JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAI‘I

Voices of Internment

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Sandra Y. Hoshida (SH)

August 15, 2017

Interviewer: Mel Inamasu (MI) and Betsy Young (BY)

Notes: 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 August 15, 2017 and we're at the Conference Room of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii to interview Sandra Hoshida about her family's internment history. My name is Mel Inamasu, volunteer, and assisting me today is...

BY: Betsy Young, volunteer.

MI: [Sandra], I realize that you were a child at the time of internment so we're not expecting you to give us details about that part of your life. But we're also interested in your family life following the internment and also your life. We'll ask you some questions to get started and we'll lead you through [the interview]. Can you introduce yourself, tell us where and when you were born? And we'll begin to ask you questions about your family.

SH: My name is Sandra Yoshiko Hoshida. I was born in July, 1940 in, according to my birth certificate, South Hilo.

MI: Tell us about your parents, their names, your father first, your mother, and then we'll ask you more questions about your ancestors.

SH: My father was George Yoshio Hoshida. My mother was Tamae Hoshida. I was actually the third of four daughters born to my parents. My father was from Japan, Kumamoto. My mother was born in Hawaii, but her parents were from Yamaguchi. They met here, in Hilo.

MI: So your father was an Issei and mother, Nisei.

SH: Yes, that's correct.

MI: Let's go back one more generation, whatever you can tell us. The names of your grandparents on your father's side and then, your mother's side.

SH: I'm embarrassed but I don't know their names. My mother's maiden name was Takemoto. We may have some relationship with Patsy Takemoto Mink. I'm not sure. She was from Maui and my father mentioned that we have relatives on Maui, which makes me think that there might some connection. Plus, what I call, Takemoto, the moon face, the round Patsy Mink face.

MI: The names of your grandparents?

SH: I don't remember the names of my grandparents.

MI: What do you know about your father's childhood, when he came to Hawaii and why and about his early life?

SH: My father was brought to Hawaii along with his oldest sibling, a brother. The siblings in between were left back in Japan with a relative. I understood that it was because of economic reasons. They could afford to bring only two of their children. I suppose, my grandparents didn't want to leave behind their youngest child. So, I was just lucky that he was just the one that was brought to Hawaii. They came, like most Japanese, to work on plantations but I understood that they did not really work on a plantation. They were sort of like tenant farmers. They had a patch of land that they farmed, sugar cane. Eventually [they] ended up working at Kukaiau Ranch [she spells it out] on the Big Island. Sort of up the coast on the eastern side. I understood that my grandfather was involved in explosives. They were clearing an area for a road on the ranch. I shudder to think how badly it was controlled, but he was there doing that. My father at that time was maybe a teenager, fourteen, fifteen, because he was taken out of school and taken with his parents to Kukaiau Ranch. The older sibling was left behind because he was rather arthritic and so, couldn't work with the family at the ranch. My father did just hard labor, I suppose, pick and shovel, and that's the time when he saw a matchbook cover that advertised drawing, learning how to draw. And so, he wrote to that school, and I don't remember what that school was, and began a correspondence course.

MI: How old was he when this happened?

SH: About fifteen, sixteen. And that sparked his interest in drawing. My father was always an explorer. He never stopped learning. Even after he retired, he was constantly learning new things. Like, he took up learning Shakespeare, you know, but his mind was always inquisitive.

MI: Where did he go to school, high school, and how much education did he have?

SH: He only went up to the ninth grade. I imagine it was some, maybe intermediate school in Hilo. It wasn't until he was way older that he returned for his GED [General Educational Development] and earned a high school degree.

MI: So, he had to go to work at an early age.

SH: A very early age. Right, right, right.

BY: May I ask a question? He seems eloquent. He's bilingual and he could express himself very well, so where?

SH: I think that came from his love of reading. My father always had a book, whether it was in Japanese or in English. He kept a book above the visor in his car, so that if he had to

wait for my mother, he'd be reading. He had books in the bathroom [chuckles] and we grew up with bookshelves just loaded with stuff to read. So all of my sisters and I, we've acquired that from him, a love of reading. I think that's where he picked up his language.

MI: He read both in English and in Japanese.

SH: Yes, he did. And he read a lot of Buddhist teachings. I don't think he got involved deeply in Buddhism until perhaps after he married my mother, and my oldest sister got into a traffic accident and eventually died, while we were interned. He had this passion for reading, always, and art.

MI: From after elementary school, he began working. Can you tell us about that period? Did he work at different places?

SH: My grandparents--the family lived originally in the Kaumana area on the Big Island, which is about five miles *mauka* [mountainside] of Hilo. It was from there that they went to Kukaiau Ranch and my father, I think, attended the Kaumana Elementary School because I remember when we passed by that elementary school, he would tell us that he used to ride to school on a donkey. Somehow that must have been a joke because he would laugh about it. I sort of took it to be like, "We used to have to walk five miles in the snow to get to school so we [you] should appreciate our education." Then he worked at Kukaiau Ranch with his parents and, I think, the owner or the supervisor there allowed him to set up a place where he could do his drawings.

MI: He was that good?

SH: Well, as he was learning how to draw.

