

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Fred M. Kaneshiro

Fred Kaneshiro was born on September 2, 1920 in Hayashi Camp, a sugar plantation village near Waikapū, Maui. His parents, Niyo and Kame Kaneshiro, were from Okinawa. The family relocated to Wailuku where they raised pigs and grew bananas and vegetables. Later, they moved to Pi'ihana Camp.

The second of eight children, Kaneshiro left Wailuku Elementary School in 1934 when his father became ill. From 1934 until 1940, Kaneshiro did contract field work for Wailuku Sugar Company. He then delivered goods for Ichiki Store. When he lost the store job, he became a waiter for the Maui Grand Hotel in Wailuku. In 1940, Kaneshiro left Maui and found a job as an assistant bartender at Honolulu Cafe, where he met his first wife, a waitress. The couple, who were later divorced, had three children.

In 1942 Kaneshiro was hired by Honolulu Rapid Transit as a trolley and bus driver when some of the non-Japanese drivers left for more lucrative defense jobs. Kaneshiro remembers dealing with drunken servicemen, suspicious navy gatekeepers, and blackout conditions on the difficult Fort Ruger-Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard run.

After the war, Kaneshiro went to barber school and was licensed in New York. Not finding the barber trade profitable, Kaneshiro obtained a job as a sheet metal worker at Republic Aviation Company. By this time, he had remarried. In 1960 Kaneshiro left New York for Los Angeles and did sheet metal work with North American Aviation Company. Subsequently, he learned to read and draw blueprints and worked as a draftsman.

With the slowdown of the aviation business, Kaneshiro returned in 1972 to Hawai'i, where he sold vacuum cleaners. That same year, he returned to bus driving. He retired from MTL (Mass Transit Line), Inc. in 1984.

Kaneshiro remains active in Okinawan community activities and helps his brother in the tour company business.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Fred M. Kaneshiro (FK)

May 12, 1993

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Fred Kaneshiro on May 12, 1993, and we're at his home in Pālolo, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Fred, why don't we get started. First, can you tell me where and when you were born?

FK: I was born in a sugar plantation village surrounded with sugarcane. It's a village that's no longer there. Born September 2, 1920. And as we grew up we had to walk to school. There's no bus system or anything transportation. We walked about three miles to school from that plantation village to Waikapū [Maui]. Waikapū is a city close to where the village was where I was born.

WN: What's the name of your village?

FK: They called it Hayashi Camp. Any old-timers would know that.

WN: Who was Hayashi?

FK: I don't really know that part honestly. It must've been someone that's up there in that job in the plantation, so they named it Hayashi Camp, see? It was all Okinawans and some Filipinos. And if you don't look good for the road that leads to the village you'll pass it up like nothing, because from Wailuku, which is the main city, to go to Lahaina, you got to pass Waikapū, which is about three miles [from Wailuku]. Then from there on it's going to Lahaina. But from Wailuku to Waikapū, then just little ways off, if you know the place, you can get into this side road. Leads right into this plantation village surrounded by sugarcane.

But the people all work together. They help each other on any kind of occasion, you know, weddings, like that. I remember my oldest sister getting married. The whole village help out making food, things like that. In those days, you know, the people would give you present, a bag rice. You know the size of the wedding by the number of bag rice. It's all piled up.

WN: Hundred-pound bags?

FK: Yeah. Costs about four dollar fifty cents [\$4.50] for hundred-pound bag rice. And after that, the married couple would get it back to the store and get some money back or something like

that. They can't keep twenty-five or thirty bags of rice. But that's one way they would find out how big a wedding is, by the number of bag rice. That's about the only thing I can remember people giving as a present. Why? Because rice is always the main staple. You can always use it.

WN: Now your village was almost all Okinawan?

FK: Mostly all Okinawans. Some . . .

WN: Where were the *Naichi*? Were they nearby?

FK: *Naichi* were all outside. They were here and there. There's no *Naichi* camp, you know. I don't know why. I guess the Okinawan people, they just want to be together. Like the word "*tanomoshi*." I didn't know what that meant, but today I know what it is because some people are in *tanomoshi*. *Tanomoshi* is a kind of thing, you have a group of people put in so much [money] every month, and you would bid. If you bid the highest you'll get this amount of money for you this month. But you got to put in every month until everybody gets it. I know a friend of mine in a *tanomoshi* today. They pay fifty dollars a month—about twenty people. Until everybody get their share back, so. . . . But that word *tanomoshi* is always in my mind because my father and mother used to worry about where they going to come up with the money to pay back. That's the thing I remember growing up in that village.

Going to school is all walk—three miles one way. It's, you know, six miles. Sometimes the plantation truck, when it's empty, on the way to Waikapū or on the way to Hayashi Camp, they stop and give us a ride. That was a treat. Other than that, you walked to school.

WN: Now, this was with Wailuku Sugar Company?

FK: Yeah. Then from Waikapū my dad moved to Wailuku. He leased a place. It was a big place where he feel he going to raise some pigs. Most Okinawans like to raise pigs. I don't know why (laughs) but they raise pigs. We had quite a few pigs there. And we had an area where we can plant our own vegetable. So we grew our own vegetable. We raised the pig. And then twice a week my father and I, we get up extra early, go around [to other homes], pick up slop, come back, and then go to work. But this is one of the things I remember growing up. Then my mother, after we bring the slop back—go into a different neighborhood, pick up all the garbage, bring them back—my mother would take it over and then she would feed the pigs while my dad goes to work, you see.

WN: Were the pigs for home use only?

FK: No, once a month my dad would kill a pig and sell it to the neighbors around. So today (laughs), maybe that's one reason why I don't buy pork or even order pork because I've eaten every part of a pork. Name it, I've eaten it. Every month my dad would kill one pig. But I've eaten every part of a pig.

(Laughter)

FK: But, you know, to be honest with you, they had a little discrimination. The Japanese, the *Naichi*, used to put us down little bit. Something that, I think, only other islands go through

other than Honolulu. I don't know why. I think most of the Okinawans are plantation labor. I would say 99 percent is plantation workers. The *Naichi* had better jobs. They worked in the [sugar] mill. The carpenter. All different---other than in the [sugar] field. They were sharp. I guess they had the kind of background knowledge from way back in Japan or something like that. But most Okinawans didn't have that kind of thing, see. That's why the *Naichi* were all scattered here and there. When I used to go around pick up the slop, I used to get all kinds of remarks by Japanese people.

WN: Like what?

FK: "Okinawa *shamisen buta kaukau*." That was one of the famous saying, and I didn't like it but, you know, we had to stand it, see? They'd think we go around, pick up the slop, maybe eat some of it (laughs). You see? Because there was a lot of slop. Maybe some of the food was pretty good yet. I don't know (laughs). But we never ate it. We always give it to the pigs. We bring the whole big barrel full of garbage, dump it in another big garbage. My mother would cook it little bit. And after that she would feed all the pigs. Pig pens are all lined up. And then once a month we kill a pig.

WN: You would go around in a truck?

FK: Yeah. One small Ford Model-T pickup. My dad used to drive. So that was one of our life [experiences] in plantation growing up.

WN: You would pick up slop from not only Okinawan but *Naichi* . . .

FK: It's all from *Naichi* area. Different places [i.e., homes]. Yeah, Okinawan, too. Pick up slop from there. But what changes my feeling about it was that when I came to Honolulu—I'm going one step ahead but—when I came to Honolulu, I feel, gee, all [i.e., many of] the restaurants are owned by Okinawan. Little restaurant. Big restaurant. I remember Kewalo Inn. All those places were owned by Okinawan. And I really open my eyes because in Maui the only business the Okinawan had is my friend's parents. They're the hog raisers. Their business was hog raisers. They had a little pork market right in the middle of Market Street in Wailuku. Those were the only Okinawans I knew that had some kind of business. Other than that all the rest were plantation workers. But we were all happy kids. Whatever we had we enjoyed life.

WN: Did you play at all with the *Naichi* kids?

FK: Didn't have a chance to meet them. But we had one Kumamoto family [i.e., a family from Kumamoto Prefecture, Japan]. They were one of the closest to the Okinawan families, I think. The Kumamoto family—Kamimoto the name is—they just came right in with us. They enjoyed the singing, the dancing, the New Year's parties. They come in with the Okinawans. They're wonderful. They're the only [family] I know that really shows no other kind of feeling. But like I said, most of the *Naichi* were carpenters in a clean job, not the kind of labor job. But if you go way back, I'm sure there were Japanese [i.e., *Naichi*] working in the field, way back, you know what I mean? Maybe late 1800s or early 1900s because you do notice some pictures of them that they work hard, too. They came from Japan, landed in the plantation. Plantation provided them home.

Changing the subject, when I went to South America, I [learned that] the migration of the Oriental to South America was worst. They had to build their own home. They had to go out in the forest to shoot game for their food. I found that out when I went South America.

But anyway, I think way before my time, the Japanese came. [The first major migration from Japan was in 1885.] They worked hard in the fields, too.

WN: Were you aware that you were different? I mean, when you were a young boy, were you aware already that you were different from, say, *Naichi* Japanese?

FK: Yeah, because our music, our *Bon-odori*. My dad played the *shamisen*. And he left the *shamisen* for me. Okinawan music was entirely different. We had *Bon-odori* every August. We celebrate the *Bon* with all Okinawan music. We used to dance the *Bon-odori*. We go to the graveyard and dance in the graveyard, then end up in the park. And we have a nice celebration *Bon-odori*—Okinawan *Bon* dance. Today I joined the Iwakuni dance group (laughs).

WN: (Laughs) You don't go to Jikoen [Temple]?

FK: I go Jikoen sometimes. But the Iwakuni one I joined because I noticed in the class they're teaching *minyō*. It's a *Naichi* dance. And I really believe in *Bon* because it is some celebration about [honoring] the dead people. So I joined the Iwakuni, so I'm learning how to dance Iwakuni *Bon* dance. But I enjoy it because first of all, I feel about *Bon*, what the meaning of that. In Maui, when we were growing up, the police would escort us from the village through the grave, and we would dance in the grave[yard]. And my dad and another man plays the *shamisen*. And then we end up in the park, and we have a big *Bon* celebration there. That was the big, big thing in Maui for the Okinawan people.

WN: Would people from the other plantations come?

FK: Most. They'd come.

WN: Like Pā'ia, Pu'unēnē . . .

FK: If they can, they come. But they used to have their own, too, see? Lahaina, Pā'ia, yeah?

WN: And would you folks go there?

FK: Sometime we go to that side, but mostly we have our biggest one in Wailuku.

WN: Oh, yeah?

FK: Mm hmm. I thought it was very interesting, though, *Bon* dance. And I will never forget that feeling when you dance along the grave and what it's really meant for and all that. I really don't know the real meaning of *Bon*. But I believe in kind of what they're celebrating for, so I used to participate every year—every August. So I enjoyed it because, I think, maybe one of the reasons is my dad played the *shamisen*. When he passed away he left it for me, and I tried to learn a few songs. But I believe in *Bon*. So I joined the Iwakuni. I get a lot of fun (laughs).

WN: Well, you like to dance, right?

FK: It's a little different, but. The music is different. They hitting drum, eh? The man sings out loud—fantastic. It's altogether different from Okinawan. Okinawan music, they sing with the music. Well, like I said, I really believe in *Bon*, so I joined the club. I practice twice a week (chuckles).

WN: Oh, yeah?

FK: Yeah. I enjoy it.

WN: Tell me something about your father [Niyo Kaneshiro]. Where is he from?

FK: My dad is from Goeku, Okinawa. That's why my [locality] club is [called] Goeku *Sonjinkai*. I've been the president (and an officer) for the last four years. [EK points to plaques on wall.] See, all this is Goeku *Sonjinkai*. "*Uchinanchu* of the Year," they selected me, things like that.

Last year, I took a group—some were Goeku members—to Okinawa City. We had a wonderful time. The mayor of Okinawa City gave us a fantastic reception. We, in turn, played some Hawaiian music and provided some program. But it was interesting to go to Okinawa City because we met the mayor when he came here [Hawai'i] a couple of years ago. We invited him. Okinawa economy, to me, looks like it's a pretty good economy right now, but they could use a lot of land which the U.S. Air Force are using, especially near Okinawa City—Kadena Air Force Base. The best part of the land. It's all nice and flat. And the people are really fighting to get that back because they could grow something. So the mayor gave me the whole stack of pamphlets. He'd like us to pass it around. Last year Dennis Arakaki went with us. You know Dennis Arakaki?

WN: State Representative [Dennis Arakaki]?

FK: Yeah. He told the mayor---we all got in a roundtable and talked with the mayor and all his officers. And Dennis is trying for the U.S. government to release some of the land so the people of Okinawa City could grow something.

WN: Goeku is near the [Kadena] Air Force Base?

FK: In Okinawa City. Goeku [*Sonjinkai*], Awase [*Dōshikai*]. Awase is another club. And they have Bitō [*Dōshikai*]. It's another---there are three Okinawan clubs here, come from Okinawa City area, although we have forty-eight clubs, you know, Okinawan, all made from all different parts of Okinawa wherever your parents come from. So they're pretty well united, you know, Okinawan associations. That's how they built this big center in Waipi'o [i.e., Hawai'i Okinawa Center], over here, because of their help and the togetherness of the Okinawan people. All the big restaurant owners donated big money, so today the big center is all paid for. And the land is paid for because of all us members. Forty-eight clubs. Every club has over hundred members. So they really organized themselves, plus all the business people donated. Plus the people from Okinawa donated lot of things because when the war [i.e., World War II] ended we knew what the Okinawans had suffered, and they were trying to get back on their feet again. So, we, from Hawai'i, helped them. Donated them clothing,

things like that, and money, too. So today they always feel they'll return some of the things. So this *kaikan*, this center, the Okinawans [from Okinawa] donated all this tile roofing, plus the workers came here. So it was two things. It was something that they returned. So every so often we have visitors from Okinawa. We always have some kind of function at the center. And the thing that really makes me feel good is that our third, fourth, fifth generations can sing and dance. Because the Okinawan language is going slowly. So only the older people still speak. Like tomorrow, I go to Okinawan club—Lanakila [Multi-purpose Senior Center]. It's a big club. A lot of old people left there. And you can hear them talking Okinawan which is something I miss. And I used to . . .

WN: You used to speak that on the plantation?

FK: They all speak that. My mom, dad . . .

WN: What about you?

FK: I know what it is. I sometimes speak the most popular words, like that. Yeah, I can speak.

WN: But in the household, at home, what did you speak?

FK: Well, my mother would speak pidgin and Okinawan language sometime. I do understand.

WN: I see. Your mother is (telephone rings) also from Okinawa?

FK: Yeah. Just a minute.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: You were talking about your mother.

FK: My mother [Kame Takasato Kaneshiro] comes from a different part of Okinawa. She comes from a place called Itoman.

WN: Itoman.

