

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Estifino Figueroa

Estifino “Fano” Figueroa was born January 15, 1923 in Haina, Hawai‘i. His parents were Mariano Figueroa from Puerto Rico and Annie Guzman Figueroa from Kohala, Hawai‘i. As a young boy, he would travel with his family across the island to Kona, where they worked as coffee pickers. He briefly attended Hōlualoa School in Kona. Later, his father worked for Honoka‘a Sugar Company (ultimately named Hāmākua Sugar Company) as a laborer.

At age eleven, Figueroa began working with his father in the cane fields. He was paid boy wages of fifty cents per day. At age thirteen, he began receiving the adult wage of \$1.50 a day. His fifty-year career on the plantation included such jobs as flag boy, steam plow operator, mule man, mill worker, railroad brakeman, cane grabber operator, and push rake operator.

Figueroa retired in 1985. He lives in Honoka‘a with his wife, Mary, whom he married in 1944, his daughter and son-in-law, Barbara and Patrick Coito, and grandchildren.

Tape No. 26-14-1-96

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Estifino Figueroa (EF)

Honoka'a, Hawai'i

November 25, 1996

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[Also present at the interview is Mary Figueroa (MF), EF's wife.]

WN: This is an interview with Estifino Figueroa on November 25, 1996, and we're at his home in Honoka'a, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

First, if you can tell me, Mr. Figueroa, when were you born?

EF: I born down Haina, and I was raised down Haina, all my life.

WN: What's your birth date?

EF: January 15, 1923, I born.

WN: Okay, so tell me something about your father.

EF: My father, Mariano Figueroa.

WN: Mariano. And where is he from?

EF: My father, he born Puerto Rico. And then he came this side.

MF: But the year, you don't know.

EF: Well, he came young boy, when he was young. Then he was the other side, Ka'u side. Something like that, I think Mountain View, Ka'u side. Then from there he went to the army, First World War.

WN: U.S. Army?

EF: Yeah.

WN: Yeah.

EF: He went to the army, and then he came back. And he was living Honoka'a, down Haina.

EF: He went to the army, and then he came back. And he was living Honoka‘a, down Haina. [When he was a] small boy, my grandmother died over here. My father’s mother. My father’s father, well, I don’t know. And then he went Kohala, work. Before, they no have anything. They used to walk by the valley, Waipi‘o, come out by Waimanu side—way other side, Kohala. Then he meet my mother over there, Hāwī.

WN: Your mother’s from Kohala?

EF: My mother [Annie Guzman Figueroa] is from Kohala. Guzman family. From there, they went Kona.

WN: What did they do in Kona?

EF: They was living in Kona. They was picking coffee for a while. But they came back over here, then they worked down Haina [i.e., Honoka‘a Sugar Company]. They lived Kukuihaele, my father work *hō hana*, my mother work *hō hana*. Like before, the olden days, they used to work—the old people, young guys and all. But from Kukuihaele, they used to come Honoka‘a. The same thing, *hō hana*, like that, right? They *hō hana*.

But I born down Haina. My sister born down Haina, my sister, Mary. And I was raised down Haina, and I go *hana*. I went *hana* with my father them. I never did go school. Every time I go school, I had asthma, they send me back home.

(Laughter)

WN: How come?

EF: Asthma, eh? The school, I cannot take my homework, eh? See, (EF makes breathing noises). You know, when you get asthma, eh?

WN: Oh, you had asthma.

EF: It’s loud, eh? So they send me back home. I go home, then the copper (policemen) pick me up, bring me back school. (Chuckles) Again the teacher tell, “You cannot do nothing. You more better you go back home and take care yourself.” So I used to go back home, back and forth, so I don’t know, see?

WN: What school?

EF: Honoka‘a School’s so far as I never go. But I used to go Hōlualoa [School].

WN: Oh, Hōlualoa? Oh, Kona.

EF: Kona.

WN: Yeah.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: So you born Haina.

EF: Haina.

WN: But how old were you when you went Kona?

EF: We used to go Kona, see? My father used to go Kona [for] about one year. I was small kid. But I used to go over there, Hōlualoa School, see? But I couldn't go because they sent me home.

WN: So your father went Kona to pick coffee?

EF: Pick coffee and *hō hana*.

WN: And *hō hana*.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

EF: Yeah. So before, I used to go Kona. My father them used to go work Kona. I stay one year, no more one year, I think. He used to go *hana* Kona. But no money, you know. They used to give us paper [i.e., scripts or coupons] for buy *kaukau* or like that. We never did get money, see? They always give us paper. Then my father *bin* go [work for Hawai'i] County. Used to make thirty-five dollars a month on the county, see? In Kona.

And then couldn't make enough money, eh?. So we moved back over here [Haina]. So we came over here, then I stay home, I go help them *hō hana*, my father, my mother, and my sister. We used to go help my father because we cannot get the *bangō* number. You know what I mean? (Coughs) We cannot get *bangō* number. Only young kid, that's why. [EF was too young to be assigned a worker's identification number which would have entitled him to receive wages from the sugar plantation.]

So we go *hana*, growing up, growing up. Then when I had age, about thirteen years, come to fourteen years, I had *bangō* number. I had *bangō* number, then I went that *hō hana*, I got money, already.

WN: So when you started, you got your *bangō* number at fourteen years old, yeah?

EF: Fourteen years old.

