JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAI'I
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
(English translation)

with

Shozo Takahashi (ST)
and an unidentified woman who is presumably his wife Yuriko (YT)

March 12, 2004

Interview by: Ted Tsukiyama (TT)
and
Jim Tanabe (JT)

Note: Comments in brackets **[ ]** are by the transcriber. Inaudible words or sections are identified by ((?)) in the transcript. The bold words represent words spoken in English in the original interview; they may contain minor edits to facilitate the translation. This transcript has been edited to remove pauses, repetitive phrases and false starts.

TT: **Today is Friday, March 12, 2004, and this morning, we are interviewing Mr. Shozo Takahashi, who has a very special and valuable life story to share with us. The interview will be conducted in Japanese, although English may be used to clarify any part of the interview. The interviewer is Ted Tsukiyama, assisted by Jim Tanabe. So let's begin.** Good morning, Mr. Takahashi.

ST: Good morning.

TT: I'd like to start by asking you for your full name.

ST: My name is Shōzō Takahashi. I was born in Ewa [west Oahu district] in 1914, or the third year of the Taisho Era. I was told that I was named after the year in which I was born; *shō* is the *shō* in *Taishō* [Japanese era name] and "*zō*' from year 3 [Chinese character for three can be read as *zō*.] In my class in Japan there were three other boys with names using the same characters, but they were all pronounced differently. I was Shōzō, another boy was Masami. I suppose the character *shō* can also be read as *masa* and the character for three as *mi.* Another was Kanno Shozō. And the other was Masazō. The first character was *Masa* and the second was *mi.* Same Chinese characters but different ways to read them. We were all born in Taishō 3 in the same part of the country. Three "Shōzō's." I didn't write about this in my book. **July** 29, 1914 - I was born on a **sugar plantation camp** in Ewa on July 29.

TT: So are you a *nisei* [2nd-generation Japanese American]*?*

ST: Yes, I am a *nisei.* In fact we are known as *kibei nisei*. *Kibei* are people like us who were born in Hawaii, educated in Japan and returned to Hawaii. *Kibei nisei* had a difficult time during the war with Japan.

TT: What are your parents' names?

ST: My father is Rikusuke Takahashi. My mother's name is Hatsu Endō; Endō was her maiden name. She was born as Hatsu Endō and became Hatsu Takahashi after she married my father Rikusuke when she came to Hawaii. When I returned to Japan, I stayed with my mother's side of the family, not the Takahashi side.

TT: Where in Japan were your parents from?

ST: Both of them are from Fukushima Prefecture, from the northernmost part of Date District in way up north close to the border with Miyagi Prefecture. My parents were from different villages in the same district. My dad was from Ōide Mura and my mother from Higashi-no-Mura.

TT: Why did your father immigrate to Hawaii?

ST: My father? I'm not 100% sure, but they were looking for people in Japan to work on the **sugar plantations** [in Hawaii], offering good **pay** to work on the **sugar plantations**. Being young and the third son of the Takahashi family, he was free to go anywhere so he decided to come to Hawaii. As for why my mother came to Hawaii, my grandfather [possible typographical error in original Japanese transcript which says father] Endo, in other words my mother's father, something happened and he lost all of the family fortune. He often told us that he came to Hawaii to work hard so he could send back the money to Japan to rebuild the family fortune. My mother must have been about **eighteen** around that time. She told my grandfather that she wanted to go to Hawaii with him to **help** him, to work and save money, and eventually go back to Japan together. So my mother came to Hawaii to **help** her father. My mother didn't know my father [Rikusuke Takahashi] before coming to Hawaii. My mother first started working on the **plantation**, on the **sugar cane** plantation. After a while, she began **cooking** in the kitchen of her house. There were so many **young boys** around, so she cooked meals and made *bentō* [lunch boxes]for them. My father was one of the many young men who went there. He came to eat. They were both from Fukushima Prefecture and they decided to get married. They didn't know each other before.

TT: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

ST: I come from a big family. I have a lot of brothers and sisters. My older brother, Rikuo, [pointing outside with right hand] is still there, my elder sister, here's a photo of her, she lives in Hokkaido and is the only one out of all of us living in Japan. Then myself. I'm the third oldest. The three of us were born in Hawaii but raised in Japan. I also have five younger brothers. They were all born in Hawaii.

TT: You went back to Japan when you were very young.

ST: Yes. I was born in July. **July 29**. This photo was taken around November, in 1915 [should be 1914? as he stated at beginning]. I was about 100 days old. I must have been about **one hundred days,** or **three months** old, when I returned to Japan. My **Auntie** [pointing at a photograph] went, too. This isn't my mother, this is my **Auntie.** My aunt [in the interview he says "*okaasan"*(mother)] said she wanted to give birth in Japan and they took me back with them. My aunt and uncle were working in Hawaii, too. My uncle came with us, too. My auntie ended up giving birth on our way to Japan on the ship to my **cousin**. My **cousin** was named Yōzō. *Yō* was taken from *Taiheiyō* [Pacific Ocean] and *zō* because it was the third year. I am Shōzō. My aunt raised him in Japan. She also

nursed me, too. Yōzō returned to Hawaii when he was two or three. I stayed in Japan and went to school there.

TT: Were your parents in Hawaii during this time?

ST: Yes, they were in Hawaii the whole time.

TT: That means you were brought up by your grandfather and your grandmother?

ST: Yes, my grandparents raised me. When I was really young, I thought my grandmother was my mother, so I called her "*okkayan,"* which in the **local** dialect means "mother." I called my grandmother *okkayan*, *okkayan*, believing she was my mother.

TT: So you spent most of your childhood in Japan?

