JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAI'I

VOICES OF INTERNEES PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Paul Osumi Jr. (PO), Norman Osumi (NO)

April 13, 2017

Interviewer: Melvin Inamasu (MI)

Notes: Comments in brackets [ ] are by the transcriber. Inaudible words or sections are identified by ((?)) in the transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability.

MI: Today is April 13, 2017. We're at the conference room of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii to interview Paul Osumi Jr. and Norman Osumi to find out about their family history and themselves. More specifically, we're interested in the World War II period. We know that your father was interned and we have read Norman's book [*Today's Thought: Rev. Paul Osumi, the Man and his Message*] so we have some background of the story. My name is Mel Inamasu. I'm a volunteer here at the Japanese Cultural Center. I'd like to introduce Mr. Paul Osumi Jr.
Paul, can you introduce yourself with your full name, month and year of your birth and where you were born? Then we'll jump over to Norman.

PO: I'm Paul Sadao Osumi. I was born in 1937 in Hilo [Island of Hawaii].

MI: [To Norman] And you are?

NO: Norman Hideyuki Osumi. My birthdate is in October 1941 and I was born in Lihue, Kauai.

MI: Paul, tell us about your parents. Their names, their parents' names and where in Japan they came from.

PO: My father was Paul Sutekichi Osumi. He was born in Hiroshima, June 15, 1905. He came from Kusatsu, Hiroshima. My mother was Janet Sadako Monden. I think she was born on Kauai?

MI: Let me ask Norman. Norman has done the research, so maybe you can answer those questions first. Roughly what year?

NO: I have it here [in my book]. January? Around 1912 . She was born in Nawiliwili on Kauai. Her family was from Kauai. She's already third generation on Kauai because her mother was born on Kauai, too. Her grandmother came from Japan.

MI: Came to work on the plantation?

NO: No, rice farmers. I don't know what company.

PO: The [great-]grandmother was Yokomoto, the last name. I know they were on Kauai. My grandmother moved to Honolulu to go to school. I don't know when, but she went to Normal School. She was the smartest in the family, that's why the brothers all stayed on Kauai.

MI: The family on Kauai sent her to go to school when she was a teenager to go to school here [Oahu]?

PO: Yes, that's why for her age, she was unusual. She spoke very good English, so people were surprised. (Both chuckle)

MI: On your mother's side, you are fourth generation.

PO: Yes.

MI: On your father's side, second?

PO: Yes. On my father's side, his father came from Hiroshima. I don't know too much about the family.

MI: Do you know more, Norman, about the Hiroshima background?

NO: The family, from my understanding … my father came to Hawaii because his father [Usaburo] was here working as a cook at Fort Shafter. So he came here and the mother sent him or the father requested. I'm not sure, but he came here by himself when he was about fourteen years old. The funny part about it was that, after about seven months, his father went back to Japan and left him here. He had an older brother [Torakichi] who ran that Fukujitei Restaurant. It's in the Aala Park side. He was famous for shrimp tempura. It was a very well-known restaurant.

MI: That was whose restaurant?

PO: His [father's] oldest brother, much, much older.

NO: They had eight children.

MI: How much difference in age?

PO: Quite a bit.

MI: That older brother was in Hawaii and the father came back?

PO: And went back.

NO: And my father stayed there for a little while at the restaurant.

PO: Actually, it's weird because you go back … our father's father was a chef at Fort Shafter. The mother was pregnant with my father, then she went back to Japan and had him while she was in Japan, so he was born in Japan.

NO: The problem I have, that's what our mother said. My grandmother on my father's side went back to Japan because she was expecting. [However], I went to the Japanese Consulate to see records and I couldn't find any records that she had gone back to Japan to give birth to my father, but that was what our mother told us.

PO: Did she come back?

NO: Who?

PO: Her mother.

NO: No, she didn't come back. She stayed in Japan and sent our father over here.

MI: Did you ever … either of you talk to your father about this?

PO: No, just saw pictures of them.

NO: No, father didn't talk too much about this. It was more from our mother, who kinda told us a little bit about his side.

MI: Okay, so your father comes to Hawaii…

PO: Fukujitei [father's older brother's restaurant]. He was famous for their shrimp tempura, the flaky kind.

MI: Let's talk about your father. He comes here, he's a teenager, and he's working for his older brother.

NO: When he first came back with his father—I don't know, his father was a chef and the father went back to Japan about seven months after he came here—then he went to stay at his oldest brother's restaurant. But he didn't stay there very long, either.

PO: He was too young to really work, I think. He was still going to school. He went to McKinley [High School].

NO: No! Then he went to Mills School [Institute], which is Mid-Pac [Mid-Pacific Institute] today. He was a boarder over there. It's a boarding school. I'm not sure if his oldest brother helped because he did work at the school. He was in the laundry room and he was doing various things. He was earning some of his tuition and his living expenses while he was there. I'm pretty sure his father may have helped him but I don't have any records.

PO: Or maybe the brother.

NO: Yes, the older brother may have helped him being that Mid-Pac or at Mills School. It was called Mills School for Boys at that time. He stayed there and he was an outstanding student.

MI: So pretty much, from the time he came here, he was on his own.

NO: He was on his own. From my understanding in all my research, he never met his parents, he never saw his parents again. He may have written letters, back and forth, but I don't have any of those letters that he [may have] written to his parents or his parents [may have] written to him. From my understanding, he never saw his parents again.

That's my understanding. It's really … he calls Mid-Pac or Mills School in a letter that I found, that [that] was his home. He was very close to that school because I believe that school gave him his family life. That was where he grew up, and his education and everything came from there.

MI: Any names that he may have mentioned related to that time, old classmates?

NO: Oh no, no.

MI: He never kept in touch [with any of them]?

NO: (Sighs) I did some research at Mid-Pac. There was one living classmate at the time I was doing research, which was about four or five years ago. I don't know if he's still living.

MI: Do you remember the name?

NO: I have it in my records somewhere. That person told Mid-Pac … Mid-Pac called him to see if I could meet with them and talk to him about my research on my father. He was quite elderly and all he told Mid-Pac at that time is that he [my dad] was kinda outstanding and a big shot at the school or something to that effect because he was one of the more outstanding students in the school.

MI: Which is a little bit surprising to me because … how was his language? He spoke English when he came to Hawaii?

NO: That's the thing, very amazing. He came over when he was a teenager, fourteen years old. He came over here, and in Mid-Pac, he won some oratorical contest. He read the Gettysburg Address and he won an award. So he picked up the English language fairly rapidly! Because for him to come here and then go to Mills School and be able to become fluent in English, he learned it very quickly.

MI: He wasn't just average.

NO: I don't know if he had any English [education] in Japan. I don't have any knowledge or records of my parents, that when he came [to Hawaii] he understood any English. From my understanding, I don't have any records that he learned English or knew English before he came here. As far as I know, he came here with just Japanese. But while he was at Mills School, it seems like he was amazing. He was an honor student while he was at Mid-Pac.

MI: As an aside, as his children, was he amazing to you, or was he a regular person, a regular father?

NO: To me, he was just a father. He wasn't a minister. He didn't, like you would think, he's a minister so he would preach to you or read Bible scriptures. None of that. He never did that. I think, if anything, he was just a father to us, more than anything else that I could look at. Of course, he was a very busy person because, being a minister, the church and to service his congregation, it took a lot of time from the family. But overall, I saw him as a father.

MI: Was he really knowledgeable about current events, history and those things?

NO: He never talked too much to us about that. I know he was a family person because he used to take us to the beach. He used to take us to movies once in a while, and to dinners. I remember the old car that he used to drive us around in, the old car. (Chuckles)

PO: He liked to fish. He was a fisherman.

NO: Yes, he was a fisherman. He loved his fishing.

