BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: MELITON NGAYAN, 66, taro hand and retired irrigation ditch watchman

Meliton Ngayan was born in Ilocos Norte, Philippine Islands, in 1912. He lived in the Philippines, attending school until the fourth grade, and helping on his parents' farm until 1930. Then he falsified his age in order to come to Hawaii. For his first eight years in Hawaii he labored at Olaa Sugar Plantation.

In approximately 1938 Meliton moved to Waipio. He was befriended by school teacher John Thomas, who took him into his home in exchange for work in his taro patch. He also worked for the U. S. Engineering Department and Board of Health before becoming the irrigation ditch watchman for Honokaa Sugar Company for 20 years. He retired in 1975.

For the last seven years he has worked for other farmers as a taro hand. When not harvesting taro or weeding for someone else, Meliton works in his garden, raises ducks and chickens, cares for his dog, and fishes and hunts. He is an elder in the Mormon Church. Meliton is a U. S. citizen and has "voted six times already."
VL: This is an interview with Mr. Meliton Ngayan. Today is March 12, 1978. We're at his home in Waipio Valley, Big Island.

You know, you remember when you were in the Philippines. You told us that your parents were farmers. What did they grow?

MN: Rice, sugar cane, tomatoes, corn and some else vegetables, like that.

VL: Was this for their own use?

MN: Yes, for our own use.

VL: Then what did they do for a living, for money?

MN: For money? Well, the time I stay over there yet, we had very hard to find money. So if you go work to somebody before you get only 50 cents a day. And whole day you still working, you see.

VL: What kind of work was that?

MN: Well, just like carpenter, or sawmill, just like sawmill. Cut all the lumbers like that. Or go plant rice with the other families.

VL: So what did your father do?

MN: So that's all they did. Go earn sometime because not enough money. Anyway, no need too much money in there. But if you are good farmer. (Laughs)

VL: So your father would do these outside jobs?

MN: Yeah.

VL: And do farming also?

MN: Farming.

VL: And your mother?
MN: Just same things, stay home like that. You know, take care the house.

VL: Did she have outside jobs too?

MN: No.

VL: And what about you? When you were young. Did you do some kind of work?

MN: Well, when I was young. I think about five; no, about six, seven years old, I went to school. First, I went to this Spanish school. And, after that, they bin build this English school.

VL: What was the Spanish school like?

MN: You know, they get the Spanish words. So I went to the beginning of the Spanish words. So I get little bit.

VL: Did they teach you other things besides Spanish?

MN: No. Just the Spanish and Filipino. Then I went to school. English school. I went school about four years. No, five years. But I stayed back in the fourth grade. (Laughs) So when I passed fourth grade, I was going fifth grade. But the trouble is no more money, see? No more money for buy everything that you need. (Laughs) So I stop. So I go help farm too.

VL: And before you started school, did you help on the farm?

MN: Yeah. I go help, well. I go plow the land, like that.

VL: When you were just six years old?

MN: Yeah. No, about seven years old, eight years old. Then you can go and help your father, see.

VL: How much land did they have?

MN: Well, in that place. Sometimes is about 10 acres. You know, some guys rich and some guys poor. Just like that.

VL: So your family had 10 acres?

MN: About 10 acres more.

VL: And was all of this for your home use?


VL: How big was your family?

MN: Well, I don't know because when I was born and knowing to know all the family, before me and before my brother had some more first born than us, see. So, I don't know all but they was telling me get 12 children in
one families. Twelve sons and daughters.

VL: And then, did you also have aunties and uncles living with you folks?

MN: Yeah, yeah.

VL: So how many all together?

MN: Oh well, that I cannot count (laughs), plenty of them. Big family too.

VL: And where did they all live?

MN: In Philippine Islands.

VL: I mean, in one house?

MN: No, no. They get their own house. But just like one place. Some outside too.

YY: Did they farm the farm, do you know?

MN: Yeah, they farm. That's what we are doing, farming only. But that time, only one time we plant rice in one year. But now they get two time. Two time now they plant rice.

YY: Why?

MN: Well, you know, they get the new kind rice that the Japanese bring, I think, from Japan, the seeds. And they try in Philippine Islands and he grow more. So now they get two time harvest. (laughs)

VL: Did you folks always have enough to eat, though?

MN: Well, sometimes not enough. Because if big family like that and you get only small land, sometimes no 'nuff. So, had to go earn outside little bit.

VL: So what was your first job outside?

MH: Planting rice. (laughs)

VL: And who would you do that for?

MN: For our neighbor, like that.

VL: Can you tell us how you would do it?

MN: You mean how we bin plant?

VL: Yeah.

MN: (laughs) Well, you see, the rice is....you have to....the seed, you have to put in the soft soil first. And then when he grow up then come tall, then you transfer. Then you can plant as much as you like. Maybe
about six inch apart, or 12 inch apart.

VL: You put one plant?

MN: Yeah, one plant. Just one plant. Because if you put plenty, just like the cane. If you put plenty in one place, they no grow too much because all come just like skinny, eh? So we had to plant little bit far. Then he come good.

VL: And then?

MN: Then you wait about eight months then almost ready. Little more about one year, planting rice. Then you harvest. Most you start in November; October, November, December. January some you still gathering yet.

VL: So you would help to plant?

MN: Yeah, I help to plant. Sometimes I was keeping only the animals. Buffalos, like call buffalos over here, we call carabao over there. So when they go plow, or harrow. Then I can go chain the animals to them. So my father's place where they working.

VL: And so when you worked for your neighbor, they paid you what?

MN: Well, they pay, if you like, they pay you by cash. But 50 cents [centavos] one day. But if you want, in one year they give you one very much, maybe about over 100 pound rice (about 20 pesos). In one year. (Laughs) That's why hard, see?

VL: Which was better to take?

MN: Well, up to you. If you like get spending money, well, you have to take the money and buy something else.

VL: What other kinds of jobs did you do in the Philippines?

MN: I think that's all the most. I take care all the animals after I pau school, English school.

YY: You had work animals, the carabao. How about animals that you raised to eat?

MN: To eat? You mean just pigs, or....

YY: Cattle?

MN: Yeah, sometime people take care some, few animals, pig like that. Maybe two, three. Just keep them for their own use, you see.

YY: Did your family?

MN: Yeah. With my family. Not in business. But some place near the city, like that. Well, they raise plenty, then they sell. See, but, us out-
side, we just keep enough for grow and eat for us.

YY: How about chickens?

MN: Chickens. Get, plenty chickens.

YY: On your farm?

MN: Yeah. That only for eat, that. Not for sell, see. If you want eat chickens, well you have to kill. (Laughs)

VL: So, sometimes were hard times, then.

MN: Yeah. Some place hard time, you know. That's why we figure if we come Hawaii, stay. Well, we get more plenty money, see.

VL: How did you first hear about Hawaii?

MN: I come here in 1930, you see. 1930. And I was 17 years old at that time. So, I had to do some things in the plantations. Cane field first. Hoe hana. You know, hoe hana.

VL: Who told you about Hawaii, first time?

MN: My brother, he bin come first in here, you see. Four brothers.

VL: Oh, four came?

MN: Yeah, four came. They was over here first. And my second young one, the more old than me, him the one wen call me to come in here. So he send me money. (Laughs) He pay me my fare, see?

VL: He paid your boat fare?

MN: Yeah.

VL: Wasn't there immigration recruitment?

MN: Yeah, yeah. You had to pass immigration. You had to pass a doctor when you come.

VL: How did that work?

MN: In the beginning you had to go in the doctor, see. You pass so many doctors and nurse. You know, nurse, they come (Laughs) check you up too, you know?

VL: Where did you go to get checked by the doctor?

MN: For some immigration in Philippine Island. That's why them come. To check.

VL: Manila?
MN: No, in the Northern Luzon. Ilocos Norte. That's where I lived, Ilocos Norte. The doctors come over there. Then we go to some big place again. They check you up. Then you go to Manila. Another check up again.

VL: The name of the place in Ilocos Norte, what is that? Where the doctors first came.

MN: Oh, that I don't know too much about that immigration.

VL: You said you were born Solsona?

MN: Yeah, Solsona. This is a town.

VL: And when the doctors came, did they come to Solsona?

MN: No, no, no. They don't come in there. They only come to the immigration. Where the capital, like that.

VL: So how many times you were examined by doctors?

MN: Well, I think about three times. Then they check you up, everything. Look behind. (Laughs) See, that's how they figure they check up all the sickness from Philippine Island, like that.

VL: So how long does it take for them to check you?

MN: Well, sometimes 20 minutes, 30 minutes, like that. Check up everything. Especially in Manila, especially over there, all the doctors, nurse, they come and the nurse that pass in front you, see. And we are all naked! We are all shame but no can help.

(Laughter)

VL: You standing all in a line?

MN: Yeah, in line. You stay all in line and the doctor pass. After they examine you then they pass. Nurse behind. Oh boy.

VL: And then what happens?

MN: If you pass, that's all right. You get your recommendation already to come. But if you no pass by the doctors you cannot come. That time.

VL: Did they ask you questions about your background?

MN: No, no, no. Only about your father, mother, and when were you born. That's all.

YY: Did they know that you were 17?

MN: Oh yeah. They know but when in tax place you had to pay more in order that you get $1 in here when you reach [Hawaii]. If you only 17 years
old, they no give you $1 one day. So they tell you you have to get this age, advance, 'em. You have to advance. I tell him, "Okay, advance 'em." That's why we advance my years, see.

VL: Who did that for you?

MN: Well, the government.

VL: So they said that you were 18?

MN: Yeah. Too bad, I wen lose all my papers now from then. So I no can show you already.

VL: So the government gives you the papers that said you were 18?

MN: Yeah, they give.

VL: And did you pay them to do that?

MN: Yeah.

VL: How much did you pay?

MN: My parents... well, that time I think about $2.50 something like that. Just cheap because, you know, hard to find money in there.

VL: Did you have a contract?

MN: Yeah, we had contract. No, we don't have any contract. But when you stay in Manila, already you have to get contract from the plantation. So when you reach in Honolulu, well, they ask you if you get family, like that. Then you can go, see. Then you start working to the place you reach.

VL: So when you were in Manila, did you know that you would come to the Big Island?

MN: Yeah, because my brother is here already. So when we stay in Honolulu, they ask where we going. I tell, "I going the Big Island." Because I have brothers in there.

VL: Did you have to wait in Manila before you could come?

MN: Oh, yeah, yeah. You had to wait. Especially when had the sickness, the time. Then we are quarantine. So, we wen stay about one week in Manila.

VL: And does the plantation have an agent in Manila?

MN: Yeah. They get agent.

VL: So what did they say to you, the agent?

MN: The agents, they said, "You like go Hawaii?"
I tell, "Yes, I like go. I get parents or brothers in there."

