BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: DAVID TAI LOY HO, retired fireman

Tai Loy Ho, Chinese-Hawaiian, was born in Kakaako, March 16, 1910. He was the third of 13 children. His mother was Hawaiian from Kohala; his father Chinese from Honolulu.

Tai Loy began working almost before he went to school, picking kiawe beans and selling newspapers. Through his years at Pohukaina Elementary and McKinley High Schools, he continued to sell newspapers, dove for coins, and helped out with playground supervision.

Mother Margaret Waldron, a strong community guiding light, encouraged him to continue his education at the University of Hawaii. He graduated in agriculture. While in school, he held a variety of jobs related to recreation and sports and was in the National Guard. He served in World War II, later became a fireman, and retired in 1966. He currently lives with his wife Maile in the Waialae-Kahala area.

TIME LINE

1910 birth: Kakaako
1923 coin diver
1930 moved to Nuuanu
1932 graduated, University of Hawaii
1943 Army Infantry service
1966 retired
GG: This is an interview with Tai Loy Ho in his home in Kahala Towers, and the date is May 18, 1978. The interviewer is Gael Gouveia. I thought, maybe, to begin with, you could tell me how your family happened to come to live in Kakaako. Or do you know how they got there?

TH: Well....let's see, my family was living in a sort of ghetto down River Street. Live among the poor elements. And my father was just starting the business; he was cooking for Alexander Young Hotel Bakery, delivering bread and making, maybe, $60 a month. Finally, I don't know how, she [mother] never told us about it, but she had some friends in Kakaako; Hawaiians, you know. So, she moved into an area on Queen and Cooke and...

GG: This is your mother or your father?

TH: Yeah, my mother.

GG: Your mother was living alone, or what about your father?

TH: No, was married, you know. And the first born was the oldest brother. The first and second born [elsewhere] and [their family] moved to Kakaako. I was [third son and first] born in Kakaako. I don't know how many was born in Kakaako, but we moved around quite a bit.

GG: Within Kakaako?

TH: Yeah. As the family grew larger and larger. Plus, my grandmother died. And, of course, all the people who lived in were Hawaiians, Portuguese, Chinese. It one big community. And every time you gave birth, everybody came there, and watch their kids, and cook for them, and send 'em to school, you know. And we all played together, we all fought each other, you know.

GG: Could you remember what year your parents moved into Kakaako area?

TH: Gee, I don't know. But it was....all I can remember, I must have been
about five years old. I can remember selling papers, you know.

GG: And that was in Kakaako already.

TH: Yeah.

GG: But they moved there before you were born?

TH: Before I was born. Of course, I had to shine shoes and pick up kiawe beans and sell newspapers. But, of course, I went with my brother to do that, see. And to learn little bit about what it was all about. I did that for several years. When I grew up to 6, 7, 8, 9 (1916-1919), I kept on doing it. And, of course, they were too big, so they quit the job.

GG: Where did you go to pick kiawe beans?

TH: Well, the best place was Ward Estate. Ward Street and Queen Street. From Queen to King. They kept lot of cattle in there. They exempt from taxes, and lot of kiawe trees, you know.

GG: And can you describe to me how you would go and pick them, or what did you put them in, or how many of you went.

TH: Yeah, we sneak under the wire. Because the cattle, they weren't any barbed wire. Wires is what--8 inches, 19 inches high. And we'd go in with our small bags. The big bag will be on a four-wheel, hind-wheel cart, and come out, load 'em. And then we go down, way down the Ward Estate on Ward Street. Toward Ward and Queen and further down. There were lot of kiawe trees, you know. Just full of beans and across the stable, way down Ward and Ala Moana. They kept the horses over there. And we go down there and sell it. We get two bits (25 cents) a bag.

GG: How big was the bag?

TH: I would say about 35 pounds. When it weighed, you know.

GG: You said you took the little bags under the fence with you. What kind of bags were they?

TH: Well, Mama used to find little, I think the potato bags. Potato bags so that we won't get it like stuck with us. You fill it up; you have to drag it. You load it, take it back...

GG: Then you go dump it in the bigger bag in the cart.

TH: ...and then we go to another area, pick it up.

GG: And what was the big bag made out of? Or do you know.
H: Oh, that was the bag; I think they were sugar bags. Not sugar, sugar bags, they were burlap bags. Burlap bags.

GG: Where did you get those? Or do you know?

TH: I think they were rice bags. Because right across from us was a rice mill, on Queen and Cooke. Now it's a white house. That was old Japanese rice mill. I know that now they don't use those burlap bags, they use a white bag and it's no leakage.

GG: And then what did they use the kiawe beans for? Was that...

TH: For the horses.

GG: That's what they ate?

TH: Yeah. Because kiawe beans was juicy and sweet. The horses ate it. And, of course, the cows ate it too. That's why we had to sneak it, see, we was taking the food away from the cows.

GG: Did you ever get caught by the Ward people?

TH: No. There were watchmen and we put somebody on guard, eh. There's only one man in there. But right across the old plantation, where the coconut trees were, where McKinley High School, where right now is the Neal Blaisdell Center, was a big pond and there were lot of coconut trees. And there was this old man staying there as a watchman for the grounds, groundskeeper. But we never did got in there because there was nothing in there. There was nothing there for us to steal. Or, you know, sell. But, I suppose, I think there were mullets in the pond and that's why he was there. And where Gem is, were all salt ponds. Salt ponds.

GG: And this is when you were, what, about five, six years old, you said?

TH: Yeah, when I was...

GG: So that would have been about 1916?

TH: ...just about in elementary. Elementary school.

GG: And how often did you pick kiawe beans? Every day?

TH: Every morning.

GG: Before school?

TH: Yeah. Every morning. In the dark.

GG: Oh, boy. How could you see?

TH: Well, you go in and then as the light comes on, eh. But we had to go
because other guys are going too.

GG: And who went with you?

TH: One of my older brother. Older brother. And then he had the cart, iron-wheel cart. We'll pull it along and...

GG: Did he make the cart?

TH: Yeah. He get an axle, drive holes in an axle and we got these 2 by 4 and drive nail and bend the nail, and then put the hole on the 2 by 4, and put a spike in it so that you could use it to steer it. And had a long 2 by 4 or 2 by 6, if you lucky. And you put your box on it, and that's for your container, put whatever you want. But we didn't want the container because easier to put in the bag, and when we through and if we didn't fill it up, next day put some more and fill it up.

GG: And then, when you got paid for it, how did they pay you? Everytime you took?

TH: No, every time you went to sell it. And, of course, we didn't go sell all the time. We stack (the bags) up and then Mama look at it and say, "Well, we need some more money." So, we go down and (sell) then...

Other people go down too because we weren't the best pickers, you know. Some people were older and faster. I only remember that because you had to go earlier and earlier. Just like selling paper. Yeah. Selling Advertiser, we used to start 4 o' clock in the morning. (Then) we used to 3:30, (then) we used to 3 o' clock. Yeah, because you used to fight your way in line, you kept your place in line. And the guys more big they punch you, and you get out of line, so you step one step back and let him come in. But then, if you have the bigger brother, then they fight, see.

GG: Where did you have to go to stand in line? Was this to get the papers or to sell the papers?

TH: To buy the paper. Paper was two for nickel, see. So the guys in line first they come up with the papers and hawk it on a street.

GG: So, but, did you have to buy the papers yourself, and then go sell 'em?

TH: Yeah, right. We'd buy; well, when I first started and I continued, I'd buy 10 (newspapers). Two for nickel. I'll make a quarter; I'll sell 10, make a quarter, and go back school. And I give my mother 10 cents, I keep 15 cents for me. And I use nickel for lunch. And those days, lunch was 2 1/2 cents; nickel for two lunches.

GG: Oh, my goodness.
TH: Yeah. Because Chinese used to sell it, see. So, nickel, I had two lunches. So I earn a dime. Afternoon, I do the same. You had to have your regular customers.

GG: So did you go in neighborhoods to sell them?

TH: My corner was King and Alakea. As the people would go to work, we know who's going to buy 'em, we'd run. And, of course, anybody would cut you out, well, that means we're going to have a fight. And anybody crosses our corner, he's going to get a dirty beating.

GG: How did you get the corner assigned?

TH: Well, you fight for it. Of course, you can't fight, but you going get somebody behind you. My big brother was just there, he was good fighter.

GG: How much older was he?

TH: He was about two years older than I am. Big and strong.

GG: And you both worked that corner, then, King and Alakea? You worked it together?

TH: Yeah. Right.

GG: And maybe you sold 10 papers, and he sold 10 more?

TH: Right. And he go get another corner.

GG: You paid two for a nickel. And then what did you sell an individual paper for?

TH: For a nickel?

GG: I see, so you make a nickel on each two.

TH: Right.

GG: And then, the lunch that you had, where did you get that?

TH: From the corner store. This was the school and all the Chinese were very enterprising. They get their store next to the school because the kids were running all around the place.

GG: Do you remember what the name of the store was?

TH: Yeah. Yee Kau See.

GG: Oh that was it. The bakery?
TH: Right. Right. On Pohukaina and Coral. Had a bakery, had the store, and had two daughters and the son.

GG: So they had a bakery, plus like, a little grocery store?

TH: Right.

GG: Did they have others too?

TH: No, they only the bakery and the store. And they sold lunches.

GG: Now, what did you get here? For 2\(\frac{1}{2}\) cents, what kind lunch did you get?

TH: Oh, I bought chow fun. Was a small package, you know. I think was a quarter a package. They cut the package, and you bought a quarter size. About this high. Small package.

GG: And could you go off the school grounds, then, to get it?

TH: Well, the school was like here, the store is right here (right next). In other words, those days, there's no such thing as [cafeteria]-- you run home for lunch. I always ran home for lunch.

GG: So did you buy your lunch, and then go home and eat it?

TH: No, I ran home for lunch. But sometimes, when I had that money, I splurge, eh.

GG: Now, if you went home for lunch, what did you eat for lunch at home?

TH: Well, butter and sugar (sandwich).

GG: Let's see, it's your mother was Hawaiian and your father was Chinese. Is that right?

TH: Yeah. Pure.

GG: Both of them?

TH: Pure.

GG: So, as far as cooking, or lifestyle in your home, did you follow more the Chinese, or more the Hawaiian, or a little of both?

TH: Well, my father was dominant. We were raised like Chinese. We had round table. Rice bowls. We had a big, black iron pot. Brass spoon. We had bamboo stools. That's how we ate. No poi.

GG: So what kinds of things do you remember eating....that was, when you were in elementary school, right?
TH: Yeah. My father believe in food. Well, he was nutrition-wise, I think. He said you got to have one meat dish with vegetables. We got to have one soup, see. You got to have one fish. It was always three dish on the table. Always three dishes.

GG: Fish, meat and soup.

TH: Yeah.

GG: And what did your father do? What was his job?

TH: Well, he was working for the bakery for many years.

GG: For the Yee See Kau?

TH: No, Young Hotel. You know where the building is still standing? And they had a bakery, where Bishop and Hotel, That was Young Hotel Bakery. Of course, now it's, well it changed several names. I like to go with him, because I used to go with him. Because when I went there, he'd make toast, you know. Cut an old bread in half, put butter and toast it in the oven. Oh boy, I would never had enough to eat, never have enough to eat.

GG: Because there were 13 of you?

TH: No, there weren't 13. See, as the family added, there was almost one every year. The year was about 1920 when there were five boys and three girls in the family.

GG: And so how many of you were there, all together?

TH: Well, let's see, my oldest brother was four years older than me; my second was two years older than me; on down the line, there's ...

GG: But how many kids all together?

TH: Had 13. 1930, I think we had 12, and that's when I told my mother, I think she was beat up so many times to leave my father. Let him stay in. But somehow, we had a love child. Number 13. My father said it wasn't his, but that's his image. (Mama never had another man).

GG: Now, if I get too personal, just tell me, "to stop," but I just wondered...

TH: No, no. We talking straight from the shoulder; we not beating around the bush.

GG: Right. I just wondered, was it common, say, for Chinese men to beat up their wives?

TH: It was common for all men to beat their wives.

GG: In those days?
TH: Yeah, Oh, and, of course, the wives beat up their husbands too. And, at that time, the practice was not to call police for help. You say, "Holina, Holina," That's the call for police. Holina. You will probably hear that again.

GG: No, I haven't.


GG: And then what would happen? Would somebody come to help, or...

TH: Well, they call the police. See, in other words, somebody's being beat up, and they call police, but if we think that he deserve it, well, nobody call him. He come out all battered up.

And there was a poi man, you know, he had a huge wife. Smaller than I was. He must have been about 125 pounds. And everytime he get beat up. I don't know why, but I guess over money or... And he's a good working man and we'd buy our poi from him. I guess some women are not satisfied.

GG: Well, when did you start eating poi, then?

TH: When I get married to my wife in 1934.

GG: So you never ate Hawaiian-style, or Hawaiian food, to speak of, before that?

TH: No, I ate. Later on I ate. See, when my mother and my father separated, let's see, when I was going to college. Then I got out of the family, so to speak. I ate lunches. But we always had the family eat together; we always had Chinese food—at home. But I went to school, I ate what, the lunches were in school.

GG: When you were living in Kakaako area, you said you moved around several times. Were there many Chinese people living close to where you lived?

TH: No.

GG: Were there many Chinese people in Kakaako, anyway?

TH: No. There lot of Japanese.

GG: Had Chinese lived there in earlier days, but moved on elsewhere.