PO: Right about that time, right about high school … I think he joined the YMCA when he went to UH [University of Hawaii]. That kinda influenced him to go into ministry.

MI: So he began doing quite well at Mid-Pacific already?

NO: He was an outstanding student.

MI: Then he went to the University of Hawaii. Do you know what he studied at the university?

NO: I didn't find records. I didn't research at the [university] library. He was a reporter for the *Ka Leo* [student newspaper] and he belonged to some clubs, organized Christian clubs like the YMCA. He decided to join clubs.

MI: The Atherton YMCA?

NO: Yes, "A House," or the Atherton House. He boarded over there.

PO: So after UH, he went to …

NO: He got married.

PO: Right.

NO: He was at Waipahu. He was with the YMCA at Waipahu.

PO: He went to Southern Cal [USC].

NO: No, that was after. He got married and he and mom were at Waipahu. Remember, they stayed at the Waipahu church ["Junior Church" at the Waipahu Community House]? He was with the YMCA. He was helping with the youth programs in Waipahu.

PO: Yes, yes.

NO: Then, from Waipahu, and again, I don't have any records of the decisions or who encouraged him. My mother and he packed up and they moved to California and then he went to the University of Southern Cal, in their college of theology. That's where he got his master's degree.

MI: When and where did he meet your mother?

NO: That, I don't know. [To PO] Did you know? All I know is that I read that he met her at a social.

PO: She was at McKinley [High School].

NO: Yes, she was a McKinley grad but I don't know where they met.

MI: Did she go to the university also?

NO: No, she was the oldest of four girls.

PO: When they went to Southern Cal [USC], she went to a teacher's school.

MI: So somewhere along the way, he [was] probably at the university and he met her and they got married after he graduated. Then …

NO: He went to work for the YMCA as a youth … in Waipahu. They had a little …

PO: They lived in a variable ballroom upstairs. It was an old building. It was a dance hall. (Both laugh) That's how they got to meet a lot of the people. They knew the Takayesus and the Arakawas, the old generation.

NO: The Waipahu people, he knew the Arakawas from way back.

PO: But when he was going to Southern Cal, I think his brother supported him, the oldest brother.

MI: The brother from here. He was still doing the restaurant.

PO: Yes, he was doing well.

NO: He was also helping a church in L.A., Union Church. He was helping. I don't know if they were paying him.

PO: He went to USC.

MI: Do you know about when he went to USC, what years?

NO: I should have brought some more information.

PO: After USC, he went to that theology school for … so actually, he went to school for a lot of years.

MI: Theology school was after USC? What did he do at USC?

PO: I don't know.

NO: USC? He was working for his master's in theology. They had a college of theology, and he got his master's.

PO: After that, he went to this theology school. It was only … ministers training.

NO: Yes.

MI: So when he finished that theology school, they came back to Hawaii?

NO: Yes.

PO: I think so.

NO: I wish … I had a whole chronology of his life.

MI: How did they end up on Kauai?

PO: He was in Hilo first, as a minister. What church was that, Holy Cross?

NO: No. In Hilo, it was called the Hilo Japanese Christian Church, the original name. Now it's called the Church of the Holy Cross. They changed it. But he was there when it was called the Hilo Japanese … and he helped the other churches in the surrounding area also … Olaa and Papaikou Christian Church.

PO: But what happened with our church was that the head office placed them so he might have been in Hilo for a while then they moved him to Kauai.

NO: Yes, they moved him to Kauai, where he became the minister at the Lihue Christian Church. That's how Betsy [Young] … because she was a little girl going to the church when my father [was there]. She has a picture of her [there]. She showed me the picture.

MI: At what point did you two come along?

PO: I was born in Hilo and Norman was born just before the war on Kauai. As soon as the war started, after the Pearl Harbor bombing, they [military authorities] grabbed my father first.

MI: How many years before December 7, 1941, did they move to Kauai?

NO: About three years, I think.

MI: So they were at the church on Kauai.

NO: Yes, in 1938, they went to Lihue and the war was in 1941.

MI: Okay, that gives us a sense of your parents. Let's go to that date, December 7, 1941. How old are you and what are you doing on Kauai?

PO: At that time, I was about four years old.

NO: I was two months old, just born. (Laughter)

PO: So it was very rough on my mother because they grabbed my father first. My mother was left without any income, so for a short while, we moved in with my grandparents in Honolulu.

MI: They closed the church?

NO: No, the military, I think, took over the church.

MI: The military took over the church. They took your father so the family had to vacate and moved over to Oahu.

NO: Yes.

MI: [To Paul] Do you remember that time?

PO: I remember a little. I remember walking around with my mother and, of course, he [Norman] was just a baby. She's just telling me, "Don't say too much."

MI: Because she was afraid that it might cause trouble for your father or for yourselves?

PO: Yes, so we were living with my grandparents on Oahu and I was going to [the University of Hawaii] Lab School. My grandmother worked there. I used to go there early in the morning, catch the bus with her. And then after school, she put me on the bus alone (chuckles), so I had to come back [home]. She was working, that's why.

MI: Was somebody there at home, waiting for you?

PO: I don't think so.

MI: You could take care of yourself?

PO: Yes, I remember my grandfather. He never really worked.

NO: No, he didn't have a job.

MI: He was at home?

PO: He was at home, yes. But he did what they called curios.

NO: Hawaiian curios, coconut …

PO: Coconut shells and make something out of it.

MI: As a hobby or he sold?

PO: No, no, as a business. He was working for himself. I remember that he used to take me to Foster Gardens [Botanical] to pick up these little red beans, hard ones, that he'd glue on to the curios to make the eyes or something. So I'd go walking on the ground, looking for the beans. (Laughter)

MI: That was your job.

PO: Yes. We lived very close to Foster Gardens, Kauluwela Lane. After that, I guess, Mom had the choice (to join our father) and chose to go live with dad. That trip was terrible.

MI: For now, you're living with your grandparents. What do you remember about growing up on Oahu?

PO: It was hard. I remember some odd things. My grandparents' house had a porch. I used to stand there—and there was a little walkway alongside and there was another house on the other side with a porch—and this boy and I would talk to each other across the porch. I just remember that boy was naughty and his father would hold him upside down and shake him! (Laughter) Those kinds of things stick in your mind.

MI: You never got held upside down.

PO: No, no, no. No father, right? But my mother's sisters were married … one was married to a policeman and the other was married to a football coach, Kusunoki. The Farrington [High School] field is named after him. They used to come over and they were like fathers to me.

MI: Who were these?

NO: My mother's sisters' husbands. She had three sisters.

MI: How was it like, without your father, at that point?

PO: I didn't notice anything different except that my mother had a really hard time.

MI: How did she manage without any income?

PO: I don't know. I guess my grandmother helped. One of the strangest things I remember when I was living there was that it was a small house, rental house. And I remember waking up one night, and I could see this face in the window, right above my head. The next morning, they said, oh, somebody came in the house and stole some cash. I was kinda half-awake when I saw this person. (Laughter) In those days, the doors were wide open. You didn't lock the doors. Also, I remember we all had gas masks going to school. Carry the big gas mask.

MI: Was there one for Norman also?

PO: I don't think so. He was too young. When the sirens came on, my mother, grandmother and Norman, who were in the bedroom, closed the doors and windows. My grandfather and I would stay outside and put on the masks. (Both chuckle) They'd kinda flood the city with tear gas.

MI: They actually [did that], for practice?

PO: Oh, yes. But they sounded the siren to give you a warning that it's coming.

MI: Do you remember the tear gas, inhaling it or getting some of it in your eyes?

PO: I just remember that it was big.

MI: No, no, I don't mean the mask but actually the tear gas.

PO: I just remember putting on the mask. The cars used to have their headlights painted half, the top was black. The bottom half was open. And the windows had like awnings on both sides, to cover the lights so you couldn't see them from the outside.

