

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Jeff Yamashita

Jeff Yamashita was born in Honolulu on April 2, 1940. The oldest of three boys, he was raised by his mother, Eunice Young Gee, in Pālama.

Yamashita was educated at Ka'iulani School, Kalākaua Intermediate School, and Farrington High School. He attended the University of Washington in Seattle for 1½ years.

He began frequenting Pālama Settlement when he was about seven years old. It was there he learned how to swim and eventually became a competitive swimmer. He also participated in volleyball, basketball, and softball. He served on the Pālama Settlement Board of Trustees for six years beginning in 1988.

After returning to Hawai'i from Seattle in 1959, he worked for a short while at American Factors, Ltd. In 1961 he became a police officer with the Honolulu Police Department. Later, he was promoted and worked as a homicide detective for fourteen years. In 1986 he retired from the police department and became a private investigator. Beginning in 1989 he worked as an investigator in the City and County of Honolulu procecutor's office.

Today, Yamashita is the deputy director of law enforcement at the department of public safety.

He is the pastor for the Wai'anae Assembly of God. He is married and has four children.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Jeff Yamashita (JY)

Honolulu, O'ahu

June 6, 1997

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

[This interview with Jeff Yamashita was done on June 6, 1997 at his office in Honolulu. The interviewer was Holly Yamada.]

HY: Okay, let's start with when and where were you born?

JY: Okay.

HY: When were you born?

JY: I was born April 2, 1940, in Honolulu, Hawai'i.

HY: And where in the birth order are you?

JY: I'm the first of three boys.

HY: Three boys. And where were you living?

JY: I lived in downtown Honolulu. I don't remember that. My mother [Eunice Gee, nee Young] told me. But it was, I guess, what you would call near Punchbowl, in that area, when I was young. And then we moved to Kalākaua Homes, and I remember that, for a few years. I remember living there—Kālākaua Homes—on Kālākaua Avenue and King Street. And I lived there until I was six years old.

HY: Do you know anything about your parents' background? What did your father do?

JY: Yes, my father [Harold E. Yamashita] worked at the Honolulu Gas Company. He used to be called, I guess what you call a troubleshooter—go out and fix the residents' problems with their gas line or install new ones, the meters and things like that at the homes.

HY: And do you know anything about his family background? Was he born here?

JY: Yes, he was born, I think it was on the Big Island. I'm not sure if it was the Ka'ū area or somewhere on the Big Island, and they moved to Honolulu as he grew up.

HY: So he actually grew up on this island?

JY: Yes.

HY: And what about your mom?

JY: My mom was born in Mokulē'ia on the North Shore and raised like on a farm. My mom, being Chinese, her parents both Chinese, was raised—she had a big family. They were actually, I think, working for Dillingham family at that time. My grandparents anyway were working there. And my mom grew up there, and later on they moved into town.

HY: What kind of farm? Do you remember?

JY: Dillingham property, I don't really know, but they lived and took care of the Dillinghams as, I guess, servants and things like that.

HY: I see. And so, at some point, your parents were divorced?

JY: Yeah, when we were living at Kalākaua Homes. I remember vividly this incident that broke up the marriage. They were having an argument. We were in the living room, my grandparents had just moved from the Big Island, I think, to stay with us—on the Yamashita side. And there was an argument, I don't know what the argument was about, but I remember my father striking my mother. And my mother and I ran to the next door neighbor. I'm pretty sure his name was Uncle Louie, he was a Hawaiian man. And we went next door, she used the phone, call the cops. And I remember crying, and my mother was crying. I don't know what happened to my two brothers, the younger ones, but I remember that incident. And right after that they got divorced.

I didn't know until these last few years that my mother actually wanted to get back with my father, but he was stubborn because, you know, being what I call samurai—Japanese-style. I guess he was proud, so he didn't take her back, so. My mother kind of regretted that. She actually didn't tell me directly, she told my wife about it, and my wife told me. So I inquired, and it's true. She wanted to get back. But he didn't want, so that was the end of the marriage.

And it was kind of a bitter situation because my mother raised us up after that by herself. And because she had the burden, she talked bad about my father, even though he had visitation. We'd take turns on weekends. Whenever he could, we'd stay with him and do things with him. But she didn't like him, you know, it was a kind of hate type of situation. But now, it's all water under the bridge, you know. It's all right. They talk to each other and stuff.

HY: How old were you?

JY: I was six, six years of age.

HY: Six years old. And do you remember anything about your family life with your grandparents when your parents were still together?

JY: Not my Japanese side because, like I said, they just moved from the Big Island to live with us for a short—I think maybe that was part of the situation that broke the marriage up. But we

moved to my mother's side of the family, my Chinese grandparents, in Pālama. That's where I---most of my life I was raised in Pālama, and I was raised there from maybe six to after I graduated from high school. So, while at Pālama, we live in---my grandparents, the last name was Young. I remember both of them, but my grandfather died in my early years there, and my grandmother died later. But my mother took care of them, even though she had to work, she worked and took care of them as they got older and as the years went by. I remember my mother coming home from work taking care of my grandmother, who was bedridden, with the bedpan and always taking care of her bed sores and things like—I remember those things.

But my grandmother is pretty strict, you know. And they own property right on King [Street] and Austin—it's Austin Lane, 1007 Austin Lane, I remember the address. And so I remember the front—two-story building, initially had a Sunshine Soda Shop, had an upholstery shop, and some other things. And upstairs of the two-story front building was like a rooming house for Filipino bachelors. And on one end—there was like three sections—one end had another Korean family living there. But the back section, the bottom was a warehouse for the soda works. You know, they keep all their materials there, equipment and stuff. Upstairs we lived in one half of that, the top. My aunt and uncle lived on the other half, and my cousins were raised next to where I was brought up.

So my two brothers and I were raised here. My brothers, the one below me is Larry, he's one year younger. And my kid brother is three years younger than I am, his name is Lincoln. So we were brought up in Pālama, we went to Ka'iulani School, Kalākaua Intermediate [School]. And then I went to Farrington [High School], my kid brother went to Farrington, but number two, Larry, went to Mid-Pacific because he was good in sports—basketball and baseball—so Mid-Pacific Institute gave him a scholarship. So he had a full scholarship there.

HY: Was that kind of unusual in your neighborhood, for you to be brought up by a single parent?

JY: No, many of my playmates were from broken homes. In fact lot of 'em, as I grew up, went the other way. In other words, they committed offenses, and got in prison, and things like that. Whereas my mother was strict, so we went to church every Sunday. She kept a handle on us. Even though she was busy working, she made sure every Sunday after church she'd take us to the beach or the zoo. So that was one thing we appreciate about her. We get on the bus—in those days, the trolley—and we'd catch the trolley, go down to Waikīkī. We'd either go to the zoo, spend some time there, or go to the beach. And as we grew older, we went by ourselves—my brothers and I. We just catch the bus and go down to San Souci and Queen's Surf and those beaches. And I saw a lot of my friends that I grew up with fall off the law. They went the other way. And some of them turn out all right, but most of them that I knew got into trouble.

HY: Why do you think that is?

JY: I think it's upbringing, even though they had only one parent. And some of them had both parents, too. But it's the whole life. I really believe because my mother was strict, and even though I didn't like it at that time, her strictness, I feel that that had a lot to do with keeping us out of trouble. You know, if she set a curfew, we better be home. Where others, they didn't listen. They rebelled and their parents were either drinking or too busy for them. My mother always spent time with us—made sure we did our homework and stuff.

HY: Who were some of your classmates, starting maybe with elementary school—Ka'iulani?

JY: Who was . . .

HY: [Do] you remember, was it kids around the neighborhood?

JY: Yeah, a lot of neighborhood kids. Mostly Orientals and there's some mixed kids—Korean and Hawaiians, Filipinos. But mostly Orientals I stuck around with, and most of us went to the same school. And some of them that went to the same elementary eventually ended up in different districts because of the boundary, yeah? They went to Central Intermediate or Kawānanakoa, they ended up at McKinley High School. But majority of us went to Farrington High School.

HY: Maybe you can describe your neighborhood a little bit?

JY: Well, when people ask me that, I describe our neighborhood as a slum area. Not to boast or anything, but that's what it was, it was a—Mayor Wright's housing [Mayor Wright Homes] was like a few blocks away, three blocks away. Lot of my friends came from that area, wasn't Mayor Wright's at that time. The time I was growing up was what we call kind of like "Hell's Half Acre," because it was a mixture of all kind of low-income people just living there, and a lot of run-down shacks, and really was a rough area. And where I was, we're kind of on the outskirts of that, but we played with these kids that, you know, were our friends.

And I say slum because in the place we lived in was kind of run-down, too. It's still standing to this day, but it was run-down. And three boys, we had two-bedroom place, my mother stayed in one, and the three of us stayed in one room. And at night we hear the rats scratching in the attic, and we'd find rat holes in the corner, they really chew through the lumber. And we'd have to put tin—you know, tin can—cover it, and nail it to the floor so that they don't come up again.

And my mother kept a nice house, but it was pretty run-down area. And I appreciated what we had, even though three boys in one small room. And we used to rotate, my three brothers, we had a bunk bed, and we had two mattresses on the floor, stacked onto each other. So we just rotate every month or so—one sleep on the top, the next move down, so we rotated.

That was something, but we adjusted pretty well on that, and we had hand-me-downs, you know. I was the oldest, so I used to hand my clothes down to my brothers, because we had a limited budget. So even for me to save for roller skates, which was pretty popular in those days—we used to skate on the sidewalk or go down to 'A'ala Park, see our friends, there was a skating area. I think the skates, if I'm not mistaken, was like twelve dollars. I saw it in the store, grocery store, down the street about a block away. And I saved my nickels, you know, saved money, and eventually had enough to purchase that.

My mother bought us a bicycle—a two-wheeler. And three boys, every day we come home from school, the first one get it would ride—it was a Columbia. Before, those days, only had, I think, two brands, Schwinn and Columbia. So wasn't easy in that sense because, you know, three boys growing up trying to use the same toys. But we kind of adjusted. And we'd fight over it, and stuff like that. But I value those days because money was not available to us, but because we cherished that and was survival. So now that I have money—because through my

work and stuff like that—I cherish it, and I appreciate what I have. I [am] more appreciative of what I have now, because of what I didn't have before. And I wasn't too envious of other people because we made do. We didn't have money to buy toys, so we made our own.

HY: Like what kind of toys did you make?

JY: I remember going to Davy Crockett movies. It was popular when I was growing up. We go and then we come home and make guns. You know, pistols out of guava tree branches, or slingshots out of that. If we go to see Robin Hood, you know, bows and arrows, we made it out of the hedges, and put string and stuff like that. And now the kids just go to the store and buy those items. Even slingshots, they don't make 'em anymore, they buy 'em. We used to make 'em, we used to carve 'em out of guava tree where it was the best. And we'd take out a piece of branch that has a Y and cut it, make a slingshot, put rubber bands and put a little piece of leather, and put a bean, a red bean from the tree, and use it to shoot it out—or a pebble. We made our own toys, never had to purchase any.

HY: You mentioned that you saved some money for your skates though?

JY: Yeah.

HY: How did you get money as a kid?

JY: Well, my mother gave us so much for lunch money, right? Those days, you took your own lunch money. Now, I think the schools have some kind of—I guess you pay ahead. Maybe they have either a card or something, a stamp. But we'd had—we'd take our own money and so I'd save from my lunch money. If my mother gave me a quarter, I'd save a nickel and just eat twenty cents a lunch, whatever.

Or my mother worked Thursdays, every Thursday she worked at Liberty House in Honolulu, Fort Street. And so every Thursday she worked from twelve noon to nine o'clock at night. So when we came home, she wasn't home. So she already had on the table a quarter and maybe almost thirty-five cents. So with that quarter we eat dinner, and usually we go to Palace Saimin Stand, which is in the same block. See, I'm on Austin Lane, and the other side of us—on the other corner—is Tamashiro Market, which is a famous market. Right next to Tamashiro Market, a few doors down, was Palace Saimin Stand, which is still in operation today. It's on [North] King Street, but it's near Farrington High School—right across Diners [Kalihi] drive-in. And I used to frequent the place. Same owners, they have the best base soup for saimin. Anyway, we'd go there and we'd have a small bowl of saimin and maybe sushi, cone sushi, and barbecue stick. And twenty-five cents or thirty cents would suffice. There was enough for us to eat and we'd feel full.

So, that's what we did. Or if I didn't want to eat, if I wanted to save, I'd save a nickel or so out of that. And that's how I got my money, because we didn't really have allowance. My mother had to stretch what she earned, you know? And my father didn't actually help too much, but my mother did most of the finances.

HY: So being the oldest, did you feel like you had some responsibilities for your younger brothers? You know, like on Thursdays you folks had to get dinner on your own?

JY: Yes. Yes, I was in charge even though my brothers (chuckles) didn't like it, especially the one below me. We get along fine now in the sense we're older, but we're so close in age—a year apart—that he didn't like taking orders. I was responsible, but I always got the blame. You know, the first one always has the blame. So I can relate to a lot of the kids nowadays, because you're responsible. When your parents away, you're the parent, right? You have to make the decisions and you gotta do the reporting. If they didn't do well, then you get the—what do you call?—you get the lickings, or you'd be reprimanded for it. And even though wasn't your fault, you still were responsible. So, it was hard trying to be responsible and yet your brothers didn't want to do what you wanted them to do. You know, doing the chores when your mother's not home, they were out playing and you try to tell them do it.

HY: What kind of chores would you have to do?

JY: Well in those days we didn't have carpets, so we had linoleum floors over wood. So what we'd do, we'd have to sweep and mop—that's one chore. Or we'd have to clean the table—clear the table—after a meal, and wash the dishes, empty the garbage pail. Because in those days we had those plastic pails in the corner of the sink, and we didn't have garbage disposals, and you pile the leftovers in there and then you would take it out to the garbage pail outside, which is usually a five-gallon container—tank, container—with a wooden cover on it. We'd dump that in, and then the slop man—the garbageman we'd call, not the rubbish man, this is garbageman—he'd come and pick it up maybe every other day. Take it to feed the pigs. So that's one.

And then we'd mop, wash clothes if it was your turn. But usually I got out of it because I always claimed I didn't know how to run a washing machine. In those days, you had those ringers and stuff, so my kid brother, usually, he liked to do that, he'd do that. In fact my kid brother was good, he could sew well. He learned how to run the sewing machine [and] he didn't use any pattern. What he'd do is get a pair of shorts, and just measure it and copy it and sew pieces of cloth together. And he'd make shorts, even shirts, he made shirts. I mean, he was so good at it, even. Though he was a teenager he'd do that.

And we'd do our own ironing. I was in the third grade, I had to do my own ironing. From then on, I still do my own ironing. Well, my wife lets me do it because I'm faster and I know how to do it. So, ironing clothes. . . .

HY: What about your grandparents, when they were living with you for a while, did you have any responsibility to care for them?

JY: Not really. My mother had full control of it. If they want something to drink or something, we'd do it. But we didn't have to cater to them too much. Like I said, my grandfather died shortly after, and my grandmother died after a few years. Because I was there only twelve years and they died when I was young. But they real old-fashioned, you know, the way they dressed and lived and stuff like that.

HY: You mentioned that there was a Filipino boarding house that was just right next to you.

