BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Hideko Saruwatari

Hideko Saruwatari was born in 1927 in Lānaʻi City, Lānaʻi. She is one of six children born to Aiko and Iwao Kurashige.

Both parents were employed by Hawaiian Pineapple Company. Her mother held various jobs: bi-lingual assistant in the household of engineer, David Root; dormitory cleaner and laundress for Hawaiian Pineapple Company employees; and helper in the company bakery and hotel. Her father, initially hired as a heavy equipment operator, helped clear Pālāwai Basin for pineapple cultivation. In later years, he was a movie theater projectionist and a storeroom clerk.

Hideko Saruwatari attended Lānaʻi High and Elementary School. While still in school, she worked part-time in the company storeroom. In the summer, she worked in the field, cutting the tops of pineapples. During World War II, she helped her mother at Endo’s Fountain.

In 1948, she married Masao Saruwatari, who also worked in the storeroom.

In the 1960s, she did bookkeeping for the Nishimura Service Station. For more than thirty years, she worked as a clerk in the Licensing Office, Maui County.

The Saruwataris raised four children.
Tape No. 56-36-1-13

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Hideko Saruwatari (HS)

Lāna‘i City, Lāna‘i

April 11, 2013

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: Okay, we’re going to start. This is Warren Nishimoto and I’m interviewing Hideko Kurashige Saruwatari in Lāna‘i City, Lāna‘i. This is for the Lāna‘i Culture and Heritage Center oral history project. Today is April 11, 2013.

So, good afternoon Hideko. First question I want to ask you is what year were you born?

HS: Nineteen twenty-seven. Lāna‘i City.

WN: So tell me first of all about your mother [Aiko Muramoto Kurashige]. Tell me her background—where is she from and when she came to Lāna‘i.

HS: She was from Lahaina [Maui]. She was adopted by the Iba family, because she lost her mom and dad. She was adopted by Iba family because [Kanekichi] Iba grandpa had only one son. So, she was adopted by them and she grew up there without a mother. She had only a father and a brother in Lahaina. She went to Kam[ehameha] III School there. I don’t know what happened after that.

WN: Her father, [Mansaku] Muramoto. . . . Muramoto yeah?

HS: Yes. I don’t know about her [biological] father. I don’t know anything about them. All I know is Iba. That’s all, and her brother Yoshio.

WN: Iba, how do you spell that?

HS: I-B-A.

WN: Oh, I-B-A. So she grew up in Lahaina, and when did she come to Lāna‘i?

HS: Oh, when she was thirteen? Fourteen? Because they needed somebody who can speak and write English and Japanese.

WN: Who was “they”?

HS: I don’t know who. [Hawaiian Pineapple] Company, I guess. They went to get her on the canoe across that channel over there [from Lahaina]. To Keōmuku, you know? Then she came to work, but she said she stayed here I think only two or three months, and she didn’t like it. So she went back to Lahaina. Later on they didn’t have anybody who can speak English and Japanese, so they
went to pick her up again. So she came back, and when she came back she worked for the Root family. Then, oh when did she get married [1925]?

WN: You mean to Iwao [Kurashige]? Your father.

HS: Yeah.

WN: We can look that up. But the Root family, Mr. [David E.] Root was the engineer for Lāna‘i.

HS: I think so. [Root was resident engineer in charge of planning and construction for Hawaiian Pineapple Company.] She worked for them. She said she worked for the Root family.

WN: You know, you said your mom—they needed somebody who can speak English and Japanese. How did she learn Japanese? She’s nisei right?

HS: Yes, she’s nisei.

WN: Second generation, and you’re third generation. So usually, second generation [speaks] better English. . . .

HS: No, the father spoke Japanese, because he’s first generation. I got the picture of the father and brother and her. Because she gave it to me. My cousin folks—her brother’s family—when they all grew up they found out that I had the picture of their grandfather and their father. So, I gave it to somebody and they made [copies] on the computer. So they all have a picture.

(Taping is interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, so we were talking about your mother. When she came to Lāna‘i from Lahaina at age fourteen, this is about 1922, I have over here. Because we interviewed your mother a long time ago.

HS: Oh yes. Because I have the book too. [Center for Oral History, Lāna‘i Ranch: The People of Kō‘ele and Keōmuku, 1989.]

WN: When she came over here, you told me why she came, and she lived in Kō‘ele.

HS: Yeah, Kō‘ele.

WN: What kinds of jobs did she have when she came over here?

HS: Housekeeping.

WN: So with the Root family she was doing housekeeping?

HS: Housekeeping, yeah. She was their cook, and regular housekeeping. I guess after she got married, she did laundry [for single male workers], but when she first came she baby-sat and then did housekeeping.

WN: What other jobs did she have besides housekeeping?

HS: I don’t think she did anything [else]. I think that’s it.
WN: But later on she worked for Richard’s [Shopping Center] yeah?

HS: Oh, that was after she got married. When did they get married? Nineteen twenty-five?

WN: Oh, you were born [19]27, so probably right before then.

HS: After she got married, she worked—I have her first. . .

(Telephone rings. Taping stops then resumes.)

HS: Warren Osako found my mother’s first—when she first worked for Dole company [Hawaiian Pineapple Company]. I wonder where I put them? Warren found the paper that she signed the first time she worked for Dole company.

WN: Oh yeah? This was when she—what did she do for Dole company?

HS: [Examining hiring documents.] That’s her. That’s her [employee] number and when she first worked for Dole company.

WN: This is dated “July 16, 1926.”

HS: Yes, when she first started working for Dole company.

WN: And what did she do for Dole company?

HS: She used to clean the [working] boys’ dorm. The big house. She used to wash their laundry. The secretary’s and the boys’ laundry. After that she used to—you know the [present] Hotel Lāna‘i? That [building] was for single boys and single ladies. That was their room. She used to work up there. Clean and do their laundry. After that, Dole company at first had a bakery, she used to work down at the bakery. Pine Isle Market, that was the old [company] bakery before. The back side. The front side was a restaurant, like a boarding house for single boys to get their meal, and get their lunch to [take to] work. So the big part of that was the dining room, on the other side half was the bakery.

WN: You mean where Pine Isle [Market] is now?

HS: Yes, next to Pine Isle. Anyway, that was the hotel before, so she used to clean the hotel too. In the front was a barbershop, and the back side was a hotel. Had about one, two, three, four rooms I think. That was the hotel.

WN: Who stayed in that hotel?

HS: People who came [to Lāna‘i], and they stayed in the hotel. So she used to clean over there to take care of the hotel.

WN: She was doing all this while being employed by the company?

HS: Yes, that was all under Dole—long before, everything was Dole company, or you worked for Dole.

WN: So had the hotel and nearby had the boardinghouse?
HS: Yes, right across Pine Isle [Market]. Next to that is Pele’s Other Garden [Deli Bistro] now. The front portion was a barbershop, and the back side had four bedrooms. That was the hotel. That was all run by the company, so she used to work under the company.

WN: This was right after she got married then?

HS: Yes, after she got married.

WN: And when they got married she moved away from Kō‘ele and she moved into the city?