TH: Well, the Chinese people who lived there were all storekeepers. Well, let's see, they were laundry men and storekeepers. The two storekeepers right on the corner there. The barbers were Japanese. The poi men were Chinese; the poi men were all Chinese because I guess they got their poi from the Chinese who lived on the farms. They Chinese planted rice and later on, they changed to taro because rice came from California,
you know, dry land? And they didn't make money on rice, so they switched to taro. And, of course, they married into the Hawaiian area, you know, the Hawaiian people, and Hawaiians had beautiful taro lands. And Chinese were natural farmers.

We come from China where there's all, I don't know the Chinese name, but it's (called the Bamboo village). And, of course, we are peasant stock. I mean, we were one of the great clans in China. And, of course, the Hos furnish all the warrior for when they have wars, sectional wars. My uncles lived to be 90; my father died when he was 86, but he had diabetes.

GG: Did the Chinese storekeepers live right where their businesses were too?
TH: Uh huh. They lived right in the buildings, right in the back. They'd eat they have a little stove in the back. Live with their family.

GG: Did they have like a Chinese language school, or...
TH: Yes. I went to Chinese language school.

GG: Where was it?
TH: It was on Fort and Kukui [Streets]. But we never learned because our uncle paid for it, dollar a month, and I said, "This is not for me." And we'd run away, we never went to school, and, oh, my goodness--there were 1, 2, 3, 4 of us; we get beat up everyday.

GG: This was four of your family members?
TH: Yeah.

GG: Because you didn't go, you got beat up.
TH: Yeah. But we come back and daddy said, "You go school?"

"Yes."

"All right, turn the pages. Where's the lesson? Okay, read the lesson."

Can't read the characters. (Laughs) Except my oldest brother, you know. He was a sharp cookie. Yes. He can read it. And read it.

And I said, "My goodness, isn't he wonderful." One day, I look in his book, had English.

GG: Underneath.
TH: Yeah.

GG: Somebody else told him, huh?
TH: Well, I went to school. I never did cut too many times, but I couldn't remember the characters, you know. But when he tell me, I think, "Gee, one character look like another one." Except there was an extra line, it meant something else. And I said, "Gee." So I gave up.

GG: When did you actually go? How old were you when you were supposed to be going?

TH: Well, I was in the elementary school. I was in the... I think was in the seventh grade. (1923). Sixth or seventh grade. Of course, couldn't take life too serious, you know. Life was all playing. But, gee, when I went to university, I say, "Gee, I wish I could remember the character." But I could count, eh. [Counts to 10 on Chinese.] One to ten. And my father would try to teach us, talk to us. He taught us the names of the different vegetables, and the names of the different foods. And he try to tell us how, when you call your family to come to dinner, "Loi sit fun." So, we didn't tell 'em, "Come eat." It was "Loi sit fun." So, we transmit the Chinese, see. In other words, everybody knows when Hawaiians say, "Hele mai aia." See.

GG: But now, at the time when you were small, though, did your mother try to teach you some of the Hawaiian too, or...

TH: No, no Hawaiian in our family.

GG: Your father wouldn't allow it, or....

TH: No.

GG: Do you know whether it bothered her that she was, perhaps, denying her culture because....

TH: Well, my grandmother lived with us. It was constant battle.

GG: Between your father...

TH: The young and old.

GG: This was your mother's mother?

TH: Yeah. And so my father gave us all Chinese names. But my grandmother gave us Hawaiian names.

GG: What is your Hawaiian and Chinese names?

TH: Kaimu. Kaimu is my name. And, of course, my grandmother gave us names after her uncles. So my oldest brother's name is Puao. And Maile (Tai Loy's wife) is researching our family history. She went back, way back, and she got stuck by the name of Puao. And when she researched, the name Puao means a Tahitian chief. So we tell that to Johnny Naumu, I'm a Mormon. And Johnny comes here, and sit down,

*Translation:  "Come and eat."
we discuss genealogy and different subjects. And he says, "Maybe we related because we have a Puao with our family too." That's an old chief name.

GG: What does your Hawaiian name mean, then?

TH: *Imu. Because you know what *imu means?

GG: Right. The pit.

TH: Yeah, the pit.

GG: And *ka is "the," like "the pit."

TH: Yeah. And the circle.

GG: And then what about your Chinese name, is what?

TH: Well, you know what "tai" is?

GG: No, I don't.

TH: Big.

GG: And "loy."

TH: Come (flowing). You know what "*ho" means?

GG: No.


GG: It's escaping me today.

TH: Well, all right. But to me, a "big, flowing river." Big, coming river; flowing river. But, of course, it's my interpretation. It could have been something else. See, we talking about literal meaning. But the Hawaiians interpret words a different way. And the Chinese too. There's a history behind every word. So, I can't tell you that's exact meaning, but I know when I went up to Chinese school, they said, "That's the meaning of your--the different letters--yeah, that's the words in your name."

GG: Were there any Chinese cultural celebrations in Kakaako, ever, or at all, that you recall? I mean, like the Japanese have their *bon dances, the Portuguese had their Holy Ghost Festival. Did the Chinese do something, too?

TH: No, no. As far as community-wide, you're talking about, we never had. I remember Holy Ghost, we always went to Holy Ghost because they had sweet bread. And they had the band went around, went around played
"Ashask pooshkong." And then we went to the Holy Ghost and they sold all the goodies. We always loved to go because they had that, what's that bean called now? That bean (tatamoosh), that's the only time they make it.

GG: And what about, did you participate, or go to any of the, say, Japanese bon dances?

TH: Well, there were bon dances in different sections. Because we talking about the Japanese areas. Well, we say like Japanese, today they use the word "ghetto." But it wasn't ghetto, it was a Japanese live in their own area. Seems like, if they came from a prefecture in Japan, they used to live together because just like a big family neighborhood. And Kakaako had several, because we were discussing the other day.

GG: So the Japanese camps.

TH: Yeah, Japanese camp, right, camp. We don't say it's a ghetto, but now they say, "ghetto." And everytime they would have their own bon dance. It's a funny thing, they only had one school.

GG: One language school?

TH: Right. One language school. (Early 1920's). And there was a biggest bon dance, and you could tell that it's going to be a big dance because the decoration went up, and it's a big, big area.

GG: Whereabouts was that? Do you recall?

TH: Well, on Coral and Queen [Streets].

GG: And then the area, though, where you lived, mixed nationalities?

TH: Ah, mostly Portuguese. Queen Street was mostly Portuguese.

GG: And how did you happen to be living in that area or, I mean, in that particular section?

TH: Well, I guess, my mother used to like the area because the Huhiwis, and there was another Hawaiian man and wife, who was a policeman. Because Huhiwi was the champion of the....welter-weight champion. And this other guy was a policeman, a violin maker. And, of course, my mother. My father graduated from Iolani School, and there were three houses. And we were very close. And around us, there were Japanese. There were Japanese on one side and Filipinos more over. And then the Portuguese, on Queen Street; there were a lot of Portuguese who owned their own homes and land, you know. And lot of them didn't sell until it became industrial area and, oh, my goodness. Some of them are letting it go now.

GG: So you folks rented your place?
TH: We rented, yeah.

GG: Do you have any idea who it was rented from? Was it one of the estates or a small....

TH: I think it's estate land. We paid rent, I think was $10 or $12 a month. I'm just guessing, of course. My father hardly made any money to keep us alive.

GG: And so a lot of you kids worked to make extra money. Now, did your mother work too?

TH: No, she didn't work.

GG: Too busy taking care of the kids?

TH: Oh, they hardly keep us together because we were running away. Running all over the place, fighting, and doing everything.

GG: Who did you run with, say, when you were in elementary school? Were your friends your neighbors, also?

TH: Well, not my neighbors. The Huihuis were mean, you know. They always wanted to fight. And I wasn't the fighting type. I was just, I just want to go school and try to learn something. The Huihuis want to fight. And they were good fighters. The father told them what to fight, see. When they're very young he punch 'em. I had watch. Boy, they was good. They become champions, too, you know. I said, "Well, I don't want to be that way." They going get punch drunk up here [points to head] and that's what a few of them...they get beat up so damn much.

But I made friends with some other boys whom I think were ambitious like me. One guy was William Kakalia, we call "Hawky." He had a swollen jaw. Another one is Harry Wood; he live down by the St. Agnes Church. His mother owned the property right on Queen and Kamani [Streets]. Then, of course, there was another Chinese boy, we call him, "Chubbo," whose parents own a store on Queen and Kamani [Streets], on the mauka side. And we ran around because I selected my friends, I didn't want to get in trouble, and I know that lot of boys in Kakaako; oh boy, I'm telling you, they'd steal anything they can put their hands on.

GG: From within the area? Or they go outside to steal?

TH: No, they stealing all they see, almost anything.

I wasn't all together lily white, you know. But they'd plan it, they gambled, raped women, and gee, they get drunk. I never drank in my life. Although my father was a bootlegger. I capped his beer for him; I sold the beer for him. And they gave all away. We had a football team; when they are victorious, they drank all his beer.

GG: He didn't sell it, then?
TH: No, we gave away when they won.

GG: What about otherwise, though, did he sell it?

TH: Yeah. He had okolehao. And people come, you know. We never made a cent off it. No, everybody had a big head the next day. They come over here, says.... I forgot the word they use, "put them on the book, charge it." They use the word. You go to the store, you use the same word. Well, anyway, this Chinese word. Because when you go to the Chinese store and you going say, "Charge it," you know. He's going to add his percentage, too. When you start paying him, he already added the interest. So you take it and you go home. You don't even ask him how much. You wouldn't get a receipt. When you come and pay, he say, "Well, you owe this much." So you pay him on time. You pay him so much. So he give you a Chinese plum. He don't want you pay all anyway.

GG: So he keep adding the interest.

TH: Yeah. Just like the plantation, you know. Well, you work and you go to the country store and you can't get out of it. Right?

GG: Yep. The old song, "Owe my soul to the company store."

TH: Yeah. And, of course, the Chinese very clever. We were just talking about it last night. Of course, there were two stores; Ma Yee and Wong Kai Yee. You go to one, oh, give you lemon drop. You go to the other one, they give you fish candy. And, of course, you going tell 'em, "Oh, I want two." That one give you two. So you come back again. See, and then you make them compete against each other. Then you say, "Oh, I don't want that kind, I want the other kind."

Then, of course, little kerosene. We buy a gallon of kerosene, see. I think was 15 cents a gallon then. Was big money. Like bread was nickel. "Well, gee, I should get more candy for this." After awhile we caught on and we bargained. So when go home, I give my mother one, I keep one. Or my sisters one, eh. So you got to get wise to the ways, too.

GG: You talked about you folks were running a lot...it was hard for your mother to keep track of you, or to keep tabs on what's going on. What kinds of things did you do?

TH: Well, I'm trying to say, she cooks, see. All right, we eat. Clean up the table. She give us job; "You wash dishes, you sweep the floor, you wipe dishes." Gee, I'm telling you; lucky if she can find anybody.

GG: Before the jobs were done?

TH: Yeah, we don't do it. Chee, when my father comes home, boy, somebody's going to get it. I remember many days, many days, I slept under the stoop, the steps until my father went to work; 3 o' clock, or 4 o' clock, you
know, to the bakery. Then I came up. And then my mother would just
whack me, but as soon as she whack me, I scream like hell.

And then she says, "Well, no do it next time." But didn't hurt, of
course. But my father, he get that, anything he grab; he get some
wire, or he get a tube, or he take off his belt. You not going get
one, you going to get it till you get marks all over your body. My
father could hit you.

I remember when he caught my oldest brother smoking. He tie his hands
up, hung 'em up.

GG: Did the brother smoke after that?

TH: Of course. You know, punishment doesn't stop a man from committing
crime. Because that was to serve us a lesson, the rest of us, look
out. Oh boy, never stop anybody.

GG: As I recall, you did do some diving, is that correct?

TH: Yes, as we got bigger, what, 12, 13, you know. And we kind of too big
to sell papers. In other words, if you want to sell papers, the older
people going to buy paper from the younger kids. Small little boy
about 7, 8, or 6 years going yell out, "Paper." And they look at you,
too big, eh. So they going buy 'em from the small one.

We used to steal rides on the streetcar and if you big, you going
get hit by the conductor. But the small kids, they not hitting because
they knock 'em out, they get injured, eh?

GG: That's for trying to get on without paying, you mean, to ride, or....

TH: No, for catch ride to; see, if you going to a corner. See, from
Star-Bulletin, we used to go down Iron Works. And the streetcar go
all the way down to Catton Neil, South and Pohukaina. And then they turn
around and go back. And look as the streetcar come down, we usually
run 'em.

GG: And jump on the back?

TH: Yeah. You know, the cow catcher, see. And, of course, the conductor's
right there. But if he's in front, we jump on the back, and when he
come near the back, we jump off, but we got that much ride,
eh. But as you get older, you find that you not making it with newspapers.

So we went down to dive for nickels, because you don't invest anything,
and maybe you make a quarter, maybe you make half a dollar. Every
boat came in, you went out.
GG: How did you find out when the boats were coming in?

TH: We go down everyday. And the newspapers show departure time, and arrival time of the ships. You know, the "boat days." And everybody go down, of course. Ladies and lei sellers. Those were big days. Especially the Matson Navigation company (boats) Manoa, (Matsonia, Calawai, etc.) People came from California. Oh, they had lots of money. But, then something happened, spoil it all.

