

# “Nuchi du Takara”

## One’s Life is a Precious Treasure

ALLISON YANAGI

I see you laying there, the twinkle still in your eyes.  
You seem so weak and frail, but your spirit is still so strong.  
I think of all you taught me, words of wisdom and grace.  
You saw who I am, long before even I knew.

Chorus:

Nuchi du takara.  
Remember the past.  
Live for the future.  
This moment will not last.

As a child, we sat together, playing songs from the past.  
I did not know then that they would make me who I am.  
Now, I play for you, as you lie there in bed.  
Still guiding me ahead, still smiling at the future.

Chorus

Okinawans have a saying, “Nuchi du Takara,” which roughly means “one’s life is a precious treasure.” It affirms the preciousness of life for people who survived poverty and starvation resulting from being colonized and from the horrors of the Battle of Okinawa. I wrote these lyrics one day sitting in a car waiting to rehearse with a musical group which I was a member. My grandmother was in a nursing home at the time, and I began to think about her influence on my life. She is really the one who got me interested in Okinawan music and culture.❖