

JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAII

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

HARRY URATA (HU)

January 19, 2009

Interviewer: Brian Niiya (BN)

Notes: Double parentheses ((?)) denote unclear sentences or words. Notes in brackets [ ] are added by the translator for clarification purposes.

BN: We're here at the Japanese Cultural Center on January 19, 2009 with Mr. Harry Urata and we're going to ask him a life history with him and I guess we'll start maybe with your parents. Maybe you could tell me their names and what you know about where they were from and what led them to come to Hawaii as far as, based on what you know.

HU: Can you speak louder? I have a hard time hearing now.

BN: I wonder if you could tell us about your parents—their names and what you know about where they were from and why they came to Hawaii.

HU: My father's name is Fukutaro Urata. My mother and he got married in Kumamoto before they came to Hawaii. That was, I think, I don't remember exactly when but then they settled in Kukui Street, where I live right now, and they started a vegetable store, small one, very small. Then I was born there but when I was two years old, my father had an accident, car accident, at Nuuanu Pali. I think he was the first victim of Japanese immigrants with a car accident so came out in a big write-up in *Hawaii Hochi* and *Nippu Jiji*. I still have the *Nippu Jiji* one. Anyway, I was two years old. He was maybe only 35 years old. Then they had big, big funeral. He had lots of friends that connected with vegetable. The reason why he got into accident: he went to get watermelon from Kaneohe, so on the way to Kaneohe they had that old Pali Road, and hit that hairpin place so about eight people in the truck, everybody throw outside. And my father was the driver and I forgot the name but...one Japanese man sitting next to him, two of them died on the way to Kaneohe Hospital. And so because of that accident, when... that's the Japanese style... *shichinenki* [seventh anniversary of a death], seven years after he died, my mother decided to bury his ashes in Kumamoto, so my mother took all of us, six children. I was the eldest boy and my brother and two sisters, all above us, sisters, and went to Kumamoto.

BN: If we could back up a minute now, what was your mother's name and was she also from Kumamoto?

HU: Yes, Take Urata.

BN: What was her maiden name, do you know?

HU: Before she got married?

BN: Before she got married.

HU: Oh, Take Fuchikami. All the people stay in that village, funny thing is, everybody, same name. Fuchikami. So I was surprised when I went to that graveyard. I see all Fuchikami, Fuchikami. Even my father's side too. About one, just... the distance is about one mountain. I still remember that village name is Mitama-mura; the other side is Mitake-mura. My father's side is Mitake. My mother is Mitama-mura. Anyway, so...

BN: So they married first in Kumamoto...

HU: Yes, Kumamoto...they went to...

BN: Were any of the children born in Japan or were all born in Hawaii?

HU: Born here.

BN: All after they moved here. And you mentioned there were six. You said there were six children?

HU: Six children. But you know, six children and the father died only 35 years old. Only my mother with six children. It's hard to make living. Maybe that's the reason why my father left only me as a *chonon* [first son], eldest son, to Kumamoto, at my uncle's place.

BN: How old were you when...or actually first I should ask you, what's your birthdate? When were you born?

HU: In Kumamoto? First time?

BN: When were you born?

HU: Oh, 1918, August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

BN: So your father died about 1920.

HU: Yeah, that's right. Around there.

BN: Then you said seven years after that.

HU: Yeah, seven years everybody went to Kumamoto to bury his ashes.

BN: In between that time you were in Honolulu.

HU: Yes, before. So when I went to Kumamoto, they used to tease me because I talk funny Japanese and at the same time mostly English. “*Me ga you ni kuren no ni.*” You know, that kind Japanese. “*You ga me ni kuren no ni.*” Odd, those days, I speak English. Of course my sisters too. But anyway, only one year or so, I think, everybody came back to Hawaii except me. Yeah, that’s what happened. After that, all alone, I was raised by my relative in Kumamoto, but not so long because I stayed in Kumamoto only three years, then they decided. Kumamoto is too *kokka* [country], country [he meant “the countryside,” not “nation”] and those days, lots of Japanese used to go to Korea and Manchuria. So I had two aunts in Seoul, South Korea. And the younger one, younger aunty’s house, I was brought up. They took me to *Keijyo* [now called Seoul, capital of South Korea], those days Seoul was called *Keijyo*, Japanese way. Then I started new life in Korea. So anyway...

BN: So you were in Kumamoto for about 3 years, and then to Korea. Which relatives were you living with in Kumamoto?

HU: You know, the relative, my mother’s elder sister, two elder sisters was in Seoul. The younger one, first, I went to her place. That was lucky because kind of rich. The husband had a good job. But when I went inside high school in Seoul, my aunty died. So they decided the other elder aunty would take care of me. So after that I went to, I used to call her “*washida no obasan*” [aunty at Washida family]. “*Washida*” is oldest sister of my mother and Hajime is the one died when I went high school. So those are the days, Japan was really, really militaristic, especially the school like that, you know. They say, “*Yamato damashii*” [the Japanese spirit]... all those things. And they started, they invaded Manchuria, that was 1931. Then they started invade China, 1937, July 7<sup>th</sup>. But my mother worried, so “*Oi* [Hey], *Minoru*,” that’s my Japanese name, “you better come back. I think you’re going to have war pretty soon with China.” But had I already took the entrance examination at Waseda University, and I passed, you know, surprising, so I wanted to finish my college in Japan. But at the same time I was worried maybe they going to take me into Japanese army. Then my mother said, “Don’t go back. Stay in Hawaii.” So I listened to her; I stay back. I was lucky. If I went back to Japan, maybe I ended up someplace.

BN: So you were able to keep in touch with your mother and your family in Hawaii continually.

HU: Yeah, in Hawaii. No, ((?)) altogether 13 years in Japan, relations between my family and me, just like “*tanin*” [stranger]. Not like family. Because all by myself I stay. So I don’t have that family relation like. So those days, I think back, I was really rough, bully, yeah, real Japan-style, “you can do anything what you want if you’re a man.” So I used to fight all the time. So anyway, but I thought, that time, I decided, if I’m gonna stay in Hawaii, first of all, I gotta speak English. That’s the lucky thing I did. I decided like that.

BN: Before we get to Hawaii, I want to ask you couple more questions about Korea and Japan. One was, with the aunts you stayed with Korea, were there cousins, other children, that you lived with?