MI: How about a bomb shelter?

PO: No, we didn't have a bomb shelter. But when we were on Kauai, I remember bomb shelters. They had made some, but in Honolulu, we didn't have any. I remember, too, we lived in this lane and on the corner, there was a Terada Store and a Chinese restaurant. So when they wanted noodles, they'd give me a pot and then tell me, "Here's ten cents" or whatever. I'd walk out there and go to the Chinese store and they would fill the noodles in there and I'd bring it back. (Both laugh)

MI: Remember the name of that store?

PO: No, I remember across that was this Terada Store.

MI: What kind of store was that?

PO: Just a convenience store.

MI: During this period of time, what is your mother doing? You mentioned no income.

PO: I think, watching him [Norman]. Grandmother was gone, grandfather stayed home most of the time.

MI: So grandmother was the breadwinner.

PO: Yes.

MI: At some point, the Wilcox Foundation was helpful to your family. How and when?

PO: From what I remember, the name was Elsie Wilcox. They were a plantation manager [family] on Kauai.

NO: She was a territorial senator.

PO: When the war started, a lot of the community leaders spoke up for my father. I think she was one of those.

NO: Yes, she was the one who was instrumental to get them all together.

PO: I just remember the name, the Wilcox family.

MI: At some point, your mother gets a letter about your father informing her about his health. Remember anything about that point in time?

PO: No. I don't remember that.

MI: Let's go back to your father. This is from your research. Was it on December 7 that he was picked up?

NO: Yes.

PO: It was the day after, I think.

NO: No, no, it was that day. I had to go back to the military archives in Washington and Maryland. You request declassified information.

MI: When did you do this?

NO: When I was here at the JCCH. I wrote to them and I got that. I do presentations to high schools. I have the Warrant of Arrest [Dept. of Justice Form I-200]. It was typed up on December 7 and he was arrested on December 7. It must have been in the evening because they had typed it up some time during the day, and they came and they arrested him. It's kind of amazing, when I do the presentation, the students are surprised that after the bombs were dropped on Pearl Harbor, hundreds of men, Japanese men, leaders in the community, were all being rounded up and picked up, through the Warrants of Arrest that was given to them to arrest any of these Japanese men.

He was arrested and then he was sent to the Waialua Jail. I don't believe he knew why because from all of the records I found, he didn't know why he was arrested. He kept thinking that it was a mistake the government did [made] because in his mind, he didn't do anything wrong towards the United States or did anything that he felt … he lived the American way, he preached the American way. But in letters that he wrote to the government, even after he was interned, he felt that the government made a mistake and that he shouldn't be here [incarcerated] because they never disclosed to him why.

I don't think the government did that [disclosure] to anyone, the men they picked up. They just picked them up and put them in jail. They didn't tell them why, because they didn't do anything wrong. They were picked up because of their nationality. They were Japan-born people and they were leaders in the community. The government was afraid that these men who were leaders or Buddhist priests, or Japanese language teachers, editors and so forth. If Japan landed forces, and this is my assumption—it's not written in the documents but I can kinda understand what the government was doing—the U.S. government was afraid that the Japanese people, with their leaders, would revolt against the government.

At that time in Hawaii, one-third of the population was Japanese. So you can see the government was afraid that if Japan did [invade] it could create all kinds of havoc here. They couldn't pick up all the families and intern them. There were too many. There were no facilities to do it. So the government felt that if they took all of the leaders in the community out of people they felt had some [influence] over the other Japanese people, that would prevent any type of revolt. The Japanese people [would have] no leaders to look towards for any guidance. I think that was the reason.

The Japanese Consulate also created consular agents that were responsible for various Japanese communities because the consulate didn't want all of the Japanese people writing to them about any births, deaths, marriages, whatever or anything. They wanted these consular agents to help coordinate these people with the Japanese Consulate. They were only working with the Japanese consuls that they had selected in the community. My father, in his notes and all the documents, he never signed a document that [said] he was a consular agent. But he was doing the work that other consular agents were doing to help the Japanese people in the community. He was influential in Lihue and he was writing to the consulate because he had to do that to help the Japanese people, especially people who wanted to give up their dual citizenship. You had to write to the consulate. You couldn't just say, "I don't want my Japanese citizenship." You had to go through

the Japanese Consulate to get that. A lot of the people weren't able to do it, with their [level of] education. They didn't know how to do it, so my father was asked to help them.
When [I was] working with the JCCH and talking to Betsy [Young] and Jane [Kurahara], they said that was probably one of the reasons too. Besides being born in Japan, not being a U.S. citizen, he was well-educated, he was a leader in the community and his writings to the Japanese Consulate put him … from my understanding when I talked to them, that put him on the list, high on the list, because of the fear if the Japanese landed forces. To him, in his mind, he couldn't understand why he was arrested because they never came and said, "Rev. Osumi, you did this against the United States. That's why you're being jailed." No. They just picked him up and put him in jail because of what I just disclosed.

MI: It was the same with all of them, not just your father.

NO: Yes, not just my father. All of them. [George] Hoshida, the one that I mentioned [previously]? There was an article in the Hawaii Herald and one part of it, I read to the students. He [also] didn't know why but he felt that [America] was his home, that was his country. But after he was interned, it was a rude awakening that he no longer considered the United States as his home. I think that's how my father felt, too. He felt that the United States was his home and he was married to an American, his children were American, and all of a sudden, the government took him away. And now, he had no home [country]. So I think his sentiments were very similar to Mr. Hoshida.

MI: Let me ask Paul. Your father was taken from the family on December 7. At what point did the family move to Oahu? One month later? One week later?

PO: I don't know about that.

MI: So you were on Kauai for a while with your mother and your brother. Your father is in the [Waialua] jail. Do you remember visiting him there? Or do you remember your mother saying anything about visiting him? Did the family know that he was there?

PO: I don't know.

MI: [To Norman] Do you know that?

NO: My mother probably knew. I met with some people from Kauai that knew my father when I was putting my book together. There was a man, I forgot his name right off-hand, who tried to visit my father, to bring food and things. But they wouldn't allow anyone to see him.

MI: Now from there, your father was moved to Oahu. Then your mother came to Oahu?

NO: No, I think she went back.

MI: Your mother came because she needed help. Your father was still on Kauai in jail?

NO: Yes, yes, and he came to Oahu later in 1942. They moved him to the Sand Island Detention Center. That was some time in June, I think, he was moved, or earlier.

MI: I guess at Sand Island your mother was not able to visit him?

NO: No.

PO: I don't know.

NO: One of the things that he wrote … I don't know if she saw him earlier. Now Sand Island was not where there was a bridge [connecting Sand Island to Oahu]. You had to get across with a boat in those days. Before he was shipped out [to Angel Island], he wrote in a diary. He was supposed to meet my mother before they left for the mainland [U.S.], [however] the government just boarded and shipped them out. It was supposed to be a Sunday and they had to go on board and they never got to see their wives and families before they left. My father felt that was really disheartening for him. He was so anxious to see … because there was a period when he didn't see my mother.

MI: So from December 7, he never saw your mother in Hawaii?

NO: I don't know. I don't have any records that she ever went to the prison [on Kauai] to see my father. I don't have any records. They were saying that they were going to be able to see their families before they shipped. But it never happened and he was very disheartened about that because he never got to see my mother before they were shipped out to the mainland.

MI: Did your mother even mention that, that she was supposed to see him before they left Hawaii?

PO: I don't remember that.

NO: I have records of what he wrote as part of his diary. That's how I found out.

MI: But from her side, you don't have anything.

NO: No, not her side.

MI: Did she write letters to him?

NO: She did.

MI: Did he keep those letters?

NO: Yes, I have them.

MI: So you have letters from both sides.

