

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Francis Sing

Francis Sing, son of Francis A. Sing and Johanna Baker Sing, was born July 17, 1918 in Pālama and lived for a few years in Kaka'ako before moving back to Pālama. He attended Pohukaina School, Kalākaua Intermediate School, and graduated from McKinley High School in 1938.

He began frequenting Pālama Settlement as an elementary school student and continued to play sports there as a young adult. While still in high school, he worked at Pālama Settlement under the National Youth Administration program.

During the summers he worked at the cannery for Hawaiian Pineapple Company, and for a short time he worked at the Mid-Pacific Horticultural Establishment nursery. During World War II, he worked in the ammunition depot in Āliamanu. In 1943, he began working at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard as a pipe fitter and then transferred to Barber's Point Naval Air Station.

Sing joined the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. Upon his return, he went back to his former job at Barber's Point.

He retired in 1973. He is married and has two sons.

Tape No. 27-43-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Francis Sing (FS)

Honolulu, O'ahu

February 4, 1998

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This an interview with Francis Sing, it's February 4, 1998 for the Pālama Settlement project and the interviewer is Holly Yamada. [The interview took place at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa.]

Okay, let's just start with when and where you were born.

FS: I was born at Long Lane, Pālama.

HY: And when were you born? What's your birth date?

FS: July 17, 1918.

HY: Do you remember what your parents [Francis Atoon Sing and Johanna Baker Sing] were doing at that time?

FS: I think my mother was a housewife. My father was working for *Honolulu Advertiser*.

HY: Oh, what did he do at the *Advertiser*?

FS: He was a printer, running the presses.

HY: And where in the birth order are you? Do you have siblings? Do you have brothers and sisters?

FS: I'm the second oldest.

HY: The second oldest?

FS: My sister is older than I am.

HY: And then how many younger?

FS: My two sisters are below me, (three half brothers and one half sister). I stayed with my father.

- HY: And so you grew up with your stepmother.
- FS: Yeah, she---when I was four years old.
- HY: Do you have memories of your biological mother?
- FS: Not when I was young. I didn't remember until I grew up. About nine or ten years old. She [FS's stepmother] brought us up. I went to high school, I (heard) my mother wanted to see us. So we visit her.
- HY: And do you remember anything about your dad's parents, your grandparents?
- FS: No, my dad's parents, I don't remember because they passed away. My grandfather is from China, and my grandma (is part Hawaiian and Portuguese). Her maiden name was Espinda. Her parents came from (Azores,) Portugal.
- HY: And then . . .
- FS: But I just have a picture of my grandfather and my grandma.
- HY: [Was] your dad born in Hawai'i? Or did he come from China, or. . . .
- FS: No, no, he was born in Hawai'i.
- HY: Oh, okay. So your grandparents met each other in Hawai'i, then.
- FS: Yeah, in Hawai'i.
- HY: Okay. So, let's see. Do you remember if you had chores around the house when you were little?
- FS: Oh yeah.
- HY: What kind of stuff did you have to do?
- FS: Well, (at eight years old) we (took turns wash dishes,) sweep and mop the floor before we leave (for school).
- HY: Your mom was very strict?
- FS: (Yes.)
- HY: Was she the person that disciplined you?
- FS: Yeah, she was. She taught me how to be neat, and everything. You know, (keep myself clean).
- HY: When you say you had to wash your own clothes, did you use a washing machine? (Laughs)
- FS: No, no. By hand, scrubbing, you know, those washboard, eh. Cold water, no hot water.

HY: What was the house like that you lived in? Can you describe that?

FS: We lived in a cottage, two bedroom.

And sometimes I get into fight. When I get into fight, even if I come home with a black eye, she see me like that she just hit me on my back.

HY: What about your dad?

FS: Oh, he was a quiet man. Very quiet. Never bother. He would scold me, but never lay a hand on me. Really nice and easygoing.

HY: What kind of things did you do for play I mean, other than Pālama Settlement, maybe before you started going there? You said you had all your chores to do, and what would you do for play?

FS: (Shoot marbles [and] *pee wee* using broomsticks.) Play basketball.

HY: Other than like at Pālama Settlement, were you playing sports before you started going to Pālama?

FS: Well, yeah, when I lived down at Kaka'ako, and then I went to Pohukaina School, and I turned out for the little league football team. I remember that, playing football for the Kaka'ako team. And we took the championship. So our award was to take a trip. It was Mother Waldron [Playground], I think. That's the Kaka'ako park that they called Mother Waldron. And a limousine would take us up to the Pali. That was our award for winning the championship.

HY: Oh.

FS: I played football there, then we moved to Pālama. I don't know what made me just go to Pālama Settlement, but somehow. . . . I can't remember how I managed to get to Pālama Settlement. Well, we went through the little park. There was a little park on the side where the kids, younger kids played, see. So went there, then from there maybe I went over to Pālama Settlement and seen how they start participating. And besides that, I always read the sports page, because my father was reading the sports page, so. And he used to tell me this and that, who's playing who, so I start taking interest. Then I went to Pālama Settlement. And I start playing and then I start looking up to the older guys. See how good they were, you know, the good players. And then I start following them, watching them, what they do. And I just developed my own way.

