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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yoshiaki Fujitani (YF)

Mānoa, O`ahu

April 7, 2005

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

MK: This is an interview with Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani. This is the first session on April 7, 2005 and the interviewers are Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto.

And for the first question I just have to ask you, what's your year of birth?

YF: Yes, I was born in 1923.

MK: And where were you born?

YF: In a small town called Pa`uwela. P-A-U-W-E-L-A. Pa`uwela, Maui.

MK: And what was your father's name?

YF: His name was Kodo, K-O-D-O, Fujitani and he was a minister at the Pa`uwela Hongwanji.

MK: Now, based on what you've heard, share with us what you've been told about your father's family background in Japan.

YF: He was the second son in this family. I forget my grandfather's name. But in Shimane prefecture a place called Hikawa-gun Hisagi-mura in Shimane. There was a temple named Gekkoji, which is a very nice name. Gekkoji, "light of the moon," you know, Temple. And Dad was the second son of three sons. And so he didn't have the responsibility of taking over the temple. His elder brother was supposed to take over. And so he was, you might say, more adventurous and he did what he wanted to. But he wanted also to study Buddhism so he was in school at Bukkyo Daigaku - you know, in Kyoto - when he was asked to accompany Ōtani Kozui on his expedition to Southeast Asia, or South Asia. And so he went and later on came back and continued his studies of Buddhism.

MK: And I think you mentioned that eventually your father became a Buddhist missionary. Where was he sent?

YF: Yeah. So he continued his studies after he came back from India. And got his *tokudo* [ordination rites], his *kyōshi*, his ordination. And he was sent to Okinawa for a year, I think. And this was in 1915, [19]16 around that time, you know, maybe a little, even later. And so he came back from Okinawa. And then he was sent to Hawai'i. He came to Hawai'i in 1920, I believe. So he was a latecomer, you know.

MK: And where in Hawai'i was he sent?

YF: And so he was, of course, at the main temple on Pali Highway originally and I think he taught at the school. But then he was transferred to Pa'uwela Hongwanji.

MK: And your mother, what was her name?

YF: Her name was Aiko Furukawa and she came from Toyama prefecture. Her dad was, well, we were told that he was a masseur, you know. But later on we found out that in Toyama, the so-called masseur was a kind of a paramedic kind of a person who had certain talents, you might say, or skills, in medical practices. But we think he was more a pharmacist, you know, a pharmacist who used to do masseur work as well. And so he wasn't just a simple masseur but he had certain credentials in pharmacy. And he and his wife, with their only child, who was my mother, Aiko, came to Hawai'i in 1907 or 1908 around that time. And they went to Kaua'i. They lived in Hanamā'ulu. So we met the family, a few years back, who were neighbors, you know, of that family. And we were told that that person knew my mother as she was going up. She was an only child and maybe kind of spoiled, too. They remember her, that she had a big pet dog and so on.

MK: And what do you remember about your mother's education?

YF: Yeah, so she was four years of age when she came to Hawai'i and so she went through the public school system. And I'm not sure how they did it, but she chose to go into teaching. So she went to Normal School. And I always like to believe that when a person was ready for high school, it was either high school or if they chose to go to Normal School. In other words before high school, they would choose. But I'm not sure about that. It might be after high school that they, you know, go to education as it is now. But I'm not certain. But anyway she came out to Honolulu and attended Normal School. And while she was attending school, she stayed at the Hongwanji [Mission] dormitory and

served as a housemother, you might say. And so the connection with the Hongwanji was very, very early.

MK: And then after she graduated from the Normal School, did she pursue a career in teaching?

YF: Well she wanted to but because she was an alien – you know she was four when she came so basically an alien – she was not permitted to teach. I guess there must have been some kind of law, you know. And so she, I think, went on to commercial college or something, you know, to learn secretarial skills. And maybe that's where she learned typing and stuff like that.

MK: And I know that your parents were married when your mother was about twenty.

YF: That's right.

MK: What have you heard about how they met?

YF: Well, she was at the Hongwanji as the housemother, you know, at dormitory, girls' dormitory. And so Dad came to Hawai'i at – he was in his thirties already. But he was thirty-five and Mother was twenty when they got married. So there's a fifteen-year difference. But she was there and it must have been a kind of a *shimpai* [arranged marriage] kind of a deal where they wanted to marry this minister, single minister, getting on in his age. Yeah. He's getting older so they said, "How about it?" (Chuckles) So I guess that's the way they got married.

MK: And how many children eventually came to the couple?

YF: Yeah. And so they got married and went on to Pa'uwela. And seven of us were born in Pa'uwela.

WN: I was wondering your mother was staying as a housemother at Hongwanji dorm. So she was Buddhist, raised Buddhist?

YF: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Did she ever tell you, you know, what that was like? Were they very strong Buddhists?

YF: Mmm, I'm not sure whether she was a very strong Buddhist or not but it seems the people from Toyama – in fact there are a lot of her relatives who were here at that time already, you know, and they're not all Hongwanji Buddhists either. I mean, we have some pretty strong Methodists, Christians, you know, in the family. And so they belong to Harris Memorial [a Methodist church], for instance. That is the

Oyama family and so on. But well, it just so happened that Mother's folks belonged to a Buddhist temple so it wasn't, I mean, the emphasis wasn't on a person's religion. They were what they wanted to be, you might say.

MK: And you know, your mother being practically nisei.

YF: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: Because she came so young.

YF: Right.

MK: From your vantage point as a child, what did you notice about the relationship between a nisei mother and an issei father?

YF: Well, in our family, because Dad spoke only Japanese and Mother was bilingual, we gravitated towards Mother, you know, all the time. We hardly went to Dad. And so we found it more comfortable and, of course, we were, you might say, we had the advantage of an English[-language] upbringing, you might say.

MK: And as you say, "an English upbringing," in terms of being Japanese or being American, how did that combination of parents affect your sense of being a Japanese American?

YF: Yeah. In some respects, as I look back, you know, I was not very conscious of any difference in our being Japanese or American or whatever. At Pa'uwela for instance, Mother used to be very good in relating to people of different races. And so we remember the Inciong family, (chuckles) for instance, in Ha'ikü, who used to join their friends who were members of the Pa'uwela Hongwanji in youth activities and things like that. And Mother made them feel very comfortable. And so, I guess, we learned from that, too. That, you know, we might look different but we're the same, that kind of attitude.

MK: And I know you mentioned that seven children were born in Pa'uwela.

YF: Mm-hmm [yes]. And another was born later in Toyama. Within a period of twelve years, I think eight of us were born. (Chuckles) So anyway, after the seventh, I think Dad got instructions to move out to Honolulu. And so they decided, okay then, they'll move out. And at the same time, Mother decided to take the three youngest ones, yeah, the three youngest kids to Japan, you know, to visit, I guess, her home. And so I think it was in 1934, around that time, that she left. And when they came back, there were four, four

children. (Chuckles) One was born in Toyama. So there are eight kids.

MK: So in terms of citizenship, what citizenship did all of the children in the Fujitani family have?

YF: Yeah, well, we're all Americans, of course, you know, we're all born here. And even the eighth, I guess she was registered at the consulate, the embassy. And so there was no problem with that. We're all Americans. But at the same we had been registered, maybe not all of us, but some of us. Certainly, the older ones had dual citizenship.

MK: How about in your case?

YF: Yeah, I had dual citizenship.

MK: And what number child are you?

YF: I was the second.

MK: And you know, you mentioned a little bit about Pa'uwela, where is it located?

YF: You know Maui looks like a man sort of bent over. So on the body side, Pa'uwela is near that hump. And there's a lighthouse there. That's Pa'uwela lighthouse. And it's just up country from that, just about a mile or so. That's Pa'uwela. And a couple of miles further up country from there is Ha'ikü, which is more well known. But that area, Ha'ikü, Pa'uwela, and the other town, Kui'aha, also known as Libby's, were three pineapple growing and processing communities. And Ha'ikü was Maui Pine[apple Company], I think that was Dole [Hawaiian Pineapple Company]. And Kui'aha was Libby's [Libby, McNeill & Libby]. And Pa'uwela we don't know about. I have no idea what it was. [The Libby, McNeill & Libby cannery was once located at Pa'uwela.]

MK: And from your memory, what sorts of people lived there?

YF: Yeah, I guess most of us, I think, were Japanese. But there were a lot of Filipinos, also. In fact, our neighbor was a Filipino family. I forgot his name already. A lot of people from Okinawa, you know, among the Japanese.

MK: And in terms of their work, what were most people doing?

YF: Most of them worked on the plantation, pineapple fields. It was fieldwork or cannery work. But I guess, we didn't have enough people there because every year, during the summer, when the canneries were being operated, a lot of young

girls from Hilo used to come and stay at the dormitories and work in the canneries. And they used to come down to Pa'uwela, you know, on Sundays. And so we got to know some people from the Big Island then.

MK: You know when you mentioned they stayed in the dormitories, where would they stay?

YF: Yeah, they had built dormitories just for that purpose, you know, to take care of the seasonal workers.

MK: And when you say they would come down to Pa'uwela . . .

YF: Yeah, well, the dormitories were up in the Ha'ikü area, which is uphill. And so it's a couple of miles walk down to Pa'uwela but they used to come down.

MK: Was there sort of like a town area where businesses . . .

YF: Yeah, very, very small business, small town, you might say. Few establishments. Well, even in Pa'uwela, it's just one street. And on one side, the ocean side, there was a dairy. The Hiromoto family run a dairy. And on the upper side, there was a Hawaiian church. I think it was a Catholic church. And then a few stores. There was a barbershop that I used to go to. There was a garage that was opened for movies once a week or something like that. (Chuckles) Very simple town, that was Pa'uwela.

But in Ha'ikü, yeah, there were a few, a little bit more stores and so on. There was a Shinyama Restaurant I remember. There was a gulch near the cannery. And on the other side of the gulch was another row of homes and stores. There was a Nishikida Store that I remember. So anyway, these were very small towns and, you know, they're sort of spread out a little bit.

MK: You know, you mentioned . . .

YF: Plantation town.

MK: You mentioned that there was a Hawaiian church.

YF: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: Maybe a Catholic church.

YF: Yeah.

MK: Were there other churches and temples in that vicinity?

YF: That's the only other one besides the Buddhist temple. The thing that I remember is our, the Hongwanji temple looked exactly like that Hawaiian temple. And so it had a nickname. You know, they pointed to the Hongwanji temple and said, "Oh, that's fashioned after a Hawaiian temple." You know, it was just a simple building with a steeple, you know, which is what those churches looked like. And the Hongwanji had one exactly like that. (Chuckles)

MK: As a child, was there any curiosity on your part about the Hawaiian church?

YF: Hardly. I wasn't interested in things like that at all. I probably wasn't interested in our own church (chuckles) either. Yeah.

MK: Well, having said that, what do you remember about your father's and mother's work with the temple?

YF: Yeah, it was a plantation community, you might say. And one thing I remember, both of them were very compassionate, you might say, in bringing into our family, orphans. There was a Nakagawa family, there were three kids and they were orphans. And they stayed with us for many years, I remember. And there were a couple of others. One was a fellow named Abe. He was a juvenile delinquent (chuckles) and so he was brought in. Another was a young girl, you know, but she was having some problems, too. So anyway, she stayed with us for a while. So I remember our life always having these foster brothers, sisters, you know. So that was part of their social work, you might say. But they were always busy helping the people in the community. Dad was about forty when I remember—you know, he got married at thirty-five, I mentioned. But I was born about a couple of years later. So, when I was about four or five I remember Dad doing sumo, you know, with the young guys. So he must have been in his forties and these kids are, you know, younger and stronger. And I thought, wow, he must have had a lot of stamina, and all that at that age. But in school, I remember, he told us that he had judo and, you know, not very high rank. Maybe *shodan* [lowest grade of the senior class in judo] or something like that. And in school, they used to do sumo. So, I guess it was an extension of that kind of activity with the young people in the community.

MK: You know, when I think about Buddhist temples nowadays, I think about Buddhist Sunday schools, *Obon* [the Lantern Festival, Buddhist All Souls' Day], the ministers doing the funerals and weddings. In those days, what sorts of things fell in your dad's responsibilities?

YF: Yeah, I remember there were a lot of group activities. You know, the YBA [Young Buddhist Association] was a very important activity. And I think Dad, although he was the minister, I think he served as president of the Pa'uwela YBA for a while, YMBA [Young Men's Buddhist Association], for a while. But it was important so there was a building built called the YBA hall, YMBA hall. Yeah, that was built later, but I think it was destroyed first besides the other building. The other buildings were the temple and there was the minister's residence next door. And then beyond that, we had a language school, maybe about five hundred yards east of that area. But I think the original buildings are all gone now. There's nothing there. But the idea of the YBA hall being there meant, you know, these youth activities were considered important. Because I don't remember Dad doing many weddings, but he must have had a few. But he did a lot of funerals. I remember a lot of funerals going on. One such funeral, I remember, was when a bunch of us went down to the ocean, you know, and a service was held in absentia, you might say, because it was reported that one of the members was eaten by a tiger shark (chuckles) out there in the ocean. And so we had a memorial service out there. I was a young kid then but I remember that. And so there were activities, even those days.

MK: What do you remember of times like *Obon*?

YF: Yeah, *Obon* was always very popular, just as it is now in the yard. We had a fairly large yard and rather level, maybe slightly sloping. But that was the area where the *Obon* dance, *Bon* dances were held, you know with the *yagura* [tower] and lighted up. And they were quite popular. See, that's when the girls from Hilo were, you know, working in the canneries. So they made the place a little bit more festive.

MK: And then those days were there different sorts of foods served at *Obon*?

YF: That, I don't remember at all. Maybe we didn't have anything. It was just dancing. And if any food was served, it would have been for the visiting dancers or something like that. Not as it is now where they have booths selling all kinds of things.

WN: So the booths is a relatively recent thing?

YF: It seems so, yeah. And besides, yeah, it sort of changed in significance, you might say. It's not only a Buddhist activity anymore. I mean, the entire community is involved in the *Bon* dance, you know. And new things have been added. For instance, the Tendai Bishop Ara started the *törö*

nagashi [lantern offering on the water] in Ala Wai Canal, for instance. I mean, that's a new twist.

WN: So in those days, the *Bon* dances were attended primarily or exclusively by Buddhists?

YF: Mostly by Buddhist, I suppose. If anything, you might say, it was a youth activity. (Chuckles) I mean a lot of young people.

WN: So they weren't necessarily Buddhist?

YF: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WN: So it was, in essence, sort of open . . .

YF: Yeah.

WN: . . . if people want to come.

YF: Right, right. Yeah. That was one of the highlights, you might say, of summer, you know. Yeah.

WN: You mean the dances or the girls?

YF: Both.

(Laughter)

YF: You have to remember I was only twelve years of age when I left Pa'uwela, you see, so I wasn't interested in girls then, I think.

MK: But it was still festive?

YF: Oh, yeah.

MK: And also I'm wondering, in those days, as you mentioned, your mom and dad were sort of like social workers. You know, taking in kids who needed, you know . . .

YF: Yeah, yeah.

MK: . . . a family, a home. What else did your mom, you know, take as a responsibility, being the wife of a minister?

YF: Yeah. I guess there might have been a dual purpose in operating a language school. One is to, maybe, to perpetuate the language or culture through language. But I think it was a kind of a moneymaker, to sustain the temple. But of course, the community was involved, too, you know, so. In that area, we had the Hongwanji school, language

school, but there were many who were not Buddhist and so they wanted their own language school. And I remember there was a Rev. [T.] Kono of the Christian church in Ha'ikū. And he had his own language school. And we call it something like independent [Japanese-language school] or *dokuritsu Nihongo gakkō* something like that. So even very early, it was not a monolithic kind of community, you know. You had different groups, yeah.

MK: And you know in this community, as you mentioned, you were there only till you were about twelve years old. What do you remember about your own childhood activities?

YF: What I remember, yeah. I was trying to think is there anything positive I can mention, (chuckles) you know. But I guess we remember only the negatives, you might say. Maybe that's not really negative. But what I remember was that I gave Mother a lot of headaches because I was getting into all kinds of fixes, you know. You know, you've seen these water tanks. They're usually on stilts and maybe you see that in western movies and things like that, but that's what we used to have, these water tanks. And the one in our yard was accessible, I mean there's a ladder that went up the side. And it seems I got up there, I don't know how old I was, about three or four maybe, and I had climbed up there and I couldn't come down, you know, that kind of thing. So I still don't know how I got down, but I must have.

Oh, when they were building that YBA hall, these high horses, you know, paint horses were left. And I had climbed up one of these horses and I fell from it. And I guess I had a sprained ankle or something like that.

What else? Oh, on the language school *lanai* [porch, veranda], I was riding a tricycle and I rolled down the steps and then landed on my head, leaving a big scar (chuckles), you know, on the metal grate. So it's kind of a right angle kind of scar right on my head.

(Laughter)

Things like that, this was all before age twelve, of course. So well, I just gave Mother a lot of heartache, I guess.

But I remember also, we had that Hiramoto Dairy next door and they had a very tame mare and its name was Mary. But when she had a baby, this colt was given the name John or Johnny. And it was very frisky and, you know, unruly, you might say. But I wanted to ride that horse so I got on and Johnny wanted to get back to his mother and so he began to

- gallop and I hung on for dear life, I remember. And so I must have been about eleven, twelve then, you know, just before we came out [to O'ahu], because otherwise I would have been too young. But I suppose in growing up we had a lot of opportunities to experiment and try whatever we wanted to get into trouble and all that.
- MK: So the temple grounds and the neighboring area, they made up your playground?
- YF: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.
- MK: And when it came to playmates, who were most of your playmates in those days?
- YF: Yeah, there's—right across the road—there's [a] belt highway that ran all the way from Kahului, I guess, to Hana, that belt road ran right across, right in front of the temple. And later on, they moved it in the back, but at that time, it was right in front. And right across that street, road, was Ha'ikū School, the school was there. In other words, Ha'ikū School was in Pa'uwela. It wasn't up-country. But across from the school, on the other side, was the Hamada Store. I think that name should ring a bell, you know, Hamada, Mr. Hamada, Itsuo Hamada. But he was *shibai* [dramatic performance] man and *benshi* [movie "talker"] and, you know, stuff in the arts, you might say. But a relative of the Hamadas was the Murakamis and they lived right next door to them. But they were our age so, well, they were some of our playmates. But also down the other side on Pa'uwela, the town, we had a relative there, too, Inada family. So we're about that age, too. So those were some of our playmates.
- MK: And you know, you mentioned Ha'ikū School, I know it's a long time ago, but what do you remember about your schooling at Ha'ikū?
- YF: I guess, first grade, my first-grade teacher was Mrs. Wade and she was kind of nice. My second-grade teacher was, I think, Mrs. Andrade or something. And my third-grade teacher was Miss Watanabe. She became later Mrs. Miyamoto. But it was that teacher that I fell in love with and I used to dream about her, you know. I got up one morning crying because I just missed my teacher. And so those (chuckles) were some of my early recollections. The husband of Mrs. Wade was Mr. [Herbert] Wade. I forgot his first name though. But anyway, he was the principal and he was an Englishman, very interesting person. Every summer, he took a vacation to visit different places in the world and he'd bring back souvenirs, which he shared with the students. One, I remember, was from Portugal, he brought back some

paint, which he—I guess that's what they did there, but paint would be floated on water, and pencil would be stuck in, and then as you bring up the pencil, you manipulate it so that you can put designs on it as it comes up. You know, that kind of stuff. So I remember that, which he shared with us. So anyway, he spoke like an Englishman, he had an English accent. And another thing, he wanted to be close to the students and so, you know, he'd play with us, play basketball and things like that. But he had a wig on and so, one day, playing basketball, that wig sort of slipped. And since then, his nickname became "Hage [Baldy]."

