

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Miyo Asuka, 91, retired laundress

"As I looked this way from the top of the ship, everyone said, 'Diamond Head, Diamond Head' as they spotted Diamond Head. . . . I thought, 'So that's Diamond Head!' Well, it turned out to be the reflection of the sun on a glass window of a house in Manoa--that was what was glittering. When they pointed out Diamond Head to me I said, 'What do you mean diamond?' Since there was nothing glittering there."

Miyo Asuka, Japanese, the second of Maki and Taiji Fujikawa's nine children, was born in 1895, in Hiroshima-ken, Japan. She grew up in Itsukaichi-mura, a farming community. She completed her elementary school education and learned to sew in preparation for marriage.

She married Tokumatsu Asuka in 1913 and arrived in Honolulu in 1914. From the time of their arrival, they made Waikiki their home. They first lived with a brother-in-law and later resided in a court of rental cottages known as Asuka Camp. In ca. 1938, they purchased property on Kuhio Avenue where many years later they built an apartment building.

For decades, Asuka took in laundry while her husband worked at Halekulani.

Now retired, she enjoys being grandmother of eleven, and great-grandmother to five.

Tape No. 13-1-1-85 and 13-2-1-85 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Miyo Asuka (MA)

February 20, 1985

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by Judith Yamauchi.]

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Miyo Asuka at her home in Waikīkī, Honolulu, Hawai'i on February 20, 1985. The interviewer is Michi Kodama-Nishimoto.

What was your mother's name?

MA: It was Maki. Fujikawa, Maki.

MK: And your father's name?

MA: Fujikawa, Taiji.

MK: Could you tell me something about the Fujikawa family line in the old days?

MA: Well, there was nothing in particular. Nothing really worth mentioning. (Laughs)

MK: What sort of work was the Fujikawa family involved in?

MA: They were farmers. Besides farming, since my father was business-oriented, they also had a business.

MK: What type of business?

MA: My town was located close to a harbor so ships went in and out of there. Well, I'm not too sure of exactly where, but from some island in the Seto Inland Sea such as Shōdo Shima where they imported vinegar from where it had been manufactured--what we did was to transport this vinegar to the small shops in the rural area. Also, udon or soba or sōmen. And in summer during Obon people used udon and sōmen to send for Chūgen, and at that time the ships would always come in loaded with these items. We would take these to the rural shops and drop them off. These are the kinds of things we

did. And we would buy rice and things from the rural farmers and--well, I guess you could say we were middlemen.

Also, we would buy rapeseed and drop them off at the oil stores. These are the types of things [MA's family] did when I was a child. So various people such as oil shop owners often came to our house. And at home, we cultivated our own land.

MK: Well, did your father succeed in his business?

MA: No, he didn't. (Laughs)

MK: Why is that?

MA: If he had just stuck to these types of things it would have been all right. Well, how should I say this. You know how people, without having any actual rice, would speculate on the rice market prices and buy their stocks which go up and down in value? He got involved in this and failed. (Laughs) The place where I lived was in a town called Itsukaichi, and there, there were some people called sōbashi, who could be said to be the best in the Chūgoku district. Even these people who lived in fine large homes would also go bankrupt. The number of people who went bankrupt through speculation was very large in the rural areas. This also happened to my father. This did not happen when we were young, but by the time my younger brothers' and sisters' generation came around, we were unsuccessful.

MK: Where were you born?

MA: In Itsukaichi. Hiroshima-ken, Saiki-gun, Itsukaichi-machi.

MK: When were you born?

MA: In the 28th year of Meiji. (Laughs) Here they would say 1895. That is why I will be 90 years old this year since my birthday is March 20, 1985. In two or three weeks, I will be 90.

(Laughter)

MK: What number child were you?

MA: Me? Well, I had thought I was the eldest daughter, and I did have a younger sister. But when I happened to look at my koseki-tōhon [family register], it said I was the second daughter. I thought, oh I must not have been the eldest daughter. So I asked my mother and she said I had had an elder sister who lived for only sixty days. Since she was above me, she would be the eldest daughter; and after she died I was born, so I became the second daughter. She had the same name as I--Miyo. They told me that since she had died so young and the following child was a girl, in order that this second child would live twice as long, they decided to name her Miyo as well. (Laughs) So I became Miyo too. So it seems I had an elder sister although I did not know it, since I was born

after she had died.

MK: [So you lived in] Hiroshima-ken, Saiki-gun, Itsukaichi- . . .

MA: Machi. When I was born it was Itsukaichi-mura.

MK: What sort of mura was this?

MA: Well, in those days when I was going to school, elementary school was made up of jinjō [regular] and kōtō [higher] elementary school. Jinjō was for four years and then kōtō was for four more years. The first four years of jinjō elementary school was compulsory. You had to at least graduate from jinjō elementary school, and most people only went this far--especially girls. And if you wanted to go on to kōtō elementary school, you had to go to Hatsukaichi. In Hatsukaichi there was a Saiki Kōtō Elementary School which was the only kōtō elementary school in Saiki-gun and this was only for four years. So when one is ten years old, he would graduate from the four-year jinjō elementary school in Itsukaichi and then he must go to the kōtō elementary school in Hatsukaichi for four more years. After I had been going to this Hatsukaichi Kōtō Elementary School for one year, a kōtō elementary school was built in Itsukaichi. So after this it was called a jinjō-kōtō elementary school and I graduated from the Itsukaichi Jinjō-Kōtō Elementary School. But people like my older brother, after graduating from four years of school in Itsukaichi, went to Saiki Kōtō for four more years; so they graduated from Saiki Kōtō Elementary School--they were the last graduating class from there. I only went there for one year because a school was made in Itsukaichi. In those days, people from all around the vicinity went to the kōtō elementary school in Hatsukaichi, so [the school] had a dormitory--since people came from far away. People came from all the surrounding villages since they did not have a kōtō elementary school in their own villages. That is why they had dormitories.

MK: What types of houses were there in your village--that is, within your village?

MA: What do you mean by "what types of houses?"

MK: Could you explain what kinds of houses there were? For example, your house?

MA: Let me see. . . . At the time of the Meiji Restoration [1868], there was often warfare; and, due to this, Hatsukaichi was burned. So the Asuka house, which from long ago was an eating house, was a large old house; and since it was the time of the Meiji Restoration during the Seinan War when we fought against Kyushu, people, on their way over there, passed by Hatsukaichi. So it was burned. When it was burned, everything burned. And when we were rebuilding our house, there was no lumber, so we could not use fine lumber to build our house. We had to use small pieces of lumber. People in the country areas used huge pieces of lumber as pillars, but we didn't have any of these. When I went to the Asuka family as a

daughter-in-law, my aunt often spoke of this.

MK: What about the Fujikawa family?

MA: I didn't hear of any such burnings due to the war in my family. That is because the Asukas were in Hatsukaichi which was a town located along a main national road. That is probably why it burned.

MK: What types of roads did they have in those days?

MA: The national road from Itsukaichi to Hatsukaichi which I took when I was going to school was lined on both sides with pine trees. It was a road which passed between these [trees].

MK: What did the people of your village do for a living?

MA: They were farmers. Most were farmers.

MK: What sorts of things did they raise?

MA: Rice and wheat. They harvest wheat in May and then they plant rice. And after they harvest the rice in the autumn, they again plant wheat. If it is a place where the soil is poor, both rice and wheat cannot be raised. Rice must be raised in a paddy but wheat can't be raised in a paddy since [the soil] must be dry. So it seems there are places where both cannot be raised. At our place, we usually raised both rice and wheat. From the time I was young, I was made to work in the fields . . . (Laughs)

MK: What sort of work did you do when you were a young girl?

