Rosaline Calasa Ventura, the eldest of three surviving children, was born on October 20, 1917, in Kula, Maui. Her father, Marcellino Nunes Calasa, worked various jobs and hauled produce from Kula to town, before finally deciding to open a car repair shop. This small garage eventually became the Calasa Service Station, which continues to operate in the same Kula location.

After graduating from Kealahou School in 1932, Ventura worked in her father’s service station doing some bookkeeping, pumping gas, and checking tires. Then in 1936, she married Frederick Ventura and turned her attentions towards being a homemaker.

During the war, Frederick Ventura served with the Provisional Police on Maui, but later ventured to Honolulu where more lucrative civilian defense jobs became increasingly available. With her husband and children, Rosaline Ventura traveled to Honolulu, where they lived for the remainder of the war years. For her part in the war effort, she knitted mufflers and caps for overseas servicemen, made camouflage netting, and did laundry and mending for her husband’s coworkers.

As soon as the war ended, Ventura and her family returned to Kula. There, she worked as a mail carrier, postal clerk, and home care attendant for the elderly. Ventura is a member of the Holy Ghost Catholic Church in Kula, and remains very active in the community.
JS: This is an interview with Mrs. Rosaline [Calasa] Ventura at the Holy Ghost [Catholic] Church in Kula, Maui. Today is July 19, 1993. The interviewer is Jonylle Sato.

Okay. Why don’t we begin with when and where you were born.

RV: I was born on October 20, 1917, here in Kula, Maui.

JS: Okay. And what about your grandparents, where are they from?

RV: My grandparents were from Portugal. They came over. They were quite young at that time. And they came to Kula and lived here in Kula all their lives.

JS: And is this your mother’s side?

RV: My mother’s side. Um hum. My mother’s side. My grandfather’s name was Louis Francisco Teixeira. And my grandmother, her name was Emelia [DeJesus] Francisco Teixeira.

JS: And what area of Portugal was this?

RV: In Madeira.

JS: So do you know about what year they had come over?

RV: No, I really don’t know. I know that they did come over with a lot of the people that came out here to work in the plantations.

JS: So is that where they ended up working?

RV: (Yes, for the duration of the contract.) [Then] they ended up getting some property here in Kula and they did farming. Farming and they raised a few head of cattle, mostly for home use at that time.

JS: So how did they manage to do that?
RV: Well, apparently the property was so cheap those days that it wasn't hard to obtain a piece of property. And what they did get, they held on to most of it up to the time they passed away.

JS: But originally when they were coming over that wasn't their plan, was it?

RV: Well, actually my grandfather came over under an assumed name. There was another man that was supposed to have come over with the plantation employees, and he backed out at the last minute. And he asked my grandfather if my grandfather would like to come over. And my grandfather said he was hoping to come over, but he didn't think he had a chance. He [the other man] said, "Well, if you're willing to go under my name to Hawai'i, you're welcome to take my place." And that's what happened.

So when my grandfather got here, he was not known as Louis Teixeira. He was known as Louis Gregulho. That's the man's name. After they were here for many years and they had a few children already, my grandfather went and had his name legally cleared out and gotten to be Teixeira, which was his real name. He then had one son that was old enough to make up his own mind, and his son decided that as far as he could tell, there were too many Teixeiras, and he was going to have the name Gregulho become his legal name. And he did go and have it all fixed up so that that's what he ended up with till the day he died. And even his own sons and his grandson carries the name Gregulho.

JS: What kind of things had your grandparents been doing in Portugal?

RV: Well actually, I guess just about everything that the other people did there, too. Grandpa and Grandma never really spoke much about what they did there. But considering the trips that some of the family have had going out there and seeing how the people lived there, they have the faint idea that farming was just about the same thing that they would have been doing had they remained back in Portugal.

JS: Okay, what about your father's side then?

RV: My father's side—my grandfather also came from Madeira, and his name was Manuel Nunes Calasa. My grandmother's name—and she, too, came over from Madeira—her name was Ludvina Freitas Nunes Calasa.

JS: And were they married before they got here?

RV: Yes, they were. Because when they came, they had a couple of their children already, had been born before they came. Those have long gone. They passed away and otherwise. . . . Just about the whole family on my father's side and also on my mother's side have all been deceased already. On my mother's side, practically all of them are buried here at our Holy Ghost [Catholic Church] cemetery. And my father's side, let's see, my father's side, they are at. . . . Some are buried at Makawao, (St. Joseph's Catholic Church) cemetery, because when they first came they didn't live here in Kula. They lived in Kaupakulua.

JS: And what kind of work had they been doing there?

RV: There they did also farming.
JS: Do you know why they had decided to come to Maui?

RV: No, I don’t. But I believe it was with the same reason as the others. To be able to get ahead they were coming in to work with plantations, but those that did get into plantation life, they didn’t remain there after their first contract [expired]. A lot of them left and decided to go out on their own. And that’s what my grandparents did.

JS: This is on your father’s side?

RV: On my father’s side, yes.

JS: So what did they do then, after their plantation contract had run out?

RV: Well, they did farming up in Kaupakulua. And at that time, people raised a lot of bananas and things like that, and that was all taken by wagon down to Kahului and Wailuku and around the plantation areas where there weren’t any stores. And so the wagons would come to the houses and bring things, and the people all came out and shopped right there at the wagons.

JS: Okay. Now what about your parents? Were both of them born on Maui?

RV: Yes, both of them were born on Maui. My mother [Mary Teixeira] was born here in Kula and my father [Marcellino Nunes Calasa] was born in Huelo. That’s also Maui, but that other end.

JS: So how was it that they got together?

RV: Well, in those days there were so few homes and things, and people got to hear, oh, there’s one there from our city, the same city that our parents came from [in Portugal]. And so they would decide to visit. And that’s the way they got to know each other. And of course no cars at that time, so my dad had to do his courting by horseback. He’d come all (laughs) the way on horseback from Huelo at the time. And right after that he— they were living in Kaupakulua, so he lived most of his life in Kaupakulua before he came here to Kula.

JS: So how did he decide to stay in Kula?

RV: Well, he found that it was easier here in Kula, too, because the weather here was not as damp, and they could produce more work outside. With the climate in Kaupakulua was so rainy, very, very rainy, and a lot of times they couldn’t do what they wanted to do outdoors. So when he came up here and—in the meantime, his dad had purchased a little piece of property here in Kula, and he then sold it to my [father]. And that’s how they decided to stay here. Although before my father really settled down to being his own employee, you would say, employer, he went and he did work at the Kahului Railroad [Company]. In those days were odd jobs that they used to do, and they lived for a time in the Kahului Railroad camp, which is now the area where you see Gasco [The Gas Company], and the Honolulu Paper Company [Hopaco-Boise Cascade Office Products Corporation]—all in that area [Lower Pā‘ia].

JS: When he was working at the railroad and living down in that area, didn’t he already have the property in Kula, or did that come later?
RV: No, I think he got it from, he bought it from his father later.

JS: And so once he moved—he and your mother moved to Kula—then what kind of work did he do?

RV: Well, he still continued to work with the rest of the Portuguese farmers. Actually, that's all there were at the time. And then he got interested—he used to take the produce downtown. He had a wagon and he took it down. And then he, somehow, he invested in the first truck that was here in Kula, and it was an old Federal truck. And he would haul all the produce for the different farmers down. After he had been doing that for a while, he started thinking about it and he realized, "Gee, I have a truck, but then what's going to happen if something goes wrong with it and I don't know how to repair it?"

So he made up his mind—those days it was so cheap to travel, even from here to the Mainland. And he, along with the coaxing of a couple of other old-timer missionary families that were here, Haoles, they coaxed him into going to automobile mechanic's school in Michigan. And he went there and he took a course there which really started him up into life then, because when he got back he opened up a little garage right where the Calasa Service Station is now. That was the first little garage there. And he started doing repair work. He took the entire course at that time in six months. And after that he continued like a correspondence course, and that's the way he learned all about the mechanics, everything that was to be known about the cars of that era anyway.

He also decided that as he was growing up. . . . He considered himself "growing" because he was getting out into the world and doing things on his own. He decided that maybe he should start thinking of future years of investing with a service station, too, because they would have to travel quite a bit to be able to refuel their tanks, and by the time they got back, half of that fuel had been used up. So he started thinking about it, and he and my mom talked about it. We, [the children], were too little to get in on the conversations, but anyway, they did have an idea that that's what the future would hold for them. So in 1932, when I graduated from the old Kealahou School, my dad opened up the service station and that was my job for the next four years. I was a service station attendant. Everything from gauging the air in the tires and everything that was minor, my dad taught me to handle it.

JS: What about your mother? Was she doing work at that time?

RV: No. Those days, the women never went out to work. As much as possible, they helped out at home. They constantly did whatever they could, and like, well, they did all their own baking and preserving and canning and all that. So that's what my mother did. She did not go out to work. She helped my dad take care of his bookwork. And she did very well doing it. For many, many years she did that. In fact, she was doing it up till almost to the time when she passed away. So as for going out to work in the community, she didn't. She became very much involved with church work, which at that time was very minor compared to what we have to do nowadays.

But I think they were about the happiest couple. They understood each other so well, you know. When you start off and you don't have much, I think there's a real deep closeness, you know, because you struggle along and you really make up your mind you're going to make ends meet and you're going to reach the goal that you really want to. So my dad worked at
the service station, ah, let’s see, he... He died at the age of eighty-nine, and it was just a few days before his ninetieth birthday. And he had been working up to about five years before that. He worked there steadily. He had had a lot of problems with his legs. He had ulcerated legs, yeah. And it was very hard for him to get along, and they had to have attention every day. After my mother passed away, he stayed at home, he lived at home for about eight years. And after that he came to my home, and I took care of him there for another eight years before he passed away.

JS: In the earlier days, when your father went to study up in Michigan though, how did your mother manage things at home without anyone working?

RV: Well, she did all right because they didn’t have a farm [i.e., no field work, but] what she had to do was see to it that the cows got milked and the chickens got attended to and all that. And just my brother [Valentine] and I, whatever we could help, we used to help her with it. And then my sister [Irene] came along later because my sister is ten years younger than I am. And so—she actually was born after my father had come back from Michigan school.

JS: So your family—your parents had enough saved up during that time to not worry about it?

RV: Um hum. And they had this thing going where if you raised chickens and you had to go to the store to shop, you could just take eggs and exchange for whatever you wanted, and that helped them a lot. And some of the people that did not have milk and were raising their little children, too, they would do the same with my mom because there were days that we couldn’t use up all the milk that my mom would... She was the one milking the cow at that time. And she used to share with the people, so whatever they grew, they would bring over to her, too, and that’s the way we started off in life.

JS: And so when your father decided to open the garage first, and eventually the service station, where did he get the money to do all of this?

RV: I know that he had to borrow some of the money, but at that time they used to have something—I don’t know, you must have heard of it, too—what they call tanomoshi. Well, that’s how he got his start, too.

JS: And that was within the Portuguese community or...

RV: At that time there was a lot of Japanese people had moved here to Kula. We had a lot of people already here in Kula. And this tanomoshi thing was going on with the Japanese people. But because they all dealt with him, he had a chance to get in on it.

JS: Do you know if that was very unusual or was that happening a lot within the community?

RV: At that time, that was happening quite a bit.

JS: No, I mean with...

RV: Oh, with another...

JS: ... Portuguese going in with the Japanese?
RV: Well, they were good friends, they were good friends, but they didn’t usually get into business too much unless if it was something special.

JS: And I guess that would have helped out all the Japanese . . .

RV: Yes. Um hum.

JS: . . . plantation farmers and things, too.

RV: Right. Um hum.

JS: Okay. You mentioned you have a brother and a sister. So were there just three of you?

RV: Yes. My mother had ten children, but seven of them died as babies. The majority of those died right at birth. The one that lived the longest was my sister, Elizabeth, and that was six months. All the others died at birth.

JS: So, of the three, are you the oldest, then?

RV: I am the oldest, yes. When it came to having her children, I was number four. But of all the children that lived, I’m the oldest, and then my brother is two years younger than I am, and my sister is ten years younger than I am. So, thank God, the three of us are still alive.

JS: Mm hmm. Okay, why don’t we move on a little bit and focus more on your life. Can you tell me a little bit more about your home life and what you remember of that, how things were there?

RV: At home?

JS: Mm hmm.

RV: We had a very nice life at home. Our family was very close. And I always joined my mother with her fancywork—embroidery and things. She did a lot of that, and I got interested in it, so I used to work along with her. Of course at that time, a lot of the things that we made were to be sold for the church and to make money to continue running the church. So as the other members of the Portuguese community did do a lot of handwork, too, and they used to have their little sales every now and then to help the church.

JS: So the church you’re talking about is this church [the Holy Ghost Catholic Church]?

RV: Yes, this is the church. Uh huh.

JS: Even as a child, was your whole family really involved with the church then?

RV: Yes, at that time my whole family was involved with the church, even more so than now. Right now, a lot of the younger generation don’t care to get together with the church. They don’t want any part of being responsible for different things. My brother was the one that, and my sister also, that never really got involved in church work. Except as children, we helped my mom to come to clean the church and the altar, the front of the altar, you know,
that gets all. . . . Even in our homes, you know, dust gathers on those little carvings and things. So my brother and I, being small, we would just sit down in front of the altar and with the little brush, and get that all out while my mother and several of the other ladies cleaned up all of the church.

JS: So this church had been mainly a Portuguese congregation?

RV: Well, actually, we started off as Portuguese because we had no church when our great-grandparents came over. And by doing that, it seemed to have brought the community more together because we ended up having Hawaiian people join the church, we had Chinese people, we had Japanese people. Whatever nationality was around here would come and become a part of the. . . . At that time, we did have mostly Sunday services, and the church for being way out here and the amount of people we had, was pretty well filled up every Sunday.

JS: So was it just the people in the Kula community or from other places also?

