

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Ronald "Square" Goya and May Goya

"Our kids must have come out and went to see our place, I guess. . . . Roy said he could hear everything. Drowning noise and people yelling and crackling sound. He said the noise---the first noise, that drowning noise, was the scary thing. Like one big plane flying overhead, our place. . . . we went down [to see the damage]. From the area going to Piopio Street, all damaged. All the cars were up against the trees. . . . Just get water in the front end. Tidal wave do something different sometimes. They destroy a house this side just like a tornado. This house will stand, nothing trouble, but the other house is all gone. Funny thing how the wave run."

Ronald "Square" Goya, one of three children, was born to Okinawan immigrants, Ushi "Haru" and Aizo Goya, on September 19, 1911.

His father, originally from Okinawa, worked first as a plantation worker on the Big Island. After moving to Hilo his father drove a hackney then a taxicab; he later operated a grocery, liquor store, U-Drive, and service station.

Born in the Waiākea section but raised in the Shinmachi section of Hilo, he attended Waiākea Kai, Kapi'olani, Hilo Intermediate, and Hilo High schools. He graduated from Hilo High School in 1934. Six years later, he married May Yaeko Toyama.

May Goya was born to Okinawan immigrants, Tsuru Osato Toyama and Zenshin Toyama, on May 21, 1920 on the island of O'ahu. One of ten children, May Goya worked for two years at a dress shop in downtown Honolulu following her graduation from McKinley High School in 1938. After marrying into the Goya family and moving to Hilo, she helped at the Goyas' stores and service station.

Following the 1946 tsunami in Hilo the Goyas closed the grocery store and opened May's Fountain, noted for its hospitality, *loco moco* and "Volcano Special" sundaes.

In 1960, May's Fountain and the Goya's service station were destroyed by the tsunami. The Goyas then opened a hot plate-lunch establishment on Ponahawai Street. They retired in 1977.

Square and May Goya raised three children and have three grandchildren. They were interviewed simultaneously in their Hilo home.

Tape Nos. 29-15-1-98 and 29-16-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ronald "Square" Goya (SG) and May Goya (MG)

Hilo, Hawai'i

May 11, 1998

BY: Nancy Piianaia (NP)

[Note: Also present at the interview is Roy Goya, (RG), SG's and MG's son.]

NP: This is May 11, 1998 and I'm at the home of Ron and May Goya and their son, Ron.

RG: Roy.

NP: Roy. I'm sorry. And we're going to be talking about Hilo and the tsunamis that they experienced. But before we start doing that, I'm just going to get some background information. May I call you "Square"? Would that be better than Ronald?

SG: No, it's all right.

NP: Which would you like?

MG: He'll feel comfortable with "Square."

NP: Okay, let's do "Square." How did you get the nickname "Square"?

SG: Well, I was going to intermediate school, Mr. Ah Fook was our physical ed teacher. He (chuckles) just put my name "Square," so.

NP: You don't know why he chose that name?

SG: No.

MG: Because he was a square shooter. (SG laughs.)

NP: Square shooter? Okay.

MG: He was an honest boy.

SG: Yeah. (Chuckles)

MG: He hardly did anything bad too, but he was rascal, you know. Not into---you know, he would

- help people out.
- SG: I was little older than the other students 'cause I started out school late. I was a sickly boy, that's what my mother said. Instead of start school from six years old, I start from eight years old. I started with my brother, the same time. So I was back in school about two years.
- NP: So, because you were older, you were a helper of the others.
- SG: Yeah, I was little older than the other students. So, I remember a little more.
- NP: Could you tell me where and when you were born?
- SG: I was born in Waiākea, by the tea garden. And what else?
- NP: What year were you born, on what date?
- SG: Oh, September 19, 1911.
- NP: Nineteen eleven. Okay, so you're a young guy still yet.
- SG: (Chuckles) Yeah.
- NP: And were you born at home? You said you were born at . . .
- SG: I think so. Those days was home, I think.
- MG: Midwife.
- SG: Yeah.
- NP: Midwives, okay. And could you give me the names of your parents and where they were from?
- SG: Hmm. . . .
- MG: Aizo Goya, that's A-I-Z-O . . .
- SG: Yeah.
- MG: . . . and [Ushi] Haru [Higa] Goya. You want to know when they were born?
- NP: No, I don't think that's necessary.
- MG: Well, anyway, they are from Nago in Okinawa. Both of them are from Nago, Okinawa.
- NP: Okay. Do you know how your parents met or . . .
- SG: Picture bride.

NP: Picture bride.

SG: They got married in Honolulu—what do you call it?

MG: At the immigration.

SG: Immigration [station].

MG: In Honolulu. And the girl would come on the ship and (in) vast (numbers)—not just one girl, so many of them. They would come on the ship and all the grooms would be waiting on the wharf. (Voices in the background.) And that's when they come up to the wharf.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

NP: Okay, we stopped just for a moment and now we're talking about the arranged marriage.

SG: This way, the old days, my father came first on the plantation. You know, those days they used to come over. And then he wanted a wife so he wrote to Japan and they picked my mother and one year later she came here.

NP: Which plantation was he on?

SG: I think the first one was in 'Ōla'a.

NP: 'Ōla'a, okay. So he was on more than one plantation?

SG: Oh yeah, because you know why, he was a small man, only ninety-five pounds, he was so small. He cannot work hard labor so he came in [Hilo] town and we lived by the tea garden. It's a tea garden now. Before, they had a hotel, big church, and everything there, the old days. I don't remember because I was that small. He came and he was one of the first taxi drivers with horse and buggy, those days. He had five horses and he named all the horses, but I forget the names. But all English names. And my mother was saying (she would) carry me on the back every time he come back from work, and (she would) take the horse down the beach and wash the horses. I was on (her) back every time.

NP: Was this down---you were living in the Waiākea area then?

SG: Yeah, that's Waiākea. Before, the sand beach was way out, see, lot of sand.

NP: When you say way out, where do you mean?

SG: It's by the [Wailoa] River mouth, by Suisan, from there. Before, the train used to pass there and they used to have a wharf there, the first wharf they had by [where] Nihon Restaurant [is] now. They had that wharf there, the first one.

NP: So that's where the ships would come in or the boats?

SG: Yeah.

- NP: And then you said there was a beach next to it, kind of.
- SG: Yeah, on the beach on the right.
- NP: Going out towards Coconut Island?
- SG: No, no, on the other end.
- NP: On the other end, going in.
- SG: By Coconut Island was deep so they had a small harbor for—plantation used that for haul sugar from Waiākea Mill. They get a scull to take down to the ship.
- NP: So, your mother and father's marriage was arranged. And he started out at 'Ōla'a plantation, and then he became a taxi cab driver?
- SG: Yeah, you know, buggy.
- NP: Buggy, a taxi buggy driver or something.
- SG: And then afterward, automobile came in and he bought a car. He was taxi driver for many years.
- NP: And did you folks continue to live in Waiākea after that?
- SG: No, we moved when I was small to Shinmachi.
- NP: Shinmachi? Oh.
- SG: They call that Shinmachi.
- RG: They lived right where the . . .
- SG: Kamehameha statue (is now—Bishop and Punahoa streets).
- NP: Okay. What kind of house did you live in?
- SG: Oh, this kind of house.
- NP: Wooden house?
- SG: Yeah, wooden house.
- NP: One family?
- SG: Yeah. The land was owned by Bishop Estate. After the tidal wave came, the state took over. They bought from Bishop Estate, I think.
- NP: Do you know why you moved from Waiākea to Shinmachi?

- SG: That, I don't know. I was small anyway.
- NP: Was Shinmachi considered to be a better place to live or a newer place or . . .
- SG: Well, the town was growing so just like we had two towns, Hilo town and this side, Waiākea town. So they have Waiākea and Shinmachi combined. We had a lot of people. We had more people than downtown, I think. Because the wharf was there in the old days, and then they had a bigger hotel, and then that's a fish town, Suisan [Company, Ltd.]. So all the fish goes. . . .
- NP: Oh, okay. Did mostly fishermen live out there [i.e., Waiākea and Shinmachi] then?
- SG: Yeah, lot of fishermen and—you talked to Mrs. [Kimiko] Sakai, yeah?
- NP: Yeah.
- SG: Yeah. Her husband was a fisherman there.
- NP: Now, where your house was located, where the statue now is, was that kind of on the water at that time?
- SG: No, no. In Shinmachi, no house was in the water, everyone was on the land. But, maybe when the high tide, about two feet. But we won't go over the road.
- NP: But you were at sort of like the back of Shinmachi, would you say? Or was it in the middle. . . .
- SG: Right in the center.
- MG: Distance, you know where the statue is, the same road just a few feet away. Same, parallel to that statue.
- NP: So when you go back to the statue you must have all kinds of memories.
- MG: Oh yeah.
- SG: Yeah. (Chuckles) We go when we try find where, and we find the place.
- MG: I think he used to know all the different areas.
- RG: The home that they used to live in, somebody bought it and transported it. It's still sitting somewhere across the highway from Waiākeawaena [School], it's a block over. On the main highway.
- NP: So it survived the tidal wave?
- RG: It survived the tidal wave and the war years, somebody bought it. When (we) built this (house) they sold the (old) house.

- SG: He wasn't born yet when tidal wave.
- NP: How much did you sell that house for back then?
- MG: It was only the house, the land was leased from the Bishop Estate.
- SG: We didn't sell the house, we give back to Bishop Estate. We just left the house.
- MG: Those days, I guess, you just had about ten dollars, I think, or something like that.
- SG: What? (We sold it for just one) dollar.
- MG: Just to, you know, make it look good on the papers. One dollar or ten dollars or something.
- SG: We don't know how much that house rent was.
- NP: Okay, let's move on to your brothers and sisters. Can you tell me the names of your brothers and sisters?
- SG: Yeah.
- NP: Maybe from the oldest first.
- SG: No, I'm the oldest. And . . .
- MG: (Brother) Richard Takeo.
- SG: Richard Takeo Goya. His nickname is "Hick."
- NP: H-I-C . . .
- SG: [H-I-]C-K. Old days everybody had---boys had [nick]names. You laugh, some names. And then my sister Ellen.
- MG: Ellen Hiroko [Goya].
- NP: Okay, that's three.
- SG: That's all.
- NP: That's all, not like your [MG's] family, you had lots.
- SG: Ho [yes].
- NP: So there were two boys and a girl.
- SG: Yeah.
- NP: And you lived in Shinmachi.

SG: Mm hmm [yes].

NP: What was Shinmachi like? What kind of a neighborhood was that like? How would you describe it?

SG: Shinmachi, we had the [Royal] Theater and. . .

MG: I thought the bakery started out there, too.

SG: We had a bakery, Star Bakery [a.k.a. K. Hatada Bakery]. We had the [Hilo] Macaroni Factory, Ikeda Soda Works, we had Hawai'i Planing Mill there, and then we had Motor Supply. We had a big place around the place we live.

MG: But this is more on a business section. The house was where the statue is right now. Then from Bishop Street we would walk out to Kamehameha Avenue.

NP: Was it a place where people knew everybody?

SG: Yeah. We know everybody, everybody know us.

We had a little store at 1933, down there, with the service station [i.e., Goya Brothers Service Station, on the corner of Bishop Street and Kamehameha Avenue in Shinmachi].

NP: So in 1933 your dad, did he still continue to drive the taxi?

SG: My father?

NP: Yeah.

SG: No, he retired. Yeah. We were going school yet.

MG: They still—older brothers were in high school.

SG: We were in high school when we [started the service station and store] so when we graduate we can work.

MG: The place was sub-leased from H.I. Young, you know that . . .

SG: Ah Mai [& Company].

MG: Ah Mai.

SG: They were the owners of the building and we pay them rent.

NP: So the building was already there.

SG: Yeah. But was a small place. We fixed the place up, just like a new building.

NP: Was it a service station before or did you make it into one?

- SG: No, had a store, little store, on the side. And we . . .
- MG: Somebody else was running.
- SG: Yeah, somebody else was running that store, and she was a widow and she left the store. So we took over the store, that's all.
- MG: And the filling station was there. Something like the pumps, you know.
- SG: We used to pump [gasoline] this way.
- NP: In and out.
- SG: Yeah, you know the hand pump? That's the kind.
- NP: (Chuckles) I don't know the hand pump.
- SG: You know where they have that? Miloli'i.
- MG: Oh, they still have that?
- SG: Yeah, I think so. That's an antique, that.
- MG: I don't know, I never saw that.
- NP: Why did you decide to do a service station? What made you think of that?
- SG: My father wanted to create job for me and my brother so we started that service station. And there were few automobiles, because there were only about one, two, three, four—about six service stations in Hilo town, the whole Hilo town. That's all had in 1933. They had all kind business. In Shinmachi we had [I.] Kitagawa [& Company] car dealer, and they had service . . .
- NP: Was he just starting out then or had he been there for a long time?
- SG: Kitagawa?
- NP: Yeah.
- SG: Kitagawa first was, before the [1946] tidal wave, was way in the front, waterfront.
- MG: You know where the canoe landing is?
- NP: Mm hmm.
- MG: That area . . .
- NP: By the canoe landing.

- MG: . . . was Kitagawa. Just about [where] Suisan [Company, Ltd.] Fish Auction Market is].
- NP: But was he just starting out, I mean in the [19]30s?
- MG: Before the 1946 tidal wave.
- NP: I guess I'm trying to figure out if there were a lot of cars and a lot of cars being sold? Or were you folks kind of ahead of your times, thinking about a service station?
- SG: My father thought about a service station. We were young, we don't care because we were—well, you know when young time, we used to play football and basketball and all kind of sports from high school days. So we still was keeping on. We used to play football without shoes, short pants, no helmet.
- NP: No teeth guard.
- SG: Yeah. No nothing. The helmet just covered your head. Those days everything was poor. Nineteen thirty-three, depression year that.
- NP: So it's amazing to think of somebody opening up a business at that time.
- SG: You see, Shinmachi was big, just like Waiākea town. Waiākea town too, see. We have a map of that, too.
- NP: Did you have to borrow money to make those repairs and make the service station?
- SG: Those days, we worked for the parents, we don't get paid. All they give us is maybe couple dollars a week for go show or something. That's all you have. But at least we have a car so we can go out. Those days young people don't have cars. There's maybe---lucky we had ten people bring car to school. Otherwise nobody had.
- NP: So in this service station, did you mostly pump gas or did you do repairs also? What kind of things . . .
- SG: We used to service the cars, lubricate cars. And then we used to sell gasoline. While the store, we sell grocery and things, before the tidal wave.
- NP: What kind of groceries would you sell?
- SG: Oh, just general. We sell, well, some vegetables, ice cream, and everything. That's before the tidal wave.
- NP: Before the '46 one. Where would you get your vegetables and your supplies from?
- SG: Well, people used to come and they sell you and we sell to the people. We used to buy cabbage, one bag for one dollar.
- NP: Big bag?

- SG: Yeah, that regular bag.
- NP: The big bag. And where would the cabbage come from?
- SG: Waimea. Waimea or Hakalau or someplace. They distribute all around.
- NP: So you would get your vegetables from this island, would you say?
- SG: Yeah, yeah. Nothing from the Mainland.
- NP: Those were the good old days, when you had to really depend on . . .
- SG: Everything.
- NP: . . . what you had.
- SG: We don't have supermarket, anything. We have to go to the big wholesaler and then buy and sell. Hilo Meat [Co., Ltd.] was one of them. And we had . . .
- NP: So you would carry meat from them?
- SG: Yeah, we just go over there and buy and then we sell. We can buy wholesale.
- NP: Would you sell Japanese goods as well, since it was Shinmachi? Like shoyu and rice and things like that?
- SG: Yeah, those days, once a month there's a Japan ship come in. And then the wholesalers have and they distribute. We ask and we sell.
- NP: Who was the wholesaler?
- SG: American Trading [Co., Ltd]]. American Trading was in town, [but] the tidal wave got 'em so they moved by Amfac [i.e., American Factors, Ltd.], the old Amfac building. Now, that place is owned by American Trading, but American Factors used to own that place.
- NP: What about Hilo Rice Mill?
- SG: Hilo Rice Mill, yeah, we'd buy a lot of things from Hilo Rice Mill. That was in just middle of town—not middle but more on this side. And we'd buy lot of things from American Factors. American Factors warehouse was next. And [Theo H.] Davies [& Co. Ltd.] was past that Mo'ohau Park.
- NP: So would you have things like salt salmon and that kind of thing, too?
- SG: Yeah, *bacalaw*. (Laughs) Codfish. We used to buy codfish this way. (SG demonstrates length of codfish slices.)
- NP: So that's about three feet long.

SG: Yeah.

MG: For twenty-five cents.

SG: Twenty-five cents. And we used to buy tofu for ten cents.

MG: No, five cents.

SG: Five cents sometimes, one day old, five cents.

NP: Who would sell you your tofu?

SG: I wonder where we got the tofu?

MG: Gee, I don't know.

SG: See, we forget where we got 'em. Oh no, we didn't sell tofu. It was so cheap, they had tofu place in town.

