

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Jane Sakamura Nakamura**

Jane Toshie Sakamura Nakamura was born in 1933 in Honoka‘a, Hawai‘i Island. Her father was Masaru Sakamura, a carpenter for Honoka‘a Sugar Company; her mother was Hatsuko Matsuura Sakamura, originally from Pa‘auilo.

In 1937, before Jane Nakamura’s fourth birthday, the family moved to Lāna‘i City, where Masaru and other Big Island carpenters began working for the Hawaiian Pineapple Company, building homes and other structures. Hatsuko found employment as a clerk at Yet Lung Store, and later at Mermart Store, Okamoto Store, and finally, Richard’s Shopping Center.

As the eldest of six children, Jane Nakamura had many childcare responsibilities as both her parents held fulltime jobs.

She attended Lāna‘i High and Elementary School, graduating in 1951. An excellent student, she was the first recipient the company’s Dole Scholarship. She used it to pursue a degree in teaching from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. She spent a year attending Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where she also practice-taught. At Bucknell, she was exposed to the larger world and was asked to give talks about Hawai‘i to various groups in Pennsylvania. She returned to UH-Mānoa and earned her fifth-year teaching certificate in 1956.

After practice-teaching at University Laboratory School, she briefly returned home and taught kindergarten for one semester at Lāna‘i High and Elementary School. Dissatisfied with kindergarten teaching, she returned to O‘ahu and taught at the following elementary schools: Helemano, Nimitz, Lanakila, Pearl City Highlands, and Waimalu. She retired in 1990.

She married Takeshi Nakamura in 1957. A longtime airline industry employee, Takeshi died in 2000. A devout Christian who teaches Bible classes, Jane Nakamura lives in ‘Aiea, O‘ahu.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Jane Nakamura (JN)

‘Aiea, O‘ahu

July 31, 2014

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

WN: This is an interview with Jane Toshie Sakamura Nakamura on July 31, 2014. And we're at Newtown Recreation Center in Waimalu, O‘ahu.

JN: ‘Aiea.

WN: And interviewers are Warren Nishimoto and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto. Jane, good morning.

JN: Good morning.

WN: The first question that we have for you is, can you tell us when you were born?

JN: I was born on November 8, 1933 in Honoka‘a, Hawai‘i. I was brought into this world by a midwife, so it wasn't in a hospital, but probably in my parents' home.

WN: And can you tell us what your parents were doing, or tell us a little bit about the history of your family?

JN: My father [Masaru Sakamura] was a carpenter. He was born on May 5, 1907 in the town of Honoka‘a, Hawai‘i. My mother [Hatsuko Matsuura Sakamura] was also born on the Big Island in Pa‘auilo, Hawai‘i on October 31, 1914. And I'm the eldest, the firstborn child.

MK: And how many were there in your family?

JN: Eight in all. My mother had six children, but three of us were born on the Big Island. My brother, Ray, who is two years younger than I am, is a retired carpenter foreman who lives on Maui. My sister, Dora, was two years younger than Ray. Tragically, Dora passed away at age fifty-nine of pancreatic cancer. She died only three months after being diagnosed, so it was very, very sad. Dora was an excellent cook and baker who baked thousands of delicious cookies, which she gave away to family, relatives, and friends for Christmas. All recipients expressed their sincere appreciation for "Aunty Dora" and her famous cookies.

The younger three children were born on Lāna‘i. The fourth child, Ralph, was born on October 12, 1941 before World War II started. Two years later, my brother Gerald was born in September 1943, during the war.

WN: And he was the youngest?

JN: No. My mother had a sixth child, my youngest sister Phyllis, who was born in June, 1949, sixteen years younger than me. Three of them were born in Lānaʻi Hospital.

WN: So, your father and mother were both nisei?

JN: Yes, they're nisei.

WN: What can you tell us about your father's parents, first of all?

JN: My father's parents were Torakichi Sakamura and Toku Kamo Sakamura. Both were born in Hiroshima, Japan. My mother's parents [Genpachi Matsuura and Tatsu Iida Matsuura] came from Kumamoto, Japan, in Kyushu island. They came as immigrants on the ships from Japan, because laborers were needed for the sugar plantations and pineapple plantations that were being planned for Hawai'i.

On the Big Island, both grandfathers worked on the sugarcane plantation. Later, when they moved to Lānaʻi, they worked for a pineapple plantation under the Hawaiian Pineapple Company, which later became the Dole Pineapple Company [i.e., Dole Corporation].

MK: And your father was a carpenter?

JN: Yes. In the summer of 1937, my father, along with several other carpenters from the Big Island, moved their entire families over to Lānaʻi, because they were needed to build the homes for the plantation workers who were anticipated for the Hawaiian Pineapple Company.

WN: So, when you were four years old?

JN: Not quite. I became four years old in November of 1937.

WN: So, your father was a carpenter for the plantation [Honokaʻa Sugar Company]?

JN: Yes, except for it being a sugarcane plantation.

WN: And then in 1937, they ...

JN: Moved.

WN: Moved to Lānaʻi.

JN: And then, he was a carpenter for the Hawaiian Pineapple Company. He was really an avid fisherman, and hunter too, once he got to Lānaʻi. He went fishing every weekend. The waters around Lānaʻi were very good fishing grounds.

WN: Did you ever go with him?

JN: No. I, being the eldest, I had to do a lot of babysitting. I had to take care of the younger ones. My mother worked as a store clerk early on. When we first went to Lānaʻi, there were only three of us children, but later on our family grew to a family of eight people, six children and two adults. My mother was always working. So, early on, she taught me how to baby-sit, cook, clean the house, do the laundry, and take care of my siblings. I had to learn everything, including cleaning the fish Daddy caught. That has really come in handy as an adult. Sometimes I resented it, because I felt, oh, why can't I go with my friends here or there? I couldn't because I had to care for my younger

siblings. My sister Dora helped me a lot as she got older. Yes, all the work was necessary, because my mother would be working all day.

MK: And where did your mother work?

JN: Well, she worked as a clerk in a store. The first was Yet Lung Store, a Chinese mom-and-pop store. After several years, the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Young, closed the store and moved to Honolulu with their family. Then, I believe Mermart Store on the opposite side of city rectangle opened up, and my mother was able to get a job there. And the Mermart Store, and this is what I can't remember, whether it was Mermart Store that became the Okamoto Store, and then finally, the Richard's Shopping Center. Which is now—today, it's just Richard's Market, I believe. Richard's Market, because it has a newer owner.

WN: So, Yet Lung Store was, you said, on the opposite side?

JN: On the opposite side, yes.

WN: Opposite, meaning ...

JN: Well, if you think of a rectangle—well, they call it, like, the City Square [i.e., Dole Park]. But it really is more a rectangle. If you stand facing the former site of the post office with the business offices behind you, Yet Lung Store would be near the end of the right side.

WN: So, Yet Lung was down near there?

JN: Yet Lung was—right. And Mermart or Okamoto; I don't know which came first, one or the other. They were on the opposite side. So, those two stores, I'm pretty sure, did exist simultaneously.

MK: And what was your mother's job at these stores?

JN: My mother was a sales clerk. She worked as a sales clerk at the store. So, it seemed to me like she was always working. (Chuckles) I thought nothing of the fact that I had to be at home after school. As I'm the eldest, so much was expected of me, and I felt, well, I had to do all of those things. But then, when I went to school, I found out my other friends were the youngest in the family or they had older siblings, so they didn't have to do all the things expected of me, and their time was freer than my time. They had a lot of time, whereas I did not.

MK: Compared to other families, did other families have mothers who were also working outside of the family home like yours?

JN: Yes, quite a number. There were many who worked as laborers in the pineapple fields. Richard Tamashiro was the owner of Richard's Shopping Center and his wife also worked in the store; she helped in the butcher section and wherever she was needed. There were, I think, two or three other women that I recall who worked alongside my mother as salesclerks. They had families but their children were all older, as I recall.

MK: And you know, we notice that your parents were nisei.

JN: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: So, your mother was conversant in English?

JN: Yes. My mother—oh, it’s amazing. I wish I could do what she did. She had gone to English school on the Big Island up to the sixth grade. For somebody who had just gone up to the sixth grade, and to advance in the store to finally become a bookkeeper of the store was amazing to me. I mean, I couldn’t believe it, because people have to go to business school to become an accountant or bookkeeper. But the former bookkeepers taught her how to use the adding machine and keep records of all transactions, etc. She was very capable, and worked on all the accounting matters, including purchasing. So I thought, oh, had she gone to school, how much farther she could have gone. But so often as a child, you take things for granted. It seemed that Mom always worked at a store.

The really odd thing about our parents was that we used to call my mother “*Okā-san*” and we used to call my father “Daddy.” I was in high school before we called my mother “Mom.” So you would think that we were the nisei. But, no. I don’t know how it started and how it changed. So, Daddy was always Daddy. From the time we were young until we were older, it was Daddy, not *Otō-san*. It’s really strange. And we don’t know how that happened. (Chuckles) Mom was bilingual. She could speak fluent Japanese, plus read and write Japanese and English. She wrote letters to her brother on the Big Island in English and she regularly wrote to her sister, Momoe Nakagawa, in Kumamoto, Japan. Daddy knew some Japanese but he usually spoke pidgin English.

My father didn’t seem interested in education for himself, but he patiently helped me with some of my lessons in elementary school. Daddy’s mother died of tuberculosis when he was ten years old and his eldest sister, Sumi, was fourteen. My Aunt Sumi had to care for him and the other siblings. So, there was a lot of pidgin English spoken so that they could relate to the different mixed nationalities on the Big Island and Lāna‘i.

But the interesting thing about Lāna‘i, too—I didn’t think about it until I was older—was how our homes were separated by ethnic groups. Because my parents were Japanese, we were living in a Japanese camp. Instead of really calling it different kinds of camps, it was called a block. So originally, the first house we lived in was just a small four-room house in Block 17. There were a few Filipinos living in Block 17. Our house had two bedrooms, no hallway or bathroom; it was very small. Instead of a living room, we had a parlor, and the kitchen. That’s it! That’s the type of homes my father helped to build along with the other carpenters. That was our plantation home. We used to call it a cracker box. It’s like we were living in a cracker box. We had a public bathhouse and a public toilet. But that was how we lived, so we thought nothing about it because everybody else lived like that, except for the wealthier ones.

