

JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAII

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Toshio Saito (TS)  
Shikibu "Clara" Saito (Toshio's wife) (CS)

By: Jim Tanabe (JT)  
and Yoshie Tanabe (YT)

Interview Date: May 8, 2004

English translation of original interview, which was conducted mostly in Japanese;

Note: Comments in brackets [ ] have been added by the transcriber or translator. Ellipses indicate trail-offs. Inaudible words or sections are identified by ((?)) in the transcript. Items in bold represent words spoken in English in the original interview; they may contain minor edits to facilitate the translation.

- JT: **OK, today is May 8th, 2004. We are interviewing Mr. Toshio Saito, who was interned in Honouliuli and the other places on the mainland.** Let me begin the interview, Saito-san. Could you tell me your parents' names and where they lived in Japan?
- TS: Fukushima Prefecture. Yes, [in] Fukushima Prefecture [in a place] previously known as Shinobu-gun, Hiratsuka-mura.
- JT: Is it located in the northern part of Japan?
- TS: Yes.
- JT: What are your parents' names?
- TS: My father's name is Umejiro and my mother's name is Uta. I think they came to **Hawaii** for something related to sugarcane, maybe, but from our conversations I am not quite sure what they actually did.
- JT: In other words, they came to here as **contract laborers** for sugarcane-related work. There were many such people at that time.
- TS: I think so.
- JT: Did your parents get married through a picture bride arrangement?
- TS: I don't know.
- JT: Didn't you hear any stories [about their marriage]? Did they marry because they loved each other?

TS: I am not sure.

JT: Do you have any siblings in your **family**?

TS: There are five of us. My oldest sister was born in Japan and seems to have moved to **Hawaii** when she was nine years old. My father had come [to Hawaii first], and then she came here with my mother.

YT: **They were married in Japan?**

TS: I think so. They probably got married in Japan.

JT: I see. So, Toshio-san, where are you in the sibling order?

TS: I am the fourth.

JT: You were born here, so where [in Hawaii] were you born?

TS: I was born in **Haiku**.

JT: You have many photographs of your father and mother. Were those taken in Japan?  
[pointing to photographs]

TS: Yes, this is [pointing to the person on the right side of the picture] my father, and this is my mother [pointing to the person on the left side of the picture].

JT: **Ok, thank you.** So, you were born in **Haiku**. Where did you go to school?

TS: I wasn't in school yet.

JT: I see.

TS: I went back to Japan when I was four years old because my father was sick with **kidney stones**. He was told by the doctor that his condition was hopeless. One day a friend brought him a watermelon, which seemed to make him urinate more. He kept eating watermelons and his health improved, so he made it back to Japan.

JT: Really, he got well! The watermelon was good for it, then!

TS: Yes, it's good for the **kidney**. The doctor somehow . . .

JT: Was he fine after that?

TS: Yes, he was fine.

JT: That's good. When you were four, you went to Japan and, of course, went to school, right? To a school in Japan. Where was that? Fukushima?

TS: Yes.

JT: How was school?

TS: Well, I didn't like it much, so I always played around. [chuckles]

JT: Did you speak English until you were four years old? Did you speak with your parents in Japanese as well?

TS: I don't remember.

JT: But you went to school in Japan and spent time with Japanese children, so you might have also spoken Japanese, right? How long were you there?

- TS: Until the eighth year.
- JT: Eighth year. That's junior high school, right?
- TS: I didn't go to junior high school.
- JT: Eighth year is still school, though. Were you about twelve years old?
- TS: I guess so.
- JT: Were the rest of your siblings with you?
- TS: Yes. All of us went back to Japan together. **Oh**, no, only my **brother** stayed back in **Hawaii**
- JT: Your older brother?
- TS: Yes, my older brother stayed back and worked in **Hawaii**, and then returned to Japan.
- JT: Did you have a house on **Maui**?
- TS: No, we were in a [plantation] **camp**.
- JT: So, at the **camp**, it was only your older brother who was left alone in **Hawaii**?
- TS: Yes.
- JT: So then, how old were you when you were an eighth-year student?
- TS: How old would it be? I don't remember.
- JT: Are you **85** years old now?
- TS: **Four**. [84 years old]
- JT: Were you born in **1920**?
- TS: Yes.
- JT: That means that in **1932** you were an eighth-year student in Japan, right? **1932**. Did you return to **Hawaii** after that?
- TS: I came [back] to **Hawaii** in **1937**. December **three**.
- JT: So you went to junior high school in Japan, didn't you?
- TS: No, I didn't.
- JT: No? Didn't you go to school even in Japan?
- TS: I did **farming**. I helped out. Because we were farmers.
- JT: Did you just work in the fields?
- TS: Yes, for a **couple years**. I helped my family and then came [to Hawaii].
- JT: What kind of crops did you grow?
- TS: All kinds—vegetables, rice.
- YT: **Apples**?
- TS: We planted many **apple** trees later. Lots of them.

