

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Rufo Suelto, 88, coffee/macadamia nut picker and former farmer

"At one time, I have a drying platform, a pulper, and a house. But when the coffee prices went down, I went to planting vegetables and gave up the drying platform and pulper. . . . My life was hard. I planted string beans. If I harvested five bags of string beans, I have to carry the bags up the road."

Rufo Suelto, the third of 11 children, was born on November 7, 1892, in Amlang, Negros Oriental, Philippines. His father, Catalino Suelto, was a farmer and town mayor.

Rufo came to Hawaii in 1912. For nine years he worked on Big Island sugar plantations: Kohala, Hawi, Kukuihaele, Olaa, and Pahala. In 1921, he became a longshoreman for Matson Navigation in Hilo. Ten years later, he returned to plantation work, first at Papaikou, then at Laupahoehoe.

Rufo quit plantation work for good in 1937 and settled in Kona. After five years as a hired coffee picker, he began farming coffee, banana, avocado, mango, papaya, and vegetables on leased lands.

In the late 1970s, Rufo stopped farming and sought work as a coffee and macadamia nut picker. He now resides in Honaunau, Kona.

Tape No. 9-32-1-80 TR
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Rufo Suelto (RS)

December 20, 1980

Honaunau, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Modesto Daranciang (MD) and Michiko Kodama (MK)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Tagalog. Translation done by
Modesto Daranciang.]

MD: Interview with Rufo Suelto at his home in Honaunau, Kona,
Hawaii on December 20, 1980.

When were you born?

RS: Eighteen ninety-two, November 7.

MD: Where were you born?

RS: In town. Amlang, Negros Oriental, Philippines.

MD: How many children were there in your family?

RS: Eleven children.

MD: What number were you?

RS: Number three.

MD: What were your parents doing for a living when you were a child?

RS: My father was a mayor of the town, a health worker and [later] a
sheriff.

MD: What about your mother?

RS: My mother was a housewife taking care of the children.

MD: Your father was a mayor and health worker, economically, how did
your family do in comparison to other families in the area?

RS: Our life was good. We managed because we had a small farm.

MD: What did you plant?

RS: Sugarcane, corn, rice.

MD: Who worked?

RS: We, the children.

MD: When you were of school age did you go to school?

RS: I wanted to go to school but my father said it was better for me to work than to go to school.

MD: Why did you father say that?

RS: My father said if I worked, I would have income. If I go to school there were already many educated people.

MK: So Mr. Suelto did not go to school except for two years.

MD: Yes.

You went to school only for two years, how did you feel about not continuing school?

RS: We were hard up. There were many children in the family. When I grew older I was employed by my grandparents. I brought the workers to my grandparents' plantation. They had four plantations.

MD: How old were you when you went to work for your grandparents?

RS: About 17, 18 [years old].

MD: What kind of plantation did your grandparents have?

RS: First, he [RS's grandfather] planted sugarcane, corn, [and] rice.

MD: When you went to your grandparents' plantation what was your job?

RS: I was a cook.

MD: How did you know how to cook?

RS: I watched my parents cooked.

MD: How many people did you cook for on your grandparents' plantation?

RS: Sometimes ten, sometimes five, four. They plowed and did hō hana.

MD: Were you paid for helping your grandparents?

RS: I was not paid. (Laughs) He [grandfather] just gave me anything [RS wanted]. (Laughs) There was enough compensation for play. Play cara y cruz, marbles, and other games. Cara y cruz is a game where you flip two coins in the air.

MD: What else did you do for recreation if you were not working?

RS: I do balitao.

MD: What is balitao?

RS: A dance. I dance. [It is a dance where] the man and woman sing in courtship.

MD: When you were with your grandfather what did you do with your neighbors or other people in the area?

RS: We worked together because they worked on the farm.

MD: While you were working for your grandfather what did you hope to do in the future?

RS: I planned to go abroad so I can improve myself.

MD: Why did you think you could improve yourself in a foreign country?

RS: I thought I would try my luck, that's why I came to Hawaii.

MD: Before you came to Hawaii what did you know about Hawaii from other people?

