

JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAII

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
(English translation)

with

Shizuo Yoshikane (SY)

Interviewed by: Yoko Waki (YW)

June 9, 2009

Translated and transcribed by: Yoko Waki

Note: Comments in bracket [] are by the transcriber.

YW: Let's start now. May I ask your name and your birth date?

SY: I am Shizuo Yoshikane. I was born on March 11, 1922. [The 11th year of Taisho era]

YW: Where were you born?

SY: In Japan. Yamaguchi-ken.

YW: Yamaguchi-ken. Where in Yamaguchi-ken?

SY: Oshima.

YW: Oh, Oshima-gun. There are many people from Oshima, aren't there? Your parents were in Japan at that time?

SY: Yes.

YW: May I ask your parents' names?

SY: My father is Koichi.

YW: Your father is Koichi. Your mother?

SY: My mother is Tomo.

YW: Tomo-san. Then they came to Hawaii?

SY: My father was in Hawaii.

YW: Was he living in Hawaii?

SY: Yes. Here. On a boat. He was a fisherman.

YW: What was he doing?

SY: Fishing.

YW: Oh. He was a fisherman in Hawaii.

SY: Yes.

YW: And what about your mother?

SY: My mother was in Japan all the time.

YW: Yamaguchi-ken?

SY: Yes. Yamaguchi-ken.

YW: How did they get married?

SY: My father was....my grandfather carried him back when he was only one or two years old. They went back to Japan. My grandmother and grandfather [went back] from Hawaii.

YW: Your father's parents took your father when he was a baby back to Japan?

SY: Went back to Japan.

YW: And then?

SY: In Japan, they stayed. Until around forty years old. All the time in Japan.

YW: And then he got married?

SY: Yes, with Tomo.

YW: How many children did they have? About seven?

SY: No. Ten children.

YW: I see. Where do you stand among them?

SY: First.

YW: First son?

SY: The eldest, the fool.

YW: The eldest? You must be the boss.

SY: No.

YW: No? Is that right?

SY: The second and the third [son] had already passed away.

YW: I see. So your father was in Hawaii?

SY: He already returned to Hawaii.

YW: When did he return?

SY: I wonder when....

YW: If he stayed in Japan for forty years, he should have been around forty years old.

SY: Yes.

YW: He returned to Hawaii and then...

SY: Yes.

YW: Didn't you return with him?

SY: No, later.

YW: Later?

SY: Yes.

YW: Was your mother still in Yamaguchi?

SY: Much longer.

YW: Only your father returned first?

SY: Only my father. My mother could not come yet.

YW: I see. So when did you come to Hawaii?

SY: In 1938.

YW: I see. How old were you?

SY: Sixteen.

YW: Sixteen years old. Did your mother come, too?

SY: No. She couldn't come.

YW: She couldn't come.

SY: Only the children were able to come, but not the mother.

YW: I see. So you worked as a fisherman with your father?

SY: Yes.

YW: I see. I am sure that you were speaking Japanese at home with your father?

SY: Yes. Only Japanese.

YW: Only Japanese.

SY: Old days. Many of them in Hawaii.

YW: Your friends, too? All of them were Japanese?

SY: Yes. Japanese. Foreigners [non-Japanese] learned Japanese when they worked on boats.

YW: Oh.

SY: Them. All spoke Japanese.

YW: So foreigners spoke Japanese?

SY: Japanese. They learned.

YW: You have been speaking only Japanese all these years since you came to Hawaii when you were sixteen years old. You were nineteen when the war began. You were not yet married, weren't you? You were only nineteen. Before the war, had you been in a school?

SY: No. I didn't attend.

YW: Were you already a fisherman?

SY: Yes. Fishing was the fastest way to make money before going back to Japan. Fisherman. The fastest. But Japanese came when I had saved some money

YW: Then what happened? December 1941? What were you doing at that time?

SY: Fishing. Fishing off the shore.

YW: Were you on a boat off the shore? Fishing with your father?

SY: No.

YW: Alone?

SY: My father was in Japan.

YW: Did he go back to Japan? You mean your father was in Japan and you were here alone.

SY: No. With my younger brother.

YW: Your brother?

SY: Yes, I had a younger brother. He had a job on the land.

YW: I see. Will you tell me what happened at that time? Did airplanes suddenly fly over?

SY: In the morning, we were bombarded. We saw them with binoculars. Red-sun mark was on. We said that Japan wouldn't come. We insisted and argued. Then just around noon, we saw black smoke went up from Pearl Harbor. Strange. We ate lunch and laid around. [Then] American airplanes.

