

RUBY YABIKU

An Interview by J. Ward Russell

April 2, 1990

This oral history interview is a project of the Historical Committee of the Outrigger Canoe Club. The legal rights to this material remain with the Outrigger Canoe Club. Anyone wishing to reproduce it or quote at length from it should contact the Historical Committee of the Outrigger Canoe Club.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The reader should be aware that an oral history document portrays information as recalled by the interviewee. Because of the spontaneous nature of this kind of document, it may contain statements and impressions that are not factual."

--Quoted by permission of the University of Hawaii  
Ethnic Studies Program, Oral History Project.

## RUBY YABIKU

Interview by J. Ward Russell

April 2, 1990

---

Today is April 2, 1990, and it is a beautiful sunny morning at the Outrigger Canoe Club. I am Ward Russell, a member of the Club's Historical Committee. This committee has, for a long time, been engaged in a program of interviewing old-time members and employees. Today it is my pleasure to interview Ruby Yabiku, the Club's senior clerk.

JWR: Good morning, Ruby.

RY: Good morning, Mr. Russell.

JWR: Are you ready for this interview?

RY: I hope so.

JWR: Good. OK, tell me Ruby, when were you born?

RY: I was born May 28, 1925 in Honolulu.

JWR: In Honolulu. Are you married?

RY: Married to Edward S. Yabiku, and have one son Wayne Yabiku, married to Sue K. Yabiku, two grandsons, Christopher Yabiku, nine years old, and Jonathan Yabiku, five years old.

JWR: You just have the one son, Wayne?

RY: Yes.

JWR: What does your husband do?

RY: My husband is deceased now. He died on Kuhio Day - March 26, 1975. He was also employed at the Outrigger Canoe Club as a storeroom clerk from 1959 to 1964.

JWR: That would make it 15 years.

RY: 15 years.

JWR: Yes, I remember. Tell me about your family background. Were your folks born in Hawaii?

RY: My parents arrived from Niigata, Japan. My father was a carpenter and my mother a homemaker. We were a family of eight, six sons and two daughters.

Three brothers and one sister deceased.

JWR: Then you have three more brothers and one other sister.

RY: No, we have...counting myself.

JWR: Counting yourself. Then you have three brothers now. Are they all here in Honolulu.

RY: Yes.

JWR: All working?

RY: No. Some have retired.

JWR: Tell me a little bit about your schooling.

RY: I was educated at Liholiho School, Liliuokalani, Kaimuki Intermediate, McKinley High School and Galusha Business School.

JWR: What year were you at McKinley?

RY: I was graduated in 1943.

JWR: During the war.

RY: Yes. It was exciting years, during the war, and we couldn't have anything that we wanted. In fact our senior prom was held at the Church of Christ and we couldn't have any white gowns or anything like that.

JWR: This was the first two years.

RY: Yes.

JWR: Was your father still alive then?

RY: My father passed away in 1945.

JWR: In 1945, shortly after you graduated from high school?

RY: Yes, and mother passed away in 1963.

JWR: '63.

RY: Just prior to moving to the new Club.

JWR: That's right. Galusha Business School - I remember Galusha Business School.

RY: Yes, that was downtown on King Street.

- JWR: That's right, and what did you do after you finished business school?
- RY: While attending business school, I was also employed at a CPA firm.
- JWR: You mean you were attending business school while working for the CPA firm.
- RY: Yes, the business school sent me to the CPA firm. After graduating from business school in 1945 I went to work for the USO which was located on Beretania Street in the old Von Hamm Young (Schumann Carriage) building. I was there for a short while until I was offered a job with the Veterans Administration Office.
- JWR: I see.
- RY: The Veterans Administration Office was then located in a temporary Quonset building on the grounds of the Capitol. After which we moved to Bethel Street. I left the Veterans Administration in 1948 when I got married. I then worked for the Federal Government as a clerk-typist at Fort Ruger until my son was born in 1950. I took time out to raise my boy until 1953 when I went to work for Kirby Vacuum Cleaners. After that I came to the Outrigger Canoe Club.
- JWR: What year was that when you joined the Outrigger?
- RY: July 28, 1955.
- JWR: '55 - thirty four years.....
- RY: 35 years in July.
- JWR: Who were some of the employees that you worked with when you came to the Outrigger?
- RY: I started to work with Eva Pomroy and Malia Lutz, as a receptionist.
- JWR: Eva and Malia...As I remember, didn't Malia work until she was over 80?
- RY: Yes. Malia Lutz, yes.
- JWR: That was against the law!
- RY: At the time, yes, it was. (Laughter). She wanted to continue to work. She was a lovely lady.
- JWR: I know. It was a tough decision for us to make because we knew she wanted to continue, yet at the same time we were breaking the law. I was on the Board at that time - I remember that.