GG: What was that?

TH: Some of the boys got enterprising. They bought a motor and had a boat, they went out to meet 'em. Out port. So they got all the money before people came in.

GG: Because they would dive out there instead of in the harbor?

TH: Yeah. Right. As the boat came in, of course, they throw whatever left, maybe a dime or a penny.

GG: About what year did that happen?

TH: Well, that was about; gee, I must have been about 16 [1926]. You know, when you starving, you start thinking of all kind of ways to beat the other guy. And these guys, they never went school, they figured out a way. They lived under the wharf. When I found out, I said, "Gee whiz." They certainly got on to some good ideas. I guess today, enterprising businessmen can always make money. Don't you think so?

GG: I think that's one thing about this country that supposedly, at least, you have the opportunity to try. But, tell me about a "boat day." Say, if the Lurline or whatever, was coming in at 9 o' clock in the morning. How did you folks, just go down by yourself, or were some of your brothers doing that with you, too?

TH: Well, way back, see you not accepted to dive.

GG: What is that?

TH: You not accepted. Say, that you an old timer. See, now I want to get in. I'm not accepted because I'm trying to crash in on the deal.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

TH: And we'd go down the pier. We turn around, face the building and drop our pants and put on our tights. Those days get tights, you know. As soon as we go in the water, we do that, see. We only had a jeans, sailor mokus. And maybe a shirt on. That's all you wore, those days. Then we roll 'em up and put 'em against the wall. And after they [the old timers] go, probably go down this way. They go first, we not going where
they are; we go down this way. And then that group increased to about 60. Now, we were about, I would say, 13 (1923). Well, I started when I was 13, I think. Just before I finish Pohukaina. And there was some younger ones in there that were in the sixth grade. Little boys, very good swimmers. They came from Laie. Those people all over there lived in Kakaako or started to join us, you know. From all over the city.

So, we'd line up and wait. We'd get a lecture. And one of them, (Charlie Pung, Jr., a honcho) would swim out. They couldn't catch us. Some would be waiting. We'll all go in and our clothes (would be tied) in knots. You call that "chew beef." They put oil on the knot so when you try to take off the knot, you would get oil on your mouth. They call that "chew beef." Or else they'll get your clothes, hang it up on the halyard. Oh, they try anything to stop us. But as we got older, well, our bodies grew, you know. We got to be 16, 15, 17. And some of the Hawaiian boys was big. Very big and didn't do too much.

Same time, we grew older and wiser. Warden took notice, you know. And then, of course, that's the time we started to steal more. And we become young man. You get hungry, and you steal more, and, of course...

GG: Who were you stealing from? The stores, or from people?

TH: Anybody. Yeah. Stores, people, warehouses, bakery. We got to be brazen, eh. So, the truant officers catch 'em and take 'em into Mother Waldron, who is the playground director. She was a school teacher. Of course, you know about her, eh?

She says, "Well, let me take care of them."

And nobody want to cross with her.

GG: Well, we know bits and pieces about her. But could you describe her, and tell us why did nobody want to cross with her. Or, how did she figure so largely in you folks' lives? What did she look like?

TH: Well, she's a big woman. Big jowls, just like a bull dog. Rough. Big. I would say, almost 300 pounds. And she taught fourth grade in Pohukaina School. You got naughty, quick principal spank you with the hairbrush. If got worse, you go see Mother Waldron. She work you over.

GG: Physically?

TH: [Nods.] So nobody want to go see her. (laughs)

GG: Did you ever get worked over by her?

TH: No, I was her pet. But, she notice me, see. But I was around, was always around. But I wasn't her best pet. She took care of some of
the pets, the Kalihi boys didn't have to come to school.

"Mother Waldron, the boat coming in, I got to go earn some money, you know."

"Go, go, go."

Nobody else got that permission. Yeah. And then, there was another boy that she says, "I want to adopt you."

He said, "No." Rascal....Henry Morris. I never got that kind of deal.

GG: Was she married? Did she have a husband?

TH: Yeah. She had a daughter. But she took care of the people. After school, she had a... Oh, she went down to the playground. She took care of the playground until... Well, there was wayward girls, eh. Hapai and everything else. So, she taught them cooking, sewing. The kind of girls that couldn't refuse the men, eh.

GG: Where was she doing this, at the playground?

TH: Yeah, where Atkinson Park; across Pohukaina School there's a big park. Is, is where Amfac warehouse now? Yeah.

GG: And the girls, they would just come down there after school, or were they living there or....

TH: Now, there was a little cottage on the school grounds. That, you know, they had sewing class and cooking class. I say, unwed mothers, at that time. But to me, now I know, I'd say. You know how women get lonesome, and some women need more men than others, and some women cannot resist their boyfriends, you know. No matter how dumb they are, or how no good they are, that's the man they like. And Mother Waldron, of course, trying to keep 'em away from them. But they go back. But she was smart, to say, "Well, okay. You learn how to cook and sew. At least, you take care you baby." But I never saw any babies around. No. I don't know where they were. I think Salvation Army Home, I think. But I was too young for those things anyway.

But truant officer (Harold Godfrey) come around, they never questioned her. Of course, she had a lot of support from the business community in town.

GG: Something to keep the kids off the street and out of trouble?

TH: Yeah. But today is the same thing. As you know, we got lot of community organizations that, let's say, that they get donations from different organizations. They know it helps to keep the kids off, and keep crime down. In the long run, it pays off. So lot of kids didn't go reform school at Wailee.
GG: Is that our toward Kahuku, or....


GG: Did many boys from Kakaako end up out there?

TH: No, you live Kakaako, you never went.

GG: Because of Mother Waldron?

TH: Yeah. But you didn't live in Kakaako, well, nobody go to bat for you. I know myself, I know there were lot of no good kids in Kakaako. Because some went jail because, I guess she couldn't handle 'em. There was Andrade boy, and oh, he's vicious. Very vicious person. I think was little off, crazy. He finally ended in a Federal prison. But the rest of his brothers were really fine. I know his brothers, Manuel and Willy fine boys.

Of course, I was going to say, Mother Waldron noticed me. I never got in trouble and always going school. And finally, one day she asked me if I want to go college. Of course, nobody went to college. Nobody thought about it. We didn't have the money. Except for the Japanese boys whose parents, that's all they did, you know. Everybody work for one son to go. Then, he come back, they send the other boy, or the other girl. Those days, you know. Which was, the parents, maybe not the parents, but they had a uncle helped. That's how the Japanese live. I never thought I'd go to college. Mother Waldron told me, I said, "Yeah."

She said, "Well, you go work for me."

"Okay." I said.

And there was a vacant lot where McKesson is now. Queen and South. And right on where the tire company is now, there was a mission.

GG: Was that Kakaako Mission?

TH: Yeah, a mission.

GG: Mrs. Knott was there?

TH: Yeah, Knott, yeah. And behind there was kindergarten, so it was a big building. And it is not used. Part of it went down, anyway. And there was a big banyan tree, and lot of kids went in there to play. There were swings and was, I think, the Mission, Mrs. Knott took care of that. And (Mother Waldron) she told me, "You go down there and take care of the kids."

Said, "Okay."
"I pay you $5 a month." Because I only did it on Sundays. It's all right. I had something to do. So I went down there all the time. Well, at least I get chance earn a few dollars. Then she told me, "Well, we are going to close the Atkinson Park." And, well, after (The Mission Job), I went down to work at Atkinson Park, and then she closed Atkinson Park.

GG: Why were they going to close it?

TH: They going sell it. City Council going to, well, the Board of Supervisors going to sell it. Like the stadium.

GG: This was before you went to college, still?

TH: Yeah. Right before. I was going to college. So I went to work for the pineapple cannery, on the Ginaca machine (during the summer). I earned a few dollars. So, after school began in 1930 I worked three times a week over there [at the park] and there were few kids.

Mrs. Waldron had given up working and she said, "Well, they going to close this place (Atkinson Park). My playground will be open," (where the present sight is.)

GG: Where Mother Waldron Park now is?

TH: Yeah. "I want you to work there, you and Pua." Pua Almeida.

"Lana Lane, Coral Street, Halekauwila Street."

I said, "Oh, that's fine." So I helped Pua. See, I know Pua very well. And I said, "Be just fine." So I got paid $25 a month.

Then, in 1930, the Kawaiahao Gym, I don't know if you remember, right across from McKesson Building on Mission Lane. It was owned by the Kawaiahao Church, and leased to the City and County under Powlison, Arthur Powlison. And she said, "When Uichi Kanayama go on leave, you take over." (He was a school teacher and leader of about 50 boys; he left to take a job in Japan.) Actually, Arthur Powlison was the superintendent, but when Mother Waldron said she'd take over, she the super up Kakaako. Nobody would argue. See. They had so much faith in her.

I said, "Okay."

She said, "You'll get $65 a month. You take care of the boys (be the director). I want you to be the janitor, clean up the place, make sure it's all right."

I said, "Okay." So that was my job. Till I finished college and depression came in 1932. I stuck on the job until I said, "Well, gee whiz, I can't live on this." And I got married in 1934 and...but this kept me going. And I said, "Gee." I felt kind of privileged, you know, to be able to earn $65 a month, where lot of people didn't have a job.
Then my brother asked me if I want to work during the last part of May, June, because he was working for the Federal government on Ford Island. Hawaiian Air Depot.... if I want a job as a laborer. Said, "Well any kind of a job would be all right." Forty cents an hour. So I start adding; $18 a week, $3.20 a day times five. And I said, "Sure,"

Then, I get some of the boys. I always draw a schedule for use of the gymnasium, because during the season everybody wants an hour or half an hour (for practice or work out with his group. Maluhia, St. Agnes, Atkinson, Hawaiian Divers, Mother Waldron were some local groups. There were other business groups such as Liberty House, Dawkins Benny, Honolulu Gas Co.who enjoyed the recreation hall).

"Ah, gee, I can't give you a whole hour. That's the time everybody get through work. You take half an hour, okay." As you look all these teams all lined up. They want to practice, too. And didn't cost them much so.

GG: What kind of teams were they?

TH: We had all kind of leagues going, see. And I organize leagues for our community first. Our community came number one. Then I organized leagues for inter-community. All part of the city. Then the business people wanted to make, young businessmen. And, I think, that just about covered it.

GG: Was this basketball?

TH: Yeah, basketball, volleyball. And then the women came in on Monday, Wednesday, Friday. And then the Boy Scouts came in too. So, was really a tight schedule from about, say, 3 o' clock till about 7 o' clock, when the schedule for competition began.

GG: So you were working your labor job, plus still supervising what was happening at Kawaihao Gym?

TH: Right. I start work at 2 o' clock. And I got through at 4 o' clock, I came back at 4:30. And they was still practicing, and I just look at the schedule and check 'em off. And I always have a person responsible for the team. And they know, all young men, responsible. The teams had young men, but they had some guys who donated their time to the rest of the kids. They were people that I knew and, of course, they got first crack because they were my friends too. Sure, reliable and all that. They knew they were getting their times.

GG: So when did you start to college? Was about 1928?

TH: Yeah. When I finished McKinley, 1928, and I started college.

GG: How did your family react to the fact that you were going on to college? Were you the first brother to go, or first son?
TH: I was the only brother.

GG: Were they happy or... did they think it was a waste of time?

TH: Well, my family. Let's go back and say, my oldest brother was very sharp, very sharp. I wish he was here. He could sit down and talk to you. Remember the exact day, and the people that any time, maybe dinner or something, what each one said. I disliked sitting down with him because he can out-think me and out-remember me. He had so sharp a mind, I looked like a dummy. And I would say, "Well, I think I remember, but." Gee, or else I don't. See? Then he doesn't want to talk to me, because he knows he's talking to a dummy. You sharp enough you can talk, what did he wore, how young he was. Or, if it was a girl. Very observant.

GG: So how did the family react to you're going to college?

TH: Well, the family, they were too young. Remember I was just 18. My two oldest brothers got married already. My younger brother got married already. Because they weren't living with us. So, I was the oldest [at home] in the family. So my sisters were younger. And, well, Chinese style, you don't say nothing. Only the head of the family talks. And because I didn't say anything myself. I prefer to be democratic.

GG: Your mother was already separated from your father at this time?

TH: No.

GG: They were still living together?

TH: Yeah. They lived together until 1930. My mother encouraged me, and said she wanted me to go to college and get what I wanted. There weren't many long talks because my mother never went to school. She didn't know what it's all about. All she want to do is says, "Well, you do what you want." She back me up, see. She said, "Don't worry about it. I'll work, I'll save the money."

GG: Did you find it difficult, or do you remember? I think you told me there were, how many, in your class, then?

TH: Which class was it now?

GG: The one that you... Well, you graduated with how many, when you graduated from the university?

TH: Oh, the Ag class, you talking about? Okay, there was 16 of us. Eight of them were trained for teaching, and 8 of us were not trained for teaching. In other words, we didn't have psychology. See, if we had psychology the last two years. Your junior and senior years, you'll qualify to teach. They call it "education," eh.

GG: So, agriculture was your major?
TH: Yeah. Well, I took sugar tech in the beginning because I felt that was Hawaii's biggest industry. Pineapple is second. I stuck with it, basic courses in agriculture, lot of engineering and lot of science, chemistry. And, of course, I didn't do too well. I did well in some, not too well in others. Next year was physics. And, of course, 1930 was all right. See, the depression was coming to Hawaii. And I didn't want to switch to education until 1931, and that's when it was too late. I said, "Well, that's all right." But I switched to general ag from sugar tech. In other words, start taking pigs, and feeding, and poultry and livestock; general ag rather than pineapple, rather than sugar. In other words, I was trying to generalize. If you specialize you get stuck in one field, and you're dead.