HU: No, no, no. No cousins at the first aunty, but they had adopted son from Kumamoto, where my mother came. You know one boy, they adopted one son of my aunty in Kumamoto. He

was with me at Seoul. But anyway, after that first aunty died, after that, they, I think, divorced or something. After that I don't know because I went to the other aunty.

BN: And I guess the other thing I was wondering is, among the others that you went to school with in Korea. Did people see you as being different because you were from Hawaii? Or, by the point, did you pretty much one day...?

HU: No, that's the point. I was brought up as a Japanese. Nobody told me you know I was born in Hawaii, because of that, you have American citizen. Nobody told me. That's why 1937 I came back from Japan. Inside immigration station they asked me, you know, "What are you, Japanese or American?" So I said, "Japanese, pure Japanese," so they never let me from immigration station. One week, two weeks, because I insist that I'm Japanese, pure Japanese, then the immigration station thought "funny." So I supposed to get birth certificate in Honolulu so I think they told my sister to go to the birth certificate, look for the birth certificate and they got that, so they found I was born here, so I had citizenship. I myself I didn't know.

BN: Did you remember as a small child being in Hawaii? Or are your first memories all of Hawaii?

HU: I knew that I was born in Hawaii though. But those days, that Japan style, no matter where you live, you are Japanese. Japanese, right? At the same time, nobody told me about my citizenship and all that.

BN: So by the time you're in Korea, you're pretty much blending in just as a regular Japanese. No one knows from your speaking or anything that you're from Hawaii.

HU: No, no. Pure Japanese.

I look at these boys, funny. Especially 1<sup>st</sup> battalion, 100<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Lots of my friends I know, *kibei* [those born in the US, but primarily educated in Japan]. Even one guy, good friend, Miura, he was over here. He was Italy. He died. Him too, he get the same idea with me. He told the government, he say when he die, he like the government to bury him in Kumamoto. They did you know. I went to see the graveyard.

BN: To pick up where we were. Given that you saw yourself as being Japanese, did you want to come to Hawaii? Or what were your feelings about coming to Hawaii now to live with a family that you didn't actually know that well...

HU: Family, those days... You know, my feelings toward my family just like "*tanin*" [stranger] not family-like. "Shucks. I'm by myself." That's the kind attitude I had when I came over here 1937?

BN: Did you want to come to Hawaii on your own?

HU: No, no, my own, no. As I told you I wanted to go back, finish my college. Because already, for me, just like, I don't have any family.

BN: You were mentioning before, once you realized you were going to be in Hawaii, you wanted really to learn English.

HU: My own thing, I have to learn English. That's the most important thing. But lucky thing I realized that, compared with other *kibei* Nisei. That was really good decision I made.

BN: Where did you go to learn English?

HU: When I stay outside, I mingle with only *Issei* people. I have hard time making friends with Nisei people. Only *Issei* people. So I thought, if I'm gonna live like this, I never going learn English. Then I found out, there's a school called Mid-Pacific. That school, boarding school, only time you can come out is Sunday. This is the place I think I gotta go, so that no contact with *Issei*, to improve my English. I did good decision but was hard time I had, because stay over there one whole year, it's hard. How I'm gonna eat? How I'm gonna make money? Of course, first part, when I came back from Japan, I was teaching Japanese school. See all those days, teaching Japanese school, not so good for my English improving. So I had hard time, really hard time, so I talked to somebody in Mid-Pacific, said how about maybe six months or so I stay, because I finish my high school education in Japan, so I know all that algebra, or geometry, or this and that, only thing my handicap is English. And they said okay. So I used to go Mid-Pac only six months or so, every year. Six months I can do whatever I like. So I used to work at cannery. That's a good place to work. I used to work 13 hours a day to make that money for Mid-Pac. Yeah, that helped me a lot. So but actually, I didn't go school like other students. So I had really, you know, those days, I had hard time to make my schedule. But somehow anyway, six months every year with Mid-Pac. Then in 1943, I graduated Mid-Pac, and before graduate Mid-Pac I took test for UH. I passed that one too. I didn't expect though. So hard, everybody says, so hard. So anyway...

BN: At Mid-Pac were there other *kibei*?

HU: Had two or three maybe, but they quit. They cannot continue.

BN: So then it was just you that graduated. You mentioned earlier also that you had hard time making friends with other Nisei.

HU: Especially at Mid-Pac. And funny thing is, when I went inside Mid-Pac, one guy came, he said, "Sensei [teacher], how come stay over here?" That was a Waialae Japanese School student.

BN: Was that because of the language or because Nisei didn't want to associate with *kibei* or...

HU: No, no, I think more you, your side. You know, they are open, Nisei boys, because I found out after that I came really good friends with all these Nisei. They say, "Hey, Urata, you know *naniwa bushi* [Japanese narrative ballad] You sing that, *naniwa bushi*, boy, I like *naniwa bushi*," these Nisei boys, from Waipahu, Wahiawa side.

BN: I know later on you became a music teacher. Was that something that you already... had

you had some musical background or training in Japan?

HU: No, no, the school I went was so strict. Kind of good school. Number one school in Korea. Very high standard.

BN: You didn't have any musical training.

HU: No, no. Not at all. In fact, I talk to my high school teacher. I want to go to Ueno...Ueno Ongaku Gakko. "*Urata, ima dame, dame. Ima no yōna sensō...*" ["Not right time to study music because of the war"]. War, right through war and this and that. "*Ima sonna tokoro ikan hoo ga ii*" ["It's better not to go to a place like that"].

BN: So you had an interest.

HU: Oh, small time. When I went to Japan, I think I lead one *kangaku tai* [instrumental group] later.

BN: So when you came to Hawaii were you able to pursue that?

HU: That's right. That one too. I study, not only English, my other goal was to study music. So much I like. I used to start from notes and everything. I used to take lessons from three *haole* teachers, piano. Yeah, that one too, I think to myself, those days, how I did it? You know, day and night I used to practice piano.

BN: So you were studying music, studying English, and working, all at the same time.

HU: Yeah, that's right, everybody say, "Hey Urata, you no mo interest in *wahine*?" [Laughs] Yeah, no more such thing. Only study, study, study.

BN: Were you studying both Western music and Japanese?

HU: More Japanese. Of course, I like classic. Funny, but I want to study classic too.

BN: Were you also singing?