MI: Do you have some of those early drawings?

SH: No, we don't have his early drawings, no. Then, I'm not sure what he did after that. He was involved in sales, I know that, and very active with the Buddhist church in Hilo.

MI: Which church was this?

SH: It's the Hilo Hongwanji. It was called that back then. I think it's Hilo Honpa Hongwanji today. He was a judo instructor as well.

MI: How did he learn judo?

SH: I don't know, but I'm assuming that it was through the church because they had a dojo in the back and I know that's where he taught, so I assumed that that's where he learned judo. At that time, too, the Hongwanji had an orchestra. Today they don't. And he played the violin. Probably badly. [chuckles]

BY: Oh my, I can really see this guy as a Renaissance man, for his time!

SH: Really, I really think of that myself. If you think of it, his mind was like a sponge. He just had to keep on learning. He would do things like walk into a store and there was nothing to read, and he was with my mother who was shopping, he would read the labels off cans and merchandise. Just constantly reading. It was at the Hongwanji that he met my mother.

MI: Go back and tell us about your mother.

SH: My mother lived in Papaikou and I think her parents worked on a plantation. To give a little story about her parents, my mother used to tell us the story, over and over again, that her parents met and fell in love and got married, and it was not an arranged marriage. I think unlike--I think my father's side, it was an arranged marriage. Later on, I remember we would chide my grandmother, asking her if my grandfather used to kiss her. [BY laughs] And she'd laugh. They worked on a plantation and then when my mother was...

MI: Which plantation?

SH: You know, I don't know. When she [mother] was in the fourth grade, I believe it was, my grandfather was carrying her, and they both fell and she injured her hip. But they did not know that she was injured. They knew that she was in pain and something was wrong with her after a period of time. The story I was told was that my grandmother, you know, *opa*, carried her down to the train station to catch a train so that they could see a doctor. She eventually ended up at the Shriners Hospital here, on this island [Oahu]. She was diagnosed with tuberculosis of the hip. I don't know what that means. It was on her buttocks. It was almost like somebody had pulled the skin inward. It was almost like a hole. And her leg was shorter on that side. So she always walked with a limp. And she never returned to school after the fourth grade.

MI: Because of that?

SH: Because of that.

MI: Was she hospitalized for a long time?

SH: I think she was, here at Shriners. I guess, eventually, she returned to the Big Island and reunited with her family. My grandfather, in those days, was of the opinion that if you don't marry off your daughters early, he used this word *mushi*, worms would get to your daughters. Kind of offensive but… So my aunt, my mother's older sister was married at age sixteen, I believe. With my mother, he felt that because she was damaged, in a sense, that she would never marry, be acceptable for marriage. So he felt that she had to learn a trade in order to support herself, which, to me, was rather liberating, back then. He sent her to sewing school and she became a very accomplished seamstress. She and a woman friend had a shop across from the Hilo Hongwanji. And, that's where she met my father. The story was that his girlfriend had broken up with him and so he would come over to their sewing shop and look for a shoulder to cry on, I suppose. And, my mother said he would play his violin really sadly and whatever, and, I guess, they fell in love.

MI: What ages are we talking about?

SH: They were in their early twenties. My parents married, I think they were about twenty-three. My mother must have been about twenty-three. They were rather older for that generation, I think. I'm not sure what my father was doing, what work he was doing but I think it was something to do with sales. They got married and I remember my parents telling us that they didn't have any money so each of them, after the marriage ceremony, went home [to] their respective homes, their family homes. [All chuckle] They eventually bought a home in Hilo and that was the home from which my family was taken for internment.

MI: Let's get to December 7, 1941. How old were you, how old was your older sister June?

SH: When December 7 happened, I was about a year and a half and my older sister June was maybe five.

MI: And, you also had an older sister. Tell us about that sister.

SH: Taeko, my oldest sister, was six years older than I was. When my parents got married and Taeko was born, they were in a traffic accident. In those days, they were in a car that was open, like a convertible, and both my mother and my sister were thrown out of the car. I think my mother injured her head and my sister also, but they didn't know that, at the time. My mother kept insisting, after the accident, that there was something wrong with my sister, that she [the sister] was not focusing on my mother as she was breastfeeding. Eventually, they took my sister over to the other side of the island, I think Kona, where Dr. Kutsunai, a very well-known doctor-

MI: Akira Kutsunai?

SH: I think so--on the Big Island, and he diagnosed my sister as having suffered some brain damage and that she was actually blind, which is why she could not focus on my mother. I don't think she was deaf.

MI: She was about how old, then?

SH: She must have been less than a year old. And as she got older, it became apparent that she was paralyzed on one side of her body. She never learned to talk and used to have convulsions several times a day. She was in that state--she would have been, maybe seven or eight when we were taken to internment. She was placed in Waimano Home, here on this island, by my parents, when we left for internment camp.

MI: You probably wouldn't know much about this because you were very young, but did you learn anything about the events at that time or the period after that, as far as your father's detention?

