

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Riichi Hatada

"My family was working since it was seven o'clock in the morning already. I was a late riser. . . . I was having breakfast. . . . While I was eating, they said, 'Tidal wave.' That's when I looked out. And it came . . . I think that was the third wave that Shinmachi was wiped out. I could stay in our building for a while. Then after the third wave, I told my father, 'Let's go to the Coca-Cola [Bottling Company] plant.' Just a walking distance [away]. [It was] in the back around the building, you know, the narrow side. And we went in through the side and went upstairs. Then went to the top. And my father refused to go. [He] said, 'No. The bakery on fire.' The burner started to burn because that was oil, burning crude oil. So it started to spread. So he said, 'It's going to burn the building, so I'm going to stay here and extinguish the fire.' I said, 'No, you cannot, you don't have time, so you come up.' So we all went up. Said, 'You're going to lose this bakery. You cannot save it.' So about the third or fourth wave, I saw the wave hit our bakery. We had a railroad track across the street. . . . And the train was parked there. The tidal wave washed the caboose, and hit our bakery."

Riichi Hatada, the fourth of eight children, was born on April 21, 1922 in downtown Hilo to Japanese immigrants Shigemi Tasaka Hatada and Kenho Hatada.

His father waited on tables at the Pacific Bakery Hotel and Restaurant where he eventually learned the bakery trade. In ca. 1925, his father founded K. Hatada Bakery in the Shinmachi section of Hilo where the family resided. The bakery produced Star Bread. The bakery was later sold to the Ikedas who owned Hilo Macaroni Factory. During that time his father returned to Hiroshima to build a family home. Upon his return to the islands, his father was employed by the Hilo Macaroni Factory. When he accumulated sufficient capital, he again started K. Hatada Bakery which produced Purity Bread. The K. Hatada Bakery enterprise, which at one time distributed Love's products and included Robert's Bakery, served Hilo residents for decades.

Riichi Hatada attended Waiākea Kai, Hilo Intermediate, and Hilo High schools. He started working at the family-run bakery prior to his graduating in 1941; he continued to work there until it was sold in 1993.

He and Eiko Hayashida Hatada have been married for fifty years and have raised three children.

The K. Hatada Bakery was destroyed in the 1946 tsunami. The bakery, hit by a caboose propelled by the tsunami, was only half salvageable. The family subsequently re-established K. Hatada Bakery on Kūkūau Street where it survived intact the 1960 tsunami.

The interview was conducted in his Hilo home.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Riichi Hatada (RH)

Hilo, Hawai'i

April 27, 1999

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[NOTE: Also present at the interview is Eiko Hatada (EH), RH's wife.]

WN: Okay, this is an interview with Mr. Riichi Hatada, in Hilo, Hawai'i, on April 27, 1999. And the interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Hatada, first question I want to ask you is when were you born?

RH: I was born four, twenty-one, twenty-two [April 21, 1922]. I was born in Hilo. Before I was one year old, we moved to a town called Shinmachi—that was "new town"—in the bayfront area [of Hilo].

WN: And where were you born?

RH: Near the Rossmond Hotel on Kīlauea Avenue, downtown.

WN: Okay. Before we get into Shinmachi, what was your father doing at the time?

RH: He [Kenho Hatada] was working as a waiter, I understand, at the Pacific Bakery Hotel and Restaurant. He worked as a waiter, waiting on tables at the restaurant. Then he got tired, and he asked the boss if he could go into the bake shop, to learn baking. I understand a lot of people went in there to work, to learn, and they all [eventually] went [back] to wherever they came from: Pāhoa, or Kona, or Hilo, wherever. And they made their own bakery, I understand, as soon as they had enough money to build their own. And my father started his first bakery somewhere in about 1925 or 1926. And the name [of the] bakery was Star Bakery, under K. Hatada.

WN: So the name of the bakery was Star Bakery.

RH: Star Bakery. That's the bread [brand] name. And pastries. So he worked at it for so many years. Then he decided to go back to Japan, so he sold that business to Hilo Macaroni [Factory], the Ikeda family, and he went to Japan to build a home in Hiroshima[-ken] where he came from. Because at that time when he came, they [K. Hatada's family] had a rice farm, but it wasn't doing too good. Rice price was so low that they couldn't make a living. So he came to Hawai'i, thinking that he can make quite a bit of money or something like that, to go back

and live in Japan.

So he built a home, and stayed there [in Hiroshima] for so many months, but then he came back [to Hilo]. Then he started working for Hilo Macaroni. (Chuckles) They started making---learned to make cracker, and (*udon*) noodles, and also bread. Then he had enough money again, so he left Hilo Macaroni, and he came back to where we were living again. He had the same bakery underneath the home we were living in, and he decided to bake Purity bread, under K. Hatada Bakery again. And that was a brand name until he left Hilo. Anyway, that was in early [19]30s, or mid [19]30s.

Then we lived there and worked at the bakery until the 1946 tidal wave. We didn't have any warning, it was on April 1st, seven o'clock in the morning. And my family, were all working, and I was having breakfast upstairs. My dad says, "Tidal wave!" I looked out, oh, was terrible, the homes were all being washed out, washed away.

WN: Before I get into the tidal wave, I have a few questions about the bakery. You said that when you were a baby, your father moved to Shinmachi. And then, that's when he---about that time, he started the first bakery?

RH: Yes.

WN: Oh, okay. And this was Star Bakery.

RH: Star Bakery.

WN: Star Bakery. Okay. And so when you grew up, when you were a child, it was Star Bakery?

RH: That was until about. . . . I forgot, maybe I was a teenager yet. Then he sold it, then he left for Japan and built a home for the family.

WN: Then came back.

RH: Came back. Then he worked for Hilo Macaroni. Then saved enough money.

WN: So actually, the bakery had a split---there was a bakery, then there wasn't a bakery, and then there was a bakery again.

RH: Yes. Because he rented half of the building at the time, and our neighbor was [Ishida Drug Store], and they had a store next to the bakery. There was an alley going through the back, there was a camp where people lived. So after the drugstore closed, he rented the whole building. Then we lived on two sides of the building. Had a partition, we tore down the partition, and we had about something like four bedrooms because we had a big family, eight of us. So it was easy living then. Was hardship, but for us was easy because lot of space.

WN: This is upstairs?

RH: (We lived) upstairs. Then downstairs we had two sides. One side was a warehouse, and the other side of the alley was the bake shop. That's where we produced all the bread and pastries. So, it was hard work, getting up early in the morning.

WN: How early did you wake up?

RH: Well, I couldn't get up, I wasn't a morning person.

(Laughter)

WN: What time did your father wake up?

RH: Oh, he started about, before midnight, if I'm not mistaken. Because bakery business you have to have it out early. People will come to buy, then go take it home for breakfast, and make lunch, sandwiches, or something like that. So, he did lot of work. As we were growing up, we started to help him.

WN: Doing what? What kind of . . .

RH: Baking. We learned to bake. He had about four workers. They wanted to learn to bake from him, too. So they---good thing we had a lot of space upstairs. They boarded with us, and while learning to bake, they lived with us. Then when they learned enough, they went their ways to make their own bakeries, wherever they came from. That's how they worked in Hilo in the old days. They teach each other.

WN: That's how your father learned.

RH: Yes. He learned, then he teaches. Anybody wants to learn, he'd tell, "All right, you can come and learn." He'll pay them and he'll work with my father. So, that was all right. Then, I think, yeah, that bakery lasted till 1946, April 1.

WN: What kinds of things did the bakery bake and sell?

