

JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAII

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Lynette Kim (LK), Mildred Tahara (MT) & April Carvalho (AC)

June 22, 2017

Interviewer: Jane Kurahara (JK) & Mel Inamasu (MI)

JK: Good Morning. We're here this morning to interview members of the Tahara family. Maybe you can give your names.

LK: My name is Lynette Tahara Kim.

MT: My name is Mildred Yutako Tahara.

AC: And, I'm April Tahara Carvalho.

JK: And, I am Jane Kurahara. I'm a volunteer here and my assistant today is

MI: Mel Inamasu, also a volunteer.

JK: Every time I have a chance to chat with you, Lyn, I just begin to get a sense of this huge story about you and your family. I know that I'm only hearing a little part of it. So, that's why I asked Dr. Mel if he would sit in, who's always in charge of our talk-story interviews, not only to do all of the technological things for me but also to sense whether maybe we would like a further interview with you later. But the background behind today's chat is the fact that we would like to write an article for a future JCCH Legacy Newsletter. We know it's only one small aspect of your efforts to bridge the generations for all the Taharas. We're hoping the article would somehow show the bridge among generations, starting with Joichi Tahara and at this point, ending with great granddaughter, Heather Dinman. As an aside, we'll be chatting with Kathy and Heather in July, when they're back. So, today, may we concentrate on yours and Shelly's and your committee's efforts that have played a huge role in helping to bridge the generations within the Tahara family? We were very excited to find out that that was the focus of your efforts, too. Let's start with early information about you, maybe starting with you, Lyn, giving us your name and month and year you were born and what generation you are.

LK: I don't usually share this very much but I was born in 1949. I'm sixty-eight years old

now. I am the second eldest daughter of Yoshiyuki Tahara. My dad was the second of the Joichi Tahara family. My livelihood was teaching. I started up teaching as a preschool teacher, moved into grade school and finally retired from teaching college. So, I'm used to lecturing, so I'll try not to do that today. [Chuckle] They always remind me.

MT: I'm Mildred Yutako Tahara. Actually, Mildred Yutako Kanemoto Tahara. As she said, she's the speaker of the family, I don't say much. I've had a good life with the Tahara family. They were nice to me.

JK: And, you're Nisei.

MT: Yes.

AC: I'm April Tahara Carvalho. I'm the third daughter of Yoshiyuki and Mildred Tahara. So, Lyn is my big sister, I listen to her. I'm Sansei. I was born April 5, 1953. We lived with grandma for probably—I did for maybe five years, my growing up years.

JK: So, you have some memories of grandma?

LK: Oh yes, we do. More than any of the other Taharas because we lived with grandma. I forgot about that.

MT: She was really nice.

JK: Can you tell us more about grandma? Your impressions...

MT: Well, being half Portuguese, I think she didn't quite accept me. But after I got married, she was really nice. She shared everything with me.

LK: Grandma, actually, World War II when grandpa was taken away to internment camp, grandma raised the family herself. They had nine children. Two were already working, my father, his oldest brother, Nash. They were already working so she didn't have to support them per se but seven of them [she raised] without any help from anyone during World War II. And, my grandfather actually built a home in Paauilo and I actually brought pictures of the store and the home that my grandfather built for the family because he planned to live a long life with his children. He loved his children, he loved his wife.

MI: [Reviewing photos] Do you have dates on these photos? What year were they taken?

AC: These pictures are actually more recent.

LK: 2001. I believe we have older pictures of the home.

AC: When it was being constructed.

MT: When they, Maru Tahara and mother Tahara, got married, they were living in Volcano. She was a maid for one of the professors up there. He was working up there, too. The three children, I think four of the older children were born out there. And, then, they bought the property.

LK: Fifty-three, I think.

MT: Aunty Atsuko was up there, too.

AC: Yes, so four of them. We're fortunate because the woman who bought this home and the property—the property is, I don't know how many acres ...

LK: I thought it was ten acres but I think it's a little less than that. Eight, or something.

MT: Maybe, eight acres.

AC: In the late seventies, grandma sold the property and the family that bought it, they still own the property. Their family is still there but they've always welcomed the Tahara family to come back and visit. In that way, we're really lucky because whenever we plan reunions, we made it a point to go to the house and she'd let us walk through the house, walk on the property and that brought the younger ones and the people who grew up on Oahu—like, we were fortunate enough to live there for quite a few years. But the other cousins that we have didn't have that experience. So, this way, they could get a feel of what grandma and grandpa provided for their family. And, be able to just enjoy seeing the birthplace of some of their parents, where the parents grew up and where they lived, that kind of environment.

JK: And, that was very important because sense of place for young people that have no connection, that must have helped a lot.

AC: Yes.

MI: Could you give us the names of the new owners who have been so generous to allow you to ...

AC: Lindberg, I think. I can check.

MT: This [photo] is the old gas pump. And they still have it and they have a plaque now. Lindberg had a plaque made underneath ...

MI: So they're trying to preserve the property.

LK: She's preserved the property for any of us who want to go on there and look through it and walk through. Not just the outside but the inside also. So, we're really happy that she's done it. You know, I'm just kinda regressing but you know how, as you're growing up, my parents, they're so busy with their families that there's no foresight in "Let's

purchase the property.” And everybody is busy trying to pay off their own bills and their own homes and whatever so, there was no interest in perpetuating grandma’s property. And yet, my generation, my cousins now want to purchase the property back again. And they’re capable of it. Because of the good life, I think that we’ve had through the Nisei generation, it’s provided us the opportunity to now have a little money, not me, but my cousins [chuckle], my sister too, but that’s why they’re looking at maybe purchasing the property. But, of course, you know [property] values. At this time when my grandfather purchased the property, they were about the only family there in Paauilo Mauka. It was just pastureland. That’s all it was and he probably bought it for a pretty reasonable amount. I don’t even know how much he bought it for.

JK: I’m sure yes, back in that time.

LK: But, being in real estate, I looked at the price on this property. It’s over a million dollars, already. My cousins may be able to afford it.

AC: But, they’re not selling. They’re not even considering that.

LK: Not even.

MI: But, they have sort of become part of the family.