- JT: Well, it seems that you grew all kinds of things. So, after [you worked in] the fields . . .
- TS: I was in Japan for about twelve years—since I was four—because when I got back to **Hawaii**, I was seventeen.
- JT: You worked in the fields a lot.
- TS: [chuckles] Yes. By the way, do you know the word “*daraoke*”?
- JT: Something to collect water?
- TS: **No**. Human waste. [laughing]
- YT: Something like “*ageya-san*” [a person who collects human waste] ?
- JT: *Ageya-san? Age-baketsu?* [waste bucket]
- TS: Yes. Human waste. I had to carry it on my shoulders.
- JT: They made you do even that kind of work?
- TS: Yes, we were farmers. I had many experiences like that.
- YT: I guess you would really remember something that smelled bad—that kind of thing.
- JT: Didn’t it splash on your legs?
- TS: Yes. I couldn’t do that now.
- JT: You had the worst kind of work to do. Was it **1937** when you got back to **Hawaii**?
- TS: Yes, I spent New Year’s Day on the ship. At **five** [o’clock], 1938, I entered the **Immigration** Office. I walked in and then I had to walk right out. Because I had no citizenship [papers] at the time.
- YT: Did you lose them?
- TS: I didn’t have [citizenship]. But I had proof of my **birthday**. So I showed them my Japanese family register.
- JT: And then you got American citizenship. What kind of work were you doing before the war began?
- TS: I worked at a *sake* brewery in the mountains [possibly Maui Sake Brewery]. I made a *sake* called “*Hinode to Aloha*.”
- JT: Where was this?
- TS: It was in **Waiakoa, Kula**, on the island of **Maui**, in the heart of the **Haleakala** Mountains. I have a picture of the place.
- JT: Oh, there was a *sake* shop? Did you make **ice** as well?
- TS: No, we didn’t make **ice**.
- JT: You didn’t? Most of *sake* shops would make **ice**, right? You folks didn’t?
- TS: No, we didn’t.
- JT: What about soy sauce?
- TS: No, we didn’t make soy sauce either.

- JT: Really? Only *sake*? Was there a good source of fresh water in the mountains? Good water?
- TS: Yes, there was good water. It was a little muddy, so we had to purify it first.
- JT: Did the water come from a well? A natural well?
- TS: Probably from the mountains, down through pipes to our water tanks.
- JT: Was the water cold?
- TS: Yes, very cold.
- YT: Mr. Saito, did you come back to **Hawaii** alone from Japan?
- TS: Yes, I was alone.
- JT: Did you come here alone by ship?
- YT: Did you visit your **brother**?
- TS: No. My **brother** had already gone back to Japan alone. He got married and still lives there.
- YT: I see, so were you alone **then** in **Hawaii**?
- TS: Not at all, because I had many **cousins**.
- JT: Were they on your father's side of the family or your mother's?
- TS: They were on my father's side. My father's last name is Nihei. Not Saito. Saito is my mother's last name. He was adopted [into my mother's family].
- JT: So, you were doing that kind of work, and then war began early in the morning on **December seventh, 1941**. What were you doing at that time?
- TS: It was Sunday. I was still sleeping. [laughs] When I got up, I heard on the radio that war had already begun. I just listened in front of the radio intently to the news.
- JT: How old were you at that time?
- YT: **Twenty-one**.
- TS: Was it **twenty-one**? Yes, **twenty-one**.
- JT: What were you feeling [at that moment]?
- TS: I felt like—ahhh, it's come—they've finally done it. After I came back from Japan, I also went back [to Japan] once **pre-war**. I was told that my mother was sick and in critical condition. It was **June tenth**. It was autumn when I went back to Japan. At that time, I had already heard that there would be war.
- YT: Where were you when you heard that? In Japan?
- TS: Yes, I heard about it in Japan.
- YT: Who did you hear it from?
- TS: Everyone had been talking about it. Ships had stopped sailing to America.
- JT: Oh, really. That means the last . . .

