

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Alice Gouveia, 62, retired grocery store owner,  
Lower Paia

*"I thought that if I run it the right way and if I have my friends-- you know, my customers--to back me up, there must be a way. And, somehow, I wanted to be my own boss for a change, because I went through working from maid to janitor to everything, that someone was always above me. I wanted to be independent for a change."*

Alice (Saito) Gouveia, Japanese, was born January 10, 1918, in Keahua, Maui. Her father was an independent pineapple grower near Kokomo. At the age of thirteen, Gouveia moved to Haiku where she lived with her uncle, a storekeeper. Besides helping her uncle in the store, she also helped him put on kabuki shows in his garage.

In 1934, she worked as a housemaid for a hao plantation supervisor in Puunene, remaining there until 1937 when she began working at the Iao School cafeteria. At about the same time, Gouveia started her own poultry farm. She tended the farm after putting in a full day's work at the school cafeteria.

In 1948, Gouveia started the Economy Store in Lower Paia. She ran the store until 1975, when she decided to sell it. Today, the store is still in operation under the same name. Gouveia is presently involved in real estate. She also does volunteer work for Maui Rehabilitation Center. Her hobbies are photography, gardening, and meeting people. She and her husband, Alfred, live in Pukalani.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Alice Gouveia (AG)

March 3, 1980

Pukalani, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Alice Gouveia. Today is March 3, 1980, and we're at her home in Pukalani, Maui.

Okay, where were you born?

AG: In Keahua, [Maui].

WN: What's your birthdate?

AG: January 10, 1918.

WN: What was your father doing in Keahua?

AG: Well, he used to work in the fields. Pineapple fields. No, not pineapple. Sugar cane fields. My mother did the same.

WN: Did they work together?

AG: No. I think they had the men gang and the wahine gang, they called it. My father got paid seventy-five cents a day for twelve hours, and my mother, fifty cents a day. Then, he decided he better go into pineapple because with that pay, he won't be able to educate us. (At that time, a large, round bread was ten cents.)

WN: The pineapple was better pay?

AG: No. They called themselves the Independent Pineapple Growers. This other way [sugar plantation], they always had a boss above them. He wanted to be on his own. The harder he works, the more money he makes, in other words. What they did was, charge everything that they need--(fertilizer), the tools they use (to Haiku Fruit and Packing Company). Not fancy equipment that they have today. They used dynamite to crack the stones. Everything done by hand (and plow with horses). He got the pineapple growing.

WN: Did he buy the land?

AG: No, he leased it. I think it was Haiku Fruit [and Packing Company].

WN: Oh, he sold the pineapples to Haiku Fruit?

AG: (Yes.) Haiku Fruit. He sold it, but actually I don't know who. They used to talk about Grove Ranch, those days. It could have been there. Part of it was owned by the Costa [family]. Now, before the pineapple--this was sad--before the pineapple (ripened), he was starting another field. There was a different type of dynamite [which] was sold. They say it was a illegal one. I don't know if those days, they considered that. His face was all in bad shape. Even I could see his heart going up and down. It's something that a person, even at the age of seven, cannot forget.

WN: Is that how he died?

AG: That's how he died. They took the door from the house and carried him home. He died in April the fourteenth; the pineapple start coming out in June. So, we were there picking pineapple. The pineapple was about our height. (Chuckles)

WN: The leaves?

AG: Yeah, the leaves. We'd poke our eyes, and we had something like pink eyes all the time. Then, we got some help during the summer from boys from Keahua. We were so poor, but when the pineapple (was taken to the cannery minus what we owed), we got some money. The first truck I remember they bought was a Federal--the name. You don't . . .

WN: Federal truck?

AG: Federal (Scout) truck. You don't hear Federal nowadays. They would pull a cord--oh, that's the horn--you pull the cord and make kata-kata, kata-kata. Have you seen or heard anything like that?

WN: They'd pull the cord?

AG: Pull the cord, uh huh [yes]. I don't know whether they made their own, but lots of them around there in Kaupakalua had the horn like that. I don't know whether you can hear it from the distance. (Laughs) That's the horn.

WN: They didn't have built-in horns, the cars?

AG: No. They pull the cord. I was too young to even see how it worked. Then came the (round) press (type), and it says, "Arura, arura." That came next, eh? (That was very loud.)

WN: So, you were born in Keahua, but then your father thought he couldn't make enough money working in sugar cane, so you folks moved to Kokomo? That's where he started growing his pineapple fields?

AG: No, he worked for someone--some Japanese family.

WN: Pineapple growers?

AG: Pineapple growers. So that he could learn a little bit about pineapple.

WN: What did he do? Did he pick pineapples?

AG: Well, no. He started to plant. Then, they hō hana, (that means) to cut grass in the pineapple field. It's not like now where they spray [insecticide], and there's hardly any grass in the pineapple field. There were lots before. When the crop came out and those people made the money, he got paid. Then, he start his own in Kaupakalua.

WN: When you were about five years old?

AG: Five years old. But I went ahead and told you--he died when I was seven years old.

WN: While you folks were in Kaupakalua, he died?

AG: Kaupakalua, uh huh [yes]. Oh, another experience was, there were no mortuary, those days. We were told my father was laid on the futon on the floor. All the children had to sleep beside him, because we were told that, "This is the last night you going to sleep with your father." We were sad. You know, when you're seven years old, you're sad, but you're scared, too.

So many people came during the night. I had a aunt, (Haru) Takahashi, [who] came from Hana on a horse and reached there about midnight, and she started to cry. Lot of others came. That is an experience that we--you know, brothers and sisters get together--we talk about it. Then, what's next, now?

WN: Let's see. You had a big family--eight of you in the family.

AG: Well, from my first father, the sixth one came after he died. Then, three more later. My uncle became our father--my father's younger brother. In fact, he was with the kabuki shows in Honolulu at that time. I know it was hard for him to pick pineapple, and [he] had to stand the noisy six of us. (Laughs)

WN: He quit the kabuki shows in Honolulu?

AG: Yes. The family and the friends got together and spoke to him.

"Your brother died, and we have all that pineapple, and living in a gulch. Aren't you going to worry about them?"

He didn't know what to do. He was in the bedroom two days and two

nights to make up his mind. Then, he decided. Well, he feel sorry for us, and he have to carry the pineapple business on. So, I think we did manage real well.

WN: Where did you folks live while they were doing pineapple?

AG: In Kaupakalua. The school could have been about two miles away (from home) between Peahi and--past Kokomo, anyway. Really [lived] in a gulch. I don't know why they put a house there. I think it's because there was a stream. We don't need to put the pipes in or whatever. But, of course, we had some pipes put in certain way, but not to a high level. I guess they didn't know how. When it rained hard, the water would come from all angles (up to our waist). It's a wonder we did not drown. (Chuckles)

My mother's uncle, (Bunshiro) Tomita, I recall couple times, he came--when my parents were away--with a rope and tried to tie the house to the kukui tree. (Laughs) And still, we were so brave. The kitchen was all filled with water, but what we had in mind was, "Oh, we musn't forget the (pineapple) fertilizer that they have under the house." We saved the fertilizer. One bag was about hundred pounds, now. Maybe three or four of us would get it to higher grounds and cover it up. At that time, they were in Keahua. No telephones, so they can't call us at all. When they came home, we were told--after struggling, you know, we could have drowned--and still, they say, oh, good girl that we saw to it that the fertilizer (laughs) was saved.

The laundry, when it's dirty, we have to scrub it on the (rough) rocks by the ditch, put some soap on, and soak it overnight. Sometimes, we'd boil it with--they don't have that anymore now--Pearline was the name. I don't know why, but when it's so dirty--we could have learned it from the Portuguese--we had a stick. We'll hit the clothes, and then wash it. We didn't have to rinse because the water was flowing all the way down. We just shake it, that's all. We didn't have to change water at all.

Of course, we had our furo. Now, as I recall, people say it's good for your health. It's cold water and hot water, and cold and hot water. The Nishi shiki (style). Well, we did that when we were young. We went in the furo, swim in the ditch. When it's cold, we go back in the furo. Back and forth. So, we were pretty healthy. We did not catch cold at all.

WN: What about medicine? Any kind medicine?

AG: Oh, medicine was brought in by, I think, was Mr. Hata. There was a (colored) paper sack hanging down (with pictures of the whole family).

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, you were telling about the medicine?

AG: The Japanese medicine. They were all kinds. For headache, toothache, and stomachache. They were all powder form. We could not read Japanese, but then, we could more or less tell by the picture. Mr. Hata came to refill, like every three months. So, whenever we had a toothache, we'd pick up that medicine and drink it. It's funny that they did not have anything to put on the teeth. It was a powder form to drink. And for headache, and for colds. Now, I can't recall if there were any medicine that was other than powder (in the bag). (Whenever we got a big cut--even if the bone was showing--we took care of it ourselves with hydrogen peroxide and Mentholatum. As I think back, I wonder if there were germs those days or we were physically fit.)

WN: Any herb kind of medicine?

AG: Herb, I don't think they did go into . . . . No, this all came from Japan. Well, we did know, let's say, if we needed a laxative, we would eat kukui nut. (Chuckles) Really. Because we ate a lot of guava to survive. Then, there were some kind of a purple berries. That was for upset stomach. Other than that, I don't recall. (Oh, yes, I was the tough dentist of the house to pull my brother's and sister's teeth with a plier.)

WN: This Mr. Hata who came, he came up in a car?

AG: Gee, I wonder if he came on a horse or maybe it was Model T.

WN: How many people were living in that area? Were there other houses in that gulch?

AG: We were the only ones. The Costas lived up on the hill. The Watanabes--that's my uncle and his family--lived on the other side of the (gulch). The Costas were closer to us. Maybe, one-fourth mile. They were the closest. The Watanabes were, I would say, little over a mile. How we got there is go on the winding road up the hill and keep on walking--barefooted.

My grandparents were there, too. She raised a lot of bananas. She had a cave; she kept the bananas in there. We were always hungry. She was a kind-hearted grandma. She doesn't mind if we go there and pick the ripe bananas and eat it. She had lot of rakkyō--made her own rakkyō [Japanese pickled onions]. We would raid that place, also. But the thing is, we did not know which one was ready and which one wasn't. (Laughs) Then, we just stick our hand in the jar and take it out. "Oh, this one was just"--been fixed, maybe, the day before (and it was hot). Some were, maybe, about a month. That kind always taste good.

WN: So, you folks ate bananas and guavas, you said, to survive? What else did you eat?

AG: Well, we ate the wild taro that grew on the side of the ditch.

WN: How would you prepare the taro?

AG: Oh, with tuna or with sardines, and, maybe, shrimp--dried ebi. Make miso soup. We even ate Spanish needle--the young shoots. And even pig grass. [And] the sweet potato tops, like the Filipinos do. So, if you ask me how to survive, I can tell you what kind of grass to eat. (Chuckles)

WN: Did you folks have a garden?

AG: Yes, we did. We raised Japanese taro, Chinese cabbage, green onions. So, we didn't have to buy any vegetables. We had our own chicken, our duck, so, we had our eggs. We were so poor that--can you imagine?--we had to divide our egg. We can't eat a whole egg. We cracked that in a bowl, get a chopstick and mix it up, put some shōyu in. We ate it raw. Maybe my sister and I--half for her and half for me. We put it on hot rice, eat it.

WN: Things like rice, and tuna, and sardines like that, how did you get those things?

AG: Oh, from Hanzawa Store. That was, I would say, maybe 2-1/2 miles, we had to walk. (Many times we were too poor to buy rice. Can you imagine a Japanese family without rice. At that time, it was two dollars for a hundred-pound bag. We had to eat sweet potato that was too young--no taste at all.)

WN: How often would you walk to Hanzawa Store?

AG: I was already in school. It was near the school. We could go there. And they used to deliver somehow. I think it was in a horse and wagon. Like rice and the staple items. Maybe order once a month? Whatever we need, right after school, my mother would tell us to go and pick it up. We wanted her to tell us to get some candy, but very seldom we got the treat. Those days, the coconut balls were ten for five cents. The same thing for the coconut squares. The cigar candy was another thing that I remember. And the chestnut candy--the round chestnut. There weren't too many variety of candies.

WN: Were there any peddlers who came around?

AG: Not in Kaupakalua. Only thing I remember was the aku--Mr. Kainuma came. He had a (Model T), it's so small. But somehow, it was screened in the back. The aku, I would say, about twenty-five to thirty pounds--the real big ones--was only twenty-five cents. Not a pound, now. A fish. Twenty-five cents. My mother bought about five at a time. We ate aku in all different ways. The first meal was raw fish. The second meal, salted and fried. Then, she boiled some. That was hanging on the (cord)--everything was cooked by wood (on two iron bars)--so, it was hanging from the ceiling down. (Today you would call it smoked aku. Oh yes, some was put in miso--

fried with miso.)

WN: The fish?

AG: Yeah, the fish. Of course, there were flies, but we just shoo the flies. It was quite safe, those days. Then, we cut it with a knife, put shōyu. That's another way of eating. Then, make miso soup out of it. When it got hard, you can't use a knife to cut it, so--what do they call it, now? The carpenters use to shave the wood?

WN: Oh, a plane?

AG: Plane, uh huh [yes]. We used the plane. There are lot of times we cut our fingernails.

WN: The same kind of plane?

AG: The same kind. Then, you can put miso in there, (water, and the hard aku, which was shaved. Sometimes we found our fingernail in our miso soup. So we threw our nails quickly and not get caught. It tasted good if not better).

WN: What do you call that? Dried fish, eh?

AG: Dried fish, uh huh [yes]. And it's so hard, because we didn't have no refrigerator. So, we had to make use of it. Even the aku could get as hard as lumber. So, we had to use the plane. (Chuckles) That's where our miso soup seasoning came from.

WN: The miso, you got from Hanzawa Store?

AG: Yes. The miso came from Japan, I think, those days. In a big tub. Maybe about thirty-pound tub. We used to buy the codfish in a fifty-pound box, but, of course, those days, was so cheap. Maybe it did cost ten dollars. We had our (Libby's) Vienna sausage.

WN: You got everything from Hanzawa Store? All your groceries?

AG: Yes. That was the only store. The next store would be in, I guess, Makawao or Peahi way. That's too far away. No one else came to take order but the Hanzawas.