NO: Yes, I've read them but of course, those letters, you've got to realize, this was during the war so you don't write anything. What they were writing between each other was asking how is … you and I, or have you seen this person? Not like how are the living conditions or any kinds of problems, all of the hardships they're going through. Nothing … It was very taut, "Did you send my sweater to me?" That type. There was nothing to refer to the hardships he was going through, or the hardships she was going through here in Honolulu. Nothing was said about that.

MI: Tell us about the history. When do they leave Sand Island and where does he go?

NO: He goes to San Francisco, Angel Island, which is where all of the ships went. And from Angel Island, then they decided where all of these men went to. The men from Hawaii went to all different internment camps. They all didn't go to one. He was selected to go to Lordsburg, New Mexico. So from Angel Island, they put him on a train and he talked about the conditions on the train. He said they were very unsanitary and were boxcars with wires like prisoners being transported. He complained about that … the treatment and everything.

MI: Did he mention any names of his fellow internees?

NO: He mentioned one thing was on the train. In his letter, from going from Sand Island to Lordsburg, there was a person who had a suitcase that had a certain amount of funds and the government took it and never returned it. He had the name of that person who was with them at that time.

MI: Okay, so he's in Lordsburg, New Mexico now. Somewhere along the way, he gets sick, medically.

NO: No. Lordsburg, it was an internment camp. But when I read the documents, internment camps were prisoner of war camps. They were strictly men. They were not families. There weren't any children. They were just strictly men. They were prisoners of war. So he went to Lordsburg which was a men's camp. It was there, he was like an English teacher while he was there. The men had limited knowledge of the English language. He was an English teacher while he was there.
The only thing my father talked about in Lordsburg, was that they put on a Christmas play, a Christmas scene with Mary, Joseph, Jesus, shepherds and three kings. Well, Lordsburg is only a men's camp but they needed a Mary. That was the only female they needed. They looked at him and according to my understanding from what he wrote in one of the articles. He had a mustache, he had to shave off his mustache, and they had to put makeup on him because they selected him to be Mary for this Christmas story. He kinda mentioned after the Christmas story, many of the men had to come up to see who was this beautiful Mary in the play. (Laughter) He wrote that in one of his sermons. He made light humor to that while he was in Lordsburg. That was the only thing I ever heard about Lordsburg.

MI: How old was he, at this point in time?

NO: He was born in 1905, so he was in his thirties.

MI: His thirties, at least 35, late thirties.

NO: He stayed in Lordsburg for a little while, and he was able to get paroled, not released. He didn't get any freedom. There was a minister at Gila Relocation Camp. Now, relocation camps is where they moved the Japanese families, the children, the grandparents and everybody to these relocation camps. They were not really internment camps, because there were not just men. There were families. That's why I call it relocation camps. Some books, I see, call it concentration camps but I think they try to stay away from concentration camps because there's too much connection to Germany's concentration camps. To me, it's different.

MI: Part of the difference is different departments of government.

NO: Yes.

MI: The POW [prisoner of war] prisoners were run by the Justice Department, or Department of Army.

NO: Justice Department, that's right.

MI: But the civilians, the West Coast people, were War Relocation Authority, so it's a whole different structure even though we lump them together. Interestingly, the POW camps

ran under the Geneva Convention rules from World War I. So they actually had very strict monitoring by international authorities.

NO: I think the Spanish Consulate…

MI: Spanish, Swedish … Whereas the War Relocation, which is Gila River [Relocation Center], that's a different branch of government. It was actually worse here because there was nobody watching, whereas this one, the international authorities were watching how the prisoners were treated.

NO: That's right.

MI: There is a difference. You mentioned that he was at Lordsburg but he was paroled.

NO: To go to Gila. This was through the efforts of this Rev. Royden Susu-mago, who was a Christian minister in the camp. This minister wrote to the government asking if my father could be released or paroled from Lordsburg to come to Gila to help the Christian youth group there. They were short of Christian ministers there. So he wrote to the government.

MI: How did he know Rev. Susu-mago?

NO: That I don't know how he knew Rev. Susu-mago. He must have known him because Rev. Susu-mago knew about my father, to get him into the Gila Relocation. Now how they met or where they met, I'm not sure. But that Rev. Susu-mago knew my father and wrote to the government to parole him to come to the Gila Relocation camp to help with the Christian church there, the youth program. And he was able to do that. I think my father was very happy because now he's out of the prisoner of war camp, internment camp, and he is now back serving as a minister to a Christian church.

MI: There were women and children.

NO: Women and children, and services and things. He was happy to go to Gila River Relocation Camp.

MI: So this is what year?

NO: (Laughs) I'm sorry.

MI: This is probably 1943. (Pause) So this is where he gets sick?

NO: Yes, he came down with what was called Valley fever. Valley fever is picked up from something in the dust…

MI: It's a fungus.

NO: … in the desert and it gets into your lungs. He got really sick. This family that was in the Gila Relocation became close to my father, this Yuki family. Mr. Yuki used to work in the mess hall. He was like a cook. Mrs. Yuki, when my father became sick, she helped him out. Wash his clothes and helped him a lot. But he got really sick, so one of them—I don't know if it was one of the daughters or Mr. Yuki—wrote to my mother in Honolulu saying "You'd better come to Gila Relocation if you can, because your husband may not live."

MI: At that point, your father and mother were corresponding?

NO: They had some letters, but he *never* told my mother that he was sick. Nobu told me this, one of the daughters of the Yuki family. She said my father never wrote to my mother telling her of his condition because he didn't want her to worry about him. That's what she said. So he never told her how sick he was. He just wrote to her asking how we were and how we're doing. But he never wrote. I don't know if it was Mr. Yuki or Mrs. Yuki—it might have been the father because he was very close to my father. He wrote to my mother and said that your husband is very sick and he may die here. He's not well, he's very sick. So I guess, at that point, my mother had to make the decision to go. I think my grandmother said, "Go take care of your husband, go." It was her decision to take my brother and I with her, to go too.

MI: [To Paul] Do you remember that time when your mother said that you were going to join your father?

PO: I remember the trip.

MI: What do you remember about the trip?

PO: She was seasick so I had to watch him. We'd run around the ship and all...

MI: You were how old then?

PO: I must have been about kindergarten, first grade.

NO: No, you were older, about six or seven. Somewhere around there.

PO: Yeah? It was kinda scary because there was always this warning that enemy submarines were around. So we always had to … they'd have a siren on the ship. The ships were worried about getting hit.

NO: My mother told me—he was four years older and I was small, I must have been three years old. She was seasick. She was sick in her bed. He took care of me. She doesn't know how he took care of me.

MI: What was it like? Did you have a room for the three of you?

PO: We were all in a room with several others.

MI: A big room with a lot of people?

PO: Yes, with several other families.

MI: Do you remember people throwing up?

PO: I remember that my mother couldn't get out of bed.

NO: She just laid there.

PO: There were some other ladies, too.

MI: Did you have to bring water and food to her?

PO: I don't remember.

NO: Maybe the other families might have helped out.

PO: But they were really sick, I know.

MI: When you reached the West Coast, then you had to get on a train?

PO: Yes, we went to this like a POW camp in San Francisco. I don't remember too much. It was nice but [I remember] my mother telling me that there were some German prisoners over there at the same time. From there, somehow, we got on the train and went to Gila [in Arizona].

MI: What was your first impression when you got to Gila River Camp?

PO: I don't remember too much.

MI: Was your father there to greet you?

PO: I don't think, at the beginning. It was a big camp, no trees. Barracks, the barracks were all lined up and then in the middle was the showers and the toilets, community type.

MI: At Gila, you lived in the barracks with your own space?

PO: We had our own section of the barracks. I kinda remember meeting my father the first time. I think it was a little later. I don't know why.

MI: What do you remember about when you first saw him?

PO: I don't remember too much.

