JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAI‘I

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Masamizu Kitajima (MK)

October 6, 2006

BY: Florence Sugimoto (FS)

FS: Please give us your name in full, your birth year, and your place of birth.

MK: My name is Masamizu Kitajima. I was born on August 1, 1933, in Ookala, Hawaii.

FS: Please give us your parents' names.

MK: My father's name is Shoyu Kitajima, born in 1908. And my mother's name is Kameshiyo Tashiro Kitajima. Her place of birth is Japan. They are both from Saga, Japan, Sagamachi, Sagashu, Sagaken.

FS: Why did they come to Hawaii?

MK: Oh, wait. My mother's birth is April 17, 1910. My father's birthday is January 1, 1908. They came to Hawaii because he had just graduated from ministry school and my uncle was moving from Ookala to Kohala to a new, different church, so this created a vacancy in Ookala--the Ookala Japanese school--so my uncle called my Dad over to replace him, and the Betsuin here in Honolulu (Jodo Mission of Hawaii) approved the move.

FS: Then his place of assignment was…

MK: Ookala Japanese Language School.

FS: Does that mean he came as a Japanese language school teacher, or as a minister?

MK: He came as a minister so he was originally tied to the Betsuin here, the Jodo Mission Hawaii on Makiki Street and served the members from Laupahoehoe to Hamakua. The language school was his secondary occupation.

FS: But they also had…

MK: They didn't have a church per se in Ookala, but they had a Japanese language school, which also served as a church. The plantation people couldn't make a church since it was really a plantation camp. So I understand around 1938 or something thereabouts after we left, the school building was demolished.

FS: Oh, I see. What was the language spoken at home?

MK: Oh, Japanese. Nothing but Japanese. Both my parents never spoke any English at all.

FS: How about the language spoken with…?

MK: My peers? I have three brothers and one sister, so there were five of us all together, and we spoke English, and being that I was the oldest, I learned that I had to take more responsibility than anybody else, especially during the war years when my father wasn't with us.

FS: Does that mean you were dual citizens, all five of you?

MK: Dual citizens? Yes, we all had dual citizenship until a few years after World War II. And actually we moved from Ookala to Kapaa by assignment from the Betsuin, Jodo Mission Hawaii. They needed to build a new church in Kapaa, so my dad, being one of the younger ministers at that time, was assigned Kapaa and his mission was to gather the money and build a new church. So then we moved to Kapaa in 1938; at that time I was five years old. So the three of us, me, my sister next to me who was born in 1935, and my brother born in 1936. We moved to Kapaa.

FS: What was your family life like?

MK: Typical Japanese family, I would imagine. Well, the only thing, I guess being a minister's family it's a little bit different in that my dad never went to work outside. I kept wondering to myself, "How come everybody goes to work and he doesn't go to work?" until I realized that he had to be at home because this was where his work was and people kept coming to the house. Very often I saw people who were high up Japanese dignitaries who would come to the church, come to the house. They had all kinds of meetings, and stuff like that. And that I learned at a real early age, that he was somebody that people respected and recognized as special.

FS: Were there any family values or traditions that you observed regularly?

MK: Well, most of it was religious. All the different sect holidays or recognition days like *ohigan* or *obon*, all those things, and they come so often, every couple of months, within a couple of months or had *obon* or *ohigan*. You thought you get over one and you had to prepare for another one. And I used to hate that

primarily because, even though I was only about seven years old or something, I had to go out and clean the yard and polish the brass on the altar. And in those days you had no lawn mower; you had to go out and cut it with a sickle, and I learned how to use a sickle early in my life. I learned what haole koa was. It kept growing in the yard every time I turned around.

FS: And then, actually your father did not emphasize any other kind of values, such as working hard, respect for elders…

MK: Oh, that was standard. It came without question, respect for elders, keep your mouth shut, don't say anything unless you're asked to do.

FS: What about your relations with your neighbors and the community?

MK: I would say it was a little strained. I was the minister's son. I had to be a good boy. You couldn't do things the same like anybody else. You had to obey, and you had to stay out of the spotlight. I couldn't go where other people went. So I think, during my younger years I stayed pretty much isolated. The kids, the three of us, would play. Well, eventually, in 1938 my younger brother came along, and in 1940 another one came along. But until I went to camp, I don't think I really associated with very many people. We stayed within our family and never really went out into the community. And I don't think the community really accepted us per se as just another person. We were kind of, you know, "He's a minister's son." And they would back off and I would back off. It's kind of strange but you just get adjusted to that. It's a fact, the way of life. It could have been a carryover of the Japanese class system.

FS: So you were sort of restricted in your behavior?

MK: Yes, in those days especially, pre-war, the class system was very predominant. You stay in your social class. So then you're looking at all plantation workers. The plantation workers, they never classified themselves in different classes. So many were very higher ranking people, and yet they said they were plantation workers and never made it known to others unless somebody researched it. And my dad used to tell me, "Oh, this person came from this place. Be very respectful because his class is higher than you," and stuff like that. I knew that prevailed. I remember a guy who was a contractor or something like that. He was supposed to be part of the noble [class], higher than any of us, but he used to come to our house, and just get down, and start talking and they'd start drinking, and then letting out, and I'd be in the back room, listening to everything that was going on. I learned more that way than anywhere else.

FS: Which English and Japanese schools did you go to?

MK: I only stayed at my dad's Japanese school in Kapaa. He ran a Japanese language school at the same time. I went until about third grade, I think, something like that; by that time the war broke out.

FS: What about English school?

MK: English school? I was in third grade at Kapaa Elementary School when the war broke out.

FS: Where?

MK: Kapaa.

FS: Kapaa Elementary?

MK: Well, 1941, my parents were planning to go to Japan in summer… June? Something like that. So before that, I went to Japan and stayed with my grandfather and I was starting to learn the ministry over there.

FS: Please tell us if you have any special memories of your school days before December 7th.

MK: Not very much primarily because I hated Japanese school and being the sensei's son, I had to go to school and I had to excel. And everybody would look at me and say, "How come you're sensei's son and yet you don't know very much?" "I don't like, I don't want to learn Japanese." And so I was more rebellious than anything. That was one area I could rebel, and I rebelled. So I refused to study Japanese. So then because I refused to study Japanese, of course, as an example, I used to get knocked around by my dad in front of all the other students. Then I'd rebel more. I was very rebellious. That's how I learned to become very rebellious. And I think that was one of the reasons my dad decided to send me to Japan ahead of the family, to learn the cultural background required that I be more complacent, or more obedient. So I went to Japan; I went to my grandfather's place.

FS: When was this?

MK: 1941. In March, something like that. Several months prior to my folks coming to Japan. So I went to Japan. I know I left in the third grade, something like that, and went to Japan.

FS: Did you like it?

MK: No, I didn't like it, because the first thing I did was go over there and learn how to become a minister. I started memorizing the chants and had to recite them, get up five o'clock in the morning, clean the church, and then do the prayers every

morning, before you eat breakfast, rake the yard, make sure all the rake lines are straight, and then I'd eat breakfast.

FS: And how old were you?

MK: Probably about seven or eight. And then I would have to go to Japanese school.

FS: Where was this?