FK: Yeah. Itoman is one of the better places. Like they always say, "Itoman people are different." (Laughs) I don't know why. In fact, when I took a group the first time to Okinawa—Itoman is in the southern tip of Okinawa Island—so when we were on the southern tip, the tour conductor said, "Anyone of you from Itoman? Your parents?" I put my hand up. Let me tell you a story about Itoman. You know, Itoman, many years ago, the Portuguese, the Dutch seamen and merchants, one day they had a big wreck outside of Itoman, the ocean. Because Itoman is noted for their fish. And this tour conductor tells me about Itoman people. Why you think they're a little taller? Why you think that they're this, that? Because the Portuguese, when one of their ships got sunk out there, some of the survivors survived in Itoman. They hid in a cave. And then they couldn't stand it in the cave too long. They came out, and they found out that the people were good. So they had intermarriage, I guess (laughs).

WN: Mm hmm.

FK: Well, that's what he tells me, but I don't know whether to believe that or not, whether he's making a joke. But I've heard from people that Itoman is a little different people. Speechwise, they're all the same. Only different speech in Okinawa is people from way up north in the forest. I can't remember what they call that particular type of people, but they speak a little bit fast, like Chinese. But the Itoman people are supposed to be a little bit different (laughs). I don't believe that. You figure all these people that own business here, they don't come from Itoman. They all smart business people. They come from Oroku. They call them *Orokunchu*. All these business people here are mostly all Oroku people. They come from Oroku with their parents.

WN: Was that a business type of province or. . . .

FK: Well, they have business mind, and they used to help each other. So when I came Honolulu, when I see all these restaurants owned by the Okinawan, it didn't dawn on me [that many of] those were [run by] Oroku people. But later I found out. Most all the business people, *Orokunchu*. Like *Yamantunchu* is Japanese, right? *Yamantunchu*.

WN: Yeah.

FK: *Orokunchu*. (Laughs) We used to kid around. They're just like the Jewish of Okinawans. See, the Jew is the brains in New York City. All the department [stores] are owned by Jewish people. Macy's. Gimble's. All those big department stores. They're a business people. Although not everyone of the Jewish is up there, there's a lot of Jewish who are way down, too. Just like any other nationality. But you get to know all these kind of things about different kind of White people, yeah? I think the most friendly people—White people—are Italian people, although I do have some wonderful Jewish friends, Polish people, that I've met and worked with. Here [i.e., in Hawai'i], *Haole* is a *Haole*. You don't know whether he's an Irish or what (WN laughs). But in New York you find the difference. I enjoyed living there.

WN: Okay. What about your house? I know you had---there were eight of you---eight children.

FK: Eight children.

WN: Did you have a big house?

FK: Oh, no. We had a plantation home. All the same size. We had two good-sized rooms. One's suppose to be like a living room. One is like a bedroom. But my mom used that one with big mosquito net [over] the entire room, and here we would sleep. Then they had one smaller room, one, two, three. Three rooms in this main building. Then our kitchen was little separate---separate building. And the outhouse was way near the sugar field because we had all cane field, huh? So outhouse was always outside. Nobody had inside toilets. But roomwise, wasn't bad.

WN: You had kerosene stove or wood stove?

FK: All wood. Once a month we had free *kiawe* wood from the plantation. They would deliver it to every house. One pile of it. Dump it there. All the different homes. Then I would cut it to about this size and chop it and put it underneath the house. I remember my mom cooking. Big rice pot, eh? Call that *hagama*, I think, with the heavy wooden cover. Cooked a lot of rice.

And the firewood, that's how we cooked until I don't know when. Kerosene stove came in [later]. So we did buy one.

But, too, I remember we all sitting. . . . The kitchen was just one, two step away from the main house. We had a kitchen, about this size, and we had a long table. All eight of us would sit down and eat.

WN: All one time?

FK: One time (laughs). Long table here. And, boy, my mom used to cook a lot of rice, though. Only thing we had to buy was meat.

WN: Oh, you had pork, though.

FK: We had pork, see. I don't know how we used to survive. When I think about it, there was no icebox, you know, no refrigeration. Only time we had soda water is New Year's. And we had to buy some ice to make it cold, but. But every day ice, we don't have. We grew up like that. No more refrigeration. I don't know how my parents used to maintain the food, you know, leftover, like that. But that's the way it was.

But when we purchased kerosene stove, I don't know how my mom then know how to bake. Used to make bread! It's amazing. No recipe or anything like it. I remember she making bread in the oven—kerosene oven.

WN: And you had a garden, too?

FK: We had our own garden in the back.

WN: So what kind of vegetables did you have in the garden?

FK: Almost all kind. Have string beans, carrots, *daikon*—all staple food.

WN: Potato—sweet potato?

FK: Sweet potato, yeah. Always get sweet potato. Like I told you, we moved from Waikapū to Wailuku. My father first leased the place because he wanted to raise pigs. And from that place, I don't know how long we stayed there. The lease was up or something. I don't know why, but we made a move into another plantation village in Wailuku.

WN: Oh.

FK: That's where I was describing to you the house we had.

WN: Oh, okay.

FK: The other home where we grew up was very small, in Hayashi Camp.

WN: But your family was smaller then because you're the second oldest.

FK: Oh yeah, much smaller. On top of that, my oldest sister worked for one of the schoolteachers, and she used to sometimes stay there to houseclean and things like that. Bring in some extra money to help the family. My oldest sister. I remember that. But other than that, we all piled up in this particular house.

WN: So how old were you about when you moved from Hayashi Camp to Wailuku?

FK: Oh, gee. I would say about eight, nine years old, I think, maybe.

WN: Do you remember it being a big difference living in a place with a pig farm?

FK: Yeah, pig farm. I hated it, too. But we had banana patches. We had---grown our own vegetable. Much bigger land. So every New Year's come I used to go help my mom and dad dig this *gobō*. *Gobō* was this long. We used to . . .

WN: You mean two feet?

FK: Oh, long *gobō*. We used to go inside and dig soft, nice soil, eh? The *gobō* long! Ho!

WN: Three feet, looks like.

FK: Yeah. Really long! So every New Year's---before New Year's Day we used to dig that out, tie them up, and sell it. Make some extra money. Eggplant, same thing, because there was lot of Filipino bachelors living not too far. So I used to go around, house to house, and sell eggplant, five cents a bunch, whatever it was. But the *gobō*, we used to take orders from all the different Oriental people. So I did a lot of digging *gobō*. Ho, I'm telling you. And we clean them all up, tie them in bunches, and we'd sell it. But I've never seen that kind of big *gobō* anymore, though.

WN: Yeah, yeah.

FK: We grew our own *hyōtan*, they call that. In English, I don't know what they call that [gourd, or squash].

WN: *Hyōtan*.

FK: *Hyōtan*. That's where the *kanpyō* comes from. *Kanpyō* is that strip of stuff [i.e., dried gourd shavings] they put in the . . .

WN: *Kanpyō*. Uh huh, yeah.

FK: My mom used to make that---dried. *Hyōtan* is some kind of melon. They come in like this. Long kind. We used to grow a lot of that in the field.

WN: So all dryland kind [of] stuff.

FK: Yeah.

WN: Nothing wetland like *hasu* or anything like that.

FK: Nothing wet. All dryland vegetable. All kinds of vegetable.

WN: And how big was the garden?

FK: Well, the place my dad leased, oh, we had a big acreage.

WN: You mean in Wailuku?

FK: Wailuku, yeah. I don't know how long we stayed there. My father gave up the pig business and moved into a plantation home.

WN: I see.

FK: And there was another Okinawan village.

WN: But still [part of] Wailuku Sugar [Company]?

FK: Yeah, still Wailuku Sugar. And that's the time, about 1933, '34, my dad got sick. See, I was, what? Only seven, eight years old. Nine years old.

WN: Well, 1934, you were about fourteen.

FK: Thirty-four. That's fourteen. I'm going to be fourteen, yeah? Dad got very, very sick. We thought we were going to lose him, so I had to quit school. That's when we were living in that new plantation village—Pi'ihana Camp.

WN: Oh, Pi'ihana was the later one. Oh, I see.

FK: Yeah, that's the later one.

WN: So first, Hayashi Camp. Then Wailuku . . .

FK: Yeah.

WN: . . . and then Pi'ihana?

FK: Yeah.

WN: I see.

FK: Pi'ihana is in Wailuku, too, but then when we moved to Wailuku my father leased the place from a Portuguese family, Freitas, because of the land—because we can raise pigs. We had a lot of banana patches and lot of vegetables. Area we can plant our own. But it takes a lot of work because you got to make sure the vegetables are all irrigated. Every year, digging for *gobō*. That was one of the biggest sellers, see. But there were other kind of vegetables, too.

Being the second boy I did a lot of work. My oldest brother already was working in the sugar mill. But anyway, when my dad got sick, like I told you last time, we were playing volleyball or basketball in the plantation playground, and this friend of ours came running to the

playground. I can still remember him running to me. He says, "You better go home fast because Papa is very, very sick." When I got home he was on this—they made a table, makeshift table, and had him lying down just like that. We didn't have no bed, see. So the doctor was looking over him, and he had put out a lot of blood. But anyway, from then on, I was asked to quit school. The first thing came to my mind was, I thought it was going be good. I don't have to go school. But half a year later, I used to think, gee, how am I going get education? So the big changes came was 1939 or '40. I don't know whether I told you this the last time. There's [M.] Ichiki Store. It's one of the biggest stores [on Maui], grocery store or market, where they sell all kind. And there's a man. He comes around all the village to take orders. They call that a *chūmontori* man. They come around the villages, to every house, and take order for the kind of food we want. They're going to deliver it for us, see? Well, one day he came on an odd day which is not a delivery day. I had just came back from work from the plantation. I was tired, sitting on the porch, and he wanted to see my parents. And I asked him, "Oh, they not home. Well, what it's all about?"

He said, "Oh, Ichiki Store wants to hire somebody to drive—to deliver."

And my folks wasn't home. But I told him, "I think I would like the job."

So the next day come, my mother said, "If you want to, okay, go. Quit plantation." That means wearing clean clothes, not the clothes you get dirty. You wear it for one week. My father, too—dirty clothes. He work in the field, and every morning get into this thing. Now I thought I'm going to work in the store. I'm going to be all clean shirt and all that kind of stuff, which was right. But there again, Ichiki Store---Mr. Ichiki had a big store in Honolulu called the Ho'olau Market.

WN: Ho'olau?

FK: Yeah. It's on River Street.

WN: Mm hmm.

FK: A big Ho'olau Market, at one time. I found that out later. And he, Mr. Ichiki, had lot of stores on other islands. Maui, he had one in Lahaina, Olowalu. Wailuku was the main branch. They had Makawao. Four branches in Maui. All Ichiki Store. I didn't know who the guy [M.] Ichiki was anyway. But the point is, I got a job. Eh, that was a big difference in my life, you know, because it's going to be clean clothes, and you're going to meet people, and you're not looking at sugarcane. Big change.

WN: Let me back up little bit. Tell me first, what did you do on the plantation, from 1934 after you quit school. What were your jobs?

FK: My job was work with the Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, in the field, cutting the grass, this and that. I don't know if you heard the word *kompang* [cane cultivation by contract]. There was a Mr. Higa and myself, another old man—I don't know what his name—three of us had a *kompang* field of sixty acres. That means---*kompang*, the way it works is that the company, Wailuku Sugar, were to plant the seeds for you. Once the seed is planted, three of us, we're going to take care this sixty acres of field until it's harvest[time]. It takes twenty-four months. At that time they had only one kind of sugarcane called "109" cane which is the sweetest and

the heaviest. For twenty-four months we irrigate until it's ready to harvest. The life was good because there's no *luna* around us. We report to the stable. After we report, three of us would say, "Okay, you go over that section today. You go that section. I go this section." The water will be coming. We'll just irrigate, see? It was nice, *kompang*, when the cane was small. Gee, you're looking all over the field. But when the cane come up this high [FK holds hands above his head], it's no fun. You're in the middle of the sugar field and irrigating. (You can't see anywhere.) Here and there, you might hear a mongoose running or something like that but I stood it for twenty-four months. And the way a *kompang* is paid, they pay you for the tonnage of the sugarcane.

WN: You did all the harvesting, too?

FK: The harvest---the plantation will provide the labor to cut it. And the labor to put it in this little train car---railroad cars. See, what they do, they harvest the cane, they cut 'em down. And the plantation going make the makeshift rail into this field. It's all sugarcane cut already, eh? This is the main line, and we load all this . . .

WN: Cars, eh? Cane cars.

FK: And then the tractor will pull it out to the main track. Then this railroad will take it down to the mill. And then we were paid by the tonnage. They weighed all this cane after it's in the mill. How they did it, I didn't know. But, anyway, *kompang* was one of the biggest money-making thing, and you don't have someone behind you with a whip watching you all the time. So I did it for twenty-four months with these two elderly people.

WN: But only three of you. . . .

FK: Three of us.

WN: How big was the field about?

FK: Sixty acres.

WN: Oh, sixty acres. Three of you.

FK: Yeah, sixty acres.

WN: So your main job was irrigating.

FK: Irrigate that.

WN: Irrigate. Take care of it.

FK: Take care of it.

WN: And you don't have to plant and you don't have to harvest.

FK: Nothing. All is done by the plantation. The main thing for us to do is to make sure the irrigations are there. And the way the *luna*, or the foreman, will find out you're not doing the

job, they get up in the high plateau and look down at the field. The big dry spot there, and they come after us. "How come you're not watering over there?" This is one of the ways they would find out that we are not doing the job right. And I used to sneak off sometimes—goof off, too, you know.

WN: After two years they weigh your harvest and so forth. But what about in the meantime? How did you get paid?

FK: Every month.

WN: Oh, they gave you . . .

FK: Seventy-five cents a day.

WN: Oh, they gave you day wages, too?

FK: Seventy-five cents a day. Every day. My oldest brother worked in the sugar mill. I think he was making the same thing. Those days, the parents used to make only a dollar a day.

WN: Yours was boy wage—young-boy wages?

FK: Yeah. Seventy-five cents a day. And then my oldest brother and I, every month, would go down to the main office, pick up the paycheck. On top of that we'd pick up my dad's, too. It's heavy, eh? It's all silver, you see? I never see a dollar bill. It's all silver dollar. Or silver coins. My father's one was half the weight because his payroll is all charged to the plantation store for food.

WN: All the deductions, eh?

FK: Yeah. But my brother and I, we had pretty good. Maybe, in a month, we make twenty dollars, something like that—all in silver. That all goes to the parents. Maybe they give us twenty-five cents. It sounds funny, but that's the way it was.

WN: So even when you're *kompang* you still got the seventy-five cents.

FK: Oh, yes.

WN: What if you weren't *kompang*. You would still get seventy-five cents?