AC: Yes, they have. And, they have pictures around the house. They have some old pictures. And, they’ve always said, whenever family comes to the Big Island ...

LK: [Photo] This is Mrs. Lindberg, the person that owns the property. We had a little reunion.

MI: You know their first name?

LK: It’s Kate.

AC: Her daughter and the daughter’s family live there now. They use the front area, what used to be the Paauilo Store, grandma’s Tahara Store ...

LK: She’s renamed the store to that now. We had it Tahara Store. She has it as that, now.

AC: She’s converted it to a B & B, bed and breakfast. And, I think she rents out rooms also. But at one time, she took in foster kids. So, she’s a very loving, very caring person.

LK: Yes, she is.

JK: Fortunate that she was the one that purchased.

LK: Yes, she had the foresight. Our family, not until later on—we start having ... [chuckle]

JK: It’s almost like she’s holding on to it for you.

LK: Yes, yes. Almost as if grandpa and grandma are reborn in her. And, that's why she's perpetuating the property.

JK: Grandpa says, "Now you go ahead and help them out."

LK: Yes. [It's like he said,] "You can own this place, but you have to open it up to my family."

AC: Yes. So, they had that pasture in the back where they usually had maybe five, six cows. And then, on the side of the property, they had a small coffee field.

MT: They had that coffee machine, too.

AC: And the *hoshidana* [coffee drying rack] and the grinder, the coffee mill...

LK: So, we know how to pick coffee, we know how to dry coffee, we know—you hire us, we can do it.

AC: Yes, two cents a pound. She paid us by the hour. And she kept track of—because she had the store. It was like a dry goods store. So, she sold candy, she had candy in big jars. And, we would take the candy but she would tell us, "You keep track," so we would have our tic marks, how many candies and then at the end of the summer, she would add up how much we earned, she would add up how much we owed [chuckle]...

LK: We owed more than what we earned.

AC: And then, she would deduct. She would usually just pay us.

JK: She was a good teacher.

LK: Yes, she was.

JK: Thanks for sharing all these early recollections. Did you know very much about your grandfather's internment experience?

MT: No, because I got married into the family after [the internment].

LK: It's actually a very interesting question because through us, the younger Joichi family has found out, through what we found out, [who] they are now—cause they said, "We didn't know this." We've found out, we've recovered, uncovered a lot of information and that's how they're now learning along with us. So, it's been a very interesting journey for them, for us, too. Because, the youngest son, our youngest uncle, was only a year old and ...

MT: Even down from Uncle Nobu, they were too young to remember.

LK: Yes. And they didn't talk about it.

JK: Yes, that was going to be my next question. That's frequently what happens.

LK: Yes.

AC: So for us, we knew grandpa was in the internment camp and we knew he died there. But aside from that—so we grew up to say, “Oh, just one of those things,” and didn't really look into the conditions or the circumstances of why he was taken. We knew he was a leader in the community and they were taking in a lot of the leaders but aside from that, we didn't know until more recently when we started looking into it.

MT: But, grandma never really talked about it.

LK: I think there was a stigma that you were not supposed to show that you were Japanese. I think, you wanted to become more westernized and even when we were growing up, you know, it was kinda discouraged for us to speak Japanese. Although now, I really regret that because she [MT] knows a whole lot more than we do. We went to Japanese school but at the same time, if you don't use it, you lose a lot. My grandmother spoke and wrote but even she said, you need to become Americans.

JK: Yes.

MT: The only time that I spoke Japanese to them, “*Bakatare* [stupid].” [Laughter]

JK: So they know those words?

LK: Yes, we understand that. We understand that a lot.

JK: My kids know *bakatare* too. [Laughter] So, what triggered your wanting to have family reunions?

AC: The reunions ...

MT: I think the family wanted to go back up to grandma's place and let the young ones see what they went through. And, the Tahara family is pretty close. We're all close.

AC: Yes.

LK: I think it was just that the time was right. I think that everybody said they wanted to get together and we said, “Ok, we should, and we need a committee to organize everything so, okay, we'll call it the Reunion Committee.”

MT: And, dad folks were still alive, so they all wanted to get together, too, bring the young ones.

LK: Yes, yes. The Nisei generation, they were very close so I think because of what happened to their father, I think they were a very close family unit and I think that's what made us close because ...

AC: As cousins, first cousins.

LK: Because, they knew the importance of us being close and staying together as a family. I think, as we were talking we realized that if we don't perpetuate this for the younger generation, it's not going to happen. They're not going to know each other. It's going to be really sad and the most important thing for us was the legacy of the family, too. Because we felt we had such a rich legacy that we wanted them to understand where their roots were. I think that if children don't understand where they've come from, and what the legacy is, I think they lose themselves. And so, I think that was part of the reasons why we decided as a reunion committee that we would like to foster [bridge?] the generation gap, and then the knowledge of what had happened, transpired with the family in the past. What was the history of the family? And, we wanted them to be proud of that and not, as we were growing up, be embarrassed or ashamed. Yes, we wanted to turn that around.

JK: So, what did your very first family reunion look like?

LK: That we put together—well, the Okino was the very first one that we did. And the Okino family, this is just a brief idea of what the dinner was like, and that's all it was.

MT: Okino was my mother-in-law's maiden name.

LK: So, Joichi's wife. In 1979, that was the very first. The Okino family decided to get all of the sisters and brothers together so—I kept this because the Reunion Committee, as far as how much the dinner, what we had at the Wisteria Restaurant and then, the cost and whatever, whatever, whatever. So I kept it.

JK: So, it was a big dinner.

LK: It was a big dinner. Does it say even how many people? I didn't even.....

MI: What year was that?

LK: 1979.

MI: So, this was way before JCCH came into the picture.

LK: Oh, is that right?

MI: I'm just trying to get a sense of the connection between the family and JCCH.

LK: Yes, already as a family, we started in 1979.

MI: So you started having, in seventy-nine, these reunions.

AC: We had a few—I think when we planned for the KMC [Kilauea Military Camp] reunion, that's when we were involved with JCCH.

LK: That's right. That's the first contact we made with JCCH, yes. And, that one, we were in contact to just say what we were doing but I think you folks helped in 2013 when I needed help getting tickets for Pearl Harbor and also to bring everybody up to the Honouliuli site, which I thought was really important. It was really important.

