JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAI'I

VOICES OF INTERNMENT

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Junko Iwahashi (JI), Tomoko Mohideen (TM)

June 27, 2018

Interviewer: Melvin Inamasu (MI)

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 June 27, 2018 and we are at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii's conference room to interview two people, Junko Iwahashi and her sister, Tomo Izumi Mohideen.

TM: My name is Tomoko but everybody calls me Tomo.

MI: We're here to talk to them about their family's internment history during World War II. My name is Mel Inamasu. I'm a volunteer at the Japanese Cultural Center and I'm going to begin by having both our guests introduce themselves. Tell us your full names, month and year of your birth, and where you were born.

JI: Junko Izumi Omori Iwahashi. I was born in September 1929.

MI: And where were you born?

JI: I was born in Fukuoka, Japan [in 1929] and came to Hawaii on January 8, 1931, when I was a year-and-a-half old.

MI: Tomo, why don't you introduce yourself?

TM: My name is Tomoko Izumi Mohideen. I was born in September 1933, in Puunene, Maui, Hawaii.

MI: Tomoko published a book, *The Crystal City Story*, about two or three years ago. Her story is well documented in the book, so, for the beginning of our session, I'm going to focus on her sister, Junko, who is a little older. Tomoko was about eight when the events of World War II and the internment occurred and Junko was a little older. So, I'm going to have her be the focus of the interview at the beginning and then later on, we'll involve your sister more. Full names of your parents?

JI: My father was Reverend Kakusho Izumi and my mother was Mrs. Kiyo Izumi.

MI: What was her maiden name?

JI: Izumi is her maiden name. My dad was adopted by my grandparents, and immediately he married my mother, to carry on the Izumi name. He was Kakusho Tabuchi and when he got adopted, he took the last name, Izumi.

MI: What does that mean?

JI: Last name was Tabuchi. When he got adopted by my grandparents, he became Kakusho Izumi.

MI: So, they were both Izumi, when they got married.

TM: You see, in Japan, if you have only daughters, sometimes they marry and change their family name to carry on the line. But my father was adopted so he was Kakusho Izumi. But when my grandfather got ill, he said, "Why don't you marry my daughter and really become family?"

JI: Let me recount that. My grandfather was ill, [and] that's the reason why he asked his professor friend in Kyoto if he knew anyone who could come to his temple in Fukuoka and give a sermon. The professor said, "There's a person who graduated this year, number one in the class so I'll send him." When he gave a sermon, my grandparents immediately liked him and said they wanted to adopt him. But first he went back to Hiroshima, asked his older brother if it was okay and he also asked his mentor, Professor Ekaku Koreyama Wajo, that's what they called him. That's how it happened. So immediately after he was adopted, the papers, then he got married to my mother.

MI: Can you tell me what year your father was born and what year your mother was born?

JI: Yes, my dad was born in January, 1902 and my mother, April, 1908. And they got married on December 27, 1925.

MI: When did they come to Hawaii? How and what were the circumstances?

JI: We left Japan in December, 1930 and arrived in Honolulu on January 8, 1931.

MI: Why did they come to Hawaii?

JI: My mother had a younger sister who was studying to become a minister in Kyoto and my dad would go every month to pay the tuition. Then one of his professors said, oh, do you know of anyone who would go to Hawaii? They need a minister there. So, my dad said no, he doesn't know anyone but what about me? [The professor said that] if you want to go, you have to take a test, so immediately he took a test and passed and decided to go to Hawaii. When he went back to Fukuoka and told his mother that we're all going to Hawaii, she was okay with that. But when they went to apply for the immigration passport and all that, my grandmother and my mother's younger sister couldn't come.

MI: Your mother, your father and you, the three of you came?

JI: My older sister, Megumi.

MI: Four of you came?

JI: Yes.

MI: Where was he assigned, what church?

JI: Puunene, Maui, Puunene Hongwanji.

MI: Then a few years later, she [Tomoko] was born.

JI: But the twin boys were born.

MI: You were the only child when they came here?

JI: No, my sister [Megumi] was here. When she was six, she went away. I was four, that's when she left.

TM: She left when she was six years old.

JI: She was born in 1927.

MI: And she went back [to Japan] for what reason?

JI: Actually, it was because my grandmother wanted her to come and live with her. I know, my mother told me that my dad did not want to send her, but my mother wanted [it], so I guess he couldn't refuse that. My mother told me that for many years, she really thought about my sister, how she's doing, but in front of my dad, she never even said, "*Me, Megumi no me.*"

MI: What does that mean?

JI: It would make my dad so sad so she never did mention that she was missing her too. But you can understand—parent, right?

TM: Didn't *Oto-san* [father] apply for Grandmother and Aunt Itsu, and their entry visa was denied?

JI: Oh, yes, he did, but the immigration law prohibited it. Only the immediate [family], my dad, my mom and the children could come, not mother or sister.

MI: Yes, that was the law.

JI: Yes, it was the law. It had been closed by that time.

MI: What do you remember about growing up on Maui, Puunene?

JI: Well, not too much. I know there was this one girl, Hiroko Funatsu, who used to come and take care of my sister Megumi and me. The only thing I really remember about it is that one day, she took us to take a bath in the community bath. It was so huge and I was only four years old, so I felt like I was going to drown in there. The other thing is that, at Puunene, we used to always go to a picnic at the beach, once a year.

MI: Church picnic?

JI: Yes, church people would go to the picnic and we used to ride on the plantation calaboose or whatever, the way they hauled the cane.

MI: Cane hauler?

JI: We would all be standing there and going to the beach. And the part I remember is that it was very dangerous because it had a lot of kiawe trees and the thorns would be [sticking] out, so we had to be careful not to get hurt. Before my sister went to Japan, my dad took us to Mt. Haleakala and we made snowballs and threw [them] at each other. That's about what I remember about Puunene.

MI: When did the family move [Kauai]?

JI: When I was … that was in 1936. I was seven by that time.

MI: Where did your father serve?

JI: Kilauea Hongwanji, on Kauai.

TM: Mill Camp, there was a mill near the *otera* [Buddhist temple in Puunene].

MI: You lived on the church grounds? What was it like growing up on the Big Island?

JI: Big Island, it's about the same.

TM: Before the Big Island, we went to Kauai.

MI: Oh! What year did you go to Kauai?

TM: After Puunene.

JI: 1936, we stayed on Maui from 1931 to the summer of 1936.

TM: When I was three.

MI: I'm going to ask you about December 7, [1941]. The people on Oahu have different stories because this is where the attack occurred. On the Big Island, that day was important for your family. Do you know how your family learned about the bombing of Pearl Harbor? Was it from the radio?

JI: I think, through the radio.

MI: Remember anything about that, how your parents reacted?

JI: I know my dad, that Sunday morning, he had to go to Hilo because they were all having a ministers' meeting. So, all the ministers were there. When my dad learned about Japan attacking Pearl Harbor, my dad immediately said that we should not be here. We should all go home to our respective temples. So that's when they cut short the meeting and he came home.

MI: At the time, where was your temple on the Big Island?

JI: Papaaloa, Papaaloa Hongwanji.

MI: How long did it take to go back and forth in those days?

JI: About an hour, I think.

TM: In the old days? Before the freeway, it was an hour and fifteen minutes by bus. (Chuckles) Because I rode the bus every Saturday to Hilo for two years for my piano lessons.

MI: Did you folks already know what was happening when he came home, or he came home to tell you folks the story? Do you remember that?

JI: I really don't know. [To TM] Did we know about the war or did Dad come home and tell us?

TM: I think we didn't know until he came home. He told us.

JI: I think so. We didn't listen to the radio.

MI: Do you remember him telling you about the bombing of Pearl Harbor? Was he worried about himself, being a Buddhist priest?

TM: He was worried about all the Japanese that had immigrated. He said, "Now that we're at war, what's going to happen to us Japanese who are here?"

