BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: John De Guair, Sr., 82, former sugar plantation and oil company employee

> *"I went to work for the plantation [Kona Development Company], hauling sugar. I drove a truck--five-ton truck. We made four or five loads a day from the sugar mill to the wharf. Hundred bags a load. And those days, the sugar bags weighed 125 pounds and I weighed 118 pounds. We had to carry that all on our backs and pile it up, down the wharf . . . There was no such thing as recreation time or go to football, or swimming, or surfing. Sundays--with a donkey and a mule--we used to go down the cane fields and pick breadfruits--five, ten bags breadfruit. Take it home. We used to cook that and feed the pigs. And we ate some, of course."*

John De Guair, Sr., the second of ten children, was born in Kahaluu, Kona, in 1899. His grandparents, and parents, Marcelina and Thomas De Guair, were Portuguese immigrants. Thomas De Guair worked on a coffee plantation in Kahaluu. Later he moved his family to Holualoa, where he bought land, farmed coffee, and raised a few head of cattle and pigs. He also worked as a blacksmith and team luna for Kona Development (KD) Company.

John attended Holualoa School until the eighth grade. As a youth, he was a jockey, racing horses for various people in Kona. He also helped on the family farm. He did hō hana, drove a mule-pulled sled, and later, drove a five-ton truck, loading and unloading bags of sugar for KD Company.

In 1926, he became the Kona area salesman for Standard Oil Company. During his years of work, John learned to speak Japanese and Hawaiian. He retired in 1961.

In 1922, John married Lakana Kamau, a teacher and principal at Keauhou and Napoopoo Schools. They had one son. Lakana passed away in 1965. Later, John married Jane Texeirra Silva.

John was a member of the Lions Club of Kona for 30 years.

Tape No. 9-74-1-81

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

John De Guair, Sr. (JD)

February 13, 1981

Holualoa, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Faye Komagata (FK)

FK: This is an interview with Mr. John De Guair, Sr., at his home at Holualoa, Kona. Today's date is February 13, 1981.

Mr. De Guair, can you tell me when you were born?

JD: June 10, 1899.

FK: And where was that?

JD: Down here in Kahaluu.

FK: How many children were there in your family?

JD: Ten lived, but I think there were some born. . . . You know, at birth, eh? Ten--six girls and four boys.

FK: What number were you?

JD: I was number two.

FK: Do you remember the names of your grandparents on your father's side?

JD: My father's side was Thomas. They used to call him Tomas in Portuguese. But my grandmother, I don't know, because she died young--very young. On my father's side.

FK: Where was your grandfather from?

JD: From Portugal.

FK: What kind of work . . .

JD: He came here to Paauhau Plantation as a laborer.

FK: Do you know about when?

JD: Oh, that, I don't know.

FK: Was your father born here?

JD: No, my father came here at the age of four years old. He was just a little boy when he came with my grandfather.

FK: How old was he when he passed away?

JD: My father was a young man, about 62 or 63.

FK: That was about what year?

JD: My father passed away in 1936.

FK: So that means he was born about 1874, I guess, somewhere around there?

JD: I guess so.

FK: He came to Hawaii pretty early, then?

JD: He came as a young man.

FK: How about your mother's side--your grandparents?

JD: My grandparents, his name was Manuel R. Costa. My grandmother was Florinda Costa.

FK: Where were they from?

JD: They originally, I think, came from Portugal very young.

FK: And your mother?

JD: My mother, I'm not quite sure whether she was born here or was born in Portugal and came here as a little girl. I'm not sure on that.

FK: Where were they?

JD: They came to Ka'u Plantation. You know where Ka'u is.

FK: Do you know what kind of work they were doing there?

JD: Laborers. Plantation laborers. Then, they moved over here to Kona.

FK: Can you tell me about your parents? Where did they grow up?

JD: My father grew up in Paauhau Plantation. My mother grew up, I think, in Ka'u, and then she moved over here as a young girl, and then married my father here. My father moved from Paauhau Plantation

over here. They were married here.

FK: Do you know what they were doing before they were married? I mean, as far as work?

JD: My father? Yeah, he worked for the plantation, too . . .

FK: Oh, even here in Kona?

JD: Yeah. My mother didn't work. Those days, all the (chuckles) women stayed home, raised babies.

FK: Did they speak English or Portuguese?

JD: They spoke broken English and Portuguese.

FK: Did they have to attend school or did they, do you know?

JD: Very little, I think, they did. Those days, was very little schooling. I really think they had very little schooling. Whatever they learned, they picked it up themselves, I think.

FK: Did they ever talk about their plantation life when they were young?

JD: Oh, yeah. My father used to talk about that quite a bit. They had hard time on the plantations.

FK: In what kind of way?

JD: Those plantation lunas, they used to treat their labor very mean. You have to work; otherwise they use a whip on you. That's why he used to say. And they used to treat the Chinese laborers very mean.

FK: Who were the lunas then?

JD: The plantation lunas were mostly Scotchmen.

FK: Did they ever mention why they came to Kona?

JD: Well, I guess, they want to better themselves. I think that's the reason why they came over there.

FK: When you were a child, you had mentioned, your father worked at the plantation. What was his job?

JD: I think he started off here at the plantation as a blacksmith. And then, he became a team luna. Took care of all the teamsters. That's it, I think. Then, he retired.

FK: Do you remember him working as a blacksmith?

JD: Oh, yes.

FK: Where was he working?

JD: Up here in the plantation.

FK: Did you ever go with him and. . . .

JD: Well, I used to. I was a little boy then, and I used to go up the plantation, fool around all the time. (I used to hoe cane for 35 cents a day--ten hours work--from when I was about 12.)

(Laughter)

FK: After your parents were married, you said, you were born in Kahaluu. Do you recall what kind of house you lived in?

JD: House? Oh, a litttle shack. (Chuckles)

FK: Can you describe it?

