BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Stanley C. Mendes

Stanley Clifford Mendes was born September 9, 1931 in Āhualoa, Hawai‘i. He was the only child of John Mendes, Jr. and Josephine Souza Mendes. The family eventually moved to Kapulena. In 1937, they settled in Pa‘auilo, where his father worked as a sugar plantation superintendent for Hāmākua Mill Company.

He attended Pa‘auilo School until and eighth grade. In 1944, he began his forty-year career in the sugar industry, first with Hāmākua Mill Company and eventually, through company mergers, with Laupāhoehoe Sugar Company and Davies Hāmākua Sugar Company. He retired in 1984.

In 1952, he married Kathleen DeRego of Haina. They have five children and eight grandchildren. They live in Honoka‘a.
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
with
Stanley C. Mendes (SM)
Honoka'a, Hawai'i
July 16, 1996
BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[Note: Also present at the interview is Kathleen Doris Mendes (DM), SM's wife.]

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Stanley Mendes, on July 16, 1996, and we're at his home in Honoka'a, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Mendes. Why don't we start? Why don't you tell me, first of all, when and where you were born.

SM: Āhualoa. I was born in Āhualoa. My grandfather place up that side I was born, and from there, we moved down Kapulena. They call Kapulena.

WN: Kapulena?

SM: Kapulena, yeah. That's a few miles away from here. Down before we reach Waipi'o Valley, that side. Kukuihaele, all those places, down there. Then, we moved to Honoka'a. From Honoka'a, we went to Pa'auilo. That's about [1937], somewhere around there we went Pa'auilo.

WN: What is your birth date?

SM: September 9, 1931.

WN: So you were about six years old when you moved to Pa'auilo.

SM: Yeah.

WN: Tell me something about your parents. Who was your father?

SM: John F. Mendes [Jr.]. And my mother was Josephine Souza Mendes.

WN: What did your father do?

SM: Well, he was a workingman, you know. A man that was skilled doing anything. He could do any kind job. You know, he was a good worker. Wake up in the morning, go to work, and work till dark again, you know. That's the type of guy, he no scared of work. He not afraid
of work.

WN: What kind work did he do?

SM: Well, the last [job] he was a superintendent, supervisor, for one section of the plantation.

(Scanner radio audible in the background.)

WN: This is Hāmākua Mill Company?

SM: Yeah. Well, at that time, was T. [Theo] H. Davies [& Company, Ltd.]. He started out with T. H. Davies company, you know. [Hāmākua Mill Company was established in 1877 by Theophilus H. Davies and Charles Notley, Jr.] And he used to work with a portable track. You know, the train track. They take 'em—you take 'em [portable tracks] in the field and lie 'em out in the field, so that they could take the cane cars into the field, and they load 'em up with cane. The Filipinos load 'em up with cane. That's what they call hāpai kō.

WN: Pai ko? [WN mis-hears due to extraneous sounds in background.]

SM: Hāpai kō.

WN: Oh, hāpai kō. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SM: You lift up and you put inside . . .

WN: Oh, you used to go up the narrow steps?

SM: Plank, yeah.

WN: Plank.

SM: Throw [cane] inside the car. Then, after that, the mules pull that cane car out [to the main train line]. When they throw that [cane into the cane car, then] they pull 'em [cane cars] out [of the field]. Then, connect 'em on the main line for the train, eh. Put 'em there for the train, then they put one other one, go inside, you know. That's how they used to work.

WN: Your father was the one who laid the track?

SM: No, he was with the mule, you know. The steer-man of the mule, just like the driver. And the biggest men do all da kine (loud squeal is heard from scanner) train—I mean, you know, the track work, like that, eh.

WN: Yeah.

SM: Two guys load 'em on top the mules, stuff like that.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

SM: And, well, he had other [jobs]. He was a serviceman for the plantation, you know.
WN: Serviceman.

SM: Yeah, *da kine* service truck, you know. He go and put fuel for all the equipment get there at that time, you know. They put fuel inside. And he used to supply the camp, the houses, with kerosene. You know, they go around the camp and they fill up the kerosene for the people in the camp, 'cause the plantation supply the kerosene. He used to go fill up the kerosene, so many gallons a month they get, eh? He go . . .

WN: How did he supply? How did he carry the kerosene?

SM: In his truck. In his . . .


SM: No, no. In the truck, service truck.

WN: Oh, I see. How many gallons would that service truck hold?

SM: I'd say maybe five hundred gallons. You know, those days, there's nothing big. All small kind trucks. No more front-wheel drive. It's just plain trucks. (WN laughs.) From the Standard Oil Company, I remember then, we went to Hilo. On the weekend, we went to Hilo, pick 'em up from the company down there, go all around Hilo town. That was our car for the day, you know. Oh, the supervisor down here, the boss down there, Dan Thompson, he was a close friend to the family, you know. I mean, he liked my father. And, of course, he told 'em, "That is your car for the day. You go all around Hilo. You go whatever you do with it. And you come back, you no bring 'em down here. You keep 'em till Monday or Tuesday. Whatever you want. Then you bring 'em down." (Coughs)

WN: So you would go Hilo, to Standard Oil, and pick up, fill up with kerosene?

SM: Well, no, they used to deliver that. They come down and they get delivery trucks and they deliver the—into the tanks. Down here we had tanks, eh? They put the, whatever—fuel, kerosene, whatnot—in the tanks. From there, my father pick up. They go service the equipment during the day, and then when he's through with the servicing, he grab the kerosene. Take kerosene and supply the camp with kerosene.

WN: He used to go to each house?

SM: Each house. Yeah, he come down to like Pa'auilo. He went to Pa'auilo, all the houses. The truck can service these three houses at one time, you know. You no need move to every house, every house. And, like that, you know, it's quicker, and get ahead.

WN: So each house had one main kerosene tank.

SM: Yeah, you get your own five-gallon can. You get your own five-gallon can. If you run short, your fuel, you had to go buy your own afterwards. The supply that they [plantation] give you, you use that, you gotta go buy again, on your own.

WN: One month's supply?
SM: Yeah.

WN: So if you use 'em up, then you gotta go buy . . .

SM: You gotta buy your own afterwards.

WN: Did most people use theirs up, or what?

SM: No, plenty that stay, they keep, eh. Because they use firewood, make hot water, things like that. The kerosene usually is for cooking. And of course, there came about where we had kerosene heaters. You know, you can light the heater down in the tank and supply you with water.

WN: Oh, hot water.

SM: Hot water. Most of the people used to use firewood, especially Japanese. You know, they make their own furo kind [of bath], eh?

WN: Furo, yeah.

SM: They get one box, and they make fire right underneath that box. Da kine they used to use copper. Copper bottoms, eh. That's how they used to make the hot water. And the rest is that redwood.

WN: Oh, yeah? The bottom was copper?

SM: Yeah.

WN: Oh, I always wondered how they keep the thing from burning.

SM: And, well, of course, it was little bit open, you know. Not solid. Get the copper and then the wood. That, more like a steamer that would be, you know. The way it was made, more like a steamer. You know, you make steam.

WN: So had water, in between the copper and the wood?

SM: No, no had. No had water. Just the wood, you know. The heat, I guess, you know, go through the wood, but he no burn, eh.

WN: Yeah.

SM: Get the space in between. He no burn, eh. I often wondered that, you know. (WN laughs.) But that's how, you know, 'cause afterwards, we used to sell copper. We go out, we sell copper bed, brass, stuff like that. You could sell 'em, eh? Make money. But we used to roll this old kind [of] furos and broke 'em up. That's all that copper we used to take. And that's how we made.

WN: Did you help your father at all?
SM: Yeah, I used to go ride with him. Not help, eh. No, not help. Riding, eh. (WN laughs.) So he had other guy used to work with him, one guy used to come with him at camp. We had one guy used to come help him, you know. Like especially during the weekend, he had to have help, eh?

WN: Yeah.

SM: 'Cause plenty, see?

WN: Yeah.

SM: Plenty kerosene he gotta give. In two days he gotta service up the—just like service the camp in two days, yeah? Then, he used to service the equipment. And then the boss down there, like I say, he cared for my father, so he wanted my father go out and check the equipment that... Troubleshooter, in other words. Sometime the equipment no start, or stuff like that. So they had to have one man out in the field, and that's what he do. He go check the equipment out in the field, start the equipment. And little do you know that my father became supervisor, superintendent, and things like that. Till he died [in 1955]...

WN: So he was doing all this while employed by the plantation?

SM: Yeah.

WN: You told me, too, that he was almost like a businessman?

DM: That's his grandpa.

WN: Oh, this is grandpa.

SM: My grandfather.

WN: Oh, okay, okay. I see. Oh, okay.

SM: My grandfather was John Mendes, Sr.

WN: Senior.

SM: And then my father was John Mendes, Jr. Me, I get Stanley.

WN: Yeah.

SM: And then we had the boy, that's the fourth generation. My oldest boy [Stanley "Butch"] is the fourth generation of the Mendes family [in Hawai'i]. Now, he has the fourth—I mean fifth generation of the Mendes family. His boys is the fifth generation of the Mendes family. That's a picture there. Them.

WN: So your [paternal] grandfather [John Mendes, Sr.] came from Portugal.

SM: Yeah.
WN: And what do you remember about him?

SM: Well, he was not a very smart man.

(Laughter)

WN: Why do you say that?

SM: Well, as far as paperwork and stuff like that, he wasn't really that good. But he was what you might say a wise man. You know, he could take care of his business. He could take care of his business because he always had something in his head to do, you know. He took care of his family, built nice home, nice place, all of that. He was a wise man, in other ways, but really not a reader, you know. But he was appointed to all kinds of community services and stuff like that, and even during the war [World War II], he was the CD person up Ahualoa, all those areas there. Civilian Defense.

WN: So he was a real community leader, then.

SM: Yeah, yeah. He was a community leader. That's why some people got jealous of him. They fight with him. Cut him his stomach. Little more he make, little more he [would have] died, because of that.

WN: Really?

SM: But he survived, he survived all of that.

WN: So he was employed by plantation, too?

SM: No, on his own. All by his own. Always, only.

WN: Oh, yeah?

SM: Yeah. But he contract his stuff to the plantation. Like firewood. He used to supply the plantation with firewood, the camps and all da kine things, he supply. They get a big—what they call ox. And he had big trailer, you know, wagon, for supply the wood to the plantation.

WN: So he was on his own. He was a businessman.

SM: Was on his own.

WN: He wasn't employed by the plantation.

SM: No. My father was a wise man. He wasn't afraid of work. In fact, when the union came to Hawai‘i, my father was the first president in Pa‘auilo.

WN: Oh, yeah?

SM: That's the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] union.
WN: Oh, this is before ILWU [International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union] then. [The CIO was the predecessor to the ILWU.]

SM: Yeah, was the first president. He’s the founder and all that of the union at that time. Then, little by little, the ILWU came inside, squeeze him out, and stuff like that.

WN: Was he involved with ILWU at all?

SM: He never go back to them, because, you know, the way they treated him, eh? After all, he was the, you know, first union leader, so why shouldn’t they treat him that way? And from there, that’s how he got this lift of being top man, supervisor and all this kind, and superintendent. Like I say, he was the section—one section Pa’auilo, one section is Kūka’iau. He used to get the Kūka’iau section. He take care whatever needed in that area. Planting and poison, and all those kinds [of] things. He recommended all those kind of things. This was his job. Take care the workingman.

WN: So, your father folks were living in Āhualoa, Kapulena, those areas. This is when he was working for the [Honoka’a Sugar Company] plantation.

SM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: When you were growing up.

SM: He got the job as camp boss, take care of the camp, nighttime. He’d go out nighttime, look, check the camp then everything was okay. You know, like get all [kind] of robbers and killing, people that kill one another during the night, and things like that.

WN: Had that kind stuff?

SM: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Filipinos, eh? And he used to patrol the place, all like that. He had one guard, eh? Had one guard for that.

WN: He was like a policeman, then.

SM: Yeah, yeah. Camp boss, they call ’em. All over the place, all over the community—the plantation, they had people like that. In different areas. They had people like that. Like I say, he was up this side. Take care of Haina side or Honoka’a area, you know. They had camp boss like that, do that. Now him, he used to take care the Kukuihaele area, eh?

WN: A big area.

SM: Towards Waipi’o, yeah.

WN: So, this Hāmākua Mill Company covered—had Pa’auilo, all those areas. Āhualoa, Kukuihaele.

SM: No. This was all Honoka’a Sugar [Company].

WN: Honoka’a Sugar [Company]. Oh.
SM: Then you had Pā‘auhau Sugar Company. Boundaries, you know. Then you had Pa‘auilo [i.e., Hāmākua Mill Company].

WN: So your father first was working Honoka‘a Sugar [Company].


WN: And then when he moved to Pa‘auilo in 1937, he moved plantations? He switched plantations? He switched plantations from Honoka‘a to Hāmākua [Mill Company]?

SM: Yeah. As far as that, yeah. He had different company. It’s just like going from two companies across. Honoka‘a and then Pā‘auhau, then Pa‘auilo, eh? This was Davies, T. H. Davies at that time [i.e., Hāmākua Mill Company in Pa‘auilo].

WN: Theo H. Davies that time.

SM: Yeah.

WN: Okay. So, what about your mother [Josephine Souza Mendes]? Tell me something about your mom.

SM: Well, she was born in Pa‘auilo. She was Pa‘auilo born. I don’t know how they met, but.

WN: But they were both born in Pa‘auilo.

SM: No, he was—she was born Pa‘auilo. And, well, you know, like I say, Pa‘auilo was a very popular place in the old days, because they had hotels down there, and the train used to come all the way to Pa‘auilo. The trains from Hilo. They pick up the sugar from Honoka‘a, Pā‘auhau, and all those kind places go to Pa‘auilo on the train. That’s why Pa‘auilo was a popular place, because they had parties, they had dances, and things like that during the weekends, yeah? They had dances and parties all the time down there. Yeah.

WN: So what did they have besides—they had a mill over there?

SM: Pa‘auilo?

WN: Pa‘auilo had a mill?

SM: Yeah. Like I said, T. H. Davies. [Hāmākua Mill Company’s mill was located in Pa‘auilo until 1974, when the company merged with Laupāhoehoe Sugar Company].

WN: Okay, and then you said had a movie theater?

SM: Yeah, we had movie theater, hotels. Eh? [To DM]

DM: Had a whole lot of bars.

SM: Drinking bars, stuff like that.
WN: Yeah.

DM: That came crowded during the war [World War II] when the servicemen . . .

SM: Yeah, that's later part of the years, but they had one by itself already, right there in Pa’auilo. Nakashima Bar used to be there. Arita Hotel. They had car garage over there. They had tailor. Make clothes, stuff like that. And they had a movie house over there, and of course, several stores. One Filipino store, run by Filipinos, and Japanese store, vegetable stand place, where you get vegetables. And they had two pool halls there. Then, they had a Nakahara business over there.

WN: Nakahara.

SM: Nakahara Store, used to be. Then, after a while, they made one bar, they had laundry over there, jewelry store.

WN: Wow.

SM: They have Filipino store again over there. And beer bar afterwards. You know, they build this beer bar. And across they had the post office there. And Nakahara Store there. And they had one small—you would call that hotel or motel or whatever, next to the Miyazaki Store. And they had the Japanese graveyard, church, above that side. Pa’auilo was quite a big place, you know. It was quite a big place in its day, you know. I mean, compared to Honoka’a. Honoka’a not very much, you know.

WN: Oh, yeah? Was bigger than Honoka’a?

DM: Business-wise, was bigger than Pa’auilo.

SM: Yeah, business-wise.

WN: Oh, business-wise, Honoka’a was bigger?

SM: Pa’auilo was bigger.

WN: Pa’auilo was bigger.

SM: Yeah, 'cause they had everything come to them, eh.

WN: And had different nationalities living over there?

SM: Oh, yeah, yeah. As far as that, yeah. Always been. Every plantation has all different nationalities. Different stages, in other words, you know. Higher, lower, what. All was there.

WN: And then, where you folks lived, was it mostly Portuguese living over there?

SM: All kind [of] people, all kind. Mixed, mixed.
WN: Was all mixed by then, eh?

SM: Of course, they had---above that was Japanese Camp and . . .

DM: Filipino Camp.

SM: Filipino Camps, Puerto Rican Camp, or—Spanish Camp, they used to call 'em. Things like that. But they had mixed variety there anyway. They had the Stable Camp. They had mixed variety up there. And Japanese Camp, they had mixed variety there, too. Filipinos, and . . .

WN: What was the name of your folks’ camp?

SM: Well, afterwards, they call it the New Camp, eh. New Camp.

WN: Oh, yeah. ’Cause that came up in the [19]30s, eh?

SM: Yeah, 1935.

WN: [Nineteen] thirty-five. Oh. So you guys lived in a new house?

SM: In a brand-new house. We was the first people to move into the house. To the houses in Pa‘auilo, we was the very first people.

WN: Was it near the mill?

SM: No. Up high, there, where the camp is now, that’s where it was. The mill [area] get different camp. Afterwards, then, they build this other camp down by the mill. This was all cane field, before they build the houses. And they just build homes—no landscaping or anything. You know, at that time, there was no landscaping. They just build the homes right in the cane field, laying on the cane, you know. You had all those furrows and stuff like that, you know. And you had to clean up all that, put ’em together, all that.

WN: Was it mostly supervisors living over there?


WN: Your father wasn’t supervisor by then, at that time, ’35 . . .

SM: He wasn’t supervisor yet at that time.

WN: What kind work did he do when he first came to Pa‘auilo?

SM: Well, like I say, he was portable [track] man, work with the mules, and serviceman [i.e., maintenance], and all this kind. That’s all he used to do.

DM: After[wards] he became supervisor.

SM: Then afterwards, he became supervisor after the—during the war [World War II] years, in other words.
WN: So what was your house like? Your new house?

SM: Three-bedroom home. Bath inside the house. You had to take two steps go down to the bath—take a bath. Toilet down there, and everything all enclosed. Not da kine you gotta go outside, toilet, like above, the Japanese Camp, like that. They had the toilet in the back, bath house, everybody go take a bath over there. Toilet all over here. Each house you get toilet place, you know. Where you wash clothes and all this kine. But take a bath, a big [community] furo, big furo house. Everybody go take a bath over there.

WN: You folks had your own bath.

SM: Yeah, each—all the houses. All the houses.

WN: It was flush toilet?