RH: Baked bread, white bread, brown bread, and he made *manju*, bean, you know that? And cream snails. And he made jelly rolls, cakes. He made quite a few pastries those days. Then when Thanksgiving came, he told me, "If you go out and take orders, I'll give you 20 percent of your sales." So I went out, and he hired a couple of ladies. I told them, you go out Piopio Street, the other one went to Waiākea or somewhere around there. Anyway, I went to the closest area, Shinmachi village [because] I was skinny and whatnot.

(Laughter)

RH: I had a order of something like over a hundred pies. So when I collected all the money and turned in the cash to him, all right, he gave me over twenty dollars. Over 20 percent. Because I had a good sale. So that's how I made my spending money, besides going to the river to catch the fish, or gathering scrap copper and brass. And there was a junkyard called Penny Junk near our place. So we walked over to his place, and sold him the copper. And he bought it for about fifteen to twenty-five cents a pound. So we all---you know, we have a few friends, get together, and we put it together, and we made our spending money with that. So we didn't have to ask our parents for money. So we were never broke. We had good time (chuckles) growing up in Shinmachi.

WN: Was it only Thanksgiving that you went and took orders?

RH: Yes. But day after, if had leftover bread, he won't keep it for two days. The next day, he tells me, if you go early in the morning, and you go house to house, and you sell the bread for—at that time was three cents to five cents because the [regular price of] bread was about six or seven cents. So he tell me, "Whatever you sell, you can keep the money."

So that's how I made my spending money too, because my brothers didn't want to go. I went.

WN: So day-old bread.

RH: Day-old bread. Not two days old. Whatever he couldn't sell that day, next morning he tells me, "Okay, you can go and sell that bread."

WN: So how did you cart that bread around?

RH: I had a box, you know. I put about half a dozen to eight bread, which I can carry, then I went back to refill again, to go house to house, until I sold it all. (Chuckles) So I had good income for my spending money. And I spent it all. I didn't save any. (Laughs) Because my friends had hardship. Their parents worked [as] stevedores, or they went fishing. They weren't making enough income to give the children allowance. So whenever we go to the movies, I treat them. Or when we go to the restaurant, like Moto's Inn, I treat them the hamburger, you know? And I'm broke again. Those days, he used to give me three dollars a week allowance when I was going to school. Intermediate school. Then on Monday, I go to school, and my friends don't have lunch money. So, okay, let's go, I'll treat you folks. So I'm broke again.

So I come home and I tell Dad, "I'm broke. I don't have money."

"What? You spent all the money?"

"Yes. Because my friends don't have money, I have to treat them lunch, or snacks, you know?" (Chuckles) I felt sorry for them. That's how I was, you know. That's why I was broke those days, I couldn't save. So that's how we grew up.

WN: What was it like growing up as a---being a child in Shinmachi? What did you folks do to have fun?

RH: We had to swim in the [Wailoa] River. Catch fish. Then when we got tired, we'd go to the bayfront, we had a nice black-sand beach [before the 1946 tsunami], if you saw it. I don't know if you saw the picture.

WN: Yeah, you showed me.

RH: So we used to swim, and go crabbing. Then we had a pot, you know, and we'd catch the crab, we'd boil the water, and we'd put the crab in there and boil it. Then we'd eat it fresh. Live crab in there. We'd put salt and we'd make our snack, you know? Then we'd catch the fish and take it home to eat.

WN: What kind fish had in the . . .

RH: Well, they had *āholehole*, *aji*, *'ōpelu* used to come in too.

WN: Yeah?

RH: Yeah, because. . . .

WN: Brackish water.

RH: Brackish water. Yeah, the river water comes out and the ocean water, so. . . . Although it was polluted, they told us don't eat the fish, but we ate.

WN: This is Wailoa River?

RH: Yeah, Wailoa River comes out to that—near today's. . . . There was a bridge, and people lived below the bridge. And they had a Coast Guard boat in the—anybody get trouble they go out from there. So. . . .

WN: Sort of near Suisan [Company, Ltd.] today?

RH: Yes, that's where. Then, there was a train bridge at the time, and the Wailoa River—that's the one today. I showed you, I have the picture too, the old one. That was an iron bridge laid with lumber, you know? Thick lumber, I don't know what size. Anyway, they laid it across the bridge so the cars can go over. And they made a walkway on one side with that lumber. And we used to walk across the bridge to go to school, Waiākea Kai School, up till sixth grade.

WN: How far was it from your house to Waiākea Kai School?

RH: About half a mile, I think. Not too far, so we could walk it. Because we used to walk to Coconut Island to swim. So, we had a good time living in Shinmachi.

WN: What kind of families lived in Shinmachi? You know, economically. . . .

RH: Well, had lot of fisherman. And lot of stevedores those days, you know?

WN: Mostly Japanese?

RH: Yes, and Filipinos. Had Hawaiians, Filipinos, more Filipinos too, had some Hawaiians. In fact, we had a Christian church. Hawaiian Christian church, with a Hawaiian reverend.

Oh, excuse me.

(Telephone rings. Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

RH: So, they [stevedores] had hard living because whenever the boat came in, they had job. Otherwise, they didn't have work in those days, because [it was] far in between when the boat came in. They had Young Brothers [Ltd. coming in], but more Matson [Navigation Co.]. But boat doesn't come in every week, so certain time they don't work. And they weren't paid too well, too, I think. But maybe those days that was a better-paying job for them than cane field. So they went to work for Matson.

Then eventually they had a refinery, from the sugar mills. They used to bring the raw sugar,

and they made into brown sugar, and they ship it to Mainland to have it refined to make it white sugar. And that's how they got work too. Waiākea Mill [Company] didn't know what to do with the cane trash [i.e., bagasse]. All the plantations on the coastline used to dump it in the ocean. And whenever we'd go swimming, when they would harvest, all the trash used to come to the beach, you know? So we couldn't swim. And we couldn't get any crab or fish. So we just stayed in the river, until that let up.

So, eventually, this company called Flintkote [Company] came to Hawai'i. They made a business with the cane trash. They ground it up and they made these Canec boards for ceilings and whatnot. In fact, some of them made partitions. So that was good for Hilo. [Flintkote Company of New York bought the Hawaiian Cane Products Company, Ltd., which had been manufacturing Canec from bagasse since 1928. This plant was located at the corner of Kekuanaoa and Mililani streets, in the Waiākea Houselots area.]

WN: And that was where the Waiākea Mill [Company] was?

RH: Yes. That's where the Waiākea Village is today.

WN: Right, right.

RH: *Aku* fishing was good, lot of fish. [There were] about three [commercial] *aku* boats, I think. They went out about three or four times a day. At one time, they wanted to make a cannery near the airport. And the women's club in Hilo said no. They cannot make that because the smell of the fish. When the tourists come on the plane, they won't like the smell, and they won't come to Hilo. So, they said, "You cannot make that." They blocked that, you know? So they didn't know what to do with that fish. They had so many. So they started to give away some, and they sold—they flood the market so much, fish came so cheap, that they couldn't make a living again. So they---Honolulu had a cannery, they made a cannery, tuna cannery [Hawaiian Tuna Packers, Ltd.], remember? So they started to ship the catch to Honolulu. And that's how the price of fish came good again in Hilo. Because they keep so much for Hilo and ship most of it to Honolulu. So that's how they made a living too.

WN: And most of these fisherman, many of these fisherman, lived in Shinmachi?

