Dr. Kazuo Miyamoto

(based on an interview by Karen Motosue and Pauline Siefermann in 1980)

(Background and Early Childhood)

I was born on April 1, 1900 in Olaa, Hawaii. My mother told me that I was born in the morning when the sun just came out of the horizon over Hilo, so it was a very auspicious beginning.

My father Torahiko Miyamoto was born in Uto-gun, Midorikawa Mura, in Kumamoto, Japan. He probably came to Hawaii around 1891. He first worked at the Ookala Plantation on the Hamakua Coast. Later on he moved to Olaa to buy a hotel there. There were a great number of people moving to that area. I think it was a German man who cleared the land and started planting coffee, so there were lots of laborers over there. It was also a crossroad for people who went to the volcano and back down to Kau. I think the altitude in that region is too high for a sugar plantation, so when the coffee plantation went out of business, it just reverted to pasture land. Fifty years ago when my father was still living, he accompanied us to the volcano and said, "This is the place where the hotel was," and it was just pasture land.

My mother's maiden name was Mosa Murayama. My father came to Hawaii first, then my mother came later. They didn't have picture brides then. She came as what they called *tsukuri fufu*, a "temporary wife," just to pass the legal side, you know. Single women weren't allowed, so there were temporary marriages. Upon arrival they went to the man of their choice. So I think she came in a group of four or five women who banded together and, just to pass the immigration, their paired together. And so when she came she landed at Honuapo in Kau and then went to my father's place. She had known my father because they are from adjacent villages in Japan. She came with his parent's approval and but her name was not entered in the register as married before coming. That took place quite a few years afterwards. When I went to Japan in 1913 I had some trouble of my own because they weren't legally married. So, in order to get the Japanese *koseki*, because at that time we were dual citizens, I became not the *chonan* but called *shoshi*. Its a legal matter that even I don't understand.

When I was 13 years old and attending Hawaii Chugakko on Fort Street, and it conducted the first group travel of young men who were born outside of Japan to go to see Japan. I was the youngest of the group and there were sixteen of us. We saw Japan for the first time and seeing Japan changed my whole view. Maybe it didn't affect the others,

but it did me. When I came back, I voraciously read things Japanese, especially Lafcadio Hearn. I became proud of my heritage at that time. So it changed my entire outlook on life. I am very unique in that respect.

My mother began bearing children shortly after she came; nine of them. And so she did *ogokku* at that time, cooking for these people, sewing, making tofu, different things. My father was the first contractor on the plantation and he employed about 15 or 20 workers. And being single men, they needed a cook, *ogokku.*

My wife's maiden name was Sadie Seiko Omokawa. She was born in Honolulu and trained to become a registered nurse at the Queen's Hospital. We have three children: Gertrude Keiko Natori, Victor Takashi and Eric Kiyoshi Miyamoto.

(Education)

I first attended Ookala School. We had only 35 students. It was a two-room school with the teacher in the middle. The school inspector once came in and quizzed me on two different things. He asked me, "What is the capital of Egypt?" I said, "Cairo." Then, "What is the capital of Ohio?" "Cincinnati." So he looked at me and said, "You better change schools." I was in the 5th grade, but I was the only one.

When I was 12 years old, the Japanese high school in Honolulu had three or four graduates go to the different plantations to recruit students. The graduates were from 18 to 20 years old and wore long white pants. I still wore khaki shorts so when I saw them I envied their pants. And I asked my mother, whether or not she could send me to Honolulu. She must have spoken to my father at bedtime because the next day he was all a-fire. He went down to speak to the Japanese school teacher. I was only in the 5th grade and in order to enter Chugakko, the middle school, one had to finish the 6th grade. But the teacher said, "I'll recommend him to the school," because I was good, you know, and so I got the long white pants and came out to Honolulu.

At that time we had to get on board an inter-island steamer at Laupahoehoe. The steamer was anchored about a mile off shore and the Hawaiian seamen rowed a skiff to it. Laupahoehoe landing was just an inlet, the skiff went up an down with the waves, so when it was up, you jumped and a sailor grabbed you.

Some of the old fashioned Japanese men working for my father came down to see me off. The Japanese, when they go out to war, have this *nobori* (banner). So they came down with the *nobori*, and exchanged *sake*, and made my departure very colorful and full of hope.

So I spent the next four years at the Hongwanji boarding school. At Chugakko they graded us and at the end of the year, I was second in my class. I maintained that first or second position to the very last. We had to compete with students from Japan. They were good in Japanese, but we beat them in English.

My parents didn't have much money and to send me to school was something. It cost my parents $8.00 a month, I think; it didn't amount to $10. And you have to figure that my father only got paid about $28 or $29 a month.

