

JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER OF HAWAII

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: Mrs. Sueko Tōyama (ST)

Interviewer: Ms. Yoko Waki (YW) (JCCH volunteer)

Other attendees: Mrs. Terumi Laa (TL), Ms. Sachie Imoto (SI), Mrs. Chiyo Zayasu (CZ)

Date of Interview: September 1, 2018

Transcriber: Ms. Yoko Waki

Translation by: Ms. Yoko Waki

Note: () means unclear words

[] means a note or added words by the transcriber

YW: Today is September 1, 2018. Thank you very much for coming today during your busy time. I would like to record a very precious story by Mrs. Sueko Tōyama so the next generation will know. I am Yoko Waki, a volunteer interviewer with Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii. Let's start. Mrs. Tōyama, please tell me your full name, date and place of your birth.

ST: My name is Sueko Tōyama.

YW: When were you born?

ST: July 15, 1936.

YW: Where were you born?

ST: In Okinawa.

YW: Where do you live now?

ST: Kaneohe. Kaneohe, Hawaii.

YW: I see. You live in Kaneohe, now. May I ask your parents' names?

ST: Yes. My father is Takeo Imoto. Mother is Ushi Imoto.

YW: I suppose your parents came to Hawaii from Okinawa.

ST: Yes, but I don't know when they came.

YW: Although you don't know when, your parents came to Hawaii.

ST: Yes, to Hawaii.

YW: To work?

ST: I think only my father came. My father came first and he met my mother here in Hawaii.

YW: I see. He met your mother here.

ST: Yes. He met my mother here and they got married.

YW: I see. So, they lived here since then?

ST: Yes. They lived here and had seven children.

YW: Oh, they had seven children. Do you know their names?

ST: Imoto Takekichi, Seikō, Seitoku, Nobuo, Shigeo...

YW: Seven of them. You mentioned five so far.

TL: Aunty Miyoko is older.

YW: You don't have to worry about the order.

ST: Oh, then, Kōjō and... How many so far?

YW: Six, so far.

ST: One more sister...

YW: Anyway, seven of them. I will write down later. I don't think you remember all.

ST: Yes, yes. Seven of them.

TL: Aunty, you were born in Okinawa.

YW: Eh? They were married in Hawaii. Isn't it strange that you were born in Okinawa?

ST: Yes, it's me. My parents went back to Okinawa with seven children. Then a war broke out. My mother died. My brother died.

YW: Your parents, Takeo and Ushi, went back to Okinawa with seven children. Then, you, Sueko-san, were born in Okinawa.

ST: Yes, I was. Everyone up to my brother just above me were born in Hawaii. So, I don't have any ((record?)) in Okinawa.

YW: Was any other child born in Okinawa?

ST: One more, Rumiko.

YW: Rumiko.

ST: Yes, one more. A younger sister.

YW: There were two more children. Then, the war broke out. We will talk about the war later. Do you know the names of your grandparents?

ST: No, I don't know.

YW: We can look at your family tree later. So, your grandfather and grandmother stayed in Okinawa.

ST: Yes, they stayed in Okinawa and never came to Hawaii. They were farmers.

SI: They were all farmers.

YW: Your father was born in Okinawa and worked as a farmer, but decided to come to Hawaii.

ST: Yes. When he reached adulthood, he came to Hawaii alone.

CZ: The oldest son inherits the family home. The oldest son of the grandfather and grandmother inherited the family home. He was not allowed to go abroad.

YW: Usually.

CZ: So, a second son or younger ones. Takeo happened to be a second son.

YW: What kind of work did Takeo do when he came to Hawaii?

ST: I guess it must have been sugar farming.

YW: Sugar farming. The people who came to Hawaii usually worked at a sugar plantation as a three-year contract worker. After they finished the contract, some left or chose to stay at the plantation.

ST: I am not sure, but I heard that they were producing cow milk. I think they made it a business, but Chiyo said the milk was only [for the family] to drink.

CZ: No, no. I mean...

YW: Her father came to work at a sugar plantation in Hawaii. It was very common.

CZ: He made money and went back to Okinawa.

