

The Arakawa Family of Okinawa and Hawaii ~ A 20th Century Memoir

Rory Van Tuyl, January, 2020

Introduction

In 2019, in several interviews, Arakawa family members shared with me memories of their lives in Okinawa and Hawaii, including their survival of the horrendous Battle of Okinawa.

This memoir is based mostly on their recollections, supplemented by Hawaii public records and other published sources.

Okinawa

The largest and most-populous of the *Ryukyu Islands*, Okinawa for most of its history was independent of Japan. The people there are genetically different from most Japanese, and their native language is related to, but entirely separate from Japanese.^{1, 2} They style themselves *Uchinanchu* and the main-island Japanese as *Naichi*.³ Physically, Okinawans tend to be shorter than Japanese people and their hair is often wavy, in contrast to the straight hair of most Japanese people. Culturally, Okinawans have developed a very peace-loving society, with a long tradition of diplomatic approach to societal and foreign relations. Although its ancient people were hunter-gatherers, Okinawa has for centuries been an agricultural society like Japan, though with certain key differences. Traditionally, the

main carbohydrate was not rice, but the *Okinawan Sweet Potato*, a tuber introduced from China around 1600 C.E. The main protein (besides fish) was pork, which traditionally was raised by most farmers in Okinawa, though only by a few in Japan. Prior to the 20th century, religion was tied to governance through a system of village priestesses call *noro*, who inherited their position and reported to a chief *noro*, who was usually the sister of the king and who acted as the royal emissary to the spirit world.⁴

Okinawa developed into an agricultural society during the *Gusuku* period (12th – 13th centuries C.E.), and between 1322 and 1429 formed into three kingdoms, north, central and south. After unification into a single kingdom centered at Shuri Castle under Shō Hashi in 1429, Okinawa was recognized as the *Liuqiu [Loo Choo] Kingdom*⁵ by the Chinese Ming Emperor, and a trade-and-tribute relationship developed between Okinawa and China. In 1609, the powerful *Satsuma Clan* of Kyushu conquered the kingdom and controlled it as a protectorate until 1871, when the Meiji emperor asserted control. Finally, in 1879, Meiji annexed Okinawa and all other Ryukyu islands into the *Okinawa Prefecture*, and began a program of education and bureaucratic reform known as *Japanization*, with the view toward fully incorporating the Okinawans into Japanese society. It is from this point forward that we have recorded information about the Arakawa family.

¹ Yamaguchi-Kabata et al., 2008.

² Okinawan is a [Japonic language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japonic_language), derived from [Proto-Japonic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Japonic). The split between Old Japanese and the Ryukyuan languages has been estimated to have occurred as early as the first century AD to as late as the twelfth century AD. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okinawan_language

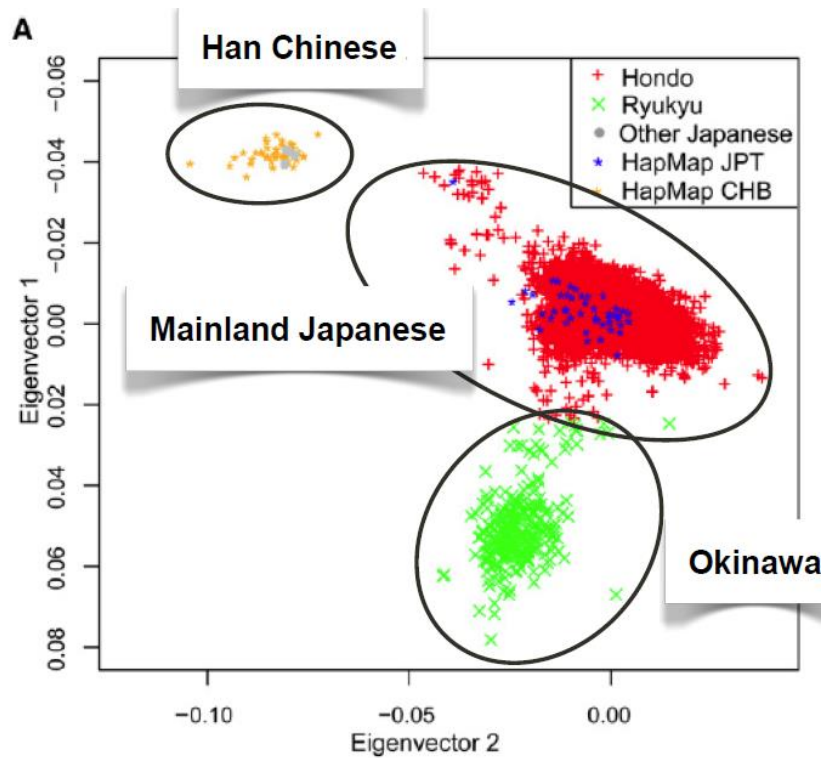
³ The *Uchinanchu* are an admixture of ancient *Jomon* people from the period 14,000 B.C.E – 1,000 B.C.E, and *Yayoi* people from the period 1,000 B.C.E – 300 C.E.,

but differ genetically from most *Naichi* probably due to a higher percentage *Jomon* ancestry.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ryukyuan_people

⁴ Kerr, pg. 32.

⁵ Pronounced *Ryukyu* in Okinawa and Japan.



The genetic separation between Japanese and Okinawan is distinct, and can be illustrated as shown in this 2-D map of genetic distance, similar to a map of geographic distance. Okinawans are distinct from both *Naichi* Japanese and Han Chinese, a result of centuries of isolation of the Okinawan population.



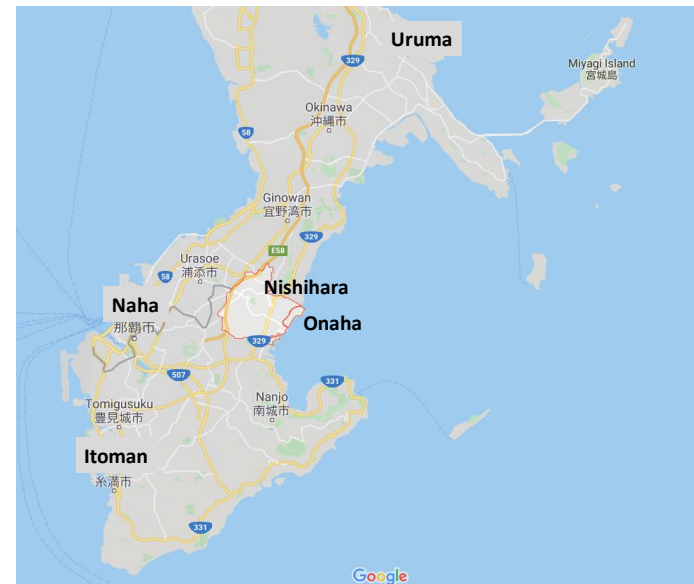
As late as 1935, when this photo was taken, Okinawa was free of modern development: dirt roads, virtually no cars or industry. In baskets perched on their heads, these women are carrying the Okinawan Sweet potato, the dietary mainstay of Okinawa, to market.

Onaha

Prior to World War II, Onaha had been a small farming village on the eastern shore of Okinawa, just 12km from the capital city, Naha.⁶ “Onaha” means “Little Naha,” but unlike Naha, it had no trace of aristocracy; it was a village of hard-working farm folk. To get from Onaha to Naha in the 1930s, you would walk on its dirt roads 3.4km (2.1mi) south to the town of Yonabaru where a local train would take you to the capital, with its thriving markets, magnificent Shuri Castle, and (most important to the Arakawas) its schools. Before there was a railway, the only routes between Onaha and the rest of Okinawa were dirt roads, the only transport was by foot or by horse cart.⁷ Onaha, like most Okinawan villages was an isolated place.

Trains, and indeed schools, were relatively recent improvements brought about by the *Japanization* of this once-independent Ryukyu kingdom.⁸ One of the most significant events, however, was Land Reform.⁹ Starting in 1898 and proceeding through 1903, the ancient form of communal land ownership practiced by Okinawan farmers was abolished, and private ownership of substituted in its place. But with this land reform came a disruption in the traditional system of taxation, and with it an increased tax burden on Okinawan farmers who were now land owners. This economic disruption, coupled with the natural factors of nearly-annual typhoons, drought, and disease, brought great pressure on the struggling people of Okinawa. So it was that in the early 20th century, the young men of Okinawa, and

especially villages like Onaha, headed overseas for work. Their remittances to their folks back home made life possible for families like those in Onaha village.¹⁰ Among these emigrants was the eldest son of one prominent family of Onaha: Sanra (later Keikichi) Arakawa, who would in 1906 open the door to Hawaii for his family.



Onaha village, part of the larger Nishihara village, is located on the east coast of central Okinawa, 12 km from Naha, the capital.

⁶ With the Meiji-era reorganization of Okinawan government, Onaha was administratively merged into Nishihara.

⁷ The Yonabaru – Naha railroad was opened in 1914 and destroyed by war in 1945. <https://www.rhs-japan.org/en/tourism/keibinyonabaruekisyatenzishiryokan/>

⁸ *Japanization* refers to efforts by the Meiji government, after its conquest of Okinawa in 1879, to solidify control over the previously-independent Ryukyu Islands. Japan was modernizing in this period, and wanted to extend this

modernization to its newly-annexed territories. Japanese language and education were part of this program, along with construction of roads, railways, bridges and harbors. Suppression of Okinawan language, culture and religion was a byproduct of *Japanization*.

⁹ Kerr, pg. 426.

¹⁰ The greatest number of expatriate Okinawans today is in South America. The Hawaiian Islands and mainland U.S. are second.

The Arakawas of Onaha

As it turns out, the village of Onaha is full of people named Arakawa. The name, as it is rendered in Chinese characters (Japanese Kanji) is 新川, meaning “New River.”¹¹ Family lore¹² says the Arakawas of Onaha are all descended from three brothers who “...came from the north,” and there might be some truth in this story, because there is indeed a river in the north of Okinawa named 新川¹³. Whatever the origin of the family name, the people who carried it were successful within the limitations imposed by their environment. In the village graveyard of Onaha are numerous large Okinawan-style tombs in which are buried people named Arakawa. So common is the Arakawa name in this village, that families have taken to giving their various branches, and their home properties, a more specific name, called a *Yagou* (屋号) in Japan or *ya-n-na* (屋の名) in Okinawa.¹⁴ The tomb of the particular Arakawa family of Onaha being profiled here has the *ya-n-na* : 新前世利, pronounced “Nii-Me-She-Ri,” a phrase with no known meaning other than to identify this branch of the Arakawa family.¹⁵ There are two tombs in Onaha for this branch of the family: the “Old” tomb, estimated to be about 300 years old¹⁶, and the “New” tomb which holds the remains of family members buried since about 1930.¹⁷



The ancient Arakawa Tomb in the village graveyard of Onaha. This tomb is hundreds of years old and contains the remains of ancestors through the 19th century. The newer tomb, with burials dating from about 1930 is similar in appearance and displays the plaque shown at the right. It says: “Arakawa Home Tomb, Nii-Me-She-Ri, renovated 2009.” Nii-Me-She-Ri is the *yagou* or *ya-n-na*, of this specific branch of the family. It has no known meaning, but acts to identify the family, its property, and tomb.

¹¹ The name in Okinawa is spelled 新川, meaning “New River” but in the main islands of Japan, is spelled 荒川 meaning “Wild River.”

¹² Per Harry Arakawa, 2019.

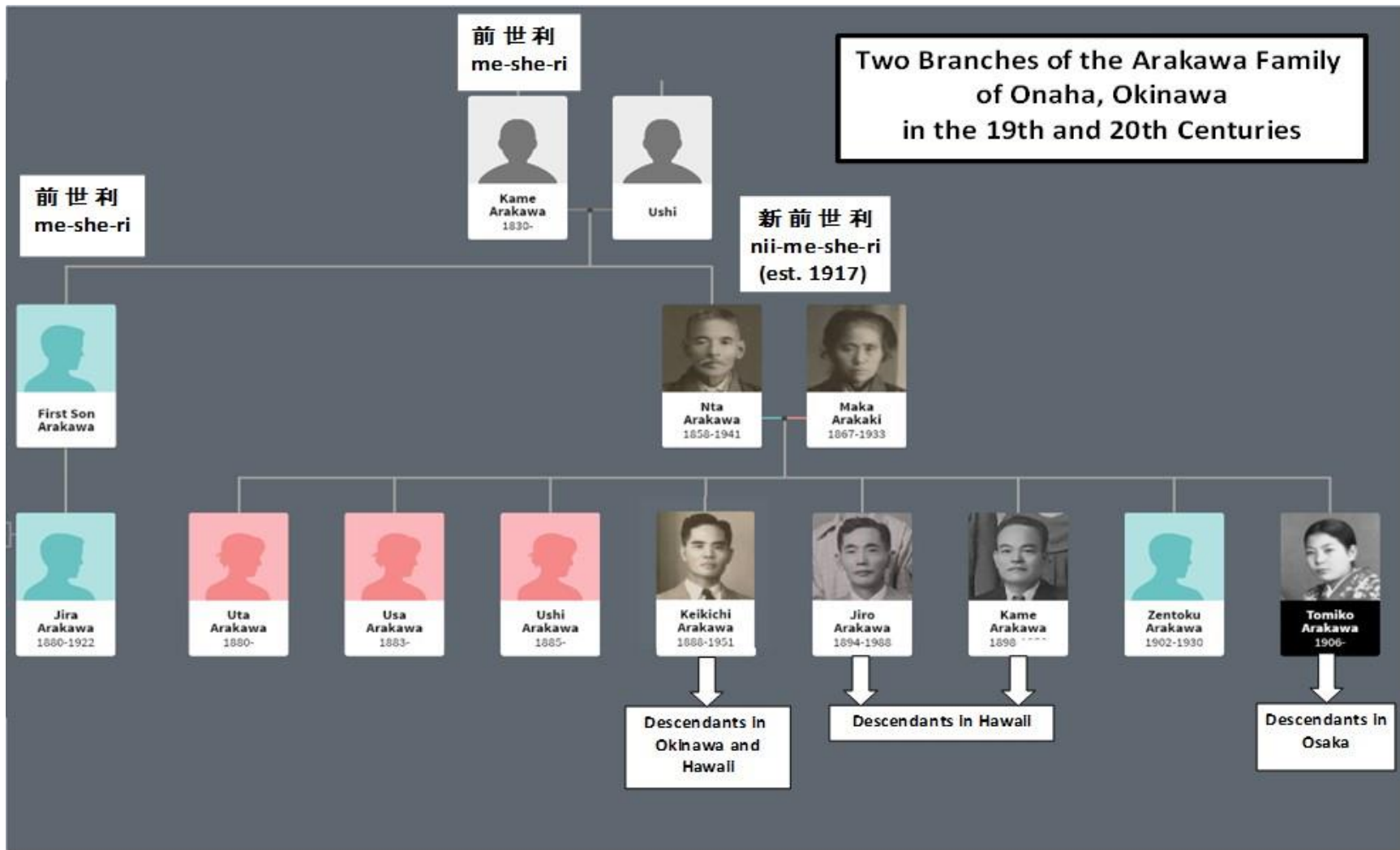
¹³ On English-language maps, this is usually labelled “Shinkawa River” owing to the ambiguous pronunciation of the kanji 新, meaning “new”, which can be pronounced as “shin”, “ara” or “nii”.