JY: Right, yeah. Right by the front building. Bachelors, and was interesting because my mother used to always want to—we like the guys, and my mother liked them, and we'd talk. But she was careful for us not to get too friendly with them. But we became friends, and my brothers

and I would run down to Kapālama Canal—in those days it was cleaner than it is now—and we'd catch crayfish, and bring home a half bucket or more, and sell it to them. You know, for fifty cents or something.

And they'd cook it, and they made food. And I used to go over once in a while, and my mother didn't like it, but I used to go over because—they're bachelors so they fry most everything, right? They fry their garlic and smell up the whole place. Garlic and then they make the crayfish. You know, it's like little lobsters. And I went over there and ate with them, and stuff like that. So we used to—I remember one real well, his name was Shorty. That's what we call him, he was a short, Filipino guy, real nice guy. And they all worked, and they were all well-dressed guys. Maybe around three or four at times, depends who's there. Shorty lived there the longest, and I remember him.

HY: Why do you think your mom didn't want you to get too close to them?

JY: Well, I guess because they were bachelors, they're male, and she didn't trust others than the family members, right? So, she didn't make such a big thing, just made sure that we were careful what we're doing. But we tell her, "I went over there."

And, "Hey, no, you shouldn't have gone over there." But, that's all right. Then after a while it wore off. She knew that they weren't going to harm us or anything. I guess careful because she's a single parent, no father around. I think my mother became more strict because she didn't have a male around to tell us what to do, so she was both mother and father.

And I tell all my friends this about my upbringing, because my mother used to spank us and use a ruler or yardstick and it'll break, right? After hitting us on the leg or something for being naughty. I mean, she didn't really beat us up. Then once in a while she'd use a strap, because if we were real naughty she'd hit us with the strap on our buttocks or our legs.

But as we grew older, twelve, thirteen, she says, "I don't want to hit you guys anymore, you're getting too big for me." So what she did was she'd put clothespins on our ear. You never heard that, huh? Well, that's what happened. (HY laughs.) And I think my mother's the originator of this. We'd sit in the corner, nowadays they say time-out, right? You go to your room, or something. Well, she used to have us sit in the living room, in the corner—face the wall, in the corner—and if you weren't too naughty, put one clothespin on one ear. If you're real naughty, she'd put two. And if you're really bad, she'd get the new clothespins, instead of the ones that are weather worn, and they hurt. Put 'em at the lobes of your ear, and hang down. Well that's not too bad. I mean, if you turn around, she'd put another one on, you know. So you gotta obey whatever it is—fifteen, twenty minutes you'd be in the corner. Didn't like that, you know, it hurt.

But the worst part is, when our friends used to come over. And before, when we're growing up, we didn't lock doors. People just walk in and say, "Hey, Jeff, how are you?" You know, friends come over, and they'd see me in the corner and they go (laughs)—put their hands to their mouth and start giggling. Then they tell everybody, "Ahh, Jeff was misbehaving, and he. . . ." That was embarrassing, but it worked, it worked. Was wise of my mother, she didn't have to use the strap or nothing if you misbehave.

HY: Well what would she discipline you for?

JY: Not doing our chores. Because we didn't have that many privileges, other than going outside to play. Like nowadays you can tell the kids, "Well, you won't have the car. You won't do this." We didn't have a car, right? So privileges, she take---because the only movies we go was on a Saturday morning, not—we don't go out at night. So we'd maybe come home and you can't go out play, that's about all privilege. But other than that, that's why she'd spank us or discipline us—for not doing our chores, or answering back, stuff like that. Minor stuff. We didn't commit crimes, but just that, oh, we didn't come in when she called us. Because she yelled out in the street, "Come home for dinner," and we dragged our feet, and she'd discipline us.

HY: You said she emphasized doing your schoolwork, too?

JY: Yeah, yeah. We'd have to do it. I remember when I was, I think I was a sophomore—or was it a junior in high school? But our neighbors across the street—so that would be about '55 or somewhere around there—got a TV, black and white TV, the only one in the neighborhood. So we used to go over watch TV after school like that. My mother didn't appreciate that too much. But then the neighbor kind of got tired of us and the other kids coming over, because we, you know, that's all our playmates. So the mother was wise. What she did was she says, "If the door's open, you can come in. If the door's closed, don't come in."

So whenever we see the door open we run over (chuckles), "Can we watch TV?"

But that was black and white, so we didn't get TV in our home until I was, I think I was a senior. When I was almost eighteen, my mother got one. So when she had a TV, you had to do your studies or you no watch TV. So after dinner we'd stay in—what we call kitchen-dining room was one place—so we'd stay at the table and study and you could hear the TV, but you couldn't see. And so that was the way she was, "You don't come into the living room unless you're through [with] your studies."

HY: This neighbor that had the first television in your neighborhood? Was this a schoolmate?

JY: Yeah, yeah. Two brothers and the mother and a stepfather lived there.

HY: Do you remember their . . .

JY: Oh yeah, in fact, yeah, Choy, George Choy and Robert Choy. Robert died, he's the younger one. George is a year older than I. We went to school together. He's one year older. In fact, we still keep in touch. He became a policeman just about the same time I did, shortly after I did. Police officer, then we became detectives together. And then when I retired, he retired the same time. And we both keep in touch. He went into private investigation, I went into private investigation, and I just talk to him once in a while and stuff like that. So I keep in touch with him, yeah. The mother's still living, the stepfather died, the real father died. So they had broken home, too, but then the mother remarried—my mother remarried, too. Eventually my mother—after nine years of being a single parent—she remarried.

HY: So were you living in the house with [your] stepfather for a while?

JY: Yeah, short, very short time because I went to college—when they got married I went to college at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. And they were trying to

purchase a home in Waimalu—‘Aiea side. And they finally made it. But my mother, before she remarried was looking for a thousand dollars to put down for deposit on the home. And in those days, thousand dollars is a lot of money. Was ‘57, around there—‘56, ‘57.

And I’ll tell you a story that relate to my uncle on my mother’s side—my mother’s brother. They have three brothers—she has three brothers. And the three brothers, you know, in the old days the boys had everything in the Chinese family, the girls get nothing. And my mother was the one that took care of her parents. Nobody else raised a finger, she did everything. And that was the deal, that’s why we stayed in Pālama in that home, was free rent because she took care of them. That’s what they gave her.

So when she called my uncle—I was right there when she used the phone to call my uncle, who lives somewhere else—and ask for a loan from the family, the family estate. He turned her down, says there’s no money, but we knew there was. So my mother cried, I mean, she really cried on the phone. So I felt bad for her. And she got kind of a nervous rash on her because she was so adamant that she wanted to get out of where we’re living and give us a better life. And here’s an opportunity, she qualified, but she didn’t have the deposit.

So, somehow she scrounged up enough money—I don’t know how she got it—she got enough money, and eventually she bought the place. So when I went to the Mainland, the house was coming up so she’d send me pictures of each step as it went up. So I wasn’t there when they first moved in. They moved in November of ‘58, I was on the Mainland already. So was interesting to see. So my stepfather—when I came home—we lived together, my brothers and him. And he was all right, he died a few years ago. She married---well she’s a Young, married a Yamashita, then married a Gee, G-E-E, Robert Gee.

So I keep in touch with a lot of my friends that we were brought up with. In fact, as we go back to those that committed crimes and got locked up in prison, I became a homicide detective in the police department. And I know six people that died—well, they were murdered—that I had to investigate.

HY: These were childhood friends?

JY: Childhood friends. One was in prison, got killed in prison. Imagine, in prison he got killed. He got shot in prison—how do you like that?—by another prisoner. Franklin Melendre. So he got shot. Now he was a Pālama boy, from Pālama Settlement where we were brought up. We call him “Baby,” that’s his nickname.

So on the way home one day from work, about five o’clock, I got a call on the radio, police radio, that there was a shooting at the prison, and there was one dead—an inmate was dead. So wasn’t my case, I wasn’t up at the time for a case, but I stopped by because I was on my way home—I was close by. And I got off, and they were just wheeling the gurney out of the prison into the medical examiner’s wagon. So I said, “Well, let me see.” I didn’t know it was him.

So it’s, “Oh, this guy,” so I looked at the face and I knew it was Franklin Melendre.

I said, “Yeah, I know him.” So it’s kind of shocking, but he went the wrong way.

And then others. I went to (a scene) one time at Salt Lake when they were building up Honolulu Country Club. The golf course was still being leveled and everything. Well, they found a body there one afternoon, so I went there. And this guy had tattoos on his arm and everything. Nobody knew who he was. Body was there, I think he didn't have a shirt on, had pants on, he was shot. So when I got there, I saw, I recognized it was Donald Kealoha, another of my playmates from Pālama. But I knew him, so they say, "How do you know him?"

I say, "Well, I grew up with this guy." You know, and several other murders. I went to an apartment one time, this guy got killed outside of his apartment, in the parking lot, by syndicate people. Hiram Kauhane. So there's three of 'em, but there's others I come upon, and they were my playmates.

HY: When you were a kid, did you have a sense of your life being something that could go that way? I mean, how much awareness did you have of the potential to end up the way some of your playmates did?

JY: No, because I didn't realize it until later on, as I became an adult that, wow, yeah, it could've gone that way. And not knowing---because after a while, as you become an adult, you kind of lose track of some of the people. And then later on, when I got into police work, then I started finding out things that were happening to some of them. Because when I grew up, it was just all part of the growing up. You know, like, so they were bad. I did some bad things, too. Maybe I never got caught, but they were real---they carry it on through their adult lives, most of these guys. Whether they were stealing or doing some other crime, getting into drugs and stuff. And committing a lot of crimes, stealing cars and things like that. But no, I didn't think, "Oh, these guys are gonna go end up in jail," or anything. But of course my mother warned us, yeah?

I remember one incident, my brothers---well, one of my brothers, I think Larry---we were riding a bike, our bike. I was packing him. In those days, that was a big crime, you know, juvenile crime. (Laughs) A police officer stopped us, and tagged us. And you know what? We ended up going down to the juvenile (hall)---the police station used to be on Bethel and Merchant [streets], okay? And right there they had a what they call a detective, or I guess juvenile area was a separate office next to the main station. And I remember vividly going there, my mother taking us, and she was upset. And just for a tag, they didn't arrest us or anything. We had to go there, and the detective talked to us so rough that we got scared. But actually, it was what he was trying to do, scare us. But that was a crime in those days, packing double on a bike. He said, "You know, we can lock you up," and all that. And I remember that. But we didn't do anything after that. I never packed my brother or vice versa, he never packed me.

HY: How old were you?

JY: Oh, maybe ten, eleven years old. You know, but scared us. But we respected cops those days. In fact, we feared them, enough to fear 'em. Nowadays, the kids, they don't have no fear---adults or police officers. So, I remember that. That's the closest to being locked up.

(Laughter)

JY: It was interesting how he made us realize that the law, we gotta obey the law. We would double pack. But that was crucial in those days. I mean, that was a crime. (Laughs) Big deal, yeah?

But anyway, growing up, these times that we were in trouble, we realized. But I think the other guys just carried on and just got in trouble all the time. Rebellious, you know? And we could see, they always get into fights and stuff like that. And we got our share, but not the way they were joining some gangs. Not as big as nowadays. The gangs that we had before were more [affiliated with an] area, like Pālama, Kaka'ako—jurisdictional more than ethnic. Nowadays you have Samoan, Filipino gangs yeah? Vietnamese gang. You play football together and you challenge the other guys. Pālama would play Kaka'ako and you would go to the park and play football—I mean tackle football—and all you had was shorts with jeans and barefoot. No padding or anything. But that's how you challenge each other. And wasn't there to fight. And sometimes you end up fighting and stuff, but wasn't like you going over there and kill someone or anything.

HY: How organized were gangs back then? I mean, was it just mostly that kind of sports play?

JY: Yeah. Sports play and area. We'll challenge the 'A'ala guys basketball or something.

HY: Did you have like insignia or paraphernalia that was just . . .

JY: No. Just name Pālama. "Oh, you from Pālama? Okay, we go play Kalihi guys today, or Kaka'ako guys," you know, just area. Wasn't like Dragons from Kalihi or some of the. . . . The Pālama Settlement had some clubs, you know—Dukes, they had a reputation of being the rough guys. Dukes, Pālama Dukes. But wasn't like a gang per se as the ones that go look for trouble. They just, hey, they did things together.

HY: But there was a territorial mentality about it?

JY: Yeah, even though it wasn't like---it was territorial in the sense of who you belong to, who you belong with. But not that if Kaka'ako came to Pālama we wouldn't allow them to be there. They could, as long as they don't make trouble. Or they could challenge us to play, but it wasn't like, "Hey, you stay out of our turf." That kind of ideal, no.

HY: What would constitute trouble? Like, they're supposed to stay out of trouble. What. . .

JY: Well, if you get in a game, and somebody starts shoving each other, cannot fight. They ending up---your bull against our bull type. You know, who's the best, who's the bull. I mean, they would challenge us like that. It wasn't, you go get knives or stuff like that, it wasn't in those days when we were going out. Was mostly fistfights.

HY: What about the girls?

JY: Well, they didn't have any gangs. Girls were always in the background in those days. The guys just kept the girls out of it.

HY: Maybe this is a good time to flip the tape over.

JY: Sure, okay.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: Okay, so maybe we can just back up a little bit, and then come back to the . . .

JY: Sure.

HY: Now, you said you still maintained contact with your father when you were younger? So you spent some time with him?

JY: Yes, we had---I remember even during the vacation time, when we were on the summer vacation, he'd take us, one at a time, to stay with him a week or so. And I remember going to work with him. He'd take me in the truck, and I remember. So I liked it—good fun to go to work with my dad. Every day we get up in the morning, get ready, and we'd go to Honolulu Gas Company. I forget the street name now. Anyway, across McKinley High School. [Honolulu Gas Equipment Company, a division of Honolulu Gas Company, was located on Kamake'e Street.] But anyway, we went to there and they'd pick up all their—right next to Kodak's. . . . Right across McKinley High School. A field, on Kapi'olani. But anyway, we went there and they'd pick up their orders, what to do, all their work orders, and sit around. Then they all jump into their trucks, their utility trucks—all the trouble-shooters. And we'd go to some place, maybe four or five of us—meaning the trucks—and go to have breakfast. And I remember I loved those, because I remember I loved breakfast when we were eating eggs and bacon, that kind of stuff. And just being around the adults, and I'm eating this up, right, being the only child there. Then we go to his runs, we go to the homes, and tell me, "Hold a wrench," and stuff like that. And he'd take out the gas meter and whatever he had to do, talk to the people—the housewives were home and stuff like that. I enjoyed those times. And come back to the shop at lunch, if we were close by, if our run was in town. Go to the shop, and guys were playing cards—eating their lunch and playing cards, and stuff like that. Or checkers, you know? So I got to stay, right among the lockers. In fact, the place is still there, I see it over there. And I have good memories of those times, being with my dad.

He'd take us fishing, he was a fisherman, he used to throw net. He learned from old Hawaiian guys. He throw net, he'd sew his own net, repair his own net. He used to do that a lot at home.

HY: Where would he go fishing?

JY: He'd go to Portlock and Maunalua Bay area, that place has an island out there. You know, there's an island. It gets covered with water sometimes so he goes out there. Throw net there. Sometimes he go in the country, like Punalu'u area, and I'd be his bag boy. Of course, my brothers did that, too. And he did a lot of throw-net fishing. That's when he walked up and down the water with his sunglasses and his cap on and throw the net. I'd be his bag boy, take the fish in and stuff. I had good memories of that.