Tell the okay, they make the papers. Everything.

VL: So when you left Manila, how much money did you have?

MN: Well, maybe about $30 only. Because you no spent nothing. As long as you ride in the boat, you no need spend nothing. If you like buy something in the boat, well, you have to buy just orange, apples like that. Because they get for sell.

VL: How was the boat ride?

MN: As far as ridings go, and I never get sick, you know. And we ride 15 days till to Honolulu. Till to Manila. Straight come, you see. That's why I don't know about Kobe, China, Japan. I don't know about those land because we never pass over there.

VL: They fed you on the ship? They give you food?

MN: Oh, yeah. Yes. We get free. (Laughs) Yeah, free.

VL: So what did you do all day on the boat?

MN: In the boat, well they inspect again. Every time, daytime, inspect you. They get one inspector over there too, see. So you folks in the morning, pau breakfast, like that. You folks go on top the boat, exercise. (Laughs) Exercise your body over there.

VL: When you first landed, you came Honolulu?

MN: Yeah, in Honolulu.

VL: What did you think?

MN: Well, when I came over here, I think it's good. But I don't remember now, you know. Because when you stay in Honolulu, we saw that big pineapple sign. That's where we landed, that place before. That's why we see that big pineapple. That's where the boat bin land, eh? Then they bin take us to one immigration.

VL: And then what did you do at immigration?

MN: Well, you no do nothing but stay wait while they ask you if where you going. That's where you begin to separate all everything. Separate everybody, eh? Some go Kauai, like that. Maui. So they separate all that. If you tell Big Island, well they put you in the Big Island.

VL: How long did you stay at immigration station?

MN: In Honolulu? Only about two days only.

VL: And then you came to....
MN: To Olaa. That's the first plantation I went. To Olaa.

VL: And how was your first day at Olaa?

MN: Well, the first day when they take me to go hoe hana. Well, our foreman is Filipino, see. Half Filipino. Tagalog anyway. They show us how to make. Learning, eh? Then after one week and you get used to. You know already what to do. Then, after that, maybe they give you spray poison, like that. Well, we had to spray. With the knapsack.

VL: How many new people came with you to Olaa?

MN: I think about eight peoples only, bin come to Olaa. And some bin come Hilo side.

VL: So your foreman, he spoke Tagalog?


VL: And you could understand?

MN: Yeah, I can understand little bit. And then I speak English. I can understand little bit, so easy for me.

VL: Because you knew some English from English school?

MN: Uh huh. Some people, they don't know, see. Because they never go to school. Because late they bin build English school our place, see [in Philippines].

VL: Can you describe where you lived at Olaa? What did it look like?

MN: Olaa is a good place. But just over here, plenty trees, like that. And all the cane field around. At least stay in the camp, eh?

VL: What was the name of the camp?

MN: Olaa, Kurtistown. Happy Home. And then we moved to Iwasaki; they called Iwasaki. That's a new place. But Happy Home, we....

(Laughter)

MN: I don't know why they call Happy Home. That's the name of the place we wen go first.

VL: What did your house look like?

MN: Our house? Well, our house, you know some old houses, plantation houses, like that. The long kind. And get room by room. And then....

VL: How many of you?

MN: Sometime six, seven. One time I bin live with all our cousins like that. In one house.
VL: Were you all young men?

MN: Yeah, all. (Laughs)

VL: Who would cook?

MN: The first one get up, he go cook. As far as cooking, anybody cook.

VL: So you did hoe hana and spray poison?

MN: Yeah, throw paakai. Fertilizer, throw fertilizer. Flume cane. You know, they use flume before. Before truck get. Pulling trailer. They use flume so you had to carry the bundle of cane for near to the flume so some people who throw the cane inside the flume, too. I bin try that too, about one week, I think. Then hapai-ko, I try. Hapai-ko, too.

Then, sometimes when school time, I mean vacation time, for the school. Well, plenty children come and work. Some 75 cents only, 50 cents the time. And then, my foreman, he's good to me and I good to him, see. So he tell me to watch all the children. And sometime go carry water for them, give them water. Every maybe one hour, two hour, like that. Then I take care the childrens. You know, the school kids, they don't know how to work yet, eh? So most they play. Maybe worth it because they get only 50 cents, eh? Seventy-five cents. They talk, they work, well if they feel like. As long the boss no stay, the big boss.

(Laughter)

VL: And you were receiving how much a day?

MN: Receiving only $1.50, $1.30. One day only. Because I told you if no more 18 years old, no more $1.00. But depending your job, see. If you hoe hana, only $1.00 a day. If you spray poison, you get $1.25 a day. Spray fertilizer, $1.30. Then flume cane, you had $2.00-something. Because you working nighttime too, eh? I think I done plenty work in the plantation. Water boy, they called water boy.

VL: What would you do with your money?

MN: You know the money, first thing I sending to my parents. Just little bit. And then, you know (Laughs) maybe that's my opinion, I no keep too much money, you know. Why not spend while you are living?

VL: So what would you spend it on?

MN: Well, you know you feel like something. What you want to buy. (Laughs) And if you like friends, you had to spend. You know what I mean? (Laughs)

VL: You mean ladies?

MN: Yeah.

(Laughter)
MN: Because if you don't have money, you cannot play with them.

VL: Did the plantation know that the ladies came?

MN: Well, you know. Plenty ladies, too, they come work. So you can (Laughs) play play with them if you get time. As long the boss no stay.

VL: You mean they work for the plantation?

MN: Yeah.

VL: What kind jobs?

MN: Well, just like you. Hoe hana, like that. Even over here now. Some guys stay hoe hana, sometime cover seed, like that. So the men work ladies' job.

VL: Were these Japanese ladies, or....?

MN: Yes, some are plenty Japanese. If you cut cane, they come cut cane, too. They know to cut cane. Because that time, we use by cane knife only. No more all these machines right now.

VL: So, how long did you work Olaa?

MN: 1930, June, until to 1938, by the middle of 1938. Then I come down here.

VL: So you worked eight years?

MN: Yeah, almost eight years. Then I come over here because I get my friends. When I bin come over here, I had a accident, see. In Hilo. My car bin blow out and I banged one passing bus. And the passing bus, they get passenger, see. And one of them is injured, go to the hospital. But we make agreement, we went to the police station and then he [the driver] bin tell me, "If you agree to pay my damage, damage of my car, well that's all."

I tell, "Okay." We go to the police station. Then we make the paper. After we finish fix his car, he come see me about his passenger, the one bin go to the hospital. So I tell him, "I cannot pay that way because I get contract with you. When I finish pay your damage of your car, that's all."

VL: Now, it was the driver that you make the agreement with?

MN: Yeah, yeah. The driver, see. Then he tell me, "Well, I going garnishee you."

I tell, "Okay, you try." So I get friends from down here [Waipio]. They come in Olaa see. So they told me to come down here. They no can find me over here, see. (Laughs) They no can find me. After two years, or three years more, I went to Hilo. Then he see me over there in Hilo.
Tell, "How long time I was finding for you."
I tell, "Why?"
"Well, about the passenger that I [you] injured."
I tell him, "That's your problem, because we don't have the agreement that way." The agreement is I fix his car, see. That's the agreement. So I tell him, "That's your problem." Then pau.
He tell, "Well, I going garnishee."
I tell him, "Do it."

VL: What kind of car did he have?
MN: They get the kind passing bus. They call passing bus before. That open kind.

YY: The sampan?
MN: Yeah, the sampan kind. (Laughs)
YY: It's unique to Hilo. These trucks are converted into a bus. And it's open on the sides and it has a top.

VL: They have them in the Philippines, too, don't they?
MN: Well, I don't know, I never see that one. But they get trucks.

VL: So the driver, he was what....
MN: Nationality? Well, he look just Filipino too.

VL: And the passengers that were injured were what?
MN: Well, he's Hawaiian. One big Hawaiian, big stomach. Because that man, he bin go under the passing bus. I don't know how he bin go. And one baby bin throw off with the mother, from the mother. And the mother was inside the bus. Only the baby bin fly out. But never get hurt, the baby. That's funny, though.

VL: So the damage to the bus was how much?
MN: It's only the bumper. Pay about $48, something. Just only the bumper. But funny, he said he bin see my car stay going turn someplace, eh. So he never stop, he never care. So he think I drunk. But, no, we was not drunk. But only blow out the tire. And then no can control. You see? One time blow out, you cannot control. Especially if you go little bit speed, eh? You cannot control.

VL: So you quit at Olaa?
MN: Yeah. I quit from Olaa. Come work over here outside. Helping my
friends in here.

VL: Who were your friends?


VL: What nationality was he?


VL: And what did he used to do in Waipio?

MN: Them, they get fishing boat. One canoe. And they go catch fish. Or they go fix fence someplace. That's all.

VL: So when you came down to Waipio, did you sell your car?

MN: Yeah, yeah. I sold my car. Because was cheap. Cheap car. I sell my car, then come down here.

VL: Did you live with Hiram?

MN: Yeah. I live with Hiram first then I think, almost six months, I bin go to the brother-in-law. Because the brother-in-law, he was a school teacher, I think. And when they make party, this Hiram Hay, they send me any place, see. Rain, and no rain, they send me any place [to stay until the party is over]. So the brother-in-law, he don't want that kind idea. So he tell me, "Ah, more better you come my place; you stay with me."

So I tell, "Okay, I come stay with you."

So I stay with him and then start making taro patch. Because they get land, see.

VL: Is this John Thomas?

MN: Yeah, John Thomas. So I start making taro patch with them. And then he pay us enough to pay for the kau kau and some money for spend if you like go Hilo, like that. Kind of mean bugga too, you know. (Laughs)

VL: In what way?

MN: He no like to give small money, see? He's a school teacher but he's mean. Mean type.

VL: Were there other people living with you folks, too?

MN: Uh, no.

VL: So how long did you help with the taro?
MN: Well, I say 1938 until about....well, only about three year now I no stay with him, see. But I stay with the girl.

VL: The girl? Who is that?

MN: Nellie, Nellie.

YY: John Thomas' daughter?

MN: Yeah. 'Cause I keep her, she young time. That's why she call me, "Papa." Call that father. So when I go up [Kukuihaele], well I stay over there. Just like the father.

YY: So you were like a father to her?

MN: Oh yeah. Anyway, when John Thomas bin died, they wen publish all in the newspaper that they put my name too, as first born. But I'm not really family for them. But only stay with them long time, see? But they said that the first born, eh? Me first born.

VL: How long did you stay with them?

MN: Well, but eh, I stay with them since 1938 too. Until about, two years now bin died eh? About two years.

VL: And then when did you start working for the Honokaa Board of Health?

MN: I think 1944, something like that. I was working.

YY: So for about six years, you helped with the taro?