(Laughter)

YF: Yeah, I still remember that. Yeah, he was nice man but, I guess, students are cruel aren't they?

(Laughter)

But anyway, the Wades lived right next door to the temple in the principal's home, you know. So we got know their kids, there were three of them. One was Sylvia, the older one, and then Marjorie, and then the boy's name was, well, we just called him "Sonny." But anyway, they were our neighbors. Marjorie and I were about classmates. So very early, I mean, they're more or less *haole* [Caucasian], you know. Although some said, "Well, they're not pure *haoles* because Mrs. Wade is Portuguese. (Chuckles) Do you remember that here in Hawai'i, the Portuguese never was given that status of an English Caucasian. But anyway, but they were Caucasian. And so very early on, you know, we had this kind of relationship with them. Not only with the Filipinos but with the *haoles* as well.

MK: Other than the Wades, were there other *haole* children at Ha'ikü School?

YF: Yeah, there must have been. I never got to know many of them. In the third grade, you know, we took a picture and so we might identify different ethnic groups in that picture. But, yeah, I remember there's, I don't know whether you've heard of Mildred, Mildred. . . . Anyway, she became Mildred Kim. She was a nursing, head nurse or something at Queen's, yeah. Her name was Mildred Asato and we were in the same class. That's the only person I know of right now. There are others, though, Yoshimasus, for instance.

WN: Was there a *haole* plantation elite living in Pa'uwela?

YF: Yeah. Where did they live? I guess I didn't have any interest, you know, in their culture. But all that I know

is that Pa'uwela Point, that I told you about, where we have the lighthouse, that area was a golf course. And of course, the golfers were all plantation bosses, you know, none of the managed group, you know. They were the managers. And so I guess we were conscious of that kind of division within our culture.

WN: And you said there was a Buddhist, your father's Buddhist temple, Pa'uwela. And then there was a Catholic church you said?

YF: Yeah, I'm not too sure.

WN: Oh, okay.

YF: Might have been just Hawaiian Protestant, like that. It was a Hawaiian church anyway.

MK: And you've mentioned like your first, second, third grades, what do you remember about your fourth, fifth, sixth grades?

YF: Then, we had, in the fourth grade or fifth grade around there, we had a Miss Lee was our teacher. But there was a Mr. Tom, whom I didn't have as my teacher, but one day Miss Lee became Mrs. Tom. (Chuckles) They got married. So there was romance going on in school. (MK chuckles.) We didn't, of course, care but we noticed. I forget the lady's name, our teacher's name. But around the sixth grade or so there was a *haole*, a blonde *haole* teacher who had come from the Mainland and she was pretty, you know, so we had a lot of comments about that. But she was nice, I remember. But you know, about that time, there were many teachers coming from the Mainland, especially from the East Coast. And as a kind of a proof of that, we have the sound of one word, you know, we learned to pronounce the word "ont" instead of "ant," you know, auntie, aunt, which is Bostonian or East American, Eastern Coast American sound or New York sound. Whereas in the Midwest, it becomes "anty," you know, the "ah" sound. In the East it's "au", that broad sound. Anyway, they brought that kind of influence to us. Of course, we learned Christmas carols and we had to recite the Lord's Prayer, for instance, in school. Of course, we had to be good Americans so we learned, we all recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Yeah, those things I remember.

MK: At that time, you know, coming from a Buddhist family, how did you react to being told to, you know, celebrate Christmas and saying the Lord's Prayer?

YF: Yeah, we didn't have any questions about that. That's part of our education, you know. And even today, I'm happy that

we've been exposed to many, many different elements of our culture. It's a multi-culture, you know.

MK: From your parents' perspective, what did your mother or father ever express about the children doing those things?

YF: I don't have any idea how they felt. They just rolled with whatever came, I guess. Yeah, and Mother played the piano, maybe not concert style but, you know got us singing and stuff. And so we had music in our house. And that was kind of nice. Yeah, what I'm really grateful for is the kind of exposure that we had very early. All kinds of East and West, Western culture, you know.

MK: And you know, coming from a Buddhist family, being the minister's son, how did that (chuckles) affect your life at school and among your peers?

YF: The only indication of well, our strangeness, you might say, was the people used to call me "*Botchan* [young master]" which is a kind of word of endearment, I guess, you know. But it's a term usually reserved for, well, somebody that should be treated differently, you know, that kind of thing. *Otera no botchan* [young master of the temple], yeah. So, I guess I might have internalized that as I was growing up, that we're special, you might say, you know, different. But that didn't keep me from getting into all kinds of trouble.

(Laughter)

WN: Were you held to certain standards? Did people, do you remember hearing a lot from people, "Oh, you know you're the minister's son. You have to act a certain way."

YF: Occasionally, I guess, I've heard that. Occasionally. Yeah, but, I guess, that wasn't important. And that, yeah, that's limited, you know, to our real young period, which is life in Pa'uwela because when we come out to Honolulu it's a different world, you know. Yeah, it contrasts quite a bit.

MK: What was different? You came up to Honolulu when your father was assigned to Möili'ili Hongwanji. What was this different world?

YF: Well, in Pa'uwela, you know, we're quite free and the area was large enough, (chuckles) you might say, to feel free. But once we came out to Möili'ili, you have a lot of houses, a lot of people, heavy traffic. It was a totally different kind of life. We were more prone to get into trouble, you might say. Where in Pa'uwela, although we did get into enough. I mean, [in Pa'uwela] we had a little bit

more leeway. In town, we had other things that would cause some problems for us, yeah.

(Laughter)

MK: You know, I know where Möili`ili Hongwanji is now and I know what it looks like now, but what was it like back then?

YF: Back then? Actually, the temple was facing the other way. It wasn't facing University Avenue. It was facing Kapa`akea Lane. And it was a smaller temple. And the house was large enough, you know, but yeah, to handle eight kids. But there's a small yard in the front, a wall that separated the yard from Kapa`akea Lane, the road. And across the road was the Möili`ili [Japanese-]language School. I guess that hasn't changed. It was a small, small village temple, you might say, within this compound. And what I remember vividly is, you remember the Kanazawa family? Kinji and Kanemi [Kanazawa] and others. Well, the mother used to go out to work every morning and come back in the evening, afternoon. I guess she was doing housework out there someplace. But whenever we saw her pass in front of the temple, we'd see her stop, you know, face towards the temple, bow, and then continue, both ways, you know, going and coming. And that's sort of impressed me, you know, about the devotion of this lady. And I think that sort of rubbed off on the boys, too, the Kanazawa boys. Both of them have served the community very well because of, you might say, their basic faith and regard for people and so on. But that's what I picture when I think of that old temple, you know, facing Kapa`akea Lane. It was a very small one, small temple.

MK: And in those days, what was the community like around there?

YF: Mostly Japanese but there were some Chinese. Right next to the temple was a Chinese family that used to have *kālua* pig [pig cooked in a ground oven] almost every Sunday, (chuckles) you know. So, very early in the morning, they'd be burning oil, yeah, what to do you call? Heating the rocks. And then during the day, they, I guess, stuff it and then by evening it's ready for their party. They always used to have a party there. That was right next to the temple. But Möili`ili is generally a Japanese town, yeah.

WN: I forgot to ask you, do you remember how you felt about having to move from Pa`uwela?

YF: Yeah, I guess we weren't very happy. But I remember we had to ride, get on this Inter-island [Steam Navigation Co.

Ltd.] boat and I remember that we left at night and the whole community came out—I mean, the temple community—came out to the wharf and they sang something and it was a sad kind of farewell, (chuckles) you might say. I remember that. I was twelve, you know.

MK: And what was your initial reaction to Honolulu?

YF: Well, in a way, just like, "Wow! This is a different kind of place," you know, "better get to know it a little bit more." And so it gave us a chance to, again, investigate and experiment and get into trouble and all that. I remember our folks were quite concerned about our making undesirable friends, you know. Friends are people that might get us into trouble. Of course, we didn't have that kind of thinking.

(Laughter)

WN: Yeah, what do parents know, yeah.

YF: Yeah.

WN: Shall we stop here?

MK: Shall we stop here and then we'll

WN: We're going to change tapes.

YF: Oh, okay.

MK: We're doing well. You're doing well.

WN: Bishop, before we concentrate on some questions regarding Möili'iili, we forgot to ask you about your Japanese[-language] school experiences in Pa'uwela.

YF: I remember a couple of things. One is the—I must have been very young because I was scolded and I remember that, being scolded, when we had an *engeikai*. You know the—I don't know how you translate that, *engeikai*. It's a program, entertainment program that, you know, the children put on. And when the curtain closed and, you know, we were waiting for the next program, I remember getting up on the stage and trying to attract attention. And of course, I was not supposed to be there, so.

(Laughter)

I was scolded. (Chuckles) So I remember that. That was kind of painful.

The other is, there was a person named Teruko Kawabe and she's still alive, you know. She's in her nineties now. But she was not only our babysitter, you might say, when we were small, but she was also our language-school teacher, Japanese language-school teacher. So anyway, she was devoted to people, to education, you know, the kids and so on. And so she ended up [not marrying]. She didn't get a chance to develop, you know, that kind of opportunities to get married, I think. Anyway, she's still around. But she was a local girl, learned Japanese and she taught Japanese later. And her sister was something like a business manager with the Libby's cannery, a very sharp businessperson. But she died. She's older than Teruko, but she passed away.

Anyway, the language school then was mainly the Hongwanji language school because the other one existed up in Ha'ikü. But the community being Hongwanji or Buddhist, they supported the Hongwanji Buddhist, I mean, language school much more, you might say. The one up in Ha'ikü was a smaller one. And so we had all kinds of things like that, *engeikai*, *undökai* [athletic meets], you know. There was a rather large yard and so we had races and, you know, things like that. In a way, it's very much like the way schools were in (chuckles) Japan, you know. The culture was just brought wholesale, yeah, to this small community.

WN: Was your mother teaching in the school?

YF: Yeah, Mother taught also.

WN: Did she teach you?

YF: No, I don't remember that. Maybe I just wanted to forget that. (Chuckles) Yeah, but, you know, she spoke English. She spoke Japanese. She played the piano. I mean, she was multi-talented, you might say so.

WN: I'm wondering, you know, you said that, you know, you were held up to certain standards and, you know, people called you "*Botchan*." I was wondering, was this feeling of being sort of in a fishbowl different going to English [i.e., public] school as compared to Japanese[-language] school? Did you feel more pressure or more like in fishbowl within Japanese[-language] school?

YF: Yeah, it wasn't among our peers, you know. Actually, the problem was with the older people, the parents, you might say, who expected us to be maybe different or whatever. And so in school or even in language school, it didn't matter. It's just out there that the older folks made a lot of fuss over us.

WN: And of the two, Japanese[-language] school and English school, what did you enjoy more?

YF: I'm not sure. I guess there a lot of things going on in English school like the May Day program for instance. I mean, we got May Day dance and so on. There were activities and they were right in our vicinity. I mean, you have the temple here, the school is over there, Japanese[-language] school is over here and so just like it's within our family circle, you know. And on Sundays, for instance, the older people come make a lot of fuss about preparing food and things like that for occasions. I remember it as a very happy kind of atmosphere within school, language school or temple.

But, you know, I have something in, I've had this in my mind for so long, a very negative thing that I think has played some role in my life. And that is, it must have been in about fifth, sixth grade level, when we had an art contest and I had found an earlier student's work in our house, somehow it was there. And so I copied that and submitted it as mine. And so the teacher was very impressed and she wanted then me to continue in the art program and she asked me to paint or draw, you know, something else and I couldn't, you know because I really (chuckles) didn't have any talent. So I cheated and that cheating caused me to feel, not only bad but sort of immobilized, you know, I really don't have any talent (chuckles) kind of feeling. And that's been bothering me all my life, you know, since those early days. Yeah, having cheated on an occasion that has bugged me all the time. So anyway, that belongs to that period in Pa'uwela.

WN: How would you evaluate yourself as a student in both English school and Japanese[-language] school?

YF: I would say as a student who studies, I wasn't very good. I didn't like to study but I was able to get along, you know, when you can get along without applying yourself, that really, that's debilitating actually (chuckles) because the only way you can go is down. You can get along and so you're doing minimum work and so on.

WN: Is this in both Japanese[-language] and English school?

YF: Yeah. So I always feel that, "I wish I had studied a little harder," you know that kind of thing. But all along, maybe because of that art thing, I kind of felt, "Oh, *chee*, I can't do it anyway," you know, that kind of negative feeling. Yeah, it was kind of interesting thinking about it.

MK: You know in Japanese[-language] studies, how did you fare?

YF: I guess I fared fairly, I guess. (Chuckles) Yeah, I guess I could have learned more if I had applied myself a little bit more, you know, but I got along. I just got along.

MK: How about your attitude back then towards something like *shūshin* in the Japanese[-language] school?

YF: We had that *shūshin* [morals, ethics] pounded in our heads, yeah. So we remember quite well reading stories about Abraham Lincoln and his perseverance and [George] Washington's honesty and so on, you know. And so I think what we might call moral training now or values training and stuff, that's kind of important I think. But again, some people are against that sort of thing because they feel it leads to brainwashing and nationalism, for instance, and other things that would get us into trouble. But I don't know, the values are, I think, very important.

MK: And you know, when you say that stories about Abraham Lincoln and Washington were sort of pounded into your brain.

YF: Mm-hmm.

MK: Was that in English public school or Japanese-language school?

YF: In both, yeah, I remember both. Yeah, Washington and Lincoln appear in the *shūshin* books, you know, alongside people like Ninomiya Kinjiro and so on, Japanese heroes. But in our public schools, also, we had values training, I guess, maybe more Christian stuff.

MK: To what extent did those values kind of stay with you or escape you? (Chuckles)

YF: Yeah, we questioned some, you know, as we go along we experience life and, well, what is important? Even in questions like the abortion problem or the same-gender issue or stuff, there's no clear-cut answer. Even this Terri Schiavo incident, for instance. And so in a way, you know, in my case, I think it's more a kind of relativism rather than black and white, thing, you know. But I think with some thought, there can be some kind of acceptable solution, you know, for problems. But I think thinking about these things are important. And I'm glad, for instance, that Bill Bennett, for instance, there's an article about his radio program, you know, was it Bill or William [J.] Bennett? The fellow that wrote the book on

ethics or values [*The Book of Virtues*]. But he has a radio program and he engages callers, you know, in conversation and there was a good article about him in today's paper. So I think it's good that we do have some thought given to values. You know, we talk about courage, bravery, loyalty, and you know, like being a good samurai, for instance. Well I guess that kind of emphasis would change as we move along, you know. But during our upbringing, those values were very important. The stoicism, patience, you know, these might seem kind of strange nowadays but, you know, young people don't think that way.

WN: Things like stoicism and patience, is that something learned? I mean, is that something that you read about in the *shūshin* books or is it more parents?

YF: Yeah, both, I guess, yeah. But we weren't familiar with that kind of term like stoicism, you know, but patience. Yeah, I guess we had a lot of it from parents, yeah.

MK: Would you get it from the parents in terminology like *gaman* [patience, perservance]?

YF: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MK: Or *shikata ga nai*? [It can't be helped.]

YF: Yeah, yeah, those were present. How do we pass on these traits, these values, to young people? Is it through words or concepts or behavior or whatever? But when we were growing up, you know, we were told that a lot. The community, they say, the village took care of everyone. And so, actually it was so that if you messed up in school, for instance, you got scolding from the teacher, the principal, and then when you got home, then, you got it from your folks again. In other words, everybody was looking after you. But nowadays, you don't have that, you know. So we were taught not only through precepts but actually by example and the involvement of many people. Nowadays, we're sort of isolated (chuckles), I think, yeah.

WN: But back then, you didn't think of being looked after by all these people as being a good thing?

YF: Yeah, gee, *urusai* [annoying, irksome], we used to think.

(Laughter)

MK: Well, let's bring you back to Möili'ili, then. You moved from a small community in Pa'uwela, to the city of Honolulu, residing in Möili'ili. You talked a little bit about Mrs. Kanazawa [and] your Chinese neighbor next door.

What else do you remember about the Möili`ili community that you folks became a part of?

YF: We got to meet more people close hand. So even in this Kapa`akea Lane area, we got to know people. We had a lot of classmates, people that we were in Boy Scouts together and so on. So suddenly from a rather isolated place where we had a lot of space, we weren't pressed to do much, suddenly we're in a very active beehive-like atmosphere, where you have to interact with a lot of people. And so the move to Möili`ili sort of seemed to have given us a little bit more pressure, you might say. I was in the seventh grade and so I went to Washington Intermediate. In a way, you know, I was a year younger than my classmates so I've always had that feeling that, "Well, I'm not as old as they are. I don't know as much as they do," you know. That kind of feeling, I think, was always there.

But anyway, one of the things that I experienced at Washington Intermediate was to be hijacked, you know. A guy came up and said, "Give me a nickel," or whatever, you know. And so I gave it to him but I didn't think that was right, you know, to be hijacked that way. And so I reported that to the teacher and so the teacher called out the kid and he was ordered to give the money back to me. And the thing is, I received the money but then I said, "Chee, I wonder, this kid might need it more than I do." (Chuckles) And so I gave it back to him. But, you know, that kind (chuckles) of new experience, I mean, it never happened to me before and I didn't know how to behave actually. But anyway, that was one experience that I can't forget.

