

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Carol Kubota Murakawa

Carol Kubota Murakawa, eldest of six children, was born in 1933, in Taiwan.

Four years later, her father Ryudo Kubota, became the minister at the Lahaina Jōdo Mission on Maui.

Besides meeting the religious needs of the community, Ryudo Kubota and his wife, Tsuyuko, met the educational needs of Japanese American families. The couple served as principal and teacher at a Japanese-language school.

On the night of December 7, 1941, an FBI agent and a local policeman removed Ryudo Kubota from his home. His family—wife Tsuyuko and four children—knew little about his condition or whereabouts.

Only later, were family members allowed to visit him at a location on Maui. Later, they learned he was moved to the Sand Island Detention Center on O‘ahu.

By early 1943, the Kubota family, too, were moved. They were incarcerated at Jerome in Arkansas, while their father was held elsewhere, at several facilities, such as the Santa Fe Department of Justice Camp in New Mexico and Camp Livingston, a U.S. Army Internment Camp, in Louisiana.

In 1944, as Jerome War Relocation Center closed, Ryudo Kubota and his family were reunited at Tule Lake Segregation Center in California.

Like many at Tule Lake at that time, the Kubotas intended to go to Japan.

But, dissuaded from going to Japan by those familiar with the situation on Maui, the Kubotas returned home at war's end.

Ryudo Kubota remained at the Lahaina Jōdo Mission until his passing in 1955.

Carol, a 1951 graduate of Lahainaluna High School, moved to O‘ahu where she and husband, Wayne, raised four children.

Tape No. 57-7-1-12

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Carol Kubota Murakawa (CM)

‘Ewa Beach, O‘ahu

July 9, 2012

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

MK: This is an interview with Carol Kubota Murakawa at her home in West Loch, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. The interviewers are Michi Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto. The date is July 9, 2012. Also present is Mr. Murakawa and [their dog] Shiro. Should be okay.

First of all, Mrs. Murakawa, what’s your birth year—the year you were born?

CM: [Nineteen]Thirty-three so *Shōwa hachi-nen* [Shōwa 8] I think? Is that right? Correct?

WN: Yeah, ‘26. Shōwa starts ‘26. So *hachi*, yeah.

MK: So you were born in 1933 in *Shōwa hachi-nen*, the eighth year of Shōwa. Where were you born?

CM: Taiwan. Formosa.

MK: What was your father’s name?

(Intermittent construction noises and dog noises throughout the interview.)

CM: Reverend Ryudo Kubota.

MK: Your mother’s name?

CM: Tsuyuko Tanaka.

MK: Just based on whatever your family or others have told you about your father, share with us what you know about your father’s background from the time he was in Japan and ended up in Taiwan.

CM: To tell you the truth, not much. (Pause) I guess we were brought up not to ask. I mean, those days we never asked our parents too many questions about who or what. Later years we found out, but all I know is that he was. . . . He had two other brothers I think. But I knew only my second uncle—father’s brother. The older brother I never knew but actually we stayed with them after we came from Formosa back to Japan to come to Hawai‘i.

MK: And what *ken* [prefecture] did your father come from originally?

CM: Fukuoka-*ken*. Kurume. My mother’s from Nagasaki.

MK: I know that sometimes among the Buddhist priests’ families they come from a family of Buddhist priests. How about in your father’s situation?

- CM: (Don't know why he chose to be a minister.) His older brother was Kendo Kubota. No, Kendo Kato. He married into his wife's family, so that's why his name is different. (Auntie's father was also a minister in Kurume and when he passed away, Uncle Kendo took over in his place. That is why he went back home to Kurume. Then took his wife's family name, Kato.)
- MK: Have you heard anything about your grandfather? Your father's father?
- CM: No. Oh that part I don't know.
- MK: How about your mother's side of the family? What do you know about them?
- CM: She had a sister. I don't know how many siblings, but I know she had a sister. She also had a half sister, but I think she tried to explain to me how that came about. She married a Tanaka also.
- MK: How is it that your mom and dad got together?
- CM: I have no idea. Never asked.
- WN: Never asked. (Laughs)
- MK: Okay. So you have Tsuyuko and Ryudo Kubota. Your father was a minister in Taiwan at the time of your birth. How is it that your folks ended up here in Hawai'i? Try explain to us what happened.
- CM: I don't know how long he was in Taiwan. [Nineteen] thirty-three, we came here in '37 so about four years between Taiwan and Fukuoka I think. His older brother came to Lahaina, Maui in 1926. (A purchase of one acre was made possible by temple members, and the original temple was moved from Front Street to the present site closer to the ocean.) He was the fifth minister there. So in '37, he decided (to go back because his wife's father passed away). He changed places with my father. That's how come we ended up in Maui in 1937.
- MK: Did your father go directly from Taiwan to Hawai'i?
- CM: For a while I think we were in Fukuoka with his older brother I think.
- MK: We've been just referring to your father as a Buddhist priest, but I was wondering what sect of Buddhism was your father with?
- CM: Jōdo Mission.
- MK: Jōdo Mission.
- CM: Jōdo *shū*, yeah.
- MK: Jōdo *shū*.
- So your family was in Lahaina from 1937 and at that time who was in your family?
- CM: Okay, after we came to Hawai'i. . . . Father, Mother, my brother and I—my brother was also born in Formosa. In Maui had Michiko and Toyomi. Two more after the war.
- MK: When you look back on your childhood in Lahaina, Maui, describe for us what your home was like. Try to picture in your mind and tell us what was the quarters like for you folks.

- CM: I don't know. Me being the oldest I guess I could say we never did ask so many questions. We just did what they told us to do. I guess we rebelled at times but other than that we were very obedient. I don't know.
- MK: What was the house like?
- WN: Your house was on the grounds of the [Lahaina] Jōdo Mission.
- CM: The house was on the grounds.
- MK: Yeah, try describe your house for us. What did it look like?
- CM: Three bedrooms and a kitchen and a dining room and a big parlor. And a veranda—screened in.
- MK: What else was in the temple grounds? You have your house. . . .
- CM: At that time there was another building which the YBA [Young Buddhist Association] used. . . . And then there was a schoolhouse on the over-an-acre lot.
- MK: And the temple itself?
- CM: Yes.
- MK: Nowadays when we think about the Lahaina Jōdo *shū*, we think about the huge statue and the bell. How about in those days?
- CM: No. Just a church.
- MK: And, the cemetery?
- CM: Cemetery on the side.
- WN: When did that big Buddha come up?
- CM: After the church burned down.
- WN: Oh, you were still living there when that happened?
- CM: No, no, no. We had---when did the church burn down? Actually, I got married in '56. I don't know when the church burned down.
- WN: Okay.
- CM: Before the church burned down [in 1968], my mother had to—she wanted to stay there. Tried to get my sister to marry a, you know. . . . But that didn't pan out. She moved to Honolulu. This other reverend, Hara, moved there. While he was there, the church burned down. There was this rich Japanese person from Japan who was interested in properties. I think he bought some of the property and he donated whatever and built the church. Bought the Buddha and the bell and built the pagoda. Pagoda too, I think.
- MK: So all that is post-war?
- CM: Yes.
- MK: So when you folks were there, it was very different.
- CM: Very different. Very different.

- MK: When you folks were living over there, what did you folks do for fun? You and your brother.
- CM: We just (pause) went to school and had friends over. I guess friends would come down and we would go down to the beach and swim—the beach was right there. We were kind of mostly in the water most of the time.
- WN: You said the place you were raised was Pu‘unoa.
- CM: Yes, that was called Pu‘unoa Village.
- WN: So it’s kind of sort of right near the Māla Wharf.
- CM: Yes, Māla Wharf was here and then the church [Lahaina Jōdo Mission] was—the cemetery, the church, and then houses down until downtown where the hospital [Pioneer Mill Hospital] was. The Lahaina Methodist Church [on Front Street], that was all called Pu‘unoa Village.
- WN: How did you learn how to swim?
- CM: Actually not swim, just. . . . didn’t learn how to swim we just played in the water.
- (Laughter)
- MK: Did you folks go by the wharf side too?
- CM: Well, wharf side to play on the wharf. But mostly play just those regular childhood things that you do. Nothing extraordinary.
- MK: Who were like your neighbors? Your nearest neighbors?
- CM: We just had one house between the cemetery and our house and we had this Hawaiian family—a Hawaiian-Chinese family. They had older kids so we would kind of be like the younger siblings and they would play with us. They had a older brother who would lay net or put traps and when they caught fish they would give us. Since I didn’t have older siblings I guess I made her [a girl in the Hawaiian-Chinese family] my older sister. Those days, the parents never worried where you were or what you did. Like—this was after the war but—even after the war we came back and the cannery [Baldwin Packers Cannery] had this big river—stream [Kahoma Stream]. We would go there and just catch whatever.
- MK: In those days when you were still a child did people come to the temple area a lot? You know, other than for the service but come to socialize?
- CM: Oh, service. Not while we were younger. They only came during Sundays or when they had special services, but other than that. . . .
- MK: For your mother and father, what did they do in the community?
- CM: Nothing that I can recall. She taught Japanese school so that was their other (pause) main. . . . (Since ministers were not allowed to apply for Social Security (at that time), my mother started to work at the cannery. She would walk to work and come home for lunch and go back again. I also worked at the pineapple cannery then later worked at the sugar plantation.)
- MK: I was wondering, usually when you have the *bon-san* and you have the wife, the wife sometimes takes care of the *fujinkai* too? How about your mother?
- CM: (Pause) I don’t think they had anything special only when they have special services she would be in charge. But, I remember being young, too, we had to polish all the things in the church.

