

JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAII

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

(English translation of interview originally conducted in Japanese)

with

Reverend Kyōdō Fujihana (KF)

May 6, 1978

Interviewers: Ichigūkai members [Names unknown] (IG) & (UN)

Notes: Comments in brackets [] are by the transcriber. Inaudible words or sections are identified by ((?)) in the transcript. Words in **bold** were originally spoken in English.

IG: Thank you very much for coming today.

KF: No problem.

IG: I would like to hear your many stories today.

KF: I just came here casually and did not really intend to talk story. Actually Rev. Ara lured me in here. I was like a struggling fish, caught by the bait, which wasn't even a good one.

IG: Well, you can't run away now that you've been caught. You have to make up your mind.

KF: I see many people here who look like examiners.

IG: So, where are you from?

KF: I was born in Tokyo but raised at Mandara Temple in Shin Minato, Toyama Prefecture.

IG: I see.

KF: This temple is very large. It was under the direct protection of the Maeda clan. The Maeda clan was [a daimyo of] one-million-*goku* [unit of rice used to measure a daimyo's power] in Kaga, as you know.

IG: I know.

KF: Therefore, all priests for generations were very educated.

IG: I see.

KF: Many priests were selected from Tokyo, because the temple was very established. Therefore, my master had many disciples from Tokyo, Yokohama, Sendai in far Miyagi Prefecture, and also from Ishikawa [Prefecture].

IG: I see. From all over the country.

KF: Yes, from all over the country.

IG: So, you were born in

KF: Tokyo.

IG: 1900.

KF: March 1, 1906, but my family register shows March 11.

IG: I see. And then, how about schools?

KF: Taisho University in Tokyo.

IG: Ah, Taisho University.

KF: It is a Buddhist university.

IG: When did you come to Hawaii?

KF: 1931. The 6th year of the Showa era. My master ordered me to go without question [to Hawaii] when I graduated [from the university.] In those days, we were not like today's priests of the various religious sects who may just ask if they can go to Hawaii.

IG: That's right.

KF: The master's order was absolute, even if you didn't like it.

IG: No way out.

KF: We had to absolutely obey the order.

IG: I see. Then first...

KF: I stayed at the temple headquarters in Honolulu for the first two years and some months -- about three years -- and then moved to [the temple in] Ewa.

IG: Oh, Ewa.

KF: The temple and a school were located at the corner of Honouliuli and the Ewa plantation.

IG: Yes, there was a school.

KF: I stayed there for a full six years. Then, I moved to Puunene, Maui, by the order from the higher-ups.

IG: Puunene.

KF: There is no temple at Puunene now.

IG: Oh, there was one at that time.

KF: I had to move to Kahului, because all the workers at the plantation were discharged.

IG: Kahului.

KF: The temple was moved to Kahului. Puunene was thriving at that time.

IG: Yes. The Puunene [plantation] was the largest in Hawaii.

KF: It was said to be the second largest sugar plantation after [those in] Cuba. Puunene was the largest in Hawaii, as you know, and Ewa was next, followed by Kohala.

IG: Kohala. I think only Puunene produced one hundred thousand pounds of sugar at that time.

KF: Well, it was 1940 when I moved to Puunene. In September. I stayed at Puunene for one year and three months. Then, the next year, 1941 -- the "bang" of December 7. I was

forced to get on an army truck. I am not saying it proudly -- that I was the very first [one to get on an army truck].

IG: The very first one.

KF: Yes. I was wondering where I was going to be taken to. Then I found out that it was Wailuku Prison. It was during the black out. [The truck] sped through the darkness and suddenly stopped. “Stop here!” The door squeaked open. I thought, “What now?” The moment the door was opened, all of my belongings -- necktie, belt, watch and cigarettes -- were taken away.

IG: Oh!

KF: How terrible. I asked, “Who’s order is this?” They said just one word. “Military.”

IG: I see. It was a military order.

KF: Then, I thought I was the first one, but I could hear someone’s voice. Someone was in the back. “Who is this?” “Oh, Mr. Imamura.” Mr. Imamura of Wailuku. [Teizen Imamura, a priest of the Jōdoshū temple.]

IG: Oh, Mr. Imamura.

KF: “Oh, you are Rev. Fujihana.” “When did you come?” “I entered here one step ahead of you because I was closer.”

IG: I see.

KF: Then the guard said, “**Hey, no talk Japanese.**”

IG: Ah.

KF: “Since we can’t talk in Japanese, let’s talk in broken English.” So we started to speak in broken English. Then the guard yelled, “**Shut up!**” So, we couldn’t talk. We were bitten by lice all night long. Then, the next morning, December 8, we counted forty-seven Japanese prisoners. So this must have been the forty-seven *samurai* of Showa.

IG: Yes, indeed.

KF: Well, it was not the right time to be doing it, but I was kind of showing off, because I was not pleased with the situation. Afterwards, the prisoners increased by three, five, sometimes fifteen, sixteen, because they were brought in from not only Maui but also from Lanai and even Honolulu. I read in a newspaper that Tsuruichi Sarae, a fisherman from Honolulu, was picked up by a guard while he was fishing near Maui or Lanai.

IG: I see.

KF: Then the fisherman was thrown into the prison with us. So the number [of prisoners] kept increasing.

IG: I think there was [another prison] at Honokawai [Lahaina].

KF: Yes. The prison was too small and became over-crowded so canopy tents were built and five people were put in one tent. The number of prisoners grew very large.

IG: Yes, indeed.