Then, there's some kids living around that area that we grew up with, you know, on Hausten Street, which is next to Kapa`akea Lane. In between was the language school. We grew up with many of them. There was a Nekota Store and then there was a Yamada Barbershop and the Suehiro—I guess it was a jewelry shop. Upstairs was a dentist. In the next building was the Watanabe Store and then the street, Hausten. And so these places were very familiar to me. And so we did a lot of things in that area but also in the temple area, too.

And one thing that I can't forget is, it was some Sunday evening, I guess, they were having a service upstairs and a couple of us had built a tent next door, next to this temple and the wall on the other side, a fence on the other side. We had it covered and we were playing with fire, you know. And then it got out of control and then there was a big fire and a lot of commotion (chuckles) because the service was going upstairs and everybody came running down. And that's when I was told, "You have to watch," you know,

"what kind of friends you have because these guys are going to get into trouble." Well, I wasn't thinking about that. I mean, we were good friends, you know, and we're enjoying a campout. So I think I was about twelve years old then, you know, just having come out from the country. So I continued in this kind of experimentation, (chuckles) you might say, growing up. But we had a lot of fun.

A couple of streets over was Coolidge Street and further down was a Chinese taro patch and we used to go visit the taro patch just to take a shortcut, you know. And whenever the Chinese farmer was there, I mean, he'd chase us away yelling something in Chinese and swinging his hoe and all that. So we remember things like that, too.

WN: Was the taro patch on Coolidge?

YF: It was, yeah. There was a lot of water, it seems, around in that area. You know Willows [Restaurant], which is on Hausten. While we were there, I don't know when it was, but suddenly all the water in Willows disappeared. And there it was out in King Street, right where the Kinko's is now, that area, that place used to be a coral bed. And somehow, I don't know how it was but somebody dug a hole there and found that under there was a pond. The water from Willows had all flowed to there, I mean, they're connected. And there were a lot of fish in there and they were blind. So anyway there's that building by Hausten, it's called Blindfish Tank, or something like that. Yes, it's named after those blind fish. So anyway, the whole place was connected. There was water underneath this coral bed. And so also further down Coolidge was that kind of water—what do you call?—ponds out there, too.

And when we were on Hausten Street, there was a fellow named Kato. Oh, what was his name? It was Kenneth Kato, who was a few years older than us but he was the one who got us to build a *totan* [galvanized iron sheet], you know that roof, *totan* boat. We just folded the *totan* up and nailed the thing and tarred it and it was able to float, you know. Anyway, we took that down to Ala Wai Canal and we got on it and rowed across the canal to Ala Wai Boulevard. But somehow it, we didn't know what to do with it once we got across there. (Chuckles) And so we finally came back and we abandoned that program. But we wanted to go across the river, I mean the canal, and onto Waikiki and go visit the zoo or go swim or whatever. And so the next plan was, "Okay, let's tie up our clothes and put it on our head and then swim across." And so there were three or four of us, so we did that. And then getting onto the other side, put on our clothes, and visit the zoo. It was nothing like, you

know, we didn't think it was far but now I don't know whether I'd like to do that. I mean . . .

(Laughter)

. . . seems to me, it's kind of far out there.

WN: In those days, how did you get across, other than swimming and going on the boat, how did people go across? Was it only the McCully bridge?

YF: Yeah, yeah. That was the only way.

WN: And then Kapahulu.

YF: We got Kapahulu, I think, that's right. So growing up in Möili'ili, you know, that was, you know.

WN: And I've heard about *totan* boats but, okay, so the bottom of it was made of *totan*?

YF: Yeah, yeah.

WN: But did you put anything?

YF: Oh, no, no, no. It's just a simple skiff, you know, you just get on and row.

WN: So you're actually just on the *totan*?

YF: Yeah. But we had—what do you call—an outrigger, you know, otherwise it's pretty shaky, yeah.

WN: What did you use to make the outrigger?

YF: Just—what do you call—logs, I guess. Small logs over and then a piece like that.

WN: How did you fasten it to the *totan*?

YF: Nails and ropes, I guess. Yeah, so it's a boat like this and then there's a bar, you know, to give us the width. So there's that board and then it was on that board that we put the bar. Yeah.

MK: Seems a lot of work. (Chuckles)

YF: I guess we had a lot of time (WN and MK chuckle) but, you know. But anyway this Kato fellow, later on, became an engineer, you know. He has that kind of predilection, I guess. And we were younger so we followed him. That was part of growing up in Möili'ili.

WN: How did you learn to swim?

YF: I remember it was rather late, you know, because in Pa'uwela we tried swimming in ponds but there wasn't really enough space, you might say, to swim in these small ponds. So I wasn't sure whether I was able to swim or not. But when we came out to Honolulu, I remember very clearly how I learned how to float. We went out to where 'Ilikai is now. There was nothing there, you know, there was a pier going out, a concrete pier, I guess. And around there was all very shallow. And I thought I'd learn how to swim then to be sure that I knew what I was doing. So I just put my face down, I mean, my whole body down in the water and I sank all the way, I mean, it's not too deep, yet. And then gradually I began to float up. And that's when I decided, "Wow! I can float." (MK chuckles.) And then beyond that was just, you know, moving your arms and splashing your legs. It was then that I realized I could swim.

WN: Well, you made it across the canal. That's pretty good.

YF: Yeah, yeah. That's how we—of course, it's, you know, dog fashion, you might say, pants and shirt tied on our head.

WN: (MK and WN chuckle.) You don't happen to have a picture of that do you? (Chuckles)

YF: No. Gee, I wish we had that.

MK: So actually even though you left sort of like a small town, rural area, to the city, you were able to really find some outdoorsy things to do.

YF: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I guess I was twelve then, you know, so I was old enough to join the Boy Scouts Troop 2. And, you know, I think my scoutmaster is still living, yet. He's a year short of a hundred. His name is Harry Yoshimura. He's ninety-nine, I think. But anyway, he was my scoutmaster and we used to meet at Mother Rice Park or, what do you call it, Mother Rice.

WN: Where the preschool is now?

YF: Yeah, yeah. Troop 2. And so I had more friends there. And I remember I wasn't happy with some of these older fellows who were supposed to be teaching us things and examining us and so on. It sort of showed how unfair I was. I expected to pass these tests even without, you know, knowing enough. And so the fellow would ask questions and I would answer and it's all wrong. And I get angry because of that and, (chuckles) you know. But I guess that was part of growing

up, too. But things had to be my way, kind of, you know, which I had to abandon after a while.

At the same time there was bunch of people at the temple who were members of the YBA. And they were people that we got to know very well. I was twelve. I remember, I don't know whether you remember the name Margaret Makino. Margaret Makino used to be the secretary of the YBA. But she was seven years older than me, I remember. I was twelve, she would have been nineteen. She became, later on, Spark Matsunaga's secretary in Washington. But she was the secretary so I remember we never, she never talked about age. She never liked to talk about age. But I figured out she was seven years older, so she was nineteen. But we had people like Mr. Yokota. And his nickname was "Yokota Fat." But anyway, he used to be a salesman at Hub's [a clothing store]. Anyway, he had a couple of daughters and a son, I think. But he was also a baseball player and he'd always be the catcher. A very good player. And the Kanazawa boys were, you know, also in the YBA. Yeah, I wish I could remember more of these names.

There was a very strong Japanese community in Möili'ili, but it was a pretty tough area. And we used to have a couple of boxers, you know, fighting. Now one was a fellow named Horie. There was another guy named Wakida. But they were, you might say, amateur fighters, and one was, you might remember Mark Murakami. Yeah.

WN: The lawyer?

YF: No, no. He was the insurance man. Anyway, that was earlier because later on he went on to the Mainland to go to school and he was caught there when the war started. So he was put into an internment camp there. But anyway, Mark was also an amateur fighter. And there was a Toshimasa Tando. I don't know whether you know, "Toya," he was called. He used to be a fighter. He was a south-paw. But yeah, our community bred that kind of culture, you might say, because it was a pretty tough area. So during those days, we used to have words like the Möili'ili gang, Kaka'ako gang, Kalihi gang, Pälama gang. I mean these were these guys that hung around together and, I guess, in some cases, caused problems.

WN: Do you consider it sort of a badge of honor to be from a place like Möili'ili?

YF: I never considered it that way, but it was nice having come from Möili'ili. It was a strong Japanese community. And another thing I remember about Möili'ili was the quarry, you know.

YF: While we were growing up, the quarry was constantly running, all day, all night. *Gata, gata, gata, gata, gata*, you know that kind of sound. And there'd be this cloud of dust over Möili'ili all the time. And so our trees, our *kiawe* [algaroba] trees, like that, would be all white, yeah. And so they used the word "quarry dust." That was the name of the newsletter of the Möili'ili Community Center, *The Quarry Dust*. Yeah, it was always present. And then, of course, they closed it down and now it's something else.

WN: Was it mostly Japanese who worked at that quarry?

YF: I'm not sure who worked there. But there was certainly a lot of Japanese businesses along King Street, the Nakamura Garage, for instance, Kunimune Store. Well, I forget these names.

WN: Kunimune became Kuni Dry Goods?

YF: Yeah, that's, yeah. Makoto and I were classmates, but I don't know who runs the Kuni Dry Goods. No Kuni Dry Goods is somebody else, I think. I think the sister's family.

MK: There actually was a store, yeah, not just a dry goods?

YF: Yeah, there was a Kunimune Store. I don't know whether it's still there or not.

MK: I know that nowadays people associate the Möili'ili area with florists.

YF: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MK: How about back in those days?

YF: Hmm, gee, I don't remember. I was kind of inattentive, I guess.

(Laughter)

WN: You mentioned certain sports, people playing sports, like boxing and so forth, were you into any sports?

YF: Well, when we first came out to Möili'ili, I went to Möili'ili language school, the Japanese[-language] school and they had these so-called martial arts, yeah. And so at that time, I took kendo and there was a *Takeda-sensei* who was a kendo teacher. Later on, [in Honolulu] I moved on to the Hongwanji. And there, I took judo, you know. Yeah. Again, I didn't last very long. I guess, maybe a year or two.

WN: You said there were a lot of toughies living in Möili'ili. How did you get along personally with them? I mean, were you accepted into the community when you moved at age twelve?

YF: Yeah, I guess I made some friends early. But I'm not sure whether they were what our folks were thinking of as "good" friends. But we didn't know the difference. Yeah. But whatever we experienced, I think, was good. We learned a lot, yeah. From mistakes, and tough times, good times, whatever.

MK: Why don't we end here, today?

(MK and WN have discussion.)

WN: I need to go, I'll see you later. She'll take you back.

YF: Okay.

MK: Okay, well let's go a little while more then, if you don't mind.

YF: Yeah. I wish I could remember a little bit more, but.

MK: No, this is good. It gives us a sense of what the community was like, yeah, when you folks moved over. And, you know, I was wondering, again, when your parents moved over to Möili'ili, what were their roles in the community?

YF: Well, Dad was the minister at the Möili'ili Hongwanji. And, as a kind of, maybe, senior minister, he was also like an advisor to the bishop. So although he was at Möili'ili, he had some responsibility at the headquarters. And that was from about [19]35 on to [19]41, you know, when the war started. So it was just a continuation of pastoral work, you might say. Taking care of the community.

MK: And was he also active in the Japanese-language school?

YF: No, no. Here, he didn't have that responsibility. Language school was separate. And, so, Mother didn't have any such responsibility either. So just taking care of the temple and being, you might say, a leader of the women's group.

MK: So she was active in the *fujinkai* [women's group].

YF: Yeah, she was active.

MK: And, here in Möili'ili, were there times when they still continued their sort of foster parent role?

YF: No, we didn't have any people like that in that kind of situation. But we had people staying at the temple. Those attending University [of Hawai'i], for instance. So they were permitted to stay, using the place as a lodging, you know. So we know some people like that.

MK: So the temple had like dormitory?

YF: No. Just a small room, I remember, beneath the temple. And so people stayed there one at a time, I might say. Yeah, so I'm not too sure. I guess I was just oblivious to what our folks were doing. But I was growing up then, from seventh grade and then on to—from Washington Intermediate to McKinley High School.

MK: And then also, by the time you came to Möili'ili, you're twelve years old, and getting older, your father has his responsibilities at the temple. Were any of those minister-type responsibilities put upon you?

YF: No. No, he didn't even suggest that, you know, I'd be helping with the temple or anything like that. I remember my friend Roland Tatsuguchi at the Shinshu Kyokai. He wanted his son to be the minister. So he took him around to all kinds of things. They did things together, and so on. But the son finally rebelled (chuckles) and he just refused to do that. So Roland was all by himself. But I think Roland himself joined his father in, you know, learning about the temple and so on. But in my case, I was completely left alone. So there was no such expectation.

MK: And we started talking a little bit about Washington Intermediate School.

YF: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: Besides being hijacked, what other experiences stay in your mind about being at Washington?

YF: Well, we used to walk to school, you know, from Möili'ili, Kapa'akea Lane. We walked past the [Honolulu] Stadium, which was there. And just on the side was [Makahiki Way], I guess. So turn left [at Makahiki], next street is Algaroba. And from Algaroba, straight down to Lökahi, which is Washington Intermediate School. So that was our route going to school. And from there, though, I guess I started going to Hongwanji. So I think we used to take the bus, jitney, or whatever they call it. Large limousine that packed a lot of kids. So from there, we used to ride to Pali Highway, Fort Street. I think it cost us five cents for that ride.

MK: So those days, your intermediate school days were kind of long, then?

YF: Seven, eight, nine [grades], yeah. Those were intermediate school. And then we went on to McKinley from ten, eleven, twelve.

MK: So in terms of your daily routine, you would walk . . .

YF: Oh, yeah.

MK: . . . to Washington Intermediate, have your school day, and from there, take a jitney up to Pali to go to Japanese-language school.

YF: Right, yeah, yeah. Yeah, and on the way home, I think we took the streetcar.

MK: And at Washington, what do you remember about the teachers?

YF: Yeah, our principal was a Mr. [Frederick] Clowes, I remember. But I don't remember too much about the other teachers. And I attribute that to a kind of cloud, you might say, in my mind about things happening. To move from the country to this very busy place. Being preoccupied with a lot of things happening. My not remembering our teachers' names, for instance, is simply evidence that I didn't care, you know, about school, or teachers, or whatever.

So I don't remember too much about my seventh, eighth, ninth grade, except that I took music. And of all things, I don't know why, but I chose the violin. Now, guys don't take violin, you know. But somebody must have put something in my ear for me to try that. But, having chosen the violin, it didn't last very long because soon I broke my wrist. I fell down and slid down something that I thought was firm enough. So I fell, and broke my hand, wrist, so I couldn't play. I think it was my left wrist. And so in music, the teacher said, "Well, you can play the drum." (Chuckles) And so that year, I played the drum. Never learned the violin.

(Laughter)

And I insisted I was beating it in time, but the teacher says, "No, you're off time." Just the simple beat, you know (chuckles). Oh my goodness, what kind of musician am I? So anyway, I remember that kind of humiliating music career that I had in school.

MK: In terms of intermediate school years, then, because of the move, those years have been kind of . . .

YF: Yeah, I was sort of disorganized and disoriented, you might say.

MK: I think I'm going to end the interview here, and then we'll continue with McKinley . . .

YF: Okay.

MK: . . . at the next session.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 44-34-2-05 and 44-35-2-05

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yoshiaki Fujitani (YF)

Mānoa, O'ahu

April 22, 2005

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

MK: Okay, this is our second session with Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani on April. . . .

WN: Twenty-second.

MK: . . . 22, 2005, and the interviewers are Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto.

And at the end of our last session, we had gotten you graduated from Washington Intermediate . . .

YF: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: . . . and had moved you on to McKinley High School. And I'm wondering, at McKinley High School, what do you remember most about your teachers?

YF: Yeah. Of course, I think it's very well known that we did have a Dr. Miles E. Cary, who was quite an educator, but I think he was a humanitarian, as well. Because when the war broke out, by the way, he volunteered to serve in the relocation center somewhere to serve as an educator. So, anyway, he was that kind of person. But I think those of us who came under Miles E. Cary's influence, I think, were

very fortunate. He was the one who insisted that we all learn democracy. And by "democracy," he meant it's a kind of participatory democracy. I mean, you have to be involved in things. And so, he's the number one man that we remember. But under his tutelage, you know, we had things like the homeroom where we all gathered first and got the news for the day, and then went on to other classes, for instance. But we were all assigned certain tasks. And so you had your homeroom chairperson, or homeroom secretary, or you were club president, or whatever officer. And these things were all listed in our annual. So that gave the person a sense of pride, you might say, that, well, we did something in school, that kind of feeling. So I think there were a lot of psychology methods used, but that educational process that we underwent, I think, was excellent.

Aside from Dr. Miles E. Cary, our principal, I remember our teachers. My sophomore teacher was—I think her name was Ruth Gantt, G-A-N-T-T, whose husband was a dairyman, but she was a teacher. Very sensitive, very bright, so I remember her very well. She was our sophomore teacher.

My junior class teacher was Archie Jackson. I wasn't very close to him. I mean, I didn't really care for him. But you know, he had another brother also in school, as a teacher. Also Jackson, but I forget the first name.

My senior class teacher was someone whose name I have already forgotten. It'll come back sometime. You're dealing with a senior person with senior moments.

(Laughter)

And also, I had a speech teacher whose name was Mrs. Spalding. And I remember her because she got us to memorize a lot of speeches and things like that, you know. Like the Gettysburg Address, for instance, and so on. And she was one who encouraged me by saying, "Whatever you do, use your voice," she said. So that, to me, I took that to mean that oh, maybe I have a pretty good voice so I better use it. You know, that sort of thing, that kind of encouragement that she gave.

So my high school experience, generally, was a very positive one. I really enjoyed school. Enjoyed doing a lot of things, including ROTC [Reserve Officer's Training Corps], for instance. Well, except, now, in my senior year, I found out I had a deficiency. I was half a point or half a credit short or something, you know. And that was pointed out to me, so I had to go back to take a course during the summer in order to graduate. And that course was the speech

course with Mrs. Spalding. So that was something that I thought [was] time well spent. But anyway, we graduated.

MK: You know, you mentioned that you were involved in ROTC at McKinley.

YF: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: Was that a mandatory?

