MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Kazue Iwahara Uyeda at the Center for Oral History office in Mānoa, Honolulu, O'ahu on May 6, 1993. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

We're going to start the interview, then, by my concentrating on your mother, Ryo Shishido Iwahara. And first of all, I want to know when and where your mother was born.

KU: My mother was born [November 9, 1893] in Koi, Hiroshima-ken.

MK: And what number child was she in her family?

KU: She was the eldest one in the family. And she had two brothers and a younger sister. The two brothers are deceased. And I still have that aunt living in Kure, Japan.

MK: And, you know, what have you heard from your mother about her family's history?

KU: I understand that her father was in education. He taught school. And so, her two brothers also went into education and they became schoolteachers. My mother went to Yamanaka Kōto Jogakkō in Hiroshima. But while she was at Yamanaka Jogakkō, (her) father was transferred to Taiwan (for) some kind of diplomatic job. So he moved the family there. My mother went to Taiwan no Taihoku Daiichi Kōto Jogakkō, which is still existing. When I ask some of the students from Taiwan that come to my shop [Uyeda Shoe Store in Mo'ili'ili] about Taihoku Daiichi Kōto Jogakkō, they say, "Oh, that's the most prestigious school and it's still existing." And my mother was dairoku kisei. That means that she was a sixth-year graduate. I have (a few of the) pamphlets that my mother kept. I think the school sent her news and whatnot occasionally. It was lying around but I don't know what happened to them. I just have a few copies at home.

My grandfather on Iwahara side came for her as soon as she graduated jogakkō, (and) brought her to Hawaiʻi.

MK: What was the relationship between the Shishido family and the Iwahara family?

KU: What I've (been) told is, (that) her father and my father's mother were brothers and sisters. In other words, they were first cousins. So I guess their marriage must have been arranged,
You know, you mentioned that your mother’s father was an educator. He was in diplomatic service. And how about your mother’s mother? What have you heard about your mother’s mother?

I guess she was an ordinary housewife, but I hear she was a very strict mother. Very meticulous. (Chuckles) In fact, she [KU’s mother] told me she couldn’t understand why I would wear my shoes and my geta all crooked because her mom was very strict about [that] (chuckles). I’m her granddaughter and (yet) (chuckles) I (used to be) so sloppy. She just couldn’t understand. My mom used to say such things and we always had a good laugh about it.

Your mother had kind of a strict upbringing from your grandmother?

Yes, I think so, uh huh. So she was very meticulous, too, in lots of ways.

You know, in those days, what kind of things did your mother learn at school in those days?

She was surprised when she told me that they even had tennis. She played tennis in school, which I hardly did, you know. So, she was brought (up) in a kind of modern (way) for that era, yeah? She was very oshare, too. So, she had (nice) clothes, (and they) were kind of very up-to-date. (Chuckles) Haikara, I would say.

Was she was very Westernized, then, your mother? Was she very Westernized?

Well, I think so. I have some old photographs and snapshots in our family album. When she first came here, naturally, most of them wore kimono and she had those high [Japanese-style] headgear. But I think she became Westernized and her hairdress was kind of very modern. She had those ear puffs. You know, those days, the young women used to have the hairdo with the puff on the ear. She had nice clothes, too.

Your mother came here in 1911 in an arranged marriage. What feelings did your mother express to you later on about coming to Hawai‘i this way?

I guess things were taken for granted. So, I really (wouldn’t) know. But from what I remember, my parents hardly quarreled. They must have had differences in opinion, naturally, so they may have quarreled without me knowing. But in front of the children, I have never heard them arguing. And she hardly spanked us. Although I remember when I was naughty, she told me to make okotowari. And later she (punished me with) yaito. (Laughs) That’s about all I (can) remember, but in those days the parents didn’t (spank) their children as we do now. I think they were very patient with their children’s upbringing.

When she first came to Hawai‘i, she must have had to go through a lot of inspections and preparations to come to Hawai‘i. Did she ever talk about all the things she had to go through in order to come to Hawai‘i on her way to Hawai‘i?

No. But I (do) know she brought a lot of yomeiridōgu, I think. Because she had a lot of, you know, those silk omeshi kimonos and whatnot, which were considered very expensive. But I
guess, (in) those days, the parents felt that (they should) provide their daughters with (enough) clothing that they (could) make use (of them in) future years, so I still remember (she) had a lot of *jimina*, very dull-looking designed (chuckles) kimonos.

MK: From the time that your mother came?

KU: Mm hmm.

MK: Did your mother ever share with you what she first thought about your dad when she first came to Hawai‘i?