On a typical day at Chugakko the bell rang to awaken us at six in the morning. At seven we had breakfast. At seven-thirty we started Japanese school for an hour. Then we went to the English school. Then we came back and had another hour of Japanese. The curriculum was Japanese, written Japanese, Japanese history, geography, and translation of English into Japanese.

The first two years weren't much, but in the third year we had Lafcadio Hearn's *Kokoro.* You should read that book. It gives not only the definition but the implication of what the Japanese are, the Japanese heart. And in the fourth year we had to translate Inazo Nitobe's *Bushido*.

The English school was Royal School which was close by. I was a transfer from the 5th grade but they didn't have transcripts then so I lied and got into the 6th grade. But the 6th grade was so easy that I had the audacity to say, "Promote me to the 7th grade", and to my surprise, they did.

When I went to McKinley High School I was very poor in English. I got a C+ for my first paper. Then I began reading. I read and read and read, and used to commit to memory the idioms and so forth. By the end of the year I got an A- in English. In the second year my English became better. In my fourth year we had Miss Dow; she was the strictest teacher, but I got A- from her. Despite my poor state of preparedness, I was second in my graduating class and became the valedictorian. That was in 1918.

I had finished Japanese high school in 1916. I did yard work for a couple of hours in the afternoons in the Punahou area. In my junior year I worked as a salesman for a bakery shop. The owner who was distantly related to my mother said, "I tell you what, come and have your breakfast down here." So I used to stop over for hot rolls and coffee, and picked up some doughnuts or something for a noon meal. In my senior year I became a yardboy for the Japanese Consulate. They gave me room and $15 a month.

We used to go down to a *Meshiya,* a Japanese restaurant. At that time you could eat all the *gohan* you wanted and have *shiru* and some kind of a side dish for 10 cents. For 10 cents you could have a meal.

They did not serve lunch when I was going to Royal School. Hopoiki Bakery on Emma Street used to have round buns with salmon fillings for 5 cents. They served *chow fun* for two and 1/2 cents. So for lunch money at the boarding school we were given 5 cents a day.

While we were at the boarding school, once a month they gave us 15 cents spending money and we could take in a show or something. Our favorite place was the Empire State Theater (later called the King Theater) on King Street. So for 10 cents we took in a movie, and on the way back we'd go to Chinatown and have a bowl of saimin for 5 cents.

The thing that triggered me into deciding on a medical career occurred when I went to see the baker's wife at the old Japanese Hospital. In 1917 the hospital was still on Liliha Street, where the Kaluwela School is located now. I went to see here after an operation and I stood there like a fool, not able to express myself or express any words of sympathy. I really got disgusted with myself. I told myself I better become someone who can do something for such people.

But then, how can anyone with my family resources become a doctor? This was 1918 and America was in the midst of the war effort. Herbert Hoover was the director of the Belgium Relief. The word kept coming out to conserve food and send the food to Belgium. So the word "Hoover-ize" came about. Herbert Hoover had worked his way through Stanford and he became my idol, so I told myself, "If Herbert Hoover finished Stanford by working himself, why couldn't I?" So I decided to go to Stanford.

By that time I had saved $125 in gold. We had no paper currency then. And with this $125 I began my medical career.

I had no trouble getting into Stanford. I was an honor student and my scholastic credentials were ample. At that time Stanford was cheap. If fact there was no tuition. And the total expenses were about $20 for one trimester or quarter. I was able to finish three years of pre-med there.

But something occurred at that time. Its funny how a twist of fate can either break you or make you. In 1921 when I finished my third year, there was a great nationwide economic slump. Agricultural prices were down and farmers were having a hard time. Summer jobs were hard to find.

They used to pay us $3.50 a day for ten hours of work, but substracted 50 cents for meals.

Just at that time, the California land law took a turn for the worse. In 1913 anti-Japanese forces in California had passed a law so that farmland could not be leased to alien Japanese for more than three years. In 1921 it was made even worse so that Japanese could not lease land for more than a year. That meant that Japanese could not operate their own farms because it would be difficult to put a large investment with such short term leases. Although some land owners, who knew the efficiency and veracity of Japanese farmers, gave some of them as many years as they wanted, most of the Japanese had no legal assurance.

I got a call from my mother's cousin in Oakland asking me to go there where I met the Sakata's. The Sakata brothers were big tenant farmers in the Sacramento area and, through marriage, were related to a distant relative of mine. I was introduced and told that, "The Sakata's are big farmers and Tom Sakata has about 2,000 acres of leased land but, because of this law, he cannot have it renewed. Not only he, but about ten sub-tenants under him are affected. You being an American citizen, would you act as a lease holder for him and he will assure the expense of your medical education?"

