

Oct. 1985

OKIMURA INTERVIEWS

- I By Evelyn Trapido on May 6, 1980, at Okimura's home.
- II (Labeled IIa, IIb) A little later with Mirium Reed and Lori Arizumi.
- III A large group at Lyon Arboretum on May 29, 1980. Mrs. Okimura also on these tapes.

September 8, 1985

I think I have sorted out the interviews. There were three altogether. Interview I, I did at Okimura's home by myself.

I thought it was so full of information that I asked for another session with Lori Arizumi which I have labeled IIa and IIb, although on the tape, I originally had II and III.

Interview III took place at Lyon Arboretum. There should be additional tapes of this session, including Mr. Okimoto's great speech. (Date May 29, 1980)

The dates of these interviews make very little sense to me, since I remember them as taking place rather close together. However, perhaps not, since Mr. Okimoto was quite busy with his farm work and with illness during part of the time that I was in touch with him. I haven't seen either Okimura in a long time. I wonder if Lori Arizumi could tell us anything about them at present?

Evelyn

INTERVIEW I

Manoa History Project Interview by Evelyn Trapido
Kenji Okimura May 6, 1980 (at Okimura home)
3346 E. Manoa Road

ET We are looking at old photographs. This is the first high school graduating class---that's 1914. Is that his name?

KO Takeyoshi Arizumi. My brother is in there. That's my sister. My brother is in there. I was 2 years younger. This other, Masaichi Okimura and Mineo?? Okimura is my oldest sister, and this is my oldest brother, and I think I'm in here.

ET They have your name here. You had a big smile.

KO Yes, Mr. Kumagai was the principal; later, he left for the mainland. Then we had another principal after him.

ET Do you think the negatives for these photos are still around?

KO When we worked on this, we had to collect all the photographs from different individuals, and, of course, we didn't keep any. 50th is the original anniversary; and on the 60th we picked up from this and added some new pictures for the new 10 years. This year, we are planning to have it in English! They're working on it right now.

ET I wondered if we could use some of these pictures if we publish the book. This picture, I think, is a very good one.

KO You'll pick up from this?

ET Yes. Is that all right? We will have permission to do it? Probably that one and possibly one of your group and probably of the first class.

KO It's all right.

ET That one is interesting because I remember when that archway used to be there.

KO Let me see. This photo is of the 20th anniversary, so 1930.

ET So this book was for the eighth grade. So you finished eight grades at Manoa School. Were you the first class to finish the eight grades?

KO Let me see. Perhaps one or two before us. Yes, because my brother or Mr. Arizumi—they went to Kaahumanu School because we only had to a sixth grade at that time. Some of the people I really forgot because they came from Salvation Army Home; they were a group from there. I recall the artist in here was my close friend. He was graduated from the University of Hawaii and became a career soldier. Jiro Iwai.

ET Did he write it, as well as being the artist? (Manoa School Scrapbook, 1923)

O No, somebody else. He was only the artist.

ET Oh, I see. It says "modeled by". Isn't that an unusual word—"modeled".

KO It's "Gero", but he's really Jiro Iwai. He died in Daly City just south of San Francisco. He retired there and died there about nine years ago.

ET But he was an Army officer?

KO Army Intelligence, and he was located in Tokyo before his retirement.

ET So, his Japanese language school training came in convenient for that...We're now in the process of trying to get pictures together and will possibly give a slide lecture using one of the school auditoria next fall or spring so I don't know if any of the pictures from here can be reproduced because they're all so faint. Can I keep this book? (Japanese School Book) These

have notes of yours in it.

KO Do what you want--you may keep that. Also I have the 50th anniversary one. This is the 60th. The artist that edited the pictures is Ray Higuchi of the Star-Bulletin.

ET We have a photographer now, so I'll take these to her and see if she can use some of the pictures, and naturally, we'll invite you when we put on the show. Laurie is Laurie Arizumi; she is so busy working that she hasn't come to any of our history meetings at all. Do you know that Miriam's brother, older brother, died?

KO James.

ET Yes, but George, too, passed away about two weeks ago.

KO When? Two weeks ago? Oh, is that right? Because on Saturday, I went to Manoa Barber Shop, and I met James's son and talked about his father, and he didn't mention that.

ET I think it was less than two weeks ago because when we met last Friday, they were talking about it. The funeral was on Monday at Punchbowl, not here. Jim was--James was buried here, but George...

KO You mean at Manoa Cemetery? Hawaii Cemetery?

