

Harry Goda #83
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Q: Mr. Goda, why don't you tell me a little bit about your early life. Where you were born?

A: Oh, I was born on Kauai. When I was 3 years old I went back to Japan and I went after grammar school, I finished my high school in Japan. This was [in] Shikoku, Kagawa Ken [Japan], and after high school I went to Takamatau teacher's training school; should be two years. But I didn't quite finish the school. One year; a little over one year, I came back to Hawaii. I was 19 years old.

Q: What year was that?

A: Oh, 1920-something... 1920... something 19... I... about 1900 I think, about. Is that right? (voice from back, "He was 19.")

Q: Oh, you were 19 at the time?

A: Yeah, 19 years old. That was about 1922 or 3, I think, yes.

Q: Oh, O.K., and what did you do when you returned to Hawaii?

A: I returned; I had no work so I went to a newspaper... the Maui, in the Maui they had the Japanese paper... newspaper company... Maui Shinbu newspaper. I worked over there one year and after that I went to Makawao. My father, the friend of the store, they needed one man, speak good Japanese. So I went there, and after that one Mr. Sasaki(?) he was care for Japanese learning school. He wanted me to come over; help him.

Q: Is this on Oahu?

A: No, Maui.

Q: Oh, on Maui.

A: Maui, Kaehoeho. So I quit the store and went to help Mr. Sasaki. He was principal for that Japanese Learning School, and he wasn't there just one year, and he left for Honolulu. I was the only one so I took his place. I became more like principal for Japanese Learning School, and I taught about 3 years, or 4 years. Mr.Kugo(?) who is from Lahaina, he wanted... he used to be my good friend. Do you understand what I am saying, yes?

Q: Oh yes.

A: I went to Puukolii Learning School as the principal and I taught about seven years. We got married, my wife Nakiko(?), and ...

Q: Was that in Puukolii

A: Puukolii, that on the Lahaina; more like.... that was what you call... Kanapali what is very popular now.

Q: I have to ask you one question. Did you know the Matsudo family?

A: Matsuda?

Q: Matsudo.

A: Very well.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: Very well Matsudo. How do you know him?

Q: I know one of old Mr. Matsudo's daughter, Mrs. Araki.

A: Oh.

Q: Lives in Salt Lake.

A: Oh!

Q: I know that family.

A: Is that right?

Q: Yes. (laughter)

A: Would you give my regard to her?

Q: Yes, yes, because I know Mr. Matsudo's grandchildren. They are friends of mine.

A: Is that right? Oh! Mr. Matsudo child, one of them I know, but Mr. Matsudo kind of short man used to be. He's not living any more, yes.

Q: No, but...

A: ... and from there I stayed about 7 years, Kanapali. They used to call Puukolii, Kanapali. I went to... what was the name of that school I went? (voice from back, "Hong Wan Ji(?)") No, no, no, not that. (voice, "Lahaina Home Gardens") No, no, not that garden. (voice, "which one?") the last school. (voice, "Oh, Waihee Waihee, Japanese learning school, as the principal, and I stayed about 4 years. Then when I was Waihee...

Q: That's around on, near the other side from Lahaina.

A: That's right.

Q: Yes, on the north side.

A: No, no. Waihee is next to Wailuku.

Q: Oh yes, that's what I meant, around the other side.

A: Then...

Q: Um...

A: Yes?

Q: Tell me, how did they first pick you up?

A: Pick me up that night? Oh, that December 7th night, I cannot forget for my lifetime. On December 7th night I was listening to the radio, you know, about 11:00... about almost midnight; that is December 7th night. Someone knocked on the door so my wife went out and said, "Yes, my husband is here." and so one man came in and (laughter)... so and gun. I was scared you know... I don't know what to do. "Oh, Mr. Goda, I want to ask you some questions tonight. So would you come over?" I said, "No, it's too late! Almost after 11:00 already! So no, no... a few minutes we will come together." So I just left and went to schoolyard. There's one big Army truck there and four or five soldiers with guns and what they call... swords?

Q: Bayonet, yeah.

A: Bayonet. And Mr. Hashimoto used to be our school president you know. He was inside there, and he said, "Sansei" (means teacher) "I'm here." he said. He was caught already in the truck. Then one of the soldiers said, "Shut up you! Don't talk Japanese!" So we did nothing. So I went in the truck. I went to Wailuku side and we are saying something in Japanese. Whenever I say something, "Damn you! SHUT UP!" you know so I could...

So we passed Wailuku Town and going over, and Asimoto says, "Sansei, we are going to Yakiva." (Yakiva?? means cremating place) "We might be cremated." (laughter) Then he said, "Don't say Japanese!"