YF: Yeah, yeah. At that time, I think it was compulsory, you know. If you didn't take ROTC, then you had to take phys ed. or something like that. It was, well, mind and body kind of training purposes, I suppose. But most of us enjoyed ROTC. Being in uniform and acting smart, and all that.

MK: What were the requirements of ROTC?

YF: Well, we had drills. And, of course, every morning we'd have inspection, you know. So I guess we were being taught many things by that. Being meticulous in things we do, being clean, and so on. Being orderly. But we took it for three years, you know, in high school. So in the sophomore year, we were all buck privates, you might say. Then, in our junior year, we were non-coms. And then in our senior year, we were commissioned officers, cadet commission officers. See, but I was a year younger than my classmates. So where my classmates were captains and majors, you know, I was a second lieutenant. And, well, that didn't do very much for my self-confidence. But, I figured, well, they're a year older than I am, so it's okay.

MK: And then you had mentioned that Miles Cary sort of instilled the ideals of democracy at McKinley.

YF: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: How did he do that?

YF: I suppose he made a lot of opportunities for the students to participate. And so even in club activities, you know, there was the McKinley Civic Club, I think. Or there was a Torch Society, which was a kind of a science—oh, no. Science was something Jaggar Club. There was Dr. Jaggar. And there were clubs like that, that we all felt was good to be a part of. And then there was the National Honor Society, for instance. Some kids were elected into the club in their junior year. Others, in senior year. But that sort of built that confidence, you might say, or kind of a pride.

MK: And I think you mentioned that you were involved with the *Daily Pinion*?

YF: (Chuckles) Yeah. Yeah, that was part of the course, I guess. But I was one of the typists in our *Daily Pinion* class, whereas our editor-in-chief that year was Amy Hironaka Shigezawa. And she's still around, and she's writing. For instance, she recently wrote a book about the *Päkē* Patch in the Mōili'ili area. But Hilda Morita was our managing editor, Richard Ando was our sports editor. These are the guys I remember, but. I know there was a Sylvia Zane who was the chief typist. And under her, there was Richard Kaneko and myself. And so—I sort of seem to remember this—but our pictures appear in the annual, that's why I remember it (chuckles). I can't even remember the name of the teacher, was it Sisson, or something like that? But the *Daily Pinion*, of course, was the only daily high school newspaper in the state, and they take very great pride in that fact. In the publication area, there was also *Black and Gold*, which was our annual. And, of course, in our senior year, we knew the editors. They all did very good jobs, yeah. I think our annual has won prizes quite often.

MK: And, during the years that you were going to McKinley High School, were you also continuing with your Japanese-language studies?

YF: Yeah, we went to Japanese-language school. And, of course, that was in the afternoon. And from McKinley, we used to take the jitney, or whatever. It's an elongated bus—what do you call?—a car, that carried a few of us. And I think it cost us five cents a piece, or something like that. So we rode from McKinley to the Hongwanji on Fort Street, at that time.

MK: And what was the formal name of the Japanese-language school?

YF: Ours was called the Hawai'i Chügakkō, the Hawai'i Japanese-language school. Oh, Japanese High School. Hawai'i Chügakkō, it's called. Literally, is middle school, you know, but they call it Japanese High School.

MK: And how did you fare in Japanese[-language] school?

YF: Yeah. The first year I was there, the *chügakkō ichinensei*, I was in *chū ichi-no, ichi*, the first group. Because, I think the teachers felt that since I was a minister's son, that I was a good student. But lo and behold, by the end of the year, I had flunked quite a bit. I mean, you know, failed a lot of places. And so the second year, *ninensei*,

chügakkö ninensei, I was put into the *nikumi*, the second grade. I was no longer with the elite. And so I look back and I remember people like Noboru Ogami, Kazuo Watanabe, Henry Yokoyama. These are all my classmates, and they were all in the *ichikumi*, the first. That, of course, woke me up and made me study a little bit more. Maybe my father did. You know, after all, it's so embarrassing to have a son failing. And so the third year, I went back up to the first, you know. So I saved face a little bit, for all of us. But I guess we learned quite a bit, too, because the teachers were very good.

There was a Wakukawa-sensei [Ernest Wakukawa], you know. And Wakukawa-sensei appeared to be like a nisei. He was bilingual, so he spoke English and Japanese very well. And he had a moustache, and you know, looked very modern, I think. But he was, I think, our translation teacher. So we would learn English-Japanese translation. There was Yosemite-sensei [Chiro Yosemite], the father of our present bishop [Chikai Yosemite]. And I remember his mannerism, you know. When he's thinking, he would bunch up his mouth, and he'd say, "Mmmmm." And he has a moustache so it sort of pops up. I used to remember that.

(Laughter)

The principal, of course, was Tatsutani-sensei. Anyway, there were some women teachers, too. There was a Miyasaka-sensei. There was a classmate of mine, was George Miyasaka, his mother was a teacher there. And Tanaka-sensei, and others.

But, you know, language school was segregated. We had girls on one side and boys on the other. But, of course, we got to know each other. And recently, I met a few of them. And I nicknamed them *mukashi no ojō-san*. (MK chuckles.) And they think it's funny, but, you know, they take it with humor. You know what *mukashi no ojō-san* is, Warren?

WN: Old-fashioned women?

YF: No, no. Young ladies of the past. (Chuckles) In other words, they're old already.

(Laughter)

MK: Back then, what did you think of going to Japanese[-language] school?

YF: There was no question in my mind that, you know, it was good for us. For one thing, my dad didn't speak very much English. He had a few words, you know. But Mother, on the

hand, was bilingual. And so we gravitated towards her and we spoke English a lot. But since Dad didn't speak English, you know, we had to try our best and, well, we felt we'd just better learn the Japanese language.

WN: How would you compare the cultures of McKinley High School with your Japanese[-language] school? You know, you said Miles Cary sort of set the tone of the culture of participatory democracy. And then, at that same day, you're going, taking the bus over to Japanese-language school, which is probably very different. How would you compare them?

YF: Well, there wasn't much of a difference. To us, I mean, it was part of our life. By the way, there's that story. We get teased for—well, our nickname was "black coat boys" because we had to wear tie and black coat to go to the language school. Normally with shoes, of course. But on a rainy day, you'd see us carrying our shoes with coat, and like that, with our barefeet. That kind of incongruous sight. But anyway, we all had to wear coats to, I guess, instill in us gentlemanly behavior, I suppose.

But the teachers there didn't show any intention of questioning our loyalty, say. That after all, we are Americans, that there's no question about that. And so there was no attempt to try to make us Japanese. Buddhism, you know, teaches that we all, we have four gratuities. One is *oya no on*, our gratitude to our parents; *shujö no on*, gratitude to all beings; *kimi no on*, or *kuni no on*, our gratitude to our country; and the fourth would be our gratitude to the Buddha. I mean, in Buddhism, these four *ons* are taught. And so in it, it says *kuni no on*. In other words, you are indebted to your country. And even in language school, we were taught that our country is America. And so there was no conflict at all, we were Americans. That's why, you know, when World War II started, there was no question that our loyalty was with America, not with Japan. Those with that hard decision to make might have been *kibeis*, you know, who spend a lot of time in Japan. And, well, we could understand that, you know. But we didn't know Japan that well, we just knew from school, you might say.

MK: Also, at that time, what citizenship did you formally bear?

YF: Well, when we were born, we were all given dual citizenship because—I forget the technical term—but the Japanese from Japan who bear children in a foreign country, would claim that child as a citizen of Japan. But in America, a person born here is an American citizen. And so we had the dual citizen. And, of course, that was cumbersome and caused a

lot of problems. And so most of us severed one side. Well, most of us, the Japanese side. So we don't have dual citizenship anymore.

MK: And we heard a lot about *shūshin*, teaching ethics in Japanese language school. What was it like at your school, at your time?

YF: Yeah. The thing is, I remember in the *shūshin* book—again, must be a particular book—but I picture a picture of Abraham Lincoln and Washington, George Washington. So even in these Japanese books, these American heroes were cited. Abraham Lincoln was an example of perseverance, I think, that he studied by log—what do you call?—burning log light. George Washington, of course, stands for honesty, about the cherry tree, that kind of story. But there were some Japanese people like Ninomiya Kinjiro, and so on, about studying hard and working hard. So that kind of value, I think, is important for anyone. These are universal values. Well, even in those questionable ones like courage and loyalty, and so on, they became problematic because if you're on the other side, you know, it seems to be saying you're going to be loyal to some other country, then "that's not what we want" kind of thing.

I think even today, the question is always, "Whose value are we talking about?" We were talking about it, you know, we were [recently] with that [community and University of Hawai'i] nisei forum on universal values. But that seems to be in the back of our minds all the time. Whose values are we trying to push? So anyway, we sort of generalize and say "universal values." Even yesterday, there was a discussion about bringing in some of the stuff that are taught in ROTC. How about these values? And [University of Hawai'i professor] Dick Dubonoski, you know, said, "We are concerned with universal values, not any small," I mean, "limited values." And so the committee, I think, agrees on that. We were thinking in terms of larger kinds of values. But still, the question is, "Whose values are we talking about" kind of thing. Especially now, with this religious emphasis. Some people are not able to accept certain Christian values, for instance. Others cannot accept Muslim values, for example. So anyway, I guess this will always be a muddy kind of situation.

MK: For you, as a youth, where did your values come from, principally?

YF: Yeah, I suppose in school, we learned certain principles like that. You know, about loyalty, and perseverance, and love, compassion, stuff like that. But I think we learned a lot just among our peers. Even going to the war, for

instance, a lot of people might have had a lot of bravado in saying, "Well, I'm a loyal American, and therefore I chose to volunteer," and so on. But others might have had a little bit of a motivation that they didn't really want to talk about, like, "Well, if my friend is going, I guess I better go" kind of thing. "What would my friend say if I don't go" or, you know. I think we mold our lives based on that kind of peer pressure, also.

MK: And then back then, you know, when you were finishing high school, what were your aspirations?

YF: Mrs. Spalding, that I mentioned, suggested that I go into education, that I become a teacher. But I've never felt confident, you know. I look at our teachers and I think, "How can I be like them?" So I didn't take too well to that suggestion. And so I entered the university in 1940 without any direction. So, I went into liberal arts, or arts and sciences, taking just the general courses like survey of sciences, and political science, and economics, I guess, anthropology, sociology. These basic things. And so what I wanted to be, actually, came gradually, later on.

MK: What did your parents want you to be?

YF: My mother used to say things like, "I don't care what you be, just be a good one," (chuckles) you know. She was pretty liberal that way. She had an education in Normal School, you know, so she was not only Japanese but very Western. Even the way she dressed with her hat and all those things. There are pictures of her that way. But they just hoped that I would succeed in whatever I undertook, I guess.

MK: How about your father, though?

YF: Yeah, he didn't push me to go into the ministry or anything. Of course, the war came, and I went away, left school for a while, and then came back with the GI Bill money. And then I asked my dad, "What should I do? I have no idea. I have this scholarship money."

And he said, "Well, you know, you were born in a Buddhist family. If you have no idea what you want to do, maybe you should go and learn what Buddhism is all about." He didn't say anything about the ministry. Just learn.

And so I began looking at good schools, you know, expensive schools (chuckles) because the government was going to pay for it. And I chose University of Chicago, where they had some pretty good teachers. And I went into the field of history of religions to study religions, generally. My

teacher there was a Dr. Joachim Wach. He's a Swiss-German. And he had a sort of an interesting background. He was born a Lutheran, but he became an Episcopalian. But he was interested in Eastern religions so he translated some stuff, some Buddhist things. So he was a very sort of well-known scholar. And I stayed with him for three years. I was at the University of Chicago for five years, actually, but was part-time, on occasion.

MK: So you were at Chicago from about 1947 to [19]52.

YF: To [19]52.

MK: And I'm going to move you back.

YF: Okay.

MK: And looking back on your UH [University of Hawai'i] years, what do you think of that? First year at UH.

YF: *Chee*, I don't remember too much about that period. See, we lived in Mōili'ili and so university was right up the hill, and so I walked to school every day. But it was those basic courses. And I guess I wasn't a very good student, maybe C+ or B- kind of a student. I argued with my mother once, about grades. And I said, "You want me to be happy and be a B student, or unhappy and be an A student?"

(Laughter)

And of course she said, "I want you to be happy."

(Laughter)

So, well. But anyway, I took such courses. There was a course on history, you know. I wish I could remember his name, but he was from Germany. And so I kind of think it was in my second year. In other words, I was a sophomore then, in this history-world, it was world history course. And one day he announced to us that he has to go home. And so we were unhappy about that because he was a good teacher. I mean, we enjoyed him a lot. With a subtle German accent, you know. But that was because his country, Germany, was already embroiled in the war, and there were other things coming up. But I remember some students booed and, you know, in other words, felt that he was being a traitor to America, when actually, he was being loyal to Germany. But anyway, I sort of remember. So I don't recall too much about-it was just a simple, straightforward kind of thing.

MK: And then when war came on December 7, 1941, what do you recall about that particular day?

YF: Yeah, well, I was a sophomore then. And on December 8, Monday, our archery class was going to have a kind of tournament. And so—I remember that because it never came, you know. But we were looking forward to it. But on that Sunday, December 7, I was in the YBA [Young Buddhists Association]—junior YBA softball league, and so we were going to have a game that day. And so I was dressed in my red sweatshirt, must have had a name and stuff. And I had corduroy trousers, and I was barefooted, ready to go play softball. And then, of course, the bombing started early in the morning. And we thought, "Wow, gee, they must be having a great maneuver out there." And so we went out and looked at Pearl Harbor side and there was a black column of smoke going on out there and a lot of things flying around. And so, "Wow, this is great." So I corralled all the kids around that area and got into our Studebaker Roadster (chuckles)—it's a small car—and then dashed out to Ala Moana Park. And from there, we looked, you know, you could see Pearl Harbor. And wow, they had a lot of stuff going on out there. We didn't think it was war or anything, it was a great maneuver. Then gradually, it dawned on us that something was not quite right. I think there must have been a car radio, I don't remember. There must have been. But the radio said that there were attacking planes with the insignia of the rising sun on it. And my thinking was, "Wow, why are they beating around the bush?" I mean, they can't say it's a Japanese plane. Maybe it's just part of the ruse, this maneuver, and therefore, they're not really saying it's a Japanese plane. But I remember the announcer simply said it had the mark of the rising sun. Then later on, of course, it was more clear, they said Pearl Harbor is being attacked by Japanese planes. And so gradually, we sort of accepted the fact that this was war.

But I didn't fully accept that, I guess, because when the radio announced the call for the ROTC, university ROTC students to show up there, I said, "Okay." And then from Mōili'ili, I walked up to the ROTC shed over there, barefooted. Maybe that was the way I used to dress all the time, I don't quite remember. But anyway, I attribute that to my disbelief. I mean, you know, I didn't think it was the real thing. But when we came up to the university and reported, they gave us—the cadre there—gave us the old rifle that we used for our drills, 1903 Springfield—five rounds, bolt action. Real obsolete weapon, but they gave that to us and said, "Okay, put the firing pin into it." And so we all put the firing pin into the weapon. And then we were inducted into the Hawai'i Territorial Guard.

And, well, because I had had ROTC at McKinley High School, I was appointed corporal, the squad leader. And my superior, the company—what do you call?—non-com leader, was Ted Tsukiyama. He was our topkick, first sergeant. And so I would joke about that, *mo atama ga agaranai*. He's been my superior ever since that time. But we were then assigned to different places. And at one time, my squad was billeted at the pumping station by Kapahulu and Wai'alaie [avenues]. Or is that Harding [Avenue]? Yeah, Harding, I guess. I think we spent one night there. Another time, we were billeted at Dillingham Building. I think it was there that we were—our assignment was to walk the pier, the Honolulu Harbor. And it was at that time that that story arose. Some clever person began to tell a story that on the day after Pearl Harbor, a troop ship came into the harbor and it was filled with marines. So when the boat docked, the marines, some of them, came up to the bow of the ship and looked over and saw us walking up and down. So this one guy nudged the other and said, "Hey Mac, we're too late."

(Laughter)

Well, I keep on telling that story. I know other guys know it, but they don't like to talk about it that way.

WN: Did you feel a real danger? That you were in some, you know, danger. Or did you feel a sense of urgency while you were guarding that pier?

FY: The only feeling that I had was when we were. . . . Oh yeah, at one time—in fact, my first assignment was walking the road between the ['Iolani] palace and the library.

FY: That's called Likelike Way or something like that. Walking over there. And my assignment was from midnight to morning. And we just walked up and down and we were told to say, "Halt, who goes there?" and you know, that kind of stuff. But anyway, we were doing that. And then morning came, and people began to come to work. And they were digging some trenches, I guess, in the library grounds. And these guys, non-niseis, looked at us very suspiciously, you know, antagonistically. I remember that. The sense of fear, you know (chuckles). But to them, we sure looked like the enemy, you know. And so. Well, that's the only thing I remember. We joked about a lot of things. Like when we went on duty, the person going off duty would pull out the six—I mean the five rounds of bullets, and give it to the next person. And then we put it in, and then we guard, and then when we go off, we give the five rounds to the next guy. And so somebody began to ask, "Now, if the enemy should come, and you shoot your five bullets, then what's going to

happen after that?" And the answer is, probably just have to hightail it.

(Laughter)

You have to run like hell.

(Laughter)

You know, that kind of stuff.

WN: Were you confident at that time, you know, in using your weapon?

YF: Yeah, for that moment, I guess. At least you have five rounds. But just even thinking about it, if you're under fire, five rounds will be gone in a minute. But we never thought beyond that, yeah, I guess. I guess we weren't---I guess we were kids, you know. I was only eighteen then. And so even this was just like war games, like.

WN: Do you remember what instructions they gave you? What to look for, anything like that?

YF: Anything suspicious. And so I remember at Dillingham Building, somebody found a laundry slip. And then, oh, I think the officers we gave that to, spent a long time trying to figure out what that laundry slip was. (Chuckles) It looks suspicious (laughs).

WN: Well, here you are, you're Japanese, and you're at war with Japan, and then you're told to guard piers with the thought of possible invasion. Do you remember what went through your mind at that time?

YF: Yeah, we had really no idea of what we were looking for. In fact, one of the earliest skirmishes, so to speak, of the HTG, Hawai'i Territorial Guard, was a squad was sent up to St. Louis Heights because there was some kind of rumor that the Japanese had landed, that the enemy had landed there. And so, maybe was Ted or somebody who led this group up there, and they found nothing. And so we had no idea what we were looking for. Anything unnatural, unfamiliar. And, of course, we heard reports about the submarine out in Waimānalo, and the submarine in Pearl Harbor, outside Pearl Harbor, stuff like that. So we knew the enemy was around, but. . . . I don't know, maybe I've just forgotten all of those things completely.