- MK: All the altar brass and . . .
- CM: . . . the vases and you know. That was our thing and. . .
- MK: That's a lot of work. (Laughs)
- CM: Couldn't get out of it. (CM and WN laugh.) So like every morning we would have to go and to pray. Then, dinnertime have to bring rice.
- WN: The offering.
- CM: *Osonae*. *Osonae* to the---yes, offering. And I guess when you were small you didn't realize what it was but I always thought it was kind of scary to me. But, now that we think about it, it's like a comfort area but at that time—when you're small—you only think about people passed away.
- MK: So you folks would---some of the things you used to do at the temple was kind of polishing the metal objects that were by the altar and the vases. Dinnertimes you would give the offering to the Buddha. Were there other things you folks helped with at the temple? Like the flowers or anything like that?
- CM: Well basically, the flower changing I think mostly my mother did but like polishing was only special occasions like *Hanamatsuri* [Buddha's birthday festival] or *O-Bon* or you know. But other than that we were just like any other normal kids.
- WN: Being the oldest did you have different kinds of responsibilities?
- CM: Looking after my sisters. My brother was---he was the only boy. . . . This was---they weren't actually in school when the war started. Only my brother and I, I think. I was in third grade and he was—what?—kindergarten or first grade.
- MK: So they were real young. One was born—Michiko was born—in '38. Toyomi in '39. You were helping to take care of very young sisters. Yeah?
- CM: Uh-huh.
- MK: I was wondering, you mentioned that your mother was—of course she had duties as the wife of the *bon-san*. She was a Japanese-language school teacher. How about your father? What were his duties?
- CM: Just visiting members or. . . . I understand that—I don't think this was before war but—I guess [he was] trying to get members and he would offer to pick them up to see to the families bringing the parents down. Pick them up early in the morning and come down. So they would cook and get things ready for the service.
- So actually, I didn't have too many so-called friends that I could play with. Only the ones I kind of remember in school.
- MK: And then for your father, most of the people that he knew were the Jōdo *shū* members that came. In those days, what kinds of services did he conduct?
- CM: Well, memorial service. Funeral services. I guess he would go to their homes. But, other than that that's about much he did. He didn't have other side things that he could do.
- MK: Then he would also take care of like *Hanamatsuri* and *O-Bon*?
- CM: Yes. Yes.
- MK: What would he have to do for those special times?

- CM: (Pause) Just have the ladies come down. Pick up the ladies and then when they were there, his normal thing was to see that everything was in order. But, I can say I really (pause) being young yet too, you don't. . . .
- WN: Yeah, really young.
- MK: Yeah, I was wondering though, what was *O-Bon* like in those days? I've heard of people going to *Bon* dances in the old days. What was it like at the Lahaina Jōdo *shū*?
- CM: I remember after we came back. Before the war, I don't remember much. I don't know if they even had *O-Bon* dances during those times but I remember after—after the war.
- MK: Like you mentioned, your father would spend time going to pick up people. What kind of car did he have?
- CM: He had an old Ford. Running board. One of those heavy—with the wooden steer[ing wheel].
- MK: I've heard that sometimes in those days the Buddhist priest would also be the person in between the regular people and the Japanese consulate. How about your dad? Did he do any of that?
- CM: Not really. The consulate was in Honolulu, so I don't think he. . . . he might have helped some of them with getting letters to Japan but other than that. . . .
- MK: He was also a Japanese-language school teacher?
- CM: Principal.
- MK: Principal. Teacher and principal.
- CM: Yes.
- MK: So how did it work then, the splitting up of the work between your mother and your father with Japanese school?
- CM: I don't know if it was by age or grade level or. . . . You mean before the war?
- MK: Before the war did your mom take the younger kids and your father took the older kids or. . . .
- CM: I think my father had the older kids. My mother didn't understand—she didn't know any English.
- WN: Was your mother your teacher?
- CM: I think I had both.
- WN: Mother and father. As you think back at it, how was that? Having your parents be your teachers? (Chuckles)
- CM: I guess Japanese was the first language until I went to English school [territorial public school]. Because she didn't know any English, I think our conversation was mostly Japanese. We tried to teach her English but. . . .
- WN: So your Japanese was better than her English.
- CM: Oh yes.

- WN: It must have been easy for you then in Japanese[-language] school?
- CM: I guess it was. (MK and WN laugh.) Because basically from Japan that's all—I hardly knew any English so basically everything was in Japanese.
- MK: Being the *kōchō-sensei*'s [principal's] daughter and the *sensei*'s daughter, did you feel like a little pressure for expectations? How did you feel?
- CM: Yes. Because we're not the brightest too. I wasn't the brightest too. But, like you say it was hard. Not showing off, but I think we knew a little more than the other kids, you know, because they were just learning and their language was mostly English—my friends. But at that time most of them were speaking Japanese because they had elderly parents.
- WN: Would you say your Japanese is probably better than most of your friends, classmates?
- CM: Yes.
- MK: What do you remember most about Japanese school?
- CM: Just trying to get by. (Pause)
- MK: You know those days, what was the emphasis? Like reading, writing, speaking? What did they kind of emphasize in their teaching?
- CM: It mostly was speaking, because we had the members who were mostly elderly and mostly speaking Japanese too. In order to converse with them for them to tell us what to do, it was easier.
- MK: So your mom and dad tried to teach the students how to communicate with their Japanese-speaking moms and dads or older relatives.
- CM: Yes. Well even now I try to teach—while at that time my kids were going to Japanese school here, I tried to teach them but it's hard to explain the nouns and the verbs because certain times Japanese is different.
- WN: Sentence structure is different.
- CM: So they went to Japanese school, they know how to read and write but to speak, they would always use the wrong verb tense.
- WN: Right, right.
- CM: But I guess that's how you learn.
- MK: In those days the Japanese schools used to teach *shūshin*. I guess nowadays we call it ethics. What do you remember about *shūshin* teaching?
- CM: I don't know. Third grade—what?—eight years old so not [that much]. . . .
- MK: What was it like for you in English school [public school in Hawai'i]? Because you came from Taiwan and Fukuoka and ended up here in Hawai'i. What was it like for you when you went to Kam III school?
- CM: You know, I try to recall but it was (pause) I guess it was hard because I just felt like an outsider. Because you know more Japanese, than English and trying to catch up on English but we pick up fast, but other than that it was okay. I guess.
- WN: What did you like better? You liked English school or Japanese school better?

- CM: At that time?
- WN: Yeah. When you were a kid.
- CM: I think English school because I had more friends. I tried to make friends and like I said on the weekends we never went out to play when there were duties at home. I guess one [temple] member—his grandma would say that it wasn't nice for us to be gallivanting. I had to behave.
- This is early years so actually, I'm just getting—making friends. But after I came back from the war they said, "Oh you remember me?" And this and that. I said, "I remember you going but I don't recall."
- WN: So they remember you but you don't remember them.
- CM: Some of them did. Some of them did. They said, "Oh yeah, I remember when you were in my class and all of a sudden you were gone" kind of thing. She became one of my good friends too. But other than that, it was. . . . I'm not slow but. . . .
- WN: (Chuckles) Country living. You know people talk about Lahaina and the mango.
- CM: Yeah.
- WN: Do you remember . . .
- CM: The common mango.
- WN: You remember common mango a lot growing up?
- CM: Yes, we used to go down to the stream and pick and eat. Come home with stomachache.
- WN: Did you just eat regular by peeling or did you do the *shōyu* [soy sauce]. . . .
- CM: While we were picking we just kind of ate but later on we brought some home and made *shōyu*. But we picked the purple plum? You know the purple plum?
- MK: Uh-huh.
- CM: Putting them in the mayonnaise jar. Smash it, put some sugar and put it on a tin roof to make a [preserve]. . . .
- WN: Oh.
- CM: I don't know. That's what we used to do.
- WN: Jam? Is it?
- CM: No, just eat it like that.
- WN: So you get the purple plum. You put them in . . .
- CM: Mayonnaise jar and smash it. Put some sugar inside and put it on the *totan* roof. (Chuckles)
- WN: Yeah. And then you would get it from the *totan* roof and . . .
- CM: Just eat it like that. Right by the cemetery there was a big date tree. Real big dates, so we picked some green, come back, and dig a hole and bury it until they got ripe. That's the thing. That's the kind of things we used to do.

