BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: NOBUYOSHI NAKATSU, retired lab supervisor, Waialua Sugar Company

Nobuyoshi Nakatsu, one of 12 children, was born in Kawaihoa, January 8, 1904. His parents came from Japan; his father first. He worked in a section gang.

Nobu completed nine years of school and started work on the plantation at the age of 14, cutting, loading, and irrigating cane. After the 1920 strike, he worked for a pineapple company for about two years and then returned to work on the plantation in the mill laboratory.

He helped organize sports on the plantation. In 1948, he was the ILWU president for the Waialua Unit. Nobu is married, has one child, and currently resides in Waialua with his wife.
PN: This is an interview with Nobuyoshi Nakatsu on September 28, 1976 in his home. Mr. Nakatsu, could you tell me a little about your parents, why they came to Hawaii?

NN: My parents, my father and my mother both came from Japan. My father was here first. He came...I don't know what year, but anyway, I was born 1904. He came before that. Around 1900, I would say. He was here for a while, then my mother came. And then I came.

(Laughter)

NN: Then, well, I had a big brother which they left in Japan. They all came here. Both parents. And later on, my father called him. That was 1912 or 1913. Somewhere around there. He was about 15 years old. He came.

PN: Oh, your parents were married in Japan?

NN: Yeah. They were married in Japan.

PN: Why did they come to Hawaii?

NN: Well...I would say I think they were trying to make a fortune here. But, you know, majority, they try for the goal, but they fail. They stay here, with the children. Increasing family. So they stay here. And here we are. And they all die over here, except for my parents.

PN: Did they work for Waialua Sugar Plantation?

NN: Yeah. My father work for sugar. My mother didn't work any. She was a housewife, right through, eh. My father worked for the plantation right through. And he change his...(Chuckles) well, I don't know. He was still looking for fortune or what. But he took the whole family in Honolulu in 1912. He had a small business. Work in a laundry shop. He failed so he came back again to the plantation.

PN: What was he working as on his first job?

NN: They use to have locomotive long ago. And they use to transport cane by rail. So he was in what they call the section gang. It's maintenance on the railroad there. He was in a gang. Then
he didn't retire, actually. He quit the position, I say. Went Honolulu. Took the family and came back. And then he work for short while. And then he went to Haleiwa and open the same business again, see. And that was a failure, so he try to make another go in Honolulu again. So he went to Honolulu himself with my second brother, see. Our family remain in Waialua.

Well, meantime, he die. When he was 56 years old, he had a stroke and he die at 67. So 11 years suffer with the stroke. And my mother died way afterward. My mother was about 74, I think. She pass away in her sleep.

And I have two brothers at Mainland. They went to Mainland. And my second brother had strawberry farm there. And, you know, the War came up, and they were relocated in a camp. But other brother went afterward. They are still there. They are successful. One retired already.

PN: How many children in the family?

NN: We had seven boys and five girls. But one pass away, so that leave 11 in the family, children.

I'm the oldest now. Above me pass away, see. During the 1920 strike. He was born in Japan. The last one born in Hawaii.

PN: So you began working at what? 15?

NN: Age 15. Cutting cane. Then, cutting cane was incentive, see. The more cane you cut, the more money you use to make. But I quit that. And they had a big pump, pumping the irrigation water up highland, see, from down side. The pump is not there any more. And I started working there. And then the strike came. Then after strike, I work for pineapple for a year or two. Then, I came back on plantation again. 1922, yeah. '22, until I retire, I work on this plantation.

PN: Going back to the '20 strike, you know, who organize that strike?

NN: I would say these Japanese people. They all got together, the Japanese people. They elect a president and so forth to organize the union, see.

PN: Do you remember who the president was?

NN: Yeah. One of the president was Baba Tokaji and another as far as Waialua concern was Kajiwara. But that Kajiwara not related to any Kajiwara now. They all pass away now. The first one I remember is Baba. He pass away, too.

PN: He's from Waialua?

NN: Yeah, he was from Waialua. They had a headquarter in town. And
that's where they use to work, eh. I think Shigco Soga was a leader, I think. They all backing up the strike, too, eh. You know, the Hawaii Times. Horio No and all that. He pass away, too, now. Now the son taking care. You call that Hawaii Times, now. Those days, use to call Nippu Jiji.

And was pretty long strike, eh. And the people suffer. But we won. We won at last. And raising the daily wage 75¢ to dollar at least. (Laughs) A day. Not hour, you know.

(Laughter)

NN: After that, well, gradually, plantation start to recognize power of labor. You know, treat labor good, eh.

PN: Do you remember if these organizers were part of the Young Men's Buddhist Association?

NN: No. No. Religions was not connected. No religions.

PN: What did you do during the '20 strike?

NN: Oh. We just was young yet, so we just roam around, swim. We use to quarter down you know where the Sands now? Sands, Haleiwa (Sands), the restaurant?

PN: Yeah.

NN: That place. That building is still there. They had quite a number of cottages alongside. So all the people from this district, they all place them different place. Like we use to live Kawaiola, they call it now. So all Kawaiola people were quartered there by the Sands. You know, upstream of the Sands. And use to sleep upstairs. And my father them was in the cottage. They had about three, four cottage. They took care all the Kawaiola people. Not all, but most of them. And some, they was located somewhere else, like Taihō Gakkō (Haleiwa Jodo Mission). Somewhere around there. And they had a headquarter right in front there. Used to call union headquarter for Waialua people. My father was one of the director. He use to work in there. I used to go fishing together to catch the fish for the community kitchen. They cook one place, and everybody go over there and cat. Pick up their food, see. And they use to get recreation like wrestling. That's Japanese sumo.

PN: This was all during the strike?

NN: During the strike.

PN: The plantation told you folks to leave the...

