

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Yasunari Hamai, 72, retired plantation store employee,
Paia

"[Plantation store], they don't make too much money. Because this is a plantation. Just take care the workers. That's why in those days, everything is cheap...Those days, I remember way, way back, the highest [margin] they stay on is only 3 percent. So, any can goods you open--one case, and twenty-four to the case--if a couple cans stay spoiled or something, we don't have even one cent profit. We lose money. But plantation don't care, because plantation [store's function was to] just take care the workers."

Yasunari Hamai, Japanese, was born August 20, 1907, in Hiroshima, Japan. While he was still a young boy his parents left Japan for Maui. Hamai was raised by his grandmother.

In 1922, Hamai came to Hawaii to join his parents. In 1927, he started working as a clerk at the Paia Camp Store. Nine years later, he moved to the main Paia Store. In 1938, Hamai moved to a branch store, Haliimaile Store, which mainly served pineapple employees.

From 1941, Hamai worked as a "pinch-hitter" in various MA Company branch stores, requiring occasional extra hands. In 1948, after the merger of MA Company and HC&S, Hamai moved to the Kahului Store where he worked until retiring in 1969.

Today, Hamai lives in Kahului and is an active participant in Japanese community affairs. He is president of the Maui Japanese Community Association. He also finds time to work in his yard and help at his brother's appliance store in Wailuku.

Tape No. 7-56-1-80 and 7-57-1-80

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yasunari Hamai (YH)

March 6, 1980

Kahului, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Yasunari Hamai. Today is March 6, 1980, and we're at his home in Kahului, Maui.

Okay, Mr. Hamai, where and when were you born?

YH: I [was] born in Hiroshima, Japan.

WN: What is your birthdate?

YH: August 8, 1907.

WN: What kind of job did your parents have in Hiroshima?

YH: I remember, I think, father was working Ujina. It's a port--that's a harbor. He was taking care the boat, go in and out. Mother was just a plain housewife.

WN: So, you folks lived near the coast? Near the ocean?

YH: No, it's not the big boat can come in and out. It's shallow. When come to low tide, [it it] just like all dry land. But when it come to summer like that, we used to go swim. Because tide come up, we can swim. And clean water, too. But Ujina--father was working Ujina--Ujina, I think, from our place about four miles away.

WN: Did you folks have any farmlands out there?

YH: I understand, yeah. We used to have farmer's land. But I know all the brothers, especially my father's oldest brothers, was up Mainland. And then, my father came over here [Hawaii]. And the young [brothers] stay over here, Hawaii, too. Nobody was in Japan--boys. So, we stay lease 'em out--the property. I [was] raised by the grandma.

WN: When you were born, your father was just about ready to come to Hawaii?

YH: Yeah. Before I born, about year or year and a half before, I

- think. No, one year ago [before YH was born], he came over here.
- WN: So, when you were born, your father was already in Hawaii, yeah?
- YH: Already in Hawaii. And mother leave me [to join YH's father]. You see, I was only 200 days old in Japan. After that, my Grandma going to take care me.
- WN: What kind of work did your grandmother do?
- YH: Grandmother just stay home. Every day, go into the church. She was old age.
- WN: How did she support you folks?
- YH: Well, you see, one of them [YH's uncle], the Mainland. Two of them [YH's father and uncle] in the Hawaiian Islands. Then, we get a little income from the property lease. And they used to send money from Hawaiian Islands and the Mainland. That's how we used to.
- WN: What do you remember about growing up in Hiroshima?
- YH: That time I stay in Japan, grandma going to raise me up, I no suffer at all. Just like I was a king. I ask 'em anything, next day, grandma buy for me, right there. So, I cannot forget grandma, how much she love me and she used to take care of me.
- WN: You were oldest, so you didn't have any brothers and sisters at the time?
- YH: Oh, I used to stay with the cousin. One cousin from the Mainland. The father is Mainland, see? So, grandma, she used to take care of two boys. Then, my cousin, after he graduate Hiroshima Kōryō High School, he went up to Brazil. Then, after couple years, he passed away. Catch a certain kind of sickness.
- WN: He passed away in Brazil?
- YH: Yeah, passed away in Brazil.
- WN: You said that your grandmother treated you like a king?
- YH: Oh, yes. I cannot forget. We stayed in Japan, just myself and my cousin. Only two, then. So, grandma going to take care us. No more any other sisters or brothers. Just only two. Then, we don't have to work at the outside field or anything. Just we taking care the yard, own yard. Our job just go school and come back.
- WN: What kind of house did you folks live in?
- YH: I'd say about something like two-bedroom or three-bedroom size house, we used to live. Then, I was about eight, nine years old time, we bought a big house again. So, we used to stay in a big

house, and the old house, we used to rent 'em out. So, the big house, even I get study room, too. See, Japanese, they call that sanjō no ma [three-mat room] or yonjō no ma [four-mat room]. That's small, little room and study room, they call.

WN: So, your grandmother wasn't really working? Your father and his brothers . . .

YH: I remember, from small time, she used to go to the church. Every day, she used to go church. Then, I was growing up to about seventh and eighth grade. I was growing up, and same time, grandma getting old. Grandma make our lunch, and they go to the Hiroshima town and the church. Then, after school, I used to push what you call the baby kiddy car. But, Japan, they have a much stronger than over here kiddy car. Even you can pack a hundred-pound bag rice just like nothing. It's a strong kiddy car. Even adult, you can sit down inside the kiddy car. I used to push the kiddy car about mile and a half. I used to go push the kiddy car, and I used to pick up the grandma. Every day. This is my job was.

WN: How far you had to go?

YH: Oh, about mile and a half. I pack grandma and we come home.

WN: So, you lived in the city part?

YH: No. You see, right now, it's a Hiroshima city, but those days, it's not. It's [YH's home] a little away from the city. Just a mile and a half I go over there, pick up the grandma every day.

WN: In that area where you lived, what did most people do for a living?

YH: Oh, that area, most people is farming. Farming and some, they going to work outside. Some of them, they work in a hifukushō. Hifukushō, they call that. They sewing those servicemen's suit, like that. Most girls, they used to work in the hifukushō. Yeah, that's a government

WN: Did you have any type of chores to do around the house, besides the yardwork?

YH: Well, certain time, I keep a rabbit, enjoy. Then, certain time, I keep a little chicken. I used to enjoy it. As I said, little, our yard. We bought a bigger place. Over there, when it come to field acreage, I think about quarter acre. We plant some persimmon tree and all kind of fruit tree. And there's a open place. We used to plant some of the cabbage. But grandma going to take care little bit, then the rest, we used to take care.

WN: This garden, was this for your own use?

YH: Oh, yeah, own use. If anything come up, fine. So, we used to deliver all [to] the neighbors. (Laughs)

WN: Did you folks sell any of that?

YH: No. We don't plant that much. Just only little bit, though.

WN: Do you happen to know about how much your father was sending from Hawaii to your grandmother?

YH: One year, I'd say, at least about four times, they used to send. Those days, I remember, American is fifty dollar. In Japan, that's a hundred yen. Of course, Hawaiian Islands, everything is cheap, too, but those days, Japan is much, much cheaper than United States. If we have about, American money, \$100, why, Japan, it's \$200.

WN: So, your father would send American dollars?

YH: American dollars, yeah. Then, the other brothers. Katsunosuke, he's my father's younger brother. And up Mainland, Kazumihisa, he's the oldest brother. Three of them, they used to send.

WN: Your father's brother on the Mainland, what kind of work [was he] doing?

YH: Oh, Mainland, I really don't know much. Mainland uncle, he used to send us big money. That, I remember that.

WN: More money than your father?

YH: Oh, more money than other two brothers over here, Hawaiian Islands.

WN: As a young boy, what else did you do to have a good time or have fun?

YH: Those days, even baseball, small time, we [didn't] use a regular bat. We used to cut the bamboo, and rubber ball, and we used play baseball at the churchyard. The school, they have the regular bat, but we don't play, you know, [with] those hard balls. We play [with] something like a tennis ball, rubber ball, we used to play. Then, when it come to summer, every day we swim.

WN: You were going to school in Hiroshima. How far away was your school?

YH: I used to go public school. If I run, take about seven minutes. And walk, take about little over ten minutes. So, I used to come back every day. Lunch time, I used to run, come home, eat lunch, and then run back to school.

WN: You had to come home to eat, or could you eat at school?

YH: No. Of course, you can bring the lunch at the school. But I'm near enough, so I used to come home and eat, then go back to school.

WN: Do you remember any kind of events that your neighborhood or community

used to celebrate?

YH: Those days, yeah. We have our Shinto. Every year, they have. Japanese, they call o-matsuri. That's the Shinto celebration, certain times of the year. So, when it come those days, everybody wear his nice clothes. Some poor house, maybe, they give you three, four cents for spending money. Then, we used to go out, and one whole day, we used to enjoy those days. Those days, even one cent, you can get lots of candy. And kushi-zashi [skewered] chicken, they used to cook, those days. We can buy it [for] only one cents. One stick and the chicken--kushi-zashi--we ate. That, I was really small, about six, seven, eight years old time.

WN: What kind of matsuri was this?

YH: That's Shinto. Japan, they call it o-miya [a grand shrine].

WN: O-miya, but any time of the year, or . . .

YH: Oh, yes. First thing, it's January 1. They celebrate. Everybody going. That's January 1, go climb the steps [of the shrine]. At least, the steps, they get about seventy-five to eighty steps. You go up to little high place, then the building stay on top of that. Aki, they have, too, so we used to go. Aki is most big celebration. The climate is nice, too. The trees, and nice and green, everything.

WN: Any other matsuri that you folks used to celebrate?

YH: When it come to summer, each place, they have a Bon dance. Something like Hawaii's. Hawaii's are all in one time, but Japan is, they make in a little different times. So, those days, when it come to Bon dance, girls, they wear the nice clothes, too; and boys going to wear nice clothes, too. They go out. They celebrate for the Bon dance. When it come to special occasion, much more bigger crowd. Then, they spend the money to make a celebration. Every once in a while, they used to have that.

WN: Was there any kind of celebration that only Hiroshima had?

YH: Oh, only Hiroshima celebration Even the Bon dance, it's Hiroshima, in a Hiroshima way. Japanese, they call ondo. Ondo, that's singing. So, altogether, singing is different. Like now, Hawaiian Islands, most popular one, Yamaguchi--Iwakumi Odori, they call that. Then, Fukushima, they call that Tohoku Odori. Looks like, most, those two is popular. Of course, Okinawa people, they dance. You know, Okinawa people. I understand, Hiroshima ondos and odoris, they used to have a long, long time ago, but not today anymore.

WN: In 1923 you came to Hawaii, yeah?

YH: Yes.

WN: Why did you come to Hawaii?