MK: You know, in those early days, you were with a bunch of other young guys, right?

YF: Yeah.

MK: What would you folks talk about while you folks were on duty?

YF: Hmm. Well, I know one of the fellows in my squad once complained to me that he expected me to be wide awake and alert while they can take naps and, you know, rest, and so on. When actually, I was the one dozing off and (chuckles) not being a good leader, and stuff like that. And so we were all kids, you know.

MK: So what did you think of this war with Japan in those early days?

YF: Yeah, well, the attack was sneaky, of course, you know. Although I think it wasn't intended to be, according to that movie *Tora! Tora! Tora!* But there might have been some justification, you know, the fact that the Japanese government was being—I think the oil supplies were being curtailed and things like that. They seem to have been pushed to a very bad situation and they had to retaliate violently, perhaps. I mean, that kind of stories going around. But the fact that Japan, of all countries, would attack us, whose folks are from Japan, this was not a very good thing, you know. I don't know, I suppose I have, in the back of my mind, a kind of connection with the enemy, you know, through our folks. So the anger might not have been as strong as in a person who had no such relationship. I think I tried to understand, though, a little bit more, why this had to happen. But still, they were our enemy.

MK: And by that first week of the war, already there were members of the Japanese community who had been hauled in by the FBI and other authorities. Some of them were Buddhist priests, schoolteachers, influential businessmen. But your father, being a priest, how was your family reacting to those kind of . . .

YF: Well, I think there was a period of uncertainty. We knew that he has to go because of the other examples, you know, the other Buddhist priests, and Shinto priests, and teachers, people going. Why not Dad? So we expected him to go. But, I think in Dad's case, he went a little later. He went in April, I think, of [19]42. And I feel that was because a friend, a person who grew up in Möili'ili, was in the FBI with the police department as well and working with G2, the military intelligence. And that was Kanemi Kanazawa. And Kanemi Kanazawa, I feel, vouched for Dad, and said, oh, yeah, I've known Dad for many years, and so he's okay. But I guess that couldn't last forever. So, I had occasion to talk to Kanemi and ask him, "Did you do that?"

And he wouldn't answer. So his not answering, to me, was an affirmation that that's exactly what he had done. And, so, it was kind of strange, too, that I was stationed in Camp Ritchie in Maryland. And while I was there, Kanemi was injured, wounded in battle. He had a big scar on the back of his head. Anyway, he came back to Camp Ritchie for R-and-R, and so I saw him. And, well, he's gone now, but.

MK: And going back to the Hawai'i Territorial Guard, I guess, who were in the Hawai'i Territorial Guard?

YF: Well, the nucleus, the base, was the ROTC unit at the university. But after it was established, volunteers were welcomed. And so people from the community came in. And so, in my case, I thought that was kind of funny, too. See, I was eighteen years old and the corporal, squad leader. Eighteen years old. Now, there was a fellow named Pro. Well, his nickname was Pro, he was a professional gambler. I think his name was Sadao Fujioka. But anyway, he was a taxi driver, and twenty-five years of age. And so he came into my squad. Now, you can just picture that situation. I was the nominal head of the squad, but the one who was running the squad, was Pro Fujioka, twenty-five years. So he would tell me, "Yeah, I'm going to stay out all night tonight."

And so I couldn't say no. "What are you going to do?"

"We have a game, gambling game. You want to come?"

(Chuckles) So one night, I went with him and stayed up with him as he gambled. And on that occasion, he taught me, "Well, if you want to gamble, you better learn how to gamble. Now, if you're not going to learn how to gamble, never gamble." (Chuckles) Now, that was a twenty-five-year-old telling an eighteen-year-old about life, I think. So I still remember that.

(Laughter)

Yeah, but I think he's gone too, already. He was twenty-five years when I was eighteen, so he would be in his nineties if he were alive. I think he's gone.

WN: Stop here, we're going to change tapes.

YF: Okay.

MK: Okay, this is continuation of the second session with Bishop Fujitani.

And before we turn the camera on, we were commenting about the youth of the HTG. And if you could repeat for us that story about the photo.

YF: Yeah. I think this photo was arranged by Ted Tsukiyama because the original photo is in his hands, too. But it is a picture of the company, our company, D, I guess, taken, I guess, just before we disbanded. That was in January of 1942. But in that photo, Ted, of course, is there, but some of the others I recognize, Warren Higa, Hiroshi Kato, Camel—well, that was his nickname—Yoshimasu, or even Dr. George Goto, you know, sort of a short doctor. Those people are in there. But I'm in there, too. And I thought it was kind of interesting that my grandson, who just made eighteen—yeah, he will be nineteen this December—looks exactly like me in that picture. And so, well, we look young, skin is tight and unwrinkled. Bushy hair, and yeah, we were young.

MK: You were young. And you know, like you've mentioned Ted as being one of the leaders. Who were some of the leaders back then, of the HTG?

YF: Well, let's see. Ted was the top man, of course. Top non-com. But we had officers, I suppose. Never really got to know them, but our captain was Captain Nollie Smith. You remember Nollie Smith?

MK: Mm-hmm [yes].

YF: He was quite an athlete. But, well, that's the only one I remember. But what I remember about him was that, in January of [19]42, the HTG was disbanded. I guess the decision was made in Washington by the bigwigs. Because we were told that we were going to be inactivated. And the rumor went around that it was so because we all looked like the enemy. In other words, the HTG was packed full of niseis, and they were afraid. But when the announcement was made by Captain Nollie Smith, he actually wept as he announced to us, saying, you know, they don't understand. So I remember that about him.

MK: How did most of you react to that announcement?

YF: Well, we were angry, disappointed. I think maybe we cried, too. I don't remember that part. But we were discouraged, you know. Here, we had no intention of being traitors to America, but already we're being suspected and they're not trusting us, and so on. And so what happened after that, of course, is, you know, the formation of the Triple V [Varsity Victory Volunteers, or VVV]. Because when we were all kicked out, we didn't know what to do. Some fellows

went to work, others just hung around the campus. Leaders, you know, like Herbert Iso . . .

MK: Isonaga.

YF: . . . Isonaga. . . . Let me see these names.

WN: Masato Doi?

YF: Masato Doi, yeah. Ralph Yempuku, of course. You know, Ralph was working here, already. He was with the athletic department and he had a commission in the army. But anyway, *chee*, I wish I could just tick off these names of this leadership group that we had. But anyway, those guys were approached by Hung Wai Ching. And Hung Wai Ching, who was the executive secretary of the university YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], Atherton YMCA. And he came across from the Y, and then he talked to the boys. And he said, "Why are you guys just moping around for," you know. And he suggested, "Why don't you do something. Why don't you volunteer?" And so the guys began to talk about that, and that's how the Triple V started. And, so actually, it was a group of volunteers, volunteer laborers, offering to the army the use of themselves. And so the army accepted that and attached that group to the 34th Engineers Regiment in Schofield. And so this group was then—the official name was 34th Engineers Regiment Auxiliary. And so, it was just added. And the nickname became "Varsity Victory Volunteers," and it sort of stuck, you know.

MK: Do you know who came up with that nickname?

YF: I have no idea. Could be somebody like Herb, or Masato, there are others, you know.

WN: When you were saying that some—when you found out you were being disbanded—some went to work, some sort of hung around campus, what about you, what did you do?

YF: Yeah, I didn't do anything. And when---I guess I was just hanging around at home, maybe going fishing or something like that. And then, there was this—once it was organized, this call went out, and so I volunteered.

MK: How did the call go out? How did you hear about this VVV?

YF: Must have been something like, "Hey, let's get together to volunteer." Maybe that call came from people like Hung Wai, you know, because there was this group of older people like Hung Wai Ching, and Shigeo Yoshida, maybe Mitsuyuki Kido, people like that, who were older and served as a kind of advisors to the younger guys.

MK: When the call came out, how did you react?

YF: Yeah, I thought, yeah, I'd like to go. Out of, well, I don't know whether it was patriotism, it was more like adventure. Yeah, I've been wondering whether I had any sense of patriotism at all. But because once we got in, and got organized, and we were established in Schofield, couple of months later, my dad was hauled in. And when that happened, I sort of blew my top, and said, "Here, I thought I've been a pretty good American, why should they take my dad?" Although I had suspicions that that would happen. But when it happened, then I decided, well, I am not going to cooperate anymore. And so I declared that I was going to quit Triple V. And Hung Wai Ching came running up and, you know, tried to stop me. And he asked Shigeo Yoshida, also, to talk with him. But I was adamant, and so I just left. That was not very good, I suppose, for the morale, too, you know, of the others. But I sort of lost my feeling for America.

MK: And then at that time, how did your fellow VVV guys or friends react to your response?

YF: Yeah, they sort of accepted me, I guess, you know. And that shows even today, that although I was in very briefly, they considered me as a bonafide Triple V member, so.

MK: When you made the decision to quit the VVV, were you torn in any way, or what went through your mind and heart?

YF: Well, I was thinking mostly of my dad, I suppose. You know, all these poor guys, so selfless - I mean, helpless. Yeah, I wasn't very close to my dad to begin with, hardly spoke with him. But once I was in camp, you know, at Schofield, and we had privileges of the PX [post exchange], and so I wanted to get dad a good *omiyage* [going-away gift] at the first pass that we had. And so I bought him a box of cigars. And when I gave it to dad, he said, "I don't smoke cigars, why did you get cigars for me?"

(Laughter)

That was crazy. But, I guess, in this young mind, you know, cigars must be valuable. That kind of . . .

WN: I guess I should ask you this, but, you know, you said that your father was sort of delayed in getting interned.

YF: Mm-hmm [yes], yeah.

WN: Instead of December, he was called in April.

YF: Yeah.

WN: I was just wondering, do you remember anything going through your mind relating to, if I joined, or become involved in this, it might prevent my dad from being called in, or anything like that?

YF: No, that never occurred to me, yeah. Because there were others, you know, Akira Otani. Akira's father was also interned.

MK: When you made your decision to quit, though, did you talk to anyone as you were about to make this decision?

YF: No, I made it all by myself. Yeah.

MK: And you mentioned Shigeo Yoshida.

YF: Mmm.

MK: At that time, was he related to your family through your sister?

YF: Well, I think Teri was his secretary when—oh, maybe he was, at that time, principal somewhere. I'm not sure what the timetable is. But later on, I think from that connection, she got married to Shigeo's brother. But that, I'm not exactly sure of the situation.

MK: So at that time, you weren't that close to the Yoshidas.

YF: No, no.

MK: And going back to the VVV, when you went to Schofield, what did you folks do?

YF: Well, we were in the army barracks, you know, we were billeted in the army barracks. And we had different crews that were assigned different work. Like road builders. There was a rock—what do you call that?

MK: Quarry?

YF: Quarry, yeah, quarry gang. That was hard work. But I think Shiro Amioka was in that, too. But they were a rough, tough bunch of guys. But fixing roads, and fixing fences, and building buildings, and all kinds of different groups.

MK: What were you involved in, as a VVV?

YF: I'm not too sure what our gang really did. My team captain, you might say, was Bob Kadowaki, and his nickname was

"Wacky." But yeah, he passed away, too, already. But *chee*, I'm. . . . Maybe we were fixing fences or something. So anyway, it was such a short time for me that the experiences have not really jelled for me.

MK: I'm just curious, did you folks ever get any compensation at Schofield as an auxiliary to this 34th Division?

YF: Yeah, I don't really remember, you know. I thought we were just volunteers, it was a volunteer unit. So they might have given us some kind of allowances, you know. But I know we had use of the PX. That was a kind of a privilege. And, of course, we had our meals there, and all that. But I don't remember any pay, receiving any pay. I think I better ask some of the others.

(Laughter)

WN: Well, it was Varsity Victory Volunteers. (Chuckles)

YF: Yeah.

MK: You know, we interviewed someone who said that when he was at Schofield, not as a member of a VVV, but of another unit, he used to like to go down to the VVV side because you folks had good food.

YF: Better food, yeah. Yeah, they might have.

(Laughter)

WN: What was your relations, do you remember any kind of—what was your relationships with the military personnel at Schofield? Do you remember anything?

YF: Well, our—what do you call?—CO [commanding officer], we had a military cadre, you might say. There was a Captain [Richard] Lum, and Tommy Kaulukukui was a lieutenant, I guess. I don't know who else. Anyway, those were military people, they were all lay people. And then our topkick, you might say, was Ralph Yempuku. He held the group together, you know. Yeah, he was given all kinds of nicknames like "Little Caesar," and all that. (Chuckles) He wasn't a very tall person. Yeah, we miss him a lot. He was very . . .

MK: How did you take to military life? In the sense that people would put you in a spot, give you duties.

YF: Yeah, I guess I didn't really enjoy it, myself. But, well, under the circumstances, you know, that's the way things are done, so that was okay. And having gone through JROTC and ROTC. But I don't especially care for that kind of

regimentation, you might say. But I'm a member of the MIS [Military Intelligence Services] Veterans Club. That's a hang-loose group, you know, we all served in the MIS. But out of the MIS group, some real gung-ho guys organized the VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars. And it's called MIS Post 110. And the person who started that was Kenichi Watanabe. He's a colonel, or something like that. Or lieutenant colonel, yeah. So, anyway, people like that served in the regular army, you might say. I mean, that's their way of life, so they feel comfortable with that. And they like to salute, and "Yes, Sir," "No Sir," you know, that kind, which I don't especially care for. But anyway, I joined the VFW, too, because they needed a chaplain. And I decided, well, I can be a chaplain if they want. And so, perhaps, I'm the only Buddhist chaplain in the VFW.

(Laughter)

You know, because they go by the books, you know. They have a manual, and they have everything spelled out for you. The prayers for this or that, and they're all strictly Christian. So I felt if the guys are not uncomfortable with that, that's okay with me, too, also. I do the best [I can].

WN: As a VVV volunteer, you folks were actually civilians.

YF: Yeah, we were civilians.

WN: Did you feel military, like you were a military person?

YF: No, no. Well, of course, we were under military supervision, you might say. But we were just hang-loose kind of guys.

MK: About how long were you with the VVV?

YF: I was there just a couple of months, that's all.

MK: And then when you look back on that time in your life, what significance does it have for you?

YF: Well, it's just I feel like I had done what was expected of me at that time. But since I couldn't stay with it any longer, I left. And after I left, I went to work, you know. In a way, it was partly economic, too. When Dad was hauled in, Mother was left with a whole bunch of kids. I mean, we have eight kids in the family, and my older sister and I were the only ones working. I mean, of working age. And so I went back home to work, also.

MK: And where did you work?

YF: (Chuckles) I was with the American Optical Company, making glasses. Yeah, there's some nice guys there, too.

MK: How did you learn that job?

YF: It's on-the-job training, you might say (chuckles). So anyway, there are two aspects. One, some of the guys made glasses, you know, ground glasses. The others made glasses, I mean, spectacles. And we were with that side. So. . . .

MK: And with your dad being hauled in, how was your family treated by the community?

YF: We didn't notice. I don't know, they might have looked at all internees as possible enemies, maybe. But we didn't know. So we continued our life. Mother, for instance, was a kind of a leader within the temple so she got the women together and rolled bandages and stuff at the Möili'ili Community Center. In other words, did Red Cross work. So she kept herself busy.

MK: And what was the status of the temple itself?

YF: Yeah, there were some basic rules, like not more than so many people could gather at one time at one place, and so on. But there were memorial services and things like that that had to be done. So Mother took over to do things like that.

MK: So your mom would conduct the services?

YF: Yeah. She had to take a crash course, I guess (chuckles), in rituals and stuff. But yeah, she did all right.

MK: At that time, were you ever asked to help out at the temple?

YF: No, not at all. I had no interest at all and no knowledge, you know.

MK: And about the same time, was it the period that you volunteered with the civil defense?

YF: Yeah, yeah. Right. So at home, then, I was doing things with some of the fellows around there. And one was at the Möili'ili Community Center, they had a fire brigade. A truck and a water pump. And at that time, I guess I was nineteen and I volunteered to be the driver. And so the only skill that I had to have was in backing the car, I mean, truck. The pump, you know, which is an attachment, would wobble, and so to do that, you have to maneuver the truck in a certain way. And I was able to learn that. And I

thought I was a pretty good driver. But later on, when we got together to reminisce, I was given the bad news that—they say that they knew I thought I was the good driver, but they didn't think so.

(Laughter)

Well, I tried, anyway.

(Laughter)

We had a lot of fun, though.

MK: And then, I guess in October or November of [19]43, the MISLS Deputation Team came.

YF: Right, yeah, yeah.

MK: Tell us about that.

YF: Yeah, the Military Intelligence Language School, of course, was going full blast, and they, I guess, wanted more students, you might. And so I remember just two people who came to Hawai'i. One was Masaji Marumoto and the other was Edwin Kawahara. And it was Edwin Kawahara who approached me and asked whether I would consider going to language school. And by then, I was—well, I guess, honestly speaking—I was very lonely because my friends—people I had known, did things with before—had all gone to 442nd and other places. And there was no one at home, and so I was eager to get involved. And so I agreed to join the MIS.

MK: What did your family think about that decision?

YF: I don't know. I guess I was that kind of a guy, yeah. I didn't think of what they were thinking. I just had to go.

MK: And, knowing that the MISLS, they wanted your skills in Japanese, which meant that you would be in the Pacific war.

YF: Mm-hmm[yes].

MK: Which meant that you might, you know, possibly have to fight a Japanese.

YF: Right, right.

MK: What were your thoughts on that?

YF: Well, I don't think I worried too much about that. I thought, "Well, I might meet my cousins, but meeting them would be a small chance." I think I thought about it that

way. And later on, I did talk with some of my cousins who were in the army. One was a captain, another was first lieutenant, another was a buck private. There were three of 'em. And I met them in Tokyo, in, I guess, November, December of [19]45. You know, when the war ended. It was interesting that the captain was in charge of construction of pillboxes on an island south of Tokyo. I forgot the name of that island there, but he was building fortifications. And when I told him that we had translated one of these manuals, fortification manuals, he said, "That's exactly the book we used to build." So that was kind of interesting. Yeah, I think he also died already. But he was a captain. And we visited his home in Tokyo, and he had hidden a large sword, a samurai sword, that he used. And I looked at the blade, and on the tip, was sort of stained. So I said, "You mean you killed somebody?"