NP: I know the Ushijimas had tofu and some others.

SG: Yeah, those people.

(MG shows NP a picture.)

NP: Was there a liquor store also or did you sell liquor or . . .

SG: Oh, liquor?

NP: Yeah.

SG: (Looks at picture.) Oh, this is the grocery store. That's before the [1946] tidal wave. Here's Hilo Macaroni.

MG: The liquor store. There's a funny little cage, like you know, where they store all the liquor, right here. And had a window here that they . . .

SG: We had ice cream here and then we had all the grocery here.

NP: Looks kind of like it was all open, you could just walk into the store.

SG: Yeah, we have door . . .

MG: You could . . .

SG: And shut at night.

MG: Filling station is right here.

SG: We had the sliding door come down and shut it.

MG: Here, this is Kam[ehameha] Avenue.

NP: This is a beautiful picture, it would be nice if they could make a copy of this. And who's standing in this picture?

MG: That's him. (SG laughs.)

NP: Oh.

MG: And this was a Model A. Was it a Model T or a Model A? Whatever.

SG: Model A. And this is the bus, school bus.

NP: The school bus, oh.

MG: This is on Kam[ehameha] Avenue and then Bishop Street over here. Then right further down would be the statue. Kamehameha statue [today].

SG: You can tell the old car, even the number here. (Chuckles)

NP: Yeah, this is a great picture. Wow.

Okay, so you and your brother, when you graduated from high school, began working in the service station.

SG: Yeah. We fixed this place up, see. Had a small store, this is all remodeled. Just remodeled so we took the picture.

NP: This is a great picture.

SG: Yeah, we still---where you see the Kamehameha statue, you can tell, we have the sidewalk from here, all sidewalk. The sidewalk was still there. The tidal wave took everything away from here. Everything gone. Nothing left. Even this pump gone. Everything here gone.

MG: The 1946 one, just came down. The insides were three-fourths gone. All those debris from [Hawai'i] Planing Mill. . . .

NP: Came over and. . . .

MG: [Hawai'i] Planing Mill was across the street, Kam[ehameha] Avenue, and then this was right across.

NP: Okay, we're gonna go into that . . .

SG: Yeah, later.

NP: . . . later on in detail. Let's see, did most of your customers pay cash or did they buy on

credit?

SG: Everybody credit. (Chuckles)

NP: On credit.

SG: Yeah, those days credit. Everybody trust each other. Honest. And they pay their bill because the gas was so cheap, thirty-five cents, twenty-five cents a gallon. Of course, the wages, say, if you make two dollars a day labor, you lucky. County foremen and policemen used to get three dollars a day. Schoolteachers, they used to make only sixty-five dollars a month, those days.

NP: Those days, huh? This would be the 1930s or so.

SG: [Nineteen] thirty, '32.

NP: So, service station started in '33. And you worked in there. Let's see, I'm going to talk to May in a minute but maybe you could tell me how, from your version, of how you two met. Then I'll hear her version and see if it's the same.

SG: Picture bride [i.e., arranged marriage].

NP: Picture bride?

SG: Honest. I think we're one of the last ones because we got married just before the war. We got married in 1940 July.

NP: So how did that work? How did. . . .

SG: Well, see, from here there's a go-between, they have a man. And they send letter to Honolulu and . . .

MG: We had a good friend, family good friend, my dad knew and his dad knew as well, very well.

NP: A mutual friend, then.

MG: And then they talked it over.

SG: But there's plenty refusal. (Chuckles)

NP: For you?

SG: Pretty hard, you know, those days. You met the girl and you talked to her and everything, you explained everything. And then you asked questions. Then if you're okay, okay. But most of the time, those days, all the young boys used to drink, so they [the girls] don't want drinkers. Pretty hard, so we cannot find girls in town. We'd go out with girls but [not] to get married. We don't want to get married because single, we had a lot of fun.

NP: Yeah. So how old were you then, when you met her? About?

- SG: [Nineteen] thirty-nine, (chuckles), (1939 I was twenty-nine years old).
- NP: [Nineteen] thirty-nine, okay.
- SG: Yeah.
- MG: Twenty-nine years old, [19]39.
- NP: You were twenty-nine.
- MG: And I was twenty, just made twenty.
- SG: You see those days . . .
- MG: In fact, when he met me, (I) was nineteen.
- SG: You were nineteen.
- MG: Was in March. Then in July we got married. So May (21) was my birthday, (I became twenty years old). I saw him only three times. Third time was marriage, wedding, you know.
- NP: Wow.
- NP: So you had---the marriage was arranged. Did you go to Honolulu to meet her?
- SG: Two times. (Chuckles) And those days, the old days, the girls got to wait twenty years, they had to be twenty.
- NP: She was nineteen, only. Do you remember how it felt to go to Honolulu to meet her?
- SG: Yeah.
- NP: How did you feel?
- SG: I took my best friend from here, both of us, we went to Honolulu.
- MG: Well, at first he just met our parents and myself at our home. And then after that both sides consented, so it was like an engagement. His good friend and his wife and myself, we were going to Kewalo Inn, that's when he gave me the ring. He bought this one. And then the next time was the wedding (that) I saw him.
- NP: Did you write letter to each other and things like that?
- MG: No, we didn't telephone, no nothing.
- SG: Those days, telephone calls cost too much money. (Chuckles)
- MG: And he would come to Honolulu to see me on the plane, yeah! When he first came here.

SG: Yeah, 1939 we rode plane. There were only thirty-two passengers on the plane.

SG: Oh, wow.

MG: And one way was sixty dollars.

SG: Yeah, one way sixty dollars.

MG: And then he would have to pay for the in-between guy that . . .

NP: The go-between.

MG: Yeah. So cost him over \$300. Both ways. (Laughs)

NP: I think she was definitely worth it though. (SG laughs.) Good investment.

Let me just ask you a little bit about your schooling, just so I have that down and then we'll take a pause and let May have her chance to talk about . . .

SG: Yeah.

NP: Where did you go to school?

SG: Waiākea Kai. It was in Waiākea town. And then when I was, I think, second grade we moved to Kapi'olani School, just opened. So half of the Shinmachi crowd goes to Kapi'olani School. Then Kapi'olani School had plenty students so all my children went to Waiākea again, Waiākea Kai.

MG: Akira and Roy went to Waiākea Kai.

SG: They graduated from Waiākea Kai.

NP: Now, Waiākea Kai was where?

SG: It's by, you know where the clock is, down Waiākea? Right in the back was Waiākea Kai. They had a road right there [Kilohana Street].

NP: So that lasted till the second tidal wave?

MG: Nineteen forty-six. Until 1946.

RG: Until 1960.

MG: Oh.

RG: When [1960] tidal wave came, then they closed it down.

NP: Did it survive the tidal wave?

- RG: Yeah, it survived.
- NP: But the water went through or. . . .
- RG: It went through it and then they decided they'll tear it down and they moved the school.
- SG: That's why this school happened here, Waiākea.
- NP: Oh, so then they built Waiākea Elementary and Intermediate [currently on Puainako Street].
- SG: Yeah, they were going build [the new school] on a Hawaiian property there, but they gave us business people [opportunity] to build there so that's why there are businesses there, you know, that Shinmachi crowd and everybody, like Kitagawa, over there.
- NP: Oh, that was the place [i.e., currently the Hilo industrial area] that they were all moved to.
- SG: Yeah, moved from the tidal wave zone, like Ikeda [Soda Works and Shoyu Factory], like that.
- NP: Okay, so then you went to Hilo Intermediate?
- SG: Yeah.
- NP: And high school was. . . .
- SG: Hilo High.
- NP: Hilo High.
- SG: That's the only high school we had.
- NP: That was it. Was that a good school to go to?
- SG: Yeah. Only high school in Hilo.
- NP: Yeah, the best in Hilo, right. (Chuckles)
- SG: Yeah. Because we had---that's all we had, school, three. They had Kona[waena] and Kohala and Hilo. That's all, my days.
- NP: And I know that you have a strong connections because you said you still have reunions.
- SG: Yeah.
- NP: You still get together.
- SG: Yeah.
- NP: What year was your class? You were the class of. . . .

SG: [Nineteen] thirty-four. I graduated late, yeah.

NP: Nineteen thirty-four. Just after this service station was opened?

SG: Yeah. From that day we started [having reunions] till now. I don't know this year but every year we had [reunions] till today, that class.

NP: Wow. Okay, I think I'll pause.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

NP: Okay, could I have your full name please and when you were born.

MG: Okay. May Yaeko Toyama, that was my maiden name. And I was born in Kahalu'u, O'ahu, May 21, 1920.

NP: And your parents were. . . .

MG: Zenshin Toyama and Tsuru Osato.

NP: And where were they from?

MG: My dad is from Ikejima in Okinawa and my mom was from Shuri, the main island of Okinawa.

NP: And how did they happen to come to Hawai'i?

MG: Well, they had a son about year and a half. He would have been born in 1911. But at the age of year and a half, he died. Then they had another one, a daughter. She was born, say, about two years later, I guess. And then it was a girl, my elder sister. She was a baby yet, I guess. So at that time my dad was sponsored by this man, he had a printing and newspaper company in Honolulu. That company name was Jitsugyo no Hawai'i, that's the name of the printing and newspaper company. And he was also Toyama. (Tetsuo) his first name. But he had sponsored my dad to come because my dad was a scholar. And he worked with him, at the same time he was a photographer, too. So he [Zenshin Toyama] was, more or less, more on the schoolteacher side, [and later accepted] the position as a school principal in Kahalu'u, Japanese[-language]. Then my mom came to Hawai'i. First my dad came, then my mom came. But my oldest sister was too young to travel, you know. So she left the little baby with her sister back in Okinawa. And so she came and then when they went to Kahalu'u, my dad taught—in those days the wives would teach Japanese sewing and, you know, etiquette and all those.

NP: As part of the school?

MG: Right, right. And then they had my elder brother, George. He's older than myself, about two years. Then they had me two years later. And then he [MG's father] had another position, transferred to Honolulu, the city, you know. Also a school principal or something.

NP: So that's how you went from Kahalu'u into the city.

- MG: Right. I was six years old when I moved to Honolulu. I really cannot remember what Japanese[-language] school he was principal that time in Honolulu. Then they started to have more children, you see.
- NP: Now how many brothers and sisters did you have altogether?
- MG: [Including] the one that died, altogether ten.
- NP: Ten. So there was your sister, who was born in Japan. . . .
- MG: Uh huh [yes]. She came when she was about thirteen years old or ten years or something like that, from Japan.
- NP: And her name was?
- MG: Toyo.
- NP: Toyo?
- MG: Toyoko.
- NP: And then your brother George, then you . . .
- MG: George Zenji, and then myself, May, and Toki, Yuri, and Roy, and Betty, Helen, and Stanley.
- NP: That's a large family.
- MG: I have to think twice. (Laughs)
- NP: That's amazing you can remember them all.
- MG: But then, several passed away already. So, after that, having so many children, the school teaching job wasn't paying that much and he had already quit photography but he still had the instruments, all. Then he, together with different men, educated men, they would come to all the different islands, Hawaiian islands, and lecture to people or whatever on different things. Like now when graduation time, they would ask maybe different people to speak. It was something like that. And then afterwards he got to be insurance salesman, Sun Life Insurance Company.
- NP: So this is while he was still being a Japanese[-language] schoolteacher?
- MG: No.
- NP: No, he switched?
- MG: No, he gave it up because it wasn't paying that much. Because his nine children [one was in Japan] and stuff like that. Okay, this is when we moved to Hobron Lane, you know where the Ilikai Hotel is now?

NP: Mm hmm [yes].

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MG: . . . is there. And then . . .

NP: Across the highway or across the road.

MG: Across the highway to Hobron Lane. And that's where I went to school and several of my siblings were born there.

NP: What kind of house did you live in?

MG: It was a---those days there was, I think it was two acres land and these people had houses. There was a main house and then several maid's quarters and horse stables and there was a big fish pond in the yard. Lots of coconut trees and *kiawe* trees and was all sand. It was right next to the canal, you know the Ala Wai canal.

We stayed there rent free to take care of all the—more or less upkeep the place, you know, manual work. My dad and my mom. It was an old house anyway. It belonged to the Holt family. Long time ago big shots, you know. So they had the horses, stable, and all those things.

NP: Oh what a neat place to live.

MG: Yeah. And you know (Lena) Machado (the singer)? She was just a little ways up the road, Hobron Lane. And several other people. And the Mirikitani's were on the other end. Magoons were more towards the Ilikai Hotel side.

NP: Where there a lot of areas of large pieces of land like yours?

MG: You mean at those days?

NP: Yeah. Like, you know, you said yours was about two acres.

MG: Yeah.

NP: Were there other big pieces of land?

MG: Yeah, uh huh. And our neighbor is about, I would say, from here to that house there. They had a fence between our house and their house. They had about three big houses, where the three brothers had each one house. And their families. And all the houses were huge, and enclosed in the high fence, just like they were secluded from the outside people.

NP: Do you know what the name of that family was?

MG: It was Hamasaki.

NP: The Hamasakis.

MG: Yeah, I'm not too sure whether they sold it or what. But they were kind of money people.

NP: So, it sounds like this was a really lucky—a fortunate thing for your family.

MG: Yeah.

NP: To have that kind of a place to live in.

MG: Uh huh, right. And then some people would rent the maid's quarters, like that. Of course, the rents wouldn't be paid to us, it would go to the people that owned. Okay, when the war started, this was nineteen. . . . Before I get into that, in 1940 I got married. That's where we had the *miai*, at home. You know this, where is this . . .

NP: The picture.

MG: The picture when I first met my husband, that's the house where we were. Then 194[1] the war started and those were still depressed years. Not like now, you know. So people don't have money. And the man that owned the house, land and the house, had two partners. And they were real well-to-do but they wanted to sell the area. Was only \$2,000 for the two acres with the five houses and the stable, everything, \$2,000. It was really expensive.

NP: Wow.

MG: Two thousand dollars. That was right after I got married, just before the war started, you see. But we couldn't afford to buy those houses so they had sold it to some other people for \$40,000 when the war started to break out, you see.

NP: And then price was all going up.

MG: Uh huh. This was about, I guess must have been 1942. But the family still stayed there rent free and taking care of the place and did all kinds. Then, gee, I think, must have been they sold it—gee, I can't remember. But between 1945 and 1940 they sold it. So, I guess, after that they had to move out somewhere else. I was already here [Hilo]. And then we got married and the family moved on to Makiki or wherever, somewhere else. Couple of more other places and then eventually bought a house at Mānoa. It was pretty expensive at that time, \$45,000. It was real expensive but they managed to—you know, all the brothers and sisters and the parents got together. By that time my dad had passed away in 1950. So after that, several years after, they had bought that house, Mānoa. That's where my mother stayed and she died there. So my eldest brother, George, got the house. At that time they would pay off all the other siblings who had contributed to the house, I guess. So then now George's eldest boy—only boy—has the house. But his mother died, the father died, his other brother died so he's the only one that had. And he was married to this Japanese girl. They didn't have children for many years. I don't know why but they divorced and then he got married to a *Haole* lady. She's a very nice lady. And they had two babies. Then he sold the house so he's somewhere else now. Evidently he had to pay his first wife, you know, for settlement, I guess. So that's why he sold the

house.

- NP: Can I go back to the house that you were growing up in, in Hobron Lane? What was that like and what was your family life like? I know you had lots of brothers and sisters. Must have been pretty busy.
- MG: Right. Well, as I said, we were poor at that time. We weren't easy at all. Everybody would have to chip in. I worked from twelve years old, going to private homes and then live with them and go home weekends. And one month I would make twelve dollars. And that was big money.
- NP: What would you do with the twelve dollars?
- MG: Well, I would go to school from that house. So early in the morning I would get up and help the lady. She had one child, baby boy. And her husband was—I remember well—Mr. and Mrs. Doyle. They were very nice to me And I was only twelve years old, just intermediate school.
- NP: Where did they live?
- MG: Somewhere---you know where that graveyard, somewhere around, was it Kīna'u Street, Ward [Avenue] or wherever. Somewhere around there. Near. . . .
- NP: Oh, near the Straub Hospital?
- MG: Could be. Straub came later on, much later, so I wouldn't know where Straub is.
- NP: Near the . . .
- MG: Was it Queen's Hospital or whatever, I'm not sure. But anyway, somewhere around there. Doyle's street. And I would walk to Washington Intermediate School.
- NP: Okay, down that way.
- MG: Then I would come home weekends. And then whenever we had paid we don't open the envelopes, take it right home, give it to your parents. And out of that maybe they'll give fifty cents or something, which was real big money for us, those days. And I'm not the only one [with] that kind of life. Many other of my classmates were in that same position. So several of them couldn't even continue to high school. Okay, so I worked part time right through . . .
- NP: What did you do for the Doyles when you were working for them? Like what kind of chores would you have to do?
- MG: You know, clean house, mop the area, and then help the lady fix breakfast, and then after school come back again and take care of the babies, you know, stuff like that. Do the dishes nighttime, help her cook. That's where I learned several food preparations.
- NP: Like what can you remember that you learned?