MA: When we were busy, the family alone wasn't enough to do the rice reaping or wheat planting or cutting so we hired some helpers and the children weren't used too much; but during the summer we helped by going into the paddy and weeding. And when we were busy with such things as rice reaping, we used to go outside and help. And when I was a child, since there was a younger sister, my mother couldn't go outside; so I was made to babysit. Since I had to babysit, [there were times when] I had to be absent from school. That's how it was. The thing that bothered me the most was that I was absent just at the time we were learning about Hiroshima-ken in geography class; so I didn't know very much about Hiroshima-ken. They used to say Hiroshima-ken had sixteen gun [counties] and three shi [cities]. The shi were Onomichi, Hiroshima, and Fukuyama. I did not know these. After that I told my parents that I would not be absent from school anymore and caused them some trouble.

MK: How did you feel about having to help with the farm work and babysit for the sake of the family?

MA: Since I wanted to go to school, I wasn't happy about it. (Laughs)

MK: What sorts of things did you study in school in those days?

MA: There were relatively many courses to take. I understand that these days they don't even teach history. They don't have history or geography or moral training, do they? Well, it was not that way during our time. We had geography, history, and moral training. We also had etiquette. From the third year of jinjō elementary school, we had lessons in etiquette.

MK: What were the teaching methods like in those days?

MA: They certainly weren't like they are for the children today. The teachers were looked up to and feared, but today television shows them to be otherwise. I look at that and wonder at the schoolchildren of today. The children in the old days were different.

MK: What did you like best in school?

MA: I'll tell you what I did not like. I hated composition writing. (Laughs) And I didn't like drawing, since I wasn't good at it.

MK: What course did you like the best?

MA: I really didn't have many likes and dislikes. My daughter-in-law said that she did not learn history in school. Since she did not learn history she always says she doesn't know much about the past. But did she have books! Novels. She must have had over twenty copies of [books on] Tokugawa Ieyasu lined up in a row to read. And there was this novel called Ryoma o Yuku which had to do with the period of the Restoration which she used to buy and read--since she hadn't any history [courses]. But we had history--I believe we had it after we were in kōtō elementary school--geography and history. We went from Japanese geography to world geography. We also learned physics. We had most things. And we girls learned sewing from the third grade on, and when we entered Saiki Kōtō Elementary School we continued with it. Since we had been doing sewing for two years during the third and fourth grades of the Itsukaichi Jinjō Elementary School, when we entered the Saiki Kōtō Elementary School in Hatsukaichi, because sewing wasn't taught in the Hatsukaichi Jinjō Elementary School, the teacher was surprised at us.

MK: You are a female. What about education for girls in those days.

MA: Of course it wasn't encouraged as much as for boys, at our homes as well as elsewhere. However, at our house, since my father had quite a bit of understanding, he allowed us to [study]. But the number of girls commuting to Hatsukaichi was very few. The number of us girls graduating from Hatsukaichi Kōtō Elementary School was only seven. There were twenty-seven or so boys graduating but only seven girls. I have the graduation picture. (Laughs)

MK: After graduation, what kinds of things did you learn?

MA: After graduation, I learned mainly sewing. After graduation and before one got married, there was mainly sewing. A happy thing for us was

that our sewing teacher was the Saiki Kōtō Elementary School's sewing teacher. So we learned from this sewing teacher at school and upon graduation this teacher taught both at the Hatsukaichi school and at her home. After the kōtō school was built in Itsukaichi, this teacher quit her job at school and came to Itsukaichi and bought a house in Itsukaichi and started sewing in the town of Itsukaichi. Thus, I had the same teacher throughout school and then again after graduation. So I was with the same friends throughout school and afterwards in sewing class until we got married. There is only one of those friends left now. I still hear from her by letter.

MK: Did you go to sewing classes every day?

MA: Yes. Except for Sunday.

MK: What kinds of things did you learn?

MA: We would take various things from home. Since I had a lot of siblings below me, I would start sewing things for the little ones and then gradually progress to the older ones. After that I would sew for the adults. Since all the girls in the vicinity learned from this teacher first at school and then even after graduation since she taught at her home, we would go there; so most of us went to this teacher until we got married.

MK: And when did you get married?

MA: When I was nineteen. (Laughs)

MK: How did you meet your husband?

MA: He [Tokumatsu Asuka] had come here [i.e., Hawai'i]. He came here because his older brother had a house here. He lived here for some years, then went back to Japan and married me and brought me back here.

MK: And was there a nakōdo?

MA: Yes.

MK: What happened?

MA: The nakōdo got together my father's friend and an acquaintance of the Asuka family and he brought my husband over to my house. (Laughs) They came to take a look. I happened to be doing some sewing in the parlor at the time they came. I had a sewing girlfriend from Hatsukaichi who had come from Hatsukaichi to learn sewing in Itsukaichi--we were such good friends people used to call us dōsei renya. She happened to be visiting at our home just at that time--just at the time my husband came with the [Asuka's] go-between. Our side's go-between brought them over to our house. After they left, my friend told me that if they were from Hatsukaichi, the man must have been Asuka's son. I asked her if she knew him and she said of

course she knew him since they were neighbors of theirs. When I asked her what they might have come for she said that of course they must have come to look you over.

(Laughter)

MA: That's how my friend would talk.

MK: And what did you think about Mr. Asuka?

MA: I didn't even look at him. I couldn't look since I was sewing and couldn't raise my face to look at him. I just glanced at him sideways and then kept looking down. (Laughs) Really, I didn't even see him. So I always say that at the wedding ceremony when we wear the watabōshi, that white veil which you can't see through, and do the sansankudo--it wasn't until after we had finished this that I first saw him. Until then I hadn't seen nor spoken with him and had been put together with a virtual stranger. At any rate, I had just gone along with what my parents had decided for me. (Laughs)

My granddaughter here asks me why I married her grandpa and I tell her I married him, even though I had never seen him nor spoken with him before, because my father told me to. (Laughs) Then my granddaughter, who would have thought that we would have been friends from about the time we were in college together and then gotten married, tells me that the old ways might have been better, because people nowadays who get married after having known someone for a long time sometimes separate very soon afterwards. Perhaps the old ways were better she says. At any rate, during Grandma's time, when a girl left home to get married, she had to go with the thought of dying and leaving home forever and being reborn into a new life [with the husband's family] with no possibility of returning home. Well, these days parents say if you don't like it there, come home right away.

(Laughter)

MK: Times have changed.

MA: Yes. So we always say that we all endured a lot in the old days.

MK: So after you got married and saw Mr. Asuka's face for the first time, what did you think?

MA: (Laughs) I didn't think anything. Perhaps, "so that's him" or so. At the time of the marriage, he came with his older brother to our house and I saw him going from the parlor but I didn't see his face.

MK: After you were married it was decided that you would come to Hawai'i. Why did you return to Hawai'i?

MA: When we first went back [to Japan] we went back not intending to come back [to Hawai'i] after having been here for four years. We

went back after our oldest daughter was born. We went back not intending to come back. But after we got there we realized how difficult it was to live in Japan.

MK: When you first came to Hawai'i, why did you come? Why didn't you and your husband continue living in Hiroshima?

MA: The Asuka house was an eating place. It had been an eating place for hundreds of years. And my husband hated it. My husband was a quiet person who disliked talking and going out. After we went back to Japan, whenever we would walk around the town, if we passed by someone, he would say afterward that that was so-and-so. Even if he came upon his friend, he would walk in the other direction. He wouldn't even talk [with him]. He was that type of person. On the other hand, I would say, "Oh, isn't that so-and-so" and go running over to talk with the person. He was that type of person so a place like an eating house didn't suit him.

