KOREANS
BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: JOSHUA LEE, assistant to the manager, Waialua Sugar Company

Joshua (Joe) Lee was born on December 12, 1913 in Lihue, Kauai. Both of his parents were born in Korea and immigrated to Hawaii in their youth. His father moved to Waialua when Joe was seven.

Joe attended Waialua Elementary, Andrew Cox Junior High (first graduating class), Leilehua High and Tri-State College (Indiana). After graduation, he began working for Waialua Sugar Company as an electrician's helper and has worked his way up into a high administrative post.

He and his wife presently live in Waialua and have four children.
NOTES FROM UNRECORDED PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW

with

Joshua Lee

May 27, 1976

Waialua Sugar Co. Office, Waialua, Hawaii

BY: Vivien Lee

Through his birth certificate, we determined that Mr. Joshua Lee's parents' birthdates were:

mother 1893 Korea
father 1883 Korea

Their dates of immigration to Hawaii:

mother - approx. 1905 - age 12
father - approx. 1905 - age 22

The mother came as a girl with her parents. She spoke "perfect English."

1913: Mr. Lee was born on Kauai, the second oldest child. There were eventually twelve siblings. On Kauai, his father and his uncle sold Singer sewing machines.

1919: The family moved to Waimanalo for one year. His father worked at Waimanalo Sugar Co.

1920: The family moved to Waialua when Mr. Lee was 7. His father was a plantation carpenter. Mr. Lee went to Waialua Elementary School (now Haleiwa Elem.) for 8 grades.

1925: The family moved to Waimea (Yoshida Camp - now gone) and the father worked for Hawn Pine Co. as a field worker. They ran a boarding house for Filipino bachelors - his mother cooked for them. For four years Mr. Lee had to commute to Waialua Elem. School. Dole Co. gave the kids a ride in a truck every day.

1929: A junior high school was begun at Waialua-Andrew E. Cox Jr. High School (7th-9th grades). He attended the 9th grade there.

1930-1932: He attended 10th-12th grades at Leilehua H.S. He drove the family car to school and picked up other students on the way.

1932: The family moved to Wahiawa. His family ran a laundry for non-commissioned officers and officers, as did 10-15 other Korean families in Wahiawa.

Mr. Lee heard about Tri-State College (Indiana) through a friend,
ordered the catalogue, applied and was accepted there. He took a boat to the mainland, went to school and didn't come back for 4 years. He worked his way through school by doing various jobs - tree surgeon, waiter in restaurants. The National Youth Administration found him jobs. His major was electrical engineering.

Mr. Lee came back from the mainland and found a job with WAC as an electrician's helper (wired houses, etc.) He has worked for WAC ever since.

He married in 1939 at age 25. He has four children, the youngest is 26 at present.

At age 10 or 11, the minimum age for working with WAC, Mr. Lee did summer work for the plantation at 50¢ per day. He planted seed cane or picked up cane that fell alongside the railroad tracks. The seed cane was put in bags and then soaked, so the bags were heavy. He could not carry them, but his older brother could. Mr. Lee recalls that everyone who wanted to work could get a job.

At age 12, since summer pineapple work was more lucrative, he hoed weeds for 10 hours a day at $1.00 a day for the pine co. Age 12 was the minimum age for pine work.

He remembers chewing cane while sitting on the railroad tracks; he also remembers the 10-cent movies.

There was a Korean Methodist Church.

Before, there were probably 400 or so Koreans in Waialua. Now he says there are not more than 10 in the plantation community. They all moved to Wahiawa and Honolulu and opened small businesses.
Tape No. 1-12-1-76

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Joshua Lee (JL)

June 4, 1976

Waialua Sugar Co. Office, Waialua, Hawaii

BY: Vivien Lee (VL)

VL: This is an interview with Joshua Lee in the Waialua Sugar Company Office. Today is June 1, 1976. Okay, in our first talk you were telling me that you moved to Waialua in 1920 when you were about 7 years old, right?

JL: Yeah, that's right.

VL: Okay, could you describe what you remember about your first house here? Like the number of rooms?

JL: Gee, I can't recall how many rooms there were in the first house.

VL: Was the bathroom in the house and that kind of thing? Your kitchen facilities...