KF: The year eventually ended and the New Year arrived. I can’t forget February [19]42,

President's Day, when we were ordered to move. We had no choice but to get on an army truck, and we were rushed down to the Kahului pier. There was an inter-island ship. When I got onboard, I found people from the island of Hawaii, mainly from the Volcano area.

IG: They were confined at the Volcano camp.

KF: They were all there. "Oh, you are here, too. What a mix up to incarcerate a Nisei [second generation of Japanese-American]." As we were talking, the ship departed with a whistle.

IG: [The ship] departed.

KF: The ship zigzagged but went very fast.

IG: I see.

KF: I think that, in the old days, a boat departing at nine at night from Honolulu arrived around seven in the morning at Kahului.

IG: It was the following morning.

KF: Well, this boat zigzagged, going here and there, but it took only five hours before arriving.

IG: Oh, it was very fast.

KF: So we arrived at Honolulu in the evening and slept on bunk beds in the Immigration Building for two nights. Then we were sent to Sand Island. There was no Sand Island Road at that time, so we went by boat. We stayed at Sand Island for a couple of weeks. Then, without any warning, we were told that we were departing. "Where are we going this time?" We had no information. I saw a large ship over there. We were brought to the large ship by a small boat. [I later found out] the ship had been the first ship to take to the Mainland prisoners like us who had been incarcerated on December 7. And then it returned empty to transport us on its second trip. Then we arrived at Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay.

IG: The name sounds good, but . . .

KF: The name surely sounds good, but it was an island prison. We said that the place was good, because it was very cool -- not hot like Honolulu -- and comfortable. When meal time came, I was called, "Reverend Fujihana!" "Hey, K-Y-O-D-O Fujihana!" They couldn't read it Kyōdō. "Hey, K-Y-O-D-O Fujihana!" "Yes." "Come, come!" I wondered where I was being taken. I found out I was being taken to a kitchen. They told me to cook!

IG: [Laughs]

KF: Well, I did help a German cook at Sand Island, because we couldn't just sit and eat. We were ordered to cook our food ourselves, although the ingredients were supplied. Nobody volunteered, so Mr. Chikuma of Tōyō Theater [Masayuki Chikuma, general manager of Tōyō Theater] and I had to assist the cook. However, the menu was an army-style menu, which we had never cooked before. We requested a dictionary and learned to cook with the help of the dictionary. So it seemed this was a continuation [of this practice]...

IG: On the Mainland.

KF: On Angel Island. The first place we were sent to was Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

IG: To Fort Sill.

KF: This place is famous for tornados. Luckily, we did not experience any large tornados. As you know, this is the place where Mr. Ōshima, a barber from Kona, was killed. [Kensaburo Ōshima was a shop owner and car dealer from Kealahou, Hawaii.] I think he was emotionally troubled and staggered near the barbed wired fence, although there was a strict order not go within 10 feet of the fence. He was shot the moment he touched the fence. Mr. Chikuma and I were the first ones to help him. At that time, I had been chosen chief cook of a unit and Mr. Chikuma was chief cook of another unit. One group had five cooks who were all amateur, volunteer cooks. I put on a robe [*koromo*, i.e., a Buddhist robe], and instead of Buddhist beads, I carried in my hand a sharp knife and hacked up the meat. Can you imagine how much meat there was for 250 people? [KF is making Buddhist references: one involves the use of the word “*koromo*,” i.e., the robe of a Buddhist priest, instead of a cook’s apron; another is to the prayer beads normally carried by a priest. They convey the irony of a Buddhist priest working as a butcher.]

IG: What a job!

KF: It is was a quarter of a normal sized cow.

IG: A quarter.

KF: Being chief cook, I was told to cut it by myself. If the other assistant cook were to cut the meat, he would cut it unevenly and it would not be enough for everyone. Well, they thought a chief cook would cut it nicely, but the chief cook was just an amateur.

IG: Well, you were an expert because you were named a chief cook.

KF: That’s what they thought, although a sergeant was always standing by me. I had a bloody knife in my hand when I heard “bang, bang.” I rushed out and saw a body lying miserably on the ground like a stray dog that had been killed by a stray-dog hunter. It was the first time that I witnessed such a miserable reality. I had heard earlier some similar news from another camp, but I hadn’t actually seen it until this time.

IG: So, this was the first time.

KF: Also, a man who was a mailman from Puunene, Maui --what’s his name? [This may be Kōkichi Nakamura, a mail carrier from Wailuku.] I don’t think he was well educated, but I suppose he could read names. He was a mail carrier and also a handyman for the Japanese Consulate. So, he was also arrested and incarcerated. He was a good-natured man, but he was hiding something -- maybe a cigarette -- and he got caught. He was brought to trial at a special court in the camp and sentenced to a prohibition of cigarettes for one week. Well, as I said earlier, we were stripped of everything, including cigarettes when we were imprisoned. Eventually a store was opened and cigarettes could be bought freely. So, that was good. [Before that] even a small violation of a rule was strictly punished.

IG: I understand. Then, who was the judge at court?

KF: A person just brought in by a soldier.

IG: I see.

KF: From headquarters.

IG: A Caucasian?

KF: Yes, a Caucasian.

IG: Not from among the internees?

KF: No internees would volunteer.

IG: Sure. Therefore, someone from the outside had to come.

KF: Then, things got interesting. Suddenly, we received orders to move, and I had to go Camp Livingston [in Louisiana]. We always had to go through very strict physical checks wherever we went. I suppose they didn't want to have any sick people. That was good. There were many doctors among the internees.

IG: Who were the doctors?