MT: But I regret, when we went out there the second time, we weren't allowed to go down into ...

LK: I know. And the reason why we wanted to do that was my—the three children of Joichi, the three remaining children, are getting up in years already. One can hardly walk, the other two [were] physically healthy but we wanted them to be able to, you know, that feeling when you're down there?

JK: Yes, sense of place, it's so powerful.

LK: We understood from that time, when we had the initial trip with JCCH ...

AC: Yes, yes.

LK: —why my grandfather had the aneurysm. Why—that's how he died. He had an aneurysm rupture, and then he died. We understood after being down there ...

AC: The seclusion.

LK: The seclusion.

AC: How apart they were from everything. All they could see was the sky above. And no contact.

JK: Yes, that's right.

LK: And the embarrassment, I think, all the emotions that he must have felt and he was the leader of the community and he was put at a high level, respected by everyone. And now, here you are, in this kinda dungeon kind of— it was awful.

JK: Yes, yes.

MT: Even Rocky, your cousins Rocky and Tyrone, they really felt bad.

LK: Yes, so I wanted the impact and yet, maybe at the same time, maybe it was a good idea

that they didn't. But, when we went there—I'm sorry, we're kinda jumping all over, but ...

JK: That's okay, that's fine.

LK: When we went there, we thought, "Wow, maybe it's a good idea to bring grandpa's picture because—our remembrance. And after we came out of there, we said, "Oh, man, it's a good thing we didn't bring [it]. He doesn't—it's the last place he wants to be.

MT: Yes, I don't think he would want to ...

MI: I'm guessing that the 1979 type reunions were fun and games. How did it evolve into Honouliuli or internment?

AC: So, this initial one with the Okino family, we didn't, we didn't—it was the Okinos that planned the reunion. I see here that there were ninety-seven adults. We don't know a lot of the Okinos, that side of the family. So, they wanted to bring the families together and more so, the first cousins. So, our dad's generation. Those first cousins to me. From here, the next reunion would have been the one in Paauilo.

LK: Yes, 2001.

AC: By that time, we had already lost our dad and Uncle Nobu.

LK: Yes.

AC: Uncle Nash was still there. That was a big one, too. We usually have over a hundred at each reunion. From that time, that's when we went to—that's when these pictures were taken. We realized the importance of everybody going to that house and seeing the house and being able to walk through, and the property and the connections there. The cousins, our generation, have pictures of their mother or father, as kids, at that house, so that way they could actually place it. And be there, physically themselves.

LK: That was important, yes.

AC: From there, we started. And because our generation, the first cousins, were starting their families, they were having kids and we wanted the second cousins and those children to know each other and understand what the family is about and the background of the family. Then we started planning more. And, we started getting more information. We went to Japan. Mom and my husband, son and I, did a trip to Japan and we got to meet Joichi's youngest sister. She was already ninety-two at that time. Ninety-four?

LK: You sure? Gotta be because ...

AC: Ninety four because she passed away last year at one hundred and four.

LK: Five. Hundred and five. [Laughter]

AC: We got to meet her and she could still remember everything about—she was young also when her oldest brother, the only brother, Joichi, left Japan to come to Hawaii. They were always waiting for him to return. Even at ninety-two, she said, “We were always waiting for him to return.”

LK: We filmed her because we didn’t know when—I knew they were going, “Okay, you gotta film her. You gotta film her and you gotta tell her we’re going to play this for the next reunion. Let her give a message to the Tahara family.” So, she did and so did her son. I was so glad we did it.

AC: That’s why we planned the next reunion, around that. I think that’s how it started getting—we started getting more involved in wanting to know and share more of the history of the family.

LK: Yes, 2007 was the next one.

MI: Do you remember what her message was, by any chance?

AC: Long life. [Chuckle] She said, what she felt contributed to her long life was that every morning, she would hang from a bar. She had a bar going across the doorway.

MT: Yes.

AC: At our reunion, we had to clarify that. It was not hang out at bars. [Laughter]

LK: It was, hang on a bar.

AC: We enjoy our drinking, too. So we had to clarify, not hang out at bars, hang from a bar, every morning. She was just active. But what was her message? That she was happy to be part of that reunion and that the Tahara family was getting together and prosperous in Hawaii.

LK: Yes.

MT: I tried inviting her over to that reunion but she said, “No,” she can’t make it.

LK: She didn’t want to travel.

MT: She was happy looking at my face and I kinda understood the Japanese language, not the Hawaii Japanese, so I spoke with her and she was happy about that.

JK: It’s nice that you were there.

LK: It was, you know, you do things sometimes with—there’s no thought but there’s

definitely—I've always said this, when we started the reunion, I put it out to the universe and I said, I believe in the universe, and I said, "Grandpa and grandma, anything you want us to bring to the family and open up, let it flow, through the committee members. And, that opened the door to a lot of stuff that we weren't sometimes prepared for. Like, the Last Will and Testament, that came soon after that, because nobody knew that that existed.

JK: Yes.

LK: So, I think that you have to open yourself up to whatever happens once you start this. And, when you start this, you have to finish. I think the committee members knew that nobody could resign after they said, "Okay, we'll do it." Nobody would accept the resignation after that. So, "Too bad. You signed up. You're going all the way."

JK: Who were your committee members?

LK: I had it listed down somewhere.

JK: Mostly sansei members?

AC: Sansei, it was mainly cousins, first cousins.

LK: It stretched three generations, actually. Nisei, Sansei and then we had the younger generation. After a while, we said, "No, no. We're not carrying this on for the rest of our lives. Somebody's got to take over," so we have to get the next generation in and committed also. Otherwise, we cannot just let this go. And then, after a while, we'll be consultants, helping the future generation, whatever, whatever. So we started that ball rolling that way. Otherwise, if there's nobody to push, it stops. It ends. Because they don't see the significance of all of this.

JK: Yes, they don't know.

LK: I think that's one of the things we decided to do whenever we got together. There was always going to be a meeting and a presentation of the history and the legacy of the family. And then, so that's why April did a timeline to tie everything together. I thought that was really a wonderful idea because the family, kinda—they get it when you start doing it and doing presentations.