MN: Uh huh. Then worked for the Board of Health. No, first I went to the U.S.E.D. (U. S. Engineering Department) Worked on the Army houses.

VL: That was 1944?

MN: Yeah, 1944.

VL: Doing what?

MN: Supply the carpenters board, like that. Carry the lumber for them.

YY: Where was the Army housing?

MN: You know Waimea. You know had the big houses. You know those Army, the time. All around in Waimea before. So, I bin go work first over there.

VL: And then you went to Board of Health?

MN: Board of Health, uh huh.

VL: And from Board of Health, you....
MN: From Board of Health, I think about two weeks only.

VL: And then how long did you work for U.S.E.D.?

MN: U.S.E.D., I think no more one year. No more one year.

VL: So, how come you quit U.S.E.D.?

MN: Well, you know, is two company eh? Federal and territory, that time. So, Federal, no 'nuff money. So they lay off us.

VL: And then Board of Health?

MN: And then Board of Health, I wen work little bit in plantation. Maybe about one month, two months.

VL: Doing what?

MN: Working in the plantation.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

VL: Board of Health, you went different places?


VL: Doing what kind of work?

MN: Just like hoe hana, take care the cane. Then when I was working over there until about three years from Honokaa side, the other side. They call that Paauhau, the other side, see. Was all over there. Then I was working. Then after that they [Honokaa Sugar] bin come and see me for go work up there. Up the mountain [in upper reaches of Waipio Valley]. They come ask me if I can go work. I tell them, "Okay." Because I like because more money, see?

VL: How much would they pay you for going up there?

MN: Well, first they give me the low grades. First grade one, like that. Bumbai they come up grade two, grade three, then come to grade four. That's all. Think that time I quit.

VL: So this you started about 1955 then?

MN: Yeah.

VL: And what does grade one get paid?

MN: Grade one is, I think, $1.78, something. One hour, only.

VL: And this is you were employed by the Honokaa Sugar?
MN: Yeah.

VL: So why did they ask you to clean the waterheads?

MN: Because nobody go work over there because the man who was working over there bin quit. So they come find me, if I can go take his place. So, I tell 'em, "Okay, I go try." So I wen go try stay over there.

VL: How did you learn where to go?

MN: Well, first they come show you the way, the road and where you take care, like that. They show you all the trail and ask you what to do. They let me do all what I like over there.

VL: Can you tell us more about up there? Where you went, and....

MN: You see, when I go up there, I go in Monday. Every Monday I go up. Ride the mules or horse. Bring all my food, enough for one week. Then every Friday, come back again. Friday afternoon come back. As long the water is not big. But if the water is big, you cannot come down because you had to watch the screen. Get the screen, if fill up with rubbish, then water no can run through the tunnel.

VL: Now where would you buy your food?

MN: Plantation store.

VL: At that time, where were you living on weekends?

MN: Weekends I stay with Nellie. I stay over there.

VL: So you were in the valley?

MN: First I stay with Nellie. My girl now. When I come back from down.

YY: In Waipio or Kukuihaele?

MN: Kukuihaele. She already stay in Kukuihaele already.

VL: And then, what kind of food would you take with you?

MN: Well, most rice, meat, salt, shoyu. Any kind of food that you....

YY: Did you have electricity up there?

MN: No, lamp. (Laughs) Gas light.

VL: So you have to take kerosene also?

MN: Gas, yeah. You had to take your own.

VL: What else did you have to take?

MN: That's all. Your tools. But they give you the tools.
VL: What kind of tools?

MN: Sickles, sickles like that. Picks, shovels.

VL: Can you tell us what the house looked like?

MN: House is... did you go? You not going up there, eh?

YY: Not yet. Maybe one of these days, Vivien and I will go up there. [We later made an overnight trip to the house and waterheads. See writeup to supplement following description.]

MN: Well, some old plantation house. One room like that. That's why the people when they get work over there, then they all stay one place. That's why big one room only. One room, one parlor, one kitchen. That's all.

VL: And your bedding?

MN: Bathing. All cold water. Get hot water if you like. Hot water. You put firewood and you.... But when you get used to in the cold water you had to go and swim in the river, that's all. If you want hot water, well, you have to make fire.

VL: What kind of cooking equipment did they have?

MN: We have the same kind pot we have over here.

YY: What kind of stove?

MN: Kerosene stove. Kerosene stove and forewoods. Mostly use firewood before but if you don't want to clean every time the black pot; well, you had to use kerosene stove.

VL: Did you have to cut your own firewood?

MN: Oh yes, yes. Firewood, get plenty over there. All free.

YY: So you had to gather your wood.

MN: Yeah, and maybe about one year, almost one year to dry the firewood, in there. (Laughs) You know over there, just like no enough sun and all time rain. See, that's why cannot dry quick. Unless you put under the house. More quick dry. But if you leave 'em outside, catch rain all the time.

YY: Were there lots of trees around the house?

VL: So what time Monday would you start up?

MN: I start come down maybe about 7 o'clock start over here [lower part of Waipio] and I reach over there [the house in the upper valley] almost 10 o'clock. Sometime 10 o'clock. (Laughs) Then when you unload all your things, your food, just let go the horse. Then you had to go cook when you reach over there. Then you check up the screen. Maybe it been rain before you reach over there, see. And that's all. Then you stay in the house. Make net.

(Laughter)

MN: That's why I get plenty nets. If no more rain, well, easy job, see. She work because as long the trail is clean, then you no more the other kind job, the other kind work. But if all time rain, you had to clean the trail, you had to go clean the screens, control the water, how much come down. That's why they need people stay over there. But like now, when I bin quit, nobody like go. Nobody like stay over there. Because when you stay over there, just like one dummy. You only talk to your animals, to the dog, or that's all. Nobody, no more men for talk to you. Not even your radio.

YY: What were your feelings up there?

MN: The first time, I kind of scared, eh? Because something happen to you, you don't know what to do, see? When I get three years stay over there, what I have to do, well, I make up my mind. Stay. Well, if you are good, somebody is good too, see? (Laughs) So I stay over there 20 years.

VL: How many animals did you take? How many horses?

MN: One animal only.

VL: You rode one and one pack?

MN: Yeah. No, same one that you ride, then you can put enough kau kau for one week.

YY: Was this animal a mule?

MN: Mule, horse. Horse first I had. Then after they died, I bought the mule.

VL: Did you have to buy the animal or....

MN: Yeah, I buy my own animals. The ditch company had animals that....You know the father of the foreman is mean too, you know. They use the animals for the just like tourists, they come down over here, holo-holo. And instead of they give me for ride, go up work over there, but no. Their idea is different. So, after I get one year in there, I ask them animals, so they been give me one old one.
(Laughter)

VL: Was it horse or mule?

MN: Yeah, one old one. Horse.

YY: When you come down, where would you leave your animal?

MN: I have a pasture down here in Waipio. I leave over there.

YY: Where is that? Which part?

MN: By the road when go up the trail. I get....

YY: By whose taro?

MN: George Farm. George Farm place. I leave over there. So I bin buy the mule, too, from them [the Farms]. Because sometime they see me, I'm walking going up so they pity me. They ask me if I like buy the mule. Tell them, "Okay, I like buy." So they sold the mule for $200. So I take 'em.

VL: Sometimes you would walk up?

MN: Yeah, because no more animals. What you can do? If no more animals you had to walk.

VL: And how long?

MN: And then they come bring your supplies. Sometimes. If you no more animals, you no can pack anything.

YY: Recently, Ted Angelo [Nellie's husband] used to pick you up down in the valley?

MN: No. No. My foreman or the workmen. Because four of us worked. Three boys working down here and I'm one there. One in Honokaa and one in Paauilo, Paauhau.

VL: Doing what? What were they doing?

MN: They stay clean the side of the ditch.

VL: When you were up there, did you ever run out of food?

MN: No, no. As far as food, I bring enough. I bring enough. And then sometime catch pig over there, see. The only way is to bring plenty salt. That's only the way you can keep long, the meat. Put plenty salt. Then not spoil.

YY: How about fishing?

MN: No. Fishing, well, if you get time, you can go. But that time, get plenty fish. Like now hard. Only those small kind shrimp, plenty now.
I mean opae.

YY: Did you ever catch opae?

MN: Yeah. Plenty.

YY: How?

MN: By net. (Laughs)

YY: This kind? [Points to large, gathered fishing net.]

MN: No. More small eye net. With the round wire.

VL: They paid you by the hour?

MN: No. By month. If they pay me by hour, they don't agree because they don't know if you go work or not. But...what you call...the union bin tell me to give the hours when you work. But even though I tell them, they no believe because they no see me go work, see. The foreman is, only stay over down here.

VL: So how much did they pay you a month?

MN: Sometime over $200, $275.

VL: This was in the beginning?

MN: Yeah, in the beginning. Then been come up, come up, little bit.

VL: Can you tell us about the different screens? The names.

MN: First, in the main one is Kawainui Stream. [See picture in hike summary]

VL: Last time you were telling us what the screens looked like. Can you say again?

MN: Yeah. Well, the screen is, Kawainui is about 20 feet long and two feet wide. Because more wide the river, see. So he cover.

VL: So where is the screen in relation to the river?

MN: You see, from the river, had the screen already [the screen spans the
river]. And then he get one more screen going to the tunnel. That's why you watch all time, the one go to the tunnel. Because when big water time, you cannot go to the river, hemo the rubbish [from the screen]. Because too strong, eh? So the only way the water can go down is the screen by the tunnel. You go take away all the rubbish. Then the water come down. Maybe some days you fella go and watch over there. See. They allow.

VL: Because I don't understand. I don't know what it looks like. I can't picture how the stream comes, where is the screen.

MN: You see, the river is this way, the river. And across the river he get the screen already. Over there. And then go to the tunnel. He get one more ditch go to the tunnel now.

YY: How there's no pump to pump it out?

MN: No, no. No more yet.

VL: So what makes it go that....

MN: Well, he get the open place. That's why the water go to the intake. They call it intake. Then from the intake, he go to the screen.

VL: Two screens?

MN: Two screens.

VL: The first screen....

MN: Is by the river.

VL: Is made out of what?

MN: Iron.

VL: And how big is the space between the iron pieces?

MN: You see, the screen is about two inch, some inch-and-a-half, space. Because if too open, plenty small rocks go down inside. Then he going fill up the tunnel. So you have to allow maybe one-inch-and-a-half, two
inch, like that. The screen.

VL: So it flows through that screen?

MN: Yeah. It goes through. Go to the intake. They call intake. Because from the river, he get the main screen, and he go to the intake. And then the intake, that's the one going to the tunnel. Then you had one more screen over there.

VL: So the intake is upstream?

MN: No, by the side of the river.

VL: The intake is upstream of the screen?

MN: Yeah.

VL: Then why would they have the screen after the intake?

