

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: RAY SARMIENTO, retired housing supervisor, Waialua Sugar Company

Ray Sarmiento was born in Pangasinan, Philippine Islands on March 15, 1912. After high school in Manila, Ray came to Hawaii under Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association auspices, hoping it would be a stepping stone to higher education on the Mainland. His first assignment was at Waialua Sugar Company where, because of many unforeseen factors, he stayed for the next thirty years. He held many jobs, including janitor, hapai ko worker, camp boss and housing supervisor. In 1943, Ray married a nurse from Kauai.

Since leaving the plantation in 1963, Ray has worked in insurance and was a bilingual specialist for the City. He was a leader in the Waialua community and was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1976. In late 1976, Ray left Hawaii to live in the country of his birth, the Philippines.

Tape No. 1-3-1-76

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ray T. Sarmiento (RS)

June 7, 1976

Waialua, Hawaii

BY: Araceli Agoo (AA)

AA: This is an interview with Mr. Ray T. Sarmiento of Waialua, June 7, 1976. Will you please tell me about your origins, where you were born, when and where were your parents born?

RS: Well, my parents were born in Pangasinan and I was born from my parents, also of course from Asingan, pangasinan. That's way back in 1912. And I went to school there, briefly, more than expected, then because of fiery inspiration in 1929 I came to Hawaii. Prior to coming to Hawaii, I was in Manila trying to continue my studies there. But I heard about the good opportunity there in mainland and besides that, lots of my classmates were going to the mainland, United States. I went home to go to the mainland also. But when I reached home, my brother--he used to be here in Hawaii, came alone so I figure I come to Hawaii first and it would be my stepping stone to the mainland. Before that thinking I will continue to the mainland. A lot of Filipinos were not allowed to go to the U.S. because they have no job. There had been lots of problems in the United States and that Depression really cut me off. So here now I got stuck in Hawaii.

AA: What did you expect Hawaii to be like?

RS: What do you mean?

AA: What were your expectations of Hawaii?

RS: At that time I did not expect anything from Hawaii. At that time my target was going to the mainland to study. I did not expect anything from Hawaii. All what I wanted to do was go to the mainland and study. But when I came to Hawaii through the HSPA labor corps, I got stuck in Waialua and I stay in Waialua for awhile thinking that this is my stepping stone.

AA: As soon as you got to Hawaii, did you move to Waialua? Did you work anywhere....?

RS: Now, I was recruited to Waialua, Waialua Sugar Company and my first assignment--I was assigned at Kawailoa Camp. So I stay there for

over 30 years doing all kind of job. In those days it was very, very hard, especially for Filipinos to be promoted to a certain job unless they are extra qualified. So I stick to the plantation. After two years I was promoted to a luna--they call that a supervisor. Two years, for sure two years. That's very speedy for a young man like me. That's one reason why I stick around with the sugar company.

AA: What kind of job did you do before that two years?

RS: Well before being a luna, I did all kind of a jobs, you name it, I did it. From janitorial work, hapai ko, you call that the loading of sugar, cutting cane, you call that pali pali, irrigation.

AA: Cutting cane is...?

RS: Cutting cane. They call 'em cutting cane.

AA: What's pali pali?

RS: Pali pali means fixing the lines, fixing the furrows of the sugar cane. And mule boy, hauling cane, and helper, plowing, also do some plowing with mule and so forth, grader with mule. I did all that things.

AA: Grader?

RS: Grader, yeah. You know, to grade the fields? That time, we don't have no tractors to grade the field. For example, now if the field is too high or like to cover something, you have to have a mule with a little grader. You pull that. You plow and you grade that. The loose soil has to be graded out. We don't have no tractor in those days. The tractors were the mules.

AA: And after you were a luna, what other kind of jobs did you have?

RS: Well from a luna then I was promoted to camp boss. Then as camp boss I take the job of camp boss until, the war came in and I still was a camp boss during the war and after the war. Then after the war finish, then they created the Housing Dept. So I work the Housing Dept. with a certain job in housing allocation for the laborers and practically do all the servicing. Just like a service department, take care of all the needs as far as people, as far as their housing is concerned. And then I worked on that job until my early retirement on 1964.

AA: 1964. So how long were you a housing supervisor?

RS: Well that's about...I think about ten years.

AA: As a camp boss, what was your typical day?

RS: As a camp boss, in the early days, first you must maintain peace and order, second you must see to it that there is sanitation in the houses. You must see to it that all the facilities will be functioning. Then at the same time you must see to it that the health and welfare of the people is supposed to be maintained. Now for example, now not only health and welfare we also take care of the peace and order in the area. And that part is the most important job because on the early days lots of these people from outside come down and exploit the other people, the Filipinos. So that's one of the most important jobs of the camp boss. As camp boss, you also represent the people, whatever they need. If there's a sick people, you must see to it that the man must be taken care of by the hospital staff. In case they need some facilities or any thing repaired in their houses. In other words practically everything they need, that is the job of the camp boss. We must see to it also they must work regularly. If they are sick they must be taken care of.

AA: So you work 24 hours then if somebody got sick:

RS: It's practically a 24 hours job. I used to have two assistants in those days. After pau hana in the afternoon, somebody will take over as watchman in the camp. So anytime, in the middle of the night, anytime of the night, if he saw something very unusual then they just call me. In other words, I be there 24 hours a day, ready to serve. Now in the early days, one of the most delicate situations is because of the unbalance between men and women. Now I think at that time, it may be about 80 percent men and 20 percent women. And so those are the problems that they used to have before. Especially these people in those early days, these people are all in their prime. They are all below 50, that is the prime of the men. And like today we have lots of senior citizens. At that those days we have no senior citizen.

AA: About what would you say was the population of Kawailoa?

RS: At that time? The population of Kawailoa, at that time, we used to have a least twelve hundred Filipinos.

AA: That is including women?

RS: Men and women. In the early day. Men and women, about 1,200 in the early days.

AA: Was the population then mainly Filipinos? Did you have some Japanese?

RS: I think the population in that early days I think is about 70 to 30; 30 percent Japanese, and at 70 percent Filipinos in those days.

AA: Did you have something like only one ethnic group live in one camp? Wasn't it like that?

RS: Yeah. That was before my time. Before my time, when we came down there was such thing as segregated camp. Like in Waialua they have such thing as segregated camp. Like in Waialua they have such things as Portuguese Camp, Puerto Rican Camp. We have the haole camp, Japanese camp. Now that's why when I took over the whole plantation, I took over the whole plantation way back from 1943, as a camp boss in the whole plantation in '43. All the camps. The whole area, the whole plantation in 1943. So, I have to serve every outside camp like Opaaula, Helemano, and Mokuleia. Yeah, name it, every area, I use take care.

AA: You were talking about people coming in Waialua...

RS: To exploit...

AA: ...Yeah to exploit Filipinos? What were those?

RS: Some people who are businessman from Honolulu and some people who do have some organization from Honolulu and those organization just like...I don't want to name names because I don't want to jeopardize their situations now. But, but for example now, there was an organization, in those days, a go home organization. Meaning if you join the organization, anytime you go home to the Philippines everyone will donate money. You collect one dollar, so and so from each member. Meaning that if you have seven hundred members then they will collect every \$1.00 from each member, then you have about \$700. Those are the most important, those are the things they promise, uh, they take you people home. A lot of people from Honolulu, those businessmen of some various organization for those candidates and so forth. In the early days we had a lot of candidates all around and those candidates does not benenfit at all any one of the plantation population but just because a few in those early days, get few young girls. So the moment these young girls, they make them sell tickets, and pictures. They sell their picture for just one dollar---now everybody....unless the single men houses, there's many pictures of young girls all in there. In their bedroom or in their living room and you can see all kind of a picture and those are selling for \$1.00. So if a young girl can sell 5,000 pictures then she can have \$5,000 and those in the early days \$5,000 is not, is just like, is just like \$50,000 today. And a lot of these single men when they back up one candidate, sometimes they give 'em about two, two or four hundred dollars. Those are the things we'd like to...Those are the things we're trying to stop. So the early days, in any sugar company in this state, they used to have a camp boss and they use to have what you call that, a watchman all the time. And before they could come in they suppose to have a pass so that we know what's the business and we know what house they going. Otherwise if anybody coming in without any pass, we just send 'em out. The idea is not to prevent them from visiting some of their relatives and so forth, only those, so anybody coming to visit their relatives, they're all free. As I said again we have to have some sort of a policy to protect the laborers.

AA: Was it just candidate kind, wasn't there other kind of exploitation other than collecting money.

RS: Yes, yes, lots of bogus business in those days also. All kinds of businesses, so forth. Some of these Filipinos in those early days, they're very unfamiliar with the situation and can easily be exploited. As a matter of fact lot of Filipinos, their money was taken away from them. Also some of them Filipinos had their bonds taken away from them by these sort of operators.

AA: What kind of lies did they use? Promises?

RS: Well, like uh one very popular concept is they put up before, like I intervened in Waialua which I was very happy. I believe that there are two people in Waialua, one Japanese and one Filipino who's been taken for a ride. Now this man come around and he said he was gonna invest his money. He was gonna borrow \$500 from you, now immediately will give you a receipt of \$750. And he promise you that in six month or in sixty days, six month or sixty days, he will return your money not \$500 which you are giving to him but he will give you \$750. Now those are the gimmicks that are going around. And I was very fortunate, I was lucky enough that I saw that one first and I was able to intervene. I was able to drive them out and seek them out from the camp. And we have only one Filipino here, yeah, who has been swindled. Now where as in the whole state of Hawaii I understand, according to the Better Business Bureau when they went to the court that this man was able to swindle at least about one million dollars from the Filipinos.

AA: Filipinos alone?

RS: Yeah, in the whole state. This man is a Filipino, swindled around Filipinos one million dollars and they went to the court and this man was deported to the Philippines. I think the hardest hit island was Kauai. Kauai, Maui and and Big Island of Hawaii. And also some from Waipahu, Ewa and in those days, Waimanalo. But Waialua, fortunately we have only one in the whole Waialua area. It made me very unpopular at that time with the outsiders (RS wouldn't let them into the camps) and by the people from those swindlers. They even try to say--they even threatened to kill me whenever I stay in Honolulu because they were not able to penetrate in Waialua.

AA: Did you use any kinds of machines in your job? Before you were a luna, when you were a luna and when you were a camp boss?

RS: On those days, in the early days we don't have no automobiles. We don't have tractors. In the plantation, in the early days. When you plow the fields in those early days, they use to have the steamboat, they call that. And then when you make furrows, also a steamboat, and then small job like plowing between sugar cane we have the mules.

AA: This is before 1931.

RS: Yeah. Even in 1930. Those machines, hapai ko machines came in as late as about '36 yeah. That's why my early days, and going around the camp in those early days, we use horses. Ride horse. Get lot of fun riding horses. Until in 1942 then we got rid of the horses in the camp. Then we use automobiles. That was in 1940. I was given an automobile in 1940. I think was 1938 I was given that automobile.

AA: As a camp boss you were already a supervisor right?

RS: Before supervisor, and then promoted to camp boss.

AA: Supervisor of what?

RS: No, luna. They call 'em luna in the field, cutting cane.

AA: So a luna is a supervisor. Were there any benefits? What were your benefits and why were you promoted to a supervisor? Was it because of your education or your physical ability?

RS: Well first, you have to show them that you are capable. Now, education don't mean anything to them. You must be capable to do the job. Now first you must have your determination and second you must show that you have an ability to take care the job that is assigned to you. Like for example now what's really missing was, in order to be a camp boss, you have to be commissioned as a police by the department of police department because you are a special....commision-
ed to be a special police officer. Unusual, I think was for one non-citizen to be commissioned a police officer at that time, special police.

AA: Non-citizen, you mean.

RS: Before if you are not an American citizen you can never be commissioned as a police officer. So I was the only one given the commission as a police, special police officer with a badge and carry gun. All the rest cannot.

AA: So this is a very high paying job then.