RH: Waiākea town. Because the boat harbor was in the Wailoa River near the Wailoa River mouth. So all the sampans would park down the side. And the first Suisan [then named Suisan Kabushiki Kaisha] was on the strip on this side, when they unload the fish on this side. Then came so much that they built the one today they have there. They made it bigger. Then that was all right. So they made a good living on fishing.

WN: Getting back to the bakery, when did you start working, you know, getting paid, on a full-time basis?

RH: When I was going to high school. I was a sophomore, that was when I was about fifteen years old. Teachers used to [bring in guest speakers who] represented the Lāna'i company. And he asked the students if anybody wanted to go to pick pineapple when it's pineapple season, that's summertime. They offered about fifteen cents an hour.

So I told my father, "This year, I'm going to Lāna'i to pick pineapples. I want to get some

money.”

He looked at me, told me, “I don’t think you can make it. You’re too skinny. (WN chuckles.) I don’t think you can stand that labor.”

So he said, “All right, if you want to work, I’ll pay you.” And he gave me thirty cents an hour. He said, “I’ll hire you. You’ll work for me.” So that’s how I started to get paid. I used to make about ten dollars, fifteen dollars a month. He paid me good. He saved at least ten dollars or fifteen dollars a month for me and gave me spending money.

WN: So this is kind of different from the work you did as a kid?

RH: Yes.

WN: Where you just keep . . .

RH: Yes. So, I worked in the bake shop, and I learned to make the pastries, whatever I can. Then eventually when I started to—we used to sell the bread unsliced before. It wasn’t sliced. So I said, “People were asking, ‘Oh, why don’t you slice the bread?’”

So we had that knife and we had to slice the bread. Because we didn’t have the machine then, you know? Eventually he invested us into the slicing machine, table model. You know, you fit the bread from the side like that, and the bread comes down. There had a block of wax paper with our Purity bread, naming all the ingredients. And a hot iron on the side. You know, the regular, ironing-clothes kind? Then I started to wrap the bread. Sliced bread. That was all right, but we didn’t make too much at that time.

WN: How many loaves would you make a day, when you first started?

RH: Those days? Maybe about fifty, sixty, at the most, if I remember right. When I used to go to [Hilo] Intermediate School, the cafeteria ordered our bread. So, nobody wanted to—we didn’t have. . . . Oh, we had car. In fact the first time I delivered the bread to the school in the box, I rode in the five-cent bus. You know, the. . . .

WN: Sampan?

RH: Sampan bus. They drop us off at the school. I used to walk to the cafeteria and deliver the bread. They made sandwiches.

(Laughter)

RH: Then eventually, we had a car deliver it. So they used to take me to school, and they used to tell me, “You go deliver the bread.” And they paid me for that too, you know, my parents, my father. He gave me commission on that.

WN: So you folks would deliver only to the schools? What about stores?

RH: We delivered to the stores too. Not many stores those days. Maybe about ten stores at the most. Maybe less than that. And not many. And they used to live near the stores, so her job

was to go early in the morning to pick up the bread, because we had to deliver the bread early in the morning so when people get up, they going buy the fresh bread and take it home to eat bread or make toast.

WN: Oh, this is your---you're talking about your wife?

RH: Yeah. She [Eiko Hayashida Hatada] was living on Kīlauea Avenue, near the church. She used to walk across the street to buy the bread. That was her job. (Chuckles)

WN: Oh, so her family had a store and bought the bread from you folks?

RH: No, no, she lived there, but the store was across the street. Somebody else running the store. So she had to go and buy the bread.

WN: I see, I see.

(Laughter)

WN: So when you first started, what kind of mechanization did you folks have? Or was everything by hand?

RH: By hand. It was a round bowl, and first, with the flour, and then somebody would help on the side, mix all the ingredients. And he would pour the water in, mix with the hand like that. So, those days was good bread, not like today. Then eventually he bought a small mixer. That was a good mixer, you know. So, was machine-made. We mixed our bread and pastry dough all in there. But those days, we used to take it out from the pan and lay it out on the table, I think, to cool the bread. You cannot wrap the hot bread. So it took about half an hour or more to cool the bread. Then, in the meantime, we'd make the pastries. Then, again, the pastries, we didn't have any big equipment to put the pans on the bread rack to cool the pastries. So we'd lay it on the floor. And walking space like this, maybe . . .

WN: One foot. One foot walking space.

RH: Yeah. Walk around that, while it's---it's on the floor, so it takes time to cool off again.

WN: You had it on wax paper or something?

RH: No, directly in the pan. So, it's strictly a pan, you know. Then eventually, we had it lined with paper, you know, they had the baking paper. But that was long after that.

WN: How big was the bakery itself, in terms of floor space?

RH: There was a make-up table [i.e., work table] facing the window. (We would mix the dough on the side, then take the dough to the front to make the pastries on the work table.) And we had a warehouse in the back, too, those days. So it was pretty good size for that day, in those days. You know, you don't produce too much. So that was enough.

WN: The front of the bakery was facing Kamehameha Avenue?

RH: Yes. Then people could see us working, had the window there.

WN: But there was---it was also a bakery where you could buy things, from there? Could people walk in and buy . . .

RH: Yes, they used to---you know, the people living in Shinmachi? They smelled the bread, they come and buy pastries. Those who had money, but those days money was hard, as I told you, so not many people would come and buy. They'd wait for the day-old.

I used to sell the pastries too, if I'm not mistaken. Some people couldn't pay me, so I said, "Okay, you pay me next time." Because, income was hard. So I let them have it. Then sometimes I never even charge them.

So, my father said, "What? You didn't charge them?"

"No, they didn't have money. I felt sorry for them."

(Laughter)

WN: So these are people that came in, walked in.

RH: Yes. If they had money, they'd come in.

WN: So that was your job too? To sell at the bakery?

RH: Well, somebody else used to sell because it was a family bakery. I had older sisters, an older brother, younger brothers [and sisters]. So they all used to help those things.

WN: Did you have hired help, too?

RH: The only hired help was those who wanted to learn baking. Then eventually, we had delivery cars, then we had so many, that was way ahead again. We had about three salesmen, one goes to Wainaku, one in town, and one went to different areas of town. And they used to sell at the stores, or people walked to the car and they used to buy the bread and pastries.

WN: Did you---I know you folks delivered to the schools---bread---but did you deliver pastries too, to the schools? Or was it . . .

RH: Some of the workers, they wanted snacks, so they ordered pastry ahead of time.

WN: Did you deliver pastry to stores?

RH: Yes. Because we had about three deliverymen, for small bakery like that. I think I remember the names, if I mention. Ushijima, John Ushijima's older brother.

WN: Oh, the [state] senator's brother.

RH: Yeah. Then had Shintani, and Mizuno, I think. Kiyoto Mizuba's father. They all worked together. Then eventually, they worked for Hilo Macaroni.