HS: Yes, because they had all the small houses here [in Lāna‘i City]. She moved and got her own house. We moved house a lot of times I remember when we were young. Ninth [Street] and Gay Street. That was our house. Ninth Street and Gay Street, that was an old—the first time it was a Christian church. After that, it became a storeroom for the Dole company. Then [the company built] their own [storeroom], so they moved everything [out of the structure]. So he [father] asked Mr. [Dexter “Blue”] Fraser [plantation manager], and so they made rooms the way he like and that’s why we were over there. So we grew up over there too.

[Nineteen] forty-five we moved [again]. How many of us? Four girls and one boy. So, we needed a bigger house, so he asked Mr. Fraser.

WN: So you folks moved around a lot. Your mother had different jobs, yeah?

HS: Yes. I guess everybody I think over here when they were young, they moved a lot. But then after the children start growing up, they stayed where they were.

WN: Okay, so tell me now about your father, Iwao.

HS: My dad?

WN: Iwao Kurashige.

HS: Well, he said when he first came he didn’t know where was Lāna‘i. They reached here in a big boat [inter-island steamship] they travel on in nighttime.

WN: Haleakalā?

HS: Oh, I don’t know what boat. He came from Wahiawā, [O‘ahu]. He worked for Hawaiian Pineapple Company.

WN: Oh, I see. He was like transferred then?

HS: Yes. He used to live in Waipahu because that’s where the family was. When he was six years old—three brothers, he had two more other brothers—the father moved to Japan. So, they went to Japan. But when he [Iwao] came eleven, he said he didn’t like [Japan], so he moved back to Waipahu again. Then after that he worked for Hawaiian Pineapple Company [in Wahiawā].

WN: And he was nisei too?

HS: He’s nisei. Because they were all born there.

WN: What ken did his father and mother come from? Do you know?
HS: From Yamaguchi [Prefecture]. Because that’s where they went back to.

WN: Your mother’s side family, what part of Japan are they from?

HS: We don’t know. I never heard her father and mother—where they came from.

WN: So your father is a Waipahu boy and then came in 1922 to Lāna‘i?

HS: To Lāna‘i.

WN: So in that sense he just stayed with the same company.

HS: Right, Dole company. It was [named] Hawaiian Pineapple Company before Dole.

WN: So he lived in Waipahu and worked in Wahiawā?

HS: Because Wahiawā is [part of] Hawaiian Pineapple Company before.

WN: Right. Do you know how old he was when he came?

HS: He said he was fourteen, fifteen?

WN: So when your father and mother got married, they were really young huh?

HS: My father was sixteen, seventeen, I don’t know. Then my mother was only fourteen, fifteen.

WN: When they got married or when she came?

HS: No, when she got married. Because when she came she was thirteen, fourteen, yeah? I think two years after that I think she got married.

WN: So maybe sixteen then?

HS: Yes, and then my father was—I don’t know if he was seventeen, eighteen then. I don’t know. I think they were three years apart, two years apart?

WN: Well, I have here that your mother came Lāna‘i 1922 at age fourteen. And your father came 1922. And you said they’re three years apart?

HS: I think they’re three years apart.

WN: So when your father came, he didn’t know your mother yet?

HS: No.

WN: Okay. What did he do? What kind of work did he do for the company?

HS: Oh, the company needed heavy-equipment driver. You know tractor—Caterpillar?

WN: Yeah.
HS: He said they worked hard [clearing land for pineapple planting] down Pālāwai. I know over there was full with *pānini*. The cactus. Used to be full of cactus. And big, big boulders. They didn’t have any heavy-equipment driver, so that’s why they sent him here. He said he didn’t know where he was going. But he said it was okay.

WN: So this was right when the company was starting in Lāna‘i?

HS: Yes, because clear up for . . . .

WN: Clearing up for pineapple. Okay, so he helped clear up Pālāwai?

HS: Pālāwai side. That’s where they started first. Because over there was sort of flat-like. So that’s where pineapple started first. All down Pālāwai.

WN: Pālāwai Basin they call it.

HS: In the basin, yes.

WN: Did he have to learn how to be heavy-equipment operator? Was he doing that in Wahiawā?

HS: I think that’s what he was doing in Wahiawā. But as a single man, he liked it because the only fun they had was drinking. (Chuckles)

WN: So when your mother—because she was so young when she came here, she was only fourteen, did she drop out of school? After Kam[ehameha] III School in Lahaina?

HS: Yes, because she went only until sixth grade, I think. The father said, “Go work,” so that’s why she came to Lāna‘i.

WN: So you said that you folks moved around a lot. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

HS: We had our brother in between me and my sister. I don’t know when the brother died. I think after my third sister we had one brother. He was no more two years old I think when he died. Then after that we had another brother. Then after that we had one more sister. So, right now we have only four sisters. We lost our two brothers already.

WN: So four girls and . . . .

HS: We had two boys.

WN: Two boys. And what number are you?

HS: I am number two.

WN: So Cookie [Setsuko] is number one?

HS: Yes.

WN: Okay. So, what was it like growing up in your household?

HS: I don’t know, because I never was home. I was the sickly one, so my mother, working, she cannot take care of me. I was always with [the] Okamoto [family]. From young time I can remember. I
used to go to school from there, when I was first grade, second grade. I never was home. I don’t know why. But when I was with them all that time, my mother never came to see me. My dad used to come see me. So I don’t remember my sister—playing with her. Even my sister below me, I didn’t know at all. My older sister Cookie, she was the one helping my mom. A lot of the office [i.e., workers for the Hawaiian Pineapple Company]—the male workers—my mom used to do all [their] laundry, so she used to help. But I never was home.

WN: I know Okamoto was your good family friend.
HS: Oh yeah, we are family. We are good friends.

WN: You spent a lot of time at that house?
HS: Yes, with Okamoto, because before Mrs. [Kimiko Okamoto] Nunotani got married, I was with Bāban and her. When she was going to get married, then I came home. Stayed for the summer and whatever, and then I went back—after she got married I went back to her.

WN: You just said Bāban. . . .
HS: Okamoto, yeah.

WN: Okamoto grand[mother]. . . .
HS: Yeah. Because Bāban used to work at—it’s now Hotel Lāna’i in the back has a building. That was a laundry room before.

WN: For who?
HS: For the [Lāna’i] Hospital. She used to do all laundry for the hospital, you know. So we used to go over there. That was the laundry room before. I think the laundry room is still there. Then the extension they rented out, there’s a room—like part of the hotel [today]. I think the laundry room is still there, [part of] Hotel Lāna’i.

WN: And that’s where Mrs. Okamoto worked?
HS: Yeah. Bāban used to work over there, because when I was born I don’t remember staying home. Until I’m five years old, I was in the hospital, because my dad said I had pleurisy. He took me to Lahaina and he said I had a surgery. So I have a hole there—surgery. After the surgery the doctor said, “No hope, so you take your baby home.”

So actually, my auntie—she was married that time to my mom’s brother—she always told me, “God gave you second life, so always take care.” My dad said too that I died once. I went out of breath once. But they [revived] me, and so when I was young I was in the hospital [often]. That I remember, because every day I would sit where the clinic is. That’s where the hospital was. I would sit and wait for Bāban to come to go to work. So I always used to wait for her by the window. So, I don’t remember playing with my sister Cookie when young time like that. Even my sister Mit-chan. I don’t remember.

