KOSUKE TERUYA

Okinawa

I was born in 1897 in Osato-*son* in Okinawa. I am the oldest son and have five brothers and sisters.

Osato-*son* was a farming village. My father did farming—sugarcane and rice. My mother *kokua*ed (helped). She brought the *bentō* (lunch) and planted rice. They worked quite a lot, because they went early in the morning and came back after the moon came up. There weren't any factories or industries. My village was small with about 100 houses. All of the people in the village were farmers.

When we were small, after we came back from school, we just played. All the neighborhood children got together and *sumō* wrestled and ran. That's about all. In Okinawan *sumō,* it's not okay to just push the person to the ground. Win or lose, we make it clear. There was no *dohyo* (ring). You have to make the opponent fall down, that's when you win. I'm not that good in *sumō* wrestling, to say the truth. I was bad.

I went to *jinjō-kōtō-shōgakkō,* so that's eight years of school. The name of the school was Osato Jinjō-Shōgakkō. It was compulsory education: The government said the first year this, the second year that.

I'm not good at studying. As for subjects I liked—well! To talk about 'like', I liked to play. The teachers were very dedicated and methodical. Very! If the person did something wrong, even if it was small, he got strongly punished. The teachers had thin sticks and would say, "Take out your hands." When you took out your hands, that was the end. They would be whipped. Oh, that was very strict!

I asked my father to call me to Hawaii. I went to school longer than other members of my family. Among my brothers and sisters, the rest of my family went only for six years. It was only money, money, money. That's all we could think of. My father and mother's wishes were to be healthy, to

Based on interviews by Michiko Kodama, ESOHP Researcher/Interviewer. Translated by Miyoko Hata. Edited by Ada Yamaki.

make money quickly and come back early. I came to Hawaii around 1912 when I was 15 years old, because I didn't like school. When I said that, that was the end of it. My father told me to come here.

Hawaii

My father was in Hawaii since Meiji 40 so that's around 1907. My father, too, came to Hawaii, because of the financial difficulties. When we were staying home, we received letters often from Kekaha, Kauai, then from Waianae, Oahu.

When I came to Hawaii, I came alone. I didn't know anything about Hawaii except for pictures. When I saw them, I thought, "Oh, Hawaii is such a nice place." In Japan, the school principals were wearing suits. In those days, I thought those in the pictures wearing suits were just like the teachers. I didn't have the slightest idea they were plantation workers.

My father often sent letters but I didn't even read the letters. As long as my father sent some money, I was happy. My mother . . . my mother suffered a lot raising children because we weren't blessed materially.

Oh, in those days, I thought if I go to Hawaii, I'd be rich. When I got here that wasn't so. It wasn't that easy.

My mother sent away my father and her oldest son. We didn't want to part, but it couldn't be helped.

The preparation was easy when I came. My father sent me everything. My fare was only 55 dollars. There were many kinds of examinations upon my arrival in Hawaii: eye exams, physical exams and education checks. In the education check, they just asked questions like "Up to what grade did you attend?" and "How old are you?" But we didn't have a test.

The ship I came on from Yokohama was named *Teresa-go.* It was made in England, I think. They said the company was English. Those days, *yobi-yose* (summoned immigrants) were very popular, so there were many *yobi-yose* ladies on the ship. There were people from Okinawa prefecture and mainland Japan all mixed. There was no difference for food, but the sleeping place was just like a bag. We did nothing on the ship except quietly come out to the deck and walk back and forth. It was the first trip, so it was fun to watch the ocean and the big waves. It took ten days to reach Hawaii.

After we arrived in Honolulu, we were thrown into the immigration office to be checked out. My father came to welcome me. We didn't talk about anything; we were just happy to be together.

We went to Kawasaki Inn on River Street. An Okinawan man named Uesato was the *bantō* (front manager). We stayed at the inn about one day, I think. Right away, we took a train. It was the first time for me to ride one. I hadn't ridden on a train in Japan. Of course, we didn't see trains on Okinawa.

Plantation Life

After I settled in Waianae, I worked on the sugar plantation for six months. We didn't have a long house in Waianae. Two couples lived in one place; I was with my father in one room.

There were people from Okinawa, Yamaguchi, Hiroshima—people from all over Japan gathered there. We spoke standard Japanese.

