

Tape Number 34-46-1-00

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

George McEldowney (GM)

July 13, 2000

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This is an interview with George McEldowney. It's July 13, 2000 and the interviewer is Holly Yamada.

First, I'm going to ask you when and where you were born.

GM: I was born in Honolulu in 1916.

HY: I know this is a complicated question for you, but where did you grow up?

GM: In Honolulu, of course, on O'ahu. I went to school in various schools. Kindergarten, I guess, was in Miss Soper's school. I went to Central Grammar School, and Lincoln School, and Kahuku School, and then Punahou School, and Leilehua. I graduated (from) Leilehua High School.

HY: Maybe before we get into that—because you moved around a little bit on this island, yeah?

GM: Yeah, well, kind of a long story, but after I was born, shortly after that, World War I started. My father [George A. McEldowney] was in the navy then and he was transferred to the Mainland and eventually ended up in Bermuda. My mother [Alice McEldowney, nee Shiel] and I traveled from Honolulu to Bermuda. After the war was over, we left Bermuda and went to live in Spokane, Washington. And we left there in 1920. Came back to Honolulu. My father was working then with the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association as a forester. So he moved around the island planting trees in various areas. So we first lived on Lunalilo Street. Then we moved to Mānoa. And we lived in Mānoa for several years then moved out to Kahuku for about a year and a half, then moved back to Honolulu. Shortly after that, we moved out to Wahiawā.

HY: About how old were you when you moved to Wahiawā, would you say?

GM: Oh, in the seventh grade, whatever.

HY: About twelve?

GM: Whenever it was, seventh grade.

- HY: Maybe we can backtrack a little bit and I'll ask you about your parents. Maybe we can start with your father, where he's from originally.
- GM: My father was originally from Adrian, Michigan. He moved from Adrian to Detroit and eventually across the country and he worked in Washington. He went to the University of California and worked up in Alaska on the Coast and Geodetic Survey on the Alaskan boundary line. After that he came to Honolulu and worked for the Department of, at that time, Department of Public Works. Then World War I started after that. And he lived the rest of the time and worked in Hawai'i from then, after he got back from the Mainland in 1920.
- My mother was born in Portland, Oregon, and she lived in Salem, Oregon for a while. Then they moved to Spokane and lived in Spokane for a long period of time. And then my father met her in Spokane and they were married and then moved to Honolulu.
- HY: So when he moved to Honolulu to do his public works job, they were married, so, they both came along?
- GM: Right.
- HY: So the first place that you lived for a while on this island was Mānoa?
- GM: Mānoa. Right.
- HY: Maybe you could talk a little bit about your neighborhood there.
- GM: The neighborhood was, of course, in those days, the houses were large and the property was large. We lived right across from the East Mānoa Road right across from the park in East Mānoa Road. And we lived—we had a large house, very comfortable and very nice place to live. And, of course, at that time, we were going to Central Grammar School. I remember my father would take us to (school) when he went to work in the morning. He would take us to school and we'd come home on the streetcar. Nowadays, of course, you'd never do that because it'd be too dangerous. Kids, in those days, we would go down and take the streetcar in King Street and go home. So really it was a nice place to live up there.
- HY: How many siblings do you have?
- GM: I had a brother and sister. My sister lives on Maui now. And my brother was lost in World War II in Italy.
- HY: You said you lived in a big house. What was it like? You can talk about the yard, and the homes, and the structure.
- GM: Yeah, it was a large yard. It was a three-bedroom house with a large screened-in *lānai* in the back. There was a large understory where they had a washhouse like place to wash clothes. There was also a large room down there, a storage room. Out in the back we had chicken coops. So was kind of real country. And the garage is in the back because there's an alleyway that goes in the back that parallels East Mānoa [Road]. So it was quite different than it is now.

- HY: Now was that — I know you were so little then. You were about four years old, I guess. Four or five? Do you remember making any kind of adjustment from your—you had been living in Spokane and then you're now . . .
- GM: No, because (I was) only around four years old. I vaguely remember the trip on the boat coming down, and I remember arriving in Honolulu. I remember all the *Poinciana* trees and things like that made an impression. And we lived on Lunalilo Street for, I don't know how long, maybe a year, a year and a half. I remember that part. I remember walking to school. Miss Soper's school is where the HSPA [Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association] Experiment Station was and where the Makiki Park is now. We used to walk to school, two or three blocks.
- HY: What do you remember else about that school?
- GM: Very little except there was a big cow pasture alongside. I remember that. Beyond that I don't remember a great deal.
- HY: What about your neighborhood in Mānoa? Do you remember other children, playing with neighbors or . . .
- GM: Yeah, most of the people that live in the area. Later on I got to know other people. School and so on. Met them all the way through school.
- HY: Do you remember who your neighbors were?
- GM: Next door to us was the Winant family. Down the street was the Linnemann family. Across the street from us was the Young family. Behind us was the Steere family. (Pause) The Moore family lived across the park on the *mauka* side of this park. Doctor [Rudolph] Benz lived down on the corner. Gee, I don't remember beyond that.
- HY: Well that's pretty good. (Chuckles) I think the last time when I talked to you, you mentioned that you, I think it was when you were living in Mānoa, you used to come to UH and you were picking . . .
- GM: Yeah, of course, the university is entirely different than it is now. Had very few buildings. Had a big agricultural area in the back with a pasture and chicken runs, and had a dairy and sold the eggs. And we walked down from our place down there with a—I remember taking a gunny sack and I think we had a little wagon—and we'd go down and pick up algaroba or *kiawe* beans on the campus and take them down and sell them to the dairy. I forgot what they paid us, but it wasn't very much I'm sure. But that's the first I remember hearing about the university at all.
- HY: What would the dairy do with them?
- GM: They'd feed it to the cattle. It was good cattle feed.
- HY: You were enterprising.
- GM: Yeah. But I don't know, other than that, the campus. I know there were very few buildings there. I think the track was there. Cooke Field was there. And the swimming

pool—I'm not sure whether the swimming pool was there or not. Other than that, there were very few buildings.

