

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #466-2

with

Lorraine Yamada (LY)

September 23, 1993

Hilo, Hawai`i

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: The following is a continuation of an interview with Lorraine Yamada, session number two.

When you were working at Kau-Kau . . .

LY: Korner.

HY: Korner. What do you remember about your coworkers?

LY: We were of mixed groups. And most of them were nice, except there was one Filipino—I think I told you—he called me a “public enemy number one.” And he said he was going to get me. (Laughs) You know, kind of threaten me. And I just said, “Oh you—” You know, the slang at that time for a Filipino was (*bayau*). We used to call 'em, you know. And I said, “Oh, you damn, ignorant (*bayau*)!” And they don't like that word. It's like calling a Japanese, “You Jap!” You know, something like that. So, that made him angry.

But, I hadn't seen him for a long time, and then he became a cab driver. I think I told you. I caught his cab one night, without realizing it. Yeah, and then . . .

HY: Was this during wartime? Or way . . .

LY: Right after the war, right after the war. Because I lived in the country, and the bus line would (end about a half mile from) my house. (That meant I have to walk.) I always worked night shift(s). So it's kind of frightening.

So when I reached—just before the bus line [*ended*—I would get off, and the last cab stand was in Kaimuki So, I would get off there, and then catch the cab so he can take me all the way home. And it happened to be Coloma, the Filipino guy (laughs), that we once fought in Kau-Kau Korner. But then he said, “You, Sue eh?” They used to call me Sue. My Japanese name is Tsutae, yeah. And whenever there's another Lorraine, they always say, “Can we call you something else?” So, Sue. “You Sue, eh?” he goes.

And I said, “Yeah,” I said, “Oh, you Coloma?”

He said, “Yeah.”

And I said, “Oh, how's everything?” You know, I act like nothing.

“Oh, I marry now, you know. Me marry Japanese girl.”

(Laughter)

LY: That's what he said (laughing). That was strange, but hu! If he was the type that had vengeance and unforgiving, maybe he would have poke me with the knife (laughs).

HY: So, that was the only problem you had with your coworkers?

LY: Yeah. Sometimes, very rarely, the *Haole* customers. And those days, were mostly defense workers and service people.

HY: Were there other Japanese waitresses or workers there?

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm. Yeah, yeah. We all got along. As far as locally, you know, very rarely, we come across prejudice. I guess because it was always like that. The prejudice(d) ones are prejudice(d), whether we have war or not. I would say most of the people were the same. No change.

HY: How did you get your job working at Hickam [*Field in the Officers' Club*]?

LY: How did I? I went to apply. Then, was not so bad because that was right after the war. It was in 1947. The war ended in '45, and No, in '46, I worked there. In '46 to '47. Just before I get married I quit.

I went to apply because most waitress jobs, they give you minimum wage. And those days was only like thirty, thirty-five cents. And because they think you going to depend on the tip. But you didn't have to report your tips, those days. But they said Hickam [*Field*] pays good. So, I went to the restaurant there, and I applied.

No, they had the office some place in town because it was contracted out with a private caterer, not caterer, but people that do that kind of business. And it was called uh, (sighs) they were big operators in Honolulu, now I can't even think of the name. I remember(ed) till about four, five years ago—(Spencecliff Corporation Ltd.).

Anyway, big operators, and he had the contract with Hickam. So, I went to (the) office in town, and I applied and I got the job. So, Hickam Air Force Base [*Field*] officers' dining room—that's where I worked. And then the hours. . . . I worked night shift 'cause I go to school. So, was from five to nine. Short hours, but good wages and good tips. Yeah, I applied for it. And those days, I think it's not like today where there's a law you got to hire certain amount of a certain ethnic group. [*While the government does not have a quota system, they do have a stated policy of encouraging women and minorities to apply for jobs.*] Today, it's like that—in government especially. But those days, they go strictly by your qualifications, which I think is better, no?

HY: What was the ethnicity of some of the coworkers?

LY: We had all. We had Blacks, we had *Haoles*, we had Japanese, I don't recall any Chinese at Hickam. But Hawaiian, *Haole*, and mostly the Blacks were in the kitchen. Yeah. Cooks or busboy, or something like that.

HY: And are the customers all military then?

LY: They('re) all military, and they're all officers. So, it made it kind of nice. Unless the officers brought in their families, or wives, or something, other than that, the regular enlisted men cannot come in. It's strictly for officers.

HY: How was the relationship with the workers and the customers there?

LY: You know, I don't recall any kind of prejudice. Once in a while you might find a cocky guy, but I think he would be cocky with anybody, whether you were Japanese or whatever. I don't think it was the race. But it was something. You have to have a pass, and every time you pass the entrance, you have to show your pass. [*All workers were required to show their passes.*]

And so there was an intelligence office, right near the dining room. I noticed because that was the---initially that's where the base was, I mean, where the planes come in (the terminal). (It was just a small office right there in the terminal. On one occasion we were called in for an investigation. A janitor was caught in the women's restroom peeping. We reported the incident. The Peeping Tom was apprehended, and about three of us workers had to go in to answer all questions.)

HY: I lost my train of thought. . . . Can you describe what the working conditions were like there?

LY: You know, it was better than the regular restaurants in—what you call?—in town, because they had their specific jobs. I don't know if it was because it was a military base, but some of the restaurants that I worked, we serve, we clear the tables. . . . There were no busboys. But over there, we had the busboys. We had the janitors that clean all the floors, see.

Back then when I worked, after the restaurant close, you sweep, you mop, we do everything. But over there, they had their specific job. The cooks, the pantry people that work only on salads and hors d'oeuvres and things like that. And the busboys—and what else we had?—the janitors, the bakers, yeah. So, it was kind of good. You don't have to do all those other things that we normally do when you work for a private firm in town. Even a nice restaurant, when you have time, you have to fill up the sugar bowls, make sure all the salt and pepper is there. . . . Certain time of the day, when the rush hour is over, you make sure the napkins are all filled up. Over there, we didn't have to do that, so was good.

HY: Specialized.

LY: Mm hmm, was good. Just like today.

HY: Was there a specific name for that restaurant? Or was it just the Hickam officers' restaurant?

LY: I think it was called that—Hickam Officers' Club dining room. Yeah.

HY: Now when the war started, your musical interests. . . . You had to change your activities. Can you explain what happened?

LY: Well, I was more---I love all kinds of music, but it just happened that in Japanese[-*language*] school I was always selected to take a role in whatever plays we have, and it's all done in Japanese, and singing. . . . I would be the star, so, you know, I tend to go more that way. And---but when the war started, you forget everything Japanese. You're not permitted to even speak. Wherever you go, it says, "Be American! Speak English!" That's the kind of sign all over the place.

So, I started to study music, and there was classical singing. So, that was the changing point.

HY: Was that why you decided to go to the music school, or what was it? The Hawai`i Institute of Technology?