I got a boy-*bangō* (plantation I.D. number) in Waianae Camp. After working 26 days, I got paid 15 dollars in those days money. I worked for ten hours per day. Since I was a child they didn't give me hard work. I did bone meal *furi* (fertilizing) and sometimes *hō hana* (weeding) in Waianae. *Luna*s (foremen) were good those days. I was a child then, so they didn't give me impossible work.

We thought we could get paid more at another place, so we moved to Waipahu around 1912, 1914. In those days, we were living in a part of Waipahu called *Pake* (Chinese) Camp. In that camp, *Pake* and Japanese were all mixed up. We didn't have any trouble with the *Pake.*

There were long houses in the camp. A hallway was in the middle and sleeping quarters were on both sides of the hallway. A single person had one *goza* (woven) mat. And that was *pau* (all). There was a cook for many people. There weren't any tasty foods. While we were there, there was *udon* (noodles), and *tsukemono kōkō* (pickled vegetables), things like that. And also there was a laundryman. It was cheap those days, but even then it cost about six to seven dollars for the cook and laundryman. Monthly pay was $20 for 26 days.

Work was everyday. After work, we got together and talked stories over tea. At Waipahu, Okinawans, and the people from *Naichi* (mainland Japan) worked together, so it was good. But besides work we hardly did things together. It's easy when all the Okinawans got together and used dialect. With people from other prefectures we couldn't do that.

We moved out of Waipahu to Ford Island for *uke-kibi* (sugarcane contracting) from 1914 to 1916. We were to mature the sugarcane for 18 months. I did *hanawai* (irrigating) and *hō hana,* and after the sugarcane matured, harvested it. The pay was set per ton; then if we had extra, we got paid extra.

On that island, you can't go anyplace unless you ride on a boat. We lived on that island and worked there. Water was abundant. The island was covered with sugarcane.

The camp on Ford Island was good. Everybody knew each other and we were just like brothers and sisters. Thirty-six people lived there, I believe. The people were from Yamaguchi, Chiba, Okinawa, and Koreans were there, too. I still remember their names, but I doubt that they are still alive. The *uke-boshi* (contracting boss) was Tokugawa. He was good because the work group was just like your own family. He gathered people and cultivated for someone else.

After *pau hana* (finish work) at Ford Island, we told stories and during spare time we caught small shrimp for fish bait. There were a lot of fish there. We could catch as many *pāpio* as we wanted in those days. It was more fun fishing than playing, so we did it often. We ate lots of fish.

We moved out from there and went to Puunene, Maui next. Since there were many people from my birthplace I went there. They could help me. People went back and forth to various plantations so we found out right

away about conditions at other places. From 1916 to 1918, I was doing *kompang*.

Puunene's camp was an old, old camp. The houses were dirty even for those days. They were long houses, and the rooms were divided. They threw us in those rooms. They were all long houses. There were many people from Kumamoto there. The Okinawan people were from all over Okinawa. We didn't pay any attention to what village they came from. It was a difficult task to gather people from the same village even if you tried.

I didn't say no to any type of work, but, I rather liked working in the mill. I worked doing sugar *sarashi* (bleaching). Anyplace you go in the mill, the work is easier—lubricating the machines or anything—the jobs at the mill were less strenuous. The pay was a little higher too, for about 12 hours every day, longer hours than in the fields. Higher pay, less strenuous and our clothes didn't get dirty either. So everyone used to say "Mill, mill," wanting to work in a mill.

The lady who cooked for us also washed our laundry. I paid her 50 cents per month for four washings a month.

The stores around Puunene in those days were private company stores. There were door-to-door salesmen who came from Onishi store.

We moved out of Puunene to Lahaina because the base of pay was different. At Lahaina, the base was per acre for 18 months. At the other places, even at Puunene or Paia, pay was based per ton. Same work but different pay base.

The work of *uke-kibi* had nothing to do with cutting or loading. All we had to do was raise sugarcane for 18 months. The name of the company was Lahaina Pioneer Company. A person just leased the land, say 10–100 acres, and took care of it.

In those days, Lahaina residents were mostly Japanese. Anywhere you went, you met Japanese.

I was *uke-boshi* for our family. Some *uke-boshi* did have somebody working under them, but ours were all brothers, so two brothers plus my father. I lived in Lahaina eight to nine years. I wanted to make money, but I couldn't. So I tried harder and harder. That was why I stayed longer. I worked till 1926. Nothing changed even when I stayed longer, so I decided to move to Lanai.