WN: Did the Okamotos have children?
HS: Yes, they had two other boys. So they had three in the family.
WN: Did you play with them?

HS: No, they were older than me. I was real young. I used to stay there. Go school, come home.

WN: So you think maybe it might have been combination of you being sick and then maybe they wanted a daughter?

HS: I don’t know. When I think about it, when I was young I was thinking, why wasn’t I at home? My mother never explained to me anything. So I always tell them I was the unwanted child. (Laughs) But sometimes I think maybe I was the sickly one, and my mom couldn’t take care. The Okamoto [children] were all big already. They had only one girl and she was older. So, I used to stay [with that family], but I used to like staying with them, because when I go over there, they had Japanese[-language] school in the back of the old gym. So we would go to Japanese[-language] school and after that I had to change bag and our [public] school was up at [where] the Cavendish Golf Course is now.

WN: That was the old [Lāna‘i High and Elementary] School?

HS: Yeah. And then where that MCC [Maui Community College] is now, that was Yet Lung Store. That was the biggest grocery store that we had. Every time they [Okamotos] used to give me a nickel or dime, they told me go buy candy or something. So, I was happy. But then, until teenager—I remember every time I’m sick a little—they gave me a big tablespoon of castor oil. Those days we couldn’t have fresh fruit. My mother, even Okamoto used to make orange juice for me. So that’s why I’m tall and big. I’m the only one who had vitamins and all that. My sister folks never did. I used to like that. So they used to treat me good. They would give me a nickel. And before, nickel you can buy plenty candy, you know? I used to buy and they tell me go to school.

WN: Now you called Mrs. Okamoto “Bāban”?

HS: Bāban, yes.

WN: Which is almost like “grandma”.

HS: Grandma, yeah.

WN: You called her that because she was . . .

HS: Oh, she was older.

WN: Was she older than your mother folks?

HS: Yes, she was older than my mother folks, that’s why. So they used to treat me real good. But then, sometimes I wondered why I wasn’t home at all.

WN: Did you wonder at the time or you wonder now?

HS: No, wondered now. When I grew up I was thinking, I don’t remember playing with my sister below me. She’s two years younger than me. I don’t remember playing with her. But then, even when I became a teenager, I could never run around and play too much. My dad never used to
like it. Because I [would] get a bleeding nose whenever I got all hot and worked up, because I had rheumatic fever.

That’s the reason my dad didn’t want me to go to work out in the [pineapple] fields. When we [got to] high school, they used to [send] us to work after school. My dad didn’t want [me to work], but I said, “Everybody going. I want to go.” But if they get work on Monday through Friday, I never could work the whole five, six days. I never could. I worked Monday, Tuesday, [then] I had to rest Wednesday. I go work Thursday, I rest Friday. I cannot go work Saturday. So when come payday, everybody got more money than me. (Chuckles) Cannot help. I couldn’t go work. But, I’m glad that I went a little with everybody. So after that I think to myself, I was too sickly and maybe my mother was busy working so she couldn’t take care of me.

WN: So when you were staying with the Okamotos, did you have chores to do?

HS: No, usually I don’t. But sometimes they would tell me go wash dishes and I’d do that. But not the [usual] chores, because Mrs. Nunotani was always home. She never did go work outside, because she used to be a seamstress.

WN: This is your sister . . .

HS: Nunotani.

WN: The daughter of Okamoto.

HS: Okamoto, yes. She was a seamstress, so she’s home all the time. I used to baby-sit her daughter. She had only one daughter. So I didn’t know what is hard work, actually. I never did do hard work.

WN: But you had your own hardship.

HS: Oh yeah, I guess so. Because I was sick so often. But then as we got married and grew up, my mother always said, “You were the sickly one, but you grew up to be the healthiest one.” So I said, I guess so. But I still cannot do hard work. (Laughs) I don’t know what is hard work.

WN: So again, where was the Okamoto house that you stayed at?

HS: Across [from] the gym. After she [Mrs. Nunotani] got married—the daughter got married—you know right down Fraser Avenue [was] that old fire station? The small house right there, that’s where we stayed. They had the old fire station going up the hill, Ninth Street. That’s where I stayed with them when she was a seamstress and baby-sat for them. He was working for the [Hawaiian Pineapple Company] personnel department, Mr. Nunotani.

WN: I see. Okay. So, did they have a garden and things like that?

HS: They had a small garden in the back, but those days hardly anybody had garden because their yard was too small. They didn’t have big yards like now.

WN: So you went to Lāna‘i [High and Elementary] School?

HS: Yes.

WN: How was school for you?
HS: I was sickly, so I was very bad in school. I was real slow. But I went until twelfth grade. After that I got sick, so I didn’t graduate.

WN: Oh, you never graduated?

HS: But, junior and senior year I used to work after school—2:00, 2:30. I used to work in the [Hawaiian Pineapple Company] storeroom department. I used to work storeroom because my father was friends with the storeroom boss. They gave us jobs after school my junior and senior year. So I worked from 2:30 until 4:30, 5:00. So, after [19]45 out of school, I worked for the storeroom department until [19]47 September I quit, and then my mother sent me to Maui to go sewing school.

WN: Okay, I’ll ask you that a little bit later. But you said during the summers during school time you worked in the pineapple field?

HS: Oh, when summer, yes.

WN: What kind of jobs did you do?

HS: Oh, we only cut [off the pineapple crowns]. Men were picking—in the bag they pick and bring it [out of the line], and we used to cut [off the crowns] and help them box up [the fruit].

WN: Oh, okay. So the men would pick [pineapple and put them] in the bag and dump them off at where you guys were.

HS: And then we just bring them out in the open. The girls would all cut the top.

WN: With a knife.

HS: Yeah. I never could go contracting [basis]. They had contracting girls, but I cannot do that. My back is bad.

WN: By “contracting” you mean they get paid by the number of boxes?

HS: They get paid contract [i.e., paid by the amount of work done]. Number of the tops.

WN: You got paid only by the hour?

HS: Yeah. Because I got a bad back. From young time I had spinal trouble, that’s why. But then, my dad didn’t want me to go work, but I said, “No, I need to. I cannot just only stay home.” Summers I used to go. But then when come payday, they get more money than me.

WN: So when you’re cutting the top, what are you folks doing? Sitting on the ground?

HS: No, you’re bent over.

WN: You’re bending over and then what, you . . .

HS: Bunch of pineapple they bring down. Just cut the ends and cut the top off.

WN: It’s like a cutting board?
HS: No. We don’t have cutting board.

WN: So what, you’re cutting on the ground?

HS: Yeah, on the ground. Well, you stack up the pineapple. Each one used to cut.

WN: Oh, I see.

HS: So you’re bent over, so the back is bad. I never could do that too much.

WN: Did you have to strip the bottom [of the fruit] too?

HS: Yeah. So you know the knife—the Japan-[made] knife—the wide one? We had a man—our friend used to go sharpen our knife. It’s real sharp. He used to sharpen for us and we get our knife case. You got to shave off the bottom, then cut the top off. But that’s all [by] bending over.

WN: Then after you cut you put them in. . . .

HS: Then go to the next pile [of fruit].

WN: You had to sort them by size too?