RS: They said Hawaii is a good place because there is work. The pay is high.

MD: Who told you these things?

RS: The [recruiting] agent plus other people told me that Hawaii is nice.

MD: Can you explain to us about this agent and what he told you about Hawaii.

RS: The agent told me Hawaii is a nice place. He said there is everyday job in Hawaii.

MD: What was the name of the agent?

RS: I don't know his name.

MD: Who did this agent work for?

RS: I don't know. He just recruited people for Hawaii.

MD: About how many people in your area were recruited by this agent?

RS: There were four of us. There were plenty recruited before me.

MD: And these plenty people recruited before you, did they write back or send back news about Hawaii?

- RS: No. They were just recruited to Hawaii.
- MD: And when these people like you were recruited to Hawaii, what were the the terms of your recruitment?
- RS: Work in Hawaii for three years before you go back to the Philippines with free return passage.
- MD: That free passage, was that to and from Hawaii?
- RS: Yes.
- MD: What was the pay that was promised to you?
- RS: No pay was promised.
- MD: When did you leave the Philippines?
- RS: Nineteen eleven.
- MD: When did you arrive in Hawaii?
- RS: Nineteen twelve, January 6 on this island [Hawaii].
- MD: Why did you come to this island, why the Big Island?
- RS: They brought me here. The plantation [brought me].
- MD: Did you have any choice as to which island you wanted to go to?
- RS: No.
- MD: From 1912 to 1920 you worked on different plantations. You did hō hana, hāpai kō, and kachī kane, what were the plantation camps like back then?
- RS: The houses were like the one I am staying in now.
- MD: So the houses had small rooms like this, wooden walls and a corrugated roof?
- RS: The walls were made of 12 feet-by-1 inch-by-12 inch boards. Plantation houses were like that before. Plantations were poor before not like now. This house is better.
- MD: Why?
- RS: The [plantation] houses were like the houses of the poor. Houses were poorly constructed.
- MD: This room is eight feet-by-four feet; how many people lived in a space like this on the plantation in one room?

RS: Plenty, sometimes there were five of us. Plenty guys before. There was nothing I could do because that's what the plantation did.

MD: In those days, what kinds of people were in the camp you were in?

RS: Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, Okinawan, Puerto Rican, Portuguese. The Filipinos were the poorest of all.

MD: Why were the Filipinos the poorest of all?

RS: Because they were lowest of all. In Hawi they gave coupons. The Filipinos got \$5.00, Puerto Ricans and Hawaiians got \$10.00, Portuguese \$20.00, and Japanese \$40.00.

MD: Is that coupon or pay?

RS: Coupon, you buy [goods] with this in the [plantation] store. It was a coupon like a food stamp. (Laughs)

MD: You are a Visayan. What other types of Filipinos were there?

RS: There were Ilocanos, Pampangas, Tagalog, Batanes.

MD: Who were the most of the group?

RS: The most were Visayans.

MD: Were there families?

RS: Yes, there were families but these women were grabbed [taken] by other men. (Laughs)

MD: Who were with families?

RS: The Visayans..

MD: Is that what they called, "Cowboy" [wife stealing]?

RS: Yes, there was much foolishness.

MD: What could a Filipino man do so that his wife would not be taken?

RS: There was nothing he could do because they just cowboy her. The government has no control. (Laughs) A newly-arrived woman can be cowboied.

MD: At that time, were you married?

RS: No, I was single. There were no women.

MD: There were no women?

- RS: I was courting the Japanese girls. There was no trouble.
- MD: How about among different Filipino groups, how were their relationships?
- RS: Good, except the other men cowboy the women.
- MD: What happened if somebody cowboied the women?
- RS: There was nothing that could be done because handguns were on the loose.
- MD: Those days some people had families, some had women, some people didn't have, when they were not working what were they doing?
- RS: When the husbands were not home, the men courted women.
- MD: Besides courting the women, was there anything else they did at pau hana time?
- RS: Nothing, only play around. Cards, billards, that's all.
- MD: Where did you play billards?
- RS: They go to town.
- MD: What town did you go to?
- RS: Hawi.
- MD: What else was there in Hawi?
- RS: There were card games, also the Japanese card games and dice.
- MD: To go to town, how much did you need to enjoy yourself in town?
- RS: It depends if you have, you spend. Before we had gold.
- MD: How much gold?
- RS: Five dollars, ten dollars, or twenty dollars.
- MD: How much was your pay back then on the plantation?
- RS: When I first came it was 90 cents a day.
- MD: How did you get five, ten, twenty dollars to play?
- RS: The things that I bought were cheap.
- MD: On the plantation, you hō hana, hāpai kō, cut cane, how did you feel about the type of work?