YW: Were you on the boat?

SY: On the boat. We were shot at.

YW: Shot?

SY: Shot. None of five of us was injured. Bullets did not go through to underneath. There were big ices. Those [ices] stopped the bullets. Navy didn't do anything. Only airplanes. Navy came nearby. I think the Navy has rules. So they didn't do anything. They just came very close to us. Scary.

YW: Sure. And then what happened?

SY: We pulled up all the fishing equipment. It took three hours. Then we went back to Kewalo.

YW: Kewalo?

SY: Yes, Kewalo [Basin].

YW: And...

SY: About seven o'clock.

YW: In the evening?

SY: Yes. It was dark around seven at that time. So we put a light on a lamp. When we reached the basin, there were many soldiers with guns. Two of them came aboard.

YW: Who came aboard?

SY: Soldiers.

YW: You mean soldiers came aboard?

SY: Yes. Two . I wanted to change my clothes, because they were wet. They didn't say anything.

YW: They said nothing?

SY: Yes. Five of us had to go up in line.

YW: And then?

SY: Not one by one. Here, [pointing his shoulder], we had to hold on. Five of us had to go up together. Hard to go up. They told us to hold on here.

YW: And...

SY: We went up and went to FBI.

YW: FBI?

SY: Yes.

YW: Were you taken to FBI?

SY: We went to FBI.

YW: I see.

SY: They checked us a little there and then went to the Immigration.

YW: To the Immigration Office?

SY: Yes. We went there around eight and a half o'clock.

YW: Eight and a half o'clock at night. And then what happened? Were you detained there or at the Sand Island....?

SY: I think the Immigration was the worst. There were too many captured people and no space to sleep. Full. Many prominent people. The toilet was the worst. In the morning, everyone wanted to go. Not enough toilets. They were all waiting.

YW: About how many people do you think there were?

SY: Many. All of them in there. There was no space to sleep. So we slept underneath [on the floor]. Good thing this is Hawaii. It was December.

YW: So you were there until 22nd?

SY: January.

YW: January. So you were...

SY: I was released.

YW: From where? Sand Island?

SY: Sand Island.

YW: From Sand Island. You were told that you were released?

SY: They gave me nothing. I was afraid that I might be caught again. My house was in Kakaako. I walked because it was close by.

YW: Did you have a house in Kakaako?

SY: Well, my aunty was there.

YW: Aunty? Your aunty was living there. Then, in June...

SY: Yes. June 10. I was called by my number [at the place where I was working].

YW: Where were you working?

SY: Hawaiian Pine.

YW: Pardon me?

SY: Pineapple. I had to work to avoid being caught again. I couldn't do any kind of job to avoid being caught. Hawaiian Pine was easy, since pineapples were not in season.

YW: You were arrested even though you were working at Hawaiian Pineapple. Who came to arrest you?

SY: FBI came.

YW: FBI came again. What did they say?

SY: They had to do some investigation.

YW: Investigation? It was June...

SY: I was taken in again in June.

YW: Sand Island?

SY: No. First, Immigration.

YW: And then?

SY: Again to Sand Island.

YW: In Sand Island. Until the next year?

SY: Until 18th [of *Showa* era].

YW: You stayed at Sand Island?

SY: Until forty three [1943].

YW: And this time?

SY: February 1943.

YW: On January 23, 1943. Where were you sent to?

SY: Jerome, Arkansas.

YW: Jerome, Arkansas. Was there any explanation? Did they explain anything to you?

SY: Nothing.

YW: Nothing. They just sent you there?

SY: On the train, all the shades were pulled down, because it was dangerous. We were Japanese. [People] might attack us.

YW: I see.

SY: All the windows were closed when the train went through a town.

YW: How long did it take to reach?

SY: The ship took nine days to America. It did not travel straight. It was during the war. If traveled straight, [it] might get attacked.

YW: I see. Where did you arrive?

SY: Probably San Francisco.

YW: San Francisco and then...

SY: After arriving San Francisco, we took a train to Jerome.

YW: It was February.

SY: Yes. February. The coldest time.

YW: Was it very cold?

SY: Yup... Cold, cold. February.

YW: How about clothing?

SY: They gave me an overcoat. Soldier's. You know the old one.

YW: They gave you an overcoat. Sure, there was no overcoat in Hawaii.

SY: All of us were given overcoats.

YW: You arrived at Jerome center on Feb. 6, 1943. Did you stay there over one year?