RS: Well, in those days no such things as very high paying job. Better job, better than luna. Only thing is a bigger responsibility. People look to you cause on those days you are not handling working men. You are handling people. In other words, every people here now --either haole, Japanese, Puerto Rican, everybody, they are under you. In those days, the difference between a luna and camp boss, the luna is you only take care of the working men assigned to you as a gang, you see. That's a group of men assigned to you as a gang, then that is the luna supervisor. You take them to work early in the morning

until afternoon. While a camp boss, yeah, the whole area, what is needed in the camp, because in those early days we don't have no different departments. Unlike today. Now today we have all different departments take care the job. In those days if you are a camp boss, you are practically the only boss, your boss under you, you under the manager at that time. Only you and the manager, see so every department, all the luna, what they need, what their men need is you. Yeah you are practically under the manager and the manager's policy is you are going to enforce that manager's policy and also work in the office. In the office you have to keep the work record of the man. From time to time the office will check on you whether a man is still in the camp or not, whether the man is working or not. So that's a big job in those days.

AA: So actually you, as a camp boss, you were second highest in the rank, manager was the...?

RS: No, it's not the highest in the rank. It's not actually second. The job. I said because in those days you have the manager, you have, they call 'em the big luna in the administration operation side. Your operation, all right, you have the manager, the big luna, then you have the section overseer, then you have your water lunas, also then you have the mill. So those are the operators side. But, so far as the administration side, administration all right. On the outside, on the camp, yeah, you only take order from the manager. That's a (the job) camp boss. Yeah, you have nothing to do with cultivation, you have nothing to do with the office because we have an office manager. But they have nothing to do, so far as the camp peace and order, the camp maintenance is concerned, you know, the cleanliness of the road, yeah the repairing of the house and so forth. Then all what you do, that is your sole responsibility, is to report that to, for example just anything, repairing the house you report that to the office all right and the office report that to the carpenters. So you take care all those things unlike now, everybody is very simple, the job today is very simple for all those people.

AA: Okay, what was your pay rate?

RS: Well pay rate, on those days, that pay rate is of course higher than; all people working as supervisor.

AA: Um, your pay rate or the manager?

RS: No, no, I am not. I said not higher than the manager because the manager is the manager is the boss.

AA: No, that's what I meant, were you speaking of the manager or were you speaking of yourself.

RS: No. Pay rate? No I have said is similar to some of those skilled workers, you know they give you skilled job, skilled bango you call it, so that determines, the pay rate is determined by the office also.

AA: Oh, what kind of work did women do?

RS: Well in those days the women do the field work only. Now very seldom that our--that in those days we don't have Filipino women in the office. In the hospital at that time they have some special nurses from the Philippines in the early days but so far as the plantation is concerned we have no more Filipinos working in the fields at that time. Very few of them who are only working as field workers. During the harvesting, use to be as piler. You know cane piler. They pile the cane for their loader. That's what they do.

AA: That's what the ladies did? What about people that were handicapped because of, if they had gotten handicapped because of some accident from the plantation. What kind of jobs were they given? Were they given money?

RS: Well, in those days, the handicapped people is not even known. Either you are working or you are not working in the early days. No more such thing as compensation and so forth, none.

AA: Even though you were injured?

RS: No more such things as those in the early days. All right you are at the mercy of the company. Now I spoke to one guy and I still have the records there. Here comes now is a Filipino old old timer who is later luna. Then he contracted, I mean he has a high blood pressure and he became paralyzed, after serving the company for the last I think about 25 to 30 years, this man, as a luna. He used to be a water luna, one of the highest paid man in the plantation and when he was paralyzed, they were trying to cut off everything from him. Salary and everything. And they even try to carry him away from his house. So I intervened on that, and that man, they were trying to send him back to Philippines with free transportation for him and his wife. So when I intervened they give him a free house and I think a little amount of money just to live and then finally he died.

AA: He died here?

RS: Yeah, Waialua.

AA: What about your expenditures. What were your major expenses.

RS: Well expenditures before is food. Yeah, and some clothing, that's the major thing before, in the early days. And everything, food is cheap, at that time. Of course your salary and wages are cheap, yeah. So those are considered expenditures.

AA: Ah, was your income adequate?

RS: Well in those days people are not very extravagant, not like now; there's a lot of luxury things. In those days, it's go to work, go home and sleep. But nowadays we have lots of things to do. Now people use to go to Honolulu maybe once a month. While now every

night you can go to Honolulu. On those days we have only few stores, no nightclubbing, and so forth to go in those days. That's the reason why the people who were able even though they were only \$1.00 a day. Some of these laborers, at one dollar a day, they were able to save money. At \$1.00 a day they work 26 days, they can make \$26.00 and out of \$26 that they earn, yeah they were able to, some of them they were able to spend or save \$20.00 at \$6.00 one month in those early days.

AA: Because you were a luna. Maybe your expenses wasn't too much of problem for you but did you see any hardships within the field workers? Hardship, you know, because I'm sure there were differences in pay, your pay and their pay. And maybe in your case it wasn't that hard for you to live. But did you see anything or anybody go hungry or...

RS: No. In those days, nobody's hungry because in those days especially Sundays, lots of these people, they have their own garden in their back yard. And whenever they go to the beach, they have lots of fish in the beach. They can go to the river. They can fish for lots of fishes. Around those days, people, they don't eat just like we do; not, that they have two or three kinds on the table. In the early days no. Because once they have papaya and iriko in those days, it's good enough for them. And iriko is good, you buy the iriko, and iriko is I think about 25¢ a bag and that iriko good for one week. Funny how 25¢ is good for one week. So, that's the reason why I said that they only spend about \$5.00 a month. Because rice, one bag of rice is about \$3.00. And then \$2 is enough for your food. Now some of these, lots of them, some broke because some people in the early days, like lots of these single men, just like now, they don't take care of their living. They just, in other words they try to live just like in the high society and those people they run broke.

AA: They go broke. Were there any part-time job you could go to make extra money, or did the plantation allow that.

RS: You don't have no time to do a part-time job, because you practically there from six to six at that time. So when I say six to six early in the morning, 5:30 you go out in the morning, 5:30 and then you finish about 4:30 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon. You reach home because you go by train or by truck, in those days mostly by train. If you go by train, you reach home at 6 o'clock, then you start taking a bath, and do the cooking, by the time ready to sleep. So no part-time...

AA: What about banking and saving and borrowing money? What kind of systems did you have?

RS: Banking is very easy at that time because the banker whenever there's pay day use to go around in the camps, just like Kawailoa. Give you an example, Kawailoa, they use to come pay day there and bankers use to follow them. The bank manager, they go there, yeah, they can give their money to these people unlike today where you have to go

to the bank to bank your money. On those days, no, they come follow you.

AA: What bank was there in existence?

RS: That's the Bank of Hawaii and First National Bank. There's only two bank in those days.

AA: They also allowed you to borrow and things like that?

RS: Well borrowing money in those days is practically not known. Because people, they do not borrow. They save money, they don't borrow.

AA: Did you practice anything within yourself, not with a bank, you know tanomoshi or cumpang.

RS: Yes, that is cumpang cumpang. Some they follow, they follow that from the Japanese but it is not very popular to the Filipinos because there are some sad experience. It seems to me that they didn't trust one other. Filipinos. So that's not very popular because very few do that.

AA: You're saying then that we, ah, we took this cumpang-cumpang from the Japanese.

RS: Yes Japanese started that. They call that tanomoshi.

AA: Oh, you don't think that we brought from our home too?

RS: No, it is the Japanese you call it tanomoshi. Because Filipinos even brothers, and brothers sometime they don't cook together.

AA: But I'm sure they live together.

RS: They live together yeah, but that tanomoshi is not very popular to the Filipinos.

AA: Well alright, as a camp boss, was there anything that you got free, you know benefits, bonuses. Well not free but what kinds of things were there?

RS: Well, there's some incentive at that time. If you're working man if you work 23 days a month then they will give you 10¢ on every dollar you earn.

AA: This is for a field worker.

RS: Field worker in those days.

AA: What about mill workers. Were there anything there? The same thing?

RS: Well, the same thing, every worker. Every laborer, they have that incentive.

AA: Did you have to buy your mule? Was that uh free? You know the one you go riding around the camp.

RS: No. The mule is provided. Now riding around the camp is a horse provided by the company. And one thing that's very interesting and very enjoyable life because early in the morning, your boy, the boy will, who's in charge of the horse, will bring it to the stand and then about 3 o'clock in the afternoon---no, 11 o'clock during lunch hours, they let 'em go the mule, the horse. Somebody, man, I have one Japanese old man before take care my horse, feed the horse give him water. Then about 12 o'clock I will take again the horse and by 3 o'clock the man will take my horse to the stable and give him a bath and so on. He use to take care everything for me.

AA: Well as a camp boss, as you stop people from coming in to exploit the people. Other than that were there any organizations that did this thing that help the people.

RS: Help! No organization helping the people from outside, they are trying to, they come in the compound, plantation to help themselves, not to help the people. Not one. I have yet to experience one guy to come down to help the people. Nobody. They only come down to the plantation to try to squeeze some money from these people.

AA: Can you tell me about your education?

RS: Well, my education is very meager, from the Philippines. But when I reach here, I didn't go, I tried to continue my high school in Manila but I didn't finish my high school in Manila. So I came down from the Philippines, to here, then I continue that, through the continuation school. Well I think that going to school is equivalent to graduation of high school from continuation school. Then from there I keep on reading and studying every night. Ever since I arrive here in Hawaii, I immediately subscribe to Star Bulletin and read and immediately also bought some books and studied, especially in history and then after studying history then I went on business. So I enrolled at the business college for one year, finishing in the Dale Carnegie Course, the basic and the advance courses. And I went to the University of Hawaii, study the real estate law. I finish Real Estate I and Real Estate Law II. That is preparatory, supplement to real estate, because then I studied real estate also. I have a certificate in real estate business. I didn't stop there, I went to Security School for two years. Now Security School will teach you the basic of business and also the delicate things of business just like selling security, how business is formed, just like in corporation law. You have to specialize, you have to know all those corporation law, how to go in a different kind of stocks in business, like the common, the preferred stock, the municipal stock, municipal bonds and so forth. I remember that. I learned that in two years in business school and then I took up insurance also. That's why when I got insurance. And that makes me retire. Then I was not afraid to retire in 1964 because I feel that I'm ready to tackle an important job outside.

AA: So actually you did finish high school. What was the high school in the Philippines?

RS: In the Philippines - no high school. In the Philippines, same one. I did not finish high school in the Philippines. But I said again that I helped myself since I can't continue in college in a better formal way, then I studied at home.

AA: What business schools did you go to at first?

RS: Honolulu Business College and U. of H.

SIDE 2

AA: When did you marry? How did you get into your first house? How did you meet with your wife?

RS: That's too personal.

AA: Well how did you meet your spouse, at a party or...? Too personal?

RS: You don't need that.

AA: No, we'd like to find out patterns.

RS: What you mean, patterns.

AA: Patterns you know, like here you said there was ratio 80 percent male to 20 percent female. You know, I'd like to know they dated, their social lives.

RS: That's a good question. You know marriage life is something of luck. If there's faith, if you believe in faith, sometimes, it comes without you knowing. Now it happens that during my early days, I'm not bragging but I was supposed to be one of the most eligible Filipino bachelors. Because of the job, my position, I'm not bragging, I'm not that backwards. I suppose to be one of the so called "top notches" as a bachelor, well among the Filipinos, they suppose to call that the most eligible bachelor in Waialua at that time. All right, the most unusual thing was, I always go around with people, non-Filipino. And, when luck comes as I said, it will come. When I first saw my wife, that was in 1941, maybe the destiny is there and we meet at Kawaihoa. She was vacationing with her family and that's it, and that's the beginning. Then she went home. The war separated us for awhile. Of course before the war we went down to Kauai and I took up my tennis players. I was a tennis addict at that time and when we went to Kauai, took up tennis team to Kauai so I renew my acquaintance with my wife. Then when I came back, we came back from Kauai, finally after two days come back to Oahu, the war broke out. So the communication broke out for awhile. The war broke out in '41. And the year of '42, one year and by January 1943, I went back to Kauai and got married.

AA: You got married in Kauai.

RS: The whole family was in Kauai so I followed them, I went down to Kauai.