- WN: And in the early days, who was the competitors? Who were your competitors?
- RH: Had Funada Bakery, had—(to EH)—what the family name was?
- EH: Noda.
- RH: Noda Bakery.
- WN: And they sold same kind stuff? Bread and pastries?
- RH: Yeah. Had American Bakery. We had several bakeries in town.
- WN: Was it mostly run by Japanese? Bakeries.
- RH: Yes. And Pacific Bakery was still running. That's a big bakery.
- WN: So your father's bread in the early days was known as . . .
- RH: Star Bread.
- WN: Star Bread, and then later on it became Purity.
- RH: Yes, because he sold the bread rights to Hilo Macaroni. And they started to make Star Bread.
- WN: I see. And what about the pastries, though? I mean, the pastry side part was known as K. Hatada Bakery, or was there a name for the pastry?
- RH: Purity. Purity pastries, and we had our name of the pastry individually packed. But that was way ahead, again.
- WN: Yeah, that was probably later, yeah?
- RH: More walk-in. Oh, it was delivered to the store. They had a show [i.e., display] case, like, small one. They used to put the pastries in there, and it wasn't put in bags. Those days wasn't bagged yet.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

- RH: They had showcase in every store. *Manju*, cream snails, cinnamon rolls, some donuts. Used to display in the tray, you know. And put it in there for them. And people used to buy that. Bread was wrapped, hand wrapped. Sometimes, my father feel, oh it's good to trick the people sometimes. So he bought box of candies, you know. Those square ones, nice colors. Had orange, red, grape kind, I guess. Everytime I wrapped, I wrapped like this: fold one end, stand it up, then iron the other end, turn it around, and then before I iron that, fold the wax paper again, I put the piece of candy in there, between the wax paper, you know. I used to wrap that up, and they didn't know that at first. That when they were at home, they found candy in there.
- WN: Well, how often did you do that?

- RH: We did that for quite a while, yeah?
- WN: Candy inside?
- RH: Yes. My father was generous.
- WN: As a businessman, was your father, I guess, did he have, like, a higher status in the community?
- RH: Well, in our community people looked up to him, because he was an honest man and clean man. That's why I say we had a *kumiai*, *ik-ku*, we were *ni-ku*, *san-ku* [i.e., the three sections of Shinmachi]. And every year, they had an election of officers. And every year—they like him, so they automatically elect him president. And some people used to get jealous because, "How come he's always the president?" Because they like him! What can you do? (WN chuckles.) You know, they elect him, they vote. So people used to get jealous of him, and they had representative, and secretary, too, I think. I think he used to do the paperwork, too. So people look up to him, and he was well liked. He was a gentle person.
- WN: How was his English?
- RH: His English? He learned to speak some. So, on his own. He came when he was about fifteen years old, from Japan, all by himself. He had no relatives. My mother [Shigemi Tasaka Hatada] was born in Laupāhoehoe, so her family was here.
- WN: Did your mother work in the bakery too?
- RH: When she was well, yes. She was sickly, so. . . . At a early age, she was bedridden. She couldn't—you know, our home was two-story, so, there was plenty steps to reach up to the living area. So she couldn't go down or climb the stairs. So she spent most of her life until she passed away in the room upstairs, in bed. So at the time, Dr. [S.] Kasamoto helped her as much as he could. She passed away at the age of, I think about thirty-seven, or thirty-eight. And she had all of us already, eight of us.
- WN: Wow, so how did you folks manage?
- RH: Well, as we grew older, each of us had chores. But washing our clothes, my older sister used to do that. And she used to cook for us. And eventually she (was engaged) to get married, so she had to move out from our home and move to Pāhoa, where her husband came from. We hired a lady living right behind our home. She did our laundry, she did our cooking and whatever she could on working days. On Sundays, my father did the cooking. He was a good cook, too.
- WN: What did he cook?
- RH: Oh, he used to make fish. Main staple was fish. Used to have *aku* those days. You had that *otaro*, you call it, that's (thirty-five pounds and over) [*aku*].
- WN: What is that?
- RH: *Otaro*, in Japanese, you call that. That's a really big fish. About thirty-five pounds or more.

WN: That's not butterfish, huh?

RH: *Aku*.

WN: Oh, it's *aku*?

RH: Yes. So, that was the main *okazu* for us. Day in, day out, we eating that. You fry that, you make it shoyu style, you know, *nitsuke*? He used to bake that in the oven. So we used to like that. That was the main staple. *Okazu* for us, with rice. And leftovers, we can eat.

WN: I was wondering, did you folks eat a lot of bread at home?

RH: Not much, more rice.

(Laughter)

RH: Seldom we ate it.

WN: Yeah, I guess, yeah? Kind of tired of looking at bread.

RH: Pastries we used to eat. Sometimes, not enough [left] to sell. Good stuff, we ate it first. [RH's father] tell, "What? All gone already?"

"Yes, we ate it."

(Laughter)

WN: I wonder, did he make---did you folks also make, like, hamburger bun, hot dog bun, kind of thing in the early days? Or maybe did they have that?

RH: I don't think so. Hot dog came later. Hamburger. Because we started to make that in the later years. So, that was all right, that extra income. So, [the bakery produced] more the easy ones, the one that goes [i.e., sells].

In fact, he made cookies at one time. And that was good cookies, too. He learned a lot of things on his own. He tried to experiment what to make by taste. So, it was all right. He made several varieties.

(During the interisland shipping strike of 1938, our bakery could not get supplies from the Mainland. We could not get things such as yeast to make our bread. I remember my father making his own yeast by washing and fermenting Irish potatoes.)

Then, after the tidal wave, we were at the apartment at Dokuritsu School, we rented there for several months. And that was the war years too, so my brothers were in the service. We had two rooms, for our big family. Then he didn't know what to do. So he asked his friend, who had a cane field in Kurtistown, he told him, "Can I raise cucumber, in between the [rows of the] cane field?"

Said, "Yes you can." So he did. But he's no farmer. So the cucumbers came all, MQ [i.e.,

rejected], they used to call that. All the bugs eat that or sting that. He didn't know you had to cover that. So all MQ, so he had to sell it cheap to the vegetable store. And lot of times we had to eat cucumber. Or he'd give away to friends. So that was a no go. (RH chuckles.)

WN: Let me just turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

RH: Then in the meantime, he wasn't working yet, so I went to work part-time at the [Hilo] Transportation Company.

WN: When was this?

RH: In 1946, '47. I was a weakling, so they gave me easy job.

(Laughter)

WN: So after the tidal wave, you worked part-time?

RH: Yes.

WN: Okay, let me get into that little bit later. I have a few more questions about the bakery. When you first started full-time, in 1938, what time did you have to wake up?

RH: I was the last one to get up. (Chuckles)

WN: Well, what time is that?

RH: Lucky if I got up at seven o'clock.

WN: Oh boy, you banker's hours, huh?

(Laughter)

RH: I was spoiled, you know. He don't wake me up. He gave up. But he still paid me for when I went down to work.

WN: So what time did the bakery close?

RH: Until everything sold out.

WN: Usually about, what, in the afternoon?

RH: Late in the afternoon, yes.

WN: And your father was there, from say, midnight, all the way to the afternoon?

RH: He used to go---he used to rest, he had to have his rest. And when he goes to rest, then he calls me up. He had back problem. So he tells me, "Come."

I tell him, "Okay."

Then he tells me, "Go on my back, and walk back and forth, back and forth," on his spine, you know? So, okay. And he paid me for that too. I couldn't walk so long, so, "Okay, that's enough." Then eventually I got used to, so, he was happy because I could walk on his back longer, balance on his back, you know. So he was happy.

Then he relaxed and take a nap, and watch his wife. Help her, feed her, and clean her up. He used to do all the work until my sister grew up. Then she used to help.

So, he had a hard life too. Then eventually came little easier, because after the tidal wave. . . . Now? You going to ask me?

WN: No. Before tidal wave. I wanted to ask you about World War II first. What was it like?

RH: Well, World War II. At first, they asked for volunteers for the 442[nd Regimental Combat Team]. So I volunteered. I told my father, "I'm the *kolohe* one, I'm the black sheep. So I'm going to volunteer." I talk to my brothers. Say, "Okay." They let me volunteer. But, somehow, my friend was working for the, what do you call that, where you register to. . . .