JK: Do you still have your timeline?

AC: I do have it. I didn't bring it with me.

LK: That was important. It's stuff to get them hooked on, to wanting to know, and that's what we—we're just really brilliant at that [laughter], so ...

MI: May I ask—grandpa died at Honouliuli. Where is the gravesite?

LK: Oh, he's back home. They shipped his body back home.

AC: Yes, but he's at Nuuanu.

LK: Oh, no, no, here. That's right. Nuuanu.

AC: His urn is up at Nuuanu.

LK: That's right. He's up in Nuuanu.

AC: He actually died at—was it Tripler [Army Medical Center] or at [Fort] Shafter?

LK: There's a service we had at the gravesite. We decided nobody knew where the grave was—grandma, grandpa buried. And we had the service at the Elks Club. This was 2007 and we decided, “Okay, we're going to have the services at the grave site” ...

MI: So he was released [from Honouliuli] and died at a hospital?

AC: He went from Honouliuli. He was suffering, I think he had already gone into a coma. Then, they brought him to a hospital. I'm not sure—it was at Shafter, it sounded like.

LK: Not Tripler? Tripler, I thought.

AC: I have to go back and check. They have the records of all of that, too. And in passing there...

LK: I think I left internment papers, I think I left medical reports also with the JCCH. I think I have everything.

JK: Okay, there is a collection.

LK: I think I have the whole collection with you folks.

JK: Okay, I'll check that.

AC: Yes, because they didn't have records of his death. JCCH didn't have any. It wasn't, I guess, recorded as a death at Honouliuli because it wasn't actually there where he passed. But he was interned. They didn't have a record of that.

JK: Oh, so now we do [have records]. That's good.

LK: That's right, they didn't. He died while he was interned.

MT: He was driven to the hospital because he wasn't feeling well.

LK: Yes, he was already in a coma and I think he died in the ambulance or at the hospital. We're not quite sure.

MT: It wasn't an ambulance. It was somebody's private car.

LK: Oh? I thought it was an ambulance.

JK: You mentioned that Taharas came from all over. Where are some of the all overs?

LK: Chicago, Seattle, California ...

AC: Mainly, Big Island, where the family started. And, Oahu. Those are the two [where the] majority of the family live on, both islands.

JK: It sounds like you started as a close family anyway.

LK: Yes.

JK: So, that motivated you to want to pass it on, too. Because as the generations get further and further along, it's true, you don't know who they are.

AC: That's true.

LK: Actually, if you allow for that to —that's never going to happen. So, we knew that—we recognized the fact that they were the ones that started the close knit but they also perpetuated in us, the next generation. So, we knew that if we wanted it that way, we had to perpetuate it for the next generation. It has to be the generations wanting to do that and keeping it that way. So, rifts in the family, and I know some families have these tremendous rifts that you can't bridge, but it has to be overlooked. Just for that particular—just so that you get to know who your family is and forget about the bickering. Forget about the—it has to be that. And, everybody has to at least get together. You don't have to love each other. Just be there. I think that's important.

MT: It was nice because Uncle Nash always had the family together, remember?

LK: Yes, my Uncle Nash's house was a gathering point, always.

MT: The eldest son.

AC: Yes. I think that made a big difference, too. Because, there was a house that we would have family gatherings. Every so often, he'd say, "Oh yes, let's get the family together." And then, people from wherever, Big Island, would fly in if they wanted to. if they could make it.

LK: So, when he passed away, he passed the house on to his daughter. And, one of the stipulations was, she makes a house for everybody to be able to come to.

AC: The family gathering house.

JK: So, it's been a high value for your family to want ...

LK: Yes, it's still that way. And, so, she has this really beautiful home that they contracted, built for her, and that's where the family goes.

JK: That's wonderful. Very strong.

MT: Pretty close, your cousins are all close.

LK: I think it's because of what happened to the family. I think the close knit—I can say that now because of the events that happened but I'm not quite sure if the family would have been that way anyway because grandpa was, he loved his children. All that we've been finding out, he was the one that went to the school visits with the teachers.

AC: Or participated in ((?)) activities.

LK: Or said, "Okay, what about grandma? How come?" Well, grandma was the slave driver, the person that kept the house going and so he said he'd be the social butterfly.
[Laughter] And, he was the one that was ...

AC: Would get the Christmas tree. From what we've been hearing, the different stories, he would get the Christmas tree and they would all decorate the tree and he would get the presents.

LK: Yes, he was a great father.

MT: Olden days, there was this community person that would go to the Japanese schools and help out. He was that.

JK: He was the one.

LK: He was the one, not my grandma. Usually it's the wife, you know, but oh, no, no, no, grandma was too busy running the household, whatever, running the store. So, that was unusual.

AC: That's why all the women in the family are hard workers. [Laughter] No, we're going to do this, we don't wait for anybody.

JK: You're on the committee.

LK: Yes, that's right, there's no guys. Oh, but there was one guy.

AC: There were two. So, the committee was made up of cousins from—children from each

family, we tried to get. We tried to get each family involved.

LK: That's right.

AC: So, everybody was represented.

JK: Now, you've been doing this for a number of years and I know you've already mentioned some of the fruits of your labors, but what have you seen as benefits for the younger Taharas? And, then, I'm going to ask you the same question, benefits for the older Taharas?

LK: For the older, we said, we actually paved the way for them to understand what was happening with the father where they didn't really know. So, they have gained a lot of knowledge of what their father went through, through us.

AC: Yes, that's important.

LK: Which was very important that they knew, so when we found the Last Will and Testament, my mother, very insightful, said, "We need to present it to the children first, not to everybody." To the children first, let them feel what the letter was, Last Will and Testament first, and then open it up to everybody. Yes, that was the best way to do it because that was their father. So, they need to know that first, before everybody else. I'm really kinda glad we did that.

JK: Did it trigger certain things then?

LK: Yes, because there was only one son and two daughters that were left. The oldest one, Aunty Atsuko, she was number three? Four?

AC: Four.

LK: Four. And the last two children, eight and nine.

MT: Yes, they didn't remember much of the father.