KF: Dr. Takahashi [Dr. Tokue Takahashi from Honolulu], Dr. Ōhata from Maui [Dr. Seiichi Ōhata from Paia, Maui], our Dr. Kimura [Dr. Robert Akio Kimura from Honolulu], and Dr. Ōta, the "camp desk" [i.e., chief doctor]. Well, there were many doctors. There was also a medical colonel from outside. First, internee doctors would do physical checks. Then, it was my turn. When [the colonel] checked my blood pressure, he said it was strange. "**Only eighty-six. Eighty-six! Why?**" He said that my highest pressure was only eighty-six. I don't remember what the lowest pressure was.

IG: Maybe around fifty. That was very low.

KF: Colonel Greenwich from headquarters kept saying that it was strange. He said Japanese internee doctors did a half-hearted job for some reason. He said he would examine me himself. So the Caucasian colonel doctor checked me himself. "**Funny kind. It is only eighty-six.**" Then, Dr. Takahashi, who had prisoner-of-war experience during World War I and spoke English, calmly asked the colonel, "Do you know about the **Geneva Convention**? Can you recite it?" "No, I don't know it." "There is a clause on how to handle **war prisoners** versus **civilian internees**. It says that **civilian internees** must be supplied with everything necessary to keep them healthy."

IG: You showed him!

KF: So, a translator was brought in. "I understand you are a reverend." "Yes." "What time do you get up to work as a chief cook?" "I have to get up at 3 o'clock." It was **hard work**. I was very skinny. During the hot season, I had to start working in front of the hot coals from 3 o'clock. I couldn't eat. I was stumbling around because I was so skinny. "What do you like to eat?" I said, "I like this and that." "Do you drink this?" He motioned as if he was drinking liquor. "Yes, a little." "How much a day?" "Well, if I have someone to talk with, maybe we drink **half gallon one time**." "That is not a little." We laughed out loud. So, Dr. Takahashi said that we might need some [liquor]. Well, the colonel said that he could request some low-percentage alcohol like beer. After a week, we received the beer. We were happy – so happy. We were very grateful that we were able to drink beer in the internment camp. The supply was not only for me, but also for everybody. Some who didn't drink gave their coupons to others who wanted to drink. So, we even had a party in the pine forest. A principal of a school drank too much and ended up needing surgery for a stomach ulcer.

IG: I'm sure.

KF: That was a side effect.

IG: I wonder why your blood pressure was so low.

KF: Because I didn't do this at all. [He gestures as if he is drinking *sake*.]

IG: You were always drinking.

KF: Yes, a little every day. A little means half a gallon if I had a partner to talk with. Therefore, I got beer at every camp I went to.

IG: I guess that your records showed that this reverend needs liquor.

KF: So, the people from the other camps were surprised to find that we had the luxury of having beer in this camp. We had beer and also some wine later. When we returned [to Hawaii] after the end of the war, Mr. Tsuchiya of *Shōgyō Jihō* [Seiichi Tsuchiya of the Business Magazine Company] wrote about this story. Until then, nobody knew that it was owing to me [that we got beer]. Well, this is one episode. Then, I was moved to Texas [Crystal City Internment Camp] from Louisiana.

IG: To Texas.

KF: It was so hot.

IG: I'm sure it was very hot.

KF: The temperature was 120F degrees in the room. Once you stepped outside, it was 125F degrees. It was just awfully hot. Do you want to know how hot? Rather than telling you the degrees of the temperature, I would say that trees did not grow there because of the heat. There were only skinny, poor-looking cactuses.

IG: Cactuses.

KF: And the cactuses were pitch-black.

IG: Why was that?

KF: They changed to a nice green in the evening when the temperature cooled down. The reason was that flies couldn't fly and just hung on to the cactuses to look for a bit of shade. Therefore, the cactuses looked black. When the temperature cooled down, the flies all flew away to look for food. So then the cactuses became green. One hundred and twenty-five degrees was that kind of heat.

IG: How awful.

KF: Yes, but there is always a way when you're at your wits' end. Someone got hold of beans from a castor oil plant somehow some place. So we planted the beans. It was a great success. The beans grew to be like large trees in half a year. The whole camp became a cool place. By the time I went to Texas, some family members had joined us for the first time.

IG: Your wife, too?

KF: Yes. She finally came after she was moved around here and there. So, us singles no longer needed to cook. This was a great relief. However, we needed to collect the

garbage instead. A **garbage** troop was organized. Again, no one wanted to volunteer. Well, I volunteered as usual, because at least three or four people were needed. We were given a **dump truck ((a junk ?))**, which required a hard turn of the **handle** to start its engine. We drove it all around the camp to collect the garbage.

IG: Was there any pay for those who worked?

KF: No, there was none. But they realized later that this was not good, and they paid us a little bit of pocket money – about 30 cents – to buy cigarettes. Eventually some children came around, because this was a family camp. We thought that some school education was necessary. We asked to have a school built, but they said, “No.” They said they would supply the materials, if we would build the school by ourselves. All right. We, priests -- who were supposed to be wearing robes but had handled for the first time a bloody knife and now used a hammer and saw – which had never been in our hands before – did a carpenter’s work to build a school. It was easy.

IG: You became an instant carpenter.

KF: Yes. There were some guys from Peru, South America, who used to act big. They were so uneducated in South America that they didn’t even know how to use a toilet. They often climbed on the toilet seat to do their business. Some others – the smarter ones – put up the lid and turned to face it – as we call it, “*kinkakushi*” [hiding their genitals]. Yet, they were acting big.

IG: I see.

