

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: PEDRO PONCE, retired barber

Pedro Ponce, Visayan, was born June 22, 1900 in Cebu. He came to Hawaii in May of 1922; he was assigned as laorer to Hanamaulu Plantation. He first worked doing kalai, cutting cane. By the time of the 1924 strike, he had become a ditch man and was supervising the work of nine men.

He joined the strike, and lived in the Kapaa strike camp. While on strike, he helped plant the coconut trees which still stand on the Lihue side of Waipouli, the coconut plantation area. He served as a donations collector during the strike. When the strikers were evicted from the camp, Pedro spent one night in jail.

After the strike, Ponce opened a barber shop and pool hall. He worked for 50 years as a barber, retiring in 1976.

Tape No. 5-22-1-78-TR1 and TR2

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Pedro Ponce (PP)

October 30, 1978

Kapaa, Kauai

BY: Ed Gerlock (GG) and Gael Gouveia (GG)

GG: This is an interview with Pedro Ponce and we're in his home in Kapaa. The interviewer is Ed Gerlock. The date is October 30, 1978.

EG: These are the first questions that I'm going to ask you. We're beginning in the Philippines. Where were you born?

PP: I was born in Cebu, in the town of Iluan.

EG: What was the day that you were born?

PP: June 22, 1900 is my birthday.

EG: Did you go to school there in your place?

PP: In the beginning, I went to school at the place where the priest lives. I went to school under the priest. [The priests in the Philippines many times run some kind of school right in the rectory.] I went to school there at the rectory and Visayan was the language that we used. Then after that I went to school in English but only up until the third grade. My parents were very poor so there was nothing that could be done.

EG: What is the situation of your parents?

PP: They had no particular work, except for around the house. Farming, and a little piece of land that they had. They planted rice and corn, but as far as money was concerned they didn't have any.

EG: How many were you in your family?

PP: All of us together, we were seven.

GG: Where were you in the list of seven? What number were you?

PP: I'm the youngest one of all, the last one.

EG: So when you finished schooling, what did you do?

PP: Well, when I finished schooling, I began to help working on the farm by planting rice and corn and things like that. That's what I did. After that, because I wasn't going to school anymore and there wasn't that much work at home, I began to work for the government and was working on the road, building the road. I did that for around one year. After that, I didn't have any more work. So I started looking for how I could come here to Hawaii.

EG: How did it come about that you were able to hear that there was work to be had here in Hawaii?

PP: In Cebu there was an office there at the immigration center that was looking for workers to come work in the plantations here in Hawaii. You see, there were agents that went around. They asked people, whoever wanted to go to Hawaii to work, then they would help them to go. So I went there to the office that was sending people to Hawaii, and I presented myself. Then they examined me, they examined everything. They examined me physically and they found that I had no sickness, and so they accepted me.

EG: Well, how old were you at that time?

PP: I was 22 years old at that time [1922].

EG: Wasn't there any kind of papers or anything you had to sign?

PP: Oh yeah, there was a contract that we had to sign. We had to promise that we would come here to Hawaii.

EG: What was your understanding on that contract?

PP: Well, once you signed it you had to come here to Hawaii and work for whatever sugar company they assigned you to.

EG: For how long?

PP: The contract was for three years. And after three years, then I could come and have free passage to return to the Philippines. But until now, I still haven't gone back yet.

EG: You mean you haven't gone back since you came here in the first place?

PP: Oh no, there was once when I did go back, in 1958. In 1958 I went on vacation there in the Philippines.

EG: Manong, what was it like when you were riding on the ship? What was your situation on the ship?

PP: We got on board ship in Cebu, that was the President Lincoln. Traveling to Manila. Then we arrived in Manila and I stayed there

for one week, after which we left for Japan. Then we stopped in Japan, in Kobe for one day. After Kobe, then we went on to Yokohama. We were in Yokohama for two days, and then we set out for Honolulu. The ship was a different one now. We were riding on a Japanese ship, the Tenyu-maru. When we were on the Japanese ship heading for Honolulu many of my companions got very sick. There were nine of them who died on the journey. I think that along the way--maybe when we went through Hong Kong--we picked up some kind of sickness. Maybe it was flu. We probably carried the sickness right there through Japan. And then when we changed ships the sickness remained with us. And that's how many got very sick. I myself got quite sick.