FK: You'd still get seventy-five cents. But you'd be working here and there. You don't know where you going be assigned to. See, when I first started working plantation it was, meet at the stable. That's the meeting place at 6:00 [A.M.]. They assign you [to] a gang for that place or that place, wherever. Cutting grass or whatever the job is. I did lot of cane cutting after they burn the cane, too, before I went into *kompang*. But once you get into *kompang*, you don't do cane cutting, like that. Mostly the plantation provide the labor for that. They burn the whole acres, maybe half of the acres first. The reason for that is to burn all the dry leaves off. And then you can just get the cane, you cut the bottom and top and pile them up until they load them in the small cane car. But as far as *kompang*, we have to irrigate the cane for twenty-four months. And that was a good job in a way. No more boss in front of you,

watching you and things like that. But it was no fun kind of thing when the cane got big.

WN: What about Mr. Higa? Didn't he---you know, you were a young boy and he was an older man. Didn't he act like your *luna*?

FK: (Chuckles) Both of them was good. Good men. They were all neighbors. My dad had another *kompang* some other place with other people, but. I remember Mr. Higa, but I can't remember the other man because the other man was a bachelor—Okinawan man. But Mr. Higa, he had his own family, like eight kids like us in this particular Pi'ihana Village. But I worked with them for twenty-four months until it harvest. That's an experience. And lot of people don't know what *kompang* really mean, but *kompang* is like you. . . .

WN: Come together. Come together. [Cultivating cane by a small group under contract.]

FK: Yeah. That's what it is.

WN: Was that like a desirable. . . . Is that what most sugar workers wanted to get? *Kompang*?

FK: As far as I know, they all like to get into *kompang* because at the end of the harvest they'll get that extra money, depend on the weight of the sugar and all that. Like I've told you, I've done most everything concerning sugar, jobwise. I worked in the sugar mill. I used to load the raw sugar into the bag and then sew it and put 'em on the conveyor belt and take 'em to the flat railroad car. The railroad car, after it's stacked with hundred-pound burlap sack of raw sugar, they take 'em to the pier and they would load it on the ship. And they take it to California to get it refined.

WN: That was at Crockett, huh? Crockett, California [Sugar Refinery]?

FK: Yeah, California.

WN: Let me turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

FK: They would refine the sugar in California, and of course, they get business, you know, they sell to stores in the islands—white sugar. But we would always use brown sugar. Get it from the mill. But white sugar is pretty expensive now.

WN: You got your sugar for free? Or you had to pay for it?

FK: I used to bring it, or sometime my brother used to bring it from the mill because he work in the mill most of all the time.

It was a life where you don't know too much about what's going on in the next part of the world, so you're happy. The kids are all happy. They making their own toys and playing

[with] whatever they can get. Because we had this Mr. Kamimoto's family. The oldest boy there, he was like our leader. He used to make a baseball team and all this kind of things. Get us involved, you know? He was really a good leader, and we really respected him. And we gave him a real good reception one time, a few years back, when we get our Pi'ihana Camp reunion, which we going to have another one in Las Vegas, I think, this year. And we honored him. We remembered him because the way he really trained us to get in the softball league or baseball league. Otherwise, we don't get into this kind of thing. But he made sure that we form a team. And we played against all the different plantation camps and things like that. But he was a leader. Kamimoto—Yukito Kamimoto.

WN: Now, these leagues and things, was it for Okinawans only?

FK: No, no. All different league.

WN: Different leagues. But the league you were in was all teams from Okinawa . . .

FK: Okinawa village. The players were.

WN: You played against. . . .

FK: Played against mostly Puerto Ricans or different [ethnic groups], plantation league. Same with volleyball, basketball. But, we were mostly in baseball. This Mr. Kamimoto used to get us together, make a team. That was one of the sports we had. But they had all kinds of sports. You can play basketball just for fun. Volleyball, the Filipinos were one of the best. They were good volleyball players. Basketball, there weren't too much but mostly all Orientals. But we had our own playground which we enjoyed.

WN: Besides the organized kind of things, what did you do to have good fun as a kid?

FK: As a kid? Well, like I said, my teenage wasn't that fun.

WN: Okay. What about before that then?

FK: Before that? Well. . . . Before I became a teenager?

WN: Yeah.

FK: (Laughs) Played under the house. Make trains out of little sardine cans. You know, flat—we joined them together and make like a locomotive pulling the thing underneath the house. I remember that (laughs). Sardines were cheap, huh? So we sew a lot of sardine cans together. You join them together, and you play underneath the house like your choo-choo-choo . . .

WN: You join them with what? String?

FK: Yeah. And make the sound like choo-choo train (laughs). I remember that. And play other games like playing top. And there's another game where you hit the thing and then you hit them.

WN: Oh, *peewee*?

FK: *Peewee*. I think they call it *peewee*. We had that game, too, as a kid. But I think, as a whole, growing up in Pi'ihana Camp was good because everybody was happy, you know.

There's no automobile, except my friend, the father had a pig business. He was just outside of the village [where] they owned acreage of pig farm. And they were the only one, I think, had automobile. So I used to help my friend on the weekend go buy pigs, like that, just to get to ride in the car. (Laughs) That's how it was. Every place we go, we walk. I remember the Kahului Railroad [Company] would bring the train up to Wailuku, then we all get on the train and go to Maui County Fairs. It's in Kahului, you see? Every October. That was one of the biggest event in Maui—Maui County Fair. I don't know if they still have it or not. But I remember the Kahului Railroad [Company] would bring their train—coaches—up to Wailuku station, and all the people would get on and then go to the [Maui] County Fair. There was hardly anybody working plantation had owned a car, let alone telephone, things like that. That's why my first experience with Christian[ity] was the Salvation Army. They used to come down to our Pi'ihana village under the streetlight, and they would teach us Christian[ity].

WN: How often?

FK: Every Wednesday evening. We sat under the telephone pole under the streetlight. Three of them used to come. One with a drum. One with the kind of bugle, I think. And I forget what they called themselves, but they made us sing songs and talk about Christian things. And every Christmas they tell us to come to the main headquarters, which is Wailuku town, and they would give us fruits, Christmas candy. We would hardly donate anything. But they're there to give us all these things that used to make all the kids happy.

WN: And---religionwise, what were your parents? Were they Christian?

FK: My parents, I think, they were Buddhist because in those days, when someone died, they don't go to the church or mortuary. The service is right in the house. We pray in the house. And I don't remember whether there were hearse or anything like that. In fact, I think there was a truck that take the coffin from the house to the grave. I can still picture one family that everybody in the house praying the final rites, like that. But I don't believe there were any kind of hearse, the kind that they carried the body. But the first service was held in the house. But the coffin, we put it on the truck and taken to the cemetery. I don't know where the mortuary is anyway (laughs). So this is the way it was conducted. And another superstitious thing is when we come back from the cemetery, they would throw salt on top us, and things like that. I think that must be some of the Buddhist following. I remember folks doing that.

WN: Brush salt on your body. On your clothes.

FK: Throw them over you or something like that. So that's one of the things, if someone died. But I used to like to ride car. So my friends, they had a pig farm, so they had a truck. Every weekend I go with him. He goes to Kula, some place, to buy pigs. But he became one of the biggest hog raisers in Maui today. My best friend.

WN: But when your father had the hogs, you used to go pick up the slop in the car. Did you like it then?

FK: I didn't like it. (WN laughs.) Really didn't like it. No.

WN: By that time you didn't like riding car anymore?

FK: Well, I had to go, see? But I didn't want to go to pick up slop (laughs). But I did help my parents do that.

WN: Besides picking up the slop and the gardening, what other chores did you have to do?

FK: (FK mis-hears question.) Well, we used to play top. Tie the top and swing down there. And what else kind of game we used to play? Marble. Five hole. Four hole, one in the middle. Marbles we used to play quite a bit when we growing up. And we did lot of swimming in 'Īao Valley where we used to have the stream there. We used to make our own pond there and swim. On top of that, we used to swim in this big reservoir. *Pūnāwai*, they called it. Plantation have like a big pond, you know. This is where the irrigation water is stored. So when time to irrigate they would let some out to different parts of the field. But we did lot of swimming in there, in that *pūnāwai*, until they imported toads. They imported toads for one reason—to kill all the insects in the field. But that toad multiplied so fast it was getting out of hand. We had our bathroom in the outside, eh? My dad made one special bathroom for us outside. And it's near the field. Sometime the toad hardly can hop. So full of insect. Comes in the bathroom floor. Used to make me sick. And they used to go on the road. You can see them all over the road, all smashed because the cars used to come and run over it.

So that was the life in plantation. Like I said, I cannot tell you more about my teenage life because my teenage life was mostly spent in the field with the Puerto Rican boys, Portuguese boys and the Filipinos—young Filipinos. Mostly all bachelors. They did their own cooking. In fact, my mother used to wash some of their clothes just for a few money. Used to boil the clothes and whack it and clean it up for the Filipinos. There were only two Filipino families in that village—near our village, anyway. Filipino Camp was further up from Pi'ihana Camp. But I used to sell to all these Filipinos, especially eggplant—the long kind. They used to love that. I used to tie them in a bunch and sell them for ten cents or whatever.

WN: Did you sell pork, too?

FK: Once a month we'd sell them pork. In those days, funny, you know. You think about it today, [board of health] inspectionwise. No more such thing, you know. (Laughs) Isn't that something? Today . . .

WN: Did you salt the pork at all?

FK: Well, we salt them, all that.

WN: Before you sell them.

FK: Yeah. But they [i.e., neighbors] know we going to kill the pig, in advance. They know. So we had no problem to sell.

WN: So when you kill, people would come and then you would sell to them?

FK: They come, and we sell it.

WN: You don't go house to house, right?

FK: No, no, no. Only the vegetable I used to go house to house, sell.

WN: I see.

FK: Today, when I start thinking about it, when I came Honolulu, pig raisers were big business. They had it all in Wai'alae. They had in Kam[ehameha] IV Road. All pig farms there. And I used to see all these young ladies going out on the truck—big truck—picking up slop. Take them back to their parents' farm. This is when I really opened up my eyes. Thinking about all these things, what the people in Honolulu used to do. Being proud and doing it. You know what I mean?

WN: Mm hmm.

FK: To me, I was getting sick of that thing, but that's the way life is.

WN: What about things like, as a kid, movies or . . .

FK: Yeah. I used to hit drum to go in free. See, they used to go around the different neighbors on the truck, [beating a] drum, and [displaying] a poster, what [movie is] playing. Silent movies, see, those days.

WN: Japanese [language] or English [language]?

FK: Japanese movies. English movies. And I had to tell the guy, "Hey, let me go hit drum." I go in free, see? (Laughs) I stay in the back of the truck, just hit the drum (laughs). Late in the evening, before the movies. I did that, too.

WN: And then the movies would be [shown] inside or outside?

FK: Inside. They had a theater.

WN: Oh, they did?

FK: And the Japanese movie, they had the guy on the stage [i.e., narrator] on the side hollering . . .

WN: *Benshi*?

FK: Yeah. They talking when the movie going on, and you have to understand that thing. But that's the way it was.

WN: Right. If a woman was talking then he would imitate a woman. . . .

FK: Yeah, fantastic people, you know. That's the kind of movie we used to see. It's all silent movies. English kind were all silent movies. Only cost ten cents or fifteen cents. But to me

was, you know, lot of money. But that's the way it was in those days—in the [19]30s. Because most of the thirties was spent in Maui. But when forties, I ran away to Honolulu. So my life was little different.

WN: Okay. We were talking little bit about your life as a *chūmontori*. What did you do?

FK: They taught me how to drive a truck. I knew little bit because I used to go with my friend. I didn't have no license, but Mr. Hasegawa was nice enough to teach me to get license. So I became a delivery boy. Those days you can only order. You don't have to go to a store to buy things. The *chūmontori* man comes around, you order and they deliver it.

WN: Mm hmm.

FK: And, you know, (laughs) the [reason] I was fired from the job after one year, I think, is going with this *Naichi* girl. And this *Naichi* girl was the boss', what do you call, you know (laughs). They found out she going with me, eh? We used to spend our time. . . . Teenage, you know. Really teenager. I don't think I was twenty yet, but I had a chance to work for the store and got to learn little bit better English. And the whole thing is different because you're clean, you're meeting new people—the salespeople, the office people, and the butcher in there. And I get to know how to drive truck now, and delivery. Only this saleslady and I, we go down the beach swim every weekend. And the boss found out about that because this lady, Sally—I remember—was under the guardian of this Mr. Hasegawa who was the manager of the store. Mr. Hasegawa is the son-in-law of Mr. Ichiki, see? So when he found out Sally going with me, oh, he stopped everything. And both of us were hurt, of course. And, as you know, when you're teenager, you feel kind of hurt more. I don't know how to describe it, but I remember my mom trying to find out what's wrong with me. Then I told. She went to the store to straighten out things, and I was fired from that. Whatever my mom did, I was fired. But I don't know how long I was out of a job, but I took whatever job I could get for little while until my friend—my neighbor, Hawaiian boy—decided to run away to Honolulu.

WN: Okay, we'll get into that little bit. *Chūmontori* means you went house to house to take orders?

FK: Yeah, *chūmontori* man is that. But this *chūmontori* man came specifically to our house that particular day which wasn't a day to come because my folks wasn't home anyway.

WN: No, I'm talking about when you were *chūmontori*.

FK: Oh, no. I delivered.

WN: Oh, you weren't *chūmontori* at all? You just delivered what the . . .

FK: *Chūmontori* come with all their orders. They'd pack it up [at the store], put them in the truck. I delivered.

WN: You delivered. Oh, I see. So you didn't do any of the order-taking?

FK: I don't do. Unless when I deliver, oh, the family would tell me, "Can you bring this month, something," you know. But my job was to deliver.

WN: And what did Ichiki Store sell?

FK: Everything (WN laughs). Everything. From market, you know, regular butcher—pork, meat, whatever it is—to dry goods. And that gave me opportunity to learn lot of things about different items. You work plantation, you don't know nothing. Maybe you know iodine because you use iodine every day for your cut or whatever, but other than that, you don't know. But I get to meet people other than Filipinos or Puerto Ricans. That was my first change of life. Everywhere I would take the big truck and deliver to the branch [stores] in Lahaina and Olowalu.

WN: Oh, that far?

FK: Yeah, that's once a week on the bigger truck, not the small delivery truck. Then once a week I'd go to Makawao, to Pāpōhaku, there's another two branches.

WN: Oh, so you delivered to the branch stores?

FK: Yeah. I used to take . . .

WN: How come?

FK: Because Wailuku was the main place. This is where all the ship comes in, to Kahului and this big warehouse that we had in Wailuku. So every Wednesday I take a truckload of stuff to Lahaina and Olowalu. I used to enjoy the job, but I got fired (laughs).

WN: Was there a plantation store, too?

FK: Plantation had their own.

WN: Wailuku Plantation had a plantation store, too?

FK: Yeah, they had their own.

WN: And do you remember "new month"?

FK: What?

WN: "New month"? That's when toward the end of the month—twenty-second or twenty-third—that's when if you order [after] that time then you won't get charged until the following month? Do you remember anything like that?

FK: No, I didn't hear anything like that.