SH: Yes, I did. I learned later, through my father and mother telling us stories about what happened then, but they didn't talk about it very much. I understood it to be something almost, not quite an embarrassment, but something that they just didn't want to bring up. But my mother, I guess her maternal side, her attachment to my sister, over the years, I heard stories about my oldest sister. Anyway, what happened after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, immediately after, I was told that my parents got rid of all of their Japanese language books. They burned them.

MI: Your father must have had quite a collection.

SH: Quite a collection, yes. He burned them or-

MI: He just made a pile and burned them?

SH: Yes, because he was afraid that he would somehow be associated with that attack. And they tried to speak only English, as well, in public. Then, they had, of course, Girls Day dolls and I thought my parents said they buried them but I'm not sure if they did or they just destroyed them.
Then, a couple of months after, or maybe after the executive order, my family was visited by my father's older brother, who was a detective with the local police. He came with, I guess, the FBI, and they took my father away. Of course, I don't have any recollection of

that. My older sister [June Honma] does and, of course, it was upsetting to the family. Then, we learned later that he was taken to the Kilauea Military Camp.
I do remember, though, that when he was brought down to face the panel just before he was interned, we were told that he was going to be brought to the Federal Building in Hilo. So, my uncle packed us all in the car and drove us down to one of the back windows of the building, which is near the library, the old library. We waited and waited and eventually, my father passed by the window. I think there was a balcony, that he stood on that balcony and I remember waving. We all waved to him and then he was gone. And the next thing we know...

MI: He saw you folks?

SH: Yes, he did see us. My mother was pregnant at that time with my younger sister, so she patted her belly and he nodded, he acknowledged that he understood. And then he was gone. We didn't see him until a year later, I think it was.

MI: Do you know why [he was picked up]? This was not December 7th. We're talking about six months later.

SH: Right, right.

MI: Why was he picked up?

SH: Well [pause], when I was in law school, I did what they call a "comment." Students write comments. And, the comment I wrote was on the [Fred] Korematsu case. The question I asked was, "Could it happen today?" And, in the course of doing research for that paper, on the FOIA [Freedom on Information Act], I asked for my father's papers. There was a transcript; I wish I could find it. It's in a box somewhere. There was a transcript of the hearing that he had before the panel. That transcript showed that he got into a discussion about the concept of Bushido. Especially because my father was a judo instructor, Black Belt, and the question was posed to him, whether he had, as a result of all that, loyalty to the Emperor of Japan. My father was arguing that he did not. And, he says, the next thing he knows, he was on a ship to internment camp.

MI: He was an Issei.

SH: Yes, he was Issei. And, closely affiliated with the Hongwanji and with judo.

MI: Now you were very young. Any recollections of traveling to the mainland, the internment camp? You were young, I don't know if you remember anything.

SH: Yeah. I was once interviewed by Beverly Creamer. She was a reporter for one of the local [news]papers and she asked me that same question. My answer to her was that it's sort of like a photo album. I have pictures, but nothing that really… no continuity.

MI: What kind of pictures?

SH: I do remember being on the ship, going over, because I was sick. And, I do remember running up and down the--it was actually the Lurline, one of those ships that had been painted black during the war. I don't know if it was appropriated or confiscated by the military. And, so my sister and I would run up and down the stairs in the ship and we'd get scolded for it. But I do remember that part, about being sick. I don't remember landing anywhere.

MI: It was you, your older sister and your mother?

SH: Yes, the three of us. My younger sister was three months old, baby. There were four. The eldest, of course, was at Waimano [Home].

MI: Were you aware of what had happened to your eldest sister?

SH: No, I did not know where she was. All I knew, the feeling I had was that, I very much missed my grandmothers. I was very close to my two grandmothers. And, I used to annoy my parents because I would ask almost daily, in Japanese. I would say , *"Obaban wa, obaban wa?*" "Where's grandma, where's grandma?" And I did learn, when I learned to speak, it was in Japanese before I learned English.

MI: Any other images?

SH: Throughout the internment, I do remember attending school. This was in Jerome, Arkansas. And my mother sewing me a dress that I really liked. A pale yellow dress with little flowers on it. And it had a piping that was like a princess cut to it. I loved it so much, I wore it for a week. I wouldn't let her wash it. She said that every morning--this part I was told, and I sort of remember, but not real clearly--that this boy Larry would come by our house to pick me up to walk to school together. He would want to hold my hand and I remember being annoyed at that. That part, okay, I remember that.

MI: You were so young. Would you say that for a few years, you didn't go to school? You stayed at home?

SH: Yes, I stayed at home with my mother. Oh! I had an incident. There was, in Jerome, there was a castor bean [poisonous] tree outside of our unit. My playmate and I were sitting there and we began to eat the castor beans.

BY: Oh dear.

SH: She promptly threw up, my playmate. But I didn't, and I got really, really ill.

MI: What were you folks thinking when you were eating the beans?

