BIographiesal SUMMARY: DAVID MAKAOI, 74, retired teacher

David Makaoi was born in Papaaloa (Laupahoehoe) in April, 1904. He is of Japanese ancestry. When David was just 1-1/2 years old, his mother died, so his father, Yamane, hanai-ed David to a fellow plantation laborer and his wife. The fellow laborer, Hawaiian, re-named the hanai child after himself, David Makuaoi. Soon, the wife of the older Makaoi died, so he gave the child to his mother and her second husband, Alama Nui, to raise. The Alama Nuis lived in Waipio Valley.

David lived in Waipio 1906 to 1919. He grew up speaking Hawaiian fluently. He attended Waipio Elementary School (1st to 6th) and Kukuihaele School (7th to 8th). In 1919 he moved to Hilo for high school, returning to his hanai grandparents in Waipio only during summers. After graduation David received a full scholarship to the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Through college he returned to Waipio every summer.

After college he taught two years at Honokaa High School before moving to Honolulu permanently. He taught at Kalakaua Intermediate School from 1929 to 1966. Since his retirement, David enjoys gardening, playing the "banjukle" (a banjo-ukulele he made), and being a member of the Laimi Senior Citizens Club.
Recollections on Life in Waipio Valley
From Childhood Until Graduation from the University of Hawaii (1927)
by David Makaoi
Written February 9, 1978
for the Ethnic Studies Oral History Project

1. When I was about 1-1/2 years old, according to my adopted guardian, also David Makuaoele Makaoi, my Japanese mother died. This happened at Papaaloa, Hilo district. Since my father was a plantation laborer and my older brother and sister were still too young to look after me, my father offered me to David Makuaoele Makaoi for adoption. Not long after that, my guardian mother was burned to death in a fire caused by an overturned kerosene lantern. So my guardian took me to Waipio to his mother, Kapahu, who had married Alama Nui after Makaoi's death.

Of the few childhood recollections of life in Waipio Valley, I recall that he sometimes took me with him to visit other neighbors in the valley. They regarded me as a rare specimen among the predominantly Hawaiian and Chinese community. Some time later, my guardian took me to Kamuela. I can recall seeing the cowboys on horseback rounding up the cattle each day. So beef was more or less a regular part of our daily diet.

Then my guardian took me back to Waipio Valley and left me in his mother's care. I recall going to Waipio School, a two-room school with three grades in each room. In a way, that was a neat arrangement because you could listen with one ear to the lesson in the next class, so that by the time you were promoted to the next grade, you were already familiar with the lessons for that grade. I know of a Chinese boy who arrived from China and entered the Kukuihaele School at age 11. Because of a similar setup at Kukuihaele School, he was able to finish the eight grades in four years and graduate at age 15. (His name was Hardy Lum.) I was not that lucky at Waipio School. The teacher wouldn't recognize me. In addition, he advised to stay back another year in the sixth grade because I looked too small to climb the Waipio hill to go to Kukuihaele School. (I was four feet, 10 inches then.)

2. While at Waipio, there was little opportunity to earn a few dollars by catching frogs at night with a kerosene torch consisting of a bottle or a long bamboo node filled with kerosene and a roll of cloth at the top. At night the frogs in the ditches, little streams, and empty taro patches would come out to croak. You had to approach them very quietly and gently. When close enough, you try to grab the head with one try. If you fail to grab properly, the frog will escape. One summer, I caught 24 dozen and sold them to a frog exporter to Honolulu restaurants at 50 cents a dozen.
3. Luaus were held once in a while for a baby's first anniversary or a wedding. A kalua pig was always the main attraction. Practically the whole Hawaiian community was invited with their monetary gifts. Liquor, and soda water for kids, were the main attractions. The party usually ended with fisticuffs between two drunkards.

4. On New Year's Eve and on Chinese New Year's Eve, several musicians would serenade the Hawaiian and Chinese homes, respectively. I was one of them, beginning with the sixth grade, until my high school years. I welcomed that opportunity to earn some good money. We usually serenaded in groups of two or more musicians. On one occasion, however, on Chinese New Year's, I performed all alone with my adopted uncle, Kamaka, as chaperone and lamp holder. This happened during my eighth grade year. I netted $5, though I had to split 50/50 with my adopted Hawaiian uncle. In those days, $1 a day was the average laborer's daily wage. The next day was a school day. Without any sleep I went to Kukuihaele School the next morning. With nickels and dimes jingling in my pockets, I did not fall asleep in school. Perhaps it was because, with nickels and dimes jingling in my pockets, I was walking on "cloud nine."

5. My Hawaiian grandfather, Alama Nui, through a second marriage of my Hawaiian grandmother, was an ingenious man. He made fishtraps with the ie vine to catch oopu and shrimp. Whenever we needed some "bait" for our meals, we would place the trap facing a rock and scare the oopu and shrimp into the trap. If we needed fish for a longer period, we would shut off the water in one of the streams and let it flow elsewhere. In this case, the whole neighborhood helped themselves with the fish in their immediate neighborhood. When the streams were flooding, the inhabitants of the valley remained in their homes. Only our home "made hay" while it rained and flooded. My grandpa would build a fishtrap with rather straight guava branches. It was a platform whose high ends were joined to the sides of the stream with a stone wall, the empty spaces of which were stuffed with leaves. The platform floor consisted of rather straight guava sticks. (During floods oopus are washed towards the ocean.) So all we had to do was to "sit pretty" and grab the oopus tumbling down the platform. In this way, we would catch strings of oopu while sitting down in one spot (sheer effortless fishing!).

6. Once in a while, when it was flooding, I would climb up the side of Neneue Falls to catch oopu with a bamboo stick, line and hook, up until the fourth pool. During dry weather I sometimes climbed the sides of Papala Falls, up to the third or fourth pool. In all those three or four pools, I would slap the water and scare the oopu into the holes in the sides of the pool. Then I would slowly stick my hand into each hole and gently grab the fish. However, coming down the hill was a squeeze! I had to hang on to lantana bushes and descend very slowly and gingerly, feet first and facing the hill!
7. Waipio Valley of those days was just filled with ghost stories. And the story tellers talked like they meant it. What made them more scary was that they would give the exact location. So when we passed that location at night, nobody wanted to be at the tail end.

This often gave rise to my own dreams of ghosts. In one of my dreams which I haven't forgotten, I was under a grove of mango trees between Neneue Falls and my home (about 200 yards from my home). In my dream, I was under the mango grove picking fallen mangos. Then I heard noises in the nearby guava bushes--someone's feet stepping on dry guava leaves on the ground. Immediately I thought--GHOSTS! So I started to run for home which was about 200 yards away. But when I started to run, my legs would not respond. My arms were flailing but my feet just walked! Gee! I was concerned that I would not reach my home before the ghost would get me. But, funny thing, I finally managed to reach home. I entered through the back door and hid myself under my bed. A few moments later, I heard the voice of the ghost at the back door. He had a human voice. He asked my grand folks, "Where is David?"

I responded to my folks, "Shhh!"

But to my dismay, they replied, "Oh, he is under the bed."

I was lying with my face down. He pulled out my legs and turned me upside down. But I hid my eyes with my hands. I heard him say, "So you are the boy who steals my mangos, eh!"

I felt a blow on my stomach! With that, I gave a yell and got up in the middle of the night.

8. The following incident happened when I was at Waipio School. My folks had an extra field of taro patches further down the valley, about a half mile from the beach. One day my folks told me to go there after school was over. When I arrived there after school, I was surprised to see a Filipino man tied with ropes, lying on the ground. I learned that he was insane and had broken into the house. They had phoned Honokaa for the police. We waited until 5 o'clock (PM) or thereabouts, but no policeman came. So my folks freed the Filipino. He started to dance and sing, "Pake pupule, pake pupule," and then walked away.
VL: This is an interview with David Makaoi. Today is February 9, 1978. We're in Nuuanu, at his house, with Yukie Yoshinaga and Vivien Lee.

Can you describe what the valley looked like when you were growing up there? [Approximately 1906-1919] I don't have a good picture of like....

