

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Beatrice Chow Tominaga, 71, retired clerk

*"When I was a teen-ager I loved to go swimming right in front of the Moana Hotel. That's where I met my husband. My husband worked for the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. He lived in this [employees'] camp. He worked for the Royal Hawaiian as a bellboy when he was young, teen-ager days. They used to make pretty good tips, you know."*

Beatrice Chow Tominaga, the fourth of seven children, was born in the Ala Moana area of Honolulu, O'ahu in 1915, to Nyuk Lan and Henry En Ming Chow. Her father was a bookkeeper at the Seaside, Moana, and Royal Hawaiian Hotels. From about 1918 to December 1953, the Chows resided in the Moana Employees' Camp in Waikiki.

Tominaga attended Waikiki Elementary, Washington Intermediate, and McKinley High School, graduating in 1934. She also attended business school for a year. She married E.Y. Tominaga in 1935.

The Tominagas are parents of two sons.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Beatrice Tominaga (BT)

February 5, 1986

Mānoa, O'ahu

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Beatrice Chow Tominaga on February 5, 1986. The interview is at the Oral History Project's office in Honolulu, O'ahu, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Michi Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, Mrs. Tominaga, the first question I have for you is, what was your mother's name?

BT: Mrs. (Nyuk) Lan Chow.

MK: From your memory, tell me about your mother's background.

BT: Well, she was born in the Dowsett Highlands, that's in Nu'uano. And she went to public school, the Ma'ema'e Elementary School, up to the sixth grade. And what else?

MK: What did she do after Ma'ema'e?

BT: Oh, she helped her parents at home with the housework and help(ed) her mother with the younger children because she was the eldest girl. They had a strawberry (farm), and she used to help (them on the farm), too. When she got married, then, naturally, she moved to my father's place at Ala Moana. I think she married at the age of eighteen.

MK: What was your father's name?

BT: My father's name was Henry (En) Ming Chow. He was born in Ala Moana. They had a large duck pond. They raised a few pigs and they had chickens and pigeons. They (also) raised vegetables. His parents also had a little grocery store. They only sold staples, though, you know, no meats or anything like that. And then, he went to work for the Seaside Hotel when he was only about sixteen, I think, as an office boy. Then, office clerk, and then he went to study bookkeeping at one of these night schools, a business school. And then, he was transferred from the Seaside Hotel to the Moana Hotel as a bookkeeper. He worked there until his death in January

of 1939. He also worked about three nights a week to earn extra money to support his family. He worked as a cashier (during the nights).

MK: Where did he work as a cashier?

BT: Well, he worked at the Moana, and he also worked at the Wai'alae Golf Club and the Royal Hawaiian Hotel (during) the nights, three times a week till after one o'clock in the morning.

MK: I was curious. What kind of economic support did your mother's family have? Your father's family had the duck pond and the store. How about your mother's family?

BT: Oh, my maternal grandparents had the strawberry (farm) and, oh, they (also raised) some vegetables. That's about all. I don't know how they struggled through it. But my mother's older brother, the (eldest) son in the family, became wealthy because he was a smart man. (Do) you want me to tell something about my Uncle Sam?

MK: If you want to.

BT: He just passed away about two years before my mom. He was two years older. He was well-to-do because he operated a tire and a tire recap shop on that--I don't know what you call that street--(Queen Street near) Iwilei Street. He operated that business with his wife's brother. They were in business until they retired at the age of sixty-five. But all during that time when they made money, they bought land. Land was cheap in those days, and he invested in real estate. He owns houses and a (small) building and this and that, so he's wealthy. So his children are fortunate. All his four children went through college. They all have good jobs. One, two, three--three are retired. One isn't.

MK: You mentioned that your father's family had a (little grocery) store. Where was that store?

BT: Ala Moana. Where the Ala Moana Shopping Center is now, right there. That's (included in the location) that Dillingham bought.