YH: You see, I born in Japan. The parents all over here [Hawaii]. And mother told me, "You graduate [from] grammar school. Before you start go high school, I think you better go Hawaii and visit your parents." So, I came up over here. The time I came over here, Japanese, they call that yobiyose. Yobiyose means the parents going leave the children in Japan, and then they call me to Hawaiian Islands. I came over here as a last yobiyose from Japan--the second to the last one [group], I came. After I came--one more trip, yobiyose people, they come Hawaiian Islands, and the United States--they stop 'em [in 1924].

Then I came over here. Grandma told me stay only three months. So, tell 'em, say, "Okay." Between the three months, grandma was getting older and older, too, so she passed away. When she passed away, I go back to Japan, nobody at home. Only our relative girls. It's not a maid, but she came our house. So, she taking care the house; she taking care the grandma, and everything. Then, she used to go work. So, when I go back, see, grandma is passed away. I have to stay with I used to call "nē-san." Nē-san, that means older sister. I cannot call her [by] name or call her a maid, because it's a relative girl. She came to the house and taking care the house for us. So, I used to call [her] nē-san. If I go back [to live] in Japan, only her and myself. So my parents said, "I think mo' betta you stay back over here [Hawaii]. No sense you go back Japan already."

Then, Japan house concern, let nē-san take care. So, I already told my parents, before I come up over here, everything, I finish 'em up--the paperworks. The bank and everything. Even [if] I no stay, grandma can get the bankbook, just go to the bank. They can withdraw. I fix 'em all up and I came over here. [Then] decide, I think I'm going to stay back. Till today, I stay over here.

WN: So, you came to Hawaii with the idea of staying for three months?

YH: Yes, just to visit the parents.

WN: In the meantime, your grandmother . . .

YH: Yeah, grandmother passed away.

WN: So, you went back to Japan?

YH: Yeah, after that, I went back to Japan [years later]. Yeah. Then, I go see grandma graveyard, and auntie, uncle's graveyard, I went. I went, twice, Japan.

WN: Did you know that she passed away when you were in Hawaii?

YH: Oh, yes.

WN: What about the lands that you folks leased? What became of them?

YH: Lands, I still get. (Laughs)

WN: The same lands?

YH: Yes. But the house I used to live [is no longer owned by YH] Right after the Second World War, from the Mainland, auntie came down over here--the Hawaiian Islands. Auntie asked me for the house. So, I give to her the house. Because I was [in] Japan till fifteen years old. Everything under my name was. So, I give to her. Because, [in] Japan, they call the chōnan, that means the oldest brother. So, oldest brothers going to take [over] the house. Honke, that means a oldest [i.e., main] house. That's the biggest one. So, Mainland, the uncle say he's the oldest [i.e., YH's uncle living on the Mainland was the oldest son of YH's father's family, and thus was entitled to ownership of the family's main house]. So, I give to her. Then, she go home Japan, and she give to the cousin.

But I still get those small building--used to be. But the buildings, during the wartime, they burn 'em down. Then, I have another property. It's right below Hijiyama Mountain. So, I still get about two places more.

WN: So, you were allowed to do that? Come to Hawaii and still have land in Japan?

YH: Yeah. That, Hiroshima, near the Hijiyama [Mountain]. That, my father came back--way, way, back--and he bought that over there. It's a small property. Then, the other one, from since I born, they had over there. Those fathers like that, they say they no want to sell. They want to try to go back Japan [eventually], so I think they were keeping our property. But, today, no. I don't want to try to go back Japan and live in Japan. So, I figure, might as well sell the property.

WN: So, you sold it?

YH: No. One of these days, I think I try to sell 'em, anyway.

WN: So, when you were coming over here, what do you remember about the conditions on the boat?

YH: Oh, boat, [for] three days, I was really seasick. Then, after that, little by little, coming good. When I reach in Honolulu, I was good condition. I can eat. I was really good condition.

WN: How long did it take?

YH: I came with the Taiyō Maru. Those days, that's a big boat--the Taiyō Maru. We take about seven or eight days was, I think.

WN: What was it like at the immigration station?

YH: I reach in immigration station. Then, over here, is all citizen people. Same time we came out from the boat, they [U.S. citizens] just check out. Everybody go out from the immigration station. But, like me, born in Japan, they kept me over there--immigration station. I have to wait for my parents to come down, get me out from the immigration station. So, I was waiting some three days. Then, father came, then took me out.

But as I was [at] immigration station, in the morning, I hear a mynah bird. Mynah bird, they come up to the coconut tree. They crying, crying, crying. When I used to hear that mynah bird, I used to cry, myself, too. When it come to evening, same thing. The mynah bird making a big noise, and they cried. And my parents, they no come get me. I was really sad that time I stay in immigration station.

WN: Your father came from Maui?

YH: Oh, yes. My father came up from Maui. That time, I understand my father, he was [working] irrigation pump in Paia. So, he's the engineer, so he cannot take off [work] right away. So, he delayed, and three days [later], he come down and take me out.

WN: What did you do in those three days?

YH: Oh, three days, we stay in the immigration station. Not only myself from Japan. One of those boys going to the Big Island, he's from Hiroshima, too. He's one year above me, but he graduated the same school in Hiroshima. Since we came over here, and we stay in the immigration station, everybody . . . Oh, Japanese, they call that a sashi-ire. Sashi-ire, that means they say, "Oh, our friend's boys staying over there." They used to send us a fruit basket in immigration station. So, they bring for me, all the fruits. Apple, orange, all kind of . . .

WN: Who used to give you this?

YH: Oh, our friends, they used to. You know, when you get sick, you stay in a hospital? Your friend going to send flower or something like that. They used to send us fruit. Father, he get in Honolulu, lots of friends. Then, I used to get this uncle and auntie. My auntie and myself came together, same time. But the auntie, she was over here before, so she can get out right away. So, first one I had a fruit basket was from my auntie. But we cannot eat that much, any fruit. So, we used to play the pitch, pitch with the orange or apple in the immigration station. Of course, you cannot hit with the stick or something, just only throw and pitch, and pass the day. Then, three days.

WN: Could you go outside at all?

YH: No, you cannot go out. You cannot go out. All time, the watchman stay keep one eye on us, anyway.

WN: You never met your father and mother [before]?

YH: I never met any of my parents. I really don't know. I saw by the picture, but, those days, my father was young, too, and after that, I don't see. Only the picture. The faces, I never see since I born till I come Hawaii. So, he came. Then, Mr. Katsunuma [immigration official], he asked my father question. When he get through, Mr. Katsunuma came out and he call me.

"Are you from Maui?"

I tell him, "Yes."

"You going to Maui?"

I tell him, "Yes."

"You Hamai Hyosaku's son?"

I tell him, "Yes."

Then, Mr. Katsunuma told me, "Why didn't you tell me? I'm a very, very close friend with your father. Today, we not supposed be working. Today is a Saturday. Saturday, we don't work. But your father came, and he call me up. Then, he told me [his] situation in Maui. He's busy and busy. So, I call another examiner, special, and we came over here. Just only you."

He told me that. That I still remember. On a Saturday. So, I came out on a Saturday afternoon. About 3 o'clock, I get out from the immigration station. Then, Mr. Katsunuma called me, so I went. Then, I see somebody stay walking. That's a long, long hallway, that immigration station. Somebody stay walking. So, I look. Then, I figure, I say, "Oh, that's my father or what?"

Then, Mr. Katsunuma, he came out from the room, say, "Eh, boy. Come on. Get inside. Hurry up."

Then, I go inside. Then, come to find out, yeah, that was my father. He was walking the hallway. That's the first time since I born I saw that--alive on the face. (Chuckles)

WN: Did he look like the picture?

YH: The picture and the time I look, altogether different was. "So, you got the picture," he say, "Japan, that was really young times."

WN: What kind of things did you bring along with you when you came over to Hawaii?

YH: Grandma told me, "Go three month time. You go visit, and you come back." So, not plenty when I come to Hawaii. Grandma said three months, so I figure, the three months, I think. But since grandma passed away, I have to stay back over here. After that, I used to make a plan.

But, those days, I cannot speak English one bit. Over here, boys, same age with me or much younger than me, everybody, they talk in English. Then, even my parents. I came over here, a big family. I get lots of [younger] brothers and sisters, too. [YH was the only child born in Japan. His seven brothers and sisters were born in Hawaii.] I talk the Japanese language, they understand a little bit, but it's not 100 percent. They can catch on the Japanese little bit, but they cannot speak out in Japanese too much. So, they get hard time, and I get hard time. You know, even own brothers and sisters, but those days, really, I used to get hard time. But they treat me nice. Everybody there treat me nice.

WN: So, when you got to Maui, you started to learn English, huh?

YH: Oh, yes.

WN: How did you first start to learn English?

YH: I came over here May 3, [1923]. Then, June, school vacation, so I cannot even go school. But that time I came from Japan, I was already fifteen years, past already. According to those days, when you come to fifteen years old, you cannot get in a regular grammar school. If you want to take English, you have to go a private school. Those days, they used to have only St. Anthony School [in Wailuku]. But I live in Paia, and St. Anthony is quite distant. Those days, they don't have a car. Transportation are very, very poor. Only thing, [if] I want to go St. Anthony School, I have to live Wailuku. Or, go back and forth to the school. But, those days, my father, and mother, too, I think they don't want me to go too far. So, I used to stay in Paia.

Then, September, their school start. Oh, [parents] say, "School start. You got to go school." But I really get a hard time. Sometime, I go fooling around the school side and try to learn the English. I used to go H. Poko [Hamakua Poko] grammar school--every once in a while--I used to sneak into the classroom. That's not the whole year, just about six months. But I cannot stay in school, lesson times. Certain time I have to get out and stay fooling around the yard. So, that's how I start learning English. After that, I used to carry the dictionary. Then, I start. Small pocket dictionary.

WN: So, you would carry that dictionary around wherever you went?

YH: Oh, yes. I used to get all the time behind the pocket. First thing in the morning, I get up, before wash face, I look up one

word for today. Of course, I wash face, still I remember [the word]. Then, after wash face, go breakfast. After eat breakfast, oh, look the time. Oh, got to go. Hurry up. Oh, this and that. Then, after couple hours, you start to think of this morning's word. Forget. I tried to remember, but cannot. If I cannot, I have to pull out the dictionary. I got to look all over again. "Oh, yes." Then, keep on going the whole day. But, I figure, one day, one word, and one year, 365 words. But that's really hard. If can catch 'em, even 150 words one year, that's damn lucky. That's what I think.

WN: What type of jobs did you have when you first came to Maui?

YH: First came to Maui, they say summer vacation going to start. Everybody--big boys--go work in the outside fields. That's plantation cane field. So, neighbor's boys, we used to play together. They told me, "Eh, come on. Let's go work in outside field and cut grass." So, I went. I worked three days plantation in the cane field and cut grass. Then, my uncle from Haiku, he told me come down work in the [pineapple] cannery. So, after that, I went to cannery.