- TS: Yes, I came here on the last boat. I had already asked *Ōshima-ya* in Yokohama to let me know if any ship would be leaving for **Hawaii**. Then I got a **telephone** call, went there. And then after I got there, I came back to **Hawaii**.
- JT: Did you come back to **Hawaii** because of the war rumors?
- TS: Well, if I couldn't come back to **Hawaii**—I feel **Hawaii** is a good place. It's a better place to work than Japan.
- YT: What did your father and mother think about it? Did they say it was OK to leave?
- TS: [My father] said it was OK. But my mother said that it would be better if I didn't go. But finally she said, "Do what **you** want to do."
- JT: When you were small—turning [the conversation] back to Japan for a bit—when you were small, when you were in school, did you ever pretend to be a Japanese soldier?
- TS: At that time, I did, yes. After all, they said it was our training.
- JT: Even for children.
- TS: Well, it was a school for young men.
- JT: Especially true for boys.
- TS: I guess the girls trained a little, too.
- JT: It was already like wartime, wasn't it? But didn't you talk about the war while you were working in the fields?
- TS: Not at that time.
- JT: **OK**, was it around June or July when you got back to **Hawaii**?
- TS: It was already in the autumn, so around September.
- JT: It was almost the beginning of the war. **OK**, so, on **December seventh**, you're on **Maui**, you hear about it on the radio—were you surprised?
- TS: Yes. I felt that, sure enough, it had actually begun.
- JT: Were you afraid for your safety at that time?
- TS: Yes, after all, I am a Japanese—a Japanese American. I was brought up in Japan, and I thought it was dangerous. There was a lot of talk about the danger to us.
- JT: Was this your own thinking?
- TS: No, everyone was talking like that by that time.
- JT: I see. Even on **Maui**. But here, **Honolulu** was the most dangerous place to be. Even on **Maui** . . .
- TS: Yes, people were talking about it.
- JT: I see. And then you were arrested a year after **December seventh**, weren't you? What were you doing up until then?
- TS: The **Army** took over the *sake* brewery and used the storage to hide all kinds of **food**.
- JT: The **Army** used it as storage?

- TS: Yes, because it became their property.
- YT: Was the owner of the *sake* brewery Japanese?
- TS: Yes, he was from Hiroshima.
- JT: Did the government force you to close down the *sake* factory? Saying because it's Japanese?
- TS: Well, the property was taken away, so I guess there was no other choice.
- YT: What was the name of the owner of the *sake* shop?
- TS: It was named "*Aloha to Hinode.*"
- YT: What was the name of the owner?
- TS: It was a corporation, so there were many, many people . . .
- JT: Oh, I see. It was a **corporation—company.**
- TS: There was Mr. Shimoda, Mr. Kobayashi.
- YT: Didn't the government put them in the **camp**? Were those people put in the **camp**?
- JT: No. Oh, wait. One person was put in.
- YT: The top executive?
- TS: No. It was Shimoda.
- YT: Shimoda? Was he sent to **Honouliuli** or **Sand Island**?
- TS: He was sent to—**Sand Island? Honouliuli?** I don't remember.
- JT: It was **November** when you were taken away—November **1942**, right?
- TS: Yes, it was **November seventh. After one year.** I was captured.
- JT: Do you remember that day?
- TS: Of course I remember that day. Suzuki and I—he was a school teacher, a teacher at a school in **Kula.** We were . . .
- JT: A Japanese school teacher?
- TS: We were arrested, put in a **Jeep**, then **turned** here and there, and walked around like we were in some kind of show.
- JT: Were you at your home at that time? Were you in your house when the **MPs** [military police] came?
- TS: I had rented a home and was living there.
- YT: **Kahului?**
- TS: Yes, **Kahului.**
- JT: What was the **MPs'** attitude when they came? Did they seem angry?
- TS: No, they just said I was going to **camp**, so I needed to prepare a **suitcase** of just the basic things and then get ready to go. And then, we left.

- JT: Right then and there?
- TS: Yes, I left the other things as they were—all the things that I couldn't bring.
- YT: What happened to all those things?
- TS: I left them as they were at that time, but told my neighbors to have my cousin take care of them. I had to leave right away, that's why.
- JT: Did the **MPs** push you around?
- TS: No, they didn't really do anything rough.
- JT: Did they bind your hands?
- TS: Yes, they did. Then we went toward **town** and went to the **office**.
- YT: What did they ask you?
- TS: They asked if I would support Japan—if I would **help** Japan. I said I was born in the U.S. but grew up in Japan, so both countries were like my parents. I didn't want to fight either country. That was the truth. I couldn't lie. The interpreter was there, too.
- YT: There was an interpreter? Was the person Nisei [second generation]?
- TS: Maybe Nisei, but I also thought maybe not.
- JT: Was the interpreter a soldier?
- TS: Yes.
- JT: Is this a photograph of the sergeant?
- TS: I don't remember if it's a photograph of him or not.
- YT: Mr. Saito, were you afraid?
- TS: Not so much that. It was more of an eighty-percent feeling of resignation. I was caught and there was nothing I could do about it.
- JT: Does that mean you were not really surprised about your arrest?
- TS: Not really.
- JT: Were you surprised when the **MPs** came?
- TS: I wasn't really that surprised.
- YT: Not even a little?

