Ernest Malterre, Jr., 67, retired administrator for Oahu Sugar Company

Ernest Malterre, Jr., French-Portuguese-Hawaiian, was born October 10, 1915 in Onomea, Big Island. His father was an overseer for the Onomea Sugar Company.

In 1928, the family moved to Honolulu. Ernest's father worked for Oahu Sugar Company, and commuted to Waipahu from their Kaimuki home. Ernest found work as a clerk at Bailey Store, a cash and carry in Kaimuki. A year later, he became a caddy at Waialae Golf Course and was paid seventy-five cents a round.

In 1930, the Malterre family moved to Waipahu and Ernest began working for Oahu Sugar in the pump office. Meanwhile, he attended Liliuokalani School, Central Intermediate, and McKinley High School, earning his high school certificate in 1934.

After four years with the pump division, Ernest became a cane field supervisor, responsible for gangs of field workers. In 1938, he became an irrigation overseer.

Following World War II, Ernest served Oahu Sugar in a number of personnel-related administrative capacities: housing, medical plan, pension plan, workmen's compensation, and trades progression. He retired in 1979.

In addition to his many years as Oahu Sugar employee, Ernest has also been a tireless community volunteer. His organizations include the Waipahu Community Association, Waipahu Cosmopolitan Senior Citizens' Club, St. Joseph Church, Boy Scouts, and the Friends of Waipahu Cultural Garden Park. In 1983 he was nominated for the City and County Outstanding Senior Citizen's Award.

Ernest lives in Waipahu with his wife Angie. They have three children and, at last count, six grandchildren.
WN: This is an interview with Mr. Ernest Malterre, Jr. Today is June 14, 1983 and we're at his home in Waipahu, Oahu.

Okay, Mr. Malterre, can we start by having you tell me where you were born and when you were born?

EM: I was born in Onomea, on the island of Hawaii, October the tenth, 1915.

WN: What was your father doing in Onomea?

EM: The time I was born, my father was an overseer for Onomea Sugar Company. He had charge of all the plowing, cultivation, of course, which involved all the mules and horses that they used on the plantation. And he rode horseback every day.

WN: So your father was a luna?

EM: A luna, yeah. He was a little higher than a luna. My mother's father was a luna, a gang luna. So he [EM's grandfather] just had one gang and he just looked after that particular gang. But with my dad, he had people spread all over the section—the Onomea section that he had. So that's why he rode horseback all day long.

WN: And what was your mother doing?

EM: My mother was a housewife and we had chickens and cattle. We raised a couple of pigs. So my mother used to take care the—I mean, it's more like a hobby, like they raised chickens for the eggs and for the meat. So they set aside certain hens for fertile eggs and roosters. Of course, you had to have roosters. For the fertile eggs—then they kept these eggs and then
when they had enough, they put them in an incubator. The incubator was run by kerosene. Now, the eggs had to be candled every so often. My mother used to keep track of all the eggs and turn them over, you had to turn them over in the incubator.

WN: The eggs had to be....

EM: Candled. They call it candled. What it means, you look to see if it's fertile or not. You see after a few days, you can tell whether the eggs are fertile. You see the chick starting to develop within the egg. They call it candling because you put it up to the light, you see. It was a little container-like, you put the egg in and you put it up to the light and you could see right through the egg. You could tell when it was actually fertile or not. Any that wasn't fertile she would take off from the incubator. You know they wasn't [fertile]--you ain't gonna have a chick. Then when the chicks came out of course, then we had what we call a brooder. There again we had a kerosene lantern in the middle of this little...I don't know what you call it, little structure that they built, and they used flannel to keep the chicks warm within this little thing. And we had it right in the house. The house was so big that we could set aside a section that we could raise these chicks.

WN: And you raised it for what? Commercial use or....?

EM: We sold chickens and we raised for our own use, yeah. Quite a bit---incubator would hatch about a hundred eggs at one time. So you'd have a hundred chicks, you know. That doesn't mean that they all gonna survive though. Because at that time, they did not have the innoculations that they have now. So when the chicks would get bitten by the mosquitoes, sort of a mold-like would develop on their face usually. We used to put iodine onto the mold-like, and it would cure them. Not always all of them survived though. Sometimes they died from these mosquito bites, the chicks did.

WN: And did you help at all?

EM: Oh yeah! Oh yeah, we all helped. For instance, every week we had to clean out all the coops, you know, and refurbish with--what would you call it--used dry grass for the---where the hens laid their eggs. Then, of course the yards where the chickens [were fenced in]---we had chicken runs, we call them chicken runs. The whole place was fenced in. One of our big problems
were the mongoose. So what we did was the chicken run had small fence wire on the bottom and then the bigger wire on the top to keep the mongoose out. Those wires had to be staked into the ground so the---you know, the mongoose, if he wanted to come in, he had to dig underneath the wire to come into the chicken yard. And every so often, we'd have a mongoose come into the chicken yard. And we'd all get excited, of course. And then my dad had an old .38 [caliber gun] that (laughs) he had, to go out and try to shoot the mongoose and you know how fast the mongoose were. (laughs)

WN: Kinda hard....

EM: That was something, yeah. But you know, I remember my father. Bang! You know, he'd shoot (laughs), he'd shoot again. That was really something. Then, as I grew older, we had a wood stove and a kerosene stove. So for the wood stove, the plantation gave us 'ōhi'a wood. And if you read into the history of the Hawaiian Islands, you'll find out that there used to be a lot of sandalwood, and 'ōhi'a wood, and koa in the islands. And then they cut them down for firewood. In fact, even on Oahu they've done that. So the plantation would supply us with the wood. They come in big logs that were, oh God, from about six feet in length, at least, some of them. And you know, they're foot to foot-and-a-half in circumference. So we had to saw the logs into sections of about 1-¾ to 2 feet. And then, you had to stack these stack of wood to dry. And we were fortunate that under our house, there was one section that was high. Oh, about six feet at least. And we stacked all the wood underneath the house to dry. When we needed, we'd go out to the stacks and you know, keep breaking all the stacks. But that was every Saturday, when my brother and I used to get on one of these big logging saws, you know. So two of us, one on each side used to saw that way. That was a must every weekend. You have to ask the questions, I.... (laughs)

WN: Yeah. You know, you said you had a big house, eh? Was that because your father was a luna?

EM: No. My father bought what was formerly the Onomea School prior to getting married to my mother. He bought about three acres of land that belonged to the Territory at that time. So he bought the land and on the land there was this building. And he sort of renovated the building and that became our home. See that school used to have the housing for the principal when my grandfather used to live there too. Then they
moved the school to Pepeekeo. So when they moved the school, that's when my dad bought the property.

So the house is large, it had three bedrooms, a large living room, a dining room and an immense kitchen. And like I said, we had this wood stove and kerosene stove and then I remember the icebox was one of these old boxes where you bought the ice in blocks. And that was the icebox. Beside that, we had this crock, we had at least one crock, maybe several, I think, of these big crocks, in which we kept the salt pork and stuff like that. In the kitchen, I can never forget this. We'd have the big leg of ham, I don't know what you'd call it, cured ham would be in a sack hanging up on the ceiling. I mean on the beam, on the ceiling (laughs) in the kitchen. And every time you needed some ham, all you did was take down the ham and cut off a section and you fried it or....

WN: How long did one last?

EM: I don't know. See when we left the Big Island there were six of us children so I couldn't tell you how long it lasted.

Then for water, we originally had a water tank that got its source of water from the rainfall which fell on the corrugated iron roof, run into a flume, on both ends of the corrugated [roof]—because it was an A-frame building, so you know, from both ends, it went into a flume and from the flume, into this tank. Now, water being standing in the tank, would accumulate mosquitoes. So we had a faucet that came right into the kitchen—was a little window like, and right off the kitchen window, there was this tank with the faucet. On the faucet, we'd tie the Durham bag. You know, tobacco bag (laughs) to get all the impurities out of the water. Then eventually, my dad ran his own water line from our house up to the Onomea village, and we had some running water that way. But our toilet facilities were just a hole in the ground with a shanty on top of it, you know. And this thing had two holes, one made out for children, and one for the adults. Each one had a cover, so that nobody would fall into the toilet then.

WN: How come had one for children and one for adults?

EM: Smaller hole on top, you know, smaller hole. And of course, before you used it, especially at night, we used to light newspaper and run the newspaper underneath so to keep the cockroaches out otherwise you
know they'd pinch you, (laughs) bites you. And you know that [hole] used to be about six feet deep, when that filled all they did was dig another hole and move the shanty. You move the little building onto this hole.

WN: What, nearby or you....?

EM: Oh, we had to travel about at least fifty feet, at least fifty feet from the house. So we, we had to walk.

WN: How often you have to change the hole?

EM: The hole? I don't know. Depend on how many people used the place, eh?

(Laughter)

WN: I was wondering the workers, you know the common working people, did they get their water the same way?

EM: I remember my mother telling me how their house---see they were in the plantation house. That I didn't live in so I cannot recall exactly how it was. But, I did go to a woman that used to come and take care of us children when we were small. Her name was Tsune Takahashi. She was the midwife to all of us children. There were eight of us born, one died at about three months-old so. She was the midwife and she used to come over and take care of my mother and take care of us children and she taught me how to cook Japanese food, which I loved and still do. (Laughs) And then after we got older, she was small, tiny person. You know us kids, we start growing tall pretty young, and we used to even wrestle with her.

(Laughter)

But anyway, she used to take us up to go see the samurai movies, you know silent movies, up in the camp.

And I remember going to her house and you walked in what was supposed to be the living room, and first thing, you know, there was this floor-like, there was about a foot and a half off the main floor. And on it were all these mats. She told me that's where they slept. When she stayed at our home, she wouldn't sleep in one of the beds because we had regular beds, you know. We had the steel frame beds and we had koa furniture in fact; we were, you know, suppose to be the elite, eh, supposedly. But anyway, she come to our
house, and she wouldn't sleep on the bed. She sleep on the floor on a mat and then she had the futon and she had her wooden headrest. So, you know, she'd bring it with her and sleep on our floor.

Then my mother used to tell me that at their house, they had a little ditch in the back where they got their source of water from. And from that ditch, they'd run little flumes to their house. Now what this flumes were made from and how, I don't recall. So I cannot tell you the background of plantation houses.

WN: Your father was Hawaiian-French and your mother was Portuguese. So your father and mother were both born in Hawaii?

EM: Born in Hawaii. My father was born in Honolulu in 1885. His father came to Honolulu in 1880. His father came from France, my grandfather went to San Francisco and from San Francisco he came here. By the time he got here, he was an American citizen, my grandfather, the Frenchman. And he met my grandmother Maggie Pukui, who was Hawaiian. Now my mother, her parents came from Portugal, I don't know exactly what year. But she was born in 1897 in Onomea and she had three sisters and two brothers older than she. So, she had nephews that were just as old as she was, in fact, older. I think there were some, couple of nephews that were older than she, because she had older sisters.

WN: Do you know why your grandfather came to Hawaii?

EM: I understand he was on ship and he jumped ship. My grandmother, I understand from what's in the stories we've heard, had property, she being Hawaiian. [She] had property where the Royal School is. My grandfather was a great gambler. He gambled away all the property, he lost all his property, my grandmother's property. Why they moved to Hilo, to Hawaii, I don't know.

But while he was in Hawaii, this is now talking about prior to my father buying the property, he ran a soda works--soda water works. And there are still bottles with the name Malterre on it, Malterre Soda Works. Of course the old soda works was, my dad used to explain, was where you didn't have a cork to tap it. You had a marble within the bottle. And as you put the soda in, the gas would lift the marble up to the top and that was the cork.

WN: You mean a glass marble?
EM: A glass marble, it's agates. And us children, we used to find these agates, they were white agates. We used to find the agates on the property and we used to play marbles with them. And then he went into raising frogs for the legs. So he made a big pond, you know, and he lost some frogs to sickness, disease, and he lost for this and that. Then he went into silkworm and silk---try to raise silkworms. I mean silk, you know. So he had mulberry trees. So along the border of our property, there were mulberry trees. See, the silkworm lived on the mulberry leaves, see. But that beat it all. So he was an adventurous old guy. (Laughs)

WN: Did he ever work on the plantation?

EM: No, he was a schoolteacher. When my mother was in school, he was the school principal. And then my aunts, two of my aunts, were schoolteachers. And one of my uncles who was my mother's age, he was a student with my mother and she'd tell me how he used to sit in the back of her and pull her hair, you know they all had long braids in those days. He used to pull her hair, never knowing that he was going to be her brother-in-law one day.

(Laughter)

So I went ask 'em one day, my mother, "Eh, how come you met Papa?"

She said, "Oh, you know your father lived away from the camp. And was alone, he was a bachelor, all by himself, so he needed bread to eat. He needed his laundry done."

So he used to bring his laundry up to my mother's house and he used to, of course, buy bread from them. So lot of times, he used to deliver the bread and they had to deliver bread hot, eh. And of course you asked the question: How did they do the bread in those days? Well, the Portuguese people had these outdoor ovens, you've heard of those.

WN: Stone ones?

EM: Yeah, concrete ovens--brick ovens, and that's how they used to bake the bread. In fact, when I was a child, my mother made all our bread. We thought that the store bread (laughs)....

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes).

WN: Okay, we're talking about the bread.
EM: Yeah, my mother baked bread, you know, for us children. And then gee, the homemade bread to us was food. I mean you know, regular staple. When it came to the store bread, every so often we'd buy a loaf of store bread, was just like cake to us, it wasn't enough, it wouldn't fill us up. Was so different, I mean, of course we ate a lot of rice, I've always loved rice, you know. We learned how to eat rice too but, and potatoes. But she made all---every weekend was a whole bunch of bread. And I always was hairy, so I couldn't help her knead.

WN: (Laughs)

EM: We don't want to get the hair (laughs)---in fact my wife make sweet bread now, and I can't help her because, you know, of the hair....

WN: On your arms? (Laughs)

EM: Yeah, 'cause, when you knead, eh, you know the hair, eh, get into the bread.

WN: That's a good excuse.

EM: Yeah.

(Laughter)

EM: I used to help her, you know, just kinda mix that stuff. I never did get to knead the bread. Oh, one thing I forgot to tell you, I was born clubfooted, both sides. When I was four years of age we came to Honolulu. There was my father, my mother, my brother Leon, and I. My brother Leon was about two years old. He's two years younger than I am. And we came on the interisland steamship, Kilauea. Of course, we all had a cabin to ourselves. And we stayed at 6th Avenue in Kaimuki where my grandfather was. By that time, I never did get to know my Hawaiian grandmother because she had died when my father was nine years old. So he [EM's father] didn't have a mother since he was nine. And--he [EM's grandfather] had remarried a French woman. At that time, he was working for Standard Oil in Honolulu. And she used to raise rabbits and chickens as a side business-like, you know, sell the rabbits and we used the meat at home too. We used to use quite a bit of rabbit meat and chicken meat, of course. She used to do the driving, she used to have a old Model-T that she used to drive around.

Then they put me in the hospital, for I don't know how many months. And what happened, was that they left the
cast on so long that you see I don't have a normal leg. You see how this is big and this is small.