Of course, the Caucasians were the managers, the supervisors, and the superintendents. They lived up on a hill in back of the hospital. We called it “Snob Hill,” and we realized that it had several connotations (chuckles). But we always thought, oh, they live up on the hill, and the rest of us peons lived down in the city plantation houses. But there were some people, like a Japanese dentist, Dr. Fred Tamanaka, who lived in a bigger house. A few other non-Caucasian people, depending on their occupation, lived in larger houses.

MK: You mentioned that your father was a carpenter. As the years went on, did he stay at a certain rank, or did he go up to something like *luna* or foreman?

JN: No, but he would mention Mr. Miyazaki, who must have been the boss. It seemed Mr. Miyazaki made the decisions. Mr. Saito was also a carpenter. Mr. Hirayama was another carpenter who came from the Big Island.

Daddy also built some wooden furniture for our family, such as an end table with a drawer for paper supplies. He was a very friendly and sociable person who enjoyed his drinking buddies. He seemed to be well liked. They used to call him “Shorty.” He had a lot of friends, and he would invite them over to our house after they were through with work, while my mother was still working until the store closed. He went fishing and hunting every weekend. He made his own fishing nets: “throw net” and “surround net.” He also made the lead weights for the throw net and carved wooden floaters for the surround net. He made beautiful nets.

WN: And personality-wise, how did your mother and father differ?

JN: Well, I think my father was more outgoing, more sociable, and liked to mingle. So, he had friends of all different races. He had no prejudices and treated others fairly. I also admired my mother for being kind, helpful, and non-prejudicial. She was a diligent, generous, trustworthy, and reserved woman who was well respected. She did not gossip about other people and avoided people who were gossipers. Mom was nine years old when her father passed away. She had to quit school, and she was sent to work at a store in Honoka‘a. She was a live-in worker. She seems to have done the household chores upstairs, where the family lived. I don’t know whether upstairs or in the back of the store, but their living quarters adjoined the store. Eventually, while she was still young, maybe as a teenager, she was still working there doing all kinds of jobs, because she was capable. She also did the cleaning, washing, ironing, and helped to work in the store as well. She gave all her earnings to her mother to help support their family of four younger siblings, three brothers and one sister.

Because Mom’s father was better educated, although he had come to Hawai‘i as a laborer, he soon became the *luna*, or supervisor of a work gang, in the sugar plantation. Consequently, he had to work on the payroll for the working men under him. That’s when my mother told me that she would help her father count the money and put it into envelopes for the different men working under him. So, I thought about Mom and realized that she had experience with money, and the early training to work in a store. It seemed that she was very well qualified and dependable in whatever she did. If she didn’t have six of us children, she probably could have furthered her education.

She felt education was important, but because she was working, I would come home from school and if I needed any help, she said, “Oh, ask Daddy.” So Daddy would be the one who would help me when I was in elementary school.

WN: Who disciplined you folks?

JN: Mainly, my father. My mother did too, and she could be very strict. But oftentimes, I guess she must have been tired, and she would say, “Wait till Daddy comes home.” (Chuckles) So, wait till Daddy comes home, and then Daddy could use the strap or whatever, you know. And it was Roy and me. My sister was the third child, and she was more obedient. (Chuckles) But my brother and I, we would be the ones who could get into trouble. We would be pinched, or we’d be hit. My father would use a strap on my brother, and I would be spanked. (Chuckles) He had to be the disciplinarian, because Mom always said, “Wait until Daddy comes home.” That would strike fear in us, because Daddy would be stricter than *Okā-san*.

My brother and I, many times, we would go off and we would be crying, maybe at first, then we’d end up giggling and laughing about the situation, hoping our parents couldn’t hear us (chuckles).

WN: So, what kinds of things did you do to get your father angry with you?

JN: I can't remember exactly what we did. I can't even say that the punishment fit the crime. I may have answered back when given instructions or advice. Ray didn't always cooperate but when he got into fist fights, he fought his own battles and did not divulge names of those involved. He was punished for getting into fights. I did ask my mother once, in my adulthood, you know, what I had done.

But she knew how to draft clothing; she had learned that Kimata style of drafting and sewing. Mom had learned the Kimata style, which was the style of drafting trousers with the pockets inside. She could do all of that. She was an excellent seamstress, and she did take in sewing orders. She had a lot of orders for making men's khaki or denim trousers that fit them perfectly with pockets inside the trousers. They were happy and satisfied. She said that's what a lot of the women didn't know how to do, but she had learned to sew pants that exactly fit the person. The men wore khaki pants and the canvas pants also. So, she had a drafting stick, the L-shaped measuring stick to do her drafting. In regards to her first measuring stick, I told her, "Mom, I remember when you hit me so hard with that curved measuring stick, it broke in half. You were so angry with me." I said, "What did I do to deserve that?"

She said, "I don't remember."

(Laughter)

Daddy glued it, so it was functional for her drafting.

The sewing machine was old but worked perfectly. So, she taught me how to use the machine and sew. But I regret never learning how to draft. Some of my girlfriends were learning how to sew from someone who had gone to sewing school. My mother taught me to sew and embroider--- machine and hand sewing. Mom didn't have to get a McCall's or Simplicity pattern, which is what I've learned to use and I enjoyed sewing clothing for my four children.

WN: Who did your mom sew for?

JN: Well, she sewed for the men in the community because she made perfect fitting trousers. She also sewed for our family: dresses, *mu'umu'u*, shirts, and even organdy gowns for our proms in high school. Mrs. Tamanaka, the dentist's wife, gave me a few prom gowns that her daughter no longer wore, and they were beautiful. Mom fixed them so they fit me perfectly.

WN: Did she charge the men?

JN: Oh, yes, she charged them. I have no idea what the charge was, but compared to now, it would have been a very cheap charge because the cost of living was much lower then, in the [19]40s and [19]50s..

MK: And this was in addition to her work as a store clerk?

JN: Yes, yes. Because she needed to have extra money for the six of us children to feed and clothe. Mom's youngest bachelor brother, Clarence Matsuura—Uncle Clarence to us—lived in single men's quarters near our home. He followed Mom to Lāna'i from the Big Island when my father took all of us there. He started initially working for the pineapple plantation. He ended up—I

remember he was working in the research department, so he had an office job later. But I think initially, he must have worked as a laborer to start off.

When he got married—going back to why I believe my mother was really not prejudiced at all. I thought she was a very liberal-thinking woman. Uncle Clarence had fallen in love with Akiko Higa. Higa is an Okinawan name and a lot of the Lāna‘i Japanese were prejudiced and looked down on the Okinawans. But then, Mom told me that Uncle Clarence and Auntie Akiko loved each other and theirs was a love marriage, not an arranged one planned by a matchmaker. Mom was very happy that her brother had found a beautiful woman, who was also very smart. She’s somebody who had graduated at age sixteen. Her family was very large and intelligent. They had a Christian ceremony at the Lāna‘i Union Church. They had a very long, happy marriage with two daughters and two sons. Uncle passed away several years ago. Aunty Akiko is still living, but she’s in a care home in Kāne‘ohe.

Aunty Akiko is our favorite aunty, because she’s a wonderful, caring person. She was an excellent baker, too. She would bake cakes, and she would bring us a whole cake. I remember once, she had made a cake that was a checkerboard cake. I asked her, “How do you make that?” She said she doesn’t remember how she did it anymore. She doesn’t make what she did when she was younger. My mother prepared food and took it over for Uncle and Aunty and their family. Before he was married, Uncle Clarence came to our house for meals or we took meals over to him. He lived in single men’s quarters which was close to our home.

MK: So, you actually had family on the island of Lāna‘i. You had your uncle.

JN: Yes.

MK: Anybody else?

JN: My father had a younger sister. She had married Susumi Fuchigami who was originally from the Big Island. She was our Aunty Shigeiko, and Uncle Susumi was a mechanic working for the Hawaiian Pineapple Company.

MK: You know, when there were like, holidays or special occasions, to what extent did the family members get together?

JN: Oh, yes. I remember my parents always celebrated New Year’s Day, as they would try to observe the Japanese traditions of having the *mochi*. Although, she never did make the *mochi* but they would get *mochi*. I think the Higa family pounded *mochi*. So, we had fresh *mochi*, or she would order it from the store, because there were other people who needed to have it. But she would stay up, and course—so I would be helping her the night before, and then, people are popping firecrackers and all. But I remember, she would—I’d be cutting vegetables, and we would be getting all kinds of things ready, because she had to make *nishime*, and she was preparing to make *ozoni*, *nishime*, *namasu*, teriyaki chicken and beef, egg roll, *kanten* and *morimono*, macaroni-potato salad, baked ham, steamed fish, and *sashimi*, and the traditional kinds of things. We made teriyaki beef, and that would be cooked on the charcoal, and have a roast of some kind, it would be a roast beef or—well, my mother could do American. She learned American foods, as well as Japanese, but she made everything taste wonderful.

She was an excellent cook, having learned to cook when she was still a teenager. When she was living with this other family, she had to cook. So, she was always cooking, and people really loved her sushi. Whether it was *makizushi* or *inarizushi*, or *oshizushi*, she made all of that from



scratch. It's only as I got older, after I was married, I would ask her for her recipes. She would tell me, "There's no recipe." You combine this and that and add salt, or sugar and *shōyu*, or whatever.

I said, "Oh, but I have to write it down, because how else can I learn and make it by myself?"

She would tell me, but it was all approximate. She would say, "Oh, about one cup, about half a cup, about one tablespoon," or whatever it was (chuckles) But there were several things that she made, that I wanted to know how she made it. She just did it, and it was just her own way of doing it. She found her own shortcuts. But she shared whatever she made. She cooked a lot, and she would have us take some of it to the neighbors, the Fuchigami's house and the Matsuura's house.

My father, early on, did have some kind of jalopy, maybe a Model-T. He had to have transportation for fishing. So, he did drive a car with a crank to start it. He is the one who initially taught me how to drive. We would practice in the pineapple fields in his jeep. I was learning to drive on a jeep that had a four-wheel drive and I didn't understand about all the gears. It was in the pineapple fields, so if I go crashing into something, it didn't hurt too much, because the pineapples were planted on raised beds of soil. He would take me where—even if I did go the wrong way or whatever—I wouldn't be harming the crops.

WN: You would go on the pineapple field dirt roads?

JN: Yes, the dirt roads.

WN: In between the rows of pineapple.

JN: No, on the dirt roads between the pineapple fields (approximately ten rows of pineapples per field).

Daddy passed away on Monday, December 17, 1956. Dad and Mom were married on December 17, 1932. The assumed cause of death was atherosclerosis. The hospital personnel said that Daddy died of the clogging of his aorta, the main artery. In August 2009, two aneurisms were discovered in the left carotid artery in my brain. My interventional neurologist told me that my father probably died of a stroke from a brain aneurism. The doctor said I probably inherited my aneurisms from Dad. Not much was known about aneurisms in 1956.