¹⁴ All people named Arakawa in Onaha form a *Kamei* [clan]. The *ya-n-na* distinguishes individual branches of this *Kamei*.

¹⁵ The family tomb inscribes the *ya-n-na* entirely in *kanji*: 新前世利. A map of the property apparently from the 1930s renders it as: 新前 セリ, Nii-Me in *kanji*, She-Ri in *katakana*.

¹⁶ Per Takakazu Arakawa.

¹⁷ Interestingly, the Old tomb bears the *ya-n-na* “me-she-ri” while the New tomb is labelled “Nii-Me-She-Ri” raising the possibility that the *ya-n-na* of the New tomb is merely the same as the Old tomb, but with the word “new” added as a preamble.



The branch of the Arakawa family of Onaha identified by the *Yagou Mi-She-Ri* spawned a new branch in 1917, when the titular family head, Jira Arakawa, who had inherited the office via primogeniture, permitted his uncle Nta Arakawa to found his own branch: Nii-Me-She-Ri [*New Me-She-Ri*]. It is this branch, which has descendants in both Japan and the United States, that is the subject of this memoir.

The head of the Arakawa family Nii-Me-She-Ri branch was Nta Arakawa, born in 1858, at the time when Okinawa was the seat of the Ryukyu Kingdom. He was a relatively prosperous farmer who was the owner of several properties in Onaha. His main language was Uchinaaguchi, the Japonic language of southern Okinawa. He himself was not an educated man, but he could speak and write basic Japanese.¹⁸

Probably about 1879, Nta Arakawa married a local girl named Maka Arakaki (or Aragaki). It is likely that, given the size of the village and the large number of Arakawas in town, that they were somehow related.



The Arakawas of Onaha, Nishihara-mura, Okinawa in the 1920s.

¹⁸ In 1913, Nta passed the literacy test administered by U.S. Immigration officials in Hawaii. Japanese literacy requires knowledge of *kanji*, symbols derived from Chinese. Schoolchildren are taught these symbols from first grade, and knowledge of 2000 *kanji* is required to read a Japanese newspaper. The Okinawan language was traditionally written mostly in *Hiragana*, but we do not know if Nta Arakawa could read or write *Uchinaaguchi*.

In the early 1880s, they produced three children, all girls: Uta, Usa, and Ushi.¹⁹ On October 24, 1888 they welcomed their most important child, given the customs of the time: a son, Sanra, who would later adopt the name Keikichi.²⁰ An oldest son was the family's insurance policy for the future. When the head of the family would die, the oldest son was expected to assume the leadership role, including maintenance of the family tomb and of the family elders. Until that time, a son was a source of labor on Okinawa, as he was in every agricultural community on earth.

Keikichi would have grown up in Onaha at Nii-Me-She-Ri, a property with a traditional Okinawan house built of wood with either a thatched roof or a tile roof, a water well, an outhouse, a pond for keeping eels and fish, and a sizable garden. As had been the custom in Okinawa since its introduction from China in 1606, the purple sweet potato was the staple crop and main food, and of course every family farm would have a pig or two. Okinawans loved pork. But the main cash crop in Okinawa was sugarcane. It was so well-adapted to the hot, wet climate it grew wild all over the place. So, boys like Keikichi Arakawa would surely have learned how to cut and process sugar cane, even though the work would have been unpleasant in the extreme. Based on what we know about Keikichi from the memories of his children, he was not a person who longed to be a farmer. In fact, he probably wanted nothing more than to lead a life as far from the farm village of Onaha as possible.

¹⁹ These names were provided to family historian Grace Arakawa Ige by her aunt Yoshiko Arakawa Arakawa.

²⁰ Sanra was probably his *Warabi-naa* 童名 (childhood name). It was a common practice in Okinawa to go by these names until some point in adulthood. Hereafter, we will refer to him only as Keikichi,

Nta and Maka Arakawa were not about to stop having children after the arrival of Keikichi. The sons kept coming: Jiro in 1894, Kame in 1898, and Zentoku about 1902. With the arrival in 1906 of daughter Tomiko, the Arakawa home must have been overflowing with humanity. And as mentioned earlier, times

were tough for the Okinawans. So Keikichi Arakawa, eighteen years old, set sail in 1906 for the United States Territory of Hawaii, where lots of his peers were headed, and where a lad could earn cash money for his labor in the sugarcane fields.

The Arakawa Neighborhood in Onaha, Okinawa



This pre-war map shows the location of the Arakawa home in Onaha , a section of Nishihara, Okinawa in the 1930s. (Annotations added per the recollections of Harry Susumu Arakawa in 2019). The property is labelled “Nii Me She Ri”, a name which has no specific meaning, but was apparently the *Yagou* [or *ya-n-na*] of this branch of the Arakawa family. The entire area was destroyed in the Battle of Okinawa and rebuilt after the war. Nearly half the residents of Nishihara Town died in the Battle, but many residents of Onaha, including the Arakawas, fled to the north and survived.

Life in Hawaii

In the early 20th century, there were no docks in Naha harbor, so Keikichi would have been rowed out to his anchored steamship in a small boat to embark for the short 2-3 day passage to Kobe, Japan. In Kobe, after undergoing a health check, he would have elbowed his way into a slot below decks of his transport ship's steerage compartment, where people were jammed together in unsanitary conditions. He was bound for Honolulu, a grueling 12-day ordeal, especially when the seas were rough and the passengers were seasick. Immigrants probably packed their own provisions for the voyage, since there was no food service available onboard for steerage passengers. Once in Honolulu, Keikichi would have to clear immigration, then find a job on one of several plantations eager to hire hard-working Japanese men.²¹ At the time Keikichi entered, almost all Japanese in Hawaii were *men*.

Records indicate that Keikichi was living in Ahuimanu, Oahu in 1913. So it is reasonable to assume he had been working on the Ahuimanu sugar plantation from 1906-1913. The work was backbreaking, but a man could earn about \$1.00 for 10 hours of work, which was more than he could fetch in Okinawa.²² Single men like Keikichi, who worked hard, stayed sober and didn't gamble, could perhaps afford to send about \$4.00 per month

²¹ From 1900-1908, importation of laborers under contract had been abolished, so foreign workers were free to arrange their own terms of employment. During this period, some 71,000 Japanese entered Hawaii, many of whom subsequently went to higher paying jobs on the West Coast of the U.S. This caused deep concern by American politicians, so a deal, called the "Gentlemen's Agreement" was struck: Japan, starting in 1907-08 placed restrictions on its citizens travelling to Hawaii. Only returning former immigrants or relatives of immigrants living in Hawaii would be allowed in. So Keikichi had become the "key" that unlocked the "door" to Hawaii for his family members, including any future bride. Despite these restrictions, immigration continued unabated, with over 61,000 Japanese men, women and children (25,000 from Okinawa) entering Hawaii by 1924. [Kawakami, pg. 2-3].

back home to Okinawa.²³ By 1913, his younger brothers were old enough to share the burden of supporting the Arakawa family, and Keikichi could at last hope to take a wife.

Possibly lured by the prospect of earning some hard cash of his own, and probably hoping to pave the way for his younger sons to emigrate, Nta Arakawa, Keikichi's 54-year-old father, decided to give Hawaii a try. He arrived in Honolulu on July 2, 1913, allowed to emigrate because he had been "summoned" by his son Keikichi.²⁴ For six months, he probably lived and worked alongside Keikichi at the sugar plantation in Aluimanu. During this time, apparently deciding that life in Hawaii would be a good deal for his younger sons, Nta took it upon himself to file whatever papers were necessary to summon Jiro (19) and Kame (15) to Hawaii. But he did more than that. He also acted as matchmaker for Keikichi. He very likely made the case that Keikichi should marry a certain girl from Onaha, 19-year-old Uta Aragaki. Apparently agreeing with this match, Keikichi summoned Uta to come share his life in Hawaii.

So it was that Keikichi's wife-to-be, Uta (19), as well as his brothers Jiro (19) and Kame (15) arrived in Honolulu in December of 1913.²⁵ And also, probably without much delay, the Arakawas – Keikichi, Uta, Jiro, Kame and Nta- set sail for Maui to take their places among the multitude of workers in the

²² Men earned \$1.00, women \$0.45 for a 10 hour day. [Kawakami, pg. 28].

²³ Average annual remittances for Okinawans was ¥88 [Kerr pg. 438]. This was equivalent to \$44/year at the time.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tables_of_historical_exchange_rates_to_the_United_States_dollar

²⁴ In Japanese, relatives "summoned" to Hawaii were termed *Yobiyose*. This usually applied to brides, but in this case, Keikichi summoned his dad, not his bride. Immigration records tell us he arrived from Kobe aboard the S.S. Mongolia.

²⁵ Jiro arrived Dec. 19 aboard the *Hong Kong Maru*. Kame arrived Dec. 23 aboard the *Shinyo Maru*. Uta had arrived Dec. 16 aboard the *Persia*.

sugarcane fields at Kaheka Camp, near Paia, on Maui's north shore. Nta stayed there for 2 ½ years before returning to Okinawa in August, 1916. The brothers labored on for the rest of the decade, but for Keikichi, married life there was full of twists and turns, as we shall see.

Picture Brides

The *Picture Bride* system was not unique to Japan or to Hawaii, but was extensively used by Japanese and Okinawan plantation workers there in search of a mate. Marriages arranged by parents had long been the tradition in Okinawa and Japan, so that was nothing new. However, the relatively recent exodus of Okinawan young men to foreign parts left girls seeking husbands with little choice but to advertise themselves abroad. For some, the lure of a life in “paradise” called to them. To others, the prospect of marriage in Okinawa was terrifying, where a bride became a member of her husband's family and therefore subservient to her mother-in-law. She was expected to do farm work along with all the domestic chores for the multi-generational family, as well as bear and raise children. Surely, Hawaii would be better?²⁶

Marriage arrangements often required an intermediary, such as parents, other relatives, or a professional matchmaker – a *nakoodo*. Typically, brides were 16-18 years old, their prospective husbands in their 20s or early 30s.²⁷ The standard system included the exchange of photos, but this was often a formality, since the arrangements had already been made. The

pictures gave the prospective spouses an opportunity to reject the arranged selection, but this was probably unusual. “True love” never entered into the equation in these marriages, at least not at the outset.

A marriage ceremony - *sans* groom- would be held in Okinawa, complete with all the rituals and customs of an actual in-person ceremony. Sometimes a relative would play the part of the groom. Sometimes, the actual groom's picture would do the job. There might be a party with fancy food, attended by friends and relations, then the girl would often move in with her in-laws for a “breaking-in” period, which could last as much as 6 months. Then, equipped with little more than the bare necessities and maybe a nice kimono to wear in Hawaii, this young girl would leave her home, perhaps forever.

Okinawan girls would travel with a number of prospective brides to Kobe, where, in addition to having a health exam, they would for the first time meet *Naichi* girls – those from the main islands of Japan – and endure the taunts directed their way from them. The *Naichi* were also uneducated country girls, but like teenagers everywhere, liked to have someone to look down on. The Okinawan girls served this purpose.²⁸ Among the social norms that differentiated *Uchinanchu* [Okinawan] girls from their *Naichi* counterparts, was the method of tying the *Obi*, the kimono sash. Japanese girls tied the *Obi* behind their backs, Okinawan girls tied the *Obi* in front. Only “courtesans” tied in front on the main islands! The two groups of picture brides

²⁶ Information about marriage of Okinawans comes from Barbara Kawakami's excellent book *Picture Bride Stories*.

²⁷ The standard tale of men sending photos of younger men back to the home country and surprising their poor brides upon first meeting probably happened, but this was only one of many hazards facing the *Picture Brides*.

²⁸ It was not felt necessary to educate Japanese or Okinawan girls beyond 8th grade in those days.

however soon found common ground – they were after all, in the same predicament. They learned to support one another as they waited to board the ship for the 12 torturous days at sea.

Upon arrival in Honolulu, the girls were subjected to detailed interrogation by immigration officers, along with a written test to measure literacy in the Japanese language.²⁹ They identified themselves by their married names, and gave as the names of their nearest relative in Okinawa, that of their mother-in-law or father-in-law. Their height was measured and a notation was made of hair color and identifying marks such as moles, scars or tattoos. They told how much money they were carrying (usually not much) and who had paid for their passage (usually their husband). Then, after stating where they would be living in Hawaii, they waited in detention for the arrival of their husbands. Sometimes they waited a day or so, sometimes weeks or months, and sometimes the husband never appeared at all. In such cases, they would be deported.

A marriage in Japan was not sufficient for the Hawaii authorities. Husbands had to obtain a legal marriage license, and the couple had to undergo a marriage ceremony by a Christian minister, despite the fact that few of them were at that time Christian. In some cases, these marriages were performed *en masse*, with a group of 20 or so couples transported to the preacher in a livestock truck. All of this occurred before the bride and groom became even remotely acquainted.

Not surprisingly, these marriages often ran into trouble. Most girls were put to work in the fields immediately, though some were able to live on their husband's earnings alone, and stay

home to bear and raise children. Sometimes, the marriages never got off the ground because either the bride or groom felt defrauded by a phony picture or erroneous background check. However, most couples made a go of it, but not all were successful. The living conditions at the labor camps were adequate, with wood frame houses for each family, but working conditions were brutal. A working woman would labor hours in the often-blistering heat or drenching rain, then go home, gather wood to heat a bath for her husband before cooking his supper. If there were children, she might be lucky enough to have day care at their camp for which she would have to pay nearly as much as she earned in the day, sometimes more. In many cases, she would take her infant to the fields strapped to her back as she cut cane or weeded the fields.