JK: And, that's such a universal letter. Anyone reading it can relate to it.

LK: And I think because of that letter, the translation of that letter ...

JK: It showed the love that he had.

LK: Oh, yes.

AC: And the appreciation for his wife and what she was doing, while he was there [Honouliuli].

JK: Most of the Issei, I guess it's part of their culture, they're supposed to be very stoic and not show feelings, and so, when I read the letter, I ... Oh ...

LK: Oh, yes. It was heart wrenching.

MT: Kathy's [Dinman, cousin] father wrote. It was surprising that he'd write.

LK: Yes, so the benefit for the other, the younger end, is here we have, now Heather [Dinman, daughter of Kathy], who is perpetuating this legacy, not for the family, but for all of the world to know this. Wow, that wasn't even our thoughts. We thought, just for the family and continuation on that. But now, she's brought it to the world.

JK: By doing a web site.

LK: Yes. It's like, "Wow!" Never even imagined that.

JK: It's so well done, too.

LK: And, I think it's gotten the younger generation to listen to whatever the presentation was, the timeline, the letter, the whatever. Now, they're beginning to feel the family and feel grandpa, feel grandma, whatever. So, when we get together now, it's like, "Okay, let's compare. How were you raised?" [Laughter] "Was your father, was he strict?" It's gotten to that interesting point.

AC: Yes, with personal background...

LK: It's really interesting. And, the kids are interested, too. They're listening now. Whereas before, they were not. Although, that little electronic game, things like that, it's going to be the downfall of ...

AC: The whole generation.

MI: As you folks learned the story, as you were going along, and you tried to share it with the family, were you trying to share a family story or was there a message? Did this message with your niece [Heather's web site] come from her? Or was that something that was being impressed upon the next generation? Were you just preserving the family story?

AC: Preserving the family story, letting the younger ones know what went on, and also the message—we also sent the message that the internment and that whole period during World War II and everything that the Japanese went through, was hushed up and wasn't recognized. And so, in that sense, we brought those facts out, too. So, not only the family message, but just a general knowledge of this is what was going on at that time. I guess. The feeling, because mom would share stories about what it was like during the war, when the war broke out and they had to black out all the windows. Just kind of brought it home more, what everybody was going through, not just the Tahara family.

JK: Yes.

LK: But then, they did take the younger ones. We didn't realize how much of an impact that it made.

AC: Yes, yes.

MI: What started as a family, personal story, has become, with the next generation, sort of a political message.

LK: Yes, and the racism involved in it too. We don't want it too much on that but the perpetuation. Like, if you're going to think that every Japanese, or the bombing of the Towers, the World Trade Center, and after that everybody that looks like a Muslim or looks like an Arab or whatever was the enemy—no, that's not the case. That's not the case. You don't even know the story. Because my grandfather came willingly. He wanted to move here. He didn't want to become a *Bonsan* priest as his father wanted him to do. So, he escaped, actually, to come to Hawaii and make a life for himself. And so, the stories of the individual families, even though you look like an enemy, you're not an enemy. So, I think that's another reason we wanted to do this because we wanted them to know that you're not the enemy even though you look like the enemy and you still need to prove yourself, actually, because that's embedded in all of us that you still need to prove your Americanism. That was really clear for us as we were growing up because my father was military. He was a military officer.

AC: Yes, show your Americanism but yet, hold on to your culture.

LK: Yes.

JK: Yes.

AC: And, your family. That's the important thing. So, getting back to 9/11 and that whole scare and people wanting to imprison just because you're a little eastern or whatever—it was like, "No, hello, this is the same thing that happened to the Japanese." You cannot be singling people out that way.

JK: So, you're passing on values, too.

LK: Yes.

AC: Yes.

JK: And, your insights.

LK: Yes, because you cannot, as a human being, you cannot be passing on these prejudices just because somebody looks non-white. What is that?

JK: Yes, exactly.

LK: So, I think that was the underlying—I think they kinda got it.

JK: Heather sure got it.

LK: Yes, Heather got it.

AC: Yes, we didn't realize it, getting back to your question, that they would get that message, that it would impact them so much that she would do a whole—but I think there were a couple of them that did school projects or whatever on that.

LK: Yes, not as big as Heather...

AC: Not to that extent. Heather is exceptional.

LK: Yes.

MI: It would be nice if you could gather the others, also.

JK: Yes, yes.

MI: Like a family collection.

JK: Showing the impact.

MI: Even if they're at different levels.

JK: No matter what it was or what level of competency, it doesn't matter. It's the fact that they got it.

MI: Starting to pick up on it.

LK: Yes. Well, then next reunion, surely we'll play Heather's video for sure. It's funny how everything comes in—it just happens to be the time and the place and it's there. Even Kilauea Military Camp Grounds [Big Island of Hawaii], we didn't realize that that's—we didn't know that Grandpa, that was the last holding place before he was shipped out. It just happened. We said, "Oh, you know, we like Kilauea, the volcano, it's really cool up there. Why don't we just have it [there]?" We weren't thinking about grandpa was there. We didn't even know, until ...

AC: And then, I was doing research ...

MI: You had a reunion there?

AC: Yes. But prior to that, the letter [Last Will and Testament] came out and I was doing some research and I read, and I had to read it like three times.

LK: I think, the week before we went out, you found out.

AC: Yes, that KMC was the holding area for the internees. That people were arrested...

MI: Which reunion was that?

LK: 2010.

MI: That recent, you found out?

LK: Yes. We didn't know. You talk about the blind leading the blind. It was like, "Oh my God."

AC: The very room that we held the reunion gathering was where they slept. That was their barracks.

JK: Yes.

LK: So, talk about *deja vu*.

AC: And where the flagpole was, that was the guard tower.

JK: Yes.

AC: Where you tripped.

LK: I tripped, I know.

JK: Grandpa says, "Hey."

LK: Grandpa probably said, "Don't pass here without recognizing that this is, you know." That's where I tripped and I fell. I should have sprained an ankle, broke a leg, but nothing. I just tripped.

JK: He just wanted attention.

LK: He just said, "Don't forget this, Lynn."

AC: Giving her a whack on the head. [Laughter]

LK: So I tripped, I fell completely down. Oh, my God.