And he says, "No, I just killed a cat."

(Laughter)

He had to test it, you see. But anyway, it was sort of stained. But it's a long sword. You know, he was a big man, so. And I brought it home with me, after, when we left Tokyo. But I thought it was so cumbersome carrying that thing around, so I gave it away to someone here, a person from Japan. And years later, I asked him, "Do you still have the sword?"

He says, "What sword?"

(Laughter)

He didn't even remember that he had received that. That was interesting, too.

MK: So, you know for the MIS language school, you know, when you enlisted, did the internment of your father ever influence this decision?

YF: No, it didn't. Dad went because he was a potentially dangerous enemy alien. And he was incarcerated at Santa Fe, at that time. And when I was in—I think it was at [Fort] Snelling. We went to [Camp] Savage, you know, and a few months later we moved up to Snelling. And I was there when I decided to go visit Dad. And so, the way I look at it, his life was his life, I mean, and mine was mine. There was no connection at all. But I understand the government did make that connection, you know. There were some guys in the American army whose parents were detained and they, I think, tried to get these detainees out because of their son's participation in the army. And so we heard that Dad

was asked whether he'd like to be released to a camp or not or whether he wanted to go to Japan or not. You know, to be repatriated. And he wrote us a letter, and the family had a powwow and they decided, well, no, we don't want to be repatriated with him, nor be transferred to a relocation center. So Dad had to stay in camp by himself. I think it was his—in other words, his choice to stay, now, you know, because the authorities were saying you can be released if you want to. But he had no place to go. He didn't want to go to a relocation camp, so he remained. But he couldn't come back to Hawai'i. I guess it was still—what do you call?—under martial law or whatever. Yeah.

MK: I asked that question because I was wondering if maybe your being in the MIS, you ever thought that would help your dad's cause in anyway.

YF: Mmm. No.

MK: And when you enlisted, what did you do before you were shipped out to Camp Savage? You enlisted in January [19]44.

YF: Mm-hmm [yes]. Yeah, we were inducted, you might say, at Wahiawā—what is that?—induction center. And then, I guess, we were on our way. We might have spent a few nights there, but yeah, they shipped us out pretty. . . . It was in February that we got into Savage.

MK: And . . .

YF: February was a very cold time, too.

MK: So where is Camp Savage located?

YF: It's in Minnesota, just about middle, sort of east side of—little bit east, within the state of Minnesota. And south, south of Minneapolis-St. Paul. And Fort Snelling was very close to St. Paul.

MK: And, you know, when you folks went there, it was February. What were conditions like for you folks?

YF: What I remember is, Camp Savage was covered with snow, was all white. Very beautiful, and it's still vivid in my mind. Later on, I remember we tried making snowballs and stuff, but it wouldn't hold. In other words, the ice, snow, is so cold that it just won't stick. It was very cold. But, of course, you know, a few months later, the place was all muddy and ugly. And at that time, a friend of mine wrote home, saying that darn thing is still around. In other words, earlier, it's just a beautiful sight, but a few months later, it's not wanted anymore.

(Laughter)

Yeah.

WN: How would you compare Camp Savage with Fort Snelling?

YF: Yeah, Camp Savage was a kind of rustic, country place. Fort Snelling, they have barracks, like Schofield, permanent buildings like that. Camp Savage was just like cabins all over the place.

WN: Yeah, Camp Savage was a CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps .
. . .

YF: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, right, yeah.

WN: . . . originally. Whereas Fort Snelling was military.

YF: Right. Yeah, yeah.

MK: And then at Camp Savage, what class, or unit, were you initially assigned to?

YF: At Savage, I was in Company D, I remember. One person I remember there was Sergeant Phillip Hirano, who was master sergeant. I don't know where he came, he's from Hawai'i, I suppose. But anyway, he was the one who took us to class from our barracks. And we marched to class and marched back.

YF: But anyway, he was the one who commanded our group. And I still remember that.

MK: Who were some of the guys in your group, at Camp Savage?

YF: Well, one of 'em who passed away, who died in that August 13, 1945 crash in Okinawa. You know, there were ten guys from our group who died in that. But there are people like Masaru Sogi, Francis Sogi's brother. There was an Inouye—I wish I had these names. There was a Ben Hirano. There's an Ishida fellow. Ishida, Inouye, Hirano are from Kaua'i, so I used to hang around with the Kaua'i guys. Yeah, a lot of names I can't recall already.

MK: How was your Japanese?

YF: *Heigo heta deshita ne.* [My military language was not good.]

(Laughter)

You know, I feel that, in our translation team, the main person was the *kibei* [nisei who had spent youth in Japan].

The *kibei* knew the language well, and his English was not as strong, and so the *nisei* sort of added a little bit. So we were sort of, maybe—you can't say extraneous—but we weren't the central team. The central persons were the *kibei*, who knew the language.

MK: So in class at Camp Savage . . .

YF: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: . . . how were you doing?

YF: Yeah, well, we learned, sort of goaded to learn *kanjis* [Chinese characters used in Japanese writing], the military language, and stuff. And that's all it was. *Heigo*, we would learn *heigo*. And so we might have been able to translate certain things because we've been learning these words, but we certainly would have made very poor interpreters, you know, to be conversing, say, with the enemy or others. Of course the *kibei* could do that.

MK: In class, what incentives were there for you folks to learn it?

YF: I don't know what, just pride, I suppose. We had to learn so many words a day, you know, and so it was kind of an intensive sort of thing. And, of course, we forgot many, many words. We failed, in other words, but. So we were half prepared when we went out to the front. See, but I went to Camp Ritchie because in the summer of [19]44, I busted my kneecap playing football and that laid me up for a whole month, a month and a half, actually. And then when our class graduated, they all went to basic training in Alabama or someplace. And they told me if I wanted to go, they'd send me, but I said, no, I didn't want to go. So they sent me to Camp Ritchie in Maryland.

MK: And then at Camp Richie, where were you assigned?

YF: To the Pacific Military Intelligence Research Section. The acronym is PACMIRS, but . . .

MK: And what was your task there?

YF: Yeah, as one of the translators. But that group, that outfit, was an international group. And so we had British, Canadian, American, New Zealand, Australian linguists, officers, and non-coms. And so in this group, well, from the American group, there was a major who was a former missionary in Japan. So he knew Japanese very well. He was a sort of older person. But there was an Englishman who was *hapa*. *Chee*, I wish I remember these names, but he was in

- the, well, I guess in the air corps, British air corps. Maybe he didn't fly, but he was a linguist attached to PACMIRS. The CO was a Colonel [G.F.] Gronich I remember, he was a full colonel. He was a rough and tough regular army guy. But there were some non-coms, too. There were some WACs [Women's Army Corps], also. Yeah. American WACs, Canadian WACs, and Canadian non-coms. I think I remember his name was Kuwahara or something like that, he was a Canadian nisei, who was in that group, too.
- MK: Were any of the WACs nisei?
- YF: Yeah, I knew one who was from Colorado, her name was Betty Nishimura, I remember. She was a few years older than us, but. Yeah, she was telling me that she had a brother who was in the 442nd and he was beaten up (chuckles) by maybe some Hawaiian guys. I guess that clash, you know, between the Mainland nisei and the Hawaiians was a very real thing. You know, they just couldn't stand each other. Maybe the way they talked or something like that.
- MK: How about in your experience, what's your take on the relationship between Hawai'i nisei and Mainland nisei in the MIS?
- YF: Well, I thought I got along pretty well. In fact, one of my closest friends in Savage and Snelling was a guy named Sherman Kishi, who came from Livingston, California. He was a very devout Christian, very—what do you call?—very devout person. I think that Livingston area is a very strong Christian area. But anyway, I got along very well with them. Maybe because I didn't have any—what do you call?—language problems. I could understand both Hawaiian, as well as the Mainland English, you know. So I didn't have any run-ins or anything like that.
- WN: You know, after you busted your kneecap, they gave you a choice of going basic training and be assigned somewhere, to Camp Ritchie or whatever, and you said you chose the Camp Ritchie. Do you remember what went through your mind, or why you made that decision?
- YF: Well, I was told that basic training will be hard on the body. I guess you have to run. And so the assigning officer just gave me a break, you might say. "If you want to go, you can go, but you don't have to." And so I thought, well, with my tender kneecap that way, I'd assume I'd be assigned. And so that was it.
- WN: By being assigned, did you know already where you would end up?

YF: No, I didn't know, but yeah, that PACMIRS is a kind of pretty solid translation group. Maybe you heard of Kazuo Yamane? He was there at PACMIRS.

MK: What kinds of things were you folks translating at PACMIRS?

YF: Documents that had something to do with military movements and things like that. And so in the case of Kazuo, he translated a very valuable document [on the inventory of the Japanese Imperial Army Ordinance] about the materiel—what do you call?—the weapon system, the supply system, and stuff like that, that was current at that time. And so that gave the Americans a picture of the strength of the Japanese, and therefore was considered very important. And because of Kazuo Yamane's translation, our entire PACMIRS was rewarded, you might say, awarded with a citation. So what we got was what—maybe Kazuo got something else—but we got what was called a commendation ribbon with pendant. Now a days, I think they call it commendation medal, but it's the same thing. But it's a hexagonal medal with green and white stripes, you've seen that. Yeah, it's very common now. It's, maybe, right next to good conduct medal.

WN: Do you still have yours?

YF: I still have that one, that's the only one I have. I've misplaced the good conduct medal, the Asia Pacific campaign medal, victory medal, these things I don't have at all.

WN: And how big was PACMIRS, I mean, in terms of number of personnel?

YF: *Chee*, maybe twenty-five, thirty people. Yeah. And we had some real good *kibei* translators. *Chee*, until a few days ago, I remembered some of the names, but. There was one, about two or three of them, went—I mean, you know, after the war ended—in October, PACMIRS was sent to Tokyo, on temporary duty, to collect more material. And when that assignment ended, about two or three top translators, these *kibei* guys, were asked to stay in Japan to serve in the tribunal. And so, these guys were the ones with the master sergeants and so on. And so they stayed back and then the rest of us were sent back to Washington D.C. At that time, the outfit changed its name to the Washington Documents Center. So our outfit, I mean, we stayed in billets in Fort—what was that? What's the camp outside of Washington . . .

WN: Fort Myers?

YF: Fort Myers. We stayed there. And at the same time, the TO, the table of organization, opened up at the top, because

all the master sergeants stayed back in Tokyo. And so those of us below were automatically raised up. And soon, I found myself as the master sergeant. I was the top man, you know, with . . .

WN: Shall we end right here?

MK: Let's end here.

YF: Oh, okay.

WN: This is a good place to end, actually.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 44-42-3-05 and 44-43-3-05

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yoshiaki Fujitani (YF)

Mānoa, O'ahu

May 16, 2005

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

MK: Okay, this is an interview with Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani on May 16, 2005. This is the third session, and the interviewers are Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto.

And for today's opening question . . .

YF: Mmm.

MK: . . . we were—we'd like to have some information about your visit to your father when he was placed in the detention camp in Santa Fe. What was that visit like?

YF: Well, it was a very brief visit, so I don't remember too much. But, as you know, there was a bunch of people from Hawai'i who were considered potentially dangerous enemy aliens—I think that was the title, the name, that they all had. But a bunch of them were sent to camps—department of justice camps. And they went to Lordsburg, New Mexico, or Fort Sam Houston, Texas. But most of them ended up in Santa Fe, in New Mexico. And my dad was there. And in 1944, I

think it was in the summer—I was at Fort Snelling then—I decided to go to visit him. And so I went down to Santa Fe. And what I remember is, meeting first—it seemed a person from Hawai'i, who was kind of a community relations person, and his name was—his nickname—was "Pistol" Uetake, I think. And his name was "Pistol" because he had his fingers shot off in some kind of accident when he was a kid, and so it looked like this. You know (chuckles), no fingers here. And so that was his nickname. But he lived off the campsite, and he invited me to have lunch with him. And he prepared a dish of rainbow trout, which he said he caught in a stream nearby. So I remember that, mostly. But then I visited Dad and, of course, he was behind barbed wire—stockade-like place, you know. And we took a picture together, but we had a very quiet visit. And we talked about our experiences, the kind of breakfast we got to have in camp. And I thought it was interesting that we were having the same kind of food, like powdered eggs and luncheon meat—I guess that was the forerunner of the Spam, you know, thing. And so in a way, we were complaining to each other. That's about all I remember.

WN: Did he look different?

YF: Yeah, he had grown a beard, you know, a goatee, or whatever you call it. And he looked very relaxed. So he wasn't under stress or anything. I guess they must have had a pretty relaxing kind of existence there. He talked about going out of the camp, you know, to collect petrified wood, for instance, and other kinds of woods and pieces of, I guess, very hard wood, which they brought back to camp and made bookends. And I guess some, more skillful people, would carve into something nicer, and so on. And so they had a quiet kind of life, I think.

MK: And throughout that conversation that you had with your father, were there people observing your conversation?

YF: I don't even remember that. Whether we were sitting within, inside a place, or not. But I remember standing outside because we had our picture taken by an official photographer. And that's the only souvenir I have of that encounter. I remember also, that in the town of Santa Fe, at that time, there was an exhibit by an artist. I think the name was Best, just B-E-S-T. A woman artist. And I remember going through that art museum.

MK: When you visited your father . . .

YF: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: . . . what were your feelings like? You know, being a serviceman, and visiting your father at the department of justice camp.

YF: Well, for one thing, I wasn't very close to my dad to begin with. And so there were all kinds of thoughts that went through my mind. We hardly talked, for instance, as we were growing up. It was easy for us to talk with Mother, who was bilingual. Dad spoke only Japanese, mostly. He knew a few English words, perhaps, but. . . . So it wasn't as though I was meeting a person that I had known very well, and. . . . But, after all, he was Dad, and so there was a kind of emotional feeling, I am pretty sure, that he must be suffering, etcetera, etcetera. But it turned out that, you know, he was all right.

WN: Do you remember what his housing looked like? Do you have any memory of that?

YF: Not at all. I think it was something like the camps in the relocation center, that type of barracks. Yeah, I don't remember his describing his housing, anything.

WN: And do you remember what kinds of administrative or bureaucratic procedures you had to go through to make this visit? Do you remember it being difficult?

YF: No, it wasn't hard. My remembering Mr. Uetake, for instance, you know, would suggest that he was the contact person. So when we wrote to Santa Fe, I guess he was the one who knew that I'd be visiting. So he was the one who enabled me to visit the camp, in other words. And so the meeting place might have been outside the enclosure. There might have been an administration building or something. And I think I waited for him to be called, and he came out. Yeah, I think the feeling was, well, Dad has grown old, older, that kind of feeling, as he came out.

MK: At that time, had you ever talked about your dad being in the camp with the other men that you were serving with?

YF: Not too much. I'm not sure whether I mentioned the reason I left Triple V, for instance. I left because my dad was hauled in, and I was very unhappy, very angry, that I would be treated that way. After all, I volunteered, I'm a loyal American, that kind of feeling, and they're taking my dad in. So I remember Hung Wai Ching, for instance, approaching me and trying to get me to change my mind and all that. But I was pretty adamant, and so I left. So I think, you know, the feeling of my dad, as a family member, being treated this way, was pretty offensive to me. But, as I mentioned, after a while, that anger subsided, overcome more by

loneliness, and so I decided to volunteer for the army, then. So by that time, when I met Dad, I think I was pretty—had sort of solved this problem that I had. So I don't remember talking too much about Dad being in camp with my army buddies. But anyway, I went down with another person, but I forgot who that person was, because I kind of recall walking around Santa Fe with another fellow. Well, it's been some years back.

(Laughter)

WN: I assume you wore your uniform when . . .

YF: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I was in uniform.

WN: . . . you went out.

YF: And I was looking for some stripes on my uniform. I didn't have any, so I guess I was a buck private, then. (MK and WN chuckle.)

MK: And, I guess we'll bring ourselves back to where we had left off. And the war ended in August 1945, and in October, your outfit was sent to Tokyo. And what was your assignment in Tokyo?

YF: Yes. It was—the outfit—I'm not sure whether already, the name had been changed. When we were in Camp Ritchie, Maryland, it was called the Pacific Military Intelligence Research Section. But later on, somewhere along the line, our outfit had the name of Washington Document Center. And so it might have been when we were in Tokyo that that name was changed. But we were there in Tokyo to collect documents, military documents. And so, perhaps I mentioned already that what sort of offended many of us, was the way these books were treated. We had, as our working place, the first—it was called Tokyo, Tokyo Daiichi, Daiichi Tokyo Zöheishö. Zöheishö. I suppose that could be translated to arsenal, the First Tokyo Arsenal. The building seemed to have been intact, might not have been bombed out. But we used one of these larger halls where the books were all brought and just laid out on the floor. And we went through the books to see whether they were of military value or not. The thing is, these books came from the libraries, mostly from university libraries. And all kinds of books. Not all military, you know. There were a few, very few, but these books were just thrown on the floor, and we went through them. And we all wondered what's going to happen to them, those that we didn't select. And we suspected that they would all be thrown away, you know, just discarded. And so we had raided the libraries, so to speak, of all the books there, selected what we wanted, and just discarded

the rest. But, I guess, that might have been a necessity. I mean, they weren't going to reorganize these books and return them to the libraries. So, we spent a few months going through all of these books, selecting what we wanted. And these, we brought back to Washington D.C., where we proceeded to translate those that we considered important.

MK: And then while you folks were in Tokyo, what did Tokyo look like? This is right after the war.

YF: Right, yeah. It was bombed out, you might say. And, you know, the place was bombed with incendiary bombs, so they just burned the whole city. There were a few places remaining, but generally it was all flattened, you know. There were some places that--the rooms, for instance, that were useable in the basement. The basements, you know, were not damaged, and so those places were used. But right along the palace, you know, right in Tokyo, many of the buildings were standing. Like the Nippon Yusen [Kaisha] Biru, NYK building. And that's where the ATIS, the Allied Translation and Interpreters Section, was stationed. And we were attached to that group, so we stayed at the ATIS building. Right next to it was the Marunouchi building, another large building, and that was intact. The Daiichi---the Daiichi building, I suppose, was General [Douglas] MacArthur's headquarters. And that, of course, was standing. Because the palace wasn't touched, you know, so. Of course, we couldn't get in there, but we visited that area. But generally, Tokyo itself was practically razed completely.

MK: You know, as a Japanese American GI in Tokyo at that time, how were your relations with civilians?