And that's the way I got money for my education. In 1922 I had about 3500 acres under my name. I quit school temporarily and spent two years on the farm. I did not do the actual work because I had no knowledge of farming, but we had good tenants who did the actual supervision. I was sort of the overseer-messenger. I would get the workers from Sacramento and take them to the farm, run errands, go to the bank, buy seed, etc. It was a lot of fun but winter months were terrible because the roads were muddy, and sometimes you were marooned by rain and had to listen to these farmers talk for hours. I couldn't stand that for very long.

(Medical Education)

Because of the strong anti-Japanese sentiment in California, I did not want to continue my education there. At that time Washington University in St. Louis had an aspiring medical school and was being called, "The John Hopkins of the West," so I decided to go there.

I was accepted at Washington University Medical School and spent the best years of my schooling there. I was the only Oriental in the class and made many lasting friends during my four years there.

I was popular among the Negro patients. At one time my friend and I were doing a study on sickle cell anemia. We

went to City Hospital, which was the Negro hospital, to collect blood samples. At first I used to explain in detail what we were doing. Then later I got tired of doing that and just picked up a patient's arm and stuck it. This man jumped, looked at me and said, "Are you a Jap?" I said, "Yes, I'm Japanese." He says, "Shake hands." The Negroes had very warm feelings toward the Japanese because Ambassador Ishii had proposed the concept of equality of the races in an International Peace Conference in Paris.

Another enlightening episode involved a Negro man who just had surgery for cancer of the maxillary bone. I had to change his dressings two times a week and this involved pulling out the old gauze and putting in a new one. When I went up to him with my forceps, he stopped me and said, "If you ever hurt me, I'll knock you down!" He was a big fellow. I kept my mouth shut and said, "We'll just take it slowly." I pulled the old bloodied gauze out very, very carefully and, finally, it was done. The next day, we had to stick the patients for blood tests. As I walked to his bedside, every eye was upon me. And when I stuck him, the man jumped. The whole room began clapping their hands and said, "You jumped!" "No, that was not the doctor's fault," he said. "Its my fault that I jumped. He didn't hurt me a bit."

I had a difficult time getting an internship. I stood 28th in my class of 85 so I knew I wasn't going into academic medicine. I had many Jewish friends and my classmates told me to apply at the Jewish hospital because all the instructors liked me there, but I was turned down because I was Japanese, even by a Jewish hospital.

Finally, I saw a notice on the bulletin board that the Nebraska Methodist Hospital in Omaha was looking for an intern. I had met so much disappointment earlier that when I applied for that position, I asked then to say in the beginning whether my Japanese ancestry stood in the way of my appointment because the silent treatment hurt me the most. They said, "No we'll take you," so I went to the Nebraska Methodist Hospital in Omaha.

I was there for twelve months for my internship, and I stayed another four months to take extra training in X-ray. I was offered a residency at the University Hospital in Radiology, and was also offered a job with the busiest internist group to take care of their hospital patients, but I turned them down because I felt I had to come back to Hawaii.

(1929, Practice in Hawaii)

I returned home to Hawaii towards the end of 1928 and opened my office in January, 1929, on Kukui Street.

At that time there were two camps of Japanese doctors, the Japan educated doctors and the American educated doctors. The Japanese educated doctors included Drs. Tokue Takahashi, Motokazu Mori, Sanjiro Nakaba, Yukihide Kohatsu, Jiro Yoshizawa, Eijiro Nishijima, Tokujiro (?) Yanagi, and Chinani Hasegawa. The American graduates were Drs. Vitaro Mitamura, a University of Michigan graduate, Ichitaro Katsuki, Cooper Medical College, Mitsuharu Hoshino, University of Texas, Tsuneichi Shinkawa, Iowa, James Kuninobu, Loma Linda, and Thomas Tamura, Yale.

The first Japanese doctors to come to Hawaii were induced by the immigration companies. Most of them were graduates of *senmon gakko*, second grade medical schools, and were not of the level of the Imperial universities. At that time German medicine was superior in all aspects, even to American medicine, so doctors used to go to Vienna and German medical centers to learn. Up to the end of World War I, medicine's center was in Europe, especially in the German speaking countries of Austria and Germany. And Japan was influenced by German medicine. Even the general public in Japan thought more of German medicine than American medicine.

Therefore, in order for me as a practitioner to feel equal to the best Japanese doctors, although I didn't subjectively feel that I was inferior to them, I decided that I must have a Japanese diploma. But that was not the primary reason for my travel to Japan.

(1937-39, Japan)

After nine years of practice I had paid my debts and had saved some money. I wanted to travel, which was my hobby since childhood. So I cut short my practice here and with my wife and two children, I went to Japan and stayed there for two years. During that time I saw almost every corner of Japan. And during the second year I began to understand things that are uniquely Japanese. I really became very "Japanesey" after that.

While I was there I studied allergy at the Jikei-kai Medical College. And after two years I obtained the degree of *Igaku Hakase* (the doctorate in medicine).