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm. Oh, that was afterwards. Before that, it was all private lessons because there was no music school in O`ahu. I took private lessons weekly—twice a week—from Rita Raymond. She was a former instructor at Carnegie Hall. Very well-known. And I studied with her for about two years, I think. And then, I studied with. . . . This man used to teach at his home in, out by Fort Ruger, near Fort Ruger, in Kaimuki. A great big house, and he was an opera singer. I never heard of him, but he was of Spanish origin. Joaquin Wanrell his name was. J-o-a-q-u-i-n W-a-n-r-e-l-l. Elderly man, but still, you can tell, yeah. Because these kind of singers, like Rita Raymond, too, she was in her seventies. She still can blast the voice, you know. Same thing with Professor Wanrell.

So, I studied with him for a short while, and then Hawai`i Institute of Technology opened, the music department. So, yeah, I went there two years. And over there, too, they had. . . . She still active I think in Honolulu, Ruth McKendric. And—gee, what was the piano teacher's name?—Ruth McKendric, and. . . . Rasmussen, piano teacher was Rasmussen. I can't think of her first name. . . . Gerda Rasmussen. She's the piano teacher.

HY: So your performances stopped—your Japanese-style singing?

LY: Mm hmm.

HY: And then did you begin performing in English?

LY: (Yes.) I performed English while I was studying. And I think I told you, yeah? In English---During the war, see, hardly any entertainment except for the military entertainment. And mine kind of, not entirely stopped, but not as active like the Japanese one. But same time, when I was just going to Hawai`i Institute of Technology, the boys were all beginning to come home—the local boys that went to war. The war is over. And so then, they---You know, if you('re) from Hawai`i, you miss the Japanese music, you miss the Hawaiian music. American music, you hear it all the time. So, every party, every week, there was a welcome-home party, and we had to entertain.

HY: So, that's when you . . .

LY: Yeah. I went full back again, and then we started singing in the theaters again.

HY: When you did perform English songs, even though you slowed down some, where would you perform?

LY: Oh, I performed at the YMCA [*Young Men's Christian Association*] (laughs), churches. . . . I performed several times at Honolulu Academy of Arts, and parties, too—going away parties. During the war, when they go away to war, yeah, they had farewell parties. Yeah. Those . . .

HY: Did you play in private homes or . . .

LY: Private homes or the teahouses. Those teahouses were always busy for parties.

HY: Did you sing with a group?

LY: No. Always solo.

HY: Solo?

LY: Mm hmm. Mostly solo. I might have just a guitar accompanist, or a pianist. That's all.

HY: And you also did some theater.

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

HY: Can you talk about that a little bit?

LY: Yeah. I was with this community theater group. And, oh, the director's name was Bob Wagner. So long ago. That was in 1945, around there I think. Anyway, I was the star in the program. See, so, now when I look, I may come across the clipping. And we're going to perform in the military bases, you know. And so, Mr. Wagner told me, "Oh, Loraine, you cannot ride in with all of us after we reach the gate because you're Japanese."

And I said, "Oh."

"But we can't put on the show if you don't go in because you're the star!"

(Laughs) My [*character's*] name was Lani, Lani the maid. So he said, "When we reach the gate, you have to get off the bus," because we travel in the bus, with all our equipment and everything, yeah.

HY: What base was this?

LY: Oh, we went to Pearl Harbor, Kane`ohe Air Force Base [*Kane`ohe Naval Air Station*]. I think we went Hickam [*Field*], too. And then, there's another one, Camp, Camp. . . . I think was

called Catlin. On the way to Pearl Harbor. It's on the right-hand side. There was another air force base.

Anyway, we went to (all) the military base(s), and he said I have to ride on the. . . . If it's navy, you know, base, the SP [*shore patrol*] comes. You know, the jeep comes, yeah. And they all have their [arm] band—SP.

HY: Oh, the MP?

LY: MP is military police, army one is MP. But navy's always SP. So, I have to ride with them, and then they take me to the—and they always fed us before we perform—so, take me to the dining room. I eat. And once I eat with the group, then I--we just go to the theater together. But to enter, I had to always be escorted by the SP. Like I('m) going (to) do something. (Laughs) Small potato(!) I going blow up the base! (Laughs) It's so funny, yeah? 'Cause I used to be so small! Only about ninety pounds! Shee. It's funny. Yeah.

HY: What was the name of the theater group?

LY: I think it was called Honolulu Community Theater Group. Yeah.

HY: Who were some of the other people that were. . . . Were you the only Japanese?

LY: Ho. Yeah, I was the only Japanese, and there was one Chinese. I forget his name though. No, two Chinese. In fact, one became a politician afterwards. His name was Wong, I think. Something Wong. And then we had another. I can't remember his name. He was a kind of like a technician in the back. Do the lights and the sound effects. Then we had couple of soldiers that were in the play, too. Something Ogilvie. And then we had couple of ladies from Pearl City area. Can't think of her name all ready. Rose, Rose something. Oh, if I find the clipping, maybe the names of the cast might be there.

HY: Was this theater group formed specifically to entertain the bases?

LY: Military. Yeah, I think so. Because that director was a military man.

HY: Oh, I see.

LY: Mm hmm.

HY: And was this unusual for Japanese to entertain on base?

LY: Oh, yeah. I never did see [*other Japanese*]. Maybe there was, but I didn't see.

HY: Were you affiliated with USO [*United Service Organizations*] as well?

LY: Uh uh, [*no*], only that. And then, if I sang at any group, I mean to entertain, the military. . . . See, lot of 'em was held at the YMCA.

HY: Is this the one on Richards Street?

- LY: Yeah. That's the one. And I would sing by myself, with the piano. That's all. And all classical music.
- HY: Oh, classical.
- LY: Yeah. So, you know, I sang pop, I sang classical music, I sang country western. Was all kinds (laughs).
- HY: So, your other entertaining, outside of this theater group, was also mostly for the military as well?
- LY: Yeah, for a while. But when the boys started coming home, it was already early '46. In fact, from around. . . . The war with Japan ended in '45 of August. So, by the time they come in, usually, early '46.
- So, from around then, I had done that thing already, that community play. I was back into singing Japanese songs. And then the orchestra started practicing again. So, it was nice. Till I got married, I sang with the orchestra.
- HY: What about radio? Did . . .
- LY: No Japanese program.
- HY: Had you performed with [*on the*] radio prior to the war?
- LY: Oh, yeah. Yes. Before the war, those days, we had only three. We had KGMB, KGU, and KPOA [*began broadcasting in 1946*]. Only those three stations. And I sang at all three, when they had the Japanese programs. And I think in the early [*19*]50s they asked me to sing. I was here [*Hilo*] already. So, on one trip that I went home, I sang on. . . . KPOA was popular with the Japanese program then. Oh, and then later on, KULA came in, K-U-L-A, with Japanese program. Today, they have plenty, but those days was limited. And very active. And we had the daily newspaper, too. *Hawai`i Hochi*, and *Hawai`i*. . . . Oh, wait, wait, *Hawai`i Hochi* and *Nippu Jiji*, it was called. (*Hawai`i Times* also.) [*The*] *Hawai`i Herald*, that went on even during the war. I'm sure it did because I remember my father reading the paper.
- HY: Was that unusual, for people that were singing Japanese-style music, to turn to English singing and perform? Or were there other people that were doing that, too?
- LY: You know, the only person that I know of that sang English songs, was. . . . You know that instructor now, Dick Aoyagi? Him. Because we studied almost under the same instructors. And he's a fine, classical singer. I don't know of any others that continued with English performance.
- HY: Was Ethel Azama, was she . . .
- LY: Oh, yeah. She came way after. She came after. And she was a jazz singer, yeah. Not Japanese singer, but she was an accomplished, jazz singer. But, did I tell you I met her mother in Maui?

