

## MANOA HISTORY PROJECT

Tony Shigemoto (Taxi Driver)

8. 1917

Interview by Bea Krauss (1984)

TS: I was around five years old when we moved to Manoa.

BK: Where did you live in Manoa?

TS: We lived in a small camp, Magoon Camp, located where Noelani School is now.

BK: Was there a road down to that from East Manoa Road?

TS: From Kolowalu Street.

BK: Kolowalu and then it went down

TS: Where a dirt road led into the camp.

BK: What was this camp? Was it just a lot of houses that Magoon built for people to live in, or was it for a special reason?

TS: Houses for people that couldn't afford to pay high rental.

Mostly Japanese lived in that camp.

BK: Why did your father move to Manoa?

TS: Because he was a farmer and was having a hard time, from what I heard.

BK: In Palolo.

TS: He came to Manoa to seek job as a yardman.

BK: Was he a yardman to several families?

TS: Yes, to several families.

BK: Do you remember any of them?

TS: No.

BK: Then...so you, your father, and your mother and the rest of your sisters and brothers moved here, or were some of your brothers born in Manoa?

TS: Some were born here.

BK: But you were born in Palolo.

TS: Yes.

BK: Are you the oldest, youngest, or the middle child?

TS: The middle child, of a big family. I went to Manoa School.

BK: Who was principal?

TS: At that time, Miss Mitchell was our principal.

BK: Do you remember Miss Mitchell's first name?

TS: No.

BK: I'll find out. You started there first grade?

TS: Yes, I did.

BK: Because I don't think they had kindergarten.

TS: No.

BK: So you would go first grade. Do you remember the names of some of your teachers?

TS: My first and second-grade teacher was Miss Noble.

BK: How about third?

TS: I had Miss Felix after that.

BK: How long did you go to Manoa School?

TS: Up to sixth.

BK: Sixth grade, yes. Do you remember who your sixth grade teacher was?

TS: Miss Felix.

BK: You had her at third, fourth, fifth, sixth grade.

TS: All the way!

BK: You only had one teacher for the whole day?

TS: Yes.

BK: Did you folks have mid-morning recess and long recess? Did

you have something they call short recess and long recess at school?

BK: We had a short recess.

BK: In the middle of the morning.

TS: Yes.

BK: And then long recess. Did you bring your lunch from home?

TS: Yes, we did.

BK: Most children did. They didn't have cafeteria?

TS: They did have cafeteria, but most of the time we did bring our lunch.

BK: Did you have a bento, which your mother fixed in the morning?

TS: Yes. We used to have our milk at school.

BK: Oh, yes, that they served. I remember that. Do you remember your school years? Did you like them? TS: Yes.

BK: You thought they were good teachers?

TS: They were good teachers.

BK: Short recess, what did you do?

TS: Oh, well, we just played.

BK: What did you play? Catch, hide?

TS: Hide, well, all kinds of games. I can't remember exactly what kind of games.

BK: Long recess, you would eat first and then play?

TS: Yes, that's the idea.

BK: Did you have a whole hour?

TS: I don't remember.

BK: What time was school over about? 2:00, 2:30?

TS: I think it was about 2:00.

BK: Yes, around 2:00. I think in the old days, it was 2:00. When you got through school, you would go home?

TS: No. We would go to Japanese language school. Couple of hours, I think.

BK: And that was where the old Japanese School was.

TS: Yes. Right across from today's Toyo Superette.

BK: When you were living in Manoa, how many stores were there?

TS: There were four stores.

BK: Can you remember the names?

TS: There was Yano Store, Toyo Store, another store called Mitsunaga Store, and

BK: Was Pee Wee there then?

TS: Yes. Pee Wee, but it wasn't Pee Wee Store; it was something else, but I can't remember the name. Also, there used to be a Manoa Market where that chop suey house is now. I forgot to add it. That's five. Manoa Market, they used to call it. I forgot to add it.

BK: Where would your mother buy her produce and groceries?

TS: My mother used to charge all her groceries from the Toyo Store and pay the store at the end of the month whenever we had the cash, for we come from a very poor family. They delivered.

BK: So, everyday?

TS: Mostly every day for what we needed.

BK: Did you grow any vegetables for the family yourself? Your father?

TS: Small things, you know. What we needed for the day, we would pick it up.

BK: But did you grow anything, like bittermelons or anything like

that?

IS: We had some vegetables like

BK: Mustard cabbage? Some vegetables, but not enough to sell?

IS: Just for the family.

BK: In the camp, did you have a place where you could have a garden?

IS: Oh, yes. We had a small yard in the back.