JL: No, it was outside, I think. Just like most of the houses in those days, the bathroom was outside. The kitchen as I recall was in the house though. I know where the house was. It was down what we call today Otake Camp. That's by Otake Store as you get to Waialua. As far as how many rooms were in the house, I'm not too sure.

VL: Um, what about electricity? Did you have electricity?

JL: As I recall, we didn't have electricity. Just lamps. Gosh. I can't remember! You'd think that I'd be able to remember whether we had electricity or not. Let's see, this was 1920.

VL: Yeah. Was it furnished?

JL: Oh, yes.

VL: And did you have a yard?

JL: Mhm.

VL: That was a long time ago.

JL: Right.
VL: What about bathing facilities?

JL: There was a community bath. You know, just like most of the camps. Plantation camps had a community bath. One side for women, one side for men, and that's the bath. Community bath. Quite sure of that. (Laughs.)

VL: Do you remember anything in particular or special about the facilities? Were they very far from where you lived?

JL: You see that first place that we lived down on Otake Camp, we didn't stay too long there. Then we moved to another place. Because the family moved around quite a bit. The second place we moved to, I remember the house quite well, and I recall the community bath. It was very close, you know. Because the camps weren't too large. In fact, I guess the farthest house from the bath was not more than five hundred yards and that's barely one quarter of a mile.

VL: Mhm. Was it a shower type? Or---

JL: Well, they had both. You know, the big redwood tub, so to speak, you know. Probably I would guess about as large as maybe 8 feet by 10 feet. Rectangle. And approximately 4 feet deep.

VL: And people got inside?

JL: Got in there. Sure. Of course, could get hot water out, if you wanted to. On top of that, they had faucets around for...

VL: With hot water?

JL: Cold water...

VL: You mean you had two? How did you get hot water then?

JL: You couldn't get hot water on the piping. There was hot water in the, uh, furo. The Japanese term for the...

VL: Did they have a fire underneath it?

JL: Yeah.

VL: To heat it?

JL: Sure. That's the way they heated it up.

VL: On your houses, do remember paying rent?

JL: No, we didn't pay any rent. In fact, as late as 1946, you know, we still were not paying any rent. But when the union came into the picture we converted rents to pay and the fellows turned right
around and paid rent. Then paid rents. Now we talking 1920. 26 years later we were still not paying any rent. 1946. That's when we started paying rent. But once we converted to--all perquisites were converted to cash. We weren't paying rent, we weren't paying any medical fees. We got fuel allowance in terms of kerosene. I guess those were the perquisites.

VL: Firewood. Did you need that for anything?

JL: Some people got firewood, I think, but most of the people, more got that perquisites in kerosene. Was distributed to the people. I'm trying to recall how it got around. (Laughs.) I don't recall that, but I know they got kerosene, cause there were kerosene stoves in those days. No electric stoves. No electric lights. Only lamps. Kerosene lamps.

VL: Do you remember when electricity came in or when you got electricity?

JL: When. I don't recall when that came in.

VL: How about school? I'd like to find out what a typical school day for you was like.

JL: Well, that's quite clear as far as schooling. See, that was as I said, the Waialua Elementary School, what is today Haleiwa Elementary School. About two miles down on Haleiwa Road. Nearly all of the kids walked to school. Very few kids had any bicycles. We all walked. After school, we'd walk back. We'd all eat there—well, some of us took our own lunches. Uh, some of them bought lunches.

VL: They provided at the school?

JL: That you paid for, purchase at the school.

VL: Oh how much was that?

JL: A nickel, as I recall. Some of the children bought lunches at the store right next to the school. And in those days you could get a cone sushi as I recall. You could get one cone sushi for a nickel.

VL: Oh, so some children used to go to the store for lunch?

JL: And we used to do that.

VL: What did you used to do?

JL: Well sometimes I...it was a treat to go to the store you know, but sometimes we'd go to the cafeteria. Sometimes we'd bring lunch and sometimes we'd go to the store. And at the store they used to sell sushi, they used to sell stew rice as I recall. Uh...Kishinami Store.

VL: Kishinami Store?
JL: Right next to the school. For years and years and years that store was in operation. The building is still there but it's another kind of store today.

VL: So what time would you have to wake up in the morning in order to have enough time to walk to school...

JL: Gee, I don't recall, but then I would say it took us about forty minutes, forty-five minutes to walk to school. I think so, two miles, you know? Twenty, twenty-five minutes, for a mile that's about right, I think.