MK: Saga, Japan. Sagaken. In Japan, the churches are owned by the families. You know being Jodoshu -- Jodoshu churches are very rich, because their lands come from the first shogun, until McArthur divided it and gave it to the farmers. But at that time, I remember that my grandfather's church was big. Later on in the year, in the fall when the rice harvest came about, all the farmers would bring all the harvested rice to the church because that was their payment for the rental of the land. And then the rice merchant would come and buy all the rice and this would be the subsistence for the church. So I learned what it meant to have land and what it meant to have people working for you or leasing the land out and what they could do for you. I learned a lot in a sense that way, but I sure hated it. I'd get knocked on the head every morning during the five o'clock prayer. We're doing the prayer, and I'd nod off to sleep and I'd get hit on the head with the gong stick. I thought my grandfather was really hitting me. I know now that he just tapped my head but still it hurt, just like he was really hitting me.

FS: Then did your parents join you?

MK: Yes, in June my parents came up, and they came to my grandfather's place so we got together. And they were supposed to stay until August, I think; they were supposed to stay there a month and a half. And at that time, because of the political situation in Japan, well, my parents had said something about things are changing so that they were taking me back to Hawaii. I still did all the things that I was doing then, but then I was preparing to go home with the family. Then in August when we were supposed to leave for Yokohama we were informed that the ship was not sailing. We couldn't leave because there was no way to leave, so we just deferred the idea. My dad said that we had to get back somehow because there was all the stuff in Hawaii left open; we can't just leave it the way it is. I remember him going all over the place, trying to find some way of getting home to Hawaii. In October, the *Tatsuta Maru* was sailing, so somehow he booked passage for us and we came back in October, 1941. That's how we happened to be back here in '41 when the war started. If it wasn't for that, we probably would have been stuck up there; my dad would have gone in the service up there.

FS: Was your father of eligible age?

MK: Oh, yes, he was thirty-what, probably under thirty years old.

FS: So you went back to Kauai. That would mean that about two months later…

MK: A month and a half later, the war broke out. That was kind of difficult in a sense because my dad had collected a lot of money to build that church that he was supposed to, and then we had gone to Japan, so there was a lot of accusations about him taking the money and all that. Fortunately we had friends who were very honest and they retained the money for my dad before all this happened. I don't know how it happened. A lot of money. I guess the church people took care of it, and we didn't have the money in our house, fortunately.

FS: Now then, on December 7th, how old were your parents and you especially?

MK: My dad would have been thirty-three; my mom would have been thirty-one. I was seven, eight years old? Yeah, because I went to camp at nine.

FS: Do you have any memories of that day?

MK: No, I have no memories of what December 7th was like. To me, it was so remote. When we heard anything, everything was over already. And December the 8th, that Monday, I know we had school, and in the middle of the day they said I had to go home because something was happening at home, so I walked home, and then my dad was already gone. The FBI had come picked him up already, December 8th.

FS: So he was at home when he was arrested, and you were not there at all?

MK: I think my mom and my two younger brothers were at home. Everybody else was…I think three of us were at school, at Kapaa School. Only my two younger brothers were at home.

FS: Do you know where he was taken?

MK: He was taken to the Wailua, Kauai jail I guess you would call it, the building across the street from the current Kailua Golf Course Clubhouse. It was a kind of funny place because I know they were taken in there and the place had all barbed wire around there and all that. They were assigned to cells but the cells were all left open, and they could walk between rooms and all that. My dad said when we used to go and visit, "You don't have to work; they're just keeping us here to keep an eye on us."

FS: Then you did visit him there?

MK: Oh yes, every Sunday the family would go up. We'd make bento and get together and we eat someplace on the grounds. And everybody that had family over there did the same thing. Every Sunday we could go and visit.

FS: Do you know about how many so-called prisoners there were?

MK: No, I don't. I have no idea how many people. I know there were four people in my dad's. Maybe under twenty? There weren't that many cells. Four, six cells.

FS: Now what was the effect of your father's sudden arrest?

MK: Kind of sad in a sense primarily because everybody was afraid. Nobody would come. We were really isolated. You know, for a place where people always used to come to the house for advice or anything like that, nobody came. We had no money to go out shopping. We had no means of support. And every so often, when we weren't around, or we were in the house or something, somebody would drop food off, but nobody would acknowledge that they dropped it off. In those days you know you had no telephone or anything that you could communicate with people, but you'd go to the door and sometimes you'd see something there, in those days remember the stores used to deliver to the houses? And somebody would buy something and have the store deliver it, but it would be delivered anonymously. I think everybody was afraid to be incriminated just by association, and being that my dad was one of the ones arrested, they didn't want to be incriminated in any way, so they just stayed away. Kind of lonesome life. And there was only one lady that I remember. She was an American citizen (Caucasian), and she came over and she brought food for us. Daily things, like vegetables, we had to try to raise our own. Most of the stuff that came, came from the Red Cross, and yet, it just wasn't suitable because the Red Cross are American, American stuff, and they'd bring cheese to us. They'd bring moldy cheese. I remember moldy cheese coming every week. I'd look at that thing and say, "Man, what am I going to do with this cheese? I don't want to eat cheese." So the elementary school meal was my meal.

FS: So did you grow vegetables?

MK: Yeah, we raised our own vegetables in the back yard and my mom would help us. But one thing really stood out in my mind. It affects me to this day. When these FBI guys came, they came every week to inspect the house.

FS: Even after your father's arrest?

MK: Well, right after my father's arrest, I think it was… My father's arrest was Monday; I think Tuesday they came and tore the house up. They tore everything up! Every book, every place you could put things in, they just tore it. And all they did was pull the drawers out, flip everything out, not really looking at anything, just empty the contents on the floor. And they did this every week so my mom put the papers and contents in the boxes, stacked up the boxes, so they can flip the boxes again. And they still came. And they even brought some people out and dug under the house, just to see if we were hiding something. Primarily they wanted to know how come we didn't have any money. And I kind

of suspect that they knew my dad had been collecting funds someplace and now there's no money, and then all of a sudden we went to Japan and came back and had no money. So it must be that we had taken the money or something, some way to make some kind of accusation.

FS: Is that about the time that you had your first official eviction notice?

MK: Oh, no. That went on from December, I would say until April, May. And then in about May sometime I think we got a notice the first time, and I understand that those people went to Crystal City.

FS: When you say "those people" who are you talking about?

MK: The first internees from Hawaii, the ones that went in that relocation. Some place just before summer, we got notified that we had to go to relocation camp. Our family had to be interned. And the travel notice was something like two days. We had two days to prepare, something like that. And my mom said there was no way we were going to move in two days. We can't pack and leave in two days, so she said we refuse to go. So, I don't know who this person was, he understood so he came over and said, "Okay, I'll talk to them and see what…" So they did give us a reprieve so that we didn't have to go. But he said to be prepared next time because you'll probably have to go. So we got off, that time. Then in November, early November, we were notified – our second notice -- that we had two weeks to pack up and get ready to go because we were moving at that time. That's how I knew my dad was in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, because they said something about Crystal City being pretty close to where my dad was.

FS: Who told you that?

MK: I don't know. I think it was the person that was the interpreter and who came to see us, representing the relocation department, the WRA [War Relocation Authority].

FS: So actually, this second notice in November was the one that told you that you had to leave for a specific place?