WN: How old were you when you started as a boy?

EF: Young boy?

WN: Yeah.

EF: I was eleven years old [1934].

WN: Eleven. Oh.

EF: Yeah.

WN: So when you came back from Kona to Haina, you didn't go school already?

EF: No, no. When I *stay* come from Kona over here, we used to work, help my father [in the cane fields]. You see, we no get pay. My mother them got the pay. Then come up to the boy time, make fifty cents a day. And I *bin* come back my *bangō* number. I *bin* get dollar-half [\$1.50].

WN: Dollar-half [\$1.50].

EF: Man time, that already. You know, man time.

WN: So boy pay was fifty cents, and the man pay was \$1.50, one day.

EF: Right, right.

WN: So before I ask you about work, can you tell me what you did to have good fun in Haina as a small boy? What kind things you did for young boy time?

EF: When us used to be Honoka'a, we no go no place. Only stay home. We get no more money, you see. That's why. And then we start working, then my father give us, my mother give us, for go to the show [i.e., movie]. That's all. And we go to the show, come home.

WN: What kind show?

EF: Cowboy show.

(Laughter)

EF: Then we used to go to the show, we go home, and then we get up morning time, go work extra. Go *hana*. Then, when I had the man time, *bangō* number, we used to *hō hana*. But the guys used to measure by feet, eh? We used to get paid by feet. Twelve feet, one *bangō*, and that's your measure, see? How many feet the line get, and then we got paid by that. When we used to get pay, it's separate already from me and my father and my mother. They give us the money separate. And my father them different, like that. And then we get paid, we give my mother them the money, all the money. We no take nothing. And then it's up to my mother for give us money. You know what I mean?

WN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

EF: That's how, eh. From time I growing up, I *bin* working the cut cane with my father. I make ten cents a day.

WN: Young boy time?

EF: Yeah, young boy.

WN: Ten cents a day?

EF: But I had *bangō* number already.

WN: Oh, you had [your own] *bangō* number already.

EF: Yeah, yeah. I *bangō* number already.

WN: So you got \$1.50 a day.

EF: One day. But the way they used to work, the scale boy, the water boy, and the foreman, plus the *hāpai kō*, plus the station man, you gotta pay all them, too. You see, if we make the bundle little bit big, they thought too heavy, they take out money from us, you see. Okay, if we make the bundle small, they tell, “No ’nough cane. Too light.” So they take out the same thing. If you make so many bundle, they take. You see. So afternoon time, I *stay* tired already. Was about two o’clock, I think, I tell my father I *stay* tired already cutting cane. So my father go ask the scale boy how much I make. Ahh, only ten cents. My father *bin* like hit him with a cane knife.

(Laughter)

WN: So they *wen* pay you by the bundle.

EF: By the bundles, right.

WN: Or you put the cane together in the bundle?

EF: You make a bundle, like that. One bundle.

WN: Okay.

EF: Then you tied ’em up. And then they lift ’em up . . .

WN: Oh, the *hāpai kō* man put ’em on the shoulder.

EF: *Hāpai kō*. You know what I mean? And then put ’em on the flume.

WN: Put ’em on the flume.

EF: Right. Had flume, water flume that go down to the station.

WN: They put the cane on with the string around?

EF: They tied ’em up with the cane leaf, and put ’em on top.

WN: Oh, then they walk to the flume.

EF: And then they walk, maybe about—sometime they walk about from here to the house. Hundred feet or sometimes 150 feet, the *hāpai kō* man. Depend, eh?

WN: And how heavy was one bundle?

- EF: Supposed to be eighty-five pounds. But we don't know.
- WN: (Laughs) Yeah.
- EF: We make bundle big. But less better for us, eh. No, it's too heavy. Small [bundle], no good. They always scale 'em, the bundles. They scale 'em. They got the scale boy, eh, go scale 'em.
- WN: So you got paid by the bundle?
- EF: Yeah, got paid by the bundle, that's how. 'Cause every time, they go scale 'em, eh. They go scale everybody's bundle.
- WN: You scale every bundle? Every bundle they scale?
- EF: Every one. Not only one, every bundle. Every bundle.
- WN: And then your father was *hāpai kō* man?
- EF: Cut cane.
- WN: Oh, he was cut cane.
- EF: My father cut cane.
- WN: You work with him, together?
- EF: Yes, I work with him. [Once] we had big cane fire down Kapulena side. From Kawela over, right up to Iuka Road, right up. Had one camp up there, had one Catholic church. All that, the cane *bin* burn all right up. So we had to go help them cut the cane, all the *hō hana* men, otherwise the cane get sour. So everybody has to go help them cut cane. Then after the field *pau*, they come home, take the train, come back home. Otherwise, we have to walk.
- WN: So that was your first job?
- EF: No, the first job, *hō hana*.
- WN: First job, *hō hana*.
- EF: *Hō hana*.
- WN: Okay.
- EF: *Hō hana*. Then second job was cut cane.
- WN: Cut cane. Then after that, you did *hāpai kō*, eh?
- EF: Eh?

WN: Bundle, put in the bundle.

EF: Yeah, yeah.

WN: You did that too.

EF: Then we go *hāpai kō*, too.

WN: So for the *hāpai kō* bundle, you got paid ten cents for one bundle?

EF: That's right. Just right for one man *hāpai*.