JWR: What else did you do?

RY: I was transferred to the Beach Shop, working with some of the beach boys.

JWR: Can you recall some of them?

RY: Steamboat, Steamboat, Jr., Curley Cornwell, Nappy Napoleon, George Downing, Turkey Love, Rabbit Kekai, Philip Kaahue, Harry Robello and Blue Makua, Jr.

JWR: Oh, the beachboys - wasn't this about the time of the beginning of the Waikiki Beach Patrol?

RY: Yes, I think so.

JWR: Sally Hale.....

RY: Sally Hale was working under the Outrigger Canoe Club.

JWR: Yes.

RY: He was captain, I guess.

JWR: Yes, he was the first captain of the Beach Patrol. Well, how long did you work in the Beach Shop?

RY: It was just about a year or so, I don't quite remember, I think it was about a year or so.

JWR: That was good fun?

RY: Oh, yes. Yes, it was fun. Getting to know all the beachboys. Of course, the Beach Shop was not as big as it is now. It was inside, but it was interesting.

JWR: When were you on the beach?

RY: I would say... '57, around then.

JWR: Those were contentious times. As I remember - about that time the beachboys' group from the Reef Hotel tried to take over the operations of the beach in front of the Royal Hawaiian.

RY: Yes, yes. I think Jimmy Hakuole was at the Royal Hawaiian.

JWR: Yes, Jimmy Hakuole.....

RY: He was evicted.

JWR: Jimmy and...Chick.

RY: Chick, yes.

JWR: Fortunately the takeover was short-lived.

JWR: OK. Let's see. After the Beach Shop, what did you do?

RY: I was transferred to the Business Office under the supervision of Charles Hee.

JWR: What's your present position?

RY: Right now I am a senior clerk taking care of memberships, correspondence, typing financial statements, sending out statements for the ads and typing up checks; in charge of issuing the lockers to the members; ordering all office supplies; taking care of the change of addresses of the members - and I got to learn some computer work under the supervision of Gordon Smith.

JWR: You've worked under a group of managers - do you remember some of the managers you have worked for?

RY: Yes, I have worked under eight managers.

JWR: Eight managers.....

RY: Mr. Bill Kane (1955-1956), Mr. Ted Magill (1956-1957), Mr. Jake Tudor (1958-1961), Mr. Jarl (1962), Mr. Don Ross (1962-1964), Mr. Peter Van Dorn (1964-1971), Mr. Norman Riede (1972-1979), Mr. Raymond Ludwig (1979 to present).

JWR: From 1955 to 1990 - thirty-five years. Oh, we've had some colorful managers. I can remember Bill Kane, he had a little drinking problem.

RY: He did that - always drinking when he came to the Club with alcohol on his breath. (Laugh).

JWR: What happened to Bill?

RY: I think he passed away.

JWR: Do you know how long he was with us?

RY: I think it was about a year.

JWR: Ted Magill, next on your list. Ted was manager for quite some time, wasn't he?

RY: Yes, he was there before my time and then he came back in '56 and '57, and Mr. Tudor was 1958 to 1961. Mr. Jarl was just hired in 1962 and he was just there for a short period.

JWR: That was when we transferred to the new Club, wasn't it?

RY: Yes, he had another job offer so he took that other job instead. He was working for us for about three months or so, I guess.

JWR: Let's see, that would have been '62, yeah. Didn't he help in the move from the Old to the New Club?

RY: Yes, he did some of that too, yes.

Then there was Don Ross, 1962-64. Mr. Ross came here at the new Club and he worked for a short while. Then we had Mr. Van Dorn, 1964-1971.

JWR: Was he here for seven years?

RY: Yes. He was here for quite a while because he loved Hawaii and working at the Club. After '71 he transferred to San Francisco, I think.....

JWR: That's right.

RY: .....and he's working there at the Holiday Inn.

JWR: Holiday Inn. A number of our members have reported staying with him.

RY: Members going there are well taken care of - he's happy to see them.

JWR: I wish I'd remembered that because I was in San Francisco having a difficult time getting reservations. Which Holiday Inn, do you know?

RY: I don't know which one.

JWR: There's one downtown on 8th Street. I'll have to check the others and remember that when I go to San Francisco.

Norman Riede.....

RY: Mr. Riede was 1972 to 1979 and is presently on the Mainland...and, Mr. Ludwig, 1979 to the present.