- EG: Where did these nine people die? Was it from Manila going to Yokohama, or from Yokohama going to Honolulu?
- PP: It was from Yokohama going down to Honolulu that they died.
- EG: How many were you on board the ship?
- PP: If I'm not mistaken, I think there was around 40 Filipinos who were on board ship.
- GG: How many women? How many children?
- PP: Women, I no mistake, I think about only three or four. All single.  
I was wrong before, the women were not single. They were married women who were coming along with their husbands.
- EG: When the recruiters went out looking for people to come to work here in Hawaii, what did they prefer? Did they want more married men, or families, or were they looking for single men?
- PP: It didn't seem to make much difference. They were looking for young unmarried men, but if the person is married that was okay also. But of course, many of them were not married and so we were really lacking women at that time.
- GG: On the same ship how many were Visayan and how many were Ilocano? And any Tagalog?
- PP: That one there, from Cebu, us all Visayan. And then, when we come to Manila over there he got some Ilocano.
- EG: By the time you came to Honolulu, how many were Visayan and how many were Ilocano?
- PP: We arrived at the immigration in Honolulu. We were there for one week. The Visayans were not so many because they were nine who died. So there were only 31 left after the nine had died. Then they were sent to work on farms, to Maui, to Hilo. And of those sent here to Kauai, to Hanamaulu Plantation, we were seven.

EG: All Visayans?

PP: Yes, we were all Visayans.

EG: In other words, you were one week at the immigration at Honolulu, and after that you came directly here to Kauai?

PP: Yes. I tell you Father, when I left the Philippines, it was really very difficult. Our situation was really difficult. That ship that we were on--the Japanese ship--I myself got sick on it. You know, it wasn't a very clean ship and it smelled quite bad. There were a lot of---our companions were throwing up. I myself was throwing up, vomiting. I tell you, the last time that I threw up, I was vomiting blood.

EG: When you arrived here at the plantation, what kind of a house did they give you?

PP: It was just one of the plantation houses that they gave everybody, just an old house.

EG: You were all young unmarried men living together?

PP: Yes, we were.

EG: What kind of work did you have when you first started working?

PP: Kalai was my work. There at Hanamaulu, after four or five months, I was given a better kind of work. Became a ditchman.

EG: What's a ditchman?

PP: A guy who makes sure that the water goes into the ditch. And I had some men who were working under me.

EG: Why were you given a better kind of work, after such a short period of time?

PP: Maybe they just thought that I understood the work very well, and so they gave me a better kind of work.

GG: What kind of luna? Portuguese or Japanese, or....

PP: My luna was Portuguese. And the big luna was a haole.

EG: And your companions in work were mostly Visayans?

PP: Yes, they were.

EG: Did you have any Ilocanos who were companions?

PP: Yeah, there were some Ilocanos at that time, but not very many. Not like now. Maybe in one plantation you would have like two

Ilocanos. There were mostly Visayan at that time.

EG: When did you arrive here in Hawaii?

PP: May, 1922. And that's when I began working. When I began working there, after a short time, then the big luna had me transferred over to the waterfall. I began to live near the waterfall also, near the Wailua River. The big luna, he put me over there. I was supposed to watch over the guys who were also working on the ditches there, who were working on the pipes. In a way, you could say I was like a luna; and I had nine men who were under me.

1923, I think was September, Manlapit, he come. First he come Honolulu and he call strike. Then after that, 1924, he come over here, Kauai. Pablo Manlapit came here and he gave a talk. Basically, his talk was that we Filipinos have to pull together, be united, and we can raise our salary. We were asking for \$2 a day. Before we asked for that we were being paid 10 cents an hour; one hour, 10 cents. So Manlapit was going around and talking around the plantations, and encouraging people to strike so that they could ask for the \$2 per day. So that's how it happened that in 1924 the Visayans went out on strike.

EG: You personally, did you ever hear Manlapit speak?

PP: Yes, I did.

EG: Here in Kauai?

PP: Yes.

EG: Where did he give talks?

PP: Right here. Every plantation.

GG: Did he speak inside the plantation or on the road?

PP: Yeah, he spoke on the road. But when he go inside the plantation road, he going bring one box because the plantation--the boss--he say he no like Manlapit go inside the plantation. He bring one box, and then he go on top the box, and then he going talk.

