

JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAII

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
(English translation)

with

Hideo Kaneshiro (HK)

August 14, 2012

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Note: Comments in brackets [] are by the transcriber. Inaudible words or sections are identified by ((?)) in the transcript.

TH: Today is August 14, 2012 and the anniversary of the ending of World War II. I am honored to have an interview with you on such an important day. Thank you very much. First of all, may I ask your name, birthday, birthplace and nationality?

HK: I was born on October 10, 1921 at Paahau on the Big Island.

TH: So your nationality at that time....

HK: I am a U.S. citizen since I was born in Hawaii.

TH: Did you obtain Japanese citizenship?

HK: I was a dual citizen, but I don't know when I obtained Japanese citizenship.

TH: Your name Kaneshiro Hideo is written in *kanji* as kin [gold], *shiro* [castle], and *shu* [excellent] and *o* [husband]?

HK: Yes.

TH: What are your parents' names and birthplaces?

HK: My father is Kame Kaneshiro and mother is Kamado Kaneshiro. They were from Itoman...Itoman-cho, Okinawa-ken. It was Itoman-cho before. It is a city now. My father was a peddler and a farmer in Kumeshima Island. After he completed an exam for military, he came to Maui, Hawaii for the first time. I don't know what he did in Maui. Then he went to Big Island and became a taxi driver. Later he worked at a coffee farm and also tried to cultivate a sugarcane field. It seems none of his works did well.

TH: I see. Your mother's name is Kamado. Did she get married and then come to Hawaii with your father?

HK: I understand that my mother's father talked to my father and called her over from Okinawa to marry him.

TH: I see. Then how about your family? Please tell me their names and where they live now. First, what is your wife's name?

HK: My wife is Fusako. She is now Kaneshiro, but her maiden name was Miyasato. Her parents are from Nago, Okinawa.

TH: When did you get married?

HK: 1960 or ...?

TH: [Let me know] later. I understand you were born here [in Hawaii] but went or returned to Okinawa. About when was that?

HK: I was born in 1921. So around '22 or '23, when I was about one year old.

TH: Where in Okinawa?

HK: Itoman now. It was Kanegusuku village before.

TH: Ken [if written in kanji]?

HK: Kaneru [combine] in kanji. Gusuku is a castle.

TH: A village, wasn't it? It is Itoman, now.

HK: Yes, Itoman.

TH: Was there any reason why you went back?

HK: Well, my father's work wasn't doing well. My family got sick often and had difficult time going to hospitals. I also think my parents wanted me to have an education in Japan.

TH: So, did all of your family returned to Japan?

HK: No, [not all]. My father stayed back.

TH: I see. Your father stayed back here [in Hawaii]. So you lived in Kanagusuku village afterwards?

HK: My mother went to Taiwan [Formosa] later, taking my brother and me. However, I guess she had a hard time [raising both of us]. I went to an elementary school from my uncle's home [in Japan]. My mother stayed back in Taiwan.

TH: How many years did you attend an elementary school?

HK: It was Itoman Elementary School. It was called Jinjo Koto Elementary School. I went up to the second year in high school level which meant eighth grade.

TH: So you attended up to eighth grade.

HK: Yes, eighth grade.

TH: Do you have any memories, good and bad?

HK: Yes, at that time, Okinawa was in very poor condition. Everyone was trying to earn money. My uncle and my aunt made us work very hard, almost like slaves, to reduce the number of mouths to feed. I could hardly do any study.

TH: That means not a good memory?

HK: I don't have any good memory. I had a very hard time.

TH: None. It must have been very difficult for you. When did you come back to Hawaii?

HK: I think it was February 21, 1938. I had to be kept in the immigration office one extra day, because it was one day before February 22 which was President Washington's birthday.

TH: Were you alone at that time?

HK: [I was] with my elder brother.

TH: Your elder brother. What is his name?

HK: Kenichi. *Kashikoi* [clever] and *ichi* [one in kanji].

TH: I see.

HK: I was suspected as someone's replacement, since I was only seventy-seven pounds and very small, because I had to work so hard and had only poor food I finally got out in the end. I had to stay one or two days longer.

TH: After you were released from immigration, where did you stay?

HK: My father was a fisherman at that time. Since he was out to the sea for one week and came back to stay home one week. I stayed with my uncle, my mother's younger brother, Haruo,

Haruo Kaneshiro. He is now a bit famous for his bonsai [miniature trees].

TH: [Your father's] younger brother was living there.