KF: Worse ones were those who left Hawaii on their own and lived in the Mainland. They were called “*tairiku goro*” [Mainland rogues]. Those were the arrogant ones. When we actually wanted to start the school, we needed teachers. We looked hard for those who had teachers’ qualifications. There was only one among those from Peru. He – Mr. Yogi – was originally from Okinawa. Just one person. There were four Hongwanji priests from the Mainland. There were 350 students for the Japanese school in [the] Texas [camp].

IG: How many were interned in the camp?

KF: About six or seven hundred, because it was a **home ground** [*sic*]. There were only three hundred and fifty children.

IG: By “Peru,” do you mean the people assembled from South America and brought to U.S.?

KF: Yes. There were many, many children among them. When we looked for teachers, only Hawaii men [were qualified]. Ninety-nine percent [of the teachers] were Hawaii men. Buddhist priests were all graduated from universities. Most of the Buddhist priests were from Hawaii. If I mention a name, Mr. [Isao] Ichiba, who was a principal of a Japanese school in Ewa, had graduated from a teacher’s college in Japan. There were some like him. So, we gathered these [qualified] people. Then, there was no one left to collect the **garbage**. So, those from Peru and the rogues from the Mainland finally gave in and treated us as teachers. Until then, they used to say, “Hey, collect more dirty garbage!” When we were cooking on the train, some even kicked the rubbish with their feet but I hid my feelings, collected the garbage, and cooked.

IG: You mean the guys from South America?

KF: That was a Mainland guy. South American people came later.

UN: How old were they?

IG: What were their ages?

KF: The children were from first graders to high school kids. There were so many. So, we needed to start from the first grade. There were no textbooks. We needed to somehow make textbooks. We asked our commander to give us a mimeograph. We all shared the work.

IG: You made instant textbooks.

KF: I made textbooks. I printed them. I was good at writing *kanji* [Chinese characters]. There was no *kanji* teacher.

IG: I suppose so.

KF: “*Sensei* [teacher], you are good at reciting sutras, which are all written in *kanji*. How about writing some *kanji*?” “Yes, I am good at *kanji* writing.” “Then, please write for us.” Since there is normally no *kanji* class at the elementary level, I made all the textbooks for the first grade of middle school to the second grade of high school. I worked until midnight every day to create a basic teaching plan and taught school in the morning. I am sure I still have those textbooks at home. So I finally quit the dirty work. Then, on the day of August 15, 1945, we heard news that was not good, and we held each other and cried.

IG: Cried and cried like men.

KF: However, I could not go back right away. When I was in Louisiana, my master sent a telex saying, “Endure, we’ll meet again.” The telex took half a year to reach me. When I read it, I just couldn’t wait to see him. He was almost eighty years old and had stayed single all his life. He had taken care of me from the time I was a small child. So, I wanted to show my healthy face to him. Although we had lost the war, I decided to go [to Japan]. I thought I would be able to easily return [to Hawaii], but it wasn’t easy. I found out that my master had passed away at the age of eighty on January 1 of the year when the war ended.

IG: I see.

KF: I was in tears. I couldn’t do anything, because I had lost my purpose. So, I wanted to return to the place where I had been before [i.e., Hawaii]. I went to the American Embassy in Yokohama. Mr. Nicholas and Mr. Burns of the religion section were there. Both were advisors and Caucasians. Well, I thought I had to use my broken English. When I started to speak [in English], Mr. Nicholas said [in Japanese], “Why don’t you speak in Japanese, since you are Japanese?” [Laughs] I had thought that the only [American] soldiers who spoke Japanese were Japanese who had been born in America. He said, “I am a Caucasian Nisei who was born in Kyoto!” After talking with him for a while, he suddenly asked me, “Which country do you think should have won this war?” I thought this was a bad question, but I had nothing to lose. So I asked him, “Mr. Nicholas, what would you think if you were me?” “Yes, I know. Many Japanese came here before you, but you are the first one who has said it so clearly.” He understood before I had to say, “Don’t you think you would say that you wished America would win if you were in my shoes?” I think he liked

my answer. He introduced me to his superior, Mr. Burns, who said he would contact Mr. Morrow of the religion division of the Foreign Ministry right away. So, I went immediately, but the office was closed. I went again the following day and was asked the same question again. This time I said clearly that I wanted Japan to win because I am Japanese. I think he liked my answer. After that, Mr. Burns and Mr. Nicholas tried hard to help me.

IG: I see.

KF: Owing to them, the State Department issued a visa for me on July 1, 1949, way before the Peace Treaty was signed. Of those returned to America after the war, I was the first person who had lived there previously.

IG: I see. So, you were the first person. What were you doing during your stay in Japan?

KF: At that time, there was a *Jodo-shu* office in Tokyo – it's now in Kyoto. I went to see Bishop Shio, who was my uncle at the Zōjyōji **headquarters** [i.e., main temple]. He happened to be there and he met me. He asked, "What do you want to do from now on?" I said, "I want to return [to Hawaii] but I don't know when that would be." "Then why don't you help us at the office?" Usually there are steps to follow to work at a religious office, but he promoted me to chief of the social section. Well, I was happy thinking I could get some pocket money. He said he could pay me only a little, which would not be enough to buy cigarettes. Even a general manager of the headquarters was paid only 200 yen at that time. One dollar equaled 16 yen then.

IG: Yes, 16 yen.

KF: He said he would give me some kind of title, so he could pay me 200 yen, if I could help him. I thanked him and got 200 yen, but I couldn't buy anything. Well, I had a wife and three children. But it was better than doing nothing. I was asked to be a liaison for the headquarters, since I had experience in America. I thought it would be easy.