On Sunday, Daddy was healthy and well, and had gone fishing with his friends. Monday morning, he got up to go to work. Mom fixed Daddy's breakfast: bacon and eggs, bread and butter, and perked coffee. A few minutes after breakfast, he fell to the floor, unconscious. My brother Ray, who had just been discharged from the army after serving in the Korean War and had returned home, heard Daddy fall. He immediately got up and ran to resuscitate him. He carried Daddy to the car and raced to the hospital with Mom beside him. Daddy was still breathing when they reached the hospital but he never regained consciousness despite all desperate efforts to revive him. So sudden and so shocking to all!

At the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, I had been trained in upper elementary teaching.

Prior to that, I had taught one semester of kindergarten at Lāna'i [High and] Elementary School. Then, I had this full-year job. In December, I remember, in the sixth-grade class, Esther Sakamoto, a kindergarten teacher, lived with me at the teachers' cottage which was directly behind the [Helemano Elementary] School over in Whitmore Village, outside of Wahiawā. So, I

thought, oh, what a perfect setup. I'll teach my students, and it would be part of math and everything, incorporate all of that. I would have them bake cookies for Christmas, which was a really ambitious undertaking, but I thought, oh, they can go to the teachers' cottage, a group at a time could go over, and I could go over with them. Because it was right in back of the school. And so, that's what we did. So, in December, we were—I don't know how I thought I could do all of that, but we were decorating coffee cans, painting coffee cans with non-toxic paint, which would become the cookie containers. They were going to bake the cookies that go into the coffee cans that the students would have made. I felt that it would be a practical, good experience for the entire class. In addition, we were going to do a play for Christmas, the *Nutcracker Suite*. We had rehearsals for that. (Chuckles) We were having groups going to the cottage to bake their cookies and so on. But it was a wonderful time.

But on Monday, December 17, 1956, the office called me from my classroom. They said that there was a long-distance phone call. So, I went to the office and answered the phone. My brother was on the phone. The first words he told me was, "He's gone."

I asked, "Who is this calling?" He identified himself. And then, I told him, "What are you talking about? What do you mean, he's gone?"

He answered, "He's gone."

I said, "What do you mean? What are you talking about?"

He said, "Daddy is gone." You know, he was telling me that Daddy had passed away.

So, I said, "How—what happened? How did it happen?"

"Well," he said, "you have to come home." It was just shocking to me.

Mr. Roy Mitsuka was the principal at that time, and he told me, "Well, Jane, we can take care of things, so you can go back to the cottage and take care of whatever you need to do." They had to make plane reservations for me. I was already engaged to my fiancé. Takeshi and I had gotten engaged in October, with plans for an April wedding. In April, I would have a week's vacation, so we could get married in April and we'd have that week to go on a honeymoon. My father had thought of arranging a *lū'au* for our wedding.

I told the principal, "No, I'll go back in the classroom, because I can't leave. There are so many projects." This was the last week of school, there were still a few more students who needed to finish cookies, and we were still doing our rehearsal for the *Nutcracker*. To this day, I don't know what happened with all of that. You know, but they had to have—I mean, the teachers were really helpful. We got to be very close. In a small school, you do get very close together, so everybody was helpful. I called my fiancé, who was working as an apprentice at Pearl Harbor [Naval Shipyard]. He was a shipwright's apprentice at that particular time. I called him, and then he said he will come over, but he'll see if he can take off and come over. So, after he was able to take off and come over, then he had to come and pick me up, and the office had made reservations for me to fly out that afternoon. So Takeshi took me to the airport. Then, of course, he arranged so that he could come later.

My sister Dora, the one who passed away of pancreatic cancer, was living with me in an apartment in Honolulu on the weekends when I wasn't at the teachers' cottage. She was supposed to leave with me to go to Lāna'i on the Friday when school was out. But do you know, the week

before on Saturday, she insisted that she wanted to go home. She said she wanted to change her reservation. I said, “Why? Why don’t you just wait until I’m done, and we can go together.” She said, no, she wants to. Somehow she sensed the need to be on Lāna‘i earlier. She was very close to my father. So, everybody in the family was home, except me, when Daddy took his last breath.

When I think about it, I mean, it’s very sad. But anyway, they were—when I went home, of course, you know, it’s a plantation style, where everybody comes and helps. So, there were so many ladies helping in the kitchen. My father’s body was already there in a wooden casket. But anyway, there were all these people, you know, women who had come to help. My mother, I could see that she was in a state of shock. She usually was a very quiet, cool woman. She wasn’t very excitable and all, a very reserved person. But she was there, sitting beside where my father was. I went to look, and. . . . Of course, it was shocking. I guess I got very emotional and everything, too. But there were all these people helping, and. . . . I think that was really wonderful that they would all come together like that. I mean, that’s what friends are for, and the neighborhood was like that.

I think they did that for several days, and then I remember we had to go to Maui, because there’s no mortuary, no crematorium on Lāna‘i. We had to fly, so we had to charter a plane, the entire plane, because now he’s in the casket or whatever he was in, maybe gurney; I don’t remember. But you know, he had to go with us, and we had to fly, the entire family, all of us, an entourage had to fly to Maui. We had to stay at a hotel there, and have the services—well, the cremation there, and then the service there after the cremation. Then, we had to bring him back to Lāna‘i so that we could have the service at the Lāna‘i Hongwanji Mission, the Buddhist church, because my parents were Buddhist. I never went to the Buddhist church but they were Buddhist. We had all of that there. But he was cremated, so the service on Lāna‘i was over his ashes, and his picture.

MK: I notice that when your father passed away, that was 1956?

JN: Yes.

MK: And your youngest sibling was born in 1949.

JN: Yes, so she was just—how old would she be?

MK: Seven years old.

JN: Yes, seven, that’s right. So, she was the only one of the children who was cheerful and laughing, and running around, so happy to see so many people over. To her, it seemed like it was a party, because she’s only seven. The others already were old enough, and we knew that, okay, Daddy is gone. My brother Ray, the one who had called me, had just been discharged from the army. After high school, he joined the army and had gone to the Mainland for training, and even served in Korea. He had been discharged, and he had just come back. That’s the reason why he was home; everybody was home. But I couldn’t, because I would have been home a few days later. I remember asking my mother, I said, “Should we postpone our wedding? Will our wedding be too soon after Daddy’s death?”

She said, “No, just go ahead with your plans,” because he already knew about it, and he knew we had selected the date. So she said, “No, just go ahead with your plans because he would want that.”

MK: So, in your family, you have yourself and your sister Dora living in Honolulu at that time?

JN: Yes, Dora was in Honolulu.

MK: Out of the house.

JN: Yes, yes.

MK: And your oldest brother also had been in the service, and had come back.

JN: Yes, and he had been honorably discharged after serving in Korea.

MK: So, there were still three children that were at home.

JN: That were still at home, yes.

MK: How did your mom manage?

JN: I don't know. I don't know how she managed. Well, Dora was out already with me, so actually, it would be the two boys, Ralph and Gerald, and Phyllis was the youngest. But somehow or other, they were able to manage. I don't know how. I think people—the neighbors, I think, at that time, everybody pitched in and helped. Then, Phyllis being the youngest, I remember she was the one that went to *odori*; she went to dance class, she learned Japanese dance. So she went to the Buddhist church. Whereas Dora and I went to the Christian church, Lānaʻi Union Church which is a Congregational church. So, we were Christians. I don't know why I was drawn to the Christian church rather than the Buddhist church. A lot of the Japanese on the island went to the Buddhist church, but the Okinawans attended the Lānaʻi Union Church. Because of the large Japanese population, the Buddhist church was very active and very large. The Filipino group went to the Catholic church [Lānaʻi Catholic Church of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary]. The Okinawan people and the *haole* people went to the Christian church, the Union church. There was a Hawaiian church [Ka Lōkahi O Ka Mālamalama Hoʻomana Naʻauao O Hawaiʻi Church]. The Koreans went to the Christian church.

WN: So, there was a Union church, and a Catholic church?

JN: Yes, and they were kind of across each other. Further down that street, as you're coming into the city, at the end of the city, is the Buddhist church, the Hongwanji. It's still the same—well, I think they've renovated and fixed it, and tried to make it usable.

WN: Something about during the war, the Buddhist church had to close down.

JN: Yes, yes.

WN: And then, they moved somewhere else after the war ended?

JN: I don't know where they started off, because I wasn't involved with them. But my mother was with the *fujinkai*, and then there would be all the ladies there that would help with the cleaning. When they would have a bazaar or any kind of activity, church activity, my mother, again, would be making sushi and *nishime*, and then they would all have whatever event they had for the church.

MK: With the passing of your father, who was the employee of the pineapple company, your family was still allowed to stay in a company house?

JN: Yes.

MK: And your mom still continued working at the store?

JN: Yes. Right. Of course, at least my father was still an active employee at the time that I got the [Dole] Scholarship. I graduated in 1951, so I was eligible, because it had to be children of employees of the Dole Pineapple Company at that time. They had already changed the name to Dole Pineapple Company. So employees—or children of the employees of the Dole Pineapple Company were eligible for this scholarship that they had just created. So, in that sense, sometimes I think of myself as a guinea pig because I was the first. So, I to go before the Dole committee. There were all these executives and all, you know, who were part of the scholarship committee, and there was a representative from Wahiawā, one from the Honolulu cannery, and then somebody from Lāna‘i, one man from Lāna‘i. The others were from the—well, here, because the headquarters, the main office would be here at the Honolulu cannery. That was the main pineapple company. So, then we had to all be interviewed. Of course, they had the same kinds of requirements that academically you have to be all right. You had to be involved in different activities, and they wanted to be sure that you showed leadership qualities. And of course, financial need. Oh very much, there was a financial need. My parents could not have afforded to send me to college, because there were five siblings below me.

WN: Before we get into that, I wanted to ask you more about your chores. You know, you being the oldest of six, and your mother working, father working. What kinds of work did you do?

JN: What kind of chores? (Chuckles)

WN: Yeah.