RV: No, if people wanted to come from any other place, they were welcome. It's the same as it is today, they're welcome to come. And with our church we do not keep anyone out, regardless of color, creed, they're all welcome to come. The only difference is that if they have not been brought up Catholics and have not been baptized and registered as Catholics, they cannot take part in the receiving of the Body and Blood of Christ. But at any time that they decide they want to become really a part of our church, a lot of them go out and have the teachings of the priest or some nun or somebody. They'll have their teachings where they can become Catholics, and from then on, they do receive the Sacraments the same way as the rest of us did, and we still do.

JS: You mentioned that there are a lot of different nationalities that come to the church. So can you describe a little bit more the Kula community and what kind of people, you know, what kind of jobs they did or . . .

RV: Well, a lot of them that did come and were here, went out and got into, what would you say it now? Like [Harold W.] Rice's [Ka'ono'ulu] Ranch, and in the cattle-raising business, they would go out and get jobs there, and then with whatever time they had at home to do some of their own farming. And if they didn't do for themselves, they went out and did farming for somebody else.

JS: What kind of atmosphere did the community have with all these different races together?

RV: It was just as we say, a melting pot. Everybody got along with everybody else. The Portuguese people of course, all—the majority of them—had these stone ovens for baking their bread, and that made a hit with the Japanese people. They really enjoyed that bread. And it got so that we almost made it like a calendar event. Certain day we're baking, and when we bake, well, we're going to take bread to this person or that person. And we always got to take—as far as we could travel, you know—we always got to take them a loaf of bread. And they in turn, would give us vegetables. And we did get along really well. The Hawaiian people, too, were very, very nice to get along with. And to this day, we still have people that are Hawaiian and come here to our church.
JS: How much did you get to travel outside of Kula, because it seems like Kula is so isolated from a lot of the other places. Did you go very much to other towns?

RV: Not too often. We would make it maybe, luckily once a month that we would go to Kahului or Wailuku. And when we did go, that would have been our shopping day and we would do all our grocery shopping and everything to last us for a month. We didn’t run to the store every day the way we have to do now (laughs).

JS: So were there stores up here, though?

RV: We had a little Chinese store across from where the University of Hawai‘i. . . .

JS: The [Hawai‘i Institute of Tropical] Agriculture [and Human Resources, HITAHR, Experiment Station]?

RV: No, the main office where they go up to the [Haleakalā] Crater for the observatory and all that. There was a little store there, and that store was called Ching’s store—Ah Jip Ching’s store [Jip Ching, also known as Ah Jip, managed the Tuck Sang general store in Kula]. And we could get quite a bit of different canned goods there. And of course they carried a lot of the Chinese things because of the people in the community that were Chinese, and they had no way of going down below to do their shopping, too, so they picked it up here. Then in Kōōkea, further over, there was what is still known as the [Henry] Fong [General] Store and the K. S. Ching Store, only that their locations have changed from one area. They moved it down, I’d say closer to civilization because they used to be up in the, sort of in the mountain area.

JS: So when you would go down to Kahului to do your shopping and things, did you notice any kind of difference between the communities or anything?

RV: Well, not really, because everybody seem to be getting around doing their own thing, just as we would be doing it back up here. The only thing that we found that was different, all the little stores that were available there, that you could go into one and see what they had and some of them you could even buy some clothing in it and some with shoes. Some carried everything from groceries right on through to clothing and shoes.

JS: And you mentioned that you went to . . . . What school was that now (laughs)?

RV: Kealahou School.

JS: Kealahou School. Tell me a little bit about what kind of school it was.

RV: Well, Kealahou School is such an old school, they no longer refer to it as Kealahou School. Now it’s the Haleakalā [Waldorf School]. . . . They just gave it a new name and I don’t know the rest of the name right now. And it’s just below the church here. And we used to go there and . . . . In fact, my mother was educated at the Kealahou School, and then when we were old enough to go to school, that’s where we went to school. And I graduated from there in 1932.

JS: And what grade was that?
RV: Eighth grade. Mm hmm.

JS: That's not the same as the Kula [Elementary] School, is that?

RV: No.

JS: It's different?

RV: Well, when they closed down the old Kealahou School, they opened it [another school] under the name Kula Elementary because when they did decide to do that, [the population in] Kula was already building up. They were building up so fast that they had to get a new place. And they had—instead of calling the [whole] area just Waiakoa, they decided to have [a section of] it called Kula, which even the post office at that time had always been known as Waiakoa Post Office, and it became Kula Post Office.

JS: So the area that your family had been living in though, that was considered . . .

RV: Waiakoa.

JS: Well, what else about your school do you remember?

RV: Well, I remember quite a bit my old teachers at school, and some of the things that we used to do that the children don't mention doing nowadays because they've gone mostly into these . . . What do you call that? Video, learning by videos, and with us at that time, no, it wasn't that way. One thing that I never forgot—in fact, yesterday I came across it. I had been keeping it all these years. Imagine, from when I was little in school. And those scrolls—you know what that is? A scroll is a long piece of paper, and you do all your work in there. So at that time we were studying about . . . Shucks, I forgot the name of it now. Anyway, in the olden days—you must have heard the story of that wolf that had adopted these babies?

JS: Oh, oh. Are you talking about The Jungle Book one?

RV: I think it's in The Jungle Book, too. Yeah. So we used to write all in different chapters in those scrolls. And when you got through with it, you rolled it up from both ends and tied it. Well, my grandchildren thought it was a ridiculous thing to have to carry around with you (laughs). But I enjoyed that very much, and we did at that time a lot of papier-mâché work, and the children now in school, they don't even mention that anymore. Anyway, that thing smelled awful.

(Laughter)

RV: You know how they make the papier-mâché. And you know the ink of the [news]paper and all that, and being soaked in all that water [and flour], gets to smell very, very horrible after a while.

JS: Well, what about the teachers? What kind of teachers were they nationalitywise?

RV: Well, nationalitywise, when I went to school, we started off first with . . . My first teacher was Haole, and she had a little Hawaiian in her. At that time she was called Miss [Mary
Eliza] Macfarlane—Lady Macfarlane. And in a couple of years after that, she married and she was then Mrs. Gifford. And she had a sister also, who helped out at times at the school, but she wasn’t there permanent. The permanent teachers that we had, I had Mrs. Gifford. I had Mrs. [Agnes] Stange—which this summer I was really thrilled. When we were preparing for the [Holy Ghost] Feast here, this young couple came up to me. They had asked someone if they could get some information from the olden days up here, and so they sent this couple to me. And this boy stood there in front of me, and I thought, “Gee, he looks like somebody I knew.”

And then he got down low next to me and he says, “Does the name Stange mean anything to you?”

I said, “My Lord.” I said, “Of course, Mrs. Stange was my schoolteacher, and she had a son, Robert, and a son, Paul, and also a daughter, Hermina.”

And he looked at his young bride. Now this couple, they were married just a week and a half before that, and he looked at his wife and he says, “By golly, she’s got all that information that I couldn’t get anywhere else.” So he said, “I am Charles Stange.”

And I looked at him and I said, “And then you’re related to Charles Vincent?” Because Charles Vincent, his father [Joaquin Vincent] was the principal of the old Kealahou School, and he had also been my teacher.

And he tells me, he says, “Well, at least you got to meet him and know him.” He says, “I don’t even know—I have never met him. I heard a lot about him, but I haven’t met him yet, and I’m just dying to do it. Maybe one of these times when we go on a vacation we’ll try to look up Uncle Charles.”

So anyway, we talked about the different teachers that we had had. And then after Mrs. Stange and Mr. Vincent, we had Elizabeth Vincent, which was Mr. Vincent’s wife. And then we had also an Eva Newton Kapohakimohewa (laughs). Most people just refer to her as Mrs. Kapoha. And we had Hattie Newton as a teacher there, too. And just before we graduated from school, we started having like Miss Kunioki and Mr. Kunioki, which was her brother. And there were some that came just as part-time that didn’t stay on a whole semester, or not even a whole year, yeah. And those, I did not get to know them well because I was passed those grades already, and so I didn’t get to mingle much with them. But as time went on, they did have increase of Japanese teachers and some Hawaiian teachers, too. And of course, the Haole teachers started to come in (from Honolulu and the Mainland).

JS: So how big were your classes?

RV: Well, our own class was twenty-nine [students]. We had twenty-nine in our class. So the classes ranged about twenty-nine, some had as far as thirty-two. And there were classes that were too small, and so they would have three classes combined so that one teacher could attend to it. Some classes were just about thirteen or fourteen people, so they would put in enough to make it comfortable to work with.

JS: And what kinds of students were there?
RV: What nationalities, you mean?

JS: Yeah.

RV: Well, the same. The Portuguese, Japanese, Hawaiian, Chinese. That’s the type, and at that time when we were in school, we didn’t have any Haole children except those who were related to the teachers.

JS: And how did all the children get along?

RV: They got along real well. Those days it was easy for them to go outside and enjoy the recess because they all joined in the different games that they decided they were going to do. Seasonal, you know, like now for instance, the girls would play jacks. Well, all nationalities would get—they’d form all their little different groups and then they’d challenge that one group, and then they’d challenge the next one, you know. And there was really no problem. They got into the different types of athletics. The girls played basketball, and volleyball, and softball. The boys, of course, went out for their softball, and later on for baseball. And they had their marble games and they had their. . . . Golly, that one always skips my mind, one that they used to do with a little board—like a little rice paddle, you know—and they would flip a coin, not a coin but a token of some kind to see who could do it the farthest. And that was really something that they looked forward to because they became champions.

And as a game for the younger ones, a lot of them ended up using the mother’s empty thread spools, and they would make little tractors out of it. They’d cut all the edges of the spool and put a rubber band on it. And they would work it so that that thing cruised along from one place on to the other. So that also became a game that the children had to look forward to—compete with each other. “Oh, my spool can go better than yours.” And they called them different names—tractors, and all that. And it was really remarkable the way they amused themselves and didn’t have to go and spend so much the way they do nowadays. [Now], if they don’t get a very expensive toy from the store, they don’t know what to do with themselves. I guess you’ve had that experience, too.

JS: A little (laughs). So while you were in school, what kind of dreams did you have? What did you want to be once you graduated?

RV: Well, I always felt that I wanted to become a mother, and I wanted to be at home and raise my family. I did get my family started up and then eventually, [after World War II had ended], I started to do some outside work. I worked as a substitute in the post office. I worked as one of the first mail carriers here in Kula. And then I got interested in doing work with the elderly, someone that would need help—they couldn’t be left alone all the time. So I did that type of work for quite a few years.

When the war broke out, my husband [Frederick Ventura]. . . . Well, first my brother went to Honolulu and he saw the difference in the wages down there, and they were begging for people to go and work for the navy. So my brother called my husband up and—in fact, he wrote him a nice long letter and told him, he said, “Why don’t you just come down here now. You folks are always thinking about buying a place, and you can’t seem to earn enough money to do it.” He said, “Come down, and I’m sure you won’t regret it.”
So that's what happened. We went down and that was in the beginning of '42. And we stayed down until the war ended. The day after the war ended we started making plans to come back home. It was enough already, because we lived right down on [near John] Rodgers Airport [now the Honolulu International Airport], you know. And then they called it Damon Tract. Now they have—I don't know, I guess they have it all in different names now, different sections. It's not like it used to be before. And we were surrounded by service people.

JS: Okay, I'd like to get back to that. Let me . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JS: Okay. Before we talk more about the war years, I wanted to go back a little bit, you know. While you were in school, had you been doing any kind of part-time job?

RV: While I was in school?

JS: Yeah.

RV: No.

JS: Because I know you were pretty young still.

RV: Yeah. In those days, you know, even when one of the teachers took sick and she had to be away from her classroom for a few days, they usually picked on someone that was up at the head of the class to handle the class, because they always had their written program made out for about a week ahead. And I was fortunate enough that I was one of the bright children there, and I got to take over for my teacher on quite a few different times that she had to be gone. She wasn't well. And so I helped out that way. Not to say to go out and earn money, you know. Just helping there in the classrooms.

JS: And then once you graduated, you said you worked at the service station, right?

RV: Yes, uh huh. For four years I worked at the service station.

JS: And how did you feel about—did you want to graduate at eighth grade and stop school then?

RV: Yeah. At that time we didn't have any buses that would take the people from here to Maui High [School]—that was the only one—and Maui High was not where it is now [in Kahului]. It was way out country [in Hāmākua Poko]. The only way that I could have done it would have been to go and stay with an elderly aunt, my father's oldest sister. And I couldn't stand that little H. Poko [Hāmākua Poko] community. It seemed to me everything was so tight. You were talking here and you look right into the next person's house, you know, the houses were so close. And being born and raised up here with just one little house, and for miles around you wouldn't see anything else, I couldn't get adjusted to the thought of going down there.
So my dad and my mom said, "You better go."

And I said, "No, I don't want to go." If I had a way of going back and forth every day, it would be different, but to go down there and stay with my aunt and then to go to school, I didn't want it.

So anyway, my mom says, "Well, don't worry. You don't have to have much of an education to change diapers and bathe babies (laughs) and feed babies." So she said, "I think you'll do all right."

So when I left school... I used to be kind of a bookworm. I tried to read whatever I could. And then with the service station I had to do a lot of the statements, because very rarely you had anybody come in and paid cash for anything. Because then you felt, gee, this person doesn't live here in this community, that's why they're paying cash. Otherwise they would all say, "Can you charge it on my name?" And they'd look at you and say, "Do you know my name?"

I'd look at them and I'd say, "Yes, I do."

There were instances where I knew the person by face, but I didn't know which name to go with whom because there were too many, like for instance, Tavareses. Too many Tavareses, too many Monizs, and all that. So I'd have to ask them if they didn't mind telling me. So they would tell me, I'm either Frank or whoever it was would tell me their name, and then I said, "Okay." And they would come and lean over me like that to watch me, to make sure that I put the right name down in that ledger (laughs).