JK: I kind of [understand] what you said, about letting the Universe in.

LK: Absolutely.

JK: So, all these things are happening and you think, “Oh, could this be coincidence?” No, it’s more than coincidence.

LK: No, it’s not.

JK: Serendipity.

LK: Absolutely.

JK: It’s kinda what we’re feeling here, too, because somehow when you do something that is right, somebody up there helps you. Grandpa’s helping you.

LK: It’s Grandpa saying, “Hey, you’re going in the wrong direction. You’d better go here now.” I’m sure he’s guiding us that way.

JK: Yes, he is guiding you and he’s giving you all these hints. “Okay, you’re open to the universe, this is what’s next.”

LK: Right, right. My cousin Shelly kept saying, “You know, if we were in Hilo, I could get a whole lot more entertainment.” I said, “Oh no, if it’s Kilauea, everybody just goes out there, stays out there, we can drink up there. Everybody likes to drink. Nobody needs to drive. It’s not dangerous. Just stay up there.”

AC: And then we have a captive audience. People aren’t going off and do what they want. They’ve got to stay right there.

MT: Yes, they want to go up there again.

LK: But, that wasn’t our intention, that it was because grandpa was there. We never thought about that.

MI: How were you able to go there? Do you have to have some military in the family? Who was the member?

AC: Our father was military and a lot of his brothers were in the military, too. So, we have a lot of connections, that way.

LK: But, because we were going to have the reunion and April was the contact person for Kilauea camp grounds, they threw her and my dad, and knowing that there were some others— how many cabins did we have?

AC: Eight. I think we had eight cabins. Different sizes. Some apartments. We had the big

house with the fireplace. That one has, I think, five bedrooms, so the bulk of us stayed there.

LK: Six, seven bedrooms. We put up a tent, everybody came there to eat. We cooked. We won't do that again. [Laughter] We had to cook every ...

JK: Your committee worked so hard.

LK: Yes, that really burned everybody out.

AC: But the end product, what you see, it's all worth it.

LK: Yes.

AC: We all go to tap ourselves on the shoulders.

JK: Absolutely.

LK: We were saying, not another one for a long time. And, let's just order food okay, next time.

AC: We're going to a hotel. Because, for us, we need that time. We need days. You have to plan a reunion at least spending two or three days together. One evening, one dinner is not enough.

LK: Yes, so it was a whole weekend, wasn't it? Friday all the way through ...

AC: We went from Wednesday or Thursday. Then we stayed up till Monday.

LK: That's right. We had an extended [stay] on that one, but we really enjoyed it.

JK: And, you're smart. You kept everybody together.

LK: Captive audience. We like captive audiences.

JK: I know you folks prepared to go to Honouliuli well before. We were talking a year ahead. And, you mentioned something about an uncle, maybe this would be his final ...

LK: Uncle Richard. The last brother.

JK: I wondered how that ...

LK: That's why it was really important for us to go. But of course, the two sisters, too. And, you know, what was really interesting. Uncle really didn't have any interest to see that. And even the brothers. They had no interest in seeing it. That's why the first time we went out with JCCH, and we called them and asked, "Do you want to go?" "Oh, no.

We're not interested." Whoa. Okay, well we're going to go then. So, three of us, two other cousin and we were the only ones that went out there and we're thinking, wow, they should have come.

AC: Yes. Did Shelby send you the pictures of Honouliuli?

LK: Yes.

AC: At that reunion.

LK: But once we got them out there—this is why the Committee members, the Committee [has] a lot of power. You say this is what we're going to do, this is what we're going to do. That's it. And, what, you don't want to do it? You come talk to me. I'm head of the Committee. [Laughter] You have a problem, come talk to me because, you know how much I've done? Planned this and how many meetings and stuff? So, they don't say anything. [Laughter]

AC: They just go, "Tell us where."

LK: Just tell us where and we'll be there.

AC: Tell us where and when and we'll be there.

LK: "Okay, that's really a nice attitude." Good attitude.

JK: They recognize the value. And, they knew somebody had to work hard.

LK: Hard work.

JK: And they were glad it wasn't them. If she's going to do it, okay. [Laughter]

LK: Yes, nobody wants to do it so that's why.

JK: Better listen. When she talks, listen.

LK: These are the last three remaining of the family. [photo]

MI: Who are they?

LK: My Uncle Richard, Aunty Atsuko and Aunty Sei. My Uncle Richard is the number eight. My Aunty Sei on the other side is the number nine and the one in the middle is number four.

JK: So, they went to the event [Honouliuli tour]?

LK: They did, but only to the gate.

AC: They were very moved by that.

LK: The flowers that they brought are from my grandmother's garden. And the flowers that we put when we did the service at the grave, were from my grandmother's garden. They still have the garden at my aunty's house. So, my cousin cut the flowers and when she gave it to me that day, she said these are from grandma's garden, oh, it just blew me away. I had forgotten that Grandma had a garden, and wow. For her to think about putting the flowers on—this is my grandmother's grave and we put the flowers that she grew all the time that she lived with my aunty.

AC: So, they got the bunches of flowers that our cousin made and they put them onto the gate.

LK: We left it on the gate. Yes, we left it on the gate.

AC: We all said a prayer over there.

LK: Yes, we said a prayer.

AC: Do you have the whole family picture?

LK: Yes, I was just going to show it to them. That's the whole family that was there at that time.

JK: That's wonderful.

MT: Disappointing, no?

MI: Why was it that they couldn't go down?

LK: I think they were working, the safety factor and how to get everybody down there.

JK: Monsanto wasn't allowing—they weren't in charge of that. I forget now, what it was. Even now, Monsanto can only go to the gate. And if you want to go beyond the gate, you have to get NPS' [National Park Service] permission.

AC: And I think at that time, I think they were just trying to get NPS' approval. But for some reason they couldn't go beyond that...

LK: This [photo] is at the *Obon*. We took everybody to *Obon* that time and we did *Hapi* coats and everything. So, you're a committee member but we're doing all this kind of stuff. The *Hapi* coats, to get them interested, and then we did shirts, T-shirts. And then, Grandpa was a *Go* player. He played *Go* and so somebody designed, my cousin's husband designed the T-shirt with the *Go* board and pieces. It represents the family.