HY: Who were some of the older guys that you really looked up to?

FS: Well, he was my coach. He was a sports writer, he was a sports editor for *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Bill Gee. You remember him? He was an all-around athlete, and a really good athlete. He was my coach also and I watch him play, and then I played under him. And then there was one of the greatest all-around athlete Hawaiian Solomon "Red" Raymond. He was really good. Whatever he did in sports he just, like he was a master of it. You give him a tennis racket, if he didn't know anything how to play, but he just go out there and he watch and he just played, play the game, and he was good. He was really all around. He played for

McKinley High School and he really was really good. All the sports: football, basketball, baseball. Track, I don't know whether he did anything on track, but that was the sports that I remember him participating in.

HY: Was there a track at Pālama Settlement?

FS: No, there wasn't no track. Just a football field.

HY: So when you did sports conditioning you would just run around the field then?

FS: Yeah, and in the gym also.

HY: Oh, I see.

FS: And I watched the older guys like—my brother-in-law, Francis Wong, he was playing basketball with Red Raymond, the one I was talking about. He . . .

HY: Francis is your brother-in-law?

FS: Yeah.

HY: Oh.

FS: He just passed away. He was one of the old-timers that was really good playing the senior league basketball with Red Raymond. And there were lot of good players, too, all around. The Naauao brothers, Bob, Robert Naauao and Solomon. Who else? (Walter Wong; Tomita brothers—Maha, Swanny, Jimmy and Elmo; John Puuloa; Tom Hugo.) And then there was Bill [William] Flazer, the best kicker in barefoot football. You heard about him?

HY: No.

FS: No? He still has a record on his team. They put him in *Believe it or Not*. He kicked the longest (distance in) barefoot football. He played basketball also with Red Raymond. They had a Wonder team, anyway, at that time. They had Philip Tuck Chong, Maggie Chow, (Alex McKee and Walt Holt).

HY: These are all---this group of people was all . . .

FS: Older than me.

HY: Above you? Oh, okay.

FS: Older than I am. I just watch them how they play.

HY: You were sports minded from very early, then.

FS: (Yes.)

(Laughter)

- HY: Okay. What about your—the neighborhood where you were at Pālama, were there—if you could talk about your childhood friends in the neighborhood.
- FS: Yeah, I was older than some of them. Like, this guy that turned out to be a photographer for the *Star-Bulletin*. (James Koo, another friend.)
- HY: So you said earlier that your dad was interested in sports and he kind of influenced you that way.
- FS: Mm hmm, yeah. He was a pretty good boxer, too. So he taught me how to protect myself, how to block punches. And he put up a speed bag, get the speed bag for your eyesight, your timing.
- HY: That's the little one [bag]?
- FS: Yeah, the little one.
- HY: Yeah, okay.
- FS: He taught me how to hit the bag.
- HY: He put one up at your home?
- FS: Yeah, right in the corner. And him and I would just practice. He'd show me to go like that, and then go like this, see. [FS demonstrates boxing moves.] (HY laughs.) Like that and go like this, like this, you know. All the timing and your eyesight, everything.
- HY: You think that helped you when you got in fights? Or was that. . . .
- FS: It did, it did.
- HY: Yeah? (Chuckles)
- FS: It did help.
- (Laughter)
- FS: Then swimming, he taught me how to swim. Go down the beach and I watch him stroke, because he swam with Duke Kahanamoku.
- HY: Oh, is that right?
- FS: Yeah, he did. And he used to tell me that they always go down by Moana Hotel, and that's the area where it's about—what do you call that, now?—Kūhiō Beach [Park] area.
- HY: So he . . .
- FS: And he said Duke Kahanamoku would just—all you see is his back. His leg would kick and all you see that full rise and you see him duck [tape inaudible]. That's the way he trained,

went right out. He just swim like a fish.

HY: Real smooth.

FS: Mm hmm. Powerful. And we have pictures of Duke, too. And when I see pictures of Duke in the paper, I say, "Oh, we have that in the album."

HY: And what other sports was he [FS's father] interested in?

FS: He was the best bowler. Well, while he played—before he became a bowler, before I was born in fact, 1912, he played with the all-star Chinese [baseball] team that barnstormed the Mainland. They went through twenty-two states and they brought twenty-two pennants [from] states that he'd been to, he brought home, brought back and showed me after I grew up. And he kept those pennants and then he showed us where he traveled. And when he traveled to New York City, he saw these people bowling. So they asked 'em, "What they doing? Is it bowling?" Then he watch them. Whether he learned up there or not, but he must have picked the game up there and learned how to bowl only with one finger [and a thumb]. See, this is thumb hole, this is two fingers—today this is modified, you have it [two] fingers [and a thumb]. But all his life, because he was a baseball catcher, had big hands, he had powerful hands. And he bowled all his life with two finger [one finger and a thumb]. And he became the champion. And he was a duckpin champion, too, the small little pins. They had tournaments down here. Nobody beat his records. I used to read in the papers his records. Shoot, nobody beat. Every time he bowled the big pins, the small pins, he was always up there. His name was always up there. He would win all the awards: high average, high single, high three. Just wipe everybody out.