NN: Yeah, plantation told us leave. And some people were treated rough, you know. Just thrown out. They get camp police they use to call, eh. Cam-around and just throw the household stuff out. But mostly, single men was treated that way, no. Family men, they didn't treat
family men too bad as that. They just got out and went out, see. But those guys, single men, they were slow in moving. And that's the one they got after and threw everything out from the house.

PN: Did they board up the houses after you folks left?

NN: No, they throw 'em out. That's all, eh. They know they cannot get back. If they get back, they will throw you out, so. And, well, was quite organize, the labors were. And they had truck hauling the stuff away for the people. And go on located place, like Haleiwa Sand or Jōdō Mission. Front of Jōdō Mission had some camp, too. And Kamaloa, they call it. They all scatter around because they cannot take care all the people one place. So they had a community kitchen all over.

PN: Then did the merchants in Haleiwa help?

NN: Yeah, they help. They extend the credit like that, eh. Yeah, some help. But merchant had hard time, too. But when come to community kitchen, then, of course, the stuff was all donated, see. By merchant and all those....some good people. That's the money they bought all for the goods. Some goods, they got free from the merchant, like that. And they use that. So, the striker didn't pay anything for the food or for the houses. Everything was free, see. Only thing, they couldn't receive any wages. That's all.

PN: And then, when the strike ended, what happened?

NN: And then, all everybody went back. Mostly to the same job, no. Of course, they didn't discriminate you, the plantation. They give job, eh. They start to work.

PN: Were there many strike breakers?

NN: Yeah. They were all mostly....I would say about ten or more, no. I no want mention the name, but still living yet, some.

PN: Ten out of how many people in the strike?

NN: Oh....I would say about couple of thousand, no. Yeah. I think about couple of thousand. So wasn't too bad.

PN: I heard people call these strike breakers inu. (Japanese word for dog.)

NN: Yeah. Inu. Yeah. They use to call inu, eh. But as you know, people forget that, eh. Now they all forget and they associate with them. Of course, those old folks most of them passed away already. The children used to suffer, too, eh. They call 'em puppy dog, eh. Parents, eh.

PN: Then you said you worked there for couple more years. Then you went to pineapple company?

NN: Yeah. Pineapple field. I work about a year, I think. I went on
the incentive basis, too, eh. Make more money, try make more money.

PN: They paid a higher wage?

NN: Yeah. Incentive, you make more, of course, than daily wages. Because become a contract and everything. You picking pineapple, you go by incentive, eh. The more you pick, the more you make.

PN: So that's why you went from sugar to the pine...

NN: Only myself. Not my parent. Only myself. Then, after one year, I came back work for plantation. In the mill. Starting in the mill. That's where I stay right through. And they had openings, so I came back. Then, when I came back that time, I organize a ball team, see. I started a ball team. Then I kept through, that one, 1923 up to '37, I retire. I resign from that baseball stuff. After that, I came back again couple of time. They call me back so.

PN: Was there a ball team around? You started it out?

NN: Yeah. Because they used to get all different nationality team, see. Call that inter-plantation league. The Portuguese, Filipino, Japanese, of course, only three, see. But we use to play in the league. Then, after that, and we got a little better, so we join the Rural League team. That was AJA. All Japanese. That was 1928, we join up. Then, from that on, '37. I manage to take five championship for the Waialua team during that time.

PN: You said this is a senior league?

NN: Senior league. Senior.

PN: Before, they use to play only among their own race?

NN: Yeah. Inter-plantation. After that, as I say, in a way, I say, we graduate from that. I join the Japanese Senior League, see. So we join that. They admitted us as one of the team, so. Play in there.

PN: Who belonged to their senior league then?

NN: Now, they still have senior league, but now, Waialua and Haleiwa is combine. They call it Haleiwa team, see.

PN: But back then, who belonged to that league?

NN: Waipahu, Wahiawa, Aica, Pearl City, Ewa, and Waianae. That was that's all, I think. And Haleiwa had, too. Yeah, Haleiwa, later on they came in. Had about six teams.

PN: You folks used to what? Travel by train?

NN: Well, Waianae had, too, yeah. No. In the former years before the.... yeah, just about when we join, we use to travel by train to go
Waianae, play with Waianae team, see. That was only short while. Then after that, they start to use car, see. We bought a car.

PN: The senior league would be made up of all kind of players?

NN: Yeah, yeah.

PN: Different nationalities?


PN: Later on, you folks joined up with the AJAs?

NN: Yes. No, that time, they call Rural Senior League, eh. After that, they change to AJA Senior League, the name. But of course, they combine with the town team, too, so. Some town team was inside with the AJA.

PN: So you started work at age 15?

NN: 15.

PN: Did you quit school?

NN: Yeah, I have to quit school. The sixth grade. I have to help out my family, eh, make a living, eh. Earn livings. And well, after that, I graduate from the adult education, high school. Yeah, they still having now. Adult education. We use to call it adult education, something like that. I finish that and I got diploma. So I am a high school graduate. (Chuckles) That one, I don't know how long ago.

PN: How many of your brothers and sisters also quit school?

NN: Gee, I think all of them. No, except one finish high school. That's all. The rest, all, they start to work. They start to work at young. Nobody went to college. Only couple of guys finish high school. That's all.

PN: To help out the family income?

NN: 'As right.

PN: What kind of games or sports did you play when you were a small kid?

NN: Oh, when we small, swam in the reservoir.

PN: Where? Up Wahiawa?

NN: No, Kawailoa. Have plenty reservoir. Couple of my friend got drowned. I wasn't drowned myself, though. Then we use to play baseball, but
not this kind regular skin ball. We use to make our own ball with string. You know, that string the store use to use? Tie anything. We use to put some big rubber in there and then tie it all around. Make a ball, see. Of course, didn't last long, but.

PN: You guys cover 'em with anything?