MG: I learned how to make mashed potato and those—she would make beef roast. And the next day, the leftovers, she would dice it up and then mix it with gravy with potatoes, onions, and all the vegetables. And she would make like a stew and put thickening inside. I thought it was real heavenly, those dishes, because we can't afford those meat and stuff.

NP: At home, when you were home with your family, what kind of food would you usually eat?

MG: Well, I was hardly home at that. They would eat like a piece of round steak or chop it with the cabbage, mix it up. To feed that many you just, you know. And then they would sit around the table and then if you not there at mealtime, certain time was a mealtime, you don't eat. (Laughs)

NP: Because there was nothing left?

MG: Yeah, nothing left. So when we had birthdays, like siblings had birthdays, my dad would buy those ring bologna. You know those round, ring bologna?

NP: Mm hmm.

MG: And then fish cake, *kamaboko*, and then roast pork from the Chinese—I guess your mother-in-law had those . . .

NP: Did they have a market.

MG: Market, yeah. And then the cake would be a marble cake. I remember it was round, chocolate and white marble cake. That was a pattern for all different sibling's birthday.

NP: Something that you must have really looked forward to.

(Laughter)

MG: And then Christmastime, we would—well let's see now—while walking to school, like that, we would pick up those red beans. They call it—I forgot. Anyway, we make beanbags out of the red beans. So we pick all those during the years and then walk to school, like that, and then save it for Christmastime, make beanbags. And the beanbags, we give three or four to each other. You know, wrap it up and. . . And then we would save matchboxes. You know those matchbox that came in, like the little square matches?

NP: Mm hmm [yes].

MG: And we would save the empty ones and we would put about six like this in and wrap it up and then it looks like a dresser.

NP: Oh how cute.

MG: But at the end we'll put, like a—make a knot like, with the yarn or something and pass it through and make another knot and you just pull that and there's that drawer. So those like that we used to make.

- NP: You had to be really creative, it sounds like, for toys.
- MG: We can't afford to buy anything. As I grew older and intermediate school, seventh or eighth grade, we were required to take sewing, you know, home ec [economics]. So, then I had learned how to cook some too, in that home ec. Learned how to make pies. But we cannot afford to make pies because you can't afford to buy the ingredients. So what I learned in school, that's how we learned. So not much to experience in pie making, or cake, anything. But we remember. And then they would teach us how to sew, you know. So whatever I learned in school we would cut the patterns. They don't have any [ready-made] patterns those days so you have to use your own, you know.
- NP: Your own pattern.
- MG: Draft yourself.
- NP: And they taught you the drafting also?
- MG: Uh huh [yes]. So, we survived with the clothing, I'd sew for my younger sisters and stuff like that. My mother had an old sewing machine.
- NP: With the pedals.
- MG: Yeah, the pedals. So my mother knew how to sew with the hand. So whatever we can't make with the machine we sew . . .
- NP: And back then, people who knew hand sewing, it was very beautiful and very delicate.
- MG: Right, and then, that's when we learned how to crochet a little, knit a little, in school. That was . . .
- NP: You went to Washington Intermediate and then you went to high school?
- MG: I went to McKinley High School.
- NP: McKinley High School. Was that a big school back then?
- MG: Oh yes, they didn't have much other high schools. They only had McKinley High School, and Roosevelt, Punahou, and St. Louis. But they were all private schools. [Punahou and St. Louis are private schools, Roosevelt was then a public English-standard school with restricted enrollment.] And so our graduating class was about 1,300 or almost 1,400. Talking about it, this year is our sixtieth graduating class, (laughs) sixtieth year.
- NP: Do you go back for reunions sometimes? No.
- MG: I lost track of all my—but they send letters, invitations and stuff. I just don't feel like going, you know. Nothing to talk about. I would rather look forward and. . . (Laughs) Although they call up and so I don't know who I'm talking to. They give me the names and I supposed to be good friends to 'em, you know. But there's another one that I know of, she's here, Chinese girl. She's going, she says, "So let's go, let's go."

"I don't know," I said, "I'm not sure."

NP: What kind of memories do you have of high school?

MG: Very good memories, of course, but I had to work part time to go. And then, as I said, I worked right through from [age] twelve up to high school. When I was about—was it about fifteen or going to sixteen or something, part time, after school I would go to work for these different families in the military. Where is that? You know where the Outrigger Hotel is now? What was the military base they call that before?

RG: Fort DeRussy?

MG: Fort DeRussy, right. I would walk from my house, go walk through this Fort DeRussy and go on the other end to this courtyard where all homes are different. And most of them are military families. So I would go and clean three different houses after school or something like wash the dishes while they work.

NP: Every day?

MG: Yeah. Uh huh. Some would leave their laundry soaked and I would wash it for them, stuff like that. But before I went to these courtyard houses, Halekūlani Hotel, I worked there for about two years or so. This was fourteen, fifteen years old. Then . . .

NP: At the hotel?

MG: Their bungalows.

NP: Oh yeah, okay, the old style, Halekūlani.

MG: Right, with the bungalows where the rich people would come and stay for the summer. Bring the children and they would leave the children at the bungalow and they would do their own socializing and whatever. So I would watch this particular family. They had the couple and grandmother and then the two little grandsons. So my job was to take care of them in the summer. Every Saturday and Sunday I would take them to the movies at Princess Theatre. What was it? Because the hotel would pay my expense, their expense. Hotel would give me. . . . Only ten cents admission. (Laughs) That's where I saw that *Gone with the Wind*. If I wasn't working I wouldn't be able to see that show.

NP: Yeah, yeah, so that was kind of a good deal, that part.

MG: Yeah, uh huh. So I would watch them swim and more or less—they didn't have any lifeguards or anything like. So I would watch them swim certain time of the day, you know. And that was . . .

NP: This would be at the beach?

MG: Yeah, right at the Halekūlani, and then you walk little ways and then the beach where they can swim. And then right now it's the Ilikai Hotel. That's where it is, Ilikai is right there where we used to take the kids swimming. Then the weekends I would take 'em to movies and stuff,

spend the day there. Then some nights I would stay till eight o'clock or something like that and they would feed me. And the thing about eating over there, what I liked was—the hotel supplies—two boiled eggs, you know, two hard-cooked eggs cut in half, and tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, and celery, all the big vegetable salad with that four half pieces of eggs. And then a dollop of mayonnaise.

NP: You must have . . .

MG: I still remember that.

NP: Yeah, I was going to say, you must've loved it because you can still remember it.

MG: Because we were not able to buy those things when we stay at home. And those tomatoes was those Roma tomatoes, not the regular tomatoes, the Roma ones.

NP: Small, tasty.

MG: So now we have some Roma tomatoes planted.

NP: Good.

MG: Because of that I like it. (Laughs) Brings back lot of memories, you know. So whenever they used to feed me, ho, I used to love it.

NP: So it sounds like you worked hard all the time.

MG: Yeah, yeah.

NP: Did you have time to socialize with your friends also?

MG: Yeah, uh huh.

NP: What kind of things would you do?

MG: Right, we are like intermediate school time, there was a good girlfriend that I'm still good girlfriend. She's in Honolulu. So we used to walk from---she used to live by that Makiki pump station, whatever you call that.

NP: Oh up there.

MG: Yeah, uh huh. I really don't remember how I used to go to her house but both of us would—would I meet her there or she would come my house or whatever, anyway, I still could picture both of us walking that length of space, distance, from the Makiki to Waikiki zoo. We used to walk there.

NP: That's a long way.

MG: That long, long walk, yeah. Okay, on the way they would have all those beans, tamarinds or whatever, those horse beans or whatever. We used to pick those and eat those and whatnot.

Pick up the red beans. And then we would stop over. . . . Out of the fifty cents that I got given to me after the one month's payday, I would save that, then we would buy five cents ice cream cone. You know that. She would buy five cents and I would. And she was working as well too, part time. And so that was, more or less, our highlight of the week. And certain time of the day we would walk and buy that waffle ice cream cone. You know those?

NP: Yeah.

MG: Five cents. That was the hit of that day. (Laughs)

NP: That was the hit, yeah. What about in high school, did you go . . .

MG: Yeah, I'll show you what I belonged to, different clubs and whatnot. But somehow I had a good---I have this here because this girl is coming to pick this up Wednesday.

NP: This is your yearbook, is it?

MG: Yeah, she's my classmate, she's the one who's going to that reunion. But she lost her book so she wants to see. I kept it here so when she comes I just give it to her.

NP: So you were the class of nineteen. . . .

MG: [Nineteen] thirty-eight.

NP: [Nineteen] thirty-eight.

MG: Yeah, here. And then, you know, when they have the yearbook, everybody brings all the books and piles it in front of your desk and this was on the bottom here open like this and all about this high, you know. So you just sign it. Wherever your pictures are, you sign it. And here it is. And so somebody has writ[ten], I don't know who this is, if this is Young or Wong or whatever it is. They wrote and it says here, try see what she says.

NP: "Gee, what a girl, signing her name. Ha ha, just now . . ."

MG: "On your own picture," yeah.

NP: "On your own picture," yeah.

MG: (Laughs) So this is the . . .

NP: Oh, I see, you signed "Aloha, May" on your picture.

MG: This is what it is, it says there what the activities we were doing.

NP: You were senior dance club secretary, HR magazine and pamphlet chairman, camera club and HR special activities chairman.

MG: Mm hmm, mm hmm. And this one is the . . .

NP: Man, you were busy.

MG: . . . we were also sponsor, you know, ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] unit. And the thing is, there's some pictures in here about the ROTC sponsors, ROTC platoons and stuff like that. We had a good life, high school, I think, although most of the girls were working after school. And the boss that I had, he was a Captain McKee, he was head of the McKinley High School ROTC at that time. There was this guy—well, those days, the ROTC officers have to have a sponsor. So at that time he was so shy he cannot find any girl or ask any girl to be the sponsor. So he asked Captain McKee if the girl working for you . . .

NP: Would be his sponsor.

MG: (Laughs) So that was me. But I didn't know that. But way afterward Captain McKee said, "You know how you got be a sponsor?"

I says, "No."

"He asked me, 'The girl working for you, is the girl I'd like to be my sponsor.'" But he doesn't say a word. You know, he so shy.

So that's how I got to be his sponsor. And the captain was the one who told me, "Go to this guy," you know. He [the boy] wrote a note, the name, my name and everything. That's all, he don't even say hello, no nothing. (Laughs)

NP: So after you graduated, did you work anywhere or what did you do?

MG: Yeah, uh huh. In 1938 I worked at the Bon Ton dress shop and department store [The Bon Ton Womens & Childrens Wear].

NP: Bon Ton dress shop.

MG: B-O-N T-O-N. It was situated right across from the [S.H.] Kress store in [Downtown] Honolulu. Diagonally across.

NP: How did you choose working there? How did that happen?

MG: Well, you see, just before graduating everybody would walk the streets in Honolulu or wherever and then leave all our names on different . . .

NP: Companies.

MG: . . . drug stores or Liberty House or whatever, you know. And then happened that the man that had sponsored my dad to come to Honolulu, his wife, very elderly lady, would always walk the streets collecting ads for the newspaper. So happened that she goes to the Bon Ton district and it was kind of an exclusive place where they screen you and stuff like that. And then she heard that my name was—you know, we would leave our name. So she more or less urged the boss to screen me, you know, test me out. So, it was pretty hard to get into those kind of stores. At that time we would get into it, we would work as an apprentice three months without pay.

NP: Hmm.

MG: Yeah, those days were like that. Many places, Liberty House and . . .

NP: No health insurance, no nothing.

MG: (Chuckles) No union and stuff those days. So I was eventually hired after three months. And while I was there that's when my husband came, too. In fact, his dad came to see me while I was there, while I was working, which I didn't know about.

NP: You didn't know. Did you see him there?

MG: But he had already spoken to my parents.

NP: Did you see him when he came into the store?

MG: My father-in-law?

NP: Your father-in-law.

MG: No. So, he sort of okayed. Those days, before the war, Japanese strict style, traditional stuff, the elder one would get married and live with the family and then take over the heirship or something like, for the family. So they would really scrutinize the people that wants the son to get married to, yeah. Although boys would have their girlfriends, you know, stuff like that. But to be married to, they have to choose. The parents would more or less be the ones to choose for them.

NP: So how did you feel about this arranged marriage? How did it work for you?

MG: I was only nineteen and just out of high school. High school, I was out at eighteen. At that time I would like to go to dances. My eldest brother, George, would like to go to dances. And he and his friends, his gang, they would take me and I would tag along as a youngster. They would go to different dances, YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] and all different dance areas, social dancing, you know. And even while working at the Bon Ton, like that, couple of people I went out dancing with—of course, approval of my brothers. It's just, "The guy not so good," you know, "This is okay." So I would go dancing. After working Bon Ton, the night shifts like that, my dad would come and pick me up after work.

NP: How late would you work?

MG: Ah gee, must have been about ten o'clock or eleven o'clock in the night.

NP: So he'd walk up and get you or. . . .

MG: No, his car. My dad would drive his car up and then take me home. It wasn't every time because the shifts always changed, you know. During the daytime I would catch the streetcar to come home.

NP: So when you had the *miai*, do you remember being really nervous or anxious about it?

- MG: No, no. I didn't think much about it. In fact, because my parents, you know, talked about it and told me about it and this and that, so I said, "Well, if I should get married, would that be easier on the family financially?" They said yeah, so I said, "Okay, okay, I'll get married." That's the only way I felt about it to help the family out. But I never knew that you have [to live] with the old people, your in-laws, never knew those things. I never knew anybody in Hilo, never heard of Hilo at that time. (Chuckles) Those days, no TV, only radio, and the newspapers. But you don't read about Hilo or Kaua'i or Maui and stuff. You don't know there was an island besides where you are. Because there's so many other things going in the mind. So (laughs) that's about the only. . . .
- NP: So you met your husband, you had another meeting with him, and then you came to Hilo to get married.
- MG: On the third time. The third time was—we had our ceremony in Honolulu within my friend only. And just one girl, my seventh-grade good friend, the one I used to eat ice cream with, she was the only one invited to my wedding. The rest was all relatives and family.
- NP: Was that also a Japanese-style wedding?
- MG: Yeah.
- NP: With kimono and you have that *katsura* and . . .
- MG: Right. This one, like this here. This was Shinto, the ceremony. That day after the ceremony, everything, we would board the interisland boat. I think it was *Haleakalā* or something like that. My husband would remember. So it took us overnight.
- NP: So you spent your honeymoon on the boat in the ocean.
- MG: Yeah, more or less, more or less. But the thing is, after the ceremony in Honolulu they took us to this dinky hotel, (laughs) Japanese, Yamashiro Hotel in Honolulu near the River Street side [on Beretania Street and College Walk]. And in the room there's only mattress. So we had to go ask for the sheet. They look at us as though, "Oh my goodness, why they like. . . ." you know, when we say that. I remember that, only mattress. So after that, next day I think, we came. Was it morning? Board the boat and then it took us morning to overnight, like that. And then reach here the next morning just before seven o'clock, I think. My husband got sick on the boat, seasick. My mother got seasick.
- NP: Oh, so your whole family was . . .
- MG: Nope, just . . .
- NP: Your mother.
- MG: Just myself, my husband, his father, and my mother, my father, that's all. So I was so happy to be on the boat to eat (laughs) all different kinds of good stuff. But my husband and my mother was all—can't even lift up the head, seasick. And my father-in-law and my dad, I think they were able to eat. But anyway, when I reached here, standing on the wharf with—there were several other people greeting the other people, you know—and then this girl

was standing there and waving as the boat anchored and stuff. And I cannot figure who this girl is, you know. Because I didn't realize that I had another—besides my husband there was somebody else in the family, you know. Then she's waving and she—the thing I remember, first thing about it, she was fair. The one blotch of rouge like this, you know, like Betty Boop, you put the . . .

NP: Yeah, yeah.

MG: I could just see that. And those days that was the style, you know. You just pat it like that.

NP: Pat in on. Really red. And who was that? That was . . .

MG: Ellen.

NP: Ellen, yeah, his sister.

MG: The sister. And she wasn't married, she's four years older than I was and she wasn't married. Okay, before going to my husband's house from the wharf we drove the car and they took me to this, they call that Yamanoha Hospital. And in the back there's the residence. So we went to the residence—and this hospital is now the surgical hospital (across from Kadota Liquors & Drive Inn).

NP: Oh okay.

MG: There's a . . .

NP: Yeah, a little. . . .

MG: Yeah, there's several doctors over there. That's where it was, the doctor's hospital over there. So at their residence they put me front of this mirror, that Japanese-style mirror, and then they start working on me. Shave my face off so they can put makeup on good and then all different makeup and the hairdo. The other lady will work on my hairdo. By that time they had told me to, "Don't cut your hair. Just let it grow long." So I wouldn't cut my hair for two months or three months or whatever, so it was pretty long. So they would take this part here, put one patch grease and that thing just sticks out like horse's tail. And here, here like this same thing, like. So when I look in the mirror I'm like this, yeah, [with a traditional Japanese ceremonial hairdo].