Then when I was three years old, my parents moved to one of the Moana Hotel employee's cottage on Ka'iulani Avenue.

MK: When were you born?

BT: I was born on November 17, 1915.

MK: How many children were there in your family?

BT: There were seven of us. Four girls and three boys. The eldest girl (Lily) passed away when she was only forty-three and a half. And the youngest boy (Alvin) passed away when he was forty-four and a half in Los Angeles. My mother was living with him after she

retired because he was the only bachelor in the family and he was her youngest. And then, when he got stricken with cancer at the age of forty-two, she took care of him until his passing. When he passed away, she was nearly eighty-four.

MK: Among your brothers and sisters, what number child are you?

BT: I am the fourth.

MK: Fourth one.

BT: Third girl.

MK: And you were born in Ala Moana, but. . . .

BT: Yes. (We) moved over to Ka'iulani Avenue at the age (of) about three.

MK: Why did the family move to that Ka'iulani area?

BT: Oh, because the hotel provided living quarters for my father. He was happy to (move to) that house because it was much better than living at Ala Moana. The family had a big, old two-story house. It was much more convenient. It was (a short block) to where he worked. And my father never did drive. So he was happy (to live there).

MK: This house that you lived in, in the employee camp area, describe that house for me.

BT: Well, it was a brown house with white trimming and it (had) just two bedrooms. But we were fortunate to have running hot water day and night. We had a telephone, too, provided by the hotel.

MK: Where your house was located, in the front of it you had the Moana Hotel Annex, in the back of it you had the 'Āinahau Court. Now, tell me about both places. You can start with the Moana Hotel Annex. What was it like?

BT: Oh, when we were there when I was a little girl, this was an empty lot. Just empty, nothing was on it. When I was living there, we watched them build these four big beautiful buildings (and a small two-bedroom cottage). They were beautiful (and painted white). They were two stories and they had a chimney on each one of them, and a big yard. The hotel called it the Moana Hotel Annex. And then, this part, 'Āinahau Court, had many two-bedroom cottages and lot of date trees over here. We used to pick dates when they fell on the ground.

MK: Who lived in the Moana Hotel Annex?

BT: The Moana Hotel Annex, were (for) hotel guests. (A) lot of them were from Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Some from Europe, of

course, and some from the United States. Mostly White, of course.

MK: And how about the 'Āinahau Court?

BT: 'Āinahau Court, were (for) Mainland people who rented those cottages and they lived there for many years.

MK: Would you remember any of the names of the people?

BT: No. I don't remember the people's names. I remember several times, my sister (Lily) and I did some babysitting in the evenings for one military family, (Lt. Battley). He was an officer in the army, I guess. But we didn't do much babysitting in this area.

MK: In the 'Āinahau Court area?

BT: Yeah.

MK: As we move away from the Moana Hotel and 'Āinahau Court to, let's see, we would be going away from Koa Avenue, what was in this area?

BT: Oh, this area right here where the International Market [Place] is now was the Seaside Hotel cottages that they moved from Kālia Road to make room for the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. They moved them here and they were over here. They were cottages, you see. After the war [World War II] they got rid of those cottages. And in the middle 1950s they built the International Market [Place].

MK: Earlier you were telling me about. . . .

BT: The ['Āpuakēhau] Stream? They drained that stream when I was about nine years old. So that was in 1925 (when) they drained that stream. The water came from the Waikīkī Beach, went under Kalākaua Avenue, and way up into this area.

MK: Past the power plant. . . .

BT: Past the (back of the) power plant and just by these employees' cottages right here. It drained here. I mean, it stopped there.

MK: It stopped above Mr. Hikida's house by Kānekapōlei Avenue?

BT: (Yes.) It didn't quite reach there. It stopped there anyway. Oh, yeah, this (was) my lady friend's aunt. One of my (girl)friend's aunt, the Takenaka sister-in-law, drowned here. She drowned in that (stream), in that place where I told you that I nearly drowned.