EG: I'd like to ask you, personally, what was your feelings, how did you feel when you would listen to Manlapit speak?

PP: What I felt inside of my heart is I felt the same as Manlapit, that I wished that our salaries could be raised. If the plantation would give it. I would go to work at 6 o'clock in the morning and I would finish at 6 o'clock in the evening. Six to six.

EG: Was there two hours for your lunch?

PP: No, only a half-hour. I tell you, it was really very difficult, to

work in the plantation before. The work was very heavy. You were always being made to go faster by the lunas. We were helped by Manlapit so that our life on the plantation would be a little bit easier. And that's why we came to ask for \$2 a day.

EG: Were there people inside of the plantation who you would consider to be like men of Manlapit, some kind of leaders of this movement?

PP: No, they could not even enter the plantation. You know, when we went out on strike there in Kapaa, you know the long building there?

GG: Is that the Hee Fat Building?

PP: Yeah, Hee Fat Building. That's where we lived, in the Hee Fat Building. I guess we lived there around five months. We didn't have to pay anything for the building. Anyway, we didn't have any money. Then after five months Hee Fat said, "Hey look you guys, if you don't pay any kind of rental on the building, then you're going to have to get out." And that's why, you know, we couldn't pay anything on the building. That's where we moved, to the rear of the building there, on the beach. So we began to live right alongside the sea.

We began to make these kind of like shacks. In order to put up these shacks, we found second-hand iron roofing, sheet metal, cardboard, anything....as long as there no more rain, you know.

GG: And then, how did you patch it together? With what? Nails?

PP: Nails, and we look some lumber--second-hand lumber. That's how we.... The house that I had made, we were only two living inside. But our beds that we laid down on were army cots.

EG: And how about your food?

PP: Our food was from a collection that was being taken up. Collection was being taken up among Filipinos on the different plantations. Whatever people would give, like bananas, rice, anything, as long as it would keep us alive.

EG: Who was in charge of the collection?

PP: They were men of Manlapit, men who had been picked out. Here in Kapaa, there were four who had been chosen to do that work.

EG: Do you remember the names of any of them?

PP: I don't remember. There's one that I remember, just the same name, his name was Amando. I don't remember his last name. Mr. Cabinatan was also included. He was also living there on the beach.

EG: For example, how many of these shacks do you think there were down on that beach?

- PP: Oh, there were plenty. I think about 30 houses.
- EG: Now how many people were in these houses?
- PP: I just never really counted them.
- EG: Yeah, but I mean if you were going to give an estimate, how many do you think?
- PP: Three hundred.
- EG: Three hundred? If there were only 30 houses, that means there must have been about 10 people in each house.
- PP: There were big houses and there were small houses that were built on the beach. And there were still some people who had a little bit of money and they stayed in the Hee Fat Building. You know, the Hee Fat Building had two stories and they were downstairs.
- GG: Then the houses on the beach were right like at the back of the property, right? Because the property went almost to the beach.
- PP: Yeah, that's right. So we continued living down there on the beach, and we lived in a very peaceable kind of way. We didn't make any trouble and we didn't want any trouble. But the trouble came from people who were being ordered by the plantations. Some of them were even Filipinos, who were being commanded by the people of the plantation. And they would come in and---they were trying to break our strike. So they had people who they could send around. And they would send them into the strike camp itself--Filipinos--and some of them were Visayans even. And Tagalogs and Ilocanos. In order to break our strike.
- EG: In what way? What would they do?
- PP: They were just making trouble with the strikers. And that's why, every night we had to put people who would be on guard. For example, suppose they would burn down the house; well, we had to have somebody watching. For example, if we had nobody on guard and the house were burned down, then we'd be blamed for it. That's why we had a guard there every night. No one could enter there unless they had permission.
- GG: Do you remember then, one particular night when they tried to fire the rice mill? Somebody snuck in at night....
- PP: Yeah. There was a rice mill in that place where we were camped. There was a lot of junk; weeds and things like that around it. And the things, the rice hulls that are left over when rice has been ground. And they tried to burn down the rice mill.
- EG: Oh, who were they?