SM: Flush toilet. All the houses was like that. All built with the house, you know, with the toilets and everything inside. Then, like I said, you make hot water whatever way you wanted. Lot of Japanese had da kine furo, like I say. Whatever. We made a living, very nice living, very good living.

WN: The kitchen was part of the house? Indoors . . .

SM: Oh, yeah, all indoors. All indoors. Like I said, three-bedroom house. We had the parlor, the three bedrooms. We had one hallway, you know. I don’t know why they build that for, hallway, eh?

WN: (Laughs) Yeah.

SM: And then, the kitchen there, go downstairs. Wash clothes inside the house. And, like I say, in years to come, my father say he don’t know what was that—he didn’t realize what was that closet for, so he told the boss, he asked the boss, he like take that closet out.

“You do what you like. You do what you want. If you think it’s not satisfied with that, take it out.”

So, he take out the wall in there, and became the whole kitchen. But we didn’t take out the door. You still could go in and out of the door. So in other words, you get three doors—front door, side door, and the back door—to the house. And that was good, because, well, in years to come, when we go grocery shopping and stuff like that, you just park the car right there, and from there, you in the house, you know. Rain or shine, you can park right there, and take the groceries in the house. No trouble. You no get wet. You know, people start closing the doors, take out the door. Open the wall, take out the door, you know. Or they didn’t think that was a necessary door, you know, really, really good door to get. If you no want open ’em, you don’t have to open ’em. But that was a place where you can make great use of. I think it’s great use.

WN: Had Japanese and Filipino living in New Mill Camp too?

SM: Yeah, yeah, my neighbor below was Japanese. He’s still there, in fact. (WN laughs.) The one
above me, that pau, no more. Well, that was Portuguese, but the original people that was there, not there anymore, was Japanese, Filipino.

WN: So your family had fourteen children, right? You’re the oldest.

SM: My grandfather.

WN: Oh, your grandfather’s family.

SM: My grandfather.

WN: What about you folks?

SM: Only me. My mother and father, I was the only son. No brothers, no sisters.

WN: Oh, your father was part of fourteen children.

SM: My father was part of fourteen children.

WN: So you’re the only child.

SM: Yeah.

WN: So what was it like growing up? What did you do to have good fun when you were a kid growing up in Pa’auilo?

SM: Anything. (WN laughs.) Anything, we do. Catch birds. We had traps, we had slingshot guns. Our slingshot was the guns we had. No more gun. You can use slingshot, shoot the birds, eat ’em.

WN: How you eat ’em?

SM: Cook ’em in the fire, regular way, same way of cooking. Eat that, salt and pepper. Start the grill up and . . .

DM: I think it was doves.

SM: Doves, mynah birds, whatever big bird you get, cook ’em and eat ’em.

WN: What mynah bird taste like?

(Laughter)

SM: Nothing wrong to it, nothing wrong. Mynah birds was good, really good. They fat.

WN: No more of the bitter taste?

SM: No, no. Was good.
WN: And what you used in your slingshot? Rock?

SM: Yeah, stones. Of course, we get the small guavas like that, too, you know.

WN: Oh, strawberry guava?

SM: No, regular guavas. Get the small ones. Round, more straight. Stones no go too straight. Not like the guavas or marble, stuff like that, something that's completely round, you get more accuracy. Yeah. I used to be pretty good, you know, with slingshot. Oh yes, even till today, I can still shoot one slingshot and hit what I want to hit.

WN: You made your own?

SM: I made my own. You get guava stick, you know the guava stick with the V [shape]. Or you get the guava stick with three—three points, one in the center like that. You cut out the center one, and you get this one here, you kind of round 'em out. Make 'em round, more like a U [shape]. Little bit more light, because you get this part here you cut out, get one stump over here, like.

WN: A stump in the middle.

SM: Yeah, the stump in the middle, eh? And you make more like one U. You heat 'em up over the fire. You heat 'em up, the bend. So the bend stays, like that. You tied 'em. You know, you get 'em tied, and you heat 'em up. You get wire, you tied 'em. Heat 'em up, and then let 'em dry itself out like that, and the thing come out with a U, like, eh? And the handle, take shots.

WN: What you use for the rubber? How you make the rubber?

SM: Well, those days, there was no synthetic rubber. Was real rubber tire tubes, eh? There was no such thing as synthetic stuff, where you pull and it no like go back. (WN laughs.) You know. Those days, rubber is rubber. When you pull 'em, it goes back. Or as long as you pull 'em, yeah, goes. Good material. And, of course, afterward, then they come out with the surgical rubbers, eh? Even spears, you know the spears? Fish, spear guns.

WN: Fish, yeah. Fishing spears.

SM: This was made of tire rubber. Not da kine synthetic kind, where you stretch 'em, you know, he no sling back, eh?

(Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: So, you said slingshot. What else you folks do?

SM: Play ball, play marbles, shoot marbles.

DM: Spin tops. Used to play tops.

SM: Yeah. Play yo-yo. Make your own yo-yos. No can buy. Gotta make your own. And, like I say, these kids nowadays, everything has to be bought.
DM: They don’t know how do it, that’s why.

SM: They don’t know how to make their own stuff like we used to do, you know? We gamble with the marbles, like anything else, gamble, eh. Play ball. The only thing was not in the picture too much was football. We didn’t know very much about football. And you know, it wasn’t really a sport at that time. Unless you go to college on the Mainland and then, you know, they had those kind games up there already, eh? Basketball, we play basketball.

WN: Did the plantation organize all this, or was all on your own?

SM: Well, during the kids growing up, this was our own, you know, school court, like. But as far as organizing sports by the plantation, that’s basketball, baseball. They take you anyplace to go play games, you know, baseball game. In the trucks, you know. Two trucks, three trucks, go. Come to Honoka’a, play baseball, go to Pāpā’aloa, play ball, Kohala, Hilo side. Team go play ball there, always trucks of people go. This was the taxis. Trucks. They take people go, supplied by the plantation. And basketball, baseball, same thing. Of course they had tennis, but the tennis was the Haoles’ game. (WN laughs.) Where the White people only go play that kind. Oh, what else? Girl chasing. Go chase girls around the place. (WN laughs.) Oh, yeah.

WN: So you had your own bunch of friends, then.

SM: Yeah, you have bunch of guys. Portuguese, Japanese, Filipino boys, all. Had plenty Japanese boys that, they don’t want to hang around with their own Japanese kind. (WN laughs.) Yeah. Young ones, they didn’t care the style of Japanese, you know, old people. Had to do this, had to do that. So they hang around with the Portuguese boys, or the Filipino boys, eh? And believe it or not, every week we get parties.

WN: Where?

SM: Pa’auilo.

WN: What, had a social hall or something?

SM: Yeah, had social hall. Had Japanese parties, Filipino party, Portuguese party.

WN: Family kind party? Or plantation party?

SM: Sometime family kind, sometime occasional get-togethers, things like that. Some kind religious parties. The Filipinos famous for that. And of course we had Hawaiian parties, kālua. Before was all mostly laulau they make, you know? Hawaiians was more famous making laulau than kālua. Yeah. In fact, the kāluas was the Portuguese, mostly. My uncles, yeah, they was kālua people. (WN laughs.) The Hawaiians, they go make one party, they call my uncle for make kālua. My uncle Walter, he used to be the kālua man. Or other uncle. All the Mendes boys could handle one kālua.

WN: You mean imu kind?

SM: Yeah, in the imu. They were very good in doing that. Yeah.
WN: You folks kāluaed pig, anything else?

SM: Pig or—well, afterwards they started learning how to make chicken, turkeys, sweet potatoes—they put a sweet potato inside—and ‘ulu, you know the ‘ulu? They kālua that. In fact, they kālua the ‘ulu alone. Yeah, and they make poi out of the ‘ulu. Like when you kālua and you make poi, it even taste better.

WN: The ‘ulu poi.

SM: Yeah. When you kālua ‘em, eh?

WN: Oh, they kālua the ‘ulu . . .


WN: Then they take ‘em out, and then they smash ‘em.

SM: Yeah, come soft, yeah? When they take ‘em out, and they make the poi out of that. Taste good, yeah, really good, the ‘ulu. And even the sweet potato, sometimes made poi out of that, too.

WN: You folks went hunting too?

SM: Yeah, I mean, not big-time hunting, but when we had slingshot, we could take rice with us, salt, shōyu, vinegar. And we go, we no come home. We go out, we shoot birds. That was our living, then, go hunting, shoot birds. Up we go. We no come home that night. Sometime, we no come [home for] two days. See, as long as get enough rice, eh. You stay, cook our rice with da kine coffee cans.

WN: Oh, coffee cans on top the open fire?

SM: Yeah, this was our pot. You get coffee can, you get a pot. In fact, water, you could get ‘em all around the place. Before . . .

WN: Where, in the streams?

SM: Yeah, in the gulches or—always had clean running water. I don’t know really why, but. Anyway, we had running water all the time.

WN: Let me turn over the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay.
SM: Yeah. We had spring waters all around the place. Pa'auilo had lot of spring-water catchments. You had even caves in the ground with big steel door. Yeah, the spring inside there, plenty water.

WN: That was for the plantation? Who put up the steel door?

SM: The plantation. So people no make trouble, they put doors. And cement, and put steel doors outside, and the water can come out. Where the water come out, leaking, it’s dripping, out of there. And then they have pipes coming out from there. Kūka'iau side had more places than Pa'auilo side. In fact, there was one spring up there, way up in the forest there, my grandfather’s hand print.

WN: Oh, yeah?

SM: Yeah. My Souza [i.e., maternal] grandfather [Joachim Souza], he took care all those kind things.

WN: Still there?

SM: Yeah, it’s still there. Way up, you gotta go up the gulch and go inside the forest. And still there. As far as I can remember, nobody wen broke that place down. And get pipelines come there, come all the way down. In fact, that very same gulch have two water springs. One up there, and one down by the highway, close to the highway. In fact, was right next to the highway, [tape inaudible]. The old road. And right up side there, they had one. Get one cave there with the steel door, and the water coming out of there. But the one up there is more like one dam. Cement. They made cement into it, you know? Keep the water coming to one spot.

WN: That’s how they irrigated the fields?

SM: No, no. This was drinking water.

WN: Drinking water, oh.

SM: Yeah, like I say, Pa'auilo was very poor in irrigated, because the only place that used to irrigate was Pā'auhau. Even Honoka'a, I no remember if they had too much irrigation.

WN: Because of the rain?

SM: Yeah. Well, Pā'auhau was the only one that had irrigation. They make ditches. And plenty of cane. And of course, then, afterwards they come about with this kind pipe type of irrigation [i.e., sprinklers]. Pā'auhau came up with that, with the [spray] guns. And then the other plantations went into that, Pā'auhau, Haina, Pa'auilo.

WN: That’s the same kind water they use for the flumes?

SM: Yeah.

WN: But never have flumes up here too much?
SM: No, no. Pā'auhau, yeah.

WN: Pā'auhau had.

SM: And Haina.

WN: Haina had.

SM: 'Cause the water come from this side, go till Pa‘auilo, about the center of Pa‘auilo. Beyond that, no more water—I mean, no more flumes. You couldn't flume any cane, anyway, because not enough water for flume the cane. That's why that had this kind tin bins. Cable from down the bottom of the train track, go all the way up the mountain, this cable. And in between, they get power to help the thing [tin bins] go up. Down, no problem, but go up, they had to have little more strength. 'Cause they supply anything from cane to fertilizer, poison, that's how they ship 'em up to the [cane fields] . . .

WN: And they used to harvest [cane] like that too?

SM: Yeah, yeah, that's how they harvest. . .

WN: The cane inside the . . .

SM: The cane inside bundles.

WN: The bundles.

SM: And they sling 'em on those wires, they send 'em down [to the mill].

WN: And the mill was down by the ocean.

SM: Yeah. Well, they send 'em down that way, and then into the cane cars, and the cane cars take 'em to the mill.

WN: Oh, I see.

SM: They had certain place where they would do that, supply that way. Pa‘auilo was a poor [cane-growing] place because of [lack of] water. No had much trench water strong enough to do all those kind irrigation, or fluming and things like that.

WN: So this spring water and everything up there, did you folks go fishing in there too?

SM: We could not really fish. Crayfish, you know, da kine small crayfish. Plenty there.

WN: Oh, yeah, crayfish?

SM: Oh, plenty, yeah.

WN: What about 'o'opu and 'ōpae?
SM: No, no. Not this kind. Only the 'opae.

WN: The 'opae.

SM: That's what we used to get. Crayfish, that's afterwards that came in, later parts of the years that came in. But all the time was that 'opae, you know. Ho, you make a dinner with that. (WN laughs.) [Gather] one gallon in no time. We go work. With the mules, we go ride the mules, yeah? Go work. After lunch, the water gallon [container] empty already, eh? Fill 'em up with the gulch water. Put the 'opae all inside that. Get one gallon bring home. Bring home that.

WN: How you used to cook 'opae?


WN: You folks---you said had lot of parties. Like, for what? Did they have, like, holidays and stuff? They had parties?

SM: Yeah, holidays, parties, da kine wedding parties, or birthday parties. Filipinos were shameless with those kind of things, you know. Birthday parties or stuff like that. Whenever they make one party for you, you going get money because people going give you money, stuff like that. If they baptize one kid, they get, what, five, six, seven, or more godfathers. It's all money, you know? Oh, yeah. You come rich, you get that kind.

WN: They give everybody who comes?

SM: Yeah, I guess anybody who come. They feel happy. They give five, ten, twenty dollars, fifty dollars or more, they give. The Filipinos, yeah. Was their style of doing things. Then they had church affairs, rosaries and stuff like that. They pray, and things like that. They make one prayer. Like somebody make, pass away, like that. They get about nine days, or what, praying. Then they make party after that. You go to the house, the evening, you know, they pray, pray, pray, pray. Then, I think the ninth day, they make celebration party. Get together. I don't know. The Japanese get that kind same thing, too. So many days, and then they make one little gathering, yeah?

WN: Had how many Catholic churches over there?

SM: One Catholic church.

WN: And you folks went to that.

SM: Yeah.

WN: Filipinos went to the same Catholic church?

SM: Yeah.
WN: So you had a lot of fun, but what kind chores you folks had to do when you were a kid?

SM: Chores?

WN: Yeah.

SM: Oh, clean yard. Wash . .

WN: How big was your yard?

SM: . . . dishes. Ah, small place, eh? Bush and stem. Make garden, clean the garden.

WN: Well, what did you have in your garden?

SM: Oh, all kind. You name it, we had. And you plant any kind, he grow. Anything you like, you plant, he grow. Nowadays, he grow, but some of them don't survive with the green bugs, or beetles and all those kind things. But those days, oh, anything. I was a good gardener, you know. I used to plant things. Anything I plant, he grow. (WN chuckles.) Ah, yeah, I had a good hand for growing things. Had my own garden. In those days, you make garden, you make 'em big, you know. Make one bed, and you plant your vegetables or whatever on top there. Carrots, beets, lettuce, all those kind things, you make, plant.

WN: You want to take a rest? Take a break?

SM: No, eh, only get kink inside here.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

SM: Yeah, I used to make good gardens, you know. And then we'd go play. Oh, you do your chores first, whatever, you go play. If you no do 'em, you catch hell afternoon.

WN: (Laughs) Did you catch hell plenty times?

SM: Oh, yeah, plenty times. (WN laughs.) Catch hell with the strap (WN laughs), with the belt.

WN: That's how your father used to scold you?

SM: Yeah. Before those days here---no such thing as you no can lick the kids. You lick 'em the way you like. 'Course, nowadays, "You lick me, I going call the police." Oh, they [i.e., parents] scared.

My boy [say], "You hit me, I going call the police." I stand up on top the bed, I whack 'em yet. With the hand, I whack 'em.

"Go the police now." Nobody call police. That's it. That's how. No let 'em trapping you. You trapping them first. And if he call the police, the police going find out what it was, eh?

WN: So what was school like? Pa'auilo School?
SM: Pretty rough. Pretty rough kind teachers we had. You know, just the other day—I don't know if you see in the paper had one guy, just passed away. He was a short man, you know. Not very tall. He was one agriculturist teacher, and math teacher, all that kind. He was there in Pa'auiilo for a while. He was born in Pa'auiilo. Well, he's a schoolteacher. Pilau bugga, that. He come down there with the chalk, and broke your head with the chalk. Hard, you know, the chalk. (WN chuckles.) Sometimes he stay by the blackboard, writing something. He turn around and he see you playing around or doing something. He get the eraser, throw the eraser at you. Yeah. Wild bugga, that.

WN: He was math teacher?

SM: Math. And agriculture. But good fun. He was good fun, you know. But when you stay inside the classroom, you watch out. But you go outside, good. He used to take us park, [play] basketball like that, eh? He take us all over the place for play basketball. In his own car, you know, go. Yeah, and had wild kind [of] principal too. Pilau buggas. He put chili pepper in my mouth one time. I swear at the teacher. And he put chili pepper in my mouth. Bumbai I stand up and tell him, “Thank you.” I used to eat that kind chili pepper all the time. (WN laughs.) Round chili pepper. Red, green, yeah?

WN: So he put 'em in your mouth.

SM: Put 'em in the mouth for eat.

WN: And you didn't think was hot?

SM: No. (WN laughs.) Not like the Hawaiian chili pepper. You know the Hawaiian chili pepper?

WN: Skinny kind?

SM: Yeah. Skinny one, eh?

WN: Yeah. (Laughs)

SM: That, you no fool around.

WN: How long you had to keep 'em in your mouth?

SM: Chew. We eat 'em.

WN: Oh, you eat 'em. And what, you make like. . .

SM: Make you eat 'em.

WN: You make believe was hot? Or . . .


WN: So you were kolohe student?
SM: Yeah, played, like anybody else. (WN laughs.) I mean, all the boys over there pilau buggas, yeah? There's different friends, different guys. And of course, one more still there, Anthony. But some of the guys, they died already. Well, get some over there yet. Like, now I thinking, get two more that I really know. Three. Three boys left, I think, down there, and myself. Ah, well, maybe five or six people, no? That I can say that are around the place yet.

WN: How many people were in your class?

SM: Oh, quite a few. Quite a few people. [To DM] Doris!

DM: Yeah?

SM: Where that class picture of mine?

WN: Oh, I think I saw that.

SM: At least you see what kind class I had before.

WN: How many rooms in the school? Had plenty rooms?

SM: Yeah, plenty rooms.

WN: Not just one room, eh?