JN: Well, we used to sweep and mop. We didn't have carpeting. We had wooden floors, and steps that led down out of the house. There would be a little porch, which we referred to as a veranda. Later on, they did build a lean-to, with a toilet, washtub and a basin, a bathtub. Well, four things could be done there. You had the basin for washing, and then you had the toilet, and there was a separate door that closed the toilet. Then, there was a separate door that closed the tub for bathing. It was all concrete, concrete tub, square tub, and then there would be the shower. So, you could have a shower, or you could take a bath if you wanted to. Prior to that, we had to use a public bath. We would take our clothing, bath towel, soap and washcloth, and whatever, and we would have to walk over to the public bathhouse. Half of that building was for males, and the other for females. So, we would go in, and then there would be a bench attached to the wall. We would put our things down—oh, and we had to take a bucket or a pail, or some water container. We would find a spot on the concrete floor, and there would be the wooden tub filled with hot water. My mother-in-law, it turned out, I found out later that her family, she and her family, were responsible for heating up the water at their bathtub in another part of town. (Chuckles)

The areas were called blocks at first, so we used to live on Block 17. They called Block 17, Stable Camp, because there was a stable at the end of the property where our homes were. Our house, I remember, we were the second house, faced the stable. But there was another huge warehouse or something in the front of us. And we used to play on the streets, and we would go over to the stables, and we would play over by the stables, because they weren't using it anymore. It had been stables for the horses and all before. But now, it was vacant, and so we used to go there and

play. And we would climb the trees. You know, there were trees there. We used to use hibiscus leaves to be honey. You know, we'd put that in water and make it honey water. And we would play what we called *mamagoto*. So we would play house, and we would say, "Oh, this is my house here." We used to do that, when I was able to go out to play. (Chuckles) Because I couldn't go out until I finished whatever chores my mother had for me.

WN: What did you do with the honey, the hibiscus?

JN: The hibiscus leaves, we would pick the leaves and we would put it in water, maybe half a pail of water. Then, we would kind of squash it and it would make the water slimy. Yeah, because of what the leaf has, the formation of the leaf. But we would make honey water. I can't remember what we did with it, because we certainly didn't drink the honey water.

(Laughter)

WN: That was my question.

JN: Yes, I know. We didn't drink it. So, I can't remember what the purpose of making it was. But that's what we made. It was just for fun.

WN: And how far away were the stables from your house?

JN: Less than a hundred yards. I'm thinking of a football field; so let's see, would it be maybe about fifty yards? Maybe about fifty yards away, so we could just walk.

WN: And Block 17, your father being the plantation carpenter, do you remember other families and what kinds of jobs they had on the plantation?

JN: Oh yes. Well, the family living next to us at that time was a barber. So, he was a barber. They were very close friends with my parents, so my parents would go over to play cards. They loved to play trumps and *hanafuda*. Trumps was a very popular card game, so I learned how to play early on. They would go over, or sometimes they would come over to our house. On the other side, the man was a—I think he was a mechanic. My father was a carpenter; this man was a mechanic. They had a lot of children, too. Their eldest child became a doctor. He's in Chicago now, retired of course. Dr. Daniel Anbe, cardiologist. He's a year younger than I am. But he's a boy, so he didn't have all the responsibilities that I had. There were sisters and brothers in that family also.

There was a street right in front of our house, a two-lane dirt road. You know, a dirt road, but enough space for cars to go back and forth.

Oh, and the store that my mother worked at, when she finally worked there—and even Yet Lung used to do that. On Lāna'i, you could order things. You know, in the early days, they didn't have a telephone. When they did, then people could call the store, order what they want, and then it would be delivered to the house. So, we had delivery trucks that would go around. That was really nice. My mother is right there at the store, so she can make a list of what she wants to get. She'd have it delivered, because she can't be carrying all of that to come home.

Another man who lived maybe two or three houses away from us was—I think he was a bookkeeper at the Okamoto Store. He was an older man, so he was—I mean, he looked so dignified, because he'd go to work wearing a white shirt. You know, because his job was an

office job. But yes, he was a bookkeeper. And then, let me see. The family across, the man may have been a plumber. But everybody had some job. Next to the plumber's house was a farmer. This man, Mr. [Toshio] Onuma, was so good at raising veggies. His entire yard—and I think he probably bought the property next to his. But he used to plant green onions, cabbage, lettuce, and all of those, so we could go and purchase that. So my mother would say, oh, go over to Onuma's and get a cabbage, or go get some beans, or tomatoes, or whatever it was. So, we had a ready-made farmer that we could go to, only a few houses away.

WN: Did you folks have a garden at your house, your yard?

JN: Yes, we had a garden, but my father was more the fisherman. But my mother, busy as she was, she liked to have flowers, so she did have some flowers. I remember she had African daisies, and she had nasturtiums, and she had begonias, and she liked to have vegetables. So you know, every household—I think every yard did have green onions and chives. Everybody had their own; we never had to go and buy green onions. And then, you know, cabbages, different cabbages; mustard cabbage or *won bok* cabbage. We had lima beans, because I remember that they would have to put the poles since the plant would grow up. We had a macadamia nut tree in our yard that did give us nuts. But I think we didn't appreciate it as much as we should have appreciated it.

WN: Yeah, I was just wondering what Japanese families did with mac nuts.

JN: Right. Well, we didn't understand that much. And then, we knew you needed a hammer to crack the nuts. You had to put it on a flattish rock, so you would have two hard things to get that nut opened up.

There were others who were laborers. You know, we weren't living in a high-class section. The dentist who was Japanese lived close to the hospital because it was sort of in the business area. The banker was a *haole* man. The wife was one of the teachers that I had. We did have a theater. But everybody knew everyone, and everything that we did, or everywhere we went, we walked. We thought nothing of it. I think I probably had to walk about eight blocks or so to go to school. But we thought nothing of it, because my friends would—you know, we would go to each other's house, and the two of them would come over to my house, wait for me, and then we would walk together to school.

WN: Was it where the school is now, or were you going to school at the old. . . . By the Cavendish . . .

JN: No. Well, the school, where it was now. But there were some other buildings, but all of the old buildings are gone. The buildings that are there now are new buildings. So, it's not like it was when we were going there, because we had all wooden buildings and wooden porches. We could hang out on the porch during recess, although the teacher would say go out into the play yard, into the playground.

WN: I was wondering; you know, you said your father was a fisherman, and your mother was a good cook. Did she cook a lot of fish that your father caught?

JN: Yes, she did. My mother learned to cook all different kinds of fish. She could make *sabao*, which is a Filipino soup. My brothers all learned how to cook, so my brothers and my sisters, we all learned how to cook. My brothers turned out to be pretty good cooks. They would make their *sabao*.

*Okā-san* also made delicious steamed *uhu*, covered with vegetables and a gravy. Plain, pan-fried fish was always delicious. *Okā-san* knew how to prepare different fish. Sometimes she would make teriyaki fish, fish *tempura*, *miso* soup with small fish, and fresh *sashimi* if it was the right kind of fish. ‘*Ō’io*, scraped, made delicious *tempura*.

My mother was also good at cooking tripe, so she could make what they said was a delicious tripe stew. I was the one person in the family who wouldn’t eat tripe.

(Laughter)

JN: Because I asked my mother, “Oh, what part of the animal does tripe come from?” She said it’s the stomach lining. And I said, “I’m not gonna ever eat that.” (Chuckles)

But she said, “At least try it.”

So, I said, “Okay, I’ll try it.” So, I tried one, and of course, it was so rubbery and stiff, and you cannot even bite into it. So, I said, “I’m never gonna eat that; it doesn’t taste good to me.” But everybody else loved it. I don’t even like the smell of it. I had to help clean it. Because, she would say to take all of that outer skin off. So I learned how to clean that. But my mother could cook whatever my father brought home. When he was hunting, he would come home with deer or goat, deer meat, goat meat. So, she learned how to prepare that, dried or *teri* style, deer jerky, et cetera.

WN: So, how did she prepare deer and goat meat?

JN: Well, I would eat deer meat if it was marinated. She would make a teriyaki marinade. Then, she would also dry it. My brother now, my one bachelor brother has a fancy smoker, because he loves to go hunting. He uses bows and arrows, and he goes to the Big Island. He’s one that loves to go fishing. He has his own boat down at the boat harbor, and he’ll go out. So, he can catch the deep-sea fish. He’s a senior citizen now—he goes to the senior center and he takes his catch, and those fish are the prizes when they play Bingo. The people who are playing the Bingo love that, because they’re getting fresh fish that’s just been caught. He also gets *tako* too. But he’s a good fisherman. I see so many varieties of the fish that he catches in Tamashiro Market, Foodland, or Times. I see it, and I think, oh, that’s the kind of fish that my brother Ralph catches. But that’s what he does with it. He doesn’t sell it, he just gives it to his friends. He doesn’t want to sell it. So, he’s not interested in getting money; he’s just happy to see people happy. Whenever he caught fish, he used to take fish over to Aunty Akiko’s house. She loved that. He didn’t take it over to the Fuchigami aunty, because Ralph went fishing with their sons. They were fishermen also, so they had their own fish.

MK: So, it’s kind of part of their lifestyle.

JN: Yes, it was their lifestyle, on the weekends. But that’s my one brother who’s not married. My other two brothers are married, but they’re also good fishermen and huntsmen. So, then my brother Ray lives on Maui, and when he was younger, he used to go over to go hunting on Lāna‘i. Of course, they had to have their permit and everything. They would hunt for deer, or goat. I wouldn’t touch goat meat, because it seemed to me that it has a smell.

WN: And you were saying that you had a garden.

JN: Oh, yes.



WN: And you had the store, so you got things like rice. And then, your father fished.

JN: Yes, so we didn't have to buy fish.

WN: I'm trying to think; what else did you—did you have poultry?

JN: Poultry, oh yes, we did have a chicken coop. (Chuckles) But we didn't have it right in the yard. There was a place we had to go. In back of the housing area, there was a hill before you reached the pasture, and there you made your own chicken coop. Well, I think before they made that chicken coop, we did have a chicken coop in the yard, because I remember going and watching the hen laying an egg. I wanted to see how the egg was going to come out, so I'd be there watching to see it happen. You know, because we had egg-laying hens. Of course, if my mother was going to cook the chicken, then I wouldn't eat something that we had kept as a pet, that I had to feed and take care of. (Chuckles) So, I said, those, we had to buy. (Chuckles) But when we no longer were allowed to have chicken coops in the yard, then they [i.e., the company] made a space for us to have chicken coops. So, we would have to go up to feed, clean, gather eggs, or whatever it was. And then, there were people that would have them roaming around in their yards.