PP: Well, its....it was impossible to tell. We caught them and then we tied them up and put them inside of a room. And then in the morning, the police came and got them. We just put them inside of a room. We didn't punch them or hurt them in anyway, and we turned them over to the police. And we were hoping that the police could see that our intention was not to hurt anybody or to cause any kind of trouble. You know, but as a matter of fact, the kind of police that they had during that time, they were the first ones to make some kind of trouble. The police themselves were against the strikers. And you know, that's really at base, what happened there at Hanapepe. That's why a lot of people died.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

PP: ...who were causing a lot of trouble there in Hanapepe. That's why a lot of people died. They were out to break the strike.

EG: Maybe I just don't understand this too well, but I have to ask you again, why would somebody want to burn down the rice mill? I mean, who would do a thing like that? What would be their purpose in burning down the rice mill?

PP: I know we were just watching very carefully, because sometimes there were people who could come in there who were not a part of the strikers. And if we caught anybody like that we would immediately turn them over to the police, because we didn't want any trouble.

EG: But why do you think they'd want to burn the rice mill?

PP: Their purpose really was to break the strike. For instance, if somebody else's rice mill was burned and we were camped right next to there, I mean who else would they blame but they'd blame us for it. And once we get blamed for arson or burning down somebody's building, then the strike is broken because we got a big problem. That's why we were really watching ourselves during the strike.

EG: When you were living there on the beach, were there whole families living there? Like husbands and wives and children?

PP: Yes, there were quite a few who had wives and children.

EG: What were the women doing? Like for instance, what would they do from morning to night?

PP: There was no work because it was a strike.

EG: Well, like what were the women doing?

PP: Well, they would wash clothes and they would cook, and things like that.

EG: What was their system of cooking? Was it that they cooked for everybody all at once, or did each family take care of their own needs, as far as food was concerned?

PP: Each family took care of their own needs. Each house had a kitchen for its own members.

GG: How many might have lived in one little house?

EG: Yeah, it seemed to vary because all together he's saying there's only about 30 houses but there's something like 300 people; so that would average out to 10. But the house that he was living in there's only two. So some very big and some were very small.

GG: Okay, also does he recall when he first went to the strike, and you said you lived five months in the Hee Fat Building, before you moved into....so do you remember the month you went on strike?

PP: I no remember. I no remember the time I moved the building. I think was around June or August, I think. 1924. And then I moved down the beach, make small house over there.

GG: Were there a lot of people already in the strike camp when you moved into the strike camp to begin with?

PP: When I got there to the Hee Fat Building, when the strike first began, there were already a lot of people there. And it was divided up into like four big rooms. Up and down, all fill up, that one. All full. Those of us who came from the waterfall, when we got there, there were already a lot of people. And even my own companions that came from the waterfall, they were all married, I was the only one who was still single. My companions that were married were seven.

We were upstairs in the Hee Fat Building, and this is the system that we had. They took the married people and they put them upstairs in one room, one after the other. And I was right in the middle because I wasn't married. I was the guard. You know, it's a funny thing, but all of my companions who were already married, I was very close to them. They liked me very much.

EG: Were there old people there?

PP: Yes, there were old people and young people; all kinds. And also there was the younger sister of my wife. Her younger sister came here to Hawaii before she did. My wife didn't get here until December of 1924.

EG: What kind of schedule did you have there, when you were living there at the Hee Fat Building? Like for instance, was there a

certain time for getting up or for cooking or something like that?

PP: You know Father, it was like this. They were all married people and so they sort of took care of themselves. But because they were married and because the salaries were so low, they didn't have much money. I was the only one who was not married. And by the time we had gone into the strike camp there I had saved up \$600 that I took with me. During those times that was big money. You know, we were all living together, and so there was only one [person] cooking for all of us (our group). Well, after a while, things were getting quite difficult within the strike camp. And so, sometimes if we didn't have any rice then I would be the one to buy the rice for the whole group.

EG: So what you're saying is that sometimes the food really was lacking?

PP: Yeah, that's right. We did lack food at times.

EG: You mean that the collection was also lacking?

PP: Yeah, that's right. Sometimes we were lacking in the collection. You know, the leaders of the strike who were there, they put me in the position of being a collector to go around and try and get food for the strikers. Yeah, I was a collector and I would go around to whatever plantations that we were able to get into, and ask for food. For example, Kilauea, that was a plantation that we could get into. And we'd go in there and collect food. So I would go to that plantation and approach the Filipinos there, and ask them for some help for the strikers.

EG: What was your way of approaching people?