KU: (Chuckles) She just told me that my father was a hardworking, honest (chuckles). . . . What should I say? I guess his interests were more in business, but, later on, he took (up) hobby in photography. (Then) later went into taking movies. I still remember when I was in (the) elementary grade, he took interest in shortwave radio. He would try to listen to shortwave radio from Japan, you know. But they could catch it only in the wee hours of the night, so they had to stay up very late. (Laughs)

MK: Your dad was a very serious businessman . . .

KU: I think so, he was more of a serious type of a person, (but then) he was very kind and gentle. I still remember my dad coming to pick (us) up—you know, in Japanese[-language] school, (when it) started raining, he would come and pick all of us. And plus, a few (other) neighbor’s children. Just packed the car full of kids (laughs), (to) give them a ride home. He was a very kindhearted person.

MK: I was wondering, going back to your mother, when she first came to Hawai‘i, what did she think of Hawai‘i when she first set foot in the islands?

KU: Gee, I’ve never asked her those questions, but I guess she must have thought the climate was (nice) and comfortable. And since my father was a good provider, she must have been quite happy, compared to (other) people who had to go to the plantation and work hard throughout their lives. I think she felt that she was very fortunate in getting married to a businessman. Although, you know, those days, she told me that they had to keep the shop open till twelve midnight. Their store was, as you know, (right) in front of that O‘ahu Railway [and Land Co.] station (and) the last train would leave the station at twelve midnight. And (so) when they heard the whistle blow, they would say, “Oh, it’s time to close shop.” (And) that’s (when) they closed.

Do you know why they were open? Because they used to sell not only hardware (but) had provisions for everyday supply like miso, shoyu [shōyu], and (other) groceries. So the people would come in to buy all those supplies, and then board the train and go back to their homes. Plantations (were) in Waipahu and ‘Aiea and all those areas. And the only means of transportation was by train those days.

MK: So even though she didn’t come as a plantation worker’s wife, her hours were still long.

KU: (Yes,) that’s right. (Then later on my father’s younger brother [Masuto Iwahara] arrived from
Japan and as he was quite young he attended Royal School. He later took a bride from Japan and that is how my mom and aunt [Tokyo Iwahara] started working together to help the business [Iwahara Shōten] going.

MK: You know, we've sort of gotten into your father's family. Your father, Taketo Iwahara, came to Hawai'i earlier than your mother. He came in 1907, yeah?

KU: I think so, yes.

MK: Can you tell me when and where he was born?

KU: He was also born in Koi-machi, Hiroshima. The Iwahara and the Shishido families were all (living) in Koi-machi, Koi village, in those days.

MK: And what year was he born?

KU: (He was born in 1890, [January 2, 1890] the year of the tiger.)

MK: And what number was he in his family?

KU: My father had only (younger) brother. So there were only two sons in the Iwahara Kurataro family.

MK: Your father's family, what do you know about his family's background in Japan?

KU: They were, what you call (big) farmers (that) had lots of Kosakunin working under them. So, they were kind of well off and owned properties around that area. I guess my grandfather, Kurataro, came here with some capital (that his father had given him) to do business. Whereas, most families were just brought in as plantation workers. So, in that sense, my grandfather was very fortunate that he was able to bring some capital to start off the business.

MK: I don't know if you would know, but why did Kurataro-san leave Koi-machi to come to Hawai'i?

KU: I guess, (in) those days, it was sort of a fad (and) it was (also) some kind of an adventure. He didn't want to farm, perhaps. (Laughs) So, I guess (that) made him decide trying out doing business. My great-grandfather (seemed to have) encouraged him (and) gave him some capital to take along.

MK: So Kurataro Iwahara, your grandfather, came from Hiroshima to Hawai'i as a businessman.

KU: (Yes,) that's right.

MK: When he did that, your father was . . .

KU: Still in Japan.

MK: And who took care of your father in Japan?
KU: (His) mother. I guess the mother was back home to take care of her children and only Kurataro came here and worked singly, I think.

MK: During the time that Kurataro-san was in Hawai‘i, did he have a lot of contact with your father in Japan?

KU: I understand he used to go back and forth to Japan because he had some other relatives (here) whom he (had) asked to come from Japan. And while he was on his trip, the relatives would take care of the business.

MK: While Grandfather Kurataro was in Hawai‘i, your father, Taketo Iwahara, was being raised in Koi-machi and he also went to school there.

KU: (Yes,) that’s right.

MK: How much schooling did he get in Japan?

KU: I think he graduated chūgakkō, and as soon as he did, he came here.

MK: Did his mother ever come to Hawai‘i, too?

KU: I don’t think so. I’m not sure, but I don’t think she came here.

MK: So, when your father was being brought over to Hawai‘i, do you know how he felt about it?