MI: [To JI] And you were not a [Territory of Hawaii] citizen because you were born in Japan.

JI: Yes, but I never really thought about myself being an alien because I came when I was a baby.

MI: Do you remember what happened on that day after he came home?

JI: Yes, we just did the regular things but we had to put a blanket to cover all the windows so that …

MI: The blackout. How about that day, and your father? Do you remember what happened to your father on that day?

JI: Not really.

TM: No, you see on that day, my kid brother fractured his leg. And so, my father was contemplating whether he should take him to the plantation hospital although Mr. Uyeno came over—he did home remedies, he used to massage my father's back—because my father had rheumatism. So, my mom told my brother to call Mr. Uyeno. Mr. Uyeno pulled it in place, and he did a correct job on it, and he made a homemade cast.

MI: How did he know how to do that?

TM: I don't know but he was from Hiroshima and he knew those home remedies.

JI: He was a carpenter, wasn't he?

TM: He told my mother to bring flour, eggs and vinegar. He made a homemade cast, with egg white.

JI: Yes, only the egg white.

TM: And the flour and the vinegar, it smelled terrible until it dried. Then there was no smell, but it was like a cast. [Knocks on the table] My father said, "Should we go to the hospital? Maybe I shouldn't drive. Maybe the cars should not be on the road …" So, he said, "Let's wait and see how tomorrow is, and then I'll take Hiromichi to the plantation hospital."

MI: Which was far away?

TM: Well, no, I think maybe about fifteen minutes by car, but if you walked, quite a way more.

MI: How about your father? What happened to him on that day?

JI: I think he must have been doing a lot of thinking, what would be happening to everybody.

MI: So, he was concerned.

JI: Oh, yes, terribly concerned.

MI: In the family did they do anything, your mother, as far as burning books and things or burying things, anything like that?

JI: No, we didn't do anything. We just worried about my grandmother and all the relatives.

MI: The relatives in Japan.

JI: And my sister in Japan and all the relatives, I guess.

TM: I only remember, when my father came home and he said, "*Nihon to America wa senso*," that means war. And I remember him telling my mother "*Ima kara nihonjin wa do naru no kana*?" He said, "What's going to happen to us Japanese?" So, I think he was concerned, not only about us and the family but about his congregation and the immigrants. My father always thought about others.

JI: One of the duties as a minister, [for] people who didn't go to school too much, they came to Hawaii … so he had to, a lot of times, write letters for those people … in Japanese … to let the Japan families know what the situation was. This is before the war. That was part of his job, to teach Japanese school besides being a minister. He used to write letters for them. And then when people gave birth to children, they wanted to send the information to Japan so they would be registered in the family register.

MI: Now how about him being arrested? When did that happen, remember how it happened?

JI: I think before midnight on that day.

MI: What happened?

JI: The police came. My father told my mother to prepare some—about two or three days of underwear and clothing to change. He even wore his white dress shirt and suit.

MI: So, they gave him time to pack a little suitcase?

JI: Oh, yes, and then he was going into the temple to conduct a service, and the FBI or the police captain asked, "Are you planning to escape?" But he said, "No, no, no." He just wanted to sort of [have] like a funeral for himself because he really thought that that was the last time that he would see all of us. He just told me and my brother right below me and Tomo. The rest were all sleeping, they were little children. So, we went in and then my dad chanted and told us to help our mother because he doesn't know what will happen to him once he's arrested, taken away. That was it.

TM: Actually, he performed his funeral.

JI: Yes, that's what I said.

MI: Before he left.

JI: Yes, he did. That's what he told us.

TM: And so that's what the service was. Later on, he told me that he thought that they were going to just kill him. He kind of knew, and not only him, but all of his colleagues, he thought that once they got in one place, they would line them up and just shoot them down. So that's why he told the FBI agents to sit in the parlor. The Captain S. of the Laupahoehoe Police Department and Kentaro Shikuma who translated—he lived in the house next to the temple—they came to our house. Do you know Dr. Shikuma?

MI: Yes, Craig Shikuma.

TM: K. came and all he had to translate to my father was, "You have to follow them." They didn't give any reason, nothing. Of course, my father knew it was because of the war.

MI: What was Shikuma's profession? Was he [Shikuma] a policeman?

JI: No, he was just a neighbor.

MI: He was a neighbor who could speak English and Japanese.

TM: Yes, so my father just said, "Please sit down." He was in his pajamas. He changed into his suit. He wore his [Buddhist] robes and he woke up her, my brother and me, took us to the temple and he said, "I will now perform my funeral."

MI: And your mother was there also?

JI: Oh, yes.

TM: Of course, my mother was woken up, too. And so, the four of us went into the temple and he said, "I will now perform my funeral." That's why I wrote in my book, in my own eight-year-old mind, I thought my father was dead already. So, I said, "I think our family suffered more than any other Hawaii families because I thought, he was dead. Because he performed his funeral. If he didn't perform a funeral but just said a farewell service or something, then I would not have thought so. I never told anyone but, in my heart, I really thought he was dead.

MI: [To JI] What did you think?

JI: I thought that my father really had the foresight to do this because he knew that this might be the last time that we would be seeing him.

MI: How about your mother?

JI: My mother was a very … she was a very, very strong-minded person and she really …

TM: Stoic.

JI: Yes, in looking back at all our lives … my mother, I truly, truly admire her for what she went through and how she raised us. Each child—we had twelve children—but each one was very precious. Both parents believed that every child was a blessing from Amida Buddha. I used to see my mother prepare everything before the baby is coming. Even [though she] had lots of old clothes to pass down, she would always sew a new set of things for the baby to wear to come home from the hospital. She was a very, very meticulous person, and took excellent care of us. In fact, with twelve children, she never had to supplement milk, from the very beginning to the last, I think, [at] age forty-two when she gave birth to my youngest sister.

But to tell you the truth, when I was born and about two weeks later, when my oldest aunty gave birth to a boy, my cousin, she was not able to nurse him because of some kind of condition that didn't agree with the baby. He would throw it up. The doctor said to try taking other milk, which never agreed with him. My mother told me that my aunty came, 'cause the doctor told her this baby must have a mother's milk or he'll die. So, my aunty came and asked my mother if she could even give only half of the supply. Doesn't have to be all the way, you know, because she knew that my mom had to nurse two

babies. My mom said, if that was not her nephew, she didn't think she could have nursed him because he was all covered with boils.

MI: Who was covered with boils, the baby?

JI: The baby was all bandaged up. Only the eyes, the nose and the mouth [were exposed] so he could breathe. But you know, when he started to drink her milk, he got well. In fact, the thing is that my mother was good at taking care of anything, so there was not even a scar left after he was covered with all those sores.

TM: She really had ample milk. She nursed all of us for one year and at one year, she stopped. (Chuckles)

JI: The thing is, my mother, even when she was busy, she always made sure that … I remember, I don't know when I started to cut my own fingernails, but she would always, on the big double bed, she would sit in the middle and then we would all come to sit on her lap and she would trim all our nails and then, after that, she would clean our ears so [we] got [to] lie on her lap. I just remembered this, but every time when I lie down to have the other side ear cleaned, my nose would be right against her stomach and I would take deep breaths because she would smell so good. But even after she would have the baby and bring the baby home from the hospital, we'd come home from school and we would all go up on the bed and we'd look at the baby and pretty soon, opening his or her mouth wanting to drink milk. So, my mom said, the baby's hungry so she would take out her [breast] to feed the baby. As she did this, we would all be looking at this so we'd get all splattered with the milk. Ummm. (Laughter) The milk is so sweet and good. Then my mother would say, "Okay, open your mouth," and she actually would shoot the milk, squirt it into our mouths...

TM: That's because you were still young, yet. But when Duane was born, we all knew how to be close enough and open our mouths wide, just like little birds. And she would shoot it, ahh! her warm, sweet milk right into our mouths. (Laughter)

JI: She's talking about the youngest brother. I delivered him. I had that experience.