DM: Well, it was beautiful in my time. We had rice patches near the ocean. And then, taro patches further up in the valley. Hardly any trees on the floor. Course there were guava groves along the edges of the stream, you know. Especially rice patches at a certain time of the year when they were just young, nice and green. You see green patches down there along near the beach. And then, before harvest time they were all yellow. So, it was one color one time, and another the next time.

VL: Was other stuff growing in the valley also?

DM: Well, further up were the taro patches. Well, in fact, up beyond my place, too, there were some taro patches. Taro farms. Most were operated by the Chinese—for the Chinese poi factories. They had their own taro farms, to grind their poi. But once in awhile, if they were short of taro, they came to buy some from the Hawaiians.

Well, I recall during World War I, there was, somehow, a shortage of poi. I don't know why. And, they came to buy our taro patches. So, everybody, all the taro planters in Hawaii, the Hawaiians, had quite a bit of money at that time during World War I.

There was a big demand for taro. I don't know why. And, they were sending it to Hilo and Kamuela—all those areas. And then, what happened was this. Everybody sold their taro but then they didn't have any taro for their own use. (Laughs) We didn't have any poi. So, we had to eat breadfruit. (Laughs) It was a big joke.

VL: You made poi out of breadfruit?

DM: Yeah, I didn't like it. I didn't like the taste of breadfruit poi. I'd rather eat it plain than to make poi out of it. Tasted funny to me.
VL: Do you remember about how many Chinese farmers there were and how many Hawaiian farmers?

DM: Ah, in a rough way. Maybe I might go by names and have an idea. Like the Chun Hin family. That's the Chun family. Rice planter. And then, this Young family just further up. Married to a Hawaiian lady. Was a rice planter. Or was it taro, I'm not sure. Another Chinese taro planter nearby. I forgot his name now. And then, further up, on the Hilo side of the valley, you have this Akioka family with a taro farm. And on the opposite side of the valley we had this Mock Chew family. Those were the main taro farmers. There was one more taro farmer further up. Akona. Those were the main taro farmers. Chinese farmers. So, they raised it for their poi factory, ground it into poi and then transported it to Hamakua and Kamuela.

VL: They had poi factories in the valley?

DM: In the valley near Hiilawe Falls. Near the rice mill. I recall going there sometimes with some of the Hawaiian ladies and they would peel the taro for the Chinese people, and then, at lunchtime they'd serve lunch, you know, with cracker and hot water and sugar. (Laughs) That's all. But, still I enjoyed that, you know. Something from the store, you see.

VL: And the Hawaiian taro farmers?

DM: Well, we had our own taro patches. Enough to feed ourselves and maybe sell some in case the poi factories wanted to buy. If they didn't have enough. Especially during World War I, they bought many of our patches and we were short of taro. We got our money but no taro for ourselves. We had to buy flour. That's funny. But then, we never had a chance of getting any more money. The war ended in one year's time, you see. World War I between the United States and Germany. Just one year, so, that was all. So, that was the only chance they had to make money in those days. And so, we got money. I know my grandfather. He bought a war bond for me--$25. And then I went to Hilo High School and sometime during that time I cashed it because I needed cash.

VL: That was Mr. Alama Nui?

DM: Alama Nui. You've got to excuse me 'cause when I think of those things it makes me sad thinking of their sacrifices.

YY: Uh huh. Sure.

VL: He sounds like a good man.

DM: He was, because you know what he did, when I was in Hilo I stayed with a Hawaiian family--his friends. And he sent a paiai to me every week, by horseback to Kukuhaele, then by truck to Pauuilo, and from there, by train, to Hilo. And then, at the Hilo Station, somebody there delivered our poi to our home on Piopio Street. And that was just hard poi, you know. Wrapped up in ti leaves. Just pounded hard so that it
wouldn't sour fast. And, I had a poi pounder at the house and a poi-pounding board. Pounded the taro into poi-form to make it softer and smoother. Add water, and we had enough for one whole week. So, he did that for two years.

VL: Every week he would bring it up?

DM: Every week, once a week. So that's how we got our poi for the first two years. And then, the lady in that family in Hilo died, so I had to move in with some other relative who was a son, I'm not sure. Stayed with them another year, and then he moved out from Hilo. And it happened that another relative from Hawai'i, my grandma's granddaughter, Kapahu, named like her grandma, she happened to come to Hilo, and stayed near the First Foreign Church in one of those little club houses. That was during my last year in high school. So, at that time, of course, he didn't send me any more taro because we had no board to pound taro on. No stones, so, he just gave me money thereafter. So, this Hawaiian lady, the husband was just a stevedore when a ship arrived in Hilo. But, it was just for few days a month. Just barely enough to live on. So, part of the time we'd go fishing along the seacoast, just to get our fish for our meals. And there was a Korean with us too, a bachelor. He used to feed us his famous kim chee.

(VL: laughs)

DM: If I eat kim chee, yeah. So hot. So, I somehow managed to survive for the four years while going to high school.

VL: Yeah, that's how you lived at three different places.


Then, when I came to Honolulu, my guardian who had adopted me [the original David Makaoi] was living in Honolulu, but I didn't know where he was. 'Cause he never wrote to me. But he had seen my picture in the paper, the Advertiser you saw [Advertiser 6/20/23 article about Makaoi's receipt of a full UH scholarship]. But he didn't come to the "U" to see me right away until about maybe two months later. So, I was in the meantime staying at a boarding house by Pensacola and Beretania, near the Makiki Japanese church. Near Kaahumanu School. I worked during the summer at the Volcano House as a yardboy and saved, maybe, about $60. And I was using up all of my savings 'cause I had to pay rent and my food, eh. So, I was just about ready to find a job as part-time yardboy for somebody in Manoa Valley, but they were not quite ready for me to go there, so, it just happened at that time, that's when my guardian came to see me at the university.

So I told 'em, "Gee! Why don't you come earlier because here I squandered all of my summer earnings and now you come to see me."

Then he said, "Do you have any money to lend me?"

I said, "No, I haven't any money." You know? I could have lent him in the beginning but, he came so late, I had to spend all of my money on
my rent and food, etc. So I thought, "Gee, Hawaiians are not that far­sighted. They're not systematic." You know? So loose!

YY: Yeah. Was this the first contact that you had with him since....

DM: Yeah, the first time since he left Hawaii [Big Island]. So, I didn't know [where] he was staying at all, you see. No communication with the mother in Hawaii. All he did was, come to Honolulu but, I had no way of finding him. So, I stayed with him then at Kapahulu. He had a home in Kapahulu, on George Street, near Campbell. That's off Campbell, towards Diamond Head. So, I used to walk from there to Kapiolani Park in those days and catch the Rapid Transit. And then, going to the "U", I had to transfer twice. You know? Wasted a lot of time. I came to King and Pawa'a junction, take the Pawa'a shortline, and then come to Punahou and take the Punahou line. So, if I miss one, I have to wait another 10 minutes extra. So, I left home early to be sure I got to school on time. Oh, it was early for my regular classes but, in those days, the ROTC class started at 7:30 in the morning. And if you got there on time, they marked you tardy. And if you were tardy about five times, they made you work on the firing range during our vacation for so many days. They were that funny, you know. I said, "Gee, they don't even allow you to be on time. No, you have to be there before time, in the Army, to be considered 'prompt'."

(VL and YY laugh)

DM: I thought it was so unjust. Because, for the other classes, you could go on time and not be marked tardy.

VL: What about in Waipio? Can you tell us some more about going to school there?

DM: Yeah, I can.

VL: Like you were saying before, you had to wake up so early.

DM: Well, that was when I was going to Kukuihaele School. For the seventh and eighth grades. But, before then, well, Waipio [School] was not so bad 'cause it was nearer to walk to. Oh, they didn't serve lunches. They just had no lunches. Just went without lunch.

VL: You didn't eat?

DM: There was no lunch.

VL: Why was that?

DM: Well, somehow, the Hawaiians didn't provide their kids with lunch or lunch money to school. In fact, when I went to Kukuihaele [School] the first year, at first I used to carry with me a can of poi, see. But, after doing that several times, I got tired of carrying the can back and forth. Because it was a big can too, and sometimes it would topple on the road and roll downhill, and we would chase after. So, I gave up the idea.
Then the Akioka family, that taro, poi factory man, asked me to pick luau for them once a week for them to take to Waimea, Kamuela, to sell to the Hawaiians--one bag of luau, young taro shoots. So, I would go and pick them in the ditches in Waipio Valley and take it to them. And, I had at least a nickel a day for my lunch at Kukuihaele [bought lunch from a restaurant]. And if I didn't have any money, well, I was without lunch.

