Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i

Oral History Interview

with

Scott Furukawa (SF)

January 25, 2017

Interviewer: Melvin Inamasu [MI]

Note: Comments in brackets [ ] are by the transcriber. Inaudible words or sections are identified by ((?)) in the transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability.

MI: Today is January 25, 2017. We're here at the Japanese Cultural Center Conference Room to interview Mr. Scott Furukawa. My name is Mel Inamasu. I'm a volunteer at the Japanese Cultural Center and we're here to learn about Scott and his family history, regarding the internment of his father. So, to begin with I'm going to have Scott introduce himself, his full name, month and year of his birth, then we'll start talking about his background and then we'll go backwards into his ancestors. So, Scott, introduce yourself.

SF: Okay, thank you Mel for inviting me to share my family story. My name is Scott Furukawa. I was born on August 3, 1954. Start with that.

MI: Where were you born?

SF: I was born here in Honolulu, went to public schools here in Honolulu, Anuenue Elementary in Palolo Valley and Jarrett Intermediate School, Kaimuki High School and then eventually the University of Hawaii. I spent most of my work career, thirty-plus years, working in the investment field.

MI: What company?

SF: This is Merrill Lynch. It's now known as Bank of America Merrill Lynch. I was in branch management here in Hawaii for a major Wall Street investment firm and, just a few years ago, I made the transition from the business world to church ministry so I have just recently graduated from seminary and in fact, this past weekend, I was approved through my church council as being ordained pending a call from a church.

MI: Congratulations.

SF: Yeah, thank you.

MI: Okay, so let's start by going back to your ancestors. Will start with your parents. Tell me the names of your mother and your father and then we'll branch backwards to their respective families. Your father?

SF: My father was Masami Furukawa. He went by the nickname Jimi, J-I-M-I because that was, I think, a family name that was on my grandmother's side. His mother's side.

MI: What do you mean by "family name?"

SF: Well, my grandmother, it was kinda unusual because my grandmother married a Furukawa but she kept, I think, her maiden name, Jimi, and so she was…

MI: How do you spell that?

SF: J-I-M-I, like Jimi Hendricks, [Laughs] which is pretty unusual.

MI: That is a little unusual Japanese name.

SF: It is unusual. I don't know enough about the background and why that was. In fact, one of my uncles, who was my father's youngest brother, went by the last name Jimi, not Furukawa. So, he kept my uncle…

MI: Wait. Wait. His uncle is your mother's brother?

SF: Oh, I'm sorry. No, no. This is my father's younger brother.

MI: Oh, okay.

SF: Yeah, who lived in Japan and so, instead of…

MI: He had the name "Jimi" that your mother had?

SF: Not my mother, but his, yeah, my father's mother. My grandmother.

MI: Oh, yeah. Okay, I see.

SF: Yeah, yeah.

MI: Okay, I'm getting all mixed up.

SF: Yeah, sorry.

MI: No, no, no. Now, okay. So, when, if you know, when was your father born? Where was he born? What, you know.

SF: Yeah, okay. My father was born on April 16, 1920. He was born in Honolulu and the story that was passed down to me was that when he was about three years old, he and my grandmother, his mother, took my father and some siblings back to Japan. So, he was really *kibei* [born outside of Japan but raised in Japan], yeah.

MI: Now, went back as far as you know, went back to live there or to just to visit?

SF: Went back to live there…

MI: Went and got educated?

SF: All of his schooling was in Japan. He had some college experience, at a teacher's college.

MI: Was he the oldest son?

SF: No, he was not. There were two older siblings of his. There was an older sister, Sumiko, and an older brother, Tsuyoshi. There's a story behind Tsuyoshi as well that sort of relates to this.

MI: Okay. Then, before getting into your father's story, let's go back further then. Grandparents came to Hawaii, immigrated to Hawaii?.

SF: That's right.

MI: It's his parents?

SF: Right.

MI: Do you know where from?

SF: Fukuoka.

MI: Both of them from Fukuoka?

SF: Both? Yeah. Both of my paternal grandparents. My grandfather's name was Kurakichi and my grandmother went by Mutsu Jimi Furukawa.

MI: Do you know when and why they came to Hawaii?

SF: I don't know, exactly but, you know, my presumption is that they came around the turn of the twentieth century.

MI: They worked on the plantation?

SF: Yes, you know, I'm not exactly sure but there's some stories, I think my mother had said that my grandfather spent a little time on the plantation but he also worked at the old Alexander Young Building on Bishop Street.

MI: In what capacity?

SF: He worked in, like the boiler room, in the maintenance area of the building. But, he also was a landscaper. He did landscaping of like Japanese gardens? So, the old Lau Yee Chai restaurant in Waikiki, back in the day, you know, he was the one that helped to design and create that Japanese…

MI: The landscaping?

SF: The landscaping. Yeah. In fact, the story that my mother told me was that my grandfather would get ready to go to that landscaping job in Waikiki and he would dress up. You know, he'd have his coat, tie, the hat…

MI: He'd dress up to do the landscaping? [Chuckles]

SF: Exactly. Yeah, he'd dress up--you know--he'd have his coat and tie and hat, get on the bus, go to Waikiki, change clothes into his overalls, you know, and then do his work with the dirt, moving all the dirt and shaping the garden and then he would change out of the work clothes, get back into his suit and tie and then, get on the bus and go back home. Yeah, so, I guess you could say, he was sort of a professional, in that way. [Laughter]

MI: Okay. And they lived in what neighborhood?

SF: They lived in Kakaako.

MI: Kakaako? And that's where your father grew up? Kakaako?

SF: That's right. Yeah, in the very early years of his life.

MI: Okay. And, grandmother did what?

SF: Grandma was a homemaker.

MI: How many children?

SF: There were, let's see… One, two, three, four, five, six. Yeah.

MI: So, she took three of them back to Japan for a few years.

SF: She took, one, two, yeah three. No, actually, one, two, yeah, three of the..

MI: Leaving the rest of the family here?

SF: Leaving, I believe my uncle, who was the oldest son of the family.

MI: With the father.

SF: That's right. So, my older, my father's older brother, my uncle, stayed in Hawaii with my grandfather, while the rest of the family, including my grandmother, went back to Japan.

MI: Do you know when they went? When they left and when they came back to Hawaii?

SF: You know, my father…

MI: Was it how long?

SF: Roughly, you know I think my father said it was around when he was about three, maybe four years old when they left Hawaii to go back to Japan. So, that would have been roughly about 1924.

MI: And came back to Hawaii when?

SF: I don't know the exact date but it was when my father was kind of a young twenty year old, so that would be, you know, 1940.

MI: Like about 1940? Just before the war?

SF: Around 1940. Just before the war. That's right.

MI: They rejoined the family here?

SF: No, I think it was just my father that came back. So, his other siblings stayed in Japan, and there were, you know…

MI: Oh, sorry. Mother stayed in Japan?

SF: Mother stayed in Japan. Father stayed here. So, the family was separated during that time.

MI: I see. Okay. Let's go on to your mother's side.

SF: Okay.

MI: Tell us the names from Fukuoka area, names of her parents, if you know. and when and why they came to Hawaii.

SF: Yeah. Gosh, the last name is Yano. My mother's name is Ruby Toshiko Yano. And, my grandparents, her parents, were also from Fukuoka prefecture. I don't know exactly when they came to Hawaii but I believe it was around the turn of the twentieth century.

MI: Do you know if they came as plantation workers?

SF: I do know that my grandfather came first. My grandmother was a picture bride.

MI: Oh!

SF: Yeah, so, my grandfather and my grandmother's family kinda knew each other from the Fukuoka prefecture and so my grandfather was here. I'm not sure exactly what he did for work here but, I think, there was one aunty who told me that initially he was working in like a produce store or something like that but, that would eventually lead to, you know, a store that the family had in Manoa valley.

MI: Grocery store?

SF: Grocery store.

MI: Yano Grocery Store?