WN: Did your mother pay them cash all the time?

AG: No. Charge until the pineapple (got to the cannery, and they got paid). Then, she can pay them. With a big family. Although the food was cheap, but then, it was a struggle. We ate all the fish we could find in the gulch or the stream. (Goldfish, 'o'opu, and freshwater shrimp.)

WN: What kind of fish?

AG: It used to look like Tilapia. I recall draining a tunnel for two days. What we got was two bucket of fish. My parents and my grandfather was with us, and all the children. Get a bucket and keep on throwing the water out. We drained it. I think they could have blocked the top. If not, the water would be running down. Don't you think so? They blocked. Then, towards the end, we saw the fish flapping. They used to call it funa, those days, but it could have been Tilapia that they talk about. That was a meal for how many days. All different ways. Mostly fried.

WN: Your father, he would get paid after the pineapple was harvested, yeah?

AG: Yeah, no other way.

WN: Did he get any kind of pay while those pineapples were being grown? Did he get any kind of living expense, or anything like that?

AG: I don't recall. There wasn't any other job. So, we had to raise . . . . Oh, my grandfather raised squash. We used to take it to the store, and they'll give us candy or something in its place. So, all in all, we more or less had our food--grown food. Oh, we had--we used to call it--pear, but nowadays they call it avocados. And the oranges, and figs.

WN: This all came from your . . .

AG: No. From the land that my stepfather leased from (Mr. Antone) Costa. We lived on all these fruits.

WN: When you were growing up there, what kind of things did you do to have a good time?

AG: Run up the hill. Walking was no problem. All in all, I think we had so much freedom. You know, away from the neighbors. We used to go for a swim, even though we didn't know how to swim. But it wasn't that deep anyway.

WN: Where? In the ditch?

AG: In the ditch, uh huh [yes]. If we see some honeybees, we try to get some honey out of that, also. We knew that we had to smoke them first, and go in with the screen pots. You know, the old pots, we put screen around it, and put it in front of our face, and we'll go and get it. Sometimes, we do get quite a bit. Sometimes, there isn't any. We don't know the difference. I know my brother was a very brave one. He's about three years younger than I am. Boy, he came out, one time, with so many (bees) . . . . Oh, he was stung by the honeybee. He got so fat all of a sudden. His face, his arm, and his legs. Terrible. But, all in all, to us, it was fun.

Then, we saw the Costas' cows. He [AG's brother] thought he could

milk (chuckles) the cow. I do think he was about five years old. What he got was just two tablespoons. His hands were so dirty, too, so we gave it to the cat. What else did we do? Oh, made our own dolls. Played with the frogs down the gulch. Climbed the trees. In fact, I was a good tree climber. There are times when we did fall, but we didn't get hurt. Somehow, we had a condition, in other words.

WN: What kind of chores did you have to do? Did you help your father out in the fields?

AG: Oh, yes. If we had to cut grass, if the short line, they'll say cut. "There's your line--one, two, three, up to twenty." Then, he marks it. Then, the next one goes another twenty lines. If they're younger, well, they get fifteen lines. We did the laundry, and start the furo, get it hot. Oh, and take care our younger brothers and sisters. If we were to go somewhere, we had to be sure and tell them. Of course, we had, those days, the perfect outside toilet. I guess everybody did not have no running toilet like we do nowadays. (We used all kinds of rags and paper. It's a wonder we did not get piles.)

WN: When you were out in the fields, it seems like your whole family helped out, pitched in. Were there any other workers that were under your father?

AG: There was a Puerto Rican man that was so dark, he looked more like a Negro. The funniest part about it is, when they burned some rubbish, my father told him, "Since you so dark like charcoal, do you feel hot as I do?"

That man says, "Of course."

"Oh, I thought you already burnt, so even if you step on the hot ashes, you would not feel it." (Laughs)

WN: Did he get paid?

AG: Oh, yes. Well, pineapple, they were paying little more than the sugar cane, so, maybe, a dollar [\$1.00] or dollar and a half [\$1.50] a day. I recall they made a lot of pancakes. We enjoyed eating them.

WN: Oh, the Puerto Ricans?

AG: Yeah, Puerto Ricans. They made their pancakes. It's made out of just flour, and KC Baking Powder, those days. KC. I don't think you can find that now. And (also) brown sugar, and water. That's all. Not even an egg in there. They couldn't afford to (chuckles) put eggs in, those days. But it really tasted good. We made our own candy. You know how? Just melt brown sugar. Then, it gets hard, and it's something like sugar brittle that they have nowadays.

We didn't have no peanuts or anything to put in. Just plain sugar.

WN: You did that yourself?

AG: Oh, all of us. When you feel like eating something sweet. Of course, every New Year's, my parents pound the mochi. And we gave the Portuguese. They liked it. In turn, Easter and Christmas, we got their sweet bread. Oh, it tasted so good.

WN: You would exchange food with each other?

AG: Yes. Then, they made their own bread. We used to call it the Portuguese stone bread. They were so big, not like the small ones that you see--the round ones--that you see in the market. Then, my mother would give pickled cabbage or pickled daikon or takuan. So, we exchanged. In fact, this Mrs. Costa was hundred years old when she passed away last year. We talked about how we used to wash clothes. They came down with a basket with their dirty clothes, down the hill, put it on their head. And then, wash it and go up. She told me, last year, that how funny people talk about this dirty water that they have nowadays. What we used to do was just push the tadpole and the toads and the green--looks something like a limu in the water . . .

WN: Algae?

AG: Yeah, algae, yeah. That's . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

AG: We didn't have that much education, that's why. We don't know the right words to use. Just push the honohono grass and everything, and we drank our water. Mrs. Costa did say, "Why do they complain about this water when we survived." We wash clothes, and those people down below, the Minodas, were even making tōfu and went out to sell it. And no one got sick with that soapy water.

WN: They used the same water?

AG: Same water. It goes right down the ditch. They even make tōfu. And their tōfu was really good. They had a old wagon and a horse, and used to peddle that. That's right.

WN: How far would they go to peddle?

AG: Maybe up to Kokomo and Kaupakalua area. But, of course, they're not in big business. They might make, maybe, fifty tōfu at the most.

WN: How much one block cost?

AG: Oh, it was only ten cents. They had lot of children, too. But, somehow, they managed to make the tōfu. I don't think they worked in the pineapple field.

WN: So, people who didn't work in the field that lived around there, what did they do?

AG: Oh, the Portuguese had their grapevines. They sold the grapes, which was very cheap--one bucket for fifty cents. They made their own wine--grape wine. The Japanese made their own sake. But one way or the other, I think--oh, they raised their bananas. In fact, their name was Banana Sato because they peddled their bananas. That's how he made his living--only on bananas.

WN: The people who made sake, did they peddle sake?

AG: No, they could not at that time. That Prohibition days. Oh, they sold it on the sly. (Laughs) Well, when you're hungry and you want to drink something--when we were kids--we went in that room. We put sake in a cup, put some (brown) sugar in, and mix it up, and we drank it. We did get drunk. (Laughs) Then we knew that's not for us. Especially, when we had soda pop--only for New Year's, or when we come to the Bon dance at Mantokuji Mission in Paia. We didn't celebrate Christmas. The Japanese don't. Oh, and then, at the Maui County Fair. That was the only time we had a chance to drink soda. That was five cents for a twelve-ounce bottle. It was light green bottles.

WN: When you went to the Mantokuji Mission and the county fair, how did you get there?

AG: On the truck.

WN: On your father's truck?

AG: Well, the Grove Ranch (worker) came to Kaupakalua School with their big truck. I think they were using it to haul the cattle, but they cleaned it up. And, here we rode on it just like the cattle and went to the county fair. But, to think that we going to the fair, we couldn't sleep all night. It was so exciting for us.

My mother would give us just fifty cents. Fifty cents was quite a bit for our days. She would tell us, "Try not to spend all of it. Bring some change back." And we listened to her. We took our lunch with us, so we don't need to buy any other food. One bottle of soda at the fair was ten cents--double the price. Then, one ride was ten cents. Oh, that ice cream was something that we really craved for. That was ten cents, also. Then, we think about what my mother said and take back the twenty cents. Sometimes, it's so tempting that we just have to spend the fifty cents.  
(Laughs)

Oh, this was something. When we first got our truck, my father wanted to take us to the fair. We stopped at Paia Store; we all got a hat, a dress, and a cotton stocking, and a pair of shoes. From Paia Store, we did go straight to the fair. (Laughs) We got dressed in Paia Store. Can you imagine?

WN: The big plantation store?

AG: Yeah, big plantation store. Because they did not have that clothing at the Hanzawa Store. Then, you know, we not used to wearing shoes. After two hours, we just can't make it. We take off our shoes and walk barefooted in the fairgrounds. It wasn't only us. There were lot of children from the country walking barefooted. But, what do you think about that (laughs) getting dressed in the store and going to the fair all dressed up? I don't know why we had to get so dressed up like that.

WN: Were other kids dressed up, or just you folks?

AG: No, they wear just plain clothes. But, because, I think, he was proud of the truck. You know, the truck and how we were dressed had to go together.

(Laughter)

WN: What could you get in Paia Store in those days?

AG: Just about everything. Food, can goods, and Japan goods like rakkyō, ume, and that surume. That's called cuttlefish. Oh, the material. All kind clothing. Even dry goods, hardware. Oh, they even sold gas, which they were using the hand pump.

WN: Is that across the street from the store?

AG: No. It was on the side of the store. The butcher shop was in the next building on the other side. Maybe, on the right side was the butcher shop, the main store in the middle, and then, the gasoline pump was on the left. There were no parking problems, those days, because very few people had cars.

Even the meat was like, the haoles ate their T-bones, porterhouse, and sirloin. The Japanese ate the round steak because that had the least bones. The Portuguese, was their soup and their stew, so, stew meat and shinbone. I guess Portuguese used to like the rakkyō and codfish. They used to eat a lot of codfish. Codfish, they call it the "Portuguese turkey." Did you hear about that? Yeah, it was like turkey to them--Portuguese turkey.

They even had jewelry, like watches. Oh, it's like a general store. I don't know whether, at that time . . . Oh, later on, I recall, they had the liquor. I think I have to tell you about my uncle's store, yeah, mada?

WN: In 1931, you moved to Haiku?

AG: At the age of thirteen.

WN: Thirteen, you moved to Haiku. First of all, why did you move to Haiku?

AG: After graduating from Kaupakalua School, eighth grade, I was told by my parents that they can't afford to put me through high school. My uncle, (Kohachi) Watanabe, and his wife said that they'll put me through school. So, I moved to Haiku.

WN: This was the same uncle that took over after your father died?

AG: No. The uncle that took over is on my father's side. This is my uncle on my mother's side. So, they were going to put me through school. I worked in the (Libby, McNeill and Libby) cannery during the summer. Then, I was going to Maui High School. Then, what happened was, oh, in December the twelfth. That is why when December comes, most people are happy, but I'm not. She died coming home on a open truck hit by another car. She fell out of the truck and hit her neck--back of the neck. They brought her home, but she died right away. She was holding a one-year-old son. When they came home like that--I wonder if we did have telephone?--that was such a shock to me.

WN: This is your mother?

AG: No, my auntie (Hiroko). Leaving four children. The youngest was one year old, the older one was one year more, so two years old. There's the other sister about two, three, four . . . maybe, five. The oldest was maybe about seven. Here, my good uncle--I could see--he cried and said, "What am I going to do, now? With this four children and that store to run?"

So, I finished the first year [of school]--at least, till June--and I decided to help him in the store, as well as I was doing the housework. That's cooking, and laundry, [and] pump gas. You know, to think, at the age of thirteen . . . My cousins keep saying that, being so young, their house seem to be in pretty good shape [that] I must have been pretty good. (Chuckles) Doing the cooking, (and they never got sick).

WN: So, you moved to Haiku? You lived with your uncle?

AG: My uncle. That is where I learned to work in the store, meet the people. It was called Watanabe General Store and Garage. The store was in the middle, on the left was a pool hall, and on the right was the garage. They had the soroban.

WN: Abacus?

AG: That's what they call that? Abacus? We used to call it the Japanese adding machine. He sold . . .

WN: Was there a cash register?

AG: Cash register, no. They put the money in the drawer. But everybody was honest, those days, they didn't have to worry. There was a drawer below the counter, you see? (Later, he bought a Remington Rand adding machine with a drawer for coins.) The Japan goods, he ordered from Iida Shōten. The Theo H. Davies came in. So, Japan goods, (geta and rubber boots), well, those days, I think all the slippers were made in Japan, not in Honolulu.

WN: What other kind of Japan goods did you get from Iida's?

AG: Iida Shōten. The tabi that they wear for the dance or in the house, or the outdoor type--the black, thick ones, with little rubber on it. And the yukata means kimono material. The ume, the rakkyō, the surume, (Chinese seeds, Kikkoman Shōyu, miso, Japanese lanterns, candles, and toys). And obi.

WN: You would get the Japan foods from Iida?

AG: Iida Shōten, uh huh [yes]. The salesman came like once a month, or every other month. I don't quite remember. He [AG's uncle] would order all these things, then it would come to Haiku Depot. Then, he used to go and pick it up. Or did he come to Paia? I don't know which. Because one thing sure, it wasn't delivered to the store. I know he went out to get it.

Oh, even they sold (Japanese) cotton to make futon. They would come in a big stack, like this. Something that looked like silk, I thought, they would stretch it. First, they put the material, stretch this thing, put the cotton in there, and then, put that other silky thing and stretch it out so that the futon does not get lumpy. Have you seen that? No? Well, I saw (chuckles). And what else from Japan, now? I know, one thing sure, no candy and no cookies came from Japan. They all came from--wait now, there was a salesman--Hawaii Candy Company. So, that's where we got the coconut candy (two kinds) and (marble candy, chocolates, stick candy, and cookies).

WN: From . . .

AG: From Honolulu. Uh huh [yes]. Hawaii Candy Company. Oh, of course, we had the hana-fuda. Then, that's from Japan. Oh, and the funniest thing is that small, little store, and yet, we had can goods, mostly like meat, fish, and very little of fruits. Everything was sold like ten cents, fifteen cents. Even the peach, the 2-1/2 [can] size, were only twenty cents. We did not bother with no pennies. But if anybody would bring in five pennies, we just push it on the side. Everything was fives, tens, fifteens. You know, I could not

use the soroban, so I would just add it up. It was easy enough, those days.