WN: How come you only worked three days in the field?

YH: Because my uncle say [to YH's parents], "No send him out to outside fields. This boy, he never done it before in Japan, this kind of job. He get a hard time. So, I take him home to Haiku cannery."

So, Masaichi Tanaka [YH's uncle], he come pick me up and take me home in Haiku. I used to stay at his house the whole summer and work in the cannery.

WN: When you were working in the cannery, do you remember how much you got paid?

YH: Oh, yes. The cannery, I used to get at least about a dollar a day. I used to work in the plantation outside field. Three days I worked. I went three days, I had seventy-five cents. That means that's twenty-five cents a day was. So, one day, we working, twenty-five cents a day.

WN: What kind of housing did you live in with your father and mother?

YH: My father, he used to get quite a good job. So, we have us a big house. At the time I came, they used to call that New Camp. That's a new building section. So, was a pretty good house. But, of course, you cannot compare to Japan. I came over here. Once I look at over here house, I say, "Oh, my goodness. This is what you call a house?" That's what I thought. (Laughs)

WN: Where was this? In Nashiwa Camp?

YH: Nashiwa Camp. Yes.

WN: So, ethnically, what percent was Japanese, and what percent was other nationalities?

YH: Nashiwa Camp? Nashiwa Camp, about 99 percent is Japanese.

WN: About how many houses were there in Nashiwa Camp?

YH: Well, I don't know exactly how many house. But, those days, I understand Paia Camp, the biggest camp was. You know, one place, form all the building? That's what I understand. HC&S [Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company] Puunene concern is a more bigger sugar company, and they have lots of camps, but [spread out] here and there. But the Paia [Maui Agricultural Company], only one [area]. This, a big, big camp was. You see, Japanese. Nashiwa Camp, and Orpheum Camp, and all this in one place. So, I understand was the biggest camp, Paia.

WN: Nashiwa Camp was 99 percent Japanese?

YH: Japanese, yes. Ninety-nine percent is Japanese. Of course, [later on], had some Korean people, some Filipino people. They come in. But, those days, beginning part [i.e., 1923], Filipinos [lived in] one place. The Japanese, all one group. Portuguese, all one group. Chinese, all the Chinese, was all one group. Hawaiian, Hawaiian Camp, they used to call that. Hawaiian stay all one place. But all in one place [close to each other].

WN: Did you folks used to go to the different areas?

YH: Oh, yes. You see, those days, not like today. Those days, everybody really is a good, good friend. Just like your own brothers and own sisters.

WN: Did you folks have any kind of activities? I mean, Japanese gatherings?

YH: Oh, yes. Japanese gatherings, that's way, way back--house to house, we used to go. Just like a whole day, we used to go house to house. Especially New Year time. Then, you go to the church. I'm a Hongwanji member. Then, I went church and the Japanese school. Then, we have a Christian church, too. Stay right next to the Nashiwa bakery store. So, we get invitation or something, we used to go over there. Certain times, occasions, they want to try to make a Japanese--they call that--shibai [plays]. I was a young boy, so go ahead. Go up on the stage. Go in all kind (chuckles) show, we used to make.

WN: Was like a theater inside the camp?

YH: No, no, no. At the churchyard. There's a big churchyard. So, we make the one special stage. Then, we used to do that.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay. Then, a few years after you came here, you did odd jobs. You did the irrigation and the cannery. Then, in 1927, you started working at the Paia Camp Store. Is this the big camp store [i.e., Paia Store]?

YH: No, no. They call this the Paia Camp Store. It's in the camp.

WN: What camp was it in?

YH: That camp, one side is the Japanese, and one side is the Chinese. Right between was the camp store. And the back, they used to call this the Hawaiian Camp. Below, they used to call this Portuguese Camp. See, right in the center [the store] was [located].

WN: This was run by the [Maui Agricultural Company] plantation?

YH: Yes. Plantation.

WN: So, it was a branch of the main Paia Store?

YH: Yeah, main Paia Store. Yes.

WN: How did you get that job?

YH: You know, those days, [when] you work in the plantation stores, at least, you can speak a little Japanese. Because all the Japanese people--they come from Japan--and majority [of the] old folks, they speak in the Japanese language. So, when they asked me [to work in the store], I told 'em why I think I [would] get a hard time. Because any charging concern, we have to write 'em down in English. They told me, "No, not necessary. You can write 'em down [in Japanese]. For instance, a good example, one can tuna. If cannot write in 'tuna,' you can put down, 'one can katsuo.' You can put 'em down. The invoice going down to the main store. Those people checking the invoices understand the Japanese language, too." So, I figure, well, nothing but try it. So, I start to work.

WN: So, you got the job because you could speak Japanese and write Japanese?

YH: Yes. And the same time, if I work in the store, I can learn more English. I don't have to go to the school and learn English. Regard or not, you see, you got to learn little by little. That's why I take the job.

WN: So, you didn't have to know English to work in the store?

YH: Oh, yes. Those days, our camp store manager, used to call Mr. Manuel Carreira. He can speak Portuguese language, he can speak in the Japanese language. At the same time, he can speak a little Hawaiian

language. So, if I get a hard time, I can talk to him in the Japanese language. And he can give me the answer in the Japanese language.

WN: So, lot of times, you would write the invoice in Japanese, you said?

YH: Oh, yes. Sometimes Japanese, and sometimes, English.

WN: Did you have to apply for the job? Or did you know somebody?

YH: That time, my friend, he came from Japan, too. But he's born in Hawaii. Mr. Kawakami--Hajime Kawakami. He came up and see me. He say, "Try work in the camp store." He was working in the camp store, those days. Of course, he get education over here--grammar school education. Like me, no education. Just only couple months, education. So, I had a hard time, but, I don't know, somehow, I did take the job.

WN: Was that considered a good job, a popular job, to work in the store, rather than working in fields or cannery?

YH: Ah, yes. Those days, if you work the outside fields or something like that, was really hot. You know, not like today. Today, the union [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] came in. Nobody can tell you, "Go ahead. Go ahead." Or either, "Hurry up." Or this and that. But those days, they tell you, "Go ahead. Hurry up. Come on. Eh, no stand up. Keep on going." Really, they used to push when you go out to outside field. So, store concern, just stay in the shade, and you taking care the customer. That's about all. So, no sweat. Those days, store is really--well, I'd say, it's pretty good job was, anyway.

WN: How was the pay in the beginning?

YH: Before I go to the store, I used to work in Paia irrigation. Paia pump. They pump 'em out, the water, to the plantation's reservoir. I was working over there for three years under my father. And my father and Mr. Watkins, both of them, was boss and engineer. So, I used to get forty-five dollars a month. Of course, you working seven days. No Sunday. And forty-five dollars, I used to get.

In the camp store, I have to start at forty dollars, but Sunday's off. At least, only six days work. And it is a clean job, too. I was working the pump and I have to dirty my clothes. But the store concern, you don't have to dirty the clothes. It's a clean job. So, I take a store job. Of course, those days, five dollars, it's big money. But our understanding, "After so many months, you work, we see. Then, if good, we going to give you the raise." So, after six months, I had another five-dollar raise, and then, same pay like in the Paia pump. Forty-five dollars a month.

WN: So, what did you actually do in the camp store?

- YH: Camp store sales clerk. The customer coming in, help them. Any can goods go out from the shelf, go back in the warehouse, get the can goods, and fill 'em up on the shelf. Then, the customer, they come. Say, "I want a certain can." So many can. I just take the can goods from the shelf and put 'em on the counter, and we charge 'em out.
- WN: So, in those days, they couldn't just go up to the shelf and take what they wanted?
- YH: No, no, no. Shelf is behind the counter. Nobody coming in behind the counter.
- WN: Everything was behind the counter?
- YH: Behind the counter, yes.
- WN: At one time, how many clerks had working?
- YH: Oh, one time, I think, with the part-timers, seven.
- WN: Working all one time?
- YH: No. Sometime, two, in the morning--one hour or hour and a half before school start. But this is all the high school students. We hired that for part-timers. So, before go to the school, one hour or so, come down to the store, then work. See, because the store open 6 o'clock in the morning, those days. It's a twelve-hour work. So, one hour work, then they go to the school. After school, they come in, 3 o'clock [p.m.], then they going work till 6 o'clock [p.m.]. This, schoolboy and part-time workers. So, original, steady workers, the whole day, stay in the morning till noon. Original, it's only five [full time workers].
- WN: The store would open 6 o'clock. What time would it close?
- YH: Six o'clock [p.m.].
- WN: So, your hours were what?
- YH: The same thing. The twelve-hours work.
- WN: Six [o'clock a.m.] to 6 [o'clock p.m.]. This was a branch of the Paia Store, yeah? So, how far away was it?
- YH: Oh, about quarter mile. So, anything we need--the small stuff, not too heavy stuff--we take invoice down [to Paia Store]. And same time you come home, you pick 'em up. Then, we used to come home to the camp store. If anything had--can goods or something like that--just you leave over there. You write it down on paper, you leave over there. Then, Paia Store, they used to bring 'em up to the camp store. Because Paia Store is the main store, so they used

to deliver [to] us.

WN: So, somebody could go into the camp store and make big order?

YH: No. We take 'em down, the order, to main store. Because every day, we made the charge to the plantation workers. The following morning, we have to take all the invoice down to main store. We don't have a regular office. Any invoice we make and charge slip we make, we have to take 'em down the main store, following day. At the same time, anything we need, you know, [for example], we have charge slips, only very few. Only one or two book more stay behind. "Oh, temporary, I got to pick 'em up, maybe, dozen or so. The rest is too heavy, so send 'em up." That's how we used to run.

WN: So, if anybody wanted to charge from the Paia Camp Store, you had to send the invoice to the Paia Store?

YH: Invoice going down to the main store. Those days, the main store, the office, at least, about a dozen people was working.

WN: So, somebody comes in and buys ten cans of corned beef, and he wants to charge, so you write up the invoice? And then, you give him the ten cans? And then, later that day, you send the invoice down . . .

YH: Yes. Invoice going down to the main store.

WN: What about if somebody wanted a big order that you folks didn't have?

YH: Well, you see, if it's a big order, they going down to the main store. Because the camp store, just only handy store. Certain stuff, just one, or two, or something like that. They come home right after work. Main store, they used to close 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Our store was at 6 o'clock. One hour more. We have more time than the main store. The main store is another quarter mile more away. Anyway, camp store, to plantation workers, that's for the convenience. So, it's not they buying from the camp store really big orders. Paia Store, sometime, they used to go out taking orders. So, one month, once. Then, they making the big orders [i.e., new month order]. Then, Paia Store say they deliver following day or day after following day. They used to deliver with the truck. So, camp store, just only small stuff.

WN: What kind of things were sold in the camp store?