SF: Yano Grocery Store, yeah. Or Yano Store, I think it was called. So, my grandfather was already here in Hawaii and then my grandmother, you know, again, the story, they exchanged photos, and then she made arrangements and got on the boat to come here to Hawaii.

MI: I don't know if you know the details of this picture bride thing but do you know if they were technically married [in Japan], you know, even though they were, even though they were separated geographically?

SF: Yeah. I don't know that.

MI: Then she came as his wife?

SF: Yeah. That I don't know. I do know, and this is the story that I got from her before she died, when she was already in her late eighties at this point. Um, she had gotten on that boat, got to Honolulu Harbor and I guess she got there and then saw my grandfather in person for the very first time. And her reaction was, she was shocked because he had sent her pictures of himself when he was much younger. [MI chuckles] He was actually fifteen years older than she was but, so the pictures she saw wasn't the same man she [met].

MI: How about her picture, the picture she sent him?

SF: She didn't mention anything about that. I assume that it was authentic…

MI: Yeah, contemporary.

SF: Contemporary at the time. But, she was shocked and I think she felt a little betrayed by that. Her reaction was kinda funny to me but I think for her at the time, was like, she wanted to get back on the boat and go back and not go through with this but, again, she felt that she had to do this.

MI: Do you know why she felt that she had to do this?

SF: I think it's just the family honor, you know, the culture of that time, you cannot bring shame, you know, to the family, so she would tell me that she was kinda in an unhappy marriage with my grandfather for all of those years. But she sucked it up and did what she needed to do in order to build this new life here.

MI: So, she did not live with his family in Japan before, like six months before she came here? That kind of thing?

SF: No, not that I know of.

MI: Some of them were like that, you know. They had to, they got married so they had to live with the family and then they came as picture brides.

SF: Yeah. As far as I know. I don't know if that happened, or not. Although she did share with me, kind of, this is funny hearing it from my grandmother, but I think she was really in love with the boy in the next village, not my grandfather. You know, I think he was from a pretty well-to-do family. My grandmother's family were rice farmers. So, I think, his family, this boy in the next village…

MI: Next village in Japan?

SF: In Japan. Yeah, in Japan. So, this boy's family was pretty well-to-do and kind of looked down and didn't want their son, you know, with this peasant girl, so to speak, and so, ah, the families kind of broke that relationship off so she kind of left what she considered her love to come to Hawaii to be with my grandfather.

MI: Interesting. Okay, okay. And, that family settled where in Hawaii? Where did your mother grow up?

SF: Initially, I'm not sure but they ended up in Manoa. Yeah, Manoa Valley, right near, um, right off East Manoa Road.

MI: Okay.

SF: Yeah, and so that's where my grandparents started the store. Yeah, and so, they lived like in back of the store.

MI: Okay.

SF: So, that's where my mother grew up. Her siblings, you know, grew up there as well.

MI: Okay. And, um, so, your father comes back to Hawaii, roughly 1940, or so?

SF: Hm, mm.

MI: What is your mother doing at that time?

SF: Yeah. My mother actually was born in Hawaii.

MI: Okay.

SF: And, so, and all her siblings were born here as well.

MI: I don't think I asked you about her, roughly her day and year of birth.

SF: Oh, her birthdate is May 3, 1920. 1920.

MI: Okay, but she was born here?

SF: She was born here, yep. And, so, she went to public schools here. Went to McKinley High School. She did not graduate, I don't think, from McKinley. I think with a lot of f young people during that time, you know, she had to help the family and help with the family store. So, she…

MI: How many children in her family?

SF: Let's see. There were a total of one, two, three, four, five, also six, and I think there was one that died at birth or, you know, as an infant.

MI: Okay. Okay. So, how and when did your parents get together?

SF: Both my mother's family and my father's family knew each other from back in Japan.

MI: Oh, really?

SF: Yeah. It was that the families knew each other, being from the same prefecture. And, so, that's how they…sort of had an arranged marriage.

MI: So, they had like prefecture groups here. Picnics and that kind of thing?

SF: Not so much. You know, I think this was…

MI: Just knowledge…

SF: Back in Japan, you know, it's like my, both my maternal and paternal grandparents and their families sort of knew each other.

MI: Right.

SF: Yeah, so I think that's how they made the connection.

MI: When were they married? I"m getting to December 7th.

SF: Yeah, yeah.

MI: Before or after the war?

SF: They were married in 1948.

MI: 1948. Okay. So we go back to your father then. So, he's all alone. He's a single man and comes back from Japan. What is he doing when he comes back?

SF: When he comes back here, he's working as a Japanese language teacher. He was teaching, I don't know exactly where, it might have been somewhere in Kakaako, maybe Manoa? I'm not sure. But, he was a Japanese language teacher for, you know, school kids here in Hawaii. And, then, for that reason, I think, when Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor, he was eventually arrested for that.

MI: Because he was a *kibei* [Japanese born in Hawaii or U.S. but educated in Japan] and he was a Japanese language instructor?

SF: Right. And, I think he had only been back to Hawaii, having returned to Hawaii from Japan, fairly recently, like the year, like 1940, so he was pretty new back here.

MI: Did you ever talk to him about December 7th and what he was doing and those kinds of questions?

SF: I don't have any recollection of having those kinds of conversations with him. He, you know, he rarely wanted to talk about those things. He was sort of stoic, not real talkative about, in general, you know. Getting information from him was sort of difficult.

MI: Okay. Before we get to his story, let me ask you, so when did you learn of his internment story? Well, let's go back even further. When did you learn about internment in Hawaii? [Chuckles] In school?

SF: Yeah. Probably at school.

MI: Really? Where did you go to school?

SF: Kaimuki High School, University of Hawaii.

MI: At Kaimuki High School, they talked about Japanese internment?

SF: Not in high school. I think it was more, maybe more at the university. I think I read something. It wasn't in any, you know, course or anything like that. I think it was during my younger years at the university. I think, you know, I became more aware of it. But, it was more recently, I think, that I became more interested, you know, in the subject.

MI: So, when and how did you learn about your father's internment?

SF: When and how? You know, I can't pinpoint, like an exact time but, you know, it may have just come up, you know, around the dinner table kind of family…

MI: At what point in your life? How and why?

SF: Again, I think probably younger, when I was in college. Yeah..

MI: You don't remember how it came up or why it came up?

SF: No, I just kind of knew that, you know, my father was interned during the war.

MI: Did your mother ever talk about it?

SF: No, no.

MI: She didn't talk about the time they were separated?

SF: No. She…

MI: What I mean is they were married after the war?

SF: That's right, yeah.

MI: So, she wasn't there?

SF: I think, for me too, you know, I wasn't really interested in it at that time. You know, it's like I'd heard it, said, "Oh, okay, well." And then, I never really dug deeper into that. It was never really discussed a lot, you know.

MI: Just piecemeal?

SF: Yeah. You know. Just bits and pieces of information, you know, that would come out But, it wasn't anything that I really, you know, had a real strong interest in really kind of ah, you know, getting to know more about. Yeah.

MI: So, what do you know about him that you can tell us the story?

SF: As far as him?

MI: That you remember telling you, as far as him.

SF: As far as him?

MI: Yeah. For example, when was he picked up? Where did they take him? Those kinds of things.

SF: Yeah. Um, what I do know, and this is information that I got from him, that he was placed first at Sand Island, the camp there at Sand Island.

MI: Do you know when he was picked up? Was it on December 7th? December 8th? Was he picked up immediately?

SF: That, I don't know. Yeah, I don't have any specifics, you know, time frame or the time when he got picked up. But, I do know that he, you know, was at Sand Island in the camp there and then eventually transferred to Honouliuli.

MI: When they closed the Sand Island facility?

SF: Yeah. See, that I didn't know. That's the reason why he didn't stay.

MI: That would have been about, I think March of 1943, when they opened.

SF: Yeah. He was interned on March 11, 1943. That I know.

MI: Interned? You mean Sand Island?

SF: At Sand Island. Not Sand Island but the Honouliuli.