HU: Singing? When I came back 1937 and '38, they had inter-island amateur contest. I tried that. I took number one in whole island. 1938, but those days, I was teaching Japanese school, so I changed my name to my best friend's name in Seoul, Kobayashi Goro. That's why even now lots of people remember me as Kobayashi Goro. Yeah, it's surprising.

BN: Did people at Waialae know that you were Kobayashi Goro?

HU: Some, some. Especially you know George Shimabukuro? George...he's a local singer. He made recording in Japan. He told me, "Eh, *sensei* [teacher], I used to like your singing when I was going Waialae Japanese School."

BN: Now during the time you were doing all this and going to Mid-Pac, the war breaks out. I

guess first of all, what do you remember about Dec 7 when you first heard about it?

HU: Oh, I still remember that morning, 7:15. I was at dormitory at Mid-Pac. Only time I can go home is Sunday, daytime. So I was over there and all of a sudden, I was brushing teeth, when music stopped, Hawaiian music. Silence, you know after that. Nothing. Everybody said, "What happened? What happened?" Oh, I don't know how long but then, after that, the announcer came out again and said, "This is war." You know, "Entire Hawaiian island under enemy attack" or something like that. I was so shocked! World War started. Then some other Chinese boy, or not Japanese, they came, "Hey, Harry. When the Japanese soldier land over here, help me, you know. Tell that soldier you're good friend with me." Just like, you know, hard to believe those things happened.

BN: What was your immediate reaction when you heard that? What was your feeling?

HU: I used to read a lot, you know even Japanese book, you know. There's one book in Japan, very popular. "*Nichibei moshi tatakawaba*" ["If Japan-US war breaks out"]. If there's war between America and Japan. That was the title of that book. Very popular. Everybody was reading. In there it says already that Japan was gonna attack, you know. [Slight interruption] Oh yeah, bad eye, I'm going doctor for that. Eye, hearing. All over, when you come 90 years old.

BN: The most important thing is your mind is very sharp.

HU: Not so bad.

BN: Very sharp.

HU: Very sharp?

BN: I hope I'm that.

BN: Now, did you...? Right on the day of Pearl Harbor, people like my grandfather and others were arrested and taken away. Were you aware of that? Did you know some of that and what was going on?

HU: Oh, yes. A lot of my friends, teaching Japanese school. Not the early part but after, especially 1943, when they made that Honouliuli Internment Camp. That time, lots of Nisei teaching Japanese school. My friends, they got arrested, went inside that internment camp. So I thought maybe tomorrow is my day, maybe I gotta go. Yeah, I had that feeling all the time.

BN: You weren't arrested for almost a year and a half after the Pearl Harbor attack. What did you do in the interim?

HU: Well, I thought until I'm gonna arrested, just keep on going, you know. To keep on studying music and English, that's the most important thing, so I just keep on going. Anyway, when I was arrested, I was arrested at school. The FBI, two men, came to give

me warrant of arrest at my school principal's office. "Here, you read this." So unusual, I was arrested in a school.

BN: So pretty much all along you were thinking that eventually you might get arrested.

HU: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

BN: Because of all the other Japanese teachers were arrested. When they arrested you, did they tell you anything?

HU: No, I thought well, the time came. Just nothing.

BN: Where did they take you?

HU: Oh, they take me, I think maybe FBI office. These people, they send me to that Honouliuli internment camp, that immigration station. Inside there already, so many Japanese arrested. They had hearing whether they gonna release or put in camp.

BN: So you had a hearing also.

HU: Oh, yes, I had. I still remember those hearing and interrogation and all that. I thought to myself that FBI's treatment, I mean the way they interrogate and all that, they are very, very gentleman-like. Not like Japanese officers. They are very, "Please sit down." And after they're *pau* [finished], they shake hand with you. "Thank you very much." I was so shocked the way they treat us. Real gentleman-like.

BN: Do you remember what they asked you?

HU: Ah, so many, so I don't remember.

BN: It was a pretty long hearing.

HU: Pretty long. Oh, I think they know pretty much about me.

BN: Did you wonder? Because it was so, like you said, a year and half after the war started. Did you wonder why now, as opposed to... I mean, why would they arrest someone after midway, so...

HU: Oh, yes, that Midway battle, to me, after that. That time, I still was outside, right? Then March 1943, I was interned. But anyway, already Midway battle was *pau*. Maybe that's the reason why, that the Honouliuli camp treatment came really nice. Yeah, they would tell me, "If you like Japanese food, you can go with the jeep. We take you to downtown, you know, Honolulu." Yeah, so nice, you know. We used to have sashimi and all this fish like that too.

BN: So after you had your hearing at the immigration station and at that point they told you that they gonna detain you. After your hearing, you're not released, so after the hearing did



they tell you that they would keep you in camp? From there you'd go to Honouliuli?

HU: Honouliuli. Yeah.

BN: You went there soon after it opened.

HU: Yeah, yeah, that's right. I think I was the first one maybe. Because they said they moved to Honouliuli from Sand Island, that March. See, I was picked up March and went inside.

BN: So you were one of the first ones there?

HU: First, I don't know, but at the beginning.

BN: Did you already know some of the people?

HU: Yeah, lots of them my friend.

BN: What were the living arrangements like there? What kind of quarters were you living in?

HU: Oh, to me, you know, compared with Tule Camp, the one I went inside, at Tule Lake, California, this side, Honouliuli Camp much, much better, treatment and everything. *Kaukau* [food] and everything. Very good. Yeah. Because maybe Hawaii was frontline you know. *Kaukau* stuff like that, just like we eat the best food. The soldiers eat.

BN: Were you in a barrack type of building?

HU: Yes, barrack.

BN: Did you have roommates?

HU: Oh, yes. Eight people in one shack.

BN: Do you remember who they were?

HU: Oh, yes, I still remember.

BN: Can you tell us?

HU: Eight people. I know two, my good friends: One was my good friend, from Japanese school. Everybody know that Chūō Gakuin. That vice principal, he was there. You know, He's Issei but come to find out, Issei, and of course he was working at the same time at *Nippu Jiji*, *Hawaii Times*, although he's Japanese school teacher and at the same time Issei. Come to find out he graduate from UH. I was shocked. He said, "*Honto, honto* ["It's true, it's true."] You sure? He say, "Urata, you know why I like study English?" "*Dōshite?*" ["Why?"] How come? "*Itsuka* [someday], someday, I like to fight with *haole*. I like to give them what I had in my over here." [a piece of my mind] [Pounds his chest.] That's what he said.