JS: Well, what about your other classmates, though? Did they go on to high school?

RV: Yes. A lot of them did. The majority of them did. Some had very close relatives that lived down below. And some of them just didn't care to go, so they didn't go. But the majority did go.

JS: Okay. So you started working at the service station.

RV: Uh huh.

JS: And whose idea was that, that you start working there?

RV: Actually my dad, because my dad said he would take care of the repair section in the garage, but then somebody would have to be in the service station not to keep people waiting. And that's how I got to do it. And once I got started in there, that was an everyday thing. I'd go out there early in the morning and stay all day there. The house was close by, as it is right now. When we did that, my mom would come up at lunch hour and she'd watch the service station for me so that I could go home and sit down and have my meal. And she knew just what I liked, so she tried to prepare whatever I could be eating for that day. Because those days when you cooked, if you were cooking for a family, yeah, you would try to cook lunch and dinner together, so you don't have to cook lunch and then a little later on start with dinner. And the old people usually made their meals of soups and stews and things, something that they could make it in a big pot that would last, yeah.
At that time, we used to have this poi man that used to come all the way from inside Hana side, and they would bring bundles of watercress for sale, all weighed and everything—tied up—and they used to bring fresh taro and they used to bring fresh poi. And that was every Tuesday. So my mom knew that I really enjoyed it, although it was a strange combination, but I loved Portuguese soup with poi. So she always made soup on Tuesday mornings, so that when the poi got there it wouldn’t take but a few minutes for her to mix it. And sure enough, as soon as the poi came and she mixed it all up, when it was lunchtime she’d come up and she said, “Okay, your lunch is ready. I’ll stay here now, and you go home and have your lunch.”

And I’d go home and have a nice bowl of soup and poi. That’s what I wanted (laughs). Now when I mention soup and poi to my grandchildren and all that, they say, “Oh Grannie, how gross.” (JS laughs.)

I say, “Nothing gross about it. You get a taste for it and you really enjoy it.”

Of course, we lived on lots of other different foods, like those days codfish was very, very inexpensive. So we made codfish in many different ways, too. But now, golly, you can’t hardly even afford to buy codfish. It’s so expensive now.

JS: Was it very strange or unusual for a girl to be working at the service station?

RV: Yes, and I had a lot of wisecracks (laughs). People would say, “Since when you’re doing a man’s job?” Says, “You know, men are the ones that usually do this.”

I say, “Yeah, so my dad is the owner, but he didn’t have an older son, so I’m the oldest one here now, so I’m the one that’s doing it.”

And my brother still had—when I had graduated from school, my brother still had another two years that he had to remain in school. He, too, did not want to go and live down below to go to school. So he got to being with my dad. And he worked with my dad in the service station. And he did a lot of correspondence course and everything, and he was really one of the top mechanics. People would come from down below, even mechanics would come and they would ask him if he had had a certain problem and how he got to have worked with it. So he worked out as long as he could, and these past few years he didn’t feel too good, so he took an earlier retirement.

JS: Did the service station have other outside help then?

RV: No.

JS: So it’s just a family . . .

RV: Yeah. The only time that we had outside, and actually it wasn’t outside help, it was in-laws that helped when there was a sickness and either I couldn’t be there, like when I had my appendix removed. At that time, my brother managed to help because it was during summer, and he helped out there at the service station. And then, you know, they worked in the garage, but they could hear when somebody would come to the service station, it’s just a few feet away, and so he’d run in and wait on the customer.
JS: So how was business?

RV: Well at that time, gee, if we did sell thirty gallons of gas a day, that was a big sales day. And when it ever got up into fifty gallons, oh, golly, that was really something. Then, as years went by, it starts climbing up and climbing, and then at the time of the highest that I ever sold, it came up to about 226 gallons of gas. And, of course, there was the engine oil and stuff like that that went through the service station.

JS: So those kinds of other supplies, like the oil and things like that, where were you folks buying those things from?

RV: Well, when Shell Oil Company came here into Maui, they had negotiated with my dad. My dad would sign a contract that he wouldn't go and get his supplies from anyone else, that he would become a Shell agency. So that's where we got all our gas and oil and kerosene. It was all from there.

JS: And this was still in the 1930s?

RV: Yes. Uh huh.

JS: And I know you were talking about some of the things that you were doing at the service station, like pumping gas and checking the tires and things like that. And were you also doing the bookkeeping?

RV: Yes, I did.

JS: Okay. So how did you like working at the service station?

RV: I didn't mind it. Actually, I enjoyed it because I met people that otherwise I wouldn't have met before. I enjoyed it, and I used to stop and think. This car would drive in, just jam-packed with people, sitting all as tight as they could in the front seat and in the back seat. Sometimes there were about eight or nine people in that one car—and all adults. And when it came time for the gas, they'd all bring out all their loose change and see how much they had, so everybody pitched in to buy that gas. Many times they didn't have enough to buy too many gallons of gas. Sometimes they ended up with only two gallons, and at that time the gas was only twenty-something cents a gallon. So that way, some would give—when they had a group of about ten people—some would give two cents (laughs) and the other one...

And that's the way you had to tally it all up and make sure that you got your money for the gas that you gave them. And the gas, of course at that time, was not run with pumps like this. It was a pump that you had to crank by hand, you know, to siphon it out of the storage tank. So it was a little longer. It took longer in between customers if more than one customer came at the same time.

JS: How long did you work at the service station?

RV: Four years.

JS: And were you doing other kinds of jobs during that time also?
RV: No. I just worked there because at that time we’d open up the service station early in the morning, and it would go all through the day and sometimes we didn’t close up the service station till about nine, nine-thirty at night. Because at that time, anybody could be there alone, nobody bothered, you know. Nowadays, you wouldn’t dare try to run something in, you know, a place where it’s not completely surrounded with cops. Otherwise (laughs), they’re bound to come and konk you on the head, which actually before my dad gave up, Kula was beginning to have a lot of ruffians already, and that’s what they did to my dad. They knocked him over the head, and they wanted to take his cashbox as he was going from the service station to the house, but he held on to it. He didn’t let go.

And they had hit him so hard that they had cut his head. He had a big cut on his head, and his face was just covered with blood when he called me. And I was living at that time at the house where I live now. And he called me to come over right away. So my husband and I both went over. And when we got there, my God, his face was all covered with blood and all that. And he had no idea who did it because they came from the back and hit him. Later, we found out that they had been watching all my dad’s actions for a couple of weeks. Every day they watched just what he did, what time he left the service station to go to the house. And so that’s how they came and put themselves in a position where they could get at him right after he got the service station closed.

JS: But I’m sure there weren’t those kinds of incidents while you were working there.

RV: No, no. No, thank God. While I was working there we didn’t have anything like that.

JS: So, you worked there for four years . . .

RV: Uh huh.

JS: . . . and then what did you do after that?

RV: Well, after the four years, I got married [to Frederick Ventura] and then [tape inaudible] we went to Kama‘ole—that’s on the way to ‘Ulupalakua. And so I just raised my—we started our family there. I had one son, my oldest son. And before my daughter came along—because my husband worked on the ranch and the pay was very, very small . . .

JS: This is the ‘Ulupalakua [Ranch]?

RV: Haleakalā Ranch [Company]. Haleakalā Ranch, but it was known as Kama‘ole because that was the section—Kama‘ole Ranch. At that time, the wages were very, very small. So Mrs. [Violet Atherton] Harris—I don’t know if you’ve heard much of her, she was from the Atherton family in Honolulu. She was looking for a yardman that would help there, and it would be full-time. And of course the opportunity looked liked it was just the perfect thing that we really needed at that time. Because not only she would give us a few dollars more for our wages, but we also had doctor’s care, and that meant an awful lot those days. Even now, it means a lot. And then after that, we were there, we were with her two years, I think. That’s when the war [World War II] broke out, and that’s when we had to leave.

But during that time that we were still here yet, my second child was born—was my daughter—and she was born with a huge birthmark on her forehead. It looked like an overripe
strawberry. And you know how a strawberry has all those little dots-like in it, yeah. Well, that’s exactly the way it looked on her forehead, you know. And the doctors here couldn’t do anything about it. So Mrs. Harris had a cousin in Honolulu, Dr. [Francis] Halford, and she got everything ready and she sent me to Honolulu, my husband and I and the babies. And she said, “I’m going to send you to my cousin Halford, and if this is not in his line, he’ll know who will be able to do something for you.”

So we went there, and oh, he was as pleasant as could be. He said, “Well, this isn’t my line, but I know just the man that will attend to that. He’ll get rid of it.”

And sure enough, he took us to Dr. [Jesse] Smith. And Dr. Smith looked at her and he said for that day he couldn’t do it, but the next day for us to be there in the morning. They started to put radium on her. And that was a strange thing for us to watch, because at that time, they would have a heavy, a thick lead piece that would cover her face—of course, leave her nostrils open so that she could breath and all that—covered and only that little thing, [the birthmark], was sticking out. And the radium that they handled at that time, looked like an old-fashioned phonograph needle, a thick one. And they would stick it on with a little piece of plaster and then let it on for so many minutes and then take it off.

And then I had to wait. I’d come back home to Maui and then go back. I went down three times to Honolulu for it, and on the third time when we came back, the what you call—they were calling it a birthmark—was gone. And alongside of it had been another little one that was growing up, and so the little one had dropped off before the big one. And it’s amazing because today she can put her hair all the way back, and you’d never know what had happened. There’s a slightest little . . . What would you call it now? The texture of the skin is a little different in color because it doesn’t have all the pigmentation that we have on the rest, yeah. But so far, it hasn’t bothered her.

JS: So these trips to Honolulu were before the war started?

RV: Yes, uh huh.

JS: And your husband was working as a yardman until the war started?

RV: Yes, uh huh.

JS: Okay, so on December 7, [1941], then you were still . . .

RV: He was still working for Mrs. Harris. They had been—they had recruited a lot of the men to become Provisional Police, and he was one of the Provisional Police at that time. In fact, he and my brother belonged in the same group.

JS: And that was prior to the war starting?

RV: Yes, uh huh. So the day the war started, actually, there was a big celebration going on at Our Lady Queen of the Angels in Kēōkea. And when they [RV’s husband and brother] got the word that the United States and Japan were at war, they came home right away and they had to get their helmets and get their guns and all that, and report to the station. And then they went on twelve-hour shifts—twelve hours on and twelve hours off. And after that, they had
regular stations, you know, along the way where they had to report in, and they had to be watching for any sign of light at night because we went into complete blackout. But some people, poor things, some of them, they were used to do their cooking out in an open fire, and they used to get up very early in the morning to cook their breakfast and make their lunchcans and all that to go to work, so they had to make that. And my husband said he used to feel so bad when they had to go up to this house, because from a distance you could see the fire going on. And they had to tell them to turn it off.

They say, "Oh, but we cannot because we're cooking to go to work."

And some of the men were really—the Provisional Police—some of them were really so strict that they would just get a bucket of water and throw it on the fire and said, "You wait. When the sun comes out, then you cook."

And that wasn't right, because when you have a job to go to and you have your meals that you have to prepare and all that, you know you just have to do it ahead of time, especially in such primitive ways of doing it, yeah. But all in all, we've never had any problems appear with people during the war.

One thing that was funny for me. . . . My last child was a war baby. And my husband had to go to the Provisional Police office—that's a little house next to the Kula gym. There's a small house there, yeah, next to the gym. And [he went to] report that I was in labor, and he was going to take me to the hospital. So they notified the hospital and all to be ready. In those days, they had the tiniest little blue lights because the [car] headlights were all painted blue, and just with a little peephole-like [opening], for just a stream of light to come out. So that's what we had to use, and the headlights looked like they were wearing baseball caps because they had visors on, you know, to keep the light from going upward—just down where you had to see it.

So we went up [to the hospital]. And when we got up there, they were expecting us already, see. So the night watchman came out to help with the gurney, and he was carrying his flashlight. And you know that all the way in the head station in Wailuku, they called up Kula San [Kula Sanatorium] and said, "Turn off that darn light that you have. We can see it from down here. Get it off."

So that poor man didn't know what to do of himself, but he said, "Well, I'll just have to shine it just down where we're going to walk so it can't be seen." So he got me up there okay.

That part was really a joke with me because my doctor had said my son was going to be born for Christmas. Christmas Eve my son was due. Well, he didn't come Christmas Eve. He didn't come Christmas Day. He didn't come New Year's Eve. And he didn't come New Year's Day. He chose to come on King's Day, that's January 6. (The sixth of January used to be celebrated as a holy day among Catholics. The Feast of the Three Kings.) And when I got up there and I was really in labor, and they called for my doctor to come in, and it took him a while before he got there. And when he got there, they had already taken me upstairs to the delivery room, and they kept telling me, "Pant like a puppy. Pant like a puppy."

And here you're going, (RV makes panting sound).
Said, “Keep panting. We don’t want you to have the baby before the doctor gets here.”

But when they wheeled me up out of the elevator and I was facing straight into the delivery room, I said, “Whether you like it or not, here it comes.” And I had the baby right there on the gurney going in. And in a few minutes, I heard the door to the delivery room open, so I turned my head back and I looked back at the doctor, and I started to laugh.

And he said, “How can you laugh at such an important moment like this?”

And I said, “Doc, you know, this baby has been a joke all this time. You were always figuring the day that he was going to be born, and now the day that he’s born you’re not even here to see him pop out.”

And the doctor started to laugh, and he said, “Golly, I guess you’re doing pretty good a job even without me here.”

I said, “Yeah, well, I wasn’t going to wait if you weren’t going to be around. As long as he was ready to come, that’s it.” So the doctor really had a laugh over it, too.

