

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Makoto “Mac” Morihara**

Makoto Morihara was born in 1928 in Kēōkea, South Kona, Hawai‘i. He was the youngest of ten children born to Usaku and Umeyo Morihara. Usaku Morihara, who died in 1990 at age 105, was proprietor of U. Morihara Store in Kēōkea. He was interviewed in 1980 by the Center for Oral History for *A Social History of Kona*. Usaku started the store in 1919. During World War II, when Usaku Morihara was interned in a U.S. Department of Justice camp for Japanese aliens, his wife ran the business, with the help of Makoto’s older siblings. The business included the general store and coffee farm.

Makoto Morihara attended Ho’okena School, and graduated from Konawaena School in 1946. In 1949, he attended a business college in Honolulu. Later, he owned a vending machine business before serving in the military.

In 1956, Morihara returned to Kona to run the family store. He and his wife, Sumiko, whom he married in 1981, ran the store and farm. In 1995, he sold the store to an individual who renamed it Merv’s Place. At the time of the oral history interview, Makoto and Sumiko Morihara owned the original family home. They farmed coffee and macadamia nuts on the adjacent farmland.

Tape Nos. 35-9-1-00 and 35-10-1-00

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Makoto "Mac" Morihara (MM)

Kēōkea, South Kona, Hawai'i

June 14, 2000

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[NOTE: Also present at the interview is MM's wife, Sumiko Morihara (SM).]

WN: This is an interview with Makoto "Mac" Morihara on June 14, 2000, and we're at his home in Kēōkea, South Kona, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, let's begin, Mac. Why don't you start, first of all, by telling me when and where you were born.

MM: Okay. I was born here, Kēōkea, Kona, Hawai'i. Nineteen twenty-eight.

WN: Tell me something about your parents.

MM: Okay. Well, my father and mother came from Yamaguchi, Japan. That's Yamaguchi-*ken*, yeah?

WN: Right, right.

MM: I don't know when he came to Hawai'i. [According to Usaku Morihara's oral history in Ethnic Studies Oral History Project's *A Social History of Kona* (1981), he states that he first came to Hawai'i from Yamaguchi-*ken*, Japan, in 1907.] He came to Hawai'i first. He was a cook at the Greenwell Ranch in Keōpū side. My mother came later on.

WN: Was she a picture bride or. . . .

MM: No. They were married in Japan [in 1903]. They had a child in Japan, and then he was adopted by another family. So he was left in Japan. So they both came over. And that's when they, I guess, started a family here. So I was the last one, anyway, in the family.

WN: The last of how many?

MM: Last of ten in the family.

WN: I think I was looking that your father came around 1907. Does that sound right?

MM: I guess somewhere around there. Because I was born in 1928. My (brother, Isao) came first. He was born here [Kona]. So it could have been 1907, I think.

WN: Okay.

MM: I'm not too sure, but.

WN: How many of your brothers and sisters were born in Japan?

MM: The only one, that first boy. He was Yoshito. Then he was adopted to the Gotos. Then came my brother, Isao. Then the next one was Violet.

WN: Violet Yaeko?

MM: Yaeko. And then Rosie Chizuko. Then Akira Arthur. Then James Genshi. Then *Ma-chan*, Julia.

WN: Julia Matsue?

MM: Matsue, yeah. And then Satsuki Edith. And then my brother Roy Kazuo. And me, Robert Makoto.

WN: Oh, your name is Robert?

MM: Yeah, but it's not legally "Robert." I was known as Robert, that's all. (Chuckles)

WN: On your birth certificate . . .

MM: No, it doesn't show. I checked my birth certificate, it says just "Makoto."

WN: I see, okay. So what was your father's name?

MM: Usaku Higaki. He was [originally] Higaki. And then when he married my mother . . .

SM: Mother.

MM: Mother's adopted, too, yeah?

SM: Yeah.

MM: Mother was adopted, too, to Nishioka.

WN: Umeyo Nishioka.

MM: Umeyo, right. She didn't have any family. Mom was [adopted by] Nishioka. So my father and mother were adopted. Papa was adopted by Morihara?

SM: Yes.

MM: So then Papa married . . .

SM: To Nishioka.

MM: . . . Mama. And then came to Morihara?

SM: Yeah.

MM: Okay. Sumiko knows more about family than me.

WN: So your father was Usaku Higaki?

MM: Higaki.

WN: But then later was adopted [into the] Morihara [family].

MM: Adopted by Morihara, yeah.

WN: And then he married Umeyo Nishioka?

MM: Nishioka.

SM: Yeah.

WN: Was that like *yōshi*? Was he a *yōshi*?

SM: *Yōshi*, yeah.

WN: But he didn't change his name to Nishioka. He kept . . .

WN: He kept the Morihara [name].

MM: Morihara, yeah.

WN: Okay.

MM: Okay. (Chuckles) Sumiko knows more about my family than me.

WN: Yeah, well, that's okay. What things did he [father] tell you about the store, you know, when you were growing up? This is, before you were born.

MM: Well, he didn't say too much about his store. He just went along what he did. We didn't discuss anything about the store until finally, when I came back from Honolulu to run the store. Until then, we hardly had any communication because when I was eighth grade, he was interned [during World War II]. So when he came back, I [had] just graduated from high school. And then, I went on to business school. So there was no communication because I was away. I stayed in Honolulu ten years. Then he told me to come back and run the store. That's when I came back. That's when we discussed several things about the store; how to run the store. And he told me to treat the salesmen nicely because they're the ones who will give you your deals. But if you don't be nice to them, then they'll just overlook those deals. So that's one of the things he told me. And always to pay the bills. That's just about it.

WN: Tell me, when you were growing up here, what was it like? First of all, what was this area like?

MM: Oh, this was really like a country life. Very few cars. I remember when there were no customers in the store. I was waiting for customers, I would sit outside and for maybe half an hour to one hour, hardly any car would pass. It was just that kind of life. So as far as that, there was no excitement like Honolulu. We had a theater, so just maybe on weekends we would go to the movies. That's about it. Once in a while we'd go down to Kailua where there were some nightclubs, that's about it. (Chuckles)

WN: Well, besides movies, what else did you do to have good fun as a kid around here?

MM: Just playing by myself because my brothers were older than me. I was the last one. So as they grew, they left home. I was the last one to be with my parents. At that time, we didn't have any coffee land. We had the farm, but there wasn't anything raised, not even macadamia [nuts]. My father used to buy coffee [from farmers] and we used to process the coffee. So that's what kept us busy.