YH: We used to carry dry goods and groceries which they have at Paia Store. We used to get. But we no stack up too much like Paia Store, because we have a small warehouse, too. We used to order, even rice, one month's supply, we used to order--sometime, all depends. Sometime, 80; sometime, 100; sometime, 120 bags. All depends on our warehouse. Some month, we sell more; some month,

sell less. Then, we look for the stock. Then, we put 'em in, our orders. All this, we order through Paia Store. Paia Store going to just bring 'em up to the camp store.

WN: So, the order taking and delivering was all done . . .

YH: All done at the main store. We don't deliver at all. They come down to the camp store, and we sell. Then, they take 'em all home.

WN: About how big was the camp store?

YH: Camp store, warehouse included, I think, the building about 100 [feet] by--the chicken feed and all the warehouse included--100 by about 175, 180 feet. Of course, inside there, they get a bakery, too. One Chinese man used to make every day bread, and saimin, pie, and all those things.

WN: So, saimin, they could come in and eat?

YH: Oh, yes. They coming in and eat. You see, after work, those people. So, kitchen closes much more later than us.

WN: Had seats and everything like that?

YH: Oh, yes. Those days, they don't have a nice seat, but, you know, those long table and a long bench. Sit down, everybody. Community, you know? Those days, those big, big pie. Much more bigger than the pumpkin pie size, those days. Beginning, I remember, it's only five cents, one pie. And fresh apple inside, too. They chop 'em, apple; they cook little bit; they put 'em in a apple pie.

WN: What made more money? The store side or the bakery side?

YH: Bakery's included [in the] store, but, you know, even a store, even a bakery, they don't make too much money. Because this is a plantation. Just take care the workers. That's why in those days, everything is cheap. Today's grocery, 25 percent, 30 percent, 40 percent--that's the [profit] margin stay on. But those days, I remember way, way back, the highest they stay on is only 3 percent. So, any can goods you open--one case, and twenty-four to the case--if a couple cans stay spoiled or something, we don't have even one cent profit. We lose money. But plantation don't care, because plantation [store's function was to] just take care the workers.

WN: So, the prices of your goods in the camp store, was it lower than in, say, Lower Paia?

YH: Oh, you mean, those outside stores? It's not the plantation? Oh, yes. Prices are different. They cannot compete with the plantation store.

WN: Was it big difference?

YH: No, it's not too big a difference, those days. You know, those days, everything cheap. If you make too much difference, you got to give 'em free, give away. (Chuckles) Way back, even Vienna sausage, three for quarter [twenty-five cents]. Before that, much more cheaper. And deviled meat is six for quarter. And oil sardine-- now, I don't know how much they cost--but those days, those flat, oil sardines, I remember, three for twenty-five cents. Even one bag rice, less than five dollar, you can buy in those days.

WN: Oh, for 100 pounds?

YH: Hundred-pound bag of rice. But, single men, they don't buy in hundred-pound bag rice, so we used to open the bag. We make some of them fifty pound, and some of them twenty-five pound--one-fourth of the bag. Twenty-five-pound rice, we used to sell, I remember, dollar and a quarter [\$1.25]. That, you see, stay in is a little labor [cost for dividing the rice]. If a twenty-five pound bag is a dollar and a quarter [\$1.25], a fifty-pound [bag] supposed to be two dollar and a half [\$2.50]. So, supposed to be, hundred pound is five dollar. But, no. The full bag, you can buy it, \$4-something. I remember, just about five cents, or seven cents, or not more than ten cents, charge for the labor. We separate, put 'em in the bag.

WN: What about things that kids would buy, like soda, candy, like that. You folks had that, too?

YH: Oh, yes. Soda is a much more bigger bottle than now. Five cents a bottle. Ice cream, the scoop is much more bigger than today's scoop. Five cents a scoop. The plantation concern--those days, way back--it's not really strict, because they taking care the plantation people. That's why they open the store. So, some mothers, they bring the small children. They come in the store. The children going to nag and nag. The mother get a hard time to shop. That's why--all depend the salesman, too, but--sometimes, we give one cone ice cream. We fill 'em up--one ice cream to the children to make 'em quiet until the mother going to finish the shop. That's free. The boss stay over there, but the boss say not one word. Sometime, boss does, too, those things.

We used to go over there. Any time we want to eat ice cream, okay, we can eat ice cream. Any time I want to drink soda water, any time. If we want to smoke, just get the pack cigarette, and you smoke. And keep 'em in your drawer. So, really, this is the beginning part [1927].

WN: You could smoke free? Free?

YH: Yes. Every plantation payday, those people, they stay charge, they have a statement. Really way, way back, they don't have a statement. The store get the statement--how much you bought last month. Of course, those people, they keep the invoice. They can figure 'em up. How many invoice get? Ten invoice get. Okay, so ten invoice,

total going come up, thirty-eight dollar. You can figure 'em up at home. Then, they come down to the camp store, say, "I want to pay." Okay, so we take the pay. See? We used to give, sometimes, cigar. We used to give 'em soda water. When they come to pay this, "Eh, I go take soda water."

Say, "Go ahead."

Some people, they ask us, "Eh, give me one cigar."

Say, "Okay." We give cigar. They [bosses] didn't say anything.

Even you go to the main store, they used to do that, too. They taking care the plantation people.

WN: Did they ever start to get strict?

YH: Really come strict little before, during the war, and right after the war [World War II].

WN: Do you know why, about that time, they started to get strict?

YH: Oh, yes. They want to try to make money. Those days, already start, everything, the prices come up. And the living costs come up. Plantation concern, the stockholders say they want more dividend or something like that. Then, workers like us, those days, want to try to get more pay. You know, the beginning part, even automobiles, just only [owned by] plantation big boss. They had very, very few cars. But, each year, getting more, and more, and more cars. Somebody else get a car, well, you want to try to get a car, too. But any time you want to try to get a car, that's money talks. So, you want to try to get more money. Same like today. Today, you can fight, but if you stay join the union, union going to fight for you. That's why, today, any kind of business, any kind of work, really no can compare with those days we used to work way back in the camp store.

WN: When you folks wanted to get your groceries--the employees--did you pay? Or did you get your groceries free in those days?

YH: No. Any time you take 'em home, you have to pay. Then, every day, the school kid come back after school--part-time workers--first thing, we send 'em into the kitchen. You know, poor boys, they come back. Those days, no more cafeteria in the school. You have to take one musubi or something and couple stick Vienna sausage, and you take 'em go the school for lunch. At the school, they play hard and study hard, and they come back about 2:30 or 3 o'clock, afternoon--they hungry. So, we used to send 'em in the kitchen. Say, "Go in the kitchen. Go ahead. Go eat saimin, or whatever you want to eat. Pie or bread, or whatever you want to eat." We send 'em in the kitchen. Of course, we don't charge that. And same time, "Oh, I want to eat saimin, but with the saimin, I want something."

Top shell, or something, go ahead. Take the top shell, go inside. Any time you eat over there, it's free. That's how we used to do. But the boss didn't say anything. The boss, himself, he go eat saimin, he take something else, go inside, if he want to eat. But, for bring 'em home, no, no, no. You cannot do that.

WN: The things like cigarettes, you just . . .

YH: Yeah, cigarettes. Sometimes, they hide 'em, and they put 'em in the pocket. They used to take 'em home, yeah. But the grocery, no.

WN: All nationalities came into the store?

YH: Oh, yeah. The time I was working over there, those nationalities stay over here. Every nationality, they work in the plantation. Of course, even [those] outside of the plantation can come in. But you cannot charge, you have to pay cash. Only plantation employee going to charge. So, all kind of nationality, they coming in. Sometime, plantation outside field superintendent, they come inside, say, "Oh, I want a couple cigar," or something like that. Pass by, they stop.

WN: You know, the restaurant part, was it connected to the store?

YH: Oh, yes, connect to the store.

WN: Was it in the store?

YH: In the store, camp store. Same, under the roof.

WN: Did people meet over there and sit around?

YH: Yeah. So, if those plantation workers, they want to charge--even you eat one bowl saimin, you want to charge--the cook just open the door, "Oh, certain-certain people, one bowl saimin." He just tells us. Then, we make the invoice. Sometime, they come shopping over there in the camp store, and they want to charge all kind of grocery.

Then he say, "Oh, that's all."

Say, "Oh, okay, then." Then, we put 'em in a paper bag. Those days, brown paper bag, we put 'em in.

Then he say, "Oh, I go in the kitchen. I go drink a cup of coffee, and then, maybe, pie or something. Put 'em on the invoice for me."

Okay, we put 'em in the invoice. That's how we used to run. Some of them, maybe they walk out. That, we don't know. So long they don't tell us, "Eh, I eat saimin, but don't charge. I go walk out." Nobody tell you those kind of stuff. So, without notify to us,

just walk out from behind the door, that, I don't know. Those kind, kitchen, that's the cook, he got to do. Because we got nothing to do [with that].

WN: About what percentage of the people charged?

YH: Plantation workers, those days, it's 100 percent. Hundred percent, they charge. Everybody get a number, too. So, if you work long enough in the store, you know. They come. Say, "Oh, this fella, so-and-so-and-so. His plantation number so-and-so-and-so." So, you memorize already, all, everything. Those grocery, too. In those days, no more tag on top. We don't have a price tag. We get only the sheet. They stay write so much, and so much, so much. So, everything, you got to remember, put 'em in the head.

WN: The price?

YH: Oh, yes. No more price on. So, you know, they come--certain stuff--with a box. Like cracked seed, they used to come in a five-gallon can. They used to come with full can. Then, we put 'em on the scale, right nearby you, then we scoop 'em up from the five-gallon can. They used to call that quarter-pound bag--paper bag, the small, tiny one. Then, you fill 'em up. Beginning part, half pound cracked seed, five cents. Quarter bag, paper bag, almost till top--full. Cracked seed, it's heavy. It's wet, too. That's why, quarter pound bag, they can take care. But when people, they ask one pound, special like that, we don't put in one pound. Half pound package, we give 'em two and then charge one pound. We don't have prices like today's, all on the shelf, no. Everything, you got to memorize. If you forget, you got to look for the price book. Or either, you see, those days, it's really friendly work. "Eh, can of corned beef, how much was?"

"Oh, so much."

Oh, write 'em down. Yelling. That's why, really friendly. Really enjoyed the work, those days. Not like today.

WN: Did you folks sell any kind fresh things? Vegetables or meat like that?

YH: No. Camp store, no. Vegetable, like that, no, we don't sell. Meat, we wouldn't sell. Meat, plantation, they used to get this meat market. Butcher.

WN: Paia Meat Market?

YH: Paia Meat Market. That belong to A&B [Alexander & Baldwin], but separate meat market.

WN: Did you folks deliver to people?

YH: No, we don't deliver. Deliver concern, only Paia Store--main

store--they do.

WN: What about the new month time?