WN: Uh, interesting.

FK: Yeah, I didn't hear anything like that. All I know is, sometime you listen to my parents, what they're worrying about. Sometimes used to get me, you know. *Tanomoshi* was still going on. That was one word I used to always listen. They always feel, "How we going come about with paying this?" Because the whole village, there's quite a few people in this *tanomoshi*

gang, huh? They have it today, someplace. They help each other. Like my friend in *tanomoshi*, they pay fifty dollars a person, fifteen people, that's quite a bit of money that you can take it. Then you pay back fifty dollars until everybody gets their own.

WN: You bid, right?

FK: That's my understanding of what *tanomoshi* is. But I can remember the worried look my parents had, talking about *tanomoshi*.

And another thing, hospital care was all free. You can go for minor operations, things like that. House was free. Only thing we paid is the light [i.e., kerosene and later, electricity]. Everything else was free. Outhouse, toilet paper, I don't know whether we used to buy it or not. We used to use, I think, Sears Roebuck paper, I think.

WN: Sears Roebuck catalogue?

(Laughter)

FK: Yeah, I think so (WN laughs). I don't remember buying nice roll of toilet paper, now. I don't remember that.

WN: What about *furo*?

FK: Well, we had a community bath—the village. For a while we were all using community bath. Big—the *furo* is bigger than this room—big one. And it's divided [i.e., partitioned]. That room is for the ladies and this side for the men.

WN: But the *furo* was the same *furo*?

FK: The same thing.

WN: You just had a wall . . .

FK: Had little partition. Not completely partitioned.

(Laughter)

FK: And they had a big burner outside with firewood—they would burn it. But eventually my dad made our own *furo* about the size of maybe this table.

WN: Oh, about. . . . Small then. Three feet by three feet?

FK: We don't go in like we used to the main community bath—after we wash we go inside, eh? But this one, just to clean ourselves. Small room, outside, next to the kitchen. And like I said, sometime the toad used to sneak inside the floor—concrete floor (laughs). Those toads, man. They multiply so fast, and when you had a job cutting grass, like that, sometime we accidentally cut 'em. In fact, there were incident that Filipino ate one, and they died because it's poisonous—toad is poisonous. But they look like a frog. But they much, much uglier than a frog. Frogs, we used to catch 'em—plenty—and we used to sell them to the Chinese farm.

Oh, I did a lot of that. And they used to catch all these frogs from the big reservoir—*pūnāwai*. We knew where the holes were. Catch 'em and sell 'em. We used to get nickel apiece. Big bullfrogs.

WN: At least frogs can be eaten.

FK: Yeah, that can be eaten. And the Chinese frog farm, they had their own private land. They had a farm, and we used to sell whatever we catch. But those days, when you think about it, like I told you before, we don't have to go to the fish market and buy fish. The fisherman comes down in a truck to the village. Buy one big *aku* for fifty cents. My mother will slice it in half and dry half of it and make *katsuo bushi*, they called it. You know, they shaved it to make the taste in the food—the soup. I can remember that. As far as *tako*, you know, we used to go to Waiehu Beach . . .

WN: Waiehu?

FK: . . . knee deep. Come back with lot of squid. Me and the Hawaiian people used to go out and catch it, and they used to wash 'em all off, salt, and then dry it on the clothesline and then fry it or whatever [way] you want to eat it. Lot of squid in water this deep.

WN: Knee deep.

FK: Ooo, plenty squid! That, I remember doing. Waiehu Beach and all that. They had a golf course there, too. They still have, I think, now.

But plantation life was day in, day out, the same thing. You know what I mean? You go to work. You come back about two-thirty [P.M.] because you start 7:00 [A.M.]. Six o'clock [in the morning] you report. Some of them would start six o'clock, too. Seven o'clock we have what they call a small *kaukau*. We have a big *kaukau* tin. The bottom is rice, the top is *okazu*. Seven o'clock we have a small *kaukau*. We eat little bit of it. Then about eleven-thirty we had a big *kaukau*. Then two-thirty we *pau* work.

WN: What about rainy days? You folks still work?

FK: Still work. You know the way I used to work? Cover my whole face with a big rice bag cloth so I don't get cut from the cane leaf. Big hat (chuckles). Tie up [the cuffs] like this so no insect crawl on you.

WN: They crawl on your leg?

FK: Oh, yeah. And that's the only kind of shoes I ever wore.

WN: What kind [of] shoes?

FK: Working shoes. I never wore dress shoes at all. We don't know what dress shoes is those days anyway until I was maybe twenty years old, I guess. But it was all working shoes. But still we got to tie the thing down here.

WN: Right at the cuff?

FK: Yeah. Because there was lot of centipedes, and even mice used to crawl up.

WN: Everything was '*dhina*'?

FK: I beg your pardon?

WN: Denim? Everything was denim?

FK: Oh yeah. Everything is denim. All long sleeve, too. I remember covering my face, though, (laughs) because the cane leaves get sharp. Can cut you while you're working. But it was good working in the field until they imported toad (WN laughs). Sometime I accidentally chop one, ugh, man. But I can tell you everything about sugarcane (WN laughs), really. When I left, and they had big change in plantation, where they had a big crane came. Instead they have 100 to cut sugarcane after it burned, they had two guys. One young man down on the field, one operate the crane. The guy down there would guide this into the bunch of cane. And they grab it. And they eliminated all the little cane cars. They drive a big truck there and dump them over there.

WN: Even while it's still growing in the ground they'd grab it?

FK: Stone and all, sometimes.

WN: They didn't even cut it?

FK: Stone and all they used to cut. But they used to have lot of jams in the mill because sometime you grab the big boulder so the crusher used to get big jam in the sugar mill. It's one of the things I remember used to happen. But what really got me was that they eliminated a lot of workers cutting cane. You know, *hāpai kō*, all that. [Now it] takes two guys. [Then it] took over 100 workers.

WN: But you're talking about up to the war, this? Or was it before war?

FK: No, just before the war.

WN: Before the war and they were doing this?

FK: Oh yeah, before the war.

WN: But you were off the plantation by then?

FK: By that time, just when those things came in, I left.

WN: You left. Okay, this was in 1940.

FK: In the late 1939 or '40.

WN: All right, you got fired from Ichiki Store (FK laughs). Okay, this was, what? Nineteen forty or so?

FK: Then I worked for Maui Grand Hotel as a waiter.

WN: Maui Grand Hotel? Where was that?

FK: Biggest hotel in Maui—those days. It's a big hotel.

WN: Where? In Wailuku?

FK: In Wailuku.

WN: Oh.

FK: I got a job as a waiter there. It was a good job. Clean job, too. I didn't work too long, but the interesting thing about it is that I met people from all over the world. When they come to Maui they stayed at Maui Grand Hotel.

WN: Was it a pretty high-class hotel?

FK: Average people won't go there. All these business people from Honolulu. I used to really be interested in listening to them talk about Honolulu. I used to be a waiter there. And they talk. And this guy named Mr. [William] Walsh. He's the owner of Maui Grand Hotel. He's a big wheel. Mr. Walsh.

WN: Mr. Walsh?

FK: Yeah. W-A-L-S-H. He was one of the big wheels for Kahului Railroad [Company], too.

WN: Yeah, Kahului Railroad. That's right.

FK: He owned the hotel, and they had a manager running it. And he also ran the observation station in Haleakalā. I don't know if you've ever been to Haleakalā, on the top?

WN: Yeah.

FK: Well, the observation station in the [19]30s, even in the forties, was not a national park. It was run privately. [Haleakalā National Park was established in 1961.] So Mr. Walsh asked me to go up there. I stayed there for weeks.

WN: Doing what?

FK: Just take care the tourists that comes to visit the observation station.

WN: Oh, you were one of the early tourism workers then.

FK: Absolutely! (WN laughs.) And I had to learn. In the observation station, we had a big layout of the crater. I [could] tell you where this sliding sand trail is, when Haleakalā erupted, where this volcano flow went to. One went to Kaupō Gap. The other went to Hana Gap. And I used to explain to the tourists. We had visitors come up there to see the sun rise, the sun set. But sometime you don't see nowhere. The clouds all below you. You can't see no place. But on a

nice clear day you'll see Mauna Loa, Mauna Kea, Big Island. But I worked up there. And I got to meet [people] there. We had a big register book there, and they put down where they're from. People from all over the world come over there, those days. Not as many as today, but. Today the buses go up there. Those days, only cars could go up there, see. But today it's a national park, so the last time I was up there, there was government workers [i.e., National Park Service rangers]. They really sharp in uniform and all that. And the guy didn't believe I was [once] working here, taking care all these tourists. Not only tourists but local people come up there with their car. And some would come, and they would hike down the trail. They had a rest camp down there in the crater. In those days they had what they called a CCC. I don't know if you ever heard of CCC.

WN: Civilian Conservation Corps?

FK: Yeah. They used to make the trails into the crater. They used to . . .

WN: Oh, I see. Depression time, yeah?

FK: Yeah. Young people. Yeah, I remember that. But working at the observation station, there again, I got to meet people from all over the world, and my mind start growing.

WN: You lived up there, too?

FK: I stayed there.

WN: Yeah, you stayed there. So you were okay with the cold and the altitude?

FK: Yeah. All that.

WN: No problem?

FK: [If] the water is hot, in ten minutes it gets cold. Coffee, you know. And we had only outhouse in those days. You go and sit on the toilet, you can feel the breeze coming from the cracks—from the crater. Come right up. But today, they have nice toilets up there. Big parking area for buses. And then from the observation station they had another little road up to the observatory there. But working up there is another time that I learned and meet people. Get to know how they talk. That was my goal. And in working as a waiter in the Maui Grand Hotel I got to meet people from all over, especially the Honolulu salesmen used to come there and tell me all about Honolulu.

WN: What did they tell you about Honolulu?

FK: Oh, the city, eh? No buses in Maui. Nothing whatsoever. There's no public transportation in Maui. Like I said, the Kahului Railroad would come there when we had Maui County Fair. They take you to Kahului. That's where the county fair is. They had a lot of private taxis, but no public transportation. So that was a big difference. The salesmen that comes to Maui, no more public transportation. They have to take cab. That was the big difference between Maui and. . . . I found out all those things later. Came Honolulu, you see those trolley cars and all the kind of big buses. In Maui you don't see those until even the late [19]40s, I think. In fact, I don't know whether they have public transportation today at all or not. I don't know.

WN: I don't know, either.

FK: Yeah, because Maui was way back—back in time. But the people were happy. They didn't have much. They could care less what's going on in the next part of the world because we don't know anything about it anyway. But when you listen to people, like I had the opportunity to listen to them, your mind starts to thinking. That was my change of my life, you know, working the [Maui] Grand Hotel. Working at the store.

WN: How did you get these jobs? I know the store one, but the [Maui] Grand Hotel?

FK: Just applied. I had some friend working in there, too. I don't know if you know this guy, Bones Ono. He was the bartender there. I used to know him. And there was another guy who was working in the office. And I used to know one Okinawan waiter. That's the way, I think, I got in there as a waiter.

WN: So, what is it? Mostly American food?

FK: Yeah, mostly all American food. It was one of the only hotel they had in Maui, Maui Grand Hotel. And then I found out one Japanese bought that place. I don't know what it is today, though. Local Japanese guy, soda-works guy, bought that place.

WN: You mean---when? Recently or . . .

FK: No. Some time ago, but . . .

WN: Was it mostly *Haoles* staying in that hotel?

FK: Mostly all visitors, yeah. No local people. Only from Honolulu, outer island. They come Maui. They stay there unless they have friends. But lot of salesmen used to come from Honolulu. That's when I'm waiting on them so I'm listening to them about Honolulu and things like that. But my mind start thinking about, gee, this is not a place to stay. But after I ran away, I got caught. My uncle sent me back home. I came back again. Another new life started—good life.

WN: Let's talk about why you ran away. What made you run away?

FK: Well, first of all, there was really no future there [on Maui]. Limited as far as jobs other than plantation. You can get job plantation anytime. But the other kind of job, it's hard to get. And when you talking to salesmen, like that, from Honolulu, you get lot of ideas about Honolulu which was true. So that was an experience for me to run away. I cannot believe it yet (laughs). My brothers all know that. My brother used to tell me my two youngest brothers cried every day because I'm not home.

WN: Okay, what do you mean by "run away"? I mean . . .

FK: We didn't say anything to the parents.

WN: Who's "we"?

FK: My Hawaiian friend and me (laughs). We packing the---you know those *kome* bag—hundred-pound *kome* bag—we threw some clothes in there. We didn't own a suitcase. We didn't know what a suitcase is anyway (WN laughs). I didn't. Honest. Really.

WN: Now, you were still working for the hotel? Or Haleakalā? Or were you still working?

FK: Yeah. Then I quit and that's it. You know, me and this Sonny Kia.

WN: Sonny Kia?

FK: Yeah, Hawaiian boy. So we ran away on SS *Hualālai* or *Wai'ale'ale*—the interisland steamship. Five dollars. Took off to Honolulu. New life started.

WN: How did you feel while you were doing that?

FK: Oh boy, when the boat coming into Honolulu Harbor, hoo, I saw the lights up in the heights. There's more light in one heights than the whole island of Maui. When you go back to Maui on the boat, when you coming in Kahului Harbor, you can count the lights. Now that I know all these [O'ahu] heights—St. Louis Heights, Maunalani Heights, all the kind [of] places like that—I realize that one particular heights has more lights than the entire island of Maui. Only time we see other lights, plenty lights, is when every four years the Pacific Fleet used to come to Lahaina, and they would anchor out there—the whole Pacific Fleet. And boy, there is lights out there on the ships. And all those small launches used to come and bring in all the sailors to shore—Lahaina. But the lights on there was something else to see.

WN: Did you have any idea what you were going to do while you were coming over . . .

FK: Well, [whatever] job that was handed to me, I would take it. I remember working for C. Q. Yee Hop. They used to deliver feed, I think, chicken feed, all kind of feed. I was a swamper—a helper. I didn't know how to drive here yet. I didn't know the city. But helping as a truck helper for C. Q. Yee Hop. Then I start learning about the city. Then I got a better job driving a truck for Durant-Irvine. Durant-Irvine was a big plumbing outfit. They used to install all these big oil burners for the military. So now I know how to drive so I took the job as a driver. So I used to deliver all these big oil burners to different parts of military camps. And I get to know more and more about Honolulu.

WN: Like which camps were there before the war started?

FK: Well, I remember delivering one to that Kāne'ohe marine base [i.e., Kāne'ohe Naval Air Station]. They had a big heating system. So our company, Durant-Irvine, sold those big oil burners—real heavy. And I remember delivering there. Delivering to Salt Lake. I think, they had one military place in there, too. And then from there on, you know, better to get a job where you can have free food, so I got a job at Honolulu Cafe.

WN: And that was 1940, yeah?

FK: Yeah.

WN: So, you told me a story that after you got off the boat, you were at the pier . . .

FK: Ho!

(Laughter)

WN: . . . what happened?