WN: So you folks never had your own coffee lands?

MM: At the time, that was how many years ago? Then when I came back from Honolulu [in 1956], my father had coffee land. So that's quite a time when we didn't have coffee before then.

WN: So your father, he had the Sun Mellow Coffee Mill.

MM: He did, yeah.

WN: So he was more or less a storeowner and a coffee broker?

MM: Broker, yeah, right. Those days [the wholesaler] was Amfac [American Factors]. When there were hard times [i.e., during the Great Depression], these stores couldn't pay back Amfac because they would charge the farmers and farmers had hard time to pay the bills. Then the store folks would have hard time, difficult time to pay Amfac. So he [MM's father] told me something. He approached the manager of Amfac. I don't remember who his name was. And then he approached them to reduce the payment, the liability, to Amfac to a point where the stores can pay Amfac. So that's about all he kind of discussed. [See interviews with Usaku Morihara in *A Social History of Kona* for details.]

WN: So the stores were like the middleman kind of thing.

MM: Between the . . .

WN: Between the farmers and Amfac.

MM: Amfac, yeah. Because Amfac was the wholesaler in Kona. We had a wholesaler in Hilo, but Amfac was more of the major one in Kona.

WN: So Amfac also provided you folks with some of your goods . . .

MM: Right. In fact, the majority of the goods at that time. But later on Amfac closed, so these wholesalers in Hilo provided us the merchandise.

WN: Such as what? What wholesalers? Do you remember?

MM: Oh, there were, let's see, Y. Hata [& Company]. T. Hara.

WN: T. Ihara?

MM: T. Hara.

WN: Okay.

MM: Hilo Rice Mill [Company], Fred L. Waldron [Limited], what else? Suisan [Kabushiki Kaisha].

WN: So these are all after Amfac?

MM: Yes, after. But they were coming to Kona that time, too. But as I said, at the time when Amfac was in business, we had more merchandise from Amfac than from Hilo.

WN: What kind of merchandise did you folks sell in the early days?

- MM: Mostly the staple goods: rice, sugar. Sugar came in bulk. Nothing five pounds like packaged today. We used to pack it, used to scale 'em. Weigh this sugar for whatever the customer wanted.
- WN: How big was the sugar?
- MM: Came in a—I don't know how many—came in a bag, anyway. Then we'd have to take it, pour it out from the bag, and put it in a package.
- WN: Oh, I see. So you have to weigh the sugar?
- MM: Weigh the sugar. The Hawaiian salt, too.
- WN: So sugar and salt would come in bulk.
- MM: Yeah, right. Rice, too. Rice used to come in hundred pounds. And then we used to put it in a container and we'd scoop it out to how many pounds the customer wanted. Same thing with the scratch feed, for the people who had lot of chickens. So we used to do same thing to the scratch feed. And the Hawaiian salt. I remember we used to sell the salt salmon. This salt salmon used to come in a tub. Just take the salt out from the tub and cut [the salmon] in half to sell it to customers.
- WN: How big was the tub, you remember?
- MM: Oh, I'd say it was about twenty-five pounds of salt salmon in the tub. So quite big, the tub.
- WN: Was wooden tub?
- MM: Wooden tub, yeah. And then we used to sell the *crack seeds*, too. *Crack seed* used to come in bulk, too. Not like today, it's packaged. It came in bulk and we used to take it out, put it in a big jar. When the customer wanted half a pound or one pound, we just would weigh and sell it to them like that.
- WN: Some stores still do that.
- MM: Yeah, there's one, I think, Doris [i.e., Doris' Place] in Hōlualoa.
- WN: Oh, yeah.
- MM: She's the only one in Kona I can think of now.
- WN: So when you were saying, you know, you have to weigh and put it in packages, was that one of your jobs?

- MM: That's one of my jobs, right. So, let's see. . . . Yeah, that's about it. Somebody else weighed and sell it to customers.
- WN: Salt salmon, was that from Japan?
- MM: No, I don't think so. Could have been Mainland because I don't think it was coming from Japan. If from Japan, most likely would be *iriko*.
- WN: And so what else? Canned goods?
- MM: Oh yeah, canned goods. Corned beef, Spam, sausage. That's about the main items.
- We used to sell clothing, too, at that time. *Mu'umu'us*. Do you remember Union Supply [Company] in Honolulu?
- WN: Union Supply? No, I don't remember.
- MM: I don't know if they're still in business or not. We used to get from there *mu'umu'us*. And what else?
- SM: Slippers.
- MM: Slippers, too.
- SM: Pocket knife.
- MM: We used to have this German pocket knife from Hoffschlaeger [Company, Ltd.]. I think they're not in business anymore. It's a German company. But the salesman was a Japanese man, Kodani.
- WN: So you folks sold dry goods, . . .
- MM: Dry goods.
- WN: . . . food, hardware?
- MM: Hardware, yeah. And then, let's see. Oh, for a while we were representing Diamond Bakery [Company]. That's a Honolulu company, Diamond Bakery.
- WN: So what did you sell from Diamond Bakery?
- MM: Soda crackers. They were known for their soda crackers. Saloon crackers. Cookies. That's about it from then.
- WN: So even back in your small kids days you folks were selling that?

- MM: No, when I came back from Honolulu [in 1956].
- WN: Oh, so that's more recent, yeah?
- MM: So I used to call on the stores once a month. And then I would take their order and when they send it over, I would deliver it. We used to buy cherry coffee, too. So I used to go and pick this cherry coffee from the farmers.
- WN: So you bought cherry coffee from farmers?
- MM: Farmers, yeah.
- WN: And then, what? Took it to your father's . . .
- MM: Then we used to pulp it. We used to pulp it ourselves, dry it, and sell the parchment to the mills. Until later on, when the coffee farmers formed the cooperative, we phased out.
- WN: About when was that? Is this after you took over?
- MM: After we took over. So must—chee, let's see. In the '50s, if I'm right. Later part of the '50s, I think.
- WN: So when your father was running it, you know, when you were growing up, how did it work in terms of coffee back then?
- MM: He would buy the coffee from the farmers. Same thing, he would process the coffee. We didn't have any cooperatives at that time. He used to process it and we used to sell it to Amfac. Most of it was Amfac. And then, when my father bought some things from Amfac, he would charge it. He would pay, some, along the way. But when he sells his parchment to Amfac, they would take it for the credit that he owes to them. So Amfac would wait about one year to have their credit pay, because we would have once a year, big coffee crop. It was good, too, because they weren't charging us any interest. Whereas, today, you can't do business like that.
- WN: So your father received goods, wholesale, from Amfac to sell in his store . . .
- MM: Right.
- WN: . . . and in return he would pay them for the goods in cash and sometimes in coffee.
- MM: In parchment, yeah.
- WN: He would give them parchment coffee in payment for some of the . . .
- MM: For the credit, yeah.