So eventually my son got to have part of my doctor’s name, Kenneth, because my doctor was Kenneth Paul Jones. And when my son was old enough to be confirmed in the Catholic church, he had been baptized Kenneth Herbert Ventura. But because he knew his doctor’s name was Kenneth Paul, he took the name Paul. So he has the first name and the middle name of his doctor, Kenneth Paul Jones.

(Laughter)

JS: Okay. Well, I’d like to go back a little bit to December 7 . . .

RV: Uh huh.

JS: . . . you know, the day that the war started. Where were you when you found out what was going on?

RV: I was at my mother’s house because I was already waiting for my baby. And the worst part of it was that the day before, I had climbed on a chair to reach for something, and I got dizzy and I fell from there, and I dislocated my knee, so I had a knee about so big. And I was in bed—I couldn’t walk around. So I was down at my mom’s, in bed. So when my husband came home and he mentioned it [the outbreak of war]—and we had just heard it on the radio—so I said, “Well, there’s nothing I can do. I can’t go back up to the house because I’d be worse off. No telephone up there, no anything.”

So my parents said, “No, you’re going to stay here. You’re going to stay here until you’re well from your leg and until that baby shows up, anyway.” So that’s what happened. I stayed down there till after my son was born—about a month after that, that’s when I went back home. He was born on January 6, [1942].

JS: So your mother’s house was in what area?
RV: Right there where the service station is.

JS: So how did you feel once you heard that the war had started?

RV: Well, I was kind of shook up and wondered what was going to happen. And of course we were all with fear that we’d be bombed, or even troops landing, so we were always kind of very tense. We tried to really abide by the blackouts. I remember my mother buying all these navy-blue denim and making just long, like drapes, to cover the windows completely every night so that no light could get out so we could have light on in the house.

JS: Were there any other incidents that your husband might have told you about on that December 7, that first day?

RV: No, he said that because they had been practicing off and on for something like this, so he said they were pretty well—what you call?—used to the plan that they were supposed to follow. And they all had a partner that they were to go with. Not one Provisional Police alone. They had to have another partner with them. So it was a good schedule that they had made, too, and they knew if something happened, what hour they would have to go in, what hour each troop would have to go in, so that made it very nice.

JS: So was he staying with you up here in Kula or was he . . .

RV: Yes, he was up here. He did guard duty here in Kula, like at the intersection at Ōma'opio Road and going up to the Upper Kula Road and Kēōkea section. All that, they had to check on that area.

JS: What about other people in the community, what kind of atmosphere was it during that?

RV: Well, the thing that most people really had to put up a lot with was the shopping, like for food and things—everything was ration, ration. And you had to have those rationing cards. And certain items that were rationed had to be filled up into those cards. And for the gasoline for the cars, we had to have special stamps. We were allowed five gallons a week, I believe it was. [The basic gasoline ration was usually ten gallons per month.] And then after that, let’s see. . . . When we had the rationing going on, even for liquor, we had to have special cards. If you didn’t have that card you couldn’t go for liquor. And you know, with the servicemen around there, they really were used to having all the liquor that they wanted and all, and they couldn’t get it. So they would try to get to be very friendly with the people, and so that the people would buy the liquor and share it with them.

By that time, we were staying down in Honolulu because when my brother sent for my husband, then we all went down, and then we rented a house down there. My brother and his wife lived in it, and my husband and I, and we had our three children with us. But my oldest son stayed with us only a few months. He just didn’t like it down there. He wanted to come home to Grandma.

And that’s what he did. He came home to Grandma and she got him started off at St. Anthony’s school [St. Anthony Boys’ School], because by that time, the bus to St. Anthony made a stop right at the service station in the morning to pick up children that came from the side areas, and in the afternoon after school, dropped them off right there. So they felt very
safe that he wouldn’t have to be putting up with changing buses or, you know, getting with the wrong crowds and—you know after school how kids will be aching for a little fight every now and then. So Mama was very, very worried about that happening, so they made sure that he got his education at St. Anthony’s because of the bus.

JS: So before you folks went to Honolulu though, how were things going with the service station?

RV: Well, it was okay at that time, only that we had to have the [ration] cards, yeah. And if you didn’t have a card to show, you couldn’t get your gas rationing. And of course the business, well, wasn’t much different from other times because people either that were taking up jobs down below that they had to continue going back and forth, or else if they were the type that didn’t go down, well, they would kind of try to conserve on the gasoline and things. So we had some good days and we had some days that weren’t that good.

JS: Financially though, it wasn’t that much of a strain?

RV: No, no, it wasn’t. My dad was able to come up with the gas payments every time they delivered. Because when—with the companies, when they delivered the gas, before they go home you’ve got to present them with your check already for whatever amount they dropped off, yeah. You don’t have thirty days or anything like that to do it, you have to do it at that time.

JS: Were there any other problems though, with people not having enough, not being able to get as much gas as they wanted?

RV: Well, there were times that some people needed—really needed badly—more gas than they were being allowed. They could go and apply down below at one of the offices there, and they could get an additional amount of gas. But they had to specify why they had to have it.

JS: Well, I know you were just having another child and so you weren’t helping out in the station, were you?

RV: No, no. I wasn’t helping in the station because at that time my third child was going on eight months [old] when we went to Honolulu, so I wasn’t doing anything like that. As he started growing up I started to take up courses with the service, and I was with the Office of Civilian Defense. In case of emergencies right in our own areas, we would be prepared to help them out.

JS: So you stayed in Maui up until about . . .

RV: About August.

JS: August?

RV: Yeah. The beginning of August. That’s when . . .

JS: Nineteen forty-two?

RV: Yeah.
JS: So before you went to Honolulu, did you folks here in Maui deal with things like the air raid shelters?

RV: Oh yes. Um hum. We had---my dad had built a big air raid shelter right below the house where the service station is. Would rest below the house, there in the pasture. We had a good-sized one there, and of course everything that we should have had prepared and put, in case of a real emergency, we had boxes of it in the shelter. In case of an emergency, you just get in there and you don't have to worry about anything else.

JS: What about the---did you folks have to carry the gas masks?

RV: Oh yes. Those gas masks were something else. The hardest part was when we went to Honolulu. Here in Maui, well, you just go around in. . . . Like, for instance, in Kula, well, if you had to go to the store or something like that, well, you [would walk there and you] would have your children and all their gas masks, too. But in Honolulu, that I had to take the bus to go to town, and take the bus to go to the doctor's, and I had the two of them [RV's children] with me at that time. In fact, the oldest one was with me still yet for a while. What happened was that---so much stuff you had to carry. Because for the children, for their masks, under certain age it was like a huge pillowcase with something attached to it, and you had to zip them up in that, you know. And then as they got older their masks changed. And you had to be prepared with your mask all the time. Those masks actually ended up being kind of heavy and cumbersome to be carrying it around. So that's the part that was really hard for me down there.

JS: What other things---well, again, before you went to Honolulu, I know your husband was with the Provisional Police. Was he still working his other job, too?

RV: Yes, uh huh. But during the time that they were really strict with the Provisional Police, the ranch had to give them so much time out because it was a necessity. So they let them have extra time out. They didn't go in every day to work, yeah. And yet the ranch had to give them so much for the days that they lost, because they were providing the people with necessary help, whatever that time would come and whatever things would happen. They were there to help out the people.

JS: And in the Kula community, did you notice any kind of friction or change in relations between the other nationalities and the Japanese immigrants?

RV: There were some, but it wasn't much. It wasn't much because a lot of the Japanese that were born and raised here in the island did have their chance to get in on the Provisional Police, too, and work together with them. As a rule though, the families still dealt with each other. Some people didn't feel that way, but the majority of us, we felt whatever happened here, and the people that were here with us had no knowledge or nothing to do with whatever happened out in Japan that made them decide what they did. So more or less we just continued our friendship all through the years.

JS: What about things like getting other foodstuffs from Kahului side or down below? Was there any kind of change in how the Kula community was supplied with foodstuff?

RV: Well, they had---the outlets, the food outlets down below had their trucks come and deliver to
the stores. And we were rationed certain things, just so much, like with our rice and flour and all those different things—staple goods. And we managed okay. We just couldn’t go ahead and be extravagant, but we managed.

JS: And what about any kind of military presence?

RV: Well, they had a lot of military camps here in Maui. And a lot of the men became good friends with some of our boys that had been in World War I. And so they did mingle together. And the local people here, a lot of them had their military men that came in as guests, come to their home, have dinner with them and spend time with them. I got to know of quite a few of the different service personnel by visiting them at my in-law’s homes, at my sister-in-law and her husband[’s]. It was nice, and we learned quite a bit from the servicemen because they could tell us things about the Mainland that we had no idea about, you know. So we enjoyed it.

JS: Did it affect the businesses around here at all?

RV: No, well, at times I think it fluctuated, you know. There was times that business was a little better, there was times that it came down a little. But all in all, I didn’t ever hear of any one of the businesses around here closing down because of the war.

JS: Okay, why don’t we take a short break here.

RV: Okay.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-93-1-93; SIDE ONE

JS: This is a continuation of an interview with Mrs. Rosaline Ventura.

Okay, we’re talking about the war and some of the regulations and restrictions and things like that. And you had said that your family had gone to Honolulu, right?

RV: Yes.

JS: And can you tell me a little bit more about why you folks went to Honolulu. I know you said your brother had called you folks over, but tell me a little bit more about why your family decided that you would go.

RV: Okay. When my brother called and advised us that we should come down because they were looking for [civilian defense] workers for the navy and that he had got himself a job there, and he enjoyed it very much. And the wages were much better than we were getting here in Maui. So my husband decided yes, well, we would go, but he’d like to have the whole family together. So that’s when we planned to go—my husband, my three children, and myself. We went down and we lived in a rent home with my brother and his wife.
And the two men got together and went to work on the same shifts so that when they would go, they didn’t have to worry about transportation. They had a chance to both go on the same car, and if they didn’t go on the car, then they would catch the bus to the navy supply depot. They worked there. They went a lot into twelve-hour shifts. So when they worked during the day, they’d work all day and they came home and naturally, they slept all night. But when they worked at nights, then they came home and they had to sleep all day, at first it was hard for them to get used to it. And we had to have the children learn that they had to be really quiet so the uncle and the father could sleep. All in all, it turned out to be okay. We felt kind of lonely at night when the two men folks had to be on all-night duty. Just my sister-in-law and I and the three children.

JS:  What kind of jobs were they doing?

RV:  They were doing like servicing of the cars. There were times that they had to go down into some of the boats, like the cement used to come in in bulk, and they had to go and do something in there. And they would help out with the draining of the big storage area. Then they would go on trouble calls as far as Pearl Harbor. Some of the equipment or the cars that the personnel were using would break down, and they had to go out and repair it. Bring it back—some of them bring it back to the shop where they were. Get that done there.

JS:  How did you feel about having to make this move to Honolulu?

RV:  Well actually, I was never fond of Honolulu, so it was a big decision to make. But I thought that at a time like that, the family should all be together. And my parents also thought the same thing, said, “No, the children are growing up now and you folks should all be together. When and if the time comes that you folks are able to come back here, fine.”

So when we left, my husband and I had been seriously thinking we wanted to buy that home [in Kula] that we lived in now, and the only way we could see getting it would be by him working down there [in Honolulu]. And, you know, everything after eight hours goes as time and a half. And so that’s how we were able to save, that when we did come back. . . . In the meantime, my dad heard that this place [in Kula] was for sale, and so he went and he talked to the owners of it and they told him that they wanted to sell the property. So he said that he would buy it. So he bought it from them and he paid them off. And then he let us know, he said, “Now you folks can work down there in peace. And don’t worry, because I bought the place. When you come back, all you do is reimburse me for what I spent on it.”

And that’s how we got the place. When we came back, he just gave us the statements showing what he paid for the house and then we had to get a carpenter to come in and do some work. The roof was leaking badly and the kitchen really needed a good work over. The sink was no good there and all. So when we came home after being down there, and we came back, we were able to pay off the entire thing—the repair work and everything. And that was a song, really. In those days, they didn’t consider it a song, but now when you stop and think of it, we had 7, 7.91, I think, acres of land and the house included, and the house is a five-bedroom house. And we were able to get it, and with it, repairing done also. We got it all for $4,500, everything complete.

JS:  So your husband’s job in Honolulu, what kind of pay difference was it between there and . . .
RV: Oh, lots. Because over here, he would make only... The highest that we were making at that time was fifty-five dollars a month. And going down there, he made a few hundred dollars a week. So that's how it helped. It wasn't exactly the same amount each week. It went all by hourly pay and how much overtime they had. So there were times that we were shocked when we saw a check. My goodness, they brought in a check of $500, $600 or over in one week. That was like a dream. So there was a lot of difference in the wages there.

JS: And what were some of the things that you were doing in Honolulu?

RV: Well, I was taking care of our children at home, and a lot of the men that were out here working, they had no one to do anything for them. And you know, when you work with cars and with batteries and things like that, acid gets on your clothes and all that. Sometimes the first day you put on a brand-new thing, and you end up with a big, gaping hole on it that you can't use it anymore. So I don't know how the subject came up, but with some of those men and my husband, and they told my husband, "Gee, somebody always mends your clothes so nice. Too bad that we don't have anybody that we could turn to." He said, "Now, for instance, me with this one today, look at the spot turning white."

And there was one shirt—brand-new shirt—this whole area in here [the front] he had, I guess, lifting up the battery, the acid had spilled on it so just cooked off that shirt. They'd come with their pants. So many times their brand-new pants, or maybe washed one or two times, and there the same thing has happened, too. So I used to do a lot of mending for the boys that worked with my husband and my brother.

JS: Did you charge them for this?

RV: I didn't. I didn't charge them. But out of the goodness of their heart, they always gave me something for it. And sometimes I argued with them that... Like, for instance, if they wanted to give me five dollars—some of them, that's how they were—they wanted to give me five dollars for doing their mending and all for that particular time. And I would say, "No, this is too much. This is not really what you should pay for it."

They say, "Oh, no, no. We want you to have it."