[Part 2 begins]

- TS: Well, I did wonder why I had to be arrested since I had citizenship. But I also thought that maybe it was because I am of Japanese descent.
- JT: Where were you sent first?
- TS: **Haiku**.
- YT: Were there others there?



- TS: Yes, there were.
- YT: How many? **About how many?**
- TS: I don't remember—about twenty or so.
- JT: Was it crowded? The beds?
- TS: It was a pretty big place with a yard. There was nothing to do every day.
- YT: Was there anyone you knew?
- TS: Yes, someone who came back from Japan with me.
- YT: Was he your friend?
- TS: Just someone I knew.
- JT: All young people?
- TS: All young. But there were few elders.
- JT: Issei [first generation]?
- TS: I would say Nisei.
- JT: Elder Nisei.
- TS: I think so.
- YT: Were there any Issei?
- TS: I don't know because I didn't ask them.
- JT: School teachers?
- TS: Yes, there were school teachers. Maybe they were Nisei.
- JT: And Buddhist priests?
- TS: I don't think there were priests.
- JT: Maybe they were arrested much earlier.
- TS: They [school teachers] were from **Honolulu**, and maybe those arrested much earlier were priests.
- JT: The question about which side you would support in the war—was that all you were asked?
- TS: I guess so.
- JT: That was all? Did you feel disgusted?
- TS: I said that if the army was going to draft me, I'd have no choice but to serve the U.S.
- JT: Did you say that? Is that how you really felt?
- TS: Yes, that's how I really felt. There was nothing else I could do except to say that I didn't want to fight either country, but if I had to I would.
- YT: What did he [the interrogator] say? Nothing?

- TS: I don't think he said anything after writing down my reply.
- JT: **OK**, then how long were you on **Maui** and in **Honolulu**?
- TS: About two to three months.
- JT: Did some people remain in **Haiku**?
- TS: Yes, some stayed, and some came out later, after the war.
- JT: Why did only you and a few others leave and come to Oahu?
- TS: Well, **Haiku** was going to **close** later.
- JT: Weren't you part of a special group to be brought to Oahu?
- TS: I don't think so, but I'm not sure. I don't remember.
- JT: Anyway, you came to Oahu, and where were you sent? **Sand Island**?
- TS: Yes. **Sand Island**.
- JT: Did you go to the Immigration Office?
- TS: No, I didn't go to there.
- JT: Did you go directly from **Maui** to **Sand Island**? How long were you on **Sand Island**? Was it a short period, like a month or two?
- TS: A little bit longer than that, but less than a year.
- JT: Was there **barbed wire**?
- TS: Yes. Here is a photo of that.
- JT: How about your sleeping quarters?
- TS: It was like a **barrack** with two floors.
- JT: So it was not a tent.
- TS: No. It was good place. There were up to seven companies. First company, second company, third company. I was in the fifth company. And I was on the second floor.
- JT: How were the provisions?
- TS: Do you mean meals? The food was not that bad.
- JT: Was it American-style food?
- TS: Yes.
- JT: No fish, no tofu.
- TS: I'm not sure about tofu. I don't think we had any.
- JT: But, weren't the **cooks** Japanese detainees?
- TS: All Japanese in the camp were like **volunteers**.
- JT: But the ingredients would be a problem.
- TS: Yes, there was a lot of canned food.

- JT: Did they serve steamed rice?
- TS: Yes, there was rice.
- JT: What did you do every day?
- TS: Well, there were **shells** so I collected and polished them. Then, I gave them as gifts to my **wife** and the people who came to see me. I collected a variety of them. I still have some.
- CS: He made them for me when he was in **Honouliuli**.
- YT: So you still have some?
- CS: Yes, downstairs.
- TS: Yes, in a frame.
- JT: Wasn't **coral** brought in?
- TS: The **yard** was dug up and sand-like material brought in to build roads.
- JT: **Gravel**, right?
- TS: Yes, **gravel** made from **coral**. Yes, they [shells] were mixed in it. I polished them.
- JT: How did you polish them?
- TS: I went to the shower room and polished them like this.
- YT: No **sandpaper**?
- TS: My friend got **sandpaper** later.
- YT: So on the cement [floor] of the shower room?
- TS: Yes, we made the **floor** very smooth.
- JT: The government wouldn't let you use tools.
- TS: No.
- JT: I would think not. Too dangerous.
- TS: When we finished using it [sandpaper], we had to give it back and it was counted.
- JT: [It was like that] all the time, was it?
- YT: Do you remember **Loveless**? **Sergeant Loveless**?
- TS: **Loveless**? The soldier? I know him.
- YT: What was he like?
- TS: He was a nice person.
- YT: Everyone says that.
- JT: He was at **Honouliuli**, wasn't he?
- TS: Yes, he was at **Honouliuli. Loveless**. I remember him. He was in the office.
- JT: Did you play games, sing songs, or do stage plays?
- TS: Yes, we did. When someone stepped forward, we had him sing a song or do something