MT: The elder son, one daughter, my husband and I.

AC: Four girls and one boy.

MT: And it all goes down.

LK: This is the initial family. This is not correct but this is the *mon*, the Tahara *mon*.

AC: That's supposed to be the Okino.

LK: We didn't put it on the sleeve this time but the Tahara name.

JK: Oh, my goodness.

LK: So, even printing out the shirts and doing the *Hapi*—they sewed the *Hapi* coats, my aunt and my mother sewed the *Hapi* coats for everybody when we went to *Obon*.

MT: [At] the volcano, had a nice background for the picture.

LK: The volcano picture. I didn't bring that one. You know, when you're committed to a family, you do everything.

JK: You go all out.

LK: And so, through the family we perpetuated—our family plays checkers. Competitively. And, *Hanafuda*. So, we perpetuate it.

JK: Good. [Laughter]

LK: Every time we get together, and my uncle, the *oniisan*, he is the champion. So he can't stand it when people beat him. [Laughter] So, it's really—you gotta stay on top of your toes. You know these old people, I'll tell you. It's hard work preparing for that. You've got to be mentally prepared as well as everything else because they want you to participate. Checkers, *Hanafuda*, whatever. So we had even games and everything. The committee—I even did questionnaires of the family. We did a family tree. We even have a family song.

AC: We sing "In This Life" by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole. We sing that for every occasion.

LK: Yes, every occasion.

AC: Yes, we sing it at funerals.

LK: We did a family tree and this is kind of an agenda of the reunion.

JK: Oh, my goodness.

LK: 2007. And we have about 150 people.

AC: And at this reunion, we invited old friends from Paauilo. Family friends. We had a few of them join us. Happy to see everybody.

LK: So, every time we do a reunion, because this is our financial money girl ...

AC: Treasurer. I'm the accountant.

LK: And, I'm the educator and I have another educator so everything has to be written, everything has to have a time frame. We don't go in just, "Okay, I think this is what we're going to do." No. Everything has a time frame and what people are going to do. When you're working with that many people, you cannot just—although now, everybody's saying, "Can we just show up and do pot luck and whatever happens, happens?" [Laughter] Ok yes, yes. Let's. Because now, we've been doing this for how many reunions, two, three, four ...

JK: So, they kinda know what to do.

LK: We all know what to do, so now, what we do is we don't have as many meetings. We used to have meetings galore. And now, it's like, just email everybody.

MT: And, the family, we have good cooks, too.

AC: And, we're trying to pass it on to the younger cousins, or the next generation of kids coming up ...

LK: So, we do icebreakers also. And, part of the games when we initially meet, we do icebreakers for the younger kids also. Mostly for the younger kids because we know [each other]. But the younger kids, we need ice breakers so we do that and then we have a lot of different kinds of games. We have an agenda of what we're going to do.

JK: Yes, you have to plan it.

LK: We do, everything.

AC: And, they have to participate.

LK: No questions.

JK: The committee has powers.

LK: Yes, we do.

JK: In speaking to you recently, I got the feeling that you and Shelly and April, you guys are still getting out, doing things and ideas are running around.

LK: Oh, yes. The next one, the Okino family, I think, said they want to do a Tahara-Okino again. So, I said, “Okay, Shelly, Hilo, you plan it. We’ll come.” [Laughter] “Hilo people plan it.”

MT: No, I’ve been telling her the basics she did, everything, so time to give it to the younger ones.

LK: I thought, I’m kinda resigned. I don’t think anybody knows it. You guys know it. So, I kinda resigned.

JK: Advisor, now.

LK: Yes.

MI: I don’t know if you’ve done this before but one suggestion, next reunion, individual photographs to show the diversity of faces. Versus the group [photo]. The group is kind of hard to appreciate ...

LK: Somebody talked about that.

AC: In fact, one reunion—no, we did families.

LK: Somebody talked about it. But individuals.... I’m going to write it down.

AC: That is a good idea.

MI: We have something like that in the exhibit here.

LK: Yes, I saw it.

MI: Individual faces and how they changed over time, over generations.

LK: Evolved. Absolutely, because now we’re getting a lot more *hapa* [mixed] kids.

JK: Yes, gets more and more *hapa*. It’s a good idea.

AC: Yes, that is.

LK: Okay, that will be the next. You plan it. [Laughter]

AC: We’ll find somebody to do it.

MT: Next generation. You can be advisor.

LK: It’s a lot of work. We did a lot of work. We divided the responsibilities but still, I don’t

think anybody understands what— and I think that’s why a lot of families don’t want to do it because ...

JK: It’s not that easy.

LK: We started meeting a year or started thinking about it, talking about it a year ahead of time. And then, we started meeting. When we first started this, we started meeting like six months before. Just to get a general idea. So, this last one that we did, the Honouliuli one, we actually did a lot of emailing because I was sure everybody, they knew what to do so we don’t have to meet so much.

JK: Has it been worth it?

LK: Absolutely.

AC: Oh, yes.

JK: With no question.

LK: No question. Hands down. It’s been worth it. When I read what Heather has gotten out of this and then I see the interest of the other people, I think, “Wow, you know what? It was really worth some of the bickering, some of the sleepless nights, some of the “Will this work?” Yes, it was really worth it. Really worth it.

AC: Yes. And even the ones that you think they’re not paying attention, they’re so busy on their phones and whatever, they still—they hear it. They hear it, they’re participating. Just by being there, they’re gaining something. Like my son, too, I’ll tell him, did you hear about some other story that we brought up? “Yes, yes, I heard, I know.” [Laughter] It is getting in there.

LK: Whenever we meet, it’s over a hundred people. I was an instructor. You get a hundred people in the room, it’s really hard to get everybody’s attention. You know that whenever we meet, you can hear a pin drop. Cause, everybody is interested in what the presentation is. So, it’s like, it’s amazing. I’m one, because I’m an educator, I don’t just listen. I’m looking around to see how many people are interested, really interested. And, I look at the faces and you can tell by the response on the faces. So, my cousin and I, this is what we do - we tell each other, “Did you see that?” It’s really satisfying.

