

To: What about your wife? When did she go to the mainland?

Take: I went in 1942. '43. She left in 1943, about New Year's time. When the family got together, it was about May of '43.

To: It must have been pretty hard. Family life that is.

Take: It was felt in the family life of all. It left a lasting impression. The atmosphere at that time. The fact that the Japanese were interned and that it was used against them, caused a lot of Japanese to avoid being seen in public. In my case, I had responsibilities to the temple. But after I was arrested, I couldn't take care of the temple and had no job. I heard that the fujinkai had to assume the responsibilities of looking after the temple and my family. Those who had their own business were better off. At least they had their businesses to support their families. When I was arrested I couldn't do anything to support my family. That was the case for most of the religious leaders. Even the present Bishop Yoshiaki (Fujitani), his father was arrested. Since his children were older, they remained in Hawaii. Cases like that were rare. In terms of young ministers' families, they had a hard time. Many of them received welfare until they left for the mainland camps. Once they got to the camps, things were taken care of. It was just until they got to the camp that was the problem. So, recommendations that the family join the internees were made. A lot of times, liquidation of the family assets created some obstacles. The assets remained in Hawaii and were not taken with the internees. A lot of times, the investigations here delayed the families from joining their husbands. That was the situation.

To: Where there jobs or work assignments in the camps?

Take: Was that in the internment camps? They had. Since I was young, I volunteered for everything.

To: Everything was handled on a voluntary basis?

Take: We weren't forced to do anything. That's one of America's good points. We weren't forced to do anything. If someone wanted to do something, then he could. If he didn't, he didn't have to do anything. Since I was in my 30s, still young, I helped out with the quartermaster in handling the clothing supply.

To: What about free time?

Take: Free time? We had that.

To: What kinds of things were you doing during your free time?

Take: Well, the old-timers usually sang and participated in other recreations. The most popular over there was the polishing of stones. They would pick up raw stones and then polish them until they had a beautiful finish. They did a lot of other things like making boxes and other handicrafts. They had that freedom. We were free within the camps. The problem was in obtaining the materials. Some of the material were bought locally. Equipment and tools were often ordered from Hawaii. Tools like saws, once passed through the censors, became available. Once the orders were placed, the old-timers got the equipment for their projects.

To: Letter exchanges were unlimited?

Take: We were free to exchange letters. The censor office would go through the letter and cut out what they felt necessary.

To: What about the frequency?

Take: The frequency was twice a week. Otherwise, the censors

would have a hard time keeping up with the volume. In terms of incoming mail, they didn't mind how many you got. They even censored the incoming mail--the translators that is.

To: So you were limited to two letters a week.

Take: You could only send one letter at a time and up to two letters for that week.

To: Of course your family went to the mainland, but were you given the opportunity to discuss things over with the family?

Take: Of course, I discussed things with my family. I think it was once with the family to get approval. The rest of the communication was with my immediate supervisor. My wife is nisei, so she can speak both English and Japanese. As a result, she had no problems in communications once she got to camp. But she is a nisei, and they sent her to Arkansas instead of Santa Fe. They sent her to a relocation camp instead of the internment camp we were in. There were others like us. Although they got room and board, they were inconvenienced. The few from Hawaii were placed into camps filled with mainland people. In the beginning, they suffered until they could build up relationships with others. Most of them left Hawaii thinking that they would be immediately joined by their husbands at the camps. A lot of people left Hawaii with the wrong impression.

To: So it took about an half-year before you joined your family?

Take: It took about an half-year. They left in March and it wasn't until the end of the year that I joined them. Between that time, there were a lot of other troubles that arised. Those who didn't have to call for their families were better off. Those with homes and income could rest assured that no real difficulties confronted their families. The ones that were faced with difficulties were mostly the Japanese school teachers and ministers. Those were the people who had their families join them. You could divide them into three different categories. The ones who were married and left their families behind. The ones who were married and had their families join them and those who were single. Those who were uncomfortable with camp life were later released on temporary parole and left the relocation centers. The mainland people took advantage of that and left the centers. The camps were almost empty. The ones that were left were the single men and the people who left their families in Hawaii. The camps were almost bare by then.

To: What about food and medical treatment in the camps?

Take: We didn't worry about those things. We had doctors in the camp. Dr. Mori, do you know him, was among the first to be interned. He was a good doctor. Other doctors and dentists also came and volunteered their services to help those at the camp.