WN: Draft board?

RH: Draft board. So, she told me, "Why do you volunteer? You crazy."

Said, "No, that's okay, because I'm the one in the family should go."

So I did. She let me go then. I went to the physical, I passed. Then my friends started to get calls, you know, those who volunteered. And they're waiting for mine to come. I was also waiting. Somehow, mine didn't come. So they all went and I stayed home. Then, in the meantime, when I became eighteen years old, they said, eighteen and over. . . . What was it, below eighteen?

WN: You were about---oh, 1941, you were about eighteen, nineteen.

RH: Yes. Then I volunteered [but] they didn't take me. But in the meantime, they took my oldest brother. Then he went to the service. Then they took my younger brother. Then he went in the service, too. Then they took my third brother, the fourth brother, so he went into the service too. Then that was all right. And I still waiting to get drafted. But nothing came.

In the meantime, my father told me, "I need you. So try to get deferment." So I didn't know how to go about it. So, my brother-in-law, Gilbert Yamaguchi, said, "Oh, I can help you. My good friend is Merrill Carlsmith. He's a lawyer. I used to deliver firewood for him, so I can ask him to help you."

So he took me to his office and introduce me. And he said, "Oh, okay, I help you since you have three brothers in the service already," he'll go to the draft board. That was [located at] HELCO [Hilo Electric Light Company, Ltd.] at that time. A Mr. Smith was the [draft board] manager. He refused to give me deferment.

Say, "Why?"

"If his father cannot run the business, sell it." They took cheap of the Japanese, you know, these *Haoles*.

So, said, "What? [That's] their livelihood and you want them to sell the business?"

"Yes."

"See, you must be something else." He [Carlsmith] told him off. Then he got angry and he argued with him. So, at last he [Smith] gave up, and he gave me that deferment. So I stayed home all the [war]time. I didn't have to go to the service.

So I spent my time helping my dad, and working for [Hilo] Transportation [Company] part-time as soon as I get through with the bakery. My friends told me, come to work at Hilo Transportation, they'll hire you for part-time. [Then I could] play basketball with them in the league, you know. So I did. They hired me.

WN: This was during the war?

RH: During the war. So that was in about 1943.

WN: What did you do while at Hilo Transportation?

RH: I couldn't drive so they hired me as a truck helper. I used to carry the cases. Pretty good. Then I came to the hundred-pound sack of rice. I couldn't do it. So the other strong guys tell me, "Okay, you, stay away." They carried the rice. Then eventually I learned the art. You know, from the length of the truck, you go to the store, and we rush back and then unload the rice. I learned how to grab it, and with the momentum, I used to swing it to the back of the truck. I did pretty well at the time. I worked for so many years like that.

Until then, I went home, then my father was deciding what to do. He'd say, "We don't have any training to do any other work. We don't have skill." So he told us, "You know, I think I'm going to make another bakery." And that was the one on Kūkūau Street. So we had meeting one night. He told us, okay, sign all the savings bonds, and whatever savings or money we had in the bank, we took it all out. And he had about [\$]12[,000] or \$15,000. I took all my money out, and we all put it together for down payment. And then he went to the bank to borrow the balance to build a bakery on Kūkūau Street.

WN: Why did he want to build a bakery on Kūkūau Street?

RH: Because that was the safety zone. The waves don't come up.

WN: Oh, so this was after the tsunami that you're talking about.

RH: Yes. That was in '47.

WN: I wanted to ask you about what the bakery business was like during the war.

RH: Okay. That's right. I'm sorry.

(Laughter)

WN: No, no, no, that's okay.

RH: Yeah. During the war, it was blackout. So, wake up at early in the morning, and deliver that before curfew. And we delivered the bread, then came home and. . . . Six o'clock in the night, we're sleeping. Because we were working too, but, you know, and blackout and all the windows closed. Slightly opened maybe. And we cannot use electricity because the light, they say, they can see from the ocean, or the plane can see that when they fly over. So it was completely black out. So we had candles, or lantern, to light our home. Or walk in the dark. So that was hard living. Eventually they cut out the blackout. But before the blackout, there was a eruption, the Kilauea Crater. And that . . .

EH: Mauna Loa.

WN: Mauna Loa.

RH: Mauna Loa, yeah. So anyway, the eruption was on. So these crazy service people, the army people, they sent about three or four planes to bomb the crater to try to stop that. Yeah. I saw that plane going up and bombing the crater. I said, "They must be crazy. You can never do that." You know? So they did that and they give up, because they cannot stop the eruption.

WN: They wanted to stop the eruption . . .

RH: Yeah.

WN: . . . because it would give away the . . .

RH: Yeah, it was bright, eh? So, said they can see from the ocean, or when the plane come in to bomb Hawai'i. They can see the light, the eruption. So they gave that up. Then, after Pearl Harbor, then the war started in Japan, right? In Pacific area. Then they told all aliens, stay home. And we could go out.

WN: Your father couldn't go out?

RH: No. So, he stayed home, all right. He worked, and stayed home. Then. . . . We could go out, so, until curfew, and they---we were running short of food. So they allot so much a family. And we had to go to the store and buy so many and that's all you can buy. And even liquor too. My father used to love his---once in a while he used to drink a little. And my brother wanted to drink, the one [that] was home. So we had permit to buy the liquor. We had about---my sister-in-law had one, I had one, and one of my brothers had one. So we went to the liquor store and we could buy one each. So we took it home and we kept it all.

- WN: Were there a lot of servicemen in Hilo?
- RH: Yes, they had at the Hongwanji church home, when they came to Hilo. What kind---they were infantrymen?
- EH: Yeah.
- WN: From Camp---from Waimea side?
- RH: No, they were stationed at . . .
- WN: Oh, I see.
- RH: They took over the church, so you couldn't go to church. We didn't have any church service. And they took lot of things, you know, for souvenir, from the church. So one of our members . . .
- EH: Just had it looked up years later.
- RH: Yeah, they breaked it open, and they took lot of things.
- WN: This is the [Hilo] Hongwanji [Mission]?
- RH: Yeah. So---this is going ahead of my time, but---after the war, this person heard about it and checked up all what they took. So he wrote to the government and said the servicemen took all our things from the church. So they [U.S. government] sent enough money to replace whatever they took. So that was all right.
- WN: How did it affect your bakery, with all these servicemen?
- RH: Well, the servicemen hardly came to our bakery. Oh, they used to order our bread, and pick it up and take it up to camp in Waimea. That's going ahead again, because when the R and R came, that Marines from [Camp] Tarawa, they came on the troop ship, and they landed on the black-sand beach at Shinmachi, on the bayfront. And they camped at the park, you know. And not all of them had tents, so they stayed in the rain and everything. They couldn't come across the street. So, they called the children around, the young ones, calling "Come, come." They didn't want to go at first. They didn't know what was going on. "Come." They showed the money. So they went across. Say, "Okay, you take this money and you buy for us whatever we need." They tell them take candy, and bread, and whatnot. So they bought that, bring it across, so they can eat.
- WN: How come the soldiers couldn't go across the street?
- RH: Because that was a Japanese town. They didn't trust us Japanese.
- WN: Oh, I see.
- RH: So they didn't trust us. So we couldn't go across or they couldn't come. So at one time, and they let the people go across sometimes, so---that's going ahead again---they asked my father

to donate the bread. So they made tuna sandwich and deviled egg sandwich, and coffee. The whole park was with marines, so many thousand of them. Until they left for R and R to Waimea, they were treated well by the Shinmachi people. Although they didn't trust us, but they [were] well treated.