AA: But originally they were from the Philippines.

RS: The parents were from the Philippines. The father was from Siquijor, island of Siquijor, the Visayan group. The mother was from Cebu, Visayas. So we get married. After we get married on July, on January (1943) after one week in Kauai, I took her back to Waialua at time and ever since we living together. And ever since we stay here. So that is, marriage is, as I said again, nobody can say well, "I don't know when I'm gonna get married" because sometimes it's in faith. Even you, sometimes you said, when the faith comes, it comes. And that is the situation of married life.

AA: Okay, so her parents, her father was a plantation laborer?

RS: Plantation laborer, yes. Eleele, Kauai.

AA: Would it be too personal if I asked her maiden name.

RS: It's a Lillian Salba at that time. She use to work at the hospital. She's a practical nurse at Eleele Hospital at that time we got married.

AA: Good, okay can you describe your first house, here in Hawaii, in Kawaihoa.

RS: Well, when you are newly arrived, usually the plantation camp boss will come down and assign you, (at that time we have a Portuguese Camp Boss) to a house which is ready for you. Well I use to live with two people, yeah. It's a very modest house, outdoor toilet at that time. There's no stove, no electrical stove. You cook with firewood. Inside the house, inside the kitchen. There's a stove, I mean a place there provided for you to cook inside the house. And of course we're lucky we have running water inside the house. It's very modest living. You have to lay down on the floor until finally you have to buy a cot, you know, this army cot. After one month you have to buy another cot to live on, to sleep, until finally when you have some money, you buy your own bed to sleep. And that's how happened. And when I was promoted to supervisor, then they assign me another home, living with another supervisor, single man. We are both single supervisor so we live together in that house, those of us that are cut cane luna. When my house mate get married then I was alone in that house, until I was promoted to the Camp Boss, then I was promoted to a bigger, I mean I was assigned a big house three bedroom house in Kawaihoa, a bungalow type, with a telephone. Around those days in Kawaihoa we have only three telephones. One is my house, one is the, they call that, the section overseer and one is the store. So that's only three telephones in Kawaihoa at that time. Only three telephone. So you can just see that sometimes my house was a headquarters of young people, yeah. Then finally we were able

to in the later part of '35, '36 it was, about '35, '34, '35 when Kawaiiloa Gym was built so we had a swimming pool, we have a recreation center there, we have a theater there. So I help on those activities.

AA: So the people you lived with, did you eat together, did you do things together? Go out together, did you have the same working hours?

RS: With the people that I lived with? Yes, because we're both luna. We go to work together at the same field. We eat together. We have lots of fun. My assignment's cook in the afternoon and he cook in the morning.

AA: Was he Filipino like you?

RS: Filipino, yes.

AA: So you prepared the same kind of food, yes?

RS: Yes, same kind of food, Filipino.

AA: You said you played tennis. You play any other sports?

RS: Yes, I use to play baseball, I use to play golf.

AA: Can you tell me a little bit more about your trip to Kauai as a tennis player? Who were you with?

RS: Well, I am the captain and organizer of the Waialua Tennis Team. At that time we have the Kawaiiloa tennis team that is composed of three doubles and two singles. So I took the whole team to Kauai and played against the Lihue team in Kauai. And fortunately we won the game of tennis.

AA: Was there, at the plantation...had other sports team? Were you in any of them?

RS: Well in the early days, the sugar company is trying to promote all activities in the plantation to provide them recreation. Like every camp, I use to be camp boss, every camp, there used to be a volleyball court in the area and, there was an organization in the early days. They call them the OPAA meaning that was, this Oahu Plantation Athletic Association. O.P.A.A. Every plantation, they have there at that time, the later part of the years, they call 'em the athletic director. In Kawaiiloa, we also have the team there in Kawaiiloa and the team composed of, to participate in the OPAA. Now, we go to every plantation, for example, now, we have the volleyball players, we have a sipa -sipa player. We have a baseball player and also we call that the softball player for the women. So we move to one plantation to another plantation to compete in those activities. On those days we are very busy and not unlike today. The activities is not being organized by a big group just like the sugar companies. Now in those days, those are the functions of the companies even in that

early days. I was very much involved in those activities.

AA: Were there any people in Waialua that were deformed or considered insane?

RS: Deformed? What do you mean deformed?

AA: You know, like, Mongoloid type of people.

RS: Oh - deformed people? I'm not very familiar with those things, yeah because the very basic thing that we know already is Japanese, Filipinos, yeah. Puerto Ricans and uh, Portuguese, Chinese and Koreans - these are the important people here before. So far as the deformed people, we are not very familiar with those. Those are very insignificant so far as the activities of the company is concerned.

AA: Yeah sure, but as a camp boss, you said you were called on for emergencies and whenever there were accidents, you were called to it. Didn't you come across these kinds of things?

RS: None, none.

AA: All right. What serious accidents have you had and were they because of job or just luck and fate?

RS: None.

AA: None. What about well, you know, like plain sick you know, injured, you know, not a big accident, you know. Who took care of you, what kind of services were rendered?

RS: Well for example now, when I was a plantation luna somebody cut his, his kneecap. And this man was practically invalid in the canefield so I carried that man on my shoulder outside to the road, to the canefield and then from there, there's one car and then the field boss, then somebody drove him to the hospital. And not like today where somebody will call up and the ambulance will come pick you up. No more such things as ambulance in those days.

AA: Were you paid for the lost time in accidents while working?

RS: On those days, no. No more such things as lost time accidents and so forth.

AA: Was the medical care good? Did you consider it good?

RS: The medical care at that time is well, we'll have to take the doctor. Well in those days, I think the plantation in those days, were about two thousand people and we had only one doctor. So on those days, well it's adequate cause at least you have a doctor.

- AA: What about people who commit suicide. Were there a lot of people here? I....I hear, there were some.
- RS: Well that suicide is very insignificant. And that suicide, even now, in this modern time, well there are a lot of people. Well, I believe that in those days, in my time, suicide is very insignificant.
- AA: How did you use to travel, you know, from here to Wahiawa. Other than your horse around the camp?
- RS: Well in those days, we have a few cars, we have some few cars here and there. But anyway that is very adequate to take care people because as I said again people are not the roving type of people just like now. From work, go to home and their luxuries and their entertainment on Sundays is to play their phonograph record whole day. That's all they do. Unlike today, everybody, they cannot keep them in the house. Then after '40, after the war, then that really stimulate the energy of people to go around.
- AA: Who had the first car in the community. Was it the manager?
- RS: Of course the manager. Have to have the manager.
- AA: Okay, who was the first, other than the manager who had the second car?
- RS: Well, now, I don't say who is the first but the manager must have the car. I did not come in that early, I just seen that from the time I came in. Well of course, according to what I said before in the early days, well of course, the manager must be the first one then you have your head luna, head luna means, just like you take care the fields, that's a head luna. Because in those early days management is only operations in the field in the early days.
- AA: Were the trains used to transport people back and forth from work or were they used for public transportation.
- RS: No, just your own train. Train. The early days, was only train, no more truck.
- AA: The postal system, was it a good system then? You know, did you get your mail when you expected it?
- RS: Oh yeah, they have very modest postal system. Of course, unlike today everybody receiving mail, maybe three or four a day. In those days, you lucky if receive mail one week, one person, one time, one month. So postal system is very adequate on those conditions.
- AA: What about newspapers. What were they? What magazines, did you read?
- RS: Well the newspaper is the Daily Star, was the Star Bulletin, and Advertiser.

AA: What about magazines, did you read any of them?

RS: Well magazine in those days is practically unknown.

AA: When did you get your first TV?

RS: Oh, TV as I said TV came in after the War. I don't recall when the TV came about but as soon as the TV came around, I think I was the first one to also own.

AA: Radios were around before the TV though, did you have radios before the war? Before the war, did you listen or watch TV with friends or did you just do it yourself?

RS: Well, in those days, when you have a TV in your private home, you don't have to go to somebody's home.

AA: You have your own TV and you stayed at your house to watch your own.

RS: That's right.

AA: But when it was, when TV, not everybody had one, didn't you get a group together, you know go to his house because he had a TV?

RS: No, I think Hawaii, they usually don't do that because after the war when the TV came in, uh, and besides that and by nature...

AA: You are suspicious of your neighbors?

RS: ...people are not going to their neighbors.

AA: Okay, what about your telephones. You were the first one, you were one of the first three in Kawaiiloa to have one.

RS: Yes.

AA: About what time?

RS: Like I said, way back in 1931.

AA: 1931. That was just for business calls?

RS: Business.

AA: Emergency calls.

RS: No. Before nobody buy telephone and this was all official. As company phones.

AA: Camp police, when there was gambling or vandalism or people were drunk, what did you do to them? Did you send them to jail and make them pay fines?

RS: Well, if it's the plantation, plantation property, usually that's our job. We usually don't put them to the court, police station, no. Because that's plantation property. And in those days, very seldom they do vandalism. Very good people, very good in those days.

RS: Now if there's some vandalism from outside, they went to court. Yeah and sometimes, because by nature somebody stealing chicken and so forth then us take care ourselves.

AA: What about stealing wives?

RS: Well that is before my time. In the early days in that time, as I recall somebody was telling us the story and that's part of my study. I study that also about Filipinos in Hawaii and sometimes it's a fault of a woman in those days. It's not the fault of the man because some of the women, because since there are very few women and especially if they are married and then they usually have a little party and so on and especially with the man is more handsome than the husband. And at that time, sometimes they took advantage also. It's women. Not usually the man. Some people, they say, when I went to the Philippines in 1946, to recruit the laborers and they, brought their wives and I was...the question was asked by women from Vigan at that time was: "Is there any truth to the story that when you reach Hawaii, the man will kidnap you out from the house?" Said, "No, that is not true." Because I know one very specific incident which I followed up; the woman was in love with another man. But at that time, there's no such things as divorce law and you cannot go to the plantation and so forth. And the women, they don't have the automobile to get out at that time. So they had to live and the only thing is in their house. Now, sometimes, as I say it's the fault of the women because they encourage the man to go to their house and sometimes the man has been spending lavishly for the women at the house everytime. For example if the family in the camp of about 50 men, maybe two only two women so it's just like the house is the only place of the sugar to the ant. So they use to go there every night, you know. As usual they bin very friendly. So from that kind of an association then maybe develop some very unusual situation.

AA: Okay, this incident you talk about, was it within your time?

RS: Yes, sometimes within my time, the early times.

AA: What about prostitution, you know other than the ladies in the camp? Were there people coming in and out?

RS: Well that's where, exactly as I told you the first time, that's the headache, that's the job of the camp police, camp boss because lot of the outsiders bring in those kind of things to the camp and they are seldom come around because the moment we apprehend them, then really, we really put them in the carpet. But there was legalized prostitution and around. I mean not legalized but open, known. Like in Kawaihoa in our area they have one house in Haleiwa.

And usually they go to Honolulu they have that, they go to Honolulu.

AA: Do you, the laborers go to Honolulu?

RS: Very seldom that they can sneak into the camp.

AA: How were they punished if you found them in there? Did you do anything to them or did you...?

RS: That's the time we call the police.

AA: Yes, you call the police.

RS: That's the time now when we call the police because they are outsiders.

AA: And what did the police actually do to them?

RS: Well, on those days, in the early days, the police is controlled by sheriffs. And then, usually put them in jail. But on the...maybe they go to court...so.

AA: During the strike time, were there more vandalism occurring?

RS: No.

AA: Even when people were thrown out their houses and no money and all that, water cut off?

RS: No.

AA: Nothing like that existed?

RS: No, nothing. None in my time.

AA: Are you in the St. Michael's Church here, have you been an active member all your life?

RS: Yes.

AA: All your time in Hawaii?

RS: Yes...not in St. Michael's because I came only here in 1957 but I was at Kawaiiloa Church.

AA: That was also a Catholic Church?

RS: Yeah, as a matter of fact we are the first one, uh we're the second one in the whole state to organize the Filipino Catholic Church.

AA: In Kawaiiloa or in Waialua?

RS: Kawaiiloa is the first one.

AA: In Hawaii?