YW: Did he go back to Okinawa?

CZ: In old days, some people decided to stay until they die and others just wanted to make money. Takeo made money and went back to Okinawa. Then, he raised cows...

YW: In Okinawa?

CZ: In Okinawa. He returned to Okinawa and raised cows for milking. My father used to cut grass and wash milk bottles. He also delivered milk to Asato village. [Aza Asato-mura, Gushichan village].

YW: It is good if you can find out the year when he returned with his seven children. I am sure that it was before the war.

ST: Yes.

CZ: Your father died before the war.

ST: Yes. He did not die because of the war.

YW: He died before the war.

CZ: Your mother, my grandmother, died in the month of the war.

YW: Do you mean that only the children were left?

CZ: The oldest son was in Hawaii. The oldest son and the second son went to Hawaii first to make money, so they could call other members of family over. However, they heard that their mother died and realized that they could not pursue that plan.

ST: Ah, the oldest son and the second son.

CZ: Takekichi and Seikō. So, they decided to return to Okinawa after hearing that their mother died and only young children were left.

ST: I heard there was a problem when they wanted to leave Hawaii.

CZ: They were told that they had dual citizenship. They were asked to choose just one nationality. They decided to keep Japanese citizenship, because they were returning to Japan.

ST: So, they renounced.

CZ: The American citizenship.

ST: That is what I heard, too, but...

YW: Well, we can talk about the war later. Right now, I want to go back to the time when your father returned to Okinawa and raised cows but died before the war. I understand that seven children who he had brought back with him were left in Okinawa.

ST: Yes, including Rumiko.

YW: There were nine children left before the war.

ST: Yes, that is correct.

YW: Since you were born in Okinawa, do you remember your life before the war?

ST: I remember that my mother was milking cows. My two big brothers were boiling water in a large pot. I was about 8 or 9 years old and helped them wash milk bottles. Then, soon the war began.

YW: Yes, that's right. How about your school?

ST: School? Many Japanese soldiers came when American soldiers attacked Okinawa.

YW: How about before the war?

ST: I don't know anything before the war.

YW: You don't remember?

ST: I don't remember what happened.

YW: Not even about your school?

ST: Japanese soldiers occupied the school. So, we couldn't go to school.

YW: Didn't you go to school before the war?

ST: I did. I was eight years old and a first grader. Yes, I did go to an elementary school. My elder sister [and other brothers] also went school, although I don't know what grade they were in.

YW: Do you remember the name of your school?

ST: Gushichan Elementary School.

YW: Gushichan.

ST: [She writes kanji for gu shi chan]

YW: Is this pronounced as "chan"?

ST: Yes. Gushichan.

YW: Gushichan Elementary School.

ST: I think its name has been changed to Gushikami recently. There is no more Gushichan.

YW: When you were 8 or 9 years old, the war was about to start.

ST: Yes, I think the war between Japan and America already began. It was 1941.

YW: Yes. The war started in December 1941...

ST: Pearl Harbor. There was no change in Okinawa at that time. Quiet. It was quiet. They attacked Okinawa...

YW: At the end of the war.

ST: Yes. The war was almost ending.

YW: The war was almost at the end. There wasn't any change in Okinawa until then?

ST: No. That's why I could go to school. My younger sister didn't go yet, since she was two years younger than I. I was in first grade. Just when I finished first grade, American B-29s started to attack. We couldn't go to school. We just had to run away...

YW: Were you in a second grade?

ST: Before the second grade. No one my age went to the second grade class. We had a first grade graduation ceremony, though.

YW: The war ended in 1945. Do you remember the month?

SI: Aunty, what year were you born?

ST: 1936.

SI: If you add eight...

YW: 1944.

ST: But we didn't attend the second or the third grade. When we returned to school after the war, I was already in a fourth grade.

YW: So, it was still quiet in 1941. You were still going to school.

ST: I don't think even my mother felt that a war with America really began. So, she was taking care of the cows and milking them. We started feeling the effects of the war in 1942 or 1943. We realized that America was in fact attacking. The schools were already closed by that time.