MK: Tell me about that incident again, about that stream and how you almost drowned.

BT: I don't want to go into that story, that same story where I nearly drowned. I told you once. (Laughs) I don't want to say it again. The story is so long.



MK: Oh, okay. Tell me about the carnations that were being grown here, then.

BT: Oh, yeah. Right over here, let me see, near the power plant over here, they had carnations. They hired a Korean man (Mr. Ome) to raise carnations, and then he (also) took care of the hibiscus bushes over here. And these flowers were all used to decorate the hotel, the Moana and Seaside Hotels.

MK: What other things were being grown in this area?

BT: Then they (had) a big hothouse over here that provided plants and shrubbery for the hotel. They used to have a big, freshwater mullet pond on this side, on the left side, of the employees' cottages. They had some Chinese farmers who used to take care of the produce for the hotels.

MK: When you were living down here in the house that you lived in between 1919 and 1925, were there other employees living near you?

BT: (Yes,) they had one employee cottage over here for the Moana Hotel employees. They were for bellhops and room boys. And then, in the back here there was a big, old-fashioned, two-story house. The Kimura family lived upstairs and (the) Fukuda family downstairs. (On both floors, they were divided like a duplex, a Japanese couple lived right next to the Kimura family. There) was a big yard (in front of this two-story house). We used to play in that yard.

MK: Were there any other single family houses?

BT: (Yes, there were three two-bedroom houses, two of them faced Ka'iulani Avenue. We lived in one,) and (the) house (next to ours) was rented to a White couple who were not employees of the hotel. They were Mr. and Mrs. Fitzgerald. I remember (her) because (she was nice) to us.

MK: Okay. So you lived [there] from 1919 to 1925?

BT: (Yes.) About six to six and a half years.

MK: In this employee cottage that was near Koa Avenue?

BT: (Yes.) Right on Ka'iulani Avenue right across from Koa.

MK: Then you folks moved up into this private lane up into the Moana Hotel employees' [quarters].

BT: (Yes, during the) summer vacation of my third-grade year, (we) moved over there.

MK: This area was above Kūhiō Avenue?

BT: Above, yes. That time, Kūhiō Avenue didn't go through, you

know, because of the (thirty-year) lease that the hotel had, (they) couldn't (extend Kūhio Avenue). After the lease was over, then they extended Kūhio Avenue. You know, (starting by the) Kūhio Theater (to Ka'iulani Avenue where it meets Kūhio Avenue).

MK: I was wondering, why is it that your family had to move up here?

BT: (Well,) they want(ed) to get rid of these houses and make room (for the Moana Hotel Annex, so that the courtyard would look more spacious, so) they moved the employees' cottages here. The annex was here until after World War II.

MK: What did your house look like up here?

BT: It was this house that they moved from here. It was a larger two-bedroom house. It had a large living room and dining room. Small kitchen, though, (and one complete bathroom).

MK: It was not the house that you lived in originally, but a neighboring house?

BT: (Yes, a) neighboring house. They demolished (the) house (that we lived in, and the one next to it).

MK: Now, if you can kind of describe for me that neighborhood that you lived in from 1925. First of all you can start by telling me about the employees' houses near yours.

BT: Oh, okay. Right in front of our house was another employees' quarters for the Moana Hotel employees. Then, our family house, and the next house was occupied by the Maeda family. And the next one (was) for the Fukuda family, and the next (was) the Kuboi family. But prior to the Kuboi family moving there, the Kimura family used to live there. (They had built new three-bedroom houses for the Kimura and Fukuda families. Also they had built new living quarters for the male employees of the three hotels, Seaside, Moana and Royal Hawaiian.)

MK: To the area left of these houses were. . . .

BT: The Moana Hotel employees' quarters.

MK: Can you tell me about the single men's quarters?

BT: Well, there were six of them right here, and the one in front of our house, and then two bathhouses there.

MK: What type of people lived in those employees' quarters?