MK: Yes, at that time they said we were going to Arkansas. We didn't know where in Arkansas. All we knew was Arkansas, so I remember looking at the map and I said, "Where are we going to Arkansas? I don't know." He said, "It's someplace in the southeast." Must be swampy land because southeast is all along the Mississippi. That's the only geographic location that I had but by this time my dad had moved to Louisiana so we thought, we were under the misinterpretation that once we got to Arkansas my father would be released from his internment camp and join us in Arkansas.

FS: Does that mean that your father went from Kauai to Honolulu…?

MK: Sand Island.

FS: And from Sand Island he was shipped…

MK: To wherever. I don't know where he went to. Then he ended up in Oklahoma.

FS: And the first you heard…

MK: …during the summer of '42.

FS: Oh, so the first you heard of his whereabouts was in summer…

MK: No, my mom corresponded with him quite well. They had all these papers, correspondence, which didn't amount to anything because of censorship. They used to cut the paper, cut all the sentences out, and all was just like paper ribbons. But it had the address. And they would still write to each other and my mom would try to decipher what was written in between, so my mom and dad used to keep it very simple. But the letters, the correspondence used to go back and forth all the time, so there was no lack of correspondence. Like some people say they never knew where anybody was, that didn't happen to us. We more or less knew where he was all the time.

FS: Do you remember when the first letter came?

MK: No, well, even from Sand Island they used to write. After he left Kauai, my dad used to write. So that I knew, the letters kept coming in.

FS: And from that time there was censorship already?

MK: Yes. Definitely. There was a short period of time after Sand Island when we didn't know where he was, but later on, within a couple of months, and found out where he was because he had sent letters home, and after that I knew that he had gone to Fort Sill. So we knew he was someplace in the Midwest.

FS: So before that, you don't know where he was.

MK: No.

FS: Then going back to your being removed from your property…

MK: From Kauai. We left about the day after Thanksgiving. We went on one of those boats that sailed between the islands, overnight trip, and came over here to the immigration center.

FS: Did you have trouble disposing of your assets on Kauai?

MK: We had no assets anyway, so it really didn't mean very much. Most of the stuff we just left over there and what we could, we packed up. What valuable things we had, well, my mom had *azukeru* [left] to some friends, close friends, and she made sure that the people she associated were not the issei, they were definitely the nisei.

FS: Why was that?

MK: I don't know. I guess she felt it was safer to deal with nisei, to associate with nisei rather than issei because the issei were kind of afraid of associating with us.

FS: Now then, from Kauai you took this boat and came to Honolulu.

MK: Took the boat to Honolulu and went to the immigration center on Ala Moana, on Ala Moana Boulevard, and…

FS: How long were you there?

MK: We were there a month, until Christmas.

FS: Tell us about some of the conditions there.

MK: I really don't know. Well, when we first went there, it wasn't too bad. It wasn't very crowded and we thought "How come we've got to stay here all this time?" But each week, as each ship came in, the place got more and more crowded. And it was just before Christmas, just a few days before Christmas, a bunch from I think it was the Big Island, no, Maui, came down, came in, and then as soon as they came in, they said "Oh, we're going to be going to the Mainland pretty soon," and sure enough, the day after Christmas, we sailed. We went on the Lurline, shipped out of here, and we sailed seven days to San Francisco, under the Golden Gate Bridge, and it was New Year's Day. I looked at the bridge and said, "Oh, my first introduction to the Golden Gate."

FS: That was New Year's Day.

MK: New Year's Day 1943.

FS: Now, you actually went from San Francisco then to where?

MK: I don't know what rail yard we stayed in, but we got into San Francisco. It was dawn, New Year's Day, probably about six o'clock, or seven o'clock, with dawn just breaking, we passed San Francisco. But by the time we got off the ship, we weren't very far from the train yard, and we walked down the gangplank. It wasn't very pleasant, but we went down the gangplank. Cold, because we had no clothing. And we went down into the trains. And we thought, "Oh good, we got

trains, solid ground, and then we'll be going someplace pretty soon." But then we didn't go anywhere. The rail cars were cold. We stayed in there all day. We couldn't use the bathroom facilities. They wouldn't allow us to use the bathroom because it was in the rail yard. We had MPs [Military Police] in there with pistols and rifles in each car. We couldn't move out of the cars. We had to stay in our car. And they were eating; we weren't eating. We had no clothes. They wouldn't even give us blankets because they didn't have any to give us. All we had was maybe a sweatshirt and we had, well, Hawaii clothes in January in San Francisco. I remember the day being so miserable--I couldn't use the bathroom, so finally my mom said, just go to the corner. And there're other families, all the families got together and just select a corner and they used the bathroom there. They said they'll clean it up later. Because in those days, when you use the train bathroom, it fell on the tracks. The waste used to fall on the tracks, on the rail bed, so when you were in the rail yard you could never use the bathroom. Just like you couldn't use it in the stations. So at that time, it wasn't that – it was cold but we never had any water so we didn't intake anything, so there was no output. But by that night I think everybody in the train had diarrhea. And I can't recollect what time it was, anything like that, but we knew, we felt the train bump, then a few minutes later we started getting heat in the cars because the steam engine was pumping steam into the rail cars. There was no way to heat those cars without the locomotive on there. As soon as the steam came up, we started rolling. So I think that was the most miserable day I had in the whole journey.

FS: And once the train started going…

MK: It was all right. But there was some restriction on the water consumption. They really didn't have enough water for the whole train so we were kind of like rationing for water. They fed us okay, but they never had anyplace where we could go for water except the dining car; I remember that.

FS: Were there bars on the train?

MK: No, it was regular rail cars, old rail cars, but they had MPs on board. Everytime we'd stop, we got a change of guards. It was the only reason we were stopping—change of guards or putting on coal for the train or putting water into the tender, or something like that. Other than that, we never stopped. Or—we stopped, I'm sorry. We'd get sidetracked to allow the main track to run and we'd be on the side. Sometimes we'd stay sitting for hours, then that was the same story, we couldn't use the bathroom.

FS: How long was that train trip?

MK: The train ride was five days. One time they let us off, someplace in New Mexico or somewhere thereabout – or Texas or someplace around there. They told us, "You folks can get off the train. The train gonna stay on the siding for awhile," so the guards all let us off, and said, "You guys can go. But don't go anywhere."

(Laughs.) Where are we going to go? We're in the middle of the desert! Nobody's going to run away. But that was the only day that we could get off the train and walk around.

FS: Just one day!

MK: Just for about a half hour or so. But it being cold, nobody would stay out. They get back on the train. But every time we'd get on a siding we would hate it because the locomotive would pull off and the train would get cold. After five days we arrived in Jerome. That was the first time I heard the name "Jerome." And the most significant thing about, that I remember about that, was when we pulled into the camp, they had a big, big bonfire. That fire was big! They had all wood. They said because the Hawaii people were coming—all these people, most of these people were from the Sacramento Valley, they said they were greeting us, so they had built a bonfire for us so that we could be warm when we got off the train. So while we were waiting for the trucks to haul us with our bags, we all stood by the fire to stay warm.

FS: Was this near the train station, or the camp?

MK: Right there in the rail yard.

FS: In the train yard.