JD: No, no, no. I can't. I was a little boy, then. Then, we moved down here. But we still moved to a little shack down here. Then, we built this house.

FK: You had mentioned the kind of stove you had.

JD: Wood stoves. There was no such thing as water heaters. (Chuckles) In order to take a bath, you either take a bath in cold water or go and make some water on the stove to heat it up.

FK: You said your mother baked . . .

JD: Bread. Oh, yes.

FK: Where was your oven? What kind of oven did you have?

JD: In the wood stoves, they had ovens. A lot of the Portuguese, they built a stone oven outside, and then they built a fire in it to heat it up, and then they cooked their bread in there. Or even, they baked anything they wanted in there. Roasted meat or pork or. . . .

FK: When you were in Kahaluu, how many acres of land did you have?

JD: We didn't own any land there.

FK: Was it a leasehold?

JD: No, I don't think we had any lease on it. The plantation furnished, I think, the shack.

FK: Oh, for the plantation workers?

JD: Yeah. That was a coffee plantation, then. It was not a sugar plantation.

FK: Oh, in Kahaluu?

JD: Yeah.

FK: So, while you were living there, then, your father was working on coffee?

JD: Yeah, yeah.

FK: Who was the owner of the plantation?

JD: If I remember correctly, I think it was by the name of Miller or Cane. Man by the name of Miller or Cane owned that coffee plantation there, I think.

FK: Do you recall other workers there, too?

JD: No. No, I don't.

FK: How long did you live in Kahaluu, then?

JD: Not too long. I don't think we lived there more than four or five years. Then, my father bought this property here, and we both moved down here to a shack.

FK: Did he own the land or was it a leasehold?

JD: No, he bought this land.

FK: How many acres was this?

JD: This land was from the road here to the beach. Clear to the beach. All one property. He bought that for--if I remember correctly--for $1,500. He had to borrow that money to build.

FK: Who did he borrow it from?

JD: Those days, there was no such thing as banks. He borrowed that from one old Portuguese man. I think he had some money and he loaned it. Those days, people borrowed money without any paper or any promissory note or anything, you know.

FK: Trust, eh?

JD: All trust. And they were prompt. When they say they going pay on such a day, they'll pay it. They don't fool around. (Chuckles) Today, you can't do that. They'll tell you, "I don't owe you

anything." (Chuckles)

FK: While you were growing up, what kind of foods did your family eat?

JD: You had to go to work for your food. You had to plant. My father used to raise lot of pigs. He used to kill a pig 'most every month. He used to buy a cow every other two, three months. He bought a whole cow. And a cow cost him five or seven dollars for one cow. But, of course, you had to go and catch it in the field, and kill it, and bring it home.

And then, there was no such thing as ice boxes or Frigidaires or anything like that. So, the Portuguese used to salt some; they used to make sausages. They preserve it. The pig, they used to boil that, and all that lard used to come out. Then, afterwards they cook the pork in chunks like that, about that size (JD measures with hands) . . .

FK: About five or six inches.

JD: They'd cook that and the sausages. They preserved it in a barrel or some kind of container and pour all that lard back into there. That preserved it two, three months. All you had to do was to dig it out, warm it, and was ready to eat. They used to plant sweet potatoes and vegetables. We had lot of breadfruit. We used to eat breadfruit.

FK: How did you prepare that?

JD: Breadfruit? Just cook it like you cook a potato. You never eaten breadfruit?

FK: I have, but then everybody has different recipes. (Laughs)

JD: Some people just cook it, and then they fry it. They Hawaiians used to make poi out of it. Yeah. They used to eat lot of breadfruit. Poi was good, but, of course, if you ate too much of it, it caused lot of gas. (Chuckles)

FK: What other kinds of vegetables did you have?

JD: Oh, they had beans, cabbage. They had quite a few vegetables.

FK: How about fish?

JD: Sometimes, they used to go fishing. And at times, we had a old Chinese fisherman--I mean, yeah, they used to go fishing. They used to bring all that fish on a donkey, with two boxes on the side of the donkey. They donkey carrying the two boxes full of fish. They'd walk all the way from Kailua, up along here, to peddle all that fish. They'd give you ten big 'ōpelus for 25 cents. But to get your 25 cents was hard. Money was very scarce, those days.

Not like now. It grows on trees.

FK: How did they keep the fish cool?

JD: There was no such thing as keeping it cool. You mean, the fishermen?

FK: Yeah, the peddler.

JD: The peddlers? Oh, they didn't have any ice or anything. They just had to sell it fast; otherwise, it get spoiled.

FK: The pigs and the cow your father used to buy, was it just for family use?

JD: Yeah, yeah.

FK: Did he have any other cattle?

JD: My father? Well, now and then, he used to raise a few pigs and cattles, just for household use. That's about all.

FK: Can you describe this area here as you recall? Like, before, when you were growing up.

JD: Well, those days, we didn't have so many people around like we do now.

FK: Do you remember who your neighbors were around here?

JD: Oh, we had neighbors, yeah. And people were very friendly, those days. They were friendly. We didn't have any crimes around like we do now.

FK: Who were your closest neighbors, as far as right around here?

JD: Over here, we had an old man by the name of Manuel Jose.

FK: To your right, here?

JD: Yeah. And then, we had old K. Ota Store down here, just few yards away. We had other neighbors over here by the name of Morenha [JD not sure about spelling]. We had Hakoda Store further up. They were small stores, though. They were small stores; they were not big stores.

FK: Is that where you used to do your shopping?

JD: Yeah, yeah. In the olden days, most of the people used to raise some coffee, and they sold their coffee once a year. They bought all their groceries on credit. They used to pay it with coffee.

FK: Did your family do that, too?

JD: Yeah, yeah.

FK: How many acres did you have in coffee?

JD: We had here about five acres in coffee.

FK: Was there any one particular store you patronized, or did you go to several different stores?

JD: Oh, we had one store here by the name of K. Ota. And then, we had another store that they used to deal with--K. Yokoyama. Was further down by Doris Place now. Little further down, there was a big store there.

