

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Harry Fujinaka

Harry Fujinaka was born in December, 1935 on the island of Moloka'i. Three years later, his family moved to Pālama where his parents, Masaru and Ayano Fujinaka, raised eight children.

He attended Likelike School and St. Louis College (now called St. Louis School). In 1954, Fujinaka joined the U.S. Air Force and served for 4½ years. Upon his return, he attended the University of Hawai'i and received his degree in education.

When he was about six years old he joined Pālama Settlement where he first learned to swim. He was involved in many athletic activities there, including basketball, football, softball, weight lifting, and volleyball.

He began his career in education as a teacher and coach at Roosevelt High School. He later returned to college and studied educational administration. As an educator and administrator he worked at various schools including Kaimukī High School and Farrington High School.

He retired in 1995. He is married and has three children.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Harry Fujinaka (HF)

Honolulu, O'ahu

November 13, 1997

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This is an interview with Harry Fujinaka. It's November 13, 1997 and we are at [what was then called] Porteus Hall at the University of Hawai'i. [The interviewer is Holly Yamada.]

Okay, let's just start with when and where you were born.

HF: I was born in 1935 on the island of Moloka'i—Mauna Loa, Moloka'i. My dad [Masaru Fujinaka], at that time, was an employee of Libby, McNeill & Libby pineapple. And as a result some of his children were born there.

HY: And how big a family?

HF: We had nine children. One passed away at a very early age so we had eight children when we moved to Pālama. Lakimela Lane, which is about a block away from the settlement. And that was in 1938, so I was about three years old at the time.

HY: Do you have memories of Moloka'i?

HF: Yes I do, but very vague. I just went there Monday, this past Monday, and Mauna Loa really changed. I recall dirt roads, but it's all paved now. There's also a new theater. It really changed. All the homes that we grew up in, these were plantation homes, they're not there anymore. They're reconstructed and it's quite a change.

HY: What was your mom doing? Do you recall?

HF: She [Ayano Nishimoto Fujinaka] was a homemaker, never did work. Her education was up to about the sixth grade. Dad went to Ka'iulani School until the eighth grade. They used to call 'em grammar school. Grammar school, at that time, they used to [give] diplomas—eighth grade. And grammar school was comparable to current twelfth grade high school. So after that they elected to—anyway he did—he elected to go to Michigan to study further in automotive mechanics and came back and pursued that career.

HY: Now is this prior to your . . .

HF: Oh yeah. This was about---I recall seeing some pictures of [him] being in Michigan, 1917. He

was born 1896 on the Big Island. So seventeen plus four, twenty-one years old. So right about his late teens and early twenties he spent time in Michigan going to automotive mechanic school.

HY: But when he came back then he worked for . . .

HF: Libby, McNeill & Libby as a mechanic. And he got married. And my oldest brother was born in 1925 or so. He's about ten years older than I am. So he must be about seventy-two now. Yeah, and let me see, I was born '35 so my dad was thirty-nine years old when I was born. Is that right, mathematically?

HY: I think so.

HF: Nineteen thirty-five plus four. So he was twenty-nine when my oldest brother was born.

HY: And what about your mom's side of the family? Was she born and raised in Hawai'i also?

HF: Yeah. She was born in Kāne'ohe. Her parents immigrated. And at that time they had this *shinpai* marriage. You know what I mean? The go-between matched my dad and my mom. I guess their ancestors also came from the same place in Japan.

HY: You know what prefecture?

HF: Yeah, yeah, Hiroshima, Hiroshima. So, they were very clannish at that time. So they got together, they got married, and here we are. She was born in Kāne'ohe, 1903. So she was seven years younger, coincidentally [born on the] same day, December 16th.

HY: Oh they have the same birthday.

HF: Yeah, (chuckles) what a coincidence.

HY: And where in the birth order are you?

HF: I'm sixth. Yeah, and three below me. We had three boys and six girls. One girl died, infant.

HY: You know why it was that you came to O'ahu then?

HF: He got reassigned, my dad did. And he was reassigned to Libby's [Libby, McNeill & Libby] over here in Kalihi. So he rented a home in Lakimela Lane, which is about a block from Pālama Settlement, a two-bedroom, one-bath small house, cottage. Eight kids plus parents, so ten people living in there. So you can imagine. (Chuckles)

HY: And do you remember doing any chores or that kind of thing?

HF: Oh yeah.

HY: Yeah.

HF: Yeah, every one of us. Our family was so big that we had to eat in shifts, two shifts, with a

small round table in the kitchen and no dining room. And before we can eat there were chores. Like my chore was to sweep and mop the floors every day. And my older brother, his chore was to clean outside. We had couple of dogs, [and he picked up] their droppings and so forth. He used to bury the droppings and clean, pick up debris around the home. Every one of us had [chores]. My sisters had dishwashing, washing clothes, things like that.

HY: And so did all of the kids sleep in one room?

HF: No, I recall my youngest sister and I slept with my mom and dad in one bedroom. I had two brothers sleeping in the other bedroom. And can you imagine four sisters sleeping in the living room?

HY: And where did you go to school?

HF: Oh, I started at Nalei Kindergarten [and Preschool].

(Technical difficulty, taping interrupted, then resumes.)