Sometimes I would get wild beans in Waipio Valley that grew near our place. Big vines in the forest, wild kinds. They had nice beans. Was just like lima beans. And I would get that, and boil and pound it into a paste. Was kind of delicious too; wrapped it up and took it to school. And I ate that. If I had any money, like when I serenaded on New Year's Eve I would make some money, and get enough to go to the restaurant to buy long soup. (Laughs) Things like that.

VL: Did other children bring lunch to Waipio School?

DM: No, they didn't bring. They had money to go to school. Somehow their parents were better--the Chinese or part-Chinese. Only the Hawaiians were not that....provident with their kids with money. Maybe in town here they do, but in those days they just let you shift for yourself. (Of course, they didn't have much cash.)

VL: Were there other ethnic groups in the valley?

DM: Ah, you mean, besides Chinese--there were a few Japanese. Not many--bachelors. There was one Japanese man who married a Hawaiian. That was this Kanekoa family. See, the wife was Hawaiian and the [husband] was Haraguchi. But, when World War II came, they changed [their name from Haraguchi] to Kanekoa because they were afraid of being persecuted. So, changed to Kanekoa. In fact, when they had a Waipio reunion down here years later, I couldn't tell. I say, "Who is Kanekoa? Oh, that's you?" (Laughs) I was surprised! They say, oh, they had to change the name because they were afraid during the war they would be persecuted by the government for being Japanese. His father was Japanese--the husband.

VL: But, mostly Chinese and Hawaiians?

DM: Mostly--there were more Hawaiians than Chinese, but quite a few Chinese, you know, because of the Chinese laborers who worked for the Chinese taro and rice planters. They grew taro and rice. You could see all those bachelors hauling rice on their shoulders, you know. And, you feed them four times a day. Real hard work, you see, carrying that, so they get hungry faster. So, they ate four times a day.

VL: Who would feed them?

DM: The Chinese employers. And also the taro farmers, the Chinese, there were three of them. The Akona and Akioka and Mock Chew families. Well, they fed their employees, too, you see. And mostly, they were all bachelors--the employees. So, that's why they say their employees survived on opium. That was their substitute for a wife. (Laughs)
They would be in heaven when they smoke that drug. And once in awhile a policeman came down to Waipio Valley and to the store, you know, it [opium] was sold in the store, I know. You could smell it. A strong smell, the smoke. They would go behind and smoke and take some home. When coming out, once in awhile a cop would be waiting on the outside. When they come out they just slap their wrists and down drops the opium, then the Chinese man runs for his life. (Laughs)

VL: Where would they get the opium?

DM: From the stores. There was two Chinese stores down Waipio Valley in those days.

VL: Who owned them?

DM: Chinese. One was Ah Chong, the other was Ahana.

VL: Do you know what these Chinese workers were paid for working in the taro and rice fields?

DM: Well, not exactly, but I would say not more than $1 a day. Of course, they had their room and board there though, so it was not too bad. Whereas, if you were an outsider, like a Hawaiian, you could work, but all they paid was $1 a day, and also feed yourself. Of course, we Hawaiians had our own homes and our taro patches. It was all right, we didn't squawk. But pity any single person without any home. Can't live.

VL: And how many rice mills were there?

DM: Just one rice mill by the Hiilawe Falls, you know. I used to go there and admire how that wheel spun, you know, and water splashing, you know. It fascinated me. It was a big wheel, too. I knew the man who operated there, who ran that thing. I didn't know if he owned it. Maybe it was a community thing, but he was there to supervise it. His son was attending Waipio School with me. His name was Edward Ah Choy. And he had a brother named Un Gun. And a sister named, I forgot, Mut Mut. The sister was the oldest. She came to Honolulu to Normal School. Edward was the second brother, and the second in line, and he and I went to Kukuhihaele School together, although he was one class behind. He was older than I was but he was one class behind. He was a pretty big boy, Edward was. And, what else did you ask?

VL: Was it about the rice mill?

DM: Yeah, rice mill.

VL: And the water wheel you were talking about.

DM: Water came from the Hiilawe Falls. In those days it was always running. The cane fields didn't use all the water in those days. But now, they are siphoning all the water so it's usually dry. So, I used to admire that waterfall falling down, you know, like a spear.
VL: Can you describe a typical school day at Waipio?

DM: Oh yeah.

VL: From the time you would wake up to the time you came home.

DM: See, we had three grades in one room. So naturally the teacher cannot talk to all at once. So, what he would do is to talk to one class in one subject and then go on down the line. Each time he takes the next class, the previous class would have to do their written assignment in class. So, you have your English and your spelling and whatever else in sequence. Of course if you finish your homework before time, your classwork, you can tune in on what they're saying. I used to do that in the second teacher's class, ah. While I was in the fourth grade the fifth grade would be having geography and the teacher would ask, "Where is the capital, what is the capital of so and so state?" Nobody could answer. I would say, "I know, I know." I would put up my hand. (Laughs) But, the teacher wouldn't recognize me. Good thing he didn't slap my head for disturbing. Because whatever they studied I would study too and by the time I got there I already knew the answer. But, he wouldn't listen to me. In fact, he told me to stay back one more year at Waipio School. When I finish the sixth grade he said, "Oh, you are too small to climb the hill. Stay back one more year."

I said, "No, no. I want to go." Because I see Dai Ho Chun, he's about the same size. If he can go, I can go.

So, that's how I went. Oh, I had to wake up earlier than the others, [I lived] further up in the valley. I had to get up with the alarm clock at 4:30 to cook coffee for the old folks, you know. Then have breakfast and then wash the dishes and then leave home by 6:30. Then I met them at the foot of the hill and climb up to Kukuihaele.

VL: So, Waipio had two teachers?

DM: Two teachers and six grades. Three to each teacher. I recall now, after the fourth grade, when I took the exam for the fifth grade, I could make a higher score because I sort of opened my ears, you know. When it came I could answer the question. So, beginning with the fifth grade I had good marks in my final exams. There was an exam for all the whole territory. Printed in advance and then on the day of the exam, they'd open it. All schools took the same test. Same questions. So, when I took a test in the fifth grade I got an "A" average. Although my average was "A", I had a 70 in one subject but my average was 90. And from then on I had "A's" up until the eighth grade. In fact, in the eighth and seventh grades I averaged a 98 percent in all the subjects.

So, when I reviewed my lessons I knew all that I had in there. I would pass. So, I just looked at it carefully and somehow I had a vivid memory in those days. Sort of like a picture in my mind. I see the page and I can see the number in my head. You know.

Once my Waipio teacher in an exam marked my answer wrong. It was a case of dividing a whole number by a decimal number, like maybe, five by .6.
And, he treated the divisor like a whole number. He didn't consider the decimal point. So, he marked my answer wrong. So, I had to argue with him, you know. At least I had the nerve to argue with him at that time. In fact, the Honolulu office had taken the problem from the text book. I told him, "I can show you where the example is in the book."

And sure enough I showed him, and then he looked at the answer behind. Then, "Yeah." (Laughs) See, I was right. So, he gave me—in the fifth grade—I had an "A" average for my subjects. Up to the eighth grade. In fact, in the eighth and seventh I had a perfect, oh, 98 percent average for all the subjects.

So, when we graduated from Kukuihaele, the teacher there, the principal, Kamakaiwi, he was really just the opposite, he was very nice. He said, "Don't stay in the valley. Get out of it." (Laughs) "Otherwise, you'll rot down there." In other words, be ambitious. Go on. Go to further education. So he told me, "Well, I know you have no money, so, I'll back you up if you need money. In a pinch, I can send you a few dollars." He really did. And so, I went to Hilo and each time I had a report card I'd send the results to him. He was happy. Would brag to all his classes. He said, "Why don't you folks study as hard as that boy?"

VL: Were the teachers strict in Waipio?