FK: (Laughs) He and I got off the ship. Eh, we couldn't cross the street. We were so scared. There was so many cars on that Fort Street going back and forth (WN laughs). Fort Street was a street all the way up, yeah, before? We finally made it, we didn't know where we were going. So we're walking up Fort Street from the waterfront all the way to—there's a theater called Princess Theater. And then we asked somebody if there's any kind of room to rent. They said, oh, behind Princess Theater. That's how we rented a place there. And we didn't have much money, but we start looking for job. Wasn't too lucky [finding] a job. But we bought lot of bread, which was cheap.

Then I don't know how my uncle found out I ran away. I guess my mother's brother in Waipahu. So they found me, somehow.

WN: Oh, yeah?

FK: And they sent me back. They asked me, "Come to Waipahu and work in the field."

I said "No, I don't want to work plantation."

So he sent me home. I had to listen to him. And I told my friend goodbye, and I went home. But my parents were really good. They told me, "If you wanted to go Honolulu, you could have told us. We could have helped you and provide you with things. And you can go." So I stayed Maui for little while then I came back to Honolulu. I couldn't find my Hawaiian friend. By that time, I got a job Honolulu Cafe. War started already, too.

WN: So, how did you get the Honolulu Cafe job?

FK: Just applying for that job. I got a job as an assistant bartender, helping mix. Those days they had lot of lady bartenderess.

WN: Yeah?

FK: Yeah. And they helped me learn how to mix drink. And I'm not a drinker, too, but. Another big thing about this kind of thing. I don't know how to say it, but growing up in Maui you don't speak to White people. You come to Honolulu---that head bartender, Harry Asato. "You see all these girls in the bar sitting down? You know what they are?" Eh, I was shocked to see pretty ladies like that—*Haoles*—in that type of business. And there was one that used to come every night to order one Singapore Sling, which was a famous drink those days. We made them in tall glass. Beautiful drink. She insist I make it (laughs). But anyway, that was one of the experience, to see and talk to *Haoles*. I had yet to meet Black people, though. But White people, when I came Honolulu, that's a dime a dozen. You can talk to them anyplace. They just another human being.

WN: Right. They're not all high class like on Maui?

FK: No, they're just another human being. But in Maui, you don't have a chance to talk to White people. White people are all plantation bosses or big business bosses, or something. And their children are sent to school privately. So you don't have the chance to meet them. Portuguese [were] different. Portuguese. We all grew up together. But *Haoles*, no. Any *Haole* come from other places to Maui, they'll get a good job for the plantation. But as far as mingling and playing with all their kids, no, until I came to Honolulu. *Haoles* are [just] another human beings. They're not any better. You find out all this kind of thing.

WN: So Honolulu Cafe was owned by a Okinawan, huh?

FK: Yeah, Mr. Higa and Mr. Agena. Mr. Higa was entirely different from Mr. Agena. Mr. Agena was a real businessman. Mr. Higa looked at people who were famous in sports. And he would invite them for lunch, you know, dinner. I got to meet lot of them. Big *sumōtoris*. Local. And I get to talk to them. I meet lot of people. I don't know if you know Lefty Nakano. He was one of the greatest tennis players in Honolulu. In fact, in Hawai'i. Lefty Nakano, he comes in the bar every night. That's how I got to know him. If you like to learn tennis come up to his Y—Nuuanu YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association]—he'll teach me how. But he is a guy used to come in the bar and drink every night. Not to get plastered, but just to come and talk, things like that. But Mr. Higa is the one. He's so nice. He invites all these famous people or popular people to lunch and dinner like that. But Mr. Agena was a real businessman. He don't do things like that.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-81-1-93; SIDE ONE

WN: When you started at Honolulu Cafe it was still before the war started?

FK: Just before the war.

WN: Just before the war.

FK: All the other time, like I said, I worked for Durant-Irvine, C. Q. Yee Hop, different places, for a little while only. But working Honolulu Cafe started another kind of life.

WN: Tell me, when you went back to Maui, how did you feel about seeing your parents. I mean, were you glad that you did it or . . .

FK: Well, they made me feel bad because they say, you know, if I wanted to go they would've let me go nicely. They would come down the pier and see me off, things like that. But I was thinking they wouldn't let me go, so I just ran away.

WN: So when you came back and your Hawaiian friend was no longer at that rooming house, what did you think?

FK: I don't know where he went.

WN: You never saw him again after that?

FK: No. And I stayed with one of my friends who had a little room up in Maunakea Street upstairs. I stayed with him little while until my oldest sister and the family moved to Honolulu from Maui. And they were renting one small room behind a produce. . . . River Street used to be all produce [stores], one time. All big produce area. And behind this produce business they had apartments. Small. My oldest sister rented one. She and her husband. So I stayed with them, working back and forth to Honolulu Cafe. Then I thought it would be a good idea to get all the family to Honolulu.

WN: So eventually you brought them over?

FK: Eventually I persuaded. . . . On top of that, my parents okayed it because my oldest sister moved, too.

WN: Oh, I see.

FK: So when they moved, we all. . . . My parents lived in a little shack. All these community things, yeah? Community bathroom, community this and that, right near Alapa'i Street. Then I got a job driving bus, too, when the war started, too. So it was convenient.

WN: You're still working Honolulu Cafe, and December 7 came. What do you remember about that day?

FK: Well, I was off. That was a Sunday, I think.

WN: Right.

FK: I was down the beach—Waikīkī Beach. I see all that smoke coming from Pearl Harbor area. The sailors and the soldiers just nonchalantly walking in. They didn't know what's going on. And all of a sudden, couple hours later, oh, there was a big thing. You hear about it. And then, at that time, big company, American Sanitary Laundry, they were using all their vans as ambulance. They were bringing bodies back and forth from Pearl Harbor to hospitals. From then on it becomes blackout, eh? Something hard to take, too. Then end of '42 I start driving bus because war started. Jobs were plenty in Pearl Harbor.

WN: Right. Okay, what I want to do is to stop here and then come back another time and then we continue from the war on and get into your bus experience. Let me ask you little bit more about Honolulu Cafe. Was it . . .

FK: Well, Honolulu Cafe is where I met one of the waitresses. We got together. We got married. That's how Gwendolyn became queen, huh? One of my daughters.

WN: (Laughs) Cherry Blossom Queen was one of your daughters. Okay . . .

FK: Well, they were all born while I was still married. Then something happened. Don't have to go through all that, but I supported them until she [FK's wife] got married again. But the surprising thing is Gwendolyn calling me in 1967 in the Mainland. I was [living] in the Mainland already at that time. And I went to meet her and the chaperone down at one of the

restaurants in Japanese town. I was really shocked, though. It's something that happens. Then from '67 until 1973 I moved back to Honolulu. I saw her again. That's when I joined an Okinawan club. They used to have this Okinawan festival at Thomas Square. That's when Gwendolyn came over, talked to me. That was really nice of Gwen and my oldest son, Gary. Two of them was no more ill feeling or anything like that. Just like nothing happened. But I supported them. That's the thing, you know, while I was in New York I supported them.

WN: Okay, let me turn it off.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-89-2-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Fred M. Kaneshiro (FK)

June 8, 1993

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Fred Kaneshiro on June 8, 1993, at his home in Pālolo, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Fred, we were talking last time about World War II and we were talking about what you were doing on Pearl Harbor day. And then in '42, you got a job with Honolulu Rapid Transit [Company].

FK: Yeah.

WN: Can you tell me how you got the job?

FK: Well, my friends got in. And then they were hiring---the door opened for Japanese, in other words. That's what it is, see. And then we were hired.

WN: Why was the door open to hire Japanese?

FK: Well, for one thing, all the other nationalities were going to Pearl Harbor [Naval Shipyard]. They were making almost double the wage, see. And lot of them—I don't say everyone went, but there's lot of them went, and that left a lot of openings with [Honolulu] Rapid Transit, see. So we got the job right away, no problem.

WN: Were there other Japanese besides you?

FK: Plenty. One young fellow from the Big Island became a good friend of mine, from Kona. He and I applied for the job. We got the job right away. And we got trained to drive. It's not hard. Especially those days in Honolulu, it was quiet, not much traffic like today. Today the drivers going crazy (laughs). But believe me, those days were beautiful, Hawai'i. Really nice. Any run you take. Liliha or Waikīkī, you know, or Kaimukī-Kalihi. It's beautiful driving. It was quiet. You go down Kalākaua Avenue, see Royal Hawaiian [Hotel]. Beautiful shrubs in front Kalākaua Avenue. You don't see that no more. It's all concrete now. All stores. So it's a big difference driving those days, which I feel thankful. Get to drive and know Honolulu in those days. Yeah, it was really nice. I don't think it'll ever come back again but . . .

WN: Well, you know, America was at war with Japan and I'm just wondering were there

difficulties for you getting the job, first of all?

FK: Well, we got the job all right, but the hardest part is driving when you don't have the seniority. You have the kind of run that others don't like. Like driving from the Main Gate to Honolulu.

WN: Pearl Harbor Main Gate?

FK: Yeah. And when these service guys, marines, soldiers, when they get little high, you know, oh, they see you're an Oriental. They throw all kind of wisecrack. And you can't do nothing, you alone. All these guys are bus loaded. And they going back to the base feeling high. So we couldn't do anything. That was the worst line [i.e., route] I've had. And that line caused a lot of fighting, too. But those days we were protected by roving protectionists. Had big Samoan guys, Hawaiians. Tough guys. They drove on the car. They just follow some small drivers, see that they are driving okay. No problem. 'Cause I have seen these guys that go out and protect us. I've seen how they've beat up some soldiers and marines because they were giving the young, small Oriental drivers bad time. I tell you (chuckles). But that's one of the things that was happening because we are Oriental.

Another thing we didn't like was that they gave us a black badge. It says, "restricted." And the other nationalities, any other nationalities, all had nice white badges. [The black badges were] just to identify that you are Japanese. And that we didn't like. But that didn't last too long. But anyway, it did last. So when you come to the [Pearl Harbor] Main Gate, the marine with a gun looks at you. Oh, he get a different attitude. You can see it. He comes in the bus. If you had a white badge, he just motioned. You go in. So this is one of the things that those days being a Oriental, and the black badge identified you as Japanese. You have to take it 'cause it's a living. You gotta make a living somehow. But eventually your seniority gets better. You don't take that kind of run no more—navy housing run. You take runs that [are] in town. Waikīkī-Liliha or Kaimukī-Kalihi, all that kind of run. But that kind of run, most of the drivers didn't like.

WN: So you got a black badge.

FK: Yeah.

WN: Now what does that mean, though? You couldn't go onto the base?

FK: Well, we go in the base with the marine guard stand in front you.

WN: Oh. He gets on the bus?

FK: Yeah.

WN: Oh.

FK: That didn't last too long because we made such a big complaint about that.

WN: So about how long did it last?

FK: Oh, not too long. But I remember him coming in the bus when all the others were just signalled to go by looking at the badge, see. And I remember the incidents in San Francisco where all the Chinese put "I am Chinese" on it (WN chuckles), walking around San Francisco, just to identify they're Chinese, not Japanese. I read in the paper those days when the war was on because they could be mistaken for Japanese, see.

But those days, you start thinking a lot of things. Like in San Francisco, Fisherman's Wharf, were all Italians. They didn't do anything to them. They were our enemy, too—Italians. They were fighting with Germany against America and Britain. That I couldn't see. Even New York, down Fulton Street. The marketplace was practically all Italian fishermen. I read about this way back when the war was still on. They didn't do anything to the German Americans, Italian Americans, you know [i.e., systematic, wide-scale internment]. So I don't think that was fair, you know.

But I gotta take my hat off to the Japanese. They don't say much. They built themselves up again. It's really something. They don't cry about it. Like in L.A. [Los Angeles], Japanese town was almost gutted. It was almost like a slum [after] they evacuated all the Japanese from there. And when they came back, slowly they built that Japanese town now. I think you've gone to Japan town.

WN: Yeah.

FK: Down East First Street, L.A. It's got a lot of tall buildings there. My mother-in-law lives in one of 'em. I go visit sometime. It's really nice how they brought themselves up being quiet, without complaining. They could have done lot of complaining. They lost a lot of things because they were giving you so many hours to pack [to leave for internment camps] and you gotta. . . . And they'll take you.

WN: Did you have any opportunity to complain or file any kind of grievance when all this was happening?

FK: Oh, you mean when driving the bus?

WN: Mm hmm.

FK: (FK misinterprets question.) Well, only kind of complaint I didn't like was when I was driving [to Pearl Harbor] navy housing. They're feeling high, you see. Can't help that. They're fighting for their lives, too, in the army or navy. And they make remarks which I just have to take all day long for eight hours.

WN: Like what did they say?

FK: Oh, "slant eye" or something like that or all kinds of. . . . But these were all young *Haole* kids that don't realize a lot of things. They just have one thing in mind. You're fighting a "Jap." And that's another word they called you, see. But just have to take it. I think a lot of Japanese drivers have taken a lot, but we don't complain about it. It's one of those things you have to live through. So, like I said, I really take my hat off to the Japanese here and in the Mainland. My ex-wife is born and raised in the Mainland. She was one of the last from UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] to coordinate people to go to different relocation camps. She's a

graduate of UCLA. And their parents were given a notice just like that. To pack, get ready. They going pick them up and go to Poston, Arizona, [or] Hart Mountain, Wyoming. When they came back, they had nothing. These are the kind of things I hear from my ex-wife. We're still good friends. I go visit my sons, she lives with them, the mother. But what I hear about what they went through, well, I think you know all about this kind of story where a guy is fighting for his life in the war and his parents are in relocation camp.

WN: Right.

FK: They come back. They don't make too much noise about it. If was some other nationality, I can just imagine what kind of complaint they would make. I know. The Japanese, I tell you. Slowly, quietly, they build themselves up again. That's why nobody can complain about them. They deserve this, this money they were given back to them [i.e., reparations]. Because they were given such a short notice. Pack up things. They gotta leave lot of stuff back and that's all gone. I think my ex-wife them lost an automobile, too. And a lot of household things. They cannot take everything. So the whole family left. They went to Hart Mountain, Wyoming which is one of the coldest spots for a relocation camp. But my ex-wife ended up in Poston, Arizona, which is right in the heart of the desert. I mean, deserts! The kind of barracks they were living in, the cracks on the floor. The sandstorms. Sand comes in there. But within one year in Poston, these Japanese made this into a fabulous place where they grew watermelon. But there was a lot of Japanese went out snake hunting, things just for keeping yourself busy. But I heard about the watermelon. Gee, as long as they got water, the Japanese made something out of this desert. Poston, you can't even see in a map. I think after the war started, you might find it in the map. Poston, Arizona. It's really a heart of the desert. That's where she stayed.

WN: How long was she there?

FK: Oh, I don't know. They had an uncle in New York. If you had an uncle in New York or somewhere way out in the East Coast, you can go and live with them, so that's how they got away from the relocation camp. But they did stay [in Poston] about only two years, I think. But they ended up in New York. From there, they stayed until everything cooled off.