But you know, I need to tell you that even though we seemed to be segregated by different racial groups, we all came together, and we were one. In school, we didn't even know one person was another nationality, because we were younger. So, we felt no animosity, no prejudice. We didn't even know what prejudice was, until the war [World War II] started. When the war started, the government then did take—I mean, they really made a mistake, hurting the Japanese in Hawai'i. There was a hysteria, and they really didn't know what to do. And so, I think our 442 [442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team] boys really proved that we were loyal Americans. I wouldn't be able to go to Japan and fit in there, because I've been brought up as an American. I've gone to English school. But we did have Japanese-language school before the war started. But I only went until the third grade. We had already learned *katakana*, *hiragana*, and then we were going into *kanji*; and that's when the war started. The teacher, the principal, the priests and all, they were all sent to internment camps.

WN: Did you enjoy Japanese[-language] school?

JN: I liked it, yes. I liked it. When I look back, I think that we really advanced very quickly, because the teachers—when you're in Japanese school, you don't fool around. I mean, they're very, very strict. Plus, of course, we learned the Japanese word of honor, and not bringing disgrace to the family, and all of that. So those things were instilled in us already. So, my mother and father instilled those things in us, and so, we carry those things with us. Of course, as parents ourselves now, we've taught that to our children. But as we see the young people now, well, it seems like America is really turning into something different.

WN: And where was the Japanese school?

JN: The Japanese school was held where the Lāna'i Union Church is now, in the back. They used the facilities. You know, they really shared facilities. There wasn't a prejudice as to where you have it. The Filipino people would go to their Catholic school. But we went to Japanese school in the mornings before we went to English school. So, Japanese school started at seven o'clock in the morning. We thought nothing of going to Japanese school early and then to English school at eight o'clock or eight-thirty, I'm not exactly sure. On the way to Japanese school, we passed the shops. We had a big bakery owned and operated by Mr. Yokoyama. While we're walking on our

way to Japanese school with our dimes or nickels that we were supposed to buy our school lunch with—imagine, it was just a dime. (Chuckles) The bakery items smelled so wonderful and we would be tempted to stop and get one doughnut for a nickel, or maybe it was two for a nickel. Luscious long john was a dime. So, a few times we submitted to temptation and we would ask our parents for an extra coin so we could at least stop and buy a treat from the bakery. Because we certainly couldn't afford to do that every day. We had to bypass Mr. Yokoyama's bakery and go straight to school. (Chuckles) After Japanese school, we'd resume walking to English school.

WN: I was wondering too, you know, you were the oldest and you had to babysit. Do you remember how your mother managed while you were you going to school, who watched the younger ones who weren't going to school?

JN: I can't remember exactly, but when I was six years old, in first grade, there were only three of us. Mom paid a neighbor lady friend to babysit Ray and Dora so she could go to work. She had to adjust her working hours.

Going back to the things that I had to do, I did have to sweep and mop the floor, dust the shelves, do all the dishes, help with the cooking, and even iron. Mom showed me how to iron, because everything had to be ironed. Wrinkle-free clothing was not available yet. Everybody had a clothesline, so hanging laundry was a regular chore. I often had a baby sibling tied to my back, and then I would be doing these different chores. But I thought nothing about it because it was an accepted thing. Other families with babies needed to do that. So Mom taught me how to do everything, just about everything, because she spent many long hours working at the store.

WN: By then, did you have a washing machine?

JN: I'm not sure how quickly Mom had one, because I remember washing by hand. There was an open public laundry building with four cement washtubs on both sides of the water faucets. Everyone brought their own wooden washboard, laundry brush, and soap to scrub and wash their laundry. There was a *kudo* outside where you made a fire under a huge bucket filled with soapy water to boil the colored jeans and other colored laundry. We used a huge, flat stick to pull the laundry to scrub before putting it in a tub full of clean water for rinsing. I loved the rinse process. The cool water felt so good. (Chuckles) So, it seemed more like play to be rinsing the clothes. I loved to do that. But I also had to use the brush and scrub before the rinsing.

WN: So, you had another tub for rinsing?

JN: Yes, there was. So, when we had got to the public laundry building---referred to as the "wash house," we had to be sure that there were two empty tubs that weren't being used. So, we did our laundry on the weekends. We had to work quickly, because other people needed the tubs. You sort of had to schedule yourself. Somehow, they managed. Only a few women could be there, because each person needed at least two tubs. There were probably four people who could do their weekly laundry.

WN: Well, what about ironing?

JN: I did ironing. When I was a senior in high school—I don't know how I got the job, but after school, I believe once a week, I would go to the dentist's home to do the ironing of his white dress shirts. Mom had taught me how to iron dress shirts. She taught me how very nicely, because Mom would slap my hand if I didn't do it well. I would walk to the dentist's home, and Mrs. Tamanaka would have a snack for me, because I went there directly from school. She was very

nice, kind, and thoughtful. I don't know if it was on a Thursday or whatever, but I ironed her husband's white dress shirts, and whatever else she had for me. So, that earned me some money. It was really cheap. I don't remember what I was paid, but I had to give my earnings to Mom.

MK: What was the dentist's name?

JN: His name was Dr. Fred Tamanaka. When he retired they moved to California. They had one son who was my age and was in school with me.

MK: And you know, you mentioned that there was the Yokoyama Bakery, where you could get some snacks at.

JN: Yes.

MK: Where there any other businesses you could go to?

JN: Yes. There was a Lui's Restaurant. Mr. Lui had a restaurant where he sold snacks and also liquor. Next to Lui's, there was Kay's Beauty Shop. It was a small beauty shop where we could go get permanent waves with those iron curlers. There was also a barber shop. There was a *tōfu-ya*. Mr. Hirakawa made tofu not too far from Richard's Shopping Center, somewhere in the back. My sister and I would go to the tofu shop after my mother said, "Go and buy one tofu." (Chuckles) So we had to take our own container, and whatever money it cost, and he would give us the freshly-made tofu. Sometimes my mom wanted *okara* which he gave to us for free because it was *kasu*.

WN: So you would bring your own container?

JN: Yes, we used to take our own container.

MK: You mentioned a dentist.

JN: Yes.

MK: What about a doctor?

JN: There was a doctor, Dr. [William H.] Wilkinson, who seemed to be an extremely competent doctor, but we only had the community hospital, the Lāna'i Community Hospital. There was no doctor practicing privately. Dr. Wilkinson was there for the longest time, and he had to be a jack-of-all-trades, as doctors go. Maybe he had to be, of necessity because he was the only one there. I think now they have at least two doctors there. Part of the hospital is used as a senior care home or whatever. Things have changed a bit. But there was only that one hospital, so my father was taken there in a futile attempt to revive him in December 1956.

I'm jumping around now—but Aunty Fuchigami, my father's younger sister, died at age fifty-three, I believe, her daughter told me. She died of a brain hemorrhage, which when I mentioned that to my interventional neurologist, he said she probably had an aneurism, which is inherited. It seems I've inherited that, but I've lived this long life. My doctor told me, after completing surgery to stuff nine platinum coils into my brain aneurism, "Don't stress out. Just continue with your life. Don't stress about what you have. Just keep your blood pressure down." So that's what I do. I am a strong believer in Jesus Christ. I'm a very strong Christian, and I pray all the time. In the mornings when I get up, I thank God that I'm still alive, and I ask Him to let me have a productive day.

WN: Well, you know, it's been about an hour and a half . . .

JN: Oh my heavens.

WN: We haven't finished yet.

JN: Oh.

WN: We were wondering if we can do it another time.

JN: Oh, another time? Okay. You don't want to do it now? Oh, it'll take too long?

WN: Do you think we can continue another day?

JN: We could.

WN: You are such a terrific storyteller.

JN: Oh (laughs). I don't know if I'm just rambling on and on. Have you turned me off?

WN: No. With everyone we've interviewed, we've always gone two sessions.

JN: Oh, I see.

WN: It gives us a chance to review things, You know, "Oh, we forgot to ask you about this . . ."

JN: Yes, yes. If you have your questions in sequence, because I'm only telling you as you're asking. And then, certain other things occur to me.

MK: No, you're doing a great job.

WN: I'm going to turn it off.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 56-43-2-14

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Jane Nakamura (JN)

‘Aiea, O‘ahu

August 7, 2014

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

WN: This is an interview with Jane Toshie Nakamura on August 7, 2014. And this is session number two. The interviewers are Warren Nishimoto and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto, and we are at the Newtown Recreation Center in ‘Aiea, O‘ahu.

Good morning, Jane.

JN: Good morning.

WN: The first question I have for you is . . . Oh, go ahead. Michi is going to start.

MK: You know, you had shared this morning with us a *Pine Parade* issue, October 1951, that featured your being given a scholarship to go to college. And in it, there are photos of you in college, and also at home. And there’s one photo of you with your family at your dining table, your wooden dining table. Describe for us what it was like during mealtimes at your home.

JN: You know, my mother and father made sure that we were eating properly, and that we weren’t making a mess of things. We had one main dish and some *tsukemono*. We used forks, spoons, and chopsticks. Even to this day, my three brothers always choose chopsticks to eat with. They say that they can grab anything with chopsticks. I use chopsticks, too. Because to me, it’s such a simple, but amazing implement for eating food or picking up anything, for that matter.

MK: And when you kind of think in your mind the types of foods that were served at your table, what was served?

JN: Well, my mother was an excellent cook, and she had learned to cook a wide variety of different ethnic foods. We ate a lot of fish in different forms, beef stews, hamburger patties, beef tomato, spaghetti, soups, chop suey, swiss steak, roasts, et cetera. She could cook. She was excellent with Japanese food. Her *nishime* and sushi were famous, as well as her *tempura*. She made *ozoni* at New Year’s with *hokkigai*. She was good at cooking Filipino food, Hawaiian food, Portuguese food, Hawaiian food and *haole* food (roasts, burgers, et cetera). People enjoyed her food, because she shared what she cooked. I learned to cook most of what she did because I had to help her. But I guess I was the spoiler in the family, and I got scolded for being so picky, because I refused to eat tripe stew, all fats, goat meat, etcetera. My siblings thought everything was tasty and enjoyed what Mom cooked.

MK: You know, when people think about Lāna‘i, they think of deer and fish.

JN: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: Because there's fish available, were these items part of your regular diet?