SY: One year.

YW: Were you transferred then?

SY: Yes. Transferred. To Tule Lake.

YW: Any explanation?

SY: The Jerome Center was closed.

YW: Closed. I see. So you were transferred to Tule Lake. Before we talk about Tule Lake, how was the condition of Jerome Center when you arrived?

SY: To get off from the train, there was nothing. There was no [train] station. We had to jump. Poor old people. We were young, so we could jump off. But poor old people, since the train stopped at nowhere, they had no choice, but jump. Poor thing.

YW: What kind of place was Jerome Center?

SY: There was nothing.

YW: Were there cottages or tents?

SY: Houses were already built there.

YW: There were houses, but nothing around them?

SY: Nothing. They wouldn't build [an internment camp] in a good place.

YW: Was it cold?

SY: Cold! The surface of the road was frozen. In February. They told us not to slip when we walk.

YW: Did you wear shoes?

SY: Yes.

YW: Wearing overcoat?

SY: They gave us soldier's overcoats.

YW: How about inside the house?

SY: In the house, I had to burn wood, not coal. It didn't get warm quickly. Coal would have made it warmer quickly. Those wood chips wouldn't warm up quickly.

YW: I see. Was there a bed?

SY: Yes. There was a bed. Only bed.

YW: Only bed. How about washing? Where did you wash your face?

SY: At the restroom. There was a place to wash clothes by the side of restrooms. We washed our face there. Oh, going to the toilet at night...

YW: Cold?

SY: It was far away. Ah, yes! It was far and cold.

YW: Could you do nothing there? There was nothing to do? Just stayed?

SY: No. Everyone did some work.

YW: Did you work?

SY: Eighteen dollars.

YW: Eighteen dollars for any work?

SY: Eighteen dollars for any work.

YW: What kind of work?

SY: Doctors got twenty dollars per month.

YW: What did you do?

SY: I cooked at the hospital.

YW: Cooked? Were you a cook at the hospital?

SY: Yeah.

YW: So you could cook.

SY: I have no worry even now.

YW: I see.

SY: We ate fish and pork. Even if you like fish, you couldn't eat only fish. You also had to eat pork for your health.

YW: You had enough food ingredients to cook?

SY: Well, the hospital was special. Other places had a ration. They did not have sugar and other stuff. Hospitals were exceptions.

YW: Hospitals had enough food.

SY: [Other places] just this much. *Pau*. Because of ration.

YW: I see. What kind of meals did you prepare?

SY: Of course, foreigners'. There was ...

YW: Was there a menu?

SY: It was already made.

YW: I see. So it was naturally Western style.

SY: No. Because we were Japanese, I cooked rice porridge. There were some old people. Potato cooking was difficult.

YW: I don't think there was any Japanese food, was there?

SY: Food was not bad. It was rather good.

YW: Was it? Jerome Center was good. Was there any fight over food or someone stealing the food or something like that?

SY: No.

YW: No? Not at all here?

SY: Not at Jerome.

YW: Not at Jerome. How about Tule Lake...

SY: I had a girlfriend at Jerome.

YW: A girlfriend?

SY: Yes, a girlfriend.

YW: Is that right?

SY: The prettiest.

YW: In the same camp?

SY: She was a Miss Hawaii.

YW: Is that true?

SY: A *hapa* [mixed ethnicity]. With Japanese.

YW: Was she in the same camp?

SY: Together with her parents.

YW: Well, were there any sick people in the hospital?

SY: Tuberculosis.

YW: Were they also staying in the camp?

SY: Old people in the camp. Many of them. TB.

YW: I see. There were many TB patients.

SY: There was a young girl who also had TB. A pretty girl.

YW: Were you friendly with her?

SY: Well, yes. I had to cook for her.

YW: Were you busy? Was there anyone who passed away in the hospital?

SY: Yeah. There were.

YW: Many? How many?

SY: Usually old people.

YW: Old people?

SY: Old people. One person from Hawaii died. He was a drunkard. Alcohol that doctors used. He drank it by mixing with water. He died. No good.

YW: I see.

SY: Doctors earned twenty dollars. Only two dollars more than us.

YW: I see.

SY: Doctors, twenty dollars. Us, eighteen dollars.

YW: Doctors, twenty dollars. I see.

SY: I had my tonsils cut.

YW: You had tonsils removed?

SY: Yes. Cut. Cold.

YW: Cold?

SY: Cold! I caught a cold. I often caught a cold, so I had my tonsils cut.

YW: Were you well after the surgery?