HY: No. You met her mom?

LY: Yeah. And she came and introduced herself, and she started to cry. She said, “Because my daughter, Ethel and I, always used to follow you to listen to you sing.”

I felt kind of flattered, and I said, “Oh! I thought she was a great singer,” you know, I told the mom. And I said, “It's so sad that she had to die so young. What happened?”

And she told me, “Oh, she was sick.”

She left, I think, two children. So, she said when she heard me, the tears just came, and she said she had to come and talk to me. I knew of Ethel, but I never met her personally. So, this was really something when the mother came to me, yeah in Maui. And that was in '87.

HY: So, you were at Hickam for about a year . . .

LY: Mm hmm.

HY: And then, what happened after that?

LY: After that, I went on a Mainland trip to perform Japanese (show). Total, I mean, Japanese show. There were about eleven of us, I think.

HY: Who sponsored this trip?

LY: Matsuo [*Brothers*]. You know, I told you the brothers? Okay, he came back from the war. He was in the 100th Infantry [*Battalion*]. So, he came back to resume his profession in show business, because (he was) always the producer (in) their family.

HY: What's his first name?

LY: Fred.

HY: Fred.

LY: So, Fred said, “Okay, we going get back together.” So we started practicing again, and we going to the Mainland. Before we went to the Mainland, we island hop(ped) every island and we performed. We got back, and we gave a big show in January of '47, in Honolulu. And then we gave a big, farewell performance at McKinley [*High School*] Auditorium. I don't know why it was at McKinley because they had a theater, International Theatre. But we performed at McKinley High School, and it was called, “The Farewell Performance Of Hawai`i Takarazuka Club.” And then the Hilo Takarazuka joined us. And that's how I met Uncle [*Lorraine Yamada's husband*].

Then, after that performance, we were scheduled to go Mainland. So, we went on a two-week tour of all the different districts in California, to perform for the people—Japanese people. They were all coming back from the camps. Yeah. And so, they had a hard life in the camps. And,

so to see---We weren't the best performers because we're from Hawai`i. But they were so appreciative, yeah. Ho! So many of them just cried.

And one of my songs, was about the 442nd [*Regimental Combat Team*] and the 100th Infantry [Battalion] boys. I would sing---every performance, I sing that. I was requested to sing that song. And so, it's about the---actually, it's for all the Japanese boys, but in the lyrics it's, "We are the boys from Hawai`i Nei." So, was for the Hawai`i Japanese boys, yeah. But, oh, that was always requested. So, every performance, I sang that song.

HY: Were the same people involved, postwar as they were prewar in your singing group then? Or was it a re-forming . . .

LY: This one was pretty much the same, I would say, but in the course of the years, I went to many different ones. Because before Fred [*Matsuo*] came back, I got involved with the orchestras now. With Fred, we never had a good orchestra. It was always a string---three-piece accompanists, maybe a mandolin, a guitar, and an ukulele [*ukulele*]. And these are not the typical Japanese instruments, you know what I mean. And so, it's kind of discouraging, but I get to go places because he had all the ties. But the other orchestras . . .

HY: Like---can you name some of the . . .

LY: What is this? (Loraine Yamada points to newspaper.) Is this the *Hawai`i* . . .

HY: Yeah, I'll show you that.

LY: Okay. You know, get Urata, yeah? Harry Urata?

HY: I don't know if he's in there [*newspaper*].

LY: He does---he has it in every issue. He does the translation of all the Japanese songs [*in the "Karaoke Korner" column of the Hawai`i Pacific Press*], so he must be in here. Harry Urata. Wait eh.

HY: This one [*article in Hawai`i Pacific Press*], is a five-part series on these orchestras, mostly [*about*] Francis [*Zanami, well-known orchestra leader in the thirties and forties*].

LY: Eh, who is this? I cannot see. What's that? Ikehara?

HY: Yeah, [*Seiko*] Ikehara [*a member of the Smile Orchestra*].

LY: That's Okinawan, I think. Okay. See, like my sisters, used to dance, yeah. Them two. . . . Oh, here's Harry Urata. That's him. He has his own music studio [*Urata Music Studio*]. And he had an orchestra [*Shinko Orchestra*]. Maybe like eight-piece [*orchestra*]. So, he had the clarinet which would play the flute section of the Japanese song. He and the mandolin which was in almost, lot of Japanese songs. Guitar, bass, even had the drummer. And I joined his group, and I said. . . . Because, he was a teacher at Wai`alae Japanese-*[language]* School---the school that I went to. So, I knew him already, eh, so it was easy. And then . . .

HY: What about some of the other orchestras?

LY: Yeah, I went with Nippon Orchestra, but I don't know if you have anything about Mr. [Akira] Takei in there. He performed for quite a number of years before he died. I sang with his orchestra for little while. And I don't know, I felt, yeah, the loyalty towards Mr. Matsuo, because he's the one that gave me the beginning in performing. So, even though he didn't have a good orchestra, you know, I always end up with them.

HY: Did some of these orchestras play western-style, like big-band stuff? Or was it strictly Japanese?

LY: Strictly Japanese. Yeah. Strictly. And then, I know already, just before I get married, or right after I got married, they had Bob [Robert] Kojima. He started his own, the Club Nisei Orchestra. Then had Chidori Orchestra, by another guy [Charlie Miura]. I forget his name now. And then had that Masaji Uyehara. He had his orchestra [Smile Orchestra, cofounded by Francis Zanami], too. I forget what his . . .

HY: Is that the Smile . . .

LY: Smile. Smile Cafe's boss [Sam Uyehara, brother of Masaji and the owner of Smile Cafe, became the Smile Orchestra's sponsor]. And he's an old-timer. And there was another guy . . . Fred, I think his name was, Kiyabu. Good pianist. Oh! When he played the Japanese songs on that piano. Oh! He was fabulous! So, I often wonder what ever happened to him. He was outstanding.

HY: What happened to the theaters? What were they used for during the war, when you could no longer perform in, like say, the International Theatre? What were they used for, all those buildings?

LY: Oh! They showed the English movie, and any other ethnic movie (laughs) except Japanese, Chinese . . .

HY: So, movie houses.

LY: Yeah, yeah. And then they tore it down. International Theatre, they tore it down, and they put up something else. You know, I don't know what it is today. But there was Toyo Theatre, too. That was a Japanese theater, too. But see, Toyo Theatre was, even in Japan they have. . . . In Hawai`i, it was always Royal Amusement[s Ltd.], had a collection of their own theaters, like Palace Theatre, Queen Theatre, King Theatre, Liberty Theatre, and some of the country theaters are all under Royal Amusement company.