WN: When you were driving bus, did you feel threatened, that you were in danger or anything?

FK: Well, I really took everything, but I know my friends, they don't take it. They have a big fight. I told you the last time, this guy. He beat the heck of one of the sailors or marines. In fact, the serviceman died. So after that we called him the "One-Blow Onaga." One blow down Waikīkī, right in front Kūhiō Beach. End of the [bus] line. I think he must've take a lot of crap from that particular guy. So he step out the bus, right in the front. He called the guy come down, and one blow. That guy fell right on the concrete. This is a true story, you know. So we had to lay him off for about three months. That's one of the terrible things that happened.

The other incident was a little smaller Japanese guy driving the trolleybus from Waikīkī—coming up Waikīkī—loaded with servicemen. He couldn't take it. He drove the bus into [HRT, Honolulu Rapid Transit, headquarters on] Alapa'i [Street], right in the [bus] barn. (Laughs) They had a big fight right there. Because day-run guys, two-thirty, two o'clock, getting off, yeah? Big Hawaiian guys, some of them. They had a big fight there. Right in the barn. So these are some of the incidents I remember.

WN: So these are like local [drivers] fighting with . . .

FK: Well, all local drivers just happened to be in that hour when their run [is ending]. Their run means guys work from four [A.M.] to two [P.M.]. They're just getting off. So naturally, they have these young kids [i.e., military personnel]. They fighting. But it was stopped pretty fast. That's about the only incident I remember, though. But you hear about the stories, the complaints.

But the funny thing, there was a lot of good GIs, too, like anything else. Some of them real nice. Some of them never seen a trolleybus in their life. That amazed me. They come to Hawai'i. They got on a trolleybus. Look at us, how we're driving this darn thing. Some of them come from way in the sticks in the Mainland. They've never seen trolleybus. And then they come in the bus, they just amazed. Really amazing. And to me, trolley was one of the best transportation, though.

WN: By trolley, you mean fixed track?

FK: No, the one with the pole on top.

WN: Oh, two poles above [attached to] the electrical line—electrical wire.

FK: Yeah. Powerful. No matter what kind of load you have. It's got that power. It doesn't have any pollution that you don't realize until now. They talk about pollution. Before, you don't talk about pollution. But the trolleybuses were powerful. No matter what kind of load you have, it's the same power. Press on. It just goes silently. I see 'em in Canada, Vancouver.

WN: You mean now?

FK: Yeah. We were on our way from the airport to the pier. Still have the nice trolleys there.

WN: So you went on the road, the same road that cars went on?

FK: Oh yeah.

WN: Just that you folks had the two poles. . . .

FK: Yeah. That's the [electrical] power, see.

WN: I see.

FK: It can go either way it wants. Power. Just follow [the overhead power lines] like this. Only if you go into Kaimukī, you gotta sort of glide it through the switch, see. There's one going to Kalākaua to Waikīkī, eh? Then this is where you gotta watch. We have a mark on the side, something to mark when the bus come. Then we look. Just about that time then we put up a one point of power so that trolley switches to this track to go Waikīkī.

WN: Oh, what if you didn't do that?

FK: Sometime you didn't, then, oh, the trolley comes right off.

WN: Oyee.

FK: Yeah.

WN: So what happens? Do you have to put it back on?

FK: Then you have to go down [i.e., get out of the bus] and you gotta put it on again.

WN: You have to do it?

FK: Yeah. That's why we had lot of imaginary markers there. Driving the trolley, ah, I gotta go Waikīkī. Right about that time my trolley is right where that switch is. So you press one point and the switch turns to that way.

WN: I see.

FK: But if you going straight you just glide right through. Another inconvenience time is when you jump the guy that's supposed to be ahead of you. Like I'm coming down from Liliha, the guy comes from Kalihi—Dillingham and King, yeah?

WN: Mm hmm.

FK: I know the guy supposed to be ahead of me (chuckles), but he's late.

WN: Yeah.

FK: So I went ahead of him.

WN: Yeah.

FK: Can't hold back the traffic.

WN: Right.

FK: So when I go down a few blocks, I get off. I let him pass me. Put down my trolley, let him pass me.

WN: Oh, really? You have to do that?

FK: Yeah, that's the way it was, but. . .

WN: How long would it take you to take the thing off?

FK: No problem.

WN: Yeah?

FK: No problem, yeah. The thing is just dangling (chuckles). Oh yeah, the trolley was the best bus I've ever driven. Yeah.

WN: So you would have the power . . .

FK: Yeah, the power and brakes.

WN: . . . similar to gas today. So no shifting or anything like that?

FK: Nothing, nothing. People wouldn't know I'm right behind them. It's so quiet. Especially the forty-four passenger. The big ones.

WN: Mm hmm. And the doors were power . . .

FK: All open by itself. Just open. Beautiful bus.

WN: What was the route from say you're going from Downtown to navy [Main] Gate. Where did you go? Nimitz?

FK: Yeah. Those days we go Nimitz Highway, yeah?

WN: Mm hmm.

FK: And then they used to have railroad, too, those days . . .

WN: Oh yeah, yeah.

FK: You know, from 'A'ala Park station there?

WN: Yeah, that's Dillingham railroad [i.e., O'ahu Railway & Land Company].

FK: Yeah, they get a lot of guys go on the train, too. Go work to Pearl Harbor, too. Sometimes I used to go along same time with the train, though. And then we cut off into navy housing. Those were good days, though.

WN: So like if you went to the [Pearl Harbor] Main Gate, they still had the overhead [power lines] right at the Main Gate?

FK: Oh, no. That line, we don't have trolleys. Only in town.

WN: Only in town.

FK: Kaimukī, Kalihi, Liliha, Waikīkī.

WN: Oh, so the Main Gate line, you . . .

FK: All gas.

WN: All gas.

FK: All gas. Buses or diesel buses.

WN: And they give you rookies that run?

FK: I've done that, driving that. We had lot of Mack—Mack company, Mack buses.

WN: So during the war when you started they had gas buses already?

FK: Yeah, they had. Then we leased some navy buses—diesel buses. Big ones, too.

Well, to me, driving a bus is a good job. You got to like people, first of all, because you're going to meet up with all kinds of people. I really enjoyed it. I really enjoyed talking to little kids, breaking them in to say good morning. Takes me about two or three weeks (WN laughs). The local kids that come in the bus, they just. . . . Every morning I see the same, especially when you're driving the line like Maunalani Heights, you see them every day. Not like going town. So you see the same kids every morning. You say, "Good morning," they no say nothing (WN chuckles). About two weeks later, eh, they say something. And that's what inspired me. Make me feel good. And when you see the kids out in the shopping center like that, they always say hi. I had some real handicapped kids, mongoloid kids, that always remember till today, which I haven't seen them for some time. But some of them remember because you've been good to them. You meet them halfway. That's all it takes. Meet them halfway. And they really respond. So I get a lot of kids that was really, really good. That really used to satisfy me because saying good morning every morning to them, no say nothing (chuckles). Finally, I think, about two or three weeks, we became good friends.

(Laughter)

FK: I cannot believe that, but it used to happen like that.

WN: So when you took the town routes you had mostly local kids?

FK: Oh yeah, mostly local.

WN: So when you took the Main Gate ones, that was what? Almost 100 percent military?

FK: Seventy-five percent or more. In the morning when local workers go to Pearl Harbor [to] work, some of them used to take the train. Some take the bus, so. But after nine o'clock you see nothing but servicemen.

WN: Was it crowded?

FK: Yeah, always. Shee. You go over there on the weekend, Saturday, you come to the Main Gate you see all white—all sailors. And we'd go right around area three. We'd pumped the doors—open the door. "Here's for two." They'd put two fifty-cents on the coin box. "Here's for two." They put a dollar [bill]. They just run, trying to get a seat. And we don't know (chuckles). That's all extra money.

WN: Oh, they give you bills, then?

FK: Some bills.

WN: How much was fare that time—wartime?

FK: Three for fifteen cents, tokens, yeah? They could put cash if they want but gotta be dimes or nickel. But they put a fifty-cent piece, "Here's for two." They rush in, trying to get a seat, because the crowd. I mean it's crowded! All white, Main Gate. So we had a parking lot they called area three. Come in, open the door. In no second that bus is loaded. It's the same thing going back [to Pearl Harbor in the] late afternoon from the Army-Navy Y[MCA] on Hotel Street. But the difference is they are feeling high. They're not clean or fresh like when they first came in the morning. So that's a big difference. And they're always looking for booze, too. Those days they were restricted, eh? No more whiskey or anything like that. But in Hawai'i, some brewery used to make Five Islands gin and so many other different kinds of gin. And if I can get it, I can sell 'em for fifty dollars.

WN: Oh, did you do that?

FK: Well, I did.

(Laughter)

FK: I won't tell you that but. Some sailors, they come around, they like to buy drink, eh? Because they couldn't buy [from stores].

WN: So when they give you dollar for two, you know, for one fare, two fares, the rest is for you then?

FK: I know, it is (chuckles).

WN: That's good.

FK: It was good, but . . .

WN: Getting a tip.

FK: Yeah, it's like a tip, but you gotta put whatever, you know. . . . But I can tell you lot of stories about this kind of thing, but no good (chuckles).

WN: Oh, okay.

FK: Oh boy. 'Cause . . .

WN: So you made on top of your salary, you got some, in essence, some tips.

FK: Yeah, especially over there [Pearl Harbor]. When they're rushing in the bus, "Here's for two." Put a fifty cents. That's way more than it takes to get on the bus. You can buy three tokens for fifteen cents was, I think, those days. They won't want to waste time like that. They just put the money right on my dashboard, right there, rush in to get a seat. So everything was wide open in those days.

WN: So if they don't get on the bus, how long would they have to wait for the next one?

FK: Oh, in no time. We had good service.

WN: Oh yeah?

FK: Yeah, pretty good service. Sometime we have what they call that express line. You go straight to navy [base], straight to town. Nonstop. We had that kind, too. Then if you want to take extra work after you finish work, there's always extra work. You take a bus out to the Army-Navy Y. That inspector will be right there, we count. "Okay, go." Used to take 'em straight to the Main Gate.

WN: Oh, kind of like a charter then, or shuttle.

FK: Yeah, sort of like a charter. Those are extras. Like going to a football game—Honolulu Stadium—or boxing or. . . . We used to take a extra bus out. It's extra money. We go to see the game free and all that stuff. I've done that quite a bit. Go to Civic Auditorium. Remember we used to have all these boxing and wrestling?

WN: Mm hmm.

FK: We used to take the bus, park the bus right in front Civic Auditorium. And when the event is over, they get on. Take 'em wherever my destination is. I think even today for [Aloha] Stadium [from] Mānoa they have a express bus.

WN: Right.

FK: Special bus, I think so. They do that. But they pay little bit more. But I think it's a good service 'cause we take you right to the gate. I've done that once, in 1973, when I came back from Mainland, when I got a job. They had one extra. I took the bus, and you just go straight to the stadium. And you can go in the stadium free.

WN: So when you're going from Main Gate to town, like where did you stop? Most people got off Downtown?

FK: Most people coming in town. But you have some local people live out in Salt Lake area, in the Nimitz area, they get off. But they didn't like to ride the bus because all the servicemen, yeah? It was hectic those days, but you can't help it.

WN: In the beginning did you need those, what do you call those guys that followed you?

FK: I didn't need, but I used to watch them, see them following.

WN: There was no incident that you needed them?

FK: No, no. But I've seen when I was following them, how this guy beat the heck out of this serviceman. Was giving problem with the driver. Oh, we had this guy, he's a Samoan brute. Take the marine, put this two thumb in the mouth and (chuckles). I mean, some of these servicemen will never forget that kind of beating they had. But it's the kind of protection you have but you can't help that. You can't carry a gun with you (chuckles). But we had that kind of protection, especially navy run—navy housing run, Pearl Harbor [Main Gate] run.

WN: So it's mostly because of drunkenness and whatever and so forth.

FK: Yeah, right.

WN: But what about like robbery or money or anything like that?

FK: I didn't have any incident like that or I've never heard of anything like that. No, no.

WN: Mm hmm. How late were the buses running during the war?

FK: Well, we used to run at night, too. We had this little square thing in front the headlight.

WN: Mm hmm. The slit.

FK: Yeah, little slit. I cannot remember how late we were running, but not too late. But I remember driving a bus like that because that time, [the route] was [from Fort] Ruger to [Pearl Harbor] Naval Shipyard.

WN: Oh, that was your route?

FK: Yeah, and there was little slit there [exposing part of the bus' headlight]. But I don't think we drove till late, though.

To me, it's a good life, though (chuckles). When you start thinking about it, you've got to like people, all kinds of people. And your job will be really, really entertaining because you meet all kinds of people. Really.

But what amazed me, like the Mainland servicemen coming here, never rode on a trolleybus (WN chuckles). They used to stand in front, ask me, "How is this thing going?" (Laughs)

WN: They were more used to gasoline-powered vehicles?

FK: Probably. They come from way in the sticks somewhere. I won't call that in the sticks, but places where they don't have big city, so they really never see a trolleybus in their life. It's amazing.

We have another bus, forty-passenger Mack buses. And it shift by air—air clutch they called it. It just shift. You no more clutch. You just shift by air. The bus go, pshoop pshoop pshoop, shoop shoop shoop. Those were good buses.

WN: Hmm. That came around same time or later?

FK: Yeah, they came about the same time. Then. . . .

WN: But when you were driving to Main Gate, you had regular clutch.

FK: Yeah, that kind of bus. Sometimes we had the navy buses that we leased from the navy. We didn't have enough buses. Those were automatic diesel buses. It was different color. It didn't even have "HRT" on the side of the bus. But the company used to lease them, I think. But I

remember driving those. It's a white-grayish bus. A pretty big bus.

But to me it was a good life, though, driving bus. I like people. I enjoyed old people. In fact, I learned my Japanese from driving Mānoa. All these old people come in every morning, Japanese greetings, they said. When they get off the bus, same Japanese greetings, so I learned some of the words from them.

(Laughter)

FK: Until today, some of them are really. . . . They remember. Some beautiful people. I remember one old Japanese lady used to make lunch for me (chuckles). All kinds of good things happened. Really. That's the only way, you be nice to them. But that's the way life was at that time. Then as your seniority gets better, you can choose. Everything goes by seniority. Your vacation time, June is limited. September, plenty opening. So if you get good seniority, you can get into June or whatever time you need, whatever month you want, see. To choose a run, too. Every three months, we change run unless you have enough seniority that nobody takes the run you like. You can keep on taking the same run, see.

WN: How long did it take you to reach a seniority point where. . . .

FK: Oh, they would start hiring people, yeah? So seniority jump higher and higher. The more they come in, more your seniority goes up. So that was good part of it, too.

WN: So during the war, up until before the war ended, were you still doing the [Pearl Harbor] Main Gate route or by then you had some seniority where you could get better routes?