NN: No, no cover. Just string, that's all. So whenever you hit by that, you get the thread mark, eh, on the face like.

(PN laughs)

NN: Even bat, we didn't have a regular bat. We use to make our own bat.

PN: Out of what?

NN: Out of lumber. (Laughs)

PN: You say you guys use to watch sumo or participate?

NN: Sumo. Sumo....they use to sponsor sumo. They didn't last too long. Only short while.

PN: What kind of food did you eat in terms of....

NN: Oh, mostly Japanese food, I think. We use to eat once a week a meat. Meat was once a week. We didn't drink any milk. Mostly was soy beans and salt salmon. Yeah. And ume, pickle and daikon.

PN: You would take this to a school as lunch also?

NN: Yeah. Put ume inside the riceball. Then put nori around sometime. And use to bring small piece of salmon. Salt salmon. That's all. And we eat daikon or takuan like that.

PN: In what? Your lunch pail or what?

NN: In those days, school didn't have cafeteria, see. Everybody use to bring their own lunch.

PN: How did you carry it to school, though?

NN: Oh, wrap in newspaper. So riceball used get wording from the newspaper, yeah.

(Laughter)

NN: We use to eat that. We didn't care much about sanitary, like now. No sanitation around there. But they use to get the aluminum lunch can, too, eh. Flat one. Use to have rice and you put okazu on the side like that. Some people use to use that. But I didn't like that because you get trouble of carrying home, eh.

(Laughter)
NN: So, newspaper, you can just throw away.

PN: You guys used to subscribe to the Japanese newspaper?

NN: Yeah. Nippu Jiji. Only Nippu Jiji. I didn't see any English newspaper those days. Only Nippu Jiji. Only Japanese. Straight Japanese. Like this is Hawaii Times. (Rustling of paper in background.) They call it that now. This one Nippu Jiji olden days, see. This get Japanese and English section. Before was no English section. Just straight Japanese, see. We use to read that Japanese, see. So I went to school, Japanese school, so not bad. I can read and write at least Japanese.

PN: You went to Haleiwa Jōdō (Mission)?

NN: No, Kawaiola. We had our own school. Oh, we use to be big school, there, that school. Not like now days. My grandson is going Waialua Japanese School but, what. Oh, there's few people. I think little over twenty people. That's all. Twenty student. Our days, they use to get over fifty. Close to hundred.

PN: Chee. Do you know how many people were taking this Nippu Jiji?

NN: Those days?

PN: Yeah. Most of the Japanese were reading the Japanese paper?

NN: Yeah. But I don't think plenty people were taking....those people, no. Mostly, the immigrant, maybe, well, they didn't care much, no, in the olden days. I don't know, they didn't know how to read or what. I think my father went to school in Japan, so. My mother couldn't. Didn't go to school, so she wasn't so good in reading. My big brother from Japan, he wanted to read Japanese paper. In fact, he work for a Japanese newspaper in Honolulu. Hawaii Hochi. As a delivery boy.

PN: And that's---your older brother, the one that died in that strike?

NN: Strike, yeah.

PN: Was he the only one that caught the flu?

NN: No. I had, too, but lucky thing I didn't go. (Laughs) Yeah. After my brother pass away, then I got a flu.

PN: What kind of treatments or remedies did you folks...

NN: They didn't have regular doctor, you know, those days. We had a hard time. They had only one, I think, regular doctor. And hire one doctor without license. Was working. You know, this....oh, that building not now already. You know, new post office, Haleiwa?

PN: Yeah.

NN: Behind there. Back of that, had one big building. Two story building.
That's where my brother died, too. They used that as a hospital during the strike. That's where the school, they call it Yamato Gakuen, they use to have Japanese school, see. And that's where some people came from far over there come to that school from Wahiawa. The principal, the man who put up the school, was a well known person, see. Matsumura. You know Monroe Matsumura? The lawyer in town. His father use to...

PN: Matsumura use to have the Kaaawa school?

NN: Oh yeah, Kaaawa school. That's the one. That one came down.

PN: When did they put up this Japanese school?

NN: Oh, must be before 1920, eh. Because 1920, they use that hospital, so...

PN: So there was a lot of people stricken with the flu then?

NN: Oh yeah! Especially, those pregnant women. They all went. Majority of the pregnant women went. I know, funny thing.

PN: You mean majority of them were afflicted with the flu?

NN: Yeah.

PN: Oh. Some people were telling me that they were dying so fast.

NN: Yeah, they were dying fast. Especially young people, they die fast. Lucky thing I was one of the youngest, but. My brother was over twenty, but I was under twenty yet.

PN: Did they give you any kind of...medicine?

NN: Oh, those days, not advance, yet, eh. Like no one had a flu shot like that. Not like now. Only get when you get it and you have to treat. And if you lucky enough, you survive. But if you unlucky, (Laughs) you just going. About in two weeks they use to die. High fever, eh.

PN: They didn't do anything like put ice pack or...

NN: Yeah, ice pack. They use to do.

PN: Is that all?

NN: Yeah, had some kind medicine, but I don't know what kind of medicine they gave, but. Yeah, continuously, we had to give ice pack. The fever so high. I use to go do that to my brother, but. Well, I had to take chance and go, eh.

PN: Did anybody else in your family come down with the flu?
NN: Only my big brother and myself. That's all.

PN: You remember how much you got paid at the pineapple company?

NN: I know was little more than plantation, though. That one incentive, so you have to work. The more pine you pick, the more you use to get.

PN: How would you get up to the pine fields?

NN: Oh, pine fields? Pine fields, they had a camp. Pineapple camp, they call it.

PN: Oh, you use to live up at the camp?

NN: Yeah. Uh huh. Myself. They use to call Takeyama Camp, see, up there. Way up Halemano side. Oh, Opaaua side was. Small camp about, I would say, oh....maybe about....thirty or forty houses inside.