In terms of food, we would prepare it. They would buy the ingredients for us. We had a lot of good cooks who volunteered their services for us. They would prepare the dishes so it would suit our tastes. It was food geared for the Japanese. In that respect, we had no problems with food until the ending part of the war. The food at the war's end suddenly got bad. For example, the rice tasted vinegar-like. We thought the U.S. was having a hard time in its war-effort (laughs). We didn't worry about food--we enjoyed it.

To: Within the camps, you had Japanese language schools and Sunday schools...

Take: We were free in the camps. Anything that we wanted to do, we could.

To: In addition to those, you also had drama classes...

Take: Yes, we did. We also had movies about twice a week in a hall. Of course they weren't Japanese films, but we did enjoy them. But the one thing that everyone looked forward to was the nightly news broadcasts. The guys from the Hawaii Times and Hochi, like Tanaka who recently died, translated newspapers and broadcasted it in the camps every night. That was the most popular item that everyone looked forward to daily.

When they broadcasted that Japan had lost the war, some who couldn't accept it reacted. There was the katagumi and they really had an argument. Mr. Soga had to come out and say that there was no mistake. Japan had lost the war. Even the Swedish consul-general came to inform us. Still some could accept it and said that it is a lie. They just couldn't believe that Japan had lost the war.

When the nisei in the occupation forces would write to their parents in the camps, they would translate the letters for them while knowing well that Japan had lost the war. Still they would say that they couldn't believe it. The ruckus continued from August until December. There were some bad fights and blood flowed in some of them. If I were to say that Japan had lost the war, I would have probably been beaten to death. That was the kind of atmosphere.

Finally, they started closing up the camps. They returned those from Hawaii to Hawaii. Those from the mainland disappeared

once they left camp. Everyone was looking forward to returning home.

But there were many who said that they wanted to return to Japan. They still thought that Japan was winning the war and wanted to return. There were still quite a few that were convinced that Japan was still winning. That's what happens to humans during a war.

To: Where there any cases in which they tried to force Japanese to return to Japan?

Take: They had some cases like that. That's America for you. There were rumors spreading that everyone was being expatriated to Japan. Then, the Friends (Quakers) came into the camps to inform us that we didn't have to be expatriated. They really came in and helped us. There were some that wanted to go back to Japan but had family members elsewhere. Like me, there was no sense in going to Japan when my family's home is in Hawaii. It was up to the individual. That's when I decided to return to Hawaii. There were others who were still wondering what to do and the Friends helped them decide. Then there were those from South America. In their cases, they weren't returned because their country didn't want them back. They were sent to America because of this country's beckoning. When the war ended, they were thinking of returning--I think that most of them came from Peru--the country refused to accept them.

They were left in a bind. America was trying to send them off and their country refused to accept them. They were the last ones left in the camps--the people from Peru. Finally, they were permitted to go anywhere in the U.S.

To: I heard that two of them are living in Hawaii.

Take: I know of some of those people in Hawaii. You can't imagine the atmosphere in the camps then. People from Hawaii were acting almost crazy with the thought of returning. Then there were those who couldn't return home like the people from Peru.

To: Those people were really in a bind...

Take: In cases in which family members or relatives served in the military or worked for the government, there were no delays in their release. In my case, I was interned and my wife, although she's a nisei, accompanied me to the camps. There was no one who was in the military in the family. The only connection was my wife's older sister's

husband went to serve in the Army. The authorities said if that's the case, it's alright. I was released immediately. They put a lot of emphasis on those who had military connections. They had two hearing boards. One for the people from Hawaii and the other for the mainland people. Ours was relatively simple, but the one for the mainland people was complicated. They investigated everything in detail for them. Living places, work, and friends were checked. They were pretty strict on them. But for us from Hawaii, as long as you had a military connection, you were out in a short while. There was that kind of distinct discrimination. That was the atmosphere during that time.

There were also those, like you mentioned, that were to return to Japan. These were either single men or those with family in Japan. There were some who were overjoyed with the idea of returning to Japan while there were those who wanted to remain in the U.S. The final decision was left to the individual.

Even if a certain individual received orders to return to Japan, he didn't have to unless he desired to do so. So a number of them stayed in the U.S., but there were also those who, for some reason, had to return to Japan. Japan at that time was in terrible condition.