HY: Is this in the [19]20s?

FS: And [19]30s.

HY: [Nineteen] twenties and [19]30s.

FS: Yeah.

HY: And you said that he bowled with the Chinese league?

FS: He was the captain for the all-Chinese team, yeah.

HY: So all the members are Chinese.

FS: Yeah, they're Chinese. I have a picture of them here.

HY: And would they play—you said they went to the Mainland.

FS: No, the baseball team. The baseball team went to the Mainland.

HY: Oh, I see.

FS: See, he played with the all-star Chinese baseball team that traveled to the Mainland.

HY: Oh, I see.

FS: And that's when [he] picked up his bowling.

HY: Oh, oh, oh.

FS: So when he came back, then he went into bowling and he became good.

HY: Where did they go bowling? Do you remember where the. . .

FS: The old YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] was on Hotel Street. You know where Adams Lane is?

HY: Yeah.

FS: That big building there?

HY: Yeah.

FS: That was the men's YMCA.

HY: So they had a lane there. A bowling lane.

FS: Right along side the Adams Lane, downstairs. They had about four lanes, and he would bowl there. And from there then they had downtown on Bethel Street, they had a pool hall, and downstairs Brunswick [Amusement Hall], they called it the Brunswick bowling lanes downstairs. And I was about seven or eight years old, he took me out a few times. And I would go down there, smoke filled and they just gambling, you know, they just bowling. Only men, yeah. (Laughs) And the bowlers, they used to—I was with my dad and they would call me Ah Toon, Jr. That was my father's Chinese name. (Laughs)

HY: Did you learn to bowl then, too?

FS: But I was really shy. I was really shy. Because I wanted to know how to keep score before I go on the bowling lanes. But then my dad [at] home taught me how bowl, how to pick up spares, where to stand, how to deliver the ball. He taught me all that, see. He told me to take three steps, and go out to the right side of the lane, and just cross, cross alley. But follow, he said, "Follow through like you shaking hand with the pin boy." We had pin boys that time, see. When I . . .

HY: That would go and put up . . .

FS: Yeah . . .

HY: . . . the pins that fell down?

FS: . . set up the pins, yeah. Then he told me, "The only way you follow through, look at your spot, where you going throw your ball, and just follow through. And your hook is in that follow-through," he said.

HY: How is it that you started going to Pālama Settlement? Do you remember how you started?

FS: When I was interested in sports and then I just going, kept going.

HY: So you knew that that was the place to go for sports.

FS: Yeah.

HY: Did most people know that? That they had the reputation of. . . .

FS: Yeah, and see, they made leagues, too. All kind of leagues. Their tournaments and then they had indoor track. Their indoor track was, we challenged the Mainland Boys Club of America. We challenged the Mainland through phones or radio, radio patch through phones. Their records and our records. But we had to be under eighteen years of age. On that tournament, I'm talking about. They called that the pan-Pacific pentathlon. Five events, see. And you had to be below eighteen years old, and they had different class on weight, weight divisions—110 pounds, 125, and 135 pounds. And I think they had a unlimited, after that 135[-pound division], unlimited after that.

HY: What were the five sports?

FS: Was a basketball shoot in a radius of eight foot, how many baskets you can make in one minute. And then the next sport was hop, step and jump—standing hop, step and jump. And the next part was standing broad jump, and the next one was high jump, and then the last event—that's really hard—chinning the bar. My friend and I, he was in a different division than I was. I think he was the 110 pound, I was in the 125 pounds. We both took national champions in 1936. I won my division, he won his. And he came in *Believe It Or Not*, Robert Ripley's *Believe It Or Not*, shooting one hand in an eight-foot radius, twenty-three baskets he made. And they put 'em in *Believe It Or Not*. Nobody beat that, see. I made twenty-two, but he did better than I did, but we both won national championships. Pālama Settlement gave me a silver medal with a track shoe with a wing. Beautiful medal. (I also received a gold medal from the Mainland Boys Club of America.)

HY: How did they send you folks to the Mainland?

FS: We didn't go, we just by radio, by records.

HY: Oh, I see what you're saying. Oh, I see. Yeah, okay.

FS: The records, see. Then they had the Junior Olympic Games, which Pālama had pretty good representatives. And champions, too. They had Cupie Yamamoto, he was an all-around junior olympic champion. Elmo Tomita, then Anthony Lewis, he came from St. Louis, that time they called it St. Louis College. It's a high school now, see. Then they had—well, these two brother were from Waipahu, the Arakawa store [Arakawas], Takemi and Kazuo Arakawa. They were champions, too. They were representing Hawai'i. And Pālama had Elmo Tomita, Cupie Yamamoto, Tony [Anthony] Lewis.