RS: In Hawaii.

AA: And what was the population? Was mainly Filipinos right?

RS: Filipinos yeah.

AA: Okay. Um, do you have anything to say about the Filipino Federation of America?

RS: Well, I think I'm very fortunate to meet the leader, Moncado himself in person, the Filipino Federation of America. In my personal view, there is nothing wrong with the Federation of America. Nothing wrong at all. Now even then they were criticized at that time because of the long hair but look at now. I even put my commentary that those people who ridicule the Filipinos for having a long hair, now look at the haoles today. They are now, even students in the University, even professors now, university are having long hair and long beard. And yet at that time they ridicule because they are Filipinos. They having long hair, having long beard, yeah, they call them all this kind of a names. But now the professors at U.H. now they are having a long beard. So I always say this at that time, there is nothing with the Federation of America. Because their concept is so true that the concept is loyalty to country, and loyalty to the community and those are the people that do not trouble to or harm, yeah and I think the Federation of America is one of a great organization.

AA: Great organization yeah. When you first got to Hawaii, what were the first things that struck you as different? What were the first things that you noticed? How was Hawaii different from the Philippines?

RS: Well, when I first came to Hawaii, we knew nobody. First is loneliness. Second then the hardship, especially, me cause I didn't work. Hardship. But I do not notice a very significant thing because I always portray my mind into a certain determination. Determination to do a good job. Anybody that, even advise people to go the Philippines, if you go to the Philippines I said, especially those born and raised here, you don't go to the Philippines and criticize or compare. Do not compare. All you do is to do a good job. The only thing, significant thing I know is from then on till now, very worthwhile noting is that Hawaii on those early days and you compare it now is just like between day and night in progress. Because Hawaii in those early days is just like the Philippines. Right, they don't have nothing just like they do the Philippines. The coal cook stove just like in the Philippines. They have an outdoor toilet just like in the Philippines. They don't have no automobiles just like in the Philippines in those days. The only difference is sugar cane and while in the Philippines you raise rice. And school, and the school in those days, very few also here. When I first arrived, few people especially the youngsters like me

before have gone up to high school in the Philippines.

AA: Okay, what about your habits. Because you were in Hawaii now, were there any differences? Did you change your dress?

RS: Well, there's no significant thing about dressing because gradually you go by casual, as the Hawaii go. No such thing as a drastic change. Because from the Philippines, because what we wear here, we wear in the Philippines. As a matter of fact, what style in the Philippines they are taking here and what style here also taking back in the Philippines. So in that way there is no gradual change because habitually sometimes, by habit, and also by inclination that sometimes we have a new shirt from the Philippines we wear it. We have a new shirt from Hawaii, we wear it in the Philippines. So that's not very unusual. There's no such thing as a change.

AA: No change in habits?

RS: Yeah.

AA: Okay....you knew English when you came to Hawaii?

RS: Yes.

AA: You knew it. But then there were the Japanese who did not know English. How did you communicate with them?

RS: Well, the Japanese of those early days because they have been an old, old timers in those early days, I don't know, maybe I was born to be very intellectual by destiny that when they speak pidgin English, I can easily understand them. In those early days as a matter of fact, the first time I was assigned to a luna, a Puerto Rican luna who could not speak also a very good English, luna and the first day I came, I went to work with the laborers who could not speak English. Immediately at that time I was the interpreter of that whole gang and newcomers to the Philippines. Because I was assigned to a luna whereby a luna who cannot speak Filipino is Puerto Rican and he cannot speak English and so I was the middle man from that time at the very start. I was the only one who could speak English.

AA: When did you become an American citizen?

RS: I became an American citizen way back in 1948.

AA: '48? And how did you go about doing this? What were your reasons for becoming an American citizen?

RS: Well, many varied things. Well, I was very much interested in this social, economic and my civic activities and political things of

Hawaii. And I think every young people or every people should be interested in the civic, political and economic and social activities of their country or any place. Now in order to adequately engross yourself into such things, I think is a very easy way, very important that you will also become an American citizen because politically you cannot practice, you cannot be recognized unless you are an American citizen. And sometimes, when you are in the community and you try to engross yourself in all the affairs of your community it's not enough unless you also can participate in politics and the only way you can participate in politics adequately is when you become an American citizen. That's why I must believe this. That not because you become an American citizen that you already abandon your qualities as a good Filipino. Because of study the history of the U.S. today, there is no such thing as pure American. No such thing. Either they gotta be good Italian, good Frenchman, good German, good Yugoslavians and good Pollocks and what have you?

That's compose the U.S. Now here in Hawaii for example now, now we're all aliens here. Everybody in Hawaii, except the Hawaiians. And what makes Hawaii progress is because all the aliens of Hawaii. Americans considered aliens of Hawaii. Historically they are aliens of Hawaii. Every one of us all aliens of Hawaii. They got the Germans here who come down, the Japanese, Puerto Ricans, Koreans and Filipinos and all what have you. Yeah, we're all aliens so far as Hawaii is concerned. And that's what Hawaii is today so my thinking is this--that is pertaining to the Filipino people now--why should the Filipinos take a back seat which we are now today? Now I'm sorry to say this, but it's true. The Filipinos are trying to engroup themselves only by themselves. Yeah. This is wrong. Now the Japanese were doing the same thing before but finally they wake up and they said "Hawaii is just as good for us just like the haoles." Now if we the Filipinos will also say that "Hawaii is just as good for us, just like anybody can, then we can." And then the Filipinos says "no, no." And then when you put the Filipino in one side, they thought that will, they only maintain the Filipinos themselves. That is very wrong. Now, if you want me to advise the Filipinos, if I will include. One way of organizing the Filipinos is first--- they must now realize that Hawaii...they have just as much responsibility in Hawaii, and they have as much right to take all the opportunities from Hawaii and they have just as much right also to build Hawaii. Now, especially here in Hawaii, whether we like it or not the years will come that the Filipinos will be the leaders of Hawaii. It will come. Now it's very important that every Filipino from young and old today, especially the students, to take now the proper steps of preparing themselves to be a leader in Hawaii. How is first. They must develop themselves into one covenant - one group. Covenant means a philosophy of their life. That there is a Filipino race. Now when I say Filipino race, it's not the Badoc for the Badoc, San Nicholas for San Nicholas, and Pangasinan for Pangasinan, Visayan for Visayan, Ilocos Norte for Ilocos Norte and so forth. They must realize that they have a community of their own and they should call that the Kayumangi or the Filipino Community. They must recognize also and they must know by now that in order to be recognized you do not want to

portray yourself you are a good San Nicholas people, you are not good as a Visayan people, you must be a good Filipino. By doing that, you much have to group yourself into a certain community, where you get a Filipino Community. Okay?

AA: No, not at all. Would you say that moving to Hawaii was the most significant part of your life? Or was, you admit it as a stepping stone but not anymore.

RS: Well that can be answered yes and no. Because if my determination to study if I move into the Philippines, I mean to United States with my burning desires to study, it might be a different story.

AA: Uh huh. But because it has turned this way, this is the, the turn of your life, coming to Hawaii then.

RS: Well, it's this way, as I say, if you go back to the word destiny, maybe that is my destiny but even though, when I was in Hawaii, that didn't stop me from trying to achieve what I was trying to accomplish. In the most, humble way, maybe in the most very rigid way.

AA: What event then that you can recall has brought about the most change in your personal life?

RS: Well, change in personal life does not come just between day and night. It's a gradual thing. From the beginning up to now I still continue to achieve, try to study, try to persuade my mind and try to look for new things and look for more lucrative things, both mentally and socially and more also---not more in financially but that's the way to live. You cannot just say well tomorrow, I will be millionaire. No, cannot. And tomorrow you cannot just say I will be an eligible man. No. As long as you start from the beginning today because even now, I am not ashamed to say this, no I'm not afraid to say this - that some people are very much educated with a degree, Doctor of Philosophy, Master Degree and so forth, I cannot say I will take back seat from any one of them from my kind of activities, either social activity, political activities, civil activities, all what we can for our people. That is the most important thing. Your desire to help people and your desire to improve and your desire to think what is right and wrong. That's the most important thing.

AA: Is there any person, that sticks in your mind? Was it Mr. Midkiff that was the manager when you first arrived?

RS: Yes.

AA: He was a very well liked man?

RS: Ah, well, when I first arrived, was Mr. Thompson. Everybody said they afraid to visit Thompson because Thompson is a guy that can talk to you straight in the face and well some people were afraid because they thought that he was a man that cannot be listened (reasoned) to but to me when I first meet Mr. Thompson, immediately

I put my point across to him and he accepted it and then not long after that Thompson died and then Mr. Midkiff became the manager. And I believe that Mr. Midkiff, as a man, he is a guy that really trying to put the community together. He was the first man, as a manager to organize the social club of Waialua and I was one of the members. Now to give you the idea about the social club and then the activities of the social club is this: knowing that you have all the different type of a nationalities, so he pick up the cream of every nationalities, every race, racial extraction here. So he pick up about a few Filipinos, he pick up some of the Koreans, pick up some of the haoles, some of the Portuguese and some of the Japanese and we use to meet once a month in his house because we belong to the social club. And that comes about from the product of the social club at his house, the beginning of the Waialua Community Association.

AA: I think this was in 1935?

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 1-70-2-76

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ray Sarmiento (RS)

September 3, 1976

Waialua, Hawaii

BY: Araceli Agoo (AA)

AA: This is the second interview with Mr. Ray T. Sarmiento. Today is September 3rd, 1976, and we are at his house in Waialua. Okay, let's talk first about the canned goods that were available at the stores. 1930, that's when you came to Hawaii, right?

RS: Right.

AA: Around that time, what kind of canned goods did you have?

RS: Well, they were very few. Only sardines. Mostly had sardines and salmon. Those are the canned goods at that time.

AA: The salmons, did they by any chance come from the Philippines?

RS: No. There's no canned goods from the Philippines at that time. None.

AA: So they were Hawaii made?

RS: Well, everything is not Hawaii made either. I think they are all from the Mainland.

AA: Okay. What about corned beef? Libby corn beef. It's been around a long time.

RS: I do not know whether Libby was still there before. I think Libby is not during my time.

AA: You mentioned about iriko the first time.

RS: Iriko, that's very abundant here. Iriko is very common. Some dry fish from Philippines. Those are very common.

AA: Iriko is from the Philippines?

RS: I don't think so. I do not recall. I do not recall where they came from. Iriko, I think, is from Hong Kong, or from Japan. But I know some of the dry fish are from the Philippines.

AA: What kind of dried fishes?

RS: It's a very skimpy kind of a fish. They call 'em daing from Philippines. And also, they got these bilis from Philippines. Those are the dry fish from the Philippines.

AA: What kind of containers were they in?

RS: I think they come in only packages. Only bagoong come containers. They call 'em salted fish. Those are the one come in the container. Five gallon can.

AA: Okay. When you get your food to your house, what kind of containers did you store them in?

RS: There is no container at all. There's no icebox at the time. So in other word, we just buy our things day to day. Except those dry fish, because it will last you (a long time). Iriko, and also some of those dry fish will last you weeks without being demolished or something.

AA: You don't recall a kind of container? Like if you cook something in the morning and you had to keep it overnight?

RS: No. Usually, in those early days, you just cook from day to day. You cook enough for dinner. Enough for lunch. Usually we don't cook lunch, because we cook in the morning. That, we bring lunch to work. That's it, work, work. Then we cook at night. That's enough for us at night. That's what we usually do.

AA: Later on, when you did have to cook for not just, say, the day, then what kind of containers came around? What kind of things that you stored your food in?

RS: Well, before the icebox, we don't have no containers. And usually, covered it with plate or a bowl. Put 'em in a bowl and covered them. Those are not being spoiled, you know. We know of something, for example, now you put adobo. And those are not being spoiled over night. So usually, we put (cook) that. Cover that. Or fry fish. You just put 'em in the bowl and cover. With only the plate. Those are not going to be spoiled over night.

AA: What about the dentist in Waialua? When do you recall the first dentist having his own practice here?

RS: Well, that was the old man Dr. Miyasaka.

AA: And where was his office?