BN: What was his name?

HU: Yamamoto *sensei*. Noted for Gonbei [nickname; his actual name is Takeo], Yamamoto Gonbei. And the other one is Tsushima-san. One is *Hawaii Times*. The other one is *Hawaii Herald* [actually was Hawaii Hōchi]. Yeah, I used to live with them. And one pilot, during that China war. He was Japanese army pilot.

BN: Was he a POW? He was in Hawaii?

HU: He had come to Hawaii.

BN: Was he also *kibei*?

HU: *Kibei*. Of course, *kibei*.

BN: So most of the people were *kibei*?

HU: Most were *kibei*. Every one, I think.

BN : Except for a few Issei. You mentioned the food was very good.

HU: Food was very, very good.

BN: Japanese food?

HU: No, no, American food, but we used to change with the army side. We eat more rice, so we give them rice and they give us potato.

BN: And then, what about day-to-day life? What did you do?

HU: Oh, that one too. Hard to believe but I used to study a lot. Read books. And I used to practice guitar. So while my life in internment camp, I thought, when I recall, was not so bad, you know. I read a lot and study music.

BN: Were there other people there that were interested in music?

HU: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because those people, very well-educated. Priest. Bank people. Some people to do with Japanese government. Leader of the community or something like that. So we didn't have any trouble, you know.

BN: There were also POWs there. Did you interact?

HU: They had. No, no, no.

BN: Separate part?

HU: Separate. Entirely separate.

BN: And then there were a few Germans and Italians.

HU: Very few. Very few.

BN: But also separate?

HU: Maybe three, four Germans. Compared with Japanese.

BN: Based on your recollection, about how many people... about how many other Japanese were there, do you think?

HU: Maybe 250, because first part, *Issei* people among us. *Issei* people they started to send to Mainland, you know, here and there. So, I used to... They had a list of what ship they went to Mainland and all that. Yeah, when I was in Honouliuli, every so often, *Issei* people, they used to send to Mainland, relocation center or internment camp.

BN: And when they left did other Nisei come in?

HU: All the other people come.

BN: I know that at Tule Lake and the larger camps, the barracks were organized, and there were block numbers and there was an organization. Was there any of that at Honouliuli? Did you have an address?

HU: No, they had just like Army style. They had the commander, the internment camp, Japanese side. They had captain, about four captain. I was captain too once.

BN: Did your building, though, have a number, or an address?

HU: No, no, no.

BN: Nothing like that. It was few enough so that it didn't have any kind of address or number...

HU: No, no.

BN: Did you have a number?

HU: Oh, number. [pointing to his chest, understanding the question to refer to a personal number as opposed to an address number]. Yes, yes. I thought, "What is this, you know?" Some kind of, I forgot the name, insignia and a number. Just like prisoner. They had that too.

BN: Do you recall any kinds of major problems, episodes that happened?

HU: No, no. That's the part, I'm kind of proud of that place. That Honouliuli. We didn't have any trouble. You know, I used to hear, like other place, Tule Lake like that, they had

trouble, right? But nothing at Honouliuli, because those people they were community leader and all this kind of big shots. That's the reason why, I think.

BN: You mentioned there were POWs also at Honouliuli and you didn't interact with them...

HU: No, no.

BN: But was it your impression that there were a lot more of them or fewer of them than you?

HU: The first part there was real, real *Kaigun* [Navy], Midway or someplace, captured on island, South Pacific Island or something. But I didn't see too many though. I saw more at Saipan, after Japan landed Saipan, lots of Korean laborers. That time they came, so many thousands, I think.

BN: Thousand came to Honouliuli?

HU: Not thousand, but close to thousand.

BN: So a lot more than you guys. Having been there now, could you see them? Because you were in the back of the valley there...

HU: I can see them. You know, every morning, they bow down, east side.

BN: You mentioned to me also earlier, that later on you became world famous for your studying of *hore hore bushi* [hole hole bushi - folk songs of Japanese immigrants working on Hawaii's sugar plantations] but that that kind of began at Honouliuli. Can you tell me how that started?

HU: You know, I was picked up and went into Honouliuli, but at first I didn't know who I know, my old friends. But somehow through my experience, I had that really studying English. No matter what, I gotta study English. So, while I was in Honouliuli, and talked to a, I think, Lieutenant, warden, I said, "How about we make one class, English class?" So they say, "Oh, that's a good idea, Harry." So they did. And I think, that time, Mr. Hirai, Kauai boy. He's a real Nisei, talked mostly English, not Japanese. He was our teacher. We started. Lots of people came. Not lots but, you know, came. And that time, *Hawaii Times*, Mr. Kawazoe, came in, then we came good friends because Kawazoe-san started to talk to me every day about immigrants. So I thought, "How come Kawazoe-san you know about this immigrant stuff?" "*Watashi wa Nippu Jiji de ne reporter shite. Hajime wa, Nippu Jiji shigoto suru mae wa Hilo ni orimashita.*" ["I was a reporter at Nippu Jiji. Earlier, I was in Hilo."] He was in Hilo. As you know, Big Island, lots of Japanese immigrants. Plenty. So he had contact with lots of time, Japanese immigrants, and then he became a reporter of *Nippu Jiji, Hawaii Times*. He started that English class too with me, then every day, nothing to do, you know, so he used to talk to me about immigrants every day. Then he found out, interestingly, music and all that. He said, "*Urata-san, anata senso ga owatte mo, imin no uta, hore hore bushi yatte mitara, dō desu ka.*" ["When the war's over, why not study *hore hore bushi*?"] How about study, research *hore hore bushi*, immigrants' work song. So I say, "*Sō desu ne.*" ["Well, maybe I will."] I thought, "so desu ne" but...