And eventually he remarried, too. He married a part-Hawaiian gal, and they still married. They had one son later on. My half-brother is ten years younger than me. Well he died a couple years ago. He was kind of despondent. He lived alone. Sad in a sense because he was ten years younger than I, and he was smart. He went to Kamehameha School[s], graduated with honors, and he was selected—appointed—to go to [Military Academy at] West Point. Came out of West Point, went to the service, the military, in the army—became a captain eventually, helicopter station. Came back here, got stationed at Fort Shafter. Something went wrong, I don't know to this day.

See my father is very quiet; he doesn't talk; he's very proud. So to this day I don't really know what happened [or] why. But he got out of the service, I think was because of a nervous breakdown. So they gave him medical---I'm hearing bits and pieces from family. He's real straight and honest, and apparently he must have turned somebody in or something—or they say you can't do something. So, in other words, whatever he did report, they didn't appreciate, and so I think he didn't like it. So apparently I think he suffered a nervous breakdown. But they gave him a medical discharge and he came out. And he started---we saw him after that a few times. And as the years went on, he became like a hermit, he stayed home. He [became a] recluse and he didn't want to have to do anything with the family or anything.

HY: Did you get to know him at all before he died?

JY: Not that well. We get family get-togethers, that's about it now. But he eventually—two years ago, I think—during the holidays, Christmas holidays, they found him dead. His mother was sick. Usually she would see him every day. In fact she was taking food over to him every day, otherwise he wouldn't eat. She went there, and just before Christmas she got sick, she had the flu, so she couldn't go over for a few days. I think maybe it was like five, six days. When she went over, he was dead. You know, already decomposed and everything, so was kind of sad.

He lived in Waipi'o, Waipi'o Gentry. They lived in Mililani. Pretty smart kid, just that was sad. So they won't talk much about it, so we left out, we can't ask questions. His side of the family, they don't know much about what happened. She won't tell. But she has told---she likes my wife, and she's told my wife a few things, that's how I know. Not too detailed, just enough. So it was sad that he died. Because of that my father, more so, is withdrawn and more—he's got old back injuries. He just stays home, he doesn't do anything but watch TV.

HY: Where was he living prior to, I know you say he's living in Mililani now, but . . .

JY: Well, different places. He never owned a home, he was renting—he and his wife, Helene, my father's named Harold, and Harold and Helene. They moved different places, Kapahulu, Mānoa, because we went to visit when they took us over. Kapahulu, Waikīkī, different places, never owned until my half-brother—they called "Butchy"—Butchy's the one that set 'em up with a home they have in Mililani. He lived with them, then he moved out and went to Waipi'o, bought another place. So apparently, I think with his financing, he got them to have a home. 'Cause I don't think they could handle it much (themselves).

They both retired, my dad and my stepmother. I call her my stepmother, she's not my mother, but I call her that. She's a state government worker, so they're living off their retirement and social security. Not very happy marriage though. She works hard for him. Even when she's sick, she prepares meals, that kind of situation. Real hard, my father's real hard on her. She

complains once in a while, but she keeps doing it. I give her credit, she keeps a nice home. When we go over she's doing all the cooking, she waits on us hands and feet like she does him. 'Cause she's been told all her life to take care of guests and stuff like that.

HY: Did you get to know any of the neighborhoods that you lived in when you go and see him? Did you play with kids?

JY: No, no. But interesting to go back again, let me tell you. I was born as, well I thought I was, Jeffrey Harold Yamashita. I found out my name was Harold Jeffrey Yamashita. When I became fifteen years of age, I wanted to go work at Libby [McNeill & Libby] cannery, my first job. So I applied, but then you have to have your birth certificate, right? So I asked my mother to get my birth certificate out. So she got it out of the safe deposit box, gave it to me—handed it to me. I look at it and say, "Well this is wrong."

She say, "What do you mean?"

I say, "It says Harold Jeffrey, I'm Jeffrey Harold."

She says, "No, that's your name."

Now, I don't know if you remember, in those war days the Japanese—well, my father actually his first name is Eichi, E-I-C-H-I. But then they take English names, so he became Harold Eichi Yamashita. Well my grandfather was still living, he's ninety, probably about ninety-eight or something. He's in a care home now. He---in fact I don't know his Japanese name, I can't even remember. He has a Japanese first name, but he took the English name as Robert, so his name is Robert T.—whatever his real name was—Yamashita. And it wasn't like you had to go to the lieutenant governor's office and change it, you know. You just took on that name and everybody calls him that. And their social security, that's their name. So when my half brother was born, they named him Harold, and they called him Junior. I say, "Oh, my God." Good thing nobody knows me as Harold.

So at my school, and I wish I didn't do this, but when I graduated, I told to put on my diploma—you know they ask you how you want your name—I said put Harold Jeffrey.

So in the police department, you know you have to sign reports, so for eleven years I was signing my reports, legally, Harold J. Yamashita. But actually I'm Jeff, people know me as Jeff. So the guys used to always, legal guys say, "How come you didn't sign this way?" So, I got tired of that. So when I got promoted to detective in 1972—I joined the police force in 1961—I said, "I'm tired of this." And I was already married, so I went to change my name, I went to an attorney, paid seventy-five dollars, he made the papers—documents—got in the newspapers, you know the lieutenant governor's office, they change it. So it's Jeffrey Harold.

HY: You talked about your mom, the type of disciplinarian she was. Did your father discipline you, too?

JY: Not much, because he wasn't around, only when we went to live with him. Of course, because they had that divorce, he tried to treat us good, yeah? Take us to parties and stuff, which was good. But one thing about my dad that he did, which I didn't appreciate—and I told my brothers later in life when we all had our families—was that when we were growing up, my

dad favored my brother Larry. And my brother Larry is very similar to my dad, personality. I mean, if you say spitting image—well my brother's good in sports. Well, we all were good in sports, but he was good in running sports—basketball and baseball. He used to get written up, he's the one who used to play in the Police Activities League [PAL]. We all played in the league, but he was well. . . .

So, he became good, and we go to parties and my father introduce us and, "Oh, this my son Larry, he's all-star this and all-star that." And my kid brother probably wasn't affected because he didn't mention it to me. But I got affected, like, "Well, what about us?" We got two other boys, [but all the attention was] always [focused on] my brother Larry. My brother Larry didn't know that. He didn't, until I told him. I wasn't jealous of him more than upset with my dad, telling all his friends, his drinking buddies, we go to parties, everything, Larry this, Larry that. He'd introduce us, but we took a backseat.

So I didn't appreciate that. So my kid brother and I, Lincoln and I, became real good at swimming. We played other sports, too, but swimming was our forte, and I had a scholarship, partial scholarship, University of Washington, and Lincoln had a full scholarship at Idaho State [University]. And of us three, he's the only graduate from college, so, he's good.

It's not that we try to show up our dad, but to me, it was self-satisfaction like, "See, I'm pretty good." I didn't tell him that, but you know inside me I said, "Hey, I'm pretty good, too." I held the state record—well, was territory in those days because I graduated in 1958. In 1959 we became a state, state of Hawai'i, statehood. So in high school I set the, it was my senior year, I tied actually, interscholastic swim record for fifty yards freestyle, which was a territorial record. And wasn't broken until years later, but . . .

HY: What was your record?

JY: Was 23.3 [seconds] for 50 yards. And my coach was real proud of me because nobody thought that record would be tied for a long (time). So I tied it, didn't break it, tied it. And then later on, years later, somebody else—now they swim faster. But I was part of that. And we took---in 1958 [1956—JY later corrects himself] we beat Punahou [School]. Farrington High School beat Punahou swimming, and that was unusual because Punahou was tough. Well, they get guys on scholarships. But our coach psyched us up so much that we beat them.

HY: Was that a big rivalry?

JY: Oh, wasn't '58, I'm sorry, was 1956 when I was a sophomore. Because our novice, or what we call the junior team, scored so much that we helped the varsity [team]. So we dethroned---in the Yale meet, Y-A-L-E, Yale meet was the big meet. Yale meet was the big meet of the year, and we beat Punahou.

We're public school, the private schools had all the big guns. But that year we had real good swimmers in the varsity and the JV [junior varsity]. But our JV was real strong, I was one of the strong swimmers. And a lot of us came from Pālama Settlement, we were groomed there. So when the championship meet came, we beat them, beat Punahou. And was so good, I mean, was a good feeling. Not that we didn't like them, we had good friends over there, all the years we spent together in AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] meets and stuff, so when we swam in high school, we knew each other. But just that, we never thought we'd beat 'em. But

because we had a strong JV team, the scores came up so high that we beat them.

HY: Who was your Farrington coach?

JY: It was Al Minn, Albert Minn. He still coaches nowadays, he's with the Aulea Swim [Club], on the other side of the island. And he was coaching at University of Hawai'i for a while, he was a coach. And Harry Mamizuka was an assistant, and he was our Pālama coach. So we beat 'em and it was self satisfying, to see that we took a championship from a big school. I still see some of the swimmers from Punahou, we're still friends. Just that the rivalry was there that year. But was surprising because people never thought a public school could beat Punahou in those years because they had really a good team, tough swimmers.

HY: Who were some of your classmates at Farrington?

JY: Well, governor, state of Hawai'i, Ben Cayetano was my classmate.

HY: Do you remember him?

JY: Yeah, yeah, we hung around together, our gang. You know, he was in our bunch. Yeah, we did. Never thought he'd be governor. (Laughs)

HY: Why is that?

JY: I don't think anybody thought that our classmate would be governor for the state of Hawai'i. I mean, he was all right. The personality didn't show like he does now, but apparently he became a lawyer. I think that's what made him, and then he came into politics. Not that he couldn't be [governor], but just that nobody expected that kind of stuff to happen.

HY: What was he like as a kid?

JY: Quiet, nice, well liked. Not as aggressive as he is now. (Chuckles) He was all right, quiet guy, well liked. That's all I can say. Smart. Playful like everybody else. He wasn't putting his nose to the grind and being studious. He did all right; he was smart. Yeah, active, he was active like us. All of us were active. Our bunch was pretty active in the school.

HY: Back to your small kid time. At some point after school you began going to Pālama Settlement.

JY: Yeah, well when I was young, seven, eight [years old], we used to go Pālama Settlement, just to participate in things. My mother would send us there, we'd get into their summer fun, and things like that. Go camping, go hiking and learn to swim. And Pālama Settlement had Nelson Kawakami, who was the swimming director, I guess you would call him. And "Earie" [Kalau], his assistant, this Hawaiian guy. And that's how I learned how to swim.

And while I was at Ka'iulani [School]---in fact all the elementary schools, Ka'iulani, Likelike [School], Kauluwela [Elementary School], that were around the area, the neighborhood, would go to Pālama Settlement to learn how to swim, fifth and sixth graders went to swim part of the year, and they have Red Cross instruction, too. The Red Cross would come in and help, and we learned how to swim. You know, we get a hold on the side [and] kick. We grab one of the

poles, and then they'd walk across the pool, from the edge of the pool.

And I remember vividly, going down on Mondays, the pool would be low, what we call low tide. Because on the weekends they clean the pool, but then on Monday, they fill up so much. Maybe if I was to stand in, I would be up to my chin in the deepest area. For young kids it was deep, but it'll gradually move. 'Cause the pool kind of slopes from eight feet to twelve feet like that, and then comes up to ten feet. Kind of sloped that way. So on the eight-foot end of the pool you come down on wooden ladders, two wooden ladders, and we kids would go down and then we'd get on our tummies and we'd put our hands in front of us, and we'd kick. That's how we learned how to swim, and learned how to stroke in the deeper water. It helped us. So that's how I learned how to swim, through those programs.

And about age ten, eleven, that's when I joined the swimming team, Pālama Swim Team we called it. The Pālama Swim Club, I'm sorry, Swim Club. We changed to "team" later on. So we were proud to wear what we had, red sweatshirts with white flying "P" on our sweatshirts, or even our shorts. We had black shorts with white "P" on it, and we were proud to be part of, you know, that's the identity. And that's what kids are going through nowadays, they're looking for clubs, gangs, right? So that was kind of like our gang, the swim team was my gang. I mean we stuck together, did everything together, families did things together.

HY: Did they provide uniforms for you?

JY: We had to sell sweet bread. Those days, the famous bake shop was Buck's Bake Shop, by Mō'ili'ili, by the old stadium, Honolulu Stadium. Same block, had this Buck's bakery. If you wanted fund-raising, you go there, and you would sell sweet bread, maybe fifty cents a loaf, and you'd make half of it, or whatever the deal was. So we'd go around, and my coach Harry Mamizuka would take us. Oh, we go Kapahulu, because our neighborhood you can't sell much in Pālama. So he'd take us to the outlying areas where people have money, like Mānoa, and drop us off on the block, and we'd walk the block and sell sweet bread.

HY: You'd go door to door?

JY: Door to door, that's how we made our money. That's how we bought our uniforms and stuff. And we used to pay a dollar a year to be a member of Pālama Settlement. They give you a card, says your name, just a dollar. But see, had a sense of---I was proud of that card. Two cards I was proud of, that one and my Red Cross swimming, that [meant] I knew how to swim. You know, says beginner swimmer, then advanced swimmer, whatever, those Red Cross cards. I always carried it in my wallet, especially the Pālama Settlement (card).

And we get to Pālama, [if] you want to use a ball in the gym, you turn your card in, they give you the basketball. So you return (your ball and) you get your card back. Or in the swimming pool, at the pool office you have to turn in your card, you get a basket, wire basket, with a huge safety pin, was like a big diaper pin, and has a circular emblem with a number, so-and-so---so you knew what locker area you have. So the basket fit in a certain part of the shelves that you have. And you put that in there and you take the---oh, I'm sorry, that's in the office. They take that, you take the pin, and you put it on your shorts. When you come back, you turn the pin in, and has your number, number seventeen, so they go to the shelf and take number seventeen basket off the shelf. That's where all your belongings are, right there, all your clothes and your wallet, whatever.

HY: So they had it very organized.

JY: Organized, yeah. And if you didn't have membership, you pay ten cents to swim. You pay a dime, if you're a nonmember.

HY: Now when you first started going there, what kind of activities? You were younger then, yeah? You said you were seven or eight?

JY: Yeah. Well they'd have music, their programs, Halloween time, that kind of functions. You get in or you get into---like they going hiking on Saturday, you sign up and you get there. Kind of like a YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] program, similar. Or they have sports program; you go to learn judo. You can take music and acrobatics. They had volleyball. So you just go where you feel like, sign up, after-school programs. And they even have ukulele, piano, that kind of stuff, you just sign up for the programs. And most of the programs were free, volunteer help, or they had some staff taught things like that. And they had clubs, as I got older they had clubs, teen clubs like that. And they meet once a week, whatever, and you do stuff together. And we go to Pālama-by-the-Sea, used to be in Hale'iwa side, Waialua, had Pālama-by-the-Sea. Had cabins, had a dining hall, stuff like that, so we used to do that. Now it's Pālama Uka, Pālama in the mountain, have a place up in the mountains. Kawailoa I think you call it, Kawailoa area. So one year, I forgot what year, the storm . . .

HY: [Tape inaudible]

JY: Yeah, tidal wave [in 1957], I guess, [damaged] all the property in Pālama-by-the-Sea. They never fixed it up after that. So we lost out. That was good times, going to Pālama-by-the-Sea for a week and being in the cabin with kids your age, yeah? Boys and girls were separated. And do things together as a group, arts and crafts.

