

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Myrtle Hashimoto

"I had a girlfriend who always on weekends would come and stay with us, sleepovers. She enjoyed coming over. 'I like your house because you have a Haole tub, you have a flushing toilet.' And a bed. They slept on the floor . . . our house, almost everybody had their own bed. We had electric stove. She didn't. She had kerosene stove. I remember we had an ice box. And then, we had refrigerator with the ice compartment. And then, gradually graduated to better and better. Many times, it was something the Haoles, the bosses, wanted to get rid of and buy a new one, so my dad would take it home and fix it up and use for us. We had a stove with oven . . . those were almost like luxuries at the time."

Myrtle Hashimoto was born in Lahaina, Maui in 1932. She was the youngest of five children born to Kazuichi Tamura and Uto Date Tamura. Her father was a supervisor in the electrical department for Pioneer Mill Company.

She attended King Kamehameha III School and graduated from Lahainaluna School in 1951. The following year, she attended college at Stout Institute in Wisconsin, where she lived for seven years. Upon returning to Hawai'i, she settled in Honolulu. She eventually worked for the Motor Vehicle Division as a clerk typist and retired after twenty years in 1990.

She lives in Honolulu with her husband, Richard Hashimoto. They have two children and two grandchildren.

Tape No. 39-4-1-02

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Myrtle Hashimoto (MH)

Kāhala, O'ahu

July 22, 2002

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This is an interview with Myrtle Hashimoto, we're at her house in Kāhala. It's July 22, 2002, and the interviewer is Holly Yamada.

Let's start with what is your birth [year]?

MH: I was born in 1932.

HY: And where were you born?

MH: In Lahaina, Maui, plantation hospital.

HY: And before we talk about your childhood, can you tell me a little bit about your parents [Kazuichi Tamura and Kou Date]? Your father is from?

MH: My parents, my mother and father are from Hiroshima, Japan. And my father arrived in his late teens and he had. . . .

HY: Do you know why he came?

MH: I guess he was looking for adventure for a young boy. He was living with his mother and stepfather. His stepfather adopted him, but as he grew older, he decided he would venture out on his own. So he had a friend, a family friend, Mr. Doi, he became guardian on this trip to Hawai'i. So he came to Hawai'i and did a lot of odd jobs. I'm not sure what island he was at first. He ended up on Maui—Lahaina. He worked menial jobs, like delivering mail or he planted the pine trees. As you enter Lahaina, not now, but in the early years, you'd see rows and rows of pine trees. And, he's one of the guys that planted those trees. So whenever he passed through those trees going towards Wailuku, he remembered, "I planted those trees."

HY: And does Mr. Doi—this was a contact his parents had in Japan? How did that happen? Do you know?

MH: I'm not too sure. My dad couldn't come because he was considered a minor. Still in his late teens, but you know. I guess my grandparents felt that he would be more comfortable if he came with someone older.

HY: To sort of introduce him to . . .

MH: Yeah. He came over, and then in his later years in Lahaina—I guess his friends are commenting that he get married. Everybody should get married. So he sent a picture home of himself, a photographer's picture, and sent it to his parents and they in turn found a go-between to find a bride for him.

My mom, she grew up in a large family and had an auntie and uncle who did not have children, so she was kind of given to them, like *hānai*, to raise. She did more maid's work for the auntie. She was approached by this go-between and she agreed to come to Hawai'i.

HY: So she was a picture bride.

MH: Yeah, she saw the picture of my dad. It was just a photograph, and she came over.

HY: Now did she send her picture?

MH: No, just the way she held the picture (chuckles) matched the person. She came by ship.

HY: They did not know each other, right?

MH: No.

HY: So she came by ship. Do you remember what year?

MH: No. The only thing I remember her saying, when she first arrived in Lahaina, she got off the boat and on the harbor she was to be picked up. She looked and looked. She said she was one of the last persons to find someone to meet her and that was my dad. My dad is not a sociable type of person. Saw her, he just told her, "Okay."

HY: Matter of fact.

MH: In Japanese, "come with me" and he didn't even pick up her suitcase or anything. (Chuckles) She carried it. She only had one suitcase. She said she wanted to turn around and go home (chuckles). Such an abrupt meeting, but there's no turning back. So, she stayed on. I'm the youngest of seven children, and two of them died. The oldest son died before any of us were born. He was about two years old, from a childhood illness and he died. Then my sister was born. She lives in Lahaina right now. And then two boys, and there was a sister (who died at age seven), and then there was another brother and then I was the last.

HY: Did your mom talk to you about her adjustment to living in Hawai'i after her arriving here?

MH: Not really. They don't talk too much about the past.

HY: I know (chuckles).

MH: About struggles and stuff like that. And my dad wasn't that talkative. He was more work, work, work. He did a lot of menial work, work for the plantation. I'm not too sure what job he did, but I remember he (talked about going) to work with the mule. He got ready to go to work, but not the mule. So many times he was late because the mule wouldn't go work. I don't know, but he became an electrician. I don't know how soon after that, but he had like an encyclopedia on electricity and he would look at pictures because he

couldn't read. He would look at the pictures and he would try to fix things by looking at pictures. And became interested in electricity and became an electrician.

There was this Mr. [J.R.] McConkey; he was his boss and he helped him a lot. He could see my dad's potential, and he helped him. It was, I don't know what year, but it was before World War II. He was already an electrician. He knew almost every electrical plant in Lahaina. And whenever there's a trouble call, he was right there.

HY: Do you know how it was that he originally started working for the plantation?

MH: Not really. I guess in Lahaina almost everybody worked for the plantation.

HY: Right.

MH: I don't think anybody had the background to do it, to start their own business.

HY: Do you know if his intention was to ever return to Japan?

MH: I have no idea, but I doubt it. I doubt it. I think that he was there to settle down. His mother, she was pregnant with him, and her husband didn't want to stay married. Didn't want to stay wherever they were living in Japan. So he left her, and then he was born, and he was about a year old when my grandma married this other man, Tamura.

HY: And that's your father's; he took his (stepfather's) name.

MH: Yeah, adopted name. I'm not sure what he was before that. Anyway, he was adopted by his stepfather when he was about a year old, but his birthday recorded the day of his adoption. He kept telling us that he's a year older. But, legally, on paper, it's the day he was adopted.

HY: What is your mother's family name?

MH: Date. Spelled like D-A-T-E. She did a lot of seamstress [work], cooking, cleaning, things like that. I don't know how old she was, but she was pretty young when she was adopted (by her aunt and uncle). That was like her job. She did a lot of hem work, sewing. And then when she came to Hawai'i she did a lot of sewing for people. So when they approached her to become a teacher at the Hongwanji, the Japanese school in Lahaina, she became like a home-ec teacher. She taught sewing, like making kimonos, *zabutons*, *futons*, teaching the girls for when they get married. And, she taught smocking, any handcrafting, and embroidery, but they didn't have cooking facilities for cooking school. Almost like a home-ec teacher, but more sewing and handcrafts.

HY: Maybe you can talk about the house that you grew up in. First, your parents weren't on the plantation and then you . . .

MH: I'm not sure. I think my dad was working for the plantation.

HY: Oh, okay. Well, the house that you grew up in then.

MH: We lived in a house that was provided for supervisors (my only recollection).

HY: Because at that time your father was in a supervisory position.

MH: Electrical department. And, so, the supervisors didn't live in the camp. They lived outside of the camp, so we were outside of the camp. That's the only house I remember.

HY: Where was that located?

MH: This was located on Lahainaluna Road, right below the plantation office. Near the plantation mill. We were surrounded by the plantation.

HY: But that wasn't considered in the camps per se, it was outside.

MH: The camps had a separate road.

HY: Can you describe what the house was like?

MH: We had four bedrooms, a large living room, dining room, kitchen. I remember we had *furo* in the back, separate unit right outside the back door. It heated the—there was a place to heat the water for the *furo*.

HY: Outside.