The other one was Consolidated Amusement Company, which is Princess Theatre, Hawai`i Theatre, Waikiki Theatre. Toyo Theatre was separate from International Theatre. So, International [Theatre] run by the Matsuo Brothers had another one called Park Theatre, right by `A`ala Park. That was the older theater, like a rattrap. But every time we had a live performance, there would be a line. And International Theatre was a nice theater—real nice. But they tore it down, I know, and they rebuilt it. But I don't know what it is today. Maybe it's still there, I'm not sure.

HY: How did. . . I know you talked a little bit about your folks during the war, and you had some difficulty getting supplies, and that sort of thing.

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

HY: How did that impact on your family life?

LY: Well, I grew up on the farm. So, in a way, to me it was a blessing. Times were hard for many of us, but being on the farm. . . . You know, the old barter system comes into the picture. The peddlers come around because we live in the rural area. They come and they peddle groceries, fish, tofu. A man just delivers tofu, I mean sells tofu. And . . .

HY: Would come door-to-door?

LY: He would come up the road and toot his horn. They all come out to buy tofu. Then, today [*the next day*] is the fisherman. (Lorraine Yamada imitates horn sound.) We know it's the fisherman. They all come and buy fish. So, and then the markets. The little grocery stores would come calling in the houses to take your order. Okay, "How many cans of tuna you need? Oh, one gallon of oil. Okay, five pounds of flour." Like that. And then, he'd take it back, and somebody else would deliver it. Was like that.

So, when things (be)came rough, lot of things were rationed. Even sugar was rationed. [*While the neighbor islands experienced brief periods of food rationing, there was no territory-wide food rationing. However, many instances of food shortages occurred.*] But living on a farm, you know, you can exchange with fresh eggs. The chickens---you kill 'em, and clean 'em, and you can exchange, see. So, it worked out fine.

HY: Did your family also peddle some of their goods in the same way that, like say the tofu . . .

LY: No. But we did go to the open market on `A`ala. They still have those markets. All that open market. We used to go there every Sunday.

HY: But were you able to do that during the war, still?

LY: I think so. I think the market ran during the war. But not as early because we had blackout, yeah. You('re) not permitted to drive with lights until the war ended. So . . .

HY: How was it that you managed to work nighttime?

LY: Well, in the beginning, maybe for the first six months or so, nobody was allowed to go out at night. [*Curfew was from 6 P.M. to 6 A.M. and was extended to 10 P.M. in May 1942.*] But slowly they lifted, and every place you go, even Kau-Kau Korner---the whole restaurant is blacked out. You walk inside. . . . The cars, up until eight o'clock. [*The curfew on automobiles was extended to 8 P.M. in September 1942 and to 10 P.M. three months later.*] The automobiles were installed with certain kind of blackout lights. Where the small light, you can just see in the front. That, and then. . . . Curfew, after ten [*P.M.*], nobody is out till, gee, I don't know, till about 1943, [*curfew was lifted on*

July 7, 1945] I think was like that.

But you had special pass if you work at night. You got to make sure you have your pass in case a police officer stops you.

HY: So, you working with a pass?

LY: Yeah. Yeah.

HY: Oh, I see.

LY: All night workers have that. And that, eventually, was lifted, too.

HY: What about your social life during that time?

LY: (Sighs) Everything is done during the day. You know, like school dances, was always held during the day. All the socials concerning school was held during the day. Quite a difference, you know, that time, yeah, during the war especially.

HY: Think we need to flip this over.

HY: Now when you got married, you moved to Hilo.

LY: Mm hmm.

HY: And began working in the Yamada Furniture Store.

LY: Mm hmm.

HY: What do you---do you know what happened to the furniture store during the war?

LY: Oh, yes. It was terrible. Ships weren't coming in with the goods. And so, it was very interesting. Uncle [*Lorraine Yamada's husband*] told me all this. He said they had no furniture to sell. Whole store is empty! But luckily they had the equipment---the machinery to manufacture mattresses. So, what they did was---they would only manufacture mattress(es), but then they need(ed) the ticking, the fabric for the mattress. They need(ed) the cotton which comes in from Texas. And so, only on priority basis—and which is kind of low on the list—would they get their supplies. Then, they don't know what to do. So, for a while. . . . Lot of babies were being (laughs) born. No more cribs. So, they made their own cribs, and they would sell it.

Then they made nothing but pillows because a whole group of marines and infantry men came to this island to train. And the marines were all stationed in, he [*Lorraine Yamada's husband*] said, Waimea [*Camp Tarawa*]. The store from the floor (up) to the ceiling was nothing but pillows. And they would deliver all the pillows to the army installations, here and there. That's how they made their living: with the cotton mattress(es) and the cotton pillows. And for the longest time during the war, that's how they lived, you know. Amazing! (Laughs) Make their own, what you call, cribs.

HY: When were they able to start getting supplies then?

LY: Well, Uncle told me when he was training in 1944 in Texas, one day when he went on leave, he saw this cotton factory. So, he went and he got all the information. He sent it to Uncle Toshi, and told him go make contact. And then they sent the bale out over here. And that was in 1944. And the war was still bad, you know, in the Pacific. So, there're military men all over, even where I lived, Wai`alae. They had the artillery installation in Koko Head, the big searchlights. Hu! I tell you.

Wherever you go, you see soldiers, sailors, marines. Oh, yeah, of course, we were under martial law for a while. Then, it wasn't in effect too long. It was lifted, but when it first--the war first started, Hawai`i was under martial law.

HY: So, the furniture store survived by making mattresses and pillows. When were they able to start selling furniture?

LY: I think it was around---slowly things started coming in around 1946, early '46.

HY: Where did they get their supply---where did they get their furniture from?

LY: Mainly from the West Coast—Washington, Oregon, California. And they had some from—where was that now?—some of the high-quality manufacturers of living room set came from, I think North Carolina. They had to stop eventually. This is only about what, fifteen years ago maybe. Or twenty years ago. It became so expensive, freight and all, yeah, that they stopped. That's the Kroehler Company. Then, see, my living room set, that's Kroehler. Nowadays, hard to get.

HY: Was it primarily the shipping the problem then, that they weren't able to get furniture? Or were there restrictions?

LY: Shipping, and I think they had a whole---everything. The military came first. And other than food, other commodities, you know, would be secondary. So, was slow. And those days, everything's by ship. No freight is to come in by air like today. You know, all the food's shipped by air so then you get the fruits fresh. Gee, by time you get the apple, probably half of the box you got to throw it away. Onions, potatoes, yeah. Everything was imported. And the ships---on ship, it used to take at least around—what?—five to seven days.

But so many things are better today. So much improvement. And gradually, they go by priority. I remember when the merchandise starting coming in, like appliances---automobiles are almost probably the last, other than trucks and stuff like that. But appliances---all refrigerators, you have to submit your name and wait. People with babies or [*the*] elderly comes first. And the normal---the regular people got to wait. They go on priority.