- WN: Oh, interesting.
- CM: So my kids think I was crazy. But this was after the war.
- WN: When you buried the dates, you just buried it or you put it in a container?
- CM: I remember burying to make it ripe. Dates was real bitter—the green dates. So they have to be brownish. Maybe paper bag or. . . .
- MK: All close to your area then. The dates were by the cemetery. The mango down . . .
- CM: The mango was down—well mango we would go in the [plantation] camp with my friends along the river.
- WN: So mango was more up toward the camp.
- CM: The campside, yeah. Down from Lahainaluna School there was a big river or stream. It grew there.
- WN: Had Haden mango too?
- CM: Haden mango was later, way up in Kā'anapali. They had this grove planted.
- WN: So most of the mango that you folks got in Lahaina area was common.
- CM: Common mango.
- WN: I see.
- CM: Later on my father planted a Haden mango tree. But common mango was the thing in Lahaina. With *shōyu* vinegar or salt [and] pepper.
- MK: So in those days you could get those things. The plums, the [dates], the mango. On the temple grounds did you folks grow things too like vegetables?
- CM: My mother planted peanuts and right underneath where you hang your laundry so you have to be careful not to step over when you hang your laundry.
- (Laughter)
- WN: She planted peanuts?
- CM: Peanuts.
- MK: How about other *yasai* [vegetables]?
- CM: (Pause) I think it was mostly green onions I think.
- MK: Did you folks have chickens or anything like that?
- CM: We raised chickens and at one time they had a lot of mongoose there. It was hard. They would come eat the eggs. The cage wasn't one of those perfect ones. [It was] put up by my father. He doesn't know anything about it so all he would do, he just put up wire kind of things.

Even after the war, racing pigeons were popular. Remember they had this pigeon club where they used pigeons for island to island. Well, one or a couple landed in our yard. I don't know how my father got hold of it but he kept it—he started to raise. They

multiplied. And multiplied. So one day he tried to make barbecue and he told us that was our dinner but we refused to eat it because we knew it was one of those pigeons.

(Laughter)

I don't know. Those days I think you only think about eating chicken, which was okay. But other than that, you don't eat. It was cruel to kill a pigeon. So he took several to Haleakalā and to let it go. But they came home. (Laughs) I remember that part.

WN: You would set them free at Haleakalā? And they would come home?

CM: Because they were homing pigeons.

WN: Yeah, that's amazing.

CM: That's the kind of thing he used to do. When the hens would lay egg he would just walk by, collect the egg. He would just crack it and pop it in his mouth. That was the best time to eat eggs.

WN: Oh, he would eat the egg raw? You did that too?

CM: No, I like it with rice. With hot. . . .

MK: *Tamago meshi* [egg and rice].

CM: *Tamago* rice. To this day I still eat, but my kids can't see me eating that.

WN: Because next generation cannot see that.

CM: What I used to tell my father, I used to just—he gobble the egg. I would say, "Oh, gross."

WN: He would crack the egg above his [face], open his mouth and just let the egg go in.

CM: Yes.

WN: Wow.

MK: So those days then your family—you folks had green onions? You folks had some peanuts. You folks had chickens. Chicken eggs. But otherwise everything else you folks would have had to buy.

CM: Yes, or else the [temple] members would bring if they had surplus. I guess most of them lived up in the [plantation] camps so they would grow things or they would bring whatever they had.

MK: So when your mom needed to buy things, where would she buy things from?

CM: This man would come with his wagon—the truck. This man used to come with his truck. Sell meat, vegetables, and whatever. But he would come because she never drove and my father I don't think took her shopping.

WN: So he would come and then she would place like an order . . .

CM: She would buy it. She would buy it. Whatever he had.

WN: I see.

CM: But at that time we looked forward for him because he would give us little snacks you know. Like kids.

- WN: Did one man sell all the vegetables, fish, meat?
- CM: Yes. He had a market.
- WN: I see.
- CM: His mother was a good member and I've known her as *bāchan*. She took care of my sisters when the youngest was born. She came and helped my mother. But that was her son that had the market.
- MK: And the market was in Lahaina town?
- CM: In Lahaina town.
- WN: So he would actually come and everything. So what about rice?
- CM: Rice was the offering from the [temple members]—you know, during offering.
- WN: Oh, so you folks didn't have to buy rice.
- CM: No, we didn't have to buy rice. Offerings. Like *O-Bon* they would offer rice. I remember, you know the *nanten* leaf? We put in to preserve from getting bugs. Because when they donate rice it's not one type of rice. It's all different kinds right? You don't know. If you left it too long, it would get the bugs in the rice. So we used to pick the leaves and put it in. That's the kind of things I remember.
- WN: Oh, I didn't know they did that with *nanten*. Did you know that?
- MK: I didn't know that. So the congregation would help to supply the temple family.
- CM: With some.
- MK: With some things?
- CM: Like us, I guess growing up in a big family too, when it's time for dinner my mother would cook meat or just a piece of meat. If you were late you just had leftovers because a big family right? It's not like---like my father only had a meager wage monthly from the church itself and no other side income coming in except when he went to *omairi* [visit] to the members' homes.
- We used to enjoy when he came home with all the envelopes. You know, kids are kids right? Grab the envelope from him and open it up for him.
- WN: You mean, these are offerings of money?
- CM: The offerings. Out of that came our lunch money for school.
- MK: So basically what your father had was whatever salary or wage he got from the temple and whatever he would get from the congregation for services. How about from the Japanese-language school side? That would be . . .?
- CM: I don't know how much his—how much it was but (pause) I guess enough for us to get by. We never really asked for things like kids nowadays. “I want this!” or “We need that!” kind of thing but I just knew that he only had a limited income.
- WN: Did you folks make your own toys? Like what? What did you folks make?
- CM: Sticky beans on the Carnation can. The evaporated milk.

- WN: Okay.
- CM: They had sticky beans growing a lot before. So we used to get that, come home, peel the outer skin and rub it on the can. Put your feet on the can, and it got stuck and that's how you used to walk.
- WN: And walk on the ground on the cans. What kind of beans was that? Not monkeypod?
- CM: No, it was real bushy, thorny. Just like the *edamame* but a little thicker. About that size. A little thicker. When you peel it was sticky, so we called it, "Sticky Beans."
- MK: What else did you folks do? You folks didn't have money. You couldn't buy toys.
- WN: What about beanbag?
- CM: *Ojame*. My mother used to make and we used to play with that. (Pause) Other than that not. . . .
- WN: What about *peewee*?
- CM: Huh?
- WN: *Peewee*? Did you play *peewee*?
- CM: The stick game?
- WN: Yeah. Yeah.
- CM: Yes. We used to get a board too and then you know the posts that they had? And then the bumblebee would go in. We used to hit the thing so the bumblebee would come out. (Chuckles) That's the kind of things we used to do.
- MK: I guess among the girls, *mamagoto*? Kind of play house.
- CM: Hmm. . . .
- WN: Not too much.
- CM: I don't think we had those small dishes. Children nowadays they have all those dishes were you play but we didn't have that so we would just go out and make our own mud and I remember there was a soursop tree right by the bathroom and—not the spare room but the *koya* like where you put the. . . .
- MK: A shed?
- CM: Connected to the house. There was a tall soursop tree there so over there we used to make mud and that's about it. Oh, I remember one time. . . . When we were bad and my father would get mad at us, he would lock us underneath. The temple had this, like a basement but on dirt. He would lock us up in there.
- WN: Underneath the house?
- CM: Underneath the church. Where they stored all the *yagura* [wooden stage] and all those other things—extra things. So we used to dig. It's all sand right? We used to dig ourselves out. (MK and WN laugh.)
- MK: And you just mentioned *yagura* stuff was under there. You folks must have had *Bon* dance then?
- CM: This was after the war I think. I don't remember recalling before the war. After the war.