So when they were in Camp Tarawa they came down, some of them, [and] look up the people in Shinmachi, go home to home and thank them for what they did. They came to the bakery, thank us. Then they came friends with us. So as I told you, when my brothers were drafted or they volunteered, those who had passed in our area, we invited them to have a farewell party. They ate and drank, gambled with us, you know. They had good time. And they stayed overnight, and they went back to camp. So we treated them well.

So when they went home after the war, one of them wrote to me. No, in fact, this guy wrote a letter to his wife in Washington state, [a place] called Blake Island or something like that. He told me, "Can you mail this letter for me?"

So I said, "All right, I will." I was innocent. I didn't know it was going to be censored. You know? So he wrote what he not supposed to, where he's going next.

So the FBI came looking for me. Say, "Are you this person that mailed the letter for him?"

I said, "Yes, why?"

"You shouldn't have."

I said, "Why?"

He wrote something in there they had to censor. He wrote to the wife where he was going. That was a no-no.

So he said, "Next time, don't do that."

I said, "Okay, thank you."

And they let me go. After they make like that I said, no, I'm not going to do it for you anymore.

(Laughter)

RH: So, as a whole they were good, the servicemen. They came to our town, you know, browse around. So, for our economy it was pretty good too. They bought some stuff from us, from the stores in Shinmachi. That was all right.

WN: Okay, well, let's talk about April 1, 1946. How did the day start for you?

RH: Nineteen forty-six? My family was working since it was seven o'clock in the morning already. I was a late riser. And that particular morning I was up at seven. I was having breakfast, Japanese *o-zōni*, mochi soup, you know, mochi soup? I like that, so my father told me, eat. So I ate. While I was eating, they said, "Tidal wave." That's when I looked out. That was seven

[o'clock] A.M. And it came, and about the second or third wave—I think that was the third wave that Shinmachi was wiped out. I could stay in our building for a while. Then after the third wave, I told my father, "Let's go to the Coca-Cola [Bottling Company] plant."

WN: How far away was that?

RH: Just a walking distance. [It was] in the back around the building, you know, the narrow side. And we went in through the side and went upstairs. Then went to the top. And my father refused to go. Said, "No. The bakery on fire." The burner started to burn because that was oil, burning crude oil. So it started to spread. So he said, "It's going to burn the building, so I'm going to stay here and extinguish the fire."

I said, "No, you cannot, you don't have time, so you come up." So we all went up. Said, "You're going to lose this bakery. You cannot save it."

So about the third or fourth wave, I saw the wave hit our bakery. We had a railroad track across the street.

WN: Right in the front?

RH: Yes. In between the beach and the park. And the train was parked there. The tidal wave washed the caboose, and hit our bakery. You saw the picture?

WN: Right, right.

RH: Then, that bakery was cut in half. The half went away but was stuck around there. So we were lucky, we had some stuff left, because half of the building was left.

WN: Oh, so the caboose hit one side of the bakery and that part was destroyed.

RH: That [part of the] bakery rested on the train.

WN: Oh, the part that the caboose hit stayed?

RH: Stayed.

WN: And the rest of the building got swept away.

RH: Yeah. Half of the building. But luckily, we found some stuff on the side. After the tidal wave, [when] it was all clear, they let us [come into the devastated area]. But . . .

WN: So as you were---did you actually see all this from the Coca-Cola building?

RH: Yes, until the tidal wave was over. About seven or eight waves came in in all.

WN: So you could see everything from where you were? On, what, second floor? Third floor?

RH: This was on the top, this was wide open top.

WN: And Coca-Cola building was concrete?

RH: Concrete.

WN: Oh, so you were safe.

RH: They had the bottling plant down there, and a warehouse down there, too. So, our panel—we had a bakery panel—was stuck in between that Coca-Cola plant. So we could salvage that. We had a mechanic fix it up. But it didn't last long because salt water went in the engine. Then . . .

WN: So when you left the bakery, was it all flooded already?

RH: Yes, it was . . .

WN: I mean, how high up?

RH: It was about knee high, because I piggy-backed my youngest brother, half-brother. And he used to tell me, "Ho, Rii, we have a lot of water, yeah?"

"Yes, that's tidal wave, that's why."

"Oh." So he remembers that. He was three years old. Then we went up there. And after it was all over, they let us out, they had the all-clear [announcement]. Then we walked out towards Piopio Street where Dairymen's was. Then we walked out. And my family went their way, said they're going to my sister-in-law's home someplace downtown. So they stayed there for a while, and I went to my friend's home.

Anyway, before that, the people coming up from Shinmachi, the ladies had aprons on. And they saw the fish and crabs and lobster on the walkway, walking out, live, jumping up. So they're packing it in the apron and they took it to wherever they went and they ate it for lunch and dinner. They were lucky. (Chuckles) We didn't think about that.

WN: It's a good thing you folks were all up at the time.

RH: Yes. I was the last one up.

(Laughter)

RH: That's why my brother told me, "Boy, you were lucky, you're the last one up but you were up at seven o'clock." Usually I get up about seven—just before school, anyway.

WN: So you said it was, like, the third wave that actually flooded the place?

RH: Yes. Hit the boxcar, came to the bakery, hit the building.

WN: But you weren't in there by the time the caboose came?

RH: Yes. I was out, and went to the [Coca-Cola] building. And we stayed there until all clear. So

we could see the waves coming in and out. And homes was in the river. When the waves came in, go up the river, you know, and when the waves receded, went down the river. Couldn't do anything. We couldn't help them.

WN: Did you see any human beings . . .

RH: Yes. They were all on the roof [of their homes]. They were saved, some of them. So, they were lucky they landed across the river, where the Wailoa State Park is today. So a lot of them was saved there.

So, after that I think we went to a friend's home. And they wouldn't let us in[to the bakery] to get our—whatever we can find. For about a week or so. I don't know why. They said they had guards watching the place. And the guards started to pick up the good things and take it home. And by the time we went in, lot of things were gone.

And when we had to look, naturally, the bodies were all smelly, eh. So we couldn't help. We helped them find, and found so many bodies, you know. As I told you, Mr. [Gunji] Kono, the [Hilo] Transportation [Company] owner, that was payday, so he was there early. He was making the payroll. Individually in the envelope. He couldn't make it. So he put all the money he had in his pocket, then he went in the back and tied himself around the clothesline near the pole. He tied himself around that. So he was washed in the river and he was gone. And we found him, about the last one, because the rest were all, most of them were found. So we still got to look for him, because we couldn't find him. So all the workers and friends went in. So we went all around up to the Waiolama Canal. Then, one day we went, and we saw him floating up like that, because the body was bloated. Sure enough, that was him. So we called the rescue and they picked him up and took him to the mortuary.

WN: This is Mr. Kono, who was the owner of Hilo Transportation [Company]?

RH: Yes, that was Hiroaki Kono's father. He was the original [Hilo] Transportation owner. He had two sons. One son [Lawrence] went to Honolulu. He is a lawyer. I think he became a lawyer. And during the war, he served in the interpreters' group [i.e., Military Intelligence Service] in the Pacific arena.

WN: So while you were watching from the Coca-Cola building, do you remember what went through your mind?

RH: I didn't think it was [going to be] that scary. Because the early ones that came in [prior to 1946] was all knee high, and went through the bakery and the alley, but you could walk through. Was low, not those high ones like that. Several came in—I think [there's a] book someplace where it said so many came in to Hawai'i—so we knew what to expect, but we didn't expect it that big. We didn't know. It was from Aleutians, so it took quite a while before it came to Hilo.