WN: Your thigh is big and your calf is small?

EM: Yeah. It never did....

WN: Both sides?

EM: Oh, yeah, both sides. Here, see this, see this here. See was this way. So they had to cut here, they cut back here.

WN: Did they cut at your Achilles tendon and the bottom of your feet?

EM: Yeah, and this side too. You see underneath. I was in the Shriner's Hospital. If I remember right, the doctor's name was Dr. Hats.

WN: Hats?

EM: Yeah, I think that's what my mother told me, Dr. Hats.

WN: H-A-T-S?

EM: Yeah. Now you must remember, this is about 1915, so that was about 1920 that I was in Shriner's Hospital. And, I remember the crib that they had, was a metal stake crib. That I can remember, otherwise I can't remember everything at that time. So we were in Honolulu for quite a few months. My father, of course, stayed and went back to Hilo because he had to go back to work, but my mother stayed here with us children. And she had a difficult time trying to live with the old French lady, you know.

Then in 19---I think it's about 1924. The way I figured it out is by the children that were living at that time. In 1924 we came to Honolulu and by that time, my grandfather had moved to Wilhelmina Rise, the very top. He was the first person to build a home on top of Wilhelmina Rise. And my dad had invested in a piece of property right below his. So [grand] father's on the top and my father had a piece of property right below his. And from there, at that time I remember we used to use binoculars and we could see the polo games at Kapiolani Park from Wilhelmina Rise. There weren't as many trees and everything else that time. You could even see the games with binoculars.

And I remember them having the---which was me--to me was something terrific, a Victrola that stood up, you
know, about (laughs) five feet off the ground. They had these records. Lot of them were in French and of course there was some English records. A lot of them were in French—the records were about a quarter of inch thick you know.

WN: Oh, yeah?

EM: Yeah. Big heavy records. And my dad—and mother had them for a while. After my grandfather died, I don't know how they accumulated some of these records. I looked and looked, I haven't been able to find them [i.e., records]. But that was something amazing.

We have a picture of the whole family, my grandfather, my step-grandmother, and all the cousins and aunts and everybody else. My younger sister is only about two years old so that's how I can tell. And my mother was pregnant for a brother of mine at the time. So that's why I figure it's about 1924, '25, somewhere in that time.

WN: Did you all move permanently to Honolulu at that time?

EM: No, no, no. At that time, we just came in for the summer. And we stayed at that time—we came in 1924, '25, whatever it was, we stayed on 10th Avenue in a house that one of my aunts owned. And I think what it was, was that a tenant was moved out and they were waiting for a new tenant to come in. That was the first time I saw—and we experienced a gas stove. You know where you put thing and swoosh, the darn thing would go on, you know, the flint. We used to be scared of that doggone thing. At first, when we first moved, every so often at night especially, you could hear the streetcar go up on Waialae Avenue. So the house must have been only a couple of—not even a block, I think, from the darn Waialae Avenue. And you could hear the streetcar, you know, clank, clank, clank, clank, it would climb a hill, see 'cause you know 10th Avenue is going up to—it's a little hill, so you know, clank, clank, clank, clank, clank, clank, clank up (laughs) the hill.

WN: Oh yeah, right by the [Kaimuki] park, yeah?

EM: Yeah, right by the park, yeah. Right by the park there.

WN: King's Garden is over there now—10th Avenue and Waialae? You know, the Chinese restaurant?
EM: I know, I know, there's one side, there's one on the other side, I think, yeah?

WN: Oh, so you must have been near there, then?

EM: Could be, yeah. I never did try go look. My grandfather's house I tried to go look for one on 6th Avenue. 'Cause I remember there was a stone house and it had this vine that creeps on rock, you've seen them, just the leaves itself, you know, you know what I'm talking about. And that I remember of his house, 'cause there was an open porch, all of stone. That was on 6th Avenue.

WN: Do you know why your father moved from Onomea to...?

EM: Oh yeah, that wasn't until 1928. See, in 1928 my dad had this property in Wilhelmina Rise, and he had bought the property, was something like three or three-and-a-half cents a square foot. And then he was able to sell it for double the amount. So to him was big money at that time. But it wasn't now, I don't know what it was, $2,000, $3,000, you know. So, he had money. He had a little savings.

And his boss used to give him a bad time. Guy's name was—I forgot his first name, I know his last name was Moir. He was a Scotsman that was related somehow to the manager of Onomea Sugar Company which was John T. Moir. See, the Onomea Sugar includes Papaikou, Kalua and all of that. He was a nephew so you couldn't fire the guy because he was, you know. And he used to give my father a bad time at work. Then midnight he'd come to our house drunk, knock on the door (EM makes slurring sounds) you know my dad wanted to beat him up several times, but he couldn't because the guy was above him in rank. (Laughs) He was in charge of the whole area and my dad was only in charge of, you know, operations—certain operations only, not the whole area. So my dad got fed up with him and he just quit.

And then my uncle was working here in Honolulu now, you must remember this is 1928 going in '29 and my uncle had been—one of my uncles was working here in the day as a streetcar conductor. He used to write and say, "Oh, shucks! You come Honolulu, I find you a job. You can be a motorman you know. And easy for you! All you do is clean the---run the thing, you know. Easy job! Good money and all that." So my dad fell for it. That time my dad was forty-two years old. He came here to Honolulu. So what he did, he bought property with my—where my sister is living now. Right on Bethshan Road. Five thousand dollars
for a 6,000 square foot lot (and three-bedroom frame house).

WN: St. Louis Heights?

EM: No, no.

WN: Where is this?

EM: This is uh, Bethshan Road, right on uh, off (12th Avenue) and Maunaloa Road. One block from Leahi Hospital.

WN: Oh, okay.

EM: Yeah, they still have the property. My sister owns it now, my mother's dead. And---they bought this house---now that was all landfill. When I was a kid, we used to see the holes that developed, you know, in the property that (we) would fill up with stones. Oh God. What a piece of property, $5,000 house and lot, brand new house.

So when we moved, we had koa furniture in the Big Island. Beautiful stuff we had! And my aunts kept saying "Oh, you don't have to bring it. We have here." We got here, they bought this flimsy stuff. That's, you know, the modern-day furniture, supposedly---that they had---my aunt, had bought for us. My mother cried, she cried many days. So all the beautiful stuff she just about gave away on the Big Island, you know, that they accumulated for years. They'd been already married twelve years, I think. I was twelve years old? I was about twelve years old. My father had had a lot of the furniture from before, cabinets even of koa.

So, we came to live there. And then I went to Liliuokalani [Elementary School] and my brothers and sisters went down to Liholiho [Elementary School] which is down the street, this school there.

WN: This is in '28 yeah?

EM: Twenty-eight.

WN: Okay, before you get to Honolulu, can you tell---kinda tell---describe Onomea for me and what you folks did and what it was like?

EM: I can tell you about going to school?
Okay.

Okay. I went to school a year late because I had to use braces to walk because of my clubfeet. And I went into kindergarten, and of course, the kids that were there were younger than me. And then I remember my teacher was Mrs. Low, was a part-Hawaiian—Chinese-Hawaiian lady, really nice. And she had children in this class too. The principal of the school was Mr. Pickerel at that time. I went to different grades, in fact I have pictures somewhere, of my third grade and all that.

And then when I was in the fourth grade, a man whose name was Stanley Kunishi was my teacher. He was very friendly with my family—and what he did, he used to drive from Olaa to Onomea, so instead of walking to school—we used to walk from Onomea all the way to Pepeekeo. My dad used to pay him a fee. And he [Mr. Kunishi] used to pick us kids up because there were—by that time, there were three I think, three or four of us I think. First I went to school. I had to walk. Then, we later had this man pick us up.

When I was in the fourth grade a person come into the class—classroom, they took all the students out and I was the only one with this person and he gave me, this person gave me a written, and oral test which took practically the whole day. And then what happened was that he did the same thing to another young fellow who was in the fifth grade. His name was Manuel Crivello. And both of us went through this test. So what happened the second semester, I went from fourth grade to the fifth grade. And their young fellow went from fifth grade to the sixth grade.

So here I was now going into the fifth grade, mid-term wise, you know, mid-school term. And, I had to learn long division, I had to learn fractions, this common denominator which I never forgot. (Laughs) And nobody could teach me at home 'cause my mother didn't know how to do it, my mother went to the sixth grade I think, she couldn't do it. My dad went to the third grade, he couldn't do it. The store clerk—the clerk from the store they used to come pick up the orders for the groceries, he didn't know it. So I was stuck with the LCD, least common denominator. But anyway, the way I did it, I'd go to school earlier, in fact I had to—-I couldn't go ride—the ride came later, so I'd go real early and walk the three miles to school. And Mrs. Pickerel, who was the principal's wife, taught the fifth grade at that time. And she taught me long
division and the fractions. Then I must have passed because the following year I was in the sixth grade. And by the time I got to the sixth grade, the principal had changed to Mr. Henry that time.

When you were in the sixth grade you were given responsibilities, I mean you all took turns. For instance we raised the flag up in the morning and of course, we had music---somebody had played the record, you know, "Star Spangled Banner," the flag went up and then after school, opposite procedure, we had to lower the flag, everybody, you know, at attention, no matter where you were. And then we were in charge of the milk distribution. One of us would be assigned to go to each classroom and find out how many bottles---was gills at that time, or whatever they call them---the small bottles of milk that the students needed. And we'd take all their order and we'd have to distribute to the classroom. There were no---there was no cafeteria of any kind. I mean, you know, each one took their own brown bag. Then, we sold ice cream, and was the old freezer type. So we had to go in there and scoop, you know, we do cones. Must have been a nickel, I think. I don't think anything cost more than nickel those days. And we'd sell ice cream to those kids that could afford. So we'd have all these little bit different duties.

Then we,---I was a JPO [Junior Police Officer] also and I took my turn out in the highway, JPO. And remember this is 1927, '28, we had JPOs on the Big Island, at that time. I did all the different things. Now, I was thinking the other day of all the games we used to have. We used to keep busy all the time. We had olovia, which was a game made out of beads in a Durham bag. And I used to actually work the mechanics, but I can't remember. We [also] had steal eggs [game].

WN: What did you call the first game?

EM: Olovia, Olavia, Olovia.

WN: How do you spell that?

EM: I don't know.

WN: Olovia?

EM: Olovia. In fact, after we---I think my kids still go---when my children went to school I think they still had it. You had to hit the person with this bean bag. There were rules and everything else, but you had to
hit them with this bean bag, you know. Like I said with a Durham bag. And then we had...

WN: Steal eggs?

EM: Steal eggs. (laughs) It is a game with stones. And there again---I can't remember, I cannot say. I remember having a---what you call 'em---something like a station like a home plate. And then you had one on their side and one our side. And you had so many of these stones. The idea was, see if you could steal the stones without getting caught. So you'd have part of your team go out and distract these guys and then somebody run in and steal and run fast back to their goal see, before they got caught. The one who ended up with the most stones, of course, was the winner. See, if you could steal everything from the other team, well, terrific. And if you got caught, you had to---that's right---whoever got caught had to be (laughs) in the opponent's goal or area and you know, I think you stuck your hand out or something and tried to get rescued and was all kind of fancy stuff. All kinds of stuff.

Then of course we had tops. We used to make our own tops. I used to make mine out of tops from spools. You know the thread spools? Thread spools? I used to make my own tops from that.

WN: What, carve it with knife?

EM: I don't know exactly how we did it, but I remember putting the nails. We used to use nails, eh, for the top. And then we used aho, the cord---I don't know why, but there was a lot of cord at that time around the place because I made---after I got older I made these what do you call 'em---daikon kites. Made, you know, big---we call 'em daikon because they were tailless, see, tailless. So you had to have the point. The darn thing would stand ah, four, five feet in the air. You know, with point like that and you went out to your wings and you came down just like a daikon, see. Just a point, no tail. Then they had those that had---that were like a bird. The Filipinos used to build those. And then what we did---across the top of the wing, you put in the dried---it's made from the bark of the banana tree. What other word they used for it? I forget what they called it. Anyway, you made a cross, so that when your kite was up in the air, you pulled your cord and go (EM makes a whirring sound). You know, the wind would make it---we used to call it, sing. You used to call it sing.
WN: Vibrate.

EM: Vibrate, see. Vibrate with the wind. And you could hear that sound, you know (EM makes a whirring sound) up in the air. And like I said, when I used---these big kites we used cord. 'Cause sometimes you wonder if the darn kite was going take you up in the air, it's, you know, the wind was really strong. Because, you know, big. And you know, cord you didn't just roll up this way. You had to use the long stick to roll up this cord. And we used to have contests, the highest flying kite, the best looking kite, you know small kites, different size, all different size. We used to make kites out of all, anything. And you know what our paste was, either poi or rice. (Laughs) Poi and rice...

WN: How about the cockroaches?

EM: (Laughs) And then the---we used to go get bamboo. We used to go down the gulches and get bamboo to make the framework for these kites. And we used tissue---tissue paper. I don't know how we used to get the tissue paper. Japanese people used to have a lot of tissue paper, that's how we used to get it. In fact, the Japanese man that used to take our [store] orders, he used to bring us tissue paper.

WN: Did you paint the kites too?

EM: Some did. Some did, yeah, paint them different colors. We had lot of water colors those days, I don't know. I think we had. I always remember water colors. How, what kind, I know we had water colors. And we played a lot of marbles. We had the wiliwili red beads. We used those for---we used to call 'em gambling 'cause you know,...I bet you ten ten or (laughs) eagle eyes. And one of those red ones was worth ten Job's Tears. You know what Job's Tears are. So Job's Tears we used to use. So anyway every kid went to school had marbles, had wiliwili and Job's Tears in his pockets. If he didn't, he wasn't (laughs) going to school.

WN: So you played with marbles and the winner, you would...

EM: Yeah, we had different games, you know, fish, or hapu...aw, shucks. You know we used to do it all the time, you know.

WN: Make the holes in the ground?
EM: Yeah, the hole in the ground, you go into the hole and out of the hole and all that kind. And all the different rules. Hāpu'upu'u is you stick 'em up, eh?

WN: Hāpu'upu'u?

EM: Hāpu'upu'u we used to call it (laughs). Anyway the rules include if certain thing happen, you were able to, instead of going straight from the ground like this, you raised your finger up here...

WN: Oh yeah.

EM: You know. You stayed in the same area, but you raised it up.

WN: You never make spam first?

EM: Oh, get spam, there's all kinds. And the spam was one thing, you know you're out. And the one you lift up. You know, all kinds of rules...

WN: What kind marbles you folks had? Cat's-eye?

EM: Um---shee---I don't know exactly. Oh, I know we had some of those brown agates that I've seen since. You know the big brown ones...What?

WN: Oh, the bombucha kind?

EM: Yeah, bombucha, you know, but they not glass, they more like ceramics. Then of course we had these agates. They white, you know. They were white. That's the kind they used to use for the soda water bottle. And the soda water bottles also had the glass---there were two kinds for the soda water bottles, the white ones and the green glass caps.