MN: Because you know that to hold all the small kind stones that bin drop through the first screen. That's why they had one more screen.

VL: Why did they have the first screen?

MN: Well, that's why the water drop. Drop. The water. Go to the intake.

VL: Now Alakahi is how big the screen?

MN: The screen is, well, about 13 feet long.

VL: It's the same kind of setup?

MN: Yeah. Same kind. Same kind setup.

VL: So you cleaned all the screens by hand?

MN: Yeah.

VL: Was it ever dangerous?

MN: No. Not dangerous over there. But, you know, when the big water like that, the rubbish all come down then plug up the screens. That's why you have to go in and take away all this rubbish.

YY: During big water you didn't have to worry about being washed away?

MN: No. No. Only the main one over here, see [the first screen]? Only the main one [you have to worry]. Because as long he get little bit [water] come down over here, he get one more screen over here can open little bit. And then he come over here. Then you watch the screen this side [the second screen]. That's why you watch all the time. Because that's the main screen for the tunnel, going to the tunnel already.
YY: How often you mean when you say "all the time?"

MN: All the time when the big water like that. So had to go maybe about one, two hour, you check up again. Because plenty leaves like that, fall down. Then you had to take it away from the screen.

VL: If it's not big water and there's not a lot of rubbish, how long would it take you to go to all the screens?

MN: Well, if you just only go check up, maybe one, two, three. Little more whole day. Because one place is over one hour, you go, sometime [one hour to walk from one intake to the next]. One screen in between.

VL: Would you take a horse to go? Or would you walk?

MN: No. No, no, no. Trail, just trail.

YY: Where was your house?

MN: In Alakahi.

YY: Close to the intake?

MN: No, no, no. That's far from the intake. Between the intake, I think, about between. The house is in between Alakahi and Kawainui.

YY: Up high?

MN: No. Down.

VL: So, if it took you all day to go, then the next day you would do the same thing?

MN: Not every day. Only when big water.

VL: So if it's not big water time, then....

MN: You no go.

VL: How often you check?

MN: Sometime only one time, two time one month, like that. But you had plenty job in there because you had to clean the trail. By sickle only. Then you go by mile, you know. So many miles.

YY: Now, where is the pump?

MN: The pump is over here. Waima. [Waima intake is the only one which pumps water from the stream uphill to the ditch. It is used only when necessary.] You can see the one flowing over here. That's Waima.

YY: Did you have to do any work around the pump?

MN: No.
VL: Did other people come up to....

MN: Well, yeah. My foreman, they come. Or they send the other boys come and they start the pump. And the electric is come from Waimea.

VL: Then would they ever spend the night?

MN: No.

VL: So were you the only one occupying the house?

MN: Yeah. Only me I stay in the house.

VL: And you made nets?

MN: Yeah. I make net. Well, nothing else to do. Make nets. (Laughs)

VL: What did you do with the nets?

MN: Use 'em for go fishing, like that. Like cross net. Throw nets when I come down, when I have time for go. Well, go throw nets.

VL: What else could you do up at the house there?

MN: Well, that's all. Nothing more. If you tired, well, just sleep. (Laughs) Well. A good life to stay over there if you can stand only one man. But like the other guys nowadays, they don't want that kind. They no can enjoy.

VL: Did you enjoy it?

MN: Oh yes, I enjoy it. Because when I was in Kalopa Homestead, well, I stay my own self, see. So I get used to it, one man living.

VL: Also, before, you were mentioning a union. You were a union member because this job was sugar company.

MN: Yeah. You had to. You had to join the union. Unless they no can raise up you pay. If you no join the union. If you get grade one, grade one, that's all. (Laughs)

VL: And when the union went on strike, how would that effect you?

MN: Well, we no strike too much. Because the people need the water so we no strike too much. But we pay the 10 percents, 25 percents, that we earn in one day.

VL: To the union?

MN: Yeah.

VL: So you kept working full time?

VL: You also said you had to control the water amount?

MN: Yeah.

VL: How did you do that?

MN: Well, you had the key. Yeah. When big water time. That's the time you have to control the water. Because if too much, then all some flume over here, low side, see? So come out from the water. So you have to control from up there first. Then one more [control] in Kukuihaele. Control 'em over there.

VL: So how would you control the amounts?

MN: Well you had measurement over there. Had the measure, with the stick. In the intake. You get the measurement from over there, intake, so you can control.

VL: And you could block the water from coming in?

MN: Yeah, you can block the water going out to the tunnel. You can control.

VL: How much water was....

MN: Going to flow? Well....about 20, 28 inch.

VL: So 28 inches in the intake?

MN: No, the intake is almost full of water. But the going to the tunnel is where you control 'em. That's why you can close up if plenty water. If plenty water, you can close up.

YY: And you control the space, the opening through which the water will flow [from the intake into the ditch].

VL: So the opening is usually 28 inches.

MN: Twenty-eight is the highest up there.

VL: What is supposed to flow? What is good flow?

MN: Some flume over here is slow, the side. Then all go outside, eh? So you have to control up there. And this side, Kukuihaele.

VL: I mean, is 28 inches optimum? Is that the best....

MN: Yeah, that's the best you can put in the tunnel. Twenty-eight or thirty. And then control 'em again over here [Kukuihaele]. The foreman control. So many [gallons] going up there, going to Paauhau, like that. Because they can control 'em.

VL: So when you close this off, when it was high water, the extra water would just....
MN: Yeah, overflow to the river. And the rest only, no more place for close but, he get. But he trust because he control already the first one.

VL: So you would only control Kawainui?

MN: Yeah, yeah.

VL: You said before that one time you had twisted your ankle? That was your only accident up there?

MN: Yeah. From over here [Waipio] going up to the pali. You know, below the bridge [in Kukuihaele]? Had a landslide so my mules try to climb up then bin fall down. But lucky thing they never go to the ditch. Only by the road we wen slide off. Lay down. That's as how I catch my ankle. That's all the accident I had.

VL: Did you ever think you would go back to the Philippines?

MN: Me? Well, I don't think so. (Laughs)

VL: When you first came, did you think you would go home some day?

MN: No. Because when you go home, just like over here. You stay over there, you going die and if you stay over here, same thing. You going die, see? (Laughs) Like now, we get only brothers stay over there. Our family's mother, father, all died. We don't have nothing to worry. Now we have my two brothers come back, they stay Maui. So we three over here. One more in the Philippine Islands, my oldest one. That's all.

VL: When you first came to Waipio, were there very many Filipinos in the valley?

MN: No, not much. I think about eight, 10, something like that. Filipinos only few. Most Hawaiian people.

VL: The Filipinos, what did they do?

MN: Well, they worked taro patch too.

YY: Did any of them have families?

MN: No. Most single.

VL: Did you ever get together with the other Filipinos?

MN: Oh, yeah, yes. Sometimes before when we had the store in here, Waipio. So we stay over there. They get good yard, then we go for play volleyball, like that. The same time they go buy drink. Little bit can enjoy.

VL: So you knew all of them?

MN: Yeah.
YY: Did you know Felix [Nemenio]?
MN: Oh yes. I know him.
VL: Did you celebrate Filipino holidays?
MN: No. Oh, yes, yes. Once we bin celebrate down here.
VL: Which holiday?
MN: Rizal Day.
VL: How did you celebrate?
MN: Make party, like that. Little bit program. And that time I don't know all the Filipinos too. So, I don't know some guys bin tell somebody that I can talk about the Filipino flag. So, I had to talk about the flag, about Rizal Day.
VL: Then you gave a talk?
MN: Yeah. I give the talk. I try my best.
VL: What did you say?
MN: I told them this patriotic Filipino. But the Spanish bin kill 'em, eh? Maybe they jealous because so smart. Smart. So they bin kill 'em. By the Spanish.
VL: And did you have special food?
VL: Did you make Filipino food?
MN: Yeah. (Laughs) We make Filipino food.
VL: Is this all men, or....
MN: Yeah, all men. Some were, few were wahines, you know. But half Hawaiian, like that. Marry with the Filipinos.
VL: Did you have music?
MN: No, well some guitar. (Laughs)
VL: But you celebrated Rizal Day only one year?
MN: Yeah.
YY: When was that?
MN: The 3rd, December.
YY: What year?

MN: Every year, supposed to be.

YY: When was your celebration? What year did you celebrate it?

MN: Oh, long time ago we make our celebration over here.

VL: How about Philippine Independence Day?

MN: That's what they called Independence. About the patriotic Rizal Day.

VL: But Rizal Day is December?

MN: Yeah.

VL: And Philippine Independence is....

MN: Independence is different, no?

VL: Yeah. Did you folks celebrate that?

MN: No. But some places they celebrate. But in Waipio no more.

END OF INTERVIEW
VL: This is an interview with Mr. Meliton Ngayan. Today is April 11, 1978; we're at his home in Waipio.

Can you tell us about fishing? Where did you....

MN: Breakwater [Kukuihaele] and Waipio.

VL: What kind of fishing?

MN: Well, we catch any kind fish from the sea. The kind aawa; red kind, moano, weke, papio.

VL: What kind of equipment would you use at Breakwater?

MN: Drop line, the one you drop it.

VL: From where?

MN: On top the boat, canoe. Go out with the canoe then you drop.

VL: Whose canoe?

MN: Mine, my own.

VL: Would you go alone?

MN: Yeah, I can go. Sometimes two guys. But if no more partner, well, only myself.

YY: When did you used to do this, Meliton?

MN: Same time when I was working up there [at the intakes--1955-1975]. Like come back Friday, and then, Saturday I go down. If good sea, well, go down.

VL: Where did you keep your canoe?

MN: Down Breakwater. We used to get old landing before, down side Kukuihaele. And then come down Waipio sometimes. And we go out from there.
VL: You would leave from Waipio?

MN: No, I live up there [Kukuhaele] but we get our canoe down here, down Waipio.

VL: Where would you put the canoe?

MN: By Joe [Kala's] place. That's where all the canoes stay.

VL: Other people left their canoes there too?

MN: Yeah. That's why you see get plenty canoes over there, by Joe.

VL: And what kind of bait did you use?

MN: Shrimp, squid, some fish like that.

VL: How would you catch the squid?

MN: Well, the squid, you go torch by nighttime. Because they get that small kind squids on top the stone, they come up in the nighttime. The small kind squid, that was what we use for bait.

VL: Can you tell us about torching?

MN: Well, torching, sometime, if kind of rough, you have to watch the wave. Because the stone is where the wave go, so you got to watch the wave all time before you go pick the squid.

VL: What kind of torch?

MN: Flashlight. Sometime we use the torch by bamboo or pipe. Then we put kerosene, we put rag, then carry. Just light 'em like that. But torch like that not so good because sometime he burn your face.

VL: And how late at night would you go?