SM: As far as that, plenty rooms. You saw the one [picture] with the family, eh? Mendes family.

WN: Yeah, yeah. I saw that.

SM: Ah, that's the one there.

WN: Yeah. Oh.

DM: All the children. Two classes, eh?

WN: Yeah.

SM: Nowadays, they tell, oh, too much kids for one teacher.

WN: This is one grade?

SM: Two grades. Well, same grade.

WN: One . . .

SM: Seventh.

WN: Oh, but---same grade but two classes.

SM: Yeah.
WN: So you played basketball in the school. What else you did, other than . . .

SM: Baseball, basketball. Those days, that’s about all we had. Baseball or basketball. Even volleyball wasn’t too popular. Then, of course, marbles. We used to go out and challenge with marbles, you know? Come Honoka’a, Pāpa’aloa, stuff like that. We challenge marbles, marble games, we used to go. And yo-yo. We play yo-yo games. I used to be pretty good with yo-yo, too, you know. My grandson, now he get yo-yo. He stay learn. I teaching him, I teach him what to do, what way to make. He learning. He learning now. Even . . .

WN: Nowadays, the yo-yos easy, yeah?

SM: Oh, same thing. Only now, they make ’em little bit more fancy, noises and lights, and stuff like that. But before we used to make our own yo-yos. You cut a piece wood and we make our own yo-yo. Or you get thread. You know the ladies get the sewing thread? All out of wood, eh? What do they call that?

WN: Oh, the spool.

SM: The spool. Then you cut that spool in half, and you put one pencil in between the center, you make your own yo-yo.

WN: The thing was heavy enough to go down?

SM: Yeah, yeah. Well, of course, get the string, the one throw ’em, yeah?

WN: Yeah, yeah.

SM: String.

WN: Wow.

SM: Then you go home, you make your own. Or you get chopsticks, that game, eh?

WN: Chopstick?

SM: Yeah, when you . . .

WN: Oh, in between?

SM: No, you play. You let ’em go the things, like this. And then you pick up one more.

WN: Pick-up-sticks, they call ’em [today].

SM: Chopsticks. And you could challenge that kind. And go from one school to the other. Big game, you know, that.

WN: The chopsticks. You guys used to play against other schools?

SM: Yeah.
WN: And that's the one, you cannot move any other stick.

SM: Yeah, yeah. (WN chuckles.) You better be damn good, you know, for play that.

WN: (Chuckles) What other elementary schools had, besides Pa'auilo, around here?

SM: Each place had their own school. Kūka'iau had their own, Pa'auilo, Pā'auhau, Honoka'a, Kukuihaele. In fact, where we was living, the school was right up side. I don't know how high that was—I was small boy. But I know the school, and the people that used to run that school used to live down below us—Reinhardt.

WN: Reinhardt.

SM: Reinhardt. Principal, like. And get one big jackfruit tree there. You know what is jackfruit? The big fruit come out from the tree. You never see that, though?

WN: What you call it?

SM: Jackfruit. [Related to the breadfruit and contains an edible pulp and nutritious seeds.]

WN: Oh, jackfruit, no.

SM: You no remember that?

WN: Oh, more like sausage.

SM: Round.

WN: Brown.

SM: Yeah, yeah, brown.

WN: Oh, I thought they call 'em sausage tree or something like that.

SM: No, not—the sausage tree, get small one, like that.

WN: Oh, I don't know...

SM: But this was big.

WN: Oh, yeah?

SM: They get big, the buggas. And then the seeds inside, big seeds like that. And you boil that with salt, taste just like peanuts.

WN: Oh, yeah?

SM: Yeah, good. People go crazy for that. And when you pick that jackfruit, you eat the inside. Yellow, the meat inside. Sweet. Good taste, too, you know, that. But too much of the sweet,
real sweet, eh? That's how we used to eat. And of course we had the mountain apples. You know the mountain apple, eh?

WN: Yeah.

SM: We go pick that in the gulches. Pull down from the tree. That tree pretty hard for climb, you know. (WN chuckles.) Yeah, that, quick for broke, the branches.

WN: Mountain apple, what else? Guava?

SM: Guava, bananas. Ho, bananas all around the gulches. Pick up bananas, take 'em, you hide 'em. Sometime you look the tree, eh, little more, all ready. Cut the tree down, take the bananas, hide 'em in the grass. Or we dig hole, put 'em inside one bag, you know. And dig, cover 'em up in the ground.

WN: How come you gotta hide 'em?

SM: They get ripe quick, eh?

WN: So when you bury 'em, they get ripe quick . . .

SM: Oh, yeah. When you bury 'em, quicker to get ripe. Or you take one bunch bananas, you put 'em in one bag. And you hide 'em inside one dark place. In no time, he comes ripe.

WN: Really?

SM: Yeah. Quick get ripe. Like, we used to dig hole, put 'em inside a bunch of grass, then you cover 'em all up with more grass. Come ripe. And of course, the bananas, the rats come help themself too. But mostly we'd bury them in one bag. Next week, he stay ripe already. Of course, when you pick 'em, is—the banana [bunch] is full already. You no expect to get da kine young banana and make 'em ripe. You get the banana [bunch] is kind of full, you know, in the full stage already. And then you bury 'em up. Yeah, of course, we had oranges around the place. They get big oranges around the gulches, or near the gulch, or lemons, apples. Certain place had apples. Regular apples, you know.

WN: Regular apples?

SM: Small apples, you know, the small apples. I don't know what they call that already. Good for roasting, those kind of apples.

WN: How you eat 'em?

SM: Roasted. You cook 'em, eh?

WN: Yeah, and then . . .

SM: You put sugar and cinnamon . . .

WN: Cinnamon. Oh, I see. Yeah.
SM: And you make roast apple. Good. Of course, you no use too plenty sugar or whatever, with the cinnamon.

WN: You can eat 'em plain too?

SM: Oh, yeah. Little bit sour. Little bit sour. But they like it, you know. Sour. In between kind, you know. Not all sour. In between, you can eat. Yeah. Then certain places had plum. You go pick plum. You know, the small plums. Yeah, in our growing-up days, you no starve. You no starve. Plenty food around the place. Even now, you still get food around the place so you can survive.

WN: You just gotta know how to find 'em, eh?

SM: Just know what kind of food you can eat, that's all. I mean, something that eaten every day. Oranges, bananas, and plums, and apples, even taro. Taro, you can eat, you know. Get big-leaf kind taro, you no fool around with that. We used to cook 'em. They get such thing as sweet potato, wild. You know, people throw away the leaves and whatnot. The vine, they throw 'em away, and he grow. And you get sweet potato out of that. Yeah. And wild potato. You get the regular potato, wild kind, eh? Grow out in the wild.

WN: Had squash too?

SM: Squash. What they call pipínolas.

WN: Pipínola.

SM: You know? That small fruit. The one, you can eat the shoots and all.

WN: So your mother did a lot of the cooking?

SM: Oh, she was a cook.

WN: Yeah. What kind of things she cook?

SM: You name it. She cook anything. Soup, Portuguese soup was what we wanted. She made, she cook.

WN: She made bread, too?

SM: Yeah. She didn't make the white bread. Mostly what she make is the sweet bread. My daughter, my youngest daughter, she made two times already, sweet bread. Just like the grandma.

WN: Oh, yeah?

SM: Just like the grandmother. Nobody else make that like my mother.

WN: They use the regular oven?
SM: Regular stove, this kind gas, electric stove.

WN: So your mother didn’t have the outside oven.

SM: No. We no have this kind. My grandmother had 'em up there. But already, by that time, my mother was making the sweet bread, no more da kine outside oven. I mean, the oven was there, but leak already. The heat leak out all the time. You have to—what I guess you would do, you get the regular type of cement, for the heat. And you could put 'em over that, and you still get a good oven, you know. That was not only for bread, you roast inside there. You know, you make vinha d’alhos.

WN: Make what?

SM: Vinha d’alhos.

WN: Oh, yeah, vinha d’alhos, yeah.

SM: Adobo, eh? You know adobo. The same thing. You put 'em inside there [the oven], and they roast 'em [the meat] in there. Good for eat, that. My Āhualoa grandmother used to make that. Ho, good for eat. And then, she had the kind wooden stove in the house.

WN: Which grandmother is this?

SM: My Āhualoa [i.e., paternal] grandmother [Amelia Mendes].

WN: Oh, Āhualoa.

SM: My Mendes side. And she’d roast in the oven outside, and she’d bring 'em in the house, put 'em inside that oven. Stay there a few days, you know. The heat not that great heat. It just keep it warm, inside there. The thing keep 'em warm. And she get oil, you know, the regular lard. And she soften 'em up, put 'em inside the big crock, put meat inside, the roasted meat already like that, put 'em inside there, put lard, that’s how they preserve 'em. They make sausage, they make the lard, they put the sausage inside, put some more lard inside, sausage, and preserve 'em. That’s how they used to preserve da kine cooked foods like that. Be real tasty, tasted good, compared to what, fresh food, like that. That used to be good.

WN: So you folks made the—she made the sausage out of the pork?

SM: Pork. They used to raise pigs. They make pork . . .

WN: Who raised pigs? Your parents?

SM: Yeah, my grandmother, especially Pa’auilo [i.e., maternal] grandmother [Mary Souza].

WN: Oh, your Pa’auilo grandmother.

SM: She used to raise lot of pigs, one time. I mean, at least four or five pigs one time, you know, she raising. One grow, grow, grow, like that.
WN: Had chickens . . .

SM: People used to . . .

WN: Chickens too?

SM: Oh, yeah, chickens. Oh, everybody had chicken. Everybody had chickens and ducks. My father was famous for ducks. He raise good ducks. And he use slop. You know slop?

WN: Yeah.

SM: Like the Filipinos used to use a lot of rice, eh? And they cook rice in the morning, they go work. They come home, leftover rice inside the pot, that. When my father go down there, pick up the slop in the afternoons, sometimes he bring a whole bucket all full rice. That kind slop, you know. And of course, they put 'em inside a pan, take out the—if get bones, like that, you take out the bones. Give to the ducks. The ducks living on rice, nothing dirty. Not dirty because the pigs eat 'em, no dirty. And the ducks eat 'em, no problem. And, well, this was the breeding ducks mostly. The kind stay on the ground like that. And of course, the ones that he had in the pens, that was for eat.

You see, you gotta know about the ducks, too. You know, you no can just kill one duck any time you feel like. You can kill 'em any time you feel like (WN chuckles), but going take you one month before you get the feathers all out from the body. (WN laughs.) You know, duck funny kind, you know. Hard for come out, that feathers. So, you get da kine eyebrow pluckers, take out the feathers. So you put 'em inside the—in the house.

When they born, you mark that down. So many days, so many months, whatever, then you kill 'em. When you kill 'em, all the feathers come out.

WN: Oh, yeah? Oh, they gotta be a certain age.

SM: Yeah. If you get 'em—the feather, funny kind, you know. If you kill 'em the wrong time. You gotta wait another month or so, then you kill 'em. The feathers more ready, eh? That's how it was, you know. It's like they molt, after their molting time. Yeah.

WN: How your mother used to prepare the duck?

SM: Oh, she roast 'em, or she cook 'em, the way she like. Just like [how] she prepares one chicken. Plenty guys they like the duck, you know. We get 'em all up, and they come get 'em. They buy 'em. And some of the Filipinos, they expect my mother to cook 'em. Cook 'em and they come buy 'em. They pay for that. Oh, yeah, they pay big money for that. If you say, "Oh, ten dollar," they give you at least twenty dollars. You know, that's how the Filipinos was. They like the animal, they pay for it. Even the pig. My grandmother raise pig and all that. They pay big money for the pig. That's how it was, you know, the Filipinos, before. They good people, you know. I mean, they not Jew. They willing to pay for what they get.

Well, my mother was a cook. She was hired by the plantation for cooking for the bachelors. Plenty Haole bachelors come.
WN: What did they come for?

SM: Work for the plantation. Like supervisor, superintendent, and all da kine stuff.

WN: Oh, she used to cook for them.

SM: Yeah, used to cook . . .

WN: She cook for Filipino bachelors too?

SM: No, they had this Tanouye Restaurant down there. That's where we used to buy our ice cream from.

WN: Oh, Tanouye.

SM: Tanouye. Da kine—what do you call that kind juice you make? Kool-Aid?

WN: Kool-Aid, yeah.

SM: Kool-Aid. And mix it up. Put 'em inside the ice trays, they make ice cubes. This was our ice cream. Penny, one cent, one. You keep all the pennies for go over there, buy ice cream. And of course, the Japanese had place for cook themself, Japanese. Nakashima, he used to cook for the Japanese. Old guy, get hotel above, too. Had one hotel there. And right next, had one more hotel.

WN: Who stayed in the hotel?

SM: All kinds of guys. All kinds of people.

WN: You mean, like people passing through . . .

SM: Yeah. You get people. The restaurant. Da kine guys who go salesman, salesperson they stop. They . . .

WN: From Honolulu, like that.

SM: Yeah, they live in the hotels. Like I say, Pa'auilo was the attraction place. You know, the train used to come till there, and whatever groceries used to come through there. So the people who get the stuff, they come there and supply the stuff from there. Yeah.

WN: Okay, let me change tape.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 26-1-2-96; SIDE ONE

WN: Okay, so, about how many stores were there in the town?
SM: Oh, they had a plantation store.

WN: Oh, yeah, plantation-run store?

SM: That's what---it's still there, yet. That big building above the---you know the overpass you see in Pa'auilo there?

WN: Oh, that's where that snack—Earl's Snack Shop?

SM: Yeah. Earl's Snack Shop.

WN: Yeah. Oh, that's the [former site of the] plantation store?

SM: That's [the former] plantation store, that. Until the father wen take over the place. Earl's father take over that store. It was plantation store before that. So he was already prior to there, working there, eh?

WN: Mm hmm [yes].

SM: He was in Kūka'iau Store at first, then he came to Pa'auilo Store. More big, eh? After that plantation store, get Nakahara Store, get the Filipino store, get Miyazaki Store, and another Filipino store there. That's one, two, three, four, five stores.

WN: And they all sold . . .

SM: Six.

WN: They all sold the same kind stuff?

SM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Yeah. Groceries, feed, and . . .

SM: Yeah, yeah. All had the same things all around. Then, like I said, they had gasoline, they had kerosene—pumps. Like Pa'auilo Store there, where the overpass is right now in Pa'auilo.

WN: Yeah.

SM: That's where the gasoline pump was. The gasoline pump was down there. 'Cause the road used to run right in front of the store, you see. Where the overpass is, had one highway through there. The old highway through, then you go up Pa'auilo Store.

WN: Yeah, the road is still there, eh?

SM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Right through the town. That was the road before.

SM: That's the old road, yeah.
WN: Before they built this main [Hawai‘i Belt Road] . . .

SM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: I see.

SM: Yeah.

WN: So, you said had pool halls too?

SM: Yeah, pool halls. Two pool halls, beer bars. Well, the beer bars—afterwards, after the war, then the beer bars was built.

WN: Tell me about World War II. You were about ten years old when the war broke out.

SM: Yeah.

WN: How did that affect you folks, the war?

SM: Never affect us. Except you had to get blackout. You know, your house had to be black [i.e., no lights]. You no can come outside nighttime.

WN: You had electricity by then?

SM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Had.

SM: You no can come out nighttime. My father was some kind of [block] warden, too. And we had one policeman named Pestana. He used to live way up the top, Pa‘auilo Mā‘uka, way up. Had his own place up there. And he was one Honoka‘a policeman. Police department. He come, and then he go back Pa‘auilo. This was his place, you know. Pa‘auilo, he take care that [i.e., patrolled Pa‘auilo during the war]. Of course, when he like, he can come back Honoka‘a, and then he go back for a little bit. But this was his round, Pa‘auilo. When he used to come my house, he used to bring coffee. You know, he’s friend of my father. So he bring coffee from his place. They had [i.e., grew] coffee up there. They raise ’em, they grind ’em all up, and they bring ’em down. And nighttime, my mother make coffee. When he like coffee, he come there, drink coffee, see? So he always come there, drink coffee, my house.

’Course, my uncle was a policeman too. These pictures.

WN: Okay. Well maybe later.

SM: The big policeman there, that’s my uncle, policeman.

WN: Oh, yeah.

SM: He work his way up all the way till captain. Yeah, then, like I say, that guy used to come. We had blackout. And our neighbor down side, one day, he came and, you know, I guess the
shade show light, eh? Little bit. Boy, he went down the house, he pound the door, he go inside the house, he broke all the bulbs in the house. (WN laughs.) No more head, you know, the guy. Yeah, they were stupid, these policeman they had before. They wasn’t really smart. They probably—they could write their name, by the last, probably back-side, I think. You know (WN laughs), that’s how smart they was. They give you one ticket, you gotta write your name inside the ticket. (WN laughs.) Yeah. They give you one ticket, you gotta write your own name. That’s how they was, some of them.

WN: So the policemen were all—they were like block wardens, too. I mean, wardens for . . .

SM: Yeah. And had only maybe about eight policemen. Not like nowadays.

WN: Eight for the whole—just for Pa‘auilo, or for the whole . . .

SM: No, the whole place.

WN: The whole place.

SM: Hāmākua.

WN: Oh, yeah. The whole . . .

SM: Pa‘auilo to Kukuihaele to Waipi‘o. From Pa‘auilo to Waipi‘o, they took care.

WN: Plus the valley too?

SM: Yeah. Plus . . .

WN: Waipi‘o Valley.

SM: . . . the valley too.

WN: They’d go down.

SM: They go down with horse that time. Come back with horse. Go down with horse, come back with horse. Eight policemen, they not all at work one time, you know. Maybe three policemen nighttime. Three or four, like that. Different shift. And that’s how they make up the eight. I mean, not eight policemen at one time working. It was in between.

WN: But you said, too, had plenty soldiers stationed up Waimea [during World War II].

SM: Yeah, Waimea. And along the coastline they had—this place, they had soldiers, or marines, sailors, worked the ocean.

WN: They stayed down there? Or they . . .

SM: Yeah, they stayed over here. Their outpost [Camp Tarawa] down there. They get their guns, machine gun, stuff like that, watching the oceanside. Ocean front. Right through the line, right through the line they had.
WN: What, did the soldiers used to come to Pa'auilo?