MK: The train yard—the barbed wire was right against the tracks, so when they unloaded, you walked right into the camp.

FS: Oh, I see.

MK: That, I understand, was why the camp was built there, because there was a rail head where they could deliver produce and products to the camp, and that was one of the requirements, that you had to have a rail head for the camp.

FS: So you were actually greeted with a bonfire by the residents who were already at Jerome?

MK: Already there, yes, from California. You see, Jerome was mostly for people from California and we were the newcomers. They had been there maybe two or three months before we got there in January '43, is my understanding. It was late '42 when the camp got built.

FS: I wonder where they got the wood from.

MK: They cut the wood from right there. They milled their own lumber. They cleared the forest. That land was supposed to be like a welfare system so that people could have a better life. All these sharecroppers needed a place to live and do

their farming and stuff. This land was actually supposed for them (the sharecroppers). Taxes had not been paid for, so the government had taken it and they were going to use it to help the poor people in Arkansas, but then the relocation came about and the WRA appropriated the land to build the camp. And then, in order to build all those campsites, they had to cut the timber down to clear the land. When they cut the timber down, they made lumber from the timber to make the barracks. So they had the sawmill. In fact, some of the residents would go into the forest to cut special trees so that they could cut lumber to build nicer things.

FS: Did they use that also for firewood?

MK: Yeah. In fact a number of men from each block were required to go out with the trucks, go into the forest, cut wood, and bring the wood back to each of the blocks. I think there was a total of fifty blocks. Forty blocks had barracks. Not all of them had barracks on them. But if I remember correctly, Jerome had twelve barracks and I think six units per barracks, and because we had five in the family we could lived in one unit. Every household that had a male adult above seventeen or eighteen, they had to go out, go to forest and cut wood, so that we had firewood for our potbelly stoves in our barracks. So the ladies, "the mothers," when the timber was delivered, the mothers would go out and put the log on a saw horse and two people would saw… would cut wood. They'd cut it in short lengths. Then the ladies would chop the wood with the axes and that's how we got firewood. Every day they would bring logs in the winter. Summer was good because then there was no timber in the way so that there was a clear area where we could play.

FS: How long were you at Jerome?

MK: Until 1944. I'm not sure what part of the year; we stayed there about a year and a half in Jerome. We had regular elementary school.

FS: Tell us about your family life there.

MK: For me, it was a little different, primarily because I had a different life style in Kauai, where I never knew anybody else, and yet in camp when I came out of our "house," our assigned barracks, I'd meet somebody and have somebody who was my same age. We could go down to the mess hall together. We eat together. Then after awhile I got to a point where I'd get away from my mother, I'd run away from my mother to eat with my friends. And I know this made many, many families very unhappy. They'd say that you'd lost your family togetherness. And I think that was why my mom told me, "You're the oldest member of the family. You have to take your father's place. You have to hold the family together. This way, if you go the way we are going, our family is going to split up. If nothing else, we gotta keep our family together." When she told me that, I learned what it

was to have family responsibilities. But with that came, there's a secondary effect that my sister and brothers never understood that…

FS: What do you think caused your brother and sister to hate you?

MK: You know, being that my mom kept saying that I had to be the head of the family, I had to keep the family together, and all these other responsibilities that I never knew existed until she pointed it out to me, and this was one of the reasons that we had to stay as a family. I understood that they had to obey what I said, being that I was now "dad", I was dad so I had the authority to tell them what to do and they had no choice but to obey. And I think I was kind of like a dictator, so I don't blame them for thinking the way they did, and I think to this day we still have that sort of relationship. That's why I don't really get along with my sister and the brother under me. But with the younger two, I have no problems because they always looked up to me. To this day, they always call me "Nich" and when I say I'm going to do something they never question what I decide even to this day.

FS: What do they call you?

MK: Nich. *Niichan* [older brother]. Instead of *niichan*, they call me Nich. Whatever I decide to do I can do and even right now, I can go over there and say I want something and they'll do it. And it had quite a profound effect within our family relationship. And I think in a sense it was good, and in a sense it was pleasant, but it made things a lot easier to handle in our family relationship concerning my parents. When my parents became older and they need the help and stuff like that, then I could go to my brothers and sister and almost dictate what I wanted them to do to help my parents. It's not the best way to do things but it was effective.

FS: What was your daily routine like in camp?

MK: Play. Go to school. Come back. Play again. We never had to worry about food. When we were hungry we'd go down to the mess hall, and try scrounge what we want, what we could, or steal something from the back storage or be good to the cook. In the Hawaii block, most of the cooks were former fishermen. In Jerome, most of the males were not regular internees like my dad folks. They were fishermen who were at sea on December 7th, and were sent to relocation camps, so there were no merchants. So they became our cooks. And they knew how to cook since they cooked on the fishing boats.

FS: Tell us about school.

MK: Well, it's the first time I had haole teachers. I thought they were different in the way they taught. They were very innovative in a sense because I remember they used to have plays. They never had regular school like we knew school in

elementary school because they would come and they were more or less like babysitting, especially in Arkansas.

FS: Did you have books?

MK: Yeah, we had very little, very limited amount of books. Most of them were mimeographed papers like this. That was how we got our lessons. I know that I fell quite a ways behind when I was in camp in school.

FS: What grade?

MK: Fourth grade. Fourth, fifth, sixth. Yeah, when I came out in October I was in seventh grade in 1945. But in Jerome the school was more playful, more playing than really school.

FS: What about Japanese school?

MK: No Japanese school. Jerome had no Japanese school. The people there were not militant. They were ordinary people who were just trying to survive with what they had there. And most of them were looking for a way out of the camp at all costs. Every week as things relaxed in 1944, early '44, people were moving out going to Denver, going to Chicago, going to New Jersey. As soon as they could get out of camp, the family would start moving out.

FS: What did you play? Did you have toys to play with?

MK: No, we made our own toys. We did anything we could…

FS: What did you make?

MK: We made surfboards out of scrap lumber that came from the sawmill that was supposed to be used for the building. We had baseball. We played baseball, basketball. They had playgrounds for those.

FS: And you had equipment?

MK: Yeah, we had equipment. It was donated from someplace. I remember we had pretty good equipment… regular baseball equipment—bags and bases and stuff like that. In fact we had leagues, baseball leagues.

FS: For the children?

MK: Block against block. Within the block we had two or three teams.

FS: For the children?

MK: Yeah. There was enough boys to make I think three teams in our block 38.

FS: Did you also play with some of the animals that you may have found around there?

