JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAI'I

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Paul Shigenaga (PS)

May 3, 2017

Interviewer: Mel Inamasu (MI)

MI: Today is May 3, 2017, and we are in the Conference Room of the Japanese Cultural Center to interview Mr. Paul Shigenaga about his father and his family and their experience during the World War II period. My name is Mel Inamasu. I am a volunteer in the Resource Center. I'm going to have Paul introduce himself and tell us a little bit about yourself, where you were born, when you were born, just the month and year you were born, and then I'll start asking you some questions about yourself.

PS: My name is Paul Shigenaga. I was born in Honolulu in September, 1942.

MI: And where were you born?

PS: In Honolulu.

MI: What part?

PS: Oh, on Wyllie Street…

MI: Wyllie Street.

PS: But…

MI: What neighborhood?

PS: In Nuuanu, across from Maemae School.

MI: Okay. Let me ask you about your parents. Who were your parents, the names and, roughly, when were they born so I have a sense?

PS: My father was…

MI: Where they were born.

PS: Yeah, my father was born in Hiba-*gun*, Shobara City in Hiroshima Prefecture on February 5, 1917. I'm sorry. March 14, 1901, the date of his birth.

MI: Okay.

PS: He came to Hawaii in February, February 5, 1917.

MI: Okay.

PS: His parents…

MI: What was his full name, I'm sorry?

PS: Shigeo.

MI: Just Shigeo? Didn't have a middle name or anything?

PS: No. Shigeo Shigenaga.

MI: Okay.

PS: He's the second oldest in the family. He had an older brother Kakuro who also came to Hawaii from Hiroshima.

MI: They came together?

PS: No, they didn't come together. They came separately. Kakuro came first because my grandparents, Mansuke and Katsu, both of them came to Hawaii. I don't know what year they came, but they came earlier.

MI: Earlier.

PS: Yeah, so it must, it must have been before 1912 because, I think, around that time, my uncle Kakuro came to meet with them. And they settled in Ninole, Hawaii, [the] Big Island.

MI: Wait, your father was left behind?

PS: My father was left behind. My uncles were left behind. Both of them were left behind. My grandparents came here first.

MI: Who took care of them in Japan?

PS: Their great grandparents, their ((?)). So, but…

MI: So your grandfather came to work on the plantation?

PS: Yes.

MI: On the Big Island.

PS: Yes. On the Big Island. So…

MI: And he came married?

PS: No. He was single at that time. First of all, my father was only fifteen when he came here. Sixteen years old. So…

MI: Your grandfather. Your grandfather came married.

PS: No, my grandfather and my grandmother were already married in Hiroshima. And both of them decided to come to Honolulu.

MI: Okay.

PS: To Hawaii, along with the rest of the immigrants. And I don't know what year they came over. I don't have their records. But they settled in Ninole on the Big Island. My grandfather worked on the sugar plantation. My father also worked on the sugar plantation from 1917 to about 1919, while he was about sixteen years old. And this was in Hakalau on the Big Island.

MI: Okay.

PS: And then [in] 1919, when he became eighteen, he decided to go on his own so he came to Honolulu. And then he worked at various restaurants. He loved cooking so he worked at various restaurants and he was a fish monger, among other things, in the restaurant business. And then he started to save some money and go forward and he opened up his own. So he decided—he got this small restaurant along Hotel Street. My understanding is around Hotel Street.

MI: You remember the name?

PS: I don't remember the name, but that's when he started. And then he met my mother around 1927 and they got married. But at that time. he was still working in restaurants. And I don't know the exact date, but they opened up a larger restaurant on College Walk which was called Café Venice. And he bought, purchased the property and had the building built and everything else and…

MI: What kind of food?

PS: He had a bar and a restaurant over there. He was very successful, yeah.

MI: Local business?

PS: Yeah, this was during the war. Before the war.

MI: Before the war.

PS: Before the war broke out and there were a lot of military people who used to come. My father had a nightclub downstairs. The restaurant came out later, but the bar opened up. That's where he made a lot of money at the time and so, he started to become successful. So what he did was purchase a home up on Wyllie Street, in Nuuanu. A pretty big property. I think he was one of few Japanese that were living in that area during that time. So [it was] about a three quarter acre property. It was a mansion, sort of like a mansion. I guess some white people used to live there and he purchased it all from them. Anyway, then the war broke out and the property became alien property because my father was never—not a citizen and my mother was not a citizen also. But, let me go back, prior to that. We had about six children in the family, five boys and one daughter. And I was born after my father got interned, but I'll go into the internship [internment] a little later, but…

MI: Which one are you? What…

PS: I'm the last one. They called me the mistake baby because I was born eight years after the brother above me. So I was born during the year of the war, 1942, September. So…

MI: Now, okay, going back maybe a little bit about your mother. What was her name?

PS: Okay, my mother's…

MI: Her parent's history.

PS: My mother is—her maiden name was Akino Okamoto and she was born in Hiroshima, this place called Asa-*gun* in January 1909. And she came from a pretty well[-off family], good-position. Her parents were in the needle business, you know, the needle to sew clothes and…

MI: They produced needles?

PS: Yes, they had a factory.

MI: I see.

PS: So, they were pretty well-off and they had a lot of properties in Hiroshima. But unfortunately, with the war—well, prior to the war, my mother just so happened [to] come to Hawaii because she was supposed to visit her uncle who was a farmer somewhere along the West Coast in California. And part of my understanding is when she came to Hawaii when she was going to go there [to California], she broke her leg so unfortunately, she couldn't go. She had to stay back.

MI: But she had family here?

PS: Yes, the Osumi family…

MI: Related to…

PS: They're cousins.

MI: How are they related?

PS: First cousins. My mother is first cousins. First cousins, yeah.

MI: And your mother's mother and their mother [were sisters].

PS: Yeah.

MI: Okay.

PS: Osumi family. One of them was a dentist, Paul Osumi. Not Paul, I forgot his first name. But there was Paul Osumi. He was well-known. He was the pastor.

MI: Oh, yeah, yeah.

PS: But that's a second cousin, not the first cousin. But anyway, so she stayed here and she met my father. Write that down. During that time, they got married around 1927. I don't have the exact date. And then, you know, they produced six kids, five boys and one daughter. So, you know, as early immigrants, they all struggled. So [in the] early years, they were living out in the Palama area and the Kalihi area.