NO: (Chuckles) My mother said, when my father saw me, he wanted to hold on to me. But remember, I was only two months old [on December 7, 1941]. Now I'm about three years old. I was afraid of my father so he didn't want to make me cry, this is what my mother said. When he came close, I would run away. I didn't want him to hold on to me. So my father had to take it step by step. Each time [he] came closer to me, closer to me, until he could hold on to me. In the beginning, this was a stranger to me because I was just a baby, two months, and now I was three years old. I kinda recognized people and I didn't know who that man was so I didn't want him to come and hug me. My mother said my father had to take it very slowly to approach me so that I became comfortable with him, until he could hold on to me. It took a little time for that because I wouldn't let him grab on to me at the very beginning. (Laughs)

MI: Was he in a hospital when you first went there?

PO: I don't remember. I would think so, though.

NO: Yes, he was.

MI: But you don't remember.

PO: This is all Japanese and they're good farmers and landscape people. In no time at all, they were growing these little trees that looked like papaya trees. They were called castor bean [trees]. There were little beans and soft thorns. I always felt that that was the cause for my father's illness. I think he was allergic to that. It was all over the place. They were good farmers.

MI: They weren't growing the castor beans?

PO: They planted them. They grew fast. This family across the barracks from us, they had built a pond, a fish pond. It was really nice. And they had a little rope around the pond and this guy [pointing to Norman] went right into the pond. (Laughter)

MI: How large was the pond, how deep?

PO: It was bigger than this table [ten feet]. I don't think it was very deep.

MI: What kind of fish?

PO: I don't remember.

MI: But they did have fish?

PO: I think so. I remember grabbing him by the hand and yelling. I don't know if it was that deep but he was crying and I was holding on to him and yelling. (Laughter)

MI: Remember that, Norman?

NO: No, I don't remember.

PO: Another time, we had to go to the women's showers.

MI: The children went to the women's side?

PO: Because our father couldn't take us. He was sick in bed. So my mother would take us. One day, without clothes on, he didn't want to take a bath. He went taking off down the street. (Laughter) Everybody running after him.

MI: He doesn't remember that.

NO: I don't remember that.

MI: What was it like for the young children in the camp?

PO: It was good fun.

MI: What was a typical day for you?

PO: Well, besides school …

MI: Tell us about school.

PO: I don't remember too much. We did have school and I don't know who taught us or whether they were qualified or not. (Laughter) I did have a friend, and he and I used to get into all kinds of mischief. I remember one time, we kinda hid from the parents, underneath the barracks. We dug under, like a trench and we were hiding. People were calling for us. (Laughter) I remember this guy's name was Tom Ogami.

MI: What did your father say when they found you?

PO: Probably scolded us. (Laughter) But it was fun.

MI: What's interesting, you mentioned that your father taught an English class in Lordsburg. For someone who spoke Japanese until fourteen, then twenty years later, he's actually teaching English, that's interesting.

PO: One of the things that was amazing was the men were good carpenters, too. All the women had what they called a lunch box. They made nice lunch boxes, out of scrap lumber with a door that opened. The women would go to the mess hall and bring back plates of the meal, cover it up and bring it home, so we ate in the barracks.

MI: You were allowed to eat in your barracks? You didn't have to eat in the mess hall?

PO: No. I don't know how they washed the dishes, no running water. Every meal, they had to do that.

MI: Oh really? That's interesting because one of the things we read about is the mess halls were a place where the families were fragmented, because the children sat in one area. They wanted to be with their friends. You didn't have your meals with your friends [in the mess hall]? You went back to your own…

PO: I remember eating in the barracks.

NO: When Dad was in the infirmary or hospital when he was sick, my mother had to pick up the meals and take them to him. Somebody had to do that. She would pick up the meals and go to him. From my understanding, in the mess hall, each of those blocks, you had a certain time to get your meals. Nobu said, if you don't go there at that certain time for your building or your block, you can't eat. You have to wait 'till the next meal. They were strict. You go there and you get your meal at this certain time.

MI: In your area, in the barracks, there is no food or snacks?

PO: Mess hall.

NO: I don't know how they did it. I don't know how the plates and things.

PO: They had potties for the kids, nighttime. They couldn't go to the latrine or toilets.

MI: Then someone would have to clean it up the next day.

PO: Yes.

MI: Did your mother clean up for you, or did you do your own?

PO: I don't know. I think mother or somebody [else] did it. I remember my brother and I, we'd tag along with my mother. Later on, Nobu would take us to the showers. I remember one time, he and I were walking around looking at these girls and this one girl had a rash on her butt. So we [asked], "What's that?" (Laughter)

MI: What did she say?

PO: I don't remember. I remember pointing it out.

MI: What did your father say?

PO: Father was not there.

MI: So you remember some of these things from those days.

PO: Yes, well, I was close to third grade.

MI: What do you remember about the school?

PO: I don't remember too much.

MI: Were you a good student?

PO: I don't even remember that at all.

MI: How about playing?

PO: Playing was fun. There were no organized games.

MI: There were not?

PO: No.

MI: They didn't have baseball?

PO: No, no, no, not for kids but for the older kids. They had a baseball stadium and certain nights they had outdoor movies, once a week or so. I remember going. For little kids, it was pretty interesting.

MI: Do you remember any specific movies you saw?

PO: No, not at that time. But it was a big deal. People would take mats.

MI: Outdoors?

PO: Outdoors.

MI: [To Norman] But you don't remember any of those things?

NO: It's only what I was told through this, one of the daughters … actually, two daughters took care of us. The Yuki family that wrote to my mom. The two younger ones [Yuki daughters], Nobu and Dorothy, they were in high school. They took care of my brother and me while my mother took care of my father while he was sick.

MI: How long did it take your father to get well?

NO: I don't know.

PO: He must have been well enough when the war was over.

NO: Yes.

MI: That long? So most of the time that you were there, he was sick?

NO: He was really sick.

PO: He was in bed, most of the time.

NO: I have his medical records in the book. In 1945, that's toward the end of the war. You can see he was dressed like he was still sick.

MI: So when he came back to Hawaii, he was still sick?

PO: I think he was okay.

NO: He was okay. I [do not] remember him being sick at Waialua when we came back.

PO: Maybe it cleared up.

MI: Did anyone else get Valley Fever?

NO: No. Oh! Yes, you [Paul] and mom, came down [with it] when we're ready to leave. I read somewhere that you and mom started to come down with it, but they said that by moving to Denver, it was good because it's a high elevation and it helps with that.

MI: Like tuberculosis.

NO: So it was helpful. But somewhere, it said you and Mom started to come down with the Valley Fever but that was toward the end of the war. I mean, we're leaving already.

PO: Because I remember that in Denver, he was working.

NO: Yes, he was back on his feet by the time we went to Denver.

MI: How long was the family at the Gila River Camp?

PO: Until they let us go. But actually, we could have gone [left] a little earlier but …

MI: When and why did they let you go? Because the war ended?

NO: The war ended on September 2, 1945. The Gila Relocation [Camp] closed in October but we left before that.

PO: This girl, Nobu Yuki, her family left, but she wanted to finish high school [in camp] so she stayed with us 'till we left Gila. Then she left, too.

MI: Why did your family go to Denver instead of coming back to Hawaii?

PO: For one thing, I think that Rev. Susu-mago invited my father to come and help [in Denver].

MI: So Rev. Susu-mago had gotten out earlier, before your father?

PO: Did he ever go to the camp?

NO: Yes. From what I understand, he was writing like he was from the camp.

PO: I kinda remember something that certain states didn't grab the Japanese.

MI: They were invited by the Governor of Colorado to [voluntarily] relocate there.

PO: He was in Colorado and I think he married a *haole* [Caucasian] girl. I thought he didn't go [to Gila River Camp].

MI: So he got married in Denver?

PO: I don't know. But he was married to a *haole* girl.