For those returning, they couldn't go back empty-handed when conditions were so bad. Since I worked in supply, I would leave the jobsite wearing new clothes everytime I finished work. Everything was brand new--towels, underwear, shoes, overcoats--and I would give them to those returning. I did this a number of times. And those who returned to Japan went back with a lot of things like shirts and overcoats. It was a strange experience.

So those who were expatriated went back on their own free will. Guy Williams that I mentioned before would ask those who spoke English that all he needed was their signature for their return to Japan. He finally separated those returning from those who wished to remain.

To many internees, this gesture was misinterpreted. To the "Kachi-gumi" why would the U.S. be doing this if they were winning the war? Why would the U.S. be showing so much leniency if they were winning? Japan must be winning! This was going on every day.

Even some of the news that was going around the camp was manufactured. They would say that something from Japan had come over the shortwave radio. The "kachi-gumi" would spread the false rumors around the camp...People under stress react differently.

K.T.: How did you get out of camp?

Take: There was a list of those from Hawaii and they left in large groups. They returned by train and I had to deliver some 300 blankets for them on the train. That was sure a long train that was at the Santa Fe station. With guards, I had to deliver those blankets to those who were leaving the next day. I remember that.

That train went to Seattle and there, they got on a ship to Hawaii. That was the people from the first and second group. And the people at the camp became less and less.

In my case, I left from Los Angeles on a military ship. Everything was handled by the military. The official word was that the government would return everyone to the place where they were taken

into custody. I wasn't aware of that and I was called into the office and asked where I wanted to go and what kind of work I was going to do. I was questioned quite a bit. I told them that I was returning to Hawaii. That's about all they could ask me since I couldn't speak English.

So they took me to a small station called Laramie on the Santa Fe Line and told me to get on the train to go home. I was escorted by a guard until the station. He told me to get on the train. I didn't even know where the train was going. The guard told me that he had orders to take me to the train and he didn't know anything else. The rest was up to me.

I thought I really didn't care where the train was going; I just wanted to leave. There was a nisei returning from Chicago on that train. We rode to Fresno together. That train continued to Oakland and from there, we caught a ferry to San Francisco. We came home that way.

K.T.: How did it feel to rejoin your family?

Take: My family returned earlier. They followed a similar return pattern and were safely in Hawaii. I was relieved to see them again. We stayed at the Betsuin dormitory for a while.

K.T.: Where there any changes in the family during your long separation?

Take: Sure, there were. I was fortunate. My oldest daughter was going to kindergarten then. My next child, I didn't know when he was born or seen a picture of him. He's a dentist in Kaneohe and he was born in Tule Lake. He was born after I was recalled to Santa Fe. I saw him for the first time when I returned to Hawaii. So my children couldn't recognize me when I came back.

I don't know if I should say this, but I got off pretty easy. Some people were worse off. In Jerome, there was a wife who had relations with a young man and had a child. Welfare took the child after it was born. There were things like that happening in the camps. Things like that worried many of the family men.

K.T.: The men were separated from their wives for quite a lengthy time. Everyday problems had to be decided upon by the wives. Did this kind of thing create problems later on?

Take: They must have, but I haven't heard of any. Most of the internees were issei. In three or four years of absence, many of them came back to find that their nisei children had taken over the business. The issei became advisors or chairmen of the boards. That has happened in many cases that I know of. In Hawaii, it wasn't that much of a problem because most of the issei were thinking of handing over their businesses to their children anyway. So the transition went over relatively smoothly.

In the ministers' cases, not all of them returned. Over half of them returned to Japan. The ones who did come back were mostly returned to their original posts. I was in Wailuku, but I was not returned there because someone else was already there. But most of them returned to their former temples. The ones who remained only numbered two or three-- the rest were interned.

I'm not sure of what happened on the mainland. In the mainland whole communities went into camps. So actions there were a lot more drastic. They really suffered.

K.T.: How were you received by the Japanese society upon your return?

Take: Feelings were pretty strong. The atmosphere was different. The places where you could use Japanese said that you couldn't use Japanese any longer. That kind of thing would change in due time, but that's how it was right after the war.

So we had to keep a relatively low profile within the community.

Even the Haole stores before the war had Japanese speaking help. After the war, that had disappeared. So most of us who returned from camp maintained a relatively low profile.

For the government, they were really cooperative. Housing and furniture, they would assist. They really helped us out and alleviated a number of readjustment problems. That kind of things really show the goodness of America.