PP: You know, when I'd go there I'd greet them. And Kauai isn't that big of a place and most Visayans know each other. And so they would know me ahead of time. They themselves were not on strike, and so I tell them, "For those of us who are out on strike these are very difficult kind of times, and we could use some help." So because they were not on strike, that's why we went there and asked them for some kind of help, because they had the ability to be able to help us.

EG: Was it only the Visayans who would give you food, or were there other people who gave?

PP: Oh well, the Visayans gave but there were other people also. Like the Japanese.

EG: Did you walk or did you ride, when you went to collect things? Because Kilauea is quite far.

PP: Before, there was one car. That was owned by a friend of ours. And so we were riding in that car. Before in 1924, here in Kapaa,

there were no cars. The cars in Kapaa maybe there were not 10 cars in all of Kapaa. The only people who had cars were the people who had stores. And the car that we used for our collection, that was owned by a Filipino. The cars at that time were either Model-As or Model-Ts.

EG: Who was this Filipino who owned the car?

PP: He was my kompadre (sponsor in a baptism or a wedding) with me. His name was Vicente Quijano.

EG: Is he still alive?

PP: No, he's already dead.

EG: How is it that he had a car? Was he the owner of a store?

PP: No, it wasn't a store. He was the only taxi in Kapaa, at that time. We were very lucky he was able to buy that Model-A that we used for our collections.

GG: Did he go alone, or did he always go with somebody; and did the police ever catch you folks?

PP: No, I go with somebody.

EG: You didn't have any problem with the police?

PP: No. We were free to enter Kilauea. You know, we really didn't want Kilauea to go out on strike because they would be able to support us who were out on strike.

EG: Was there somebody who was like a strategist; somebody who said that it was good that Kilauea not go out on strike, so that they could supply food? Was there some leader among yourselves who would coordinate all these things?

PP: Yes, we did have leaders among ourselves.

EG: Who were they?

PP: Well, for instance, the head one was Amando. Caralde was another one. Caralde was the one for all of Kauai. He was the right hand of Manlapit.

EG: Now, how long were you down there on the beach?

PP: We were living down there around five months, I think. And it happened one time, around 1 o'clock in the morning, that the police entered our small shacks there along the beach. And they brought along with them guns. We were all asleep. I myself was asleep.

EG: There were no guards outside?

PP: Well, there were guards but there were so many police that they were just able to go by the guards. Because there were a lot of police and they all brought guns. They walked right into the places where we were sleeping, and they were holding guns right close to our heads. That's the way the police were at that time. So I asked them very frankly when I woke up, "Why is it that we were asleep and you come in here and you hold guns to our heads, and we haven't done anything wrong?" They brought a big truck and they were going to take us away. [This was some time AFTER the Hanapepe incident. This was when strikers were evicted from the Hee Fat area.]

I nearly forgot, when we were still there in the building there had been the fighting and the killing there in Hanapepe. They brought big machine guns. Maybe it was the plantations who ordered the Army [National Guard] to come, I don't know. On both sides of the road, right near the big building they had machine guns. Right next to the Hee Fat Building. The purpose of setting up the machine guns on both sides of the road is so that the strikers here in Kapaa would not go there to Hanapepe. How are we going to go there anyway, if we didn't have something to give us a ride, some way of riding there. Hanapepe is very far, there's no way of walking there. Nobody could walk to Hanapepe to help out the strikers there, with those machine guns on both sides of the road. That's what it was like before, at the time of the strike.

EG: Please finish the story that you were telling us before, about when you were sleeping and the police came in and they were holding the guns to your heads. [At the time of the eviction.]

PP: It was the guns put to our heads that woke us up. And then they started shouting at us, "Okay, okay, get up, get up. Go inside the truck."

We were all inside of the truck. It was hard to fight back because we were all inside of the truck. We were taken to jail. And that's how the strike was broken here. By that time, the money that I had saved up was more or less gone. I was working here in the homestead. My luna at that time was Sakaguchi, who was Japanese. I was working for him there on the sugar plantation. I only stayed inside of the jail for one night. Next day, my boss got me out of the jail. That's why I only had one night in jail. My companions stayed in the jail. They were a long time there in the jail. They didn't want to give up and of course, there was no place for them to work anyway. And they were probably thinking for themselves, "Well, it's just as well to be here in jail because at least there's something to eat."