WN: We'll take a break.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, what was your *bangō* number?

EF: Twenty-fourteen [2014], my first one.

WN: Twenty-fourteen.

EF: And when I *bin* retire, my *bangō* number was ten-twenty-three [1023], something like that?

MF: Twenty-fourteen.

WN: No, that was his first one.

MF: Oh, his first one.

EF: Yeah.

WN: But he's talking about the one that when he retired. So this was Honoka'a Sugar Company . . .

EF: Honoka'a.

WN: . . . when you started. And the mill was down Haina.

EF: Down Haina. The old mill was down Haina.

WN: And so when you worked as cut cane, and *hō hana*, and *hāpai kō*, who was inside your gang with you? Who worked with you?

EF: With me?

WN: Yeah. Portuguese? Filipino? Japanese?

EF: I have my friends, the Portuguese boys: Louis DeRego and Gordon DeRego, Josilla Soares

and Joe Santos, I think. That's all I get.

WN: And who was your first *luna*?

EF: Well, my first *luna* was Joe Ramos. And then our boss was Kazu, he lived Āhualoa, one Japanese man. Kazu.

WN: Kazu?

EF: Yeah. He was good guy though. *Stay* live Āhualoa. That was my first boss.

WN: So Kazu was your boss over here, Haina?

EF: Haina. We all was sent Haina.

MF: Well, I don't see him long time.

WN: Okay, so when you were fourteen years old, you were man, yeah? You get the men's pay. You got your *bangō* and everything, yeah? Fourteen years old?

EF: Fourteen years old, yeah.

WN: So when you became fourteen and you got your *bangō*, what was your first job?

EF: That time my *bangō* number? That was *hō hana*.

WN: Still *hō hana*?

EF: *Hō hana*.

WN: Oh, okay. So you did *hō hana*, cut cane, *hāpai kō* . . .

EF: *Hāpai kō*, I was flag boy, watch for the flume.

WN: Oh, flag boy.

EF: 'Cause every time, I fall down with the bundle.

(Laughter)

EF: Every time, fall down with the bundle of cane. Sometimes too heavy, eh. We don't know, eh. Fall down. Fall down inside the flume.

WN: You *wen* fall down in the flume?

EF: Inside the flume.

WN: Wow.

EF: Yeah. But we jump off. (Laughs)

MF: 'Cause the water is not that high.

EF: Yeah. Water.

WN: How long was one flume? How many feet you think, one flume, average?

EF: Well, the board is—I think about fifteen feet one board, or twelve feet. But the flume is---where this road now, over here, you know, the highway. Go all the way down to Haina, [from] Honoka'a, down Haina, to the station. All the way, they make 'em. So the water is up here. They make raise above. They put water inside from Waipi'o. They fill up that, and then when time for flume, then they take the water from there for flume the cane.

WN: Oh, so maybe one flume, all the way down, is like over one mile?

MF: Over, eh?

EF: Over.

WN: Oh yeah?

EF: Over. Like a full speed go down right down to the mill, to the station, and then the train, pick up the cane. Go to the railroad, down side. And then get the mill, they get the hook, he pull 'em like that. Two cable, pull 'em like that, the cane.

WN: So at the end of the flume where does the cane collect? Inside one truck? Or in the cane car, or what?

EF: They got the cane car. Cane car is about twenty feet, I think, the cane car. But he get one station. Then the cane fall inside, fall inside the box. Then one Filipino at the top, and one down with the mules for pull the cane car. When he open the box, the cane drop inside, then the guys pull 'em, fill up the cane car, pull.

WN: And what about the water?

EF: The water? Go down to the ocean. All go to the gulches.

WN: And how wide was the flume?

EF: Oh, the flume small. On top it's about two feet and a half, I think. Just one board. One by twelve, just put 'em like that. That's how. Nailed 'em like that.

WN: Oh, like a V.

EF: Yeah, one V.

WN: Yeah, so narrow then, eh?

MF: Yeah, it was.

EF: Yeah. Small.

WN: And then I bet the cane got stuck, though, along the way.

EF: Well, gotta go push 'em. That's why got the flag boy.

WN: Oh, that's your job?

EF: Yeah. Get flag boy. If the flume *stay* stuck, well, you had to put the flags for the men stop up there, for they no flume [more] cane, 'cause the flume *stay* stuck. And then gotta push the cane, you see. That's why they put the flag boy, for watch. And if they no more flag boy, they going be back up all the way up. You get big trouble.

WN: How many flag boys had?

EF: Two, sometime one, two. If you can look the guys way up, not bad. Because [with] the foreman, it was two. And as soon as you make like that [i.e., signal] with the flag, well, they stop the workingman [from placing more cane onto the flume] up there. For them no load the flume, you know what I mean?

WN: But the water still running, though.

EF: The water still running. But that stuff stack up, flume stop, the water cannot go, all spill out. No more place, so you had to push 'em [i.e., the cane], you know. That's how.

WN: And then the flume, they built 'em right over the cane field?

EF: Yeah, right on the cane field. 'Cause they start from down, go up when they cut cane. From down, go up, and then when they reach on the top, all *pau* harvesting already. But they *stay* going, going, going. You see. And if get young cane, when they gotta open road, they put a flume between there.

WN: I see. And then the flume is on the ground?

EF: On the ground. Some place high, some place low.

WN: Oh. How they make 'em high?