MH: Yeah, and on the side there was another—not a barbecue pit, but they call that *kudo*, which is what my mother used to boil water for the laundry (and heat the *furo*). When you have greasy laundry and dirty laundry she'd boil all this water for the laundry. We also had a washroom (or laundry room), and I always remember we had a washing machine. One of those wringer type ones with the rollers. That's one of the first ones I remember. And, we were pretty much—my dad always wanted, not a comfortable home, but anything electrical he liked. So then, he made friends with the plantation manager and the higher-ups. They liked my dad. He fixed a lot of the appliances and the electrical wiring they needed. He would do that; they depended on him. So, they would give us their. . . .

HY: Their hand-me-downs?

MH: Yeah. Hand-me-downs. We even had a Baldwin piano (given to us).

HY: And this was from one of the other higher-ups.

MH: Yes, it was given to us. And bathtub, you know. Fancy with legs.

HY: That was unusual yeah, to have that.

MH: Unusual for a plantation. And so, I had a girlfriend who always on weekends would come and stay with us, sleepovers. She enjoyed coming over. "I like your house because you have a *Haole* tub, you have flushing toilet." And a bed. They slept on the floor. Everybody had, like our house, almost everybody had, their own bed. We had electrical stove. She didn't. She had a kerosene stove. I remember we had an icebox. And then, we had refrigerator with the ice compartment. And then, gradually graduated to better and better. Many times, it was something the *Haoles*, the bosses, wanted to get rid of and buy a new one, so my dad would take it home and fix it up and use for us. We had a stove with oven, so couple of my friends would come over and we used to make cookies. They didn't have such a thing at their homes. Those were almost like luxuries at the time.

HY: So your friends perceived that as having certain special, desirable . . .

- MH: They're thinking we're rich, but we're not rich. It was given to us, hand-me-downs that we received, and my dad fixed them up. And then, my friends were envious.
- HY: Now, did you have household duties or family-related duties when you were growing up?
- MH: Oh, yes. As we were growing up, I'd say when I was fourth, fifth or sixth grade, I had another brother who was about three years older than I, he and I had to sweep and mop two bedrooms and the porch. We had two, back and front porch, and two bedrooms on each side. And then we had a good mop, a junk mop, and a good broom and a junk broom. And the person who got up first, would be the one who got the better one. But, every week we traded sides. He always won.

(Laughter)

- MH: He got the good mop and the good broom. That was our duty every morning before we went to school. Breakfast was milk and maybe toast. Peanut butter that you had to mix, the oil is on the top and you had to mix it. Peanut butter and jelly toast, corn flakes, foods like that.

- HY: Were there other household chores that you had to do growing up?

- MH: When my mom did the laundry I helped hang it or—all the nice clothes, cotton ones, after it's washed, you put it in the liquid starch. The bucket, you pour a portion of thick starch, mix it up, then you have to squeeze it and hang it up. Sheets and pillowcases would also be the same. We put bluing, a little cap full of bluing in the starch and it would give you a slight tint of blue in the white sheet. For that, we were fortunate to have a wringer type, you put it through the wringer to squeeze it because sheets are hard to squeeze. Put it through the wringer and hang it up.

- HY: Did you folks have a garden?

- MH: My dad and my mom were interested in raising orchids, especially *Cattleyas*. We had lots or orchids and a garden—we had a big back yard—and we had a garden in the back. When World War II started, we enlarged the garden and one of my older brothers, he raised rabbits, ducks, and we always had chicken. There was a huge chicken coop in the back. There was a problem with the ducks because you have to have a pond. You had to clean the pond, which he didn't because he was too busy with (tape inaudible). So the plantation office complained that the smell was getting too bad (chuckles), so he had to discontinue that. And then, the rabbits, he had not a lot, maybe four or five of them. The reason he was doing all this was, of course, hobby. But then, for food too, something different. The difficult thing was to kill the rabbit, so he gave it up. He couldn't kill the rabbit, much less eat it, because they become pets. He can't eat it. So, he gave that up.

And then World War II, we had to dig trenches, air raid shelters. So my dad dug a big one in the backyard. It got bigger. It started small, but it got bigger and bigger. We found out that the land was sand and gravel. Layers of different grades of gravel and sand. He said, "Oh, this is good for raising orchids and plants, can't use this for shelter." So we had to dig another one in the back. And, I'm not sure how the sand and gravel developed—I guess over the years.

- HY: So that's why he decided to grow orchids?

- MH: No, no. He was into it long before.

HY: He was already, oh I see.

MH: Before World War II he was into photography, my dad. He used to go around taking pictures of people, and my mom and I used to be the star, his models. He wanted certain scenery, but he doesn't want to just take scenery. He wants somebody in it. Mom and I would sit in front of the camera. Only thing, my mom, she said she got dark because she sits posing waiting for him to focus in the hot sun, getting darker and darker. And, he used to develop his own in his own darkroom, which he made himself. As years went by, he did it for a couple of years, but he realized that it's interfering with his asthma. Whenever he goes down into the darkroom, he comes out sneezing and wheezing.

HY: The developing chemicals?

MH: Under the house he dug it, and he made this darkroom, two-room darkroom. And I guess, inner room he had to use for developing, and I think there's a dampness too, plus, of course, the chemical. So, finally he had to give it up.

HY: Did he ever do photography for anything other than a hobby? For commercial purposes?

MH: No.

HY: For hobby.

MH: He entered one of the pictures of me in the shallow part of the ocean, and I had my hand cupped trying to catch a fish. He enlarged it and he framed it and entered it in the county fair on Maui and got first price. He was so proud of that.

HY: You talked a little bit about food. What about other kinds of foods did you folks eat? It sounds like you ate kind of an American-type breakfast with corn flakes and toast. What other kinds of foods did you usually eat?

MH: I'm not sure.

HY: Did your family eat Japanese food, a rice-based diet?

MH: My dad did not care for fish. I think when he was little he choked on a bone, almost died. And so, ever since my dad never had fish. My mom never prepared fish, so we hardly had fish. Usually steak, pork chops and things like that, with vegetables. *Nishime*, stir-fry, a lot of eggs because we had our own chickens. She always used to send me to the market.

HY: What market did you go to?

MH: Nagasako Store. Today, there's still a Nagasako Store. I went to the Nagasako Store, they had a meat market, and I would just say, "My mother wants pork chop." Can I remove this [i.e. microphone]?

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MH: I say, "My mother wants four pieces of pork chops, or pork, two steaks or three steaks." And the man just knows exactly what my mom wants. He wrapped it up; I take it home. Everything is charged to Mr. Tamura at the end of the month. There's a bill. I don't think it's bill, but on honor system. This being a small town. Everybody knows everybody so you don't want to leave [unpaid] credit. Mom will go with all the receipts and then she'll

pay it off. And so, we hardly carried money to the store. Maybe ten cents, five cents, for a treat.

HY: Did you folks shop at the plantation store as well?

MH: They had a plantation store, Lahaina Store, but I hardly shopped in there.

HY: Was that because you folks were . . .

MH: It was a department store.

HY: Oh. Was that something that people in the camps used, rather than because you were in a supervisory position or did that matter?

MH: I don't think it mattered. I'm not sure what the other families did as far as shopping.

HY: The plantation had a dairy, is that where you got your milk?

MH: Yeah, delivered every morning. It was in glass bottles, so you rinse the bottles and put it out.

HY: And they'd pick up the bottles.

MH: Pick up the bottles. Same order every time. Unless you want to change you leave a note, but otherwise the same [milk order]. That's where the milk caps, bottle caps [came from].

HY: Yeah, pog.

MH: We used to play that too. We didn't call it pog. It was bottle cap or milk cap. Sodas were pop, soda pop. They came in glass bottles with caps. What we used to do when we were small, which is not too good for your clothes. What we used to do—there was a cork on the cap. There's a cork inside, to seal it. We used to take that cork out carefully and then you put it on your clothes, and put the cork underneath and squeeze it in, and it's a pin.