ST: Yes, I spent my childhood and teenage years in Japan. I finished all six years of elementary school, and then went on to what was then called "senior elementary school." The senior elementary school was located in the next village over. I went there for two years. I then decided I wanted to become a teacher, so I took the entrance exam for a **normal school, the** Fukushima Normal School, which I passed. I went to the normal school for **five year**s in order to become qualified as a teacher. I graduated when I was **twenty**, after studying for five years. You didn't have to pay **tuition** to attend **normal school** but you **have to teach** in return. You had to teach for four years in the prefecture you attended school. In my case this was Fukushima Prefecture. At least for **four year**s**.** So I graduated when I was **twenty** and taught for four years until I was **twenty four.** I taught these children [pointing at photo]. This was in 1934 when I first taught in Japan. They were fourth graders. No, I'm sorry, they were in third grade. **Third grade.** I taught the **same class** for four years, through third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade. This is the school's **graduation** ceremony [pointing at photo]. Then I came back to Hawaii. When I was in Japan in **October** 1992, these children held a **welcome party** for me [pointing at another photo]. So many of them came to welcome me and my wife. These are the kids I taught. I'll always remember them.

TT: Can you share with us some memories you may have of your childhood in Japan?

ST: You mean when I was a boy? Let's see. I was living in the countryside, so I played in the mountain and in the river. There was a beautiful river just outside of the village, so I went fishing there, and in the summer time, we went swimming. I played there all throughout elementary school, with some of my classmates, too. When I went back to Japan, some of the classmates got together to welcome me. These are friends from my elementary school in Japan. I got together with six, maybe seven former classmates.

TT: What did your grandfather do? Was he a farmer?

ST: Yes he was a **farmer**. He owned a field and a rice paddy [unclear from the Japanese dialogue how many of each he owned]. He grew **rice** in the paddy and mostly mulberry in the field. In the Tohoku area of Japan, we grew silkworms that spun cocoons. We fed the silkworms mulberry leaves. My grandfather grew these mulberry trees on his field. And he had his **rice field.** Silk is made from cocoons.

TT: Did you see your parents during the time you lived in Japan?

ST: Who?

TT: Your mother and father in **Ewa** [district in west Oahu]**.**

ST: **No.** My father and mother lived in Hawaii, and I was in Japan, so we couldn't see each other. Hardly ever. I was reunited with my father in 1938 when I came back to Hawaii. My mother did come to Hawaii, I mean Japan, once. I was in my second year at normal school when my grandfather passed away. This is the grandfather that called me to Japan. My mother came from Hawaii to Japan, so I was able to see her then. I came back to Hawaii when I was twenty-four, and met my father for the first time [since I left Hawaii] at the **Immigration Station** in Honolulu.

TT: You were educated entirely in Japan.

ST: I was educated for **13 years** in Japan, including sixth, seventh and eight grade, plus the five years in normal school. I returned to Hawaii without knowing any English. A lady called Miss Suehiro taught English to people like us who just came from Japan in a room she rented at a school called *Chūo Gakuen* on Nu'uanu Avenue [major Honolulu thoroughfare]. It was called Suehiro English School. I went there frequently. Miss Suehiro, who was elderly, was the headmistress. There were four other teachers, all Caucasian. I did not know a single word of English, so I started from the ABCs. I went there for three years. I finished up to the elementary school level. I was thinking of going on to **high school** when the war broke out. So my **education** in Hawaii was **only up to six grade.** I wasn't able to go to high school.

TT: Why did you return to Hawaii in 1938?

ST: When I was teaching in Japan, a Japanese language school teacher from Hawaii came to Japan on **vacation**. A female teacher. I think she was teaching at Palama Japanese Language School. She knew my grandparents so I met her. She told me that Japanese was very popular in Hawaii and there were Japanese language schools everywhere, but there weren't enough teachers, especially those with teaching **certification**. So she **suggested,** why don't I go to Hawaii? My grandfather passed away when I was in normal school and I was planning to **watch** [look after] my grandmother who raised me. But my grandmother's **number one boy** [eldest son] who lived in Hawaii came back to Japan. My mother was in Hawaii. My uncle's **friend** told my uncle that he should go to Japan and **watch** his mother because he was the **number one boy.** So he came back with his children. He worked at the **Salvation Army**. He wasn't planning to back to Japan, but decided to do so after his friend talked to him. So he looked after my grandmother **indoor house** [in the house?]. The **number one boy** came back to Japan. I am a Takahashi. Not everybody who wanted to go to Hawaii could do so unless you had a **birth certificate** from Hawaii. And I did have a **birth certificate.** So I decided to move back to Hawaii to teach at a Japanese language school. It wasn't something everyone could do. My grandmother who raised me said I should go back because my parents and my siblings were there. She said it was OK for me to leave. I've been in Hawaii ever since then.

TT: Did you live with your parents again when you came back to Hawaii?

ST: Here, here [camera turns outside].

TT: By yourself?

ST: **No, no, no.** My father and mother were **farmers** on 22nd Avenue. They grew vegetables and flowers, and raised pigs and cows. This entire area was Japanese ((?)). My older

brother lives two, three houses from here. My parents' house was there too. This entire area was called **Punahou Farm** because it was owned by **Punahou School** [private school in Honolulu]. My parents leased **one section**. Their small house was gradually split into sections [hand gesture indicating dividing the house]. I lived in an **extension** that was built by the **garage**. After the war, this became a residential area and was **subdivided.** My older brother bought this land. It was on a **private road**. My older brother told my brother **Mike** and I that he would give us **first chance** for **one lot** if we were interested. So Mike got the **corner** lot and I got this lot here. I built my own house on it. I was a **carpenter** during the war.

TT: Wow, you mean to say you built this house?