Then war ended. Just happened Kawazoe-san house and my house right near Kawanakoa School, around there, walking distance. I used to see him at the corner of that service station all the time, when he *pau* work at *Nippu Jiji*, you know, *Hawaii Times*, used to come up. Maybe sometime I was at the service station. I used to see him all the time. He'd say, "Urata-san, *hore hore bushi* research *yatte imasu ka?*" ["Mr. Urata, have you been studying *hore hore bushi*?"] All the time he tell me. So I said, "Yeah, *yattemasu yo.*" ["Yes, I have been studying."] "*Shikkari yarinasai. Are taisetsu are desu no... Imin no ne.*" ["Do your best, It's an important part of immigrant life."] So he used to bring that...his study research..., of *hore hore bushi* and I used to read and all that. Oh, he used to write a lot about the immigrants. Then I think after the war he finished writing two books. One is *Imin Hyakunen No Nenrin*, history of Japanese immigrants, hundred years. Other one is *Ishokujū No Hanahiraku*. *Ishokujū* [food, clothing and shelter] is you know, the immigrants came to Hawaii and started their own life. That's the flourish, a really, nice big ending. Those two books, he finished writing.

BN: You remained friends with him until after the war, throughout...

HU: Yeah, he gave me that two books. He said, "*Kakimashita yo.* [I wrote these books] Oh, *kore attara* [If you have these...]. Very good. *Arigato* [Thank you]. Don't forget you, you still continue research *hore hore bushi.*" "Hai, hai" [Yes, yes]. And somehow that thing going on, then Franklin [Franklin Odo] came in. See, he heard something about *hore hore bushi*, I don't know, from his student, or so. He came, "Urata-san, you researching on *hore hore bushi*. You have some interview and singing of immigrants, *hore hore bushi?*" "Yeah, *daibun atsumatta yo*" ["Yes, I have collected many"]. I said I collected. "*Kikasete kudasai*" ["Please let me listen"]. He wanted to listen. So he started to come to my studio. So he took interest in *hore hore bushi* too. Then anyway, that's what happened. Franklin. And Kawazoe-san also came. Then Franklin, all of a sudden, what he disappeared from the University of Hawaii Ethnic Studies. I thought, "What happened?" I called his office; I called his home. Nothing. Then two years later, I had a phone call from him. He told me, "Hey, Urata-san, *genki desu ka?*" ["Hello, Mr. Urata. Are you all right?"]. How are you and all that? "*Anata wa dokkara denwa shiteru*" ["Where are you calling from?"]. Where are you calling from? He said, "*Ima Washington D.C., Smithsonian de shigoto o shite masu*" ["I am now working at Smithsonian in Washington D.C."]. "Eh, *honto*" ["Are you really?"]. "*Anata shimpai shita deshō*" ["I guess you have been wondering about me"]. "All research *hore hore bushi* no tape, *doshiteiika wakaran*" ["I do not know what I should do with Hore hore bushi tapes"]. "*Smithsonian wa daijobu yo*" ["You can depend on Smithsonian"]. "Oh, that's good news." Then, he did so much for me after that. Yeah, that just happened like that.

BN: When Mr. Kawazoe first introduced the topic, had you even heard of *hore hore bushi* at that point or was that new?

HU: Yeah, I used to hear from other people. Yeah, *mochiron* [of course], especially those who work on the plantation. I have some friends, my own friends.

BN: Later on, I want to ask you some more about that, but I want to get back to Honouliuli.

Who were some of your other close friends at Honouliuli that you spent time with?

HU: Sumida-san, his father was a big shot. Sumida Daizo. Sumida-san is the son of Sumida Daizo. He was with us at Honouliuli. And when I found out he was so well-educated. He graduated from a very good university in Tokyo and then after that, when he came back to America, he graduate what university? Anyway, both university he graduated. And when China war stated, he was in Japan so he was drafted in the Japanese Army. He was a lieutenant. Then somehow, China war ended and he came back to Hawaii.

BN: What was his name?

HU: Shinzaburo Sumida. I came good friend with him. He really helped me. You know I was going repatriate Japan. He stopped me.

BN: This was when you were at Honouliuli or Tule Lake?

HU: No, Tule Lake. Then when I got divorced, no good husband that's why me [laughs], he helped me a lot. Anyway, he was our commander when I was in Honouliuli. Internment camp. One time, we had strike. All these internees, "This *benjo sōji* [toilet cleaning], we not going do it anymore." So poor Sumida-san, what to do, I used to see him, all by himself, he was cleaning the toilet. Poor guy. So I told the other guys, "What's a matter you guys? The boss is doing all the dirty work." That's the kind man he was. Yeah. He died though, I think, two years ago or so. Do you know him?

BN: I know the father.

HU: Yeah, father big shot. Sumida Daizo. Iida Suisando. Iida Kōzō [actual name is Kōichi], or something. And then Isoshima-san. Was all big shots.

BN: Now, you probably know, we're doing some archaeological work there. These may be kind of strange questions, but it's related to some of the things we're doing. Were there, did you have hot water, hot showers there?

HU: No, I don't think had hot showers, Honouliuli. No.

BN: Because we found what we thought were seemed like water heating elements, but it might be just the administration area.

HU: I remember I never used hot water.

BN: The toilet, was latrine kind or had water, flush type?

HU: I think ordinary toilet.

BN: It had the flush kind of toilet, not just latrine.

HU: Yeah.

BN: Then what about power, electricity?

HU: It was all right.

BN: You had electricity.

HU: Yes, yes.

BN: We found what we thought were generating station.

HU: Another thing I was kind of proud of, you know, Honouliuli internment camp. You know, in front of every shack, they used to make small Japanese garden. Some really nice, you know. So I think they had Army camp, so lieutenant or somebody, some high rank officer, used to tell some lazy soldiers they don't clean up, or this and that, so they say, "You go internment camp, you go see, really nice."

BN: From the pictures we have, and from going there, there's that stream going down the middle of the camp. You were on which side of the stream?

HU: You know that long bridge leading to that eating place? That's the entrance of the internment camp to come in. And the first was, I think, as soon as you come in, left hand side was Dr. Uchida's office, right? Then right hand side was warden's office.

BN: Who's Dr. Uchida?

HU: Dr. Uchida used to have his own office at, on what's that street, Vineyard Street. You remember Vineyard Street? He had something to do with that Liliha Bakery, Takakuwa, related. First Dr. Uchida came to Hawaii, then after that they called the Liliha Bakery boss, Takakuwa.

BN: Later on I'm going to bring you some big pictures that I want you to look at. So we'll get to that later. I guess the other thing I wanted to ask you about was visitors. Were your family and other people able to come?

HU: Twice a month, or once, I forgot, anyway they used to have, on Sunday, visiting hour.

BN: How long could they visit?

HU: Oh, I don't know the time limit.