MI: Actually, Susu-mago, one of his sons was my high school classmate on Maui.

PO: Yes, he had two sons and a daughter.

MI: Douglas was the older son, there was a daughter and …

NO: The younger one.

PO: One is a contractor.

MI: That's Theodore [my classmate]. I haven't seen him since high school, Ted. His mother was a teacher and by the time I met him, I believe his father had already passed away on Maui.

PO: My mother always wanted a daughter, and when [Rev.] Susu-mago had problems, he wasn't going to live, Mom wanted to adopt the daughter.

NO: Adopt the daughter. Oh, I didn't know that.

PO: I don't know what happened to her.

NO: We left the Gila Relocation Camp on July 20, 1945. It was before the war ended. The war ended in September.

PO: That's right after June.

NO: It was after the graduation. Probably, that's why we left.

MI: You left because there was something waiting for your father on the outside, a position?

PO: I don't know if that was the reason, or because he didn't have the money to come back.

NO: Well, no.

MI: You had to have a sponsor.

NO: You couldn't come back to Hawaii. You had to get approval from the Hawaii Military Governor.

MI: Hawaii was a war zone.

NO: Yes, so, he had to get approval and through the process he had to apply. Then they went back to Los Angeles for a little while, and from there he caught the ship and got the approval to come back to Hawaii.

PO: We lived in the slums in Los Angeles.

MI: From Denver, you went to Los Angeles before coming back to Hawaii.

PO: Yes, Denver, we were in the black slums. I remember going to school in Denver. It was good fun, mostly blacks and Hispanic. I remember getting into plenty of fights. (Laughter) Just little kids fighting.

NO: I don't remember going to school. The only thing my mother passed on to us, that where we lived, in front of the house was Hispanics but one side was all blacks. We played with the black kids because they were friendlier to us.

PO: Oh yes. We go to the movies. We're the only ones who were not black. I remember one name, Leroy Green, my friend. But I remember one incident. We used to play. We used to play … we're playing war kinda stuff, talking about Japs, what you call the opposition. "Don't call people Japs."

MI: Who said that?

PO: My mother.

MI: To you? Or to the other kids?

PO: To me, playing with the black kids. I was calling them "Japs." (Laughter)

MI: In this period right after the war, you go to Denver. You go to L.A. Any kind of discrimination or name-calling that you remember?

NO: I don't specifically remember. Just from what my mother told me. But there were signs in the stores, "No Japs."

MI: You remember the signs?

NO: Not really myself.

MI: You were told that.

NO: Yes, I think that's one of the better things. We lived in the black neighborhood. They didn't care.

MI: Now why and how did you go from Denver to Los Angeles?

NO: I think that's just on the way back.

MI: So you didn't really live in L.A. too long.

NO: No, no. I think so.

PO: I remember we were in a Hispanic neighborhood, and Mom used to fight with the … you'd go grocery shopping. It's on the streets. She'd be buying something, and they'd be cheating her, and she'd be all mad at them. Then they'd throw one rotten tomato in the bag. She was watchful. (Laughter)

MI: But during this period, like when you're in transit, Los Angeles, your father could not work?

NO: No, he was not working.

PO: I don't think he was working.

NO: Yes. The churches … he knew a lot of ministers.

PO: From before the war.

NO: Before the war, and they knew him. So he had a lot of help from some of the churches, the Christian churches there. They kinda supported him.

PO: Riverside and several churches.

NO: They kinda helped him out.

MI: Do you remember the trip back on the ship from L.A. to Hawaii? Did your mother get sick again?

PO: I don't remember that.

MI: Do you remember coming back to Hawaii?

PO: Yes, it was (pause) different. But when … more, I remember starting in school and because I spoke English, (chuckles) this is in Haleiwa.

MI: So you folks settled in Haleiwa.

PO: First,

MI: The church assigned him to Haleiwa. What church was he assigned to?

NO: Waialua Pilgrim [now Waialua United Church of Christ].

PO: It was a small, small church. But going to school and just coming from the mainland, [a] lot of the kids there didn't like that (chuckles) we spoke better English. I think I was a little bit more advanced. But it was good! It was very good. Good times for us.

NO: We had help, coming back to Waialua, from the Haga family.

PO: One of my father's classmates from Mid-Pac.

NO: He was instrumental to get my father to Waialua Church. Otherwise, we were supposed to go to Maui. A Maui church was asking my father to go, but Mr. Haga asked him to come to Waialua, he turned down the church in Maui and went to Waialua Pilgrim.

MI: So you grew up in Waialua.

NO: Oh no, no, about three years.

PO: Then we moved to Ewa.

MI: What church in Ewa?

NO: Ewa Community Church, Christian church, right next to the elementary school.

PO: And it's good there too.

MI: And you lived at the church?

PO: Yes.

NO: Yes, there was a parsonage for us right there.

PO: It was good living, country living.

NO: Ewa was a really nice community.

MI: How long did you stay in Ewa?

NO: About nine years.

MI: So you really moved around! You had to keep making new friends.

NO: Yes.

O: Yes, Ewa was the best, I think.

MI: How was your father during this period, from Gila River to Waialua, to Ewa. Did you see him changing as time went on?

PO: With the church, it's kinda like Waialua was like a rookie, and as you get more experience, they keep sending you to a bigger church. So my father, from Ewa, went to Nuuanu [Congregational Church]. Nuuanu was a bigger church. Each time he was going up.

MI: So after nine years in Ewa, he's at Nuuanu.

PO: Yes. Some of the members at Nuuanu were members from way back from Waialua.

MI: You mean, they would come all the way from Waialua?

PO: No, no, no, some of them had moved.

MI: They had moved to town?

PO: Yes. They always seemed to like him and helped him.

MI: At Ewa, was he writing his newspaper articles?

NO: He started in the late fifties.

PO: 1958, we were there in Ewa.

NO: He started to write [while we were] there.

PO: The newspaper started this article at that time and they asked him to submit, so he did, with a whole bunch of other ministers. Pretty soon they said, "Oh, we like yours. We're going to print yours."

MI: What's the story of the start of this?

NO: The paper asked various ministers. I forget how many. The other ministers wrote about their theology. They wrote about their religion. My father didn't write about the Christian religion. He didn't write it from a theology basis. He wrote about how each person should live their life. That was for everybody. There's no connection to the Bible, there's no connection to the Christian [religion]. What he was writing was everyday life, how people should look at life and how they should live their life. That really hit everybody in Honolulu, in Hawaii, that was reading the *Honolulu Advertiser*. He was not writing it for any class or race or for religion or political way or gender. He was just writing [about] how people should live their life and that's why he became so well known for that article.

MI: So how did he become that way?

PO: He read.

NO: He read a lot.

MI: You mentioned in your book about the parallels between Christianity and Buddhism.

NO: His master's degree, I have that [dissertation]. His thesis, which was a comparison between the two religions. In there, it's kinda interesting because he compares. He had to do a lot of studying. His background was Christian but when writing, he had to talk with a lot of Buddhist priests and Buddhists. He learned a lot [about] Buddhists. I think the Buddhist religion is a way of life. Their whole religion is based on a way of life and it kinda parallels [Christianity] a lot. I think that may have some influence. Of course, it's not documented anywhere. What he was writing about was how you should live your life. That's why, when I met a lot of people, they thought he was a Buddhist priest! I said, "No, he was a Christian minister." Because when they read it, they kinda felt that he was paralleling what the Buddhist religion was talking about.

MI: Was there ever a point in his life where he thought about turning to Buddhism?