MI: While your father is doing, you know, this business, I guess the bar and then the restaurant. What is happening to his parents?

PS: Say that again.

MI: What is happening to his parents on the Big Island?

PS: They were all still there on the Big Island.

MI: Just staying on the plantation.

PS: Just staying on the Big Island. And my father had two siblings that were born on the Big Island. So they were *Nisei*.

MI: Citizens.

PS: One of them is Yoshio, one of the brothers, and the other one was Ayako, my sister. And both of them were educated on the Big Island. My father and my uncle, you know, were educated in Japan so they were self-taught when they came over here. They learned English by themselves. But, so…

MI: So this—I guess he's just getting, doing well business-wise…

PS: Yeah, he...

MI: And financially…

PS: Getting going in the business…

MI: This is [the] 1930s now.

PS: Yeah, so…

MI: Okay, but go ahead.

PS: You know, then as I indicated, he opened up a restaurant and a bar, well, actually a bar first which was called the Venice. The restaurant was called Café Venice. I don't know what the name of the bar was. But it was on the first floor and that's where he was very successful. He made a lot of money. This was just before the war broke out. And so when the war broke out, at that time we were living in Nuuanu. I wasn't born yet but they were living on the Wyllie Street property. My understanding was, well, this is a story I just heard of, but my aunty was just telling me about this. It just so happened they, the FBI, Department of Justice, went to my father's house. He was involved in, I guess, a lot of the Japanese organizations.

MI: Do you know any of them? Any that...

PS: I don't know. Whatever organizations they had in Hawaii. He was involved in a lot of those things. And, so the story goes that my uncle Kakuro just so happened to be on Oahu at that time. He opened up a—going back to Kakuro again. I'm skipping all over the place but Kakuro was from the Big Island. He [had] settled in Maui, in Kahului. So, he opened a store there.

MI: What kind of store?

PS: Mom and pop store. They sell all kinds of stuff and he used to make, you know, *tsukemono* [pickled vegetables] and make *bagong* [fermented fish paste] for the Filipino plantation workers and so he was pretty successful, too. He was a peddler, too, going around the neighborhood selling goods and things. But, anyway, it just so happened that he was on Oahu, Honolulu at the time, and he was at that home on Wyllie Street. So my understanding is that they came there and they asked for Shigenaga and he said, "Oh, that's me." So, they pulled him in. They thought that was my father. They took him down to Sand Island. He got detained over there. And then they found out, that was the wrong Shigenaga, (Laughter) so they came back again and they picked up my father. And he was arrested on March 7, 1942.

MI: And he was arrested because, well, number one, he was a non-citizen, eh?

PS: Yeah.

MI: And number two, because he was active in the business community.

PS: He was active in the business. He was also active in the Japanese organizations, so, you know, and his friends were involved in that—priests, school teachers, [school] principals, and whatever. So they all got hauled in together.

MI: So, your uncle, they let him go within a day or two and they came for your father?

PS: No.

MI: How long…

PS: They kept him too because they found out that he was an alien too and my father's brother so…

MI: Well, as far as your father, how soon after they took your uncle did they realize that they were wrong and came for your father?

PS: I think about four days later.

MI: Four days?

PS: Something like that. I think my uncle was detained I think… oh, no, no I'm sorry. No, I'm sorry. It's three months later because my uncle was picked up on January 7, 1942.

MI: And your father was…

PS: My father was picked up on March 7 so just about three months later. I don't know…

MI: Two months.

PS: So what the reason was…

MI: It took them about two months to figure out that they got the wrong guy.

PS: Probably.

MI: Right.

PS: But anyway, they came back again so then they picked up my father, then…

MI: When they picked up your father, they didn't let your uncle go?

PS: No, because they knew that [he] was my father's brother, yeah, and he also was an alien too, at that time. So, both of them got detained and both of them got…

MI: I think I read somewhere about something he had written, a diary or something…

PS: What's that again?

MI: Your, I think it was, was it your father or your uncle had a written diary that had…

PS: Uh huh.

MI: Some anti-American things.

PS: Yeah.

MI: Was it your uncle?

PS: As far as my uncle, I'm not sure. You know, I was looking for the testimony. I think there's a transcript that the…

MI: But the family doesn't have that diary or anything?

PS: No.

MI: Does he have any children?

PS: Yeah. My uncle has, yeah, two boys and he had two boys and two girls.

MI: As far as family historian, are you the guy or cousins that…?

PS: Not really. My older brothers have passed away, yeah, three of them. So I have one brother left. He's in his eighties already. Mid-eighties. Well, early eighties. And my sister is also in the eighties. So, you know, I'm mostly the person to talk to so…

MI: How about on your uncle's side?

PS: My uncle's side?

MI: Yeah, the children...

PS: The oldest son, Winston, he's the one that got involved in this thing. Especially on the story, Winston's son who's Mark Shigenaga, both of them did a lot of work providing the information to Grant Din of the Angel Island immigration office and they [he] came up with that story, "The Shigenaga Brothers" [Angel Island poster] on the detention. But I guess their names got picked up originally because Grant Din knows my cousin's son personally. And I guess when he was going through the records at Angel Island, because he works at Angel Island, he came across the name. Both my father and my uncle were detained at Angel Island first before they were sent out.

MI: From Sand Island they went to?

PS: Yeah, from Sand Island, they both went to Angel Island in San Francisco, yeah.

MI: Do you have anything, direct information from your father about this period or is this mainly what you've read and learned?

PS: No, he didn't talk much about it and I'm not sure about my uncle. I'm sure my uncle too, you know, they didn't talk about it. It's just like the 442nd Infantry people. They hardly talked about the war. It's the same thing like the experiences that my father and my uncle had. They didn't talk much about it. There was only one time when he talked to me about this. We were at his home and we had dinner together. We were drinking together...

MI: Like how old was he?

PS: Yeah.

MI: And how old were you at the time?

PS: I was in my thirties, already. At that time I told him, "Hey dad, you know there's a story that's going to come on TV." I think at that time it was KIKU TV too, the [local Hawaii] Japanese TV program [station]. They were going to show a clip on Manzanar. So I told him, "Hey, you gotta go watch that because it's about the immigration [internment] thing." I mean …

MI: He didn't talk about it but you knew, the family knew the story about your father. The children knew.