GG: Were there any other boys from Kakaako going to college at that same time?

TH: Yes. ("Chicken" Hori--Tomatsu). I don't know if you remember him, Chicken Hori.

GG: I've heard the name.

TH: Yeah. He was in Pohukaina with me and he went to McKinley. He was one of my good friends in university. Well, Willian Kakalia didn't make it. He quit school in McKinley because he didn't have any money and he went to work. Then he went back McKinley and, I don't know, he got stuck over there. Then, I guess, he felt he was too old to continue into the university field.

GG: The 16 men that graduated with you, what were their ethnic backgrounds? Do you remember?


GG: And did you still live at home in Kakaako? And then, how did you get to and from the university, or....

TH: When I was going to the university, I lived on Kawaiahao Street and I bought a motorcycle. I gave that up when I got in an accident. Then I bought a little Model-T, and I broke it down and under-slung the body.
Sat on the gasoline tank in a box and I drove. And, of course, the handle is like this, and then we brought it down lower, so that it was not upright like this and like this. And, of course, all the girls wanted to ride. Oh, I had it loaded.

GG: Is that how you met your wife?

TH: No. I knew my wife a long time ago. When I was delivering papers. She lived in Kakaako, and I knew the father because I delivered Hawaiian paper, Kuakoa. And I deliver Hawaiian paper because her grandfather read the Hawaiian newspaper.

GG: So you delivered Hawaiian newspaper, too, as well as...

TH: Yeah. Friday only, once a week.

GG: How did you get that job?

TH: Well, the Hawaiian people wanted it. I go the route, you know. Take Sunday Advertiser, and he asked me if I sold Kuakoa. So, I count how many customers, was worthwhile so I pick 'em up too.

GG: Where was the Hawaiian newspaper published?

TH: At the Advertiser.

GG: Oh, at the same place?

TH: Yeah. I guess they had a special editor on that, and it was all in Hawaiian. So I said, "Oh, I'll get it." But, of course, my wife was young and ugly. You know, when girls are young, they ugly and gawky, and we call hupekole. You understand what it means?

GG: Say it again?

TH: Hupekole. Butter running down from the nose. You know what they do, eh? Don't you? When the butter run their nose, and they go (TH makes inhaling sound), they bring up back. It's not a dirty term, but when they say, hupekole, they understand that when you young, you unkempt. But all girls, when they grow up, they used to come beautiful. And you look, "Eh, look, what's this?"

GG: What happened to her?

TH: Ugly duckling changed. But anyway, oh, I was going with several girls. Eh, life was too hard. When I told my mother move out in 1930. So we got a house in Nuuanu. "Eh, no worry, Mom, I take care you and the kids." And you know, my brothers move in on me. My brother (Fong Lam and Mary) the younger brother and his wife. And my younger brother (Ah Luke) and his wife. Because they went without jobs. That's why, when my oldest brother (James) asked me to work, I said, "Oh, this helps, you know."
He say, "Yeah, I know."

And you know something, not one of them used to give me a dollar, when I was in college. Not one of them. Because they was worse off than I was. But I went to National Guard every Tuesday. I was a sergeant, I was making money at drills four times a month; $1.80 because I was sergeant. And at the university I was in Advanced ROTC; (I was paid) 35 cents a day. So I said, "Well, I'll make it."

GG: Pulling in extra money from every source you could, then?

TH: Well, you got to be resourceful. So on Sundays, go referee baseball with Henry Yamasaki, Parks and Recreation, and he and I going to referee softball and football and we get a dollar a game.

GG: With all your working, how did you have time for the girls?

TH: Well, didn't have any girls. But when I was in college, my goodness, they hung on me like flies. Okay, I take 'em out to picnic. We go way out in the country, go crabbing. I guess they enjoyed it. But, oh, take 'em dancing. Oh, they are so sweet and young.

GG: Where did you folks go dancing? Any place in Kakaako--was there a place to go?

TH: Oh yeah, I took 'em to Kakaako. Was one young, sweet thing from Kamehameha School, oh, boy. I took 'em down Kakaako, down Kewalo Gym. You know where they had the boxing? They had move the ring back, and, of course, we had Sceda, Sceda Rocha and his orchestra. Oh, they had a good music. Then, I take her to Palama. Palama Gym, armory. The university had some very good dances.

GG: Did you go to the movies too, or....

TH: No, I never went to movies because when we were at university, every assignment takes you about two-and-a-half hours, or more. And I couldn't remember my reading one time, I had to read twice. But I licked the problem because I read backwards. Yeah, I read backwards. I didn't read from the beginning, the introduction. Every chapter they gave me, I look in the back, not the introduction. Of course, when the math came, well, you got to start from the front. Math and chemistry, and physics, I say, you miss the front, you dead. But, yeah, well, there's so damn many girls, I'm telling you.

GG: So, how did you single out and decide on the one that you...

TH: I didn't.

GG: She picked you, huh?

TH: Well, I was lucky. There were too many of them, see. And one tried to corral me. "Talk about marriage," I said, "Gee, I get too many problems." No need, so split. She got married to a fine man. I got married to
somebody who was, I would say, my type. And this young gal from Kamehameha School, what a beautiful gal. I remember, I graduated and I said, "Well, by time I sold my under-slung and I bought another Model-T with seats on it, you know. Topless. I was going up, and what a gorgeous graduation party we had. Country club, and you don't bring your girlfriend. We had string beans and small piece of steak. But after that, you back at your date. Oh, I can't forget that night. Henry Lum and I.

I said, "Okay Henry, let's go back get our date." He was always carrying umbrella, that guy. And did it rain going and coming. And the girls are all in their gowns. And he pull up the umbrella--great big Japanese umbrella. Oh boy, it was crazy. But the girls enjoyed it. Henry married this girl. I didn't, because I said I cannot support this girl. This girl probably die. Her husband died. She married a candy man (Earl Dye). Ah, you probably know him. He had a candy store on Fort Street, oh, well-known before. Must have been 25, 30 years ago.

Anyways, I didn't remember her. I remember when she was young, and beautiful, and I look at her, I say, "Gee whiz." I went up to her house, I knock on her door. Her dad opened the door.

"Confound it, what do you want?"

"I want to see your daughter."

"Who are you?"

"Just somebody." I gave 'em my name. "I want to talk to your daughter." He looked at me like I must have been crazy. But I came every time, and they let me in. They talk to me and they think, "This guy got more guts than brains."

Her name is Martha Punohu. I don't think you'll ever remember her, but. Yeah, Martha Punohu. Punohu family, they live in Kakaako way back. They're a hula teachers. Kakaako had lot of, they had all the hula teachers in Kakaako. Louis Munsey's mother was one. Eddy Ho's wife (my brother's mother-in-law) was another one (Maria Luhi). There was a hula house in Kakaako, on Kalia. I don't know if you remember that. Iolani Luahine's mother also.

The hula, those days, well, religious, you know. The olapas. And had that... Now it's all modern. But you couldn't watch. It's religious type.

But anyway, I was trying to say that I met Martha, and she invited me to her graduation. Well, this the last time I see her.

GG: But there were a number of hula halaus, then, in Kakaako in those days?
TH: Well, I never did go to any. But I know there were a lot of hula classes. And guys would sneak in and look, peep what they doing, and nobody playing. Only had, sort of secret like.

GG: Do you recall Squattersville?

TH: Yes. But not too well. I know there were a lot of people down there. It was a grand place where they had a wonderful, merry time, all the time.

GG: Whereabouts was it? Do you recall?

TH: Yes. Squattersville was, you know where the incinerator is now? Well, the incinerator. There was all kiawe trees over there, but the area went out like this, and came back, and came back this way [zigzagged]. And nobody lived there. But as you came back this way, there was about 100 yards out, toward, sort of promontory, but was still land. Came back this way. And then all the way up to Fort Armstrong. And the people went there to live as squatters, you know. And there's lot of fish, lot of limu and people lived there. I would say that they were people without jobs, I think. This is when, the 1930's. And, of course, you know, I left Kakaako after I went university. Going to university and going to high school. That's why I left that, shall I say, "era," behind me. Except going to work down Kawaihao Recreation Center.

GG: So it was about 1932, though, when you moved out?

TH: 1930. I moved to Nuuanu. But before that time, I lived on Kawaihao Street. Every day I come home, I go to the library. Well, I did study. And the only other thing I did was play football. In 1932, I said, "Well, this is it."

GG: What years did you play football?

TH: Well, I played when I was young because nothing else to do; 1926, 1927. And then 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932.

GG: And that was, you played with, what they called, the Barefoot League or Kakaako Sons?

TH: Yeah, Barefoot League.

GG: Are they separate, or....

TH: Well, I played for Kakaako. That time was the Citywide League organized by Arthur Powlison. There were gangs roving around, and like I said, robbing and doing everything else. So they had to organize some sports. So they organized the barefoot football, and that's how it came to be.
(A few sportsmen) had previously organized the older boys in 1924, I think. Palama, Kalihi, Kewalo and Olympics. They had lot of young men. And then, we grew up too, and they made junior teams. So as we got older, then the older people, let's say they got injured, and they got enough of it and they get out. Of course, when I got enough of it--I busted my nose and I busted my arm--I said, "That's it." It got so bad, when my two boys grew up, I said, "No football for you." Yeah. I stop 'em. I said, "You not strong enough."

He said, "Why?"

I said because they wiry (poor opponents). "You can dive off a ship, 60 foot high, for a quarter? I did that everyday. I swam up to the ships, I swam back. And you got to be tough. You don't eat, you survive. But you soft." I grab his arm and stay all soft. I said, "First guy hit you, you going keel over, all back and blue. So you don't play football. Anyway, you just going to sprain your ankle, or dislocate your shoulder, or knee and so what." Anyway, I get head injury. I been knocked on the head how many times. We don't wear any helmet, no shoulder pads, nothing on. Just khaki and the jersey. Crazy.

GG: And this was Citywide, what they called Barefoot League?


GG: And so you played, like, Palama and other areas?

TH: Yeah. Right. Other people. And, of course, we had men who liked to, they're interested in the young boys, you know. They come down and help and then, of course, they kind of learn a little bit, see.

GG: Who were your coaches?

TH: Julian Judd. He's a good coach.

GG: And then, didn't you play during the years when they took several championships?

TH: Yeah. They got Norman (Kawaihilo and Clem Judd). University boys. Well, I say, we got an expert instructors. So that's how we...we'd pick up fast, you know. How to block, how to tackle. No necktie tackles, hit 'em around the ankles.

GG: And what years again? Were you going college when you were playing?

TH: Yeah.

GG: And you played before that, and after that, for a while.

TH: Right, uh huh.
GG: When did you have time to practice, though? How often did they have practice?

TH: When they practice, after they, everybody got through work, you know. About 5:00, 5:30. Until dark. About hour and a half, two hours. Sometime at night, and had the lights out.

GG: You must have had quite a schedule to do your studying, plus your working, plus playing football.

TH: Well, you better believe it. Well, it was a tight schedule, but my life was tight all the time. But you always make time. As long as you make time. And everyday I have a schedule. I set up priorities. Right? So school was first; study was first. Work was number two; without the work, I cannot go school. So I have to have some recreation. Right? Where was women? Nowhere. Okay, I couldn't drink, I couldn't smoke because cost money. With that kind money I making and supporting the family. So, what? I had to buy a little car, I took 'em for a ride, catch crab. That's about all.

GG: Where did your scheduling ability, or prioritizing ability come from? Did you develop that yourself, or is that the way your father operated, or....

TH: No, as I grew up, you know. When you start selling paper, you got to get up a little earlier if you want to sell all your papers. You miss one customer that means you going to school little bit late, because that one paper is a nickel. And you don't take that paper home, you stay till you sell it. And somebody's going to get a beating, who sold to your customer. That nickel is going to cost somebody trouble, but you go to school, and you eat your lunch and well, sometimes, you splurge, eh. But most time I go home and eat. Sometimes, my mother makes hamburger. Oh, that was good.

END OF INTERVIEW
Tape No. 3-48-1-78 And Tape No. 3-49-1-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mr. Tai Loy Ho (TH)

May 18, 1978

Kahala, Oahu, Hawaii

BY: Gael Gouveia (GG)

GG: This is a continuation of the first interview with Tai Loy Ho in his home at Kahala Towers, May 18, 1978.

Okay, tell me about your father's observance of Chinese New Years.

TH: My father always observed Chinese New Years. From the day before, we had jai (Monks food), no meat. You cook a vegetable dish, and we get up 3 o' clock in the morning to eat it. And, of course, we're not used to getting up at 3 o' clock. But, after that dish is over, there's going to be chicken. Oh, what a wonderful day! And, whenever we got sick, we always had Chinese herbs. Always Chinese herbs.

GG: Where did they get them from?

TH: From the herb doctor in town. And there was a bowl of medication that we had to take. Oh, couldn't take it. But he always had a plum, you know. You took your bowl of herbs, well, it was solution, his solution, then you can have your plum. Well, we get coached and coached, and went down, and you took your plum with you, and you sucked on it.

GG: Was this something you had to take daily, or just when you were sick?

TH: No, we were sick.

GG: What kind of sick?