ST: I did. I worked on it on **weekdays** and **weekends.** Paul Norihara [Morihara?], my **wife's brother-in-law,** worked in construction. I went back to work at **Honolulu Planing Mill** after being released from internment. But I wanted to work with my hands. Also, I didn't need to speak English well to be a **carpenter**. So I became a **carpenter helper.** I was a carpenter for **more than four years.** I took out a mortgage against this land and used the money to buy **materials** to build this house. My **carpenter** friends helped me. It took **one year.** I even painted the house. So I can say I built this house [laughs]. But I fell from a roof. I was still new as a carpenter. Back in those days, a carpenter would build both the **roof** and the **foundation.** I fell off the roof of a big house that we were building in **Koko Head.** We were sprinkling water on the roof and I slipped down. I hurt my leg here [points to a big scar on leg] and couldn't work anymore, for about **one year** [shakes head]. Meanwhile Japanese language schools started to open again. I went back to teaching at a new school in **Palama** called Palama Gakuen. I ended up teaching for a long time, starting at Palama Gakuen. I taught 20 years at the Japanese Language School in **Kaimuki after the war.** I taught before and after the war [laughs].

TT: Did you start teaching right away after you returned to Hawaii in 1938?

ST: Yes. Back then, my **younger sister Sara** worked at the **Japanese Consulate** doing **housework.** Through **my sister'**s introduction I got a **recommendation** from the Consul-General, and started working at Chuō Gakuen in **Nu'uanu.** I went to English school in the morning and taught Japanese in the afternoon.

TT: Did you meet Mr. Tasaka at Chuō Gakuen?

ST: [Laughs]. Yes I did. We worked together. Chuō Gakuen had a upper school and lower school. The lower school was located near where the **highway** is today and it went up to 6th or 7th grade. The upper school was from 8th grade onwards and it was all the way up **Nu'uanu**, I think close to where the mortuary is. Mr. Tasaka taught at the upper school which was 3rd and 4th grade of Middle School as well as High School. I went to the upper school **one time** a **week** to teach high school students *shūshin* (pre-war morality education). Back then we used to teach *shūshin.*

TT: Of course.

ST: [Laughs]. I taught *shūshin* once a week to high school students. George Takabayashi was there. You know who he is, right?

TT: I do.

ST: He was a high school **student**. I still remember. Once a week I asked first year female students to write an essay. Reverend Machida of Sōtō-shū – his wife was my student at Chuō Gakuen. They were all my students. But I taught mostly at the lower school. Mr. Tasaka taught at the high school.

TT: Do you still see Mr. Tasaka from time to time?

ST: I do every so often. The **YMCA** has a program called Mokuyō Gosankai [Thursday Lecture Series] every Thursday. I'm a member and I go every week. Mr. Tasaka comes once in a while. He's been a speaker, too. We have a variety of speakers. So I meet him there once in a while. Oh, this brings back memories. We're the same age.

TT: Did you ever meet my father at Mokuyō Gosankai? His name was Seinosuke Tsukiyama.

ST: He went, too? It must have been a long time ago. I started to go...

TT: Recently?

ST: I started to go after I stopped teaching, so about ten years ago. Your father must have gone there before that. I think someone called Mr. Kanetake went there for many, many years. This really brings back memories.

TT: Do you remember one of your students called Shiro Amioka?

ST: Shiro Amioka? Yes, I remember him. Do you know him?

TT: He was my classmate.

ST: Is that right! Shiro Amioka, I remember now, he was good in both English and Japanese. I think he worked at the University of Hawaii. Yes, yes, I remember now.

TT: What about Fujio Matsuda?

ST: [Laughs]. Yes, brings back memories. I think he was in **Kaka'ako** [district in Honolulu].

TT: Yes, that's right. So you were teaching at Chuō Gakuen until the war started?

ST: No, I was at Chuō Gakuen for only one year. I came to Hawaii in **1928** and worked until **nine** [1929]**.** I've always lived here, right? Waialae Japanese Language was located close by. Mr. Miyagi was the headmaster. Many Japanese lived around this area. Mr. Miyagi asked if I would be interested in teaching at **Waialae** since it is much closer to my house, and so I switched jobs and started working there. I was there until **1994,** no, I mean until the war started. When the war started in **1941,** I became worried and went to Mr. Miyagi's office to ask him what he planned to do. While we were talking, the **FBI** came and took Mr. Miyagi away and **inter**ned him.

TT: Was this before the war broke out?

ST: No, no, it was on the day war started.

TT: I see. Going back to before the war, did you live here while you were teaching at the Waialae Japanese Language School?

ST: Yes. **22nd Avenue** is close by so I commuted from here.

TT: The Headmaster was Mr. Miyagi?

ST: Yes, Mr. Miyagi. Genei Miyagi. His wife was also a teacher.

TT: Do you remember **December 7th, 1941,** the day of the attack on Pearl Harbor?

ST: Oh yes, I remember. What about that day?

TT: Yes, yes. Can you tell us what you remember about that day?

ST: Sure. I didn't write about this, but there's an organization called **Japanese Society**. Around **1940** to **1941,** the Society ran a program where doctors taught members how to **help** in the event war broke out, like learning **first aid**. Dr. Yamashiro came once a week to **Waialae** [Japanese Language School] to teach us. Those who completed the program were given a **certificate**. The **certificate** showed that we received proper training. Back then, there used to be a theater called Tōyō Theater. Members of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce as well as those who completed the program from all of the Hawaiian Islands gathered there to receive our **certificate** of completion. The date was **December 7th**. During the meeting an **army officer** suddenly got on stage and announced, "**Pearl Harbor** was **attack**ed by the Japanese. We are now at war. You must all go home immediately." I just couldn't believe my ears, that war had really broken out. I was there with Mr. Miyagi to attend the program so we went back together to the school. We were in his office worried and talking when the **FBI** came and took Mr. Miyagi away. He was wearing indoor slippers so he told the FBI agent, "Please give me a bit of time to change my clothes and put on **shoes,**" but the **FBI** told him, **"No, no, not necessary,** there's no need to change." Mr. Miyagi was led away in his slippers and whatever he was wearing at the time. This all happened on **December 7th.** I was really shocked. I think there was already a list of people that would be the detained first. They were taken to **Sand Island detention camp.** Leaders of the Japanese community, like school headmasters, Japanese club leaders, the head of the chamber of commerce, for example – one by one, they were taken away to Sand Island. Gradually this facility became too crowded. I was taken to **Honouli** [Honouliuli], an **internment camp. Honouliuli** was built in the mountains. It was much later that I was sent to **Honouliuli.** That's what it says right here.