PS: Well, I don't think he even discussed it with them [older siblings] too, because none of my brothers talked about that, you know, about the internment thing. And my mother, too, she hardly said anything. So…

MI: Did you learn about Manzanar somewhere else or…?

PS: No, I learned about Manzanar when it came out, when they talked about detention of the Japanese immigrants.

MI: When the book was written, *Return to Manzanar*?

PS: No, it was only because somebody told me this program was going to come out so that's why I knew about it. Other than that, I didn't know about Manzanar.

MI: You didn't learn about it in school?

PS: No. So before—I think when we were in high school, they didn't even mention, you know, the detention of the immigrants and the *Nisei* and…. Those were all hush hush, I guess. Nobody wanted to talk about it too. I don't think we ever came across that even in the history books. But anyway, when I was with him and he talked about it, I told him, "Hey, you gotta look at this program [about] Manzanar." And he said, "Oh, you know, Manzanar was good compared to where we were. We were—like, the first place was just like hell," he said. So I said, "What do you mean?" "Well," he said, "from Angel Island"—Well he didn't say Angel Island, he said the place we were—"They pack us in this rail train, railroad train," and he said it was like a cattle truck. Everybody, they just pushed everybody inside. And this was all men, you know. They were all *Issei*, put them all into the train. They're blindfolded, they put them in the train, and then the train was all covered with black.

MI: Now, blindfolded for the whole trip?

PS: I'm not sure if it was the whole trip. But he told me that, no windows, all covered black. So, they don't know where they were going. And they were all standing, just like cattle, he said, you know. Guys starting to get sick and so forth. Dehydration and all that. And finally, they reached this place. And then, I guess when they came out [of the train], he said it was like a military camp. And when I look back at the record and I looked at where my father was detained, through the records, and it seems like the place he was talking about is this place called Fort Sam Houston, which is in Texas. Because that's the first place from Angel Island which they stopped at. This was on June 8, 1942. Oh, I'm sorry. Going back, Angel Island, they left on June 1, 1942. And then they reached Sam Houston on June 8, 1942, seven days later. So apparently, that's the place he was talking about.

MI: Did he ever mention anything about the Immigration Station or Sand Island?

PS: No, he didn't mention anything about that.

MI: Would that be on that, that list?

PS: Yeah, it has Sand Island on here.

MI: Sand Island.

PS: That's where he was ...

MI: First started.

PS: Where he was arrested and they detained him there, prior to shipping him over to Angel Island. Same with my uncle too. So he mentioned that Fort Sam Houston was like a military prison.

MI: That was a military camp.

PS: Yeah, he said it was like a prison, you know. And he said he still recalled that time. You know, he said they were mistreated, very harshly, and he said that for the food, they were fed the slop, you know, whatever the remaining leftovers were fed to them. Some of the people got really sick and some of them died but everything was hush hush. They didn't say nothing. And apparently some got killed too, you know, with weapons. Of course, everything was hush hush. Nobody wanted to say anything, he said. Then he said they rounded up this guy–I think they stayed only for ten days and that's when he and whoever was there were shipped to Lordsburg, New Mexico. Not shipped but they went on a train to Lordsburg and that's where they settled. The first internment camp, yeah. And that was it. After that he didn't mention anything, anything else about it so...

MI: At Sam Houston…

PS: At that time, for us too, you know, I guess because being *Nisei* and, you know, being Japanese at that time, we felt kinda inferior too, especially my parents. Both of them were *Issei*. I didn't really push for it but if it was today, I would have asked a lot of questions but at that time, everything was hush hush. Nobody wanted to say nothing, so….

MI: That's about it. That's about all he said.

PS: That's about, that's the only thing he talked to me about. That was the only time.

MI: That was the only ((?)).

PS: So it's all because of the Manzanar [video].

MI: Your mother is left behind with five children.

PS: Yeah. My mother was left behind because she was pregnant with me at that time.

MI: I see.

PS: Okay, because when he got detained, it was in March. I was born in September so we had the home but the kids were—my oldest brother was about fifteen, I think. Fourteen years old. And the one above me was eight years old. So five of them, plus me at home so I guess they left her behind [to care for the family]. But from what my understanding was, my brother was saying that they had military guards posted at the home.

MI: Why was that?

PS: I don't know. Well, he just mentioned that they had military guards posted at the home and we were just like [under] house arrest in that home. We couldn't go out or anything. I guess but for food. I don't know what they did. My grandmother was with us too. My father's mother, at that time, was staying with us.

MI: She moved from the Big Island?

PS: Yeah, she came over…

MI: Her husband [had] passed away…

PS: Because when I was born, I guess she came to help my mother, yeah. So, she stayed at our home too. And then…

MI: Now, what's the story on the government confiscating your house?

PS: What's that again?

MI: The government taking the house—what's the story?

PS: No, the government didn't take the home. They didn't take the business, too.

MI: Oh.

PS: Because, you know…

MI: So your family continued to live in the house during this whole period.

PS: Yeah.

MI: Okay.

PS: So they didn't take away anything and...

MI: But this [house] guard thing went on for the whole war period or…?

PS: This is the whole period during the war. Even the restaurant business.

MI: [For] four years, the guards were watching your house?

PS: Well, I'm not sure whether the guards were there the whole four years or not. But my brother was telling me, he still recalls they had guards. They couldn't go out, just like a house arrest.

MI: And what happened to your father's business?

PS: The business itself was, you know, alien property but my father, I think, at that time, he had this feeling that maybe he was going to get arrested because, you know, everything was just stirring up, so he put everything under my mother's name. He put the properties, all the properties, under my mother's name. Took his name off. And then, for the business, and I saw part of the transcript, it said he was only the manager over there.

MI: I see.

PS: You know, he just ran the operation of the business. I'll try and see if I can get that transcript and then make a copy for you. And I think there's a lot of things [there].

MI: Because of that, your mother was able to retain ownership.

PS: Yeah.

MI: The home and the business.

PS: Yeah. So, they didn't take it away.

MI: So the business continued.

PS: Yeah, still continued. But of course, you know, it was kinda hard because nobody had money at that time, when the war broke out.

MI: Yeah.

PS: Everybody was limited.

MI: What about the soldiers?

PS: A lot of—we kept the business. My father kept the property.