WN: The soda water bottles, how you open 'em?

EM: You press down, you press down, you know, once you open all the gas comes out, yeah, press down.

Then what else, that's to do with school? Of course we walked to school and I remember one of the things that I---you stayed after school---it was the worst thing that could happen to you. Because you had to walk home alone. And we never walked home, we ran. If you stayed after school, you ran home. Three miles was nothing, I mean, you know. You ran home from school. And then I remember...
WN: Even with your brace you could run home?

EM: No, this is older, after I was older. That's what I mean you know. See what they did, they---after I got rid of the braces, I had to have special shoes. You know, was built up on one side, and built up inside, in front. I figure---I wish I could find one of those pictures. I had a picture of me going to school in knickerbockers. You know what knickerbockers are? Bloomers, we used to call 'em bloomers. The damn thing to here. And then with long stockings, necktie, big shot, necktie, yeah.

WN: Every day?

EM: Every day! Necktie! I came from rich family. My father was---1927, who else made over $100 a month in salary. Not many people, God, they were getting one dollar a day, some not even. My dad get over $100 a month. Big money. (Laughs)

WN: Were you the only kid wearing tie or...?

EM: Just about. No, I think there were some others that wore tie. But I wore tie all the time. Oh, if we stayed after school what uh---what we were afraid of the kids used to say, "Korean, Korean, Korean." Not Korean they say, "Korean [EM says word in exaggerated manner, with emphasis on the long vowel sound]." Now why we say Korean, that means just like obake, you know, bogey-man and God, the kids would all run. They say, "Where is he, where is he?" They think of---you remember we going through the gulches, you know. There's no houses there---three miles---there's one part, one part had some houses---Kawainui had a short area that had houses. In fact, they had a store.

And I'm going all over. Anyway, us going to school, for instance. We were allowed---say we were allowed a nickel a day for milk, or maybe ten cents with the ice cream if we had any. We'd save. And I was---in fact, this carried on through practically all my life that I used to do something like this, but anyway, we saved the nickels and then after you had four nickels, you could buy the dry 'opihi. You know, came in the...

WN: From where?

EM: From the store.

WN: Plantation store?
EM: No, this was the store on the way to school. On the way to school there was this store where you buy the coconut candy, for instance, the red balls. You still find them around by the various kids, yeah, the red balls candy. You could buy all kinds of different things. Harmonicas, they used to have. I used to admire them, but I couldn't afford them. Then, I remember buying oh...

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay.

EM: Yeah, I remember buying an IXL knife, IXL knife. That was supposed to be a German-made knife. Was all metal, you know. The handle, everything was all metal. Had one big blade—that's the kind of knife you used to cut the 'opihi, yeah. So I had to save many nickels before I could buy one of those. But I finally bought one. So when you went to school, you, like the kids eat candy, now, you'd cut off from the 'opihi. "Eh, give me, give me," eh. You know, first thing you know you're down to half the 'opihi by the time you (laughs) come back from school, you know.

WN: Dried 'opihi, it comes in the shell?

EM: Just like that. No. Was just like that. Looked just like a bar of soap, that's what it looked like. Was about that thick. Had bigger ones, smaller ones...

WN: Oh, oh, oh...they---that's plenty 'opihi and they put 'em together into one...

EM: No, no, that's not the kind of 'opihi you're thinking of. This is abalone.

WN: Oh, abalone!

EM: We call 'em 'opihi, but it's abalone.

WN: Oh, I see. So you called abalone 'opihi in those days?

EM: Yeah, we call 'em 'opihi because we didn't know any better. I never heard the word abalone till I was... (laughs). We used to call it 'opihi.

WN: Ok, so looks like one bar of soap.
EM: Yeah, and we'd---that was our candy, and in classrooms, they ate. Then get into trouble for it. Well, talking about the classroom, you know, we had grades the way---you had two students on one desk. And if you were naughty, what would happen was that the teacher would put a girl sitting with you. That was the biggest disgrace that could happen.

(Laughter)

Go put a girl sitting with me, my God, you know! Then as we grew older,---like up into the upper grades, then we did lot of reading in class. What would you call it, oral reading, you know, right in class. And then---so we'd read say a front page, or a paragraph or where it was, and then we'd pick somebody else to read. So you know who you gonna pick and you had to pick a girl. The boy had to pick girl, the girl had to pick a boy. See. And I never forgot---there was this Scotch girl. Her name was Alberta Stewart. She and I, I think were the only white, different nationality in the class, I think. Mostly Japanese, I think. I can't remember there were any Filipinos. I remember one boy, Angel, and that's about it. I don't remember Filipinos. Was at that time, I don't think there were that many. 'Cause when the Filipinos came, you know, they didn't bring their wives, you know, they came all as bachelors, eh. So I can't remember. Well, anyway, I pick her one time and the next time I pick 'em Toyoko Fujioka. She was a tiny little girl in school, and I used to like her. That's how we went along, you know, we used to pick.

Now, when I was in the sixth grade, there were boys that had beard. Shaved. So that means they were at least fifteen, sixteen years old in the sixth grade. Older kids. And there were girls. They were, God, they were, you know, fully developed.

And I remember a Scotch boy, it was in one of the classes, and his father was a---what was he? I think one of the supervisors, anyway, on the plantation, and he got---I don't how,---anyway, well, anyway, he had relations with this Japanese girl. Now you would think they would pick on the boy, when those days they didn't pick on the boy. The father of the girl found out, and I understand he strapped her up and he beat the dickens out of her with a whip. This comes back---see what it is, you know, I was always one to pay attention, so that---if what you don't hear in school, your parents will talk among themselves. See the rooms, or the walls, can hear across the wall sometimes. And I used
to hear my parents talk. "Oh, you know so-and-so, you know, beat up his daughter, because she had relations with this kid." And I used to hear them talk stories of certain men and women that they used to have relationship in the cane fields. You know all you had to do was lay down your raincoat and that was it, eh? (Laughs)

I mean, that's another thing, on the Big Island, it used to rain quite a bit, Hamakua Coast especially. So, we had a rain hat, a raincoat, and rain pants. And then us that could afford it, we had rubber shoes that you put over our regular shoes. Well, you know to go to school. And these---this equipment was made from---can't remember the word---it's cotton but what do you call the kind of cotton, it's the brown-like cotton, what they call it---this was...

WN: Muslin?

EM: Muslin. Made from muslin. Painted with linseed oil. They painted the linseed oil on it and then of course they had to make it first. And the Japanese people used to make it in the camps. And my dad, used to---I'm sure he bought---I don't think my mother made them. And then that's what they used---we used to wear. In fact, the guys in the field used to wear them. My dad wore the kind that you wore on the horseback, with the long thing that covered you all the way down. But we all had rain pants which was a custom of the Big Island alone. Oh, nobody here, when we came to Waipahu, there was no such thing here. And it wasn't a custom. In fact...

WN: Used to rain a lot?

EM: Yeah, it used to rain a lot, Hamakua Coast. In fact, the sugarcane wasn't irrigated. They had enough rain to raise the sugarcane. Okay, we're talking about this kind of stuff---I'm trying to think of something---I used to talk about...

WN: School, eh?

EM: School, I'm talking about school...

WN: You know the kids you used to play with outside of school, were they mostly Portuguese or...?

EM: Yeah, there were Portuguese kids too, quite a few Portuguese kids. 'Cause Onomea camp had quite a few Portuguese families. And then when we went to
Pepeekeo—we were going to Pepeekeo school, so they came from Pepeekeo also. Oh course, they were some Hawaiians and the Waihees and the Lows. There's some Hawaiian kids. Even at that time, the only person that struck the [students]—discipline the students was the principal. And, when I was in the sixth grade, it just happened that the little library or what it was that we had was right [next to us]—there's only wall between the library and us. And he used to take the kids in there and beat 'em up with—I don't know what he used. I never did see, I never did get beaten myself. So I don't know what he used, but I used to hear the kids yell though, was right next door. The principal was the only one that touched the kids at that time. Nobody else, the—teacher never—in fact, they tell you, you do something wrong, you going to the principal's office. Not office, yeah, he was teaching the sixth grade. The principal taught the sixth grade, see.

WN: The principal was what, Caucasian or...?

EM: No. The first principal like I said, was a big Caucasian. When I was in the sixth grade, was a part-Hawaiian named Henry. In fact, he came to Honolulu, and became something, I don't know. I forget his name, O. P. Henry, something like that. I think it's in my book you know. In that Onomea, the Onomea book. I think it's in there.

Every so often us kids instead of going to school the regular route which was the winding road that went down the gulch and up the other side, we'd go on the railroad. So, the railroad had two tunnels that we had to go through. So what we'd do, we'd get down and put our ears to the rail and listen, you know. 'Cause you could hear the train coming for many miles. And we'd scoot through before the train would come through. Then there were times we'd walk on the—there's a flume that they used to flume cane with. And we'd walk on the flume which was quite high. I'd say, a hundred feet, maybe more, high above the stream and we'd walk on the flume to cross the stream. I mean to cross the—instead of going all the way down the road, you had to go all the way round and come back and cut short—we used to call the shortcut, eh.

Now at home, we had to get feed for the cattle and the pigs and everything else. So what my dad used to do after work is get a couple of gunny sacks and then we'd go down and they would—one day we'd go for grass for the cattle and he'd cut the grass in the gulches and
another (day), we'd go we'd pick breadfruit, tree is right outside there. Breadfruit from the trees. And we'd carry it home and cook it up and feed the pigs that, that breadfruit. Then we raised papayas, when I'm talking about papayas, I'm not talking about these little papayas, we had some papayas that were about ten pounds big.

WN: Ten pounds!

EM: Ten pounds, yeah. Big stinkin' papayas. I know was special variety. And what we did, we raised the papaya trees close to the pig pens, so you know you had that much, (laughs) lot of fertilizer for the papaya trees. I mean the stump of the papaya trees are real big. I don't know what variety it was. But you didn't have fruit fly or that kind of stuff, you must remember, you know.

WN: Was sweet?

EM: Oh, yeah! Very sweet, yeah. Quite an orchard, the papaya trees and we raised sweet potato. There again we'd feed the leaves to the pigs.

WN: How many pigs did you have?

EM: We would raise more than three or four at one time. Just for use with the home. We'd raise them. My father used to pay ten dollars for a little piglet. And you buy 'em, I don't know how many weeks old. You buy 'em and you bring 'em home. We didn't breed them. In other words, we didn't breed our own. We just bought this for meat, that's all. But we had to feed the pigs, we had to feed them middling. Middling was the main feed. The same middling, we used to feed the cattle, the cows and calves. We never did have a bull in our area. In fact, for the breeding dad had to go get a bull from the next town to breed. And we used to have a lot of experiences with that too. But...

WN: From the cow you got milk?

EM: From the cow we got milk. And, as we were about to leave Hilo, I learned to milk. Before that my dad never used to allow us to milk. I used the thumbs like that. And then we raised some calves and we had them in paddocks. And us kids used to like to go jump from the railing, top of the paddock onto the calves and play cowboy on the calves. (Laughs)

WN: Did you ride horses too?
EM: Not when I was a kid. Only time I rode horse was [when] my dad would be going towards school. I must remember five years, at least, I went to school there, see. So maybe going towards Pepeekeo side and he'd stop by the houses and "Eh, I'm going to Pepeekeo side and would you want a ride." I'd go ride on the back on the horse. To have a horse of my own, no, I never did ride.

I used to go up to the stables and watch the stablemen, they used to take care all the mules and the horses, and the cowboy would break in all the new animals that used to come in.

I think I told you one time, they had two types of mules. For instance, they had the pack mules, which were donkey breed and they were small, and they had the dray mules which did the plowing and the hauling. Pull the wagons and dump carts and stuff like that. They were the big—we used to call them California mules. In fact you go to Disneyland, now you see them using them for the rides. And you know, the big California mules. You must remember, there were no tractors so they did all the plowing with mules. My dad used to tell me how the—you'd have acres of land and these men that ran these mules were so well trained that the lines were always straight. You never saw a curved line. They plow straight lines. I mean that some of them were two-mule team, some four-mule teams, some six-mule teams. So the more mules you had, the more difficult it was to handle. The wagons usually had only two mules. And the dump cart, one mule. Once in a while you had a real big load then they hitched on four mules.

So, going up to the stable I learned about the horses and the mules and then I used to watch the old blacksmith. And he used to—what you call it—shod the horses, you know, put the shoes on the horses and the mules. Of course, you had to pound. He used to make all kinds of things, the old blacksmith.

WN: Was there just one blacksmith for the whole plantation?

EM: Yeah, yeah. Of course, they had apprentice, they always—all these different trades, they had apprentices that, you know. Because the blacksmith would have an apprentice first, then what he [i.e., apprentice] did was run the blower for the furnace. (Laughs) That was his job and later on he'd do small things or do the pounding. And they all learned how to, first to shod the horses you had to—-you didn't
just—you had to take the old shoe off and then you had to skin all the—what do you call that, anyway—the hooves. The hooves had to be cut eh, to right shape. And then you fitted the shoe right onto that thing. And you'd nail it in, eh. I watched them quite a bit. You'd be surprised some of those darn blacksmiths didn't have to be a big guy, you know. I used to know a small guy with a lot of muscles. And he used to handle those hammers all day long.

WN: What about the—you know, you folks raised a lot of things, but what did you go to the store for? What did you...

EM: We didn't go to the store. They had a system, see Onomea's plantation store was actually in Papaikou. So every day, this person came by and he took your order. In the morning, he go all around the camp, take the orders. And in the afternoon, he'd deliver from Papaikou to Onomea. So he'd stop by the house and drop off the orders for the people. I don't know whether he came every day or every other day.

And then they had a store in Hilo town that was named Kurohara store. Kawahara, Kurohara, something like that. They had a Portuguese man, we used to call him Calotte. I don't know why they call him Calotte. But anyway, I called him Calotte and he used to come and take orders. See, they specialized in dry goods. But they had groceries and all that kind of stuff too. But their special was dry goods. So if you couldn't buy material for instance in a plantation store, you went to Hilo and you went to Kurohara store, I think. Was right on the—-I don't know what—right next to railroad station. To travel from Onomea to Hilo, you could go by car if you had one, or you could rent one or something. Hire somebody. But we went by train.

WN: How far is it from Onomea?

EM: About six-and-a-half miles from Onomea to Hilo. There isn't a town there now, there's nothing there now. Then, like I said, my dad had these cattle so what he'd do, we'd have these calves and—after the calf was of certain age, he'd take it out to pasture. So the plantation had quite an acreage up in more or less the mountain area. Gulch is way up in the hills. And we'd go out there and take the cattle—till they were big enough to breed and you know bring 'em back home. But, we'd let them run out in the pasture and then there was a stream going to the place, and the cattle had grass and they had the water. Those days they didn't—-what
you call that now—not poaching, what you call that—when they steal your cattle (laughs)...

WN: Oh, rustling.

EM: Rustling—there were no rustling. 'Cause you know, they no mark their cows, eh, you know how they mark the cows and something in the ear [i.e., tagged in the ear], eh. But they brand them I think, they branded them.