I said, "No. If you want to give me something, give me something less." I said, "But I will not put a price," I said, "because I'm not out in business."

So I did a lot of—my work was there. And then I had joined with the community areas there where they taught us to do different things. And there was one thing that we did a lot, was the... You know on the servicemen's metal hat? They had that, like fishing net. I did hundreds of those. We made them, and they would pick it up at a certain place.

JS: You're talking about the camouflage netting?

RV: Yeah, the camouflage netting. We did a lot of that. And they used to come and pick it up. Certain days, certain times, they would have the pickup that would take all of those things. So I kept myself kind of busy in that and then learning some of the civil defense procedures in case of an air attack and things like that.
JS: When you had mentioned that you were taking classes or something with the Office of Civilian Defense, so that was just learning how to prepare or was that for something else?

RV: Yeah. It was learning, giving us an idea of what to expect in case anything happened, and what were some of the things we should have. Like, for instance, you going to make sure that you have fresh water in your... What do you call that? The puka (laughs). You know, where they... The shelters, in the shelters, and make sure that you always had food that was there that was edible, not something that had gone past it's due date already, and all the things like that. And then medicines—first-aid medicines—always have those things ready. And then I got to go to a lot of the gatherings that they would have for the community just to talk about the different procedures, different things that we would have to do.

JS: So what kinds of people would be going to these meetings?

RV: Well, just about anybody. I had people in there with me—Hawaiian, Chinese. I had Portuguese people, Haole people, Japanese. All of the younger people.

JS: What about the people that your husband worked with, you know, the men that you were doing the mending for, what kind of men were they?

RV: They were mostly Haole sailors, and those that were not sailors, they were regular workers that would do the repair work, like welding and sanding and all different things that had to be done. We had some Negro boys there, too. My husband got to be kind of friendly with some of them. They were very nice people, too.

JS: So what were—you know, you folks were in Honolulu away from your family and things, how did you manage to adjust to this new situation?

RV: Well, it wasn't too bad because on my mother's side she had some family living that actually lived down there [in Honolulu], and so we got to mingle with them a lot. And we didn't get too lonely for the family back here. And the family back here always made these special care boxes that they would send down for us through air freight, which contained different types of foods and stuff from home. So it kept us kind of close to home, the same.

JS: What about dealing with the regulations and restrictions in Honolulu?

RV: It was all right. We didn't have any problem there. We got along okay.

JS: So the rationing was okay?

RV: Uh huh. Mm hmm.

JS: What about air raid shelters there? Did you have to build...

RV: We had a big air raid shelter in our backyard there in Honolulu. But I never went into it because I knew that they had toads in there and they had centipedes, and everything that could crawl got in there. So I never did go in there. I used to look in through the door, but I wouldn't go in. And I kept saying, "Oh my God." Every time the sirens would go off at night and all that, I said, "Oh my God, please, don't let it be something that we have to get
out there.” Because I’d sooner, I think, just stay out—like they would say get underneath the bed or something—than go out there and face all those horrible creatures in there (laughs).

JS: Did you ever think that you might need to use the air raid shelter, though?

RV: Well, we wondered about it several times but we always said, “Well, let’s hope and pray that the Good Lord will watch over us that we don’t have to get out into the shelters.” So never once did it ever occur that we had to get out. We would hear the air raid sirens at night and all, and we would just stay quiet and wait to turn on our little radios and see if there was any instructions coming over for us.

JS: You were renting a house, right, at that time?

RV: Mm hmm.

JS: Did you do any kind of gardening?

RV: We had a small little vegetable garden in the back. We had a lot of manoa lettuce and all. And with that—just a block and a half from where we lived was this little Chinese store, and they used to prepare food for lunch wagons. So when she knew that we had lettuce and things, she asked us if we would mind sharing it with them. So they bought a few of our lettuce, and they would just clean it. We washed off all the dirt of course, and then we took it up. And then they would shred it and do whatever they had to do, right in their own little kitchenette there. Then they prepare their lunches and take them out on the wagons to the different areas where the construction was going on, or even a lot of times to where the servicemen had their different camps. Because we had the marines, we had the air force, we had the army, and we had the navy battalion, those that go out and—what you call?—do the building for the navy construction areas. And so we were just right in the middle, and all around us were all these different branches of the service, because at that time we lived on what was known as John Rodgers Airport.

JS: And what kind of—how did you folks manage to communicate back to Maui? Did you have any kind of difficulties or anything?

RV: No. We did most everything was by mail. Of course, they used to—there were times we could tell they had checked our mail to see whether we were revealing anything we’re not supposed to. So we didn’t have any problems there.

JS: What were some of your impressions of Honolulu during the war, especially comparing it between, you know, while you were in Maui and while you were there?

RV: Well, that was really a hustle. Everything was hustling, hustling all the time. But we found it was—life in Honolulu was different from life here in Kula because everything here in Kula was at a slow pace compared to down there. Everywhere you went you were just rushing. Because if you were supposed to go somewhere and you were relying on a bus, you had to make sure that you had your time allotment so that where the bus didn’t get to the area to pick you up at the right time, you still had allowed yourself extra time to get to your appointment, whatever it was. But those buses really made a lot of difference.
And with me a lot of times, like coming home on the bus, I couldn't see [doing] it. Because if I had the children with me and I'd done some shopping, I couldn't handle the children and shopping and getting in and out of those big buses. So I made good use of Charley's Taxi. The boys, they were so nice. I cannot say exactly what they were, whether they were a mixture of Japanese or Chinese, but most of the boys that did drive it, they were Oriental boys. I couldn't say whether Chinese or Japanese or Korean or whatever.

JS: Was it very expensive?

RV: No, at that time it wasn't. It wasn't really expensive because we could go from town all the way back to Rodgers Airport. And with whatever I had shopped that day and all that, the men were very nice. They would help me put everything in the car and all that. I had to pay two dollars. So that was really being very, very reasonable.

JS: And the things that you were buying in town then, you know, while you were shopping and everything, did you notice any kinds of shortages or . . .

RV: Well, there were things that at times, that there were shortages and everything was rationed. Even when it came to bobby pins. Bobby pins, you'd have a line [as long as] from here [the Holy Ghost Catholic Church] almost to the community center up there. People all in line waiting for bobby pins. And then when anyone would say, "Oh, you know, certain store is having nylons today," oh my God, that place would be packed. When they were talking about Kmart [Stores] opening over here and how the people packed up, I thought of those days when certain things came in and how people just rushed over there and stood in line for hours.

The two things that we had to stand in line for hours would be poi and meat. Those two things we had to get out in line very early in the morning. So when my husband would go to work in the morning, I would go to town with them, and when they caught the other bus to switch over, I would just drop off. I'd be close to Metropolitan [Meat Market]—if I was going for meat that day, would be Metropolitan. And if it was for poi, it would be down on Queen Street, Chinatown. And that's where they used to have the poi sales and all different types of local foods. And then we waited and we waited because we were there so early, but when the poi man finally came, well the place would be packed. And you just keep your fingers crossed. "Let there be at least a bag of poi that I can take home."

When we went down to Metropolitan for meat, we were lucky when we would go through the whole line and get there to the Metropolitan, get inside, that there would still be something in the showcases. And we were happy when we were able to go home with shinbone—shinbone and some, either a little leg of lamb or some lamb chops or something like that—because that [waiting] was horrible. People used to get there, I really don't know how early, because a lot of them had tiny little mattresses and a blanket. That meant that they had spent most of the night there. But that's the only way we could get any of those things. Had to do it that way.

JS: How was the general atmosphere in Honolulu about the war? Was there any kind of feeling of tension or had things calmed down by then?

RV: No, things were pretty well calmed down. There was no tension in there, no . . . What would you call it now? No people that would be hostile to someone else. Unless if there were
some, like I always said, in every community there's good and there's bad. Some try to better themselves so that they can get along with everyone. But others, they just have a chip on their shoulder. They make up their mind they're not going to do it, and then they're not going to do it, you know. But so far, we'd never had any really bad experiences.

I had them try to get into my home when my husband was at work at night on the night shift. But I had a dog that from puppy—he [RV's husband] brought it home to me one day. It was so tiny, he had it in his jacket pocket. We raised it up always in the house, and we toilet trained the dog to go on a certain paper. And that little dog would do that, so all we had to do when it go, we just pick up the paper and discard it. So as the dog grew up. . . Well, it was a beautiful, beautiful animal. It was chow, spitz, German police [German shepherd]. Now, there's three bad bloods in there, but with the kids he was really good. He never bothered anybody as long as we welcomed them into the house. I guess he realized that they were welcome because we were friends.

So one night, I woke up with the dog barking, barking, barking, barking, and growling. I said, "Oh, something isn't right." So I got up from my bed. My sister-in-law was sleeping in the next room, because her husband was working night shift, too. And I walked towards the kitchen, and there was somebody trying to get in the kitchen door. Well, when he saw that we turned on lights and all that, he didn't take a chance. He ran off.

A few weeks after that, I woke up again with noise at night, and my little dog was growling and growling, and he would go right up to the area where it's going on. And he had a way about him that all the hair on his back would stand up like a razor, straight, from the head right down to the tail. And you could tell that he was really angry. So when I walked in and I saw him there, and I could hear noise outside, and I talked to the little dog. And then whoever it was went away. But when I went to use the wash—do the laundry in the morning, when I walked in, they had taken off the hinges already from the door and was about to come in. But because we were awake and the dog was right there by the door, that's how I always say, through the dog we were saved from being attacked and everything there.

Another time my sister-in-law was asleep. And I could hear—I knew she was in her room, and I could hear her. And I could hear another voice talking, and I thought, "Strange. My husband isn't home. That means her husband didn't come home either."

So I had a pipe underneath my bed about that long [two feet]. I got out of the bed and I picked up this pipe and I walked down that corridor to her room. When I got to her room, she was very peaceful, lying down. She was with her hands under her head. And here was this guy at her window and telling her, "Open the window. Let me come in bed with you."

And she was so sleepy, that wasn't registering. She was, "What?"

He said, "Open the window. I want to get in bed with you."

When I heard him say that, it was just like hell had broke loose. I jumped from where I was in the corridor right next to the bedroom, and I jumped on top of her bed, and with this iron pipe in my hand. And I started screaming at him the most horrible words I had heard the men use. I called him all the words I could think of. He stood there with his eyes wide open, and I was like that with that pipe [shaking the pipe at him]. "You get the hell out of here!" And
when I said that, he knew that I meant something. So he turned around and he ran. He went.

And the neighbor next door was having a party. And they heard me screaming and all that. They were really nice people. She always had parties and had a lot of the servicemen come. So all the servicemen came running to that window there where I was and asked what happened. So I told them what had happened. And you know, they just scattered all around like that, searching all around to see if it could have been one of the men that belonged to their group. They went, but they couldn’t find him because there was so much brush and stuff in that area.

But we were lucky all the time that we were there. We never had our home really broken into because we woke up in time and with the dog. But in other ways, during the day with local people getting at us, we never had any problem.

JS: So how did you feel about this happening in Honolulu?

RV: Well, it made me kind of leery about it. I had never heard of anything happening like that here in Maui. So I was just anxious to get back. Get back to Maui no ka ‘oi. (Laughs)

JS: What about while you were in Honolulu, you know, hearing news about how the war was progressing. How much of that did you folks hear?

RV: Nope. That was really kept quite confidential. We didn’t have much chance to know anything because even the mail, when people would write to us, the mail had been checked through. And if there was anything there that they should not have said, we wouldn’t be able to read it. It was just covered up with ink in such a way that nothing could leak through.

JS: So how did you feel though, about the war?

RV: Well, I wasn’t pleased with it, that’s for sure. I wasn’t pleased. But then I thought, well, if it’s come to this and they have to have something settled, well, what are we to do but just try to do whatever we can to keep our own families and friends happy here. So it worked out okay.

JS: You and your family, did you have any fears that things would get worse and closer to Hawai‘i?

RV: No. The only time that we would feel that was when we would have the sirens blow at night. That’s when we thought that, you know, they were coming in or something. But otherwise, we didn’t really have that fear in us that it would get worse.

JS: You were mentioning friends and things like that, how easy was it for you folks to make new friends in this place [Honolulu] that you had never lived before?

RV: Well actually, in Honolulu I didn’t make many new friends. I made a very good friend, the neighbor right next door to us. Was just a picket fence between us. She had two little girls and her husband was an ex-sailor. He was part-Indian and part some other type of Haole. He was a huge man. He was over six-feet-something, and he was broad. He was very quiet and yet a pleasant person to know. And his wife was a local girl. And lots of times she used to try
to get things from him if he had been able to hear something special. And he would tell her, said, “You know, where I work, what we hear, what we see, remains there in that office. We are not supposed to be letting it out, because if it’s not one person, it’s another. They’re going to add something on to it, make it look worse, and that will just bring fear among the people.” So very little that ever escaped, what was going on.

JS: Were there any rumors that you especially remember?

RV: There—no, not really. But we had a little problem here in Kula before I had gone down. They had—some people, I guess they got antagonistic to the other nationalities. And there was an old—we used to call him Japanese man, but he was not Japanese. He was an Okinawan man. He was a big fellow. And he came around several times at night, and several times we spotted him up by the service station. And he was trying to see if he could see what was going on in our house, right from up at the service station. And my dad of course would show up in the house, then he’d [the Okinawan man] run off. But he never did us any harm.

And the only thing that I felt so bad about, until today I don’t know who did it, but my little dog—we had another little dog there—and being, at that time, I had had that injury on my leg and I had been with my mom and all that, the little dog was outside, it was on a leash outside. And during the night we heard the little dog go, “Ipe.”

I said, “Oh no.” I wouldn’t dare go outside and I wouldn’t ask anybody else to go out because I don’t know who’s out there. And in the morning when we got up, my little dog was dead, dead—just crushed her head in with one big blow with something. That hurt me and I thought, “Gee whiz, even during wartime they take it out on the pets.” But otherwise, no.