HY: Oh, it was the backing for a pin.

MH: Yeah, backing for a pin. If you wanted to hold fabric together, you can use that just to—put the cork back in and hold the fabric together. Some people used to collect the caps because there were all different kinds of caps through the years.

My dad was working as electrician, the office was with the Lahaina Ice Company (at that time). Anyway, that's where they made the soda pop, ice cream, and everything to do with ice. Block of ice. His office was there, and he would come home and whenever they have ice cream getting a little old they want to get rid of, they would give my dad or my dad would fix something there. As payment, they would give him ice cream, brown huge cartons of ice cream. No place to freeze. No freezer in the refrigerator, so we had to eat it all up, and get all the friends and neighbors to come and eat ice cream.

HY: Now, why was his office . . .

MH: He was an electrician and that's where the electrician office was.

HY: Was that company also plantation affiliated?

- MH: I think it was under the plantation. Lahaina Light and Power Company became later, before that was Lahaina Ice Company. He used to bring home soda pops, too. He could get it cheaper, I guess because they know him.
- HY: What other kinds of games did you play besides the bottle caps? What did you play when you were a kid?
- MH: We used to flatten them out and make a hole in the center, two holes, and put a string.
- HY: You're talking about the bottle caps?
- MH: Yeah, bottle cap. Put a string in the holes and then you lace the string into one hole out the other, and the two ends, tie the ends, and then hold the two ends about—oh, I'd say...
- HY: A foot apart?
- MH: Yeah, a foot apart of string, and then you twirl it. And you spin it. It's very dangerous because it's sharp. We used to let it twirl, spin it like that. Pull it and it spins. You could cut leaves or something, just to play.
- HY: So this is the metal part.
- MH: Yeah. Bottle cap.
- HY: I'm thinking of those softer milk bottle caps.
- MH: Glass bottle caps. Beer cap.
- HY: You use it to cut things.
- MH: Yeah, we used to flatten them out. It's very dangerous. So we used to play with that. Then when we played house, we used to use bottle caps as little decorations for the dolls like a doily or something. Different ways of using milk caps, bottle caps, and stuff like that. And we used to use cans. Tuna fish can?
- HY: Mm-hmm [yes].
- MH: Yeah. Those days they were deeper. Now, more narrow and not as deep. We used it for all kinds—pots, when we played house. Get the cover, and they bent one end of it and grasp that end and use it as a knife to chop off leaves and flowers to play house, play dolls. Then the boys or the girls used the can, and put a hole in the center and put a cord through it with heavy string and pass the string through it and on the other side, tie a nail so it was like a stopper. And then you have about two or three feet, so the string has to be about four to six feet long depends on the height. And then you had two of those. One for one foot and the other one for the other foot, and use it like a clopper. Clop around. Like slippers or something. Hold the string up and clop around. That's how we used to play. We didn't buy toys. No toys to buy.
- HY: Did you folks spend time at the beach?
- MH: My dad was always busy, but when he had a holiday, he would take me and my girlfriend to the beach and my mother would prepare a nice lunch. In Lahaina they call it Fleming's Beach, which was like going to Hanauma Bay or a place like that. It's a nice beach. That

was a big treat. Maybe once a year, not even once a year, but he took us to the beach. Once a year before school starts, I think it was Labor Day—before Labor Day. Cannot be Labor Day, the stores would be closed. It would be on the weekend, I asked my girlfriend to come because my dad says he's going to Wailuku, which is twenty-some miles way. That's a town. Lahaina is plantation. That's a big town. There's Kress Store there. They [i.e., MH's parents] don't own a car, so I asked, "You want to go to Wailuku?" She get all thrilled. Sunday best, we're dressed in our Sunday best, can hardly sleep the night before. We're going to Wailuku. My mom would take us to the Kress Store, and we probably had fifty cents to spend. You know that's big money at that time. We buy things for school, preparation for school, like a bow for your hair or a handkerchief. At that time, we used to pin handkerchiefs to our dresses with a small safety pin.

HY: Was it decorative or functional?

MH: Supposed to be functional and wipe your nose.

(Laughter)

MH: Buy pretty handkerchiefs embroidered. We buy socks, a pair of socks for school. My mom would buy me a pair of shoes and it was very exciting. Something new for school. My mom used to sew school bags for my girlfriend and I. She and I always used to have same. A couple times my mom would sew dresses for us, same material, same style. We were maybe five or six years old.

HY: Did your friend live in the camp?

MH: She lived in the camp, her dad was a carpenter with the plantation. She was the youngest with three boys above her. She was the only girl, and they weren't that well off at that time. Her father and my father came from the same part of Japan, so they became good friends. We were never something special, they were always invited. They were treated like part of our family.

HY: What was their family name?

MH: Miyamoto, and my girlfriend's name was Nobue.

HY: I'm going to turn the tape over, we're at the end of this side.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: Maybe I should ask you about your friendships and if there was a relationship that was different between the kids that were in the camps as opposed to you as a daughter of a supervisor?

MH: As far as growing up, I don't think there was any difference in growing up. I didn't feel it. Whether they felt different towards me, I don't know, but I didn't feel it. The only time I felt like an outcast, was when they had the big strike [1946] at Pioneer Mill Company. And since I didn't understand and I didn't know what really a union was, and I didn't know what scab was, and my dad being a supervisor was unable to join the union at that

time. He went on working, which was required. Anyway, they had a union function. I was good friends with the camp girls. We always played together. I would join them at these functions, and they would have a soup kitchen, where they served [food] because they're on strike. They serve their meals once a day. I just joined them, and take a plate and then one of the ladies said, "Tamura you cannot, you don't belong here." I kind of shrank. Nobody explained anything to me. I went home crying because I don't know why I couldn't be there with my friends. My friends are all enjoying it and I couldn't. And so, my dad got angered by that. I don't know what he did actually, but I guess when they had electrical problem he wouldn't go the house.

HY: So he knew who it was that had said that to you?

MH: Not really, but any union member. But then, I think the ladies realized that my dad was essential.

HY: Since we're talking about this 1946 strike, did you notice any attitudes from your friends or your peers, the adults had their own thing but was there any attitudes about whether they wanted to still play with you or hang out with you?

MH: No.

HY: Or were you told by your parents . . .

MH: When we went to school we were all the same, but only when involving the plantation, the strike or anything, no one associated with me because I guess they were told. I was scab daughter (chuckles) and I didn't know what a scab was. I didn't know why my dad couldn't be in the union either. My dad never explained these things. Japanese, they don't tell their children all the problems. I didn't even know how much he earned. I remember my dad folks all had a number from the plantation called *bangō*, *bangō* number. That number is to identify you at the office and that's where you pick up your paycheck, and the office is right above our house and mom used to send me to pick up my dad's paycheck in a little brown envelope. It was sealed and I would bring that to my mom, and that's how you were identified. So I'd see all my friends; it would be the same for their parents. Payday is usually a work day too. So, I'd see them picking up their paychecks. It's all cash. No checks.

HY: Do you remember any incidences there that happened during the strike?

MH: That's the only incident I remember involving me.

HY: I had read that some of the supervisors kind of got roughed up at one point.

MH: I know my dad—I'm not sure if this had to do with the strike or not, but my dad was a perfectionist and he felt that he earned his way up to his position. So, he had workers below him and he wanted to teach them. When he retired he wanted to have trained whoever he liked to get his position. Train the man who's interested. And this one man, he told him to climb the pole to fix something, and he was told, the other worker was told to do something, and he didn't like the way my dad talked. He was ordered to do it. He turned on my dad. I'm not sure what the incident was all about. He turned on my dad and beat him up.

HY: Was this during the strike or is this at some other point?