FK: Did they sell different things? How did you decide which store you were going to go shop at?

JD: Well, those days, people didn't do much. . . . They didn't buy very much of luxuries. They bought just the essential things, like flour, sugar, rice, little soap maybe. Just a few little things. There was no such thing as candy or soda water and all the luxuries that you buy now. You didn't have all this fancy furniture. You didn't have the carpet floors and all that stuff. Money was very scarce. They worked in the plantation, they got maybe $40 a month. That's all they had to live on.

FK: How large was your house? Did you have bedrooms?

JD: Later on, we built this house. This is three-bedroom house, and we have a bedroom downstairs.

FK: The house you grew up in, did you have bedrooms?

JD: Yeah, we had couple bedrooms, and a little dining room. That's about all. And the carpet was dirt. (Laughs) Dirt floors.

FK: Did you have beds?

JD: We had little bunks that they made. They used to make the mattress out of grass. We used to go up here in the hills. They used to call that "bed grass." It used to grow up up here--the high elevation, huh?

FK: Who would go and pick it?

JD: We go and cut it. And then, we dry it. Mother used to make mattress out of that.

FK: Did it last very long?

JD: It lasted for quite a while. After a while, you had to change it, put new grass in it. Today, people live like kings and queens.

FK: What kind of chores did you have to do?

JD: Chores (chuckles)? Oh, my gosh. We had so much to do. There was no such thing as playing time. When I was about 14 years of age, I worked from, sometimes, 2, 3 o'clock in the morning 'till 8, 9 o'clock at night. And I meant work. That was all hand power; there was no such thing as machine.

FK: What did you have to do?

JD: My father had a---later on, he had a team, wagon. They used to have wagons driven by mules. I used to drive a seven-mule team from Holualoa to Kailua; load up freight and bring it up here; and all that stuff. And then, go and cut feed for the mules, feed the mules, harness the mules. By the time I got home, was 8, 9 o'clock at night. When I got home, I just lay down on the bed and just pass out. Tired, eh?

FK: How old were you then when you were . . .

JD: About 14, 15 years of age.

FK: Driving the mules?

JD: Yeah. And then, after that, I went to work for the plantation [Kona Development Company], hauling sugar. I drove a truck--five-ton truck. We made four or five loads a day from the sugar mill to the wharf. Hundred bags a load. And those days, the sugar bags weighed 125 pounds and I weighed 118 pounds. We had to carry that all on our backs and pile it up, down the wharf, ready for the boats to come in and pick it up. Those days was work.

There was no such thing as recreation time or go to football, or swimming, or surfing. No such thing. Sundays, we used to go--with a donkey and a mule--we go down the cane fields and pick breadfruits--five, ten bags breadfruit. Take it home. We used to cook that to feed the pigs. And we ate some, of course.

FK: I guess when you have animals, you have a lot of work, too.

JD: Oh, yeah.

FK: And you helped with the coffee, too?

JD: If I had time. (Chuckles)

FK: How about the rest of your family? The other children?

JD: Oh, they all did their chores. Hauling the wood, carrying the wood, cutting the wood for the stove. Hauling water. Water was very scarce.

FK: Did you have any tanks here?

JD: Later on, yeah, we had some tanks. But if it didn't rain, we didn't have any water.

FK: You said later on you had tanks. What did you do in the beginning, then?

JD: They had just little barrels. Only barrels. They used to haul most of the water from Kailua. That was brackish water--half salt water. Bring it up here and give every family five or ten gallons a day for their use.

FK: Who would do the hauling?

JD: Plantation had a team.

FK: What was the brackish water used for?

JD: For whatever you wanted to use. Even some people use for cooking. Or take a bath. (But regular water was used for drinking or making tea and coffee.)

FK: So, it wasn't like wash clothes every day?

JD: Wash clothes, they go up to the ditch up here, if there was water, and wash their clothes. Take a bath, we used to jump in the pond up there where there was water and take a bath. (Lots of kids learned to swim up there. Kailua was too far for swimming in the ocean.)

FK: Who took care of the garden--the vegetables like that?

JD: We kids had to take care the garden. And my mother, with all the work she had, she also went out and did some garden work. Those days was hard times.

FK: Did she do a lot of preserving?

JD: No, they didn't do much preserving. Only meats and stuff like that--make sausages and stuff like that, they did that. But not anything fancy. Even jellies or jams, they didn't do much of that stuff because sugar was very expensive.

FK: Your food, and your house, and your parents' work, how did it compare with those of your neighbors?

JD: I think we were fortunate in a way, because we had a lot of meats and pork. Otherwise, we'd have a hard time.

FK: Did some of your neighbors have a difficult time?

JD: Oh, yes. Most people had hard times.

FK: Did you keep any other kind of animals besides your pigs and your cows?

JD: Oh, horses, mules, donkey. For transportation.

FK: How many horses and donkeys did you have at one time?

JD: We had about two, three around the house. (Donkey, mule and a horse.) We had to ride a horse or a mule to go to work. (We had about 15 mules when my father had the wagon.) (Later, after I got married) I rode from Keauhou School to Kailua, back and forth, on a horse every day to go to work.

FK: Oh, I see. After you were married. When you built your water tank, who built that for you?

JD: We had carpenters build it for us.

FK: How large was yours? Did you have just one tank?

JD: No, we had three tanks over there.

FK: Did you ever run out of water?

JD: Oh, yes, we did. Sometimes, we ran three, four months without any rain. And the tanks were small. It couldn't accumulate very much water.

FK: While you were going to school or when you had time, what kind of games did you play?

JD: There was no such thing as games.

FK: You never played marbles or anything like that?

JD: Oh, in school, we did. Yeah. We played marbles or sometimes we played a little baseball.

FK: Did you have a bat and ball?

JD: Yeah. Some of them didn't have any bats from the store. We got ahold of a stick or something. (Chuckles)

FK: How about your ball?