JS: What about things like drafting? Was your husband ever drafted?

RV: No, no, my husband was not drafted because he was working down there [in Honolulu], and even before he went down, we had children already, see, before that. And he was down to... What was it? He was on the class A, but not on the first ones. They used to go A, and then they would have one, two, three, and up. And if I’m not mistaken, he was on A-4 [4-A], so he never got to go. And my brother didn’t get to go either. But a lot of my cousins ended up going because they were either not married or at the point where they still could take them because they had only one child.

JS: So your husband was listed as [4-A] because he had young children or because of what he was working as?

RV: Well, the first time when he was classified, it was because we had children. But then in Honolulu when he went down there, and later on they were changing their classifications, they did not change his because he was with the service already and what he was doing was important. So he didn’t have to get to the point where he got drafted in any way.

JS: Okay, why don’t we take our break here then.

RV: Okay, if it’s okay with you. Um hum.

END OF INTERVIEW
JS: This is the continuation of an interview with Mrs. Rosaline Ventura at the Holy Ghost [Catholic] Church in Kula, Maui. The date is July 19, 1993. The interviewer is Jonylle Sato.

Okay, Mrs. Ventura. I wanted to talk a little bit more about the wartime, and I guess we'll still talk a little bit more about when you were in Honolulu.

RV: Mmhmm.

JS: I want to ask how your husband was able to get the navy job or how did he go about getting it?

RV: Well, at that time they were so anxious to get workers that anyone that would apply, they would give them a light test to see if they passed. And they didn't start them off on a real good job. Most of them, they were called grease monkeys because they used them to service the military equipment and to help out down at the navy yard in Pearl Harbor. So the job there was very, very simple to start off with. And then after that, then they gradually started working on finger lifts and all different things.

JS: So he was working only at the Pearl Harbor navy yard?

RV: Yeah, mm hmm.

JS: Did he talk very much about his job and what he was doing?

RV: Well, when he'd come home he'd say, "Well, you wouldn't believe it but today I was working on a finger lift," or, "I was working on a high lift," whatever it was. And he would try to explain to me what the problem had been and who had gone as his companion for the work. Usually, it would have been my brother or one of my cousins that was working there also.

JS: So as he progressed on the job, did he have to take classes like training type of classes?

RV: No, during the war they weren't doing it. But they had—what do you call that now?—around here everybody used to call them foremen and all that. Well, they had people that came from
the Mainland that were highly qualified, and like my husband and my brother worked under
them. Any problem that there was, this person would tell them, “Well, you check up on this
and that and that and you’ll find what the problem is.”

JS: And what about—did he see things like the ships that had come back from the war and things
like that?

RV: Not much, not much of it. Most of the ships were going out the other way and not so much
coming back here, because as you know, a lot of them had been bombed and they had just
sunk. So he didn’t get to, even to see the one that everybody comes to see [the USS Arizona].
He didn’t even get to go into that because it wasn’t just part of his work, so he never got to
go in that area. The first time he got to go into Pearl Harbor, to see Pearl Harbor, the
baseyard there, he said it was about twelve o’clock at night. There was a call and his officer
came in and said, “Hey, I’ve got a call to Pearl Harbor. Who wants to come along with me? I
see you folks are here with nothing to do tonight.”

And they said, yeah, that there was nothing to do, that they would enjoy it if they could. So
my brother and my husband both went and then they had couple of other guys that stayed
back. So for them it was a treat. They had never been there. And they enjoyed it. But at
twelve o’clock at night, that’s when they finally get to see it after they had been there
working, oh, I don’t know how long. It’s quite sometime that they had been there.

JS: What was your husband’s impressions of how the war was going?

RV: Well, he had in him, he had a feeling that things were going okay and he had a feeling that
America would win. He said, “I don’t know how, because I don’t know what they’re going to
do, but something tells me we got to win.” (Laughs) That’s just . . .

JS: Did you feel the same way?

RV: Well, I felt sort of the, just about the same, yeah. But I always kept saying, “Why is it that
something has to be decided in such a manner?” You know, I thought it was horrible, but
what can you do? Even now so many years later, they still come up for, any little thing they
coming up with a war here and a war there and what can you do?

JS: Well, how did you manage as a mother of young children and sending your husband off to
work while it was still dark, you know, the blackout and curfew and things like that? How
did you manage the household with those restrictions?

RV: Well, I managed okay because we all got stuff applied to our windows so that between the
hours of curfew we kept our windows closed. And down there, when we were staying down
there, we had like. . . . You know the pineapple paper, the black [mulch]? On the windows
on the inside so the weather wouldn’t bother it, see. So as soon as it would get dark, just
about to start getting dark, we’d close those windows already because then no light could seep
out. And the other way that we did some of the windows was to have the old denim and then
just make a drop curtain to drop over and then we’d kind of tack it on the sides at night so
that the wind wouldn’t play with it. So we could have some fresh air in there, too, because
otherwise you suffocate in the house. And in Honolulu (chuckles) when it’s usually hot, it’s
hot. We’ve had some pretty hot days up here, too, so I know.
JS: So then in the house with the windows blackened out, you left the lights on?

RV: Yeah, but we didn’t have high voltage globes. We had smaller globes instead of having great big light. We had it small because we felt that there was less chance of any light seeping out. And before I had gone to Honolulu, my daughter was little and she had gotten into this habit. Before she’d go to bed every night she wanted a bowl of crackers in milk or hot chocolate. And it was to the point that my dad kept the light so dim in the house that I’d practically have to feel with one hand her little mouth and use my other fingers to put [the crackers] into her.

And she would say, “Mommy, me bopas.” “Me bopas,” means, “I want my sopas.” And sopas means something soaked in milk or broth, whatever it is. And she would—then you knew it for sure, she was ready for her bedtime. Whenever she said, “Mamma, me bopas,” means she wanted her sopas so she could go to bed. (Laughs)

JS: This was in Honolulu or . . .

RV: This was just before we went to Honolulu.

JS: So how old were your children then? Were they of school age yet when you went to Honolulu?

RV: No, my oldest one had not attended school yet. He got into school after we were living down there. And actually, he stayed with us just about a month before school started, and he insisted he wanted to come home. He didn’t want to stay down there. He wanted to come to Grandma. So that’s when my mother had him enrolled at St. Anthony’s, so the bus pick him up right there at the service station and drop him off at the service station every day.

JS: So how did he travel back to Maui? Did he come by himself?

RV: Well, my brother was coming back. Let’s see . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

JS: Okay, we were talking about your son coming back.

RV: Well, let’s see, my husband had to come back. I forgot now what it was. It was sort of an emergency. He had to come back. And when he came back, our oldest son came together with him. But once he [RV’s son] had made up his mind he wanted to come very badly, but after he got to the plane and he realized that I was going to stay back with the sister and the other little brother, that’s when they had a hard time to control him in the plane. My husband said that was all he could do to listen to that child say, “I want to go back with Mommy now. I want to go back with Mommy. I don’t want to go on the plane.”

And he said, “Well, you wanted to go to Grandma. Now Grandma is waiting for you, so you have to go to Grandma’s now.”

So finally he quieted down. And she [RV’s mother] made it so that every chance they had they would take pictures of him so we’d know just how he was getting along, what he was doing. And he was enjoying it all, so we managed that way.
JS: So how was travel between the islands? Was it harder to do?

RV: Oh yeah, it was harder because when you got on the plane, you had to have your... The glasses were all frosted or darkened so that you couldn't be looking out, too. And then when you went on the boat, everything was pitch dark on the boat. Because when we had gone to Honolulu, we went down on the plane, and when we came back for—it was a funeral in the family—we came back [to Maui], we had to come back on the boat. And on the boat that thing was just awful. Everything was so dark and you can't find your way around. But actually, you can't have lights on the boat because out at sea that will really be spot with... Anybody could see it. And it wasn't very convenient. The boats were lousy at that time.

I made several trips on the boat. And the last one when we moved back here after the war, we still came on the boat instead of coming on the plane, because we were bringing back whatever we had down there. We put everything we could into the car and we had our little dog down there. The little dog came back with us on the same boat. So my husband never got to go and lie down that night. He and another man from Ke'anae stood out on the deck all night and talked stories. What went on, what sort of conversations between the two of them, I don't know. I know that they were talking about hard times in Hana side and the war and how he had known some of my family there in Hana, because my uncle had worked out there with them in the taro patches. So they really enjoyed each other's company that night and for many years after that. Oh, when they'd meet each other, they had a lot of stories to tell (chuckles). Now both of them are gone already, so those old storytellers, not many of them left now.

JS: So how did you feel traveling during the wartime?

RV: I was scared. You know, you're traveling, you're in a boat and you're going, and every now and then you hear one of the boats go, "Beep," because you have a... What do they call that? The destroyer—the little boat that goes accompanying the destroyer.

JS: The tugboats?

RV: It's not a tugboat. I forgot the name of it. But they go around. They say they check on this side and before you know it, you look and it's on the other side already. It's checking. And all night long when you're coming, that's the way it is until you get to the pier. They keep on checking to make sure that no sub is going to come up right there. They're watching for it.

JS: So there was actually another smaller [patrol] boat with the larger passenger boat?

RV: Right. Mm hmm. With the passenger boat. Yeah. Oh shucks, I can't remember the name that they gave the little boat. (Pauses) I could probably get the name—I know I could get the name from my son, but they're not here now (chuckles), and he's at work.

JS: So when you traveled back and forth, you had the children with you, too?

RV: Yeah. I had...

JS: And so how was it handling them in that kind of condition?
It was hard. It was really hard. But some of the stewards, they were really nice and they’d come and they’d bring us little trays with little sandwiches made of different things, and a glass of juice—some kind of a juice—and later on, couple of hours later, they’d come back and see if the children needed anything or I needed anything, too.

I didn’t mind traveling too much on the boat. I’ve always loved to ride the boat. The only thing that I did not like was one of the boats that I rode in, the locks on the doors were all broken, and I was afraid because some of the, even some of the stewards, they were... I don’t know, as though that they weren’t really all there. You know, they made certain suggestions and things that made me afraid of them. And I was always wondering, “Gee, when is one of them just going to walk into my room?” because I cannot lock the door. So I was really afraid and I wouldn’t go to sleep that night. I made sure that the children were comfortable and I stayed right where I could be with them and watching that door (laughs).

So those times your husband wasn’t traveling with you?

No. Right at that time he had to be down. He had to be in Honolulu, but I had to come home and then go back again. And that wasn’t too often. I think it was only two or three trips that I made during the war.

Do your children remember very much of those times?

No. Sometimes they just sit there and listen to me when I’m talking about it. And once in a while one of them will remember the name of one of our neighbors that they used to play with the children down there. And I’m really surprised because so many years have gone by that we don’t even mention these people’s names, and off and on they still remember different names. It happens, too, that one of our neighbors, the one that was married to that ex-navy man, her sister—her younger sister—married a boy here from Maui, and I get to see them both every now and then. In fact, now they’ve just joined our Portuguese club. So I’ll be seeing more of them now (chuckles).

How did you feel about being separated from your eldest son?

Well, I felt rather lost because at that age they tend to have a lot questions to ask you. And I felt to myself, gee whiz, now that he’s up there with Grandma, I hope Grandma can help him out, you know, with all the questions he’ll be asking. Well, my mother was a smart woman, too, so she knew just how to handle him. But it didn’t make it any easier for me, you know, being separated. And when we finally got ready, as soon as they announced that the war was over, and my husband’s officer came in and he says, “Well, the war is over,” and all that.

My husband said, “Hooray, Maui here we come.”

And he looked at my husband and he said, “You mean you’re going back to Maui?”

And my husband said, “Yes.”

He said, “You know, it’s a good thing that the war is over because if not, I would send you to the front line,” he said, (JS chuckles) “just because you don’t want to stay with us.” (Laughs)
JS: Well, are there any other things you remember that, how the war might have affected your family?

RV: No, not really.

JS: You also had mentioned that you had made some of the camouflage nets for the helmets, right?

RV: Yes. Uh hum, uh hum.

JS: Can you speak a little bit more about that, like how you got into making those things?

RV: Well, when we started to have our neighborhood meetings, because as the war was progressing they wanted to be sure that we would be all able to do things and take care of ourselves if anything should strike us there. That’s when some of them knew how to do that, and they arranged it with the service that we would make as many of those camouflage nets as we could. And actually it wasn’t hard to do, but now if I were to do it, I’d have to stop and think a lot before I could really accomplish it. I know we had a little, like a, almost like a tatting shuttle. You know what a tatting thing is? They tat this beautiful delicate lace on handkerchiefs and things like that, and it has two points, see. It comes this way. And then in between the outer shell, the thread is all put in there. It’s the same way with the other thing [camouflage nets]. The only thing is that we used bamboo shuttles and then it was wound. It would wind all the cord onto that thing and then work from there. Then you have to do it around your fingers. Your fingers become the measurement, too, for the different size shells that you have to make.

JS: Were there other things that you were contributing to this war effort?

RV: Well during the war, too, we also got to make mufflers and the caps for the men, you know, like they use for skiing and all that. Well, we used to make those and then the mufflers. And then some of those that were really talented at the knitting and things made gloves for them so that those that had to be in areas that were very cold, they had something to protect them. And we enjoyed it. We used to do—we had quite a group that would get into that and do it.

JS: Okay. How much did you folks associate or meet with the servicemen?

RV: Well, our husbands did. They met them a lot. But we didn’t get to have parties and things like that where we could get together with them. And some of them had some family out here, but the majority of them didn’t. But we didn’t have [parties] because at that time, the less gatherings we would have the better they [the wartime government] liked it. Because they were afraid that if too many people were assembled at one place and something happened, it would be a disaster then. So they strongly discouraged us from having things like that.

JS: What about, while you were shopping or doing things in town, did you notice a bigger military presence?