MI: That's sort of when the camp opened.

SF: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MI: But, so that's like, you know, maybe a year and so many months after Pearl Harbor.

SF: Right..

MI: So, do we have a sense of how long he was at Sand Island [before this]?

SF: Um, no. I don't really have a good feel for that part of his life.

MI: Yeah, okay.

SF: And, so, he got interned at Honouliuli in March of 1943, and then eventually got transferred to Tule Lake in California. And, I don't know the exact dates when that happened. I do recall him saying though on that ship, going from Hawaii to California, that they put him in the lower decks of the ship and there were like, drums, it might have been oil drums there and just the fumes from the petroleum were pretty harsh. So, people were getting sick and throwing up and, so, it was that story that I remember distinctly him telling me. You know, as far as his time at Honouliuli, you know, he didn't talk about that much.

MI: Did you get a sense, you know, was it positive or negative? Very positive, very negative or anything like that? Was he bitter about that part?

SF: Well, you know, as far as like internment and his feelings about it, I mean the only story I recall him saying was that, and this was more after Honouliuli when he was at Tule Lake, where, you know, they were so bored, you know, they needed things to do and so he would tell me that the boys would, it got really cold, I guess where they were and so they would get like a water hose, hose down this concrete area on the ground to try to

make like an ice rink. Just for recreation, you know. To do something because it was so boring. He did a lot of weightlifting, I don't know if he did this in Honouliuli but definitely in Tule Lake.

MI: They had weights for them to use?

SF: Yeah. So, he was really into weight lifting. He was a pretty fairly big man for his generation. He was about five [feet] ten, which was pretty tall for Japanese, especially for his generation.

MI: He was used to physical work?

SF: Yeah, 'cause while he was in Japan, he was doing track and field [activities]. He was pretty athletic. He said he did all the running events, mostly sprinting. And, he was a swimmer, he was a pretty strong swimmer, as well. So, he had a pretty athletic build.

MI: Why did he come back to Hawaii at that point in time?

SF: You know, I don't know his reasons for coming back.

MI: His father called him back?

SF: Well, it could have been that. You know, his father was here and his older brother was here in Hawaii. And, um, during the war years…

MI: How did they [family] support themselves in Japan with your mother taking care of the children?

SF: I'm assuming it was my grandfather who sent money back you know.

MI: Oh, I see.

SF: Plus, maybe she [mother] had family there in Japan so she might have gotten--I don't know exactly but I'm assuming that's how they got by. During the war, my father's older brother, my uncle, was in the U.S. Army.

MI: What was his name?

SF: Tsuyoshi.

MI: Tsuyoshi.

SF: Tsuyoshi Furukawa. And so he was in the 100th Infantry Infantry Battalion. And, so, he was also a black belt in judo. So, while in the army, he would teach the boys in his unit judo techniques. There's actually a side story to this, and I'll get kind of get back to my father, but this uncle that was in the 100th, there's a story that's actually documented in a book somewhere, where, I guess, they were doing training in Wisconsin somewhere, like basic training and, some of the boys went to the local bar there in Wisconsin and I think there were some other like farm boys from the area that saw these Japanese boys in the bar and pretty soon one thing led to another and there was kind of a big melee and this uncle, who knew judo, the story is that he was throwing these much bigger guys all over the bar and then finally the boys just left right away. But, anyway, getting back to…

MI: I've read about stories like that...[Laughter] It may have been your uncle, I don't know.

SF: Yeah.

SF:: There's actually a book.

MI: Which book?

SF: I don't know that, but I think that the author was, and I may be wrong but I think it was Higa, like Taro I think but, yeah, I can't…

MI: That told the story?

SF: That had written about it. I think it was his memoirs or recollections, something like that.

MI: You need to buy that book. [Laughs]

SF: I think I may have it somewhere at the old family home. But, anyway, so, my father's older brother was in the U.S. Army, his younger brother who was in Japan, was in the Japanese Imperial Army. So, he was a Sergeant with the Japanese Imperial Army in Manchuria. So, this younger brother of my father's, took care of the horses there. He had this love of horses, you know, that I remember, 'cause this uncle…

MI: Came back to Hawaii eventually?

SF: He actually came back to Hawaii and had a body and fender shop in Kaneohe.

MI: What was that uncle's name?

SF: Kazuma.

MI: Say that again.

SF: Kazuma.

MI: Kazuma?

SF: Yeah, yeah. And, so, I remember his first car, and you know, he was so proud of this, the Ford Mustang, it was like 1967, or '65, maybe, the first year they came out with the Mustang. So, he was really proud of that car. So, anyway, there are the three brothers, [who] were separated because of the war.

MI: Now, I'm trying to think, your father's brothers, I guess the older one was not in Japan and he ended up having to serve?

SF: Yeah, that's right.

MI: So, he was an American citizen and he lived in Hawaii? .

SF: Yes. I'm assuming, he...you know, I'm not sure where he was born, whether here or... but he did serve.

MI: What was the name of the older brother?

SF: Tsuyoshi.

MI: Yeah.

SF: So, um, and this is just another…

MI: So, one brother is fighting [for the U.S. Army], the other one is in an internment camp.

SF: That's right. Yeah, yeah.

MI: And another one in Japan?

SF: Who was also fighting, yeah, yeah. Which I think, was a common, you know, scenario I think with a lot of families, sort of split by the war. You have one, you know, some fighting in Japan…

MI: There were a lot more on the mainland in terms of internment and our military [service].

SF: Aha, yeah.

MI: Two sides, there are some other stories. Not a lot but there are, yeah.

SF: Hm, mm. So, there's actually another side story to this. So, just recently, you know, I was kind of…

MI: But they all survived the war?

SF: Well…

MI: The one's in the military?

SF: No, not all of them and this is kind of related to the story I'm gonna kind of share with you now where my father's older brother, Tsuyoshi, who was in the 100th Infantry Battalion, I had found a box of old letters and one of the letters was from this uncle that was serving in the U.S. Army. And, in this letter, he talks about, and this letter was dated in October of 1943, and, so, in this letter, you know, he's talking about that his unit had just arrived in Italy after, you know…

MI: October of '43?

SF: October '43.

MI: Okay.

SF: The 100th, right. So, his unit had just entered Italy and they were fighting the Nazis in the mountains in Italy. And, you know, in this letter, you know, he talks about when they first got there to this spot in the mountains of Italy, that they thought was a safe spot but as soon as they got there, they were under enemy fire right away. And, so, you know, in the letter he talks about bombs hitting where they were and if it weren't for this jeep that was just in front of him where he was laying down, he probably would have died, then, because, his buddy, that was like right next to him, laying down, got hit by shrapnel and died. And, so, that letter was October 1943. My father was interned, as I said, on..

MI: March.

SF: On March, March 1943. Yeah, but shortly after he sent that letter, that uncle had died. He was hit by a bomb. Just November of…

MI: Early that year?

SF: Yeah, November 1943, yeah, yeah. But, you know, and there was actually another letter that he sent.

MI: Do you have these letters?

SF: I do. You know, they're kinda hard to read, and…

MI: They're kind of precious.

SF: They are, they really are. You know, they are, really to me, you know, they're sacred letters because, you know, for a couple of reasons, one, the letters were written in English which really, kinda surprised me but it made sense because this uncle was here, was living here. So, he knew English so I could read it 'cuz all the other letters, you know, in the box were all in Japanese.

MI: What were the other letters?

SF: Just from different family members.

MI: From that era, wartime?

SF: From that era, yeah.

MI: Those are also worth keeping and taken care of.

SF: Yeah, I have them kept. But, there was another earlier letter that was written by this uncle where, you know, he talks about first finding out that my father had been arrested and…

MI: You think your father had written to him, or someone else?

SF: That I don't know. I think, for the boys that were fighting the war, I think they were really wanting to get news from home and there were several letters that I found from this uncle that was in the war but, I don't know if my father actually responded to those letters.

MI: What did your uncle say in the letter, about your father's internment?