MK: So that's the reason you came to Hawai'i.

MA: Yes. My Asuka father-in-law also agreed with this. He said he himself didn't like this business. So he said to let it end with his generation and said his children didn't have to continue it. My father-in-law didn't like it either. But they have a long family line--there is a genroku hachinen [about 300 years old] grave--it's that long.

MK: So the eating house ended with your father-in-law's generation?

MA: That's right. But even when I went back [from Hawai'i], I saw that my mother-in-law had kept some stock in a fish store and a geisha's kenban [call office], thinking that perhaps one of the sons--there were three brothers--would resume the [family] business. My father-in-law had died early so just my mother-in-law remained. But in the end no one continued it [the business].

MK: Excuse me for changing the subject, but can you tell me how you felt when you first found out that you were coming to Hawai'i?

MA: I had [always] wanted to go to America. I had three uncles in America. Since my uncles were there I wanted to go to America. However, I didn't think I would go to Hawai'i. Since I was young, I wanted to go to a foreign country. (Laughs)

MK: Before you came here, what did you know about Hawai'i?

MA: I didn't know anything. Nothing at all about Hawai'i.

MK: You hadn't heard anything about Hawai'i?

MA: No, nothing.

MK: In order to come to Hawai'i, what sorts of procedures did you have

to go through and what preparations did you make?

MA: Well, in order to get my passport, I did go here and there, but I didn't know anything since my husband did almost everything by himself and since this was his second time around. (Laughs)

MK: What were you thinking as you left Japan?

MA: Nothing special. My father came to see me off at Hiroshima station. I've already mentioned that I had three uncles in America. Well, when my father went to see off one of my uncle's wives from Kobe where the ships were taking off, he told me that it had been so sad watching the ship leave that he had decided to see me off from the train at the Hiroshima train station, since the parting would be the same no matter where we did it. So he came as far as Hiroshima station. At that time, he told me that if I reached my goal I could go home even tomorrow, but if I didn't reach it, I couldn't go home for the rest of my life. I guess that's why I haven't gone home for the rest of my life. (Laughs) That's what my father said. So we parted at Hiroshima station, and sure enough I probably won't go back for the rest of my life. I came here in June and my father passed away in September of that year. He wasn't particularly ill or anything when I left, but he had a weak stomach so we thought perhaps he had had stomach cancer when he died. In those days, even if he had had stomach cancer they probably couldn't have done anything for him such as perform an operation. But that's why I think he probably died early.

MK: I'm sorry.

MA: What a severe father he was! He was famous for being strict. So I was very strictly brought up. Well, I guess all the girls were in those days, but it wasn't much of a life. We used to laugh and say, "Aida, koida, nanimo shiranai; iwashi gurai no koto shika shiranai," [which is a play on the words ai (sweetfish) and koi (carp) which mean both a kind of fish and love. The expression means they didn't know anything about love (the fishes ai and koi) but they only knew about iwashi, or sardines]. (Laughs) It didn't happen often, but if there were even so much as a rumor about a boyfriend, it would have been terrible. Therefore, there really were no people who did such things. There were no girls like this.

MK: So it was strict.

MA: Yes, it was very strict. If you were seen on the street even talking to a man, you would really get it. When you got home would you ever get scolded! You weren't even allowed to read novels. The novels of that time, even though they were good for you--they were completely different from the novels of today--even though they were good for the girls and did no harm--even so, they were not allowed to be read. He [MA's father] was really strict. He was well known for being strict.

MK: So you left your father at Hiroshima station and he didn't go to Kobe?

MA: He didn't go to Kobe. I left from Yokohama and boarded the ship at Yokohama.

MK: When you boarded the ship at Yokohama, did you have any tests done?

MA: We certainly did. We had stool and the duodenal examinations. There weren't too many who passed these the first time around.

MK: What about in your case?

MA: Fortunately, both my husband and I passed on the first time around.

MK: So you departed from Yokohama. What was the name of your ship?

MA: It was the Chiyo Maru. At that time, there was the Chiyo Maru, the Tenyō Maru, and the Shunyō Maru. They were all about the same size.

MK: How was the trip--the trip from Yokohama to Hawai'i?

MA: I'm not a good sailor so as soon as I go on board I get seasick. I couldn't even go to the dining room to eat, so I had them bring the food to my bed so I could eat.

MK: And how was it?

MA: How I suffered! On top of that, I was three months pregnant. After my husband returned and we got married six months passed before we came here. So I had both morning sickness and seasickness. I arrived here on June eighth and my daughter was born in November of that year.

MK: So you had morning sickness and seasickness.

MA: Yes, it was terrible.

MK: When did you arrive in Honolulu?

MA: We arrived on June 8, 1914 at the immigration office. It happened that the ship prior to ours had some kind of bad illness on it. They were busy with the people with this illness, so the procedures for [the passengers] of our ship took some time. So we were detained at the immigration office for two days. On the tenth of June we came out. We arrived there on the tenth.

MK: You mean to your brother-in-law's place?

MA: Yes.

MK: How did you arrive at your brother-in-law's place?

MA: By wagon. There weren't any automobiles in those days. We loaded our trunk onto the wagon and rode over here.

MK: What sorts of things did you see as you passed through Honolulu and Waikīkī?

MA: Nothing in particular. As the ship landed, what we saw from the ship were the local pine trees which we heard were the Hawaiian pine trees [i.e., ironwood trees], and I remember thinking: what strange looking pine trees, since they were different from the pine trees of Japan. We arrived on the tenth and the following day was Kamehameha Day, since it was June 11 and the park was bustling.

MK: Which park?

MA: This park--Kapi'olani Park. It was busy because of Kamehameha Day. They have the music theatre [Kapi'olani Park Bandstand] of the old days, don't they? They have it even now. That area was noisy then. I went there with my husband's older brother's two children.

MK: What sorts of things did they have?

MA: I don't really know; but what I do recall is that at that time there wasn't a [Japanese] consul general [at the park] but there was a deputy consul general. His wife wore a white hat like the Caucasian women wore in America, and her bust puffed out like this and her derriere seemed to stick out and she wore this long white dress which trailed behind her as she walked around the park. When I heard that she was the deputy consul general's wife, I thought, I guess people like that can look that way--like a Caucasian.

MK: When you first reached Waikīkī, what was the most extraordinary thing you saw--the first time you saw it?

MA: Nothing in particular then, but it was when I first looked from the ship as it was landing. As I looked this way from the top of the ship, everyone said "Diamond Head, Diamond Head" as they spotted Diamond Head. I guess it was from about here--there was something glittering from the mountains. I thought, "So that's Diamond Head!" Well, it turned out to be the reflection of the sun on a glass window of a house in Mānoa--that was what was glittering. When they pointed out Diamond Head to me I said, "What do you mean diamond?" since there was nothing glittering there. (Laughs) Also at that time when I saw the coconut trees, I thought, "Ah, this must be a foreign country after all."

(Laughter)

MA: (Waikīkī was like country. Kalākaua Avenue was a lonesome place; there were groves of kiawe all around Waikīkī. Few houses. Only one or two on the oceanside, here and there. Moana Hotel did not have its wings built yet.)

And while I was at the immigration office, my husband's friend would hand me things through the visitor's window. He gave me an American tangerine and how good that tasted--what with my morning sickness and all. It was so delicious.

MK: After you arrived in Honolulu, you first went to your husband's older brother's place, didn't you. This Asuka Camp which was your husband's older brother's place, where was that located?