YH: When it come to new month, even they come in the camp store, they charge. You know, like single men, even new month, they don't order really big amount. If a big family, yeah, you have to order a big amount. So, they go to the main store. [The order takers] go around house to house. Those people, they taking order. Go around, and at the same time, you order. When it's the Paia Store new month, it's the camp store new month, too. But camp store, it's the single men, they come and buy. Most, they buy, even rice, maybe only half bag. Because once you buy, then you have to carry 'em home yourself. We not delivering. Those days, no more car. So, some of them, they used to come with a horse and wagon. Horse and wagon, yeah, any amount, you can buy. They throw 'em in the wagon, go home with the horse. But those kind, that's very, very few. Maybe every month, one or two persons, they used to.

WN: Was it more busy, new month time?

YH: Oh, new month time, yes, busy. You know, those days, not like today. Today, oh, "I cannot save money, I cannot save money." Those days, [if] so much spend, it's limited already. Say, "No. This month, enough already. I spent so much." Try not to spend any more. Even the grocery side, they hold 'em till the new month. They wait for the new month. That's why, new month was busy.

WN: Did people come and ask you, "Can you make new month little more early?"

YH: Lots of times. Maybe one day before, they come, "Eh, you know, last month, I stay buy so much already. You know, I getting such-and-such pay. If I pay that money, only so much more balance I get. My kids got to go school. And this and that. I need cash, at least so much every month." Those times, yeah. We used to give 'em--one day before, like that. We stay write 'em down. It's a charge book. The charge book, we used to keep 'em in the drawer. Then, following day, new month [begins]. So, following day, we tear 'em [invoice] off. Then, we send 'em down to main store. Following day, new month. From the following days, get together, then we go send 'em down. Of course, the following day's date stay inside [i.e., the next day's date is written on the invoice]. Like today is the sixth. Okay, from tomorrow, new month. Okay, we put in tomorrow's date--seventh. Then, number eighth day, we take down the invoice.

WN: So, you wait . . .

YH: Yeah, yeah. So, we give at least one day early.

WN: Collection time, payday time, do they come to the camp store to pay?

YH: Some, they come camp store. Some, they go to the main store. Either side, you can pay. For instance, they come pay at the store. So, we take the account, and following morning, we put 'em in a bag, we take 'em down to the main store. Those days, [personal] check is very, very few. Maybe plantation big shot, only those kind of people. The rest is all cash.

WN: So, you folks have the records in the camp store, too, then? A record of the invoices?

YH: Oh, yeah. The moment they come pay, we make the receipt out. And receipt--the copy--next day, with the cash, we take 'em down to the Paia Store--main store. Then, the main store, they figure 'em up--so many \$100 cash--and then, check the receipt--so many \$100. If they count, everything correct, everything okay. But, sometime, cash plenty and receipt short or something like that, of course, they going to try see. Everyday sale, you have to take 'em down, too--cash sale. Then, every so many month, from Honolulu, main office, they come to check up the cash register. Only they get the key--auditor. Then, they check up the cash register number, then the cash book, they check up.

Even today, business place concern, it's the same thing. Today it's a much, much better machine, but sometime, they off so many cents. Sometime, one dollar or sometime, four dollar off or something like that. But, today, I think it's very few because the machine the one. How much you going give, the change, and everything. The change come out. Those days, cash register, no. They don't figure for you. You got to figure, yourself.

That's why, we used to teach 'em. If they [customer] give you dollar bill and if you sell eighteen cents, first thing, eighteen cents, you remember. Eighteen cents, you sell. From the dollar, you have to give 'em change. That's why, any time new man coming in, eighteen cents, you take. Okay, penny, now. You take one more penny, that's nineteen; one more penny, that's twenty. Then, keep on going till dollar. Then, you give 'em. That's the correct change. See, we used to teach 'em. That's how we used to teach 'em.

WN: Was there any type of payroll deduction when . . .

YH: Ah, yeah. They used to have. You know, some people, they buying, buying, buying, buying. Keep on buying. That's why, some of them, they used to get this account. Certain time, they come every month. No credit. Stop the credit. Overbuying. Even office collection, you cannot take--if he get about forty-five dollar, or fifty, or sixty dollar, his pay--you cannot take [deduct] sixty dollar. You got to leave some cash for them. That's the law. So, still these people, they buying sixty, seventy, seventy-five dollar--more than he earned. Some people, they do. So, that kind, maybe he get a income of, say, sixty dollar a month, but we have to give at least about ten dollar for him, too. Cash, too. Payday, they

get the cash for ten dollar for the house. When it come to fifty dollar, they stop the account--charge. Then, we get a notice. It say, "Number so-and-so-and-so, so-and-so-and-so name. No credit from today." So, following month until new month, he cannot charge anymore.

WN: You folks were the ones taking the money out of their paycheck, or was it at the office?

YH: Office. They go down the office. They used to pay cash, those days, it's not the [pay]check. They used to give you cash.

WN: They used to hold back some cash for some people?

YH: No, some people, the cash, if you want to take 'em home, it's up to you. But if you stay charge to the store, you got to pay. Otherwise, you see, they stop your credit. That's why they come pay. But, now, you go out and collection. (Chuckles) Well, those days, no such thing as collection. If you stay buying, charge, you have to go over there and pay. So, if you receive your pay, then if you don't come pay [the store], end of the month, or something like that, long time, they stop the credit. You cannot charge anymore until you pay. Of course, sometimes, some month, you get a hard time. Bad luck, or something like that. You cannot pay all. If you stay buy forty dollar, you cannot pay all forty dollar. Maybe you pay twenty-five dollar or thirty dollar. Ten or fifteen dollar is the balance. Oh, they give it to you. But, some people, no. They no pay even one cent. They want to try to forget. They stop your credit.

WN: But they don't actually take money away from . . .

YH: No, no, no, no. You cannot. No.

WN: What if people leave and go to another plantation to work? Did that happen?

YH: You see, quick, it's notified. If they quit, they get fired, or something like that, they quick notice. Same day, they [give] notice, no credit. That's why, the moment no credit notice come out, our desk, right over there, by the piece of paper, we stay write 'em--no credit. If no credit, [and] you give, you going get hell from the main office. So, that, yeah, we have to all the time watching. Oh, lots of time, they say no credit. Some of them, new Filipino, they fight and all this and that. Some, they go in jail; some, they fight. Oh, quick they come out [with] a no credit notice.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 7-57-1-80; SIDE ONE

- WN: In getting goods from the Paia Store, how would they transfer it over? Was there a truck?
- YH: Oh, yes. Paia Store truck delivered. We don't have a car. Only Paia Store truck, they delivered.
- WN: When you bring the invoices down to Paia Store?
- YH: Paia Store, when I go down, I have to walk down. Just about a quarter mile.
- WN: You have a lot of money with you, too?
- YH: Oh, yes. But, those days, no such thing somebody going to hold you [up] or this and that. No, no.
- WN: So, when people come to pay you folks, is it mostly payday time?
- YH: Yeah, was payday time. Right after payday. Those days, people, not like today. Payday, on the way go home, they come stop in the camp store. They paid. They can pay it in the Paia Store, too, but Paia Store is bigger. And more people stay over there--stay buying, and then, pay their own account. But the camp store, people, the amount compared with the Paia Store is very small. Then, once you stay up the camp, [it's] close by the houses, too. So, they come to camp store, they paid.
- WN: So, when it's not payday time, sometimes you can go through a whole day without touching any cash since mostly everybody charged?
- YH: No. You see, when the kids, they come--five cents or you know--they come with the cash. Some people--outside people--they come. They visiting the camp people, they no more charge account. When those kind of people, they stop [at] the camp store, anything they buy, even grocery or even dry goods, they pay cash.
- WN: Could kids charge?
- YH: Really small kids, we not charging. If he get okay by the parents, even that, we get a notice. Say, "My children going come. I want you folks to give him charge." A notice get. [We] get a notice, okay, we charge. But some people, no. "Even my son, they come--the oldest one or this and that," they say, "I don't want you folks to charge." Okay, we not charge. If we charge, the parents now say, "Eh, I'm not going take responsibility, because I already report to you folks. I don't want to charge to my children." So, those kinds of things, we used to. But that is not really way, way back. Way, way back, never those kind of trouble. It's just before the war and like that.
- WN: Did people used to go and hang around outside the store?
- YH: Oh, yeah. They stay by the porch over there. They talk story.

Some, they buy the soda water, and they go outside the porch. They drinking and talk story, smoking.

WN: In one day, about how much volume sales you folks made, including the charge?

YH: Oh, include the charge, gee, those days, I'd say about--beginning part--sometime I don't think you get a hundred dollars. Those days. They don't buy a really heavy load. Just for time being kinda, they buying from the camp store. And goods was very, very cheap, too. The Japanese, they call the iriko and all those things. Now, they coming in five ounce or six ounce, and they cost you dollar or dollar-something. Those days, even the tiny, tiny iriko, they used to come from Japan, all one-pound package--sixteen ounce. Only thirty-five cents, one pound. Now, only three, four ounces, a dollar-something. So, money value concern, it's very, very small was. Then some of them, single men, they ask for plantation coupon. They come with the coupon.

WN: How did this coupon system work?

YH: Plantation, they give away the coupon ahead of time. Then, when it come to payday, they deduct the amount you stay take the coupon. If you stay take the coupon--five dollars worth of coupon--following month you get the thirty dollar pay, they take off the five dollar. They give you the twenty-five dollar. Your pay. That's how, those Filipino people, they come from Philippine Islands--beginning--the plantation, they give 'em all the coupon. But you can ask 'em, if you don't want only five dollar, you can ask 'em [for] ten dollar. They used to get a five-dollar, ten-dollar, fifteen-dollar coupon. So you can ask 'em. But most of them, they used to come, about five- to ten-dollar coupon.

WN: To get a coupon, you had to pay for it right there?

YH: No. After you [start] work, then following month--payday time--plantation deduct that much. Because they give you the [employee] number, same time, they keep your name, and you already get the five-dollar coupon. Then, they deduct the five dollar.

WN: If everything was charge anyway, why get a coupon?

YH: You see, they come from the Philippine Islands. Of course, it's a contract they coming, but we charge how much they going to buy. You see? No more limit. Same time, if you get the five dollars, you buy five dollar and finish. You cannot buy any more. You can buy just you spend five dollar's worth. Those days, with five dollars, you can buy everything. Even enamel saucepan, only thirty-five cents. (Chuckles) You see?

WN: So, coupons were given to the new workers?

YH: New workers, yeah. They come in from the Philippine Islands or

wherever. New people, you want a coupon, you can ask [the] plantation [for] your coupon. Okay, they give you the coupon. But the following month when it come the payday, [they] deduct the amount you get the coupon. Ahead of time, they give you.

WN: So, a new person, just from the Philippines, comes into the store, he cannot charge all he wants?

YH: No more charge account, anyway. They no stay work yet. No more charge account.

WN: I see. That's why. So, once they start working, then they don't have to use coupons?