NP: Oh my gosh.

MG: Like that, that's how it was. You know grease, heavy grease. Then eventually they mold it up and like that . . .

NP: That's the picture. So that was---in this picture it's not a wig, that's your hair that they actually made up. Wow.

MG: Well, they may have some hair parts but not the wig like that. Nowadays they do have a wig, but those days they don't have, you see. They use most of your own hair, and then maybe a little longer tail like put in the back here or something. So from seven o'clock in the morning

till we break for lunch noontime. Then after one hour we would still go back to the mirror and then they dress me up in the kimono, all this and that. Took me up till five o'clock that day to be dressed.

NP: And yet you don't look tired in the picture, you look fine.

MG: Well, with all that makeup and you're young yet.

NP: You can tell. Wow.

MG: And then I guess we must have taken picture after that, I guess, I'm not sure. But this was taken in Hilo.

NP: It's a beautiful picture. And the kimono was something that they . . .

MG: Well, okay, say like, my sister-in-law Ellen graduated high school, then she was sent to Japan. This was in 1935. And those days the families that had money would send the sons or the daughters to Japan to be further educated. But they had sent her to prepare her to be a bride. You know, like sewing and etiquette . . .

NP: Flower arranging.

MG: . . . and flower arrangement, tea ceremony, how to wear kimonos and all those things, speaking, you know. So about year and a half she was in that school in Japan. Then before coming back to Hilo the parents had sent her some money to buy all those, you know. In preparation for her wedding, dowry, you know. So she bought all those kimonos and stuff. From slipper to the *tabis* and everything. From the school they would more or less teach her what to buy and how to buy and this and that. So she brought back all those. And then being married to the elder son I got to use those first, [before] she did. So these kimonos and all those things belonged to the parents because they had paid for it.

NP: So that was brand-new.

MG: Yeah, uh huh. So I still have all these. Then now my grandson, Akira's oldest son [Dale] is getting married in couple of weeks. She (Dale's fiancée) wanted to take pictures with the (kimono).

NP: Wonderful.

MG: Yeah. So she came with Dale about a couple of months back and they took about two or three different kimonos to Honolulu. So one of these days we'll be seeing the pictures I guess. But not this hair style. They have one now where they use their own hair and just regular, you know. In those days . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 29-16-1-98; SIDE ONE

- MG: And they have now in Honolulu (kimono rental places) where this lady would—it's her business. She has several kimonos with her, obis and whatnot. And then they would dress them up like a bride. They would charge about \$600, if you use their kimono and stuff. (If you use your own kimono then the fee is less.)
- NP: Well, it's wonderful that she's going to use your kimono. And that you kept it.
- MG: Yeah. So her grandmother, her own grandmother had something in that fashion, you know, when she got married. So she kept hers like we did. So she had three and she took three of ours. So either one she's going to take pictures with and then give to us. But the main ceremony will be the regular bride (western style).
- NP: Going be western style.
- MG: White one, yeah.
- NP: I'm going to ask you one or two more questions.
- MG: Sure.
- NP: Because we've been talking for a long time and I know you get tired.
- MG: Yeah. Okay, all right.
- NP: But what I wanted to finish off with—I think we'll go up to, let's say, the time before the tidal wave. And next time we'll talk about the tidal wave with your husband. But tell me a little bit about moving into his family and what that was like.
- MG: Oh, I see. Okay, as I said, I don't know anybody. I had relatives in Kohala but I barely know about them, I never met them unless, when we were little, they came to Honolulu to visit us. That's about all. And I didn't know anyone. So was pretty hard. And then before the war it wasn't as civilized like [during] war and after the war, you see. Everything is, "Oh, you from Honolulu." Stuff like that.
- And then I used to like to have red dresses. Prints in red or, you know, dresses. So I had few red dresses at the beginning of my life in Hilo. And the neighbors, the Shinmachi neighbors, the ladies were all gathering and talk, they said, "Ooh, the *yome-san*," they call it, the bride, "she wear red clothes." And to them it's unheard of.
- So my mother-in-law, in front of me, even told my sister-in-law, you know, Ellen, "Don't you wear, don't you make any red dresses like. . . ."
- NP: Like what you were wearing.
- MG: Yeah. But so I didn't care, it didn't dawn on me, I was young, never dawn on me because in Honolulu it's just natural that you wear whatever you like and stuff like that. And then if I go to the movies, all the neighbors would wonder, or this and that, you know. All the. . . .
- NP: A lot of talking, everybody must have known what everybody was doing.

MG: Especially you from Honolulu, you see. Yeah, it wasn't easy, it wasn't.

NP: How was it living with your mother[-in-law] and father-in-law?

MG: Well, looking back now, I'm very thankful that I had them, lived with them. Because I had to learn many things. Like I was growing up with them. Of course, it was hard during the process, you know. But looking back, I'm very happy and thankful that they were there, you know. And then when I had given birth, they would take care of the first baby, this and that. The thing is, it's a family business so we all, the whole family, would work at the service station, the grocery store, or the place over there. So my sister-in-law and I would stay at home in the morning, fix breakfast, clean up the house, and everything. Where my mother-in-law, my father-in-law, and my husband, and his brother all would go to work. And then we make the breakfast ready so they would come home and they would eat and they would leave. Then we'd clean up. Then we'll go to the store. We would all work in store.

Then before lunchtime I would come back. And then I fix lunch, you know, with my mother-in-law or my sister-in-law. I don't know if my sister-in-law came back to fix lunch, but I remember I came back and I fix lunch. And then they would all come home after that, they would eat and then go back again. So I would clean up everything and then go back to the store and work there until maybe suppertime. But suppertime, we were---yeah, same thing, we would go back and fix, you know, this and that.

NP: Was it busy at suppertime, the store? Were there a lot of people buying in the late afternoon or. . . .

MG: Well, more neighborhood store so I wouldn't say it's a. . . . But certain people would come at certain time every day, this and that. Most of it was charge customers, too. So when I had Akira I would. . . .

NP: When was he born?

RG: April 15, 1941.

NP: So Akira was born April. . . .

MG: Fifteenth.

NP: Right before. . . .

MG: Nineteen forty-one.

NP: Okay, right before the war began.

MG: Well, yeah, uh huh.

NP: And Roy, you were born?

RG: Nineteen forty-six. July 25, 1946.

NP: Much younger.

RG: About three months after the tidal wave.

NP: Oh, so you were pregnant during the tidal wave, too. Oh, I didn't know that.

MG: That's why you have his side of the story. He wasn't born [but] he knows about it. (RG laughs.) He said he saw the tidal wave going on, you know, like what we were going through, from the navel. (Laughs)

NP: Inside, yeah.

MG: He could see. I guess he could feel it or something, all that was going around. (Laughs)

NP: Well, let me stop now and we'll continue the next time.

MG: Yeah, okay.

NP: And I'll come back and we'll talk about—focus on both tidal waves next time. And then we can just take a breath here.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 29-17-2-98 and 29-18-2-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ronald "Square" Goya (SG) and May Goya (MG)

Hilo, Hawai'i

May 13, 1998

BY: Nancy Piianaia (NP)

NP: This is May 13, 1998 and I'm back in Hilo at the home of May and Ronald ["Square"] Goya. We're going to be talking today about their experiences in both tidal waves and the effect that that had on their home, their family, and their business.

So thank you very much for once again giving me such great food and allowing me to come and interview you. I'd like to start with your memories of the war years when you had a service station operating, a grocery store, and a liquor store. What was the effect of the war on your business?

MG: Well, shall I start off with that?

SG: Yeah.

MG: When the war started, it was December 7, [1941], and they had the military. . . .

SG: Take over.

MG: Yeah, it's not the, what do you call? Military . . .

NP: Martial law?

MG: Martial law, yeah.

SG: Let me take over. [For example], Hawai'i Planing Mill was right across [from] our place. The Seabees took it over, just temporarily, during the war. And while we had the liquor store, they closed our liquor store altogether.

NP: Did they take all your bottles . . .

SG: No, no, they don't take anything.

MG: Gasoline were rationed, too. Private homes were issued [coupons for] eight (to ten) gallons a month gasoline. But his service station, because of business, service station, he [was allowed] how many gallons?

- SG: Well, we had taxi, that's why. We had . . .
- NP: You started taxi [business] at that time?
- SG: Yeah, when the war happened we started taxi because we had no . . .
- MG: Yeah, because the grocery store wasn't nothing. Everything was rationed. We cannot get any goods coming to you, not even delivery. So we would have to go drive and buy, pick up all those groceries, whatever, milk, everything. And then load it in our own car, bring it back to the grocery store, and sell those meats and all different things. Nobody would deliver it because the gasoline were rationed.
- NP: Oh, of course. Was it difficult to get all the supplies that you needed?
- MG: Right, right. And things weren't coming in from other areas like the other islands or the Mainland or Japan or anything. So whatever we could get, we would have to make do with what we could get.
- NP: What were the most difficult things to get?
- SG: Everything was rationed.
- MG: Yeah, everything.
- SG: You can buy so much and that's all. Even liquor, you cannot buy more than one bottle a week, that's all. And then the gasoline is rationed. Five to eight gallons a car a week.
- MG: That's for his . . .
- SG: That's my side.
- MG: He has the business.
- SG: And then we had taxi.
- NP: How did they check on whether you were giving out the right amount of gas? Did you have to match up the coupons with the amount?
- MG: They issue . . .
- SG: Yeah, they issued a coupon and then when we buy the gas we use the coupon to fill our tank. See our tank, we had only 500 gallons so. . . . People was [buying] fifty gallons a month [prior to the war], now they have to come with . . .
- MG: Only ten gallons.
- SG: Yeah.
- NP: I know that you folks wouldn't have done this, but was there a black market kind of gasoline

going on?

- SG: This the first time so there's no black market. If you're family, you get stuck, well they help each other. That's why Hilo was good, everybody help each other during the war.
- MG: And then the martial law is 6:00 in the evening; everything should be closed, blacked out. And all the windows, everything blacked out.
- SG: You cannot use light, otherwise you . . .
- MG: Lights cannot be visible from outside. Even one speck of light showing, the Seabee guards are there knocking. You know, "Close the light out," you know.
- NP: Did you close down at 6:00 then, every night?
- SG: Oh everybody.
- MG: Everybody. You cannot be on the street after 6:00.
- SG: You have to get pass.
- MG: And then at the home, gatherings, any kind of gathering, you cannot have more than ten people congregated in your house, like that.
- SG: They were strict.
- MG: Yeah, real strict about it. So if they see several cars parked in your yard, they would come and look into it. And then if there's more than ten people, they tell you to stop.
- NP: Did that change the way that you lived?
- MG: Oh yeah.
- NP: Having to be in at night?
- MG: Our store business, we stayed on till about ten o'clock usually. Ten or eleven o'clock in the evening every night. [MG is referring to the time after the war and after the tsunami, when the fountain was built.]
- NP: What would you do at night then, because you were home early?
- SG: Just listen to radio. There's no such thing as TV.
- MG: They didn't have any TV, yeah.
- SG: Or you play your record at home, that's all.
- MG: But he joined the volunteers.

- SG: Volunteer, first aid. So we get pass to go out at night with our car. But our car, you'd be surprised how, the light, you know the headlight?
- NP: Mm hmm.
- SG: They get a shield so it only faces down[ward], and you drive ten miles an hour.
- NP: Very carefully.
- SG: Yeah, be careful.
- MG: And just about this much [light] showing, you know.
- SG: But those days in Hilo, we lucky we had 5,000 automobiles. That's all had, see, that's why easy to drive. And the front street [i.e., Kamehameha Avenue] was wide.
- MG: So Seabees all took over that [Hawai'i] Planing Mill area. And I don't know where the [Hawai'i] Planing Mill went to, but, as I said, during the day I would sell sandwiches in the back. They would all buy.
- NP: You said as many as you made, you could sell. They wanted them so badly.
- MG: Yeah, because Seabees, you know, they're hungry because they don't cook or anything there. They go back to Pōhakuloa or wherever. Or they had their station in the airport, yeah? NAS [Naval Air Station] place.
- SG: What?
- MG: The Seabees, their home base was. Just then, 1942, Mauna Loa erupted, yeah. And then everything is blacked out so you could just see the lava bright and shiny in the sky like that.
- NP: Wow, it must have been spectacular.
- MG: From where we were, we would just walk out to the roadside and look up. Straight up and you can see the lava flowing like that, all bright red.
- NP: So it was coming down the side of the mountain?
- MG: Yeah, right, right.
- SG: Came down to Saddle Road. All this place was lighted like this. Nice light.
- MG: From that . . .
- SG: Eruption.
- MG: . . . eruption. Although we not supposed to have any other light showing, you know. So it was beautiful.

NP: So if an enemy plane wanted to find the Big Island, it would be pretty easy.

MG: Right.

SG: Yeah.

MG: They tried so hard and so fast trying to get that thing *pio*, you know [to stop the flow]. So [the government] bombed [attempting to stop the lava flow]. They bombed in the airplane.

And during that beginning part of the war I had miscarriage so I had to stay in the hospital. December 7, when they started to have everything blacked out, I was in the hospital bed. You know where the surgical building is now?

NP: Mm hmm [yes].

MG: That's where. And then everything was all dark and there's all guards outside, you know. So I was scared. But then they were instructed to build bomb shelters.

SG: Bomb shelters. Everybody built bomb shelter.

MG: Bomb shelter, you know, underground.

NP: In town? By your house?

SG: Anyplace at home. We lived in Shinmachi and when you dig so much . . .

NP: There's water.

SG: High tide the water come up. But we dig so much and then put lumber and cover it. And you put your food and everything. Everybody think that's funny, but it happened.

MG: And then they issued the mask.

NP: Gas masks?

SG: Yeah.

MG: Everybody.

SG: Everybody had gas masks. And you carry your gas mask wherever you go.

MG: So good thing we had his parents, we all lived together. When the siren blows, like that, they would all go in that [shelter], you know. They had all different canned goods and everything in storage.

NP: So you actually went into the air raid shelters?

SG: Yeah, everybody had.

- NP: You did a practice? You would go into the . . .
- SG: Yeah, we get practice sometime and we all go underneath. I don't know if any people told you about that shelter. You ask, they forget all about that.
- MG: I think so. They built steps going down to there. The parents had hired somebody, contractor or something, to build it for them.
- SG: We dig a hole, so much. If you dig over five feet the water will come up because the ocean. We were three feet below sea level, that's why we cannot.
- MG: That's in Shinmachi.
- NP: So there wasn't much room then, in the shelter.
- SG: [Not] much room so we made it flat and then instead of standing up in there, we'd go crawl in, see.
- MG: And then sit down on the bench.
- SG: You ask some more people down Shinmachi, they tell you the same thing. And they lived right by the [Wailoa] River, they cannot dig too much.
- NP: It must have been pretty damp in there then.
- SG: Oh yeah. When we get high tide, get water in the shelter.
- NP: What happened to your parents during the war? Were they aliens?
- SG: Yeah, they were aliens, see. They thought they was going get picked up but they didn't get picked up.
- MG: But they did come to the house and searched everything.
- SG: And then nothing so.
- MG: And they don't like the idea of having those altars, you know those Japanese *hon*.
- NP: The *butsudan*.
- MG: We have. Yeah, *butsudan*, yes. So my in-laws, quickly, they put it away. They heard about things, so put it away. And they dug everything in, underground, whatever books and Japanese stuff.
- SG: You know, lot of people hid their money underground and they'd leave 'em for four or five years. Gone, you know, you brought out, no air.
- MG: Or something. Melting away.

- NP: Did the *butsudan* and those things survive, that they had buried?
- MG: Yeah, uh huh.
- SG: If you did put in the box nicely all right, but you bury anything . . .
- NP: How soon after Pearl Harbor did they come and knock on your door and check the house?
- SG: Oh, take kind of long time. Because they go to all the big ones first, big boys [i.e., prominent leaders in the Japanese community]. Then they come.
- MG: They had the concentration camp in Keaukaha [for interned Japanese].
- SG: No, not Keaukaha, the military camp.
- MG: Oh, military camp.
- NP: Oh, Kīlauea, up on the . . .
- SG: Yeah, Kīlauea Military Camp. The people that---concentration camp was there first. Then they [internees] were transferred to the Mainland.
- NP: I know there were several people in Hilo who had to go.
- MG: Right.
- SG: Yeah.
- MG: But anyway, luckily we weren't picked up, you know, my in-laws weren't picked up. So we worked what we can do during the ration period and all kind. So can't help but just feel as though you're being watched everywhere you go, what you sell, and things like that. But, okay, the soldiers started to come early. First was the Seabees and they built everything, barracks, everything. So then they went away. Then the apple-knockers came, you know, New York. They were the first ones.
- SG: What you mean? The Seabees was here. All the time.
- MG: They was still there. Oh.
- NP: The second group was what?
- MG: The apple-knockers, the New Yorkers.
- NP: Oh, the apple-knockers.
- MG: Yeah, they call that.
- SG: That's their nickname.