HY: Did you have any contact with your grandparents?

GM: Yes. I knew my grandmother, my grandmother on my father's side, my father's mother, who was living in Honolulu. Of course, I knew her. They were living in the corner of Nu'uaniu [Avenue] and Judd Street.

HY: Did she arrive then, after your father?

GM: Yeah. And my father—my uncle, my father's brother, moved to Hilo first of all, 1908 or [190]9, and then moved to Honolulu. After that, all the members of the family moved to Honolulu. And he lived in Nu'uaniu and Judd. So that was in the [19]20s.

HY: So you grew up knowing the McEldowney side?

GM: Yeah. I knew my mother's father, of course, grandmother and grandfather both, when I was very small.

HY: What is your mother's name?

GM: Alice Shiel. S-I-I-E-L.

HY: What did your grandmother—did she come here to retire or what did she do when she came here?

GM: Well, I think she retired and just came to live with her children—my aunt and uncle.

HY: I'm going to ask you a little bit more about your life in Mānoa. What kind of games did you play when you were a child there?

GM: Well there were a lot of—of course, there was a park right across the street and we would play a lot of touch football and things like that. We were playing with older kids. We weren't very good at it, I'm sure. But we were—they needed somebody to fill in the spots. There was very little traffic in Mānoa in those days so we had a lot of scooters and wagons. And we'd roller skate. The streets were kind of wide over here, didn't have to worry about cars. We used to go hiking up Mānoa Valley—up in the taro patches and behind. So we walked all over the valley.

HY: Were there chores that you were required to do at home? Do you remember?

GM: That I don't really remember. I'm sure there were, but I don't remember.

HY: So you kind of as a kid—you'd kind of explore that whole area?

GM: Yeah. And we climbed up Round Top—I remember climbing up there one time we went. That was a big adventure for small kids. The fact that we walked all over Mānoa when we were in, you know, second, third grade is really amazing when you look at it now.

HY: You said "we," were you talking about other neighborhood children?

GM: Yeah.

HY: Where were you in the birth order?

GM: I'm the eldest one.

HY: The oldest.

GM: Yeah, mm hmm. My brother is the second. My sister is the youngest.

HY: I always ask people about food. What kinds of food did you eat when you were a kid?

GM: I think much the same as what we eat now, except the food took longer to prepare. We had a milkman that came. I think the dairy was the university dairy, I'm not sure. But the milkman came. And the iceman used to come every couple days in a wagon or a truck. And then, oh, I know we had a fireless cooker which was (used to cook) oatmeal. But it took all night to cook oatmeal in those days. Put this chunk of sandstone on the stove and heat it red-hot and put it in an insulated box and put the cereal on top and it would cook all night. I can remember that clearly. Other than that, I don't remember too much about the food, what we ate.

HY: Did you eat—do you remember if you ate a lot of local foods?

GM: That I don't remember too much. At that time, I wouldn't think so. But I don't remember.

HY: What about your schooling then? You said you didn't have that many memories about Miss Soper's school except the location.

GM: Yeah.

HY: At what point do you start kind of having memories of your schooling?

GM: I remember going to the first grade at Central Grammar School. The main building at Central Grammar School was, of course, Princess Ruth [Ke'elikōlani's] palace, a very big wooden building. That was the main building. But we were across the street—across Vineyard Street on the *mauka* side. That was in first grade. There were a lot of houses at that time. I can remember that part. I remember going across the street to the main campus. In the second grade we moved to the long wing that was in the back of the palace. I can remember being on the second story. Recess time we played outside. I remember it was very dusty and dirty. I can remember that. Of course, it was right down in the middle of Honolulu. I remember the building itself as really an interesting building. Great big one, built like a palace inside.

HY: Did you [referring to PM, Phyllis McEldowney, GM's wife] have a comment? It's okay.

PM: I was going to say it's gone now.

HY: Oh, yeah, yeah.

GM: The interesting part of that was that Princess Ruth built this palace. She lived in it one month and couldn't stand it anymore. She wanted to go back to her grass shack so she

went back to her *hālāu* some place and lived there. The building was then unoccupied for a long period of time and eventually the school department took it over.

HY: What about your classmates? From what districts were they?

GM: Mostly all in Honolulu because there weren't really that many schools in Honolulu at that time. I remember Judge Sam[uel P.] King went to Central Grammar about the same time I did. And quite a few people. Because I knew, later on, as you go to different schools in the same grades and so on, and you run into them again.

HY: You had mentioned that you had chickens in your yard.

GM: Yeah.

HY: Was there any commercial aspect to that?

GM: No, no. Just for our own use. I remember several people up there had chicken runs.

HY: So they were for eggs, egg-laying chickens.

GM: Yeah, got eggs. It wasn't any kind of a commercial thing. Just people did it in their backyard because you—you know, the food wasn't prepared. You couldn't go down and buy much in the way of canned food and stuff like that. You made your own, I guess.

HY: What about the vegetation there? Did you have a garden? Or—do you remember?

GM: I don't remember that. Well, we did have a garden but I don't remember what was in it or anything. Because there was lots of room on that property. Now, I think on that same piece of property, I think there are two houses on there. So they don't have much room, but those days we had a lot of room.

