BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: CHARLES JAMES FERN, retired newspaper editor and publisher

Charlie Fern, Irish, was born in June 20, 1892 in Madison Barracks, New York, one of three children of Arthur and Elizabeth Wainright Fern.

He attended UC Berkeley for a few years, then joined the Air Force during WWI where he learned to fly airplanes. He came to Hawaii in 1919 with a friend hoping to make money barnstorming and flying passengers. He worked as a camp policeman at Makee Plantation, Kauai from 1920-1922, and briefly as an automobile salesman at Garden Island Motors before becoming a reporter for the Garden Island newspaper in 1922. He became editor in 1924, manager in 1929, and president and publisher in the 1940's.

He reported on events preceding and following the Hanapepe incident during the 1924 strike.

Charlie married Mary Lucille Gillespie in 1922 and they have one son. He was active in the Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce and enjoyed golf and promoting tourism on Kauai.

He "retired" from the Garden Island in 1969. The Ferns moved to the Arcadia in Honolulu. He continues to work at the State Legislature and writes a regular column for the Garden Island.
This is an interview with Charles Fern, at the Arcadia. Today is December 14, 1978.

Mr. Fern, I was wondering if you could describe to me again how you got to come to Hawaii, that experience?

Well, I had been in the Air Force in World War I. And had become a pilot. And then, after the war, I didn't stay in the service. After the war, I was deciding whether to go back to finish college or not. And I had a fraternity brother who, "had more money than sense," shall we say, and he had been in the Air Force but he had never got to fly. So he asked me one time if I'd teach him to fly if he bought a plane. And I said, "Sure, sure." We bought a plane at Mather Field, where I had trained--that's near Sacramento--and flew it down to San Francisco. And I started to try to teach him to fly in the San Francisco area. But actually, the air was too rough for beginning flyers. And so we used to go out on weekends; we'd go out into the countryside someplace, so he could find a place where I could teach him to fly and teach him landings. And we found out that we could sell it. But it wasn't very productive. We were making a little money out of it but nothing at all. So we decided there must be a place in the world or somewhere in America where somebody had never been with an airplane as a barnstormer. And so we got out a map and started looking at it, and Hawaii was way down in the corner someplace on this map. And we wondered if anybody had ever been there with a plane. So we had a fraternity brother living down here, and we wired him and asked if anybody ever had done any barnstorming, if there were any planes there, if there was a place to land where we could put a plane up, and what about it. So he wired us back that nobody had ever been there, and yes, there were places that we could land. And so we put the plane on a Matson boat and brought her down here. We landed in December, 1919.

And so we set up the plane in Kapiolani Park. And Kapiolani Park in those days had a race track; a mile race track. And a polo field in the middle. The polo was a big sport in those days.
Among the haoles, particularly. Inter-island polo was a big thing.

And so we flew out of the polo field, and then we made trips to other islands. One trip I made to Maui with a passenger. He wanted to go to Maui so I took him over in this Jenny. I was flying a Jenny—that's a World War I trainer—and I took him to Maui and got him back the same day, and that was big news. The distinction I have is, as far as flying in Hawaii is concerned, I was the first one to make a round trip. The Army had tried it twice ahead of me. They had gone to Hawaii. In the first case, they had engine trouble and had to bring the plane back on a boat. In the second place, a Major Clark had engine trouble over Mauna Kea and had to land in the forest up there. And landed safely with it. And so that was it; nobody had ever been over and back. As I say, that's my distinction.

Then, the Army had planned a flight to Kauai, and they had two big flying boats that they were using for inter-island flights. And they planned one in May. And so I decided to join them and go to Kauai. And so I landed on the polo field at Waipouli, where all those hotels are now. You see, there was a mile track there in those days too, in the polo field. So we flew out of there for a while, and then we flew out of Barking Sands too. That was the two places we flew from; we flew from the polo field from the east side, and Barking Sands from the west side.

And during that time, the plantations, they were on the old dollar a day basis of payroll in those days. But they were paying a bonus on the price of sugar. And sugar in 1920 had gone up to 23 cents a pound. So the employees were earning 400 or 500 percent bonuses. At that rate, you see. So they held back part of it; they held back 25 percent of it to make them finish the crop. So they stayed on and finished it. And so, we figured, well, when they get paid off on this crop—the crop paying time, which was in October—we'll go back into business again. So we put the plane away at Kilauea. And then, I got a job in the plantation—old Makee Plantation at Kealia.

While I was doing this, my partner, he wanted to go back into flying again. And he and I hadn't got along too well financially, see. On his financial promises. And I told him, "The hell with it." And so he went up and bought another plane and came down and flew out of Honolulu. He put it on pontoons and he flew out of Hilo. We couldn't land on Hawaii at all, with no place to land in Hawaii near any population. We flew on Maui and we flew on Kauai, but the only place you could fly on Hawaii was up at Parker Ranch. And that was too far away from the population.

So I dropped out and started working on the plantation. Then, from the plantation, I got a job with Garden Island Motors selling cars.

CT: Before you talk about that, what was your job on the plantation?
CF: Today, I would be Director of Industrial Relations. In those days, 
I was a camp policeman. I had to get 'em out to work in the 
morning. The job was---in those days, they worked 20 days, they 
earned their bonus, then they'd all loaf. And at the end of the 
month, there'd be nobody working in the fields or anywhere. So my 
job was to pick 'em out and make 'em get out and keep a record on 
them, see. And make 'em go to work. Which meant I had to get up 
at half past four [4:30 a.m.] with them too. So it was quite a 
job.

And so then, I had written in college a little bit, when I was in 
high school...

CT: Well, talking about being a camp policeman, where did you live when 
you were a camp policeman?

CF: I lived in Kealia Boardinghouse. The single help, they had a house 
there for us. The houses there. And it was a nice place. It was 
built---it may have been somebody's home, but it had about eight 
rooms and we had baths upstairs and baths downstairs, and stuff 
like that. We used all the rooms except the kitchen and dining 
room for bedrooms.

CT: Did you have to pay rent?

CF: No, no.

CT: The plantation took care of that?

CF: Yeah. And I got $75 a month; that was my job. But my first month, 
I earned over 300 and some odd dollars in bonus.

CT: No kidding?

CF: Yeah. The sugar was 23 cents a pound, and we got that in bonus.

CT: And exactly what would you do in your job everyday?

CF: Well, what I did, the first thing I'd do, would get 'em out. And 
then I'd go out and inspect the camps for sanitation and housing 
and repairs, and things like that. That was my job also. If 
somebody wanted his house fixed or something, I'd go look at the 
house and see what was needed, then go ahead and issue an order to 
the plantation carpenters. And they'd send a gang out to do it. 
I'd get the approval of the boss. It was to keep the houses up, 
too. And keep up the sanitation and see that the---in those days, 
they had so much washing and things like that. We had ditches for 
all the waste water, things like that. Not the toilets. Most of 
the toilets in those days were outdoor toilets, too. On the 
plantation. So that was my job, was the sanitation. Another job 
was, I had to take care of the sick; see that they got to the 
doctors. If I'd go and find some guy who wasn't working, and he 
was in bed sick; well, I'd let the doctor know and I'd get him to 
the doctors.
CT: How would you do that?

CF: I'd get a car. We get an automobile and take him to it--one of the plantation cars--and take him there. And then, that was another part of my job, was to keep an eye on the sick people too.

CT: How many camps were you responsible for?

CF: That's pretty hard to figure now. Kealia had quite a few. They must have had---let's see....they had a big one--the big one was in Kealia itself--and there was one, what they call "Kumukumu." It's still there, I think. That's where they used to have the gambling all the time (Filipinos mainly were the gamblers, playing dice and card games, with maybe $10 per person. This is in the 1920's.). And then there was another one, there was one....oh, I can't think of the name of it now. It was on the old road to Anahola, on the other side of Kealia. And then there were some mauka of the road in that area too. I think that was about it. There was a big one, Mill Camp was the big one. All the mill people lived there. The field people lived in these others out on the various areas. I think we had one over near Anahola, too. That was part of the plantation.

CF: So you're talking about four or five camps?

CT: Oh, yes. I've forgotten. We must have had---I think the payroll at that time must have been something like, somewhere around 1500 or 2000 employees.

CT: So how did you make sure that everybody went to work?

CF: I would get that from---the foreman would turn in who didn't show up, see. I'd get on him in the afternoon. I'd catch him in the afternoon. I'd tell him, "Why weren't you at work? You'd better be there tomorrow morning." When the morning, when it was bad, the boss, the manager would be screaming at me to get 'em out. But they're all smart, you know. They'd get out early in the morning too, and leave the camp. They'd go holoholo that day.

Where the bad part of it was, they'd all make their 20 days at the same time. They'd all work straight right through and make the 20 days, then they'd all go holoholo. So at the end of the month, they'd have a tough time working. And you'd just have to tell 'em, "Either you go out and work 21 days this month, or 22, or you won't be working here tomorrow." That was the main thing.

CT: Was that the only way you could get them to work, by threatening them?

CF: You'd have to just start and say, "If you keep this up, you won't be working here anymore." It wasn't too bad.

The Filipinos, we have the Tagalog and the Visayan. And they were
the sports for the silk shirts and everything. They were buying silk shirts. It wasn't the Ilocano; we didn't have Ilocanos then. Ilocanos didn't come in till later, see. They were different; they liked to work. They wanted the money. They worked hard and long at it. But the Tagalog and the Visayan, they were the sports. They liked to shoot crap and wear silk shirts, see. And they were all wearing them, in those days. Instead of making $1 a day, they were making $5 or $6 a day, or something like that. It was good.

The other thing was, the fellows were on piece work, like the cane loaders, and the people that had the piece work rate, they got the same bonus on their rates. And so where they'd be making $50 or $60 a month [without the bonus], they'd be making $250 a month [with the bonus]. Everybody was buying automobiles, too. That was a great time.

The price dropped after I went to work for this dealer, Garden Island Motors. The price dropped to 3 cents. From 20 cents to 3 cents. So there were no more sales, to Filipinos particularly.

CT: In those days, how did you communicate with Filipinos and Japanese?

CF: Mainly--with the older Japanese--mainly through "pidgin" English. I had to learn it. I could say holoholo, and molowa. Apopo, "tomorrow", and stuff like that. I got the vocabulary pretty well. It was a pretty fundamental...and I knew mai hea, "Where you going?" and stuff like that. You pick it up. But it was a combination of Hawaiian and "pidgin." And with the Filipinos, it was much the same. It was a little bit more difficult. But a lot of them spoke pretty good English, too. They lived around Manila, in that area. They had some English. And they'd been here longer, too. They'd been here pretty long. But the older Japanese, particularly the older Japanese men, they learned the field language. They learned to speak it.

CT: What made you move from working as a camp policeman to Garden Island Motors?

CF: Well, better, more money. I thought it a better opportunity. I was down on the bottom of the pile there, and I wasn't a field man, you see. If you're going to move up in the plantation, you move either through the fields, or if I were in the office, I could move up through the office. But where I was, I was not getting anywhere at all. And it was more money [selling cars]. I was only making $75 a month, base pay, then.[on plantation]. And I started to work for $125 a month when I went selling automobiles. That was the main reason for it.

CT: Was that $125 even before commissions? Did you get any commissions, in those days?

CF: I didn't get any commissions. I didn't work on commissions; I worked on straight salary. Because I did a lot of things. I sort
of was a contact with the men with the plantations on tires and parts and stuff like that. Besides that, you see, I sold tires, and I sold everything that they had. And so I was pretty much of a contact man. I'd go into the warehouses and find out how they were doing on tires or whatever we sold. Batteries, and things like that. I was selling everything, you see. It was good pay for that time. I got married on it, so you can figure.

CT: And then, what made you go into the Garden Island newspaper?

CF: As I said, the bottom dropped out of the automobile business. That was one thing. And they were cutting back, and I saw that they were. I had written in college and in high school. And I had done some reporting. I had done some reporting at Kealia. When I was there working, I sent a column from Kealia every week. What I did, I made Kealia a little city. We had a mayor, we had a chief of police, we had a chief of the fire department, we had councilmen, and they're all real people. The mayor was the assistant store manager. He was the mayor; he was Mayor Souza. See what I mean? He was Bill Souza's father; I don't know whether you know him. He's a school teacher on Kauai; he's retired now. But they were all real, see. But whatever they did was all phony. Their council meetings and things like that, they were all phony. And I remember one story, I told that the council was meeting and a dog fight started outside. So the mayor had to go out and referee it. And I said, "Of course, it was between a Hawaiian dog and a Filipino dog. And the mayor gave his decision; the Hawaiian dog won." Because the Filipinos didn't have any votes, see; they couldn't vote. So the Hawaiian dog won the decision. But it was stuff like that.