SY: Yes, but you'd better not to have a surgery when you are old.

YW: Weren't you still young?

SY: I was twenty years old. Still a young kid.

YW: That's right.

SY: There were many kids who also had [tonsil] surgeries, but not cured well. They couldn't even drink water.

YW: Is that right?

SY: Hurt.

YW: Hurt? Terrible. Did you get better?

SY: Yes.

YW: Although you worked as a cook, did you have any free time?

SY: No. There were two chefs.

YW: Two shifts?

SY: No, two chefs. [Cooked] from morning to noon.

YW: How about a night when nothing...

SY: We had to cook at night again at the hospital.

YW: What did you do when you were free.

SY: Nothing.

YW: Nothing? Sleeping?

SY: No, not sleeping. I went to catch a snake.

YW: A snake?

SY: Somewhere else, I caught a turtle, too.

YW: What did you do with them?

SY: I caught them.

YW: Did you keep them?

SY: I caught snakes, too. I like them. [They are] small and same green color as a tree.

YW: Did you have any books to read?

SY: No.

YW: Not at all?

SY: Not at all. No Japanese things.

YW: Sure. There couldn't be any Japanese things during the war! Did you keep the snakes in your room?

SY: No. Outside.

YW: You caught them and just watched them? Were they your pets?

SY: I kept a rattle snake. It was pretty. Inside. Really pretty. Cut off the head. It was pretty and tasty.

YW: Did you eat it?

SY: Yes.

YW: You ate it.

SY: Tasty.

YW: He ate it. It was tasty. Well, just think it was an eel....

SY: Fish was not good there. Smelly. Muddy smell.

YW: Where did you catch them?

SY: They were in the river. I could catch them. I cooked them. It was no good regardless how I cooked. Couldn't eat because of the muddy smell.

YW: Were there any other problems?

SY: Foreigners. An old lady at the top of the hospital [staff]. She became fine at the end. She was bad to Japanese in the beginning. To us. I think she understood Japanese. She became good. Really. She changed.

YW: Good.

SY: She was in charge of the hospital. In the end, she understood when I swore to her "Babaa" [old lady] in Japanese. She understood Japanese.

YW: Wasn't she a Japanese?

SY: No. After all, she understood true Japanese people. She became good. Really. She was bad in the beginning.

YW: That was good.

SY: She was nice to me.

YW: That lady?

SY: That old lady.

YW: How about the language?

SY: English.

YW: English? How did you communicate?

SY: Just said, "thank you, thank you."

YW: Oh. "Thank you, thank you." I see. I suppose that she could understand your feelings.

SY: I think that people could see if you work sincerely for many years.

YW: I think so. You stayed at Jerome for one year and three months, not quite two years. Then the Center was closed. So you went to Tule Lake.

SY: Yes, for a short time.

YW: You left [Jerome] on May 17, 1944 and arrived at [Tule Lake] on May 21, 1944. And then, you went to the next place on Dec. 15, 1944. So just about seven months. Why did you stay only for a short time at Tule Lake?

SY: There were many "Japan" type people at Tule Lake.

YW: Pardon me?

SY: They were running around wearing *hachimaki* [head band]. "*Wasshoi, wasshoi, wasshoi!*" [Japanese shouts similar to "hip, hip, hurrah!"]

YW: Oh, I see. There were many people like that.

SY: Yes. This place.

YW: Those Japanese people were wearing *hachimaki*?

SY: They were running around in the morning.

YW: Were there any trouble by those running people?

SY: I didn't know anything.

YW: You didn't know anything.

SY: I ignored them.

YW: What were they doing?

SY: Early in the morning. Wearing *hachimaki*...

YW: Were they in the same housing?

SY: [Same] block. There was a block.

YW: And then...

SY: One block.

YW: Were there many blocks?

SY: Tule Lake was a large place. Mine was 79th block. There were houses [in a block].

YW: How many houses in a block?

SY: Here were six and there were six, about twelve. There were toilets and other things in the center [area].

YW: There were seventy nine blocks like that?

SY: More.

YW: More?

SY: About eighty or so.

YW: Did you also cook there?

SY: I cooked at the cafeteria of 79th block.

YW: In the mess hall of 79th block?

SY: I went to the hospital. Carrying a gun. It was far. Very far.

YW: The hospital was far, so...

SY: So far. If anyone gave me a ride. I couldn't walk.

YW: Wasn't it huge? So you did cooking there. Same kind of menu?

SY: Different. Block by block. Hospital, too.

YW: You mean the menu?