BN: At that point were you married at that point?

HU: No, I was single.

BN: So you had all your girlfriends come visit?

HU: No, no. No girlfriends. Nobody like us. No, no, no. My mother used to come, I remember. My mother used to come all the time.

BN: You were there about a year and a half. Now, how did that occur? I know a lot of people were released at that point.

HU: Well, that Honouliuli they said there were going to close, they said, "You get out." Then all us, Japan "bobora" [also "bobura"], kibe Nisei. Sixty-nine of them, they refused to go out. They beg us, beg us, go out. War ended, no war not ended yet. They said go out. We said, no, we stay until the duration of the war. Then they decided we go Tule Lake.

BN: What was the reasoning for wanting to refuse to go out?

HU: Well, they said they made mistake put you folks in, especially citizen. So we got upper hand. So, you made mistake, so what for we going out? So you made mistake so more so. Hard head. So they used to call us, sixty-nine of us went to Tule Lake, *Tsuihō Gumi*. You know what means *Tsuihō Gumi*? Excludes.

BN: Did you have like a leader or did you confer amongst yourself and jointly decide to do this, or was it individual?

HU: No...individual, but more like stick to it.

BN: But you kind of organized.

HU: We were hard-headed Japanese

HU: Hard headed. That time lot of people went out, especially those who had family, but us... come to think of it... more single *kibe*.

BN: And then from there they decided to send you to Tule Lake?

HU: That's why they didn't put us with other people, the other what 17,000? They put us in stockade and they watch how we react...nothing happened.

BN: When you went to Tule Lake there were a lot of Hawaii people already. Did you mix with the other Hawaii people or mainland people? The renunces?

HU: They told us to stay so we followed the order

BN: You moved in the fall of 1944.

HU: 1944, September.

BN: What was fall and winter like in Tule Lake for Hawaii people?

HU: Terrible. One stockade. All dirty. That was already September, kind of cold. We wash the



place; we had hard time until we settled.

BN: Did you stay in the stockade area the whole time?

HU: No, only two months. They watched. Now quiet... "this good boys". So we joined.

BN: And from there they moved you to the...

HU: Yeah... "OK, go... join."

BN: Was that the normal procedure, that when people first came in they would go to the stockade?

HU: No, no. Just for us.

BN: Why do you think that was? Why do you think your group was singled out for that?

HU: Because in Manzanar or some place, Hawaii Nisei had trouble. Came out in... what magazine? Come out in magazine.

BN: So they were probably afraid you were troublemakers somehow. You mentioned that conditions at Honouliuli were much better. Can you talk about the conditions and life at Tule Lake relative to Honouliuli?

HU: Anyway I was surprised when I went to Tule Lake. They had this *sokoku* [motherland]... you know... that *hachimaki* [headband]. I thought, what this young kids doing? *Bakatare* [idiot]. you know. What you can do?

BN: How were the living condition relative with Honouliuli?

HU: Honouliuli was much, much, much better, because of the people. Not ignorant. Yeah, Tule Lake *dame* [no good]. They don't know what they doing.

BN: What made you feel that way?

HU: The daily life... Quiet. And they enjoyed the garden they made. Mo more trouble.

BN: But at Tule Lake it was different.

HU: Tule Lake... *Asa kara* [from the morning] *sokoku* [motherland]... something *kikokudan* [group advocating return to Japan]. They all lined up. They marched and all that. Doesn't make sense.

BN: Did any of your Honouliuli group get involved?

HU: No. I still remember... I forgot the name... Okinawan boy was the leader of that. But no, after we reached over there, I don't know what happened, but he changed his mind, or I

don't know what but...quiet.

BN: At Tule Lake, you were there when there was that mass renunciation of citizenship. You were not among those?

HU: No, so many months I was there before closing to that war, I applied for repatriation. I did. Then Sumida-san stopped me.

BN: What was his reason for stopping you?

HU: All these things. They don't trust me. Just like I'm anti-American. What's the use of living in America? But I was too small-minded, come to think of it, when Mr. Sumida told me. He lecture me. "You know, Urata, *yoku kangaero* [think about it carefully]."

BN: So ultimately, because of him, you didn't apply.

HU: First I applied. After that, I send another letter.

BN: Changed your mind.

HU: Changed my mind.

BN: Were you glad you did that?

HU: Yeah, I did...really. Even now I thought, "Sumida-san, thank you." I have that feeling/

BN: What was your reaction when you heard about the ending of the war and the atomic bombings?

HU: I went outside. Tule Lake, just like dead town...quiet, really quiet. Oh, war ended. Now I have to do something for Japan or America, I thought. Then I made my mind... I gotta do something for America. *Korekara* [from now on]... Well, anyway, Japan lost the war, what you can do? Then all these other Japanese people too, they lost the war. They gotta build up Japan. Build up Japan to be a peaceful country. Then I changed my entire idea. I gotta do something for America. That's when my sister wrote to me to come to Minneapolis before I go back to Hawaii. So I went. Then I found that job for MIS. University of Minnesota was looking for Japanese language teacher. Lucky thing I took the test and went inside there. Everybody so nice to me. There were about twelve of those students, before they went to Japan, as occupation force, they stop over my house. *Kitanai* [dirty] house...Palama. I still remember. Everybody. the neighbors surprised. That time I was thinking I did something good. from now I gotta do something more.

BN: How long were you in Minnesota after leaving Tule Lake?

HU: Only four months because I was waiting for the transport to Honolulu, free ride.

BN: How did you sister end up in Minnesota?

HU: Before war ended, already some of Manzanar people went inside, more inside. That's the time she went to Minnesota.

BN: How did she end up in Manzanar? She must have already been in California.

HU: The husband was gardener. So he found somebody, *kanemochi* [rich person], they want to hire gardener at Minneapolis.

BN: So this must be early 1946 that you come back to Hawaii. Is that about right?

HU: Yeah, that's the time, when Sumida-san too came back.

BN: Was there any thought of staying on the Mainland?

HU: No, no. I had this girlfriend. In 1940 I told her go to Japan--She was a Hiroshima girl--to study more Japanese, especially *ogyō gi* [manners]. Then war started. End up atomic bomb. She died. Yeah, the war is nothing but destruction.

BN: So you came back to Hawaii. And what did you do?