VL: And when would school be finished? What time?

JL: I think about the same as they do today, about 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

VL: Did you then go to Korean language school?

JL: Um hmm. They had you know, Japanese language school, and we had a Korean language school so we went to Korean language school. It was a regular Korean language school building that we went to.

VL: Did a lot of Korean children attend?

JL: Yeah, nearly all the Korean kids went to school.

VL: About how many is that?

JL: I'm trying to recall about how many Korean kids were going to school at that time, you know first to the eighth grade, now I'm talking about. Cause over the years gradually the Korean population dropped off but I would say Korean kids were as many as fifty, going to school.

VL: Did they teach you culture in addition to language? You know, Korean values or cultural activities, that kind of thing?

JL: No, they taught us primarily Korean words, and speaking Korean and so on. Korean songs. Things like that. My mother happened to be a teacher, too, at one time. Cause as I said, you know, talking to you the other day, my mother could speak very good English. Better than I could. Better than I can. And she could speak very, very good Korean, too. So, um....

(Interruption: Gloria, Mr. Santoki's secretary comes in with some papers for Vivien.)

JL: ...Korean school was held in the same building as the Korean church, the Methodist church. There was the Japanese church and the Filipino church and so on. And the Korean language school was held in the same....
VL: Mhm. Did the Korean church or the language school or the community put on certain cultural activities or did they have festivals that they celebrated?

JL: Hm. Well, one of the things that there was at Christmas time, I think was sponsored by the sugar company...plantation. And there'd be a Christmas program. And it was held in what we call today the old sugar warehouse. There'd be a program put on by the Japanese group and the kids, you know, children and the Filipino group and the Korean group and so on. And some of them had the cultural background of the Japanese people. So, that was held nearly every year.

VL: Mhm. Did the Korean community itself...for example, the Japanese had their bon dances or something, did the Korean community just by itself do anything?

JL: Yeah, they would put on something that was more Korean than American. Some of the Christmas programs were as I recall, one particular one was, I don't know what they call it, was just a scene, Rock of Ages you know. It was a group singing the song and a girl hanging on the cross (laughs.) The Koreans put it on and it was the first time that something like that ever happened and the show went over big. Prior to that we used to have different kind of things and always in motion. But then we're with the Korean background marching out with flags and things like that.

VL: Korean flags?

JL: Gee, I'm trying to recall. I think maybe a mixture of Korean and American flags. But this Christmas program, as I say, in the sugar warehouse, if you go interview other people, ask them the same question. "What kind of programs were put on?" I remember taking part in some of the programs that marching business, you know? With a flag crisscrossing and all. What were we doing that for, you know? (Laughs) So, as far as programs, cultural programs, they used to have that. As we grew older--this is much later, now, high school level--there were some group sort of church programs and when they had singing by the different groups such as the Japanese group and the Filipino group and the Hawaiian group and the Korean group and used to be at the theater. There'd be singing there. I recall going up there and singing. Oh, this is quite much later, now. And this is when I was in high school.

VL: You used to sing in a Korean group?

JL: Uh huh.

VL: And the different ethnic groups would get together...

JL: Yeah, and sing separately. Sort of like a competition.
Oh.

And we sang English songs, you know?

Not in the native tongue?

No. Not in the native tongue. Wait, I can...

Was this sponsored by the plantation?

No, it was sponsored by the church group, so to speak. What I'm trying to recall whether it was in the native tongue or...no, it was in English. Cause I'm talking now in the '30's, now, in high school. I recall going right up there. I recall that because the Korean had a good singing group. (Laughs) Good singing group.

What kinds of American songs?

Lot of church hymns. See, this was a church program. Learn the church hymns, uh? (Chuckles) I'm trying recall some of the things the plantation people did in those days. I don't know if you have a list of questions. I might add some things that come to my mind. What did we do as kids, what kinds of games did we play?

Yeah, that's what I was coming to, like in your free time, after school and on weekends...

Yeah, what kind of games did we play, you know we didn't have---very few of us had bicycles. I didn't own any bicycle. What kinds of games did we play? We played stickball. I don't know if you know that game. (In the second interview, he recalled that this game was actually called "pee wee.")

No, could you describe it?