EG: Were some of your companions sent out of Hawaii, back to the Philippines?

PP: No. Some of my companions went back to working in the plantation. And some of the others went to work in pineapple. Some others even

went to America, to the Mainland, to work there. And some went home by themselves to the Philippines.

EG: Can you remember what month it was when you entered the jail?

PP: Maybe about December, I think.

GG: 1925 or 1924?

PP: 1924, December. I no mistake, I think December or January.

GG: Because she [PP's wife] came in December, right? So it was after she came or before she came, that you went to the calaboose?

PP: My wife arrived on December 9. And when she came I had not yet gone to jail. Yeah, I think it was maybe January or February, 1925. 1925, was clear already. The strike broke already.

GG: Going back a little ways, when they tried to fire the rice mill that time, we have heard that some outside men came in in the middle of the night to try and fire it. And the Visayans caught them and evidently took all their clothes off and tied him to a chair and left him so the mosquitos would get him during the night. Do you remember that, or were you there?

PP: Yeah, I remember that. That I remember because we going put [him in] one room and we tied up over there, so long he no run away.

EG: Only one person?

PP: Only one. Yeah, that's why we really had to have people watching every night.

EG: Who was this person that you caught? Where did he come from?

PP: These were those kind of people who were ordered by the plantation to do those kinds of things.

EG: What happened in the morning then, after you had caught him?

PP: We gave him over to the police in the morning. We told them, "This is what this guy did here during the time of the strike".

GG: Did one of the men run away and get the police, and then the police came back?

PP: Yes, we call up the police.

GG: Oh, the strikers called the police?

PP: Yeah, because, you know...the next morning, we turned him over to the police. He been tied up from the wee hours of the morning.

GG: Did one policeman get shot in the head that time? Not killed but just grazed?

PP: Yeah. That one I remember, that's not the government police. I think that's plantation police. Because before, plantation, he get police.

EG: What happened that he got hit with a bullet?

[Not the time when the rice mill was fired.]

PP: You know, we had one guard who was....I think he was half Moro, half Muslim. He was just a little man. That policeman, when he came he was riding on a horse, and he entered the strike camp. And he was running around on the horse. And that's why he was shot at. But of course, the bullet really didn't hit him; it just went through his hat.

EG: Where did this happen?

PP: It happened right there in Kapaa, the strike camp. In the back of the Hee Fat Building.

EG: Were there a lot of police who came with him?

PP: No, he was the only one. After, of course we couldn't catch 'em, because he was riding a horse. But after the guard took a shot at him, then he ran away. That's all there was to it.

GG: Were there other incidents of tension or were---did the Visayans have trouble within the camp with each other maybe, because they didn't have enough to do during the day?

PP: Listen, we didn't have any problem understanding one another because we were all Visayans. We had no problems among ourselves. Our only problem there was if there were people from the plantation or some of the police who entered the strike camp. But as far as the strike was concerned, we were all Visayans and we had no problem.

Well, an ordinary day, in order to stay alive, someone go to the sea to go fishing. Or they would try to spear a fish. And during those days, there were a lot of fish in the sea. So among the men, almost everybody had something to do, and it usually had something to do with getting the food. Like fishing or going out to make collection, or something like that. Women would wash or cook or things like that; clean. And there was not much else to do besides that.

EG: What did you do to amuse yourself? What was your enjoyment?

PP: Well, what we would do would be like we would play hantak [Hantak is kind of a gambling game played with coins that are flipped, and

it's a matter of matching heads and tails]. Or we would play cards sometimes.

GG: Also, did you ask him how he heard about the Hanapepe trouble, and what they heard?

EG: Oh yeah. [EG asks PP the above question.]

PP: We heard about the trouble in Hanapepe because one of the strikers there in Hanapepe called us on the telephone, and talked about the people who died, both on the side of the strikers and the police. That's the way it was. There were a lot of Filipinos who died because they had no gun. All they had was a bolo, a kind of a knife, and so a lot of Filipinos died.

EG: What were your feelings when you heard about what had happened in Hanapepe?

PP: I felt very sad about what had happened and they prayed that it wouldn't happen here in Kapaa. Because that kind of thing is useless. All I did was to ask God that that kind of thing did not happen here in Kapaa. It's really very very difficult if you go up against the police who have arms, and you have none.

