

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Mariano Reyes, 77, retired plantation store employee,
Paia

"Every afternoon I go out to one camp, one afternoon. In the morning I bring the order over there [Paia Store] and then they put up the order and then they deliver. Then I go to a different camp, I take another order and then the next morning, they put up that order and they deliver, see. That's my job before. They had about four guys over there taking orders because plenty people. Me, I take care the Filipino, the Portuguese and the Puerto Ricans. Wherever they stay. I no touch the Japanese. They get two Japanese people going."

Mariano Reyes, Tagalog-Ilocano, was born July 13, 1902, in Bangued, Abra, Philippines. His parents were farmers in Abra.

In 1920, Reyes and his family moved to Manila, where he worked as a pharmacy clerk. During the evenings he attended school at Far Eastern College.

In 1924, Reyes left Manila and came to Hawaii. He worked at Pepeekeo Sugar Mill. Three years later, he moved to Haiku, Maui and worked as a store clerk.

Reyes started working as a clerk and order taker at Paia Store in 1938. He also served as an interpreter for new Filipino arrivals at Paia Plantation.

In 1950, Reyes was transferred to the A&B Kahului Store wholesale department. Later, he moved to the merchandising department.

Retired since 1967, Reyes spends much of his time tending his large orchid nursery. He is a member of the Maui Orchid Society as well as the American Orchid Society. He lives in Kahului with his wife, Katherine.

Tape No. 7-41-1-80 and 7-42-1-80

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mariano Reyes (MR)

March 1, 1980

Kahului, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Mariano Reyes. Today is March 1, 1980 and we're at his home in Kahului, Maui.

Mr. Reyes, can you start by telling me when you were born?

MR: I was born in July 13, 1902.

WN: And where were you born?

MR: Manila. [MR's place of birth is Bangued, Abra, Philippines, not Manila.]

WN: What kind of job did your parents have in Manila?

MR: My father is working as a regular laborer, you know, fixing up utilities like plumbing, like that, in Manila and then from there I attended night school, Far Eastern College.

WN: Before I get to your education, let's talk about---your father was working under somebody?

MR: Yeah, he's working under the County of Manila or something like that.

WN: Was your father born and raised in Manila?

MR: No, he was raised in the province. He's a Tagalog. We have plenty different kind of people in the Philippines, you know. He's a Tagalog, and married to an Ilocano lady born in Abra.

WN: In where?

MR: In one of the provinces and then they meet together, that's how. Our family grew up and we have nine in the family. I'm the oldest.

WN: You're the oldest?

MR: Yeah.

WN: What about your mother, did she do any kind of work at all?

MR: No, she's only housekeeper. She take care us--nine of us, you know. She raise us and then my father has another business. He's a fisherman, you know. He has his own net and everything and then somebody help him to go to the ocean to catch fish and they divide the fish [catch] into three different [shares] because two persons plus the net. That's how they did it, so my father get two share and they sell that in the market.

WN: So he was independent?

MR: Yeah, he's independent. Only when---in Manila he get a spare job because not every day they go fishing so he work for the County, fixing up some road or something like that.

WN: What was his main job, the one that he spent more time with?

MR: The main job is---I didn't tell you that my father came from the province, too, see. He just moved to Manila and then there [the province] he is a farmer. We have big land and he raised all kinds of vegetables, corn, all kinds.

WN: What was the name of the province that he came from?

MR: I was born in Bangued, Abra. It's a province [Abra] where my mother is [from].

WN: So is this in Ilocos Norte?

MR: No, it's down, not Ilocos Norte. It's Bangued, Abra. This is one province over there.

WN: So you were born there?

MR: I was born there, yeah, and then my father, while he was raising us, he had big land and he raised all kinds of vegetables and on the weekend or something like that, he go fishing and make some more money. That's the living over there. And then when I grow up, then I move to Manila.

WN: Oh, I see. Your family moved to Manila?

MR: My father move over there. In fact, my father died in Manila in 1943. You know when they bombed Manila [during World War II], he was over there and he was one of them.

WN: When he moved to Manila did he give up all the lands that he had in the province?

MR: Yeah, he sold all the land, and then one of my sisters stayed behind in the province so she had a share of land. My father give some land to her and she keep it and get married over there and all the rest of us stay in Manila. In fact, I get two brothers in Manila living over there.

WN: Do you know why your father came to Manila?

MR: Yeah, because I move first so he follow me.

WN: Okay, so why did you come to Manila?

MR: I come to Manila [in 1920] because I want to go to school. I went to school in the province, only in the intermediate when I left over there. Then I get a job in Manila when I was over there as a pharmacy clerk. We are selling drugs or something in Manila and then during nighttime I attend school in Far Eastern College and I pay five pesos every month for my education. That's how I have my education in Far Eastern College. I stay freshman, second [year] and third [year]. I never finished high school.

From there I get one brother--he's about 16 years old--he run away from my parents' place in Bangued and then my mother wrote to me to see my brother because he run away. He borrow the personal tax and he not supposed to come to Hawaii. He came to Hawaii and then my mother told me to go follow him so that's why I came to Hawaii in 1924. That's the story why I came over here. I get out of the school and my father is still working in Manila that time I left. In 1924, October...

WN: So you had to watch and keep an eye on your brother, is that it?

MR: No. When I came over here, I don't know where I going find him because he get no---I went check up in the Immigration in Honolulu and they said there is no such name that arrived before you because he borrow the personal tax of that guy working in Bangued, it's different kind of name and that name was Santiago Torquesa. His [MR's brother's] name is Felix Reyes, so I cannot find him. So it is coincidence that when I was assigned to Pepeekeo [Hawaii], I give up hope that some day I can find him. I sign in Pepeekeo and I tell the camp boss I make good friend with him. I make all his reports and everything, you know, because there's the camp boss over there--camp police--so I said if you don't mind, look out for my brother. His name is Felix Reyes. So he tell all his friends so one night--I still only two months in Pepeekeo--a friend of mine he went to Hilo--in Waiakea--so he was observing one guy playing billiards in one pool room and that's a store over there too. He looked like me. He get curly hair and everything and then he said, "Excuse me, brother."

He said, "Yes?"

"Do you happen to know Mariano Reyes?"

"Yes, that's my brother! Where is he?" And he was so excited because that's how we found each other. That night--this is a strike night--strike time...