BT: They were not couples. They were single men. Or if they did have wives, their wives (and children) were back in the Philippines. Because there were only men living there. (There were also Japanese and a few Koreans, and one or two were Chinese.)

MK: What kind of jobs did they have?

BT: Well, they (had) jobs such as room boys (who work in the housekeeping department). And some of them were dishwashers, some were waiters, (some were bus boys,) some were kitchen helpers, (cooks,) and such.

MK: I know that as a little girl growing up here, what do you remember about the Maeda family?

BT: The Maeda family was a good, friendly family. They were good neighbors of ours. I remember Mr. and Mrs. Maeda and their six children. The first three were girls and the next three were boys. We used to always play with them. (Their parents are gone now.)

MK: What kinds of things did you do for play in those days?

BT: Oh, well, in those days. . . . Well, no, when the Maeda family became my neighbors, that was in summer of 1930. We were intermediate age, so we didn't play (those games) that children in the elementary (age) played. We just used to play, and talk stories, and go the beach and go swimming. (Chuckles) (I used to go surfing with the Japanese bellhops when I was fifteen. I didn't continue when I turned sixteen because I found myself a summer job.)

MK: How about the family . . .

BT: And we used to play cards once in a while. But we didn't play bean bags or jacks because (they were) usually (played during our) elementary years, you know.

MK: How about the Fukuda family? What do you remember about . . .

BT: The Fukuda family, I used to play with one of their daughters, Tsuyako. She was three years younger than me. I used to love her and we used to play together. And then, in September of 1930 just at about the time I entered my ninth-grade year, the family moved to Japan with the exception of the eldest son. The eldest son, (Joe Hideo) remained working for the power plant for the hotel (as a foreman. Then during World War II, he was promoted to being the superintendent of the plumbing department for the hotels, including the Royal Hawaiian, Surfrider and the Princess Ka'iulani Hotels. Then later, he left working for the hotels and became vice president for Kenji Osano's Enterprises in Hawai'i until he retired).

MK: And how about the Kuboi family?

BT: The Kuboi family, well, that man, he was the personal waiter and (chauffeur for) the general manager. At that time, the general manager of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel was Mr. Benaglia. And after he retired, well, he served the next general manager. (Mr. Kuboi)



retired at the age of sixty-five. His wife passed away a few years ago, but he is still living.

MK: For the other families, the fathers, what kind of work did they do--Mr. Fukuda and Mr. Maeda?

BT: Mr. Maeda used to work in the power plant under Mr. (Joe) Fukuda (who) was the head of the power plant.

MK: I know that these are all employees' quarters. Would you remember anything about the rent and the management of . . .

BT: No. No, they didn't charge us any rent separately. It was included with their salary. You know, the pay was cheap in those days but included rent, and water--hot water and cold water--and included electricity. But this place, the telephone was optional. You paid for your own telephone. But they provided ice for your icebox in those days. They provided free ice that they made at the power plant until they start buying refrigerators afterwards. Probably just prior to the war [World War II], they bought refrigerators, (and some bought quite a while after the war ended in 1945).

And then, what else? Oh, the hotel was kind enough to provide linen services. They provide the bed sheets and the pillowcases. In fact, bath towels, (too), but my mother didn't want to use their bath towels. But the sheets and pillowcases. They would be laundered and (pressed) by the Young Laundry. And then, we would get it every week, clean sheets (and pillowcases). But these sheets are sheets that had been used by the guests at the Moana Hotel. These were sometimes with patches here and there. They wouldn't dare use (them) for the hotel guests, so they (let the employees use them). And they (also) provided toilet tissue, too, about two rolls a week. So we had good sheets that were ironed all the time. And my mother hated to wash (our own) sheets by hand. We didn't have a washing machine back in those days and it was (laughs) killing to us.

MK: I know that your family lived in that house from 1925 to 1953.

BT: Yes.

MK: And you had a hedge next to the employees' quarters . . .