MN: Sometime we go 8 o'clock, especially if the moon rise up early, we have to wait little bit, as soon he dark, we go.

YY: How big are the squid?

MN: The squid, the leg is like this long. About eight inches, 10 inches. The head is some big like this, like a dollar head. That's the best kind for use for bait.

VL: Would you use it raw?

MN: Yeah. Just cut 'em up and then put it in the hook.

VL: What do you put the squid in after you catch it?

MN: If we stay down the beach already, for go out, well we just keep 'em in the night down there, in the salt water, in the bag.
VL: Is there any time that is best for going out in the canoe?

MN: We had to look the weather and the waves. That's all. Because like over here, down Waipio, only certain time you can go out. Not every time.

VL: And that time, you were living up Kukuihaele on weekends?

MN: Yeah. Because every Friday morning, then I come back over here. If I see the sea good, well I go down, make ready.

VL: Did you do that every weekend?

MN: Well, sometime.

VL: And how much would you catch?

MN: Well, sometime get good luck, sometime three-quarter bag, half bag.

VL: How big the bag?

MN: Maybe 50 pound, 75 pound.

VL: Then what would you do with all the fish?

MN: Some keep for eat, and some for sell.

VL: The fish that you sold, who would you sell it to?

MN: Sometime the fish market guys, the one is for commercial like go around. Sometime they buy 'em from me little bit cheap, then they go selling around.

VL: Fish market?

MN: Yeah, those truck car, like that. Then they go in camp sell.

VL: And how much would you sell it for?

MN: Maybe sometime you get $30, $25 is enough, eh? As long you get little bit because some the rest of the fish you keep for eat.

VL: These people that would sell the fish through their trucks, were they Japanese or....

MN: Japanese, yeah.

VL: All?

MN: Yeah, Japanese. I think you folks know Saburo before? Saburo from Honokaa?

YY: Did he drive the _aku_ truck with "Fresh Aku" on top?
MN: Yeah, sometimes. And Castillo the other one, the Filipino.

VL: Then how would you prepare the fish that you kept for yourself?

MN: Well, put in the freezer. Otherwise you no can keep any kind. You have to put in the freezer.

VL: Were there other places that you fished? Like the streams?

MN: Like the stream down from the main stream. Then we go up scoop fish, the small kind opae.

VL: Can you tell us about that?

MN: This kind fish not so easy for catch because sometime they go hide under the roots of the guava trees. Then you had to make your hands around so they go to the net.

VL: What kind of net?

MN: Scoop net, they call this scoop net. Not so big, like this. With the wire.

YY: Did you make that net?

MN: Yeah, yeah. I make. I get, the one she hanging down there. Round net get wire. That's what they call this scoop net.

VL: And that's what kind of fish?

MN: Yeah, catch opae.

YY: Down here on the river?

MN: Yeah.

YY: How about way up where waterhead?

MN: Where I live, hard to use that. We use in the river too, we had to shake, shake the stone, like that. And go in the tunnel can go.

VL: In the tunnel? What do you mean?

MN: In the tunnel get plenty, small kind.

YY: Get rocks in the tunnel?

MN: No, no. Only some few rocks. Maybe sand get little bit.

VL: What tunnel is this?

YY: The irrigation tunnel.
VL: And how about baskets, do you use baskets when you fish?

MN: I use basket when I go fishing in the river.

VL: What does it look like, the basket?

MN: The basket? The one I have over there I go get.

[MN leaves room, returns with basket.]

MN: So like this you can use this for river kind, when you go fishing. So they no die off quick.

VL: Where did you get this basket?

MN: I made from up the mountain.

VL: How did you make it?

MN: Well, I had to scrape all that bamboo, split 'em and make 'em good, nice, smooth.

VL: How do you make it so even, the strips?

MN: Well, you can tell if you cut 'em. Like us, we know, how big and how thin.

VL: What kind of bamboo?

MN: Just like Japanese bamboo.

YY: What color bamboo?

MN: Green, green kind.

YY: Big one?

MN: No, small kind. About like this....

VL: Your arm.

MN: Yeah. Well, you folks can see tomorrow [on the hike to the intakes and the house MN used to stay in]. Because the bamboos all right by the house.

VL: Did you chop the whole bamboo down?

MN: Yeah, whole 'em. And then take the good kind.

VL: What's the good kind?

MN: I mean the long--you know sometime we get the joint, short joint. So you look the little bit long kind joint, so more easy to split 'em.
YY: After you cut the bamboo, you make right away?

MN: No, have to strip 'em like this. Then if you think enough, then you start building, weaving.

YY: Can you strip it when it's green?

MN: Yeah, when green time, it's easy.

VL: And then do you soak it or....?

MN: No, before you weave, you can soak 'em in the water so come smooth little bit, soft.

VL: Where did you learn to do this?

MN: In the Philippine Islands.

VL: And so, when you were up at the waterhead, you would catch and eat?

MN: Oh yeah.

VL: And how do you prepare it?

MN: When I catch, well, I had to cook 'em with oil, shoyu, ginger, that's all.

YY: Up at the waterhead, what kind of fish do they have up there?

MN: Those oopu, I don't know what they....

YY: Gori?

MN: Gori, yeah. Before, when I was new man over there, had plenty. And then when old time we go around, before that they bin come bring the trout for raise 'em up up there (approximately 1960). So those trouts, when they become big, they eat all the oopu.

VL: Who brought?

MN: Masaru Matsunami. Him the one wen bring all the trout there, and then eat all the fish.

VL: What did he bring it up there for?

MN: Well, I think they like to keep 'em over there, so they see how come big or small. Then, after that, when they bin bring maybe about one year or more, all time flood come and then the fish got big. Then when the flood come, come big the water, then they all go under the stone, so when the stone roll down, they no can come out already so that they all inside.

YY: So how long had trout up there?
MN: I think about almost seven months, eight months, the trout was. And the trouts bin come about like this long, about 12 inch like that, 10 inch.

VL: Did you ever catch any?

MN: Sometime, because you see them running by the stream so the waste; you have to go hook 'em up.

VL: So because of the trout, no oopus?

MN: No oopus. He get only few now, stay over there. Before, had plenty, you know. Sometime, I just start cooking, when big water time. I go right behind my house and I go hook maybe about 10 minutes. You have enough already, for eat.

YY: What size were the oopus?

MN: Some big kind like this. Long. Seven, eight inches. If you get about eight, seven or five enough for you, you only one man, see. Is very good fun, you know, before.

VL: Is that mostly what you did with your free time up there?

MN: Oh yes, yeah.

VL: When you came down again, besides fishing, what else would you do on the weekends?

MN: Say, come work taro patch.

VL: For who?

MN: For me.

VL: Oh, your own?

MN: Yeah, because I have planting little bit way up place. Then, when I finish up there, then I bin come down over here. Because somebody bin take the place over there so I come down again over here.

VL: How many years did you raise taro?

MN: Up there, I think about two years only over there. And then come down here, raise about four years. Because one crop is almost two year.

VL: When did you start way up farming taro?

MN: That I cannot tell you, all forget.

VL: Was it about in the last 10 years?

MN: Maybe about less than 10 years.

VL: So then before you had taro, what else did you do on weekends?
MN: That's all. Go fishing, good. That's all.

VL: How about playing sports?

MN: Like us, in the church, we get enough sports, playing volleyball like that, softball. We get enough.

VL: What church is this?

MN: Mormon church.

VL: Where?

MN: Honokaa.

VL: On Sundays, then, you would go to church?

MN: Yeah. Every Sunday before. But these last two years now, only one Sunday I went with my neighbor.

VL: When you used to go to church on Sunday, from what time to what time?

MN: In the morning, we go in the morning 8:30 because we get meeting in the 9:00 too. Then after the meeting, we get the Sunday School.

VL: And then when is it pau?

MN: Then pau, that's all.

VL: How about parties on weekends? Would there be parties?

MN: No.

VL: How about dances?

MN: Dancing. Well, when we get activity in the church, sometime we dance little bit to that. Finish the program, then we had the dance.

VL: With musicians?

MN: Oh yes, some fellas of our church they get enough instrument. Have groups.

VL: How about movies?

MN: Well, sometime go movies, but not every time.

VL: When you were living down in the valley, this was before you started working up at the waterhead, you lived in the valley right?

MN: No, live up Kukuihaele first. Then we bin come down here.

VL: When was that?
MN: In 1955. That's the time I bin start working up there [waterhead]. But before I bin go over there I was in Kalopa. We stayed, was working the cane field and then they bin come see me.

VL: When did you move back into the valley?

MN: About two years over, now.

VL: You know your own taro, when you started raising your own up there, how did you get the land?

MN: That is lease, somebody take lease and they tell you for work 'em. Well, work 'em up. Then they give you 30/70, see. They get 30 and you have 70 [percent of the profit]. But you do all the work. That's how they give before.

VL: How much land did you have up there?

MN: Over there, I think about three, four acres.

VL: Whose land was it?

MN: Some from the ditch company and some people own the land.

VL: Why did you decide to start growing taro?

MN: Well, I had friends and they asked me if I can go join to them. I tell okay.

VL: How many of you?

MN: Two of us.

VL: And was it taro land before you started?

MN: Yeah, was taro land already over there. But nobody is stay working.

VL: Did you make any changes in the patches?

MN: No, no, no. We just continue and then take over.

VL: How about the water, the water system?

MN: The water system is very good because we get the main ditch. If the main ditch pass through our place, easy for us to get the water.

YY: Did you have to build any new ones?

MN: No. Already build.

VL: The owner, the one you sharecrop with, does he give you huli?

MN: We go get from somebody in the beginning, we go get from somebody. We go help them pull, then they give us the huli. That's how we make.
Then, when we finish plant all, then the next crop we have enough already, so we can get from our own already. Then we get.

VL: So the one that owns the taro patch, does he give you equipment or anything?

MN: No, just the land.

VL: And who did you sell to?

MN: This Honolulu factory.

VL: Then how many bags did you get every week?

MN: Well, every week, sometime 12 bags, 10 bags, every week. I think about three, four months, I think.

VL: Would you have to deliver the taro yourself?

MN: When I had my car, then I go deliver. But anyway, before we hemo the taro, I ask Ted Angelo because he get his old truck, and he help me pack 'em. Then I pay 'em $1 one bag.

VL: To take up the pali?

MN: Yeah, yeah.

VL: That time, how much were you getting per bag?

MN: That time, sometimes $7.50 only one bag. But now they give you 10 [$10] or more now [for 80 pound bag]. But even the four cans kind, they get 15 bucks [$15] one bag. [The harvest taro is put into a bucket, or can, first, then dumped into the bag.] Four cans, 100 pounds and they get 15 bucks [$15] one bag.

VL: So your bags were not 100 pounds.

