

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #450-2

with

Masao Asada (MA)

April 7, 1992

Kailua, O`ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[*Editor's note: Also present at the interview is MA's wife, Sumie Yamashita Asada (SA).*]

WN: This is an interview with Masao Asada, on April 7, 1992, at his home in Kailua, O`ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, why don't we start today's interview. We were talking about you and your brother's store. And you know, when you went around to the different places, did you actually peddle the vegetables, or did you just take orders?

MA: Before, when we first started, we were peddlers. Then, later on, when we built the market, before we built the market, we quit the peddling. So I don't know how long we did the peddling.

WN: [*Your brother*] built the market in '29?

MA: The new market, yes. But he started the business in 1923. And we did that for about five years, I think. And then, we quit the peddling. My brother just started going in [*i.e., peddling*] on Ford Island, was first place he started. Then, when I joined him, he expanded to Fort Kam[*ehameha*], Fort Shafter (and Fort Armstrong).

WN: Why is it that you folks dealt mainly with the military?

MA: Well, I don't know, but we were all in the military base. I think 1926, he went into Schofield [*Barracks*], started to deliver Schofield. See, in the olden days, the mess hall used to buy from us, vegetables and fruits. So there was three squadrons on Ford Island. At first, there were only two squadrons, the sixty-fifth and the sixth pursuit squadrons. Sixty-fifth was a service squadron. Then the seventy-second squadron came in, and they had three. Oh, there was another one, the twenty-third squadron. So there were one, two, three at first. Then, towards the end, they added another one, and was four squadrons over there. Then I think about nineteen thirty-something, the commissary went into bidding for vegetable and fruits. We didn't bid on that, so we, from there, we just discarded all the squadron mess hall business, and we went only into family.

WN: Military family.

MA: Military family. And then, that's how we were mostly in the military. Then he was at Fort Shafter and Kam, and he was peddling in Schofield. Then when I took over Schofield, I went into all the mess halls over there. And we were selling to all the mess halls.

WN: When you say sell, that means selling directly to them . . .

MA: Directly.

WN: . . . or taking order and then delivering?

MA: Well, the way we were doing was, in the morning, we were peddling all fruits and mostly vegetables. And we make our rounds, as we go in, we take the order for fruits. And we deliver that in the afternoon. The delivery in the afternoon was all order. We just pick the order up, make up the order, and then we deliver it [*that same*] afternoon.

WN: And then, when would they pay you?

MA: Monthly.

WN: Oh.

MA: We'll charge it to the mess hall, and [*we would*] send a statement, they'll send a check. So it was monthly payment.

WN: What kind of vegetables did you deal with mostly?

MA: Mostly island vegetables. Like the mess hall, most thing they were using was like, green onions, radishes, carrots, beets, and eggplant. And then we get all kinds of fruits, island fruit, like bananas. Bananas were the main item that they used to buy, and papaya, pineapple. And we were handling some Mainland fruits, but they didn't go too much on Mainland fruits. The mess hall was really for the breakfast fruits, like bananas. And we were selling lot of bananas. We used to buy all our bananas from this guy [*A. J.*] Campbell. He had big banana field in Mokule`ia. Right now, last time I went to Mokule`ia, it's all alfalfa over there. But Campbell [*in the early days was*] shipping bananas to the Mainland, and somehow he quit the banana. But that was years after we were out of that business. Oh, he had a big banana field over there. And shipping a lot of bananas at one time.

WN: Did you folks peddle to civilians at all?

MA: Well, around the [*Pearl City*] Peninsula.

WN: Oh, around the peninsula, yeah, I see. Did you go to, say, the Dillingham's place, and things like that?

MA: Well, they weren't there all the time. That was their summer home. So we didn't do too much. But there was [*Harold*] Dillingham, and most of the rich family was the Waterhouse, Albert Waterhouse, and Ross. Mrs. Ross was Mrs. Waterhouse's sister. Then (Mr.) Waterhouse was [*working for the Waterhouse Estate*]. And then (Mr.) George Fuller had a

home (on the peninsula). (He was a bachelor.) George Fuller was vice president of Bank of Hawai`i. Then later on, [Mr. Bottomley] was the president of American Factors, moved in there. (His peninsula home was just for the weekends.) But all the rest of them, (Mr.) Harry Cobb, he was treasurer of O`ahu Railway [*& Land Company*], he was living in there [*Pearl City Peninsula*] permanently. And there's [Victor] Schoenberg, he was a manager of Bank of Hawai`i, Waipahu. S-C-H-O-E-N-B-E-R-G. She was my teacher, Mrs. Schoenberg was. (Chuckles) Then [Albert] Van Valkenburg, he was the O`ahu Railway [*& Land Company*] land department president. And there were a [John] Schwanck family, an old German family. But they were retired. They had a home near the [*Pearl Harbor*] Yacht Club. (The Schwanck family lived there long before the yacht club came up.)

WN: Where was the yacht club?

MA: [*Pearl Harbor*] Yacht Club [*property*] was owned by this Chinese guy, Afong. And then, when Afong, in 1929, stock crash, he went bankrupt (I heard), and he had to get rid of all his land. That's when the yacht club bought his home. It was a big yard, big home. The Pearl Harbor Yacht Club originally bought the Ted Cooke home, but that was a smaller place. The building was big, big, two-story building. Originally that was built by the Jones Family. And then they sold it to the yacht club, and the yacht club first started in the peninsula over there. Then it was too small, so they took the Afong place.