HY: Back to school then. You said your father had a college education.

GM: Well, he went to the University of California for two years and then went to work up in Alaska and so on.

HY: I would think that because he had a college education that he may have wanted you folks to perhaps go to college? Or did you have any sense of that growing up that it was expected of you?

GM: No, not really. I think it was just that that was the normal routine. You went to high school, then you went to college. I don't remember any . . .

HY: It was sort of a given?

GM: Yeah.

HY: Yeah. Okay. Do you remember if you had favorite subjects in school? We're still at Central I guess.

GM: Oh, Central Grammar, I'm sure, was very simple. I don't remember much about the classroom.

HY: What about the difficulty? Do you remember having difficulty or school was easy for you?

GM: I don't remember. I'm sure it was an adventure. I don't know.

(Laughter)

GM: I don't remember much. Because going to school every morning was an adventure getting there and getting back.

HY: Lincoln? Oh, okay. Your wife is telling me to ask you about Lincoln School.

GM: Yeah. Well after Central Grammar, well, they started—Lincoln School was an English-standard school. I think that year I was in the third grade, I think, it was established, Lincoln, as an English-standard school. You had to take an examination, an oral exam. That was the only criteria for being in the school was to pass this exam. I remember going to take an exam. I remember that one of the real things was the “t-h” sound. “The.” That was the one that probably [determined] yes or no you'd go to [English-standard] school. Pidgin-English kind of thing. I went to Lincoln School, that was the third grade. And we were in a cottage out in the back. I remember the buildings in the back. The teacher was Mrs. Chester Clarke, and I remember that pretty clearly. Then I went to fourth grade which was in the main building upstairs. I don't remember who the teacher was. But I remember the fire escape had a spiral slide and I think everybody that went to Lincoln School remembers that spiral slide. Because you had to slide down when had a fire drill.

HY: (Chuckles) Do you remember the specifics of the test?

GM: Well, as I remember it, was strictly oral. And had a book. They opened the book to the page and a picture of a needle, and a thimble, and thread. And those were to get you. I'm sure the thread and the thimble. I don't remember any mathematics side. I think it was strictly English. That part I remember.

HY: So they'd show you a picture and then ask what it was?

GM: Ask, “What is this?” I don't know if there was any marking or that sort of thing.

HY: So you were there until . . .

GM: Third or fourth grade. Then my father was working in the country a lot in Kahuku and Punalu'u and Lā'ie. So they moved—we moved to Mālaekahana right outside of Kahuku. We were there for fourth and part of the fifth grade. When I went to Kahuku School. Of course my brother and I were the only two *haoles* in the whole school. That was quite an experience. And we got in a fight the first day, I think. But after that everything was fine. We had no problems after that. But it was a real country school. Entirely different from Central Grammar and anywhere else. Then from Kahuku School I went to Punahou School which was a traumatic change, too, because that's a big difference. We moved to Wahiawā when I was in the seventh grade.

HY: So you were only at Punahou for a short period of time?

GM: About two years, fifth and sixth grade.

HY: Well I'm curious about that contrast: Kahuku and Punahou.

GM: Of course, wherever I went you talk like your peers—the other kids you're with—you talk like they talk. So when you go to Punahou School it's entirely different from Kahuku School. I think only three of us in the whole class that came from country schools like that. The three of us had a hard time adjusting to the English spoken at Punahou. It was entirely different.

HY: Even though you had gone to English-standard school before.

GM: Oh yeah. Being with other kids, you're going pick up their language. You're going to talk like they talk. You have to. I can remember my mother talking to me about not talking like that. "You speak English."

HY: She didn't want you to speak pidgin.

GM: Yeah. Pidgin-English. So I got to—it was a big change at Punahou.

HY: What about socially? Is that what you mean primarily?

GM: Socially, I had a lot of friends at Punahou. I don't remember that part too much. No. Of course, Punahou was a small school in those days, not like it is now. Very small. So you got to know everybody, because I met people in school there and I met them later on in the University of Hawai'i.

HY: Who were some of your friends there then?

GM: Well, I knew Ben Dillingham. I remember him. I remember Gerald Greenwell. And I remember Carl Linnemann. And the de Vis Nortons. And (pause) I don't know. Can't remember all. Jane Loomis and Alan Winant. If I looked at Punahou bulletin, I'd remember more of them (chuckles).

HY: And these are all people that eventually you met up [with] again?

GM: At the University of Hawai'i.

HY: Coming from the country and then back into town, did that change the kind of, I'm sure, the activities you did outside of school?

GM: No, I don't remember that too much. It would be a difference because when we lived out in Kahuku we had the free run of the beach and we had the free run of the whole area. We used to go all over the place. We'd go swimming every day and that sort of thing because we were right on the beach. And that was the real life out there. When you came into town of course, you're much more restricted. We used to go down to the beach every day, anytime. It became an event to go to Waikīkī Beach once a week then. It was different.

HY: So you felt after you were there for a while—after your first day of getting in a fight—you felt accepted and you accepted them?

GM: Yeah, you get to know them. You begin to know people, know the kids. And games, and play, and go to their house and that sort of thing.

HY: There were different ethnic groups then.

GM: Yeah.

HY: Well, do you remember some of your teachers?

GM: At Lincoln School I only remember Mrs. Clarke. At Kahuku School, I really don't remember anybody. At Punahou I remember the [department] principal was Miss [Mary] Winne. To me a good teacher was Jane Winne. And classroom teachers I've forgotten.

HY: So then you moved out to Wahiawā then?