TT: How did you feel when you heard the news the morning of **December 7th** that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor?

ST: Well, I thought the inevitable had finally happened. I was praying hard that it would not happen. But I guess there was no other way. Then I became really worried. What was going to happen? I was really worried about what would happen to us, to my **friend**s, to Hawaii. These were the things that worried me the most.

TT: What do you think was going through the minds of the people in Japan?

ST: Do you mean what they were thinking? Yes, I thought about why Japan had to attack Pearl Harbor at that moment and what made them take this drastic step. It was really a painful time for me. Why did they do it? At the same time, because I lived in Japan for a long time, I could also kind of understand what was going on over there. They were extending into Manchuria and other areas in Asia, and I was worried that the same thing might happen to Hawaii. Japan is such a small country but so many people live there. The Japanese believed their country was the land of the *kami* [god] and were confident that they would never lose. That's not how I felt, but in those days the Japanese were very confident about how strong the country was, just like **Germany.** I don't know if Japan truly believed it could win the war, but I think they wanted to control Asia, and the

first step was to take Pearl Harbor. I was truly worried. I didn't know what was going to happen next.

TT: You really didn't know what to do. You grew up in Japan and went to school there. You were back in the United States for only a couple of years when Pearl Harbor happened.

ST: I came back in **38** [1938], so yes, **39, 40, 41,** I was in Hawaii for **only three years** at the time. So I couldn't really figure out what was going on. My English wasn't very good, and I was more **Japanese** in my way of thinking. I think these are the reasons why I was **interned.**

TT: You felt you were more Japanese than American?

ST: Yes. It's written here in my book [referring to his autobiography], but I spent **twenty four years** in Japan. I was educated there. So I can't help but think like a Japanese. When I arrived in Honolulu on the ship, I went to the **Immigration Station** and showed them my **birth certificate** that said I was born in Hawaii. I told the officers that I was an American citizen because I was born here. I said the same thing when I was interviewed for **Selective Service.** I told them that I was allowed to enter this country because the government accepted my right as an American citizen. I was taught in Japan that you cannot accept your right without fulfilling your duty. To me, this is the way it should be. This is how I was educated in Japan. If it's God's will that I am called to do my duty, I would accept it. I would do my best to serve the United States, even give up my life, if I was to be **induct**ed by the Selective Service. I told Mr. Aoki at the **Selective Service examination**. "**I do.**" If I or **my friend** were **inducted, maybe** into the **100 Infantry Battalion** or as an **interpreter**, **I do my best.** I would do anything for the United States; this is my **duty.** This is the **education** I received in Japan. Right and duty go hand in hand. It is so important to do your **duty**. **Maybe** this way of thinking made them think I was **pro-Japanese. Maybe.** Within a few days, I was sent to **internment** camp. But this was my **idea** and what I believed in. I was accepted as an American when I arrived in Hawaii, so I felt I had to fulfill my **duty** as an American. I never wavered on this principle, even during the time I was **intern**ed**.**

TT: In *shūshin*, duty is the most important value.

ST: Yes.

TT: Duty.

ST: So *shūshin*..[laughs]..

TT: You taught *shūshin*?

ST: I taught *shūshin* at Chuō Gakuen [laughs]..

TT: Before the war, all of us *niseis* were sent to Japanese Language School for an hour each day.

ST: Yes, everybody went.

TT: And we studied *shūshin* there.

ST: You studied *shūshin*, too, didn't you [laughs]? Many of us **volunteered** and fought really hard for America, joining the 100th Infantry Battalion or the **442**. We did so because of

the values we were taught in Japan. **Yeah, yeah yeah** – the ((?)) president **apologized**. Was it **discrimination**? The president **apologized** in the end. It's [letter of apology] up on my wall. **Congress** issued us a **check** for **$20,000.**

TT: After Pearl Harbor, what happened to your job as a teacher at the Japanese Language School?

ST: Gone. No more job. Japanese Language Schools were **all closed.**

TT: What did you do then?

ST: There was a **lumber yard** called **Honolulu Planing Mill** in **Kaka'ako.** A **relative** on my mother's side worked there. I think his name was Mitsuka, Jimmy Mitsuka. He was a **foreman** there. He helped me get a job at the **Honolulu Planing Mill.** I worked with big pieces of **lumber.**

TT: As a **laborer?**

ST: Yes, I was a **laborer.** It was manual labor so I really didn't have to speak English to do the job. I returned there after I was released from internment camp. The release was temporary but I went back there. After a while, I became a carpenter. My wife's **brother-in-law** Paul Morihara was a contractor and houses were being built all over the place. I didn't need to speak English well to become a carpenter.

TT: During the war, you were working in construction?

ST: Yes, I was working at **Honolulu Planing Mill** during the war. The FBI came to my work place. They took me away to their building in Dillingham during my **working hour**. The **FBI.** They interviewed me but I was released.

TT: When was this?

ST: Let's see, it's written here somewhere [referring to his autobiography].

TT: Yes, March 1943. You went to the **Selective Service** office then?

ST: No, 1942...

YT: I think it was March 1943.

ST: 1943... It's written here that it's 1943. Why wasn't I called up to **Selective Service** right away? My father was a farmer and grew vegetables. Back then, the **Selective Service** had a classification system. Farmers were ((?)) **three... three B or three.** At the beginning, **Selective Service** delayed calling up farmers.

TT: You were **defer**red.

ST: **Yeah, yeah. Because** we grew food. I wasn't called up until 194- [does not say the specific year], although my **brother** was already enrolled. There was a **Selective Service** office in Kaimuki but they told me, "You're a farmer so we'll defer you for a while." It wasn't until the war intensified that I went to the **Selective Service.**

TT: And you got married.

ST: Pardon?

TT: After the war started?

ST: Before.

TT: Before or after the war?

ST: No, no, when the war...

TT: When did you get married?