DM: Yeah, well, they were strict, yeah. Very. For any little offense you got a whack.

VL: With what?

DM: With a stick. A yardstick. And, I know the teacher was—in the second room—was extra strict with his own relatives, especially. For any little offense he just gives 'em mean whacks with a yardstick or anything like that.

VL: Little offenses like what?

DM: Yeah. Nothing serious. Maybe they don't know the lesson, he bangs your head against the blackboard. Seven times three—don't know, BAM. Just like that. If you don't know your lesson, he bangs you too. So when the kids were asked, they always, the way they shake I can see them trembling. They were more afraid, anticipating the BAM.

Of course the one at Kukuihaele was not that bad. Only once he slapped my head because of a—well, what happened was, during the lunch hour some of us were in the classroom just drawing pictures on the board with chalk, you know. And then, when the bell rang, I forgot to erase my pictures, you see. And I had a picture of a man with a sharp nose. That's all it was. A man with a sharp nose. And that was Kamakaiwi's class, too. He was the principal, see. So, when he came to the door he said, "Who drew that picture?" I hesitated and then when he asked again, "Who drew the picture?" I was going to say, I better shut up, since he already asked twice. At least I should have responded first. You know.
So, nobody would say, although some knew, you know, that I did it.

This Toko boy I know. He knew because he told me afterwards, "You lucky I didn't squeal." And he was a bigger boy than I was. Good thing he didn't squeal on the small boy. So, he went right down the line. Bam, bam, bam, on the head.

VL: Oh. Everybody?

DM: All they boys that were present in the room during the recess. So, that was the only thing, but, I never told him about it to this day. And the other boy said, "Oh you lucky we didn't squeal on you."

VL: Hm. So the kids would stick together then?

DM: In spite of the fact, they had punches on the head.

VL: So what else would you do at recess?

DM: Oh, we just had a short recess. Lunch hour, just a half hour. You have your lunch and come back to class. It's very short. So, for the few spare moments we might be doing a little wrestling, things like that. Just boyish pranks, you know.

YY: What kind of subjects did you learn?

DM: Oh, we had English grammar. We had grammar, though. We really mastered our grammar. Although he didn't teach us, we had to study our own, but, at least he assigned lessons in grammar every day. We had a grammar book, spelling—that was emphasized—spelling. And English, history, hygiene, math, geography—see, it went by subject rather than departments. And, let's see, what else? I think those were the main subjects. There were about six subjects, though, I think.

VL: Did you have P.E.?

DM: No, we had no P.E. We had to just play by ourselves during lunch time (one-half hour). Just a short recess—lunch hour. That's about all.

But, we had gardening, though. Once a week, maybe, we had gardening in the yard. Had our own school gardens. Each one chose his own little bed to raise something. So, I raised peanuts in my patch. (laughs) And harvested, I took it home.

YY: Did all the children of the valley go to school up to sixth grade?

DM: No, if you reach a certain age and you are over age, there was no sense going on, you see. Because, you know, it was a shame to repeat a grade. Just stayed out of school. If you reach age 15, and you haven't made it, you stay out; otherwise stay in the same class all your life. 'Cause now, it's just the reverse, eh. Now, they're talking about trying to be more strict, eh.

VL: So were there any children that didn't go to school?
OM: Oh, many, many didn't go beyond the fifth grade, sixth grade. Were too big, eh. They didn't want to stay with the small kids in the low grades.

VL: And after school would you have chores to do?

DM: Well, we took turns cleaning the room. Sweeping. At Waipio School I recall, we used to have once on Friday afternoons, we had yardwork to do. Everybody went out. And I enjoyed being out of class. We cleaned the yard or weeds or things like that. Even the big boys built a nice playground behind the Waipio School for a baseball field. Used to be so uneven. They filled it up with big rocks and then put soil on it so they could play baseball. That's one thing they did behind the school. Behind, facing the Hiilawe Falls. And we enjoyed doing that because that was something away from the classroom for a change. And then, we had a nice system for hauling rocks. We just relayed, you know. Stood in line and just passed on the rocks. That way it was easy and faster. So, that's how they got the rocks to fill up the big hole behind our school. Of course, for the big rocks the big boys, they used the crowbar to pry them down to the hole.

VL: Who would direct you folks?

DM: Well, there were just two teachers, and in those days they didn't send anybody else to help because they were strict, so if anybody misbehaved you can tell right away. No chance for any pranks.

VL: How about chores after school when you went home?

DM: You mean at home? Well, I had my regular chores to do. I was the only child in the house so I had to feed the pig and the chickens. I had to get the papayas for the pigs, too. On Saturday mornings I get it for the whole week. So, I would go to a papaya farm we had and get papayas and carry in my bag and take it home.

VL: You folks had a papaya farm?

DM: Yeah, we had one about maybe a quarter mile away. Raised papayas for the pigs. We had some at home, too, in our yard. Enough to feed the pigs all week. See, what I had to do was harvest enough to last the whole week because on school days I didn't have much time coming back from Kukuihaele School, especially. You reach home by 4 o'clock. Not much time to do anything. So, I harvest the papayas on Saturday mornings and sometimes it rains, and I didn't like the papaya--the ripe ones on my back getting all smashed. (Laughs) Get messy. But, I had to take it with a grin because I was the only child and nobody else to share the chores. I was not a big boy then, because until age 15 I was only 4 feet 10. So they used to call me "Shorty" in those days, you see. And yet I did all this hard manual labor, carrying water with two buckets from the stream. About how many yards up hill? (100 yards) So, I had to conserve my water to wash the dishes and this and that.

VL: Oh. Did you do that every day?
OM: Every day because I was the only child then in the house. I had to mix the poi, cook the coffee and other simple chores. To cook coffee in the morning I would get up. I didn't drink coffee, but I had to cook coffee for the old folks. Get up 4:30 with the alarm clock and get things started so I could leave by 6:30 for Kukuihaele School.

VL: Did you haul water in the morning?

OM: Well, maybe not, maybe I did it in the afternoon or evening. It was a long haul to my house--more than 100 yards uphill from the stream.

VL: Then where would you put it once you came up to the house?

OM: I left it in a little closet, you know, I mean a space, and cover it up.

VL: Oh, in the bucket still?

OM: In the buckets. And carry two buckets. Would be enough for the day for washing and for drinking. So, we drank from the stream, in other words, which I thought was not too good. You look over it now--I don't think it was good because I found I had worms in my body, you know, coming out. Not this way [points to mouth], but the other way. Worms. In fact, once my grandfather had a worm coming out through his mouth. We were eating, oh, he was just, whoa--couldn't stand the sight! I saw one coming out. I never saw that before. Funny kind of worm, too.

VL: And you think it was from the water?

OM: Well, maybe, could be. Or could be from the food because sometimes, he would have raw salted fat from the pig, you know, salted kind. We would eat that, see. Maybe the pig has worms in there too, eh. Who knows?

VL: What did you folks eat most times? Your family?

OM: Well, morning, noon and night we had poi. So, you naturally need the "bait." We had some dry fish or salt salmon, or if we were lucky enough, had some fresh fish like oopu from the stream. And mullets and shrimp. Well, at my home, it was not so bad because my folks were--at least my Hawaiian uncle was always going out to fish. Catching oopu. And I didn't tire of eating oopu. That's one thing I found out. Could cook it and maybe roast it sometimes, or boil it. The gravy tastes nice, it's fat. It's tasty. And fry. And sometimes cook in the ti leaf too over the fire. Gives a different flavor. So, you can cook it in many ways. So, you never get tired of eating fish. So we had fish most of the time. Hardly any meat. 'Cause only once in awhile, when somebody kills a cow for the whole valley. Then they get to buy beef, so many pounds to take home. And salt it most of the time. And that's pipikaula. That's the only way to preserve it and still be nice for eating. So that's why I enjoy pipikaula, nowadays here, because it has a good flavor.

VL: How often would somebody kill a cow?
DM: Kill a cow? Maybe not more than twice a year. So it's a long while. He would go out, getting orders and then, and then he kills the cow.

VL: One for the whole valley?