WN: What did this Mr. Afong do?

MA: I don't know what he actually did, but I think they were connected with some dry goods store in Nu`uanu someplace, on Nu`uanu Street. But I don't know whether he was directly in or with his brother, I don't know. That part I don't remember. But they were one of the old Afong family [*of Honolulu*].

WN: Your store was cash-and-carry?

MA: No, we used to do credit, charge by the month.

WN: People could just pick what they wanted and pay you there, if they wanted.

MA: Yes. They charge it. We had quite a number of charge customers too.

WN: I was wondering, you know, as the, in the thirties, you know, war was approaching, did you feel any tension, you know, because you were Japanese, going to these places?

MA: Actually, there wasn't that much pressure. Local people didn't show that they were prejudiced amongst. Well, anyway, I didn't feel it, that way, either. And majority of the rich people living down there, their working people, the caretakers, are all Japanese. But they didn't do anything. Just like normal.

WN: What about the military? You know, when you went to Ford Island like that?

MA: Well, that was (before) the war anyway. During the war (we had to cut off all military delivery).

WN: When the war broke out, were you still able to go on the boat to Ford Island?

MA: (All military business terminated. December 6, 1941, was our last delivery.)

WN: Oh, this was in the thirties, before the war started?

MA: Oh yes, that was before the war started. I think it was in late thirties. Then in 1938 or '39—see, half of Ford Island was Luke Field and half was Naval Air Station. Then when Hickam Field opened up, they [*U.S. Army*] all moved to Hickam [*Field*]. So there was only [*U.S.*] Navy now over there [*at Ford Island*]. The whole island was navy. But as far as the quarters on Ford Island, they didn't build too much. Navy, they built it way up, where the [*USS Arizona Memorial*] is now. Just around there. And the officers' quarter, there's an old battery around, two battery on Ford Island. And they never used it there, that is, that I know of. And when I started to deliver over there, they were using as a bomb shelter, you know, they store their bombs inside there, airplane bombs.

WN: Did you lose business when Hickam was built . . .

MA: No.

WN: . . . when they moved out from Ford Island to Hickam?

MA: No, the thing is, Lieutenant Colonel [*Eugene*] Fitzgerald was commanding officer when Luke Field moved to Hickam. And that's when Mrs. Fitzgerald told me, “Hey, you have to come to Hickam Field. We want your service over there.” (Chuckles)

So I said, “Well, all right. I'll try and wriggle up some way to go.”

That's after we were peddling already, so we used to go. And then, when I first went over there, there wasn't that much. Hickam was just starting and they had quite a few officers' quarters all built up, but the non-coms' [*i.e., non-commissioned officers*] quarters, like that, wasn't built yet, so there was just a handful of officers' quarters when I started delivering over there. Then 1940, I think—see, to go to Ford Island, we used to have to go in through the [*Pearl Harbor Navy Yard*] main gate to catch the ferry. Then, one day, the guard over there, at the gate, he says, “The captain wants to see you.”

Well, I had the feeling what was coming off already. See, the funny part of it is that the officers, in a clubhouse and they talk about all kinds of things, I guess the women especially. So I told this guy, “You know, I can't make it today.” I said, “I have to go home already.” I had the feeling that they want my services. I was loaded already. And so, I didn't go that day. And then I told the guard, “Well, maybe tomorrow or day after.”

And then tomorrow I didn't come. And the day after I didn't come, I didn't go. And then the third day, when I was coming out, the guard at the gate, he told me, “Oh, you pull aside.” He won't let me go out from the gate. So the Marine sergeant came out, he says, “Now I'm going with you.” He said, “We're going to headquarters, we going see Captain Roberts.”

And then, when I went in there, the captain was expecting me already and they didn't have too much quarters over there. Maybe was only about fifteen quarters, you know. And he says, "You know, we want your service over here."

But I said, "Chee, my schedule is all *[full]*." So I said, "Let me think it over." The third day I didn't come again, you know.

So the guard took me again. He say, "You were supposed to see the captain, you didn't go."

I say, "Oh yeah, I had problems, so I couldn't go see him." So I left it at that.

And then, the next day, he says, "Here's your pass." (Chuckles) He had my pass all made up, so I can go around the quarters. And he said, "I want you to start from tomorrow."

I said, "Tomorrow is hard."

He said, "No, you start from tomorrow." (Chuckles) He knew that I was going to prolong again. And so then I had no choice. I started. So actually, I have to come in early in the morning, and catch all that before I go to Ford Island.

Then, this Makalapa [*Naval Housing*] came up. And Hickam [*Field*] was building up, so, gee, myself, I couldn't handle it already. Too many (customers) to call. And see, we would go and pick up the order and deliver it the (same) afternoon. So I had to split my route. We had several boys working, so me and another boy took the navy yard, Hickam route. Ford Island, I had another boy go over there and do it. And when the war started, everything stopped one time.