KU: (laughs) I really wouldn’t know.

MK: Did he ever tell you how he felt about that time?

KU: I guess (in) those days, they just (obeyed and acted) only according to (their) parents’ wishes, so I (really) wouldn’t know (how he felt).

MK: So, when your father came to Hawai‘i, your grandfather, Kurataro Iwahara, already had a business. What kind of business did he have?

KU: He had more (or less) a general store. They carried all sorts of household wares, hardware, (and) even miso, shoyu, and those foodstuffs.

MK: Where was Kurataro Iwahara’s business located when your father first came?

KU: It was in that ‘A‘ala area, I’m quite sure. Because I’ve never heard of them living elsewhere aside from ‘A‘ala area.

MK: When you say the “‘A‘ala area,” was it in the building that you remember or was it in the earlier building?

KU: You mean, when my father (first) came?

MK: Mm hmm [yes].
KU: Oh, it was in the earlier, the old building (because) I remember my mom telling me (that) they had to go to a temporary housing while the building was being built. So at that time, when my mom (first) came here, the old building was existing.

MK: You mentioned that the Iwahara Shōten at that time had housewares, hardwares, provisions like miso, shoyu, and other things. Now, who were the customers in those old times that came to Iwahara Shōten?

KU: Oh, I guess, (a lot of local people as) most of them knew Iwahara Shōten. And especially, plantation people (who needed to shop for supplies at a convenient store near the train station).

MK: In those early days, who worked in Iwahara Shōten? Now, this would be the time when your dad came over and when your mom just married. Who did you hear worked in the store?

KU: Gee, I'm not sure, but some of the relatives were there, like my grandfather's younger brother, (and) they must have had other hired people. That I wouldn't know because it was before I was born. But as a child, I remember Nobuhara no oji-san (and) his son, Jukichi-san, (who) worked for our store for close to thirty years.

And we had (Tsuda) Takao-san. We have an old snapshot. I was just a little child, maybe about two or three years old. And Takao-san was carrying me, you know. (Chuckles) He was perhaps about fifteen or sixteen years old. He worked at our store for close to thirty years, too, until the shop was confiscated [in 1944]. And we had (a) few more others.

We had Hirai-san, (Yoshito) Baba-san, Oba-san, (another) Hirai-san, Tarui-san. And then we had oba-san that helped us cook and wash. From my childhood (days), we had three or four oba-san that came and worked for us for a number of years. Some of them had to go back to Japan, but the last one, Mrs. Otoide, stayed with our family for about fifteen years.

MK: So there were a number of people who worked in Iwahara Shōten from early on . . .

KU: Yes, that's right.

MK: . . . when you were a child, and maybe even before you were born then, there were some people there.

KU: That's right. Because not long ago—I would say (perhaps) about five years ago, two ladies came to (my shop and told me) that when they were very young, they had worked for my mother. And I said, "Oh, is that so?" (Laughs)

MK: A number of employees. You know, in those early days, I don't know if you would know, but what did your dad do in the Iwahara Shōten store? What was his job?

KU: Oh, my father was . . .

MK: Just when he was real young when your grandfather was still there.

KU: Oh, I guess to learn the trade, he worked as a clerk. And I guess he (also) learned how to do
some (merchandise) ordering. You know, *chūmon-tori*, those days, would come (and later on) when I was in elementary grade. I used to see a lot of (them sitting by) my father’s desk (to fill out the orders).

MK: How about your mother? Like you mentioned that your mother remembered the store being opened till twelve midnight. What did she do in the store when she first married your father?

KU: I guess she helped around. Being a housewife, she had to do her daily chores around the (home), and then help. (Where) people ran businesses, like husband and wife’s business, the wife (had) to be part of the store, you know, taking care of the customers (as well as keeping things in order). So I guess my mom and aunt, who was my mother’s sister-in-law, helped around.

MK: You know, when Iwahara Shōten was in that old building, did the Iwaharas live in that building?

KU: When I was a child, we had a home in [the] Kuakini [area]. And that house is still standing in Huli Lane. It’s located right in front of the childrens’ hospital [Kauikeolani Children’s Hospital] in Kuakini. Well, considering those days, it was a pretty nice home. It had a nice veranda and a yard, plants and trees. (Chuckles) And my neighbor was the Kusunoki family. The Kusunokis lived across my place. (In) those days, the neighbors were very neighborly. I mean, they helped each other. They were very friendly. So I still have nostalgic memories of my younger days associating with the Kusunoki family.

MK: So, you think that in the early days your mom and dad lived outside of ‘A‘ala and went into ‘A‘ala to work? Commuted?