I do have some experience putting money into *tanomoshi* (mutual finance association), but the money was eaten up. I was single at that time and stayed at the camp. *Tanomoshi* was held in town, so I used to ask someone to take the money for me, a set amount per month. Without my knowledge, he took the money out. I couldn't do anything about it; he was very shrewd.

I sent money to Okinawa, as much as possible. When I had extra money, then I would send. It was impossible to send every month. To support herself, my mother had to grow things in the fields to eat. It couldn't be helped.

I got married in 1923 before I left Lahaina. My wife's name was Muta.

My father went back to Okinawa and arranged it. Oh, I felt it was good for me to be married—now I didn't need to depend on other people. We had something like a wedding ceremony after she arrived, a small ceremony.

I came to Lanai around 1926 when it was a new place, just opening up. I thought I might find a job which made money. All the work was under contract: making roads, cultivating the fields. I didn't know anything about pineapple; I only heard about it after I arrived here.

The people were different. The people are settled here nowadays. But, in those days, one day I see him, next day I don't. There were many single people. So, if they thought other places better, they moved right away.

When I came to Lanai, I did everything—picked pineapple, planted pineapple—everything. Picking involved carrying bags and picking pineapples. Pay for planting was set per thousand pineapple plants you planted. We used to get 85 cents per thousand. The highest pay was one dollar and the lowest was 45 cents.

I did *hō hana* too. It was 20 cents per hour. Bone meal fertilizing was under contract, so much per bag.

*Luna*s were good because we knew each other. From that time on, there were not any bad *luna*s. The *luna*s were Japanese.

At Lanai camp, medical expenses, housing, and water were free. At the beginning there were restrictions. They said not to water the plants. If we use too much water on our plants, we do not have enough drinking water. So we used to conserve water.

There was a camp police, but there were not any bad people on Lanai. They used to warn those people who disturbed the camp or littered the camp. And they watched small children play.

We did not have *sake* (rice wine) brewing or *'ōkolehao* (ti root liquor) making, those days, there were no places to sell, so nobody made beer or *'ōkolehao*. After *pau hana,* we got together and talked stories and played *hanafuda* (Japanese card game). That was about it.

Around 1926 there were many Okinawans, about 300 or so. Mashi Ikehara had a piggery in the next valley from our camp. He sold to Lanai stores. He must be from Gushikawa, I think. He was raising pigs even when he was in Lahaina. I think Ikehara's piggery lasted until 1938 or 1939.

Richard Tamashiro started his store in Lanai in 1946. Mr. Tamashiro was a very independent man. He did it all by himself—the store, bowling alley, movie theater, hotel. Before he started his business, he was a butcher at Okamoto's. Tamashiro is doing business where Honda's used to be. The name of Honda store was Lanai Pine Store. Before Mr. Tamashiro started his business in 1946, no Okinawan people had businesses of their own besides Ikehara.

Oh, there was a photographer, Mr. Tsuha. He was taking pictures about five to six years. He was from Sashiki-*son.* His first name was Soko, I believe. He was from Honolulu. His pictures were very good. Now his boy is doing business in Honolulu—Goldtone Photo Studio. Mr. Tsuha took my picture once or twice when I was young.

I became *luna* around 1932. The *luna*'s job was killing bugs and picking pineapples. I watched people also. If you become a *luna,* you should make workers willing to work. That's a hard task. Each individual is different. The same thing does not work on this person just because it worked on another person. During my time, mostly Filipinos worked under me. When I talked to Filipinos, I used all mixed up language. I did not know English well. At peak time, I had 12 people to kill bugs. Work was nothing difficult; you just did whatever the company tells you to do.

When I wanted to be *luna,* I asked. Mr. Tsukiyama went back to Japan so I became *luna.* It was the depression. Even if we grew pineapples, we could not sell. We just left them in the fields.

After the depression the world war erupted. Every month, my salary went up. Even if we did not ask, they used to raise it for us. There was a curfew system so we could not go out, and we could not put the lights on during certain times. During the war, there were piles of dirt on the roads in Lanai that prevented airplanes from landing. They made the roads rough so only Jeeps could pass easily.

I retired in 1962. When we came to Lanai in 1926, the plantation manager was Mr. Brown who was a methodical boss. Next was Frazer, Hawley, and then Cleghorn. I do not know the boss now. I know his face, but I do not know his name. Looking from my side, I feel thankful towards the bosses. Because of them I could make a living.

From the time when Mr. Frazer was a boss water was free, no matter how much you watered the plants, day or night. That's because they installed a water pump.