YW: Schools were closed. The year 1942 or 1943 was already two or three years after the war began. Did Japanese army come to Okinawa?

ST: Yes, they did. While the schools were closed and we couldn't go, the Japanese army was using the schools.

YW: They were using the schools. Did the Japanese army come first?

ST: Yes.

YW: Japanese soldiers occupied the schools.

ST: Yes. The schools became their lodgings. So, we couldn't go to schools. Not only that, bombs started to drop.

YW: Were the bombs from B29s of American army?

ST: I think the American army was stationed on an aircraft carrier nearby.

YW: They flew from an aircraft carrier.

ST: Airplanes had to be stationed somewhere.

YW: Aircraft carriers came and then airplanes flew over.

ST: That's how it started in Okinawa. It was far from going to school. All of us were running around to look for a bomb shelter and hid in there.

YW: I understand there were natural caves [called *gama*] in Okinawa.

ST: There were *gamas*.

YW: I heard there were many natural caves. Did you hide in there?

ST: We did hide in there. We hid in a small cave first, because it was close to our house. However, small ones became dangerous, because too many bombs were dropped. I remember the words such as "*kūshū* [air raid]" and "*kanpō shageki* [naval bombardment]. We needed to look for a larger shelter.

YW: Did you use the word "*bōkūgō*" [shelter]?

ST: Yes, I did use the word. When we were hiding, Japanese soldiers came and told us that they needed the shelter, so we had to move out. Well, I heard about it later when I grew up. My mother didn't come back to the shelter after she went to get some food from house. She just didn't come back. My uncle said, "The house was on fire. I think she

went inside and died there.” He was telling my brother, but I didn’t believe it at all. “When is my mother coming back?” “Eventually.” I remember only that. The shelter was called *gama*. It was a cave.

YW: It was *gama*.

ST: And then, my uncles said, “Since your parents died, you have to come with us.” So, we walked with them to a mountain, no, a forest.

YW: A forest? A jungle?

ST: There was a place like a jungle. I didn’t know, but we went there anyway.

YW: With your uncles?

ST: With two uncles and their families. All of us walked to there. It was very, very far. It was farther than the place we were born. During the day, we hid in the forest to avoid being seen and walked during the night. We had nothing to eat. We didn’t have our mother with us, so we had nothing to eat. And, that was the beginning...

YW: You must have been very hungry.

ST: I don’t think we lived in a jungle too long.

YW: Not so long?

ST: I don’t think so. Well, I forgot.

YW: But if you didn’t eat...

ST: No. Since the war ended in 1945, I don’t think it was more than a couple of months. We just didn’t have anything to eat.

YW: You must have eaten something.

ST: Do you know *sotetsu* [Japanese sago palm]?

YW: A sago palm? Yes, I know.

ST: There is something like potato inside its stalk. But it is poisonous. I heard when my aunties were talking with my brothers. They were saying that they had to cut it and put it in water to remove the poison before they could eat it. I ate it, but I couldn’t taste any flavor. I couldn’t taste anything, but I had to eat something. It was my hardest experience during the war.

YW: Hm...

ST: And my mother didn’t come, although she was supposed to come...

CZ: You didn’t know that your mother had died until you reached Yanbaru [a northern district of Okinawa]?

ST: No, I didn’t know. Uncle Isao Imoto told Nobuo that she was probably dead. When he went to get her, the house was in flames. After he saw that, he told my brother that mother was most likely dead in the house.

CZ: Did you hear it that way? I heard from my grandmother that your mother went to get a kettle from the house to boil water at night and then she died.

ST: [We went to] look for her after the war.

CZ: The house was burning, but she didn't die in the house. She died because she was hit by stray bullets.

YW: You mean outside?

ST: But uncles thought that she died in the house, because the house was in flames. We started to clear the area after 1945.

CZ: Oh, I see now.