KU: Commuted. (Yes,) after they closed the shop, they would pack all of us in the car (and) take us (back) home. And early the following morning while we were still sleepy, they would wrap us in warm—we used to call that *tanzen*, you know, those *wataire no* (warm jacketlike clothing as it was rather chilly in the early morning). (They would then pack us in the car and go to ‘A‘ala to open shop bright and early at seven o’clock.)

MK: So the early years, it used to be seven o’clock in the morning till twelve o’clock?

KU: No, not (at) that time. When they were open (until) twelve o’clock, it must (have been) way before the time I was born. I guess they decided (on) getting (a) house (and) built a home in Kuakini. So my parents and my uncle and aunt (lived together) in Kuakini (for several years).

(Do) you know what I remember? On our way home, we would stop by that Darumaya [Fruit and Fountain] and pick up fruits (or) whatever and then go back home to Kuakini. I guess they enjoyed their (laughs) free time eating the fruits and (snacks). My parents were very fond of fruits. That’s what I remember.

MK: You know, you mentioned in the early days in the old ‘A‘ala Rengō, you had Iwahara Shōten and the Suga Saloon, yeah?

KU: Mm hmm.
MK: Now, can you kind of imagine the stores or kind of remember what you’ve been told about the stores in the old ‘A‘ala Rengō. What other businesses were there?

KU: No, I really (wouldn’t know). In fact, I was (surprised) to (find) that [photo post] card coming out from an old family album. I thought, “My, what’s this?” you know. And that’s how I found out (that) the Suga Saloon was right next to our store.

MK: What do you remember being told about the Suga Saloon? You were just sharing some history about the people who ran it.

KU: I didn’t know anything about it, as I told you. (But when I saw that photo card, I remembered my Uyeda mother-in-law who came from Tanna village telling me about the Sumida family and that Sumida and Uyeda families were next-door neighbors in Tanna. Now Tajiro-san who happened to be the oldest son of the Sumida family came to Hawai‘i to help his aunt who operated the Suga Saloon next door to Iwahara Shōten. Then later on after the Sugas built their fortune they left for Japan. Tajiro-san who had learned the trade at Suga Saloon went independent and started his own business and later built the Yamano-sakeya [Honolulu Sake Brewery and Ice Co., Ltd.] in Pauoa. Later on he called his younger brother Daizo from Tanna to carry on and left for Japan to start other businesses.)

MK: So the Sumida Sake Brewery [Honolulu Sake Brewery and Ice Co., Ltd.], the roots go back to the Suga Saloon that was next door to Iwahara Shōten . . .

KU: Well, in other words, Tajiro-san had learned the trade from his aunt, who ran that Suga Saloon.

MK: Have you heard about any other business that was in that original building?

KU: No, not at all, as I told you. I was so surprised to find that picture, you know.

MK: What happened to that original building? What have you heard about that old building?

KU: That part, I really wouldn’t know. (But from what I’ve heard, that old building probably was moved to the Pālama area.)

MK: I think you were telling me that when the building was transferred to the Pālama area, your Uyeda family had a store there later on?

KU: No, no. They weren’t even in business yet. My father-in-law, Uyeda Saijiro, worked for Tajiro-san. In fact, he was just a delivery boy, (delivering) wine and sake and all that. A lot of people that came from Hiroshima worked for this Sumida no Tajiro-san, and after working there for several years, some of them would decide going on their own and one of them was my father-in-law. Someone had told him, "Oh, why don’t you go into shoe business because it’s a good business, lucrative business." So he went on his own and started a small shop on Fort Street. They stayed on Fort Street for a number of years, about seventeen years, and then moved to King Street. So it was many years later that they moved up to that Pālama area.

MK: And then, when they moved to that Pālama area, was that the old building?
KU: I think it was the old building.

MK: Now, you know, you mentioned the family used to go to Darumaya, which was one of the businesses in ‘A’ala, not in the ‘A’ala Rengō building but in the ‘A’ala area.

KU: It was on King Street, (directly) across from O‘ahu Railway (near Iwilei Road. Darumaya was operated by the Kenjo family and they were in partnership with Mr. Tadao Yashima).

MK: What kind of goods did Darumaya sell?

KU: Oh, mainly fruits. It was just like a fruit stand. And they also had ice cream, and soft drinks. They had a fountain, (too). And Mr. Yashima, I understand, was (an excellent syrup) maker. He would make, you know, those flavors to pour on the shave ice and (ice cream). I hear he was (an expert) making those flavors. Strawberry, orange, and lime, and whatnot. (Laughs)

MK: You know, in that area that Darumaya had their business, were there other businesses near Darumaya?

KU: Oh, (yes).

MK: What kind of businesses?