JD: They had some balls. And people used to make lot of balls themselves with strings.

FK: That's a lot of string. (Laughs) Did you ever play pee-o-wee?

JD: No such thing.

FK: When did you start going to school?

JD: Oh, when I was about six years of age.

FK: Was there kindergarten then?

JD: No, there was no such thing as kindergarten.

FK: When you started school, did you speak English? Did you speak Portuguese at home?

JD: Most of it, yes. (At home was mostly Portuguese until we went to school, then it was both. Our parents could not speak much English.)

FK: You started at Holualoa?

JD: Mm [yes].

FK: Who were some of your teachers?

JD: Well, the principal at Holualoa School then was Mrs. Scott. Then, they had one by the name of Mr. Manuel De Coit. Then, they had Ben Kamakau. Then, they had Akana. Then, they had. . . . Oh, quite a number of them.

FK: Gee, the principals changed often, then?

JD: About four, five years, they used to change.

FK: What subjects did you like the most?

JD: We just took what they offered us. (Chuckles)

FK: Was there anything you didn't like?

JD: (Chuckles) You had no choice. If you didn't learn, they had a big (guava) stick. They principal used to come around and give you big spanking. (Chuckles)

FK: How large was the school? Were there very many classrooms?

JD: Holualoa School, we had seven grades. Seven, I think. It was seven grades. Keauhou was about five. And Napoopoo, I think they had about six or seven.

FK: How long did you attend school?

JD: I got out of school when I was only 14 years of age.

FK: You went eight years?

JD: Yeah.

FK: That was because there was all there was here?

JD: That's all there was here. We didn't have any high schools here, those days.

FK: Did you want to go more?

JD: We wanted to go to school, but the parents couldn't afford it and they wouldn't send us to school. They put us to work. (Chuckles)

FK: Did you have any kind of activities at school, like special events or programs?

JD: No, we didn't have such things.

FK: How about your neighbors--the other children? Did they attend school about the same amount of time?

JD: About the same amount. Yeah.

FK: When you started school, were there that many Japanese here or other ethnic groups?

JD: There were quite a few. Quite a few Japanese.

FK: How about this Holualoa area as a whole? Did you notice the different ethnic groups, as to ethnic breakdown?

JD: You mean, then and now? Not much difference. Of course, we have a few more haoles over here now than there used to. (In those days, was mostly Hawaiians, Portuguese and Japanese. Later the Filipinos came in.)

FK: There were a lot of Portuguese though, I suppose?

JD: Yes, at that time, there were a lot of Portuguese.

FK: What time did you go to school? What were the hours?

JD: Eight [o'clock a.m.] to 2 [o'clock p.m.].

FK: Did you have relatives in Kona?

JD: Oh, yes. We had quite a few.

FK: Did you do anything with your relatives or friends and neighbors, like an outing every so often?

JD: No. We didn't have much time to fool around. Was all work. And Sundays, we go to church, come back home, and get to work again.

(But once in a while if my mother had a dime for us we could go to the movies. There was a wagon that went around the island and would show the movie in a tent or a shack. The kids would try to sneak in under the sides so they wouldn't have to pay.)

FK: How about celebrations?

JD: We had, maybe once a year, celebration at the church. That's all.

FK: What would that be?

JD: Oh, they'd kill a cow or pig. They used to auction out a lot of stuff. They made a nice celebration for the people. That was once a year.

FK: Which church was that?

JD: Holualoa Church. Catholic church.

FK: What occasion was this usually?

JD: They used to call that the Holy Ghost Feast. Once a year.

FK: Then you'd have a procession?

JD: Yeah, they had.

FK: Did everyone look forward to that?

JD: Oh, yes, they did.

FK: Even the children?

JD: Oh, yeah. That was a big day. They had some ice cream for the whole year.

(Laughter)

FK: How about holidays? Was there any kind of holiday celebrated in the community? New Year's and Christmas . . .

JD: Oh, we had, like, Washington's Birthday, and Christmas, and New Year, and a few others. But not holidays like now. Now, every other day, they have a holiday. Not only one, but they have three or four. (Chuckles)

FK: What was Christmas like for your family?

JD: That was a big celebration, Christmas day. That's the only time we had some candy and maybe a bottle of soda water. And maybe one apple and one orange. That's it. That was once a year. Today, every day is Christmas. (Chuckles)

FK: Did your family practice any kind of customs or traditions, other than Holy Ghost Day, that you'd call Portuguese?

JD: No, not much.

FK: How about the food you ate? Was there any special type of ethnic food?

JD: We ate rice, and bread, and meat, and pork, fish.

FK: Was there anything you could call Portuguese, though?

JD: They used to make lot of soups. Bean soups, rice soups, vegetable soups. All kind of soups. They cook it with pork or meat and made it tasty, which was good food. Now, you have all these chemicals that kill you.

FK: They have to make it from scratch?

JD: That's right.

FK: As a family, did you attend church very often or regularly?

JD: Every Sunday, we go to church.

FK: Then, after that, you do your work? Before and after, maybe?

JD: Yes, we had to work. Those days was plenty of work, very little recreation. Today, it's all recreation and no work.

FK: How would you say the relationship was among the different ethnic groups while you were growing up?

JD: Oh, I think we had good relationship. You didn't hear of very many fights or anything like that.

FK: Even without being able to communicate too well?

JD: No. People were too busy doing their own work.

FK: Do you recall any significant events when you were young? Like a war, or storm, or drought?

JD: We did not because there was not such thing as radios. There was no such thing as T.V. There was no newspapers. So, it didn't bother us very much, (what we didn't know about).

FK: How about earthquakes, or winds, or storms?

JD: Oh, we had it. Especially month of December--end of December or early part of January. We had a lot of wind, rain, thunder, lightning. We had that quite often.

FK: Someone else had mentioned thunder and lightning before. We don't have that too much now.