WN: Yeah, okay, so when the war started, okay, what were you doing that day when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

MA: Well, that was Sunday morning. And we were at home and I had few deliveries early in the morning, around the peninsula. So I went, done my delivery, and I came home and it was about seven o'clock, I think. I generally start out about six in the morning, and finish out all delivering, come back. Wasn't too heavy a delivery, but milk and bread, and papers, and few other orders that was left, you know. We used to open the store (at eight o'clock) on Sunday morning. So just as I came home, I just sat in the truck and was reading the newspaper. Then I hear several explosions, you see. And being that I was delivering on Ford Island, I knew they were, where the [*USS*] *Arizona* [*Memorial*] is now, that place was a shallow point, and the dredger was dredging over there. I think they dredged over there for about a whole year, or more. And every so often, they used to blast, so I thought, oh that. My sister was in the store, my younger sister. And then I came in and she said, "Gee, what's that noise?"

I said, "Well, I think they're blasting over there, you know."

Then, it keep on blowing. So I said, "Eh, this is something else. It must be something

else.”

So I jump on my truck again, and I was going down to the pier to see. And just as I came to the end of Franklin Avenue, there was a road going down towards Coral Avenue. On the point, over there, was the big pier, that the navy and the army was using. And so I was going down to that point. And see, the fleet was in that time. As I was going, one of the cars kept coming, and I see him waving as he was coming. So I stopped on the side, and he says, “Get out of here! Get out of here! This is not practice! It's war,” he tell me.

And just about the time he came up, when I stopped, I saw three Japan planes flying in from Wai`anae side. And when I looked up, I see this Japan insignia, the red *maru*, you know, under the wing. And I couldn't believe it, you know. Then when this guy came out, *Haole*, then I thought, oh, it's war. Get the hell out of here! And so I realized then that, and I rushed home, and they were all still at home. I said, “Get on the truck, we gotta get out of here.”

And I took all my kids, and my wife and my sister-in-law were living right together. My brother was still sleeping I think, that time. And he says, “Oh, you fellow go,” and he stayed back. He said, “I'm going to come with another truck.” And so I load everybody in and we went way up to (Pearl City), on the Waimano Home Road. And about halfway up, we could see the fire and smoke [*from Pearl Harbor*], you know. Then later on, he came up and then we stayed up Waimano Home for a whole day, near Waimano Home. Then that evening, about four o'clock, we came down several times to get supplies, food and whatnot. Most of the people living in the peninsula was up there already. Everybody ran up and, oh, the whole bunch was up there.

WN: Was the peninsula bombed at all?

MA: No, it wasn't bombed at all, but the concussion, you could feel. Rocks around there, everybody took off, went up to the highland. And then, towards the evening, we went to Waipahu, because the Waimano Home, they didn't have enough room to accommodate everybody, so they said, well, they up to capacity now, so you fellow gotta go someplace else. And then we went to Waipahu, to this Waipahu Japanese community club they have. And we went over there, and they told us, oh, they're all loaded. And then we went to the Hongwanji in Waipahu. And that night, we wasn't able to get in there. And they said, “Oh, too full,” that they cannot. So we didn't have no choice, it was getting dark already. So we pulled way up, near the [*O`ahu Sugar Company*] manager's home, there was a straight road going up to his home. And we pull alongside in the cane field over there, and we parked our truck, and we slept in our truck, over there.

Oh, next morning, the poor kids looked like they had measles, the mosquito bite them all up (chuckles). But that night, we were so high up that we could see all of Pearl Harbor. And we'd still hear this blast. And what happened was the [*USS*] *Arizona*, and there was—to me, it looked like one of the ships in the dry dock, they caught on fire. I think they tried to blow the dry dock and this ship caught on fire. Finally I think the fire went into the ammunition part, and, oh, that thing was blowing that night. Oh boy, and they had this tracer bullets was inside there, I think you could see all that thing flying up. It was a sight. Hard to forget.

WN: Yeah.

MA: Then the next morning, we came down to the clubhouse, and we finally got room over there, and we stayed there for couple of weeks.

WN: You mean in the plantation?

MA: In the plantation clubhouse, yeah.

WN: So what, they had cots and things for you folks?

MA: No, we sleep on the floor. No accommodation. (Chuckles) Good thing we had blankets and whatnot, we had in the car, you see.

WN: Were there other people in the . . .

MA: Oh yes, there were full of other people.

WN: What about food?

MA: We have to supply our own. But during that first day, we came down [*home*], oh, several times in between. We'd tell the police, and police would tell us, "Well, you go down, you stay one hour or forty-five minutes," or whatever, and used to limit us to time we stay, so we rush in and we just throw everything in the car so that we can have food. So we had lot of food. The first day after the blast, we came down and took as much as we can. Milk and bread and whatnot. And people up there, nobody had chance to eat breakfast yet, being Sunday morning. So whatever we needed we kept, and the rest we just give it out to them. Didn't even try to sell it, you know. And then, months later, they had some kind of a OCD [*Office of Civilian Defense*], or whatever, set up, and somebody told them that we had given them bread and milk and whatnot, and that was something that, you know, survival already. You know, you gotta have something to eat. So whatever we kept for our, we had four kids I think, four, five kids. So whatever we needed we kept, and then the rest, we just gave it out. And some of them offered to pay.

"No," I said, "never mind the money." And we tried to give as much as we can.

And then, towards the end, we had to keep milk and bread for ourselves. At the end, we ran out, so we said, "Well, that's it already." And several of the people didn't get it and, boy, they made a big squawk, you know. I said, "We didn't bring the whole store up!" (Laughs) But that's how it goes. Point like that, why, they only thinking of themselves. You could really see how selfish people could be.

WN: What about the [*O`ahu Sugar Company*] plantation store? Did they supply anything?

MA: No, nobody supplied food, Pearl City. Later on, they paid us, actually, what we gave out.

