

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Makato Teruya, 89, retired tōfu maker and peddler,  
Puunene

Makato (Kameya) Teruya, Okinawan, was born March 7, 1891, in Itoman, Okinawa. Her father was a farmer who raised and sold potatoes. She came to Hawaii at the age of twenty to marry Fuki Teruya.

She lived in McGerrow Camp and did various jobs: hāpai kō, cooking and laundering, and making and peddling tōfu.

Today, her sons own and operate the Wailuku-based Teruya Tōfu Factory, which makes Valley Isle Tōfu.

A summary of a recorded interview held in Kahului with Teruya follows.

Tape No. 7-16-1-79 TR

NOTES FROM RECORDED INTERVIEW

with

Makato Teruya

November 10, 1979

Kahului, Maui

BY: Yukihiisa Suzuki and Warren Nishimoto

Immediately after stepping off the boat at Kahului pier in 1911, Makoto Teruya boarded a horse-drawn wagon and went to McGerrow Camp, Puunene. Her husband-to-be, Fuki Teruya, was an employee on the Puunene Plantation. Her first job in the fields was hāpai-kō, receiving wages of between fifty and seventy-five cents a day.

Two years later, she gave birth to her first child. Because she needed to care for the child, she quit field work and started working as a cook for thirty-five men. She was able to watch her children and work at the same time. Teruya woke up early in the morning and prepared breakfast, which consisted mostly of udon, for the men. She then prepared a lunch for them to take out into the fields. Meat was eaten once a week, and was mixed with vegetables. Although she wasn't paid cash for this work, she received free food such as udon and iriko.

Teruya also did laundry for thirty to thirty-five men, charging each a dollar a month. She scrubbed the clothes with a brush. By doing this type of work, Teruya was able to be near her children, something she could not do had she been working out in the fields.

After cooking and laundering for about five years, Teruya started to make her own tōfu. She learned how to make tōfu by watching others in her hometown in Okinawa, so it wasn't difficult for her to get started. Japanese carpenters came to make her equipment. To get started, she borrowed money from friends.

Since her family was growing, tōfu business was ideal because she could wake up early in the morning, be with the children, and make tōfu in her home. Meanwhile, the family raised pigs, feeding the pigs the residue from the tōfu. Raising pigs became a second business. Teruya would sell many pigs to Filipinos, who liked fresh pork. Once a week, the Filipinos would slaughter one of the pigs.

Teruya purchased the soy beans for making tōfu from Kahului Store, Onishi Shōkai, Kobayashi Shōkai, and Nihonjin Shōkai. They delivered the beans to her in bags.

Teruya peddled her tōfu house-to-house in McGerrow Camp, carrying two five-gallon cans balanced on each end of a wooden pole. Each can held about fifteen blocks of tōfu. The blocks, however, were about half the size of today's blocks. To avoid spilling and splashing the water in the cans, Teruya had to walk slowly and take frequent rests. Customers came out of their homes carrying their own containers. Teruya then scooped out the tōfu with her hand and put it in the container for them.

Payment was usually by cash. Occasionally, Teruya would allow people to charge. If she knew the person, she had no difficulty. However, if she didn't know the person, she would write down certain physical characteristics about the person. For example, "man with pukas on his face, two blocks tōfu." Nevertheless, she still had trouble collecting from many who bought on credit.

Teruya, on weekdays, made about three to four boxes of tōfu, each wooden box containing twelve blocks. Whenever someone would order for a special occasion, she would make more. On weekends, especially Sundays when people didn't work, she made more.

Teruya continued to peddle tōfu until the 1930s, when markets such as Noda would send someone to her place to pick up tōfu to sell in the stores.

**STORES and  
STOREKEEPERS of  
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