HF: I recall starting at Nalei Kindergarten at the age of three to accompany my brother, my older brother. Then he left to go to Likelike School, and I continued another year at Nalei Kindergarten. Nalei Kindergarten is right on Pālama Street. You know, walking distance from where I used to live. And at that time, the schools came under the Department of Public Instruction. Likelike School did anyway. And they didn't have kindergarten. That is the reason why we had to go—quote, unquote—"private kindergarten."

Then just before my fifth birthday I enrolled in Likelike School. So I completed six years and that was during World War II. And just at the start of World War II, I joined Pālama Settlement for twenty-five cents a year. Can you imagine paying. . . .

(Laughter)

HF: Twenty-five, and progressively as the years went by, twenty-five, fifty, seventy-five [cents], et cetera. And then we worked at the settlement for a couple of years I recall. And by that time the dues—the membership dues—was about a dollar, a dollar and a half, but because we worked during the summer there they gave us free [membership].

HY: So what age were you when you were working there?

HF: Well, work meaning child labor. I don't think they'll allow that now.

HY: Yeah.

HF: What we did was break down the bomb shelters. During the war we had bomb shelters in our athletic field, our football field. In fact, it was larger than a football field. And we had lot of bomb shelters there just in case. So after the war, they needed to break that down. And another chore that we had at Pālama Settlement was to grind the walls of the swimming pool.

HY: What do you mean by grind the walls?

HF: You know the tile? The glazed tile we had lining the swimming pool?

HY: Oh, uh huh [yes].

HF: It gets . . .

HY: To clean it.

HF: [It] gets moldy and all that. So they give us this sand; it wasn't a soap. It was kind of like a file, but it was soft file, and we just rubbed it against the tile and it cleans 'em up. So we used to do that, too. But we enjoyed it because all the kids were around and had something to do. And in turn they gave us free membership for the year.

HY: Maybe you could describe what the bomb shelters were like.

HF: Bomb shelter—it wasn't level with the ground. There were benches. If you can imagine a dug-up ground about fifty feet in length with entrances and exits on both ends. Then they put a roof on, a dome-like roof. And they covered that with dirt and planted grass. The roof was above ground level, but where the benches were it was below the ground level. So what we had to do was remove all those things and just pack it down and refill. Took us quite a while to do that.

HY: Did you ever have drills where you practiced going inside?

HF: I cannot remember drills going into the bomb shelters, but we had drills at Likelike School—gas mask [drills] for speed [how long it took to put on a gas mask] and how to [make sure] it doesn't leak. [I remember] tear gas in one of the rooms. And I can just picture that room yet.

HY: What other memories do you have of your elementary school days during the wartime? How was that different?

HF: Nothing really significant. I can recall we had athletic teams. We competed with other elementary schools close by—Ka'iulani, Kauluwela, Lanakila schools. I was a JPO—that was a big deal—junior police officer. Going back, I can remember every teacher I had.

(Laughter)

HF: They were all good, all good. I was impressed with them. They disciplined you when [they] needed to.

HY: What kind of discipline was that?

HF: Oh they spanked us.

HY: Did they use a paddle or . . .

HF: Yardstick, most of the time. I recall one teacher who checked [our] fingernails. If your fingernails were dirty, you had to stand up in front of the class and she would just hit your

fingertips with a ruler.

HY: This was a teacher that you liked? (Laughs)

HF: Well yeah, because . . .

HY: They all did that.

HF: Yeah. I mean, that was accepted at that time. And that was part of training. I recall teachers pinching my cheeks when I swore. You see, at that time, the language that we used was the language that my parents used and we didn't know that those were bad words (chuckles). But we learned very quickly that we're not supposed to say those things publicly. No regrets. I love that school.

We had singing, music. I really enjoyed art. I love art. Nothing else really significant. I can recall things I learned at a certain grade level, like cursive writing I learned in the third grade. And I learned telling time in the third grade, too. I can remember the teacher . . .

HY: Who was the teacher?

HF: . . . Yanagihara. Mrs. Yanagihara. And [I can remember] what classroom we had in the main building.

HY: Now did you go to Japanese-language school after school, too?

HF: I started, but that's when the war [World War II] broke out, so we had to quit. And then after the war I was [involved] in athletics. I just didn't have the time, so it was one or the other. And I regret the fact that I did not learn that language. My mom and dad spoke English. Well, they were bilingual, but whenever we conversed they always spoke English. I know very little Japanese.

HY: Did the war affect your father's work at all?

HF: I don't think so. I don't think so. I know that they confiscated his firearm. He had a pistol, but after the war they returned it to him. He wasn't interned like others. And the reason, I think, is that he was born here. He was a kamaaina like my mom. There were neighbors who were reverends in the Buddhist religion and they were interned. They were arrested.

HY: And then what intermediate school did you go to?

HF: After Likelike I was supposed to have gone to Kawānanakoa Intermediate School, but my dad and my oldest brother enrolled us [HF and his other brother] in St. Louis. So I graduated from St. Louis.

HY: Oh.

HF: And at that time it was called a college, St. Louis College [currently called St. Louis School]. From sixth grade through twelfth grade I attended that school.

HY: And how did you get there?