The police here were just like decorations. There were no bad people. This place was really a nice place.

I think union (International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union) was good. Because of the union, the pay went up, the living conditions improved and everybody became "rich." So, I think the union was good. But even if *luna*s wanted to join the union, they did not let them.

In 1947, there was a very severe strike. All workers made picket lines. So, it was very hard. *Luna*s did not work during this strike. I stayed at home. I think it was good for the workers. For *luna*s, that strike was not good. Even if you wanted to, you could not work because there were picket lines. Actually *luna*s were rather happy, because there was no work.

After the money went up, they started to charge for water and the rent. But it's better now than before. There's no comparison. The proof is our luxurious living today. That's because we have more money.

There are many machines now: machines to pick pineapples and to put down the mulch paper. We used a horse to put papers down before. With horses, we could only put one paper at a time. Now, a Caterpillar can lay four papers at a time.

On Lanai, the best thing was that they sold homes to us. I think that was the number one thing. When we bought it, we did not pay much.

When you work for the company, you cannot say, "I like these things"

or "I do not like these things." If you do not like it, you would not stay around.

Retirement is terrific. I should be thankful. Every month I receive a set income and free *kaukau* (food). It's terrific.

I am a member of Okinawa *Kenjinkai.* Lanai Okinawa *Kenjinkai* started in 1934. I was a member from the beginning. I think it was a butcher, Oshiro, who started the *Kenjinkai.* Not too many old members are living now. Old members are myself, Tamashiro-*san,* and Hokama-*san*. That's about all, I think. There were many members in this association. In earlier days, I think there were close to 100. The purpose of it was to get together and help each other. In those days, many people had many children and some families needed help financially. We decided to lend them some money without any interest. The association put all the membership fees in the bank. All helped each other. With so many children every month was a struggle. We helped where money did not stretch enough.

In those days' we got together once a year, and just discussed something good, but did not have a party. I think there was *Bon odori* before. It was by the *Hongwanji* temple. The first reverend was Kina, then Takamiya, then Yamazato.

The community of Okinawan young people is good, but we, *makules* (old people), do not go near them. We cannot teach them even though they are just like our children or grandchildren. We have to learn from them. That is how much the world has progressed.

After the war, I was a member of an organization to help Okinawa. We donated money to promote cattle raising on Okinawa. I gave $15 or so; I still have the receipt. The people on Lanai who were from Okinawa got together and sent money. Seiyei Wakukawa collected money to help build the University of Ryukyus. I gave $20 too, because I felt it was worthwhile.

I feel happy that I came to Hawaii. As you get older, life gets easier. I have five children who take good care of me. Hawaii is a very happy place; it's heaven.

At this stage of my life, I just hope that they continue being good children. I cannot teach them anymore. I cannot tell how this world will change, but I do not expect too big a change. It might get better, but I do not expect it to get any worse. That is how I feel.

The Okinawans in Hawaii are doing well. I do not have anything to say. They are doing more than I did.

Since my future is limited, it's no use hoping. It takes a long time to accomplish something. I have not done anything, although I have been living in Hawaii for 65 years. It's absolutely no use wishing, because my life is very limited. If I had hopes, I would have reached them by now.

I only feel that I worked a long time and went through it in good faith.

We came here in 1912. My wish is that in regards to honesty, I wish it were back in 1912 again. I miss those days. In those days, Hawaii was really heaven. If everybody became honest like back in those days, Hawaii will be a very nice place in which to live. There were no thieves, not even one bad per-

son, even when you go out in the street late at night—Honolulu or anyplace else. That is why, if possible, I want it to go back to those days. The living itself was hard, but it was enjoyable. There weren't any fears. Nowadays, everywhere you look, there are thieves. The ladies cannot even walk freely. I wish these situations would change. That's all I wish. It's better to have a little hardship. Even if living was hard, it was heaven.

UCHINANCHU
A History of Okinawans in Hawaii

Center for Oral History
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Hawai'i United Okinawa Association

Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
College of Social Sciences
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Honolulu, Hawai'i

First printing 1981
Second printing 1984
Third printing 2009

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Ethnic Studies Oral History Project

Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii.

LOC 81–43434
ISBN 978-0-8248-0749-8

This book has been published with a grant from the Japan Foundation and with the assistance of the Center for Okinawan Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and the Center for Japanese Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Royalties from the sale of this book will be used to support further research and publication in Okinawan studies in Hawai'i.