WN: So what things could you salvage from the bakery?

RH: Some of our machines. And our car. Nothing much. Few clothings.

WN: This was the things that was still in the part that stayed put.

RH: Yes, some was there underneath the house, so I went to look. And my father went to the bakery. In the back there was a warehouse, was all cement blocks. He told me, "Look for a part where it's freshly cemented." You can tell the difference, eh? So he found it. And he got the hammer and the chisel and whatever, and he dug it up. Then he had about \$1,500 buried there.

WN: Oh yeah? (Chuckles)

RH: Yeah. For emergency. He didn't expect anything but it happened. He had \$1,500.

WN: Now this is what, in the rubble? You mean, of all the damage?

RH: Well, that building was gone already, cleared out.

WN: Yeah. So you just found the slab?

RH: Yes. (WN chuckles.) He said, "Look for it. Help me look." And he knew what to look for, it was on the corner like that. And he had it there.

WN: When was this? I mean, the next day, or. . . . ?

RH: No, that was weeks later. Because they wouldn't let us in. Then when he found it, he didn't say anything, he held on to that and went looking for something else.

[William H.] "Doc" Hill, remember Senator Doc Hill? He came around. He said, "Mr. Hatada, if you want to rebuild, I'll lend you the money to rebuild."

"Okay, thank you," he said. And when [Doc Hill] left, under his breath he said, "You know something, he wants to lend me the money, but he wants to charge big interest." So he not going to borrow from him! (Laughs) So we had fun while talking to him. I was the only one home, so he could talk to me. We had fun, and then after that, as I told you, we were at the dormitory.

WN: Were there other families staying over there too?

RH: Yes, lot of families, tidal wave victims. Downtown area, and several other places, you know? So we met some people. Then we had community kitchen where we could cook our foods. Then, we went to the Red Cross, because people told us to go to the Red Cross, and they'll help you. We didn't have anything. Not much clothing, and cooking [appliances], you know, stove or refrigerator. So we went, I went with him.

So we went to apply. While he was signing in, they questioned him. "Do you have any money in the bank?"

"Yes, I have about \$15,000," had it in the bank. Because besides that, he had savings. Because he planned to use it for the bakery and the family.

Then they told him, "Okay, you have the money in the bank, you use that all up, then if you don't have anything left, then you come to us, and we'll help you."

I said, "Wow, these people are mean." It's not what you have, it's what you lost they're [supposed] to replace, right? So. That was temporary housing so he didn't want to buy his own stove and whatnot, I guess, I don't know. So we borrowed somebody else's, to cook. That was all right.

Then he told me, "I'm never going to donate to the Red Cross."

So, "Yes, I'm not going to donate either. What they did to us." So I told my family what happened when I came home. I said, "Don't ever donate to the Red Cross. They never helped the people, those who need help." So I told my daughter on the Mainland, my two daughters, I said, "Don't ever help the Red Cross. But Salvation Army, and other organizations, you help, because they help the people."

WN: So what did the Salvation Army do?

RH: They gave some foods, you know. They packed---they had the Salvation Army church. They helped the poor people. So they gave canned goods and some food. All right, that was good, so we donate to them. Then, I told them, my children, what happened. Said, "Don't ever---Red Cross, no. Don't give to Red Cross."

Then, my daughter found out [on her own] too. Said, "You know something? You told me about the Red Cross?"

I said, "Yes."

"Remember the earthquake they had in San Francisco? You know, the rich people, they got help from the Red Cross. But the poor people didn't have. Came out in the papers, you see."

WN: Is this the recent earthquake, or the one way back in nineteen . . .

RH: Way back, and the recent one too. [She said] it came out again [in the newspaper]. So she sent me the paper. Said, "Look."

So [I] say, "Yeah, that's what Red Cross about. They help the rich, they don't help the poor people. So don't help them." So all this coming out in the paper today about Red Cross. I said, "No, I'm not going to donate." So they gave up sending me the "Donate to the Red Cross" [literature]. They don't send me anymore.

WN: Yeah, I've talked to other people, too, you know, tsunami victims, about the Red Cross.

RH: So, we never help the Red Cross. Salvation Army, yes. So that's what it is today.

After that [tsunami], then, we got together, when the family came back, and my father was debating to make the bakery or not. As I told you, we got our own money, so that's how we made the bakery on Kūkūau Street. So he decided to make, because he say, "You people cannot go out and work. No skill, you cannot do hard labor. You only bakers. So you stick together and we make the bakery." So he was the owner, and when he left for Japan, he made sure that each of us had equal shares in the bakery.

- WN: What year did he leave for Japan? You know what year? But after the tidal wave?
- RH: [Nineteen] fifty-one. Then he say, "I'm not coming back already. I'm going to stay in Japan, live my life there, with my family." He had brothers and sisters, and niece and nephew. So, he built a nice home so he could stay there.
- WN: You think it was because of the tidal wave that he left?
- RH: I beg your pardon?
- WN: You think it was because of the tidal wave that he left?
- RH: No. He was going to stay, but see, he decided, "I'm going back to Japan. And live my life out there. And I'm not going to come back. So this is the farewell then." And he went. So we never saw him alive again. I went to Japan in 1985 and visit the family. And I'm happy we did, that was the only time we went. Met [RH's father's] brothers and sisters, and the niece and nephews, you know? So I had a wonderful time in Japan. I wanted to go back again.
- WN: Maybe you can go back again someday.
- RH: Yeah, someday. So, that was all right.
- WN: What was the bakery on Kūkūau Street like?
- RH: Well, that was a bigger factory, because we had two ovens, you know. We could bake pastries and bread, different times. Same time, actually. And we had all the equipment to cool off the bread and pastry. So we could make a full-production bakery. Not like the long ago [one] at Shinmachi. This was a really modern bakery at that time.
- WN: Who was in charge? Your brother?
- RH: My oldest brother was the, well, supervisor like. And we worked in the shop. He helped too. And they went out to sell—deliver to the stores, schools.
- WN: And this time, it was Purity?
- RH: That was Purity bread already. Hatada Bakery. So, he [RH's father] stayed with us till about. . . . I don't know how many years he stayed with us. Then, said, okay, this is it, he's going back. So he told. "You folks have even shares, so, whenever you have enough money, you split evenly, what you're making." That was all right. He made it good for us.
- WN: How many of you?
- RH: Five of us. Yes. And eventually, years passed, and my sister worked hard for us. So he put her in too, so it became six of us. And we made the bakery incorporated. Cheaper tax, I think. Partnership was high tax. So we continued until nineteen. . . . (To EH) Nineteen sixty-nine, yeah, we gave up? We sold the bakery? When we sold the bakery?
- EH: You mean this last one?

RH: Yeah. [Nineteen] ninety-six?

EH: [Nineteen] ninety-three?

RH: [Nineteen] ninety-three?

WN: Nineteen ninety-three? Okay.

RH: Yeah, because, you know, all these supermarkets have in-store bakeries. So, competition was great. And Love's came in and Holsum came in. They had their own distribution center, and they had delivery vans. So, came so bad. They made their bread. . . . We called it balloon bread. Because it was big bread, but it was light. We called it balloon bread. Ours was, you know, solid bread.

WN: Oh, was heavier?

RH: Yeah, heavier, really bread-bread. And people used to like our bread, they used to buy out our bread.

WN: Now bread is so light.

RH: Yeah. We called it balloon bread. You know, it's so light. Because it's nothing but air in there. (Laughs)

WN: Probably cheaper though, yeah?