YH: Then, yeah. If you want to open a charge account, you got to go main store. You got to open a charge account.

WN: So, you don't get to charge automatically? You have to go to the Paia Store?

YH: Oh, yeah. You have to open the charge account. Some people, they come, "Eh, charge please."

"What's your number?" You ask 'em, number.

"Oh, my number so-and-so-and-so."

"What your name?"

"So-and-so-and-so."

If no stay inside the list, they cannot charge. We get all the list of persons [who] can charge. Still get the charge account, but if they already overbuy, stop the credit. We cannot charge. Some of them, stay [have] the charge account, but they don't pay good. That's why stop the credit. That's why stay like that--no credit--with the red pencil. That kind, we cannot charge. You have to open your own account. Just like you go the bank, you put in a deposit, you go make the checking account. Something like that. Everytime you cut one bad check, the bank going to stop you.
(Chuckles)

WN: If you see a new face come inside, then that's when you have to check, huh?

YH: See, we have to put down a number. We have to put down a number . . .

WN: On the invoice?

YH: . . . and the name. Sometime, if you think, "Eh, this fella, funny kind." You know, those days, they used to give a number--tag, like this. Metal.

WN: Round tag?

YH: Yeah. "Let me see the number."

"Oh, I'm sorry. No more number."

"Eh, number so-and-so-and-so. Looks like this guy, [but] different guy. Not too familiar [face], this guy. Funny kind, this." If don't carry the number, we no give. Original people, they going to grumble.

"I never buy it."

"No, but certain-certain day, you bought so-and-so-and-so."

"No, but not me. You guys give somebody else."

You see? Then, store got to take a loss. But those days, that's very, very few. Hardly get any. Maybe one year, get only one or two. That's about all. Not like today. No, no, no, no.

WN: While you working at this Paia Camp Store, 1927 to 1936, that was around depression time, huh? Did you notice anything? Did the depression affect the camp store?

YH: Oh, yes. When the depression hit, those days, those people, they want to try to save more money. They don't spend. Really, everything is tight. So, even the sales concern, down. But, today, it's the opposite. Today, most, they come like this.

"Oh, okay. Eh, go over there, other side." No, that guy going to charge.

You say, "Go ahead. Go take 'em."

Oh, they do that. But those days, no. People all honest. Depression hit, they say, "Now, we got to keep some money." That's how they Today, no. If no can borrow, say, okay, bust the bank and everything. Today, they do, but not those days. Those days, depression hit, everybody tight 'em up.

WN: Less sales, then. How about the prices?

YH: Prices concern, some stuff, the company--the factory, like that--they knock 'em down. Okay, we knock 'em down. Some stuff, only 1 percent, 2 percent, only 3 percent markup. The moment the wholesale going to come down, we go down--price. Really expensive stuff, we don't want to try to keep 'em in stock. If people, they want to buy, "Oh, I'm sorry. We don't keep that. You go main store." They go down the main store, they buy it. Because they can charge our place; they can charge in the main store, too.

WN: When somebody opens a charge account at the main store, he could go

to any of the MA Company [Maui Agricultural Company] branch stores to charge?

YH: Can. Paia Store and camp store, you can. But if you go to the Hamakua Poko Store--that's a plantation store, H. Poko--H. Poko get the camp store and the main store. Two store, they have. You get the Paia Store account, then you go to the H. Poko Store. Well-known people, they go buy it over there and charge. Okay, from H. Poko Store, [they] charge to the person and transfer [the account] to Paia Store. We got to transfer. Not direct charge to H. Poko and the account going to the H. Poko [Store], no. H. Poko going to transfer to Paia Store. [It is as if] H. Poko Store go sell back to Paia Store. So, when it come to payday, the person, they going to pay in Paia Store. Just like he stay buying from the Paia Store. So, Paia Store, they have to give him credit to that much in H. Poko Store. Merchandise, usually it's credit.

WN: How come was different at H. Poko?

YH: That's a different camp.

WN: But same company, though.

YH: Same company, yeah. But the transfer. Even the [Paia] Camp Store, all the goods, we order from Paia Store. Paia Store, they transfer to camp store. Same company. Transfer to camp store. Okay, camp store, we transfer, [for example], this month, it's a thousand dollars worth in grocery, and dry goods, and everything. So, we get the merchandise. That's a thousand dollars from the main store. Plantation, they selling a particular certain stuff. Paia Store sells so damn fast, run short. Oh, they come camp store. They want to try to take back some. Okay, camp store charge back to the Paia Store--transfer. Otherwise, you cannot keep record. (Chuckles) You know what I mean? That's why, some, they do. So, you go H. Poko, you want to charge. Okay, you can charge. But H. Poko Store's office, they call Paia Store [and tell them that] certain-certain people, they buying certain-certain stuff. So, we charge and we give it to them. And then, charge back to the Paia Store. See, H. Poko same thing. They pick 'em up, go to the H. Poko--you know, merchandise from the Paia Store. All the plantation branch store.

WN: In 1936, you transferred to the main Paia Store, yeah? How come you were transferred?

YH: Paia Store said they need some kinda little old-timer. Like the camp store, something like a training store. Some merchandise, you know already. Most likely the Paia Store, they have--camp store, most likely, they have, too--original moving fast item. So, if you pick 'em up [i.e., employee] from the camp store to main store, already they know the business. That's why they pick 'em up. Then, camp store, a new person go in. When I go down to Paia

Store--good example--maybe about 1,000 people, charge account, and 1,000 people, they go to the Paia Store. Camp store, maybe about only 200-300. Of course, they can come up to the camp store and charge, but if you want to buy lots of items, they go down to the Paia Store. Learn at the camp store and good enough to go down the Paia Store, they used to pick 'em up from the branch store.

WN: Was that like a promotion?

YH: Yeah, a promotion. That, promotion, yeah.

WN: Did you get more pay?

YH: Oh, yeah. I think, most likely, when move down, at least, those days, they used to give 'em five dollars, anyway. (Chuckles)
Yeah. Christmas present, five dollars in the envelope, too.

WN: What did you do in Paia Store?

YH: First I went down Paia Store, two months, almost three months, I was Japanese Camp--delivering. They take orders, old-timers, they go take order. Every day go out and take order. Every day they get the delivery. I used to go delivering about not quite three months, anyway. Then, I get in the grocery department. Grocery and hardware department. One side grocery, and one side hardware. In hardware department, they get one man over there, but when really busy, help 'em out. And hardware, [if no] customer over there and the grocery side busy, so they come out to the grocery side, and they help. All the departments--dry goods department, hardware department, warehouse department, and the delivering department--they all separate.

WN: When you were delivering, you didn't take order? You weren't a salesman?

YH: No, no. Not go out and salesman. We used to stay behind the counter, wait for the customer coming in. Grocery department.

WN: Those salesmen, did they have lot of pressure on them to sell plenty things?

YH: Those days? No, no, no, no. No pressure. They not trying to making money, those days. Just for the plantation worker's convenience. They taking care the plantation workers. That's why the markup is very, very small. Even the stores, maybe, lose money little bit, but sugar company going to support--work in the plantation store--in case go in a little hole. But plantation concern, those days, small markup, so long it's break even. Just taking care the plantation workers. That's how they was running.

WN: When you were working grocery department, how was your job different at the big store as compared to the smaller camp store?

YH: The customer. Lot of new customer. That time, I get a little hard time because lots of haole customer and Portuguese customer. And I get no education. So they tell me, "Just charge, please."

Then I have to ask 'em, say, "What your name, please? Initial?"

Oh, they tell me so-and-so-and-so-and-so. For instance, they said, "My initials, M.V. Carreira."

"Oh, M.V." Okay, M.V., I can put 'em in. Carreira, sometime, I got to ask him for how to spell. Oh, they good enough, too; they tell you.

"C-A-R-R-E-I-R-A."

"Okay." Put 'em down. That's the kind time, I used to suffer, little bit. And the Filipino people, they come inside. Filipino people, sometimes Japanese way; sometimes Spanish way. That's why name concerns are really hard.

WN: But like at the camp store, you didn't have that kind of problem?

YH: Camp store, we get the charge account slip. Paia Store, they don't stay put 'em out. Those kind of things, no stay put 'em out. That's why, "Already this guy, I think, is good enough to take 'em down to Paia Store. Pretty old already. They know already, experienced already." Then, they take 'em down.

WN: How come they don't put the charge thing out in the Paia Store?

YH: Only thing they put out is no credit [list]--stop the credit. That's about all. Then, if you think it's funny kind, you can ask another clerk.

"Eh, look this guy came in, but he get charge account?"

Say, "Oh, yeah. Him so-and-so-and-so. Yeah, yeah. Go ahead, charge account." Old-timer stay over there, they tell you.

WN: Did you feel any more pressure working in the Paia Store?

YH: Ah, no.

WN: But you had to use more English in the Paia Store?

YH: Paia Store, yes. Not like camp store. You have to go for more English. But Portuguese [and] Japanese was working in the grocery department, but more Japanese Let me see, Ben Ambrose, Portuguese; Frank Medeiros, Portuguese; Tony is a Portuguse. Then, me, Kawakami, and Matsumoto. Yeah, still, more Japanese was salesclerk, over there. But those Portuguese boys, they understand Japanese, too. We ask 'em certain stuff. They say, "Eh, you, nani ka iuta?"

[Did you say something?] I told you so much already." They use the Japanese language. They understand those things.

WN: You know, the salesclerk as opposed to the salesman--the one who went out take orders--to be salesman, you had to know more or be better personality or anything like that?

YH: Oh, yeah. Old-timer, they used to go out--salesman. Take order--go up to the camp, then they take orders. Not only take orders. Sometimes, they go out and [collect] the account. Why, you go take it right there. From the main office, so much change, ahead of time, they allowed for you--fifty dollar or seventy-five dollar. So, you take that from the store money, then you go collection, and then you come home. If they tell you, "No, no. I don't want to take your account," no, no. You cannot say that. You have to take the account, too. Sales and account, too. That's why you got to be old-timer, and the personality concern, (chuckles) put good personality people, and the honest kind people got to go.

So, that time I was working in the Paia Store, they go out to the Japanese Camp. All Japanese people, they go out. And the warehouse side, Mr. Oshiro, he's the manager. Then, delivering side is Mr. Jardine, but under Mr. Jardine, Tamashiro and Kaneishis--about two, three Japanese. Top guys was over there. They go out, take order. They come back, tear [off] the invoice. Then, all, line 'em up the invoice. Then, we pick up the goods and put 'em in the box.

WN: That was your job?

YH: No, no. That is the warehouse people. I was working in the delivering section about couple months. Those people, they take the orders and they come back. Next day, in the morning, first thing, you got to put up the order. Then, after you finish, after lunch, you go out and deliver. Those people take order in the morning, come back, segregate the bill. Then, put up the order and pau. After lunch, go out to the camp again. They take order again. Today, this section; tomorrow, this section.