BT: Yes. To separate (the) Royal Hawaiian (employees' quarters).

MK: To the right-hand side of it were the Royal Hawaiian Hotel employees' quarters.

BT: Yes.

MK: Tell me about those quarters.

BT: Okay. Those quarters were built a (few years) after we had moved in because I had watched them build those employees' cottages. They were built by a different contractor and they had better bungalows than the ones at the Moana side. They were more modern.

MK: Would you remember any of the families?

BT: No, there were no families. They were single men's quarters, like what I was saying, the bell boys, the room boys, the waiters, dishwashers and kitchen helpers, the same thing. But they had only one bathhouse because they had less bungalows, you see. They had only five. One, two, three, four, five. The bell boys stayed in this one, the young (men). The rest were all older men, so they stayed in these. The rest of those men who had employment at the hotel had to seek lodgings somewhere else because the hotel cannot provide enough--you know, enough rooms for everybody.

But during the Great Depression, the hotel used to be closed. No, they open during the summer and winters. During the spring and fall, they would be closed. So people will have to seek employment somewhere else. There was no such thing as unemployment compensation in those days.

MK: When the hotel was closed were the employees still allowed to live in the employees' quarters?

BT: (Yes,) they were allowed to live there. But some of them moved out because they found work somewhere else. Cannery or something like that or what(ever). And then, they would come back.

MK: How about for your father? When the hotel closed where did you go?

BT: When the hotel closed, my father was fortunate. They transferred him to the Wai'ala'e Golf Club. When he worked there, he did auditing and he also did cashiering. He worked about three nights a week whenever they had dances. They used to have (dancing) Wednesday nights, Fridays and Saturdays, I think. He used to come home real late, you know, about two o'clock in the mornings, sometimes almost three. But a friend would always drive him home, a waiter. So that's how it was. I used to worry about him coming home so late.

MK: You know, when you were living in this area, what did you call this area that you lived in?

BT: There was no name to it. We just called it the Moana Hotel employees' quarters. And some people called it the camp--hotel camp. (Laughs)

There was a road out here. See, this is a private lane now that we walk through to catch the streetcar. There's a road over here that goes in, and (the) cars go in and out and (go) out to Kalākaua Avenue. No name to this lane. It's a lane, private lane to go to

the employees' quarters. It didn't go through to the Ala Wai Boulevard, no. Because you would be wondering how the cars would get in. This is only a little lane. (We) walk(ed) through here. You (didn't) ask me about how the cars would go in and out. The private lane right by the power plant. No, the power plant would be on the left side of that lane.

MK: You know, in that area, that neighborhood, what kind of activities did the neighbors have that they would do together?

BT: No activities whatsoever. To each, his own. Everybody did their own (things). The housewives only got to talk to one another whenever the peddler would come. The Japanese peddler would come, maybe twice a week. There were two peddlers, you see. The housewives would get together and talk a few words to each other. No activities. Just the kids would play, you know. But when we got to be almost high school age we didn't play with the neighbors. We went to work. We went to school and worked. We had no time to play.

MK: Like you mentioned the peddlers. There were two peddlers that used to come in?

BT: (Yes.) Twice a week.

MK: What did they sell?

BT: Well, one sold only produce. The other one sold more. He had his truck loaded. He even had canned goods and lots of things. Not only produce, but he had other things, too. But the other one, his truck was not loaded, just vegetables.

MK: How about shopping in the Waikīkī area? Where did your shopping get done?

BT: My mother would always send me to the Ibaraki Store or the Aoki Store on Kalākaua Avenue a few, oh, five or six blocks away. Twice a week my mother would catch the streetcar and go to Chinatown and buy some Chinese groceries because she loved to do Chinese cooking. That's how we got our food.

