

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: FORTUNATO MOLLE, fisherman

Fortunato Molle, Filipino, was born in Cebu, Philippine Islands, June 5, 1905. He went to Lahaina on Maui from Manila in 1924, where he worked at hapai ko and cutting cane. In 1944, he went to Waialua and worked as a plumber's helper for the U.S. Engineering Department; later he worked in the boiler room. He got laid off in 1950 and went into the fishing business.

Fortunato is still fishing. He and his wife live in Waialua.

Notes No. 1-N3-1-76

NOTES ON ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Fortunato Molle (FM)

July 8, 1976

BY: Pablo Lazo (PL)

(The following notes are from an unrecorded interview; the conversation written here is nearly verbatim. Mr. Molle did not wish to be tape recorded.)

PL: How did you find out about the jobs here in Hawaii?

FM: Agent came around our place. Left Philippines, June 1924 with wife. (He was only 19 years old.) Stationed at Lahaina Sugar Plantation.

PL: Will you tell me what kind your first job was?

FM: Cut cane, but mostly hapai ko and then contract work.

PL: What kind of contract work did you do there?

FM: Growing cane or cutting cane. Sometimes make \$3.50 a day and this is good money then. Work here for 19 years. And then in 1944, came here to Waiialua.

PL: Why did you come here to Waiialua? Is it because you're not making money, or the work is too hard or what?

FM: My kids wanted me to come down when they got married.

PL: When you came here, what kind of job did you have?

FM: Plumber helper.

PL: Who did you work for?

FM: I was working for U.S.E.D. (United States Engineering Department) at Schofield.

PL: How much did you get paid?

FM: 75¢ and then came up to about \$1.05 an hour. And then in 1945, worked in boiler room. \$1.50 an hour I got paid for. 1950, got laid off.

PL: What did you do after you got laid off?

FM: In 1950, I went fishing.

PL: What kind of fishing did you do? Is it hook and pole, net?

FM: Oh, I bought a boat. Twenty feet. Net fishing.

PL: Why did you decide to go fishing? Did anybody tell you that fishing is a good business?

FM: Nobody told me. I went fishing because I had experience in the Philippines.

PL: How much did it cost you to start fishing?

FM: The boat cost about two hundred dollars and two hundred dollars for the motor. Went fishing with son-in-law at the beginning.

PL: Where did you sell the fish that you caught there?

FM: If big catch, I go sell in town. (Auction.) If little bit, I sell house to house around the camp.

PL: Has fishing always been good?

FM: Before, get plenty fish like kumu, akule, menpachi, but since people use aqualung, now no more.

PL: What else besides catching fish did you go for?

FM: Lay lobster net, but never go for three to four years now. I have new lobster net outside and maybe I try someplace where nobody touch.

PL: What years did you have good business?

FM: In the '50s.

PL: Did you ever have a bad time in fishing?

FM: Oh, yeah. Evening time leave net, and morning time no more, no can find net. Catch bad weather. I lost my net about five times since started fishing.

PL: How much did it cost for one net?

FM: About five hundred dollars.

PL: Anything else that was a bad time?

FM: Oh. In 1967, I lost my boat, wen sink. I think it was in May; get too greedy, huh. When I came home, I said to my wife, "I give up."

But she cry.

PL: Why did the boat sink?

FM: I told my helpers that got enough already, but they said get three more turtles. But there was eleven turtles.

PL: How big the turtles was ?

FM: About three hundred to four hundred pounds.

PL: How many turtles were in the boat when it sank?

FM: 22 turtles sink already. No more twenty minutes. Sink, but before went down, I shoot flare. The plane saw the flare.

PL: What plane?

FM: The haole guy who drive plane, who spark the fish. I also, try use radio before boat went down, but plane said help is on the way. Boy, quick the rescue came.

PL: Coast Guard rescue?

FM: No, fire engine boat from Haleiwa. Lost plenty that year.

PL: Did you lose your boat completely?

FM: No, my son and some friends pulled it up. They put fifteen tubes (tire tubes) and pump it, he float.

PL: Where did it sink?

FM: Outside Kawaihoa, about one mile out. Forty feet water.

PL: Tell me more about your catches, like turtles or fish or lobsters. These catches have good price?

FM: Turtles are cheap. 15¢ a pound, but before, no kapu for catch turtle. And people jealous because I catch plenty. But two years ago, kapu on turtle. Limit size to 35 inches. But before, can catch anything.