The worst thing, from the viewpoint of a bride's welfare, would be her failure to bear children. If, after a couple of years, no babies were forthcoming, husbands would often divorce their wives, leaving them to fend for themselves. Such a woman would be of no interest to most men, for whom the main point of marriage was procreation. But the imbalance of men-vs-women was so severe in the pre-1920s that most of these rejected women were probably snapped up by men interested in having an obedient servant, children or no children.

Under the pressure cooker of life in the farming camps, there were all kinds of social problems that could lead to divorce-or just miserable lives. Chief among these was drinking, with its notorious byproduct, wife beating. And, of course there was adultery. Sometimes people just preferred another partner than the one they were stuck with in their arranged marriage. Formal

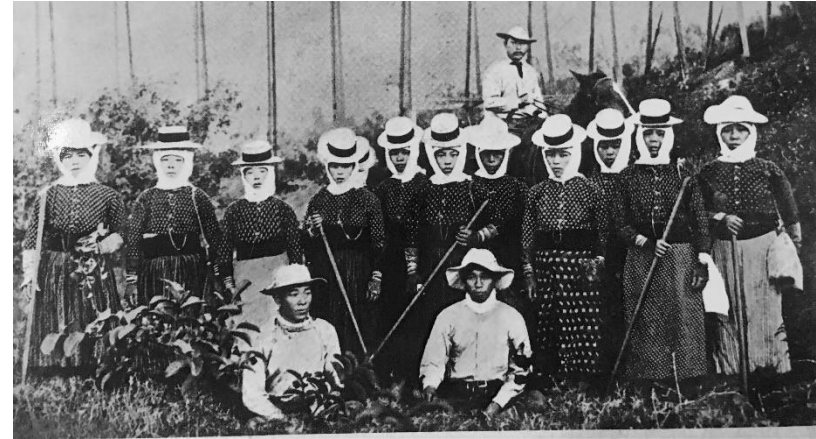
²⁹ Literacy was apparently not a requirement, because some women who could not read or write Japanese were admitted.

divorces of camp workers were not routinely recorded in Hawaii, so only ones involving contested property have left any paper trail. Divorces among camp workers were not infrequent, but in most cases seem to have been handled informally, without intervention of the Territorial legal system. In many of these cases, a man whose wife left him for another man would be compensated by the new husband with a cash payment, and in some cases, he would use this money to recruit a new wife.

Okinawa



Sugar farming and processing was the major cash crop of Okinawa. Here, workers in Okinawa in 1935 cut the cane by hand and load it aboard a horse cart for transport to a small pressing mill.



Hawaii



Okinawans, both men and women, worked in the cane fields of Hawaii, under the supervision of a *Luna* [usually Portuguese]. A man earned \$1.00 for a 10 hour day, a woman earned \$0.41 for 8 hours.

The Convoluted Marital History of Keikichi Arakawa

Wife #1: Uta Aragaki

In December 1913, after seven years of hard labor in the sugarcane fields, Keikichi Arakawa finally greeted his bride at the immigration station in Honolulu. She was 19-year old Uta, from Nishihara, whose maiden name matched that of Keikichi's own mom: Aragaki. In fact, Uta Aragaki's mother was one Kamado Arakawa, raising the likely possibility that she and Keikichi were closely related. In fact, marriage between residents of the home village was the historical norm in Okinawa, so everyone in Onaha would have been somehow related.³⁰ Uta's father, Kame Aragaki, was dead by December 1913, indicating that one of Uta's main motivations for emigration might have been escape from poverty in Okinawa.³¹ It seems likely that this was a marriage arranged by the families in Okinawa, not by a matchmaker, and that part of Nta Arakawa's purpose in moving to Hawaii in 1913 was to facilitate this marriage. It was a union with every chance of success, but it actually failed within a couple of years. What happened? And how do we know the marriage had failed? Simple: by early 1917, Keikichi had remarried.³²

In fact, we have found no record whatsoever of Uta Arakawa beyond her license to marry Keikichi Arakawa. Was this

marriage a sham, intended to gain access to Hawaii for a relative? Possibly, but not likely.³³ Did Uta die within 2 years of her arrival? A real possibility. She could have, for example, died in childbirth, or of some typically-fatal disease of the pre-antibiotic era. Unfortunately, no record of death for Uta Arakawa that has surfaced. We are left with the very real possibility that Keikichi, like so many men in the camps, simply rejected Uta for failure to bear a child. If he did so, it would likely have been with the backing of his father Nta, who was living in the same labor camp, who would have been insistent in his desire to see his oldest son bear his own heir apparent. But there is another possible explanation for Keikichi divorcing Uta: he fell in love with someone else.

Wife #2: Kama Goya

Keikichi and Uta had moved to Maui immediately after marriage, to the Kaheka labor camp of the Maui Sugar Company near the town of Paia. In that camp lived a man named Tara Kohatsu and his wife Kama. Like Keikichi, Tara Kohatsu was from Nishihara. He was a few months younger than Keikichi and had emigrated in 1906, as had Keikichi. In 1911, Tara fetched his bride, 17-or-18-year-old Kama Goya, in Honolulu and brought her back to Maui.³⁴

By 1916, five years later, Mr. and Mrs. Kohatsu had produced no offspring. As we know from later events, neither was

³⁰ Sered, pg. 79

³¹ This information comes from the marriage license obtained in Honolulu by Keikichi Arakawa on 17 Dec, 1913: http://ulukau.org/algene/collect/algene/pdfs/Oahu_pdfs/O-86%201911-1914_pdfs/O-86%20p414.pdf She arrived 16 Dec., 1913 and was admitted 19 Dec, 1913.

³² Possibly as early as February 10, 1916, according to the Arakawa Family *Koseki* of 1958, but no later than early 1917, given the birth of their first child, Fumiko, on 12 Nov., 1917, in Paia Maui.

³³ Immigration fraud was common. Girls would travel to Hawaii with a relative or family friend in a scam known as *Kari Fufu*, wherein women would claim to be the man's wife, then go their own ways. After a 1-year waiting period, they would "divorce" and be free to marry someone else. But this marriage did not fit the profile of *Kari-Fufu*.

³⁴ Marriage license of 6 Sept. 1911 says she was the daughter of Jinyei and Nabi Goya (probably of Nishihara), and was 18 years old: http://ulukau.org/algene/collect/algene/pdfs/Oahu_pdfs/O-83%20Number%201_pdfs/O-83%20p163.pdf Immigration record says she was 17.

infertile. Whatever the reason, Tara Kohatsu could not have been at all happy with his wife of 5 years and may have wanted to divorce her. What we do know is this: in 1917, Tara Kohatsu returned to his family home in Nishihara, where he married a 16-year-old girl, Kamado. They entered Hawaii on the 28th of December, 1917, and returned to the plantation in Kaheka, Maui, where they presumably took up residence in Tara's plantation house. Their marriage was long and successful, producing 8 children by 1935.³⁵

There is, of course, the possibility that Tara Kohatsu did not divorce his wife Kama, but that she divorced him. The failure to reproduce in 5 years of marriage could have been due to any number of reasons, but an unwilling wife could be one reason. If, after 5 years of loveless marriage, Kama had met the admittedly handsome Keikichi Arakawa, sparks could have flown. However, one thing is clear: Kama Goya Kohatsu was not a barren woman. On 25 November, 1917, Kama Goya Kohatsu Arakawa gave birth to her first child, Fumiko, in Paia, Maui. Three-and-a-half years later, 22 April, 1921, she gave birth to the longed-for heir, the oldest son's oldest son: Yoshiichi Arakawa.

But there is more to a happy marriage than childbearing success. The partners must get along, and in Japanese society of the early 20th century this meant that the wife must be obedient. And she must be obedient not only to her husband, but to his parents, and his mother in particular. This was probably the reason for the 6-month breaking-in period for Okinawan Picture Brides. A girl who satisfied her mother-by-marriage would be allowed to

emigrate. If she failed, the marriage was off (all this without any input from the prospective groom). And as we know, in 1921 Kama had never met her mother-in-law, even though she had borne her two grandchildren. This was problem.

In 1922, Fumiko Arakawa had turned five, and would soon be needing an education. Keikichi Arakawa, like most plantation workers, would probably have considered himself Japanese, not American. Many workers had intended from the start to return someday to Okinawa with money in their pockets and -if all went well- a family in tow. So it was that Keikichi Arakawa gathered up his wife and children, took the ferry from Maui to Honolulu, and booked passage on the *Taiyo Maru* bound for Yokohama, with connection to Naha, Okinawa. And as they waited in Honolulu for their ship's departure, we believe Kama decided to have her picture made.³⁶

In the bustling port of Honolulu in those days, there were services galore for the transient populations. Among them were photographers specializing in high-class portraiture, complete with costumes to flatter the subject. Kama was a very attractive woman of 29 who had probably never had her picture taken. She had labored for 11 years in the cane fields wearing nothing but crude protective clothing. Now she had a chance to show herself to maximum advantage in a decorated photo studio, seated on a fancy settee, clad in a beautiful silk kimono with obi tied behind, and sporting a dress wig with decorative combs. Surely this would impress her friends and family back home? In the portrait, her beautiful eyes stare directly at the camera with a no-nonsense gaze. Her right hand tells a story. It reveals a tan line running

³⁵ U.S. Census of 1940 for Paia, Maui.

³⁶ The time and place of where this picture was taken is speculation on the author's part. In fact, there is no independent proof that this picture, which was found in

the effects of Ken Arakawa after his death, is actually of his mother. But her appearance and details of the portrait strongly argue in support of this conclusion.

across its back where she had bound it for protection while working in the cane fields. Even today, the viewer of this portrait can see that she was a natural beauty, and could read into her determined expression a hint of willfulness.³⁷



Studio Portrait believed to be of Kama Goya Arakawa, taken in Honolulu in 1922 prior to her sailing with her family to Okinawa.

³⁷ At least this is what the author sees in this portrait. Barbara Kawakami, who examined a copy of this portrait, concluded it was made in Hawaii, not Okinawa, based on the formal attire of the subject.

When they arrived in Onaha in early November, 1922, grandma Maka Arakawa was surely delighted to meet her grandchildren for the first time. She may not have felt the same about her new daughter-in-law. After all, Maka had surely been involved in the selection and approval of Keikichi's first wife, but she had not vetted Kama. Possibly, things went well enough for the first 3 months, while Keikichi was there. But after this time, in February, 1923, Keikichi returned to Hawaii, leaving Kama, Fumiko and Yoshiichi behind, in the household of his parents. At that point, the small family home housed Nta (64) and Maka (55), their son Zentoku (20), daughter Tomiko (16), daughter-in-law Kama (29), granddaughter Fumiko (5) and grandson Yoshiichi (18 mo). This was undoubtedly a stressful situation, but Keikichi had decided his wife and children should stay with his folks, so, as a dutiful wife, that is what Kama had to do.

We might imagine that Kama Goya Arakawa was not really "dutiful"- especially to her mother-in-law.³⁸ Another 3 months was about all Kama could take. So, she decided - apparently without consulting her husband - to return to Hawaii with her infant Yoshiichi, who was probably still being nursed. Fumiko would stay behind so that she could benefit from education in the Okinawa schools. From Kama's point of view, this seemed the best that could be done. Her husband - and probably, her mother-in-law- would not have seen it this way.³⁹

Kama Arakawa arrived in Honolulu aboard the *Tenyo Maru* from Kobe with her 2-year-old son Yoshiichi on June 15, 1923. She told immigration authorities she was going to meet her husband Keikichi in Paia, Maui, and that he had paid for her

³⁸ Family lore remembers Maka Arakawa as a "tough old lady."

³⁹ This paragraph involves speculation. Obviously, there is no way to know what people were actually thinking a century ago.

passage to Hawaii. Per standard practice, she was detained at the immigration center in Honolulu pending Keikichi's arrival, since single foreign women were not allowed into Hawaii unescorted. So, she waited...and waited...and waited. After 2 ½ months, Keikichi had not arrived to claim her, so she was DEPORTED on the grounds of "Illiteracy" and "Moral Turpitude". (This latter charge was a catch-all category authorities applied to unaccompanied women, on the presumption they must have come to engage in prostitution.) Illiteracy was another matter. She failed the standard test and was listed as "unable to read" in the Japanese language.⁴⁰ If she was unable to read, she surely was not able to write, so could not contact Keikichi by mail. Nevertheless, she surely got someone to write to him in Paia to let him know she and Yoshiichi had arrived. But when he had not come to get her by September 3, 1923, authorities shipped her and her son out aboard the *Anyo Maru* bound for Yokohama.

This was, to put in mildly, a life-changing event.

What happened? It is possible that Keikichi got word of her arrival but decided not to come fetch her. He very likely had ordered her to remain in Okinawa, and she had very likely disobeyed. We know from reports of his subsequent behavior as a husband and father that he was traditional in the sense that he, the head of the family, was to be obeyed in all things. If he had relented in this case of egregious disobedience by his wife, he would certainly have lost face, and this would not be something he was willing to bear. So, he could have turned his back on his

wife and child, leaving them to find their own way back to Okinawa as best they could. Alternatively, he could have already moved to Honolulu to seek work without her knowing, so she would have been unable to contact him. In fact, this could have been his plan from the start: relocate the family to Okinawa, then set out alone in the big city to find a job. We will never know what actually happened, or how Kama was able to get the money necessary to pay her passage home. But somehow, she managed, and returned to Onaha in the fall of 1923 to meet her fate.

The Arakawas were a traditional family, and in such families the elders were firmly in charge. When Kama returned, her in-laws took her 2-year-old son and apparently cast her out.⁴¹ Her only refuge would have been with her relatives in the Goya family, who were probably none too pleased to see their 30-year-old divorced daughter come back home. We know that she must have lived in the Onaha/Nishihara neighborhood because, in later years, in collusion with her daughter Fumiko, Kama was able to secretly meet her children in the public park without grandma's knowing.⁴²

So it was that Fumiko and Yoshiichi Arakawa, both born in Hawaii, would spend their entire childhoods in Okinawa, forever separated from their mother, even though she lived nearby. Their life was hard. Their grandmother was a strict taskmistress, probably without a lot of affection for the children. Laborious chores were a regular part of their days. There was one bright spot: both children excelled at school. Eventually, Fumiko would graduate from the prestigious Okinawa Daiichi High

⁴⁰ Although she failed, Katsu (Keikichi's 3rd wife) and Kamado Kazuko (Kame's wife) both passed.

