

6. Item # MANZ 7573 (marbles and other toys)

Arthur Yamada [AY], MANZ 1162, interviewed by Richard Potashin [RP]

Disc 2 of 3 (DVD), 32:51 – 37:32 [cut to] 38:09 – 39:14 (transcription pages 47 – 49)

RP: Were you much into marbles before you got to camp?

AY: No, I don't think I ever played much with marbles. It was only in camp. Where everybody else was playing marbles, I decided I have to get into the game too.

RP: Can you share with us some of the games that you played, particularly the one where you built the mound?

AY: Yes.

RP: A very elaborate game.

AY: Those games started fairly simple because we had a lot of dirt around the camp. We devised games out there. Of course, the basic game was drawing a ring, cleaning the loose sand and getting to the dirt, patting it down, and then you'd put maybe five of your marbles, your opponents would put five, and then everybody had five marbles to make right in the center. Of course, you would shoot from the edge of the circle, and any marble that you hit and knocked out of the ring, that's the one you get to keep.

When we got tired of that game, we played a game called Holes, H-O-L-E-S. That's a game where you would dig four holes in a square pattern and maybe, oh, let's say three or four feet apart. Then you would start from home base and then shoot to the hole at first base. If you make it, then you get to shoot to second base and make it in there. And you'd come on around and shoot back into home base. Then right where the pitcher's mound would be, we'd dig a tiny hole, just a little bigger than the marble you're shooting, and then if you'd make it in there you became what we called, I think, poison. Then, of course, you could, from there, try to hit the other opponents. Of course, if they had to miss, then say near the hole, and if you hit them with your poison marble, then you'd win the game.

That game got a little more elaborate in the later stages. Since we had so much ground and space in the block, we'd put the holes maybe ten feet between holes, and then we'd extend that to maybe fifteen feet. That way the game got a little harder to play. It took a little longer. That was kind of our Holes game, and revisions of that game.

Then we had a game of marbles called Roads. What we would do is we'd kind of scratch a long line, maybe ten feet, and then after you do that you take the base of your hand and kind of tamp it down, follow that pattern that you had made with the stick. Then it would be enough that you could shoot your marble down the road along that pathway. Then at the end, we'd build a mound of dirt with kind of a pathway that circled the outside, and up at the top we'd put a tiny hole again. That would be poison. So as you'd play the game you'd shoot down the road and try to keep it on the road, because if you shot it and missed it and it came off the road, you'd have to go back to the beginning. As you get to the mound up there, you'd have to follow and shoot carefully up the side of this mound of dirt, this cone, and then shoot it into that hole, which would then become, your marble would become poison.

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AY: Then you'd come back down the trail and try to shoot the guys coming up the road. Of course, when you did that, you'd kill them off and you'd win the game. That game also became kind of—the later version of the Road became the whole block. You'd make a road because we had so much space, and that game would take maybe a couple of days to complete. We wouldn't quite finish the game up in one day.

RP: How many kids would be playing this game at one time?

AY: Well, our block, we had kids in every barrack. I can remember maybe ten kids playing at the same time, so it got pretty big. So that was our version of the marble games.