

## NOTES FROM UNRECORDED INTERVIEW

with

Margaret Iizaki

March 20, 1997

Mānoa, O'ahu

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto

[Ms. Iizaki was not available for audiotaping due to ill health and schedule conflicts. The following is a write-up of a pre-interview conducted by Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto in Mānoa, O'ahu.]

Margaret Iizaki's father, Kenzo Iizaki, was born in 1890 in Hiroshima-ken, Japan. Following his mother's death, he was adopted by a benevolent uncle. Self-described as a *furyō shōnen*, or delinquent, he was a mischief maker and occasional truant.

Upon graduation from high school, he had two choices: Japanese military service or plantation labor in Hawai'i. Having heard about the islands and the potential for money-making from a distant cousin, Kenzo Iizaki chose the latter.

He arrived in the islands in 1906 after a voyage on board the SS Manchuria. He worked on the sugarcane plantations at Waipahu and 'Ewa. Initially, because of his youth, he was paid women's wages which were less than those paid men. He found the work arduous and was oftentimes absent from the fields.

With the prospect of better wages—dollar-a-day—in Hawai'i, he left O'ahu for the Big Island. He helped construct bridges and flumes. He later worked for Parker Ranch and held a variety of jobs, including building fences and corrals.

Later, he returned to O'ahu where he started a family with his picture bride, Ikiyo. The family first resided in Pālama. Later homes were located in Lanakila and Kalihi. At one of the homes in Kalihi the Iizakis maintained a large vegetable garden and sold produce at the markets. They also raised chickens and ducks for home consumption.

In the early 1930s, the family moved to a home on the campus of Pālama Settlement where Kenzo Iizaki began his thirty-year career as caretaker of the grounds. Prior to that, he tried his hand at masonry, stevedoring, and a number of odd jobs.

Margaret Iizaki, born in 1920, attended Fern School, Kalākaua Intermediate, and the Margaret Dietz Commercial School. She also attended Kalihi Japanese-Language School. Later, she attended the McKinley Community School for Adults and through GED testing received her high school diploma. In 1977, she earned a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Japanese from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Margaret Iizaki's first place of employment in the 1930s was a taro company.

In 1938, Annie Kerr, head dental assistant at the Strong-Carter Clinic, hired and trained her to be a dental assistant. Later, Margaret Iizaki worked as a clerk-typist in the office remaining in that position until the mid-1940s.

In early 1941, prior to the beginning of hostilities with Japan, Pālama Settlement was designated as one of many first-aid stations by the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD), Preparedness Committee, headed by Drs. Robert and Marie Faus. Margaret Iizaki held the position of chief clerk of the first-aid station at Pālama Settlement and was directly responsible to Mrs. Ethel L. Bivens, chief clerk of OCD. Director of the first-aid station at Pālama Settlement and its chief medical officer was Dr. Joseph W. Lam, who was employed in the Medical Department at Pālama Settlement. Mrs. Grace P. Lai was the volunteer registered nurse at the first-aid station. Mr. David Williamson, an employee of the settlement's Medical Department, was the pharmacist at the station.

On the morning of December 7, 1941, Pālama Settlement was activated as a first-aid station. Called to the station by Ethel Bivens, the realities of war set in. Before nightfall, five deaths were registered at Pālama Settlement. Margaret Iizaki, who had never before seen a dead person, trembled as she removed IDs from a corpse for registration purposes. By day's end, she knew Hawai'i was at war.

The canteen room where coffee and doughnuts were served accommodated evacuees. The swimming pool was drained to serve as a morgue. Margaret Iizaki and a corps of first-aid volunteers (i.e., registration clerks, nurses' aides, litter bearers, ambulance drivers, utility men, doctors, nurses, et cetera) slept on the floor of the medical building. For three nights, she stayed at the settlement.

Margaret Iizaki recalled only one wartime anti-Japanese incident. A Mainland civil defense worker, who had lost his way due to the blackout and curfew, found himself at the first-aid station. When asked for identification, he refused to speak to her because she was a "Jap."

After World War II, Alice Yee, secretary of the Group Work Department, retired. Margaret Iizaki filled the vacancy. Paul Anderson was director of the Group Work Department at that time. Theodore Rhea was Executive Director of Pālama Settlement (1942–1948). Prior to Rhea was Phillip Platt (1929–1942) and following Rhea was Eileen Watkins, first woman director at the settlement (1949–1951). Dearon J. Shetanian filled the post from May to December, 1951.

In 1955, following two years of federal civil service employment in Japan, Margaret Iizaki returned to become secretary to Pālama Settlement's Executive Director Walter H. Ehlers. She took this position only at the urging of Ehler's secretary, Julia Desha, who was ready for retirement.

She remained at Pālama Settlement through 1968. Others who served as director following Ehler's resignation were: Arne E. Larson (1959–1962), Jack Nagoshi (1962–1964), and Lorin Gill (1964–1969).

Margaret Iizaki joined the staff of the Metropolitan YMCA on Atkinson Drive in 1969.

In 1974, she became a state employee and worked at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Retired since 1989, she remains active in the community. She is a member of the Honpa Hongwanji (Hawai'i Betsuin), Ikenobo Ikebana Society-Honolulu Chapter, and the Ikebana International Society. Volunteer work includes Project Dana, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Thrift Shop, and Bishop Museum.

**Reflections  
of  
Pālama Settlement**

**Volume I**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

**August 1998**