MI: She couldn't get to the doctor?

JI: No, so she went on the double bed and …

TM: Tommy, too. Didn't you deliver Tommy in the car?

JI: I didn't deliver, that was Dad who delivered. I had to step out of the car. Mom was sitting in the front and I was in the back but I stepped out and then my mother gave birth to the baby. Then my dad, naturally they didn't have scissors.

TM: She had no birth contractions.

JI: So, he just wrapped the baby in the blanket and I sat on the floor and carried the baby and we went to the hospital. It was not too far.

MI: Okay, let's get back to December 7. When did you folks find out that he was still alive?

TM: February 15 [1942]. No, one day before, February 14.

MI: Nothing from December 7 to February 14, you didn't know where he was or what was happening?

TM: No.

MI: How did you find out, on February 14, that he was still alive?

TM: I don't know who notified Mom. The FBI? [To JI] Who notified us that we could go and visit him? I don't know who notified us. All I know is, my mom said, "Tomorrow we're going to go and visit your father at Kilauea Military Camp."

MI: This was the first news you had that he was still alive?

TM: I don't know who notified us.

JI: I think, maybe we did know that he was at the military camp, but we were never allowed to go and see him.

TM: I didn't know.

MI: You lived far away from Kilauea.

JI: Oh, yes, it's the volcano place, military. And I knew that he was alive.

TM: I didn't tell anybody, I thought he was dead.

JI: No, he was alive, I know that they were all in a place.

MI: So, you folks went over to see him at Kilauea?

JI: Only when he was going to be sent to the mainland.

MI: So not February 14?

JI: No, in February, that's the first time we were able to go.

MI: That's when you found out that you folks could visit him?

JI: Yes.

MI: Remember going there?

JI: Yes.

TM: Yes.

MI: The whole family went? What was it like when you saw him there?

JI: (Softly) Actually we all cried. (Clears her throat)

MI: What did he look like? Had he lost weight, sick?

JI: No, he looked fine. In fact, my father, he got a nickname as *Sekkyo* Izumi, *sekkyou* means to give sermons. *Sekkyou* is somebody who would give a sermon. *Sekkyou* is his nickname because he would always want to give sermons to all the people in there, Kilauea.

MI: Including the other ministers?

JI: Yes, he was kind of a (Chuckles) … maybe he didn't want to just be idle.

TM: I think … umm, my father … he was, I think maybe, the most popular minister. After the war, I played the organ at the *otera*. I followed him everywhere, when he went village to village because if there was no piano, I had to sing, line by line and he taught even the

gathas [verse of Buddhist scripture] to the three groups, Sunday School, YBA [Young Buddhists Association] and the adults. And if he tells me, "Sing!" I just sang. Nobody said no to my father when we were kids. But anyway, everybody told my father that the reason why we like your sermon is you say the teachings in a way it is in the sutras [scripture]. We don't understand, like if you say *kimiyo muryo junyo rai namo fukashigi ko* ((?)), we don't know what it means. Then he will explain it in layman's language.

MI: In English?

TM: No, no, in those days, it was all Japanese. And after that, even from the newspaper or actual happening or whatever it was, a story, he would bring the appropriate story that fits that teaching so they can see how the effect of what he is teaching will be the result. Everybody understood his sermons. They liked him. But I didn't know about his nickname, Sekkyo Izumi. The nickname I know, I remember, is *Niko-Niko Sensei.*

MI: Which means what?

TM: Smiley teacher, he was always smiling. He was so happy to tell the teachings.

JI: That is … you went way ahead. Because when we left Puunene, Maui, he used to teach Japanese school. Afterwards, the principal wrote to him at Kauai and said that the students still miss you and talk about you and they call you *Niko-Niko Sensei*. He would always be smiling. He was very kind. That's how he got that name, *Niko-Niko Sensei.* That's Mr. Maehara, who was the principal of the Japanese school, [who] wrote and let him know about how everybody missed him.

TM: I only heard that nickname from my mother, when she told me that your father smiles so much and even at funerals, he wanted to put the family at ease, to say that now the deceased is one with Amida Buddha and has no pain. She told him, "Don't smile when you say that, even if you want to comfort them because the family is sad." (Chuckles)

JI: I'll tell you something. My sister and I were four years apart but as I was growing up, my mother always talked to me about things. So, she might have heard [something] from my mother but sometimes what she says is a little different from what I heard originally, when my mother was so much younger. So that, it cannot help.

MI: Yes, we don't expect to get the same story.

JI: When you have a lot of people telling us the same story, the last person is probably not the same as the first person who heard it.

MI: Now, how many times did you visit him at Kilauea?

JI: Only that one time.

MI: One time. Then shortly after that, the group left to come to Oahu. Is that correct?

JI: They went to Sand Island.

MI: You saw him at Kilauea [February 1942]. When was the next time and how much later, that you saw him?

JI: That was about May of 1943, May 3.

MI: Over a year, then.

JI: Yes, when we went to Crystal City, Texas.

MI: That's when you [next] saw him.

JI: More than a year [later], December of 1941 till May of 1943.

MI: You saw him in February of 1942. Now what's happening to the family without him? How did you folks support yourselves? You were living on the church grounds at the time? They allowed you to stay there?

JI: Oh, yes, but the thing is...

MI: How many children at that time?

JI: Six.

MI: How were things without your father, from December 7? How did your life change?

JI: My mother used to teach Japanese school at Kilauea, Kauai, and at Papaaloa, Big Island. She always had an infant or a little child that wasn't going to school, so we had to have a helper to watch.

MI: So, she worked.

JI: She did work. My mother worked. This is what I don't remember, at the age when the war broke out and we couldn't have the helper. Until then, I wasn't sure who went to do the marketing.

TM: *Oka-san* [mother] cut *Oto-san*'s [father's] *koromo* [Buddhist robe] and resewed it in for Taka-chan's, to fit Taka-chan.

JI: I didn't know who did the marketing so … and the cooking, I think it was the maid who did the cooking most of the time. I don't recall my mother doing much cooking. So, after December 7, 1941, we couldn't hire a maid, and there was no need for a maid anyway, my mother was at home.

MI: Once your father was gone, she continued with her work, to support the family?

JI: No, no, they couldn't teach Japanese school and the baby was still little.

MI: So how did the family support itself?

JI: So okay, this is what I heard. There was a member that went around to the other members' homes and asked for donations. I guess that it was a little bit enough for us to buy food and everything. 'Cause, nobody was working at the time.

MI: But this was for a year and three months?

JI: Until we left in August of 1942. So that's eight months.

MI: So, for those eight months …

JI: I don't know how much money there was in the bank. But my brother had to go to the bank and somebody was kind enough to … one of the officers … to let him withdraw the money, because my dad wasn't there.

MI: What happened in August of 1942?

JI: Oh, the FBI came and said that your husband will be sent to Japan as an exchange for a prisoner, as a prisoner. So, he said, "What do you want to do? Remain in Hawaii or go to Japan?" So, my mom said, "We have to go to Japan because we have no income."

MI: There was no communication between your mother and your father? It was through the FBI? They talked to her and she gave her answer to the FBI?

JI: Yes, she decided to.

MI: Did she know where he was on the mainland, in August?

JI: Yes, I think we might have received a letter. I'm not too sure.

MI: You don't have any of those letters?

JI: No, but everything was censored.

MI: What did the letters look like?

JI: He would write in Japanese.

MI: It was in Japanese?

JI: Yes, to my mother. He didn't write to any of us.

MI: When you say censored, what do you mean?

JI: The government, they look at the ….

MI: Did you notice that parts of the letter were cut out?

JI: I think maybe they had certain things that they weren't supposed to discuss.

MI: Did he write just to your mother, or did he write to the children?

JI: I'm sure that he asked my mother how the children are doing. But we were going to school.