GM: Right.

HY: You said your father was in forestry . . .

GM: Right.

HY: . . . and this is why you . . .

GM: Moved around, yeah. In those days it was a long trip from Honolulu to Kahuku. Was a half-a-day trip. So we moved to Kahuku. Then later on we moved to Wahiawā because that's kind of the center of the island. That was the center of the planting activities, and the experiment station got a piece of property and put a forest nursery out there. They planted the trees in pots and so on and seedlings, and grew the seedlings and planted the trees out in the forest from Wahiawā. So it kind of made sense to move right where we're working. So we moved to Wahiawā once they established the forest nursery. We lived up in the upper part of Wahiawā in the beginning. We lived up there for a couple of years. And when my mother died shortly after that, we moved to Wahiawā. We eventually moved down and lived in the building in the nursery itself. We lived there for all the time I was going to the university.

HY: This is the botanical garden.

GM: Right. This is the Wahiawā Botanical Garden, what it is now.

HY: Can you describe how it was then? Maybe your dwelling and . . .

GM: My father built a house on the side of the gulch in the botanical garden, on the end of it. At that time they called it forest nursery. He had an office there and we lived in the back. It was a story-and-a-half building. My brother and I lived upstairs. My father and my sister lived downstairs. We had a large living room and kitchen and all. It was a very big house. We lived there for—I think (the family) lived there until 1950-something, I think. That was a real country living. There again we could wander almost where we wanted. And it was not a good place to grow up. It rained all the time. A lot of red dirt was a problem. The clothes always red. I know lots of kids at school were from military, from Schofield [Barracks]. I knew lots of them. A lot of our activities were in Schofield. We belonged to a boy scout troop over there. We spent a lot of time over there, going back

and forth. We used to walk back and forth, too. Little long from our house was, oh, about a mile and a half either way, I guess. But we used to walk quite often. Later on of course, we were old enough to drive and we had a Model-T truck to drive around in.

HY: So shortly after there, you said your mother passed away. How did that affect your family life back then?

GM: It was quite a big change. My father handled it all, I guess. It must have been a tough time for everybody, but I don't quite remember how. From your stand looking at it, you don't realize what's going on and how difficult it must have been. But I don't know.

HY: I was wondering about, in terms of responsibilities with the house, maybe you had more . . .

GM: We had a full-time maid that came in and worked and did some of the cooking and all of the laundry and stuff. The rest of us took turns cooking. It was good experience to learn how to cook, I'm sure.

HY: Your wife is saying Maui. So I know you spent summers in Maui.

GM: Yeah, I used to go to Maui because my mother lived on Maui for a year or so before she died. She felt better over there. But, yeah, we lived over there, for I think every summer for about ten years maybe, went over there.

HY: Where in Maui?

GM: Up in Kula.

HY: Did your father work there, too? Or did he just send the children?

GM: No. My mother and father went to Maui on vacation in the 1920s. They liked it over there so they went and wanted to get a piece of property so my mother bought a piece at Waiakoa, about ten acres. Later on about ten more acres. So they had very good sizable piece of property and they built a house there strictly for summer use, although my mother did live there for about a year, year and a half.

HY: So you spent summers there. Was it recreational for you?

GM: We just go there summertime. And go to the wide-open spaces. We enjoyed them. So that was a nice country up there.

HY: Maybe I'll ask you a little more detail about what kinds of activities you did there.

GM: Oh, mostly I get out in the pastures. Go on out in the gulches and up Haleakalā. We walked quite a way up Haleakalā. Up through the pastures and through the ranch lands. Occasionally, very seldom, but occasionally, went down to the beach down to Mākena. And we used to go 'Ulupalakua Ranch quite a bit. There was a family over there. And got on the ranch and we watched cattle drives and ranch activity.

HY: Did you participate in the cattle drives?

GM: Do it? No we just watched.

HY: Too young?

GM: They used to drive the cattle right down past the house right down the main highway.

HY: And what was that house structure like? The one you built on Maui?

GM: It was single wall. Typical at that time. That was a two-story house in the midst of the center of the plot and a garage underneath. A beautiful view from the *lānai*. Big *lānai*. Beautiful view of West Maui Mountains and Mā‘alaea and Kahului.

HY: You said you had a garage, you had a car there, too?

GM: Yeah, my mother drove. Later on I drove.

HY: So you said you did know some families there?

GM: Yeah, I got to know the families in the neighborhood. The Walkers, Collinses. Mathias family. She [Virginia Mathias] was the postmistress at Waiakoa. And the Rices lived down the road from us, their ranch house.

HY: Was that sort of like two separate worlds for you?

GM: Oh yeah, it was different. Sure. Although Wahiawā was country and over there was country, it wasn't like living like now. If you live here and you went out in that country, it would really be different. There we had no electricity and had kerosene lamps and ice was delivered. I think they delivered ice or we went to get it, I don't remember which, about once a week. We had big chunks of ice you buried in the ice box under the ground and move it up to the refrigerator to keep everything cool. We had wood stove—a wood stove for hot water. So if you didn't start the wood stove, you didn't have hot water. And the Kula water was cold. Had a water tank and fed off the county line. You had to have a water tank because the flow was very small, the water line.

HY: You mentioned you had a maid come in when you were on this island.

GM: Yeah.

HY: Was it a live-in [maid] or was this someone that would just come in?

GM: Well, at first she lived in and then she moved—she had her own place in Wahiawā and she came every day.

HY: Was this after your mother died?

GM: She worked for us when my mother was still alive. I think she worked for our family or my aunt, or my sister. I think she worked for the rest of her life. This maid was with us right from the beginning.