PN: Mostly what? Single people? Married...

NN: No. Married and single. Those single was few. Mostly married.

PN: Why did you return to Waialua?

NN: Oh, because my father call me back. There's an opening in the factory, see. He figure it's better for me to stay near him, see. Instead of living separate up here.

PN: So all the time you were working at the pineapple company, you'd turn your money over to your parents?

NN: Yeah.

PN: That's how you got your job in the mill, when your father called you back?

NN: Yeah. Well, through connection, too, I would say. You had to get connection those days to get a job, you know. Was hard to get job. And he had a friend who did that for him. So he call me.

PN: Oh. So what was this? Work in the lab? What did you do?

NN: No. I work in the, they call it, sugar room. Dry sugar. Centrifugal. Centrifugal the sugar. Yeah. I didn't stay too long there, because they took me in the laboratory department where they test the sugar and juices.

PN: So how much did that pay?

NN: Oh....I think somewhere around forty dollars a month, I think, or something like that. Not much, of course, compared to now days.

PN: So what did you do in the centrifugal room?
NN: Just dry sugar then. Work for 12 hours. Those days about ten hours in the field, I think. 12 hour shift in factory.

PN: Just drying sugar?

NN: Drying sugar.

PN: Then when you went to the....

NN: Laboratory department. Then after that nineteen, I would say, thirty-six, I would say that, we got a new lab outside the mill. That's where this eight hour work came in. And social security came in, too, '37, yeah.

PN: What did you do in the lab?

NN: Well, they call that something like analyst, see. Combine with.... you have to go get sample, on cane juice sample, and sugar sample from the sugar room. And all those sample from the boiling house. That is, make juice. They call that syrup, clarifier---all those things. Then test the sugar content on that.

PN: How many people working?

NN: Well, we get two people on that shift. We had four all together, see. Two people on the shift.

PN: Who did you work with?

NN: Oh, let's see. They all change it. Hard. They didn't last too long. Only I'm the one lasted long there. They came in and go out; come in--go out. Japanese guy, Portuguese guy and Filipino. And haole guy. They didn't last too long. They came in but they work. And I was the only guy that stayed long there.

PN: Oh yeah? What? These other people left to go to other jobs or something?

NN: Yeah. They out of the plantation. Yeah, mostly went out. Only one person went to different department.

PN: Do you remember the Miles Fukunaga case?

NN: Yeah. I was working in here. Miles Fukunaga. In fact, my wife use to work with the sister in Kuakini Hospital. Mmm. Yeah, I read all that in the paper. Nippu Jiji. He kidnap one boy. He smoke cigar to quiet his nerves down or something like that, yeah. (Laughs)

PN: Oh. Japanese, what? They felt a lot of shame or something because somebody of Japanese race did this kind of crime?

NN: Well, I didn't feel that very much. But in the paper, use to write that, no.
PN: So there wasn't that much, you know, like shame among the community or community shame?

NN: No.

PN: What about after that Fukunaga, there was the Depression.

NN: Yeah. They had the Depression. That was what year was? I work under three, four manager, see. The first manager, we had a wage cut that year, Depression year.

PN: Oh yeah?

NN: Yeah, we had a wage cut.

PN: Only in the lab or the whole plantation?

NN: No, whole plantation. But that last only couple of months, though. I know I was getting hundred dollar and they cut me ten dollar. And then ninety dollar. I was ninety dollar a month. I was making hundred dollar monthly, then they cut down ten dollars all. Came ninety dollar. That one way back in 1924.. somewhere around there, '28 or something. Depression year, anyway. Yeah.

PN: They said they dumped molasses out here in the ocean also.

NN: No, they don't do now. Before, olden day, when they get plenty molasses, well, you know, the pollution stuff was not there, eh, those days. They wen just dump 'em anything they don't want in the ocean, see. Even the mill oil or those opala like that, eh. Was all went to the ocean. Yeah.

PN: This was common practice or this just...

NN: Yeah, common practice in the old days. Nobody talk about pollution those days.

(Laughter)

PN: So it wasn't just one time that they dump molasses in the ocean. Because we read in the paper that, you know, during the Depression time, they dump molasses that they couldn't sell.

NN: Yeah, the excess molasses, they going take care. Went down the drains. In the ocean, in other words. But that wasn't an all time practice. Only once in a while, great while.

PN: Did plantation supply all the workers with firewood, kerosene, like that?

NN: Yeah, yeah, that time, yeah. We use to get free firewood, free kerosene. Of course, free house, too, eh, in those days. They use to bring that firewood cut by contractor who cut the firewood. That is not actually plantation people. Was outside contractor use to cut firewood up in the mountain. And they load on the flat car, they call that. One
Locomotive pull down to the camp and leave 'em right by the camp. People go over there and pick up the firewood. Sometime they use to unload that and make a fire. But most time was all on that car there. People go there and pick up their own firewood, eh.

PN: Was it kiawe wood?

NN: No, not kiawe. Those days, didn't have kiawe wood for firewood. They use to get what do you call that? What you call that?

PN: Plum?

NN: No plum, but some kind of ironwood. And what they call that yellow kind wood? I forget the name. Valuable stuff.

PN: Koa?

NN: No, no. Yeah. Had koa. And one more yellow wood. Oh, really, was all yellow. Was nice wood, though. But to burn wasn't too good. I forgot now. Maui had plenty. The Chinese like it.

PN: Oh, sandalwood!

NN: Yeah, sandalwood! That's it.

PN: So mostly was sandalwood and koa?

NN: Yeah. Oh yeah.

PN: You folks have a garden or any kind of....

NN: Yeah, we use to raise all vegetable in the yard. But they use to get plenty room for that, eh. Get one house and back of the house, backyard, oh, was big yard. You can plant any kind vegetables, yeah.