JN: Yes. We ate a lot of fish because my father was an avid fisherman. Every weekend, he went fishing. Sometimes, he would really get a good catch; other times, maybe just a little, or he'd come home and say, "It's a whitewash today." But we did have a lot of fish, and my mother made excellent steamed fish, fried fish, fish stir fry with vegetables, *tempura*, fish soup, et cetera. I loved steamed fish--steamed mullet, or *moi*, or *uhu*. Those were among my favorites, because my mother made a special gravy with vegetables to pour over the steamed fish. All of those fish for steaming were white meats. I didn't care that much for the deer meat, unless she made her special teriyaki sauce, in which she would soak the deer meat. I like lean meats; I don't like to eat the fat. Deer is very lean, with a little fat. Mom pan-fried or baked the teriyaki deer meat. Mom thought I was so picky and particular. But nowadays, we know that all of the fatty parts have cholesterol and we should avoid them. So, I thought, well, maybe that's why I'm healthier. (Chuckles)

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

So, when we did eat, we ate all together. so I have good memories of that. But of course (chuckles), my father would be there, and then if we were to use our fingers when we should be using our chopsticks or fork, then he would hit our fingers with his chopsticks. (Chuckles)

MK: And, you know, I notice that in these photos here, your family looks very happy, I think about your getting a scholarship.

JN: Oh, yes. My parents and siblings were happy and proud. I feel that my mother taught me so much and it was necessary that she teach me because I was the eldest. They really depended on my helping them as well as set an example for my five siblings.

MK: You know, with your being a scholarship recipient, how would you describe your mom and dad's reactions to that?

JN: Well, they were very surprised, happy, proud, and totally speechless. They never expressed their true feelings. They weren't talkative people. So, they wouldn't know how to really express their elation mixed with surprise. I know that they were happy, mainly because there would be no way for them to afford sending me to college without a scholarship. Although two of them were working, the pay scale was much cheaper than now, and there were five other children to support. I could not have even started college anywhere without the scholarship.

MK: So, had you not gotten the scholarship, looking at what occurred in the lives of maybe your classmates at that time, what do you suppose you would have done?

JN: Well, my parents always said that education was important. But it seemed that they really stressed it to me, because my sisters and my brothers didn't go on to college. I had told my brothers that since each one went into military service, they would be eligible for the G.I. Bill to further their education, because everybody needs to have advanced education. For myself, I might have had to go to business school, which was much, much cheaper. But I would have had to leave Lāna'i and come to Honolulu for post-graduate education. There would be the cost of housing. Even with the scholarship I couldn't afford to be in a dormitory. The scholarship did not cover a dormitory

while I was in Hawai‘i. It did on the Mainland, where I attended Bucknell University. Consequently, I worked for my room and board in a Caucasian doctor’s family.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

Eunice Johnson, a Caucasian teacher friend of mine who was my younger sister Dora’s sixth-grade teacher who went to the same church I attended on Lāna‘i, became my mentor who helped me check the newspaper want-ads for a live-in student in Mānoa Valley. I wanted to live close to the University of Hawai‘i so I could just walk there. I decided to live and work with Dr. Fred Ivan Gilbert, III, his wife Helen O. Gilbert, and their four children. Eunice thought I was crazy that of all the different places I had gone to check out where a live-in student was wanted, that I would pick the one with four children. I told her that I felt I would be more comfortable in a home where there were children, because I would be able to easily relate to the children due to my experiences with my own siblings. Mom had taught me well, so I knew how to do many household chores.

Helen Odell Gilbert, who was an art teacher at the University of Hawai‘i, was a very good mother. She was very good to her four children, and she was very good to me. I had a room of my own with my own shower and toilet facilities. It was like a tiny studio, with a desk, lamp, and dresser. My major responsibilities were household chores and babysitting. She told me that if I wanted to earn any money, I could work beyond the required fifteen-hour week by ironing or waxing, or other miscellaneous things. Fifteen hours, and after that, she would pay me fifty cents an hour, because that was the wage that long ago. She was a very kind, generous, and thoughtful woman. I learned a lot from her.

Dr. Gilbert was very busy at Straub Clinic and Hospital and the phone was always ringing because his specialty was internal medicine. Later, he became a doctor of nuclear science. He was an extremely capable, dedicated, and intelligent doctor. The children were well behaved and we got along very well.

MK: And on Lāna‘i, you were with Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans, Chinese. And the Caucasian families were . . .

JN: Limited, up on “Snob Hill.”

MK: Up on the hill. Now, coming to Honolulu, you were actually living with a Caucasian family.

JN: Living with—and I guess that has really shaped what I have become because I had lived on Lāna‘i, and then coming out of Lāna‘i, then I was living with a Caucasian family. So, I could see first-hand that they lived just like anybody else. They were a very good family. I felt I had made a good choice as I became very close to the children. I need to keep in touch with them now and see where they are, because their parents have passed away. Originally, the house they lived in was right on the corner of East Mānoa Road and Mānoa Road, very close to the bus stop—across from the Salvation Army’s Waioli Tea Room. So, we could go there and the children could play when I took care of them.

MK: You know, before we get more into your Honolulu college experience, I was wondering, what do you remember most about your educational experience on Lāna‘i?

JN: When my Lāna‘i friends and I get together, we reminisce often that although Lāna‘i had only one school, Lāna‘i High and Elementary School, we all went there and our teachers were excellent.

Many of the teachers were Caucasian. My friends and I were so hungry for knowledge about the world as well as learning new things, that we were extremely attentive and well behaved. The local people had not yet gone on to college, some to become teachers themselves. During the war [World War II], I remember Lāna‘i having young teachers from the Mainland fresh out of college and they were truly dedicated. I know our *haole* teachers in biology, math, social studies, and English taught us a lot. We were fortunate enough in grades third, fifth, and sixth to have had *haole* teachers. One of them was the spouse of Mr. Hector Munro, a superintendent of Hawaiian Pineapple Company, Mrs. Blanche Munro. Mrs. Carlson, our sixth-grade teacher, was the spouse of the head of First Hawaiian Bank.

Mrs. Munro was our third-grade teacher. When we were in her class in 1941, World War II had started. She taught our entire class of eight-year-olds how to knit little squares of yarn, which she sewed to make quilts to send to the soldiers on the battlefields in Europe and Asia. The boys learned to knit, too, and we would compete with each other to see who made the most squares. She would knit several quilts and send them overseas. When I look back, I think she had us eight-year-olds participate in helping the war effort by knitting squares for quilts for our brave soldiers. Even eight-year-olds and boys could learn to knit.

Mrs. Munro selected five of us, who were “model students” and “teachers’ pets” and invited us to visit her home up on the hill. We thought, “Wow, we’re gonna go up to Snob Hill.” We referred to it as Snob Hill. We said, “Oh, we’re gonna go into a *haole* house.” Of course, we were all eyes and ears. But she also wanted us to look in her library. She had one room for her library. In her library, there were many, many books. The wonderful fact is, she told us to look at the books and we could select one to keep. What a privilege! We were just awed at her generosity, her graciousness, and her hospitality. She had snacks for us, too. We were very impressed. Although she was very strict in the classroom, she was a wonderful, caring woman who knew that none of us had a library in our little cracker houses nor a book to call our own.

Then in fourth grade, I had a very young Japanese American teacher, who gave us a good education. Then, I believe from the fifth grade, the students were placed in two separate classes according to academic ability. Students more academically minded were placed in class A, and the others in class B. I guess the teachers realized that they would be able to help the ones who are more able to advance faster and those who needed more help would get it..

In fifth grade, we had a *haole* teacher who was older and single, Miss Midkiff, who introduced us to *Mary Poppins*. That early, in fifth grade, we learned about *Mary Poppins* and P.L. Travers, the author. Daily, after our lunch hour, she would have us rest our heads on our desks, and she would read us a chapter of the book. A chapter per day was a special treat. Even the naughty, talkative, rascal boys loved the story of *Mary Poppins*. We anxiously looked forward to a chapter a day. We were truly fortunate to have had a dedicated teacher introducing us to classical literature.

During Easter, Miss Midkiff had us perform an Easter pageant for the entire school. (Chuckles) The entire class, thirty of us. So, the girls had to be flowers. I remember, I was an Easter lily, so I had a big white Easter lily right on top of my head, and there were a few other girls with that, and then other kinds of flowers. But she taught us so much. The teachers we had realized that we were on an isolated island with only one school. They did their best to teach us well. I became a teacher myself, and my teacher role models were excellent. We just gobbled up everything that we were taught. To my surprise, I’ve retained so much.

In sixth grade, we had the banker’s wife, Mrs. Carlson, as our teacher. She was very elegant, gracious, dedicated, and well respected. And an excellent teacher. She taught us our English and



math. Then for social studies, it was American history. She had our class do a play for the entire school, on the Revolutionary War. My classmates portrayed the colonists, Indians, and soldiers, in appropriate costumes. She picked me to be the announcer and narrator. I wanted to be one of those costumed characters, but she said, “No, Jane, you will be the mistress of ceremonies. You will be the one who will announce everything.” So, all of my classmates portrayed these different characters. We had girls in those long dresses, and the boys in breeches. She was able to teach so much as we were trying to emulate what it was like during the Revolutionary War days. Being that we were doing that, you can imagine how much we learned. The boys who were usually rascals and inattentive learned a lot too, because everyone had to participate. So, this was an unforgettable, excellent learning experience.

When we went into seventh grade, the principal’s wife, Mrs. Heminger, was our English teacher. She taught us English grammar, literature, writing plays, and composition. She was so thorough. Very strict, all of them were very strict. I realized too, that I wanted to be a teacher. I think already, the reasons for my wanting to become a teacher were already being inbred in me, because I had all of these wonderful role models.

WN: You were talking about that they sort of isolated you. In other words, divided you.

JN: Yes, we had two classes for each grade level.

WN: And then, you said that in your class, it was like maybe the more brighter ones?

JN: The studious ones, yes. There were six of us who did become teachers. One became a doctor, and he was with us up to eighth grade, I think. Arthur Osako became a pediatrician at Center Medical Clinic and later, went to Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and researched neo-natal cancer. Arthur was stationed in Japan during his military service and then married a doctor’s daughter from Japan.

MK: And then, during your years in the upper grades at Lāna‘i [High and Elementary] School, what were those years like?

JN: Well, in high school, we had many different young *haole* teachers from the Mainland. I had a geometry teacher who was strict and an excellent, no-nonsense teacher. Our typing teacher was a local girl from the island of Maui. She taught us a lot, too. These young teachers were probably just out of college.

Our home economics teacher was a German teacher, Miss Bulow. She was a tall, attractive blond, and very strict. But it’s through her that I learned there was such a thing as popovers for breakfast. I never knew what popovers were until she taught us how to make it. She taught us about table settings, what utensils to use, and a lot about manners, dining, how to cook, how you decorate your house, etcetera. The different teachers were very dedicated teachers. I guess because we were good, attentive students, we were just learning so much.