MA: It was over there. There, where the Hawaiian Regent Hotel is standing. There was a field of kiawe trees--perhaps not a forest--but five or six in the yard. The yard was full of weeds. There in the yard there was this wooden, white, lime-coated rowhouse. It was really shabby looking. Also there was a house with living quarters for two families--there were two of these. There was a rowhouse here and then came the yard and then in front of that was a common kitchen. Next to the kitchen was the bathhouse which was a separate unit. Next to that, that is, next to the street, there were two, two-family houses. So there were four families there--all Japanese. My brother's rowhouse had five or six families and that's where we came. They were all Japanese and all the men worked in hotels. The men were usually waiters.

MK: What about the women?

MA: The women who did not have children did family work for Caucasian families. After the children came, they could not go out so usually they took in laundry at home.

MK: Whose laundry?

MA: I'm not sure how they got their customers, but they were all quite busy. They did not have separate laundry facilities, either. They would take it outside under a kiawe tree and set up a table in the shade and set their metal washtubs on it and wash everything by hand. (They strung wire between the trees and hung the wash there.) They all did this. When their children were small, they would also do the ironing with them on their backs. (All with charcoal iron, not electric iron.) All of them [women] did it. I don't know about the ones who lived Downtown but the women in Waikīkī all worked hard.

MK: I understand there was a woman living there who worked in a Chinese rice paddy. . . .

MA: Yes, she went there to plant rice. That woman, also from Asuka's hometown, Hatsukaichi, had done this in Japan so she was able to plant rice here as well.

MK: Where was this rice paddy?

MA: At what is now the golf course. In front of the Ala Wai [Canal]. That area was all rice paddy land.

MK: What kind of paddy land?

MA: They were paddies filled with water where you plant rice. And on Kalākaua Avenue where Liberty House and the other shops now stand, they used to cultivate lotus root. It used to be a lotus root field.

MK: Were they Chinese or Japanese people?

MA: Chinese. The Chinese were the main farmers here. And before it became like it is now, they had to fill in the lotus root fields. What they used as fill material was the dirt which was taken when they dug the Ala Wai Canal. When we lived there, there was a stream right next to us.

MK: You mean next to the Asuka Camp?

MA: Yes. There was quite a wide stream there. That stream was also filled in when they worked on the Ala Wai Canal. Until then it was a stream. That stream was formed by the accumulation of waters from the fields in Mō'ili'ili. You know where Kalākaua Avenue is. At Kalākaua Avenue there used to be a bridge. Now, it's filled in so it's gone, but there used to be a bridge. And water used to pass below that.

MK: What happened during a heavy rain?

MA: It was safe during a heavy rain because everything flowed into the ocean. Nothing ever backed up over this way, because everything went into the ocean.

MK: And the people who first lived in the Asuka Camp--where did they come from?

MA: They were mainly people from the Yamaguchi-ken and Iwakuni area.

MK: Do you remember any of their names?

MA: Not really. After that, they moved all around so--they did live in the Waikīkī area though. The children of these people are still living.

MK: What was the rent in those days?

MA: About three dollars a month. (Laughs) And it was only about the size of this room [i.e., eight feet by ten feet]. And when there was a heavy rain it would leak. After it was handed over to us and we were in charge, my husband would often climb to the roof to repair it, but it was really a tumble-down shack.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: At first what type of work did your husband do when he was at Asuka Camp?

MA: Before he was given this place, Asuka Camp, by his older brother, we went to live near what is now Princess Ka'iulani Hotel at a nice new rental which was owned by a Mr. Yoshida who was originally from Yamaguchi-ken. My husband and I couldn't be accepting the hospitality of my older brother-in-law for too long, especially since he had his own children as well. So when we heard that this place was opening up, we went there. At that time the rent was five dollars, since the house was new. Five dollars seemed to us to be a lot at that time, since my husband didn't have a job and we had been paying only three dollars at my brother's place. I wondered how we would make it, (laughs) since I didn't earn anything--having only just arrived and not having any work yet.

MK: Then how did you pay for things at Yoshida Camp?

MA: My husband did the paying so I don't know, but I assume we had some money which we had brought over with us [from Japan]. Soon, however, my husband got a job at the Halekūlani Hotel and was able to go to work. Also, my husband would bring home the laundry of the guests at the Halekūlani Hotel for me to do.

MK: What sort of work did your husband do at the Halekūlani Hotel?

MA: When he first started at Halekūlani, he did yard work. Once, after my child was born, I wondered what sort of work I could do as I carried my child, so I went over there to take a look. Well, it was so hot and the yard was a mess. The work looked so hard that I said to myself that I couldn't just stay home with my child and enjoy myself. I knew I had to do something. So I started doing the laundry which my husband brought home to me. People in those days went to work by bicycle since they didn't have such things as automobiles. So my husband would haul this laundry home on his bicycle and take the laundry which I had done back to the hotel. To do laundry is not as easy as you might think. At the beginning nobody can do it that skillfully. The collars of the shirts in those days were stiff. Both the collars and the cuffs. These were very, very difficult to do in the beginning. I had trouble with them for quite a while at first. I went to my neighbor's place to learn how to do them. And finally, I was able to do them well enough so that I could earn some money.

MK: In those days, what sort of iron did you use?

MA: A charcoal iron. There was no electricity in the house. We had only lamps. I would set a lamp on the other side of the ironing board and work. People in high positions maybe have suffered but people in the old days all experienced hardships.

MK: What with the child and all, how did you manage it?

MA: I carried her on my back. (Laughs) Everybody did this.

MK: In those days by taking in laundry how much did you earn.

MA: People were envious of me because, in contrast to the laundry of people in the vicinity which was dirty, the laundry of the guests in the hotels was [relatively] clean and we could charge more for it. People would tell me how lucky I was. Every week I would get about seventeen dollars. This was at a time when my husband only earned about eighteen dollars a month. This was true for all the men. Of course, waiters would get tips but those who did yard work wouldn't get any tips.

MK: But didn't your husband become a waiter later?

MA: Gradually he got higher level jobs. He advanced to doing rooms and at that time he started getting more laundry orders. I had so much I had to work day and night.

MK: You did all this at Yoshida camp?

MA: Yes, Yoshida. He was from Yamaguchi-ken. It was a new house. All of them were two-family houses. Mr. Yasumatsu also lived there at the Yoshida camp.

MK: Is there anyone else left besides Mr. Yasumatsu from Yoshida camp?

MA: None of the original people but their children are here. The parents of Mr. Takashige who is president of Waikīkī Aloha Kai [club of longtime Waikīkī residents] used to live there.

That mother didn't have children for quite a while. There was a rich Waikīkī person who had that place which is now a hotel. So [the mother of Mr. Takashige] became this [rich person's] babysitter. They [rich family] owned a car and their driver, on Sundays or his day off, would drive the mother of Mr. Takashige home. Her husband was a waiter at the Moana Hotel and the wife worked at this place.

MK: Besides Yasumatsu-san and Takashige-san . . .

MA: There was a Yoshimura-san, but now also there are only his children left. When I first went to that place, it was Mr. Yoshimura who--no that was the second time--the first neighbor I had was Mr. Nadamoto. His son is now a doctor. The Dr. [Ichiro] Nadamoto who is a bone specialist. He hadn't been born yet while they were my neighbors. They were my first neighbors. And his wife also took in laundry. The husband was a waiter at the Moana [Hotel]. This was true for all of them.

MK: So this Mr. Yoshida had a camp?

MA: Yes.

MK: How did he get such a camp?