TM: I know that mom did home services. I didn't know them, but this lady at the temple, every time she sees me, she tells me, "I'll never forget your mother performed my grandmother's funeral."

MI: So, your mother used to perform the church services.

TM: My mother was born in a temple. And my older brother was trained to be a minister. So, he and my mother conducted home services. But the good thing is, in a country temple, the congregation all have gardens and they have chickens, so they brought vegetables and eggs and things. We just needed to buy meat and onions, that kind of stuff. So, it was very helpful.

MI: They chose to continue these Buddhist services during the war.

JI: Yes.

TM: After my father left, yes.

MI: They didn't close down the churches?

TM: I don't recall people coming to the temple openly, but when they had memorial services, my brother and my mom went to their homes.

JI: For funerals.

MI: So, the FBI came, they told you what the plans were for your father and they asked if the family wanted to join the father and your mother said yes. Then what happened? How much time did you have to prepare?

JI: Only two days.

MI: Two days from the time the FBI came, you had to leave? You remember those two days?

TM: Two days' notice.

JI: Oh, yes, my mom and me, we had to stay up practically all night. We hardly had any sleep and she and I were the ones that packed the clothes and …

TM: Two ladies came to help and then, my mom and Junko, the four of them packed.

MI: Remember how much you could take with you?

JI: Two hundred dollars.

MI: How about things, clothes and things?

JI: Clothes? I'm not too sure.

MI: One suitcase per person?

JI: I remember that we were allowed 2 suitcases. It must have been enough so that … I suppose the trip to Japan must have taken very long, in those days, from New York. They might have gone all around, a different route, where it was safe for people to be going to Japan.

MI: When you left the Big Island, in your mind, what was the plan? What was supposed to happen? You were supposed to come to Oahu first?

JI: Yes, we went to the immigration.

MI: Pick up some other people from Oahu?

JI: I think, yes. We all came together. There were only about forty-two families altogether that went away from all the different …

TM: You know that picture on the stairway of North Carolina? That many people's fathers were taken [on] December 7, I think, not only the ministers, Japanese school teachers and like M.K. 's father, he owned a bookstore in Honolulu. So, I think what happened was they got some alien immigrants from every island.

MI: The leaders.

TM: Yes, and then we all met in Honolulu on the ship. From there on, we were all together till the end, except for the families that went back to Japan during the war.

MI: Do you remember the trip, going over to the mainland?

JI: Yes, long.

MI: What do you remember about the trip?

JI: Fortunately, I was one that didn't get seasick. Everybody else got sick so I had to go and get whatever they could eat, apple or juices.

MI: And bring it back to them?

JI: Yes.

MI: The family was able to stay together on the trip?

JI: Yes, they were small yet, so yes, but coming back, the boys would have to stay with my father.

TM: To me, the ship we went [over] in was a luxury liner. And coming back was on the naval ship. But going, although M. said it was a naval ship, I don't think it was because I never saw a sailor and there was a man ringing the bell on the decks. I was on the deck every day because I was throwing up. My mom pretty much didn't care whether I went alone to the deck because she knew that I wouldn't jump into the ocean or anything. So, I would just hang on the rail and [throw up] but then, as soon as the bell man rang, "Mealtime, mealtime"—Terufumi-san remembers that, he said, "I wonder if it was a naval ship." We would eat and then I would go back up on deck. But later on, years later, Dr. Scott Lawson told me, "Tomo, it's not the movement of the ship that makes you sick, it's the smell of the diesel that makes you nauseated." And in those days the smell was so strong, the diesel (chuckles).

MI: And then you got on a train and you went to …

TM: San Francisco, then on a ferry to Oakland.

MI: Did you expect, when you got on the train at Oakland, that you were going to see your father when the train … [reached its destination?]

JI: No, I knew that we were going to be meeting in New York.

MI: In New York was the plan?

JI: Yes.

MI: But you never got to New York.

JI: No, we went all the way but then they said the repatriation, that's what they called it, wasn't going to happen. So, they sent us …

MI: This was while you were on the train?

JI: No, I think it was just about when we reached there. We knew that we were not going to Japan. That they're going to send us …

TM: I thought that when we got off the train, we were going to see him. But he wasn't there.

JI: No, I thought that we would see him when we all got onto the boat [in New York]. Anyway, we had to go to North Carolina. And they said they weren't ready to do the exchange.

TM: Did you know when we were in North Carolina, where he was? Back in Oklahoma or Louisiana? You knew that?

JI: Yes, I knew because, I told you, we used to get letters.

MI: You were getting letters from …

TM: I never knew that.

JI: My father and mother wrote to each other. But all those days …

MI: And also, there were other people to talk to, in the group.

JI: Yes, censored. I know that mom wrote. Dad would, if he could write, I know he would write. He's a writer, my dad.

TM: I never knew that. Nobody told me that he wrote or anything. All I knew was that he wasn't in North Carolina and how dare they don't tell us where he is.

MI: You couldn't read Japanese, though. Could you read Japanese?

TM: Could I read Japanese? Well, I could read but I learned the *kanji* in camp.

JI: I don't think she could have read the letters because my father would write *kanji* and all that and she was just a little child, elementary school. You were what?

TM: Actually, I became nine [while] in North Carolina.

JI: But during the time that we were in North Carolina, we didn't go to school or anything.

MI: So, you were at which hotel or facility, initially?

JI: It was the Asheville hotel, Grove Park Inn and then later, we went to another hotel.

MI: And all this time, as a group, you stayed together as a group just waiting from day to day, not knowing what was going to happen.

JI: Yes, we didn't know. It took kinda long. Seven months that we waited. It was a long time.

MI: How long were you at the first hotel?

JI: A short while.

TM: Well, I don't know what you thought, but when we left Ashville, I thought they were going to take us to see *Oto-san*. Then we ended up in another hotel [Assembly Inn in Montreat, North Carolina].

JI: The thing is, the second hotel, we were there when it was winter because I remember that there was a big pond in front. It was like a lake and the students used to skate on that.

MI: What students? From the community?

TM: Montreat, North Carolina.

JI: University, I guess, university students.

MI: Did you folks get to skate?

JI: No, we couldn't. We just could see.

TM: They talked to us. The girls talked to us. You know me, I talk to anybody. (Chuckles)

JI: As I said, I never, ever got to play. All the time, from the time that war broke out, I could not go and play at all.

MI: But your younger sister could play?

JI: Yes.

TM: See, I had to watch the kids, so I would take the kids with me and see these girls swimming. We would run to the place and stay lakeside and they'd come. And we could see this building across the lake. I asked the girls, "Did you come from there?" "Oh, that's a girls' college, all girls' college." Some of them were really pretty. And they would hang over there and then we would chat. (Chuckles)

MI: So, what would you be doing while she's taking care of the kids?

JI: I would be washing clothes and taking care of all of my younger brothers and sisters during mealtime. My mother didn't want to go to the dining room so she would stay in the room with the baby.

MI: So, while you're doing these motherly things, what is your mother doing?

JI: She didn't do the laundry. I was doing it.

TM: I don't know where she brought it from, but she would carry the ironing board in our room, her [JI], my sister. I never saw my mother doing anything except maybe the baby, like you said.

JI: Actually, my mother left Puunene, Maui with her [TM]. She was one year old and my brother above her was three. I was five and my father said, oh, you have to stay back, you cannot go with mom because we don't know when she's coming home and in September, you're having to enter first grade. So, I stayed with my dad.

A couple of months later, I got really sick from a cold because I used to go with my dad and we didn't come home until ten o'clock or so. A five-year old child wouldn't stay awake that long. So, I caught a bad cold, which turned to pneumonia. I was supposed to go into the Kula Sanitarium. My dad went to another minister's place, Rev. Saigusa, because his wife was going to Japan. So, he said, "How are you doing?" "Fine, but the only thing is, my daughter is sick and has pneumonia so I've got to take her to the Kula Sanitarium tomorrow." He said, "Don't do that." "Why?" "Because once she goes in there, she'll never be able to be discharged unless she puts on a lot of weight." And I was such a skinny child then. "What if she doesn't get fat? You're going to have to leave her there all the time."