WN: Were there other stores besides the plantation store in Onomea or...

EM: I don't recall, maybe later years, but, I don't remember, I...

WN: What about the store that you bought the ['opihi]...

EM: Oh, that was in Kawainui. That was on the way to school. That was Kawainui which is almost as far as Pepeekeo. See, what it was, there was Onomea and there was Kawainui, was a sort of in between railroad stop for the people that lived in Kawainui. There weren't too many people living there. There was a railroad stop so they had a railroad station. And then they had Pepeekeo station, see. They're in between, yeah. Just like from here you going---you have Honouliuli---Honouliuli, yeah and you had Ewa, you didn't go straight to Ewa. They had a Honouliuli station one time.

WN: So why, how often would you go to Hilo?

EM: It all depended. My dad would hire this guy that had a car to take us to the county fairs. That would be—I don't know, oh, I think was annual county fairs, because my dad paid for his time and paid for the use of his car and he take us in this. Now remember this is '27, '28, so what model car he had. I know (laughs), I know was an old model but the year---anyway, he took us and we had nice times at these fairs.

I had an aunt whose husband was a ticket agent at the railroad station. And they used to have their cars and everything like that. They always had something that we never—they always were far advanced than we were. Even though my dad used to buy us—we had the most expensive toys anybody could buy in Hilo. Tricycles, the big wheeled tricycles, a push cart, you know, you just pump the pump car, we had toys of all kinds. I'm sorry.
Sorry, okay, all right.

Where was I?

You were talking about the pumper cars and things you got at the store in Hilo.

Oh yeah, I mean, you know pump car and then we used to innovate, we'd take the wheels off from (laughs) the tricycles and make something else out of them, and we used to do all that kind of stuff.

My dad---see you must remember these plantation areas, people either owned or leased sections of property. Like my father owned his own three acres. So he didn't have workers to work his fields. We did the work, or if he needed plowing or anything, he hired from the plantation, you see.

In the cane field?

Yeah, in the cane field. To work the cane fields. He'd hire these people, come with the plow, hāpai hana or whatever they call they come. Anyway, to weed, they had this regular plower that went into the fields and lift up---see, even the hō hana, we couldn't keep up. He'd hire these people see. When it came time to harvest, he'd hire these people, the gangs. Men and women and he'd hire them to do the work.

And your father would get paid by the tonnage?

Yeah, yeah, and then (the plantation would) charge him for all the different services and what was left over was his profit you see. Now the, talk about raising the cane, see you have---its stump, they call stools, you know different stools of cane. They go in a straight line and there was no irrigation so it stayed on sort of on top of the banks. And then we had to weed, then we had to---as the cane grew, we had to strip all the leaves off the cane, so by the time they harvest, all that remain would be the stocks of cane with the top on it. And they didn't have all this trash to contend with. So...

So, no burning?

No burning.

How come?

They didn't know about burning then. Not there anyway. Later years they did burn. But that time, they didn't
burn. There you could do it cause the cane go straight up. They couldn't do that here now on Oahu, because the cane you know, all a tangled mess. See the cane go---was short cane, not like...

WN: Different variety...

EM: Different variety and there was no irrigation, so you depended on the weather. You had good weather, you had good stock. You had bad weather, you had bad stock, eh. So we'd go in there and we'd strip all this cane and we get stung by the bees and bitten by the centipedes, and the best time to holehole, like we called it, was when it rained. Because the fuzz of the leaves would not be that coarse on your hands. So we'd go in there and we'd strip all these leaves during the rainy weather. Now because of that, I---in the later years, I contacted pneumonia. And from the pneumonia, I eventually had asthma. And so I had for so many years afterward. And then my dad tried everything, you know, all kinds of---you know those people give you different remedies and all kinds of stuff, but I really suffered from asthma. But I still work, and I still played and everything else, but when I had asthma attacks and---those days we didn't know about allergies and stuff like that, eh.

WN: So you would work in the fields when? Summertime?

EM: No, every weekend or even after school. All depended when was necessary we'd go out into the fields and work. Then to replant, like say for instance, they harvested and they found out that oh, some of the stools had died off, or there [were] not enough stump, they did what we call stumping. An operation that in later years I saw [at Oahu Sugar] done away [with] and I said "My God, we used to do that on our plantation when I was a kid." Stumping is, you take a portion of one of the stools and the cane grows in stools, yeah. Take a portion of one of the stools and you'd pick it up roots and all and you plant it again somewhere else, you see. And it grows, eh.

WN: Why do you do that?

EM: To fill in all the gaps. See now they replant, they take the seed from the top of the cane and plant that. In Big Island we didn't do it that way. We just---we stump, in fact, they thought it was faster to grow because he didn't irrigate, but---I don't know they must have started from seed. But anyway, that's what they call it stumping. They...
WN: Is this unique to the Big Island, this style—stumping?

EM: I'm not sure. I don't think they do it anymore. My dad was at the time, you know the time that my dad used to do that, stumping.

What else should I talk about?

WN: So, they didn't have cane burning, yeah?

EM: No cane burning.

WN: They all...just the stripping the leaves from the---and they would just cut it.

EM: Yeah, cut and cut the top off. Well, they cut the cane and they had to bundle it. Then they put into these bundles as they went along. And they tied it with the cane top, that's what they used the cane top for too, tie the bundles. You see. Because it's green and it's still pliable. After it's dry you cannot do that, but still pliable and you tie the bundles with the cane top. Then a man came along with a scale---hand scale and with a helper and he weighed every tenth bundle or so. He kept track of all the bundles.

Now, after these bundles were weighed, then a sled driven by two mules would come along and they piled these bundles of cane onto the sled. And the sled would take it to a flume. Now these flumes were portable flumes, put into the fields to transport the cane from the field to the main flumes which ran from, oh from, just across the whole bloomin' place. I mean, you know, from Kawainui all the way to Papaikou. All they did was pile it along the side of the flume. Then at night they'd take turns who was to flume which cane. So maybe today they'd flume from this field and next day, from the other field and so on and flume this cane to the factory. And that's how went to the factory, all by flume.

WN: This is just only Big Island that they use flumes?

EM: This island [i.e. Oahu] used some---in some areas, very difficult to transport the cane, they did use some fluming. But they used a different method all together. Instead of using that, they didn't have flumes that in a sense that the Big Island had them, where they had them used just like they used the railroad here. [On the Big Island] they didn't have railroad track transportation for the cane. Here
[Oahu], all they did was flume the cane from these inaccessible areas, down the slope into cane cars that were parked below. In the gulch somewhere they'd have the flat land, they'd have the cane cars and the cane would come down the mountain into these cane cars, you see.

[On the Big Island] I remember at night seeing the (watchmen) up the main flume. If the cane got jammed, I've seen them with the lanterns running around trying to get the blockage unblocked. And then the mill (whistle) would blow and they knew there was no cane in the mill. They say, "Eh, something wrong." So they'd go, all go check. And they found out where the blockage was and they'd have to take off the cane sometimes.

WN: So the flumes are permanent?

EM: Permanent. The main flumes were permanent. And the portables flumes were, God, I don't know how long they were. Maybe about thirty feet a section, I think. Pretty long. At least maybe---'cause they had to be carried and---in fact, of course they tied something to---along the flumes and they could drag them with the mules.

WN: Was made of, what? Iron?

EM: No, the flumes were one-by-twelve boards. No, maybe longer, maybe bigger. But they were, you know. I say the portable flumes were at least foot-and-a-half to two feet, let's see.

I tell you the story of the day I was walking home from school and I thought I cut across the field that was harvested. And I jumped over the flume and I fell into the flume with the water running. And it carried me down for a little while until I finally caught on the side of the flumes, able to climb out. And I thought I was gonna go to the mill.

(Laughter)

Went to the mill...

WN: Where did the water come from?

EM: They had sources of water, I mean exactly how it worked, I'm not sure. But they had sources. So they must have had ditches from the big---there's a pond, in fact, above the Onomea town there, we used to call it
Chicken Little pond. And there was a lot of water coming from the mountains to a pond. So I think that's where they got the water from. But like in where our property was, I remember there was a line, sort of, left for these flumes to be put in when they harvest it. Was already set into the property. They knew exactly where. So they had to bring the cane to these flumes.

WN: So what supplied the force of the water? Was it always downhill or what?

EM: Always downhill.

WN: Oh, I see.

EM: Yeah, always downhill. But the main flumes they were not downhill, they were level. But they had enough water that they pushed the cane to the factory.

WN: Did the water run?

EM: Yeah, yeah. The water ran into the falls. It's---was just the way you could feed into and not, you know what I mean, you want to feed into this section and you couldn't. You don't need in that section, you just cut it off. Just like...

WN: Just like what?

EM: Just like we do with our irrigation. We can feed different areas.

WN: What kind of community activities did they have in Onomea?

EM: I seldom went up to the camp because my grandmother used to come from the upper camp. As I grew up, I was about nine years old when my mother's mother died. I remember her, she was tall, maybe she used to wear, you know, those days they used to wear the long dresses. Darn, if I don't remember right, if I don't forget, if I remember right, she used to walk barefooted. She had a big black dog with her she used to walk, from you know, come down to our house. Our house is about a half a mile or so from the camp. At least half a mile. And she used to walk down to come visit us. And she'd bring her dog with her. My grandfather got blind so I didn't really get to know him. I know my grandmother. I learned a few words in Portuguese that she used to talk Portuguese. My mother never carried on the language. So my mother barely spoke new Portuguese
words. She never spoke at home, we never did speak Portuguese. All—everything was English. Even though I learned from the kids that's going to school and from the ladies who used to come to our house, I learned a lot of Japanese words. My father spoke Japanese fluently, he used it all the time.

WN: Oh yeah?

EM: Yeah. Fluently, very fluently. In fact, he shamed some of the younger people, he spoke better than they did. But they didn't carry on, eh, some of them.

WN: So in 1928 you came to Honolulu? How did you feel about leaving Onomea?

EM: We missed it, we had lot of land, lot of area to play in and all that, eh. In fact, you couldn't even throw a baseball from our gate to the house. (Laughs) So far, you couldn't throw a baseball, I mean you know, we had a big area. And of course, we had to mow that and all by hand mower. What we did (laughs) we'd tie the rope in front of the lawn mower, one in the front with the rope pulling, the other in the back, pushing from the back. Took two kids to mow. (Laughs) That's Hilo grass, you know, not this kind, not mānienie. Hilo grass, the one that grows fast. Really grew fast that sucker.

WN: Plenty rain too, eh?

EM: Yeah. We didn't have a car, so. Even though I remember the—there's one doctor used to come from Pepeekeo and used to come to the village every so often. Every time—I don't know why he stopped at our house. And he had flat tire. And here I never—besides riding in a car, I'd never touched a car before, you know what I mean besides riding it and I had to go out there and he taught me how to help him fix his tire (laughs). Blown out tire and change his tire, not fix his tire, change his tire. I remember that.

WN: Let's take a break now.

END OF INTERVIEW
WN: This is an interview with Mr. Ernest Malterre, Jr. at his home in Waipahu, Oahu. Today is June 21, 1983.

WN: When you moved to Honolulu, what did you do in 1928?

EM: You got it on already?

WN: Yeah.

EM: Oh, we moved in 1928. I went looking for work because---here I have been active all my life. And my dad was having a hard time find a job. So I went up to this---something like a cash and carry, they used to call the cash and carry store. Store right on 10th and Waialae Avenue. And I asked if there was any work I could do. I was too young to go to work in the pineapple cannery. I was only thirteen only at that time. And this manager gave me a job. A dollar and a quarter [$1.25] a day for at that time I think it was ten hours of work. What I did in the store was a general---handy hand, you know. I'd sweep up the store and I'd bring in the produce and put it on the shelves. First we'd go into the warehouse section and then onto the shelves. Keep the shelves filled all the time. And then make sure all the cans were dusted. Then I'd carry---I would be a bag boy also and carry the groceries to the car. And we wore one of those fold over aprons that was navy blue, I remember. Every customer got his packages carried to the car. And it wasn't miss, hit or miss. Didn't have carts of course in those days, we carried.

Eventually, I became a cashier part time, I'd learn how to run the cash register. And we had to sort of memorize all the prices on the shelf. There were no prices on the items themselves like they do nowadays,
they had the items priced on the shelf and then I had to memorize the prices.

Then since I worked there, I was able to have a discount on the groceries I bought for our family, at which time we were having a difficult time. And I was also able to buy day old bread when the store closed. So if the bread was ten cents, I bought bread for five cents a loaf. That helped our family quite a bit.

And when school started I went to Liliuokalani Junior High School. And there I remember my first year I took shop. And I had a Portuguese teacher by the name of Perreira. And I learned how to handle tools. In Onomea I learned how to use some tools but not all of them as I learned in the shop there. He was such a guy that used to like youngsters.

I remember one incident he took us for a hike all the way up Wilhelmina Rise. And we went way up in the brush of course and afterward, we started getting hungry and thirsty and I said, "Eh, we are short of water." We look down, we could see the stream down in the valley. So we said, "Eh! We cut down to the stream." God, we went through lantana and what have you. Finally got to the stream. Come to find out (laughs) we didn't know how to get out of there. So we said, "Gee, my goodness, we can't climb back up, was too steep." So we followed the stream all the way down and we ended up by Hind-Clark Dairy that used to be in that area.

WN: Hind-Clark Dairy?

EM: Yeah. That is where they call Wailupe I think now.

WN: That's by Aina Haina?

EM: Aina Haina. All in there. That's where we ended up. And luckily we were going through the pasture and we saw cattle. Luckily there were no steers or bulls, you know, running around in there or else we'd be in trouble 'cause when especially the cows are around you have bulls, they sort of protect the cows. But we finally got out. That was one incident. Then...

WN: Was this store that you worked at, Bailey's Store, was it all cash and carry?

EM: All cash and carry. Yeah, there was no charging at all. All cash and carry. Then in 1929, the store went out of business. There was too much competition.
There was L. Kwai Yau Store, there was Piggly-Wiggly, there was another chain (Central Market), down the street, so...

WN: What was the name of the first store?

EM: L. Kwai Yau Store.

WN: Oh, Chinese?

EM: Chinese store. And then there was Piggly-Wiggly and there was another store (Central Market). So, of course, the competition and hard times, 1929 was the depression.

They closed up so my brother had already been working. He was younger than me but he had been a caddy at Waialae Golf Course and had three cousins that were caddies at the Waialae Golf Course. So I joined them. And what we had to do was on weekends. Saturday morning, Sunday morning, we'd be out there 4 o'clock in the morning, bright and up to get in line to caddy. We would—when our turn came they'd assign us. You go with these people and you carry the bags. And they paid us seventy-five cents a round. But the fellas that were generous they'd give us a dollar per round. And if you went early enough, the idea of going early enough is that if you completed one round, you may have a chance to do a second round in the afternoon. So if you—when the second round and you got another dollar, my God, that was two dollars per day which was good money. People weren't earning that. Lot of people were only earning a dollar a day. And we did that on Saturdays and on Sundays. That supplemented our family's income. Then...