WN: Nineteen twenty-four?

MR: Yeah. Nobody can go inside the camp [Waiakea] but my camp police escorted me and we went to the manager and I said, "I should like to meet my brother. You allow my brother to come and live with me."

He said, "Who is your brother?"

I tell him the name and then the policeman, he backed me up.

"If he want to come live with you", the manager said, "okay, it's up to him."

And then my brother said, "Okay, I coming." (Laughs) That's how it was in 1924. It's October, I think, I stay over there. I think December I found him.

WN: You said that he took somebody's personal pass?

MR: Yeah.

WN: Was that easy to do?

MR: Well, over there [Philippines], they don't check you out because my brother is a big one. He was 16 years old. He still in seventh grade that time and he like come to Hawaii. He just run away. He never tell to my mother and everything. That's the thing. Then when I received the letter [from MR's mother], I run to the immigration place where they send the people to Hawaii...

WN: In Manila?

MR: In Manila. The boat was left about few hours. I can [still] see the boat yet. So I was thinking how I going follow him. So I make up my mind. I tell my father, "I quit school and I quit the job, daddy, I go follow him."

"Well, it's up to you. What you going do now?"

"I don't know." They don't accept any immigration to come to Hawaii if you are a student because they want laborers to come over here so what I did is I have a personal tax, I erase "student" and I put "laborer". (Laughs) You see how we falsify everything over there and then they accept me. They give me all this kind free clothing, free shoes and everything and then we went. One week

later we went behind them and in Hong Kong get three of the passengers, [who know] my brother. [They] was sick so they leave them in Hong Kong to recuperate so our boat went pick these ladies. Then the boat captain made me interpreter, you know, for the whole bunch because they cannot speak English and everything so they speak English to me and I ask them what they want. These three ladies we was in the dining room and they look at me, look at me and say, "You look [like] somebody in our boat".

"Yeah, I get one brother."

"You look just like him."

And then I know we was following because that's the one boat that I saw when I went see him. And then that's the whole story and right on the boat after we left Kobe [Japan], we have strong waves and everything and the boat was going like that and somebody get sick. From Hong Kong he start get seasick already and then he can't stand, he died after three days we was sailing from Kobe. We bury him in the ocean.

WN: How long took the boat to go from Kobe to Hawaii?

MR: It takes I think about seven days or something.

WN: You know the three ladies that you picked up in Hong Kong?

MR: Yeah.

WN: What were they coming to Hawaii for?

MR: You see, during those time if the lady like to come, she got to get a partner. She tell this my husband. They come. That was all. And when they reach Hawaii, they get separated and marry another guy. That's how plenty ladies come because they make partner with somebody, with one man, and they say okay. This immigration they don't check up if you're married or not, just go.

WN: So they wanted to come to Hawaii so they...

MR: They get arrangement with somebody.

WN: Already in Hawaii?

MR: No, no, no, the one coming to Hawaii.

WN: Oh, oh, oh.

MR: And when they reach Hawaii, it's up to them if they like get married together, they can get married and if the lady no like, well, go find another man.

WN: So these three ladies were alone at that time?

MR: Sure, because they was sick.

WN: And the husbands went ahead?

MR: Yeah, the partner went ahead. They was sick and they left them in Hong Kong then our boat picked them up and that's why I meet them. That's good fun.

WN: Let me back up just a little bit.

MR: Yeah.

WN: You said that you left the province to come to Manila because you wanted to go to school?

MR: Yeah, I wanted to go to school.

WN: What did you want to become or what did you want to study?

MR: Well, I like to finish high school or something but I didn't finish because of my brother and, you know, it disturbed my studies. I studied night school about freshman, second and third year and the three years, the last one, that's when I came over.

WN: So that must have been a---was that a big decision for you to make?

MR: I know that our country was poor, you know, and I know that there is no improvement so I rather come over here and try to earn money. If I stay over there, like now my life is maybe hundred times better [than] if I stay over there.

WN: So when you came over to---first you came to Honolulu, yeah?

MR: Honolulu, and then...

WN: Did you stay in Honolulu?

MR: No, we don't stay Honolulu. We just assigned to the boat and came right away to Hawaii. We sleep on the boat and when we reach in Hilo, was about nighttime and they are picketing over there. I see some Filipinos moving like that. I say, "What's this?"

"Oh, this is strike, you know, 1924 strike." I know that but that's why the strike never win because we coming and fill their jobs and that's not good. I never know.

WN: They didn't tell you about that?

MR: They didn't tell me nothing about that.

WN: When you first came and saw them striking, did you know what a strike was?

MR: No, I don't know. I don't know what they was striking for because we don't know nothing when we was in the Philippines. Then when we arrive over here, that's the time we know about it, see. Philippine Government we have that Philippine Consulate, Mr. [Cayetano] Ligot, the name. He was the one fighting the strike and he take all plenty of the Ilocos Norte came over, see. Mostly from Ilocos Norte people because he live in Ilocos Norte and then he tried to get all his people come inside here but it happened that me was taken too because they no used to take from Manila but I told them, "I no live in Manila." I tell them, "I came from the province [Abra] and I like follow my brother because he's gone, see."

"Okay, okay."

That's how I came and then they look my hand but me, I smart, I rub my hand in cement, you know, because they look my hand if I working guy. Oh, that's hard before, you know.

WN: When you rub your hand, who told you about that, that you should do that?

MR: Oh, somebody, somebody told me so I have to do it because if you're a student, you cannot go, see. So I have a personal tax before. I erase "student" and I put "laborer". They not so particular because they like to get people to go, see.

WN: Uh huh.

MR: That's how I came over here.

WN: Was there any trouble during the strike time when you got off the boat or anything like that? Do you remember any kind of trouble?

MR: Oh, yeah, they try to come inside the camp but they guarded the place so we don't have [trouble]. It wasn't that very long. I think one year and pau when I stay over there. That's how happened.

WN: So you didn't know when you came to Pepekeo that your brother would be there?

MR: I didn't know. It's only coincidence that when I arrived in Pepekeo my mind is to get in touch with where my brother is. So I told all my friends over there, like the camp boss--that's the special police take care the camp and became friend of mine because he said if I could help him make all his reports. So I said, "Okay" so that's why he was my good friend so anything I like, he do for me. That's why he ordered all his friends [that] if happen you go someplace and you see somebody look like me to ask. So it happened like I told you. That's how I found him. But he never last long--56 years old he died.