EG: Would you happen to know who called on the telephone, and how the news came through?

PP: I really don't know that. But it was one of the strikers from Hanapepe.

EG: Do you know who heard the news on this end?

PP: Well, there was a telephone there at the building of Hee Fat, and that's where the news came through. And that's who told us.

GG: When you left the strike camp why did you not go back to the plantation and can you tell how you got your barbershop started?

PP: When the strike broke, some strikers go back plantation, They go work pineapple. But me, lucky thing I was barber in Philippine Islands. My home town, Cebu, I was barber over there. So in 1926, I open barbershop, Kapaa, 1926. And at the time I was married already, my wife.

The barber over there, 1926, cheap; 35 cents one head. So I work 7 o'clock in the morning, I close up my barbershop sometimes 12 o'clock in the night. Because I'm busy and I got pool room, too.

EG: You never went back to the plantation?

PP: No, I never went back. Because I remember the bitterness of living on a plantation.

EG: What do you mean "bitterness?"

PP: Oh, you know, the work...

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 5-22-1-78 TR2; SIDE ONE

EG: You know, Manong, as you look back over 50 years, and look back towards the strike, what do you feel now; how do you look at it?

PP: Well, I look back on it now---you know, we were asking for \$2 for one day, and we just couldn't get it. We tried our best but they wouldn't agree to it. It seems like it was not successful. But I was really hoping that nothing that happened in Hanapepe would happen here, and it didn't.

EG: But how do you feel now as you look back on it? I mean, was that a good thing to have done--the strike--or was it not so good?

PP: Maybe it would have been a very good thing, if the plantation had given us what we were asking for; our life would have been a lot easier, we would have been able to have adequate food and things that we needed.

EG: I was just asking him now looking back 50 years, how do you look on the whole thing? Was it worthwhile doing? And he was just saying well, it wasn't a bad thing. They survived all right and thank God nothing happened like it did in Hanapepe, but we still didn't get it. Then he said, "I didn't want to go back to the plantation anymore because the bitterness I encountered."

So I was asking him, "What do you mean bitterness?"

And he was saying, "It's a hard life working on the plantation. The long hours that you work, the little pay, and stuff. And people here...went into the barbershop."

GG: What did he do between the end of the strike and 1926, though? 1925, what did he do then?

EG: He was saying before about this job, that this friend of his got him out of jail and he went to work with him on a piece of land.

GG: Is that when he help plant the coconut trees?

PP: Oh yeah, in 1924 we stay in the strike, right? Then we plant that coconut over there. You know, that coconut grove. We plant that one, that coconut.

EG: That was your work?

- PP: Yeah, that's what I did so that I could buy rice.
- EG: Who was your boss there?
- PP: Crabbe. Dennis Crabbe. That Crabbe was a person who was quite wealthy. He was about the only wealthy person here in Kauai. The place where we planted them was the place of this man Crabbe. He was a haole.
- EG: Was that your work, planting coconuts until you started the barber-shop?
- PP: No. We were planting coconuts during the time of the strike only. We were a lot of strikers who were planting coconuts. And it was on both sides of the road. We were planting for two months, and then it was finished.
- EG: I don't understand. You mean while you were on strike, you were planting coconuts?
- PP: Yeah, that's right.
- GG: Now, how did you get to know your wife, and how did you get to marry? Did you marry after the strike or during the strike?
- PP: After that strike. In 1925, at that time, me and my wife we stay together already.
- EG: Did you know each other in the Philippines, you and your wife?
- PP: No, we didn't. Only here in Kauai. Her sister was living with us in the house; that's how I came to even know the family.
- EG: Was that in the strike camp, that you were living in the same house?
- PP: No, it was in Kapaa, even before that. And it was then that we talked it over and decided that we would marry each other.
- EG: Where were you married?
- PP: We were married here in the church. That was 1925. The priest who married us before was Father Morris. He's already dead.
- EG: And how many years since your marriage?
- PP: Well, it's a long time.
- EG: Can you tell how you went to get her and then she didn't like to come with you because she was afraid of the cowboy-cowboy kine, when she was staying, before it came....
- CP: (PP's wife) You know, when I was there on the plantation I found

it very hard. And I finally decided that I'll just go to my sister's house, because it'll be a lot better there, it'll be a lot easier. But my sister was in the strike camp at that time. And other people were saying, "If you go into that strike camp, you don't know the police. They'll kill you. Or even worse, you'll be killed by the strikers themselves." But then (pointing at PP) he asked for me, tried to get me to come to the strike camp. At the time, he was not exactly inside of the strike camp; he was outside of it so he wanted me to come there.