IG: When you say "headquarters," do you mean **GHQ**?

KF: Yes, **GHQ**. I could use my broken English. Besides, many soldiers there were my former students. So it was easy.

IG: I see. You did negotiations with the headquarters at the Dai Ichi Seimei building.

KF: Yes. However, I received my visa soon thereafter and wanted to return immediately. So I stayed just seven more days and boarded the ship on July 7. Somehow I got to Hawaii. Although I had been in Tokyo and had kept my title as the head priest of the Puunene temple, shortly after I arrived there, I resigned my position. They all asked me to go to the main temple [in Honolulu], and so I have been at the *Betsuin* [main temple] ever since. I have become an old man while serving at the *Betsuin* for most of my religious life. IG: Yes, you are the longest-serving priest.

KF: Yes. Reverend Hara [Reverend Gensho Hara of the Jodo-In in Lahaina] knows this well. He always asks me questions, saying I am a walking dictionary.

IG: Did you have any difficult experiences during your stay in Puunene?

KF: I had difficult experiences wherever I went, because of my work as a Buddhist priest. Reverend Hara was telling me the other day that he never imagined that a priest's job

would be so difficult. He did not realize it until he came to Hawaii. He encountered troubles one after another. I told him that I went through difficulties all the time. I cannot explain what kind of difficulties, but I can say they are troubles from small to large. I even had to mediate a couple's quarrel when I was in Japan.

IG: Oh.

KF: Even a dog wouldn't eat it. [This refers to the Japanese saying that the marital quarrel was so terrible that even a dog would not touch it.]

IG: I suppose a Buddhist or Christian priest is like a social worker.

KF: That's right.

IG: I guess so. A Christian priest is like a social worker, at least in Hawaii. I am not sure how it is in Japan, though.

KF: Hawaii and Japan are totally different.

IG: Different? Do you mean in terms of responsibility?

KF: Yes. A Buddhist monk in Japan can just sit on a soft cushion and play his favorite *go* [a Japanese game played with black and white stones on a board]. If he is a monk at a large temple, his patrons come and greet him from a next room saying, "Hello, *hōjo-san* or *gozen-sama*." [Both mean "honorable Buddhist priest."] It's not like that here.

IG: Do you know the movie "*Hana to nami* [flower and waves]" in which Morishige Hisaya acted?

KF: A school child here says, "Hey teacher! Where are you going?" "I am going to mail a letter." "I will pick you up and where shall I drop you off?" [Note: The Japanese words for "pick up" and "drop off" used by the student here are not considered polite words.] Well, I have to handle those kids. Adults are quite rough, too, especially on the plantations.

IG: Yes, I think so.

KF: They start with direct words. "Hey, teacher, what are you doing today?" "I am working." "Are you busy now?" "What happened?" "You must listen to my request." That's how they begin.

IG: Yes, indeed.

KF: That's how it goes on the plantation every day.

IG: How about a Buddhist priest's life before and after the war?

KF: There was a huge difference.

IG: Huge difference.

KF: Yes, a large difference. I don't want to talk about money, but even a priest cannot survive by eating mist. Financial difficulty was a big problem. Then, there was no private time. People came at their convenience, even at night, and woke me up. "Teacher, we can't settle a fight well. Can you do something for us?" Well, I finally figured it out. I would bring a gallon of wine whenever there was a fight involving neighbors. "You mean again?" This would be the sort of fight between a husband and wife, in which even a dog

wouldn't care. "Ok. I brought a gallon of wine. Forget making excuses and just stop." And I would show them the bait.

IG: Oh, bait.

KF: "Let's do it." "Since the teacher insists, let's stop" "Good!" So, we all drank a cup of wine.

IG: I see.

KF: So, it was endless. There were many occasions like that. There was an incident that was caused by students but blamed on the principal. Do you remember the hill with the *kiawe* [Hawaiian: mesquite] bushes? A small hill in front of the temple school?

IG: Yes, yes.

KF: "Where is the principal?" "Here I am." "Principal, you are negligent." "What do you mean, all of a sudden?" "They are smoking at the hill." "How can you keep quiet when elementary students are smoking?" "Well, although outside the school is not my area of responsibility, I will keep an eye on it." The next day, I heard some noise and went around from the side and found out that they were smoking.

IG: You mean kids?

KF: They were smoking cigarettes. Some were smoking rolled up weeds. So, I caught the ringleader. He was the son of the guy who came to complain!

IG: [Laughter]

KF: His name is Nitani from Hiroshima. So, the father scratched his head and said, "I won't report to you from now on." [Laughs]

IG: I see.

KF: There were not too many funny things like this. I usually heard bad things. Both in Honolulu and Maui. Well, I will let you guess.

IG: Ok.

KF: Good things rarely happened.

IG: By the way, I think you were a marriage go-between, not only a mediator of quarrels.

KF: Yes, I did it often. However, marriage arrangements did not always go well.

IG: Is that right?

KF: The parents of the bride were always troublesome in the old days. The parents of the groom were easy going. "Teacher, can you just look for someone from some place?" "Did your son find any one he likes?" "I won't say he looks like me, but he is quite good looking, but he found this girl who looks like a protruding belly button. Can you do something for me?" "Where does she live?" "Waipahu." This guy's name was ((Kiyohiro?)), a fish vendor, whom I didn't know at all.

IG: Ah, a fish vendor.