MA: I don't know. He had already had it for quite a few years before we went there.

MK: You've mentioned that at the time you went back to Japan in 1918 you had already been living at a place on John 'Ena Road.

MA: Yes. There was an old house which was furthest behind the new houses which Mr. Yoshida had built which used to belong to a Hawaiian. Mr. Yoshida leased this and rented it out together with his other houses. At that time, we were next door to a Mr. Yoshimura--his children are still living. At first, we were next door to Mr. Nadamoto, but the people next door to Mr. Yoshimura went back to Japan, so they asked us if we wanted to move over there since it would be vacant and it was cheaper. The front houses were five dollars--i.e., next door to Mr. Nadamoto--and since I didn't have any work then and it was hard to pay five dollars, we decided to move over there. Then the kanaka who had that house said he was going to tear it down. So Mr. Yoshimura and we had to move. At that time, we went to 'Ena Road.

MK: So after that you went to 'Ena Road. What sort of place was 'Ena Road?

MA: The 'Ena Road area now has many large buildings there, [but at that time] it was really junk. Although the rent was cheap, it was even smaller than this room [i.e., eight feet by ten feet].

MK: You mean it was smaller than this?

MA: Yes.

MK: About half this size?

MA: Yes, about half. And there I had to do the ironing, set up the sewing machine and do the sewing, and then put everything away to make room so we could sleep--that's the kind of place it was.

MK: What sorts of people lived there at 'Ena Road?

MA: The people who had already been there for a long time had already made quite a bit of money and had an easy time, but people like us who came later [had a tougher time].

MK: Were they also people who worked in hotels and such?

MA: Yes. At the entrance to that place there was a store called Kobayashi's. The mister and missus there were very kind to me. At the time I went back to Japan in 1918, that man had some kind of illness for which he had had repeated operations on the stomach.

He asked me to think about him sometime--about whether he was healthy or alive or whatever. He asked me to look at his stomach before I left. He had stitches and scars all over. He showed me all this. He loved movies. You know the place called Pāwa'a. There was a movie theatre there. He would walk over there from 'Ena Road along Kalākaua Avenue. He would take my daughter with him on his back and his wife and I would follow them and walk there. We would go there, watch the movie, and come home. After I had gone back [to Japan] he once wrote me a letter that when he went to the movies he no longer had someone sitting next to him crying, so he was lonesome. His wife was a person who didn't cry at tragic movies. But this man and I would always cry and he wrote me a letter reminding me of this.

MK: What kind of movies did you watch at Pāwa'a Theatre?

MA: That Pāwa'a Theatre was not a fine theatre like they have today. It was a temporary hut. They showed old-time Japanese movies--movies like "Kojiki Yasha" or movies of that era. The admission was twenty or thirty cents. He would always carry my daughter on his back and take her along. On Saturdays and Sundays if I happened to be finished with my customer's laundry, his wife would ask me if I wouldn't just iron her family's laundry which she had already washed. So I would go over there to iron. She also operated a store, and as I was ironing, she would come over to where I was ironing and sit down. This woman, like me, could play the shamisen, and enjoyed such things. She would come over to where I was ironing and make shamisen sounds with her mouth and sing. Since it was fun, I would join in and together we would sing as we ironed. Then her husband would come over saying that he couldn't just sit back there and watch us having so much fun singing as we worked. In return he promised to cook up a feast for us in the evening, and he would cook for us. This man passed away here while we were in Japan.

MK: That man was Mr. Kobayashi who owned the Kobayashi store?

MA: Yes.

MK: About how many Japanese-owned stores were there in Waikīkī about that time?

MA: The upper side of the street was Mr. Kobayashi's and the lower side was operated by a Mr. Tagawa. [He had] a yellow house on the corner on Kalākaua Avenue. Since it's been vacant it's covered with graffiti--since he died. Mr. Tagawa had three sons, but it seems his sons aren't taking over. Whenever I look over there from the bus, I can't help thinking what a good location it is, especially since it's on a corner and I wonder why the sons don't take over. The outside is covered with graffiti and it's really a sight since it's been vacant.

MK: When you lived on 'Ena Road, wasn't there an Aoki Store?

MA: That was right here. There was an Ibaraki Store and an Aoki Store.

MK: Other than these, were there any other Japanese businesses?

MA: There were cleaners and restaurants. And there was a Japanese barber shop. That area was virtually all Japanese on the main road.

MK: Do you know their names--such as the barber's, storeowner's, etc?

MA: On the corner was Mr. [Niro] Aoki, but I don't remember the barber's name. There was a Mr. Harakawa who had the cleaners and next to him was perhaps the Ibaraki Store. At first it was in the middle. Next door to that a Mr. Kobara ran a restaurant. On this side there was a Mr. Tahara who also had a restaurant which was famous for its pies. Next to that there was a Chinese cleaners. Next to that was the previously mentioned Mr. Yasumatsu's [cleaners].

MK: I've already heard about Mr. Tahara's pies. His coconut pie was famous.

MA: Yes, it was well known.

MK: What happened to him?

MA: He and all the others had died. I wonder if there are any children left now. Mr. Aoki is also from my hometown of Itsukaichi. Mr. Aoki's younger sister was my sewing friend.

MK: In about 1918 you went back to Japan for a short while. Why did you go back to Japan?

MA: Because my husband kept saying he wanted to go back. My husband was the last child and his father had passed away leaving behind his mother so he said he wanted to go back. At that time he went back not intending to come back here. But he couldn't make a go of it in Japan after all so. . . . He tried to do various things in Japan but he just couldn't make it.

MK: I heard there was a severe outbreak of illness in Japan about that time, but what happened?

MA: Yes there was but was it at that time? At any rate, after World War I, wasn't there an epidemic of the flu? It was at that time. At that time as I was intending to come back here and was already in Yokohama to come here I contracted it. Since my husband's older brother and his wife were in Tokyo, my mother-in-law, who had come with us to Yokohama, went to stay at my brother-in-law's house. We had already passed our tests and were waiting for our ship to leave at any time. But for some reason or other the ship was delayed. So rather than stay at a hotel in Yokohama, since my mother-in-law was staying at my brother-in-law's, we decided to stay another night there. That night my brother-in-law's wife's father told us he was going to take us to the kabuki theatre and that he had already bought the tickets for it. Since our sister-in-law's father told us that it would be better for him to wear Japanese style clothing rather than Western style, my husband was going to borrow his brother's three-

layer kimono. And we were all ready to go. But then my daughter came down with a fever so I couldn't go. I couldn't go so only my husband went. The following day I became very ill with a fever. In the end I had to be hospitalized. But there weren't any hospitals available since they were all full everywhere. The conditions were such that they had even set up beds in the closets so they could accomodate more patients. Fortunately for us my brother-in-law's wife's father just happened to be wealthy in those days, so through him we were able to stay on the second floor of a private doctor's place, not a hospital, and there the three of us, my husband, my daughter, and I were cared for for about a month. Luckily we recovered but. . . . It was about December that we stayed there. It was in March that we went back to Itsukaichi. Until then we were cared for at this doctor's place. They called a doctor, I can't remember his name, from the University Hospital to examine me but. . . . The other two, my husband and daughter, were fine. I was the one who wasn't fine. They told us to inform those who needed to know, so they sent a telegram to my mother's place.