The vegetables were only (potatoes and onions). I don't know why, those days, they used to call it the Irish potatoes--the regular potatoes. Sweet potatoes, they could not sell because everybody raised their own. Other thing was U.S. onion from the United States. There were no Kula onions, those days. I think, the only tax they had to pay was the five dollar poll tax that everybody had to pay.

WN: Five dollars a year?

AG: Five dollars a year. Uh huh [yes]. Oh, and he had pots and pans, all kinds of dry goods. Material, all lined up. Some material was ten cents a yard, some twenty-five cents. The highest was about fifty cents.

WN: Did he take order and deliver, too?

AG: Take order, no. They used to come. Now, let me tell you some more things that we had to know. Being so young (fourteen years old), I had to know about the fuse, all kind of wires, the tires and the tubes, and car parts.

We made ice cakes--the pink kind and the white--and sold it for three for five cents. The pink, we added strawberry and sugar in water. Now, the other white ones was the cream. Those days, I think it was Alpine milk. They did not have Carnation milk. Alpine.

Oh, when we fill up gas (the tank was either under the seat or on the hood), we check the oil. You know, reach up high and check the oil (chuckles). Because most of them were growers, and we wanted to make sure that their cars are well taken care of. And gasoline was so cheap. I think it was nineteen cents a gallon. It wasn't a hand pump--the type that we press, (we could see) the gasoline was on the top. And he say, "One, two, three gallons." Then, we had to figure . . . . No, maybe it wasn't nineteen [cents] because we didn't pick up no pennies. Maybe it was twenty cents. I not too sure, now. I kind of forgot.

Of course, the chicken feed was just scratch feed, nothing else. No middling or all these fancy things they have for the horses.

WN: How about fertilizer for pineapple growing?

AG: I don't think he carried that, because they would go to the Haiku Fruit--Haiku Fruit and Packing Company was the name--and when they take their pineapple, they pick up their fertilizer and come home.

Oh, that unbleached muslin was really something. Was ten cents a

yard, and they would buy linseed oil, those days, and made their own raincoat. You keep on putting on, it'll get so stiff. It was waterproof. First it's yellow, then gradually, they get brown. I guess they use it out in the field and don't get wet. Those days, well, they didn't sell no raincoats.

He even had underwear, especially for women. It was so funny. They wouldn't look in the store. They would go in the back room to look (laughs) and see if that's their size. But not to try it on. They just look.

WN: Didn't have the size on the thing?

AG: Oh, yes. Maybe, large, small, or medium. More or less, by looking at it, they could tell whether it fits them or not. Maybe they had size 36 or maybe the waist (size). So, we always had to have our tape measure. Yeah, we did have a tape measure, that time. On the garage side, well, it was everything. Fix the car. He had a stage there.

WN: He had a stage?

AG: Stage. For kabuki shows. Yeah. The bottom part was a garage; there's a stage there. I guess it was a garage first, but he made a stage. My mother's uncle, Tomita, he was really good. He can paint the faces; he can put out that kabuki voice; he could use a shamisen, and the drums, and the stick that goes, "tak-tak-tak-tak-tak." My uncle had three trunks of all kabuki (outfits)--I mean, that would be used for kabuki. All the katsura--the wig--plus the fancy wooden skirts and shiny, gold-looking tops and whatnot. He had three trunk loads. (Swords, hats, decoration, and all kinds of scenery curtains.)

WN: Did he bring it over from Japan?

AG: No. Oh, they were too poor. They couldn't go to Japan. Now, maybe he ordered them and it came.

WN: Was he born here?

AG: No, in Japan.

WN: You think maybe he brought it over when he first came?

AG: I doubt it. He was too young. It could be . . .

WN: How about his father?

AG: No, he wasn't an actor, anyway, to start out. It could be Mr. Tomita (who) knew how to make them. I know my auntie (Watanabe and Mrs. Kane Tomita) did a lot of sewing. So, they put it all together. We were in the kabuki show with the katana, that's the sword, and

that sword dance. Oh, we had to cry. When we not sad, it's hard to be in that act and cry. But we were forced to do it.

WN: So, "we" means who? You and who else?

AG: Oh, my auntie (Violet Matsueda). All my uncles. One, two, three uncles (Kohachi, Kosaku, and Daisuke). And my stepfather (Genshichi Saito) used to be in it, too.

WN: This would all be in the store?

AG: In the garage.

WN: Who would come to see the kabuki?

AG: Oh, those people living in that area. How they used to let them know there's a kabuki show was they dress up, get on the truck in the back, they hit the drum and play the flute or the shamisen, and throw--before they used to call it--the leaflets.

WN: Where would they go to do this? All around Haiku?

AG: Yeah, all around Haiku.

WN: Were there anybody else doing kabuki like that in the area?

AG: No. [Not] even in Wailuku, I think we were the first ones. Then, that place was used for silent show movies, which had only the wording. You have to follow up by reading. Japanese shows had that benshi [narrator]. Someone would cry or laugh or say something, eh? That was Mr. Kunichika, and Mr. Narumaru came, and Okuda.

WN: Three?

AG: They're all different times. Well, Kunichikas were the first ones. Then, next was Narumarus and Okudas.

WN: How far, from what areas, would the audience come from?

AG: Oh, even from up Peahi. They did come on the truck. Then, you see, because it was a garage, we had to scrub all that oil, so that they could sit on the floor. Put canvas and sit on the floor. Or put goza.

WN: How about admission? Would he charge admission?

AG: Well, for me, I used to cook for them when they came. I would say that I'm a Watanabe girl and get in free. No charge for the children, and I think it was like twenty-five cents admission. Or maybe it was cheaper than that, but later on, I think it was about twenty-five cents. Then, it was used for the politicians, also--the rally. Meet the candidates kind of thing, too. Oh, they even used

that place for parties. One time, a wedding (laughs) reception.

WN: How many people would that place hold?

AG: I would say, pretty big, so one, two, three, four . . . . Maybe, five hundred. But those days, they used to (sit on the floor or benches).

WN: In one garage?

AG: They used to pack in there.

WN: At that time, in Paia, were there any theaters like your uncle's?

AG: It wasn't used for all purpose, now. There was a Narumaru Theater. Oh, and there was one theater, Upper Paia. But in Haiku, that was the only one. So, it was a hall and everything. My uncle was the type that, if they say, "Can we use the garage?" he can't say no.

Said, "Okay. Go ahead." They decorate the place sometimes. Oh, that was really something.

You did say, oh, if my uncle went out to take order. No, he did not, but he goes, or another auntie (Haru Takahashi) that wasn't living with him went to Keahua and Pulehu and Puunene to sell material. They pack their (material in) a panel truck, it wasn't that big--but they'd stack them all up and went out to sell. Only thing he did go out was to go on collection, because he charged lot of his things. The funniest thing about his charge book was--you see, he hardly went to school--so, it wasn't in a alphabetic order. If someone wanted to charge something, we had to keep on looking until we get to that certain name. When he goes for collection, he just takes the book and go. No receipts. He would just look--paid ten dollars, minus ten dollars.

WN: Would he let anybody charge?

AG: No, he did not. (Just the ones he trusted.) But still then, there were times when he could not collect. After living with him, without a wife, struggled (a lot), then he tells me, "I'm going for collection." I always hoped that he would be able to collect whatever he can. But as soon as he come home, I could tell if it was a good day or bad day. He had smiles on his face when he collected.

WN: How often would he go out to collect?

AG: Only when he need the money badly. When he's pressured from the wholesalers. Then, he decide to go out and get some money, because he felt that if they charged, they should come and pay. Lot of them were gasoline, (bills). Gasoline, they charged, and their cars were fixed. Not too much on the food.

WN: How often would they go out and peddle? Was it peddling or delivering?

AG: They used to go in the camp when it was payday, once a month. So usually, it was between the first and the tenth. Maybe about the tenth, they would go out. Sometimes, they sell pretty good, and sometimes (hardly any). It all depends. Like if there's a fair going on, there's no sense in going because they going save the money to go to the fair. If it's near New Year's, then they do celebrate (with plenty of food, so material was out).

WN: Did you go out with them?

AG: I did go, couple times. They try to line up the best they could, on the floor, or on the tables.

WN: What were your jobs in the store?

AG: Well, sell the things. When they say, "Time to cook," I had to run in the back and cook, or take care the children. Then, run back in the store again. Then, someone would say--my grandfather would say, or, maybe, my uncle would say--"Can you watch the store? Because I want to use the--" Those days, were no bathroom, see? We used the toilet, (which had large, medium, and small holes with covers). And in that toilet, do you know, way back, in that open type toilet, didn't have toilet paper, those days. Did anybody tell you what they were using? Sears Roebuck Catalog. Those days, had the Walter Field's, National Bellas Hess, Montgomery Ward and the Japanese zasshi--magazine. They were all used as toilet paper. Later on, the flat toilet paper came--the beige color. But all these things and . . .

WN: Nobody had toilet paper? They didn't make it?

AG: Couldn't sell it, because they didn't want. I don't know if they had in Wailuku. (The haoles had it because they had the flushing toilet.)

WN: What about in Haiku Store? Didn't they have toilet paper in the store?

AG: I don't know when the toilet paper did come in. They like the Sears one because it was thick. (Laughs) (I remember seeing the flat ones in Haiku Store. They were saving the orange and apple wrappers for their customers--all colors.)

WN: Kind of hard, though, eh?

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 7-50-1-80; SIDE ONE

- WN: Let me ask you a few more questions about the kabuki before we move on. How often would your uncle give a kabuki show?
- AG: Whenever they have time. Mr. Tomita, when he has time. (He was the teacher so it had to be okayed by him.) Most likely, about twice a year.
- WN: Any special time of the year?
- AG: March was the best time. If they make it twice a year, in August or September because winter months weren't so good because of the rain. Then, we won't have too many people there.
- WN: When the people came up to, maybe, show silent movies and things like that, did they pay your uncle money to use that [garage] theater, or did your uncle get a portion of the receipts? Do you know how that worked?
- AG: It was no set price. Whatever they wanted to give him. That's how it was with my uncle. He wouldn't say, "Well, it's going to cost you twenty-five dollars a night." So, if they had a big crowd, they'll give him more. If small crowd, well, he'll say, "Forget it." He was a well-liked person. That was the whole trouble with him. He just could not say no. That is why he have struggled in business, too.
- WN: What do you mean by that?
- AG: Because he would not get hard on them when he goes for collection. So, some people take advantage. He did tell me, when I was to start a store--he still had a store when I started mine--that, "Be very careful." The way he struggled, I've learned a good lesson. I cannot be too kind--maybe, not to all. There are some that you can be, and some, you have to say no.
- Shall I say something about my uncle, now? Because he was that type, he was well known. After he got through with his garage, then the store, he (started) his (own) chicken (farm). That's where I was getting my eggs. He gave me my first electric clock to put in the store. You know, we went through hardships together that I was like his daughter. He wished me all the luck with that clock. Another thing was, then, he was raising his chicken. "You go ahead and pay all your bills first. When you get leftover, you can pay me for my eggs."
- WN: This is when you were starting your own store in 1948, yeah?
- AG: Yeah, when I started my own store. Uh huh [yes], 1948. He had helped lot of people with Nishi shiki (lessons). He's known all over Maui. If you say Kohachi Watanabe, the Nishi shiki man, they would know him. Sometimes, I come across that, and they say, "Aren't you the niece of Kohachi Watanabe?" They say, "I'm living

today at the age of eighty because he taught me how to exercise and eat the right kind of food." They believe in cleaning their system with milk of magnesia. He picked them up--that is, furnish the transportation--take them to Puunene . . .

WN: Wait, take who?

AG: These people who did not have transportation. He would buy the cooked food from my place [store]. You know, furnish the transportation, feed them lunch, take them home. That's how he was. Then, they tell me that through his kindness, that when he died, his body was at [Paia] Mantokuji [Church], but the cars have lined up five miles all the way to his house--through (Kuau), Maliko, and Haiku and all that--that they haven't seen a funeral like that. So, all in all, he was well liked. He had his hard knocks. (Chuckles) He was like a father to me.

WN: Did he lose his business? Whatever became of his store?

AG: Well, he sold part of it. Someone made it into a rental home. The son is living on the other side. Did he sell or my cousin sold it? I'm not sure.

WN: Was he in any debt at all?

AG: No. People owed him. In fact, he, whoever was poor, he had helped and paid their debts, so that they can have a clean face. That's what he used to say. But, all in all, he did have a hard life. He died at the age of sixty-two. I don't know why, after helping people. This is why, I think, at times, it's not the quantity of life, but it's the quality of life. I think of my uncle as such.

WN: You left the store in 1934 after three years of working there?

AG: Oh, why I had to leave was, my stepfather lost his job, and I think my sister wasn't working, so I was asked by my mother to go where I could get paid. You see, I stayed with my uncle. Just for room and board. Well, he was kind to me in (lots of) ways. So, I had to choose between my parents and my uncle. It was really hard. I knew my uncle needed my help because of his (four) children--too young. So, where did I go from there?

WN: So, you went with your parents, then?

AG: No. From there, I did go to Tanizaki Store, didn't I? Uh huh [yes].

WN: Why did you leave your uncle's store?

AG: Oh, so that I could get paid somewhere else.

WN: Your uncle's pay wasn't enough?