HS: No. If big, all big. Number two is all small. So they were all number one if it’s all big, number two crop is all small. We just cut and the men came and pack it up in the box.

WN: So they’re all more or less the same size.

HS: Yeah. About same.

WN: What did you do with the tops? Did you just leave it there?

HS: Yeah, just leave it there. Before, they [would] just throw it away, but when it came later part when Dole took over, they keep the crown and that’s what they plant—the crown.

WN: So in the old days before Dole, you’re talking about Hawaiian Pine time?

HS: Yeah.

WN: They only used to plant the slips?

HS: Yeah, only the slips.

WN: So later on they started to plant . . .

HS: They found out the crowns give better fruit.

WN: Oh yeah?

HS: But when the pineapple grow from the slip, wow, it’s real sweet. But they found out the crown have better fruit. So they started planting [crowns]. It’s plentiful. Slips not too much. The slips got a nub [at the bottom], yeah? So they used to contract, taking off slip. The ladies used to contract. That’s the one they got a boarded knife, *oshigiri*. 
WN:  *Oshigiri?*

HS: It’s a board with a knife on, so you put the nub and cut.

WN: Oh, I see. The knife is part of the board.

HS: Yeah. So you just cut and take off the nub.

WN: Kind of like the old paper cutter. (WN makes a cutting sound.)

HS: Yeah.

WN: I see.

HS: It’s like a four-by-four [piece of] lumber. You get that knife screwed on, but you got to get sharp knife because you have to cut [off the nubs]. That was when they bring all the slips—you know where the Catholic church is now?

WN: Mm-hmm [yes].

HS: The Catholic church, they didn’t have the building before so they used to bring the slips over there and the ladies would cut, cut, cut. They would get the contract. You cut so much, you get so many. So we used to go help the ladies [gather] the slips after they cut. We used to help them.

WN: So when you were schoolgirl you didn’t get contracts yet.

HS: No, we didn’t. I don’t think school time we had the slip-cutting contract. Only for cutting pineapple they had contract.

WN: But not you folks?

HS: No. Well, some classmates had because they[could] do it. I cannot, so I never did.

WN: When you first started, how much did you get paid?

HS: The first time I think we got twelve cents an hour. After that came seventeen cents an hour, then we came high school came twenty-five cents an hour. (Laughs)

WN: Yeah.

HS: After that my mother used to work at the soda fountain. It’s [where] Canoe’s [Lāna’i Restaurant] is now. That was Endo’s Soda Fountain. My mother used to work there. So, after school I used to go help my mother. [When] the soda fountain got busy, then I used to go help her wash the plates for that. They made banana split. And then the cup, the tall cup where they make [sundae]. I have that.

WN: Oh, you have? (Laughs)

HS: When the fountain was going to close, I said I would like some. So I have even the cup for make sundae. I have that. So I told my daughter, “You want that? You cannot find those already.”

WN: This is your mother or your Bāban who worked at Endo’s?
Endo’s Fountain? My mom. That was wartime, when the war [World War II] just started.

I see.

War just started, and Mr. Endo moved to Hilo. So my mother and Mrs. Perry used to be the fountain ladies. After school, I used to go and help them. Wash the cups. When I was working there, the military guys [would] come. My mother said, “No, that’s my daughter.” I think I was only a freshman, but I was tall for my age.

So she said, “No! She’s young yet!”

Wartime was busy.

Yeah, I bet with the soldiers around.

Oh yeah. My father was working [at the movie] theater. He was a projectionist, running the projector. So wow, when [there was a] movie the line would go way down. But my father—when did they get the fire? He got burned. The projector room, there was no door on this side. He had to pass through the other projector because only wide like this. He had to pass [by] there. This man over there, he would smoke. The ashes would fall down on the film. Oh wow, when I think of my dad at that time, I cry. From waist up he was like a mummy, only he had glasses on so his eyes were okay.

That night was Robin Hood, and we wanted to go movie that night. But [because] it rained a little, my mom said, “No, we go tomorrow night [instead].” So we didn’t go. But that night, the boss came pounding on my mother’s door. We were all sleeping. He said, “Your husband. . . .” But then she cannot go because she doesn’t have car. Raining yeah? They didn’t have room in the hospital, so they put the two guys—that man and my dad—in the morgue. The middle had a small room where they put the morgue—the dead people. They had to sleep there overnight. Next morning they bring him home. Wow, I tell you. Hard.

My dad was always a big guy, so good thing my second brother was [still a] baby. So we had a baby crib. When they came to change the bandage, to move him, we needed to help my sister and my mom, three of us had to move him. Put him in the crib and change his bedding, and change his bandage. He was like that for a long time. It was really hard. After that, if you know my dad, he doesn’t have any scar.

No kidding?

Because you know why? Because [he was] burned and dehydrated, you needed to every time give him water in a cup with a straw. We had to watch him every time. The doctor told us to give him lots of water. After they took off the bandage [there were scars]. Then Nishimura man, he was working with my dad; they were ticket collectors. His mother used to live down Keōmuku. She used to raise a lot of aloe. So she said, “Put aloe.” So that’s what we used to put. My dad, he doesn’t have scar. Only thing, kind of white blotches you could see, but he didn’t have scar. But that [experience] was real hard for us.

This was during the wartime?

Yeah.
WN: It’s a wonder that the theater didn’t burn down.
HS: Well, maybe they had fire hydrant. The man that smoked, he was not supposed to smoke there. Before they don’t have such thing as “No Smoking” sign, yeah?
WN: He was a projectionist too—the smoker?
HS: Yeah. But he was in the out room. So after that, the theater, they made another door on this side. My father had bad eyes. When he came ninety he was almost blind already. But he worked at the Hawaiian Pineapple Company storeroom until he retired. He was giving out tools for the mechanic because he can feel . . .
WN: When did he pass away?
HS: He passed away seven years ago.
WN: Oh, that recent?
HS: Seven, eight years already. My mother is four years ago. He died in May, because I was in Las Vegas at the time. I used to go to the hospital every afternoon at five o’clock. I used to cook and bring for him things. I used to go check on him. When I went Vegas I told Daddy, “I’m going to Las Vegas, so be good until I come home, okay?”

He said okay, but then when we were in Las Vegas, my sister called me, “Oh, Daddy passed away.”

So I said, “No, I told him to wait for me.” Four years I think he was in the hospital. Because my mother couldn’t take care of him already.

WN: We were talking about wartime yeah? What was it like? Did you folks get along with the military men?
HS: We never used to bother the military. But they had like an army group—Filipino group. They had a military like you know . . .
WN: Just a Filipino unit?
HS: Yeah, only Filipino unit. They get rifle but no more bullets. When they had training and marching, it’s behind the old gym.
WN: You’re talking about the Home Guard?
HS: Yeah, I guess so. They go check all the windows [to make sure residents are not allowing light to shine from their windows]. You need to get something square and you need to get all black mulch paper.
WN: Mulch paper.
HS: Yeah. But the bottom is open, but the light cannot go over the opening. Sometimes they [i.e., the Home Guard] tell us, can see. You’re not supposed to get one even puka.
WN: So their job was to make sure every place was dark with the paper by covering the windows.
HS: Right. Yeah.

WN: (Laughs) So they give you folks hard time [when they saw light shining through]?