We had a piece of stick about six inches long, you know, and it might be pointed on both ends. You get another stick that's about, uh, possibly twenty inches long--a broomstick size about that diameter. Inch and a half or so. And then you'd hit that little stick, the pointed end, that'd fly up in the air; whack it with the other stick and then you hit it a mile out. The guy is out there; he's trying to catch it. If he catches, you out. If he misses it, he throws it back. Then you leave your stick down. If he hits the stick you're out. If he doesn't then you count how many stick lengths and you get so many points. I think that was a fairly common game we used to play.

So let me describe it again. The short stick is on the ground first. And then you take the longer stick and hit the end and it flies in the air, and then you...

Hit it.
...bat it as far as you can.

Uh huh.

And someone out there catches it. And then you're out. Or if they don't catch it, they can pick it up and throw it in?

Yeah, you lay your stick down.

Oh.

And then if they throw it back in, if it hits the stick, you're out. But if it don't hit the stick you count how many stick lengths...

The long ones?

...from where the thing...Yeah. And you get so many points. I'm trying to recall if that was exactly the way...I think sometime we should count with the small one--maybe it's the small one that you count with from one end. That was a common game that we played.

Stickball?

I don't know what we'd say. "Let's play stick" we said, not stickball but, it's called stick. It's called stick.

And when there's so many number of outs....

No. We just took turns. We kept on going, you see.

So, as few as two children could play?

Yeah.

Could more than two play?

Yeah. We would take turns, you know. Another game, of course, marbles. Of course I guess they still play that.

I've never played it. How did you used to?

Well, you know the regular marbles or agates, we call them, those circular ones, round ones...

Did you used to call them marbles, or did you have other names?

Agates. We used to call them "eggets". Eggets, we used to call them. That's an incorrect pronunciation. The correct pronunciation is agates, but we used to call them eggets. As kids. One game was, we'd have a circle about five feet in diameter. We'd have a competition; only guys want to play. Each guy would put maybe, four or five, you know, these agates right in the middle, then pile em,
one level and he'd shoot from the outside of the ring. And if you
knock the agate out, 'at's yours. If you knock one out, shooting
it, you have another turn, keep on shooting. But if you miss one
more piece, then next person's turn.

VL: So you can keep taking as many turns as long as you keep knocking em
out?

JL: Knocking em out, yeah. And that was a common game. So the guy
that's a good shooter, he would win.

VL: How did they decide who should go first?

JL: Well, sometimes we would decide by shooting as close to the pile and
see who would be closest to the pile without getting on top of the
pile. I think that was one way of doing it. Or did we draw a line,
okay, who could get closest to the line and decide who shoots first.
And of course the guy that knocks the most out, the second game
they gonna play, well, he takes first crack at it. That was a common
game. Cause we didn't have type of games they have today, you know,
we...

VL: Did girls used to play with boys?

JL: Hardly. Hardly played with them. With the boys. Course, we, uh,
ever did what the kids do today. We went swimming quite often in
the river, right down here.

VL: Which river is that?

JL: Kikii Stream. We used to go swimming down there.

VL: Fishing?


VL: Crabbing in the river?

JL: Mhm. From the bridge. Drop in crab net and then, the way they do it
today. About the same way.

VL: Did you use bait?

JL: Mhm. Fishead, aku head, things like that.

VL: You were saying last time just about sitting on the railroad track
chewing sugar cane.

JL: Mhm. We used to do that. But we always were careful that we didn't
get caught by what we used to call the camp police, in other words,
sort of a security guard. Cause they'd sure chase us so, we would do
this at night most of the time.
VL: But would he chase you for taking the sugar cane or for sitting on the track?

JL: For taking the sugar cane.

VL: Oh. (Laughs)

JL: Yeah. They wouldn't do us for doing anything on the track. But for chewing sugar cane, yeah. We used to do that, and quite a few of us had pocket knives, but most of us just tore our cane with our teeth. We'd compete to see who could make the biggest pile of...(Laughter.)...chewed up cane. Of course, we used to go to show once in a while, cause as I recall, the show was ten cents way back in those days. I'm talking about...

VL: Did you have an allowance? Your parents give you any?

JL: No, most of us kids did not have allowances, well, as far as I was concerned, we never had any allowance. Um, never had any allowance. In order to go to show we just ask, you know, "Can we go to show?" and, okay, and then we got a dime to go to show. Because, I guess, most of the families were not rich period. Even the food we ate was nothing compared to today.