KU: As far as I can remember, the corner was a Chinese butcher shop. And then, [Yashima’s] Darumaya. Next door to Yashima was a Chinese drugstore, I think. And next to the drugstore (was) Tamane shirtnaker [Kosaburo Tamane]. And there were a number of Chinese clothing shops and lots of drugstores. And at the very tail end, you know, where King and Beretania would meet, there was a furniture store, which later turned into a pawnshop. I guess they were all (doing well).

MK: So, when your mom and dad were running the business way back when there were Japanese and Chinese businesses then in ‘A’ala?

KU: Oh, (yes). When I was a child, the next-door neighbor was this Sun Loy [Dry Goods], Mrs. Chang used to run this business. Mrs. Chang was the sister of Mr. Ah Wah Wong who (was known) as the mayor of Chinatown. And one of Mrs. Chang’s sons is Clarence Chang who is an M.D., a medical doctor. They had a lot of brothers and sisters.

MK: You had mentioned earlier that there was the older ‘A’ala Rengō building that Iwahara Shōten was in, yeah? The older building?

KU: Mm hmm.

MK: And then your mother said that she remembers they had to find temporary quarters elsewhere until the new building was built. So what I want to do now is ask you about the different businesses that were in the newer ‘A’ala Rengō building that you remember when you were a small girl. You were just saying that the Sun Loy [Dry Goods] was there up to . . .

KU: About 1928. And then, the next shop . . .
MK: And then you expanded, yeah?

KU: Yes, that's right. Sun Loy decided to quit, so my father took (over) that store. I mean, he enlarged it.

MK: I know that you were born in 1917. So if you can just kind of recall in your memory the stores that you saw when you were very young. Try and tell me the stores that you saw in ‘A’ala Rengo.

KU: Okay. (Now,) the first one (was) my next-door neighbor, Sun Loy Dry Goods store. And next was a Chinese restaurant. I can’t remember the name, but it was a very busy restaurant because there weren’t too many restaurants around that area. And next was Kawano’s Aloha Curio. That’s Hideo Kawano’s parents. Mr. and Mrs. Isomatsu Kawano were the owners there. And next was Awamura’s Heiwa-Do. But before Mr. [Tokuyoshi] Awamura came there, there were about two other people who ran that store. One of them was Fujitani. . . . If I can remember (correctly, that was Fujitani that had) that jewelry store. And next was another Chinese men’s shop. Mr. Chow—I don’t remember the [first] name, but Mr. [Richard] Chow, the son of that owner, (has become) quite a well-known businessman. I remember him as a grown man. I mean, he used to come around to my shop [Uyeda Shoe Store] to sell us shoes.

MK: You’ve given me a good list of all of the businesses that were there. You mentioned the Sun Loy store run by the . . .

KU: Mrs. Chang. Mrs. Chang passed away not too long ago, you know.

MK: What did this store carry?

KU: Oh, men’s shirts, pants. Oh, they had a big variety of men’s clothing. Ties, and handkerchiefs. A regular men’s store. And they had coats, too, I think. Jackets and whatnot.

MK: Who were their customers?
KU: Well, I guess ordinary people. (But) a lot of Filipinos used to patronize them. (I’ve heard that Filipino young men liked to dress up but with their meager earnings one man alone couldn’t afford a suit of his own so they pooled together to buy one outfit and shared with friends, taking turns and then went dating (laughs). And because there was a big Filipino community in [the] Iwilei area near the Dole cannery, Sun Loy must have had a lot of Filipino trade.)

MK: How about because they’re Chinese, did they have a Chinese trade coming through their store?

KU: I don’t think so. I don’t think the Chinese in those days used to dress up much.

MK: Then the Chinese restaurant, what do you remember about that Chinese restaurant?

KU: Oh, they served the regular kind of Western food. And they made the best custard pies. Oh, (how) I used to look forward to weekends for my mom to go and buy the custard pie. You know, it was this thick and the whole pie used to cost (only) about thirty-five or forty cents. But those days, thirty-five, forty cents was big money. So, on Saturdays, (or) over the weekends, we would beg my mother (to), “Buy us some pie.”

MK: So even if it was a Chinese-run restaurant, the food that was served there was . . .

KU: Western. (Yes,) stews, and curries, and the same kind of (menus) that we still have, (like steaks,) and (also) they used to serve a lot of frogs. You know, they kept a frog pen in the back of (the restaurant).

MK: Were they live frogs?

KU: Oh, naturally. (Yes,) live frogs. And we used to take a peek. (Chuckles) (And they made the best ham sandwich for only ten cents. They would toast the bread on the big grill and fry the ham on the side with an iron placed on top to keep it from curling. I tell you they were the best tasting ham sandwiches and even to this day I still think they were the best (chuckles).)