HS: Yeah. But we knew all the leaders. So we talked to them. We knew them, because they all worked out in the fields.

WN: But they give you folks hard time? (Laughs)

HS: Yeah. But then after that they came pretty good. Old-timers, yeah? So, we knew the old-timers.

WN: So you folks had outhouse?

HS: Yeah, we had outhouse.

WN: How many families shared one outhouse?

HS: Oh no. Their own.

WN: Everybody had their own?

HS: Yeah. And they get one big camp outhouse too. Shower. Washhouse and bathroom. So one side is men, one side is ladies. In the back had a washhouse.

WN: Washhouse, you mean for . . .

HS: For laundry. Everybody had washing machine. So they get their own, but my dad fixed that house that we stayed in. On the side he made a cement [slab] and we put washing machine, but the water going to run in the garden, in the yard. That’s the only thing. Then get three-burner stove, so we got to boil clothes. We have to boil the clothes, then put them in the washing machine.

WN: How come you had to boil them first before you put them in the washing machine? You’re talking about electric washing machine?

HS: Yeah. But only the washer and the wringer, yeah?

WN: Oh.

HS: But we had electric washing machine. Only thing, got to boil the clothes [first] because to get the dirt all soften, then you throw them in the washing machine.

WN: I see. So the real dirty clothes you have to wash by hand.

HS: Yeah. But, it’s only our family. Me and my young sister every time got to wash clothes. My sister Cookie got to iron clothes. She did all the ironing. We did the washing.

WN: Did you folks do it for other people?

HS: No.

WN: Just for your family?
HS: Yeah. Only our family. My mother used to do [laundry] for the single men though. My sister Cookie did all the ironing, because the girls before wore pleated [skirts] Wow, she was smart in ironing, that’s why. You got to iron all the pleats, yeah?

WN: Hard.

HS: Yeah. So my sister worked hard.

WN: You remember only electric iron, or what did they have?

HS: Yeah, electric iron. We never did get charcoal iron. Maybe long before my mother got married at Kōʻele, maybe they had. But, we had electric iron already.

WN: So when you had to boil the clothes, you get the dirty clothes and you throw them in a bucket?

HS: Hot water, yeah. With soap suds.

WN: Over the fire? Over the burner?

HS: Yeah. In the big—we get big pan like this.

WN: Like tarai.

HS: Tarai. It’s a long one, round like that. You put soap suds and then boil and then take them out. So you got to be real careful.

WN: And you had to hit them with a paddle?

HS: No, we just take them out and then throw them in the washing machine.

WN: What about starch?

HS: No, we never starch that much clothes. I still make my own starch—the tapioca.

WN: Oh yeah?

HS: I still starch all the jeans for my son.

My son told me, “Mom, no need to starch the clothes.” You know, the jeans.

But I said, “If you’ll notice, the clothes last longer. It stays new long time.”

WN: Is that right?

HS: Yeah. All the cotton shirt, jeans. All starch. I make tapioca.

WN: Oh yeah? No kidding.

HS: The ladies tell me, “Nobody starch nowadays already.”

I said, “No, I do!” (laughs) Even my sheets, I still starch.
WN: No kidding? Boy.

HS: I still make [my own]. Once I get tapioca, I make sure I don’t run out. I always get extra pack.

WN: You just get regular tapioca?

HS: Yeah. Potato starch, mix it in hot water.

WN: No kidding. Who taught you that?

HS: That’s what we used to do. Long before.

WN: Your mother didn’t teach you that, or . . .

HS: She taught us how to make our own starch.

WN: Wow.

HS: So I still do that. They said, “Why use starch?”

I say, “The clothes last longer and it stays clean—new—long time.” I tell my son, “Your clothes will last longer.” So I still do that. But getting to be a little tired nowadays. Getting old already. (laughs)

WN: I give you credit.

(Laughter)

HS: Everybody tell me, “Why do you do that?”

I say, “Habit already.”

WN: What about when you were growing up cooking? What kine cooking? Did you help your mother cook?

HS: Yeah. We used to. Because my sister did the laundry [i.e., ironing], so I had to do the cooking.

WN: Because your mother was working?

HS: Yes. My mother worked. She’d tell us what to cook. I used to do a lot of cooking. But my cooking is more vegetables, I guess because I was brought up like that, I never used to eat too much meat. I cannot eat what my sister Cookie used to eat. She liked meat and bakaláw. Codfish. I never used to eat that. I never used to eat even Portuguese sausage. I cannot eat that. I cook with meat so the vegetables get taste, yeah? But I don’t eat the meat. I used to know how to make stew, because I [would include] plenty of carrots. I don’t like potato. (Chuckles) When my sister made stew, she doesn’t put plenty carrots, but plenty potato.

WN: And more meat?

HS: Yeah. I get meat, but I put plenty carrots inside. And my dad used to know who made the mustard.
WN: The mustard?

HS: Yeah, you know the . . .

WN: Colman kind? Colman mustard?

HS: Yeah. He knew because mine is not hot. My sister’s one is real hot.

(Laughter)

So my father knew who made it.

WN: Which one did your father like?

HS: He liked my sister’s one, because it’s hot. (WN laughs.) Mine isn’t. I don’t know why. I make it the same way. But mine is not hot. Yeah, so my father never used to like. He liked my sister make the mustard.

I used to eat my sashimi, I don’t care for too much *shōyu*, but then I used to make mayonnaise and *shōyu*.

WN: Mayonnaise and *shōyu* for your sashimi?

HS: Yeah, sashimi. Because fish you can eat with mayonnaise. Tartar sauce, yeah? So I used to eat it. My mother said, “No put too much mayonnaise.”

But I said, “Well, I cannot eat mustard.” I don’t like spicy food. I don’t like Mexican food. I don’t like too much Italian food.

WN: So you used to cook Japanese food?

HS: Yeah, I learned from Mrs. Nunotani.

WN: Like sukiyaki or hekka? Chicken *hekka*?

HS: Yeah. Because even now, I don’t care for hamburgers. But I make for my son. I make for him, because young boys they’d rather have meat. I said, “I don’t want you to be eating every week steak and only meat.”

WN: Somebody was telling me that [every] Fourth of July the company used to have these gatherings. What were they like?

HS: Oh, the Fourth of July they used to get parade, because my father used to take pictures a lot. They all dressed up as—what’s that?

WN: Uncle Sam?

HS: Yeah, they used to. Then Thanksgiving, that’s when they used to serve lunch [to the community]. Hot dogs and they used to give us fruit, punch and juice, like that. My mother used to go help [cook]. I remember I used to go with my mother. Go help them make salad. Boil potatoes, cut up the potato. They used to have it at the baseball park down here where there’s apartments [today].
They used to go serve hot dogs and salad and juice and fruits. The company used to serve to the community.

WN: They used to have entertainment?

HS: Yeah.

WN: Music?

HS: Music. Or they had a baseball game. Then Christmastime we had a program down at the gym. They gave a stocking, [filled with] apple and orange and candy. The whole community. Wow, I tell you. We were young, and we had to go early and sit down because the bleachers [filled up]. After that, the whole community, everybody got to line up. We looked forward to that when we were young, because when we were young we cannot eat apple and orange and drink soda like now.