VL: What kind of food did you eat?

JL: Well, most of us, I guess the staple was rice and bread and also native kim chee and codfish and things like that. Prepared the Korean style, uh.

VL: How's that, Korean style?

JL: Korean style codfish, they still prepare it today. It's a dried codfish that's soaked in water. You know the large codfish that's--that you can get in....(laughs) You know what the codfish is, the dry codfish you can get at Shimai...

VL: Salty?

JL: ...Yeah, Shimai Market? Soak it in water and then they chop it up in hunks about two inches square and then they sort of boil it with soyu and oil and sesame seed and so on, and they still prepare that today. I like it. (chuckles) But that was one of the staples cause that was fairly inexpensive in those days.

VL: You would buy the fish from the market and not catch fresh one?

JL: No. No. Fresh fish. Well, I guess fresh fish once a day at the most. But the families weren't as well off as they are today. Of course, then, nobody had cars, you know.

VL: Yeah. Did you raise animals or vegetables?
Vegetables. We raised vegetables. Nobody raised animals, then.

And, did your mother make her own kim chee?

Oh, yes. For that matter, most of the---I would say, most of the Korean families today make their own. Because um, well in those days, kim chee wasn't sold in the market. Not until the last 20 years, uh? Maybe during the war, we used to have kim chee on the market. Prior to that they might make, you know.

And what kinds of foods would your mother buy from the store?

Oh, you know, vegetables like cabbage and, uh, turnips, you know, daikon, you know, typical food that all the orientals bought, uh? Things like that. They never bought things like celery, though. Of course they bought stringbeans and onions, but celery and things like broccoli and cauliflower were unheard of. Never heard of those things.

What kinds of things did you raise in the garden?

Oh, cabbage and things like that and turnips and all. Little things. One of the things that a lot of the plantation homes had and especially the homes of the Portuguese families, were these outside ovens. I don't know if you heard of these where they baked Portuguese bread.

Yeah.

And, uh, Portuguese people made, baked those breads.

Did you used to be able to purchase that? Or did you ever eat it?

Yeah. Yeah. Because we knew the neighbors and so on, they pass it out once in a while, and they're really good bakers, uh, these Portuguese ladies. And looking back, all of us kids wore clothes and if there was a rip in the trouser, we patched, you know. It wasn't uncommon to have patched knees or patched elbows, you know. You don't see those today unless the kids deliberately put on a patch. (laughs)

So there was no shame, having a patch?

No. No. That was typical.

What about when you're talking about the Portuguese ladies giving you bread once in a while, and you were talking about the church groups singing, what is your opinion of the relationship of the Korean community or the Korean people with other ethnic groups?

You know, I'm trying to recall, as far as the different groups, they got along well, you know. There weren't any problems as far as I
recall. When I was a kid, there was a big strike, I think in 1919, so I'm only 7 years old. But based on what I've read only, there was some ill feeling between the different races because some group wanted to go back to work and some other group, uh, that's the only thing that I know of.

VL: You didn't experience anything back in 1920, 1919, that you remember?

JL: No, I---I didn't personally experience any of that. So, even in those days, we got along okay.

VL: You used to play with children of other ethnic groups?

JL: Um hum. But primarily, I guess, when you come right down to it, primarily kids of the same nationality played with each other, cause I recall, who did we play with mostly, the Korean kids. But as we grew older, we got to play, you know, the older we got, the more we mingled with the other kids. In grade school. Up into junior high school, you know, and then high school. When I got to high school, I guess my best friends were Japanese boys. My best friends. They were Japanese boys. Not necessarily Koreans. So I guess, that's the way it goes, uh, the older you get. Things change, uh, people get more broad-minded about things.

VL: What about Caucasians? Were there very many going to school with you?

JL: There weren't too many. There weren't too many. Very few. The first of the haoles, you know, that I recall, fifth grade or so. And there were only about four in the class. And I still remember the names of them.

VL: Did you get along with them alright?

JL: Yeah. No problem. Mhm. From the fifth grade on, I recall the haoles in our class. There didn't seem to be any problems. There weren't any, for instance, gang fights. We had a lot of competition. You get, say, a high school age, there was basketball competition. There was a Korean team, a Japanese team, a Hawaiian team. I don't like to say whether Koreans, but the Koreans was darn good basketball players, you know, oh boy. When you talk to some of the other guys and ask them what they think if---there were few Koreans but they were good basketball players. Um, they had basketball competition. There wasn't too much other competition besides that. Baseball, for instance. You know, by the ethnic groups.