WN: Morning time would be delivering?

YH: Morning delivering, those days, no. We don't have morning delivery. Morning delivery, a particular morning delivering they have only one time. That's new month time. New month time, they start from in the morning. One day, four, five, six loads, you have to go delivering with the truck. But not only one guy. At least about three people. One guy just only keep on driving. One guy stay sit down on the truck and take the invoice, and pick up the goods and put 'em in the basket. One guy just--finish, okay--carry the basket, go to the house and deliver.

WN: What kind basket was it?

YH: You know, the bamboo basket? Oh, very, very large one. Very large

basket.

WN: Whose basket was that? The store's or . . .

YH: Oh, store's, yes. Store, they supply.

WN: So, you bring it to the doorstep and empty the basket?

YH: Empty the basket, and you come back with the basket. Then, you put 'em on the car. Another delivery, already the checker stay put 'em in another basket already. So, another house, next house you go, okay, that one fill up. You take 'em go. The basket, empty one come back, take. Another house one, they put 'em in. At least, we have about three basket stay on the truck. Some houses, really big order, so one basket no can hold all. At least two basket, they use. (Chuckles) So, three baskets.

WN: What about rice? Would you put the rice in the basket, too?

YH: No, no, no, no. Rice is rice, itself, you have to carry. The checker tells, "Eh, this house, one bag rice and one bag chicken feed." Say, "Okay, you take the big stuff first." And same time, the checker going to check in the small stuff in the basket. That's how we used to.

WN: What if nobody's home?

YH: No. Most times, they home. Those days, even nobody home, the door never stay lock up. The door open--kitchen side. Open the kitchen door, just by the door place, we put 'em down, all. Then, we leave the invoice, and we come home. Nobody steal, those days. Nobody lock the house.

WN: The salesmen, like that, they would have Portuguese salesmen to go Portuguese area, Filipino . . .

YH: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Take orders from Portuguese.

WN: Then, you moved on to the Haliimaile Store?

YH: Yeah, moved up to Haliimaile Store.

WN: Nineteen thirty-eight [1938], yeah? Is that part of MA Company?

YH: Oh, yes. That's a branch of the Paia Store. The property concern, it's Maui Pine [Maui Pineapple Company]. The building concern, it's a Maui Pine building. But business was A&B, Alexander & Baldwin. Of course, Maui Pine, those days, was Alexander and Baldwin, but the store belong to branch of the Paia Store.

WN: Okay. So, you have the main Paia Store, yeah? What were the branches underneath the Paia Store? Where were they?

YH: You mean, all the branch store? Oh, we have all--camp to camp--we used to have all the branch store. But Haliimaile--that's a particular Haliimaile concern--over there is pineapple. Strictly in pineapple. So, they wanted over there one store, small store. So, Paia Store get in over there; open a Paia store. But the building, Maui Pine, they built, though. Then, small store, but of course, no can compare [to Paia Store]. Much, much bigger store. And the Haliimaile Store, in the store was a butcher and everything inside. Paia Store's butcher department--Paia Meat Market--that's a separate building, but the Haliimaile is all in one roof. It's a Paia Store branch store.

WN: It was a branch store. So, under the Paia Store, you have the Paia camp store, and then what else?

YH: Paia Camp Store, Haliimaile Store, H. Poko Store, H. Poko Camp Store . . .

WN: Two in H. Poko?

YH: Oh, yeah. Two in H. Poko. Then, Keahua Store, and Kailua Store. And used to have a Pulehu Store, too. And short while, we used to get this Kaheka. Small, little store, that.

WN: "Short while"?

YH: Yeah, short while. Near by the Paia, anyway. Paia, and Kaheka, and one branch in Haliimaile, you see? Yeah, lots of small stores.

WN: All under the . . .

YH: Oh, yeah. All under the Paia Store, yes. That's why, any time charge, all invoice going down to the Paia Store. Cash sale, all going down to the Paia Store.

WN: So, sometimes, you used to go to the different branch stores to work?

YH: Oh, yeah. I was working the Haliimaile Store. And [when] the Keahua Store's manager take the vacation, or take some kind of leave, or something like that, the Paia Store's managers, they come up and see me. Say, "Pinch hit." And I went the Keahua Store, too. And I went to the Kailua Store, too. Still, those days, lots of Japanese are way inside the countryside. Most people, they talking Japanese. Then, I can speak in Japanese. Same time, the store, they used to have, taking care the mail.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: We were talking about the post office in Haliimaile?

YH: Haliimaile, no. Post office, Haliimaile didn't have. But Keahua

and Kailua.

WN: Did you take care of the post office?

YH: Sometime, the store clerk take care, but sometimes, it's [written in] the Japanese language. Those people [store clerks], they no understand. They come ring for me. Then, I can tell. This is so-and-so-and-so. If anybody get so-and-so-and-so, this camp, I say, "Oh, yes." Then, they keep the mail. Over there, after walking, people, they look for the mail. They pick up the mails. Until the ending part, they have a small, little box. Particular name one, they come. Okay, we put 'em in, over there, by name.

WN: You said that because you knew Japanese, you would go over there. You could read Japanese?

YH: Oh, yes. Because, those days, they used to come from Japan, letters like that. Now[days], most of their letters, they no stay write in Japanese language--Japanese word. But, those days, maybe, for instance, you, Nishimoto. Okay, your initial "S". Mr. S. Nishimoto, and Hawaii or Maui, and Keahua. That's how they come [in English]. But with the Japanese word, stay write, Nishimoto so-and-so-and-so, Maui-shima, and Keahua. All the details in Japanese, they stay write.

WN: This is coming from Japan?

YH: Right. Coming from Japan. From over here, you send 'em. Just write 'em down, English, just little bit. Now[days], it's more English than Japanese. Before, (chuckles) Japanese concern, more Japanese words stay inside. That's the difference, you see. Some people, they come, sometimes, say, "Oh, I want to send letter, but can you write for me the envelope?" They come every once in a while.

Then, we ask 'em, "Did you have a sample?" You know, those letter, you send to Japan.

He say, "Oh, yeah. Here."

Then, you look. Stay write Yamaguchi-ken, Iwakuni, so-and-so-and-so. Just you copy. And that number--house number--so-and-so-and-so. You write 'em down. Then, Mr. So-and-so-and-so.

WN: So, you used to write English for them?

YH: Sometimes English and Japanese. Some old people, they cannot write.

WN: So, you would write on the envelope both English and the Japanese?

YH: Yeah, English and the Japanese. Because they brought the sample

for me, so much easier. You know, some old ladies and some old men. Those days, even store workers, they used to do that much. You know, take care the old people.

WN: What else did you do--that kind favors?

YH: Well, stay in the store, sometime every day--even stay in Keahua--every day you have to come down to the Paia Store. Everyday charge slip, like that, every day. Following day, you have to bring 'em down the Paia Store. Some people, they said, "Oh, you folks don't have over here. In the Paia Store, they have certain-certain stuff. I want that stuff, but I get no way to go," or something like that. Why, the Paia Store, that's the main store, so we give 'em service.

"Okay. How much you want?"

"Oh, I need so much, so much." And I know exactly these people get charge account. So, I go over there [Paia Store]. If I want to charge over there, direct, charge over there, and then they charge back to the Keahua Store. I go over there, say, "Eh, I'm going to have so much, so much, this."

He say, "Only that much?"

I tell 'em, "You know, particular so-and-so-and-so, they like. So, charge to Keahua Store for me." Then, charge to Keahua Store. Then, I bring 'em back. Already Paia Store, they stay charge the Keahua Store. Now, after that, that's Keahua Store's business, now. Oh, that kind, they ask you lots of time, favor. Some people, they ask you a favor. Say, "Take this cash. Put 'em in the bank for me and come back." Oh, yes. Lots of time.

WN: You had to pick up goods from Paia Store to Keahua, too? Were you the regular delivery?

YH: Some small stuff, like that. You know, example, I said certain stuff, we don't stay keep over there. Some people, they come; they like. I pick 'em up and I come back. Charge to Keahua Store and I bring 'em back, then I give to the customer. Lots of time. So, any time you work--pinch hit--you go like that, they give us a little allowance, too. Those days, allowance, it's not too big--five dollar or ten dollar, they give allowance. Those days, we used to get a automobile, so if you go Haliimaile Store, I used to go bum ride with our manager, Dean Shigeta. Or sometime, I go my own car. But if I go my own car, I got to burn my own gasoline. If I go with the manager--he get allowance. Gasoline is charged to the store, so we get the free transportation. But if you pinch hit at certain place and the manager went or something like that, you going to get this allowance. So, I go with the car. Everybody, they ask 'em, it's okay. If they like ride, okay. So long I know the person. If I don't know, no. You cannot. (Chuckles) No

trust, too. Of course, those days, everybody nice, but I have to take 'em down, the cash. I have to take 'em down, the day before all the charge slips. Everything, I have to take 'em down the main store.

WN: You would give people ride, too?

YH: Oh, yeah. Once in a while. Then, payday time, I used to go down the bank and ask 'em for change. This is way back, now. Those days, plantation, they start to give a check. Okay, so we have to pay that account. If [it's] about seventy-dollar [pay]check, [and] they stay buy thirty dollars [worth of goods], okay, we have to give 'em forty dollar cash back. We don't keep that kind of money. So, that kind of time they come, we have to go to the bank. We borrow. Then, go home at the Keahua Store. Then, we take the account. That kind of time, yeah, I used to take at least one more person from the store workers with me. You know, I got to go home in the cane field road. Never happen, those days, those kind of things, but in case anything happen, [if] only myself, I have to take all the blame and I have to take all the lickings. If somebody else stay with me, no need. Even the store workers, the girls all right, the boys all right. Anybody. Outsiders, no. You cannot use for the witness, only store workers. I used to do that.

WN: How far away was Keahua from Paia?

YH: Keahua and Paia? Let's see, now. About three miles? No, about four miles, I think. All cane field. Not camp. The moment you out from the Paia Camp until you reach in Keahua, no more camp along the side.

WN: People living in Keahua, how would they get paid? Where would they get their pay from?

YH: They paid from the Paia Plantation main office. Then, Keahua section, that's a field superintendent stay over there. Those people going down to the main office, Keahua plantation worker's one, they take 'em [pay] back Keahua. At Keahua, they get the little office, too. And from over there, they pay out. That's how they used to run. Keahua, they used to pay out, that time, for Pulehu, for Kailua, and Keahua. Three sections.

WN: Pulehu, Kailua, and Keahua were not too far from each other?

YH: Yeah, yeah. Not too far. They used to taking care--the Keahua Store. Keahua Store, something like that's the main store was. Outside, [there were] branch stores and the Paia Store, but the sections [i.e., Keahua, Kailua, and Pulehu], Keahua Store, that's the main store.

WN: Was the Keahua Store smaller than the Paia Camp Store?