HF: Bus or walk or hitchhiking. We weren't very rich at that time. I don't know how they paid our [HF's and his brother's] way. But I know my oldest brother was instrumental in putting us through that school. All the others went to public schools, Farrington [High School] and Kaimukī [High School].

HY: People in your neighborhood, I assume that not too many of them went to St. Louis.

HF: No.

HY: Was that an unusual thing?

HF: Yeah, yeah. In our group, we call ourselves the Crusaders. What a coincidence, Crusaders is the nickname for St. Louis. But we had a club at Pālama Settlement made up of about thirty-five guys, and we called ourselves the Crusaders, Pālama Crusaders. We had clubs like Pals, short for Pālama, Pal Juniors, that's the younger guys, Hui O Pālama, Dynamites, Crusaders, which was us guys.

And out of thirty-five, I think I was the only one who went to a private school. All the other guys went to Kawānanakoa [Intermediate School]. And I wanted to be with them, so it was a big adjustment for me to go to St. Louis. First time I wore a pair of shoes daily. First time I wore neckties. (Chuckles) It was an adjustment.

HY: Why do you think your folks wanted you to go to—you said your brother was kind of instrumental—but why do you think they thought that might be better?

HF: I really think it was to keep me in line. They were very strict. Corporal punishment was the name of the game. They kept us in line. I don't want to degrade St. Louis as far as education is concerned, but that's the greatest thing that happened to me—they kept me in line. But then after St. Louis I rebelled see, because I was so free. And as a result, I flunked out of the University of Hawai'i my freshman year.

They were so strict. They kept us within a corral, so to speak. And when I graduated from St. Louis and attended University of Hawai'i, it was so free that I went bananas.

(Laughter)

HF: I couldn't adjust. So, as a consequence, I didn't go to class and I did very poorly and they gave me that pink slip. (Laughs)

HY: So going back to your participation at Pālama Settlement, you said you first started going there in elementary school. What kind of activities were you involved in?

HF: The first activity was swimming. I had to learn how to swim. And all of us guys. . . . So you can imagine, from that time on till now, we still get together. That would be 1940, so this is over fifty years. We get together and we talk. Swimming was the activity at that time. Once we learned how to swim, we had competition, competitive swimming there. Incidentally, Pālama had a very good swimming team, historically. All the way up. I don't know about

now, but we used to have good swimming teams.

HY: Who was your coach? Who taught you how to swim?

HF: There was a guy named Nelson Kawakami. He already passed away, of course. And there was another gentleman named Harry Mamizuka. He is now paralyzed, and I heard that he had cancer and so forth. But we had several fund-raising parties for him. He was my swimming and football coach as well.

HY: Oh, Harry was your football coach?

HF: He was our coach for barefoot football, the city and county 150-pound [league]. We had different designations, weight classes. One year he coached us. We had other coaches, but Nelson Kawakami introduced us to swimming.

HY: Now, you talked about your group, Crusaders. How was that defined as a club? What constitutes a club?

HF: I cannot recall if we had bylaws that governed our club, but obviously the Pālama Settlement had something written out where we had to abide by this. They had rules and regs [regulations] I would imagine. But we had elected officials within the club. We held monthly meetings, formal kind. I mean Robert's Rules of Order. That taught us.

HY: Taking minutes?

HF: Yeah. We had advisors see, advisors to our club. And they sat in at the meetings and they taught us how to run formal meetings, how to behave. Yeah, and we had social activities, we invited gals from other parts of O'ahu.

HY: So were the clubs just boys' clubs?

HF: Yeah, yeah. I cannot remember too many girls (chuckles) in the Pālama area, except for sisters, our sisters. They very seldom would come to Pālama Settlement. We had girls coming to the settlement that belonged on the swimming team, but they don't socialize with us guys. You know what I mean?

HY: Why is that?

HF: I think their parents would tell them not to frequent themselves (chuckles) there because it was a rough place.

HY: When you say it was a rough place, what do you mean?

HF: Well, we fought a lot, and I mean fistfights. I cannot recall weapons being used. What a change today. Today is mostly weapons.

HY: Would clubs fight each other? Or within a club you . . .

HF: Within a club, yeah. Very seldom would I see fights between clubs. And the reason for

that is, we sort of naturally got into clubs. In other words, we went by age group. So the oldest guys would be Hui O Pālama, next guys would be Pals, next guys would be Pal Juniors. One or two years would make a difference. Our age group would be the Crusaders. And the ones below us, about two years or three years younger, would be the Dynamites, and so forth.

HY: And then after—you said swimming was the first thing that you learned there.

HF: Yeah.

HY: What else did you learn?

HF: Then they introduced us to basketball team activities. Tennis as an individual activity, judo, boxing, weight lifting. Team activities would be basketball, football, volleyball, softball.

HY: You remember some of your coaches?

HF: Oh yeah, I remember every one of 'em. Like I remember all my teachers. (Chuckles)

HY: Who was teaching you basketball?