MN: No, 80 pounds only. So when we get, we bin start $7.20, $7.50, and then come up, come up. So this John Loo was taking our taro, he's our agent, eh.

YY: And even when you pull, only the two of you?

MN: Yeah. Sometime only me. When my partner bin go away, then I wen take over. I had to pull my own. Sometime somebody come help you; then I have to pay them what they pull.

VL: How do you pay them?

MN: I pay them maybe $1 one bag. Or, $1.25 one bag. But most of the time, I pull my own self.

YY: How was the taro in those days?
MN: Those days, pretty good taro. No more this kind sick they call the kakio.

VL: What do they call it?

MN: They call it kakio because get sick inside, eh? Just like guava seed. That's why they call kakio.

VL: What does that mean?

MN: Was rotten inside.

YY: Is that Hawaiian word?

MN: Yeah, kakio.

YY: So how big did the taro used to be?

MN: Oh, some big taro, you know.

YY: About how many pounds?

MN: Some about five, six pounds. They were big you know.

YY: What variety did you grow?

MN: What kind? This white kind, apii, they call the apii. That's what they call now. White taro.

VL: Why did you decide to grow apii?

MN: This is the most taro, they send in Honolulu before and only few color kind, red like that. Then they mix up with the white one. That's how they do it.

VL: Does the Honolulu Poi tell you which kind to grow?

MN: No, you make your own taro, what kind best you like.

VL: Do they tell you how to grow it?

MN: No, we make our own idea.

VL: And where did you learn from?

MN: We see all the other guys was working before, and then we follow how they make. That's how we learn.

VL: If you wanted the price of taro to go up, make it more high, what could you do?

MN: Well, you had to ask to the agent because he get two agents over here, or three. But John Loo is the first one had get the chance. So he take plenty people's taro, send 'em to Honolulu.
VL: Did you ever ask him?

MN: No, because I was working with the brother, and then the brother bin tell him if he can take our taro. He tell, "Oh sure."

Because sometime he no more enough taro to send, so we get to send. That's why he see all the good taros, and then they tell, "Well, you can give us 10 bags, 20 bags one week?"

"Okay," he said. That's how he....

VL: He comes to look at the taro first?

MN: Yeah, sometime he come look, and then if they good, he take more order.

VL: Do you think that sharecropping is good method?

MN: Oh yeah. He grow good and I don't know....

VL: Did you ever want to own your own land?

MN: No. But only my friends bin ask me if I can go join to him. I tell, "Okay." So when we was pulling about two years, and then he bin move to Kona, so I wen take over all the patches, then, I pull all my own, I sell the taro.

VL: And all on weekends?

MN: Yeah, weekend. Every weekend, that's the only time I come down. Fridays or Saturday, I go pull.

VL: So you never wanted to buy your own land?

MN: No. Because if somebody ask you if you like work the land, well, you tell "okay" if you like, you work 'em up.

VL: But to buy land for you.

MN: To buy land? I no buy land. Just like my place now. My place is Bishop land so I lease, and that's all.

VL: Which is better? To lease or to buy?

MN: Well, if you get much money, if you like buy your own, you buy. See?

VL: If you had more money, would you buy?

MN: Well, maybe I buy someplace but not over here. Because I know these patches not so good.

YY: The ones here in front?

MN: Yeah. You see how much they bin pull on this place; they bin only for about 46 bag only.
VL: The Ainsworths? [Sidney and Gloria Ainsworth, a young couple farming land in front of Meliton's house. They had just finished harvesting their first crop.]

MN: Yeah, this the one they bin pull now. But before [when] I was taking care, sometime he get 80 bags, 90 bags. Because I know how to raise 'em up. But when they bin take over, well, no more. Bin come like that too. First time they plant, eh? That's why I tried to tell them, help them, but they believe the outside guys. So I tell, "Okay, if you folks believe the outside guys, don't believe me, well, don't blame me."

VL: What do you mean, "outside guys?"

MN: Outside means some other taro man.

VL: In the valley?

MN: They get taro too, so they tell them what to do.

VL: Is each part of the valley different, you grow it in a different way?

MN: Oh yes. Because someplace you have to use plenty water. But in this place, you cannot use plenty water all the time. Because cold, the water. So in the open place, all right because warm.

VL: How come the water's cold?

MN: Just like get spring under over here.

VL: All this is spring water?

MN: No, not all, but he get spring under, come out. Especially this one over here, these patches. That's why you no can dry the taro before. Because when you rain, you see the waterfall [Nenewe]? Sometime he no go down, the water already, but he go sink down so he come this side. This is the low part, so he come under.

VL: From under the ground?

MN: Yeah, under the ground.

YY: So that means the land is always wet?

MN: Yeah. That's why they never plant 'em. Hard for work 'em up because hard to bulldozer too, eh? This bulldozer go inside, he sink down.

VL: Before time you planted on this patch?

MN: Yeah, I bin plant two times.

VL: Was it always wet?

MN: Yeah, always wet. But so far, the taro bin come pretty good. Because I know how to keep 'em already.
VL: Are there any other differences between the different places in the valley?

MN: Yeah, like down side is open place, but same, get plenty spring water too, I guess. So, all time cool the water, and some places stay warm only. That's why some place the taro, he no grow good.

VL: So over here with cold water, how should you grow taro?

MN: Well, if cold water, you don't put plenty water all the time. So, some time you dry 'em up.

VL: When?

MN: When he get about seven months, six months. Then you start dry 'em up. Then maybe one month or two weeks, like that, then you put again the water. If you don't do that, the taro he no come big. You only grow the stalk, that's all. And under only small kind. Only the stalk grow. But if you do that, you dry 'em sometime, then he get chance the taro come big and comes out.

VL: Then besides the water, is there anything else?

MN: Like nowdays, they stay using paukai fertilizer like that, but when I was taking over I didn't use any paukai like that, fertilizers.

VL: Why didn't you?

MN: Because I know how to raise 'em up.

VL: No need?

MN: No need.

VL: What do you do so you don't need it? What's the secret?

MN: Because I learn already someplaces. So I no put fertilizer.

YY: Can you talk more about how you regulate the water? For example, how many inlets you have.

MN: Well, depend how wide the patches is. Then if very wide, like this one over here, you can just put one inlet and outlet, see. Someplace more wide, then you can put two inlet and outlet like that. So that the water runs cold all the time, if you like cold all the time.

VL: When you were growing your taro, you would watch it on weekends. Sometimes would something happen during the week, like your waterhead got damaged?

MN: Well, sometime. Then the following week, then the chance for come down, come check 'em up.
VL: Were there ever floods in your patch?

MN: Even though flood, you cannot do anything. So if you stay up there and the flood is over here, so you cannot do anything.

YY: So if there's a flood and you're up at the waterhead, up Alakahi, then what do you think?

MN: Well, I stay think, "Oh, how is my taro patch down now." You only think, but as soon I come down, and I come check 'em up.

VL: Did you ever have any problem with disease when you were growing?

MN: No, no. Not that time. Was very good, no sick like that. Because not so long this taro sickness bin come you know. Not so long.

YY: When did you first see the taro sick?

MN: I think about three, four years now wen start.

YY: Now which one is this? Which sick?

MN: This guava seed. Inside. Just like guava seed. Then like now, he get the other kind too. The kind of sickness, that he just spoil inside without the red stuff. That's why now they put any kind, throw any kind in the patches now, so that they try if it kills that, maybe some kind of bugs. That's why, nowdays, they throw all any in the patches.

YY: Do you have any idea about what is causing it, or how to fix it?

MN: No.

VL: If it was your patch, what would you do?

MN: Well, if my patch, if sick come, I no can help see. If I don't know what to do, anybody don't know. If come sick, well, sick.

VL: Then you don't think the farmers can do anything?

MN: Well, that's why they try to throw all, any kind medicine, they try to soak 'em up.

VL: When you had your own patches, how would you take care of the weeds?

MN: I pull, pull 'em the weeds. If cannot finish in one week, well you have to come down every week to get. And sometime, somebody come help you, well, that's good. Then you have to pay them how much you like.

VL: How much did you pay?

MN: Well, sometime, maybe $10 one day. Maybe $5 one day. But sometime they only come and help.

VL: For free?
MN: Yeah, for free.

VL: Who is this? Friends?


YY: Meliton, how about grass on the banks?

MN: You had to cut 'em or spray poison.

VL: What did you used to do?

MN: I used to spray poison. More last long. But if you just cut, every week, he come up quick. But if you spray poison, you have to wait maybe one month or almost two months. Then you spray again. So I told them [the Ainsworths] to spray, so that they no go cut-cut every week when they come. Maybe they no like because first time they plant, eh? So now they know how hard is it to plant, now, to raise 'em up.

VL: So you stopped raising taro how many years ago?

MN: When I bin start, about four years, and now over here is about two years. Now about two years I no plant.

VL: How come you stopped?

MN: Because somebody taking the patches, they bought 'em. They bought this one.

VL: The land you were leasing?

MN: Yeah.

VL: Can you find more land?

MN: Well, had plenty land if you like, but I think better for me to go work for somebody now.

VL: Why?

MN: Because I think more easy. If you don't want to go work, well, up to you. Like now, I work for John Loo.

He asked me, "How much?"

Tell, "Well, you can give me $3 an hour?"

He tell, "Okay." I tell he all right. Three dollar one hour.

VL: To do what kind of work?

MN: Pulling weeds.

YY: What about pulling [harvesting] for John Loo?
MN: Pulling the taro; well, the pulling taro is sometime only $1.75 [to pull a 100 pound bag].

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

VL: How much you get for harvesting taro?

MN: Sometime $1.50, $1.60 one bag, and three cans only, one bag. That makes about 80 pounds.

VL: Oh, I see those cans.

MN: Yeah, those five-gallon cans.

YY: If there's lot of rot, is the price different?

MN: No, not John Loo. But only [one] I know is doing like that is [Yubon] Maehira. If he see you very hard to pull and plenty rotten, he pay more. But these other guys, they no pay. If they tell you $1, $2 one bag, that's all they give.

VL: If there's lot of rot, then it takes you much longer?

MN: Oh yes. Because you have to cut 'em out like that. One taro, sometime all spoiled inside.

VL: So now, who do you work for?

MN: I work for [Merrill] Toledo and John Loo. Because I give up the other man's now place.

VL: Who was that?

MN: That Pampo.

VL: And what were you doing for him?

MN: Just pulling taro. From last year I bin start.

VL: And how come you gave that one up, Pampo?

MN: Because too cheap, the one pay. And then hard to pull his taro.

YY: Why?

MN: Because some patches is deep and hardly you can move.

VL: How deep?

MN: Oh, sometime the mud, you see, like this.

VL: Past your knees?
MN: Yeah, and hard to move. Especially if you get the box, and then you pull the box. Hard to pull that. That's why I give up over there. So he tell me now, yesterday, to go back when he get plenty taro again, I tell, "Well, maybe that time I come back again."