- MK: I was wondering, we would hear that sometimes the Japanese[-language] school teachers would have Saturday class and girls would go to learn sewing or manners or things like that. Did your mom do that?
- CM: (Pause) I don't know. (Pause) I don't know if my father taught *fude* too.
- WN: Oh. Calligraphy?
- CM: But I know in Tule Lake he did.
- MK: Not sure in Lahaina.
- WN: We were talking about the different soursop and small plum and mango. What about *nasubi* [pickled eggplant]? Do you remember? I mean to me Lahaina is famous for Lahaina *nasubi*.
- CM: Oh, Lahaina *nasubi*, yes.
- WN: Do you remember that growing around as a kid?
- CM: A couple of family—the church members had. They would make pickled *nasubi* and then sometimes my mother would buy or they would bring their extra and she would make and to try to learn. I tried but it doesn't work. She put a galvanized nail in to keep it purple. Mine turned brown.
- WN: No kidding. Even with the nail?
- CM: (WN chuckles.) I think the water had to be a certain temperature.
- MK: There's a technique yeah?
- CM: So sometimes I want to eat but it's expensive to buy so when they sell the small ones I would buy and come home. First you rub it with salt to make it a little bit soft. Then you put it in brine and a galvanized nail in to keep it purple. The *nasubi* was purple right? But mine would turn brown. (Chuckles) Still edible.
- MK: But your hands would turn all purple.
- CM: Those kind of things that she was good at. I tried to learn from her. Then when they had service, ladies would cook rice in the *kamado*. They had an open [fire]. . . . They would burn the rice. Put *shōyu* on, make *musubi*. I remember those things. We would be there waiting. The ladies used to laugh but those kind of things you miss.
- MK: Were there other little kids—like you folks you're from the congregation—the ladies' kids?
- CM: No. Well sometimes they would bring their *mago*.
- MK: Oh, grandchildren?
- CM: Yes.
- MK: Oh, they were older than these ladies?
- CM: Yes. Some of them were young but mostly were . . .
- MK: Grandma generation?
- CM: Yes. So after the war. After I got my license I had to go pick them up. I didn't like it because I had to get up early. You have to go to every camp to pick up certain people.

- Come home, drop them off, and go back out again. Because he started that tradition, I understand.
- MK: He would go pick them up for coming to work [prepare for services and other temple activities] and do things?
- CM: Because it was hard for some of them to come down, for their family to bring them down. There was this camp way up by past Māla Wharf, call it Maruyama Camp? It was like a mountain and I don't think it was a reservoir but it was like a mountain and on the top there was a road. I think you can go down there and was several people living down there. So you had to drive. I was scared taking this man and I refused. I told them I didn't want to go. But he made me so I had to go pick them up.
- WN: You weren't that old then when you were driving?
- CM: This was what. . . .
- WN: Still in the [19]40s?
- MK: When you came back you were still a teenager yeah?
- CM: This was after I came back.
- MK: So a teenager?
- WN: When you came back you were only twelve, thirteen years old. (Laughs)
- CM: When I got my license, what sixteen? Fifteen, sixteen?
- At first I refused to learn, but because he had nobody else to rely on. . . .
- MK: So your father did a lot of driving. Picking up the ladies, bring them down for them to help prepare for services. I guess the food, yeah? That would be served.
- CM: Yes. Uh-huh.
- MK: When people think about Lahaina they think about fry soup.
- CM: Uh-huh.
- MK: Did you go and eat fry soup too?
- CM: Oh yeah. Sometimes we would on the way home. But, certain times when special occasions, when a half a day of school he would give us extra money to buy. But other than that we would save our milk money. They used to serve snack. Mid-morning we used to save that. We used to buy *crack seed*. We used to buy noodles on the way home.
- MK: So, you know that fry soup. Try describe for us what that was. People say, "What is fry soup?"
- CM: Just chow fun noodles, but mainly bean sprout and I don't know what else. They had some kind of meat in there. Maybe at that time it was *char siu*, I don't know. But some kind of pork I guess. It was mostly bean sprout I think and green onion. They will put it in this—what kind of paper you call that?
- WN: Butcher paper.
- CM: Butcher paper.

- WN: Red butcher paper.
- CM: And then roll it in a cone and put it in and then flip the top and then went home with that.
- WN: You ate with fork or you ate just . . .
- CM: Oh, just your fingers. (Laughs)
- WN: With your fingers? Oh, okay. And you called it fry soup? What was the name of the store that sold it?
- CM: Yamafuji. [Liberty Restaruant owned by the Yamafuji family.]
- WN: Yamafuji. Oh, okay.
- MK: You had *crack seed* stores?
- CM: Yeah, they had a *crack seed* store, and then we learned how to make our own *crack seed* so we have my mother buy prunes. Get the hammer, crack the prunes with the hammer, and make your own. At that time we didn't have extra money to buy *crack seed*. We used to sneak from my father, so sometimes I remember his lunch [money] container would be short because he would count how many days and how many kids, so it's up to you to take your own lunch money.

In those days, you didn't have much and I guess we couldn't ask them for extra money. Kind of sneaky but, kids being kids you miss your snack at school. You save up extra.

- MK: The school you went to, it was all mixed? What kind of kids went to the school?
- CM: All kind of mixed. Mixed kids from Lahaina town.
- WN: So that was the only school in Lahaina.
- CM: Only Kam[ehameha] III [School]. There was---I think they had one in Pu'ukoli'i or Honolulu or some place I think.
- WN: Up in the camps then.
- CM: Way up. Past Kā'anapali I think. So it's kind of far. That's the only school that they had but others was Kam III.
- WN: So, every day you walked from your house to Kam III School. How long did it take you about?
- CM: You know, kids being kids we played along the way. (WN and MK laugh.). But I don't know, sometimes he would say, "You are late."

Sometimes we would say, "Oh, can you drive us down?"

He says, "No. Better walk."

So hurry up and get them all ready and then started the walking and pretty soon here he comes along with the car. (WN and MK laugh.) "Oh, why didn't you do that in the beginning," that kind of thing.

In those times we used to go to school barefoot too. Going to school was okay, but coming home was hard. So you had to go find patches of grass in the cement on the sidewalk. So run on the grass. Keep our feet from burning and run to the next patch of grass. (Laughs)

- WN: So you wouldn't walk along the beach to go to school?
- CM: No, you couldn't.
- WN: Oh, because it had the wharf and everything.
- CM: No, no. Not the wharf but this was on Pu'unoa Village side but then just before the hospital there was a wall. Stone wall. I guess you couldn't walk there.
- WN: Wasn't a beach, I see. So every day you had to walk through the town? Front Street. To school and then back.
- CM: Yes. About twenty minutes, twenty-five minutes.
- MK: So you would pass all the stores then?
- CM: Yes. So going to school wasn't bad. Coming home it's when you're tired, you're hungry, right? So you stop and kind of ponder and then say what do you want to. . . .
- So, this man that had this truck that came to [sell] things, we would stop by in his store and he would give us knowing our situation. He would give us little things, but we didn't do it all the time because we'd get scolding.
- MK: How about clothes for school? How did you folks manage all that? Your mom sewed?
- CM: I think my mother sewed, I think.
- MK: You were the oldest so you didn't get hand-me-downs. There was nobody to give you.
- CM: No. Because we didn't have any relatives. My mother---father had no relatives on Maui.
- MK: Did they know people that came from like Fukuoka? How did they manage?
- CM: I don't know. Our thing was a daily—not daily, but once a month trip to Wailuku. We would get to go to Kress. Kress in Wailuku, so we would go there and just buy whatever we wanted. That was about. . . .
- MK: That must have been kind of exciting yeah?
- CM: It was.
- WN: That's a long trip.
- CM: Over the *pali*.
- MK: How about things like movies? Did you folks see movies?
- CM: There was one theater [Queen Theatre]. We would get to go because—it was mostly Westerns right? Like Roy Rogers, Gene Autry. My father's favorite was Hopalong Cassidy. So we would corral him, "That's his show today," kind of thing. He would take us. But we were allowed to go only but once a month. Although, it was only about—I forget how much it was. At that time with about three or four kids, you know. . . . But then those days they had the serial, right? Chapter or what happened. Falling on a cliff, we don't know what's going to happen—had to see. So we would gang up on him and do all our chores right and get everything. Ask him, we would go. Once in a while he gave in. (CM and WN laugh.)
- We got to see movies. Those days it was cheap. Like you say, we walked to the theater. Sometimes mostly we would go matinee.

MK: So before the war, your dad—he was a presence in the family. He would discipline you folks.

CM: Yes, yes.

MK: He would make sure that there was lunch money ready for you folks. He would drive you. He was the only driver in the family?