MG: The soldiers, the army.

NP: Why did they call them that?

SG: I don't know.

MG: When they say you apple-knockers means you from New York.

NP: Oh, okay.

SG: Yeah.

MG: That's what we learned, you know. Most of them were . . .

SG: Because my sister married one of them. (Laughs)

MG: That's how she met her husband. He used to be our---their bunch were our customers. And then they had many, what you call, you know, trucks that go up and down, up and down. First before we get into---there was this convoy that landed---LSD [Dock Landing Ship] landed at . . .

SG: Right in the bay, you know where the Hawaiian . . .

MG: The canoe landing is?

NP: Yes, yes.

MG: They used to have a landing for LSD landing, you know. And then all the marines and soldiers would come and stuff like that. Especially the marines, they had the convoy coming up from there and going up to Camp Tarawa, they used to call.

SG: Waimea.

NP: In Waimea, right.

SG: Where you live.

MG: So they were the first convoy Hilo people ever saw. And the elderly people were so afraid, the elder Japanese. Here were these guys on the truck, standing up, ready to shoot. You know, like this, all standing on the truck, all convoy.

SG: Convoy to Waimea.

NP: I bet there was a lot, too.

SG: Forty-two thousand. [Approximately 50,000 military personnel stayed at Camp Tarawa.]

MG: So that's when they were so scared, all of those people. And all the civilians lined up on the sidewalks, watch those going up. That's the first time they saw army trucks and, you know,

those things. And then the soldiers came, the apple-knockers came, and then they went up there too, I think. Was it after that?

SG: Who?

MG: After the marines came or something.

SG: No, they were here first and then the marines came. . . .

NP: There were some soldiers who came to Waimea before the marines, who built the platforms for all the tents.

SG: Yeah, yeah, the Seabees came and . . .

NP: So maybe that was this group.

SG: See, by the [Hilo] Airport, they have a swimming pool. There was a lot of buildings there [during World War II] for all these army officers and everything. And they built all the barracks and all, the roads and everything, the Seabees.

MG: We used to call that NAS, Naval Air Station.

NP: So during the war, because of the rationing, did you have less business or did you have more business or was it . . .

SG: We had good business because lot of people came in. They have to . . .

MG: Well, yeah. Not so much groceries though. Like ice cream and you know, those . . .

SG: Sandwich and that sort of.

MG: Whatever you could get. Roy was in the stomach and he was born in July. And this thing happened . . .

SG: You talking . . .

MG: No, not Roy, no, no, no, I'm talking way ahead.

SG: Yeah.

MG: Okay. No, no, I'm sorry.

NP: What were you thinking of? The tidal waves? Or. . . .

SG: No, she's thinking about—not the tidal waves, you asked her about the war. Because the first was born . . .

MG: April 1941.

NP: Nineteen forty-one.

SG: Nineteen forty-one, April.

NP: Okay, just before the war.

SG: Yeah. And December 7 was the war.

MG: All right. And the next year, when I got pregnant. When I had miscarriage, over five months, six months.

But then I didn't know how to drive, but being that nobody would deliver those things, my sister-in-law was picking up all the [goods]—Ellen. She was single then. She lived with us. And then she met this guy, Joe, and went away. So we were left without [a driver]. So I had to go pick it up. And in the meantime I learned how to drive fast.

(Laughter)

MG: You know.

NP: The hard way.

MG: And in fact, I didn't have a license for one year. (NP laughs.) Picking up orders. And I was pregnant. So many a times I parked the car at certain area in town then all these guys would come and pick those things up and put it in my truck—car. It was a car without brakes, yeah. Had brakes? No more light was, yeah. But anyway, we survived. That's how we did, but I lost the baby. And then in '42, she [Ellen, SG's sister] met this guy and they got married, and they were shipped away.

NP: How did your family feel about that? Was that okay, for her to marry him?

MG: It wasn't a nice picture.

SG: They were eloped marriage.

MG: They didn't believe in, you know, so. We did what we can to soothe the old people, you know. Let them calm down, you know. So cannot help those things.

SG: Because the old days, if the oldest son don't get married, the rest won't get married. So they'll make sure oldest son get married first. If they cannot find themselves they gonna find for you.

NP: And everybody else waits.

MG: Like we were married, huh.

SG: Before the war was like us.

MG: That's why in our era, you know age group, many of them were in that style. You know, that parents have to . . .

- NP: Arrange who . . .
- MG: *Shimpai*, you know. Even if they had girlfriends or boyfriends, you know. Being the eldest, you know.
- SG: You know, my brother and I, we had taxi. We used the taxi for everything because no ambulance service those days. We don't have the ambulance. We used to take pregnant people hospital, injury to hospital. We had a pass for nighttime, so for emergency we used to do.
- NP: And as you said . . .
- MG: Those were all those blackout . . .
- NP: . . . because so few people had cars, they really needed you.
- SG: Oh, those days not a lot of people had cars and they cannot go out. That's the only thing, they can use the telephone call, that's all.
- MG: Did they have that sampan buses that time?
- SG: Yeah, they had the buses. Plenty, the buses.
- NP: So throughout the war you lived in Shinmachi with your parents.
- MG: Right, we all lived together.
- NP: And what about your brother and his family, did they live there also?
- SG: No, they stayed there little while till he found a house and they moved out.
- MG: He got married in February 1942. They stayed in the house about a month or so and he found a house for himself.
- NP: And they weren't in Shinmachi? They were back?
- MG: Yeah, they all lived away. Actually, his brother had helped at the service station. Wife, you know, she worked outside.
- NP: So at the end of the war the service station was continuing, the grocery store was there, and you were able to reopen the liquor store.
- SG: Yeah, yeah.
- NP: Or that had been opened . . .
- SG: After the war.
- MG: And what about the U-drive?

- SG: The U-drive, after the war [started].
- NP: But before the tidal wave?
- SG: Yeah, yeah, [1943], before the tidal wave. After '46 tidal wave we gave up our (U-drive). And for me and my brother, we get wife and everything, so he have to work outside. So he became an auto serviceman, Hilo Motors. He worked there and she and I worked at the station.
- NP: At the station. But before the tidal wave you didn't have the U-drive yet?
- MG: They did.
- NP: You did?
- MG: In fact, taxi and U-drive.
- NP: Was the U-drive your own independent operation?
- SG: Yeah.
- NP: It wasn't like Hertz [Rent A Car] or National [Car Rental] or . . .
- MG: No, no, no.
- SG: We had, oh, about four or five independent U-drive [businesses in Hilo]. Then the big boys came in and we quit.
- MG: So Jack's U-Drive was one of them in that he was a taxi driver plus . . .
- NP: This is the Jack's that has the . . .
- MG: . . . ran the U-drive [Jack I. Miyashiro].
- NP: . . . tour business now [Jack's Tours, Inc.]?
- SG: Yeah. Most all the U-drive people was a taxi driver, too.
- MG: And those days they didn't have credit cards, nothing. So everything was just charge, you know.
- SG: Everybody charged.
- NP: Now how many cars did you have and what kind of people would rent those cars?
- SG: Local people. Some people come from away, like interisland people, family or something.
- MG: And the airlines were limited. Not just anybody could ride the airplane.
- NP: This was during the war?

- MG: During the war.
- SG: Yeah, if you want to go to Honolulu, you go down the ticket office and they look at your name, what purpose you going, everything. If for business you get chance, but if just for ride they won't.
- MG: Yeah, many people just couldn't go back and forth, you know. Even people from O'ahu or wherever couldn't come [freely].
- NP: Did they have many flights a day or . . .
- SG: Everything was run by the government.
- MG: Airplane flights.
- SG: You know how many---it take 2½ hours from Honolulu to Hilo, the first . . .
- NP: By propeller?
- SG: Yeah. Right on top and bolt underneath. I have a picture.
- NP: Oh, were they the pontoon ones?
- SG: Yeah.
- NP: That they would land the sea planes?
- SG: Yeah, I have that, it land in the ocean and water. But I have the picture of that . . .
- NP: Later on I'd love to see that.
- MG: We have to look for it.
- NP: . . . they called them the flying boats. Yeah, after we finish.
- MG: No, we have to look for it. (Laughs)
- NP: Oh that's okay. All right, let's talk about the 1946 tidal wave.
- SG: Oh boy.
- NP: And this was just kind of to set the scene. You were still living in Shinmachi; you have the gas station; you have still some taxis; you have U-drive; you have a grocery store; and you have a little liquor store. And can you tell me your memories of the '46 tidal wave? What you were doing when it happened, that kind of thing.
- SG: I going tell you first. Me and my brother, we were home. And then, you know young people, we sleep till late. So my father and mother would go to the store to open the store and check everything. And then we come to work about seven o'clock or seven-thirty. But we slept till

late. My mother, from the station, she ran to our place and she said, "Tidal wave".

MG: We didn't know what that was but he [SG] knew.

NP: So your parents were already at the store . . .

MG: See, they were there from about six o'clock in the morning.

NP: Hmm, I think it started at about seven o'clock or so. [According to *Tsunami!* by Walter C. Dudley and Min Lee, the first waves of the 1946 tsunami arrived at approximately 6:50 A.M.]

SG: Yeah.

MG: Seven-thirty about, you know. Just before seven-thirty, the tidal wave. But we were having breakfast . . .

SG: Because she don't know what [the word "tsunami"] means. So I told her . . .

MG: But "tidal wave" I knew. Because in Honolulu I experienced small tidal wave. But "tsunami" I never heard.

SG: They had the construction cars, garage, next to our house. So the truck came, the working people. Then tell me, "Get tidal wave so you got to get out."

So I tell, "Will you please take my wife because she's pregnant?" And then we had the little boy so she went on the truck. But meanwhile, I have to go see my mother and father at the station.

NP: They were still at the station. Mmm.

SG: Alone. So I ran up to see them. And the wave was coming already, the big one was coming. So I . . .

NP: Could you see it?

SG: Oh, no, I didn't see, but I was in the water like that.

NP: Oh, up to your waist or so.

SG: Yeah. Because when I went there, all the buildings in the front [i.e., the buildings on the *makai* side of Kamehameha Avenue] fell down so I cannot see. [Goya Brothers Service Station was on the *mauka* side of Kamehameha Avenue.] But my father was out, he was on the [Wailoa River] bridge. My mother was looking for my father and she gets stuck by the Excelsior Dairy over there. They had a dairy there. And then good thing . . .

MG: The water was so—they cannot see the buildings.

SG: Wait, wait. They have the platform, on the platform, lot of people were there. And I saw my mother there. Water was by the waist already, I know it was a big wave. So wait till the next

wave, the water recedes. Then I told her to [stay there]. But she wants to get out because my father called to her to come [to him at the bridge]. I said, "No, no, no." I had to plead with her and then she'd listen. Then [after the wave] all the people followed her and went out [to Piopio Street]. That's the only experience.

NP: So you ran to where your mother---you didn't run because you were half up to your waist in water.

SG: Yeah, that's why I told her to stay back.

NP: Yeah. And did you go up to the bridge to meet her?

SG: No, she got up and everybody came down, too.

MG: Then the water receded, that's when they walk.

SG: Recede, that's when they told, "You fella walk and go down."

NP: Did more waves come in after that?

SG: After that, we don't know what happened, we all went out [i.e., left the area].

MG: Well anyway, according to Grandpa [SG's father], he was at the store and he was on top of the office desk, you know just see-sawing on the desk. That's when you saw him, I think, first, yeah?

SG: But he was smart, I told you, he got out before.

NP: So he left after the wave began rising, he left and went back.

SG: The first wave was just so much. The second one was big. The third one was the biggest.

NP: So in the third one, where did you go to, to escape?

SG: The third one, everybody was out already. But I don't know who the people was in the water. Because lot of people was in the water. We cannot do. . . . You know that river [Wailoa River] was just like an ocean, wave and everything. You ask all the people, all, even that small canal, hoo that, you cannot even walk across.

MG: Yeah, and there were lots of tenants around here, too.

NP: This is on the back.

MG: Yeah. They used to call it *naga-ya*, you know those, by Coca-Cola [Bottling Company].

NP: So May, while that was happening, where did you go in the truck?

MG: Okay, as we rode the truck and I sat in the front, you know, with the driver, and there were other guys in the back of the truck. And Akira was about five years old. And he had a real

high, high fever that morning so we wrapped him up and then we ran down the stairs, you know the high house with the stairs, eh? Then we rode the truck and the truck went out to Punahoa Street. And as we went to Punahoa, already the water was coming up to the steps where we jumped on the truck. Then we rode to Piopio Street. And the bridge, you know.

And he took us way up to dry land, you know where, I think it must have been—anyway, higher than where the water could reach us, you see. So there were many, many people already there. And then we were lined up. We could see this lady with the five children going down the river, drowned, you know. Drowned in the river.

NP: You just watched her.

MG: And she was a customer of mine, you know, the grocery store. Then according to the story, I heard that she was already on [top of the] Coca-Cola building with her children, but one of those wanted to go to the bathroom. So she went down and all followed her back to the house. Then the house uplifted and went sailing down the river there. Next to [where the Wailoa] visitor center [is today], there's a river, yeah, back of the King Kamehameha statue there's a river in the back.

NP: Yes, yes.

MG: Right down there.

NP: And did they all drown?

MG: All drown. So we could see. Because from the window all the kids, the hands fanning, and she's, "Help! Help!"

NP: Yeah, and there was nothing you could do.

MG: No, no. Nobody could do anything. Then that's what is in my mind, you know, poor thing, you know. [See interviews with Masao Uchima and Robert Chow for other accounts of this incident.]

SG: Amazing, our house wasn't damaged.

NP: The house that you lived in?

SG: Yeah. (Chuckles)

NP: Around you, how much was damaged?

MG: Where we lived?

SG: Our place, was lucky enough, nobody died.

MG: Because we were in the back area of Kam[ehameha] Avenue, the wave came in the front of Kam[ehameha] Avenue so the frontage was more damaged than what we were, out in the back [*mauka* of Kamehameha Avenue].

- NP: Did the water come into your house? It must . . .
- MG: Just the basement. Luckily, because it was a weekend, there were a couple of cars that they were supposed to service or something, a very good customer, a very good car. They had brought the car from the service station to our home and parked it in our garage in the home, you know, where the wave didn't catch. And there was the Uno bus, they used to commute to Kona every so often, every other day or something. And he parked the car in our service station garage, way back. So it wasn't damaged. Just the front part of the service station, the roof came down and damaged everything. But the bus wasn't.
- NP: Now the roof came down for what reason? What made the roof come down?
- MG: Because the debris . . .
- SG: The wave. Because we had the big posts. The wave took the post so the building in the front fell down. All what we did just for lift 'em up and then fix.
- MG: And this was right across the [Hawai'i] Planing Mill building. So they were all damaged. All the debris came into that, and then the roof came down. So all the liquor and the canned goods were all soaked with water and stuff like that. And the gas tank and everything else.
- NP: How much of what you had could you save or salvage?
- MG: Well, was about three-fourths was damaged, no?
- SG: Yeah but . . .
- MG: Nothing was salvaged. You cannot salvage nothing.
- SG: Yeah.
- MG: Because even the liquor [bottles] is not open, but there is sand in there. Amazing, yeah. [The force of the wave was such that sand penetrated unopened bottles of liquor and soda while leaving the contents intact.]
- NP: That's incredible. Bottles aren't broken but . . .
- MG: Even the canned goods. Nothing salvaged. But the night before, we went to the movies because we closed early Sunday night. Then I had taken all my jewelry, wore it to the movies, and had a alligator skin bag that he bought from New York when he took a trip. I had it all in there and then my high-heeled alligator shoes that matched with the purse. (NP laughs.) All at the service station. Because we spent many hours there so many of our clothes were there, at the service station, too. And then also, we had the pictures and whatnot at the—what you call that?
- SG: You're talking about the second [i.e., 1960] tidal wave now.
- MG: Oh yeah, this is---I'm talking about the second tidal wave. I'm sorry.

- NP: That's all right. We can---we know that now. So this one, you were not able to salvage much of anything and you—did you sit down as a family and decided what are we going to do now? How did you decide, for instance, to make some of the changes that you made after the tidal wave?
- MG: Well, the . . .
- SG: Wait, during the . . .
- NP: This is the '46 one.
- SG: During the war, we had a store. The Seabees living across, they hungry, so she used to make sandwich and we used to sell the sandwich. So we got an idea. When the tidal wave came I said, "Why don't we make a fountain?" Because Moto's Inn was all gone, downtown. All the place was gone so I said time for build one little restaurant. So I went Honolulu, pick up everything from Honolulu and bring 'em.
- MG: Secondhand fountain service dispenser, ice cream stuff.
- NP: Do you remember how much that cost you?
- SG: Hmm, let me see how much. . . .
- MG: Sixteen hundred [dollars] (for the fountain).
- SG: Yeah, about \$15,000 (including everything—remodeling, et cetera).
- NP: For the whole fountain?
- SG: Yeah.
- MG: With the freight and all, you know. That was secondhand stuff so.
- SG: Not secondhand (chuckles) you.
- MG: No? (SG later recalls that the fountain was secondhand.)
- NP: And then you built a counter in the front.
- SG: Yeah, we built a counter.
- MG: Yeah, rather than the grocery store.
- SG: And then we had about three tables or four tables.
- MG: There's a picture I showed you of that fountain . . .
- NP: Yes, that's a wonderful picture.