VL: Maybe you can ask for more money?

MN: Yeah. That's the time to ask again.

VL: Is it steady work now?

MN: Steady work for pulling?

VL: For Toledo and Loo.

MN: Yeah.

VL: What's your schedule like in the week?

MN: Well, like in Toledo's patches, we pulling Monday and Friday.

VL: Who's "we?" How many of you?

MN: Only two man. You know Santiago, he is an old man now. Only two of us. About two years now, we stay doing like this. And he's very good man, you know, Toledo. He pay us $1.75 a bag, but he help us hold the bag still like that, sew 'em the bag. And then Christmas time he give us quarter bag rice. The other mens they don't give nothing, you know, for you make happy.

VL: How much do you pull on Monday?

MN: On Monday, before we pulling about 30 bags one day.

VL: Two people?

MN: Yeah, two people only. But now when the order bin come down, then we have to pull only 25 bags. And then Friday, we pull only eight bags.

VL: How come it's different?

MN: Because these eight bags now in Friday, this is his special order from Kona.

VL: Now, the order came down from 30 to 25? How come?

MN: Yeah. Well, maybe the poi shop they have some more places to get the taro. And more worse, that Merrill is, he like more high price.

VL: Now, since you and Santiago are pulling at the same time, how do you decide how many bags you pulled and how many he pulled?

MN: You see, we are pulling, but maybe I am more quick to pull, that's why I pull more plenty. What you pull, you have the pay, how much bag to
get. Like now, we have the schedule, I pull 13 bag and he pull 12 bags.

VL: But it's all mixed up?

MN: No, he make his own bag. I make my own bag.

VL: You don't put all in the same boat? [Boat refers to shallow, metal bottom box that holds the harvested taro; it floats and can be pulled around in the taro patch.]

MN: No, he get his own boat.

VL: So you know exactly how much you pulled.

MN: Yeah. And when we put in the bag, then we know how much we pulled. Then sometime him more behind, then I help 'em out. Because even though I finish more quick, I cannot go home first because we have to load the taro in the truck. So I have to help him sometime.

VL: Mr. Santiago is how old, do you know?

MN: I think about over 70-something.

VL: Has Mr. Toledo ever tried hiring....

MN: Outside?

VL: Yeah.

MN: No. Because we can pull all that much already. Not all same. The other guys farm, they have sometimes seven men for pulling, and they get only 40 bags. Just like William [Kanekoa], eh? Sometime he get eight men pulling taro. But most of them only talk story like that, that's why they had slow for pulling. Like us, when we start work, we work. We like go home quick, well we work more quick. So sometimes when hard pulling, sometimes we go home 1 o'clock, 12 o'clock, like that. That's all.

VL: Mr. Santiago is quite old. Why do you think that Mr. Toledo doesn't hire someone more young?

MN: I don't know because before I never join him, he get some boys pulling with him see. But too slow. So when Toledo, when he bin ask to Toledo to come back, he said, "No, no come back already because I find one man already." So he found me, eh. Think that's why. That's almost two years now, we stay pulling with him.

VL: You mean Merrill used to hire somebody else before?

MN: Yeah. They had Santiago and the other man. But when the other man bin stop because he slow, eh; so Merrill bin come see me if I can go pull for him. I tell, "Okay." So when the other guys like come back, he no accept already because too slow, and then more slow for them go home.
VL: So you think Mr. Santiago is old, but age doesn't matter?

MN: Does not matter, yeah.

VL: What's important then? Being young is not important?

MN: You see, if you little bit more young, maybe you more strong. Just like me, I get more little bit strong than him because me more young. So I get only over 65.

VL: And then you pull for Merrill, Monday and Friday?

MN: Yeah.

VL: And for John Loo?

MN: John Loo, well, any time, any day now, if I get chance, I go work for him. But he pay you by hour. Like today, I been there, work little bit so maybe I put two hours, five hours.

VL: Who keeps track of how many hours?

MN: No, I track my own. He asked me to keep my time. Because they trust me; they see how much I can work one day. Not all same the other guys. Because the other guys, like now, if some other guys, they no can work what I can work. When I start work, I work. So that, worthy the money they pay. That's what I think. So when I bin start working to him, I said, "How you think, how much you can give me?"

Tell, "Well, up to you."

Tell, "Well, you pay me $3 an hour?"

"Okay." Because worthy. He can see how much I work one day.

VL: Do you also harvest for him?

MN: Me, I harvest, but only $1.60. Before, first time I was pulling with him is only $1.25 one bag. Bumbai come up $1.50. So when this last time I stay pull for him, $1.60. That's all he can give; you know the man mean. They call paakiki. (Laughs)

VL: Then how often do they pay you?

MN: Like when I was pulling the taro, every week he pay. But now different see; you work this month then maybe number 15 next month you have the pay.

VL: Then do you get any benefits like Social Security?

MN: Oh yeah, yeah. I have that.

VL: I mean from working....
MN: From him?
VL: Yeah.
MN: No.
VL: So, how long do you think you will continue to work for these people?
MN: That, I don't know. As long I no sick, well, maybe I work for him for long time. But if I get sick, well, no can help, see?
VL: The money you get from Social Security, and the money you get from helping [pull] taro, which is more?
MN: I get Social Security, $270; and from the plantations I had $118. Plus, I work for pulling, sometime I get almost $200. Sometime $180, $150 from one people. So if the other guys too, like now one bin come pay me yesterday, sometime $150 one month. Then all this money go for buy feed for my animals, like that. Pay the garage, pay for my two cars.
VL: Two cars?
MN: Sure, I get two cars. One truck and I get one Rabbit car [Volkswagen]. That's mine, that.
YY: You have a Rabbit?
MN: Yeah, Rabbit car. They call Rabbit.
VL: You know in the future in Waipio, what do you think will happen?
MN: I don't know if maybe the taro not come good, or maybe they going stop 'em, the taro in there.
YY: Now, "stop" because of what?
MN: The sickness of the taro. Because you no can produce, you no can make money if the taro is sick.
VL: Who do you think should fix the sickness? Whose job is it?
MN: I don't know. Because they stay try all from Honolulu, the university they come check up sometime, the taro patch. And I don't know how they figure.
VL: You think it's the State's job?
MN: I don't know.
VL: What would you like to see the valley like in the future?
MN: Well, maybe this valley, he no come more good now, than this. Maybe come more worse.
VL: Worse, you mean in what way?

MN: Worse because if the taro he get sickness and they no plant, well, come more worse, see. And the only thing you do is go fishing.

VL: How about ideas like the bathrooms on the beach, pavilion on the beach?

MN: About two years or three years ago, they bin discuss for making pavilions in the beach side, or by the waterfall. But I don't know, never come out yet, I think that.

VL: What do you think of that idea?

MN: That is a good idea; good idea if they make because some outsiders guys they come visit like that. Then, they had place to stay and look.

VL: Would you like for more visitors to come to Waipio?

MN: Well, I would like to see them if they want come down.

VL: How about more young people moving into the valley?

MN: I don't know that because over here, if young people, especially they going high school already, they don't want, Waipio. (Laughs) They don't want Waipio already.

VL: Why?

MN: Maybe they cannot work in the mud place. Maybe they like work in the office, like that, or some hotel like that.

VL: How about the young haoles that come down?

MN: Even some haoles over here, they no work, but they get food stamp.

VL: What do you think of that?

MN: What it gets me now, is like this. Why they give all those food stamps? They so young, they can work if they like work, but they no like work. So they had to go asking help, food stamp. And yet, like now, some guys they stay plant marijuana, they making money, you know, marijuana.

VL: So in the future, would you like to see more young haoles come in the valley?

MN: Oh yes. Maybe can make friend. Like me, I like to be friends, everybody.

VL: Meliton, how come you moved back to the valley?

MN: When I build my house, I stay figure I going stay with my own self only.

VL: Which house?
MN: This house. Like, good place for rest, nobody bother. If you don't want to go work, well, you stay home and do something else. Like, make net like that. Plenty things to do.

But what I no like now, is I'm making a garden, eh? And then they like to know how much I sell, or how much acres I get. [I] tell him, "This is not a farmer, farm place. This is only for home use."

VL: You mean the government wants to know?

MN: Yeah. Like from Honolulu. That Honolulu Business...some kind of club. So they send me books like that to read, fill 'em up. Tell, "This is not a farm, this only for home use. Small garden only." That's why no need to like that.

YY: How about all your other animals? What do....

MN: My animals are just only keep for eat; not for sell. Even eggs, I no sell.

YY: What kinds of animals do you have?

MN: Well, I have chickens and ducks. Maybe that's why the call "farm." Small farm.

YY: It's a nice farm.

MN: But how can you farm? I'm not making money; I no sell. Is only for your home use.

VL: What does Waipio Valley mean to you?

MN: Waipio is a very good place, you know. For stay, for one man like that. If you stay up Kukuihaele, maybe you get in trouble quick. You know some people over there, he get some long ears, and then when they come make trouble to you, I no like. That's why, more better stay over here; nobody bother.

VL: Is that the same reason why you enjoyed living up the waterhead?

MN: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. That's good for me because nobody. But the only trouble is, nobody to talk with, only the animals, dogs.

VL: What kind of things did you used to think about up there?

MN: I no think any kind. Just like my permanent place.

VL: The water system up there, who is the water for; where does the water go?

MN: Go to Haina, Paauhau, then Paauilo. Three places it supply. The water they mostly use for hanawai and for the people's drink.

VL: And then the water that comes into the valley, how important is that for Waipio?
MN: For Waipio, even though you don't want the water come down, get plenty spring water come out from the pali, from the mountain. So if no more water down Waipio, they cannot raise taro.

VL: At the waterhead, most of the water would go through the ditch?

MN: Yeah, through the tunnel, most. But still, way down over here, just like Waima, get plenty springs come out, water over there.

VL: Did Waipio always have enough?

MN: Yeah, Waipio, you no worry for water.

YY: These days, there's drought conditions up top, Honokaa, Hamakua. How has Waipio been, when dry?

MN: All same, this time. Because they get enough water for drink, enough water for the taro patch.

VL: There's enough for the taro patch?

MN: Yeah, I get enough.

VL: No farmers ever used to tell you that they didn't have enough water?

MN: No, no, no.

VL: Sometimes did they tell you they had too much?

MN: Yeah, if big water and too much, then they tell me, "How come you wen let go all the water?"

Tell, "No." Some goes in the tunnel, but if you make full the tunnels, some of the flume, or cement from the ditch, they cannot flow, see. That's why you control the water, how much go inside.

VL: And the extra comes into Waipio?

MN: Yeah.

VL: How would that affect some of the farmers down here?