SY: Two eggs were served at the hospital. Only one at a regular block.

YW: Only one, what?

SY: Egg.

YW: Egg?

- SY: In the morning.
- YW: One. One egg for one person?
- SY: Yeah. Two, if the hospital.
- YW: Wasn't enough?
- SY: Was enough.
- YW: How about ingredients?
- SY: We had enough food at Tule Lake. We ate at a mess hall of that block.
- YW: Did many people eat together at the mess hall?
- SY: Yeah. We had to eat whatever. All of us went to eat.
- YW: About how many people ate together?
- SY: How many? About 200, I guess.
- YW: Two hundred? It was a large place, wasn't it?
- SY: There were so many of them [mess halls].
- YW: It was really a large place. Wasn't it difficult to cook at such a large place?
- SY: I wasn't the only cook. There were about five cooks.
- YW: How about ingredients and meals? Were they similar to the previous place?
- SY: Meals were better at a hospital.
- YW: Excuse me?
- SY: Menus were same, but more and better ingredients were received at the hospitals. Meat was the best, after all. It was easy [to get].
- YW: Wasn't there enough food?
- SY: Was enough. I washed rice in the morning and later...
- YW: You washed rice.

SY: I didn't stay at Tule Lake long.

YW: It was rather short. Then next?

SY: Gila.

YW: Gila Center. Why did you go to Gila Center?

SY: I didn't like the place. I was able to leave, because I didn't have anything [any bad record]. I didn't have to go there.

YW: I see.

SY: I just went with my brother. I didn't have any record. I was not blacklisted. I just went to see an officer, a foreign officer, and told him that I wanted to go to Gila. He said "OK" right away.

YW: Where was the place where your brother had a fight?

SY: It was at Jerome.

YW: Yes, Jerome. So your brother and you went to Tule Lake together.

SY: After moving to Tule Lake, only I requested a transfer and was OK right away.

YW: What was the reason you didn't like Tule Lake?

SY: It wasn't fun.

YW: It wasn't fun? Wearing *hachiaki*...and many brawls.

SY: There were many fights.

YW: Between Japanese?

SY: Yes, Japanese.

YW: What was the cause of the fights?

SY: I didn't know.

YW: You didn't know. Were Japanese fighting each other? Many of them?

SY: Yes. Many.

YW: Many.

SY: There was *sake*....

YW: *Sake*?

SY: Yes. *Sake*.

YW: Did they provide *sake*?

SY: No. It was made.

YW: It was made. How was it made?

SY: Japanese all know how to make *sake*.

YW: Did Japanese all know how to make *sake*? With what? Rice?

SY: *Sake* was sold at the camp.

YW: Selling at the camp?

SY: After they made it.

YW: Was rice sold? Was *sake* made from rice?

SY: Yeah. They went to buy rice themselves.

YW: They went to buy?

SY: There was a store.

YW: Oh, there was a store. Rice was sold there.

SY: Many things were sold at the store.

YW: I see. Then, they made *sake* and drank it and started fighting?

SY: When they return [to the housing], they started to fight. *Sake* caused fightings after all.

YW: Didn't you drink *sake* a little?

SY: I drank.

YW: You drank. A little?

SY: No. Plenty.

YW: But you didn't fight?

SY: I didn't fight.

YW: I see. You didn't like the place [because of those people] and decided to be transferred.

SY: Then...

YW: Wasn't Gila Center far away?

SY: In Arizona. Way down South. It wasn't cold there.

YW: It was not cold there.

SY: It was hot.

YW: Did you go by train?

SY: No. Bus.

YW: You went by bus?

SY: People were very poor. They asked me, "You Mexican?" So I replied, "Yeah, Mexican". I couldn't say Japanese. I might be killed. It was during the war. They said, "Mexican?" so I said, "Yes".

YW: You went to Gila Center by bus.

SY: It took about two days.

YW: Two days. It was far. Wasn't it dangerous? Were you OK?

SY: Nothing happened.

YW: You were all right? How many people went there?

SY: Only me.

YW: By yourself?

SY: I had a [bus] ticket.

YW: A bus? An ordinary bus?

SY: There was a long distance bus at that time.

YW: You went by yourself. What about your brother?

SY: He stayed there.

YW: He stayed back? You went alone?

SY: I went alone.

YW: Was there any guard?

SY: No more. None. I was scared being alone.

YW: Pardon?

SY: Scared. It was during the war. I was a Japanese after all.

YW: So you said you were a Mexican.

