I was born in the 23rd year of the Meiji Period (1891) on November 7th in the place called aza-Maezato of Takamine-mura (Takamine Village).

Our house originally belonged to a man who was once the sonchō (village chief) of Takamine-mura. It was a fairly large house. The man somehow met failure and had to sell and leave the house. Since he had been a sonchō, people were afraid to buy the house as they weren't sure what would happen to them later. So he said to my father, "You buy it from me," and we got it quite cheaply. That's how we got that house. Even when I go back to Okinawa now, I stay there.

My parents were farmers. Potatoes were planted for food, and our sugar cane was made into sugar to make money. That's how we lived in Okinawa.

Ours was about an average family. The big families would have as much as two acres of land, but they were rare. Most lived on one-fourth to one-half acres. In Okinawa we don't go by huge tracts of land like tens or hundreds of acres. So the scale is quite small.

I was the third one in the family. My eldest sister was quite healthy, but the sister right above me died even before I knew her. Her name was Utoru but I couldn't pronounce it. My grandparents used to laugh since I used to call her "Tōru, Tōru."

I started school from age nine for five years. The Japanese school was centered around the emperor and the boys were supposed to become military men. Ever since I was a child I didn't like fights and the Japanese militaristic education. Since they taught militarism at school I didn't feel good and couldn't stand it. So instead of going to school I used to help my

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parents. And since my dad said he was coming to Hawaii, I came with him, and I’ve been in Hawaii until now. My mom tried very hard not to have me come and tried to stop me with all her might. But I said, “What do you know? I may be drafted in five or six years!”

She thought it was better for me to go rather than be drafted, so my mother said, “All right.”

Well, everyone then came to Hawaii to earn some money. I just followed my dad. For the cost of transportation to come to Hawaii our land was placed under a mortgage. And we borrowed some money, about $100, from the moneylender. After we came to Hawaii we sent money back. If we didn’t pay it back, our land would have been taken away. So before anything else our main task was to quickly pay back the money. I don’t think it took too long, maybe about two years.

Journey to Honolulu (1906)

We went from Okinawa to Kobe and came directly to Honolulu so it took only about one week. I got quite seasick. I couldn’t eat for about four days. And after about four days a person named Takamine from my village came to visit me when I was sick. And even now, I won’t forget that person. She was sick, too, and after she came to see me, that night, she died. Sometimes, even now I wonder if she knew she was going to die and came to say farewell to me.

At the immigration office there were some (physical) exams and people who had bad eyes couldn’t pass. There were some who had to go back even after finally getting to Honolulu. As for me, the eye exam was very easy. There were many different kinds of exams, but nothing to worry about.

From there, we went to a hotel called Kyushu-ya. We didn’t even stay there overnight because we got on a boat to go to Maui in the evening.

There were some Okinawans in a place called Paia, in Maui. We saw a letter written by them in Okinawa and came to seek them. But the route was changed to Puunene, and we couldn’t get all the way to Paia.

My father and others said they’d go to work after two or three days, but I said I’d go to work right away even by myself. You see, I was still a child so I really worried whether I could do a man’s job. I wanted to go to work as soon as possible and test myself. My dad was finally persuaded by me, and we all went to work.

But when I went to work, I couldn’t swing the cane knife with one hand and used two hands instead. So the luna (foreman) said, “Boy, boy, come here, come here.” And I was taken to where the children worked, I was really disappointed and thought I still couldn’t do a man’s job.

At that time there was a train on the main road. A cart filled with cane was drawn by horses and pulled to where the train was. Then the train would take it from there.

The houses at Camp 3 were really junk houses. A house was made of rough wood. It was a tenement house built long and big. It was partitioned and in one room there would be three or so people.
There were mostly Okinawans, and I can still remember one guy who was really strong. When the camp policeman came around, everyone feared him because he'd use his whip. But this guy was stronger than us. When the camp policeman came around with the whip to make him go to work he just took away the whip. The camp policeman couldn't even get angry.