HY: Was your mom with you?

JY: No, no, no, just kids. Parents weren't allowed. They had staff, good staff. We had camp fire, you know, all the stuff that kids like to do. Crab hunt, they have games, you play softball, organized games, and they have arts and crafts, things like that.

HY: Do you remember some of the staff leaders that you had?

JY: Yeah, Kiyoshi Matsuo was the athletic director. "Knuckles," we call him Knuckles. Bertha Lee, she was the assistant athletic director, but also she was the assistant swim coach, and she became Bertha Nahoopii. She was a police officer. In those days she was like a social worker.

(Taping is interrupted, then resumes.)

JY: Yeah Bertha, and there were others. This gal Winifred Ishimoto, she was a social worker.

(Interview is interrupted, then resumes.)

HY: Okay so, and now would Bertha and Winifred take you folks up to Pālama-by-the-Sea?

JY: They were part of the staff.

HY: They were part of the staff? Who would go up there with you?

JY: Oh, they'd truck us or bus us in from town to there. It was a whole program, like a summer fun program. So you go there a week, you come back to the settlement, you do some other things. But that was like the city program [under] the parks and recreation [department] where the kids go to summer fun, and one week they go to Kualoa Beach Park. Well, that's kind of like what we did. You have a program at the settlement, but then you look forward to the camp.

HY: What were the cabins like?

JY: Plain steps going up, I remember, and then small, maybe a front porch, real small, railings going up. And you walk in, and they have bunk beds. The toilets weren't there, the restrooms weren't there. You had to go to another building next to it. Maybe you have a cluster of cabins. So they have bunk beds, and the walls would come up to maybe almost six feet high, and then they have a screen. So the top bunk would be, like you have the view, you could look outside, you have screen windows and old wooden plank-type window protectors. Like you go outside and put it up, and put a piece of board to hold it open. That's how it was. It wasn't sliding or anything, just had the screen.

And then lot of ironwood trees around, so was nice. At night they tell you spooky stories. The wind blew threw ironwood trees and, "Whooooooo." We found this out later but when we were young, what they used to do was put fishing line. You know, *suji*, from the tree to the clothesline, or even to the cottages. And when the wind blew, the thing made the strange sound, going through the *suji*. That's when they start telling us ghost stories. Say, "You hear that? You hear that? That's the ghost up there." We'd all cuddle up in one area.

(Laughter)

JY: Yeah, so everything was good. I don't think we paid too much for the camps or the summer fun. And good food, they fed us real well in the kitchen.

HY: What would they feed you?

JY: Oh, chili and rice, stew and rice, all these. I mean, eggs for breakfast, pancakes, whatever. They fed us well, real well. Big kitchen and dining room. We'd go fishing. They'd teach us how to fish, and stuff like that. We wouldn't only play, was lot of teaching going on. Camp fire at night, tell stories, play games, have marshmallow, you know, what do you call those with the graham crackers?

HY: Are you talking about s'mores?

JY: S'mores, s'mores see? S'mores, you look forward to those things.

HY: And did you go with your brothers? Or were the three of you separated?

JY: Well, we separate because different age yeah? Different age group. We see each other, but

they're in a different cabin, not in the same cabin. They break us up.

HY: There were several cabins?

JY: Oh yeah, several cabins, yeah. Maybe eight to ten in one cabin. And your counselor, I guess you'd call him, would stay with you in a cabin. Was good.

HY: Were the counselors people that were with you when you were at Pālama Settlement, too, and they just took you up there?

JY: Yeah, lot of them were staff, paid staff or volunteers I guess from the university, or older guys that adopted Pālama, that volunteered their time during the summers like that.

HY: Were most of the kids in the neighborhood, were they all going to Pālama Settlement after school?

JY: Yeah. My friends, because most of my—when I was in elementary, or even through intermediate—were Japanese, yeah? They went to right next door to Pālama Settlement, this is Pālama Gakuen, the Japanese-language school. So they go to that school from elementary to intermediate, usually high school they're through with it. And I used to tease them. I go there and wait for them, or run from Pālama and meet them, because they had to go to Japanese[-language] school, most all my friends. I wish, kind of, that I went. My mother was Chinese, she didn't care about the Japanese language.

So anyway, they did that, so yeah, after school we'd end up at Pālama Settlement, and like a second home. My mother trusted the people there, so she never worried about us. She just made sure we came home on time for dinner. And we took a shower there, because we swam there and they get hot shower. And lot of [us] took shower there. When I was on the swimming team, that was common practice and all. Don't have to go home and take a bath, what we call bathe.

Because in those days, when I lived in Pālama, we had a tub, the old-fashioned tub, and we didn't have heaters. So what we had to do was boil our water, in big, either pots or kettles, big kettles. And we'd go in the tub and fill up a big, we had a Japanese word [*tarai*] for it . . .

HY: *Furo*?

JY: Well, like a *furo*, but big, round, pail bucket yeah, wide one. And put maybe hot water in it, put cold water, so you get warm water to bathe in. So you bathe like a *furo*, yeah, you splash water on yourself with either a towel or a small pail or something. And then you soap. That's how we used to bathe. So before you bathe, you just don't go in the tub, you had to go make sure you had (hot) water. So you had to plan ahead of time, because you had to boil the water.

HY: You boil the water on. . .

JY: On the stove, gas stove. And gas stove fast, right? You had to do that. It's not like nowadays, you just jump in. So we had to do that. So we took a lot of our showers at Pālama. "Well, you make sure you take your shower." So we come home from swimming practice like that, and we just take a shower and come home. And we already clean right? (Laughs) Save water and

everything. Save time.

In fact if you talk to lot of old folks—like we had our [Pālama Settlement] centennial year last year—all the people would say, if you talk to people, they say they learn from Pālama Settlement (how to swim). During the centennial year [celebration], I heard from a lot of people, even if I didn't know them, they said they learned to swim at Pālama, or they went to the dental clinic there, Strong-Carter Dental Clinic, which was part of Pālama Settlement's outreach to the people. Ten cents a visit for kids and they went to the dentist there. Lot of people will tell you that. I think even [the former] governor, [George] Ariyoshi will say that he remembers going to Strong-Carter Dental Clinic. Because he's, I think he's from Liliha. I think that's where he used to live. So, yeah a lot of people have memories of that place. Whether it was for health reasons or play reasons.

HY: Did you folks make use of the dental clinic as well?

JY: Yeah, oh yes. Not having enough money, we use 'em. Because the schools took you there, too. The schools went for dental hygiene program, and then you could come there . . .

HY: Instructional?

JY: Yeah, how to brush your teeth, remember they had those long sinks outside with the faucet, when you turn on they tell you how to brush your teeth. I remember the nurse would tell you how to brush your teeth, "Now this is where you brush it." They do it on charts first, right? And then they show you actually doing it. And then you go to the clinic, have checkups. But then if you had to come back for dental work, you pay ten cents and come back. That was good.

HY: Well, what other sports did you get involved in?

JY: I played basketball. Oh, you mean at the settlement? I played volleyball, basketball, softball. What else did they have? Oh, judo, and things like that.

HY: Who was the judo instructor?

JY: I'm not sure. But I know there was an acrobatic [teacher], Mr. Lee. I didn't take that because, you know, (chuckles) I no believe in going up in the air, thrown up in the air, trampoline, and stuff like that, but this guy Mr. Lee, he was good. Good shape, and he taught the kids. He had a team. But judo, I forgot the guy's name. [Jerry Tarutani was the judo instructor.]

They had a small weight room. Anybody can go in there and lift weights. And we did some weight training for swimming. Farrington used to come and practice swimming and basketball over there, because Farrington didn't have their gym and swimming pool. So the Farrington High School team used to come. So I used to watch them.

HY: You had clubs and groups there, too, yeah?

JY: Yeah, they had clubs and groups. I wasn't involved in clubs over there, because I was at Kalihi YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] when I was in high school. Kalihi YMCA had clubs, High Y clubs, for the guys, Tri High Y for the girls. So I was in the High Y club. I

didn't need it at Pālama. But even though I was a member of Pālama, Kalihi was my club activities, because all my school friends were there.

HY: Now, it was mostly servicing that area, that neighborhood. Were there any kids from other areas that you . . .

JY: Well, mostly the Kalihi, Pālama, Liliha area kids. See those days, people, when you involved in a community, you stayed there right? Now, the place has changed, Pālama is more immigrants, different ethnic groups, and they're having a harder time actually, the staff there, having the people feel community like, you know what I'm saying?

Because when I was on the [Pālama Settlement] Board [of Trustees], we were trying to draw the people from the community to come and use the facilities. And there are people using it, but they have to draw 'em in. Before, we all came. It was, hey, that's understood, that's our center. Whereas now, they have senior citizens' program which is doing real well. They come from all over the island, because they got a good program. And even for the young people, they have a game room, Mayor Wright kids come over. And there are some people that are being serviced by—they have the Pākōlea Program, which is the sports, yeah, football, like that. But before it was just understood, you live in the area, you come over there. You felt community. Now, it's not a community.

HY: At one point did that start to change?

JY: I don't . . .

HY: It happened after you left?

JY: Yeah, after I left, I guess. Gee, I don't know, maybe late [19]70s, early [19]80s, because the complex was a place change. Because that area of Mayor Wright's—when I was growing up, wasn't Mayor Wright's, was a real slummy area—and then when Mayor Wright's came into being, I still was—I was old already—but lot of the younger kids like [Edward] "Skipa' " Diaz—I don't know if you know Skipa' Diaz from Farrington, the coach, football coach—he came from there. Him, his brothers, and some other guys that made real well in sports came from that area, the housing area. Wasn't all bad. Now it's worse than when they first started Mayor Wright Homes.

Housing was, I think, was more family-oriented. Now it's more gangs, the families are having a hard time again. Because a mixture of immigrants, yeah, that come from different countries. I think the cultures are different. Whereas if you're local, you're local, even though you're of a different nationality, different ethnic background. We got along—Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian. Now you have a problem with the Vietnamese, Koreans, Filipinos, and they don't understand each other. I think that's why they have problems over there, you know?

HY: Well, outside of when you used to visit your dad, did you venture outside of that small kind of little area? I mean, you lived there, you went to school there, and after school—you were kind of [in] this small little radius. Did you venture beyond that? I mean, just to go to the beach, or anything like that?

JY: Oh, we went to the beach, as I got older I went to the beach with my friends. Oh yeah, I did

other things. Well Pālama was central, even through high school, because of my swimming. I still swam in the AAU meets, even though I was in high school, I swam age-group swimming up to when I was, well, age-group up to seventeen and then when I came an adult, I swam till I was twenty-two, in the senior meets. So I still was swimming for Pālama.

So I was always back there, I did other things, I had other friends. When I went away for a year and a half to Seattle to go to school, I was homesick, didn't do too well, but then I decided to come home help my mother with (mortgage) payments. So I came home, worked for American Factors at a warehouse, for a year and three months. And somebody told me to take the police exam. In fact, was my stepmother, my father's wife. She said, "Oh Jeff, why don't you take the police exam?"

I never thought I'd be a cop. My closest [thing] to public service was to be a fireman, but I never really thought of it seriously. The most serious thought I had from Pālama Settlement, because I liked seeing the social workers, the way they treated us, so I thought I was going to go into social work. But then she said, "Take the police exam."

Because as a warehouseman, I was making \$1.38 an hour at the time, 1960. Big deal, yeah? \$1.38 an hour, punch time, I said, "Oh, I'm getting tired of this." So I took the exam. At that time, they were getting \$444 a month pay. That's the salary for a starting police officer in 1960. So I took the exam, I was twenty at the time, see I was born 1940, so 1960 I was twenty.

So I had to take the exam as a police cadet. See police cadet was from eighteen to twenty-one [years old], twenty-one and over is a police officer. But [they take] the same exam, but you [as a police cadet] don't wear a gun, you don't have a badge, you just work in the police department, and cadets have light blue top and dark blue pants. And you work internally, different divisions [in the] office, you don't do patrol work or anything. But that's good. So I took it as that, but I didn't get to be a cadet because when I turned twenty-one—I passed the exam, when I turned twenty-one in April of '61, 1961, I still wasn't hired, right? So I went down to civil service, changed my status see? Now I'm twenty-one, can I be changed to police officer? Yes, it is okay, so police recruit. So one month later they call me. So May 1, I got hired, 1961.

So then became a police officer—well, all through the exam, you know the written exam, I passed and went along, I still wasn't that serious. And came up to the---well, I passed the agility [test]. And so finally the last interview before you take the job, you meet either the chief or the deputy chief, and then maybe four or five [others], maybe a captain or lieutenant. So there were some personnel people and lieutenants. And the deputy chief was Arthur Tarbell at that time. Chief Daniel Liu was the police chief, Tarbell was his deputy. Well, he was running the interview and some other people that I—when you get recruited, you know the lieutenant in personnel because that's the guy that talks to you all the time.

So I went in there and then they ask you pat questions like, "Why do you want to become a police officer?" You know, they ask everybody that, right? And most guys, I found out later on, say, "Always wanted to do public service, always wanted to be policeman," that kind of stuff. In those days, lot of Kamehameha School graduates went there because they had ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] and Farrington, too, [had] ROTC.

So I guess they were expecting me to say the pat answer, "I always wanted to be a cop, because I like public service." So I told 'em, "Oh, because of the pay." (HY chuckles.)

They stunned, they were stunned. The Deputy Chief Tarbell looks at me and says, "Oh, that's pretty honest." (HY laughs.) "Well, explain yourself."

So I say, "Well, I make \$1.38 an hour." I says, "Four hundred forty-four dollars a month is good pay, plus the benefits."

"Oh, do you have relatives or friends in the police department that made you interested?"

I said, "No, not really, the closest that I have is—" when I was growing up, I remember the police officers Ezra Wolf and James Kendrick, who ran the program, the police activities league program, the PAL program. I know them real well, they were there many years. So I used to participate in biddy boxing, my brothers and I, biddy boxing, and all this, basketball, baseball.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 27-29-2-97 & 27-30-2-97

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Jeff Yamashita (JY)

Honolulu, O'ahu

June 19, 1997

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This is the second session with Jeff Yamashita. It's June 19, 1997. The interviewer is Holly Yamada, and we're at his office in Honolulu.

I think the last time we left off you were talking about how you got into doing [police] work, but maybe we could just kind of backtrack a little bit . . .

JY: Whatever, you just lead me.

HY: And talk about after you graduated from high school at Farrington. You went to college on the Mainland. How did that happen? Why did you decide to go to the Mainland? You got a scholarship for swimming, right?

JY: Yeah, I got a partial scholarship to attend the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington for swimming. And I went up there with two other of my high school graduate friends, and we swam together. So three of us went up, and we joined another guy who was already there. He's also from Farrington and he used to swim with us, so he was a year ahead of us.

So all of us were working—he set it up for us—so we all were working in a sorority house, Alpha Gamma Delta sorority house, as houseboys. Was a live-in situation in the basement. The four of us---Patrick Murata, he's also from Pālama, he's a Pālama boy and a Japanese-Irish guy, and he's a good swimmer, and he had a full scholarship for swimming at University of Washington. So the three of us, myself, Walter Miyashiro, and Ed [Edwin] Jensen [Jr.], went up there and we stayed in the basement of this sorority house, with the cook and an assistant cook, and we had two rooms, two of us in each room.