HY: Do you remember her name?

GM: Yeah. Toyo Hattori. She was a real nice person. Because she was with us for a long, long time.

HY: I think I'm going to have to turn this over pretty soon. Oh, no, we got a couple more minutes.

Well let's see. What else about Maui? You said you continued to go there for about ten years?

GM: Yeah. And of course, we got to know people, too. There were quite a few people that went there during the summertime from Honolulu. But we use to walk down to the post office every day to pick up the mail and pick up foodstuff. Whatever you needed to get in the way of food. We walked down. It was about a couple of miles walk. Either way, kids even walked easily.

HY: During the school year then, was there somebody else that made use of your home on Maui? Or was it vacant?

GM: I think it always stayed vacant.

HY: Is that property still in your family?

GM: No, it's not. It was sold quite sometime ago.

HY: So I'm wondering about your school adjustment then—you were at Punahou and now you were at Leilehua [High School]—if there was any kind of school adjustment for you.

GM: Not really. It was just a different school. Had to start making friends all over again. As I said, a lot of military—that portion of the school is about 40 percent military, I think and the rest were from Waialua and Wahiawā because in those days Leilehua was the first high school or intermediate and high school outside of Honolulu. So people came from as far away as Kahuku, and Waialua, and Wahiawā to go to Leilehua. So you met people from all over. And the army people made it interesting because those kids had been traveling all over the place and been to schools in various parts of the country. So being with them gave you kind of a broader outlook of the world than just Hawai'i. Begin to realize there are other places like Texas, and Kansas, and places like that. So that was kind of good.

HY: Did that make you curious about other places you wanted to see?

GM: Yeah, you wanted to know, you wondered about it. People I got to know in Wahiawā. One of them is living with us now, here [at Hawai'i Kai Retirement Community], that I knew in school. So eventually the same thing. You catch up with those people somewhere along the line.

HY: I think I'm going to turn this.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: Let's continue with your life and the botanical gardens. So school was little—you didn't have much problems adjusting.

GM: I don't remember any problems. No.

HY: You didn't get into any fights there?

GM: Well, I'm sure once I had a couple of fights somewhere along the line. But once you go through one of those and get beyond that, why, things smooth out. And people you fought with now you're good friends. (HY chuckles.)

HY: What about academically? The change from Punahou?

GM: I don't remember that too much. I'm sure probably different standards but I don't know. But I don't remember that too much really. I know I got along all right in school. Didn't have any tremendous problem.

HY: I'm getting a signal again.

PM: Don't forget the good friend, Japanese. He had to go to Japan. He has contacted you.

HY: She's mentioning a childhood friend.

GM: Yeah, one of my real good friends in school. He and I took a lot of classes together and we got to know real well a fellow named Kiyoshi Uzawa. His father [Takashi Uzawa] was a school principal in Wahiawā of a Japanese-language school. Eventually they moved to Japan before World War II started. And he was stuck in World War II. He eventually ended up in the Japanese army. After the war, he stopped by in Honolulu because he was working for Mobil Oil Company. I met with him about every two years. And I think the last time he came here was a year and a half ago? Yeah. So that was a friendship that developed there. And during the war, every time I'd climb up over a hill I always wondered if I'll ever meet him coming the other way. But he was up in—I didn't know at that time—he was up in Manchuria so he was a long way from where I was. And he remembers opening up a newspaper and seeing Leilehua High School in the Japanese newspaper as part of the bombing of Wheeler Field. So he knew right away where that was. But he and I kept a fairly good correspondence over the years.

HY: You said you met him there. Do you remember having him as a high school friend?

GM: Yeah, he went through, I think, from the seventh grade, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh.

HY: I think I was asking you about the academic differences, if you noticed any.

GM: You mean, between Punahou and...

HY: Yeah.

GM: I don't recall any great differences because I don't think there were. I don't know.

HY: And what about the subjects? Were there certain subjects that you liked more or did you pay much attention to that sort of thing?

GM: Well, the only thing I really remember—I remember to this day clearly, my mother thought it was more important that I take Latin instead of typing. So she arranged (for me to take) Latin instead of typing. And to this day I've regretted it. (HY laughs.) It just

forces me to write. I was going to learn typing and here I am, I'm never going to learn typing. But that's one of the things I remember in school. And, of course, sports. We engaged in a lot of sports: track and football, basketball. I remember all of that.

HY: Do you remember some of your coaches or your teammates?

GM: Oh, several of the teammates ended up in the University of Hawai'i, playing in the University of Hawai'i. I didn't play football. In university I was in track and that carried over from high school.

HY: She's saying soccer. You played soccer also?

GM: I played soccer, yeah. Leilehua was, as I said, was the first high school outside of Honolulu. And with the military kids there, I think it made a great difference in the standard of the school. It's little different, maybe, than others.

HY: Was that standard of the school—if you're saying it was better or it was worse or just different?

GM: I think the standard was probably fairly high. But it's hard to tell. Because in those days everybody didn't go to high school. And a lot of kids—the eighth grade and that was it. When they changed the school system to intermediate school, then it brought in a lot of people from Waialua, and Wahiawā, and some even from Waipahu came up to the school. That was the nearest high school or nearest intermediate school. So we had a big change in kids. But those were probably the kids that were more willing to work and wanted an education or their parents wanted them to have an education. The rest of them, of course, found jobs readily in the plantations in pineapple or sugar. So they didn't necessarily go all the way through to high school.

HY: Do you remember where your teachers were from? If they were from Hawai'i or elsewhere?