- AG: No, he wasn't paying me. (Only room and board. Later, he bought me a sewing machine.)
- WN: Oh, I see. I'm sorry. So, you needed some . . .
- AG: Of course, I do think that my parents did owe him some money, and I had to pay back. They didn't tell me exactly, but, somehow, it was that.
- WN: Okay. Then, you left and went to Tanizaki Store in Wailuku?
- AG: No. In Pukalani.
- WN: How did you get that job?
- AG: I have no idea. Why? We didn't know them. Through someone. I decided to work. Yeah, I got fifteen dollars a month (and room and board). With our family, every penny counts.
- WN: After you quit working at your uncle's store, did you decide right there that you liked store work and you wanted to continue in store work?
- AG: I think so. I think it was. Yeah. I didn't too much store work there, unless the family should go somewhere and I had to take their place. It's more like serving saimin and make the noodles by hand, and do the housework for Mrs. Tanizaki. Do the laundry. So, I guess I did nearly (laughs) everything, except keep the books.
- WN: Did you live nearby? Did you live with them?
- AG: Live with them, uh huh [yes]. I guess I (got lonesome). So, I decided to go home.
- WN: Oh, you mean, you didn't like working there?
- AG: No, I didn't. Oh, at that time, (my parents were living) in Peahi. Then, Mr. Nashiwa, Dr. Nashiwa's father, came over to ask me if I would work for his son.
- WN: Did you know him beforehand?
- AG: No, I did not know. So, I said okay. I was a housemaid there.
- WN: Why did he ask you?
- AG: He didn't know me when I was working in Tanizaki. Maybe he asked the people around (Peahi) if they know of someone that would do the housework, maybe. I didn't know them until I came to Paia.
- WN: Dr. Nashiwa was in Paia?
- AG: Yeah, he's a dentist, and the wife was a piano teacher. So, I took

care of their two daughters and I did the housework. (I also helped Dr. Nashiwa clean his office.)

WN: Was this the same Nashiwa family with the bakery?

AG: Yes, uh huh. So, once in a while, we used to get together at the bakery with the doctor's parents, and we had supper there.

WN: What did you do when you were a maid for Dr..Nashiwa?

AG: I do some cooking, but not too much--the easy kind. Like I say, they were rich. Mrs. Nashiwa was very thrifty.

WN: Is this the wife of the doctor or the mother?

AG: The wife. She is a Mainland girl. (She spoke so well, as I recall.) But then, she was very thrifty and being a piano teacher at that.

WN: How much did you get paid?

AG: I would say, was about between twelve and fifteen dollars. That was the price those days, because they would say free room and board and fifteen dollars.

WN: Oh, yeah. You left in that same year [1934] for Puunene?

AG: Same year. For Puunene, uh huh [yes].

WN: Why did you move?

AG: Well, I wanted to be more broad-minded and go to a bigger place, maybe. (Chuckles)

WN: In Puunene?

AG: Uh huh [yes], in Puunene. Oh, there was a friend from Peahi that I knew. She was working for the Taylor's. That's how I got into Hansen's place. They had a daughter, same name as me, so that's Alice. So, they used my Japanese name. They would call me, "Saiko." (Chuckles) But, of course, the daughter was already about six or seven years old.

WN: Where did these Hansens live?

AG: Below the mill.

WN: Oh, where all the big houses are?

AG: Yes, uh huh. He was the field luna, and the wife did not work. But she was very, very strict. Very neat. I think I'm not a good housekeeper (now), but, at that time, I was. I had to be. Working for people like that, I have learned to be doing things a certain

way, save time, and to be neat from corner to corner. They liked me that when he got a transfer to Kahuku (Oahu), I had a chance to go with them.

We were in Moana Hotel, which was a treat for me, being a country jack. Did I hear like nine dollars or twelve dollars, around that area, it cost a day? I think was nine dollars. That was big money to us, you know, when you get paid only twelve or fifteen dollars a month. They were in one room, and they gave me a room for myself with a telephone in it and two beds. Boy, I felt like a queen. (Laughs) Like a queen. I think, those days, there weren't too many Japanese that stayed at Moana Hotel. The usher looked at me as though I did something wrong. So, I told him, "Oh, I came with the Hansens, and I'm their maid." Then, it was okay.

WN: Well, nine to twelve dollars a night is expensive, huh, in those days?

AG: Those days. Then, not too many Japanese was going in there. So, they wondered why I was in there.

WN: Did you follow the Hansens to Kahuku?

AG: Oh, yes. After three days. They did their shopping, then I followed them. They tried all ways and means to keep me there. They even tried to find boyfriends for me. I was, at that time, about nineteen. I knew three boys that worked at Kahuku Store and another man that worked on the bus, I think it was. In fact, I have their pictures-- (chuckles) snapshots that they gave me.

WN: Oh, yeah? Well, what did they look like?

AG: Well, friendly and all that. But I still wanted to come back to Maui. They lined up all the other maids, also. Told them to come and for me to go there. Maybe I'm the one-track mind that I like Maui. So, after that, from Hansens to . . . .

WN: So, you came back Maui, yeah? Oh, you got married [to first husband] about that time, too?

AG: Yeah.

WN: So, how did you meet him?

AG: (It was through my friends.) Maybe I had him in mind, that's why I couldn't stay back in Kahuku. Yeah, he was Japanese. But the unpleasant things, I will not say.

WN: So, you lived in Wailuku, then, after you got married? You worked at Iao School?

AG: Iao School as a janitor, first. Same time, I had my poultry farm

in Wailuku.

WN: Backing up just a bit, how much did you get working for the Hansens?

AG: For the Hansens? About fifteen dollars.

WN: Did you get about the same amount that the Nashiwas paid you?

AG: So, that means, if I was getting fifteen dollars there, no, maybe I was getting less. I'm not too sure. Or did I get twenty dollars at Hansens?

WN: So, what else did you do at Iao School?

AG: First, as a janitress, took care all the hallways. During the summer, I would clean all the rooms, wax the floors, clean the windows. I think back, now, how did I clean the outside of the window when it went (down) to the basement and two story high? I would sit on the window . . . .

WN: Sill?

AG: Sill, uh huh [yes]. And hold one side and clean the other side (with) my right arm. If I did fall, I would have hit the basement. You know, the cement. But I guess by being a good tree climber, I could do it. (Laughs)

Of course, at that time, Mrs. Glick was the principal. She was very strict, too, but a very understanding principal. On a Saturday, she trusted me so much that she would give me the key to clean her house with no one there. Furthermore, I think I did, while working there, some teachers' laundry.

WN: By doing these extra things like cleaning Mrs. Glick's house and doing the laundry, did you get extra money from what you were getting at . . .

AG: Oh, yes. The laundry, I would pick it up on a Monday and take it back (next) Monday. Oh, I could do it because I wasn't working in the cafeteria, then. Only the building. So, one month's laundry, once a week, for Miss Sakai--she was by herself, now--was five dollars a month. The Nakamuras--man and wife and the son--was twelve dollars a month. I would go and pick it up, take it back a week later--or was it few days later, I forgot--pick up and deliver for that price. But, then, we could buy an awful lot for twelve dollars.

WN: When you were working at Iao School, you were making much more than your other jobs?

AG: Yeah, twenty-five dollars a month. But, then, that was after school hours, like 2 o'clock [p.m.] when school closed till 5

[o'clock p.m.]. That is why I could go home and take care the poultry farm.

WN: Oh, now, this poultry farm, was it your idea? Did you start it by yourself?

AG: Yeah, I did, myself. I kept some ducks, also. I took it to the Iron Bridge Restaurant. I did the killing, myself. You like to know how? Well, grab the duck, (get) a thick board, and I had this Japanese knife, like a cleaver type. I had the ume or some kind of barrel or bucket. Cover the body, and just keep the neck out and the head, and just chop it. Sit on the bucket until it dies--until it doesn't shake no more. That's the easiest way. If not, they're going to flap all over the place, and the place is going to be full of blood. So, only one section. There were times I killed about six.

WN: You would sell the duck to the restaurant?

AG: Yes. At--how much was it?--(twenty-five) cents a pound. (Live weight, ten cents a pound.) Yeah. The female---do they call the ducks male and female? Wait, wait, now. Well, the wahine [female] kind, we call it, weighs between four to six pounds. The kāne [male] kind, they were bigger, like seven to ten pounds. I tackle all that.

WN: What else? Did you sell eggs, too?

AG: Yes. People used to come and buy the eggs. We did not even put in (egg) boxes. Those days, I don't think we had any boxes. No, we didn't have. There were no restriction on that. Maybe in the stores they did have (egg cartons). They come, and we just put 'em in just any small, little box--candy box or what, and make sure that it doesn't crack. (Wrap them with newspapers.) Later on, I think we did have the (egg cartons).

I had a candler, they call it, to see if there's any blood spots. Those kind cannot be sold. Then, I knew how to weigh them. Like the large eggs had to be 1-3/4 pound with the box. The medium was pound and a half [1-1/2]. You know, there's only a four ounce difference. Then, the small was pound and a quarter [1-1/4].

WN: How did you learn how to do all this?

AG: Through the Extension Service.

WN: The UH [University of Hawaii]?

AG: Yeah. I asked them questions. How the weight should be, and where I can get a candler.

WN: Why a poultry farm? Did you see it as a way of making money?

AG: Yes, and then, eat the chicken at the same time. I think it's

because when we were young, we did have. We knew how to take care of them. But then, I did make a pen for each one. Not like the old-fashioned way--where you just throw the scratch feed and let them run loose--(that was) when I was much younger.

WN: How much did you make in this poultry farm?

AG: How much a month? It's hard to say. Maybe if I made about twenty-five or thirty-five [dollars], that was good. Because eggs, at that time, was only about fifty cents a dozen.

WN: Did your [first] husband help you at all in this poultry farm?

AG: Yes, he did.

WN: But which one of you did more of the work?

AG: I did more, because . . . . Oh, all the garbage from the school, I carried it home and I feed the ducks. At that time, my daughter was attending Wailuku Elementary.

WN: Then, you had the cafeteria, and you had the Iao School, and the poultry farm for about nine years? Then, in 1946, you quit and went into cannery in Haiku?

AG: Yes. (Libby, McNeill, and Libby.)

WN: Did you quit your poultry farm, too?

AG: No, I left it for him. I took my daughter with me, and I left.

WN: After the divorce?

AG: Uh huh [yes].

WN: So, you returned to Haiku?

AG: Haiku, yeah. Uh huh [yes].

WN: So, cannery was the only work you were doing for a while?

AG: Cannery, yes. But I felt that I wasn't making enough. So, I had to think, "What am I going to do next?" But, at that time, I was living in Paia, not Haiku. I had my own car to run.

WN: Why did you move to Paia?

AG: I had a store in mind, already. Through my uncle's hardship and the few people there, I thought Paia would be the better place, although I did not have too many friends there. What made me, now? Another thing was, then, I would be with my daughter most of the time. She'll be in school and come back, and we can be together.

I don't have to get a babysitter or worry about her. So, I thought, well, if I had a store, at least I can eat. If I sell some, then, if I can have enough for my rent. And I give her the education.

I don't know why I worried so much about those things. Maybe it's through struggling, I do think that you get to a point where, oh, we have to make the best of things, whichever way it is. I'm glad that I did. But I was a brave one, I think. (Chuckles) That's what people keep telling me.

WN: This was after your divorce, and you moved to Paia. You worked in the Maui Pine for couple years, and then, in 1948, you started your own Economy Store, yeah? Your own store called Economy Store?

WN: Wait, now. You said, the Maui Pine. No, that was Libby's, in Haiku. Yeah, in Libby's. Of course, I did work in Maui Pine during the summer while I was working at Iao School. In the cannery. Oh, that's another thing I think now and then. I was a packer. Then, Mrs. Dupont and Irene Chung . . .

WN: Dee Dupont?

AG: Dee Dupont, yeah. Do you know her?

WN: Then, she moved over to Dole [cannery] afterwards? In Honolulu?

AG: Yeah, her husband was Portuguese fella, yeah? In fact, she had put him through school. Dee Dupont, yeah, she was a nice woman. She and Irene, who was a head forelady, they were looking at me. So, I got worried. I thought, "Oh, I think they're going to fire me. What did I do?" Then, you know, I was called to the office. I was so nervous.

They said, "From now on, every summer when you come, you going to be a forelady. That forelady means ten cents more an hour." At that time, I think it was (sixty) cents an hour? Yeah. Then, as a forelady, that's (seventy) cents. That made me very happy. I was told by Mrs. Dupont that they were watching me because I try to help those on both ends if they cannot keep up with their pineapple. I was doing extra work, so that I should get more pay than the others. So, that was a promotion.

At that time, there were a lot of those steady workers say it's not fair. I just come in for the summer, and then, I'm a forelady. But my type of job was to pick up the good pineapple that came down the belt. Just pick 'em up, and to let the others know that they are throwing away good pineapple. Of course, not everybody likes it because it's going to hurt someone--hurt the table forelady. But the way I grew up, not to waste anything, so I thought it was good that they know that they throwing away good pineapple. (Laughs)

WN: So, you became a forelady, then?

AG: Forelady, yeah, at Maui Pine.

WN: This is Maui Pine or at Libby's?

AG: Maui Pine. This is when I was working at Iao School. Now, the Libby's . . . . Oh, yeah, those days, was only ten cents an hour. Ten cents an hour when I started at twelve years old, saying that I was fifteen. (We cheated on our age because we didn't have to show our birth certificate.)

WN: Way, way back?

AG: Yeah, way back. Uh huh [yes]. Ten cents an hour. (There was no child labor law, those days. I worked twelve hours a day, 6 o'clock [a.m.] to 6 o'clock [p.m.]. I made seventy dollars a month, gave my mother the pay envelope, and she gave me two dollars. No such thing as keep our own money.)

WN: Then, you went to Libby's, yeah, for a couple of years?

AG: Yes. So, that's the second time I did go back.

WN: Were you a forelady at Libby's, too?

AG: Let's see. Yes, I was a forelady. I watched through all the tables, too. But working at the cannery is not a steady job. Only during the summer, well, we work every day. Then, after the summer crop is over, then you kind of laid off. I felt that the store would be the one. I thought to myself that if I get the goods and do some sewing, I'll make it.

WN: So, then, in 1948 you started your own store, yeah? I think next time would be a good time to pick up from there.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 7-51-2-80 and 7-52-2-80

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Alice Gouveia (AG)

March 3, 1980

Pukalani, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Alice Gouveia. Today is March 3, 1980, and we're at her home in Pukalani, Maui.

Mrs. Gouveia, last time, we were talking about your background, and how you had your past jobs and so forth, and how you worked. Now, we're at the time when you started your very own store in 1948, right? What was the name of your store?

AG: Economy Store. Now, I was wondering whether I should [call] it Economy Market, but I felt that if I used the name "store," I could sell nearly everything. Because if it's only a market, they think, "if I want a handkerchief," or "if I want a pot," they would not come in my store, see? So, if I used the word "store," [it] means overall, from Christmas trees to Easter basket and everything.