So finally we reached one building, that was prison... Wailuku prison. So they put me down, no more right. I went the hole going straight. Then someone said in Japanese, "Hey, who is that coming here now! Oh... Goda. Oh we thought you were coming pretty soon too. Ah, come over, come over." So went, about 15 people inside there already, in the prison you know. And Dr. Wohata(?), Mr. Myhana(?) used to be a big school principal too, and almost everyone I know, the old friends, and I shouldn't say but, almost all 'big wheels' too you know. That was December 7th night, yeah.

Q: When you were in the jail, did they ask you questions?

A: No, about two, three months, they didn't ask any questions. Just, we don't know what to do, but they treated us really mean you know.

Q: What did they do?

A: Oh, well, we had place to sleep but that's all prisoners bed or some kind of (cannot understand). I couldn't sleep. Really unsanitary place... prison. Now prison is alright, but the prison the time we went, we couldn't sleep whole night, and in the morning they served one piece of bread and one cup of soup, which is more like weakened... you don't know, even now a dog cannot eat that kind soup you know... thin, oily soup. We couldn't stand that time really bad.

Q: How many together? How many people?

A: At that time about oh... almost forty people from all over... Maui you know, Maui. That's much smaller a community than Honolulu of course. There was most minister, principal, or big manager of big store, and yeah, more or like us, school teacher... I mean not school teacher but principal of the Japanese learning school and minister and big manager of big store... big Japanese store. Yeah, something that about 40 people.

Q: How long did you stay in Wailuku prison?

A: About 6 months. Six months in Wailuku. Later, the treatment a little bit improved and they giving some better food too. And we had one investigation too before 3 or 4 months.

Q: What kind of questions did they ask?

A: Oh, that was mean... Mr. Chapman. I don't remember their name but one that was Cooper or something, from Army and the rest, three of them civilian. They had one, two, three, four, in front of me and I went there.

They asked many, many questions which I forgot, but mostly, "Are you a citizen of the United States?" I say, "Yes." I say, "I was born on Kauai." and one of man said, "What are you doing December 7th?" "I was Japanese learning school teacher?" "What were you doing?" "Teaching Japanese to small children after grammar school." "Why you teaching Japanese?" Well, that was my bread and butter. So it was just my work. You understand what is bread and butter? That my living. "You not supposed to teach Japanese to the people of the United States... the citizens." Well I don't know but they wanted me to teach so I teach. "You not an American citizen. You a Jap."

That word I cannot forget my lifetime, you know. "You not a citizen, although you were born in Hawaii. You're a Jap." one of the civilians said. I didn't say anything. After that I didn't say anything already you know. But that real hurt me. I'm teaching Japanese but I taught them good American citizen. Still I taught to loyal to this country you know. Even if I'm, my face... of course I'm not white but yellow, Oriental. But my father was of course Oriental, but I should be good American. So I had pride you know. But still he said, "Damn you Jap." He said. I didn't answer anything.

So O.K. do anything what you want. So I didn't answer after that question. I don't know who they were but I didn't answer that

question. He was a young man about 28. I forgot his face too already but if I see him I can tell because I hated him so much. Ever since I didn't say anything but you know, I have nothing to say so I didn't answer. I still remember that all my life time, yeah....

Then we were sent to Honolulu, Sand Island.

Q: What was it like at Sand Island?

A: Sand Island was very good. Oh the treatment was completely different. They served good food. I didn't have any complaints, Sand Island. They treated us really nice. Someone said they treated me but I said that time I really believed United States people they might think we are enemy but they treated us really nice. I had no complaints; nice food, treatment good. They gave me a place to exercise you know. Oh lots of good treatment.... oh that Army treated that time really nice.

Q: Did you live in tents or barracks?

A: No, very nice barracks. Nice barracks, nice food, everything... I'm so happy that time.

Q: Was your wife able to visit you?

A: Yes. Once (wife) show up, come down.... uh. Mommy who was that president of Wailuku Sugar Company? (voice in background) Anyway, she forgot his name but he helped us so much. He gave plane ticket to my wife and my child. He visited us in Sand Island one day. So nice, you know, that place. Mr. Aaron or something, he treated my wife so nice. That real American.

Q: Could you write letters to your wife and family on Maui?

A: Yes.

Q: What about when you were in jail in Wailuku? Could you get visits?

A: Yes. Usually after one week they allowed to visit us. They bring over some food; mostly food. We cannot eat the food they serve you know. So they bring sushi or sometimes soup, or chicken, boiled chicken. We divide it you know? I give a chicken you something like that. We didn't eat in fact Wailuku prison food.

Q: What did you do all day?

A: Well, we had nothing so we walk in the yard or read in the newspaper, something like that. Newspaper, of course we have no Japanese newspaper, so American newspaper.

Q: Was that at Wailuku?

A: Wailuku, yeah.