ST: It's here. I got married in ...

YT: 1942.

ST: 1943...

JT: 42.

YT: It was 42.

ST: **She knows** the **Miwa** family**.** I also knew the Takahashi family [meaning is unclear as he is a Takahashi]. It's written here, but I thought I would feel more settled if I got married. If I ever got interned, having a family would make a big difference. I would be strong for the sake of the family. It says here that I said it's better if we were married [laughs].

JT: You knew there was a possibility that you might be interned?

ST: Yes, I thought it was possible. I had no idea when it would actually happen, but **she understand**. I was a *kibei nisei* so I knew I would be interned. But **she** said OK and we got married.

TT: Were other teachers from the Japanese Language School also taken away and interned?

ST: The headmaster and another teacher.

TT: They were interned right away?

ST: They were first taken to **Sand Island** [internment camp]**,** then they were sent to the U.S. Mainland. Every time a ship sailed, people were sent to the mainland. And the other teachers…

TT: They were taken away one by one?

ST: [Laughs]. **But,** some were not interned. Some decided to **volunteer** [sign up]. A teacher at the **Waialae** Japanese School called Harano **volunteer**ed and became an **interpreter.** Another teacher called Yoshinaga worked as a contractor here. Another young teacher called Taira was interned with me but not everyone was.

TT: You went to the **Selective Service** office in March 1943 and were asked lots of questions.

ST: **Yeah, yeah.** I was interviewed at the **Selective Service** office. It's here. I had to answer a loyalty questionnaire [he literally says "threat examination" in Japanese] in **March** 1943. As a U.S. citizen, I was prepared to do my duty and fight for my country if I was drafted, but I didn't want to volunteer. Yes, I was willing to if I was drafted, **inducted**. But it says here that I was not willing to **volunteer**. Why did I feel that way? As it says on **page 7**, my English was poor. I did not speak English well. I could not bring myself to volunteer, knowing that I may find myself in a situation where I may have to point a gun at a Japanese soldier. I would have done it if I was **induct**ed. It's very difficult.

TT: The **FBI** came right after the interview?

ST: **They come** about **two days later.** Two days after I took the loyalty questionnaire. They came to my **working place** at Honouliuli [should be Honolulu Planing Mill?]. But they didn't take me straight away to the camp. **They** treated me like ((?)) and told me to go home first, collect my belonging, and report to the Immigration Station at **1 o'clock** in the **afternoon.** They took Mr. Miyagi away right on the spot, but they treated me very politely.

JT: Was that typical of the way all *kibei nisei*'s were treated?

ST: Yes. There were camps on the mainland for *kibei nisei* who held strong feelings about the war. Many people also felt they would rather go back to Japan than continue to be discriminated against in the U.S. As for me, I had family in Hawaii, so I wanted to stay here. I couldn't go back. But those who said they wanted to go back to Japan were sent to the mainland. Those who said they wanted to stay here were released. The internment camps were closing. Some *kibei* were sent to **Tule Lake** concentration camp on the mainland. But very few were sent back to Japan, even those at **Tule Lake. Not too much.** The war was drawing to an end so many *kibei nisei* were being released. *Kibei nisei* who indicated they really wanted to go back to Japan were sent to mainland camps, *Issei* were Japanese citizens and considered **foreigners,** so they were sent to the mainland without hesitation. But *kibei nisei* were American **citizens.** Although they were interned, they really couldn't be held against their will without a proper **reason.** That's why the U.S. government **apologized** later. We were released in Hawaii. My friend was sent to **Tule Lake** on the mainland but was not sent back to Japan. There were many people like that.

TT: You were sent to an internment camp.

ST: Yes, I was sent to Honolulu [Honouliuli] Internment Camp. Right here [pointing]. You had to go through the woods to reach it. The mess hall was on this side of the road [pointing]. The building had a roof but no walls and tables were lined up inside. That's where we ate. A kitchen was attached to the mess hall. We walked across the bridge over the valley to get to our barracks. There were houses all over here. Inside each house were bunk beds, I think four bunk beds, so a total of eight people lived in each house. There were **four groups** - group one, group two, group three, four. Each group was made up of about six houses. I was in group **number four.** I've written that our group leader was James Murakami who was the **auditor** for the **City and County of Honolulu** [Honolulu city government]. I also wrote that I didn't know why he was interned. He was the **spokesman** for group **Number 4**. The Japanese head of the entire internment camp was somebody called Sakamoto. He was our **spokesman**. Honouliuli was not a stoic place. Nobody forced us to work. **If you like work,** then work. If you didn't want to, you didn't have to. I had several different jobs, like working in the kitchen, growing vegetables, or being a **carpenter.** I got paid ten cents an **hour.** They paid us in coupons.

The internees would eat breakfast, lunch and dinner here, crossing the bridge from the barracks. I'd come here before them and lay out spoons and forks in the kitchen. For example, if there were one hundred internees, I would get out one hundred forks and one hundred spoons. Then I would pass them out one by one as the internees arrived. It was a very stoic job. After the meals, I would count them again. If one was missing, say I passed out one hundred before the meal but got only ninety-nine back, we **gotta look all**

over for the missing utensil. This actually never happened while I was working at Honouliuli. But at Sand Island, one of the internees hid a spoon, sharpened it and tried to stab himself. That's why it was so strict at Honouliuli.

I got paid ten cents an hour, in coupons. I didn't work for free. He was truly a gentleman. [unclear in the Japanese original as to who this refers to]. There were guards there all the time, with rifles. There were no windows, either. Later on, I was allowed to see my family. Once a month, my wife would ride the bus from Honolulu to come and see me. Once our baby was born, she couldn't come for a while. I couldn't go to the hospital when our baby was born. It says here that the first time I saw my baby was in 1944, three months after the birth. My wife brought the baby to visit me here in the mountains. Looking back, it's hard to believe that all of this happened.

TT: So how many visits per month?