YH: No, no. Paia Camp Store is much, much smaller than Keahua Store.

But compare with the Kailua and Pulehu Store, yeah, Paia Camp Store is much more bigger. But the Keahua, inside the country, that's the main store. Just like H. Poko. H. Poko was a pretty good [sized] camp. That's why, [there was both a] H. Poko main store and the camp store, you see?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, when you were pinch-hitting, going to Kailua Camp and Keahua Store and so forth, this was during the war [World War II] years?

YH: No, no, no, this is not during the war years. Keahua Store and Kailua Store was, I think, before the war.

WN: During the war, you were at Haliimaile?

YH: Haliimaile, yes.

WN: How different was it, compared with . . .

YH: Even Haliimaile Store is much more bigger than the Keahua Store. So, we used to supply the meat like that. We used to supply Keahua Store. Keahua Store going to take order. School cafeteria--those days, cafeteria was running, school--so Keahua School cafeteria like that, Keahua Store go out and take order. So many pound of hamburger, or so many pound steak, or something like that. They used to buy from Haliimaile Store--meat. So, those people, they used to come pick 'em up, the meat. Or sometimes, we get something to go down, okay, we used to take 'em down.

WN: So, Haliimaile sold meat?

YH: Meat, yes.

WN: When did the MA Company stores start to sell meat?

YH: Under the same roof, only Haliimaile Store. Paia, they have a meat market, but the Paia one, it's Paia Meat Market. Not under the same roof in Paia Store. That's a separate building. But the Haliimaile, the meat department, everything, inside of one building. Then, the Paia Meat Market, Paia beef is Grove Ranch beef. Then, our store in Haliimaile Store's meat market, we used to sell the beef for Haleakala Ranch. Altogether different company beef. Of course, Haleakala Ranch owned by Mr. Sam Baldwin. Grove Ranch, they owned by the H.A. Baldwin. So, when it come to ends, that's the same thing--the Baldwin and the Baldwin--but Haleakala Ranch and the Grove Ranch, altogether different ranch. Different workers. We used to sell Haleakala Ranch beef. The beef coming from Sam

Baldwin. Paia Store one is H.A. Baldwin's side.

WN: All the same family, though?

YH: Yeah. Baldwin family. All the Baldwin family.

WN: When you moved to the Kahului A&B [Store] in 1948, was that because of the merger between HC&S and [MA Company]?

YH: Yes. Then, after the war, union getting in, all the business kinda start to slow down. Everybody, they earn more money. They buy the car and all this and that. Even they come down the Kahului side, city side, and they buy some stuff like that. Business start to slow down. Those days, the union start to get in. The plantation [store], beginning part, [operated] only for the convenience for the employees. But when it come to time like that [i.e., after the union came in], they want to try to make money. So, more overhead, so you cannot make money. And the same time, the customer go out and start to shop around. They looking for the cheaper place. And the more item place, they go look. That's why business start to slow down. One guy go out, then two guy go out. That's how all the branch store, they close.

WN: So, they started closing the camps, then?

YH: Yeah, yeah. Camp stores, too. That's how they all closed up the stores--the small little stores.

WN: When did you start to notice the business start to go down? Was this after the war?

YH: Yeah. After the war.

WN: During the first sugar strike in 1946, do you remember what it was like in the store?

YH: Yeah, sugar strike. That's the time we were getting in the union. But Maui Pine--Haliimaile's managers--they wanted we stay go with the Haliimaile's workers. Haliimaile, they never joined the union that time. We tell the union, say they getting good pay and whatnot. And then, the company going to take care the employee. We stay in Haliimaile's property, but we working under the Paia Store. That's for sugar side. One side is pineapple. We working for sugar side. So, sugar side, all, they join the union.

WN: The store employees, too?

YH: Oh, yeah. So, they give us--you know, those guys--they give pressure. Even we working not the Paia side; we working Maui Pine property over there stores. [If] we no join, those people, they call [us] "scab" and all kinds. So, we get together and we talk. Then, we decide. We join the union. We join the union, then the pay concern, they got to adjust them up. Butchers, okay. "You regular butcher.

Oh, regular butcher supposed to be so much dollars a hour." "Oh, you. You the assistant manager. Oh, manager getting so much. Assistant manager is at least so much." That's how they go. Then, overhead expense going come bigger. And business, [at that time], it's not improving, because everybody is trying to get the car. Because the pay come up. So, they coming in to go out and shopping around. So, one side, business, it's not growing, instead go down. But overhead expense going to come up. That's why, naturally, they start to cut down on overhead.

WN: So, by cutting down overhead, that means cutting down on what?

YH: That's workers. Yeah, workers, they cut down. Workers, they cut down, but they not--even agree not--just cutting down. That time I go from Haliimaile Store to transfer to over here, [Kahului] A&B, I can ask 'em for severance pay. How many year I work plantation, okay, you throw me out. You pay me up, whole, till this year I work--plantation severance pay. I can get. But that is up to you. Those days, I'm young yet. So, even I get the severance pay, maybe I might get pretty good money, but same thing, after, you got to work. Any other section you go, you the new man. You got to suffer because you got to learn the job. If you get the same kind of store job, it's not too bad, but still, you go to another company, you the new man. Your seniority going to start again. See? Beginning. So, I no ask 'em severance pay.

They tell me, "Eh, we want to transfer to you in Kahului." Because that time, after the war, Kahului Store [HC&S] and Paia Store [MA Company] merged. Because all under the Alexander and Baldwin. Paia Store used to be wholesale, too, and Kahului Store in wholesale, too. That's why they merged. That's why they send 'em down to Kahului's grocery department. Then same thing, grocery department, I come over here. Short time, Kahului. Only short time, I come down over here. I used to work in the warehouse.

WN: So, 1948 was when Paia Store stopped wholesaling?

YH: No. Paia Store was wholesale, too. This side [Kahului] wholesale, too. But this side is much more bigger and more convenient. It's close by the harbor, too. This side, they used to wholesale more bigger business than the Paia Store. That's why, gradually, Paia Store, you know. And stay in the country. Over here is all city, Kahului. That's how Paia Store is closed down, too. The plantation idea, all the plantation workers, after union get in, they want to try to corral all in Kahului. That's why they call over here Dream City. Everybody stay dreaming. Same time, all the plantation workers, put 'em on Kahului. That's why they call over here Dream City. So, naturally, outside, there you get the big store. People go out from over there. So, usually, last job, last business, you got to close down.

That's why, today, over here, everybody [lives] Kahului. Oh, some

of them, they go buy the countryside, and they go up the countryside. Some of them, they get Kula side property. Okay, go Kula. Keanae side, or all over the place. That's how Paia Store, they closed. They got to close down, anyway. No more people. No can make business. Why, you got to close down. That's why, one by one, they go out; they take some severance pay. Some, they come down to the store, this side. I'm one of them, come down to the Kahului Store.

Then I was working warehouse department for a while. Then, sometime, stay inside there. Then I ask the warehouse manager, "Eh, how's about today, go out and delivery? I'm the swamper."

"You?" So, I tell him yeah.

"Oh, okay. Go."

"Okay, I go. Take fresh air." I used to go for Wailuku and Kahului side. Couple times I went Lahaina, too, even. Swamper, you know?

WN: What is that? Swamper?

YH: Swamper, that's a helper. (Laughs) That guy say, "Oh, this store get so-and-so-and-so."

You say, "Okay." Check 'em up, okay, so-and-so. I take 'em go in.

I'm not the driver, now. I'm the delivery boy. The helper. Oh, those days, I used to go Wailuku, like that. I get all types of friends out there.

"Eh, how come you helper now, delivery boy? You demotion or what?"

I tell 'em, "Yeah, yeah. Demotion all right. No trouble. So long I'm happy to work."

Then I work only short time. Then, they put me in the hardware department. I don't know nothing about hardware department. I was working the 99 percent [of the time], it's a grocery store. Even the Haliimaile Store, even the Paia Camp Store, all kind of stores, most is grocery. Then, all of a sudden, come down to over here. They throw me inside the hardware department. I tell, I'm the complete out. I don't know. I got to study again. But the same company, so it's all right.

The manager told me, "Nobody know from the beginning. You got to put the time inside. Little by little, you learn. So, you try, anyway." The manager the one that told me. So, okay. Me, I figure, pay coming in every month, okay, so I take the job. Then, I work for a while. They send me out as salesman--hardware salesman. Go out all over the place--Lahaina, Wailuku, Haiku side, Hana side--all over the place. I have to go even--those days, Haliimaile Store still open yet--I have to go even Haliimaile Store. But the

Haliimaile Store like that, just like something like a transfer. It's all combined already [with] Kahului Store. But still I got to taking care. A&B Supermarket, those days, still I got to go supermarket. Some hardware stuff, very few, but they selling. You know, iron rake, or sickle, or all those kind of things. So, I got to go check up. Anything short, say okay. I got to transfer it, send 'em to the store. Take care our own branch store, too. I used to do that.

Then, over here, Kahului, too, grocery department, they not making money. Rumor start to go, it's close up or something like that. Then, before they close up, they ship me to merchandise department. When it come to merchandise department, hardware, everything [was taken] out from the Kahului Store. We take all the hardware department; we move to merchandise [department]. Still, I have to go out and salesman. Now, lumber and everything--building material, too.

WN: They still have it now, huh?

YH: Oh, yeah. Now, still have A&B Commerical Company. That's the one, now. Those days, we move out, beginning, they used to call us merchandise department. That's before. Now, they change. After that, they changed it A&B Commerical Company [in 1950]. Then, I used to go out, A&B Commercial Company. I have to go, every month, Molokai and all over the place. Then, the salesman. Then, I worked till almost sixty-two [years old].

Then, somehow, I'm unhappy to work. So, before I'm sixty-two, I take retirement. See, I lost my wife about 1955. I have the youngest one, only five years old. Those days, little hard time was, take care the family and the children. Then, I was coming to sixty, and the children all grown up already. So, I start to think, everybody, they changing. System, going to change the system again. More better I retire. Then, I talk to the manager. Manager said certain-certain kind of retirement, we can give you.

I tell 'em, "Okay, I take." Then, two month later, I take a pension. That time, I was a full sixty-one. Another four months to go, reaching sixty-two, I took retirement.

WN: What have you been doing since retirement?

YH: Same time, my brother, he's retired. I retired in April.

WN: Nineteen sixty-nine [1969]?

YH: Yeah. I retired. Lester, he retired August. He say he's unhappy work, too. He retiring. He say he's going to make his own business. So, I help 'em out. Say, "Okay, go ahead. I help you."

He say, "Finance concern, no need worry. I get everything. I start from small."

I say, "Go ahead." Then, I used to help him out. Till today, anyway. Today, I no go full time anyway. Today, just only go fooling around half day. Afternoon, after lunch, I go over there.

WN: Okay, thank you very much.

YH: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

**STORES and
STOREKEEPERS of
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Volume I

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