SH: Well, you know, it tasted awful! It tasted awful, really, but I don't know. I guess people eat beans and nuts, [laughter] and so we ate it. And, I remember waking up during the course of the night. There was an older woman, not my mother, who was sitting next to me. And then, I'd fade back. I heard her saying something like, "Oh, she woke up" and then I would go back to sleep or whatever. It's strange but I did see a light, and I was trying to reach it. And then, I heard the woman, and I'd get up. And in the morning, I remember waking up to my mother pulling the curtains open, and the light hit my face, and I woke up. She was just deliriously happy. But later, she told me that I had come pretty close to dying from eating those castor beans [chuckles].
Another memory I have is, I must have been about four. We were playing hide-and-seek in the camp grounds. And, there was a grease pit next to the cafeteria. You know, a hole, maybe about two feet across and rather deep. I looked in that hole and I thought, "Oh, what a great place to hide." So, I jumped into the grease pit. The grease was pretty much up to my waist and then I stayed there and I couldn't get out. So, I remember then, later, everyone in the camp was looking for me and they were calling my name, calling my name. The hole was above my head and the oil came to my waist. I remember holding the sides, the wall of the hole.

MI: Were you calling for help?

SH: I was not because I was scared that I was going to be scolded for jumping in to the pit. So, they were looking for me and I didn't yell out, that I'm here. They were calling and calling, and finally, a man looked in to the hole and said, "She's here! She's here." They pulled me out and I remember my mother, at first being happy and then just scolding me and taking me--there was a washhouse where the women did laundry, and outside of the wash house, there was a faucet with a flat piece of wood there. She put me on it and washed me off, meanwhile scolding me! And, I'm crying. Yeah, that was, [laughs] that was memorable.

BY: Oh, I bet.

SH: I remember going in to an abandoned building with my older sister [June] and her friends and I was a tag-along. She would often try to shoo me back home but I just followed her that day. They were in this building and she and her friend--my older sister was quite a tomboy. She and her friend climbed up into the ceiling and it must have been like this type of a ceiling and it was weak and she fell through it, and she grabbed her arm and she was really in pain and I didn't know what to do. She was crying and her friend then ran back to get help. Again, the same thing, she was scolded. It turned out, she broke her arm, and was in the hospital.

MI: Your poor mother. [Everyone laughs]

SH: Yes, my mother! Poor thing. [chuckle] She went through… I was what she calls *nakimiso*, I was a cry baby, so I just always clung to her. I tell you. And, I got it back in spades when I had my own children! [Laughter]

MI: During this period, is your mother explaining to you why you're there?

SH: No.

MI: You don't know why you're there.

SH: We don't know. And I'm not sure my mother knew why we were there. I know that they --she missed my older sister [Taeko] for sure. And, I know from stories that she related to her women friends after we came back from internment, and if I happened to be sitting among her and her friends, I would hear the story. I heard it over and over again, about her feelings of missing my sister. She would always tell the story and cry. And how she [Taeko] had been left unattended in a bathtub at Waimano [Home] and she drowned.

MI: At what point did this happen? While you were at Rohwer, or with your father?

SH: We were on the mainland, and I think my father was already with us. I do know that she died when she was nine. We left when she was maybe six or seven, so it was well into internment. Today I can talk about that incident, but I remember serving on panels, at [Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii] here, and it would always be difficult for me to talk about that. Also, I don't have really strong memories of my oldest sister. But, I think it was, knowing what it is to be a mother, and to lose a child and you're not there for the loss of that child and that child died all alone. I think that's devastating for a parent. Just heartbreaking. I don't think my mother ever got over that throughout her whole life.

MI: Do you remember being reunited with your father?

SH: Not really. I don't remember it as a big event.

MI: It was at Rohwer that your father…

BY: Wasn't it at Jerome?

SH: Uh, no, at Jerome, I think. Yeah, I think it was Jerome.

BY: But it was a while after you guys [got there].

SH: It was a year, I think.

BY: Yeah. I think you were there just without him.

SH: Right. It was about a year. I think we were--ah wait, we were at Jerome and we were also--where was the other place we were at? Gila River. I wonder if it was Gila River? It could have been Gila River.

MI: That's right. You went from Jerome to Gila River.

SH: My parents expected to be reunited but it took over a year for them. Well, about a year.

BY: Yes, like Mrs. [Otokichi] Ozaki, from the Big Island. It took over a year for them and she went up expecting to…

SH: I'm really not sure why my mother went, because she's Nisei. All I know is, the story that I heard my father tell us was that she was on the verge of going on welfare. And, as a result, they sent her up there. I'm a lawyer but I have another research [to do] to find out whether that was indeed the basis.

MI: Whether there was coercion versus whether it voluntary?

SH: Yeah, yeah. I don't know. [Pause] I have some nice memories.

MI: What are some of the nice memories?

SH: One in particular. After awhile, we were given passes, I think, to take train rides into Phoenix.

MI: So you're in Gila now?

SH: In Gila. Right. And I remember on the train rides with my sisters, marveling at how the telephone poles would go by really quickly in front of us but yet, in the distance, they'd be moving rather slowly. It wasn't until years later that I found out there was a physical explanation for that. It was really intriguing on the train.

MI: So the three of you, with your mother, would be allowed to go to Phoenix.

SH: Yes, and with my father. My father was with us, I remember. We'd visit a supermarket, I remember, and I just marveled at how white and clean it was, in comparison to our camp where everything was dusty and dirty and not colorful at all. And, the lights were bright. It was just a wonderful experience for me.