SM: Oh, yeah. As far as that, yeah. We had more fun in Pa'auilo than anyplace else, I think. Yeah, it true. Because Pa'auilo was a place where they—the community was together, you know. They made out things. Like I said, parties and things like that. Every week they get dance in Pa'auilo, in the gym. Was during the war. That's right in the middle.

WN: During the war.

SM: Just before the war, they made the gym.

WN: Oh, before the war.

SM: Yeah, they made the gym. Before the war, they complete the gym already. Was still new, yet, in other words. But they come there, dance. Like people from Pāhala, up the other side, they come Pa'auilo, dance. [From] Kona they come dance in Pa'auilo. Pa'auilo was a real popular place, you know, in those days.

WN: You said the beer bars opened during the war.

SM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Before that, they didn't have?

SM: They had. Like I said, they had one there. And big bar, you know. Big bar, like that, big. Horseshoe-type bar. Big. Plenty people can sit on 'em. And on the side, they get table you can sit on, too. Yeah. Lot of fights.

WN: Oh, yeah?

SM: Lot of fights. The MPs [military police], they all the time get MPs take care the fights.

WN: The fights were between servicemen and locals or servicemen only?

SM: Marines with marines. Sometimes [army] soldiers, soldiers and the marines. They never like one another, anyway. And they always end up down Pa'auilo, (chuckles) so they always getting into one fight. Of course, they used to chase the Japanese around the place, or the Filipinos, they chase 'em around the place. The Filipino's walking with his bottle. One gallon of shōyu. They take his shōyu, they going give the Filipino dirty licking [beating] down there. They take shōyu—take the bottle of shōyu from them. They thought was wine. Come to find out shōyu, boy, they give him licking. Yeah.

The Japanese (laughs), they no stay out too long, you know. The Japanese go to one party, those guys go together. They no want to go alone, because the marines, just pass there, oh, they chase 'em. Oh, they chase 'em, they bust 'em up, boy. Yeah. 'Cause they come back from the war front, eh?

WN: Yeah.
SM: They never like the Japanese for nothing.

WN: Anybody get killed?

SM: No. As far as that, no more. But they get licking, though, as far as that. Yeah. In fact, the hotel they had there, Arita Hotel, had one big wahine over there, you know. Regular whore, that.

WN: Oh, yeah? Had during the war?

SM: Yeah. Live downstairs. And you can open the door, she stay with one guy inside there. Open the door, go talk story, she no care. Keep on going, they no care. We go shine shoes. And lot of time we talk story with her. You like kaukau for eat, stuff for eat, she making all the time. Yeah.

WN: You folks, go along with the servicemen?

SM: Oh, yeah. And make big money out of them.

WN: Oh, yeah? Like how?

SM: Shine shoes. We used to shine shoes.

WN: How much one pair?

SM: One pair, twenty-five cents. But they give you dollar, five dollar, ten dollar, and all kind stuff, they give 'em to you, pau. They no like the change. That's how it was. Some, cheap buggas, they only give you quarter, that. (WN laughs.) Yeah, some of them cheap buggas, they no give. But some, oh, big money they give you.

WN: I bet had lot of you guys, then, shining shoes.

SM: Yeah. Quite a few of us. All the young boys, all friends, eh. Always shine shoes. But not Japanese kids. Japanese kids no used to go, you know. They no shine around the place.

WN: Oh, yeah.

SM: But even Filipinos very scarce, you know. Mostly the Portuguese boys used to make money with [servicemen].

WN: So you were about ten years old, eh?

SM: Yeah, ten . . .

WN: Shining shoes.

SM: . . . eleven, twelve.
WN: Anything else you did besides shine shoes to make money?

SM: Well, like I say, we get the summer job, work plantation. Hō hana. Hoe grass in the cane field, so they call 'em hō hana. Go in one gang, regular workers, you know. Go with them, morning time, come home, eat, they kaukau. They give you kaukau, too, eh? They give you food, too. The Japanese ladies, ho, plenty food they take, you know. Yeah.

WN: Oh, you mean the Japanese lady workers.

SM: Yeah, the lady workers. When they go in the field, they open up the bag, it's just like one table of food, yeah. Sometimes the Filipinos, they bring two varieties of stuff. Portuguese, very seldom that you see 'em with two variety. Get plenty meat, meat, or whatever. Sausage, only sausage. They no make double kind food like that. But the Japanese people, ladies, plenty food they make. Oh, yeah. Little bit, little bit, little bit, you get full, boy. You get daikon, da kine cabbage, and the red fish, and the long skinny fish with seaweed, and stuff like that, you put on top the rice. Only that enough for you eat.

WN: So you never had to bring your own lunch then.

SM: You take our own lunch, but the rest you get there. Yeah.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: So you---how much you used to make working in the fields in the summer?

SM: Hey, I don't know. I no can remember that.

WN: Shine shoes better, then.

SM: Oh, yeah. Shine shoes we make much more money. (WN laughs.) Yeah, I make more money than my father. Yeah.

WN: I bet the stores did well, eh? Stores . . .

SM: Sure.

WN: . . . made good money, yeah?

SM: Yeah.

WN: During the war.

DM: That's how lot of people got big with the bars.

WN: Yeah, the bars.

SM: The stores make money with us. Buy candies and pastries.

WN: You folks get money now.
SM: They go buy candy, buy pastries and stuff like that.

WN: Oh, so, okay, '41 was World War II. And '46 had tsunami over here, eh? Had over here [April 1, 1946].

SM: Yeah.

WN: You remember that?

SM: Yeah.

WN: What you remember about that?

SM: Well, like Laupāhoehoe was destroyed. Laupāhoehoe School, all the school kids and things like that.

WN: Where were you when the waves hit?

SM: I was in Honolulu at that time.

WN: Oh, you were in Honolulu.

SM: Yeah. I was in Honolulu for a while. And I was working with Hawaiian Pineapple Company. They had a job down there for work summertime. You know, I wen go work summer—they used to hire from all the islands. During the summer. And I went work with them. Then, they gave me one job with the experiment people. I experiment pineapple, take care of pineapples experiments.

WN: So, how long were you there?

SM: I don’t know. Not that much.

WN: Oh, but this after you pau school, then.

SM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: 'Cause you paued eighth grade.

SM: Yeah, yeah. Then they give me one job in the [Hawaiian Pineapple Company] cannery.

WN: Oh, Honolulu.

SM: Yeah, afterwards they offer me one job in the cannery, inspector. Oh, clean job. But my mind was to go school, da kine technical school. Was right up side there. So I went technical school over there.

WN: Where?

SM: Honolulu.
WN: Oh. This was, what, after eighth grade?

SM: Yeah. Then afterwards, we found out, had technical school Hilo. They wen open one branch in Hilo. So I wen move back over here to attend the school—Hilo Technical School, Hilo.

WN: You didn’t want to go to high school?

SM: No.

WN: How come?

SM: Not very much that time. High school no . . .

WN: Had Honoka‘a at that time?

SM: Honoka‘a School. But, you know, I wanted to learn how to be a carpenter, da kine bench carpenter, bench work. You know, make this kind stuff, make tables, or things like—not be one house builder. I never like be one house builder.

WN: So you went Honolulu for a little while, you worked Hawaiian Pine[apple Company].

SM: Yeah.

WN: You wanted to go tech school, so you went technical school little while in Honolulu, then opened up in Hilo.

SM: Yeah.

WN: Technical school. So you came back [to the Big Island].

SM: Yeah.

WN: And what, did you live Pa‘auilo?

SM: Yeah. Pa‘auilo. I used to go Hilo every day.

WN: Every day from Pa‘auilo. This was right after the war.

SM: Yeah. We had several guys from Pa‘auilo used to go school there. Japanese boys, two, three Japanese boys used to go. We went on the bus. You pay so much. For three guys, we pay so much, and that’s it. At the same time, I could get job, plantation, work plantation.

WN: So how come you wanted to come back to Pa‘auilo? Lot of people, you know, after the war, they—during the war, they moved to Honolulu and they stayed over there, they lived over there. What about you?

SM: Honolulu scary place to live. (DM laughs.)

WN: Even back in 1940?
SM: Oh, yeah. Scary place to live, that. Honolulu, it always been a trouble place, you know. I no care for Honolulu for nothing. Terrible place to live. I used to live in Kaimukī. I went Kaimukī with one of my aunties up there. I never like 'em. I went with one of my aunties down Damon Tract, and from there, I went straight back to Pa'auilo.

WN: So you were—so during that tsunami, you were in Honolulu.

SM: Yeah.

WN: During that ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] strike [in 1946], you were in Honolulu, too. The first ILWU strike . . .

SM: Yeah.

WN: . . . you were in Honolulu. Oh, okay.

SM: That's some junk—-I had no business with union at that time.

WN: Yeah.

SM: And like I said, never used to affect us. Until I get married, on my own.

WN: I think next time, I want to come and talk about you getting married, and then talk about your sugar plantation days. Yeah? So, I'll turn this off right now.

END OF INTERVIEW
Tape Nos. 26-3-2-96 and 26-4-2-96

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Stanley Mendes (SM)

Honoka'a, Hawai'i

July 31, 1996

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[NOTE: Also present at the interview is Kathleen Doris Mendes (DM), SM's wife.]

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Stanley Mendes, on July 31, 1996, and we're at his home in Honoka'a, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, let's see. Why don't we start today by talking about when you started working for Pa'auilo plantation [i.e., Hāmākua Mill Company]. I know you said after eighth grade, you had some temporary jobs, yeah?

SM: Yeah.

WN: But then, when did you start working, permanently, full-time for...?

SM: Nineteen fifty, that's when I was hired full-time for the sugar company. Nineteen fifty.

WN: How come you decided to work full-time?

SM: Well, there's nothing else to do, you know. Nothing else to do around the place. Plantation was only job you can expect, you know, to make money, eh? And I had pretty good jobs down the line, so no trouble.

WN: So you were about nineteen years old, then.

SM: Yeah, well, eighteen. After eighteen I started to work. But every year I work [before that], you know, part-time work. Every year I had job to do there on the plantation.

WN: Like, what kind jobs did you have when you were working part-time?

SM: Oh, cover [cane] seed, hō hana—that's what they call the guys, go with the old people, go hō hana—plant [cane] seed, all those kind of work. In the harvesting department, go after the drag line. You know, they had one drag line—instead of cutting cane—they had this long line, long cable, go from one tractor to the other. And one pull the empty one back, empty rake, they pull 'em back, to him, you know. Then, this other tractor, this side, again, drag that thing back this way. And that's what pick up all the cane. Just like one rake, but on the line, see? And you follow that. [SM is describing lilikō.]
WN: So this after the cane is cut?

SM: No, no. After they burn the cane.

WN: Oh, after they burn the cane.

SM: Yeah, that's how they rake the cane.

WN: Oh, you rake the cane . . .

SM: Yeah, with line, eh?

WN: Oh, okay. So by then, they weren't cutting cane, then.

SM: No, they cut. They had people cutting cane. But they improve and modernizing themself, eh?

WN: Yeah.

SM: They modernizing themself. They had this drag line, they call. Especially on the hill, like that. That thing can bring all the cane back up to the top of the hill. You know, bring 'em up to the field. And then, of course, they had the cane cutters, you know. They make piles, and they have to drag that up, too, see, afterwards. And they even had the, what do you call, side bar cutters. You know like the lawn mowers you see the county use for cut grass? Go down like that and they pull. That's how, they had this kind side-bar cutter. It's a good machine, but the thing is, you have to go get a tractor in the back of that to pile that cane, you see. So that guy go down, he cut the cane, and then this rake come, he rake the cane, into piles.

WN: Put 'em into piles.

SM: Yeah. And then this guy had to go around the tractor, drop again, you know. All of that. That's how they used to work. Then sometimes they try the other way. They go one way, cut from the other side, go back, stuff like that. And you know, cane is a funny thing. Is not any way you can handle that cane. Because that cane flow with the wind, like. When they started to grow, the wind blow the cane so it lying down [i.e., leaning toward one direction]. So it's easier to cut from this end . . .

WN: Oh, the opposite way.

SM: The opposite end, cut the cane. Because whatever you using fit right inside the cane.

WN: Oh, so you cut against the way it's leaning.

SM: Yeah. Easier, and you can make better job this way.

WN: So after the cane is piled, what, did they have the mechanical grabbers [tape inaudible] . . .

SM: Yeah, yeah. They come down and pick up all the cane. Load 'em into the trucks, stuff like that.
WN: So by then, they didn't have hāpai kō, then.

SM: Well, it was losing [phasing] out. Like I said, they had the cane cutters, and they had hāpai kō. They pile 'em up on top slings.

WN: Slings.

SM: Yeah, they pile the cane up on top the sling. And they had these hooks, so the loader comes around with a cable. It's a fast job, you know. Two Filipinos, two workers—they were all Filipino guys—they hook up that sling together with the loader, and next thing you know, the cane going. Lifting up the cane. It's a real---just like mechanical all around, already. The way they work, the Filipinos, the timing they get and all of that. Too good, you know. They were real good.

WN: And then from the sling, it goes into the truck.

SM: Into the truck. And automatically, it untangled itself. How, well, I don't know what they do. Certain way they do it that sling loosen out and falls right into the truck. Nice looking, 'cause the cane just all fall in straight. Not like with the load and the grab kind, any way the cane go in. But this, the cane stay inside there [facing] one way. When they go to the mill, that thing all [facing] one way going inside the mill. Unload, they go straight into the mill, stuff like that.

WN: So from the time you started doing it that way, and the time you finished—1984—were there any changes in how they harvested?

SM: Yeah, yeah. Afterwards, that's when the changes are. Before, the changes was very slow in coming. Like the cut-cane guys, they used to cut the cane and pile 'em in the ground, and these tractors used to come and rake 'em, put 'em into piles. They didn't have no hāpai kō man, you know, da kine [who] guys make bundles and carry the cane. They didn't have anymore. They started raking the cane. They had small, small tractors. Very small tractors. Just rake the cane into one bundle. Then the loader come around and pick those things up.

Yeah, the improvements was very slow in the start. But when you get the people with little bit more education and more modern, things come out fast. Every time, they always have different changes, different changes.

WN: So by the time you retired, they were doing it the same way.

SM: Yeah, yeah. I mean, of course they had modern way of cutting. They went into cane cutters, you know? Different type of push rakes they had. They even had da kine push rake, we have knives inside the rake, you know. But that didn't work out too good because you putting strength from one end to the other, and the knife gets plugged up. Yeah, you just have to—more like slow your machine down to get the knife doing its job. Things like that.

WN: Did they use bulldozers at all, for pile?

SM: Well, they call it push rakes.
WN: Oh, okay.

SM: That’s a bulldozer, more like. If, in a sense, you look at it, it’s a bulldozer, but it’s push rake. Only fingers.

WN: Oh, rather than the—oh, I see.

SM: Yeah, not the whole blade. Fingers like that.

WN: Just like a rake, eh.

SM: And then they had what they call V cutters. Big tractor with that V in front here, plate. And the bottom, the V was like that, eh? And this here had knife. There was a knife there. And there was one knife in the center of the pile, and two sides had this knife. As it goes along, that knife supposed to cut the cane. And they tried to get away from the dirt, you know, dirt getting into the cane. It cost too much to wash ’em. And of course, you had to be pretty good to run those V cutters, because when you put ’em down, you gotta more like float on the land, you know. No dig into the ground in order to get away from the dirt, eh?

WN: Because the more dirt you have, the more work for the mill, eh?

SM: Yeah. The whole deal, I think, was to get the dirt away from the cane. All the time, they was always trying to improve getting the dirt away from the cane. Still yet, now, you cut ’em with the V cutter, and the cane just fall down there. So you had to get something to make ’em into a row. The push rake had to go there and push the cane, and pile ’em up into a row, so that the loader can come there and pick ’em up. Then, another thing there, you look, the loader grabs the cane, and he grab the dirt, too. So a pile of dirt going into the—you know. That’s what they was always trying to do, to get away from that.

WN: I’m wondering, Pa’auilo had plenty rocks?

SM: Yeah. Mostly the Pā‘auhau section towards Honoka‘a. That’s where we had the most cane on rocks. But towards Hilo, that was good land.

WN: Oh yeah?

SM: Good land. No more too much stone. And if there was any stone there, it was more like limestone. Soft, soft kind. You know the soft kind. The one they tell get Hawaiian diamonds. (Chuckles) The kids used to get da kine stones and dig all, and little, little shiny things on ’em, they call a Hawaiian diamond. Pā‘auhau side—this Pa‘auilo side—from Pa‘auilo village on, towards Honoka‘a, you would find more rocky area, no?

WN: And the rocks were big? Big kind?

SM: Yeah, big rocks.

WN: Boulder kind?

SM: Yeah. They had one rock in the cane field over there, even one tractor no can move ’em.
Even tractor no can—huge, huge thing, you know. Huge rock. And everybody say that was a *kahuna* stone. You no can move that stone. If you move that thing, something happens to you, or to the machine, and things like that. They always had that same word over and over. *Kahuna* stone. And if you plow the field, that [boulder] always in the way. *(WN chuckles.)* You had to stop there, turn around, go on the other side, continue again.

**WN:** So everything, you did everything, you went around the stone?

**SM:** Yeah. *(WN laughs.)* How many years the stone been there. Finally somebody went ahead and dig one hole in the ground there, dig, dig down, and put the stone underneath the ground.

**WN:** Oh, yeah? Oh.

**SM:** And they say, “Oh, *kahuna*. The guy’s not going live,” or stuff like that. But nothing happened to the people.

**WN:** I’m wondering, you know, you said they didn’t have [human] cane cutters anymore, and they didn’t have *hāpai kō* anymore. I don’t know, maybe it was your father’s time that they had all these jobs.

**SM:** Yeah, yeah, it lasted. Even when I started working, there were still [human] cane cutters.

**WN:** There were still [human] cane cutters. I’m wondering, when you started, when they started to mechanize, what happened to the cane cutters?

**SM:** Well, they did other jobs.

**WN:** They did other jobs.

**SM:** Yeah, they did other jobs. They went into the field as truck drivers, and lot of them went into the garage, make mechanic, carpenters. Lot of these guys got those kind of jobs, those old Filipino guys. Yeah. They drive equipment.

**WN:** Cane cutters was mostly Filipino?

**SM:** Yeah, mostly Filipino people. Of course, they had the Chinese, and Japanese groups. You know. When they hired, they hired that certain group. Japanese had plenty cane cutters. Just like the Filipinos, they hired them all for cut cane, and pile up the cane, stuff like that.