MG: Yeah. Anyway . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MG: The way we had saved all that money was—is it all right to tell that? He used to drive taxi and the tips. Every night he would put in the barrel.

NP: Safe.

MG: And so that's the good chance to use all the tips. So we had just about, little over that.

NP: So you didn't have to borrow money from people to do this.

MG: Well . . .

SG: We no borrow a penny. Lucky because everything was so cheap those days, we can buy that thing. And then we charge till end of the month so we can pay end of the month. And everything was cheap. Everybody getting cheap pay so.

MG: Well, they had this SBA [Small Business Administration] loans, you know?

NP: Mm hmm.

MG: They charge 3 percent.

SG: You talking about different again.

NP: That was later on. So this one you didn't have to . . .

SG: We never borrow nothing, May. We borrow when the second tidal wave. Second tidal wave we borrow money for the fountain—not fountain but the eating place, anyway.

MG: Oh, the Ponahawai Street.

NP: So how long did it take you [to reopen] from, let's say the tidal wave was in March . . .

MG: The first tidal wave is the April 1.

SG: About in couple of months.

NP: Couple of months.

MG: Was it couple of—oh yeah, July.

NP: And during that time was there a lot of cleaning up and people relocating? What kind of a

time was that? Do you have memories of . . .

MG: Well, there weren't too many eating places. All the front street [i.e., Kamehameha Avenue] were all damaged. Restaurants and all was gone. So we opened that fountain service and then it was very busy. You know, especially with the young people.

NP: But before you opened, let's say the aftermath of the tidal wave in '46, what kind of a time was that for people in Hilo and people in Shinmachi? For instance, were there a lot of funerals because people had died?

MG: Oh yes.

NP: Was there a lot of sadness . . .

MG: Yeah, mm hmm.

NP: Do you have memories of that period?

MG: Well, we were more concerned about ourself. We were so thankful that we were healthy enough to do something about it so we said, "Don't think about the past, look ahead and go ahead." So the only thing is how to survive. You know, what do we do to feed ourselves and the family? Especially with the older people. So we thought that's the best thing. We didn't know anything about the . . .

SG: [Nineteen] forty-six wasn't so much. But the bad one was the . . .

NP: The '60.

SG: [Nineteen] forty-six, lot of buildings were still standing. Even my own house was standing.

NP: Did you begin to think about moving out?

SG: You know why? After that [1946] tidal wave they invent the siren [i.e., the tsunami warning system]. And that siren, every month, once or twice, they would ring. And my father and mother, they all get excited because they went through once already. So I said, "Okay, we'll build a house here." We bought this place and we build a house here [Kilauea Avenue].

NP: How soon after was this then?

SG: Oh, about two years after that.

NP: Two years.

SG: Oh wait, we built this house in 1947, one year later.

MG: We already had the . . .

SG: Property.

- MG: Bought before. It was just bushes and whatnot. So they had bought the place while they were driving the taxi.
- NP: And back then there was no big KTA [Super Stores] shopping center or anything like that.
- MG: Nothing.
- SG: You see, I'm going to tell you, the tidal wave did good to some businesses. Some people--- anytime you get disaster, if you give up then that's it. But if you try you might get lucky and then come up. Taniguchi was a small place. Now today they number one, now. Sure Save, too, was like that. And then, who else? The big boys, all was very small. [Hawai'i] Planing Mill.
- MG: Kitagawa, all those.
- SG: Planing Mill, Kitagawa, all those people, they're all doing well now.
- MG: Yeah, all of them. Is better for us, too. The way I see it, disaster like that made us stronger, we thought ahead, you know. And we were young so physically we were able to do heavy things.
- SG: Everybody was young, that's why not too bad. The family took over, that's why. You know, like that young generation. That's why it's good.
- MG: Yeah. We were fortunate and we had lots of friends that always showed concern for us and this and that. They felt bad, sad for us. But actually, in reality, we were more concerned what to do to survive. So we were very thankful that we' were healthy enough to do it and so that's the main concern for us, you see. So we wouldn't be extravagant, buy things and no [fancy] clothes, no nothing, just wore slippers and stuff like that, *mu'umu'us*, old ones and this and that.
- NP: How did your parents feel about the fountain? Did they think it was a good idea or did it . . .
- SG: They like us to do business. So when we---in '60 we got wiped out, they were looking for places for us to find work.
- MG: This was in the '60 tidal wave.
- SG: They found a place in town. Then we fixed the place up and we borrowed about \$9,000 to start. And then we built the place up.
- NP: And that place in town was located where?
- MG: Ponahawai Street. And it was a doctor's office there. Right across where Agasa is right now.
- NP: Oh yes.
- MG: In the corner. Right now there's a lunch shop. Koji's [Bento Korner].
- SG: Koji, yeah. We was there first. We was eighteen years down there.

NP: Okay, we'll get to that a little bit later. Now let's talk about what happened with May's Fountain and the service station because there was this period between '46 and '60 where you worked continuously there, didn't you?

MG: Right, uh huh. So the fountain was renamed to May's Fountain at that time. And the liquor store was Ellen's Liquor Store before that. It changed because already Ellen was away. But then we're so used to calling ourselves Goyas, the Goya Brothers. As long as the whole family was there we would like to include everybody in as a family group thing. So legally it's called May's Fountain but every day we say, "Oh, this is Goya's." Like answering telephone or anything, Goya's Liquors or Goya's Fountain or stuff like. In writing it was May's Fountain. Everything went on all right, everybody helped out.

SG: That's where the young . . .

MG: We had good customers, young schoolchildren.

SG: Young children, high school, they used to come there.

NP: What were the hours that you were open and the days?

MG: Oh, they were there from about six o'clock or. . . .

SG: Seven o'clock was.

MG: Even the old folks was still going down there early in the morning, open up the place.

SG: They would open up and we. . . .

MG: And then they would run the service station and they did the little mechanics job, too.

NP: And did you still have the U-drive?

SG: After the (1946) tidal wave we quit.

MG: Yeah, because wasn't that busy. Everything was broken up and then not too many people doing.

NP: How about the hours for the fountain, when were you open from?

MG: Well, we opened as long as the service station was open.

NP: So early in the morning.

SG: Not early in the morning.

MG: No, about six, seven o'clock or something, eh? We used to serve breakfast like hotcakes and waffles, and then coffee. And then lunch and dinner, like that. But not too much of dinner because, you saw the picture, wide open. So we just walked out from there and there's a service station. So we would all help at the—I pump gas, too, you know, and cook. He did the

same thing. Brother did the same thing, pump gas. You know, we all would wash dishes and all. The father and mother . . .

SG: Because they had the Hilo Theatre and then that show finished about nine-thirty so.

NP: People would still come?

SG: They come and eat ice cream or sandwich or something.

MG: Yeah, saimin, we used to have.

NP: So you had long days.

MG: Oh yeah.

SG: Yeah, long days.

MG: Only on Sunday we used to close about eight-thirty in the evening, Sunday.

NP: But you were open seven days a week?

SG: Yeah.

NP: Wow. What were some of the things that you remember that were the most popular foods at the fountain?

MG: Hmm, maybe, well, let's see. We opened in '46, the fountain, and about—well, used to have all these school boys, high school, young, they were fifteen or sixteen years old.

SG: We had the jukebox. (Chuckles)

MG: Jukebox, you know, stuff like that.

NP: Mm, that was good.

SG: And we had marble machine. (Laughs)

MG: And then middle [19]50s, Elvis Presley was very popular at that time.

The young boys would come after school and they're hungry. So they would like to eat something. So we used to put rice in the saimin bowl and then whatever leftover [from lunchtime], if we had corned beef and cabbage or whatever, we would put some of that. And then they call it *loco moco*, the boys. The boys named it *loco moco*, this was in 1952, I think it was. Then, when I didn't have the leftover food for that day, they would specify what they want to eat. They said, "Make for me", I put hamburger and some Portuguese sausage, or whatever I have. That was a staple, that was always there, whoever wanted. So Vienna sausage or whatever, Spam, whatever they wanted. So I would make for them. And put egg on top, put gravy on top.

SG: Forty cents.

MG: Forty cents. Everything was forty cents for that.

SG: Real cheap.

MG: But many a times they're school kids so they don't have . . .

SG: Money.

MG: So they would come weekends too, eventually. Even weekends, they come because the parents work, kids were coming from Pāpa'ikou, Wainaku, Kaūmana, all different areas of Hilo. And they would come with the bus to the bus station at Mo'oheau Park, and they would walk over to our place. And many of them the parents work, so. Some boys, they had their own *loco moco*. Like this one particular boy he wanted hot rice with raw egg mixed in shoyu . . .

NP: That's special.

MG: . . . and then fry some hot dogs, two pieces of hot dogs cut, sliced up, fry it up.

SG: Those days no more Spam. (Laughs)

MG: Yeah. So they wanted like that. So that would be his *loco moco*, that's Royden's *loco moco*.

NP: So you had all different kinds of *loco moco* actually.

MG: Yeah, actually . . .

SG: Yeah. In Honolulu they call that mixed plate.

MG: Yeah. So okay, actually it's a *loco moco*. Young people are always not quietly sitting down, always moving around and stuff. So they call themselves loco. Yeah. And then think about the train, locomotive. And when they start to move it just goes, so they call themselves *loco* and . . .

NP: The *loco mocos*.

MG: . . . they start going and then loco, like a train, you know. So that's how---in our fountain, that's how it started. Otherwise I didn't realize there was other people calling *loco moco*. So whenever they wanted some, "May, I like stew *loco moco*." "May, I like this and that." Then I know what they want. And eventually, even the soldiers caught on. And then the ones that was stationed in Pōhaku'loa, they had to come down to NAS station to take shower or bring their laundry down there to do it because the water force wasn't strong enough to reach up there. So the convoy would come down every day. And they would stop by our place and they would order sandwiches and whatnot. First, before they started to come, the army would come and inspect what they would eat and stuff, which we didn't know. And then what kind of food I was serving.

NP: Whether it was safe and clean and . . .

- MG: Yeah. So the boys start coming. And they wanted to come too, because they were eating on their own—on their day-offs like. Because our food was cheap.
- SG: It took three hours from Kamuela to here, three hours. Sometimes more.
- MG: Their *loco moco* was mashed potato or french fry instead of rice. And then, you know, order ham, the hamburger and egg. But eventually, they got used to rice so they. . . .
- NP: That became acceptable.
- MG: With the gravy, lots of gravy on top. They liked that, you know. And one of them, before he left the island, he asked me to give him a recipe. You know, so he can go back to—I think it was Oregon or somewhere, he said his father owns a property in town, "It's just a hole in a wall," he said, "just like your place." He said when he goes back he's going to do that.
- NP: Did you ever hear from him? Do you know if they did that?
- MG: No, that was it.
- NP: So maybe some day you'll be traveling through Oregon . . .
- MG: Maybe.
- NP: . . . and you'll discover that, hey, May's *loco moco*. (MG chuckles.) You told me also that during the volcanic eruptions you made some kind of a special treat.
- MG: Yeah, it was a volcano special. When the volcano is erupting we'd make a sundae. We put chocolate syrup on it, like lava, and then we put two vanilla ice cream scoops. Then I buried the sugar, cubed sugar, soak it in that lemon extract and I bury it in the ice cream, the top of the ice cream, bury it there.
- SG: You try it.
- MG: And then---in fact, before I'd dip the sugar inside I would put black, chocolate ice cream and then strawberry.
- SG: (Chuckles) Come down.
- NP: Wow, oh must've been great.
- MG: So, it was like a lava flowing down. Red against the black.
- SG: Put a match.
- MG: And then put fire on. It was, nicely, the fire would burn.
- SG: The fire burns, you know sugar, eh. And put that extract inside the ice cream. And the fire's in the . . .

NP: Oh.

SG: That's why it's nice because black and red.

MG: Just like the lava flowing on it.

SG: Real—you look at that, you think it's volcano.

NP: They must have loved that.

MG: Oh yeah, kids. And it was only twenty-five cents.

SG: (Laughs) Yeah.

MG: And we used to have cantaloupe specials, papaya special, you know.

NP: Whatever you had that was . . .

MG: Uh huh, yeah.

SG: But that's the best one. The volcano. (Laughs)

MG: And then in seasonal, the fruits, seasonal fruits, so we used to have specials, different specials. And then we'd open a can of fruit, you know mixed fruit in a can. Then we put it in ice cream, you know, put ice cream on that. That dollop of, you know. And then nuts and stuff on top.

SG: We made banana split, too.

MG: One special, particular boy, he was elder but he liked ice cream. So, you know, the tall ice cream soda glass, you know the tall one with the ice cream soda? We put about five scoops of ice cream, all different flavors, then we put whatever kind of fruit we have, and then put all different flavors and it's all oozing down the side in the glass, you know, all the ice cream. It comes just like a rainbow color. And even the fruits are chopped small and all dripping inside. So it looks really like a rainbow color. So he called that "my special." So that's George's Special. So when the girls see him coming they said, "Oh, George coming, make his special." (Laughs)

NP: How many employees did you have? How many people working for you?

SG: One or two.

MG: Yeah, full time, and then part-timers mostly. So we had, summertime, when don't have school, we have part-time workers and stuff like that.

NP: Was this something that you would have good memories of, you know, for your family and yourselves?

MG: Yeah. Maybe I better not say this but all the kids that were coming and the neighbors' kids

that were coming, just about almost fifty or sixty of 'em daily, you know. You know, it's like a family to us. One of the boys would have birthdays with all boys get together, they buy a cake, you know, and stuff. And there were about three or four boys that had beautiful singing voices and with the 'ukulele, I had a 'ukulele for them to play. So they would all congregate in the back of the area and then we would all have fun like that. You know, for happy birthday and all kind.

SG: I bought a boxing glove. (MG laughs.) Every time they argue, I let 'em have 'em.

NP: (Laughs) With the gloves.

MG: And then many a times they don't have money to buy things like . . .

SG: They come to me. I used to . . .

MG: They say, "Lend me, lend me." But he just give it to them.

SG: If they pay me [back], it's all right, if not, just let 'em. Just a couple of dollars. Sometimes they want to go show, because those shows I think cost about fifty cents, I think. So . . .

MG: And then some of the neighbors' boys would go fishing and catch those *tohe*. You know the---*tohe* you know, (a type of edible eel with no teeth).

SG: They catch---those days had a lot of fish, see. And some of them good fishermen so they go outside in the ocean, they bring in big eel. But eatable one. I used to clean that up. And she used to soak 'em up. And then we used to put over the charcoal.

NP: Oh, like the *unagi*?

SG: Yeah, *unagi*.

MG: Yeah, just like *unagi* in about two, you know the big mayonnaise jars? About two gallons.

SG: Two gallons, you know that thing, a whole like this, touch the ground. That big.

NP: That's huge.

SG: When I cut it in half. Yeah like this.

MG: And then whatever fish they bring, he used to clean and we used to fix it up for them.

SG: And they eat the fish.

NP: They must have been so happy.

MG: They used to catch lots of sand crabs, Samoan crabs, and like that. So we . . .

SG: Most time Samoan crab.

MG: Yeah. We would, in a big roasting pan, I would cook for them. And then this is way late in the night, about . . .

SG: Twelve o'clock.

MG: . . . eight o'clock.

SG: Twelve o'clock. (Laughs)

MG: Whatever time, you know. So we didn't set a time we going close, no. As long as the kids were there, we were open. You know why, the service station open. Everything was open. It's sort of like our home or something. Then afterwards, put lots of newspaper on the floor, you know that concrete floor, back of the filling station. There's a big area over there. So all the boys would just go over there and just (SG chuckles) kneeling down, sitting down, eating. We joined them, we eat that . . .

SG: Put all on the floor. All right, yeah, everybody, everybody. 'Nough for everybody.

MG: Oh when they catch the crab, there's so many.

SG: Hoo, the big pot like that full.

MG: (Laughs) Oh, those days were really fun. (SG chuckles.) I really miss that, you know. And then that's how we grew up, they grew up like that, too. So whenever (chuckles) the parents would tell the probation officers, "My kids every time at the Goyas' place and I don't know what they do," and this and—complain, you know.

Then he goes---well, this guy [officer] was coming our place all the time.

SG: What he say . . .

MG: Good friends, you know. So he told us that, "I tell 'em, 'You lucky, you know where your kids are and you know Mr. and Mrs. Goya going take good care of them.'" You know, instead of somewhere they don't know where they are.

NP: Getting into trouble somewhere.

MG: Those days smoking was a danger, you know. Now it's AIDS, or now it's drugs or anything. But those days not drugs, smoking and drinking was the issue in those days, for the young kids. So, they would never do those when they stay at our place, you see. So (chuckles) they would tell the parents that complained, you know. So after that nobody complained. In fact, they all thanked us, you know. They didn't realize.