SF: Yeah, in the letter, yeah, and this was pretty significant because he says in that letter that he had just found out about my father being interned, arrested [and] interned. He says in the letter, God knows you didn't do anything wrong, God is with you so keep up your spirits, basically paraphrasing. And, so, it was significant to me, again, and on another level too. First, that he was writing in English and two, that this is all kind of Christian language, that he was probably Christian at the time, you know. So, that was significant for me but, also, just kind of the sacredness of that, you know, that family history. Also this idea of this brother, who's fighting a war and getting shot at, you know, whose life was in jeopardy, and then he's caring for his younger brother, who he finds out has just been arrested.

MI: Was there like bitterness?

SF: On the part of my uncle you mean?

MI: Yes.

SF: I didn't sense any in the letters.

MI: More sympathy for your father?

SF: More sympathy, yeah, for my father. And, there were other letters he had sent but they were basically giving details of just the boredom of the hard basic training they had to go through.

MI: Now, your father was at Honouliuli until the camp closed?

SF: You know, I'm not sure. I think there are records here [JCCH] that show when he was actually moved out and this would have been the time when he would have been sent to, to Tule Lake in California.

MI: You're not sure when he went to Tule Lake?

SF: I'm not sure when, exactly. Yeah.

MI: Now, maybe you have to remind me, what was the date on the koa bowl [wood] platter that you donated to JCCH?

SF: It was March 11, 1943.

MI: Okay. The reason I'm wondering is, I know that that's the date on the bowl. Do you think that's the date that he made it? Did you ever talk to him about that while he was alive?

SF: No. In fact…

MI: Did you know that it existed?

SF: I didn't know it existed until he died. You know, I was kinda going through his … cleaning up the house and I kinda pulled this out of a drawer and, so, yeah, I didn't even know it was there.

MI: Were there other artifacts with the bowl when you discovered it?

SF: No, that was it. That's the only thing I could find.

MI: No Honouliuli letters?

SF: Nothing like that. That was the only thing that I could find that related to Honouliuli.

MI: But the correspondence with your uncle, was it from Honouliuli? You don't have his side [of the correspondence], you only your uncle's side?

SF: That's right. Yeah, I'd have to go back and check the date of the letter, you know. But, I think he mentions that this uncle found out that my father was arrested, so probably prior to Honouliuli, I would imagine.

MI: Most likely, there's nothing as far as your uncle's family. They don't have any letters or anything like that?

SF: Most of…

MI: He died in combat?

SF: He died in combat and all of my father's siblings have all passed away now, yeah.. Anything of this uncle that was in the army, all I know of is those letters. Except for things from the army like an old flag.

MI: Would it be possible to have us copy those things and give us a copy of those letters?

SF: Yeah, you know, I was planning to bring that here today but I just kinda got busy and could not get that done.

MI: It would be a good addition to [your father's file].

SF: The letter itself is kinda hard to read so I had to get a magnifying glass and really kind of look at it but I sort of typed it out.

MI: Hard to read because the handwriting was small?

SF: The handwriting, yeah, was kinda bad. [Chuckles] And, there were some letters that were on, I guess, the U.S. Army, they sent, like microfilm. I guess these letters never got out or I think they…

MI: How did you get the microfilm [of these letters]?

SF: They sent it to my grandfather.

MI: That's how he got the message? Is it like in a roll?

SF: No. It was his, like a photograph of, you know, of the letter. It was really kind of shrunk down to pretty tiny [copy].

MI: Do you think that's how, I mean is that how your father received it?

SF: [Sighs] Well, the letter that I saw was an actual letter that he received. And, there were others that were just simply on that, you know, from the U.S. Army. I don't know if these were letters that, you know, were being screened, and then, you know…

MI: The ones that were being screened and censored generally, they're physically cut, the letters [to remove contents].

SF: Oh, okay.

MI: I don't know if they even had microfilm. I guess there must have been.

SF: Yeah. But, um, so I kept those letters. I think, one of them, my older brother might have in his possession. 'Cuz he was, when I told him the story of this letter that I found, he was pretty shocked, too. [It was] kind of a family revelation.

MI: How old is your older brother?

SF: Well, he is sixty-eight, sixty-eight.

MI: Does he know more about the story than you do? Your father's internment story?

SF: You'd have to ask him. I don't think so. I think we both kind of have that same level of knowledge.

MI: You shared?

SF: Yeah, we kind of talk every now and then about it but, you know, it's like, I think it's…

MI: What's his name?

SF: His name is Randall.

MI: He lives here?

SF: He lives here. Yeah, in McCully, like a few blocks away.

MI: Um, mm. So, you found this thing [carved wooden bowl dated Honouliuli], but there's no story really to the bowl but you found it after your father passed away?

SF: Correct.

MI: You never had a chance to ask him?

SF: Yeah. You know, after I found the bowl, I showed it to my brother.

MI: This is about 2010, after he had passed away?

SF: Ah, maybe even later than that. Well, yeah, it was after 2010, after he died so I think maybe this is, probably around 2013, something like that. Yeah, yeah.

MI: And, no one, like your brother, had never seen that or anything?

SF: As far as I know, he hadn't because he was kind of surprised, too, I think to see it.

MI: Did your father have woodworking skills? Did he do these kinds of things after?

SF: Yeah, you know, one thing my brother did tell me, though, is that he looked at the inscription and felt like it wasn't kind of in the style that my father would have done it so he might have had somebody else do the carving for him. It's just the printing of it, you know. And he's [his brother] an architect.

MI: Who's an architect?

SF: My brother is. Architect by training so he looked at how the printing was done on the carving.

MI: It didn't match his handwriting?

SF: Yeah, he thought, "Eh, maybe this might not be his writing and maybe he had somebody else carve it for him" kind of thing.

MI: How about the carving [of the bowl] itself? Did he have those kinds of hobbies, to your knowledge? I'm trying to get, you know, I'm wondering if he made it or was it something somebody gave him? Like somebody else in the camp made it and gave it to him? It's a good story, yeah?

SF: That I don't know. There's no story behind it. I don't have an actual story behind the actual carving itself. I do know that my father was pretty good with his hands.

MI: When you say he was pretty good with his hands…

SF: Yeah.

MI: For example?

SF: Well, he was a mechanic for most of his work life.

MI: Mechanic where?

SF: Working for the Honolulu Gas Company.

MI: Repairs?

SF: Repairs, yeah. But he also, and my brother would know this, that when my brother was really young, my father had sort of crafted like a car for him. Like those soapbox kind of cars?

MI: What do you mean by carving and soap boxes?

SF: Well, it was like a car made out of wood and he shaved the wood, shaped it into like a race car.

MI: So, he did do woodwork?

SF: He did woodwork. So, it's possible he could have done that wood carving.

MI: Do you have any of his old [wood] things? Like this car?

SF: I have a picture of it.

MI: You have a picture of it?

SF: Yeah.

MI: That would be interesting for us [to copy] these kinds of things because it's kind of related, yeah?

SF: Yeah. And this car that he made…

MI: So, he had, I mean, woodworking skills?

SF" Yeah, he had some skills, as far as like woodcraft and that sort of thing.

MI: Any other things you remember him making? Toys for you folks?

SF: You know, maybe my brother might remember. I don't really remember. I just remember…

MI: He never made any for you? [Chuckles]

SF: Yeah, I think he got, maybe tired after making all that stuff for my older brother.

MI: Do you remember anything [else] he made for your older brother?

SF: Well, that soapbox car, that race car.

MI: How big are we talking about?

SF: We're talking, you know where a young toddler could sit in. It had metal frames.

MI: Really?

SF: Oh, yeah.

MI: So, he had skills?

SF: He had the paint, you know, like the racing, you know, paint job on that car and the wheels, you know, you could take it and go on the sidewalk.

MI: You never got to…

SF: No. By the time it got handed down to me, it was, like, you know, in pretty bad shape.

MI: Oh, you did…

SF: But, when it was brand new, when it was new and my older brother was using it, it was a pretty nifty car.