Alarmed, my mother came immediately and thinking that I probably wouldn't live and that they would have the funeral in Tokyo, she had even brought along her mourning dress. After that my condition gradually improved so my mother didn't have to stay too long. My mother had a store and since people send out all their bills in December in Japan, they needed my mother to write in the account book--my older brother said he couldn't do it. They said if I were really ill it couldn't be helped but, if at all possible, could she come home, since they couldn't manage the store alone. Since I was better and the doctor thought it was all right for her to go, she went home. The express train didn't stop at the Itsukaichi Station since it was a small station. So it seems my older brother had taken my mother to Hiroshima Station by car at night to put her on the express train.

After I had recovered and gone back home, my mother told me that an army colonel's daughter who was our neighbor boarded the same express train in Hiroshima with her. Her name was Miss Sachiko Hayashi. When my mother asked her where she was bound for, she told her that her older sister was ill in Tokyo and they needed someone to care for her and they had asked her to come to help. She was going there to help out. She asked my mother what she was doing so she told her that her daughter who was planning to return to Hawai'i and had gone as far as Yokohama was taken ill in Yokohama, and she had received a telegram saying her condition was grave so she was going there--these are the things they talked about. But what happened was that I recovered and went home, but this colonel's daughter did not after she had gone to take care of her older sister. It seems that the older sister recovered but the person who had gone to care for her and in turn had contracted the illness had died. This younger sister had died. Her name was Sachiko and I knew her.

According to my mother, in Tokyo at that time they had difficulty in finding places to put the dead--even the hospitals. At the crematoriums they would have to pile the bodies up to burn them. That's how it was. Every day people died.

But fortunately for me I have been able to live this long. . . . At that time thanks to the fact that my Asuka brother-in-law had lived in Tokyo I was able to survive. After I returned here, since we had borrowed money from them, I felt I must hurry and work so that we could return it, so I looked for work. It was hard to find work immediately upon returning. Mrs. Kobayashi who had operated the Kobayashi Store was working at the Pierpoint Hotel.

MK: Where was this hotel?

MA: At the spot where Kaiser's large hotel [i.e., Hilton Hawaiian Village] now stands. There used to be a number of small cottages there. Mrs. Kobayashi had been working there. She quit her own job and gave it to me.

MK: What sort of job?

MA: Cleaning rooms. I would go in the morning and clean the rooms, wash all the towels, go to the kitchen and wash the towels and napkins in the kitchen, hang them all up to dry, and after they were dry I would iron them and then go home. The good thing about this was that there were no set hours I had to work. I could go home as soon as I finished. So I would work as fast as I could and be home by about three. At that time my daughter wasn't in school yet; so there was no place to leave her; so I took her to work with me. (I wheeled her to work in a cart. A guest had a child of the same age so the two children played together. I cleaned rooms and left as soon as the day's work was done.) I would also take home with me the laundry of the guests who were staying at that hotel.

MK: You certainly were busy.

MA: Yes. After I came home at three [o'clock p.m.], I would do this laundry. The next day I would iron it and if possible I would take it with me to work. An old Caucasian woman who was the housekeeper at the hotel would say to me that it was all right for me to work but what would I do if I were to get sick from overwork. Luckily, I didn't get sick and was able to do it, but it was difficult with the child and all. Since I did the laundry from this hotel and also that which my husband brought home from his hotel [i.e., Halekūlani Hotel], I really worked hard. So in less than six months I was able to completely return the money we had borrowed from my brother-in-law. (Laughs)

MK: Weren't you a little far away from the Pierpoint Hotel?

MA: It certainly is far. In order to catch the streetcar you have to walk to the main road, Kalākaua [Avenue], so I used to put my child

in a buggy and walk to work.

MK: Were there any Japanese-run businesses near the Pierpoint Hotel?

MA: No, there weren't. It was all hotels. Come to think of it there was a Japanese restaurant. Afterwards, they moved to the Liliha area to run it. What was the name of that now?

MK: Could the name be Mochizuki?

MA: Mochizuki. That's it.

MK: Was it Mochizuki's teahouse?

MA: That's right. A teahouse. Yes, Mochizuki, Mochizuki. It later moved to the Liliha area. Yes, it was Mochizuki. You know a lot.

(Laughter)

MK: I heard there was also a bathhouse somewhere.

MA: The bathhouse was further away near the 'Ilikai Hotel. That's where it was--a salt water bath. It was run by Japanese.

MK: Do you remember the name of it?

MA: It was called the Shioyū. I think it was run by someone by the name of Yoshioka. When the Aloha Kai was created here, the Aloha Kai opening ceremonies was held at this Shioyū.

MK: So the Shioyū included the bath and a teahouse?

MA: Yes, yes. And also a ryokan. A ryokan, a bath, and a teahouse.

MK: That means there were two teahouses in the Waikīkī area.

MA: Yes, there were.

MK: Other than these, were there any other Japanese-run businesses?

MA: In that area I don't think there were any others. It was because I was young that I was able to work that hard, but I really did work hard.

MK: Where did your husband work?

MA: He worked straight through at the Halekūlani for forty-some years. Only at the Halekūlani. He was treated kindly by the head [i.e., Clifford Kimball] of the Halekūlani. After the war started, the military took over the Halekūlani, so he had to quit. But since he had worked there so long, when he left--see that photo over there of Diamond Head--they gave that to him at his farewell party.

Although it wasn't very much, every month his ex-boss gave him a pension after he left. It would have been fine if they had sent him a check, since my husband hated going to pick it up. Finally, he stopped going to get it. (Laughs) After the elder Kimball died and his boy [i.e., Richard Kimball] took over, my husband refused to go to get it. After that he stopped going. He was treated very kindly by his boss since he had worked there for such a long time.

MK: That was Mr. [Clifford] Kimball?

MA: Yes. At first, when my husband first started there, the name wasn't the Halekūlani Hotel. It was called the Hau Tree Club [i.e., Hau Tree Hotel]. You know the hau tree that's over there in the back. There, even now, the women's clubs often have luncheons--at the Hau Tree Lanai. They took the name of that tree and called it the Hau Tree Lanai. It was run by an old Hawaiian woman. Mr. Kimball used to work at [i.e., manage] the Hale'iwa Hotel in Hale'iwa. He quit there and bought this place and moved over here. My husband was at the Halekūlani even before Mr. Kimball came.

MK: That was certainly a long time.

MA: Yes, it was.

MK: So you took in laundry and your husband worked at the Halekūlani [Hotel]. You already had your oldest daughter, your first son was born in 1921, and your second son was born in 1931. Which school did your children attend?

MA: At first, the school here in Waikīkī [i.e., Waikīkī Elementary School]. After that they went to Washington Junior High. Then it was McKinley [High School] for all of them.

MK: You mentioned previously that there was a Japanese-language school . . .

MA: The [Waikīkī] Japanese-language School was on that corner over there on what is now Kūhiō Avenue. There used to be a house at what is now the Hawaiian Regent Hotel--behind that house was the Japanese-language school. The Japanese-language teacher Watanabe-sensei's house and our house--if we both opened our back windows we could look in and talk with each other. That's where the Japanese-language school was located. Later, it moved to Kapahulu.

MK: How was this Waikīkī Japanese-language School?

MA: Since both Watanabe-sensei and his wife were our neighbors, they were kind to us and our daughter graduated from that Japanese-language school.

MK: Was there only one teacher?

MA: Yes. The husband and wife ran it.

MK: What was Watanabe-sensei's first name?

MA: I don't remember. But Watanabe-sensei's wife couldn't speak English very well, and although it was all right at the beginning, later they decided to require that the teacher had to be able to speak English and had to pass an English exam. So the wife would study at night. Watanabe-sensei himself had gone to the University [of Hawai'i]--and he had graduated. All the while working too. So she was learning from her husband. I also went with her to study--I asked him to teach me together with his wife. After going there at night for a while I did learn a little from Watanabe-sensei. I learned to read ABC's from Watanabe-sensei. Watanabe-sensei had since passed away. Although his wife was a beauty, she was such a kind and gentle person.