HK: My father brought back some fish when he came back from the sea. I went to study English from my uncle's house.

TH: I see. Do you remember the name of the school?

HK: Hawaii Chuo Gakuen in Nuuanu. It is now Foster Garden.

TH: Do you recall teacher Nakayama...?

HK: I don't think teacher Nakayama was there when I was attending.

TH: He wasn't there.

HK: English teacher was Ms. Lozawsky, a Russian descent. The principal was an old lady, Ms. Suehiro.

TH: Ms. Suehiro. So you learned English there. Then, did you get a job?

HK: I was doing dishwashing work at the same time. School ends around 12:00 noon. So I went school in the morning and worked as a dishwasher in the afternoon.

TH: Did you have a hard time?

HK: Yes. I didn't have any pocket money. A bus ride cost five cents at that time. Two tokens for an adult were fifteen cents. I was given ten cents for bus rides for going and coming back. I bought ice cream for five cents and walked home. (laugh)

TH: To where?

HK: Kakaako. (laugh)

TH: Kakaako. You had been living like that and then the war began. What were you doing on the day of Pearl Harbor attack?

HK: My work shift was afternoon to midnight. So, on the Sunday morning, my father was back from the sea and a co-inhabitant, Mr. Uehara, was also at home. Three of us looked at the sky because we heard bursting sound of anti-aircraft guns. My father used to watch anti-aircraft artillery practices and knew bullets made white smoke. He said these should be real bullets because they made black smoke.

TH: You watched it from Kakaako?

HK: So we were saying these had to be real bullets, and then next neighbors climbed up on the roof to watch. They had to rush down, because shrapnel from cannons spattered on the garage roof. My place in Kakaako and Times Grill, now Columbia Inn....

TH: On Kapiolani Blvd?

HK: I walked there because I was working there. Then, Extras, Pearl Harbor Attacked! It was blackout at night. I could work only daytime. I could work only half-a-day, because there were workers for day shift and night shift. Then eventually, I quit there and started working as a cook at my uncle's brother-in-law's small restaurant in downtown [Note: Black Cat Café]. However, I was suffering from emphysema and was told by a doctor not to do a work which required to use water. At the same time, I found a job at Wilson Cooke's lumberyard. Since I didn't have to use water there and pay was better, I decided to hand over my cook's position to Keiichi Kaneshiro, who came from Okinawa in the same year I did, and who knew some cooking. So I went to apply for work at a lumberyard, where I was arrested. I suppose the lumberyard had some connection with people of defense work. That could be one of the reasons.

TH: So, when were you arrested? On the day or several days later?

HK: No. A couple of months later.

TH: Oh, I see. The following year? Pearl Harbor attack was on December 7 and you were arrested after the New Year?

HK: Yes, after the New Year.

TH: I see.

HK: Many people wanted to get a job in defense work in Kahuku, because of military boom at that time. I went there, because my friend took me and also the pay was good, but I was not hired. I think it was bad to go such a place.

TH: You were arrested by surprise.

HK: I think that was one reason, but the other reason was because I attended a military exercise at high school in Japan. I carried guns and all that.

TH: I think many people were arrested because of that.

HK: My elder brother was in sixth grade, but had to work to help his uncle. He was also working at a hospital which his second cousin owned. That's why he was not arrested.

TH: Where were you taken after you were arrested?

HK: First to the immigration office. I think I was there for about a week.

TH: And then, Sand Island?

HK: Yes, Sand Island. Investigation was held at FBI office in the Dillingham Building.

TH: I heard FBI office was there. So you were investigated.

HK: After the investigation, I went home, but I was called in for second time. I could not go home this time and was sent to Sand Island. There were boats running from a small pier at that time.

TH: Do you recall about how many people were locked in the immigration office?

HK: Well, I guess about twenty in a courtyard.

TH: How about Sand Island? How many other people were there?

HK: I don't remember the number of people. There were three large two-story barracks. About forty people were downstairs and about eighty were upstairs, so I guess about 200 or 250 all together.

TH: I see. Did you see anyone you knew and was able to talk to them?

HK: People I know... We were all in a same circle. Many were from Okinawa. Minister Tsuha [Note: Minister Norizane Tsuha], Kotaro Taira, Dr. Ikuta [Note: Dr. Shunji Kay Ikuta] and Mr. Oudou [Note: Mr. Shunichi Oudou, a Japanese school teacher]. Many were from Yamaguchi-ken or Hiroshima-ken. Fishermen from Yamaguchi-ken were out in the Pearl Harbor and, therefore, got arrested. I learned many Yamaguchi and Hiroshima dialects.