⁴¹ In those days, in-laws had the power to divorce a daughter-in-law, with or without the knowledge of the woman's husband. So it is entirely possible that

Keikichi had no intention of divorcing Kama, but rather just went along with what his mother had decided.

⁴² And in 1938, when she entered Hawaii again, Fumiko listed "K Kama Arakawa, mother" as her closest relative in Okinawa.

School in Naha, and Yoshiichi would become an honor student chosen to travel with his classmates to Nara, Japan, on a field trip for boys being groomed for leadership by the Japanese establishment. In the absence of his father, young Yoshiichi looked up to his uncle Zentoku, who was a talented athlete. Yoshi took up running because he admired his uncle's speed on the track. And he was surely to have been impressed that uncle Zentoku won a contest to become the javelin champion of Okinawa. It must have been a severe blow to the entire family, but especially to the admiring Yoshiichi, when his uncle Zentoku died of tuberculosis in the early 1930s.



Fumiko [11] and Yoshiichi [7] living with grandparents in Onaha in about 1928.

⁴³ Love's Bakery: <https://www.lovesbakeryhawaii.com/about>

Wife #3: Katsu Yamauchi

At some time after returning to Hawaii in 1923, Keikichi Arakawa extricated himself from the plantation and settled in Honolulu to become a non-farm worker. He had had enough of the farming life, and had probably been planning this move for some time. In fact, it could be one of the reasons he consigned his family to life in Okinawa. It would give him the opportunity to find a better-paying job as a single man unburdened by having to house his family in the city. By 1926, he had signed on as an apprentice baker at Love's Biscuit and Bread Company on Nu'uaniu St. in Honolulu.^{43,44} It became clear, however, that his employer was more interested in his labor at the ovens than in training him in the baker's trade. So Keikichi carried a little notebook with him throughout the work day, making detailed notes on what to do. He learned by example and by doing, not from being taught.

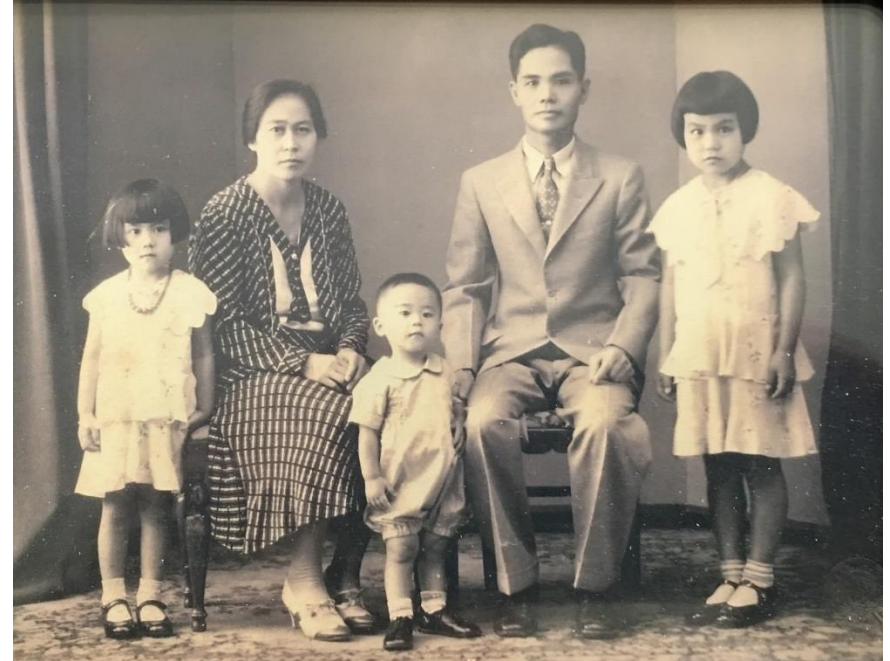
During this time in Honolulu he met Katsu Yamauchi Zukemura, a divorced woman from Yonabaru, the town next to Onaha back in Okinawa. Katsu had married Toshimichi Zukemura when she was 23 years old, having just arrived in Hawaii. Within 1 year she had given birth to a daughter, Misayo, and a year after that had divorced her husband. Reportedly, Zukemura was a gambler, and the 25-year-old Katsu was unwilling to put up with this destructive habit of his.

When and how Katsu met Keikichi Arakawa is not known, but it must have been within a year or so after her August 17, 1926 divorce. Katsu and Keikichi got together no later than the beginning of 1928, when she became pregnant with their first child. Since they had not married in Okinawa, they needed to go

⁴⁴ The Honolulu City directory of 1926 (pg. 107) lists him living at 1233e Lakimela Lane, Honolulu, which is within walking distance of Nu'uaniu Ave.

through the formality of a marriage in Hawaii, and for this they required a marriage license. There was just one problem: they both needed proof of divorce. Since Katsu had divorced in Hawaii, she had no trouble doing this. However, Keikichi had never officially divorced his wife Kama in Hawaii. So he had to write to Okinawa for some sort of proof that he was no longer married. This proof must have arrived in early October, 1928, because on October 7 he finally got a license to wed Katsu.⁴⁵ They were officially married on October 8, 1928. Their daughter Akiko was born on October 24, the first of four children they would bring into the world over a 16-year period.

Family lore tells us that Katsu adored Keikichi. She thought he was handsome and well-proportioned, and – most importantly – he supported her and treated her well. He made a home for Katsu’s 3-year old daughter as well as the newly-arrived Akiko. He was 40, she was 28. They would be married through thick and thin for the rest of his life. Perhaps most importantly, Katsu was an obedient wife. Keikichi asked a lot of her, and she responded dutifully. Their family added a son, Harry Susumu⁴⁶, in 1932, while Keikichi continued to work as a baker in Honolulu. Their family life was apparently happy and uneventful until 1933, when news arrived from Okinawa that Keikichi’s mother had died. This was an event requiring action.



In 1933, after the death of his mother, Keikichi was obligated to care for his father in Okinawa. He sent Katsu and her children back to Okinawa to fulfill this obligation. Keikichi remained in Honolulu to work and support the family. Here they are just before Katsu and her children set sail for Okinawa in Aug. 1933. L-R: Agnes Akiko [5]; Katsu, Harry Susumu [1½]; Keikichi; Misayo Zukemura, [8].

⁴⁵ The license is annotated: “Groom divorced in Japan,” “Bride divorced in Honolulu Aug 17, 1926 in which decree she reverted to her maiden name.”

http://ulukau.org/algene/collect/algene/pdfs/Oahu_pdfs/O-90_pdfs/O-90%20p128.pdf

⁴⁶ In the effects of the late Harry Arakawa was a card identifying him as having been born in Hawaii, and with the name Harry Susumu. The card was issued when

he was 1 year old, showing that his parents gave him an American name when he was young. Keikichi admonished him to carry this card on his person at all times during the war, knowing that it would be his ticket back to the United States one day.

Return to Okinawa

In Japanese and Okinawan families, the responsibility of the eldest son is taken seriously. He will become the legal head of the family when his father dies. He will inherit the family property, is expected to care for his parents when they are old, and to assume responsibility for the family tomb. With the death of Keikichi's mother, he was doubly obligated, because in addition to his elderly father, there were his own two children from his first marriage, Fumiko (16) and Yoshiichi (12) to care for. They had been living with their grandparents in Onaha since 1922-23 and were now in need of a mother.

Apparently, Keikichi never had a desire to return to Onaha. In effect, he delegated the responsibilities of oldest son to his youngest brother, Zentoku, who stayed behind while his three older brothers went to Hawaii. But, tragically, Zentoku had died in about 1930 of tuberculosis. So now the only men living in Onaha were grandpa Nta (65) and grandson Yoshiichi (12). Keikichi could not return to Okinawa and still continue to earn the kind of money he could as a baker in Honolulu. He was an ambitious man, striving always for advancement in society. In addition to learning the baker's trade, he took English language lessons in Honolulu. He had absolutely no desire to return to the agrarian life in Onaha. So he instructed his dutiful wife Katsu to go in his place.

The 33-year-old Katsu was now the mother of two children by Keikichi: Agnes Akiko (5) and Harry Susumu (1). In addition, she had her daughter from her first marriage, Misayo (8) living with them in Honolulu. So she was faced with not only moving

back to Okinawa, but also caring for her father-in-law, her own children, and her husband's two children from his first marriage. And waiting for her in Okinawa, literally on the dock where her ship landed were her first husband's parents. As hard as it is to understand in the modern age, these in-laws had rights to their grandchild that were superior to the child's own mother. As she landed, Katsu was met by her Zukemura in-laws who confiscated 8-year-old Misayo. Welcome home!

Katsu and her children had been living in an apartment building in Honolulu⁴⁷ with running water, indoor plumbing, gas and electricity, paved streets with public transit, and four solid walls to protect against occasional storms. Now they were living in a small Okinawan-style house without solid walls, without running water (there was a hand-pumped well in the yard), an outhouse, no utilities, often-muddy dirt roads supporting transport by foot and horse cart, and typhoons arriving on a regular basis. And while markets in 1930s Honolulu offered a wide variety of items for sale, the tiny Arakawa market in their Onaha neighborhood was basic at best. Most food was grown in their garden and either eaten fresh or canned by Katsu. The staple food was the Okinawan purple-fleshed sweet potato. And for protein, she raised pigs and kept *Unagi* (fresh-water eels) in a pond behind the house.⁴⁸

Life in Okinawa would require the skills of a super-housewife, and Katsu rose to the task. Not only did she cook, clean and supervise the family, she tended the family garden plot that provided much of their diet. She made clothes for her children, even weaving fabric for kimonos on a hand-loom and - as hard

⁴⁷ 173 N. Kukui St.

⁴⁸ Her stepson Yoshiichi in later years preferred not to eat *Unagi*, as he had unpleasant memories of having to fish them out of the pond with his bare hands for Katsu to cook.

as it is to imagine- she even made silk thread from the cocoons of silkworms she raised!⁴⁹

No one benefitted more from the motherly ministrations of Katsu than did her stepchildren Fumiko and Yoshiichi. Yoshi was a model student and dutiful stepson to Katsu, the only mother he had ever really known. And she, in turn, admired him, telling her own son Susumu to shape up and follow Yoshiichi's example.⁵⁰ Fumiko was another matter. A 16-year-old girl when Katsu arrived in 1933, she behaved as many stepdaughters do toward their stepmothers: with adolescent rebelliousness. After all, Fumi resented not being able to be with her own mother, and was secretly in periodic contact with her in Onaha. And there was the fact that Fumi had become an extremely beautiful girl, known as the *Komachi* ("town beauty") of Onaha.⁵¹ So in addition to all her other responsibilities, Katsu had a rebellious teenager on her hands from the time she arrived in Okinawa. But Katsu did her best, making sure that Fumiko had a beautiful kimono to wear at the time of her high school graduation.⁵² One thing she did not do: find a husband for her eligible stepdaughter.

In 1936, Keikichi's brother Jiro and family came to Onaha for a visit.⁵³ So the Okinawa Arakawas joined their Hawaii relatives in the Onaha photo studio for a group portrait. This picture gives the best evidence of Katsu's positive influence on the welfare of her family. Every child is impeccably dressed, with both Katsu and Fumiko looking fine in their silk kimonos, Akiko and

Susumu neatly clad in western-style outfits, Yoshiichi in his school uniform, and grandpa wearing the same dress outfit he had worn a decade earlier. Little did they suspect this would be their last picture together in Okinawa.



Front L-R: Akiko, Katsu, Susumu, Grandfather Nta Arakawa, Alice Yasuko (daughter of Jiro and Yoshiko), Yoshiko; Back L-R: Fumiko, Jiro, Yoshiichi (wearing his school uniform).

⁴⁹ This was the recollection of both Harry Susumu and Agnes Akiko [via her children], remembering their mom in the 1930s.

⁵⁰ This according to Harry Susumu Arakawa in 2019.

⁵¹ This according to Takakazu Arakawa in 2019. Having been born after Fumiko left Okinawa, he never knew her as a beautiful teenager. So he must have heard this from his mother, or some other family member.

⁵² 1936 was a big year for Fumiko. Not only did she graduate high school, but she traveled to Osaka to visit her aunt Tomiko. This would have been a perfect opportunity for the lovely, 18-year-old Fumiko to find a husband from within the Okinawa community on Osaka. But nothing came of it.

⁵³ Harry Arakawa remembered that at this time Jiro may have been contemplating a move back to Onaha, but in the end decided against it, and opted to stay in Waipahu, Oahu, work at the cleaning business with his brother Kame.

Back to Hawaii

In January 1936, while Keikichi was still in Hawaii, his father retired as head of the family, making Keikichi now formally responsible for the Nii-Me-She-Ri branch, and increasing pressure on him to return to Okinawa.⁵⁴ He finally came home to Onaha on May 4, 1937, a few months after his brother Jiro returned to Hawaii from his Onaha visit. Keikichi had not seen his wife Katsu and their two children for 3 ½ years, and was surely anxious to reunite with them. But he had not seen his older children for 15 years! He didn't really know them. Fumiko perhaps remembered something about her dad, but Yoshiichi was an infant when he was last with Keikichi, so his father would have been known to him only indirectly, through whatever stories his mother or grandparents might have told him. The same was true for Harry Susumu, who had been 1 ½ years old when he was last on the same island with his father.

Soon after his arrival in Okinawa, Keikichi determined to get his older children back to their birthplace, Hawaii. Part of the reason may have been his concern about the political situation in Japan. Tensions had been flaring between Japan and China since 1931, and war erupted in China just about a month after Keikichi's arrival in Okinawa. Having lived in Hawaii for 31 years, Keikichi had formed an opinion: Hawaii was the place his children should live. There was more opportunity in Hawaii. There was family in Hawaii. And now, with war looming between Japan and China, there was the issue of safety. However, there was a practical problem: who would care for his

children in Hawaii? The obvious choice would be Katsu. Why not just bring everyone to Hawaii? This would have made the most sense except for the fact that Grandpa was still in Okinawa, and probably unwilling to move. So Keikichi decided to take his older children to Hawaii, but leave Katsu, the younger children, and grandpa in Onaha.⁵⁵

Starting in November, 1937, six months after he arrived in Okinawa, Keikichi packed his son Yoshiichi (16) off to Hawaii, with orders to go live with his uncle Jiro in Waipahu. Jiro, his wife Yoshiko and 5-year-old daughter Alice Yasuko lived in Waipahu with his brother Kame's family, in a small apartment above the family-run laundry & dry-cleaning establishment on Depot Road. In April of the following year, 1938, they would be joined by Keikichi's daughter Fumiko (20).