GM: I think most of the teachers were originally from the Mainland. I think the teachers there and the principal transferred from other schools when they formed Leilehua. Because Leilehua was formed only about two, three years before I got there, a brand new school. I think the teachers transferred there from other schools. I know that principal Clowes came from 'Iolani School.

HY: Who was the principal?

GM: Frederick Clowes. The only teacher I really could remember is John Reinecke who was a very controversial figure in Hawaiian politics, in union matters, and so on. It must have been government or politics or something he was teaching. I don't remember that part—what the name of the course was. I know the kids gave him a bad time. They really—he had a hard time maintaining order in the classroom. They were unmerciful on him as kids can be.

HY: Do you think, is that a lack of respect? What was the reason?

GM: I don't know. The kids just didn't connect with him, I guess. I remember one time he was writing on the blackboard and they threw erasers at him on the board, one hit either side

of him and he turned around. He kicked the whole class—half the class—out. “All of you out.” And we all got up and left. The funny part was one of the girls that threw the erasers was the daughter of the plantation manager in Wahiawā. (Chuckles) So it wasn’t just—everybody was. Poor guy. Everybody just kind of walked out, half the class out. I remember an incident like that. We had some good teachers. The teachers were there for many years afterward, too. Mathematics teachers. They were good.

HY: Do you remember who that was? Your math teacher?

GM: I think her name was [Helen] Fish. And had Miss Iselin. She married—who’d did she marry? She married Judge . . . . I think the teachers were good. They had Leilehua elementary, and Leilehua intermediate, and Leilehua High School all on the same campus. The elementary school was chiefly populated by military people, almost 100 percent.

HY: Well that story makes me just curious about discipline in the classroom.

GM: I think other than that I don’t remember any serious thing. I remember there were a bunch of unruly kids. When you bring together people like that from all different places, you’re bound to get some kind of problem. But there weren’t that many problems.

HY: What about class size? How big were classes?

GM: Oh I think the classes were probably twenty to thirty maybe something like that.

HY: Sometimes people talk about discipline in the classroom and, you know, the standards have changed so that corporal punishment used to be more allowed.

GM: But I don’t remember. You know I think our generation at that time, everybody said stop or go, you did that. You’d stop or you’d go. And you didn’t question why. So I think the discipline was entirely different. If you had any real problems, it would be a real problem. But I think the kids were more amenable to discipline than they are today. I think.

HY: You talked about sports activities in school. Did you play sports outside of school, too?

GM: Not too much because we lived kind of by ourselves above Wahiawā. And it wasn’t much opportunity to play in the playground or stuff like that. We had our own activity right in our own backyard. We had people come up with us and we’d go do things around the property. We had a big slide right across the gulch on a wire that we’d slide across. Things like that we did on our own.

HY: Was that something you constructed yourself?

GM: Yeah we made it ourselves.

HY: What did you make the slide out of?

GM: Big fence wire and cable clamps and pulleys and stuff like that. And we had a trapeze bar—we’d slide across the gulch. Later on that was our favorite thing in the military. Slide for death they called these. Slide across the big gulch. But for us kids it was fun.

HY: Now was there anyone else living on your property there?

GM: No, we were the only family on the hill. We had the run of the whole gulch, whole area there. There was probably twenty acres, thirty acres maybe. I don't know.

HY: So the nearest resident was quite a ways.

GM: Quite a ways away. In fact, my brother and I used to sit on our bench and shoot our .22s out the window to targets across this gulch. Now there are houses all over there. You couldn't think of doing something like that.

HY: Did you hunt for sport, too? Did you do any hunting?

GM: No we . . .

HY: Target practice.

GM: We didn't do too much hunting at all. We just wandered around. Hiking was our main activity.

HY: What about fishing?

GM: Fishing, I don't really recall. Going out fishing a few times. Not many.

HY: Now having a parent that's in forestry, I'm wondering if you had that transferred over to having the interest of growing your own food.

GM: Oh I don't know. We didn't really absorb that much. We did a lot of help[ing] him grow the trees. Water the trees and stuff like that. But I don't think we learned an awful lot. I learned more when I finally got to the university. I learned more there than I did at home.

HY: So you had some chores, or some—I guess helping your father.

GM: Yeah, things like watering the—they had couple of acres of small trees growing in pots and needed a lot of water. I used to do some of that. And take care of the cooking.

HY: What kind of trees mostly?

GM: Oh all kinds of trees. Eucalyptus, ficus trees, any kind of trees that grew up in the forest they grew. The idea of the forestry development was that sugar planters were interested in maintaining a supply of water to their sugar crops. They decided early on that they shouldn't plant trees on the agricultural land. It should be used for agriculture. So the gulches in the mountain were the places the trees should be planted. So that's what they did. They engaged in a project to plant trees up in the mountains and plant trees in the gulches. And if you go out to Wahiawā, Kīpapa Gulch, and places like that today, you'll see those trees growing now. That was to hold back the runoff. So these small trees were transplanted and put up in the mountains.

We used to go out and gather seeds, various types of seeds. And those seeds were then prepared and put in army airplanes and take them and scatter them all over the mountains. So the whole seeds would germinate and have trees way up in the mountain areas. Hard to reach to carry anything up there. How successful it was, I don't know. There were

several places where they found trees growing from the seeds that had been dropped. But that was what the forest nursery was for. I helped a little bit on that.

HY: So the seeds came from the trees that you were growing in the nursery?

GM: In the nursery. Right.

HY: And then would gather those to be distributed.

GM: We were going all over the place. Anyplace with big trees was growing, seeds dropped and you go pick up the seeds.

HY: So that was the kind of chores that you were expected to do.