WN: Your brother was registered under another name at the camp?

MR: Well, he changed his name. When he was working in---he never stay long in sugar cane. He move more first than me, see. We separated again but I know already we see each other. He came to Haiku [Maui], see, so he work in the pineapple cannery. He work over there and then I follow but I don't like the pineapple, so they get one store over there [Haiku] so I apply and they accept me.

WN: You know, at Pepekeo...

MR: My job over there?

WN: Yeah. What did you do over there?

MR: We arrive over there in October 1924 and then I don't know what kind of job they going give us, see, so I join the new guys so we follow them and we went over there. First thing we do is we went to cut grass, you know. We start cutting about 7 o'clock [a.m.] until 5 o'clock [p.m.] so at least about ten hours. We earn ten cents an hour so 10 hours you get one dollar, see. And then if you work twenty-two days [a month], then you have 10 percent bonus on top of the \$22.00 so you get \$2.20 more so you get \$24.20 [a month]. That was good for us. We work hard, you know, and the rain, too. So I work October, November and then I think I cannot stand the rain because I never work hard like that before. Even when I stay in Manila, attending school, I working in the drug store. I ask my camp boss. I say, "I wonder if I can go under the shade." So I applied to the mill and they accept me because recommended from that thing so I worked in the machine shop--what do you call that--before you no more those kind like at HC&S. We had that kind automatic dryer for sugar. You do yourself. I have four machine, two for the other guy and two for me, see. We call that centrifugal operator.

WN: Centrifugal.

MR: Centrifugal. When the sugar come down in a big pack, we have to put the sugar inside that tank and then you got to look how much you going put inside. When they say, "All right," then you press the thing and then you open the machine and then it dry itself. It spin around and the molasses go out from the side of that machine and then you wash---they wanted the brown sugar to come inside so you don't have to wash all, so still get little bit molasses when you put them in the thing, see. It takes us about one hour and a half to dry that one load, see, and then after four hours--we resting for four hours--we clean our place and then one more [load] come.

One night if I'm nighttime--sometimes we get chance to work night and you get chance to work daytime, see. One night we have about two or one and a half [loads] because when your time come, the other one take over, see, if you don't finish. So we work another

ten hours there in the night and then daytime, same thing, see. When we get rest like that, you have to be alert when the sugar come down because if you go someplace else and the sugar come down, your job is way behind, like that, and they catch you up. Sometime I go to the camp--I get bicycle and go to the camp but I no stay long. I come back right away, see.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: You mean you could rest during working hours?

MR: Yeah, during working hours because your job is if the sugar come down, you do the job. You sweat up because you go with the sugar--with the machine, so after we finish the thing, they don't bother us. It's up to us what we want to do.

WN: How long a rest in between loads did you get?

MR: Sometimes three or four hours so the sugar sometime come good and sometime get too much molasses and you get hard time to dry it. That's why sometimes it takes us two, two and a half hours to dry that thing, see. Was harder job.

WN: And you get paid by the hour for that?

MR: No, they give us \$33.00 for one month. I know that, plus 10 percent bonus so about \$3.30 more so about \$36.

WN: This bonus was for working [at least] twenty-two days?

MR: Yeah, for working twenty-two days.

WN: So about thirty-six dollars so hō hana time, you were making how much?

MR: Oh, 10 percent of one dollar, how much that?

WN: Ten cents.

MR: Dollar ten cents [\$1.10] if you work twenty-two days, yeah.

WN: What about your housing? Where did you live?

MR: We live in a plantation house, you know. Get free housing, free medical. That's one thing good, see.

WN: What kind housing?

MR: Just like this Puunene house before. No more that kind good kind inside, you know. I think maybe two by twelve, put 'em inside . . .

WN: Boards?

MR: Yeah, and about this space and it's up to you to put---no, before we used to buy bed, you know.

WN: You have to buy bed?

MR: Yeah, you buy your own if you want. They used to give us these cots--army cots--so we sleep over there for temporary and when we get rich little bit, we can buy bed because bed is cheap. Before we can buy bed about twenty dollars, you know. That's cheap before. That's why we get cheap payment but cheap everything you buy, you know. You know this codfish, before ten cents one pound, yeah?

WN: Yeah.

MR: Oil sardine I think is about five cents one [can], you know. One month we spend about ten dollars is plenty.

WN: Where did you buy your things from?

MR: Oh, we have a plantation store. The plantation store they give us almost cost price. It's cheap. Sometimes I spend---I buy all one time because I no like everytime go to the store, see. I buy six dollars worth. I get half-bag rice, oil sardine, codfish and all kind I like eat. Only when fresh meat, then we have to buy. That's how we lived before in the plantation. We don't have hard time, you know, although we cannot save money because it's just right for your living. Three years I worked on the plantation and I get only \$300 in my savings. (Laughs)

WN: Three hundred dollars?

MR: Three hundred dollars. When I came over here, I spend my \$300. I came over here, I get better because...

WN: You mean Haiku?

MR: Haiku. The [Haiku] store pay me forty dollars one month and then I still have free house over there because Haiku Pineapple [i.e., Haiku Fruit and Packing Company] owned the store, see. I get free house and free medical, yet, that time. Hawaiian Pineapple [Company, later, Dole Corporation] bought Haiku Store so Hawaiian Pineapple no like to operate the store, see. In 1935---I think 1934 they bought that store, Maui Dry Goods. I still working in the store and then Maui Dry Goods [was] not responsible for our housing and medical. They give me the same pay but [because of housing and medical costs], almost half gone of my pay. And in 1935, brother, I gotta get married. Me and my wife was engaged for three years before we get married so in that year, 1935, was the time I get all the hard time and my wife she got to work in the pineapple cannery, you know, to help me out because I paying the house and I pay medical. Nineteen thirty-five we get hard time.