HU: I came back and I thought I go work little while. First I look for job, but not so many good job. I used to teach Japanese school, but Japanese school already gone. But somehow ...Honouliuli internment camp, that Mr. Tsushima and Yamamoto Gonbei, even though they *Issei*, they graduate UH? Tsushima-san especially, I came so good friends with him. He went back to *Hawaii Hochi*. He contact me, "How about you work *Hawaii Hochi* as translator?" So I went inside *Hawaii Hochi*.

BN: Then when did the whole music studio come about?

HU: Oh, music stuff. I still had that idea, about music. While I was working *Hawaii Hochi*, if you remember *Advertiser*, this Nisei man, kind of big shot, Curtis Otani, was working for *Advertiser*. And one day he called me. He say, "Harry, how about you work for *Advertiser*?" You know *Advertiser* and *Star Bulletin*, Japanese they don't like. What I going do? Because of the war, we lost all that Japanese side ad. But I said, "I don't think so." Then somehow they put pressure on, all kind stuff, and even that salary too, double up and all that, so "Please come work for *Advertiser* and get back all the Japanese newspaper ad." So, finally I said okay. But that was my mistake. I didn't like. Really, I suffer. Cannot get ad. Then I was going, every day, "When I'm gonna quit?" Then Yamamoto Tsuneichi-san, big shot, he became *Hawaii Hochi* president and he started Japanese radio station, KULA, and then he hired me as an announcer and program manager, so I went inside. Then I was working for KULA radio station and I had one kind of my own program, "Chop Suey Melody." That came really popular. I don't have to go out and solicit ad. They used to call me for the ad. Anyway, I was working KULA for one year, one year half. I fight with Yamamoto-san, some kind of misunderstanding. Yeah. So I quit. That time I made up my mind. Never work for somebody. So, I though, what shall I do? Okay I'll go Japan and little bit study Japanese music, how to compose. So I knew Koga Masao,

very noted composer, of course popular music. Then I went Japan, but that was only the front. In order to stay in Japan, only thing you can stay long time is, you gotta go as a trader, so I talked to Chinese guy, what do you call that coffee shop... Wong Coffee Shop? Wing Coffee Shop. I knew that boss. So he say, "Harry, good, you go. Our agent went Japan and they sell our coffee." So I went, as a Wing Coffee salesman or something. But that was just front. I wanted to study Japanese music.

BN: About what year was this?

HU: That was 1949. Very bad time for Japan. After the war, about four years, yeah?

BN: Where did you study?

HU: Yeah, I had hard time. I cannot sell anyway. I'm not businessman. I bought house. Rate was good, those days, 360 to a dollar. I bought one small house in Japan, Tokyo. And then I was taking lessons from Koga sensei. I thought how long I gonna last. Wasn't so good. About one year later, everything stuck. Cannot go anymore, so I was going home. Then somebody told me. "Why don't you try... Maybe GHQ wants you as translator or interpreter." But other Hawaiian soldier friend...everybody says, "I don't think you can get...you gotta go back to Hawaii and then apply for job; otherwise, you cannot get right away from Tokyo GHQ. So I believe that. I stay little while. Anyway, so I try, if can or cannot. I went GHQ by myself, and the Captain came and said, "You passed the test. Where you like to go?" I used to live in Kumamoto, so not Hokkaido, like cold place. He says, how about Fukuoka? MG... Military government, so I end up over there. But that one too, not last long. Because '49, '50, I think '51 or so, Japan came...San Francisco, Prime Minister Yoshida went to sign peace treaty. MG *pau*, so my job as [at] military government, no more. Gotta go back Hawaii.

BN: So how long total were you in Japan?

HU: About two years.

BN: But one year studying music?

HU: No, no, cannot study anyway...that kind situation. But was big try.

BN: And at that point you had you had to come back to Hawaii?

HU: Yeah. *Nagai, nagai nō* [This is taking a long time]. [Probably referring to the length of the recorded interview.] But before I die, I like leave this kind stuff for the rest of the people.

BN: We'll get back to when you came back to Hawaii in a minute, but I wanted to ask you, you mentioned that you had a radio program that became pretty popular before you went back to Japan. What was the content of the program. What did you do or say or, if I listened to it, what would it be?

HU: Well, I had in mind to make that more Japanese music popular in Hawaii. That was my

intention because I know Koga Masao and all that musician in Japan. So when I started the program... Anyway, at the same time, Nisei had hard time speaking Japanese so, to me, through singing is the most, you know, easy way to learn Japanese language. Everybody like to sing anyway, so all in my mind, I thought, at the same time I was teaching Japanese school, so how for Nisei to learn Japanese, easy way? So that is through music, and through singing. Every time I teach Japanese music, I have that in mind.

BN: So after your time in Japanese and you came back to Hawaii, what did you do after you came back from Japan?

HU: So I don't remember, in '50 or '51, I started that Japanese music studio. And I notice after the war, I thought Japanese things going diminish, not like before, but no, right opposite, 19-around-50 Japanese music, Japanese things came back strongly. Really strongly, come back. I was so shocked. So 1950, around there, in Honolulu alone, I think, had lots of Nisei orchestra, I think maybe around forty, forty music bands. Very popular. You know, Japanese movie theater and radio station. I don't know why though, around 1950, if I'm not wrong, 1970, that's the time, that's the border, Japanese things came not so popular. All this community stuff... wedding, birthday, and all those things. Before around 1970, lots of time, wedding and funeral and all those things done by Japanese, but around 1970 all diminished, no more, no more Japanese stuff. Right now entirely gone.

BN: But when you started it was...

HU: That's why I was lucky, I started and ended right time.

BN: What was the nature of your business? Who would go there? What would happen there?

HU: You mean, my business? To enjoy Japanese music. That is, I think Nisei made it... Japanese music... more popular. More than when Issei used to stay. Issei time nothing but Japanese anyway.

HU: So most of the students, or clients, were Nisei?

HU: Oh, yes. All Nisei. Very few Issei. Nisei, the most.

BN: About how many students have you had? Have you kept track of the number?

HU: Hard to tell, but maybe I taught maybe three thousand, three thousand people. Of course, not, some people only one year, two years. Like the longest I taught was one student, 19 years. That's long time.

BN: Were you involved in... you mentioned that there were a lot of Nisei orchestras playing Japanese songs.