HF: Basketball was [Kiyoshi] "Knuckles" Matsuo. He was a good coach. You know, the college-type coach—very formal, as opposed to another coach. I had several basketball coaches, in fact. Harry Kahuanui, we call him the clown, he coached us one year. He retired as a football coach at Kahuku [High and Elementary School]. He was with the DOE [Department of Education] also. Yeah, Knuckles Matsuo I recall. He was also our football coach. (Another football coach, at different times, was Joe Gans Kupahu.)

HY: And then [you said] Harry Mamizuka also coached football.

HF: Yeah, yeah. Mamizuka was not involved in basketball. He was strictly swimming and football. Knuckles would be football, basketball. There was another guy, Charlie Choo, softball. Boxing we had a guy named Kaoru Fujiyama. He fought during the war, he was a good coach. [Samuel] "Sad Sam" Ichinose, I don't know if you heard of him, but he had a franchise called 49th State Boxing Club and he was a manager for Dado Marino, world champion, flyweight division. And [Sam Ichinose] was very popular guy. As a result, we fought for him, or within his club. We belonged to his club anyway.

HY: And he had this at Pālama?

HF: No, no . . .

HY: Oh, this is aside from . . .

HF: At that time, when I was growing up, Pālama did not have a boxing club. Previous to that time they had one. So those guys were older than we were. So because we didn't have any, we had to go out. And I joined the 49th State Boxing Club.

Weight lifting was more informal, guys would just help you lift weights. Volleyball was

[organized by] club. We didn't have one team, we had several teams, all by club.

HY: Who was your volleyball coach?

HF: We didn't have any really, we just participated. One of the leaders in our club would make the lineup and all that, but we learned a lot.

HY: Did you play other teams or did you just play each other?

HF: Volleyball we just played each other, interclub. Swimming we went out and swam against others. Football we played islandwide, we played Wahiawā, we played Kaka'ako, et cetera, et cetera. Softball was islandwide also. Basketball we entered this league called junior AAU, Amateur Athletic Union. And we played at Kalākaua I recall, Kalākaua gym. We played several years over there.

See, when we participate in that kind of activity they don't bar anyone. I mean, whoever is interested at that time would participate. Of course, we have turnouts because we have a few from Crusaders making that team, we have a few from Pals making that team, et cetera, et cetera.

HY: Oh, I see.

HF: So several people from each club would make up Pālama Settlement team. You can compare that with high school. It's like several classes, classrooms, and they vie for a position in the varsity group. That would be comparable.

HY: Who were the big rivals in those days?

HF: For what activity?

HY: For whatever.

HF: Well, for football, for an example, Kaka'ako was our rival. They were good, but I cannot recall anytime we lost a championship to them. It just so happened we were a little better. Wahiawā was another team. Pu'uhale was another team. Kaimukī was another team. Nānākuli had another team. So it was islandwide and we played mostly at the old Honolulu Stadium, or Crane [Playground] park. Crane park is by Kaimukī High School right now.

HY: Going back to St. Louis, you said it was very disciplined there. What kinds of activities were you involved in there? Since you told me of all these sports at Pālama.

HF: Athletics. Well I started out by playing football, basketball, and baseball in the eighth grade. We had organized teams at that time. And we played all the private schools. We played Central Intermediate [School], Kalākaua Intermediate [School], et cetera, that was in the eighth grade. Then in the ninth grade I participated at the junior varsity level, basketball and baseball. And then from my sophomore year, I only played varsity football. I couldn't make the other teams, they were too good for me. (Laughs) Like basketball, we had a great team. Baseball too, we had a great team. I didn't swim. I just played football.

See, I was boxing at that time also for 49th State [Boxing Club]. Boxing is all year round. And it was difficult to box and play football at the same time. Because boxing you want to control your weight. I was 130-pounder, 132 [pounds], lightweight. And for football I'd like to gain weight. So it was working against each other. I hated that time. But once football season was over, then I enjoyed it. Then to prepare for the next football season, I had to gain weight again. So it was rough, physically.

HY: What about academic studies at St. Louis?

HF: I did very well in the eighth grade. In fact, I have a diploma, certificate, special recognition. They call that honorary promotion, from eighth to ninth grade. I did fairly well in the ninth grade, then it was all downhill until I graduated.

HY: Were there subjects that you liked more than others? Or was your main focus athletics?

HF: That was my main focus. I did poorly academically in the senior year. Senior year was my worst, and junior [year] wasn't too bad, but wasn't good either. Sophomore year I was just about to get into trouble. So I did get into trouble with the law.

HY: What happened?

HF: Well, we, gee, I can't recall how old I was, about fifteen or so, sixteen. We did things that I'm not very proud of at Pālama Settlement, and we got nailed. As a result, we had juvenile records. Which was expunged though, once we reached eighteen. Since eighteen I've been clean. (Laughs)

HY: Who were some of your, I guess, some of your Crusader friends at Pālama?

HF: There was a guy, the first name that comes to my mind is Soo Kil Park, Korean guy. The reason is, he also became an educator. Clean guy, he never got into trouble, he went to Farrington High School. He was born in January, I was born in December of the same year, so we were about one year apart. But he became a teacher at Waimānalo and he retired just before I did.

Henry Haruki, he also went to Farrington. In fact, all these guys went to Farrington except me. And Henry Haruki became a salesman. He graduated from college here, business ad[ministrat]ion. He ended up as a car salesman.