When we returned, cars were not available. We couldn't get iceboxes. Industry had not reconverted back to consumer goods yet. Since Hawaii is so far out, many of the things did not reach the Islands. So, cars, iceboxes and washers were things that were really in demand. Everyone was waiting for their shipment to come in.

K.T.: How were things different within the household?

Take: In my case, since the children were young, they were just told that "Papa has returned." They accepted that. There were no problems in that sense. Some had older children and they had taken over the business and had changed some of the older ways of doing things. I've heard of many problems like that...that's natural.

K.T.: Do you think something like this would happen again?

Take: I don't think that something like this would happen between Japan and the U.S. I don't think that it would boil down to another war. Even if it did, there aren't that many issei left. Among the nisei, those who were unfavored by the U.S., I thought about them quite a bit because of the past experience. In the past, it was teseigaiten (racism?) that caused internment. The next time, it would probably be ideological difference that could be used against them. I don't think mass relocation would happen again. That time was an exception.

Now we have congressional people that are Nikkei and I don't think that something like this would happen again. At that time, there weren't anyone that could compare anything. Even within the Territory, senators and representatives were interned. I just don't think that could happen again.

Within the camps, they were looking for a spokesman. That person had the responsibility of negotiating with the camp officials. The barracks heads would get together and come up with uniform demands and the other side would only recognize only the spokesman. That went on relatively smoothly.

K.T.: Do you think there are some cases in which people are too embarrassed to talk about their camp experiences?

Take: There are some; there were definitely some. The majority of those in camps were immigrants. They were issei. They were pro-Japanese. The movements--everyone's movements. Even the news in Japanese put out opposite lies. At times, when the Japanese forces were losing, they would say it's a lie.

But truth is truth. Within the camps, for instance, I don't know if I'm going to live or die...Even though there's no logical reason how they could turn the war around in their favor...Truk fell... the Marshalls and Yap fell. You could tell that the conditions were getting worse. People felt danger...Amongst their groups there would be that kind of talk, but not publicly to everyone...That was the kind of atmosphere at that time.

Then that leads to how we actually knew that the war was over. They had a radio broadcast... The Japanese Emperor on Aug. 1⁵ was broadcasted into the camps. The complete transmission was not broadcasted, but we did realize what had actually happened. There were some

that were so upset that food didn't pass through them properly when they heard the Emperor's words.

Six months to a year before that, there were many who thought Japan was going to win the war. Gradually, conditions worsened and everyone realized the possibility of Japan losing the war. They just couldn't come out publicly to say that. So in many cases they just denied it.

K.T.: Do you think if you compared pre-war and post-war days, that the Nikkei's beliefs toward religion changed?

Take: Even in the camp as it was in Hawaii in general, freedom of religion was permitted. After the war, even Buddhism was recognized. There were no fears that once we returned from the camps that Buddhism would be wiped out. There were no feelings like that. There were feelings about the economical sufferings of some people that were being voiced.

For example, those who fought in Italy--some of the bodies would come back. Depending on what religion he had, a minister of that religion would conduct the services. The bodies would come into Pearl Harbor by ship. The Army would come to get a Buddhist minister if the deceased was Buddhist. I personally had to go three or four times. Pearl Harbor was a fearful place since it was a military headquarters. Of course, I was escorted by M.P.s throughout the base. I often wondered if I would be able to get out of such a military complex.

Whenever I went to Pearl Harbor, I was accompanied by the deceased person's parents. Together, we would go to greet the body. Oftentimes after I got back from Pearl Harbor, I wondered if it was real. Religion-wise, there was no discrimination.

K.T: Did you feel that there was a difference in your religious beliefs during the camp experiences and pre--war days? Where there times when you questioned your beliefs?

Take: When I was arrested...I think 99 percent of those interned thought that they would be at a disadvantage if Japan lost the war. Truthfully speaking, we wanted Japan to win the war. We wanted to see America lose...That kind of thinking was shared by the majority.

As conditions worsened for Japan and the tables were finally turned, many reconsidered returning to Japan. Until then, they were thinking of returning to a victorious Japan. I even felt that way. I had expectations of returning to Japan with my family.

But things didn't work out that way. Even if we did return, we would be faced with hardships. We decided not to return. We changed our minds. Most of the people did too. Those who left their family in Hawaii wanted to return to them. But those who had their family in Japan thought about returning to Japan and restarting their lives. That was the thinking in the beginning. We really changed our minds then.