MI: Did you ever ask your parents why you couldn't stay there?

SH: No. See that's the thing. It was just sort of an acceptance. And, as long as my parents were there, I was not ever unhappy.

MI: Did you feel that you were incarcerated?

SH: No, I did not feel--because, you know, this was the only life I knew from when I was two years old. I do know that I missed my grandparents and I wanted to know why I couldn't see my grandmother. My parents, to get me off their backs, they would tell me that in ten days, you're going to see your grandmother. So, they would start counting for me. And then I'd lose count and they would start me all over again and I'd have to count to ten all over again. But that was the biggest and greatest sadness for me, not seeing my grandmother.

Another incident, when we were in Phoenix, we were picnicking next to either a canal or a river. There was water. And, across the ways, it was rather a wide river. When I say wide, from a child's standpoint, it was wide but it could have been maybe twenty or thirty feet across. There was another family picnicking on the other side. Politically incorrect, but my parents said, "Oh, they're Indians," Native Americans. And they didn't look like they had much food and so, my father--we had already eaten--and my father had an orange and he raised it and he showed it to the family across. The father nodded his head and my father tried to toss it to him. It fell in the river [chuckles] So the father on the other side went into the river to look for the orange and found it. I remember that, and feeling really happy about it.

MI: How about when you went into Phoenix? Would people stare at you?

SH: I don't remember that. And again, I think it was because I was a child. As long as I was with my parents, I was okay.

BY: Do you remember him painting or drawing while in camp?

SH: My father, always had a book and he would flip the pages and he'd be scribbling in it. I do remember seeing him do that. He was always either writing or drawing or reading, [pause] or sleeping [laughs]. My father used to say, "If you can sit, don't stand, and if you can lie down, don't sit." [Laughs] Very, very calm.

MI: Let me ask you as a non-artist. He's done so many of these sketches. Once he's does sketching something, like you say, he would sketch something, is that it? Or, does he, later on, come back and fix it up?

SH: You know, unfortunately, when he came to live with me, and he revisited his pictures, he colored them. In a way, I wish he hadn't, because then he added something to it that was not on it originally. The other thing he did, which I think the Japanese American National Museum was not happy about, he laminated his pictures. He thought he was preserving the pictures but it made it harder to preserve, I think. Yeah, but he drew.

In internment camp, they also learned to make these wooden birds and shell flowers, and I have some of those. I've just hung on to them because I just wanted something of his. Oh, and then he pressed flowers, and I have that album still.

MI: Tell us what kind of man he was, as you recall him as a child, still being in camp. Was he angry?

SH: He was <u>not</u> angry. He was always, always--I wouldn't have known the word philosophical, but very accepting of things and so we just went along with him. He'd go off, and I know that group of men worked in carpentry and, because he was not a cook, and so he would come back and he'd have made things for us. I still have a bookstand that he made. And, he also made a footlocker, and that's my coffee table today.

MI: So he did different things, art things?

SH: Yes.

BY: Did you think he might have thought that this was a good time in his life, because he had all this free time, and he didn't have to worry about the meals and those things, but free time to pursue his artistic interests?

SH: He might have, but, years later, he was interviewed by Ray Lovell, who was also on [local] TV, and it was on one of those seminal anniversaries of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Ray Lovell asked him, "How do you feel today about America, having the President and the military taking you away?" He was really thoughtful. It was on TV and he was really thoughtful and he said, he only has gratitude for America because it offered him a chance to earn a living and to support his family. And that was my father. I didn't quite share his attitude and yet, I don't have really unpleasant memories--except for missing my grandmother--about internment. But it was only after I'd learned about the basis for it, internment, that this anger in me arose.

MI: How old were you when the family came back to Hawaii? Did you come back directly to Hawaii?

SH: Yes, we did come back directly. I do remember the journey back though, bits and pieces of it. I remember that we rode a train. I remember that we stopped somewhere to have a meal. And, sitting outside of a cafeteria or café and waiting for the bus. And, to this day, when I hear the clanking of dishes, like in a restaurant, it takes me back immediately to that time when we were sitting on the bench, waiting for a bus and sort of smelling a little bit of the restaurant, the meals being cooked. I'm transported back there immediately. Then, when we reached the West Coast, I do remember looking over a cliff, down to the ocean, just marveling at the waves, seeing the waves there. And, then, going down to the beach and standing on the sand barefoot. And as the waves took the sand out, you can feel the sand washing out from under your feet. I remember that. Then, years later, my parents moved to Los Angeles. This was when I was a freshman or sophomore in college. I stayed behind but they went and joined my older sister in L.A. And, when I went up, I transferred to UCLA and joined them up there. My parents, without saying a word, they said they wanted to show me something. They drove me to Santa Monica and took me to this railing. When I looked down, I knew that was the beach that I had seen.

BY: And, that was the first time that you saw the ocean, right?

SH: Yes, my memory of the ocean. It was quite an experience. It took my breath away. When we returned from internment camp…

MI: Where did you return to, the Big Island?