NO: Not that I know of. He held on to the Christian faith all the way. But he was close—when he was at that Nuuanu church on School Street and Nuuanu [Avenue], by the Chun Hoon Super Market, he was close to the Soto Mission bishops. They had a good relationship, although he was a Christian and they were Buddhists. He had a very good relationship with some of the bishops and ministers of the other Buddhist churches. But again, he had close relationships not only with the Buddhists. There were also Catholics, other religions, too. They would write to him and primarily…

PO: Like in the countryside, he was very close to the Catholic minister. Catholics couldn't marry someone that was divorced. So the man would call up my father and say, "Hey Paul, can you marry this couple?" (Laughter) Then he would marry them.

NO: So he was close to a lot of the other ministers and in a lot of the letters I received…

PO: I don't know for what reason but he tried to speak Filipino.

NO: He did, he did.

PO: And he gave some sermons [in Filipino].

NO: When he was in Ewa, the Ewa Plantation, they used to have yardmen come around and take care of the grounds. They were Filipino men, and whenever they came around, my father would go out there and he'd start learning how to speak. It was Ilocano and he picked it up. Now in Ewa, there was a Catholic church. But there were a lot of Filipino communities that were not Catholics. They're Protestants. So what he did was, he started to conduct services in Filipino.

PO: I don't know if they understood him. (Chuckles)

NO: I don't know. He became pretty proficient, from my understanding. There were Filipino members that started to help him out, too, when he started to learn [their language]. In fact, he went to the Philippines, too, when we were in Ewa, and the Filipino community said, "You have to be careful about going to the Philippines" because this was in the fifties, sixties. In that time period, there was a lot of animosity against Japanese in the Philippines because of what the Japanese Army [did] in the Philippines. He spoke Ilocano and in pictures, he dressed like the Filipinos in their costumes, he was dark, and he talked to the people. He didn't have any problem when he talked to the Filipinos! (Laughter) So he went and visited various churches in the Philippines which he wanted to do. He did go and visit. Some of the church members went with him, to assure his safety. At that point in time, it wasn't [safe] for Japanese to be in the Philippines.

MI: At the churches in Ewa or in Nuuanu, did he build a Filipino congregation? Did he speak Filipino?

NO: In Ewa, he did. But once he came to Nuuanu, the congregation was strictly more Japanese. There were maybe one or two Filipinos but it wasn't where he would conduct services in Filipino anymore. It was strictly Japanese and he would conduct both English services and services in Japanese, too.

MI: (Pause) One of the thoughts I had … the Christian ministers in Hawaii were not interned. Like Rev. Okumura at Makiki Christian Church, he was not.

PO: A lot of them weren't.

NO: No, they weren't, Christian ministers.

MI: Wasn't it your father who had changed the name of the church on Kauai?

NO: Yes, it was the Lihue Japanese Christian Church and they dropped the word "Japanese," before the war. He made it just Lihue Christian Church.

MI: So it was other factors like helping the [Japanese] Consulate that overruled being a Christian minister.

NO: Yes, because he was doing it. The Yuki family, whose daughter Nobu—I went to interview her before she passed away. She told me, when I went to visit her, they were up in Seattle, and they were farmers. Nobu told me, "You know, Norman, your mother used to say why your father was interned." My father didn't know why he was interned.

Nobu said that my mother would tell her that my father was interned because while he was in Lihue, he would conduct his sermons in Japanese, over the radio.

MI: Oh, so he did some radio programs on Kauai.

NO: Yes, in the evening. On Sunday, he would do English and then on Monday or Sunday evening, he would translate … he'd give the same sermon in Japanese so the Japanese community could hear his sermon. My mother felt that was the reason why the government picked him up, because he was on the air and talking in Japanese. That was my mother's reason.
But that wasn't the reason. As far as all of the military records that I found, that was not the reason. The reason was basically that he was born in Japan, he was well educated and he was a very influential person on Kauai. Those were the reasons that they picked him up. But again, they never told him that, that's the reason you're there. So he never knew why he was imprisoned or interned. He really didn't know.

MI: Did your father ever look back upon this internment experience or did he just move forward with his life?

NO: He moved forward. He never talked about … as far as I know, and I, as a son, never asked him, too. Growing up as a son, you don't think about [asking], "During the internment, what happened here?" It never dawned on me. I knew that we were in the Gila Relocation Camp and I started to realize that he was in Lordsburg. Basically, when I came here [JCCH] to start helping the JCCH, I was filing his records into your resource center. Jane [Kurahara] showed me how to document and file his records, what he left. I had to read a lot of these documents during the period of one year. As I was reading a lot, that started to create my interest in what happened during those days.
He never talked about it. After he came back, he really never talked much about it. The only thing was that Christmas play that he wrote and made up a joke about it. And my mother telling us a little bit about the Gila Relocation Camp. Besides that, I didn't know what happened and there's a lot of things I learned about his internment. A lot of things that I wasn't aware of.

MI: He had already passed away when you began doing this.

NO: Oh, yes, he passed away in 1996. I came here in 2003, and my mother passed away around 2003. I came here because now I had all of his files like I mentioned, and both of my parents had gone and what do we do with it? That's when I started to read. Both parents were gone, already. Now I had to do the research and my father's life started to come out of the woodwork.

MI: How did you feel about that? That you had missed the opportunity?

NO: Oh, I missed it! If he was alive today, I could ask him a thousand questions because I don't know, like the questions like, how did he meet my mother? I don't know how he met her. All I know is he met her at some social, but outside of that, how did they get together? There's a lot of things that I wish he was alive and I could ask him. But when I was growing up, it never dawned on me to ask any of these questions. Only after both parents passed away, I started to do almost five years of research in his background.

MI: [To Paul] Did you have any talks with him while growing up?

PO: Not too much.

MI: Did he lecture you when you did something wrong?

NO: Oh, he scolded us (laughs) when we did something wrong.

MI: Remember anything he scolded you about?

PO: No, not really.

NO: One time, we were living in Ewa and I got mad. I don't know the reason I got mad. I said something and he got upset because of what I said. I think it was towards my mother and he told me, "Don't you ever say that." I think I said something to my mother and I was kinda angry and said something. He scolded me.

MI: How old were you?

NO: I must have been in the elementary grades. I still remember. He pulled me to the side and he said, "Don't you ever say those things." He scolded me.

MI: That was enough.

NO: Not all the time. Most of the time he was working. He was a Christian minister so he was quite busy. It was more my mother that took care of us, day to day. She made the meals, she took care of us more than my father.

MI: [To Paul] How about you? Anything like that where you did something wrong and needed to be disciplined?

PO: Yes, I was scolded like that but, going back to your question a little earlier, about why some ministers weren't picked up. We were talking about that. We didn't agree but I had heard that people fingered other people. For a couple of reasons, wanting to make themselves look good so they wouldn't get picked up. Some of these people were pretty influential themselves. They called them "snitches."

NO: Somebody told me one time—I met a person that said, during the war period there were people, he called them "snitches" that would say something bad against somebody, another Japanese, to get in good favor with the government.

MI: To help keep themselves out of trouble.

NO: So they'll talk bad about something, so the military would arrest someone because they would say something. But I have no proof of that. In the military records, and everything I couldn't find anything regarding that.
But this one person I met said that there were Japanese people that were causing trouble for other Japanese people and he called them "snitches." They were talking bad things and telling the government about that person [who] was doing this or that.

MI: They called them *inu*, dog.

NO: Huh? *Inu.* But I have no proof and that was the first time I heard about that. With my brother, too, he kinda mentioned that. In my research, I didn't come across any of that. But then again, military records wouldn't bring those things out anyway.

MI: Tell me about your careers, and whether or not your father had any direct influence in where you ended up in life.

NO: For me, my father never told me to follow in his footsteps. I think that was because he felt that it has to come from within. To be a minister, you have to have that within you. He never told us to … he never told me to follow his footsteps. And whatever I decided, both parents fully supported me in whatever I wanted to do. It wasn't where I felt that I would follow his footsteps and become a minister. No, I never heard them ever say, "Have you ever considered becoming a minister?" (Laughs)

MI: What did you end up becoming?