ET Yes. You called it Manoa Hawaiian Cemetery? When Jim (James) was buried, we saw that in the newspaper--it said Manoa Hawaiian Cemetery, and we never thought of it that way, but it turns out--you see I'm working on the history of that land and that building--we've gotten a lot of good information from Miriam Reed. That land was given to the Hawaiians of the valley before the land belonged to Kawaiahao Church, according to Miriam. The land was given maybe by Kaahumanu, maybe by even earlier

royalty. Before that it used to be a heiau. Did you ever hear of it when you were a child that there was a heiau just makai of where the church is now?

KD Makai of the church?

ET Yes. There's still a street called Hipawai Street or Hipawai place, and the name of the heiau was Hipawai. I suppose by the time you were children, there was no sign of a heiau at all, for people were farming through there.

KD On the other side taro patches, across from the cemetery.

ET When I saw you last time, I was asking you if you remember when they rebuilt the church, and I think you said that you were on Kauai at that time, about 1934. It was in '34 and '35. They took down the old building. It was a little white wooden church; and they built it more like a Hawaiian church. Do you ever go into McDonald's here in Manoa?

KD Yes. I noticed the pictures on the wall.

ET There's a picture of that church.

KD Enlarged. The residences shown are really sparsely located.

ET I think we have an old map that shows the streets where Woodlawn was, not built, but traced out. As early as 1912, they were planning Woodlawn as a subdivision up there.

KD They used to have a ranch back here. Substantial ranch for those days... and later on, we found out that that land area belonged to Oahu Railway and Land Co.

ET It says Woodlawn Dairy on our deed. Do you remember other dairies in addition to Woodlawn Dairy?

KD Oh, yes. There was one across from my place called Sakamoto Dairy, and Mitsunaga. Andrade was an old one. That was rather

a big dairy.

ET Where were they located?

KO On the Magoon property in the Noelani School area. From East Manoa, a lane ran up to that section; and there was the Mitsunaga Dairy, after Andrade Dairy on the mauka side of the property, and Yamane Dairy was at the present Manoa Service Station and Safeway area and Sakamoto Dairy.

ET What about...Mr. Wong was more...Richard Wong--he was a farmer rather than a dairy man?

KO Yes. He was a taro grower. His father was a taro grower, but he was an independent taro grower, but the other side had a company that grew taro--the Manoa School area, way up to that street--anyway on the west side of the Manoa Stream.

ET What was the name of the company?

KO You could trace that from the land. It was before Manoa School. The land area was taken over by _____?. That was one big taro-growing patch, and it occupied my land area, too. Richard Wong's father owned...raised taro on that subdivision...you see the subdivision, then a little over five acres, and then from Y. P. Lum?? Test case that...

ET Oh, was that Y. P. Lum?

KO That's Y. P. Lum, and above that Richard Wong, but at one time, they combined that, undivided partnership, and they starting leasing..."Manoa Acre" area was mostly taro patches.

ET You said Mr. Watson was principal of Manoa School and asked you to put on the first community day, but it doesn't say what year it was.

KO 1945-46. In 1945, he asked me, but I planned the community day

and submitted my plan and left for Kauai, and when I came back, they didn't go through with my plan, so in 1948, I volunteered to serve as chairman of community day. Yes, Mr. Watson, you remember, he asked me, and then I had to leave for Kauai for one year and nine months

Did you look into the year that Manoa School was started because in 1954, it was stated that it was a centennial year.

ET Dorothy Devereux did most of the research; she went back to read the original reports written by the Superintendents of the schools. The first printed report said 1854. But somehow you don't know, when you go to the Archives and ask them for things, sometimes they give you one thing, and sometimes another. I asked for the oldest school records on hand, and they gave me not printed things, but something old and handwritten, beautiful, and there was Manoa School in 1847. Not only was there a Protestant school, but there was a Catholic school in 1847, and there were three teachers of the Protestant school and one teacher for the Catholic school, and it listed all the subjects that they teach.

KO Were they located at the Funahou School area or up here?

ET No, they built the church--the first church building was 1846, and the old history says that was built for church and a school, so they probably just met in the church. That's where the school was.

KO That cemetery area, do you think? Because the Manoa School that I had attended was just across from the cemetery.

ET Sure. I don't know when the land was bought across the street.

KO The old Manoa School?