We observed some really funny incidents. Airplanes, almost like gliders, would fly over our school campus, and it seemed some of the teachers knew those military pilots because they would be all excited. So, when the plane flew over, everybody would run out, including the teachers (chuckles). The teachers would run out, because sometimes they would receive a message floating down from the plane. Lāna‘i is so isolated, and we don’t have that many *haoles*. So, the teachers didn’t really have a social life. There were some who did stay on for several years. Two

of the teachers married Japanese Americans on Lāna‘i and they were very well respected in the community.

MK: I noticed in looking at the photos, you were into Girl Scouting.

JN: Mm-hmm [yes]. When I went to Girl Scouting, my Buddhist friends were in scouting, too. We did Girl Scouting together, which drew us closer together. We shared the various activities such as camping, cooking outdoors, practicing first aid, earning badges by doing community services, helping those in need, etcetera. We kept in touch with each other through our Lāna‘i Alumni and Community Association (LACA), where the people in the community, as well as students who graduated from Lāna‘i High and Elementary School, make up this organization. Periodic newsletters are printed and mailed wherever Lanaians live, Hawai‘i and the Mainland. But, we need to get the younger people to take over.

MK: So, you’re saying you’re hoping that they will continue this organization.

JN: Oh, yes. Because every year, they have been having, in Las Vegas, a LACA banquet and social gathering. It became a popular event. Now, it’s beginning to fizzle a bit. They used to have it in October of the current year.

MK: And then, you know, we got you talking a bit about the war, sort of when you were in the third grade.

JN: Oh, yes.

MK: What was it like for your family during the war years?

JN: The first immediate thing that happened was, the U. S. government took the principal and teachers of the Japanese-language school, business owners, the Buddhist priest---those who had some influence in the Japanese community. They were all taken away from their homes and forced to go to a concentration camp on other islands or on the Mainland. There was such a hysteria since it was Japan that bombed Pearl Harbor. There were hundreds of American citizens of Japanese ancestry interned on Kaua‘i, O‘ahu, Moloka‘i, Maui, Lāna‘i, and Hawai‘i Island. At that time on Lāna‘i, there was a very large—I would say that the population at that time on Lāna‘i was predominantly Japanese, approximately 50 percent. Approximately 25 to 30 percent were Filipino, and the remainder were a few Chinese, a few Koreans, a few Portuguese, a few Hawaiians, then a few *haoles* on the hill. I mean, we only had one school, so they had to mix with us. They were all nice. You know, we were able to get along with everybody. We got along with all—we played and talked to—did things together with all the different racial groups. But once the war started, these people who were not Japanese started calling us “Japs.” They said, “Oh, you Jap. Oh, you’re a traitor.” There was a lot of unmerited verbal abuse because we were in World War II.

So, we had to put up with that during the war. After the war, because we were on a small island, we were all friends again. It was just—and we knew, as Japanese being called “Japs” and all, and being called all kinds of names, and being accused of being traitors or spies or whatever, which none of us were, and none of our parents were, but we understood that it was just the fear and misunderstanding and hysteria of war. So, because we were a small community, we were all friends again.

The United States Army Department had some soldiers come to stay on the island. There had to be soldiers, even though Lāna‘i was small. In our schoolyard, the army made bomb shelters. So in addition to a fire drill, we had an air raid drill. The alarm would sound, and we had to put gas masks on, line up and go outdoors down into six-foot-deep wood—dirt trenches. We were only in third grade and only eight years old. In addition to that, the soldiers went house-to-house to distribute black mulch paper which had to be on all of our windows. We had to blacken everything. So, once it was curfew—probably eight o’clock, a loud whistle would blow. We had a community whistle that blew early in the morning to signify that work is beginning at the plantation. In the evening, there was a whistle that blew for curfew. Blackness covered Lāna‘i City.

WN: I was wondering, the company had a curfew, right?

JN: Yes.

WN: So, even when it wasn’t during the war, they had this curfew, right?

JN: Yes. The public whistle blows.

WN: I was wondering, during the war, did that change? Did the hours change, or did the curfew change at all?

JN: It seemed to be the same. As far as I remember, it would have been about the same. So, I don’t know if it might have been earlier; it could have been earlier. But it was a terrible thing that they did, these soldiers, two by two, went house-to-house in the city and they confiscated whatever Japanese items were found. My mother had to surrender some beautiful pictures of Japan, framed in black lacquer wood. She told us that they were made in Japan and came from Japan. They confiscated anything Japanese. We were told that they destroyed what they took, but then we were told that things like swords, the soldiers kept for themselves. But that was hearsay. We don’t know; we were never told what had happened to the objects taken. When I think about it, that’s robbery. There was no cause; it was just the hysteria of war.

WN: I know that during summers, you worked in the pineapple fields.

JN: Yes, we did.

WN: During the war, did that increase?

JN: Let’s see, how old would I have been? I remember working in the pineapple fields when I was eleven years old. So, at eleven I would be a sixth-grader.

WN: Nineteen forty-four?

JN: Nineteen forty-four, I was working in the pineapple fields.

WN: The war is still going on.

JN: The war is still going on, yes. We had to wear canvas pants, a long-sleeved denim jacket because we would get pierced by those long, pointed pineapple leaves. We also had to wear wire goggles to protect our eyes. Then a hat, because we would be out in the sun. We had to do weeding and putting fertilizer into the pineapple plant, and picking the ripe pineapples from the plant.

I was only eleven, and the other people were twelve. But then, I'm in the same grade they are; we're in the sixth grade. I remember I was paid ten cents less, because I wasn't twelve years old yet (chuckles). I can't remember the figures exactly, but I think my wage was fifty-seven cents per hour. My classmates, because they were already twelve, were getting sixty-seven cents. I remember grumbling about it. I went to the *luna*, and said, "You know, my pay is not fair. How come they're getting more money than me? We're in the same grade at school, and I'm going to be twelve in November. But then, this is the summer, so I'm only eleven." (Chuckles) And I said, "That's not fair". You know? He probably made some excuses that it was a union problem, or whatever (chuckles). I'm surprised that I had the boldness to even say that to him. When I think back, I was only eleven (chuckles). But I already felt it was unfair. Why? I could not understand the unfairness, because I'm doing the same work they are.

- MK: But then, as the years progressed, each summer, did your work change, or did you continue to do weeding?
- JN: It did change, so that we got to where we were picking the pineapples. So, we had our gloves, and we had to learn—they told us how to pick the pineapples and then, the pineapple machine would come and we have to put the pineapples there. Or sometimes, we had to put the pineapples into boxes that would be at the end of the row. So, we would go row by row, doing our work. You know, picking the pineapples, there was a technique to it. I mean, everything, everything has some method to follow. We learned how to do that. Then, they did give us a bag. So, little as we were (chuckles), sometimes we had to carry six or more so that we would have more to put into that box at the end. We didn't get paid any more or anything, but we had a quota to fill up several boxes. As children, you always—you have to have some kind of competition. So, we wanted to know who's filling up more boxes, who's picking more pineapples. (Chuckles) You know, so that gave us the incentive to work a little harder. But, yes, we did that. We also put fertilizer into the pineapple plant through the leaves.
- MK: You know, when we spoke to Lāna'i residents who worked during the summers as teenagers, they would say—especially the men—they would say, "Oh, it was fun, because we would bring refreshments for the girl crews, and then later on, when we would be working, the girl crews would bring refreshments for us."
- JN: Oh, yes, yes. That's true.
- MK: There seemed to be some socializing going on.
- JN: Right, but I can't remember how the sharing of refreshments was done. I didn't work in the pineapple fields that many summers. So, for the summer—I don't remember exactly. But I know that I did work in the store for a when my mother was working. So, I worked in the store, but I don't know if it was during the summer or during the Christmas rush, or both.
- WN: What did you do in the store?
- JN: Well, I was a clerk and I learned how to cut and price fabrics on a sales slip, and wrap the items bought in a bag.. But mainly, they were having me—I remember wrapping gifts. So, it must have been Christmastime.
- WN: And this was at Richard's [Shopping Center]?

JN: Yes, it was at Richard's, because my mother was there. I did not work in the pineapple fields every summer. I worked several summers, but I don't know what I did. I did go out, and I did have to do ironing. After I ironed for the dentist, Dr. Tamanaka's family, then I would go to another home, a friend of theirs, and I would do ironing for them. So, I was doing that.

MK: And then, you know, you graduated in 1951.

JN: [Nineteen] fifty-one, yes.

MK: And I guess, during that year, you applied for the Dole scholarship.

JN: Yes, because it became available; it was the first time the company was offering it. So, they were offering it to children of workers in the Lāna'i plantation, the Wahiawā plantation, and the Dole pineapple cannery in Honolulu. So, three areas. So that's a lot of people who were eligible to apply. But because it was the first scholarship of its kind, I don't know the exact number of applicants there were altogether. I guess my mother and father probably instilled this in me, "You know, if you don't try, you have nothing, zero chances." But if you try, at least you have one chance out of a total. So, I was encouraged by my teachers to try for it. The principal was also very helpful, and he wrote a letter of recommendation. I don't remember how many of my classmates may have applied, but they were all eligible. But I think in the beginning, because nobody knew that much about it, but I felt, well, some of my other friends are wealthier. You know, their fathers have a better job, and they don't have as many children in the family as we did.

Anyway, I had to come to Honolulu, because we had interviews with the scholarship committee. We had to be interviewed. The scholarship committee, chaired by George E. Felton, had a representative from Lāna'i, Mr. Hiroshi Oshiro, a representative from the Wahiawā plantation, Mr. T. Ishii, and a representative from the Honolulu cannery, Mr. Harold Kawakami. They had Dr. Katherine Handley, who was a professor at the University of Hawai'i. Also, there were two men who were executives in the Dole Company. Those of us who were there had to be interviewed individually. This was the first time I experienced a private interview. I noticed that when we went to the University of Hawai'i campus, a lot of the other girls that I met were either from McKinley High School or Roosevelt High School. Those girls said, "Oh, you're from Lāna'i." There were some friendly girls, but I felt like they were looking down on me from the tone of their voices because I was from little Lāna'i. Because of questions like "What's Lāna'i? What's there to do on Lāna'i?" Many of us have faced similar questions due to ignorance, but we have kept our close ties and we have a close camaraderie that other schools don't have. Even though some of our classmates went to Mid-Pacific Institute in Honolulu or to St. Anthony's School on Maui, they weren't sassy, nor did they act superior. They weren't conceited, and they didn't act like they were better than the rest of us. We continued to be genuine good friends. Lanaians have a very special relationship.