RS: It was good since there was no other work.

MD: What was it like working for the luna?

RS: The lunas were bad. They were pushy. If you were lazy or if you fought back you were fired.

MD: So you just worked so there was no trouble?

RS: Yes.

MD: You did different types of work on the plantation. Which one was the hardest?

RS: Hāpai kō was the hardest. The sugarcane was heavy and also [difficult was] fertilizing.

MD: Was fertilizing heavy work, too?

RS: I fought the luna.

MD: What was the easiest?

RS: Cut cane, plowing was also easy. They were light work.

MD: How many hours were you working?

RS: I worked eight hours, 6 [o'clock] a.m. to 4 [o'clock] p.m.

MD: Sunday was only your day off?

RS: I worked until Saturday.

MD: Considering all this work and work experience and the luna what did you think about the plantation?

RS: There was nothing I could do. The work was good plus I got paid. The only drawback was [that some] lunas were cruel.

MD: You moved around Kohala to Hawi, to Kukuihaele, to Olaa and Pahala plantations, why did you move to different plantations?

RS: I was looking for a place that paid more.

MD: Were there much difference from one plantation to another in terms of pay?

RS: Yes, there was much difference. If you work in heavy work, you get high pay. You work cut cane and hāpai kō, high pay.

MD: So did the different plantations pay the same amount for the same type of work? If you hāpai kō in Kohala, did you get the same pay in Pahala?

- RS: The pay was different from one plantation to the other with the same type of work. If you work hard you get more pay.
- MD: Was much of your pay based upon how much you got done; that much bundles done, you get paid that much, or was it by day?
- RS: If I get more bundles [of sugarcane cut or loaded] I get more pay or if I get more done I get more money. It was contract.
- MD: About cut cane, was it contract?
- RS: Sometimes contract, sometimes by day wage.
- MD: How about hō hana?
- RS: Hō hana was a day work.
- MD: Comparing the different places you worked, which place do you like the best?
- RS: Olaa. Because if you worked hāpai kō, the pay was high.
- MD: You left Olaa, why did you go to Pahala?
- RS: I was fired.
- MD: What did you do [to be fired]?
- RS: I did not work. [I was fired because] I worked someplace. I was working for the government in Waiakea on a road. I broke stone [for the road].
- MD: How did you get the job?
- RS: The contractor wanted workers.
- MD: Which plantation did you like the least?
- RS: Pahala, pay was small.
- MD: In 1921 you went to work stevedore in Hilo, why did you leave the plantation?
- RS: Stevedore work pays high.
- MD: How did you get the job?
- RS: A strong whistle in the company advertised openings. I showed up. The luna selects people with good physical build. I was chosen.
- MD: What was the name of the company that hired you?

RS: Matson [steamship] Navigation.

MD: What did the job involve? Describe the job.

RS: Load and unload the ship with sugar.

MD: And what were the hours?

RS: From 7 [o'clock] a.m. to 4 [o'clock] p.m.

MD: And how often was there work?

RS: If there was a ship, they need workers.

MD: Since people were chosen that day to do work, is there anything that the workers did to get chosen? Did they make friends with the people choosing the workers?

RS: None. Just present yourself. If the luna likes you, you are chosen.

MD: What kind of people worked with you in the stevedore?

RS: Filipino, Puerto Rican, Portuguese, Hawaiian, and Japanese.

MD: How did you get along with them?

RS: Good relationship.

MD: Why do you say that?

RS: All people in Hawaii are like brothers.

MD: Can you explain why you said that people in Hawaii are like brothers.