DM: Whole valley, yeah. But the Chinese, I notice they kill the pig more often. They have it all pre-cooked, roasted already, in a special place and then the customer comes and buys it there. Chinese customers. I didn't see any Hawaiian customers buying pork. (Laughs) Just sold to the Chinese community. So they had that more often, I noticed because I could observe the main part of the village.

VL: There was a main part of town?

DM: Yeah, down near the school. Used to be a village there they called Napoopoo.

YY: That sounds right. In fact, there were different areas called by different names.

DM: Well, yeah. But, down near the school and all that area it was Napoopoo.

VL: What else did they have in Napoopoo?

DM: They had the stores. They had three stores in my time. The Ah Chong, Ahana and another one. Mainly a coffee shop. When I was attending Waipio School. And of course, those who were lucky and had nickels went to the store to buy bread. A generous serving of bread, one whole loaf baked there in the store. Nice kind--chewy. And inside they put their own homemade guava jelly. And it was for a nickel. But I didn't have any nickel to buy with. So....

VL: The three stores and the school....

DM: There was no barber shop. You had to go to Kukuihaele to cut your hair so my hair used to be so long. Only once in awhile I went up. No dentist. Good thing I had no cavities then. Not a cavity until I came to Honolulu and became about, oh, 40 years of age, and then had my first cavity. So I was lucky because I was so poor I couldn't afford buying candies. Because when I had my son here, in less than a year and a half, he was already having cavities. So much candy given to him.

VL: Was there a doctor in Waipio?

DM: No doctor. No policeman either. So, if you need to call a policeman you have to call Honokaa by phone.

VL: Was there a phone as far as you remember?

DM: Ah, some people had phones. Especially the poi factories had their phones and the rice farmers. And the watchman for the ditch company way up the waterhead, they had phones, too. Like, one of them was
this Kanekoa, yeah? The Kanekoa family. The husband of this Kanekoa
was a watchman up the waterhead, one of the waterheads. There were
four waterheads. The wife was living part-time next door to us. She
was near the Papala Falls. Her home was there. I was on the sea side
of her. And the mother was a close friend of my grandma, so they used
to just send things back and forth, you know. Whatever each gets, she
would send it to the other.

VL: Was there any other things in Napoopoo?

DM: You mean....

YY: Like churches?

DM: Ah, there was, yeah, there were—there was a Mormon church at one end,
below the rice mill near the road. And there was a Catholic church to­
wards the Kohala side of the village. And, there was supposed to be a
Protestant church further up the valley, but I never went there, never
saw it in action. So, they were not so active. Only the Mormon church
was rather active because, I recall, once I got involved with them. They
wanted to have children sing on a special day. So, I went to sing just
to have a chance to eat luau. (Laughs) Free pig. For that I went, see.
So, I joined the choir and sang with the young singers. Otherwise they
wouldn't try to convert me. (Laughs) They hadn't converted me even
until then, see. Just went once for the songfest and the luau. Kalua
pig.

VL: Did your folks go to church? One of those churches?

DM: No, my grandfolks didn't go at all. I know once in awhile this Mormon
Elder, a Hawaiian man, would visit the homes in the valley. Came to
our home to stop and talk to my folks. We didn't go to church. My
grandparents say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." But there was no action. They
didn't force each other, you see. Just talked nicely and chatted and
then that's it. So, they never went to church.

So, before I came Honolulu, at Hilo I had joined the Hi-Y club in high
school, see. And they needed an advisor so we got the pastor of the
First Foreign Church for our advisor. It was Peter Huyler. I don't
know if you heard of him. And, he was our Hi-Y advisor and he influenced
us to join his church. So we joined his church. Me and my classmate
from Kukuihaele, Ernest Iwasaki. I met him in high school, Hilo, so we
became close friends. And so we were in the same club, and so we said,
"Let's join his church." We went together. We were the only kids--high
school kids—in that church that I could see. The rest were just old
folks. When you go to church on Sunday they all look at us. Who are
those two young kids? What are they doing here? But we had each other
to get courage to go.

So when I came down here, well, I joined the--I happened to go to the
Honolulu Bible Training School. They had classes there for high school
and university students in Bible study. And that's where they also had
the Crossroads Church in the same building. See the halls now? You
know where the brick building is still standing? There used to be
another behind there, a big hall called Memorial Hall. That was where we had our services and Sunday School too. The first place where our church started. Crossroads. We had this man Mr. Weaver to be the pastor. So, we came there to attend Sunday School, well, we thought it was convenient to stay afterwards, just a few minutes later for the worship service. And save the trouble of walking to other churches. Some others did and they walked to some other church in town. So we just stayed there and rested a few minutes, and then started on the next service 15 minutes later. So, that's how I joined the Crossroads Church.

VL: But, in Waipio you did not go to church.

DM: Well, I went only on special occasions. I recall as a kid, when my guardian was there he took me to the Mormon Church, but it was in some other location in Waipio Valley, further toward the Kohala side, the Kohala side of the valley.

VL: There were two?

DM: Well, it used to be there before, but later on they moved to Napoopoo.

VL: What special occasions would you go for?

DM: When they had a luau, you know? That was the only time.

VL: Why would they have luau?

DM: Well, I guess to celebrate a special event maybe. I don't know what it was. Once a year they had a big shindig, you know. They had a little exhibit....

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

VL: How much would they charge? Would they charge to get into the dance?

DM: Not too much, maybe 50 cents at the most. But, of course, in those days 50 cents was big because you earned just $1 a day ordinarily.

VL: What other kind of recreation was there in Waipio?

DM: Ah, nothing special. Once in awhile they had maybe a baseball game between some Waipio boys and somebody from Kukuihaele. Not every time though, but just once in a rare while. So, the rest of the time, you just had to find your own recreation. Fishing, swimming, things like that. Just on your own. Well, I had things to do so I didn't mind. I went fishing. I had so many places to fish, too. See, I had to climb the hill, too, to fish. You know Nenewe Falls and Papala Falls. I climbed those places. It was all oopu up there in those ponds. So if the oopu come up when they're young, they come up from the ocean. They come up all the way up. See, when they hatch, they hatch in the ocean. And you see all those tiny babies coming up at a certain season.
They call them hinanas. The Hawaiians would go there (mouth of the river) and scoop them with the net. But some of them escape and travel up and grow up as oopus. And they would find a way up the mountain, up in the waterfalls. Climb up so, because nobody goes there, hardly anybody goes there; I go there during the summertime on my vacation from high school and university, and in those ponds I can see some goris, you know. Of course, kind of deep above my head, so, what I would do, I would jump in there and slap the water and they all run to the side and hide in the holes on the side. Then I go in and feel slowly and feel something slimy.

(Laughter)

DM: And I would aim for the heads. When I find the head then I grab the head. Otherwise I have no other place to grab. You catch pretty big ones, too, because they've been there for so long. You can tell when it floods, they all are washed down by the flood. They come tumbling down and get killed. You can see big ones dead in the stream, floating down. So, every summer I go back to the valley, I climb up the hill and go out to those places and slap the water and catch the oopus. Come back and have it salted and dried, and bring back to Honolulu. So my folks here (in Honolulu will) be happy because they like oopu and this is their only chance to see oopu.

VL: When you were young what was your favorite pastime?

DM: Well, we had to work most of the time so if we had a free time--of course, we went to swim at Nenewe Falls, or even in the streams. And of course when holidays came I enjoyed playing music. When I first learned to play--nobody taught me--I just watched the elders play when they had a party and tried to do the same. (Laughs) Just haphazard, you know. I learned a few chords that way. At least the songs I chose were simple, so I could sing, using maybe two or three chords, you know. I recall the first time I went when I was about maybe 11 years old, oh, the neighbors were just making fun of me because, of course, it was funny. I didn't pronounce the words correctly, you know.

VL: What? English?

DM: Hawaiian. See, I didn't know what I was singing in the first place but I saw the words written somewhere and so I memorized them and made a song out of them.

VL: But I thought you spoke Hawaiian with your folks?

DM: Yeah, well, this was when I was young. I was still learning.

VL: Oh.