They (American officials) said it didn't matter. We are free to think and feel as we wanted in America. After hearing that, things settled and we returned to Hawaii. But there were many who returned to Japan. Half and half. There were a lot of people who returned to Japan.

Recently, a Honolulu Advertiser reporter asked why I returned to Hawaii after being interned on the mainland. He painfully asked what was my reasoning behind that decision. Just as I answered previously, I felt that making a living would be more readily accommodated if I remained in the U.S. I realized the conditions if I returned, and the U.S. government gave the internees a choice.

KT: When Hawaii's religious leaders were arrested, there was a huge gap in the community.

Take: That's right.....

KT: Daily life must have had some difficulties with the absence of the religious leaders. Advice and consultations must have been restricted.

Take; That's the truth..... that's correct after the ministers were gone. The Japanese society, the ministers were an essential part of the community. We're not only talking about Hongwanji ministers being taken away--- we're talking about religious leaders from other faiths too. Buddhist ministers were taken away. There were some Christian ministers who were interned. I believe there were instances in which all advisors and consultants were gone. Realistically, funerals became problems. With the absence of ministers and the curfew laws restricting wakes, many left this world under lonely conditions. Gathering in groups was also forbidden. People found themselves living a solitary life, especially those who couldn't speak English.

KT: How did they exist under these conditions?

Take: Well, frankly putting it, they vegetated three or four years. They were told not to go out-- remain inactive. That was the conditions in Hawaii. In America the entire community was thrown into relocation centers. The only ones that led a relatively normal life were those who remained in Hawaii. But they faced lonely and inactive lives.

KT: On the mainland, entire communities were relocated into camps, but in Hawaii only the leaders were taken away. What were the effects?

Take: To those who were interned, the majority were Buddhist. There were only a few Christian ministers. The Christians held their own services like we Buddhists did. We were all Japanese but somehow communication between the groups didn't flow. They thought differently. Honestly speaking, since it was war time we thought of Japan's winning first. We were basically Japan oriented. The Christians had some that felt like us. But most of them were Americanized. I felt like that during that time. Perhaps it was through the teachings of that religion that they became like that. Even the common folk, there was a difference, feeling-wise, between Hawaii and mainland people. Perhaps it was the different lifestyle, but the Hawaii people were closer to Japan. The same probably holds true today. The people on the mainland associated with the mainstream American more so and became more Americanized. We just couldn't come to an agreement with them. For instance, we wouldn't bathe with dirt on us, but the mainland people wouldn't care. Then we would fight.

The people from Hawaii would clump together in the barracks. Mainland people would stick together also. So there was a difference between Hawaii and mainland barracks. Our side would take off our shoes before entering while the mainland people would keep their shoes on. We used to get into fights over small things like that. That kind of thing happened everywhere.

But within the long three or four years of association we gradually became accustomed to each other. We had the same people. Take Hiroshima, for instance. The Hiroshima people from the mainland and Hawaii differed greatly.

So if you consider religion in the same vein, a greater difference showed up.

KT: Did your belief in God change during your internment?

Take: I don't believe that there were people who believed in Buddha that called on him to stop the war, save themselves from hardship or free the internees. Religion and war were considered at two separate extremes. Even the Christians didn't maintain anything like that.

Perhaps I'm jealous, but the Christians were paroled earlier than the Buddhists. I've heard that quite often in the camp. But I haven't heard of cases in which some one switched their religion to be paroled earlier. I've heard of cases outside of the camps, but never within the camps. In some cases, people thought that by becoming Christians, their chances of being interned would be decreased, and converted religions.

KT: That happened in Hawaii?

Take: In Hawaii! In America, everyone was in camp so it didn't matter much to them. But for the Hawaii people, there were quite a few conversions.

KT: Do you see that the reason was the absence of the Buddhist ministers?

Take: The central people in many of their lives were gone. They must have deeply felt their absence. Many people on the outside saw more opportunities by becoming Christians and converted.

KT: If the war and the internment did not occur, do you think that the number of Christians would be as great?

Take: That's the truth. Percentage wise that's true. You can say that there were many issei before, but nisei that followed still showed stability. For example, the number of Hongwanji Japanese schools were greater than the Christian Japanese language school. That's on the records and can be considered.