JWR: '79 to...that's...

RY: That's a long time.

JWR: Ray's been here almost the longest of any of these men.

RY: Yes. Well, he was appointed as manager in 1979. He was employed as a storeroom clerk prior to that.

JWR: Ray was the storeroom clerk prior to that?

RY: Yes, he first started as a storeroom clerk.

JWR: My, goodness! I'd forgotten that. This is the first managerial position he has ever had then, isn't it?

RY: I think so.

JWR: Tell me this Ruby, of all these managers, was there any one that was your particular favorite?

RY: I can't say.

JWR: Can't say. Fair enough.....

RY: They were all good.

JWR: They were all good?

RY: Ted Magill was a very hard person. I couldn't talk to him jokingly.

JWR: Yah.

RY: Not like the others - he was a very serious man. Everything was strictly business - no joking around.

JWR: Jake Tudor. Jake was fun. I remember the wishing well.

RY: (Laugh) Yes. (Laughter) That reminds me.....

JWR: The good old wishing well! You asked me to speak at Charles Hee's retirement. I had my choice of roasting or toasting him. I decided I was going to roast him. At the last minute I changed my mind. I wish I'd roasted him the way I wanted to because all the speakers that day were very complimentary. I was going to accuse Charles of promoting the wishing well.

Speaking of Charles, do you ever see him?

RY: Yes, he does come here occasionally - you know, whenever he has time he drops by.

JWR: Enjoying his retirement?

RY: Yes. He misses his wife who died some years ago.

JWR: How many children does Charles have, do you know?

RY: I'd say...three - two boys and a girl. He's living with his oldest son.

JWR: What other old-time employees do you recall?

RY: Charles Hee, Eva Pomroy, Maria Lutz, Minnie Wren, Hazel Minatodani, Katsuie Anzai, "Sally" (Louis Salisbury Hale) Hale, Papa-san (Furubayashi), George Fugishige, Richard Ota, Clara Oyafusco, Lillian Ogata, Max Fuertes.

JWR: Anzai - famous for his "Anzai Banzai" - and Max, he was in the diningroom. Let's see - Eva, Maria on the front desk, Minnie on the front desk, Hazel?

RY: She was in the locker room.

JWR: She's still in the locker room?

RY: No, she's retired.

JWR: Are any of these still with us?

RY: No, I don't think so.

JWR: We have a picture of the Beach Patrol and in the front of the picture there's a Filipino boy, man, who used to work on the beach. I never could identify his name. Do you have any idea who that might be?

RY: Would it be.....?

JWR: I'd like to get that picture and show it to you.....

RY: All right.

JWR: .....we've been trying to identify him for a long time. I'll see if I can find it.

JWR: What about the Presidents you worked with?

RY: I have a list here...how many Presidents, one, two, three...I have thirty Presidents.

JWR: Thirty Presidents! OK, let's see - read them off to me.

RY: Mr. Samuel Fuller, Mr. H. Vincent Danford, Mr. Ronald Q. Smith, Mr. Martin Anderson, Mr. Fred Steere, Mr. J. Ward Russell, Mr. J. Cline Mann, Mr. T. J. S. Muirhead, Mr. Thomas Arnott, Mr. Howard H. Goss, Mr. Ernest H. Thomas, Mr. Donald Avery, Mr. Thad W. Ekstrand, Mr. Thomas A. Haine, Mr. Robert W. Guild, Mr. Peter A. Balding, Mr. Robert W. Mist, Mr. Roy C. Kesner, Mr. Robert Anderson, Mr. William Eggers, III, Mr. Ronald G. Sorrell, Mr. Charles Ackerman, Mr. Robert I. Moore, Mr. Benjamin Cassidy, Mr. Robert W. Guild, Mr. Roy C. Kesner, Mr. Thomas A. Haine, Mr. Mark Buck, Mr. Peter Balding and Mr. Dan Williamson.

JWR: Counting those who have served twice that makes 26 different people who have been President. Let's see...Well, I imagine over the years you've had a variety of experiences. Any particular experiences that are outstanding in your recollections?