BK: Did your mother, by any chance, take in washing?

IS: She did. That's how we made our living.

BK: That would be for families? Haole families?

IS: Haole families.

BK: Do you remember any of the families?

IS: I don't know.

BK: No, because I know a lot of the people did that. Would people bring their wash and pick it up, or would she deliver it?

IS: We'd go and pick it up and deliver it back. Sometimes they would bring it to my mother. Oh, yes, we used to carry the laundry on a wagon that we could push by hand.

BK: Oh, a pull wagon. Were some of those customers far up the valley?

IS: No, not very far, all around the neighborhood.

BK: I hope you didn't have to push it up Pamoia hills. That's hard! Tell me about what you remember which dairies there were.

IS: Mitsunaga Dairy was located on Kolowalu near the present library, right around there.

BK: Weren't there some more dairies, too?

IS: That's the only one I remember.

BK: Would your mother buy milk? Because in the old days, the Japanese didn't drink too much milk.

IS: We used to drink more canned milk, you know, the one that you add water in.

BK: Yes, I know, like the thick sweet ones.

IS: Condensed milk.

BK: So that's what you would have for your cereal and drinking.

After you came home from Japanese school, what did you do? Did you still have time for play or was it time for supper?

IS: We had time to play. We used to, well, during the kite season, we used to go out to the empty taro patches and we used to make our own kites. We used to fly our kites and do things like that. We also, maybe a bunch of us boys get together, go down the swimming hole and do a little swimming. Also, we used to play football during the football season, and baseball, also, during the season.

BK: Where did you play baseball and football?

IS: Right in the taro patch, dry taro patch.

BK: At that time, as you remember, how far down did the taro patches come?

IS: From what I know, right in the Noelani School area, where the Safeway, and all the way up to Kahaloa Street, somewhere in that area. They used to have some \_\_\_\_\_??\_\_\_\_, but they used to go farther up there.

BK: At that time, were there Hawaiians or Chinese?

IS: Mostly all Chinese.

BK: The Hawaiians had left. Do you remember any Chinese camps?

IS: No, the Chinese were all scattered around.

BK: When you played together, was it mostly Japanese boys or did you have other ethnic groups?

IS: Mostly Japanese boys in the camp and nearby.

BK: What would you do on Saturday and Sunday?

IS: Sometimes I used to help my father with the yardwork when he needed a little help. When free, we'd always go to the swimming hole down Manoa Stream, where we called it Mountain Pond.

BK: Yes, I'm going to ask you about the ponds a little later. What about Sunday? Did you go to church?

IS: I did not go to church. I did try and go to Sunday School, but I gave it up.

BK: What Sunday School did you go to?

IS: Manoa School. They used to have a Sunday School.

BK: Oh, they did? Who was the minister?

IS: No, they had classes, volunteers who want to teach Sunday School.

BK: Was this Christian teaching?

IS: Yes.

BK: But you didn't like it very much.

IS: I didn't last too long. I'd rather play.

BK: You're still a good Christian. Now, that would be Sunday mornings. The rest of Sunday, you could play and do what you wanted.

IS: I used to do some chores. We used to gather firewood, and cut trees, and chop the tree and make it into small pieces for firewood.

BK: What did you use the firewood for?

IS: To make hot water for the furo.

BK: Did you have your own or was it one in the camp?

IS: Each family had their own.

BK: So you didn't have common bathhouses such as they had downtown.  
Was this in the backyard?

IS: No. It was in the front of the house.

BK: So each person would take turn?

IS: Yes.

BK: What was it made out of?

IS: Made of redwood, and there was a sheetmetal underneath, and there was a metal grating underneath where we put the firewood to heat the water.

BK: Did you do it the old Japanese style of throwing some water on you and soaping, and then...

IS: Yes. We used to wash ourselves before we got into the big tank.

BK: How big would this tank be? Three by three?

IS: Yes, I think about three by three.

BK: And about waist high? Chest high?

IS: Come to about chest high. People would squat in it.

BK: What about people taking kids in? You had a big family, so who's taking turn? Oldest first?

IS: Depends on who wants to go in first, but sometimes, we go in together.

BK: Sure, when you were small. And what would you do? Have a kimono or something waiting to put on after you came out of the bath?

IS: We always had our pajamas, so that we were ready to go to bed.

BK: It was always just before you went to bed?

IS: Yes. Every night. That's a habit that we always keep.

BK: So you knew it had to be done. And this was Saturday and Sunday night, too?



TS: Oh, yes, definitely.

BK: When did you study?