WN: Who is they?

MA: They, I was just trying to think, they had this, some kind of a setup they had, the—what did they call it?

WN: Like the Red Cross or . . .

MA: Some relief, yes. `Aiea was the headquarters, I think. And then, they came down months later and they talked with my brother, and he said, “Well, emergency like that, we didn't think of money, you know.”

Most of the people, well, there's lot of them we don't know, and there were lot of them we knew, too, being our customers, so we just gave it out.

I don't know where the fund came from, but they did that. Said, “Well, we make an estimate of about how much,” and later on, we were paid.

WN: So when were you able to go back to your home?

MA: Oh, about two weeks after.

WN: Two weeks? Oh.

MA: Yes, we finally came back.

WN: And when did you start to resume your business, normal business?

MA: I think about a week later, we came back and opened the store, about eight-thirty, nine o'clock in the morning, until about four-thirty. Then we rush back to Waipahu, the first couple of weeks. Then after we move back, then we (opened eight [A.M.] to five [P.M.]).

WN: Oh, so you opened the store one week after December 7.

MA: About a week after.

WN: Oh, I see. And what about delivering?

MA: No delivery already. Gasoline was rationed, and we hardly had enough gasoline rationed that delivery was entirely out during the war.

WN: The entire war years, you never went out?

MA: Well, we were delivering, but they would come and do their buying—see, the family is hard too, because the menfolks that were working, most of 'em were [*Pearl Harbor*] Navy Yard workers, and they were working twelve and fourteen hours. And the wives were doing the shopping and lot of 'em lived quite a ways off, and they couldn't drive, lot of 'em. So we used to just let them buy the merchandise in the (store). After we close the store, I used to deliver.

WN: These are the local . . .

MA: Yes, just for the local family, right in peninsula alone.

WN: So, like the Ford Island [*families*] and all that . . .

MA: Oh, that was entirely out.

WN: I wonder how they got their vegetables during the war.

MA: Well, I think the commissary probably. But after that, we didn't go back at all.

WN: So you relied all on walk-in customers . . .

MA: Yes.

WN: . . . from the peninsula.

MA: Well, during the war, the people from all over the place was coming in.

WN: Oh.

MA: Actually, my brother, he used to like to stock up his warehouse. We had a warehouse full of merchandise. So, where other stores were rationing out, we were giving them all they want (chuckles). So people from, as far from Waipahu, used to come down. They hear, their friend would say, "Well, if you come down to our place, you can get all kinds of supply."

WN: How was he able to get so much supply?

MA: Well, he had a friend in American Factors, by the name of (Mr. Frank) Bellows. He was the manager over there. And this fellow, Bellows, he saw, or he felt, maybe he knew that maybe a war can start. So he stocked American Factors with so much merchandise, they couldn't find any more warehouses. So he was renting the railroad's [*O.R. & L.*] boxcar, and he was storing goods in there, for American Factors. Then when American Factors directors found out that he was doing too much stocking up, they fired him. The poor guy got fired, but as soon as he got fired, well, he started to do business his own. And I don't know what he was doing during the war. Maybe he was working for the government. That's one reason American Factors had plenty of merchandise, because this fellow Bellows was the smart man over there. So during the war, American Factors made money. They had the merchandise.

WN: So your main supplier was American Factors?

MA: Yes, American Factors [*Amfac*] and [*Theo H.*] Davies. Davies, they were pretty well stocked. This fellow, [*William*] Baird, I think he was the grocery manager at Davies. During the war, after Amfac's supply ran out, they didn't do too good in grocery. Davies did good. This fellow Baird was smart. During the war, he tried to get as much as he can

on the cargo. Mr. Baird and my brother were pretty close friends, so when this cargo is coming in in about ten more days, then he'll call my brother and tell 'em come down and give him the order. So we had good supply, you know. And so my brother would go down and give him all the order, and then Davies used to fill our order. They never cut on our order. Whatever Mr. Baird write out, why, the warehouse used to fill (the whole order).

WN: Did their cost or prices remain the same?

MA: Well, accordingly. Sometimes it cost more. But during the war, price wasn't the item, price wasn't anything. It was [*obtaining*] the merchandise, I think (chuckles). Try to get the goods. So we did pretty good during the war. And we were in good supply.

WN: So, relatively speaking, you couldn't go out and get orders and, you know, with the military . . .

MA: No, the military we cut out altogether.

WN: So, you did less business during the war, but enough to . . .

MA: Oh yes, what we were losing on the military side, well, we were getting from the outside. Customers from all over, not only from Pearl City and peninsula, but people from other towns, like from `Aiea (and Waipahu).

WN: And the stores that they usually went to were low in stock?

MA: I guess so, yes.

WN: Oh, so your brother must have had good connections, then?

MA: We had pretty good connections, you know. And during the war, they don't give us enough gasoline, so we had to rely on this trucking company. There were lot of smaller guys [*who*] owned one or two trucks, you know. They were doing all our hauling. That was Shintaku. He has a, some kind of connection, Waipahu boy. He had a big truck. At first, this Kazama from `Aiea started the trucking with another guy from `Aiea. And they were doing the hauling. And this guy—I don't know whether you remember, but like Crisco and stuff, instead of can, it was coming in bottles during the war, because can is scarce. And, oh, he used to break that, purposely look like. You know, you get on the truck and then just throw 'em down. Bust one or two glass. And one time, my brother called him, he said, "Eh, why you have to throw that thing down?"