MK: What did your children do for play when they weren't in school?

MA: Baseball and--our oldest son was too heavy to play football so he used to play without eating. It seemed that if his weight went over a certain amount he couldn't play. He used to drink some sort of tomato juice concoction and play. (Laughs)

MK: Was he playing at school?

MA: Yes, and he also played baseball.

MK: When he was smaller, what did he play with the neighborhood children?

MA: Since the yards were large, they would play in the yards.

MK: I heard that at one time someone used to pick up kiawe beans and sell them.

MA: That was me. It was when I didn't have any children yet. It was when I had just come from Japan and had rented that house from Mr. Yoshida. It was about then.

MK: Where was it that you picked them?

MA: That area where the Hyatt Regency Hotel now stands used to be all kiawe forest. I would pick them up there. It was a Japanese man with a cart but he would leave sacks like charcoal bags and when we filled one of them he would give us fifteen cents. Then we would take home an empty bag and fill it up again for another fifteen cents. This was at a time when I didn't have any work. I also often used to sew yukatas for people. Those without children used to all do housework wearing a yukata--with the sleeves rolled up, since they worked wearing a kimono. So I often sewed yukatas. One would cost fifty cents. (Laughter) Even so, we used to work thinking of this as being equal to one yen in Japanese money. But then, what do you know. It's been two years since I stopped sewing but now they are

worth fifteen dollars if you sew one yukata.

MK: And they keep getting more expensive.

MA: Yes. Nevertheless, my eyes are bad so I stopped making them. I have a lot of friends who are practicing tea ceremony, odori, and odori teachers who keep asking me to make homongi and dancing kimonos for them, but my husband would get angry at me and say that if I were to keep working all night like that I would get so that I couldn't see anymore. He was so bothersome that I turned them down and stopped sewing. They all seem to be in a bind now saying there is no place to take the material to be sewn.

MK: It must have been difficult, what with all the various kinds of work.

MA: It really was with all the sewing and laundry--it's only because I was able to do all that. Now, I don't even feel like sewing my own clothes.

MK: Your husband's older brother handed down the Asuka Camp to you. Why did he transfer it to you?

MA: My brother-in-law was a waiter at the Moana Hotel for many years. Since [there was no future] in being a waiter and he had heard of a small store downtown that was for sale, he thought he would buy it and try his hand at business. He asked us if we wanted to continue here. Since it was at the time when we had just come back from Japan in 1918 when we didn't have a place to go or live--we stayed at the Kobayashi Hotel for a short while--since he asked us at such a time, we thought it was a good opportunity and we took it. That's how we came to live there.

MK: So after he turned it over to you, you remained there to take care of it. What was it like after you took over?

MA: Well, the rent was not much, but every month we took in about forty-five dollars in total. Since we didn't need to pay any rent ourselves that in itself was a savings. There was room there to work and I could do the laundry. My husband's older brother's store that he bought was located on the corner of Nu'uuanu [Avenue] and Vineyard [Boulevard].

MK: Did you continue working even after you received Asuka Camp?

MA: Yes, and my husband continued right on at the Halekulani [Hotel]. Since all the people at our camp took in laundry, we all would iron at night. Since the walls were thin, we would iron as we talked with each other--we could hear the neighbors that well. To our neighbors we would say such things as, "It's already such and such a time so let's quit and go to sleep."

MK: What kind of people lived at Asuka Camp?

MA: They were all people we had known for a long time. Some we lived with for twenty years. Five years ago when my husband passed away, after the funeral, people came up to me to pay their respects--people I didn't recognize because they had grown up. When I asked them who they were, they would say, "Auntie, don't tell me you've forgotten who I am!" They were people who were born at our place, reared there, and had grown up. They were working now so they had bought land elsewhere and moved away. They would say that since they had been born at our place and been reared and grew up there my husband was like a parent to them so their mother had told them to come to my husband's funeral and so they had come. I was so happy!

MK: Do you remember the names of the people who had lived there.

MA: Yes, I remember. There was Mr. Watanabe and--they all belong to Aloha Kai now--their children.

MK: So there was a Mr. Watanabe and . . .

MA: I think the elder Mr. Watanabe passed away after my husband. In any case it was about two or three years ago. His wife is still living. His wife had been living here. The wife and his sons are around. One of them is the same age as our second son and has gotten married and lives in Waipahu. This Sunday there will be the Aloha Kai New Year's Party and he will be there again. He comes every year. All the children of the people who lived in our camp--even the daughters who have different names now--they all belong to the Aloha Kai. They all get together.

MK: Who else was there besides Mr. Watanabe?

MA: Let me see. There was Akamatsu-san who had his daughter at our old camp. She grew up there and studied and became a beautician, and today she owns a fine house in a high-class neighborhood in the Wai'alae area. They had been living here but they had to move since we were building this apartment house. So the daughter built a house and took her mother and father with her. She still has them. Watanabe-san and Akamatsu-san were here the longest. They were with us for several decades.

MK: Did the husbands of these people also all work at a hotel?

MA: Yes, all the husbands worked at hotels. Mr. Watanabe worked at the Waikiki . . . something or other on the beachfront road. It wasn't a hotel but a restaurant. It was called the Waikiki something or other.

MK: Was it the Waikiki Tavern?

MA: Yes, that's right. He worked there for a long time. Mr. Akamatsu first worked as a kitchen worker at the Moana [Hotel] and later at the Wai'alae Hotel [i.e., Wai'alae Country Club]. You know--the big hotel at Wai'alae. Mr. Akamatsu worked at that old hotel.

MK: Was it about 1938 that you moved to this place [Kūhiō Avenue]?

MA: Was it 1938? Come to think of it wasn't there a bad depression from 1931 until 1932 or 1933? At that time the price of this place suddenly plunged. It became cheap. For some time prior to that we had been urged to buy this place. We kept saying we didn't have the money yet and we couldn't buy it. With that depression the price suddenly dropped. They urged us even more that the time was right. That's when we bought it. So that's why I think we came here in about 1935 or 1936. At any rate, our second boy entered this school [Waikī Elementary School] here as soon as we arrived. At that time there already was a school in front of here.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 13-2-1-85 TR; SIDE ONE

MK: Mrs. Asuka, as I was saying, why did you move here--from Asuka Camp?

MA: Because I couldn't stay there anymore. Over there the person who managed the Queen's [Lili'uokalani's] lands was a Mr. [Curtis Piehu] Iaukea, a Hawaiian, who I believe had been something like a colonel in the army. He was someone who had gone to Japan while Emperor Meiji was still living and had seen him and then returned here. He's the one who was in charge of the Queen's lands here. I always went there to pay the lease rent--to his office. This Mr. Iaukea's office was located in a building on this side [i.e., eastern side] of what is now the Aloha Tower. It was about five or six stories. At any rate you had to go up by elevator. Well, our son was afraid of elevators and wouldn't go into one. I couldn't help it so we would walk up the stairs to go pay the rent.

Mr. Iaukea had told me that even if there were someone else who wanted to lease the place, he would give me the first chance. Then, suddenly, he told me that there was someone else who was going to lease it. It turned out that this large Japanese company was going to lease the entire area--not just our place. So Mr. Iaukea said he couldn't lease it to us anymore. So, although he's sorry about it, could we go find another place. Nevertheless, he allowed us to continue leasing it for another seven years after our lease was up. So we stayed there for seven more years.