TH: Do you have any unforgettable memories at Sand Island or the immigration office?

HK: Well, I dug for many seashells at Sand Island. I used cement instead of a whetstone, which was not available, to shape shells to make leis. Since I had leisure time, I did many things. There was someone who could teach me English I remember the prisoners of war very vividly. They were confined in a stockade. When I got up in the morning, they were already up and followed their leader for a military exercise. They made very deep bows towards the Imperial Palace. When the guards warned them with guns, they just said "Yes, yes. Just kill me." When they want to say something, they talked loud to themselves.

TH: Did internees mainly talk about their families?

HK: Yes, conversations and also performances. We did some vulgar things. Very funny Dr. Uehara sang some vulgar songs by *nagauta* style. He could sing *rokyoku*, both decent or indecent way.

TH: Do you remember how long you stayed at Sand Island?

HK: I don't remember, but I think I was interned for a long time. Just like life, it seems long and yet short.

TH: Do you remember when you were transferred to Mainland from Sand Island?

HK: Well, I don't remember how long [I stayed at Sand Island] before transferred to Mainland. I think that transfer was voluntary. I didn't have to go. I was told that I would be free without fences and guards, if I go. Well, it was a lie. There were fences and guards.

TH: Where in the Mainland did you go?

HK: I went on a convoy, that is, a cargo ship. There were about seven cargo ships bringing supplies to Hawaii during the war. They did drills such as hitting targets with anti-aircraft guns. The ship was not gorgeous, of course, since it was a cargo ship. We were not told to stay away, although gun shells were flying around and dangerous. It took about one week, because the ship had to proceed in zigzag manner to avoid being hit by submarines.

TH: Then, where did you arrive?

HK: I arrived at San Francisco, passing under the Golden Gate Bridge. Then went to Oakland and got on a train. It was a train using coals. There were nice tables on the train. A waiter brought dishes and asked for a tip. I didn't have even a penny, because my money was taken away. Nothing. The waiter became upset, because I didn't tip him. Next time, he brought murky water and lamb stew. All of us [internees] had stomach aches. I think there were two toilets. We had a miserable time. After about four days, we arrived at Topaz, Utah, about 100 miles from Salt Lake. There were barracks in the middle of a desert. [Note: He arrived on March 14, 1943].

TH: About how many of you were from Hawaii?

HK: Well, I don't remember exactly. May be about two hundred. There was one empty barrack at Topaz. I suppose it was kept empty for us. We almost filled the barrack. The bathtub was dirty with sand and dirt dust. We cleaned it up, since we had a lot of time. I worked as a kitchen helper. I also worked as a fireman. I did [worked] garbage trucks and garbage collection.

TH: I understand there were internees not only from Hawaii, but also some from Mainland with their families.

HK: I later heard there were five thousand or more.

TH: Did you have a chance to talk with those from other places?

HK: I talked and visited Mr. & Mrs. Shiromatsu from Los Angeles. There was a Tamanaha.

TH: Could you go freely to the other blocks?

HK: Yes. It was just like a town. There were entertainments in the evening. Many good singers. There were musicians, doctors, and all different professionals. Even baseball players.

TH: Topaz was famous for baseball teams.

HK: Yes. [Showing a photo] This is Waikiki team of Topaz.

TH: A Hawaii team, wasn't it? Are you in this photo? Where are you?

HK: Yes. This is me [pointing at him in the photo].

TH: Yes, looks like you. Did you play baseball every day?

HK: Not much at Topaz. More at Tule Lake.

TH: Was this a baseball or softball?

HK: No, it was a hardball. Baseball, I think. I don't know much.

TH: So you did various works in the camp and got together with others when you had time.

HK: Well, just a little work. Only one hour in the morning. I could finish garbage collection in one hour. Firemen in Topaz. Firemen go to a fire station and spend twenty four hours there and then rest three days. Something like that.

TH: Naturally there was no fire!.

HK: No fire. We did a drill once in a while.

TH: Wasn't it a little boring job?

HK: Therefore, we did *shogi*, *go*, and horseshoe.

TH: So, generally speaking, the life at Topaz was not strict but rather free.

HK: We could live freely.

TH: How about quality of meals?