Benny [Benjamin] Medeiros, good karate man, he ended up working for Gaspro. [Lawrence] "Bay" Kaowili. "Bay" Kaowili, he passed away. He worked at Pearl Harbor. He had lung cancer. And as a matter of fact, because we were really close, I testified at his court case [a class action suit claiming workplace asbestos as a health hazard].

HY: You said he was at Pearl Harbor?

HF: Pearl Harbor, yeah. Working with asbestos and so forth.

John Kahale, he moved to the Mainland just after we got through with high school. But he also went to Farrington and he recently came back after, what, thirty, forty years. And we

played ball together. He's now living in 'Ewa.

Oh man, I can rattle off the names: Jerry "Taka" Okazawa; Harry Tagomori, we call him Bootsu; (Kats Kaneshiro; "Hippo" Bob Hee; Louis Kaninau).

You know I had a job [offer] here [University of Hawai'i], PE [physical education] department after graduating from the university? Everything was signed and sealed. Hank [Henry] Vasconcellos used to be the department head, and he needed an instructor. So after I graduated from UH he hired me. But at the very last minute I accepted a job at Roosevelt High School to teach biology. And that's how I got my teaching experience. So rather than teaching here I went to the DOE, which was advisable at that time. Billie Beamer, she was with the PE department, she kind of encouraged me to, rather than take that job, to go to DOE because of [job] security.

HY: How is it that you---you said you flunked out of UH, but then I assume you went back to school.

HF: Yeah, I spent 4½ years in the military, [United States] Air Force. Because of my juvenile record, not only me, I mean the other guys too, some of us couldn't join the air force over here because they had a quota [which limited the number of those who were accepted for training at Parks Air Force Base, California to about fifty]. So a friend of mine, Albert Nam is his name, we paid our way to San Francisco and we joined the air force over there.

Yeah, that 4½ years really woke me up. It matured me. So when I came back I reapplied [to UH] and was under a probationary status. I had to prove myself, and I did. They wouldn't accept me in the College of Ed[ucation] because of my poor grades, previous grades. So arts and sciences was the college that I enrolled in up until that time when my grade point average got up, that's when Wist Hall, College of Ed, accepted me. Torlef Nelson was his name, Dr. Nelson, he accepted me. Then after that I got a bachelor's of ed, I got a professional diploma, and I started teaching.

HY: I think we need to flip the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: Now did you go on the GI Bill [of Rights]?

HF: Yes, yes. You know, if the GI Bill was not given to us, I don't think I could have afforded to go to school. I was very lucky because I joined in 1954. I joined October 27 to be exact. So they gave us thirty-six months of [tuition for] schooling for that period of time, before January 31, [1955]. So I used that up here at the university, then couple of years later they came in with this post-Korean War [GI Bill benefits], which I was eligible for also because the majority of my military time was after January 31, [19]55. So I got out in late '58. So they gave me more schooling months. So I made use of 'em. I came back summertime and picked up credits. I really had to work hard to get me out of that (laughs) . . .

HY: Academic problem.

HF: Yeah. But no regrets though.

HY: I just want to go back to Pālama Settlement again. Maybe you can just kind of describe a typical day when you come in, maybe from when you first started going there—you talked about your swimming activities. Would you come after school?

HF: Afterwards, yes, but while I was going to Likelike School, from the second grade to the sixth grade, I sold newspapers and shined shoes in Chinatown to make some money. Can you imagine a second grader walking from Pālama to . . . At that time we picked up papers on Punchbowl Street. So it's quite a walk. Then my first corner was Punchbowl and Beretania [streets]. Not too many pedestrians. So I had a lot of car customers, where they would stop, pick up a newspaper, and continue driving. Then I got promoted to River and Hotel [streets]. Selling papers there and so forth. And I also shined shoes periodically to make more money. All that money was for me at home. I kept it in a can. My parents would not touch it, and that was my spending money.

Then when I went to St. Louis I had to quit all those activities, and that's when I got interested in team sports. So a typical day when I was at Likelike would not be going to Pālama Settlement after school., but my first and second grade level I would. And that's when I learned to swim—after school. So I stopped going to Pālama about third to sixth grade, because I was selling papers and shining shoes. But when I started to go to St. Louis, after school I would go, or whenever I could. After school usually we had sports activities. So I spent time maybe on weekends at Pālama.

HY: And how structured was that? Did you always have meetings or always have coaching, or you could go on . . .

HF: Anytime. Anytime you wish. But our meetings would be structured. And I joined Crusaders when I was in the ninth grade I recall. And that's when my behavior turned the other way. (Laughs) I started to smoke, I started to gamble, and things like that. I cannot blame my peers because I had a mind of my own. But, what the heck, I just joined the gang and did those things. About once a month we used to meet at night.

HY: At Pālama.

HF: Yeah. Again, my parents, they were kind of lax. So I spent my evening hours at Pālama Settlement—took a shower over there. Maybe that was good for the family, maybe. And the reason why I say “maybe” is because there were too many people in that house. It was kind of a relief, so to speak. But then, that's when we got into trouble, see?

HY: Did you eat meals at Pālama sometimes, too?