EF: They put two-by-fours or whatever, like that.

WN: Oh, and they elevate 'em.

EF: For hold 'em up, the legs. Yeah.

WN: How come they gotta elevate some?

EF: Oh, some place come high. The high ones, they leave 'em over there all the time. Maybe

about fifteen, twenty feet [high], something like that. But they leave that one there. They only take the one to the ground, then they take 'em off. That's easier for join, eh, that one. That's how they make.

WN: So your job as flag boy was, when you see one jam up you wave your flag.

EF: Wave the flag. And the guys up there, they stop that [cane loading].

WN: And they can see you?

EF: Yeah, they can, make [EF waves arms frantically].

(Laughter)

WN: And then after you wave the flag, they stop loading the cane?

EF: Stop loading cane.

WN: And then what? You gotta . . .

EF: I gotta go push. If I no can, I call them. They come down to help.

WN: Oh. And you do 'em by hand?

EF: All by hand. If no can [push the stalled cane down the flume], gotta *hemo* all the cane outside [i.e., remove cane from the flume]. Throw the cane down. Then *bumbai* I gotta *lilikō*, put 'em inside.

WN: So the cane is like going down one at a time like this?

EF: All downhill.

WN: One. . . . Not bunch, eh? Get bunches going down?

EF: Right. The bundle go inside the flume.

WN: So you figure how many cane stalks fit going down at one time?

EF: Ho, the plenty, boy. Plenty. How many bundles stalk, you mean? It depend how many men *stay* carry that. Maybe eight or ten men. If it back up above from here till the road over there, it come plenty already. Hundred feet, all back up. Plenty, plenty. That's why gotta *hemo* the cane. Take 'em out from the flume for the water can run, eh, you see. And then when the water can run, the flag boy pick up the cane, throw 'em back [onto the flume] again.

WN: But get only two flag boys?

EF: Yeah, two of—way up.

WN: One over here, one down. But what if something happen in between? (EF laughs.)

MF: Then get stuck, they gotta run up.

WN: Who gotta run, you or the other guy?

(Laughter)

EF: Maybe about one mile, half mile, I think. Far. Hard work, before. Hard work.

WN: You said sometimes you go fall inside the flume?

EF: When you *hāpai kō*.

WN: Oh, when you *hāpai kō*?

EF: Yeah. You throw the [cane onto the] flume, go inside the flume.

WN: Not dangerous?

EF: Dangerous.

WN: You know anybody who got hurt or died?

EF: They watch. The other guys watched you. If you hit your head, like that, they go right down to the station.

WN: And the flume made out of wood, you said. Wood, not metal?

EF: No, no. All wood. One by twelve. All lumber. Not metal.

WN: So flag boy, and what other job you had?

EF: From there I went to the mules.

WN: Mules? Oh, so what did you have to do?

EF: Mule? Cultivator, *hāpai hana*, pull flume [lumber] for the guys, for line up for the flume cane, pull flume. Inside the forest, pick up firewood for the people make hot water. You know *da kine* box, *furo*, they call that to us. How you call that . . .

MF: *Furo*, the Japanese [bath], they had *da kine* box for . . .

EF: The *furo*. Yeah, you make the fire underneath, they go inside, bathe or what. The old people, the Japanese, anybody. That's *da kine*, collect firewood. Because the company used to give us kerosene before. We never used to buy kerosene and the firewood. We used to make small pay, that's why. So used to give that all to the people. And cut firewood, put 'em by the side of the road. Then the plantation truck come pick 'em up, drop 'em to the houses. You get so much [i.e., a certain amount]. Every day like that. Go pull flume. Used to go cultivator,

hāpai hana.

WN: What you use the mule for? To pull things?

EF: Pull that. The mules, that we use 'em for cultivator, *hāpai hana*, plow the cane field. Before we no more tractor. Olden days, no more tractor. And pull the flume, the lumber for they make flume. Then we used to pull firewood for the people. Good, though. Ride the mules every time. (Laughs)

WN: So your job was to ride the mule, tie 'em [i.e., the lumber and firewood] on.

EF: Yeah, all that.

WN: You had to feed 'em, too? You had to feed the mule?

EF: They just feed 'em grass with molasses. They take the fresh grass, they mix 'em up with the molasses down the stable, they mix 'em up and then they feed 'em afternoon time. Every day.

WN: So you did that? That was your job, feed the mule?

EF: No, no. Never did. They get somebody else, that Antone Angel, that. Antone Angel. You know, yeah.

MF: Yeah.

EF: Them the one feed the mules. Us, we only go take the mules, go work, go back. Put the mules in the stable, tied 'em up, *pau*. Then, they take care the rest. Morning time we go get 'em. If the mule *stay* sleep they tell us not to take that mule, or whatever. They used to always tell us.

WN: How many mules had?

EF: Hoo, the plenty. Plenty. Maybe had about twenty or twenty-five, I think, or more. Because plenty guys working, go cultivator like that. Go up in the line, the line gang.

WN: So you go to the stable first? You go to the stable and then you get your mule?

EF: Go get the mule. From home go down the stable, pick up the mules, ride 'em, go to the field.

WN: Oh, good job, that.

(Laughter)

EF: Then reach up there. You stand there you put the *hani* [i.e., harness] put the collar. Get the *hani* with the chain. They call that *hani*.