GM: Yeah. Another thing we did, too, my younger brother and I did a lot, was go and read the rain gauges. They had rain gauges all over the mountains.

HY: I don't know what that is.

GM: Rain gauge.

HY: Oh, rain gauge.

GM: Yeah. We used to get paid five dollars a rain gauge and you had to hike clear up the ridge on top of the mountain. We used to do that about once a month. We worked on a system where we'd go up one trail along the ridge line to another trail and intersect all the different trails where all the rain gauges were. So we thought it was a big deal. We get fifteen dollars for a whole day's work.

HY: It's pretty good.

GM: Yeah.

HY: And what were the—I'm assuming the rain gauges may have changed by now.

GM: No, the same rain gauges they have now. Now they're probably more sophisticated electronics, but in those days you had a big container and a small one inside. When it rained it would collect that and then you measured how many inches of rain by the tube that was inside. So you go up there and measure out the rain, write it down, go to the next one.

HY: Now what about the planting of the trees. Did you participate in that, too?

GM: Oh not very much. Working in the forest nursery were a group of men that would go up and do the planting. They'd grow the trees and do the planting. And then they had, occasionally, they had people—the military was interested in reforesting Schofield because Schofield was very bare. So the forest nursery furnished the trees for Schofield to plant in Schofield. They had soldiers out planting the trees and they'd go up to the Wai'anae mountains and plant trees up there. Because the place was really bare in those days. In fact the whole island was bare. And then on the plantations, the plantations paid for the nursery. What they did was they assessed so much a ton for every ton of sugar that

was produced. Several cents was set aside for reforestation. So that money then paid for the salaries of the people who collected and planted the trees and so on.

HY: So the planters would come then to the nursery take the small . . .

GM: Well either that or we had a truck there and they would deliver the trees to the area they were going to plant. And then the bunch of soldiers would go out and plant. And some of the people in the nursery would supervise to make sure they planted it right. The plantations would do the same thing. They'd send some of their men up into the mountains to plant. The result of that, as you can see, the results up in the mountains.

HY: So your father was head of this nursery, about how many people did he have directly under him?

GM: Oh if I remember, about six or eight.

HY: Were there other things, too, that you did for him?

GM: That was about it.

HY: What about other jobs you might have had?

GM: Well I didn't have any—I didn't do any work outside of that until the university. At the university during the summertime I went to work on the pineapple field.

HY: Was it always assumed then that you would go to UH or did you think about other possibilities?

GM: I don't know. I was thinking about it last night as to why I went to the University of Hawai'i. My father, at one point, said, "Why don't you go to the University of California?" And I just didn't—well people I knew were going to the University of Hawai'i and that was here so, let's go there. I didn't see much difference from going to high school, kind of the same thing. And living in Wahiawā was a problem. Had to drive back and forth all the time.

HY: You had a car at that point.

GM: Yeah. Part of the time anyway.

HY: When you graduated, was it 1934?

GM: I graduated in '34 and I went the university for one year and I went out and worked for—one semester, a year, whatever it took, go to the next semester. I decided I better go back to school. More important to stay in school than work. So I went back and I changed my major and changed the—it was like starting all over again. So I had changed to sugar technology from—I guess it was general science. Then I finally finished sugar tech.

HY: Did you live in Wahiawā the whole time then?

GM: Most of the time. Part of the time I lived in Nu'uuanu at my uncle's. It was closer by.

HY: Atherton. She [PM] is saying Atherton House.

GM: I stayed at Atherton House in the beginning.

HY: In your first year?

GM: First year, yeah. And then when I came back, I drove back and forth every day to Wahiawā for a few years. Then I went to live in Nu‘uanu [Avenue] and Judd [Street]. My uncle’s place. I don’t recall how I got back and forth to school.

HY: So there was some talk about possibly going to California but you were not really interested.

GM: No. When I graduated from high school, the family took a trip across the country. We took our car from Honolulu, shipped it up to Vancouver, British Columbia, and drove from there down to Seattle. See relatives there. We drove clear across the country, Yellowstone, and places like that. And Chicago, and New York, and Boston. And drove back. We left before school was out—high school was out. We got back, I think, the last day of registration at the university. I remember going up university and last minute registering. I really didn’t have much time to think about what I was going to do, or what the university was all about, really. I might have thought differently but I was kind of unprepared. We just got back from the Mainland and I went right up there and registered.

HY: Do you remember anything about the application process?

GM: No, I remember going to the registrar’s office and doing something. I remember going to [Harold S.] Palmer. Dr. Palmer was an advisor. I went to see him. He thought maybe I ought to take these courses so I followed that. And I don’t know. I wasn’t really interested in what courses there were. I was just not ready, I guess. So I worked a while and came back and then settled down with sugar tech.

HY: I’m wondering if the depression had any affect on your family’s livelihood at all.

GM: Let’s see. Well, the depression hurt everybody across—the price of sugar dropped. Everybody’s wages dropped. I don’t remember a great deal about the depression except that there was one. And I remember they cut back even the military. They cut back the military funding, wages by 10 percent. Fuel was rationed, that sort of thing. But other than that I don’t remember a great deal.

HY: Do you know if it had any impact on your father’s forestry program?

GM: Well, they had less money to work with, I know that. I remember when we went to the Mainland in 1934, that’s where you really saw what the depression was all about. In cities like Chicago and New York, you could see. But by that time they were coming out of the depression. But that’s the only part. I never noticed it in Hawai‘i too much.

HY: Now had you spent time on the Mainland other than when you were really small?

GM: No.

HY: So that was kind of a new experience for you?