So, they ask you all these questions when you go to shop. Nylons for---eh, you couldn't get. All rayon stockings. The water wet you, that mark stays on all day (laughs) like you get some kind of disease. No more hosiery. Those things came way later 'cause they're considered luxury, eh. Food first, medicine, things like that. But by 1945, slowly it was getting better,

although the Pacific war never end(ed) till August of '45. By '46 gradually you can see the change in the merchandise in the store. And by '47, pretty good.

HY: When you started working at the furniture store, what duties did you have?

LY: First, they told me to sew mattress covers. It's just a simple box that you sew. One after another, you sew that. Then they stuff cotton in there, and they sew the sides. And then with the machinery, they do the rest. Then I sewed cushion covers. And if they short of---they would call me---they need another salesman. So, I would run down [*Yamada Furniture Store located downstairs, living quarters located upstairs*]. I used to get nervous because I never did that kind sales work. But then, ho. I began to like it. So, after that, every time, "Lorraine!" (Laughs) "Come down! Come downstairs!"

HY: Was it only family-run? Or did they hire outside [*of the family*]?

LY: Yeah. At that time, the only outsider was one girl and one boy. The girl that worked in the office, and one salesman. Aye! (Lorraine Yamada leaves to answer the door.)

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

HY: I think you were describing your duties. . . .

LY: Oh, okay. I sell, yeah I do sales and . . .

HY: Oh, I know. You were talking about the two non-family members.

LY: Oh, yeah. We had one outside salesman, and one office girl. And was all family, other than that. Then later on, they hired one delivery boy to help. And by the time 1970 came along, gee, we must've had four delivery boys, two outside salesmen, about three office girls. So, things grew like the present condition. Lot of change.

HY: When the---after the war ended then, I assume they would quit supplying the military.

LY: The military, yeah.

HY: How did that affect their situation economically?

LY: Nothing. By then, the merchandise starting coming in, and everybody was waiting for furniture. So . . .

HY: Local? All local people?

LY: Yeah, they just. . . . People that get married, for instance, they want a bedroom set. They didn't have. So, ho, the market was there, and they all had money because nothing to spend [money on during the war]. So, was good yeah. They did well. In fact, in nineteen---wait '47 we got married, then after living here one year, we moved to Honolulu, and we came back in 1951 . . .

(Phone rings.)

LY: Excuse me.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

LY: Before the war, nice, beautiful, Japanese furniture. And that came to a halt. I don't think we've had Japanese furniture since. You know the kind where you go to Shirokiya [*department store in Honolulu*], you see? With that mirror that swings, so that when you wear kimono, you can see, you know.

HY: They used to sell that?

LY: Yeah.

HY: The Yamada Furniture Store.

LY: Mm hmm, yeah. *Ojichan* [*Loraine Yamada's father-in-law, Holly Yamada's grandfather*] used to order all those Japanese . . .

HY: From Japan?

LY: Yeah. The mirror-type, and then Japanese, they call it *tansu*, which is tall drawers. And the small drawers on the top, then you have the big drawers right in the middle, and then some more small drawers on the bottom, and then like a little closet on the side. Oh! So, you can put your *futon* in there. Nice, Japanese furniture. And what else they had?

Yamada's, [*Yamada Furniture Store*] pretty much carried complete, yeah. Furniture for the whole house—living room, bedroom, dining room, juvenile furniture, baby furniture. They even used to sell wheeled goods like tricycles, and bicycles, gym sets for the kids, ironing boards, stools—and what else?—carpets . . .

HY: Appliances?

LY: Drapes. Appliance came little later. Oh, the only thing they used to sell was gas and electric range. But after they went to this present store, they thought to make it complete household furnishings and appliances. Uncle Masao [*Loraine Yamada's husband*] started the business with appliance, see.

HY: When did they [*Yamada Furniture Store*] move to that current place [*340 Kino`ole Street*]?

LY: Nineteen seventy.

HY: Oh, okay.

LY: So, it's only twenty, twenty-three years.

HY: I'll just backtrack a little bit. In '46, was the old furniture store---was located Downtown, yeah?

LY: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

HY: What street was . . .

LY: Kilauea Avenue.

HY: Kilauea Avenue.

LY: It's the present---it's a Chinese restaurant now. And it still belongs to Yamada Furniture [Store]. In '46, yeah, was over there . . .

HY: They rented it?

LY: They rent out. It's such a big building that they store all their things in the back, plus living quarters upstairs. That's how big it is. And banquet room upstairs, too. And I think we were the first store in Hilo to install an elevator. Yeah. I think even today no more---I don't know of any other [furniture] store that has an elevator because it's all one floor.

HY: What's the name of the Chinese restaurant that's there?

LY: Mun Cheong Lau. Yeah. And then in '56. . . . See, '46 it was an older store. Just a The warehouse was---they built the warehouse first with concrete so that it would be solid, because lot of termites. And then, the front section was the store. And in 1946, it was really an old-fashioned, wooden building. Nothing, I mean ugly store. And the whole family lived upstairs. Your dad [*Lorraine Yamada's brother-in-law*], too, lived upstairs.

See, I came here in '47. They still lived in that old store. And in 1956, they tore down that store. Temporarily, they operated the store at another site. And they tore down that store, and they built this store [*where Mun Cheong Lau is located*] that's existing now. That was in 1956.

And in the meantime, they were negotiating because every time when we had a tidal wave warning, ho. We had to move all the furniture, because the water did come in, in 1960 when we had that last big tidal wave. So, they were negotiating, looking around for another property. And they bought that property that the store is on now [*340 Kino`ole Street*]. And in 1970, we had the grand opening over there, so. That store is twenty-three years old. But the other one that we opened in '56, on Kilauea Avenue, we had the grand opening for that one. Oh! That was a nice store. Big, and *Ojichan* was alive then, yeah, so he was happy. But when we opened this other one, he was gone, but *Obaban* went for the grand opening.

HY: Did that---did the store sustain any damage in the '46 tsunami?

LY: No. In the '60 tsunami, yeah. Lucky, oh, I tell you, they so lucky. We went down because no electricity. You know, when the tidal wave struck, we didn't have electricity for about a week I think. And . . .

HY: This is in '60?

LY: Yeah. And then Uncle said, “Oh! I better go down to the store.”

I said, “I got to go, too, because I have to go get milk for the kids.” Early in the morning. So, I took the baby, and Uncle and I went down. My goodness! And when we reached down---We could get to Yamada Furniture Store, but there's another block of buildings. Oh! The buildings. . . . Things are all in the middle of the street, you know. You can go to Yamada Furniture Store, but beyond that, you see another building right in the middle of the street.

And so, we went to the store, and I said, “Wow! Look at that!” Get somebody's slipper, and there's some fish on the street. And then you look across the street, you see all the stores intact. The facing of the store is all intact. So, Uncle opened the store, but you can see the water, yeah. And all that silt from the ocean, the fine sand, and it's not white like O`ahu's beaches. Over here, it's all black. All that. And next door is a bar. Water had gone all into their bar. And they were moving everything. When we opened our store, you can see the water mark that went in, but not all the way in. Just so lucky! So, Uncle said, “Wait, yeah Loraine. You wait over here.” And he ran across the street. There's small alleys that you can go to the backside of the store. So, he went, and he said, “Oh! I can't go home. I got to help these people.” All the buildings were piled up. The facing looks all right, but the back was all piled up (with other buildings and people's belongings).