MH: I can't remember. I think it was some other time because it couldn't happen when we were in the plantation house, it happened after. I'm not sure when it happened, but anyway, he got beaten up. He came home, and eyes puffing, cut on his lip, and glasses broken. And he wouldn't say why. Mr. McConkey helped him. I guess the man was charged with assault and my dad had to go to court. He still didn't want to blame him. He said it was his [own] fault. But anyway, the man was charged. I'm not sure what happened.

HY: After the strike, were attitudes different then? Were people still kind of holding grudges or was everything back to [normal]?

MH: I didn't feel anything. My parents never discussed anything like that.

My mom used to help other ladies, counseling, and I didn't notice anything different. My dad was a go-between too, he arranged a couple of marriages in Lahaina. I'm not sure how long ago that was. To this day I know these two married. People come into your house, get counseling, maybe marital arrangements. That's what I remember them doing. People used to respect him in many ways.

HY: What about schooling, you went to school at [King] Kamehameha III [School]?

MH: Yeah, [King] Kam[ehameha] III School. I used to be asthmatic, not as bad as my brother. I had an older brother, the one in Tennessee, he had very bad asthma, and the sister in the middle right below him she had bad asthma too. She died when she was about seven years old because the doctor made a mistake and cut her tonsils. She was in the hospital because she had flu or pneumonia or something and my mom—prior to that somebody in the family, one of the grandparents, was very ill wanted them to come home, my parents, to come home [to Japan]. And my dad said no he had to work, so he sent my mom. I was a baby, and my brother who had real bad asthma, she took him to Japan to see if he could get medication or help for him. And I being a baby of a year and a half, two years old, she took me. While we were gone, my sister passed away because she caught a bad cold that turned into pneumonia. And with her asthma, the doctor that was the resident doctor or new doctor didn't read her chart. Then in those days everybody had their tonsils out. She was among the children all in the same ward, one by one he took their tonsils out. My sister wasn't there for tonsils and he cut her tonsils and she didn't stop bleeding. Infection because of her condition. She coughed and coughed and wouldn't heal and died. Those days, they don't sue. I didn't hear anything about it until I was in high school. My mom, my brother and I were in Japan. And then, when we came back, I don't know how long we stayed in Japan. We stayed for a while, maybe about six months.

HY: Did you have any difficulty when you started school with language? You spoke English well enough?

MH: Well enough. My dad spoke broken English, my mom hardly spoke any English, but they understood. And because I had older brothers and a sister, everybody spoke English. The funny thing is, when I was in kindergarten school we're all sitting against the wall. I think they had four kindergarten teachers in a huge room, separate from Kam III School, just the kindergarten section, and as your name gets called you're assigned to certain teachers. Everybody was called except me, sitting there. She looked down, my mother said nobody called me. She looked down on the list, "Oh yes, here, Myrtle Tamura." My mother said my daughter's name is Miyoko. And she [i.e., the teacher] said your daughter is really

Myrtle. She didn't know. So she took out the birth certificate, sure enough, it's on the birth certificate. The nurses gave me my name. (My mom never knew.)

(Laughter)

MH: When they made out the application for birth certificate, they included my name. I found out that the nurse who gave me my name told my sister that day, anybody born that day their name would start with *M*. So they named me Myrtle (chuckles).

HY: But your family knew you as Miyoko.

MH: Yes, until I was in kindergarten. My mother didn't know I had an English name. And there is another girl that was born the same day and her name is Mildred. From that day I was known as Myrtle. My mother would never use that name. It was always Miyoko. There's some people still in Lahaina, the older generation, still know me as Miyoko. Miyoko means the third girl. I was the third girl.

HY: Did you have favorite subjects in school?

MH: Not really, I vaguely remember school. I used to be asthmatic, not as bad as my brother. And, we had to walk because we lived near the plantation and camps. Kam III School was by the ocean. We had to walk that every day because my dad had to work. Some days with my asthma I could hardly walk. I used to miss school a lot. Being the youngest too, my mom and dad babied me a lot because they lost (an older) daughter. So they would keep me home and when I'm well enough, I'd walk to school. We were doing that for a couple years, and finally one of the teachers somehow reported that I didn't have enough—you have to go so many hundred days of school and I was over [the number of days allowed for absences]. So I couldn't be passed to the next grade because I missed school too much. So my dad got real angry, "Why didn't they tell that before?" And this is not the first time. So in the morning, he would drive me. He had a truck and he'd drive me to school and I'd walk home. There were times when they had to call him to pick me up because I was too ill. He would come pick me up. Sometimes he cannot pick me up, so he'd send a policeman to pick me up. Everybody look. "What did she do wrong?"

(Laughter)

HY: The only kid with a police escort.

MH: He'd take me home in a police car. Then gradually I got better, but when I went to Wisconsin, again, the doctor there said, "You picked the worse place to put someone with asthma." Because it's surrounded with lakes and rivers and the farms and all the ragweed, it affects asthma. I used to have real bad [asthma] there. I couldn't make it to the doctor's office; the doctor used to make house calls.

HY: Did you go to Japanese-language school as well?

MH: Yeah, we used to go to English school, Kam III School. After school, from three o'clock to five o'clock, we go to Japanese school, the Hongwanji school, every day Monday through Friday, Saturdays half a day. I think I went until second or third grade. I forgot all my Japanese, and those days you're not really into it. You go because you have to go. You learn a lot of Japanese songs. On Saturday morning we used to exercise for fifteen minutes, calisthenics. Everybody, the whole student body, would line up by grades and there's like a P.E. teacher and she'd conduct the exercises and they'd have a recording of

music, exercise music, going on to do different exercises. Just standing in that position before we go to class. They used to have *undokai*, once a year. We have red team and white team and we'd compete in different games and tossing the ball, not strenuous games, but games. The whole school—there's a big park behind the school. The whole community was invited to come and watch.

HY: Of course, when the war started all of that discontinued.

MH: Yes, the war started. I remember it was a Sunday. I used to go to church, Hongwanji church. We were Buddhist at that time. We were all getting ready when—I don't know who told us that you cannot go church today. No church today because Japan bombed. We don't know where—I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was or anything. We knew Honolulu, but we didn't know the extent of the attack. When you on an island, you don't know what's going on the other islands. So we stayed home. My dad said we have to all stay home. And nighttime my brothers get restless, they were interested in their friends or movies and things like that, boys will be boys. And blackout, so no lights after the sunset, after dark.

My dad would go out to work during the day, and we heard that all the teachers and priests were being interrogated. And my mother being a teacher, she was a nervous wreck. She didn't know what was going on. My dad said, "They're looking for traitors." And so, I don't know whether she heard about it, but one of the teachers there, a woman teacher, the army was interrogating her and they took her to a room and they have a spotlight on you and they question you and I guess she got so scared that she cracked under the lights.

HY: She had a nervous breakdown.

MH: She had a nervous breakdown and she ended up at Kāne'ohe mental hospital. She never got better.

HY: This was your mom's colleague.

MH: Yeah. And my mother was so scared. She didn't know what would happen to her, and the other teachers were taken to concentration camps. The priest, too. The whole school, they were just taken. The menfolks especially were taken.

HY: Who was the priest?

MH: The one I know is my friend whose father was in the church, not Hongwanji. But, the Hongwanji priest did not return to Lahaina, they went back to Japan. They had a daughter about my age, but she wasn't very close to anybody and they went to Japan. But my friend, from Jōdō Mission, she came back, the parents came back and her father resumed his role in the church.

HY: After the war.

MH: Yeah, and she had a sister, who was born there [i.e., internment camp]. And she remembers a lot about the camps. And they had school and all, so when she came back she just resumed where she left off. She finished high school with us. She's the oldest, so she used to be her father's interpreter. She used to know a lot of people in Lahaina. Her dad would do house calls and she would take her dad to different places all over—visit the camps and villages that's outside of Lahaina. They know her.

HY: So, your mother, was she interrogated then? Was she questioned?

MH: You know, I don't think so. After that woman, I think they decided that they would kind of weed out those that really influenced [the community]. My mom was just a home-ec teacher. I don't think she was interrogated. I remember they're burning anything pertaining to Japan, books, and things like that.