MI: What I mean is that the soldiers were stationed in Hawaii. A lot of soldiers came to…

PS: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But at that time, [it was considered] alien property so they wouldn't visit, wouldn't patronize that property anymore.

MI: Is that right?

PS: Yeah, because it's alien property so… So, you know, but she kept the business, tried to make a living out of that. But, my father, I guess, had a lot of savings at that time. Like I said, he was successful so at that time, I guess, they lived off the savings or whatever.

MI: How about—your mother ever talk to you about how hard things were in those days without your father?

PS: No, she didn't mention anything. Yeah, they might have discussed it among themselves but they didn't say anything to us.

MI: They shielded the children.

PS: Yeah.

MI: How about your brothers and your sister?

PS: Even my brothers, ah…

MI: They just went to school…

PS: Yeah.

MI: And continued with their lives?

PS: They went to school all in that area, Maemae School. Later Kawananakoa, then McKinley. But, you know, like every other family in Hawaii, all the Japanese families, everybody suffered during the war. But they lived through it but like I said, both of them never talked about it, about the hardship and this and that, yeah.

MI: Like December 7. Did you ever ask your parents what they were doing on December 7 [1941], those kind of things?

PS: No, nobody mentioned anything. So 1941, I don't recall anything.

MI: Now, did your parents write to each other while he was away?

PS: I'm not sure.

MI: You don't have any letters or anything?

PS: No, I don't have any of those so I'm not sure if they did or not.

MI: Did you ever hear anything from your mother about having to make a decision whether to join your father in camp or staying back in Hawaii?

PS: You mean to join him?

MI: Yeah.

PS: No, because I think the camps my father was in were all male.

MI: Yeah. What they did was for those men in those camps who chose to have the families join them, they were moved to other camps [where the family could join them].

PS: Oh, yeah, yeah. but ours…

MI: You weren't aware of any kind of discussion.

PS: I don't think they even decided to do that, you know, umm so…

MI: Okay, so, umm, I guess it was about three years, over three and a half years, that he was..?

PS: About three years, yeah, because he was...

MI: So, you were about three years when he came back.

PS: Yeah. Because he was released— he was, after Lordsburg, he was actually transferred a year later to Santa Fe internment camp. Yeah, internment camp and he stayed there until June 14, 1943. And then he stayed there for two years and then he was transferred to Seattle, Washington, ah, then released on… Oh, he...

MI: Seattle, Washington was…

PS: Yeah.

MI: He was on his way back.

PS: Yeah. They released him from New Mexico, transferred him to Seattle, Washington, November 2, 1945, and then he was released and left Seattle to Honolulu on November 7, five days later. I don't know when he arrived here. I was already three years old.

MI: Do you remember the first time you met him?

PS: I hardly recall. I was only three, so I don't remember too much.

MI: From your early days, remember how the family was? How he changed when your father came back and anything like that?

PS: No. When my father came back, he started to continue the business, yeah. And then so…

MI: And he…

PS: That's when he opened up the restaurant, I think, at that time, upstairs.

MI: Okay. How old was he when he came back in 1945?

PS: How old he was?

MI: Yeah.

PS: He was forty…

MI: Thirty-eight…

PS: Forty-four years old.

MI: He was forty-four. So, he was born, okay…

PS: 1901.

MI: 1944…

PS: Forty-four years old. So…

MI: He was able to resume his life because things were kept intact at home.

PS: What's that?

MI: He was able to resume his life because the home was preserved…

PS: Yeah, the business was still there.

MI: Okay.

PS: And he started the restaurant called Café Venice at that time.

MI: That's when the restaurant business…

PS: We held the restaurant business to about 1954, 1953 and the reason why he gave up the restaurant business was because [of] condemnation, the city took over. So, if you look at College Walk today, from the river, on the opposite side is River Street, eh? His property was close. It was just between Vineyard Boulevard and Kukui Street. About the center, more to the Vineyard side. But that property was condemned by the city and they built that housing there. This was in 1953 or 1954.

MI: So when did he have to sell? Where did he go?

PS: Okay. I went back again but while we were living in Nuuanu, my father was, you know, I guess successful so he picked up a long term lease of a property on Kalakaua Avenue. San Souci Beach. And that property belonged to the McInerny family. And it's still owned by the McInerny family, the foundation, yeah? My father had a long-term lease on that property through Bishop Trust Company. At that time, it was called Bishop Trust. So, at that time, that's how he got the lease on that property. So that property was our beach home. So we used to go there.

MI: Do you remember going to the beach?

PS: Yeah.

MI: Playing on the beach?

PS: Yeah. We used to go swimming and whatever, shower. It was a big property. It's about an acre. And, so now, with the condemnation of that property, my father, instead of paying taxes on that, he purchased some property out in Beretania Street, rental properties. So everything was just moved over so we didn't have to pay any kind of taxes. And that home in Nuuanu at that time, my father paid nothing.

MI: Say that again.

PS: My father was always an entrepreneur.

MI: What was that again? The property in Nuuanu?

PS: Sold it in 1953 or 1954, about the time that everything was happening, the condemnation and everything. Then we moved over to Waikiki. And, you know, my father, of course, was not working at that time. My father was an entrepreneur, always looking for something and, I guess, this thought came into his mind. At that time, the Japanese started to come to Hawaii. And he thought to himself, maybe they, you know, need something that was owned by Japanese and they could come over where they could relax. And Japanese proprietors cooking Japanese food for them and so forth. So, of course, in those days, that property there was residential property. So, my father and this person called Dad Center, they called him "Pop" Dad Center—the Centers had a lot of property about…

MI: What was his first name?

PS: Center.

MI: First name?

PS: I don't know. They called him Pop or Dad Center. He was a well-known person.

MI: D-A-D.

PS: Yeah. He was a person but he had a property over there too. And I think his property was fee simple. I'm not sure. But they wanted to convert, both of them. Eh, they wanted to go into the apartment hotel [business] so they went through the zoning [change process]. My father, you know, at that time, he knew a lot of people, so they both were successful in making that area all apartments and hotels. So, my father and Dad Center were the first people that…

MI: He didn't own it…

PS: He had a long-term lease. My father had a long-term lease.

MI: How long?