WN: Oh yeah? *Hani*?

EF: Put 'em on, then you go to the field, and you put the chain to the cultivator. Get a single

string, one iron, get two holes. Then put the chain over there. Tell the mule go. Pull 'em. Then you stay behind the mule.

WN: The plow, too? Had one plow for plant, too?

EF: The plow?

WN: Yeah.

EF: Well, the plow is only when *pau* harvesting. When *pau* harvesting, like that, they go plow the field for plant cane again, you see. So the same thing. The mule pull the plow. But I never go through the plow, though. That one only one-mule plow, he pull 'em, he broke the ground. You know what I mean?

WN: Yeah.

EF: Broke the ground. And then *bumbai* they pack the hard one on top. The ground come all soft. That's how.

WN: Okay, and then what other job you had? You had steam plow, too, you work steam plow?

EF: Steam plow, yeah. Steam plow, flag boy, too. Watch the cane cars when the [railroad] station [was] by the ocean, down Haina on Plantation Road where the railroad was before, right down to the ocean. The steam plow is like the cane car, two cars. And right on the bottom by the ocean in the station, the flag boy give sign to the steam plow guy for pull the car up, the two cars, they pull 'em up. In case the cable broke and the cars run away, they go on the side streets. Only if the car go up, you stay in the street. In case broke way up, when the car come down, runaway. For no go kill the mule down by the ocean, the guy, he go by the side, *huli*. You know what I mean? Go by the side streets and *huli* the car.

WN: Yeah?

EF: Plenty time, he *huli* by the side of the road. So that's why I got a flag boy for give sign to the steam-plow driver, and when come down, go let 'em go, give 'em sign again, then they *hemo* the—they *bin* go neutral, just like. The cane car go fast. He go straight to the level. They get one pickup truck, *da kine*, boom, start already.

WN: Hoo, must have been hard to stop.

(Laughter)

EF: That's how they used to make. Time for the steam plow, I was steam plow, I *bin* go work at railroad, I think.

WN: So when they had the steam plow and the railroad, they still was using mules? When they had steam plow and railroad, they still had mules on the plantation?

EF: Yeah. All that. I *bin* go work railroad.

WN: What you did at railroad?

EF: I used to fix the railroad first. I *bin* stay there so many months, pick up cane, back and forth, gotta clean the railroad.

WN: Oh, you mean the track?

EF: Clean the tracks, right from Honoka'a to Kukuihaele. You know Kukuihaele? Down by the lighthouse? Go all the way down there. Then after long time, I *bin* go [work as a] brake man. I stay there long time, brake man.

WN: What you had to do to be brake man? What was your job?

EF: You ride behind [in the back of] the cane car. Because the fireman and the driver *stay* on the train. I give sign to them for back up. They no can [see]. Sometimes ten, fifteen cars, no can [see]. Like turn, like that, the fireman, he watch me. Then I give 'em sign. When little more, maybe about half kind [i.e., one-half car length], make 'em like that. (EF makes clapping sound.)

(Laughter)

EF: Half car. That's how it is. You gotta give 'em sign. *Bumbai* the train slow down. Then you stay behind in case the car is—sometime when the train going, the pin fly off. In case the car go back, run away, you take something, [and] poke 'em in the wheel. You know the wheel, from the cars, you poke 'em inside for hold the brake. Not like *da kine* Mainland kind, get the wheel on top. So you take one pipe, you put 'em inside [the spokes], he take the frame. Then *pau*, he jam.

WN: Oh, you jam the wheel. I see.

EF: Yeah, yeah. He stop. All the way. Then from there I *bin* go fireman.

WN: What the fireman did? What you did for fireman?

EF: We use the oil. Oil. But morning time you get one old man, Japanese man, nice man. Hirano. He used to make fire morning time for ready. For morning time for the drivers go down, workingman, just go. Pick up the cane cars from the mill and we go. And we use oil when the train slide we get sand, black sand from Waipi'o they bring. We *wen* sand. You know, sometime the train go, go, go and when little bit slide, no can pull already, all the cane. They put the sand on the railroad, on the track, and train he grab. (EF makes crunching sound.)

WN: Oh, better grip. Good grip

EF: He grip, he grip. Then he go. Then maybe about three load or four load from Kukuihaele to Kawela. Then the last time he come straight home [to Haina]. About five o'clock reach home, afternoon.

WN: So the train went all the way to Kukuihaele?

EF: Kukuihaele.

WN: From Honoka'a to Kukuihaele?

EF: From Honoka'a he go to Kawela, halfway. And then the one from Kukuihaele, he come to Kawela then go back Kukuihaele, like that. Half and half. And then after work, about five o'clock comes all the way back to Haina right by the mill.

WN: Okay, so you were brake man and fireman. So while you were working railroad, like that, how much you got paid? What was your pay?

EF: My pay?

WN: Yeah.

EF: I no like tell you. (Chuckles)

MF: I think they were paying him by hours already when I married him.

EF: The foremans used to pay us before.

MF: Yeah, yeah.

EF: We no get pay from the office.

MF: But afterward they stopped that.

EF: Yeah, but no more railroad already.

MF: The office, they give the money.

EF: You no more railroad.

MF: Because if you talking about the railroad, in the meantime [1944] we got married.

WN: So down Haina, had plantation store over there?