PL: Did you ever get caught by a game warden?

FM: Only about two times. I paid \$25 each time. My friends fix me up so I don't have to go court. So, if game warden see you with turtle net, tell him you only catch shark meat.

PL: Did you use to catch shark?

FM: Yes, shark jaw, sell. Meat, throw away. Before we hustle for catch

shark. Ten cents a pound. That's why not plenty shark before. Now, shark meat no can sell. Haleiwa before, catch shark for extra money, that.

PL: Did you ever give credit to some people?

FM: If some don't pay, don't give next time.

PL: Who help you catch fish? Do you go looking for help or they come to ask you?

FM: They come and ask if they can come with me to catch fish.

PL: How many helpers do you have?

FM: Now, one haole and one Hawaiian helper. They are old friends. I get two now.

PL: How big is a good catch?

FM: Heavy catch, five tons. Sometimes ten tons. I don't go to big business. I no go to other island now. I only go to what I call manini business.

PL: What time you usually go out fishing?

FM: Go out morning and sometimes night time.

PL: How often you go fishing?

FM: When get good water.

PL: What month get good fishing?

FM: Only three months a year. Summer time, about May get good water.

PL: Oh, yeah, and before the plane spark the fish for you, what did you do to spark fish? Did you listen to radio if get good water or what?

FM: On top a tree, look outside for school of fish, sometimes about the size of this house.

PL: What else? What kind signs you look for if get fish or no fish?

FM: If get new moon and also full moon, you know akule come in.

PL: When plane spark fish for you, how much you pay the guy?

FM: If big catch, sometimes take twenty percent of the catch.

PL: Will you tell me more about fishing?

- FM: Bottom fishing--bait, use cuttle fish(squid) or use live akule (the small one is called halalu). Throw 150 hooks one time.
- PL: What kind fish you catch when bottom fishing?
- FM: Pakapaka, uhu, sea bass, ulua, any kind. Kumu good price fish. Menpachi, very high prize, this kind Japanese fish.
- PL: Do you have machine to know if get fish on bottom?
- FM: I had before. But expensive. Lost it when boat went down.
- PL: How does this machine work?
- FM: It draw. You see picture on the machine. It draw the mountains. Go up and down. And if get fish, the machine tell you.
- PL: What kind fishing is good business?
- FM: Aku good business. But got to have crew, (five) good worker, steady men. But cannot find good helpers, so sold net to young pake and now make good money.
- PL: Do you make own net? Did you make net and sell it?
- FM: Before, make net, but hard for sew. Better buy. It's more cheap. Now, buy ready-made.
- PL: Is your boat at Haleiwa Harbor? How you pay?
- FM: Pay twenty dollars a month. 28 feet boat.
- PL: Did you hear about Filipinos cannot go fishing before?
- FM: Yes, from about 1925 until Martial Law (c.1941). No can fish, because at 1924 strike, Filipino catch plenty fish, so Hawaiian made law. Filipino no can fish.
- PL: You mean this was what happened when you was at Lahaina?
- FM: Yes.
- PL: Because this happen here, too, according to Tata Tantog, so it must be all over the islands, huh, Tata?
- FM: Could be.
- PL: How much you pay if game warden catch you?
- FM: Five dollars. Can go dive with hook and catch kurita, though.
- PL: How you know where to go hook fish with pole?

FM: Friends go tell over there, that place bites like hell. So I go, but some no tell. But you know if people catch fish, because they bring out.

PL: How about spending free time? Did you join clubs?

FM: Fishing clubs before. Because if no join, no more friends. Club-- when somebody die in family, give money. Hard time if no money, and no family. Just bury you like dog.

PL: Will you tell me more about fishing stories you have?

FM: Hook fish at night. Put out light (Coleman lantern). Any kind fish come. Menpachi hang around light, too.

PL: What kind bait (besides those already mentioned) you use?

FM: Mosquito fish (small kind) bait for good fish--kumu, weke. But not too much now, because talapia eats this fish (mosquito fish.) I think talapia come from Mainland.

PL: What year you think it came here?

FM: Around '56, because '50 no more yet.

NOTES OUTSIDE HOUSE WHILE ABOUT TO LEAVE:

FM: These traps go about three hundred to four hundred feet water.

PL: What things go inside?

FM: Fish, haole crabs.

PL: How much go inside one time, most time?

FM: 20 to 25 pounds. Sometimes fifty pounds.

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