So I was looking at this picture of Pedro and I was saying to myself, "This is not the picture of the husband of my sister. Because he has a different appearance than this person who is in this picture."

And Pedro answered me and said, "I was just sent here by your sister. Because your sister has just given birth."

"Where is my brother-in-law?"

And he answered me, "He's out fishing."

"I'm not going to go with you," I said, "because I don't even know you. You know, I'm an unmarried woman and for me to go with you, somebody I don't even know, that's a very dangerous thing to do. You know, it's a dangerous thing for unmarried women to be going around with people like you, because there's a lot of this cowboy-cowboy kind of stuff going on. "

I tell you Father, that I was really afraid. Way back in the Philippines, my mother was saying to me, "You know, you're going off now to Hawaii, you have to be very well behaved while you're there in Hawaii."

I told my mother, "Listen mother, don't be worried about me. Don't be sad because as soon as I find my sister, we're all going to return back here to the Philippines." I had only had the one sister here in Hawaii. She was married in the Philippines before she came.

And my mother said to me, "You're going over to that faraway place and you're still an unmarried woman. You might be better if you just find yourself a husband before you go."

I said, "Mom, don't worry about me because I'm going to go with our cousin over to Hawaii, and you can be sure when I come back I'll still be an unmarried woman." Now what could I do? My fate caught up with me while I was here in Hawaii.

You know, there was somebody who was courting me, but we couldn't understand one another. Somebody else was courting me. The man who was courting me was from the northern part of the Philippines,

from Pampanga. His name was Abe and was from Pampanga. I said to him, "You know, it doesn't make any difference if you speak to me even slower; I still don't understand what you're talking about." You know, he even tried by having an interpreter. It was a woman who was doing the interpreting and so I said to her, "Hey listen, if you think that he's so good why don't you marry him." And I was in no hurry to get married, and besides that I didn't know the customs or the character of this man.

You know, the next day he came to the house where I was ironing clothes inside of the house. He told me to open up the door because it was locked. I was all alone in the house and I was not about to open the door for him. "What do you want," I said to him. Of course, I didn't understand what he was saying because he was speaking in his own language and he didn't understand what I was saying, because I was also using my own language. You know, he started to get angry; started kicking the door. Finally, from his kicking the door, the door finally broke and so he started coming in. And I grabbed a hold of the iron and I said to myself, "If he comes in here and grabs me, I'm going to hit him with this iron." I was still an unmarried woman at that time. We still couldn't understand one another because he was speaking his language and I was speaking my language. I began to shout at the top of my lungs, and the woman who owned the boarding house where the place that he was staying came running.

She came running and she said, "What's going on?"

And I said, "Well, this man, he's bothering me."

And she said, "Hey listen, how come you don't pay any attention to him? You know, he's very good and he loves you."

"Maybe so, but I still don't understand what he's talking about."

Finally, I left there and I went to my sister who was inside of the strike camp. And there were lot of people there inside of the strike camp. And a lot of them were married. That's where I saw my husband now, and he was not married at that time. And I asked my sister, "Who is that man over there?"

She answered me by saying, "That's my kompadre." Because he was the sponsor for the baptism of her child.

While I was at the strike camp, this same Pampangan, the one who kicked in the door, who she couldn't understand, he went there looking for me. And my husband now became the interpreter for this Pampangan who was coming to court me.

PP: I became the interpreter because I can also speak a little bit of Tagalog. No matter how I interpreted, though, my wife would not agree because she couldn't understand the Tagalog and she couldn't take an interpreter with her all her life. And because she would

not agree to him, then the Pampangan just left. "Abe, it's a good thing if you don't come around anymore. I mean, don't be angry about it but she cannot understand one another, and besides that, we're on strike here. It's better if you don't come around." After that, Abe didn't come around anymore. And then the two of us got married. (CP laughs)

END OF INTERVIEW

**The 1924 Filipino  
Strike on Kauai**

**Volume I**

**ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Ethnic Studies Program  
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

**June 1979**