SH: The Big Island. And, it was again on a ship. I remember my mother getting us all dressed up and saying that her older sister, my aunt, and her family, they were going to meet us. I remember looking over the rail and just this group, hordes of people waving at us and my mother saying "Wave, wave!" and I didn't know who to wave to. Then eventually when we got off the ship...

MI: When you say waving at us, who are us?

SH: My family.

MI: A whole group of internees on the same ship?

SH: Yes. Right.

MI: And soldiers also?

SH: I don't remember soldiers but there may have been.

MI: There was a reception for you, for the internees, when you returned to the Big Island?

SH: My aunt and our relatives, they were expecting us.

MI: But what I mean, there was a large group expecting you and came to welcome you back to the Big Island. But I mean all the other internees also?

SH: I think so, they had families there. I remember getting into a car and my aunt had ten children, and all of my female cousins, they were just all fawning over us, and all wanting us to sit next to them, and being driven to my aunt's house. That's where we stayed, at least immediately after returning.

MI: So you felt very welcome there on the Big Island.

SH: Yes.

MI: How about the community? Were you welcomed by the community? Or did you feel--did they shun you?

SH: Well, I didn't feel shunned.

MI: How old were you then?

SH: I was five. I remember--you know how parents have discussions in front of you and they don't think you're listening--but I remember my parents being very concerned about my shyness. They were afraid that once I started school, I would not be able to integrate because I was so shy. So, they placed me in a private preschool. I don't know how they did that because they didn't have money. It was called Mauna Loa Preschool. I remember the smell of paint because everything was freshly painted in that preschool. And meeting children my age who later, in high school, I found out were my classmates then. But I didn't know at that time. I attended there one year, then I went to Kapiolani Elementary School after that. I do remember being at the school and feeling really out of place because I didn't understand what the children were saying. I could not speak pidgin.

MI: And you had learned English in the camp?

SH: Yes. And, I spoke, I guess they called it Standard English. I just felt so out of place because I thought it was another language they were speaking. They would use Hawaiian place names that I had no idea where these places were, and feeling alienated in that sense but not...

MI: Not because of the internment?

SH: No. Because I was different. Yeah, and I guess so much so, that I remember when I was either in the second grade, the principal of the school had me do a reading on the radio. It was because, I guess, because of how I spoke. It took me a while but I eventually learned pidgin. [All laugh]

MI: So you went to elementary school and high school on the Big Island.

SH: I did.

MI: Then came to Oahu?

SH: No, I actually went to the UH [University of Hawaii] Hilo campus.

MI: At that point, your parents moved to the mainland?

SH: Yes. After my freshman year, they moved to the mainland. Actually, I came here to Manoa [university campus] for the first semester of my sophomore year. Then I returned. I had a boyfriend then who eventually became my first husband. I returned to the Big Island.

MI: Let me just ask you before you go on to--your father, after he returned from the internment, what was his life like? How did he adjust to coming back?

SH: I understood later that he tried to get his job back. Oh, that's right, he was working at Hawaii Electric Light Company. I'm not sure what as, as a salesperson or repair person? I'm not sure. But when he came back, he could not get his job back. I don't know for what reason. Whether it was because of the taint of internment or whether there were just no jobs available. But I do remember him doing repair work in my aunt's garage. She allowed him to set up a place and he would repair washing machines and lawn mowers and whatever people asked him to repair. I guess, that's how he made his living.
Then, I'm not sure if thereafter he went to work for the Moses Company, which is a department store, no longer in existence, in Hilo. It had an appliance department and a music department. And he worked as a salesman in the appliance department and eventually became the manager there.
We stayed with my aunt and eventually moved to Hilo Commercial College, or we used to call it "*Dokuritsu*." It was a college that had been converted into sort of like public housing. So, we occupied what was a classroom. There were no bathrooms within that classroom, so the people there shared common bathrooms, common showers, and a common kitchen. From there, we eventually moved to abandoned naval housing. After that, eventually, my parents bought a home in Hilo.

MI: So, they had hard times, economically.

SH: Very hard times economically. As I got older, I was aware that we were poor. But my parents never made me feel bad about it. My father had a car. We always did fun things. I never felt bad about my situation. Maybe, except in school, a little bit. I felt like my clothes, which were hand-me-downs, were not as pretty as my classmates'. Every year, I'd get one pair of shoes, new pair at the beginning of each school year. New set of underwear. I look at my grandson and how easily he wears his clothes. He doesn't even think about the clothes he wears. He doesn't like this t-shirt, maybe occasionally. He has fashionable clothes and shorts and I think about how hard it was for us to get anything that we really liked, that was our own.

MI: Was that part of the reason that they moved to L.A. to be with your sister?

SH: What happened was, Moses Company was a sole proprietorship. Mr. Moses owned it. He had no children and when he died, there was a general manager who took over the company. He wanted my father to revert to being a salesperson rather than managing the appliance department, and I'm assuming that it was probably at less pay. And so, my

father realizing that it was difficult to have a go of it, and my older sister was already on the mainland, so she encouraged them to come up and find employment in L.A. So, they packed up and left.
I stayed behind because I had, at that time, what they called a Territorial Scholarship, which today is a state scholarship. I would have had my four years paid as long as I maintained my grade point average, so I stayed behind and I thought I would finish at UH. My mother, she said, before she launches her daughters out in to the world as adults, she wanted to be able to teach them certain things so she wanted me home, close to her. So I transferred to UCLA and moved up to L.A.