So, he took his truck. He went to each place. And all the trucks. . . . The store was closed. They all helping everybody, yeah, those that need(ed) to have their things moved because the store is damaged. Lot of dry good[s] stores. Every stream in the parks, in the valleys, you see people rinsing. That---you know that fine sand that gets into your clothes like this? You know, if you have a cuff like this, you see all that sand in there. Because I brought couple of my friends' things home to help them rinse it all out. You have the water running constantly in the big tub, and just keep doing this—getting the sand out then you dry it, and then you take it back. And these are the personal things that belonged to my friends. But the people that were in business, you know, all the yard goods. So, they have an after-tidal wave sale. And it was chaos for about, gee, over a week.

The front street [*Kamehameha Avenue*], no buildings. All smashed and gone. Even the parking meters that's like this (pounds the table), everything was down like this. All like this. You know, I tell you, you can't imagine, and it was off-limits to everybody, but because we were helping, they give you this special pass yeah, from civil defense. And I could go in because Uncle them all drove the trucks to help the different merchants.

Oh, was really something, but Yamada Furniture Store was so lucky. Nothing was damaged! Only the floor, yeah, little bit. But you just sweep it out and mop it, and it was fine. But in front of the store, in front the door, we found fish, slippers, and some of the wooden kegs that carried shoyu. They used to import shoyu in kegs, you know, that come tumbling out from whatever that the waves destroyed. So, was smelly, yeah, afterwards. Because there were some dead bodies that they couldn't locate for a few days. But that was all after the war. Funny. I couldn't remember ever having tidal wave(s) while I was growing up.

HY: And then '46, they had no damage?

LY: They did. Mainly was on the other side. (There was major damage in Hilo. Many sections,

residences and businesses were completely washed away.) Along the highway---the coastal highway.

HY: Oh.

LY: Laupahoehoe.

HY: But, I mean, the furniture store?

LY: Furniture was okay.

HY: Yeah.

LY: 'Cause I know we came to perform to raise money—relief fund for tidal wave victims in '46. And that tidal wave struck April 1—April Fools' Day. People didn't take it seriously in the beginning, but that was really, very, very sad thing that happened, yeah. So many lives was lost, especially at Laupahoehoe—100–something children and teachers. Oh! 'Cause I guess we never had that kind of, you know, in our lifetime till then. And that destruction was really something.

So, Hilo, one section was all wiped out, and another section was wiped out in 1960. But luckily the furniture store---that old, junk building withstood everything. Amazing.

HY: What happened to your singing career then when you got married, and moved to Hilo?

LY: Oh, just limited. The first year, I had no children, so, I sang with this group.

But during the day, I got to work. And the old folks hate when you play or have fun. They made sure you know it. (Laughs) So, only on Sundays I would go to this—they were called Yamamoto's—go to their house, and we would practice for about a couple of hours. And then we would sing over the radio. But *Ojichan* liked me to sing, see. He always tell me to sing, sing, you know. So, I would sing, and whenever there were Japanese performers that came from Japan, he made sure that I go and see it. That part, he was really good to me. (Laughs) I was lucky. So, I could do that, and I sing with these people, but after one year we moved back to Honolulu. And then . . .

HY: Why did you move back to Honolulu?

LY: Because I became *hapai*. And *Obaban* said when Uncle asked them for a raise---because now we're going to live on our own.

HY: Oh, that's right.

LY: We couldn't survive on less than a dollar. He was only getting seventy cents an hour. And so, when we figure---even if he made ninety cents, we couldn't make a go. Buy our food, and pay for the mortgage, and the utilities and so forth. So, he said that I have no choice, I have to work. So we left. We went Honolulu.

HY: What did you do in Honolulu?

LY: (Sighs) I stayed home because I was pregnant, but. . . .

HY: With your folks?

LY: Yeah. My folks took us in. And he and the unemployment was at, oh, at it's peak that time.

HY: Oh yeah?

LY: Mm hmm. He went to the unemployment office, and every week he has to go and report, yeah. No jobs, no jobs. So, he was selling Fuller Brush. He became a Fuller Brush salesman. House-to-house kind. And he was a good salesman. But nothing like having a job where he can go to every day.

My brother's friend was in charge of repairing furniture at Sand Island for the military. So, he said, "Oh you know, I can hire your brother-in-law." So, Uncle Masao worked there for about, let's see. . . . In the meantime, he had applied for job, but he worked there over one year I think. And he would catch the ferry every morning, and then go to Sand Island. Work there until 3:30 [P.M.]. So, he would be coming home early, and he started at seven [A.M.]. So, he leave home at five because we lived in Wai`alae, and that's so country and far those days. Not like today, with the freeway and all.

So, he'd go to work. And meantime he had applied as a—something to do with furniture. And then he got the job with [*The*] Pacific Company [*Ltd.*] that used to be wholesalers of furniture. And they had good selection furniture like Kroehler, Beautyrest, L.A. Period. All the kind that we sold at the store here. So, he became a rep [*representative*] for Pacific Company. He'd go call on all the furniture stores, the big, the small. And doing that, he learned a lot, he said.

So, when Tatsuo [*Yamada, Loraine Yamada's brother-in-law*] called him back, "We getting hard time at the store, and nothing like family. So, why don't you come back?" (Oh, Masao) was so happy, and I was so unhappy! (Laughs) I didn't want to go back. And I said, "I don't want to go back. I don't like the kind of treatment they gave me."

And he said, "Oh no, things going be different."

I said, "How can it be different? I'm still the same. They didn't like me."

And he said, "I'll go first, and I'm going to explain," to the parents, what I went through, you know. So, he went first. And they said that, oh, I didn't have to live with them, and he'll match the wages he was getting over there, and. . . .

HY: What were the wages?

LY: Two-hundred seventy-five dollars a month. And we had--by that time, we had two children. I just came home from the hospital with the second child when Tatsuo called. And, oh, for a while, that's the only time I seriously thought I would divorce him. Because I know I wouldn't be happy if I came back here. And then, he came back and talked to the old folks.

And, see, my father-in-law used to write me letters all the time. I write in Japanese just to let him know how Uncle was, and how the---to keep him in touch with his family. And he always wrote me nice letters. He (was) happy because I could write Japanese. When my mother[-in-law], *Obaban*, I don't think she liked me until the year she died. (Laughs) Her feelings kind of changed, but, you know, she was always so cold.

But anyhow, Uncle came home first, and then about a month later, I followed, and I came home over here. And it was pretty good because we live(ed) apart [*from Loraine Yamada's in-laws*]. Somebody came [to the door]?

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

HY: When you came back to Hilo then, did you work in the store?

LY: Yeah. Not right away. I came back in '51 of June.

HY: When you started working back at the store, did you do the same things?

LY: Yeah, pretty much. Except that now we were into drapes. So, I was sewing drapes from home because I had two children. I lived in town. See, we didn't build this house till 1957.