So I like to move because my boss--before they sold the Haiku Store--he was transferred to Kauai Merchandise Department because he's under A&B [Alexander & Baldwin.] I wrote to him, I like move over here because I cannot keep up. I pay all my medical and my housing and I cannot keep up and I get married and then the boss said, "You wait little while, you hang on. You hang on your job." And then my wife, in 1936, give birth (chuckles). Hospital, I got to pay all that. More worse, now, see, so 1938, that's the third year I work, I suffer, and then they call me up, Paia Store. They send one guy to tell me in the store. I was working in the [Haiku] Store, you know, I gotta work because how I going support my family and then he said, "Mr. Corell is the manager and he told me he want you to start right away at Paia Store. What time you want to start?"

So I went interview. I interview about Saturday and he said, "Monday, you work." Sure I want to work and they give me three bedroom house, free hospital. Then that's the time I feel so good and I really enjoy my life, you know. That's how we come up.

WN: When you came to Haiku--when you first came--you came to follow your brother, is that it?

MR: Yeah, my brother was first over here but he live [on] his own now. He live [on] his own and I come because he wrote to me, "Brother, over here \$1.50 an hour, you know."

WN: Working in the cannery?

MR: Cannery, yeah. That's a big difference already but I cannot work in the cannery, see, so I applied right away to the store.

WN: How come you couldn't work cannery?

MR: I see the job over there, carrying things, so I went to the store.

WN: How did you get the job in the store?

MR: They told me if I have education. I said, "Yeah." I went high school, see.

They said, "Okay." They accept me so I work on the counter, sales and I learn all the merchandise that was there.

WN: You said back in the Philippines you worked drug store, did you learn anything?

MR: Sure, I learn. You know when I used to work in the drug store, the pharmacy owner he teach me all how to mix up medicine when they get the prescription so I used to make that thing, you know. That's how I learned all those things, you know. But I never come and work drug stores over here, see.

WN: But you learned about other things about the store?

MR: Yeah, I do. In the Philippines I know because I work in the drug store, they have all different kind of merchandise to sell, see, so not only making the prescription, I have to sell all the merchandise.

WN: In Haiku where did you live?

MR: I live in the camp. They have that pineapple camp houses that you can use and only was free from 1927 to 1935. And then the Hawaiian Pineapple [Company]. He don't want to operate the store so Maui Dry Goods bought it. That's how the hard time came.

WN: You lost your...

WN: I lost all the benefits and that's why my boss in Haiku Store that was transferred to Kauai Merchandise Department that's under A&B, he's the one who contacted all the big shots in Honolulu of Alexander & Baldwin but I don't know what he did, but they just call me. I didn't apply.

WN: So what did you do in the Haiku Store? What kind of work?

MR: I work all the general merchandise. I work--sometime--and then the boss pick me up. He said to go help and take some orders in the camp during new month time. Maybe one day I help some guy so I take the order, and then we pile up the order, and then we put up the order, and then deliver and I help deliver, too. That's the hard job, you know. I help deliver but it doesn't take . . . it takes only about one week and then we have a special deliver man for ordinary, everyday order and they deliver and I stay inside [the store].

WN: So only new month order time you would go?

MR: Yeah, and then after that I stay inside to sell inside. I have one department--that's the drug department--and I take care that. I said, "I sell all the rubber cock (i.e., prophylactics] over there." These young boys over there, huh?

(Laughter)

WN: In Haiku?

MR: In Haiku I get plenty friends. Everytime I buy about one dozen and weekend--we was single--we have good fun. They have this bon-odori and everything and I get these inside my pocket, and this friend of mine--one Japanese boy--"I get my friend, you know, but I forget buy that thing. Give me some."

"Yeah, how many you want?"

"Two enough." I give him two. Laugh like hell, the bugga.

WN: How come, you get it free?

MR: Well, yeah, that's for friends. We were all good fun over there. I see all the Japanese boys, good friend for me because sometimes they no can go up to one lady to buy da kine, you know, because get three ladies working with me over there [in the store] and only me the boy.

WN: So they used to tell you to buy the rubber cock?

MR: Yeah. We carry all good kind, too. (Laughs) Weekend, like that, they know I get, see, so they come ask me. One time they get that kind bon-odori, get plenty girls, so a good friend of mine he always depend on me. He like go play the most.

"How many you want?"

"Two enough."

WN: You got it from the store?

MR: Yeah, I bought those things because I get cheaper. When I buy I get cost plus 5 percent, see. Outsiders they buy they get about 25 percent over or 50 percent over.

WN: The drug department in the Haiku Store?

MR: Yeah, they have it.

WN: And what else was there?

MR: We have clothing, you know, and we have some grocery--all mix up inside Haiku Store before--and then we have the meat market. We have this kind electrical on the other side. They sell electrical and this is all under [part of] the store. That's why all different kind department, you know. We have dispensary over there, too.

WN: In the store?

MR: Next door, see. Dr. St. Sure was before. St. Sure. That's the old doctor before stay over there and then the son become a doctor. He was a doctor of this clinic over here before and now he's retired, too. Dr. St. Sure, Frank St. Sure.

WN: How many altogether were working in the Haiku Store?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MR: In the meat market, they have two helpers, one cutting and one helping, you know, and then in the general merchandise, we have two girls and me and one more boy. The boy is sometimes all places go so we get two order [takers] and then get two delivery men.

WN: Where did the delivery men go? How far?

MR: Oh, they go Libby. You know Haiku before was plenty camps, you know. They get the Grove Ranch the other side, and Pauwela. They deliver Pauwela and above Haiku there's a camp over there and we deliver. That's a big area for delivery. Our delivery men they have a district to go. If the deliverymen go to one place or the other place, then he know the people, so if he go deliver that side, it's easy. If the other guy deliver to different place, he stay over there because he [gets to] know the place, he know the people. Good fun. You know Mr. McCoy, he just died lately. He is the collector. He deliver, too, and take orders and he collect money, see. One time he lose his money.

WN: Oh, yeah?

MR: But lucky thing somebody found it.

WN: How much he lost?

MR: Oh, I think about three or four thousand dollars. That's store money, now. They return him. He died, though.

WN: In those days people paid cash?

MR: No, most charge, charge, charge, charge. Even in Paia Store we have most time charge but in Haiku we get the charge account everytime and we can collect from the office.

WN: Oh, payroll deduction?

MR: Payroll deductions, yeah. Even in Paia Store, payroll deductions.

WN: Did they do it regularly or just for people that didn't pay?

MR: No, we do it regularly, yeah.