CM: Uh-huh [yes].

MK: Only driver for your mom too for errands and everything.

CM: Yes. But she hardly went anyplace. He did most of the banking, whatever had to do. Get the car, whatever. But she mostly stayed home. She never hardly—even to go to Wailuku—she hardly went. The only time she went out is when we got together with these other ministers' families for occasions. Like Christmas, New Year, she would go, but other than that. . . .

MK: When you say the other ministers' families, they would come from different parts of Maui?

CM: Yes. One from Pā'ia. Well, it's a Hongwanji from Pā'ia. Jōdo *shū* from Pu'unēnē. So our three families got together quite often. All the kids were in the same camp in Jerome and Tule Lake. I kind of was the babysitter.

MK: But you knew them before? Before the war.

CM: Oh no no. Before the war they didn't have any kids so we didn't know them before the war. This was after the war.

MK: After the war you got to know these ministers. But before the war . . .

CM: Well, during the war I guess when they had little kids, I . . . But this was mostly after the war and came back, kind of growing up.

MK: So you folks go to know each other in the camps?

CM: Mm-hmm. Yes.

MK: Oh, I see.

WN: Want to stop here and then pick up? Or you want to get to December 7th? We can do that. Maybe before Jerome.

MK: Actually, we can stop here. Stop here, and then continue.

WN: Carol, we're going to stop here, okay?

CM: Okay.

MK: Okay, and then we'll continue.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 57-8-2-12

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Carol Kubota Murakawa (CM)

‘Ewa Beach, O‘ahu

July 30, 2012

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

MK: This is an interview with Carol Kubota Murakawa. This is session number two, on July 30, 2012 in ‘Ewa Beach, O‘ahu. The interviewers are Michi Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto.

So, Mrs. Murakawa we’re going to start with December 7, 1941. What are your remembrances of that day?

CM: That was a Sunday, right?

MK: Mm-hmm. [Yes.]

CM: That was a Sunday night. I remember that night. . . . Well not really late but FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and one of the policemen from Lahaina came—talking on the veranda and then next thing I know they took him [CM’s father, Rev. Ryudo Kubota] away that night. We had to put up blankets and a black cloth over the lamp [as part of wartime blackout]. I guess that’s how we survived that day.

MK: That night when the authorities came, who was present over there?

CM: I think there was another reverend there. I don’t know who he was; I can’t remember. But I remember another *sensei* [teacher] was there and my mother [Tsuyuko Kubota] and my brother and—it was 1941—so Michiko and—let’s see, Toyomi was born [19]39.

WN: Toyomi was two years old?

CM: Yes.

WM: She was born in [19]39.

CM: So, Michiko, Toyomi, my brother Daido, and then myself, my mother, and this other *sensei* was there. That’s what I remember.

MK: You’re telling us about what happened in the evening, but when Pearl Harbor was attacked during the day, what did you folks hear or know about anything happening that day?

CM: I don’t think anything. Did we have a radio then? Because no TV at that time. I think they had a radio but I guess we were too young and my father doesn’t understand English that well so I guess we didn’t have the radio on so, I don’t think we knew that Pearl Harbor got bombed that morning.

MK: In those days—like at the temple—were there regular Sunday services?

- CM: That Sunday, I don't. . . . Maybe we had Sunday school but that was in the morning. As far as—I don't think there was anything special that Sunday.
- MK: Before you knew it, he was taken. When that happened, how did you folks react—the family? He's being taken.
- CM: We all got scared because we didn't know why. I mean, they were talking among themselves but they never told us anything. We said, "Oh, policemen," so we kind of—at that time we didn't know it was an FBI man. We saw the policeman was in uniform. I mean, we didn't think much of it at that time. Just that, "Where was he going?" and "Why is everything so dark?"
- WN: Do you remember who? You said a policeman came, and then others came along too. It wasn't just one person.
- CM: No, I think it was only the two of them I think.
- WN: So a policeman and . . .
- CM: The FBI.
- WN: Was the policeman a local man?
- CM: Yes, local man.
- WN: What about the FBI man?
- CM: He was a *haole*.
- MK: After your father was taken, what did you folks know about his situation? (Siren sounds in the background.)
- CM: Nothing. We didn't know where he went. Maybe my mother knew why he was taken, but at that time they never explained to us anything that they were rounding up all the [Japanese] people connected with a church or school. (Pause) So, for a while we never knew where he was.
- MK: When did you folks know where he was?
- CM: Later, I think we got to visit him. It was either in Kahului or Wailuku. I don't know if we all went. I'm trying to remember if I went or only my mother went, but we found out later I guess from my mom or somebody—they know where he was and then she could visit him. But, I guess life went on.
- Then [recently] I had to call my girlfriend up to find out [about the war years]. I remember going in air raid shelters, and she said, "Oh yeah. When Pearl Harbor got bombed, the army came—the military came." I know our house by the seawall, there was a small stone wall. Outside of that they built a platform and a tower. So, we weren't allowed to go outside out on that area.
- MK: Who built the platform and the tower?
- CM: I guess the military did. The military. I guess they also built an air raid shelter on the Kam III campus. I told her I remember going in and [she] said, "Was this before the war or after the war?"
- I said, "Oh, before the war there was nothing." We didn't know so after the war [started,] when the military came. So if then the siren sounded you would go in a trench air raid shelter. I remember that.

She said, “Oh, that was when war started.”

MK: So after the war started, you remember the air raid shelters. You remember that platform and tower being built. You were kind of aware of an army presence.

CM: Yes.

MK: After your father was taken, we were wondering, what did the other people think about what was happening to your father? The reaction of the people.

(Intermittent construction noises throughout interview.)

CM: I guess those days they don't tell you—the people that came to church. I guess they were all worried about their own family back in Japan. A lot of them were all *isseis* right, who came to the plantation.

MK: Were people still coming to the temple even after your father was taken?

CM: Yes.

MK: What did the people come to do at the temple?

CM: I guess just to support my mother. You know, give her—because she didn't understand English. So, mostly was the elderly folks.

MK: Were there some key people that kind of helped your mom out that time?

CM: Yes, the church member elders I guess. The ones that faithfully come. But, we were I guess nonchalant about what was going on. Just wondered when he was coming back, if he was ever coming back. Was he ever coming back? We didn't know that. I guess I asked my mother but she didn't know either. Then, later on we found out that he was transferred to Sand Island [Detention Center].

WN: Do you remember school at all?

CM: Yes, I asked my kid brother. I said, “How did we go to school?” because we didn't have any relatives there. We had no aunts or uncles. My kid brother I think was in kindergarten so he said—so my girlfriend said—I said, “How did you go to school?”

She said, “Walked.” Because, aliens weren't allowed to drive. Her father was an alien, from Japan he came. His wife, her mother was a Japanese school *sensei* too, but she did home economics. Taught plantation people how to sew.

I asked about it. I said, “If your father was an alien, how come they didn't take him?”

This is kind of going off, but she said that because the father was head honcho at the electric company—plantation—that if they took him nobody knew how to operate at that time. So, one of the *haole* supervisors I guess vouched for him and that's how come they didn't—he wasn't taken.

I said, “Oh, that's interesting.” I never knew that too.

But, then she said, “He wasn't allowed to drive.”

So, I said, “I guess in my family nobody. . . .” So, I don't think somebody came and took us to school every day so I guess we walked to school.

MK: So, prior to your dad being taken, your father provided a ride to school for you guys?