HY: Your mom.

MH: Yeah.

HY: Your mom's personal items.

MH: Not much personal items, but any literatures.

HY: I see, so at the Hongwanji.

MH: No, at home.

HY: At home.

MH: And then, my dad became the head electrician in Lahaina who knew all the electrical pumps, the underground tunnels, the electricity generators. He knew the whole Lahaina, and he was given special permission after hours in case of trouble to go out on trouble calls. But because of that, they had a sentry tent, sentry guards, right next to our house so they know his comings and goings.

HY: Their purpose was specifically to watch him?

MH: They post all these sentries in sections of Lahaina, and so, I would assume they purposely planted that tent next to the house. There was a huge park next to our house at that time, they could have put it anywhere, but they put it right next to us. I would say, one driveway away.

HY: So what happened when your father would leave the house on trouble call during blackout?

MH: He would get stopped at the intersection by the sentry.

HY: So, did they not know him?

MH: He had his permit to drive, but they don't believe him because there's no picture. It's just a paper saying that he's allowed to go out after hours because he's an electrician, and if there's any problem there's a contact person. And every time he goes out, I'd say over the year, especially when there's a storm, maybe about four or five times a year. And they would stop him and question him. They question him and take him to an armory hall, there was an armory army hall. Take him there to be questioned. And the sentries, a lot of them don't know my dad personally, so they wanted—that's their job. He kept telling them, "Call Mr. McConkey. Call Mr. McConkey." Because he's the one, he's boss, and he's the one that got him the permit to go out. He used to be very frustrated when there's a trouble call at night, he'd go out, and phone calls were all monitored. I think they took the phone away. We had a telephone, and they took the phone away and—what do they call those

phones? Station-to-station phone. The kind, three rings is yours and four rings and that's your call coming through. And you wind. So many times is one ring, two rings.

HY: The crank, crank dialing.

MH: Yeah, there's a little receiver and you talk through a speaker. That kind of phone was put in our house connected to the plantation office and I think Mr. McConkey. I'm not sure where else it connects to but he had one of those put in our house. I wasn't allowed to answer that phone, neither my mother. My mother couldn't speak English. The only one is my dad, four rings and it's his call.

HY: I remember last time you had mentioned that he had actually wired the sentry tent so . . .

MH: . . . to have electricity.

HY: Yeah.

MH: And so, he connected it to our porch light (to the sentry tent). And from the army kitchen (a truck) would come with food and serve them food, and the truck would come around and they'd all line up to get the food. My brother and I would watch all the time, so one day they asked if we wanted to bring our own plate. We got stew. It was very good, because when you make stew in quantity it tastes better, but that's only that one time.

HY: So your father wired the sentry tent for electricity, but yet they didn't . . .

MH: There were blackouts, so the tents, they rolled the sides down [to prevent light from leaking].

HY: But they didn't know him?

MH: They were always changing.

HY: The personnel changes.

MH: They serve maybe two or three months and then a new batch would come. By the time they get to know him, they're off. So it was kind of trying times because you're always being watched. My brother, the last year of the war, my oldest brother was working for the plantation garage and a shift—they worked in shifts—and this guy that's supposed to come in to relieve him didn't show up. So my brother took the plantation truck, and the car's headlights were all shaded, the lights pointing down to the ground—tar paper or something [so the headlights are] shaded. He went to look for him. And the guy being a little late was coming with no lights, and they hit him. My brother got hurt. He broke an arm or leg, anyway, not that badly.

HY: Do you remember any rationing of foods? Things that you couldn't get during the war? If you have a memory of that.

MH: Bread, I remember. That was my job to go and pick up the bread. We got two loaves a week, and you had like a coupon, and you went to the bakery and stand in line early in the morning and you can smell the bread baking. And you get two loaves wrapped in paper, like store wrapping paper, two loaves are wrapped in there. My mom gave me a bag to carry them, so I wouldn't squish it on the way home. It smelled so good, nice and hot. I used to open the top, pick and eat as I go home. It takes about a ten-, fifteen-minute walk

home. I used to walk home with the bread, by the time I got home, it's like a rat went through (chuckles) with a big hole in the loaf of bread. But, it was the best tasting bread.

HY: What was the name of the bakery?

MH: I don't remember, I think it was ABC Bakery.

HY: Was it one of the Front Street businesses?

MH: There were two bakeries. There was one Kondo Bakery, and the other one was ABC Bakery. The ABC Bakery guy, he bakes his bread by hand, everything is just like home baked. Kondo Bakery is kind of machine, he's more bigger, mass production. What I used to like about Kondo Bakery was the long johns. Real good long johns. The custard was so good. Then there was such a thing called snail. The dough is made into the shape of a snail, a spiral, and in-between is sugar and cinnamon and raisins.

HY: Now they call them cinnamon rolls.

MH: Cinnamon roll, we used to call it snail because it looked liked a snail. That was good too, at Kondo Bakery.

HY: Are those Front Street businesses?

MH: Front Street. Now it's like an alcove where you walk in and it's all little shops.

HY: Were there other food rationings that you remember, or shortages that you remember?

MH: My sister recalls. She mentioned that she was told to go and pick up whiskey because she was old enough and my dad was an alien, so he couldn't buy liquor. I guess they had coupons, one per so long, month or something. She remembers she went to the store to buy liquor. She doesn't know what kind she bought, but she says she remembers Haig and Haig. H-A-I-G, I think. That's one of the best whiskeys. My dad used to drink a lot.

When they closed the Buddhist churches, my mom being a religious type of person, she wants to have some kind of religion in the family. They thought the church would never be open again. So she joined a Methodist church. And for the longest time, my dad refused to recognize it. And finally—I don't know what made him, but he joined the church, became a good member and the last ten years of his life he was the lay minister in this church. He surprised everybody.

HY: So they never went back to being Buddhist.

MH: They never went back; they became baptized Christians. I became a Christian when I was in high school.

HY: So this was the church that you attended.

MH: Lahaina Methodist Church. It was new to us, but then, the reason I joined it was because many of my friends were members there, classmates. And they weren't plantation people, they were—one parent was schoolteacher and one owned a store, a couple of them had businesses in Lahaina town, and another one worked in an office. They were all members of the Methodist church, and there was this Methodist youth group and I joined that and befriended all these friends. Till today.

HY: So up until high school time most of your friends were plantation kids and then . . .

MH: Yeah. In grade school, plantation kids until, I would say, the strike. I didn't feel comfortable going to—not that they did or said anything, just when you learn a little bit more about what happened, you don't want to cause any trouble so you just stay away.

HY: Now, was your youth group at the Methodist church, were they ethnically different than the plantation kids?

MH: Ethnically, no. I don't think so. The ones that I mentioned, the friends that I had, they're more cultured. Like they all knew how to play the piano. They took piano lessons and singing lessons and things like that, which I didn't. We had a piano, but my dad said—my sister was forced to take piano because (someone) gave us a piano and he didn't want to show the *Haole* boss that gave us the piano he (didn't appreciate it). So, she was forced to take (lessons) after school. I used to accompany her for an hour or half an hour lesson. She used to hate it. I wanted to learn. I'm sitting there on the porch waiting for her, I could hear her play the scale. I would go home and I would try. So, when I got older, I told my dad—I joined the Methodist group, they all learned to play. One of the girls played the *Flight of the Bumblebee*, Tchaikovsky, Chopin, and all these classical [music pieces]. (I was envious.)

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 39-5-2-02

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Myrtle Hashimoto (MH)

Kāhala, O‘ahu

July 30, 2002

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This is the second session with Myrtle Hashimoto, it's July 30, 2002 and the interviewer is Holly Yamada.

Last time, I think we finished up you were talking about how your parents had become Methodist and your social life was more there than with people in the camps. I'd like to ask you if you ever played with other supervisors' children?

MH: No. I didn't know who were supervisors besides my dad.