HF: No, no. Meals were not offered to us. We used to pilfer soda. And we also used to take fruits and whatever food we can find from boarders, [people] boarding at Pālama. And that wasn't nice, but we used to pick the fruits. We had a lot of mangoes, plums, things like that.

HY: Were you ever disciplined by either coaches or other personnel at Pālama?

HF: Yeah, yeah.

HY: What form would discipline take?

HF: Well, they didn't beat us up, but it came very close to that. Physical handling without slapping or hitting, but just grabbing your arms and shoulders. That's the extent of being disciplined. Lot of harsh words, threats, but what the heck, yeah? (Laughs)

HY: How did you feel about your—I guess I want you to characterize your feeling about the personnel there, the coaches and . . .

HF: Oh, they were good people, no regrets. You know, out of all the coaches I had at Pālama, there was only one college grad[uate], and that was Knuckles Matsuo. He played football for University of Hawai'i. So he became our model. Oh yeah, we had some social workers who went to the university and they started to work there. They taught us life, so to speak, in a nice way.

The other guys who were—not putting down non-college grad[uate]s—but the other guys, they had an experience in their life that really paid off. I mean, it wasn't formal, but it made sense, and we admired that trait. Like Mamizuka, for example, he had a bad mouth, but he really made sense. Nelson Kawakami, he didn't go to college, but he was a practical guy. And Knuckles, being a college grad though, he was the more formal type and he taught us a lot about education and the worth and value of ed and so forth. So some of us—in our group only two, three guys—went to college.

HY: And what was your relationship with the social workers? How would they interact with you folks?

HF: The ones I remember, we didn't respect. We'd talk back, I recall. I don't know why. Maybe because they were fresh out of university and they were idealistic. They were goodie-goodies, and they tried to teach us good behavior. We were rude sometimes, I recall. We were disrespectful, and they tried to teach us the right way—quote, unquote—"the right way." And we wouldn't accept that, some of them anyway.

I can't think of one that we really cooperated with. But they were nice people. I know they meant well, but I think they went about it in a wrong way. We just didn't accept their style. We accepted Mamizuka's style, Kawakami's style, and Knuckles' style. Joe Gans was another guy. Joe Gans Kupahu was a bass player for Gabby Pahinui. He recently passed away. And he was one of my neighbors. He was very strict, but yet, I don't think his education went beyond eighth grade. But again, we respected him because of the way he treated us. He was strict when we got off track. Good football coach, I really admired him at that time. As opposed to these guys who came down from University of Hawai'i telling us what's good, what's not good, and so forth.

HY: Well, let's see, I'm trying to think of how you would, how is it that you had contact with them [social workers]? Would they be at meetings or . . .

HF: Yeah. And their main job there at Pālama was to supervise us in the dayroom, and that's when our language gets all out of whack, and we smoked, and sometimes we tried to gamble on the

side. And they told us not to do those things. And we told them, "Oh take a dive," or something. (Laughs)

HY: This is when you were a little older though, right?

HF: Yeah, in high school. You see, the main building, Pālama Settlement, there was a dance hall on the top floor. That's where Jackie Rath's office is now, okay? Downstairs, we had a social hall also, but with pool tables. Not the real pool tables—checkers would take the place of a ball. We had the regular cue stick and we tried to hit it and so forth.

HY: Was this the dayroom that you . . .

HF: Yeah, yeah, it's a small little table. I recall having that. We had a television set later. What else in activities? We would get together and create games just to keep us occupied. And lot of times it was to gamble. We were so competitive. And we gotta have something of value—and it may be one cent, two cents, or something like that—just to compete.

HY: Did you bet on [sports] games, too?

HF: No. We didn't have that kind of money.

HY: What kind of gambling then?

HF: Oh, like you and I would play checkers for an example.

HY: You would bet on that.

HF: Yeah. Or anything, dice, cards (chuckles). . . . No regrets though.

(Laughter)

HF: If I had to live my life over again, I'd like to live it the same way.

HY: Did you get involved in any of the music and art activities at Pālama?

HF: No, the answer is no, not formally, but we had some good instructors I understand. I know we sang carols during Christmas time and the instructor, John Kelly—he's living in the Kāhala area, he was a voice teacher. And there was another person, I can't recall the name. They would just grab a bunch of us guys and teach us Christmas carols and we would sing.

HY: Would that be for a program where your parents could come?

HF: No, parents wouldn't come. It's just to celebrate Christmas and all that. And instrumentals we just learned among ourselves. A guy would bring a uke [ukulele], and we would learn that.

HY: What about your siblings, did they also hang out at Pālama?

HF: No, I was the only one.

HY: And why do you think that is?

HF: I don't know, I don't know.

HY: What did they do after school?

HF: See, my oldest brother had to work. I recall he worked when he was a teenager to help support the family. He used to build boats, and he was good at it. He had a contract with Sears [Roebuck, and Co.] and he used to make a boat a day. Fourteen-footers for these bottom-line fishermen. I used to help him paint, I recall. So he didn't have time to come to the settlement. My sisters, they had their own activities, sewing, or whatever. My older brother hanged out with other guys on Pua Lane. Are you familiar with Pālama Settlement?

HY: A little bit from the outside.