MK: No, we couldn't go into the woods to play. We had to stay within the confines of the barracks. Later part in the year, yes. Because 1943 all of that I remember they had guards and the barbed wires, and we could not approach the barbed wire. But later, in the fall, I remember during the fall we used to walk out where the barbed wire was and we talked to the guards and it got so they would recognize us and associate with us. Then sometime after that, all the guards disappeared. So then once the guards disappeared we started cutting the fence and we started going through and we were pretty much able to go around the camp but we wouldn't go very far because it was all swamp land. The only reason we had that dry place was because they had ditches dug for drainage, must be four feet deep, three or four feet deep, and they would have the barracks, the ditch, and a middle walkway, a ditch, and the next barracks, you'd have a plank that was crossing over the ditches to the walkway. During the winter when you had icy rain and you had to walk to the mess hall, you couldn't come out of your house and walk on that plank because it was too slippery. We were on one end of the block and the mess hall was on the opposite end of the block. You just crawled on all fours trying to walk on that icy ground. The first experience I had, I never realized how icy or how slippery the icy rain was. There really was no good place to play because it was all ditches, except the playground, which had been built as a playground. In fact, during the summer when it rained, we'd have a pond where they used to stack the timber for wood burning stoves. That place wouldn't have any timber there so there would be a flat area. We used to play ball over there sometime, or play tag or whatever games we could play. Then when it rained that place would be so deep with water that we could swim in it. And that's really how I learned how to swim. Not in Hawaii but I learned to swim in Arkansas. So then when you went outside the barracks area where the farms were, we couldn't go near the farms because the Japanese men would kick you out, so then we'd go in the woods and we'd go fishing in there and chase animals. The only thing we saw was snakes, rattlesnakes, water moccasins, and we'd try and catch those because we saw the men catching them. And we'd try imitate that. Most of the time we'd be swimming in that swampy water.

FS: You said "farms nearby."

MK: Our farms. Camp farms. The Japanese people are very innovative. Like the biggest problem with parents was that they couldn't take care of their kids because the kids kept running away, going their own ways. And then boredom took hold; they had nothing to do. So then they started farming. Each camp had acres of farms and each one would raise so much produce that they could supply our own mess halls. I found out during our last trip to Arkansas that between Jerome and Rohwer they produced enough truck farm crops that they supplied all

the federal institutions in Arkansas for the duration of the war. The federal facilities, like the jails, hospitals, and military and all that—they had enough truck farms.

FS: That was back in…

MK: '43. And then to this day, that reclaimed land is now raising not only cotton but rice and soybeans. In fact in 1946, when some of the former internees of Jerome who went to Poston, California, another camp, were released and had no place to go, they went back to Jerome and they worked for the company over there because they knew how to farm that land. They stayed there for about ten years, I believe. And there's still one family that's there who started a nursery after Jerome closed and to this day they take care of the cemetery in Rohwer. They have a graveyard over there. He takes care of the graveyard and the family takes care of the other memorials in that place.

FS: What did your mother do for living expenses?

MK: Well, she got a job. They all had jobs, what they could. You could get jobs if you wanted. It paid $16 a month and with this you bought what you needed, especially for us, we had to buy clothes. And the clothes were not given to us. We had to buy clothes. And if you wanted extra blankets, you had to buy the extra blankets. And I remember my mom saying that she had to work 'cuz she had to buy me a mackinaw so I could stay warm, since I would be outside a lot of the time. So she used to work by being a janitor. She would take care… Each block had so many jobs, cleaning jobs. Either you worked in the mess hall or in the laundry. But because she had us, she said the best place she could work was as a custodian and she cleaned the bathrooms and showers. That way she said she didn't have to work during the day when the kids were home. She could clean the showers and bathrooms at night when we were sleeping. That's what she decided. I know she did that all the years from '43 to '46. She said that was the best job she could get.

FS: Didn't your mother have any communication with your father during this time?

MK: They wrote. We had mail service. That's how we knew when my father was coming home, coming back to join us. We knew when he was moving and being sent from Santa Fe to Jerome.

FS: Actually was this where he joined you?

MK: You mean in Jerome? He met us in Jerome.

FS: How long after that did you have to be transferred?

MK: Maybe a couple of months. A couple three months. It wasn't very long after he came back with us. But one of the interesting things was that in Jerome, since we were in Arkasas and the 442 and the 100th were in Mississippi, in Camp Shelby, one day the Hawaii boys came over and they came to our block. Hawaii people were in block 38, 39 and part of 40. And because to Hawaii people in Jerome the 100th infantry who came over to visit us, were from Hawaii, we made every accommodation for them. I remember we used to go without rice all week just so that they could have rice on Friday when they came. They would stay with us Friday, Saturday and then Sunday morning they'd go back to Shelby. And every time our food allotment would be rationed for the week, and the block manager would say, "Well, this week we're having this and we have how many boys coming, and this and that, so we have to ration so we have this much stuff," and the girls would have to set up a canteen dance in the mess hall for the boys. And yet we were very happy to do it because we wanted to see them all the time and when they would come they'd bring us goodies from their PX.

FS: What were some of the things they brought?

MK: I don't know. I really don't remember.

FS: They didn't give them individually.

MK: No, they brought it to the mess hall to thank the people. Lot of candy. They brought candy by the box. That I remember. I remember their bringing Milky Way. I used to go over there, "Oh, I like Milky Way!" and Cracker Jack.

FS: And you had to buy those candies.

MK: No, no. That was given to us. The boys would bring it for us.

FS: Oh, it was part of your meal then.

MK: No, no.

FS: Snack?

MK: That was what the 100th infantry boys would bring as *omiyage*.

FS: But they would distribute.

MK: The block manager would accept the *omiyage* and distribute it. He would keep it the candy separate and then when we wanted some of the candy the block manager would be sure it was given to us. You wouldn't get more than you were supposed to. Otherwise if the candy was just left, the fastest one would be the first and grab everything and there would be none left for the others. It was quite orderly in those camps. You had quite an organization… a block manager,

assistant block manager. The people that worked in the mess hall had to get up at four o'clock in the morning to start preparing breakfast. That's the reason my mom didn't want to work in the mess hall. The prime job was the mess hall because you could get all the food. All the leftover food, you could take home and feed your family. But my mom couldn't get up at four o'clock in the morning and leave us and go so that she decided to do something otherwise.

FS: You don't recall then when it was that your father joined your family?

MK: No, I don't. I think it was in the spring of 1944. It wasn't too long before we had to move to Tule Lake. I didn't know why we were moving to Tule Lake. All I knew was that we were leaving. And I was kind of disappointed after we departed from Jerome because I thought we were going home because we were riding on the train.

FS: Do you think this was when you father had to answer the loyalty questionnaire?

MK: No. The loyalty question was asked of him when he was in Santa Fe. And at that time he had decided no, he was not going to sign the paper and take the pledge of allegiance, so he became a "no, no." At the time when he came home to us, he was very bitter.

FS: Did your father explain to the family that he had done this?

MK: Yes, he explained it. I understood why he had done it. He had talked about the incident when his fellow internee had gotten shot in his own camp and the guy was not… he had gone insane or he had lost his mind and he wanted to go home so badly that he tried to go over the barbed wire and the guard shot him. He was quite bitter about it. And he said that because of that he had not wanted, he had no desire, to stay in the United States. Now if it wasn't for my mom, I think I'd probably be in Japan to this day.

FS: Now when you were relocated to Tule Lake, how did you go there? By train?

MK: We went by train. We went to Tule Lake by train. We were on the train for five days again. The same set up. A little bit better accommodations. We had little bit better clothes. I think overall the trip was much more pleasant up to Tule Lake. But it was quite a contrast from a wet swamp to Tule Lake, which was a desert and just a dry bed. And then Tule Lake was an internment camp and there was supposed to be exchange of political prisoners.

FS: What was the reception like at Tule Lake?