But my father used to make soda for us. Root beer. They would clean the bottles and then all the young friends come. Single men. They come help my father. My father used to get one big [ice cream churn] where you crank and make ice cream. You get Hawaiian salt and ice and they used to come and crank and make ice cream for us. Wartime [World War II] already we had a refrigerator. But the freezer part was only one small little [compartment]. So my father used to make root beer and then he used to make ice cream for us.

WN: What a treat.

HS: Yeah. Used to get, in a gallon can, a powder to make ice cream.

WN: Oh, you mean like powdered cream?

HS: Yeah, powder to make ice cream. I don’t know from where my father used to buy it. But he used to work [in the company] storeroom. If we needed to put [something in] a freezer, the company had a big refrigerated room, so he used to put in there. So he would make for us ice cream. My father was good in making those things. We were real lucky when we were young. Only thing, we cannot have apples and oranges. Most times, it’s only at Christmastime.

WN: So in the stocking at Christmastime had one apple and one orange?

HS: Yeah, and the candy. A package of the hard Christmas candy. The whole community, everybody got to line up. Took a long time, but that was a real treat for us when we were young.

WN: I guess apple and orange was better than pineapple, huh?

HS: Oh yeah. (WN laughs.) We couldn’t go out in the field [on our own and] go pick pineapple, you know. We used to hide. You know where there’s a new church now. In front of the Catholic church get the police station. Next to that there’s a new church.

WN: This is on Fraser Avenue?

HS: Yeah. Down there was all garden—community, everybody. The garden was watered by the sewer system. All was pineapple. The old power house and all trees over there. Used to get all pineapple. We wanted to eat pineapple. We would go down there and we’d sit [amongst] all the
trees and the tall California grass, we’d sit down, and [hardly any] cars. We would tell our friend—our neighbor—to go get pineapple. We would look for cars. So he would run and go pick the pineapple. “Come on! Come on! Hurry up!” He used to run and we’d sit down and cut and eat pineapple because if you got caught with that, oh wow. You got to watch out for the company. We used to hide and eat. And we’d go to somebody’s garden and take carrots and radish and go eat. The man [who lived] in front of us, Endo man, he would plant pigeon peas.

WN: Pigeon peas?

HS: Yeah. He would make natto. They would dry that . . .

WN: Not with soybeans?

HS: Soybeans? No, it’s pigeon peas that grew in tall branches.

WN: No kidding?

HS: It’s pigeon peas. He used to make natto. Stink the house. (WN laughs.) We didn’t know what was that before, but we knew it stinks so we don’t want to eat. But we would go in the garden, go pick his peas so that we can bring home and boil and eat. He used to get mad with us. He used to chase us. (Laughs) We used to take somebody’s papaya, all that. Where the sewer water was running, they planted papaya trees. So we used to go take papaya.

Above from that, they used to get chicken coops. The company ran it and everybody in the community raised the chickens.

WN: Oh, you raise your own chickens, but . . .

HS: My father used to raise, but I never used to like to go. Stink. So I used to tell my kid sister, “Go get for me eggs.” (Laughs)

WN: So you bring your own chicken and put them in the coops?

HS: Yeah. So everybody had chicken coops all lined up all over there, because you making your [own] yards smelly and messy. [The company] didn’t want that, so the [company provided coops]. But after that they stopped. I don’t know why. Everybody had to raise their chicken in their [own] yards. But long before, the company used to [build the coops in a central location]. It’s across from Fraser Avenue, right below that, had all chicken coops. Below that they had gardens.

WN: And the garden was run by the company too?

HS: No. It’s your own. The chicken coop too, it’s your own. You had to make your own. So everybody raised chickens before.

WN: On some company land?

HS: Yeah. But then like long before, you couldn’t have chickens. Only holiday time you can have your chicken. Most of the time was New Year’s time. And Thanksgiving. But long before, chicken you don’t eat every day. But now, I getting tired of eating chicken already.

(Laughter)
WN: Different now.

HS: Yeah.

WN: Well, back then too you needed the chickens for eggs.

HS: Yeah. So we had our own eggs. At least you get eggs. But then you got to buy the feed. My father had to raise the tall grass, so that he chopped and gave to the chickens. He didn't have a garden, but at home he would raise.

When we were young too, my father used to raise rabbit. So we used to have rabbit for our food, but our rabbit was a pet. We can leave our rabbit all day in the yard, only fence. They don't get out. But I used to hate when he killed the rabbits. I didn't like how he killed the rabbits.

WN: How... .

HS: How pitiful, yeah? They just hit the head. Turn them upside down and hit the head. When they skin it, you can see the rabbit flesh shaking.

WN: Moving?

HS: Yeah. But then we used to eat. (Chuckles) My mother used to cook and we used to eat, but you tell me now, I say no. It’s a pet. (Laughs)

WN: How did you guys cook? How did you eat rabbit?

HS: Roast the rabbit or bake.

WN: Oh, okay.

HS: Rabbit is nice meat. Soft and nice.

WN: Actually it’s hour-half now. Can we stop over here? Then continue another time?

HS: Yeah.

WN: Sounds like you need something for your throat.

HS: I need water.

WN: Yeah. Okay, let’s stop over here, and then we’ll continue in a couple weeks maybe. When are you leaving? Oh, you’re going to be here yeah? In April.

HS: April? Yeah, I going to be here in April.

WN: We’ll finish up . . .

HS: Later on?

WN: Is that okay? I’ll stop right here.

END OF INTERVIEW
Today is June 21, 2013. I’m interviewing Hideko Saruwatari for the Lāna‘i City oral history project. This is Warren Nishimoto. We’re at her home in Lāna‘i City.

So, good afternoon, Hideko.

HS: Good afternoon.

WN: You know last time—this is long time ago—last time we did this was April. The first session, April. And then, I think you were going on a trip or something, so we had to keep postponing. So now here it is in June, and so finally we’re here to finish. Last time I was here we talked a lot about your small-kid days in Lāna‘i City, and we talked about the war—wartime in Lāna‘i City. I want to pick up with 1947 when you left Lāna‘i for Lahaina to go to sewing school. Can you tell me about that?

HS: I left here September 1947 to go to sewing school because I didn’t know anything about sewing. I don’t know why my mom send me to Maui, because my sister took sewing class on Lāna‘i at Mrs. Nunotani’s place. Mrs. Nunotani was like a sister to me because I used to live with her before she got married. After she got married and had a child, I stayed there when I was a teenager helping her. So, I asked my mom, “How come I cannot go Nē-san house to learn sewing?”

WN: This is Mrs. Nunotani?


WN: So that’s almost two years.

HS: Yeah.

WN: Wow.

WN: Got married?

HS: Got married, and then . . .

WN: Went back.

HS: Next day I went back to Lahaina.

(Laughter)

WN: No more honeymoon?

HS: No, because he had to go [back to] work. So I said that’s okay. He said, “Christmas, we’re going to spend two weeks in Honolulu.” That’s when he’s going to take vacation, because I told him he needed to go Honolulu to go visit his family. Because the family, right after the war, they left Lāna‘i, and he stayed back because he didn’t have a job [in Honolulu]. He was working for Dole company. Already he had a good job.

WN: What was his job?