MK: Who else used to go to that restaurant, besides, you know, neighborhood . . .

KU: (Well, mostly) working people (and) people walking in that area would just go and stop in for a meal. So they were kind of busy all the time.

MK: And then, how about Kawano’s Aloha Curio. You mentioned it was owned by Isomatsu Kawano. Now, what kinds of things did they sell there?

KU: Oh, they carried mostly curios and omiyage stuff. They carried a lot of coconut ashtrays and tie hangers and (also craft work) made out of koa. And their specialty was the silk lei. I don’t know who originated that silk lei, but they (certainly) sold a lot of silk leis. Mrs. Kawano and her sister, Mrs. Ohta, who happens to be (the 'ukulele player) Ohta-san’s mother (and) Chiyono-san (the shop saleslady) and another (helper), Yano-san, (worked all day making silk leis). They had bolts and bolts of that material (piled up and they would cut them into strips for lei making).

(In those days, for graduation it was customary for friends and relatives to send baskets of
flowers and not only flower leis but silk leis to the graduates. So—Mr. Kawano’s Curio Store really made a killing on those silk leis (Laughs).)

MK: And then, besides people buying leis for graduation, who else used to come to the store?

KU: (Oh, friends of people who were going away on trips. They would offer the leis aboard the ship to bid farewell as there were no planes or airports those days.)

MK: And they had their leis . . .

KU: (Yes,) that’s right. They would give them silk leis. When I went [to Japan], too, I received quite a number of silk leis. But, you know, one thing, they got all smashed. That’s the only setback. (Chuckles) But you could steam it and kind of revive the lei.

MK: Someone had told me that the Kawanos also had a big trade with the fleet when the U.S. Navy fleet would come in.

KU: (Yes, that’s right.) Because the sailors and all those military people would come around and buy curios for souvenirs.

MK: You were telling me that next door to the Kawanos was the Awamura Heiwa-Do.

KU: Heiwa-Do . . .

MK: Before that, you remembered two others . . .

KU: I can’t remember the name, but I think (it) was Fujitani. The older one was—I don’t know. I can’t remember. But definitely, there were two owners, (and the second one was Fujitani).

MK: Was it always a jewelry store?

KU: (Yes.) A watchmaker store. They would repair watches, and clocks. The Awamuras came from Maui when I was in the fifth grade, I think. I still remember Mr. [Tokuyoshi] Awamura already (had) four children (and) he had a nice Naish car. (The oldest daughter was Sa-chan) and the second one was Margaret or Shi-chan, (who later became Dan Inouye’s wife.) And Satoe-san. And I wonder if the fourth child was born (in Maui). No, maybe she was born (in Honolulu). (They may have come) with just three daughters, and the rest were born over here (in Honolulu).

MK: You were mentioning that Heiwa-Do was not just a jewelry store but watch repair?

KU: They had jewelry, too. They sold diamonds and rings and other jewelry, brooches and whatnot. But I guess they did a lot of repair work.

MK: So, in those days, who did the repair work? Awamura-san?

KU: (Yes,) Mr. Awamura did (repairing). And he had about two or three (other) apprentices.

MK: And then, next to the Awamura store was a Chinese men’s shop owned by the Chow family.
Again, what kind of things did they sell?

KU: I think they sold (men’s clothing). Just like Sun Loy.

MK: Same kind of goods?

KU: I think so. And then, maybe they may have had material, too. People would buy the material and have them (made to order)—there were lots of tailor shops, those days.

MK: So, did the Sun Loy shop also have materials . . .

KU: No.

MK: . . . or just ready-made?

KU: (Yes,) mostly ready-made things. They carried a lot of trousers, I remember. We used to play hide-and-seek in between. (Do) you know how they were arranged? They had rows and rows of bars and they would hang the pants over the bars. There was a little space in between (and) being kids, we would play hide-and-seek. We would hide in between. (Laughs)

And even (at) Kawano [Aloha Curio], they had a fountain on one side of the store. They served the best banana split. (And) you know, the kids around (there), including me, would go in there (to scribble on the) stainless steel (counter).

MK: Oh, it mists up so you could draw things on the counter?

KU: (Yes.) And then, Mrs. Ohta and Chiyono-san (would say,) “Ey, you kids! Get out!”

(Laughter)

MK: So, the Kawanos had sort of like an ice cream fountain and the curio business when you were small?

KU: (Yes,) that’s right. Mm hmm.

MK: And then, next to Mr. Chow’s Chinese men’s clothing shop, you had a Chinese-run candy store . . .

KU: (Yes, a) candy store.

MK: . . . with lots of goodies.