JD: No, we don't have that too often now.

FK: You said that you were a jockey?

JD: Yeah, one time, I was. That was just on holidays or Sundays, when they had an event, see?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

FK: How old were you when you were being a jockey?

JD: Oh, about 12, 13 years of age.

FK: Who were some others?

JD: We had another Japanese man by the name of Yoshimura. He was a jockey, too. And some other boys.

FK: Do you recall any of the others?

JD: Joe Teixeira was one of them. And Yoshimura. I think that was about all on this side.

FK: You mentioned Martins.

JD: John Martins, I think, he was one of them.

FK: What occasions would you race the horses?

JD: Any time when they felt like. (Chuckles)

FK: Whose horses?

JD: Oh, we had quite a number of horses. We had a man by the name of Kalele, had some very good horses. And Kelinahi and John Martins. Japanese man over here by the name of Suenaga had a good horse. Onaka. Oh, quite a few.

FK: And you boys would ride . . .

JD: Ride for them.

FK: Were they placing bets, too?

JD: I believe they did. (Chuckles) But we didn't see any money.

FK: It wasn't for any special occasion, like a holiday or something?

JD: No, no, it wasn't special. They were competing, that's all.

FK: Was there any special reason why you were. . . . Is it because you liked horses or they asked you?

JD: Oh, I liked horses, too. I used to ride horses all the time.

FK: Did you have to know the owner first or did they just hear about you and ask you?

JD: Oh, they asked me, yeah, to ride.

FK: How long was your family into coffee? For how many years?

JD: Oh, we didn't have coffee very long. We had coffee about, oh I would say, about eight or ten years, that's about all.

FK: This was after you moved from Kahaluu?

JD: Yeah, we moved over here. Then, coffee price went so bad that everybody gave up coffee.

FK: This was before 1920?

JD: Yeah.

FK: Did you sell your coffee only to the stores or did you sell it to a mill also?

JD: We used to sell it mostly to the stores. And then, the stores, in turn, used to sell to American Factors. They had a coffee mill down there.

FK: How about machinery?

JD: You mean, to grind the coffee? They had machinery.

FK: Did you have?

JD: No, we didn't have. We had only a little machine to pulp the cherry coffee.

FK: Was that a hand pulper?

JD: Hand power. All hand power.

FK: Then, you needed water to wash the coffee?

JD: Yeah, yeah. We needed some water,(and we'd use whatever we had but had to be very careful about conserving it.)

FK: How about the drying platform?

JD: We had to build our own platform to dry it and stir it. Dry it in the sun.

FK: Did you have a covered platform, too?

JD: Yeah. Or if people didn't have a covered platform, they piled it all on one spot, and then they put couple sheets of iron over to cover it up.

FK: What if it rained? Wouldn't the rain get under it?

JD: Well, they covered with some bags, and burlaps, or something like that. Then, spread 'em out again the next morning to dry.

FK: Did you ever have to hire workers?

JD: Some people did. Especially during the coffee season. I picked coffee for 35 cents a bag--100-pound bag, 35 cents.

FK: Who did you pick for?

JD: For different farmers. Thirty-five cents. Now, they paying $14 a bag, nobody wants to pick it. Nobody wants to (chuckles) go and pick coffee.

FK: Then, your family didn't need to hire any pickers?

JD: No, we didn't hire any pickers.

FK: You had a large family, too. Did you use your donkeys, then?

JD: Oh, yes. To haul the coffee from down the field up to the house here to . . .

FK: You had to load the bags down to the donkey?

JD: Oh, yes. The donkey wouldn't carry it himself. (Chuckles)

FK: I mean, the children, themselves, had to load?

JD: Yeah.

FK: Strong children.

JD: Oh, yeah. You had to be strong.

FK: How about as far as taking care of your coffee land? <u>Hō hana</u>?

JD: The boys used to do that.

FK: You didn't use any poison?

JD: There was no such thing as poison, the olden days.

FK: How did you feel about having to do all that farm work?

JD: We didn't like it, but we had to. (Chuckles)

FK: Did you have any problems as far as taking care of your coffee land?

JD: No, because we had a large family, so we managed all right.

FK: Did you cut the branches yourself?

JD: Oh, yeah.

FK: How about as far as your harvest is concerned? How was the quality?

JD: Oh, I think the quality was just as good as now.

FK: What kind of coffee did you have?

JD: Well, those days, was mostly old, Hawaiian coffee. We didn't have this. . . . Now, they have different varieties of coffees.

FK: Did you have tall trees, too?

JD: Those days, most of the people had it tall. They figure that by having a big tree, it would produce more coffee. (Chuckles)

FK: So, you had to use ladders?

JD: Oh, yeah.

FK: You didn't bend the trees, then?

JD: We did. We got a hook.

FK: Oh, even the tall one?

JD: Bend 'em down.

FK: For your family, which was the most money-producing income?

JD: Well, I don't know exactly, but . . .

FK: Was it the coffee or your father's work or. . . .

JD: I think was working out for the plantation.

FK: But you feel you still needed to have the coffee land?

JD: Oh, yeah. That was little extra money.

FK: What was your very first job?

JD: First job was working for my father, driving teams. Then, I worked for. . . .

FK: How much did you get for doing that?

JD: For working for my father? Get a whip, sometimes, on my back. That's about all. Father didn't pay us anything. (Chuckles)

FK: You were just helping him?

JD: No, he was feeding me. That was the payment. (Laughs) He wasn't giving me any money. Lucky if I got a bottle of soda water on Christmas time.

FK: When you went to pick coffee for other farmers, how old were you?

JD: About 12, 14, 13.

FK: Did you go with anyone else in your family?

JD: With my sisters. And the money that we got from picking coffee, gave it all to my mother. That was the end of it.

FK: Did you take baskets? What did you use?

JD: Baskets, yeah.

FK: What kind did you use?