MI: The photograph is for when it was new? With your brother still sitting on it?

SF: Yeah. He probably has one [photograph] with him sitting in it. I have another one like that.

MI: That would be very interesting for his file.

SF: Oh, okay. I can, can…

MI: Because it goes with that technical skill.

SF: Oh, okay. Yeah.

MI: Anything else you remember he made?

SF: Mm, not really but yeah, that soapbox car was, you know, pretty nifty. It was pretty good work that he did so it wouldn't surprise me if he actually did the wood carving [of the platter] himself. I think that would have been really easy for him to do, yeah.

MI: You mentioned that you found this, I guess, in the family home after he had passed away?

SF: Hm, mm.

MI: Has everything been inventoried in that family home? Could there be other things that he made that you haven't gotten to?

SF: I think I've done pretty much, I've done a pretty thorough job in going through all the things. But, I think that's probably it. Yeah.

MI: Okay. What kind of man was he? I know, I mean, you've come along quite a bit later, I mean, after the war. Your mother actually met, I guess, met and married him after the war, I'm assuming?

SF: Right.

MI: When talking to your mother, or you know, from your growing up, which is a little bit even later, what kind of man was he?

SF: Well, you know, my father, you know, there's a saying about opposites attract. My mother was very sociable, very gregarious, she had a lot of friends. My father was kind of the opposite. He was more introverted.

MI: But he went to work and came home?

SF: Right. But very, you know, very steady. I think one of the things he taught me, just by example, was just perseverance, you know, having gone through all the war years, kind of in internment camps. I never sensed any kind of bitterness about that experience. Whenever he would share stories about his time in internment camps, it was stories about the boys making the ice rink or just trying to combat the boredom. They wanted to get out of there.

MI: Were there other stories besides the ice rink?

SF: He would tell me, and there's a picture somewhere of him, and this was in Tule Lake, where they would try to get the assignment of driving the truck that would take all the leftover food to the pig farms that were kind of in that area. So, anything to really get outside of the camp.

MI: That was one of his jobs?

SF: It was one of his jobs, yeah. But, other than that, he never really talked much about the camps. I mean, I do remember him saying that, at Honouliuli, it was really hot.

MI: How about Tule Lake?

SF: Tule Lake? Just those stories about the ice rink and, you know, trying to get outside the camp.

MI: Oh, Tule Lake was a place where, in general, I guess the more Japan oriented people were sent to, those who wanted to, declared their....

SF: Right. The hard core.

MI: Yeah.

SF: The questionable ones.

MI: Wasn't Honouliuli a little bit different?

SF: Yeah.

MI: They ended up there but not necessarily for the same reasons.

SF: Yeah.

MI: Did you get any sense about his loyalties or his intentions? Because he had family in Japan.

SF: Hm, mm. Hm, mm. Yeah.

MI: He never talked about that?

SF: He never talked about that.

MI: Did he really want to go back to Japan? Or, intended to go back to Japan?

SF: Yeah, 'cuz, um, I think at the time, you know, he still had his mother, my grandmother, was still in Japan. He had siblings that were still in Japan and of course, his older brother was in the U.S. Army and my grandfather was here. So, I can only guess that he was really torn, you know, and felt a loyalty to his family in Japan as well as his father and brother who were here in the United States. So, yeah, but I never got a real good sense of this from him.

MI: You didn't find any other artifacts as far as Tule Lake?

SF: I think there's some old photographs of his time there at Tule Lake.

MI: Document? No documents?

SF: No documents. Yeah, mainly old photographs.

MI: You're not sure exactly when he was released to come back to Hawaii?

SF: Um, no. No. I don't have an exact date of that. But I know that he came back to Hawaii and eventually went to work at the Honolulu Gas Company and that's where he pretty much spent the rest of his work career.

MI: As he got older, did he have any kind of flashbacks, PTSD [symptoms] post traumatic stress disorder? Those kinds of things? Did he have those kinds of things or did he, you know, change as time passed? Easily angered or agitated?

SF: I never noticed anything like that from him. You know, like I said, he was pretty quiet most of the time, didn't talk a lot.

MI: Now, your mother passed before him?

SF: That's right. Yes.

MI: Well, when did she pass?

SF: She passed away in 2005. She was actually killed in an accident where she was crossing a street over on Waialae Avenue. A driver kind of didn't see her and just sort of plowed into her. Yeah. It was, you know, my father didn't show a lot of emotion. In fact, he had a hard time walking during that period so he pretty much stayed at home. And, so, you know, during that period when my mother was in the Emergency Room at Queens, you know, just fighting for her life, and then she eventually died in the Emergency Room, so I was the one that had to go back to where my dad was and to give him the news. And, you know, I still remember his reaction to that. It was like, he immediately kind of went into…well, first of all, you know, I asked him, "Did you want to go and see mom?" But, he said, "No." He just felt that he just needed to stay where he was. And, when I broke the news to him that she had died, he was, um, he just turned a switch and just went into like, "Okay, these are the things we need to do. We need to call these people in Japan." And, he named the people.

MI: Very objective.

SF: Very objective. You know, okay. Very, you know, kind of a regimented sort of approach to what we needed to do.

MI: He wasn't like that throughout his whole life? Organized and…

SF: No, he really wasn't. He was pretty low key and very, you know, laid back.

MI: Your mother did all of the…

SF: My mother did all of that. Maybe he felt like now that she's gone, he needed to kind of take control over that part of it. And, so, he immediately started giving instructions on who to call to let them know what had happened. And, so, yeah. That was one thing. There was another side of him, too, where, you know, because my mother died in this accident, and the police came to the house, wanted to get some information from my dad, I still remember this. The driver of the car was actually a ninety-year-old woman. My dad, we were sitting in the living room, there were about three police officers there, and they asked a bunch of questions and finally, one of the officers, I think it was a female officer, asked him, "Is there anything that you want to say or convey to the driver?" He said, "Yeah," you know, kind of in this broken English, he said, "You know, just let this person know and her family know that my father [he] doesn't have any ill will towards them. It was an accident, tragic accident, and we're really mourning the death of my mother, his wife, but we really don't have any kind of animosity towards the family."

MI: So he was able to put it behind him?

SF: Yes.

MI: Did the family respond, the other family?

SF: They did. They sent a card. [Choking up]

MI: That's because of his difficult life experience that, for him, tragedy was, had already been experienced.

SF: Right. Can we take a short break?

MI: We'll just take a break. Let me…

MI: We're basically trying to find out more about your father's later life. So, you may not be able to help us with this, but do you think this experience with internment changed his life, directed his life? I know it's not an easy thing to determine what he was like. Did he keep in touch with any of his fellow internees? Any communication?

SF: Yeah, there was one fellow that he kept in touch with and I can't recall his name now but, this friend that was in the internment camp would eventually settle, I think, in the Bay Area in California.

MI: If you ever remember the name, if you could email me.

SF: Yeah, I'm sure that I have it somewhere.

MI: Okay.

SF: They would, you know, many years after the war was over, they would still correspond. Sometimes this friend would come here.

MI: Hm, mm. So, it was a local person who moved to the mainland, San Francisco, after the war or something like that?

SF: I don't know if he was local or not.

MI: Oh, maybe someone from Tule Lake?

SF: Yeah. It was somebody from Tule Lake.

MI: I see.

SF: So, I don't know where this friend was originally from. I don't think he was from Hawaii. I think, he might have been on the mainland somewhere. But, they kept in touch, you know, after that time and would get together whenever they were in town.

MI: You ever met that person?

SF: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I've met them.

MI: Wow.

SF: It's been a long time. I think he died, like several years ago.

MI: So, if you happened to be around when they were socializing, did they talk about Tule Lake?

SF: Well, you know, he [friend] talked mostly in Japanese. My Japanese was pretty limited.

MI: Do you mean the other guy?

SF: The other guy. Yeah, yeah.

MI: Do you know what he was or anything about him?