JK: You can tell, they got it. They got it.

LK: It’s really satisfying to just scan the family and see ...

AC: And, they even tear up. They start crying.

LK: Yes, they start crying.

JK: It's connecting.

LK: Yes, that it [has] hit and we know we've done something right.

JK: Yes.

LK: Very rewarding.

JK: And so, the Tahara family is going to go forward, strong.

LK: Yes.

JK: As a family.

LK: Nobody in jail. Nobody on heavy drugs that's been hauled in. We do have drinkers, but, social. Social drinkers. [Laughter] But, you know what, it's okay.

JK: Is there anything JCCH can do to support you or do you have suggestions for us on how to support other families? Just have a lot of hard working first cousins?

AC: JCCH has done so much. We really appreciate that.

LK: Yes, and I think, if anything, maybe, if any family wants to know how to get started, maybe you can tell them how to get started because, you know what, it is kind of a dilemma when you say, "Okay we want to start having a family [reunion, but] where do we start?" Maybe, that's where you guys come in too and say, "Okay, so here's what you need to get done. Here's what you need to get in place. Here's what you need as a leader of this committee, somebody that can do this and that." And, maybe helping them to get organized, because the organization is the hard part.

JK: It's the hard part. You guys going to be our advisors? [Laughter] We don't know...

LK: Sure.

MI: Get her email address.

AC: And, it has to be mandatory for people to participate. And the families, the young ones all will have to come along. I think that was part of the thing. I think at a certain age, it's like, "I don't want to go, it's boring being with the family." But, they have to.

LK: Even *Obon*. They said, "No, cannot." I said, "No, no, no. The rule." When my mother used to bring us, "Your dad says, at least one dance." It's the longest one. [Laughter] But you dance at least one dance and you try to go through the whole So, every year, when we go to *Obon* ...

MT: Yes, sometimes we got my sister-in-law and her children interested, too.

JK: Yes, step by step. Is there anything else you want to say before we stop?

MT: No, I think she said most [Laughter]

LK: I think the next thing I want to do with my mother is you know, they have the DNAs that they're doing right now, and I actually want to go a step further and do that kind of what are the connections, if there is, maybe there's something else. We're doing it now for the Portuguese side of the family and I'm more interested in that because that's the *kolohe* [mischievous] side. [Laughter] A little *kolohe*.

AC: Do we really want to go there? We don't know what's going to turn up. [Laughter]

LK: We know that we're now connected with the Royal House of Portugal. But it seems like it's like kind of the shady end, so that's kind of the next step for us.

MT: When my father got married to my mother, Portuguese, in the olden days, they didn't like it so after my mother passed away, we went to live with my Japanese grandfather. And, I guess he didn't like us Portuguese so he would—we were supposed to be given to the Portuguese family, three of us. And so, my father, after a year or so, he got married to my step-mother, Japanese. So, I'm thankful that she kept us together.

AC: I think because of that, because we're brought up with—because of the prejudice she went through, I think that's why it has us a lot more aware of, now, the World War II, the internment of the Japanese and the 9/11. We don't want to see it perpetuated. We know it was hard on her. We know it was hard on her brothers and her sisters. I don't want to see it perpetuated.

JK: Exactly.

AC: As a human being, I think we need to accept people for who they are and not necessarily where they're from.

JK: And, it's not just out there. It's within every family. Every family has some discrimination story to tell.

LK: Oh, yes. We just recently had somebody marry a black guy. Okay, well, that was really interesting how everybody accepted that.

JK: Yes, we've come a long ways.

LK: Yes, but if we were true to our philosophy and our thinking, we should accept anybody, everybody.

JK: Don't see color, just see a human being.

LK: Absolutely, absolutely.

MT: So now, they're trying to learn more about the Portuguese side. I don't know anything.

JK: My grandchildren are Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Irish. So, they just want to please grandma. They say, "Don't worry, Grandma, we're mostly Japanese." And, I say, "I'm not worried because I bring you over here [JCCH] but I want you to find out about your Chinese, your Portuguese and your Irish."

AC: Yes.

LK: Absolutely.

JK: "Ohhh." [Laughter]

LK: And, that's why we do the DNA.

AC: "Why can't that just be two, or one?" And that's the funny thing too, because it wasn't just mom's Japanese side that looked down on the marriage, it was the Portuguese side [also], because they were educated, they had their status and they thought that their daughter marrying a Japanese person was below them. So, from both sides.

LK: So, it's both sides. It's like, what? [Laughter]

AC: But I think here we're blessed every year we're in Hawaii. Because Hawaii is, if you start with the aloha spirit and come from that place, then we all can live together and share that. I think from here, just bring that message out.

MT: Yes, but olden days, not [like that].

JK: Yes, olden days—but still, coming along.

AC: But still, some now, too but ...

LK: Oh, still. But we're trying to tell the families that they have no place to be prejudiced and to perpetuate that because of what we went through. We don't want that perpetuated.

JK: Right. Exactly.

AC: That and a good point with the pictures, too, because I think almost every one, I'm trying to think, all of our cousins, I think we've all married outside or [are] Japanese mixed.

LK: Yes. That's going to be an interesting [project]. We thank you for sharing that. We'll do that next time.

[Discussion over sharing the Honouliuli trip family photo]

JK: Thank you very much for agreeing to come. This has been a wonderful session.

LK: Thank you for inviting us. If this helps other families to get themselves organized as far as reunion.... We want to encourage all the families to do that because it's so rewarding in the end when the future generations get it. Because sometimes we're not sure ...

JK: Yes. I guess every organization like you said, the *Shingon*—you know here too, our members' getting older and older. And how to attract the young people. I think it's through family. That's the strongest place to have [continuity] and it's good for family too.

LK: Yeah and sometimes I think as the older person, the head of the family, I think you have to say, "You just got to do it. That's it." Like when we go to *Obon*, nobody really wanted to dance—[our elder] just said, "You know, we're going to go and we're going to at least dance just one dance least one dance." Nobody told us it was going to be the longest song, but by the end of the song...

AC: We loved it.

JK: If you don't try it, you don't know.

LK: Absolutely.