WN: ...was it the same place that...

EM: The same place and where the homes are now that was all brush. And I always tell the story that some of the well, not so honest caddies, when the ball went into the rough, they could never find the ball. 'Cause the idea was that when they did find it, they stepped on it so you couldn't see it, then looked at the area, marked it and that's (laughs) the position of the ball. And after they did their round, and the golfer went home, they came back and found the ball and sold it to somebody else. You know (laughs) made another two bits [twenty-five cents] or fifty cents or what it was for the balls, you see.
And then there were caddies that also used to shoot craps in those days. There was a brush or brushy area and they had a little circle in there where they used to go and shoot crap there with their earnings, eh. So I got on the good side of the caddy master because I used to stick around the clubhouse and sometimes help him sweep up around the caddy house. And this is what we used to call it anyway—I don't know what they call it now. But anyway, the clubhouse. So he kinda took a liking to me. I was already in the eighth grade. And when very important people would come in and he needed a caddy, he come up to the school and pick me up and take me down to the golf course to caddy for these people and bring me back to school. I'd be gone for a couple of hours. These tourists they were usually generous. Maybe got dollar and a half [$1.50], two dollars you know. Wasn't too often but every so often he'd come and pick me from the school. And the principal knew we were having a difficult time. By that time there were already six children and my father wasn't working much. He used to help me.

WN: Did other kids do that too?

EM: Um, very seldom. I don't know of any others being picked from the school.

Then when I was still in the eighth grade, the school put on a fundraising program by putting on a three-act play in the Kaimuki Theatre which was right across from the school. And I happen to be the main male actor. And I remember the main female actor was Virginia Rodrigues. I never seen her since I left school, this is how many years ago. We had to rehearse and we had to put up props and we did all the work.

We had a good teacher though and the same time, I was now taking typing. So I learned to type in the eighth grade. I never was good at typing, I was slow.

Meantime now, my father in early part of '29, got a job at Oahu Sugar in Waipahu. And he started as a what they call a foot luna for seventy-five dollars a month. They could not give him housing for his family which was part of the benefits for all the employees but they put him up in what they call the bullpen, which was a bachelor barracks, sort of, for supervisors. Supervisors who didn't have any families.

WN: How come they called it bullpen?
EM: Because all males in there and that's why they call it bullpen. Yeah, they call it the bullpen, I don't why but that's what...

WN: Something to do with baseball?

EM: No, I don't think so. And then they had people like—I think there was a postmaster that was single, he lived in there. You know, people that had something to do in the community. And was right next to the plantation hospital. So one side was the hospital and here was the—what do you call—bullpen and then they had a post office—I don't know if the post office was part of that bullpen or not. I'm not sure. Can't recall too well that post office.

So what he [EM's father] used to do was every Saturday night, 'cause they'd work six days a week—every Saturday night he'd get on the what they call the Honolulu Taxi. You paid fifty cents I think for a ride from Waipahu all the way to Aala Park. And when he got to Aala Park, he got the streetcar and came up to Kaimuki where we lived.

WN: How much was the streetcar?

EM: Uh, those days was fifteen cents for two tokens, seven and a half cents. I still have some tokens in my collection. So he did that every weekend. So in the weekend that's when he got all the reports of what happened, what we did, naughty (laughs), during the week from my mother. (Laughs) And he'd reprimand us if need be. Of course at that time he'd bring all his laundry home too. So my mother on the weekends, she didn't have the rest, she had all his laundry to do. So that on Sunday evening, after dinner he'd pack his laundry and reverse, get on a streetcar, come back to Aala Park, get the taxi and come back to Waipahu.

Now that went on for over a year until he finally got a house in Waipahu in about February, I think it was of 1930. The plantation sent a big mack truck I remember, to pick us up with all our furniture in Kaimuki. And we moved to the camp area called Pump 4.

And there was one big home that had been the supervisor's that had charge of the machine shop there. He had moved to the Waipahu central area so here was his vacant home and they gave it to us. Was a nice big home.
So then I commuted. So I continued going to Liliuokalani while the rest of the children went to Waipahu School. I used to walk from Pump 4 all the way down to the depot station, get on the train, get on the streetcar, and go all the way to Kaimuki.

WN: What time did you have to get up in the morning?

EM: Oh God! I don't even know what time we left home. We left pretty early, still dark, during the winter months you know. [Then coming home] we reversed, I had to get the streetcar, come all the way to Aala Park to the depot and then get the train. And I couldn't get the early train so I had to get the 5 o'clock train. And the train would take at least three quarter of an hour from Honolulu to Waipahu, we had many stops, eh. They had the Watertown, they had Aiea, they had Waiau, Pearl City, you know all these different stops. I'd get home dark, I remember that during the winter months, and I walked all the way from the depot all the way back. That was about---I'd say about a two-mile walk from the Pumps all the way down to the depot. Then...

WN: When you moved to Waipahu, you quit the golf course job?

EM: Right. I had to quit the golf course job. That summer I started looking for work and I applied at the pump department. It was right across the street from our house. When I say street, it was a plantation road, yeah, right across the road was the machine shop and all the pump buildings. Across the stream was a whole big camp they called the Pump 4 Camp. They had a mixture of irrigators living in one little section, they would call it the---what they call it---Camp 17 or something like that because the people that lived there worked in Field 17.

And then there was the pump people that was divided into two sections. One section was all the engineers and the assistant superintendent live there. One end was the Chinese bachelors and they lived in these U-shaped buildings. They had their own, you know own facilities and all. There were a few Filipino workers in the pump department at that time. And they usually commuted from Waipahu town down to the pump. They'd walk down or.... There was a truck that used to bring in the supplies and all that to the pump. So they'd ride that truck down to the pump.

So June 29, 1930, I started working for the plantation. My first job was to chip the rust off the big pump
valves they called them. They weighed about 300 pounds each. And then paint them with red lead. You know what red lead is, that orange looking stuff? Then I had to chip bricks that were taken off from the boilers and the heaters. What they did was refurbish the whole system with asbestos and with something like cement that they used to adhere the bricks in the fireplaces. Every so often they had to repair, so they'd close down these boilers. And they had a boiler cleaning gang that used to go in there and clean all the tubes and wash out the whole system.

WN: This is not in the mill right?

EM: This is the pump, pump department. These are steam pumps. They pumped, oh God, eight to ten million gallons apiece I think. I don't know exactly how many million gallons but they had gauges that they used. Part of the job was to go into the drums—big drums. And you looked at the hole and you say, "By God, I'd never get into that drum." But we had to go into these drums and chip all the inside, you know we had the extension cords and we'd go inside with the light then chip all the rust inside. That was part of the job. We had to do all kinds of things, we painted the pump, the buildings. I say "we" because there were about five of us young fellas. And we did all kinds of odd jobs. We'd move different material from one place to another that they use in the pumps.

Then since I could type, whenever the pump clerk would go on vacation—there were two pump clerks, one was a senior clerk, one was a junior clerk and whenever they'd go on vacation, I'd go into the office and type the reports for them. You know do the typing and then part of my duties were to go out and read the electric meters to see how much power has been consumed every day. Then we had to take off the oil that came in huge oil tanks from Oahu Railway. Used to bring in the big tanks and what they did, they had a sort of a oil reservoir and the oil was drained from these tanks into that reservoir like. It's a tank, actually it's like a water tank, huge thing. From this tank for us, the oil would be siphoned off to the different steam pumps to get them going.

WN: How many pumps were there...

EM: In that particular section, there was pump 1, pump 2, pump 3, pump 4, pump 4-B. In that particular section there were 5 pumps. Besides a domestic water pump, there were small booster water pumps. There were five
big pumps that pump water—irrigation water up to the fields. Oh, another thing was these pipelines. I believe they were at least twenty-four-inch pipelines 'cause they were huge. One of the jobs was to go out there and chip all the rust off of the pipelines and then put bitumuls. You know that black tar like paint eh, paint these pipelines to keep them in shape. And these were God, I don't know how many miles long but they went quite a ways. See what it was the pipes went up the hills until they would open up into either a ditch that would take the water to the reservoirs or would empty up directly into a reservoir depending on where the pump was. Now these 5 pumps I'm talking about were just the pumps that were right in that particular area. We had other pumps, like we had pump 5 which is still in existence. And that pump is a submerged pump 300 feet underground is the pump itself. You have to go by elevator 300 feet down into the ground and that's where the pump is. And they had a camp of their own. People that worked in that pump lived there. We had about—that's pump 5, we have pump 6 on the——what do you call it——the east side of the town. And it's no longer—I don't think they use it anymore but there again they had 2 pumps, 6-A and 6-B into 1 building and they pumped the water that was close to the Waiawa Stream on this side. I don't know why but there was quite a bit of water there and that's where they pumped the water from. Today the Navy has a huge system right into that same area. And they're drawing lot of their water from there, the Navy is. And that water of course, was pumped up to the reservoirs, from the reservoirs to the other ditches.

WN: So each pump had like one stream to pump water from or...

EM: It wasn't the stream. No it wasn't the stream. They didn't pump the stream. From artesian wells. They pumped from artesian wells. There are artesian wells way down in the ground. All over these pumps, they all had artesian wells. Like this 300-foot pump, there's artesian wells that go below that.

WN: ...1930 they were doing that?

EM: Oh yeah. That's how the pumps were. Today all those pumps are all electrified. They control them right from the powerhouse. And all they do they have a person patrol to check these different pumps because they not the same steam pumps. They all electrical pumps now. But they all radio controlled. They got quite a system.
To maintain the pumps [in the old days], we had a machine shop and in the machine shop was where they renewed the valves. They'd sort of retread the pistons and all the different parts for the pumps. They had their machine shop, they did their own work. The company had a huge lathe that did all the heavy work that had to be carried by overhead crane. And then we had smaller lathes that did the smaller work. I may be getting ahead of myself, but as I continued working in the pump department, I went from an aid to a machinist helper, sort of, machine shop aid they called it. And there again, my main job of course was to keep the shop clean. But I did do work on machinery.

In about 1932, they decided that they going put in a whole new fire prevention system. Fire hydrants that ran from two inches to four inches and they needed all the connections, the nipples and all the fittings and that. So my job for months was—I say months because in the summer I worked every day. But while I was in school, I worked any day that there wasn't school, I worked for dollar a day. I made all these nipples and things on a threading machine. So I could be quite proficient as I call myself the plumber (laughs), even though I did machinery work. And we made things on a shaper. And of course I learned to run the lathe.

So as I continued in school, I'm ahead of myself but anyway, instead of going all the way to Liliuokalani, I went to Central Junior High School which was right on Vineyard and [Queen] Emma [streets]. There I had to go by train but I didn't have to ride the streetcar if I didn't want to 'cause I could walk from the depot all the way up to Central.

WN: Central was the closest intermediate school?

EM: No, Kalakaua was. But we were not too favor of Kalakaua at that time. You know we always think of the Kalihi roughnecks. So we weren't too favor of going there so somehow I got a district exemption or whatever it is. And I got to go to Central.

WN: So all---most of the Waipahu kids went to Kalakaua?

EM: Uh, majority. But there were quite a few in Central. I didn't know at the time because I wasn't familiar with the students from here at that time. But found later that there were quite a few that were at Central. Being in Central we was sort of centrally located.
So while I was there, I got to be a Junior Police Officer right on Fort Street and in fact after that I got promoted to Sergeant of the Junior Police. Then we took care of all the lunch passes. Make sure that no kids run out of school during lunch period. They all have to have passes to leave the school grounds. I got involved in some of the activities but not too much because I lived all the way out to Waipahu and I had to get the train again to come back home.

Then I graduated 1931 from Central and I went to McKinley [High School]. At McKinley, my first year I took dramatics. In dramatics, we had Fern (McQuesten) who was quite an outstanding person. And she let us all---part of the course was to write a one-act play of your own. So each one of us had to write, direct, and act in your own play. We had a stage and everything in our classroom. And we had to put on our own plays, we had to choose our own actors and all that.

WN: What was the name of your play?

EM: I can't remember. I can't remember but I do remember I led a pantomime with four other girls and we had a ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] review. I had already left---had been in ROTC for about six months but I had already left ROTC for health reasons. All the boys had to go to the review. Whether they belong to ROTC or not they had to go there. And all the girls was in the auditorium. And we had a program for them and so part of the program was this pantomime. These four girls and I put on. So here was I, the only male with 1,500 or 2,000 girls in McKinley auditorium and you know how awfully big that is and that was full, all females. I enjoyed it. We had a good time. Then I---of course in this other one-act plays, we all took different parts, different time. I was even an old Hawaiian wearing a malo. Can you imagine me skinny guy with a malo on?

(Laughter)

I had a good time with you know, I wanted to be an actor you know at one time. Oh, well, oh God, I liked acting. I used to love it.

WN: Were you in any kind of club or anything for drama?

EM: No, just the drama class. Then when I was in McKinley I got to be a member of the torch society, I remember. And I joined the oratorical team. I represented my
class and you know Ah Quon Leong, what is she now? You know she's the union....the Chinese....

WN: Ah Quon McElrath?

EM: McElrath. She was one of the contestants while I was there. So I know her well. There's several others. Father became Reverend...Ogawa was it? Reverend Ogawa? He became the reverend of our church [United Church of Christ] here. Seido Ogawa. He was in the oratorical contest also. I didn't win any prizes but anyway I participated. You know in your homeroom you have different activities, different clubs and stuff.

First I went by train to McKinley and then I'd---later on I went by car with some other students. There was a senior that had a car and I joined him and of course I paid him for the transportation we went by car. After school, we had to wait for one woman that worked that also rode with us.

So we'd come down to town to Honolulu and I'd hang around Bethel Street. And of course, we knew where all the rooms were and we knew where all the shows that were going on and all that kind of stuff. You know wasn't as rough as it is today. But Bethel Street was one of the hangouts. And we found that the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] had a activity room in one of the buildings, close to the theatre there. So while waiting for these other people we'd go up there and play pool and play cards...

WN: Hawaii Theatre?

EM: By the Hawaii Theatre. Somewhere in there, you know. There was a---I don't know what it was, a YMCA recreation room like. I cannot remember what the background was. I knew all the streets in Honolulu. God, I'd go to the waterfront and watch the ships come in. While waiting you know, you don't just sit down do nothing.

WN: How long a wait did you have?

EM: Oh God, sometime we wouldn't leave town till 5 o'clock. But there was a ride home, didn't have to ride the train. My last year in high school, we went by bus. There was a special company that ran a bus for students. What it was, they ran a bus to Wahiawa because the train system to Wahiawa was bad. So usually run by bus. In fact, the train went through Schofield, I think, up the valley. I know the train
went up to Schofield but, truthfully, I couldn't say how the train got into Wahiawa, if at all. But there was a train that went up Kipapa Valley to Schofield, and right through Waipahu, you know. So we had this bus, the bus would go as far as Ewa, pick up the students from Ewa, come through Waipahu, and Pearl City and then Aiea, picked up students or take them out, drop them off at all the different schools. You know [coming] back was reversed again, we start from, maybe St. Louis, and come down, pick all the students up for a fee, of course. And we used to have good fun. We going on the train we used to play cards on the train, sing, we used to have good times. Give the conductor bad time, poor guy. (Laughs) That's about school.

