BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: MAURICIO BUNDA, retired irrigation foreman

Mauricio Bunda, Filipino, was born in Iloilo, Philippine Islands, September 22, 1897. After finishing seven years of school in the Philippines, he immigrated to Hawaii from Manila in August of 1922 with his wife and three children.

Mauricio started working for the Waialua Sugar Company as a hapai ko man, then flumed cane for three years. Later he became an irrigator and then a harvesting foreman. He went back to irrigating until he retired in 1952.

The Bunda family resides in Waialua.
He came here hoping to have a better life. His brother-in-law told him about life in Hawaii. The brother-in-law took him to meet HSPA agent in Manila. The agent told him that after three years working in Hawaii, he can go back home, free passage. They also checked his hands and asked him what kinds of jobs he had in their town. He told them he worked for the railroad company and as a carpenter. He came here in 1922. HSPA paid the way for his three kids and his wife.

Their first house was at Kemoo farm. They only stayed there for three or four days, then they got transferred to Helemano 2. There they had a three bedroom house, no hot water, no electricity and the bathroom was outside. They use parol (kerosene lamp). They had running water but no hot water. They had banko (wood benches), beds made up of lumber. The lumber and other supplies like nails, wires, etc. was given to them by the plantation for free. They didn't have mattresses.

His first job was hapai ko. He had this job for three months. He got up at 4:30 am, prepared food and walked to work. It took him about half an hour from his house to his working place. If they don't work on Saturdays, he worked at his garden. He planted all kinds of vegetables; balatong (string beans), kamote (sweet potato), eggplant and bitter melon. He got sick on his first job (hapai ko). He said that he got sick because he was not use to that kind of work. He complained to his luna so he got transferred to another job. His second job was flume cane. They throw the cut cane in the flume and water carried the cane to the station where the train could pick it up. He worked as flume cane man for three years. Then he worked as a contractor irrigating cane fields. About 1930 he was promoted as a harvesting foreman at Kawailoa. He got the job because he had a good recommendation from his former luna. He also had a good working record. He worked everyday and followed his supervisor's orders. Since he can follow orders and had a good record, his friend (compadre) who was his luna recommended him to the manager so that he should get the job. He said one more reason why he became luna was because they needed a Filipino luna so that they have a better understanding between the workers and the luna.

His gang became number one because he understood his workers and since they worked the fastest some people got jealous and they think he was giving his workers more acreage than they had worked for in a day. Because of the
jealousy and pressure from these people who were talking behind his back he resigned and went back to long term contract (irrigator) until he retired in 1952. He took care of 166 acres. He said that contract work is the best in making money. He signs a contract paper saying he gets so much for a ton of sugar. He said that he used to make two times more money as irrigation contractor than when he was a foreman.

He said that his wife had six babies at home. $10.00 fee for a midwife. But after sixth child the doctor at Waialua Hospital advised the wife that it's better and safer if she will have their next baby at the hospital. He said that there were two doctors at the hospital.

In 1941 he bought their first radio. At about this time they had their ice box and washing machine also. They bought them at the plantation store. The plantation took out $5.00 per month from his pay check for payments for the stuffs they charged in the store.

He sent all his kids to school. He could not afford to give his kids lunch money so his wife fixed lunch for them. lunch was mainly rice and eggs and vegetables. The plantation provided a bus for the children. His wife did most of the disciplining because we was at work all day long. His children did most of the house chores. They did the washing, cooking and cleaning of the house. He said he had his first car in 1930. He said that most of his free time was devoted to the Waialua Filipino Community Association.

He bought his house in 1957 for $10,530. It's a three-bedroom house.

He can only remember the 1958 strike. He was a cook in the soup kitchen. They asked for donations from the businessmen. People planted vegetables on plantation land. They had different gangs doing all kinds of things. A gang to go hunting and a gang to do the fishing.

He said that mechanization is bad. He gave an example in irrigation. He said that before it took 50 men to irrigate an area (maybe Kawailoa). Now maybe two or three men are needed. He said drip irrigation is worse.

He said that the only thing he remember about martial law was that you cannot do anything you want and you cannot talk against America.

In 1950 he was nationalized. He believed that he could work for the State if he became a U. S. citizen and because he cannot go back to Philippine Islands already. In 1967 he started work for the Honolulu Committee on Aging.