He said, "Oh, that's all right. Broken one, you take 'em back, they gonna replace it." That's the kind of attitude he had.

So he [*brother*] got disgusted with him, and he threw him out and told this guy Shintaku, if he would do our hauling.

And Shintaku said, "Oh, all right." He said, "I'll do your hauling."

So when the cargo came in, he told Shintaku, “You go to [*Theo H.*] Davies and pick up my stuff, because I going get quite a bit of stuff.”

He tell, “Oh yeah?”

He said, “Why don't you make my stop at Davies [*your*] first stop?” He went over there and he couldn't bring 'em all back. (Chuckles)

He came down, he says, “Eh, how come you get so much merchandise?”

We were lucky. Davies, this fellow, Mr. Baird, used to fill our order.

WN: So, during the war, you folks relied upon these trucking companies?

MA: Oh yes, we had to.

WN: So you didn't have to worry too much about the gasoline ration?

MA: Well, they didn't give us enough gasoline so we were keeping for our own.

WN: I see. Let me turn over the tape.

WN: Okay. So, let's see, you folks relied a lot on the trucking companies. What about like the Dillinghams and those, the richer families, were they, did they stay in the area?

MA: No, they didn't stay in the area.

WN: They---wartime, they were . . .

MA: I think after the war, some of the homes they rented out.

WN: So did you folks make more money or less money during the war?

MA: Oh, we made more money during the war.

WN: With less effort, too, then.

MA: Oh yes.

WN: You didn't have to go all the way around.

MA: Yes (chuckles).

WN: Wow.

MA: The main thing during the war and after the war, the guy with the most merchandise win.

WN: So did any other stores say, “How come you folks have so much?” Or anything like that?

MA: I don't know. (Chuckles)

WN: What about liquor? Liquor was rationed.

MA: Oh yes, liquor was rationed.

WN: So you sold less liquor then?

MA: Oh, we were all on quotas. And we had pretty good quotas, though. So when the convoy comes in, then we have all kinds of liquor. And it's all rationed, one bottle a customer. I still have a ration card.

WN: Oh yeah?

MA: I'll show you afterwards (chuckles).

WN: Okay.

MA: The liquor ration card, you know, like you can buy one case of beer a week, or one quart of whiskey, or whatever, hard liquor. One cardholder. During the war, when we have liquor come in, my brother used to take care all the liquor, and boy, he was (busy)—we used to have line up (for) liquor for about a block long.

WN: Oh yeah? What about you folks as store owners? Did you folks have to have cards too? Or could you folks just more or less just buy from your own store?

MA: Well, we were rationed too. We had to carry our own card and, lot of time, we let people use it if they, you know, close friends like that. Aliens, they cannot buy.

WN: Oh.

MA: So some of our close friends that really need, why, I used to buy on our card, and take it to them.

WN: Did military personnel, during the war, come to your store?

MA: Oh yes. During the war, we were doing lot of business with the [*naval*] ships. The officers had their own ship steward. And the ship steward used to come down and buy the vegetables and fruits and whatnot, what they cannot get [*on base*]. They'd come down from the landing, and walk up to the store, and then I used to load the truck and take it down to their boat. They had a small boat that commutes. The stewards can use the boat too, you see. So they come and [*purchase*] the stuff, and I take it down to them.

WN: So were you happy when you didn't have to go to military bases anymore?

MA: Well, the going around was enjoyable for me, because I never liked to stay in the store, you know. I (chuckles) rather *stay go* outside. So I used to enjoy that outside, meet all the

family, ladies and—you can hear all kinds of stuff, the ladies tell you [*about*] the military.

(Laughter)

MA: But I never carry what we talk, you see, that's one reason they used to tell me more, I guess.

(Laughter)

MA: Those women, they knew all about what the movement of the military is, you'd be surprised, boy. Things like having a special maneuver like that, you know. You see them every morning, so they get so used to it, and they want to chitchat a lot too. And they sometimes knew everything. Oh, I used to know all what the movement of the military was (chuckles).

WN: This was before the war, though.

MA: Before the war, yes. But those are all military stuff that you shouldn't go out and talk about.

WN: So after the war started, you had to, you were more or less staying in the store.

MA: Oh yes.

WN: People came to you, instead.

MA: Yes.

WN: I see. I see. And you told me one time that—oh, first of all, what became of the Japanese that lived on the peninsula? You know, who were working as the yardboys for the richer families?

MA: Oh, they were—I don't know. There were lot of work, all kinds, because short of men. So I don't know what they were doing. I know one of my friends was living across the street. He was working for Dr. [*Arthur*] Hodgins. Then when the war started, he quit and I think he came home and he started to do laundry. Oh boy, those defense workers like that, was living over there, all bachelors. He was doing good, doing laundry, right at home, you know. He made a fortune, too.

WN: Tell me something about those defense workers. You said after the war started they started coming in to the peninsula?

MA: Yes. All these bachelors used to get together, maybe four or five of them in one house.

WN: Oh. And these were houses formerly . . .

MA: Family used to live in them.

WN: Richer families?

MA: Well, they had lot of other cottages, rental units, that the military personnel was living in. Like from navy, naval air station, those sailors. And some, even from Hickam, some of them was living there. But most of them was navy. Ford Island and [*Pearl Harbor Navy Yard*].