HY: So, you had a total of six kids, right?

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

HY: And what about singing?

LY: Even singing. I hardly did. . . . You know, the period from 1951, when I came back till, I must have sung till about, oh, maybe ten years. Maybe till around '61. The only place I sang was in church for weddings when they asked me. Other than that, occasionally on the radio. I hardly sang because it meant I have to ask somebody to accompany me on the piano, and then. . . . So busy taking care of the kids, yeah. Hard. So, the only place I sang was in church. But I know the song already, all the wedding songs. So, all I do is take my sheet [*music*], and give it to the accompanist. Yeah, every church had an organist. So, I can sing. Then I get paid for it. So, that was good (laughs). That's the only kind of singing I did until *karaoke*.

HY: And can you talk a little bit [about] when you managed your daughter's band?

LY: Oh, yeah. That was in. . . . She started singing around her sophomore year. And . . .

HY: In high school?

LY: Mm hmm. In high school. And she went---her first year in college. . . . I know she didn't like to go school, but I told her, "No, education is important." So, she went, and that's the first *F* she got in her life, in history. And I remember, she wouldn't come out of the room. She just cried and cried, and cried (laughs). And when she told me, I had to laugh. I said, "That's nothing!"

She said, “Oh, you know.”

And I said, “Yeah, and I know you don't like to go to school. When it comes to college, Joy [*Lorraine Yamada's daughter*], it's not free. We have to pay for it. So, if you don't want to go, until you really know what you want, why don't you just rest? Just go work.”

And she said okay, she wants to sing. So, she worked in the music store, and then weekends she sang. Week band—school band. So, from her sophomore year, she first started singing. And I'm busy working, too. I don't really pay attention. And one day she told me, “Mom, you know, why don't you come and hear me sing?” She's going to sing at the school program or something. But I'm so busy because I used to work about sixteen hours a day.

HY: At the music store?

LY: Music store. I managed . . .

HY: What was the name of the . . .

LY: House of Music. So, I wouldn't go, but then I said, “Go tape it.” You know, and then she'll tape it. She bring it home, and I said, “Mm, not bad. Not bad.” All rock and roll, eh.

So, anyhow. . . . Then she performed at this big wedding in the hotel. So, she told me to come. So, I went. It's near where I work. Right across the street. I went and I listened. Mm, the band is good, too, you know. They were all young kids. And kind of big band. Had the keyboard, and they had a saxophone player, (a) trumpet player, a trombone player, drummer, bass. So, six, yeah, six pieces. Six-piece band plus had three singers. Joy was the only female, and the rest were all male vocalists. And they were good. So I said, “You know, you folks are good!”

Then, okay, she went to her junior year, came her senior year. And they had jobs every week. She was just like me. Every weekend, they performing some place. Wedding, graduation, because they were a good band. Then when she went to [*her*] first year [*of*] college, she wasn't interested after the first semester. But I said, “No, you finish the first year.”

So, anyway, one night she said, “Oh mom, we had a meeting. And we're all serious about our music. And then, we were wondering if you want to manage our band?”

I said, “Heh?” (Laughs)

She said, “Yeah, we're serious.”

I said, “Well. . . .” And by this time, I had quit my job. That store was sold, and I didn't like the new manager, and he didn't like me. So, I left. And I said, “But, you know, if you folks going to go into music, and you going make me the manager, you folks better listen because I going be strict.”

And they said, “Yeah.” So, I started booking them for the different parties. And then . . .

HY: What's the name of the band?

LY: Sky Odyssey. So, we made a demo tape, and it came out good. *Bumbai* I let you hear it. I took the tape to Honolulu, and went to the different agencies, and I got them to audition the band. And they got the job. So, on 1978, Labor Day weekend, we moved to Honolulu—all the band members. And they had the Muscular Dystrophy Telethon. And we went on TV. We just arrived there. The band [went] straight to HIC [*Honolulu International Center*], and they performed over there. And then I had to go in advance, find a house where we can stay. So, from there we went to the house, and then we had to audition for the different hotels, different nightclubs. And our first job was with, was not Hawaiian Hut [*Theater Restaurant*]. Our first job was, oh, with the Telethon, and then we had to go to C'est Si Bon. There was a nightclub. We had to audition over there, and there were other bands for the job to perform at Da Sting, which was a well-known nightclub, disco nightclub.

So, there's three bands all auditioning for this position, and they chose us. So, we had a job right away. We were lucky. Ho! But they didn't like our selections. We were into different type of music. They said you got to do disco. Disco was the thing. And you know that beat (imitates disco beat), constant. We had to go get all the records, and practice all day, and learn the new songs.

The boss liked our band so much. He was so impressed with their energy, their—what you call that?—effort, and their modesty also because they were good kids. They (were) all young. One was only seventeen. He just graduated high school, but he wasn't eighteen yet. So, dealing with this kind young kids, ho, was hard. All the different personalities. But because the boss liked this band so much, and he said he really had faith in this band. So, anything that I thought would be good for the band, he gave us 100 percent support. He never did that for any other band, and it was a . . .

HY: What's his name?

LY: Fred Hirayama [*general manager for Da Sting*]. He ran for office, and he got in. [*Fred Hirayama served as a state house representative in 1989–1990 for the Hawai`i Kai district. He lost the election in 1991.*] And I think he lost this last second time or something, four years ago. From `Aina Haina side, I think, he was. But that nightclub closed since it was at Waikiki, Princess Ka`iulani Hotel. And that [*Da Sting*] nightclub closed in 1980, '80 or '81, I think. And I tell you, we used to just pack the place. And there were one, two, three bars going in all the time. By the time our contract finished, we went to Alaska. One year later we went to Alaska. We came back, I couldn't believe only had one bar. Hardly anybody inside. That's how business drastically changed. Because after we left Da Sting, the longest about three-months contract. We perform in lot of nightclubs in Honolulu, plus we went to Kaua`i, we went to Maui, and we came here to perform, too, before we went Alaska and Mainland.

HY: I think I'm running out of tape here.

HY: What year did they disband then?

LY: In 1982.

HY: Eighty-two. Okay. Can you talk about your activity since then? You retired?

LY: Oh, I retired, and I just did part-time work. And by then, you know, Uncle wasn't well, and he worked only half a day. So, was just like his maid and servant until in 1988, I went to Kona to work. And this was entirely different field for me, too, because I never did hotel work. But luckily because I could speak Japanese, and write Japanese, I got the position. And I would still be there, probably, if Uncle didn't get sick. But . . .

HY: And you're starting to sing? You're still singing?

LY: Mm hmm. I started back singing in '88---early '88. I nearly gave up because, oh, just---all the years that I didn't sing, oh, it's so obvious. The range is limited, my breath control was bad. I thought, and yet, when I listen to the *karaoke* music, it's all professional musicians. Ho! That's what I always wanted to sing with a good band, and I couldn't do it. But, you know, it just. . . . The practice, the usage of your vocal chords, gradually---and even now, I'm not satisfied. But it's (a lot) better than what it was. So, I'm satisfied, I'm happy.