WN: Did he take cherry from farmers as payment for what the farmers owed him for the store?

MM: In some cases. In some cases, after figuring how much he can get from the parchment, he would pay the farmers. But very few had charge on their coffee crop. Very few.

WN: So if a farmer, say, owed the store twenty dollars. Can they pay, instead of in cash, could they pay in cherry?

MM: Some like that because, usually, there were times when some would pay once a year. So when they have their crop in, they have cash to pay for the credit. That's how it was mostly on this business, those days. One-year carryover, you know. To carry one year.

WN: So most people charged?

MM: At that time, mostly charged. Mostly charged. Well, there were some that my father couldn't collect from.

WN: What did he do?

MM: (Chuckles) I guess he just had to take it as a loss. So that's how the problem arose because when the people cannot pay the store folks, then they [the stores] cannot pay Amfac because there's no cash flow there.

WN: So the Sun Mellow Coffee Mill that your father had, was that just parchment or did he roast, too?

MM: He roasted. But it wasn't a big operation. It was for our store and several other stores, he would distribute the coffee. But he would age the coffee maybe at least three years.

WN: Yeah, you know the coffee you folks gave me was so good.

MM: Oh, yeah? You enjoyed it?

WN: I told my wife, "The secret is the aging, you know. That's what they told me."

MM: How did she like it?

WN: Oh, she liked it very much. It was very good.

MM: (Chuckles) So he used to at least age it for three years. But today you can't age it three years because so much money is tied up in the inventory.

- WN: So your father took in cherry coffee. So some of the cherry he [pulped and made parchment] and roasted as his own Sun Mellow Coffee brand. And others he sold to Amfac?
- MM: Amfac, yeah. And he used to sell to Kamigaki. What was his first name?
- WN: You mean, Kamigaki Store?
- MM: No, his brother. And some to Noguchi.
- WN: Isamu Noguchi.
- MM: Was Isamu Noguchi? Anyway, later on, that came to—they formed the cooperative. Just about three people he was selling to.
- WN: And the people who came into the store, was it mostly Japanese?
- MM: No. In our area, we had more the Hawaiians, Filipinos. We had the Japanese customers, but majority, I would say, as I said, Filipinos and Hawaiians. Most of our customers.
- WN: Were they coffee farmers, too?
- MM: No, some were working for McCandless Ranch. Some were working for the county. And some were fishermen.
- WN: Could they charge, too?
- MM: Yeah, they would charge, too. They were quite good in paying. Although we got caught with some, though. (Chuckles)
- WN: I was wondering, for example, like fishermen, let's say. Could they pay in like fish to you folks?
- MM: Some. What my father would do, they would sell the fish to him, but in exchange for merchandise, too. So he used to go around sell *'ōpelu*, too. After the fishermen come back, that would be in the evening already. He would go around sell it to the farmers.
- WN: Did he go around to sell?
- MM: Just within our area. But only our side.
- WN: Oh, what, in a truck?
- MM: In a truck.

WN: What else did he sell besides *'ōpelu*?

MM: Just about it. *'ōpelu*, yeah?

WN: He didn't go sell vegetables?

MM: No, he did not.

WN: Did you have to do that, too?

MM: No. That was the earlier part. When I took over, he didn't sell those things anymore. More on the store. He had a coffee farm, and macadamia trees were just beginning to bear.

WN: Later.

MM: Later, yeah.

WN: So you were telling me that one of your jobs was to package the things. What else did you do in the store? What else do you remember being your jobs?

MM: I don't know. Just wait on customers and clean up the store. That's about it.

WN: There's so many of you, brothers and sisters. I was just wondering if everybody had their own job.

MM: Well, when I was young, I didn't do anything because I had the older ones. When they left, I had to do all those things. So I was kind of like a pet, you know, because I was the youngest one. (Laughs) So I got away with all the chores while they were here, but after they were gone, I had to do those things, the chores.

WN: What about your mother? What did she do?

MM: Oh, my mother mostly took care of our family. You know, like housewives. Do the washing, cooking. She'll do those things. My first mother didn't care for farming. So she, more or less, helped in the store. My second mother didn't care for the store, but she would enjoy the farming. So it was just two different contrasts. You know, one care for the store, one didn't care for it. So my second mother would take care the coffee farm and the macadamia.

WN: The second mother is your stepmother?

MM: My mother's sister. So would be my aunty.

WN: Did she do anything for extra income at all?

MM: My . . .

WN: Well, your first mother and your second mother?

MM: No. My first mother, she helped in the store and raised the family. (Chuckles) And then my second mother, when she came over, I was already back here. She cultivated orchids and anthuriums, to have little spending money. That's about it.

WN: Well, that's a lot of work, ten children.

(Laughter)

MM: Yeah, ten children.

WN: Did you folks all eat together?

MM: Oh, yes. We had a table. Quite a big table. We'd all together eat at the same time. And those days, we didn't have electric stove or gas stove, it's more wood stove. So that would take time to cook the meals. And my sister folks would help her.

WN: What kind of foods did you eat? Did you have a lot of meat?

MM: Meat, very seldom. And if we should have meat, it would be cooked with a vegetable. It's not like having a steak. I didn't have steak until I was in high school. So our days, meat, very seldom. We had more fish because my father used to get the fish from the fishermen. And we had vegetables. We had two cows so we had enough milk. And several times we had pork, but it wasn't every day. It was just once in a while we had pork. But I don't remember feeding the pigs, though. Oh, we used to have chickens.

WN: Besides helping out in the store, what chores did you have?

MM: When I was young, we didn't have. . . . He had the land, but he didn't have any coffee land or macadamia nuts so it's more just in the store.

WN: What about like feeding the chickens?

MM: Oh, yes, sometimes. (Laughs) My mother would do more of that.

WN: Early time, from what time to what time did the store open and close?

MM: Let's see, I think. . . . Early time, you mean when my father was . . .

WN: Mm [yes].

MM: Actually starts about 6:30 [AM] to 6:30, too, in the evening.

WN: What about holidays?

MM: The store was open about 364 days a year. The only holiday we had was New Year's Day. As far as holiday, we didn't close the store. (Laughs)

WN: Did he open it at night if someone needed something?