VL: How about dating? Did you used to date? In high school?

JL: Yeah, there was not too much dating, but there was dating.

VL: Mhm.
JL: And other nationalities.

VL: So you wouldn't date only Korean girls?

JL: That's right. Mhm.

VL: What kinds of activities or facilities were available for dates? To do on a date?

JL: Well, the dates, primarily were going to dances. Class dances, sophomore dance, freshman dance. You know, in those days, the high schools usually all had a dance, you know, called em freshman dance and so on and things like that. Other than that, there wasn't much dating. Of course, then, when it came to graduation, you know, junior prom, senior prom. But high school, well, I guess there were some dance...I guess there were some other dances, too. There was a gym down here and they used to have dances here and there. Dance at the gym...

VL: Who would sponsor those dances in the gyms?

JL: Different groups would sponsor as a money making project.

VL: What kind of groups?

JL: Well, uh, organizations like the Korean Community Association. I think there was a Korean community group here, or a Japanese community or some kind of club or something would have a dance and sell tickets and they'd get an orchestra from Honolulu.

VL: Oh. (laughs)

JL: And those were quite popular. And, uh, people would come from all over the place. They'd come from Ewa and Honolulu, and so on. Oh, those were quite popular.

VL: This is what kind of dancing?

JL: Regular ballroom dancing.

VL: Ballroom dancing.

JL: Yeah. And I'm talking now about high school and even after high school. College in the forties and so on. I think, uh, thirties, late thirties or early thirties and after World War, even as late as after, well...until, I think, early forty, then. And all of a sudden they stop, they don't have those anymore. And another thing they used to have, schools used to have picnics, I think. Besides that. Class picnics. End of the year there'd be a sophomore picnic, freshman picnic besides that. The dance might be during the year. Times have changed. (laughs).
VL: This might be a good place to stop...
JL: Okay. Yeah.
VL: It's been about half an hour.
JL: Okay.
END OF INTERVIEW
This is an interview with Joshua Lee. Today is June 10th, 1976. Okay, you were just telling me about the need for the Korean church declining.

JL: You know, lot of the Korean people left the community, so there's so few people that there wasn't any need for Korean church, so there wasn't any church.

VL: When?

JL: I'm not sure what year. I would say in the late 1920's.

VL: So where did the Korean people go to church after that?

JL: Joined the other churches. Just as there was no Korean church, there's no Filipino church or Japanese church. They've combined quite a few of the churches.

VL: Was there a Korean Community Association?

JL: I don't think there was an association as such. You know, with officers and so on. I don't recall that.

VL: Did your parents use to practice certain customs, Korean customs, in the home that they taught you?

JL: No. Not in our case. I don't think so. Because my mother grew up in Hawaii. She came over as a child. I think she came to Hawaii when she was 12 years old. So as far as the Korean customs, what are Korean customs? I don't know. So, there wasn't any practice of the Korean customs. I'm trying to recall what are Korean customs. I can't think of any.

VL: Okay. You were telling me before about your first job as a cane seed planter when you were ten years old.

JL: Ten or eleven.

VL: Do you remember that? Can you describe it?

JL: Yeah. This is during the summer, now. And we use to carry the bags
into the field. You know, the bags was there at the side of the road or had been soaked maybe a day or two in water. Bag seed. And the bags were so heavy, I couldn't carry 'em myself, so someone else carry 'em. Actually, my older brother. And take 'em out of the bags we planted. And we got paid by the number of bags we planted. Like piece work, you know. Incentive. That was one of the jobs we did. Was summer work. Then we also did--in the cane fields, now--we also picked up cane that fell off the cane cars and on the tracks. And made piles of them. That's all we'd do. Make piles of cane. Then the older people came. You know, the adults came. Picked up the cane and threw the cane up on the cars.

VL: Were you working under a supervisor?

JL: Ulu huh. A supervisor. Let's see, what other jobs did we have in the field? Another job we had which was related to the plantation work was picking up kiawe beans. You know, kiawe trees have these beans. And we use to pick up the beans and put 'em in the bags.

VL: What were they used for?