RS: Well, we use to be in Wahiawa, but usually, he come to Waialua. First, I recall him from Kawaihoa. Use to come down there to one barbershop. I believe come there once a week. Very practical thing.

AA: Uh huh. So Dr. Sunahara, you would say, was the first dentist here?

RS: No, that's a very young boy, that.

AA: Oh. So who would be the first dentist here?

RS: That's what I said. Dr. Miyasaka.

AA: Yeah, but you said he was from Wahiawa.

RS: Yeah, Wahiawa. But we don't have no dentist here that time. I think the first dentist who graduated is a local boy, Dr. Kabei died already. He's son of a carpenter. Old man Kabei.

AA: Filipino? Japanese?

RS: No, Japanese. K-A-B-E-I. I think that he was the first dentist from Waialua. That's one local boy from Waialua.

AA: Okay. What about eye doctors? How did you get your eyeglasses?

RS: No. We don't have no eye doctors in those days. And the early days, eye doctors are practically unknown here in Waialua. Practically, everybody go by nature. Even when you are recruited for the plantation, there's no such thing as a general examinations. As long as you can walk. You are able-bodied man. They can see you are not sickly. They will employ you.

AA: Okay. What about after the War? Then, did you have a doctor here? Did you finally go to eye doctors?

RS: Well, yes. Just after the War, they come in. Dr. Pinkerton, I think, those are the good doctors. The old man Pinkerton. There used to be plenty of Honolulu doctor, but there's one now coming in to Waialua, Dr. Pinkerton.

AA: That's the guy that has his office at Wahiawa?

RS: That's the son. The one in Wahiawa, now, his father used to be Dr. Pinkerton.

AA: This guy up in Wahiawa is Ogden Pinkerton.

RS: Yeah. That's the son.

AA: That's the son of the one that used to come here?

RS: Yeah. Yeah.

AA: Oh, well. Okay. What about folk medicine?

RS: How you mean?

AA: I mean like, not real medicine.

RS: What kind medicine? The quack medicine or something?

AA: Yeah. Something like that.

RS: Well, even right now, lot of them practicing all around. They call 'em the kahuna medicine. And then the kahuna medicine is still going all around, because, after all, you cannot take away the belief and also the old habit of any racial group. Either a Chinese, a Filipino, a Japanese, and Hawaiians. They still have that.

AA: In 1930 when you first came here, because you were a Filipino, did you do anything like that? I mean, not just people telling you to do this, but for yourself. Like if you had a headache or something, did you do something that you did in the Philippines that wasn't recognized medically?

RS: No. Because at that time, you don't have no time to go to those doctors because transportation problems. You see. For example now, you know, these quack doctors in Honolulu, yeah. You cannot go find them, because you don't have no transportation. And also, at the same time, they cannot be operating all around because they don't have no transportation around those days. So, is very few. I don't think I ever hear anything of that. Because anything you do today depends on transportation. And on those days, there's no transportation. So they only depend on plantation doctors.

AA: Before the War came, can you tell me what was the general view towards divorced people? Divorced people, non-married people, people who live together before getting married. And interracial marriages? And homosexuality?

RS: Are you asking me that question of a particular ethnic group or in general?

AA: In general.

RS: In general. Okay. Now, in the early days here, there are only very few people here. There's no such things (as divorce etc.) It was the Japanese for the Japanese. The Chinese for Chinese. Hawaiians for the Hawaiians. Americans for the Americans. Filipinos for the Filipinos only at the time. Now, divorces is practically unknown at the time. The reason for that is very few marriage very few people. They are all hardworking people. There's no such thing as too many social activities around and not enough free time. All that they do, especially on a plantation life on those days, are all practically all plantation life. And plantation life is work whole day and sleep. And work whole again the following day. So social life is practically nil. Now, I believe that divorces and other things are caused because of lot of free time. We live in a very permissive society. They have enough social activities and so forth. And those causes some of those changing of moral obligation to each other.

AA: Uh huh. So before the War, then, everything was Church...

RS: Yeah. Yes.

AA: ...you didn't have that kind of problems? But you also mentioned that in Kawaiiloa there was a eighty percent men to twenty percent ladies.

RS: Well, yes. Practically like that.

AA: Did any problems arise because of this?

RS: Well, I don't think the problem is not more than today. I think we have more problems now about woman than in nearly days before, in spite of the fact that we have very few women. We have more problems now than before, average. Now, more people divorcing their wives and go with another woman than before. Of course, you cannot eliminate that, because after all, they're all human beings. But when you look at the average, I think we have more social problems, marital problems now than before.

AA: With eighty percent men and twenty percent ladies, was it unusual to find men getting close to another man?

RS: No. Because, you see, all depends on the kind of a man. As I said those people who came down here, especially Filipinos, they are tempered into some sort of a dedicated man to himself and to his family in the Philippines. Now, the same thing with women in the Philippines. They never spoil their reputation as a woman that is sacred to a husband.

AA: Yeah. Well, in case you weren't married?

RS: Even then. But some occasion on those days, some prostitutes going around. In Honolulu, it's open and so forth. Well, that's not very unusual to human being. But so far as a social conduct is concerned we have more now than before.

AA: We have more now?

RS: Oh yes!

AA: I've heard of men, not only Filipinos, but almost every race that didn't have that much ladies with them. I've heard of men that had tensions, you know, with problems like that.

RS: Oh yeah. Even right now, you look at those people now raping women. Now you look at their background. They're married. You see. They're married. So that's not unusual. Especially that depends now on the society where they are in. As I said, especially in America today--Hawaii no exception--we are in America, we are now in such a very permissive society. And we have a lot of activities and....social things that generates the ego of a man, especially in his social instinct.

AA: The kind of suits that you have in 1930, before the War, how did you get your suits? Your "americana?"

RS: Well, on those days, Filipinos were very sporty.

AA: Right. (Laughs)

RS: Yeah. And we had lot of tailors all around. And that's a must. Tailors all around in the area, yeah. As a matter of fact, every Saturday or Sunday when there's no work, they come around and solicit business for tailoring.

AA: How much did an average suit cost?

RS: Oh, that's very cheap in those days. In those days, good suit is about \$15.

AA: Yeah, but say you earned like how much a month? Roughly how much a month?

RS: Well, in those days, if you have a good job, for example, a cane cutters. On the average, about fifty dollars a month.

AA: Fifty dollars. And so it wasn't that hard to buy a suit then?

RS: Oh no. Because what is \$15, especially in down payment? 'As just like now. For example now, you earn about seven or eight hundred dollars a month. But now you're going to buy your seven thousand dollar automobile. Same thing.

AA: What about shoes? Where did you guys get your shoes?

RS: Oh, shoes. In the store. We got lot of shoes in the stores. That time.

AA: Oh, can you tell me where the material came from to make the suits?

RS: Well, materials are all from State.

AA: From the States?

RS: Yeah.

AA: Okay. You mentioned that Filipinos were very sporty.

RS: That's right.

AA: Is that part of our nature? In your experience?

RS: Well, see if Filipinos have the means, you will never see them sloppy. Now, by nature all over the world, internationally the Filipinos are one of the best dressed people in the world. When they came to Hawaii, they came to Hawaii, they have that habit.

AA: Uh huh. Like the few ladies that did come to Hawaii, did they show a lot of jewelry?

RS: Yes. See, Filipinos are very jewelry loving people, very colorful people. They are very dressy, especially the woman. On those early days, all the Filipino women used to have gowns. As a matter of fact, during the Filipino activities, we have more Filipinos wearing the Filipino gown than now.

AA: The gowns, did the ladies bring them from the Philippines?

RS: That's right. They call 'em the terna. They have more terna on those days, because even old ladies, everybody, when they have a Filipino activities, they use to wear those ternas.

AA: Did you say you were a camp boss or a camp police?

RS: Yeah, camp boss they call that.

AA: Uh huh. Can you compare the job of a camp boss to that of a camp police?

RS: Now, there's a difference between camp boss and camp police. A camp police is, for example, now, working under the camp boss. The camp police is just like a security guard, watchman all around. But the camp boss oversees the whole activities in the camp and plantation. Now, he's just like a social worker and at the same time, a peace officer. Now, for instance, he is a social worker because that is when he goes around and see who is sick, and try to provide the transportation to the hospital and see to it that they will be properly taken care of. If they have some social problems, then you must see to it that you try to help them out. Now if they have needs in their houses, you have to see to it that they will be solved. For example, now, they have broken pipe. They have no lights in the houses. Anything of that sort. That is the camp boss.

AA: What kind of social problems were you referring to?

RS: Well, for example the wife has a fight with the husband. Is not very unusual now a days. Before, the camp boss is the one that in charge of all those things. Now, for example, there's some intruder in the house. That's also the camp boss problem. Also, if a person is very sick and he cannot provide the home with food and so on. Those are the social problems that occur. And especially when the husband is so lazy, that create a social problem. Lazy and don't work. And another social problems that we have is for example, the husband is a gambler or drunkard. Those are social problem. That is the camp boss job to see to it that all will be adjusted. And if they need help, then, that's where you come in. To give them help. Because after all, in those days, it is not like now. In those days, laborers on the plantation are just like your children. Family of the company. Because when you recruited them from Philippines, you promised that you will provide them a house. You provide them free fuel and what they need in the house. Those are the things that are entirely different from now. Right now, when you go to your house, it's up to you to provide yourself in everything.

In those days, we have some store boys, store clerks, that we send all around in the camp to see that these people, if they need something, they are provided for. Transportation, again, is a problem. Because not like now. Before we used to have camps all over the plantation. Way up the cane field, there use to be maybe about twenty houses. And those people are raising sugar cane.

AA: As a camp police, did you have to have any kind of training? Did you carry a gun as a camp police?

RS: No, camp boss carry the gun. Some camp police carry gun for security.

AA: How did you learn how to fire a gun?

RS: Well, anybody buy gun now without even practicing. By instinct. But that is up to you as an individuals. Like me, anything that I do, anything that I have, I like to practice. So, I used to go and target practice. And I become very expert. I used to practice, not bragging, with a .45 pistol. I can hit a match box at 25 yard.

AA: Do you also know martial arts?

RS: Yes.

AA: Which one do you know?

RS: I went to judo, jujitsu. Boxing. And also escrima. Fencing. Filipino fencing.

AA: This escrima did you learn that here?

RS: From the Philippines and here.

AA: Okay. You said you were commissioned as a police officer.

RS: 'As right.

AA: And you were the only one that wasn't a U.S. citizen.

RS: Yeah.

AA: How was that?

RS: I don't know. I was given a very special permission. Because anybody else to be commissioned on the police, special police at that time, you have to be American citizen. But, well, I don't know, those days, maybe some of the big company, they can pull string. And then I was commissioned.

AA: Can you tell me in what year or how many years after you came to Hawaii did you become part of the management?

RS: Two years. Not part of management, but in the supervisory capacity.

AA: Right. Okay, you arrived in the middle of the Depression in Hawaii?

RS: Yes.

AA: Can you tell me about that?

RS: Well, in Hawaii, the Depression is not as bad as the United States. Because very luckily in Hawaii, we have the sugar company and pineapples that absorb and act as a cushion for the so-called Depression. Now, of course, when the pineapple went out of business, then we had a lot of surplus people, but then the surplus people were absorbed by some of the sugar companies. Just like Waialua, for example, we have absorbed lot of them because Waialua need some workers. So, we have some special camp for them like in Halemano 6. That's where we have shove lot of this surpluses from other companies. And also, those who lose their jobs, they came down here into Waialua.

AA: There are a lot of Filipino people on the Mainland that were once in Hawaii. Was it during the Depression that they moved up there?

RS: No. Well, you see, those people who move from Hawaii to the Mainland that is by true natural movements of people. Not only the Filipinos. The Japanese. Even the well-to-do Japanese. They go there. And just like also the Americans from the Mainland, they come down to Hawaii. So those are very natural things. Not unusual situation.

AA: So you say then that the people that didn't have jobs were absorbed by the plantation or by the pineapple? Either way?

RS: No. The pineapple went out of business. And then, many of them, I say many of them were absorbed by the company. I say some pineapples. And especially, the Dole Company, you know.