MM: Hardly. If someone would like to buy something, he would open it, but it's very seldom. They would come during the business hours, store hours. Let's see. Oh, my father, when he sold the 'ōpelus, whatever left over, he used to dry it. So I remember, after he gets back from selling 'ōpelu, whatever's left over, he and my mother would clean the 'ōpelu, salt it, and dry it next day. So that was part of the business. But as far as that, I didn't do anything.

WN: He would sell the dried 'ōpelu?

MM: He would try to sell it, though, yeah. Some of the Hawaiian people would have *lau hala*. He would take them as a credit or pay them cash. And he would sell that to Union Supply [Company] in Honolulu.

WN: What kind of things made of *lau hala*?

MM: Hats, yeah.

WN: So people would pay with *lau hala* hats and your father would take the *lau hala* hats and sell 'em?

MM: To Union Supply, Honolulu.

WN: What other stores were in this area?

MM: We had Higashi Store. And then Aiona Store. Fujihara Store. Aiona and Fujihara would be about mile and a half from our store. That's on the south side. In the north side we had Eto Store.

WN: Did all these stores have, more or less, the same kind of things?

MM: Mostly same. Serving the farmers.

WN: And I was wondering, your father had the Sun Mellow Coffee Mill. Did other stores have that kind of a coffee setup?

MM: No, they did not. I think he was the only one, this side here, that had that roasting coffee [business]. At Higashi Store they had the *poi* factory. Fujihara Store, for a while, they had

a *poi* factory, too. Aiona Store, I remember, they sold the *cracked seeds*, too. (Chuckles)  
That's all I can think of right now.

WN: Oh, so you said, New Year's you folks closed?

MM: Closed.

WN: What did you folks do on New Year's?

MM: Oh, those days, we played firecrackers. And people, our friends come down, we would play together.

WN: And what about New Year's Day?

MM: Oh, that's New Year's Day we would do those things. Well, Japanese had the traditional food at New Year's Day.

WN: They would come to your house?

MM: They would come down play with us.

WN: You know the City of Refuge, Pu'u honua 'o Hōnaunau, like tourists would go there now. But I was wondering back in the early days, did people go to visit that place and stop by your store?

MM: Those days, no. We had tourists, but wasn't like today, like buses. They were more like a stretched out, like a limousine. But those were mostly for the richest, those days. You didn't have tourists like come with a U-drive or rental cars.

WN: So the customers were mostly locals from the area?

MM: Locals within this area.

WN: You said your father and mother dried the '*ōpelu*, sold it in the store. Was there anything else that they actually made or cooked to sell in the store besides the '*ōpelu*?

MM: No, that's the only one that they made to sell. They didn't do anything else besides the coffee and the dried '*ōpelu*. That's about what they made.

WN: So you actually sold Sun Mellow coffee in the store?

MM: In the store, yeah.

WN: And people would buy it?

MM: People would buy it. Yeah, people would buy it. I think, for a while, he was sending some of our roasted coffee to Maui. But I don't know what part of Maui. But I remember he used to sell it to somebody in Maui, our Kona coffee.

WN: I know when you were growing up—you were born in 1928, so you were actually growing up during the [Great] Depression days. Did that affect you at all?

MM: No, no. I was quite fortunate. (Chuckles) As I said, I was the last of them, kind of a pet. So things that sometimes I wanted, my father would buy for me. Such as, we had a bicycle. And those days, in this area, only the Higashi family had one and we had one. And there's one other, Matsunaga had one bicycle. (Chuckles) Like today's children, they would like a car. Bicycles would be our cars. And those days, it was something to have. So as far as the depression, it didn't affect me too much.

WN: Yeah, I guess not, yeah. When we interviewed your father, we talked a lot about the depression. I guess as an adult . . .

MM: Yeah, he was going through that. Right, he was going through the depression years, but I was young. So I don't remember too much of the depression. But I remember I had hardly any money in my pocket, though. No spending money. That much, I know, I remember.

WN: Were there other children that you could play with in the area?

MM: There were some families above our place here. They would come down and play with me or I would go up and go play with them. But that's maybe on the weekends. Because during the school days, after school, they would go home and I would come home, and that's all until the next day.

WN: So what was school like for you?

MM: School? I don't know. I wasn't too smart, so I just breezed through school. (Laughs)

WN: You went Ho'okena School?

MM: Ho'okena School. But I wasn't any exception. I was just another rural student, that's all. (Laughs)

WN: What subjects did you like?

MM: Arithmetic was my favorite subject. I didn't care for any else.

WN: Well, I would think that you got some practice in arithmetic working in the store, yeah?

MM: Right. Customers come and you learn how to give change to them. So that's why I liked arithmetic. But as I say, I wasn't exactly—I was just a, I would say, below-average student.

(Laughter)

MM: I got through high school, though.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Oh, while you were going elementary school, did you go Japanese[-language] school, too?

MM: Yes, I did. I went till just about eighth grade, that's when the war broke out.

WN: Where was Japanese school?

MM: Right next to our Ho'okena School. About less than a quarter mile apart.

WN: And you went after. . . .

MM: After.

WN: . . . English school?

MM: English school, too, yes. But don't ask me anything about Japanese school because . . .

(Laughter)

WN: What did you like better, English school or Japanese school?

MM: Oh, English school. But (chuckles) today I can't even write my name in *katakana* in Japanese. (Laughs) That's how much I remember Japanese school. (Laughs) I remember one of the students, Tatsu Oda. He was smart in Japanese. The teacher would say a word and we must write it in Japanese. I remember I used to always ask him how to write the word. That's why I say, I can't write my name in *katakana* in Japanese. Just went through school just like a motion, (laughs) that's all.

WN: Now, while you were going to Ho'okena School right when you were finishing the eighth grade, the war broke out.

MM: War broke out, right, yes.

WN: What do you remember about the war breaking out and your father being interned? Do you remember that day when he was taken?

MM: Yes. He was taken on February. . . . I think was Lincoln's birthday, I think. I remember they came in the morning to come and get my father. But before then, they told us to get prepared, that they will come and get my father. So my father had all the clothing all ready for him to go. And that morning they came to pick him up. I can remember that much.

WN: Did you understand at that time what was going on?

MM: A little, I think, but my mother or my father explained to us that he would be interned. So from there when he left until he came back—I was just about to graduate from high school—so just about four years. Four years he was away.

WN: Why do you think he was interned?