JL: Feed for cattle and for horses. And we got paid by the number of bags we filled up. And I remember the supervisor used to shake the bags down as tight as possible so you can get more in a bag. We did that as kids, too.

VL: Did you ever have any trouble with your supervisors, arguments?

JL: No. Never any arguments. The supervisor was always right. Of course, we were afraid of the supervisors, you know. Deathly afraid of them. As kids. (Laughs). As I recall. You know, the last time, we were talking about the games we use to play. The sticks, actually, was pointed broomstick about, maybe, let's say about, six, eight inches long. Actually, both ends were cut on a taper. About, oh, possibly inch and a half back at a taper. On the other ends, was cut on the opposite side, the taper. And that game was called Peewee. I was talking to the other guys; we were talking about old times. And I said, "Yeah. Peewee, that's right."

VL: Oh, it wasn't called Stick? It was Peewee?

JL: No, it's called Peewee.

VL: When you were on the Mainland going to school, that was about the time of the Depression, wasn't it?

JL: '32 to '36.

VL: What do you recall about the Depression on the Mainland?

JL: Well, not very much, because, see, I attended school.

VL: Did it affect you?
JL: I did a lot of work, cause I worked right through. During the summer and all, I never came home the way they do these days. All the college kids come home summer time.

VL: How did you get those jobs?

JL: Well, I applied at the college office. Was the NYA, as I said. National Youth Administration, I think. And there were jobs. You worked around the college, and they paid so much per hour. As I recall, that was about 35¢ an hour. Back in '32, now, to '36. And we did jobs, all types of work at the college. We painted, we did tree surgery work. We learned to do that work. We even dug out underneath of the building, because we were going to build a cellar. And by golly, if we didn't do it by hand. Tough job digging out all that dirt by hand. And there were other jobs that we did. During the winter, we'd shovel off the sidewalks, you know, snow. You work so many hours a month. And you apply that to your tuition.

VL: So as far as you were concerned, the Depression didn't have a great effect on you?

JL: Did not, because I was in college and I was working. I had a job. Worked in a restaurant.

VL: When you came back (to Hawaii) and became an electrician's helper, I recall your saying it was a $1.72....

JL: Per day.

VL: Per day? Was that adequate for you at the time?

JL: Yeah. Because we didn't pay any rent those days, and no medical dues. I was single...(Laughs)...for that matter.

VL: When did you get married?

JL: '39. But then, I started work when I got through college. '36.

VL: And when were you promoted to draftsman?

JL: I'm not sure, but possibly within a year after I started working.

VL: How did that happen?

JL: Well, I guess, they knew that I have the training. 'Cause I got my degree in electrical engineering. And then, having had engineering, you have to have drawing and so on. There was need for drafting work, so that's what I did.

VL: So your pay was greater as a draftsman?

JL: Mhm.
VL: And that pay, was that adequate for your family needs when your family came along?

JL: I don't recall what I was doing when I got married. I have to go back and look at the records. (Chuckles.) I'm not sure when I shifted from one job to the next. Because I started off as electrician's helper and then worked in the power plant for little while in the electrical department. And then did some drafting work. And so on. But then, when I got married, though, I was making $55 a month. I was on salary at that time. And that was a ten hour day. Because the eight hour day didn't come in until later. After I got married, I think.

VL: How did you meet your wife?

JL: I don't recall just exactly, but then, she's from Honolulu, you know. Probably met her at one of these dances, maybe. I don't know. Then, we use to have these dances out here and possibly the---because the Koreans, there's not too many Koreans in the islands, on Oahu, for that matter, so I guess, most of the Koreans knew each other. Koreans in Waialua knew the Koreans in Wahiawa and Honolulu. Not everybody, but most of them knew each other.

VL: What do you like most about living on the plantation now?

JL: Now? (Laughs.)

VL: Or then. Or growing up.

JL: Well, growing up. Well, I like the country life, so to speak, eh. I don't care for the hustle and bustle of the city. I like the wide open space, so to speak. The yard. And being able to work in the yard. Being able to go out fishing and so on without too much bother, because we live right on the beach there. I think I'd go crazy if I had to live in a condominium.

VL: What do you like least about it? About living here now or having grown up here?