And that's how we had---in other words we had free room and board, and I think it was fifteen dollars every two weeks, that's what it was—so thirty dollars a month. And all the food we could eat and everything. All we did was take care of the kitchen responsibilities—wash, serve the girls—the ladies—and clean around the perimeter of the house, and things like that. So we arranged with our schedules who would be at what meals. So they always wanted at least two people at a meal, two of us, and usually we had three.

So that was an enjoyable time, because even though I was homesick, we worked there and at the swimming pool. If we needed extra money, we worked as lifeguards or in the pool office.

So that was good. Even though we had partial scholarship, we had enough finances and things were taken care of, so was a wonderful time.

I stayed there a year and a half. The first year I had a hard time because I took, of all things, Japanese as my foreign language. See I didn't take foreign language in high school, but that was one of the requirements. So as a freshman, I had to sign a paper, and met with the dean of students to assure that I would take it my two first years at college. So I did, I signed the paper. So I took Japanese, I don't know, I guess because thinking I'm Japanese, but that was the hardest ever. I kind of failed a little bit on that.

Anyway, my grades weren't good towards the end of the semester, so I had to go to night school, what we call flashlight school. And made 'em all, my grades. But I decided to come home in '59, Christmas of '59. Yeah, '59, and decided to come home and help my mother. She had just purchased a house in '58, 1958 when I left. So I came home and worked with her, (in paying the mortgage). And I also came home because I had a girlfriend, who was still in high school. And shortly we broke up, within a month.

So I worked at American Factors, on Cooke Street. I did warehouse work and worked my way up. After a year and three months there, I left. They were heavily recruiting in 1960—posters all over town, and advertisements in the paper. So they had a big push, that's one of the biggest pushes they had for police officers for the Honolulu Police Department.

So I signed up, never thought I'd be a cop, like I told you earlier. But I kind of thought I was going to lean towards social work.

HY: Were you living at home with your mom?

JY: I was living at home with my mom, and my brothers, too. One was still in school, high school. The other was---Larry was out. He was working at Aloha Airlines, I think, at the time. Then I got hired, then when I went to the interview---well not interview---when I went to the personnel office to sign on, I was waiting in the lobby---in the waiting room---and two guys came and talked to me, and took me into a room.

So I didn't know what it was, I thought it was university grad students or something doing some research. They were asking me all kinds of questions. Kind of like, what you doing now, where was I brought up, what happened in Seattle when I was there. "Did you slum around? Did you hang around Mayor Wright housing?" I was wondering what they were getting at, but I kept answering. Well it was---eventually I found out was---they introduced themselves, but it didn't mean anything to me. Was, at the time, two detectives in narcotics. One was Francis Keala, and the other one was Fred Young. Well, Francis Keala eventually became the chief of police, and Fred Young became my boss later on, as a lieutenant, then a captain and major, and eventually became inspector before he retired.

So they asked me, would I be interested in doing undercover work. I says, "Well, never thought of it." So they told me what they wanted me to do, if I would be willing to do it. And I says, "Yeah, I'd do it." So they wanted me to go undercover in narcotics in the Pālama, Kukui area, Mayor Wright housing, which I'm familiar with. Find out what's going on with the drug situation. So I said, "Okay."

So after they sign me up they says, "You don't report to the police station, you never come down here, you don't associate with cops. As far as you're concerned, you're not hired by the police department. No one should know that, not even your family."

I said, "Well, I live with my mother."

"Don't even tell her."

I said, "Well, I'll try, but we'll see."

Because I know I'm, according to what my mother feels, I was a good boy. And also I don't have work right? So I went home, told my mother I quit my job at American Factors, which was true. So I had to lie to her, she said, "What about the police job?"

I said, "Oh, I didn't pass." I didn't pass the interview or something. I made like I was going to look for work, but I didn't come home a lot of times because I lived with these guys. I went down there, I started going to the pool halls, and of course some of the people knew me, these guys that I grew up with. And so they greeted me and so I hung around, learned how to play pool, and they thought I was working, because I used to wear my [American Factors] green uniform shirt I had, just to make like I was working. And later on I told 'em that I got unemployed, so I was collecting unemployment. So they went along with it.

So I got involved with them. In fact, like I said, I lived with them eventually. Some nights I stayed in their homes, and hung out with them. When they went drinking, I went drinking.

HY: Were you making connections with people that were involved in drugs, or were you just starting to acclimate yourself?

JY: Yeah, acclimate, because I didn't take drugs, I didn't know anything about marijuana and the pills. So I had to find out, I had to learn, and I got involved, and they trusted me. In fact, once, one guy, one evening, he stopped me on the street right in front of the pool hall, and two of 'em approached me—and my friend was there, too, who I was living with part of the time—and this guy approached me and kind of shook me down by saying, "Eh, you're a cop, I heard you're a cop."

I says, "No."

"You undercover."

I said, "No."

He says, "Let me see your wallet."

So I gave him my wallet, and they search me and everything, they look through the wallet. They're satisfied because I didn't have any identification, I had no badge or anything. So they said, "Oh, okay." So right after that they kind of trusted me, because they had thought I was undercover. Because they were suspicious of anybody in the neighborhood, even though I knew some of the people.

So then they trusted me, so they smoked in front of me, but I never smoke. I said, "I don't smoke." They knew that I don't smoke cigarettes, so I got away by not smoking with them in the house or wherever they were smoking marijuana, passing it around. Always trying to get me to smoke, but I said, "No, I don't smoke at all."

HY: Was that the main drug problem in that time, marijuana?

JY: Well, no, heroin was higher, but I wasn't working on heroin because heroin is the—those guys were old-timers in town, Chinatown. I was mainly trying to find out who was doing the marijuana dealing. And pills were a big things, red devils, downers they call that. And who's distributing and stuff like that.

So I got involved with the people, but then eventually after—I stayed undercover for 7½ months—but halfway through, I think, maybe 4 months down, my mother got really upset with me, because here I'm bumming around, I don't come home. And I come home just to sleep or grab stuff and take off, so she started getting real suspicious with what's going on with me, and upset. So finally I told Fred Young, I said, "Eh Fred, my mother's getting upset."

So he says, "Okay, we'll come over."

But by then Keala, Francis Keala, got transferred to juvenile division. So Fred Young, and then he had another partner, Sidney Kim Han. So Sidney and he came to my house one night, and I told them to come over for dinner. So I told my mother, "Oh, I get some friends coming for dinner." (Laughs) She didn't know who it was, so she made dinner. And they came over and they brought their own beer and started talking.

My mother found out that Fred—she knew Fred because of my dad, through real close family friends. And they started talking, then she found out they were cops. And they told her, "Well, we're here because we had to tell you this."

And so they explained to her that I was undercover, and then she's, "Oh, no wonder he didn't come home." (Laughs)

HY: How did you make contact with the police department? You know you weren't supposed to contact them, go to the station. How did that work?

JY: They'd call me.

HY: Where would they call you?

JY: At home, leave a message. Oh, I had a number, too, I would call if it's important. Most of the time they'd call and say, "Meet me. Meet us here." Or they'd prearrange it like, "Oh, next Sunday, meet us at certain location, certain time."

HY: So sometimes you would talk face-to-face?

JY: Yeah, and I had to keep notes of what I did every day—diary, journal, stuff like that. But then they approached me, one night they met with me and says, "You know, there's word on the

street that you're a cop. So your life is in danger."

I says, "Well, I didn't know that."

They say, "Yeah, somebody's mentioned that you're undercover. So we hear that from some other source."

So they took me out from undercover because they didn't want to put me at risk. But eventually I found out they had somebody else undercover, who was also a playmate of mine before, and he was pointing the finger at me I guess to get the pressure off him, because they were questioning him, whether he was undercover. So I never made a big bust or anything, but I had some information.

HY: Who was that? The other person that was undercover.

JY: Ernest Carvalho. We call him Boy, Boy is his nickname. I know the Carvalho family, his brother was a cop, older brother. So he was from Pālama, too. So I never told him to this day, I never told him, "You, you pointed fingers at me." (Chuckles) Because eventually I came out from undercover, and a few months later he came out from undercover. Then we met and knew that we were cops. But he never talked to me about it, I never mentioned it to him. But he tried to put the squeeze on me so he could do some, I guess, buys and stuff. Anyway, worked out all right.

So was a good experience for me, and I stayed in narcotics, in what they called vice division. They didn't have narcotics/vice, now it's narcotics/vice because [is] narcotics the major problem with vice division. So I stayed there, worked with Fred and Sidney, but also [worked] some with the gambling detail, go on raids, cockfight raids. Even though I wasn't a full-fledged cop, because I wasn't sworn in, per se, with a badge and a gun, I wasn't trained. So I went on raids with them, I did prostitution raids also. I went on stakeouts with those guys from morals. Morals, was morals detail. So eventually after a few months, maybe three, four months later, I went to school, recruit school. Then everybody knew, the guys that I got hired with saw me and says, "Oh, you."

"Yeah, I was undercover all this time."

HY: Were you still living at home then [after recruit school]?

JY: Yes, living at home. Then I became a police officer. I went to school for fourteen weeks, recruit school, hit the beat after that.

HY: What was your beat?

JY: Well, I had downtown, and most of the time, when I first came out of recruit school, I was in dispatch. For six months I was in dispatch, taking calls, doing the bulletins. I didn't get on the radio, but did most of the complaint calls. In those days, had only about five or six people in dispatch, took care of the whole island. One radio person, (with) a relief. So I did all the clerical-type work. Was good training, kind of hard though. Because we were a skeleton crew, when we worked, we ate during our working hours. We couldn't take our forty-five minutes lunch hour, they'd be shorthanded. So get home, I'm tired, because you just worn out.

But after that, I went on the beat, walked the beat in Kalihi, inner Kalihi beat—Hotel Street, Waikīkī, rotate wherever. So I walked the beat for a while, and then I got transferred to Pearl City as a foot officer, foot policeman. I was on the radio—dispatcher, you know. Then eventually I got to—I stayed in Pearl City for 8½ years as a uniformed patrol officer. Pearl City, Wai'anae, that's the area, the Leeward area.

Then I went to—I rode the motorcycle, the three-wheeled motorcycle, for a while in Waipahu, and then I got—well it's not a promotion more than by seniority—I got a motorized unit. In other words, you get your own car—you see the cops with their own cars, that's by seniority. So I got my position, I got my own car in '66, I think. And then after a while I felt complacent because I knew my beat. I was in 'Ewa Beach, my last patrol beat. 'Ewa Beach was small at that time, populationwise. And then only two lanes, Fort Weaver [Road] was only two lanes. So you knew who came in and who went out, if you stay right at McDonald's. So I knew all the people, I got complacent, I got real comfortable. I caught myself when I responded to silent alarms at Woolworth or the shops around there. I didn't take my shot . . .

HY: What do you mean silent alarms?

JY: Alarm goes off, goes to the alarm company, doesn't ring audibly, rings at the alarm company, they call the police and say, "Hey, Woolworth has an alarm going off." Back door, front door, something. So I came out, I used to come out with my shotgun and my flashlight, get ready for anything when I checked the premises.

But I found myself not doing that, got complacent, like, "Oh, just a false alarm." And I caught myself. One night I says, "Eh, I'm gonna get in trouble." Like negligent, I can get killed. So I says, "I better get out of patrol."

So I looked for another job. I was already on the list for promotion, so I applied. I put what we call "to-from," two different divisions, asking for transfer [to one division from another division]. Juvenile crime prevention division, different areas while I'm on the list waiting for my promotion. Just to get out of that situation, because I was a danger to myself, yeah?

So I went, eventually they call me and say, "Oh, you want to come to PAL, Police Activities League?"

I said, "Oh, no." Because see, PAL, you not doing really police work, in a sense, because you working with kids, sports. And I like sports, but I didn't want that, initially.

But the lieutenant that knew me, he says, "Hey Jeff, good place for you to come. Probably you should come up."

I says, "Okay." So I went. For eleven months I was there, which was really a good time—a transitional time for me, before my promotion. So was refreshing because you work in shorts, t-shirt, you set up the program. Whatever district you in—I had the Leeward and the Honolulu areas, so I took care of baseball, basketball—seasonal [sports], yeah? Set up the programs with the clubs, go to meetings.

HY: Now, had that changed from when you used to be a participant in the Police Activities League as a kid?

JY: A little bit, not as---I guess before was more---the clubs had to have their own fund-raiser. Where before [that], when I was young, we could raise our own funds, too, but they had a big carnival every year, the Police Activities League. That's how they made funds, and then they distributed the money [by] who sold tickets. You know, the most scrips and stuff. So they did away with that, because they thought the police shouldn't be soliciting. Yeah, funny how they think. But it was for the kids, wasn't for the police department. So they did away with that.

And so the clubs had to do their fund-raising. And we had funding from city council, our budget, for uniforms. Oh, not uniforms, equipment. The clubs took care of their uniforms. So that was a little different. But was run similarly, were more kids involved. We tried to start up in new areas. Like I started up---Maile didn't have any teams, so I started up a basketball league there, and got the coaches and people and families involved, and I started that for the Leeward side. Tried to start up one in Salt Lake, didn't go. Tried to start one in Hālawā. I think they did start, but didn't last too long. You know that kind, you gotta get people voluntarily involved, yeah?

HY: Now did you work with a partner prior to working with the Police Activities League, when you were on . . .

JY: On patrols. See that's the thing about police department in those days, you didn't have partners, you don't have anybody riding with you. See, on the Mainland, the dangerous areas especially, have two people right? A driver and a partner. I think now, in Honolulu, certain areas they do have partners, but very rarely. I think they should do that because of the problems they having now.

So in Wai'anae especially, you out in the boonies by yourself, and you get four beats, and sometimes you get only three officers carrying four beats, so somebody double up, or you half one beat. Or if you have what we call a full staff, you have everybody out working, you have all the beats covered, you might have Nānākuli, and another guy is Mākaha, another guy Wai'anae town, so you gotta cover off each other. But you also gotta take care of your own area. You know what I'm saying?

So that's how we used to work. And even when I was in 'Ewa Beach, I used to cover guys in 'Aiea, so you know how long that is. And when (there's a) call for help, or if there's a fight or something, you have to race to that side of the island.

HY: Now your brother became a police officer.

JY: Yeah, Larry became a police officer shortly, a few years after me.

HY: Did you ever work with him?

JY: No, no, different assignments. Yeah, I encouraged him to take the police exam, and he finally took it. He credits me, by saying, "Oh, but that was a good career."

I said, "Yeah, well." Because he wasn't doing that well. He left Aloha Airlines, but then he wasn't doing well finding jobs. So finally I told him, "Take the police exam." He also never thought of being a cop, but he liked it.

HY: When you were volunteering at Pālama Settlement, and also were a participant there, you had a certain perspective. And then as you go as an undercover officer, I assume a very different perspective. I mean, how did you think of that place then?

JY: Well, I look at it this way, I always knew there were problems in the area, and if I could help get rid of the drug problem, it was part of the job, I'd do it. Because I care for the area and the people.

HY: Were you aware that there was drug problems there before you started?

JY: Not as much as when I got older, yeah? When I was young, no I think most of the things that the kids used to do when we were younger was glue sniffing and smoking cigarettes. I didn't hear of the marijuana until I got older, out of high school and stuff. But then I found out, yeah, they were doing that drug trip around. Funny yeah, they don't have money so they gotta steal to support their habits. That's the name of the game. Even now if they don't get it from their relatives and friends, coworkers, they're gonna steal, because they gotta support their habit. Well, it started when they were young, they'd bum off people, or steal from cars and get money.