SF: Yeah. No, I don't know. But, anyway…

MI: Did your father keep in touch with, for example, they have Tule Lake reunions, those kind of things? Did he ever have any interest in…

SF: No, he never expressed any interest in going to those reunions at all.

MI: He would get the invitations and things and just toss it aside?

SF: I don't even know if he got any invitations, but he never expressed any desire to go to any reunions. You know, he was a pretty, he wasn't a real, you know, gregarious type.

MI: Nothing, I mean, do you think he was just a regular old Japanese man? You know of that generation? You don't think he was sick in any way?

SF: No, I didn't sense that. 'Cuz I don't know his personality obviously before the internment experience but all I know, growing up, he was pretty typical. You know, don't talk too much, you know, pretty stoic, you know, but just hard working. He would go to work every day, come home.

MI: For the family?

SF: For the family. You know, have his couple of beers at dinner and maybe an occasional highball but that was his life. He never really had…he did have some hobbies. I mean, he loved to golf and so as an adult, I got to play with him a little bit. Not many times. But, in his later years, his health got poor and so he eventually ended up at Hale Pulama Mau at Kuakini [Hospital] and so, the nurses there, they would call him "the general." [MI Laughs]

MI: Because he behaved like a general?

SF: You know, I think, he was just really kind of, you know, I don't know, maybe it was just his persona, was just very, you know, he wasn't happy-go-lucky. You know it was like, "I need this." [Laughs]

MI: Was there a dramatic change after your mother passed away? With him I mean?

SF: With him? I never really noticed that.

MI: He tried to just keep going on with his life?

SF: Yeah, yeah. You know, there wasn't much change with his personality. He was still kinda that same …

MI: But he had to do more for himself? Cook for himself, laundry and all that kind of stuff?

SF: Yeah. By that time, his health wasn't very good. He couldn't walk very well. So my brother and I would come up to visit him every day at the house, just to make sure he was doing okay...bring him dinner and what not. Yeah, you know, I do remember, he was not a real emotional guy but I do remember when, after my mother had died, that he would be sitting down at the kitchen table and call her name, like "I need this." Then, remember, oh, she's not here anymore. It was the only thing that he really expressed to me, that acknowledgment that she wasn't there anymore.

MI: Did he ever talk about his life [reflect], oh I had a good life, or I had a rough life, those kind of things?

SF: No, never really did that. I do remember, though, when he was at the nursing home at Hale Pulama Mau, and this was like shortly before he died, and this was kinda unusual for him, he would tell me, "You know, Scott, I had this dream. And I had this dream of this tunnel." And he could see at the end of the tunnel, my mother, his wife, his mother, my grandmother and his younger brother, Kazuma, who had died before him. And it was shortly after that he…

MI: Now, which one was Kazuma?

Sf; Kazuma was the younger brother that was in Japan but eventually moved to Hawaii.

MI: He was in the army?

SF: The Japanese Imperial Army. Yeah.

MI: Oh, I see.

SF: And so, shortly after that, he [dad] had passed away. So, I think that in some sense, he knew that his time was short. Yeah, but, he never really spoke of any bitterness of how his life had been.

MI: How about the family? Your mother? You folks? Do you think it impacted your lives in any way? Or it was just something that basically everyone pushed in the back of their mind? Just to live?

SF: The internment experience you mean?

MI: Yeah, yeah. Does that bother you that your father was put through this [internment experience] or is it something he shielded you from so you'd never remember?

SF: Yeah, I think when I was younger, I never really understood it. I knew that it happened but it didn't have any real…

MI: How about at this point?

SF: At this point, yeah, yeah. I think more in terms of, um, you know, when you have people or groups in power that control and abuse that power and take advantage of people, those kinds of issues I take note of and try to recognize. This notion of speaking truth to power. If someone or some organization or some group is taking advantage or bullying people who cannot defend themselves, then I think that maybe part of that comes from the internment experience that my father had gone through. That, maybe somehow it affects me.

MI: At what point of your life did you start, this start, you think becoming a part of you, your father's story, the story becoming part of you?

SF: I think, ah, maybe, during this period when I was transitioning from the business world to the ministry.

MI: When would this be? Before he passed away?

SF: Yeah, before he passed away. Around 2011.

MI: How old were you?

SF: Oh, well, I was, what? 58? No, maybe younger.

MI: So this started after he passed away.

SF: Ah, shortly after.

MI: Shortly after?

SF: Yeah, shortly after.

MI: I think some of these things started…

SF: Yeah, I had been a Christian as an adult but I think, since he passed away, there are certain things that have kind of occurred that sort of spoke to me in a spiritual type way.

MI: How about when you found the bowl? Any feelings?

SF: Well, yeah. I mean now, just based on that, seeing the bowl, just doing a little bit more research about Honouliuli and [learning about] sort of the conditions and, you know, just the experience for what the folks and the families that were in Honouliuli at the time. So, it did spark, I think, an interest for me to learn more about that history.

MI: How do you feel about what happened to your father?

SF: You know, I think, for me, it's just learning the lessons from that experience that my father and others kind of went through with the Honouliuli experience and because my father didn't really express any bitterness to me about it, I don't have that sense either. But, the experience and the history of that event sort of causes me now to look at things in a different light.

MI: What is the message, you think, that we have learned from this story, the internment story?

SF: Oh, I think, with the internment story, it's basically that when we're driven by fear and when people in power and in control, people in authority are driven by fear, then it may cause them to act in ways not in the right ways, acting not in the right ways. And, so, when we recognize, when we see that, then I think it's up to others to point that out. Speak truth to power. I think, just recently, going back to this whole Presidential campaign, one thing that really sort of upset me, there were a lot of things about the campaign that upset me, but I think that there was one Trump surrogate who, when asked about the subject of having a Registry for Muslims, made reference to the internment in support of a Registry, saying that this was a, you know, precedent had already been set for the Muslim Registry because of the internment that was done during World War II. To me, that was really upsetting. To use that as justification for something like this Registry, and, so, you know, it's like…

MI: So, that touched you?

SF: Well, yeah, it did. It really did. It's like, "Hey, you're talking about my dad and other Japanese Americans that were unjustly incarcerated during that period." So, I think I've developed more of an awareness of that and of those kinds of issues. Even today, with Native Hawaiian type issues, the overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani and those types of things, as a young boy growing up, we never really learned about those things. It's only now, as an adult that I've become more aware of, some of the absolutely…

MI: You were too busy making a living.

SF: Well, yeah. Yeah. You're so wrapped up in your own world, but then, now, it's like you see and you hear about these stories about people, groups and indigenous people who were sort taken advantage of, and people in power sort of using that power not in a benevolent sense but for their own purposes, for their own agenda.

MI: Do you think these things caused you to change or … which came first? You changed and then these things became more meaningful or they became meaningful and so you changed?

SF: You know, I think it was kind of a slow, kind of a melding of all these events, you know, my dad dying and then seeing the wood carving, and thinking and learning about the history of the internment camp and then, you know, having gone to seminary now and, you know, it was just, sort of just building up.

MI: You indicated this seminary thing happened, I guess, before you started learning or you know, before your father passed away that you were already moving in that direction?

SF: Well, yeah. I had been a Christian for, you know, many years but I seriously decided to go into ordained ministry, you know, just shortly after my dad had died and I think some of the events, like finding the wood carving and other things, now I see it more in a spiritual sense too. This sense of social justice, you know, and again, when people in power or people bullying other people, and those that cannot defend themselves, you know, those kinds of issues resonate with me.

MI: Now, that tour in December 2016 when we went out to Honouliuli, was that your first visit there?

SF: Yes. That was my first visit.

MI: Everything happened after you donated the bowl.

SF: Right.

MI: And, when did you donate it to JCCH?

SF: Um, it would have been sometime I think in 2014, I think. Yeah, 2014.

MI: Did you feel anything when you were out there, at Honouliuli?

SF: Yeah, yeah, I did, you know.

MI: What was it like for you?