HU: Oh, yes... like that *Wakare No Isochidori* [Farewell Beach Plover], ...that leader, Francis Zanami. He was a Nisei composer. Anyway, 19-around-50, that band he used to have is Hawaii Shochiku Orchestra. They used to do lots of concert and all that. When he died, he

died very young, he was 32 or 33. The funeral... I did a speech for him.

BN: Were you personally involved with a...

HU: Yeah, especially Hawaii Shochiku, lots of times I was emcee for the show.

BN: Did you sing also?

HU: No. No. Those days, I just used to help.

BN: Just before the war.

HU: Before the war, I used to sing.

BN: Not after...

HU: No, no. Anyway, before the war I started my own orchestra, Shinko Orchestra, that was organized in 1937, after I came back from Japan. Then before Pearl Harbor attack, only three outstanding orchestras was, Smile Orchestra. Smile Orchestra after became Hawaii Shochiku Orchestra after the war. So Smile Orchestra and Nippon Orchestra was organized in 1931 or '32. And my orchestra. Had three.

BN: Did you continue after the war?

HU: No, no. As I told you, my schooling, I used to even go to the school, Mid-Pac. I had hard time.

BN: What do you think accounts for the fact...? You mentioned that it became very popular after 1950. What do you think it was that caused that popularity for that time period, especially among the Nisei?

HU: To me, lots of people, Nisei boys went to Japan as occupation force, came back. That's why those days, songs like *Kankan Musume* [Cancan Girl]... Those Nisei soldiers, lots of Japanese music, and they are the ones that made popular in Hawaii, I think.

BN: The performances that you would emcee-- are these like dances or concerts or what kinds of...?

HU: We used to call *kikinboshū* [benefit show]. All kind benefit show they used to have.

BN: Was it a dance? Or concert?

HU: No, no. Dances too. But like two and half hour show. Dance, maybe two or three, that's all. The rest all singing.

BN: And benefit means for some charity?

HU: Yeah, charity. Especially Buddhist temple and all that. Yes, those days, very popular. Sell tickets.

BN: That means none of them were doing it as a living. More like a hobby.

HU: More like hobby. More like hobby. Not really as entertainment. That's why, 1950, around there, the Japanese orchestra was more popular than, I think, professional orchestra, in Hawaii. They said, Waikiki-side hotel used to cry, not so much demand. We are the one used to get all the jobs. Yeah, those are the days.

BN: Was the audience pretty much entirely Nisei? Did you have any non-Japanese who came to these performances?

HU: No, no, all Nisei. Lots of Japanese anyway, Hawaii noted for Japanese.

BN: So did your studio benefit from this popularity?

HU: Yeah, yeah, very much. If not that popular, I don't exist.

BN: What did you teach?

HU: Teach Japanese song. Anyway I stress on that point...if you're gonna sing Japanese song, you gotta to know Japanese to get more feeling. No matter how good voice you have, if you cannot express the feeling, no make sense.

BN: Did you also teach Western music as well, classical music, piano?

HU: I teach more the meaning of the song. That's why it's so hard. Japanese words not so come to the point. The translation is really hard.

BN: How long did you have your studio?

HU: Fifty-three years. After 53 years, I quit.

BN: That's only a few years ago.

HU: Yeah, back in 2006, I retire.

BN: So no more teaching now.

HU: Ah, enough. More than enough.

BN: But you still see, you must still run into your students. Three thousand. Did you end up teaching the parents and then the children?

HU: Yeah, yeah. I taught four generations. Issei, not so. Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, Gosei.

BN: So to switch topics again. Of course in the 1980s there was that whole movement to seek redress, were you following that and what were your thoughts about redress?

HU: No, I'm not following that. In fact, I didn't expect that going happen. I say, "What, they going give me reparation plus apology." Hard to believe. "*Nani? Daitōry*, president gonna *ayamaru*" ["What? President would apologize?"] Hard to believe.

BN: You did receive reparations.

HU: I received \$20,000. Hard to believe.

BN: What did you think? Were you happy?

HU: Not happy, not that kind feeling, but "why they do that much?", especially when they gave us apology. I was shocked. You know, son of immigrant, like me, gonna receive that kind you know, apology from President. Hard to believe.

BN: The last couple years...last three, four years, JCCH is starting efforts to preserve the site and to do the archaeology, and all those things. You came with us the first time we went back to the site, and you went back last year for the pilgrimage. What are your thoughts about the current efforts to preserve the site and educate about the site? What would you like to see done with the site if money was not an object? You could do whatever you wanted.

HU: Sometimes I think, "You gotta do that much?" It's nice but war is war. That's too much.

BN: Do you think it's important that younger people learn about your story, though?

HU: How much they goin' learn though? I cannot. Hard to tell.

BN: We talked earlier about the *hore hore bushi* project and Franklin Odo being involved. What would you like to see come out of that?

HU: After all, to me *hore hore bushi*, song of early immigrants work song...used to hear about 20 years ago, nothing but 442<sup>nd</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup>, and MIS and all that. Well, they did really good job...the soldiers, but if immigrants, Japanese immigrants, didn't exist, no Nisei boys like 100<sup>th</sup>, 442<sup>nd</sup>. That's why sometime, just stop and think, that Issei, the mother and father...they really suffered through and they built this island, Hawaii. Sometime think about the song, *hore hore bushi*. Yeah, "*Hawaii, Hawaii to yume mite kita ga, nagasu namida mo kibi no naka*" ["We had dreamed about coming to Hawaii, but we are now crying in the midst of sugar cane field"] "We came to Hawaii as a dream. It's a nice place, but actually, when you live over here, not so easy. Work is hard, everything was hard. But for the benefit of my son and daughter, I have to make *isshokenmei* [with all my might], all my best, to live in this island." So sometime I like these Nisei boys to think about this song, *hore hore bushi*, think about their parents, Issei. They did really good job for their home country, America, but at the same time, if Issei were not here, they don't exist...Nisei boys. Yeah, think sometime. Right now you don't have sugar cane field



anymore. But so many years ago this island was covered by sugar cane, all over. *Issei* people worked so hard, enjoyed everything, make all kind sacrifice. [long pause] Yeah, please. Sometimes start thinking about *Issei* people and think about this song, *Hore hore bushi*, forever and ever, *ne?* Yeah, *honto sō omoimasu* [This is what I really think].

BN: Thank you.

HU: *Hai, hai*. [“You are welcome”].