YF: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I remember a couple of 'em. For instance, at the ATIS building, we had our meals and we ate in the cafeteria. And there were a lot of young boys hired to work there as busboys, and so on. And the thing is, they all looked like me (chuckles), you know. And you can see that they're malnourished, I mean, they're under-nourished. They looked a little bit skinnier than they should be. And they'd go around, in fact, begging for food, and so on. And that was pretty sad to see. That was one.

Another was, one day, I visited the PX [post exchange] and bought a can of candy which I thought of giving to my cousins who lived there in Tokyo. And so I was carrying this Almond Roca, you know that pink can, and I had come from the PX. And I was walking down the street, I was approached by a man begging for food. Saying, "Can you give me something."

And all I had was the can, so I said, "Well, have this." And so I gave it to him. And the thought in my mind was, wow, it's so sad that he's begging for his family, and all I can give is this can of candy which will be gone in maybe a day. How much they must be suffering. You know, that kind of feeling. And I thought, well, maybe because—again, because they're Japanese—because I look like them, or they look like me. Those are a couple of impressions that I have of that time. But as I mentioned, I had some relatives, cousins, living in Tokyo. Did I mention anything about them at all?

MK: No. I'd like to know more, like how did they fare?

YF: Yeah, I visited them as often as I could. And I'd bring some rations and stuff like that. But every time I visited, they would put their best foot forward, for instance, you know. And I learned to eat a lot of gourmet food, for instance, like fried—what do you call?—bee, you know, bee nests, you find those larvas. I mean, that's what they used to eat. And they would fry it, and was very tasty, I thought. (Chuckles) Another was some kind of shellfish. And I thought, wow, they must have spent a lot of money just to entertain me. So anyway, they tried to, well, do their best to entertain their cousin. But this family was my dad's younger brother's family. And he had gone to the Yokoyama family as a *yoshi*, and so their name was Yokoyama. But at one time, he was the chief of police in Niigata city. And you can imagine, in Japan, that kind of position would be very prestigious and all that. And so they're used to a lot of luxury, I guess. But they had three boys, and two girls, five kids, and the mother was still alive. The father had died early. And we traded stories, you know. So the three guys, for instance, they were all in the army, and the eldest was first lieutenant in charge of fortification on Hachijojima, you know, south of Tokyo. And we found out that he used the same document to build his fortification—the same document that I had helped to translate, you know (chuckles), the fortifications. And so that was kind of interesting. Anyway, he was the one who had brought back with him, a large, very long samurai sword, being an officer and all that. And when I unsheathed the blade, the tip was sort of stained. And so I asked him, "Did you kill anyone with this?"

And he said, "No, but I had to test it, so I killed a cat." (Chuckles)

Well, anyway, he gave that sword to me, and I brought it back. But I don't want to have it around the house, so I gave it away, too. But a couple of years later, I asked

this person to whom I had given this sword, "Do you still have the sword?"

And he said, "What sword?" (Chuckles) He had completely forgotten that I had given it to him. Well, anyway, that's something else.

The second son was with the finance department in the military. And he was a second lieutenant. And the third one was a buck private, and he was with the clean-up squad for Hiroshima. He had gone there to clean up. So he remembered seeing all the terrible things down there. So we traded stories like that.

MK: Were there any antagonisms?

YF: No, we just—we were family, you might say, you know, so we were able to communicate. And my grandmother, on my mother's side, was still alive in Toyama. Yeah, Mother was from Toyama. And this woman, I had met about fifteen years earlier when they were here in Hawai'i—they lived here in Hawai'i. Of course, Mother was four years of age when she came with the family, I mean, with the father and mother. And they lived on Kaua'i. But a few years, I guess, after a few of us were born, they went back to Toyama. So Grandfather had died, but Grandmother was still alive during the war. And so I decided to visit her. And she had evacuated to a village up in the hills called Yatsuo in Toyama. And it's a snowy country, lots of snow. So it must have been in December, or January, or so, when I visited her. And I remember that feeling I had. You know, here I'm visiting Grandma as a sort of a conquering soldier, but at the same time, I want her to accept me—all the people around her—to accept me as one of them, you know, that kind of complex kind of feeling. And so I stayed with her just one day and went back to Tokyo.

MK: How did the people around her accept you?

YF: Yeah, they were polite, but, you know, I could see that, well, they didn't have any special love for a conquering American. But, of course, Grandmother was perhaps the only one who really accepted me then. Yeah, that again, was a long time ago so I don't know what we talked about, but I suppose just knowing that we're family, you know.

MK: And how long did you stay in Japan?

YF: We were there about four months, I guess. We went in October, so, November, December, January, February, March. No, five months. Because I remember on April 1st of 1946, I was on the high seas. You remember April 1, 1946?

MK: Mm-hmm [yes].

YF: That's when we had the tidal wave and I was on the ocean then. So, of course, we don't feel anything, but, you know. And we sailed all the way to Seattle, and we disembarked there. Took the train, and went right across the continent. So I remember passing through Minneapolis and Chicago, I guess, and then on to Washington D.C.

MK: And once you returned back to Washington D.C., what were you assigned to then?

YF: Yeah, so we were billeted at Fort Myers in Virginia, right across. And from there, we went to our office, which was on Fifth and K, Fifth Street and K Street in Washington D.C. There was a building there, so I think that was it, Fifth and K. Northeast, maybe, or something like that. And that was our office, and we proceeded to do translation work. Most of the people who went with us to Japan were there, also. And, you know, PACMIRS was a kind of an Allied outfit. And so we had Australians, New Zealanders, British, Canadian, American, both officers and non-coms. And so we got to—we didn't socialize too much with the officers, of course, we were just soldiers. But we did our work.

And in October of [19]46, we got word that my dad was ill. And so I was told to go and make the arrangements for my return to Hawai'i. I was given—what do you call?—emergency leave. And so I remember walking through the halls of the Pentagon, getting signatures, and passes, and things like that. And took the MATS, military—what do you call?—transportation, the Military Air Transport Service, MATS. And, of course, it's an availability kind of thing, so I had to wait, waited for their call, and then flew across the continent, and ended up in Hawai'i sometime in October, I guess. I was ready for discharge already, in December, and so the emergency leave turned into terminal leave, so I didn't do anything, I just stayed home, visited home. By then, Dad was all right. I think he had a heart attack or something, you know. But he had recovered. So I was discharged then, in December of [19]46.

MK: And then when you were discharged, what plans did you have?

YF: Well, I didn't have any plans. But as many of us did, we, as we left the regular, I mean, the army, some of us joined the reserve, army reserve. And I was in the reserve very briefly, and then I volunteered for the national guard. In the national guard, I was a second lieutenant for a few months.

Meanwhile, I had to decide what to do, and I had no idea. So I asked my dad, and he suggested, well, since I was born into a Buddhist minister's family, why don't you go and study Buddhism. He didn't suggest that I should be a minister or anything like that. So I thought, well, that might be an interesting thing, and so I looked for some good schools and decided on University of Chicago. There were some famous professors there. One of whom was Dr. Joachim Wach, W-A-C-H, Wach, a Swiss German who was an authority on the history of religions. And he had done some work on Buddhism, too, so I thought, yeah, it might be a good idea to study with him. There was also Dr. [Herrlee] Creel, who was a professor of Chinese, and so. . . . Anyway, University of Chicago was a kind of an interesting place. You could create your own program (chuckles). And so it was an interdepartmental kind of thing. And so I took courses in Christianity, in history of religions of course, Chinese language. I took Sanskrit. I mean, these are very impressive titles, but my scores were pretty bad.

(Laughter)

For instance, in German—I took German, too—I got a D in German, you know. But that was my language requirement. But I felt, to learn religions, you know, I should learn Chinese, for instance, and I should learn Sanskrit, and so on. So I took these courses.

And I'm not sure whether you understand the way they work there, but their college actually begins in the junior year in high school. That's the college. You know, junior, senior, and freshman, sophomore in college. This is their college. And beyond that is your professional school. They call it divisions or whatever. And that's when you major in a particular program. So I had a couple of years already at University of Hawai'i, so they admitted me into the divisions. But I had to take an exam to get in, and I failed in a couple of them. I wanted to get into humanities, and I knew nothing about humanities. So, you know, questions like identify certain names, I had no idea who they were. And so I had to make it up. So I was admitted to University of Chicago with deficiencies. And so it took me a couple of years to make up these deficiencies. But I was in the humanities division, and I took all kinds of courses I wanted, all funded by the GI Bill, you see.

MK: Being a student who was a little bit older, and who had gone through the war period, how mature were you as a student this time around, compared to before at UH?

YF: I think I was physically older, but mentally, still way back then.

(Laughter)

So anyway, 19—I was admitted in [19]47, then two years later, in [19]49, I decided to get married, okay. But, yeah. And our first child was born in [19]51. I don't know whether you met our daughter Pat, but she was born there, in Chicago. So that side went, I guess, according to schedule, but I guess I wasn't really a scholar. I don't like to study, I guess. But I hung in there, and finally, I left there. In fact, I remember Dr. Wach telling me, after I was there for five years, from [19]47 to [19]52, he said, "Aren't you about ready to graduate?" (Chuckles) He wanted to get me out of there.

(Laughter)

WN: You said you took Japanese language at University of Chicago?

YF: No, no.

WN: Not at all?

YF: No, no. The Japanese was at Fort Snelling and Savage, yeah. And that was for military Japanese, so.

MK: And you got married, and you had your first child in 1951, but you were still a student.

YF: I was still a student.

MK: How did having a family affect your being a student?

YF: Yeah, yeah, I felt that, too. So, I got married, and I thought—we had planned it, get married, and I would graduate, and this and that. But when, especially when our first daughter, Pat, came, my interest in studying just stopped right there. And so I had to go to work, and—that was interesting, too. I consider those things as part of my education, but. I worked at---summertime, we had our summer work and stuff, but aside from that, I had to get a more permanent job. So I went to work at a place called the Illinois Engine Exchange. And what we did was, we rebuilt engines, automobile engines. And so I found out some very interesting things about the car engines. The V8 engine, the straight-six engines. But there was one called the V-no, it was a straight twelve. Did you know that there was an engine like that? That was the---it was a Ford car with twelve cylinders. Long, long engine. And, well, anyway, we rebuilt these engines and sold them to different companies.

And so there, I met people of different nationalities. I got to know some black people very well. So we had them all come over to the house for dinner, and things like that. And we learned that, for these guys, anyway, that I knew, one characteristic of beauty in women was long hair. You know, for black people, their hair is usually sort of kinky and short. So when they see a person with long hair, wow, you know, it's a sign of beauty.

YF: And so they would describe them, you know, "She had hair this long." (Chuckles) It was kind of interesting. But we got to know them, they got to know us. We served them Japanese food. They could eat sashimi very easily, but one thing they couldn't—we had occasion to have *omochi*, I think, and they just couldn't touch that. I mean, they tried it, and that gooey stuff, sticky, tasteless, and all that. And so they just couldn't get used to it. I thought that was kind of interesting. But anyway, that was during the time that I had to go to work to support the family.

MK: And at work, were you doing manual labor?

YF: What was my—I was more like shipping clerk kind of job, I think. Yeah, I wasn't doing the rebuilding of engines and stuff.

MK: And, you know, you were saying that you were doing this to help support your family. How much did the GI Bill provide for you?

YF: Yeah, for one year, we received \$500 for our tuition. And that was enough, you know, at that time. In fact, it costs me \$450 for three quarters at the University of Chicago. The way they did it was, I think it cost \$50 per course, and we were to take three courses per quarter. So that's \$150 per quarter, for three quarters, so that's \$450. And so there was \$50, then, for books. And that was enough, too. Yeah, at that time. And I think University of Chicago, at that time, was one of the more expensive schools, too, even at that. And on top of that, we had our living expense. For a single person, I think was \$75. For a married person, was \$105. And so, you know, it was affordable, you might say. But that, when you have a family, that wasn't enough, so had to go to work.

MK: And then how did you meet your wife, Tomi Kitahata?

YF: Tomi? Yeah, so we had---I had met her earlier, when I was at Snelling, on a blind date.

MK: What was she doing in Snelling?

YF: No, no, she was in Chicago. Her family had been evacuated to Jerome, Arkansas. And, I guess after a while, they were permitted to leave for school or whatever. And so a bunch of them went up to Chicago, and so they were there when we were in Minnesota. And on one-weekend pass—one of these fellows that I hung around with in camp, I hung around with guys from Kaua'i. Anyway, one of them knew a person in Chicago, and so I guess they talked between themselves and so that the young lady in Chicago brought some of her friends and this fellow got us involved. And so a bunch of us met in Chicago, under the blind date, and one of them was Tomi.

So, it was after the war, of course, when I decided to go back to Chicago to school, that I decided to contact her, to ask her to find a place for me. And, well, anyway, that's the way it developed.

(Laughter)

WN: So originally she's from, her family is from . . .

YF: California.

WN: California, I see. So you weren't writing at all, during the interim?

YF: No. Yeah, we didn't know each other that well. And then when I went back to Chicago, then she was not able to find a place for me immediately, so she put me in her family's attic. So I was living in her attic for a couple of days. Meanwhile, she looked around and found a boarding house nearby, near school, and then I moved in.

And then, of course, the—oh yeah, and then she was also active at the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, which was Rev. [Gyomay M.] Kubose's place. Rev. Kubose was a Buddhist minister who had gone to Chicago in [19]43, I think, and established the temple. And actually, his background is Higashi Hongwanji. And Tomi's family belonged to the Higashi Hongwanji. And so that was her temple, and it was located near the University of Chicago, and so I decided to go, and I was helping there for a while. So those things brought us together, and one thing led to another, and we got married in [19]49.

WN: So I guess the original blind date must have gone pretty well, then.

YF: Yeah, I guess so.

(Laughter)

WN: For you to go through all of this.

YF: Yeah, I guess when you're blind, you know, you don't. . . .
(Chuckles) Yeah.

MK: And then everything worked out, you folks got married, had your first child. You graduated, and you ended up at Kyoto University in 1953.

YF: Yeah.

MK: How did that happen?

YF: Yeah, so I majored in history of religions at the university with Dr. Joachim Wach as my professor/advisor. I decided then, I mean, that's not going to get me anywhere unless I become a professor or something like that, so I decided, well, maybe I should go into the Buddhist ministry. In that case, I have to study Buddhism a little bit more, and so I decided to go to Kyoto. And I consulted with Dr. Wach, and he said, oh yeah, he'll write a letter of recommendation. And he was kind of well known, it seems, to the academia. And so he wrote a letter to the Kyoto University. Dr. Gadjin Nagao, Gadjin. He spells it G-A-D-J-I-N. Gadjin Nagao, who was a professor of Buddhism there. And I got a response from Dr. Nagao saying, "Oh yeah, if Professor Wach recommends you, we'll accept you without any exam" (chuckles). In other words, I had a free ride. And so, I went to Kyoto.

And so anyway, that was my main school, but that wasn't going to get me into ministerial training, so I also signed up for other schools. And I took courses at both Otani University, which is Higashi Hongwanji, and Ryukoku University, which is the Honpa Hongwanji schools, and took courses there. And meanwhile, the Hongwanji people got me—what do you call?—a teaching position at the Kyoto Women's University, teaching English, of all things. And that sort of helped our finances, you know.

WN: Shall we stop here, we're going to change tape.

YF: Okay.

MK: Okay, continuation of our third session.

You know, when you attended Kyoto University and other universities in Japan, how did you find the situation for yourself, being a Japanese American, studying in a Japanese-language environment?

YF: Yeah, of course, without Dr.—Professor Gadjin Nagao, you know, I would probably not have been able to survive there because he was a linguist, also. And, well, actually he was a Hongwanji minister, I mean, clergyman from Hiroshima, but he became a very famous Tibetan scholar. But I guess in his studies, he had to learn languages, so he knew not only Tibetan language but, of course, Chinese, classical Chinese, and Sanskrit, and other modern languages, including German, and English, and so on. And so when I went, he used me as a kind of sounding board for his English—what do you call?—studies. And whenever I visited his office, he'd speak to me in English. And, of course, I speak in English, and that prevented me from learning Japanese (MK and WN chuckle.) Well, yeah. But he had other students studying with him, and so I got to meet them, too. It was very interesting. And many of them became very important scholars, you know. But I guess that was the Japanese style, the student attaches himself to the teacher, and he is nourished, you might say, in different ways.

But anyway, this Dr. Nagao was also a sort of an important person in the community. And he—somewhat like the Rotary Club here. You know, the Rotary Club would have meetings every week, and they'd have a speaker come and share all kinds of information. In Kyoto, there was a club like that, too. It wasn't Rotary, though. It was sponsored by the Asahi Beer Company. And every week, there'd be—every month, it wasn't a weekly thing—every month, there would be a gathering at this beer parlor, and Asahi Beer Company would donate all the beer. And we had to pay about a hundred fifty, no, four hundred yen for our meals. And then we would have speakers come and talk about different things. But anyway, Dr. Nagao was a member of that club, and so he would drag me along. And so once a month, we would have a beer bust. And, well, we were smart enough not to lose to the liquor, you might say. (MK laughs.) But some guys would come to that gathering just to get drunk, you know. So you pay for your food, and all the beer you want to drink. And so we had all kinds of interesting people.

But I got to meet some very famous people, like Kawai Kanjiro, for instance. Kawai Kanjiro is a rather famous ceramic artist. And he was the one who sort of led the Japanese *mingei* [folkcraft] art group after the war, to encourage the artisans to produce unique ceramic art. And he was located in Kyoto, of course. But there were others, Mashiko, and others. Those artists were encouraged, but Kawai Kanjiro was one of the leaders of that group. And I visited him—you know, because we were introduced—we visited his kiln, and he gave me a bowl, a large bowl. And I asked him, "What do you use this for?"

And he said, "You use it for anything you want." And then he gave me an idea of what he meant by that. In other words, we look at something, and we think we are supposed to use it for something, when actually, it's all up to us what we want to use it for. In other words, we shouldn't let the object tell us what to do, but we tell the object to do what we want it to do. And I thought that was an interesting thing. So his bowl is very big, and it doesn't look like a rice bowl, it doesn't look like a soup bowl. So anyway, when we brought it back—gee, I lost sight of it, I don't know where it is now—but what it became for us, was a planter.