PS: Fifty years, I think. So, he decided—like I said, he's thinking about this. So he opened up a hotel. Well, not really a—it was a small operation. We had only twelve units. It was more like one-bedroom apartments like… So we had some people that came in from the mainland, rented long term, stayed over the summer or whatever. And at the same time, we had some Japanese people coming over. But not that much at that time. The influx was very little. And then about three or four years later, he was doing pretty good so four years later, he also added another twelve units, but this time, only single rooms. So that was mostly because he was thinking, eh, more Japanese are going to be coming so they're going to need these rooms. He picked up another twelve units so at that time, we had twenty-four units.

MI: He built these units?

PS: Yeah, he built them. And the old McInerny home, he converted that to a dining area and, of course, the front office and…

MI: So, the family moved out?

PS: Lobby. What's that?

MI: The family moved out?

PS: No, we lived there too. We stayed there but we stayed in the back because there were bedrooms in the back. So, my father did that and then he also opened up a teahouse on the side of that building, of that home. It was a long building. It's a Japanese teahouse. They called it Miyako. Today, the Kaimana Beach Hotel, New Otani Kaimana Beach still carries that name Miyako, yeah. They have that restaurant. I think it's on the second floor. So that restaurant we had was really successful. We had a lot of celebrities and so forth coming there. When I say celebrities, people like Frank Sinatra, Rita Hayworth, when they'd come to Hawaii, they heard about…

MI: The restaurant.

PS: The teahouse in Waikiki. But it was all tatami floor, very Japanese. We had waitresses, all Japanese, kimonos and everything. And my father, he loved to cook. So, he was the cook in the back. And he also brought in, eh, when he started to get successful, he started to bring in Japanese cooks from Japan. Brought them over and they cooked. Hired them. It was successful. And then around 1953, he had an idea of another for—I guess some foresight, he wanted to expand the hotel. So we were going to initially build our own, and maybe four, five stories. And then my father had all these plan designs [to] expand the hotel, open up the restaurant like an arcade at the bottom, yeah, right in front of the beach, right? Then, I guess he started to talk to these Japanese people. He had a lot of connections in Japan, people that he dealt with, I guess. I don't know whether it was through the organizations or whatever but he had, he had a lot of people that he met and he became friends with them. Like one of them was this guy Shigeo Nagano and you're gonna see his picture here, but he [was] the chairman of the board for Fuji Steel. They were—I think the Naganos, if I'm not mistaken, came from the same prefecture, same area that my father came from in Hiroshima. Then, he met a lot of people from Mitsubishi and all these other guys and became friends with these people. And so around 1953, they knew that my father had this property and the hotel there, so they were real interested. They were talking one night. He was thinking about building this hotel and so they wanted to invest. At that time, Japan was coming up too, in the 1950s, after the war.

MI: He's still leasing the property?

PS: We still were leasing the property. So then he said, "Okay, let's invest." Forty-seven investors from Japan came in. My father was the majority stockholder. They put my father in the majority and they started. So, this was his dream. He said "Wow!" You know, it was ten stories, eleven stories, one hundred and twenty-five rooms were additions. So he said they, you know, incorporated and then he became the first president and CEO of the company. And even as being the president of the hotel, like he said, he loved cooking so the top floor was a restaurant, Japanese restaurant, he reserved for himself. He wanted to open…

MI: A restaurant.

PS: And he wanted to go there and…

MI: What was the name of the restaurant?

PS: And cook at night. My father worked sixteen hours a day, you know. My mother too, both of them. They were used to doing this so they opened up. During the days in the office doing all the work and night time, he would go up there.

MI: What was the name of that one?

PS: Miyako. Yeah, that's the one. The name is still there yet ((?)) in the restaurant.

MI: What was your mother's role in all of this?

PS: My mother? She was a cook helper inside there. Of course, [there were] other people, cooks and whatever, waitresses, but her too, always working, working, working. Even when we had the twenty-four units, she used to be like a maid, she'd fix, you know, do all the…

MI: Whatever needed to be done.

PS: Washing, everything. At nighttime, she'd go there, cooking. They hardly slept. All day they had to work. They didn't take any vacation or anything. So, they were always in business. But they enjoyed it. It's hard, right? But they enjoyed it. And so, that was his biggest dream. I guess he wanted to accomplish this thing, the first Japanese, locally, to build that hotel.

MI: Is that right?

PS: So, at that time too, if I am not mistaken, the Kobayashi family also was involved in the hotel business. They opened up a hotel business, which is on Kapahulu Avenue.

MI: Kapahulu.

PS: I forget what the name of the hotel was. But it's not there. The hotel is still there but the name has changed. Then in 1966, my father retired. And I think in that year, if I'm not mistaken, the New Otani came in too, and they purchased most of my father's stocks, yeah? I have some shares in there. My father didn't want to sell everything because he wanted to keep something. There's a small portion in there, but the majority, he sold.

MI: When he retired, he sold…

PS: Yeah. Because, you know, I guess at that time, the Board of Directors wanted my father managing. They all decided, eh, that to really make the hotel go, they needed somebody to really make the hotel go, you know, because ((?)). We were all involved inside there. Working and all my brothers and everybody was involved.

MI: Umm huh.

PS: Too much family, so we said, "We gotta get somebody from the outside, maybe, who had the hotel business background," that can probably help to push that thing. So we got some people from Japan, before Otani came in. They were, I think, part of the original investors. They were working for them. You know, these guys own hotels and everything else too and they ran it for us for one, one or two years. Even when my father was there, I think they were there as consultants or whatever. Then, at that time, my father sold out and New Otani came in. But, ah, New Otani has put in a lot of money so today, you know, today, it's a successful hotel. It's doing real well.

MI: Did they ever buy the property or is it still…?

PS: No. That property, even till today, is still owned by the McInerny family. It's under the McInerny Foundation.

MI: Does that mean that when the lease is over, they can take over the hotel?

PS: Yeah.

MI: With all those things?

PS: But what happened was when we built the 125 units, my father re-negotiated again. We picked up another fifty-year lease.

MI: Oh, really.

PS: At that time. So I think it's now just about, you know, over so they've got to re-negotiate again. But I'm sure the McInerny family will just let the hotel be there. So yeah, that's more of my father's [life].

MI: At any point, did he ever, even after he retired, did he ever reflect on this internment or did he just, you know…

PS: Well, he…

MI: "*Shikata ga nai*," cannot be helped, and he must move on with his life?