JL: Well, up to a few years ago, maybe, we missed things like having television. And the good programs available. We realize now what we missed. Of course, once in a while, when we went to town or away, we'd see television programs. Up to about a year ago, a year and a half, two years ago, reception was so bad out here, lot of people did not have any television. But now they've got cable, so it's so much better. I think that's one of the things we missed out here. And the fact that certain things, if you want to take in, you have to go to Honolulu. For instance, if you want to see the better shows, you have to go to town. We don't go to the operas or those too often. But we do take in about three a year.

VL: What would you say was the single most important event that changed
your life or influenced your life?

JL: (Laughs.) In what way?

VL: Well, just brought about change or really influenced your way of thinking.

JL: Well, I think the most important thing I was influenced by...I would say the decision to go get an education even if it was practically raising my own money. ‘Cause I raised just about every penny of my own college expenses.

VL: What made you make that decision?

JL: I don't know.

VL: Was it your parents encouraging you?

JL: Could be that. Parents started me off with the first term, you know. Tuition and that. From then on, I did it myself. Maybe it was that. How does a guy get to the point where he takes over by himself? I don't know. But I worked right through every summer. I never came home. I did everything from washing dishes to cooking to managing the restaurant. Took over the management of the restaurant in the evenings. So I can wait on tables still today, because I did that right through college. Besides working at the college. For my tuition.

VL: That was an important decision.

JL: Besides working for the landlady for my room. So I worked at the college, at the restaurant, and I work where I live.

VL: So you had to work very hard for your education? It was important to you to do?

JL: Mhm. I didn't come home, as I said. And the college that I went to was only eighty miles from South Bend, Notre Dame. But I didn't see a single football game. I could have gone, but, you know, eighty miles is nothing on the Mainland. But I couldn't afford to do that. But we're talking about myself. We're supposed to be talking about Waialua. (Laughs.)

VL: Yeah. Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked, December 7th, 1941?

JL: Oh, Honolulu. We were visiting wife's parents. Stayed overnight in town. So, that morning, we saw the bombings and the fire over Pearl Harbor, because we were up Alewa Heights. We could see it.

VL: What did you think?
JL: Well, everybody was running out, and I thought the city guys were real unusual people running out just to look at dog fights, eh. Practice. Well, I thought it was just a practice. I made that comment, "You city guys, you get excited. All a bunch of maneuvers." But the heck, it was the real thing. So we were in town. But we did get back that afternoon. They blocked up all the roads, but they let us through it when they found out we were from Waialua.

VL: In the next few weeks, what sort of conditions existed on the plantation? Was there panic, or did people....

JL: No, there wasn't any panic, but there was a blackout, you know. In other words, lights had to be—oh, you had to draw the shades. And cars had to have shades over the headlights and so on. We call it blackout, eh, certain time. From certain time in the evening until certain time in the morning.

VL: Was that hard to live with?

JL: No. We didn't find it too difficult. We just accepted it. Wasn't too difficult. We didn't find it too difficult.

VL: How about the restrictions that martial law placed on people?

JL: I don't feel that was too much of a burden as far as we were concerned, family was concerned. There was no problems to me.

VL: Was your life changed in any way by the war years, during the War years?

JL: No, except that we did a lot of victory gardening. Everybody had victory gardens. Everybody was raising vegetables. And everybody dug bomb shelters in their backyards, you know. And what else did we do....whenever we played poker, we had to draw the shades. (Laughs.) Play poker in the evenings. About the only recreation we had. Things like that. We got to cut out all of these big.....well, in those days, we didn't do a lot of partying anyway. With a growing family. At that time, we had one child. And then the War came along and we had another child in '42. So as far as the War was concerned, to me, it wasn't too much of a problem, as far as living conditions and so on.

VL: What was the attitude of the plantation workers towards the Japanese at that time?

JL: I think there wasn't any feelings. In fact, the record would show that John Midkiff was the manager at that time and he really stood up for the Japanese people. And it's written up in books what John Midkiff did for the local Japanese people and how he stood up for them. That he was going to be responsible. He was the manager of Waialua
Sugar. And I don't recall any incident of any sabotage or anything around here, or any conflict between the Japanese and other people. No other problems at all, as I recall. I'm going to have to go because I have to get up there. Sorry!

VL: Okay...

END OF INTERVIEW
WAIALUA & HALEIWA

The People Tell Their Story

Volume II

KOREANS

PUERTO RICANS

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

ETHNIC STUDIES PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII, MANOA

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