KF: Do you know him? So, we went together to Waipahu. Actually, the father-of-the-bride was quite happy because someone was willing to marry her. Who would marry a girl who

looks like a belly button? But he wouldn't say yes. It was a bad habit of Japanese fathers-of-the-bridal in old days. He would keep saying this and that. I will tell you the name of the father-of-the-bridal. His name was Mr. Yamaguchi. "Mr. Yamaguchi, I have brought [*sake*], but I won't let you drink until you say yes." He really loved *sake*, but he wouldn't say yes. He persisted from eight at night to twelve midnight. "Mr. Yamaguchi, I will take this back, if you won't say yes." "Teacher, wait a moment. Since you have begged me until midnight, I will accept." "Do you agree?" "Yes, although my daughter is not quite perfect." And they got married right away.

IG: I think that, before the war, pride was in the way. I also remember choosing a chairman of the Chamber of Commerce.

KF: Yes. We needed to ask the person at least three times.

IG: Yes. Once or twice was not enough.

KF: He actually and eagerly wanted to be chairman.

IG: He wanted to be chairman, but he put on airs.

KF: He made us wait for a long time before he said yes. It was a bad habit of the Japanese.

UN: "So, you are saying no. I see. Then, you don't have to do it."

KF: Then he gets panicked.

UN: Wait a moment!

KF: Precisely because I was acting as a go-between, I wanted to settle the matter in a good way. He took advantage of me and took his time before he agreed. [Laughs]

IG: Now, let's talk about temple schools, including Jodo Shinshu temples. Didn't a temple coexist with a school?

KF: Yes, that's right.

IG: Did you have many incidents at your school?

KF: Yes, of course. I came to Hawaii forty-seven years ago and was assigned to the temple headquarters. [Our temple] operated the Hawaii Girls High School at that time.

IG: Yes, Hawaii Girls High School.

KF: Our Hawaii Girls High School had a good reputation among the other temple schools.

UN: Yes. Was it in Kakaako?

KF: Yes, it was in Kakaako and then it moved to Makiki. It was Bishop Fukuda's era. We used the textbooks of the Shukutoku Girls High School in Tokyo.

IG: They were very good ones.

KF: Then, we opened a boys' section. They used the textbooks of Shiba Middle School. Both textbooks were of very high level. There was an entrance examination before students were admitted. There was a person, whose name I can't mention, but he had been an administration manager of the Girls High School for a long time, beginning in Kakaako until Makiki. He had [his daughter] assigned as a president or vice president of the class until I became in charge of the class. I downgraded her because she did not have good

grades. “Teacher Fujihana,” the administration manager said, “I have dedicated my service to the temple and the school for a long time. However, my daughter has been downgraded since you became in charge. Do you mean to suggest that my daughter has low grades?” “Yes, the numbers in her report card show this. I decide [class] rank according to the numbers in the report card. Anything wrong?” Well, he scratched his head. He was not the only one.

IG: I agree.

KF: There were many like him. It got worse when we moved to Ewa.

IG: Yes, there was much politics at Ewa.

KF: Ewa was the country. In fact, even temple personnel had to be involved with school matters.

IG: At that time.

KF: If the monthly salary for a priest becomes the topic –

IG: Yes, yes.

KF: Even the matter of salary for a school principal – ah-ha, that matter.

IG: I guess a school chairman had [power] like a village chief in Japan.

KF: Yes, that’s right.

IG: He had absolute power.

KF: A priest before me was Reverend Yamaguchi [Ryukai Yamaguchi, chief priest in Ewa]. He was expelled in the end. Just before he was driven out, Bishop Fukuda told him to turn in his resignation letter in an honorable way. Since he had experience in a foreign country, he was able to get in a good temple like Shokaku-In in the countryside and he stayed there until he died. When I went to the school, I found that students with poor grades had been assigned as president or vice president of the class. They were ranked as number one or two. Children from poor families are often very smart and sent to school by parents who work hard.

IG: Surely.

KF: But they had low grades. I thought that something was wrong. So I gave them many exams and decided their seating order by the [exam] results, which I was very certain of.

IG: I see.

KF: I was attacked by the parents. Beaten up completely.

IG: Were you ok?

KF: A special meeting was called. “Principal, I want to ask you a question.” “What is it?” “Do you mean my son’s grades were this poor? The previous principal gave him good grades for many years. My girls, too.” One more bad thing. I let my students write compositions so I could know how the previous principal, Mr. Yamaji, had been teaching. I told them to write honestly whatever they thought, since I would not grade them. I gave them the subject, “If Japan and America go to war.”

IG: I see.

KF: I explained about the subject to the younger students so that they would write about what they thought in a natural way. Older students did not need an explanation. They knew exactly what to write. Eighty percent of the students wrote that they would fight for Japan because they were Japanese. Eighty percent.

IG: I see.

KF: The remaining twenty percent were all from poor families and they had firm beliefs “We were born on American soil, so my country is America. We will fight for America.” This was the twenty percent.

IG: Just twenty percent.

KF: Eighty percent were getting good grades. [Fight] for Japan. So, there was another special meeting and a parents’ meeting. I was harshly scolded. “Teacher, which country are you from?” “I am Japanese.” It was ridiculous. [The parents said,] “The previous principal had said that he would be Japanese as long as he lived. We were happy about the way he had been teaching. Teacher, your eyes are black. Why do you say that Japanese should serve America?” I had corrected the compositions with red ink, telling the students that their thinking was wrong. It created turmoil because the students showed their corrected compositions to their parents. So there was a special meeting. [And they told me that] I thought differently [from them]. What they said [followed] the Japanese schools’ teaching method in Japan.