CT: That was just in fun, then?

CF: Yeah, it was all kidding. They all loved it. I had the fire chief doing funny things with the fire department, and things like that. It was fun. And as I say, I went and told him that he [Garden Island editor] had a lousy sport page. And he did. That's the thing I wrote in high school. I covered my high school for one of the newspapers. All I got was about that much for the story on what was happening.

CT: Yeah, about three inches.

CF: Because high school sports in Oakland were not like they are in Honolulu. I'd get about six inches on a story and tell how it happened. While I was working at Kealia, I took over the sports page, and did that.

CT: Was that Mr. Harper who was manager at that time?

CF: Hopper was manager, yeah. I think he paid me $50 a month, or something like that. I covered all the sports. Then I assigned kids to cover the ball games I couldn't cover. I'd always take the main game, you know what I mean? Write up the main game. If Lihue
and Kapaa was the big game of the week, well then I'd go to that. Then I had the other fellows do it. Then I'd edit their copy and make up the sport page. That was my job, I ran the sport page.

And then, when this thing coming, I got talking to Hopper one time, and told him that they didn't have enough news. He was aware of it. So he had a directors' meeting and they decided to let him hire me as a reporter. And he was doing a lot of the reporting. And we had a print shop too, so it took him away from it. It took a lot off of him, in that way, that he didn't have to do all the regular news. So it was a weekly paper, and I'd cover the island and cover the County Building, and stuff like that. And I was selling too, I was selling printing too, at the same time, for the company, too. And advertising; I was an advertising salesman too. So I did everything.

CT: What kind of printing were you selling, in those days?

CF: Well, that was job printing. See, they had a print shop. We used to print everything for the plantation.

CT: Like for example, what?

CF: All the kinds of office forms, and things like that. And anything they needed in the office. For bookkeeping, any of the things like that.

CT: Were you the only ones on Kauai doing that?

CF: No, the Japanese newspaper had it too, but they didn't get into the plantation so much. They were strictly Japanese. They printed mostly in Japanese and Japanese billheads, and things like that.

CT: For Japanese companies?

CF: Yeah. There were two Japanese papers on Kauai at one time. One was in Koloa, in the 1920's; and one was in Kapaia. That was the Fujita family; I don't know whether you know him or not. He's dead now, and the boy's son, I think, is working here. He worked for the father and then I think he has a shop of his own down here now in Honolulu.

I sold printing, I sold advertising. I was a salesman for them, as well as a reporter. I'd always attend the council meetings, I'd get the police records of events and get from them what happened. And they'd always give us a call. I'd fix it with them that they'd give us a ring when anything exciting happens.

CT: How much were you getting paid at that time?

CF: I started off at $125 a month. And then I got promoted to $150. And that was good wages in those days. More than the fellows on the plantation were making, but they were getting a house with it,
you see. Got along with it. But some of 'em, some fellows started out on the plantation, $75 a month. But I don't know how many were married, of that. But $125 was good pay. And also, I worked for the Advertiser. I got $50 a month from them for covering Kauai for them.

CT: When was that?

CF: That was in the same period. Until I became editor. See, this was when I first went in there. I went in there as a reporter, so I kept this other job. And then I gave it up when I became editor.

CT: And when did you become editor?

CF: I think it's 1924. 1924 or 1925; somewhere around like that.

CT: If we can just focus on this period, in 1924, I'd like to ask you several things about the newspaper when you were editor. How many people were on your reporting staff?

CF: You mean full timers, or what? We had about five or six sports reporters that covered one ball game on a Sunday. And he stayed with his home team. Like a guy like G. M. Shak, he used to be office manager for Hawaiian Canneries. You don't remember them, before your time. But that was the Kapaa Cannery. And it's the down cannery, not the up cannery. He was there. He was my reporter in Kapaa because he loved baseball. And a fellow named Masao Seto, you know who he is?

CT: Yes.

CF: Masao Seto was working for me in Kekaha.

CT: This is in 1924, when you first started?

CF: Masao may have been later, but it was the same idea. If we didn't have him, we had somebody else. Before, they'd only get that much [a few inches] on who won the ball game and stuff like that. But these kids would send in a story, account of the game. And I'd edit it and dress it up a little bit, maybe. And we'd publish that. So that every one of them would get a good long [story]. And it was a great thing for circulation, see. Because that was the main sport in those days; baseball. And they used to turn out. They used to have 3,000 and 4,000 people at a ball game in those days. Can you imagine that? They can only get that at a football game now, between the high schools. And they'd play in the town communities. Where'd Kekaha used to play? Waimea never had a team in that league. It was mostly plantations. Plantations sponsored it. They'd all sponsor their home team. Every plantation had one. Kekaha had one, Makaweli had one, McBryde had one, Koloa had one, Lihue had one, Makee had one—that was Kealia—and Kilauea had one. So they had seven teams, all plantation-sponsored. Makee was a
town team, pretty much. It was the Kapaa team. But Makee Plantation helped them. It was a big... every Sunday. And they'd take the workers to the game in trucks. The ones they take 'em out in the field with, they'd have a couple trucks on each side if they were on the road. There'd be two trucks and would leave with the team and go to the ball game, and bring 'em home.

CT: And this was on Sunday?

CF: Yeah. They worked six days a week, in those days, too.

CT: And did you pay these [writers]? 

CF: Yeah, they got paid on the space rate; they got so much an inch. Whatever the length of the story, see. And then they would keep us protected. If somebody died suddenly on a Monday night or Tuesday morning, they'd always give us a ring. Or if there had been an accident; if there's an accident in their neighborhood, they'd give us a ring. They sort of covered us that way, too. If they heard any news that was police news or anything else like that that we hadn't heard about, they'd always give us a ring, so that they covered us that way, too.

CT: In those days, how common was it to have a phone?

CF: Well, they weren't in every household, by any means. They weren't in the plantation households, unless there was some damn good reason why they had to have one. It was mostly haoles, I would say. It was all the middle class, whatever you want to call it. Very few---maybe, the bigshot in the camp would have one. Sort of a camp boss or whatever it was; he'd have one. There'd always be one in the camp someplace, so they could reach him, you see.

CT: So you got phone calls from those people who were covering sports for you?

CF: Yeah. And they all worked someplace. Jimmy Wong that used to work at McBryde Plantation, he used to go type at the plantation office, and then phone in anything that he wanted. He would call. They would get to a phone. If they knew something, we trained them that way. If you see something special that's hot news, give us a ring. Even though we're a weekly paper, we want to know about it so that we can get on it and follow it up.

And then, the police would let us know. We set them up on automobile accidents because we didn't have any accidents, in those days, the way you do now. But we would kill people once in a while. We'd kill about three or four a year, or something like that.

CT: Would you then go and follow up these stories by going to the particular area?
CF: Yeah, I go to the police if it were something that involved the police. If it was an accident or something like that. If it were something else, or somebody drowned, the police would be in on it. If it was anything unusual, the police would always be in on it somewhere.

CT: So you were able to get stories from them?

CF: Yeah. If it were hot I'd get there myself and get the family or something like that. If I had to see somebody else on it, well then I'd get on it.

CT: And how did you travel, in those days?

CF: I had my own car. I had a company car.

CT: And how long did it take from---to get from Lihue to Waimea? Back in 1924.

CF: Well, it was a long way around. You had to go to Koloa. Long way around because that's another five miles or more. I think Waimea take you damned near an hour, I think. Because you couldn't go --- you can't go fast in Kauai, those old winding roads anyway. Because they're all just contour roads. They'd go way up the valley and back. You don't remember those days, do you? You know where the Robinson gold mine is? Where that field is there? You have to go way up that valley and come way back. Every valley you went into, you had to go up the valley and come back. Or else they'd go down with the sea sometimes, and go across it on a bridge. But if it wasn't big enough to bridge, well then they'd go up the valley.

CT: And your sports reporters, how would they get the copy to you?

CF: They would mail it. We came out on Tuesday. And they'd mail it, we'd get it Monday afternoon. And that was my Monday night job; was to prepare the sport page.

CT: You mean mail was that fast?

CF: They'd write it Sunday night and mail it Monday morning. Monday afternoon, the mail would come through into Lihue, and it'd all come in. I'd get it Monday afternoon. In the afternoon mail. Sometimes there was somebody was coming over; they'd send it over with somebody. As a rule, they just mailed it in.

CT: Through the United States Post Office?

CF: Yeah. See, the mail came in about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. And by four or five, it was all distributed. I'd go down and pick it up. I'd always go down on work nights. Monday night I generally worked. We came out on Tuesdays, then, so I'd have to get it all ready. In those days, I think we had one linotype operator that came in at night.
CT: On Monday night?

CF: Yeah.

CT: Was he able to set the whole newspaper?

CF: I think he set pretty much of it. We didn't have too much news anyway. The other stuff we had, from Tuesday morning till Monday morning, to get the rest of it in. What we would do, sports would take up most of the time. All the other news, we'd have it up and it would be already in type. The County Council would meet on Wednesdays. Well, I'd write it up Thursday, and get it in to type. Or write it Wednesday afternoon.

CT: So it would be ready to be printed?

CF: Yeah. I'd have to get all my copy ahead of me. And then years later, we postponed it till Wednesday. Moved the Garden Island to Wednesday. Because when we got big, we didn't have enough time to get it [out]. So we had to get another day. Because actually, all we had was Monday, one day. And the linotype operator used to work overtime. On Monday nights. We only had one linotypewriter. He worked overtime Monday nights. And then he took time off at the end of the week.

CT: I noticed in the paper, you had Makaweli Notes, Waimea Notes, Eleele, Kilauea, and so forth.

CF: We had women generally, in the town, that sent those notes in. And there were weddings and births, and parties. Mostly parties. So many people had a birthday party, and it was mostly that. And they would keep us protected us on deaths.

CT: Was that something you paid them to do also?

CF: Yes. We paid them on space. The boys would make maybe $1 for their stories. And the wahines would get about $1 or so. They loved to do it. And that dollar was big dough, those days, too.

CT: And how did you get in touch with these wahines? How did you select them to begin with?

CF: Well, I inherited some of 'em. And if one would quit, there was always somebody willing to take her place. And lot of 'em, you had to train to write newspaper style. They didn't have the faintest idea. Lot of 'em didn't know how, lot of 'em did. But you could just tell 'em the who, what, where, why and how. Answer those questions.

CT: At this time, in 1924 when you first became editor, were these people writing these personal notes generally haoles, or would they be....
CF: Mostly haole, yeah. See, the paper was aimed pretty much to the haole community, as far as the news was concerned. It was hard to get—we used to get Japanese notes too. When I went in, we hardly had any news about the Japanese at all. So I began getting Japanese weddings and Japanese kids going away to school, and Japanese marriages, and stuff like that.

CT: How did you get that?

CF: Well, through....what we call....they wrote for us. We assigned them a community and they wrote for us. And I'd get some young Japanese women to do it.

CT: You mean student types?

CF: Yeah. Or young marrieds, too. They just graduated from high school. Of course, in those days, there weren't many girls going to high school. The boys went but the girls didn't.

CT: I read a column from this guy named Leslie Nakashima. Do you remember him?

CF: Yeah. He wrote sports for us. And then he wrote other items too, but mostly....he was our sports editor for a while. He was working too. I think he worked for Hofgaard. That's American Factors. And he would come over and do the Monday night job. He'd get the sports page together. But first I did it. Then, when we got to getting more circulation and more advertising, I said, "Here, we need somebody to do this. I got other things to do."

CT: But in 1924, you were doing the sports?

CF: I was doing it all, yeah. I must have been about 27 or 28. I think after I got to be editor, I think.

CT: What was your circulation in 1924?

CF: About then, it was about 3,000. The peak that we had, when I was there, the peak was about--I don't know what it is now--but the peak was something over 8,000. We figured we had finally every home in the island. There was something like 8,000 homes.

CT: This was in the 1960's, though?

CF: Yeah.

CT: But in the early 1920's?

CF: Early 1920's, 3,000.

CT: And how was distribution done?

CF: By mail.
CT: No home delivery?

CF: No. We'd put it in the post office Tuesday night, they'd have it Wednesday morning. Then we had some on sale at a little newsstand there was there. But most of it was---100 percent of it was mailed. It worked all right. They got it Wednesday morning, you see. We didn't change to carriers until...oh, not until after the war, I think.

CT: With 3,000 subscribers in 1924, that would mean a total income from subscriptions of about $7,500. And how much in ads would you be picking up?

CF: I'm trying to figure...I think we were doing---I would say that we were doing $24,000 or $25,000 a year.

CT: Total?

CF: Yeah. Maybe a little more, because job printing was in there too. I know, in those days, we used to do about $10,000 a year in job printing. And about $10,000 or $12,000. We used to try to do $1,000 a month. The newspaper was more productive. I think we used to aim it about---we used to try to make about $500 an issue out of it. On advertising. That's hard to do. In those days, we were paying 25 cents an inch. Column inch, see. So damned hard to do because it made a page worth about $80.

CT: Boy, that was a lot of ads you had to get.

CF: Damn right. And we had legal ads, too. There, we got $2 or $3 an inch. That was one of our best revenues.

CT: That was from the County?

CF: Yeah. County and courts, you see.

CT: Did you get any news from Mainland sources?

CF: None. When I took it over, I said, "This is a Kauai paper and that's all." As we moved along, we had a rule, it had to pertain to Kauai. It could be a Honolulu story, but it had to have something about Kauai in it. That's what I mean. Because if something broke in Honolulu, and then we'd re-write it. But we wouldn't carry any of Honolulu's news at all. In fact, the only thing, I can think, we ever broken for was when President Roosevelt died. He died on a Tuesday, as I recall. So we had a big story on it. We got a wire story on it and everything else. The radio was full of it, you see. We just took it off the radio and said what happened.

CT: So you placed yourself in relation to the Honolulu papers by saying that you're Kauai only? Kauai stuff.
CF: That's it, yeah. There was no point—as I say, if something happened in Honolulu that pertained to Kauai, we would run it.

CT: What about the Japanese newspapers? Did you try to place yourselves in relation to them?

CF: Well, they were not competitive at all. They were not competitive. It's the news. Because they went in for strictly Japanese, all in Japanese type. Although, as I say, we weren't competitive because we didn't aim at the older generation. You get the idea? We aimed at the young people. And they [the older generation] couldn't read it.

CT: There's two different audiences?

CF: Yeah. In later years...oh, the best compliment we ever got on the Garden Island was the publisher of Time came out. The publisher, he came out here and maybe he was number two man. His name was Larsen. And he and this other fellow...Clare what's-her-name.... anyway, he came out here on a trip in the late 1940's. After the war. He came out and he stayed at Kauai Inn. The old Kauai Inn. And my son went down to interview him. And it just happened the day before had been paper day, or something, and he had bought a local paper to see what it was like. So we interviewed him. I sent my son down to interview him and my son said, "You'd better go down and see him."

And I said, "What for?"

He says, "You go down and see him. I want you to talk to him."

And so I went down and introduced myself and I said, "My son said that I should come down here and hear from you personally."

And he laughed and he said, "I told your son that's one of the best small town newspapers I've ever seen." He said, "It's full of local news. It's local news, everything is right here. It's well put together."

And I told him, I said, "That's the best compliment I've ever got in my life on a newspaper." When he says it.

And he said, "It's the best small town paper I've ever seen."

We got another one before. We entered into a California paper. When we liked our make up; we thought we were pretty good in make up, see. So we entered in that.

CT: You mean a contest?

CF: Yeah. They pick the best. And they gave us first place. And in those days, it wasn't like the papers today, where there's only three stories on the front page. All one story; one this way and
one below it, and that's it. We ran columns. And the thing that we went for was to get as many line stories we could on the front page. We jumped some stories but it wasn't good practice to jump all the stories. A good hot story about that long would land on the front page.

CT: Three, four inches?

CF: Yeah. And we ran a three-column head for the lead story on the page. We never went over that. Except when Roosevelt died it went all seven columns. "ROOSEVELT DIES," because we got it out—the radios were covering it but nobody else was.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

CT: Mr. Fern, you were talking about the make up of the newspaper. And I was wondering, in 1924, or around that time, when you were the editor and Kenneth Hopper was the president and general manager, how did you decide on what stories would go in the front page? Was that your job?

CF: It was up to me, yeah. And generally, a small-time paper, sometimes it's a hell of a job to get a lead story. What we tried to do with the lead story was a story they didn't know anything about. The old saying is that a small town newspaper is a newspaper that tells people things they already know everything about. They already know all about it. It's made up of stories that their readers already know everything about. Well, we tried to beat 'em to it that way. And we tried to get things that they didn't know about. And it works, see.

CT: At that time, what was Mr. Hopper's role, then, if you were the one determining the...

CF: Well, he was manager. He was business manager. And he also was in charge of all operations within the place. He was manager of the company. At the same time, he didn't bother me at the paper at all. I sold the ads and everything else like that. We'd get together and talk things over. And whenever we're going to have a special edition, I always talk it over with him, and things like that. But I ran the newspaper. And then, he ran the shop and he produced the paper and produced all the other job printing, too. That was his kuleana too.

CT: What about editorials?

CF: I wrote the editorials. I'd talk 'em over with him. We had one occasion where we wrote an editorial, and Jesus, we had it kick back on us. What happened was, at Lihue Plantation, there's this
hauling cane at night. With the locomotives. That was in the days of the railroads. And they used to cross the main highway in Lihue--and other places where they crossed--without being flagged. They'd just send a man ahead, just ahead. He'd just jump off the front of the train and run two steps and wave a lantern out there. And so we had a couple of accidents, in which the driver didn't have time to stop. He didn't have time to stop. And sometimes the brakeman would forget to get out in front. You get my idea? And they'd come across the street. And this night, this was about the third one. And he hit this fellow in a car. And he had three people in it. And lucky, it picked him up and carried him on the...what the hell is it...scarecrow?

CT: Cowcatcher?

CF: Out in front. Just picked him up and carried 'em. So they really weren't hurt. But it had just shook him up anyway. And he worked in the plantation. So he couldn't squawk much, you see, although he did. So I wrote the accident up and told them they'd took him to the hospital and everything. I wrote it up. But I wrote an editorial. I said, "This is the third time this has happened in the last couple of months. If Lihue Plantation can't see the point and do the way the other plantations do..."

At Makaweli, old B.D. Baldwin, when they were hauling cane at night, there was a man stationed at that crossing. All night. And when he heard the train coming, he got out and flagged the traffic. And he flagged the train too. He could do either one. But they didn't like to stop. He could stop traffic anyway, but he stopped the train if there was a lot of traffic. And so did Kekaha and the rest of 'em. They all did. But Lihue was pig-headed; they wouldn't. So I said, "If they don't do it, then the only thing to do is to go to the Board of Supervisors and pass a regulation that no cane train can cross the main highway without coming to a full stop, and being flagged across the crossing."

And they got mad as hell. And they ran Lihue Store. The Lihue Plantation Manger, R. D. Moler, came up and bawled the hell out of me. He scared the hell out of me. And I said, "Look, Mr. Moler, this is in the paper now. It's there and it's going to stay. I can't change it."

He said, "God damn you."

I said, "Mr. Moler, this is number three. You are going to thank me for this because if you kill somebody, where the hell are you going to be? Boy, it's going to cost you a hell of a lot of dough to kill somebody. This fellow was your own employee so the hospital bill doesn't cost anybody anything, because he gets from the plantation. You're going to kill somebody and it's going to cost you $100,000. That's what it's going to cost.

So they cut out all their advertising. But the other plantations
stayed with us. Lihue Plantation Company stopped all their printing with us; they didn't give us any more printing. And they had the Lihue Store and they had the theatre. And they cut out their theatre advertising, and they found out that that knocked hell out of business because nobody knew what was going on at the theatre. They had the one good theatre on the island.

Anyway, so when he came and bawled me out, I went out--Hopper was playing golf. This was on a Wednesday, and he was playing golf. I went out to see him and told 'em all about it and Jesus, he got all disturbed and everything. Said, "What you going to do?"

I said, "What the hell can we do? We can't take it back. We've said it. That's all I can say."

And he said, "Well, okay. We'll live it out." And we did. And pretty soon, they put it into effect. They knew how wrong they were then. And they put it into effect. And pretty soon, they found out that they weren't getting far with the theatre, and the store was hurting because they weren't advertising; so they came back again.

CT: When was this?

CF: It was about somewhere, 1926, 1927; something along there. Between 1925 and 1927, something like that.

CT: Did you ever think that it might have hurt the paper, before you wrote it?

CF: I thought it would get a reaction on it, see. We worded it in such a way---I mean, because every time before, we had mentioned this was happening. Here's another train accident. And we had mentioned. And we said, "Something's going to happen one of these days." Well, this was three within two months. And they were lucky on every one of 'em that nobody was hurt. But he [Moler], it just hit him on a bad day.

CT: So you just felt it was the right thing to do?

CF: Yeah. I thought we had to do something. Because why the hell should they have the right to cross the road, when everything was against it. And as I say, we knew that they came across without being flagged. Because in one of the accidents that happened, the guy said, "Hell, no. I just ran into him; he didn't run into me. He came out of the cane field and he was across the road when I banged him."

CT: When you first started as editor, and in the few years after that, what was your attitude as an editor? Like in this case, you were very concerned about the public safety. What did you see the role of a small town newspaper as being?
CF: Well, I saw it as a means to good government. That was one thing. And we were lucky in those days. We had five top supervisors. And they ran it like a business. And Kauai was the best—Charlie Rice had something to do with it. You don't know him at all, do you? He was the political boss. Politically, he ran the island with an iron hand. You get in wrong with Charlie once, you were—I got in wrong with him. I got in wrong with this thing, see. He was in on this too. Because he was the managing director of AmFac [American Factors] plantations on Kauai. And he may have been the guy that put Moler up to it; I don't know.

They had five men on that Board of Supervisors, and the office manager of Lihue Plantation was the chairman of the board. The manager of Kauai Electric Company was from Hanalei. The old Kauai Electric. They had a power plant out there. He lived out there and the power plant was there. He worked for McBryde Sugar Company. He was a Hanalei man. Walter McBryde who was manager of Kauai Pineapple Company, he was a member. Eric Knudsen, who was retired, he was the Waimea one. And there was always a Portuguese or a Hawaiian from Kapaa. And they were generally pretty good. Manuel Aguiar was one; he was damn good. And they ran a good, tight ship. And they ran it like a business. As far as the chairman was concerned, it was a business. They never had a deficit, they never had high taxes, they always lived within their budget, and they knew what their budget was.

After that fellow from Hanalei quit, then they started electing Hawaiians over there. Well, Hawaiians wanted more money; they always wanted more money for the place. To do this and to do that. Road jobs and stuff like that. And they had the chairman Henry Wishard to buck. He would just ask 'em, "Where's the money?" Because he'd fix up the budget beforehand. Where that was going to go and everything else like that, and then he'd bring it in to them. He was the budget officer, too.

But it was a well run county. They built roads out of current funds—[usually] they didn't sell bonds—but they did sell bonds. Where they got to where a job was an expensive job, and they couldn't do two of 'em in a year, and it had to be done, then they'd sell the bonds. Otherwise, they'd take it out of revenue. That was the big jackpot for the supervisors because they had the battle then to get the road jobs in their districts. And it was well run. I think we didn't have any problems at that time.

CT: You say you thought a small town newspaper was to encourage good government; how did that happen? What do you mean by that?

CF: Well, by showing up the phonies. And somebody that was stupid or trying to pull a fast one, just say what he's doing. And editorially, name names and do things with 'em. We did that. Years ago [1960's], we had a fellow named Raymond Aki. He was elected mayor there. Well, he was going to get rich on us, see. And he brought in a guy from Honolulu to find out ways to make money on 'em.
Just to tell you how to tell you how his mind worked, just to show you, he ran against Tony Baptiste for the mayor— it wasn't mayor, it was chairman of the board— he ran against 'em for mayor. And Tony had a piece of land that he had rented from the State, up in Wailua Valley. And he tried to get a lease on it and it was tied up somewhere. With the Land Department. And the Land Department couldn't lease it to 'em until they cleared other things like that. So Aki went around bragging, "Look what Tony's doing with his job? He gets the State to give 'em a piece of land." You see what I mean?

And Tony would have to try to explain. "Hell no, I want to get a lease if I can get it." That's the sort of stuff Aki did.

So I remember, I said to him, "Gee Raymond, you know this is phony as a seven dollar bill."

And he said, "Sure it is. But I'm getting a lot of static out of it. That's all I'm interested in."

I said to myself, "God damn you, I'm going to keep my eye on you." And boy, did we keep it on 'em. It took us six years to beat 'em. We beat 'em on his third term. It took six years. He built quite a machine.

Then he left Kauai and he went to Honolulu when he got beaten. And somebody said, "When you coming back?"

And he says, "When that son of a bitch Charlie Fern's dead, I'll come back."

I mean that was the sort of watchdog we tried to play.

CT: Even back, when you first started, did you feel that...

CF: At first, we didn't have it too much. But we were looking for things. Sometimes we'd have to get after the board to do something. But they did a damned good— they built schools. In those days, the County built the schools; now, the State builds them. The County built the school, and they built damned good schools.

CT: Back in the early 1920's, when you started, what about political endorsement? How was that arrived at?

CF: If you had Charlie Rice behind you, you were elected. That was it. Once in a while, two or three guys have run against Charlie. I mean Charlie wouldn't endorse 'em. And they ran anyway, and they got elected. We had three legislators, three Housemen— there were four Housemen in those days— and two Senators. And Charlie would elect both Senators and three of the Representatives. But every once in a while, some guy with some power would come along; he'd run against Charlie. And he'd say, "Send somebody down there that doesn't owe anything to Charlie Rice." And they'd get elected.
CT: In 1924, you endorsed Philip Rice.

CF: Oh yeah. For Congress.

CT: Who made--did you just make that determination, or did you talk with Mr. Hopper, or....

CF: Philip was running against another fellow, Hawaiian. And he was unknown, as far as I was concerned. And he beat Philip.

Charlie ran the legislature, too. I forgot to tell you that. He was Chairman of the Ways and Means in the Senate. And he didn't want to be President of the Senate. He was Chairman of Ways and Means. And he was a damned good one. So he made a lot of enemies on the other islands, when he was chairman of that. That hurt Philip like hell on the other islands. Philip got a good vote, but the Hawaiian beat 'em. But a lot of guys voted against him because he was Charlie's brother. Fellows that tangled with Charlie in the Legislature; tangled not as members but wanted something out of the Legislature. And Charlie killed whatever they wanted.

He kept the Territory solvent, I'll say that for him. Everybody said if he put as much time in the plantation he owned-they had a little plantation over in Kipu, you know where that is? They were in sugar in those days--if he had run that the way he ran the County, he'd have made plenty of money. But he didn't. He didn't give a damn about that. He wanted to be governor in the worst way. He thought he had it in 1932, when Roosevelt was elected. He was a Republican. There was a fight between two Democrats. And he was working like hell to be the compromise man. They got a compromise, but it was a lawyer in Honolulu who had just come in from the Mainland.

We can come back to this later, if you want.

CT: Yeah. Why don't we...

CF: ...take a blow, eh?

CT: Yeah. For today.

(Taping stops, then resumes)

CT: Okay, we stopped taping and we starting again; and Mr. Fern is going to tell us a story about Charlie Rice.

CF: This is just a story to show you how fast Charlie Rice's mind worked, and how politically minded he was. Back in the 1920's, Governor Judd was governor and he went out when Roosevelt came in. So it was in 1928, somewhere along like that. In those days, all the territorial revenues came from real property taxes. That was the main source. Today, the counties have it. It's main for the counties. But in those days, the territory's main source of
revenue was real property taxes. They had other revenue measures too, but that was the real source.

And at somewhere or another, two vice presidents--one, a vice president of the Bank of Bishop in those days. It's First Hawaiian now. And Bank of Hawaii is the other one. They got together and they thought they ought to scheme by which they could keep real property taxes down. The taxes were collected twice a year; once in May and once in November. Along about September and October, the Territory would run out of cash. It had money coming in but it hadn't come in yet on account of the late tax. So they would run out of cash. So to finance their situation, they would go to the two banks and tell them, "We want to write warrants on you. And you cash 'em and then we'll pay you the going rate of interest; whatever is on it." So they were liquid, that kept them liquid. And it was done for years because it was just one of those things; they weren't overspending their budget but the cash flow wasn't fast enough. So they decided then, that the thing that they would do--well, these two fellows, they went to Governor Judd and said, "If you don't do something about reducing real property taxes, we are going to fix it up. We are not going to acknowledge, accept your warrants."

Well, you could see what it would do to the Territory. They couldn't even write a bum check. So Judd called in his attorney general. This attorney general told me this story himself. He called him in and says, "What will we do? Any way to get around this thing?"

And the attorney general says, "I don't know. I can't see how we can beat it." But he says, "Wait a minute. Charlie Rice is down from Kauai. He's in town. Let's get him in on it and see what he can do."

So they got him in. Charlie came in and they outlined the thing to 'em. And he sat there and he thought four or five minutes, something like that. He says, "Okay, I've got the answer to this thing. Tomorrow morning, you get a detail of the National Guard and you get a truck, and you and your treasurer go down to the Bank of Hawaii and Bank of Bishop and draw out all the other cash you have in there. You have a lot of bond money in there. And those are things that are not in the general budget, that are stipulated. You still got current funds; you've got funds in there that you can't use for operations. You pull every nickel you've got out of that banks and bring it up and put it in the treasurer's office and put it in the treasurer's vault and leave an armed guard sitting here all night with it. Don't take any chance of losing it. You go down with a truck and get all that cash and put it in."

Which they did. Now remember, you have to remember, this was back in the 1920's. There were no airplanes flying between here and the coast. There was no air mail. The boats came once or twice a week. But it took a week to get down here from the coast. So the banks saw what was happening. They realized they were out on a
limb—they were low on cash. See, there wasn't a damned thing that they could do about it. They were the ones that weren't going any place. Then they went to their two presidents. They had done this on their own, see. So the two presidents said to Charlie, "Call off your dogs. We'll take your warrants."

And this fellow told me, "It just shows you how his mind works, as far as politics and the public was concerned." They had 'em over a barrel, you see. Because that money, if that word got around, that the Territory had taken their money out of those two—they'd have been a rush on the damn banks. It had pulled their cash flow way down anyway, see. For taking out this bond money. "Take everything you have out of there. All your bond funds and everything that you had in there," see. They would have had little money remaining, see. And that's the way his mind worked.

CT: And this is 1922?

CF: I would say it was about 1927, 1928; somewhere around there. It was after 1928 because Farrington was governor up to 1928. Then Judd followed him, so it was 1928 or 1929. Or 1930.

They made money out of it [off the warrants]. They charged them interest for whatever they used. And of course, that was the expense of doing business, as far as the Territory was concerned. In those days, they couldn't transfer bond funds. And they couldn't transfer from one account to another. Now, they can use bond funds that have not been allocated. They sell some bonds and they have 'em, they're ready to go. They can use that. But they have to pay it back right away, you see.

END OF INTERVIEW
Tape No. 5-48-2-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Charles Fern (CF)

December 28, 1978

Honolulu, Oahu

BY: Chad Taniguchi (CT)

CT: This is an interview with Charlie Fern at the Arcadia. Today is December 28, 1978.

CF: [Talking about Pablo Manlapit] But I think if the plantation had bought him off he would have given everything up. This is just my own analysis of him. I think he was in it for what was in it for him. He used the Filipinos, pretty much, from that sense.

I think he was an attorney. Or he was a half-baked attorney. He was a district court attorney maybe. I think he had some legal training.

CT: Before we talk about the strike, I just wanted to go back to last week's interview, when you were talking about the paper. When you first started on the Garden Island. One of the questions I wanted to ask but didn't have a chance to was, in 1924 or thereabouts, about how many hours per week were you putting in working on the paper?

CF: In 1924, I was working a 44 hour week. That was before the 40 hour...let's see. I think, yeah, we worked five days a week and then half a day Saturday. It was a 44---same as the plantations. Well, I think they quit about 3:00 in the afternoon, instead of half past four [4:30]. I think they were working a 50 hour week. Something like that. More than that, I guess. In the fields, they worked a 10-hour day. And in the mill, they worked a 12-hour day.

CT: How about you, as a newspaper man?

CF: I would say I didn't have....I went out and played golf on Wednesdays, and things like that. And then, I worked nights, so if I had to go to a meeting, I went to a meeting at night. So I just worked when I had to work. That was all there was to it. My schedule was supposedly a 44-hour week.

But like election time, I would be working 60 hours a week. I'd go cover the meetings, you know. That was in the days when they used
to have rallies. You're not old enough to know that. They have 'em now, but they weren't like they were in those days. Those days, they were the entertainment of the week. And they turned out—they always went into Lihue and Kapaa on Saturday nights. There were no Friday nights in those days. We all went to work on Saturdays, see. Friday night wasn't a holiday night. I think they ended up in Lihue at the general election on Monday night. And Kapaa on Saturday night. That was at the general. I think that's the way they worked it. The primary, I think they'd end up in Kapaa on the last night. And they'd get turnouts, 3,000 or 4,000 people. And they come out in their cars. All the plantation people would walk to it—didn't have cars. Because be right in the town. They'd all walk to it and they'd make a big ring with the cars, and the audience would sit down or stand up, or whatever it was.

Most every candidate had his own trio. They would sing songs before he went on and play his piece when he came up, and everything else like that. It's supposed to be his number, whatever it was. Really, they were something. They were the big thing of the year, as far as interest is concerned. Because these fellows would all get after each other. They'd tear after each other. Henriques was a great one for that. Are you old enough to remember him?

CT: Manuel Henriques?

CF: Yeah, he was one. All the others before him—Democrats, particularly. Because in those days, the Democrats never got anywhere. They ran I think anything that they could get out of it, and they couldn't be Republicans. They were too radical.

CT: What do you mean? They would be attacking each other on the same platform?

CF: Yeah, they attacked Republicans. And in the primaries, there'd be two guys running for the Democratic nomination for Chairman of the Board. They would fight like hell, too, in the primary. Opposed each other, see. Well, there wasn't too much in the Republican side. But after the Democrats got in, well, then there's the Democrats fighting Democrats, pretty much. Like among the Republicans they ran by districts. The Board of Supervisors, there was one man from each district. There were five districts. Then the Board elected its own chairman. The chairman was not elected outright as chairman. And there was the office manager for Lihue Plantation who was always the chairman. And Kauai was a good, strong county. They were never in debt, they always had money, they weren't over-bonded. They went along and paid for some of their road paving. They were still paving roads, in 1920. That's only 15 years after territory. In 1905, counties were set up. We got territorial citizens in 1898. It took 'em about seven years to get a governor.

And I don't know when they had the Legislature. I think it was
earlier. I think they had a Territorial Legislature but they didn't have the county government. Because the territorial government ran everything until they got the counties organized. And the first counties were organized in the election of 1904. And 1905, they began going.

CT: So anyway, you covered a lot of election rallies?

CF: Yeah, like I would go to chamber meetings, important public hearings, and stuff like that. I covered everything. I told you, I got the sports pretty well written outside, although I'd cover one ball game myself most of the time. And after a while, I got out and started umpiring, see. In the leagues.

CT: Well, that's what I was kind of asking you; whether you could do your job on 44 hours a week, or whether you had to really to do a lot of extra stuff.

CF: No. Because I had to write it, and then I had to make up the paper and do all that. No, I couldn't do it on a 44-hour week. That was part of the job.

CT: On your printing day, which was Tuesday, when did you start printing?

CF: We tried to start printing on Monday. In those days, we ran an average of eight pages a week. Maybe 10 or 12. We'd always try to get what we call the "first run off," or the first run started---in the old days, we only ran two pages at a time. Yeah, and then we'd turn those two over and back 'em up. Later, we got a four-page press. That cut the press runs down. We would try to get the first run off, the first eight pages off on Monday, if we could. It was pretty difficult because we had the job shop on Tuesday, and there was jobs in the job shop. And so we'd have to try to get as much copy in as we could beforehand, so that Monday they could start working on the first run.

CT: About how long would it take you, in total number of hours, to print the whole newspaper? In 1924.

CF: It depends on the number of pages we had, you see.

CT: Say, if it was a 10-page paper.

CF: Eight or ten, yeah. I was trying to figure. In the early days, we didn't get up to 10 or 12 until around holiday time, something like that. I'd have to go back and look and see. It would be a good idea for me to go back and look and see what we did have.

CT: I was looking at it. You had between 8 and 12. Usually, it was 10, I think.

CF: Ten would be a normal paper. Sometimes, if low advertising period, why we'd go back down to eight.
CT: Do you remember about how long it took you to run all the pages?

CF: I think we were running about 3,000 or 4,000. And I think it would take us a couple of hours. I don't think we did over 1,500 an hour.

CT: How about your addressing? Was that done by hand, or did you have a machine?

CF: That was done by a little thing like this. [Makes a repetitive, stamping motion.] It was an addressograph. The type was in this trough, and it was like a rubber stamp effect. You'd put the paper in and it would move up one on every one. Just put the head of the paper in and pound it down and it'll print it. That was all done by hand. It was just a little addressograph principle, you might say. By hand.

CT: And what time was your deadline for the mail on Tuesday night?

CF: Tuesday night, we didn't worry about anything about the mail because we could still get it in at 10 o'clock at night and they would go the next morning. It wasn't delivered until the next morning. Although, if we got out early, it went to the newsstands and things like that. And Lihue got theirs early. If we get into Lihue before closing time, they'd put it out. But the rest of 'em had to wait till the next morning. It was a Wednesday paper, as far as the others were concerned. Because it went in the mail to 'em. It was all mail, in those days. We didn't have carriers at all. We didn't get into carriers until....I think it was after the war [World War II]. I think we changed after the war, to carriers.

CT: So 10 o'clock Tuesday night was your mailing deadline?

CF: Well, we tried to get out if we could, at the regular time.

CT: What was the regular time?

CF: Four o'clock. But generally, the pressmen and one printer would stay. And then, the mail gang, they came just on Tuesdays. They were women. They just ran it on Tuesday. They'd address it and bundle it. At first, though, we had everybody in the shop doing it. And they would all stay. But we generally make it.... I'd say 4 o'clock was a good deadline for us. Most of the time, we made it at 4.

CT: If you had to communicate with someone on Oahu regarding certain information, how would you do that?

CF: Well, until the phones came in we had to do it by radio. Radio telegraph.

CT: Was this available to you?
CF: It was available to us from 8 to 5. They shut down at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Or we could wake up the radio. If it's very important, why you could call the radio operator on the phone. He'd come down and open up because Honolulu was always open. That was open, but the outside islands were [not]. I don't know whether Hawaii had more. And on Oahu, mostly it was used just for telegrams.

CT: I spent about four hours reading the Garden Island, in 1924, and looking over the old stories that you had written. It was a very interesting paper. I learned a lot about Kauai at that time. I just wanted to ask you, based on what I read, I know it may be difficult to recall specific stories, but I'll just ask you and if you remember then please comment.

CF: Okay.

CT: In 1924, the first mention of a strike on Kauai appears in the Garden Island on July 22, 1924. And in that issue, there was a report that 48 Filipinos--Visayans--had struck at Lihue, another 40 at Koloa, and that at McBryde and Kekaha there was nobody striking. And I was wondering, who wrote that story, for one; and where was the information gotten from?

CF: I think I probably wrote it if it was in 1924. And we probably got it from the plantation. And you see, Manlapit's strike was a funny strike. He only got the Visayans to go out. You know, the Visayans, the Tagalogs and Ilocanos. The Ilocanos wouldn't go. They wouldn't buy it. They came in in just about the late 1920's from the Philippines. They were new and they were country boys from up in the country. But the Visayans had been in, they were a little more city---they were city-wise because Visaya is a pretty good island and has a pretty good size city. And the Tagalogs were from right around Manila, and they were Manila Filipinos. So they were a little sophisticated. But the Ilocanos weren't. And the Ilocanos were making more money than they ever made in their lives. In cash. And they were very thrifty. The Visayan and the Tagalogs, they were sports, see. They were the silk shirt boys during the high price of sugar. They liked to be flashy. And they spent their money. The Ilocano didn't. The Ilocano was thrifty like hell. He was a Scotchman, you see, of the clans. And so, when the strike came, they were new there and this was big money to them, and they weren't going to lose it. And so that's why you see 50 here and 40 there, and 50 or 60 there; it was just the Visayans particularly, I think, the Visayans. Because there weren't too many Tagalogs left. Most of the Tagalogs were going to the Mainland. But the Visayans, they were sports too, you see. The other boys were just--the Ilocanos--country boys. Just like they were out of Kauai going to New York, or something; or to California. That was a transition for them.

And so that's why it wasn't a wide strike. It didn't incapacitate, it didn't shut down the plantations. It crippled them a bit,
because they weren't getting the cane off as fast as they wanted to. But it wasn't a crippling strike.

CT: So to have 40 people out and 48 people....

CF: Yeah. Like if they had 40 people out in Lihue, did they? Well, there were 400 or more on the plantation. More than 400 workers. So they had a small percentage. And probably, in taking these Visayans out, they were more or less in the semi-skilled jobs too. Maybe they worked in the fields, but if they were they had contracts and things like that. But the Ilocano, he was just the day laborer. And he would be getting contracts and things like that, and this was his opportunity. They weren't going to jeopardize. That's why the turnout was so small. If the island had been Visayan, it'd all gone out because they'd just threaten 'em. They were going in and threaten them. But they couldn't threaten the Ilocanos because there were more of 'em anyway. At that time, they were getting so there were more Ilocanos on the plantation.

CT: You mentioned they would threaten them. How would this happen?

CF: For instance, the thing that caused the strike was---you read that story, didn't you? About picking up the two guys that were down there buying. They would try to threaten to beat 'em or they'd go in with a knife and tell 'em, "This is what I'm going to give you," or....I mean, they were tough. But the Ilocanos sort of just ganged up on 'em. In the sense that they knew they had their gang behind 'em and if they came in there there'd be knives flying too. The Ilocanos not so inclined toward the knife as the Visayan. The Visayan was very quick tempered and he had his knife out. The Ilocano was not belligerent at all. They were a different people.

Supposedly, part Chinese. A Chinese pirate is supposed to have planned to attack Manila or the Philippines back in the early days---I don't know when; maybe in about 1100 or 1200, or something like that, somewhere along in that time. And he had quite a fleet, see. And he came in and he was shipwrecked off [the] Ilocos provinces. And they got ashore there and they stayed there. And lived there, and married the women, and raised kids. So there's quite a bit of Chinese blood in that area. I don't know whether they gave 'em the thriftiness or what; where that came from, whether they got that from the Chinese or not. But they were really Scotch, as far as money was concerned. The [Visayan], if he'd get $5 in the pocket, it'd go out like that. The Ilocano, he'd be looking someplace to make it $6.

CT: In that same article on July 22, you mentioned one meeting at which 150 men were present, and 50 of them were laborers and the others were not. The article mentions that the others were the ones that were more enthusiastic about the strike. And I was wondering if....

CF: I don't remember that instance. There were about 50 laborers
and about 100 non-laborers, non-plantation people, or what were they?

CT: Non-plantation Filipinos.

CF: I wonder what the hell they were doing in there. I don't know. I'd have to read that over again and try to recall it. Well, it may have been again, the Visayans off the plantations were trying to get 'em to go. They got out pretty much, they got off the plantations, too. They didn't like field work, see.

CT: What kind of jobs would they get?

CF: They'd probably get store jobs and things like that. They'd probably be working in the stores, and things that way.

CT: What kinds of jobs would there be in the store for them?

CF: Well, they'd be clerks and things like that. Like Lihue Store always had several, a number of Filipinos working there, as well as they had mostly Japanese. But there'd always be some Filipinos in it. But some of 'em went into business for themselves. But the Visayan didn't do it too much. Some of 'em did, but very few.

CT: As a store clerk, would they be making more?

CF: They'd be making more. Yeah. They'd have to have a little education too, you see, to be able to handle money and things like that.

CT: In July 29, one week later, the report in the Garden Island said that there were 600 strikers supposedly out. But this was discounted by Lihue and Koloa Plantations. And that Frank Cook, the health inspector, estimated that there were 300 men and 200 women and children out.

CF: They were living off the plantation?

CT: Yeah. And [the article says] this many people was not enough to cripple the plantation.

CF: No. Because I'm trying to figure how many Lihue Plantation---trying to figure, in those days, there must have been something like 10,000 people on the plantations. See, it was all hand work in those days. So there must have been---of course, and the Japanese didn't go at all. And the percentage of Japanese [to Filipinos], I think, would be about 50/50 in those days.

CT: Do you know if the plantations had an estimate? Had they figured out how many workers going on strike would have crippled them?

CF: As I say, it all depends where they were working, what they were doing. See, if they could get the mill to shut down they'd be fine. If they can get the mill out. But the mill was mostly
Japanese because those were the better jobs, and they'd been there longer. So the Filipinos were mostly in field work. A lot of the hapai ko--you know what that is, it's the cane loading--that was mostly Japanese. Because that's where the money was to be made under contract. Those were the hard working jobs where they made their money. That's where the money was, comparatively. Frankly, I don't think that they could have crippled 'em. I don't think they could have forced them to shut down. If every Filipino went out.

CT: If every Filipino or every Visayan?

CF: I think they could have still kept going with the Japanese field hands they had because, as I say, the Japanese were---if they worked in the field they had planting contracts. You know what they were? They took care of the fields and then they got so much a ton, for whatever they grew. They got a basic wage of $1 a day. That's where the $1 a day comes from. And too, they had a drawing account of $1 a day. That they got paid. And on a planting contract, they didn't get paid until the thing was harvested. Then they got one big lump sum. Of course, the man that was working on piece work, like the cane loader and the cane cutters, they got their money every month. The planting contractor, he had to wait for two years. Supposedly, they got a big bonus at the end.

CT: But he was able to go on credit, in the mean time?

CF: He got an advance of $1 a day, I think. Towards his contract, you see. He would get $30 a month or $40 a month, or whatever it was they decided how much they would give 'em. If it was one of their good men they'd give 'em $50 or $60 a month because he'd earn it. The good men could draw just about what they wanted.

There'd generally be a hui too, you see. There'd be three or four of 'em and they'd take big area. There'd be three or four of 'em doing all the work that's required. All the irrigating and all the cultivating, and all the weeding, and things like that. They'd do it themselves. Then they'd split it four ways.

CT: In that July 29 issue, an article said that Manlapit was expected to be coming in from Honolulu, but that he was apparently not one of the passengers on the Kilauea that came in that day. At that time, did they have a list of passengers?

CF: Oh yes. They didn't have a list of steerage. In steerage, you went down and you slept---if it wasn't a big crowd, you slept in that one big room down below decks. You slept there. And then, if there's a big crowd, they'd give you a mattress and you sleep out on deck on it. That's when they're really full.

Then they had cabins. It cost $11 per person to go to Honolulu. Well, they had rooms down about $7 or $8, but the good rooms were the rooms on deck, $11. Then, the rooms below that were $7 or $8.
Then steerage, I think, was $4 or $5. And steerage, there's one big room and there'd be several bunks, as I recall. Then, if the boat was so crowded, they were all taken, then they'd give you a mattress and you sleep on deck. There were generally two decks.

CT: So at that time, how did you determine whether Pablo Manlapit was on the ship or not?

CF: If he came as a first class passenger, when the boat came in, we always pick up the passenger list the minute it came in for news. See who was coming up, who was up here, and who was down on a trip, or who went to a wedding, or anything else like that. We did it both ways. We got the outgoing passenger list before it left, then we get the incoming passenger list.

CT: So you wouldn't go down to the dock and look for people?

CF: Well, we did. That's why we used Sidelines and---I told you about George Aguiar, didn't I? Remember, about meeting the boats and writing a column on it? Sidelines, was he working in your day?

CT: Kuraoka? Yeah.

CF: Yeah. Well, that's how he started; he'd meet the boat when it came in and he'd have a passenger list. Go right aboard and get a passenger list. And then he'd get around and grab 'em and ask them why they went down and stuff like that. Get a little story out. And then, when they sailed, he'd get the passenger list too again. Then he'd see them there, and he'd interview 'em and ask 'em where they were going. He'd write a little column on what they were doing, why they were traveling and things like that. And so we used it that way, too.

CT: But in 1924?

CF: 1924, no, we didn't have anybody do it. We'd get the passenger list. Somebody'd go down first thing. We'd send somebody down or I'd go down and see the purser on my way to work. And get the passenger list from 'em. The next morning, I'd get it from the Ahukini Railroad that was there. They handled the boats, you see; for inter-island. I'd get it from there. Shige Miyoshi used to handle it. You know him? You know his brother, principal of Kauai High. Well, Shige worked for Ahukini Railroad. Yeah, they handled 'em both. I think they did. I think they handled both the Matson boats that came in too. But they only came in with freight, they didn't come in with passengers.

CT: You were speaking earlier, before we turned the tape recorder on, that you knew Pablo Manlapit fairly well...

CF: You see, he'd been up there organizing. And I went to talk to 'em.

CT: When was this?
CF: This was in 1923 or 1924. I've forgotten now. It was before the strike. He was around there trying to organize. He had a Filipino strike going on Hawaii or Maui or Oahu; I don't know. There was a Filipino strike along in that period too. The Japanese had a big strike. I think they had one, I think in 1915, or something like that. They had a big one. The Japanese walked out. On Oahu only. And when the hell was that?

CT: That was 1920.

CF: 1920, that's right. But they had one earlier too. They had one somewhere around 1915, something like that. That was the first time the Japanese ever really moved.

[Taping stops, then resumes.]

CT: I was asking you about how you knew, how you got to know Pablo Manlapit.

CF: I met him through interviewing him during the strike. After the strike, he came up to Kauai. I don't know what he had, some kind of a proposition of some kind. He was doing something for the Filipinos. I know that I talked to him about that. And he had a Filipino friend--I've forgotten who it was--and his friend brought him into a group of us chewing the rag one night at one of the fellow's houses. K. M. Ahana, do you know who he is? He was the County Auditor then. It was his place. And a fellow named Gokan that used to be office manager for the Garden Island Motors. And we were over in their place having a drink. We all worked together; Gokan worked right next door to us and his brother worked for me.

And K. M. came in and we went over to Kazu's house. He had a house behind the service station there. The one next to the theatre, that service station. His home was behind there. We went over to have a drink and this Filipino brought Manlapit in there. And so I had quite a chance to talk to him, you see. As I said, I'd met him before the strike, and I talked to him during the strike, trying to find out what was going on. But he wasn't very communicative, because I represented the establishment.

CT: Did he see you that way?

CF: He did, then. But not afterwards. We got to be quite friendly. He was working on some labor problems then; I'd forgotten what they were. I was kidding him, saying, "Well, all the plantations have to do is just give you $5,000 and you'd call it off." And he laughed. He had quite a personality.

CT: How would you describe it?

CF: Well, he was very aggressive; I'll say that. He was out after things. I think he was out after a fast buck, that was what he was after. And he was still trying. And of course, he had some sort
of a law practice. It might have been—in those days, we had
district court lawyers. They could only practice in the district
courts. The misdemeanor cases. Then we had full-fledged lawyers
who practice in the circuit courts. And practice in both courts.
I think, as I recall, he was a district court attorney.

CT: How was that evident to you, that he was out for a fast buck?

CF: Well, by primarily, what he was trying to get. It was fairly
obvious that he wasn't working for the people. I mean, that wasn't
his main objective. He was working for the people, all right, but
he was trying to find out where the bucks were. I think they
bought him off a couple of times, I don't know. I'm not sure of
that. I think when he got a little belligerent sometimes, and they
weren't looking for trouble, well, they paid him off.

But he didn't have the Ilocanos. If he'd have had the Ilocanos the
way he had the Visayans, he could have. But he couldn't have shut
'em down because I think there's still enough Japanese on the
plantation. There was plenty of Japanese in those days, with
cultivating contracts in the field work. The field work was being
done. And most of the cane cutting was done by Filipinos. And
most of the loading was done by the Japanese because that's where
the money was.

CT: You said you tried to interview him couple times during the strike
and when he was trying to organize...

CF: Yeah, I'd try to find out what it was all about. I suspected his
motives but what was he trying to get? And he was trying to get
more money, of course. That was his main objective. It was
pretty—I don't know, it was just pretty obvious that he didn't
have much possibility because he wasn't stopping work. The work,
the plantations were going on. They were going on slower, they
were getting their crop off slower. But that was the main problem
they had.

CT: You said he was pretty uncommunicative.

CF: Well, in some ways he wasn't. He wasn't very communicative during
the strike. I talked to him afterwards, and of course, as far as
he was concerned for me, he was working for the Filipinos. But at
the same time, I knew that he was also working a hell of a lot
harder for Manlapit.

CT: That puzzles me a little, because I'm not familiar with the situa-
tion back then. But how would a guy like Manlapit make some money
for himself?

CF: As I say, I think he made it in court. I think he made it as a
lawyer. But I mean, why, he'd take a payoff, see, and call off the
strike. He'd come in a tell 'em, "Well, some of the boys coming in
kicking to me about low wages and stuff like that, and they want me
to get a strike together." I think he got paid off. Plenty of times.

I think they finally got tired of paying him off. So they said, "All right, go call your strike." And it was a flop. Of course, the riot ended everything, as far as that was concerned. I don't think Manlapit had much authority after that. I can't remember him; I don't know what he did. He was still working, I think, at that time, as a district court lawyer. And he had a pretty good practice in that because all the Filipinos would--particularly on Oahu, you see.

CT: I was just reading your paper again, and on August 5, the next week, I noticed that a sanitary code was printed in the paper. I suppose that was commissioned by the County.

CF: The Territory.

CT: It ran for about four or five pages.

CF: That was a Territory matter, it wasn't a county matter. This fellow Cook that I told you about, sanitary inspector, he worked for the Territory. He didn't work for the county.

CT: The Territory would be the one to pay for...

CF: The Territory was the one that was going to put this thing into force. What was the reason for it? Did it say, or what?

CT: No, it just listed the sanitary code.

CF: Uh huh. I guess, that was in July, it wasn't too far after legislature. It just happened, I don't know. I don't think it had anything to do with the strike at all.

CT: In other sections of the paper it mentions different kinds of violations of the sanitary code. Do you remember what kind of violations they were?

CF: I haven't the faintest idea.

CT: I was just wondering....maybe lack of toilets, or something?

CF: I don't know. Everything was outdoor toilets in those days. Practically everybody had 'em. Except the homes. All the camps had 'em.

CT: Another article in that August 5 paper mentions that seven leaders among the Filipinos were opposing the strike. Four of them were Visayans and three of them were Ilocano. I just wondered whether you happened to remember who?

CF: It didn't mention any names?
CT: No.

CF: I don't know who. I haven't the faintest idea who was the---I know the Ilocanos were. I'm surprised that there were any Visayans against it. Well, they were probably like Filipino ministers and things like that. And the Filipino businessmen. We had Filipino tailors and things like that, in those days.

CT: Why would those people be more against the strike?

CF: Because they didn't want everything to shut down. If the plantation shut down, their business shut down. I think their ulterior motive was it would hurt their business too.

CT: The next week, there's an article that says Reverend C. C. Cortezan was against the strike.

CF: I was thinking of him when you said it. When I said, "ministers." He was a Visayan.

CT: How did he try to campaign against the strike, or what things did he do?

CF: Well, I think he talked to the Filipinos. He had a Filipino church, you see. And I think he talked to them. Yeah, I think he had several Filipino churches. He rode a sort of a circuit on it. I know he ended up in Koloa. And I think he had two or three churches. You see, they were Protestant churches, they weren't Catholic churches. Of course, he didn't have too much clientele.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

CF: [Speaking of Reverend Cortezan]...as far as politics are concerned. But he had quite a standing. Particularly among the Visayans, because he was a Visayan. And his wife had quite a bit more. She was a nurse, I think. I think she worked for the Board of Health. She's still alive.

CT: We've spoken to her. She's very energetic.

CF: Yeah, yeah. She is.

CT: She's like you.

CF: (Laughs) No, I'm not energetic at all. I just saw her within the last month or so.

CT: On August 26, there was a riot threatened at Kapaa, when the strikers caught a couple employees from Makee. And then the police went there to get out and.....
CF: The police ran like hell, too. I didn't say anything about that, did I?

CT: No. You said one policeman stumbled and fired his gun.

CF: Yeah. And the rest of them, they took off. They thought somebody was shooting at them. That was the funniest thing that ever happened. I heard about it, and I went out there afterwards. They all were covering up. But a few truthful ones said, "We were all standing up there, marching in when that shot went." As I recall, the shot went out on the flank someplace. You see what I mean? The bulk of them didn't know what happened. (Laughs) They didn't fire back or anything. They just hightailed it.

CT: So you remember that one?

CF: Yeah, I remember that one very well.

CT: You had a lot of night assignments, then?

CF: That was a good one. I remember, they told me that the deputy sheriff was the fastest one in the crowd. And he was the oldest.

CT: The article goes on to say that Sheriff Rice, he had rushed six cars of policemen to the scene.

CF: That's where, at Kapaa?

CT: Yeah.

CF: See, nothing really happened. There was nothing there. The strikers didn't do a damn thing. See what I mean? Except laugh, maybe. But there was no evidence of resistance or anything among them at all. Another point in that--I don't know if it's in that story or not--I think they didn't have anybody. It was a rumor that they had somebody. And it developed they didn't have anybody. See what I mean? That was it, that's the way I remember it.

The story started, they were holding two people. This was before the Hanapepe one. The story was that they were holding 'em. And yet, when they really got into 'em, came back and recovered after their rout, they found out that they weren't holding anybody. Of course, I don't think they admitted until afterwards that it was somebody else's gun that went off.

CT: At that time, the article says that the strikers claimed that those people who were being held were spies.

CF: I don't know. I've forgotten that. They were spies, eh?

CT: Well, the strikers said that they were spies. Would you put any account into that?
CF: I don't know. I don't think so. Were they Ilocanos, were they? Did it say what they were?

CT: I can't remember. They were Filipinos, but I don't know whether they were Ilocanos.

CF: I don't remember. As I recall it...maybe they had two people. I was under the impression that when it was all over, that they didn't have anybody. I don't know where I got that. But maybe they had two people.

CT: In that same article, there was a notice that a man was arrested for having a club up his sleeve. Arrested for having a concealed weapon. And then, he was put into jail. His bail was set at $10, but they couldn't raise the $10 until a man named Yoshimura--Japanese--put up the bail. And there's other instances of Japanese providing some food for the strikers, stuff like that. Did they kind of...

CF: They were sympathetic, I think.

CT: Did this sympathy, as far as you know, worry the plantation people?

CF: I don't know. I guess they did. I think this Yoshimura, I think that's Dr. Yoshimura's father. He ran a little store over there, I think. These people probably were clients of his. The fellow was one of his customers, see. So he helped him out. I don't remember the incident, but I'm just assuming that. Yoshimura's father, I think, ran a store.

Now, there's another Dr. Yoshimura, that's the opthalmologist. The son is one, too. But this is his grandfather. His grandfather ran the store.

CT: I was just wondering if you knew the people in the haole community pretty well.

CF: Yeah.

CT: What was their reaction towards Japanese being sympathetic and giving food and stuff.

CF: Frankly, I don't remember any friction on that. It might have been that there---I think there were some that were. But I don't think the Japanese wanted much of Manlapit. I think that was their problem. I don't think they wanted much of him. I don't think they gave him much. I'd better be careful for libel here.

CT: No, no. I was just wondering. Since, I feel, that as an editor, you probably got around to talk to a lot of different people, and you sort of had probably more extensive knowledge than most people of what was going on. What people were thinking. That's why, I was just wondering.
CF: I don't recall that....I think the Japanese community was sympathetic but for the Filipinos, you see. They'd like to see 'em get it and everything, but I don't think too many of 'em placed much confidence in Manlapit being able to get it.

CT: It was more their helping the Filipinos.

CF: Yeah. They were just locals, you see. And I think, I'm sure in this case here, this $10, that he was a customer. Or a friend or something. But I think it was a good customer.

CT: Last time, you described to me about when you first heard of the shooting and stuff. Can you....

CF: Let me get my wife. Can we postpone it?

CT: Okay. Do it another time?

CF: Yeah, sure.

END OF INTERVIEW
Tape No. 5-51-3-79

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Charles Fern (CF)

May 16, 1979

Honolulu, Oahu

BY: Chad Taniguchi (CT)

CT: This is a follow-up interview with Charley Fern at the Arcadia. Today is May 16, 1979.

Mr. Fern, could you tell me about the day of the fight in Hanapepe, and where you were and how you actually got there?

CF: When the fight started, incident started, Manlapit had a strike on, on part of the plantations on the west side, on both sides. And he had a camp in Hanapepe where he kept them, the women and children, the families and everything, because the minute they went on strike they were off the plantations, see. He had taken an old Japanese schoolhouse there and made it into a sort of a bunk house. And he was keeping them there and he was feeding them.

There were mostly Visayans in this strike. Manlapit was a Visayan. The Ilocanos did not go out. They weren't impressed by Manlapit and they didn't go out. They stayed out [of the strike]. But through some unknown reason--nobody knows just why--two of the Ilocanos from Makaweli Plantation went down into Hanapepe to buy food, went shopping, or whatever it was. And they were picked up by the strikers and brought into their camp. Just why or how or what, we don't know. I don't know what the thing was.

Their families or friends became aware of it when they didn't show up. They found out where they were and they went to the policemen. And the police went and then got a habeas corpus order--you know what they are, to give up the bodies or whatever it is--they got a habeas corpus order from the court, and the county attorney went over to deliver it, gave it to the police. And the police then went down with it and demanded these two men.

Well, there was quite a pow-wow about it before they got 'em out. They finally got 'em out. When they came out, what isn't known, whether it was planned or whether it was accidental. I don't know how many people they were in the camp. There's talk about 300, including women and children. There was supposed to be somewhere around 50 or 100 men around that area.
And when they came out, they followed the police out. The police had left their cars—the school was right near the old bridge in Hanapepe, if you remember where it was. He went down the road, then, and they [strikers] kept pressing on 'em, pressing on 'em, and they got down to the point where the road turns up mauka, to go up Makaweli plantation, that area there. They got down about that place there and somewhere or somehow, the police told me afterwards that these fellas were right against them. And some of them had rifles. They all had rifles. I don't think any of 'em had any—some might have had pistols.

CT: You mean the police?

CF: The officers. Yeah, the officers had rifles. They'd gotten some goat hunters. They'd sworn them in as policemen for this strike, you see. And they were pressing against them. This is a police story, now—according to them, somebody stabbed one of the police officers. He was right up against them and stabbed him. And the man died of stabings. He wasn't shot. And what that started, who fired the first shot, nobody seems to know. But there was a return fire, according to the police, from the strikers. And this started all of them in a bunch.

When the men with the rifles were down there holding them off with their rifles in their hands, blocking them, they couldn't use [the rifles] in this crowd. And two of them worked their way out of this melee and got up on the top bank—the high bank about 10 or 15 or 20 feet above the road there—and began shooting into the crowd. This shooting was still going on, the other policemen with pistols were there, three police officers were killed—three or four, I think.

When the shooting started, some of them took off, too. Some of those Filipinos that were unarmed, they took off, see. And really, when you get down to it, when the police got through, I think they killed 19 Filipinos ....in this melee. When they began dropping, everybody began taking off. And some of the goat hunters were still taking potshots at 'em as they ran, too, if there wasn't anybody else around. So as I say, I think there were 19 Filipinos killed, and three or four policemen.

And Sheriff Crowell, who was in charge of the detail, he was stabbed, as I recall. He was stabbed in the melee, too, see. So then, the thing was to get help. Well, the policemen among themselves took their own people to the doctor's. Of course, there were others that were injured, but there were three killed. Three or four, I'm not sure. They took them to Makaweli Hospital. Then later, they came back and began taking Filipinos that were alive. Took them to the hospitals.

I was Lihue at the time. And there was a Chinese fella that ran a restaurant. I've forgotten his name, but he was quite a character.
And he called me on the phone and he began shouting. I couldn't understand a word he was saying. I said, "Wait a minute. Slow down, slow down."

And he says, "There's a big fight over here. The Filipinos and the police are fighting."

I said, "Come on, quit your kidding. Don't give me any of that stuff. What is it?"

He said, "Listen."

And I could hear the shots. And I said, "What's happening?"

"I don't know, but they're fighting up the road and there's all this shooting going on."

So I jumped in my car and went over there. And in those days, that was the days before the highway across the island. You had to go through Koloa. But there was a cane haul road up through the gap. And I took that over there, and I say I made it in 20 minutes. But I got over there and they were just taking the dead away when I got there. It took me about a half-hour to get over there. And they were still moving the dead out. These 19 dead, they piled them up and... so I took a look, there wasn't much doing there then, so I got in and saw Crowell. And Crowell, he wasn't badly hurt. He was stabbed but he wasn't badly hurt. It was just a flesh wound of some kind. And then, he told me the story of what had happened. He gave me the full account of it. And that was it. Nobody knows how it started, except that this one policeman was stabbed.

CT: This Chinese friend of yours, where was his restaurant located?

CF: You remember where the, there was a little family restaurant in Hanapepe on the main street? You know, where you go down, there's a little street. After you come across the bridge, there's two buildings there and there's a road that turns makai and there was a road that turns mauka. And this restaurant was just on the Makaweli side of that road. The makai road. Oh, it was a well-known family there.

CT: It was near the Watase Hotel?

CF: Yeah, the Watase Hotel was the one on the corner, or the one on the river. And that was in the next building. I think the building's still---that family that has a place up the valley, and they run another place out there now. The Chinese sold it out to a Japanese and I can't think of the name. But you'd know 'em. It's a well-known Hanapepe family.

CT: Is it Dang?
CF: No, it wasn't. This was Japanese. And one of the daughters now works in the Circuit Court.

It was right next to the school where it started. The school was right there next to it. But the shooting was down the road about, oh, I'd say about maybe not a quarter of a mile but couple hundred yards. It was right where you turn off the road to go up to Camp [2].

Well anyway, Crowell gave me pretty much the story what happened. Then I talked to some of the policemen. I talked to the two policemen that got out of the crowd with the rifles and did most of the shooting. And they told me they couldn't do a thing with their rifles, where they were. So they would get up---they broke it up. I mean, when they began dropping them everywhere. They were shooting goats, as far as they were concerned. In one case, they told me that two Filipinos tried to stab Crowell when he went down. And they got both of 'em. They killed both of them. When they picked up Crowell, there were two dead men with knives in their hands. I don't know how that happened but that was it.

CT: Do you remember their names, by any chance?

CF: Any of the dead?

CT: The names of the two people that you talked to, the two policemen.

CF: No. I can't remember. There's a list in the Garden Island on who they were. Because I wrote up the story on it. I told about the two that really broke it up. I could see that in the actual fighting of the thing, I don't think there were more than five Filipinos involved. It's knives and shooting, whatever it was. You get the idea? The rest of 'em might have had knives. But the fight that started, it started right as--they were holding them back, you see, with their rifles. And taking these two people from passing on and on. And when this first fella went down with the knife wound. I mean, that was the story they gave me. He went down with the knife wound, and then somebody fired a shot, then the shooting started.

CT: Being a reporter, what do you remember about the kind of feelings that the policemen had at that time? Immediately after the fight, you talked with them?

CF: Yeah.

CT: What was their emotional state?

CF: They weren't bitter. Their attitude was they had done what they had to do. They didn't start it but they finished it. But there wasn't much of a bitterness towards the Filipinos. This is my own opinion--I think a lot of unnecessary shooting happened after it was over, on those that were running. You get the idea?
They were mad, then, you see. They were mad as hell then because they saw Crowell and the other three fellas on the ground. And some of the others—I don't know how many others—I know there were couple others had to go to the hospital. They were mad at that time. Afterwards, it was a letdown for them. And then, as I said, there were 19 Filipinos and the three—I think there were 22 all together. Twenty-one or 22 all together.

And they buried all the Filipinos in one grave in Hanapepe.

CT: Did you speak to any of the other bystanders who happened to be there?

CF: No, I didn't. There weren't any bystanders. When the shooting started, there wasn't anybody there except the Filipinos and the police.

CT: By the time you got there, there must've been a lot of bystanders.

CF: Yeah. Well, they didn't know any more than I did. And Lindsay Faye came along—he'd been over to Lihue—he came along right after I got there. And I was around counting up the dead, and seeing where I could find anymore dead or something and counting up the number. And Lindsay came along, and he says, "My God, this is terrible!"

And I said, "Yes, but it's a hell of a newspaper story." That was my answer, see. It's odd. I can look back on it, I wasn't shocked or anything. It was just one of those things. I was so damned interested in getting the story on it, I didn't have time to get shocked. But when I began seeing more dead, then I realized what it really was.

I went to the funeral of those that were buried, the Filipinos. Buried in one huge...they put 'em all in coffins and they just dug out one huge place big enough to take the 19 or 18 caskets. Of course, you can imagine what it was. It was a horrible thing because all the families were there. But there weren't too many of 'em married. They were mostly single.

Then they took all the rest of 'em afterwards and tried 'em for riot.

CT: Can you describe the funeral?

CF: Well, I think there was one minister there. I don't know whether he was a priest; if he were a priest or if he were---I've forgotten now.

CT: I think Reverend Runes was there and a Catholic priest was also there.

CF: Runes might have been there. The other one, what's the one in
Koloa that's been there for so many years? She's still alive, she's a nurse.

CT: Reverend Cortezan?

CF: Cortezan. He might have been there. But I doubt it. I think the Catholics among them got a priest there. And it was a service but it was a very brief one. Of course, those that were married, their families were there and their children, you see. And all their friends, and things like that. It wasn't too big, though. I think they were afraid of trouble, they didn't let the funeral be too big.

CT: Were there policemen there, as far as you remember?

CF: Yes, there were police there. They were just there to prevent anything more happening, if somebody went berserk or something as a result of it.

CT: Do you remember the feelings that might have been expressed by some of the Filipinos there? Was there public expression of feeling?

CF: There wasn't much said. I mean, I didn't intrude on any of the families, you see. There wasn't much said. It was more of the horror of the thing that struck people than anything else. I don't think there was any recriminations or anything else like that. I think it was just the horror of the thing that had to happen.

And as I say, I don't think the police made up the story about the first guy going down being a policeman. They were all so positive about that, about him. And being stabbed. He yelled, you see, when somebody stuck a knife in his gut. He was part-Hawaiian, part-Chinese, as I recall. I know that they were all positive on that. They didn't start it. It started from this fella going down. And another shot that somebody shot, then there was another shot. They claimed there was some shooting from the other side, too. I've forgotten now if the other policemen were—those that were hit, whether they were shot. I don't know. I've forgotten now.

CT: Again, being a reporter for the Garden Island and knowing the community on Kauai, what was the reaction of the non-Filipinos after this incident?

CF: Well, the reaction, oddly enough, I think there was some reaction towards Manlapit. I think they blamed him for it. And I think there were one or two characters among the Filipinos in there that were known as pretty tough guys. And they were not among the killed. They weren't killed. But there was a reaction towards them that they were blamed for it. There wasn't any reaction against the Filipinos as people. It was decided it was just one of those things that happen, and they didn't blame the Filipinos for it, although a lot of 'em were tried for rioting and sent for jail for it.
CT: So it was mainly people reacted to Manlapit?

CF: Yeah, there was reaction to him. He was blamed for it. And he wasn't even there, but he was blamed for it. But as I say, it wasn't any anti-Filipino reaction out of it I can recall at all. It was one of those things that happened and it happened, that's all. Nobody was to blame. The Filipino people weren't to blame for it. There was a reaction towards those that were in it to a degree. Everybody pretty soon, they realized that they were innocent parties, too. They were being used.

I never could find out who started this parade of trying to get him back, trying to get these two Filipinos back. But it was organized.

CT: It must've been one of the strike leaders.

CF: One of the leaders, yeah. One or two of the leaders. That was the story I got, that the leaders, they recruited, "Come on, let's get them back." They went after 'em. The bulk of the Filipinos, you might say, they were just along for the ride. They didn't expect to do anything. I don't think there was any animosity as far as they were concerned, either.

CT: Do you remember what the talk about town was? For example, did you talk to any Japanese people?

CF: I think the horror was the reaction. And I think it broke up Manlapit's strike. It just died right there. He had another group over in Kapaa. I told you about that already. A shot went off and the cops all ran. Somebody fired a shot and the police--the regular police, you know, the fellas that were special police--they made no point about it. When that shot went, they took off (laughs). That could have been another one, too. Nobody knows where the shot came from on that one. Could have been some policeman with his gun.

As I recall, the horror of it was the principal reaction.

CT: As you were going around and reporting on your other things, did people say things to you about it? What I'm trying to find out is what kind of conversation they might have with you.

CF: I think they all wanted to know what happened. They knew that I was there. It was, "What started it?" They wanted to know that. "How did it happen?" "What in the world happened?"

And then, you'd have to tell 'em, "Well, they picked up these two guys and the police came to get 'em. That's what started it." If they'd have let the police leave quietly without any demonstration...whether this was just a demonstration or was an effort to get 'em back, I don't know. Nobody knows. It may have been just a demonstration and this happened. But if they'd let 'em go quietly, nothing would have happened at all.
It certainly looked like a war had been through there, when I got there. Because they hadn't removed any of the dead yet. They'd moved 'em off the road and put 'em in the gutters and left 'em there, but they hadn't moved. They had taken all the injured policemen, and then they took all the injured Filipinos. I've forgotten. You'd have to look it up to see how many went to the hospital, I don't know. I've forgotten that one.

CT: There were some lists of wounded people at Makaweli.

CF: Yeah. I don't know if I told you this story or not. The doctor broke down. This is gossip, you turn this off. Turn it off, kill it.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CT: I was reading the Garden Island again, and going as far back as July--this happened in September--there were stories about the strike starting and how many people were striking at what plantation. I was wondering where were you able to get the information and figures for that?

CF: The plantations.

CT: Did you call each of them separately?

CF: Yeah, we'd call Makee and ask 'em. I'd call Makee and ask 'em, "How many people did you lose in the strike?"

And they'd say, "Forty," or "Fifty," or whatever it was. It was mostly Makee. It was scattered on the other plantations. But Makee had the bulk in the Kapaa. The ones in Kapaa were mostly Makee, and some Lihue. And the other one was Makaweli and McBryde; that was pretty much mixed up. But as I said before, it was the Visayans mostly.

CT: Was the Kauai Sugar Planters Association any way involved in gathering this information, too?

CF: They might have. They would have it, I think.

CT: But you worked more with the individual managers?

CF: I just worked with the individual planters. When the strike started, when Manlapit called the strike, see, and he claimed he had so many thousand out, or whatever it was, then I checked with the plantations, to see how many men had gone on strike. It had gone on for quite a while, at this time. It started in July and this was in September. And it was sort of routine, then. You see what I mean? The Filipinos weren't working, and they were scrounging for food, and things like that. And Manlapit was feeding 'em. He put 'em in a building in Kapaa and he housed 'em there. Then he
got the school in Hanapepe and housed 'em there. Where he got his money for food and things like that, I don't know. They fished a lot and did things like that.

CT: Today, it would be accepted practice for somebody from the strikers to have a press conference and press release and so forth. What was the case in those days?

CF: I got to Manlapit a couple of times and ask him what he was trying to do. And he was for more money. He was talking about more money, that they weren't getting it. That was his argument. And he had better housing down, too. That's what they were striking for. But as I say, as far as I was concerned, with Manlapit, he was just manipulating these people for his own benefit, and hoping for a pay-off of some kind. That's the way I looked at it.

CT: Did he solicit, did he talk to you?

CF: And want publicity?

CT: Yeah, did he come to you for publicity?

CF: I don't know. I think I had to go to him. I don't think he came to me. But he was willing to talk. As I say, I think that his aims in the striking were financial, as far as he was concerned.

CT: There was talk also in the newspaper about sanitary code violations.

CF: That was because they were putting too damned many people in one building for the toilets and the baths. They were there, that's all. At the school, probably they had to take care of maybe 30 or 40 kids, or something like that. And they had a couple of hundred people in there. That was an aim to get 'em out of there. To try to break it up, too. But they were outdoor toilets in those days, you see.

CT: Do you know who was enforcing the sanitary codes?

CF: I've got it, it's in there [in the Garden Island]. Frank Cook. He was the director of sanitation on Kauai, he was the sanitary officer of Kauai.

CT: What was his job?

CF: He worked for the Board of Health. In those days, they had one sanitary officer and then they had public nurses, too. There were about five or six public nurses. Miss Mabel Wilcox was responsible for the public nurses. The plantations had their hospitals, but there was nobody taking care of the other people. So she had these public nurses. They'd go out and look for kids and look for people that were ill that should be in the hospital.

CT: Yeah, she really did a good job.
CF: Oh, she did a tremendous job. She was medicare or medicaid, she also was the welfare department. She'd make the counties take care of... They had no welfare program in those days, and she'd make the plantation take care of their own. See, if a man died--husband died--and he left a family, she went in right away on it, and talked to the plantation manager and told him how much pension that woman would need to live with her family. And she'd have to keep her house. And she had enough influence that they'd listen. They didn't say "No" to Miss Mabel. She'd run into a little problem sometimes and she might have to go over the manager's head. But she saw that the women and children were taken care of. Of course, she did a lot on her own too, that nobody knew anything about. She and her sister were wonderful people.

CT: Did she ever talk to you, to get your help in doing some of her work?

CF: No, she had her own sources. She had these nurses. They knew every case. There was one in each district. Hanalei had one, Kapaa, Kealia had one, Lihue had one, Koloa had one, the Makaweli-Hanapepe had one. There were about six nurses. Of course, there was a lot of TB [tuberculosis] in those days. And it was their job to find the TB cases and get 'em in the hospitals.

CT: So that they wouldn't contaminate other people?

CF: Yeah.

CT: How about Reverend Cortezan?

CF: He was active among them, and he had quite a bit of influence among them. He was a very level headed person. I think his wife had a lot to do with it. She's still alive.

CT: We talked to her, too.

CF: She should be good copy for you, because she was right on the job. She was a nurse, too. She was one of Miss Mabel's nurses. That's what she did; she would get Filipino nurses, see. She'd get Japanese nurses, when she could get 'em. She'd have to take haoles mostly, because there weren't anything else. But when someone came along like Mrs. Cortezan, boy, she just grabbed her and put her in public health.

CT: Reverend Cortezan was opposed to the strike.

CF: I'm sure he was.

CT: Do you know what things he was doing in order to either prevent the strike or discourage...

CF: I think he was talking, mostly. I think he was talking to the
leadership. He was a Visayan, so he knew the Visayan. But he was trying to talk to the leadership, because he felt they didn't have a prayer. And I think, rightfully so, they were being manipulated, too.

CT: When you say, "talking to the leadership," do you mean talking to Manlapit, or....

CF: I don't think he'd hesitate, but I think he worked more along Visayan Filipinos that he knew. Going with them and try to tell 'em, "There's no point in this thing." Manlapit was long on promises.

CT: Did you ever hear him speak?

CF: Yes, I have, but I've forgotten. Of course, he spoke mostly in Visayan. But he was quite voluble about it. He felt they were being exploited.

CT: You mean Reverend Cortezan?

CF: No, Manlapit. Manlapit felt they were being exploited.

CT: Oh, you mean exploited by the plantation?

CF: Yeah.

CT: From what we've heard, he spoke in Tagalog.

CF: Oh, did he? See, that's the Filipino from Manila. If he spoke in Tagalog, then he was early. Because first they brought Tagalogs, and they weren't worth a damn because they were the sport boys around Manila. You see what I mean? They lived in the neighborhood but they had big city ideas. Then they went out and got the Visayans, and they were also. There were some cities in Visaya of 40,000 or 50,000, or 100,000 population. Then they went up, when they went up, the Ilocanos were in the northern end, they were strictly rural people. Their towns were small towns. The only town of any size was the capital of the province, and that would be 30,000 or 40,000, or something like that. But they were mainly rice growers, strictly agricultural. And like I say, they had this touch of Chinese in them, supposedly, and they were very thrifty. They were completely different. They had bank accounts; that's the thing they went for. They didn't spend their money on silk shirts or automobiles. They didn't buy an automobile and then have to give it up. No, they were very thrifty.

CT: So you must have had a hard time selling them cars when you were selling cars.

CF: (Laughs) Well, they weren't there, then, when I was selling cars. As I told you, I got in at the worst time in the world to sell
cars; after sugar went from 20 cents to 3 cents. I was trying to sell automobiles and everybody was trying to pay for the automobile they had.

CT: Some people mentioned that they thought the police were too lenient; that is the reason why the fight happened. Do you remember people saying that?

CF: I think that the police were overconfident. I don't think they were lenient. They went out to get their men and they got 'em. And they did it with a show of force. But I don't think they anticipated anything at all. In most cases, I'm sure in this [Hanapepe] one, they just expected to walk in there and tell 'em to come out, and that's all there was to it. And they wouldn't be anything there. And the last thing in the world they expected was any resistance. When that shot was fired, that made everything different. They couldn't run, for one thing. There was no break and run, as far as the police were concerned, in Hanapepe. They stayed right there and fought right back. But they couldn't use their guns. And when these two fellas got up on the hill, that broke it up. I think it was broken up anyway, then, because when the Filipinos didn't have any guns, they just took off.

CT: So you're saying overconfidence rather than lenience.

CF: Overconfidence, yeah. And I don't know what the strike leaders hoped to accomplish. I think it was more of a demonstration than an effort to get the men back. It was just, "You're not going to walk out of here with those guys without you knowing we're here," or something like that.

CT: From knowing both Sheriff Rice and Deputy Sheriff Crowell, do you think there would have been any difference in the handling of the situation, if Sheriff Rice had been on the spot in the beginning?

CF: No, I think that whatever Crowell did, he consulted Rice about. And asked him, "How am I going to handle this thing?"

And Rice probably said, "Well, what do you think?"

He said, "I think I ought to go get 'em, we ought to go get 'em."

I mean, that's my anticipation. I think Rice would defer to him being the man on the ground. You get the idea? "It's your baby and you ought to know what it is." I don't think Rice would have played it any different. I think he would have gone in and gotten the men. He would enforce the law.

See, all of it now is Monday morning quarterbacking.

CT: Going on to the actual trial of the Filipinos who were arrested, do you remember the type of defense counsel that they had?
CF: I haven't the faintest idea. They were appointed, of course. As I recall, the attorney general came up and prosecuted them. I know he was there. It was an open-and-shut case, of course. I've forgotten now how many went to jail on it. Did you ever get that; how many?

CT: About 50 of them.

CF: Fifty, eh. I guess they sent everybody to jail that was there that they could identify.

CT: And those that they couldn't were let free.

CF: Yeah, those that the police officers could identify. Because they rounded them all up afterwards. It took quite a while for them to do it because the sheriff had go get over there, you see. He brought everybody over there.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

CT: Riley Allen, in the Star Bulletin, wrote an editorial at that time. "The Real Murderers Must Pay," is what he entitled it, and he was mainly attacking Pablo Manlapit as the cause of the action. And it was really a strong reaction on Allen's part, really condemning Manlapit. And I noticed that your editorial wasn't as .

CF: Vicious?

CT: ...vicious as Allen's. Is there any reason how you can explain the difference?

CF: No, my point was that it was something that happened spontaneously; nobody was to blame for it. If anybody were to blame for it, it was the leaders that put on the demonstration. In my own mind, I'm convinced that it was a demonstration. It wasn't any effort to get 'em back. They were just going to show the cops. I mean that was their attitude. I don't think anybody anticipated using any guns or knives in the thing.

CT: How did the Advertiser and the Star Bulletin get their information?

CF: Well, I sent the Advertiser story down by radio—we didn't have any telephone in those days. So I wrote the story and I called up the Advertiser and gave 'em a flash on it on the radio. I wrote a story and then sent it that afternoon for the morning papers.

CT: And the Star Bulletin, did they send somebody down?

CF: I don't know if the Star Bulletin had anybody up here. I think
they just lifted it from the Advertiser, I think. Or they may have called somebody. I don't think the Bulletin had a correspondent there.

You see, they both were AP [Associated Press news service] and when the Advertiser got it, the AP people got it, too. And the AP people gave it to the Bulletin. It happened around 9 o'clock in the morning, somewhere around---maybe it was earlier, I don't know.

CT: That's all the questions I have. Is there any other information that I haven't asked about?

CF: No, I think that's my story. As I said, I think if you get a hold of Ako and Howard Danford, I think they can both get [you] some good background for Waimea in the 1920's.

END OF INTERVIEW
The 1924 Filipino Strike on Kauai

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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