HY: So after you were assigned to the Police Activities League, where did you go from there?

JY: Then I got promoted to detective in 1972, so I went to detective division—they called it at that time. Then eventually evolved into criminal investigation division, CID. So I got to be a detective, and we used to wear coat and tie in those days. Imagine that? Coat and tie. Come to work everyday with coat and tie. Eventually they change it to aloha shirt, which was good. And only time you wear coat and tie is when you go to court [to] testify.

So anyway, I got assigned to a theft detail in Waikīkī, and I loved it. I mean, lot of work, so I loved it. The other senior detectives took me out, trained me, and I loved it for 3½ months. Then Fred Young, who was my boss when I was undercover, was my detective-in-charge, was a lieutenant in homicide at the time—homicide [and] robbery. He had those two details.

Well, he called me one morning. I was home one morning, painting the interior of my house. This is Sunday. I was painting the hallway, and at that time my schedule was flexible because the lieutenant I worked for in Waikīkī allowed me and my partner to come in late, like eleven or twelve o'clock, so we can catch the tourists.

See when we get a theft case, like today the tourist reports the theft to the beat officer, tomorrow we should be contacting the tourist, right? And they might be at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Princess Ka'iulani. And tourists, they usually go out in the mornings and you have to catch them. So the best time for us to catch them is between four and six usually, because that's when they come home to clean up to go out [for] dinner. You can't catch them in the day, they're on tours and stuff. So we usually leave a note or something.

So we wanted to be flexible. So what we did was we worked from eleven or twelve o'clock and then get through at night, and we could catch the tourists. And if we don't catch them between four and six, we catch 'em late at night. You know like when they come back nine-thirty, ten. So that's how it worked.

So I was working at home that morning, about ten o'clock, painting, and I get a phone call. And Fred tells me, "How come you not at work?" (Chuckles) He's not my lieutenant, yet.

I said, "Oh, because Lieutenant [Naomitsu] Kitsuwaka says we get flexible time, we can do this."

He says, "Oh, okay, I was just wondering how come you not at work? I was looking for you."

I say, "Oh, why?"

He says, "I wanna talk to you about working for me. Can you come in a little early today?"

I said, "Oh yeah, I can come right now." So I cleaned up, thinking in my mind, "What do you mean work for him?" He works homicide/robbery, and that's for the senior guys, and I'm rookie yeah, only 3½ months.

So he calls me in when I get in the office, tells me, "You ever thought of working for homicide?"

"No," I says, "I'm brand new here."

He says, "How do you like your work?"

I says, "I'm really enjoying it."

He says, "Well, we got an assignment, and we're working on this guns-for-hire gang; [they were] doing some robberies and murders. And because our guys are concentrating on that, we wanna get couple other detectives to help us do the miscellaneous work, the office work, and do the routine work like suicides, accidental deaths, unattended deaths, that kind of cases." He said, "Would you be interested?"

And see in my mind, I says, "Aw." You know, I'm just getting my feet wet and I love what I was doing, I had good partners in Waikīkī, but I knew better than to turn Fred down, because I worked with him before. Because he's the kind of guy that has certain expectations, and he has a good memory, and if you turn him down he might hold it against you later on. And he liked me, so I figure well, what I got to lose, yeah? But I kind of was hesitant because I really wanted to learn more before stepping up to something like that.

I'm thinking, "Gee, I'm a rookie over here, and I'm gonna work with this elite group." See everybody thinks homicide was elite—homicide/robbery. And they were I guess because they high profile, yeah? I said, "Wow." So I said okay.

He said, "What about Barbara?" He knew my wife, "You wanna talk to her?"

I said, "No I don't have to, I make the decisions."

So I went home, told Barbara, she said, "Oh, no problem."

I was kind of thinking, "Gee, did I make the right decision?"

But then I went to work and then they trained me so I did all the office work, took care of the follow-ups on death cases—unattended. Unattended means when somebody dies at home—whatever, can be heart attack—if there's no doctor that has been attending. So we have to classify. So if doctor's not willing to sign off, then we gotta to find out how they died. The body goes to the city morgue. The medical examiner has to either decide—look at the history—and he can sign it off as a heart attack or whatever, or he can go in and investigate by opening the body up and doing a postmortem examination.

And suicides, you know, handle that, or accidental [death]—you know, electrical shock and the guy dies. So I [worked] all those miscellaneous cases while they were out looking for the guns-for-hire gang. And was a big deal at that time, these guns-for-hire. And I got to doing that, I got pretty good.

And they were so busy one time they gave me a homicide case. And they told me and these two other foot patrolmen—well not foot patrol, they're motormen—assigned to the task force, and they were running around with them while I was in the office. And they assigned these two guys to me, and they had found a body one afternoon, around three thirty, in Waipahu, right by 'Ewa junction, on Cane Haul Road, Japanese guy, older guy, shot. That's all they had, that he was shot.

So they went out there investigated, the homicide detectives, but because they were so busy, they dropped it and says, "Hey Jeff, you go take it." Now, I'm brand new, I don't know anything about homicide. (Laughs) They say, "You got Danny [Daniel] Saragosa, and you got Art [Arthur] Nishida to help you."

I said okay. So I take the (case), I look at the case, review the case. We go out there, and we started interviewing people, backtracking this guy as a victim. We found out who he was, found out who he hung around with, everything. In twenty-five hours, we arrested the guy (responsible). And I came in the paper, "Detective solves case, in twenty-five hours." And was good because we worked right around the clock, I think we rested maybe about three, four hours, went home, changed clothes, came back. And we solved the case.

HY: Who was the victim?

JY: I forgot his name, Japanese guy. O-something, I forget, from Waipahu. But the family owned a tofu factory in Waipahu. And the suspect, who I know, is Baptista Ortiz. They call him Leechy, L-E-E-C-H-Y, I think, Leechy. That's his nickname. Well he's been convicted three times for murder. He's in prison again, third time, since that first arrest. He's suspected of other murders, but was never caught (for them).

He always gets into---he's alcoholic, (causes) injuries and things, (through) fighting. He shot this guy, so we solved the case, he got convicted, spent ten years, then he came out. Shortly after, he killed his girlfriend, another case, went to prison again. Came out, and then killed another guy, now he's back in prison again. Was only two, three years ago (that the last murder occurred).

So anyway, was good. First case, not even assigned to the detail, just temporarily. So eventually I went back to my detail, because they caught the—in fact I went on the raid that caught these guys. Oh what's his name? I forgot his name, but the gang.

HY: The guns-for-hire gang?

JY: [James Pokini and the] guns-for-hire gang. And they were pulling robberies. They robbed Liberty House, Dee Lite [Bakery], everything. Big, big thing.

HY: This is still about 1972 or ['7]3?

JY: Yeah, so I went back to my (theft) detail. Shortly after, was still '72 actually.

HY: Who was your lieutenant?

JY: At Waikīkī?

HY: Yes.

JY: Naomitsu, N-A-O-M-I-T-S-U, Kitsuwā, K-I-T-S-U-W-A. So I went back to work for a couple months, few months. Then Sidney Kim Han, who was in homicide, got promoted to lieutenant, so there was an opening. In fact, there were two openings. So myself and another guy got promoted. Not promoted, was moved into homicide. And ever since then I've been in homicide, for fourteen years, until I retired. Fred Young eventually became my captain in CID, then he became my major, then he went to inspector's office. And even when I retired I worked for him as a private eye. He had Young and Associates, I ran his office, then I went on my own as a private eye. Then eventually I went to the prosecutor's office.

HY: You mentioned earlier, in the first interview, that you had seen some of the people, some of your playmates . . .

JY: Yeah, you want me tell you some of those? Well, not in chronological order, but one of 'em, I was on my way home one afternoon, I remember clearly about five or somewhere around there . . .

HY: This is all while you worked homicide . . .

JY: Was in homicide, yes. On my way home—I wasn't up for the next case because we work in teams, yeah? And you know, two detectives go to the scene to handle cases, but I wasn't up already, I had done my case. I was just on my way home, heard it on the police radio in Kalihi that there was a shooting at O'ahu prison [O'ahu Community Correctional Center], and they're bringing the body out from the prison. So I responded.

So when I got there there was an ambulance, and they were wheeling this guy out on a gurney. And so I had called that I would stop in and let my office know, know because somebody else would get assigned. So I went there, and I looked at the guy, and it was my friend, Franklin Melendre. We call him Baby, that's his nickname, Baby. So Franklin Melendre was already pronounced dead, they had brought him out and they were gonna take him to the hospital, but he was dead already. And that was one.

Another one was [Hiram] Kauhane. Anyway, went to this—this was an underworld killing—went to this apartment. This guy was called out by some of his underworld people, and they shot him in this parking lot. The family called and we responded. And we

investigated the case, and Kauhane, who got shot, got killed, we knew who it was, we tracked (the suspect) down.

But his [Kauhane's] group retaliated the next night, or was it two nights after, with Duke Naeole, who was running the gambling games in town. Strong-arm, you know. Duke Naeole, older than them, was a well-known character in Chinatown. So anyway, on his way home one night, they set it up. Somebody from the other faction called his [Duke Naeole's] house and found out from the wife that he wasn't home yet. So okay, so what they did, they went to Kāne'ohe, and staked out the bridge before his house. So he, driving home, they got out of their van and fired at him, and killed him in his car. So that was retaliation.

HY: Was he the one that you knew from Pālama Settlement?

JY: Kauhane?

HY: Yeah.

JY: Yes, he was another one from Pālama Settlement. So that was a retaliation. And another one, one time they called, and I was up for the case, they called me and says, "Oh, there's a body in Salt Lake, next to the lake, at the construction site." That's when they were building Honolulu Country Club. So I went there, I look at the body, this guy lying there, no shirt on, and tatoos.

And I look at him and told the beat officer, "That's Donald Kealoha."

"Well how do you know him?"

I says, "I was raised up with him." So he got shot to the head. That's three. There's been couple others, I can't remember.

Oh, we had a big shooting in downtown Honolulu—oh, that was a mess—at one of the bars, right next to the pool hall. And what it was, two different factions. In fact Kauhane's faction, his group, walked into this place and this guy Robin Saya started shooting at him.

And you hear about Robin Saya. I don't know if you heard of him, he was shot at when he was at a parking lot in town by Kukui Plaza a few years ago. He (was injured) and his girlfriend got killed. This other guy (Cullen) got convicted. Was about drugs and gambling stuff. And Robin Saya got arrested lately for something else. So this guy's been in the news for a long time.

So that was a big thing that happened in downtown. All related to gambling and drugs. These people I knew, I knew the people on Kauhane's side. Walter [Kaeo] and Kailani [Kaeo], two brothers. They were involved in that shooting. And lot of these things happen. So I've seen lot of my friends, you know, I had to interview them. Walter Kaeo, he eventually died from another shooting.

It's sad when you go over there and you see these guys that died, they were my playmates, friends from school and stuff. But they chose to go that way.

HY: You explained earlier that you think you could've ended up on that side.

JY: Yeah.

HY: Had it not been for your mother and . . .

JY: My mother's strictness, discipline, and another thing is, because we're involved in sports, we didn't have free time. These guys had free time. They played at Pālama Settlement, but never got involved in competition, so I think that's where they lost out, because they had too much time on their hands. But we were busy with swimming and baseball and stuff like that, so we were tired. We didn't have time to go out carousing and fooling around, go drinking. You know what I mean, doing things that other kids were doing because they didn't have much to do, but go hang around pool halls.

That's why even when I went undercover, I never hung around pool halls until I was undercover. Even though all my friends went, I never hung around the pool halls, because that wasn't my thing, right? I was either in the (swimming) pool, the gym, and I think that was good because we had coaches that took interest in us and made sure that we kept away from the bad things of life. And my mother, because she made sure that she knew where we were. We had curfew, we got disciplined when we had to be disciplined.

HY: Maybe I should flip over the tape.

JY: Sure.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

[Due to taping difficulties, side two is missing. JY discussed his transformation into a devout Christian and his renewed closeness to his family. Much of his story is covered in various articles including a July 7, 1986 article which appeared in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and an article in *Decision*, November 1983.]

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 27-30-2-97; SIDE ONE

HY: Okay, we're gonna talk about your. . . . How did you end up working for the prosecutor's office under Keith Kaneshiro?

JY: Okay, I was in private eye for 2½ years. Well, in '87 to '89, I was a private eye. But anyway, 1988, Keith Kaneshiro decided to run for City and County of Honolulu, prosecutor's office, and he asked me to help him in the campaign. Of course, using my name and my reputation and be involved in the campaign as much as I could.

HY: What was your connection to him?

JY: When he was a deputy prosecutor at the prosecutor's office, I was a homicide detective, and he handled a couple of my murder cases. We got along real well, and I liked his approach to bringing people to justice, and his honesty. He was really good, he was one of the better deputy prosecutors, and I liked him. And of course he liked us, in homicide, he liked us, he hung around us.

Anyway, he decided to run, and being in the police department, you can't get involved in politics up front, which was good for me, because I never liked to get involved in politics. I think there's a lot of things that are dealt underhanded in politics, and I don't like, because being a cop we know a lot of things that the average citizen don't know, and I saw that. But that's the way they do things.

Anyway, so, he asked me to help him campaign. Because I was retired, I'm not involved with the police department, I can get involved, so I got involved. Because I wanted to get the prosecutor, Chuck [Charles] Marsland, out of office, because he had—and I don't blame Chuck, because even when Chuck ran against Togo Nakagawa [in 1980], I wanted Chuck to get in, too, because Chuck was a good man, but he had some people in his office that didn't make it good for him. You know, they poisoned him, I feel. This is my opinion. But anyway, regardless of the negatives, we wanted to get him out of office, and have somebody like Keith Kaneshiro, who's honest, get in there.

So he asked me. So I helped him do the campaign, and was grass roots. I mean, people that didn't know how to run campaigns. (Chuckles) Well we got in. And because we had a head start, we were victorious. We won the primary and he defeated Chuck Marsland, he took the thing, the office. And during the campaign, halfway through the campaign—he used my name on brochures and picture and stuff like that, I went out into the Christian community and spoke about him at coffee hours, and I went on the Christian radio stations to get to the people, because they know me. And I said, "Keith would be the better man." So myself and Carole Kai did that—she's a Christian, too—so we did that on the Christian radio stations. Because we realized there was a block of votes there that other people didn't tap into, so we used that, and I think that helped.

But it was a good campaign, and during the campaign, midway through, he pulled me on the side, he says, "You know Jeff, when I get elected, I want to hire you as a special investigator."

And I put my hands out and said, "Wait a minute, Keith," I says, "I didn't come in to help you to get a job."

Because I was happy doing what I was—my private eye job, plus my church, I was really happy, I was really comfortable. Because in my private eye job, I make my own hours. If I don't want to work today, I go to the beach with my wife. I mean, it was really a beautiful time.

I told him, "I don't want you to be obligated to me, and I be obligated to you."

He says, "No, no, I really want to hire you, so you can handle certain type cases."

I said, "Keith, you know what? Why don't you wait till you get elected, then you talk to me."

He said, "Okay."

I said, "After the election, not now." So soon as he got elected, he started bugging me. I said, "No, no, no, wait."

So on inauguration day, January 2, again he asked me, "You coming to work for me?"