MI: What did she teach you?

SH: You know, the things that she taught me were not--she taught me certain things, like cooking, how to wash clothes. My mother had a regimen for washing clothes. Delicates you wash this way, you wash whites this way, darks, you know. We did that as we were growing up but she wanted me to learn how to cook. I was not really into cooking although I can cook. I love baking so I would be the baker for our house. She just wanted me close to her, I think.

MI: You mentioned your mother's comment about your oldest sister. How about your father? Did he talk about it?

SH: You know, he never really--I never really heard him talk about it. It was more my mother.

MI: He was not bitter about it?

SH: The feeling I got was, his grief was for my mother. He was very close to my oldest sister Taeko. Very close.

MI: She never could communicate after the [accident], at age one.

SH: No, she could not. My mother would tell us that when she'd hear my father's car pulling in to the driveway, she would get very agitated. She knew it was my dad. My mother said they were very, very close. But maybe my father just kept his sadness inside of him.
One thing about her death, many years later, after we returned from internment camp, one of my cousins, my mother's older sister's child, was a nurse, and she told my parents that when she was at Waimano Home, a fellow nurse or attendant told her that she had left a child unattended in a bathtub and the child drowned.

MI: Not knowing that it was her relative.

SH: Yes. But my parents, they were never going to sue or anything. My father was just not like that. Even when my mother died, after some complications that were not diagnosed by Kaiser [Permanente]--this was in L.A.--my father never thought to sue. He was just like that, I guess.

MI: You mentioned earlier about having to write a paper. Tell us about that.

SH: Yes. We were never taught about internment in school. And so, that period of my life, I thought was something I shouldn't talk about, that there was something wrong, perhaps, with my family. Although, none of my classmates really gave me any reason to feel that way. Then, I knew we were interned because we had memorabilia around the house.

MI: Were you learning the history as you were getting older?

SH: No, I was not. I just knew that we were away for three years on the mainland. Then, when I went away to law school, it was in my constitutional law class.

MI: Where did you go to law school?

SH: Over here, UH.

MI: What year was that?

SH: I entered in 1981. This was after I already had two children; I was married. I was working at UH before I entered law school, and I felt like I had to do something more than just working at the Admission and Records [department] at UH, so I started to explore possibly getting a graduate degree or another undergraduate degree. I was interested in architecture.

MI: Was that your original degree?

SH: No, actually my father's art interests really did pass on to me, and I'm sort of the family artist, although I'm not as good as my dad was. But I wanted to combine something that had art in it, and math, because at one time, I thought I would teach math. And, I thought that architecture would be perfect. So, while I was working at UH, I was exploring going back for a degree in architecture and then, I thought "nah." I got pregnant with my second child and so I thought, maybe a master's degree. And, I thought, maybe [a master's degree in] education since I'm working at UH Admissions and Records. But my husband, who was a lawyer and is now a teacher, my current husband, it was, [pause] I felt like education was like one step removed from the real thing. It's strange to say this but I remember taking the GRE. I was a psychology major in undergrad, I took the GRE to get into the master's program at UH, and I must have done well because the dean of the [education] school asked me to apply and to pursue my master's, but I decided that I didn't want to. I just had this feeling I wanted to be doing something in the forefront and not teaching about it.

MI: Actually do it.

SH: Yes, I wanted to do something. I didn't know what it was, but I wanted to do it rather than teach it. Then, a fellow co-worker at Admissions and Records, she and I took the LSAT, that's the entrance exam for law, on a whim. And, I did quite well on it. So, I thought, I'd apply for law school.

MI: How old were you then?

SH: Forty-one. I used to work with the admissions officer of the law school, as an Admissions and Records person. We'd talk about their law school and everything. I applied and she called me after that and congratulated me because I had made it in the first round for admission. Then the question is, "Am I going to go to law school?", because I had a family and didn't know what we could afford, leaving my job and going to law school. But I did. Very happy that I managed to finish. In law school, it was, first year, it was like every other day [that] I wanted to drop out. It was so bad. Grueling. But I'm glad I stuck it out. Okay, but back to the question. In my Con Law [constitutional law] class, we came across the case *United States versus Korematsu*. It was the first time I became aware of

what had happened and the injustice of it. It really shook me up. I was like, "This is what happened?"

MI: Who taught you that?

SH: It was from that case and the discussion. It was after I read that case and as part of my seminar paper, which every first year law student had to do, I pursued the question, "Could It Happen Today?" And, while I was working on that paper my advisor told me one day something very curious. White woman. She said, "You know, Sandra, that race is no longer an issue in the United States." I was just…

BY: She was a constitutional law [professor]? Wow.

SH: Yes. I was just shocked, blown away.

MI: She was teaching constitutional law?

SH: Yes.

MI: What was her background? Where did she come from?

SH: She was a practicing attorney. She came from some place on the mainland. I think it may have been New York, and came to UH.