else.

JT: If you didn't do those kinds of things, there was nothing else to do, right?

TS: Right. We would go crazy. Actually there was someone who went crazy at **Honouliuli**.

YT: Were there people like that?

TS: Yes, there were. A man said the water in the **shower room** tasted like papaya juice. There was someone like that. Papaya juice. It was popular at that time. Maybe to him it tasted like papaya juice with an odd flavor to it.

YT: Was it medicine [in the water]?

TS: No. The person started to say that the water taste liked papaya juice after he went crazy.

YT: Were there many people like that man?

TS: I'm not sure.

JT: Did the people [in charge] call a doctor or did they do nothing?

TS: No. I didn't hear about anyone going to the hospital.

YT: Did those people have families outside [of the camp]?

TS: I don't know.

YT: But family members were allowed to visit about **once a week** or so, weren't they?

TS: No, in my case, they didn't. I didn't see them [that often]. I had just one visit from someone who came from **Maui**.

YT: Only one time? Oh, from **Maui**. That's far.

JT: Were you already married at that time?

TS: Not yet.

JT: You were still friends.

TS: I had proposed to her earlier.

JT: **OK**, so you went from **Sand Island** to **Honouliuli**. Was **Sand Island** closed down?

TS: I think so.

JT: So some were transferred to **Honouliuli** and some were sent to the **mainland**.

TS: Right, there were some people who had gone there earlier.

JT: How was the experience in **Honouliuli**?

TS: It was a valley, you know? The camp was in there. I don't remember how many—we had battalions. First battalion, second battalion, third. I don't remember how many.

JT: There were small **cottages**, right?

TS: Yes, **barracks**. Now, how many people were in each?

JT: Someone said eight people.

TS: Well, at the maximum. I think that was about the maximum.

- JT: How about the **beds**?
- TS: There were two beds, one above the other.
- JT: Were they **double** [i.e., bunk beds]?
- TS: Yes.
- JT: There were four [bunk beds], so eight people.
- TS: Yes. I guess my barracks was the same, but I can't remember if we had eight men.
- JT: Do you remember the names of your barrack mates?
- TS: The names of the people with me? Yes, I remember them although I don't know if they remember me. There was Suzuki, Yamada, and Saito. There were two Saitos. Who else, now?
- YT: Yamamoto?
- TS: No.
- JT: Takahashi? Shōzō Takahashi?
- TS: No.
- JT: Orimoto? Kōzō Orimoto?
- TS: No. I guess I've forgotten the names of at least two others.
- JT: Matsuura-*sensei*?
- TS: Matsuura?
- JT: Murata-*sensei*?
- TS: Murata was next door. He was next to us. Oh, there was Sakamoto. He was in the same **barracks**.
- JT: **Jack. Tasaka, Jack**?
- TS: **Tasaka**. I wonder if he was in the fourth battalion.
- JT: **Yoshinori. Jack Yoshinori Tasaka**. A tall man.
- TS: And **Abe. Sanji Abe**. He was probably from **Hawaii** Island.
- JT: Are they still living?
- TS: **Sanji Abe**? I don't know about him, because he was much older than me. **Okubo**, maybe? And **Sakakihara**. He was in the House of Representatives, I think. **Sanji Abe** and who else?
- JT: Are they all Kibei Nisei?
- TS: I don't know if they were Nisei or not.
- JT: But were they about that age?
- TS: Yes, they were far older than me.
- JT: Ok, they were elders. How about life in **Honouliuli**?