- CM: I guess. I mean, those days I guess you were safe, not like now. You can walk to school or whatever and just go out to play and then the parents not have a care of where you were. Half of the time my parents didn't know where we were. Go out in the morning and just play all day and come home. I guess we walked to school.
- MK: During that year when your dad was held locally, how did your mom manage? Because no income huh?
- CM: No income.
- MK: How did she manage?
- CM: I think she had income from the church. But, like I said I guess our generation when we were growing up I was asking—even my girlfriend said too, she said she never asked her parents unless they told her. You were taught not to [question]. . . . So I guess that's how come we just grew up as kids just doing. . . .
- MK: When it came time to leave Maui, to go Honolulu and eventually to the Mainland, when were you told, "Oh, we're going to move. We have to leave."
- CM: I don't know when it was, 1941, so I guess early [19]43 my mother had—what we could take was only so much, right? She had to get rid of a lot of things. Those days I don't think you sold anything. Like now, you can sell things if you move. She just got rid of whatever. Her sewing machine and other things just left.
- MK: So she got rid of some belongings. How did you feel about leaving Maui?
- CM: I don't know, just going on an adventure because it was war—how do you say? At that age too, you don't wonder. We wondered where we were going and we knew why we were going, but where we were going we didn't know. So we just went along with what they told us. So we ended up---left Maui at, I think it was Kahului on the boat, and we came to Honolulu. We were put into the immigration center [U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service building] on Ala Moana. We stayed there a couple of days.
- MK: What was it like at the immigration center?
- CM: We were having fun because had a lot of other kids there. Made new friends. Thinking at that time what was going on next or where we were going, and how long we'd stay there.
- WN: Do you remember being sad leaving your friends on Maui? Anything like that?
- CM: I don't think so. Like my girlfriend said, she didn't know where I went. One day I was there, and then next thing you know I wasn't there. So, never had that many friends except for the church members. Other than that. . . .
- WN: It's interesting. So you [recently] called your girlfriend who is from Lahaina. You were friends.
- CM: Classmates.
- WN: Classmates. I see.
- CM: So I had called her.
- WN: So then she told you one day you were there, the next day you weren't, and they were wondering where you went.
- CM: At that time I wasn't really close with her. We attended the same school, the same age, in the same rooms. I said, "You remember we had to go take a cup and the toothbrush and

toothpaste and go brush teeth by the fountain when you were in kindergarten, first grade, those days?"

She said, "Oh yeah, yeah. We did that."

But, other than that. . . .

MK: You spoke to her because you wanted to find out what she remembered about the time that you were leaving.

CM: Kind of refresh some things.

MK: And she just thought, you just left.

CM: Yes.

MK: When you stayed at the immigration station, you were saying that you had a lot of other kids. What did you folks do?

CM: Just nothing. Just play out in the yard.

MK: What were the living quarters like?

CM: It was bunk beds. I was just wondering if my kid brother was separated. I don't think he was separated from us. I think we all stayed, maybe like children all in one room on bunk beds. They would let us to go out and play.

One thing I remember at that time was somebody gave me a Mickey Mouse watch as a parting gift to going away. I lost it at the immigration center playing outside. That's the one thing I remember. Funny, yeah? I guess because it was a prized possession. I cried and went out to look for it. I said, "Hey I want to go back and go [look for it]."

(Laughter)

MK: Somewhere.

CM: Somewhere in [the immigration center]—you know?

MK: So before you folks left Maui, there were times when people would come say, "Bye" to you folks?

CM: Well, I guess, not to us personally. Maybe they did.

MK: Somebody gave you a parting gift.

CM: Somebody gave me a watch. I don't know who it was. That's the first time I ever got anything so it was a real prized possession.

MK: You mentioned that the kids would be in bunk beds and stuff. Where would the parents or adults be?

CM: I guess they were in their own quarters in the immigration center.

MK: Being separated from your mom, you were okay?

CM: Yes, we were okay because I had my brothers and my sisters. I kind of had to watch them.

MK: When it came time for the trip to San Francisco, how was that trip? Getting on . . .

- CM: Oh, we all got sick on the boat. I remember they said that we came back on the [SS] *Lurline* but I don't know if that was the same *Lurline* that we went on to go to San Francisco.
- MK: But you recall getting sick?
- CM: Everybody got sick. Just have to stay in bed.
- MK: How did your mom fare? She got sick too?
- CM: I don't know if she got sick too. Maybe she was too busy taking care of us. I remember getting sick on the boat.
- MK: When you folks got to San Francisco, what did you think?
- CM: Well, I think that was in later part of the year. I think San Francisco was kind of cold but after that getting off the boat, [they] put us on the train headed to heaven knows where.
- I mean if they told my mother she wouldn't know because the United States is a big country in those days. I guess even adults wondered what was going to happen to them and why we were going so far inland. So the train trip took a long time. We made the most of it. We had fun. Especially not knowing what's going to happen. Not like after—after now you've kind of grown up and you hear all these stories. Good thing it wasn't the Holocaust yeah? They don't tell you anything so we just played cards on the train or just mingled around. Typical kids frolicking on the train, going back and forth.
- MK: What do you remember about seeing? Were you able to see things from the train?
- CM: Well, they had—did they have curtains on the train? Do you know war time over here too was everything blackout for a long time? Not the longest time huh? They did away with the blackouts?
- WN: I don't think so but it got more lenient. I think the rules were always there but I think as the war went on. . . .
- CM: I guess once in a while they would stop and let you out to go. But the guards would be outside. They let you out to exercise. Then, go back in the [train].
- MK: When you folks got off the train or during the train ride, were there occasions when you would see people?
- CM: No. Just empty spaces. Empty spaces.
- MK: So the only people you saw were like the guards?
- CM: Yes.
- MK: When you got to Jerome [Relocation Center], what were your first impressions?
- CM: It was cold and dark. Well, when we got off the train they put us in those army—what do you call those?
- MK: Barracks?
- CM: No, army trucks.
- MK: Trucks.
- CM: I think we rode the truck and then when we got there they gave you blankets and they took you to the room. It was cold because I think it was during the wintertime.

- MK: How prepared were you folks for the cold?
- CM: Nothing. I guess not knowing where you were going—was it a cold area or hot area or whatever. We weren't--actually, I don't remember. I guess clothes but you only could take so much and my mother couldn't carry everything, right? So I guess we all had to share.
- MK: What do you remember about the barracks that you folks were placed in?
- CM: Just cots. It was cold because you could see outside at the tar paper and then the wind coming in. There was one big potbelly stove. But, even to warm that up my mother had to go get her own charcoal and her own wood. Some of the older ones would chop the wood but she had to do everything. We helped but not [much]. . . .
- MK: You folks were young.
- CM: I mean, six, seven [years old]. Third grade is what? Left Maui in the third grade so about seven, eight years old? We just had to help because no men were around. All of them had older kids and they would kind of help.
- MK: By that time were there some local families who were helpful to you folks that you folks got to know?
- CM: Well, the families that we kind of knew were all I guess reverends. Their kids were all younger. I kind of had to watch them too. During the wintertime it was so cold we didn't want to go to the mess hall, so my mother would go and get dinner for us or lunch and bring it back and we would eat in the room.
- MK: How did she manage carrying everything back?
- CM: They built a wooden [tray-like] thing. You know. I remember carrying those things.
- MK: So your mom used to bring back food to the barracks for you folks.
- CM: Yes. For us. Certain times when it was cold, or when you were sick. We didn't get sick that much but only the cold.
- MK: Most of the families that you folks knew had little kids too?
- CM: Little kids. Yes, they had little kids.
- MK: You were the . . .
- CM: In that bunch I was about the oldest so I kind of had to help them out. With the mothers, I had to go to the laundry or whatever.
- MK: How about school for you at Jerome?
- CM: Where was school? I forget where school was. I don't think they had schools in the individual camps [camp blocks]. They had it in a certain area. That's where we went to school. Going to school was fun because wintertime they had those ditches—wintertime ice, snow, we played in that before going to school.
- MK: So snow and ice were new experiences for you.
- CM: New experience. I remember the first time it snowed my mother made snowball and told us to eat that. It was ice, right? But no taste because it's no syrup. Just ice. (WN and MK laugh.) But, that was first experience with snow.
- WN: Were you mostly friends with the Hawai'i kids?

- CM: Yes. Once we started going school, yes.
- WN: Were there Mainland kids in the school?
- CM: No, mostly---oh you mean what they call them, “*kotonks*” yeah? I think Jerome was mostly Hawai‘i people I think. I think Tule Lake [Segregation Center] had more people from the Mainland.
- WN: Some of the kids you met at the immigration station became some of your friends?
- CM: I don’t know if we were—maybe we were not at the same time there.
- MK: When you look back, what do you think was the biggest adjustment your family had to make when you went to Jerome?
- CM: (Pause) Just surviving and every day we’re just waiting. . . . Just getting used to the weather and all the other. . . . Even going to school—was no big thing—but came home we’d, not chores exactly but, just had to help out. Getting enough coal in the house to heat up. We just did the regular things. Play like kids, although we didn’t have toys. Just made your own games. I guess school was important because at least [we] spent most of the day there.
- MK: How about your mom? I know that some adults worked in the mess hall or worked in different places. How about your mother?
- CM: Yes, they all worked in the mess hall as waitresses and some serving. Jerome I think there was some Mainland folks there because that’s where I met good friends there. To this day I wonder if—I’ve never seen them or heard from them. We had that reunion in Jerome, you could post a bulletin, “So-and-so, are you here? I am looking for so-and-so.” We left messages but never got anything.
- MK: So your family was with some Hawai‘i people and Mainland Japanese.
- CM: Yes.
- MK: Your mom worked mess hall.
- CM: Yes. She worked in the mess hall.
- MK: You folks had a little one in the family too yeah? A two year old or something? Younger?
- CM: Yes.
- MK: How did your mom manage with the really young one and also working at the mess hall? You? (MK and CM laugh.) You took care of your little sibling.
- CM: I guess at that time when I was in there I guess she had to stay and watch until I got home from school. Usually mess hall was usually dinnertime mostly I think.
- MK: When you folks were at Jerome you mentioned that your mother was able to visit your father, because your father was not at Jerome yeah?
- CM: No, no. He wasn’t in Jerome. I think from Sand Island he got transferred to Santa Fe [Department of Justice Camp]. We were in Jerome about a year-and-a-half, so during the later part of—about a year later, she got word she could go visit him in Louisiana. Baton Rouge. [Camp Livingston, a U.S. Army Internment Camp, north of Baton Rouge.] So, she and a couple of other mothers went. I was left in charge. I remember ironing one day and kind of burnt the ironing board. (Chuckles) Those kind of things that stick with you.