EF: Right, down right by the mill, not the old one, the new one up side, the factory. That was the second store.

WN: Which one is this?

EF: The factory. The [Hawaiian] Macadamia [Plantation] factory [in Haina].

WN: Oh, oh, [the site of the present] macadamia nut factory was [once] the [plantation store].

MF: That was the . . .

WN: Second one.

EF: Second one.

WN: Oh. Where was the first one? Next to the mill?

EF: The first one was right by the mill.

WN: What did they sell in there, the store?

EF: Down the store?

WN: What can you buy at the store?

EF: Any kind. (Chuckles)

MF: Over there was---you could charge it, you know what I mean?

WN: Yeah, actually I going ask you [MF] about the store.

MF: Okay. (Chuckles)

WN: I go ask him [EF] about the plantation. So, after you work for the railroad, what did you do?

Well, let me turn the tape over. Hold on.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: So after railroad, where did you work?

EF: From the railroad?

WN: Yeah.

EF: From the railroad, I went to the mill. Then I work in the mill on the [cane] washer. I pick up cane on the washer. They *lilikō*. Before had *da kine*—in the mill get the—they had to watch [for] rocks. Throw away the rock. So we pick up the cane for the cane no go in—we no like waste the cane. So we pick up the cane and put 'em in the next flume. You see.

WN: This is the cane that *wen* fell off?

EF: No, get the washer, with cane washing. So underneath you get the carrier take out the mud and the stone. And [sometimes] canes fall on top. You get *da kine* something like water valve. He shoot the cane and the mud fall down, and the stone. But see, some cane drops [through accidentally].

WN: Just like colander. (EF chuckles.)

MF: Yeah.

WN: Like one colander, you know, when you. . . . Oh, okay.

EF: 'Cause some cane, they drop. So you go by the carrier, and then we pick 'em up and throw 'em inside the flume for come back inside the mill.

WN: Oh, oh, oh, I see.

EF: You see. It's about three feet, or four feet high. The carrier *stay* spinning over there. Picking up the cane. I pull water, you know. And then picking up the cane, see.

WN: Oh, I see. Because the cane floats.

EF: He floats, right.

WN: And the rock and the mud sinks.

EF: The rock fall, and the mud. You see, 'cause the carriage get the iron like this picking up the cane. You see, picking up the cane. I work over there for a while, then I *bin* go up thread the washer. They put me up thread the washer because old-timer already. Long time. Operate the washer. Dump the cane, bring the cane up, wash 'em. The water, wash the cane.

WN: You like working outside or inside better? Which one more better? Working outside on the field or inside in the mill.

EF: Outside. Anytime, outside. (Chuckles) Yeah. Because in the mill, you *stay* working inside. You no more sunburn, you no more nothing. But now, if you work outside you get wet.

MF: No choice.

EF: You get sun, get good air, you see. But in the mill only *stay* steam. You know what is steam, and then the sweet smell from that sugar, all that you smell in the mill. But outside is good. But me, I *bin* go work mill. I like job on the whole plantation, what kind of job. But the only job I never go is poison. I no like. Poison I no like.

WN: You mean spray the cane?

EF: Yeah, the back one.

WN: Oh, backpack, spray the cane.

EF: Yeah. That one. That one I never did go. Poison, I never did go. That's the only job I never go. But the rest, I make job with all the plantation. All the job. All. I *bin* go fireroom, steam up the mill. Collect firewood for put inside for make steam, for can grind.

WN: Oh, to run the machine?

EF: No, no.

WN: Steam for the machines?

EF: Yeah, for the steam for can grind the cane. And for go boil the sugar, all that. All that gotta get steam.

WN: Hoo, boy.

EF: Yeah, all steam. But that's the way---when the plantation *bin* come to haul cane with the truck, with the loader tractor and all, you see, we cannot make good steam already, because too much stone. You know *da kine* sand, the stone, go inside the mill, he grind 'em, come to sand. He go inside the fireroom with that trash [i.e., cane leaves, etc.]. Then hard for make fire because all of that sand, he go to the boiler, to the firebox and he stuck. Come like clay. Stuck. No can make hot, the firebox.

WN: So you use the '*ōpala* for the fireroom?

EF: That trash, that trash.

WN: Oh, so you don't use wood?

EF: That trash. So if that trash cannot keep up for make that, we gotta carry firewood.

WN: Oh, I see.

EF: The firewood for make the fire more strong in the mill.

WN: So when you use the trash, sometimes it get the sand. [Rocks get caught in the grinders, creating sand.]

EF: The sand hard. That's why before we had plenty mules Honoka'a, but when all the mules *make*, they don't know why. But come find out, that trash had sand inside. So when they mix 'em with the molasses for go give the mules, they eating the sand. So die, all.

WN: So the washer never clean all the cane haul, then.

EF: No, no. No can, no can.

WN: No can.

EF: No can.

WN: Oh, so some rocks get stuck in the. . . .

EF: The rock is stuck sometime. Not all go. If big kind, when go on the front by the carry, by the knife, or the one take care down front there, they take out the rock. They no let 'em go through, you see. But the small kind no can see because the cane back up. Come to sand.

WN: Jam up, then.