HS: He worked at the storeroom. He worked a long time. Long before when we were going high school, when we were in junior class and he’s three years older. So after school Dole used to give us job. My father knew the storeroom department boss, and he asked me if I wanted to come. We used to work at least two-and-a-half hours, three hours after school. He [Masao] was working for the storeroom part-time too. After he graduated [19]43, he was away for one year. He went for vocational school and he came back and he was working storeroom already. I worked because summers I liked to work out in the fields, but I cannot so I worked storeroom after that. It was okay.

WN: So you met Masao when he was at school?

HS: Yeah. He was working at storeroom.

WN: Oh, he was working storeroom?

HS: Yeah. He worked long time, but we got married and after we had our second boy, they wanted him to be a supervisor for the storeroom. But he didn’t want that. He said he [wanted] overtime [wages] because [salaried] supervisors, you don’t have pay overtime. So the two boys going to school, university, he said that he needed the money. He said he’d rather work hourly, because sometimes Sunday, Saturday, the mechanics would call and they needed things, he goes [to the storeroom] to give them. He got paid hourly, so that’s the reason why he didn’t take the supervisor job.

WN: So he wasn’t on the management side?

HS: No.

WN: Still on the labor side.

HS: Yeah, just a clerk.
But [from] my sewing school, I used to come home every other weekend. My auntie folks, they were real poverty. They [had a] real hard life. They had how many children? Seven children, my auntie.

WN: This is your auntie in Lahaina?

HS: Yeah.

WN: That’s who you lived with?

HS: Yeah. That’s where I stayed.

WN: Okay. Why is it that you and Cookie both got sent to sewing school?

HS: I don’t know why. (Laughs) I don’t like sewing, handwork—period. Because I don’t crochet, I don’t knit, or anything. But Cookie, she crochet. She knits and sews. I guess my mom said when you get married, you need to sew things for your family. But, I’m glad that I went. I told my mom good that I learned, because when I came back from sewing school, I had a neighbor—Filipino family. Their children were young. They cannot sew so I used to sew for them clothes. Charge them only three dollars for sew one dress.

WN: Wow.

HS: I told my mom I’m happy because at least I can sew.

WN: Did you have a machine? Your own machine?

HS: Yeah, 1949 when I graduated, she bought me a sewing machine from Singer, and then I brought it home to Lānaʻi.

WN: This is electric?

HS: No, but we [eventually] converted to electric you know.

WN: But before it was just [with a foot pedal].

HS: Yeah. That old machine, with your feet you have to pedal.

WN: Besides that Filipino family that you were sewing for, did you sew for anybody else?

HS: No, only for my neighbors. The Filipino family had three girls, all married. They had a lot of children. You know, over here before we didn’t have where you can go buy clothes, dresses, like that. You need to go outer island. They sell material [on Lānaʻi] but they don’t sell clothing.

WN: Oh, you could buy material here?

HS: Yeah, you can buy materials.

WN: From where?
HS: Long before, at Pine Isle [Market]. And Yet Lung Store. You can buy material but they don’t have clothing for sale. So I used to sew. Three dollars, and sometimes five dollars. So I kept myself busy. I couldn’t work out in the [pineapple] fields.

WN: That was part of your family income then?

HS: Right, but then after that they [neighbors] all moved away, and I wanted to work. The doctor won’t let me [do strenuous] work, so . . .

WN: So now, you got married in 1948, and then after you got married you went back to Lahaina to finish up sewing school.


WN: So what year did you guys come back here to live?

HS: [Nineteen] forty-nine.

WN: Nineteen forty-nine.

HS: June. At that time, it was hard to get housing. The house that we stayed in over here down the other side, the two-bedroom house, it was [occupied by the] Tomita family. They were going to move to Honolulu. So, because they were family friends with my husband, she said, “We give you that house.” That’s company[-owned] house, but at least we have a house. Then she said, “One bedroom is yours.” The other bedroom had a young boy who was working storeroom with Masa. She said, “Can he stay?” because he wanted to stay here for another three or four months, then he was going to move back to Honolulu.

So, we said okay, and that’s how we had a house.

WN: But not this house.

HS: No, not this house. This house we came in 1960. Long before this was [someone else’s] house. He was a supervisor for my father when he first came to Lāna‘i to work [in the] heavy-equipment [department]. Caterpillars and tractors to plow things. He was over here. That’s how he was in this house. He moved out and so [another] family came from the Big Island. The man worked for Dole company in the finance department, and his wife worked with Masa at the storeroom.

But after her husband died, the children all grew up, they graduated, then they all moved to Honolulu to go to school. She was here with the young son. That time already that was not company house, this. Because in 1960s, the company started selling the homes that you were living in. So she bought this house. She was living by herself with her son, and the other three sons told her come to Honolulu. So, with her young son she moved.

So my husband asked her, “Are you going to sell the house?”

She said yeah, she going to sell.

“Oh, sell it to me then.” So that’s how my husband bought this house from her.

WN: In 1960?
HS: Nineteen sixty. Yeah. Two-bedroom, you know. We had the two boys—I had only the two boys when we moved in here. So he said, “I think we going to get bigger family,” my husband said. That’s how he bought this house in 1960, because [two children] were born in this house. But my other two boys were born in the other house.

WN: While you were raising your children, did you sew for them too? Their clothes?

HS: Oh yeah. Shirt and shorts. My daughter’s dress when she was going preschool. But then I was working when my daughter was three months old, that’s the first time I worked part-time.

WN: This was what year?


So he came and I went to the police station and said, “Oh, do you folks need somebody to work part-time here?”

He said, “Oh yeah. We need.” Because [for] somebody to come over, [it was by] plane, no more boat. So that’s how I started to work with the [Maui County] finance [department].

WN: What was the name of that company?

HS: Director of Finance in Maui County.

WN: Oh, you’re talking about county [government] work.

HS: County work, yeah.

WN: Oh, okay.


WN: Was this clerical work?

HS: Clerical work.

WN: Keeping books?

HS: Yeah. Selling all the car licenses, whatever, bicycle tags.

WN: You worked here on Lānaʻi?

HS: Yeah. On Lānaʻi at the police station.

WN: Oh, okay.

WN: I was wondering, in [19]51 there was a strike over here.
HS: Oh yeah.
WN: Do you remember anything about that?
HS: Oh, my husband had to work. He was an essential worker. Storeroom.
WN: Oh, I see.
HS: So he used to work. In [19]51 we didn’t have children yet. So, they told me, “You can go to the union [hall], go eat lunch.”
WN: Soup kitchen?
HS: In the soup kitchen, but I looked at how they cooked, I cannot eat. I said no. He’ll have to give so many percent to the union, his pay.
WN: He was essential worker? He was a storeroom staff?
HS: Yeah, because they needed him. I don’t know why, but only him. Not the supervisor. I don’t know why the supervisor didn’t work. But he [Masao] needed to work, so he used to go work.
WN: The workers didn’t . . .
HS: No, because they pineapple field workers and office workers had different contracts. That’s how he came.
WN: I see. So he wasn’t considered management?
HS: No.
WN: Oh, I see.
HS: But then the office workers didn’t go [to work], but he had to. Only him, working storeroom office.
WN: Oh. So the office workers went out too?
HS: Oh yeah. But then the union said he’s essential, so he needed to go work. He used to go himself. But he had to give so many percent to the union. So they told me, “You can come and go eat over there.” But eww. I look how they cook, I cannot eat.
WN: Financially you were okay because he was still working, drawing a paycheck?
HS: Who, me?
WN: No, your husband.
HS: Oh, my husband, yeah. He was having his paychecks.
WN: Did you do anything like doing sewing [during the strike]?
HS: No, I didn’t have anything to do. So I just stayed home. Then they tell me go march . . .
WN: Picket [line]?