And then, the word "economy" means to save. Through my hardship, it meant so much to me--to economize on your food, on your clothing, or whatever. Then, whoever have that in mind would run in my store, "Oh, if I get in the store, I could economize." All in all, today, it's a very popular name, because "economy of the nation." Whatever it is, the economy comes out. So, I told my new owners [when AG retired in 1975] that, "You don't need to advertise anymore."

(Laughter)

AG: Well, I started my store in February of 1948. That was after the war, at the age of twenty-seven years old. I gave free soda and free balloons.

WN: Oh, this is your opening day?

AG: Yeah, opening day. Oh, before that, (you may like to know) how I got the money. Of my own, I had just about \$500. I borrowed from my brother Matthew, \$200; and my brother Richard, another \$100; and (another) brother Fred, \$100. And my mother loaned me \$135-- whatever she had.

WN: One thousand thirty-five dollars [\$1,035]?

AG: Yeah, \$1,035. That is how close our family was in helping each other. Maybe I'm going little too fast, but when I caught up within a year or little over a year, I decided to give \$50 (interest) to the one that I borrowed the \$200. So, I gave him \$250. The other (two brothers), like \$125. With my mother, I doubled hers and gave her \$270.

WN: This is all within one year after opening?

AG: Well, I did not pay all of them one time. Because my mother said that she can wait. So, (she) said, "Pay me the last." I paid the \$100 first to the two (brothers). The \$200, he was working on the aku boat and he wasn't struggling, so he said, "Take your time." (Later on, I supported my mother for thirteen years, bought her a coffin, and put her to rest in peace.)

WN: Did you go to any banks to get money?

AG: No, I did not. The rent was seventy dollars [a month].

WN: Who owned the . . .

AG: The building? At that time, it was Mr. Hew, but not the one next door.

WN: Not the Hew Store and Restaurant?

AG: No, another Mr. Hew. Then, that building was in three sections. Oh, that was the only one that was empty--vacant--the one on the right. That was about one-fourth the size of the building. Actually, that building was a restaurant during the war--the middle part. One side was Hayashida [Fish Market, and he] made his shōyu and (chuckles) . . . .

WN: Hayashida Fish Market? [Minoru Hayashida, another interviewee.] You mean, this is all within the space of your store?

AG: Yeah. Uh huh [yes].

WN: Had Hayashida . . .

AG: Yeah. And that's where I rented--Hayashida side, (after he moved in 1947).

WN: You mean, Hayashida's Fish Market was taking up the whole space where Economy Store became?

AG: No, no. Only one section. Anyway, they talk about the restaurant and Mae Itamura's Liquor Store [Paia Liquor Store, owned by Mae Itamura, another interviewee] during the war. That was on one

side. Mae's liquor store. When I came in, it was a carpenter shop in the middle--the biggest area. So, I had the small place for seventy dollars. I had the back where the restaurant kitchen was, before, and (there) was one room in the back. That was all for seventy dollars. So, I started very small.

WN: Okay. Now, why did you decide to go into business at that time?

AG: Because my daughter was ten years old, and I wanted to be with her most of the time, other than her being in school. I didn't want her on the streets or in someone else's home. This way, she can come home and sort of give me a hand. Because if she's ten years old--I worked (when I was) twelve years old in (my uncle's) store--It would be a good experience for her. Same time she's helping me, and I'm keeping an eye on her. So, it worked out fine.

WN: When you borrowed this money from your brothers and your mother, how did they react to your idea of starting a store?

AG: "Go ahead." Because they said, "You have some experience." Well, I'm the type that--I shouldn't use the word "gutsy," but . . . .  
(Laughs)

WN: Use it if you want to use it.

AG: They say because I have the guts--not afraid--so, "That's fine. I think that's a very good idea." They backed me up 100 percent. I did not ask for more than this, but they came up with it. They even said, "Do you think this is enough? I can lend you some more."

So, I told them that, "If I need it, I'll ask later. But I'm going to start small."

WN: Did you have a pretty good idea of how much money you needed to start?

AG: Yes, I did. So, first of all, I said, "I want to make sure about the rent." If I don't pay rent, I'm going to be kicked out. I decided to buy so much with \$210 in mind for three months' rent. I knew that the food I have in there would keep me and my daughter alive. (Laughs) Know that we can eat. Only thing is, I wanted to be sure that I could stay there.

Oh, there was a old cash register there that I bought from Mr. Hew for five dollars. No tapes. It does not add. You just press the button, and it'll open. At least it has a compartment for dimes or nickels, or the dollar bills. Then, I had an old icebox that I bought for fifteen dollars. That's the type that has a (round) motor on the top, so very, very old, yeah?

WN: It was electric?

AG: Yes. That was electric. Then, oh yes, I bought \$700 [worth of goods] from Paia Store. I told him, "Now read through the (order) book to let me know what do you carry and what sizes." I knew, more or less, the staple items that people need. Nothing fancy. (I bought) from Paia Store because it was close by.

WN: They were wholesaling at that time?

AG: Yes. They were wholesaling and retailing, both. And who came was Mr. Morikawa--came to take the order. So, the first thing I told him is, "I need rice." (Laughs) Then, the salt and the sugar. Just the main items. This was [formerly] a restaurant, and then they made a partition. I put the shelves in wherever I can. There were some windows on one side, so I could not put anything there. Then, there was one front door--small, little door.

I used the restaurant tables. I lined it all up, scrubbed it, and painted. Then, I line up something that I didn't have to worry when it dropped. But the ones on the shelves had to be like shōyu, (and) vinegar--(anything that breaks). You know, so that no one will bump into it on the tables. (The rice came in 100-pound cloth bags, and we had to divide them however they wanted.) In fact, the salt was the Morton salt, but it was in a bag. Did you know that? I (kept) one sample of the bag. (Chuckles) Used to get wet, because (it wasn't dried enough and wasn't in the carton like it is today).

Ice box, I had some green onions, head cabbage, Chinese cabbage, carrots, (potatoes, and onions). Maybe a few items like that. Oh, I had a vegetable stand there, in the front. This is a closed icebox, so no one can see in there. So, in the morning, I would line it up. At night, when I closed, put 'em back. My hours were from 7:30 in the morning till 6 o'clock in the evening.

WN: Every day?

AG: Sunday was half day, from 8 [o'clock a.m.] to 12 [o'clock p.m.].

WN: When you opened that store, there was nobody in operation at that time at that place, so you didn't buy anybody out?

AG: No, I did not. It was a empty space. That was the only place in Lower Paia that was vacant.

WN: How many stores, would you say, were in operation, selling the same kind of things as your store?

AG: Well, there was Nagata Store next door, Hew Store on the other side, Paia Mercantile. Horiuchi had a meat market, (vegetables and) can goods. There was a Kobayashi Store. Kobayashi, and who else, now? Oh, there was Yamato Store. (Kakiuchi Fish Market and Groceries.)

WN: Zane Store?

- AG: Oh, yes. There was Zane. That's right. Zane Store, [owned by Gilbert Zane, another interviewee]. Oh, there was Domingo and Felipe--a Filipino store. And on this side . . .
- WN: Was Waki [Store] there?
- AG: Oh, yes, Mr. Waki was there, too.
- WN: All these stores sold the same type of things--groceries?
- AG: Yes.
- WN: Plus the Paia [Plantation] Store?
- AG: Oh, Paia Store was further up.
- WN: Further up. So, quite a lot . . .
- AG: Quite a bit. I was told when I opened the store that, "Oh, this woman, poor thing. In three months, she'll get out of business or go bankrupt." I was told.
- WN: Who told you this?
- AG: Well, not my customers, but someone said that, and they passed the word on to me. So, I said, "It better not be that way. I just have to work harder and (keep it up)." Because it seems like--you know, with all these stores there--that I was taking their customers away. There was competition. But, of course, I tried not to hurt anybody's feelings--the other merchants--because it's not nice. I tried to lower myself to get along.
- WN: Well, why did you decide to sell groceries and things? Did you ever think of maybe selling something else that there was not that many of in Paia?
- AG: Groceries is because, at least, you can make a living. Clothes, you only need so much for yourself. I thought food, well, people have to eat. Same time, we can eat it, too. (Laughs) I think to survive was my main concern.
- WN: Did you know right away that you were going to be able to make more money than you were making at, say, the cannery?
- AG: I thought that if I run it the right way and if I have my friends--you know, my customers--to back me up, there must be a way. And, somehow, I wanted to be my own boss for a change, because I went through working from maid to janitor to everything, that someone was always above me. I wanted to be independent for a change.
- WN: When you started, did you get any advice from anybody? Did anybody help you out?

AG: Oh, my uncle--although in a old-fashioned way, because I worked with him.

WN: What do you mean, "old-fashioned way"?

AG: Well, to express (our) appreciation, bow, and with a smile. (Always feel that they are supporting me by buying my goods.) Always bear in mind that they are buttering your bread. So, you have to be nice. Don't you think that was a good advice? Yeah? You don't know?

(Laughter)

WN: I'm not going to say anything.

AG: I think I told you that he gave me a clock, with good luck to go with it. I told you already that I bought all the staple items. Nothing fancy, because I thought it would be, more or less, the customers would be the ones working for the plantation or Japanese. So, I carried some Japanese food. At that time, I made it on my own. I wasn't [yet] married to my [second] husband. It was a worry for me. If I don't sell so much a day, it worried me. Would I be able to make a living and pay the rent?

WN: Did you know, from the very beginning, about how much you'd have to sell per day?

AG: Knew roughly. Like, oh those days, the food was so cheap. So, if I sold fifty dollars a day, I was happy, and maybe twenty-five dollars on a Sunday. Just so I make a living.

Did I have a car? Oh, I had a--they used to call it--a runabout, I think. It was hard for me to haul things, because right after the war, I could not buy any car. So, this, I think, belonged to some Navy (officer). It was a Chrysler (convertible), with a back seat, but that would fold. Do you see cars like that? People riding in the back, and when they get out, then they close the back? You don't see (that type) nowadays.

WN: How much did you buy the car for?

AG: Five hundred dollars, after I made some money.

WN: So, you were saying, you had to buy . . .

AG: No, I think I had this car with me before I started. That's how I used to work in the cannery. Yeah, yeah, that's right.

WN: Oh, so, you had a car already?

AG: Yeah, I had the car. That was after the war, so that was the only thing I could get.

WN: So, you said you bought a cash register and an ice box. What other equipment did you need when you first started out?

AG: I didn't even have a adding machine. We added all by hand (with paper and pencil). Those days, there were nothing like sixty-nine cents or what. Everything was sixty or sixty-five [cents]. (We didn't need pennies.) It was easy to add. In fact, my daughter (Sylvia) was good in math, that at the age of ten, she would add it all up. (She was better than me.) That old cash register, we just open, pick up the change, and give it to the customer. Getting the change from a little girl, they wonder, then they check it carefully. Then, they say, "Oh, she gave me the right change." The next time they come, they have their doubts, yet. But after five times, they say, "You don't need to worry about this girl." They tell the next person. Well, I didn't have the extra money to buy cash register in the first place. Maybe after one year, I got the hand-crank adding machine. It cost me (\$49.50). That made it so much easier. You add it all up. Then, I could subtract how much change to give back.

WN: How about when you have to get a license or permit to start your business? What kind of procedures did you have to go through?

AG: We had to get the business license. At that time, Board of Health wasn't that--I don't know if they had Board of Health. We paid like--was it two dollars for that license? Business license.

WN: I think they had Board of Health . . .

AG: At that time? Yeah, maybe they did.

WN: You don't remember having to obey any kind of regulations?

AG: No, not when I first (started), but after that, yeah. But all in all, I've had no problem with them. You know, I had my experience working as a maid, that I kept the place just so. I was told, "If everybody keep the place like this, we won't have a job."

But I said, "Well, thank you for telling me that. I'll keep the place better than what it is."

WN: Where were you living?

AG: Oh, right in the back. Part of that store. There was a back door that I used a curtain and closed it. That is why I say the Board of Health wasn't there, because why is it that I could live in the back? Where they used to do the cooking for the restaurant, that was in the back of the carpenter shop (and my store). So there was a old sink there that we wash our things. In the store, I didn't have to, because there were hardly anything to sell that you have to wash your hands. There are only a few vegetables. So, we lived back there. That was my kitchen and my living room. And

there was one room I made into a bedroom.

We did have a phone. We cut off that lumber and put the hinges on it. So, if we wanted the telephone in the front (for the store), we could answer that. Then, push it in the back, we could use it in the (living room), also.

WN: Oh, it's like a swivel?

AG: Yeah. So, we could use it both ways.

WN: These kind of things, like the carpenter kind of things, did you do that or . . .

AG: Oh, I hired a man. Of course, he wasn't a carpenter, but he helped me. I paid him fifty dollars, that's all.

WN: Fifty dollars for the job?

AG: Yeah. To put up the shelves. Where did the lumber come [from]? I guess, we used scrap lumber. I don't remember buying any lumber. (Laughs) Because I couldn't have gone out to buy lumber with the type of car that I had. So, it was hanging around. Then, maybe, we took them all apart. Of course, we didn't have too many shelves. It's mostly the table that I had used.

WN: Were you very much satisfied with your location?

AG: Oh, yes. Only thing I didn't like was the carpenter shop, when he used the machine--you know, when he's sawing lumber, (then it was noisy.) Maybe that's where I got some lumber, because it was a carpenter shop. A Filipino (man)--Picano was the name? Picano, yeah. Went (AG makes sawing sound). Then, it's noisy. There's just a partition in between.

WN: As far as, like the . . .

AG: Parking? Angle parking in the front. They could park on the other side, also. Then, the carpenter shop gave up, so we took off the partition, and we made our store bigger.

WN: When was this?

AG: I would say, maybe, five years later [1953]. Then, I decided, I have a bigger place, okay, I'm going to sell fish. I bought a fish case--the fish. We had aku, akule, 'opēlu. Some fishermen that goes out and get fish, I used to buy from them. Then, they would buy my groceries in exchange for the fish.

WN: Did you have to join any kind of fish dealer's association or anything like that?

AG: To sell fish, no.

WN: Or to get fish?