ST: Young men were gathered and one of them found my mother's remains. So, they notified Nobuo. So, Nobuo went to see. He remembered the kettle and the pattern of kimono his mother was wearing. He then declared that Naka Imoto, his mother, was dead. However, I couldn't believe it, because I didn't see her. I kept thinking that my mother would come to look for me. I always went back to the time when I was 9 or 10 years old. It is a sad story. My elder sister said that she saw the mother's remains. She could recognize the kimono worn by her mother. So, everyone knew by that time.

CZ: [She was] hit by a blind shell or a stray bullet. She was carrying a kettle.

ST: The reason why she was carrying a kettle was because she had an elder brother who was old and wanted to drink tea all the time.

CZ: So, she went to the house [to get a kettle] after dark and got hit on the way back.

ST: For her elder brother. For him, our uncle, who had a bad leg. My mother was taking care of him and went to make tea in the evening. We still had some food until that time. After we left the shelter, we didn't know where we were going. We were in the jungle.

YW: What happened in the jungle?

ST: We made a roof with leaves and stayed inside.

YW: Do you mean you were living in there?

ST: I don't even remember what we ate. Probably nothing. I think Chiyo's grandmother came to rescue us after the war ended.

YW: Do you mean you were living there until the war ended?

ST: Yes. The war ended and then...

YW: Were you still there when the war ended?

ST: Yes, we were still there. And then...

YW: How did you know the war ended?

ST: Solders who said they were *Nisei* from Hawaii were outside. I still remember even though I was small that they said they were *Nisei* from Hawaii. They said in broken

Japanese, "Please come out. The war has ended." My elder sister lived in Hawaii for some years...

CZ: Miyoko-san.

ST: My elder sister Miyoko had grown up in Hawaii. I think she went to school for a short time, too. So, she understood some English. She told uncles that the war ended and asked them to go out. However, they didn't go out from the jungle, because they said, "We would be killed if we go out." My two brothers became ill with malaria. They had fevers, and were trembling. The symptoms repeated many times during a day. Many people got malaria. Not only our family, but other families, too. Uncle's family, too. One after another died in a jungle. Getting bitten by mosquitos.

YW: With Malaria.

ST: My brothers said that they wanted to get out even if they were taken as prisoners. They were very sick by that time. American soldiers were waiting above on a mountain with a military truck. They were telling us to climb up and get out of the forest. However, it was very difficult to climb up. Since we were small, someone pulled us up. But my elder brothers had to be carried on the back, because they couldn't walk. I think the fourth brother was the most sick. We were already up on the mountain when the brothers finally came up. So, everyone was loaded on the truck and went down to the Red Cross vehicles. There were also some tents. We were sprayed with DDT there, because we had so many fleas and lice all over our body. After that, we were accommodated in a village. We couldn't go back to our homeland. When my aunty came to get us, she said "Sueko was only skin and bones, but her stomach was swollen like a balloon."

YW: You were malnourished.

ST: Yes, malnutrition. I heard something like that. Stomach becomes swollen. I felt a little ashamed when I heard what my aunty said. I realized I was like that, too. So, really, a war is awful.

YW: So, you stayed in the Red Cross tent for a while...

ST: Yes. My elder sister and a younger sister both died in it. It was too late. They were under-nourished too long. The military gave us food, but it was too late. They died in sleep one by one. Soldiers came to carry them out on a bed.

YW: Stretcher?

ST: Stretcher. I was sleeping on it. My younger sister was sleeping on it, too. My brothers were in the next tent, because they were male. When I got up, I found my sister was stiff with her legs open like this.

YW: Because the lack of food?

ST: We were the most malnourished. I heard some others weren't as bad as us. Those who became prisoners of war received food. Really...

YW: Where did you go after the Red Cross?

ST: We were gradually moved towards our village where we were born. We were taken in by an aunty who was the wife of our uncle. We were all taken in. A thatched roof house was built for us. It was a one room house and everyone had the same. The American military built it for us. They brought house materials ready to be built. The roof was made with straw and weeds from the mountain. All of the other houses were similar. So, we moved in to our own house. I was very lonesome, because my mother and sisters were gone. Only brothers. They were already 18 or 19 years old and drank sake with their friends. They were so noisy. I didn't feel comfortable and was a little scared. We lived like that for a while. Then, short time later, my brother Takekichi came and brought Yoshiko, his wife from Japan. He found his wife, who was from Shizuoka, in Tokyo and brought her to our house. I was so happy because I got an elder sister. So, I hardly visited my aunty after that time. Terumi was born soon after. Terumi was born right after the war, so I think my elder sister [Yoshiko] had a difficult time, because there was not enough food in Okinawa. I heard Terumi looked malnourished.

