

Rosie Ramiro – September 30, 2021

The following oral history is a solo recorded interview from Rosie Ramiro done on September 30, 2021 via TheirStory. The interview is part of Mānoa Heritage Center's Oral History Project.

Please keep in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

Rosie Ramiro: Okay, I see question number one. I was born at Kapi'olani Hospital in Honolulu, Hawai'i. I grew up most of my life in Mānoa, on a farm way in the valley across the river from Paradise Park, and in fact lived, up until 12 years ago, in Mānoa before my husband and my family moved out to Pearl City. My parents were Elpidio Acopan and Nobuko Yamamoto Acopan. My father was a very driven, very insightful, independent kind of guy who was God fearing and really did everything for his family. My mother was Japanese and how should I describe her? She's very kindhearted. She's very tender with the grandkids, very creative. The both of them are very creative. I really admire my mom because she sewed kimono by hand and she could crochet. She has the patience of crocheting several bedspreads, so I really admire that about her. My father's family, so my paternal grandparents were in the Philippines, in Bacarra, Ilocos Norte and my maternal grandparents were from Hiroshima, Japan. And so, my father did immigrate here as a sakada, which is a recruited plantation worker for the sugar plantations. My mother, however, was local born. She was born in Waipahu. Born and raised in Waipahu, and moved to Mānoa at a very young age. My grandmother and my grandfather were born, both born in Hiroshima.

Traditions passed down in the family. Mostly when we were younger, we honored a lot of- we had a lot of Japanese traditions. We went to a lot of Japanese movies and- at Nippon Theater and Toyo Theater and attended Japanese school until we graduated in the ninth grade. So one of the- my favorite Japanese traditions was pounding mochi just before New Year's and then molding them, you know, so it was a whole family affair. Now, the traditional Filipino things did- really did not come into play until I became an adult. We had neighbors who, you know, the Filipinos also pounded mochi rice, but they did it a little bit differently from the Japanese. The Japanese had a different kind of mallet, kind of L shaped mallet, whereas the, the Filipinos had just a straight mallet that you pounded up and down. So basically that- that would have been the memorable traditions that were passed on to us.

Oh, best memories of childhood. It was really an idyllic childhood and an idyllic upbringing, growing up on the farm because we were surrounded by so many people. There were a lot of children our age. On one side of our house further up the street was my Japanese cousin. So there were three of them up there. And then on my- on the left side of our house, in fact, even connected to- to our house was my Filipino cousins. So there were five boys and one girl. And with our family of five boys and three girls, we had enough for a volleyball team and a football team. So we played really hard. We worked hard, but we

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also played volleyball, football, you name it. You know, we had we had a blast. Hide and seek in the banana fields. That was that was an all day affair. So that was really fun.

Now the worst part about the childhood. Well, a couple of things. When we started attending school, you know, it was Mānoa is kind of a really affluent place. So when we attended school, we were the poor farm kids, you know, and it was very obvious because the schools didn't have uniforms back then. So, you know, we made that comparison and we felt kind of, you know, like, like the poor kids. One of my worst memories was I made the mistake of bringing a friend home. I typically didn't do that. But when I brought this friend home from the farm, they were slaughtering a cow. And so that- I was just petrified and totally embarrassed by that, so I, I will not forget that memory.

Did you celebrate any holidays? New Year's was especially significant for the Japanese side of the family. I mean, there were special foods involved, you know, with the nishime and the ozoni and, so that that was quite a celebration. Christmas. You know, you would think that Christmas would be something that would be really excited about, but because we were a poor family and a large family, you know, we did not have a Christmas tree with gifts, tons of gifts under it. So I would say probably New Year's, New Year's Eve, and Thanksgiving were probably the most significant holidays for us.

Significant historical events? Actually, no, I would say my older siblings, who were born before World War Two, who experienced the sounds of war with the bombings and such, that was probably a really significant time for them. For, for us, for my generation, I guess the Vietnam War would have been what would have been significant. And of course, the Beatles, you know, and Woodstock in sixty-nine, you know, those would have been the historical events. When I was in middle school, of course, the assassination of President Kennedy. So those are the things that I recall that were really significant.

How would I like to be remembered? You know, when I was in school, I would, you know, this is a question that the kids would sometimes pose with me. And I would tell them, you know, I don't want to be popular, and that's not important to me, but I want to be remembered as somebody who was fair and who genuinely cared for them and cared about them. Who is a good listener. And that's how I wanted to be remembered. And I think we're done here. Yay!