EF: But before, if cut cane, no more sand. All clean. Only trash. Easy for the mill, and easy for the fireroom, and the cane grow nice. Because you *stay* cutting over there. By the time you push that and all. Mud, all that. Terrible. [EF is comparing the earlier method of harvesting where the hand-cut cane was loaded by hand onto rail cars and transported to the mill, with the most recent method of bulldozing the cane stalks into piles, using a cane-grabber to load the cane onto trucks, and transporting the load, rocks and all, to the mill.]

But for the railroad I go every day. I go back and forth. I *bin* go back railroad again.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

EF: From the washer I *bin* go to the crane, loading crane. We going load the cane truck from the washer. Then from the loading crane, I *bin* go to the big crane. You never see the big crane, though. Big crane, that. Hundred feet long, the boom. And eighty-five feet from the ground to the top. I fall down one time.

WN: Yeah?

EF: Fall down, right down. The crane had fall down with the lightning. Had rain that day. So the manager said for everybody make *pau* and go home. So we don't know. So rain. Here come a strong lightning. The Filipino boy *wen* carry one load. That load no can be heavy. He carry the load, when he go put on to the end of the boom, the lightning had come. Strong lightning had broke my radio antenna. You put the radio antenna on top one wire and come down, so you can play radio. The lightning *bin* broke that and crack the boom because of that. *Pau*. The crane *bin* fall down.

WN: Oh, lightning, okay, okay. Yeah, I see.

EF: When rain get lightning. That's a big lightning, boy, had come. And us was hit. Me and Tengan, one Japanese boy.

WN: Tengan.

EF: Tengan. We was hit. We *wen* look that lightning, that crane fall down. All the lights from the mill went out because get the cable over the electric wire, ground. Everything went down, and nobody knew how come. So I *bin* go see the foreman. I *wen* tell the foreman, "Ey, you guys no can finish that job, the crane *stay* fall down."

"Okay, the crane *stay* fall down. We go look the crane *stay* fall down." The cable *stay* on top the wire. *Pau*. Everybody went home. No can do nothing.

WN: So the cane grabber, you said, is that like push rake kind?

EF: Push rake, yeah. Then from there I *bin* go to the push rake. Yeah. I *bin* apply for the cane cutter, but they closed. Then I *bin* go to the push rake. Push rake. Like before, had drag line before the push rake. They drag line. One tractor that side, one tractor this side. Push.

WN: Oh, gather all the cane in one bundle, one big bundle.

EF: Pull the cane. Come like one line, bundle, line for the loader.

WN: What was the line made of? Cable?

EF: The big one, five-eighths [inch].

WN: Five-eighths inch. And then you use the drag line and you . . .

EF: Yeah, drag line.

WN: . . . put 'em all . . .

EF: Pile 'em up.

WN: . . . in piles?

EF: Yeah.

WN: So this is after flume time, then. No more flume when you had drag line.

EF: No, no, no. No flume. No more flume.

WN: They didn't do flume anymore?

EF: No more. I don't know what day that.

WN: Before the war [World War II], after the war?

EF: No, before the war.

WN: Before the war, they no more flumes already?

EF: Yeah, before the war, because I get married to you [MF].

WN: [Nineteen] forty-four?

EF: You remember?

WN: You got married.

MF: [Nineteen] forty-four, yeah.

WN: Had flume?

MF: Well, the flume had stopped before that.

WN: Oh, before the war.

MF: Yeah.

WN: No more flume.

EF: Before the war no more.

WN: Okay. So from drag line you started doing the push rake. Push rake took the . . .

EF: That's the way. We *wen* push rake.

WN: Oh, oh. How did that work? What you did with the push rake?

EF: The rake *stay* in front the tractor. Just like one bulldozer blade, but rake, like that.

WN: Oh, like a fork.

EF: Like that.

WN: With fingers.

EF: Yes, like that.

WN: And went underneath and grab.

EF: Only you push the cane, the dirt go right through [the fingers].

WN: Oh, I see.

EF: That's why. So lift 'em up so much, you push like that. You no put 'em all the way down because—for push the ground.

WN: You no like rocks, yeah.

EF: So you gotta put 'em just right, the push rake, like that.

WN: And the thing was curved?

EF: Yeah.

WN: Curved?

EF: Come straight like that.

WN: Oh.

EF: Just like one L.

WN: And you drove that?

EF: Yeah.

WN: Who taught you how?

(Laughter)

WN: Nobody? You watch?

MF: And if the other guys like tell him what to do, he say, "I know how to run." And he would just put 'em there and let 'em go. Never had no problem with him working or learning. Even though he doesn't know how to read or write, but at work he knows everything.

WN: So your push rake job was your last job?

EF: My last job. Push rake.

WN: Because, I think---was Honoka'a Sugar [Company] before, and then it became [Davies] Hāmākua Sugar [Company] after that, [1984] yeah?

EF: Honoka'a Sugar was before that one Davies. And then I work one or two years, I think, with this guy, [Francis] Morgan.

WN: Morgan.

EF: Yeah. One or two year, I think, me work with him. Then I *bin* retire.

WN: You retired 1985, yeah?

MF: Yeah.

EF: [Nineteen] eighty-five, Mary, was, yeah?

WN: Morgan took over '84, I think.

EF: Right, right.

WN: Oh, okay.

EF: *Pohō*, but. Now the company broke. Everybody *stay* sad. The company *stay* give me bread and butter, take care my kids, all us, all the peoples up in Honoka'a, yeah. Jam up. So I don't know. Maybe no can get plantation already, Honoka'a Sugar. I don't know.