TH: Well, when you caught cold. Because the whole family had it now.

GG: And do you know what kind of herbs it was?

TH: No, but no problem. You go down there, and you tell 'em what kind sickness you have and the doctor would give you the medication.

GG: And where was this herb doctor? Was this in Kakaako?
TH: No. Chinatown. And then, of course, when the mothers give birth, then you got to go down buy a black chicken. Cook it, boil it with plenty of ginger. And they must have the, soup but they cannot eat the chicken. The chicken will be eaten by the children. So we'd like that. We knew, when a new baby comes, "Oh, we going have chicken.

GG: So every year was okay.

TH: Oh yes. We only knew that chicken, we didn't know whoever came, was boy or girl.

GG: Did your Mama have midwife, when she had the babies?

TH: No, no. Is the neighbors. Like you my neighbor. Well, other neighbor would come, and one or two would take care of me. And one would take care the kids, you know. The feeding, put 'em to bed, send 'em off to school. You know what the women do to help with the birth of a child, and you try to keep it clean as they can. And I guess it wasn't too hard. Women are strong, eh. Of course, if you weren't strong you die anyway. No problem.

GG: Were the children kept away from wherever the birth was happening?

TH: Yeah.

GG: What was your house like, anyway? I'm sure you were old enough so you remember some of the younger ones' births.

TH: Oh, just like this. Two bedroom. Just two bedroom and a room with clothes. And there's a living room. Of course, they had a table and some chairs and a rocker. But nothing like this. Very plain. Oil stove, charcoal iron.

GG: What kind of flooring? Did you have some kind of covering on the floor?

TH: No. All wood. Well, no, they had to paint the floor with red paint. Hard coating, red paint. But it didn't matter to us.

GG: And did you sleep on beds or did you have mats?

TH: Well, about four, or five on a bed. Not the long way. Across. The big ones slept on the floor because if they slept on the bed, they sleep the long way.

GG: Then not enough room for so many.

TH: Not enough room, so they slept on the floor. Yeah.

GG: Did your mother have any Hawaiian; like, did she make kihei pilis or the coverings, or....
TH: Not till later. Not till later, when she went to church. And the church people got together, and they started helping each other.

GG: You said you joined the Mormon church when you were eight years old. Had you not been....

TH: Well, I was baptized by my mother.

GG: So did you attend the Mormon church, then, after that, regularly?

TH: Not too regular.

GG: Did they have a, what is it called, a ward or a chapel in Kakaako, for the Mormons?

TH: Yes.

GG: Where was it? On Ilaniwai Street.

TH: Let's say, we didn't go to church regularly. When you started sports, then, of course, to qualify, you had to make attendance. So, all the men who wanted and all the young boys who wanted to play, had to make attendance, see. So they go to the young men's meeting.

GG: Did you play sports through the church, then?

TH: Yeah, you know, participation. To qualify the boys to enter teams for basketball only.

GG: Do you know Mr. Enos, I think Edward Enos?

TH: Sure.

GG: Is he same age as you, or is he older?

TH: Maybe two years [older].

GG: So he wasn't coaching.

TH: No. Eddy wasn't a sportsman. You know him well?

GG: I interviewed him. And, I think, later on, no, he said he didn't participate when he was young. Though when he was older, I guess he directed the program for the Mormon church, the sports program.

TH: I see. Called a youth program. And there's Cesar Paishon; did you meet him? (I was called to direct the youth program one year. Sure took a long time travelling around Oahu.)

GG: Uh uh.
TH: Emma Paishon's husband. He was a very strong Mormon, and he attended church all the time. But most of the young men didn't go to church regularly. There were lot of non-Mormons who went there.

GG: Who played sports, right?

TH: Yeah. But they'll just encourage them to participate. Shall we say, the church says, "Teaching the word of wisdom." You know, live a clean life, that's what it amounts to.

GG: When you were at Kawaiahao Gym, what was your job? Did you primarily do the scheduling of what was going on in the gym, or, what was your job?

TH: (Mrs. Amilia Guerrero had girls on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. I had the boys on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Sunday was free.) That's why I said, the Mother Waldron says, "Take care the boys." And I know what she meant was to keep them out of trouble. Keep them active.

GG: So did you plan programs for them and did you coach programs?

TH: Uh huh. They were like other young men. A lot of them had no homes. They slept under the gym, in the gym. (I coached baseball on Sundays, football, volleyball, baseball, and junior olympics.)

GG: How come they had no homes?

TH: Wait, I'll tell you. Some of them lived too far away, some of them ran away from home. Probably chased out of their homes.

GG: Was that pretty common in those days? Because it seems like an awful lot of young boys lived, sort of, on their own.

TH: You know, I would say 15, 16. Around then, very rebellious, eh. And they stole like hell.

GG: But did the parents or the police just kind of ignore, that they were out of the house, or was it that there were so many children, that sometimes that it was easier to have them out of the house?

TH: Nobody knew where they were. I knew what was going on. But what you going to do? Chase them out?

GG: Was that how, because somebody told me, that a bunch of them lived together that didn't have parents, I guess, is what I was told, at Magoon Block. Now, did they get together, and through their diving get enough money to pay rent to live at Magoon Block?

TH: Yeah. I think it was $5 a month. And, of course, you go down with matting, they had no, nothing. Just matting, and sleep. Matter of fact, anybody who had no home would go there. Sometimes you see 10. I went up there couple times but, I just went over there to call somebody.
Somebody say, "Well, where's this guy?"
I say, "Oh, he's upstairs."
You know, everybody knew where they slept, and resting.

GG: Were the Magoons, who were the landowners; were they aware that these boys were living there, or do you know?

TH: Oh, I'm pretty sure they knew. There were rough people living there. Poor. People who had low income, and these men who lived there, or boys, they were not kids, now. Some were like 21, some was 19, and ugly.

GG: And the ones that they refer to as the "wharf rats," now, they didn't even stay in Magoon Bock; they just lived under the wharf?

TH: Yeah. (A few. Some slept in Mother Waldron shack; some at Magoon Block.)

GG: What did they do for food or clothes?

TH: What do you think they did?

GG: Probably steal or bum?

TH: Sure. But, they fished quite a bit. There's plenty fish in the water, and there were a lot of crabs. Right where, let's see, where Kakaako Street meets Ala Moana, right across there was the dry dock. That pier goes out, that's where they were under. All heavy timbers and, you know, that timbers log. All they build boards across, eh. Sleep under there.

GG: Did the policemen ever bother them, or ever go around and try to get 'em out of there?

TH: Well, I don't think so because they lived there for long time. And, of course, they start making traps. And they caught crab and fish. This Arthur Lyman was one of them, too, see. (Brought his family to live during the depression. He lived on the beached sampan.)

GG: Senior?

TH: Yeah. He lived there quite a long time and, of course, the boys or young men who lived there were very resourceful, you know. They were strong and nobody's going to push them around. And there was one cripple boy, Peter, Peter Pung. And he's big gambler in San Francisco, now. But he is a strong man. He dove for nickels. But he was, what, shall we say, what you call the cripple whose leg is undeveloped.
GG: Not polio? Some birth defect?

TH: Something like polio, and skinny. Not fully developed. And he's walk like this, see. Sometime he use crutches. Lot of time he didn't.

GG: Was that homemade crutch?

TH: No, not crutch. But he go diving with us.

GG: Most of the boys who dove, were they mostly Hawaiians, or....

TH: No, Japanese. Maurice Furusho--good swimmer; also Hamada, who died and who cut up by a ship propeller in the harbor. They were Hui Makani boys. Harvey Chilton trained them.

GG: Nobori did dive too, or he didn't.

TH: No, he never dive during my time. He probably....you see, he lived with the Hawaiians. Lived with the Hawaiians, with the Huihuis. And he wanted to be known as a tough guy, like the Huihuis.

GG: How did his parents react to this behavior, or do you know?

TH: Oh, they don't like him because, what you call a rotten egg in Japanese? Because he was the only one, only Japanese boy that.... Japanese don't tolerate that. Well, there was one more other Japanese that went down there. Nobori never did dive in my time, but probably he dove later on, but he wasn't a swimmer, that. He spent his time learning how to fight, and make him a champion. Real good, strong boxer. And those who went down the piers, well, they were good swimmers. You had to be good swimmer to be able to make any kind of a living diving, for nickels or dimes. The guy with the fastest arm, the longest swim, got the money. Because there was a lot of in-fighting down there. (Some were beautiful divers and made their pile: Joe "Red" Huihui, Louis "Ducky" Freitas, Joane Manuwai.)

GG: Who were some of the "bulls" of the area? I can't remember which one of you talked about that, there were "bulls" that were recognized leaders.

TH: Yeah. Well, the guy with the muscle, the guys who had the word, and you listened to him, or else. It was Sam Oba, it was Louis Newman, and, of course, the big one was George Kane, of course he died. But he wasn't the muscle man. He was a great athlete.

GG: So they weren't necessarily just tough guys, they were guys that you looked up to and respected...

TH: As a leader.

GG: Yeah. And was the only way they got to be a leader, though, was to fight, or could you sometimes...
TH: Well, later on, see, guys who ain't got any head in them had to fight. Command respect. Or else you get beating. And some of these young guys who not big enough, had two or three guys behind 'em. So what you going to do? You facing, not one guy, you facing three guys.

GG: Do you recall getting into any or many fights yourself?

TH: Eh, I told you I was a runner. I'm not a fighter. My brother got fights, my two big brothers. They fight policemen, anybody. They think they tough. "You crazy. There's always a better gunman than you," I said. Right? You know that five-shooter, you get shot. And there's always a better fighter than you. Two of them jump on the policeman, the policeman (punch) bang, bang, bang. Had two guys down in no time flat. They were all about 150 pounds, and this policeman was 225 [pounds]. What a strong man. They jumped him, and he grab 'em. Bang. Bang.

GG: Was that Palinapa or do you recall?

TH: No, no. It was a special cop.

GG: Were most of the policemen Hawaiian?

TH: Most of them. That's all politics. And they were big, you know. They hired the Hawaiians because they're big. Palinapa could pick you up like this, brother, he hung you on the telephone spikes. Hang you up. And he hang two of them up; if you going make trouble, the two heads go together. Oh, this Hawaiian, he terrible. But anyway, they got your respect. They don't talk too much. Old Pali was a good man, he don't talk too much. But people had no trouble, those days. No trouble. You had no guns. You see the cop come in the road, you just behave yourself. But, as I say, John Newman, Sam Oba.

GG: Sam Oba, was he Japanese?

TH: Japanese-Hawaiian. But he was short, very short. But mighty fast. Oh. He must have been about 130 pounds. Faster than fast. And he was mean.

GG: Did you ever go out on the boat they were talking about? Where they have the electric lights strung out from the dry dock.

TH: No.

GG: Or, did you know any of the fellows that lived on it?

TH: Sure. (My friend, Bill "Hawky" Kakalia and my brother-in-law Henry "Lymie" Wilson) I saw all them over there. Not my business to go over there. I kept myself clean because I knew what was going on over there. Matter of fact, they didn't want me there. I was something else.

GG: You were the good guy, huh?
TH: Yeah, they didn't want the good guy around. Because I going tell Mother Waldron about it. But I am no big mouth. She was happy everybody was okay. But anyway, as I say, we always go down and drop our clothes, you know, face our backside to the people, right on the pier. Just put on our clothes and dive in the water. But Mother Waldron didn't like it. So she built a place for us to change and bathe in. You heard about it?

GG: Hmm.

TH: Yeah. Where the old boathouse, there was an empty lot between the dry dock and the old boathouse. Right now, the old boathouse is gone, so it's the Coast Guard pier. But next to the Coast Guard pier would be the boathouse. It was a two-story building, and then there was a pier with a gas pump, where they launch some of the small boats. And a gas pump for the small boats. We'd have a small, I think it was 14 by 16. Some of the boys would sleep there at night, too, see. That was all right. But that was a place for us to change. But Mother Waldron built that thing. She said, "You folks go down there and change. Never mind changing in public."

GG: But even as the boys got older, say, 16, 18, 19; they still had respect for Mother Waldron and didn't give her a bad time?

TH: Oh yes. No. But they got out of her claws, eh? Kept away from her, as far as they can. Of course, when you in the elementary school, up to 14, eh. After that, you go to high school. Very few went to high school. You went junior high. I didn't go to Washington Junior High because they didn't have junior high school in those days (1924). (McKinley High was the only high school those days.) They call it junior high, now they call 'em intermediate, right? So all the people from Kakaako went Washington Junior High and from there they made McKinley. So those who went to Washington Junior High made McKinley. Quite a number did make it, but lot of them who dove for nickels, call them 'wharf rats,' didn't make it. They didn't finish elementary school.

GG: They dive from even from elementary...

TH: Those days we call grammar school, eh. And, of course, Bill Smith's father, he was a policeman. Detective forever. And he organized the Hawaiian divers. So he could control them, see. They came out of reach of Mother Waldron, eh.

GG: Do you remember approximately what year that was?

TH: That was, well, I would say, around 1924, 1925. So at that time, Harvey Chilton started to coach the swimming team. Well, he coached before that time, I think in 1922 and 1923. When we were young we go to his house and he'd give us refreshments. But take us down the pier, Pier 7, to swim the length of the pier. And then he'd pick up who he wanted. And, that's Henry Souza that swam and Manuela and
Maiola Kalili. And there was Kamaka, there was Pu Sin, Edward Pukini. And I swam and there was Chabo. And it was grueling, you know. It wasn't easy. Then, on top of that, he said, "We going into the mile swim in the Ala Wai channel." You remember Buster Crabbe? Eh?