PN: You guys raised any pigs or...

NN: No. Pig was segregated to one gulch side so people have to keep their pig there. You know, they cannot keep the pig near camp, see. So, they use to put 'em where no house was around. Down the gulch side.

PN: So what kind of vegetables you folks use to raise?


PN: Did you notice that during the '30s that they increase this kind of perquisites to the plantation people? You know why they did that?

NN: Well, because the house was getting better. There use to build better houses, and people use to live in the better house. So, the perquisite was depend on the house you living. Up or down. People living in the old house like that, the perquisites were low.
PN: Oh yeah?

NN: Yeah. In fact, when I start to live this house, I use to get perquisite, thirty-seven dollar half.

PN: Oh yeah?

NN: Yeah. Free house, that was, eh. After the package deal sold up, I bought the house, package deal, see. We pay only little over six thousand dollar for the whole place. So my son build one house back of that. Because had enough room. Zoning no allow that to build another house. Only build one house.

PN: When you bought this house?

NN: I know I finish payment before I retire, so that was....

PN: '69?

NN: Fifteen year affordable I think.

PN: '54 then, about.

NN: Somewhere around there. Yeah, somewhere around there, I think. Took about fifteen years to pay, see.

PN: That's when they started to sell the plantation homes to the workers?

NN: Yeah. Bishop Estate use to take care that. Bishop Trust Company or something. I don't know.

PN: Bishop Trust Company?

NN: Yeah. Not the Estate, Trust.

PN: What were you doing on December 7th, 1941?

NN: December 7th, I was home. That's a Sunday morning. I was at home listening to a radio. (Laughs) And then we heard the plane flying over our heads. I was home, yeah. My wife didn't work those days. She's working now. But those days, she didn't work yet. I was at home that time. We didn't think nothing of it until we heard over the radio that war is on, oh. Something like a lame airplane was pass here, though. With a motor spurting. I know that was a Japanese plane, yeah.

PN: Oh yeah? They shoot around here?

NN: Yeah, they shoot not around here, but down side. Then some shot went through the roof. Went in the room. Almost hit the person or something like that. I heard the story, but.

PN: This was down where? Haleiwa side?

NN: No, Waialua. Plantation camp.
PN: Oh yeah? What you thought when you heard the news over the radio about the Japanese attacking Pearl Harbor?

NN: Couldn't believe it. (Laughs) Couldn't believe it. That was it.

PN: Was there any anti-Japanese reaction from the community?

NN: Oh yeah. From the Portuguese. Other nationality. Yeah.

PN: Like what?

NN: They use to brag. They use to call you, "Jap, Jap" all around here. My wife use to get mad. (Laughs)

PN: What other kinds reactions from the people?

NN: Well, as a Japanese, you couldn't say much, eh. Just shut up, eh. Even the mill was, even that superintendent was anti-Japanese. Yeah, I had argument with him. The hell I know. (Laughs) But he didn't fire me out.

PN: What nationality was he?

NN: He's haole from Mainland. From Mainland.

PN: This is right after the War?

NN: Yeah, right after the War. Right next day.

PN: Next day?

NN: Yeah. Monday, went work. Everybody went work.

PN: What reason did he give?

NN: No reason. Just send 'em home. He got mad and just send 'em home. He was the only one Japanese fired.

PN: Did the guy come back to work after?

NN: Oh yeah, afterward, he came back.

PN: The supervisor was what department was he?

NN: Well, he was welder, so, welding department. (Mill superintendant.)

PN: You remember any other incidents like that?
NN: No. No other incident. That's all. But Japanese was used to it those days. You know all the soldiers around the mill, eh, with the gun, eh. And those soldiers all trigger happy. Any noise during the night....well, we used to work night time, too. Any noise, they shoot to where the noise came from, eh.

PN: Oh yeah?

NN: Yeah. Sentry was all really jittery.

PN: They were what? From the Mainland?

NN: No. These local soldiers. All the people, yeah, haoles, see. Yeah, that was Mainland, I guess.

PN: They had Filipino battalions also?

NN: No, over here didn't have.

PN: Those National Guards or....

NN: No. After that, they organize. That's all nationality included, eh. I join them and then, you know use to train for marching all that. (laughs) I don't know why we needed that. Of course, I volunteer, but they didn't take me 'cause I was little too old for that.

PN: You mean one company from down here, Waialua area?

NN: Yeah, Waialua sugar workers.

PN: Oh. What kind of nationality was made up of this?

NN: Oh, Filipino, Japanese and Portuguese.

PN: But you folks would what? Only....

NN: Only drill, see. Or march. That's all we did. We didn't go in the service or anything.

PN: So when the War ended, I guess, the unions came around.

NN: Yeah. That's about....mm....that time. Yeah. They had a big strike in 1946. That was it. Yeah. The first strike, anyway, after the labor organize.

PN: Did you have any contacts or do you have any knowledge that the union was being formed prior to '45?

NN: Yeah. They were doing a underground work, though. You know, few people was meeting already, see, to organize. And this guy, Yoroko Fukuda--the father use to be a reverend here, minister. He was coming down from town and try to get the people together. They use to meet
once in a while. I know Mike Nagata was our first one in there. Yeah. And Joe Lee.

PN: What did you think of the unions being organized then?

NN: I thought was a good thing for labor get something to say, eh. They had a voice, eh. Yeah. But this plantation use to be famous for buying out the leaders, eh. Use to buy out the union leader. They say, well, looks dirty, too, but people were saying that. Anytime come, union leaders, then couple of years later, he working for the management side.

(Laughter)

NN: Try to weaken the union, eh. That's the strategy they use. (Laughs) I was one of them, too, I would say. Yeah. I was president or what for one year. Then couple of years later, they wanted me come back to management side, see. Well, you working for wages, that's what you...get more wages. Nobody refuse. You don't play hard-head and be union man right through.