PS: No, he went on with his life but at the same token, you know, my father and my mother were never naturalized as citizens.

MI: They chose not to become…

PS: Not to.

MI: Because?

PS: Well, I think two things. One, because, I guess, he had this loyalty to Japan. He loved Japan, his mother country. And, also, maybe because of the mistreatment he had during the war and this and that.

MI: So, do you think there was some bitterness against America?

PS: I'm sure he had some bitterness, but he never really spoke out about it. He may have done it with his friends or maybe my mother or whatever, but he never talked to us about it.

MI: Did he maintain contact with any of his fellow internees?

PS: Yeah, he used to.

MI: Like who, which ones? Are there any names?

PS: Sheesh. Well, I'm not sure whether they were all interned or not, but you know, people that he—after he retired, people forget you, right? But he had this loyal group from Hiroshima. It always stayed together and so they were involved in that. Even after he retired, [he was] involved in the Hiroshima *kenjin kai* and also the Hiba-*gun kenjin kai*, where they came from originally. I'm not sure all of them, whether [they were] interned or not, but the majority of them were also in business, like the Hirao family. You know, the Hirao family owns the mochi shop, Nisshodo. This was my father's really good friend, the grandfather. He was the original owner, because they came from the same

place [Hiba-*gun*]. There was also another person named Wimpy. They called him Wimpy but he's [part of] a Shimizu family. He owned a bar too, on Beretania Street. He was successful too. There was a Tanabe family, also in the furniture business. They were successful too. They all came from the same area and they were always involved together. So I'm not sure whether those guys were also [interned]. I should look it up because there was a list of all the people who were detained. I don't know whether they were rounded up too. But my father, you know, after the war, he retired, he still got involved in a lot of social—well, like for example, the Hawaiian *Meiji Kai* which I think is still existing yet.

MI: What is that?

PS: Hawaii *Meiji Kai*. But my father was the…

MI: What was that?

PS: It was a group. All the people born during the year of the Meiji era were part of this group. My father organized this thing and he founded and organized it. So he became the president and they had a lot of people born in that era that also joined into that group. Today, I think it's still existing. I'm pretty sure. And, of course, he was involved in the, you know, the United Japanese Society, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu Chamber of Commerce. And he also was involved in the, was one of the founders of that Makiki Japanese Immigrant Memorial Grave. You know, in Makiki. They have a grave there for the immigrants, the first immigrants that came and my father…

MI: Where is this grave?

PS: Some other people, like Isami Doi, came together.

MI: Where is this grave? What part of Makiki?

PS: I'm not sure where it is, but…

MI: Wilder Avenue? At the end of Wilder Avenue?

PS: Makiki side.

MI: Oh, that used to be [where] a lot of immigrants were buried. So they had that thing there.

PS: And I still remember, we were talking about if my father never became a citizen, a U.S. citizen. And there was a documentary that came out…

MI: Against…

PS: Because of this, the Makiki grave and my father ['s] involvement in that—I think it came out on KIKU and it was a documentary and he was one of the people that was in there. And, you know, that's the first time, I was ((?)) and I was proud of it too, but it was the first time my father ever came out and said…. He was walking, you know, through the grave area and he said ((?)), "But America was good to me." And that's the first time he admitted that he ((?)). I think that was because he had all these opportunities, yeah, as an entrepreneur, going into business and became very successful. And so…

MI: In general, that's what they came for, right, initially a better life?

PS: Yeah, right, because back home, they had nothing.

MI: Yeah.

PS: You know….

MI: Times were hard.

PS: My parents came from a real—I mean my father came from a very poor family. They had nothing. So, I guess, coming here was an opportunity for him.

MI: Yeah, if you worked hard.

PS: So he wasn't educated or anything. You know, he went to school in Japan until he left but in Hawaii, he just learned everything on his own.

MI: Now, what's the name of this documentary and is it something we can see?

PS: It was long ago. I can't remember what it was. But there were several people they're talking about, I guess, even when they attacked Pearl Harbor, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, there were, you know, remains of these pilots and so forth, and that's what it was about too because I think that Japan...

MI: Some of them were buried in that cemetery?

PS: Yeah. I remember my father saying there was a big stone with a "J" on top.

MI: Huh.

PS: They think it was Japanese, but…

MI: So eventually, those were sent back to Japan.

PS: Yeah, the remains, yeah, some of them. They could recover some. So that was, I think, basically what the documentary was about. But he came a long way. You know, going back after the war, but as I say September 1947, when trade opened up between the USA and Japan, he was invited to Japan with the first group of ((barists?))from Hawaii. And during this trip, he was the first foreign resident after World War II to meet Emperor Hirohito at the Imperial Palace. Aah so…

MI: Why was he selected?

PS: This was in 1947, after the war. But he had an invitation to meet …

MI: As a businessman?

PS: As a businessman.

MI: Because of his business…

PS: To meet with the Emperor. And through that exchange, you know, he kept close knit ((contact?)) with the Imperial family because I remember, even as a kid, you know, we had Prince and Princess Takamatsu come over to our home and have dinner and whatever. And then we also had Prince and Princess Chichibu. They were both brothers of the Emperor, yeah? Then he continued the friendship with the royal family, going to Japan and visiting them. They were hosting him too and things like that.

MI: So he's been to the palace and everything.

PS: Pardon?

MI: He's been to the palace, the royal…

PS: The royal family, yeah. So, in fact, even when, I guess, Prince and Princess Mikasa—I have this on my record here—stopped in Hawaii after attending the 50th anniversary of the Japanese immigrants to Brazil, my father held a tea party over at the hotel. And then, when Prince and Princess Takamatsu attended the 75th anniversary of the Japanese immigrants to Hawaii, my father was a personal escort so he took them all over the place, to the neighbor islands.

MI: I see.

PS: Even in Hawaii. So, he was really involved even after the war, still involved with Japan, because [it was] his country. And I think, one of the purposes in [doing] that, he probably wanted to keep his citizenship with Japan.

MI: So is that something he tried to convey to the kids, to the children?

PS: No.

MI: Did he talk to you about [traditional] Japanese values, that kind of thing?

PS: No. He never did mention anything about those kinds of stuff. But my father was—well let me go back on my record. In 1954, he was the first foreign resident to receive the Distinguished Black Ribbon Medal which was presented by the government, Japanese government after World War II. And then he was nominated also …

MI: What did that signify? What does that signify, that award?