- RY: Well, while working at the Beach Shop at the old Club I went to different hotels to collect the beachboys' earnings for the day, walking to the bank with my cigar box for the daily deposit which you cannot do now; had tidal wave warnings; Hawaii became the 50th State. In 1964 moved to our new Club. In February, 1977 I was nominated Employee of the Month and received the honor of being the first Employee of the Year.
- JWR: That was the first time they nominated an Employee of the Year?
- RY: The first time.
- JWR: That was in 1977.
- RY: Right.
- JWR: You deserved it.
- RY: Thank you.
- JWR: You mentioned working with the beachboys, taking their earnings to the bank - was it individually - for each of them.
- RY: Yes. Each boy had his own number and what I had to do was go through the accounts for the day, sometimes to three or four different hotels, because all the guest members would come by and sign a chit. I used to have to take the chits to the hotels and get the collection money.
- JWR: How did you reconcile the money with the chits?
- RY: Well, then when I came back from the hotels I would have to divide the money - part of it went to the Club and part to the beachboy. I've forgotten the share of the Club, but the beachboys would wait until I was finished for the day...and at times they would rush me, and when I first started I was really nervous because I didn't know what to do, or how to go about it, but finally caught on with Charles' supervision. I got to know the beachboys real well at that time. They were very considerate of me, "OK, take your time", you know, they would wait - they got paid every day.
- JWR: You paid them every day?
- RY: Yes, we did.
- JWR: My soul!
- RY: They had surfing lessons.....
- JWR: I see, but you didn't tell me, did you pick up cash?

RY: Yes.

JWR: You picked up cash!

RY: Yes.

JWR: Ho-ho-ho.

RY: That was really something, during those days there was nothing to be afraid of in those years, you know, I would just walk along with the box. Of course, they would know that I went to the hotels, but I never had any bad experiences all those years.

JWR: Ah, those were good years. Times have changed. Did the beachboys pick up big tips from people?

RY: Of course they did, but they didn't turn that in.

JWR: They didn't turn their tips in?

RY: No, that wasn't required.

JWR: Were any of these boys particularly outstanding?

RY: The one I liked was Steamboat Junior. He was so nice.

JWR: Steamboat, Jr.

RY: Yes, in fact he took us out on a canoe surfing ride one day. It was on a Saturday morning and it was my first time. It was exciting.

JWR: Did you ever learn to surf?

RY: No, no, never.

JWR: Paddle a canoe?

RY: No.

JWR: You had the beachboys to give you a ride once in a while.

RY: We didn't know we had to paddle that day when we were out, but it was an experience. We got all wet and everything, but it was fun.

JWR: It was awfully considerate of Steamboat Junior to do that.....Let's see...Are there any outstanding experiences that you had while you were working at the Club?

RY: Yes, around 1956 I was working at the Lobby desk, someone stole the Snack Bar cash box. The cash box was turned in to the Lobby at night and we were all questioned by the police at the station. That was one experience I'll never forget.

JWR: Did they ever find out who took it?

RY: No.

JWR: Was there any money left in it?

RY: It was empty.

JWR: They took all the money?

RY: They just took everything. Whatever the members signed for that day.....

JWR: .....was gone.

RY: Was gone.

JWR: Wow! Tell me, you mentioned the fact that you were working at the Club at the time we moved. That must have been a major undertaking.

RY: Yes, it was. In fact, Mr. Ross asked me at that time to open up and run the entire Beach Shop at the new Club House. This was a new experience for me. I had to take care of everything; registering new members, issuing lockers, selling merchandise; setting up records for the business office, et cetera. I was responsible for the entire Beach Shop operation. I enjoyed it.

JWR: I know that some of the old Club's records were lost.

RY: Yes.

JWR: I believe it occurred during the move to the new Club.

RY: That was a shame. I thought we had saved all the records at that time, but somehow some of them got lost. I don't know what happened to them.

JWR: Well, the time element. The rush was necessary in order to meet critical deadlines. You did such a great job. I was President at that time so I know what you went through. What everyone accomplished in such a short time was amazing. You know I had an interview with Eva and she mentioned an incident involving Charlie Amalu. I wonder if you have any specific recollections of him and of what happened.

RY: I recall him just by name. I never had any opportunity to talk or get to know him.

JWR: This one particular night, if my memory serves me correctly, he took some of his wife's money, clothes, jewels and other

valuables and stowed them in his Club locker. The police arrived and he had to open his locker. He was trying to help her escape the payment of taxes or something like that. Do you remember anything like that at all?

RY: I'm sorry, I don't remember much about it.

JWR: Are there any other things you can think of that you'd like to mention?

RY: I don't have anything else that I can think of.

JWR: You certainly have done a great job and contributed much to the Club.

RY: Thank you.

JWR: I greatly appreciate your taking the time to talk with me. It has been my pleasure to have the honor to interview you.

RY: I, too, feel very honored. I appreciate it.

JWR: Thank you very much.

RY: Thank you.

JWR: If you can think of anything else you would like to add we can always have a sequel...Thank you.

RY: Thank you.