ST: I can't remember clearly. Was it once? **You know? Two time? You not remember? Anyway one time, two time.** Not **every week. Yeah yeah yeah,** we were lucky it was Honouliuli. It wasn't like that over here. This was an **internment camp. Only family** could visit. **Close family only**. Friends weren't allowed. Only **family.**

TT: Did your wife bring you food?

ST: Food? Oh no, you **cannot bring anything** in**.**

TT: It wasn't allowed?

ST: **Yeah.** Nothing at all. We were only allowed to see each other. They checked to see if we had anything with us when we got to the mess hall. We couldn't bring in anything. We were only allowed to see the family. I don't think we were even allowed to take photos.

TT: So you were in Honouliuli Camp for over a year?

ST: Yes.

TT: One year...

ST: Yes, about one year. In 1944, the **war** was being fought all the way over in Okinawa. They didn't think the war would come to Hawaii anymore. **No worry about Hawaii.** So I was released. We had to go through a **rehearing** and those of us who were cleared were released. **Some** who weren't cleared were sent to the mainland. It must have been around 19...44. I was released one year before the war ended. Oh, it says here that although I was released, it wasn't an formal release. I had to report to the military government at Iolani Palace once a month. I had to tell them what I was doing. So it was just a temporary release, not a formal release. This lasted for a year. I was officially released in 1945 just before the war ended. I was on temporary release for a year; during this time **you had to report** and **had to permit** [get permission] if you wanted to go anywhere.

TT: Because the war hadn't ended yet?

ST: Yeah, it was still going on. The war lasted for a while longer. The war ended in '41—no, it started in '41 and ended in '45. It all seems so unreal now.

TT: Looking back, how would you describe your experiences at the internment camps?

ST: Let's see. I thought this would be a great chance for me to study something. They had English classes. It says here that **one young man,** his name is written here, started an English class. He was from the Big Island [Island of Hawaii] and graduated from a mainland university. He was an internee, too. Ten of us got together and we took English lessons from him. I thought it would be a **good chance** for me. We also had someone who taught violin. His name was Suzuki and he was a teacher at the Moilili Japanese Language School. I had a violin with me, so we started a violin club.

TT: Is that right?

ST: We had violin lessons in the mess hall. One of the guards at the mess hall came over and said, "**I wanna learn violin."** He put his rifle aside and started to play a cowboy song [laughs]. I clapped my hands and told him he was so good. What else. Let's see, we had a priest who spoke both English and Japanese at our church. His name was **Reverend Dozier.** We got married by him. **Mrs. Miyagi** at the Waialae Japanese Language School knew him. He was the son of the founder of the famous university in Kyūshū called Seinan Gakuin Daigaku. His name was **Edwin Dozier.** He stopped by Hawaii on his way back to the U.S.mainland. But he ended up staying in Hawaii for a long time. He gave sermons to the Japanese in Hawaii. This reverend came to Honouliuli once a week from Honolulu and held Sunday service for us in the mess hall. I thought this was a **good chance** so I went to his services every week. He was a very **nice man** who always prayed for world **peace.** Not many people went but I went every week. So I worked at the internment camp, but I also played the violin, studied English and went to church on Sundays. I eventually became a Christian. I still go to church but it started while I was Honouliuli. The Reverend drove all the way from Honolulu to speak to us. I'll never forget it. Once a week for one year. I worked, studied English and violin, and received spiritual lessons on Sundays.

TT: Did you ever feel resentful or angry that you were put in camp?

ST: What do you mean?

TT: You weren't guilty of any crime but you were still sent to such a place.

ST: You mean why do I have to go through this when I did nothing wrong.

TT: Being sent to a place like prison.

ST: I didn't really think that way.

TT: Other people felt that way.

ST: **Yeah,** I know many people who felt that way and some of them were sent to the mainland. But I understand. I'm a *kibei nisei* and I don't know English well. I was in Japan for twenty-five years and educated there, so I thought it was just the way it was going to be. **They cannot help**. I was at normal school for **five years** in Japan. We had military training where an army officer would come to class **one week, one, two times.** They taught us many things, like how to hold a gun. So of course, I thought it was inevitable that I would be sent to internment camp. I **understand.**

TT: I see.

JT: The FBI knew so much about you?

ST: Yes. **Maybe... they understand** [knew what they did was not right?]**.** That's why they **apologized**. The President said **I'm sorry** and sent each internee a $20,000 check. This was in 1990, sixty years after the war ended. Sixty years after they put us in the camps. So I do feel grateful to the United States. You know, I've done nothing wrong in my life. I've worked really hard, paid my **taxes**, and never got in trouble with the **police.** I did wonder why I was interned, but looking at the bigger picture, Hawaii was in a dangerous situation. It was very possible that Japan would attack Hawaii again. Nobody knew. They [the US government] told us that if the Japanese attacked, people like me who received military training in Japan, like learning how to use a rifle, would be the first to be used by the Japanese. They said they sent us to camp to **protect** us from this. So I have to feel grateful. **I understand**. I think it turned out to be a very good experience for me. My wife and children were looked after by my older brother who was a farmer, so I didn't have to worry about them. Just like me, he was a *kibei*. But he came to Hawaii when he was young to help out my parents.

JT: Because you were raised and educated in Japan, do you think it was inevitable that the FBI viewed you with suspicion?

ST: Yes, I think so. **I understand that way** of thinking**.** I agree with you that it could not be helped because Japan and America were at war. **Cannot help.** If you ask me why I was interned, I think it couldn't be helped considering where I grew up [in Japan]. So I stopped thinking about it that way. Instead, I decided I wanted to do something positive for myself during the time I was interned and not always asking "why." Of course there were many people who would not stop asking, "why, why." I just didn't think that way. That's all.

TT: Is this how you came to terms with your internment at Honouliuli?

ST: Yes, I made peace with myself. I didn't want to get desperate and fight my internment. Instead, I decided I wanted to use that time to do something beneficial for myself. As you said, there was nothing I could do about the situation. We were at war. It makes sense, doesn't it? I spent twenty-some years growing up in Japan. I was educated there and even taught there. I also received military training. Instead of thinking that they were suspicious of me, I decided to believe that they **protected** me.