PN: So as far as early organizers, you know was Mike Nagata, Joe Lee, and what's this other guy? Yoroko Fukuda?

NN: Fukuda. He was coming from headquarters. ILWU. The one Jack Hall was running. Came down here. And they all meet. Not only the two guy. Had four, five guys, all. I don't know the other guys very much, but I think Mike Nagata and Joe Lee were among them, see. And some other Japanese, even Portuguese guy was there. I don't know. Oh, Seraphine Lobello like that. Something like that.

PN: Robello?

NN: Yeah, Robello, Seraphine.

PN: So were you part of the union...

NN: I wasn't involved in that organizing, see. So, after the manager heard about that, he found that out. The laborers were organizing. Then he call all the leaders. He didn't call me because I wasn't among the leaders. And then, they talk to them. He talk to them, see. I don't know what the outcome was, but. He try to, I think, stop them or what. I don't know. But he didn't succeed in doing that.

PN: But you were a union member during the '46 strike?

NN: Yeah, all union member. Because when they segregated who's supposed to be a bargain unit, what job belong to the bargain unit or not about management, and, well, the union leader, Mike Nagata, insist that I be in the bargain unit. So there I went in the bargain unit side. Management want to hold me back, but that's how the union was strong that time. So I went with the union.

PN: What did you do during the '46 strike?
NN: Strike? Oh, kind of a messenger boy, yeah. And representing Waialua union. Myself and, yeah, another guy. He's working for the bank now. Masa Tsuyu. Two use to go in town every day. For some kind of information and bring back, see. And we use to go in town to bring the message from here to there.

PN: To the ILWU...

NN: ILWU headquarter. They use to get meeting there. Everyday practically.

PN: You and who was this other guy?

NN: Masa Tsuyu. He is in the bank now, Bank of Hawaii. And Gandhi, Gandhi Warashina. Working the Waialua store now. Gandhi Warashina was involve in the organizing. I'm not so sure, but maybe he was. Because he was a big gunner on the '46 strike.

PN: Yeah. What else happened during this '46 strike?

NN: Well, nothing much. Well, we use to get community kitchen. And they get fish and all those things. One team go out in the ocean and get the fish, eh. Food, eh. Pig. Keep the pig. They use to feed the people.

PN: What about the support from the merchants and the farmers like that?

NN: Yeah, they use to go around for the donation. And they use to donate. Ask merchant like that. They use to donate. In fact, after that, I was assign to organize the supervisor to form a union. So I went around to get a signature. And practically all sign for the union. Then the ILWU, they throw away that idea of calling the supervisor, because couldn't get much protection from the government, eh. Those days, the law...the management can fire you out without any protection. They can fire you out. That's all, see.

PN: This was during '46 also?

NN: '46.

PN: I didn't know that. So lot of the supervisors was willing to join?

NN: They sign up. Yeah. They sign up. As far as I know, I went around to each individual.

PN: So whose idea was to try to get the...

NN: ILWU, I think.

PN: And you were assign to just take up that case?

NN: Yeah. As far as Waialua concern, I was assign to that. And I thought I succeeded in signing all. Had two or three more guys to sign up, but and they say don't have to already, so.

PN: How many supervisors were there?
NN: Those day, had about 16, I think, eh, not mistaken. Somewhere around there. Yeah. 16 to twenty. Somewhere around there.

PN: So you became what? Union president in forty...

NN: Yeah, after that. '48.

PN: How did you become president?

NN: Well, yeah. Like it is now. Filipino is American, eh. And if you get Filipino backing, you come anything. (Laughs) Like I had a friend, Filipino friend who pushed me up for president. So I got it. All this countrymen, voted for me, eh. (Laughs)

PN: What did you have to do for your job as president?

NN: As president? Well, you have to see that everything goes well. Then I started to form system that put, they call, a steward in each camp. Take care the camp, see. All the various camps. Then we meet them once a week. I started that. And after that, everyone follow that style. Then anything that the members, they can report to steward, so anything they want or anything, you know. Then steward can come to the meeting and thrash it out, eh.

PN: What kind of grievances came up when you were president?

NN: Well, as an individual, of course, oh, some, they ask for the house. You know, in order to get a house. Get a repair or something like that, eh. Not much. Family affair, too, you have to involve, you know. Sometime, the wife and husband get argument in the family. You have to go between sometime. (Laughs)

PN: What much in terms of company-worker relationship?

NN: No. I would say no, because plantation had their speaker from themself. to represent them. Industrial relation man, eh, department. They use to contact the union all the time. Well, idea is to find out what the union doing. And the union trying to find out what the management doing, see. They try spy each other.

(Laughter)

PN: Some people were mentioning in terms of spying like that, did you hear of or know of tapping of phones by the company like that?

NN: No. That, I don't know. I don't know.

PN: I just was wondering if you heard about that?

NN: Tapping on the phone, no. I didn't hear. But somehow, the managers use to know way ahead of time, you know, what happening in union. And we were wondering how...there must be some spies report to him or, you know, from tapping of phone. I don't know. When I was president, we pull the one-day walk out, see. The whole plantation shut off, see. No operation.
PN: Why was that?

NN: We all want raise we had, the plantation didn't like that. They not agree with the union so. I forget what was it. Anyway, during that period, they use to get negotiations. Sugar company and the union, eh. Naturally, seeing that you got to show your power or something like that. So we pull out one-day strike. And manager knew it. And he call me up, "I do anything for you, so please stop the fellows." Was too late already. Was in the morning. Everything went out, the message.

(Laughter)

NN: So they all pull out, eh. But only after one day, told 'em to go back work.

PN: Next day?

NN: That just to show power, eh. Silly--silly what was.