AG: To get fish, no. There was no . . . . We could just go on our own, sell whatever we wanted to. Wait, now. I think had to make a report (to the) fish and game. But not at that time. I think, later on. Whether I bought it from Ting's Enterprises or the outside fishermen. I had to make sure I get their names down, because they are not supposed to sell fish without license.

WN: What made you decide to eventually start selling fish?

AG: Well, so we have more variety. It's the Filipinos that like fish. And Japanese. Then, I get more of that kind of trade. Only can goods alone is not enough. I feel that if you have everything, it's easier for anyone to shop, because they don't have to go from store to store.

WN: Was Nagata and those other stores selling fish, too?

AG: No, they were more strictly on vegetables and groceries, and little bit of dry goods and hardware. What else did they sell? Oh, they had the liquor, I think. They had the liquor before me.

WN: Were there any fish markets in Paia, at that time, that sold fish?

AG: Kakiuchi Market across, they had fish. The Kobayashi Store, also. So, there were three fish markets. I made sure that I don't waste the fish. The raw fish. The bones, we chop it up, sell it for ten cents a pound. Even the head. Some people like to make soup out of that. [With] the guts, I made bagoong. Put Hawaiian salt and (mix it twice a week for a month). The Filipinos told me I made the best bagoong. (Laughs) Even they came with a can--big, five-gallon cans--and they would ask me to save it. Then, they ship to Lanai, because my bagoong is good and it keeps.

WN: How did you learn how to make bagoong?

AG: A Filipino woman came along, and I asked her.

WN: Would you say that your business really improved after you started selling fish?

AG: Little bit. Then, I did go into pork after that.

WN: About when was that?

AG: Maybe another year after [1954]. So, I did get a lot of Filipino (and Hawaiian) trade. The Japanese stuck to the Japanese stores. (Laughs) That, I would say. Then, within that time, I got married to my . . . .

WN: Second husband?

- AG: Yeah, uh huh. (Alfred) Gouveia. Then, I started to get the Portuguese trade. (Laughs)
- WN: Why? Because of the name or because your husband knew people?
- AG: Well, his friends, because he's a Paia boy. Working in the mill, they came down. So, right after (selling) pork, I got another case to sell beef. That's when they all said, "My, this Economy Store has everything in there, except liquor." (Chuckles) So, I went and got the liquor.
- WN: When did you get that?
- AG: Maybe a good seven years after that [1961], because I didn't have the money. Because liquor is expensive. The license itself is so high. In the first was beer and wine, and I paid--shall I say \$300-something? Then, (six months later) I started to carry the hard liquor, then it was about \$700. So, you have to be sure. In order to pay (for) that license each year, you have to sell so much. So, I used to keep track how much I sell a day and by the month.
- WN: So, you had to be pretty confident that you were doing well before you could get a liquor license?
- AG: Oh, yes. Uh huh. You know, every step I took, is it worth it? I have to think real hard. Sometimes, I can't sleep at night. (Laughs) Oh, how I made the money to go into the liquor was, now, I already . . .
- WN: Well, we can get into that little later, but I want to back up a little bit. You said, first, you started with groceries, yeah? Then, after a while, you started to sell fish. Then, you started to sell pork. Where did you get the pork from? And the beef?
- AG: Let's see. The pork was from Mr. Okuhama that lived in Wailuku. He was my classmate at the Kaupakalua School. In the beginning, he delivered. He lived in Piihana Road and raised pigs. Then, later on, he said he cannot deliver. Then, by that time, I made some money; I had a Dodge panel truck, and I went to pick up the pork. (He now lives in Okinawa.)
- The beef came after that. Oh, I was buying from, at that time, was Ulupalakua Ranch. They would cut in sections for me and put in my panel truck. Then, later on, we got from Mr. William Jacintho. Because he was working for HC&S [Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company], and part-time, he was raising the cattle at Waiakoa. His beef is really tasty, we find.
- Then, I decided I want to make sure I don't lose on anything. So, the fish, all whatever could not be sold, I cut it up and made Hawaiian style--dry it up. Put salt and dry it. Another way was

the Japanese style with goma, shōyu, and sugar--dried it up, too. Whatever could go into bagoong, went that way. The stomach was sold to the fishermen.

Oh, to top it all, a Filipino man by the name of Bidal that used to bring the squid. He would not take anyplace else but my place. He goes early in the morning to Spreckelsville. Goes diving for the squid. He'll wait for me. On the way home, I picked him up. Then, he put the squid on the scale. I say, okay, how much it is. I thought I was lucky that way. Because the fishermen used the squid to go fishing. (As usual, Bidal bought his Italian Swiss sherry wine from me, and the rest I paid him in cash.)

WN: How would you sell the Japanese-style dried fish?

AG: At that time, how? Oh, we put 'em in a plastic bag. Those days, I don't think we need to label. We just put the price, that's all. If it was in a pan, in the closed refrigerator, it was all right. But when we have time, we pack it. So, if we in a hurry, we don't have to put 'em on a scale, we just pass the plastic bag because it's one pound. Oh, yeah, we could always cut it to make it straight one pound.

(The beef and pork that was too fat or discolored)--I used to put it in a pan or in a box and put it in the freezer. Oh, yeah, I didn't tell you. I did have a freezer after that. I used to make laulau. So that I could make use of (all the meat). Oh, before that, that's right, I (sold) cooked food. We made hekka and, oh, anything you can think of. Chow fun. Even went into char siu, steam pork. Oh, chopped vegetables. So, we used (all) the vegetables.

Then, I had to think, "Oh, yeah, the beef. I want to make sure that all of that is sold." You know, there's a trick. You can lose money selling beef, and you can make good money, too. It's the way you cut and what goes in the garbage can. (Chuckles) So, if you make a hekka, now, you need the ends; or whatever scrap that come out, you can always use it. We put it aside. Then, I had a woman that comes in for half a day, in the morning, to cook it. If we had leftover (tōfu), it's going to be pork tōfu the following day. Well, whatever is left was used. Whatever vegetables that did not look nice.

Eggplant you cannot use for chop suey vegetable--"How am I going to use up the eggplant that is wrinkled and doesn't look nice?" Sometimes, the vegetables from the market is not that perfect, although we always try to get A-grade. I don't like the B-grade or off-grade type. That way, you can lose money, (and) you not sure. Then, I thought, "Well, I'm going to try the bagoong (chuckles) with the eggplant." And the Filipinos say this taste good. "This one, too much good." So, I could use everything. Some (vegetables), we did make pickled Japanese tsukemono with, too. So, all in all, if I could have used the bone, I would have for some reason.

WN: Is that the main reason why you went into this kind of cooked food? You could use up your leftovers?

AG: Use up all the leftovers. Even the bone, if there's a little meat on the side, or to give some flavor, I told the cook to put some water in (and boil it), so that where she's going to add some water, add that broth.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

AG: Did I talk too much, now? You like to know all this?

WN: Yeah.

AG: Since we talking about the meat, my lauau was sold at that time for three for one dollar--with the ti leaf that came from Huelo and the taro leaf from the market. All the discolored meat, as I said, was all in the freezer. I take it out two days ahead of time. Then, I cut it. Sort of let it thaw out. Put Hawaiian salt. Let's see, now, (for) ten pound beef (and pork), add one-fourth pound of Hawaiian salt. Then, I mix it. Then, I leave it (in the refrigerator overnight). Then, before we pack, I mix it once more. Then the flavor is all there. Like some lauau you eat, the outside is too salty, and the inside isn't. (As the meat prices went up, the lauau sold for fifty cents; later, eighty cents.)

WN: That must have been a big seller, eh?

AG: Oh, when the Hawaiians come and say they want fifty lauaus, I know I'm pretty good (laughs) at that.

WN: Did you have to make fifty lauaus for them?

AG: Yes. I (sold) lauau every other (Saturday). I would start on a Friday evening. Since I lived right in the back . . . . Oh, when I made that, I moved to another house in the back. So, where my bedroom was, that became the kitchen to do all this cooking.

WN: Oh, you moved house?

AG: Yeah. (The two-bedroom house, way in the back.) Mr. Saiki's (jewelry shop) moved. So, I had the three rooms put together. (The whole store building.)

WN: Did your rent go up?

AG: Oh, yes. (Seventy-five dollars to \$200.) Oh, then, Mr. Lau from Honolulu bought that place.

- WN: What wholesalers did you deal with when you first started out?
- AG: Now, what wholesaler? Oh, the Paia Store, Kahului Store, and Maui Dry Goods.
- WN: So, in the beginning, you were dealing with A&B [Kahului Store], Paia Store . . .
- AG: Wait. A&B? No.
- WN: Not A&B?
- AG: A&B, oh, they called that afterward. The Kahului Store became A&B [Alexander & Baldwin] Commercial Company [in 1950].
- WN: The Kahului Store, Paia Store, and Maui Dry Goods?
- AG: Then, the Kahului Store became A&B Commercial Company. Maui Dry Goods then was sold to Y. Hata from Honolulu. Then, my vegetables were from Farmer's Exchange and MVGA--Maui Vegetable Grower's Association. And the business now, let's see, Y. Hata. Oh, during the strike--this is a plantation strike--that's when the union did not agree to that (2-1/2) percent [excise] tax.
- WN: Now, which strike is this?
- AG: There was one strike, you said, was in about nineteen fifty . . . .
- WN: Eight?
- AG: Nineteen fifty-eight [1958], I think that is the one. It was seventy-six days. It lasted seventy-six days.
- WN: This plantation strike, right? Not the dock strike?
- AG: No, plantation strike. That is when, since my husband was a union member, [he] was asked to please help them with the beef. So, he and three other men worked in the butcher shop, 3 o'clock in the morning, make over (three) hundred pounds of hamburger (or stew a day) for the soup kitchen. The union members went up to help whoever has the cattle or the vegetables. So, that's how they got the soup kitchen (going).
- WN: You folks were donating a lot of that?
- AG: Well, just our (butcher) machines, (icebox), and my husband's time. Then, it slowed down on our groceries, but it really boosted up on our drugs, and soapsuds, and everything else but food. Because of the soup kitchen. Then, the other things, instead of going and buy from any other store, we had the backing. That's where I made money. They realized that cannot beat the Economy Store because we're with the union. But, now, I had to be because my husband was

a union member, right? (Laughs)

WN: What about the other stores?

AG: I don't know. They [union members] all came out to our side. That's when I already had the whole building. From then on, I know it has helped us a lot, because the others were charging (2-1/2) percent, and we weren't. Then, when you asked me where else I was buying [wholesale], Hawaiian Grocery Store would not sell me because I do not charge the (2-1/2) percent. This is what I told them, "I think I rather have peace at home (chuckles) because I have to go along with my husband. With the union and their beliefs. The (2-1/2) percent should not be charged." Excise tax.

WN: But didn't you get in trouble with the government?

AG: No. It was all right. It's up to us. Not everybody was charging the 2-1/2 percent. But, you see, we have to (please our customers).

WN: Oh, but you still had to pay [the government]?

AG: Yeah. So, we say, we going to pay it from our pocket. As long as we pay it, it doesn't matter whether we collect. So, they felt that they saving 2-1/2 percent and going along with the union. Then, they [Hawaiian Grocery Store] say that they don't want to sell it to me because the other merchants are complaining that I don't charge the excise tax. So, that's when I said that I rather have peace at home. It's all right. I may sell less because Hata's might run out of something, but I'll manage some way. Then, later on, they told me, "That's all right about that. You come and buy from us anyway."

Of course, Haleakala Dairy was the milk. Some things, I used to buy from Lewers and Cooke, and Alber's for the feed. From Alber's. Let's see, what other big ones, now? Of course, our liquor came from Eagle distributor, Bevway, Spengler and Son. (Cereal and Fruit, McKesson, 50th State, Better Brands, and Paradise Beverage.)

WN: When you dealing with the wholesaler, did you pay them cash all the time, or did you get credit?

AG: The liquor was by credit--liquor, beer. And Y. Hata, it had to be strictly cash. Hawaiian [Grocery] Store, it was on weekly. Oh, poi that I picked up, that was charge. And Nashiwa Bakery, I think was charge. But whoever delivers, I rather pay them cash. You know, the small things. When it comes to something that I pick up, sometimes it's much easier for them not to add it up and take the total and all, so their office take care that, and they send me a statement.

Oh, another thing I used to do was, way back, when I go to Haiku to pick up the papayas, they give me the order a week in advance.

It's just like they had a standing order--like the rice, sugar, whatnot. When I pick up the papayas, we just sort of exchange. We pay the difference. At that time, papaya was just four cents a pound, and I would sell it 50 percent markup, six cents a pound. Vegetables and these fruits, the markup was 50 percent.

WN: Is that a relatively high markup?

AG: Well, most people did make it 50 percent, because there's some spoilage there. That is why I decided not to get (too much). You know, make use of everything before they get spoiled. But, of course, fruits, you can't help it.

Oh, another thing, I have to be proud and say that I was the first one on Maui that had a open-type vegetable case. A salesman came through Wailuku Motors. They were selling appliance. This was a haole man. He gave me some talk about that open type. Everybody had the closed icebox. They have to go in the back, and open, and get the . . .

WN: Customers could go in the back?

AG: No, no. The workers [store employees]. There were some that you could open from the front that has sliding door--in the front. But most of them were in the back, so . . .

WN: You mean, you could walk in?

AG: No, no. This is a showcase--icebox. With that understanding, I told him, "Now, if my electricity bill gets up too high, then I'm going to return it."

He said, "Okay. That's the agreement."

I took a chance. I did go to see Mr. Trask at Bank of Hawaii in Paia. He said, "Are you going crazy? An open-type refrigerator?" He says, "I never heard of any. I can see you paying the electricity bill through your ears," he told me, "but if you want it, okay. You're okay, so I'll let you borrow--" I think it was--my first one--\$1,200.

WN: This salesman, what did he tell you about what the benefits would be on an open one?

AG: Well, it's easier for the customer to pick their vegetables. It had a mirror in the back, so the vegetables that's stacked in the front, it shows in the back, so it looks full. Is it that way nowadays? I don't think they have a mirror in the back. So, it has to be against the wall. At that time, Paia Store was still operating. But they were selling only oranges, pears, and apples. I used to sell with that icebox, now, thirty case of fruits a day. Can you imagine? The grapes were like three pounds for fifty cents. It was that cheap.