JT: Many people, like Mr. Tsukiyama, became interpreters for the U.S. to help win against the country their parents came from...

ST: Me, an interpreter...

JT: You would have been very useful role as an interpreter.

ST: As an interpreter, yes, I think so.

TT: With Mr. Takabayashi.

ST: Pardon?

TT: With Takabayashi.

ST: I see.

JT: But it would have been difficult because your parents were from Japan.

ST: Yes, that's true—I understand that dilemma. I was worried that Japan would be split up if it lost. Russia would take Hokkaido, China would take Kyūshū, and the U.S. would take Honshū. That would have been a terrible, terrible thing to happen to Japan. Only the United States would have gained from it. So I prayed really hard that it would not happen. My older brother was in Hokkaido so we were really lucky that it didn't. Just look at Korea. It was split into North and South, and it's still that way. What would have happened if such a thing happened to Japan? In a way, we were very lucky. War is truly tragic, but I did learn a lot from it, too.

JT: My father was questioned and was interned. He told them that he did not want the U.S. and Japan to go to war and they should stop.

ST: [Laughs]. That they should not fight!

JT: Yes, both sides should stop.

ST: And be good to each other.

JT: Yes, and be friends again.

ST: He was being honest. He wanted the fighting to stop right away. I felt the same way, too. I went to church every Sunday and prayed for the war to end and for peace.

TT: Now, let's move on to after the war. Mr. Takahashi, what did you do after the war?

ST: I returned home after the war. I went back to work at **Honolulu Planing Mill**, where I worked before I was interned. This was after I was released from **internment camp.** While I was in the camp, I worked in their **lumber yard** so I thought I would be able to work as a carpenter. I didn't have to speak too much English to be a good carpenter. I went to work for my wife's brother-in-law, Paul Morihara, who was a contractor. That's when I built this house. But I wasn't used to the work. One day I hurt my leg and I could no longer work as a carpenter. Fortunately, around that time, Japanese language schools started to reopen. Many of the *nisei*s, who contributed enormously to the war, began returning to Japanese school. Palama Gakuen had about 1,700 students around the time. This was right after the war ended. Mr. Ōhara came all the way to my house to ask me whether I would be interested in teaching there. I became a teacher at Palama Gakuen and taught for four years. Do you remember the church across the fire station in Kaimuki? There was an English school there. Katsurō Miho's father, who was a teacher, rented this space and started the New Kaimuki Japanese Language School. Mr. Miho was from Hiroshima. Mr. Ōhama, a teacher at Palama Gakuen, was also from Hiroshima. He invited me to become the headmaster of Kaimuki Japanese Language School because I lived in the area. I moved to Kaimuki Japanese Language School and taught there for 22 years.

TT: Is that right?

ST: I also helped Mr. Takagi get a job [laughs].

TT: At the time, the school was near Kaimuki Park, right?

ST: What?

TT: Next to Kaimuki Park?

ST: In Kaimuki...

TT: On 10th Avenue?

ST: **No, no, no...**

YT: **Across** the fire station?

TT: Oh, on Koko Head Avenue...

ST: There's a fire station there. And a church on the property.

TT: Oh yes.

ST: The church had an English school during the week. Mr. Miho rented that classroom.

TT: Japanese language school was held in the afternoon.

ST: Mr. Miho lived on **13th** [13th Avenue] at the time. The church was close by so he rented the classroom and started the Japanese Language School. The number of students really increased from around the time I started teaching, so we expanded to Liliuokalani School, which was nearby.

TT: You also joined a radio station after that?

ST: Yes, I did.

TT: During the time you were teaching Japanese, you were also working in radio?

ST: Teaching at Japanese Language School was a half-day job. We only taught in the afternoon, after the regular English school was over. The pay was also **((?))**. I did not make enough as a teacher to support my family. I still remember how much I made. It was not enough to raise three children. That's why I started working for the radio station. You know Times Supermarket on King Street? Mrs. Tatsumi used to teach piano at a studio on this side [mountain side] of King Street, on Beretania Street. The radio station **KAHU** had Japanese programs which it broadcast from that studio. The main station was **KAHU Waipahu**. Anyway, I created Japanese language programs that were broadcast in the morning and at night. Nothing during the day. I had time in the morning and in the evening to work at **KAHU** because I taught Japanese [at the Japanese Language School] during the day. I would get up early and go into the station at five or six, then go to the Japanese Language School around noon. After teaching, I'd go home once, then return to the radio station at night. I played records and made announcements. There was a board and I did the jobs that were on the board, like playing music. I worked there for 9 years. There was another radio station called **KOHO** near **Kaimuki Bowling.** They needed help on the news side and asked me if I was interested. **KOHO** was much closer to my house, so I left KAHU and started working there. That was in the 1960s. It's written here, but this job was only at night. Nothing in the morning. I worked all the way to midnight. **NHK** [Nippon Broadcasting Company, Japan's national public broadcasting company] news would arrive from Japan**.** Back then, we taped the news as it came over the radio. My job was to play it back and write the script for the news reader. That was my job. I wouldn't have been able to do this job if I didn't know both English and Japanese. The news was in Japanese, so it was perfect for me. But I had no Saturdays or Sundays off because it was the news business. Sometimes it was busier on the weekends, from morning until night. The job at KOHO was only at night but it lasted late into the

night, until midnight. Then I'd go home and sleep, before waking up to go and teach at the Japanese school. Then back to **KOHO** at night to work on the Japanese news. Then the building **KOHO** closed, and it moved to Waikiki. I continued to work there for another one or two years until **KOHO** shut down. That's when my career in radio ended.

TT: What year was that?