JD: They used to make a basket out of burlap bag, with a wire hoop. Sew the bag together, that's all. Towards the end, they got some baskets made of lau hala. You know lau hala leaves?

FK: What other job did you do after that?

JD: Then, I worked for my Uncle Tom driving a team. Then, finally, I drove a truck for him for about five years. Then, I went to work for the plantation.

FK: When you were driving the truck, what kind of wages did you have?

JD: Three dollars a day. From 3 o'clock in the morning to 7, 8 o'clock at night at times. No overtime, no extra pay.

FK: Can you describe the plantation as you recall it? What was involved?

JD: Plantation, well, they were in the sugar business. Was all hand

labor. There was no such thing as machine. Only the sugar mill had machine to grind the sugar.

FK: Compared to other sugar plantations, this is pretty mountainous around here.

JD: Yeah. That's what I said. They had to work all by hoe. Pulling the hoe. You know, planting cane, fertilizer, cutting the cane, hauling the cane. That's all by hand. Now, they have all machine working. Even loading the cane, cutting the cane, different plantations have all machinery now.

FK: Were you working for the plantation when the owners were Japanese?

JD: Yes. The manager's name was Konno. He came from Japan. He didn't last very long. I think he had a plantation about eight or nine years, I think. And then, they went broke.

FK: How about the mill? How was everything done?

JD: Well, the mill had machinery. They had some kind of machinery. To crush the cane, get the juice out. They had sugar boilers to cook the juice. . . . And then, they had machine to bag it. To sew the bags was all by hand and to load the sugar bags on the trucks was all by hand.

FK: The workers for the plantation, seemed like a lot of the local people worked on the plantation, and there was also a camp?

JD: Yeah, they had different camps. They had up here a camp (just before Mori Store). This camp up here was Chinese. Mostly Chinese.

FK: What camp was that? Was there a name for it?

JD: Holualoa Camp. Down close to the mill they had another camp. There, that camp, I think, was all Japanese. Worked in the camp, there.

FK: Seems like there were different systems of work, too, like contract and there were day workers.

JD: I don't know. The plantation had here contract workers.

FK: It seemed like one person would have a contract, and he would get other people to work for him and do a particular piece of . . .

JD: I don't think they had this over here in this plantation.

FK: On the other side, they do.

JD: Oh, yeah, the other plantations, they have--I really don't know, I really don't know.

FK: When you say you were driving a truck, what kind of truck was that?

JD: It was a big, wide five-ton truck with solid tires. The roads were all gravel roads. They were not paved.

FK: Lot of bushes?

JD: Bushes, yeah.

FK: How did you learn to drive it?

JD: I learned to drive a small Ford truck--a Ford car truck. And then, I drove the big truck.

FK: Was there competition for your job? I mean, how did you get it?

JD: No, you just go and apply. There was no such thing as competition, because there were not many trucks--there weren't many drivers, anyway.

FK: You said the roads were pretty bad. Did you encounter any kind of problems as far as your truck was concerned?

JD: Not too many problems, because we didn't have much traffic. (Laughs)

FK: How about the engine, and the brakes, and things like that? How did it differ from today?

JD: They had brakes on the trucks. Yeah, it was all right. We had a big hand brake.

FK: People mention the cars were different.

JD: Oh, yeah. Like the Ford cars, you just press your foot (on the clutch), hold it down, that's low. And then, when it starts to go, then give 'em enough of gasoline (with the hand throttle), then let the foot out, it goes into high gear. There were only three (pedals)--(clutch, reverse, brake).

FK: If you're in high gear and you let it go, how does your car move?

JD: You press it in, you press in the clutch tight, that's low gear to make it go. When it gets a good speed and you let it go, it turns into high gear, see? That's all. (Chuckles) And the center one was the reverse.

FK: How long did you work as a truck driver?

JD: Well, for the plantation, I drove, I would say, about three or four years. Then, I went to work for Standard Oil Company for 35 years till I retired.

FK: You were describing, last time, about how the cane was cut and sent down to the railroad.

JD: The cane was cut in the fields. They had a cable wire from way up here or whatever field they had, reach down to the railroad. The railroad had cars. Up here, they bundle the cane, and they hook it on the wire with a roller. The wire had enough slope, so they grease that roller all the time. It went down fast. Then, it went down there [to the railroad]. Had a switch there. The bundle of cane dropped right into the truck [railroad car], see? (And one man would pick up the rollers and take it back up to the field.) Then, the train hauled it back to the sugar mill to grind it. Oh, was quite a job.

FK: Do you recall a sisal mill?

JD: Yeah, they had a sisal mill here in Kailua, above Kailua there. Didn't last very long, though. Then, we had a tobacco company, too, in Honaunau, way back.

FK: Did you ever go there?

JD: No, I used to pass by it at times, but I never went in there.

FK: Oh, how about liquor? The homemade stuff?

JD: Well, during Prohibition time, people made their own liquor, most of it. They make 'ōkolehao. They made swipe. Japanese used to make mostly swipe. The Hawaiians used to make swipe, too. Japanese made swipe mostly of rice. And the Hawaiians used to make swipe out of, they used to call it, pāninis--cactus. These beach lands were all covered with cactus--with forest of cactus.

FK: By the beach, you said?

JD: All along the beach (and ka kai, the area between the beach and ma uka). They used to make swipe out of that stuff. (There wasn't much trees and vegetation like now. Was all mostly cactus with lots of pigs running around.)

FK: What kind of cactus was that?

JD: You haven't seen cactus?

FK: I've seen, but there're all kinds.

JD: We had only two kinds here. The red and the white. They make swipe out of most any one. And the other people used to make it out of. . . . I mean 'ōkolehao. But Japanese used to make 'ōkolehao mostly out of rice. You can make 'ōkolehao most of anything that'll ferment. Then, you distill it. The best 'ōkolehao they had here was made out of ti leaf. You know, these ti leaves? Ti leaves has

a big potato underneath, eh? Then, you dig that potato and you cook it. And then, you distill it. You ferment it, then you distill it.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

JD: If you drank that stuff, you could dance the jig. (Chuckles)

FK: Did your father ever make it or your . . .