DM: And I had to find the songs. So, I know the first time I went, I don't know, I must have been in the fifth grade or so. I went to the neighbors down at Kanekoa's place, you know. They have two houses there facing each other--the Kanekoaas and Nakaneluas. It was New Year's eve. It was still twilight, just barely dark, and then I started playing my
ukulele and singing. They were already drunk, you know. The Hawaiians, the men. One Hawaiian man especially was drunk. Each time he tried to catch me, I would just move around. (Laughs) I eluded him because if he caught me I wouldn't be able to play. That's how I felt, see. So, the rest of the people were just laughing over the incident, you know. But in the end, they gave me some money for my efforts, you know. Sometimes in quarters, you know.

And in fact, one New Year's after that, I went around the valley serenading several homes, all alone with a kerosene lantern. It happened that one of those ladies discovered that I was singing her song. She said that was her song, dedicated to her, that is, by somebody. The words were dedicated to her. And I didn't know. I found a copy of the words in my home. And of course, I chose my own melody to fit the words. And when I played the song there, she said, "Oh, that's my song." And she was so happy, she gave me one dollar and a half [$1.50].

(Laughter)

DM: That's big money, $1.50 in those days when you worked a whole day for $1. 'Course when they were drunk, they were generous. So, from then on, I sang maybe every year. Of course I didn't play too fancy, just learned a few chords and then chose some simple Hawaiian songs, you know.

VL: Did other people serenade also on New Year's?

DM: Yeah, there were maybe three or four other groups serenading. Most were really adult folks. I know one year when I was in high school, I went back to Waipio. This Sam Lia, he used to be at Kukuihaele, a good employee of the sugar company. He's a violinist. Well, he invited me to be in his group. So, I played the ukulele, and he played the violin, and somebody else played the banjo, and somebody else played the guitar. So, we serenaded the plantation manager. And our teacher too, Kamakawi.

Then we went down the valley early that morning, still dark, you know, in the morning. Down the hill, my saddle was so loose and every time I tried to dismount, the saddle would come down too, so I couldn't get down because of that. (Laughs) Until I reached down the valley. Then, somebody had to help me dismount.

Then, we went around the valley serenading the Hawaiian families up to my home. It was already daylight. So, at daylight, we stopped at my house. And, I recall this Sam Lia was very generous because all I knew was "Hilo Honokahi" in those days. They let me sing the solo. Most of the time I just accompanied them. He'd play the violin, the others did the singing. But, when we split the pot—proceeds for the night—it was all even. We all got the same amount, all of us men.

VL: Was there much mixing of the different ethnic groups?

DM: You mean the—well, of course, in Waipio the Chinese were really just by themselves. Except that some of them married Hawaiian ladies, like Mock Chew and Young. Chun had a Chinese wife. The one who operated
the rice mill, Chang, he had a Hawaiian wife, too. So his children were part-Hawaiian. The son, Edward Chang, used to go with me to Kukuihaele School together.

YY: Do you recall an Akaka?

DM: I recall Akana, not Akaka. He was living in the village, near the store. Akana. He's related to this Waipio school teacher, the principal. The principal was [Sam] Kaaekuahiwi. I think they were cousins, or something like that.

VL: Where did you folks bathe?

DM: Well, when you are healthy you bathe in the stream, in the cold water. When you are sick, well, of course, you boil the water and take a steam bath with a blanket over you. (Laughs)

VL: Oh, how's that? How does that work?

DM: To get the steam. I guess you perspire, then that's how you clean yourself.

VL: You mean you go over....

DM: A tub of hot water and hold the blanket over your body so that your body will absorb the steam and you perspire.

YY: Did you just hold it up?

DM: Well, just so you have enough air to breathe. Then you perspire. But, the Japanese family, I noticed, Mrs. Kanekoa's husband (actually Mrs. Haraguchi), used a wooden tub of hot water.

VL: Furo.

DM: Yes. Then they can douse themselves with the warm water, eh, and take a bath. So, I enjoyed that when I went to their place. Those Hawaiians just bathed in cold water down the stream somewhere. Only when sick, they prepared a special pan of hot water for you.

VL: Did you have soap that you used in the stream, too?

DM: Yeah. It was kind of strong soap, though. Long bar.

VL: How about washing clothes?

DM: Same thing. They used the same soap to wash clothes, and rub, and bang-bang with the stick on the rock.

VL: Oh. Whose job was that?

DM: The ladies.

VL: And what about cooking? Did you have a kitchen?
OM: Well, we had a shack, a hut. We could make all the smoke. So, I used to be the cook, simple cooking, you know, just boil something, or put over the fire. Cook the coffee, etc.

VL: With wood--wood fire?

OM: Yes, with usually guava sticks. We would usually chop down some guava trees and cut them into pieces and dry 'em outside. We used that for our firewood. In fact, the poi factories did the same thing. They would go to the guava forest and chop down some trees, and chop into certain lengths and pile them up, and let them dry for a few months; then they come and get it on the mules, and haul to the poi factories. So, guava was the main firewood down there. It's kind of strong so it burned slowly. Kukui was not good, it was too soft.

VL: And what did your folks do for work?

OM: Well, they had their farm to look after. The man would clean the banks of the taro patch, and plant taro, and harvest the taro, and cook for the week, and have the ladies peel the taro. I would help peel myself, too, with the coconut shell, you know. And then they would pound with the stone. The men would do the job--pounding the poi.

VL: You did that?

OM: Well, not in the early years, but, when I was little big, around, say in the eighth grade I would help. And then put in the barrel and there was a whole week's supply. And the poi didn't get sour because it was still nice and firm, not soft yet. So, whatever you need for your meal, well, you take it out and mix it for that meal. That way, the poi stays longer without needing any ice--ice in the refrigerator. Refrigeration. So, that's how they did---with our Hilo poi, they would send it by train, and I would pound and soften, not too soft, and put it in the barrel. For each meal, take out just enough poi and add some more water.

VL: How much land did your folks have in taro?

OM: Ah, enough to support us the whole year and even sell some. Several acres--that's a big piece of land. Of course, some had more than ours, but it was more than enough. I don't know how many acres there were. Maybe, one or two acres.

VL: Did you folks ever have to buy food from the stores?

OM: Oh yeah. We naturally bought sugar. Sugar and maybe flour sometimes for making pancakes. Cooking oil. Matches. Kerosene oil. Soap. We didn't buy too much, though, because for the rest of the things we were self-supporting. We just say, "Why spend money? Get up and make our own." We were independent. We didn't need much cash for things in the store. So, that's why they said, "Why live in town? You have to buy everything with cash." (Laughs) In the country, you don't need much cash.
YY: How about clothing?

DM: Ah, not much either, because you could wear patch-patch and that's how they have the name, it came from taro patches. My grandma used to just patch my pants every time it got torn, she just patched it again. So, we hardly wore our suits.

VL: Yeah. When you were living there, how much did you go outside the valley? Or how much did your folks go outside the valley?

DM: What do you mean?

VL: Well, would they ever leave the valley and for what reason?

DM: Well, my grandfather would go up to Kukuihaele on horseback to buy things we couldn't get down the valley at the store.

VL: Like what things couldn't you get?

DM: Ah, maybe, like liquor of course. Wine especially. A gallon of wine. And, maybe a bag of rice because usually the stores down below wouldn't be stocking up so much, eh. Took so long get rid of one, and the worms will come into the bags. Maybe, sugar. Those necessary commodities, you know.

VL: How often would he do that?

DM: Once in a rare while, when supplies were running low then he comes up. Made a trip, maybe three times a year at the most, on horseback. Then, he would buy some liquor besides that, and he gets drunk—there's a saloon up there, too, at Kukuihaele, before going home.

So I know once he said he came back, he fell down in the stream from his horse. And all his fingers are crooked. I didn't see that. It happened before I lived there, you see. Because I asked, "How did you get those fingers that way?"

"Oh, I fell down from the horse in the stream. Was drunk." Just crushed his—couldn't bend it anymore like, just had to hold like this. But, he was a strong man, but he had to hold his hand that way every time. He could hardly grab anything.

VL: So not too often he would go out?

DM: Not too often. Only when he needed the supplies, he went up. So, he would naturally be planning ahead every time. Oh, do I need this and that, and then make a special trip. It was a long trip on horse, too. And on horseback, too, those things are sometimes hard to balance on the horse.

