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Title: Junji Sarashina Interview
Narrator: Junji Sarashina
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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<Begin Segment 1>

NW: So, once again, thanks for making time to talk with me.

JS: You are welcome, welcome.

NW: Usually I ask people to start with, probably, telling me something about what they remember about their parents. I like to know about what your father and mother did, and, probably, what childhood memory that you have of them.

JS: My father is a Nishihongan-ji, Buddhist temple minister. It's like—keep talking?

NW: Yeah, yeah, you don't have to wait for me, yeah.

JS: He was born in Hiroshima in the countryside, and he has a temple in countryside. He spoke a little bit English, so he was, he went to Hawai'i as a minister, Buddhist temple minister.

NW: Or was it, because he was able to speak in English, he was sent to . . .

JS: In a way, yes, he was able to speak and that's a plus for any minister to go to Hawai'i. [laugh].

NW: Sure, sure, that's for sure. Did he have any experience of going to America?

JS: No, not at all.

NW: Yeah, so, that was the first time.

JS: He was, he was a minister in the countryside, and he was also a high school teacher, too. So when he went to Hawai'i, that was, my guess is about, oh, 1923. He arrived in Honolulu, and visited, or worked as a resident minister in Oahu Island for a while, then about 1926 he was sent to Lahaina Maui, and he built the Lahaina Maui Hongan-ji temple. And, I was born in 1929, and as a little kid, when I was about 4 or 5 years old, I remember that, all that church members working on, to build the new temple.

NW: Ah, so that was, you were born in Hawai'i?

JS: Yeah. In those days, we had lots of immigrants from Japan, working on the plantation field, pineapple field, sugarcane field. And, when they were on the peak time, they had about 600 Japanese students learning Japanese.

NW: Oh, at the temple?

JS: At the temple. That was the only thing they had. And in the morning they go to English school and in the afternoon, they all came to the church, and then, I think that the church made them *musubi*, too. *Musubi* and *takuan*. So, it was a good place for the kids to hang around. My mother is from Hiroshima also. When they were in Lahaina Maui, what I remember about my mom was she was teaching so-called young ladies, the eligible age, the *hanayome gakkō*. For the young girl, before they get married. They learn and train many new skills, like cooking, sewing, baby, babysitting, baby care, and also, music. So actually my house was filled with young ladies just about everyday. I think my mom, my mother was the center of the activities for the church. Because of her teaching or involvement with the young girls. Of course, the regular ministry was all constantly going on, and it was far away in Lahaina Maui, but it was a very bustling community. Just about every weekend, they did show movie, old Japanese movie.

NW: Oh, Japanese movie, yeah.

JS: Some kids will run the projector, and run the *samurai* movie. It was a busy place for the, the so-called adults to enjoyed the old Japan. The church had a big bus, which was used for picnic, for the younger generation, or for older generation, or wherever they wanted to go, always somebody, the younger people drove the big bus. As a little kid, I remember going to picnic quite often, away from the home. So, when I was a little kid I really enjoyed that life, people were so kind, of course they know you, I was too little to know them, but at least they knew who I was. So, I had a very warm, comfortable feeling, hanging around with all the church members. Then he moved to Honolulu, Betsuin, that's the main church in Oahu, and we stayed in Honolulu for a while. And my parents decided that my older brothers must take over the church, so we have to return to Japan, to learn Japanese and take over the church. So all the kids and my mom went back to Hiroshima. My father stayed in Honolulu.

NW: How many siblings do you have, remind me?

JS: Altogether five.

NW: And you, are you . . .

JS: I am the youngest.

NW: You are the youngest.

JS: I had 2 brothers and 2 sisters.

NW: So, what year was it that you all went back?

JS: 1936 . . .

NW: 1936.

JS: . . . we went to Hiroshima. Since my father's church is in the countryside, they decided to rent, my mother decided to rent a house in Hiroshima. And right in front of my Nakajima shōgakkō, Nakajima grade school, and Nakajima is the place where they had the A-bomb peace park. Which is only about a mile away from where I used to.

NW: A mile. Right, right.

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