HK: Plenty and good. Well, not that much free, but I could go and see a doctor in a hospital [Note: there was a hospital in the camp] and told him, "I have a slight pain" and the doctor said, "Blood clot should be removed. It happened because you ate hard foods." I don't think the food was too hard. I ate less than [I did] in Honolulu [He talks about Hawaii from

here] My day off was only once a week after working eight hours, since my work was twelve hours a day, seven days a week with just one day off from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., a morning off. When I wanted to eat Japanese food, I went to “Mezamashi” [name of a restaurant] in front of Toyo Theater. Do you know Toyo Theater? I didn’t eat much meat. I was not too strong. I could eat [meat] as much as I want in the camp.

TH: You were lucky in that sense.

HK: (laugh) I had enough food and time. That’s why I had time to learn painting.

TH: You were busy spending leisure time. Didn’t an American in-charge of the camp bother you much?

HK: I didn’t hear anything bothering.

TH: I suppose internees lived quite peacefully.

HK: There was a block manager, but he didn’t say anything to prohibit us doing this and that.

TH: I see. How long did you stay at Topaz?

HK: I don’t remember at all. I don’t pay much attention to date and time.

TH: Well, then, putting the date aside, where did you go next?

HK: Tule Lake.

TH: Tule Lake.

HK: I went to Tule Lake because of Articles 27 and 28. Do you know, “No, no?” We were asked if we would serve [American] military and shoot the Emperor with a bow and arrow.

TH: Loyalty questionnaire, wasn’t it? You answered, “No, no?”

HK: My “no, no” answer sent me to Tule Lake. I think about 8,000 of us were sent, but I heard later about 16,000 were sent.

TH: Did you go from Topaz to Tule Lake by a train again?

HK: Train.

TH: Train. How many days did you take?

HK: I don’t remember.

TH: I suppose many people were sent from Topaz to Tule Lake.

HK: Yes, many went. [Note: exact number was 1,466].

TH: Were you served meals by a waiter on the train again?

HK: Gee, how come I don't remember?

TH: Perhaps you don't remember, because you were treated nicely.

HK: I don't think I was treated fairly well on that train. It was terrible on the train from Oakland. This time, I think it wasn't too bad.

TH: When you arrived at Tule Lake, many people from Hawaii were already there....

HK: I don't think there was any from Hawaii. Mostly from Mainland.

TH: Do you think there were many internees from other places when you arrived there? There was an internment camp at Jerome, Arkansas, which was closed in 1944. At that time, people wanted to go back to Japan and the others who answered "no, no" were sent to Tule Lake. Therefore, quite a few people went to Tule Lake.

HK: Yes, many from other camps.

TH: Do you recall any names of the people from Hawaii in the Tule Lake camp?

HK: Yes, many.

TH: Mr. Honda was one of them.

HK: Honda. In my room, Kanda, Kawano, who, I heard, died because of a holdup, and Kaneishi.

TH: Do you know Mr. Ozaki?

HK: Ozaki?

TH: Otokichi.

HK: I don't think I met him. He is famous.

TH: Mr. Honda was among them.

HK: His house was close to mine.

TH: I will ask about Mr. Honda separately later. How was the treatment at Tule Lake compared to Topaz?

HK: I heard that some complained. I felt things were abundant, since I had been raised in very modest way. I don't think many complained. May be some extremists grumbled around.

TH: I understand that Tule Lake was known for those hard extremists. I heard there were some commotions just before the war ended and some of them were sent to Santa Fe or Bismarck. Did you see any of those disturbances?

HK: Not only saw but I was wrongfully caught into it. There was a storehouse where food was kept when delivered from outside. Some people were watching when food was stolen from the storehouse at night. Then, they made a big fuss about it by the fence. There was one person who was wearing a military overcoat that was distributed to the people from Hawaii when they were transferred to Mainland. So, people from Hawaii were blamed for making the trouble. I answered the knock on the door at night and encountered three soldiers who pointed glittering silver pistols to me and ordered me to get toilet articles and get on a jeep. I was taken to a stockade on the jeep. It was around November, because snow was falling. I was taken to a stockade in the camp, a similar barrack, but first I was put in a tent. However, because of those extremist leaders who resisted everything, soldiers rushed in and ordered us to go outside. We were forced to stand for three hours in the snow. Then, someone said, "Let's do hunger strike." So we went into a hunger strike for about six days, eighteen meals. On the seventh day, someone saw those leaders were eating broiled garlic. My roommate, Mr. Kawano, said, "They can do hunger strike for a long time. We are just guinea pigs. Let's stop. Whoever wants to follow me, follow me. If you want to eat, eat. If you don't want to eat, don't eat." So, he went to the leaders and told them, "Let's quit." Then the leaders said, "It is meaningless, if you quit. Let's all quit." Then, we were finally released. But, some of the leaders, I don't know how many, started again, because they were not released. I think they did for about two weeks. I don't know what happened in the end.