MK: Very cold. Nobody liked anybody. When we arrived there the kibei were on the fence and they were already demonstrating. The fence was not four feet barbed wire but was six feet barbed wires. And the barbed wire was, well, they had some

concertina wire which I didn't know what kind of wire that was. All they said was "you can't go through that wire, not like the other one because you'll get cut up."

FS: I'm sorry, what was that?

MK: Concertina wire. It's a rolled wire. They spread it and you can't get through. The barbs on it are razor sharp. I later found out that that area had all the concertina wires because it was a stockade to handle all the rebellious kibei. These were all the rebellious, not only kibei, they were people that decided not to sign the declaration. They became "no-nos". That's what they were referred to.

FS: Then this wire was only in one part.

MK: No, the whole… The concertina wire was only in one part, right where the railhead was, where the train comes in, and where the stockade was. But the six-foot barbed wire fence was around the whole, which was one block, one mile each leg, all the way around. There were one hundred and ten blocks or something. The difference was that Jerome had only fifty blocks and they eleven or twelve barracks per block. Tule Lake had eighteen barracks to a block and one hundred and ten blocks. Much bigger.

FS: What was the housing like?

MK: Same type of housing. The housing was standard barracks, but we were allowed two rooms because of a family of five or six, seven when my father was there. We were a family of seven so we were allowed two rooms. It was just like desert. I think my mom folks tried to do some handicrafts. They used to go out into the empty block. Between some blocks there, they called them blocks, but they were really fire breaks so that if there was a fire they wouldn't burn the next block. And these fire breaks were a block width, and they would go over there and sift through the sand and look for shells and they would make different kind of brooches or ornaments, and these things would be collected and they'd have displays of it, and shows. Handicraft shows every month or so, showing what each block was doing. It was a contest among different blocks.

FS: Did you father or mother find work here too?

MK: Yes. My mother did the same thing in the block. She got paid $16 a month. And my father, being a school teacher, became a school teacher in *chugaku*, or intermediate school. He was an intermediate school teacher. He got paid $19 a month for being a professional, and I remember him saying that the students at Tule Lake, the students that he taught, were all very militant and I remember that every morning he would have to get out of the house, go down to the school, for *taiso* [exercises] every morning. And he used to tell me, "When you become

seventh grade, you're going to have to join in and go calisthenics and then go run, every morning." And every morning I used to hear him running.

FS: Your father?

MK: My father and the whole class. They would run by class. Each class would run. The whole class. And then the class was separated by sex. Male only and female only.

FS: And the girls also ran?

MK: Yes. They would run separate. And it was all "washo, washo." And every time they would get people more stirred up, they would run around those blocks. When the blocks started getting relaxed about things in the way the system was running, like it wasn't following the Japanese system, they would run around the block to kind of make a warning that "You guys better shape up, conform." In fact, especially the Manzanar group, was so militant. They were killing each other. A lot of the community leaders, for no reason, mysteriously would get killed. It was before we got to Tule Lake. Some kind of activity was going on and one of the block members got killed. Nobody could find out why he got killed. I later heard that he had confronted some of the militants and got into an argument. And when you said, "I'm going back to Hawaii," they said, "What are you… a Japanese? Or aren't you Japanese?" And we had to cut our head bald, Japanese style. You had to wear a white shirt, black pants, just like it was a uniform. And you had to get some kind of black backpack for books and stuff. That was your uniform to go to school, every day. So we went to Japanese school and to English school.

FS: What was English school like… just like Jerome?

MK: English school was kind of lax, just like Jerome. There was no push to really excel in the English language, and that's what made it very difficult for me when I came back. I fell so far behind academically. To this day, I've never recovered; in vocabulary and parts of speech, I'm terrible. But I learned Japanese then. I learned how to do multiplication. In my educational progress, I think Tule Lake was a blessing in a sense because I learned mathematics. I learned math in the Japanese system and to this day, I use that system. I cannot use any other system to do mathematics. All through college and everything, in my mind it was done in Japanese.

FS: Did you feel any resentment at this time?

MK: In camp, no. I didn't feel any resentment. It was really enjoyable, really, because I always had playmates, and I met quite a few, especially in Tule, I met a lot of "kotonks" [Mainland Japanese Americans]. And I associated with them even after I graduated from high school. In fact I went to see them, just to say, "I

didn't forget you." I've forgotten now, but. I really enjoyed camp life at my age because by the time we left camp I was in seventh grade, just starting junior high.

FS: Now that your father was with you, how did the family life…?

MK: More solid, unlike a lot of families which broke up. Kids went their own way. I did my part in keeping our family together until my dad came home and for that, I'm pretty proud of. Quite proud of my part in keeping my family together. It wasn't the easiest thing. I think I paid my dues for that. My dad always said, "You're the only one who could have done it." I think he was quite proud of me in a sense. When I was a sophomore in high school my dad asked me, "Are you going to be a minister?" I said, "No, I'm not going to be a minister." He said, "Why not?" I said, "I don't want to explain to you why I don't want to be a minister." But really it was because I could not understand how he could be so happy with the people when the people take advantage of him. I don't like to be taken advantage of. And I had to conform to different ways. I rather do what I want to do. Like I couldn't go to the pool hall. All my friends are going to the pool hall; I can't go to the pool hall. They all go to the movies; I can't go to the movies. Even when I grew up, it was the same thing. The day before I left home to go to school in New York, he said, "One thing you have to remember, if you don't try, you're never going to succeed, so you gotta try. Whatever you decide to do, try it." I think that was the best thing he ever said to me.

FS: Did you have a lot of leisure time?

MK: At Tule Lake? Lots. That's about all we had, time. If you didn't play you had time to wonder what to do next.

FS: What did you play here?

MK: In camp? Mostly ball. We played baseball, basketball. We had no place to go swimming. The *furo* [Japanese-style bath] was our swimming pool. (Laughs.) Usually baseball, basketball, and wandering around, and as strict as Tule Lake was when I first went there, by the time the war was coming to a conclusion and Germany had surrendered, the camp became quite relaxed that you could wander out through the gates, through the fence. The guards weren't around all the time. And we used to go wandering around, exploring. And that took a lot of our time. It was something different and we could go outside and see what the place was like. And go out there and play different things out there. It was a different atmosphere to play in, up in the mountain.

FS: Primarily running around?

MK: Primarily running around. Sixth, seventh grade kids.

FS: How were your meals in camp?

MK: Very good. Like we were saying earlier. When I first went to camp, I never knew what hash-browned potatoes were. I learned very fast. I learned to enjoy hash-browned potatoes, so when we were doing rationing to have enough rice for the weekend, I enjoyed the potatoes! In Jerome where it was swampy land, I learned to enjoy catfish, and the catfish was almost six feet long! They were big! The guy used go out; he'd find dynamite someplace. They'd go to the creek and blow dynamite and they'd bring fish home.

FS: This was in Jerome.