VL: And what about your grandmother? Did she ever go out?

DM: Very seldom. In the valley she would go to the parties, somebody's luau. She would go. But, up, out of the valley, ah, no. Only once
she went out. It was to ride a car to go around the island. We had a ride. I know I was still maybe in the fourth or fifth grade when we had a trip. We had a neighbor who wanted to go, too, so we rented two cars in Kukuihaele, you know, for our own purpose.

VL: Did you rent or what?

DM: We rode in the---we would pay for the trip to those drivers who own the cars. So we started from Kukuihaele, went by way of Kawaihae and Kona, and the Volcano and Hilo, and back to the Hamakua. Took us about three days.

VL: Oh my!

DM: And the first night we spent, we went by way of Kona. I don't know how he knew where the man's house was in Kona, in an isolated place. He stopped there at midnight, and knucked the house. And then, they kept us that night over there. A Hawaiian family. I wonder how he ever did that, you know. He said he had a friend in Kona. That's all he said to us and he found him.

I know he [Mr. Alama Nui, DM's hanai grandfather] was a pretty smart man, like that because I know he used to make those fish nets. You know, out of ie vine, those traps--fish traps. Used to give them away. And, once in awhile, somebody would come to him for some guidance. You know, they have some black, dark marks on their arms, or other parts of the body. They wanted to know what caused that. And he would get a certain kind of plant--a yellow plant, what you call, iholena. Pounded it and got a little juice and all that. And put it over the mark. After awhile he would say, "Oh, that's caused by your daughter or your grandson. That's a bite by your grandfather or grandson or granddaughter." So, they had to go back and settle matters with that person otherwise that person would die. And, it seemed to be true. I don't know. So, that person would be so relieved, he went back and arranged, and settled matters with that party there, and that was the end of it.

So, he was more like a medicine man. And they came to him. I don't know why. All the others came to him, too. He was respected for that. He just make a little mess and then waited a minute or so. So, he would say, "Ch, that's it."

VL: Was there a doctor in Kukuihaele?

DM: No, no doctors. Honokaa was the nearest.

VL: Honokaa. So, if you were sick, then what would happen?

DM: You die.

(Laughter)

DM: So, I noticed at Waipio Valley, people were dying off like rats, you know. They have a fever, and die. Funny. Even young kids, you know, a girl
was our neighbor. She had this one fever and in a few days, she died. So, I saw in Waipio Valley so many deaths each year. So, I told myself, "Gee, if they die that young and I'm not as strong as they, I won't live long myself." I thought, you know.

VL: So, when you were growing up there, did you ever see a doctor?

DM: No doctor. Not even a dentist. It was a good thing I didn't have any cavities. But most of the people in those days didn't have any cavities either, maybe because we couldn't get candies, I think. 'Cause when we came here (Honolulu) my son--just two years old--already had cavities. Just filled him with candies.

VL: Did you ever make your own medicines?

DM: Yeah, my grandpa used to have this laukahi. He used the weed, big leaf, you know. Pound it and put it over the sore. That helped to cure it. And, once somebody else, a man in our house had constipation, so, my grandfather got some convolvulus vines, pounded it and fed him. And the man ran a 50-yard dash to the outdoor, open-air lav.

(Laughter)

DM: In no time.

VL: How did your grandfather know this?

DM: I don't know how he knew it. Maybe from his parents perhaps. And he seemed to know something about astronomy, too. He would tell when the next full moon occurs, and this and that. He could tell you what day. He had a system all worked out, I don't know how. He would say, "Oh, Mahea-lani [full moon] is coming on a certain day. So, let's plant our crops on that date." I used to wonder how he figured that because he had no written material. All in his head. So, he was a pretty smart man I realized. 'Cause even the other people came to ask for his opinions, too. They respected him.

VL: So, he would plant at what time?

DM: When the moon is full, I think. Mahea-lani, see. That's full moon.

VL: Was his family from Waipio, also?

DM: Well, he had a daughter.

VL: I mean his parents?

DM: I didn't see the parents. He had a brother called Alama Liilii. And he was Alama Nui, meaning big Alama. Alama Liilii (small Alama) is junior, although they were brothers. Big and small. Nui and liilii, small. So, they were Alama Nui and Alama Liilii. He had a brother, a kid brother.

VL: You know your folks' house. Did they own the house and the land?
OM: No, no. They leased it from the next neighbor, Namaha. The mother of Mrs. Kanekoa. Just about $25 a year, I think, in those days. And they were very close friends, the lady and my grandma were very close friends. Every time they had something special coming to them, they would send somebody to bring it to the other. Just nice friends. So, we paid at least once a year. Just $25, I think it was.

VL: Did that ever go up the lease?

OM: No, never. And I recall, when I went back, and when I came back to Hilo High School, each time I came back, I stopped by, to say goodbye. And she (neighbor) would give me $5.

VL: Oh, that's nice. You were telling last time, something about the okolehao?

OM: Yeah.

VL: Did a lot of people make?

OM: No, not many. Not many.

VL: Can you talk some about how they did that?

[Note: DM substituted the following for the original version.]

DM: Well, one summer in the twenties, Abel Yamashita, his younger brother Paul, Ernest Iwasaki, and I, all schoolmates (except Paul) at Hilo High and the local "U", took a hike from Waipio to Waimanu Valley. Before ascending the hill to Waimanu, we met a Japanese man on horseback. On the plateau between Waipio and Waimanu, the man asked us if we cared to spend the night at his place. We were only too glad to accept his offer. (We were not prepared, blanketwise, for the night at Waimanu Valley) So we followed him to his hideout on the cliff overlooking the ocean. To our surprise we saw that he and his companions operated an okolehao distillery on the cliff near the ocean. They had roasted matured ti roots in an imu (like a pig imu) and then distilled the juice after the ti is roasted (the roasted ti tasted like honey).

Of course, we didn't say anything, we didn't report anything either. And, we stayed there for the night and had free meals, and the next morning, hiked on to Waimanu Valley. But, when we came back to Honolulu, that very Fall I saw in the Star-Bulletin, the news coming from Hawaii, you know, they reported here. They were arrested for boot-legging. So, I thought, I hope they wouldn't think it was we who reported, you know, we wouldn't be doing that. But, they might think that way. Be so ungrateful.

VL: Were there people in Waipio also making?

DM: Ah, once in awhile somebody would go way up to the waterhead somewhere, and hide there, and make some. But, usually they went up to the plateau, and then we'd see the smoke sometimes and suspect. But usually it's not
the police who finds first, it's somebody who reports. Especially, well, they might hear this, they might get drunk and then squeal and say, "Oh, we got this from someplace, eh." That's how the information gets to the police.

VL: At the time that you were growing up in Waipio were there people in Waimanu?

DM: Ah, yes, there was a Hawaiian family. And they would come by boat along the seacoast on canoe. Come to Waipio to buy their supplies to take back. Maybe twice a year or so.

VL: And what about your transportation? How would you get from place to place?

DM: You mean from where to where?

VL: Ah, say within the valley.

DM: Normally, we would walk, eh. Sometimes we'd walk all the way from our place up to the waterhead, to this Haraguchi's (Kanekoa's) place, eh. Takes about four hours or so. But, we didn't mind the walk. It was nice and cool, you know. You know, the streams--water coming down and the trees. So it was a pleasant experience, especially for strong legs. Just talk, talk, talk on the way.

VL: And to go outside of the valley?

DM: Ah, sometimes by horseback. But I found, to go to school, I---it was a humbug to take a horse because you had to feed the horse. So, that's the reason I didn't take my horse. My folks said, "Take a horse."

I said, "No, I have to worry about feeding the horse for the day. I have to find a place. There's no place. Just a roadside."

VL: How many horses did you folks have?

DM: Ah, just about, maybe two, at the most, two. In fact, when I went home for vacations and my neighbor, I had a neighbor living with the Kanekoa family. Part-Hawaiian boy. His name was William Clark. He's still living above Honokaa. William Clark. And he has a beach home at Puako. So, the last time I went to Hawaii in 1970, we stopped at Puako to see him. He was my neighbor at Waipio Valley, living with Mrs. Kanekoa. With a grandma, Namaha.