HF: Okay, off of Vineyard [Boulevard]—it's located on Vineyard—is Pālama Street. Then one block over, Diamond Head side, off Vineyard is Pua Lane, and he used to hang around with those guys. And there was a bunch in a Japanese[-language] school, that's Pālama Gakuen, on Waipā Lane. He used to hang out over there, too. So he never did come down to the settlement. Not frequently anyway. Once in a while he would come down. But he didn't belong to any of the clubs. Maybe that's the reason why he was a four-year honor man (laughs) at St. Louis. He did very well academically. But my dad would always compare my grades with his, and I say, "That's not fair, we're totally different." So he became an engineer. He did well.

HY: What about social activities, like you mentioned there's a dance hall above?

HF: Once in a while they would invite girls over from different places and we would have a dance. And it was reciprocal. We would be invited. But again, (chuckles) our behavior was bad, so not too often we would get invited (laughs). . . . I can recall getting invited to Mānoa, a private home, and I think there was a scuffle. And [because of] our reputation they said, "Don't invite the Crusaders," and so forth. So we weren't invited too often.

HY: What was your---when something like that would happen, how would you feel? You know, not being invited back, or whatever?

HF: It didn't bother us (laughs), now that you ask. I wouldn't even think twice. I wouldn't be hurt. We were too involved in other things.

HY: Now, did you ever do—I know they have fresh air camps and that sort of thing . . .

HF: Yeah.

HY: . . . were you ever involved in that?

HF: Yeah. Pālama-by-the-Sea, they used to call 'em, it was located in Waialua. Oh, we used to love going there. Then they broke that down, and now it's—*uka* is mountain side—Pālama Uka. I had never gone to that place because by that time I left the islands and I wasn't very active when I came back—went to school and so forth. Pālama-by-the-Sea, oh, we looked

forward to that. One week, you know, camping. We used to help ourselves [to] the watermelon right next door (chuckles). We had a great time over there. I don't know what the expense was. I can't recall now.

HY: Do you ever remember having to do fund-raisers? Some of the other participants mentioned having to sell sweet bread or something like that.

HF: Oh, yeah, for barefoot [football] team, 150-pound barefoot team—but that wasn't very nice, you know. We had a raffle going, and raffle was not legal, it was against the law. But we ran a raffle and we promised guys [if they had a] lucky number, they can win this, they can win that, but we never had those [prizes].

(Laughter)

HY: What happened if they won?

HF: There is no winner. (Laughs)

HY: That's right.

HF: If guys would ask, we would say, "Oh, someone else won."

HY: "Where's my prize?"

HF: Yeah, someone else won.

HY: Oh, I see.

HF: "I'm sorry, but the number was not yours," or whatever. It wasn't very nice.

HY: And this was to raise . . .

HF: Raise money for the football team.

HY: What kind of things would you need money for?

HF: Equipment, and I think entrance fee too. But I think Pālama Settlement paid the entrance fee, maybe about one hundred bucks or so, but we needed equipment. Football is expensive—helmets, pads, and so forth. But we didn't wear shoes. But shoes, normally, for any team, would be the players' expense, see?

HY: Oh, I see.

HF: Yeah, it's a personal item.

HY: Just jumping ahead again, where were you stationed?

HF: In the air force?

HY: Yeah.

HF: I was a tactical instructor. See, I did my basic training in California, then I was selected to be an instructor to train succeeding groups. I spent two years there, then I went to Wyoming. See, when Park Air Force Base closed down, we had a choice either to continue being an instructor at San Antonio—I didn't wish to go to Texas—or to go to school again, tech[nical] school. And I got placed in this communications school, Teletype and so forth. So I went to school in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and after that I was sent to Europe—Germany, specifically.

But when I went over there, I hardly worked in my career field because I was playing sports over there. And when you play sports, you have very light duty. We would get up in the morning, have breakfast, clean weapons (such as machine guns, .45 caliber pistols, et cetera), and after that we would eat lunch, go to practice (at about 1:45 P.M.), and that would be our day. Have dinner after practice. So we had a very good life in the military.

HY: How was that adjusting coming from Hawai'i then? Just completely being removed from your familiar surroundings?

HF: I enjoyed it. To get away from people here and my family, I figured that was the best way for me to grow up and mature and become independent. And sure enough, I reached my goals. I became more mature, more serious. I had to think ahead—eventually I wanted to get married. I wanted kids of my own, my own home, and so forth. So that's what motivated me to toe the line in the military and to pursue an education here at the university.

HY: So then you came back and went to school on the GI Bill here. What was your employment after that?

HF: My first job was at Roosevelt High School as a teacher and coach.

HY: You were teaching biology.

HF: Yeah, and physiology and botany, biological sciences. I spent six years at Roosevelt, then I transferred to Kaimukī High [School] because our coaching staff transferred, and I also taught science there and physical ed at Kaimukī High School for two years. Then I went into administration and I had to go back to school and pick up some admin[istration] courses, took a test, went through internship, and became a full-fledged administrator. What made me go into that was there was an opening in the Kalihi-Pālama area. You ever heard of the Model Cities program?

HY: Mm hmm [yes].