When I was a teenager I loved to go swimming right in front of the Moana Hotel. That's where I met my husband. My husband worked for the Royal Hawaiian [Hotel]. He lived in this camp. He worked for the Royal Hawaiian as a bell boy when he was young, teenager days. They used to make pretty good tips, you know. But during the depression, well, not so. And then, he used to take me surfing. I used to go surfing with him. But when I got to be about almost sixteen--yeah, when I was about fifteen and a half--I used to work during my summer months. We had no time to go surfing or swimming.

MK: What kind of work did you do when you were fifteen, sixteen years old?

BT: Oh, housemaid. (Laughs) And then, summertime, pineapple cannery. Babysitting, ironing, and dishwashing, cooking (and also housecleaning).

MK: Who did you do the housework for?

BT: For Haoles people. They were all Haoles there.

MK: What area were they living in, the people you worked for?

BT: They were living on (the other) side of Ka'iulani Avenue.

MK: On the Kūhiō Avenue, Prince Edward [Avenue], Koa Avenue . . .

BT: (Yes), and Lili'uokalani Avenue over here, that's across from Kūhiō Beach. But I was fortunate. I worked for about a year and a half for this Haoles couple. He was the manager of the Hawai'i Theater. This couple had no children but (they had) a Pomeranian dog. I used to take the dog for a walk around for several blocks every afternoon. I didn't have to do laundry for them because they had a laundry woman come over once a week. So my job was marketing and cooking for them, and dishwashing and housecleaning. That's all.

MK: Was that a live-in situation?

BT: No, no, not a live-in situation at all. [It was] only a few blocks from my house. I used to go home every day. I never lived with (them). I never lived outside of my (parents') house until I married.

MK: Oh. I kind of want to concentrate on what you did now. Where did you go to school?

BT: I went to the old Waikīkī Elementary School, and then to Washington Intermediate School, and then to McKinley High School. And I graduated from that school in 1934.

MK: You know, back at Waikīkī Elementary, tell me what the buildings and grounds looked like at Waikīkī Elementary when you were there.

BT: Well, there was a big yard, and they had all those brown and white bungalows. Mrs. Mabel King was the principal of that school. I remember all the names of my elementary school teachers. Do you want me to mention their names?

MK: Sure.

BT: All right. My first-grade teacher was Mrs. Loo, the mother of Dr. Cyrus Loo. And then I had Mrs. Wong, second grade. And then I had Miss Bernice Poaha, third grade. And I had Mrs. Mary Harrison in the fourth grade; and fifth grade, Mrs. Turner; and sixth grade, Mrs. McCluskey.



MK: I was wondering, would you have special memories of any of these teachers?

BT: Yeah. I loved them all and they loved me, too. I remember them. They were real nice. And I learned a lot from them.

MK: What special things do you remember about them?

BT: They were all kind, and they really taught us something.

MK: You know, nowadays children celebrate Christmas, Easter, May Day . . .

BT: We did, too. We did that, too.

MK: How were they celebrated?

BT: I don't know if it's much the same as now, but, chee, I don't know. May Day was May Day. It was (called) Lei Day (in) 1926, I think. It was started by Don Blanding, eh? He died (quite a long time ago). But Christmas, we celebrated, sure. We sang Christmas carols and we had a Christmas tree. I think it was much the same as now. Easter, I don't know whether we celebrated Easter. (I remember that we always had one week off for Easter vacation, the same as they do now.) Only in churches, but I don't think in the public school. But I know Christmas, we did.

Oh, and I remember in the first grade, Mrs. Loo was a friend of my mother's and she was a Christian woman. She always said a morning prayer in the beginning of class time. We would always bow our heads and then we'll sing a Christian song, a short hymn. Yeah, she was a real nice person. Second grade, and third grade, (and fourth and fifth and sixth), we didn't have prayer, but the first grade, Mrs. Loo. I heard that she passed away during the latter part of World War II, I think 1945. She wasn't very old, maybe in (her) late fifties.

MK: In those days when you were a little child, would you remember any special events or places in Waikīkī?