- TS: Life there? Sometimes there were so called *taiki butai* [standby troops].
- JT: What troops? What did they do?
- TS: The standby troops cut down trees—*koa* [native Hawaiian tree]. That was also volunteer work.
- YT: No **pay**?
- TS: No.
- JT: I heard that Urata-*san* was a leader of those troops. He was the leader of the *koa* troops.
- TS: We worked together to cut the trees and then burned them because there were so many mosquitoes.
- JT: I heard that there were many mosquitoes.
- TS: Yes, there were. Then we cleaned up the area.
- JT: Was that outside the **camp**?
- TS: Yes, it was outside.
- JT: To reduce the number of mosquitoes.
- TS: You know, when we went as standby troops to go *koa* cutting, we saw bees. There was honey!
- YT: **Oh, honey bees?**
- TS: Yes, **honey bees**. We used to collect it [the honey].
- YT: Did you eat it?
- TS: Yes.
- JT: Wasn't it dangerous?
- TS: It was. They were soldier bees, so we smoked them out.
- JT: Smoked?
- TS: [Chuckles] After we got stung. But we didn't give up.
- YT: Were there any Japanese soldiers? Did you see any of them?
- TS: There were. I saw them.
- YT: Did you talk to them?
- TS: No.
- YT: I guess you weren't able to speak to them.
- JT: Were they next to you?
- TS: Next to us, in the **space** for the **army**. They were in tents.
- JT: Then, you saw the Japanese soldiers walking around there?
- TS: No, they came to the **kitchen**. We used the same **kitchen** for *kau kau* [Hawaiian: food; to eat].

- YT: Ok, did you *kau kau* together?
- TS: Yes, but we were treated differently.
- YT: But you ate at the same place.
- TS: Yes. People in my camp cooked the meals, and . . .
- JT: But you actually saw soldiers, right?
- TS: Yes, with my own eyes.
- YT: Weren't they young?
- TS: They looked young.
- JT: And **Sergeant Loveless** was there, wasn't he?
- TS: Yes, he was there, in the office.
- JT: Was he Caucasian?
- TS: Yes.
- JT: I heard that he was kind to all of you.
- TS: Yes. He came around sometimes and talked with us.
- YT: Do you remember the names of any other **guards**? Other than **Sergeant Loveless**?
- TS: Well, I don't know about other guards. He was the only one in the office.
- JT: I heard that there was a **Hawaiian** sergeant, and that **Hawaiian** soldier gave some food to the people in the camp out of genuine sympathy.
- TS: I wonder who that was.
- YT: Were there any bad people?
- TS: Bad people—I didn't hear of any.
- YT: No? That's good.
- TS: Well, there was one in **Haiku**, but maybe it was because the war had just started. He was there for just about one day, but he was **chop-chop**. Even about food.
- JT: Ok, bullying.
- YT: Was he white?
- TS: Yes, he was. He was a soldier. Was it **baseball**? So that we could play, we were going to mark the **lawn** with the **lawnmower** when he said not to do it.
- YT: Did he say not to mark it?
- TS: Maybe he was afraid the markings would be a target for an enemy attack.
- YT: **Sabotage**?
- JT: For example, Japanese fighter jets could come and see them.
- TS: Like a **key sign**. There used to be that sort of thing. It was the early part of the war, within a year.

- JT: But when you went to **Honouliuli**, that was already **1943**, wasn't it?
- TS: When I was in **Honouliuli**? Yes, it was about that time.
- JT: In '43, '44, as the United States began winning battles and pushing toward Japan, did the camp situation improve even a little? Didn't some people start to leave the camp?
- TS: Yes, correct. Some people could leave the **camp**.
- YT: You were sent to **Tule Lake**, correct? Why were you sent there?
- TS: I intended to go back to Japan at that time, because I didn't know when the war would end.
- YT: Did you want to go back to Japan?
- TS: Yes, I planned to go back to Japan.
- YT: Planned? Was that the reason you were sent to **Tule Lake**?
- JT: But, did you notify [the officials] that you planned to go back to Japan?
- TS: No, I didn't. I didn't notify them.
- JT: But was that your idea?
- TS: Yes, because I didn't know what kind of life I would have and for how long.

[Part 3 begins]

- TS: I thought it would be better if I went back.
- JT: When you were in **Honouliuli**, was it because you didn't know anyone on **Oahu** that no one came to visit you?
- TS: I had many cousins, but they didn't come.
- JT: They didn't know you were there?
- TS: They knew, but . . .
- YT: Were they afraid?
- TS: Yes, they were afraid.
- JT: So, they were afraid to come.
- YT: Did you decide to go back to Japan because the United States didn't **trust** you? Did you want to go back to Japan?
- TS: Correct. They never trusted me.
- YT: They never **trusted** you, so you were sent to **Tule Lake**?
- TS: I think so.
- JT: And, **Honouliuli** was about to **close up**, right?
- TS: Yes, Japan had already been losing for some time. People were talking about Iwo-jima and so on.