RV: Oh, yes. Everywhere you went you could see just flocks of the sailors all in there. White uniforms. Then you would see the Seabees. That’s the construction battalions. And they would be all in their own uniforms, too. And then the marines. All the different branches, we
would get to see them—all in groups. And they had special buses that all they did was carry the. . . If they were carrying the air force, that’s all they had in there was air force. If they had the army section, they would have army. And some of them, if they came from like the naval housing that had navy families staying there, then you’d have some women and children mixed with the servicemen riding those navy buses.

JS: What about some other signs that there was a war going on? What do you remember that kind of reminded everyone that there was a war going on?

RV: Well, actually it was more that we tried to be on alert and be careful not to antagonize anybody to start up any kind of a brawl which was actually not necessary. That’s about it.

JS: What about the beaches and things like that with the barbed wire?

RV: Well, all that areas, we couldn’t go to all those areas there. About the only place that we used to be able to go to the beach was right down in town—in Honolulu. What was the name of that place now? You know where they had the [Waikīkī] Aquarium? There used to be another building there before. And sometime ago, if I’m not . . .

JS: Are you talking about the [Waikīkī War Memorial] Natatorium?

RV: No. They used to have this building here that had all these aquarium tanks and all in there. And right there had a beautiful place for children to swim right out front. That area there we used to go. But outside of that we never went. We went once or twice, twice I think we went, and we went to Waimānalo and we camped overnight there with some local boys that knew the place real well. They were from Honolulu. And we enjoyed it, it was very nice. And where we were camping, we could just look across and it seemed as though we could swim over to what is known as Rabbit Island [Mānana]. It seemed that close, you know. So little things like that I still remember off and on, because they were precious moments where all of the families could get together. We would take tarpaulins and connect it from one car to the other and make a good shade so we’d have a place like a portable lanai (laughs), so you could enjoy it.

JS: So what kind of things were the children doing during these years in Honolulu?

RV: In Honolulu, they would just be playing, ordinarily with their sand tools and with little tanks, whatever tanks and little boats they had, and they make their own little trails in the sandpiles. And even in our yard, toward the back in our yard, there was a lot of sand in between the weeds and all that. My children used to like to go there and play. But I was always afraid because here and there you’d come across a nest of red ants and oh, those things are vicious. They really bite you so bad. My youngest son, one day, he didn’t realize. He was young at the time. He sat down on one of those and it got all into his diaper. Oh, he was the saddest sight, I’m telling you. He had so many bites from it. So we used to caution them, “Be careful where you sit down. Don’t go where you see . . .”. We used to call it the bichos, means insects. “Don’t you go where you see bichos because they’re going to bite you.” So they would try to keep away from it.

JS: So all in all, how did you feel about your stay in Honolulu?
Well, I made up my mind that since we had been there and everything had been okay, we didn't have any confrontation with anyone, that I kind of enjoyed meeting some new friends and having a chance to visit with some of the families that we ordinarily wouldn't be getting on a boat or a plane to go just to go and visit, because would cost too much money. But being down there all that time, off and on we had a chance maybe in a couple weeks, every couple weeks, we would decide to go here or go there or just call them on the phone and, you know, talk with them. But we never used to hold up the phones too much. We would just call and say, "Hi, how's everything?" and just a very short conversation because we all felt that the telephones were for business and we shouldn't be keeping it, you know, in use when someone else may need it. So it was okay.

Okay. Well, tell me a little bit more about what you folks did as soon as you heard the war was over.

Well as soon as the war was over, we started already packing things that we didn't necessarily have on hand, you know, that we didn't need to use it. We started packing it and crating it and sending back home whatever we could. So by the time we came back... Of course, we didn't have furniture to bring back because we didn't bring any. The things that we had down there just stayed with the house when we got rid of the house. We sold the house. It had turned out so that my brother had rented the house. And then when we went down we got in with them, and we were paying part of the rent. Then when my sister got married and she came in and she was living there, too. She was splitting her share of the rent, too.

In the meantime, our landlord wanted to sell the house, and so we had to buy the house from him because we didn't want to go and look for another house, and was really hard to get housing. And where it was, the house was convenient for us, for church, for the store, and even for the men to catch their bus to go to work, so we decided we'd just hold on to the house. So we paid for the house. Forgot what it was now. I know it was very little. Seventeen, wait. Eighteen hundred dollars for the house. The land, you did not own the land. The land belonged to John Rodgers Airport something, and so they would own the. . . . Let you build on it and you pay lease on it for so many years. And after that, anytime you wanted to sell your house, you could sell it.

But if the people didn't have a place yet for them to put it [the house], that would cause some confusion because when they bought it and that other lot would be empty there [when the house was moved], some. . . . Let's see. The people from the airport, they would find something to do with it [the vacant land]. Either they would rent it out or lease it out to somebody else. But as it was, gradually as the houses kept moving out, they kept clearing that out and then that's when it all turned out to be that huge airport that's down there now [the Honolulu International Airport]. All that area that had been in housing all got changed over to airplanes. So lots of people did want to take their homes that they had been living in. And [they] had been able to purchase a piece of property somewhere and able to have their houses taken whole and put on their new property.

About when was this happening? Was this during the war or after?

Shortly after the war. It seemed already that was in progress, you know, so that as the war ended, just before the war ended, people were already beginning to do stuff like that. So when we did sell the house, we sold it for little more than we had bought, and I remember it
came out to $2,700, and we were to divide that among the three of us and so we felt rich (JS laughs). But that night coming—when I came home from Honolulu on the boat, I didn't feel safe with that money with me. You know what I did? I took my wallet with that money and I shoved it between my legs and I kept my legs tight while I was (laughs). . . . And I said, "Nobody's going to touch around there without me feeling, so (laughs) I think my money is safe there."

So that's how I kept my money. Because when you get out and people, of course, hear that you've made some money, nine out of ten times you have somebody that's going to try to get it away from you, especially if they're the type that don't want to work and don't want to do anything except start off with drugs and stuff. In those days wasn't much drugs, that was more liquor. Liquor's the thing they were all turning to because there was a certain amount only that you could buy, and any chance that they had to get more of it, they would really forget to stop.

JS: You mentioned that your sister was with you in Honolulu, also. Why did she go down there?

RV: Well, her husband was working down there, too. They got married shortly after she graduated and then they went down. And then she got herself a job down there. She was working. And he was working at the Pearl Harbor navy yard. So they couldn't go out and buy a home, so we decided, well, since was just three of us, three different couples and all in the family, really that we would just decide to stay together and divide the upkeep of the place. And it worked out okay.

JS: So what kind of work was her husband doing at Pearl Harbor?

RV: Her husband was a machinist in the Pearl Harbor area.

JS: So do you know how he got that job? Was that the same . . .

RV: Well, he had gone to vocational [school], and he had learned a lot of that so there was no problem for people that knew anything of that work that they wanted to have done. They didn't have much of a problem to get in. That's why so many of the island boys here [from Maui] left and went to Honolulu to work. Some of them enjoyed Honolulu that they decided to make it their home and they stayed there even after the war was over. Others felt the way my husband and I did. We wanted to come back home to our own place, although we had not lived yet in the house that we live now, because my dad had bought it and he was holding on to it for us. But as soon as we got back and we got it going, then my husband says, "Well, now I know that it was worth all the time we spent in Honolulu." (Laughs)

JS: Well, what about your sister? What kind of work was she doing?

RV: She used to do office work for different places. There was one place that she did—for E. E. Black [Limited]. You remember E. E. Black construction? I think they still are doing construction work but on a smaller scale now. You don't hear it so often because so many Mainland concerns have come in and bidding on all these different things that are to go up. And at that time there wasn't that many, and the name E. E. Black construction was really well known. And when somebody was doing something and said, "Well, who's going to do the construction work there?"
“Oh, E. E. Black.”

So we all got used to having E. E. Black around.

JS: So your sister was doing office work for them?

RV: Yeah, she used to do office work. She did for them and then she did for some other smaller concerns, too, that I really didn’t get their names right.

JS: Did she ever say how their business was doing during the war?

RV: No. No, she never mentioned anything about it.

JS: So did she want to work in Honolulu or, I mean, why was it that she was working, you know, and you had decided to stay home?

RV: Well, because she didn’t have any children, see. And so she decided that she would go to work while the husband was working, and instead of just staying at home, she had gone . . . And then she had graduated from private school and she had had all this bookkeeping knowledge and all that, so she decided she would put that to use instead of just sitting at home.

JS: She went to school in Kula?

RV: She went down to St. Anthony’s in Wailuku [St. Anthony Girls’ School]. That’s where she got her high schooling.

JS: So it was pretty good then, you had most of your family there with you.

RV: Yes, mm hmm. Yeah, I had my only brother and my only sister. And my husband had his sister, because his sister, after we were married, she ends up marrying my brother. So we couldn’t have been a closer-knit family (laughs).

JS: Okay. Well, getting back to your return to Kula, you sold the house, and what other things did you prepare in order to come back here?

RV: Well, that was just about it because once we sold the house, there was nothing else that we had down there that we wanted to sell. Because what little furniture we had in the house, we just let it there because we had our own furniture up here, and in fact, it was stored in my brother’s house. So it was just a matter of getting the papers fixed up and get everything packed and ready to come. That was it.

JS: So all three of the couples came back?

RV: Mm hmm. Well, my sister and her husband didn’t come back on the same trip with us. My husband and the two children that we had with us down there came back, and then my brother and his wife came back about a month or so after that. And then my sister decided, well, if the husband could get a job here they would come back, too. So he tried and he ended up working for one of the plantation garages, so we eventually ended up all here, back home.
JS: So once you got back, when---how soon after the war was that?

RV: I think we were back here within five months. We were back home, settled already.

JS: So were you folks here when the marines were still here—Camp Maui was still here?

RV: Yes. Mm hmm. The Camp Maui marines were still here yet. They used to go up to my other sister-in-law's house and they used to deal a lot with them. They enjoyed coming up to Kula because of the country life. They really enjoyed that. And then my sister-in-law's husband [Manuel Miguel] was the type that, as long as he got to be good friends with somebody, he didn't care how hard my sister-in-law [Eva] had to work. She had to prepare all these special foods that he had been talking to these men about. So she had her hands quite full, always preparing different things. Sometimes he'd bring home four or five guys, sometimes six guys. Once in a while would be about a dozen people or more, and she had to be prepared for all that. And she's a good soul, really. She never complained. She says there were times—now when she talks with me, she says there were times that she was so exhausted she just wanted to give up. She says, but Manuel was there always spearheading it, to be sure that she just followed up on everything that he had wanted her to do.

And her first husband, that's that one, he had been in World War I. And when he died, she married into my family, my mother's brother. And he also had been in World War I. And in fact, both of them were American Legionnaires. And so she said that she thinks it was just destined that way. The first husband and the second husband both had to be from the army, from World War I. And you know when they dressed at that time, they dressed so different from the way they do nowadays in the army and service.

JS: This is your sister-in-law?

RV: Uh huh.

JS: The one that was married to your brother?

RV: No, the one that married my uncle. (She, Eva, was my husband's sister, making her my sister-in-law. After [her first husband] Manuel Miguel died, she married my mother's brother, Joe Teixeira, thus she became my aunt.) The one that married my brother, she's a little different. She doesn't seem to like to be with the friends that we have made. She always makes some kind of remark that she rather be on her own and all. So very seldom that she'll join us on something like that unless if she knows that something special is going to turn up, then she'll do it.

JS: But she was the one that was living with you folks in Honolulu?

RV: Yes, uh huh. Yeah.

JS: Okay.

RV: And we never had—all the years we lived together, we never had any problems together. She was always there. Helpful, too. And if it happened that my husband would have a day off and her husband was working that day, she would tell me, "You and Freddie go out and don't
think about anything today.” And she would watch my two younger children. And by the time we came home in the afternoon, would be just about the time the husband would be coming home, so all day she would have company, too. She’d have the babies to look after because she didn’t have any children until we were in Honolulu quite a few years before she had this one daughter. And that’s all they ever had. They never had any other children.

JS: So the in-law that you’re talking about who was hosting these marines is actually though, [later became] your uncle’s wife.

RV: Uh huh.

JS: Is that right? Okay. And so they had stayed in Maui throughout the war?

RV: Yes, they did. Uh huh.

JS: So how had your [sister-in-law’s husband] been meeting the marines?

RV: I really don’t know. I really don’t know how long. But he used to like to drive down to Camp Maui and seeing the men around there relax and all that. He used to stop in and chat with them and before you know it, before the day was over, he had made some new friends that he was going to bring home already with him. And that’s the way it turned out to be. And they enjoyed, of course, coming into a home where there’s family life going on and so different from when they’re in their little camps. So they enjoyed it, and we enjoyed having them around, too, because they would have a lot of interesting stories to tell about different states that they lived in, and to us it was just something that we weren’t used to and we didn’t know much about it anyway.

JS: Okay, let me turn the tape over here.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JS: Okay, we were talking a little bit about after you folks returned to Kula from Honolulu and you folks had, you were saying that some of the marines from Camp Maui were still around, right?

RV: Right. Mm hmm.

JS: Did the increased military presence on Maui, did that affect your father’s business in any way?

RV: No, not really.

JS: Okay, what about things that you noticed after being gone from Maui for a few years. What were some of those things?
RV: Well, what we noticed that there were different people that had moved into the community during the time that we were gone, and some of them, it was just temporary. And others, they made it a permanent stay.

JS: Were there any things around the community that, you know, physical kind of changes that might have shown that there was a war that had been going on?

RV: No, not really. No, the only thing that we were so used [to] already of having very small gatherings, that for a long time that’s the way it continued, just very small gatherings.

JS: What about the difference in atmosphere between Maui and Honolulu now that you had come back after those years?