GG: Uh huh.

TH: Well, he won every year. Till the Kalili boys went in. And, of course, Buster went to the Mainland, so his brother Buddy swam. His brother lost, of course; his brother was a playboy. So Souza swam the breaststroke all the way, and Pu Sin, he swam the backstroke all the way. Because I was a poor breaststroker, so I didn't swim, because my time's no good.

GG: And then, is that part of the group that went on to the Olympics?

TH: Yeah. Well, only the Kalilis went. And there was Johnny Fortune. He joined us. He was from Central Grammar, see. He started coming down to the pier, and he's a big, big, guy that he eat so much, he was always hungry. Always hungry.

And then in 1930, they had a swimming championships, when Yale and Japan came to the Natatorium, and they pitted their best swimmer against Sam Kahanamoku. And both teams took a licking. Hui Makani whip 'em all in total points. Of course, Makani boys, the Makani boys weren't too developed at that time. But then we could see that they had endurance, had the stroke and Harvey Chilton develop you know, his style. But of course, in two years they didn't last. Because, you know Hawaiians, they aloha. They were gonners. I think one went to Hollywood, and the haoles caught him. He was no good. I think Buster Crabbe was the only one that won, eh, in 1932?

GG: I think so. Yeah. What about politics? Were you involved, or did you go the political rallies or anything that they had in Kakaako?

TH: No. Not at that time because I didn't know anything about politics. Only time I knew about politics when I went to Waimanalo. Yeah. Then I, I say, "Gee whiz." Well, my kids went to kindergarten and I paid $5 for each child. Cost me $10 a month, but the teacher died. So I said, "Well, okay the next teacher." Then, the next teacher was a Japanese and nobody paid her. So she quit. So, I found out that the D.O.E. [Department of Education] could furnish you a kindergarten teacher.

So we formed the P.T.A. group in Waimanalo Elementary School and, well, they elect me president, and I told 'em why we wanted one. We need a kindergarten like everybody else has. And, of course, we asked the chairman of the Education Committee (Mrs. Flora Hayes) to give us a talk and tell us how to go about it. And she came. She said, "I sympathize with you, but I'm only one person. I can't do it. You got to get everybody to vote for it."
"Okay." So we started getting the people. And it went. So there were seven for the Fifth and seven for the Fourth districts. Oh, we were all happy.

So the past president of the Hawaii P.T.A. said, "Don't be too happy. Because you not going to get it."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Well, there's politics involved."

"It can't be. There's seven for Fourth and seven for the Fifth."

He said, "But if you look at it closely, the Fifth district, they're allocated to the schools. In the Fourth, they're not allocated."

"Yeah. What going happen?"

"They going give 'em to whoever plays the best politics."

"Oh?" I said, "Who's going to get it?"

"Well, you nobody, you know."

Ho, I got mad.

"Whoever get the most votes. Whoever get the most influence."

"Oh, like Manoa, eh? Oh, whoever can pay off, eh?" I said, "Well, I'm going down see the D.O.E. Give me one name."

"Oh, go see Mr. Ferreira."

So I went down to see 'em. Do you know Ferreira? He probably retired, but anyway, I went to see 'em. And he says, "Well, you got to wait. Wait. Next year we going build a kindergarten, we going give you a teacher."

"I'm listening to this song and dance. I said, "All right. How about if I buy a quonset hut?"

He says, "Well, you know, kindergarten, you got to have so much air space per child. You must get."

"Is that right?" This guy makes sense, you know.

"You need insurance and everything else."

I said, "Well, how about the gym? We had a gym. Can we use that?"

"Well, maybe, maybe not."
I said, "Well, smells like somebody pulling my leg. Let me see your boss." So I talked to his boss. The same line, the same song and dance. I said, "Well. All right. I'm going right back to the schools. But you know who sent me here?" And I named the head of the committee. "They sent me here. I'm going right back to see her. Okay? I going back to see the principal. Right now." So I headed back. I was so damn mad with the principal. He said we can get it, you know. I was going to tell 'em off, too. So, now I'm coming back. I reach there and I see 'em jumping up and down. I look at him. I look at another teacher. I'm mad, now. I say, what they happy for?

"You done it! You done it!"

I said, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I went down there, they said I cannot get it."

"Don't worry, the guy beat you over here." He said, "Tell the guy shut up. You folks going get one."

Yeah. So I learned about politics. My first impression. You got to put the pressure. Ferreira came down there. He said, "Tell the guy. Who was the guy? Who is he?"

"Oh, he's a fireman."

"Tell 'em shut up. We'll get one for him. Okay? All right?"

I said, "Oh, that's how it works."

Then, I was going join the party. My neighbor is a Republican, see. I was going join his party, see. But one day, my wife says to me, "Eh, your friend looking for you."

"Oh yeah? What he wants?"

"Well, I was riding home on the bus and he says. He talk to me, he look at me, he talk to me. You know he's interested in forming a Democratic Precinct Club." She said, "Oh, my husband interested."

'What your husband's name?'

'Tai Loy."

'Oh, my old friend.' (Wilfred Oka, secretary of Central YMCA)

"What you tell 'em?"

"Oh, we meet again. From university." And he's connected with the communists, you know.

GG: With what?
So I called him up.

He said, "Well," this and that, this and that. So I said, "We'll organize the Precinct Club. I'll be behind you." And that's how we started.

Seems that, you don't get organize, you not going get anywhere. One day, they fixed the road in Waimanalo. I went to town, and I noticed from the road to the boundary of my yard, about 20 feet. They put about two-and-a-half feet of black top. And this is all we get. Going down the road, by the Shriners side, "Eh, black top all the way. Up to the garage." I look. I see another house. So now I stop one of the inspectors, the engineers. I see, "Eh, who's in charge over here?"

"Why?"

"I want to find out who's in charge."

"You have a complaint?"

"Yes. I'm president of this Democratic Precinct Club and I've had a complaint now, from the members." See, I'm giving this song and dance, see. "They want to know who authorized the black top paving for this area." I've seen several, you know, and not over that side. I just want to know the name of the person."

"Oh, not me, now. Not me."

I said, "Then give me the name."

"You go in town, you see Mr. Henry."

"Okay."

My wife said, "No make trouble."

I said, "I'm not going to make trouble. I'm going to find out why this had to happen."

Now they moving all the equipment to town, see. I go see Mr. Henry. "Mr. Henry," he's an old man, now. I introduced myself, and my position in the Precinct Club. And when I asked a simple question, "You have your men down there, and black topping the road, and you put so many feet in the Homesteaders' area, and down the private property, you would put a driveway. Way down to the garage. Now you tell me why this person gets it and we don't get it?"

"Oh, you know the boys, this guy give 'em bottle of booze and, you know, they do it for them."
And I said, "Well, I'm going to tell you a story. I asked that guy, he's my friend, by the way. He didn't give anything." See, I had to make up story.

He said, "What you want now? Give me your address."

I got 'em see. "Just a minute. You black top my place, how about my neighbor? My other neighbor? How about the members in my club? They going ask me, 'Eh, how about us? You got your place.'" I said, "Thank you very much, I can't."

"Why you can't?"

I said, "Well, I'm going to see David." I was going see Kauhane. He was the Speaker of the House, see. Charley. He was awful, those days. "Thank you very much." I said I going walk out make good luck.

"Just a minute, just a minute, Mr. Ho. Just a minute. Let's talk it over."

I said, "I know you're a reasonable man. I'm being reasonable, am I?" He said, "Yes."

"Well, we just want a fair shake. You have to be more, chee for us. That's all we ask."

He tell, "Okay."

So now, I told my wife, "You go back, and if I'm not home, I'm working, give me a call when they come back."

When the truck equipment came, she was outside laughing. I know, when the guy came back he said, "What you laughing for?"

She said, "I don't know what. You guys left. What'd you leave behind? Did you leave a job unfinished, or what?"

He said, "Somebody got some political pull around here."

And my wife was laughing. And then, "I wonder who? What you folks going to do?"

"I don't know what, but we got orders to do something."

And my wife laugh and laugh. But when I talk to Mr. Henry, I tell my wife, "You stay right here. And you going learn a little lesson in politics."

And she called me on the phone, she told me, "Boy, that foreman was angry." But he felt kind of chagrined because he had to call back all the equipment. Of course, he had other jobs to complete, eh.
But, I guess, politics one thing and common sense is another thing. And it's a game of "bluff" too.

GG: You learned your lessons well.

TH: But you got to... After all, I sold newspapers, eh? I had to fight. If anybody come in my corner, I had one paper left. Somebody's going to get beat up. So I told my wife, "You got to think fast, on your feet." You got to out-think the other guy and, of course, he's out-thinking me, too, eh.

Only, he wanted my address. I said, "No way." Of course, I didn't see my neighbor, I didn't go through my members, but I know pretty well. We got all the place fixed up. Nobody know why they came back, anyway. Who cares? But, you know, they got to be careful around with Waimanalo people. They saying, "Well, somebody's awake down there." You see, "Waimanalo's all Republican." But before this old man died, this my brother's father-in-law, he died, he called me "Mr. Democrat." Everybody went Democrat. Waimanalo is all Democrat, now. Well, since I left, in 1968. I don't know what, they all went to pieces, or what. But you have to take care each individual. You believe that?

GG: Yeah, I do.

TH: Down to the nitty gritty. Not the big boys on the top, because the small guy is going to vote. They going to work. They going ask you, "What can I do?"

"For who?"

"For this guy."

No questions asked. They not going answer, "Well, I don't like this guy" or not. This guy.

Because when he going ask for the help, ask me. I not going ask him, "For what kind?" See.

"Tell me what. I get 'em."

In other words, it's understanding. And that's the only way.

GG: Going back to Kakaako, how many years were you involved in the diving and the swimming?

TH: Not too many. As soon as I graduate from high school, I was out already.

GG: Then you stopped?

TH: Yeah. Well, I was in the studies, eh. And that's why Mother Waldron
saw that. "Well, don't see that guy around any more." Because I used to go play football, but that's it. I try to make good grades, and I think I did pretty well. I didn't make all the A's, but somehow, sometimes, you gifted in certain subjects. But other subjects, you just not there.

GG: Do you recall, luaus at Kumalae Block, when the people would get together and play music, and then share food and things like that? Do you remember that at all?

TH: It wasn't a luau. Was the election candidate was to speak. A rally. They had a rally for...either a Republican rally or Democrat rally for a certain district. And the big rallies were for the delegates. Where the delegates had all the best musicians.

GG: And where did they hold those?

TH: Right down Kumalae Block. Of course, Kumalae Block had a raised veranda for the length of the block. And a platform. There was a natural platform. And, of course, they extended a special one, small one. They could come out. And I would say, maybe 10 by 12 feet, with the railing. And they had red, white and blue bunting. Of course, they had a Democratic or Republican...

GG: Did you ever go down to watch when this happened?

TH: Oh, I stayed away. I stayed on a distance watching. But the women all there, they good, beautiful singers and...there was very few hula dancers. I believe, the hula was kind of sacred, and it's not too much of the modern dancing.

GG: What about the lei sellers? Did many of the lei sellers live in the Kakaako area?

TH: Oh, yes. Many of them came from Kakaako. Very many of them.

GG: Do you know where they got their flowers from, to make the lei?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

TH: Other flowers they used was the crownflower. It's easy grown and we had to pick. But, of course, there was a milkweed you had to watch. And the other flower was the yellow....we call 'em the "stink flower." Oh, I forgot the name of it. And there was a purple one, you know that small little, round, purple one. They still use it today. The yellow one was the okole-oioi. We call it okole-oioi. That's what you plant around your plants, it keep out the worms. Did you know that?

GG: Uh uh.
TH: No? You see down the gardens, they get okole-oioi around.

GG: Did any of the lei sellers live close to you, or do you recall, or....

TH: There weren't too many. There weren't too many. But I know that they were all big girls, and lei sellers had a talent how to make leis, you know. Just like the musicians have a talent for singing. The lei sellers were, it was a difficult profession because it means picking flowers, and storing them, and then stringing them every day and.... I didn't know too much about making lei, but I find that there's all kind of leis, you know. Right now, there was a new place opened up in town, and I ask them what the cost of it, she says, "$25." One of those where they weave.

GG: Will, the lei.

TH: Yeah. I said, "Is that right?"

She said, "Yeah, $25."

My goodness. But anyway, I could see it took them a little while, and not all the Hawaiians have the talent to sell, you know. Nobody like to hawk and be a barker. Most of the lei sellers don't say anything. Right? They just hang out their wares. But now, they rush you like a salesman.

They look at you, and if they know you, they should call your name. But they don't. I guess they have their own code, eh. And they let you go choose who you want. But I have my personal, people I want to buy from. And sometimes they have, sometimes they don't. I used to go down to Cindy, down on Maunakea. And, of course, over there all Chinese or Vietnamese, now, doing the business. And, of course, they all set up with iceboxes, eh, coolers. Oh, they're right in business. And they got their husbands working.

GG: You were talking, too, about how you graduated from the different chores in the kitchen with your mother. How did that come about?

TH: Well, see, my two oldest brothers had to do their job. But, see, I'm third in line, so my brother was the best cook because he was taught first. And he did the cooking, actual cooking. So I come along and my second brother didn't want to cook, he want to work. He quit school when he was 13; he became a carpenter. So now I come up; somebody had to cut the vegetables up so my older brother can cook. So, I was the guy. I cut up.