PS: I guess the Japanese government, looking at what he did, you know, as far as accomplishing things in Hawaii, as an immigrant and also going into business, like the hotel, looking at opening up East-West meeting of ((?)) by setting up a hotel. So all these things were recognized and he received that medal. And also, I guess, the hardships that he had, you know, during the war and so forth. But he got that and he also was nominated by his friends in Hawaii, the colleagues and so forth, to receive that Emperor's, you know, Rising Sun [award] but he turned it down because…

MI: Really?

PS: He said he didn't want to [accept it] because he felt that, you know, the people receiving it, most of them are well-educated people. My father wasn't. He wasn't educated. So, he felt to himself, he should not receive something…

MI: So, he declined.

PS: Any honor because he wasn't educated. If he had done some—being a professor or, you know, things like that, maybe he would have accepted it but not as a person that wasn't educated, just went on his own and looked at, you know, things,…

MI: Self-made.

PS: Self-made. So he didn't want to receive that credit. But that's how he was so he didn't want to receive credit for things. And, same thing, he never mentioned this kind of stuff to us guys. So he kept—I don't know, maybe to my mother, maybe they talked about it, but to us...

MI: It's interesting you mentioned that this cemetery thing when, you know, he acknowledged America had been good to him.

PS: No, that part, I was really proud about that because everybody, you know, would say, "Eh, your father is real pro-Japanese," and this and that. But then…

MI: When did you hear that?

PS: When I saw that, oh, I was proud of him.

MI: When did you hear that? As you were growing up, your classmates would tell you that?

PS: Yeah. I guess with my father, it was broken English, not perfect English. Not perfect English. But for what education he had …

MI: How many years of education did he have?

PS: What's that?

MI: How many years [of] education did he have?

PA: He only went to about, in Japan, only till about eighth grade or whatever, you know. But that was it. But the rest of it, he read a lot of books.

MI: What kinds of books did he read?

PS: Japanese books.

MI: No, no but what, business or…

PS: Business, history, things like that.

MI: So you have his collection?

PS: No, unfortunately, no. You know some of the things we had, we also donated it to—I don't know if you folks still have it but a lot of the pictures from the royal family, we donated to JCCH, eh? And, of course, we made donations to some other places.

MI: Umm huh. That's good.

PS: Yeah, so, yeah.

MI: Interesting life story.

PS: Yeah, he had an interesting life story for a person, an immigrant coming over, yeah? Of course there were a lot of other immigrants that were successful too, but…

MI: Yeah. He was at an age where—and he had the good fortune to have his assets preserved during the war. So many [others] lost everything and some of the older ones…

PS: Lost everything,

MI: They never got back [to their pre-war life]. Life just ended for them with the internment, but he didn't let that stop him. He just …

PS: But talking about that, the reparations that they had for the Japanese when they were, you know, detained in all the internment camps. I think Earl Nishimura was the attorney that was involved on the Hawaii side.

MI: In about the 1990s, the twenty-thousand dollars?

PS: Huh?

MI: The twenty-thousand dollars?

PS: Pardon?

MI: The twenty-thousand dollars?

PS: Yeah. The reparation. So…

MI: Who was the attorney?

PS: I think his name was Earl Nishimura.

MI: Earl Nishimura.

PS: He passed away already, I think. He was about my father's age or whatever. But anyway, I called him up. By that time my father had already passed away. So I called him up…

MI: When did your father pass away?

PS: 1984.

MI: 1984. Okay. And mother?

PS: My mother, 1997. So I called Nishimura up and I told him about the reparation. Not that I wanted the money but I felt that he [his father] should be one of the group. So I called him and Mr. Nishimura said, "No. Cannot according to the law." He had to be alive. So I told him, "What about my mother, then? My mother wasn't interned but she had to raise all of us?" He said, "No can." So I said, "Okay." We just forgot about it, but it wasn't because of the money at that time but just wanted to…

MI: But, he [his father] was aware that, say from about 1980, things were happening where the country was beginning to...

PS: Recognize.

MI: Apologize. They didn't apologize until 1988.

PS: Right.

MI: But was he aware that things were changing and that...

PS: I'm sure he was. Yeah, but you know, unfortunately, the last two years of his life, he got dementia. So after that, I don't think he knew anything.

MI: That was very early in the apology and redress period.

PS: But, you know, like I said he made his resignation by himself by saying, "America was good to me." So, in that way, I guess, he's accepting the apology for all the mistreatments and whatever they had [to endure] during the internment camp. But, yeah, it's unfortunate that, sometimes I wanted to, but now that we think back, gee, we wished we could have got so much if we [had] asked him so many things about this kind of stuff, you know, so we could put it down in writing and this and that. But unfortunately, it didn't happen until after, you know. When you get older, like us, then you start recognizing these things.

MI: The hardships.

PS: Even the 442nd. At one time I was getting tired already every time they come out but as I got older, I started to realize, "Hey, these guys went through a lot too." And if it wasn't for them, guys like us wouldn't be able to be successful.

MI: Yeah.

PS: Not successful, but to be able to earn our living and, you know …

MI: They changed the…

PS: They changed everything.

MI: The mentality of the country towards Japanese Americans.

PS: Yes. This is why I say to myself—that's why I'm trying to put things together now, because I'm starting to appreciate a lot of these things…

MI: Yeah.

PS: That the early Japanese did for us guys. Not only the *Issei* but the *Nisei,* too, but I'm looking at this and I said, it's good to put these things together…

MI: Umm huh.

PS: So that in the future, the younger generation can look back and say, "Wow, they went through all this."

MI: And that's why we do…

PS: Yeah, so I have these on my records so my nieces or my nephews, later on, I can give it to them.

MI: That's good. But, aah, it's interesting that the internment part is a relatively brief story because you don't have a lot of information but to see how he lived after that experience.

PS: But, for me, I'm a young *Nisei*. Not too many *Nisei*. When I say *Nisei*, the original, but the original… I'm at the ending part. So if you look at my class, I think I'm the only *Nisei*. You know, that's why I was, you know, it's a little different than the upbringing maybe...

MI: Actually, I mean, you are a *Nisei,* but practically speaking you're a *Sansei,* yeah, because you grew up...