HY: So you weren't aware.

MH: No, in fact, I don't think I even consider myself as a supervisor daughter. I was just somebody from Lahaina and my friends were my friends. I didn't think about what their parents did or anything.

HY: I'm asking that question because I'm wondering if there's sort of a hierarchy.

MH: Oh, no. I didn't feel that way.

HY: I think we talked about your elementary and intermediate school and then you entered Lahainaluna.

MH: Lahainaluna High School.

HY: Were there teachers there that were influential on you or anybody that sort of stands out in your mind?

MH: Not really.

HY: What about subjects in school?

MH: I was interested in home economics, especially in sewing and designing. So, I didn't pursue any career movements when going to school. I just took the courses that were offered there. But, my mom was also a seamstress so I always had available sewing machine and all the sewing equipment. I used to go the store, like Nagasako Store, they sold few fabrics and things and notions. They also had Maui Trading [Company], I think the store name was, and they also sold fabrics and stuff. I never thought about the cost; I

guess they were cheaper those days. I can't remember how much a yardage costs. And I used to sew almost every other weekend a dress for myself because there was no dress shop. You have to have clothes so you sew your own or you go to Wailuku to buy your dresses. We didn't have transportation that convenient to go there. So, I had to sew all my clothes and my mother let me do it. She got me a sewing machine also for myself.

Then, the next door over where I lived was Mr. and Mrs. Ah Sing. Mrs. Ah Sing was a sewing school teacher, so I just walk over because there's a hedge dividing us. I would walk over and on Saturdays I used to go to her and learn some sewing techniques and draft patterns. We didn't have commercial patterns those days, in Lahaina that is. I drafted my own patterns and I sewed all my clothes. And, almost every other weekend I would go and buy some fabric and sew myself a dress. You don't think about extravagance or anything like that, and I don't think it costs more than ten dollars. Fabric was cheaper in those days. They didn't have too much synthetic stuff, more cotton.

HY: Did Mrs. Ah Sing teach others?

MH: Oh yes, she had a sewing school. Her home was the sewing school, so she had sewing machines almost every part of her house.

HY: Was she affiliated with Pioneer Mill?

MH: Her husband. Oh yeah, her husband was the supervisor to, I think, the warehouse or supply for the plantation. He was Hawaiian-Chinese, and Mrs. Ah Sing was Japanese. Her husband used to love to make *lū'aus*. He liked to prepare *lū'au* food, so they had a big yard. Because we had adjoining yards it seemed bigger. Since our garden area was softer, they dug the *imu* for the pig and they *kālua* the pig in our backyard. He had tables and benches made, and we stretch even into our yard. And he had every excuse to make a *lū'au* like his son's first birthday, his daughter's wedding, his birthday, and all kinds of occasions he'll make a *lū'au* and I enjoyed that. We used to watch the *kālua* pig and we'd come and pick the skin off the wire mesh that held the pig. Oh, that was the best. We used to look forward. He used to make his own *poi*. He had this flat—it's not a cutting board, (like a stone slab,) but this mashing, and he used his stone (*poi* pounder) to mash the *poi*, and I remember watching him doing it for about two or three days before. And he got a big pot and he'll mix the *poi*. I remember watching him. And they served certain items on the table and the tables were all covered with store paper, you know store wrapping paper? It's all covered. And then, my dad and I would sit with the children section and the children don't eat everything they're served, like *'opihi*, and I can't remember, *lomi* salmon too, I think, and this dish called *loko*. Now, you don't find it too much because it's been banned by the department of health to serve or sell publicly because it's the innards of the pig. They clean it and they cut it up and they make into a dish.

HY: It's uncooked?

MH: No, it's cooked. It's fried. I think after they *kālua* the pig they cut the intestines, it's all clean, but you know, the liver and parts like that. My dad just loved that, so he used to sit with the children. They don't eat it. I remember that part.

HY: Did he make *lū'au* for the whole camp or private?

- MH: No, just his friends. He even had his daughter's wedding. He make the *lū'au* in his backyard, and his son's wedding too. I used to look forward to that, but sadly, he had a stroke and he was unable to perform any kind of duties after that.
- HY: What about some other festivities that the whole plantation would participate in or various camps, like holidays or special events?
- MH: They had something like a county fair. They used to have games like fish pond for the kids and tossing rings and stuff like that. I think it was maybe once a year, I'm not sure.
- HY: Was that something that . . .
- MH: The whole community participates.
- HY: All of Lahaina.
- MH: Yeah, all of Lahaina. They used to have it, I can't recall where it was, but it seems like it was the Kam III School grounds. That's the most community accessible place for anybody. There was also Malu'uluolele Park; it's a huge park. I remember they had the union rally there and that's where I was told, "You can't join us." Said, "You cannot come because your father's a scab." I remember then, I had to walk home, sad, I didn't know what it meant or why (chuckles).
- HY: Was there other activities you were involved in in high school besides taking sewing on the weekend? What about school activities?
- MH: We had football that was played in Kahului because Lahainaluna that time did not have a football field. It was played in Kahului, maybe there were a couple games played in Malu'uluolele Park, but I remember we had to be bused to Kahului to see our games. Basketball, they had a gym, so we had basketball. Baseball I can't remember, not too many people were interested in the baseball games. Students, that is. Track, very few. They didn't have like cross-country and swimming meet, they didn't emphasize those things, tennis, not like now.
- HY: What about academic clubs or social clubs?
- MH: They had different, Latin Club, and Speech Club.
- HY: Were you involved in any of these?
- MH: No.
- HY: What year did you graduate from high school?
- MH: Nineteen fifty-one.
- HY: Nineteen fifty-one, and at that time, were you thinking that you might go to college or was that in your thinking?
- MH: No. When we went to high school, we didn't have much counseling. The only counselor that you go to is your home room teacher or something like that. We didn't have counseling. And they didn't have such a thing as college-prep. We just went to school and took the courses required and I took some business courses, and home economics

courses, of course. I didn't care for science or math and little did I realize that that was important for me going to college.

Just when I graduated high school, my father had built this home right by the beach, in Front Street in Lahaina. He told me to sign off all my savings bonds, World War II savings bonds, sign it off so we can cash it to pay for the house. Those days, they don't go for loans. He wants to pay things right off. I'm not sure how much he paid for the house, but it was less than twenty thousand [dollars], and over ten-thousand-square-feet lot, so it wasn't that much. But then, those days, every bit counted. He told me, if I sign it off, I [have to] stay home one year and I can go anywhere I wanted to. Being selfish at that time, I waited, I stayed home, I didn't even look for a job. I stayed home, and it was almost summer and one day one of my friends was in California, on the Mainland going to school in California, and we used to correspond a lot and she said, "Why don't you come up here to the Mainland?" I thought, oh yeah, you know.

So when the one year was up, I told my dad, "I want to go Mainland. You remember you said I could go anywhere I wanted to."

He said, "No, why don't you go to Honolulu and go to school there?"

I said, "I want to go Mainland." So, he couldn't say no. And plus, I had a brother in Wisconsin at that time going to University of Wisconsin.

HY: Was Stout Institute at that time?