HS: [I said], “Why?”

“Because your husband is working.”

I said, “Oh, crazy. No, no.” I don’t want to go.

(Laughter)

But it wasn’t that hard for us. Because that was the second strike they had. The first strike was real hard, because wow, you cannot cross [the picket] line period—the first strike. That was real hard.

WN: The first one was 1947?

HS: Yeah.

WN: Everybody went out. All the [pineapple] companies [in the territory of Hawai‘i].

HS: Yeah. Everybody.

WN: [Nineteen] fifty-one was only Lāna‘i. Okay. I just want to ask you about—we’re just about finished—what do you think the future of Lāna‘i is going to be? No more pineapple anymore.

HS: I know. That was something. I feel sorry for nowadays kids because they don’t have job. How many—the students all graduate—how many of them can find hotel job? There’s only two hotels. But the hotel job—if your parents are working there, and if they apply, then [maybe] they can have [a job]. Because it’s who you know, it’s not what you know. For the summer work, it’s who you know. So I feel sorry, because if they go outer island to work, they cannot save. Because if you go outer island, you spend too, what you earn. So the parents over here working, they need to have two jobs. A lot of these Filipinos, I don’t know how they do it. They do two jobs.

WN: You mean like one would be for the hotel. What would the other job be?

HS: See, this lady who works at the store. I said, “When do you folks sleep?” She works at the store during day, and at night she go to her hotel job. So I said, “When do you folks sleep?”

She said when they come home, eleven o’clock until six o’clock in the morning. But they need to do their housework. I tell you, the Filipinos, I give them credit. They can live if they just have a three-bedroom house, two or three families can live in one house. They help each other.

The men do the cooking. Oriental—us—we tell our husband to cook or clean, oh wow, they complain, you know. Filipinos, that’s one thing. They go to the beach and they have their family picnic, you see the women all sitting down talking story and playing cards. The men doing all the cooking. So when we go, we go tell, “You make all the men do the cooking. How can you do that?”

They said, “Why? You folks . . .”

We said, “The men play and make the women do the cooking.” It’s the opposite. But Filipinos help each other.
WN: So what would you like to see for Lāna‘i’s future?

HS: Over here?

WN: Yeah.

HS: Oh, I don’t know. I’d like to see them make use of the land. What [Larry] Ellison can do. He plans to do some agriculture work.

WN: So you’re talking about former pineapple lands?

HS: Yeah. I don’t know if he can, but they try. They tried corn. But it didn’t work out.

WN: When the hotels came up in the 1990s, how did you feel about that?

HS: Well, we didn’t think it was going to survive, because we don’t see big numbers of tourists coming. We don’t have Japan tourists yet. Maybe the biggest one is they come for golf. Biggest group that came for golf was fifteen of them—from Japan, tourists. From Lahaina the tourists come on the boat and they play golf down at Mānele. Then they go home. At first, [David] Murdock didn’t like that idea, but then the workers said, “Why not? At least they pay for it. They’re not playing for free.” So, that was okay. But we didn’t see one big tour company come here yet. We didn’t see that.

WN: Would you want to see that?

HS: Well, that’s good for the hotels. The only thing they have is a big company they bring their own people on their jet. They have a meeting here for three or four nights. Then they go home. So, that’s good for the hotels. But besides that, all the wasteland. When you think about all that waste. All over was pineapple. Now it’s all wasteland. They’re not making use.

WN: What kind of crops would you like to see here or would you think . . .

HS: Oh, I don’t know. The corn didn’t work. Potato didn’t work. They can have somebody come [from outside] and do those agriculture [extension services], but they don’t have a person who afterwards would know how to take care [of the crops]. They don’t have that. They got to hire all from outside. I don’t think Lāna‘i people [would] know how, unless they go to agriculture school.

WN: So agriculture. What about more hotels?

HS: More hotels? I don’t know if can survive. So I don’t know what. Now Ellison bought go! airline.

WN: go! airlines. Yeah, yesterday they announced it.

HS: But first of all, he says he’s going to extend the airport runway. I don’t know if he’s going to do that.

WN: I’m wondering, in the 1990s when the two hotels came up and pineapple was closing, in what way did Lāna‘i change to you?

HS: Change? For us, we retired so it didn’t bother us.

WN: What about like the people? Did more people start to come in that you don’t know?
HS: Oh yeah. Hotel people, too much turnovers.

WN: If I was say, Ellison, and I’m sitting right over here, what would you want to tell me?

HS: I want to ask him?

WN: Ask him or tell him.

HS: Oh. (WN chuckles.) I don’t know. What he can do for the people? What kind of increase of work everybody can have? Especially when you’re going high school, you need job.

WN: Would you like to see more people coming into Lānaʻi to live?

HS: Oh yeah. But then you need to find what kind of work they are going to get. Make use of the land and what you can do [with it]. Agriculture or whatever job. Plant pineapple back again or whatever. Get jobs for the people. More people come in, it’s better for us, but right now, he’s building houses. You know the old, two-bedroom [plantation] houses? They don’t want to maintain it so they knock down that and they build a three-bedroom house. In the small lot. Was only two-bedroom but now they building all three-bedroom, because he said he wants to get more people [living] here. But you see, the workers don’t have places to live. So now those [former] dorms [for workers], now they have to all get out there. He going to fix it up and make them homes where people can live. He said [there is] not enough housing for his workers.

WN: What workers?

HS: I guess right now, construction workers. But some of them live on Maui and they come on the boat Monday and they stay for a whole week and they go back. Weekend they go back to Maui. He said his workers didn’t have housing.

WN: I see.

HS: I said first of all you got to make a job. I don’t know what agriculture things they can do, but that’s what we need over here. Jobs, you know. He talks about Club Lānaʻi down Keōmuku? But, no water. No electricity. Need to fix the road.

WN: He wants to make a hotel where Club Lānaʻi used to be?

HS: Yeah. But it’s going to cost him more money doing that.

WN: So Club Lānaʻi didn’t have water?

HS: They had a big tank, and from up here the big truck would bring water and fill it up in there. They have a well, but they didn’t take care of the well. It’s all polluted already. They had flush toilets, but the brackish water won’t come out now. Not enough brackish water. They had brackish water, but not enough—they don’t know where the brackish water [source] went. So they need to dig around someplace to get that brackish water back again.

WN: Well, we’ll see what happens yeah?

HS: Yeah.

WN: Okay.
HS: If he can do whatever.

WN: Okay, I’m going to turn it off. Thank you.

HS: Okay.

WN: Anything more you want to say?

HS: No, I don’t know. (WN chuckles.) No.

WN: Okay. So thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW
Lānaʻi: Reflecting on the Past; Bracing for the Future

Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

December 2014