MM: Oh, because he did lot of Japanese community work. Because he was on one of the committees to raise [money for] the Japanese hospital, Kona Japanese Hospital. He was on there. And then I guess, those days, from Japan, these training ships would come into Kona, he was one of the committee [members to greet and entertain Japanese sailors], so I guess that involved him as a suspect. You know, now we were enemies with Japan at that time. So I guess that's one of the reasons, too, why he got interned.

WN: And while he was gone, who ran the store?

MM: My mother. That's when we had a hard time. Because she couldn't get the things—she would get the things that she wanted like rice, but she couldn't get as much. If was my father, then it would have been a different story. But since she was a lady, I guess the wholesalers would kind of overlook her, you know. So she would get things but not as much as what she wanted. So those four years while my father was away, it was tough. It was tough.

WN: What about you folks? Did you folks have to do more things with your father gone?

MM: No, mostly my brothers and sisters would do most of the things. That would be my sister *Ma-chan*, *Sa-chan*, and my brother Roy. Because the others were out already. They weren't here.

WN: What about the customers? Did they change during the war?

MM: No. Still the same customers.

- WN: Were there more like soldiers, for example?
- MM: No, it's mostly the local people here. We didn't have hardly any soldiers coming into the store.
- WN: Do you remember seeing soldiers? Were there soldiers stationed in this area?
- MM: Not in this area. The soldiers were stationed in Kealahou. So maybe I would see the soldiers when we were going to [Konawaena] School. As far as that, they would pass you once in a while on the truck, but nothing more.
- WN: I guess like North Kona side, up in Waimea, they had the soldiers stationed there.
- MM: Soldiers. There were some. I think some were in the Kona Hospital area, too. There was kind of like a barracks there. And Konawaena School, for a while, there were soldiers there, too. They were [camped] in the baseball field. Other than that, no.
- WN: So your mother ran the store, but had lot of help from your brothers . . .
- MM: My brothers.
- WN: . . . and sisters.
- MM: And sisters. My brother Roy and my sisters *Ma-chan* and *Sa-chan*. But later on *Sa-chan*, Roy, and me. But they did the most, *Sa-chan* and Roy. They did most of the jobs. So for a while Roy was roasting coffee because that's when my father was interned.
- WN: Did your mother ever tell you how rough it was?
- MM: During the . . .
- WN: During the war?
- MM: No, she hardly discussed those things. She hardly discussed it. But I knew she was having hard time because the business wasn't as good as when my father was running the business. But she—but we survived.
- WN: And when he came back, did things change at all? When he came back from internment.
- MM: Well, internment was just about the—there wasn't too much change after that. But maybe later, when Kona began to boom, then things began to change. It was when, early sixties. So until then there wasn't too much. I notice there wasn't that much changes. But I was away, too, so.
- WN: So your father came back about '45 and . . .

MM: Forty-six, I think.

WN: Forty-six. And you graduated from Konawaena in '46.

MM: Forty-six, right. He came home latter part of '46 because I was just about to be graduated from Konawaena High School. So when he came back he was kind of disappointed because, well, my mother was running the business now. Whatever he had kind of was less than what when he left. He was disappointed, but in a way, he can't blame my mother because she was doing her best. She wasn't running the business until he left. You know, that transition from her being a housewife. Now she was housewife plus the business was really hard for her.

WN: So your father was here, and then got interned, then when he came back, he found that the store wasn't doing as well.

MM: Yeah. And my father, he was a tough man, too, you know. (Chuckles) You know, hard head, too. He had a hard head, but (laughs) when he came back he was all right.

WN: Now this mother, this is your mother or your stepmother?

MM: My first mother.

WN: Your first mother, I see.

MM: I don't know when my father got married to the second mother. But that was quite some time afterwards.

WN: Oh, your wife would know. We can ask her later. Okay, so you graduated from Konawaena in '46. Before you went to Honolulu, what were you doing? Between the time you graduated and the time you went to Honolulu?

MM: Oh, for a while, I was helping at the store. That's about it. I went to Hilo first, and then came back. Helped the store a little and then went to Honolulu.

WN: What made you go to Honolulu?

MM: Well, that time, no job in Kona, so I figured maybe go to school and then better myself. So I took up accounting.

WN: At . . .

MM: This is Progressive.

WN: Progressive Business College?

MM: Right.

WN: At that time, what was your goal? Did you want to take over the store eventually?

MM: No. [My goal] was to be a bookkeeper or accountant at the time. But things changed. My mother got sick and then we came back here. For a while I was working in Honolulu. We had a company there, but we didn't do too good, so that's why I came back here.

WN: Oh, that's when you were like a vending . . .

MM: Vending machine [company].

WN: So what was Honolulu like for you?

MM: (Laughs) Was all right, but to me I didn't have too much of understanding because things weren't that good.

WN: Where did you live?

MM: With my sister. For a while with my sister, and then I was living on my own. Renting apartment.

WN: Where? Where did you live?

MM: I remember was in McCully, I think. King Street, across Honolulu Stadium.

WN: Mō'ili'ili, you mean?

MM: Mō'ili'ili? Is it Mō'ili'ili?

WN: Yeah.

MM: Well, there, too. From McCully and Mō'ili'ili, too, I sort of jumped. Moved several times. But just within that area, though.

WN: So what were your thoughts of Honolulu back then, coming from this area?

MM: Actually, I think it was something different, challenging. But as far as saving money, when I first came back, my father asked me how much I had in my bank account. I would tell him I have no money in the bank account. Whatever I had in my wallet, that was it. (Laughs) Whatever, it was less than a hundred dollars.

So he was saying, "All that time you stay Honolulu, that's all you have to show?"

Yep, that's all I have to show. (Laughs)

WN: And that was from running that business that you had?

MM: Yeah, because I collect salary. But as I said, it's a good thing I came back here. (Laughs)  
Because I wouldn't know what I'd be doing in Honolulu today. Still working. (Laughs)

WN: What was the name of the business?

MM: Allied Commerce.

WN: And what did you folks actually do?

MM: Mostly, we had the vending machines.

WN: So you would distribute vending machines to the . . .

MM: I would service it. I would service the machines.

WN: This is what? The candy kind . . .

MM: We had more like the bubble gum. And we had the coffee machines. But they had very few coffee machines. But since we were undercapitalized, we lost the franchise for the coffee machines.

WN: That's a machine that makes the coffee?

MM: Dispense the coffee. You know, you put your coin and you have your coffee.

WN: Did you like that coffee?

MM: I didn't care to drink coffee.