SF: It was, um, you know, just trying to imagine. When we got there, you know, the only thing that was really visible was that concrete slab.

MI: The foundation?

SF: The foundation of that mess hall or that cafeteria in the camp. The rest of it was just trees and bushes. But it was just trying to imagine and then having the photographs of the camp back in the day, and trying to compare, "Okay, yeah this is where the wall is, it's the same wall that's here. You know, this is where the…"

MI: That rock wall used to be?

SF: The rock wall. There was also that water, um, bridge.

MI: Aqueduct.

SF: The aqueduct that was there. Then you get some perspective and you can see, "Okay, this is the aqueduct, this is where the camps were, and, um…" So, yeah, so it was… You know, I'm sort of a history buff, too. So, I think, you know, actually seeing the vestiges of the camp and just sort of imagining what it was like there, it was important for me. And there was a fella, an older fellow that was in our group that was there on that visit who I think was a young boy at the time. And so he was saying, "Oh yeah, you know I remember…yeah, this was where the cafeteria was, this is where my camp was." So he was, yeah, it was kinda neat.

MI: That was Mr. Uehara, George Uehara.

SF: Yeah, George. That was him but you know, so the recalling. "I remember all of this." That was kinda neat to see. And, I didn't sense from him any kind of bitterness, either. It was like, "Oh yes, this is where it was. I remember all of this." It was almost kind of an excitement for him.

MI: He also went to Tule Lake.

SF: Oh, he did?

MI: When the camp [Honouliuli] closed. So, he may have, I should ask him about that.

SF: I think I maybe, just before we parted ways, I think I asked him and I think I knew that.

MI: He didn't know your father?

SF: Um, no, no. I think he was pretty young. My father would have…

MI: Sixteen.

SF: He was sixteen at the time? Yeah.

MI: Well, he was sixteen when he was put in there. Let's put it that way. I don't know if…

SF: Yeah. So, my father would have been in his early twenties, mid-twenties so maybe they didn't hang out in the same crowds. [Chuckles]

MI: No, no, but actually that is the same crowd, because most of them were older yeah? Older men, I mean.

SF: Right, right.

MI: I wouldn't say older men but you know. Maybe…

SF: Um, yeah.

MI: Actually, I'm not sure they were…there were some older men. I guess it was…

SF: Hm, mm.

MI: I mean some were, you know, in their fifties and hopefully…

SF: Hm, mm. Yeah, yeah.

MI: Hopefully someday I will get to interview Mr. Uehara but I'll let you know.

SF: Yeah, oh boy! Yeah. In fact just before we had…

MI: As an aside to this, just to tell you something, so this thing opened, the exhibit opened, I guess, in November and you came to the opening ceremonies.

SF: I didn't come to the opening but then a couple weeks later I came.

MI: I'm a docent there[at the exhibit], I'm standing there.

SF: Oh, okay.

MI: You know that front section. There's the photograph, the large photograph.

SF: Hm, mm.

MI: And so, there are people wandering…I'm sorry. It wasn't that day. It was about a week or two later.

SF: Hm,mm.

MI: People wandering around, and so, this old man and his son standing there looking at the picture, so I'm trying to be helpful so I go up to them and said, "This is the photograph of the camp. This is, you know, the internment. This is where the internees were. This is the ((?))." He turns to me and he says, "I know, I was there."

SF: Oh, wow.

MI: He had never spoken...the family knew the story but he himself has never told his story.

SF: Wow!

MI: You know and that's a month or two before.

SF: Yeah.

MI: He had the ceremony here.

SF: Yeah, yeah.

MI: You know. We had invited him just like [how] you were invited.

SF: Right, right.

MI: But he may be the last surviving, you know, that…

SF: So how was he…

MI: There are some POWs…

SF: Yeah.

MI: …who are still alive, Okinawans.

SF: Okay.

MI: Okinawans who we know are still alive but in terms of interment, he may be the last survivor.

SF: Wow. And so were you able to get his story?

MI: I was not because I'm low priority so there is a, they do videos. So, a small group, Jane Kuwahara and Ryan, Ryan was there, yeah?

SF: Yeah, Ryan was.

MI: Oh, okay. A professional video [videographer], so they went out. I didn't want to kind of intimidate him.

SF: Right, right.

MI: He didn't, he had not agreed to an interview. It was like a social thing. [Conversation regarding this topic] There was another woman from Japan, who was a researcher, went. So they kind of socialized for about an hour. They never really got the story, you know what I mean. They just talked story.

SF: Okay, yeah, yeah.

MI: Because they didn't want to intimidate him.

SF: Right, right, right. Sure.

MI: Just get to meet him. Although the woman from Japan did ask a few questions but more about, "Did you know so and so?" She's researching Honouliuli so trying to get names yeah. But not really his story so we're hoping we can get to do that, like we're doing with you today, someday.

SF: Time is short. I mean if he's the last surviving.

MI: He may be the last one.

SF: Yeah. But maybe it takes a little time to make him feel comfortable and, you know.

MI: That's why we don't want to rush.

SF: Yeah, right. Sure.

MI: And, well, the other problem is, the priority is to get him on film so that's why I'm kind of keeping my distance. Let the professionals and organizations do their work.

SF: Right.

MI: I'm just a volunteer.

SF: Right, right. Yeah, yeah.

MI: So, getting back to your impression about, you know, you told us a little bit about Mr. Uehara, some of the other people, you got to hear stories from, bits and pieces from some the other internee families.

SF: Hm, mm. Yeah, yeah.

MI: Did they, those stories resonate with you also?

SF: Yeah, I mean, particularly George's story you know, of actually having been there. Although I didn't hear like a huge story.

MI: You don't know his story?

SF: Yeah, yeah. But the fact that he was there.

MI: His story?

SF: Yeah. To me, that was, that was significant. He was living it, you know and, so, he knew it.

MI: That was unexpected for all of us.

SF: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

MI: This was the first time, from the time I saw him at the gallery, that was the first time I had seen him again. The second time and we had no idea how he would react [to revisiting the camp site, after seventy years].

SF: Yeah.

MI: Like you say, he went up to the photo and said, "I was there."

SF: Yeah.

MI: Apparently, there was a stockade within Honouliuli and he was a bad boy so he was put into the stockade which was a prison within a prison.

SF: Right. [Laughs] Ahh.

MI: Maybe someday.

SF: Hopefully that happens yeah?

MI: So, in terms of the work that you…you're relatively new to the Japanese Cultural Center....what you see with Jane Kurahara, Betsy Young....what they've been doing for fifteen years, what is your feeling about them trying to preserve, well, first of all, capture these stories?

SF: Hm, mm. Right.

MI: Preserving, passing them on to the next generation which is what we're trying to do.

SF: Well, I think it's important work, you know, to preserve the memories of what had happened. Just a quick aside, I was in L.A. recently and they have the Japanese Museum there.

MI: The Japanese American National Museum?

SF: The National Museum. And, they had a photo exhibit of the internment camps and one that really kind of really resonated with me was this photo of a Japanese man. He was being arrested, there were the MP's there and they were escorting him and this Japanese man was dressed in a U.S. Army uniform, his dress uniform. You know, he had served in World War I, he had his medals. And, here he was, being arrested. I think the caption was, he was being sent to Santa Anita, the race track, the camps that were there at the time. But to me, that was a really powerful, powerful picture, you know. And, sometimes, you know, we can tell a story with the pictures, with the stories of the people and the families, the artifacts, you know, and convey that story of this whole experience.

MI: That's why the artifacts are so important.

SF: Yeah.

MI: They make it real. That's why the letters, if at some point you feel you want to preserve them somewhere, to leave, you know, we do have the facilities to preserve them.

Because you want them preserved in terms of temperature, humidifying, that kind of thing. You know, as long as you have the [conditions] to take care and keep them. That sounds like they wear gloves.