SY: They asked me if I was a Mexican. So I said, yes.

YW: I see. You arrived safely, didn't you?

SY: Yes, I arrived in two days.

YW: What kind of place this place, Gila Center, was?

SY: Hot, hot!

YW: Was it hot?

SY: Hot. Arizona was hot.

YW: It was hot this time. How was housing there?

SY: There were two roofs. There were two ceilings, because of the heat. Double ceilings, because it was hot.

YW: Was it a large place again?

SY: Yes, large. There were first and second [camps]. Gila Center was large.

YW: But not as large as Tule Lake?

SY: No. Not that large.

YW: But it was large.

SY: There were two [camps]. I worked at a hospital again.

YW: You worked at a hospital as a cook again?

SY: I went and was hired right away.

YW: Good. Then...

SY: I stayed at the hospital all the way. I couldn't go back during the day. I couldn't return [to my house] until the evening, because it was too hot.

YW: So you stayed at the hospital all the time?

SY: Yes, until it got cool in the evening. I couldn't walk during the day.

YW: Oh, how awful! Well, it was in the middle of a desert after all. I wonder how high the temperature...

SY: It had to be very high.

YW: Well, it was a hot place this time. How about the food there?

SY: It was good again.

YW: Good. You didn't have any trouble with food, did you?

SY: No, not much.

YW: Was there any fight over the food? Did you work shifts again?

SY: The chief cook was very nice to me. He called me "young boy, young boy". I was young at that time. He took really good care of me.

YW: Oh, I see.

SY: My boss, the chief cook...

YW: What kind of person was this chief cook?

SY: An American.

YW: An American. A man? Did he speak English?

SY: No. He spoke Japanese. [He was a Mainland Japanese-American.]

YW: Ah, he spoke Japanese. Good.

SY: He was nice to me.

YW: For example?

SY: [He called me] young boy, young boy.

YW: Did he give you anything?

SY: No. Nothing.

YW: He just treated you kindly?

SY: After all, it's America. [We] didn't drink during working hours.

YW: Did you drink in the evening?

SY: No, I didn't. I didn't have money.

YW: I see.

SY: I received 17 or 18 yen [dollars], but it was gone in no time.

YW: Was there a store?

SY: Yes.

YW: What kind of store? What were they selling?

SY: Clothing and so on. Food stuff, too.

YW: So you stayed there until October 1945?

SY: The war ended.

YW: Yes, the war had already ended by October. Did you leave from the Gila Center in October? What else did you do at the Gila Center other than cooking?

SY: Nothing.

YW: Nothing. There was no snake this time?

SY: There was, but not edible.

YW: Why?

SY: Dry.

YW: What was dry?

SY: Snakes.

YW: Were they sold?

SY: No. This place was totally different from Jerome. This place was dry.

YW: Because it was hot?

SY: Yeah.

YW: It was dry because of the heat.

SY: Yeah.

YW: Did you do anything else? Do you remember anything? What did you do every day?

SY: Nothing....

YW: Nothing. Were you separated from your brother at that time?

SY: He was over there when the war ended.

YW: Where?

SY: Chicago.

YW: Chicago?

SY: Chicago.

YW: Your brother?

SY: He went to Chicago after we had separated. He asked me to come.

YW: What was he doing in Chicago?

SY: Nothing. There were some jobs.

YW: But....

SY: I like here best. I signed first.

YW: To come back to Hawaii?

SY: Hawaii is the best.

YW: After leaving the Gila Center, you went to Seattle....

SY: I came home from Seattle.

YW: How did you get to Seattle?

SY: They took me.

YW: By bus?

SY: No, by train.

YW: They took you by train to Seattle. Then you boarded a ship?

SY: A military ship. It was only a military ship at that time.

YW: And to Honolulu?

SY: After about one year, you had to pay your passage to go back.

YW: Was it because you were the first one?

SY: No. It was because a military ship was used.

YW: So you arrived at Honolulu in November 1945...

SY: On the ship, I was asked to go to the kitchen and cook. No! I wouldn't go. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. [I did enough cooking]. There was an *Issei* [a Japanese first generation] man. We came home together. He said that he would take care of me if I went with him. I said "No. I'm sorry. No."

YW: You returned to Hawaii finally.

SY: Yes. Hawaii is the best. I can relax.

YW: After returning to Hawaii, what did you do next?

SY: I got on a boat.

YW: Pardon?

SY: They were happy when I went to Kewalo Basin. “Come from tomorrow”. “OK, I will”.

YW: Where was your house?