HY: This was in the Junior Olympics?

- FS: Yeah, Junior Olympics. Then when the football season come around, we had barefoot football playing at Pālama field. And I would watch them play. We had good teams. Bill Gee was playing on the barefoot football team. Elmo Tomita, Tomita brothers, Joseph Wong.
- HY: When you were playing barefoot football for Pālama, were you also playing for your school?
- FS: Yeah. (Chuckles)
- HY: You were playing . . .
- FS: Two sides. But, well, I was practicing. I was practicing so I played for Pālama, practicing for Pālama, but first I practiced at school, McKinley High School. I was on the---I made the JV [junior varsity] team, I made first-string quarterback. Then when I come after that, then I practice with Pālama, played for Pālama. Then somehow, the high school coach told me, "Ey, I found out you played barefoot, too. You either take one or the other." So I quit the JV and I played for Pālama.
- HY: Oh, why did you choose that instead of . . .
- FS: I don't know. I don't know.
- HY: Was their coaching styles different? The philosophy or their style of teaching?
- FS: Yeah, it was, it was.
- HY: How was it different?
- FS: It was. At Pālama it was more, you can listen to one coach. But on McKinley they had different line coach, and a backfield coach, and all that. So I was more close to Pālama.
- HY: When you say your . . .
- FS: He can relate—the coach was good. Harry Murakami was our coach. He could relate to us better.
- HY: Did you feel a loyalty to Pālama?
- FS: I did, but (chuckles) after the years went by, when I was playing in the senior league basketball, I had lot of offers to play for different teams, see. Some of the guys says, "Yeah, go, if they giving you everything." Pālama was a settlement that cannot afford to give what [others] give. Make you have free trips, you know, going away. So after I left, I played for different teams. And the rumors were going on. I heard it, too. They kind of didn't like the idea that I left Pālama Settlement, but I still go over there and practice.
- HY: Practice.
- FS: Yeah. Play with the boys. They call that "five baskets and you out." Next team come on. On Saturdays, Sundays like that, we get together.

HY: And you felt like they expected you to be loyal, too?

FS: Yeah, mm hmm. I was still---still yet I was loyal to them, but I love my sports so much that I had to make good playing for other teams, too, see. Which I did. And then I made the Hawai'i All-Star team. From 1946 the [Harlem] Globetrotters came down, so I turned out for the all-star team. I made it. I played against Globetrotters, barnstorming the islands. Then in '48---and that was the original Globetrotter team that came down. They were really good. I can still remember their names. Then in 1948 they came down again. And I made the team again. So we barnstormed the islands again. Then in '51 they brought a number of all-Americans down with the Globetrotter team. And I made the team, and I played with---Herman Wedemeyer was playing with us---the all-Army, "Mr. Inside" Glen Davis, he came with his girlfriend Terry Moore, the actress; and then Luke Easter, the baseball player, good hitter; and Marion Motley, fullback, he was a professional. Number one fullback. Then this guy was a all-American basketball player for, I think UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles], his name was Swede Anderson. He came down, too. We played together as a Hawai'i team playing against the Globetrotters.

(Laughter)

HY: Then did you go neighbor islands, too?

FS: Yeah, we did. We traveled to the islands.

HY: Well, did they teach you stunts, then? You know, the tricks . . .

FS: No, no. We knew what they were doing. We just had to keep up with them, which we couldn't, but. (HY laughs.) But I was really fast. I was fast and they would grab my shirt. I was kind of mad when they grabbed my shirt, then I start realizing, oh, this is the . . .

HY: The show.

FS: This is the show.

(Laughter)

HY: So this is the [19]50s, then, right? Late [19]40s, early [19]50s. So you continued to . . .

FS: Well, I . . .

HY: . . . go to Pālama and practice?

FS: (No. I didn't live near Pālama.) I volunteered during the Korean War. I went in the service. So when I came back, then I start coaching.

HY: Where did you coach?

FS: When I coached here, I coached at Jackson College. But what I learned was from my coach, Bill Gee, when he taught us the system. You learn this system. Oh shucks, now I forgot the system now. It's from Southern Cal, [University of] Southern California system of pass and

break. Follow the ball, you pass and break (Sam Barry system).

HY: Well, I'm going to turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

FS: Yeah, the name of that system (is the Sam Barry system). It was a good system, but it's all timing. Fake and pass and follow the ball. And at the same time you're blocking off your man, too, see. But like I say, when you go through this system, it's just like a routine thing. I tell my players, "When you get on the court, it'll come to you automatic. And you can do variations. Go on your own ability."

HY: So you learned all that from Bill Gee.

FS: Yeah. And we had a physical director that brought that system to Pālama. Phil Marvin. He's a graduate of Southern Cal. And when it first came to Pālama Settlement, he was refereeing and coaching. He did some refereeing too, see. And coaching the basketball team. Before Bill Gee, see. But Bill Gee was at Pālama Settlement also. I think he played with us—Bill Gee—played with us little while until he came to UH [University of Hawai'i] and played for the UH basketball team. Made the basketball team.