WN: So you could say that the population of the peninsula increased quite a bit.

MA: Oh yes, increased. There were lot of Filipinos.

WN: Oh yeah?

MA: Filipino defense workers. I think the majority of the place was filled with Filipinos. They quit the plantation and they worked for the navy and the army, like that, defense work.

WN: And they rented houses over there too?

MA: Yes, they rented houses.

WN: And they came to your store too?

MA: Oh yes, they were patronizing our place too. So the business kind of changed, more into Oriental goods.

WN: Oh, like what?

MA: Well, the Filipinos, they go [*for*] rice and whatnot.

WN: Oh, you didn't have rice before?

MA: Oh, we had rice too, but we didn't sell too much rice because majority of our trade was with the *Haole* people.

WN: So before the war, when most of the trade was with *Haoles*, you'd sell like, what, can goods and . . .

MA: Can goods, vegetables, meat. We had meat too. Well, mostly can goods and stuff.

WN: And then, when the war started, and Filipinos were coming in, it was rice . . .

MA: Different type of trade. Like mostly Oriental goods. Yeah, war sure can change things.

WN: There were a lot of bachelors. Defense workers from the Mainland came too.

MA: Oh yes.

WN: Were there any problems?

MA: No, we didn't have any.

WN: Between the locals and the Mainland workers?

MA: No, they didn't have no problem, no. Don't look like, anyway.

WN: Seems like, you know, before the war, it was mostly, you know, just Japanese and richer *Haole* people [*living*] in the area. And then, all of a sudden, the war starts and you have . . .

MA: Altogether (different customers).

WN: . . . young *Haole* guys and young Filipino guys, and you know.

MA: *Haole* guys were all from the Mainland, defense workers. But some of the defense workers, some of them was pretty old, older people was coming in too. And they had lot of women workers. And later on the navy built a big barracks-like building for all the women workers.

WN: Where, on the peninsula?

MA: No, that was above Pearl City side. They had one right next to the graveyard. The navy built a big, sort of a barracks-like.

WN: Oh, you mean Pearl City?

MA: Yes, way above. Then they used to come down. They had several big warehouses on the peninsula too, during the war and after the war. So they were there, even after the war, for a long time, they were there. They built two or three big warehouses right on the waterfront.

WN: Now, were there like price controls for you folks?

MA: Oh yes, we had the price controls. But that was before the war. National Recovery Act, that's when we had the price controls.

WN: Oh, in the thirties?

MA: Yes.

WN: But there wasn't a . . .

MA: During the war there wasn't. But the price was mostly, I think it was a set price, though. There was a price control, I think, yes. They did have price control during the war. You cannot sell merchandise for whatever price you want, you know.

WN: So these defense workers, they lived on the peninsula, and then they worked in, say,

Hickam or Pearl Harbor. So they drove?

MA: I think they drove. I guess they drove over there. Most likely, I think, they were driving, commuting. I guess they, guy have a car and they get passengers to fill the car and go to work together.

WN: Okay. And then, you said, later on, during the war, the navy took over some of the land in the peninsula?

MA: Yes, after the war. We were negotiating during the war, towards the end. And when they finally took over, that was right after the war [*ended*].

WN: But what about that waterfront parcel that you folks had?

MA: Oh, that was condemned long time ago.

WN: Tell me about that.

MA: Did I tell you about the guys went in there and cut the trees all down?

WN: Why don't you tell me that story. This was right after the war started.

MA: Yes.

WN: And you folks had a parcel of land near the waterfront.

MA: Yes. So they went in there and chopped all the trees down and cleared it up. Then this guy from the court, I don't know what you call it. Anyway, he came down and said, "We're going to condemn your land over there. The navy wants it."

Before this guy came down, one of our friends was living right next to that vacant lot, and she said, "The navy took your land over there."

I says, "No, not that I know of."

And then she said, "Well, no more trees already. It's all cut down. It's level already. They got the bulldozer, the land is all level up already."

WN: Where were you folks at that time?

MA: Oh we were in Pearl City, same place.

WN: How far away was that land from your place?

MA: Well, that was one block below, near the waterfront side. (Our home was next to the store building.)

WN: You didn't know they were bulldozing.

MA: I didn't know. And so after she told me, I drove down and I saw the whole place all cleared up. And then, this guy from the court said, "We're going to condemn that place."

So I told him, "You going to condemn the place? You already went in my property already, cleared up the property." Then he want me to sign that. I said, "No, I'm not going to sign until my brother come home from town."

So as soon as he came home, I said, "This guy is waiting." I said, "Want to condemn the place." But I said, "This morning, they went in there and they cleared all the trees already. It's all level already."

WN: How big was the property?

MA: That was two lots over there, so it's about a half a acre. Sort of a triangle-shape lot, and the roadside was wide, but towards the backside, it kind of narrowed. Was on the corner. Aloha Avenue and Coral Avenue. And so I told him [*brother*], "But they went in there already," I said. "These guys are trespassing, because it wasn't signed and it's not signed yet, see. They're trespassing our property, we can sue them." (Chuckles)

He look at me, he says, "You want to go Sand Island?"

(Laughter)

WN: You mean internment?

MA: Internment.

(Laughter)

MA: So I said, "Okay, then you go in and sign it." (Laughs) Oh shucks. That was one, I never will forget.

WN: So that person was from the military court?

MA: No, he was from the judiciary.