BT: No, no. Back in those days, the teachers didn't take us (on) excursions. Very seldom, because they didn't want the responsibility. So we didn't go on excursions like these kids (do) nowadays. They go often, yeah? About seven or eight times during the school year. But we didn't. And just prior to summer vacation, our teacher would (take) us--the whole school would walk to the Waikīkī Beach over there, where that public bath (was) before the Natatorium was built. And we would spend half a day there and eat (our) lunch there. (It was like a picnic.) We hardly went on excursions. Our teacher didn't even take us to the Bishop Museum. Some teachers did, but my teacher didn't take [us]. So we didn't see too much. (Chuckles)



MK: Some of the old Waikīkī residents have told me they used to play in the empty lots in the 'Āinahau area.

BT: In this area?

MK: Yeah . . .

BT: That's private (property and they) don't let outside kids play there.

MK: No, not in the 'Āinahau Court area, but, you know, any area west of 'Ōhū Avenue, they used to go and play.

BT: Oh, oh. Yeah, yeah.

MK: How about your neighborhood? Where did the young people play?

BT: No, we played in the camp. There was a big lot here by the Hikida and Takenaka families. That's a big area owned by the Queen Emma Estate. We used to play here. All around here. Over here was kind of congested, but we used to play in this area.

MK: By the Hikida and Takenaka homes?

BT: Yeah. Away from the power plant, of course. It was right over here. But we used to play only up to about fifteen years old. When you're sixteen, you get a summer job. (We had) to help. So, we didn't play (after we reached high school age).

MK: And then, you were also telling me that when you were a child, you remember going out to the Ala Wai area. Describe that area for me.

BT: Ala Wai area? Oh, my Uncle (Howard, now deceased,) and I used to go in the late afternoons and sit down by the edge of the Ala Wai Boulevard and watch them dredge the Ala Wai Canal. It took almost a year (or so,) and we watched them dredge it. They made the Ala Wai Canal to prevent flooding in the Waikīkī area because Waikīkī is such a low land. Once a year or twice a year there would be heavy flooding in that area. And we kids, when we were going to Waikīkī School, we used to wade through knee-deep water in order to get home. (Chuckles) We'll get all wet, (too). So the principal (Mrs. Mabel King) would always let us go home early when she knows that a storm is coming. But after they finished building this Ala Wai Canal, there were no floods after that because they had proper drainage.

MK: Let's see. You went to Washington?

BT: Washington Intermediate School.

MK: And then, you graduated there in 1934 . . .

BT: [Nineteen] thirty-one. Washington, 1931.

MK: Oh, 1931, and you went to McKinley.

BT: McKinley, 1934.

MK: You graduated in '34.

BT: I graduated during the height of the Great Depression. That was (an) awful time to get jobs, you know, awful. And the pay was so cheap.

MK: So right after you graduated, what did you do?

BT: After I graduated? Oh, I continued working for the Haole couple, the (Harry) Delgados. Oh, and then in September I went to business school for a short while. I went to Hawai'i Commercial Institute. It's, of course, defunct (a) few years later. Well, anyway, when I got married at the age of nineteen, then I moved out of the camp.

MK: So, by the time you moved out of the camp, were there any major changes in that area?

BT: No, no major changes whatsoever. It stayed like that all during the war. And then, well, the people (there) all say, "Oh, we have to move out by and by." They didn't know when, see. So, when they had to move out (by) the end of 1953, naturally, there were no improvements. Except (for) this old banyan tree (which) is still there as a landmark. (Chuckles)

MK: When did your family actually move out?

BT: My mother moved out sometime during December of '53. That's over thirty years ago. Thirty-two years ago, she moved out.

MK: Why did she have to move out?

BT: They had to move out because the (thirty-year) lease expired. They (all) had to get out. The Queen Emma Estate leased the property to all these other investors now.

MK: And your father passed away in 1939?

BT: (Yes,) January 18, 1939.

MK: How was it that your mother was allowed to still live there?