The Rancho Produce from Honolulu had an office and a storage space someplace near Nashiwa Bakery in Wailuku. My fruits were all piled up over there. I had a storage space down below. You know, when you can sell about thirty cases a day, you need quite a bit even for four days. Oh, that was really something. It seems like when it came to fruits, I was ahead of Paia Store.

WN: How did Paia Store sell their fruits?

AG: And then, they sold later on. They had the open type (after me).

WN: Why were you the first on Maui to get it?

AG: Oh, because the salesman came.

WN: Why did he come to you?

AG: I have no idea. By luck, I suppose.

WN: Did he say something like, well, he's tried other places, and they didn't want it or something like that?

AG: You know, a salesman won't say that--those kind of things. Because, then, I'm going to say, "Oh, yeah. I think like them. I don't think I should get it." So, he just told me the good part of the thing. Even Ookas in Kahului--they were in Kahului at that time--he didn't have one like that. So, they all came to look at my icebox. So, that was a demonstrator in Paia.

WN: Do you remember what year that was?

AG: I have no idea, now. Maybe ten years . . . . No, not even ten years after I opened. Maybe seven years after. Oh, when we got into the next space.

WN: Seven years after you opened [1955]?

AG: About that. Even Kishi Market from Lahaina came over to look at it. Everybody looked at it.

WN: Did you provide any kind of delivery service?

AG: Yes, I did. Monday and Thursday was my delivery day. Whoever have a phone calls in. Those that don't have, they give me their order one week in advance or few days in advance. Some places, I used to go once a week. But it was mostly cash.

WN: Did you charge for deliveries?

AG: No, same price as what they would find in the store.

WN: Was there any minimum that they had to buy before you would go

deliver it?

AG: No. Because I had to go like six different places. Same time, I was picking up their lettuce, or their green onions, or whatever.

WN: Wait. What do you mean, "six different places"?

AG: Oh, some had vegetables that I could pick up. You see? So, I pick up their vegetables and take their groceries (at the same time).

WN: Customers?

AG: Yeah, customers.

WN: You would pick up their vegetables? From where?

AG: From their house. And then . . .

WN: Wait, wait. Then, what would you do with the vegetables?

AG: Sell it at my store. So, those items that I pick up, I don't buy from the market, because I already have.

WN: We're talking about delivery to them? So, people who wanted something delivered, you would pick up vegetables from them, too?

AG: If they had. If it's ten cents a pound, wholesale, I pay them. If there's twenty pounds, okay. Same time, I'm selling them my groceries. So, I was making money both ways. (Chuckles) But most of them wouldn't buy just few items. They would consider and buy, maybe, ten different items. But before that, I wanted to make it like Paia Store and charge. And I really struggled because the money don't come in.

WN: Oh, you did charge . . .

AG: Yeah, I did charge. That was, maybe, three years after I started the business [1951]. That was one of my biggest mistakes, because I had a hard time collect. They give all kind of excuses. There was one (who called 8:30 at night). "I don't have no baby's milk. Can you deliver a case of Carnation milk, and I'll pay you on Monday." This was on Thursday. They were to get paid. When I went there, I was told, "Well, somebody came for collection, so--" Eight thirty [8:30] at night, you know. Only one case of Carnation milk. "Because the baby does not have any milk for tonight." So, I felt sorry for them. Of course, this wasn't my really steady customer, either. Then, I was told the other person came first, so first come, first served.

Then, I find myself too tied up with charge here, charge there that it got to a point where it was hard for me to operate. So, I decided, well, I might lose some [customers]. Go cash and carry,

and make it cheaper. Like some things, I have only a markup of 5 percent, 10 percent--the staple items. The others, well, maybe about 30 percent. Vegetables, that's 50 percent.

WN: When you were doing credit, your prices were higher?

AG: No, regular price. But, you know, some are good; some are really . . . . They don't worry about it. If it's charge, they buy more. If it's cash, they buy less because they feel that, oh yeah, they must pay for it. You heard about the new month [order]? The beginning was on the twenty-fifth. We change it to, maybe, the following month. (They wanted it on) the twentieth.

WN: Your new month was on the twenty-fifth?

AG: Twenty-fifth, in the beginning. Then, later on, they say, "Yeah, Paia Store make it on the twentieth." So, okay, I follow Paia Store and make it on the twentieth. Then, they want on the fifteenth. I said, "Oh, I think you going too far." You know, you think you doing a person a favor, but I didn't realize all the worry and everything was on me. Today, you just cannot operate on a charge (basis) unless you sure of that person.

WN: When you had the new month, you would let everybody charge?

AG: No, not everybody. Some people wanted to buy cash. Maybe half was charge and half, cash. Then, this was something I used to see. I felt like a fool. When we take the goods out to the car, oh, they did buy a lot of things (with cash elsewhere). It's in their car. But they come to me after they spend the money [elsewhere] or when they don't have the money (and expect me to) charge. I wanted them to pay their bill first, then to charge again. But they would argue with me, and towards the end, we become enemies. So, trying to do good, (it didn't work out).

WN: This is just some of the people, or most of the people?

AG: Maybe I had trouble with about one-fourth of those that charged. The worry of thinking, "Oh, I cannot pay Maui Dry Goods, or I cannot pay certain place." You know, it's not a good feeling. Or I might get a call (from my wholesaler) saying that, "When are you going to pay your bill?" And yet, I'm trying (really hard) to get from my (charge) customers. But they [customers] say, "Oh, somebody got sick," or "Wait five more days," and that five days don't seem to come. And there are some that, even today, haven't paid that bill. Then, I turn it over to the collector, and, somehow, they cannot collect either. So, that's a losing game.

WN: Did lot of other Lower Paia merchants have the same kind of problem?

AG: I think they did, and they have learned through that. But, maybe, I was more generous, I think. Hard to say no when they give me a

sad story. Feeling sorry for them.

WN: About how long did you do this credit before you decided to go back to cash and carry?

AG: About seven years.

WN: Oh, you were doing this credit for seven years? From the time you started?

AG: Maybe the first three years, I did not charge. After that, I charged for seven years. Then, I cut off (some). I had a few like the priest from the Catholic Church or someone like that that just don't (carry) cash with them all the time. (I still had some sincere ones.)

WN: Yeah, but you could trust them.

AG: Oh, yeah. I can trust them, because what they doing, they have to be honest.

WN: Do you have anything else to say on credit? If not, I'm going to move on.

AG: No. I got myself into a unpleasant situation that I rather not even think about it. I advise anyone that is young, going into business, to be very careful. It's better to sell it cheaper, (get the cash), but don't charge. You see, charge, that goods are taken out from your store. You have to get something to replace it, but if the money doesn't come in, you cannot replace. The other way, if you don't sell, it's still there. Then, you don't need to buy. So, this is the advice I give all the young folks. There were times that I was so desperate that I felt, "Why do I have to live like this?" Someone with a weak mind would just commit suicide. But, today, I think, more people (buy with cash), because big markets are all cash-and-carry basis that they got used to it. But before, they thought the only way to buy is charge. And lot of them did not have cars, so I did the delivery.

WN: You did it yourself?

AG: Yeah, I did myself. So, my day was like this. Sunday, I work half a day. I fix a fast lunch, take my (three) children for a ride or down the beach, cook supper, work on my books, or do my patching, or little bit of sewing. Monday was my vegetable day--Monday and Thursday. I left home at 4:30 in the morning because the market will open at 5 [o'clock a.m.]. I wanted to be there when it opens, so that I could get the best of vegetables, not the leftovers. Then, I was on my way back at 6 o'clock. Then I get my children ready. Of course, my daughter was helping some, so that they can go to school on time. Then, I opened the store at 7:30. And then line up my vegetables.

In the afternoon, Monday and Thursday, was my delivery (day). Get the orders together and take it there, buy their vegetables or whatever they had, either give them the money or collect, and come home. Monday night, I would go through all my shelves--the whole store. I had two tablets. One is for the [hired] schoolboy to stack up, and one is for me to buy. That was every Monday and every Thursday. Then, Tuesday morning, I fix up the meat, and pork or fish. Make it look nice.

I called for my things as soon as the Y. Hata or Hawaiian [Grocery] Store would open, like 8 o'clock. I usually was the first one to call them. Then, I get all the orders all ready. Then, I would tend to my meat and fish, make it look nice. If it doesn't look nice, they not going to buy. Either you turn it over or cut off certain part.

Then, I'm on the road. The first stop was my (Aloha) Poi, (Miyako Sushī, Shishido Manjū), Nashiwa Bakery. We had to pick up our pastries, too, you know. Then, the last place--on Tuesday (and Friday)--was Hatas. On (Wednesday), was Hawaiian [Grocery] Store. So, whatever Hatas did not have, I'll pick it up at Hawaiian [Grocery] Store. So, it was just like a system that I wanted to work out that way. The schoolboy, after school, he'll come, unload my car--my station wagon--and stack up. So, I have all the figures on the side of the invoice ready, so they can follow that price. If it went lower, they'll fix up all. If it went higher, then they have to change.

I was very lucky. Only once, I had a flat tire. You know, the (big) load. If I am to pick up anybody, now, they say, "Oh, yeah, I can trust you on your driving because the way you used to come home with the front up and with so much load--" I had to be very careful. Of course, my husband work all kind shifts that it was hard. Had morning shift, afternoon shift, and night shift.

WN: Where? Up in the mill?

AG: In the mill, uh huh [yes]. So, it was easy for me, because (where we lived was) just a running distance (from the store). Either wake him up, or fix something for his lunch can.

WN: The year after you started, in 1949, you had another child. So, how did you manage that? Who took over and everything like that?

AG: Oh, my sister-in-law . . . . Oh, while I was pregnant, I was still on my feet, picking up my (goods). I had this part-time lady. Then, when my husband is working and if I think I had to cut the meat, even if have to hold it sideways--yeah, because my front is sticking out--sideways, I cut the meat. So, if you bring the beef to me, I can tell you where is the sirloin, where is the T-bones . . .

WN: So, your husband was the butcher, then?

AG: We had another man that works for HC&S help us, also. That was towards the end. But in the beginning, yeah, he was the butcher, and I was the butcher.

WN: Who else was working in the store?

AG: Well, we had this lady that was working part-time, we made it full time for her. Then, I had another woman part-time. Then, as things got better, I got two ladies full time and one woman--no, I had three full time. Then came this man that cuts the beef and a schoolboy. Oh, while I was pregnant, yeah, that part. I worked till the last day. The Paia Hospital was still there. Boy, they talk about all this natural birth, nowadays. I didn't even have chance to reach the delivery room when I had him.

WN: Oh, yeah? Where did you have him?

AG: In the waiting room. On that narrow stretcher or what you may call it. Over there. Dr. Sanders--I think it could have been about 1 o'clock in the morning--he had a hard time get up, I think, so he was too late. My son already came. So, I was happy. I said, "Why do they put me in a private room?"

They say, because I wasn't sterilized at all. My baby and I wasn't. So, that's what they do. I didn't put on no sterilized clothing. There were lot of things they had to do to me, which I cut short.

WN: How soon after did you start working again?

AG: Oh, wait now. While I was in the hospital, they brought me all these bills for me to figure, so that they can stack up. (Chuckles) Yeah, I had to figure it out at 30 percent. Yeah, I had to do that.

WN: Nobody else knew how?

AG: No, because I didn't train anyone. So, the doctor came and said, "Oh, are you doing your homework?" (Laughs) Well, it was good, in a way, that I was, you know, being so fat in the front and picking up my (goods). Because they look at me, say, "Oh, what time you supposed to give birth?"

I say, "Any time." Boy, they get me out as soon as they can, whether it's pastries, or groceries, or what.

They say, "We better stack it up, because we don't want her to have a baby right here." Isn't it something, though?

WN: When did you start going back to the store?

AG: The following day. I came back from the hospital. Maybe they kept me three days. He [AG's husband] works on a early morning shift, I

got up 4 o'clock in the morning and made his lunch can. (Alfred Jr.) was born on the third of December. I wanted to pay my workers, so I started on the wages. Then, I got dizzy. I had to hold onto my desk. I think that have spoiled my eyes, because I had to look at the figures. They say it's very important, when a woman gives birth, to rest her eyes at least two weeks. But look now, right after I have the baby, the bills were coming to me. Then, I come home, and I worry about their paycheck.

WN: Who watched the young baby?

AG: My sister-in-law. Oh, that's when we were living right in the back, so that was very easy. Then, when he was ten years old, I put him to work. Mr. Hew said, "As long as they do some work--let 'em mop or stack up--give him fifty dollars a month." But, that money, we cannot spend it. It has to be put away for his education or for him to buy his personal things. So, both of my sons have worked. (My younger son is Paul.)

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 7-52-2-80; SIDE ONE

WN: Okay, let's get back to the time you were delivering, yeah? How far would you go to deliver? What camps would you go to?

AG: Let's see. If it was worthwhile, I could go, like, seven miles. That's Haiku.

WN: That's the farthest you would go?

AG: Yeah, uh huh, I would go. But not only to deliver goods. If I know that I can pick up something. Oh, another thing is, my parents were living in Honolua. That's past Lahaina. I take my groceries there; she was planting green onions. We picked up the Flemings' watermelon, come home. Kukahikos had some fish that I could bring home, also--buy it from them, of course. So that's quite a distance. I think it was from Paia to Honolua, could be like thirty-two miles? Uh huh [yes]. But it's worthwhile because I'm going to see my parents, plus take my groceries and pick up whatever they had. I was the only one that (sold) watermelon, those days, because Fleming was the only one that raised it. (My stepfather bought and kept it for me.)

WN: How about the area around Lower Paia? Would you go to Camp 1 [Spreckelsville]?

AG: Oh, yes, I did. Those were the haole homes that I used to go.

WN: Camp 1? You wouldn't go to any of the other . . .

AG: The others? No, somehow . . . . They had Camp 1 Store, too, that's why. So, they would buy from there. I don't recall anyone in Camp 1, except the (six) haole (families) there. Well, they used to come to the store, but, sometimes, on my way going to pick up something, I would do them a favor.

The best one was this haole when I took her papayas and something else. I was on my way to pick up my groceries, if I'm not mistaken. Then, she was so pale. I looked at her, "What happened to you?"