HY: You were close to him in terms of how he taught you sports and technique and all that, but was he also close to you personally? I mean, did you feel like he was. . . .

FS: No, no.

HY: It was strictly . . .

FS: (Sports.) Jimmy Koo and Bill Gee were close, closer than I was with him. But I was close to Jimmy Koo. Very close with him.

HY: Did the coaches get involved in, like, your personal, you know, your personal life at all?

FS: No, they didn't.

HY: It was separate.

FS: Yeah, they didn't bother.

HY: What about other people at Pālama Settlement? Were they---did they get involved with [your personal life?]

FS: It was Wilder Parker, Sr. He was one of my coaches when I was in that games, that pan-Pacific pentathlon. He was helping me, timing me on my basketball shooting and going through the routine, practices, what I gotta do.

And Bill Gee was a great broad jumper. He jumped ten feet six [inches]. And the best I could do was nine foot six [inches]. I was trying to beat him, but I couldn't. He was little taller than I was, see, and his legs were the longest. And there's an art to it, too.

HY: What about your other brothers and sisters? Did they go to Pālama, too?

FS: No, my mother would---I would tell my mother, I'd say, "Mom, I want take them to Pālama, too, get them interested."

She says, "No." My mother was strict.

HY: So you were the only one that went to Pālama Settlement, then.

FS: (Yes.) But my dad always worried about us; how we doing, where we are.

HY: Did he watch you play sports? Went to games?

FS: One basketball game he took one of my brothers, and they watched me play. That's when I scored twenty-six points.

(Laughter)

FS: We played against the navy team. That was a tournament at the Civic Auditorium.

HY: Oh, oh.

FS: They demolished the Civic Auditorium.

HY: Yeah. What were some of the other things that you got involved in at Pālama Settlement? Or was it strictly sports? I have a feeling . . .

FS: Strictly sports. (Chuckles)

HY: Did you do any arts and crafts or any of that kind of stuff?

FS: Carpentry. Real carpentry.

HY: Carpentry?

FS: Yeah. Pālama Settlement we had carpentry. And I would . . .

HY: Who taught you that?

FS: We had a instructor. And had---what do call that, now?---sketches that you follow, you know, how to cut, use a saw, but I wasn't interested. (Chuckles)

HY: So what would be a typical day, then, if you go to Pālama Settlement after school, I assume, yeah? You go there, and then what?

- FS: I leave my books home and just go to Pālama Settlement. And just play.
- HY: And then what would you do when you get there? Like, maybe . . .
- FS: We either swim or we go to the gym. Depends what sport is coming up, see, for the season.
- HY: And then you'd stay there till dinnertime?
- FS: Yeah. I have to get back before that, maybe three o'clock or four o'clock. Before four o'clock, anyway, I gotta get back home, wait for my dad. Then Saturdays, I know his payday is on Saturday so (chuckles) I wait for him. I know I going get a dime. (Laughs) Ten cents is plenty, yeah. And then I'm going to eat pork and beans, banana, and bologna sausage for lunch. Sandwich, yeah. Oh, that was a treat. (Chuckles)
- HY: What was the other meals like that you had, a regular—that was a treat meal—then what was . . .
- FS: For my lunch, yeah.
- HY: What would, like a regular mealtime . . .
- FS: Well, in the morning we would have Postum and mush. My dad would see that we had breakfast. He would always buy Postum and mush, bread.
- HY: Did your mom do—made dinner?
- FS: She was a good cook. She would make dinner for us, yeah.
- HY: What kind of food did she make?
- FS: All kinds. Good, really good. I don't know how she learned how to cook but she was good. She learned---and then you had Chinese people living around our area so she learned how to cook Chinese food.
- HY: She wasn't Chinese?
- FS: No, but she looked like. But she was more—see, her last name was Perez, P-E-R-E-Z. And she come from the Big Island. She was born in Waipi'o Valley. She looked like Oriental, but she wasn't. My dad was.
- HY: Chinese-Portuguese.
- FS: Well, he said Spanish. Maybe . . .
- HY: Spanish.
- FS: Yeah.
- HY: And then your biological mother, what was her . . .

FS: She was---she had English and Hawaiian. Yeah, had mix in her. She was a pretty woman.

HY: Were you one of the few mixed kids in Pālama or were there a lot?

FS: I think I was one of the few. (Chuckles)

HY: One of the few?

FS: Yeah.

HY: Did you feel unusual?

FS: No.

HY: No. You didn't think about it.

FS: No, I never think about it. Yeah. I thought that I was Hawaiian. Until---then when I start growing up they say, "Ey, you Portuguese."