JD: Oh, yes, he made. But he never did sell any.

FK: What did he make it of?

JD: He made it out of most anything. Bananas, mangoes, molasses. Anything that ferments, you can make hard liquor, (but you have to distill it).

FK: What did the processing involve? How did he do it?

JD: You had to get the stuff. You put it in a barrel, and then ferment it. After it ferments, then they distill it. Put it in a distiller. The pipe goes through water. When it starts to boil in the pot and then all that vapor that comes out has to escape through the pipe. But the pipe is cooled by water. So, when it cools off, it's liquid that comes out. That's the liquor, see? But the first batch that comes out is real strong stuff--powerful stuff. Then, they had to dilute it (with the one that comes out later).

FK: Did you ever have any raids around here?

JD: Oh, yes. They had quite a few raids. But, well, I don't know. People were all involved in that thing, so they. . . . Some people made a lot of money on that.

FK: It seems like because it was a country area, a lot of people mentioned it.

JD: They used to bring even the stuff from Kohala over here to sell it. Oh, yeah.

FK: Any one particular fruit better than another?

JD: As I said, the best <u>'ōkolehao</u> was made out of <u>ti</u> leaf root. Rice didn't make very good, though, because, I don't know, people got affected with headaches more with rice. That's what they claim, I don't know.

FK: How about grapes? I understand the Portuguese had a lot of grapes.

JD: Grapes made very good <u>'ōkolehao</u> and made nice wine, too.

FK: Did the Portuguese bring that with them to Kona?

JD: I really don't know whether they brought grapes over here from Portugal or not. Walter, did the Portuguese bring grapes when they came over here from Portugal? They did?

FK: Did you ever eat any of the grapes?

JD: Oh, yes, we did.

FK: I heard recently some people were saying they were all sour.

JD: Oh, no. They had nice grapes. They had plenty grapes. Everything was good to eat, the olden days, because it was very scarce. (Chuckles) When you got some, you relished it.

FK: Were there any wild pigs?

JD: Oh, lots of wild pigs. Lot of wild goats, lot of wild sheep.

FK: Where did you find most of them?

JD: You go on the road from here to Kamuela, you see 'em by the thousands. You didn't have to go off of the road to shoot a sheep or a goat. Not anymore.

FK: This is about what period?

JD: Right after the war, 1940, '45, '50, there was lot of sheep. But when the army came over here, they destroyed a lot of 'em.

FK: When you were young, were there a lot of animals like that?

JD: Oh, yes. Lots of them.

FK: Where did you learn to speak Hawaiian?

JD: When I worked down Kailua, there were lot of Hawaiians working, and I picked up.

FK: This is when you started working for Standard Oil?

JD: Yes.

FK: What year was that?

JD: I started working 1926.

FK: Before that, you were married?

JD: Yeah. Of course, my wife was part-Hawaiian, so I learned some. And I picked up a little Japanese here and there.

FK: What was your first wife's name?

JD: Lakana.

FK: Lakana. . . .

JD: Lakana Kamau.

FK: Was her father this principal that you spoke of?

JD: No, no. That was Kamakau, I told you.

FK: Your wife became a schoolteacher in Kona?

JD: Yeah. After Holualoa, she went to Keauhou as a principal. And then, from Keauhou, she went to Napoopoo as a principal. Then, from there, she retired.

FK: Where did she have her education?

JD: Honolulu. She went to teacher's--they used to call that normal school, I think.

FK: Where were you married?

JD: In Honolulu. We just went down for a visit and were married there, and then we came back here.

FK: After you were married, did you live at the school?

JD: I think we did, yeah.

FK: Was it like a teacher's cottage?

JD: Yeah. There're some cottages for the teachers.

FK: Why did you start working at the Standard Oil?

JD: Because it was a better job and little more money.

FK: Were you offered the job or did you hear about. . . . How did you hear about it?

JD: I had a friend that was working there. He wanted someone to work part-time. So, I worked for him. He got me to work for him for three days a week. Then, I worked three days a week for about a year, I think. Then, he was transferred to Paauilo, I think. Then, I took his job.

FK: Were there any other workers, too?

JD: After that--after a long while--yes. But when I started, I took

care of the field all by myself.

FK: Was there competition?

JD: No, those days, there was no competition. Just Standard Oil Company was here.

FK: What was the name of the company, though? You said it was not Standard Oil, at first.

JD: They had a product called Red Crown gasoline.

FK: But you said it was not only gasoline.

JD: Oh, yes. They had all kinds of kerosene, diesel, everything. Sprayers.

FK: Now, everything's hauled in just one tank, and it's just one thing. How did you. . . .

JD: Well, they had tanks over here. Barge used to bring it from Honolulu, pump it in the tanks. Then, we had trucks to take it out.

FK: Did you take the diesel and the kerosene all that one time, or did you have to go back and forth to load up?

JD: Back and forth. Some of the trucks had three or four different compartments, so we could take different products at the time.

FK: Was it a regular route you went on? Or did people call you?

JD: Most time, we had regular routes, but we had lot of side orders we had to deliver.

FK: You mentioned that you went to the homes of people . . .

JD: Oh, yes. We delivered kerosene, diesel. Later on, we delivered thermogas--this cylinder gas, you know, that they used for cooking. We delivered that to them.

FK: What did the work involve, though? What did you have to do?

JD: You have to use your hand power. And I got the invoice, collect the money, all that stuff. Account for everything you take out.

FK: When you took it to a person's home, what did you have to do?

JD: Put it in their tanks and collect the money. Make our deliveries and collect the money.

FK: You mentioned you didn't have a hose?

JD: Hose? (Chuckles) There was no such thing as hose, those days. All buckets. Put it in your bucket and haul it. Sometimes, 50 feet, 100 feet, we had to haul it in a bucket. Dump it in their tank. Oh, was a lot of work, all work.