AA: Do you recall any strikes during 1930's and 1935?

RS: No. I think '30 and '35, there's no strike. Is just only wild strike. You know, meaning there's no such thing as an organized strike. They call that the wild walk-out so to speak. That not strike.

AA: There were some walk-outs, then?

RS: Yeah. Some in Maui. Some here in Waialua. Some, some other places.

AA: In Waialua, can you tell me about those?

RS: Walk-out?

AA: Yeah.

RS: Well, there are some few here in Waialua.

AA: Did the plantation have vegetable crops to keep the people fed?

RS: No. No. On the plantation on those days, they are not so progressive as it is now. The people before, on those days, they don't have no orchids, anthurium and so forth in the yard at the time. Because, well,

it stands to reason. Because, as I said again, it is strictly a plantation home. And at that time, all people who came down here, including the Japanese, Filipinos as well, they think that they are only living here for temporary period, because they were under contract of three years. So, thinking that after the three years they go home, what they do is concentrate on working.

AA: What about mechanization of the mills and of the entire sugar industry?

RS: Well, that mechanization came out within the national in scope by itself. Because in this area, in this country and every modern country today they cannot stand still. They always look for progress, right? Now, when you say progress, that means in technology. So, we are sending people to go school to learn all those things. So, whatever they learn, they would like to apply. Now when they come out to apply, then naturally, every sugar company or any company like to try those because after all, every company today or any business, they are there for profit. So they try those machines and if they can cut cost and make the job easier for the human being, they put up those machine on trial basis. Just like anything else. You go on trial basis. And when we find that it's very beneficial for you, very profitable for your business, then, that's what start mechanization.

AA: When you came to work for the plantation in 1930, did you already have any machinery on the fields or at the mill?

RS: No. On those days, they had the only machinery of plowing. Sometimes we use mules to plow. Grader mule. To make reservoirs. Now they are making with tractors and machines. In those days, mule. Yeah, you cultivate your sugar cane. You plow between the lines. Now they have tractor. In those days, all mules. Now, cutting cane is now machine. In those days, by hand. And after you cut, you load. Now machine. Before was with the body.

AA: When do you recall this machine that could cut cane?

RS: Machine? There's no machine cutting cane at that time. First, the man cut. And then we have the machine. Then we have the pile with man and then the machine lift up to the car. And that's the start of the machinery. Then from there, they keep on improving and improving until it is today.

AA: Okay, what do you recall about the perquisite system?

RS: Perquisite system? Well, that came in gradually. Gradually. Well, at the same time, it started already when they recruited the labor. Now part of the contract is perquisite. Meaning they will give you free medical things. They give you free light, free water, and free fuel. If you have stove, they give you kerosene. If you don't have stove, they give you firewood to use. Those are part of the perquisite.

AA: And those were the things that were promised to you when you signed your contract to work for your three years?

RS: That's right.

AA: Okay. Was this one of the reasons why people came to work for the plantation?

RS: It's not only the reason. Perquisite or no perquisite, at that time, people were looking for employment. But so far as the people are concerned, they are very innocent about those perquisite.

AA: Innocent?

RS: Very innocent. Even now, lot of these people, they don't know what they're having.

AA: They're just happy that they're having it.

RS: Yeah. Even the plantation laborers, even now, this time, even supervisors, they don't know what perquisites are given to them. As a matter of fact, even the ordinary citizen even they don't know what the government can do for them. Is not that something?

AA: Yeah. I'm one of those. What did it feel like to work under white people?

RS: What you mean?

AA: Your haole bosses. I hear they were mean people. They kicked you around. And they treated you like animals.

RS: Well, I think that's not true. I think that's not true.

AA: Before the War, it wasn't true?

RS: No! You see now, it's not the white people. Now, naturally, some people who were here before have been promoted over night. (Those) born and raised here like these Portuguese and so forth. Even Filipinos went up over night. Even now. So it's not different. I feel there's no difference. Some, yeah, they treat not like human being. But I don't think that's a good way of saying that the white people are not treating the labors alike. Because to me, I found lot of them, I work with them from the beginning. And I think I was not treated that way. For example now, I saw some laborers, they were sent home from work. Sometime they give 'em hell from work. But I don't think that's a habit a white man. But a habit of one particular guy. But in time, during the years to come, those are being punished.

AA: How were they punished?

RS: Well, they were demoted from the job. They were not being promoted. They are as they are. As a matter of fact, some of them were being taken out from the job.

AA: But there was also some ethnic groups that were getting paid more

money than another ethnic group when they were doing the same thing.

RS: All right.

AA: Can you explain that?

RS: That is not very unusual. Because as a matter of fact, I've been teaching lot of these haoles under me at the time. And then after six months, they are my boss. Those are not very unusual in the early days. Because, as I said again, we are very new here. Company is not well organized. So, everybody for himself. And when you are very arrogant and you are in a position to do what you want. So those are not very unusual in a group of human beings. Look at this governor today. Look at the religious leaders today. Since they are now in their post, now they increase all their salaries. People are very arrogant, just like before. And also now.

AA: But it would seem that it's more than just one person for himself, because it was only the haoles that were getting...

RS: Because they are in the position.

AA: In what position?

RS: Well, they are in the supervisory position at that time.

AA: Because they were white?

RS: No. Well, first of all, in the supervisory position before, they are not only white. As a matter of fact, in the early '30's, in Waialua Sugar Company, I just give you example. We have more Filipinos in supervisory capacity than now.

AA: In the 1930's?

RS: Yes. We had more Filipino supervisors before than now.

AA: Really?

RS: Yes. I even came out in my column. (Editorials he wrote for the Star Bulletin.)

AA: I didn't know that.

RS: Yeah. And yet, that's why I was surprised why is it that in the early '30's, before 1946....now we supposed to be the least educated people, Filipinos. But in the plantation, we have more supervisors. All Filipinos. Then now that we have now all the educated Filipinos, and yet we have less in the supervisory capacity than before.

AA: Do you remember any of these people in the supervisory....

RS: Oh sure.

AA: Names?

RS: I name them. Alright. Roberto Pagdilao in Kawailoa. In Kawailoa, we have Felipe Suan, yeah. And myself before. Alright, then, in Waialua, we have Roberto Pagdilao. We have another Cecilio Pagdilao. We have this guy they call Adong now inside there. And we have Merikita, a water luna. Now, how many supervisors? There's more. And yet, in those days, we are supposed to be the uneducated Filipinos. We have Frank Gueco. All those guys.

AA: What column are you talking about?

RS: I put that in the column that right now in sugar company, 65 percent are Filipinos. 65 percent of the employee at the sugar company today are Filipinos. And 35 percent, all the other nationalities compose into haoles, Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans, what not. All that nationalities. And yet, this 35 percent holds 75 percent of those good job on the plantation. And the Filipinos who comprise the 65 percent of the plantation employee hold only about 25 percent of the good jobs. Came out in my column.

AA: Yeah, what column?

RS: In the newspaper.

AA: Okay. Can you tell me about the stores in Waialua? The plantation stores? Not just in Waialua.

RS: Yeah. Every sugar company, every companies before, that's one of things that they control. Not only Waialua. They control the big businesses here. It came out again in my column. To answer you briefly on that, the sugar company in Waialua and all the rest of the companies, they own all these stores, because mostly the laborers, mostly people in the community are all plantation workers anyway. So they own all their stores. And that stores supply the needs of all the people. And they trust them. They give them the credit.

AA: The credit rule, what did you call it?

RS: Jabon. In Japanese.

AA: That's Japanese?

RS: Japanese. They call 'em jabon.

AA: You sure it's Japanese?

RS: Yeah.

AA: People say it's Ilocano, too.

RS: No. Jabon. That is very common today. Yeah, because the Japanese

started that. And that came in as a part of their national language, that jabon. When you jabon, that means credit.

AA: Credit? Yeah. So you bought at the store on credit and you paid every payday?

RS: Every payday.

AA: What happened to those people that couldn't pay for their credit?

RS: At that time, there was no garnishee. I mean the creditor didn't force them.

AA: Oh, they don't force you to pay.

RS: Yeah. I mean they try to manage some way. No try to make you pay. Just like even now, lot of these people maybe owe over fifty or hundred dollars. But like now, lot of people, they owe twenty thousand dollars, hundred thousand dollars.

AA: The safety programs that they made supervisors attend, they did that, right? You know, learn first aid?

RS: Oh, that's only after the War.

AA: Okay. What about the jobs that you have had to do? If the company gave you a new job, did you go to apprentice school for that?

RS: On those days, no more. But now, after the War, because of this modern organization now, modern facilities and modern way of running a business, well, you have to be properly oriented on the job.

AA: So now they send you to school? They pay for it, right?

RS: Well, some, yes.

AA: At the end of the harvest season, did you usually have a barbecue?

RS: Well, on those days, it's not a barbecue. If I will call it in my way of thinking, they call 'em the appreciation dinner. I think I put it that way.

AA: And where were they at?

RS: They used to have in the park. In the park right there by the sugar mill. You are talking about Waialua Sugar Company?

AA: Uh huh.

RS: Yeah. They used to have that.

AA: What is the official name of that park?

RS: Waialua Park.

AA: Was it at one time a golf course?

RS: Tennis court. There's no golf course there.

AA: You're talking about the one that's right in the middle of the service station and the mill.

RS: Mhm.

AA: They used to have tennis courts there?

RS: Tennis court and they have a wee golf.

AA: Wee golf? Okay. You had games, too, at these...

RS: But that didn't last, because wee golf is only those haoles and so forth.

AA: Okay. A lot of the laborers must have had complaints against the way they were being treated by the lunas and they had complaints about the work conditions and things like that. How did the supervisory and the management cope with that?

RS: Well, on those days, as I said, we don't have no organized labor. And the plantation is not so modern. If it's just some complaint, the people just go to work, work everyday. There's no organized complaint at the time. If some people are being mistreated, as long as it's not that drastic, it's nothing.

AA: It's nothing?

RS: Just like is scolded in the field and so forth.

END OF SIDE ONE.

SIDE TWO.

AA: The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor? Where you about this time?

RS: Oh, that's not a very nice thing. That's the very day that I did not open my radio. And then all on a sudden, about 7 o'clock daytime, somebody came by my house, because I used to be a camp boss then. I say, "What you doing?" He's giving me scolding already. He's shouting. One American. "What are you doing here?" he said. "We are being attacked by Japanese! Pearl Harbor was bombed!" So, immediately I open my radio that time. Very unusual I did not open my radio. I usually open the radio in the morning. So after I open my radio, then, sure enough, we are under attack. So immediately, I loaded my gun. Then went out and patrol.

AA: And patrol? Did you have to build an air raid shelter?

RS: Well, afterward, yes. Everybody had to build an air raid shelter. Afterward.

AA: Did you supply this air raid shelter with food?

RS: At that time, as camp boss, I go down and give them supervision. The first night, I was already attached with the 21st Infantry as a guide. Because these people (infantry men) about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, they start arriving. And then we open the gym for them, the Kawaiiloa Gymnasium. We have a Kawaiiloa Gymnasium. Open that for them to sleep. And immediately at that night, they put up some guards here and there. And that night, I was attached to them because they don't know where they are going. Yeah. I was attach with them for, say, about one month.

AA: Okay. What about the blackouts? Can you tell me about the blackouts?

RS: Well, sure. The blackout is compulsory. It was my job to see to it that every plantation homes are being blackout. Lot of these Filipinos, they do not know what you mean by blackout. Some of them, they don't use blackout. But make sure that by 6 o'clock they shut their light. They have to eat by 6 o'clock and so forth.

AA: Mhm. The presence of the 21st Infantry at the Kawaiiloa Gym, did that scare the Filipinos that didn't know what was going on?

RS: What you mean?

AA: The 21st Infantry that you were a guide for? They lived at the gym at Kawaiiloa. The Filipinos people, you said, like they don't really know what's happening. Did it...

RS: No, no. What I mean, they know what's happening, but I mean, to guide them especially about the blackout. Give them a proper orientation so that they don't violate the law. Not only the plantation but everybody. So, about 6 o'clock in the afternoon, me and the guard, we go all around the camp to see to it that everybody....