RV: Well, I was more prepared for it. I really was looking forward to sort of a quiet atmosphere. Being down there it was sort of a rat race, you know, everybody was just rushing, rushing all the time. And coming back here, everything was sort of—not a standstill, because everything was going on, but it was as though you could be more leisurely about anything like that. You didn’t have to force yourself to rush into it—take your time.

JS: What about the service station? How had things changed?

RV: Well, we started to find that we had a lot of new customers. People who had moved from below had been coming to our service station. That made a lot of difference. And of course we had to lose a few because some of them, when they went away to work somewhere [during the war], they enjoyed the place and they decided to stay. But all in all, it was good. It didn’t harm our business any. It was enough that we could still go on peacefully and really enjoy life and the people around it.

JS: And what kind of work did your husband do once he got back here?

RV: When my husband got back here, he went to the service station, actually to the garage. And he and my brother worked in the garage, and then my dad had taken over the service station. So they did that for, I think it was three years. But for two families to live on the income of the service station in a small place like this is very, very hard. There was times for the whole month we wouldn’t even make ninety dollars. And after you’re used to having a nice paycheck down there [in Honolulu], and you come back and you go into something like that, was just too much.

So my husband had gone back and checked with Richard Baldwin with Haleakalā Ranch. Because my husband, since he was sixteen [years old] until after we got married and just before we had, let’s see, a year and a half I guess it was, before we went to Honolulu, he had worked on the Haleakalā Ranch. And when he asked the boss permission, too, that he was going to get into the Provisional Police and so he would be taking extra time off, and the boss said to go right ahead. He said, “That’s something that is necessary. But if you ever need help and you ever want to come back, just look us up and we’ll see if we can’t get you right back in.”

So after trying it out for a while with the service station and it was very, very tight, he went to see the boss, and the boss told him, “Oh, of course. By all means, come and work for us.”
But he had wanted to go out into the field as a cowboy. But because of his record working as a mechanic down there, they stuck him in the garage as a mechanic to take over the care of all the trucks and everything that they had there on the ranch. So that part he didn't care too much for it because he had had so much of it during the war. But just the same, he stayed on and he made the best of it. And he stayed there twenty-six years again before he quit. And so he quit at the age of sixty-two because the (chuckles) boss had wanted him to go and be a yardman because the yardman had quit.

And he told the boss, he said, "Mr. Baldwin, I'm sorry to tell you this," he said, "but you're asking me to be a yardman. Ask me to be anything else but a yardman. I definitely detest yard work." He said, "You can tell by my yard when you pass by. You [I] don't have a lot of plantings around there. I keep it down to the minimum so it's easier for me to just run the mower and that's it."

So they told him then that he could stay on and they would decide later on what to do. Well, they never really changed their mind. They left him there until the time that he retired. So that was---after the war, that was twenty-six years that he worked there in the ranch.

**JS:** And you folks never thought about going back to Honolulu where the jobs paid better?

**RV:** Uh uh [no]. Because he said it wouldn't pay off because the climate was too different. He liked the Maui climate more than Honolulu.

**JS:** Well, what about some of the things that you did after you returned to Maui?

**RV:** Well, after I returned to Maui, that's when I did mail carrier. I did that. And then I had done postal clerk inside. Then I went out and worked as like a nurse's aide, that I'd help with these old people that couldn't give themselves a bath by themselves. They needed help. And that all came on after I was back from the war. So we worked at it for quite a while. In fact, I continued doing that type of work until about twenty-nine years ago. I gave up because then my daughter had had twin boys, and her husband had walked out on her when the twin boys came, because they already had two girls. And he said that was too much to handle, so he got up and left. So she had to go to work. So I told her, I said, "I think it's better that you go to work because you have all this education with all these new things that have come up, and I'll stay at home and look after the children." So I did. And so it's twenty-nine years now. The oldest boy is—the twins actually, are twenty-nine years old.

So it worked out fine because—although she had to do a lot of traveling. She had to go from here to Sheraton[-Maui Hotel], and she would... . Her shift got through about one o'clock in the morning, and we were always tense about her coming home all by herself. After putting in a day's work, comes to that hour it's pretty hard to keep your eyes open—driving—and that's what we were so afraid that she might fall asleep on the wheel coming home. But thank God, not. She would call us every night before she left there and she'd say, "I've completed everything already. Now I'm ready to just walk to my car and get in my car, and I'll be home shortly."

So we always reminded her, please take the same route because if anything should happen that she wouldn't reach home, we knew what route to go and check on her. If she had had a flat or something gave up on the car, that we would be able to find her then. So she agreed.
So my husband and I would try to really keep awake until that phone call would come and say that she was coming home, and that she had had a lot to do with the meetings from the days before. They had different things that... You know how the cashiers and all, they have to get together to balance their things out or something new that's come in. And that's the type of work she was doing. She was working at the Sheraton at the time. So when she would let off from there, soon as she was ready, she'd go to the phone and she'd call and say, “I'm leaving now.”

So we would stay awake and wait. Of course, the oldest—I call him the oldest twin because he was forty-five minutes older than the brother. And he was a very colicky baby. Oh, for three months, every night we walked the floor with him with colic. So I used to take care of him. But you know how it is when that one child is sleeping and the other one is screaming and crying, the other one is going to wake up, too. So my husband used to handle the other one, and I would take care of the one that was colicky. And to this day, that one that my husband used to handle, he became so attached to the grandfather—that's the one that's living with me yet. And he's now twenty-nine years old, but he still hasn't decided to move out yet (chuckles).

I always tell him, “Remember, Grandma is not going to stay here for seed [forever]. One of these days will be my turn to go, too, and then you have to be prepared.”

So he's bought himself a piece of property, and they just got through making the plans for their home and they're going to build, so he'll be out Pukalani way. He said, “But Grandma, that's only until I can pay off that place and make some extra money coming in, then I'm going to invest someplace in Kula. I'm going to be able to find, even if it's just enough to have the house and with very little yard, I don't care, but I want to live back here in Kula.”

JS: So when you were doing some of those other jobs, like the mail carrier, that was right after you folks had gotten back here?

RV: Yeah, mm hmm.

JS: That was going to each of the houses, taking the mail there?

RV: Yeah, you go in and the mailboxes are right alongside the road and you just drop them in.

JS: So you probably met with a lot, talked with a lot of the people along those roads?

RV: No, not really, because a lot of them worked, and you just got up to their house and you saw that it was the number that was on the mail and so you just stuck it into their mailbox and you went on. And lot of times they needed stamps. They would just leave you an envelope with the money in it and say I need so many stamps and... So right there we fix it up because we always carried an extra amount of stamps with us. So we fixed it and left it there in their mailbox with their mail, and we went right on to the next one. Then when you're all through the whole route, then you come back to the post office and then that becomes just like any other place where you have to balance out everything.

JS: So as you were going around the neighborhoods and things like that, did you notice any changes from when you were here before the war started?
RV: No, not much. Very little.

JS: So everything pretty much the same?

RV: Yeah, pretty much the same.

JS: What about the mixture of the nationality of people here?

RV: Well, that's when people started coming from the Mainland more, coming out this way to live out here. That's when we started to have, like we say, a lot of the Haole people move up, because actually, now in Kula, I swear we have more Haole than Japanese now. Really. And there was a time that the Japanese were the predominating fact right here. But not now, because just about everywhere you turn now it's Haoles, Haoles, Haoles. And when they buy property, if they have enough money I guess, they get it fixed up so that . . . And they must go to the bureau of conveyances or something and check into what the possibilities are that they can put more than one building on it [their property], because some of them have such a small place, and they end up with three or four buildings on it.

And there's people that have had a lot more property that were never able to divide. I, for one, when my father died, my father had left me ten acres of land, and I was never allowed to divide it to my children. They put every kind of ruling down, and the only way that they would let me do it is if I would agree to go and have all the expense of putting in fire hydrants, putting in sidewalks, putting in the right-of-way roads to the different . . . Because I would have divided it into nine parcels, because I have nine grandchildren. Because my own children, we had divided our property. Each of them got, was almost three, not quite three acres of land to each one. Was two acres and something, anyway.

So we felt that we would help the grandchildren then. But they didn’t let us do it. And, oh, they were just giving us such a bad time. So I ended up selling it [the ten acres] all in one chunk, and then they pay me back a little each year until they get the payments done. So that money, automatically I give it to the grandchildren. Like I always say, “I hope you folks don’t squander it, because if you do, this source doesn’t have that kind of money to be giving out all the time.”

But what I would really like to see them do is put it into a home of their own or a little piece of property, whatever. . . . Put it to good use, you know, not squander it like some people. The first thing they say, “I going [Las] Vegas.” Well, going Vegas is fine but sometimes you come back with your pockets a lot emptier than they were when you first started off. So anyway, I had to do that. I had to get rid of it [the land], and now, as I say, when the payments come in, I divide it among the children. So I’m not making use out of that money. It goes to the children just the same. So if they can save it as much as possible, then they can invest in another piece of property someplace so that they can build up, too.

One of my granddaughters wasn’t that lucky because she had lupus and she had damage to her liver. And then it had also attacked her kidneys, so she was on dialysis for five years, I think. And this coming November, God willing that she live that long, will be two years that she had a transplant—a kidney transplant. And so far, she’s doing real good. She’s very, very strict on what she takes on the line of food or beverages, whatever. She’s just very careful. And her doctor, the one that performed the surgery in Honolulu, has her go down every so
often, and he checks on her himself. So she’s due to go back again in the ending of August, sometime. She’ll go down again to see him.

So she had, from the money that I had given her, she has money saved so that she’s had to use from there to go down, make her trips back and forth, and when she has to stay in a hotel down there, because the doctors didn’t want her working. For years now she hasn’t been able to work. Now that Kmart [Stores] opened, they’re trying to see if she can handle it. But she said sometimes the stress is so bad, she says it’s really hard. She said even before they were officially opened, some of the people that had been hired there were already robbing the store. They were robbing the cash sales, and she says she cannot work with people alongside of her and to think that’s all they have in their mind. So the manager there has been firing them left and right. All those that come up with little traits like that, they won’t keep them.

So she’s hoping that they can finally put her on a place where the stress won’t be too much. Because if she has too much stress, her lupus can work up again. And it’s a good thing that the manager there had. . . . Wait. It wasn’t the manager. It was her instructor that came from the Mainland to instruct her on the office procedures. This manager [instructor] had three brothers. All three had kidney transplants. The first one, he lived only forty-eight hours after the transplant. But the other two, they have been very fortunate, and it’s years now since they’ve had it, and they’re doing real well. And so she understands all that her brothers went through, the families, what they had to put up with them and all that. And so she [the instructor] was very much in favor of talking to the manager. And so far, everything is going good. If the manager comes in and he sees that she’s uptight—really uptight—something’s gone wrong that day, and he’ll check with her and before you know it, he’ll put her on something else.

JS: Well, sounds like your family has had a really long history in Kula and you’ve seen things change a lot.

RV: Yeah.

/ JS: Is there anything else you wanted to add, especially about the war years or anything you remember?

RV: Well, for one thing, we didn’t have like the drive-ins to go to and things like that. But aside of that, everything was about the same.

JS: Was there very—other people in the Kula community, do you know how they felt about the war, what kind of feelings they might have had about it?

RV: Well, some of them felt pretty hurt about it and some wished that they could do something to control it. But as a whole, the majority of them just went along with it and did the best they could.

JS: Was there any feelings about whether Japan would win or whether we would win?

RV: No, I think that the majority of them felt that America would be winning. Of course, we had some of the Japanese younger people, too, at that time that did go out there and really gave out their heart and soul, working for America, too. And for them I think, it was a very hard
thing to do because their parents, most of them having come from Japan and all that, had
different feelings. But then the younger ones that had been born and raised here and had all
their education here, a lot of them just had their heart and soul to help out America, and they
stuck by it and they never complained. Not like—now it's different. Everybody seems to be
either one way or the other. If you want something, you're going to stick by one side and not
go on to the next side. But all in all, they were all that type that could understand and tried to
understand what was really wrong and to make the best of it.

JS: Did you know of any of the Japanese in this community that had been interned or questioned
by the military?

RV: Well, the one that I was always told from the beginning that they had been interned was
Mr. [Robert S.] Toda from the Toda Drug Company in Kahului. That's the only one that I
know that they mention all the time that he had been interned.

JS: But no one in your, other people that you knew here?

RV: No. No, no, no. And Mr. Toda is one that I dealt with for many, many years. In fact, when
he passed away, I was still dealing there, and I kept on dealing there right on through till they
closed up their store this past year around November, December, something like that, they
closed. So Mrs. Toda is still alive yet, too. She doesn't get around too much now, but I check
with her son, the one that works in Pukalani Drugs, [located] in Foodland [Super Market].
That's where he has his place now, in Foodland. I always ask him for his mom and the rest
of the family—even his brother—because he and another brother, twins, too. And knowing
that the father had been interned and all, that didn't make any difference to me because I
thought, well, if they had to take him in to question him for anything, you're not going to
hold it against the rest of the family. Even with him [Mr. Toda]. I never held it against him.
We were the best of friends, even after the war was over and he was back working in the
drug store.

JS: So basically, things in Kula seemed like it wasn't as affected as one would think it would be?

RV: No, no. Mm hmm.

JS: And your father's business carried on . . .

RV: Yes.

JS: . . . pretty much the same as before?

RV: Pretty much the same. Mm hmm. He still kept on having his faithful old Japanese customers
come in, and he had all his other Japanese friends that used to come by and chat with him by
the hour. Until he passed away he always did have friends of all nationalities, but being that
we were brought up so much with the Japanese people, he could spend hours with them
conversing.

JS: Okay, well, did you have anything else that you wanted to add?

RV: Not right now, offhand.
JS: Okay, well, thank you so much for what you've given us. It sounds like you had a really full life, and you still seem very active.

RV: That's right.

(Laughter)

JS: Okay. Well, thank you.

RV: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW
AN ERA OF CHANGE

Oral Histories of Civilians in World War II Hawai‘i

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