RS: Since we do the same work and play, we were good friends.

MD: How was the luna?

RS: The luna was good.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MD: How much were you paid?

RS: It was cheap, \$3.50 an hour.

MD: Were you able to save more as a stevedore or as a plantation worker?

RS: It was harder to save money as a stevedore.

MD: Why?

RS: There were many kinds of gambling.

MD: What kinds of gambling were you doing?

RS: Dice.

MD: Anything else?

RS: No more.

MD: How much of your income were you losing?

RS: I was losing. I was not able to save.

MD: How did you survive if you were losing?

RS: I can charge money from the bookkeeper.

MD: Was there a company store owned by Matson?

RS: There was no store owned by Matson but a Japanese man brings food.

MD: What do you mean you can charge from the bookkeeper?

RS: He looks at my record if I want to borrow money. There was a ten percent interest. That was the bookkeeper's money.

MD: The bookkeeper was doing the loaning on his own. For that time was the ten percent interest for charging usual or what did you think about it?

RS: It was good because I could borrow. (Laughs)

MD: Were these other places higher or lower?

RS: None, only the bookkeeper loans money.

MD: In 1931, you quit stevedore, how come?

RS: The work was only once in a while.

MD: You worked plantation again in Papaikou in 1931. Later on you went to Laupahoehoe and worked there until 1935. Why did you go back to plantation work and not something else?

RS: I wanted a chance to work on the plantation.

MD: You told us that plantation work was hard plus the lunas were cruel, why did you decide to go back anyway?

RS: I went back because I was looking for a good luna.

MD: Again, you worked plantation until 1935. Was this plantation work better than before?

RS: They were no better but there was nothing I could do because there was no other job.

MD: In 1936 you came back to Hilo to stevedore, how come you came back to Hilo, stevedore?

RS: There was a strike on the plantation.

MD: Were you involved in the strike?

RS: Yes, I was involved.

MD: How come you did not stay on the plantation until the strike was finished?

RS: I don't like to stay anymore.

MD: What company did you work for this time?

RS: The same, Matson.

MD: Was it easier to get in this time because you done it before?

RS: Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW.

Tape No. 9-57-2-81 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Rufo Suelto (RS)

January 25, 1981

Honaunau, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Modesto Daranciang (MD) and Michiko Kodama (MK)

[Note: Interview conducted in Tagalog. Translation done by Modesto Daranciang.]

MD: Interview with Mr. Rufo Suelto at his home in Honaunau on January 25, 1981.

In 1937, why did you come to Kona?

RS: I wanted to pick coffee. Coffee picking was going strong at that time. There were plenty Filipinos in Kona at that time, it was like a parade in the streets.

MD: How did you get involved in coffee?

RS: They were paying \$1.25 a bag of coffee picked.

MD: When you came to Kona, did you come to pick coffee or to start coffee farming?

RS: First, I came to pick coffee. After I found a place, I started farming.

MD: When you first came, who did you pick coffee for?

RS: First, I picked coffee for Taniguchi. Second, for Miyagawa, third for Inouye, fourth for Omori, fifth I picked for a Korean, sixth I picked for Fujino, seventh Horiuchi, eighth two brothers of Mr. Fujino.

MD: How long did you pick coffee?

RS: I picked coffee for five years. Then I took a Bishop Estate place.

MD: Did you pick coffee only during season time and do something else not season time?

- RS: Yes, I took care of pigs at Moriharas for one year.
- MD: How did you find all the coffee picking jobs with different people?
- RS: I walked around looking for job.
- MD: What other compensation did you get besides the money?
- RS: Free house.
- MD: What kind house?
- RS: Like this house.
- MD: Wooden house, one room one man?
- RS: Plenty of us in one room. Sometimes there were five in one room. There were plenty Filipinos before. It was hard until I found a house at Taniguchi's.
- MD: Were you alone at Taniguchi's?
- RS: I have my family with me. My wife and two children. I have a wife, I get married in 1916. They were with me in the same house.
- MD: How did you manage to support your wife and children?
- RS: There was plenty work. I made contract hō hana work if there was no coffee.
- MD: Did your wife also work?
- RS: Yes, my wife and children also worked.
- MD: What kind of work?
- RS: They helped pick coffee and hō hana. My children were good.
- MD: How about the other Filipino men, did they also have wives at that time?
- RS: No, only me has a wife.
- MD: Those times, what kinds of Filipinos worked with you?
- RS: Mixed, Tagalogs, Visayans, Pampangas, Ilocanos and Batanese.
- MD: Where did most of the Filipinos come from, plantations, or Hilo or where?
- RS: They came from plantations.
- MD: What plantations?