TH: I suppose there was anti-American atmosphere at Tule Lake and even those who were not anti-American got involved in some commotions.

HK: Yes, that's right.

TH: So, what kind of action those extremists took when the war ended after all?

HK: There were many who did not believe the war ended. We were not so... I saw some of those were running around with *hachimaki* tied around their heads. My place was at the end of the camp, so I didn't see much what was happening in the center area.

TH: I guess that only some areas had troubles, not the whole area. Most of other areas was quiet, wasn't it?

HK: Well, those who had discarded the [U.S.] citizenship now regretted. I was one of them.

TH: When did you discard your citizenship?

HK: I don't remember, too.

TH: At Tule Lake?

HK: At Tule Lake. Many others did. I was told that I would be treated badly, if I still held the citizenship when I returned to Japan. But, after the war ended, I wanted to go back to Hawaii. I would have a hard time if I go back to Japan, since the country was defeated. I wanted my citizenship back. There was a lawyer, Wayne Collins ((?)), who was supposed to handle the case, and I paid him two hundred dollars. I don't know what happened to the case.

TH: It must have been after the war.

HK: Yes, after the war. So, those who did not discard the citizenship and *Issei*, who, of course, didn't discard since they didn't have it from the beginning, left the camp. Those who discarded the citizenship could not be released for a long time. You know, it was funny. There was a mess hall in our block 50. They delivered food to its kitchen. They delivered the same amount of food for 200 people, even though there were only 50 now. "Please take this back, because we don't need it all." "No, it is my duty to bring it." People in Japan were suffering from food shortage. Here in America, we still had abundant food. Milk, ten gallon or may be five gallon buckets. They brought four of them. We sure couldn't drink them all. So, we poured them into a bath tub. A milk bath! (laugh)

TH: What a thing to remember!

HK: They even brought one whole lamb. Japanese don't eat lamb because of the smell. We didn't know what to do with it, so we burned it in a stove. It burned well because of its fat. Skin became beautiful when it was washed in milk. We did all those things. (laugh)

TH: Were you working at a kitchen in Tule Lake?

HK: Yes. I did servicing or dish washing.

TH: You must have been an expert, since you had previous experiences.

HK: But I wasn't allowed to cook. First cook and a second cook had monthly pay of \$1,975 plus \$375. We earned \$1,675 plus \$300. I guess [the difference] between a chief cook and us was about \$300. I guess we didn't have responsibility. Well, the work didn't require much responsibility anyway. I played baseball, *judo*, and learned painting at Tule Lake.

TH: Now that you mentioned about painting, I think Mr. Honda was your paint teacher. How about telling me about him? Did you meet Mr. Honda first time in his art class?

HK: He drew very beautiful pictures. Awesome pictures. There was an exhibition at high school auditorium. His pictures drew everyone's attention. Even some outside people

came to see. They might have been businessmen. White people. I was attracted to his beautiful pictures and wanted to take his class.

TH: How often was a class, once a week or every day?

HK: I am sure it was everyday.

TH: Every day. Well, it was just like your job.

HK: It was only in the morning for my case.

TH: I think Mr. Honda was very busy. How many students he had?

HK: It was spacious. Somehow a cherry tree was brought in and we used it as a pillar to make a *tokonoma* [an alcove]. But the war ended about the time we finished making it.

TH: How many students did he have?

HK: I don't think too many. May be about ten.

TH: I guess so.

HK: Lots of space.

TH: Did Mr. Honda graduate from an art school in Tokyo?

HK: In Kyoto.

TH: Oh, in Kyoto.

HK: He was a strict man. When he corrected my drawing by pointing out a bad part, I was hesitating to re-do the part. He yelled at me, "Don't draw a picture with that kind of mind!" and he pulled both of my arms so hard that my dress shirt was torn apart. [He said] "I tore it up because you were no good!"

TH: He was in flying corps of Japanese military and achieved a lot during Sino-Japanese war. Some say he was blacklisted by FBI, because of an article of his story published in the *Nippu Jiji* [a Japanese newspaper published in Japanese in Hawaii]. So, he might have not been interned if the story wasn't published.

HK: Well, he was...but he was nice to me. He asked me, "Hideo, do you want to go?" and he took me to do a sketch. He took me, only me, and no one else.