PS: Yeah. Most of my classmates, like ((?)) are *Sansei*. One of the few *Nisei*.

MI: But he [his father] never gave you advice or anything. He was too busy working. You know, trying to raise you, he never told you *gaman* [endure]?

PS: You know, Mel, my father and my mother, as I indicated earlier, they worked sixteen hours a day. All of us kids, I think, hardly had any attention. (Laughter) Really, personally. I don't recall even getting birthday parties or anything. But they were so involved in working. Working, working, working, sixteen hours a day, you know, so...

MI: But what was unspoken, probably, was working for the family...

PS: For the family, yes.

MI: For the kids.

PS: "*Kodomo no*"… [Children's]

MI: ((?))

PS: So, you know, that's what I say to myself, "Jesus, you know he could, after he retired, he could have gone on trips." He hardly went on anything.

MI: What did he do after he retired?

PS: Mostly getting involved in this kind of stuff, you know, like the….

MI: Community organizations.

PS: Yeah, yeah. Community kind of stuff. Then, of course, we had some rental properties, got involved in that, and collecting rents and whatever. But I still remember he told me one time, he said, oh, maybe it was advice he gave me. He told me, "When you thirty," [in] broken English, "you in your thirties, you fall down. Get up. Forties, you fall down, you still can get up. Fifties, you fall down, little bit hard to get up. Sixties, seventies, really hard to get up." So he [was] always telling me, "You gotta do it, do things when you're young. You gonna strive for things, you gotta do it when you're young. When you're old, you fall down, hard to come back up." Guess he had his ups and downs too, during his lifetime. So he knows what he's talking about. But, aah…

MI: And in that sense, he was fortunate that he was kinda middle-aged.

PS: Yeah.

MI: Some of the stories we hear, they're a little older *Issei* and they never recovered [from the internment experience]. They never recovered.

PS: Because of the disparity of age between my father and me—my mother was closer in age but she was seven years younger, but he was just like a grandpa to me, right, because of the age bracket.

MI: How old was he when you were born?

PS: He was forty-four.

MI: Mid-forties. Yeah.

PS: And my mother was already about thirty— my mother was born in 1927, I mean 1909. So, she was about thirty-six. So for parents of my age, my father was considered old. In fact, when he used to pick me up, guys, my classmates [used to] think he was my grandfather because his hair was all white already. (Laughter) By the time I was [in] high school, he was already in his sixties. (Laughter). So most [other] parents were still in the fifties, yeah.

MI: Interesting.

PS: Yeah, but anyway, I have all these things. I'm going to look for the transcript of when he first got detained. Not detained, I guess, when he got interrogated by the FBI. I'm sure there was one, you know, my cousin sent me. I tried to find the record, couldn't find it so I'm going to [tell my cousin to] send me a copy.

MI: Yeah.

PS: Okay and I'll take a look. See if we can print it out.

MI: Okay.

PS: Is it about time?

MI: Umm, well…

PS: You're out of questions?

MI: For me, it's a very rich story. It's not an internment story but overall …

PS: There was, you know, when my older brother was alive, this was about maybe ten years ago, there was this lady that was at, I think, Ohio State University. And she was, she came over to the University of Hawaii, I think, during the summer months to do some research on the immigrants. And she was Japanese too. I forget what her name was, Okazaki or something? Anyway, I have the record but at that time, she was doing some research and a lot of stuff, things that came out that my father was involved in during the camps.

MI: I guess I haven't read it but the Patsy Saiki book, eh, [*Ganbare*], one of the originals in the 1980…

PS: I see.

MI: *Ganbare*. But where his story is in there, right? It's mentioned in her book.

PS: I'm not sure.

MI: I'll let you know because you should probably have, buy that book.

PS: Because there was a book *Ganbare*.

MI: That's the one. Patsy Saiki.

PS: I think my father was…

MI: It's not Patsy Saiki, the politician. Patsy Saiki was a…

PS: Oh.

MI: Scholar.

PS: Not, not the…

MI: Politician. Yeah, Patsy Saiki.

PS: Okay. So, yeah, the…

MI: Do you know anything about that, like how she found him or why she chose him?

PS: I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

MI: You should have that for the family collection.

PS: *Ganbare*.

MI: That's one of the…

PS: My brother read the book, he told me, but I have to take a look at that book. I've never seen it. There's another book that this guy Hoshide, George Hoshide…

MI: Hoshida.

PS: Hoshida. He was a ((?)) poet and so forth.

MI: Well, he was more an artist.

PS: I think he was at the camp too, I think.

MI: He went, let me think, yup, he was at Lordsburg and Santa Fe.

PS: Yeah. Because there is and maybe I should make you a copy, but there is a book that he— my father was one of [the] guys inside there, the picture…

MI: Oh, Hoshida.

PS: And he wrote a message to my father. You know, he gave my father a book, eh.

MI: What book was that? What's the name of the book? The title?

PS: *Behind Barbed Wire*, I think.

MI: Oh, okay, that's the ((?)).

PS: Something like that. Hoshida.

MI: Hoshida signed the book, that book, and gave it to your father?

PS: Yeah, yeah, but in the book he wrote to my father about, you know, the hard times we had together. Maybe I should make a copy of that.

MI: Is it in Japanese or…

PS: English. Written in English.

MI: But your father…

PS: But I think the book is in Japanese.

MI: Yes, I think the original one. I may have an interest in…

PS: Yeah.

MI: Yeah, because there is an English version of…

PS: Oh, is that right?

MI: Yeah.

PS: I got the Japanese one. I like that book. Yeah, so were you…

MI: Gave him the Hoshida book and wrote a message?

PS: Yeah. It was a nice message to my father. I should make a copy of it.

MI: Maybe I may be interviewing Hoshida's daughter soon. I hope…

PS: Oh, the daughter, yeah, I know the daughter. I used to work with her.

MI: Really? ((Laughter)) I've been kind of emailing her and getting…

PS: Takahata.

MI: Huh?

PS: Takahata.

MI: What's the first name? No, this is a different daughter.

PS: Oh, maybe a different one.

MI: Actually, I'm not sure. I think she goes by Sandra. She's an attorney.

PS: Oh, she's an attorney. It's a different one. Must be a different daughter.

MI: How old is this daughter?

PS: She's about two years older than me, so seventy-seven. What the heck was her first name was, Sai…

[Interview abruptly ended]