BT: Oh, she was allowed to live there, fortunately, because the hotel granted her that permission. She was fortunate because they only charged her fifteen dollars a month. See, they gave her a small pension of only sixty-five (dollars a month). Fifteen dollars was for the rent and electricity and water and everything else, and fifty dollars for (her) food. But then in 1942 my (older) sister, (a social worker), insisted that she get a job, so she went to work for the first time in her life in 1942 to subsidize that amount.

Fifty dollars is not enough for food. Especially [since] she was a (good) cook. (The first year after my father passed away, they gave her more, something like \$125.)

MK: What kind of job did your mother get?

BT: Oh, kitchen helper at the Moana Hotel and then at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel after that.

MK: How long did she continue working?

BT: Oh, she continued to work until she was sixty-five and a half. (That was in October, 1958.)

MK: So, even during the war years when your mother was living there, no changes?

BT: No, no changes whatsoever. They just left it, oh, kind of unsightly looking, those bungalows were. No improvements. They didn't want to because this was not permanent. They had to get out by '53, so why should the hotel put (any) more money (into those employees' quarters) and remodel? (I think that only once, they had those cottages repainted, the outside, I mean.)

MK: How about the people that were living there during the '40s up till '53. Who were living there then?

BT: I told you, these people.

MK: Same people?

BT: Yeah, same people.

MK: So, no difference in the buildings or in the people?

BT: (No.) The reason why they didn't oust my mother and the three younger children (much) younger than I am, from the Moana Hotel quarters, because they recognized that my dad was a good and faithful and loyal worker for the Territorial Hotel Company. He worked there as a teenager for the Seaside Hotel and the Moana. (He also worked at the Wai'alae Golf Club and the Royal Hawaiian Hotel.) He worked there for about thirty-three years prior to his death. So they granted my mother (permission) to stay there. Otherwise, she would have to get out and pay bigger rent. You have to pay bigger rent than fifteen (dollars a month).

MK: You married and moved out at age nineteen, but you continued to visit your mother back there, yeah?

BT: Yeah, of course. And the three children.

MK: And the three children. Now, say, after the war, what changes did you notice in Waikiki in general after the war?

BT: In the camp, you mean? The camp, there was no change.

MK: Yeah, yeah. How about in Waikīkī in general?

BT: Waikīkī, well, right after World War II, there weren't much changes until maybe in the early 1950s. Because I know that they built the Biltmore Hotel there, and then later the Princess Ka'iulani Hotel, and then all the others. But that was in the early and middle 1950s. But my mother was there till '53, see. So, (these employees' quarters were) there till '53. Nothing was improved. They didn't because they wanted to demolish this whole area. And right here on that extension of Kūhiō Avenue over here, not extension but the addition, they have this Royal Theater, (but) now it's not there, and then the Food Pantry. And what's the name of the street over there? (Oh, I remember, it's called Kānekapōlei Avenue.) And all these other hotels sprung up after that. So, they didn't have any improvements because they were waiting for the lease to expire. That's why, no improvements. They're not going (to) improve the camp because these people, the rent was included with their wages.

MK: You know, now, as you look back . . .

BT: They were plain, real plain. What did you say?

MK: Now, as you look back, when you lived in Waikīkī long time ago, what do you feel about having lived in Waikīkī?

BT: Well, no, I figured it was great, though, because we were near the stores, near the busline, streetcar line, (I mean) and we're near the beach. I loved the beach. I thought it was great compared to a lot of my friends, my classmates. They lived in (farther away) places and farther from the school. And they didn't have running hot water and we did. And we have free linen service and all that. We were better off. We have free ice, too. So, I thought we were pretty lucky. We were able to get summer jobs around the neighborhood.

MK: Okay. I'm going to end the interview here, okay?

BT: Yes, yes.

MK: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **WAIKĪKĪ, 1900 - 1985: ORAL HISTORIES**

## **Volume I**

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