AA: Is asleep?

RS: Yeah.

AA: Okay. So, because you were a camp boss, you didn't have gas rationed to you?

RS: Yes (no rationing).

AA: What about food?

RS: No.

AA: But the ordinary working person did?

RS: No, we don't have no ration. But, of course, at that time, we have

shortage of rice. 'As just like anything else. Yeah, shortage of rice, because during the War, well, it's very hard for the boat to come in at the time. They are being restricted. So there is a shortage of rice for about the first two weeks. Because lot of these people hoard rice. Just like right now.

AA: Okay, now, let's talk about the martial law in Hawaii. What were its effects on you?

RS: Well, the martial law in Hawaii is very insignificant so far as we are concern, because there was no change at all. The behavior and habits is no change. The governor was in his office. The ordinary people do not really feel it. They do not know whether martial law or no martial law, because so far as the activities and the way they treat men and so forth, there's no change. Only one thing is the martial law is only you give the Army in this area a free hand to supervise the affairs of the government. But so far as the general public is concerned, especially in the plantation life, there was no change.

AA: No change? Okay, of the young people, the young Filipino people in Waialua and of all the young Filipino people, did a lot of them join the Army?

RS: Well, at that time we don't have very many young people. We don't have very many at the time. Only mostly laborers who don't have no wife and no children.

AA: Okay, these unmarried laborers, they joined the Army?

RS: Some, yes. As a matter of fact, I was supposed to be drafted to be an officer. A field officer. But because of my job it was frozen. And then at that time, then they froze the job because lot of them went into the Army. Then they froze the job for the plantation laborers. Many of them like to join the Army. Even the plantation laborers. They froze, because they said that the sugar worker is a war worker. So, you can win the War just as good as a member of the armed forces by staying in the plantation.

AA: There were some Japanese men, that although they were part of the sugar industry, they were allowed to go to join the war, because the manager allowed them.

RS: No. That is some mutual understanding because the United States government lost faith on the Japanese at that time because of the Japanese attacked. So I think that there is some sort of an understanding between the community, the sugar company and the government. Because the government is bigger than sugar company. So, they volunteered themselves to prove to this country that they are not part of the attack.

AA: Okay. When did you first hear of the union?

RS: That was after the War.

AA: How did you hear about it?

RS: Well, it's not very unusual. As a matter of fact, it started before the War. Way back in 1932, '33, '34. It started from Maui. And that's run by Filipinos that time. Then after the War, it was capitalized by people from the Mainland--Bridges and his group. So, they penetrated Hawaii and that's how they started the union. Because after all, that's a very good business. Because the more union members they have, the more money they make.

AA: Okay. Already at this time when the union was coming, when the union was penetrating Hawaii, as you say, you were already part of the supervisory group?

RS: Yes, yes. I was.

AA: Okay. So you really didn't care for it to come?

RS: What do you mean "to come?"

AA: You didn't want it to come because it wasn't of any use to you any more.

RS: Oh no, no, no! I'm the most liberal man. After all, when you believe in the democratic society, I said, you have your individual rights. They come to the union. It's a privilege, the freedom of enterprise, freedom of wants, freedom of religions.

AA: Okay. Did you want to join the union?

RS: You cannot join the union because I am in the supervisory capacity.

AA: Right. But if you were a laborer, would you have...

RS: Oh, sure! Why not?

AA: You thought it was a good thing?

RS: Oh, sure.

AA: Okay. Although you like the idea of the union, because you were of the supervisory group, you couldn't do anything to help organize it, right?

RS: No. Because, as I say again, that's not in your line. If you are a base baseball player and that's another football player, well, they play football and you play baseball.

AA: Okay. Waialua was the last of the plantations to sign up with the union?

RS: I do not know whether it's the last or not.

AA: Well, we weren't the first. That's for sure.

RS: Yeah, yeah.

AA: You have no idea that we were one of the last?

RS: I think was the last. Or one of the last.

AA: Okay. Why do you think we were one of the last?

RS: Because of the negotiation of wages. Waialua is paying more wages than anybody else. So, naturally, they not touch this one first.

AA: Oh. In 1946 do you remember a strike?

RS: Yes.

AA: Okay, can you tell me about that strike?

RS: Well, that's the first of its kind, a strike. So, everybody all trigger happy. For union, that's the first time that the laborers were given that kind of a power. And they were oriented to hit the plantation. The union was oriented to hit every plantation management, every member of the plantation management. So, that's that first power they have had, so it's kind of a little hot issue that time. Just like they are trigger happy.

AA: Trigger happy. When were you able to buy your house?

RS: I think that was in 1957.

AA: Your house was built in 1957?

RS: Yeah.

AA: How much did it cost you then?

RS: It's very cheap at that time.

AA: The Philippine Independence, when you heard about in Hawaii, what did it mean to you?

RS: Well, as I said again, at that time when they have a Philippine Independence, well, I said, that's a country for themselves, so I believe on the freedom of other countries. I do not believe in butting in on somebody's affair. Especially other country. Now, if that's what they feel is good for them, I guess that's good for me.

AA: Okay. In 1948, do you recall the sugar company dividing?

RS: Not dividing.

AA: What was it then?

RS: No. The sugar company is not dividing. As I say again, when you come to the modern organization such as this especially your knowledge of business come more adequate, so to speak. Because in running a

business, there are lot of ways of doing it to make more profit or to show the real asset with the company. At that time, the real asset of the company is not as strong as it is now. Because the sugar company owns lot of land here, and they also own lot of pineapple land. At that time, they profit from the land that they own here and the profit what they have from the pineapples company. It is already included with the profit of the sugar because that's owned by the company. So, then they remove all the equities. So they develop. They organize a company by itself. They call 'em the Halemano Land Company. So Halemano Land Company, the investment that they have, sugar company investment on the land and pineapples, yeah, that's become the Halemano Land Company. So it's a company by itself. So now the investment is sugar company. So what you earn from sugar that you earn from sugar, that's what is shows the real asset of the company.

AA: In 1949 there was a shipping strike, remember? How did that affect Waialua?

RS: Well, it's not very much.

AA: What about the fertilizers that couldn't get in?

RS: What you mean? Fertilizers?

AA: Yeah.

RS: Oh no, that's not very much. Even you don't fertilize your sugar cane for one year, still you have sugar cane. Because by nature, the sugar cane is just like a grass. As long as you put water.

AA: It is grass.

RS: So just as long as it has water. Of course, it affected lot of things, but not very much.

AA: Okay. The retirement plan. When did it become known to you that you could have a retirement plan?

RS: Well, I think retirement plan, I think they started that way back in 1936. Something like that.

AA: Uh huh. And what were the basis for this retirement plan?

RS: Well, at that time, I think they base first on the social security. Yeah. And they don't have no progressive retirement plan as it's now, because retirement plan is negotiable thing. So at that time, since they don't have no well organized group to negotiate with them, they only defend that on the social security.

AA: Okay. When did you acquire your social security number?

RS: I think that was '37. Because my job at that time was a very controversial thing. Because at that time, the employee, they put in agriculture---whether I belong to the agricultural things or the non-agricultural things. That's why they do not know whether I belong one side or belong the other side. Because since I am a camp boss, I am not in agriculture. I'm not involved in the field.

AA: What kind of improvements in the plantation were you involved in?

RS: What you mean "improvement?"

AA: Improvements like...

RS: Well, first, as I believe the best improvement that I can recall in plantation is the social and the recreational facilities. That, I have a part in. And which is still next to my heart. Social and recreational facilities. And even till now.

AA: You're talking about the surf center and the gym?

RS: Oh, yes, yes. But before we used to have the gym, a swimming pool, and we have, as a matter of fact, I even volunteered to use two mules to make some basketball court and volleyball court for the people in those days.

AA: Mules?

RS: Yeah. To grade.

AA: Yeah, this is before the War? You're talking before the War?

RS: Yeah. Before the War. Well we talking about improvement, eh, on the plantation?

AA: Yeah. What others do you recall?

RS: Well, of course, your industrial improvement. There's lot of them. But when talking about improvement of social life of laborers, those are things I'm telling I have some part to that about the social and also the recreational facilities. And, of course, the recognition of some of the abilities of Filipinos, so on. Then after the War, since way back in 1946 and so forth, then the plantation and the county now start coming in and penetrate in the community. That's why all the recreational facilities today are being provided by the City and County, the government. Not on those days, before the War. And before the War, we created this Oahu Athletic Association (Same as OPAA).

AA: Oh! When the union came, what happened to your sport groups? Did you still retain them?

RS: On those days, after the union came, as I said, the leaders, they become arrogant. And they thought that nobody should manage the baseball team or basketball team except the union people. As I said, I was not in the union, so I just relinquish that, and that's the end also. They're all dead. That's the end of the basketball team. That's the end of organized program for Filipinos in the whole state of Hawaii.

AA: What can you tell me about Harry Bridges and this guy named Hall?

- RS: There's nothing derogatory against them, but by golly, they did a wonderful job to enrich themselves when they organize the union. Because after all, when you organize a union, it's a business. It's a business by itself. And when they were able to organize a union in the sugar, that means more million in their pocket. And in order to protect yourself and protect your union, you have to be very blunt. I mean, a militant leader. You have to produce a very militant leadership. And the union is always that way. Because unless you put some sort of a militant way of leadership, then the union is very weak.
- AA: Did you agree with the name calling that they were communist and they were trying to overthrow the U.S. government?
- RS: Well, see, they all agree that they are communist. And the only way you can organize a union, you have to have the technique, communist technique to hit somebody.
- AA: So they did say that they were communist?
- RS: Oh yes. Some of them, yes. And then all of them. But, I say, it has been proven by the court.
- AA: That they are communists?
- RS: Yes. Now, even though if they say "communist", but all the leaning and all their activities all in the communist way. Just like for example, now, oh, I'm not a basketball player. But, my gosh, they are throwing basketball all the time. That's what they do. And that's the only way to organize a union. You cannot organize a union unless you have some sort of a avenue of approach. And your only approach is militant in the union way. I mean in the communistic way. You hit that guy, you hit that guy. No more such thing as friendliness.
- AA: Uh huh. So, really, if you weren't part of the supervisor, you would really be someone that was agreeable with everything that the union said?
- RS: What you mean? I'm not agreeable?
- AA: No, it seems like you would endorse the union. You would like what the union is doing. So if you were an ordinary...
- RS: As I said, I agree that it must be done. The laborers must be represented in a better way. They need help to be organized. Because, as a matter of fact, I spoke to the plantation that why should you allow strike? Now, if there is something you know you cannot give it, well, don't give it even they strike for one year. But if they strike and then you give afterward, that is silly. Now, why don't you sit down at negotiation table, I tell them. Now if you say, "This is all what we can give." And you are sure that that's all what you can give. But after you promise them, "Yeah, all I can afford is 25¢," then after they strike and then you give them 30¢, no make sense. I told them.
- AA: You told who?

RS: I told the plantation. Negotiate now. I said, "Why should you allow them to strike?" But, if you think that only 25¢ that you can afford and honest in your heart and that's all what you can afford, even they strike for hundred years, you don't give it. You have to work with your principle.

AA: Okay. In 1952, do you remember a walk-out?

RS: Yeah.

AA: Can you tell me what the case was then?

RS: I cannot recall that very much. You know strike is some sort of a strategy. You know in this kind of a world now, you have to be very careful because sometimes you got to put a strike for the benefit of the company or for benefit of both. To straighten up the thing.

AA: Yeah. The 1952 strike, was it all ethnic groups or just Filipinos?

RS: No, everybody.

AA: Okay. When did you first start to vote in Hawaii?

RS: 1954.

AA: '54. That was their first time that you guys could vote in Hawaii?

RS: No, some Filipinos. But that's first time I was voting. And I was very strong in politics also.

AA: Okay. What party are you with?

RS: Republican.

AA: Okay. Do you remember a Senator Eastland?

RS: Eastland, yes. From Mainland.

AA: What was he about?

RS: Well, I do not recall exactly.

AA: Another time in 1958, there was another strike. Do you recall what the issues were?