(Laughter)

And I thought, well, that's okay. If Kawai Kanjiro says use it for anything you want, yeah, it could be. But anyway, people like that came to this club, and they shared their thing. So, as speakers, we had, for instance—I forget that person's name—but he was a scenario writer for one of the movie companies. He must have been a well-known person. But well, in that way, Dr. Nagao introduced me to his world. It wasn't only the academia but also his social world. *Chee*, a lot of names sort of escape me, but we visited some other ceramic artists, for instance. . . . Oh yeah, there was another famous person that I got to meet, a fellow whose works are displayed in a museum of art in Paris, for instance. And I have one of his works that perhaps I bought. Anyway, the design, it's a white bowl with a painting of poppy around it. Sort of nice. And the fact that his stuff is recognized in Europe, it makes that object to me very valuable. People like that, Dr. Nagao introduced me to. So I might not have learned Japanese from him, but he taught me many things. Unfortunately, just a few months ago, he passed away. He was in his nineties. But last year, I was able to meet him, so.

MK: And at the same time you were going to Kyoto University, you were in ministerial studies, too?

YF: Well, I was taking courses that would prepare me, eventually. And not only that, I had to spend some time teaching language at Kyoto Women's University, just for my livelihood, too. But that was kind of interesting, I thought.

MK: And, you know, I was wondering, when, in the course of your studies in Japan, did you decide to become a minister?

YF: Yeah, once I was in Japan, it was for that purpose, I suppose. So I took courses that would help in that area. And I was there for three years, from [19]53 to [19]56. And

in [19]55, I had my minor ordination. In [19]56, I received my full ordination.

WN: How would you compare the level of difficulty between, say, University of Chicago and what you studied at Kyoto University?

YF: Yeah, it was similar in some sense. I worked with the professor and so it was not very difficult. It was easy to ask questions, for instance, and gain some kind of perspective. But I guess in Japan, the language was the difficulty. I remember, the first year, sitting through many of these courses. The lecturer, of course, is speaking in Japanese, and so I couldn't grasp too much. But I began to pick up certain words that they kept on using. I still remember that the first that I remember is *haaku*, which means to grasp. *Haaku*. Anyway, this professor kept on using that word, *haaku*, "to grasp" this idea, and so on. And so I guess I must have written it down, and looked it up, and said, "Oh yeah, that's what it means." So it was that kind of process of learning words, little by little. And so from the second year, it was easier to understand what they were talking about. And I took my notes all in English, you know, as I hear it, I would translate. And I found out that the syntax is different, isn't it? *Watakushi wa nani nani o shimasu*. I, this thing, will do. And so, in translation, I would have to say, "I do this." So I have to leave that space open. I, this thing, will do. And so my translation began to become easier and easier as I went along, because I could catch the difference in syntax. But I look at my notes now, and find that there's a lot of blank spaces. I don't know what was being said and all that. So anyway, in Japan, it was the language, yeah.

In Chicago, for instance, there was a professor named Wilhelm Pauck, who taught Christian theology. And I thought I wrote a pretty good—what do you call?—term paper, and the paper came back. And I think he gave me a pretty good, decent grade, but on the bottom he said, "Your English is excellent for a foreigner."

(Laughter)

He knew I was from Hawai'i. To him, I was a foreigner. But I remember that.

(Laughter)

Yeah, I think I'm really fortunate, you know, that I've had these many different kinds of teachers along the way. And at my age now, I appreciate that.

MK: You know, when it came to the ministerial training, how was that for you?

YF: Yeah. Well, in a way. . . . Now, if a person were a very devout, basically spiritual person and all that, perhaps studying of religion would be a natural, you might say, and there's no problem. But I think I'm basically a skeptic, you know. I question and I don't like magic and stuff like that. So I remember in lectures, for instance, I'd be questioning all the time, things that I don't understand. And I think I went into religion from a very logical kind of direction, rather than a spiritual kind, you know. So I see that even in the kind of sermons, for instance, that I prepare, it has to be something I understand. And maybe that's a kind of valuable tool, for me, anyway. Because people are prone to understand logical things, rather than just something based on faith alone, you might say.

MK: Coming from—raised as a Japanese American in Hawai'i and entering minister's training, did that situation impact your training, too?

YF: It might be more what I perceived in my dad, or Mother, also. You know, what was around me. I didn't think that Dad was that kind of, you might say, a devout person, either. Maybe I learned from that. And Mother, also, she went through Normal School here, and so it wasn't just a religious kind of atmosphere, but a very academic, scholarly kind of life that she had that made her what she was. And so education was important, you know, rather than, say, religion. Yeah. I think I would tend to be that sort of person, rather than, say, a devout, kind of holy type of person, I think.

MK: And then you came back to Hawai'i in 1956, and where were you assigned to as a minister?

YF: My first assignment was Wailuku Hongwanji, and it was so because my dad was there. My dad had served one term as bishop, from 1948 to [19]52, and then he was assigned to Wailuku. And when I got through with my training in [19]56, as a kind of training, I suppose, I was sent to Wailuku to learn the trade, you might say. And so I was there from [19]56 to [19]60.

MK: And when you served at Wailuku, were you the first English-speaking minister at Wailuku?

YF: There? Perhaps so. Yeah. Although, yeah, the other ministers, of course, have tried to speak English, too, but they're not niseis, I guess.

MK: And I was wondering, as an English-speaking nisei minister, how did that affect the congregation at Wailuku?

YF: Yeah, it was easy to communicate, of course, with them, so I got to know the young people very well. We did a lot of things. Well, I was interested in photography, so there were some young fellows who came around to fool around in the dark room and stuff like that. So it wasn't only religious education that I was able to impart but other things, too. Other interests, as well.

MK: And I noticed you were at Wailuku till about 1960, then you returned here to Honolulu. And at that time you were assigned to the headquarters here, in charge of the English department.

YF: Yeah.

MK: And in those days, what was the English department?

YF: Yeah, we've had the English department for many years. You know, from the late [19]20s, on. You know, there were people like Ernest Hunt, for instance. There was. . . . I forget. There were other Caucasian ministers, and so on. So there was that English group. And in fact, it was a very active group. Many British people living here were members of that group. But the name "Hunt," of course, is kind of well known. And then the niseis began to come back, and so we have, there's another Warren. Warren, Rev. Warren Takeda, and Rev. Miura—these were early niseis. And they were part of the English department, so to speak.

Well, more and more, the members began to demand that things be in English. And so there was a time when everything non-English was being forgotten. I remember in 1960, when I first came back to Honolulu, the English service didn't have any sutra chanting, for instance. You know, sutra is supposed to be very important to Buddhism, but that part of the ritual was just thrown out. There was no chanting. And so we decided, well, maybe we should bring that back. So, well, we did that. But, of course, translations were important. Sermons in English was important. But my concern was to instill in our membership, a kind of confidence, a pride in their traditions, including their religious background. And so I felt that it was necessary to get out there and, you know, let our members know that, yeah, we do have something to contribute as well. And so much effort was put into interfaith kind of activities. But interestingly, that kind of attitude I got when I left Maui.

When I was at Wailuku, there was a minister, a priest, in Kahului, with the Christ the King church there—a Catholic church—who came into the Hongwanji temple to participate in a funeral service. And that was unheard of up to 1958, [195]9, around there. That's when some kind of encyclical, the papal declaration, sort of changed the Catholic attitude. Up until that time, Catholic members were not supposed to enter other churches. But I think that was freed about that time. I thought this is something that we ought to sort of support, too. That we have to get to know other religions, just as we want others to get to know Buddhism.

And so when I came out to Honolulu, one of the things I remember was the first Union Thanksgiving Service, which was on the eve of, night before Thanksgiving, 1960, that year. And the speaker was supposed to be Rev. Hunt. And this service was held at St. Clement's Episcopal Church, on Wilder Avenue. And the minister there was Rev. Paul Wheeler. And so, you know, about that time, there was this spirit of cooperation of doing things together, and so on. Anyway, that was the first Union Thanksgiving Service, and Rev. Hunt was supposed to be the speaker. And what happened was, a few days before that event, he came down with a bad cold or something, he couldn't come. And so he sent his—what do you call?—his sermon, and Paul Wheeler, an Episcopal minister, read a Buddhist minister's message. And, you know, that was a historic event, you might say.

But some of the people there were Rev. Harry Komuro, he was the Methodist minister there. Frank Ricker was there, Frank Ricker was a [First] Unitarian Church [of Honolulu] minister. Roy Rosenberg was the rabbi. And, you know, Rev. Hunt was supposed to be the speaker. So anyway, it's sort of seared in my mind, that very important occasion. I had just come from Maui, you know, and I was younger, but I was very impressed with that. And so we have continued this cooperative spirit, you might say.

WN: Was this kind of attitude in any kind of conflict with the older generation of Buddhist ministers?

YF: Well, there was one minister, for instance, who cautioned us about not even observing Thanksgiving service at the Hongwanji because this is a Christian observance. You know, a Buddhist minister saying that. And maybe that was the feeling at that time. A lot of the stuff that we felt we ought to do, in spite of those things being of, say, Western or Christian origin. And so anyway, I thought I brought with my kind of experiences and attitudes, a different kind of view of our purposes. And so we established also Memorial Day service at the temple, and

Thanksgiving service. And these were declared, for our purposes, semi-religious services because we had our Hongwanji services, and so on.

But there were other people, lay people, who shared this kind of attitude. One was—what do you call?—Albert Miyasato's sister, Lily—at that time she wasn't married—but she's Lily Horio now, very active at Jikoen. Anyway, she shared this kind of openness. She had been as a teacher, you know, after the war, I guess, many teachers went to Europe and places. I think she was at Frankfurt as a teacher. And so she experienced there in Germany, for instance, the attempt to create a Buddhist community there. There was a man named Harry Pieper there, P-I-E-P-E-R, I think, who tried to establish a Buddhist community there, and I think she was helping him. So anyway, there were others, you know, younger people with some energy, bringing in new ideas.

MK: At this time, when you were sort of brining in, helping to bring in these people new, innovative ideas, were there returning veterans at the Hongwanji who kind of became active in this way?

YF: Yeah, I was thinking, there could have been a little bit more of these people at the main temple, you know, but although there were a few, people like Bert Nishimura, for instance, they were around, but they weren't that active. I know he still attends services today, but. Whereas in the Christian churches, especially the Mānoa Valley Church, that was founded by Rev.—yeah, what was his name?—Rev. Kiku . . .

MK: Higuchi.

YF: Higuchi, yeah. Yeah, he was able to get a lot of veterans, you know, to be very active there. I was thinking maybe we could have had a little bit more, but. We had the YBA, you know, the Young Buddhist Association, but I don't know. We used to call them OBA, they're not young Buddhists.

(Laughter)

And then they had certain ideas, too. But through people like Ralph Honda, for instance, they did a lot to, sort of bring a little bit more stature to Buddhism as well. You go to Punchbowl, we, I think the *dharmacakka*, the wheel on the gravestones, was something that the YBA brought. At Punchbowl, for instance, the eight Bodhi trees, are you familiar with that? Yeah, there're eight Bodhi trees growing on the *makai* slope over there. They're big trees, now, you know, but they were planted in the early [19]50s,

I think. So among the YBA fellows, I think there were some veterans.

MK: I know that you were eventually promoted to be an advisor to the bishop in 1970, and you became a chief advisor later, and eventually acting bishop in [19]75, and elected bishop in 1975. Bishop of the Kyodan, and appointed head minister of the Betsuin.

YF: Yeah, well, I wasn't that. . . . Well, in 1975, that year, the main temple, Betsuin, and the—what do you call?—the state organization, were separated. And so, although I was the bishop, I think the bylaws says that the head minister will be appointed by the bishop. Up till that time, the head minister of the Betsuin was the bishop. I mean, it's just the wording in the bylaws just split the two organizations. So, I've never been the head minister of the Betsuin at all. I've been just the overall head, you might say.

MK: And, you know, you continued to be bishop from [19]75 to [19]87. What was the process, I mean, an election? Or . . .

YF: Yeah. At that time, the term, one term was three years. And so every three years we had an election. And so, in a way, I served for four terms, yeah. And it was perhaps because there wasn't anyone else who might be any different from me, so they kept me on for twelve years.

(Laughter)

But after twelve years—twelve years is long, you know, as a bishop. And of course, the main job, of course, is to assign ministers and, you might say, set the tone, and so on. But that job, I think, is one of diminishing returns, you might say. You're elected because you're considered to be the right person for that position. So once you get in, then your decisions will be antagonizing people along the way. We have to move ministers, the members don't want you to move them, so the members don't—you know, they might have some antagonisms. The minister doesn't want to move, so he doesn't like you, and so on. And it's that kind of—I can't see it as a popularity rising.

(Laughter)

It's, yeah, for twelve years. And so that was long enough, I thought.

WN: Was it under your administration that they started the Living Treasures?

YF: Yeah, yeah, that was . . .

WN: What was the rationale behind that?

YF: Well, now, what was that fellow's name? Name. . . . There was a fellow, the name, I have a lot of these senior moments. Anyway, this fellow had this idea, which he thought, as in Japan, we should honor people with certain talents. And he brought this idea because he had a particular person in mind. He was thinking of this fellow named Charles Kenn, that he was part Hawaiian.

YF: Maybe the Hawaiians might like this idea, he thought. And so he went, I think, to Lili'uokalani Trust, or he went to Christian churches, but nobody would accept that idea. So finally, he brought it to me, and we talked about that, and we thought yeah, that's a good way to honor people who have contributed. And so that's the way it started, very small. So it was in 1976, and we decided, okay, let's honor Charles Kenn. And it started small, but now it's a big thing. We have a banquet, you know. I think the original purpose, though, has been lost. See, the original idea was to recognize people who had been contributing something and have not been recognized, like Charles Kenn. Charles Kenn was quite a scholar, he knew a lot of stuff, and people would come to him and learn from him. And they would write books and, you know, be recognized. But he didn't have anything, and so we thought, yeah, we should recognize that kind of people. So anyway, he was the first one. But from the second year, the choices have been, you know, people who have succeeded and gained notoriety, or whatever. So more and more, the selection would be of people who had been already recognized. So I think we should rethink it, but I don't know.

MK: I know that even after you served as bishop, you continued your role in the Buddhist community. You were head of the Buddhist Study Center, and although you retired in 1993, you then again became head of the Bukkyo Dendokai.

YF: Dendo Kyokai, yeah, mm-hmm [yes].

MK: In both capacities, I guess it's more like, again, outreach . . .

YF: Mmm, yeah, yeah.

MK: . . . rather than to a specific congregation. Can . . .

YF: Yeah, I think in a lot of ways—I guess this is part of life—that we're at the right place at the right time, or whatever it is. Just when my term as bishop was ending in

1986—was it?—Rev. Kondo, who was the head of BSC, Buddhist Study Center, died in an accident on the Big Island. And so that position was open, you might say. I mean, he was an excellent director there. And so anyway, after he died and the place was open, and I lost my position as bishop, it was only natural that, well, they had to find some place for me, so I just stepped in.

And in the case of BDK, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai. By the way, that's translated, Society for the Promotion of Buddhism. It was in [19]78 or so—yeah [19]78—when we were approached by the headquarters in Tokyo. Mr. Numata asked whether we would permit the establishment of a branch here. And I was then the bishop, so, you know, I accepted that. And I asked Ralph Honda who had just retired from his position at Office Appliance, since he had time, whether he would take over as the president of BDK. And so he agreed, and he did a great job. He had people to help in visiting the hotels. And in ten years, he did wonders. He was a businessman, so he knew what he was doing. But after twenty years, in 1998—yeah, I think 1998—Ralph's health sort of deteriorated. His mind was still sharp, but he just couldn't get around, he was bedridden. And so he asked to be relieved of that position. And since I had been the one to appoint him to take over BDK, he said, "Well, I'll just give it back to you then." (Chuckles) So it came back to me. And so I took over then, in [19]98.

And, of course, the main job is to put the teaching of Buddha into the hotel rooms. And, well, we have quite a few hotels here in Hawai'i, and many of them have accepted the books. But recently, there have been some hotels with the leadership, maybe the managers or presidents of some other faith, who are not willing to have Buddhist books in the hotels. And so they have been refusing, and in some cases, they have been sending back books that they have. So this is a kind of a discouraging trend, you know, right now. But it's up to them, you see. But we found that those hotels that have accepted these books, have really enjoyed having them, because we also have the guests sending in requests for their own books, for instance. So there must be some benefit that they're getting.

MK: Since we've covered your growing up years, your war years, your work in the Buddhist community, we're going to shift now to some really reflective questions. I think, you know, I asked, I posed this question earlier Monday, and I was wondering, how did war affect your faith?

YF: Well, I don't think it had anything to do with my faith at all. It's a kind of a reflection of, say, my understanding of human nature, I suppose. You know, it has nothing to do

with the other, I mean, this is part of life itself. That as long as we are finite beings, we're limited in everything, and so we can't see consequences as we are experiencing things, so we react. Religions have said wise things, you know, like, for instance, in Buddhism, and this is also in other religions, too, but we say, "Violence is not overcome by violence," or "Hatred is not overcome by hatred," you know, we understand that. But as soon as somebody does something to us, then we react in kind. And there could have been some, a little bit more time in reflection, for instance, in our invasion of Afghanistan, or Iraq, for instance. But there must be some other unknown agenda. We keep on hearing people say, well, it's really a war for oil. There might be truth in that, I don't know. But, well, we don't look ahead enough, I think. So it's not really a reflection on religion, but our humanity, I guess. The frailty of our human understanding of things.

MK: And I know that you have two children, you have Patty, you have Stephen . . .

YF: Three.

MK: Three? Sorry. You have three children, and you have grandchildren. What do you want your children and grandchildren to know about World War II, or about war in general?

YF: Well, I don't know what I want them to know about conflicts of war. These things do happen. I would hope that their reaction to things would be sensible, and they don't think in terms of creating their lives based on violence, although this is a very common way in which we react to things. There must---there can be other, more sane ways, to reflect a little bit more on how we ought to look at life and contribute to a happier world, you might say.

MK: And, you know, as the tape comes to a close, how has war affected your life, your thoughts about Hawai'i, or anything? Your closing comments.

YF: Well, I guess I don't have any real words of wisdom. After all, I'm just one who has lived a full life. There've been good times, and there've been bad times, but I would think we should be concerned about how we live our lives, how we regard other people. I guess as human beings, we have choices, so it's a matter of choice, how we live. Do we live in anger, or do we live with love, a regard for others? If we think selfishly, I suppose our world would be very narrow. But we don't live by ourselves, we live with and among other people. And there's only one answer, I guess, we should live with regard and love for others.

MK: Okay, thank you.

WN: Good place to end.

MK: Thank you for the interview.

END OF INTERVIEW