WN: So if somebody had a thirty dollar bill...

MR: Yeah, we collect that.

WN: First you collect?

MR: Yeah.

WN: But when would you deduct from the paycheck?

MR: When the payday time. The store submit the names and the amount and then there's a notation over there if this guy get about \$100 [bill], then collect maybe about \$30. Leave the balance because the store no going just clean up all your money and you get nothing to do. The arrangement between the two persons, between the buyer and the store. Say, I like buy about \$150 steady, every month. I want to pay only \$50 every month, see. Management, they say okay. That's how we run the business before. And then came out ruling that collecting in the office is not so good for the customers.

WN: Was that when the union came in?

MR: Yeah, I think so. So it's up to them if they want to collect. If they don't want you to collect, then they can pay for themselves. That's how and then that's the time the store come more hard because some people buy and they no pay, see, and then that's the time they start eliminating all the things.

WN: That's about 1946, then?

MR: Nineteen forty-six.

WN: So when you were at Haiku, what did you folks do to have a good time?

MR: Oh, we have good time when I was young yet. I was Haiku 1927 to 1935 and then I get married. I get plenty girls over there, you know. During pineapple season girls from Hilo come over there and we get a big dormitory, you know, and they know me because I stay in the store. We make date--"Hey, we going someplace, okay."

WN: Oh, you mean busy time?

MR: No, no, weekend. No more job, eh, no more work so I used to pick up girls. We going Hana, you know. I get one old Chrysler. (Laughs) Sometimes we get about two girls. We going Hana, you know, and we get stuck in the middle of the road over there because my car the gasoline no can go up, no can pump, you know. What we going do now. They're nice girls, you know, from Hilo.

WN: They came to work in the cannery?

MR: Cannery only for season time, yeah. We get good fun. I was single yet. In 1932 my wife was finishing school in Pauwela and then I see her. I was thinking I'm getting older because in 1932 I was 30 years [old] already. I no can find one good Filipino girl. My time I no can find no Filipino girls, nice girls, because they're scarce, not too many. So I try my luck and she say okay.

WN: She's local born?

MR: Local born, and then I cannot marry her until she get 18. When I was engaged with her, she was about 15 to 16, you know, so I got to wait at least four to three years and the father told me, "When she get 18, you get married." So I wait. I'm a good guy, you know. Why not. When you love a person you got to sacrifice, huh?

WN: Uh huh.

MR: But before that I get good time. Yeah, that's my life.

(Laughter)

WN: In Pepeekeo you did stuff like that, too?

MR: Oh, yeah, before--son of a gun--before we had good time, too, you know, because I scared wahine over there before. One time in our camp those dirty wahines they came over and they only charge you two dollars, you know. Get one guy he give her his room for play and me, I no like. I no like that. My brother did.

WN: This is the Big Island time?

MR: Big Island. My brother did and he got sick.

WN: Oh yeah.

MR: Yeah, he got sick. We don't know how to kill that but somebody told us. He said you know the sweet potato leaves, you boil the thing and you drain the soup, the juice, and drink the thing. I go boil and I give to my brother. My brother start drinking, drinking so when he shishi, it is green one. He cleaning up all the thing, you know. You know the sweet potato when you boil, all the water is come green and that's the medicine inside. Up to one week, the thing...

WN: You mean, for venereal disease?

MR: Yeah, you get the thing, pus coming out from the prick. So this ladies were dirty so I never mingle with them. Lots of good times before, but some hard times.

WN: So that was actually a prostitute house?

MR: Prostitute, yeah, and they come in the camp. You know payday time, they parading over there, you know, but before they not so strict about they staying in the plantation. Most of them is Puerto Ricans, different kind nationality. Payday they come. They nice looking, you know, but....They made money, you know. Like us, we pay two dollars and we earning ten cents one hour. (Laughs)

WN: That's expensive, yeah?

MR: Expensive.

WN: What about Haiku? Had anything like that?

MR: No, I don't know. I don't think so. Some they get this kind thing but they not open. More better get sweetheart and then get steady.

WN: One day in Haiku Store, about how much volume of sale would come in?

MR: That, I don't know though. One day maybe about \$500 to \$1,000. Before small volume of gross when you buy. When you buy \$10 you get plenty already, cheap. Maybe about \$1,000, \$1,500 one day. In new month maybe about \$10,000.

WN: What about [pineapple] season time, was it more busy?

MR: More busy because we get season only about three months over there and then all the girls go home. Some lonesome, you know, that camp. Still, they operating, but only the local girls go inside.

WN: Where did they get the goods from, the Haiku Store? You know, the wholesalers?

MR: Well, they buy from Honolulu. They buy from mainland because we get a big store before, you know. They get all type, all kinds and they buy the meat from Haleakala Ranch.

WN: So had Filipino food and Japanese food, too?

MR: Yeah, yeah, Japanese food mostly get plenty. Filipino we have. Filipino food, they mostly buy this kind codfish, iriko, ebi and all kind and then meat, corned beef, and all this kind.

WN: Bagoong?

MR: Bagoong, yeah, they buy.

WN: Did somebody make the bagoong or they got it from someplace?

MR: Well, right now we have this special from the Philippines and they get distributor in Honolulu now and even all this big store they have this kind now, but before we don't have too much of those, and then somebody used to make, you know. They make their own like aku. They grind the aku and then they put it in a gallon and they salt 'em up and that's how the bagoong come out.

WN: Somebody in the camp made it?

MR: Not that I remember. Not Filipino.

WN: Were there other stores besides the plantation store in Haiku?

MR: Yeah, we have one Chinese store and we call that Ah Chow Store. Small one, though. It was right in Haiku.

WN: What kind of things did that store have?

MR: Oh, they sell any kind too, all merchandise. They sold rice, all kind. Ah Chow is no more already, all gone. I remember those things.

WN: While you were at Haiku in 1937 there was a Filipino strike?

MR: Yeah, I think---I remember and they even put them [strikers] on the beach over here [Kahului] but they not successful because when the Filipinos tried, the Japanese working so no can do nothing so 1946 when the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] went inside, not only one section, the whole thing and that's how got solid and that was the time that the laborers improved their life. And I know that because before that I was working in the plantation. We had to live with ourselves, too, you know. Before you cannot buy car. Where you going buy car, no more. Only the big shot can buy cars because it was low wages but when the union came inside, then they fix up everything. We have to get a standard of living. I know for myself because I sacrificed for how many years, from 1924 to 1946. Our wages is very low yet. I believe the union wen make 'em.