(Laughter)

FS: Or some of them think me Japanese, too. I said, "No." But actually my father and my aunt, see, my grandfather's name was Ng Sing, see. Then you pronounce it, you use your tongue, Ng. But Ng is I-N-G or N-G. So somebody told me that there's no such thing as Sing in Chinese. So we should be Ng, I-N-G or N-G. So then the other day, I was thinking, I said, "Gee, there's a guy same name like me, Francis Sing. Maybe I should ask him how he got that, how his family." And we're no relation, you know. And he's a good football player. Him and his brother from 'Iolani [School]. And they used to come to Pālama Settlement. That Father Bray, the coach, used to bring the basketball team over to scrimmage against us. And we liked that. We liked to scrimmage against the high school teams. And Kamehameha School would come down. We played their team, because they didn't have a gym as big as Pālama Settlement had. We'd scrimmage. Oh, I loved to play against them. I would love to compete.

(Laughter)

FS: And I'd go all out to win.

HY: Did you work at---did you ever work at Pālama as a volunteer or anything else?

FS: (While [FS was] in high school the federal government gave jobs to teens called NYA, National Youth Administration, six dollars a month for twenty-four hours a month.) For our membership we had to do some work.

HY: What kind of work would you have to do?

FS: Clean around the yard over there, or whatever they asked us to do, you do 'em.

HY: Yard work and . . .

- FS: (And clean office.) Pick up the rubbish.
- HY: Did you have a supervisor?
- FS: (The secretary took care of the hours we work, for a month.) And then we just sign the paper and put so many hours in.
- HY: And that way you wouldn't have to pay your membership dues?
- FS: Yeah.
- HY: Oh, oh.
- FS: Dollar a year.
- HY: What about working outside of Pālama? Did you work?
- FS: Oh yeah, Hawaiian Pine[apple Co., Inc.] during the summertime.
- HY: This is at . . .
- FS: (Cannery,) but you had to be certain age in high school. And they would pick you. You gotta be about sixteen, I think. Over sixteen.
- HY: Was that your first job?
- FS: (Yes.) During the summertime we'd go down the cannery, and we had our lunch with us, see. If they don't pick us up, then—they'd pick, "You, you, you. You gonna work today." If they don't pick us we'd go back to tennis courts and play tennis.
- HY: So you didn't just have a regular work schedule. You would---they'd pick you on a daily basis.
- FS: And then when they pick you, then you work. Then you work, see. But sometimes you go there every day, no job, no job. Then you come back—go back to Pālama Settlement and play.
- HY: If they picked you to work, what would you do then?
- FS: Just work.
- HY: What kind of work?
- FS: Tray boy. That's what I was doing. And then . . .
- HY: What is that, "tray boy"?
- FS: You put the (canned) pineapple on a tray, stack it up.
- HY: Stack it.

FS: (Stack on one another until at a certain height the guy on forklift takes the stack of trays away to the cooker department.)

HY: Well, when they picked you to work or not picked you, how was it that they decided? What criteria did they use?

FS: Just pick you at random.

HY: Just at random?

FS: Yeah. Maybe they like you or they like your height, you tall.

HY: So you did that through the summertime.

FS: Summertime, yeah.

HY: And while you were in high school.

FS: And that was good money for our tuition. Yeah.

HY: So what year did you graduate from McKinley?

FS: I was supposed to graduate in '37, but I graduated '38. I was still of age to play. The age limit, I didn't go over the age limit so I could play.

HY: So you wanted to play sports another year.

(Laughter)

HY: And then after you graduated, what did you do?

FS: I was working---when I was in the senior year, my friend told me if I wanted to work for the nursery right up here. Richard Tongg's nursery [Mid-Pacific Horticultural Establishment] back at Mid-Pacific [Institute] school, in that area they had a nursery there. Delivering plants and all that, see. That was part time. So I continued work, but in the meantime I put in for Pearl Harbor [naval shipyard] so when I got out, I got the job from Pearl Harbor, but they put me at Fort Shafter. I had my physical at the old Tripler [General Hospital]. Fort Shafter had---that was the Tripler Hospital. There wasn't the Tripler [Army Medical Center], the one that is now. That was in 1939. I got my physical there at Fort Shafter, and they put me in the ammunition depot. Aliamanu crater. You know where that is?

HY: Mm hmm [yes].

FS: There was a crater there that---lot of people don't know that during the war, the Second [World] War, there was a crater there. So I worked there four years, but during the war years, I was right in there, they called me to work on December 7, [1941] and I went there. And I was in there when the Japanese planes came over. (Chuckles) I seen the planes. I could see the red . . .

HY: Did you know they were Japanese planes?

FS: We knew. Yeah. They would come down low, but they never know we were all camouflaged. But we spotted them. And around the area, the crater, the National Guard was guarding on the top, all the ridges alongside there. But they had a lot of pigs. A lot of pigs running wild, so the guys go crazy. When they blackout nighttime, they shoot the pigs. Very scary. But anyway, I saw that fire still going on. We were there. I stayed two weeks in that crater during that December 7 era. Man. And we stayed in that magazine, empty magazine, and we bunked in there. And just passed ammunition. Like they said, "Pass ammunition." (Chuckles) And we were there passing. But really scary. Then from there, I worked there and then I worked on the lab too, at the lab, where I handled the small arms, hand grenades, the offensive and the—we called that the offensive grenade, and the fragmentation [grenade]. They did two types.