During that time there was a war going on in China and Japan had occupied most of the strategic coastal cities on the Chinese mainland. Two members of the Lower House of the Japanese Diet (parliament) wanted to stop the crazy, foolish war because their constituents, the farmers, were having a difficult time. The cost of war was materially impoverishing the nation. So the two felt that they had to go over to the war front. And it just so happened that one of my friends was the son of one of these parliamentarians

and the latter was not in the best of health. So I said, "Why not take me along? Being a doctor I could be of help to you and I'll pay my way." So I went and spent two months in China in the company of these two men.

First we went to Formosa, then to Canton. Canton had just been captured by the Japanese so there was fighting all over the vicinity. I saw the dead, the wounded and the Chinese captives. Then we went to Macao and Hong Kong. From Hong Kong we took the Chichibu-maru to Shanghai, then to Hankow on a Navy plane. Fighting was still going on in Hankow. We couldn't travel at night because we could be attacked so we came down the Yangtze River to Shanghai. From there we went to the mountains in Shantung. By the time we got to Peking it had been two months and I was tired and disgusted, so I left the two and came back to Japan.

The two men met all the top military men and civilian leaders to find a way to stop the war. We met with these dignitaries everyday. So, I was the third person sitting in on these daily conferences.

I told myself that this was history in the making. At night I jotted everything down. Mr. Kato jotted things in Japanese so I checked my notes with his. So when I returned to Tokyo I had all these notes for my wife to type and in two months we had it ready to put into book form. The book was written in English. It was printed in Japan and I brought several hundred of them to Hawaii to be given away. It was called, "Glimpses of Formosa and China under Japanese Occupation in 1939." Because of the book I was labelled as a Japanese sympathizer by the F.B.I., and when World War II started I was picked up and interned for four years.

(1939, Return to Practice)

When I returned to Hawaii in 1939 I went back into general practice. Most of my patients went to the Japanese Hospital but I had privileges in all the other hospitals. To me the Japanese Hospital was the institution left by our forefathers and it was our duty as doctors to maintain it. Most of the employees were Japanese so the patients probably felt a lot more comfortable, and the cost must have been a little cheaper at the Japanese Hospital.

We used to make a lot of house calls because we were concerned with the finances of the patients. When a patient had to be hospitalized, it was only after everything possible had been done at home. We would do blood counts and urinalysis in the offices and draw blood for the Wasserman Test for syphilis. We didn't have all these profile tests that they now have.

I saw about seven obstetric cases a month. We charged $50 for nine months of prenatal care and delivery. I treated syphilis and gonorrhea in the office. The tuberculosis cases were referred to Leahi Hospital. It was the hardest thing to tell a patient that he or she had to go to Leahi because it was practically like banishment. They would break down in front of you.

I stayed away from orthopedic cases. Many patients preferred to go to "bone setters." They were mostly judo men and I think they did a pretty good job. Most of them have already died.

I did the simple operations like tonsillectomy, appendectomy and tubal ligations. I referred most of my surgical patients to Drs. Takahashi, Mori or Strode.

Most of the nurses at the Japanese Hospital were educated in Japan. I think it was in 1934 that a nursing school was started there. At first some of the classes were conducted in Japanese and some in English. I was actively connected with the nursing school because I was the principal for a year.

At the hospital the relationship between the doctor and the nurses was one of "big brother and sister," or "father and daughter," very intimate, and naturally the trust laid on the nurses was greater than one of just doctor and employee. The relationship was much closer in those days.

(1941, Internment)

On December 7, 1941, I spent the day at Tripler Hospital, attending to the wounded from Hickam Field. But that night I was among the three hundred persons of Japanese ancestry rounded up as potentially dangerous characters by the F.B.I. I was interned in spite of my citizenship and honorable discharge papers from the U.S. Army in 1918. After eleven months of incarceration, I was exiled with my family to a relocation center on the mainland. I could have settled anywhere outside of the hundred mile strip along the Pacific coast, but I chose to remain with the people in camp because I was most needed there. We had 18,000 people in the camp and only three active doctors. When I came back on August 16, 1945, I finally found out that they had no right to put us behind bars because we were American citizens. We could have walked out and they wouldn't have been able to stop us.

My hobby is to travel, so all my life I worked to save enough money in order to see the world. I made enough to eat, and every two or three years I took off. I've seen most of the world so that, in 1961, the Surgeon General of the Air Force appointed me on his staff of consultants. He

used to have me to take trips to Alaska, Brazil and Japan. So I would go to these places and give lectures. That's how I got the rating of Brigadier General.

(One of Dr. Miyamoto's book, *Hawaii, End of The Rainbow,* published in 1964, is in large part an autobiographical account of his interesting experiences)