WN: McKinley?

EM: McKinley High School. I graduated in 1934. There were 1,000-something students in that class. So we had our graduation outside next to the statue. We couldn't even get everybody into the auditorium with the families and all. We had it outside. And our prom of course was in the Civic Auditorium.

WN: Civic Auditorium?

EM: Was it? I don't know, something like that.

WN: You mean on King Street? The old Civic?

EM: Yeah, the old Civic. That's where we had our prom.

(Laughter)

Ask your mother, she'll know. (Laughs) She remember. And I didn't know how to dance. So this guy that used to drive us to school, this friend of mine, you know, one year drove us to school, he tried to teach me how to dance. Oh God, I had a heck of a time.

WN: Who did you take to the prom?

EM: Nobody. (Laughs) I didn't take---I went stag. Yeah, I didn't take anybody. Now that's to do with school. When we moved to Waipahu, I was working with these people in the pump department. There were Hawaiians so they had formed this Hawaiian baseball team. So I played baseball with them for one year or so but it just wasn't my bag, I don't know why. I just wasn't interested in baseball. But we did have our own volleyball team at the pump and what we'd do, we would
challenge teams from upper Waipahu from some other pump area or some other areas to come and play with us. The bet was a case of soda water. And a case of soda water was about seventy-five or eighty-five cents something like that, a whole case.

WN: A whole case?

EM: A whole case. So, was great then, you know. A case of soda water, whoever won. Of course everybody would get to drink. But you were the winner, eh. And of course, we'd play football. The pump department was really beautiful. See, you must remember that they had lots of labor. So when a guy got to the degree where he couldn't perform certain jobs, then they say, "You already fifty-five, you retire." There was no such thing as a pension plan in the early days. "You going be yard boy now." So you get an old guy that couldn't hear. You know, maybe he was blind from one eye or something. He was a yard boy. And you knew they're conscientious, take ten hours to do it in. We had beautiful green lawns all around the pump departments. They raised papayas that were out of this world and all different bananas, and all kinds of things. Was maintained, mowed and trimmed and irrigated, you know was beautiful around the pump department. Today you don't have that. But it was really nice. So in these expensive lawn areas we used to play football and of course volleyball in another area. But was really nice.

WN: Was it organized or was it just...

EM: Baseball was organized. Baseball they had a Hawaiian team, they had a Puerto Rican team, they had the Portuguese team, they had a Japanese team, Filipino team, you name it, they had it. And they used to play—they had a league just for the area here then they'd play Ewa and play Aiea, Pearl City, they all had their teams, eh. They had organized baseball. Then of course eventually they had to organize football. Then I was interested in boxing. The Strohlin boys whose father was the assistant superintendent used to box, in fact, two of the twins—two of the boys were twins, became boxers. They boxed professionally, sort of. And I used to go train with them.

I used to love to box but I had asthma. So I could only go to a certain degree then I'd peter out. Maybe I'd go for two, three weeks without asthma and all of a sudden, I'd have asthma and I couldn't continue my training. Same thing with the exercises, I tried to
take the Atlas course. You know Charles Atlas course, we have body building and all that. Oh, I'd be great, God, I'm you know, muscles coming off. And I'd get an asthma attack and boom down to nothing again.

So what I did, I used to read a lot. I love to read, detective stories, cowboy stories, and whenever I have a chance, when I was still in school, I used to stop at the library. That's another thing I used to do was stop at the Library of Hawaii and borrow books not only for myself but for my kid brothers and kid sisters. I'd borrow books in the library. I knew the Library of Hawaii in and out. Every division, you know, they used to know me after you've been there for few years. I used to enjoy reading.

Now; when we moved to Waipahu, I---we were not church-going people. We lived in the Big Island where church was far away. We lived in Kaimuki, my parents would once in a while go to church. So when we moved to Waipahu, somehow I got together with some people that were church-going people. Even though I was a baptized Catholic, they said, "Well you should go to confession and communion." But I never received First Communion. So here I was about fifteen years old when I received First Communion with kids that were eight to nine years old. But I didn't care because was my first time and then my brothers and sisters also joined in. My First Communion, my confirmation, the Bishop came out from Honolulu. All in the same year, I think it was 1931. And then my mother started going back to church also. And she finally taught catechism. And I still have a picture somewhere that was taken about 1933, '32 or '33. My mother with all her students. And some of these students today, of course are grandparents.

Now the church had their church fairs every year. The church when I came here was right in back of the Waipahu Elementary School. They had a church, rectory, and the graveyard. All tied in their own piece of property. The priest that came here came from Ewa 'cause this was a mission at the time when I first moved here. The priest had to come from Ewa. He ran the Ewa church and he'd come here and say mass and go back to Ewa.

WN: There were no priests in Waipahu?

EM: There were no priests located here as such. Even though there was a building for him. Then in 1934, or '35, somewhere in that time, we had a resident priest.
But he not only took care of Waipahu, but he had to take care of Waianae, which was a mission. So he used to say one mass here early in the morning, drive all the way to Waianae say a mass there, come all the way back, say a later mass. So you had two mass in Waipahu, one in Sacred Hearts, one priest.

I used to work with him this way. The church had these fairs like I said. One of the first things I did was chase baseballs, you know baseball throw in the carnival. The following year, I was in charge of the booth. Now you must remember I'm about sixteen years old, I was in charge of the booth. By the time I was eighteen, I was already in charge of the prizes for the different booths. You know you had to give prizes for baseball throw and all the different activities. Bingo we had all---bingo was a big thing you know. In fact we had three, two, big booths for bingo. Very big booths.

WN: This is once a year?

EM: Once a year. At first the carnival—we call it the fair—would be at the church, because we didn't have any rides or anything like that, like you have E. K. Fernandez. We didn't have any, the place was too small anyway. They had other activities, fair queen and all that kind of stuff. We had raffle, in fact if I look through my collection, I still have raffle tickets I can show you. Ten cents a chance, you know, a book of ten for one dollar. And you got to raise your chicken or whatever it was.

(Laughter)

You know all different prizes. Then by the time I was---as I grew older I got more and more involved and I was still a pretty young man when I ran the carnivals. I supervise the carnivals in fact, over the years I got quite proficient. You know every year we'd go more and more and more. I can tell all kinds of stories about carnivals.

For what reason I'm not sure, but the plantation used to furnish the material for the booths. Plantation was really generous, when I talk about booths, I mean they came there and they put up the booths. You say, "Look, I want so many booths for bingo, so many---this my plan." Give them the plan before the weekend of the carnival, of the fair whatever it was, plantation was there, put up the booths.
Like I said first, was at the church grounds which wasn't too big. Then eventually, we moved to the L'Orange Park. Wasn't called L'Orange Park, then was called Oahu Sugar Company Park. There again the plantation came and put up all the booths. But by then you already had rides, so E. K. Fernandez would bring out his rides.

WN: When did they [E. K. Fernandez] start coming in?

EM: I'm not sure. I'm not sure when. But I finally became the financial chairman for all the carnivals. We used to have a conflict, we have to have conflicts, you know how it is with groups, the older people and the younger people. We had conflicts.

Let me finish with the carnival. Like I said the plantation would put up the booths, after the carnival they take them all down for you. So all you had to do was supply your own baseballs and all the pins and whatever else you used for the throws and all your prizes and stuff. But they put the whole thing in. But you must remember, that time, they did not require, like they do today, running water, you had to have so many lights, everything had to be inspected, the workers had to be examined before they handle food and all that. That was nothing like that. And your prizes were lot of homemade goods, lot of crochet and handicraft of all kinds as prizes. And of course people would donate a calf, they donate a---even a cow, a whole cow, or chickens, eggs, lot of donations people used to donate. Then of course that's where the boys met the girls, eh, the girls met the boys. And first thing you know, you had you know, romances started, all that kind of stuff.

WN: All the ethnic groups went to the carnival?

EM: Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah.

WN: And how long did the carnival last?

EM: Oh, see, you must remember that the plantation work six days a week at first. So your carnival would last from Saturday night---you'd have Saturday night and after church on Sunday, you start again. So one night and one afternoon, usually. And we used to have auctions also. We'd auction things off, different things.

Now in 1937, we started the Holy Name Society, which is still in existence. And I was the charter vice-president. I was about twenty-two I think at that time. And we had a young group that was not satisfied
with the president. So in 1939, we young turks, as we called ourselves, we dumped all the old officers and I became president. But what happened was that the older guys would not cooperate with us. Assign them things to do and they wouldn't cooperate. So we'd have the fair and they'd say, "Oh, you run it. We not going help you with this or the heck with you. You wanna be boss. You take over." So we took over. We did our work but eventually we said, "Look, we have to all work together." So we kinda...

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

...just help them with all the different activities. In 1938, we formed our Boy Scout troop. Priest appointed me as scoutmaster. Well, I'd never been a Boy Scout myself. So there were four of us that got to be---I got to be the scoutmaster. My kid brother was one of the assistants and the two others were assistant scoutmasters. Then we had about forty or fifty boys at that time to start with. Then we'd participate in community activities, we'd be in the parades. In fact, in the carnivals, everytime there was a carnival, there was a queen. There had to be a carnival queen. And they'd have contest you know who could sell the most scripts and all that kind of stuff.

Then my troop was Troop 57. Being the scoutmaster, I finally over the years the next---I'm talking about the next twenty years, I handled all the camping for the whole district. I became neighborhood commissioner. I---keep saying I but I, you know, took over all the different camping activities and planned programs, stuff like that. And what we'd do, we'd have a Camporee in---one year, we'd go to Ewa. The next Camporee, we'd go to Nanakuli. Then we come to Waipahu, we'd have it in the ball park. Then we'd kind of sort of rotate, go back and forth all the different Camporees we had. These were district Camporees. Would be from Waianae to Aiea, I believe it was. I'm not sure if Aiea had a troop. Waipahu had at that time three Boy Scout troops. Mine was 57, Freddie Yasui had 118, Adam Lopez had 120.

All sponsored differently. Mine was sponsored by the church, church society. The 118 was Waipahu Elementary School, and 120 was sponsored by the plantation. So we'd all work together. Then we had Troop 17 in Ewa, we had---I forget what troop in Waianaee, we had troop in Nanakuli. So we'd all you know...
WN: ...all the Leeward side?

EM: Yeah, all the Leeward side. So we had quite a few boys. And we go on these camps, the boys the first night don't sleep. And that was my job to make sure that the son-of-a-guns kept order. And that used to worry me. First night, I wouldn't be able to sleep. You know I was in charge. And some of the other guys, "Ah, what the heck, let the boys have a good time. I'm not in charge."

(Laughter)

So because we had the Boy Scout troop, I---brother and my friends, our friends decided, "Eh, we need some training." So in 1938, we joined the National Guard. And we'd go to Honolulu once a week for drill at the National Guard Armory. Part of our drill was in the Capitol grounds area. Then summers we'd go to camp up at Schofield which was a whole story in itself being in the National Guard. We---all of us like to shoot. So we had our turn to go up to Punchbowl and do our thing, firing the .22 and the .06 rifle. And so, when other groups would go, what we did, we'd volunteer to go pull targets. After they shoot, you take the score and then you pull the targets, say "Look, so and so shot so many tens so many fives." And had so many, we call them Maggie's Drawers, the red flag. When they missed the target, we ran the red flag slowly, Maggie's Drawers, we call it. (Laughs) Missed the target. Many of them missed, you know. So we go up there practically every Sunday, we'd go church early in the morning. In fact, we go to Honolulu to mass and then we'd scoop up Punchbowl.

WN: Where in Punchbowl?

EM: Just about where the cemetery is, I think. I think that's where it was, I'm not sure, I cannot tell, I think that's where it was, was Punchbowl. Because had all the hills and stuff and then they had backdrop for the targets, you shot, and all different yardage, different weapons, yeah.

Then at camp of course, we'd shoot machine guns, tommy guns, whatever they had in those days. I learned to shoot the .38 and uh.... I had my own .22 at home. In fact, I still have it. I still have my .22. Paid five dollars for it, a used .22 from a friend of mine.

WN: And it still works?
EM: Still works. I've haven't cleaned it even for quite a while. But I still have it.

I'm talking---I'm going round and round but you said, what did you guys do on Saturday night? Well, almost every Saturday night there was a dance. For instance, we formed a what we called a Get Together Club, group of men. And we'd sponsor dances, we'd sponsor different activities. We'd raise funds by these dances. So we'd hire an orchestra see, forty dollars for an orchestra for one night. You know, you cannot even pay forty dollars for one guy now. But anyway, was forty dollars for the whole orchestra. Then you'd either rent or just acquire---August Ahrens School auditorium, was a great one. We had dances there. We had dances in the Hongwanji Japanese clubhouse. We had dances in the Ewa Recreation Center. Ewa I think we had to pay a fee, I think, but that was sort of a plantation area.

Oh, we had a little clubhouse in the L'Orange Park. That was built in 1937. Was supposed to be the rec center. But it was actually just a little clubhouse. But almost every Saturday night there was a dance there. Somebody would put it on.

WN: Was it the plantation that put it on or...

EM: No, no. Different groups, different clubs. For instance, the Portuguese baseball team or the Puerto Rican baseball team or you know some Filipino group or something like that. And the Filipino clubhouse always had activities. They always had something for the Filipino people. I can show you some pictures of the crowning of the queen and all the different activities that they had.

And then I'd not only dance here. In fact, I met my wife in the Aiea gym in 1937. She was still in school. But I didn't court her till later years. While she was in school, I only corresponded little bit with her but not much. Finally, I started courting her in 1939. Married in 1940. But that's how I met her, we was going....

Now in---I think it was you I told about this, they had Waipahu Continuation School. Right next to---in fact, where the [Waipahu] Cultural Garden Park headquarters is now. My workers---my first workers in the field were young students. Just came out of school, just the eighth grade, they wanted to continue their education, continue to learn little more. So the plantation would
allow them to go, I forget how many hours a week, to these classes that Mr. Isle used to teach different subjects.

WN: Could you spell that, Mr. Isle.

EM: Isle, I-S-L-E. Charles Isle was his name. I have a picture somewhere in my collection of him. He taught all different kinds of classes so in the evening he'd have activities like tap dancing. So I took up tap dancing. I'd be tap dancing for over a year. And I was quite proficient, not to brag but---my wife would never see me tap dance. That was before I got to even know her. So I was always active. I always had something going. Now, meantime I'm talking about all these different activities going on, dancing, and volleyball and football and all that kind of stuff.

Meantime I finish high school in '34. So I looked for a job in the pump department. They had a job that I would work twelve hours a day. This what, every day of the year in the pump department, for dollar and a quarter [$1.25] a day. I couldn't see myself being tied down that much. I needed my freedom, I just---I was too (chuckles) young to be tied down. I could see the older guys but it was up to them. So I went out and my dad got me a job working in the fields with him to learn to be a supervisor. So I was in---you could say a supervisor apprentice for about six months with my father.