SY: My aunty’s house.

YW: Oh, your aunty. Had your aunty stayed in Hawaii all the time?

SY: Yes, she had.

YW: Wasn’t she taken to the camp?

SY: No she wasn’t.

YW: Oh, good. So you went to her house right away...

SY: She was elderly. She didn’t do anything wrong. Not everyone was arrested.

YW: Why do you think you were arrested?

SY: Because I was educated in Japan.

YW: Were you educated in Japan?

SY: I am *Kibei Nisei* [an American born but educated in Japan].

YW: Was it the only reason?

SY: I knew it.

YW: It?

SY: When I was first arrested, I already knew that I would be arrested again. All *Kibei*. All who understood Japanese were arrested. It was dangerous to leave them alone.

YW: Because they spoke Japanese?

SY: I was amazed that a foreign officer remembered me. I was arrested and released after about fifty days. When I was arrested again, he remembered me and said “You welcome

back". Good memory.

YW: It was sixteenth year of *Showa* [1941]. How long did you stay in the internment camp? About four years, I think, since you returned in twentieth [1945]. Do you recall anything particular? Anything good or bad?

SY: I wrote to him in Arkansas to go home together when I was released.

YW: Didn't he return?

SY: No, he didn't return.

YW: Your brother stayed in Chicago.

SY: Yes. In Chicago. He married a foreigner.

YW: I see.

SY: With a German. He had three kids before me.

YW: When did you get married?

SY: I forgot when.

YW: After you returned to Hawaii?

SY: Yes, after I returned to Hawaii.

YW: A Japanese girl?

SY: No. She is local.

YW: A *Nikkei* person? [Of Japanese ancestry]

SY: Yeah. From Manoa.

YW: Around when? Long time? Did you forget? Do you have any children?

SY: Three. Two girls and one boy. This boy takes me for shopping every Saturday.

YW: Wasn't he a nice son? How about your daughters?

SY: They are no good. Because girls had to leave [from a family].

YW: Don't they come to see you?

SY: They do anyway.

YW: Where do they live?

SY: All in Honolulu.

YW: Then you are not lonesome?

SY: Well, they hardly come, because I have no problems. It was better if I couldn't cook. I always think that they may bring some meals if I couldn't cook. They don't bring because I am a better cook than they are. They would bring if I couldn't cook at all.

YW: Do you speak with your children in Japanese?

SY: Yeah. Three of them went to Palama Gakuin, a Japanese school.

YW: Three of them went to a Japanese school.

SY: They speak Japanese to me.

YW: I see. No problem, then. With your wife, too?

Y. I wouldn't have married her if she didn't speak Japanese.

YW: That's right. Don't you speak English a little?

SY: I understand what the others are saying [in English].

YW: But you don't speak from your side. Even after you returned to Hawaii?

SY: No, I don't. Even now we all speak Japanese when we play a gate ball.

YW: How about when you go shopping?

SY: I speak English at that time.

YW: You have no trouble?

SY: No. Broken English is understood in Hawaii. You don't have to speak good English.

YW: I see. Do all your friends speak Japanese? No one speak English?

SY: Not too many. All of us speak Japanese when playing a gate ball.

YW: How old are they, your gate ball friends?

SY: Around eighty years old.

YW: Aren't they *Nikkei Nisei*? [Second generation of Japanese immigrants]

SY: Mostly *Nisei*. They remember Japanese words and speak to me. They had forgotten most of Japanese words, but began to recall as they spoke Japanese to me. Their sons thank me, because their fathers started to recall and could speak Japanese now.

YW: Although there was a war and you were interned in the camps....

SY: I made many friends.

YW: In the camps?

SY: We all became friends.

YW: Are you all still friends?

SY: Yeah. We can tell those who were interned.

YW: Do you still communicate with them?

SY: Most of them died. The youngest internee is now about 85 years old. Even the youngest is now eighty five, so most of them were gone.

YW: Do you think that your experience was terrible?

SY: No, I don't think so.

YW: Don't you think that American government should apologize to you? Or was it just a war?

SY: I think I had a good experience.

YW: Wasn't it an awful experience?

SY: Yes. I was terrified in the beginning when we were shot at from the airplanes. I was young. Nineteen years old. Everyone has now become old. All of them were younger than my current age. They couldn't move. Their knees crumbled. I told them to come this way, but they couldn't move. We were shot at by machine guns.

YW: When were those machine guns shot at you?

SY: December.

YW: Oh, that time.