HY: Where was the lab?

FS: Up on a building they had. We had a building up—the craters are—see, there's a deep crater hole like this, and on the side is all the magazines. And just coming into the guard area on the right side there's a building there, that was the lab. We . . .

HY: Were you assembling . . .

FS: . . . were inspecting small arms.

HY: Oh.

FS: The small arms.

HY: So throughout the war you were there, then?

FS: Yeah. And then when I went—my last year when I worked there, was '43. Yeah, I worked there four years. But I was at the lab and watching the hand grenade, got that pin, really dangerous. And they only paying us dollar and hour. Pearl Harbor was making double the amount that we were making, now. And I was married already, see. Yeah, that was '40 I got married. And then my last year over there was '43. I seen incidents happen where they had to throw the grenade across the road, and the thing just would make an echo in that area. And everybody would just get startled. Even the officers all start running around thinking somebody—but the pin just [accidentally] came out. They had to throw it. Dug a big hole in the road. I said to myself, "Ahh, this is not for me. I don't want this type. I gotta go out and look something that I can learn a trade and do something." So I went to the officer, I talked to him. I explained my problem, I said, "My wife gave birth and I want to better myself. I think I can do better than there." He released me. That time, you couldn't---long time you couldn't even get release, see. But when I explained my problem to him, in the afternoon, then they call for me. The command car came and called for me. Then they released me. And they put down that I can go to any government job. So I went to Pearl Harbor. I got a job there.

HY: What did you do at Pearl Harbor then?

FS: I worked at the pipe shop learning the trade. Pipe fitter. And I played basketball for the team. They saw me coming in, they said, "Ey, you want to play for us?"

(Laughter)

FS: I says, "Wait, give me time. I never even get started yet." So that same week, told me play. I played. And we played a good team. We played the welders and the shipyard team. And we upset them through my scoring and running around fast and playing. (Chuckles)

They protested. Said, "No. This guy just came in. He gotta wait two weeks."

Okay, I wait. Played them again, I run wild and just. . . . (Chuckles) And I won a championship for our team, our shop. Then we played the championship round at Civic Auditorium.

HY: Did each shop within . . .

FS: Have a team.

HY: . . . Pearl Harbor had their own team?

FS: Team, yeah.

HY: So there were enough people within each shop to make up a team.

FS: Oh yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah.

HY: So how many employees were there at the pipe fitters' shop that you were in?

FS: Gee, lot of . . .

HY: Like hundreds?

FS: More, more. They recruited lot of Mainland people come down to all the shops. It was buzzing there. (HY chuckles.) Had lot of good players, too.

HY: So after the war, did these teams continue?

FS: Yeah, the athletic department still continued. So I stayed there just three years. The coach up at Barber's Point [Naval Air Station], the supervisor was calling for me to go up there because they had a sports program up there.

HY: Who was the coach up there? Do you remember?

FS: (Pause) Leonard Bruchal. But he was also a player.

HY: Did he recruit you?

FS: No, no. The supervisor in the plumbing shop. He called. He found out. He got some players from Pearl Harbor, see because, well, the athletic director up at Barber's Point knew me, too. So they asked for me. Because Pearl Harbor was kind of getting down [downsizing]. They were trying to lay off some workers. But lot of them didn't know that I had put in four years,

little more than these other people that were there. I could have stayed, but when they called me, I said, "Oh well. I going try some other place." So I went up to Barber's Point. And then I played for Barber's Point and I won the highest scoring there. And I won the tennis tournament, too.

(Laughter)

FS: So we made a trip to Lāna'i. That was our award, going to Lāna'i City, winning the basketball championship. And we won the softball championship, too. The federal softball, and I played on the team, softball.

HY: So when you were at Barber's Point, then, who were the teams that you played? Were they still within the same . . .

FS: No, all over. Hickam [Field], Ford Island.

HY: All the different bases.

FS: All the different bases, yeah.

HY: So you were playing a lot of, like, Mainland military guys?

FS: Right, right. Even when I played the senior league at Civic Auditorium, they had about thirty-six military teams come in and play against us. Good, talented, lot of officers playing. Good college players, too. Really good.

HY: Because you're, you know, a local guy learning sports here, and then you're playing against and with so many people from outside, were you perceived any differently or did you have—what was that like?

FS: No problem.

HY: No problem?

FS: I didn't have any problem. Even the Elks, you know the Elks Club? The coach of the Elks team had an all-Haole team. He liked me a lot. Ben Silverman, he liked me a lot. And he took me to the Elks Club. And that time they were really exclusive, you know. Cannot. But he was the president of the Elks Clubs and he took me in. And the coach, too. They took me in there. We played pool, we drank highballs.

(Laughter)

FS: But they didn't ask me to play for their team. They had their own team. But they liked me. So I made friends with them. That was good. I kind of work on my shyness, too. It helped me a lot at talking.

HY: When you were at Barber's Point, then, what was the work that you did? Was it pipe fitting?