**WN:** You said that you also planted seed.

**SM:** Yeah.

**WN:** I’m wondering, did that job change at all over the years? Any kind of mechanization for planting?

**SM:** Yeah. That is a big change, too. We used to plant that all by hand. You know, they cut the seed, that...
WN: Oh, what, two feet [long stalks]?

SM: ... pile, yeah. Pile 'em up and then you load 'em into the truck, take 'em to the field where you going plant, and you plant that all by hand. Then, you see the cane [growing], nice cane. It always nice crop, when they plant the cane, always close to one another. Not like when you get mechanized way of planting, sometimes the cane pile up, sometimes no more cane [i.e., irregular spacing], it [the machine] keep on going, eh?

WN: Oh yeah.

SM: That much cane, no more in the field, or ...

WN: Oh, you mean when they had a machine doing that.

SM: Yeah, yeah. (WN laughs.) Compared to what the hand plant way of doing it. And then, of course, this guy Dan Thompson, he used to mechanize stuff.

WN: Who was it? James Thompson.

SM: Dan Thompson.

WN: Dan Thompson.

SM: Yeah. He was a head man, down the garage, you know. And he had different ideas all the time of doing things. And he made his own planter. It's a long buggy, one wagon. And the tractor pull it along. Even, they had the mules pull that around, too. And it was built on two furrows, like, you know. V things.

WN: Like a plow.

SM: Like a plow. On the side of the machine, had wheels. They want to take 'em from one field to the other, that wheels jack up the thing, and they go. They take 'em where they wanted to go. They put the cane seed right on top that box. And there's somebody that feed that, pile 'em up ready for the guy who sitting on the chair, and he's throwing that seed down to the ground. One by one, the seed go down. It's slow pace—they pace along so slow, that you have the seed go down straight. You know, seed goes down straight, no shift, or no slow down or no go fast, like that. Always a nice crop of cane you get out of that. That's what you call a planter. And then they had hoists, like, to lift up this thing going down to the ground where the seed go all the way inside there, and the round wheels, big round wheels that thing cover the cane. Cover the seed. And then they had one hoist that lift that whole thing up, when you want to turn around that whole thing. Oh, you look back at that, little bit more improvement. That made a better planter than mechanized stuff. This mechanized stuff was—the operator had to be really good, you know, that you can slow down. You gotta respect the man in the back there. You get plenty men in the back. Then, of course, they was getting too greedy that two lines at a time was not enough. You had to go improve, put four lines, you know. To plant four lines at one time.

WN: So they had four men in the back?
SM: Yeah. All that . . .

WN: Putting the seed inside.

SM: Yeah. All that kind. When you get greedy, I guess, you foul up more. When they wanted to do something bigger, they always get into trouble. That's how they lose money, like that.

WN: So you thought was better when they had just the thing with the wheels in the back.

SM: Yeah.

WN: And one man in the back putting the seed . . .

SM: At the slowest pace, that's why.

WN: Yeah, I see.

SM: The pace that the time, slow, eh? And even by hand, ho, in no time, they can plant one field, you know.

WN: By hand, you mean just going around . . .

SM: Walk around.

WN: . . . walking and planting. That's what you did?

SM: Yeah. (WN laughs.) We did those kind of things.

WN: How was your back, doing that?

SM: No trouble. No trouble. You not carrying weight, eh?

WN: Well, how much seed you had to carry?

SM: No, you no carry, because the seed was placed in the fields already.

WN: Oh, I see, I see.

SM: You come with the truck, they pick up the cane wherever they cut seed. They load 'em on top this trucks, and then you take 'em to the field, and you drive down the field, and drop this cane.

WN: I see.

SM: Bundles. From where you get the bundle, you start, plant. That bundle pau, you take the other one, go. You always have . . .

WN: You don't have to dig?
SM: No, no. They made those furrows already, eh? They call that furrows, eh? Tractors. Small tractors, you know, go ahead. Well, even the mules used to make that lines. At Pā‘auhau.

WN: You lay the seed flat [in the furrows]?

SM: Flat. I notice Honoka‘a had silly way of planting the seed. Up, standing up.

WN: Facing up [i.e., vertically].

SM: Yeah. Because they say the cane will grow up. But even us, we lie 'em down on the ground [horizontally], the seed [i.e., cane] always come up. Always come up.

WN: And Honoka‘a side, how did they irrigate? They irrigated, or just rain?

SM: They had some irrigation. But the place that really irrigated was Pā‘auhau Sugar [owned by] C. Brewer [Company, which merged with Honoka‘a Sugar Company in 1928]. They irrigated right through.

WN: What kind irrigation?

SM: Water.

WN: Oh, hanawai. The ditch?

SM: Ditch, yeah, ditch. The ditch kind with water. Even yet, you see the hanawai with the ditches. Until they came along with the sprinkler, overhead sprinklers. Even that they had problems. Sometimes that thing disconnect. All plastic pipe, and—not plastic, but aluminum pipes. Sometimes it disconnect from one another. Nighttime, especially, you no can see. When you go down there, there one cave in the ground. The water shooting down to the ground. All the water running away, and all the dirt coming out. Make caves, you know, of water, pukas. Yeah.

WN: So when you first started as part time, what kind wages you got?

SM: Oh, I don’t know.

WN: I mean, you got like the young boy kind wages, what they paid...

SM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: ... for kids?

SM: Young kid kind. But not those kind dollar-[a]-day kind, though. We had enough to make a living, I think. Like I say, in the old days, before, you don’t ever worry too much about money, because the plantation take care of you already. Lot of things is just free. And if you had to pay for something, hardly nothing. Everything was really cheap. Everything was really cheap. So, in other words, the union the one bin spoil everything. [Unionization beginning in 1946 eliminated perquisites heretofore provided by the sugar company.] (Chuckles) Eh, you know, sometimes you look back and you feel it, though, that what happen. You couldn’t buy
a car—no banks or loan companies. Nobody had ideas like that. When they came in with those things, everybody could buy cars.

WN: So when you started full-time, 1950, what did you do first? What was your first job?

SM: I would work with the mules.

WN: Oh, okay.

SM: Go work with the mules, go.

WN: That was your first job?

SM: Yeah, that’s man job, that. This no was kid job anymore. That’s man job—they call it a man job, you know. Even from the young time, when we were still going school, we wanted to go work with the mules. You couldn’t do it. Said, “No, that’s man’s job, that.” Keep that for the men. And I tell you, you think back, like now, sometime I sit here and I think back, yeah. I’m thinking one of the best jobs they had in the plantation was mule gang. ’Cause you go to work in the morning, you harness those mules up, ready, they gotta eat, ready for go. You start work seven o’clock. Sometimes you no leave the stable till about eight o’clock. That’s usual time to go with the mule. You go, eight o’clock. You reach the field, you have to give the mules fifteen minutes break. You reach the field, you sit down fifteen minutes, take a rest. Then, you hook up [the mules], you go. Take a long time to reach the end of the field. Some long . . .

WN: So you was assigned one field?

SM: Yeah, yeah. Maybe five, six guys go together, one field.

WN: All—everybody [each] has one mule.

SM: Yeah.

WN: So you ride the mule?

SM: Yeah, you ride the mule and go.

WN: Usually how long from the stable to the field, to where you gotta go? How long a ride?

SM: Maybe one hour. Half an hour, all da kine. But sometime we make ’em take longer, because you gotta play cowboy . . .

(Laughter)

SM: Racehorse, eh. Play cowboy, racehorse, take longer to get to the field. When you reach the field, after a while they [workers] waiting for you over there. One time we was working in Kūka’iau, high by the forest. Oh, we go inside the forest, go fool around inside the—play inside the forest. Lunchtime, you know. Go up inside the forest. We come outside, who stay waiting? My father waiting outside there for us.
WN: Your father?

SM: Yeah, my father waiting for us. The other guys didn’t catch hell over there. But me, when I come home, I catch hell. (Laughs) Sometime you get the other guys come, catch you playing around. We make slingshot, you know, game. Make slingshot. We go riding the mules. Shoot one another with the slingshot. Then . . .

WN: You folks had saddles?

SM: Burlap bag, that’s for your saddle. Put two, three burlap bags and tied it together. Was your saddle, that.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: So you get—you go there, seven o’clock, you go to the stable, you always got the same mule?

SM: Yeah, just about the same mule. You take the one that you like, all the time.

WN: Yeah.

SM: Not too fast. (WN chuckles.) They had one Clydesdale. You know those Clydesdale horses?

WN: Yeah.

SM: They had one there. Big bugga. Big legs. Ho, that bugga can work. He no get tired, you know, the mule. He keep on working, he like. Now, a short Filipino man, short guy, Patricio we used to call ’em. Small man. And he take that mule. Whole day he stay working, going. Keep on. And that man no tired. He no get tired, that guy.

WN: So had one Clydesdale horse, and the rest were all mules.

SM: Mules. Some big mules, some small mules, eh?

WN: So how was it taking care of mule? Are they easy animals?

SM: They good. They okay. Of course, the young ones are hard-head buggas, boy. The young type. Really strong mouth and hard head. The donkeys, yeah, those buggas are hard-head buggas. Small kine. They used to take them to take the fertilizer into the fields. What they call the pa’a, yeah. They put three bags on top the saddle—two on the side, one on the top. And go inside the field, one whole string of them, maybe six, seven mules. When you reach there, you drop one pile over here, one pile there, like that.

WN: So this the donkeys you talking about?

SM: The donkeys.

WN: Now the mules, though, what did they use the mules for?
SM: That's the mules for cultivating, and stuff like that. Well, I don't know how you put it—mule donkeys, or donkeys, or whatever. Donkeys is that grey-color one, eh? But they used to call that the donkeys, too, 'cause they small, eh? Just like one donkey, eh? Little bit bigger than one donkey. And all the supervisors, they get horses. They get from one field to the other with horse.

WN: So once you bring the mule to the field to work, what are you doing? You're the one on the mule?

SM: You stay on the back of the mule. Doing the cultivating or stuff like that, you stay in the back of the mules. You have this long rope come around your neck. You put 'em around your neck, here. From here, come out to here.

WN: Oh, you mean the mule's neck?

SM: No, the men.

WN: Oh.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: So you ride the mule from the stable to the field . . .

SM: To the field.

WN: And once you get to the field, the mules are used to pull . . .

SM: The plow.

WN: . . . pull the plow. I see.

SM: Pull the plow. You stay in the back of the mules.

WN: And you're in the back of the mules.

SM: Yeah.

WN: How come you had to be in the back of the mule?

SM: To control that plow.

WN: Oh, I see. And you've got rope around you, too.

SM: The rope is to be there if you want to control the mule. That's the way to hold 'em there, you know. Sometimes the plow fall down like that. The mule get scared, he take off. But the rope stay here with you, you can hold him back.

WN: I see.
SM: That's the control, that's the steering, in other words, yeah? That's why you get that, there. You like hurry up, you can bang 'em against the mule like that. Stuff like that.

WN: And one row at a time?

SM: One . . .

WN: One mule for one row.

SM: Yeah.

WN: And then you gotta give 'em break too?

SM: Yeah, that's what I said. You go to the field, you get fifteen minutes break with the mules. The mules get fifteen minutes break—not the man, the mule. Then, lunchtime, you get forty-five minutes break. Half an hour for the man and fifteen minutes for the mule.

(Laughter)

SM: That's the way it was.

WN: So everybody gotta go back at—after half hour, but you get fifteen extra minutes.

SM: Fifteen minutes, yeah. (WN laughs.) Fifteen minutes extra [lunch break] we get.

DM: They couldn't say it was cruelty to animals. (Chuckles)

SM: No. And then you gotta make sure you get enough time to come home before the break whistle blow.

WN: So you'd leave the field early.

SM: They gotta figure how many hours, or whatever you get, reach the field.

(Telephone rings. Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: So what time you pau work? What time pau hana?

SM: Three-thirty. Something like that.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, so, how long did you do the mule man job?

SM: Couple years, few years. One, two years maybe. Then, they had opening with the tractors. I get job driving the tractors. It's just like, same kind job as the mule, that, but you sit down and ride the tractor and go.

WN: So they did away with the mules?
SM: Yeah, they did away with the mules. But they still used to use them on the *palis*, hills, you know. Where the tractor couldn’t go, they still used to use the mules. But had this guy—like I say, this guy Patricio, he used to—he was old. He could do all the jobs.

WN: So how you felt about not doing mule job anymore?

SM: You wanted to better, you figure. And driving tractor is big shot already, drive tractor. Is big job already when you get into one tractor, sit down. Then, from there, you all different kind tractors and stuff like that.

WN: So you learned how to drive tractor?

SM: Yeah.

WN: How you learned?

SM: You go with the guys, they stay teach you. And that’s easy. It’s not like a car. Similar to a car, but not like a car. The clutch different. Throw off the clutch and then you shift your gear. Like the car, you gotta start from first gear. But the tractor, you can start from third gear and go, really.

WN: Oh yeah?

SM: Any gear you like, you can start and go, see. But car, you no can do that.

WN: So they used the mule for the *palì* kind place.

SM: Yeah, the bad places.

WN: Somebody took your place as mule man?

SM: No, no. They went off, already, *pau*.

WN: *Pau*.

SM: And then they had two more guys. They used to run the pack saddle one, you know. Go carry the fertilizer. Take the fertilizer in the field, inside the field, stuff like that. And, of course, from there we get to sit down with the other guys in the fields, and get to learn their jobs. We used to ride the plows in the back, and one guy drives the tractor, and you ride the plow in the back. You getting closer to the big tractors, yeah? And then we get on the tractor, this time more big.

That’s one thing, you never stop learning in the plantation. You always learning. I no care what they say. You not going find nobody that come there and just do the job, unless you had some experience. Like, I can say for myself, whenever I see one job, I learn to do the job by myself. And then I try ’em. That’s the only way you’re going to learn to do and try. Because some guys, they no like teach you. Some people, they no want to teach other people jobs, you know. They figure they be the important one, not you. They no like you get the job. But I never was that style. I always teach somebody else how to do. What I was doing, I always
teach somebody what to do.

WN: When you go to another job, was it the supervisor telling you, “You gotta move to this job,” or . . .

SM: Sometimes. With the union there, you had to have an application. You had to apply for one job. Like all us here, get one job—maybe all of us want the job, and then the supervisor come in, “I pick you.” If you get the seniority to do the job, you go ahead, they take you and go. And then, there was cases where they put up one job, and you apply for the job, and yet you don’t get the job. And yet you the seniority man. Yet you don’t get the job. Oh, they come with the [excuses]—you no more diploma, or things like that, you know. They make you take one test for the job, and still they give ’em to the person that they wanted to give. That’s da kine—some of them real crooked kind work, eh? But never mind me. Yeah, I learn how to do anything in the plantation. Any piece of equipment in the plantation, I learn how to do it. The only job that I really didn’t do very much is what they call the grader. You know that . . .

WN: Grader?

SM: Yeah, you know that—you seen that in the road. With a blade in the center of the tractor, wheels in the front. Grader, you can do anything. Grade the land, level out, that good for level out, you know? Grader.

WN: Well, how come you didn’t do that too much?

SM: Well, that was only one there. (Chuckles) The guys who was on ’em never seem to get old, I think.

(Laughter)

SM: Never retire or what.

WN: Let me turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Oh, okay. Did you also work inside the mill?

SM: Yeah, I wen work inside the mill.

WN: What kind of things you did in the mill?

SM: Well, that more of an off-season basis, no? Off-season basis when we had to repair the mill.

WN: Oh.
SM: Then I’d go down there and work. And . . .

WN: So when no more harvesting, you did—you went to the mill for repair. I see.

SM: Yeah. And, well, most of the time, I worked with the electricians there. Helping them repair motors, you know, take out the motors from the mill. As far as motors, electric motors in the mill, there’s lots of them. Big, small, tiny ones and whatever. Had to be taken apart, cleaned, and dry ’em up, put ’em inside dryers and all those kind of things. We did all that. All those kind of jobs. Then, we have to put all that back. Re-lined the thing up, you know. Balanced the right way and stuff like that. We had the electrician and the machinists, work together those kind. And of course, every two years, we used to take the big crane—we had one big crane out in the [mill] yard. Real large crane. That crane used to pile up all the cane in the yard. And that crane used to feed all the cane to the mill. He had a big job, that guy. And it’s a magnetic type of crane. Everything was magnet on those things. The motor was electric. You set up the motor and the rest is—the magnetic take over. Terrific. And every two years, we transport that crane to the garage. From the mill, to the garage. Big cables like that. Cables, electric cables, you know.

WN: Yeah.

SM: We had to take them along to the mill, from one pole, go to another pole, and you had to carry that cables. And you couldn’t carry those cables by hand, you know. You had to put one rope around that cable and two guys lift up the cable and go. The reason why you couldn’t handle that by hand because it blow up sometime. You know, for years stay put away in the warehouse, you know, that thing lying there doing nothing. And then when we reused ’em, the first [electric] current go through that thing. When the machine start moving, creates more heat, I guess. And, ho, the heat pop here and there, and that’s fire. It kill you, that. It catch you, it kill you. Yeah. Spooky, you know.

WN: You remember any people dying on the plantation? Working?

SM: Oh, yeah, yeah. As far as that, yeah. That road going down to the mill, there used to be a train crossing there on the road going down. Had one train crossing. So that’s my first time ever heard of accident. This train—working train, plantation train—and this working truck full with men coming from work. And they collided right on top of the road there. They had men all around the place. Men all over the place, couple of guys dead over there. I was small boy at that time that happened. The first accident I heard of dying, you know, that I can remember now. Of course, after that, yeah, plenty. Plenty accidents.

And, of course, you know this kind, the crane, they had the sling to lift up the cane. Well, when they unload that inside the truck or stuff like that, that thing [i.e., sling] hanging down, eh? When the crane move, that hanging, you know. And when you move the crane, that thing all out like that, eh? This cable whacked the electrical light, the current. Whacked that. And these guys on the ground, hanging onto ’em, you know. Eh, you see those guys fly. Electrocuted. All electrocuted. They die right there.

WN: When there was injuries, people would go to the Honoka’a Hospital?

SM: No, Pa’auilo Hospital. And of course, they had this kind powder. You know, was making the
road across the gulch.

WN: Yeah.

SM: Making roads. And this guy was packing the powder up. Good friend of ours. He was packing the powder up. And the powder exploded, killed him right there. Yeah. He was good friend of ours, you know. Used to come our house every time.