(Laughter)

MM: But anyway some people liked it, but some places it didn't have the right coffee taste, eh?

WN: I thought coming from Kona, and then drinking that coffee in the machine . . .

MM: (Laughs) As I say, the taste is entirely different.

WN: I bet. Okay, so in 1956 you came back.

MM: I came back, yeah.

WN: Why did you come back?

MM: Well, that's when my father asked my brother if I was interested to come back. But that time I wasn't interested, but then several times he asked me. So I figured, well, maybe I should go back. That's why I came back here.

WN: He wanted you to come back to run the store?

MM: He wanted, yes. Because my brother Roy was about to leave the store. He was running the store before then. But since he planned to move, that's why he asked me to come back here.

WN: What were your thoughts at that time?

MM: Chee, I was kind of uncertain, yeah? Whether it's a good move to come back here or to stay in Honolulu. But now looking back, I think I did the right thing to come back here.

WN: So you came back here in '56 to run the store. What did you have to do to get started or to. . . Did you do anything to change the store?

MM: No, I just ran the business like my father did, but to increase the sales, which I think I did. At that time, as I said, in the '60s, Kona was just beginning to boom. So that really helped the business. So at this time then we would have more customers. And we would [let them] charge, but I knew we could collect from them because they had jobs now. Hotel jobs, construction jobs. So those years were good, early '60s, until the latter part of the '80s. So at that time, I know jobs were steadily increasing. I was just lucky I came back at that time. But then the first years weren't too good because there were no construction jobs like in the sixties, I think.

WN: So when you took over in '56, there wasn't that boom yet.

MM: Wasn't boom yet. It just was as usual. So for about maybe four years, business, I noticed the sales wasn't that good. But slowly, sales started picking up because of the boom.

WN: And by "boom," you mean construction?

MM: Construction.

WN: What about coffee prices? Was that a good time, too?

MM: Let's see, the coffee prices were good. When I came back, the coffee prices was just peaking off. Was coming down. Was declining. Then when was the good price? *Chee*, I don't remember when the price started picking up again. But we didn't have much coffee farmers at that time already as our customers. We had more the construction workers. So that boom, we were lucky, too, because we were buying coffee, too, and we were selling. So that helped us, too.

WN: So you were selling to the co-op?

MM: At the time, oh, let's see. No, at that time, Amfac was out of business, so we were selling to Kamigaki and Noguchi at the time.

WN: So Noguchi was the one who started one of the co-ops?

MM: Co-ops, yeah. I think they started Pacific Coffee Co-op, I think, at the time.

WN: You know, there are some changes going on now in Kona. There's more construction, less coffee farming. Did you do anything different now that you're running the store in terms of what you sold? Is there a difference from what you sold, compared to what your father sold or your brother sold?

MM: You mean, after I . . .

WN: When you took over, yeah. Did you bring in any new things?

MM: No, no, I did not. At the time, we still had the Diamond Bakery distributorship.

WN: You had that, yeah. Okay.

MM: And the coffee. But by my time we didn't deal with any fishermen at all. It just was coffee and the bakery. That's about the same.

WN: And then the same canned goods basically.

MM: Right, yeah. But maybe little more different things, too, now. We had some other wholesalers that had different lines besides the staple foods.

WN: Did you continue to sell dry goods?

MM: In later years we kind of tapered off with all the dry goods. Because by then Union Supply stopped coming to Kona. So we couldn't get any dry goods from what Union Supply used to supply us. So we had one, the wholesaler is T.H.Y. And they had a different kind of merchandise. They weren't selling foods. They were more household goods. We still bought things from T.H. Davies, too. And then, later on, was from H.P.M.

WN: Oh, [Hawai'i] Planing Mill?

MM: Yeah.

WN: Oh, okay.

MM: What Davies would sell, H.P.M. will sell just about the same thing. So when Davies closed up, we got our things from H.P.M.

WN: Now what kinds of things?

MM: Oh, let's see. Like carpenter tools or regular tools. Wrenches, pliers, like that. Household goods. Household tools, maybe you would say.

WN: I forgot to ask, compared to your father's time and your time, things like refrigerated things or frozen things. Did you sell that?

MM: Ah, no, I don't remember. The only thing that was frozen was ice cream. But later on, we had frozen things. Like we used to get some things from Suisan [Company, Ltd.]. Chicken. What else? Bacon. And pork.

WN: It's already refrigerated and packaged.

MM: Refrigerated, yeah. It's packaged [and] frozen. It's mostly what the people would buy. I would sell things like those cold cuts. But I wouldn't buy anything other than that. Just to serve our local customers. We used to have beverages, you know, soda water. But no liquor. No liquor. The only thing we sold of the sin products would be cigarettes.

WN: I was just going to ask you about that.

MM: Yeah, cigarettes. We used to get our cigarettes from—that's going back to my father's days—from Amfac. They were the cigarette distributor. Then later on, we used to get from Hilo, Island Tobacco. Cigarettes was one of the good sellers, I tell you, really good seller. But today with the restrictions, I don't know if he [current owner] could sell or not. Because of that you can't sell to minors. It was after I sold the store, so didn't affect me. Liquor, we didn't sell—I didn't care to sell liquor because I knew my customers would wake me up in the middle of the night. When they are feeling good, they would come and knock on the door to sell them beer. That's one of the reasons I didn't care to sell liquor. And they always suggested me to sell liquor, but no. There were a lot of drinkers, then they would come and tell me to open the store. I asked them, if I sold liquor, would you folks come after it closed? "Oh, we won't come." But I know when they were feeling good, you can't reason with them.

(Laughter)

MM: I told them, "No, no thank you." So here Fujihara Store would sell liquor. Or there was Shimizu Store that sold liquor. Fujihara Store was a mile and a half from here. Shimizu would be about two-and-a-half miles from here. So I said, "You folks go to them and buy your liquor." So liquor was entirely out.

WN: Even your father's time, too?

MM: Yeah. He didn't sell liquor. Only cigarettes, as far as sin products, sin merchandise.

WN: I was wondering, when you took over, did you accept other than cash for payment?

MM: Only cash.

WN: So I guess that's a big change.

MM: Yeah, a change from—yeah.

WN: Why is it do you think people more had cash to pay their bills?

MM: Well, they had jobs. So now they are paid. So, as I say, the later years, we didn't have coffee farmers. So it's more the working people. So they were paid in cash.

WN: Salaried workers.

MM: Salaried [and wage-earners]. So as far as credit like in exchange for food, no, we didn't. It was strictly cash.

WN: What about charge? Did you let them charge?