WN: When you were working at Paia Store, you folks were part of the union too?

MR: When the union came in, yeah, we are. We have to join the union, too. I don't want them to call us scabs.

WN: So you folks walked out in . . .

MR: The store, no. We don't walk out but we pay the union. We give them so much of our wages to support the strike. They no touch the store. We work but every worker belongs to the union. They have to give so much, percent of your wage, you know, to help the union.

WN: So you folks had to work?

MR: Yeah, I work. We work, my wife work, too. My wife work, you know, because 1941 I get only sixty-five dollars [a month] and I get my daughter. My daughter is about six years old, see. I grumble to the boss. I said, "Hey, I get my wife, my child and no 'nuff my pay."

"I cannot raise you now. If I raise you now, I got to raise everybody." And then he said, "Your wife like to work? You like to give her a job."

"Sure, I like her work."

He said, "Okay, send her tomorrow." Nineteen forty-one just the war wen break out and my wife went work at Paia Store.

WN: You both worked full time?

MR: Yeah. She used to take care the merchandise, material.

WN: When you told me how you got the job with that Mr. Corell?

MR: Mr. Corell?

WN: Yeah.

MR: I get the job through Alexander & Baldwin by recommendation of Sterling Danforth. He's my manager in Haiku Store.

WN: What was his name?

MR: Sterling Danforth.

WN: Sterling Danforth, yeah.

MR: He's my boss in Haiku Store before the Hawaiian [Pineapple Company] bought it and he was transferred to Kauai.

WN: So the wages you got at Paia Store was sixty-five dollars?

MR: I get sixty-five dollars, yeah, then come up, come up some more.

WN: And then when you started at Paia Store, you started to get the benefits again from the plantation?

MR: Plantation benefits, yeah. Right away they give me a nice house, you know, three bedrooms for only three of us.

WN: Where was the house?

MR: Right by the Nashiwa Camp place. That's the Orpheum Camp they call that before. Nice place, close to everything, you know. Close to the store and close to the church, close to Nashiwa Bakery right there. You like go eat bread crust, I just walk a few distance and I buy something from them.

WN: Did you live with the laborers in that area?

MR: Oh, yeah, yeah, all the laborers, yeah. That's the labor camp.

WN: What did you do in the Paia Store?

MR: Paia Store, well, I help in the warehouse. When I started I worked in the warehouse, you know. Stock new merchandise that come in,

put 'em inside and if not busy, I go inside the packing department. We have a packing department right behind the store so any order that the front clerk going take, they take over there if it's for deliver or not. If it's for deliver, we have to put up, see, put up the order [i.e., gather the merchandise]. That's what we do over there. We get about four guys that were there. Then they found out that they need men to go out every afternoon to take orders so they...

WN: Salesmen [order takers], you mean?

MR: Yeah, salesmen [order takers]. Every afternoon I go out to one camp, one afternoon. In the morning I bring the order over there [the store] and then they put up the order and then they deliver. Then I go to a different camp, I take another order and then the next morning, they put up that order and they deliver, see. That's my job before. They had about four guys over there taking orders because plenty people. Me, I take care the Filipino, the Portuguese and the Puerto Ricans. Wherever they stay. I no touch the Japanese. They get two Japanese people going.

WN: Oh, you mean, you wouldn't be assigned by camp then?

MR: Yeah, assigned camp. I go all the time to pick up orders from Filipinos and...

WN: Oh.

MR: That's my department now to take care the Filipinos, the Puerto Ricans and the Portuguese, but the most customer is Japanese, see, so in one camp one guy no can cover all, you know, get so many. I no touch the Japanese, too. I go to the Filipino and the others.

WN: So if you go into, say, Keahua...

MR: Yeah, Keahua.

WN: And you taking orders to the Filipinos and if you come to a Japanese house, you would skip that house?

MR: Yeah, you know, I no like to jam up the other order men. I no like take the thing, see, unless they tell me, "Okay." Before every salesman [order taker] at the end of the month, it is all posted over there how much you take order, how much business you take.

WN: Oh, moneywise.

MR: Moneywise, see. Sometimes I get number one over there, you know, because I get big sales and one guy, Kawakami, number two, and sometimes he go on top me, too. That's how the pressure come in. You have to show that you're making that business to pay you. [Then the] business got slack because that's the time when they make that regulation that you can buy any place you want and they

don't have to you buy Firestone, then they don't want you to collect your money, the payment, you can't. Business time the old customers, sometimes they spread out. They go Lower Paia, buy all kinds, and everything. Then the business come slow. And then that's the time they cut down salesmen [order takers]. They cut down all that thing, you know. Finally, no more order taking so what we going do. We get how many guys so I'm lucky I get good seniority. And that's the time I bought this house [in Kahului], too, you know.

WN: So that's when you moved Kahului?

MR: Yeah, I moved Kahului and at the same time they eliminating my job over there, see, so I do good so he put me right away over here [A&B Commercial Company].

WN: That was 1950?

MR: Nineteen fifty.

WN: Okay, you said every month they list down how much the salesmen [order takers] got?

MR: How much sales, yeah.

WN: So what if you were kind of low?

MR: Well, low, they kind of watch you, you know. (Chuckles) You know the pressure come because they try to eliminate. The management try to---they understand that we cannot take too much order already because people in the camp they free to buy any place they want to buy. One time the boss say they going give us a list--what time you leave, what time you reach to the first customer, put your time and that's how they checking you if you're working or not. (Laughs)

WN: You have to put down how many houses you stopped by?

MR: Yeah, you see, you put the name, house number and the name of the person. If she buy or not, how many minutes you stay over there.

WN: Oh.

MR: That's hard.

WN: You have to write how much they bought, too?

MR: No, you don't have to write how much they bought but how many minutes you stayed with them. If they no buy nothing, you cannot stay too long--maybe about two, three minutes, five minutes.

WN: When they list you folks' name on the board, they list by how many houses you stopped by or how much they bought?