MI: That was her specialty?

SH: You know, I guess as a practicing attorney, she did a lot of appeals, and appeals are rested on--the grounds are all constitutional law. So, maybe that was her claim to fame, her qualifications for teaching the course. And I really liked her as a professor. But when she made that remark, I had no words to say to her. I was so shocked.

MI: But, how did you get to that point...

SH: That point?

MI: ...before her? Because you didn't know anything about constitutional law.

SH: I did not know and it was reading the case.

MI: You didn't [know] the history.

SH: No, I did not know the history.

MI: How did you get to that way of thinking?

SH: Well, one of the cases we read in Con Law was *U.S. v. Korematsu*.

MI: So, you studied the *Korematsu* case…

SH: Yes. And I decided to write that paper, and it was in the course of writing that paper, the research that I did, it uncovered a lot of things for me. Like that [General John] DeWitt report. It was just shockingly laced with prejudice, just shocking, and how the attorneys in the appeal on either one of the cases, it could have been [Gordon] Hirabayashi or Korematsu, but they actually hid facts from the Supreme Court. It was just shocking.

MI: And your instructor was aware of all of these things that you learned?

SH: Yes. Yes. Yes, quite aware. But, I suppose her statement was making the case that my paper was not relevant today, because race was no longer an issue.

MI: Do you still have that paper?

SH: Yeah and it was published..

MI: Could we have a copy at some point?

SH: Sure. It's published.

BY: It's her bias, yeah?

SH: I may have given a reprint to the center [JCCH] but I'll look for some reprints and give you that.

MI: So what did you conclude? What was your hypothesis or whatever?

SH: Okay. Yeah, could *Korematsu* happen today, under the law as it is today? And, that was in 1982, or thereabouts, 1983. And my conclusion was that it could.

MI: Why?

SH: It's because the basis for the decision in *Korematsu* was not really--well, in a sense, I suppose--it was constitutional, but it was the Supreme Court's deference to the presidency in areas…

MI: But this was [written] before the second *Korematsu* case [*Coram nobis*]?

SH: Yeah, it was before--you know the *Korematsu*…

MI: 1983 was…

SH: ...*Coram nobis* did not overturn the Supreme Court case.

BY: Right.

MI: How did you know that there was withholding of evidence? That was already public [information]?

SH: Yes, it was public.

MI: Who made it public?

SH: Actually, this book that I read, called *Justice Denied*, I think it was…

MI: That was the Commission Report [reference to the publication, *Personal Justice Denied, Report of the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*, 1983].

SH: Yes, the Commission Report.

BY: What's his name, Tetsuden Kashima? [He wrote a new forward of the commission report republished in collaboration with the University of Washington in 1997.]

SH: Yes. And, there was another book by an attorney. His last name was Wolfe, I think, and he led the *Coram nobis* case along with Eric Yamamoto, who's now a UH Law Professor. And Dale…

MI: Minami.

SH: Yes. They worked on the overturning and in the course of working on the *Coram nobis*, I think they uncovered a lot of information. Under the Freedom of Information Act, this attorney Wolfe [she corrects it subsequently to Peter Irons], I think that's his last name, wrote a book on it. So, that was one source. And then the other one was the Commission Report. And then, I did do a lot other legal research. You know, the *Korematsu* [1944] is still good, what they call good law. It's on the books and it could happen [again] today. And, it has happened. When I was at Admissions and Records and we had the Iran hostage situation, the students who were from Iran just came into Admission and Records fearful that they were going to be sent back to Iran.

MI: I would like to pursue this a lot more, but we're running out of time. Would it be possible for you to come back?

SH: Sure.

MI: We would start at this point.

BY: Yes.

SH: Of course, of course.

MI: I don't want to get partially in and then…

SH: It's amazing that I don't think I know very much. But, if you ask me questions, I'll answer the questions.

MI: Okay.

BY: Once we had someone, who was he, that came up with records that the Supreme Court…

MI: Peter Irons.

SH: Irons, that's his name. Not Wolfe. He wrote that book. That's the book I don't have anymore. I wrote my paper in 1982 or 1983 and I had Irons' book by then.

MI: If it's okay, we'll conclude everything today but have you come back and let's talk about this, [*Korematsu*] *Coram nobis*.

BY: Because when he [Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia] visited a number of years ago, said, you know it happened and you guys should be worried, it could happen again. [Speech at the UH Manoa William S. Richardson School of Law - "But you are kidding yourself if you think the same thing will not happen again," February 8, 2014]

SH: Yes.

BY: And then, our Senator [Daniel] Inouye, [said] it happened here in our democracy and it can happen again. Right. [SH and BY discuss current events.]

SH: Yes, it is scary. In one of the dissents in the Korematsu case, and I wish I could remember, I think it was [Justice] Robert [Jackson], he cautioned that we should choose our chiefs carefully. That's because when the Supreme Court has to rely on military justification for actions, and they defer to the Executive Branch, you have to have trust in your executive. And I don't trust the executive today.

MI: Thank you very much for today. We'll continue. [SH thanks the interviewers and suggests that she might volunteer.]