GG: Your mother taught you, or your brother taught you?

TH: My mother. But my brother was a cook because he stirred the pot. When you handle the pot, you're the cook. But you're not the finish cook till you make the sauce. Okay? All right, when you make the sauce, you put so much of this, so much of this, that's your sauce, see. That's when you going make your sauce and that's it. You serve the food.
But I found out that you start learning how to be a cook by cutting. And you cut certain ways for certain type of dish. And there were all kind of vegetables. Some have to cut rough, some fine, some on an angle, some straight. And there're all kind of vegetables that you got to clean and oh....

GG: What happened if you didn't listen so good and you cut the wrong way, or did you ever do that?

TH: Oh, you get it. You get it because my father is going to eat and somebody's going to get it. Right on the table. Boy, you going get it right from him. So bad, maybe you can't eat. And he give my mother right on the table. "Too much salt. Not enough salt. Half done. Over done." Got to be just right.

He want his mullet just right. Get the mullet, you know, they say steam, but actually it's not steam. You put in boiling water, and you huli. When you huli, you poke your chopstick in there. When the chopstick hit the bone, it's done. In other words, you tell if the eyes turn white. Of course, you have your cooked peanut oil all ready, eh. You get your parsley all ready, too. And your shoyu. So you put 'em in the platter, pour the hot peanut oil on it, the shoyu, parsley. Right on the table, and you eat right away. But if it doesn't peel off and it's half-cooked, boy, you're going to get it.

But after several times, you try and try, but you watching all the time, and you watching the guy get it. And you listening to why it's, why he got it. Because he not watching. See, nobody was, but if you're going to cook, you stay right by the stove. You can time it, but timing isn't enough. You got to have by experience, you know. With a big fish, small fish, how thick.

GG: Where did you get the vegetables?

TH: He had his favorite, my father's favorite stores that you can trust the storekeeper. That he'll give you fresh vegetables. And if he didn't, you take it right back to him. You walk all the way back. Now, I live on Queen, Queen and Cooke. And I walked back to market many times. (The street cars ran on King Street--three blocks away. Chinatown was 13 blocks ewa. Distance was no problem. Money was. Besides a newspaper boy's feet was in pretty good shape.) "You take it right back. Get your money back."

GG: Because your father said it wasn't fresh, or...

TH: No, my mother said. Because my mother's going to get it, see. Yeah, never pass her. So, go back to town.

GG: Did you grow any vegetables at all, at your place?

TH: No. Vegetables were cheap, eh.
GG: Did you shop very much at the stores in Kakaako?
TH: No.

GG: Why was that?
TH: Well, they had no vegetables. The market place had all the vegetables. Then we bought fish at the fish market. My father must have his mullet. Must be sea mullet. Must be fat. See, they slit the stomach, and you could see the fat. But you got to look at the eyes. The eyes must be bright. But the Chinamens are clever, see. They pick up the mullet, "You want this one?" They drop it down; they put another one in it. I got caught couple times. You take it right back. And they know they did wrong, they give back, they give the fresh one. Oh, that sly mongoose. Buy you remember who did that to you, see. And you come back next time, you on to him. He say no more. You go to the next guy.

So, you know all these things, you have to live and learn. So, he tells me, "Well you buy some," now, he wants chicken today. He wants certain kind of chicken, what kind color and you tell the guy what you want it for. Want a fresh one. Kill 'em right there. Feather 'em, you take 'em home. Way back, when didn't have chicken clean, right there on the spot, you had to buy a chicken, go home and kill it, and clean it, see. Then, they improve on the services. The guy next door, over there, had the services of hot water; well, naturally, you go to him. This other guy, well, he's going home and kill it and, gee, that's plenty work.

GG: Did you kill plenty chickens in your time?
TH: Oh, yeah. My father taught me how to hold 'em with one hand, cross the wing, hold the feet, clean the neck feathers and hold the head back. Cut across his throat. Hold the leg up, catch all the blood. Put salt water in there and stir 'em up. Because he said save that blood because we going have, we gonna eat blood from him. Oh, was good. Yeah.

GG: And then, did you do any shopping in Kakaako for any kind of things?
TH: No. Except for poi. Sometimes, my daddy wants the poi. He's a funny man, you know. I guess now and then, when he got older, he like his poi some times. Matter of fact, when he reach 75, 76, he eat poi. That's all he did. He eat by himself. Of course, he divorce my mother, see.

Then he got a stroke and... so I called my family together. All my sisters are big now. I said, "Well, got to take care Papa, you know."

"No." They don't want to. Nobody wants.

Say, "Why?"
"Oh, we don't like him."

"We gotta forget, he's your father. He going be your father till he dies."

"Well, he's mean to Mama, that's why."

"Oh, okay. They didn't want to take care. So I took care of him. So he went in the hospital, I paid the bill.

GG: He never married again, your father?

TH: No. Took care of him. And my sister had a house that he could have stayed in. He wanted to sleep by himself, you know. So, we put him in the house and he had a brace on his leg. And he'd walk all over. Then, he died when he was 86. But when nobody wanted to take care of him, they put him in a hospital on a wheelchair. He had no exercise, eh. Then he started getting gangrene, and he died. Big mistake we made was put him in a hospital (Rehabilitation Hospital on Kuakini Street) because, when I die, I want to die at home. He died by himself. My sister called me up. See, my sister used to be a social worker until she gave up, she went back to school teaching. And she says, "Well, you better go see the doctor."

I said, "What happened?"

"Well, they said he got gangrene. They want to cut his leg."

"Why didn't you give the orders?"

"No. Family wants you to do it."

Okay, so I went up see him. I call the doctor up. "Doctor, what you want to do?"

He says, "Well, if you want him live, you got to cut his leg off."

"Why?"

"Well, the poison is, gangrene is spreading."

I said, "How far you going to cut 'em?"

He said, "I'm going to cut 'em way up."

"Is it bad?"

"Yeah." Now, he said, "We taking a chance. Maybe he won't live."

So I went up to see him. "Well, Papa, you know, your leg all poison. He getting black. You going to die, you know, unless we take care of it."
"Yeah, I think so."

I said, "Doctor want to cut 'em so that you live little longer."

"I don't want to lose my leg."

I said, "What you want to do? Take a chance?"

"Yeah."

"Well, okay."

So he said, "Okay." We got his consent, eh. So the doctor cut his leg off. So I went back see him next day. He was on the wheelchair, and the nurse was feeding him.

I said, "How's everything Daddy?"

He said, "Okay, okay."

I look at him, he's doing good. Well, I think was too much for him. He relapsed. Next day, the doctor call me up.

"You better come see your dad?"

"Why?"

"Well, he's in bed and I don't think he's going to last."

And he started getting pneumonia and all the tubes in his nose, and under oxygen and breathing heavily. So I tried to talk to him, but he's in a coma already.

So I called my family up. I said, "Well, Daddy's going, you know." They didn't say anything.

GG: Did he have brothers and sisters, too?

TH: Yeah. He had five more brothers. No sisters.

GG: Were they all alike?

TH: They all black--dark Chinese. Just like, you know there's some light Chinese, there's some dark ones. Almost Negroid. But the hair is straight. Have you seen any?

GG: I don't think so.

TH: There's some dark ones. And my father's family, they all dark; except my father was light.
GG: But I mean, were the brothers all of the same temperament too?

TH: They all different. There's one drunkard; there's one gambler--never work in his life, only gamble. The other one always drank. He was my favorite uncle, always took me with him. (There was a farmer. Ho Yee who married. There is a brother Ho Ping who lives in Peru. Not much is known about him.)

GG: Did much of your family live in Kakaako; I mean, like aunties and uncles too? When you were small?

TH: Well, my mother didn't have too many. The only brother, younger brother, was living as a custodian in Nuuanu. Custodian and worked on the reservoirs. And that's the only uncle I had. And, before that, when he was younger, he worked on a boat, Mauna Kea. He was a good uncle because, when I was a very young boy, my mother said, "When you go down to the ship, you go see Uncle," his name was John, John Kealoha. He changed his name from Kaihe to Kealoha because he didn't like his father. I learned that later. His name is Kealoha, not Kaihe. But it's Kaihe. "You go down and see Uncle. Uncle going give you some money." So he usually give my mother $1.50, sometimes $2.00. But before he did that, he take my brother and I, my younger brother and I, we go in town, ride the hack. You know, they had a hack.

"Okay, let's go." Pay day, you know. He probably always had $10 a week or, go up and gave us the Chinese saimin or chow fun. He gave us some money, then we'll walk home. Take the money, and give 'em to my mother. Every Saturday we did that. Yeah. He quit his job and went to work for the State, I believe. And taking care of all the reservoirs, clean up all the bushes that grew in the banks of the reservoir. Cleaning it out.

GG: And then your father's relatives, where did they live?

TH: Oh, my father's relatives all live in Pearl City.

GG: Oh, because they were rice farmers, you said.

TH: Right. And they turned into....

GG: Taro?

TH: No. No. They changed to truck gardening. Vegetables. Watercress.... well, first particularly watercress, then they diversified. Bananas, you know, whatever they could; market would give the best price.

GG: Did you get out to Pearl City to see them very much?

TH: Oh, yes. I spent many summers over there.

GG: Working...
TH: No, just carefree youth. My cousin would take me down crabbing, fishing, you know. Take me up the mountains; we get mountain apple, and go and get mangoes, and catch frogs, and catch the freshwater shellfish, ten yao.

GG: And how did you get from Kakaako to Pearl City?

TH: Oh, we catch the train. We caught the train, get off Pearl City, then we walk. I think this is about two miles. We walk from the Pearl City station itself, you walk on the track, and you get off, and go up to the home. And they had a nice home. Big house and it had a separate kitchen. The kitchen is only for cooking and eating.

GG: Not attached to the regular house you mean?

TH: No.

GG: Separate?

TH: Yeah. Only for cooking and eating, see. They'd cook and, of course, they had all their vegetables. I remember one day, we went to catch some prawns in the taro patch, and she makes some soup out of it. And sometimes we catch some fish. She'd steam it with tau si (black beans). Oh, my aunty was ah nyong. She died of cancer. We call it ah nyong. And my uncle was second oldest in the family. He's a good worker. He and my father were the only two married brothers. Four others didn't marry. All bachelors.

GG: Do you know why?

TH: I don't know. I think irresponsible. As I said, one was a drunkard, the other one was a gambler. There's one in Peru, Ah Ping. I guess, you know, after a while in life, you can't find a mate. Because there weren't too many that would like to. After all, you get a bad reputation, you know. You know what I mean?

GG: And the five brothers all came from China at the same time?

TH: Well, six of them.

GG: Oh, six, all together. And the parents came too? Or just the brothers?

TH: Well, there were five brothers. Five brothers came from China. Would be my great-grandfather. And, of these five great-grandfathers, Chinn Ho came from one line. And we came from one line. And some other lines didn't have too many. But our line was, shall I say, prolific. But only two brothers got married.

GG: When the first came, the name was Ho Lim? Is that what you said?

TH: Yeah. The last name was always pronounced. The surname was pronounced first. Ho Lim, Ho Yee, Ho Chinn.
GG: And did the Pearl City cousins or relatives ever come into Kakaako to visit you folks?

TH: Oh yeah. Well, you know, we were so poor that Ah Nyong she came all the time. Maybe once in two weeks, twice a month, sometimes once a week. I was in line first. You know why, eh? The li see. That was a nickel. She'd bring oranges, you know, and I was present all the time because my two oldest brothers were gone anyway.

GG: Did she bring vegetables?

TH: No, orange. She always brought orange, or apples, but mostly orange. Had to bring the oranges. "Anybody around?" I was in line first.

GG: Did you folks celebrate any holidays within your family, when you were small, like birthdays, or Christmas?

TH: No, we didn't celebrate at all. We'd have, I know, every Sunday we had a big dinner. My father was a great one for eat food. Either Saturday or Sunday. He wants the best food on the table. Was chicken, I know his favorite was chicken. And my mother cooked chicken more ways than one. The other one was mullet. He said, "I want the biggest one." That big. Yeah. I remember many, many times I went down to get it.

GG: And did the neighbors in the neighborhood share with each other, or get together to play cards, or talk story or anything like that?

TH: Yes. I remember in the evening, like when we have Kona weather, everybody came out to put their mats and sat down outside, and they barely afford kerosene lamp, eh. And they sat down and played kamau, whist. They played (neighbors, not my father), and they laughed. And they'd have a friend or two. But not other nationality, only Hawaiians did that.

GG: What about now, did your family play kamau with anybody?


GG: Were there any Chinese games that he played, or....

TH: No, no.

GG: And what about, do you know anything about opium in Kakaako?

TH: Yeah.

GG: What do you know, or what are you willing to tell?

TH: Well, my experience is I never found it. But I knew the people who found it. Because we were diving for nickels, eh. You know how they smuggle it. See, after the boys grew too old, they didn't go dive for nickels. But they came baggage boys. Of course, they get arm bands, see. And the best boat to carry luggage for was the President Lines, it's the one went to the Orient. And the baggage boys are means to carry out the opium.
GG: What did they smuggle it in?

TH: I don't know.

GG: Because somebody told us that, I can't remember the year, but when they were doing something, dredging the wharf area, or somewhere near the tuna cannery, there used to be coal, and people would pick up coal from the sea and sell it. But also, what they were really looking for, I guess was some pipe, or something. And now and then they would find opium there; they would go and sell it.