RS: No, I do not recall that period.

AA: You don't recall a strike in '58 at all?

RS: No, I know. A strike, as I said again, is just like a very routine thing. But as I said again, that strike was very short. 'As only to straighten up the union side. So it's not very damaging in a way. They know that

they can compromise at the last. You know, some, these union leaders, it is just to give them the idea that they won, yeah, or something, so they just strike for little things. As I told you, that is very hard to understand now, because sometimes, they say they hate one another but in one corner they have been eating.

AA: They were eating?

RS: Yeah, eating there. And they have been socializing themselves. The big boss of the plantation and the union guys in the back. Yeah. They shaking hands there. They drinking beers. They drink whiskey there.

AA: Okay. What have you to say about the statehood of Hawaii? Nothing?

RS: No. I think statehood is one of the good blessing for Hawaii.

AA: Okay.

RS: Yeah. That's a good blessing for Hawaii. Because, as I said again, on the early days, you cannot blame the Big Five. It's controlled by the Big Five so to speak, because those are the people first at the time to start the business here. And then we cannot blame them. But I think we have to give them a good blessing also. Because without them, Hawaii is still a jungle, right. And yet, just like natural things. Jealousies come in even to the best of the family. Yeah. Some jealousies. And jealousies come in and so forth. And so, they were gradually adjusting in accordance with the progress of the country.

AA: Did the closing of the Ewa mill or the Kahuku mill, did they affect you? What are your feelings about the closing of the Ewa and the Kahuku mill?

RS: Oh, that's very natural in business. You see, in business you are here to make money. Now, you have no business opening your business or continuing your business if you don't make money. Because you have an obligation to your stockholders. But anyway, by closing all those things, all that's for the benefit of the stockholders. Because if you have money there, you don't allow yourself or so to continue without making money.

AA: Well, in the case of Waialua, where do you think the future of sugar is in Waialua?

RS: Now, so far as the sugar of Waialua, this is my prediction: Hawaii is very small. All right. Now, the future, about twenty years from today, I have little doubt whether we can find the sugar industry in the whole state of Hawaii. Now, in Waialua, I just give you an example. When you go in business, you are here to make money. All right. Now, Waialua Sugar Company, I have a very big doubt. I give my reasoning before that is the part of the Castle and Cooke business. In 1946, way back in 1950, I'll go beyond that, that was twenty years ago. 80 percent of the business of the Castle and Cooke are all in Hawaii. 80 percent. Now, all in Hawaii in sugar, pineapple, and some sort of

that. Today, 80 percent of their business are outside of Hawaii. Only 20 percent now here in Hawaii. Now, that stand to reason now, that if this 20 percent is dragging them out of the income, now who's going to stop them to transfer? To sell this out and put their capital outside?

AA: Okay. But what happens to the people that work?

RS: For example now, you are removing the Army from Schofield. Okay? Now you say what happened with the people that working in there? They moving out. So gradually, there will be a transitional period. Just like in Kohala. Just like in Kahuku. All right, just like in Ewa. Ewa. Ewa has been absorbed by somebody else. Kohala. And lot of Waikea. Not all sugar plantations already moved out. So, now, this one now here, through the period of transitional period. Now just give you an idea. Waialua Sugar Company used to have two thousand employees. Now you have only about five, four hundred something. You see. What happened with those thousand five hundred? They someplace else.

AA: They're on welfare. (Chuckles.)

RS: No. They are someplace else.

AA: How many years has the plantation been here? About a hundred.....

RS: No, just a hundred and twenty-six. Because they organize in 1880 or something.

AA: There are a lot of people here that arrived in 1930's, 1920's that helped to make the plantation what it is today. I mean, it's the number one in Hawaii. You could almost say that. Don't you think that people have a voice in the plantation? Their life depends on it if you say, for instance, in the next twenty years they're (plantation) not going to be here anymore.

RS: Well, those people who are working now, average plantation workers who are working now, twenty years from today, they are no longer here. They're all under social security.

AA: Their sons? Their families will be here.

RS: Sons, some families are not employed here.

AA: Most of them are.

RS: No. You look at those people now today. All right. For example, now, you look at the Baysa family, right. I give you an average. Baysa family. How many employed by the plantation? Only one.

AA: Their father?

RS: Retired.

AA: Retired? No one's employed then.

RS: Only their son, one son. Baysa. Danny. In the office. Now. Okay. I just give you another instance. Now, I give you another family. The Baitlon, those old timer here. Baitlon family. Where are the son? No more.

AA: How many sons did Mr. Baitlon have?

RS: They got three in the family. Two sons and one girl. The old-timers. Now, we just mention old timers. For example, in Kawaihoa, Albios, the oldest family. Only one son work in the plantation. Bobby. All the family, they all off.

AA: Okay. But say, for instance, you did have a son. What if you had kids that weren't able to go to school and they are still working here?

RS: You see, if everybody have a son---for example now, an average boy today now is about 45 years old. Twenty years from today, 65. Retired.

AA: Yeah, but, you see, the ordinary laborers, some of them are college grads.

RS: That's right. College grads. Okay. That's why I said in everybody, they have their own free will of going where they like to go. Right? Now, as a matter of fact, these people in this plantation now is too small. Compared now to the all businesses of the whole State of Hawaii. Now, if this area here, because just only the underdevelop area now, from Sunset Beach up to Kaena Point, that's the only stagnant place now. Is very dormant. But the moment they start developing this, all the plantation employees not enough to be employed in this area.

AA: You mean you'll need more people to come out?

RS: Lot of people come in.

AA: Okay, but once you start developing an area like this, won't that create problems for the whole area?

RS: No, no.

AA: They're going to have to build bigger roads. And we'll turn into a Waikiki.

RS: All right.

AA: Isn't that a problem for you?

RS: Well, no. Is no problem. Because you cannot stop progress. That, I believe. You cannot stop progress. You like it or not, you have to build up roads. You cannot stop Waialua to be by jungle isolated one corner. Cannot. Because very soon, they're going to open that through the other side. Kaena Point. No, you cannot stop.

AA: Are you all for progress in Waialua-Haleiwa then? You don't want to stop it at all?

RS: No. As long as it is a very natural progress. Natural progress meaning that as the progress the whole area is combined into one. Not one isolated thing here, one isolated thing. I do not stop progress.

AA: Okay. Where do you think tourism is headed in Hawaii?

RS: Now, if you are a tourist, you ask this way. If you are a tourist, well, the first thing you want to look...

AA: Waialua? (Laughs)

RS: No. One is a beautiful beach and beautiful hotel and beautiful surrounding. Any tourist.

AA: But then that's a fake paradise.

RS: Well, people are not coming down and buy paradise.

AA: Hawaii is paradise! Hawaii is Waialua!

RS: I know. You call 'em paradise. No, no. They are not buying. That's the reason why Makaha is being all broken. I mean broke. Because the beach is very far. They don't want to stay in the jungle. They come down here to see good beach, good surroundings, and good hotel. And good nightclub.

AA: Like when the plantation closes down in the next twenty years, what will the leading business be? What do you foresee?

RS: Well, this will be a business center. Because, you like it or not, the whole Kaena Point will be developed. In the whole Kaena Point, you can take care about forty thousand people. Forty thousand people. And then you can develop some hotels right here. To take care. The hotel. Then that will take care the whole surplus of those laborers who don't have no job.

AA: Okay. But don't you think about exhausting our natural resources and things like that?

RS: Well, you have to.

AA: Then where will you get your next...

RS: Well, that's the reason why lot of the educated people even in Hawaii they are not in Hawaii. Lot of these people in Hawaii, they buy land Arizona, they buy land in California. They are buying land in Alaska and so forth. Just like the Americans (mainlanders) are coming to Hawaii. Some of these people here, they are now in California and so forth. So, that is by nature, it will come to by natural transition. That's my

personal thinking. Because on that belief that, as I said, Castle and Cooke is a very big business. Belong to the New York Stock Exchange. And these people who belong to the New York Stock Exchange, all what they are looking now is the growth of the dollar.

AA: Growth of the dollar?

RS: The growth of the dollar. They don't care who and who is being hurt. They don't look at you, "Eh, my dollar don't grow, but I pity that guy." No. The growth of the dollar.

AA: Okay. Well, let's go back a little bit. The management and the ordinary laborer, did you notice any difference in their lifestyle?

RS: Today and before?

AA: Say, before the War. What are your feelings about?

RS: Plantation? Management?

AA: Yeah.

RS: Well, as I say again, on those early days, because, after all, business is people. And people is business. And the most important thing in the progress of a business is the good public relation. The public relation meaning that every ethnic group should be respecting one another. Okay. That is, we are talking now about Filipinos. Now, a public relation is two way. Not only one way. You do not expect them to come to you and show you all the courtesies and so forth. You have to go to them, too. Now, public relation is you have to come out amongst people. Now, one of the problem on those days before, in the early days interracial relationship before was very poor. Because we don't have enough people to associate with other nationalities. And the same time, before, the plantation people, especially the so called haoles in the early days, well, they segregated themselves. There such thing as haole camp. There's such thing as Portuguese camp. There's such thing as Japanese camp. There's such thing as a Korean camp. There's such a thing as Filipino camp on the early days. That was. But now, no. Everybody now mixing with one another. Especially school. Students here now is better than the average students of the other nationalities. Now, especially, we have a very good manager here, thank Lord. A very good manager. And then he associate himself with everybody, and he's down-to-earth man. And that's what change a lot. The only thing now is that we don't have enough Filipinos who can come forward and associate themselves and go out from their nutshell. That's the most unfortunate thing. And I hope that the Filipinos will wake up, because as I said, when they comprise the 65 percent of this community, northshores they supposed to be the leader over here. And yet, the unfortunate thing, they are being led by somebody else.

AA: Why have you chose to stay in Waialua and not move?

RS: Well, the idea is this. Everybody is looking for better opportunity,

right. And better employment. In Waialua, I have a fair opportunity here. I am contented with my position, until finally, I took my early retirement, because I can paddle my own canoe and run my own business.

AA: If you could say that Waialua is successful because of one factor, what would that be? Why do we produce the best yields as far as sugar is concerned?

RS: Well, very simple. Technology.

AA: Technology? But aren't all the plantations given the same technology?

RS: Well, you see, in technology, no matter how much technology you have, if you don't have the proper soil, proper environment, proper location. Because, as I said again, it's by the natural resources of your soil that counts. And your weather.

AA: Okay, so for Waialua, you would say location, soil, and water?

RS: Yes. Yes, water. And, of course, technology is the most important thing. Yeah, know-how.

AA: What about management?

RS: Well, management has nothing to do with it. Because no matter how good your management is, if the sugar will not go to the sugar cane, then you broke. And the sugar, you know what one of the agriculturalists told me? He said, "Everybody can grow sugar cane, but nobody can put sugar cane." Yeah. By nature, so only nature can put sugar in the sugar cane.

AA: What can you say was the most significant thing that has happened to you in the past 15 years?

RS: The most significant is in the last 15 years is when I quit the plantation.

AA: Your transition from working to doing what you like to do?

RS: That's right. Yeah.

AA: Right. Okay. This convention that you went to last week? What was it? Can you tell me about it?

RS: That is the Republican National Convention. The Republican National Convention, that means every state, they choose their own delegates. Now those delegates, those are the one to choose a candidate to run for president.

AA: Who did you choose?

RS: Ford.

AA: Where was this convention at?

RS: That is in Kansas City, Missouri.

AA: How were you chosen to be a delegate to represent Hawaii?

RS: Well, every senatorial district, they have to have some candidates to be a delegate. And then, fortunately, I was one of them elected.

AA: How much are there from Hawaii then?

RS: In Hawaii, is 19 delegates.

AA: Again, were you the only Filipino? (Laughs) No? Yes?

RS: Yes.

AA: Yes? Oh wow!

RS: There's one alternate. That's the one Leilani Ayson. From Hawaii. Honolulu.

AA: Okay. That's about it.

END OF INTERVIEW

WAIALUA & HALEIWA

The People Tell Their Story

Volume IV

FILIPINOS

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**ETHNIC STUDIES PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII, MANOA**

May 1977