NP: You were like extra parents.

MG: Yeah.

SG: Yeah.

- NP: I'm sure you did counseling, too.
- SG: Some . . .
- NP: When they were having problems and they talk to you.
- MG: Yeah, because . . .
- SG: Sometime I take 'em home. Wainaku, home, stay there . . .
- MG: Yeah, like when they miss their bus, like that. And then (SG chuckles) at that age they would get girlfriends too so they get problems. So I'm cooking in the kitchen in the fountain, in the kitchen where cannot see from outside. Then we had this stool, you know four legs, round top like this stool. They would sit in the corner of the kitchen and I'm cooking, they would tell me their problem, you know, whatever. Of course, I don't tell anybody else what happened, who said this, no, no. It's up to them, you know, stuff like that. And Christmastime we would hang mistletoe on the entrance, you know, from the kitchen to the fountain. So anybody who stand there or come in . . .
- NP: They were fair game.
- MG: The boys would just go and grab them and kiss them. But we had lot of fun, you know. So many times we would spend our New Year's Eve, like that, down there. You know, blowing firecracker, right—away from the filling station but that area there. All the boys would come out.
- NP: Sounds like that was almost more their home than this was your home.
- MG: Right, and we had so much fun.
- SG: Yeah. Well, those days, everybody trust each other.
- MG: And New Year's Day, right at this house, in this spot here, we would have a big table. And all the kids, whoever, our customers, we would tell whoever wants to come into the house come up. We make . . .
- SG: Yeah, you know the old-timers. The young people, well, the had 'nough down there but I mean the old people and the family.
- MG: Yeah. Okay. But even the young boys used to come. And then some of them, after they ate they'd go downstairs and play music and stuff like that in the small room, this here room and that room like that. So all day was spent here, you know. But so when it came to---well, this is another story when we go to the 1960 tidal wave.
- NP: Yeah, let's move on to that, but let me ask you one last question. Did you go down into Waiākea to get your groceries or your supplies? Did you go and pick up vegetables and things like that from any of the people who had their stores in the Waiākea area?
- MG: Well, after the war, everything would be all right, no? It was 1945. The ration was still . . .

- SG: We used to buy from Okuyama and all . . .
- NP: So you were---I'm just interested—if you did business with the people in the Waiākea area before that big [1960] tidal wave?
- SG: Oh, before they had Hilo Rice Mill and had [another] wholesale place. We had about four or five [suppliers]. We order from them.
- MG: Y. Hata and then we would go . . .
- SG: Those days, see, [T.H.] Davies and American Factors had [wholesale business]. The tidal wave *wen* destroy all that too. And then we had American Trading, that's a Japanese firm, they had Japanese food. And then Hilo Rice Mill.
- MG: Hata.
- SG: And then Y. Hata, five, that's the wholesalers, though.
- MG: So we used to buy some things from Okuyama too, they were at Waiākea. They were a little grocery store, Tom Okuyama and his parents. Many things we bought from local. We didn't—outside, you know.
- NP: Okay, so, before 1960 there were a couple of smaller tidal waves. Do you remember those? I think there was one in 1952 and one in 1957.
- MG: Yeah, uh huh. We . . .
- NP: I wonder if it . . .
- MG: We didn't have to evacuate.
- SG: Those days, we don't dream about evacuate. That's why, the big one came, then we know what is tidal wave, see.
- NP: How did the warning system work for you folks in 1960?
- SG: Warning system . . .
- MG: Prior to 1960, during the—from '46 to '60 there were so many tidal wave warnings. And then many times we would have to go evacuate and many times people would come around help and . . .
- SG: You know, not that big, the '46. But certain part was big, the wave hit big and then came down. Down the Shinmachi side, wasn't so big, so everybody built houses after the '46.
- NP: They rebuilt?
- SG: Yeah---no, [in the '46 tsunami] nothing was destroyed on the other side [i.e., *mauka* of Kamehameha Avenue]. Only our place was bang up. [The exception was Shinmachi, the

majority of which was destroyed in 1946.] The rest of the other places was all right so everybody build up over there. We had Mitchell Laundry, we had Wailoa Recap, all over there. Hawai'i Planing Mill too, they built on this side [*makai* of Kamehameha Avenue]. All wipe out after that. . . .

NP: [Nineteen] sixty.

SG: Yeah, '60 tidal wave. And that happened nighttime, and people didn't believe [the warnings] so they stay there [i.e., didn't evacuate]. Like us, we moved here so we don't worry, but lot of people never think that would happen.

NP: Now, when you began to get warnings on that Sunday, were you still at the fountain and the service station?

MG: Yeah, uh huh. It was on a Sunday so we said, "Oh, let's close up." And the kids were around, you know some of the boys . . .

SG: I told 'em, "Everybody go home." After the show they came, I told 'em, "We closed, everybody go home. Because that tidal wave will come twelve o'clock." They all knew that. But '46 wasn't so [bad] for some people so naturally they going to stay.

MG: They don't realize what it is. But then I said, "Oh, another warning, another warning." So like a routine we just cleaned up the place. Usually we used to put up many things way up on the ceiling where they had another platform like. But this time he didn't do it. (SG chuckles.) He said, "Ah, tomorrow we come back." You know, stuff like that. So we didn't think it was going to come or we didn't think it was big.

SG: That big.

MG: And then like a routine we just cleaned up everything and said, "Let's all go to the movies." So the boys all went after eight-thirty and then we cleaned up. And then after the boys left, the people [from] our surrounding area from Kitagawa and Motor Supply and Crescent City [Cracker Company], [Hawai'i] Planing Mill . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

NP: Okay, now it should be working.

MG: Okay, the people [from the] surrounding areas cleaned up their place and after that, they came to our fountain. We were all closed but cleaning inside. So they wanted coffee. So I said, "Oh, everything is all washed up, everything. But tomorrow you come, everybody come tomorrow. I'll give you all free coffee. And if you're hungry I'll give you a free breakfast."

They all, "Okay, we'll see you tomorrow." They all left. All the boys went to the movies. He and I went home, Akira wanted to go up with his friends, up the service station roof, and watch the tidal wave come. So we all came home and we discouraged him not to do that, so nobody went up there. Then we went to sleep, forgot everything, Roy missed out on the '46 tidal wave so he was all up. Then from this bedroom where the old people slept, there's a window—he sat right there and watched. They said it was going come twelve o'clock so . . .

SG: Not '46, '60.

MG: [Nineteen] sixty. Then he sat and watched and about close to one o'clock, he said it was all lighted. But pretty soon all that drowning noise he could hear. And then the place, all the lights went out, all pitch dark. But he could hear all the [electrical] crackling [noise] and all that . . .

NP: As far away as you folks are . . .

MG: Yeah, uh huh.

NP: Because it must be maybe . . .

MG: But I guess, the wind.

NP: . . . two miles at least to go down there?

MG: More than that. From our house to the service station, how was the distance?

SG: About three miles.

NP: Three miles? Okay.

MG: You know with the wind blowing this way, I guess he could hear it.

SG: Because all the lights went off. [The wave damaged the Hilo Electric Light, Company power plant.]

NP: And you folks were sleeping?

SG: Yeah, we're asleep.

MG: Even the older people were still sleeping.

SG: Next morning the police station call up, they said, "Goya, no use you go down."

"Why?"

"Wipe out, your place."

MG: Yeah, six o'clock somebody . . .

SG: Call up.

MG: He says---well, I guess he must have been a customer or something, "What you folks doing sleeping? Don't you folks know no more your place?" You know. (Laughs)

NP: Oh, what a shock . . .

SG: Yeah, yeah, well . . .

MG: Our kids must have come out and went to see our place, I guess. So we didn't think much about it, but Roy said he could hear everything. And drowning noise and people yelling and crackling sound. He said the noise---the first noise, that drowning noise, was the scary thing. Like one big plane flying overhead, our place. That's the kind of feeling he had, he said. But we went down. Boy, along the way, at the entrance of Piopio Street, you know where the green awning or whatever that . . .

NP: Uh huh.

MG: From that area going to Piopio Street, all damaged. All the cars were up against the trees like this. And then . . .

SG: And the church was still there.

MG: The church was there.

SG: Just get water in the front end. Tidal wave do something different sometimes. They destroy a house this side just like a tornado. This house will stand, nothing trouble, but the other house is all gone. Funny thing how the wave run.

MG: Yeah. So, it took us so long to reach to our place.

NP: Did you have to walk or could you drive part way?

MG: Yeah. We walked down. We parked certain area . . .

SG: At the end of the Piopio Street, there we parked the car and we walked down.

MG: Because there's all the debris.

SG: Then I look my place, "Ah," I tell 'em, "no use look good, nothing left." So I walk down, see what happened on the other side. I look, nothing standing. Here I see the Boy Scouts picking up all the body up. You know, on the stretcher. I see that, I tell you, the Boy Scout was good. Boy Scout only kids yet. They were picking all the body up. Hard to identify the body . . .

MG: Yeah, the National Guards too.

SG: . . . because all swell up. You can see the body here, there, and everything. Just like a war zone.

MG: Yeah, he wanted to help, you know, wherever. So he went looking for. . . . There's nothing, only the Dairymen's and Excelsior Dairy was partially damaged and it was standing. But all our debris all washed . . .

SG: Inside the . . .

MG: . . . against the Dairymen's wall.

NP: That far back?

MG: Yeah, pushed back. And our jukebox was on Punahoa Street. You know where the King Kamehameha [statue] is?

NP: Yes, yes.

MG: Right around there. And it was as though somebody dragged that jukebox because some part of the jukebox is here, and then pretty soon you see all the coins, money from the—just in a row, like somebody was dragging that damaged stuff.

NP: So the coins just came out as it moved along.

MG: Yeah, uh huh. And then the end part was against the, you know. And our fountain chairs and stools and stuff was against the Dairymen's, you know.

SG: You know how many tires were lost over there? Over a thousand tires. Kitagawa had tires, Motor Supply had tires, Wailoa Recap had tires, all had bunch of tires. Some of the tires land down South Point.

NP: Wow.

SG: Floated away.

NP: All the way down in the current. Amazing

SG: The tires floated, yeah.

NP: So, you saw what was left and . . .

SG: No more nothing.

MG: When was the safe [found on the beach]?

SG: What?

MG: The safe was on the beach.

SG: Oh yeah, yeah. I found our money on the beach, [in a] safe, big safe on the beach. So I open the door. My father had little—he was going Japan so he had some money inside there. I took the money out. And we put our ledger [book] inside, you know the charge thing. Lucky we write with pencil, not with pen.

NP: Do you still have that? Do you still have the ledger?

MG: No.

SG: No, no, (chuckles) we . . .

- NP: No. That would have been a wonderful thing to have kept.
- SG: But we didn't . . .
- MG: Many years back.
- NP: That shows all of your records.
- SG: Yeah, we didn't keep anything about tidal wave. Because we kept one book [i.e., photo album] of tidal wave, the first one, 1946. And funny thing, all the building gone and the tidal wave picture was across the street, nothing damage.
- MG: [The album] was open like this and going down the river when I saw it. You know, the album.
- NP: This is after the 1960?
- MG: We had brought some pictures of 1946 tidal wave and we had taken it to the service station day before or several days before. Left it at the service station. That album was just open like this and going down the river. And my handbag, the alligator skin handbag with all the jewelry, it was going down.
- NP: Did you catch it?
- MG: He saw that first so he picked it up. The Wailoa River. That's why that Wailoa River has so much memories for us, you know. So every time we go there, it's—everything . . .
- NP: Comes back.
- MG: . . . memories are so vivid, you know. [Nineteen] forty-six tidal wave memories and the '60 tidal wave memories are all down there.
- NP: After that day, what did you decide to do? What were your feelings and what did you decide?
- MG: Well we didn't . . .
- SG: You see, funny, you know. We were more pitiful for the people that died. Because business we know we can build up again but life you cannot bring up.
- MG: Especially homes.
- SG: Yeah, especially . . .
- MG: When you leave.
- SG: You know, business you can build, but at home hard to build. You have everything in the house and you're gone and people gone, eh. Especially . . .
- NP: Did you know many of the people who died in the 1960?

SG: Oh yeah, we know plenty people, but so long ago. The district where we was, nobody died, everybody evacuate. That's the good thing about that. Because we told everybody go out. So nobody died in our place. Only one hard-head man, he went back for his money. But the big wave came in. You know where he landed? He landed down—what you call that . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 29-18-2-98; SIDE ONE

SG: Way out that—the big banyan tree down the corner. . . .

MG: Going by the . . .

SG: Hundred Cafe [Cafe 100]. He land right there. From way from our place till there, he was. They were living two-story house. He just went to get his money.

NP: And he didn't live?

SG: No, he lived.

NP: He lived?

SG: Yeah, he lived.

NP: Oh my gosh.

SG: He land over there.

NP: With his money?

SG: No.

NP: No money.

SG: His wallet. But somebody else *wen* find the wallet, they return to him.

NP: Wow.

SG: You know, something like that. All his clothes, gone. The waves take all his clothes.

NP: So . . .

SG: Yeah, the wave can do lot of different things. That's far away, you know, from my place.

MG: But to see a place destroyed, I would rather see the place completely destroyed. [Nineteen] forty-six, we were three-fourths destroy[ed]. So you have to rebuild and, bring back the memories, what had happened before that, you know, and stuff like that. But when the '60

tidal wave, the whole thing is gone to the ground. The only thing left was the stool that I had talked about when the kids were. . . . And that stool, the P and R [Parks and Recreation] armory people, used to come and pick it up whenever they used to have wrestling matches at the Hilo Armory. They used that for one of those referees that sat on the ring, you know. So they used to come and [borrow] it. That's the only one was left here. And then . . .

SG: All the fountain equipment all in the river. And (chuckles) that gasoline pump, even my hoist, you know, for lift up the car, that gone, too.

NP: Wow, just ripped out?

SG: Rip out . . .

MG: Nothing is there.

SG: . . . because it's all sand, see. Our place is all sand.

MG: So, even now, if you go there [to the site], you say, "Oh, this is our driveway. . . ." Now, it's still there, you know. "This is where you go in the side way and this way, you go in from the front way." Still there so we always reminiscing.

SG: When you see the statue, you going in, when you going in from the main side—when you come from downtown, on the right side that. When you turn in, that's . . .

NP: That's yours.

SG: There's a coconut tree right in that spot, that's our place.

MG: And . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

NP: So after that, what did you decide to do?

MG: Well, before we moved on, we'd tell the kids to go school. They would walk down to the area where we were. They would sit down on the empty spot. They're imagining the stool is there in the fountain. They would just sit there, reminisce about what it was before, sing with the 'ukulele, spend the time. For several days they did that, people [told] us. Right? We ask the kids [if they did that], say, "Yeah."

And then after that---maybe this is another story. After that, we were given free rides to Honolulu, in case we want to do some business down there.

SG: The airline gave us, so we went Honolulu.

MG: All the victims for business.

SG: All business people.

- MG: So Aloha Airlines gave and Hawaiian Airlines, so we went. But Father wanted us to start another service station in Hilo. And he got application forms from the oil companies, you know. They gave us papers. So he and I went to Honolulu. But no spot [was available] where we gonna do the business. Because the place where we were, it was condemned [after the 1960 tsunami], that's why it's all empty now, eh.
- SG: That was owned by Bishop Estate. The state bought the place.
- MG: So that's why you don't see any—only the soccer field and everything. But we didn't care too much about going into gasoline station business again because economically it wasn't feasible. And then we just work hard, manually and physically. And those days we would work but originally the parents is the one that started the business, although we worked together we don't get paid. That was the style, the old Japanese. . . .
- NP: Way.
- MG: This was from 1940 to '60. We'd buy whatever we want to eat or whatever from the business end, you know. That's how it was. So, in 1960---in fact, my birthday fell on May 21, forty years old. I got married in 1940—I was twenty years old. So twenty years, all on love, okay. Both of us, okay. Even his brother went out to work elsewhere. His wife Charlotte worked, too. She worked. So actually, secretly, we didn't want to start [another] filling station. We didn't want to do something not profitable, just working day by day, you know, please the family and everything like that. We were tired of that, burnt out already. Before that, I told my husband I don't want to work if that's going to be the case. I was forty and he was forty-nine years old, almost fifty years old. So, we had to think about our future. Think saving, somehow, [for] retirement or whatever.

We didn't even have social security or anything in those days, You know. I refused, I said I'm not going to work after forty years like this, if this the case. Although we were working hard, our customers come in but nothing saved. Everything was---the old people was the financier, they were the boss. So I refused to work after I'm forty years. I kept on saying that. So, May 21 was my birthday, May 23, the tidal wave came. No more job. I refused to work. So when his father wanted us to go back to service station, I tell 'em, "No."