KU: Oh, they had lots of varieties of candy.

MK: You were saying that it may have been the largest candy store in Honolulu.

KU: I think so.

MK: What were they selling?
KU: Oh, they had all kinds. Do you know, those red coconut (candy)? They had the hard red coconut (candy), that (were) wrapped individually. They had lemon drops (and many other varieties) of drops. And they also carried crack seed and all kinds of cookies. And they had chocolates, (too). Hershey's chocolates. Oh, they were our favorites.

MK: You mentioned that some of the candies, they manufactured upstairs?

KU: I think so, they did. One of the ladies that did help with (candy making) was a Mrs. Uyeda. She was the mother of Dr. Jack Uyeda, who was a prominent dentist. She was a very active member of Hongwanji (but) just passed away not too long ago at age 102 or 103. She was highly respected.

MK: And she used to help make the candies?

KU: (Yes,) that's (what) I understand.

MK: In those early days?

KU: She was a very hard worker. I (think) her husband was a taxi driver (and) both of them worked hard (to send) the boys to school. The oldest and then I think the second son became a dentist, too.

MK: How about the Chinese family that owned the store? Were they . . .

KU: That, I (wouldn't) know. There was an old man, but we never got to know the family. I really don't know much about the family.

MK: The kids in the neighborhood would like to visit the store.

KU: Oh, (yes) naturally.

MK: Who else would go to the store?

KU: All the kids around that area. There were (a) lot of kids in that area on River Street and in the back (neighborhood) near the pier. [There was] a (pretty) big (community with) restaurants and (grocery stores). There was City Mill there, too, you know, right at the corner of Iwilei and Queen streets.

MK: Did children kind of hang out or congregate over there because there was so much candy?

KU: No, I wouldn't say so. They would (go) in (and) buy a few. We were all good kids, (you know). (Laughs)

MK: And then, you mentioned there was a Chinese tailor next door to the candy store.

KU: Uh huh.

MK: What do you remember about that Chinese tailor?
KU: (I think an) old lady and (her) daughter (were) running the store. But I wouldn’t know much about that store.

MK: And then, next to that was the Kobayashi Dry Goods run by Masaichi Kobayashi’s family. Now, in ‘A’ala Rengo, you have Hawai‘i Importing Company and Kobayashi Dry Goods.

KU: They were competitors.

MK: Yeah.

KU: But both of them did well. Because Kobayashi was there for a long time.

MK: Same type of goods? Different . . .

KU: (Yes,) same type of goods. They carried mainly women’s material for dresses and whatnot. They carried everything from thread to buttons and all (sorts) of accessories. Mrs. Kobayashi, (who happened to be) an instructor (at) Keister Sewing School, (operated) Keister Sewing School way up (on) Liliha Street (together with Mrs. R. Murata for many years). (Later on) Mrs. Kobayashi (operated) Kobayashi Sewing School upstairs (of their store).

MK: So when you were just a young girl growing up, did you also learn sewing from Kobayashi-san?

KU: (Yes,) I went to Keister (Sewing School) for two summers during summer vacation. I think I really benefitted (as) I learned a lot just going (to) summer school.

MK: You mentioned that there was Sato Clothiers next to the Kobayashi Dry Goods. Now, we notice that there are three men’s clothing stores then, huh?

KU: (Yes.) But by the time Satos came in, I think the one that was next to Kobayashi (quit and) Okazaki Tailor came in. Okazaki was there for quite some time. After the Okazakis retired, Mr. Morikubo came in.

MK: (Shigezuchi) Morikubo?

KU: (Yes,) Pacific Woolen.

MK: Next to Sato Clothiers, you mentioned a Lion Shoe Store run by the Miyakes.

KU: (Yes.)

MK: Now, I haven’t been able to get too much information on the Miyakes. What happened to them?

KU: They decided to go back to Japan. (They were) from Okayama. They were very good friends with Mrs. Kawano. My mother (used to say) Kawano no oba-san and Mrs. Miyake were very close. (They may have been) in business for ten years or more (and may have gone back to Japan around 1933).
MK: Then next to the Miyake's Lion Shoe Store, of course, would be Hawai'i Importing Company. But before the Okamotos took over, it was the Fukuda family.

KU: Fukuda-san, (yes).

MK: I haven’t been able to get much information on the Fukudas.

KU: You know, (perhaps) I can give you (some) information about the Fukudas (as I came across an old businessmen's manual not too long ago).

MK: Oh, there was something about Mr. Fukuda . . .