TH: I think Mr. Honda and you were about ten years apart.

HK: I think so.

TH: Did he have a family with him at that time?

HK: Yes. A child was born. Mr. Hirai, who also worked at Glass & Art [Note: Hawaii Glass & Art store] where I used to work, said Mr. Honda married often. Do you know Yasutaro Oda, who was the owner of the store? Mr. Hirai was next door [in the camp].

TH: There were two Hirai's in the camp.

HK: May be Ryuzo.

TH: Ryuzo [Note: Ryuzo Hirai]. He became a newspaper reporter later.

HK: I am sure he was in the camp. He was next door and used to fight with his wife often.

TH: Mr. Honda went to New York after the war. Did he ask you to go with him?

HK: I told him I would go, but I couldn't go because of my citizenship. I don't think I really wanted to go.

TH: Do you think the true reason Mr. Honda wanted to go to New York was because he wanted to learn painting?

HK: I think so. Painting was his, what you call, [only purpose]. After he died, his family held an exhibition [of his works]. Did you see the book?

TH: Catalog line?

HK: I went to see at Academy of Arts I found his paintings were totally different. I thought [the painter] was a same name but a different person. But, I found old paintings drawn at Tule Lake in the back area. So, this is not a different person. His paintings were very different after he went to New York and came back to Honolulu Paintings at Tule Lake were not quite powerful enough. Totally different after New York. It seemed a different person painted them.

TH: I think his paintings changed after he learned from Mr. Yasuo Kuniyoshi, a famous painter, in New York. So, the middle name of Mr. Edward Honda [Note: Son of Hiroshi Honda] is Kuniyoshi.

HK: Oh!.

TH: I'm sure his name was taken from Mr. Kuniyoshi.

HK: His strong eagerness shows.

TH: At the camp, could you get painting materials, such as canvas or paint, freely?

HK: Mail order. We did mail order from outside such as Colorado. I ordered my shoes by mail order. I ordered size 5, but was told no such size. I was told if I paid \$250 more and sent the shape of my feet, my shoes would be made and mailed. I think it was about \$1400. I think I still have them [He goes to see a shoe box]. Well, no more. It was Florsheim.

TH: Florsheim. High quality shoes.

HK: They kept the shape, because they were made to fit my feet. I wore them, not all the time but once in a while, for seventy years.

TH: I understand you could do mail orders quite freely through a canteen.

HK: Yes, I could.

TH: I see.

HK: Some people made *sake* from rice and yeast.

TH: Wasn't it a bootleg?

HK: I bought and drank it.

TH: Wasn't beer sold at the camp?

HK: No, it wasn't.

TH: I suppose the Tule Lake camp was strict. You could buy [beers] at other camps.

HK: Yes, that's right. I could buy beers at Crystal City. Two bottles per person for one week I obtained coupons from some people who didn't drink. So I could drink a case!.

TH: The war ended [when you were] at Tule Lake. Do you have any memories of the day when the war ended?

HK: We hid a shortwave radio. I guess it wasn't too strict I listened to the Emperor's broadcast. We all knew that Japan would lose. Because we heard people would fight with bamboo spears and would fight until the last person. We thought Japan was done. But it was shocking to hear the Emperor's broadcast.

TH: Did you think Japan would disappear?

HK: I thought so.

TH: Hadn't you already renounced your [American] citizenship?

HK: Yes. That's why I was not able to be released from the camp. Anyway, I needed my citizenship to be restituted. So, I asked a lawyer, Wayne Collins, to take care of it.

TH: How long did you stay at Tule Lake? For a while after the war? Do you remember?

HK: I don't remember at all.

TH: I understand Japanese [internees] returned to Hawaii around November. Do you remember seeing them off?

HK: I think there was a departing photo. I don't know where it is now. I don't think I went to see them off, but I remember seeing a picture.

TH: I suppose those who were against America became quiet. How was the life at the camp after the war? Was it peaceful?

HK: Well, I felt sorry for the cats and dogs left behind. I also had a dog, but I couldn't help leaving it behind. I couldn't take it with me.

TH: So all the cats and dogs became stray cats and dogs. Where did you go next after staying for a while at Tule Lake after the war?

HK: I went to Texas. Crystal City, near San Antonio. I saw a statue of Popeye along the road to Crystal City.

TH: You remember it.