I wasn't afraid of the whip at all because even if others didn't want to go to work, I wanted to. The main thing on my mind was to test out my ability—see if I could do a man's job. I never took a day off from work. Even on Sunday, if there was some job available, I would work. Sometimes there was overtime work for 10 cents an hour. When the plantation was busy, there was overtime work, and I used to say, even at a lower rate, "Let me do the overtime work."

There was a Mr. Kanemoto from the same place as us. His younger brother was in Kukuihaele. Since this younger brother was there, he wanted to go there. We were persuaded by him and came to Kukuihaele in 1906 or 1907.

It was an ordinary plantation—well, now it's consolidated with Hono­kaa. But even way before, Kukuihaele had a sugar mill.

There was a man named Morikawa who was the camp luna, and he made all the people of the camp work every day. Later he went to Waiakea and passed away there.

I was just an ordinary laborer, doing kachi kane (cutting cane) and hō hana (weeding). The pay was better in Kukuihaele than in Maui. Maui was about $18 for an adult, and I got less because I was a boy worker, but Kukuihaele was giving $23. There was a man named Furukawa who cooked, and I think I paid six dollars for the cooking. I think I still had some spending money left, but after paying for the cooking I sent the rest back to Okinawa.

Back then, I didn't know where was best to work so I thought it was best to see here and there. We tried here and there and tried to go and work. But unfortunately, just when I got to Ueki Camp (1908) I got the fever. So I had to stay at Papaaloa Hospital. At the time I really became weak, all my hair fell out, others would say, "That poor young man . . . ."  

Since I got the fever right after I arrived at Camp Ueki, I didn't want to stay there. So I came to a place called Kealani in Papaaloa and worked as a horse-handler. The pay was one or two dollars more than the hō hana and kachi kane.

Here I heard about the infamous three. Papaaloa's "Hachi" was one of the three tough lunas. Hachi is a bee and it stings right away so you're afraid of it. Papaaloa's "Hachi," Ookala's "Tora" (tiger), and Kohala's "Aka" (red), these were the infamous three. Each nickname was probably given to these luna by the Japanese laborers. The Papaaloa big luna fell off a horse and died, so "Hachi" became the big luna, and finally he became the Papa­aloa boss.

I liked taking care of horses, and I learned how to take care of them at Papaaloa until my wife came.

Her father was my mother's brother, and they were the same Tokusato
family. Her name was Tama. So we had an *itoko kekkon* (marriage between cousins).

I then went to Cabella Camp because my wife’s aunt was there, but from there I went back to Kukuihaele (1914) because there, there was a man we knew named Morikawa. So I went there and just then, my daughter was born in Kukuihaele’s Camp 15. Somehow there’s something that remains in my heart about that camp.

**A Loss and a Gain**

The reason I went to Waiakea (1918) was like gambling. I bought some sugarcane land and tried to make some money but due to the shift in the sugar market I had a big loss. At that time I thought, “Why’d I do such a stupid thing?” But when I think about it now, I am what I am now because of that. Without that failure I would have returned to Okinawa. Rather than return to Okinawa and start all over, I stayed because I thought it was better to raise my children in America. And I summoned my only daughter—the one that had been sent back home to Okinawa.

Later, I worked making charcoal in Honokaa. My failure in Waiakea was quite big so the charcoal-making job wasn’t enough to pay for my money-making schemes. So I thought I had to do something more unusual. I went to Waipio to make *okolehao* (*ti* plant liquor).

Making *okolehao*—well—there’s nothing harder than that. And it’s very dangerous. The plants used to make *ti*-root liquor are difficult to dig.

When you look from Kukuihaele to Kohala side you see the big *pali* (cliff). Around there you have to hold the digging stick and make a place to put your foot. And on the cliff the *ti* root sticks out a little. You can see it easily to dig and pull out. But if you miss a step you’d fall thousands of feet down to the ocean.

As for brewing liquor, there were others who were doing it before so I’d go there and ask about brewing. Those who were brewing from before would often talk about things they’d done. So I’d listen to these talks and one by one ideas like I should do this or that would come to my head. So, it never happened that my brew was too weak. Everyone liked the liquor I made and the *kanakas* (Hawaiians) used to lie and say the ones they made were Okinawan, mine, since everyone knew that my brew was good.