FK: Well, I started right after the war so I didn't know that. Driving. Didn't know too much about Honolulu, too, eh? Get to know Honolulu, then I applied for the job.

WN: Did you like it more than working Honolulu Cafe?

FK: Oh yeah. I'd much rather work outside. 'Cause the pay was better, too. Of course, Honolulu Cafe was giving us free meals (chuckles) but still, I think, the bus company. . . . I think another way to look at this thing is the bus company was lucky that they opened the door for Japanese. Lot of young Japanese started driving bus. So higher seniority, Japanese. All these things happened like that.

WN: And a lot of that is because a lot of non-Japanese who were working for HRT went to Pearl Harbor because the pay was better?

FK: A lot of them, yeah. But those with really good seniority, they stayed back. But the one that didn't have, "Why should I stay there?" They gotta work night run. They gotta work the kind of shift they don't like. Work at Pearl Harbor it's a day shift, see. And they were making better money, too. I don't say everyone went, but I know those with good seniority stayed back because they have choice of run, choice of vacation. But one thing I'm really happy, something that I never thought all the time I worked in the Mainland for the aircraft company, where they don't have pensions or retirement benefit, which I didn't really think about. So when I came back in '72, I went to see my friend. He used to drive bus in the forties. He became superintendent. That's when I told you that he said, "Why don't you come back

drive, Fred?" (Chuckles)

At my age I was going back driving. He said, "Come on, let's take a bus out."

So him, being a superintendent, took the bus out of the barn. He drove along. He let me take over the wheel on King Street. We just drove, drove. Drove up University Avenue. Come down. Come back to the barn, and he gives me the job back.

WN: This is in '72?

FK: Seventy-two.

WN: So you . . .

FK: And then when I retired in '84, I realized, gee, all those years in the Mainland, I never thought about retirement money or benefits. Of course, social security I've had since that program came out. Social security program, I think, came out in '37 [1935], I think. I was already working. But you cannot live only on social security today. So it was really a blessing that I went to see my friend. I didn't realize he was superintendent.

WN: This was Manny . . .

FK: Manny Gomes.

WN: Manny Gomes, yeah. Mm hmm.

FK: Even today, at least once or twice a year I go to see him. He used to live nearby. That's how we were good friends for driving the bus in the forties. So I really thanked him. Today I get pension. Trust fund money. Medical planner. I didn't have any of those working for aircraft company. Aircraft company, most of them depend on contracts from the government, see. And when they need it, they have a lot of work. But the good benefit we had was we had a chance to buy stock. The company put in so much. You put in so much. They had good benefits, but nothing like. . . . You don't think about retirement those days. So when I came here and I got a job and stuff, when I retired I think, gee, I came back from the Mainland all those years, there were no pension plan. And that's something you look forward for when you retire. You gotta have pension. Medical, especially. So I have all that. And all I have to do is work twelve years minimum. Seventy-two to '84. I get protection in a medical plan plus my social security. Every time I think about that, I say, my gosh, all those years working for aircraft company, you don't think about retirement because there is no such a thing, see. You don't know when they're gonna lose a contract. And a lot of the companies today are no longer there. The last company I worked, they worked with government contract, was Vernitron Electronics Company. I was a draftsman. It's not existing anymore. When wartime conditions stopped, everything goes down. There's lot of small companies. Say like Boeing, [McDonnell] Douglas. They make commercial planes so they had work.

WN: Right.

FK: Although Douglas and Boeing used to make fighter planes, too, like North American [Aviation Company], North American is no longer there. At least, I never heard of them

anymore. Hughes [Aircraft] is still there, Hughes Company, because they made other than wartime stuff. Boeing made commercial planes. So is Douglas. And they also used to make the fighter planes. Grumman Aircraft. You don't hear them anymore. They used to make all the navy fighter planes in Long Island when I used to work. Next to Republic Aviation was Grumman Aircraft. But you don't hear about them anymore. But Grumman went into building buses.

WN: Hmm. That's right.

FK: Yeah. I noticed some buses we have here is Grumman.

WN: Right.

FK: (Laughs) I couldn't believe it. They have to get into something because they have equipment, I think, to build certain things. But, like Fairchild, I don't hear too much about them. Fairchild is one of the first companies that used to make helicopters in Long Island. Long Island, they had Fairchild Company, Grumman Aircraft and Republic Aviation, which I worked for. And today you don't hear about those companies anymore. Unless they go into some other kinds of means of electronic things. Like when I get to L.A., this past trip when I got to the airport, I couldn't see North American sign. North American Aircraft used to make one of the best fighter planes. Jet fighter. We used to build that. You don't see the name on the thing, and they usually have a big sign, you know, "North American." Like Lockheed used to make. They're still making. They're still making commercial planes. Lockheed. There's another company in southern California. I can't think of the name now.

WN: McDonnell Douglas.

FK: McDonnell Douglas. They're there, too. McDonnell Douglas. But those wartime kind of contract jobs, even when Boeing or Douglas lose a contract it affects hundreds of small companies because it's not Douglas that make the plane by themselves. All little, small companies make certain kind of things. And they all assemble at Douglas. But if Douglas or Boeing lose a contract, it affects all these little electronic companies, all the different companies. It affects them. The reason I came [back] here because Vernitron [Company] went down. I felt sorry for the engineers because they bought homes. How they gonna pay up the kind of home? But, of course, in the Mainland it's not as expensive as here but I know, I worked with engineers, see. And they all bought homes. I felt sorry. They're over-qualified for a smaller job like draftsmen. They're engineers, see? So they had a hard time finding job. So I used to feel sorry for them.

WN: Okay, so you worked HRT from '42 to '48?

FK: Forty-two to '48, yeah.

WN: You were telling me last time about an incident involving your wife. Do you mind talking about it?

FK: (Chuckles) Well, I think the local girls all went crazy when all these White boys came here, young boys, you know, sailors, soldiers, marines. I've seen it when I'm driving bus, too. And then [one day] I went to visit my brother in Mānoa housing. They had Mānoa housing

up there. And my brother's wife's sister, single girl, went to one of the NCO clubs, dancing. They saw my wife there. She shouldn't have opened her mouth, I think, that time. I just happened to be there [Mānoa], visiting my brother. And that gal, my brother's sister-in-law, [spoke of seeing FK's wife at the NCO dance]. I couldn't believe it. And here I'm driving the bus, taking all this crap from this servicepeople, and I find out my wife dancing over there, see. I'm working nighttime. I just went crazy. I just didn't give 'em a chance. I got so upset.

WN: You were upset by the fact that your wife was---went to the NCO, too?

FK: Right, right. It took me how many years to find out why, and I found out. But it's already something like that happened.

WN: You mean she was just going with a friend?

FK: She went with a friend and she went with her younger sister who was single. And the younger sister until today, she's still my friend. She didn't know I came back to Hawai'i. I got a job driving bus from Beretania and Alexander Street. She comes in the bus. She look at me. She said she couldn't believe it. I was back in Hawai'i after so many years—twenty-something years. Then we got in touch all the time. That's how I found out what my kids were doing. Like my oldest son from that marriage spent about eleven years in the [U.S.] Air Force. Got a lot of friends in Japan. He was stationed in Newfoundland. I made an appointment to meet him. We came friends. We used to go out for lunch maybe once a month sometimes. Then Gwendolyn. I met Gwendolyn in the Mainland as a beauty queen, and she used to come once a year for that Okinawan festival. Surprised me. But the oldest daughter, she's a teacher in Seattle. I have never seen her yet, but. . . .

WN: So you had three children at the time?

FK: Yeah. And I supported them, too. Was really hard. First of all, I gave them \$1,000 because I had this land way up in Pālolo. This friend of mine had. So we cleaned it up. We cleaned it up and we put 'em on the market. In no time, we sold it for big money. Those days, \$9,000 was big money in the forties. I bought it for \$1,500. This place [FK's present home] cost \$12,000 (chuckles). Had a duplex apartment here. But anyway, from that money I gave \$1,000 because the kids were young then. And every month I was giving them support money until she got married again.

WN: So that one, it was just one outburst and you just. . . .

FK: I just---I think because I don't have enough education. I always blame that. If you had education, you would think twice. You would sit down and you would talk things over. I didn't give any chance, I was just thinking about the crap I've taken from all these servicemen every day—day in, day out. And you find she went to the dance, the NCO club in Fort DeRussy. And those days the young gals here, local gals, oh, they went crazy for these White people—White servicemen. I see 'em when I'm driving. And some of them I know personally from Maui.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

FK: The thing I'm very thankful is Mr. Nishizawa, you know, getting married to [FK's first wife] when she had three kids. And, of course, I've been supporting. That's something I had to do. But he didn't put any kind of negative thoughts into the kids, that your dad was a terrible guy and certain kinds of things, which you would expect someone to tell the kids 'cause you divorced a wife and three kids. But I'm sure he didn't say anything like that to the kids because the kids wouldn't have come up and look for me. Especially Gwendolyn. When she came up to L.A. it was shocking to me. I couldn't believe it. But the funny thing, I know that's her. I had no contact whatsoever.

WN: Why don't you tell me that story about, with Gwendolyn.

FK: Oh, I had this strange call. She must've got a number from some of my family, I think.

WN: You were on the Mainland?

FK: Yeah, I was still in the Mainland. I got this call and she wanted to meet me. I said, "Oh, okay. Where are you?" So they were near Japanese town because all the Cherry Blossom queens go to L.A. for the nisei festival. So they gave me the name of the place. I'm familiar with all those places, so I met them down there, and that was a real fantastic meeting. She had a chaperone with her—another lady. So we had lunch and we couldn't hardly talk to each other (chuckles). It's so unexpected kind of thing, see. But anyhow, it worked out all right. I never thought of moving to Hawai'i again, but eventually. . . . This was 1967, I think, when she was a queen. I hadn't moved [back to Hawai'i] till 1972 after so many years in the Mainland.

But until today, the young sister, the one that went to the dance which my wife accompanied her, she's a very good friend. When I was still here, I gave her away in marriage. I was like a father to her. So until even today we always get in touch. And she used to tell me all the stories about what's happened to this gal, this boy and that boy and all that. So I'm really thankful that she felt like that. 'Cause I think maybe she felt that she was the blame for it. She asking my wife to accompany her to go to the dance. Not that it was anything wrong to go to a dance but the idea of the whole thing. Oh, I tell you, you can't imagine what I did, I threw everything in the house. "This is it! I'm going!" I was so upset. When you taking all this kind of crap from the servicepeople and you found out your wife is gone to this dance. But instead of being an intelligent guy who would sit down and talk to 'em, would have been different story. But I didn't give 'em a chance.

But like I said, I never met Mr. Nishizawa but I think that guy is really something. He never put any kind of bad thoughts in the kids like some people would probably do. Well, maybe because they found out why, too, why we got divorced and all that. But I'm thankful that like Gary, he's a big boy. He's bigger than me. He works for a Japanese outfit, because during his career in the air force, stationed in Japan so many years and he met a lot of friends there. I haven't seen him for about a couple of months now, I think. So busy. Gwendolyn, I haven't seen. She works for Queen's hospital now. She's got very good job, I heard. The older daughter is in Seattle, a schoolteacher.

WN: And then there's someone in Minneapolis?

FK: That's my daughter from second marriage.

WN: Oh, oh, I see. Oh, okay.

FK: I had a second marriage.

WN: Your second marriage was the one who was from L.A.

FK: Yeah.

WN: I see.

FK: One of the most, I think, brilliant lady. She is a very well-known lady in the Okinawan community in Los Angeles because of her schooling.

WN: So your experience driving bus and then having these little run-ins with the servicemen must've have really affected you.

FK: It really changed---if wasn't for that thing, our marriage would still be good. But I think my brother's wife's sister shouldn't have opened her mouth. She's a single woman. She's free to do anything they want. I've seen lot of local gals walking around hand-to-hand with servicemen, sailors, soldiers. Because ordinarily, you don't get chance to talk to *Haoles*. Where I grew up in Maui you don't come near a *Haole* until I came here and you find out, they're not any better than we are. But in Maui it's different. I don't think I ever talked to a *Haole* except the boss in the sugar mill. In the field was all Portuguese. *Lunas*, you know. But White men, *Haole*, well, they were all big boys. Even their kids were sent to private schools. You don't get to talk to them. Not like here, not like today. So different, especially in Maui. And every year my dad said, okay, we're going to the boss's house, with gift. That's the only time I get to shake hand with the number one boss of the sugar plantation because every New Year's we're giving them gifts---something anyway. And that's the only time. Our *luna* was all Portuguese. So there was no contact with *Haole* whatsoever in Maui as we grew up. But when I came Honolulu, gee, it's different.

WN: Especially with the war starting, too, with *Haoles* from all over.

FK: Oh, yeah. Real different. I've never seen a Colored boy until I got to New York.

WN: What about Pearl Harbor? You didn't see any Black people?

FK: I didn't see---no. Mostly all White. Yeah. Mostly all White.

WN: So when did this incident happen? When the war was still going on or after the war ended?

FK: Oh, I think was 1945, I think.

WN: So you continued to drive bus after that.

FK: Yeah. Mm hmm. I could have salvaged the marriage if I had little bit more patience and little bit more knowledge of life like an intelligent guy would. I just cracked up. I can just still

picture that time. I tried to do everything. Work every day. But I'm glad that the three kids—I haven't seen the oldest daughter, the one in Seattle, teaching—but the other two, Gary and Gwendolyn, at least we're not enemies (chuckles). That I'm really thankful.

WN: What made you leave Hawai'i in '48?

FK: Well, I had an opportunity. All Honolulu barbershops was [run by] ladies—Japanese ladies (WN chuckles). And I thought to myself, "Eh, I'm going to be a barber. I'm going to New York and learn to become a barber."

WN: Why did you have to go New York to learn?

FK: There were no schools here. There's no beauty kind of school or barber school or anything like today. So I went over there. Took 1,000 hours to graduate. That means you know how to cut hair, shave, massage—you know, everything. And after I graduated I got a license in New York. I worked one year as a barber. Right next to Waldorf-Astoria, one of the big hotels. But gee, the haircut prices were forty cents, and you working in, you know, 30 percent or 20 percent, whatever. You weren't making money. But I stuck by for about one year. Then the Korean War came along, and they were hiring people to work in the aircraft companies in Long Island. Applied for a job. I got a job. Ever since then I worked for aircraft companies.

WN: So when you left in '48, you didn't want to continue to stay here and work as a bus driver?

FK: No.

WN: You just wanted to get out of Hawai'i?