Mother was the cook for the plantation supervisor and stuff like that. And at the meantime, the local people, young boys from different parts of the island, used to come work. So my mother used to cook for them. And they used to come eat our place, and she make the lunch for them, and they go home. Next day, the same thing, over and over. And we get to know plenty of these guys. And plenty accidents in the road gang that I know of that died, and stuff like that.

And of course, one of our good friends over there—not really, not that close, but older man than me. He was one of those push-rake guys. They surround the cane by the gulches and stuff like that. Before they burn the cane, they make one firebreak. For the fire no can go inside the gulch. Or no jump to the other—you know, like that whole section burned or they separate that. And this guy, that’s what he was doing. And my neighbor was the supervisor, he wen tell me, “Stanley, Stanley. You seen Domingo?”

“Oh, no, I no see ’em.”

“Oh, long time I no see that guy, you know. I gotta go look for him.” Bumbai, he went down. Ho, he running up the hill. Only by himself, and running up the hill. “Stanley, Stanley! Come! Come!” Go down there and look, that guy was there dead. The tractor running and his hand wen knock off the clutch, and he was there, dead.

WN: He was in the tractor.

SM: In the tractor, he was. And here this guy give mouth-to-mouth [resuscitation]. No can do nothing. Oh, we took him up to the road so the ambulance could come pick him up. Yeah, I seen that.

WN: Well, what happened, though? What did he have?

SM: I don’t know. Maybe heart attack.

WN: Heart attack.

SM: Heart attack. Yeah, he used to drink, too, that guy. Probably smoke, I no remember if he used to smoke. Good guy, you know. He was good guy.

WN: So what, that kind accident—you know, a death or injury—the union would take care, I mean, you folks had life insurance and health insurance . . .

SM: Not with the union. The plantation. Plantation insurance. Plantation insurance. The union never used to pay very much.
WN: So they had, like, worker's compensation, things like that.

SM: Yeah, as far as that, yeah. The plantation had the insurance, workman's insurance. They always had that. At one time was low, but each time that thing started coming high.

WN: Do you remember people getting laid off at all? Losing their job during the time you were working, because of mechanization or other reasons?

SM: Oh, yeah, yeah. As far as that, yeah. Quite a bit. But, that's how, see. You had to stick your nose into anything else. You had to stick your nose into anything. Any way of learning different parts of the plantation, you had to do that. Like I say, during the off-season we work in the mill, so if they bounce me off or something like that, I could go apply for the mill and things, you know. I . . .

WN: Most people did that?

SM: Yeah. During the off-season, they put you doing certain jobs. So when you lose your job, you can jump to other job like that. Then the union ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] started wise up. They say, “Oh, moonlighting learning, no, not supposed to. You gotta know the job.” What the difference? I fight with these guys in the union office. I was a steward. And they said, “Oh, this, this, that, no can do this, no can do that.”

That night, we had the union meeting. I wasn’t too happy after that. Then the following week, we had another meeting. I didn’t go. Then, one guy came and, “Eh, we go, we go.” I was drinking already. Feeling good already. So, I went up there, I fight with these guys over there. Not bad fight, but, you know, I argue with them. I had the courage of arguing that time, you know. (WN laughs.) And they listen! Nobody talk. They listen to me. So that’s what you gotta do sometime. You gotta fight them, in order to get ahead, you know. And I did that. After that, I no fool around. I fight ‘em. I fight ‘em. I no care.

WN: You mean, you fought more with the union, or you fought more with the plantation?

SM: With the union guys. Because they always changing, they like for themselves. Of course, I fight the plantation, too. But I didn’t like the idea when they [i.e., union] did it that way, or that way. Even my own cousin’s husband, he was the unit chairman over there that time. I give him the works. I give him the works. I tell, “You don’t pull the curtain over my eyes, no way. Hey Skippy, you listen, boy.”

Nobody make noise that night, over there. And we got what we wanted. They say, oh, they no like train people. The plantation never like train people [i.e., provide on-the-job training]. And the union was tied in for them. If you like one job, you gotta know the job [beforehand]. Where the hell you going learn how to do one job if you don’t—you no more training?

WN: Yeah, you mean on-the-job training.

SM: On-the-job training, you know.

WN: So the union and the plantation didn’t want to train [workers] on the job.
SM: They [ILWU] sided with the plantation.

WN: So how did you guys resolve that?

SM: Oh, we fixed them up damn fast. That one went fast. Ho, the next thing you know, I was training driving loader. Other guys was—we going train, go drive loader. Had to do it, otherwise, how you going go on top that loader, you don’t know what you’re doing? If you don’t train, you no can get ahead. And then, if you lose your job, you no can go someplace else and do da kine job. Like now, any time I like, I can go operate one crane here and there. I can operate one truck.

WN: So the more skills you learn, the better chance you’ll keep working.

SM: Yeah. Yeah.

WN: So, you know, like during the time you were working, had a couple of [ILWU] strikes, huh? How did you folks manage during those times? Like I know 1958 had a pretty big strike, yeah?

SM: No trouble. We had no problem. My mother was a cook at the academy. We had meat, and turkeys, and lambs, sheep. We used to get all of that. Because the people that she buy the stuff from always gave her extra for her . . .

WN: This is at Hawai‘i Prep[aratory] Academy?

SM: Yeah. They all used to give her half price. Because she used to buy the stuff from them all the time. Not from the cheap kind [of] companies. She get from the good companies, her equipment, eh? And then, of course, I go hunting, I get pigs. They had soup kitchen. You know, they call soup kitchens?

WN: Yeah.

SM: I never used to worry about the soup kitchen. The soup kitchen was for my dogs. I go get ’em [food], but my dog eat ’em. Honestly. You know that can, they call corned beef and cabbage? I like to eat corned beef and cabbage. But the way they [soup kitchen] make ’em, you no can see no corned beef inside there. Only strings you see. Overcook the cabbage. Keep boiling and boiling and boiling. You like corned beef and cabbage, you make the corned beef hot, then you throw your cabbage inside. Soon as the cabbage start turning color already, that’s enough cook already. You no make ’em [into] one soup.

WN: Oh, so the soup kitchen, [during the strikes] you could go and then you got food, but you never used to eat it.

SM: Yeah.

DM: Most times was the corned beef and cabbage. That’s why I no make corned beef and cabbage. He don’t like it anymore. (WN laughs.)

SM: They give you canned goods.
WN: Oh, you mean for the strikers?

SM: Yeah. They give canned goods. That was okay. You can use ’em the way you like. The corned beef, you can use ’em the way you like.

DM: Usually corned beef, or canned milk, and stuff like that.

WN: Canned milk?

SM: Yeah. Cream. You know, the cream eh?

WN: Who supplied that? The union?

SM: The union.

DM: And rice, I think they give rice.

SM: Rice, sugar, and canned goods.

WN: So with your mother working for the Hawai’i Preparatory Academy, that was a bonus. I mean, that was good for you folks.

SM: Yeah. I mean, you know, whenever the guys come, they say “What? Your boys stay working plantation, eh?”

“Yeah?” They give.

Say, “Here, you go keep for your boys.” And then like Suisan [Company, Ltd.], Hilo and all those kind [of] big companies used to give plenty stuff. One whole box of fruits, oranges or apples. And of course, we always used to give the neighbors around there that too. We no can use all of that ourself. Eggs, ooh, the eggs. Come in from one ear, come out the other side of the ear.

WN: So the union supplied food. Anything else the union supplied during the strike?

SM: No. Only food, that’s all.

WN: By then you had electricity and everything. You didn’t have kerosene, eh?

SM: No, no. Kerosene went out way back. We was having electricity long time.

WN: And you folks picket too?

SM: Yeah. Sit down, play cards. (WN laughs.) Everybody sit down, play cards. Four hours, or whatever. Then, like, being a steward, you no have to go up there [and picket]. You go to the office, sit down in the office, get meeting every day. So you go office every day. After pau there, then you go play with the other guys.

WN: So by then, you had family, yeah?
SM: Oh, yeah, yeah.

WN: How did you feel about—were you worried that, you know, you had family to take care of and you weren't working?

SM: Yeah, as far as that, yeah. Buy clothes and stuff like that. And then they [kids] get free food at school.

WN: Oh, at school.

SM: School get free food for them. The union pay. Union pay for their food.

WN: 'Cause the '58 strike was pretty long [128 days].

SM: Yeah.

DM: But that time maybe, the kids no was in school.

WN: Oh, still young yet.

DM: Only was—he [Stanley, Jr.] started '59, I think was.

WN: Oh, okay.

SM: Kindergarten, we didn't have to pay for food. We didn't have to worry that much.

WN: So you thought the union was taking care of you folks pretty good during strikes.

SM: Oh, I think they still could do more. They still could've done more.

WN: Like what?

SM: They could have started buying us the food earlier, instead of wait till you just broke. Then they start giving food. You know, if you go on a strike, as soon as get out of work that first two, three weeks, you know, make everything ready and whatnot, supply already. Because like that, you no have to spend any money. You can spend 'em for other things, rather than food and stuff like that. That's what I feel. The quicker you get the men going, the more you can last. But if you wait for the last minute, "Oh, I gotta spend here, gotta spend there," and some things are really expensive, that. And allowance for car, gasoline, stuff like that, we never did get. You had to go here, meeting, meeting there, and we never get enough allowance.

WN: Did you folks used to talk about, "Oh, what are we going to do?" between both of you in case the strike lasted—what if the strike was gonna last long, long time?

SM: Well, by that time already, I was looking for job with the state. I could've gotten job for the state. But with this girl [SM's daughter], the plantation was paying for her already.

WN: Oh. Disability.
DM: Medical.

SM: Medical, eh?

WN: Medical. Oh, I see.

SM: And then if I would join the state, I had to pay my own medical. That's little bit too much, eh? At that time she used to use a lot of medical. I had [job] offering, but the offering was too far away. They had me offers in Kona, offered up the other side, Kaʻū side for go to the job. I not living up there. I not living in Kona. And you know, never used to be da kine commuting ideas, eh? You can commute here, commute there like that. No more bus, no more nothing. Not like nowadays. You get buses all the way down to Kona, go all the way to Hilo, go take you for work. Now modern, these guys.

WN: And when this girl was born, you were working plantation at that time, yeah? How was that? Was that rough for you folks? Did you have to worry that, you know, was the plantation going to pay for medical, things like that?

SM: No, as far as that, didn't have to worry about the plantation paying for medical, because they pay for the medical. I mean, you saw that happen already. We know that happen already. Only thing is, hard on her [DM], she gotta go Honolulu, and you gotta be there all the time with her and with the other kids, you know. Of course, my mother was still alive, my father was still alive. And then things got worse. Mother went work up there [Waimea], and only her, yeah? I go work nighttime, and all those kind times.

WN: Oh, you had night shift sometimes?

SM: Yeah.

WN: Did you ever have more than one job?

SM: No, as far as that, no. Never used to go do other jobs, two jobs. Not like nowadays, you gotta get two, three jobs before you can make a living. At that time, no, you didn't have to... Of course, you make your own garden and things like that. Nowadays, they don't make garden. Nobody make gardens. Nobody plant vegetables anymore. Before, I used to like planting vegetables.

WN: Okay, so, when did you retire from plantation?

SM: Ah, 1984 or somewhere around there.

WN: How come you retired?

SM: Medical. Yeah, I went to the doctor, sick, catch cold, sick. [Blood] pressure was high, and the [blood] sugar was high, too. Oh, take treatment for all that. I pass afterwards, I pass, go back. But I get sick. I had one lump over here in the arm, this side, one place around here. Oh, was big lump. Sore, that was. Doctor check, take the blood out and try check that out, stuff like that. And then, finally, well, I was kind of sick. And I started to get swollen. My face was swollen. Had pneumonia. Put me in the hospital. I stayed in hospital about one week
or so. Then, after I get out, I went back work. Oh, but not feeling good. I went back, and I still get pneumonia yet. And, oh, she send me Hilo, go take test, or things like that. Picture [X ray] no was looking too good. Get emphysema, that’s why. So finally she decided to tell, “How about if you retire?”

I tell her, “No can retire. Too young.”

“No, I give medical retirement.” Oh, that’s okay with me. She send me to one other doctor. That other doctor okay. So, that’s how I retired. I never ask for the retirement. They retired me. But I was bad. I was getting pneumonia all the time. First time I got pneumonia, I fell down from my truck, I break my ribs. My ribs broke. And after the second night, I caught pneumonia already. They put one strap around here, one bandage.

WN: On your chest.

SM: Oh, that night, I walk all around the house, outside, the porch. I go outside the porch. Hot, I feel hot. That’s when I got this pneumonia, I guess. From then, I started getting sick all the time. That’s why she figured, well, more better retire.

WN: You used to work around lot of dust before.

SM: Yeah. You know, they say from the cigarettes. When I have cigarettes, I get emphysema. Nah, like I say, we work in the dust. Work in the dust. Work, every day you go work, you get dust. And you work in the mill, you get that trash. That’s---you call it asbestos already. When you get the bagasse, and that thing start flying around, that’s asbestos already. And of course we work with the asbestos in the mill. We work with the asbestos in the mill, too. You put around the pipes, asbestos, for keep the heat in, all that, eh?

DM: That cigarettes contribute too.

SM: Yeah, the cigarettes contribute, but, you know, they no have to blame only the cigarettes. I don’t blame the cigarettes. I look back at what we did, the kind of job I do. Well, driving one of those machines, cutting cane, and when you stand up, that’s how you get these ashes on your lap [from the burning cane]. All that ashes just coming inside over here.

WN: In your nose.

SM: Yeah. In your ears, get full of rubbish, dust and all that. Well, plantation work cause a lot of diseases, I think.

DM: Unless you behind the desk, pushing pencils, you safe over there. Other than that, you’re not safe.

WN: So, also while you were working, had some mergers, eh? Of your company. When they had a merger, did you ever feel that you may have to—that you may lose your job because of, you know, some workers coming from another company?

SM: Yeah, but the merger was mostly with the mill itself. You know, the thing had to worry was the mill itself. The guys in the mill, working in the mill, they’re the ones had to worry the
most.

WN: Oh, because you close one mill . . .

SM: Yeah. Other place . . .

WN: . . . consolidate everything in one mill.

SM: Yeah.

WN: When did—when Pa‘auilo Mill closed, had to work another mill?

SM: Yeah, they went to ‘Oʻokala. [In 1974, Hāmākua Mill Co. merged with Laupāhoehoe Sugar Co.; the Pa‘auilo mill was closed, and its milling operations were consolidated and transferred to the ‘Oʻokala mill.]

WN: ‘Oʻokala. Ah, I see.

SM: They started to work in ‘Oʻokala. And lot of those jobs over there, the ‘Oʻokala people lost out. The Pa‘auilo people took over, because the Pa‘auilo people probably had more seniority.

WN: Oh, that’s how it works?

SM: Yeah.

WN: Seniority.

SM: That kind of case is where the seniority work, most of the time. In the field like that, very seldom we had layoff because of that. You know, very seldom that we had those kind layoffs. Mostly the layoff was in the mill.

WN: Did you know anybody who got laid off because of a merger? Mill worker?

SM: My boy [son].


SM: No, no, before this. My oldest boy.

WN: Oh, Butch.

SM: Yeah.

WN: Oh. Where did he get laid off?

SM: I forget what [job] he had [when he was] laid off, but truck driver, eh?

DM: Truck driver.
SM: Truck driver. He was driving, hauling cane. And then he got cultivation job, you know. Go drive small truck or water truck, and poison truck and stuff like that. Supply trucks. And drive trailers, small trailers, things like that. Sugar hāpai that cane, seed cane. And he lost out there, it’s bumping.

WN: This was when . . .

SM: Merger . . .

WN: This was when [Theo H.] Davies took over?

SM: No, when—Hāmākua Sugar.

WN: Francis Morgan?

SM: Yeah, yeah. [In 1984, Francis Morgan acquired the Davies Hāmākua Sugar Co. and renamed it Hāmākua Sugar Co.]

WN: That’s that time? Okay, let me change tapes.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 26-4-2-96; SIDE ONE

SM: He felt as though, you know, they bump him, he no want to go . . .

WN: Bump someone else.

SM: . . . burning somebody else, eh?

WN: Yeah.

SM: He lose, he lose.

WN: So he found a state job?

DM: Yeah.

SM: Well, after about seven years of trying, he got a state job.

WN: Did he get any kind of unemployment [compensation]?

DM: I guess so.

SM: Yeah, he got some unemployment. But after seven years of trying, trying, trying, he got a state job. After about four, five years in the state job, they knock him off. Now he stay in Kona—state job. But he’s all the way down Kona. In the parks, working in the [Department
of] Parks [and Recreation].

WN: Oh yeah. How does he like that?

SM: Well, he kind of getting used to already with it, so. He travel every day from Pa‘auilo to Kona.

WN: Yeah? Hoo!

SM: Every day. Even my young boy [John], he travel from Pa‘auilo to Kawaihae, Puakō, all those places down there, every day, eh?

DM: [Ritz-Carlton] Mauna Lani [hotel]. But now he changed job, so get couple of guys that come from that way, so he catch ride with them, so not too bad. That’s how you gotta make.

WN: So different from the old days, when everybody lived in the same community, and go work right here. Different, eh?

SM: Big difference. Before, when we was there in the community, Pa‘auilo, everybody had love for one another. You do something, you invite the other one, or you make party, you invite these people. In sports, you play together. Work together. There was no more very much dog-eat-dog kind you know. But after they start moving out, ‘O‘okala [mill] came in the picture, we had to go to ‘O‘okala [mill in 1974], then to Haina [mill in 1978]—all that dog-eat-dog kind. Always after your job. That’s the way it was, you know. Not like before. Before, well, it was in our community—our community was our community—togetherness was there all the time. You didn’t hate one another.

WN: So when they closed Pa‘auilo mill [in 1974], and then, you know, you’re going with—the cane goes to ‘O‘okala mill, and then the Pa‘auilo mill guys are bumping . . .

SM: Yeah, all the ‘O‘okala guys.

WN: ‘Cause they don’t know each other. They don’t know their families, and things like that.

SM: They know! As far as that, we know our neighbors, yeah?

WN: Yeah.

SM: Because that’s neighbors, we know.


SM: Yeah, that’s neighbors too.

WN: Oh, you still know—-you still . . .