ST: I think it's written here—I think it was in 1992. Probably about 40 years. I was at **KAHU** for **9 year[s]**. Thirty years over here [KOHO radio station]. So I worked for a total of 40 years in radio. I haven't done this job since then. I mean in radio. The Japanese Language School moved to Kaimuki, and after a while, the number of students started to decline. There was a teacher called Mr. Adachi. He was friends with Mr. Miho. So I asked Mrs. Adachi to take my place and I retired. With fewer students, it became harder to continue teaching. But I kept working at **KOHO** radio. I worked on Saturdays and Sundays. It's written here that it was difficult to find the time to go to church because I had to work on Sundays. After I finished working in radio, I started going to church on Sundays. The first church I went to was Nu'uanu Church. I think Reverend Takaya was there. But as you can see, I have a bad leg, and Nu'uanu Church was too far away for me to drive. So I started going to Resity [Wesley?] Church close by here, on the other wide of the street from Times Supermarket. I think it was called Resity Church.

TT: Do you mean **Wesley Church?**

ST: Resity Church over there.

TT: It's a **Methodist** church, right?

ST: Oh, Methodist, **yeah,** that church. I changed churches and started going there. The reverend said it was **OK.** I still go there, every Sunday.

TT: You retired ten years ago?

ST: Yes, 19—it's written here—we went to **Japan** in 1992. We were **married** during the war between Japan and the U.S. So it was our 50th wedding anniversary. We got married in 1942 so 1992 was our golden wedding anniversary.

YT: **In 1992, we had big grand anniversary** ceremony.

ST: We celebrated our golden anniversary with a big party. I drew up the character for *ai* [love] [pointing at the wall]. **My wife** folded **one thousand, one thousand one** cranes from gold paper [*origami*, Japanese art of paper folding] and pasted them onto the outline of the character [pointing at wall]. We say that cranes live for a thousand years [not literal but crane is a symbol for longevity]. So she made the character *ai* out of crane made with gold *origami* [pointing to a framed picture of gold *origami* cranes forming the character *ai*]. We brought this with us to the party. I'm a *kibei nisei* with two motherlands, America and Japan. The fact that I have been able to live in these two countries, America and Japan, and to achieve such happiness in life comes down to this one word, *ai.* I was able to survive because of love. That's what's written here. Love gave me the power to overcome the many difficulties I encountered in life. I'm not talking just about love other people gave me. It's also love from the country, love from God and Buddha [reading his autobiography]. The love I received from everyone and God helped me through all of the things that happened in my life; not just my personal life, but also

the war between America and Japan. So I wanted to find a way to celebrate this in Japan on our 50th wedding anniversary. You know the $20,000 that the American government gave us? I wanted to use this money in the best way possible. Some of it I **donate.** I went to Japan to pay respect at my grandmother's grave; this is the grandmother that raised me. We also went to pay respect at the cemetery of my wife's family in Yamaguchi Prefecture.

This is **Part 1** [of my autobiography]. **Part 2** is about what happened afterwards. It's all like a big dream to me.

TT: As a *kibei nisei* yourself**,** what influence do you think *kibei niseis* had in Hawaii?

ST: Let's see. Well, *kibei nisei* understood both English and Japanese. I'm sure everyone did their best for Hawaii. But on the **other hand,** we really suffered during the war, being caught between Japan and America. Caught between Hawaii where we were born, and Japan where we grew up and were educated. I think it was truly unfortunate that we had to go through so much anguish during the war. But we also worked really hard for Hawaii precisely because we were able to understand both English and Japanese. For example, by working as translators. We worked hard for the government and I think we contributed a lot to Hawaii. It was not easy, but again, I think that the education we received in Japan was really good. Look after your parents. We were taught to take care of our parents and look after our friends. Don't lie. It's called *shūshin*. **Yeah...**

TT: We're coming to the end of our interview. Do you have any message for the **future [next] generation**?

ST: Oh [laughs]. Let's see—there are a lot of Japanese-Americans still living in Hawaii, but most are mixed with other races now. I can't think of anything specific, but I think it's important to maintain our Japanese heritage. For example, like I just said, taking care of your mom and dad. Always be truthful and don't lie. I hope that these good Japanese values continue to be passed on. Forget the bad and keep the good. At the same time, as American citizens living in Hawaii, I hope we keep giving back to America. That would be a way to repay Japan for the education we received. If you do something bad in Hawaii, it would shameful for Japan. I think the achievements of *kibei nisei* should make Japan proud, too, for they reflect the values of the Japanese education that we received.

TT: Thank you very much for taking the time to do this interview. Your story is really admirable.

ST: Oh, not at all.

JT: Thank you, *sensei* [teacher].

ST: I can't talk or hear very well any more. [Laughs and puckers mouth].

[brief gap in recorded conversation when tape changes]

ST: School motto. That's what it's called, school motto.

JT: **Yeah, school motto**. What did you tell the students?

ST: School motto? Let's see, well, the most important thing I told them was to "express gratitude." Always remember to say thank you to your father and mother, God and Buddha, and your friends. Express your gratitude. I also told them to "study hard," since

they were students. They were at Japanese language school only for one hour a day so they should do their best during this limited time. And "be friends with everyone." I thought this was really important in a place like Hawaii where people from many different ethnic backgrounds live together. So at school, I encouraged everyone, whether they were older or younger, boy or girl, to be kind to each other and to study hard. These were our school mottos, or *kōkun*. The *kō* comes from *kō* [school] in *gakkō,* and *kun* means to teach. In other words, it means the most important thing taught at school. Which, to me, is "gratitude." Thank you and gratitude.

TT: Those are extremely beautiful words.

ST: Yes, they are.

TT: Thank you once again.

YT: Thank YOU.

ST: I should have written about this [gratitude] in here [in his book]. I thought I did. Didn't I write "be grateful" somewhere?

YT: You really went through a lot. Thank you very much.

JT: We've come to the end of the interview.

Original Japanese interview transcribed by Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i volunteers Shun Yamaya and Kiki Miyazaki, with editing by Florence Sugimoto. English translation by JCCH volunteer Grace Sekimitsu. Completed October 2016.