So like the Viduyas, I know Rosita, Libby [Liberato, Jr.], Robert, and Adeline. When I think back to the different camps where we lived on the plantation, they were segregated in a sense. There was a Filipino camp, an Okinawan camp, a Japanese camp, the Koreans lived close to each other, the Portuguese lived in a certain place. But the Viduya family lived in Japanese Camp. Their parents were very intelligent, sincere, and friendly. Mr. Liberato Viduya, Sr. had some supervisory position. Mrs. Loreta Viduya was a very cordial person, very friendly to everybody. She had sisters and members of her family living among the Japanese. Other Filipino families lived in the Filipino camp and a few were intermingled with the Japanese. Recently, when I started thinking about it, I thought that we did have a semblance of segregation, but we were

friendly with each other. I think it was the older people, maybe our parents, who had some issues. But I'm very thankful that my parents weren't prejudiced. They had friends of all different races. My father worked with some Filipinos or Portuguese, or whoever, and he seemed to be good friends with them. So even today, the children will say, "Oh, my dad worked with your dad," that kind of thing. So, they have positive memories.

The church and teachings about Jesus Christ, God's only begotten son, became very, very important to me. I teach a Bible study class, and I've been a Sunday school teacher. I am very, very involved with the church. I've read through the whole Bible, but I'm going through it again. Now, the ladies in my Bible study class want to know about Bible prophecy and the end times, because Revelation, the last end, the sixty-sixth book in the Bible, talks about the future. There are several interpretations and speculation of the end times.

MK: So, your education keeps on continuing, yeah?

JN: Oh, yes. I want to learn and know more. I realize that if I just read one book, or listen to one pastor, information is going to be slanted. I'm not getting a good overview. I used to tell my fifth-grade students, "There are always two sides to every situation." Sometimes when something happened during recess, we would have a brief court session in the classroom. Because I said, "I'm not God, so I don't know if somebody is telling me a lie." Because there are liars. Even kindergarten children can lie. Everybody knows how to lie; it seems to be natural for them to lie. (Chuckles) But I said, "Don't judge somebody." And the Bible does tell us, "Judge not." Because as we judge other people, that is how God will judge us.

MK: Going back to your formal education, you got the scholarship, you went to Mānoa.

JN: UH-Mānoa, yes.

MK: Then, you went to Bucknell [University] for one year.

JN: Yes, but that one year transformed me from a shy, quiet, and timid person to one who is more vocal and confident, able to speak in public places without fear or restraint as long as I know what I'm talking about. That is a key.

MK: And you got your fifth year [teaching certificate] . . .

JN: At UH-Mānoa, yes. I was qualified to receive a fifth-year diploma in Education and a professional teaching certificate. We were extremely well-trained and went through an internship program on our first teaching job. I also did practice teaching in a fifth-grade class in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania and a full summer of practice teaching sixth grade under Mrs. Sarah Yang who was an excellent mentor and role model.

While I was doing that, I lived with the same Gilbert family, Dr. Gilbert's family. They took me back in, because I'm an old-timer. They had other girls, who were also college students who were working there, but they had me come back to stay with them after I returned from Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. The location of the Gilberts' second home was near Mid-Pacific Institute, so we would walk across the Mid-Pac campus to get to UH-Mānoa, so that was really convenient.

MK: You know, at any time during your collegiate years, did you ever consider another profession besides teaching, or did you just kind of stay the course all the way through?

JN: I stayed the course, pretty much. I mean, I looked at other things like law or accounting, even nursing, but I think it was pretty much ingrained in me that I really wanted to teach.

WN: We're just about ready to wrap things up. We have a lot of information on your career, your very long teaching career. I'd like to just ask you, there's been a lot of changes on Lāna'i, and you know, we've had different owners, and now we have a new owner. What do you envision as being the future of Lāna'i?

JN: For Lāna'i? Well, it seems that Mr. [Larry] Ellison is one who is more in tune with the community and its needs. It seems that way from the newspaper articles, TV, and different Lanaians talking to me. He has an ear for what the people have to say about Lāna'i's development. It's admirable and wise to have Lanaians working with him on the planning. So, it's not like he wants to impose his values and his desires into shaping the island. I think he really—it seems like he really wants to improve the island for the people there by providing job opportunities, innovative and productive agriculture resources, improved land utilization, adequate water supply, and new energy resources.

Since pineapple is gone, oh, it was so sad when we fly in. We had to fly quite a bit, because we wanted to leave the island. You know, I think people in Hawai'i really fly a lot, because to go interisland, flying, we don't have a ferry. Flying doesn't frighten most of us. There are many people on the Mainland, I find, who had never, ever flown. So, they couldn't believe when I said, "Oh, yes, we fly, we fly the little plane or big plane, it doesn't matter." But anyway, Lāna'i's airport has expanded, and I think it's going to expand even more than it is now. But the loss of the pineapple fields has really been a great tragedy. It was beautiful to see all the rows of pineapple. It was a beautiful sight. Coming in for landing, we could see these neat rows of pineapples.

But labor, I know that there was a place for the unions in the beginning of labor when there was child labor and during the Industrial Revolution, and all in our country's history. But I think they went too far, and the union became active and powerful on Lāna'i. With the unions, I think in all of the plantations, it made workers' wages go up, and it made it harder for the companies to operate and gain a profit. You know, all companies, you don't blame them. All owners would want a good profit, because that's the reason why they have their companies. Then, they started to have plantations in the Philippines, and in Taiwan, because the labor would be cheap. They could get the same fruit, they can accomplish the same with less costs and they would get their return. That hurt Lāna'i, because that was the major business for most of the people. Others, of course, like my mother, people working at the hospital or in the offices, the post office, the stores. But all the rest of the people were involved in some kind of labor related to the pineapple plantation.

WN: Would you like to see a return to some kind of large-scale agriculture or anything?

JN: I don't know enough about the facts as to the feasibility of various ideas being implemented, but experts need to be consulted. The red soil on Lāna'i is extremely rich and fertile. Lāna'i is very unique. The city is elevated over a thousand feet above sea level. The climate is cool, like Wahiawā. You know, it isn't like Honolulu. The mornings are very damp, and there's heavy dew that falls. So, all of those things have to be considered. They refer to it as a privately owned island. I think it does need to be privately owned, but they do have the hotels, where Lanaians can work for a living. I don't think I will live to see it, but I'd like to see it where the land can be used again, because it's fertile land. It was really rich, fertile land that helped produce all those pineapples. And, the island is a good hunting ground, good fishing ground.

WN: Now, if you see somebody on the street, and you tell them, “Oh, I’m from Lāna‘i,” what does that mean to you?

JN: Well, I’m proud of it, that I’m from Lāna‘i. But always, in the back of my mind, I’m thinking whether people still look down on Lāna‘i. I think for those of us who have come out of Lāna‘i, I think it makes us feel that we have to show them we’re just as good as everybody else. You know, we’re just like everybody else. They shouldn’t look down on us because we only had one school, and it’s a small island, the pineapple island. So, the misconception is that, oh, that’s all we know. I think we were very fortunate, and our education, when I think about it, I think I gobbled up anything the teachers were saying. Even their biases and prejudices, and all. But you know, I remember even Mr. Kiyoshi Minami, who was our social studies teacher, had been in the army in Europe. I remember the numerous things he had said about Switzerland, and Germany, which gave me the desire to go there someday to see for myself.

The ethnicity of the population has changed. Many of the Japanese have moved out, and the ones left are the older ones. Many of the elderly mothers and fathers have come out to Honolulu and most of us have come out to Honolulu. Some have gone to Kaua‘i, Maui, or Hawai‘i Island. I have one brother who went to Maui, but one brother is here [on O‘ahu]. The parents have had to come out to live with their children, because they can’t take care of themselves. We have a hospital there, but often, they need to be medevaced to Honolulu. They need to be carried on an airplane to come over to Honolulu. My husband had a chance to—he was working for Pan American [World Airways]. They were going to open an office in Hilo. He was interested in going. I said that for the benefit of our children, I felt their cultural advantages, education, all advantages, I said, “We need to stay here.” So, I said, “You can go.”

(Laughter)

But it’s a good thing he didn’t, because it lasted only—I don’t know, maybe only months, and then they found it wasn’t profitable. (Chuckles)

MK: You helped him make the right decision.

WN: You said earlier that, “Oh, I’m proud to be from Lāna‘i.”

JN: Yes.

WN: What does that mean? I mean, why are you proud to be from Lāna‘i?

JN: Well, I think I learned so much. I mean, what I have become, I feel I owe to my education and training while I was on Lāna‘i. The friends that I’ve made on Lāna‘i are sincere, honest-to-goodness faithful friends with whom I am still in touch. You know, Rosita and Libby, they were all in different grades—they weren’t my classmates. But we have this sense of camaraderie, this sense of community, because we came from the same place, and we know what it was like. I’m really proud to be from there, because my friends and all have really gone on to be educated and be successful. Even though they were from Lāna‘i, some were able to go to private school in Honolulu, and then go on to college and become doctors, and teachers, and lawyers even. We have that. But you know, it’s wonderful. My neighbor, Japanese family again, Daniel, he went on to become a doctor, a heart surgeon. He’s only a year younger than I am, and we used to play together; play and fight together (chuckles). He married a woman from Minnesota or Michigan. But anyway, one of those. I was told—and I was so proud of him—that he volunteered his service as a retired doctor when they had all of the trouble in the southern—what was it that happened?



WN: The hurricane? Katrina?

JN: Katrina, yes. Hurricane Katrina [2005]. That he just went down there to help, to see how he could help. I thought, oh, that's a Lanaian. You know, he became a heart surgeon, but he's willing to freely give. As he's able to, he contributes to the LACA organization, and when he does come, he participates. So, even though he's gotten to be a big wheel, and an important well-known person up on the Mainland, he still wants to do things. He hasn't forgotten Lāna'i. I think that's it with all of us. We have roots there. Even though we have left, I wouldn't exchange my life for having lived here, because I know that the people here in Honolulu, some of them may look down on us, due to ignorance because they don't know any better. I don't hate them or whatever. I don't resent them. I feel like Jesus said on the cross, "Forgive them." They don't know what they're saying. (Chuckles) And so I'm very proud to be from Lāna'i. I'm not ashamed of it, at all. No matter what—and sometimes I do get a reaction. Oh, Lāna'i? And it sounds—seems like a negative reaction. But I feel that we're just as good as anybody else.

WN: Good place to end. We'd like to thank you very much.

MK: Thank you.

JN: Oh, you're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **Lāna‘i:**

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Center for Oral History  
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University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

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