I says, "No." I says, "I don't feel that I should. I don't want to jump in the fire again." I like law enforcement, but I thought, I had other things out there, like I told you before. And I says, "I don't know if I belong in law enforcement as my lifetime career. I think I've done my share, and let somebody else do it. I loved working in the police department, but there's other things out there."

He says, "Well, I really want you. So when I get into my office, I want to talk to you again."

I said, "Fine."

So in the meantime, he kept calling me and I go in to his office, and I'm still doing my PI [private investigation] work, right? And he calls me, I go to his office, or he calls me on the phone, weekly, practically. Finally I told him, "Keith, I gotta pray about this." I says, "I don't want to come work again (full time). I'm enjoying what I'm doing, but let me pray about it."

So I went home, told my wife. She said okay, so we started praying. We prayed, and he kept calling me, and he wants an answer, and I said, "No, not yet." Kept praying.

Finally, one day, I think it was the second to the last time he spoke to me before I came on board, I was walking out the door, he tells me, "How much do I have to pay you to get you to work for me?"

I said, "Keith, it's not the pay. I got my pension."

He says, "Well, what do you want?"

I said, "If I come to work for you, you pay me what you feel I deserve, what I'm worth. I'd be foolish to tell you what I think I'm worth, because I know you have parameters, I know you can only pay so much on contract. You cannot just go [with] what I want, you gotta go according to what you have. So you pay me what you feel (I'm worth), if I work for you." So I left. But we kept praying, and most every morning we prayed.

So one morning we were praying that week, and then all of a sudden, it dropped in my spirit. And it wasn't an audible voice, but it was just impressed upon me, the Lord says, "I gave you this job."

Oh, that kind of stirred me. I said to my wife, "You know what I feel the Lord is impressing on my heart?"

She said, "What?"

I said, "He gave me this job."

And then we started talking and I says, "You know, I never asked for the job." I mean it's wonderful that he [Keith Kaneshiro] wants me to work, because he told me he trusts me and he wants somebody like me [who's] honest and has a good reputation working for him. And that's good, but even that didn't make me [want] to work for him, even though he said those things.

But she said, "Well whatever you want to do."

I says, "Well, if God is speaking, I should obey him. I feel I should go, but maybe I should go have a good talk with him [Keith Kaneshiro] and see what he says. Sit down, really talk about the job." Because all the time he's trying to entice me to come, but we never sat down and say what I going do and all that stuff.

So, in fact, just at that week he had called me. He said, "Oh Jeff," he's all excited, "guess what?"

I said, "What?"

"Don Carstensen," the chief investigator from Chuck Marsland's time, he's a civil servant so he stays on the job, "the chief investigator, Don Carstensen, is resigning."

I said, "Oh? Wow, that's good." Because they didn't get along, see? "Wow that's good for you."

"Yeah," he says, "but I want you to take his job."

I says, "Oh Keith, first you ask me to be a special investigator, that's not too bad, that's my field. I mean, that's my expertise. You give me a case, I can run with it, I've been trained that way. But now you tell me to manage people. You get how many investigators?"

"Seventeen, Jeff."

I says, "Gee, I gotta manage my church, administratively. I'm just learning that. Now I gotta go manage people. Keith, that's a tough situation." I says, "I don't know."

He says, "Aw, come on, now it's gonna be better, you and I can change the office and make some big improvements."

Now this is March, he calls me the first week of March. So I go into his office, I say, "Well, Keith, look, you want me, and you say I'm honest, and I'm trustful, you can trust me and that's good. But there's two things, if I do come work for you, two things I want to clear up first of all. I want to see what you say."

He said, "What?"

"You know I'm a pastor."

"Yeah," he said, "that's good."

I says, "Okay. So when something comes up, like a conference, or somebody needs help in the church, or I gotta do church work, I'm not gonna ask you to go, I'm gonna tell you. Not to be demanding, but that's my first calling, I have to do that." That's why in private eye, I can make my own hours, the church demands something, I just go. I can go with the demand, I don't have to ask anybody.

He said, "No problem, anytime you want off, you let me know."

I said, "Okay, second thing. You're after me, you have been after me, you tell me you want me." But I said, "If I come to work for you, I'm not a puppet. I have twenty-five years of police experience. You say you trust me, so if I work for you, you tell me 'Jeff, do this.' And you give me a case or you give me a situation, and I say I'll take care of it, I'll do it two ways: honestly and legally. I'll do that for you, but I don't want you looking over my shoulder." I said, "But I'm not foolish. If I don't know what you mean, I'll ask you questions. If I don't know how to do it, I'll ask you. But if I say I'll take care of it, I don't want you looking over my shoulder and telling me how to do it, because I'll do it honestly and legally. That's all you have to hope for."

He said, "No problem, Jeff."

I said, "Okay, I'll come to work."

So I got hired March 22, this is like 3 months, 3½ months after he got in office, 1989. So that's the kind of situation, because I really believe God wanted me there. So for two years I was on contract. It was good because I had my pension and the contract was good, my supervisory pay was (enough). So, talk about rich, I mean, we were rich. Because in the sense of how God allowed me to prosper at the time, and our kids were in private school.

So it was good for two years, but then they did an audit of our office, and during the audit, the auditor came to talk to me, Coopers & Lybrand. They had three guys—one *wahine* and two guys—this guy talked to me personally. I don't know why, I guess he audited certain people, and he found out what my job was, what I did, and I give 'em (the answers). And he started saying, "Eh, you full time?"

I said, "Yeah."

He says, "But you are on contract and you are in the office all the time. You have furniture, you have your own office, you have control of people and all that kind of stuff."

And I said, "Yeah."

"And you set policies?"

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "You should be full time."

I said, "Yeah, but I'm on contract."

He says, "Oh, okay."

So he put that in the audit (report). City council got a hold of it, after the audit, and they said, these guys, they don't want to be penalized. So they call (the city and county) personnel, and the personnel director was, at the time, Loretta Fukuda, she's passed on now. She called our office and told Keith, "Eh, Jeff gotta come in full time."

So he called me, "Eh Jeff, you gotta come in full time." Meaning I had to put my pension in abeyance, stop my retirement and come back into the system, to contribute (into the system) again.

I said, "Well, I gave you my word, I'll work for you Keith. So I'll stick it out the next two years." Right? The first term.

So one year [1991] I, what I call suffering, I had only my supervisor's pay, the top pay. He gave me the top pay, but wasn't enough because half of my pay was taken away because I had no pension. So, for one year, I didn't have the high pay (pension and supervisory). My wife had to go into substitute teaching more than ever, which was all right. I told Keith, "I gave you my word, I'll stay with you." Wasn't because of the pay, right, I just came on board (to do a job).

So in the meantime he [Kaneshiro] put in a resolution to change the city charter, an amendment. See, he was the only elected official in the state of Hawai'i, county or state government, when he got in office, that couldn't have special assistants appointed with pay. He had to (employ by) contract, so he contracted us.

So three of us, myself, Carol Senaga, and Doug Woo, were three executive assistants. Doug Woo and I call ourselves special assistants, but anyway, we didn't get the pay, even though we had the title, because it wasn't (mediated) by law. So we finally had, in the election after that—'91 was the election, '92 the people voted for it, and it passed. From '92 on I get my executive pay. So it was good. And I went back in the system, and after we reorganized the office in 1990 and he moved me upstairs into the executive position. Like I said, with the title but with no extra pay, conforming to the position.

So we reorganized. He [Kaneshiro] is very aware of people (moving upwards in) their careers. See, I was chief investigator, and I had seventeen people under me. Eventually, we got twenty-five people under me. He moved me up to administration, and he divided the investigators into different [levels]—we had our own division before, Investigative Operations Division. I was in charge of the division. All work came to me—through me. Any requests for investigation by the deputies would have to come through me. I controlled everything. But his [Kaneshiro's] view was that I should be in administration, take care of investigations, but make a career ladder for the investigators, so (he made) you make three positions or supervisors, supervisory investigators. So gave them---see with the chief investigator, there's only one supervisor. And these guys, if I was there for years, they wouldn't have—they couldn't move up. They're stuck at the investigator level, investigator IV. So Keith saw that. So when he moved me up, he made three positions and split them into three groups, different divisions, working (closely) with the (deputy prosecutors), so we had to promote three guys. They were happy, and it's

good, because when somebody retires, somebody can move up. So you get three positions instead of one, right?

So I move upstairs and did administrative work. It was a good move. Nineteen ninety-four I had a good talk with Keith, I says, "Look Keith, since you're deciding whether you should run for a third term," because he had two terms, was on his second term, I said, "If you gonna decide for the third term, I'll tell you this, my daughter, Maile's graduating from college in '97, I don't want to work after that. When she graduates in '97, May '97, I want to stop working after that year. So if you run again, I'll let you know. But if you do run, and get re-elected for your third term, I will stay 'till the end of '97 if you want, and then (you need to) find somebody else. So I'll give you some time."

He said, "Oh, okay."

So I had a good talk with him. But he didn't know if he was going to run. So end of '95, December, he decided not to run. He called us in and said, "I'm not gonna run." So he announced it publicly, so that he gave enough time for others to throw their names into the circle, yeah? So he said, "I wanna give them time. I don't want to cut out halfway through the year, then people gotta scramble."

Then he did that and the people put in their names for prosecutor. Everybody was trying to guess where Keith Kaneshiro was gonna go. And he told us, honestly he didn't know what he was going to do. He wasn't where---he wanted to finish the prosecutor's office, and take care of the business before he decided what he's gonna do.

So anyway, '96, September, George Iranon, who was the [state] director of public safety, announced his retirement. Shortly after, couple weeks, I think the governor [Ben Cayetano] calls Keith Kaneshiro up and asked him to be the next director of public safety when he gets through his prosecutor's office. He came to us says, "Oh, the governor called me," and he met with us, the administration of the prosecutor's office. "The governor asked me to be the director of public safety, but I turned him down."

So me and Doug Woo, Doug Woo, ex-newsreporter says, "You know, you should be [the director of public safety]. You know about the government and all."

I says, "Yeah Keith, you should be, because you're the guy with the plan. You're the one that's been screaming for bed space all these years, eight years in your prosecutor's office. Now the governor's handing you that job." So we kind of jumped on him. We said, "Well, it's all up to you, but we think you should go." Kind of got excited for him.

But he said, "No, no." But eventually changed his mind because the governor called him again, I think the following week. So he went in, the governor asked him, he says okay. So he comes back, calls me in his office. "Well, I told the governor, okay, I'm gonna take the director's job in January. So you're coming with me aren't you?" Keith asking me.

I said, "No." I didn't even hesitate, I said, "No."

He said, "Well, why not? This is an opportunity for . . ."

I said, "This your opportunity."

He says, "No, you should come with me because, you know, we can . . ."

I said, "Keith, I told you I'm gonna retire in '97. Why should I go there? I don't need this. I can retire, take care of my church. That's what I desire."

He said, "No, no, I need you over there. We gotta straighten up (the place), they got plenty problems over there."

He kept asking me, I said, "You know what Keith?" But in my mind I'm saying, "I gotta get him off my back." So I said, "Keith, you know what? I'm going to pray about it." See, I'm using God, right? As my defense, right? (HY laughs.) I said, "I remember the first time I worked for you, I prayed about it, and God told me. Because I didn't want to work, right? Remember I told you?"

He said, "Yeah."

"Okay, I'm going to pray." So I get him off my back, right? I tell my wife, "You know Keith offered me this. . . . Let's pray about it."

She said, "No way. We're taking care of the church."

"That's what I told him." (Laughs) But I said, "But I promised him we'll pray, so shall we pray?" So we prayed. And all the time we're thinking, "No way. God, we want to go take care the church." And finally, I can let go of a secular job and take care of the church permanently. Even though we don't have our own church building, I can do a lot of administrative work.

So we prayed, and I consulted my senior pastor, who's now retired from Palisades Community Chapel. He's the one that sent us out there (to Wai'anae), so I said, "Pastor [William] Ah You, I have this opportunity to work," and I wasn't even asking him, I was just telling him about this opportunity— he was the first guy, other than my wife. So I said, "Pastor Ah You, I have this opportunity," meaning me and my wife, because we believe we're together, right? Because if I work, she has to take care of the church, right? So I says, "We have this opportunity, Keith Kaneshiro asked me to work for him in public safety."

Right away he says, "You should go to work."

I said, "Why you saying that? I wasn't asking you." (Chuckles)

He said, "No, you should work Jeff, until you get your church building, then you have your own office. I believe you should be out there working."

'Cause, see, I know what he's talking about because he was a postman all these years. For many years, as we were attending his church, and he just retired before he sent us out to Wai'anae. In other words, he was a mail carrier in Wahiawā for years, and he was just like I am now, wearing two hats. And I didn't see how he could have done that. I was a deacon in the church, and I couldn't see how he could do his deliveries and then come to the night services, like three or four times a week at the church, and do other things, going to the

meetings, I couldn't see how he handled it, and now I know.

But anyway, he said, "You should go to work."

I said, "Okay." And that was the first one. So later on, a missionary evangelist came by, and we like this guy, he's really good, he's real sharp (and has a lot of) wisdom. So we shared with him, he came and spoke at our church, and he's been doing that for years. So we said, "Hugh"—this guy Hugh Kaiser, he's a missionary evangelist to the Philippines. And he quit his job at Pearl Harbor, too, as an engineer, just to do the ministry. But they gave him an early retirement, because they actually liked him, but he was doing that missionary work.

So we sat down at lunch, he came to speak that morning, and we went to lunch, and then we shared. We said, "This is the situation, we want you to pray, seeking advice." I was talking, I said, "You know, we want to go full time, Barbara and I, taking care of the church."

He says, through the conversation, "But you're full time right?" about three times.

Then finally I said, "What're you talking about?"

He says, "You don't get what I'm trying to say?"

I said, "Well, what're you trying to say?"

He says, "Jeff, God raised you up in law enforcement for a purpose. You have a reputation, people respect you, and you're a minister. Yeah, you can take care of your Wai'anae church, that's your desire, and you can just forget everything else, and you'll probably grow and do well. But don't you think God wants you out in the marketplace? With your reputation, and you can be an influence on the government, people in government."

And then that's true, I said, "Yeah, with lot of corruption in government."

He says, "You belong out there, I believe. I feel you're called to that ministry. You need to be out there. And that's what I mean full time. Wherever God puts you, you're full time."

I said, "Yeah, that's right."

[He said,] "Ministry doesn't only stay in the church. Evangelism means going out and sharing, right? The gospel, the good news of Christ. And there's hope, that people realize that there's hope."

I said, "Oh. That's right."

That's why, see, when I got saved in 1975, when I got born again, I liked police work, and I loved the career, but I always used to think, why am I here? Not doing the spiritual aspect. And when I got saved, God showed me why. That's why I have a purpose for you.

And through my career, people have come to me for help, they think I'm their savior. I get people calling me up, while I was in the police department, all kinds of hours. I don't even know 'em, they call up, "You know my son is on drugs, and somebody from so-and-so church

told me to call you. Can you counsel my son?" And I did that kind of stuff, or I pray with them. And lot of times, people call me and I don't know the answer, but because I was caring and listened to 'em, I go see their kids. Or even their family problems, or whatever problems, people used to call me.

They come to the station, honestly, you know how they come up? They ask for the Christian detective. They don't even know my name, they call, "Oh, where is the Christian detective?" And off the street they come inside to talk, they're looking for me.