HF: Okay, [when] that came into existence, they needed some educational components. So I went (for an) interview, (after) someone asked me at Kaimukī to apply for that position. And that position was physical education in the elementary schools. Because usually, historically, elementary school teachers, they're not phys[ical] ed teachers. They're well-rounded, but they're not very good physically, I mean physical ed area.

So what we wanted to do—it was a demonstration project for a guy like me to go in with the staff. I had four teachers, and I would program them into ten schools in Kalihi-Pālama from

grades K through six. And they each, the four teachers, had two aides to help them. And we went in there and we created some activities, teaching activities, for the kids. And it turned out okay, one-year project. And that gave me my first experience in administration, see. So I liked it, and that's what motivated me to go into educational administration. So I went back to school and went through the whole process.

My internship was at Kauluwela Elementary School, and after that they assigned me all over the place as a vice principal, then later on as a principal.

HY: Did you ever think when you were at Pālama in your younger days that you would end up as a . . .

HF: Nope. (Chuckles) Never in my wildest dreams. You know what got me into education? Coaching. I wanted to coach, and the easiest way to get a coaching job is to teach, to be in the DOE system as a teacher. Because in the DOE, their hiring practices, one of them anyway, is if a person is on your staff—faculty—that person has first choice to coach whatever sport, wherever vacancy exists. So that's what happened.

My initial career interest was, believe it or not, a mortician. (Chuckles) And I was just interested in that. And I wanted to run a funeral parlor eventually. And I had a discussion with my dad one time, and he told me, "You'll always have jobs. Isn't that true?"

I said, "Yeah." And so that became my first interest.

HY: What age were you interested in this?

HF: Oh, after high school, when I was in military. But that didn't materialize because I had to go away for school, and I couldn't make it financially. So my second interest was policeman, and I was too small. At that time, you had to be 5 [feet] 9 [inches], 150 pounds. I was 130 [pounds] and 5 [feet] 7½ [inches], so I didn't make the physical requirements. So the next choice was coaching, and in order to be a coach teaching would be the best career. And again, no regrets, I got to love that career field and I think I did okay.

HY: And you said that at some point you went back to Pālama as a board member, is that right?

HF: Yeah, yeah. In fact, it was in the [19]80s. The current board of directors, they're all outsiders, so to speak.

HY: Meaning, living outside of Pālama area?

HF: Yeah, they didn't grow up in that area, okay. Good people though. I got to meet lot of good people. I was asked because one of the last guys on the board was [Moses] "Moke" Kealoha. He was about to leave, and they wanted another guy to take his place. So they asked and I said okay. But because of my job I couldn't spend enough time, so I resigned from that position and carried on. But whenever they needed help I was willing to go back and help them.

HY: Do you have a sense of how it's changed at all?

HF: Oh yeah, it's really changed. Well, I don't know because I don't go back there too often. But the time that I spent at Pālama, I didn't want to see it changed. I couldn't accept the change. But I guess if I frequent myself over there I could adjust and begin to love it again.

HY: How do you think it's different? In what way?

HF: I think the biggest change is they don't have the organized clubs that we had. We would compete against each other. And I think that's what made us good athletically. We had a lot of experience, see. And then, they would select a few guys from each club and create that team to represent Pālama Settlement and we entered leagues. And I think we held our own. That's the biggest difference.

I don't see clubs. However, they do have—what do you call that?—Pop Warner [football] teams. They do have programs, like after-school tutoring services, et cetera. They have a lot of senior citizen activities. We had never had that, but nothing wrong with that. As a matter of fact, I was involved with those activities when I was with Farrington Community School for Adults. Bobby [Robert] Higashino was [executive] director [of Pālama Settlement] at that time, and I really liked that guy. He needed things, so we could run programs for the adults, mostly seniors now, at Pālama Settlement at no charge. We would pay the instructor through our allocation . . .

HY: Who was a [part-time] DOE instructor.

HF: That's right. And we would give him (Bobby Higashino) supplies, such as mops, buckets, you know, small, little things. (Some of the adult students or custodians at Pālama would clean the rooms. Supplies were given so that the settlement didn't have additional expenses. This was our way of "paying" them back for free use of their classrooms.)

HY: And these were some senior citizen programs?

HF: Yeah. I can recall, I'm sure they have more things now, but when we started the program when I was at Farrington, this was in the early [19]80s, most of them were basic English classes. You know, for the immigrants? And they branched out. I recall when I was at Kaimukī, after Farrington I went to Kaimukī, I called [Pālama Settlement] up to give them books, because I had surplus books. They came over and picked some up. That's another change, the activities that they had. There are a lot of senior citizen activities, ukulele classes, dancing, et cetera.

We didn't have those, because our adults were too busy working. And life span was [shorter]. So we didn't have too many senior citizens at that time.

They have lot of activities for kids, which is really good, because we experienced that. So I'm thankful that we had all those activities. Without those man. . . . Not all of us (would have) succeeded in life. We had a few who went off the. . . . Bad kind, I mean, shooting people and so forth. . . .

HY: Is there anything else you want to talk about or add?

HF: No, I don't think so. (Chuckles) I think I've said enough. (Laughs) I might get myself into

trouble.

HY: Okay, thank you very much.

HF: Okay, you welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

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of
Pālama Settlement**

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