MF: *Pau*, closed the last one in Ka'ū already, did they?

WN: Yeah. [Ka'ū Agribusiness Company closed in 1996.]

EF: So they going make maybe papaya farm now.

(Laughter)

WN: So how you feel about that? How you feel about no more sugar anymore?

- EF: Oh, I feel hurt, boy. All these guys no more job, and all of my life I work plantation. You know what I mean? And now the company broke. But the plantation *bin* treat me good. They give us our life, food, all that *kaukau*. You know what I mean? And now they drown 'cause everything *stay* coming up. What, what they gonna have? They never get nothing. See. Hard struggling for them, hard living. That's why, I don't know. I got my house.
- MF: We made this house ourselves, you know. (EF chuckles.)
- WN: When? When did you build this house?
- MF: This house is already over (thirty) years, yeah?
- EF: Yeah.
- MF: Over (thirty) years. We take two years but then yet not finished. You know contractors now is so expensive.
- WN: So all this time you were living plantation house?
- MF: The other times, yeah.
- WN: In Haina?
- EF: Yeah, yeah, before.
- WN: And you had how many children? You had four children?
- MF: Four children.
- WN: So what do you want to see around here? You want to see papaya over here?
- EF: Guarantee. You look Hilo coast, *stay* planting papaya already.
- MF: And the trees thing, they don't grow too tall, right?
- WN: Yeah.
- MF: 'Cause we see 'em, all the big papayas . . .
- EF: Had big papaya. And now, they like plant trees over here for make ply[wood] board or something like that. So Kohala side, they *bin* plant trees already.
- MF: I don't know, 'cause the roads are so small [narrow] over here.
- EF: But we take the dry weather. That's why never grow fast. But over here, they plant trees, the trees grow fast if every time rain. But if they take the dry weather, hard growing, the tree. No more rain, hard. But they got plenty water. Afterward they put *da kine*—I don't know how to call that. The one they put down Haina.

WN: Oh, drip . . .

EF: The *hanawai* one.

MF: Sprinkler, no? No sprinkler?

EF: Like the one sweep like that, “Schu, schu, schu, schu, schu.” (EF makes sound of automatic sprinkler.)

WN: Oh.

EF: I don’t know how to call that.

WN: I guess sprinkler.

MF: I guess so.

EF: That’s the kind they *bin* put. That’s the one, Honoka’a. They put pipe, and underneath the ground they put the small *kine* hose, maybe about three-fourths [inch] (drip irrigation). Every time the water *stay* running. That’s the kind we had. Now *pau*.

WN: So when you compare the old days to now, which one you like better?

EF: Well, only thing I can tell you, the olden days we was poor. But now, we come up. We get more money, but the [cost of] food is high. You know what I mean? High. Compare from the olden days and now, just as bad, just like.

WN: Oh, hard time.

EF: You know what I mean? My money is high, but the food high, so come level. (MF chuckles.) In the olden days—you know what I’m saying?

WN: Yeah.

EF: Just level. You no can go up, you see. Got people---we used to buy one bag rice, 100 pounds, five dollars, see. One hundred pounds, five dollars. Now, what? You no can buy 100-pound bag five dollars. Maybe about fifty-four, fifty-five dollars, 100-pound bag. Yeah. I think I come just as bad, you see. But like now, I’m old. The olden days is different already. When I was young, I know how much I may suffer. You know what I mean? How much I *bin* suffer before, and come to now, ahh, I no need suffer that much. I’m old already, so I get my money coming in already. I *bin* work all my life.

WN: What about the young people now growing up over here? What they gonna do now with no more sugar?

EF: Oh, not bad. (Chuckles)

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: So, you know the final harvest, the day when they had the parade over here . . .

EF: Oh, before we had parade.

WN: Yeah, you were in there. Oh, the one, the final harvest. You know the last day?

EF: No, no, no, no. We was Maui, eh?

WN: Oh, you missed that day?

EF: We went Maui, I think.

MF: No, we wasn't Maui.

EF: We never go?

MF: We stayed here. When the last truck *wen* pass by.

EF: The last harvesting. Well, I never go [to the parade].

MF: We was here.

WN: Never go?

EF: I never go. I was Maui, I think.

MF: No, no. We were home.

EF: Home?

MF: Yeah. We was shedding the tears, too, when you hear those horns blow.

WN: Oh yeah?

MF: Real sad.

EF: I probably go down there, I would be crying. From before and now.

MF: It was very sad when they closed down.

WN: So you started [working] plantation 1934, yeah?

EF: Yeah.

WN: Eleven years old and you retired 1985, so about fifty, fifty-one years you worked.

EF: Yeah. Fifty years.

WN: Fifty years. Okay, well, you know, your grandchildren going be listening to this tape. Any

last things you want to say?

EF: My grandchildren, I tell 'em the story, they don't believe it. (Chuckles) And I go Hilo, like that, and I tell them all the story, how the railroad used to go. And how the railroad used to come Pa'auilo pick up the sugar, you see. The cane, sugar used to go over there, go Hilo, go down to the Hilo Harbor before.

(Telephone rings. Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: Okay? All *pau*?

EF: Good.

MF: All *pau*. (EF chuckles.)

WN: Thank you very much.

EF: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

THE CLOSING OF SUGAR PLANTATIONS:

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