Q: What about at Sand Island? Did you have work to do?

A: Oh Sand Island, we used to play baseball. Oh, Sand Island was a heaven compared to Wailuku. The Army treated us.... they even took me to downtown. I wanted to buy something, so one of the soldiers and escorted me to downtown store. I bought hair cream(?). They were so nice. I wanted to buy something. They say, "O.K., I take you." One of ... I don't know who he was but one soldier, he took me to downtown and I bought something. Oh they were wonderful. That real American, yeah.

Q: How long did you spend at Sand Island?

A: About six months. So totally I stayed about one year in Hawaii and January 2, just one year after the War, January 2 my whole family was sent to States.

Q: Where were you sent?

A: First we went to... not Arizona.... Oh Grandma! Grandma! (talking in Japanese)... Jerome, Arkansas.

Q: What was the camp like in Jerome?

A: Camp was perfect too. No complaint. Mr. Chapman(?) really, they treated us really nice. Food and I used to work as an ambulance driver you know that year there and there food, even they used to give us cake and ice cream for dessert too, which we couldn't eat at War time outside you know. But everything except Wailuku, they treated I shouldn't say this but I have to tell you the truth, you know. Some they say they treated mean, something like that, but only mean, dirty was Wailuku prison. After that very reasonable treatment, yeah.

Q: How long did you stay at Jerome?

A: Jerome, about one year, and they shipped us to Arizona. We stayed in Arizona about six months and you want me to tell everything?

Q: Yes.

A: Navy wanted some Japanese learning school teachers, so I went out and took a test and I passed the test. So I went out as a teacher to Colorado uh... what was the name of the University at Colorado... Boulder University. I was an instructor. I was teaching Navy Officers. Where I taught Judge King. I met him over there and about two or three months that place was too crowded so we were shipped to... where was it, Oklahoma A & M College, Oklahoma they had branch school, Navy school, they had a Japanese language school I Oklahoma A & M College and they gave us nice house and new refrigerator, everything. I taught about.... almost two years and a half as a language school teacher, I taught up there.

Q: When did you finally go back to Hawaii?

A: Then War was over so right after the War was over, we came back, yeah, next February we came back Hawaii.

Q: Was that 1946?

A: Maybe... what time over... 1945? Oh, '46. Then I had no work. No more Japanese learning school. So I went, Judge King, King-san tried to find one job for me. "Oh, Sansei you go Japan." as a occupation forces. There's an Army wanted like you. So I went take a test. I went.... then I passed the test. So I went to Japan as... I stayed only one month, Hawaii, and then we went to Japan, in Tokyo and stayed for 13 years. My family all went there and we stayed in the Army camp... not Army camp but Army... what do you call it?

Q: A billet.

A: Yeah. That nice place.

Q: Things in Japan, Japanese people must have been very hungry.

A: So I should say but... this is not... this is more like secret you know. Not supposed say but I bought a lot of stuff from PX or Commissary. I gave Japanese people who lost his parents, or lost his husband, the wife cannot do anything with two or three children, without house, no place to live, nothing to eat. So I used to give, I shouldn't say it, but they were really happy. That was a miserable time I went, first I went to Yokohama in the jeep, from Yokohama to Japan, no building, nothing... oh yeah, terrible.

I stayed 13 years and came back and was hired at Hickam. Worked about 10 years and retired. That whole my life. As a whole I tell Mr. Chapman our country is ... well, if I say this, maybe this a true fact so I cannot hide or I cannot tell lies, you know. So I tell you the truth, as a whole United States treated us very very nicely. Someone say, complain this wrong, that wrong. Well, certain place wrong, but as a whole my idea, they treated... well they should because I'm not enemy see. But first they treated me as an enemy, earlier. But I must say they treated us really nice. Some Japanese they don't like the way I say it but this is a true fact. I cannot hide. I cannot tell lies, you know. So as a whole, they treated their prisoner, more like, very nicely. Maybe you don't like it to?

Q: No...

A: They wanted us to say, "Oh they're so mean." something...

Q: I just want you to tell me your experiences.

A: Tell my truth. Some might say, damn Goda, he is tell something. Well, the one who criticize me go ahead, but I tell the truth. They were really nice. We could do anything, Japanese school, teaching, everything, they allowed us to do you know. That's why, except Wailuku, I didn't have any complaint. In fact it was, in fact thankful the way they treated, in Honolulu too. I went to but something. They took me out to camp and when... oh, I think... the man here he was in camp too... same place. He's Oriental.

Q: O.K., well thank you very much.

A: Is that uh?....

Q: Yes Mr. Goda, that's a...

A: I guess you didn't like the way I said I guess.

Q: No, it's fine. It's fine.

A: Do you think so?

Q: Yes.