She said, "I'm hemorrhaging."

I looked. Oh, the floor was just as red as could be. So, I said, "I'm going to take you to the doctor."

(A doctor from Kahului) says, "I'm going to call the ambulance." She refused to go on the ambulance. (To think she trusted me so much.)

So, the doctor said, "Okay, put the nurse in the front (seat) of your car, and (let the woman lie on) the back (seat). I got so excited and worried that I took the road before the hospital.

Then, when I went there, I said, "Oh, no, this is not the road." I had to turn around. We got to the hospital. As soon as I got there, of course, the doctor had called and had all the arrangements made. So, then, I was just to leave her there and come back with the nurse, because the nurse has to help the doctor. That was really something. (Laughs) I got so scared. I thought, "What if she should pass out on the car?" But, of course, the nurse is there.

WN: What other things happened while you were out delivering?

AG: Oh, there was a man lying on the road. Yeah, I picked him up, take him home. Some could be drunk, some is sick. Then, if there was an accident, I stopped my car; I'm the traffic cop (until the police came). That is why, well, I guess I got a loud mouth. (Chuckles) (My ancestors on my father's side were samurai, so I am very brave.)

WN: You said that when you first opened, you attracted lot of Filipinos, and lot of Portuguese after you got married to your husband, yeah? Was it mainly because of what you sold that attracted Filipinos and Portuguese, or did you . . .

AG: Filipinos as a whole, if you treat them right, they are very faithful. The Hawaiians, also. Well, Japanese are more . . . . They stick to one. But, later on, they all came my way. I had all nationalities in the store. (They supported me in every way, and I loved them all.)

This is what the Filipinos say, when they go another store--I'm going to use their accent--"I go another store. The haole come [in

the store]. They don't know I stay here. They make that one first. Me, Filipino, us the last [to be served]. But you, Alice, you treat everybody all same. All same, all same. Even white or black. Alice, I think you good, good. You make everybody all same." That's what they say.

Till today, there are times, now, even after I gave up my business, they say, "Oh, Alice, thank you before. You thought I was going make. You come see me at the hospital. Now, look. I get young wife come from Philippine Island." That makes me happy--I have forgotten, but they haven't. That's the kind of thing, I like when they mention.

Some stores, they were, like, the haole comes in last--I don't know whether I should say this on the tape, but that's how it was--they would treat them (nicely). Give them fast service, and the other ones were neglected. How I felt was, everybody's money is the same, (and if they worked harder for it, it meant more). If they came last, they supposed to wait in line. That is why I have had lots of other nationality, too.

I had a lot of doctors that came in, because they live in Haiku or in Spreckelsville. Then, I have lawyers that live around that area. Nurse and hāpai kō man--you know, the one that works out in the field. Even I had beggars begging me for money or some food. But I don't just give it to them. I tell them to do something, in turn. Either mop the place, or stack something up for me. Hippie days, they--shall I talk about that, or am I . . . .

WN: That's later, yeah? The hippies started coming in later? Okay, we'll get to that. You were talking about having them mop and so forth. Did you do any kind of special favors for some customers? Doing things like writing letters for them or anything like that?

AG: Oh, if I had to, I do. Yeah, I used to do that. I was very active in Boy Scouts. In fact, I was the first woman that was recognized by the Boy Scouts, and I got an award. First woman in Hawaii. Because they never recognized a woman to help the Boy Scouts. Well, keeping things--any kind of cartons or anything they can use--at Paia School. I was doing that. Well, any kind church organization. If there's anything I can do to help, I was always willing. (I'm helping Maui Rehabilitation Center at the Cameron Center with plants, clothing, etc.)

WN: You mean, as far as donating goods, would you do that, too?

AG: Oh, yes. Goods, or money, or whatever is handy for them. Oh, yeah, this is another thing. I've gone to, in sadness, like a funeral, I was always there. Whether it's a Filipino, or a Hawaiian, or whatever. But because I was so tired, there are lot of times I've missed the weddings. Because, for a happy occasion, I felt that I can see them again. Of course, I try not to forget to give

them their gift. That makes a lot of difference, you know. In sorrow, you're there, means a lot. Another thing which makes me feel so happy. If I could solve a problem for any family, even if I have to tell a little, white lie, so that they won't have any trouble, I'll do it.

WN: What would you feel is the most important thing to attract customers to your business?

AG: Keep the place clean and safe. You have to have something special, like loss leaders. You know, you don't make money on certain things, but something that they really going to buy anyway. The staple items--something like Carnation milk, corned beef, spam, something like that--make it much cheaper. Even if you sell at cost or you make just 5 percent markup. Then, they think that, "Oh, that place is cheap." You see? Of course, we not trying to cheat them, but to get the people in [the store].

WN: You would have sales once in a while, then?

AG: No, I always had a sale. All the time. But I don't advertise in the paper. Maybe I would paste it on the window. Then, when they come in to buy, they buy something else. Right now, with all these big markets that came in, it's not very easy if you have to hire two, three employees and run a store. But if it's only man and wife and children, I'm sure they can make a go.

WN: So, as far as bookkeeping, who did the bookkeeping? You did?

AG: Most of it. Uh huh [yes]. And then, once a month, they'll check my books. So, that was my work at night. (Mr. Joseph Hew was a very good bookkeeper. He showed us how to balance our books from day to day.)

WN: When you were establishing your markup for each item, what factors did you take into consideration in your markup?

AG: You mean, what things are what percentage? (I used my judgment on them.)

WN: Well, you know, what were some of your expenses that affected the markup?

AG: The rent, the electricity, the employees, my car expense. Water is hardly anything. And, of course, people that walk away with the expensive things like Ajinomoto and dried shrimp.

WN: Did that happen often?

AG: Very often, uh huh [yes]. Oh, we had a way of letting everybody know--my employees. We had a bell in the front. One bell--"ting"--means, we need someone in the front to help the other clerk. The

"ting, ting" means there's somebody in here that has to be watched, because, if not, he's going to take something. So, everybody sort of gets wide-awake. Don't you think that's a good idea?

WN: Where's the bell?

AG: It's a regular bell. Right by the counter, in the front. I had one in the back, too, by the butcher shop. Because, sometimes, when you concentrating on the customer--we had two checkout counters--then, she's so busy that she cannot see so many people waiting on the other counter. So, then, if I'm on the butcher shop where it was higher, I would make a "ting." Then, whatever they doing--maybe they fixing the vegetables--they would go and help.

Then, two bells, everybody's alert in the store. We have set up mirrors, but even that does not help. Sometimes, it's for their gain, because they can see where we are. (Laughs) That's right, eh? We have had honey--they (ate) the honey (and left the jar). They eat the apples halfway and put back, and milk that's drank halfway. And margarine in a butter carton, yeah?

WN: When you first started in 1948, what was, for example, one day, your gross volume of sales?

AG: Roughly, yeah? In 1948, it was like, average, little bit. Even I'm ashamed to say. I think about fifty dollars, yeah? Fifty dollars.

WN: Okay. Later on, seven years later when you added that open vegetable case, and you were selling pork and fish and so forth, about how much?

AG: Went up to, maybe, about \$500. Big, yeah. Five hundred, yeah, about that. (Of course, the food and everything was so cheap--maybe one-fourth the price of today.)

WN: When you closed the store in 1975, about that time, about how much?

AG: Well, some days, was \$1,000-something, (more or less). But it had dropped because there came the Longs [Drug Store in Kahului], so I cannot sell too much drugs. Then, Star Market [in Kahului] came in. Of course, we had that A&B [Supermarket] before, but that plus, what?

WN: Kahului Shopping Center?

AG: Yeah, Kahului Shopping Center. But, of course, Kahului Shopping Center was there. Of course, Kaahumanu Center is not too much on food. But, the thing is, the clothing store make special on food. You find that, eh? Yeah. So, that have gone down, like, maybe I would say, about \$1,200, I think. But before that, (I sold more).

WN: Yeah, when was the peak, then?

AG: Then, the peak was before Star Market came in. That would be about ten years. Of course, I gave up in 1975. Let's see, I started in 1948. So, between 1963 and 1965. (One morning, the front windows of the store was covered with grasshoppers, so green that you couldn't look in or out. That day, I sold almost \$3,000 worth. We were so busy, the old Japanese believe my ancestors dropped by and gave me good luck.)

WN: That was the best?

AG: Yeah, uh huh, that was the best.

WN: When did you start to notice a decline in your sales?

AG: When the big markets came up. I guess, distance. Oh, let's see, when people started to work in Lahaina. Like before, they thought, "Oh, it's so far to go to Kahului or Wailuku." Then, they start working in Lahaina, distance don't mean anything today.

WN: What about when Dream City came up, and people started moving out of the camps?

AG: Oh, that's when we felt it, also. That was, I would say, between five and ten years after I started the business. Oh, that made a lot of difference, too. That's why I think I went into that cooked food (business). Then, when things were slowing down, I bought this place [i.e., AG's home in Pukalani] twenty years ago--I decided to go into something else than only the store. So, I was in rental business already.

WN: So, all the merchants, did they start to feel it? Start to get slow?

AG: Yes. Some have given up. Right now, well, Paia isn't too bad because there are a lot of these Mainland folks moved up Kaupakalua--where we used to be--and Haiku way. These are the kind of things--they eating my apples especially, now. Then, I say, "Oh, did you pay for your apple?"

"No, this, I don't need to pay for it because God made this."

And I say, "Oh, is that so? Well, when God pays my expense, my taxes, and my electricity, and whatever--the day God pays me--then, you can help yourself. Until that day, you must pay for your things."

Another thing, I used to preach those that look so untidy. I catch them and I says, "Why are you that way? Why don't you go to work?"

"No matter how hard I try, I cannot get a job, so I'm hungry."

"Okay, if you're hungry, what would you like to eat?" Oh, he wants

fruits. "Okay, you can have them, but, in turn, you supposed to help me."

So, I asked him if he believed in God. He says, oh, yes, he does. Sometimes, this kind of things, you have to go with religion, also.

Then, I said, "Do you know why you can't get a job? Take my advice. Get a nice haircut and a shave, and get decent clothes." Some, of them did help me, I'm giving them some money to buy some clothes. I say, "The best place to go is"--this is before Kihei (buildings) came up--"go to to Lahaina and look decent, you'll get a job for sure."

Every now and then, they would come back. "Do you recognize me?" And I don't, because they look so nice. "You the one that told me this and that."

I say, "Oh, I just couldn't recognize you." They thank me for the advice. They got a good job, and he's ready for another promotion.

So, everything in business, you have to help each other. Oh, another thing was that, during the war, the Fourth Division, Marines, were on Maui. When they did come back [to Paia] after ten years or so, they say, "Oh, yeah, this is the restaurant I used to eat [at]. Those were the days." They came with their wives.

I would look at them and I say, "Well, you fought for our country. Here's a can of macadamia nuts." Four-ounce can, used to give them. If the wives are there, I give them a small box of macadamia nut candy.

They would say, "You see what I mean about Maui people?" He proudly tells his wife.

You know, they take picture of my store. Couple years later, another fella shows me the picture and says, "Oh, this looks like this store."

I say, "Where you got it?" You know, it's really something, when out of a blue sky . . . . They appreciate (and pass the word to their friends).

WN: So, you quit the business in 1975, yeah? And you sold it to someone else?

AG: My employees. (James R. Fletcher and Lori Yoshishige.)

WN: Why did you decide to close up?

AG: I got tired of picking up things, worrying--working on my books, and I thought twenty-seven years is good enough. I've worked hard, and I was getting tired. That was the main reason. So, (one day)

I said, "Well, I'm tired, Jim, would you (and Lori) like to take over?" So, they both took over and relieved me of all my (chuckles) hardship.

WN: You just decided overnight to do it, or when did you start thinking about it?

AG: Maybe about six months. Well, at that time, I had these two homes. Whatever I got from there, I invested in five more homes up Makawao. So, I thought, instead of working hard in the store, maybe the rental (business) would be better. And it's easier for older people, too. Somehow, as I think, I want to get ahead. What I wanted most of life was one house of my own that no one would tell me, "Oh, you have to move out because I sold it," or "My relatives going to move in." Lot of people do that.

They say, "Alice, you wanted one home. Now you have eight."  
(Laughs) So, now what I do is take care (our rental homes. I'm the landlady.)

WN: What if Paia remained a busy area and business was getting better and better, do you think you would have gotten out?

AG: Maybe not. Maybe I would stay there. But I do think my health comes first. Because my sons didn't want no business (for the reason that I used them on Sundays and holidays to give my employees a day off).

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

AG: I have no idea. You see, another thing, I wanted to buy that place for some time. They were eight times that he said--Mr. Lau--wanted to sell. That's where I missed out in buying Zane's place and lot of other places. That was my disappointment, too.

WN: Oh, you wanted to expand?

AG: No, not to expand. To have my own building. But it was just a lease. Well, I wasn't too keen about staying there (later on).

WN: Well, you sold Economy Store, and it's still Economy Store?

AG: Yes, that's right. (I think it's a good name with a lot of meaning.)

WN: So, do you have anything more to add right now?

AG: Let's see . . . . I think (my brain is tired. It's not easy to remember everything, especially when the microphone is pinned to my blouse).

WN: Covered almost everything?

AG: Well, I might say that even though I'm Japanese, I think I talk too much.

(Laughter)

AG: (Married to a Portuguese long enough, I must have caught his "disease." As you can see, I love my jokes. In pidgin English, there is no mistake; you can get them all mixed up, even if you have to make hand motions. When you mingle with all nationalities that come from other countries, I guess it turns out this way.)

END OF INTERVIEW

[Note: Written additions by AG.]

(Before dock strikes, we were always prepared for our customers--never let items run out, divide items such as rice, if we have to. Good customers with large families, we took care of them through our back door, even if we have to put in sugar or feed bags.

Country stores are different compared to large markets. We know the people and their lifestyle. We help in all ways--worry, cry, and laugh together. I find people very interesting in all walks of life.

As I think back [on] all the things we did to survive, I'm not bitter at all. It was a good experience to know how it is to be poor and hungry--also understand life better.

I really thank our Good Lord for his Guiding Light. Without his help, we couldn't have made it.)

**STORES and  
STOREKEEPERS of  
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