MM: Yes, I did. Charge. Because some would get paid every two weeks and some would be paid once a month. They run out of cash, so I would charge them. But they would pay. Majority would pay.

WN: You would bill them or something?

MM: Yeah, I would bill them every month.

WN: So how did you keep track of what people bought and charged?

MM: Since I had training at accounting school, I would set up each account, each account of my customer, and end of the month I would just give them the bill. I didn't mail out the bills. They would come to me, you know? It's more like a gentleman's agreement.

WN: Honor system.

MM: Honor system. So I was fortunate I had a lot of good customers. Some of the customers were state [employees] and county [employees]. So they were good because they would be paid every, what, twice a month? So that was good.

WN: So how did you know who to allow to charge and who not to allow to charge?

MM: I guess, instinct.

WN: If you knew them?

MM: Knew them, right. And then I would look at their background, if they're a good credit risk. But some, I would say they would be a good credit risk, but it doesn't work that way. But I'm glad that majority, I was right in thinking whether this person was a good credit risk or not.

WN: One criteria, I would think, would be if they lived here, right? But like if you never saw them before . . .

MM: Oh, that's right. How long they've been here. And you look at them if they can hold on to their job. And look at the family, too. Look at the wife, the spouse. Whether they're a free spender or they're conservative. That had a lot to do with me deciding whether to allow the credit to this person or not.

WN: Did you have a cash register when you took over?

MM: Yeah, cash register. But beginning part wasn't cash register, but it was like a drawer, you know. But as the years go by, we had a cash register. But it's not like today. You have these scan codes, scanner. We didn't have, those days. We didn't have those kind.

WN: Oh, can you think of any other differences from the time you were running the store to your father? Any other changes? I know we talked about some.

MM: No, not too many changes. Oh, yeah. We used to have delivery before. Those days, my father would---they [customers] would come to the store, [and select what they wanted], and we would deliver the merchandise [to their homes] because those days, the early part when my father was running it, there weren't too many people with cars, automobiles. So we would deliver. But as the years went by, we stopped delivering because people were more prosperous, they had cars. So we didn't do any delivery.

WN: When you took over, did you deliver at all?

MM: At the beginning part, I was delivering. But as I say, when the construction boom was there, people began to get automobiles. So we didn't deliver any merchandise.

WN: When you say "delivery," is that when people come in and tell you what they want and then you would get the things and deliver it?

MM: Yeah, some would come into the store first and they would buy whatever merchandise and we would deliver. I would deliver the merchandise. They would be riding, they would be with me. You got to take them home.

WN: What about the taking orders? Did you do taking orders?

MM: No. They would come to the store. Very seldom we had orders. Because those days, people didn't have telephones, too. So they mostly would come to the store and tell you whatever they wanted. I have it delivered. Because those days, if they would buy a bag rice, they wouldn't be able to carry home that hundred pounds of rice, besides the other merchandise they buy. So I would deliver to the homes.

WN: You would do that or did you have any helpers?

MM: No, no helpers. Just my father and me. In fact, we didn't have any workers. The only workers we had was when my father had the farm. We had part-time workers, but that's about it. Mostly it was done by me and my father.

WN: So about when did your father start to phase out of the store business?

MM: I think when he was in the latter part of his eighties, I think. When he was about eighty years old, he kind of let up because he lived to 105.

WN: He was born in 1884, yeah?

MM: Eighteen eighty-four?

WN: Yeah, I think so. Few years after you started, you took over.

MM: Mm. But he hardly came to the store. He stayed more at home. But later years, when he kind of phased out, he was more taking care of the farm. I guess that was one of his enjoyment, I think, being away from the business.

WN: You didn't have much to do with the farm?

MM: No, not much. Because I was more busy in the store. That took my time. Because after a day's work, I'd have to record all the charges. And that would take quite some time. The merchandise would come in. I would just price it and put it on the shelf. And with no help. But later, when I got married, then Sumiko would help me. But until then it was just strictly, I would do the whole thing.

WN: You got married in 1981?

MM: Nineteen eighty-one.

WN: Yeah, so you were doing it alone . . .

MM: Until then, yeah. So anyway I think it was good, too, because I noticed that I could save money this time. (Chuckles) I could save money, not like when I was in Honolulu.

(Laughter)

MM: Came back with less than hundred dollars in my pocket. Almost ten years in Honolulu and (chuckles) came back with less than hundred dollars. My father told me, "Is that all you have? Hundred dollars? Less than hundred dollars for all the years staying Honolulu?"

"That's all." (Laughs)

That's why he said it was good for me to come back to Kona.

WN: How did you determine what to price your things at? Your standard markup?

MM: If the merchandise was a good mover, I would mark it up less. And like hardware, the slow seller, I would mark it up higher because of [the] time [it takes] to sell. We'd tie up our cash. So that's one way I was pricing out my merchandise.

WN: Were you aware of what the other stores were selling their goods for?

MM: If possible, I didn't care to see what the other stores have. I figured what I could get it for and I'd decide the price. So long, I figured, if I'm competitive enough, then it's all right. So I would watch how I buy the merchandise because each wholesaler had different kind of prices. Whatever was the best price I could get from the wholesaler, I would buy from them. That way I could keep my price competitive. Besides, I didn't hire any people so it's strictly myself. So there's no overhead on the employment.

WN: So were you actually in the store all by yourself?

MM: All by myself.

WN: What if, you know, you had to go out?

MM: Then maybe my father stay in the store for a while until I came back.

WN: I see.

MM: But if possible, I would stay in the store most of the time.

WN: At that time, what were your hours?

- MM: Ah, let's see. About 6:00 [AM] to 6:00 [PM]. But later on, when I retired was 8:00 [AM] till about 12:00 [PM], had a nap, and back to the store about 1:00, 1:30 [PM]. Then close about 6:00 [PM].
- WN: What do you mean, "after you retired"?
- MM: No, before I retired. My later years, already I was close to retirement. Because I was married, too. So I was kind of slowing up already. And then, at that time, we had these supermarkets. Sure Save was here and KTA [Super Stores] was here, too. So the sales would kind of decline because we had more competition. We were lucky because I was doing all right when they came in, but not as good as before they came in.
- WN: And when you got married, Sumiko would help in the store?
- MM: Would help, yeah. And she would take care of my father. So that's a big help. Because she would take care of my father, then she would come down to the store and help me.
- WN: So you sold the store in 1995.
- MM: Right, right.
- WN: So just prior to that, that's when your hours were cutting back.
- MM: Cutting back.
- WN: Less business.
- MM: Less business, yeah.
- WN: So in '95 you sold it, what were the reasons?
- MM: (Chuckles) [Nineteen] ninety-five, I wanted to collect my Social Security. *Chee*, was it in '95? How old was I in '95? Nineteen twenty-eight, so. . . .
- WN: Sixty-seven.
- MM: Oh, yeah, that's right. I wanted to retire at sixty-five, but because of this it took time for us to negotiate to sell the store. That's why it came to sixty-seven years old.
- WN: Your father died in—I have it—1990?
- MM: Nineteen ninety, right. March, I think. Was it March 23rd?
- WN: March 23rd, yeah, that sounds right. I have his obituary someplace. Let's see. Yeah, March 23rd, 1990. At age 105.