FK: I just wanted to get out because of the incident with my wife. Well, maybe some other reason, too. Anyway, to me I think was a darn good move because it educated me, which I didn't have education in school, but it educated me working among all these people. Learning about all different *Haole* races. In Hawai'i, they only know *Haole's a Haole*. They don't know if he's an Italian, Armenian, or whatever. Hungarian. They don't know. In New York, you meet some Italian people, so different from Jewish. But they all nice people. I'm telling you. I worked with Armenian. I never met Armenian before in my life (chuckles). Hungarian. Polish. All these kind of people I've met. German people. And they're strangers themselves, too. They're trying to make themselves different from the others. Especially Italians. Jews you can tell because most Jews are business-minded people. They own the big department stores in New York. Gimbal's, Macy's. All big, big stores. That's how come you start thinking about Jews as really smart business people. But Italians are like people in Hawai'i. They're so open-hearted. And they invite you for lunch, dinner, like that, on the weekend. It's just fantastic. Polish, a nice guy I met going to the barber's school. Got to be good friend. He comes from Portsville, Pennsylvania. It's a coal-mining town. He say, hey, I'm not going to be a coal miner all his life so he came to the school in New York. And we became good friends. He showed me where Polish restaurants was. Sad thing is I never have contact with them anymore. But like I said, it's an experience, it's an education. And lot of them, they don't take it because you didn't have education. They really take you for what you are. See, that's a good part about these people in New York. Especially people that live there.

WN: So this experience in New York must have really opened your eyes toward other nationalities

more than you had in Hawai'i.

FK: That's right! More so. Because you get to meet them as what race they are and their ways of thinking. Like Italians are open-hearted people. They're really free-going people. They're really nice, to me. All of them were nice to me. I think I was the only Oriental working for Republic Aviation (laughs). "The boy from Hawai'i," they put inside the company newsletter. They had an article about that. I used to get a kick reading that thing. But, like I said, it was an education for me. It really was.

WN: Do you think that if you had been in New York and then this incident happened later on, think you would you have reacted differently?

FK: How do you mean now?

WN: Well, you know you said that before you came to New York, you said a *Haole* was a *Haole*. Then you look at the servicemen and the drunkenness and the fighting. And you come to New York and you become friends with. . . .

FK: Yeah, amazing, you know, that part there. Another thing I can tell you by experience is that people in New York—talking about racial—not so in New York when you get to work with them. California, to me, is one of the worst states. When I moved to California, less than a year working for the aircraft company, I had a fight with a guy calling me a Jap. Big guy, too. I really slug him. He chased me all over the plant. But in New York, no problem. Funny thing. It's amazing. I don't know, maybe they took me for Spanish. I don't know (WN chuckles). But I had no problem racially.

WN: Even three years after the war ended. No problem?

FK: Yeah. No problem. But when I move to California. . . .

WN: That was in 1960. . . .

FK: When I moved to California, gosh. Terrible.

WN: Interesting.

FK: To me, California is the worst state, but they not original Californians. They came from the South. They came from different part of the states because California, they had lot of jobs open.

WN: So you stayed in New York from '48 [to 1960]. All that time you worked for Republic?

FK: (I was a sheet metal worker at) Republic Aviation (in Farmingdale, Long Island).

WN: So what were your first early impressions of New York?

FK: Well, you can't wear slippers like you do in Hawai'i (WN laughs). You know what I mean?

WN: Yeah, yeah.

FK: You get up in the morning, you put your shoes on right away, and you don't take it off until you go take a bath, and that's it. And during the winter if you like bowling or whatever kind of sport, you wear a top coat, gloves, scarf, everything. And you go to the bowling alley you take everything off and play. One of those things you remember about. But to me, New York gave me the most education, though. Really.

WN: Where did you live?

FK: I lived in Manhattan. Then I moved to the Bronx which is in a residential area. And I used to commute to Long Island to work. Getting used with the climate. Wintertime, especially. Oh boy (chuckles). That's why when spring comes along in about April, May, everybody comes out on the park bench and just looking at the sky (WN laughs) because all through the winter you don't see that. You see the sun coming up and Central Park start blooming with all these green leaves coming out. And all through the winter it's like you had a big fire there. All the leaves are gone. And then when spring comes, you see all these green buds coming out, and it's really a terrific feeling. Driving wintertime, even when it's snowing, they have a terrific system, cleaning the highway. They clean the snow, all the trees along side. No more leaves but all the icicles hanging down.

Then I got to meet some people from Hawai'i who's going to school in New York because I found out where they hang out. There was a church on 108th Street and Broadway. I can't remember what kind of---it was a Christian church, but it was pertaining mostly to Orientals, I think. And I met quite a few Hawai'i people going to Columbia University. They come over there. And some of them stay in the. . . . The church had some kind of living quarters, I think. Like this guy, Goro Arakawa.

WN: Yeah, yeah. Arakawa's.

FK: Yeah. He went to Columbia. I became his good friend when he was there. In fact, we used to go to Canada---Montreal, Toronto, one trip, I think. Because New York niseis used to play against Montreal and Toronto.

WN: Play what?

FK: Play softball and basketball.

WN: Yeah?

FK: Yeah. So Goro---I used to meet him at 108th Street. 'Cause he was going Columbia University which was close by. And even today, Goro is a real nice guy. I always remember.

WN: Oh, yeah.

FK: Bump into him, you know. He's active with the Okinawa organization. So once in a while I bump into him. He's a nice guy.

WN: Mm hmm. So from '60 you left New York for L.A. to what? Because you got laid off?

- FK: No. I didn't tell you? When I moved from here [Hawai'i], I remarried, you know. I remarried this Mainland girl.
- WN: You mean from L.A.?
- FK: Yeah. She came here on the *Lurline* during the war, I think. And everybody thought the name she had was a man. They put her in with all the men in this boat. They found out she's a lady, so they. . . .
- WN: What was her name?
- FK: Her name was Sachi.
- WN: Oh.
- FK: So then she came first class from L.A. to here. She came to Hawai'i because she had a sister who was giving birth and needed help and so she came by. That's how I met her. Then we moved together to New York. But she scold me on the first day I went outside without my shoe. Wear slipper (WN laughs). Oh, gosh, "You mean they don't wear slipper?" That's something I gotta get used to already. I have to get used to put the shoes on first.
- WN: Oh, I see. So you were married in [Honolulu]. So you moved to L.A. in '60 because what? To get closer to her home?
- FK: Well, after the postwar, the uncle had a place in New York. The barber's school was on 23rd Street. They had a place on 27th Street so it wasn't too far from the school. But she helped me quite a bit. And then I already had another boy, you know, from her. And the boy start walking on the sidewalks of New York. And then we said, hey, that's not a good life. So decided to move to L.A. Although things were getting slow, too, you know. But still, Korean War was going on, I think.
- WN: Well, 1960, I think was over by now.
- FK: Well, when I came L.A. they went first. Then I came later. I was waiting for---local guy was going to get discharged in New Jersey, so I wait for him to drive together across country. But his discharge didn't come through. So I sold my car and I flew over to L.A. But then things were okay.
- WN: So you worked in L.A. from 1960?
- FK: Yeah. (When I moved to Los Angeles, I got a job with North American Aviation Company doing the same kind of job I was doing in New York—as a sheet metal worker. My foreman asked me to learn to read blueprints so that he could promote me to a lead man. I took his advice and enrolled in adult school in the evenings. The professor made all the students in the class draw sketches from the engineering book. By drawing we automatically read what we drew. And I started to learn all about drawing and reading blueprints. Once, a chief engineer from Revell, Inc. came to the school wanting to hire two draftsmen. The professor recommended me and another student. The other student accepted the job, but I told the professor I wanted to talk to my foreman at North American Aviation Company. So the next

day I talked to the foreman. He told me to take the job because I would be working with engineers and its a clean job. So I took the job and I've been a draftsman, working with fellows who had junior college education. It made me proud in that I never gave up learning. I've been a draftsman until I moved back to Hawai'i in 1972.)

Then when things went bad, economy went down, I found out who was selling a certain item in Honolulu and I wrote to that company. They gave me a job. You see that sign out there? (FK points to old sign hanging in his garage.)

WN: Oh, this is for selling vacuum cleaners?

FK: Yeah. I found out who's selling that particular model in Hawai'i and they called me. "I'll give you a job."

In the meantime, she took a test in Los Angeles for State [of Hawai'i] work. She passed with flying colors. She had a job waiting here, too. So we both moved here [in 1972].

WN: What was going through your mind? How did you feel about coming back to Hawai'i?

FK: Well, for one thing I was glad that my mother was still alive. She was living right here. And when I got a job back in driving bus I had this run—Pālolo run. She used to wait for me out there with a sweet potato (laughs). Every time, she know what time I'm coming from down the hill.

(Laughter)

FK: Everybody think, who that lady? That was one of her enjoyment for one or two years after I came back, [before she] passed away. But that was really something, because sweet potato is one of the basic food for Okinawan people in Okinawa. And she know I love the stuff. I don't know where she get it but she's waiting out there. I'm coming down with the bus (chuckles). I stop right there. Open the door. She really enjoyed that.

WN: Your father had passed away by then.

FK: Yeah. By then my father passed away. But I gotta give them credit, too, to move from Maui to Honolulu, though, because Maui lifestyle is entirely different. Honolulu is different. Gotta wear shoes, too, at that time. And gotta take the bus, no more big bus in Maui. The entire family moved here. And it was better for them, too. They're all way ahead. If it wasn't for me pushing them to move here, they would still be there in Maui. But they got used to.

WN: Between the time '48 to '72, did you come back at all for visit?

FK: I came back in '61 to show my kids from my second wife to see Hawai'i. And they love to swim, eh? Only once. And I still got some pictures of it, too. But there's a lot of things happen in my life, like for instance, I was looking at this.

WN: Mm hmm. Photo album.

FK: This is something. I lost my oldest, see. But he became a national figure.

WN: This is who?

FK: My oldest son.

WN: Oh. From your second marriage?

FK: Yeah. He became a national champion. (FK shows newspaper clipping on his son's bowling accomplishments.)

WN: Bowling.

FK: And he was on his way to become something, but an accident happened in his life and we lost him. But these the kind of things. He went to Cal[ifornia] State College. My kids all went to college. My daughter graduated UCLA. My youngest boy, Santa Monica College. (Chuckles) All these kind of things. Yeah.

WN: Wow, he rolled 244, 257 and 249 (chuckles), 750 series!

FK: And this is all sanctioned league, too, eh? He comes home that morning and says, "Dad, what if somebody shoots 750 series?"

"Oh, that's a terrific series." He don't tell me he did it.

But I used to go bowling Saturday evening. The junior league was Saturday morning, see. So that evening we went, eh, all the managers, everybody coming up to me, congratulating me for something. And I didn't know anything about it. See, he just asked me, "Dad, what if somebody shoots 750 series for three games?"

"Oh, I think it's a fantastic series. Nobody has done that yet. I've never heard of anybody." But that night when I went to the bowling alley to play, pass time, all the managers all coming around. What's going on? They pull my hand. They come to the board up there. Even today, when you go Holiday Bowl, you'll see my son's name up there, in the sanctioned junior league. And one week prior to that in San Fernando Valley, one *Haole* kid shot 735 and that was a record. And about couple of weeks later, hey, here comes a 750 series. Whew. And he didn't tell me he did it.

WN: He told you that after he did it?

FK: No, he didn't tell me he did it. I had to go to the bowling alley find out.

WN: Oh, I see.

FK: He just kept it quiet (laughs). When I went to the bowling [alley], all the manager, desk clerk, everybody, "You mean he didn't tell you anything?" (Chuckles) He was a fantastic boy. He had everything working for him, too. But accidents happen, so. But. . . .

WN: Sorry to hear that.

FK: Some of the kind of thing that always in your mind, yeah?

WN: Just a few more questions and we're finished.

FK: Yeah, because I get 2:45 appointment.

WN: Okay. Well, you know, and you've had an interesting life. A hard life as well.

FK: I think that's what my brothers kept on telling me. If it wasn't for me they would still be in Maui. I forced them to move because the opportunity was fantastic here. And Okinawan people are way ahead here. The restaurants are all [i.e., many are] owned by Okinawans. I couldn't believe that. There's no such thing in Maui. There was only one small pig market owned by Okinawan. When I came here, god. Kewalo Inn, all these big restaurants owned by Okinawan people. That's fantastic. See, Maui, 75 percent are plantation laborers, which I was one with my father them. You come Honolulu, there's all kinds of opportunity open. So I thought Honolulu was really great and I tried to get all the family moved. Finally, my father and mother decided. They came Honolulu, lived in a shack near Alapa'i Street. I found a job for my oldest brother to work in the bus company, washing buses. And he'd never seen a big bus in his life. In Maui you don't have big buses. As time went by, lot of families start moving Honolulu. Old people. Friends of my parents. So that made it good, too, because their kids want to move to Honolulu. Big difference. I'm telling you. You're a plantation worker, you're going to be one. There's no other kind of job. But Honolulu you can be a store clerk, you can get all kinds of jobs. But not in Maui. But I don't know how I had the kind of guts to run away to Honolulu. I still cannot believe I did that (laughs) with only a few bucks in my pocket. I was thinking to myself, no plantation life for me, boy, I tell you. No education, no nothing. I really worked myself up.

WN: You've come a long way.

FK: I did come a long way. My brothers know that. They all went to school, you know. They all know that. That's why my brother always tell me, "Why don't you write a little story?" From way back he's been telling me. So I start writing things, but I never really going through. I think in this country where you have the freedom, you have the opportunity, it's up to you. Maybe hard, but you can do it. You can make something of yourself. I'm not the best in the world, but if I was in plantation, I would be probably happy and retired from plantation but not knowing what's going on in half of the world. But this way, I learned by experience or some education. Learning about all these White people, all these different kind of nationalities. Yeah, that's something, really something.

But I think California, to me, is a beautiful state but at that time they had lot of prejudice yet. Well, that's where the relocation started anyway. You're Japanese, you pack your things and you're going to go. Maybe that kind of thing is still carrying on with some of the White people living in California. Less than one year when I moved from New York to California, I had a fight. A guy calling me a Jap. I thought those things were gone already by that time. But it's a good thing there's a lot of Spanish in California and lots of Colored. They don't show that kind of racial hatred. Only the White people. But most of the White people are out-of-staters, too. They come from different states. But I had a lot of good friends. But not many like New York, though. The White people that I knew was really good people. Jewish, Italian, Armenian (chuckles). Hoo man! Hungarian, German. German town, Italian town. And then the Spanish were coming left and right from Puerto Rico, so they have a place called Spanish Harlem on the east side, and mixed with the Colored people. They were

thousands. They are free to come into this country. They're still a territory [commonwealth], I think. So it was really something.

Well, I don't know if this kind of story can help anybody.

(Laughter)

WN: Well, I'm going to turn off the tape recorder. Before I do, do you have anything you want to say?

FK: Well, like I said, people down and out could read something like this, maybe they can make something out of themselves. That's the way I feel. But what I went through, I just myself couldn't believe, too. But my brothers all know that. They were all going to school yet when I had the whole family move here.

WN: Well, seems like you still maintained your family ties.

FK: Oh yeah.

WN: Well, thank you very much.

FK: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

AN ERA OF CHANGE

Oral Histories of Civilians in World War II Hawai'i

Volume I

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

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