TS: In the evening after taking a bath, and then, we already had our supper and everything, and we take a bath, and do our studying, and then we go to bed.

BK: Did your mother cook mostly Japanese things?

TS: Mostly Japanese.

BK: That would be rice and some meat and vegetables like that.

TS: Yes.

BK: Did you have any fruit trees or anything on your place?

TS: We did have an avocado tree and a lime tree.

BK: Tell me about the swimming pool because I know there were several.

TS: There were two favorite swimming pools, pond we called it. One was called Mountain Pond, and the other was called Small Pond, but some of the boys named it Mountain Pond also. But we always called it Small Pond. Mountain Pond is the one we usually went to. One is located at the end of Pamoia Road, now back where St. Francis High School is. The Small Pond was located where the McDonald's is. Back of there, somewhere in that area.

BK: Do you remember any Hawaiians living in Manoa? Did you know any Hawaiians?

TS: Yes, a few, but not very many. In fact, there was a family living near the pond there.

BK: The Mountain Pond?

TS: Yes.

BK: Would most of the boys go to these two ponds?

TS: Boys that used to go to the Small Pond used to have a camp

nearby the pond. They used to go to that pond there--Small Pond. We used to go to the Mountain Pond because it was near our home.

BK: Yes, nearer, because you just go down to the end of the street. When you said the ones at the Small Pond had a camp, what did they--just put up some sheds or something?

IS: There was a camp with about, I would say, eight or nine homes or ten. They used to call it Nishi Camp. They used to have a piggery there. Nishi used to raise pigs, so they used to call it after him.

BK: Where were the piggens? Where McDonald is or on the other side of the street?

IS: No, there was a dirt road between the taro patches. There were taro patches right in that area, too.

BK: Now you're talking about the McDonald side of the stream or the other side?

IS: The other side. Mauka of the stream.

BK: How did that road come in from...

IS: Used to go in from East Manoa Road, and there was a narrow dirt road which went into the camp. One side used to be taro patches, and it was about 200 yards or so into the camp. They were able to drive cars into the camp.

BK: Do you know if that camp was primarily for Nishi to raise his pigs?

IS: No, these people that...I'm not sure who owned the homes, but they were paying rent.

BK: It was just someone put up houses to rent. You don't remember what you paid for rent?

IS: No, I don't.

BK: Tell me what you remember about movies in the valley.

IS: Movies in the valley, we used to have at least once a month at the Japanese School--language school--and most of the movies were sponsored by the merchants and farmers that had money, like Toyo.

BK: You mean they were paying for...

IS: They would sponsor movies, and the family who could afford to give more would give more for the whole family could sit down and lay a mat and just enjoy the movies.

BK: This was inside the Manoa main building?

IS: They used to hang a sheet on the bulletin of the Japanese School, and they used to have a movie projector way in the back. We all used to go in the front and try to get a good seat. We tried to get there early, and they used to have samurai feature and also those regular--they called it shinpa, and they used to have a ben<sup>N</sup>shi--we call it a ben<sup>N</sup>shi--that interprets while they're acting.

BK: And this was once a month?

IS: I think just about once a month.

BK: Now, I want to ask you if you remember this. When I was a child, about where Safeway is now, I don't know how often, I thought it was once a week, but it may be once a month, there would be a truck come, and all through Manoa Valley, and it would have big banners on the side of the truck with bright-colored pictures like dragons and samurais and things, and it would say, on such and such a night, there would be a movie, and on the night of the movie, they got a big sheet, about 5 ft. wide, and made a circle of it, and then they'd come

in a truck and from the engine of the truck, they would use it to show movies, and you had to pay to go in, but us kids would climb under the canvas. You remember that?

IS: I vaguely remember.

BK: You think you might have gone to that, too?

IS: I may have gone.

BK: The other thing is...of course, you spoke nothing but Japanese at home.

IS: No.

BK: You didn't? How come? That's very interesting. Do your father and mother both speak...

IS: Well, we did speak a little Japanese with my father and mother, but among the brothers and sisters...

BK: You only spoke English.

IS: Yes.

BK: So, I mean, that was no problem with you at school, then.

IS: Not really.

BK: Did you go to Japanese school six years, too?

IS: Yes, I did.

BK: What did you learn? History and language to read and write and all that?

IS: All of that.

BK: Why did you stop going to Japanese school at sixth year?

IS: I didn't like it. Also, my parents were very poor; we couldn't afford to pay.

BK: Oh, did you have to pay for Japanese school?

IS: Oh, yes.

BK: But you didn't have to pay at Manoa School.

TS: Oh, we did.