- RS: From any plantations because work in Kona is good.
- MD: After the coffee season the people go back to the plantations?
- RS: They go back to the plantations, some go back to Honolulu but me, I was stuck here.
- MD: Why were you stuck in Kona? Why did you not return to the plantation like the others?
- RS: I did not return to the plantation because I like Kona.
- MD: Why do you like Kona?
- RS: Kona is a good place and I work on my own. Nobody boss me.
- MD: Those days how many Filipinos were working in one farm generally?
- RS: In one farm there were plenty workers but I don't know how much. I only know about the farm I worked with my family.
- MD: In those days how old were the men working?
- RS: The men were young those days.
- MD: How old were they?
- RS: About 30, 35 years old.
- MD: What other types of people besides Filipinos were picking coffee with you?
- RS: All were Filipinos.
- MD: What did the Filipino workers do during their free time?
- RS: There was no free time. They worked on Saturdays and Sundays.
- MD: Those time were there any community celebrations?
- RS: Yes, Rizal Day, prayers, celebrations like Saint Catalina and Saint Filomina Day.
- MD: Those days do you have gambling, cockfighting or dancing?
- RS: Yes, there was strong gambling. There were places where we can go dancing.
- MD: Where did you go to dance?
- RS: In the dance hall.

MD: What type of gambling was very popular?

RS: Any kind, chicken fight, dice, card games, billiards.

MD: Where do you hold chicken fights?

RS: Any place on the sly.

MD: Where do you gamble?

RS: Any place because the police were after them. (Laughs)

MD: In your judgment, how much of a person's pay go to gambling?

RS: It's up to him because he can borrow money from his Japanese friends.

MD: From whom did they borrow money?

RS: From the boss. The Japanese loan them money because they needed working people.

MD: The boss loan them money after or before they have worked?

RS: The boss loan them the money even before they have worked just to keep the workers.

MD: When they returned the money, just the money borrowed or with interest?

RS: No interest.

MD: Was the loan deducted from their pay?

RS: The boss deducted the loan from their pay.

MD: You mentioned dancing, where was this type of dancing held?

RS: The dances in Kona were held in a hall but the other dances were held in the plantations.

MD: If the dances were held at the hall in Kona, where did the women come from?

RS: The women came from the plantations.

MD: How often do the workers go to this dance hall?

RS: Every Saturday.

MD: What kind of dances do they dance?

- RS: They danced like how the haole danced.
- MD: How much do they have to pay to dance?
- RS: It was cheap, six tickets for fifty cents.
- MD: Did you go to the dance?
- RS: I went to the dance but I did not dance much because there were few women.
- MD: What did you think about the dance hall?
- RS: It was good because I was happy. There were not enough women. If there were, we competed to get them as dance partners. (Laughs)
- The women that danced were Visayans.
- MD: Why?
- RS: There were few Ilocanos.
- MD: Do the Ilocano men go out also with the Visayan women?
- RS: They went out but the Visayan men were angry because the Ilocano men were naughty. (Laughs) The Ilocano men forced the women. (Laughs)
- MD: If the Ilocano men forced the Visayan women, what happens?
- RS: The Visayan women sued the Ilocano men in court.
- But before, it seemed there was no justice because there was much trouble. They just took the women like cowboy style. (Laughs)
- MD: When did the cowboy situation change?
- RS: In 1916-1917 [?] the trouble started to slow down because there were sheriffs.
- MD: During the war [World War II] were the troubles between the Visayans and Ilocanos going on?
- RS: Yes, they were still having troubles.
- MD: How about after the war?
- RS: After the war, the troubles stopped because the troublemakers were caught by the police who patrolled the place.
- What was bad before was the Filipinos formed gangs and they sometimes stole the Japanese chickens.