So, my dad said, "What shall I do?" "Why don't you send her to Japan?" Rev. Saigusa's son was living in Japan and Mrs. Saigusa was going to visit their son. That's the reason why my father went to visit. So [he said] "Okay." He had no choice, either put me in the hospital or Japan where my mother was. So that's what happened.

Before we came back in November, my aunty, the youngest sister of my mother, said, "You should take Megumi home too. Don't leave her here. She should be with the family." But when my mother told her mother that, my grandmother said, "Oh, if you take her, she's going to feel so lost. So, you have to leave Junko."

Here I'm listening to all this conversation. "Gee, I don't want to stay in Japan." My sister said, "I don't want to go back to Hawaii. I want to stay in Japan." So, from that point on, I was thinking thank heavens now I can go back to Hawaii. I knew that I was able to come back to my dad. I remembered that feeling of how happy and relieved I

was, and that I got to help my mother because my sister didn't come back and I became the oldest, then.

MI: I see.

JI: That's the kind of, I guess, thing that made me feel not to complain. I never complained about having to do all the work or doing the grocery shopping and cooking for everybody.

MI: How many months [were you] in the hotels before you were sent to Crystal City?

JI: Seven months.

MI: Do you remember seeing your father? Was he there when you arrived at Crystal City?

JI: Oh, yes, he was there. They all had to work hard, clearing the place.

MI: Do you remember seeing him when you arrived there? He was waiting there for you folks?

TM: All the men were. All the fathers were there, where the bus stopped.

MI: As a group, they were waiting for the bus and one by one, the families got together. He already had a place for the family, [an] assigned place?

JI: My dad was already … We had a duplex.

MI: How did he look when you saw him?

JI: The same! (Laughs)

MI: So, he was well-nourished and …

JI: Oh, yes.

TM: (Softly) Yes.

MI: Was he angry, was he sad? Was he happy to see you?

JI: [He was happy to see us.] My dad? You know, I don't remember ever being scolded by my dad, even as a child. He was such a kind father, super kind. My mother was a disciplinarian. She would discipline us. (Pause) She lectured us, just like the way she was lectured by her mother. My grandmother was really a very educated person, very good at sewing. She used to sew kimonos and everything. But my dad was very impressed with her because when he got married, my grandmother could chant the most difficult sutra, which most ministers would have a hard time, but she could. My mother told me that my grandmother knew many sutras by the time she was age three. So, she was very smart.

MI: What was life like at Crystal City?

JI: Very routine. (Chuckles) We had lots of teachers because all the educated ministers and school teachers were there.

MI: So, for you, it was going to school during the day, for all the children, actually.

JI: We had to, but we would come home and eat lunch.

MI: What did your parents do? Did they have assignments or jobs in the camp?

JI: Yes, my father was a … he had to teach a class.

MI: He taught Japanese language.

JI: Elementary, Japanese school.

MI: And what did your mother do?

JI: My mother was home, taking care of babies. We had a new baby, born in Texas.

MI: So, you're there as a family in this camp. Did your father seem the same to you or was he angry at the government?

JI: No, my father was never angry.

MI: Did you talk as a family about going back to Japan?

JI: Well, he told us that we should go and study Japanese, go to the Japanese school instead of the English school.

MI: Because?

JI: Because we were going to go to Japan and that way, we won't be too behind when we go to Japan to school there.

MI: So even though, when you were in North Carolina, they told you all of this [exchange] was cancelled, when you got to Crystal City, he still thought that you could go to Japan?

JI: Yes, yes, that was just a delay.

TM: Yes, that was the purpose, to take us.

MI: Yes, but already, when you got to North Carolina, the plans were changed.

TM: No.

JI: We were just waiting for … to continue on.

TM: If the war had lasted longer, probably all of us, eventually, would have been sent back. But only two ships went. And before the third ship could go, the war ended. (So, until then, those of us that were not repatriated to the Axis countries, remained in the camp until released.)

MI: So [some of] these people from Crystal City went to New York and got on the ship and they went back to Japan.

JI: I figured that's where they departed from. But the thing is, I don't know how they selected those families that were sent. Our family's name never came up. If they had said, "Izumi has to go," we would have to just pack up and go.

TM: In fact, I remember that there was a Spanish embassy in the camp, because they were neutral and you could take your grievances to the Spanish embassy. But I learned later from Jane Jarboe Russell's book, *The Train to Crystal City*, that there was a Spanish embassy in the camp. Have you read that book?

MI: Yes.

TM: I learned from there that the Spanish embassy had a place in the camp. *Otoh-san* told me that he wrote to the Spanish Embassy to ask why we were omitted from the list, twice.

So, when we were omitted the second time, he said he wrote, but he never got an answer. I don't know if he wrote, or he went to the office—I thought he wrote because he's always writing—but from the book that I read, inside Crystal City there was a Spanish embassy who heard from everybody as a neutral country, to tell our grievances to America.

MI: Two groups sailed [to Japan]. Was the camp being emptied out in the time that you were there? Or were more people being brought in?

JI: No, in fact, they were brought.

TM: More came in and two shiploads went out.

JI: Actually, from Hawaii, of the original forty-two families, were Okano *Sensei* folks the only ones?

TM: Okano *Sensei* was sent back to Japan … And after they came back and they had the Moiliili Hongwanji, Okano *Sensei* used to come to the Betsuin. I used to play the organ every Sunday. He knew me from camp. He always talked to me. So, the first time I saw him after he came back to Hongwanji, he said, "Tomo-chan, come, come, come." So, he took me to the corner of the office and he started to pull up his shirt. He said he wanted to show me his wounds. I don't know if [they were] from bullets or whether it was from hand grenades or what, but he had about three wounds on his abdomen and he told me that the men eighteen and older were dropped off at Saipan and they were handed guns without any basic training. Even if they were ministers, they had to fight in the Japanese army. [Later the interviewee learned that it was Singapore and not Saipan, where the men were dropped off to fight.]

MI: The men from Crystal City?

TM: Yes, and he got wounded. But the second shipload, maybe because they were planning to, but even the young boys, the mothers and the fathers were separated, so Japan sent two ships. That time they went to Singapore because L.M., his wife is in this picture. She was in this picture. She was two or four years old.

MI: What is her name?

TM: D.M., she's D. Masaki. She had an older brother and her mother and her father were with the same church as Clifford [Miyamoto]'s father [Haleiwa Jodo-*shu*'s Rev. Miyamoto]. My classmate, Stanley Yonamine, bought my book … and he told me, D. wants to meet you because she was in Crystal City. I said, "Okay." She happened to be a Masaki, from Jodo Shu. Her father was Jodo-*shu*. The first thing she told me was, "Tomo, I enjoyed your book but did you know my father? You seem to have a very good memory. Did you know my father?" I said, "No, I'm sorry I didn't."

MI: Who was her father?

TM: Reverend Masaki, from Jodo-s*hu*.

MI: Jodo-*shu* Haleiwa?

TM: No, Honolulu, I think. The pink building by the highway. So, I said, "I'm sorry I didn't know your father because you folks were Jodo Shu and we're Hongwanji." But I said, maybe I know somebody who might know your father. So, I called Clifford [Miyamoto].

Clifford said, "Oh yes, I remember him." D. said, "I didn't know my father, but my mother was so sad because the ship that my brother and my father were put in, the men were separated from us, got torpedoed and it sank." And I only learned that this year from her. I said, "What, it sank!?"

MI: They never made it back to Japan.

TM: She said, "I think we were supposed to go back to Japan. I don't know why Japan was taking us to Singapore and because the ship was on another route, that's why they happened to torpedo my father's ship." And that's the first time I heard about it! They were in Singapore for quite a long time.

JI: But they were on the same ship.