The Arakawa Cleaners

The Arakawa Cleaners was actually the creation of the younger Arakawa son, Kame. Ten years younger than Keikichi, Kame was a hard-working man who started out as a laborer in the Paia sugarcane fields, where he ambitiously started a small business making and selling *Mochi* and *Manju*, two Japanese treats made with red bean paste and sugar. In 1920, still single, he struck out on his own, moving to Oahu to work at the Ewa Sugar Plantation in Waipahu.⁵⁶ In 1923, Kame got his own wife from Nishihara, Kamado Kazuko Katekaru.⁵⁷ Their marriage prospered, as did Kame's career. Somehow in the 1920s, probably at Kazuko's urging, he broke free of the cane fields and learned the clothes-

⁵⁴ This is recorded in the 1940 *Koseki*.

⁵⁵ Obviously, we cannot know for sure what Keikichi was actually thinking. The narrative above involves speculation.

⁵⁶ The 1920 census shows him boarding with the Higa family in Ewa, working as a field laborer.

⁵⁷ Kazuko was born in 1907 to Niwa Katekaru and his wife Kama Arakawa of Nishihara. A highly-respected member of the Arakawa family, she had been reportedly in line to become the village *Noro* [priestess], but had opted for emigration and marriage instead.

cleaning trade by apprenticing to a cleaning establishment in Waipahu. Five children arrived at regular intervals from 1924 to 1937. By 1930, the couple had gone into business for themselves, moving their family to an apartment above their new workplace, the Arakawa Cleaners on Depot Road.



Building housing the *Waipahu Clothes and Hat Cleaning* business at the corner of Waipahu and Depot Rd. in Waipahu, founded by Kame Arakawa [1898-1958] about 1930. This photo was taken in 2014, long after the cleaners closed in the 1980s.

The *Waipahu Clothes and Hat Cleaning Shop* was established by Kame Arakawa sometime before 1930, when the building where it was located was new.⁵⁸ They were located in the heart of Waipahu village, an area with an elaborate movie theater and the now-famous Arakawa Store. Although brothers Jiro and Kame had both come to Hawaii together in 1913, the 4-years-younger Kame was the first to marry and leave the plantation to run his own business. (He liked the idea of a service business as opposed to retail, because he would not have to carry inventory). The business served the workers in the local Ewa Sugar Plantation as well as military customers from nearby Pearl Harbor. Once he was established, Kame pressured his older brother Jiro to join the business and take a bride.⁵⁹ So, Jiro married the much-younger, Hawaii-born Yoshiko Arakawa and they moved from Maui to live and work with the family in Waipahu.⁶⁰ Jiro ran the hat cleaning and blocking part of the business, Kame did the clothes pressing, Kazuko the cleaning, and Yoshiko- with her fluent English- dealt with the customers at the front of the store.⁶¹ Panama hats worn by the Filipino customers required starch, and Kame's daughter Grace remembers preparing the starch bath for Jiro to use. Most men wore fedora hats in those days, and naval officers of course needed their hats cared for, so hats must have been an important part of the business. The cleaners did pick-up and delivery. Kame had a panel truck and Jiro used an old-fashioned box-back truck, which Yoshiichi – who had grown up in a land without cars – must soon have

⁵⁸ Modern address is 94-356 Waipahu Depot St. The Arakawa store was at 94-333 Depot Rd.

⁵⁹ Kame was reportedly unhappy to see his brother Jiro leading a somewhat dissolute life of a single man on the plantation, where gambling was a popular pastime. Kame was a resolute lifelong family man.

⁶⁰ Breaking with the tradition of importing a bride, Jiro was lucky to find a match through family connections. She was Yoshiko Arakawa, born in Hawaii in 1913 to Yuichi Arakawa and his wife Kana. What blood relation, if any, there was between Jiro Arakawa and Yoshiko Arakawa is not known.

⁶¹ Her son Albert Hironari remembered years later that it was his mom, Kazuko, who was the real *Honcho* of the cleaning business.

learned to drive, since he was responsible for delivery and bill collection.

Living conditions were crowded, to say the least. Jiro and Yoshiko shared a bedroom and Kame and Kazuko slept on futons on the floor. All of Jiro and Kamei's children shared a room, and after their arrival in 1937, Yoshiichi slept on a futon in the front room with his sister, Fumiko, who used the sofa. Although most houses did not have bath facilities, and used the village communal bath house, Kame rigged up a bath downstairs in the cleaners using hot water from the pressing equipment, a big improvement over the usual method, the wood fire.

Fumi cooked for the whole family. Grace remembers her as a happy young woman willing to teach her younger cousin how to cook. She arose at 4 o'clock each morning to cook breakfast for her brother, Yoshi. He was a serious, scholarly, and artistic young man who attended high school during the day, did homework on the bus, and cleaners work- including mending- until midnight.⁶² Another of his chores was delivery of clothes to customers, many of whom lived on the Ewa plantation. This was time-consuming, but not difficult work. Except for the part where he had to collect money from customers to pay for their cleaning. He found that many plantation workers, and especially the Filipino men, would give him a hard time by refusing to pay. He was learning about life in the modern world through direct experience.

⁶² Among other skills, he learned to sew buttons onto shirts and jackets, a skill that stayed with him his entire life.

⁶³ In later years, the relationship between the brothers Kame and Jiro frayed, according to Harry Arakawa. In 1948, Jiro moved to his own house and continued to operate a cleaning business there.

In those years, the Arakawa family members all got along well, despite their constant proximity.⁶³ They all spoke Japanese at home, and sometimes the parents would converse in the Okinawan language – *Uchinaaguchi*- which the children could not understand. The Arakawa parents thought of themselves as Japanese expatriates working in Hawaii to make enough money for a return to their Okinawa home. On the wall of the Arakawa Cleaners in Waipahu hung a picture of the Showa Emperor (Hirohito). Kame had returned to Okinawa briefly in 1932-33 (possibly at the time of his mother's death), and when he returned to Hawaii told immigration authorities that he intended to stay in Hawaii for 10 years and not to seek U.S. citizenship. Of course, WWII intervened, and he never returned to Okinawa.

When Yoshiichi arrived in Hawaii in November, 1937, he was 16 years old, spoke no English, and had no work experience. He had been a star student in Okinawa, so rather than go to work in the plantation fields like his father and uncles before him, he continued his high school studies, working every other available hour of the day and night in the family cleaners. Yoshiichi set about the task of learning the English language during his studies at the *Hawaii Mission Academy*, a school run by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.^{64, 65} Fumiko would work all day at the cleaners, apparently learning English on her own.

⁶⁴ The Hawaii Mission Academy, founded in 1895 was located on Makiki St. in Honolulu. It specialized in the early-to-mid 20th century in educating immigrant children. It continues to operate today on multiple campuses.

⁶⁵ Yoshiichi joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church, attended their *Walla Walla College* in Washington State, and attended church in Loma Linda California as an adult.

Keikichi had returned to Hawaii in February, 1938, but continued to live and work in Honolulu, making frequent weekend visits to Waipahu. Keikichi would soon learn that there was yet another reason for him to return to Okinawa as soon as he could earn enough money to make it possible: six months

after he arrived in Hawaii, he had become a father once more. Katsu had given birth to a daughter, Michiko, on August 30, 1938. She was conceived during his 4-month visit to Okinawa in 1937-38, the first of his children to be born outside the U. S.



The Arakawa Brothers and their Families in Hawaii, 1939. Front, L-R: Fumiko, Hironari (Albert), Miyoko (Grace), Kazuko, Etsuko (Winifred), Yoshiko, Yasuko (Alice). Back, L-R: Keikichi, Sumiko, Kame, Koichi, Jiro, Yoshiichi. This photo was taken after Keikichi brought his two oldest American-born children (Fumiko and Yoshiichi) to Hawaii to live with their uncles' families, and before he returned to Okinawa on 16 April, 1940. ²³



The Arakawa Family of Onaha in early 1940, during a visit by Kazuko and Albert from Hawaii: L-R: Akiko, Michiko, Katsu, Grandfather Nta Arakawa, Albert Hironari, Kazuko (Mrs. Kame Arakawa), Susumu. Fumiko, Yoshiichi and Keikichi were in Hawaii at this time. Michiko was the latest arrival to the family, conceived while Keikichi was briefly in Okinawa in 1937, and born in August, 1938 while her father was in Hawaii settling his older American-born children in Waipahu.

Back to Okinawa

Twenty months after Michiko's birth, Keikichi finally bowed to the inevitable: his father was near death and Keikichi would soon become the head of the Arakawa family; he needed to return home.

On April 16, 1940, Keikichi Arakawa, clad in a neatly-pressed linen suit and sporting a lei around his neck, stood flanked by his brothers and older children on the quay in Honolulu. The look on his face was deadly serious. He was headed to Okinawa once again. It would be the final such voyage of his life. Fifty-one years old, he was giving up his life in Hawaii to heed the call of family duty. He was the eldest son. His father was not doing well. His wife and children needed him back in Onaha. It was time to go.⁶⁶

The timing could not have been worse for a return to Okinawa. The Japanese war in China had dragged on, even bringing Japan into a brief conflict with the U.S. on the Yangtse River. The U.S tightened trade relations with Japan from January 1940 onward, and was gearing up for war by drafting soldiers and building ships and airplanes in ever-increasing numbers.



Keikichi Arakawa departing Honolulu for the last time, at age 53 on 16 April 1940. L-R: Kame, Yoshiichi, Keikichi, Jiro, Fumiko, Usae Katekaru (brother of Kazuko), Yoshiko.

⁶⁶ One reason for the timing of Keikichi's departure could have been news sent from Onaha by Kazuko, his sister-in-law, who had visited the family there for a period of four months starting in December, 1939. She may have reported on the

poor state of affairs there owing to the state of grandpa Nta's health and Katsu's being left to run things by herself, while caring for grandpa and three children, including 1-year-old Michiko. (Kazuko was at sea returning to Hawaii just as Keikichi was departing).

Life in Onaha before the War

Perhaps the first thing Keikichi determined to do upon his return to Onaha was to build a better house for his family. The old house was in the traditional Okinawan style, basically a tile roof supported by posts anchored on stone blocks sitting on the ground. The walls of such houses were sliding *shoji* doors with rice paper windows that offered little protection from the severe weather so common on the island. The new house, according to Harry Susumu's recollection, had five rooms, wooden floors with tatami mats, and was sturdy wooden walls, in the "Japanese Style". Also, quite importantly, the new house had a flush toilet and a separate bath house with a tiled floor and a *Goemon-buro* bath tub. The water for this tub had to be heated by building a fire beneath it from sugar cane stalks.⁶⁷ This was not as convenient as the setup Kame had back in the Waipahu cleaners, but for Onaha, it must have been quite special for the time and place.⁶⁸

Grandpa Nta Arakawa died on December 10, 1941, at about age 84. He had been born in the Loo Choo kingdom in during the reign of king Shō Tai, and was in every way a man of the 19th century. Harry Susumu recalls that Keikichi considered his father to be old-fashioned and ignorant of the modern world. Nta possessed a "Chinese coin" he would place on the chest of a sick person in an attempt to heal them. One time, Nta found a strange object lying in the fields and declared it must have fallen from heaven. You can imagine the frustration that Keikichi, a worldly

man of the 20th century, must have felt when living with the old man. And Keikichi was not the only one. Susumu as a young boy with no father around, had been hungry for attention from his *obichan* [grandpa]. It was not forthcoming. "I spoke to him, but he never spoke to me," recalled Harry Arakawa years later. (Part of the problem might have been that *obichan* spoke mostly *Uchinaaguchi*, a language Susumu never really learned).

Another boyhood anecdote from Harry: At some point after he returned to Okinawa, Keikichi decided to take his son out to dinner to get to know him. Young Susumu desperately wanted to impress his father, so thought long and hard about what he should say. But when the time came, he froze up, and could think of nothing to say. Keikichi also sat silently, like the prototypical Japanese father of the time. This regretful memory stayed with Harry Susumu his entire life.

When *Obichan* died, he was placed in the new family crypt north of Onaha village, along with his wife Maka and late son Zentoku.⁶⁹ Keikichi, the eldest son, was now the official head of the Arakawa family. Along with this responsibility, which he had never sought, came news from abroad that must have shocked and concerned him: Japan had attacked Hawaii. His two countries were now at war with each other.

⁶⁷ In the years 1943-44, Michiko would collect these spent sugar canes from neighbors who grew sugar commercially and had canes left over they were willing to dispose of.

⁶⁸ There is no known photo of the house other than a small section in the background of an old snapshot of Susumu taken sometime in the 1940s. But an old woman interviewed by Takakzu Arakawa and Junko Yokoo in March, 2019,

remembered attending Akiko's 13th birthday at the house in 1940 or 1941. All those years later, she remembered how special the house was.

⁶⁹ This is the tomb labelled "Nii-Me-She-Ri", earlier family members had been interred in the tomb "Me-She-Ri". His body would have been left to rot for a couple of years before the ceremonial cleaning of the bones, which were then placed in an urn.

The Curse of War

It was Sunday morning in Waipahu, and Yoshiichi Arakawa had the day off. He was up early going with some other boys to help a neighbor move. Riding in the back of the truck they had borrowed for the job, they saw aircraft flying low over Waipahu. Thinking they were fighter planes from Hickam field doing special maneuvers, they pulled the truck over and started to wave excitedly. It was at that point they spotted an emblem on the side of the planes, the bright red Rising Sun! Yoshi and his friends were among the first to know: Japan was at war with the United States.