PN: Were you still president when there was '49 strike shipping strike here?

NN: No.

PN: No? What did you think of the '49 shipping strike?

NN: The shipping strike, shipping strike, you mean the stevedore, no? I don't know. I don't know. I no was too concern about it. But I thought was kind of inconvenient. So the price of the food went up. And was people suffering, eh. Shortage food, all those thing, but. That's all about I thought about it. That's all. Didn't....

PN: Have any direct effect upon you, the strike?

NN: No, I wouldn't say that, because the food was getting short. The rice and all those items. Meat like that, eh. We use to get our share, though, but.

PN: Was about this time that you became part of management? When did you leave...

NN: Yeah, about then. About then. After that, yeah.

PN: What happened then?

NN: One year after that. I came back to management side.

PN: They change your job or...

NN: No, same job. But they promote me. Give me different title like that and give me a raise. (Laughs)

PN: Oh. I see. During 1951, there was the Smith Act trials.
NN: Oh, you mean the Communist stuff? Oh, that's when the... what was that?

PN: Jack Hall, Reineckes.

NN: Jack Hall, Reinecke, yeah. Kawano.

PN: Jack Kawano.

NN: Yeah. Six guy over there. Six or eight guys, no?

PN: Seven. Had seven people there. What were your reactions to that?

NN: Well, I thought that was kind of witch-hunting. Witch-hunting, eh, by the manager. But they couldn't get anything out of it. That's Governor Steinback that time. Governor Steinback that time.

PN: I think so.

NN: He was on the Big Five side most likely.

PN: There was a lot of union people who testified in behalf of the Smith Act defendants.

NN: From Waialua, I don't know. I don't think so.

PN: In '54, the Democrats rose to power. What were your reactions to that?

NN: No. Don't feel nothing very much. I was Democrat, too. And then came Republican. Then I came Democrat again. (Laughs)

PN: When was this? When did you become a Republican?

NN: Oh, when I went back to manager side.

PN: Then in what? '54 you became a Democrat again?

NN: No. After that, I think. That time was Democrat. After that, was Republican. The manager was really political. They were pushing for the Republican party. Olden days. Now, they don't. But olden days, they use to push for Republican. And as long as you are in the management side, you have to help them out or else, it's something else.

PN: What is that? (Referring to music in background)

NN: Ice cream man, I guess. Oh, manapua.

PN: Oh. When you say "olden days," when was this they use to really push for the Republican party?

NN: As far as I know, when I start working on plantation, they was that way, see. The managers always look management side or Republican.
PN: Even when you became management, they still pushing the Republican party?

NN: Yeah. They were still pushing yet.

PN: What would they do? They tell you vote for certain person or what?

NN: Yeah. Correct. Well...we don't have to do that, the way they say. Up to us when go voting booth, eh. (Laughs) That's what I felt so. They use to in fact, put watchmen in the voting booths, some. But actually, they cannot prove that you vote for Democrat.

PN: I heard they use to watch the string in the booth, if it's swaying one way or the other.

NN: (Laughs) That, I don't know.

(NN gets up to talk to grandson.)

PN: What did you think of the '58 strike? That was a big strike in Hawaii.

NN: '58? You mean, sugar plantation?

PN: Yeah.

NN: Yeah, they had a strike. And we were working because I was on the management side, eh. We use to get paid, see, the other side. So we had to go meet together every morning. That's all. That's about all.

PN: Could you folks work if the workers wasn't there?

NN: No. They didn't let us work. Because they use to get picket.

PN: You just go to the company and then what?

NN: Yeah, come to the company. And meeting room and ask if we can meet together, that's all.

PN: And you do this for several months until the strike was over?

NN: Yeah. Oh, we use to go visit other plantation, eh. Where you can get in, send 'em in. They inspect and look around.

PN: Like the price of sugar is dropping now.

NN: Yeah. That's got lot of thing to do. Company not going to make money that we hear. The cost of making sugar more than the price of sugar.

PN: What do you foresee as the future of sugar in Hawaii?

NN: The government has to do something at least to bring the price up.
I think open fields of all the foreign country just pour in the sugar, eh.

PN: What do you see for the future of Haleiwa-Waialua, like that? What do you think will happen in the next five, ten years?

NN: Well, looking back, it improve, you know everytime. You see new supermarket coming up. New bank coming up. That mean that's a little improvement there. Of course, when labor's wages good, then I think they can make a go. I hear they depend on that labor's economy around here. Mostly sugar plantation.

PN: You think this is a good place to raise your children and your grandchildren?

NN: (Chuckles) Like this school, you send them Honolulu school, though. Mostly, some well to do family, they send their children to Honolulu school. Like Punahou, like Iolani, something like that.

PN: What would you think if this place began to develop into a resort or a high rise area?

NN: I no think get any chance to be that way. They limit the living around here, along the beach side, eh. You cannot build more than three story high buildings or something like that.

PN: But suppose they could build, what you....

NN: All depends....the people have to work and depend where they work, too, yeah. I don't think the sugar plantation worker can buy all those high rises stuff. I don't think so. To live in. The plantation giving them the package deal. Build a house and sell to them. The price is real double, triple up now. Use to be about twelve thousand. Cost now about thirty-six thousand. For the house and the lot, too, eh. And that, when they offer for sale, so many people want to buy the home. (Laughs) Buy the package deal, eh. They get no trouble in selling, because if it's own people. But if plantation people don't buy that, they can always sell to outsider, but.

PN: Let me ask one more question. Can you compare your life now with your life thirty, forty years ago?

NN: In what way do you mean "compare?"

PN: Material wealth, friends, you know.

NN: Forty years ago, yeah, it's true. I use to own a car forty years ago. And still, I own a car now. That part, not much difference. But the wages really came high. Because of the union, living condition improve and wages improve, too, eh. Even when the union get the raise, they use to give supervisor a raise. But not any more now.