TM: They separated all the ladies and the girls and the fathers and the men. I only learned that from D. this year.

JI: I thought they were sent together? I never knew they were separated from the men.

TM: That's why, I didn't know, until I met her. [TM and JI discuss the families on the same voyage.]

MI: At the end of the war, your parents made a decision to come back to Hawaii instead of going back to Japan.

JI: That's right.

TM: But that was decided in December. The war ended in August. In early December, they called the parents. I remember when they came home. I don't know if you remember. For the first time, I saw *Oto-san* and *Oka-san* fighting in front of us, in Texas.

MI: What were they fighting about?

TM: My mom chose to go back to Japan to find out if her mother and my sister were alive.

MI: Go back directly to Japan?

TM: Yes, the government said, "You can choose to go back where you came from or you can choose to go back to Japan. We will send you back to wherever you choose." But I remember that my father told me that the American citizens who were eighteen years old, if they chose to go with their parents to Japan, they would never let them come back. But the children under eighteen, of course they should go wherever their parents go, but if they're American citizens, they can come back. But [those] eighteen and older, who chose, can never come back to this country again. That's what I heard about it.

JI: It's not true, though. They came back, like the Fukudas. They were in Japan, but they came back, a lot of people chose to.

TM: Anyway, that's what they were told.

JI: Actually, the reason why my father said that we have to come back, is that our family was nine people. He said Japan lost the war and we don't know how the food condition is. With a big family, what if we go and we have nothing to eat? Then we're all going to starve to death. So, he said, it's better to come back to Hawaii. I'll tell you something. We never, ever lacked food, even at the hotel or at the internment camp. America

provided lots of food for us. So, we never suffered, but in Japan, I guess they were all starving.

MI: Did you ever hear your father tell this to your mother? And what would she say?

JI: No, my mother had to give in to my dad.

TM: My father said, why don't we go back to Hawaii because it's closer to Japan. We don't know if Japan actually lost the war. Bishop Fujii went to the office, he heard it in English, he translated it and told us, but the radio is American radio. A lot of people that chose to go back to Japan went for two reasons. This I found out from the people in Los Angeles. [JI excuses herself.] One was that the fathers did not want to stay in a country that humiliated and treated them inhumanely. The other was they couldn't believe that Japan lost the war and they chose to go back. My father said to my mother, I remember distinctly, he said, "Yes, I also want to know if *Oka-san* and Megumi are alive, but we can find out from the Red Cross." You see, my father was more knowledgeable about those things. "We can find out from the Red Cross if they're alive. Let's go back to Hawaii. If Japan did really lose the war, let's send food if they are alive. Let's send food from Hawaii. And if they won, Hawaii is closer to Japan than Texas. So, let's go home and find out the truth. But if you really want to go home, I will take the children and you go [to Japan] yourself." And of course, Kat-chan was a baby! So, my mom gave in and came home with us.

MI: [JI returns.] Okay, let's continue. The family comes back to Hawaii. Do you remember coming back to Hawaii?

JI: Yes.

MI: You came to Oahu and from here, you went back to the Big Island. What was it like when you got back to the Big Island, as far as the community? Did you just fit in? Did they treat you differently?

JI: I did not fit in.

MI: Why didn't you fit in?

JI: Because I lost all those years of mingling with people with a regular life.

MI: How many years was it from the time you left until you actually got back to the Big Island?

JI: I was thirteen and then I was sixteen and a half [when I returned]. So, I was lacking in my social [skills] … she [TM] had no trouble going back into the flow. Take for instance, the friends that I had before I left. They would tell me, "Oh, let's go to the gym and watch the basketball game," but I was so embarrassed not to know what basketball was or how it was played. So, I would make an excuse.

MI: You didn't have that in Crystal City?

JI: No, I never participated in anything except maybe Girl Scouts because I was too busy.

MI: How old were you and in what grade were you when you got back to the Big Island?

JI: I had to start at seventh grade and I was over sixteen years old.

MI: So, you should have been in what grade?

JI: I should have been …

MI: Like tenth grade?

JI: About that. I didn't even want to talk to my classmates, who were just like babies to me.

MI: So, it was hard for you.

JI: It was hard for me and I would say, "Oh, I have to stay home and help my mom, watch the babies, my brother, sister or whatever".

MI: They didn't recognize that you were ahead of the other students? Or were you ahead of the other students?

JI: Oh, yes, I was.

MI: But they forced you into this class?

JI: Yes, I had to go to seventh grade and soon after, they put me in eighth grade and the principal said, at the end of the school year, he said "We cannot let you go any further because you need to go to the ninth grade to go into high school." But at that time, I had learned in Japanese, algebra, geometry, biology and even was going into physics. Because in the Crystal City Japanese school, as I said, there were so many educated teachers that each one would teach only one subject.

MI: These were all Japanese who were internees.

JI: Yes.

MI: From the internee population they selected out the teachers who could teach.

JI: Yes, they would choose their most favorite. Even our composition or social studies or anything, they're all different teachers. We have so many different teachers.

MI: How many years before you were able to catch up with your old classmates?

JI: That's why I said, I always was behind three years because I graduated at twenty-one.

MI: So, they didn't advance you.

JI: No.

TM: Now, I remember, when the new principal came, Mr. Harry Chuck. He called all the Izumi children over and he told my brother Taka and her that high school is too important to miss, to put you in your right level. So, I'm sorry I'm going to put you both in the ninth grade? Yes, and I was in fourth grade, twelve years old, with these [students] that were three years younger than me. And Mr. Chuck said to me and my kid brother below me, [that] the plantation manager's wife teaches English to her children during summer. I'm going to ask her to include the both of you only to study English. And I'm going to put you one year behind. You can skip the fifth and sixth grade and from fourth grade, go to seventh grade. And my brother, too, was one year below his level of grade.

MI: So, you two could skip grades, but they couldn't skip grades.

JI: Yes.

TM: I heard Mr. Chuck telling them that high school is too important to miss and jump, so you should start in the ninth grade.

JI: No, this was a different principal. Mr. Chuck came afterwards but Mr. Ferdun was his name.

TM: Yes, Clarence Ferdun.

JI: He told me that after I finished eighth grade, he said, you cannot skip. You have to go through ninth grade and get your ninth-grade diploma in order to go to high school. So that was it. Nobody questioned it.
Another thing that happened to me was when I went from first grade at Puunene Elementary School to the second grade at Kilauea Elementary School. At Puunene Elementary School, you learn to write [cursive] script in the third grade. When I was in the first day of second grade, the teacher gave us a spelling test and I printed it. She sent me back to the first grade to learn to write script. I remember repeating the first grade, so I had to help the teacher with all the arithmetic. You know, when I went to third grade, it was so sad because I said, "Why didn't somebody speak up for me because my parents only speak Japanese?" If the teacher said, "Yes, your child has to go back to being a first grader," they never argued.

MI: So, for you, it was very difficult, coming back.

JI: Every time we went, from island to island, I lost my friends.

MI: More so, when you came back from Crystal City because you were much older than the other children.

JI: Yes.

MI: You didn't have a lot of friends to play with.

JI: No, so as I said, they would come ask me in the evening, to go and watch basketball games. I would make excuses and after I started to go to school, I said, "I wish they would ask me," but I guess my pride was preventing me from saying, "Can I join you folks?" So, I never did.

MI: How about your parents? Did they feel comfortable when they came back or were they treated differently? Were they looked at differently? Or they just went back to the church and the congregation came back?

JI: Yes. My dad was always hard working. He had the nicest personality and I think everybody liked him. My mom used to say, "Why do you take blame for something you didn't do?" He said, "Well, because this way, have more peace among them."

MI: What did she mean by that, "Why do you take blame for something?" What was she talking about?

JI: Oh, you know. Sometimes there's this friction among members and instead of being the one to say "Oh, you're the one that is wrong or right or wrong," you know, he would just try to say that … maybe take the blame for this problem occurring. He solved the problem but he would not make the other person who was wrong say you're wrong.