- MR: No, how much business they make. They no tell you what place you went or something but they want the amount.
- WN: How much was bought?
- MR: Yeah, for the whole month.
- WN: Oh, oh. So when you stopped by somebody's house, what did you tell them to get them to buy something?
- MR: Anything you need tomorrow or we have some new stuff like this, you know. You recommend what you like to sell. Sometime they buy; sometime, "Oh, I get plenty that kind so I don't think I'll buy that today." But the time go out, you no can stay over there. Yeah, that's how. You know we had pressure in Paia Store but we have to abide the law, you know.
- WN: How many houses in one day you would go?
- MR: Well, depends. In new month, maybe if I start in the afternoon, I can cover up about ten or fifteen houses because if the person buy about fifteen dollars [worth] it takes you almost two hours to figure what you want to buy because "No, no, no, maybe I like this some more." It takes your time, you know. You got to give the customer time to think what more he like. You cannot force her. Sometime one hour, sometime half an hour. That's the hardest one, new month time, new orders.
- WN: So when it's not new month time, how was it?
- MR: You see, they get everything already so what only they miss new month time they like buy some more and if we have some good stuff come in, new one, then we have to recommend what we have and if you want try or something like that. That's how. They did almost one year, you know, checking up like that.
- WN: One year for who to check up?
- MR: Managers because all the sales slip you get, they all put together and then they add. You get a book--nobody can use your book, see. They know your book so they all pile up in one section and then before the end of the month, they tally and put 'em over there. "Mariano, one month, so much." Yeah, that's how.
- WN: What if you had to go far places and other salesmen [order takers] got to go to the nearer places?
- MR: Same thing.
- WN: Did they take that into account?
- MR: Yeah, yeah. Me I go H. Poko [Hamakua Poko]. I get the farthest to go, you know.

WN: They didn't give you a break?

MR: No, no, because it's up to the time. You're riding.

WN: So you would start taking orders in the afternoon?

MR: Afternoon but new month time I start in the morning.

WN: When would the deliveries be made?

MR: We usually deliver I think on the twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, after the end of the month, all clear up because all the order taking, we'll never charge on the month you take but on the second month, the following month.

WN: So if you took one order on the twentieth, when would...

MR: Well, you see, they cannot deliver all in one place, you know, so maybe H. Poko the first one they deliver, maybe on the twenty-fourth. Hamakua Poko is one day over there and the next day maybe Kaheka, you see. Maybe you no can deliver all on one day for Keheka because they got plenty people and then the next day, Paia Camp. Paia Camp is a big area so at least two days to finish the job. We have at Ulupalakua, too, so get one special truck to go over there, Ulupalakua and Makawao. They will arrange that and they make it. Big order, you know. That's how the job was.

WN: Lot of pressure, huh?

MR: Lot of pressure. And when I work over here, too, there is another pressure before, you know. I hate to tell this kind but some place they found out pilferage, you know. You know pilferage--looting stuff and everything, you know.

WN: What happened?

MR: You know that stock short or something like that. They like to find out how the merchandise go because too much loss, eh.

WN: In Paia Store you didn't do any of the delivering?

MR: We do.

WN: Oh, you did, oh.

MR: New month, we got to help, you know.

WN: New month, you delivered?

MR: Oh, yeah. And sometime not even new month, if get special delivery and a person need it badly, I have to deliver. During the war [World War II] nobody can go to--what is that?--airport. The airport before was military place in Kahului. I'm the only one who

come over to deliver because they scared. The Japanese [store employees] they no can come because it's war time so the boss told me, "I think you will take care that military place."

WN: You was the only Filipino there?

MR: No, I have some delivery boys. I get two Filipinos that are truck drivers. Me, I'm the salesman.

WN: Taking orders?

MR: Taking orders and deliver special delivery. I come deliver over here, too. I get special car.

WN: So you used to go by the airport?

MR: By the airport, yeah. When the army before stay over there, well, I'm the only one that can go over there and deliver. I get the permit, see. I get the badge to wear and authorized me.

WN: Oh, Paia Store delivered to the military too?

MR: Yeah, military, yeah. They get special---they get orders over there, too.

WN: They charge too?

MR: Oh, yeah, they pay. But, they not buying too much, only what they need.

WN: So war time you were the only one that could go out?

MR: Well, in Paia Store, I'm the only one who would go over there and deliver.

WN: You also said you were an interpreter at Paia Store?

MR: No, not in Paia Store, in the boat.

WN: Oh, but you didn't...

MR: In 1946 the new immigrants came for the plantation so we stayed over there for a long time, me and my wife, so the company told us if we could help them interpret. We said, "Okay." So we received the information what the company wanted to tell them. We tell them all, you know, but most of those [immigrants who came] in 1946, they are educated. They can speak English. When they arrive, somebody got to make food for them, see, so we fix. Only one day, we stay with them and we arrange what the company wanted to do with them and then we tell them and then we write all the names.

WN: What kind of things did you have to tell them?

MR: Well, what the company said. Maybe the company said you're going to work someplace else or something like that so it's up to the company [to tell them]. But what we do over there is to explain to them what they going to do and what the company want to do because they're the one responsible to receive them. They need to know what they going to do, see. After they are all fixed up, they get a house to go, then it's up to the company and we get nothing to do already. If they need our help, then we can help them. In 1946, oh, plenty people came in. Was good and was after the war.

I get two brothers in Manila. I want them to come and even the assistant manager help me to get them over here because I was working store and then they know me. They scared, they no like come. They was taking care my mother, that's why. My mother died in 1946, see.

WN: They didn't want to come?

MR: They didn't want to come.

WN: You said you noticed less and less customers because people free to go to others?

MR: Free, yeah, that's right.

WN: Also, about 1950, some of the camps...

MR: They start closing up and then they start breaking up the place, the camp, that's why they start this project over here [Kahului] to move the people working in the plantation that are living in the camps. I was the first one and lucky guy to get this place here. Every camp they were moving so naturally no more customer, too, at the store. Paia, Orpheum Camp, all clean up.

WN: You really noticed it in 1960 that there were less people around?

MR: Yeah, less customers.

WN: And your job, did you leave voluntarily or you got laid off from your job at Paia Store?

MR: No, I was not laid off. Before they eliminate that place, I wen move over here already, see, and then they cut down, cut down. When I came over here, then I settle up and my wife still working the other side, see.

WN: Paia?