FS: More on the plumbing side. And a little pipe fitting, too. And in the boiler shop, too. I went

into the boiler shop. They put me in the boiler shop and I learned about boilers, but then I knew how to type so they put me in the office to do some office clerical work. Timekeeping. So I did that. And ordering parts for the shops. So I communicated with the salesmen from Downtown. [Honolulu] Iron Works [Co.] and Fisher [Hawai'i], and all the salesmen come up, talk to me. And I would talk to the supervisor. And I set up a stockroom, all set up alphabetically and file it, set everything up. Then when they need somebody outside work, I would go outside work. Inside not too good. I rather work outside. (Laughs) In the sunshine. And so little bit manual work. (Chuckles)

HY: And did you stay there until you went—you were in the Korean War?

FS: Yeah, I volunteered in the Korean War because they were going to lay off. So I figured, ey, there were some things that they needed, some Seabees, some construction workers. They needed them right away and they were issuing, you know, calling. So some of my friends told me, "Ey, let's go." And they went.

And I start thinking, I said, "Gee, kind of hard. I gotta keep my job." So I told the wife, I says, "I'm going to do this for you folks, then. For the kids. I know I can come back in two years. If I don't, well, I'm going try to provide whatever I can." So I went. Everything turned out all right.

HY: So when you came back, then, you just did volunteer coaching.

FS: Yeah. And they had to give me [back] my job. When you're a veteran, you come back, they have to give me my job back.

HY: So did you work at---where did you come back to, then? Barber's Point?

FS: Yeah, Barber's Point.

HY: So did you continue to work in the office?

FS: Continued, yeah.

HY: Oh, I see. And you worked there until when?

FS: I retired in 1973. But Pearl Harbor public works department took over Barber's Point. That's when they were slowing down on Barber's Point. Cutting down expenses, eh. So only by name, they shifted our Barber's Point, our shop, utilities department, to the public works, Pearl Harbor public works. So when I retired I had to go to public works at Pearl Harbor, and my paperwork all at Pearl Harbor public works, see. I retired from there. Anyway, Barber's Point.

HY: Then it was essentially the same type of work.

FS: Yeah. So I retired from there. They didn't want me to retire but I was fifty-five years [old]. And some of the office workers, the girls, they said, "You so young." But they didn't know I was older than them. (Laughs) They didn't---I never looked really old. (Chuckles) And in a way I start thinking I should have stayed, but I had a good percentage to retire that time. And maybe I can go out and look for another job. So I retired but I kept myself busy. I never kept

myself idle.

Because that's when my son was for working for the airlines. I said, "Ey, I going travel." (Chuckles) So we traveled. But my wife don't want to travel all over the place. She just want to go where our oldest son is, and goes to Hilo area.

HY: Is there anything else you'd like to add? Anything else about Pālama Settlement?

FS: (Pause) Well. . . .

HY: You seem to have some very positive memories about that place.

FS: Yeah. I didn't like the changes they made on the gym. Somehow the gym didn't look too good to me.

HY: It changed from what to what?

FS: The way it was situated. I wanted the gym to be—they could have put the gym the same place where it was just renovated. But they moved it back there. Oh, maybe it was a good spot, but didn't look like Pālama Settlement. And they did away with the tennis court. But you cannot help. You know, when they make changes, that's it. I thought they were just going to demolish the place there and build a better building, but they want to keep it. But eventually they have to demolish it. You seen that place?

HY: Mm hmm.

FS: Yeah. Well.

HY: Have your kids been there? Did they spend any time there?

FS: No, no, no. They never. My boys were good, good basketball players, volleyball players. They won that---both of them were in the security in the navy. They goofed off over here, at UH . . .

HY: At UH?

FS: Yeah. (Chuckles) I sent 'em in the service. I told them, "You go in the service and you learn something. Be a man. You doing something." They did. They did good. They both went to the language school, graduate. Mandarin. The oldest one speaks very good Mandarin language. He keeps it up. But the youngest one is, he got his Hawaiian work now, and probably forget a little bit. He knows. (After the service, the youngest graduated from UH, got his master's [degree] at Claremont Graduate School and got his Ph.D. in education. He is now a director for the Nā Pua No'eau at UH-Hilo. Our oldest son got his B.A. degree from Saint Mary's in California. He is assistant sheriff in Santa Clara County, California.)

HY: What was the language spoken at home? Was it English?

FS: Yeah, English but . . .

HY: When you were growing up?

FS: Yeah, my mom would---when her mother, Grandma---my stepmother's mother.

HY: Stepmother's mother, okay.

FS: They would speak Hawaiian and I would understand a little. But I cannot speak it. Maybe little, but not too much. My father was always English to me. He went to Chinese[-language] school but he ran away from the school. During the fourth grade, he said. He went to fourth grade and ran away. (Laughs)

HY: Is there anything else?

FS: No, I think that's all.

HY: Okay. Thank you very much.

FS: Yeah, you're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

Reflections of Pālama Settlement

Volume I

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

August 1998