Yeah. So, now we sing for parties, too. And we perform here and there. Last month, no July---end of July we performed at [*Hawai`i*] Naniloa [*Hotel*], Crown Room because it was the Statewide Annual *Karaoke* Festival, they call it. (Each island is represented)—the selected thirty. So, I sang for that one. And next month, I go Honolulu, I told you. And then December, we go to Kona, to the Senior Center, you know, Senior Citizen Program. Oh, you get to perform lot of times. Plus we have our own *karaoke* club. The one Henry is in, his brother, his sister-in-law, Carol—my friend that called little while ago. There's twelve of us. We decided that we (are) not going to have more than twelve, but Uncle Masao died, and another senior moved to Honolulu. So, there's ten of us left. And when I went to work Kona, they all kind of got lazy. They don't practice. But then when I came back, I'm busy taking care of Uncle, yeah. So, only now we (are) getting back into the swing of things. So, I just told them that it's no use only practice, and we don't do something about it. So we either get serious, or we only get together when we can. They all want to do something.

HY: Did any of your kids. . . . Were they interested in Japanese music?

LY: No. They always English, American. Yeah.

HY: Your daughter's band, the Sky Odyssey band, was that influenced at all by Japanese-style music? Or was it just their costumes?

LY: She was . . .

HY: Was all rock and roll?

LY: Yeah, but the boss at Da Sting, I told you, was so impressed with them. He wanted a different kind of band, you know. And I did mention to him one time that my thing is. . . . This band (is) going be little bit different. They('ve) got to wear costume(s). And I wanted to have the Japanese costume, I wanted to have the Okinawan costume, I wanted to have them with the Hawaiian costume. And they going play disco. I mean, well, I had the shock of my life because I came home, I had to come home every third week because I was secretary to my bowling

league. And I have to make all the assignment for the lanes, and then collect the money. So, I would come home once a month to do that. When I went back, he said, “You going get the surprise, you know, Mrs. Yamada. Go come back.”

Okay. So, I tell you. He hired the seamstress. And sewed all this *kabuki* costumes. I mean, oh, with the wig and all. And they had to go to University [of *Hawai`i-Manoa*], learn how to apply the makeup. You know, with the big brows and the white hair. I tell you, was something. So, they all dressed in their Japanese kimono with the big skirt. And then Joy had her kimono and her Japanese wig. So, what happened is, constantly music going in the disco house. When we---the live band goes out, the DJ [*disc jockey*] takes over and just slides right in with the music. So, unending. The dances go on.

So, that particular night, the music portion stopped, and then the DJ says, “And now,” and, (imitates drum sound) like that. All the lights go out. Are you familiar with *2001: A Space Odyssey*? The music? (Lorraine Yamada sings the tune). You know, go like that. And he says, and he wrote this thing out. And he goes, “From outer space, introduce. . . .” He makes it real dramatic, see. “Comes, Sky, Odyssey!” (Holly Yamada laughs). And dark, but you can. . . . They going march out. The drummer come(s) out. But he's playing the weird *2001: A Space Odyssey* music, and they (are) coming out. And then they all go into their place. And then slowly they pick up their instrument, and then they (start) playing. And then all of a sudden---(makes drum noise), they play like this, and the lights come on. All flashing, and (the crowd see) them! (Laughs)

We came on TV, you know—what's that program? That guy used to do it every week. “Hawaiian Host . . . ”

HY: Oh, “Hawaiian Moving Company”?

LY: Local, yeah, we appeared on that years back. So, he came. They came with all the TV crew, and took them performing all in their outfit, and some of them so ugly. And we had a fabulous keyboard player. He even had his big organ over there. You know, that old, I forget what it's called. He had that organ, he had the synthesizer, he had his keyboard, he had his clavinet. So, he's going to du, du, du, du, oh like this. And with his hair---and his (wig) was straight hair, and every now and then he has something like this. He press it like this, and the hairs go, poop! And come(s) down. And I tell you, so funny. And the *Haole* boy—I had one *Haole* boy. Trumpet player, he had the white wig.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

LY: You know, the guys with the long cape. And Joy had one just like a harem-kind. Long pants. This is big band, and big sleeves. We were known as the costume disco band. Was really colorful. And, gee, how many years we were on the road? From the time we left, end of '78, and we came home in '82. And everybody went on their own way. But let's see, one boy is teaching guitar now. He went on to study music, and he became outstanding. And his name appeared on the national *Guitar* magazine. That's how well he did. And two of the boys play at the hotels in Waikoloa. One became DJ at the FM station. The *Haole* boy, I don't know. I'm sure. . . . He was always very—what you call?—ambitious. So, I'm sure he's still playing music. And the piano player---the keyboard player quit, and he got married. And today hard to

get jobs with a live band. And I heard he's driving a truck. It's a waste because if anything, he was the most talented. Ho! He was a good player. Duane Higa.

HY: Anything else you'd like to add?

LY: To me, music is an international language. And talk about—what you call?—prejudice and all this, yeah. In the whole world, I think, in the field of art, it's the best. I think people are more caring, and more understanding, and compassionate.

If you look. . . . Even in Japan, after the war, there were lot of mixed babies. Blacks and Whites with the Japanese. And they really look down on these children. It's not their fault. And the whole shipload--they shipped these kids to South America. I thought I can never forget that scene in the news, where these kids were still little. Maybe the oldest maybe about intermediate school. They('re) on this ship, and the only home they know is Japan. But these are outcasts. And they're crying on the ship, and whoever they know has come to see them off, they're going to be shipped to South America to start a new life. But look the poor kids. And the Japanese government didn't want them in their homeland.

And when I went to Japan in 1959, I went to the (Tokyo) Nichigeki Theater. That one day that I could get out. And all the fabulous shows, it's like when you go Las Vegas, and you see all these show girls. Now these are all Japanese girls. And then you look at the program booklet. There was about three, I think, *hapa*-Blacks. See, they're accepted in the entertainment world, plus *Haole*-Japanese. And they dancing with the full-blooded Japanese, and nice. Where else would they accept them in Japan? Shee! And in the field of athletics, they're accepted. Nothing else.

So, it's really sad. And when you think music, you can get a whole group of mixed race. You can get couple from Africa, a couple from England, couple from maybe, Middle East, and couple from Asia, and couple from the Polynesian group. And you give them all the music, and you get one conductor, what can you make? She can read music, you make music. And even if you didn't have knowledge of music, with the rhythm already, you bring your instrument. And to me, that's the best. Yeah. Peaceful. No more fighting and hatred. So, I really think more people should be like that.

So, I don't understand. I think people that don't love music, something's wrong. I don't think they can enjoy life to it's fullest. (Laughs) For real. Music makes the world go around. And you know what? You got to have music in anything. You got to have music to make it effective. Even in a funeral there's music. Yeah. A parade is nothing without a band. I tell you, I don't care where you go, you got to have music, whether it's a sad occasion or a happy occasion. And nothing else, I can describe the same as music. It's wonderful. So, for me, I don't have that kind of education, but through music, I've been blessed with a lot of things. I think that's all I can say.

HY: Okay. Thank you very much.

LY: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW