

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Dardenella Mae Gamayo

Dardenella Mae Coito Gamayo was born February 23, 1968 in Kohala, Hawai'i. Her father, Patrick Coito, worked for Kohala Sugar Company before he was laid off when the company closed down in 1973. The family moved to Honoka'a to live with her grandparents, Estifino and Mary Figueroa.

The oldest of four children, she attended Honoka'a schools, graduating from Honoka'a High School. Shortly after graduation, she married Darren Gamayo, an employee of Hāmākua Sugar Company.

They live in Pā'auhau in a home they purchased after Hāmākua Sugar Company shut down in 1994.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Dardenella Mae Gamayo (DG)

Honoka'a, Hawai'i

January 15, 1997

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Dardenella Mae Gamayo, for the Hāmākua, Ka'ū families oral history project, on January 15, 1996, and we're at her parents' home in Honoka'a, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay Darde, let's start. First, can you tell me when and where you were born?

DG: I was born in Kohala, on February 23, 1968.

WN: What were your parents doing in Kohala?

DG: My dad [Patrick L. Coito, Sr.] was working for the sugar company, and my mom [Barbara Coito] was just a housewife.

WN: What kind of jobs did your father do?

DG: My dad worked for the sugar company in Kohala [Kohala Sugar Company] until it phased out, I'm not sure, the early [19]70s [1973]. And then we moved over to Honoka'a to live with my grandparents, my mom's parents [Estifino and Mary Figueroa]. And, I was in kindergarten that year. And so that would be, what, 1973, I think. And then (my father) worked for the sugar company, for Honoka'a Sugar [Company]. (Following) that he (held) various jobs. He worked at the Capital Woodchip Company, that used to do the logging. He worked there for a while, and then he worked at the Honoka'a Hospital as a security guard. And then he went to work for West Hawaii Concrete, then he worked at Mauna Lani (Bay) Hotel as a limousine driver [and] tour driver. (While working there) he got (into an) industrial accident, he hurt his back and went to rehab. He learned woodworking at Brantley Center, [Inc.], and then he went into his own business doing woodworking. So that's where he's been ever since, for about the past eight years, I think.

My mom worked for a little while at different places—the hotel, down at the [macadamia] nut factory [Hawaiian Macadamia Plantation]—but most of the time when we were younger, she stayed at home and took care of us.

WN: How many brothers and sisters you folks have?

DG: I'm the oldest of four. There's one sister after me, and then a brother, and then a younger sister. We were always a close-knit family. We always did family activities. We did a lot of fishing, a lot of outdoor stuff. I guess living on the Big Island helped that part. (Living here) you can do (almost) anything. You can go up to the mountains, and down to the beach at the same day (laughs). You can be playing (with) snow, and one hour later be down on the beach (laughs). We did a lot of family activities. I always remember fishing. I remember (during the summer almost) every weekend at the beach. Every time my dad was off, on the weekends, we'd be doing something. Fishing, or we'd just go riding on the cane field roads, looking for *pohā*, so that Mom could make *pohā* jelly. And I was just telling my husband [Darren I. Gamayo], gotta do that, 'cause you go to the store now, and you buy one bottle of *pohā* jelly it's about five dollars. (Laughs) For eight ounces.

WN: *Pohā* was growing within the fields.

DG: Oh yeah. On the side of the road, wild. We'd all be in the back of the truck, with our plastic bags, and Dad (would) drop us off (when we saw) a bush of *pohā*, "Okay, you two get out." (Then he'd) drive down to the next (bush), then we'd walk up, follow the (truck). (Or we'd) just (go) riding around, just to go riding on the back roads.

WN: Used to have *pohā* growing?

DG: Yeah! All over the place. Most up at the forest lines. (It) grows in a little cooler climate. Not so much down by the ocean. (We went) camping, a lot of camping. Back then I guess, we had little bit more time. Which doesn't make sense, because if you think about it, in this day, our technology makes things (easier) for us, right? To make things faster. Get one plate, zap 'em in the micro[wave oven]. To save time, right? But then if you talk to everyone, (they always say they) no more time (laughs). So it doesn't make sense.

WN: That's right, yeah?

DG: You think about it, you know? Everything made nowadays is to save us time. So what (are) we doing with all of our time, (laughs).

WN: Trying to think of ways to save time.

(Laughter)

DG: I guess so. And somebody brought that point across. I said, "Ey, that's right!" I mean, you think about it. Where is (our) time (going)?

WN: Where did you folks live when you first moved back over to Honoka'a?

DG: We lived here.

WN: Oh, you folks moved from Kohala right to here?

DG: Right to here.

WN: Oh, because your grandparents were here.

DG: Yeah, so we all lived upstairs at first.

WN: You mean here?

DG: Up, yeah. Up in this top level, 'cause there was just a garage underneath. And at one point there was eleven of us in the house. Our family, which consisted of six, my grandma and my grandpa, and then my grandma and grandpa adopted their daughter's two children. My cousins, my first cousins. So there's four of them, so it'd be ten, and then my uncle—my mom's brother—came to live with us. So at one point there were eleven of us in the house. Eventually Grandpa closed in the garage downstairs, built two bedrooms under the house. Grandma and Grandpa, and my two cousins moved downstairs. And then by that time my uncle had moved back out. In fact he came and went a couple times. So we've always lived here.

My mom and my dad---we had a house in Kohala. On the plantation they had a—I think they gave the lots, or you paid a dollar for your lot; Hala'ula above the mill, in Kohala. My mom and dad built their new house, but when the [sugar] company closed, couldn't pay the mortgage. Back then, it was only \$200 but, \$200 then is like \$700 now. So, that's why we moved over to Honoka'a, financially to make it easier.

So I spent six months of kindergarten in Kohala, and then moved over to Honoka'a, and been in Honoka'a ever since.

WN: And you went to which schools?

DG: I went to Honoka'a Elementary, and transferred across the street to Honoka'a Intermediate, and then Honoka'a High School. I didn't go to college or anything, so all of my education came from Honoka'a.

WN: What did you want to do, when you were in high school?

DG: Oh, man. I wanted to do everything.

(Laughter)

DG: At one point I wanted to be a airline stewardess. Me and this girl, was a year older than I, she lived right up the street from here. And we wanted to be airline stewardess, but she graduated a year before me, right? She (said), "Oh, you know what? I going get one small job and wait till you *pau* school. Then we can go (together to school)."

All these big plans. And then my mom always said, "Oh, you gotta be one lawyer, 'cause you always asking questions." (Laughs)

So I thought of, I guess, all the usual childhood [dreams], oh, I like be one doctor, or I like be this. But nothing [came of it]. Actually, most of the time I always thought about if I would go to college, I'd become a teacher. So even now, it's a thought, but I don't want to drive forty miles to Hilo to go to college.

Then when I met my husband, when I was in high school—I met him in my junior year,

halfway through my junior year, and we started going with each other. And then by the time Christmas of my senior year, I knew already I wanted to get married, 'cause I knew that I found the right guy. And so, I figured, ah, you know what? We talked about it, [if] we raise a family, I want to be young, you know? I want to be like my parents, where I wanted to be young when my kids are young. I didn't want to be thirty years old and then have a kid. I wanted to be young. So we did that. Graduated in June, got married in July. Everybody thought I was crazy. Then I had my daughter, my first child. My daughter came about a year later in May. And then two years after that, we had my son, and I had a boy and a girl. From as long as I can remember, about thinking of having kids, I always told my friends, "I hope I have a boy and a girl, and I only want two. That's it!" (WN laughs.) And so, I was blessed to get my daughter. And I always wanted my daughter first, because I guess I was the oldest girl, so I wanted my girl first. Somebody's listening to me up there man! (Laughs)

WN: It's like you write it in a book, huh?

DG: Yeah, it's funny. I was fifteen when I had my daughter's name picked out. Not that I wanted to have a child at fifteen. I didn't want to have kids while I was a teenager, you know? I wanted to finish school first. I was sure about that. We were sitting with my girlfriend's mom, and she was pregnant. We were fifteen at the time. And one night we were sitting down thinking of names, and she said she wanted it to start with *d*, but too bad because she liked the name Yavonne. And so I (thought to myself), "Yavonne, Yavonne, ey, Devaun!" Then I started spelling it all different ways, but I didn't tell nobody nothing. 'Cause if was a girl I didn't want her to take the name. And so, I had it spelled out, D-E-V-A-U-N, from the time I was fifteen. And sure enough was a girl. And so, that's my daughter's name, Devaun. So I guess sometimes you think about things when you're growing up, but you don't realize that they (are) actually going happen that way. So I was lucky to have it happen the way I always wanted it to happen. (Laughs)

So, as far as thinking what I wanted to be when I was growing up, was the usual childhood [dreams]. Nurse, teacher, you know, that kind of stuff. But I guess as I got older, the values that (I) picked up growing in the country and stuff, I just wanted to (hang on to them). I don't like the fast life. So it was never a thought to move, to go to the Mainland or anything. I used to go to Honolulu every other summer to stay with my aunty, one of my mom's sisters. And we'd spend 2½ months—summer is three months—we'd spend 2½ months down in Honolulu, and it was fun. But it was too hectic for me, it was too busy, you know? So, I didn't want that fast life. I enjoyed it, 'cause ey, you get to cruise, ride the bus, go Ala Moana [Shopping Center], you know. But it wasn't the lifestyle that I (wanted), I didn't want to live it every day. I'd rather sit down, and just enjoy the view. Peace and quiet, you know?

WN: You talked earlier about values, the values that you grew up with. Like what? What kind of values did you grow up with?

DG: Family first. Sacrifice. To me sacrifice is a value, because you gotta learn how to make sacrifices. Sometimes the money looks good, "Yeah, if you get a job, plenty extra money for go shopping, this and that." But yet, you gotta think about the time that it's taking away from your family. Like with my kids, right now I work across the street at Pā'auhau Post Office. It's directly across the street, you know? (Chuckles) Thirty yards, a (half-)minute walk. It's part time, I only work four hours, not every day. I get about fifteen hours a week. So it's not a lot of money, but yet, I'm there when the kids leave in the morning, I'm there when they

get home in the afternoon. I can take the time to cook, not zap everything in the micro. No more that rush, rush. Take the time to have the kids come home after school, “Oh Mom, we go ride bike.”

“Okay, yeah. We go.”

Jump on the bikes, and we go riding bikes, and stuff like that. So that kind of values, you know, the sacrifice. Whereas I could easily go out and get a job at the hotel, which I did, and I wasn't happy. I worked there for six months, I told my husband, “I can't do this.”

And he said, “Why?”

I said, “Well, I can but, it's taking away too much.”

And to me there's emptiness from being away from them. Yeah, the money is good, but money's not everything. So, that kind of sacrifice, and I try to instill that in my kids. Growing up we didn't have a lot of money. That's why we found all of those activities that only cost gas. Mom could pack a lunch for us, jump in the truck, fill up the truck, ten dollars gas, and all day we'd be gone. On ten dollars. (Chuckles) Not where you gotta go to the movies, you gotta go Hilo shopping, you know? And till this day, that's the kind of stuffs I'd rather do. Yeah, I go Hilo, but not (all the time for shopping). And so, usually if I'm going to Hilo or Kona, I don't take my kids with me. I don't get them into that shopping thing. (WN chuckles.) And my mom says, “Why you no take [them]?”

“No. I don't want to take the kids.” Just leave 'em. I just want to do what I got to do, get out of there.

So, that's the kind of values that we grew up with. Honesty, integrity, feeling proud of your roots; where you come from, your family traditions. I'm real big on family traditions. Doing the ethnic things, the things that my great, great, grandma brought. The kinds of foods, try to preserve that stuff. I think it's too late for me to preserve the language, because for one thing, my grandparents, being of Puerto Rican ancestry, they know little bit, but not enough where they can already teach me. So I think it's too late for that already. And being that, we (have) pidgin English, yeah, in Hawai'i, (we have) pidgin Puerto Rican too. So it's kind of like a mix up. It's not the same Puerto Rican they speak in Puerto Rico. It's a different type. So if I can't do that, then I just try to preserve the other stuff that I can. The way we do things, like I said, the food that we cook. I'm half Puerto Rican, a quarter Filipino, and a quarter Irish. My kids got all of that, plus Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiian, and Filipino from my husband too, because my husband is half Filipino. So, now I get all these other ethnic things, so I try to focus more so, like on the Puerto Rican, Filipino, and the Hawaiian. And so, I just kind of try to teach them different things.

Sometimes it's hard, and I know it's hard for my kids. It's like when I was growing up. [I used to say], “Ho, man, but I like do what they doing,” you know, the other kids. I like the kind clothes they had. And I never understood, but then now as (I'm) older (I) kind of look back, oh. (I'm) grateful though, for the way Mom and Dad brought (me) up.

WN: So they brought you up the same way you want to bring up your children . . .

DG: Yeah.

WN: Very ethnic . . .

DG: Yeah.

WN: Appreciation for your own roots.

DG: Yeah, yeah. Appreciate your ethnic roots. Know that we all different. You know what I mean? But yet, accept other differences. And part of being brought up that way too, is because my two cousins that my grandparents adopted. We were brought up (together). The oldest one is a year younger than me, and then the next one is two years younger than me. So we're all the same age, but they're half Colored, and they look Colored. So, to me, it didn't matter. I mean, that's my cousins you know? I love 'em like sisters. But yet, other people saw them differently. "Oh, look the *Pōpolos*." You know what I mean? Oh, I used to get so upset. Hey, you try cut their hand, and you cut your hand, same color the blood. I remember always saying that. And to me it was like nothing, but yet to other people. . . . I remember one time we went to Spencer Park. And in Spencer Beach Park down in Kawaihae, they got the showers. And so my sister was sitting in the middle of my two cousins. And so you got Black, White, Black, right? And this *Haole* lady came in, and she could not believe. She was, like making such a big—"I got to take a picture!" And she actually took the address. She sent my mom a copy of that picture, and we still got it. And we were young. Five or six, I think. And I always remember that, and I was like, "Why, what the big deal? (WN chuckles.) You know, they only sitting down!" (WN laughs.) It wasn't until I was older, and I looked back at that picture, and I remembered the story. Now, I understand why she made such a big deal.

Growing up in the country on this side, no more prejudices. You know, never used to have. Now you see more of it. The generation growing up now, is a lot different. They see things more through the eyes of the Mainland people. The way the kids growing up now, they got the Mainland views. I guess it's just so much media. (I'm) not one for watching TV. When I grew up, you come home, you do your chores, you do your homework, and you out of the house. None of this, sit in the house watch TV all day. So even now, that's the way I raise my kids. I just saw a commercial on TV last night that said, "Your kids will watch an average of twenty hours of TV this week." No ways. (WN chuckles.) If my kids watch twenty hours it must be because (they're) sick and they cannot go out of the house. No. As soon as they come home, they change their clothes, they do their homework, I send them out. If I see them hanging in the house, "Go outside, play." I'd tell them.

"But what we going do? No more noth— . . . "

"Go find something to do."

"It's so boring."

"Don't make it boring. (Laughs) Go build a house someplace."

"What you mean, build one house?" They would question.

I actually took the time to go build my kids a tree house on the mango tree in the backyard.

(Laughter)

DG: My husband came back from summer camp one year—was a year and a half ago, he came back—he was in the Mainland for summer camp for [Hawai‘i] National Guard. He came back, the tree house was up. “Wow! Where that came from?”

“I built it.”

Everybody (that comes to our house says), “Wow! You built that?”

(Laughter)

DG: But you know, it’s like, doing that kinds of stuff. I rather send my son under the house (to) go play (with) dirt, than sit down in the house and watch TV, watch cartoons. I (don’t) even encourage them to watch cartoons. (Laughs) Not even Sesame Street. (Laughs) I send ‘em outside. And so, my daughter’s getting a little bit harder. She’s getting older now. She’s gonna be ten in May. (She’s) kind of getting into, almost like the preteen. Not with me, no ways. That don’t go. “Oh, but my friends.”

“No, no. No. You get outside. You go ride your bike. You go do something.” So, it’s a battle trying to raise them the way I was raised, but yet I know I can do it. It’s just a matter of trying to instill in them, what we have instilled in us. Even with my husband, the same thing. We try to tell them about what we used to do.

WN: What kind of chores did you have?

DG: Oh man. Being the oldest, everything. Everything was my chore. Watching the kids, my younger brother and sisters, my two cousins. The laundry. Oh. For eleven people, oh. (WN laughs.) You know, you come to my house today, I hate folding clothes. I will clean everything else, I no like fold clothes. I guess growing up all those years, I had to fold clothes for eleven people. I leave my clothes sitting for two weeks on the couch now. (Laughs) Until I get tired of seeing ‘em there. Okay, then, I going fold my clothes. But cooking, cleaning the house, making sure everybody else did their chores. Because if not, oh man, (I) no like get licking. And that’s another thing too, being raised on the discipline that we had while we were growing up. Spread-eagle in the corner, that was the punishment.

WN: Spread-eagle in the corner?

DG: Everybody (ask), “Spread-eagle in the corner? What is that?” You have to kneel down on your knees, facing the corner of a room, and you just stay there. And you cannot be leaning against the wall, you kneeling. And I mean, you like inches from the wall, and you (are) so tired, and you like lean your head on the wall for rest. Oh no. (WN laughs.) And [for] fifteen minutes, ho! (Laughs)

WN: Fifteen minutes? Hoo.

DG: And if was something real bad, then you used to, spreading eagle, stick your hands out and kneel down. And no touch the wall. This was torture. I promised I would never let my kids do that, though.

(Laughter)

WN: Was it your mother, or your father more? Who was the disciplinarian in your family?

DG: Hmm. You know actually, I don't remember. I think it was both of 'em. It was both of 'em. For me now—for me and my husband—it's me. My husband, he grew up kind of like, more on his own, 'cause his parents were divorced, eh? So, his (dad) just used to scold him. He never had the spanking. The most he had was like, the ear pull from Grandma, 'cause they laughing while they praying, or something like that. But he never had spanking.

Me, I believe in spanking. Well, when we were getting older, my sister—the one a year younger than I—she would always—you know, she was real *kolohe*—and she would tell my dad, “I going call child abuse, I going call child abuse.” And I always remember that. And one time she did. My dad told her, “Go. I'll dial the number for you.” My dad got the phone book, he found the number. He call them. And she was---she was crying, “Yeah, ho, my father beating me up, and this and that.”

And we just kind of sat in the parlor, all quiet. 'Cause you know when someone getting scoldings, the best thing for you do is be quiet so you no get scolding too. (Chuckles) And we were just sitting in here, just all wide-eyed, “Oh no, what going happen?” And then the lady asked to talk to my dad. And so my dad came on the phone, and my dad said, “Well, did she tell you what she did?” He explained what she had done, and why she was getting spanking. You cannot even laugh. You know back (then), we used to kind of like (DG makes sound of choked laughter) choking.

So, I believe in spanking. If my kids need a spanking, they'll get it. If they need to be yelled at, they'll be yelled at. And I feel that, through the spanking, through the spread-eagle in the corner, the discipline that I received, I turned out pretty good. I got values, I got respect. And I'm real big on respect, because I see a lack of it now. And so, if they need it they'll get it. And I told my neighbor, “Ho, you must hear me yelling at my kids.”

And he said, “Nah. It's good to hear somebody scolding their kids.” He said, “The kids nowadays need more of it. We (are) too lenient with our children nowadays.”

And my kids, if I give them one yell, and they come, and I stand there with my hands on my hip, all I gotta do is give 'em what my brother-in-law call, “The Hawaiian eye.” I no more Hawaiian, but I guess I got the eye. (WN laughs.) You know if going just look at them, they going be sliding past me with their *'ōkoles* facing the opposite direction. 'Cause they know when they pass me, they going get one slap on their butt. My husband---he goes, “Ho, why you spank them?”

I says, “You know hon, there's a difference between discipline and abuse. And I'm not abusing my children, I'm disciplining them.”

And so, that's the kind of values that we grew up with in the country, that we try to give the children. And like I said, respect is, to me it's very important. I would never tell my mother, “What?!” If my mom called, or my dad—or more so Grandma and Grandpa—if they calling me, “Darde!”

(I'm not going to say), "What?!" "What" was one bad word when I was growing up. And now, it's like, I calling my daughter, "Devaun! Devaun!"

"What?!"

"What you mean, 'what?' Don't tell me 'what!'" I was just telling my mom in the kitchen, "Ho Mom, I feel old."

And she said, "Why?"

I said, "'Cause I hear myself speaking." And I think, oh no. I turned into my mom.

(Laughter)

WN: It's like admitting that she was right all the time, and I was wrong.

DG: Yeah, yeah.

(Laughter)

DG: So, you know, it's that kind of values that I talk about. Nothing against people that live in the city. But I think if everybody just kind of slowed down a little bit, you know, took the time to make the sacrifices and spend time with their family, ho, the world would be such a better place. Then they would find out where all this crime, and violence, and drug abuse coming from. So that's the way I feel.

WN: You find all that to be a major problem up here?

DG: It's becoming more. When I was growing up in school, (we) heard about cocaine, every once in a while, but it was always like, the older people. None of the kids. Oh, we experimented with *paka lōlō*. (Almost) everybody (did). So, oh yeah, growing up we smoked *paka lōlō*, (got) stoned, go school. I wasn't one of the nerdy ones. I used to like (to) party too. But, I took my responsibilities seriously. We used to go buy alcohol. This was when I was older, you know, the teenage years. But it's not like how these kids are. We always did it (chuckles) to enjoy ourselves. It was never---and it's kind of hard explaining this, 'cause people go, "No. You did 'em when you was one teen, it's the same thing like the kids now." It's not. I see a difference in it. Not that it was right, but it—we did all of that stuff, but not to make trouble. You know, none of the violence. Now, it's like the kids have nothing to do. It's like so much free time. Back to that time thing. Keep 'em little bit more busy.

So, I kind of feel for parents, it's like a fear. And I kind of wonder, 'cause my kids are getting to that age where, they're gonna be teenagers. So I wonder how it's gonna be on me. But yet, I know that I'm catching them now, I'm instilling all these things in them now. (We) cannot wait till they're fifteen and try teach them responsibility. You gotta start now, when they young. I'm hoping they don't give me a hard time.

(Laughter)

DG: I don't think so though. But then you never know. So, it's just that kinds of stuff that we

think about.

WN: You think the closing of the plantations had something to do with, well, what's happening with young people?

DG: In honesty, no, I don't think so. Because I see the same things happening while the plantation was still open. I think it's just a generation thing. I can see where the plantation has affected a lot of people in this area. When you were growing up and going through high school, unless you was one of those brainy kids—straight A's and stuff—the first thought was, I going work plantation when I graduate. When I got married to my husband, ey, we was thinking he going retire from plantation. And that was fine with me. I (don't want a) mansion on the hill. That's not what (I'm) after. I just want to be happy. And you (don't) get happiness from money. So that's the way I thought. I even think that now.

But when the plantation closed I could see it affecting a lot of the kids. Because, if the parents (are) feeling unstable about what their situation, it's going rub off on the kids, 'cause the kids going pick up on it. So I could see a lot of the teenagers, the concern that they had. The fear. It's always scary to graduate from high school, but yet knowing, "Ey, maybe I no can go college now, 'cause my father not going (be) working." They no more the money that was coming in. We wasn't getting rich working at the plantation, but yet we were making a living. So, I can see where it was a concern.

As far as the drugs and the violence, no, I haven't seen it. Maybe if you look at the statistics—the actual numbers of crimes, and stuff like that—before the plantation closed and after, maybe you'll see a difference there. I'm not sure of that. But through my eyes, no, I haven't seen, not with the teenagers. With the adults I've seen. My neighbor, single guy, I can see he's not working yet. He worked a little while, he helped dismantle the [sugar] mill, and he's still not working. I mean, it's sad. You know sometimes, if I cook plenty I go take food to him. 'Cause I see him gathering coconuts. And, I think he's at a point where he needs help already. He's just too depressed, he can't deal with it.

WN: How old is he? Your age kind?

DG: Oh, he's a little bit older. You know, like, late thirties probably.

WN: He has a family?

DG: No. But yet, I've seen more family problems since the plantation has closed. Marriages broken up. Darren and I, we--ho, it was really hard. We kind of just getting back up on our feet now. He was depressed, I was depressed. I mean, constant bickering. 'Cause we not sure about what going on. We even separated for a little while, but I could have easily said, "Yeah, you know what? I no need this. I going move away." But that's not the way I was raised, and after talking about it we decided, yeah, we only going make things worse. We no like that kind of lifestyle for our kids. If I wasn't brought up the way I was, to make sacrifices and stuff like that, I'd probably be one divorcée right now. But the hard work that it takes to keep things together (is worth it in the long run).

All kinds of adult problems you see, I no think too much of the kids, but adult problems. Marriages breaking up, like I said, financial trouble. I mean, we went through the welfare

thing. Oh, man. Welfare's not a help. And it's hard for us, because we were self-sufficient when the plantation was going. We paid our bills, we had money to buy food, went school shopping. You know, we had extra money. Then all of that was gone. Gotta go apply for welfare. You cannot pay your car insurance. We were living in plantation house. Lucky we never have that big rent to pay. But when we went to apply for welfare, oh my gosh! It was so overwhelming. Because for one, I shame eh, 'cause I going go on welfare. Oh I gotta go store go buy food with food stamps. And my husband (said), "You going do the shopping. I not going store if I gotta use the food stamps." When first (we) got 'em I'd send him to the store, "Oh, why, you no more cash?"

"What for I going use cash? Use the food stamps."

"Oh, everybody going see," (he'd say).

A lot of people felt that way.

WN: This was after Darren was laid off?

DG: Yeah, after he was laid off. Prior to him being laid off, when the company first started getting into trouble, back in '87, the first time they had that furlough, or layoff, he was affected 'cause he was in the field at that time. So if the company going close, the first thing they going stop doing is planting more cane, right? So we knew he was going be one of the first ones to be laid off. So we talked about it, "Hon, you gotta transfer. You gotta go work inside the mill. You gotta do something where, as soon as they close you not going be laid off already." So he went through that, that furlough thing, twice.

Oh man. Lucky we only had my daughter that time. We were living in apartments in Honoka'a, and came to one point where, only saimin me and him would eat. She was eating baby food, eh? So not too bad, you know, we could buy baby food, right? I think one week, the two of us lived on packaged saimin. Because we shame, eh, go ask anybody. We no like ask for food. And if our parents (asked we'd say), "Oh no, no. We okay, we okay."

WN: You didn't go to your parents then?

DG: No, no. We (wanted to) do things on our own. We was just married. We was married only, what, about a year and a half that time. So, only when we really had to, then we would go ask. And unemployment, you get that waiting period, and then they come in, and they calculate all this, and it's not what you supposed to be [getting in compensation]. So, it was a struggle. And then we went back to work, we moved up to Mauna Kea Ranch, where I was working twenty hours a week to pay for the rent. So we had a place to live. Ey, we never have to pay rent. All I gotta do is go work.

WN: How come you lived in the apartments?

DG: 'Cause we wanted to get our own place. After we got married we lived with my parents. We got married, we moved out for a month, then I found out I was pregnant. We moved back here. Then, oh man, no can. Mom and Dad mean well but, they know when we going and we coming. No more the freedom, eh, you know. So we moved to the apartments. And then from there we moved out to Mauna Kea Ranch. And then, there was a big hassle up there. I

was pregnant, they didn't want to give me maternity leave. They wanted me to bank hours so that I could take maternity leave. Ah, no can. So we started fighting for a plantation house. But we couldn't (get one). This was in '88. Started applying to get into the plantation housing. No could. We ended up moving back downstairs this time, with my grandparents. I was pregnant with my son that time. I had my son in June. June 2, I had my son.

By the end of June, we found out we got a duplex in Pa'auilo, a plantation house. One bedroom. Ey, we going take 'em, okay, 'cause our own place right? They said, just get into the housing system. When get one open house you can transfer to a bigger house. Stayed in a duplex for one year. At that same time he transferred and he went to work in the mill. In '89 he went to work in the mill. When my son was a year old, we started applying for a bigger house. We wanted a transfer. [In the duplex] you gotta go outside for the bathroom. You know, was the old[-style] house. You gotta go down the steps to the outside for go bathroom. Not in the backyard, but just out the steps. Plus was small---I mean, was more worse than one studio apartment. (Laughs) Was built for single men. The duplex is a single-man house. So you got a family of four in a single-man house. So he went to the union [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] for help. Ho, they give him hard time.

WN: In what way?

DG: "Ah, you know Gamayo, no can. You gotta just wait." We didn't want to live down in Haina. We wanted to move back to Pā'auhau, 'cause Darren was raised in Pā'auhau. I never like move Pā'auhau 'cause too hot. (Laughs) But I figure, no, we get one house that's the main thing. So they gave him a hard time. Finally, I got on the phone, 'cause he was frustrated already. I said, "You know what? *Pau*. You gotta let one woman handle this." Got on the phone, I called the union in Hilo. Started making noise. Hey, the guys in Honoka'a all shook up. "Ey, Gamayo, how come your wife? How come she go talk to us?"

"Well, I talked to you guys, you guys gave me runaround, so she go call the Hilo (office)."

"No, no, no, no, no. You come see me first."

I guess they jumped on that guy, right? Went to the IR [industrial relations] office, I called Dave Morgan. Dave Morgan wondered, "Why this lady calling me?"

And my husband didn't say nothing. "Go ahead, honey. Call. Do what gotta do, we gotta get one house." We saw this house that we have now in Pā'auhau. We saw that it was open, we went, we looked at it. These guys from Haina [originally] got it. Then we heard that they never like the house, 'cause they said get *obake* in the house.

I told my husband, "*Obake* or not, we take 'em!"

(Laughter)

DG: Worry about that after. (Laughs) I not scared of the *obake*. You gotta be scared of the alive one. So got on the phone—Dave Morgan told me to call the IR, the industrial relations director. So I called Skip White, talked to him, "You know what Skip? Come to my house. I'll give you a tour of my house [i.e., the duplex], you can see exactly where we living." I had three beds stacked up in against the wall. No more place for put 'em that's why. He went

through, I told him, “Ey, I toilet-training my daughter, she like use the bathroom, I gotta take her out in the cold downstairs.” Okay, he came look. One week later we got the house. Took me one week of phone calls to get the house.

WN: So it wasn’t that the houses were all filled or occupied, it was just, what, red tape or . . .

DG: Red tape. I guess in this day and age, everybody says, “who you know.” And (some people say), “Nah, nah, nah. No more such thing as ‘who you know.’” But yet, in reality, it is who you know.

WN: Was it also, could it also have been, you know, they were closing down so they weren’t sure what they were gonna do with the housing?

DG: No, that wasn’t even a point yet. ’Cause what had happened is the state had come in and helped out the sugar company. So we were all feeling, “Ey, all right! The company going be all right.” We hadn’t heard of anything about phasing out yet. Darren had gotten into the mill, so we were feeling, okay, he’s in the mill. If anything does happen, we no need worry about him being the first to be laid off. He loved driving tractor out in the field. That was his love. His tractor was the only one had tinted windows (WN laughs), had stereo, you know. “Hon, we go Hilo.”

“For what?”

“I gotta go buy tint.”

“For what?”

“I going tint my tractor windows.”

I mean, he didn’t want to give it up. But at that point he saw that, “Ey, I gotta.” So he moved in the mill, we hadn’t heard anything about the phasing out. So, the housing, as far as issuing out the houses, there were few, there weren’t a lot of open houses. And as soon as they were open, (DG snaps fingers twice). Before, they had list, the plantation. And you’d be put on the list. And towards the end, by the time when we got there, they had an application and you gotta put why you feel you should have house. So I think they give you like, a quarter page, I’d flip the page over plus add one more sheet paper.

(Laughter)

DG: So we moved into the Pā’auhau house. Oh, my gosh! I kept telling Darren, “Remind me now, this was what we wanted, right?” We went in the house, it had been vacant for two months . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, wait. We lost a little bit of that. You were talking about walking into the house.

DG: Oh yeah, we walked into the house, what, the house had been empty for two months. The grass, oh my gosh, the guy that lived in our house before us, he transferred to a supervisor house. A bigger house in the same camp, about two hundred yards away. But when he found out he was moving, he never clean the yard already. When we moved in, you could just drive up the driveway, and you gotta park, then you gotta kind of walk, you know. When I went to look at the backyard, oh, my gosh. There was like, iron roof [i.e., galvanized iron] fence. You know that's plantation style, eh? No more money for buy fence wire, so you make iron roof fence. (Laughs)

So, luckily we got the house cleaned up, and the plantation was taking care of the houses yet, that time. So they would come replace the doorknobs, fix whatever glass was broken. They made the repairs. Not at our expense, the plantation's expense. Maybe that's one of the reasons why they went broke, (laughs) I don't know. So we moved in, and Darren slowly started cleaning up the yard and stuff. I wish I took pictures. I don't know how much rubbish we hauled away from the backyard. There wasn't no grass. By the time we cut the weeds down, I was like, ew! Now you go to my house, you would never know how it was. It's clean back there.

Then Darren was working in the mill. So was good because we lived Pā'auhau; he would sleep, then go to work. Then he started working shifts, which took a little bit adjustment 'cause every week he'd change shift. He'd go from graveyard, then to day shift, and then the following week he would go to second shift. So it's a constant rotation. About two months, then he got the hang of it, the sleeping patterns. And what's good is like, he would just hop in his truck, back road, five minutes, he's at work. He can sleep till 10:30 [P.M.]. Even quarter to [10:45] he can sleep (when he worked graveyard shift) then in five minutes he's at work. So that was good. When the plantation closed he was working in the mill. When they finally phased out and the shutdown came, he was working in the mill, which we were grateful for, 'cause he was one of the last ones to be working in the company.

WN: And by then did you know already that, even if he gets laid off, or the plantation closes, you folks would be able to stay in that house?

DG: That was some uncertainty about that. We weren't sure about the houses. That was a big deal when the plantation was closing down, because they didn't know what to do with the 400 houses. And so we were kind of hesitant about that. Was like, "Oh, no." And then they said they were gonna sell it to us. Ey, they going sell 'em to us, where we going get the money to buy 'em? Yeah, we stable but, we not rich you know? We already had loans, car loans or whatever that we had. We cannot just go and borrow the money for buy 'em. How much they going sell 'em to us? The houses are old. My house was built in 1940. I mean, no more even one actually paved road. It's not [Hawai'i] County standard, the road. What about the road going down to Pā'auhau? You know, all that kinds of questions. So there was a lot of uncertainty about that, and we had begun thinking about moving away. And Darren said, "Well, you know what hon, maybe after the company closes, maybe I can join the regular [U.S.] Army."

And I told him, "Yeah. Let's go." You know, nothing here. So we actually thought, I mean I actually even sold some of my household items. People had 'em reserved already. They

gave me the money for 'em already, sold. You know, I had boxes packed away, I started weeding out the things that we never need, getting rid of 'em. Then he missed the army test [examination] by a couple points. Was real heartbreaking. He was like, "Oh no. What we going do now?"

The guy told him, "Well, you can retest." But by that point, he never like retest, 'cause he was already depressed 'cause the [Hāmākua Sugar] Company closing. So, we just kind of hung in there. At the same time he got some family land down in Waipi'o his uncle was giving up. So we (took) over the lease now. "Ey, we go taro farm." We not scared to work hard. So that's why we gave up the idea of moving. Every once in a while it kind of pops up in our head, "Ey, we go move." But then, it doesn't last very long. (Laughs) Today I telling you that, tomorrow I going, "But hon, we no can move, no more Waipi'o on the Mainland." No more this, no more that.

But when the company---when I heard that they were actually gonna phase out, prior to the final harvest, when we had known they were going down already—I started paying my bills. I started trying to get us settled. We went through that stage of credit cards and, oh, easy eh, money? Easy money, credit cards. You know, rack up the bills. Then it kind of settled in, "No, this is not the way to go." I started paying off, clearing up our bills as much as I could. Because I knew we were gonna get hard times. I knew they were coming. So, myself, I just started being more conscious about paying the bills. Not so much putting the money in the savings. I wasn't worried about saving, I was worried about getting things paid off. And when the company did close, oh man. I was glad I did what I did. We still had bills, but they weren't as bad. And whatever we did have, we fell behind on.

At one point we were six months behind on payments. And luckily, the Pā'auhau Credit Union, luckily they down to earth. Local. They going through the same thing, so they were real lenient. "No worry, if only ten dollars you can come in pay"—sometimes only five dollars I could pay. Darren didn't work for about six months.

WN: From the time of the final harvest to . . .

DG: Yeah. The final harvest ended September 30[, 1994]. (In) November he worked for this landscaping company. It was just a part-time job. This company came from Honolulu, they were cutting some trees on the road going up to Waimea. They needed a temporary worker. So he worked there. He got done in January [1995]. From January to July there was no work, and no welfare. So all we were living on was [Hawai'i] National Guard, and just squeezing by.

WN: Food stamps? You had food stamps?

DG: No. Not even. Food stamps came in in (pause) when was it? March. I mean, was like was food bank. Gotta go food bank. Food bank is all. "Ey Mom, you can buy me bread? Ma, you can buy me milk?" You know main thing my kids were fed. It was depressing, and I guess that's why was so much anger between us. I knew he was—he wasn't waiting around. We were living on unemployment, that's what it was. I'm thinking, what were we living on? We had money, what was it? But yet, unemployment not going last forever. And you gotta be making effort for go out look for job. Some of these guys was like, "Eh, I going kick back. I going use my unemployment. That's my tax money." So most of them did that. And Darren

used up all his unemployment. But yet he was already looking. He started working at KTA [KTA Super Stores], which was only part time (in July).

WN: KTA was part time?

DG: Yeah. No benefits. They made it so that you work almost full time, but yet they no need pay you [benefits]. You know, corporate thing. That's the way they do things now. He worked every day, five days a week, seven hours. Just so that they no need pay [benefits]. But the gas that he was paying, no make sense he go work. He would bring home his paycheck, \$300.

WN: He was going Hilo?

DG: No, Waimea.

WN: Waimea.

DG: Yeah. But still, we had one Ford Bronco, eh? You know one full size, 302, V-8. (Chuckles) By the time you go Waimea, you working for pay gas. So, he worked there for about two months I think. Little over two months. But prior to him getting the KTA job, I promise, he put in about forty-five [job] applications. And, I mean, I don't know. All these agencies came out to the rescue when they heard the company was closing. Everybody, "Oh, what about all these people in the Hāmākua coast." It was all political, I mean, what did they do? They helped a handful of people. They never really get down and go digging for the—you know they never really get into helping the people. It was like a surface thing. Who you know. You know this, ag [agriculture] co-op thing. Who you know. You go look at that thing now, only one small percent of that is former Hāmākua Sugar. All these big ranches that live around here, that's the ones that gobble up all that land. I just called Bishop Estate last week, 'cause I heard they had some ag [agricultural] lease land. So I called up Bishop Estate office in Pa'auilo, "Oh well, you know what? Almost all of the land gone, Darde."

I was like, "How come?"

"All the ranchers *wen* gobble up all the land."

"What about the people?"

"Oh, get couple small pieces here and there, but you might have to drive far."

Ey, what is this? They [ranchers] got the money to back themselves up. They're settled, we not. To go and start up farming, take money for do all that kind stuff. And not everybody qualify for grants. Not everybody qualify for these programs that they get out there. And so, it's frustrating. It's frustrating for us to see that kinds of stuff going on.

So, it's just that kinds of stuff. We pretty much settled in now. We got a loan, we consolidated everything. We used our house for collateral. You know everybody tell, "Oh you going get the house, but never use the house to make this kind loan. No make one mortgage loan for buy one car. No make one mortgage loan." But yet, we had to 'cause we weren't getting ahead. So we made a mortgage loan, we used the house as collateral, but we

never go overboard. I always stayed within our budget. We borrowed enough to pay off whatever we had, plus to pick up one small truck. You know, something cheaper on gas, 'cause Darren's working so far now, yeah? Working down in Mauna Kea [Beach Hotel] takes—it's a forty-five minute drive. With one Bronco it's about fifteen dollars a day on gas. (Laughs) I needed something more cheap.

WN: Gotta buy a Toyota maybe.

DG: Yeah, so we picked up a Nissan.

(Laughter)

DG: So, we did all that and then people say—'cause they don't know who makes loan. Nobody knows. Only we know. The financial company not going give out our name. (They say), "Oh yeah, oh yeah. People making loans for go buy car, go do this." And I thinking to myself, but you guys no understand what we going through. You no understand why we did. We were so behind on our payments. I couldn't let it go to the collectors. And they were real lenient with us already. And, shame you know, you gotta walk in the credit union and, you know, you back on your payments. It's kinda like, you only get ten dollars in your savings, "I can have the ten dollars?" 'Cause you no more even ten dollars, and you scraping. And, I mean, sometimes you only get two dollar something in there, and I telling Darren, "Well, I get two dollars in my account, get two dollars in your account, (laughs) maybe we can [buy] ten dollars gas." It got to that point. So was real hard.

WN: So unemployment was gone, welfare was . . .

DG: Welfare, you know when welfare came in? It was real good, when Darren *wen* go back work.

WN: And then you didn't . . .

DG: We never need 'em already. We had financial assistance, two or three months I think.

WN: In Mauna Kea? When he worked Mauna Kea?

DG: When he was working KTA, 'cause he was part time, eh?

WN: So when he went KTA then your welfare's out, yeah?

DG: When he went to KTA, welfare was coming in at that point. So they were looking at his income, right? And plus he had [Hawai'i] National Guard too, eh? Which is not much, it's like about, \$175 a month. But yet when you no more money, \$175 was plenty. You make 'em stretch. I mean I can cook one dinner for four, for \$2.50. (Laughs) I find something. (Laughs) But, it's amazing what pork and beans can do.

(Laughter)

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, you were talking about corporations that were set up to help people like you folks, and

many of it was—I guess you were saying favoritism, or who you know . . .

DG: Yeah. It's not so much favoritism, it's just a matter of them just skimming the surface. You know, like my neighbor. No more income. He could use some counseling. Like I said, I can see where he's depressed already. He don't know what for do. No more head, no more tail, just kind of living day to day. But you get all these big dreams about, "Oh yeah, I going work here," but yet a lot of anger. Oh these guys. Government this, government that. And it's not only him, you know. You can see quite a few in the community, former [sugar] workers. See, all these companies came in—not companies but all these agencies came in—and they helped. But then, one year later they gone. They no realize that the hard times no really set in until one year later. You know, they get unemployment. You get welfare. But, that kind stuff was gone afterwards. So it was hard, it was frustrating for us. Lot of anger, in us, in the community. Not the community, but the other people.

WN: These agencies for example, did you have to go to them to say, "I need help." Or . . .

DG: A couple of 'em came out. I can't even remember what kind agencies had out there. A couple of 'em went out. They had one that came out and they did surveys. They went house to house. They had former sugar workers, they trained 'em on social service work. And they would *talk story*. "Eh, how you doing brah?" You know, *talk story*, bring the paper and pencil, just kind of take notes. If not they would just kind of eyeball it, just kind of look around, see what, you know. . . . But not many of 'em.

And when I first applied for welfare, ho man! You talk about intimidating. You walk in there you got one twenty-page application you gotta fill out. And I don't know if these welfare workers realize what they doing, but they kind of stereotype people on welfare, maybe, I guess. You know I walked in there, filled out the application, and the worker says, "Oh, Mrs. Gamayo. Who—" literally, this is how he talked to me. He said, (DG speaks in a slow, condescending manner) "Mrs. Gamayo, who helped you fill out this form?"

And I looked at him, "Nobody. Me."

"You filled this out, (DG speaks very slowly) all by yourself?"

"Yeah."

"Oh, okay."

So I'm looking him like, how dare this guy. You know, wow, why you talking to me like this? But then I no figure nothing, right? Maybe he figure, I get one handicap or, (chuckles) I don't know. Or maybe I no more one education. And I dress decent. You know I not one hippie, nothing against hippies or anything. And so, then we going and he asking, verify birth certificate, social security numbers, you gotta bring the cards, you got registration, your insurance, your motor vehicle—you know, all this kind stuff. I go in there with one folder filled with papers, so I try to get myself organized so when he asks, I can hand it to him. They gotta make copies of everything, right? They like your bank statements, they like your checking balance, all of that kind stuff.

So we went down for about fifteen minutes asking me all of this. Verifying, you know. (DG

speaks in the slow, condescending manner again) “Mrs. Gamayo, who helped you fill out this form?”

By that time I looking at him going—with a few choice words going in my head, you know what I mean? (WN laughs.) And I looking at him and I go, “Why? Something wrong?”

“No, no.”

I said, “Did I miss something on there?”

He said, “No.”

I said, “Didn’t I understand it? What’s wrong?”

He goes, “No, nothing wrong.”

“Why are you asking me that? Do I look stupid?” I told him, “You know what, *brah*? I may not have one college degree, but I tell you something. If I really wanted to, I could do your job damn better than you doing ’em right now.”

And he just kinda looked at me, “Mrs. Gamayo, do you realize that it’s against the law to harass a social worker?”

I look at him and I said, “*Brah*, you know that it’s against the law to harass me?” And he just kind of looked at me. I said, “I not stupid *brah*. I *wen* fill ’em out myself. If nothing wrong, let’s move on.” And it was frustrating. I did not, the whole time we were on welfare, I did not let my husband go into that office. Not even to drop off a paper. Because if he would have got started on them, (laughs) he would be in jail.

(Laughter)

DG: My husband is a nice guy. He has real good values, but no make him mad ’cause, (laughs) you know, he has a violent temper when he gets angry. And that guy would have just rubbed him the wrong way in five minutes. (Laughs) So it was just that kind of dealing with the welfare. I went in not thinking nothing, with my engagement ring and my wedding band on for my interview, right? Like look nice, eh, you know? I don’t know all this welfare secrets, as everybody calls ’em. “And do you have any assets? Do you have a TV?”

“Yeah, of course. Every house get one TV.”

“Do you have a VCR?”

“Yeah.”

“How much is the VCR worth?”

“What?”

“If you had to sell the VCR today, how much would you sell it for?”

I looked at him going, “I don’t know. I don’t know, how much you think?”

“Oh, I cannot help you with that.”

You know, I had to go get appraisals for my vehicles. And if they [the vehicles] over this value, if you get one loan on ’em, they had all kind ways of figuring things out. But anyway, so I went in with my engagement ring, so I’m sitting there and not thinking nothing, right? So I writing down [and thinking], how old my TV now? If I had to sell ’em off, fifty bucks I *stay* writing. My VCR, oh man, I get the VCR, was one brand new one. Eh, they don’t know that. Fifty bucks. (Laughs)

Then he goes, “Is that a ring on your finger?”

(DG says sarcastically) “No.” (WN laughs.) I look at him, I go, “Yeah.”

“Is that yours?”

I look at him [thinking], you ask the stupidest questions. I said, “Of course it’s mine, that’s why I using ’em.”

He said, “Is that a real diamond?”

I said, “Yeah, this is my engagement ring.”

“What is the value on it?”

Ey, I almost dropped in my seat. I could not believe it. I said, “I don’t know, this was one gift to me. My husband gave me this. I don’t know how much he paid for ’em.”

“Oh, you don’t know the value?”

I said, “No.”

“You need to put something down, ’cause it’s an asset.”

I looked at him, I said, “I don’t know, what you think?”

And he says, “I can’t help you in that. If you were to sell it today, how much would you sell it for?”

I looked at him, I said, “You know something *brah*? No matter how much money I don’t have, I would never sell that.”

He says, “Well I’m sorry Mrs. Gamayo, but you need to put something down on paper.”

So I look at him, I said, “Oh, ten bucks.” But I mean, it’s that kind of frustration. I left there, I was so angry. I wanted to reach out and strangle ’em, you know. And then I go home, and I’m telling my friend. She goes, “Of course, Darde! You so stupid. You not supposed to go in there with. . . . If you get Hawaiian bracelet, you gotta leave ’em home.

You know, you no can use diamond!”

“What? But why?” You know? I mean, it’s that kind of stuff that’s frustrating.

WN: The whole system is set up to guard against fraud, eh?

DG: Yeah, and I understand that.

WN: Yeah, but you, you know, you really sincerely there for help.

DG: Yeah.

WN: That’s why it seems so puzzling to you, maybe, yeah?

DG: Yeah.

WN: But maybe to others who really had something to hide (laughs) . . .

DG: Yeah. And it was hard because, at one point we were really struggling during this whole layoff thing, and I had my youngest sister, she was staying with me, her and her boyfriend. And he told me, “Ey Darde, you know, I really feel sorry for you guys.”

And I said, “Why?”

And he says, “Well, you know, because you guys actually really trying to get welfare, and I can see that you guys really need it and they giving you guys hard time, yeah? But you know my friend, he get \$1200 worth of food stamps at home.”

“What? What are you doing with \$1200 worth of food stamps?”

“Well, I mean, that’s why I came home, ’cause I going change and then I going go help him. Us going go shopping.”

“Wow, tell him you like borrow some.” ’Cause you know I thinking, “Wow, *brah*. One guy, he no need that.” I said, “How the hell (did) welfare give him \$1200?”

“Nah, he sell coke [cocaine]. That’s what the people use for buy the coke. If they buying fifty dollars worth of cocaine, they give him one book of sixty-five [dollars worth of food stamps]. So us going buy shrimp and lobsters and stuff, and us going party today.”

You know what? I mean, ey, that killed me. After he left, I sat in the room and I cried, and I cried. I mean, like why? I honest, you know? I gotta lie for get ahead? I don’t want to do that. And I was frustrated, and I went in for one interview with welfare, and it got me so pissed off. And I told him, “You know *brah*, I tell you something. Get guys in this community that don’t need the food stamps the way I need ’em. I being honest with you. I tell you every damn thing, except for when I go to the bathroom. They using their food stamps for buy cocaine! Why you no go out, go hassle them? These guys been on welfare for years!”

“Oh, Mrs. Gamayo, I understand your frus . . . ”

“No you don’t understand my frustration.”

He goes, “Well you know, I only doing my job.”

“You know what? I know you doing your job, but you gotta understand where we coming from. You know, we honest, sincere people, and we cannot get ahead.” Even now, sometimes Darren tell me, “More better I lie so that can [get assistance].” But then we not going feel good about ourselves. That’s not the way we like live our life.

The plantation took care of us. The plantation was everybody’s mom over here. They held us. I mean, you had plantation life, and then you get the real world. And we were so sheltered, you know? Medical, one dollar. You go doctor, pay one dollar for medicine. Wasn’t the best doctors in the world, (laughs) but at least if you get the flu. . . . For *da kine* internal, real, real, sickness kind, they wasn’t the best doctors. But for everyday thing, which, like us get; they was fine. Water, one dollar a month. You no can go wrong. All you have to pay was your electricity and forty bucks rent. But we weren’t being rich, because the amount they were being paid was just enough to keep us going. If we like go Hilo, we can go Hilo. So it was real sheltered, and then kind of like they slammed the door on us. The plantation closed. And now we standing out there in the real world, going, “Oh man. Oh shit! What we going do now?”

WN: What about other things like employment training, and stuff like that?

DG: The employment training that they had was really—was good. They had this employment guys that came out . . .

WN: So state, or county, or . . .

DG: I think it was state. They had this employment guys, they came out and they trained the guys on how to fill out applications. Before, you work plantation, you no need fill out application. You go to the office, “Oh, I like work plantation.” Even if you smart and you know how for fill out one application, you never have to. Sometime they never even go interview. (Laughs) You go talk to---“Ey, I like go work poison gang.” But they came out, and they trained the guys how to do a resumé. Somebody never even know what is one resumé. “Ey, I go to one ‘re-zoom’ class.” You know.

(Laughter)

DG: “What is one ‘re-zoom’ class?” (Laughs) And it’s funny.

“No, *brah*. Resumé.”

“Oh. Yeah, yeah, that stuff.”

(Laughter)

DG: So it was a learning, and we laughed about it. Everybody just tried to keep their heads up.

Everybody just tried to make the best of it, and I think we did. I could see everybody pull together. But it was real sad to see the company shut down. Being there for that final harvest, the parade with all the cane trucks going through town. Oh man.

WN: How did you feel?

DG: Oh I cried, and I cried, and (my) eyes all swollen. They had a parade on [September 30, 1994]. The day shift, they had a parade, they came through town. “Eh, going get one parade. Going get parade. Oh, it’s the last shift, they not going work after that. It’s the last of the cane.” So they paraded through town, and then the second shift was supposed to have one, but they kind of had a small one. But everybody knew that there was gonna be one the last morning [September 30]. You know, when the last of the cane came in. And so, we already planned to be at that one. In fact, Darren had [Hawai’i] National Guard [duty] that weekend. So we got up at 4:30 [A.M.], we were in town at 5:00. You would not believe the people. I mean, we’ve had parades in Honoka’a, but there was never that many people in town. Old-timers, I mean, people that—local people. Not so much the outsiders that moved into the area, but the people that’d been here for a long time. And yet, you’ve heard of some people that refused to come, ’cause they didn’t want to see, they didn’t want to be there. I had to be there. I had the video camera.

About a month, the month before they shut down, I took the video camera and I started filming them on video. You know, the harvesting. Going to the mill, Darren took me around with the video camera, went to here and there. So just trying to compile everything. I no more one video editing machine, you know? Everything wasn’t in order, but I had it on film. Talking to everybody. “Ey, I know this guy long time. Ey Chico, how long you work plantation?”

“Uhh . . . ,” you know, all shame. “Uh, thirty years.”

“And what?”

And then he turn away and he cry. He cannot talk already. ’Cause ey, we joking ’cause the camera there. But yet, it hurt. Everybody was hurting. If you weren’t hurting it’s because you weren’t raised here. I mean, everybody raised here.

We gathered in Honoka’a, we waited. We waited, and waited, and waited, and we just saw more people. And more people. And I mean, was like, everybody had their video cameras. Whoever had a video camera, had a video camera there. And the trucks started coming. And all the truckers---I mean, it was so sad, but yet the people were cheering. So glad to see them going through. You know the pride that everybody had. Then when the last truck came, just so happened he was my cousin, and [plantation manager P. Ernest] Bouvet was on Fredo’s truck. Yeah, was Mr. Bouvet. Hanging onto the side of the truck, and they all beeping their horns and everything, and my cousins was yelling out the window, and everybody was waving and waving. And my cousin yelled, “This was ours, and they stole it from us!” Oh man, I mean, you know what (DG crying) you know everybody’s just crying full on. And (later he told me), “I never like Bouvet be on my truck, why he jump on my truck?”

Was the last of the cane, that was the last load to come in. And just so happened Fredo was the one to take it into the mill. And so they went through town. Oh I raced up drop him

[Darren] off, drop off the kids over here [DG's parents' home], and then I went back down to the mill. And he was working in the cleaning plant, right in the field area. So I know all the workers, eh? Oh, I was way on top with the video camera, and then Bouvet came, "Oh, you know, you not supposed to be here . . ."

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, whatever. No tell me I not supposed to be here, I said to myself. Shot the last of the cane going through the mill. He [Darren] went up to Pohakuloa that night [for Hawai'i National Guard training]. I stayed there till 11:30 [P.M.], I think, waiting for the last of the cane. And I was the only lady there. "Ey, Mrs. Gamayo, more better we pay you for Darren's time." (Laughs)

"Yeah, put 'em on his timesheet," you know? And just sitting there listening to the mill, and then oh, the mill wouldn't work. Kept jamming and jamming. And you listen to the workers, "Ey, come on, come on. Only little bit more." Talking to the mill, you know. Was real heartbreaking.

And I left and the last of the cane hadn't gone through yet. The mill just wouldn't work. And just to hear them telling, "Oh, you try listen. That's not the way the mill's supposed to sound, like she dying," and all that kind stuff. Real hard, you know? Just to sit there and listen, and watch the cane all being emptied. The last of the cane going through the mill, and talking to the guys, and they all joking. I even had dinner with them that night. (Laughs) And it was hard, because you sit there and you know that it's gone. (DG crying.) And my son not going know that. You know my son, he loved the cane trucks. Every time there's a cane truck, he could hear it coming down the road. No matter what he doing, he would stop, gotta open the screen door for him, and he would be on the porch waving to the truck. And he couldn't understand how come never have plantation.

So I felt that I had to capture everything on film, whatever I could. So that they could look at it. He might have memories, but it'll be small memories 'cause he was only five at that time. But yet, I had to capture it for us too. As much as it hurt, it was a big part of our lives that we had to come to terms 'cause it's gone. But yet, it hurts. You see [it's] gone now, you know? And like I said, sitting there I cried, and I cried, and I cried, but yet, had to find the strength in myself to stay there. To wait for the cane. Everybody tell oh, "You not tired?"

"I tired." Finally at 11:30 [P.M.] I couldn't stay awake already. I'd been up since 4:30 that morning, waiting for that parade. I'd been at the mill all day. You know, I came, I dropped off my kids, I told my mom, "I don't know when I coming home."

She told me, "Go ahead."

And at one point I just sat on the steps, and I just listened. And I told myself, I gotta go sit down, and I gotta go write one story about this. And it's been two years and I never write 'em yet. 'Cause I cannot yet, it still hurts. But I just sit down and listened to the mill, and then I finally felt what they were talking about. Like the mill was tired, like it was time, like it was dying. And I could actually feel all of that. And my husband didn't know what I was doing. He was at [Hawai'i] National Guard [duty]. He could have stayed and worked, and he said, "No. I going national guard." And to me I could see that was his way of saying he couldn't take it already. It hurt too much. Luckily that was an out for him. He could go to national guard. His friends that worked with him, they were there. That was his shift, he was

supposed to have been working when the last cane came through.

They had their cooler with beer—we don't drink and stuff, but then the supervisor came and Chico's like, "Oh shit! I get beer." So he hide in the rear, and in walks the supervisor with a six-pack of beer. "Here Chico, for you."

And he going, "I get one!" (Laughs)

And I caught all of that on film. And when he [Darren] came home, and I sat him down and I showed him. Oh man. He cried, and he cried, and he cried. And he told me, "Honey, that's my friends. We not going work together again, already. No more that." So it helps for us to talk about it. But like I told my mom in the kitchen while you were talking to Darren, I don't think the hurt ever going go away. It's never going be the same. And we never realized how lucky we was for have the sugar company. We never realize till now. We took for granted what we had. And thinking about all the good times, that takes away the anger. Never mind then, we just going make 'em. The determination that we get now.

I was just talking to my husband, I told him, "You know, hon? Get more to this living paycheck to paycheck. There has to be more to it. I no want to be rich, but when the kids gone, I like me and you be able for kick back over here on our porch, and know that if we like go Honolulu, we can go Honolulu." Not travel the world, but you know, have money. And I told him, "There has to be more to it." Maybe we gotta look at doing, like, little investments. Things that we never thought about before. I would have never thought about investing or buying stock, or—I don't even know all that kind stuff, you know? But now, I gotta start looking into that, because we no more the security of the plantation.

- WN: One sugar worker told me once—he's from Waipahu—he said, "In a way it's good the plantation closed, because if it didn't close, we would just be doing—keep doing this and we wouldn't be learning different things. And now it makes us, you know, be more determined and do things independently and try to succeed." What do you think about something like that?
- DG: I think so too. I mean, I believe—and this is just my philosophy on life—that everything happens for a reason. No matter how bad, no matter how much we struggle, how angry you get, everything happens for a reason. We may not understand now, but we cannot. . . . I always tell my husband, I always tell my kids, take the good out of everything. Everything that happen, always get little bit good. No matter how bad it is, get good. You always get good and bad to everything. You cannot dwell on the negative, you gotta go [on] until you find something positive. Even if it's little bit and just take it from there. I tired be stressed already. I tired worry. I tired be angry, and I've reached that point already. I no like be mad. You know life is too short for be mad. Just gotta take it as if the plantation never close we wouldn't be struggling, or we wouldn't be going through this. But then you gotta know the bad for appreciate the good.
- WN: How has your life changed since the time you did the video interviews, you know for the other project? [i.e., the Gamayos were participants in the "Family Adaptation to Occupational Loss" project.]
- DG: When the project came in and they did the video interview, things was good yet. We never

see the hard times yet.

WN: Oh yeah?

DG: Yeah. If they came in now, it would be a different story. When they did the interview, we were one of the first ones to be interviewed.

WN: This was when?

DG: Oh geez, right when the plantation closed I think. We were the first family to be interviewed. So, we never go through that hard time yet. You know we never have the unemployment battle, we never have the food stamp battle. So now would be a lot more different. We've struggled.

WN: So now you more or less told me the struggles . . .

DG: Yeah. Yeah, I told you the struggles that we went through. But it's different from when we did the interview.

WN: Well, okay. Thank you very much.

DG: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

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