MK: In Jerome. They'd bring big fish. So they'd drop one or two fish at each mess hall, and we'd have fish when we never had fish on the menu. And the farms had all their own produce. We had pork because all the slop that we had had to be utilized so they raised pigs. And this was one of things, especially in Jerome, where the sharecroppers envied us because they thought that we were being fed federal meals and we were getting the ham and the pork in our ration and they weren't getting anything. We had plumbing facilities, electricity, water, and we had good food and they were outside but just getting by as sharecroppers. So in the camp we were actually better off. And I can understand in a sense now why some of the internees didn't want to go back to the West Coast, because of the way they were treated at the outbreak of the war. Lot of them went back to where they came from; they wanted to go back, but there also were a lot that didn't want to go back to where they came from. Some of them just remained in camp until the camps closed, sad to say. But overall, in both camps, food was never a problem. Always had plenty. I learned how to peel potatoes. We helped the cooks so that we could have a little bit extra something from the cook that day. (Laughs.) We would be more in the way than help, but they would tolerate us to make us feel as though we were really helping.

FS: I guess you really got along very well in camp.

MK: Especially in our young age. We had no real hate or anything like that. Like in camp, we had no liquor, no alcohol, early part. I remember the men used to tell (us), "Go down the mess hall. Go ask the cook for some raisins." They couldn't get raisins. We could get raisins, so we'd go get raisins, saying, "We want to eat raisins." So they would give us raisins. And we'd give it to the men and they'd make moonshine out of it.

FS: So even at Tule Lake they were making moonshine?

MK: Oh, every place. Even at Jerome, they'd make moonshine. At Tule Lake, they'd make moonshine. And we used to help them. We didn't know what it was for. They said, "Go get raisins for us." "Oh, okay." "Go get apricots for us." "Okay." And we'd get the bag of apricots. I'm sure there were close to a hundred kids that got a hundred little goody bags of apricots or raisins daily. The

men would collect the whole stack and make moonshine out of it. Then on Sunday we would see the men all drunk. When we asked, "Oh, where'd they get all the saké?" The people who knew would say, "You guys gave it to them!" At times we saw some of the cooking staff also drunk with them.

FS: And they would make the moonshine right in their barracks?

MK: In their rooms, yeah. Japanese are very innovative. What we gotta do, we gotta do. We learn how to do things.

FS: So all this was going on with the food. I mean, you were able to get extra food from the cooks.

MK: It wasn't from the government. It was from within our own complex. All those camps really became societies of their own. Each block was a community in itself. And the block held very tight within each block, the organization. Each block traded different food items to supplement what they needed or wanted.

FS: Do you have any observation to make about the young people in Tule Lake? Were there any incidents that you were aware of? Any difficulties?

MK: Nothing really comes to mind except for the fact that the type of people that was in Tule Lake in comparison to the type of people that was in Jerome was so dramatically different. Of course most of the people in Tule Lake were set to return to Japan; in fact many of them went back to Japan, even after the war was over. We probably would have done the same thing if my mother hadn't talked my father into deciding to come back to Hawaii. She kept saying we had to come back because the children were more American and citizens of the U.S. than Japanese, so they had to come back to Hawaii. We would never fit into the society in Japan. As a matter of fact, that was the only reason my father finally decided to come back to Hawaii.

FS: When did you get the notice that you were going to be released?

MK: Early in October 1945. I think it was about two weeks before we were going to be shipped that we got notified that we were going to be going home. Well, after the war was over and Japan had surrendered, we all made up our mind that we were not going back to Japan, and so our "bozu" [military-style] hairdo, all of a sudden disappeared. When we take a bath, the militant people would say, "When you going to get a haircut?" "Oh, not going to get a haircut?" "Oh, you gotta get your haircut, gotta get the 'bozu'." So we became defiant, knowing that we were going home to Hawaii so we're going the opposite way. So when our hair came about this long, where you could grab it, if one of those guys was in the *furo*, we wouldn't go into the *furo* with them because they would grab our hair and say, "Get your hair cut!" I guess it was our symbol of defiance against them. So when we wanted to take a bath, we used to sneak in, "Anybody in there?" (Laugh.) But

this was one of the unique things that happened being in camp when the thinking changed.

FS: You did feel intimidated by those…

MK: By the militant people, yes, very much. Even in Japanese school where we had to behave, like they would have a day exhibition or where we had interscholastic contest or physical education activities like that, everything would be done with Japanese military music. They had races, always done with Japanese military music--parade marching songs.

FS: Did you also observe ceremonies… formal public ceremonies where you bow to the Emperor's picture?

MK: Oh yes. And we always faced East. Every morning, every morning when it was *taiso* time. *Kirits(u).* [Attention.] *Rei* [Bow], face to the East. *Rei*. Then they had those Japanese announcements, where the leader makes his announcements. That was daily, regular, just like you were in Japan.

FS: When did it all stop?

MK: When the war ended. When the war ended, when Japan signed the surrender, all that stopped, and everything turned around like they became non-existent. They shrunk away. You didn't know they existed anymore. There was one person who, well, most of them were like that, but there were some who really stood out. He's in Hawaii right now, but he was very militant even after the war, after the war was over, he still insisted upon militaristic system, the Japanese system, and he used to terrorize us. When it came time to go back to Japan, he went. He was the first in line to go back to Japan, but he's back here in Hawaii now. (Chuckles.)

FS: When you say "terrorize" what did he do? Just threaten?

MK: Threaten, yes. He threatened so much that he ended up in the camp stockade, where there were MPs, for three months. And those are all solitary confinement.

FS: When you were ready to return from Tule Lake, how did you prepare for the trip or was there anything for you to prepare?

MK: There was really not much to prepare because we had nothing. We had taken nothing over and we had nothing to bring back. The only thing we had to leave over there was a cat that we had picked up, a stray cat that we had picked up and learned to love, and we felt so sorry we had to abandon the cat there. And we kind of looked forward to coming back to Hawaii again—to come back to a tropical climate, get away from the desert. So I can't recall how much time we

had, but the time that we had was adequate, more than adequate. We couldn't wait to come home.

FS: Tell us about your trip.

MK: We rode the train from Tule Lake to San Francisco; that took us a day. Then we went on the boat in Oakland, I think; I'm not sure where. But when we went on board the ship—it was a Liberty ship, the *Shawnee*—we saw a lot of GIs onboard, all Hawaii boys. It was the 442. And they asked us, "How come you guys are here?" "We come from camp." Then some of the guys said, "Oh, what camp were you in?" "Tule Lake." "Where's Tule Lake?" Then they said, "We know Jerome because we were near Jerome." So we started talking about it. I said, "We were in Jerome. You guys came to see us in Jerome, but after you guys left we went to Tule Lake." That created a relationship and we kind of enjoyed the whole trip coming home. It was a small ship but it was really an enjoyable trip coming back, compared to when we were going over.

FS: Now when you came back, you actually disembarked in Honolulu, is that right?

MK: Yeah, we disembarked here. I don't know how much money mom and dad had, but we had to go to Kauai. They dropped us off here in Honolulu, and from here on we were on our own. We had to fend for ourselves to get back to Kauai. We came to the Jodo Mission over here, the Central Betsuin in Makiki. And we stayed at Central Betsuin over here at the Jodo Mission for about a week. Then we went on a boat and we sailed back to Kauai. We were probably waiting for passage, booking, so that we could get on the boat. That's the reason why we stayed here at the Betsuin.

FS: When did you go home?