- MK: You were saying that you were left in charge? Just of your brothers and sisters or all the other little ones too?
- CM: I think there was another---I think was it Matsubayashi? Some other mothers went too, so I watched their little ones too. We were mostly the same barracks, so it's not like they had to come to your room. It was crowded enough with the four of us right? I remember Matsubayashi used to live--- I think Reverend Tanaka and Reverend [Shoten] Matsubayashi kind of lived in the same barracks. But, she got to visit him in [Camp Livingston, north of] Baton Rouge.
- MK: When she went to visit your father, did you folks get any word from your dad to you folks?
- CM: Not that I recall. Maybe she had said something but then didn't stick with it. It's not like she's going on a visit, coming back, and bringing us things.
- MK: You folks moved to Tule Lake later yeah? How come?
- CM: Because he [CM's father, Rev. Ryudo Kubota] wanted to go back to Japan. I found later that if you went to Tule Lake [in California] at that time, you're one of the undesirables. That's what one of the people at the reunion say, "Oh yeah, you were one of the undesirables that went to Tule Lake." They [some internees] were way older, like the Nakanos or something. They were all older [than CM and siblings] so I think they could leave because they were citizens. They could leave camp and then go to Chicago to work or whatever. Go to school or whatever. We were young so we had no choice, so that's why we were sent to Tule Lake.
- MK: How did you feel? By that time you kind of got used to school, you had some friends. How did you feel about. . . .
- CM: Oh, if we go to Japan, what are we going to do? Are we going to have a place to stay? Going to have food? I mean, you would hear things about the war—not too much because even after we came back going to school seventh [and] eighth grade, I would say, "Oh, Italy was fighting too." Not only Japan, Germany, all those other countries were involved too.
- Going back to Japan, what are we going to do if we go Japan. Going to starve. We have a lot of relatives there, but you don't know the condition they're in too, because everybody's suffered. My mother's hometown is Nagasaki and that's where it got bombed, but their house was okay.
- MK: So at that time when you knew that you folks are going to Tule Lake because dad wants to eventually go back to Japan. At that time, your family had worries like this?
- CM: Because we were going to Japan, we had to know some Japanese. Although we spoke Japanese, because my parents mostly Japanese, we went to English school during the day, and at night we had to go to Japanese school.
- MK: At Tule Lake?
- CM: Yes. Yes.
- MK: Who were teaching you?
- CM: The ministers that were there. My father, he taught school in another [part of] camp where there were mostly Mainland people.
- MK: You folks were at Tule Lake. Your father was at Tule Lake too. You folks would go Japanese classes in the evenings and your father would teach Japanese?
- CM: Yes.

WN: But Jerome didn't have Japanese language classes.

CM: I don't think so.

WN: So Tule Lake is when you remember Japanese language [classes].

CM: Yes. Well, mostly because we were going back to Japan and we had to.

WN: Oh, I see.

CM: So that's why they say, "Oh you're going back to Japan you have to know enough Japanese." We knew but still then only to get by with our parents, but mostly it was English. Except with my parents. My mother was mostly Japanese because she didn't know any English. They told us we had to go to Japanese school. So that's how come. They had night classes because during the daytime we were going to English school.

WN: So not all of you from Jerome went to Tule Lake?

CM: No, not all.

WN: I see. So you were separated again from some people that you knew.

CM: Yes.

MK: So what was it like for you? Daytime you go to regular English school, then you got to study at night too. How did you manage?

CM: It's not like---even English school was very lenient and it wasn't like "you have to study to pass" kind of thing, because you don't know how long you were going to be there, right? So we just went to school because we had to. Then, you went Japanese school. It wasn't forced on you. I don't think the younger ones went.

I went to Japanese school but it was rough because you had other things to do besides. . . . Getting older. Although, I think some of them got to go out of camp. I know they let my mother out to go to Klamath Falls, Oregon on a shopping [trip]. I don't know why they let her.

MK: I think I read somewhere that one time a teacher took you folks on a field trip. Tell us about that little excursion—a field trip.

CM: Oh, that was---in Tule Lake there was a Castle Rock—mountain—in the back of the camp. There was another one. What do they call that, round rock? But she would take us out and climb the mountain to go to the top.

After we came back—after the war—I found out where she was living so I used to write to her. She was one of the teachers. But, English school was hard because she had all the subjects and you had to carry those books and you had to walk. No such thing as car or bus.

Those days we never had a radio so I didn't know what was going on. So, you just do your thing, go to school, listen to your elders, and that's about it. Then, my father told us that we were going back to Japan, so it kind of hit, "Why do we have to go back? There's nothing there. Got to start all over again." Although I was born in Japan, that was about the only thing. It's not like: I was born and lived there a couple of years; I need my things I left, I kind of remember. But I don't remember anything.

In the meantime, I guess mostly towards the end of the war I guess he [CM's father] started to write to people on Maui. They told him to come back to Maui, because the church was still there. I guess it was empty all the time. They had nobody to service the church because all the ministers were gone. I don't know what made him change his

- mind. They told him, “You go back and the kids are going to starve,” and what is he going to do. I guess he thought Maui was better so we went back to Maui.
- MK: Before we get you back to Maui, I was wondering, as a minister would you recall him doing any services at Tule Lake?
- CM: Oh yes, yes. One of our good friends had a little boy. I think the boy passed away so they had funeral services. Life was on just like you were at home.
- MK: So same kind of religious services that your father did on Maui.
- CM: Yes. So they were all mix of Hongwanji, Shingon *shū*, and Jōdo Mission, and all the ministers.
- MK: Like your family, they changed their minds and they came back to Maui. Would you know of some families that you were close to that went to Japan?
- CM: I think most of the ministers like, [word unclear] Stanley Kitajima, the father, went back to the Big Island. He has another brother—Kaua‘i. So, these are mostly ministers’ families that I kind of grew up with. They all came back. I don’t know if their intentions were to go to Japan too, but I guess if you were sent to Tule Lake you were, you know. . . . But some of them did go back to Japan. I think one or two from the reunion I think.
- MK: Went back. And what was it like for you folks when you came back to Maui?
- CM: I don’t know, I guess scared. Got to go back to school and you’re older. How are you going to mingle among classmates? Actually, not friends because you weren’t really friends with them when you were young. Not like good friends when you were growing up together kind of thing. When I went back to seventh—I started seventh grade—they would ask you all kind of questions. I’d get just a “Glad you are back.” I was there but like I said, I never really was good friends with them or I didn’t really know them that well.
- MK: How did you feel when people would ask you all kinds of questions?
- CM: Well, I remember coming back and then—I used to stutter a lot because I talked too fast. It was just, “slow down.” I guess the excitement. They always would tell me. I mean, they made me go in front of the class and tell them about the experience. Stuttering and talking too fast and teacher would say, “Slow down,” but I just rattle on and on and on. Maybe half the time I didn’t know what I was saying, but that kind of died down as time went by.
- MK: When you came back, what was the condition of your old home and the temple?
- CM: It was still the same. The house was the same. The church was the same.
- MK: All that time, the house was not occupied?
- CM: I don’t think so. I don’t think so. Basically, everything was as is I guess. Maybe somebody stayed at the house, I don’t know. Maybe to just take care of the church. Maybe one of the members or some of the members stayed there and took care of the church.
- MK: And the church members, any change in the church membership?
- CM: Yes, well, I guess. There were some younger ones I guess because the older ones kind of grew older and left. They remembered us when we were little, but we all age as time. . . . They were real good to us.
- MK: The church members kind of helped you folks get settled back in?