And he was the strictest guy that ever was and ever will be. I think with everybody, but with me was even---we used to have lot of scraps at home. There were couple of times I almost left home because scraps we had at home. He'd take things from what happened in the field, he'd take home with him, see, he couldn't forget because I was new and by God, I made mistakes. But you were not supposed to make mistakes. And I used to disagree with him sometimes. I had new ideas and he had---he didn't have the same ideas I had. So after a while the---after I learned the ropes, they gave me my own gang.

So I had a gang of young people that---first was with what they call li'i kō, was picking up the cane left in the fields. Then I got a gang that used to cut the cane and I used to teach them how to cut cane.

From that, I went to supervising---for instance, I had a Chinese gang that did the seed cutting. And in seed
cutting they used mules. I loved animals and every so often I get onto one of the mules and ride around. You know, get the feel of riding on a horseback. And once in a while, they'd have horses that were not too good for daily riding, they were kind of old most of them. And they'd send them out to be pack mules. So I'd ride those around too. So what we'd do, we haul the seed cane from where it was cut and bagged, out to the road either to where the cane cars were or there was a truck waiting that we had to load. And usually was a cane car. So we had to haul these seed bags all the way out to where the cane cars were. And I'd ride the mules back when it was empty, see. Each mule had four bags and I would ride back to the field on the mule. I was never thrown from a horse in later years. But I was thrown from a mule. Was bareback though. I got lifted right off into the field, boy, on a bareback mule.

WN: You also said you had different Chinese, Korean...

EM: Right. When I had—when I was assigned these Chinese and Korean men, they spoke English but was in a jargon that I'd never known. It was pidgin but the pidgin that included Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, whatever else there was all together. I learned it from them eventually but it took me a while. I'd never learn pidgin at all.

And they lived in quarters assigned to them in one particular area of the camp, they called it the Chinese Camp. And they had a person that—family anyway, that looked after them. They did their laundry for them, they cooked for them, they made sure they got all their meals. And they sent out the food to the field and their lunches would come out by train or by truck in big five-gallon can containers. They didn't drink water, they drank tea all day long. Of course, they had their spats among themselves and some of them were quite aged. They used to smoke a—I don't know they call it, the opium residue or something like that. They couldn't afford the rich stuff, the better stuff, so they used to smoke part of that. And then of course, they smoked the Five Brothers and Durham tobacco, they used that, eh. I wish I had taken pictures of those people at that time. The way they dressed and all, I mean was really something to remember. (Laughs)

But see, each gang had a contract boss. So there was Chinese gang, there was a contract boss. And he used to scrap with the workers all the time. They didn't put enough seed into the bags. They wanted to make
sure they got lot of bags but maybe they didn't want the bags to be too heavy to carry. (Laughs) See the bags was supposed to weigh not more than sixty pounds. So when you loaded the mules, you were swinging sixty pounds of seed. And I used to love to do it except when I got sick. You know I used to love to just pick the bag up and just throw it on the mule. Each mule team had five mules and they had a mule driver we used to call them. And he came with the mules. And (I saw) a new man that came out to the field and the saddle of the mules was underneath the stomach of the mules (laughs) instead of being on the back. The reason being that when you saddle the mule you tighten up the cinches on the saddle. What you suppose to do is kick the mule in the stomach with your knee and pull the cinches at the same time. See you deflate him 'cause when you tie the cinches, the mule inflates himself sort of, then when he's walking he deflates himself so the saddle falls off the back. The same thing with horses, you have to tie up the cinches tight enough otherwise the saddle falls off. So we used to have all kinds of incidents. We had rainy weather, we had mules with load---can you imagine a mule with---let's see 60, 120, 240, pounds on his back and he turns over in the ditch and his legs flying up in the air with a load of seeds on his back. (Laughs) I had to go rescue him, his legs flying you know. So you have to cut the load off and then get him upright.

WN: Did that happen often?

EM: Not too often. But it happens several times. 'Cause even with---surefooted but sometimes the way the ditches were that where they had to travel in. See, they had to travel within the field.

WN: Were there any kind of fights or arguments between say Chinese and Koreans?

EM: Oh, often. It was often. And they used to converse in their own language and sometimes they'd threaten with the doggone cane knife, they threaten with the darn cane knives they used. But then nobody ever chopped anybody else that I know of.

WN: How did you break it up?

EM: (Laughs) I let them fight. That's the contract boss's job. (Laughs) Half the time I didn't know what they were saying anyway. They'd think that somebody else stole their---took part of their seed that they had cut and bagged without them seeing, you know all kinds of problems.
WN: How much did you get paid for being this...

EM: When I started they paid me forty-five dollars a month as assistant supervisor. Then when they made me a full supervisor, fifty dollars and it kept going up until by the time I was about to get married in 1940, I was earning ninety dollars a month and I was already a relief irrigation overseer at that time. 'Cause I had to handle this young fellas in the fields that came from the school, then I had the Chinese gang. Then one off season, I had about thirty-five women, gang, and handled them doing weeding and odd jobs like replanting and all different operations. The women could handle even though during the harvesting time, they did all the cane piling.

WN: You said relief irrigation, what is that?

EM: Yeah, relief irrigation overseer, we had about 12,000 acres, 1,000 acres apiece, so we must have had about twelve irrigation overseers. And divided into three different divisions, the Waiau division, the Koalepea division, and the Kunia division. Each one had their own section, we had our own section boss. So when they went on vacation, for instance, in the Kunia division, I'd take one irrigation overseer's place while he went on two weeks vacation, that time we didn't have too many weeks of vacation, maybe two weeks was the most. I'd relieve him. So I have to go with him several days to learn his section. I'd ride around with him and then I'd take over and I go to the next one. And I had a---we had a Korean irrigation overseer that kept all his records in Korean. So before he could go on vacation (laughs) he had to translate to me what was what (laughs) so that I'd know which---where to keep what records. 'Cause we had to keep the records of all the---how much water went into the fields, when it was irrigated and you had to keep a record of each round of irrigation. The fertilizing of course, how much fertilizer came and how much was put into each field, all that kind of stuff we had to keep. Then of course all the time. Where you charge the time if your men worked in one operation, you charged the certain account, if he's worked in another operation, a different account. And you sent them out to work for somebody else. You had a gang but you sent them out to somebody. So I got to know the whole plantation that way which the old timers didn't because they were stuck with one section. They didn't know what was going on on the east side and the guys in the west side didn't know what was going on the other side.
WN: How big was one section?

EM: At least a thousand acres, yeah, one section. In fact, when I became a full time irrigation overseer in 1940, I had 1,300 acres 'cause I had the section that's on—you can say the west side off Mililani, in fact the entrance to Mililani cemetery today, that was my section all in there. And I had the Kipapa Gulch which was by Roosevelt Bridge and all in there. I had that section too. We used to leave home, God, 4:30, 5:00 in the morning. Saddle our horses and get up to the camps. I had only two camps to contend with in my own section. But some of the other fellas had sometimes three camps that they had to go to. So what it is, you rode up to the camp and you give the men their orders for the day. So by 6:00 they had to be out in the field. You had to be out there early, make sure that they got out. You tell them you gonna get so much water, you put so many men irrigating, so many men weeding. You send so many men from your gang gonna go to help with the harvesting maybe if the harvesting was late. Then you'd say, "Two men from your gang, three men from your gang." Then the truck would come and pick them up, or train, or whatever it was. Then we decide we had to burn cane for instance, at that time, the harvesting people did not do the burning, we had to do the burning. In fact, in the beginning, we used to cut our own fire breaks. And then we'd say, "Look they want twenty acres," so we'd figure out twenty acres from here to there. We'd cut it up....

WN: You mean the irrigation gang would do that?

EM: Cut, yeah. We didn't have fire break gangs. Irrigation people.

WN: So you were irrigation overseer in 1940?

EM: Yeah.

WN: How many overseers were there in the whole plantation?

EM: Like I said, there must have been about twelve, I think. 'Cause each section had uh—see my section, we had one, two, three, four; four in my section. Oahu Sugar was only about 13,000 acres I think at that time. Just about what they going back to now. There weren't that many. I'm trying to think. I remember by the people, you see. People that work there. That's about it, about twelve.

WN: So you were an overseer during the war [World War II], yeah?
EM: Yeah, I was overseer during the war. So I had thirty-five or thirty-six Ilocanos. The plantation sent out the Filipino people to go help with the defense construction and I went with them. So at first, when the war broke out, I was sick. I don't know what I had, pneumonia or something. I was sick, I was home sick and I couldn't go out. So somebody else took my men to do the defense work. Then what they did with me when I first went out, they said, "Okay, you go with the superintendent in charge of the whole operation outside of the plantation and you ride around with him." So he had a command car with an Army driver, of course. And it was so funny that when we came to guard on the bridge or a guard on the---there were guards all over the place. Lot of them were---they didn't call 'em home guard exactly, they were not exactly National Guard, they were another group that they had recruited to be guards like. And then of course some place they had the regular soldiers. And we come to the bridge or gate or something, they see the command car and first thing of course they present arms, eh. (Laughs) And we salute too. They thought we were big shot officers. And was funny to me because I've been in the National Guard as a private. (Laughs) Aw, shucks.

WN: What was Waipahu like during the war?

EM: Well, we had been preparing for about a year at least, I think about a year. We were part of the OCD, the Oahu Civilian Defense. We had formed a group and we had gone out, practiced, learned from the police department what to do, what not to do, they'd come out and instruct us. For instance, they had a practice blackout and we were spread all over this blooming place, I ended up in a rice patch in Pearl City. (Laughs) People had this rice patch and they had a little shack, their home. I had to walk on the banks of these paddies, you know, to go tell them that they had to put their lights off. That was an experience. And we'd man the different sections of the---what do you call---intersections of the roads and stuff like that, practice maneuvers. Then when December 7 struck, I was at home. My wife was getting ready to go to church and we didn't know what was going on until, all the big noise. Finally a friend of ours came by, "Eh, there's a war, war!"

"What!"

"Yeah, the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor. It's war."
Heck, we stopped going to church, we didn't go to church that day. I live right next to the ball park, first house on the corner. And then right away they congregated the OCD. So I went over to the ball park and there's a little clubhouse they had there and we all gathered there. And I watched this zero going right around and the guy was looking right at us. He was so low we could see him and he could see us. After that, I start thinking by God, good thing he didn't let loose. 'Cause we had no uniform or anything on, you know, but here we were gathering. Oh, we've been practicing blackout because we had games and all that. So all we did, we sort of organized ourselves and then right that night, they started already putting people out looking out, watching out for the sources of water for instance, the filters where the water came into the town, around the mill, all these different strategic areas, they had people on guard. And remember now, we didn't know whether they going invade or not. So everybody was on pins and needles. You know they were scared plain, I tell you they were scared. I think some of them had shotguns that they took from home and all kinds of scary weapons. Nobody moved.

Then when I got to working with these people going into the defense work, I found out that at Malakole, which is now all that Ewa Beach subdivision area, all in that kiawe brush area. The men had to go out there and clear the, all the kiawe bushes to lay barbed wire and all that kind of stuff. I found out that our troops, had some new troops that come in and they stationed them right in that Malakole area. And they would--at night, nobody moved. All the barbed wire was booby traps, wrapped with cans and things, so everytime you touched the booby then the barbed wire would rattle. So that had been a cattle range, grazing area in that kiawe bushes. So cattle would come at night [EM snaps fingers] and that was the last we heard of the cattle, he was gone, he or she whatever it was. They'd shoot, they'd shoot they wouldn't ask question, they shoot first and ask later. So at night, nobody moved or talks. We went out and worked the Ewa entrance, the Pearl Harbor entrance. And the donkey that pulled the net across was right where we were working. We put up pillboxes, we put up barbed wire. Up in the hillside, we put up gun emplacements. Oh, you know on the beach too, gun emplacements, we put in command post, you know, for do all the communications. We'd do all kinds of work for the Army. Cleared some cane field areas. We cleared kiawe bush areas. On the beach we used big timbers for gun emplacements, sand bags and stuff like that. Laid lot of barbed wire, God.
WH: So throughout the war years you were doing that?

EM: No, no, no. After December 7, right after December 7, we did that. Then after, of course, all the troops came in and you know things started slacking off. Then we worked where Ala Moana [Shopping] Center is now. And stacked lumber, all kinds of timber. When I'm talking about timber, I'm talking about twelve-by-twelves, and of course, some of the small stuff. And then they'd unload it there and we'd stack it all in different grades and everything else. There were no finger lifts, everything was by hand. One or two cranes or something but lot of work all by hand. There again because with the Filipino people. Now meantime, my fields were going to pot because nobody was tending the weeding, there was some water running into the field, they're just barely growing. But the fields that, the section that had the Japanese workers, they can continue doing their work. They couldn't go out and do [defense] work like we did with the Filipinos. They didn't allow them.

Then coming back to the OCD, Civilian Defense, we had two groups, we had what they call the Fire Marshalls and we had the--I forget what they all this, anyway, we paired off. One was the Fire Marshall and I was the Defense one. And we patrolled the town every night after for curfew. And we'd carry a stick for the dogs. And we came to a house, we saw lights on, we just walked in the yard, we hit on the wall and boom, you'd see the shades would come down fast. We had a lot of experiences, you know. Passed by the nurses quarters, they tell us look in first then you knock.

(Laughter)

Hospitals had to be all blacked out. In fact, to go to work, we had to go by car because sometimes we'd leave the horses up in the fields and we had a little stables up in the fields. And we'd have to drive out and God, we barely saw the white line on the road with the two bit gleams from your vehicle. So half the time you in the middle of the road. We had to go out early in the morning eh.

I had experiences with riding to work when they had encampments within our plantation areas. Like for instance, above August Ahrens School here, we had colored group, they were artillery. We weren't used to people like that and uh.... Our people got to mix with them eventually. But Black guys, you know, gee, we
weren't used to that kind of stuff. Now anyway, one morning, I remember distinctly, we--uh--I say we because my partner, I call him my partner, Japanese irrigation overseer and I were riding our horses and this is pitch dark in the morning. And we going up tong, tong, tong, all of a sudden I hear click! "Stop!" I told my partner stop.

Say, "What's the matter?"

"Try wait!"

The guy say something, "Halt! Why didn't you stop the first time I said halt."

"I'm sorry I didn't hear you." I couldn't see him, all I could see were his white teeth when he finally talked. I couldn't see the Black guy, pitch black in the morning! He gave us hell, so I said, "Oh. You want to see our passes?"

"Where you going?"

"I'm going to work."

They just moved in the night before. See the group that had been there, they got used to us, they wouldn't bother. But these guys would overnight, they change troops. They ship one group out, and brought another group in overnight. Then we had another one up above this section here and I had one in my section. They was Black people too and they were inside, but they had taken over part of our cane field and made their camp. And they had the artillery, big guns, you know field artillery. One of my camp areas, Camp 36, we had a Hawaiian Electric transformer station, was the big one, big transformer station. And they had the MPs [Military Police]. There was a group there of about six people I think. And they stayed there constantly. And they had big German Shepherds with them, either one or two, once in a while they'd switch them around. And they had searchlights also besides the MPs, the searchlights in one section.