MH: Yeah. And my dad said, I have to go where my brother tells is a good school to go to. So, my sister who was married and living in Wailuku, she was the one who wrote to my brother on behalf of my parents because they couldn't write a letter. She wrote to him to ask for suggestions about what school I should go to, and I should go to Wisconsin. I had no choice. I wanted to go to California where my girlfriend was, no, I had no choice. Okay, as long as I'm going to the Mainland. Little did I know, what a big world that was on the Mainland. Lahaina is such a small community. So I went, I was nervous of course, but being naive, you act so big. I ended up all by myself, first time leaving home by myself, came to Honolulu. I had a brother here married and my sister-in-law. My mother must have told her to get me a suit to wear to the Mainland. So, we went shopping to get me a suit and we went to what's that store in Downtown? New York Dress Shop. It's a dress shop and the clothes are kind of a made for local figure, so I was able to get one without any fitting, a suit. I wore that, went to the Mainland. I had a red hat; you have to wear a hat. On the Mainland, everybody wears a hat. I had a red hat and I had red shoes to match and a red purse and a dark gray suit. I don't have any picture, but I can remember that. I went there via Seattle, and when I arrived in Seattle—I was airsick all the way through because I was all nervous. It was nice lady—oh, my parents was able to get, being that it was last minute, was able to get me a first class seat and there was a nice lady sitting next to me, a *Haole* lady, and she knew I was airsick. She asked me earlier where I was going all that, and she knew I was nervous and I was kind of sick. So, she kind of took me in her care. We had a stopover at Portland and she told me, "Why don't we get off here, let's walk around, you might feel better." I didn't even want to leave the plane, I was afraid the plane was going to take off without me. She said, "No, it's going to be good for you." She's going to board the plane too, she's coming back, so I said, okay. We went down, and good thing. She got me a 7-Up to sip on. I felt so much better. We got to Seattle and in Seattle I was supposed to call the sister of one of the plantation department head's sister, Mrs. Smith's sister from Seattle. But when I arrived in Seattle

my plane was delayed. The ticket counter I checked in, they said my plane is going to be delayed for an hour. I was so nervous, but I had a two-hour stopover over there and [the plane was] delayed an hour. I was so nervous after that. I didn't want to leave the destination board because I thought it would change again. And so, I never did call, and that poor woman was waiting for my call.

HY: Let me just interrupt you for a minute, your father got the house in part because of your savings bonds, was he leaving the plantation or was . . .

MH: No.

HY: He was still working as an electrician.

MH: He was still with the plantation, still an electrician, but he didn't want to borrow money so he wanted to pay for the house.

HY: Now, you ended up going to the university and staying on the Mainland. Did you say eight years?

MH: Seven years.

HY: Seven years, before you went back.

MH: I got there---this family friend's son, Fred Kajihara, he met me the airport—from Seattle I went to Minnesota—he met me at the airport and then we took the bus to Menomonie, Wisconsin where Stout Institute was at that time. I was fine. I didn't feel homesick or anything like that because I made up my mind. When I left, my mother said, "You don't come home until you finish." So, I mean, when you're young you say, yeah. So that's how I left. But after that, there were about ten Hawai'i—maybe less than ten—Hawai'i students going to that school, which I was surprised there. Fred Kajihara, and there was Richard Kadotani from Lahaina going there too, which I didn't know and I was so happy. You're in the dorm and it was all *Haole* girls and this one Guamanian girl, and we have to eat in the dining hall, all our meals practically, except Sunday dinner. All other meals you eat in the dining hall with a very formal way because I was going to a home-ec college and they wanted to teach us etiquette at school. Anyway, that made me homesick, you're not relaxed. Curfew, dormitory curfew, and you're not free. It makes you homesick. It's not Lahaina, and when winter came, it got worse. Wisconsin winter was so severe, snow and lots of snow. It was thrilling, the first snow was thrilling, but after a while it becomes a rut.

HY: I know I asked you this before, Jiggs Kobayama attended Stout also.

MH: He came after, a year after, I think. He was in the military and after he got discharged, then he came.

HY: Did the Hawai'i people kind of hang out together there?

MH: No. We had weekend get-togethers maybe about once a month, but rest of the time you were with your roommates or most of the other girls.

HY: Let me ask you about when you returned to Lahaina, the circumstances you came back and why you came back and how had it changed or not changed.

MH: I got married about the second year I was there. After the second year I was there I got married. My husband is from Kohala and we met there in Wisconsin and got married. A year and a half later, we had our son. After I gave birth to him I started having asthma attacks again, and my son had asthma very bad and he had eczema very bad, very bad case of eczema. And so, we didn't have money. My husband was going to school on a GI Bill. He graduated after four years, but I quit after I had my son. I went up through junior year, but because of the illness we always had to stay home. Somebody had to stay home with our son because he was sick. I was having asthma attacks also, and then we moved to Oshkosh, Wisconsin. It wasn't any better; it was worse. The winter was getting to us, so the last winter we were there after seven years—we had a swing for our son, and I told my husband, "If the snow reaches that swing, we're going to go home," because we've had forty-some days of sub-zero weather. The next day we looked out; the snow covered the swing. We couldn't see the swing. I said, "We're going home." And that's how we came home. We packed up as much as we could in our little station wagon. My husband built a top carrier from end to end and we drove all the way to California with our tailpipe almost six inches to the ground, that heavy load. We brought home our washing machine, because first paycheck we bought an automatic washing machine where it (had a spin-cycle) wringer. That was a luxury, so that's why we brought that washing machine home because that was the most valuable thing we had (chuckles).

HY: Where did you move when you came back to Lahaina?

MH: We came back to Honolulu because when we were in California he applied for a position in Honolulu, in Hawai'i, teaching position. They said that all teachers have to go into the rural area. They start from there and you work yourself to the city. Somehow, he knew somebody on the board of education, higher up, and he was able to get him a position at Farrington [High School]. That was his first teaching job here, so that's why we came back, otherwise we would have stayed in California, settled there because the pay was better there. He started off with \$480 a month, at that time, that was 1959. So, we rented a duplex and all that. Somehow, when we arrived back here, my asthma just got better and better, but my son was still suffering. Especially, his eczema got worse because of the humidity and all that.

HY: So you only returned home for visits, you never actually lived back in Lahaina?

MH: Yeah, in Lahaina we only went back for visit, we settled in Honolulu since then. I tried to go home once a year, but at that time, it was still Lahaina. People were almost the same.

HY: So in the seven years you had been gone, not too much.

MH: Yeah, not too much change. But, they still had the old *pali*, they called the zigzag road that you have to go through from Wailuku, from the airport to Lahaina, from the east to the west mountains. That was a big change when they built that.

When I was in high school, I was able to get my driver's license when I was a senior and I would drive to Wailuku to go to the dentist. We only had one dentist in Lahaina, so we went to Wailuku to go to a dentist because they were younger, newer methods. But, my mother said when I go to Wailuku, as soon as I reach there, my sister has to call my mother to say I reached there safely.

(Laughter)

MH: Then, when I leave, she calls and says I just left.

HY: So it was a big deal to drive there.

MH: Yeah. We had a 1939 Chevrolet, which, by the time I got it was used by my three brothers prior to me, so by the time I got it there was a lot of problems with it. My dad was confident enough the car would be safe. It was just like a bicycle, hand-me-down, and by the time I got it, after all my brothers went through with it, there were no fenders, (chuckles) and the handle bars are crooked, things like that.

We came back to Lahaina, my mom—funny when you see your parents—I’m not aged, but they had slowed down. You don’t look at them as old, but they’re not as active. It was good to be home. While I was in Wisconsin, I never heard their voices or we didn’t even come home to visit. Those days, never heard of calling home for seven years.

HY: Who were some of the leaders of your generation, do you remember?

MH: While going to school?

HY: Yeah, maybe not leaders, but people that were . . .

MH: The whole community or just my friends?

HY: Well, your friends and people that you remember that would sort of stand out in your mind in the community.

MH: As far as my classmates, we used to look up to Alberta Nobu, whose parents were both schoolteachers and she became a schoolteacher also. Tsugio Suzuki, he was an articulate person, artistic, musical, and leader. And then, there was Alma Matsuno. She was brains, smart.

HY: Was she a classmate?

MH: Yeah, and then she married George Nagao who became a doctor. These are all my classmates. Older people—I can’t remember his name, his last name is Agena. He was a reporter, journalist. And, I used to admire him because he became blind. I think he had glaucoma. I’m not sure how he became blind, but he became totally blind—older, advance age—but he was able to remember things and he would recognize you by your voice, and you don’t even need to introduce yourself. I was so surprised, he hasn’t seen me for that seven years or more, when I met him, I don’t know how long after, maybe ten years later after I met him again, he said, “You’re Tamura girl.”