WN: Oh, Office of the [*Military Governor*], I mean, was martial law, though, then.

MA: That time, yes.

WN: So did you get anything for that land?

MA: Well, we got less than what we paid for. It was condemned. After that, when the navy finally took over all of the [*Pearl City*] Peninsula, it was sort of a negotiated deal. We talked about it, and then before we went to settle that thing, we hired an appraiser on the land value to fight for it. And we hired this Judge Cooke, he was a retired judge. And he said, "Well, the best thing is you got to get an appraiser to go to court, you know."

What they were trying to give us was, we thought was not enough, so we hired him. And then we got this man to appraise the property. And at that time, he says, "If the waterfront side wasn't taken already by the navy, we could fight for regular market price. At that time, I think the market price around there was about twenty-five cents a square foot. And so he said, "To go to court, we can fight for twenty-five cents." But he says he doubt it because the outside [*i.e.*, *waterfront*] is all been taken up [*by the military*]. He said maybe you going to end up with ten cents a square foot, or maybe a little better. But he said we can fight for twenty-five cents.

WN: This is for the land that your store was on and everything, your house?

MA: Yes, we had quite a bit. Next to the store we had about five lots, that was about acre and a quarter. Altogether, it was about three acres of land, I think, with the home and the store and another vacant lot, you know. Then we had two lots, back of our place. My father bought that two lots, and then he had four rental cottages on. But my father had rheumatism, he was laid up for over six months, or maybe more. Then finally the doctors recommended said, "The best thing for you is go to hot spring." So he decided to go back to Japan. And that was in . . .

WN: Just before the war?

MA: Yes, that was in November '41. And soon as he went back over there, and then the war started in December. So he was stuck in Japan for over three years. But all that land too.

WN: So, soon after the war started, the navy condemned your waterfront land.

MA: Yes, that was the first one they condemned.

WN: And what about like the [*wealthy families*] and all that? What happened to them?

MA: You see, those people, they could just about give 'em away, because they can write 'em off in taxes. During the war, of course they feel that, well, they can write it off. So they probably gave it away, I don't know. But looks like they [*navy*] didn't pay too much, 'cause those big shots they get so much income, that it was good chance to don't pay tax. Maybe it was cheaper for them. If they sold at high price, and then they still gotta pay tax on top of it. They figure, well if they give it away, they can write it off. So they didn't care.

WN: Were you folks the only Japanese landowners in the peninsula?

MA: No, there were quite a bit of Japanese families.

WN: So they all had to negotiate sales?

MA: Yes, negotiate.

WN: This was when, '46? After the war ended.

MA: After the war ended, '45 or '46. Then after we negotiated, we rented from the navy, we were living. We stayed there over three years.

WN: Oh, I see.

MA: And we were trying to relocate, and we were looking all over the place. And we couldn't find a place to go. And lot of people, the Japanese families especially, they went to Wai`anae side. And they bought land in Wai`anae. Wai`anae was cheap. But we figure if we still want to run a store, we wanted to get into a community where you can open a store. Like, you go to Wai`anae, not enough houses in those days yet. So it wasn't suitable for us, so we didn't go to Wai`anae, you know. And we were trying to look all over, and for a while we went looking downtown side too, and Kuli`ou`ou way too. But we couldn't find property that we want, so we finally gave up that side. And then we start looking this [Windward] side, and one day—at first, we were looking for a home, you know. And if we get a place where we can find a house suitable enough, and then we go see where we can open business. And before, Marshall Wright—his father used to be mayor [Fred Wright]—he was a real estate agent over here. So we saw him and then, after long time, Marshall Wright said, “Oh, you want a good big house, I have one on Kainalu.”

And so we went to look for it. And he says, “You know this house was built by this guy, Kuntz, he's a German spy.” His house, it was, two-story building.

So my brother said, “I think this is a pretty good deal, you know.”

Oh, the property is big. He still lives over there. And there were two cottages, one in the front, and the front house is a big house, two story, and then there was another—what they call it—guest house. Was a good-size house, too. And so, he bought that. And then we all lived together for a while up there. And I was living upstairs and he was downstairs.

And before we bought that place, we told Marshall Wright that we want a business property. He had one business property [available] on Oneawa Street. And he said, “Oh, I have one lot over there.”

I don't know how much we paid. Anyway, we had one lot over there. So we bought that one lot, and then he bought that house in Kainalu.

WN: So in '48 you moved, late '47, '48, you moved out here to Kailua. I was wondering, was business pretty good throughout the war, at the peninsula?

MA: Oh yes.

WN: And then what about when the war ended and then you folks were renting from the military, was business still doing good?

MA: Not as good as wartime, no, but was pretty good. But we feel that we don't own anything anymore, and we had to rent from the navy, so if we stay there too long, we going to give 'em all back in rent. So we thought we better relocate and buy our own land, and so finally we moved this side.

WN: So people, after the war ended, they started moving out, you know, the defense workers and so forth?

MA: Oh yes, start to. Then lot of the old-timers living over there, they had to sell their homes, so some moved to `Aiea and Halawe Valley, and some went to Wai`anae, they all scattered after that.

WN: Okay, so, and all through the war, nobody, there was no problems being Japanese or anything?

MA: Yes, we didn't feel that much.

WN: Okay, so then '48, you folks moved to Kailua and started the Oneawa Market?

MA: Yes, Oneawa Market.

WN: So you kept the same wholesalers and things like that? Or did you change?