BK: You did? Oh, I thought public education was free in those days.

TS: But very small amount.

BK: That was hard on the family, wasn't it, with so many kids?

But they wanted you to have an education. Did you do any social affairs at the Japanese School? Did they have parties and things?

TS: No.

BK: No. It was strictly you went to school. Were these teachers from Japan mostly?

TS: From Japan, yes.

BK: Do you still remember a lot of Japanese from that time?

TS: Not very much.

BK: But you can converse.

TS: I can.

BK: Now, what about doctors? Were there any doctors living in Manoa Valley that you went to?

TS: Not that I know of. We were sent to Palama Settlement. We had special nurses coming to our home.

BK: Oh, they would come to your home.

TS: Yes, and try to take care of us.

BK: How about dentists?

TS: Oh, dentists, also, with Palama Settlement.

BK: I know a lot of families depended on Palama. Did you have any bad illnesses among the kids when you were here--epidemics?

TS: Not really.

BK: You got vaccinations and all that kind of stuff?

*[Language]*  
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TS: Oh, yes.

BK: Did you have any pets?

TS: We used to go to the swimming pool to Manoa Stream to catch the goldfish. I was fond of goldfish, and I used to make my own tank, and we used to just raise our own.

BK: Oh, you did, and so you had your own aquarium that belonged to you. Did you ever have dogs or cats?

TS: Not that I know.

BK: No. Is that because you didn't specially like them, or was it your parents?

TS: No, not really. There were a few around.

BK: Who did the yardwork in your own house?

TS: We didn't have such a big yard. We used to take turns and do it. We had our own chickens. We raised them. We used to just clean the chicken coop as part of our chores.

BK: Did you take turns?

TS: Well, not really.

BK: Did you have any rabbits because a lot of kids had rabbits at that time?

TS: Not that I know of. Maybe we did.

BK: Then you used the eggs and you ate the chickens.

TS: Yes.

BK: Were these in raised coops or on the ground?

TS: On the ground, and we used to have...at night we used to put them in the coop because of mongoose and thieves coming around.

BK: Did you ever go fishing in the pond for opai?

TS: We used to go with the net, and we also used to go with a glass box that we have a scale that \_\_\_\_\_ spear those, we

called it opu, mountain opu. We speared those.

BK: After you got them, what did you do?

IS: We used to eat it.

BK: Did you make a fire there or bring them home?

IS: Some of the boys took them home and cooked at home. Some at the pond while they're swimming, they'd make a fire and cook with soyu sauce.

BK: You took the soyu and sugar with you.

IS: Yes, and a little ginger and things like that.

BK: I remember when we were kids, we went and caught opai, and we'd bring them home in a can, and we'd put a frying pan on the stove and some butter and then we'd throw them in you know. They're gray, and they'd pop up and down until they're dead and they'd turn red. Remember? Then we'd eat them, shell and all.

IS: Yes.

BK: I suppose you did the same.

IS: Yes.

BK: Did your family eat a lot of fish?

IS: Some.

BK: So most of your groceries and everything, your produce and everything, came from Toyo's?

IS: Toyo's. Heavy items like rice and things, they had to deliver, but the small things that we needed during the day, we used to go and pick them up, or my mother goes.

BK: How long did you live in Manoa then?

IS: We've lived in Manoa since then, but in different places.

BK: Did you move several times?

IS: My family is still there. They're just in that area, not that

camp, but right in that area. My mother built a home.

BK: Where do you yourself live?

TS: I live on East Manoa.

BK: All right, you don't have to give the address. Do you like Manoa?

TS: Yes, I do.

BK: You wouldn't want to live anywhere else?

TS: Not really.

BK: Now, let's see, I've done the schools, your playtime. Were there any haole kids going to Manoa School when you went?

TS: There may have been a few, but I don't know; those kids going to Punahou. Mostly, the homes that are here now are bought by Japanese and other nationalities, but they were all haole in those days.

BK: I remember when people, except for people that lived down there, were mostly haoles. When I was growing up, we called that "the village". What did you call it where the stores were and so forth?

TS: You mean the stores--Toyo Superette?

BK: Yes, around there, Superette and all those. We called that the village. Did you say anything, or did you just say "go to the store"?

TS: I didn't have any name for it.

BK: What do you think of the development of Manoa now?

TS: Today, it's terrific. It's just something that I can't really think it would be.

BK: So you approve of that Market Place?



TS: Oh yes, I do.

BK: For the convenience.

TS: For the people who live in the valley.

BK: When you were growing up in your house, did you have electricity and running water?

TS: Oh yes, we did.