SM: Yeah. ‘Cause you get family there. I get family down there. And they used to come play in Pa‘auilo, Pa‘auilo Park. Basketball, they come. Even Honoka’a [residents] used to go Pa‘auilo, play basketball, like that. The community, like. They play. But after the job-wise,
then they was enemies already. You know, I see you do something, quick I go tell the supervisors so that you can lose and I can gain. I never was one like that, that can think of those kind of things. You do what you do. If you get caught, you get caught. If I do what I like do, I do, and if I get caught, I get caught. I no like somebody else go rat on me. You know, that's just the way I feel. But if something going to hurt me, then I go for you. When it involve me, my way, then I gotta go for you. I gotta step down that way. But nothing going involve me, do what you like. You get caught, that's too bad.

WN: So that's what the mergers did, eh? It sort of pitted people against each other?

SM: Yeah. It happens that way, you know. Who this guy from Honoka'a come over here, take over the job? Well, no can help. If he gets one guy better, he's better. No can do nothing.

WN: So the union kept the seniority system pretty good. I mean, there was no---was there favoritism at all?

SM: Well, that's just it. There was favoritism, too. The union was not fitting the---you can go back and ask lot of these guys. They tell you the union was full of crap, you know. Lot of things that the union did that was not right.

WN: So they didn't go strictly by seniority sometimes.

SM: Yeah, yeah. Like back in the old days, Pa'auilo—not in the old days, before all this mergers and stuff like that—we used to get insurance money come back to the people. And they keep that—the union keep that. At the end of the year, they buy turkey or chickens or whatever they buy, they give 'em to you. Slowly...

WN: What insurance is this?

SM: Life insurance, whatever. You know, the insurance—the union pay so much, and you pay so much. And they get money come back every so much, so long, you get money come back. For the insurance. What do you call that, dividend, or whatever, no? That come back to the company. And bumbai that's for the men, but the men don't use them. That stay in the office. And then from there, they take up money and buy whatever they like for Christmastime. Or they make one little party, or something, Christmastime. Then, that started to go out the door. After I retired, I never get nothing, nothing whatsoever. But before, we used to give the retirement people stuff. Even strike time. We go out, we give the retirement people the stuff, too.

WN: Even those not working.

SM: Not working.

WN: Retired people.

SM: Yeah. They used to get stuff. But ever since I can remember, we never received—even this man down here. He tell, "How come we no get this, we no get that? Before they used to give, and whatnot. Now we no get." And so you see what kind of union that. I am not one expert. I am not an expert about judging those things like that. But to me, I feel as though, if
we had a union, or we no had no union, be the same thing. Without a union, maybe you can negotiate little better with the plantation, for yourself, you know. Now with the union, you no can negotiate. They have to do the negotiating.

WN: So while you were working, they had, you know, more and more mergers?

SM: Yeah.

WN: Became harder and harder?

SM: Came harder.

WN: Less jobs available?

SM: More supervisors, less workers. More supervisors and less workers. And the supervisors was gaining more than the workingman. The end of the year, they had big parties. They go to Kona in a bus. The bus take them all the way to Kona, all the supervisors go to Kona. Pay one hotel overnight stay. Had a ball there during that night, whatever. Big party they get. The workingman, nothing. The workingman had nothing. Before, the plantation, the supervisor had party every year up at the boss house. One party, they get. Plantation workers got something from the . . . They used to make parties from the plantation, for the workers.

WN: Where did they have the parties?

SM: Down the gym, or the park, we always had something to do. We go out there, we prepare one, two weeks, we prepare the thing for make party in the plantation. Certain workers, you know, go out and prepare. Go pick up ti leaf, or pick up taro, and get meat, chop the meat up, make laulaus, or things like that.

WN: This was when, Christmastime? Or . . .

SM: It was Christmas period. Always had something.

WN: So the whole—all the working people could go?

SM: Yeah, the community itself would be involved, like. The community people work outside, the people that no work with the plantation, they do other job, other things but with the community.

WN: Yeah.

SM: They live here, they invited. Like from Pa‘auilo, Kalapahāpu‘u, Kūka‘iau, Kūka‘iau Ranch, Pa‘auilo Mauka, those people all around there, farmers and things like that. They all invited too.

WN: But that stopped.

SM: That stopped all of a sudden. That’s one hell of a lot big expense. I think the expense they made in two days for the supervisors alone make double the expense what they would spend
for the working people. Yeah, because, that’s all money, that place. Bus, all bus go all the way down there, big money. And then, the hotel itself is big money itself. Then the food, hoo!

WN: (Chuckles) Oh, boy.

SM: You know, it’s---actually, you know, when this started, it was before [Francis] Morgan [acquired Davies Hāmākua Sugar Co. in 1984 and renamed it Hāmākua Sugar Co.]. Then, of course, the Morgans was really involved with them. The young Morgan, not the old man. The old man was a good man. Until today, I still think he’s a good man.

WN: He’s still alive, right?

SM: Yeah, he’s still alive. He was the one. He used to be the HSPA [Hawaiʻi Sugar Planters’ Association] man, before. And he used to teach the people how to make things. So now, when he took over, this plantation was down. Was supposed to be thrown out of the book then.

WN: This was in 1978?

SM: Yeah. He improved the plantation. But his own family, they the ones made the trouble for this plantation. They made expenses. Never pay off this, never pay off that, never this and never that. Next thing you know, everything was all unpaid. Equipment not paid. They bought equipment that anybody in their right mind wouldn’t buy. And if you buy one, it’s okay. But when you buy four or five of the same equipment that not worth a damn, what is that? What would you say that is? You know these big, what they call top cutters. Big machine. Big, heavy machine. Cut the cane underneath the ground, root and all, dirt and all. Never did one least good. You go one way, broke. No reach the end, he broke. Several times before reach the end, he broke. Then they improve that top cutters to one other kind type, similar to what we had already. Still wasn’t working right, still wasn’t doing anything right. If they would have done, go ahead and buy new equipment, built the way the old one was built, it was way ahead of the game. They went way ahead of the game if they did that. But they didn’t do that. They always wanted their own idea on top there. And never did come out right. Those cutters never did come out right.

Then, they still didn’t do anything right running the harvesting department. They wanted to get the dirt out of the cane [coming] to the mill. What they had to do was get one helicopter, haul the cane up, and something cut ’em underneath, away from the dirt, then they take that whole cane. No drop ’em already. Take ’em to the mill (WN chuckles) and put ’em inside the mill. That’s the only way they going get the dirt out.

WN: Hoo! Sounds expensive.

SM: No, but I mean, they never like the dirt.

WN: Yeah.

SM: Then, they went ahead, they put another expense there. They want to get the dirt not going
...into the ocean. Well, that’s the...

DM: Environmental people. [In 1994, Francis Morgan and three other Hāmākua Sugar Co. executives were found guilty of violating the federal Clean Water Act in 1989 and 1990.]

SM: Environmental people never like the dirt in the ocean. Okay? They go ahead and pump the dirt out in pipes to pile up some place else. One time they pump the dirt, next day the pump no can work. The dirt no can go through. All plug up inside the pipe. That still there. The lines are still there. Brand new pipe and whatnot, all under the ground over there, that.

WN: This is the Haina mill?

SM: ‘O‘ōkala [mill].


SM: Haina was little bit smart. They made trucks, haul ’em [i.e., dirt and rocks] out. Go inside the truck and they go dump ’em. Rocks and stuff, dump ’em in the fields. Then, ‘O‘ōkala, they broke down, they going into that idea. Made little trailers, like. And that thing, they take ’em go dump out in the field, or wherever they need soil, they take ’em there to the field and rebuild the field up. That’s a lot of things that—they blame the workingman bin broke the plantation. It’s not the workingman. It is the people that tell the priorities themself, they the one never listen to the workingman. If they listen to the workingman, all of that, plantation would still be going. And this kind of environmental people come over here and say they don’t want the soil in the ocean. Why listen to those kind [of] guys?

Before, you take one bamboo fish line and one bamboo, you go down there, you catch fish. Now you try do that, no more. You no can catch fish. You know what they call good-eating fish, moi. You folks go down there and catch by the tons of them with one line, you know. As long as you know where the nest say, you can catch—you can take out all the fish from there, without. . . . Now you no can do that.

WN: Because of the dirt that went inside . . .

SM: No more. No more the supply for them, the food and whatnot. Even the trash, you know the trash that—they wash the cane, all that rubbish go with that. That’s all something for the fish to eat. They eating that, they live on that. Nowadays, no more those kind things.

WN: But in the old days when you were still working, did they still dump the soil in the ocean?

SM: Yeah.

WN: So they always did that?

SM: Yeah, they always did that. Even the kākae [i.e., sewage] all go down there inside the ocean. No more cesspools. Only one line, go one cesspool, go down and that dumping out in the ocean. Never used to kill anybody. The guys used to go fishing down there. Close to where the sewer pipes come out. They never die because of the fish. Nowadays, they say don’t. They think—even Kawaihae, you no can eat the fish down Kawaihae. They get some kind of
sickness.

DM: And the runoff from the golf courses out there.

SM: Yeah, that’s what they say. You no can eat. But afterwards, they say it’s all the fertilizers that they use in the golf course, the runoff and whatnot, go to the ocean. They blaming that now. That’s why you no can eat the fish. Plantation used to get that. They used to fertilize the cane and whatnot. The rain come, wash all that down to the ocean. All the topsoil go down to the ocean. That’s all where the fertilizer stay. Never used to get those kind sickness.

DM: And still today, you get rains heavy mauka, those gulches all run water, and all mud. And you can see all that polluted water. But they no fight with the weather, you no . . .

SM: That’s another thing, see? Back in the old days, as I was growing up, you could use that water in the gulch for cooking or drinking.

DM: Clean.

SM: It was never---the first run is muddy. After that, no mud. Clean. But what the plantation went and do, the soil people what they did, they made contour ditches to the gulches. You know, they get these contour ditches, go to the gulch for save the soil from going down. But what? That muddy water going into the gulch. And in one field, sometimes three, four of that ditches, they get.

WN: Oh, so the fertilizer and all the mud goes inside the gulch.

SM: Yeah.

WN: Before, it didn’t do that?

SM: No. Before, didn’t do that. It used to run where he like. But now, they force ’em to go into the gulch. In order to do that, they supposed to make these contour ditches that goes to a dead end, like. You know, you make that ditch in a way, and not enough this water that flows inside there supposed to spill over. It’s not supposed to be spilling over. Whatever mud piles up, piles up back again to the start. All you do was get the bulldozers and bulldoze that mud out again. Then you can reuse the soil. That’s what supposed to be. They call it contour ditches, eh? That’s how it’s supposed to be. But no, it goes into the gulch, or it goes into somebody else’s property. You know, things like that.

END OF INTERVIEW
Tape No. 26-5-3-96

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Stanley C. Mendes (SM)

Honoka'a, Hawai'i

August 6, 1996

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[NOTE: Also present are Kathleen Doris Mendes (DM), SM's wife, and Manuel Gusman (MG), a family friend.]

WN: This is an interview with Stanley Mendes on August 6, 1996, and we're at his home in Honoka'a, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Stanley. Let's continue. We were talking last time about the mergers. You had to go through mergers, right? While you were working.

SM: Yeah.

WN: How did those mergers affect you?

SM: Nothing much. I mean, we always had to do our work the only way we know how. Most of the time, we had our union people who looked through the contract first, before doing anything more than what you're supposed to do. Then, really didn't affect.

WN: You told me earlier that the mill workers were affected a lot.

SM: Yeah, yeah. Because the seniority that people stay in, the new ones go out. Unless the old ones volunteer themself to go out or take pension, or stuff like that. Lot of the guys like change life, not working the same place all the time, so they move out. They went ahead and drive trucks. Yeah, you'd be surprised some of these older people, they learn how to be mechanics [outside of the plantation]. And a few of them that I know used to teach others, Filipino boys, mechanic kind stuff. Regular PI [Philippine Island] guys teaching the other PI guys what to do. They had classes, stuff for them. Yeah, they had quite a few guys that used to do that. Of course, they left the islands, too. They was really good mechanic, Filipino boys. They was pretty good mechanics, and they left. They went to the Mainland and open up their own shops in the Mainland.

WN: So it was generally the plantation that provided the training and so forth for these people who had to move around because of the mergers.

SM: Well, more less you had to know what you doing before you get one other job. I no can go ahead and—just because I got a lot of seniority, I going come here and bump you off, because
I got seniority. I gotta know [how to do] your type of job, and stuff like that, before I can take you out of that job. And I think it's nothing but right. You gotta know before you take. And that's the way it's supposed to be. Or unless you just don't give a damn, and you just say, "Here, you take my job. I no care." You know? You going to quit or look forward in doing something else.

WN: Did lot of people do that? Quit the planation?

SM: Yeah. There's quite a few people that quit the plantation. Some of them made it pretty good. And some I guess they sorry that they quit the plantation. But that's how life goes, you know. To me, [if] I had a chance to do something outside, I would go ahead and do something outside. But . . .

WN: Did you ever want to do anything outside?

SM: Yeah, I tried to better myself, going into the state [working for the state government], but yet, the state wasn't better enough to work for.

WN: You mean in terms of pay?

SM: Well, not exactly. You know, in terms of medical [insurance]. Like this girl [SM's disabled daughter] here, the plantation cover her for all the medical expenses.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

SM: Yeah, that's why, like I say, if I could have better myself at first, I would go. But at that time, the medical [insurance provided by the plantation] was so cheap that I was getting good medical for her, coverage—everything was covered for her already, eh?

WN: Oh, for your daughter.

SM: Yeah. So we no can give guarantee I go to the state, and I get medical for her, the regular coverage for her. So I had to make more than what I really making in the plantation. I had to make a lump sum more than what I making in the plantation, in order to leave my job to go.

WN: What kind of state job would they have had?

SM: Oh, regular, working jobs. I mean . . .

WN: I mean, that you could have stayed . . .

SM: Labor jobs.

WN: You could stay in Pa'auiilo?

SM: Well, no, you have to find someplace else to live. But I could stay in Pa'auiilo, because I was living with my father, so I could stay with him. I didn't have to worry about housing. I had housing already.
WN: But to work state job, you would have had to commute.

SM: Yeah.

WN: To Hilo or someplace.

SM: Yeah. Well, they offered me jobs in the state. I had to work in Kona. Parks in Kona, stuff like that. And go Ka‘ū, up the far places, you know. They offer us the far distant jobs. So that kind of puts you out of the question. You no like travel that far. And who knew like what we know today? That everybody is doing that anyway. Just to come work down the hotel, they come all the way from Hilo. Just to work in the hotel.

WN: Yeah.

DM: From Ka‘ū they come.

SM: Yeah, yeah, just to do work.

WN: So, you were saying that when they had the merger, the community started to—sort of . . .

SM: Break up.

WN: . . . broke up.

SM: Yeah.

WN: Yeah? How come?

SM: Well, you have to go where your job is. I mean, you gotta live close to where you work. You don’t have to spend too much time on the highway, traveling here, traveling there, just to go to work, or just to get back home. I mean, when you finish your work, I think it should be close. Emergencies or stuff like that, you’re right there. You don’t have to travel far to go home, or [someone to] come get you, or whatever.

Well, actually—well, there was merger, it really didn’t affect me. Because, like I say, I can do anything on the plantation. Anything, I can do. Except for office work. But I was doing some office work one time when I got hurt and was laid up for a while. I do office kind work in the garage. So, in time, I not going be left out. I no scared handle everything. I go ahead, poke my nose inside. That’s the way you gotta be.

WN: Do you remember other families having to move away?

SM: Oh, yeah. Quite a bit people moved away. Some went to the Mainland. But you see, they pack up all their goodies, and then, next thing you know, they down there a few years, next thing you know, they back over here in Hawai‘i. You see? Then they give up again, they go to the Mainland. I don’t understand those kind of people. And then they back here again.

WN: They found jobs back here again?
SM: Yeah, they found jobs back in the plantation again. In other words, if you bred to be a plantation worker, you might as well not pack up, because you might as well stay here. (Chuckles)

WN: Let's talk about your son Butch. He was working for the plantation, yeah?

SM: Yeah.

WN: And then he got laid off?

SM: Yeah, he got bumped off.

WN: When was this?

SM: Ah, don't ask me time. (Chuckles)

WN: But before this past . . .

SM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Okay.

SM: Well, was kind of closing down already.

WN: Oh, okay.

SM: Every year, they was getting closer to closing up.

WN: So how did it affect him and his family?

SM: Well, after he was laid off, he was driver for some business people down Kawaihae, truck driver. You know, one of those big trailer kind type. While they was growing up, I always told my kids to do anything. No look back on one job, you know. Just do anything. Tractor driving or try to get their nose into everything else. Make like me. No scared. They tell you go, I, “Yeah, I can. I go.” Whether I know or not, I go. As long as I make the machine move, I'm going to go. That was what I try to teach them, see. No try to say, “I like only this job,” or “I like only that job.” Take what you can get. And, like that, years to come, you can do anything. Just like me. I went to all the jobs. I tried everything, everything down the line. So I wasn’t afraid of work, in other words. Like Butchy, he had these chances of staying in the plantation, but he didn’t have the heart to lay off other people. He was laid off . . .

WN: You mean bump other people.

SM: Yeah, bump other people. You look at it that way. Because, “Aw, I no like go bump off this guy,” or you no like bump off that guy, you know. Those was his words, see? But then he got the [nonplantation] job, and more he never care. He say he get truck driving job. Oh, that’s up to you. And he was wearing his own shoes. My feet wasn’t inside his shoes. He was wearing his own shoes, and he like, he take. Then, he waited eight years before he could get into the state job. And he got into the state job. After he get into the state job, four years or
five years afterwards, they knock him off again. But he still with the state. He still with the state, working as a park . . .

DM: Parks department [department of parks and recreation].

SM: Parks keeper or something, whatever.

WN: This is down Kona side?

SM: Yeah. But he lives over here. And he goes all the way to Kona every day.

WN: So you find now more people doing that? More and more commuting . . .

SM: Oh, yeah, yeah.

WN: . . . for job. Which is real different from the old days.

SM: Yeah. They work all down the hotels. Kona. We had girls that come inside here, work. [SM is referring to home-care nurses who care for SM’s disabled daughter.] Next thing you know, they down Kona working in a hotel. These girls, they getting good money, you know.

WN: This is home-care nursing, you mean.

SM: Thirteen, thirteen, fourteen, sixteen dollars all in one hour, they get. I think they get. That’s good money, you know. No need work eight hours. Four hours you work, enough. Like this girl here [family’s nurse], she work here, then she work in a life-care center, nursing job there too.