- MM: I remember March 23rd because my brother was killed [in World War II], October 23rd. That's why I always remember the 23rd.
- WN: Oh, your brother was 100th [Infantry] Battalion?
- MM: One hundredth Battalion, yeah.
- WN: Okay, so you sold in 1995 and all the merchandise, too?
- MM: Our Bishop [Estate] lease, too, the whole thing.
- WN: Oh, so Bishop . . .
- MM: Where the store is, it's a Bishop lease. Bishop land.
- WN: Oh, you mean, your father was paying lease to Bishop Estate all that . . .
- MM: All those years. But in the early part when he was running the store, the lease was very minimal. It's not like when I was running the store. Because then Bishop asked for—*chee*, I think was 3 percent of the gross sales. So that cut into the profit.
- WN: Oh, I didn't realize they charged by percentage.
- MM: Percentage, yeah. It wasn't the net, now. (Chuckles) So that was about ten years before retiring, I think.
- WN: Was that a factor in you deciding to sell it?
- MM: That's one of the reasons. I figured, well, until then, I didn't have a vacation. So I figured, it's time for me to enjoy.
- WN: So the store was on Bishop [Estate] land, but this house and your coffee lands are fee simple?
- MM: Fee simple. So, many people would say, hey, life is too short, (chuckles) so start enjoying. So that's one other thing, one of the reasons, too, for me to retire, eh? Get out entirely. That's it. It was suggested to sublease the lease. But I told myself, no. If I wanted to get out completely, no work later on.
- WN: And how is the store [Merv's Place] doing now?
- MM: They seem to be doing all right because, I think, she [i.e., the new owner's] father comes and works. She opens about 6:00 [AM].
- WN: You mean now?

MM: Yeah.

WN: And they close at what time? Nighttime or. . . .

MM: About 6:00 [PM], too.

WN: Six o'clock?

MM: Yeah. They are hard workers, though, I can tell you that. Yeah, they are hard workers.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 35-10-1-00; SIDE ONE

WN: Are they selling the same kinds of things that you sold?

MM: Same things, but now they've added hot dogs, *manapua*, ice—I didn't have any ice at the time—[brewed] coffee. Those are the everyday things that they sell. So I guess that's another different—bringing in the younger customers because of these fast foods. I didn't have those. I didn't have time to prepare [i.e., brew] the coffee, to prepare the hot dog, and all this. I didn't have time so I didn't go into that. I was thinking about it, but later on I figured I cannot do it myself.

WN: I would imagine there's tourists, too, yeah?

MM: Tourists, too. Nowadays you have the tourists, too. The latter part of us running the business we had tourists too, but the early part, no. Very few tourists. So today, the young ones like hot dogs, so they did the right thing to sell those things.

WN: What do you think the future of small stores in Kona is going to be?

MM: As far as this area, I would say it's going to be all right. But further north, with the competition from the big stores, it's a little different thing. But as long as this population doesn't expand enough to warrant the big stores, I think as far as the stores on this side here, they will survive.

WN: So you think as long as this place remains rural. . . .

MM: Rural.

WN: . . . a store like this could survive.

- MM: Should survive, yeah. I don't think the big stores will come in because it wouldn't warrant them to have enough business to. . . .
- WN: Oh, I see.
- MM: (Chuckles) That's why if, as I say, if the population stays as is now, they can survive.
- WN: Well, what are your thoughts on big stores like chain stores coming from the Mainland?
- MM: Well, when I was running the store I wasn't too keen about them coming to Kona, but you can't stop them. (Chuckles) Years ago, I think Foodland came in. And we were talking, you know, [my friend who owned a business] told me he hopes those bigger stores will stay away about another several more years because he had his children still going to school. And then if the big stores came in then they would affect his business. He'll have, maybe, a harder time to send his children to college. But he was fortunate, because I think after the children were graduated, then several years later the big stores came in. So the big stores are going for the customers. That's why smart, like the [family] that bought my store, selling [brewed] coffee, those things, because people wouldn't go to the big stores just to drink coffee or [eat] hot dogs. So that's a good thing to do.
- WN: Oh, so like a snack shop.
- MM: Snack shop, yeah, right.
- WN: What about Kona itself? What are your thoughts on the future of Kona? What direction is Kona going?
- MM: It's going---the direction will be positive. But, some people that come here will not (blend into the Kona lifestyle). But yet you can't stop them. But I think Kona will still grow yet. Because we have the climate, whereas Hilo doesn't have it. (Chuckles) That's why we're fortunate.
- WN: So you think growth is good?
- MM: Growth is all right. It's good.
- WN: Because, you know, there's some people who feel, well, it's good to keep it the old way and keep the stores small, and things like that. There are people who think like that, yeah?
- MM: Yeah, but no matter what, I guess you cannot stop progress. For the future, I think for the younger generation it'll be good for Kona.
- WN: People to live here?

MM: Right. Only the older people like to keep it rural. But I don't think we can keep it rural. How long more, I don't know. If coffee prices stabilize, then maybe the younger ones will be interested in coffee farming. But if the price should drop, then there's no incentive to raise coffee or macadamia.

WN: Right now it's okay?

MM: Right now it's pretty good yet. So hopefully it stays the way it is now, then maybe the younger ones will kind of be interested. But as I say, the younger ones don't care for farming because of the hard work. Because I notice in Japan, too, passing on the train there, you will see the old folks out in the field. Very few young ones would be working in the field. So apply the same thing in Kona, too. If coffee prices are good, then maybe they'll work on the farm. In a way you don't blame them, too. After all, you want to see returns instead of just working and have no returns. That's how I feel.

WN: Well, thank you very much. Very interesting.

MM: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **Kona Heritage Stores Oral History Project**

**Center for Oral History  
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