Back at the cleaners, they knew what they had to do: they turned the picture of the Emperor to face the wall. He would never be seen in the Arakawa Cleaners again, And the Arakawas quickly understood what had happened to them. They would now have to commit to America. No more idea of making money and going back to Okinawa. Their world had turned upside-down. They, along with all Japanese in Hawaii, were instantly under suspicion. Within weeks, authorities were rounding up people who they thought might be influential enough, and disloyal enough, to cause trouble. These folks were sent to concentration camps on the mainland.⁷⁰ Other residents were told to dig shelters in their yards. The Arakawas dug one behind their house, and shelters were also constructed at the Waipahu public school where the children attended. Otherwise, though, life went on as normal for the Arakawas of Waipahu.

In Onaha, Keikichi would have been shocked at this turn of events. He had seen for himself the might of the U.S. military in Hawaii. He formed the opinion right away that this war would not end well for Japan. The U.S. was too strong. Japan had no

military presence in Okinawa in 1941, so he had no firsthand knowledge of Japan's considerable strength. But war news surely reached Okinawa right away. Japanese forces immediately overran The Philippines and Southeast Asia, and by March of 1942 had conquered the oil fields in the Dutch East Indies. There was jubilation in Okinawa, where the civilian population was intensely patriotic in the early stages of the war. There were lantern parades held in celebration of military victories. And after the conquest of the Malaya rubber plantations, each child was given a rubber ball to play with. Things were looking great in the eyes of most Okinawans in early 1942.⁷¹

Harry remembered how the war news was all optimistic, even after Japan had suffered some military reverses. Teachers fed a steady stream of propaganda to the students, and of course they still bowed to the Emperor every day in class. However, there was fear on the island, even at the official level. In 1944, the Japanese government, fearing for the safety of civilians on Okinawa in the event of invasion, organized a special ship *Tsushima Maru* to evacuate children and old people to the relative safety of the main islands. Luckily, the Arakawas were not aboard, Keikichi having decided to keep the family intact in Okinawa. Tragically, the ship was torpedoed on Aug. 22, 1944 by the U.S. submarine *Bowfin* and sank with 1788 souls aboard, including 775 Okinawan children. This horrific event surely must have further excited fear among the people.

By 1944, Japan had built several airfields on Okinawa. One of these fields was right next to Onaha, not far from the Arakawa

⁷⁰ Eventually, 1500 Japanese from Hawaii were interned on the mainland.

⁷¹ These are the recollections of Harry Susumu, who was 10 years old at the time.

home.⁷² Harry Arakawa told a story about meeting a group of pilots from this field, and one pilot in particular:

“The pilots were Kamikaze, very young. I remember one of the officers, he was 19 or 20, from Nara Prefecture. I really looked up to him. He had that kind of uniform [Kamikaze], wore boots, and had binoculars around his neck, and a sword. He had a scarf.”

Young Susumu met this pilot because he was among a group of aviators that rented the finest house in the neighborhood – the Arakawa’s house- to throw a party. No women. No liquor. But lots of food! When the party was over, the hungry family feasted on the leftovers, a real treat amid the wartime shortages.⁷³

Living next to an airfield in wartime involves a certain amount of risk. On October 10, 1944, in order to counter the threat of kamikazes (they had wreaked havoc on the U.S. Navy ships operating in the area), and to soften up Okinawa for the inevitable invasion, Admiral William F. Halsey’s enormous *Task Force 38* converged on Okinawa and launched a massive air attack on every target of military value on land and in the water. Altogether, 1396 sorties were launched, dropping over 500 tons of bombs on the island. This was the beginning of what would come to be known as the *Typhoon of Steel* – the Battle of Okinawa.⁷⁴

⁷² I believe this was the so-called Yonabaru Airfield, located not in Yonabaru, but on the site of the present oil storage facility east of Onaha.

⁷³ One wonders: was this the farewell feast for the young Kamikaze pilots headed to their deaths?

⁷⁴ Leckie, pg. 39

The Arakawas had built a small trench shelter in their yard, and fortified it with sandbags. And Keikichi dug a larger one for his family into the side of a hill, about 1 mile inland. As her older brother, it was 12-year-old Susumu’s responsibility to ensure his little sister Michiko, age 6, got to the shelter. Michiko was very frightened of the bombs, and sought comfort from Susumu, which he did his best to provide, often letting her crawl under the bedcovers with him. During daytime bombing, he could clearly see the planes diving down, and could tell the difference between the American and Japanese aircraft by the sounds of their engines. The airfield was damaged severely, and would pose no further threat to the invaders. So, the U.S. Navy went away, but the people in Okinawa did not know that. Everyone wondered when the next attack would come.

It was probably about this time that the authorities in Okinawa decided the civilian population should seek shelter in the northern part of the island. They assigned various villages in the south to locations in the north, on the Motobu Peninsula. Onaha residents were told to head to Teima, a small rice-growing village on Oura Bay on the east coast.⁷⁵ So it was that in late 1944, Katsu, her six-year-old daughter Michiko, and infant son Takakazu headed north by horse-cart on the Island’s dirt roads, to seek refuge from the invasion everyone knew was coming.

⁷⁵ Ground water in Okinawa is typically quite hard. For this reason, the Arakawas in Onaha used rainwater to make tea. And rice needs soft water to flourish, so only some locales at the foot of hills, where water filters and softens, can support rice farming. Teima was apparently such a place.



On April 1, 1945, the day of the U.S. invasion in the Battle of Okinawa, Keikichi and Susumu Arakawa fled on foot from Onaha to Teima, where the rest of the family was hiding. The journey took about 34 hours, with most travel at night. The morning of their arrival, Keikichi headed back south, in search of his daughter Akiko, who went missing during the Battle.

The Trek North to Safety

On March 31, 1945, the day before the American invasion of Okinawa, Keikichi Arakawa told his 12-year-old son, Susumu: “You had better go up north, it’s too dangerous here.” They were the only family members remaining at their home in Onaha, a village on the east coast of Okinawa. Susumu’s older sister Akiko, 16, was living in Naha City with another family so she could attend the elite Okinawa Daichi Women’s High School. And in fact, the only reason Susumu was not already up north was so that he could attend school.

Susumu was – by his own admission – not a very good student. He was reluctantly attending a local school in Onaga, the village next door to Onaha, where he would bow down to picture of the Showa Emperor each morning, learn propaganda-laced lessons mandated by Tokyo, and endure whacks from a cane to the back of his hands administered by his strict teachers for this or that failing or transgression. The previous year, when his mother headed north, he begged to go with her, but his father put his foot down: “You *will* go to school.” End of discussion. But now, school would have to wait. There were artillery shells bombarding the island. The long-expected invasion was underway.

Keikichi threw a few rice balls he had cooked, and some pickles - “Just enough for the journey”- along with a few essential items, into small backpacks and started walking with Susumu north toward the tiny hamlet of Teima, where the rest of the family (except Akiko) had taken refuge. They started in the morning, walking carefully, hiding in vegetation whenever they heard the noise of American aircraft. They walked slowly along the dirt road near the eastern shore throughout the day. Progress was slow. When they reached Ishikawa, there was a river that had to

be crossed. Fortunately, the all-important Ishikawa Bridge was still standing, despite the fact that a giant crater stood beside it where a shell from the torrential naval bombardment had just missed its target. It was evening now, and on the western shore of the narrow Ishikawa Isthmus, just 15 km (9 miles) away, American amphibious forces were landing virtually unopposed. The sky was illuminated by bursts of naval shells detonating in the overhead. At this point, Susumu and Keikichi had to keep moving as fast as possible, but they also had to stay out of sight. So they took to the hills.

A series of footpaths meandered through the hills in the central isthmus, and this is where they walked, hour after hour, except for the time they slept along the way. Normally, these hills were covered in tropical vegetation, but naval bombardment and bombing had ignited fires that stripped the trees bare of foliage, reducing the travelers' shelter. Progress was slow as they groped their way along the trail through the night and into the following day.

Late in the afternoon, after their grueling 34-hour journey, they reached their destination, a small rice-farming village on Oura Bay, at the mouth of the Teima River. Katsu and her younger children had been renting space in a hut with a local farming family. But when Susumu and Keikichi arrived, the village was almost entirely deserted, their family nowhere to be seen.

They found one man lingering by the rice paddies. He pointed them to a single trail that led up into the hills. They followed this path beneath the jungle canopy using what little light filtered through in the twilight hours, until they came upon the refuge.

⁷⁶ Arrival date estimated on the basis of travel time: 2 days each way, starting April 1, 1945.

Katsu and the children were there, living with 20-30 other families from Onaha, jammed into two-family makeshift shelters.

Surely, the Arakawas were happy to be reunited with their father and brother. But they were still missing one important family member: their oldest daughter, Akiko. The resourceful Katsu, who had dried and packed sweet potato powder, *miso*, and *kuzu* back in Onaha, and who had become adept at foraging in the jungle for *Fuki*, the rhizome of a native plant, was doing as well as she could at providing for the family. There was little Keikichi could do to help. And then there was the matter of his daughter Akiko: Keikichi needed to find his daughter.

So early next morning, Keikichi retraced his steps, heading south toward Onaha. Unbeknownst to him, American troops were headed toward the same destination. All along the road, he met heavy foot traffic of people headed north. They asked "Why are you going south? There is danger there!" Undaunted, Keikichi continued on toward his home, reaching Onaha/Nishihara by April 4th.⁷⁶

Finding Akiko

The U.S. progress in the Battle of Okinawa was faster than expected during the first week. The First Marine division was assigned the objective of crossing the island and reaching the east coast by April 10th. They actually reached Nishihara on April 4th, about the same time as Keikichi.⁷⁷ Nishihara had been heavily damaged in the assault, eventually it would be completely destroyed. When Keikichi reached his home, he

⁷⁷ www.historynet.com/battle-of-okinawa-operation-iceberg.htm

found it in ruins, still standing, but smoldering. Keikichi must have been bitterly disappointed at the loss of his home, and also to have found that a cache of food previously buried in his yard had been raided by desperate refugees. And on top of these disasters, he was soon apprehended by the U.S. Marines.

Most Okinawans were non-combatant victims of the war, but some men had been conscripted by the Japanese military and posed a potential threat to the Americans. Standard procedure was to search men who appeared to be civilian – some were actually Japanese soldiers out of uniform – and to incarcerate those who possessed weapons, or were otherwise suspicious. These men were being held behind wire fences in makeshift outdoor prisons. Keikichi must surely have been searched, but he posed no threat, and in fact had something valuable to offer the Americans. He spoke English, Japanese and Uchinaaguchi, the Okinawan language. There were a number of Okinawans like him in Okinawa at the time, men who had worked in the cane fields of Hawaii and had returned home before the War. Keikichi had spent 31 years in Hawaii, where he studied English and used it to advance himself in society. He had been pursuing the baking trade in Honolulu when family obligations summoned him back to Okinawa in 1937, on the eve of Japan's war in China.

Okinawa is an island of limestone, riddled with caves. During the Battle, both Japanese military and Okinawan civilians hid in caves, sometimes together. The Japanese soldiers had told the Okinawans that they would be tortured, raped, and murdered by the Americans if they surrendered, so most of the Okinawans hiding in caves refused to surrender to Americans. In the heat of battle, the Americans would call into a cave for surrender, and if no one came out, they would blast flames into the cave, killing everyone inside. So, men like Keikichi who could speak to the

Americans, the Japanese, and the Okinawans were valuable assets to the invaders. There are numerous stories of how these interpreters saved the lives of countless Okinawans by calling into the caves in the Okinawan language and persuading them they were safe to surrender.

So, Keikichi Arakawa, a 57-year-old Okinawan, went to work for the U.S. Marine Corps. We don't know all the details of his service, but it undoubtedly involved a number of cave jobs. On one such assignment, Keikichi was calling into a cave where a mixture of Japanese soldiers and Okinawan civilians were hiding. One of the Japanese soldiers shouted "You are just a spy for the Americans," and hurled a grenade toward the sound of Keikichi's voice. Fortunately, Keikichi was not killed, but the grenade explosion damaged his ear, resulting in total loss of hearing on one side.

As a result of his service, Keikichi had earned the trust of the Marines, and they helped him do what he had come to do in the first place: find his daughter Akiko. In early June, Shuri Castle had been captured and the battle front had moved south. Keikichi was able to catch a ride to the Naha area where Akiko had been staying and began his search.

Akiko was a *Himeyuri Girl*, as the students at the Okinawa Daichi Women's High School were called. About a week before the Battle began, the Japanese conscripted these girls into a makeshift corps of frontline battle nurses, and they were forced to engage in horrifying service tending to wounded Japanese soldiers. In late June, these girls and their wounded patients were

moved south to take shelter in a cave, where 80% of them would die due to suicide and immolation by flamethrower.⁷⁸

At some point, Akiko had taken sick and was apparently not conscripted, but was taken to a hospital near Naha. This illness likely saved her life. Keikichi found her in dire straits, having suffered from the Battle (her hair having been partially burned away), and from the horror of wandering alone in a field of dead bodies, both military and civilian, that littered the battlefields near Naha.

Family lore says that Keikichi was awarded a commendation for his cave-calling service and was even offered a ride back to Hawaii on an American troop ship. But Keikichi and Akiko needed to rejoin their family in Teima after the Battle. So, once again, Keikichi Arakawa headed north with one of his children, away from the scenes of the worst fighting of the Pacific War.

Back in Teima

After Keikichi had gone south in search of Akiko, the family struggled to survive beneath the jungle canopy of the Okinawa hills, so dense as to be barely penetrated by sunlight. Katsu foraged for *Fuki* roots and boiled them to feed herself and her children. At one point, the family was so desperate for food, she sneaked down to now-deserted Teima village to scrounge for sweet potatoes left in the field, taking care to avoid detection by the American troops now controlling the northern peninsula.

⁷⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Himeyuri_students

⁷⁹ Harry Arakawa said they were the only family he knew of from Onaha which lost no one to the Battle.

⁸⁰ Directly after the war the south-central part of Ginoza was home to a large concentration of refugees. The population of the village reached over 100,000, and

Baby Takakazu was not doing well. Like the others, he was suffering from lack of protein. So Susumu would sneak down to the rice paddies where he could find frogs, stun them with a blow from a stick, and take them back to camp for Katsu to cook. This was the culinary highlight of their life in the Teima hills, and it provided enough protein to pull them through and to rescue Takakazu from malnutrition.