RH: Yeah, it is. So, competition came so great, so we gave up. My brother told us, "We're going to give up the baking business, and become distributors for Love's." So, okay. So they shipped the bread over through the plane. And we had to go to the airport to pick it up. And distribute to the stores.

WN: And this is Love's bread you're distributing?

RH: Yes.

WN: Okay. So you gave up. You don't . . .

RH: We didn't bake anymore.

WN: And this is starting when, in '93?

RH: Uh. . . .

WN: Before that?

RH: Uh. I kind of forgot. In the [19]90s anyway. No, earlier than that. They came distributors in [19]50s, [19]60s.

WN: While you still had the bakery?

RH: Yes.

WN: I see.

RH: We were---the pastries, we were [still] baking.

EH: What year you folks bought out Robert's?

RH: Yeah, then eventually in the late [19]50s, Robert Taira, [who later owned] King's Bakery [in] Honolulu, he wanted to sell the [Robert's] Bakery [in Hilo]. It was up for sale. So my brother was thinking about it. Then [he] said, "We need a pastry shop." So he went ahead and bought out the bakery. So we had Robert's Bakery. We kept the name. We were working there for a while, and we had Love's bread for distribution, and our pastries all came from Robert's Bakery.

WN: What year---around when did Purity bakery stop, you know, Purity bread. Was it in . . .

RH: Ninety. . . . Not too long ago, yeah? Ninety. . . .

EH: What?

RH: We sold out the bakery, gave up.

WN: Purity.

EH: [Nineteen] ninety-three, yeah?

RH: [Nineteen] ninety-three. So we came distributors and we had the pastry shop.

WN: I see. So while you're at Kūkūau Street, that's when the '60 tidal wave hit?

RH: Yes.

WN: Did that affect you folks at all?

RH: No. The water came up to—below our place. Up to Kīlauea Avenue. But it didn't come all the way up.

EH: But you folks didn't have any electricity.

RH: Yeah.

EH: So you folks couldn't bake.

WN: Oh.

RH: Excuse me, [RH corrects himself] but, when we had Robert's Bakery, we were making specialty breads, I'm sorry. And some pastries. And we still were distributing to the stores. That was our retail shop. [Nineteen] ninety-three we gave that up then. We sold it to this guy, he wanted to negotiate and cut down the price. We lost out on the deal. So anyway, we

made out on Robert's Bakery. Then we all retired. (To EH) What year was that, we retired?

EH: What year we retired? What you mean?

RH: We close up Robert's Bakery and all?

EH: [Nineteen] ninety-three, right?

RH: [Nineteen] ninety-three? (Chuckles) Okay. I'm forgetting my days, getting old, you know.

WN: Well, you know, dates are hard sometimes. Let me just. . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 29-45-1-99, SIDE ONE

RH: I talking in circles. (Chuckles)

WN: No, no, this is good.

RH: We built our home here in August of 1960. And we moved up here from Kūkūau area. We were [living] in a rental home.

WN: So when you had your Kūkūau bakery, you folks lived there?

RH: Yes, we rented a home down there.

EH: Nearby.

RH: Yeah, walking distance from work. Then, my brothers were working down the street, living down the street, and some of my brothers were in Osorio Cottage. (To EH) I think they still have the cottages there?

WN: What cottages?

RH: Osorio Cottages.

WN: Oh, Osorio. Oh yeah, yeah. I see.

RH: So, some of my brothers were living across the street near the working area. Then after the tidal wave, we all moved out.

WN: After the six . . .

RH: After the '60 tidal wave. Then we went our ways, built our own home. Some of them live homestead, Komohana Street. One live Wainaku. We all scattered today.

- WN: So, Shinmachi was pretty much—'46 it was pretty much destroyed. Shinmachi. Or did some of it remain . . .
- RH: Nothing. Nothing was there. It was completely wiped out. So they cleared out the place, and they made it a park. That's how Wailoa State Park begins from there to across the street. So I asked the director of Lyman [House] Museum, "Can I ask you to change the name [of the] bayfront area [of Wailoa State Park] to Shinmachi Park? So Shinmachi name will remain there. Then people will know Shinmachi was there. So why don't you name that park, the bayfront area, to Shinmachi? And the back area you can leave it as Wailoa State Park." So he was thinking. Say, okay, he'll try and do that. I don't know when that will be, but he'll let me know.
- WN: Oh, it still might happen, then?
- RH: Yes. Hopefully.
- WN: So, you're talking about the soccer field area?
- RH: Uh, that area was downtown already. [Shinmachi started] from Piopio Street . . .
- WN: Where the memorial is?
- RH: Yeah, from this side of Shinmachi. So, that was a big area. Had three *kumiais*, you know. Had several hundred families there. Until . . .
- WN: Where did lot of the people go? I mean, they just scattered and . . .
- RH: Yeah. Some of them on the Mainland, some of them in Honolulu, I think a few of them in Japan. And here and there on the Big Island. So when we [the former Shinmachi merchants and residents] get together, used to be a big affair. They all came out. But gradually it's getting smaller, because only Hilo people [now] go to the [Shinmachi] reunion we have. Once a year in March we have reunion. So it's a good get-together. We don't see people every day there, you know, daily life. We all scattered. So, we get together then, once a year, talk story about the old days, you know? What good life we had. We remember the river. That's our river.
- WN: Were there—after the tidal wave, were there memorial services?
- RH: Yes, we had that. That's why there's a memorial monument in that industrial area.
- EH: State building.
- RH: Near the state building. That's the one the Shinmachi club donated. We paid for that.
- So we had big reunions. First was the. . . Oh, we had our children already. We had a reunion at Waiākea Village. And we had that near the shopping center. . . . Kūhiō.
- WN: Kaiko'o?

RH: Kaiko'o Mall. That's the hotel there, right? And they had a banquet place. The first reunion was . . .

EH: At the [Hilo] Lagoon Hotel.

WN: Oh, Hilo Lagoon? That's right.

RH: And then below there is the memorial, so we go to there, have the service there, and we go back to the banquet hall, we have that get-together, reunion. All-night affair. That's how I got my pictures, you know, the one I showed you? Friends took out the pictures and reprinted it.

Oh, we had a wonderful life in Shinmachi. If I have to go back, then I'll go back there again. If all is all right, you know? If it was still there, I think we'd still be there. It was a grand place to live. We had everything there. Theaters, *udon-ya*, *kamaboko-ya*, grocery stores. Oh, we had everything. It was a town by itself.

And this was the only town in the territory of Hawai'i with a Japanese name—Shinmachi. So they were wondering how it came about. So the only way we figured it out, the old-timers said, [that] the immigrants that came in [to the] downtown area, [then] came to Shinmachi area, and built the buildings, and the homes in the back to make a town there. So that's why they called it Shinmachi, a new town. That's how it came about, I understand. So that was the most wonderful town. I'll never forget it in my lifetime. My family and I. My wife too, she enjoyed it, with our get-togethers. (Laughs)

WN: Well, thank you, I'm going to turn off the tape recorder.

RH: Okay.

WN: Thank you very much for your time.

RH: Well, I hope you have everything what you wanted to know.

WN: Yeah, and then, what I'll do, is I'll type it out and then you can look at it, and make whatever changes you want to make, or add things in, things like that. Okay?

RH: Okay. So you going to make a book?

WN: Eventually, yeah.

RH: Okay.

WN: Thank you.

RH: May I have some?

WN: Sure. Of course.

RH: I'll order five! I have five in the family.

(Laughter)

WN: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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