BK: Do you remember Tanabe?

TS: Tanabe?

BK: His son is running the Tanabe Gas Station. He lived on that side street.

TS: No, I don't remember that family.

BK: He used to come and do our yard work, and his wife took in washing. It's very interesting. They had just a beaten dirt floor in their house, and then they had a platform above it where they lived. Do you remember some homes like that?

TS: Oh yes, I remember some homes built like that.

BK: I don't know why. I guess it was to get above the moisture. Have you been a taxi driver ever since you moved? Do you want to answer why you went into taxi driving?

TS: No.

BK: Okay, that's all right, but you've been very happy doing it.

TS: I guess so.

BK: That makes me think of going back to the village. There were three stores.

TS: Five stores altogether.

BK: Now, that was Yano's, Toyo's, Matsunaga, Manoa Market. (It was called Pee Wee's later on.) Was there a fire station in Manoa in the old days?

TS: No, I don't know.

BK: Well then, there were only those five stores. That's the only thing, plus the school.

TS: Yes.

BK: That made up the village. At one time, there was a taxi stand there.

TS: Yes.

BK: Who ran that taxi stand?

TS: It was run by several people. I can't remember their names.

BK: But, I wondered why that was given up, because it was very convenient for us Manoa people. Not enough business? I guess people got cars.

TS: Well, actually, the taxi stand started from way back when we used to have the new housing. A couple of boys that started the taxi stand...

BK: Because of all those people there.

TS: Right, all the people living in the Housing, and they used to do quite a good business at that time.

BK: Do you remember Manoa Housing?

TS: Oh yes, I do.

BK: Did those kids ever play with you?

TS: Yes, they used to play. That was way after our days, you know.

BK: Yes, of course. You were already grown up. Was all of that land where the Housing was taro patches?

TS: Taro patches.

BK: That was all taro patches. What did you think about that Housing?

TS: I thought it was a good thing for the people--the poor-income

people.

BK: Sure, and those were mostly construction people.

IS: Yes, people that can't afford to pay big money.

(Pause on tape)

IS: Like I told you, they are the nishiken, but it is the taro patches. 2

BK: Taro patches, and those were all run by the Chinese? As I understand, up Oahu Avenue, there were several Chinese camps. You don't remember those that worked in the taro patches?

IS: That area I don't remember very much.

BK: Do you know a person named Miriam Reed? She was a Woolsey. She's on Oahu Avenue, and her father and mother had taro patches and a poi factory.

IS: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

BK: She used to deliver with her mother. The taro patches didn't come down here because we were here already, and we came here in 1909. Something I wanted to ask about the village some more. Do you remember a person by the name of Mary Ann Perry? You know that big green house, double house that was right opposite where Kolowalu Street goes? It's gone now. You don't remember it? d

IS: I don't remember.

BK: Do you remember prohibition time?

IS: Vaguely.

BK: It didn't bother you folks.

IS: No.

BK: Did you go get mangoes and things from the mango trees, and guavas?

TS: Yes. Also, during the mountain apple season, we used to go up to pick mountain apples and to go up Woodlawn area.

BK: The other thing is, did you used to walk up to the Manoa Falls?

TS: Oh, yes. Once in a while, we used to go up to the Falls.

BK: I know there were a lot of mountain apples there.

TS: Also, we used to go hiking. We used to go right on the ridge of the mountain, way up the mountain, all the way around.

BK: All the way around this way?

TS: Up till we call it that Woodlawn area, and we used to come down. There's a trail that leads down to the hillside there. We would go up from somewhere around...

BK: By the end of Pamoia?

TS: Well, not in that area. Somewhere around Woodlawn. We had a trail that we made our own and it led up to the ridge. We'd go up and look for the menshells, we called it.

BK: Oh, did you collect menshells?

TS: Oh yes, we used to collect a lot of them.

BK: What did you do with them?

TS: It's a savings, you know. We made necklace, \_\_\_\_\_ rings.

BK: What did you do with them?

TS: I just don't remember.

BK: The other thing is, do you remember Motorcycle Hill?

TS: Oh, yes. That's the hill that we used to come down.

BK: Oh, that's the hill that you came down.

TS: That's the way we came down when we go up on the ridge, and we have a trail that comes right down to...

BK: Was that trail there or did you make it?

TS: There was a trail.

BK: Did you ever go ti-leaf sliding?

TS: Yes, we used to slide ti-leaf by the Motorcycle Hill.

BK: On the Motorcycle Hill. The other thing is, do you remember every Sunday when they used to ride motorcycles up there?

TS: No.