So we went to Honolulu. We didn't look up oil companies. Instead we went to all these small little business places in Honolulu where they have fountain service or take out service or stuff like that, where they sell window service, you know. So we went to look into all those and I'll go in the back area of the little restaurant and ask, look at what they're doing, how they're preparing. Of course all the working people don't like the idea, the bosses don't like the idea. I make believe I want to use the bathroom. I ask where the bathroom and (NP laughs) I'll go inside there and go watch them, what they're doing from the side where they cannot see. Then I felt I learned a lot.

I'd ask the waitress, "How do you make this?" You know, and this and that. And especially foodstuff. And then I'd ask one of the girls---this was a bowling alley. Those days, the bowling alley was very popular and they had fountain service and they had restaurant on the side, all under one roof. So we went two or three places like that, too. So I asked the managers---the girls, they were hired as managers there---if they make money on that restaurant where the people come and sit down and eat. They'd say no, the best was the

window service. You know, where you just . . .

NP: Fast.

MG: . . . take out. Okay, so I asked what the man knew and this and that. I talk to them all. Then we came back and then we. . . . This happened in May, then in July, before July we found a spot on Ponahawai Street. It was a doctor's office, all damaged inside so he wasn't going to be there anymore. So we cleaned it up. We worked hard.

NP: Where on Ponahawai Street?

MG: Right now it's Koji's Bento Box.

NP: That's right, that's right, it's Koji's. And the tidal wave had come in there and mostly water damage.

MG: There was Miyamoto Grocery Store where Agasa was, yeah, before the 1960 tidal wave. That's a big grocery store. So we went there. But already our grocery store was gone with the tidal wave. So we went there, fixed it up. It was just about the size of this room, I guess.

NP: Was it similar to the way Koji's is now?

MG: Well . . .

NP: Or have they changed it a lot?

MG: They changed many formation inside. But there was this front entrance, you know, where you go in. We put in a soda icebox, then a liquor store in the corner there. Then he partitioned out the front where just maybe two or three of us could work. And then we put a grill, you know, the hamburger stove or whatever, grill. And there was a big window in front where people could just walk on that sidewalk and watch the inside. So he put that grill there, and had a french frier. You could see it from the outside. And then we had the little cooking equipment here. And as you enter the door, say, like this is the front door, as you enter like this, then we put a little short counter. Then we put our cash register, then a little space where we can dish out the hamburgers and sit down. And there was another window on this side, next to the grill. So it's a small little space. So we, just he, I, Papa, Mama, and the kids, Akira and Roy, we worked in there. We didn't advertise or anything. July-something we opened that place.

NP: Just in two---that's like in two months from the time that you were wiped out.

MG: Yeah.

NP: That's pretty good. What did you call your place?

SG: May's.

MG: May's Lunch---Goya's Lunch. . . .

NP: Was this one of the first ones like that in Hilo?

- MG: Yeah, hot plate-lunch.
- SG: Hot plate-lunch. Nobody in town had hot plate.
- MG: Nobody in Hilo.
- SG: After we started, lot of people do.
- MG: Mixed hot plate, in a plastic, you know. Otherwise, there were areas that had *bentō*, you know, the cold kind. In the places where they weren't hit by the tidal wave. There were couple of them in town.
- NP: Like was Kawamoto's Sushi there?
- MG: Yeah, stuff like that.
- NP: And that kind of place? Okay.
- MG: And then had another place, they all retired and now it's all gone but. So ours was mixed hot plate, you know, whatever we served in the fountain, you know lunchtime. We put it in a plastic, thick . . .
- NP: So it was kind of like the plate lunches that you see nowadays.
- SG: Yeah, exactly.
- MG: Right, right.
- NP: With the hot rice and stew and. . . .
- MG: Macaroni . . .
- NP: Macaroni salad.
- MG: Potato salad, you know. So we were the first ones to do, so it was in 1960.
- NP: How did you do?
- MG: Okay. The first time, without any help, you know just the family, Papa, Mama, and the kids, Akira and Roy, and both of us working. And we made hamburgers. And then I cooked meals for our own family there, for ourselves. So whatever we sold was hamburger or french fry or drinks, you know. Soda, drinks and the canned drinks, we put it there, you know. So, we have to greet the customer as well as cook. You know, dish out. So that's the reason why we got the idea of putting a stove. Grill right in front the window and counter where the people walk in. So we say, "Oh hello, come in, come in." And I'm cooking, say, "Oh, nice of you to come," you know, stuff. And then the other side, the other half of that is a liquor. The soda cans, you know, whatever cold stuff. And we would just walk around and serve whoever wants liquor, whoever wants soda. You wanted hamburger, you just tell me.

So the first day we opened with no fanfare no nothing, no advertising, nothing. We sold about (chuckles) twenty-five hamburgers. Then slowly people come and they says, "Oh, why no make *kaukau*?" You know like fountain, you know, where the kids used to come. But by that time the kids weren't coming because no place to sit. In the back, we just had a little table like that, it could sit only about five or six guys and girls, you know, refrigerator and one small TV. Had the shelf on top so we used to stack up our goods and then in the bathroom we used to put all our sodas and stuff, you know, inventory stuff. And we started out like that. And then eventually---then we thought about cooking the stuff and then take 'em out. Call it hot plate, hot mixed plate-lunch.

NP: Hot mixed plate-lunch.

MG: Uh huh.

NP: And would---was it . . .

MG: Every week we would have the---every day for six days? Six days I think.

SG: Five days.

MG: We would have a menu. But next week, the same menu. Every day different [special], see. That's how we used to do it. The little plate was thirty-five cents. Fifty cents was the medium. And then that's about all, eh? And if they wanted some more, we would make some double.

SG: *Loco moco* you got.

MG: Oh, and then the kids come asking for *loco moco*, you know the ones that . . .

NP: Yeah, yeah.

MG: So I said, "Oh, yeah, eventually we going start selling *loco moco*." So we were thinking about how to put the *loco moco* in. And so we thought about this food tray about this size.

NP: Mm hmm, a small size.

MG: Like a bowl shape, you know the tray they have. And so we put the rice in there and put whatever. And then if the kids come I know what *loco moco* they want, you know the mixed . . .

NP: Mm hmm.

MG: The hamburger, two patties, and the egg on top.

SG: And gravy.

NP: Gravy, yeah.

MG: All made by scratch. Even the patties were made by scratch.

- NP: Not popping out frozen ones like they do today.
- MG: No, no, no. Not like that. In fact, they didn't have those ready-made ones those days.
- NP: So you knew what you were putting into your hamburgers.
- MG: Yeah.
- NP: Now what were your hours? Was it. . . .
- SG: I go early in the morning, five-thirty, six o'clock.
- MG: Four-thirty. Four-thirty I think.
- SG: Four-thirty or five-thirty. Depend what kind of foods she going cook. We prepare in the afternoons. She prepare. So all I do is use the grill and brown the food, you know. If you get a grill, it's the most important thing. It will make stew about this high, two big one like that. So I had to put so many pound of meat. And then I put over the grill, then I put over the stove. But she has the ingredients, I just put 'em on. When she comes, it would be cooked already.
- NP: So you come about nine or ten or eight?
- SG: No, no, she come in before eight o'clock.
- MG: Seven o'clock.
- NP: Seven? Oh, excuse me.
- MG: Seven o'clock. Because the old people [MG's in-laws] were home too so . . .
- NP: Oh, to help with the kids.
- MG: Yeah.
- SG: We go home probably about nine-thirty, nine o'clock [P.M.].
- NP: At night? So you still . . .
- SG: But seven o'clock or six o'clock we close the food.
- MG: Well, as I say, we don't send anybody away. Even if it's closed I'll make for them something, food or anything. But by that time we had hired this girl that used to work for us. She was a loyal girl that came to work for us, about eighteen years old, after she graduate high school. And this was about 1950-something, I think. But she came. She asked us 'cause she wanted to work. So we told her we cannot afford to pay anybody, but "I help you guys out," you know. But he would give her, he would pay her.
- SG: That's what we work, one half-day girl, she and I.

MG: Yeah, part-time she was hired.

SG: That's the only way you can make money because it was so cheap everything. You can get two patty, one big egg, and gravy on, all the rice you like—not one scoop worth, you ask the boy, "You want plenty rice?"

Say, "Yeah." Put plenty. Forty-five cents!

MG: And then the young boys that used to come before the tidal waves, they used to eat the *loco mocos* that—so they are working by that time, out of school working, so eventually they would come, mid-morning, about nine-thirty, "How about make *loco moco* for us?" That's how . . .

NP: That's how you started?

MG: And then they wanted to eat Spam, egg, you know. Spam and egg breakfast-like *loco moco*. That was about nine-thirty. This was the telephone company boys, you know. They used to come so I used to make breakfast like that. And whatever they wanted to eat. Any time of the day they wanted to eat something, I would make. I don't say no.

NP: How long were you open? When did you finally close that business?

MG: You mean during the day?

NP: I mean how many years did this then stay open?

SG: Eighteen years, I wanted to quit at sixty-five. Because I worked forty-two years, I no want to work more. *Bumbai* she told me one more year. So I work till sixty-six. So she quit at fifty-six.

MG: No, he was sixty-six and I was fifty-seven. Fifty-seven years old and he was sixty-six years old.

SG: I can collect [social security] but she cannot collect.

MG: But by then we had another faithful working girl so, shift around. One girl come [certain] time and the other girl will come at certain time, you know like that.

SG: You know what keep us going was, we played the stock market. (Chuckles)

NP: Oh. So you take the money that you'd made and you'd invested, wisely I hope.

MG: No, that was . . .

SG: That was our wages.

MG: That, we didn't put into the business. That was---but the way I had saved was I told my husband no matter how hard it was for us to pay the bills I'm going to save something for our future. So every month, the first day, I would write a check out, to put away into the savings

and loan.

SG: That's why my younger boy have more than us now because we show him and we help him. My older son, he play real estate.

NP: It's different ways of doing that.

SG: Yeah, different. But to me, stock was the best.

NP: But you have to keep up with it. You have to know what you're doing.

MG: Oh yeah.

SG: Well, get nowadays TV and everything come out.

NP: Yeah, probably eating into your stock market, tying your. . . .

MG: But anyway, after that we started to—everything was real, real busy. Very busy. Orders were coming from all different business places, working people. And the girls from McDonalds were coming to our place. (NP laughs.) Picking up hamburgers, twenty, twelve, and you know, stuff like that. And then the young boys that [moved] to Honolulu, they would call his grandma over here [and ask], "When you come to Honolulu, go buy hamburgers from [Goya's] place."

So she would stop, say, oh, [the grandson] wants hamburgers so . . .

NP: And she'd take it back?

MG: Yeah. I would know what kind they want so they take like two dozen. Whatever she wants. And there were some boys from this airplane manufacture place, yeah? In the Mainland somewhere. And they would have to deliver airplanes to a certain district, some in Australia, some New Zealand, this and that.

SG: They stop at Hilo Airport, they come out to this and then . . .

NP: Oh great, oh great.

MG: And then they stop, buy and then . . .

(Laughter)

NP: The hamburgers were famous then.

SG: (Laughs) Yeah.

MG: They come buy and they would, you know.

SG: I going tell you about hamburger today. They all come from Hilo made, they have soybeans inside.

- MG: Freeze it up.
- SG: The one they just sell patties, May's Patties, that's not her patties. (Laughs)
- MG: But for the hamburgers, we used to buy the meat from George's Meat Market. And he had the spare ribs coming from Kulana Foods. 'Cause those days Standard Market, they used to call themselves Standard Market.
- SG: They was in town.
- MG: They was where the open market is now. You know the building where they have the . . .
- SG: Frank Food what?
- MG: Frank Food we used to get fresh corned beef and . . .
- SG: Oven-ready butt. Oh, we used to serve all good stuff.
- NP: It sounds as though you always tried to have good, fresh food as the basis.
- MG: Right.
- SG: Nothing is one-day old, everything fresh. That's why they come in.
- MG: So even the---I think the stew meat was from Hilo Meat, yeah. Something like that. Anyway, it was all set. Every week, so many pounds. You know, stuff like that.
- Okay, so when the---even after the tidal wave '60, so many sirens alert (SG laughs) even on Ponahawai Street. Each time alert we have to close and go to higher ground. Several times, it was about ten-thirty, eleven o'clock, just when all the foods is ready to be sold or to be delivered. So we would close up and spend the day, higher ground, so we would all dump it. Many times like that. So to us it's a way of life. It didn't bother us to do those things.
- SG: Nowadays, they can put it in the freezer, but those days we don't think about freezer.
- MG: We don't, you know. So anyway, then, in 1982—we were all retired in 1977—1982, the boys that were coming, all the customers that were coming prior to the [1960] tidal wave got together and made a reunion party for us at Hilo Hawaiian [Hotel]. It was supposed to be a surprise for both of us. So all the kids got together planning this, planning. They were already men, they working out somewhere and many of them had good jobs, you know. So it was a surprise, we didn't know anything until just about a week or two weeks prior to the event. Akira folks were all in it, the planning.
- NP: Mm hmm, the surprise.
- MG: And then sister-in-law's son, Tommy, was the younger. But he heard about it, he told his mother, the mother told me. It's supposed to be a surprise but they spoiled the surprise anyway.

NP: Did you still act like it was a surprise?

SG: What time now, twelve o'clock?

NP: Do you need to go somewhere?

SG: No, I'm going right out and come back.

NP: We're just about finished.

SG: Okay.

MG: He has to go deliver. I made a sandwich for this lady that we . . .

NP: Okay.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

NP: Okay, the last question I have for you . . .

SG: What's that?

NP: Your wife already gave me her answer. What do you think was the impact of the tidal waves on you folks? What was the effect of the tidal waves on yourselves and your life? What did it mean to you?

MG: I told her to me it was a blessing. Or so we expand, we look ahead. You know, get more business that way and grew so much more.

SG: Hard to think.

MG: No, to you, you're not mad or anything, yeah?

SG: Well, you cannot fight nature. That's one thing I can tell you. That's how life goes.

MG: We accept what it is, yeah.

SG: 'Cause any kind [can happen]. We get volcano, we went through flood, too. When we was down Ponahawai, had flood. The water came in the store, too.

NP: What do you think was the effect of the tidal wave on Hilo then?

SG: Well, they say Hilo was wilder then. The tidal wave didn't clean everything up, but too many people died so we can't say anything about that but. One way it's bad and one way it's all right. Just that some people was unfortunate, that's all.

NP: If there hadn't been the tidal waves, do you think Hilo would be a different place than it is today?

- SG: Hmm, I don't say that. Hard to say. I can't say.
- NP: It would be different looking. I mean, you would have the Waiākea [town] and you would have Shinmachi still. Although people may have moved out of there. It would look different. But do you think the people of Hilo are still the people of Hilo whether or not there was a tidal wave? The qualities that they have in this particular town are the same . . .
- SG: When it come to disaster, people remember and they take [heed] the warning. Lot of these [incidents] happen [where] they don't [heed] the warning. They were warned not to go, not to do, and they do that, see. Like us, the '46, we were here. But people was living there [in the tsunami zone], they had chance. All the people on our side [of the street], they all evacuate. But on the other side, no.
- NP: Some families really learned the hard way, didn't they?
- SG: Yeah, but you no blame the family because they had no family living around here and they don't want to depend on anybody. There's some lady, one lady, yeah, they move out, been here '46, they went through the tidal wave in '46. They supposed to get out. Only that family stayed there. But lucky nobody lost. They had five kids, six. The lady can swim so the bed was floating, she put all the. . . .
- MG: Kids.
- SG: Went up, down the river three hours, nobody died. And this fellow, he get father, he used to run the theater. He went with the mother and father in the ocean, four hours, up and down the river. The father paralyzed, you know, can hardly walk, and the mother is so old too, so. Hang on in the house. Up and down the house. At last he came out. He told us the story. He just died, you know, only about six months ago. He went with the father and mother up and down the river. He said not only him, plenty more people. So when you think like that, too hard. And I seen all the dead people, ho, worse.
- NP: So it was a terrible experience.
- SG: They took away all the swamp place because all old houses over there. Even my house was there over a hundred years I think. And the house still stand over here.
- NP: Oh, they moved it, that's right.
- SG: You know, 1946 we move out here so Bishop Estate sold the house to somebody and they brought 'em over here.
- NP: So the house survived the tidal wave, too.
- SG: Yeah, the house. The house *wen* survive two tidal waves.
- NP: Well, I think that we've had a really wonderful, long interview today so I think I'll stop now. But I really want to thank you both because you've shared so much of your lives and I've learned so much about what it's like to lose everything and to have to start over. More than once, two times.

SG: You see, nowadays all the young people get education, so they can start any kind of job. Once you go university you not afraid of job. That's the good point of university. They lose one job they look for another one because . . .

NP: Except that sometimes . . .

SG: . . . they have the knowledge.

NP: Sometimes university people think they can do only certain jobs.

SG: That's why I told these people, the young, "Go school." Because the family will support you go school. If you don't go school you going be a laborer all your life. You can be a laborer, but at least can upper bracket. I seen how many college graduates, they get one job, they quit, they find another good job.

NP: Mm hmm. So I think I'll turn off the tape now and thank you so much.

SG: Oh, eh, was on tape?

(Laughter)

END OF INTERVIEW

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