And in fact, the guys I'm working with, they thought I was a Jesus freak, because soon as I got saved, I was like, "Eh, you guys gotta go church." You know, tough cop yeah? Overzealous. I was, you know, for first six months.

Even my partner, Andrew Glushenko [Jr.], he works next door now on contract, internal affairs (Department of Public Safety). He thought this guy, "Oh, Jeff!" Because in the police department, you couldn't say you go to church. You say you go to church, they look at you like you're a square. It's changed eventually. So I had to be a witness. I started with some other police officers who were Christians, we started a police fellowship.

So I got to be known in that sense, because I had a good reputation, workwise. So because of that, they respected me, so they didn't tease me. So when I walked into a room and they're swearing, they'd say, "Oh." When I first got saved, "Oh, excuse, eh, Jeff. Jeff's here, no swear." You know, they respected me. But I didn't know how to handle that.

I'd say, "That's all right." But eventually I realized that it's not all right, so I'd say, "Oh, thank you for respecting me." That kind of sense.

So anyway, I get into the office and a detective is talking to one of these suspects or victims or someone. "Eh, Jeff, you gotta go talk to these people."

"Why?"

"Oh, they're religious, you gotta go talk to them." Or, "This guy needs God, go talk to him." Not even my case, so I go inside. (Laughs)

That's the opportunity. So God used me. I had people coming in, and I'd be a witness, and we had a police fellowship met every Wednesday, got a lot of police officers involved and I opened up to the clerks, not only the police officers, was the clerks, the custodian, anybody who wanted to come to our meetings. During lunch hour we had outside speakers, people like Joyce Fasi, Carole Kai, Dick Jensen, people who are well-known Christians, pastors also came in to share testimony and inspire the people. Then the ladies started having a prayer (session) on Thursday, a bible study, that kind of stuff, so that evolved. And this thing (has been) going on now (for quite a few years), not as much as when I was [there]—was real active when I was there.

But that's why God had put me there—even now at this job—so soon as . . .

HY: You went back and told Keith.

JY: Keith, yeah, "I'll take this [job] because"—another person my wife shared with was similar to what this guy Hugh Kaiser said.

And [she (Kathy Staleup), JY's wife's friend] kept saying, "You know, I'm not saying this is God. It's just that from what I know of you folks, Jeff should be out there, and that's where God wants to use him. So think about it," she told my wife. So eventually, during church services God would speak to me in a certain way, I realized that I needed to go to work with Keith. I got the peace (in my heart) and I told my wife, she said, "Yeah, I think you should go and work with Keith."

It had to be a decision for both of us because when you become married, you become one. That's what the Bible tells you and that's true. So we feel that a decision on me has to be her decision, too, right? Because if I went to work, she knows that she has to take care of the office, which is in our home. Which she's been doing anyway, but it's like, "Wow, you're going to give me four more years or two more years of doing it myself." But she (agreed), so we're doing it, and I have her support, and it's together.

And so when I told Keith okay, he was happy. So I didn't come in January 2, when everybody came in, I came in January 10. I realize when I came in, as things evolved, I know I have to be here. Because certain things that have happened, people come to see me. You know, I counsel, I pray with people. I think it's part of the job of my ministry, to be effective in that area.

Even for you to hear what I'm saying, Holly [JY is addressing the interviewer]. Nobody can tell you what to do, you have choice, yeah? God made us to have free will, we have our free will of choosing who we are going to serve. The Bible tells us, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." Because you know you can serve the devil. There's two forces, good and evil, so you can serve evil.

And that's why I talk about Christianity. So that's been a real vital part in my life, because I was thirty-five when I came to salvation, to know God personally, so I have a relationship with him.

So, I get to share with people, even like you, I get to share. It's amazing, I get written up in the newspaper—I'm not bragging, it's just that it wasn't because of me. Because in '75 I got saved, '77 they awarded me the father of the year for the police department, police father of the year. And it's because my lieutenant saw the change in me, and he wrote about it. And even when I received the award, as he gave me the trophy, Chief [Francis] Keala said if I wanted to say something, I started crying. I just realized it wasn't me, it's because of what God had done in those two years in my career—'75 to '77 was the peak of my career. I solved cases because God gave me insight. During that time, especially in that time, I solved several cases. It wasn't because of me, (God) brought things to my mind, made me do certain things, I solved cases. People would [say], "How'd you do that?"

I reply, "You really want to know?" And I would solve cases like that. And it was amazing, so I get testimonies, what we call testimonies of all the things that have happened, and I'm blessed, I'm happy.

HY: So are you planning on staying here indefinitely?

JY: Well that's what we're talking about, my wife and I. Because I said, "You know honey," realizing this is a two-year commitment to '98, as long as the governor—well the governor's gonna run again, whether he gets re-elected or not. I'm pretty sure he will, I mean, I'm not pushing for him to get elected, because [Jeremy] Harris could do a good job, too. But I'm just saying that if he gets re-elected, and I think he will, because the Democratic party is too strong in this state, so I don't see how—even though certain people don't like the way he's running (the government). The party is the strength, right? So he'll get re-elected probably. And if he does get re-elected, if he's going to reappoint my boss [Kaneshiro], and I know my boss is going to ask me, I'm pretty sure he'll ask me again, I gotta be looking at that. So I told my wife, "Maybe I gotta be here another four years after this."

She said, "Well, if God wants this."

So I said, "Okay." Just realizing that might happen, yeah?

But I really---if I had my choice—I wouldn't want to work. Because, selfishly, I would rather stay in the church. And in '98, we'll see by the election. And I'm just gonna be open to it, whatever God wants I really believe in. Because I've done what he wanted twice—when I retired from the police force, [worked at] the prosecutor's [office], and then this. I had my peace. I have no problem. In fact, when we were first asked to go out to Wai'anae to be the pastors, we had peace. We didn't have any problems, because we knew that our pastor, Pastor Ah You, was asking us. "Why did you pick us?" Because God showed him was us.

And then we shared with him about our prayer. Because he didn't know that we prayed that way, that we had told the Lord, "Whatever you want us to do, we'll do for you." And we meant it. So when it came that time, we were ready. And like my wife says, we have such treasured friends at Palisades Community Chapel, our church that we're in for 10½ years. She said, "If I was to think about it, I wouldn't want to leave them." You know, leave that church. Because we were comfortable, in other words.

But at that time, she felt, even before Pastor Ah You asked us to go, she said she felt like a release. And she didn't have any misgivings. We still see each other, so good thing we keep in touch, but it's not like we're there every time right? And I felt a peace at that, too, so whenever we do [God's] work we feel peaceful about it.

We don't have any doubt, when there's doubt, it's not God. That's the way we feel. When there's a peace, we know it's God. So if he asked us to stay on—if Keith [Kaneshiro] asked me to stay on another four years, and God says, I'll stay. If not. . . . I have to be open to what [God] wants. I mean, I didn't feel that I would be working this [job]. Forty-six years of age when I retired. I thought that was it. I won't work in law enforcement area, or high-profile type job right? Just do my PI [private investigation], nobody knows who I am, just a worker. Just do my thing. But here I am, in a big job.

Gotta be God. I only got a high school education, year and a half of college. Never graduated from college. I don't have a certificate or diploma to say I'm a college graduate, and I'm in the deputy director's position. I'm awed by what God has done. I cannot brag and boast that it's me, because it's not me. You know what I mean?

Lot of people can say, "Well, you fortunate you in the right place at the right time." Yeah,

maybe so, but who did that for me? Gotta be God. I came from the slum area, that would be Pālama. Could've gone the other side of the tracks, but didn't.

HY: You served as a board member, too?

JY: At Pālama Settlement, yeah, '82 to '88. And they asked me again, [the current Pālama Settlement director] Bob [Omura] just asked me if I wanted to. I said no, because I'm too busy.

HY: What kinds of things were you asked to do as a board member?

JY: Oh, we'd be on the committee for—award committee—for the annual award ceremonies, I helped with that. And planning the program with some of the staff over there. Work on some different things, I forgot now. Some of the projects, membership drives. You know, sustaining membership drives, we did that kind of stuff.

Some of the board members there are just there as board members, you know what I'm saying? So when Bob asked me again, I said, "Bob, I just don't want to be a name on a letterhead."

HY: You wanna be active?

JY: Yeah, so I was active the six years I was there. I was active. And I like to do more. So I said I don't want to just put my name there. Like even the centennial committee, I really got involved in that. Because there's some people, some people are too spread out, too thin, they're on all the boards, and I don't believe that. They lend their names to boards, they go one meeting or something, but that's not the way I operate. If I'm gonna get involved, I'm gonna get involved.

And my wife and I are like that, if we commit ourselves, we do it, we get into it. And that's why I'm afraid [to serve on the board again], I don't want to get too involved, then I spread myself too thin. I need to enjoy myself too, spend time with my wife, my family, even though they're growing up, my grandkids. And even for me, I need time getting away. But if you have meetings, meetings, meetings, you can do so much, you know? I'm not gonna save everybody or do everything. I like to do a lot.

A few years ago, I told my wife, "Gee, I'd like to have a foster home." But realizing it would be foolish with the ministry, and I'm working. Know what I mean? We won't be able to give the child or the children the best, yeah? But I like to do that kind of stuff. I like to help somebody live a life that they didn't have. A foster home, I think, is a big responsibility, but it's a good way to help somebody.

HY: So did you notice a difference then? I know you kind of stayed in touch with Pālama Settlement all those years, but as a board member now and being on committees and stuff like that. What's the profile of somebody that goes to Pālama Settlement?

JY: Well, like I said earlier, I think the complexion of the community has changed. Cause it's more [recent] immigrants. And the people that lived there (before), like us, all moved out. Not all, most of them moved out. So it's not like a community that was born there, born and

raised. So you get people coming in—transients, immigrants.

And so that might be a problem because you cannot keep. . . . I guess they don't have an identity. Like when you say Pālama to the old-timers of Pālama, wow, you can *talk story* all day. When you say Pālama to people [today] it's just a settlement, a place to go play basketball. You know what I'm saying? It's not a home—identity. I'm not saying all, some people might have identity, but I think the majority of them don't have that feeling.

So for Pālama to have programs, they have good programs, and not everybody takes part in it, or gets involved, or participates like we used to. The community before was really, well, that was the center. Now it's not the center, I don't believe it is. It's trying to be, but because of the type of people in the community—and I'm not blaming them—it's just that it's not the people that have been raised there all their life. Right? They come to live in there. And for different reasons. Some of them because they cannot afford any other place to live. Well we were brought up in the slum area. Yeah we couldn't afford to live any other place, but we were born and raised there. Others are coming into it because of certain needs.

Funny yeah, how communities, in their own ethnic backgrounds, like Samoans, come together. And that's how before it was, too. We used to have Japanese Camp, Puerto Rican Camp, but yet we got along. And now you have these—even though the Samoans moving in, too, and the Koreans move in, too, but yet I guess the culture is so different from before. They don't get along as much as when we were young, I think. Even though before—I'm not saying there wasn't a prejudice—but there was, "Aw, he's Korean," or, "He's Filipino." But wasn't this kind of situation (that they) now have. And yet the Pālama Settlement is trying to bring them together, as a community.

HY: Is that part of the—how do I say? As a board member, is that something you would get involved in, trying to set policy, or set some kind of movement within that community?

JY: I don't think they have changed. Pālama is functioning like they want it to, traditionally. Maybe they have new programs and stuff. And I think they're trying to do outreach in the sense, like senior citizens' programs [are] really going—they come from all parts of the island. But I feel they should, if I was to get involved, to try see the community, Pālama itself—Kalihi Pālama—be more involved. You know, you can reach out, but are you taking care of the basic needs of the people, your community first, yeah? And that's what I would (like to) see. And maybe they're doing it, I'm not sure, but that's what I would like to see. If they're doing it, I would like to help in that area, too.

HY: Is it something, as a board member, that you would be involved in?

JY: Yeah, I would, one area I would try to get is the businessmen. Before, the business people out there really supported Pālama. When we went out to solicit. . .

HY: They don't support anymore?

JY: I don't think so. Well, it's like the police officer. When we used to walk the beat, I knew the store owners by name, they knew me by name. Now the officers are mobile, they move around, they don't walk as much, right? And they're trying to change that, go back. Because that's one of the, I think, foundations of the police department, is to be with the people.

See when you're driving around, just like you and I, if I drive to work all the time over here, never get out of my car to walk these two blocks, I'll never know this place. But if you walk, you see something different. It's like your own neighborhood, if you drive past your neighbors, "Hi." But you try to walk it, maybe a week or two, you have a different insight as to what's going on.

Well, same with Pālama Settlement, people come and go, but people not—maybe the settlement itself not outreaching. Notices [about various activities] go out and everything, but not giving into the community. Talk to the businessmen, businesswomen, get 'em together. How can you guys help us, how can we help you, situation. Instead of advertising and trying to push drives and programs more than the caring effect, that's what I'm saying. We care for you. You care for us? How can we work together? You talk about crime, well, let's work together.

The way we work together is make our community close knit. If we come close knit, we familiar with each other, there's less problems. When we're not familiar with each other, there's problems. The police department's the same way. You drive around, I ask the cop on the street right now, if I go stop a cop, "Eh, who owns that service station there? Who's the owner?" They don't know.

When I was a beat officer, we [became familiar with the neighborhood on] our own. In case something happens at your shop, even though you have a three-by-five card on the window, emergency (notification), I gotta know your family that owns the store. So they all know what's going on. And when I stop in, you can tell me your problems, instead of calling when the crisis happens, right?

And at night when I'm patrolling, your door's open, I can tell dispatch, "Eh, call this number. Call Holly Yamada, her shop's open." Nowadays, "Who's the owner?" You go back and forth, I hear this on the radio. They don't know who's the owner, they don't know. They don't care. Because they so busy doing other stuff.

HY: I think we're at the end of the tape.

JY: Sure.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

[The beginning portion of side two is not available as public information.]

HY: Anything else you want to---anything at all you want to say?

JY: Well, just mainly we're talking Pālama, I think Pālama played a key role. I believe Pālama played a key part in my life, and I appreciate Pālama so much that I'd do anything for them, if I can. Help them in any way. It's a community effort. And I believe in giving back, that's why I do what I do for them.

I still don't think I've done enough, but I don't have the time right now. I'd like to do more if I could. If I had a million dollars, I'd give 'em a million dollars. That's how I feel. Because if I can help somebody to come out of their poverty or their situation like I did, I'd like to do that. If I can give that to another family, be like my family, my two brothers and I. I feel pretty successful—we've got our own families, we never went to prison, we've done well. Not that prison, you can't be somebody after that, it's just that. . . . Well, like I tell people, maybe I never got caught (chuckles) when I did wrong.

But fortunately we've been blessed by doing things honestly. God has allowed us to do it, but also Pālama, the people of Pālama, the staff, every day giving us a good head start. But if I can help somebody else, I like to help them. That's why I get involved with like Big Brothers[/Big Sisters of Honolulu], and the situation beforehand, and giving my time over there [at Pālama Settlement]. But you can do so much, yeah? You only can do what you can do, what you're capable of doing, or have time for. You have only one life to live, so you gotta live it to the fullest, I really believe that. And I like to do more, and there's so much more to do.

HY: Okay. Thank you so much.

JY: You're welcome. (Chuckles)

END OF INTERVIEW

Reflections of Pālama Settlement

Volume I

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Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

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