

Finding Aid

to the

Nobu Uno Story

A Picture Bride of Japan

to Kaua'i

1889 - 2008

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Kaua'i Historical Society

MS 46-Y

1 folder – 30 pages, 2 CDs

Nobu Uno's history is a multi-generational archive which begins in Chiba Prefecture in Japan, a poor, rural farming community, with her birth in 1889. Nobu was the second daughter of Fusakichi Uno and Rin Lino, four more daughters and two sons were born later.

As a rural farmer, times were hard, Nobu only finished third grade, and with her sister, began working to supplement the family income. She took sewing lessons, obtaining work at a village shop, her earnings went directly to her family.

During this time, many Japanese men were immigrating to Hawaii to seek a better life, contracting to work on the sugar plantations. Recruitment of picture brides was a solution to finding women willing to start a new life, escaping poverty.

At 20, Nobu decided this would be a better future – and with the exchange of photos, an agreement was reached with Kichiro – from a village in the same prefecture. While they both shared the last name Uno, they were not related. After a two-week sea voyage she met and married Kichiro in Honolulu on January 15, 1916 – he was 25 and employed by McBryde Sugar Plantation on Kaua'i. While the voyage from Honolulu to Kaua'i was shorter, the small boat, without access to a pier, was a difficult journey. Upon arrival, Nobu learned they would be sharing the plantation house with his roommate – it would be three months before they moved into their own plantation home.

Kichiro was a hard worker, already studying English he was hoping to work in the plantation store; starting as a delivery man, he worked his way up to a permanent position – the store camp provided better housing – a four bedroom home – which Kichiro improved over time, adding an inside bathroom, planting both vegetable and flower gardens, and building a chicken coop. The first of their nine children was born in 1917 – the last in 1935. Kichiro continued to work at McBryde Plantation Store, while Nobu kept house – supplementing their income by taking in laundry, etc. The children went to both public and Japanese schools, the family wanting their futures to include higher education.

Taking money from Kichiro's life insurance policy, they purchased the Daikon Inn in nearby Hanapepe, (later renamed Uno Store) while Kichiro continued to reside and work at McBryde, Nobu and their children moved to the new property – which included a three bedroom house, and small rentals as well, over time more were added. Hard work produced a good local clientele, which increased during World War II.

Kichiro developed cancer at age 52, the best treatment could be provided in Japan, where they traveled to in 1941, however he did not survive – passing on in July. With Japan gearing up for an invasion of the U.S., Nobu was lucky to finally embark on travel to Honolulu on the last sailing from Yokohama. The war started almost immediately after her return.

Three of their sons joined the service, two became interpreters, and the third was a decorated member of the 442nd Infantry Battalion.

Nobu and Kichiro children's names and nicknames are – Shimako (Nancy), Hiroburni (Hiro), Michiko (Mike), Masaru (Mas), Junichi (Judo), Setsuko (Betty), Ayako (Alice), Yoshiko (Yoshi), and Tadashi (Robert).

The archive continues to provide information about their children, and the next generations – education, careers, and marriages.

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