SM: Ah, he stayed on till the last harvest [i.e., the “final harvest” in 1994]. He had a clean record.

WN: He participated in the last harvest, final harvest.

SM: He work on and off, different kind of jobs. He was another one that he want to drive truck. But I told him, “No, you no can live only driving truck. You have to learn to do other jobs, other things.” On his own, he tried driving tractors. While at work, he jump on the tractor, fool around.

WN: So when did you start to think that, okay, sugar is not going to be here for much longer, or it’s not going to last forever? When did you start to feel that?

SM: Tell you the truth, even till the last harvest, I think I still had hope for the sugar to come [back]. That’s right. I never believe anybody when they told me sugar was going to go out the door. I don’t know who thought of that idea of closing down sugar plantations.

DM: And they all went down, one after another.
WN: What do you think the closing of the plantation means to your family? What does it mean to you, now that the plantation is closed?

SM: I feel hurt. You know, I feel hurt. I feel hurt because when I was driving truck, cane truck, hauling cane, you go to the field, you come back with a load of cane, back and forth, you know. You see yourself in the night, you look at yourself at night, going back and forth, going back and forth. Then you get to see everything. You see the cars. There was no cars in the night. You never see very much cars at all in the night. You probably see one, two. In the eight hours shift of work, only one, two cars you see during the night. Then the last hours in the morning hours, then you start seeing the cars coming alive, people waking up. You know, because we used to haul cane near the camps, and you see the lights coming on. Then you begin to know that there’s people living around there.

DM: Yeah, they wake up four o’clock in the morning, cook rice, and go work, eh? (Chuckles)

SM: Yeah.

DM: Make their lunch then...

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

SM: Some sort of weird dream, then. You see all the people waking up, or cars moving by. Where the hell they was all this time? (WN chuckles.) Sometimes you think. I always was a dreamer. Always dreaming of something.

WN: How did you first hear about the plantation closing?

SM: Well, you hear that for years, years that they was closing the plantation. I had one uncle from ‘O‘ökala there, he was a supervisor, too. And he used to come visit us practically every night, even the wife, my aunty. They used to come visit all the time, after my father died, anyway. They used to come visit. And he always had that in his mouth. He always had that in his mouth. The sugar going down, going close, plantation going close, or stuff like that. I don’t know how he got that, but he always had that in his mouth. Me, I never used think that way. [To MG] You used to think of sugar plantation going close?

MG: Never think about it.

SM: Never did think, eh? You see?

WN: You just keep working, eh?

SM: Keep working. I mean, we wasn’t afraid of work. That’s the thing, you know. You wasn’t afraid of working.

WN: I’m wondering, too. Does the plantation to you mean more than just work?

SM: Yeah, I think in that state, yeah, because that’s your life, bin, eh? Like now, it’s disappointing. At that time, you was looking forward for the next day of doing this, doing that. What are you going to do tomorrow? Yeah. Because, whether you producing sugar or
just repairing, there was always a job there. Not like Mainland, they one day close down, they shut down two, three months [during off-harvesting season]. Nobody work or whatever. Maybe half year, they no work. They don't raise vegetables or stuff like that. They close 'em down already. But plantation, no, there was always something else to do. You shut down the sugar, producing sugar, but you had to repair the mills, you had to plant the crop, take care of the crop, all of that. So plantation was a very good place to work, because there's always something to do.

A lot of people always used to say there's no future. But from young time I hear that there's no future in the plantation. Well, I get a pension. I getting my social security, so how can you say there's no future?

WN: What about for your children? Did you want them to work plantation and continue to work plantation?

SM: No . . .

WN: Your grandchildren?

SM: I never like. I wanted them do other things. But they started, they like go drive truck. I guess that's how with some other kids, like that, the same thing, you know?

WN: You wanted your kids to go do something else besides plantation?

SM: Yeah, I expected them to go, you know? Especially my big boy, I expected him to be a policeman. Big. The uncle was captain of the police department down here. And he could get inside any time he wanted to. But he never care to do it. He went into the [Hawai'i] National Guard, never go into the service.

WN: What about for John? What did you want him to do?

SM: Well, him, I don't know.

DM: Him, he had his mind made up drive truck. And still today, he drive truck. He damn good truck driver, you know.

SM: My children are---I no worry about them. They always wanted to be somebody.

WN: So did you ever think down the road, the future—you know, like your children working for the plantation, your grandchildren working for the plantation—is that how you sort of thought?

SM: Well, no. Like I say, I wanted my boys to do other job. State or---get into something different. But no, they wanted to do the job that they wanted. Never bother. They didn't want to go school. They rather go work.

WN: You folks have any kind of arguments or anything? Disagreements about, you know, so-and-so, your son, your kids working for the plantation or anything like that?
SM: No, no. I never force my children to do anything what they didn’t want to do. I never force my children to do this. The only thing, I force them not to smoke. That’s the only thing I have fight with them is not to smoke. I was smoking, but not really was hurting me at that time. And I guess figured if I let them no smoke, maybe be better for them. They more healthy. But I used to go hunting, and the young healthy bodies like that, when they had, they still couldn’t beat me, you know?

WN: So actually, then, the plantation closing didn’t really affect your family too much, from your perspective.

SM: No, not that I can see. Well, the reason too is when the plantation closed, I was already not working. I was not working, so it really didn’t affect me too much. I had pension already.

WN: What about the community? The closing of the plantation, what has that meant to the community of Pa’auilo and Honoka’a?

SM: Well, as far as I know, Pa’auilo, from a nice, loveable town, friendly place and all that, it got to be a mean place. I think Pa’auilo got to be a mean place. You know, people not as friendly as it used to be. Before, in the old days, you had parties every weekend, there was some different party going on. Filipino party, Japanese party, Portuguese party, or you name it. They always had something, some kind of parties going on. Weddings and things like that. Birthday parties or baptismal parties—the Filipinos great for that. There was always something doing. Yet, of course, there was quiet times. Lot of people had time to travel here or there, fishing or hunting, things like that. Pa’auilo was a happy place. Everybody help one another. I didn’t see anything like that in other communities. Other communities, like, they teach one another to hate one another, look like. (Laughs) And for Pa’auilo being the way it was, we never used to chase people out. Always let different people come in there in the community. But they the ones bring in the different things.

WN: Now, without the plantation, and you said it’s more like a mean place now, how come? You know, I mean, because the jobs aren’t here, or . . .

SM: Oh yeah, yeah. Because the jobs not here. You no get no jobs, then everybody want to do what you doing. Plenty of them feel as though that you no supposed to get a job, I supposed to get ’em, or, you know. No can help. If you can do it, you do it. If you cannot, you cannot.

DM: You know why, too. There’s lot of drugs are floating around, too. Lot of people . . .

SM: And you get all the drug addicts and . . .

DM: Drug addicts come out, go in [to the community] or whatevers. When we growing up in the camp, before was always together.

WN: Everybody knew everybody.

DM: Yeah. Was a nice place to live.

SM: You go on to Honoka’a down that place, very few of the old-timers. Sometimes it’s all new
people, that. Turn the whole place upside-down.

DM: You don’t know who the hell your neighbors . . .

SM: Alcoholics . . .

WN: Because the newcomers coming in?

DM: Yeah.

SM: Yeah, the newcomers coming in. They like do what they like.

DM: They like take over.

SM: Just like each region of houses, now in the plantation, now you come live over there, six months—you start out in the plantation—six months after that, they close down. Next thing you know, you get one house free. Well, you pay couple of, maybe a thousand dollars. But you get ‘em free, just like. House. You don’t deserve it. Offer that thing to the people that was brought up on the plantation, you know. Give them that chance of owning the homes and things like that. But, no . . .

WN: So people that came and worked late for the plantation, they could buy their house?

SM: Yeah, they get the houses. Whoever stay [living] in the houses [at the time of the plantation closing], they got the house.

WN: You mean the house that they were living in?

SM: Yeah. If you stay [living] in one house, they no throw you out. You can get that house.

WN: So, yeah, I guess that caused some people to get kind of angry, then.

SM: Yeah, yeah. I mean, that’s the way I look at it. If was to give or cheaply sold, I’d offer that to the older-timer first. And then if the old-timers never like, didn’t care for it, then you can issue to other people.

WN: How did some old-timers feel about it?

SM: Well, I don’t know, but some feel hurt. Some of them feel hurt. You know, living outside [the plantation], paying bigger money and wish they could get the cheap place.

WN: So in the old days, if you working plantation and you retire, you gotta move out? Or you could stay . . .

SM: You could stay.

DM: The supervisors had to move.

SM: Supervisors, the head people, they had to move out. As long as you had supervising position,
you had to move out of the plantation. But regular working people, they stayed there. They
wasn’t chased out. And even if I passed away and she stayed back, they didn’t kick her out of
the house. The lady wasn’t moved out from the house.

WN: So you know, you were talking about crime and drugs and things like that. Did you notice it
increasing after the plantation closed?

SM: Oh yeah. Right after the plantation closed, everything was different. Big difference. After the
plantations start closing, you get all—like I say, all the new people that came into the
plantation, they the ones came in with all of those things. The young kids, even, came up
with those kind of stuff. Families, old-timer families, the young kids learn to do those things,
you know.

WN: These newcomers, where did they come from?

SM: From the island, jailbirds and whatnot. (DM laughs.) Guys was in prison, they get jobs with
the plantation, they give ’em job. That’s how bad things was before they close up, they take
anybody. Any Tom, Dick, and Harry go inside the plantation, work.

WN: You mean around the time they were closing down?

SM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: How come?

SM: Labor cheap. I mean, they just take. They had people from the Mainland, Mexicans and
people from the Mainland come over here, do jobs.

DM: Truck driving.

SM: You know, unemployment people in the Mainland. I guess they get jobs all over the world.
You unemployment, you get your jobs—you see one job in the paper, you know, in the office
there, up in the Mainland, “Yeah, I like go up there.” You apply for the job, they send you
up there, go work. Well, like these guys, they apply for jobs for down here. Drive truck.
They thought was . . .

DM: Cut seed, the Mexicans.

SM: They thought was driving on the highways and things like that. They never know that they
was going to turn over or go inside the gulches or whatever around here.

WN: Yeah.

DM: You know, there were loggers. Lot of them were loggers.

WN: Where?

DM: From the Mainland. They came down . . .
SM: Yeah, the old logging people there.

WN: Some came from the Mainland.

SM: Yeah, like I say, they get jobs only certain times of the year. Then after that, they close down. They no can log already. So, they come over here, think they can lug cane around the place, but no. Big difference.

DM: Mexicans they came, they were cutting cane. Yeah, seed cutters.

WN: You know, when you were working—from 1950 you worked plantation, and then had mergers, eh? And things. And you know, sometimes was hard because some people were laid off, especially mill people. But how would you compare all of that past to what just happened with the closing, the final closing of the plantation? Which was worse?

SM: Closing, I guess. Closing was the worse thing to do. Mergers got plenty to do with the older people. The old-timers, you know, they just couldn’t do very much different jobs than what they doing. Most of them was planting seed, or cutting cane, or cutting seed, guys working in the mill. They clean and sugar room. All those kind of guys, the boiler rooms, like that. All they did was feed the ashes, the fire with charcoal. Well, not charcoal, bagasse. And then they clean out the charcoal underneath there. That’s the cheap jobs. Then they had machinists, inside the mill.

WN: Can you tell me, how did you feel the day of the final—the day the plantation closed [September 30, 1994]? What went through your mind? How did you feel?

SM: Blank. Blank. ’Cause I couldn’t believe. I couldn’t believe what was going on, you know?

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

DM: It was a very sad day.

SM: Well, it was a sad day. I don’t know.

WN: They had the trucks going right through the Honoka’a town? Cane haul trucks?

SM: Yeah. You no get the pictures, no?

WN: Yeah, I saw the pictures, yeah. So as you saw the truck going down, and they were kind of decorated with flowers and things, eh?

DM: Cane.

SM: Cane.


SM: Oh, I felt it.
WN: Were you---did you cry?

SM: I feel hurt. Even to think of it, I feel hurt. (SM is tearful.) I feel hurt, you know, really, even to think of that trucks going.

DM: The day to do that, we had to go six o’clock early in the morning.

SM: I wanted to go up [to Honoka’a town to witness the final harvest parade of cane trucks on September 30, 1994. Sugar operations ceased on October 10, 1994]. I had my jeep parked right there in the yard. And I wanted to go up. Prepare myself to go. But as I got out there, I couldn’t go. I didn’t have the power to drive up see them. Plus they blowing the [truck] horns. (SM is tearful.) Can still hear that horns, you know, it blow. Sad.

WN: Were lot of the old-timers over there?

SM: Yeah.

WN: Did you feel, maybe there was a hope that . . .

SM: Yeah.

WN: I mean, maybe now? How do you feel? Do you feel that the sugar can continue?


SM: The only way I can expect them to come is they get one portable mill. (DM laughs.)

WN: So, what do you think about the plantations? Not only this plantation, but all the other plantations in Hawai’i now closing. No more sugar. How do you feel about that?

SM: Make you wonder what is going on for all the plantations to close up like this. What causes this? What’s behind all of this, you know. Why? They could keep one—keep a mill here, or whatever. Why, all of a sudden, Hawai’i is not a place to produce sugar anymore? All of our mills are going.

MG: All went already. No more nothing.

SM: No, no. Like Honolulu get, yet, eh?

MG: No more Honolulu, pau.

WN: Well, Waialua [Sugar Company] is going to close this year [1996].

MG: Yeah, Waialua going close.

WN: Only Maui get.

SM: Maui, Kaua’i. Well, yet again, you can go right back down the line and blame the union.
Gusman: Always the union's fault, oh yeah, closing down the plantation.

SM: They ask for too much. At one time. They ask for too much at one time, then they got nothing. We ended up with nothing. That's what it is.

Gusman: Also could happen with the hotels, if they no watch out.

SM: Yeah, the hotels, they climbing over one another's back. Close down, re-improve the place.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: What do you think, of all—you know, when you think of the government with welfare and union and church and so forth, what do you think is the most helpful? What agency or what institution do you think is most helpful to help the community deal with this sugar closing?

SM: I don't know. Well, the government had the most to do. They supposed to put down their foot and say, "Oh, no, we no close up this plantation just because this and that." And they could have put in more money. I think they could have put in—they supposed to put in more money to this plantation.

WN: You mean subsidy.

SM: Subsidy. Because everything else is made out of sugar. Everything else is made out of sugar. All the war equipment is made out of sugar. The pencil you using, they made out of sugar, that plastic made out of sugar. You can name everything, they still get sugar inside. How much, you know, I don't know, but always there's sugar. That's what I learned about sugar when I was a young kid. How old I was, I don't know. Everything was made of sugar, one way or another. Because I had to chew sugarcane, burnt sugarcane, I had to chew for my asthma. My asthma medicine was made out of burnt sugarcane, juice, you know. Freshly burnt kind of, they extract that and make my medicine.

WN: So because sugar was everywhere, you just thought sugar was going to keep on going, eh?

SM: Sure, yeah, yeah, I feel that they're going—supposed to keep on going. Because, it's—they everywhere. I don't know how they getting by without it now.

WN: Well, like Coca-Cola, like that, they using corn sweetener now, eh?

SM: Well it's still sugar. Now matter how they chop it down, it still get sugar inside. Corn sugar, beet sugar. Some more sweet than the other. Like cane sugar was really sweet.

WN: So think of this place maybe twenty, thirty years from now. What do you think . . .

SM: I hope I will last that twenty, thirty years from now. I really would like to see what happen at that time. But . . .
WN: You think it’s going to get better, or worse?

SM: I think it’s going to get worse. I think it’s going to get worse before anything else gets better. I hate to use the word better already, because you never did see the better end of it yet. As far as worse, yeah, it’s going to get worse. The way everything is going, people driving by and shooting at one another. You know, what can go more worse than those kind of stuff? Before, you had just eight policemen there in Honoka’a, and they’d keep everything going. Nowadays, they could get two hundred people there in the police station. They still couldn’t keep this place straight.

The law is causing all the trouble. Everything is law, law, law. This is law, this is law, that law.

WN: You think there’s going to be a sense of community?

SM: I don’t think so.

WN: Not like before, though, yeah.

SM: Yeah. Like I say, you know, everybody used to get a good time. When I was growing up, everybody had a good time. You know, like I say, the train used to land up in Pa‘auilo. From Hilo all the way to Pa‘auilo. And everything was centered in Pa‘auilo. Honoka’a for being the better name [at] that time, more stores and things like that. Pa‘auilo was putting in more money. Beer bars, we had the four beer bars down there or three beer bars. Hotels, we had these two hotels or three hotels. Hotels, we had two. [No], three. And down by the train landing near the where the train comes, they had one hotel down there. If you couldn’t make the train to go back to Hilo, you had a hotel right there to stay. Or if you come in late and no more taxi for take you out, you still get a hotel there in Pa‘auilo for stay. And up the village, up the town area, they had two hotels up there, that I know. And of course, they had boardinghouses. People could board.

WN: What about families? You think families are breaking up more now than before?

SM: Yeah, they all breaking up. The families all break up. As far as—one sure thing, two kids, when they get to be eighteen, they think they Billy-be-damned already, go on, go here, go there.

WN: So like, you take your grandchildren now, like Jacob, when you compare him to when you were his age, was it different?

SM: They get to go more, more, see more than what we see before. And yet they don’t deserve it, I think. The government is spending big money just to keep the kids in line, and yet the kids are not in line. Schools are not like what they was before. Schools not like it was. Everything is . . .

WN: So who’s to blame for what’s happening?

SM: Gee, I just cannot tell you that. I just cannot tell you that. (Laughs) I am not the Lord. The Lord sees all of those things. He probably know what’s going on. All I do, I pray to Him,
that's one sure thing. Every night, I pray to my Lord.

WN: Okay, Stanley, before I turn off the tape recorder—this is the end of our interviews—any last things you want to say? People going to be reading this interview, maybe fifty years from now, hopefully hundred years from now.

SM: I'm happy that I had something to do with it, I was able to say something. What much, I don't know, but at least they can learn how I grew up and how I'm going to die, which I am ready to do.

WN: Okay Stanley. Thank you very much.

SM: You're welcome, very much. I'm happy.

END OF INTERVIEW
THE CLOSING OF SUGAR PLANTATIONS:
Interviews with Families of Hāmākua and Kaʻū, Hawaiʻi

Volume I

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