VL: Did anybody have a car in Waipio?

DM: No, because, they wouldn't be able to drive up the hill. (Laughs)

VL: Oh, yeah.

DM: No car. So, we had our first ride in the car when I was in the fifth or sixth grade, when my grandparents had decided to go around the island on a long trip. So, we (our family and another family) started from
Kukuihaele and rode in two cars. I think one was a Maxwell, the other was, I don't know what (a White?). Two kinds of cars. Owned by Japanese. And we went by way of Kamuela, down to Kawaihae to Kona. Spent a night in Kona and the next morning we went past the Volcano. And slept in Hilo. And the next one was back to Kukuihaele. Three days.

VL: Was there a train?

DM: There was a train--yes, between Hilo and Paauilo. So, when I went to Hilo High School I would have to ride in the car from Kukuihaele to Paauilo. And then take a train, and then reach Hilo, and then take another car to Piopio Street near the Waiakea side. It was a long ride.

VL: So, did most people in the valley have horses?

DM: Most of them did, yeah. One or two horses. You needed the horse to haul or carry things sometimes. Once I got kicked by a horse on my chest. Good thing my bones were not broken. It left one scar originally. Now, it's gone. It was our own horse. You know, it was on the loose, so, when it's on the loose it gets naughty sometimes. And when you go to catch it again, it would turn around its rear and kick you. So, he whacked me right here, I fell down. I was crying and a neighbor saw. He came to help me.

VL: You mean you let the horses go loose unless you use them?

DM: Yeah. But then to catch them again, they get naughty, they might turn around and kick you when you try to rope them.

VL: How did you folks find out about things happening outside of the valley?

DM: Only through the newspaper unless somebody wrote a letter. But very seldom.

VL: What kind of newspaper?

DM: It was a Hawaiian paper called the Nupepa Kuakoa. It means, The Hawaiian Independent, yeah. Independent paper. Was printed in Honolulu here, and they had the story of Tarzan in Hawaiian, and that's how I learned my Hawaiian, too, reading the story of Tarzan. So, I didn't read Tarzan until I read the Hawaiian story. So, when I came Honolulu I looked, oh, in the library and discovered Tarzan (Laughs) So, I used to look forward every week for the next issue and read the next installment.

VL: The paper only came once a week?

DM: Once a week. Weekly issue. So, I read every word--learned my Hawaiian that way. It was a good experience because usually you don't....just by listening you only get certain words, repeated every time, but not other words. But you see in the paper, you see some new words and you try to sense from the construction what the meaning might be.
VL: Did anybody ever—was there any stealing in Waipio or, you know, small crime like that?

DM: No, there were no complaints because you, after all you are free to pick somebody's mangoes. See, if you stop by and get some mangoes, they don't object to that. Of course, they wouldn't steal your taro. They don't do that. They have their own taro. Or your pig, or whatever it is. They didn't have any other thefts, though. Well, there were not too many people. They all knew each other so we respected each other.

Well, I know once a minor incident happened. We had a vegetable garden between my property and their (Mrs. Kanekoa's) property. And, what you call it, the Kanekoa family had a boy just below me in age, Mitchell. He died down here. Was a fireman at Waialua [Oahu]. Was the brother of this Mrs. Kanekoa down, I mean, a lady down at Kaneohe. Well, we used to have a garden at home. Not at home but away from the home. A joint garden between our family and our neighbor's family just separated by a little dividing line, that's all. You could easily walk across and come to the next garden. I raised sweet potatoes and peanuts in my garden. And somehow, every day I would come to the field and was curious to see how the potatoes were growing and I would examine them to see if they were getting bigger and bigger. And cover it back, you know. And when I came back one day, the potatoes were missing. Only the roots were left. So, of course, I suspected right away that boy (my neighbor) because he was only the boy that would do that. So I went to his grandparents, "I think this boy must have stolen my potatoes." And he just got a stick and whacked the boy right away. Of course, he admitted.

So, when he saw me later on, he tells me, "Hey." He was just laughing over the incident.

VL: But, what about the big kind of crimes like....

DM: Ah, there were no such things because they all had their own taro and what else.

VL: But occasionally, there were fights?

DM: Oh yeah, when you have a party, they get drunk and they fight. Of course, they use only fisticuffs, so it was all right. Nobody got really hurt. You might have a black eye. But, there were no murders. So, afterwards, when they are sober they are friends again, see. Only when they drunk they say something careless and then somebody gets mad and punches. When they are drunk.

VL: Did you folks have elections, voting in the valley?

DM: No, we had to go to Kukuihale. So, they had to climb up the hill all on horseback to vote. But, if politicians came down to give their speeches then, down to the school or the store they came. 'Cause I know once when somebody came down from Hilo he said, "If you vote for me I'll have cars coming down your valley." And they voted for him and he fulfilled his promise by doing this. He had a car come down actually
to one of the Waipio stores. But then he couldn't go back up the hill. Was a little T-Ford. It couldn't go up the hill again because of the steps [steps formed by mules walking]. And even on a smooth road we cannot drive up without a special gear like a jeep. Ordinary cars cannot do that. So, they had to push the car up and get about four Hawaiian men push the car up. His T-Ford was light so you could push it up. Every so many feet, put in some water in the radiator. (Laughs) It was boiling every time.

VL: You remember that happened?

DM: Yeah, and the first time that car came down I knew about that. We were down the valley, down near the store there. So we were surprised. We couldn't believe what they said, "A car down here?"

"Yeah, yeah."

VL: Did people want a road and cars?

DM: Well, I don't know. There was nothing said either way, I think. But I think they seemed to figure, assumed that to have a good road would be the end of the valley. People would come down and get all the fish and everything else. Too many people. Because I could tell from the previous incident that when the Filipinos came to Kukuihaele to live, to work, many went down to the valley to fish and then they would just dry up a stream, pick all the fish, you know. And leave nothing. Not even young ones. So that way there would be no fish by and by, see. So, they didn't like that because they didn't propagate the fishes.

VL: Could they do anything about that?

DM: No, nothing. Not in those days. Just grumble, that's all. See, only now we have so many people fighting for certain causes, eh. But, not in those days.

VL: Just had a few more questions like about your house. You folks didn't have electricity, yeah?

DM: No electricity. Just kerosene lanterns. And for a better source of light you have a regular lamp with a--you know the kind of stand lamp, with a glass for the light, you know. But that you couldn't carry around, see. You had to leave it in the house. It had a brighter light than a lantern. We still have some lanterns in our present basement. In case there is no electricity. Keep it handy for that reason. So sometimes the old things are okay for certain times, see.

VL: Where would you get the fuel from? The kerosene?

DM: From the store. They sell kerosene in town, although it's kind of expensive nowadays, though.

VL: I mean in Waipio. They sold in the store?

DM: Yes, they sold in the store. They sold kerosene and salt, sugar and
shoyu, all the necessary things.

VL: Canned goods?

DM: Canned goods. Canned salmon, canned sardines. But, hardly any baked goods, eh. Although on school day they would bake bread for the kids, to buy. Put in some guava jelly of their own--homemade guava jelly. Sell you a whole loaf for five cents. But, I didn't even have a nickel to buy a loaf.

VL: Oh, you folks had no bathroom. You had an outhouse?

DM: We really had no bathroom. We had to take a bath in the side of the stream.

VL: No, but, for toilet.

DM: Oh, we had an outhouse. Open air kind. The flies are free to get in. So....

VL: And what, you'd dig a hole?

DM: Dig a hole about six feet deep and then put a shack over it. And some seats. Open air kind.

YY: Did it ever get re-used, the--all the....

DM: Well, we might cover it up and dig a new one by and by.

YY: I see. And it would just be left. They didn't use it for fertilizer?

DM: No.

YY: Even the Chinese didn't do that?

DM: I guess not. You notice only in Japan in the old days. Use for fertilizing the crops. So you can smell it when you are driving by and when they spread it around, you can smell it. (Laughs) In Japan, in the country. 'Course now, I don't think they allow that, but.

END OF INTERVIEW
WAIPĪ'O: MĀNO WAI

AN ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Volume II

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

ETHNIC STUDIES PROGRAM
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