When Keikichi and Akiko arrived in Teima, probably in late June, while the Battle of Okinawa still raged down south, the family's future was in grave doubt, as was that of the entire island of Okinawa and nation of Japan. But the Arakawas survived.⁷⁹ After the war ended in August, the family, along with thousands of other refugees, packed into a tent city set up by the Americans in the village of Ginoza.⁸⁰ They stayed there for 2-3 months as Keikichi decided what to do next. Despite the deprivation caused by the war, the Okinawans were intent on seeing to it that their children were educated. Michiko remembers learning her *kanji* at the age of seven while in the camp with no writing implement other than her finger, which she used to write in the dust where she was sitting.

Most families were returning to their home villages as soon as possible. However, Nishihara had been completely destroyed in the Battle, with 47% of its population killed.⁸¹ And the remains of Keikichi's new house had been pilfered by survivors desperate for building materials with which to construct some kind of shelter. There was nothing of value for the Arakawas in

the village was temporarily divided into six cities. The population of the village dropped rapidly after this period as Okinawans returned to their home villages.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ginoza,_Okinawa

⁸¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nishihara,_Okinawa

their home village of Onaha. They would need to find a place to live and a means of support.

At this point, Keikichi's rotten luck changed for the better. He apparently contacted the U.S. Marine Corps, perhaps through officers he had worked with during the battle, and found an opportunity that would, in the immediate postwar years, provide a comfortable - and in some ways luxurious- existence for his family.⁸² The U.S. Military, now masters of the Island, turned its attention toward repairing the damage they had visited upon Okinawa. So it was that they offered Keikichi a job translating for them as they tried to put the pieces back together for the benefit of, and with the help of, the Okinawans.

It should be noted that the Okinawan diaspora, especially of so many men and women to Hawaii, was of great benefit to the reconstruction of Okinawa in the aftermath of the most bitterly fought and destructive battle of the Pacific War. Not only did the Okinawan community in Hawaii send much-needed relief in the form of canned food and used clothing, but re-patriated Okinawans like Keikichi - men who spoke both English and Japanese - had become of vital importance to the postwar effort.

Keikichi was hired as an interpreter by the U.S. Marine Corps stationed at one of the myriad bases dotting the island – this one at Ishikawa Beach, near the very bridge he and Susumu had crossed months before in their flight northward.⁸³ And there was an added benefit: the family could live on the base and receive

food rations through military channels. The Arakawas had, for now, landed on their feet.



The U.S. Marine Base at Ishikawa Beach, Okinawa. The Arakawa family lived there from 1945 until 1951 while Keikichi worked as a translator and baker. The base was decommissioned in 1972.

Life on the Base 1945-1951

Initially, the Arakawas lived under canvas with a wooden floor as did the military personnel on the base.⁸⁴ The work for Keikichi was demanding. He had little time to spend with the family he was working so hard to support. Military work always

⁸² The general civilian populace suffered great deprivation during the postwar years.

⁸³ This Marine Base was eventually decommissioned after the 1972 reversion of Okinawa to Japanese control.

⁸⁴ Per Harry Arakawa. The housing was apparently later upgraded, because Michiko remembers it having a tile roof.

took priority. His initial employment doing translation would have lost some of its value as the Marines settled in and focused more on building a Marine Base and less on helping the Okinawans. But Keikichi was valuable to the Americans in more ways than one: he was an experienced baker.

His niece Grace Arakawa remembered that her uncle Keikichi worked at Krispy Krust Bakery in Honolulu in the 1930s. He would often come out from Honolulu to visit her family in Waipahu, bringing with him a bounty of baked treats. In time, he started his own bakery in Honolulu. He even had ambitions to expand his business to Japan, but the effort failed.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, he took his baking skills with him to Okinawa when he returned in 1937. When the Marines built an Officer's Club, and equipped it with at least one oven, Keikichi once again became a baker. To this day, Keikichi's children who lived at the base remember the warm bread and rolls their dad would bring home. In many ways, life was good.

It was not a life of luxury on the Marine base, but compared to what other Okinawans were going through, it must have seemed so. Katsu had a sewing machine and was expert at making her children's clothing. Material was scarce, so she must have been delighted to receive a shipment of printed fabric from the family in Waipahu. Michiko remembers having a dress her mom made for her using this cloth, which was printed with a pattern of crows. Crows were a common sight on Ishikawa beach, so the other children teased her, calling her the "Crow of Ishikawa Beach." And life on the Base offered one particular benefit from a child's point of view. When Michiko's friends came to play

⁸⁵ According to Harry Arakawa, his dad wanted to set up an American-style bakery in Yokohama, Japan. When a business partner failed to come up with the necessary

with her on the base, they were able to get shaved ice from a machine, and top it with sugar for a special treat. This was a long way from the days of eating roots and frogs in the jungle of Teima.

Another bit of good luck came their way the year after they had settled at the Marine Base. Katsu's daughter by her first marriage, Misayo Zukemura, who had been conscripted as a nurse by the Japanese Army during the Battle, showed up. Susumu spotted the athletic Misayo playing volleyball in a tournament, and brought her home with him. She was a refugee too, and soon moved in with her mom and the rest of the Arakawa family.

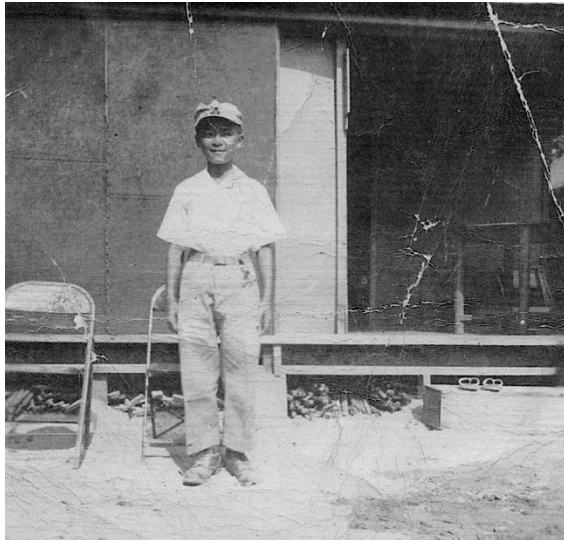
Another side benefit for Susumu was that – although he was still not a star student – the schools he attended in Ishikawa were now free from the rigid discipline of the Japanese system. He no longer got his beatings!

Katsu, the energetic and resourceful homemaker, took to raising chickens in the yard of their house on the base. Keikichi, a man more than happy to be free from the dirty work of agriculture, and mindful of the mess created by the chickens and the ever-present sanitary challenge they presented, was opposed to her egg-farming. But she persisted, taking great care to keep things clean. By selling the eggs, she was able to supplement the family's cash income, which was probably meagre.

The Arakawas were doing well compared to other Okinawans not living on the base, but food supplies were limited. At one

capital to pay for baking equipment that had been purchased in Hawaii and shipped to Yokohama, the equipment had to be returned and the business failed before it got started.

point, there was a long power outage at the Marine base. So food kept in the base's refrigerators was sure to spoil rapidly in the hot, humid climate of Okinawa. As a result, the military distributed this food to people on the base, including the Arakawas. Michiko still remembers the delicious taste of boiled sausages she got to taste as a result of this food distribution during that power outage.



Harry Susumu in front of Ishikawa Base house in 1946, age 14.

Accommodations were simple on the Ishikawa Marine Base, but the family had survived and were well-fed and were living happily together in these immediate postwar years.

Postwar in Hawaii



In the immediate aftermath of WWII, the US Army drafted US citizens of Japanese descent living in Hawaii for postwar service. Yoshiichi, who had returned to Hawaii in 1937 to live with the family in Waipahu, had graduated high school, is shown here departing for his military service on 12 October, 1945. L-R: Kame, Albert, Jiro, Fumiko, Yoshiichi, Winifred, Kazuko, Alice, Yoshiko.

More Children Head to Hawaii

In 1947, the time had come when Misayo, Akiko and Susumu could return to the land of their birth- Hawaii. In June, they sailed for Yokohama, then took passage on the *U.S.S. General M.C. Meigs*, bound for Honolulu.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ The *General M.C. Meigs* was a U.S. Navy troop ship. In addition to however many American troops it carried, this ship was transporting 33 Hawaii-born Japanese ages 11 to 30, and two Okinawa-born children of one of these U.S. Citizens. The

Arakawas were apparently part of a postwar repatriation program of the U.S. government. Unlike their parents, they were not travelling steerage. Judging from the names, most- if not all- were Okinawan.

Seventy-seven years later, Harry Susumu would recall his farewell:

My heart was so broken to see the face of my little sister Michiko. During the war, she was my responsibility. I took her to the bunker, made sure she had food and water in her backpack. She was MY responsibility. I looked at her, and she looked at me with her sad face that said “Why are you leaving now?” Even today I see a picture of her face in my mind and it just breaks me up.

Michiko also remembers that sad parting, and her beloved older brother:

I cried in my bed for many days after he left. He always looked out for me. He was always the one who looked after all of us, then and in the years that followed.

Akiko and Susumu took up their American names- Agnes and Harry- when they moved in with Uncle Jiro in Waipahu. Snapshots of them in Waipahu in 1947 show two very happy-looking teenagers. It is hard to believe that just two years before, they were hunkered down in the jungle eating whatever they could scavenge. They both went to school and learned English in short order. They were now full-fledged Americans.

Keikichi had told Jiro he would be hosting not only his niece and nephew, but also Misayo Zukemura, Katsu’s daughter, which Jiro agreed to do. He had purchased a house in the Ota Camp section of Waipahu from which he ran his hat-cleaning business. Besides Jiro, there was his wife Yoshiko, daughter Alice Yasuko, step-niece Misayo, niece Fumiko, niece Agnes, and nephew Harry living with him. Yoshiichi had been drafted

in 1945 into the U.S. Army, served a year as a medic,⁸⁷ and in 1947 was in Washington State attending college, where he adopted the American name Ken, by which he would be known for the rest of his life.

In later years, both Ken and Harry commented on how much they loved uncle Jiro, who had been so kind to them. He was more easy-going than their actual father, and apparently developed more of a father-son relationship with the two boys. He never had a son of his own, so these two boys would have been welcome to his household and his life.

Misayo, whose American name was May but seems to have been known by all as *Misa*, soon moved to Honolulu to work. By 1950, she had married and was a mother. According to family members, Misa had served during the War as a nurse to the Japanese Army on Okinawa. After the war, and after she was married, one of the soldiers she had tended during the war made his way to Honolulu and looked her up, intending to propose marriage. He was too late.

⁸⁷ His service as a medic may have been driven by his Seventh-Day Adventist beliefs, Adventists were mostly pacifist.

The Arakawa Refugees in Waipahu, 1948



The U.S.S. General M. C. Meigs, the troop ship that transported Misa, Harry and Agnes to Hawaii.



Here they are, looking happy to be in their new home after the horrors of war in Okinawa:

The Arakawa Families of Waipahu in 1948



The postwar household of Jiro Arakawa in Waipahu (about 1948): In 1947 Jiro bought a new house into which he welcomed his brother Keikichi's dependents. Back row L-R: Alice, Fumiko, May, Harry, Agnes. Front row: Yoshiko and Jiro Arakawa. Yoshiichi had lived with them until he was drafted in 1945. At the time of this photo, he was at college in Washington State.



The postwar household of Kame Arakawa in Waipahu (about 1948): Back L-R: Winifred, Sumiko, Koichi, Grace, Albert. Front L-R: Kamado Kazuko and Kame Arakawa. They lived above the Arakawa Cleaners on Depot Road, Waipahu. In 1948 after returning from study in New York City, Sumiko established her own business in that building: *La Belle Fashion School and Shop*.

Life Back in Okinawa

In 1950, Michiko turned 13.⁸⁸ Okinawan tradition considers a girl of this age to be entering womanhood, and worthy of a special party and a lovely kimono. Katsu had provided kimonos to her older 13-year-old daughters, but on this occasion, she pointed out that everyone was so poor around them, saying: “We cannot flaunt our good fortune while others suffer.” Initially, Keikichi wanted her to provide a kimono for Michiko. But eventually Katsu’s objections prevailed. In place of a kimono, Keikichi baked Michiko a large birthday cake with multiple layers, frosted with buttercream icing. Children attending Michiko’s party had never seen such a sight, and wondered if it were not some sort of giant pillow?

Now that Michiko was a young woman living on a U.S. Military base, her father was justifiably concerned about her safety. He warned her to stay away from the marines and not to be outside after dark. Fortunately, she followed his orders and did not have any problems on the base.

By 1951, four years after the departure of Akiko, Susumu, and Misayo to Hawaii, life went on for the Arakawas of Ishikawa Beach. Michiko was now in Junior High School and Takakazu was seven years old and attending school. Keikichi was still working at the base, but less happily than in the earlier years. He had a new boss at the officer’s club who was more difficult to work for than the original one who had hired him, and who valued his services less highly. At age 63, some of the old ambition had returned to Keikichi, and he was hoping to find

some way to open a bakery in Naha, the largest city on the island, which was now being rebuilt.

Keikichi had not lived in Onaha since the 1945 evacuation, but he still owned property there, and was considered a prominent citizen in that village where so many people were named Arakawa. As villages rebuilt, they were often equipped with a *Kominkan*, a sort of community center. As Onaha got back on its feet, 15 leading citizens, including Keikichi and six others named *Arakawa*, contributed money for its construction and became its legal owners.⁸⁹

On the 28th of August, 1951, 13-year-old Michiko was pulled out of class at her Junior High School and taken to her home. There, she learned the terrible news that her father Keikichi had died of a heart attack. This was a devastating turn of events for the family, and it marked a huge change in their fortunes and way of life.

Life Without Keikichi

Keikichi’s funeral was held in the family’s house on the Ishikawa Marine base. Afterward, men from the base lined up in uniform to escort the car carrying his coffin off of the base. Once outside the base, the coffin was probably taken by horse cart to the family tomb in Onaha, where the body was left to decompose – according to the ancient custom – for a period of several years. After that time, the body was ceremonially washed by family members and the bones interred in a jar inside the family crypt in Onaha, the same burial place that held his parents.

⁸⁸ In Japan, a child is considered 1 year old at birth. So, in 1950, Michiko, born in 1938, was actually 12 by American standards.

⁸⁹ The Community Center was completed in 1955 and is still in use today. Keikichi’s contribution was discovered through a business letter sent from Okinawa to

Yoshiichi in California by an attorney representing the community. It arrived after his death.