- JT: At that time, was there any possibility of you being able to leave camp? Was there any chance of being allowed to leave **Honouliuli**?
- TS: I don't know.
- JT: Then why were some people able to leave?
- TS: They were already married. They had a **wife**. That might be one of the reasons.
- YT: Were you sent to **Tule Lake** before the war ended?
- TS: Yes. I heard that the war had ended when I was in **Tule Lake**.
- JT: Were you asked if you had any place to go or what you wanted to do?
- TS: At that time, I gave up my U.S. citizenship because I wanted to go back to Japan. Then, to Texas . . .
- JT: Did you renounce your American citizenship? Or, did you **give [it] up**? Was it that you were now done for—that you would be interned forever?
- TS: Yes, that was the reason.
- JT: You went from **Honouliuli** to **Tule Lake**?
- TS: Yes, then to **Texas**. And after that, by **contract** to **Seabrook Farms**.  
[[http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Seabrook\\_Farms/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Seabrook_Farms/)]
- YT: You were sent to **Seabrook Farms**?!
- TS: I went there to work.
- YT: **Oh my goodness!** Those people from **Peru**—about **three hundred!** [TS making sounds of agreement.]
- JT: Yes, there were many of them, about two hundred to three hundred . . .
- TS: I went there, all right.
- JT: Were you there for a long time?
- TS: I was there for about a year. [Laughs]
- JT: The work at **Seabrook Farms** must have been terrible. From morning until night . . .
- TS: **Frozen food**.
- JT: **Shift** work?
- TS: **Shift** work, yes.
- JT: But you probably were not paid much. **Fifty cents an hour** or so?
- TS: Maybe, I've forgotten about that.
- JT: **25 cents** for women, and **50 cents** for men.
- TS: I don't remember.
- JT: And you had to work every day without a break, right?
- TS: Right, right.

- JT: Did you have any days off?
- TS: I don't exactly remember, but maybe not.
- JT: I think that is correct, because I've heard that people worked **seven days** [a week].
- YT: I wonder if you know this Caucasian man—**Collins**? This man named **Collins** is a **lawyer**.
- JT: Yes, he is a *daigen* [lawyer].
- TS: Oh, oh, a *daigen*. Our *daigen*.
- JT: A representative.
- CS: We have letters [from him].
- TS: Yes, we have many.
- YT: You have letters?
- CS: **Yeah**, we **keep** them.
- TS: We have a lot.
- JT: Did he write them?
- TS: I think so.
- JT: **Wayne Collins** sympathized with us Japanese and was very helpful. Especially in the case of the South American Japanese—those in **Crystal City**.
- YT: Thanks to him, you and many others were not forced to return to Japan, a defeated country.
- JT: That was the case for just the roughly three hundred South American Japanese. The rest were forced to go back to Japan, where there was nothing.
- TS: One of my friends, Yamamoto—Kazuo Yamamoto—went back to Japan.
- JT: Those people must have had a really rough time in Japan. **OK**, you **give up** your U.S. citizenship when you are in **Honouliuli**, and then you are sent to **Tule Lake**. People who were sent to **Tule Lake** were the kind of people who gave up their citizenship or spoke out against America, right? **Tule Lake** was like a *karabōshi* [Hawaii-Japanese pidgin: prison]. The government considered everyone there dangerous. From there, [to] **Crystal City**, where many South Americans went. From there, **Seabrook Farms** also?
- YT: Did you receive the **\$20,000**? [Presumably referring to the reparations paid by the U.S. government starting in 1988.]
- TS: Yes, I did.
- JT: At **Seabrook Farms**, did you have a decent place to sleep or were the conditions poor?
- TS: No, it was a good place.
- JT: It was a good place?
- YT: If you compare it with **Honouliuli**, right?
- JT: Oh, really! Were there families from South America at **Seabrook Farms**?