HK: Half of Crystal City was German and the other half was Japanese. There were some from Argentine, South America. Some were Indians. There was a sixteen-year-old girl who had three children. There was a swimming pool on Japanese side and some Germans came over. I was a driver. Although I worked on a truck at Utah, I worked as a driver here. I had never driven before at all, but I drove a dump truck here. Like this. [He pretends as if driving] (laugh) I had to pick up rubbish and dump it in a gulch. I had to drive close to the gulch. No one was guiding me. It was so scary. A person watching me yelled, "Reverse more!" (laugh) I guess I was reckless.

TH: You were young I think many who had renounced citizenship went to Crystal City from Tule Lake. Do you remember about how many people went?

HK: Yes. There were small barracks. About five people for one barrack. I wonder how many. Quite a few, I guess.

TH: Did those who came from Tule Lake stayed together?

HK: I don't think so.

TH: No?

HK: People were from here and there.

TH: I think you were still single at that time. Weren't there some family members?

HK: I guess, but I didn't see them.

TH: I see. I suppose they took a separate way. Then, where did you go after you moved to Crystal City temporarily?

HK: You know, I was told that I could stay there, if I want, and I could return to Hawaii with expense paid by the government when my release was issued. However, I had to go home with my own, if I went to work for Seabrook Farm before a release. Since I was sick and tired of staying in a camp, I wanted to work for Seabrook Farm, even if I had to pay my own way back.

TH: How many of your friends went to Seabrook Farm?

HK: Quite a few. I entered the State Park barrack first. I don't think there were too many Tule Lake groups.

TH: I see. Do you remember any names of the people who went together with you?

HK: There was a Tamashiro and then Kaneshiro and....

TH: Tell me later if you remember more. I understand Seabrook Farm was in New Jersey. Were you free to take a train from Crystal City?

HK: I don't think I was free to go. Well, how I went? Anyway, I think we went as a group.

TH: A group?

HK: Yes, as a group.

TH: I heard Seabrook Farm was a producer of canned goods and frozen foods.

HK: Yes, yes.

TH: What kind of work did you do?

HK: My first job was to remove dirt or rubbish from vegetables or beans on a conveyer belt. Not a good job, but this is America. One day a truck driver came and told two of us to come over. One Mainland person and I. We were assigned to outside work as truck helpers. We were first told to remove dirt from running water from the factory. Then, we were assigned as maintenance men for a church which was used by the company president.

It was an easy job. We were not supposed to go out more than sixteen miles but no one was watching. I also went to Atlantic City. There was nothing, since it was a winter season. Then, I went to Vineland town with four or five friends. We went to a bar and drank *sake*. One free drink after three. Sidewalks were wide. Five of us were walking and passed young, white girls. "Japanese" they whispered. Japanese were rare. Japanese were many in the camp, but not in town. We split a taxi fare to Vineland about 30 miles away.

TH: About how much was your pay?

HK: I don't remember well, but blacks were paid 67.5 cents for a same work, 72.5 cents for Japanese and 85 cents for whites. Anyway, there was discrimination. Pay was different depending on nationalities. It was such a time.

TH: There was discrimination at that time.

HK: It was natural at that time.

TH: Do you have any memorable episodes at Seabrook Farms?

HK: We couldn't work because of a storm one day. Kitchen was closed because of no work. We finally made and had a soup and sandwich. I think it was around November. In the Mainland, storms prevented farm works. So the company was closed. I think dining was free at the company. We lined up just like a mess hall. One girl told me, "I think I saw you some place." I said, "I don't know you." I was from Hawaii and couldn't be at such a place. So I left. Then, I sat again at the same place and she gave me plenty rice. I found out why, when I went to Vineland for the first time. Mainland people say something like that when they want to make friends. Mr. Uehara, one of my distant relatives, was very handsome. He was so handsome that even a white person would say, "I saw you someplace." That's how I found out that it was a common technique. I don't know if he knew that, but he would reply, "I saw you at a cow pasture" and so on.

TH: He was very popular, wasn't he?

HK: Yes, he was. At Tule Lake, I became friends with a manager's office girl who was born in Wakayama, Japan and lived in Los Angeles. She was Japanese-English, bilingual, and good with knitting. I taught her how to play mandolin and became a close friend. However, it was all over when Mr Uehara showed up! I was not popular any longer. (laugh)

TH: I guess that even the best man meets his match. How long did you stay at Seabrook Farms?

HK: I think [I stayed] about half a year.

TH: Half a year.

HK: I don't remember at all.

TH: Then you returned to Honolulu.