TL: Might die.

YW: Sure. There was not enough food. Babies had a hard time.

ST: Yes. There was not much food.

TL: So, I didn't grow well because there wasn't enough of my mother's milk.

ST: I think the sister had plenty milk.

TL: Then, why I was malnourished?

ST: Well, there was not much other food.

YW: Now the war had finally ended.

ST: I finally had a home with my brothers.

YW: Sueko-san came to Hawaii since then. When was it?

ST: I was about 20 years old. I don't feel like getting married in Okinawa. Other than farming, there were no jobs. No other jobs in my village. Since my two elder brothers were already in Hawaii, I heard there was a better chance of making money there. They already called their wives from Okinawa. They asked me to come to Hawaii this time. They will be my sponsors.

YW: Who were they?

CZ: Nobuo and Kōjō.

YW: Nobuo and Kōjō?

ST: Only Nobuo, yet.

YW: Did Nobuo ask you to come to Hawaii and he would be a sponsor?

ST: Since I didn't like farming life in Okinawa, I came to Hawaii with his sponsorship.

YW: You weren't married yet at that time?

ST: No, I wasn't.

YW: You came to Hawaii as a single woman.

ST: I stayed with my brother.

YW: Then you married to Mr. Tōyama. Now I understand most of your long story. And now, I want to move to the story of your brothers, Takekichi and Seikō. Can anyone talk about them? Takekichi was one of nine siblings and went back to Okinawa once, but came back to Hawaii before the war.

TL: Yes, [he did] before the war when he was 19 years old.

ST: He wanted to make money.

TL: And probably Hawaii was his home country. He was born there. Hawaii was his home country.

YW: How many years before the war?

TL: I think it was only less than a year and half. People who came around that time were interned.

YW: I guess it was just before the war. Around 1940? He was 19 years old.

TL: Just a moment. What year was my father born? He said Taisho 9 [1920].

YW: Did Seikō come with him?

TL: I don't know.

YW: Anyway, both of them returned to Hawaii. Was Seikō also born in Hawaii?

TL: Yes, he was. He was already a grownup young man after graduating from middle school. He came to Hawaii because he could make more money here. He came first, and planned to call the young children and his mother over later.

YW: So, both of them came first.

TL: I heard so.

YW: It was possibly 1939, just before the war.

TL: They came one year and a half before the war. That's why they were arrested.

YW: That's what I want to know. What type of work were Takekichi and Seikō doing after coming to Hawaii before the war?

SI: Dairy work.

YW: Dairy?

SI: They were raising cows.

YW: Where?

SI: Kuliouou.

CZ: I think Kuliouou. His sleeping place was separated only by a wall from a horse stable.

YW: A horse or cow?

CZ: I think horses were there, too. I went to see the place with my dad.

YW: So, they had a dairy.

CZ: Yes, they had. They walked to a movie theater to see a movie on their day off.

ST: To Honolulu.

YW: I want to know why the young dairy men were arrested. (Shows them the internee directory) Takekichi was a carpenter. Well, this must be a mistake.

CZ: Yes, it is wrong.

YW: Seikō was a farmer. Well, this is wrong, too.

CZ: Both wrong.

YW: Both wrong. They were dairy men. However, they were arrested when they were doing dairy work for only a year and half.

TL: When the war began, all Japanese were suspicious to the eyes of Americans.

YW: Just suspicious? Were they arrested just because they were Japanese from Japan?

TL: Yes, just because they were Japanese. They entered to Hawaii within the past year and half. They were just questioned and taken away, because they were single...

YW: When was it? When were they taken away?

TL: While they were working. I don't know what year was it, since I wasn't told.

YW: I guess it was right after Pearl Harbor.