MR: Paia, so not very long, no more one year over there, so the manager at Paia Store used to live someplace in Wailuku so he pick her up to go to work. Then it happened that Kahului Store sold dry goods

so one of the men who took care the men's furnishings was put out, see, so he pick up my wife. "Can you take care the men's furnishings?"

"Oh, I try." She like to come because our home over here [Kahului] already and so that's why she get the job. So she take care the men's furnishings. She do the buying for them and everything.

WN: How much did you pay for this?

MR: This is cheap, you know. When I bought this one was \$7,350.

WN: The house and lot?

MR: House and lot, but of course, I didn't pay cash, though. I paid monthly for twenty years. Nineteen seventy, I clear up. Was cheap. Somebody offered me \$100,000 already.

WN: Yeah? What did you do when you moved to A&B Kahului [Store]?

MR: A&B Kahului, I told you I worked in the wholesale department. I worked with these girls over there. We sell merchandise, especially groceries, in cases. Some stores they come buy and we sell.

WN: Any store could come and buy?

MR: Sure. Wailuku stores they come buy all the time. They need one case Carnation milk, one case of tuna...they buy all by cases, except those kinds separate one. We sell electrical, too, you know. We wholesale, see.

WN: Did you go out and sell or you stayed in the...

MR: No, I stayed in. Good fun. I stayed over there 1950. Almost four years I stayed in the wholesale department.

WN: Then you moved...

MR: Then merchandise, 1954, right when my daughter left for the mainland, she was out already when I was transferred so then I transferred to the merchandise department in 1954. Then I worked over there in the counter. At the same time, the locksmith transferred to the HC&S Company, see, so they told me, "If you want to learn about locks..."

I said, "Sure."

"Okay, you take over this thing and if you not busy, you clerk at the counter."

Okay, so I get two job, see. So they teach me all about recombining locks and everything, then when I know everything,

then I stay over there. I made the lock of Wailuku Sugar--the whole thing. Yeah, I recombine Pioneer Mill [Lahaina], and all these new schools. When I was over there, I make all this. Good job, though.

WN: When you look back, what was your best job?

MR: Best job if I look back?

WN: Yeah.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 7-42-1-80; SIDE ONE

MR: The best job was when I was transferred to that merchandise department because I learned everything. I learned everything, how to sell reinforcing steel and all this thing. We used to figure by ounces and then put the price, you know, by the weight on the iron that we selling before. And this lumber by cubic feet. We used to figure all this in cubic feet and how much a cubic foot. That's a hard one, you know, before but later on they found it is easier to figure all the price in one length and one piece, then more easy for us to sell. But the starting before was some hard, you know. We had to learn, you know, because reinforcing steel is about twenty feet long and a foot weighed about so many pounds or something like that, then we had to find out in pounds because they cost by the weight. Then later on, I think about two years, then they said, "Change this to metric, you know." Instead of finding out how many cubic feet in one piece of board, put one whole piece and that's the time they changed and more easy for us. I stay in the counter until I retire.

WN: When you were a salesman [order taker] at Paia Store going out to the camp, like today, they don't have that kind of system any more of taking orders and deliveries?

MR: I don't think so.

WN: Now it's cash and carry.

MR: Cash and carry now, yeah, that's what happened.

WN: How do you feel about that change or that difference?

MR: Well, it's better for the business [i.e., cash and carry], but they got to cut down employees because they don't want people to go over there and solicit. And the business they get their money right there when they come and pay cash and carry. I think it's good for business.

WN: For cash and carry?

MR: Yeah. But only no good for labor because they have to cut down labor. That's the trouble. That's good for business. Gee, you know, they eliminate all the stores already. They eliminate the stores and the camps, then they plant the cane. All cane field, you know. The only thing I know--in Puunene--they going leave only those few homes close to the post office and all the rest is to be cleaned up.

WN: What about the Paia side homes?

MR: Oh, there's no homes over there now eh? Only little bit more on that side. They going broke all those things. Nobody going stay over there now except those below the mill by the post office before, those are private homes now. They bought those. Farther in Lower Paia I don't think nobody living in that place now. They going break all those things down and plant cane. They eliminate the camps and improve cane--sugar cane. Now more land to plant. I think it is better for the people because if not, we stay in the plantation and we don't own these homes. It's more convenient for the people--us--now. We sacrifice, we have to pay for this home but in the long run we better off. You own the place.

WN: Did you have to draw lots to get to buy into this place [i.e., Dream City]?

MR: No, no, because when they was figuring out to make this one, we sign that we want a home. We was one of the first one, me and my wife. She say, "Hey, I no like stay over here everytime. We got to own places."

I said, "Oh, sure." And then they call us up, you know.

"You pick up your lot." Not they draw, you know. Us before, you know, the first one. You pick out what place you want. If not taken, that's yours so my wife she like this model and the place is level, nice and level. It's 10,000 square feet and my wife like the house because way in front, see. Big room behind, see....I don't know what she was thinking but maybe that's why we raise orchids. That's good.

WN: If you look back at your life, you spent most of your life working in stores, yeah?

MR: Yeah, working in stores. Even when I was in the Philippine Islands. I go school, I go work in the store daytime. It's a drug store, you know. I spend my time and I get experience in the store all my life. Only when I was in Pepekeo, that's when I work in ordinary labor, you know, outside maybe one or two months and then I went inside the mill and from there...

WN: If you could do it all over again, would you do it the same way or what things would you have done differently?

MR: No, I wouldn't go back to what I have done already. It's hard. Life at present is more better. It's better than before, improved. Even you, yourself, too. You get money, huh? Before my daughter in 1954 when she went school, I have only about seventy-five dollars or sixty-five dollars. We still have low wages before, you know, but my wife is working so we get double so we can send every time to my daughter. Sometime not enough we have to get ourselves, too, you know. We had the credit union. Every year we borrow money and pay the one year expense for my daughter at college and then we pay the whole year and then the next year we . . . Hey, that's what I do before. For four years for my daughter. Thank God, she's finished. Only me and my wife now. Nothing to worry. Yeah, that's all.

WN: Okay, thanks very much Mr. Reyes.

MR: That's good.

END OF INTERVIEW

**STORES and
STOREKEEPERS of
Paia & Puunene, Maui**

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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

June 1980