MK: October, 1945. So not too long after the war. And when we got home, the people at the church had gone to the house and cleaned the house so that we had a nice place to come home to. The windows and all that had been repaired. Before we had left, the military took over the church property and they used the social hall living quarters since it had bathroom facilities. Only the house that we were living in was not occupied by the GIs. After we had left, the church people decided that somebody had to live in the church cottage so that nobody would go in there and vandalize the place. A church member lived in the house all the time we were gone, so when we were coming back, word had gotten back over here that we were coming back, so the whole church membership came out and cleaned the yard, cleaned the church, cleaned the hall and everything. The house looked like just the way it was when we left. It was a nice welcome back. As far as housing and livelihood, my mom and dad did the same thing they did. They were busy trying to reestablish the church and get the membership together and of course do the first service. But when I got back to school, then I had a rude awakening. As happy as I was to come back to Hawaii, I came back and when I

went to school I found out how far behind I was. Everything they spoke about was so strange to me. I didn't understand what they were talking about, the speech, the language and history; I didn't know anything! So then I ended up in the lowest class in my grade, seventh grade, 7E or something like that. And I was with the kids that just didn't care to go to school. So consequently I felt the same way; I didn't want to go to school. Eventually they found out that I had gone to concentration camp. For some reason one day, a bunch of the Japanese kids—not other nationalities, Japanese kids—decided to beat me up during recess, I got into a fight with them. Then I went home that day without any clothes; I went home naked. Next day I went to school, it was the same thing again. And I found out that they were beating me up because I had been to camp and I was a shame to the Japanese people in Hawaii. I guess it was a conversation that had gone on at home, in their own homes, and this reflected upon me at school. This went on for almost a month, and nobody questioned why I never came back to class after recess or lunch. I would go home because I had no clothes. My clothes would be cut up, my clothes would be torn up, my clothes would disappear. They'd take my clothes off me and I'd go home naked. And this went on for about a month.

FS: Did your parents or the principal do anything?

MK: Well, yes, eventually somebody found out and those kids got called in by one of the administrators and they were reprimanded. But then I wasn't satisfied with that, so one Sunday, I took a bat with me and I stood outside the theater. I had no money to go a movie, but they could go to a movie. So I just stood outside the theater. As one came out, I confronted him. I said, "You know, you and I are one-on-one right now. In school you like to pick on me because you have a gang, but now you and I are one-on-one basis. This is what you get," and I hit him with the bat. "You want to pick on me, remember this." And I'd leave. The next week I'd go after someone else. I did that twice. After that nobody bothered me. I minded my own business, did my own thing, became independent. But for that, I hated Hawaii; I hated Kapaa; I didn't want to be in Hawaii; I didn't want to be on Kauai. And this feeling stayed with me until I graduated high school. And that's the reason why I decided to go to New York. New York had an aviation school. I wanted to be an aircraft mechanic, and that was the farthest I could get away from Hawaii. (Laugh.)

FS: So I take it your parents either could do nothing or…

MK: They could really do… They couldn't really do anything publicly, even though I was mistreated, and they asked me who the kids were. I said, "No, you don't need to know. I'll fight my battle." I said, "Number one, you can't do anything about it anyway. You can't go to your member family and then raise hell." So that's how it ended. One of the teachers, Mr. Yamada, called me in one day and wanted the names. I said, "I'm not going to give you names. It's my battle."

FS: And so you went to New York and studied.

MK: I studied. Well, I worked in a pineapple field when I was twelve years old so I would have enough money so I could go any place I wanted and go to school, after I graduated high school. So every summer I'd work and I'd work as long as the cannery would allow me to work, and they usually let me to work until October or November, and I'd work every weekend after school.

FS: This was after you came back?

MK: After I came back. After the seventh grade incident, I already knew I didn't want to stay in Hawaii, I wanted to move, I wanted to get out of this place, and I knew the only way I could do that was to have money. This motivated me to earn some money, and stash the money aside in order to be able to run away from Kapaa. This is why my dad told me. He said, "In order for you to succeed, you have to try." He said, "There are no failures. Failures are all try outs."

FS: And so you went on to New York and you became...

MK: I became a mechanic. While in school, I worked part-time at United Airlines as an airplane cleaner. I started in February of '52. I started washing airplanes outside the hangars in New York until August of '53, when I became a mechanic. I worked as a regular aircraft mechanic. And I worked as a mechanic in New York, then in Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and finally came back to Hawaii in 1960 with the jets.

FS: And so you did come back to Hawaii.

MK: I came to Hawaii in 1960 after I met my future wife, Marion Hamamoto, in Los Angeles in 1959. I returned to Hawaii because of my responsibility as the first born; to take care of my parents. I worked in Honolulu as a mechanic with United Airlines. During the Vietnam War I made frequent maintenance trips to our allied countries including Vietnam. I became an inspector in 1967 and in 1969 I went to Boeing Aircraft Company to take part in the building of our first 747 airplane for fifteen months. Subsequently returning to Honolulu I worked as a aircraft maintenance foreman. Between 1982 and 1986 I worked as a 747 aircraft maintenance controller in San Francisco. After United Airlines acquired Pan American Airways in 1986 I was temporarily assigned to New York for two weeks for the initial inauguration of the New York-Tokyo nonstop flight but the assignment lasted two years. I returned to Honolulu and worked as a 747 aircraft maintenance specialist for the Far East Division but worked out of Narita, Japan. I had ten stations to service. Being a troubleshooter, time was critical so I had to be centrally located where I had immediate access to all the stations.

FS: So actually you came back after retirement?

MK: Over here? No, I retired from Osaka as my last duty assignment. My home base was always Honolulu. My family remained here in Kaneohe throughout my career.

FS: So you never really left.

MK: No, my job was all over the world. I lived here. I was stationed in Honolulu; my domicile was Honolulu and yet I worked everywhere that the 747's flew. My assignments came from San Francisco. From 1969-1971 I was in Seattle with Boeing. In 1982 I worked in San Francisco until 1985. Then in 1986 I went to New York, worked in New York '86 to '87. Then back to San Francisco until 1989. I came back to Honolulu in 1990. Then in August 1990, I went to Saudi Arabia for Desert Shield until Desert Storm. After the two weeks' war I went back to Saudi Arabia to bring home the first troops, which were the Marine Corps from Kaneohe.

FS: Oh, you did?

MK: Then in 1991, after the Gulf War, I went to Osaka. Well, I came to Honolulu for a little while then went to Osaka. And I retired out of Osaka when they told me I had to return to Honolulu to work in Honolulu. By then, in 1990, the company had bought Pan Am South America and were thinking of expansion and employee ownership. I didn't want to get involved with employee ownership so I decided to retire. I wanted to be at home with the family.

FS: Actually, in looking back, how would you describe your internment experience?

MK: For myself, very educational, very different. I learned about how fortunate I was in a sense because I saw people less fortunate than myself. I saw how others living in poverty and how they were being treated. Even though I was an internee, I saw how less fortunate they were than me. I learned to appreciate what values that the family has, and how we must hold the cohesion of the family, how being alone was worthless.

FS: Is there any message you would like to leave with the younger generation?

MK: (Laugh. Pause.) I would say that the world is always changing and what may seem so bad, so unbearable, if you survive through it, live through it, things have got to turn better and there must be a better life that you can live, and the only one that can make that life is yourself.

FS: Thank you very much for your very interesting story. We appreciate it very much. Thank you again.