I said, “How do you know?” He remembered the voice, my voice. He was amazing.

My dad, he was in his nineties, he was getting forgetful and everything and one day my girlfriend, Nobue Miyamoto, she was away on the Mainland for a long time and she came to visit. I was in Lahaina and she came home to visit me one day. My dad hasn’t seen her in maybe thirty years or more, since she was a little girl. He was sitting down on the living room chair, my girlfriend came, and he said, “Miyamoto girl.” And he remembered and she was so surprised that he remembered her, but her father was one of his best friends, they were very close.

HY: Was she a camp girl?

MH: Yes, she was living in Kelawea Camp. I used to envy her because they didn't have a car, but then, her father was a carpenter and built her a chair on his bicycle, a wooden chair like an infant seat, and took her all over on the bicycle. I said, "Oh, she so lucky she can go around in the bicycle," but she used to envy me because we had a car. But those things, kind of remember, flashbacks. When I think of Nobue, she used to ride the bicycle the father built for her, the seat on the back of the bicycle, and she used to ride around. She was so lucky to me. She was so lucky to be riding around in a bicycle all over town.

HY: What kind of work did you do when you returned to Hawai'i besides raising your family?

MH: You mean from the Mainland?

HY: Yeah.

MH: I was not trained for anything particular and I only remember a few skills from my business class in high school. So since I liked to work with fabric, when I first came back I had to look for a job because my husband's pay was not that much. I didn't know where because I couldn't work in an office because I didn't know shorthand or business machines. Those things I didn't take, I only took just a few courses, typing, simple business, letter writing and things like that. But then, there was an advertisement one day when I was looking I saw Fashions by Hino, a store that sold fabrics only. I went there to interview. They wanted to hire me on the spot because I went to a home-ec school, I knew sewing, and all that. So, I worked. The day I went to the interview, I worked right away. I worked for about seven months, I think, and they used to have their store on King Street in McCully and they moved to Ala Moana Shopping Center near Sears, across from Longs, that area. I said, "Great." We helped move, and Mr. [Noboru] Hino was an expert on formal fabrics, bridal gowns, or formal gowns and stuff. He was very knowledgeable. I used to admire him. I worked for about seven or eight months, but it got boring so I went to look for another job. I ended up at the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], Nu'uana YMCA and that's where I picked up a few office skills. Then I went to Remington [Office Equipment], working with business machines, selling and repair, so I worked in the service department, in the office doing—typing up contracts for the business machines for the military, the offices in Downtown. I think that's all I did.

HY: What job did you retire from?

MH: After I got pregnant I left Remington. After I gave birth, I stayed home with my daughter for three years. She wanted to go to school so badly. She wants to go to school, so St. Mark's [Kindergarten and Day Care Center] School in Kapahulu said she has to be three. I liked that school, it was nice and clean, so they said she has to be three. She was going to be three on Sunday, and Monday she started. She stayed; she didn't want to come home. She loved it, so I decided might as well go back to work. I went back to work and I was at Freiden because they're similar to Remington, and they picked me up the day I interviewed they wanted me (to start) right away because I'm familiar with those GSA [General Services Administration] government contracts, business machine contract with the office. Oh, somebody's here.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MH: So, anyway, they said it's good to work for the state or the city because they have good benefits. My husband was teaching so I said okay. I took the exam, I passed both city and the state. The state called me. You're allowed, I think, three refusals. They'll send you to places for interview, three refusals. But anyway, I went to the state and one of the interviews was at the Harbors Division, Aloha Tower, and usually I go early for my interview. I'm standing in the hall waiting for my turn and the ocean is on the side, you can see the waves, and I got seasick just standing, waiting for my turn (chuckles). When I went in, I said, "I'm sorry I can't work here because I'm not too good with water." So that was my third refusal, another refusal was because the distance because I had to catch the bus. The city called, and the first interview was at the driver's license, where you get your driver's license. I went there, it was at the same building as the police department and I got accepted right away, so I went in and worked there.

HY: This is the Motor Vehicle [Division]?

MH: Yeah. I worked there for twenty years and retired.

HY: What was your job title there?

MH: Just a clerk, clerk typist. I worked there twenty years. The last ten years I handled the medical reports, clearance for people who had medical problems and wanted to get a permit to drive. So, I handled those, so I was familiar with those things.

HY: What year did you retire?

MH: I retired 1990, the end of 1990. I started in 1970.

HY: Just backtrack a little bit, when you came back to Hawai'i, was '59, you said? It was statehood then.

MH: Yes, we came back in end of June, or middle of June, and we didn't know anything about it. Nobody talked about it. So in August there was this big celebration and statehood and all that. We were on Maui, I think. This is the first time going to meet my in-laws when I came back. So we had to go to Kohala on the Big Island. We stayed there for a couple of weeks, maybe a week, but anyway, from there we went to Lahaina to visit. So we were in Lahaina when all that statehood thing.

HY: So while you were living on the Mainland you weren't even aware of this.

MH: We heard about it, but not involved, or not interested in it. We heard about it. A lot of stuff we heard about, but we never—the only news we got is through mail, through my family writing to me. My sister is the only the one that corresponded with me and my friends, but most of my friends were away too.

HY: So you were aware, but only through people you knew writing to you, not from the news.

MH: No, we didn't get any newspaper or anything while we were on the Mainland. And, even when we came back, the news didn't interest us because our mind is still on the Mainland. It takes a while to really read the paper and catch up with things. So, it was a big celebration, but we weren't in Honolulu at the time, we were in Maui. I heard there were parades and stuff like that. In Lahaina, yeah, stayed there for a couple of weeks too.

HY: Is there anything else you want to add about your days in Lahaina or anything else?

MH: Yeah, I wanted to say now that we have this war in Afghanistan and all that in the desert, when we had the World War II, we had to, not had to, but to be Japanese, we had to support the U.S. We used to buy saving stamps, the saving bonds. At school, we would bring, if you want to get ten-dollar bond or twenty-five-dollar bonds, it's an amount you save like ten cents, a quarter. So, every week, I think, a monitor would collect and then record how much you had deposited, and I remember I had a lot of ten-dollar bonds. That's how we get our savings bonds, see, when we were going to school, and ten-dollar bonds and twenty-five-dollar bonds. They don't do that now for the desert storm, the war, or now in Afghanistan. We used to collect aluminum, like candy wrappers and aluminum. The chewing gum, we used to peel the aluminum part and we make it into a ball. We'd save all the aluminum and make it into a ball. There was a place right in the middle of town, where the big banyan tree is. There was a fenced area where you throw your unwanted aluminum pots and things. We used to save.

HY: The wrappers?

MH: No, the candy balls, wrappers, we used to make into a big ball. We just used to throw it over there and leave it.

HY: And they would use this aluminum.

MH: I guess making airplanes and stuff, I think. That was during World War II. I don't know what they made with it, or who collected it, or when, but I remember doing it. Any kind of aluminum laying around—you know sometimes old pots or frying pans. Those days it was all aluminum, not stainless steel. And so, we used to—if you have anything old or unusable, you just throw it in there. They used to collect those and I remember those things, especially the savings bonds. That's how I got my savings bond.

HY: And that was what helped finance your father's house.

MH: My father's house, yeah (chuckles). My father had a big—at the time we were buying the bonds we never thought about it. But it's a good savings bond because—I don't know how many percents you get. All my savings bonds, I remember I had several. I had to sign it, endorse it so they can cash it in for the house. So he [MH's father] told me, I can go anywhere I want, but [I had to] stay home one year. You can go anywhere you want, so I didn't forget that (chuckles).

HY: Is there any other remembrances we didn't cover?

MH: I can't recall. I talked too much already.

HY: No, I don't think so. Well, thank you very much.

MH: Thank you, that was fun.

END OF INTERVIEW

PIONEER MILL COMPANY:

A Maui Sugar Plantation Legacy

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa**

December 2003