- TS: Yes.
- JT: Did those people speak **Spanish**?
- TS: Yes, they did.
- JT: Did you hear people speaking **Spanish**?
- TS: Yes, but I couldn't understand what they said. [Laughs]
- JT: And what did you do there? With the **frozen food**? What kind of work did you do?
- TS: I was on a platform. The **spinach** comes in. That was first, ok? The **spinach** comes in. That's where I worked. Then, like this, the baskets come by—like this, they keep coming by [on a conveyor belt]. Then a ((??)) drops down. Then I put the **spinach** in the baskets like this. Next, [the baskets] move on to the **sorting room**, where many women work at the [conveyor] belt. Then [the spinach] goes to the **sorting room**. Then, it goes around, and then they **boil** it. They sort out the good and then **boil** it. Last of all, it's packaged and then sent to the frozen room. There were all kinds of vegetables—**lima beans**. What else?
- YT: **Corn?**
- JT: Yes, **corn**.
- YT: **Peas?**
- TS: Yes, there were **peas**. All kinds.
- YT: **How long were you there?**
- TS: Well, about **one year**?
- YT: About **one year**? And then where did you go next?
- TS: Then I got out.
- YT: Did you go back to **Hawaii**?
- TS: Well, first I went to my friend's place—doing yard work.
- YT: Where was your friend?
- TS: **Oakland**.
- YT: **Oh, California**.
- CS: **Richmond, California**.
- TS: **Oh, Richmond, Richmond**.
- YT: Was your friend Japanese?
- TS: Yes, Japanese. We were in camp together. His family did **yard cleaning**, so he suggested we go there.
- YT: And **how long** were you there?
- TS: I think about **six months**? Maybe a little bit longer.
- YT: And then what did you do?
- TS : Then she came to **Oakland**, so we got married there.

YT: You got married?

TS: Yes.

YT: And did you live there?

TS: We stayed there, but I don't remember how long. **How many months we stay over there?**

YT: **One year?**

CS: **No**, we stayed in **Oakland** just for a while. **What** [was] **the other place?** The place was far from **Oakland—one more place.**

YT: **California?**

CS: There was **California, but the other place. Glendale!**

TS: Oh, that's right. We were in **Glendale** for a short time.

CS: **Nineteen forty—**

TS: **1947.**

CS: **1948.** It's in my notes. We were there for **ten months.** We were in **California** for **ten months** in total.

YT: Then did you go back to **Hawaii?**

TS: Yes.

JT: Do you remember the month and year when you left **Crystal City?** Do you remember? Probably '46 or '47.

TS: Maybe **1946.**

JT: **OK**, then you moved from **Crystal City** to **California** in **1947.**

TS: I was a **gardener.**

JT: **OK**, then finally **Maui?**

TS: In **1948.**

JT: How about your children?

TS: One child, after we came back. My wife was already pregnant.

YT: After you got back?

TS: After we got back to **Maui.**

JT: When you returned to **Maui**, what kind of work did you do on **Maui?**

TS: Maui, so it was pineapple [work]. No, carpenter. I'm getting things **mixed up.**

JT: You became a carpenter. What type of—kind of carpenter? A plantation carpenter?

TS: No, for her [wife's] uncle. **Construction** work.

JT: So you worked straight through as a carpenter?

TS: Just for a while, until there was no more work. Then we came to **Honolulu.**

- YT: Then you came to **Honolulu**?
- TS: Yes, and then . . . .
- CS: **You went trucking company.**
- TS: **Higa Trucking**, by the **airport** where **Hawaii Airline** is. That's where I worked for a short while.
- JT: As a carpenter?
- TS: No, more like **crating**. I was there for maybe **three months, four months**. Her [wife's] **brother** was working close by as a **contract** carpenter. He told me to join him, so I did and stayed in that job.
- JT: What kind of carpentry work? **Form** work?
- TS: Everything. From **form** to **finish**.
- YT: Did you build this **house**?
- TS: I bought it. We didn't have money. Not a penny.
- YT: And you had children, didn't you?
- TS: Yes, we had six children.
- JT: Six children?
- TS: All boys.
- JT: **Oh**, all boys!
- TS: Yes. But one was lame, and the other had trouble with his brain when he was born. When he was in the hospital, he caught a sickness. His brain was damaged because of that and did not work well after that.
- JT: Oh no, I'm so sorry.
- CS: **Meningitis**.
- TS: We went to the **hospital** on **Saturdays, Sundays**. We walked over together on the last day, taking gifts, wearing our nice clothes.
- JT: That must've been painful for you. **OK, Toshio san, what was your last job? Before you retired, what were you doing?**
- TS: **Carpenter**.
- JT: **Carpenter. For who?**
- TS: **Coastal Construction in Mililani**.
- JT: **OK**, in what year did you **retire**?
- TS: In **seventy-seven**.
- JT: **Oh, seventy-seven**. So, from that time on, you were here . . .
- TS: **Sunset Beach**.
- JT: So, you lived in **Sunset Beach**?

TS: Yes. From then on,

CS: **Since 1962.**

JT: **Oh, since 1962. OK, thank you very much, Toshio Saito-san, for sharing your story with us. Just about your entire life.**

Transcribed and translated by Anna Kato, and edited by Florence Sugimoto and Sheila Chun, Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii volunteers. Completed September 2016.