Meanwhile, fortunately, we were able to buy this place at a low price. It was good for us that when we bought this place there were four cottages on it. We used to rent them out at twenty dollars a piece; so we took in eighty dollars. So, as we received money from this place, we continued living at the other place, since he let us remain there after the lease had expired--because we hadn't moved over here yet. There used to be two houses behind the front house

but there was some room between the two rear houses so we sandwiched in another one there which was similar to the front house. This made three houses in the rear and together with the front house, we had a total of four houses. And here we built our two-story house and made it our home.

At that time, the person who had been renting here was a Yamamoto-san who had been my next door neighbor at 'Ena Road and remained my close friend until she passed away. She said that when she first came here to rent her place, she could have bought the entire place if she had had three hundred dollars cash. If she had had three hundred dollars for the down payment, she could have bought it. So you see how much value money had in those days. With three hundred dollars down and the rest in mortgage she could have bought it, but she didn't have the money. So in those days even though things were cheap, people couldn't readily buy them.

MK: Besides Mrs. Yamamoto, who else lived here?

MA: Other than Mrs. Yamamoto, there was a Sako-san living here. She now lives in Kapahulu. She used to live here. Her husband has already passed away. Her son is in America. She lives with her married daughter in Kapahulu. I often run into her at the Open Market. She often speaks to me.

MK: So there was Yamamoto-san and Sako-san and . . .

MA: Watanabe-san and Akamatsu-san lived in the four houses.

MK: They were people you had known from long ago.

MA: Yes. Yesterday, Kihara-san from the Hawai'i Hochi asked me what year the Royal Hawaiian [Hotel] was built. I told him I wasn't sure but at the time Akamatsu-san, who used to live in the Kalihi area, came to live here, the Royal Hawaiian was being built and he was working on the construction of it. He had been commuting from Kalihi and since this was a hardship he had been looking for a place in Waikiki. At that time in our camp, one of the rooms next door was vacant. So this Mr. Akamatsu moved in there. At that time, his second son, who is still alive, was two years old. Judging from that boy's age we were able to calculate how many years ago that was.

MK: That means that in 1936 or '37 it [the Royal Hawaiian Hotel] was already here. So the people you had known from long ago were renting these cottages.

MA: Yes. We brought Akamatsu-san and Watanabe-san over from the old camp. Sako-san had already been renting here from Tong before that time.

MK: The war [i.e., World War II] started in about 1941. What was this area like after the war started?

MA: At night everyone turned off their lights and we would all gather at Yamamoto-san's place in the rear and we made a bomb shelter there.

MK: How was it? Were you frightened?

MA: Not that much. But we couldn't go out anywhere and at night we'd darken all the windows. At the park [i.e., Kapi'olani Park] here, there were some Japanese prisoners of war doing some work. Everyone would take over o-sushi and things to them. I used to take some over. These were Japanese prisoners of war--Japanese soldiers.
(Laughs)

MK: And nothing happened to you for taking things over?

MA: No.

MK: How did you give the things to them? Weren't there people watching?

MA: I don't remember, although I went one or two times. Nothing happened.
(Laughs)

MK: Did things change around here after the war started?

MA: No, not at all.

MK: What about your family?

MA: Our oldest son was taken by the army and went off. We were fortunate. But Akamatsu-san's boy was sent off to America--he was the same age as our boy. But our boy graduated from McKinley [High School] here and then went to that technical school in Kalihi where he studied electronics. Right after he joined the army, they used him for electronics work; so he didn't have to go to America or to the battlefields. He stayed here right through.

MK: Did you continue with your laundry work throughout the war period?

MA: During the war I worked.

MK: What kind of work?

MA: Laundry work. There was laundry work. We had only a laundry but at places like barber shops, the soldiers would throw their money around.

MK: And did you do the laundry of the soldiers too?

MA: I didn't do the soldier's laundry directly. Although my husband quit his job at the Halekūlani [Hotel], the military had taken over there and only army and navy officers were staying there; they asked me to do the laundry of these officers--through that boss at the Halekūlani. So although my husband was no longer working at the Halekūlani, he did carry this [laundry] back and forth for me.

I would wash and stiffly starch and iron those navy whites and army khakis and my husband would haul it for me in our car. That was a good job--given to me through the boss at the Halekūlani.

MK: What sorts of prices were they charging at that time?

MA: I wouldn't ask for unreasonable prices--just the usual. Nonetheless, they were better than what one could get for laundry on the outside.

MK: After the war ended, how was it?

MA: Even after the war, although my husband no longer worked at the hotel, they [the Halekūlani] continued giving us their laundry. Right through they gave me the laundry of their guests.

MK: After the war you still had the same tenants?

MA: Yes. Until we built this apartment building the people we had known for a long time and had brought over were still living here.

MK: About when did you build this apartment building?

MA: I believe it was completed in 1970.

MK: Why did you have the apartment built?

MA: We decided that instead of a junk building such as we had before, if we made it into a [new] apartment, we could get higher rents which would be better.

MK: Did you leave this house standing until the apartment was finished?

MA: Yes.

MK: Are your present tenants still people from the old days?

MA: Yes, the old lady who lives next door had been here for twenty-two years. (Laughs) They are all long-standing.

MK: When did your husband pass away?

MA: Five years ago. He died on January 7, 1980.

MK: What was your husband's name?

MA: Tokumatsu.

MK: So it was Tokumatsu Asuka. These days what sorts of things do you do every day?

MA: Since my husband died and I gave up the laundry work quite a while back. . . . I have had three operations on my stomach. (Laughs) After the first one, I recovered and went back to work. After the

second one, I quit work. Let me see--how many years has it been since I quit?--at any rate I did laundry work for over sixty years. (Laughs)

MK: So you are retired now. Now that you've lived in Waikīkī all these years, how do you feel about it?

MA: I think it was good after all to have lived only in Waikīkī for such a long time. I have a steady stream of nieces and nephews coming from Japan; and when they come, they all tell me what a nice place I live in. I also have a condominium and whenever I have a visitor from Japan I show them around; if there is a vacancy there, I have them put up there. But over there the management does everything so I can't just say I want this person or that person to have a place. Unless I receive a letter from Japan well in advance and let the manager know about it--it's a bother so I don't do it [anymore]. The year before last two of my nephews and their friends--four in all--came here. They came with a tourist group and through the Japan Travel Bureau they rented this place, this condominium. They rented the condominium next door to ours. I told them ours was on the other side, but when it involves something like a tourist group, you can't tell just them you want this one or that one, since the tour leader handles everything. They were on the eleventh floor over there and I could see all their girls going in and out from here. (Laughs)

MK: This is the last question, but if you were to compare the Waikīkī of the old days and the Waikīkī of today, which would you prefer?

MA: Let me see. Although Waikīkī in the old days were quieter, it's probably better now.

MK: Why is that?

MA: I do hear about a lot of crime going on around here, day in and day out. On the seven o'clock [a.m.] news, they seems to be reporting nothing but crime; so there are times when I recall that it wasn't like this in the old days. But people change and life changes . . .

MK: About when did you start hearing about such crimes?

MA: Recently it seems to have greatly increased. I would think that the people who are announcing this news would be sick of it. And there is all this sexual violence. In the old days we never had any trouble leaving our doors unlocked. (Laughs)

MK: Things certainly have changed. Thank you very much for letting me take up so much of your time today and telling me about your experiences in Waikīkī in the old days.

MA: Don't mention it.

END OF INTERVIEW

WAIKĪKĪ, 1900 - 1985: ORAL HISTORIES

Volume I

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i-Mānoa**

June 1985