HK: I took a train from Philadelphia. From Philadelphia to Chicago and then to Los Angeles. At Philadelphia, I asked which train to take when I was buying a ticket, Northern Pacific, Central Pacific, or Southern Pacific? There were three lines. "Which is the best?" They replied, "They are all best." Well, I just randomly picked Southern Pacific. When the train stopped at some stations, I noticed there were signs, "Black" and "White" or maybe "Colored" at lavatories. Anyway, lavatories were separated. Then, the train went southward, since it was Southern Pacific. I knew it would go further south than Los Angeles, but it entered Mexico crossing the country border, to my surprise. I didn't have [American] citizenship and showed my alien registration card. Then, I was told by an inspector to go to the immigration office. I asked him to do something since I was just returning to Hawaii via Los Angeles and everything would be no good if I missed my airplane and all. I guess the inspector consulted with a higher officer and said, "O.k., o.k.." I was just passing there to go to Los Angeles.

TH: You couldn't restore the citizenship yet by that time.

HK: Only an alien registration card.

TH: Only that.

HK: I was an alien.

TH: And then, when did you arrive at Honolulu?

HK: I think it was 1947.

TH: It was almost two years after the end of war. Where did you stay in Hawaii?

HK: Kakaako, Hawaii.

TH: Kakaako in Honolulu?

HK: Yes. Where did it go? [He is looking for something].

TH: Isn't it this newspaper article? It is written here. You were single yet at that time. When did you get married?

HK: It was 1960.

TH: Did you know your wife before?

HK: No. I was attending a painting class at a club. A Mr. Shimabukuro at the club told me he would introduce someone if I was still single. He introduced me [to] my wife who was

brought over by her uncle from Okinawa as a sewing student with a student visa.

TH: So she was born and raised in Okinawa?

HK: She was born in Taiwan.

TH: Oh, Taiwan, but raised in Okinawa.

HK: I think the war ended when she was about six years old in Okinawa.

TH: What kind of work were you doing in Hawaii at that time?

HK: I was a cook at a restaurant.

TH: You worked as a cook for a while and eventually worked for Pan Am?

HK: My aunty mentioned that Pan Am was advertising [for a cook] since flights were coming from Australia.

TH: Oh, Melbourne.

HK: They were hiring temporary workers for increased flights. My aunty asked if it was O.K. with me to take a temporary job, since I already had a good job and might be difficult to change jobs. I said I was fine, since there were many jobs for a cook. Then, I was hired as temporary, but lasted for twenty-seven years!

TH: Time passed quickly.

HK: Yes, it did. My life, too. I became ninety years old without noticing. (laugh)

TH: What do you think your internment has meant for you when you look back?

HK: Well, I think it was a setback. It was mentally hard, too. I lived daily life without incidents. I made friends and played baseball. I think I learned something, but I still think I was hindered. I made friends and girlfriends. Many of them I think I was in a totally different circumstance from a normal life to look at the world and the people. There were good things but also setbacks. When I came back, I didn't understand English and didn't have any qualification. I applied for a third grade class at Hawaiian Mission [Academy]. I was told to take a test since I didn't know English. After taking a test, I was told that I could enter a seventh grade, because I knew mathematics even though I didn't understand English. I didn't know there was a special English class. Seventh grade was for twelve years old. It was just like I entered a ninth grade by skipping a seventh grade. Ninth grade is a freshman in high school.

TH: Which school was it?

HK: Hawaiian Mission Academy. Ninth grade is usually an intermediate school, but it was high school there. However, it was difficult, because I was working and also had to take a Bible class. So I quit [the Academy] and got a daytime job as a painter [at Hawaii Glass & Art] and learned English two nights [a week] at McKinley High School.

TH: I think of you as a painter right away. I suppose you had influence from Mr. Honda and kept learning painting ever since.

HK: It was just a short time, though. When I started learning [from Mr. Honda], the war ended. Then, we left the camp and went separate ways. So, it was just a short time.

TH: When did you start painting after you returned to Hawaii?

HK: Christmas cards. I drew Christmas cards one by one. There is a copy machine now, but I drew one by one [before], so I won't forget painting. I suppose I did that for about thirty years. I draw Christmas cards every year.

TH: I guess then you make new cards every year.

HK: [Pointing a picture] This is a bonsai my uncle made. This is placed at National Arboretum in Washington D.C. I painted this from a photo my friend took. This is a Makaha side. Would you like to look? There aren't too many..

TH: This looks like a Seshu's landscape [Interviewers looked at his drawings on the wall afterward.]