MN: Well, no can help if get big water, well get plenty water, well, if they damage taro patch, no can help, that's water. I cannot hold the water when I stay up there.

(Laughter)

VL: What could the farmers do then?

MN: The farmers like this, like over here they build just like bank to the river, so that they can go to the taro patch place. So they make ditches like that. But if the river come big, sometime broke up, so he come dry. So they have to fix all time.
YY: Is there any ever friction between farmers about water?
MN: No.
VL: How do all the farmers get along in this valley?
MN: Like over here, they get their own waterhead like that. They get their own waterheads so if broke, your waterheads, well you have to fix your own.
YY: What if several farmers share a waterhead and it broke. Then what do they do?
MN: Well, they have to fix 'em again.
YY: Do they get together?
MN: If they get all in the place, they have to go together and help.
VL: You have anything else you want to say, Meliton?
MN: No, no. I just only try to answer what you folks ask me.
VL: Anything else you want to say about Waipio, or taro, or your life?
MN: In my life, I think good in this place, Waipio. Like me, I no like those too much good time like that; go drinkings like that. That's why I go away from those people. Although I keep beer, but only for my friends, if they come I give them beer. That's all. But if they make trouble, ah, go to hell.
VL: In your life, Meliton, what was the happiest times?
MN: My life is, maybe that's the time I go church all the time. Because you can get every day, any kinds. You can learn.
VL: How did you join the Mormon church?
MN: I went to help to build the church and then they bin tell me to join. Because, when I was in the Philippine Island, I go church sometime, but that's Catholic, most Catholic. So I go try over here. Then, when they explain, then I read some books like that. Then, well, I think good. So I bin join maybe one month, two months, then they bin baptize me. So that time, I had learned something already about baptizing, then within one year, then they put me in deacon.
VL: What does a deacon do?
MN: Well, the deacon is when somebody come to church, you have to receive them from the door. Also, that you go, when they bless the bread, then you have to go and give to the members. That's what the deacon is, who they call deacon. Just like the priest, the Catholic now, they get the two stand by with the priest. So those two guys go give the bread after the priest is blessed.
VL: And you're a deacon now?

MN: Like now, I am a priest. Elders, they call elders now.

VL: And what can you do now?

MN: I can baptize, I can pray for the sickness like that. When somebody call us, we have to go and try to pray for the sick people, and try to explain about the church. That's what we do. Just like missionary, but like us members, we only preach in this island. We no go anyplace, just like the other elders come, missionaries. That going different.

END OF INTERVIEW
Summary of Apr 12-13, 1978 Hike into Back of Waipio Valley with Meliton Ngayan

Background on Hamakua Ditch

The 10 mile Hamakua ditch was started around 1870 and completed in 1919. The ditch runs through the mountains. There is a 72-foot drop in elevation from the first intake to the tunnel's end in Kukuihaele.

Immigrant Chinese laborers built most of the tunnel. Japanese also worked on it later. The ditch takes water from four streams: Kawainui (the main one), Alakahi, Koiawe and Waima. Waima is the only intake with a pump which is used only when very dry conditions exist. Whatever water is not diverted by the ditch, flows into lower Waipio Valley, waters the taro patches, and continues out to the sea.*

Reason for Hike

During the recorded interview with Meliton, it was difficult to picture the way the intakes work, or what the back of Waipio Valley looked like. Meliton lived for 20 years up in the back of the valley--working for the sugar company--taking care of the four intakes and clearing the miles of trails. He volunteered to take us up and show us. Arrangements were made with the Honokaa Sugar Company representative, Kelly Loo, to get the gate key.

Meliton retired from that job in 1975. Since he retired, no one has been willing to take over the lonely job. The house where he stayed is used only occasionally now by working men. He feared that the house would be overrun by rats and so we packed a small tent and other equipment to rig tents if the house was rat-infested. The day before the hike, Meliton spent hours trying to find his mule; he lets it loose in the valley whenever he doesn't need it.

Participants in the overnight hike were Meliton Ngayan, Yukie Yoshinaga, Frank Salmoiraghi, Charlie Reppun, Vivien Lee, the mule and two of Meliton's dogs, Spot and Speedy.

Hike Summary

We met Meliton at 8:45 a.m. on Wednesday, April 12, 1978 and loaded the mule which was a little skittish, having not been "packed" for some time. The group started off following the road on the Kukuihaele side of the main valley. On the way, we passed mountain apple, coffee, guava, and macadamia nut trees; passed the last of the taro farms and went into a very woody area. We passed former house sites and abandoned taro loi, and crossed knee deep streams several times. A 4-wheel drive with a high body could have made it almost the whole way. We walked by a modern A-frame, the last house on the way in.

The mule had difficulty walking over the rocky trail at times because it had no shoes. Meliton would coax, "Come on girl--little more."

We came onto an open, grassy area dotted with thimbleberry bushes heavy with ripe fruit and noticed a wire running alongside the road about six feet off the ground. Meliton said it used to be his telephone line. The sugar company would call him at his house to give instructions or find out how things were going. The phone is no longer there, and the wire has fallen on the ground in many places.

We passed what is popularly called, "Haole Make," a gravesite of a haole engineer who died while supervising the building of the ditch. The name inscribed on the headstone is Thomas Kelly. The gravesite is surrounded by a low lava rock wall. Meliton used to keep the area clear of weeds, but it is now overgrown. Then we again entered a wooded area and saw mamaki, awa, and rose apple.

Meliton set a swift pace for us, and we reached his former house in two-and-a-half hours. It was situated near the juncture of Kawainui and Alakahi streams. Meliton quickly unloaded the mule and cut ti leaves for it to eat. There were actually two houses: one which still had Meliton's bed in it and a kitchen, and the other which other ditch workers used whenever they had to spend the night. Neither was rat-infested, just a little dirty and dilapidated. A shower that Meliton had rigged was near the two houses, but the pipes which once provided him with running water had long been disconnected. Down the path toward Kawainui Stream, there stood an outhouse, or "the office," as Meliton called it.

We explored Kawainui Stream a bit before eating lunch and found that it had quite a few opae in it. After resting a bit we headed for Kawainui intake, leaving the mule behind. Shortly we came to a junction in the road: the left path led to Alakahi intake (about one mile further). We took the right path. The trail had been sprayed with poison by the sugar company a month earlier and so was quite clear. The trail became very narrow at points; below us was a steep drop into Kawainui Stream. Along the way we passed several caves, quarried for gravel to make cement necessary to build the ditch. One such cave was pitch black inside. In it our weak flashlights found the complete skeleton of a pig. Meliton estimated it to have been three feet long and two feet high. Perhaps it went there to die, or perhaps it got lost.

We entered a short check tunnel that led to the ditch, which allowed for checking the depth of water in the tunnel. That day it was about three feet deep. The ditch was about eight feet wide. There was another check tunnel further down the trail for removing accumulated gravel from the main tunnel. We passed another house where Meliton would stay if it was too dark or rainy to return to his other house. His old round net still hung on the wall and the screened storage shelves were still in the kitchen. Soon we came to where the Kawainui ditch entered the mountains. We followed the ditch a couple hundred feet to the intake. Meliton immediately picked up a hoe and started to clean the second iron screen of rocks, leaves, and sticks. Keeping the screen clear is especially necessary in times of heavy rains. At times when he was still working he'd wake up in the middle of the night and...
walk to the intakes in the pouring rain. In addition to cleaning the screens he regulated the amount of water flowing into the ditch. If there was a big storm, he might telephone for more men to help. He remembers a big storm where the stream overflowed the whole intake area.

The ditch itself was mossy on the sides and opae were quite plentiful. We caught a few and then hiked back to Meliton's house. There was still time before dinner so Charlie and Meliton cut and split bamboo for making baskets, Frank and Yukie took photographs at the river, and Vivien swam.

During dinner, Meliton told us he was once sick with a fever and couldn't sleep. He was sitting in his house in the dark when he suddenly saw a light pass in front of the door. He wanted to yell out, but no sound came from his throat. To this day he doesn't know who or what it was. In another time, he was passing near "Haole Make" and saw two men standing a distance away. He went where he had seen them and found no trace of them; not even the grass looked as if it had been stepped on. But, Meliton said, if you have a strong mind, these things will not bother you; it's only if your mind is weak that you may be troubled.

After dinner Meliton poured rock salt into the container of still live opae. By morning they would be properly salted and ready to eat raw.

In his spare time, Meliton used to weave baskets out of bamboo. He would split the green bamboo into about 1/2-inch widths, and three foot lengths. Then he would strip part of the inside off and let it dry. Later the 1/2-inch pieces would be split into more slender strips and more of the inside would be stripped away. He made baskets for holding the fish he caught and baskets for carrying things on his back. He learned how to make them in the Philippines. Meliton also passed the hours by weaving delicate fish nets. He caught and raised some wild pigs, too. They were housed in a little pen Meliton constructed near the house. Sometimes he would read a magazine published by the Mormon church.

The only thing the sugar company provided was work tools. All food, blankets, flashlights, batteries, materials for building the shower, etc. were bought by Meliton. He even bought his own pack mule for $200. When Vivien suggested that the sugar company had a good deal when they hired him, Meliton said that at the time, jobs were scarce.

The person who cleaned the waterheads before Meliton was hired was also Filipino. Meliton said that this man drank too much and did not do a good job.

The night we spent there was not a cold night. Meliton said that some nights were so warm he could not sleep and would have to jump in the river to cool off.

After breakfast (during which Meliton mixed opae with his granola) we "broke camp" and packed the mule again. We headed back down the trail. "Old horse, old man, old saddle," Meliton chuckled as he saddled the mule. Meliton showed us a side trail that was used to get to the Waima River before the pump was built. But the way that we took to Waima was further down the trail;
it was actually a jeep road. At the beginning of it we unpacked the mule as it would have been too steep and difficult for the mule to follow. We hid our packs in the grass, especially the red one, "because the cows stay around here," and may have meddled with them. In about an hour we reached the Waimea intake and pump. Springs made many small waterfalls on the mountain side. Meliton said they once tried to tap the source of the springs, but there were so many little ones, it was impossible. Waimea stream water flowed from the intake into a large pipe about 50 feet long and then into a 20 feet deep cement tank.

Four electric generators pump water from the tank up two 15-18 inch diameter pipes that go straight up the mountain and into the ditch system. Water not diverted continues flowing down and feeds the watercress growing abundantly in the stream. Meliton commented that, "plenty money they spend on this one... every time broke, broke."

Looking up at the steep mountains surrounding us, Meliton said that in the old days poi was taken by mules over the pali to Waimea. Some banana trees were growing on the mountain slopes. Meliton said, "This is what they call flying banana."

We headed down again toward where we had left the mule and our packs. The hike back to the lower valley was uneventful except for meeting up with a herd of moo-ing cattle that we had to pass through.

(Written by V. Lee)