SI: Right after Pearl Harbor.

CZ: My father was in the same group with Reverend Yosemite of Jikoen and policemen.

YW: What do you mean "a group"?

CZ: The place where they were arrested and confined. He was in a group of police men and priests. He was told there by Mr. Ifuku of Rainbow Drive [Inn] that his mother had died. So he was weeping in a corner. Reverend Yosemite asked him why he was weeping. He told him that he just found out that his mother had died. That's why he was weeping. Then several Buddhist priests gathered and chanted a sutra.

TL: Was my father, Takekichi, there?

CZ: No, he wasn't there.

SI: He was in a different group.

CZ: Different? I thought he said he was in a group with policemen and priests.

YW: Do you know which internment camp the group was at? Sand Island?

CZ: Probably Sand Island. Probably.

YW: According to a record, all internees went to the Sand Island camp first.

CZ: I don't know where.

YW: I think it was Sand Island.

CZ: The place may be called Puuloa in the olden days. My father was so grateful for the sutra that he went to Jikoen to express his gratitude after the war.

YW: Let's go back a little. The internees who had stayed at Sand Island were usually sent to the Mainland afterwards...

ST: Yes, I heard they went.

YW: According to a record, they went to Jerome [Jerome Relocation Center] first. Did you know?

TL: Arkansas.

YW: After staying at Jerome, Seikō was moved to Santa Fe. I don't know if Takekichi also went to Santa Fe.

ST: I don't know. I heard about Jerome, but not Santa Fe.

YW: You don't know.

CZ: He went to the Mainland. Since he was single and didn't have a wife or children, he [spent his time] by going to see a movie. There was a movie house.

YW: Internment camps in the Mainland were somewhat unrestrictive. Although they couldn't go outside, they could see a movie or establish a school.

CZ: I guess it was hard if he had a wife or children to take care of, but he needed to take care only himself. So, he could go and see movies.

ST: My elder brother was still single, too.

CZ: He was more free than other internees who had families with them.

ST: Not too many people were interned from Hawaii.

YW: Yes, you are right. FBI had already made a list of people who should be arrested in Hawaii before the war. They knew who to arrest if the war began.

CZ: Oh.

YW: Therefore, the night of the bombing of Pearl Harbor...

SI: They were arrested hurriedly in the same night...

YW: Yes. They were arrested and brought to the Ala Moana [Immigration Bureau], and then detained in the Sand Island. Then they were sent to the Mainland.

SI: They were not spies, but they came within a year and half...

YW: Those who were listed and arrested were about 900. Later the count increased to about 2,000, because their families joined them. The family members could not live without their fathers, brothers, or uncles.

ST: I see.

YW: American government gave permission to the family members to join in the internment camps.

ALL: I see.

YW: The total internees from Hawaii is about 2,000. The number is much smaller compared to the number of 120,000 of the West Coast.

ST: Ah, Hawaii...

YW: The reason was that Japanese population in Hawaii at the time when the war began was almost 40 percent of the total population. It was impossible to detain the 40 percent of the population.

ST: There was no place to do that.

YW: FBI knew that. That's why they made a list.

CZ: The people who came to Hawaii within a year and half were a little [suspicious]...

YW: Yes. I think two were added to the list later. The people who were listed first were priests, school teachers...

SI: Policemen.

YW: The people who used to go in and out of Japanese Consulate, the newspaper workers, and so on. The names of these people were already listed. From the story you told me, I think unluckily, two, Takekichi and Seikō, came back to Hawaii just before the war.

ALL: That's right.

YW: Of course, they didn't know the war would begin soon. It just happened to be right before the war and looked suspicious.

SI: They ended up renouncing the citizenship.

ST: They didn't think the war like this would begin.

TL: Two of them, the oldest son and the second son, made up their mind to take care of their small sisters and brothers, since their mother had died. They felt that they should go back to Okinawa and take care of them. They boarded a ship to Tokyo.

YW: You mean they returned after the war.

TL: Probably after the war.

YW: Both of them returned [to Okinawa].