Soon after Keikichi Arakawa's death on 28 Aug. 1951 in Okinawa, the Arakawa family then living in Hawaii gathered in Waipahu to pay their respects. They were joined by friends and neighbors, including Mr. and Mrs. Zenpan Arakawa (front row, he in white shirt), proprietors of the famous Arakawa Store located just down the street from the Arakawa Cleaners in Waipahu.

Military rules required the Arakawa family to now move off the base. The family, which now consisted of his widow Katsu and her two youngest children, Michiko and Takakazu, moved to a small house south of the Base, in Ishikawa.⁹⁰ Katsu was used to living without her husband. She had done so in the years 1933-1937 when she was in Onaha and he was working in Honolulu.

⁹⁰ Apparently, this house had been built in the Ishikawa 8th ward before Keikichi's death, possibly with some assistance from the Marines, in the form of donated building materials.

But back in those days, he sent money to support the family. Now there was none.

Somehow, Katsu managed, and the children were able to continue their schooling. How did she support the family? She did have a Singer sewing machine, and may have earned some money that way. Or possibly from selling eggs. One business venture she took on was the sale of liquor to young U.S. Marines. There may have been some profit in this, but she on at least one occasion had her liquor stolen by some Marines, and was unable to get any recourse through the military. These were the years of U.S. military rule in Okinawa, and she was powerless to get justice under these circumstances.

In 1953, Harry Susumu Arakawa was drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Korea. After his service in Korea, he was posted to Japan, and while there, he visited his mother and siblings in Ishikawa. Harry was shocked to see his family living in poverty. He gave his mom all the money he had (several hundred dollars) before returning to his base in Tokyo. This was a joyful visit for the Okinawa family. A snapshot taken at the time clearly reveals their happiness. And they had not been forgotten by other family members in Hawaii. At one point, Kame's wife Kazuko bought them a refrigerator.

As her oldest son, Harry felt a responsibility to look after his mother and siblings. By 1956, after he was out of the army, he managed to get some money flowing to Katsu, and at some later point, the family arranged to get a U.S. pension for Katsu, based on Keikichi's employment in Hawaii.⁹¹ This made all the

⁹¹ In the 1958, Jim Zakahi, the husband of Keikichi's daughter Akiko, realized that Katsu was eligible for U.S. Social Security survivor's benefits as a result of Keikichi's having worked in Hawaii in the 1930s as a baker and having paid Social Security

difference. She used some of this money to build a new two-story house out of concrete. And in 1961, when Takakazu had graduated high school and had been accepted to the prestigious Waseda University in Tokyo, Harry provided the funds necessary to pay his tuition.⁹²



Harry Arakawa visits his Okinawa Family in 1953: Times were difficult for Katsu after Keikichi's death, as she continued to raise Michiko and Takakazu alone. But in 1953, Harry, who was then serving in the U.S. Army in Japan, paid a visit to the family in Ishikawa, to the evident delight of everyone, judging from the smiles on their faces. Harry gave what financial assistance he could at the time, and continued to help his mother and siblings through the following years. L-R: Katsu, Michiko, Harry, Takakazu.

taxes at that time. He applied for this benefit for Katsu, and when the money started coming, it made a huge difference. It wasn't much – just a few hundred dollars per month – but at the time, it was enough to help her raise her family and live a reasonable life.



Michiko and Ryuichi (Takakazu) about 1956 in front of their tin-roofed house in Ishikawa, where they lived after Keikichi's death.



The concrete house Katsu was able to build in Ishikawa with money flowing from her Social Security Widow's pension. After she returned from studying fashion in Tokyo, Michiko opened her dressmaking business in this building, where she lived until her marriage in 1964.

⁹² In a remarkable act of generosity, the newly-married Harry, unable to come up with the money himself, took out a loan for this purpose.

Another benefit of this money flowing from the U.S. was to pay for Michiko, after graduating from Ishikawa high school in 1956, to attend school in Tokyo to study fashion. After her studies, she returned to Ishikawa, lived with her mother, and opened a clothing business. While working at this business, she hired an assistant, a young woman named Kiyoko Kinjo, whom she introduced to her younger brother Takakazu. In the late 1960s, after he had graduated from Waseda University, Takakazu married Kiyoko.

In 1964, Michiko married Keisuke Fukuchi, a young Okinawan who had been born in Peru, returned to Okinawa after the War, and had attended university in Tokyo. In 1969, the Fukuchis moved to Tokyo, where business opportunities were better than in Okinawa at the time, and where they could raise a family and their children could attend better schools than Okinawa then offered.

The following year, the Arakawas left Ishikawa for the last time. Takakazu and Kiyoko moved to Tokyo where he found corporate employment. As the only son of Katsu still living in Japan, it was Takakazu's responsibility to care for his mother, so he took her along. This move to Tokyo required housing, and it was not cheap. In order to afford a home in the big city, Takakazu was forced to raise capital by selling some of the family's real estate in Onaha, the land on which the Arakawas had lived since the 19th century or earlier, but which now stood empty due to wartime destruction.⁹³

⁹³ Technically, this land would have been owned by Keikichi's oldest son, Yoshiichi, Takakazu's half-brother. However, Yoshiichi had lived in the United States since 1937, and had no involvement in family affairs in Okinawa. So Harry Arakawa arranged for the rights to the land to be transferred to Takakazu.

So Katsu Arakawa, who had been born in Okinawa, married twice in Hawaii, raised her children and step-children in Okinawa, survived the Battle of Okinawa while foraging for roots in the jungle, survived postwar poverty after her husband's untimely death, had raised her youngest children in Okinawa and seen them educated and married, moved to the big city: Tokyo, Japan.

According to Harry Arakawa, Katsu disliked Tokyo. Seventy years old when she moved there, she found it difficult to adapt to city life, despite the fact that her Japanese children and grandchildren were there. In 1980, Takakazu and family moved back to Okinawa, taking Katsu with them. She was now home to stay. In 1984, she celebrated her 85th birthday in Okinawa, where she was visited by her children Agnes Akiko and Harry Susumu from California. A decade later, in 1994, she died at the age of 93 in Okinawa, where she joined her much-loved husband Keikichi in the family tomb in Onaha.⁹⁴

Michiko, Keikichi Arakawa's daughter, observed that in his final years he was very sad about how his life had turned out. "He had lost everything," she said, "...he was very quiet." Indeed, by some measures, Keikichi's life had been a disappointment. But in a broader sense, he was extremely successful. He fathered six children over a 27-yr period. He had kept every one of them safe from harm in one of history's most devastating battles, where nearly half the civilians in his town were killed. He had foreseen the future in the late 1930s, and arranged for his older American-born children to flee Okinawa,

⁹⁴ Harry Arakawa remembered participating in the traditional burial ceremony, which involved cleaning the bones prior to interment in a jar.

to be given a home by his brothers, and to lead successful lives in the United States. During the Battle of Okinawa, he helped save lives by risking his own safety to call into caves and urge people to surrender. And after the war, made a safe and secure life for his family in Okinawa and sent his younger American-born children to Hawaii. Today, he has numerous descendants in the United States, Okinawa and Tokyo. By the measures that really matter, Keikichi Arakawa was successful indeed.

The Arakawa Legacy

The Arakawa brothers of Onaha left a lasting legacy of descendants in both Hawaii and Okinawa. In addition to his children Michiko and Takakazu living in Japan, Keikichi's four American-born children did well. Fumiko never married, moved to Los Angeles and stayed in close contact with her brother Ken. She died at age 70. Ken married Betty Nienhuis, had a daughter, and led a successful career as an entomologist for the University of California, Riverside before he passed away at age 92. Agnes married Jim Zakahi and raised two children in the Los Angeles area. Harry Arakawa married Doreen Lum and fathered two daughters, also in the Los Angeles area. He died at age 87.

Jiro, as previously mentioned, married in Hawaii and had a daughter, Alice Yasuko. He lived to the age of 93 in Hawaii.

Kame, the backbone of the family in Waipahu, died early, in 1958, at age 59. The cleaners he founded, and where he worked most of his adult life, continued as a family business until the 1980s. He and Kazuko had five children, and today their legacy includes numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The Arakawa Brothers of Okinawa and Hawaii



Keikichi 1888-1951



Jiro 1891-1988



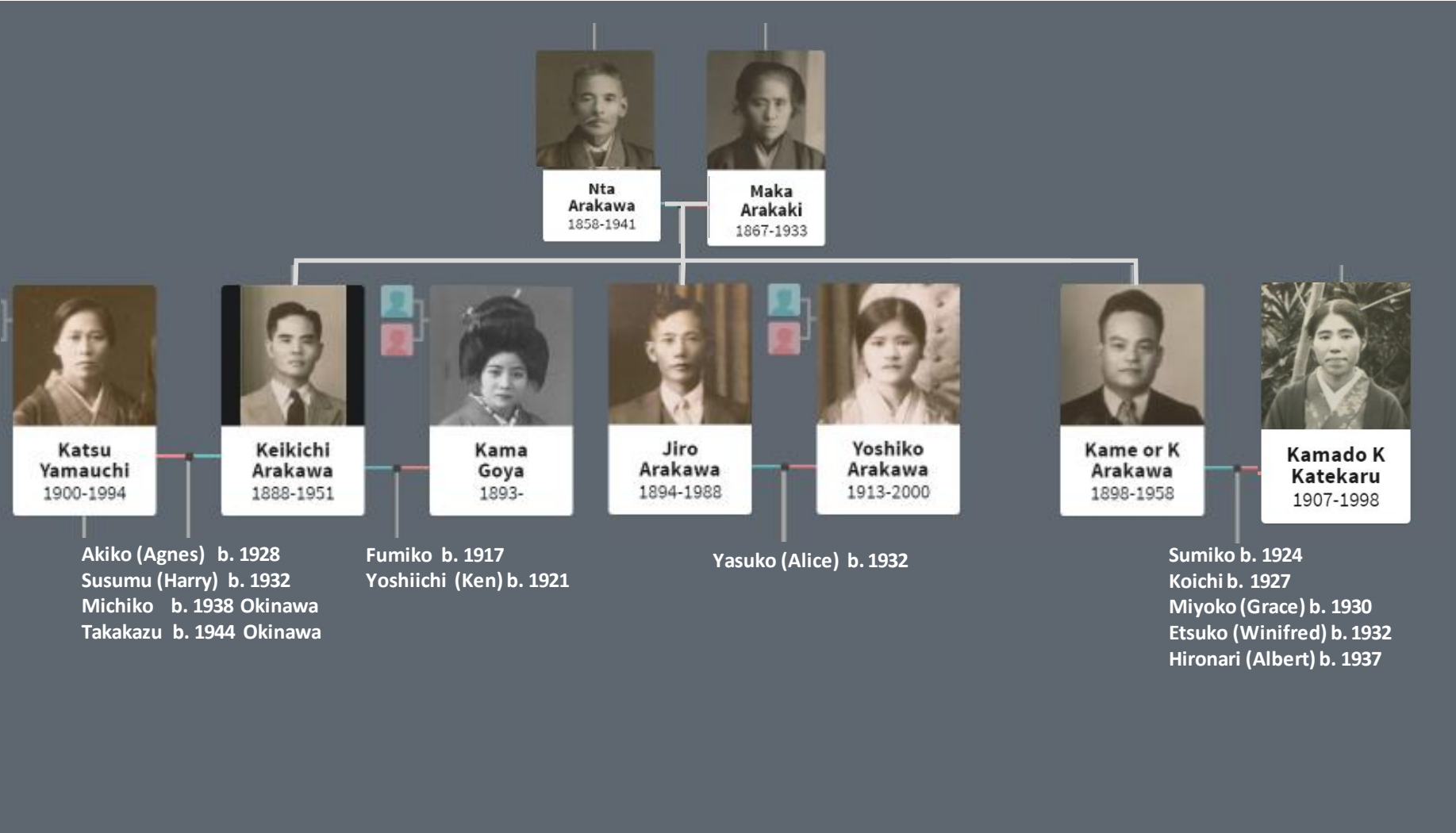
Kame 1898-1958

The descendants of Nta and Maka Arakawa of Onaha, Okinawa, are doing well in the United States, due in no small part to the courage, determination and hard work of the three brothers who left a backwater farming village in the early 20th century for Hawaii, struggled there under difficult conditions for decades, and made a homes for their Hawaii-born children.

The Descendants of Keikichi and Katsu are also leading happy and successful lives in Okinawa and Tokyo, thanks to their parents' efforts to protect them during and after the horrific Battle of Okinawa, and to the support and encouragement they received after Keikichi's death from their Arakawa relatives in Hawaii and California.

Theirs is truly a great 20th century success story.

The Arakawa Brothers of Onaha and their Descendants



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Many members of the Arakawa family have generously provided their memories, photographs and memorabilia to this project.

Fumiko Arakawa's legacy included numerous family photos and snapshots.

Ken Yoshiichi Arakawa provided many photos as well as his memories of life in Okinawa.

Grace Arakawa Ige created the first known Arakawa family tree, based in part on the memories of Yoshiko Arakawa. In an interview, Grace also provided many details of life in Waipahu with the family dating from the 1930s.

Harry Susumu Arakawa submitted to several interviews from 2013 to 2019, in which he laid out the foundation of our understanding of how the family lived in both Okinawa and Hawaii, and how they survived the Battle of Okinawa.

Takakazu Arakawa conducted research in Okinawa in which he obtained the Arakawa Kosekis, Onaha map and other primary information. He also compiled a family tree dating back to the parents of Nta Arakawa in the early 19th century, along with numerous family photos and artifacts.

Michiko Arakawa Fukuchi provided her memories of life in Okinawa during and after WWII.

Other friends and family members who assisted in this project include: Kiyoko Arakawa, Takuya Arakawa, Shoko Arakawa, Miho Fukuchi, Toshi Fukasawa, Keisuke Fukuchi, Junko Yokoo, Tracey Arakawa Kcomt, Ida Murakawa, Dean Zakahi, Doreen Arakawa, Sandy Chun, Albert Hironari Arakawa, Jackie Arakawa, Richard Azama, Adele Kaneda and Cynthia Arakawa Johnson.

Special thanks to Hiroaki Hara for translating the 1940 Arakawa Koseki to English and for providing archival research in Japanese sources. For more information about Okinawans in Hawaii, visit his website: <https://okinawans-hawaii.weebly.com/>

An Invitation

If you would like to view and/or contribute information to the Arakawa Family Tree on Ancestry.com, please contact the author by email: roryvantuyl@gmail.com