MI: This was about his work, it wasn't about being in internment or anything?

JI: No, no. My father, when he came back and when there were problems, he always was the one to take blame for anything and try to make everybody get along. So that's how he was.

MI: So basically, both of your parents were just like their old selves when they came back from this experience.

JI: Well, I don't think they resented anything because it wasn't … it just happened that way.

TM: My father always said, even in his sermons to the congregation, he said, "What happens to you, you are the cause. Don't resent others." So, he told me when I would ride with him to the villages and he would say, even the fact that we were taken, first of all, because I was Japanese and I was an alien. He later became a citizen after that, because he wanted to vote for [George] Ariyoshi [first Japanese American governor of a state]. So, he got naturalized. (Chuckles) But anyway, he said that because he was a Buddhist minister … because he was Japanese, because he was a Buddhist minister, and all the Buddhist ministers were taken, that is his karma. If he were just a plain farmer, maybe we would not have been in this predicament. He even told me, if somebody did bad things to me, don't resent them because you are the cause because you are receiving this unpleasantness. You are the cause. That's why you receive it.

MI: How do you feel about that?

TM: Oh, I feel that that's very true! Maybe I heard it from the time I was a little girl. I believe it! And when you really stop to think about it, okay, now one of the first things I realized truly that's true is he said, "Sometimes you feel not nice toward somebody and they did nothing to you. Or somebody did something you don't know why, in your previous life you are receiving it now. [I remember that] the Board of Health (chuckles) had a lady that would come to the ER [emergency room] … and I had to get the charts ready for her. She was a nice lady, but I didn't want to help her in the worst way and I couldn't understand it. She did nothing to me! And that really hit home at that time. I was grown, I had children and I was working already. I said, "Oh, boy, that's why *Otoh-san* said don't resent people." (Chuckles).

MI: [to JI] Let's get back to you. Tell me about your life now. You stayed in school, graduated at age twenty-one. What did you do with your life after that?

JI: I worked. When I graduated in June on a Friday night, the following day I went with Mr. Terada who had a business, a soda company. My mother asked him if he could take me to Hilo, Big Island, to find a job. I went with him to this restaurant called Moto's Inn. The owners were Okumoto and Idemoto so they took the M-o-t-o. The lady interviewed me and said, "Okay, we'll hire you. You're going to work in the fountain, making milkshakes and what not and also do the cashiering." So immediately Mr. Terada took me to a store that sold uniforms. I bought two sets of uniforms on a Saturday. On Sunday, I was able to go home. On Monday, I had to go to Hilo. I had the evening shift, afternoon to ten, from Monday through Saturday, and I could come home on Sunday.

MI: So, you lived in Hilo.

JI: They provided me with a room to stay in the basement. Every night I cried because at twenty-one, (chuckles) I missed my family! We were such a big family so in one bedroom, we put two double beds together and all slept like sardines. [Both JI and TM

chuckle] Only my brother, right below me, had a separate place to sleep because he was older. My father said that he cannot sleep with all the girls.

TM: They built that downstairs for him, for my brother.

MI: How many years did you do this?

JI: Actually, it was only a month and a half that I was working at this soda fountain. I thought that the soda fountain was like a bar. I never went to order anything from there, so everything was new. I didn't know a milkshake or an ice cream sundae, so I had to learn everything. Anyway, after working there [for] more than a month, this neighbor was getting married. She was a secretary at the Laupahoehoe Sugar Company for the personnel manager. She said, "Why don't you go and apply, because I'm going to be leaving." I took the test. Instead of being hired as the personnel manager's secretary, another position opened up, the Laupahoehoe Sugar Company manager's secretary job, so I got hired as his secretary, for which I was very grateful.
I had just graduated from Laupahoehoe High but from the time I was in the tenth grade, I had taken commercial subjects. Also, I took all the academics so that I could go to college. I took the university test and I qualified, accepted. But I knew that I had to prepare myself in case I had to go to work, because my brother was graduating [at] the same time. Naturally my father couldn't afford to send two people to school so I chose to work.

MI: How long did you work there?

JI: I worked there from July of 1950 to August 1952.

MI: Then what did you do?

JI: I came to Honolulu because in March of 1951, my father was transferred to the Honolulu Betsuin, Honpa Hongwanji. I remained [in Laupahoehoe] because my dad obtained a loan from a friend, eight hundred dollars, to pay the community store for the purchases we had the prior month and he said [asked] if I could remain to pay for that loan. So, he and I went to this friend's house and I signed the promissory note that my father had prepared. From April, I went every month, walking about two miles, to pay fifty dollars a month. Some months I was able to pay a hundred dollars. It took me that long to pay eight hundred. As soon as the loan was paid, I came to Honolulu. That's what happened.

MI: What did you do here?

JI: I got a job as an installment loan manager's secretary at the main branch of Bank of Hawaii until I got married in 1954 and two years later, I had my first baby. When I got pregnant, I went to take a test at the [Honolulu] City and County and I went to work in the Budget and Finance office, doing clerical work. Somebody went on maternity leave, so in the meantime, I worked until that person came back. That was the end of February in 1956. Two months later, I gave birth to my son.

MI: When you look back on this story, how do you feel about what happened to your family, what happened to you, especially? How it changed your life, this whole …

JI: Actually, I wanted to be a nurse.

MI: Would you say, because of this, that you were not able to become a nurse?

JI: Well, maybe, I might have. When I graduated at twenty-one, there was a teacher who taught algebra and geometry. She told me that I'm going to help you to go to school. You want to go to nursing school, I'll get a scholarship for you. So, I said, I appreciated her offer but I said, "No, I have to work to send my brother to school." But I did get the acceptance letter from the University of Hawaii. I got assigned a big sister. I even remember her name. But I didn't go.

MI: How do you feel about how this thing affected your family?

JI: It happened and I accepted it, but I think that having those years to study Japanese [at Crystal City] has helped me tremendously, later in life. Now I go to church every Sunday and I prefer to listen to Buddhist sermons in Japanese, rather than English.

MI: And you understand.

JI: Yes, I understand completely what they're saying. I have a friend who stopped going to Japanese school when she was young, when the war broke out. She and I, same age and I could see the difference. She's a very educated person, with a master's degree and everything, being a principal at one time too, counselor and teaching school. We are really good friends, respect each other a lot and care. I'm still grateful for the time that I could study Japanese because now I understand more, appreciate [it]. I think, to me, my life has been guided by all the Buddhist teachings. I really feel grateful for the wonderful parents that I had, such loving parents, and I have lots of brothers and sisters and having been the oldest in Hawaii, I think I was very lucky because I was able to take care of my parents until they passed away. And being the oldest, that much longer I spent with my parents.

Also, I was very grateful that my oldest boy told me that, "Mom, we are the luckiest of the Izumi grandchildren because we were the first born and we knew *ojii-chan* and *obah-chan*, grandparents, while they were still young." And all the way until they passed away, they came to my house every weekend. I picked them up from Aiea, from 1976, and took them to church, had them eat dinner and then took them home. This is what I did. When my father and mother had to go to the hospital from a stroke or anything, I never sent them back to my brother until they were well enough, about two or three months. I kept them at my home, which is why I feel very grateful that I had all the hardships or whatever. I think there were more people who suffered during that period. And I'm grateful for the big family, brothers and sisters that I had because I don't remember ever fighting with my sister. Although, when we're older, and she doesn't listen to me, then I would get upset with her and I won't talk to her, then she would say, "Please, Jun-chan please, I'm sorry."

MI: Let me ask her, now. [To TM] Your turn. Looking back on your life, how do you feel about the Crystal City experience? What it did to you, your life? How do you feel when you think about this story, what you folks had to go through?