KU: Fukuda, (yes). It was quite in detail. (Mr. Fukuda's name was Zenichi and Mr. Noboru Hino, later owner of Fashions by Hino of Ala Moana Center was working for the Fukudas at that time. After he became independent and owned his own shop, I’ve heard that he would always make an effort to visit the Fukudas in Hiroshima. For that matter, I have much respect for Mr. Hino.)

MK: Because Mr. Hino was once, I guess, a minarai with the Fukudas. And later on, became banto-san with the . . .

KU: (Yes, for the Okamoto family, who operated Hawai'i Importing Company.) That’s right. He just went (along) with (them doing his best).

MK: Then the last one would be the Akahoshi Drugs. I haven’t been able to find out from anybody about the Akahoshis.

KU: The Akahoshi (Drug Store). I’m not sure. But I (do) know (that the Itos) used to run Akahoshi. If Mrs. Okamoto were living, (perhaps) you could have (gotten more information). Try (and) ask Jane [Komeiji, Kame Okamoto’s daughter].

MK: Well, Jane remembered Professor Ito. She said they used to call him Professor Ito, the pharmacist over there.

KU: Oh, yeah? Ito-san.

MK: So that must be the same Ito-san.

KU: I think (so).

MK: But she has no recollection of . . .

KU: The Akahoshi?

MK: . . . anybody named Akahoshi. When you were a child, who do you remember at Akahoshi Drugs?

KU: (Oh,) I just went there—for my ice cream. (Akahoshi used to have a fountain and so on Saturday evenings after we closed shop, my mother would call Akahoshi and order ice cream
to serve the clerks as refreshment. The big scoop of ice cream came in a serving dish with all varieties of flavor poured on top and they cost only ten cents per cup.)

Some Saturdays, [for a snack] it would be udon. You know, there was an udon shop close by. (My mother would order udon for a change. Mr. Kawamoto, the owner, would pack all the bowls in a big wooden box and carry it on his shoulder to deliver them over to our shop. And those udon used to cost only ten cents per bowl.)

Mr. Kawamoto, you know, after quitting (his) business there, (moved to Mō'īliʻili and ran the shop for many years). (Mr. and Mrs. Kawamoto worked very hard and eventually) were able to buy that (Mō'īliʻili) property. Now, they (have) rebuilt it (and) live upstairs and (they have) the store leased out.

MK: I see. They started from ‘A’ala?

KU: (Yes,) ‘A’ala (Lane).

MK: So, outside of ‘A’ala Rengō, then, you had the saimin stand, you had Darumaya, you had some Chinese businesses outside of ‘A’ala Rengō. What other things were in the area?

KU: You mean, the ‘A’ala (Street) side?

MK: Uh huh, in the ‘A’ala (Street) area . . .

KU: (Well, there was a movie theater called Nihon-kan. It was operated by the Furuya family but before that it was owned by the Matsuo family. Mr. Furuya renamed the Nihon-kan to Kōen Gekijō.)

MK: So, movie theater. . .

KU: And there was (also) Honolulu-za (that showed Japanese movies). (And there was a shoe store—‘A’ala Shoe Store operated by the Nagasawa family right at the corner of ‘A’ala and Beretania streets.)

MK: So, you had shoe stores, theaters, Darumaya, Chinese stores. . .

KU: Darumaya was facing . . .

MK: On the other side.

KU: (Now, at the upper corner of ‘A’ala and King streets there was Benson Smith drugstore [Benson Smith and Co., Ltd.]. And next to Benson Smith was a Japanese barbershop and then a Chinese cobbler’s shop.

There was a lane next to the cobbler’s where the movie theater Kōen Gekijō was located and in that lane there was a small tofu shop.)

MK: Would you remember the name of the family?
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MK: Would you remember the name of the family?
KU: No, I wouldn't. But I can (still) remember the face of that lady. (Next came U. Yoshinaga Store on 'A'ala Street that used to carry canned goods, groceries, candy and sundries. Then the next one was another restaurant run by a Japanese family. Next door to that was a Japanese grocery store run by the Kishii family. They used to carry rice, iriko and all sorts of Japanese groceries, including my favorite narazuke.)

(Now, next to Kishii Store, there was another barber shop and then a clothes cleaning shop. If I remember correctly, there was a Sakamoto Store that sold fruits, candy, soda and whatnot. And then next to Sakamoto Store was this famous landmark Honolulu-za that showed Japanese movies.)

MK: What kind of movies did they show?

KU: (Oh, the first-run ones that were imported from Japan. It used to draw big crowds especially on weekends. Then the next one was 'A'ala Shoe Store located at the corner of 'A'ala and Beretania streets.)

MK: All those businesses that you just mentioned, with the exception of the Chinese cobbler, they were Japanese businesses?

KU: (Yes, I think so.)

END OF INTERVIEW