So I got to know what the searchlights were like and I got acquainted with these military people from the south, lot of them were from the south and these were white men though. And every day they'd bring the meals for them. So here we was, we couldn't get butter, we couldn't get corned beef, we couldn't get any of that kind of stuff, yet they were getting all these good stuff. So they'd say uh, "Eh, you want some butter?"
"Oh, sure, why not!" So the excess butter they'd give to me, that was the end of the line, see. These trucks would go around with all the food for them. So in return, I'd go down the store with my liquor permit and buy my quota. Which was maybe one quart a month or one quart in three months, or whatever. I didn't know what it was. I'd buy me Three Feathers Whiskey and take it to them, make them happy. I give them whiskey, they give me butter and this and that. So you know we had supplement food, but we couldn't buy the stuff that they were having.

WN: The military guys couldn't buy the booze?

EM: I don't think so. You had to have a permit. I still have my permit somewhere. Then every time you went to buy, they had to scribble on, you know. That was part of Frankie's job, he used to issue all the permits.

WN: Whose job?

EM: Watanabe. He was in charge of that all through the war. He used to issue all the kind of permits.

WN: So when the war ended, afterwards you became housing administrator?

EM: Um, was about a while later. Anyway, had all kinds of experience during the war that I could tell you stories about but I would take too long. Because in my section, we had the Kipapa aviation gas, which is in tunnels below Roosevelt Bridge on the Mililani side of the gulch, huge, huge tunnels. And all the aviation gas for Wheeler airfield. Was all stored in there. And we had a Kipapa airfield, which was right above the bridge there. And they got bunkers that were made and then they had women that came and we had manienie growing on our reservoir (banks). So they came and get the seed grass from our area to plant on these bunkers. And of course you could see the planes go off from there. And then they had huge nursery that had plants that they used for planting for camouflage and stuff like that.

So in 1946, the union had come in. They had come in '45, already the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] and they had sort of organized the trades people. But they had not organized all the agricultural workers, the way I understand. I'm just trying to reminisce now. They tried to negotiate with the plantation and they often had difficult time. So
on Labor Day I think it was, in 1946 they decided to go on strike. So they closed down everything. Everything just closed down [EM makes whoosh sound] tight as a drum. And being an irrigation overseer, we had to go out and check our fields because cane was just drying up and the workers in the field, irrigators, had a contract with us. They were paid a daily wage. But over and above that when the cane was harvested, they got a percentage paid on the tonnage of their fields. So the fields dried up and the tonnage went down and then they got less money. So they were interested in keeping their fields alive. And they would sneak out into the fields and open up valves on the reservoirs, whatever source of water and let it run into their fields. Well, the union hierarchy, as we used to call 'em, the chiefs around here didn't want them to do that because just like strike breaking you know, as far as they were concerned. So they'd go out and they'd patrol, meantime, we were patrolling, the supervisors. We had to go check all these different places. We didn't go bother our irrigator and tell them, don't go run water into the fields, the heck. You know was to our benefit. To their benefit, to our benefit also. Anyway, they send these goon squads out. And I remember one instance, we was, the Japanese fella and I was standing by the reservoir just looking as to see how much water was on the reservoir and this goon squad came up, was six big guys. The guy said, "What you guys doing?"

"Oh, just checking the water," I told them. He looks at the Japanese guy, he was an older man and said, "What you doing, papa? You no open the valve. Boy, we throw you inside the reservoir." Tough guys, you know. I was mad by that time, but I never say anything.

WN: These guys were what from the plantation?

EM: Oh, yeah. [The men were with the union.] I knew them. I knew who they were. I knew them personally. They [union] used to pick the biggest fellas to be the goon squad, see. So I didn't say anything. So later on, couple of days later we were in another section. It had rained so water had run into this ditch on one side of the road. And these guys come by, just happened we just passing there. They say, "Eh, you guys irrigating." I never say anything. I just laughed. He say, "Why you laughing?"

I said, "How the hell you think water going into that ditch?" I said, "There's no source, no source of water that could get into that ditch." I said, "That's rain water." They shut up, they took off.
But they used to bug me, they picketed my house. I got up one morning and just happen that morning I didn't have to go out because we used to take turns patrolling the fields. Because we afraid of fires besides. So I got up in the morning, what the heck, whole lot of voices. I go out to my front gate, God, must be about thirty, forty guys all in front of my gate! I look in the back, another gang in my backyard. You know, they weren't in the yard, but they were right there on the sidewalk just about in the yard. So that day I had to go to the barber or something. After a while, I cleaned up, I walked outside and said [cheerfully], "Good morning!"

"Oh, oh good morning." Lot of them were ashamed, but they were given orders, they had to picket, see. But they knew....

WN: They picket all the managers?

EM: I don't know whether they picket other people, they picket me because they knew I was going out. They knew the chief that was in charge of the security live right next door to me. Was a good friend of mine. Of course, during the strike we didn't talk, eh. I mean you know, you couldn't (laughs). I ain't going to tell him the company secrets and he wouldn't tell me any either. He'd see me going to work. The way I went to work, I didn't go on the main highway, I went through the yards to go to my boss's house and get in his car and go out with him. And we'd pass them you know, where these guys going, gee. So that's why they used to have it in for me. So that's why they picketed my house. This wasn't every day now, they did it a couple of times and that was it. But anyway, that morning, I walked out, I went to the barbershop, had a haircut, came back, they were still there. They stayed there several hours. Then they finally gave up and went home. But just to show the unity, see. And they used to parade. They'd get them all together in the ball park or someplace and they'd parade up the street, up through the office, pass out pamphlets, not pamphlets, but uh...

WN: Handbills?

EM: Handbills. And if the plantation had put something out, they'd get a big fifty-gallon drum and burn it in front of the mill, you know, burn the stuff to show, "Eh, plantation this, and eh plantation that." It's a funny thing, but some of the fellas that did all this
kind of stuff, they used to threaten me even you know. He said, "You better watch out." Became my good friends afterward, after the strike. In fact, I had to work with them.

Then I came in and started working with housing because my boss became the housing administrator. He needed an assistant. So I came in as his assistant. And at that time, we only had the Waipahu houses which is about, oh, I'd say about 1,200 houses, I think, because we had lot of camps, outlaying camps. Practically every section had several camps, outlaying camps. Besides all the camps in Waipahu, you know, all the different areas. And then in '47, we bought out Aiea [Plantation], so we acquired another 600 or 700 houses in Aiea. So we had almost 2,000 units in '47. I was assistant, so I did all the bookkeeping. That time, we didn't have computers—everything was by hand. And I kept track of all the Waipahu houses and we had a man from Aiea that took care of all the Aiea section and he kept the books for that. And I oversaw both.

Meantime, we already had start selling subdivision lots in Aiea. Property we bought, start selling lots in the Aiea Heights Road. And maybe something like twenty cents a square foot, thirty cents a square foot, by the lots. (They were good-sized, 10,000-foot lots.) Even then, people thought it was high. Then we started selling different camp areas. What we did, we went into an old camp and kind of move the houses around and would install maybe new bathroom facilities if need be, we put in streets, put in new water lines, sewer lines, and all that kind of stuff were needed. We sold the houses and lots to the employees. Exactly what the prices were, I cannot remember the Aiea prices. They were very small, very minimal. In fact, when we came to the Mill Camp, I remember guys paying something like $2,500 for a house and lot, of course the houses were older, and selling them for double the price. I'm talking about between 1948 and 1950, right in that time.

Then in '49, they changed the (administrative) system. They got the accounting department to do the bookkeeping. And they did all the billing. So what we had to do was collect the rent. Then of course, we took care all the maintenance requests, all the assignment of the houses. I, for instance, became the liaison between the plantation....
EM: I became the liaison between the sales agents and the employee. If I didn't give permission, they couldn't sell the houses to the employee, you see. Just because we had outsiders living in the camp area too. We didn't want to sell to the outsiders. Had to be to the employee. Employee had to continue to live there. All these specifications they had. Of course, you know, was so inexpensive, eh. The idea was to get out of the housing business. All the way through, all our subdivision, the whole idea was to get out of housing.

WN: Why did they get into it in the first place?

EM: Oh, was part of the perquisites.

WN: Oh, I see, the elimination of the perquisites [by the plantation, after unionization].

EM: Yeah, I mean that's one thing I forgot to say. Prior to 1946, they had free housing, free electricity, free medical for the workers, free water, everything for the workers. In fact, us supervisors, we even had hot water, we had (laughs) you know, we didn't even have to have a heater and all that kind of stuff. We had yard service. So [after unionization] we charge them rent and that's where we came in. Charge them for medical, charge them for water. Charge them for electricity. So we finally got rid of all the houses in Aiea.

Then we started subdividing Waipahu. And we started with the lower portion of the town which is across here from Waipahu Street. We call it the Spanish Camp. And we did the same thing. We took some of the old houses, moved them around and put in streets, no sidewalks, if you noticed all these subdivisions that we developed, no sidewalks at all. Start with the old houses, then we back here on Huakai Street, we'd again put in brand new houses. Eleven thousand dollars, fee simple, house and lot. The houses were built to FHA [Federal Housing Authority] specifications and we had aluminum roofing with a huge beam. You know, I never forgot that beam in the hallway. That was a requirement at that time, make sure the house was sturdy. And there again, I was the liaison between the agents and the employees. The union would discourage their people from buying. One fella out here bought two houses, $11,000 each. Still has 'em. Then from here, we went further up, we kept going. We subdivided all this area up in here, the upper portion. Then they went for something like $13,000, then $14,000 and there again I was always
involved. Then we went to a different area. We had a piece of land across from KAHU radio station and across what is now the high school. So we developed 134 house lots in that area. And then it was a leased deal where a two-bedroom house went for $11,000 and a four-bedroom house for $13,000. Eventually, the people were able to buy the property in fee. Those subdivisions, there was no agent, I was the agent. You know, I did the negotiating for them. And we built those houses under a special act that had been developed for people that were income underprivileged because their homes were being demolished. Their houses were being demolished so they were able to buy these houses with no down payment which was an unknown deal prior to that. That's why I used to sit down with them and go over their income, all their assets, all their liabilities and counsel them as to how they could purchase a house and lot.

WN: Could they purchase their old plantation house if they wanted to?

EM: No, we were demolishing the old houses.

WN: All of them?

EM: Yeah, as much as possible, trying to get out of the housing business. So what we did, like for instance, now we would be demolishing a house in Camp 35. Some of the better houses, we kept and moved the people from Camp 35 into these houses, the better houses. If they were too old, we just demolished them. So we would substitute the old house in Camp 35 for his house. For every house we build, we had to demolish one house. So we had to write a report. We sold five houses, we demolish five houses. We sold ten houses, we demolish ten houses, see. And there was a special specification on this thing that there had to be a house demolished before you could buy. This had to be an old house. They were displaced people just like, you know.... In fact, lots of them became displaced persons. Plenty people today are still telling me that they are sorry they did not take my advice to buy. I went house-to-house. So then what had happened then? Here I was, you know, everybody was working from Monday to Friday, weekends were off; Saturday, Sunday. When could I get together with the families? Saturday and Sunday. I had to counsel not only the plantation people, but their families as well. Lot of them had grown-up children that wanted to help the parents or even subsidize their purchase. So I had to get them involved. So I met with them Saturdays and Sundays.
So I said, "Look, you guys are working five days a week. Heck, I want to work five days a week also." So I started the first compensatory time off that was ever given on this plantation, I became. So I'd work Saturday, Sunday. I'd take off Monday and Tuesday or Wednesday and Thursday, or whatever days I wanted to compensate for that time. But the people were really appreciative of buying such a place. Nice houses, really nice. But of course, part of my job was to inspect. I went through and inspected the houses and they had to meet my specifications otherwise we wouldn't accept the houses, see. We had to sign that we accept it, eh. I wouldn't accept until I check the whole house. And there was a warranty I think for a year or so. Any discrepancies, they had to come back and repair. So once in a while, I'd miss the one or two or something else would develop. I did come back and I had to call them in and say, "Look I have these discrepancies." And I'd list them all up and they'd go to the house and fix them. Meantime, I was still in charge of housing, still in charge of medical plan, but I acquired pension plans and profit sharing. That became all part of my work, beside housing. Then as the years went by, we acquired Ewa, and when we acquired Ewa, we had retired our workmen's compensation person. We had one person. That's all he was doing. And we retired two people that were handling workmen's compensation in Ewa, so the pension and profit sharing, we shifted onto another person and a woman took care of that. And I took over workmen's compensation and trades progression which meant all the safety programs. So by the time I retired, I had the housing, the medical plan, the trades progression, the workmen's comp, what else did I have? I don't know what else, but (laughs) anyway, you know, I never had just one thing that I was doing, was always several. From '46 for instance was housing, medical plan, then I went to personnel work and then, you know, this and that. In fact, one time my title was Assistant Personnel Director. So I had all different kinds of titles.

WN: And you also said one time that you couldn't become a director because...

EM: No, I couldn't become a director. I didn't have the educational background, I didn't have a college degree. And I didn't work enough with negotiations and stuff like that. That was never part of my work. The director had to be a person that worked with negotiations. I used to feed the information for negotiations, you know.
Then I had all kinds of experiences, like every year since '48, we put out a company publication and when the man first started, I used to feed him articles, you know, news from the plantation and I used to write some of them up for him. So I got experienced there. Then we started the annual report in a movie form. Every year an annual report showing all the income, where the money went, and all that, eh. But in a movie form, so we had to go out and take pictures of different operations and new equipment would come in. They still have it, you know. It's a beautiful setup, so I helped to do that.

WN: Okay, I think we better bring this to an end. We've been through your whole life actually, yeah?

EM: (Laughs) Well, not all. In the meantime, I was always in activities. Like I started the parent/teacher's group at St. Joseph's School, 1953. I was the president. I still have the gavel in there. And I worked with the [Waipahu] Community Association since, God, since it was Waipahu Athletic Association, at one time. I still am a member of the board, you know, you see there. I'm a past president, 1960, I was president. So you know, you go from one thing you go to the next, you see. With the church, you get involved in certain things, with the community, you get involved in something else. I just worked with the Hans L'Orange Park dedication, for instance, eh. Because I'm tied in with the Community Association. Because I'm tied in with that, I get involved in something else. Of course, you with the Boy Scouts, because you that, you know. Our Waipahu Juvenile Patrol, they started in '48, I started in '49. Twenty years I was in that, you know, officer. We had the Oahu Sugar Supervisor's Club, I was the treasurer. I'd plan all the activities. We had socials, every year had socials. Big kind, some real big ones. But the experiences, you know, I've used it over and over. I'm experienced. We gonna have a party pretty soon. I know exactly what we should do, what we shouldn't do.

WN: That's experience. (Laughs)

EM: Yeah, all these different experiences. Kept active. With my senior citizens, lot of them, we worked together and we can reminisce once in a while. "You remember when...." (Laughs)

WN: Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Malterre.

END OF INTERVIEW
FIVE LIFE HISTORIES

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
University of Hawaii-Manoa

June 1983