IG: Yes, that makes sense.

KF: “I now live on American soil. I receive a salary – however small – and live by eating American food. I am a Japanese citizen but the children I am teaching are all Americans. To teach American children, the American method has to be used, even if the teacher is Japanese. This is my belief. If you disagree so much, I will return to Japan right now. I have a place to return to, my Buddhist temple. I didn’t come here to teach because I wanted to.”

IG: [Laughter]

KF: “Wait a second!” Then they called in all the parents who were absent at that meeting and told them the principal said this. Luckily, the administration chairman at that time was Mr. Jimmy Fukushima. Do you know him, Mr. Goto? He has already passed away, but he was the chairman at that time. He saved me. He was an inventor and also loved politics. He was about your age then.

UN: Mr. Ushijima?

KF: No, Fukushima. Jimmy Fukushima. He was from Kumamoto. He stood in front of us all as the administration chairman and said, “The principal is right. If you don’t want to listen to the principal, I will quit my administration position, too.” Then they all said, “Well, well, Jimmy-san, please don’t say such a thing. It will cause a big argument. Please settle the matter now.”

UN: Do you think that the people from the [plantation] camps were thinking about returning to Japan at that time?

- KF: That's why they wanted to teach their children in the Japanese way. But, the children were different. They were born Americans.
- IG: I think there were only a few teachers who taught the children to be loyal to Japan.
- KF: I think so.
- IG: I went to Japanese schools for eight years in Kona and three years at Hawaii Chūgakko [middle school]. During my eleven years at Japanese schools, no teacher taught me such. Usually, most of them did not want to touch that subject.
- KF: Yes, they didn't touch it.
- IG: Didn't touch it. Especially after the textbooks were made here, loyalty meant loyalty to America.
- KF: It was the 16th or 17th year of Showa [1941 or 1942], when President Roosevelt harassed Japan and the world situation became more uncertain. That's the reason I wanted to know what the children were thinking.
- IG: Nineteen-thirty.
- KF: I was there from [nineteen] thirty-four to forty. All the Buddhist priests had a difficult time, although they didn't show it to the outside. I think Christian priests were fairly lucky. Not too many Christian priests were interned when the war began.
- IG: Christianity is, after all, the religion of America.
- KF: Yes.
- IG: They were not arrested.
- UN: I heard that someone said that the Pacific War was a kind of religious war.
- IG: There's a person who I know from Aiea. [He was one of] three brothers who were followers of the Hongwanji. But he changed his religion very quickly and became a Christian.
- UN: Because of the war?
- IG: Yes, because of the war. However, after the war, he failed in his bid to be elected as a Hawaii state legislator. What do you call that kind of person?
- KF: In Japan in the old days, we'd call him a bat.
- IG: You know what is meant by "bat," don't you? He would look at a person's expression, and he would act depending on how the person might vote for him. He did not act on the basis of his own beliefs.
- UN: So you received the news of the ending of the war in the internment camp, didn't you? I understand that you were very disappointed and cried.
- KF: Yes, that's right. I knew that even in the end, Japan couldn't win and I was resigned to that. I was not permitted to listen to a radio.
- IG: I see.
- KF: Long-distance radio. Only long wave [radio] inside the country.

IG: Long-wave.

KF: Only long-wave. I couldn't listen to short-wave [broadcasts].

IG: Because you could get broadcasts even from Japan. By short-wave [radio].

KF: However, there were many talented guys in the camp. We were allowed to listen to a long-wave radio and they managed to change it to a short-wave radio. Of course, we couldn't listen to the short-wave radio openly during the day, so at night, "Hey, don't you want to come to my barracks tonight?" That is, he meant so that we could listen to the short-wave radio. In the beginning, we often heard announcements from the [Japanese] Great Military Headquarters. However, their announcements were very different from the news here in the newspapers or on the radios. An extreme example was the Battle of Midway just after the war began.

IG: The Battle of Midway.

KF: The announcement from headquarters was very interesting. "Our side received some damage."

IG: Some damage.

KF: Some damage. "However, we inflicted great damage on the enemy." They said they sank so many [enemy] battleships. The broadcast was full of spirit.

IG: Wasn't it the opposite?

KF: Yes, the opposite. A short time later, many Japanese prisoners of war who were caught at Midway came to Louisiana. We, in Louisiana, were very surprised. They were very tight-lipped. They would not say a word. We civilians and the prisoners of war were separated. However, Japanese prisoners of war were, after all, human beings. They became sick but refused to see any Caucasian doctors. They just waved their hands and said, "I won't see a *kichiku no isha*" [a doctor from the country of devils]. They said this openly in Japanese. Later, Dr. Ohata went to see them, and he asked me what *kichiku* meant and that perplexed me.

IG: [Laughs] Certainly.

KF: Not a *kichiku* doctor. It must be a Japanese doctor. So, Japanese doctors among the internees had to go alternately. Dr. Ohata, Dr. Kimura, and Dr. Takahashi. The doctors tried to ask questions, but the prisoners would not talk. However, more sick prisoners and more alternating doctors. After the doctors examined them thoroughly and gave them medicine, they became somewhat emotional and started to talk a little.

IG: I see.

KF: If we gathered those bits of information, we could make up a map. As a result, we were able to figure out that Japan had lost badly at the Battle of Midway and that the announcement from headquarters had been full of lies. That was the beginning.

IG: Yes, indeed.

KF: So lies, one after another. We had to listen to the news with skepticism. Some news was true, especially around the end of the war. Precise news was broadcast.