MD: Do the gangs have name?

RS: I can't remember.

MD: What do these gangs do?

RS: They stole pigs and chicken.

MD: How were the relationships between the Filipinos and Japanese coffee farmers during that time?

RS: The other people were afraid of the Filipinos because these Filipinos were bad. They killed those who resisted them.

MK: Who do they kill?

MD: The Japanese.

MK: Did that occur?

MD: Did that occur?

RS: They did not kill the Japanese but they killed the Hawaiians.

MD: What happened?

RS: The police came.

MD: From your conversation, Kona was a rough place, how was it for your wife and children?

RS: I was not involved with those people. I just worked.

MD: What did you think about coffee picking itself?

RS: Coffee picking was good. It was contract. If I liked to worked overtime, I could.

MD: You said you stopped coffee picking when you found your own place, where did you find your own place?

RS: In Kealakekua, below Yamagata [property].

MD: How did you get this place?

RS: I looked for a place. I talked with Mr. Cushingham who was the boss of the Bishop Estate at that time.

MD: What were the terms of the lease?

RS: At first he gave me ten-year lease. Then year to year. I can't remember how much was the lease because it was too cheap. I farmed for more than 40 years.

- MD: How come it was too cheap?
- RS: At that time it was cheap.
- MD: Were there coffee trees already on the land?
- RS: There were no coffee trees. I planted the coffee.
- MD: So you cleaned the place?
- RS: Yes, I planted coffee, bananas, avocado, mango and papaya.
- MD: There was no coffee in the farm from the beginning, how did you support yourself until the coffee was ready for picking?
- RS: When I moved to the place, I planted vegetables to support myself. I did not go back to pick coffee for somebody.
- MD: Were there others working on your land besides yourself and your family?
- RS: There were, sometimes I hired two or three but I have to get the good workers.
- MD: How did you find the good workers?
- RS: After the coffee season, there were plenty people who did not have work so it was easy to find good workers.
- MD: What kind of work do these people do in your farm?
- RS: Hō hana and clear the farm.
- MD: How much were you paying them?
- RS: I paid them two dollars a day.
- MD: What other things, if any, did you supply to them?
- RS: I don't give anything aside from their pay. They were living in the Japanese house.
- MD: How did you supervise the workers?
- RS: I worked with them. If they worked hard, I paid them more.
- MD: Those days what kinds of equipment did you use for taking care of the coffee?
- RS: I used sickle, hoe and mechanized plow.
- MD: Where did you get all the equipments?

- RS: I bought them from American Factors.
- MD: How did you pay for these equipments?
- RS: I could charge because I had a farm.
- MD: Was there a sort of credit limit for charging?
- RS: No limit because they trusted me.
- MD: How did you pay all these?
- RS: I paid all after the season.
- MD: You take the coffee directly to them or how did you pay?
- RS: The company will come to pick up all the bags of cherry.
- MD: So the debt you accumulated will be subtracted from what you should have been paid for the cherry coffee?
- RS: Yes, the balance will be given to me.
- MD: After the season, about how much will be left after paying the charges?
- RS: Coffee prices were cheap. What was left was about \$500.
- MD: You said you gave the cherry coffee, was that because you have no drying platform and pulper?
- RS: Yes, I did not have those.
- MD: Did you ever want to have a drying platform and pulper?
- RS: At one time, I have a drying platform, a pulper and a house, but when coffee prices went down, I went to planting vegetables and gave up the drying platform and pulper.
- My life was hard. I planted string beans. If I harvested five days of string beans, I have to carry the bags up the government road. (Laughs)
- MD: About what time was that?
- RS: Before the place was bought by Yamagata. After that, I went to vegetable planting.
- MD: Did you ever sell coffee anywhere else?
- RS: No, only American Factors because it was my store.
- MK: I heard about coffee bootlegging, what do you know about this?