TL: They had a dual citizenship at that time, but they needed to retain Japanese citizenship to go back to Japan. So, they renounced the American citizenship.

ST: Did they go back together?

TL: Yes. They stayed with their aunty, Aunt Yoshimoto, in Tokyo.

ST: Did they ask for her help?

TL: They stayed at her place for about a month.

YW: You told me that they renounced their American citizenship, but they came back here, didn't they?

CZ: They were forced to renounce it. They had to choose one. They were told to renounce American citizenship, if they wanted to return to Japan. So, they renounced the citizenship and returned to Okinawa via Tokyo.

YW: So, they met their sisters and brothers. They wanted to take care of them.

TL: I think he met my mother already at that time in Tokyo.

YW: In Tokyo?

TL: He met my mother before returning [to Okinawa]. She was working in Kamakura.

YW: She was from Shizuoka, wasn't she?

TL: Yes, from Shizuoka, but she met my father in Kamakura. She happened to meet him at "Nisei Club". Her aunty said first to her, "The place you are going is a remote countryside. Don't go. You cannot tolerate the place." So, they separated once.

YW: Ah, I see. So, she broke it off.

TL: She broke it off once. However, she went with him after all, because she loved him. And then I was born.

YW: [Takekichi] was a handsome man.

TL: He seemed like at that time. (Laugh)

ST: She went with him, but at that time...

TL: People spoke only dialect in Gushichan at that time.

YW: Dialect?

CZ: Yes, dialect. Your mother was from Japan and didn't know the dialect, an Okinawa language. I think she was brave.

YW: I think she had a hard time.

CZ: The village people didn't like outsiders. Not good or bad.

YW: I suppose there was a wall between Okinawans and the Mainland Japanese.

CZ: Yes, there was. It is a little inferiority complex.

YW: I am not sure, but I think there is a wall.

CZ: There is.

YW: I guess your mother had a difficult time.

CZ: She was like “on show”. People came to see her.

YW: Oh. “A beautiful woman from Shizuoka is here!”

ST: Okinawans call Mainland Japanese “*Naichaa*”.

CZ: Means a person from the Mainland Japan. Filipino is called Filipina. It has to be a same village.

YW: I think it is similar in Japan, too. Hiroshima people get together with other Hiroshima people. Yamaguchi are same, too.

ST: Yes. I think it is something unique to Japanese.

CZ: I think she was brave to go there without knowing an Okinawan dialect.

TL: But she learned the dialect and could even argue using it later.

YW: I see. She learned the dialect. Great.

CZ: Yes. There was no car, nor bicycle at that time. Just walk. Everyone knew about my mother who walked around in the village. She always walked wearing an apron and walked briskly with *geta* on.

TL: I heard from my aunty recently that my mother was quite strong minded.

ST: I think so.

SI: She didn’t want to lose.

TL: That’s why she could go on.

YW: She had to in the situation like that in Okinawa.

CZ: Takekichi...

YW: Takekichi was a nice person.

TL: She complained some times. What a place she came into. I think my father cared about her. He was a little different from other fathers in Gushichan.

YW: I see.

TL: Is it because he was born in Hawaii?

YW: He was a little Americanized.

CZ: He treated women nicely.

YW: I guess because he was born in Hawaii, an American territory.

TL: Children were members of a family. My father and my mother were always planning to do something, like going to a picnic or gathering shells. I still remember.

ST: The village people never did something like that.

YW: A picnic sounds very American.

TL: I think that's what they did.

YW: How long did you stay in the village before returning to Hawaii?

ST: It was a long time ago.

TL: I came to Hawaii and then my father...

YW: Terumi-san, did you come first?

TL: I came to my aunt's place when I was 21 years old.

YW: Terumi-san went to her aunt's place.

TL: I didn't like Okinawa. (Laugh) Probably because of my mother. She always said, "What kind of a place this is!" I felt that we were distanced.

YW: So, Terumi-san came first and stayed with her aunty.

TL: I consider her as my elder sister.

ST: She came as a student

TL: A student for the time being. My father later wanted to come, too, because all the children already came.

YW: Who else was here? Sachie-san?