SY: They came from above. America still had airplanes. Japs were Japs. Fishermen were all Japanese. That's why. Everyone who was fishing at that time was Japanese. They knew. Many fishermen died.

YW: You must have been very scared.

SY: I was lucky, because I didn't know anything. I just didn't like that I was not permitted to change my clothes. There was a change of clothes over there, but I was ordered not to touch anything.

YW: Did they inspect?

SY: No. My clothes were wet. Hardened with salt. It had to be washed with water. It was hard. [Sea] salt water here is very thick. Much thicker than in Japan.

YW: I see. So your clothes were hardened solid.

SY: Solid.

YW: After you returned to Hawaii, you did fishing again. How long did you do?

SY: About 11 or 12 years. I became a carpenter next.

YW: Oh, you can do carpentry, too?

SY: There is a carpenter's union now. [I have] easy [time] now, because I worked as a carpenter. Fishermen didn't have anything.

YW: That's good.

SY: [I wonder] when the union was formed.

YW: Do you still work as a carpenter?

SY: No. Working is finished. [He quit working when he was around 63 or 64 years old, since he was able to receive Social Security from 62 years old]

YW: Now you just enjoy gate balls. What else do you do every day?

SY: I don't like sitting around. If I sit down, I fall asleep. Even when I sit down, [I stand up] right away and start cleaning the house.

YW: Are you living in a condominium? It must be very convenient near Ala Moana.

SY: Very near. A bus stops right in front of it.

YW: Do you go out often?

SY: Most of the time. To Ala Moana. I shouldn't stay home. I will sit down and watch TV. It is no good now because baseball games are playing. I tend to sit down because I like the baseball games.

SY: Which channel do you watch?

SY: I have a [cable] box. I can watch baseball games. My children bought it for me.

YW: Do you remember your parents?

SY: They were born here.

YW: Your father was born on May 10 of 29th year of *Meiji* [1896].

SY: He lived till more than 80 years old.

YW: Eighty-four years old? Was he in Hawaii or in Japan at that time?

SY: He was in Japan. My mother was 83 years old. She died before him.

YW: Your mother was born December of 32nd year of *Meiji* [1899].

SY: My grandmother was 88 years old. I was my grandmother's favorite. It wasn't good. I was raised by my grandmother until I entered an elementary school.

YW: Were you in Yamaguchi-ken? What do you remember?

SY: I wasn't with her when she passed away.

YW: Were you in Hawaii?

SY: I wouldn't go if she had already died. If she had already died, it was no use. I couldn't talk to her.

YW: What did she talk to you? We were not supposed to be eating eggs. She cooked anything I wanted. I was her favorite. She was a better cook than my mother.

YW: Do you have any memory of you mother?

SY: I don't have much because I came here. I was closer to my father because I came here with my father.

YW: You went fishing with him. What do you remember of him?

SY: He was strong.

YW: Did he say anything all the time?

SY: He always scolded me. It wasn't fun.

YW: Why?

SY: Owing to him, I became a fisherman and I wouldn't lose whatever work I did.

YW: Your father told you not to lose?

SY: Yeah.

YW: You became a strong man.

SY: I could do anything fast. Any work.

YW: What did you fish?

SY: *Shibi* and *Ahi*.

YW: Did you fish *Ahi*?

SY: It was tuna.

YW: This big? With a net?

SY: No. A string. With a line.

YW: Fish got caught by a line? Those big fish?

SY: There were many in the sea.

YW: You had to have strong arms?

SY: We used to catch sharks too to make *kamaboko* [fish cake].

YW: I see. Weren't you afraid?

SY: No, I wasn't afraid. After we caught them, we cut off their heads and use them for *kamaboko*. *Kamaboko* used to be larger in old days. They are now sort of tough like rubber.

YW: Do you remember anything else?

SY: I had some pictures. I thought of bringing them [today] but didn't.

YW: Pictures of your family?

SY: No. The Centers.

YW: Oh. You had pictures of the Centers. I wish you could show them to me. Please show me next time. Well, what do you think of the world now? Don't you think it has changed a lot. Do you want to say anything to the younger generation of today? What do you think of them?

SY: They are all different. They think I am foolish whenever I talk about my old time.

YW: Won't they listen?

SY: Young people are fine that way. My boy doesn't say anything.

YW: Don't you have something you want to tell them?

SY: No. He is doing a lot for me now. Every Saturday, he takes me for shopping. I just say, "Thank you."

YW: Please take care of yourself. Enjoy your life. Please come to visit us here again. Thank you very much for taking a long time today.