- MD: She heard about coffee bootlegging, what do you know about this?
- RS: I don't know about coffee bootlegging.
- MD: What do you think about selling your coffee to American Factors and not able to sell elsewhere?
- RS: I felt good because it was American Factors who loan me the money to build the drying platform and pulper.
- MK: I was wondering you started coffee farming in 1937. That year was the time when coffee prices were pretty bad, 1939-1941, the prices were bad, how did he manage?
- MD: She was wondering you started coffee farming in 1937, that year was the time when coffee prices were pretty bad, 1939-1941, the prices were bad, how did you manage?
- RS: If you are good, you don't have to worry. There were plenty work, contract work like hō hana.
- MD: When prices were a lot better after the war, did you expand?
- RS: I planned to expand but I can no longer find workers.
- MD: Why were there no workers?
- RS: The workers returned to the plantations.
- MD: Earlier, you said you planted the other crops, did you continue planting the other crops?
- RS: I continued planting the other crops.
- MD: Did you cultivate the other crops later on for selling purposes?
- RS: Yes.
- MD: Where did you sell your vegetables?
- RS: I sold them to the stores in town.
- MD: How did you arrange that?
- RS: I asked them to buy from me and I delivered them the vegetables.
- MD: How important was the additional money in your budget?
- RS: It really helped me economically.
- END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MD: Could you have survived without doing it?

RS: If I haven't worked, I have nothing to support my family.

MD: Without the vegetables, would it have been difficult?

RS: Without the vegetables, it would have been hard.

MD: During the year after the war, what were you doing during your free time?

RS: I had no free time. My idea was to work so people will trust me and I can borrow money.

MK: How did the Filipino group in Kona change from the war to after the war?

RS: There was not much difference. For those who were lazy it was hard but for those who were industrious, life was better.

MD: From the Filipinos about how many became coffee farmers like you?

RS: Just me.

MD: After the war, how was the mixing between the Filipinos, Japanese, haoles and other groups?

RS: There was good relationships among the people.

MD: Why did you say the mixing was good?

RS: The people in Kona were mostly Japanese and they were good. After all if someone is bad, the government will catch him.

MD: In 1977 you stopped operating your farm, why did you stop operating your farm?

RS: Yamagata bought the place.

MD: What did you do after that?

RS: I went to look for work.

MD: Now you do coffee and macadamia picking, how do you compare being a farmer from just picking coffee?

RS: You cannot beat being a farmer, you are on your own, you have no boss. If you want to work overtime, you can. If you pick coffee, you have a boss, the things you do are limited. People were surprised how I was able to support my family. I was able to send my children to Punahou school although I was poor and eventually to Mainland colleges.

MD: Nowadays you pick coffee and macadamia nuts. Compare macadamia nut picking and coffee picking.

RS: It is easier to pick macadamia nut because the nuts are bigger than the cherries. You can make money on both if you work hard.

MD: Why do you continue to work for so long?

RS: Plenty women ask me money. If I don't work, I can't give them.
(Laughs)

Women charged in my name the stores. (Laughs) I even paid the divorce of one woman. (Laughs) Her life improved now. I even cured her asthma, they called me "general."

MD: How did you cure the asthma?

RS: I used herbs.

MD: You said being a coffee farmer you are your own boss, what else is good being a coffee farmer?

RS: The work is yours. You can plant anything. Your life is at peace. If you are a farmer, you can earn your livelihood.

MD: What is not so good about being a coffee farmer?

RS: Nothing is bad about being a coffee farmer. If you plant something you can sell it and you have money.

MD: When you look back at your life in Kona, what do you think about your life in Kona?

RS: Now I want to go back to the Philippines to buy a place there. I went twice to the Philippines.

MD: Can you really be able to go back to the Philippines?

RS: Yes, I can. I am going there this year. I am going to Mindanao. I have a brother there.

MD: Why do you want to return to the Philippines?

RS: Now life is hard in the Philippines. Eventually, life will be better.

MD: For yourself you want to go back to the Philippines. What do you hope for your children who were raised here?

RS: I have nothing to worry about my children. They have a good life.

END OF INTERVIEW

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF KONA

Volume I

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**Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

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