MA: Oh yes, we change it to entirely different business.

WN: So the market that I see now, that's your old market, Oneawa Market?

MA: But that one, when we started, we had only one lot, so the store was kind of small. And half of it was warehouse in the back, and then half in the front was a store. And then we wanted to buy the next lot, there was one more vacant lot, and we wanted to buy that place, and we was looking for the owner. This fellow, Chinese fellow, he still live over there. That property was for sale after a while, and he had the listing. And that Chinese fellow said, "Don't you want to buy that lot? I have the listing."

And so my brother was saying, "We'd like to buy, but how much you want for it?"

And he said, oh, he gotta consult with the owner. The owner actually lived in Hilo. But his nephew was working at [Theo H.] Davies.

And about the same time, he met this nephew in Davies, and this nephew said, "You know, next to your store over there, my uncle owns that, and he wants to sell it. Why don't you buy it?"

So he said, "Oh yeah, I'd like to buy it."

And then, when we started to talk, the uncle that owned the property said that he gave this agent, I don't know how many days, I think 90 or 120 days time limit. And anyway, he had 60 more days on his contract. So he said, "If we negotiate between ourselves, I can come down little bit, and then still I can save money," on what he has to pay. So he said, "Why don't you wait, and in the meantime, if anybody wants to buy the place, I'm gonna boost the price up so he won't get it, but my price is this," he set the price. And we wait till the time lapse, you know. So after the [60] days was over, then we deal directly through the

Bank of Hawai`i, the Hilo branch bank, and that's how we got out of paying the commission to the real estate agent. So he came out all right and we came out good, too.

WN: I was wondering, you know, before the war started, you had the business and you folks were going out. Then the war came and you folks couldn't go out and deliver, but you folks made good. I was wondering, what do you think would have happened if the war never came?

MA: Probably do the same thing.

(Laughter)

MA: The military too, it's not bad, you know. They were really friendly. You know, families. Actually they were happy to have somebody that they can rely on. I used to go out and sometime they say, "I really need this thing for my party, don't fail me now."

I says, "Whatever I'm taking the order, I won't fail you."

So once they get to know you, they depend more on you. And, what I cannot fill, I'll just tell them right off, "No, I cannot take this order, because I won't be able to." And make sure that what I'm selling is guaranteed I'm going to deliver. That way you get more trusted. Lot of times, I used to deliver, and sometimes get so much order put out that I get real late. I know, on December 6, [*Pearl Harbor Navy Yard*] was my first stop, I got out of navy yard half past seven [7:30] that night, after I got through delivering. I still have Hickam Field and Makalapa area, I had all that area to deliver yet. So from the navy yard, I went straight up to Makalapa, and I delivered all Makalapa and coming down. And that's when the next morning, the war started.

And funny thing, you know, I was delivering to the admiral's quarter that night, and these admirals they have their own official cars. And this admiral was going to a party, and the chauffeur, the sailor, was outside waiting for him to come out. I went in and my helper took the stuff inside, and I was outside in the truck. And was talking with this sailor, and he said, "The admiral is going to town." I don't know, someplace in town, anyway, some hotel in Waikiki. So he says, "I don't know what time I'm going come home. Probably three, four o'clock in the morning, but don't say anything," he was telling me. (Laughs)

But after the war started, there were all kinds of (rumors). Because I talked with the sailor, I knew where he was going, but after the war started, December 7, when it came out in the paper, [it said that] he was supposed to be having a party in the navy yard. That's how funny things goes. What you know where he was and what the paper say, you know. He don't want to say that he was in the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, or wherever his party was, so he says he was at the navy yard, officers' club or something. That's what the paper said. So I start laughing to myself, you know, how funny things can turn, you know.

WN: This was the admiral?

MA: Admiral, yes.

WN: This is [*Husband E.*] Kimmel?

MA: Kimmel, yes.

WN: Yeah. He was at the Royal Hawaiian or Halekulani, or something. Was it Halekulani?

MA: I don't know where he was, but he went to a party in a hotel.

WN: So do you think about your days at the peninsula?

MA: Oh yes, once in a while. But now they don't let you go down there. But every once in a while I used to go down. The last time I went down there, well, the place next to the store, they knock all the building down, there wasn't any more building there. And my father planted lot of fruit trees, and had lot of mango trees. And the mango tree is still there.

WN: Yeah?

MA: Yeah. But we had big monkeypod tree in the back. That monkeypod tree was still there.

WN: When was this?

MA: Oh, this is quite a number of years already. I think I didn't go down there for the last ten years already.

WN: What do they use that area for now, do you know?

SA: It's built up into park, I think.

MA: That area?

WN: A park? [*A baseball field for military personnel.*]

MA: They made into a park.

WN: For the military?

MA: Yes, the kids, playground. The mango tree is still there and the place is nice and grassy.

WN: You mean, it doesn't have buildings used for storage or anything like that?

MA: Well, the storage is all around the waterfront, where they can bring the ship alongside. So. . . . That place, I think they can dock a ship right alongside, all around.

WN: Oh.

MA: They dug it, dredged it all out.

WN: You mean after the war.

MA: After the war. I know, even aircraft carrier was docked out there.

WN: A big change from your days, I guess . . .

MA: Yeah.

WN: . . . with the store. Well, okay, I think that's all.

MA: Okay.

WN: Thank you very much for your time.

END OF INTERVIEW