Well, brewing liquor was a violation and it was being banned by others. If you were caught you couldn’t help but be put in jail. I took too many risks and went a little too far. I was sent to jail. But even when I went to jail, there was no suffering. Only, I felt it was good to see the other side of the world.

**A Lesson in Jail**

When I went to prison I felt that the ones who were there, the offenders, were more arrogant than the guards. Well, if there was anyone who bribed even a little, he was the boss. It wasn’t a matter of being a guard or anything. And when I went there, I felt that there was no way society would
get better in this situation. I felt even the guard, and even heaven could be bribed. And I felt that wasn’t good. As for myself, I came back from jail feeling I learned something.

There was a good friend named Tokuo Uehara who was the same age as me. Since he was in Paauhau, I went there and worked. From the plantation we’d take over a place as big as several tens of acres and build up that place. I should have continued . . . but I didn’t. I came to Keopu, Kona in about 1924. Just then there was a suitable plot of land so I “bought” the coffee mountain (land). It was leased land, there was someone working on the land before and I bought the lease from him. I did it like that.

Here, I tried to improve the way things were done. I looked at the way a person did it and I’d think, “It’s better to do it this way rather than that way.” Even the basket for coffee beans, I made a new type of basket. Most were made out of lau hala (pandanus leaf), you have to pay for those. But I made mine out of wire. That’s the Kakazu-style coffee basket. The ladder too. Everyone has a rather hard time setting up the ladder during harvest time. The ladder I made was metal and it would stand on four legs even on bumpy places. That’s the Kakazu-style ladder. Ideas like that came to me rather often. I think I have a more innovative way of thinking than the average people.

I stopped being a coffee farmer right when the pineapple farmers in Lanai and Molokai went broke. Right around then I felt the world wasn’t going the way it should and the economy wasn’t going well. I thought of leaving everything alone and quit coffee farming.

**War and Peace**

During World War II, the Japanese who stood out, those who would lead the people, those who had brains, were taken away to the U.S. mainland. They were thought to be dangerous by the government so it couldn’t be helped.

And there was Bunzaemon Kasahara—he was a good person. I was a very good friend of his, but when it came to the issue of war, we always raised our voices. He was just like the average Japanese when it came to the war issue and had a Japanese viewpoint. But I was the opposite. The average Japanese usually thinks that they’ll win whenever there is a way—and when Japan says that she’s going to war, nobody opposes it. But I was against the war.

You see, I believe my body is mine and your body is yours. Each person should be able to do as one pleases. The Earth was created naturally and man didn’t make it. The Okinawans didn’t make Okinawa, the Japanese didn’t make Japan, the Americans didn’t make America. The Earth was made naturally, and man is just living under the kind auspices of the Earth. I believe it’s better not to tell other countries what to do. Fights begin because you try to make the others obey you. Japan had the habit of saying, “Obey me.”
I once wrote of Japan's failure to live according to the spirit of the Hinomaru:

Has Japan Lived up to the Symbol of the Hinomaru?

Scholars tell us that on January 27, 1870, Japan established the Hinomaru as her national flag. This year marks the ninety-ninth year of its establishment. Waving this sun-emblem flag, what has Japan done during these years? Beginning with the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1896, Japan caused trouble in Korea and Manchuria. The sun-emblem flag has not been used as it should have been used, for the sun is the symbol of boundless love. Waging wars against its neighboring countries is the history of the Imperial Japan since the Meiji Restoration.

Japan took the sun-emblem flag from the original designers of it; but she failed to live up to the spirit of love that it symbolizes. Strange as it may seem, the spirit of the sun-emblem still lives in the mind of one of the descendants of the original designers of it.


I'm a little eccentric so if I believed something deep in my heart, I just have to do it. In the post-war years I wrote to the United States and the Soviet Union about world peace. Nowadays I don't write as much but I am still opposed to militarism.
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