(PN laughs)
NN: They don't do that now. Yeah. So some supervisor gripe, eh, now days.

PN: Do you think you're better off now than you were thirty, forty years ago?

NN: Well... with the free perquisite, I don't know. Not much difference. Of course, now dollar value altogether different, eh, compare. Well, in fact, I save more money now after I retire than working. (Laughs)

PN: Do you think the value of the dollar is worth more now or thirty, forty years ago?

NN: Let's see. Of course everything high, so not much difference I think. Even though the wages high, but those days, everything was cheap, yeah, the food. Living expense was cheap. With the low wages, too. They use to make a go of it with dollar a day. That's all. Of course, like big family had hard time. Like our family. Was 14 in the family. Kind of hard for dollar a day. My father and I work on it, too. We go work. Now, I think, for some people, like school teacher draw good pay, eh. Like my son and daughter-in-law, two school teachers, so they make good money, see. As far as that concern. Of course, they get quite a bit bite from tax, though, but. Olden days, we don't have to pay income tax. You just pay the poll tax, five dollars a year, eh. That's all to it. No income tax. No such thing as that. Now, income tax.

PN: Which do you think is better off? Thirty years ago or now?

NN: I don't know. Now is little better than olden days. Everything improve.

PN: What would you like to see Haleiwa-Waialua become later on?

NN: Well, that hard to say, no. They kind of progressing, though, yeah. Little by little.

PN: Well, like to add anything more or you like to....

NN: I'd like to see the school get on the par. Not like the olden days, the schools. Different, see. They can cut class anytime they like. Our days, no. Once you enter school, that's it.

PN: Was very strict.

NN: Yeah. No. They cannot be so strict. Maybe, now, I don't know. Hard part is the parents don't cooperate now days, no. See, they know that children's wrong, but still back up the children, see. You try to discipline the children, the parents get after you, eh. They think their children's right. Most of the parent like that, now. I wouldn't say all, but.

PN: What would you say was the most significant event that changed your life?
NN: We would say get championship for the baseball team, eh.

(Laughter)

NN: Yeah. Use to be a big day, no, when come to baseball game Sunday. In fact, there's no union that time, but plantation that was all out. They use to get band from Schofield, 26th Infantry. Every Sunday, they play. The band play at ball games. And that was something. You cannot do now days. Yeah. And then when you win the championship, the manager can send you to other island. They send my team twice other island. Kauai and Hawaii. Yeah. My coaching the championship in the Rural AIA, Senior league.

PN: You folks beat the other two teams in the other islands?

NN: Yeah. We beat all the team. Got the championship, eh. They gave us a vacation with the pay. And free trip, everything, free. Those days, no planes. Those days was boat, see.

PN: (Laughs) How long was the vacation?

NN: One week. But that was good enough.

PN: That was a pretty good incentive then.

NN: Yeah. That's why olden days, all the boy used to stick together. But you cannot make the boys stick together now. They all go out and work. Well, you cannot have a good team. Yeah. That's all. And every Sunday, win or lose, all the camp people is waiting with the chicken hekka. You know, they kill the chicken. All the old people used to back up the team, too, yeah.

They had a certain group making ready for chicken hekka whenever finish baseball. Mostly watch the ball game, but, there were few who were preparing for the hekka for that night. Every Sunday. I don't know how many chicken was...

(Laughter)

NN: Of course, all donation, that one.

PN: Mostly Japanese people?

NN: All Japanese. All Japanese.

PN: How many people use to watch the baseball games?

NN: Oh, quite a many, there were plenty. Old people, eh. Young people, too, but. Both side had a stand. Was full most of the time. Yeah, how many people were in there. Quite a many, though. You compare to now. Now, hardly can see any spectator. Yeah. Even the manager used to come every Sunday watch the game. Plantation manager.

PN: How did you become coach?
NN: Well, I was one of the old-timer. And there was nobody to run the team, I guess. (Laughs)

PN: Must have been a pretty good coach, eh.

NN: I think five championship out of seven years playing with the Rural League. Not bad.

PN: Maybe can wrap up this interview and we talk a little about your marriage. How you met your wife and...

NN: Oh, I met my wife at Kuakini Hospital. She's from Maui. She's born in Haiku. And, well, I got engaged three years with her, because what, I was ready to marry then she got sick. She had a pleurisy, see, so had to rest three years. Then '37, we got married. Came down here. This house was just like built for me. Because those days, had quite a "drag" from management. They build house. They left for over half a year, yet. And many people want this house and they couldn't get it. So they used to complain to the management that why I don't move in the house. He like the house empty. They want the house. Say, "No, that house is just for me."

PN: How come they reserve that for you?

NN: Oh, you know, they go by application. They apply all the house everybody. Who apply and they want the house, they move in. Well, I didn't move, you know, that, see. Yeah, because I was minus wife, eh, yet. (Laughs)

I had house down camp side. Mill 8.

PN: So when your wife became well, then you move...

NN: Yeah. Married, I came here. Then I get only one child. Then she didn't work for twenty years. So after twenty years, she start to work again. She is ready to retire next year in July.

PN: How come she went back work?

NN: I didn't send her back. She wanted to work, see. Less monotonous than stay home. Only one son, but the son grew. And then he wasn't home with us all the time. Our son join the Air Force. Go Mainland college like that, no. So she start to work, but. She had a hard time to get a job, because she was off for twenty years. And you know, those nursing technique, they change, you know, every year. So she has to go get license. So she went and she got the license alright. She start to work.

PN: If you have anything more you'd like to add?

NN: No.

PN: Wrap up this interview. Thank you for your time and...

END OF INTERVIEW
WAIALUA & HALEIWA

The People
Tell Their Story

Volume VI
JAPANESE

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