ET Yes. They didn't keep such careful records in those days, and

there's no one around to tell. Does the name Paniani mean anything to you? Reverend Paniani was the minister for the old church, but before you were born from about 1898 to 1903 or 1904. Then Reverend Westervelt came up as a visitor once a month or something like that. At other times, there was probably just a lay preacher. Did you know Reverend Westervelt? (No) Some of the other old-timers remember him.

KD Well, I haven't done any research. Just by living on this land I remember things that happened.

ET Well, Bea Krauss is writing about agriculture, and I really think she should come and talk to you. Do you know who she is?

KD No, I used to know Dr. Krauss, her father.

ET She worked at HSPA until she was 65, and then she was forced to retire, and so she went to the University and taught on volunteer basis for five years, and then she was one of those people who organized Lyon Arboretum Association. Did you ever go up there?

KD I went as far as Paradise Park. I went to the waterfalls when I was real young.

ET You probably went up a great deal?

KD No, not too many. You follow the stream?

ET The trail goes a little up the stream, but now a new beautiful trail has been cut beginning at the falls and going up to Tantalus. It's an old Hawaiian trail that they restored.

KD Back there, there's a lower spot on the ridge that...

ET Is that what they call "Paoua Flats"?

KD I think so.

ET And I think Ahuimanu trail just ends up there. The Sierra Club

cut it, and once you get to the falls that's the part that's all worn out and you have all those roots exposed, but then as you start going up the hill, it's just beautiful, that wide, and nothing to trip over.

KO In the dedication ceremony speech that I delivered, in 1954, I predicted that this community was both a dynamic one, and it was a creative one, always trying to expand, to promote, to improve, and then to contribute.

ET I have here, and I can't find it right now, that the Community Day wasn't just for fund-raising, but also that it was social, recreational, and educational.

KO Yes, and by working at the Community Day functions, you got to know other people and how they could contribute to the general welfare.

ET Remember Margie Jacquette?

KO Mrs. Jacquette. Yes, I knew her well, and she was with Manoa Valley Church after that, and she mentioned the fact that we don't cross paths now. She noted that we weren't working on any projects as we did at Manoa School. She did her own, and I did my own, different projects for Manoa.

ET Well, they moved somewhere else for a while, I think in Kansas. They were away for about ten years, but they're back here now, and I see her once in a while.

KO She was the one that told me of that Punahou School chaplain that became a principal of Mid-Pacific. Rewick. I heard that he was a dynamic personality. I once tried to get him to be one of the ministers to bless our new building at Manoa Community Association when we built the new building, but he wasn't able

to come at our groundbreaking time. So we couldn't get Kawaihao minister, nor the Manoa Valley Church minister, so we got Bishop Kawasaki of Daijingu. Thus we blessed our community association land.

ET That's a question I never thought of asking, but we know all about Kawaihao Church and Manoa Valley Church, but wasn't there any Buddhist or Shinto shrine in Manoa Valley?

KO There was a Buddhist temple, but we didn't want to be blessed by a Buddhist priest. We would rather have the Shinto...

ET So Bishop Kawasaki was Shinto.

KO Yes, Shinto.

ET But wasn't there any shrine in Manoa Valley itself?

KO No.

ET If people wanted to go to a Shinto shrine, they went out of the valley?

KO Yes. Right now, one school of Shinto, the Tenrikyo, is a Shinto. They have one branch in Manoa, but it's in a private home, privately run, so we don't deal with them. Daijingu has a shrine at Nuuanu Valley, near that park, I don't know what road that is.

ET Oh, Puiwa Lane?

KO Yes. There's a park in the front, and in the back is the shrine, and that's an old one.

ET There's one that just moved away from Moiliili, the one that was painted bright red.

KO You mean the inarisan that went to Waipahu?

ET I think so.

KO That is inarisan.

ET Isn't there another one closer to McCully? There's another shrine there.

KO That I don't know, but the one I know is Izumo Chaisha (?), that is on College Walk. There's a shrine on College Walk, downtown, and one in Kapalama area, that Konputasan(??) that the freeway took part of the land, and there's a small shrine there.

ET But the people in Manoa Valley, as far as they were concerned then, were either Christians or weren't really participating in religion. The Japanese people in Manoa Valley were Christians?

KO Most of them were Christians, yes, and a few were Buddhists--that Hongwanji on Fort Street. Just last Sunday, that Fort Street hongwanji Buddhist temple observed their 90th anniversary, but I didn't attend. My sister did.

ET I guess there are a lot of haole members now.

KO Oh, yes. Dr. (Alfred) Bloom is on the Board of Directors.

End of Interview I