SF: Yeah and I think, um…

MI: It is important and it would go very well with the…

SF: Hm, mm. I think that the people that do share their stories, it's a story that other people can relate to, too because that's part of their family story as well. So, they can see their own family members kind of somehow entwined in part of that bigger story of what happened. So, yeah, I think it's important for the people who are trying to gather all this information, yourself included, to preserve that, to make sure that it's recorded so that my daughter and future generations can know about this. I think it's really important. Sometimes, for my own daughter, she's not really interested, she's twenty one years old and not really interested in it now but for me…

MI: You were not interested?

SF: That's right. You know, later in life, you start to reflect. Okay, so, "Who am I? Who was I? What was my past?" And, so you start going back and say, "Okay, this is my past. That kind of leads me to who I am today." And, so, I think that's important to really preserve this.

MI: Do you think your father made you who you are?

SF: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

MI: What did he teach you? What do you think you learned from him?

SF: I think the first thing that comes to my mind is perseverance. Perseverance in times of adversity. 'Cuz I think like my father's generation, especially Japanese Americans, they went through a lot during their lifetime. And, so, I think, the lesson from my father is, the value of perseverance, persevering through adversity, tough times. The Japanese expression, "*shikata ga nai.*" You know, it's like, "It cannot be helped." But we just push through. And, I saw that. You know, knowing his history here at Honouliuli, and then later when my mother died, it's like you persevere, you do what you have to do and work through that adversity. And, I think that's one of the things I think he taught me. You know, I still kind of believe in, so.

MI: Interesting. So, even though he was a stoic man, you got the message.

SF: Yeah. You know, it wasn't, um, for him, it wasn't really leading verbally, you know. It was more just the actions. Okay, I'll lead by example. This is my example. You work hard, you take care of [your] family. He was very family oriented. I remember the old house that we lived in, that my brother and I all grew up in, the house was small. The kitchen was so small that the table could only seat three people. And, there were four of us, so we could never all sit together at the same time, right. So, my father said, "We gotta renovate this kitchen."

MI: Really? For the purpose of allowing his family to sit…

SF: For the purpose of allowing the family, the whole family, all four of us, to sit down all at once at the dinner table.

MI: He did that?

SF: And, he did that.

MI: How old was he?

SF: He renovated the kitchen.

MI: He himself did that?

SF: Well, no. We hired a contractor to do that.

MI: For that purpose?

SF: But that was kind of the purpose, for that purpose, you know, he wanted a bigger kitchen so that we all could sit down at the table and have a meal. And, so, he did that.

MI: [Chuckles] It's a very interesting story but it's the continuity of the story through him, to you. We'll see what happens to the next generation.

SF: Yeah. I know that we're talking about my father's experience but I don't want to neglect my mother too you know because they say…

MI: Go ahead.

SF: …[behind] every good man there's a woman who's there too.

MI: Right, the reason we neglected her was she came after the fact.

SF" Right.

MI: But, tell me about her.

SF: Yeah, you know, like my grandmother on my mother's side, my grandparents, I mentioned earlier that they had a grocery store in Manoa valley, off of East Manoa Road. Yano Store. I don't really remember the store because they had closed it when I was really little so I don't really remember much of it. My brother does though. And, so, when my grandfather had like a picture of the Emperor in the store and so I remember my uncle telling me this, this is my mother's…

MI: Do you still have that picture?

SF: No, I don't have that picture. [Laughs] But after Pearl Harbor got attacked, the way my uncle tells the story is, he, my grandfather took that picture down and put FDR's picture up. You know? So, he was a smart man. He kinda knew. [Laughs] So, he needed to take the steps to protect his family too, so.

MI: Now, do you know if he burned the Emperor's picture?

SF: I don't know. That I don't know. And, so, my mother was the oldest of six in the family. And, so, she kind of had a hard life because she was the one to really take care of her younger siblings a lot of times. She was, in a lot of ways, she was the matriarch of the family. Because even later in life, before she died, her younger sisters, her younger brothers would sort of look up to her because she was always doing the cooking in the house, for the household. So, she was the one to really kind of take care of the younger siblings.

MI: She was a housewife? That was her life? Taking care of the family?

SF: Right. She did, ah, she was in the workforce.

MI: The workforce?

SF: Well, I think, all of the kids, when they were young, kinda helped out in the store but she would eventually work at, I think it was the Hawaii Times? The Japanese language newspaper? I think she was like a type setter for that. She went to sewing school and she eventually worked for many years at Alfred Shaheen, the manufacturer of clothes, aloha wear and all that. And, then, later, just before she retired, she would work in the office of a small tour company, [a] Japanese tour company in Waikiki. She was bi-lingual, she could speak Japanese and English so that was helpful in a predominantly Japanese-speaking office staff there in Waikiki. And she retired and you know, personality wise, like I said, she was more the social one, pretty gregarious, had a lot of friends, always going places for either knitting classes or shopping, karaoke recitals, that sort of thing. My father's responsibility after they both retired was that he was the chauffeur. He had to like, take her to all these places.

MI: I see. How old were they when he retired? They retired together?

SF: Yeah. They retired roughly about the same time, so they were like in their early sixties. Yeah. And, so, later on in their retirement when my brother had his kids, they would take the grandkids to all the different places and babysit whenever they could. But, she was important to the family. Yeah. I mean, to this day, if I see my aunties who are already in their nineties, they would always say, "Oh, you know, I miss your mother, my sister." I think she really had an impact on the family, particularly her death was, had an impact.

MI: So, if you were to think about it, what would you say that you learned from your mother?

SF: Oh, she really had the gift of hospitality. She loved to serve people so whenever we would have family, family members come over to the house, and we had a really small house in Palolo, she was always in the kitchen, preparing meals, making sure everybody was well fed and had enough to eat and drink and what not. And, then only after everyone was done eating, that's when she could…

MI: Then it was her turn.

SF: …say, "Okay, I can relax now." Then, she would sit down and slowly have her meal. But, she was always putting others first, ahead of her and herself last. You know, I remember her telling me this story and she was already in her eighties at the time but she came home one day from shopping and she said, "You know, Scott, I was right near Daiei and I saw this kind of elderly lady and she was really struggling to cross the street because she was carrying these heavy shopping bags." So, she said, "You know, I went over and I helped the lady and I got some of the bags and I helped her cross the street." And she said, "That was my good deed for the day." And, um, you know, it was shortly after that that she had died in that traffic accident. Ironically, it was while she herself was crossing a busy street. So, I think that core value of service and hospitality is kind of what I take away from her.

MI: It's a very, you know, rich life story. Hopefully, you will be able to pass on the messages to the next generation, yeah? Even the political messages.

SF: Yeah, yeah.

MI: It's a difficult time, really for the next generation.

SF: Sure. I think the history of Honouliuli and the social injustice, the message that comes out of that, you know, we don't want to see that history replayed and if we do see it, we've gotta call it out. We've gotta call it out. So that's what those future generations will have to [learn].

MI: Because our generation had relatively easy lives. Really, when you think back.

SF: Hm, mm.

MI: So, um, maybe, that's your role, to preserve the message and pass it on.

SF: Hm, mm. Yeah. You know, it's passing on the message but you know, there's that Japanese expression of "*kodomo no tame ni.*" You know, for the sake of the children. And, it's really, that passing on the message is for the sake of the children, really. To allow my daughter, my grandkids, great grandkids, the future generations, making sure that, for their sakes, that we be aware of things, of social injustice and when people are taking advantage of other people, and so, knowing that history of the internment camps, I think there's a powerful message that we can pass on to those future generations.

MI: Anything else you wanted to add?

SF: I think I've pretty much exhausted…you know, it's been quite an experience, actually being able to share this, things that I really hadn't thought about in a while.

MI: Actually, in terms of your life so much is happening since your father passed away, in the sense that this Honouliuli experience is sort of changing your life.

SF: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. I think Honouliuli, you know, it's been part of this reset in my life, too, this transformation. I think Honouliuli is part of that. Definitely a big part of that, in what I'm doing now. So, thanks for the opportunity to share my family story.

MI: Thank you.

SF: Yeah. Thanks.