IG: Is that right?

- KF: By short-wave. Although the term “atomic bomb” wasn’t used, special bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which killed tens of thousands of people at once. Two places, one after another.
- IG: I wonder, the term “atomic bomb” wasn’t known in Japan?
- KF: No, not known. However the scientist who received the Nobel prize – what is his name?
- IG: Dr. Yukawa.
- KF: He was researching it.
- IG: He hadn’t completed [the research] yet.
- KF: No.
- UN: I think they didn’t use the term “atomic bomb” at that time, because they were afraid of causing a panic among the people. So they said special bombs.
- IG: It was on purpose.
- KF: When I heard the news on the short-wave radio, I thought that this would be the end. However, I am human after all. I still hung on to the hope – one out of a thousand, one out of ten thousand.
- IG: Yes, yes.
- KF: After the bombs dropped, the Caucasians in the camp were so happy that they beat things like wooden pails and made a big noise. I thought this was it. We had completely lost. We were fellow Japanese, after all. We embraced each other and cried like men. *Shikata ga nai*. [It couldn’t be helped.]
- IG: Even if you had the right to become an American citizen, emotionally you are Japanese after all, because you were born in Japan. By the way, what did you take with you when you were arrested?
- KF: I had to go with only the clothes I was wearing.
- IG: You mean you couldn’t take anything with you?
- KF: Yes.
- IG: How about a duffle bag or something? Weren’t you permitted to take at least one bag?
- KF: Are you talking about the day I was arrested? Nothing. I was a smoker – I have quit smoking now but I always carried two or three packs in my pocket. I also had a **Waltham** [a famous brand of watch] hanging on my belt. They rushed me saying, “**Hurry up! Hurry up.**” So I hurriedly put on a necktie and went.
- IG: Just the clothes you had on and nothing else?
- KF: I think it was around 4:00. It was still bright. As I mentioned earlier, I was the first one to be put on an army truck. Mr. Teiichiro Maehara of a Japanese school was next, and then Rev. Keisho Miura of the Hongwanji, and so on, until we reached Kula. The truck became full and it was pitch black because of the restricted lighting. Black out. The truck drove without head lights and went all over the road. It was chaos. Finally, with a loud squeaking sound, the truck stopped in front of a jail. Well, I didn’t know if it was a jail or

not, because it was pitch dark. “Get off!” I got off because they ordered me to. When an iron door squeaked open, I thought, “Maybe this is it.” They took off my necktie and shoved their hands into my pockets and took the cigarettes out.

IG: Everything.

KF: They took everything.

IG: They took everything from you.

KF: I stayed in that jail, Wailuku Jail, for seventy-seven days. My pants slid further down every day. There was no bed. I was like a tiger or a lion in a zoo cage. I had to hold on to my pants to keep them from falling down. [Stands up and shows how he held up his pants.] I was tottering around here and there because there was no bed.

IG: Nothing to pass the time.

KF: Nothing. As I wanted to tell you earlier, I was arrested on the night of December 7. The next morning, I was told to line up. “**Hey, line up!**” So I lined up. They told us to get breakfast. The breakfast was Korean food. A Korean prisoner, a bad guy with a pockmarked face, was standing in front of a large pot and another Korean guy was handing out plates. The plates were cracked and had probably been picked up from some place. So the guy gave me a plate and the other guy put a scoop of food on the plate. I ate it because I was hungry. The vegetables and the meat looked alike, all mixed up together. And one piece of bread. The bread was as hard as rock. They got unsold bread for free. I finally found out what was going on after about a week. At the jail site, prisoners were raising pigs. There were some people living there, after all. They killed a pig once a week. The good parts of the meat were given to the guards or soldiers and the left over intestines and all the other parts were cut up [and given to the prisoners]. Because boats were not operating from the island, vegetables shipped out from Kula were rotting at the Kahului pier. Those vegetables were picked up for free and put into the pot and cooked every day. One bowl [*sic*] at a time.

UN: Like feed for pigs.

KF: Yes, it was pig *kau kau* [Hawaiian: food].

IG: Pig *kau kau*.

UN: So the menu was same every day?

KF: Every day.

IG: You can't say it was a menu.

KF: That's right. Just before I was sent to the Mainland from Honolulu, I think somehow a visitation was allowed. So I was able to receive some food like sushi and other things. I was very grateful. But only shortly after I was able to receive outside food, I was ordered to move immediately.

IG: A move order. Terrible.

KF: My late wife put – this was an open-secret – some whisky in a small medicine bottle. I appreciated it very much.

IG: I guess you were grateful but it was not enough.

- KF: No, [it was not enough], but I felt very good just licking a drop of a sparrow's tear.
- IG: I understand.
- UN: How grateful [you must have felt].
- KF: Yes, only that one time did I think that I was lucky to have a wife.
- IG: I heard that you lost two of your sons during the war.
- KF: Yes.
- IG: What happened?
- KF: One son one night suddenly became ill with a high fever. My wife wanted to call a doctor, but the phone line was cut off. My late wife was Issei [first generation Japanese] and couldn't go out [at night], so she couldn't call a doctor.
- IG: She couldn't do anything.
- KF: A doctor came the next morning but he was too late.
- IG: Too late. What a tragedy.
- KF: The second son was born on the Mainland. I saw him just a little. He wasn't able to receive good care.
- UN: It was a sacrifice because of war.
- IG: Yes, a large sacrifice.
- KF: Well, is this it?

English translation by Yoko Waki, with editing by Sheila Chun, Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii volunteers; completed September 2017.