TH: You talking about the filling up on Pier 2. Outside of Pier 2, Channel Street came out this way, and went down to the edge of Fort Armstrong. And then the yacht, there was a yacht club on the end, which on piers. But in-between is a void, see. They built Pier 2 by dredging the harbor, and as they dredged the harbor, and when they got though dredging, people go down and dug out, and some people pick up the coal. Most of us were picking up the nickels and dimes in it. But some people struck opium. Of course, everybody down there wanted. They never got rid of the opium because somebody watching for opium dealer.

GG: Oh, were there many people who smoked it?

TH: Yeah, you know who smoked them? Thems in town, in Chinatown. All the Chinamen smoked them, the boilman smoked them, the laundrymen smoked them. You know the big pipes? After they got through work, they smoke 'em and they go sleep. Yeah.

GG: Did your father indulge in that at all?

TH: No, my father never did.

GG: What about lotteries; I think there's a Chinese name...

TH: Oh, you speaking of the numbers game. Yeah. The women used to play it.

GG: What is that, chee fa?

TH: Oh, yeah. The women always playing. Everyday. And they'd play by dreams. (Laughs) They get dreams and everything else.

GG: And was that all the women, or was that primarily Chinese women?

TH: No. All the women. Women who played. Because they played their hunch, see. What was it now? See, now you bring it up. And they'd get down there, you know. They doing their work because they got a dream they got the lucky number. They go down there. I think it cost two bits or, you put so much in. Well, to go back to the opium, is this going to be confidential?

GG: I can turn the tape off if you'd like, or don't use names.
TH: Okay. Well, this was told to me by someone who did it, see. These divers who went down, you know. Diving for nickels. As I said, we were young, and during the summer no work, and just fool around the wharf. That's why they call "wharf rats"; slept down there, we would broke into the wharfs, and get the cracked seed out, go underneath, surfboard, and come out on the other side and usually Sundays. Nobody work.

I was telling you a different story; we'd go in there and broke the cracked seed boxes up and take what we can. And the cans; then come back. But anyway, there was a lot of pilferage going on. Well this guy told me, he was fooling around one day and he found three cans of it [opium]. Well, there's a Elephant brand and Chicken brand. So, they said, "Ah we're going to open it." They had the three cans had that Chicken brand on it. So they opened up, it's molasses, you know. Did you know that? Opium is molasses. Well, it's condensed, see. He said, "Look at it." Take it. They hid it.

So they had an idea--two of them--they had an idea who they're going to... had a buyer. So, one day, they saw this, they call him the Manapua Man. I don't know if you follow me, now. The guy who sells the Chinese dim sum. So they told him, "Eh, we have this opium."

Oh, got 'em all excited. "I like see, I like see." They showed him one can. "How much, how much?"

"$100."

"Sold." Gave him three cans.

He said, "This can open. Only $80."

"Okay, okay." Paid him cash, he took off, left all his dim sum. They gave that to everybody in the neighborhood. Oh, my goodness, he probably sold 'em for one grand. He probably said, "Well, I going give you one spoonful, $15." Or, "Spoonful of this, $15." And peddle that instead of peddling manapua.

Yeah, this guy was telling me, I said, "Ah, you telling me one lie."

He said, "No, I did it."

You know, he told me how they got it through the baggage carriers. And the baggage carriers were restricted. Not everybody could do it, see. Only restricted to a certain numbers. So, I always wondered why they couldn't let more come on. I could see, now, that they were a carrier, they were carriers for somebody else. Before the ship come in, already, they were contacted somebody in town. "You go to certain cabin and give him this message and this money, and pick up this bag for me, and deliver down." Somebody's going to pick 'em up, eh. I don't know how they do it, but I guess that's how they do it. The bag is delivered to somebody, but the guy who buying it doesn't pick it up.
GG: Too risky.

TH: Too risky, so it's picked up and delivered to him or put in the place where...

GG: I guess, the reason people could find it was, if there was a raid on the boat, they dumped it overboard.

TH: Right.

GG: I see. Did the sampan people have anything to do with bumping any of it in, or did it come on the big liners?

TH: Well, I'm pretty sure that.... The movies showed some of it, eh. They drop it off during the night, float it out to the buoy or something. And then in the day, the sampan would come pick it up. But that's risky because Coast Guard is behind them, eh. And sampan pick it up, you lose your sampan. Besides go to jail, Federal prison, eh.

GG: Also, do you recall at all, or remember, when Queen Liliuokalani died?

TH: Queen Liliuokalani? Yes. I remember Queen Liliuokalani. I watched her parade, I mean her funeral. Was on top of that, you know that gate on King Street? I climbed that gate on top of there, and watched it from there. I don't remember too much about how they dressed, too well. But there were kukui nuts burning, sticks. And there were lot of these kahilis. I don't know if real or not, but they had capes. Women in black, eh.

GG: Do you know how old you were at that time?

TH: Well, I think was 1919. I'm not too sure.

GG: I can't remember if it was then, or 1922. [It was 1917.]

TH: Yeah. I was young enough that I was able to get around a little bit.

GG: Do you recall observing the Hawaiian community in Kakaako, or how they reacted to her death?

TH: No. No, the community didn't react too much. I know my mother didn't. As far as I'm concerned, Kakaako wasn't organized. They didn't have any community association like they do now. You know, now they get Kuhio, Hawaiian civic clubs. I guess nobody cared, those days. I do know that Palama Settlement took care of the people who had too many kids. Because I went to the Waialua Fresh Air Camp when I was younger. My mother had lot of kids, and she was selected twice.

GG: What did you do at the camp? How did you get there, did you go on the train?
TH: Yeah, they put us on the train. When we reach Waialua, then we got off. I think we walked down to the beach, you know. And there're lot of single family bungalows assigned to different families. The big ones for the big families, and there were community recreation rooms where they had programs for the evening. Then there was a big kitchen where they fed everybody.

GG: So your whole family went?

TH: No, this was way back. Way back, not everybody went. Let's see now. I would say, only about five of us went. The older ones didn't go. The girls were ordered to go. Not the boys. I guess the boys were trouble. Remember going swimming, coming back and maybe give you cracker. Afternoon snack. But you go to sleep, have lunch and go to sleep. And then go to swim. Come back, have cracker. And there was free time for you do what you want. And evening there was supper.

GG: Was there a territorial agency that organized the program?

TH: No, this was Palama Settlement. Rath, Mr. Rath.

GG: What did you fulks do for dentist or doctor, like that. I know you had your Chinese medicine, but if that didn't work, then what did you do when you were sick?

TH: Our doctor was Katsuki. He was the doctor attended my grandmother. And he was our doctor for our family. But I don't recall going to the doctor, or anybody going to the doctor.

GG: You guys were generally pretty healthy, then?

TH: No, I was the worse one in the bunch. My mother said, "I had to carry you every time. You were big. Four years old, I had to still carry you." I was a sick kid. My mother was always concerned about me. "You always sick."

I said, "Why?"

She said, "We don't know." She didn't know. "Well, I was all worried about you. You always sick all the time." Maybe I should have died. But, she kept me alive.

GG: Do you remember, at all during 1920, they had a real bad flu epidemic? You were only about 10 years old, 8 years old.

TH: 1918. I think 1918 or 1919, eh?

GG: Do you remember that well?

TH: Yes. Everybody went around, if you had flu in your house, they nailed a sign. It was contagious. And you don't go into that one, see.
GG: Did you have it in your house at all?

TH: I don't think we had it, because we had no trouble. But I remember many houses had it, and you kept away from them.

GG: What about, did they ever have any bad fires in Kakaako, that you remember at all?

TH: Yes. There was a big fire, California Feed Company that burned. It's located on, let's see now, general direction of the ice house, where it is now. On Cooke and Kapiolani, not on Cooke itself but the next street. Big, big warehouse. Oh, I would say 100 feet long by 60 foot wide. It kept all the feed for the livestock in there. Hay and everything. We were living on Kawaiahao Street, around Cooke and Kawaiahao, and it burned one day. Biggest fire I ever saw. And that's the only fire I remember in Kakaako.

GG: Do you remember approximately what year that was?

TH: Yes. It was in the 1920's. Approximately 1925, maybe 1926. Because we were living in that house, could be 1927.

GG: I think we're just about through today.

TH: Well, I told you I waiting for my wife. We're going back Waimanalo when she comes.

GG: Is there anything else that I haven't asked you about that you'd like to tell? Any experiences, either when you were a fireman, or with your family.

TH: Well, I'm pretty sure you're not interested in me, personally, but you're researching in the growth of Kakaako and any action.

GG: Part of that is the growth of the people, too.

TH: Well, that's true. Then I should go back. Things race in your mind, you know; go back so far.

You were talking about the girls who wanted to ride my junk when I was in university. Yeah, they all became teachers. But, you know, I had a tough time trying to support my mother on my...I had seven sisters with me. And, as I said, my two brothers and their wives stayed with us. So, I sort of kept busy and I said, "This is no time for me marrying somebody that I can't take care of." Another mouth to feed. And then, another baby. I said, "Well, I don't think the girls was strong enough." Especially, Martha was not too strong. But this other girl was Annie--Annie Akaka, and she want to get married. I told her I think the load is too heavy. She was sending her brothers to school. She had wonderful parents. We started going steady.

END OF SIDE TWO.
TH: I don't know when I stood with her because I said to myself, "Why don't I make a break because I didn't say I was going to marry her." If I kept going with her, then they expected, you know...we'd be married and... So I stopped going with her. But in-between she'd come down where I was working, down Kawaihae, and she'd bring me some food. And I enjoyed it. I thought this girl was wonderful.

GG: Did she live in Kakaako also?

TH: No, she lived in Pauoa with her family. I said, "Well, it's no time for me to get married and get serious."

GG: So how old were you when you got married?

TH: Well, I married in 1934.

GG: So, 24.

TH: Yeah. My wife (Alma Jensen) was 21. Well, I said I'm going to marry somebody I know. I knew the parents and, as I told you, I was refereeing football games, baseball games. Refereeing games, I'd pick up dollar here, and dollar there, and I was going regular into the country because was too far for other people to go, and we'd have a team, see. We'd form a team, go out, and we used to go down Kaneohe, and I would meet the parents, and I'll meet my future wife. And, by God, they'd even ask me to their house for lunch, for supper. And they asked the other officials and well, it's nice. "Thank you." Next Sunday, the same. And I said, "Gee, this is nice." So, I got to sort of know the daughter a little better and date her, dance at Palama Gym, down the National Guard Armory. As the times go by. So, when I'm working, I go school. Then, of course, after I graduated, there was nothing to do. Then, almost every Saturday, I go to dances and meet some old people I knew and enjoyed myself. But she shouldn't be there all the time, waiting for me. Funny thing, eh? So I said I would talk it over. And the parents were very happy about it.

GG: Did you go and ask the father for her hand, or what was the custom?

TH: Yeah. They didn't like her to go with anybody else. They told her, "Where you going?" I was the alibi.

"I'm going in town meet Tai."

"Okay. Okay you can go."

So he tell me that.

GG: Where was she living?

TH: Kaneohe.
GG: Oh, way in Kaneohe. But I thought you said she was from Kakaako originally, but, I see.

TH: Right. But they had move to.... Well, let's see. You know St. Anne's Church? Right behind there. Enter from the highway.

GG: So how did she get into town?

TH: Oh, taxi. They had a regular taxi.

GG: Jitney service type?

TH: No, taxi. They had taxis that came regular time. So, I had, I was target anyway. I didn't know it. And then, there was another, what shall I say, a C.I.A., another C.I.A. that told her where I was going be that night. Called up, my sister-in-law. I didn't know all this, you know. I said, "Eh..."

GG: "How does she know?"

TH: That's what I say. "The Lord sent you. Coincidence." Well, I was happy too, eh. She was a fine dancer. And plus, made my evening happy. Of course, they brought a lot of other girls, too, eh.

GG: So when you got married, what kind of a wedding did you have.

TH: Well, the father said it got to be a luau. So had this luau in the Pacific Club. You know where it was, you know? On Hotel and Richards.

GG: Yeah, I thought it was downtown but wasn't sure where...

TH: Yeah. Beautiful place. And we had a luau. So now, my old girlfriend comes. Not her, but the mother comes, and cries on my shoulder. Cries on my shoulder. I had to comfort her.

GG: Was it, pretty much, Hawaiian style wedding?

TH: No, it was a normal wedding. Normal wedding.

GG: Were you married at a church, or who officiated at the wedding.

TH: Yeah, I was married in the church, Mormon church. And it was officiated by the head of the church at that time. It was a nice wedding. And my father-in-law was proud. Because, as I told you, I went to their house, I started eating Hawaiian food.

GG: So that's when you got into the Hawaiian food.

TH: Yeah. Now I'm Hawaiian. But I like Chinese food, too. But Hawaiian, you don't cook, you hardly cook. All raw. And, I thought I was happy, but as you know, after 35 years of marriage she divorced me. And she said,
"I'm free as a bird."

And my [present] wife says, "I was waiting. When she threw you away, I caught you."

I said, "I think you kahuna me."

(Laughter)

GG: Another time when somebody was plotting, eh?

TH: Yeah, I'm telling you, a man hasn't got a chance.

GG: Okay, shall we leave it at there today.

END OF INTERVIEW.
REMEMBERING KAKA‘AKO:
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