TL: I called from the eldest. One after another. Only my father and mother were left. They also want to join the children. My mother definitely didn't want to die in Okinawa.

YW: About when was it?

CZ: Aunty, do you remember?

YW: Sachie, when did you come?

SI: When did I come? (Laugh)

CZ: I was married and living in a rented house in Manoa.

TL: I was also married when my parents came. [No one can remember exactly.] I think it was around 1978. First Sachie. Two elder ones. Then two younger ones.

YW: So, all of you are now in Hawaii.

TL: My mother was very happy. She loved Hawaii.

YW: Wonderful. She wasn't treated nicely in Okinawa after all.

SI: No, wrong. I think she was the one who bullied others, since she became an old lady.
(Laugh)

ST: I think she learned [the dialect] so well.

CZ: Okinawan dialect. She spoke Japanese but managed the dialect, too.

ST: I think she learned it well, because she came to Okinawa when she was still young around 20.

CZ: Some dialects come out when she was talking. I told Mrs. Rogers, “My mother speaking in a dialect.” (Laugh)

ST: Was she speaking the dialect?

TL: Once in a while.

YW: Well, they say, “When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

ST: Really. It was the past though...

CZ: I think she did so well in the society of Gushichan where a common Japanese was not used.

ST: I didn’t speak the dialect.

CZ: I had a grandmother.

ST: Yes, your mother was also from the same village.

CZ: That’s right. I am an Okinawan. You folks are *hapa* (mix). I was told, however, that I would be called Okinawan, if I lived in the mainland Japan.

ST: *Uchinanchu* (Okinawan) sounds somewhat good, but *Naichaa* (mainland Japanese) doesn’t.

TL: If I lived in Japan, I could be discriminated as *Uchinanchu*.

SI: Even in Hawaii. Where are you from? *Uchinanchu*. (Laugh)

YW: I have a last question to Sueko-san. Although you experienced the war and America was an enemy at that time, did you think about who was an enemy when you were still a child?

ST: Well, adults were saying that America was an enemy and Americans all look like devils. I listened to them talk and I was afraid.

YW: After you listened to those words, did you think that America was scary?

ST: Yes, I did.

YW: However, you are not [afraid] now.

ST: No, I am not at all. It is very strange. I had such an awful experience during the war. I thought America, only America, was wrong. Yet, I, a Japanese, got married to an

- American who was born and raised in America. I wonder who was wrong to cause the war.
- YW: Really. I wonder how it happened.
- ST: I was tormented and suffered. Yet, I came to an American land and married to an American. I wonder why [two countries] fought and did such an awful thing. So, I tell my children that a war is no good. I really think so. I experienced it and I couldn't avoid it and didn't know why. I want the children to grow up to be adults who can say "no". I think [the war] should never happen again.
- YW: Thank you very much. I listened to a very precious story today. Thank you very much all of you.
- ST: I wonder how babies could be born so soon right after the war. (Laugh)
- TL: Are we the Baby Boomers?
- CZ: I think humans are great. They fight wars and then become friends quickly. So many married Americans after the war. They married American soldiers and went to the enemy country.
- TL: Not like us who don't know the war. They experienced the war.
- ST: There were many women who married American soldiers.
- YW: But they were not the ones who wanted to start the war. They were just involved in the war.
- TL: Even the soldiers didn't want to start the war.
- YW: You are right. It is no use to hate each other, since the war is over.
- SI: People couldn't say anything during the war.
- YW: Yes. Since the war is over, it is ok for Americans and Japanese to shake hands and become friends.
- ST: I think it is not only between Okinawa and America. There is a same thing happening between Vietnam and America now. There are many marriages and many children are born.
- SI: What is the meaning of the war?
- ALL: Really. What the meaning of the war? It was stupid. So many people died. For what purpose? Not only other country's people but also many of our own people were killed.
- TL: I really think a war is no good, but there are so many people who don't know a war.
- CZ: I don't quite understand a war at my age.
- YW: Because you haven't experienced it?
- TL: I am glad that I wasn't living during that time.

(They continued to talk even after the interview.)