TM: Well, one of the first things I realized after coming back to Papaaloa—I was twelve years old—my mom said that since she [JI] did a lot to help in the house, the laundry was my job. So, every day, coming home from school, at twelve years old, I had to do the laundry by hand for a family of nine. (Chuckles) And diapers—my mom would say, "You have to rinse the diapers four times so that the baby doesn't get diaper rash." She wanted me to boil the sheets once a week on the kerosene stove. I remember she gave

me a fat guava stick to turn it around. I don't know why I didn't get burned, because the sheet was so hot! I had to lift it up and put it into the bucket, one by one and carry it, because the wet sheet was heavy. Inside my heart, I felt, "What did she [her sister] go through for us?" That's the first time I appreciated her, when I did housework.

All I did [before] was babysit and knit, but looking back, I felt satisfaction when I saw [my] siblings wearing the things that she made me knit, because it was so cold on the mainland. But when I was twelve, I realized what suffering she went through. And that's when I really told myself, "I don't remember seeing her play, even in camp!" I just went off to play. I made friends with mainland people and went to their homes and everything. I went to birthday parties.

What we went through as a family—how did she do it! We never had dirty clothes. I don't know where she got the vacuum cleaner to vacuum our hotel rooms. She took us to the cafeteria, three meals, and chose what we should eat. She would get my mother's food and [food for] the lady across from our room because she had two babies. She would go up and down, up and down, carry the three meals and take the dirty dishes back. At that time, I just took it for granted that maybe she was supposed to do that! But that was the biggest realization of how much she suffered.

When I had to do the laundry for the nine of us, gradually, I still ran away to play in between and my kid sister would say, Mama said come home! (Chuckles]) I didn't care if I got scolded. If I got a chance, I disappeared and I went to play, even for half an hour or one hour. And I felt satisfied to go back and finish the laundry.

All my friends would go to the movies to whichever one they wanted, but we could go once a month. I would look at the clippings on the theater door, taken from the movie magazines, I'd say, "Oh, I'm going to go to this movie this month." I would go home and tell my mother, "Mark the calendar, that's the day I'm going to the movies." I don't think she did because on that day, I'd tell all my girlfriends, so they'd come down from Kihalani and we [could] go and sit together in the movies. And that day, I'd come home from school, so happy, and I'm doing the laundry and getting ready, and my mom said, "Where are you going?" I'd say, "I'm going to the movies." She said, "Oh, tonight, two families are coming for memorial services and you have to serve tea." Tea? That's so unfair, you know. But she never allowed back talk.

So, all of that financial difficulty we went through until my dad could buy a washing machine. But it only washed, I still had to rinse. But the sheets got lighter and things dried faster because it had a wringer. The water would be all washed out. With my little hands, you know how to *shiboru* [wring] the sheets? She used to help me, though, when I had to get the sheets out of the tub from the stove.

MI: So, it was a hard, hard life.

TM: Yes, and she did the cooking. Later on, when I was about fifteen or sixteen, because I ran away a lot, I ate some meals at the [other] families' homes. They didn't mind feeding me because I was my father's kid. And I would eat something delicious and [ask], "How did you make that?" I would come home and I would cook it for them. But, other than that, I never cooked. She did everything.

But I took care of the babies. I took them to their well-baby clinic, and because my mom said I heard [understood] the instructions, I had to sterilize the bottles, make the formulas, scrape the apples and make apple juice and things like that. And I had to feed them pablum, Karo in the milk; all those things I had to do. Dr. Fernandez, when it's our turn,

he would say, "Grandma Izumi, it's your turn now," because everybody else were mothers and I was twelve years old, carrying the new baby to get the instructions. But everything turned out to be [with] financial difficulty. We had to do without a lot of things. She sewed for us. She learned how to sew and she sewed most of our clothes.

JI: We never bought clothes. We never did buy until we came to Honolulu.

TM: My father would come to Honolulu and he would go to Uyeda Store to buy our shoes. He would draw our feet and he would buy our shoes from Uyeda Store. It was cheaper than buying from Hilo. I think they knew him and they gave him a discount. But I remember that.

MI: How about your mother? Did she ever express any anger or …

TM: You know, I never heard my mom really complain. She just did what she had to do. She may have talked to her [JI] but not to me. But she always said to me, because I always took a bath with her. I was the last one to take a bath with her in the furo, and she would say, "Oh, my children are my treasures." She would say, "*Oka-san wa ko dakara*." *Takara* is treasure. *Ko* is *kodomo* [children]. "*Oka-san wa ko dakara*." I remember once I asked her, "*Oka-san*, because you have so many children, don't you feel like you have a hard life?" And she said, "You children came to me because it was destined. I didn't know when I would have children or when I would not have children. People who want children sometimes cannot have children but here, I have so many children. Which one should not be my child? Which brother do you think I should not have had? Or which sister should I not have had? You tell me." I was just like … I couldn't choose which brother or sister I didn't want. (Laughs) I loved them all. So, I said, "Well, maybe that's how she felt. She didn't have riches but her children were her treasures." She said that many times. "*Oka-san wa ko dakara*" she said.
But she was very strict. She never allowed back talk, at least not from me. I'm the one who always talked back the most. If I said, "*Demo Oka-san*," [But Mother] she was already pinching my mouth and saying, "Are you talking back to your mother?" It's a wonder my mouth is not crooked. (Laughs) But, you know, maybe that was the way she disciplined me, to respect her and to obey her. In reverse, I allowed my children to tell me how they felt. And you know, as they grew older, they didn't listen to me. They talked back to me! I allowed them to and I listened to what they had to say and then I said, "No, you cannot do that."

MI: Among the children, is there any anger at the government about all of this? It has [been] sounds like financially a very difficult family life, childhood. Any of the children look back and say …

JI: No, it's just that if we weren't interned, if we hadn't been interned, I guess, we would have had a better … we wouldn't have had to struggle so much.

MI: Especially for you. You would have graduated at eighteen instead of twenty-one.

JI: No, but when I submitted my resignation to the Laupahoehoe Sugar Company, I said that I was going to school. But actually, I didn't go. But if I had decided to, if I was smarter in thinking how I could live my life to achieve that, I could have gone to school at that time and found a job in the night to help my parents financially. I could have done a lot of things but everything is in hindsight. In life, that's how it is. You get the knowledge

afterwards. Looking back, I say, "Yes, if you really wanted to, you could have gone all the way."

MI: You still had the opportunity. You made your choices.

JI: Yes, I could have, all the way. Even after I got married, I could have told my husband, "I want to go to school." But I never did. Work, work, that was how it was.

TM: I know that a lot of our difficulties were because we were a big family.

JI: Yes.

TM: But I still feel that, like she said, there isn't one brother or sister that I wish I didn't have.

JI: That's true.

TM: And the thing is, I first realized how much of a difficulty my parents already had. From Kilauea [Kauai], I remember there was a bazaar and my mom bought sandals, brand new sandals. At least it looked brand new to me. And [when] she wore those sandals, I don't remember which one of the girls it was, but one of them told me, "Oh, you folks no more money, eh, because your mother is wearing my mother's shoes." I think that maybe she wore it once or twice, and she didn't like it or whatever it was, but she gave it to the bazaar and my mom bought it. You see, my mom had very small feet, so it could have been a children's shoe [size]. But I still remember that. That one girl told me "Your mother has to wear the shoes that my mother gave to the bazaar." That stayed with me for a long time. I can still remember exactly what that sandal looked like. I must have been, maybe six years old or seven years old.
But my father always, when she [JI] went for her piano lessons in Lihue, for the three of us, he took us to Kress and he told us to choose what candy we wanted to buy. [To JI] Remember?

JI: No.

TM: I always chose the big chocolate malt ball, because I liked that. And every now and then when he said we could buy a toy, I used to buy a paddle like this, that had a rubber band and a ball, that toy, (Chuckles) and paper dolls. But when we were still young, the three of us, I think we got the most toys. The three older of us.

MI: Anything more you folks want to say, either one of you? Thank you for sharing your story.