FK: And the approach to people's homes were pretty rough, too. I notice people who live off the road, off the road is pretty much of an incline.

JD: Yeah. We had to do all that.

FK: What was your starting salary for Standard Oil?

JD: Three dollars a day. But no such thing as overtime or anything like that.

FK: No overtime? You had to figure your schedule yourself?

JD: Yes. We worked till we get through, that's all. Eight, 9 o'clock, 7 o'clock, 6 o'clock, doesn't make any difference.

FK: You were the only one there? Is that why?

JD: For a while. Then, I got two other men.

FK: Did you have to request for that?

JD: Well, I had to, and same time, the company knew that there was more business, more business all the time. So, naturally, required more help.

FK: You said there was more business. Was it because of more people or more . . .

JD: Oh, of course. Of course, more people. And people started to get little more money, so instead of using wood, they use kerosene.

FK: Where was this first Standard Oil plant? Do you call it a plant?

JD: Yeah. Down Kailua.

FK: Where was that in Kailua?

JD: Right back of the wharf, there.

FK: Oh, by that Kamehameha Hotel?

JD: Yeah. Then, they moved it further out on the other end. Then, I think, now, they moved all of it to Kawaihae. They have no plant over here, now.

FK: From that Kailua Beach, then where did they move first? After

that?

JD: They moved where the old airport is, a little further up there. And then, from there, they moved to Kawaihae.

FK: Why did the move have to take place?

JD: I don't know. I think it was because. . . . Oh, they did away with the wharf down there. So, all the tankers came to Kawaihae to unload.

FK: How many trucks did you have?

JD: We started off with two, and then, later on, we had three.

FK: Who were some of the men who worked for you?

JD: Oh, I had quite a few. I had a Japanese boy named Matsuyama. And then, I had Leonard Yates. Kazuo Aoki. And few others.

FK: What area did you cover?

JD: The whole Kona.

FK: That would be from where to where?

JD: It's from Honomalino to Keamuku. Past Puuwaawaa--Puuwaawaa Ranch. (At Keamuku they were building roads, and we used to deliver to the contractors.)

FK: That was some road, then. Did you ever worry about having all that gas and driving on those roads?

JD: No, I didn't worry much.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

FK: Did you ever deal with American Factors?

JD: Oh, yes.

FK: You mean, the gas?

JD: Yeah. And diesel, and stuff like that.

FK: [How did clients pay their bills?]

JD: (In cash. Sometimes we extended credit--a few days or a week. The larger business had up to one month. The company was pretty strict about extending credit.)

FK: [What was the fuel used for?]

JD: (People needed it for lamps--gas or kerosene, for starting fires, and later, to coffee machinery. Kerosene was about 12 to 13 cents a gallon. Gas was about 25 cents.)

FK: [What about Kailua Bay. Was it clean?]

JD: (Oh, yeah. Barge used six-inch hose tied onto floating empty barrels about 20 feet apart and pumped it into the tanks on the shore. They also came in 50-gallon barrels from Honolulu.)

FK: [How were the safety standards?]

JD: (Oh, our--what do you call it--was "Think Safety." You know, whatever you do, work or anything else, if you "Think Safety" you'll be okay. . . . I remember when the big bosses used to come, we wore our uniforms with bow ties; shine up our shoes (gestures). Appearance was important. Especially those days, jobs were hard to get and if you had a good job, you did your best to keep it.)

FK: Everyone I've spoken to, in mentioning you, all said that you're very good in Japanese.

JD: Not good. Just speak up here and there, that's all.

FK: But they said they could all understand.

JD: I can understand quite a bit, but not too good.

FK: How did you pick it up?

JD: Well, the olden days, we had a lot of Japanese here. And most of the Japanese were businessmen, so I had to deal with them. Most of them didn't speak English too well, so they spoke all in Japanese. So, I had to learn.

FK: You would ask them to repeat something . . .

JD: Mm hmm [yes]. And I had lot of Japanese boys, friends--lot of friends majime [serious], too--that we used to go around with, so I picked up.

FK: Because many people say, "Oh, yes, he speaks very good Japanese." I was wondering. Everyone seemed to be impressed. You took a correspondence course while you were working?

JD: While I was working for the oil company, I took for couple years.

FK: What kind of course was that?

JD: Just salesman course. But I didn't finish it. It was too much

work to work and study.

FK: When you went to Napoopoo area when your wife was teaching there, did you live in the teacher's cottage there, too?

JD: Yes.

FK: And you commuted all the way to Kailua?

JD: Mm hmm [yes].

FK: Did you have anything to do with the students, also?

JD: The school? No, no.

FK: What kind of duties did your wife have as a principal?

JD: She taught class just as well as any other teacher. And she had to make all her reports and everything else. There was no such thing as 2 o'clock, go home.

FK: What kind of salary was she getting as a principal?

JD: I think, as a principal, they got about $25 more or something than the ordinary teacher. Something like that.

FK: So, about how much was her salary? Do you recall?

JD: I don't think she was making very much over a $100 when she started there.

FK: Did you have any children?

JD: Yeah, I had one boy.

FK: Was he born when you were up there?

JD: No, he was born Keauhou School.

FK: So, she had to be a mother and a teacher?

JD: Yeah. But those days, I had someone work for us to help her in the house, do some cooking. My sister used to stay with us, and I used to pay her.

FK: Why did you move to Kailua?

JD: Because I bought a place in Kailua and I built a house in Kailua of my own, see?

FK: What part of Kailua is that?

JD: Right there where the Hilton Hotel is. You know where the tennis court is? I had a home there before. That place, I rent that place. I leased it out to Hilton.

FK: Now?

JD: Yeah.

FK: How long a lease is that?

JD: I gave 'em a 55-year lease, I think.

END OF INTERVIEW

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF KONA

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Ethnic Studies Program
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