NO: I was a banker, close to forty years in banking. I worked for a lot of the banks. I worked for First Hawaiian Bank, which was First National Bank at the time. I worked there for about nine years. Then I went to work for a service company, Southeast Asia Computer Associates that took care of Liberty Bank, Hawaii National and Bank of Honolulu, which I helped to open at that time. Then I left that service bureau, and I went to work for Bank of Hawaii. I worked for the Bank of Hawaii for about twenty-three years. I took an early retirement when they had this beautiful retirement package back in 1995. So I retired, took the package because it was too good not to take it, but I was still young yet. I met up with a person I used to know at the Bank of Hawaii who was working for Central Pacific. He called and said, "Hey Norman, you want to come work for me? Come back and work at Central Pacific." My wife said, "You're too young to stay at home. Go work." So I went back and I worked for another seven years. It totaled about forty years in banking. I was in the technology side at the beginning. It was developing our own software system to run bank applications. Later on, software companies developed it. We started to buy software and we maintained the computer systems for the banks. So all the forty years were in the IT side of updating systems, bank systems. I traveled a lot to the mainland to attend seminars, meet other banks, conferences and learn about new systems and bring it back, helping banks upgrade their systems to newer systems. That kept me busy over the forty years. (Chuckles)

MI: How about you? What did you end up doing? And still doing. You're still working.

PO: Architect. I started working when I was going to college. I graduated and got my license and opened my office. I've worked for a lot of architects.

MI: As your father is writing these articles for the newspaper, are you folks reading them?

NO: You know, I do a lot of presentations for the senior groups. This lady asked me one time, she said, "Norman, when you were growing up, did you used to read your father's articles?" I looked at her and a big laugh came out. I said, "Why would I read his articles in the newspaper when I used to hear him at home every day?" They erupted in laughs. (Laughs) I said, "No." You know, I never read it!

MI: He never really preached to you, his children?

NO: He was not a minister to us. He was a father to us. But he did pass on some things that I felt I learned. I don't know about him [Paul]. I learned from my father. That was, he always … in the back of my mind, when I was growing up, that health was very important. I don't know if that was through one of the sermons and stuff that I heard, but he always felt that health is the most important thing that everybody has. Without health, I still remember, everything else in the world—money, fame, whatever—doesn't have any meaning anymore if you don't have your health. Your health is the most important.

And from a religious side, I think, it's a gift that was given to you, a God-given gift. But you should take care of it.

MI: Did he talk about health in his sermons?

NO: Yes, he was a very health-conscious person. Let me tell you. He never drank, smoked or anything. When he was growing older, he had about twenty different types of pills and vitamins. And every morning he would take all of that, and he'd say, "You know, health is important." He really tried to take care of his health. He was very conscious of health.

MI: Did either of you smoke or drink at any point?

NO: Oh, yes, I smoked. (Laughter)

MI: What did he say?

NO: I don't know if he really knew. I was older then. I'm sure my parents knew that I smoked and drank but they didn't say anything about it. If you're not an alcoholic or a chain smoker, I think they kinda felt that you're old, you should know, that kind of attitude. I think growing up in that certain period of time, everybody was smoking, so it's like, being one of everybody! Everybody smoked. But I quit a long time ago.

MI: How about you, did you ever smoke or drink?

PO: I did, but that was long ago.

MI: Did he ever talk to you about it, about your health?

PO: No.

MI: How do you think he influenced your life?

NO: For me, he was just a father.

MI: He never preached to you folks at home?

NO: No, not that I know of. I don't know if he preached to you [to Paul]. I think, if anything, my mother had more influence on my life. I went into engineering in college and I wasn't doing that great because I was having fun. I belonged to a fraternity and some youth groups and we used to stick around with the sorority girls. I was enjoying my life. In engineering, you had to study. My classmates were studying in the library while I was out there having fun. In engineering, you couldn't be playing around. You had to study. It wasn't easy. I left the [engineering] college. I went to work at the Hilton for a little while.

But my mother had a very strong influence. She said, "I want you to go get some education." She had read about this school called Automation Training Center, which is teaching business machines, computers and programming. She said, "Why don't you go there at nighttime and go and learn?" So I went and I learned it. The person in charge asked me if I wanted to work for a bank. I said okay, and that's how I got started in data processing. I got my college degree once I was in the banking industry; I found that I needed a college degree. After I got married and I was working for First Hawaiian, I went back to get my college degree in Business Administration. I should have done that earlier but I think, earlier, I was just more immature at the time. I was just running around with the other fraternity brothers and didn't take college very seriously.

MI: Your father moved on from all of this [internment experience]. How about your mother? Do you think it impacted the rest of her life? Or was it something she also put behind her? What did she end up doing?

NO: She was a substitute teacher, even in Ewa. She would go to Barbers Point Elementary to substitute. They used to call her when a teacher was sick, elementary grade. When she came to town, she would go to Kalihi and some of the other schools in town.

MI: In terms of the internment experience, did she ever talk about it? Do you think it affected her much or was she like your father?

NO: She didn't talk too much about it.

PO: I don't think she enjoyed it too much, but she just worked.

NO: She just helped my father. You know, she didn't talk too much.

PO: Towards the end, my father started … he was the first one doing these, um, weddings from Japan. She helped him a lot.

MI: There was no bitterness about what they had to go through during the war years?

PO: I don't think so. (Pause) My father, I remember when he got his citizenship, was very happy. (Chuckles)

NO: Yes, that was in the early fifties, '52 or '53.

PO: It was a big day for them.

MI: You all got the reparations, the $20,000?

PO: We did.

MI: What did he say when he got the check?

NO: He didn't say anything about it.

PO: When he got his citizenship...

MI: You understood what it was about? There was no family discussion about it?

NO: Yes, because I was kinda old already. I knew the internment and all the families being relocated.

MI: You don't have much recollection of the whole…

NO: Of the internment time, no. Only after, in Waialua, I started to because by then, I was in kindergarten and first grade, so I started to know a little bit more.

MI: So at that point in time, when everybody got their checks, there was no family discussion or talks about the...

NO: No, no.

PO: I know I kept mine for a long time and finally, I spent it.

NO: (Laughs) I don't remember what I did with it.

PO: (Pause) I didn't think we'd get it, you know, but they said to try, and we tried.

MI: People had just put that [experience] basically, in the back of their minds…

PO: Yes. Yes.

MI: … and just said, move on with your lives.

NO: For me, I'm doing these presentations to the high school students, about the internment.

MI: What kind of impact do you think you have on those students?

NO: I have a tremendous impact because when I do my presentations, the students, I know they're listening. The reason they're listening is because what I'm telling them about what my father went through with the internment, you don't read about it in the history books, in the newspapers … they don't talk about it. I don't blame [anyone]. This is not a happy part of the United States history, what they did [to the Japanese Americans]. So when I go through exactly what happened from December 7 and I show them the Warrant of Arrest [of his father]. He went through an Inquiry Board with military and civilians and the FBI agent. There were forty-something men and they went through why they were considered enemy agents or enemies for the United States.
Then he went through another board proceedings where they interviewed him and then, the conclusion came up that they didn't see anything that was against releasing him. Then the FBI, the intelligence bureau, overturned it. They said "No, he has to be interned." That got me more. That's why I went to Senator Dan Inouye's office to get some help. I wanted the FBI files. I got the military, army files but I never got anything from the FBI. The Intelligence Bureau was the one that overturned it and I wanted to know why. Even with the help of the late Senator Dan Inouye, I couldn't get in. The last response I got from his office was that they [FBI] destroyed the records. I had to accept that and let it go at that. I got no information from the FBI. To this day, I don't know why they overturned that [recommendation].

MI: Do you have any more comments you want to add? If not, thank you.