CM: (Pause) I guess. I guess I used to see them more often, because we didn't have any grandparents like this one family. That's the man that came to sell vegetables. His mother was like a *obāchan*, and took care of us. Later on my mother had a baby. She would come to the house and help because I didn't know too much about anything. So she would come and bathe and kind of [word inaudible]. That was like our auntie, uncle—they had a lot of older kids. I used to be a pest to one of the older daughters.

At that time we came back from the war and it was hard to make friends because they don't want to come down to the church. At the beginning it was really hard. Just among my brothers and sisters. Eventually as the years went on, going to school, and making their own friends kind of thing, they would come. At the time my two sisters were real young so they didn't have any good friends.

I remember my kid sister Michiko, she ran out of school one day—kindergarten—started to go home. But instead of going home she went to this family. A fish market, I mean she went to the store, stayed there. They had to call my father to say she ran away from school. They had to go look for her but it was easy to find her. You know where she was—at the family store—because that's where they would give you small goodies. We didn't have—kids nowadays get allowance but we never had. We didn't have much because knowing that my father didn't have much. Eventually as the kids—sisters and brothers—made friends, more kids came down.

MK: From the time you folks came back, your father continued as a minister of the temple.

CM: Yes.

MK: How long did he continue that?

CM: He did until 1955 when he passed away.

MK: Then, yourself, you graduated from Lahainaluna [High School] in 1951. What did you do?

CM: I left and I came out---I wanted to go to vocational school but my father said, "Can you wait?" because he couldn't afford it. So he said, "Maybe you go work first and then go to vocational school."

So, I said, "Okay." It made me come out to Honolulu and stay with his good family friend—church members. I stayed with them and looked for a job. My first job was with Lewers & Cooke Ltd. That was rough because I had to get up early in the morning, catch the bus, and being from Maui don't know any better. (WN and CM laugh.) Living in Honolulu, fast those days too right? I guess I managed.

MK: What kind of work did you do at Lewers & Cooke?

CM: I was a clerk—stock clerk. Do all kinds of things with—office work mostly. You first start as a messenger and then you go to the post office. Then you go up and office work.

MK: I know that somewhere along the line you became a naturalized citizen yeah?

CM: Oh yes. That was right after high school. Oh, I was working at Lewers & Cooke and we had to think about getting citizenship. So you have to go to class. I say, "Why do we have to go to school? I just graduated." [Sentence unclear.] I didn't take any classes and took my test and passed. Before that—because I was only going by my Japanese name—the people in the office says, "Get an English name."

I said, "What for?"

They say, "It's free. Otherwise you got to pay [for a legal name change] if you want to get it later." (WN and MK chuckle.)

- I said, "Oh well."
- MK: They help you decide?
- CM: Yes. I think they had more fun than me I think.
- MK: Choosing your name? (Laughs)
- WN: Carol with—is there an 'e' at the end?
- CM: No.
- WN: So you went from Tatsuko to Carol.
- CM: Yes. But my classmates still call me by my Japanese name. They don't know my English name because I never went to school with English name.
- MK: What made you decide to go for your citizenship though?
- CM: (Pause) This was. . . . (Pause) I guess being an alien, I guess I didn't want to be living as an alien. I guess you used to call it "alien". I thought if I can get my citizenship and then since I'm in America. . . .
- WN: You can vote?
- CM: Yes. That's why I had in my thing [an earlier interview] that I don't understand some of the people who don't vote. They have the right as an American citizen. So my granddaughter saw that, and she say, "I'm gonna go vote." (Chuckles) So she came back and the other day she told me, "Grandma, I signed it. I'm gonna legally vote."
- I said, "Good for you."
- WN: Good for her. Good for you.
- CM: Yes. I mean, people complain about this and that. I said, "You live in America, you have that right."
- MK: You mentioned you have a granddaughter.
- CM: Yes.
- MK: How many grandchildren do you have?
- CM: Four.
- MK: Four. And how many children?
- CM: I had five, but my older one passed away when she was ten. She was born with brain damage. So she passed away in Waimano Home because I couldn't—I cared for her all that time—but because she was getting so tall and at that time I got pregnant with my fourth one. I couldn't lift—she wasn't able to walk or sit or anything. She would sit in a wheelchair. They said put her in a home but I decided not to, because once you put them in a home, not going to get the care. But, eventually I had no choice. The doctor said you have to put her in. So I put her in Waimano. She lived until she was ten years old.
- MK: You raised four other children then. You had married Wayne Murakawa. How did you folks meet?
- CM: At church. I mean, he wasn't church-going type. Someone just came and said. . . .

MK: Mr. Murakawa worked as a . . .

CM: Carpenter.

MK: . . . carpenter all those years. Now when you look back on internment, what are your thoughts?

CM: It was an experience in itself. Got to see, and then no more. Like, in the train when we crossed the Mississippi River, we saw a lot of colored people, because when growing up in Maui we never see any colored people. On the train as we passed Mississippi River, I said, "How come they're all black?" Who are those black people? Nobody knew the answers at that time, all the kids coming from the island. Going to school you learn all the history. Those things—certain things that amazed me. Having different experiences and meeting a lot of other people, especially Mainland people too.

My father became friends with this good family from Sacramento. Father had a furniture store. He even ordered his Maytag washer from them. That, I don't understand. They had a daughter. She was very good in Japanese *jude* and things that he taught. He said she was a really good pupil and she also became an ordained minister now. We named my younger sister after her.

Growing up those days we never thought giving my sisters English name. This was after the war. One was born in Tule Lake. At that time we never knew to give her an English name. My youngest one [sister] was born Maui. I said, "Let's give her an English name." She's going to be the only one with an English name.

WN: This is Molly.

CM: Yes, so we named her Molly after the good friend. To this day we still correspond and when she comes to Honolulu we see her, although her father passed away. We still talk about those—so when we had a reunion for Tule Lake one year, she called me and said, "They're going to have a trip to Tule Lake. You want to come?"

I said, "Good chance to go see what that place was like."

Even [visiting] Jerome, the first time I didn't go, but Pat [Nomura] had called me because she went. She was the instigator that did this trip to Jerome, but she went. So, the second time I decided to go with my sister. My sister wanted to go see that place, so two sisters and I went.

MK: What draws you folks back? Why do you folks want to go see the place?

CM: I guess when we were there we didn't know too much about that area. Although they say it was just a barren, snake-infested swamp. But, just to see where we spent a year-and-a-half of our lives there. I guess you get curious to see where they put you. Although, the buildings and everything were gone. Just was a vast open space. When we went they already had a memorial erected. So, that's how come. Even Tule Lake too was just—knowing that you're there and say, "How do you survive the winters?" Just kind of curious.

MK: What are your thoughts on your father kind of being taken out of your house and being incarcerated and separated from the family? Then the whole family being in camps. What are your thoughts on that?

CM: I don't know, just [thinking] why did it happen. At that time what was the reason to take him? After the war you go to school they say because of security. I said, "What are they going to do?" I had heard, I think from my father, while they were in Santa Fe that somebody got hold of a radio and tried to get to listen to news about the war. I don't know what happened to that man, but I guess those things were prohibited. Nobody had radio or cameras or anything. Now I wish we had a camera then to take down all these things that happened. But, because I was too young and not knowing what was going to

be expected of us. If I had a camera I would have taken memories of growing up. So somebody had even said, “Why don’t you write?”

I said, “I forget already.” (Chuckles) Had I known—what do you call that. . . ? This was after I was married. We’re in this Labo organization and we went to this class where this lady taught us how to write a journal. I wrote a journal when I was in Japan for a month. That’s good because once in a while I’ll get the book out and read what I did.

MK: And it helps.

CM: Yes, and bring back memories of what I did in Japan. Had I older sisters or brothers to tell me those things, maybe you could have written down what you did and how you spent your days. That’s the kind of thing I regret the most. But, hard to recall things that happened. I can remember the bad things that happened (chuckles)—the funny things.

WN: Do you feel it’s important for your children and grandchildren to know what you went through?

CM: Yes. That’s why at first they never talked about it—a lot of people. That’s why my parents I guess never told me too much. But then I made it a point to tell my kids. So then I told my granddaughter that I’m going to entrust her with all this information and everything so you can tell your kids and your grandchildren what I went through. History. But then you think about. . . . I think during school we never talked about the Holocaust and whatever, I think this was after I got out of school, you hear all those horrible things. I said, “Oh, good thing it didn’t happen to us.” If it did, that was the end. Especially not knowing what’s going to happen the next day and the next day so you just live day to day.

WN: Okay.

MK: We’ll end the interview here. Thank you.

WN: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

Unspoken Memories:

Oral Histories of Hawai‘i Internees at Jerome, Arkansas

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa**

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