GM: Yeah, oh yeah.

- HY: Did you have a sense of how people perceived you as somebody who had grown up in Hawai'i?
- GM: Of course. In those days, they look at your license plate and they would wonder, "What's that?" And, "Where's that?" You know? You go through that anywhere. I remember going to a barbershop in Washington, D.C. It was the same day that Franklin Roosevelt arrived in Hawai'i. I remember that. And I told the guy in the barbershop, "Well, that's where my home is." He had a hard time believing I came all the way to Washington, D.C. No, I don't remember a great deal about the depression, but I'm sure that it affected the plantations.
- HY: We only talked about your one friend mostly that ended up in the Japanese army. What were some of your other friends that you remember from that time from Wahiawā?
- GM: Oh I remember Chin Do Kim played football for the university. And a fellow named Archie Kennison who was in the army with me. I met a girl named Esther Castle (nee Pyun), who lives here with us in this facility; and Nam Young Chung, who was a veterinarian; and Masuko Saito, who lived in Honolulu. We had a couple of class reunions. I think we had three class reunions. So there are still a few of us around.
- HY: Do you remember how big your graduating class was?
- GM: Oh, I think it was about seventy. I can find out. About seventy. I think about a third of them were military people from Schofield. And what's significant about that is those people came and went. Although you may be a good friend and all that, after their tour of duty, those people moved to somewhere else. So you kind of lost about a third of your class. When we had the reunion only one person from the military showed up. He just happened to be in Honolulu at that time. So in high school, a class like that where a third of your people are moving all over, you kind of lose a little bit. Like you go to a place like Roosevelt or Punahou or somewhere like that, the kids are still around. People you went to school with are still there. In our case it disappeared.
- HY: Okay, so you entered UH. And you were advised by Dr. Palmer.
- GM: Palmer.
- HY: Well, what were your early impressions of UH then? Even though you knew the campus to some extent.
- GM: Well, of course, it was different than I remember when I was younger. The campus was different. As far as school work, I don't think I worked really hard at it. But wasn't a lot harder than anything I had in high school, that's for sure. Structured differently and you're more on your own. If you don't do it, you don't do it. But you get penalized for it. I thought it took a while to get adjusted to that system.
- HY: You said you entered as something like a general science major.
- GM: I think that's what it was. I don't know. I think so. I know it wasn't for me. I couldn't see the practical side of the courses so I really didn't dig into them like I should have. But when I got into sugar tech, then I could see—some experience with it—so I could see the end result of the thing. I did better there.

- HY: Well what was living in Atherton House like?
- GM: Well, that was a real mad house. It was a good place. On campus, a good place. A lot of good people that I got to know later. And I was in the Hui Lōkahi fraternity so we're all pretty close together there. Atherton House was a very comfortable place right around campus. It was well run, the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] facility. A lot of neighbor island people lived there. I got to know them. Most of them are year round. Butcharts from Waialua lived there. A fella named Charlie DuBois from Maui lived there. Reuben—that his name?—Tam, the artist lived there. And a guy named, Ben Hollinger lived there.
- HY: Well, was it sort of a party atmosphere?
- GM: At times, yeah. Especially at the end of the examination time. When the exams are over the place was a riot. Yeah. It got really rambunctious at times. But other than that it was a very convenient place to live. You can't beat that.
- HY: Did you have supervisors that lived there? Or imposed regulations . . .
- GM: They had a manager at that place. And had a housemother who supervised the kitchen. The food was really good. And plentiful.
- HY: So you took your meals there.
- GM: We had three meals and housekeeping and that sort of thing. Of course we did our own laundry.
- HY: Were there curfews?
- GM: That I don't really remember. I don't remember. I know that there were rules and regulations about how much noise you can make late at night and that sort of thing. You'd have to have some kind of rule like that. It's close to the campus. That was a big thing. Like we took ROTC [Reserved Officers' Training Corps] and ROTC started 7:30 in the morning. You didn't have very far to go. We had to change into uniform and even at that we were always trying to get there on time. You could go to classes and in between you can go home. Whereas if you lived in Downtown, you couldn't do that.
- HY: You know how it came about that you ended up living in Atherton House?
- GM: I think it was too much of a strain driving back and forth, more than we thought it was or I thought it was. And, of course, driving from Wahiawā every day is quite a drive. But then later on when I went back to school there I drove back and forth. But at that time my brother and sister were going to Punahou so the three of us drove back. We usually had a couple of other people with us.
- HY: Carpooled?
- GM: We carpooled, I guess. It made it kind of worthwhile at that time to drive back and forth.
- HY: Did they charge you for staying at Atherton House? Or what was the arrangement?

GM: That I don't remember. I think it was seventy-five dollars a month? At this time it would be a ridiculous price but at that time it was a fairly substantial amount. Of course, the Atherton family subsidized the building and so on. But I don't really remember how much it cost.

HY: Do you remember if there was any difficulty financing your education at UH? Or were you eligible for scholarships or anything like that?

GM: I think my father really had to work at it, get enough, because my brother and sister were going to Punahou and I was going to the university. That was a fair drag. So I can remember that I took ROTC and I got my commission early. So I went on active duty for two weeks. I remember that was enough money to pay for one semester of school. (Chuckles) I remember that clearly.

HY: You said there was a housemother at Atherton House. Do you remember who that was?

GM: No I don't, but she could sure cook good apple pie.

HY: Were there social functions that Atherton House organized?

GM: Yeah, the YMCA had—I don't know what they called them, socials of some kind. I guess they had dances. I don't remember that part too much.

HY: So this was just guys that lived there right?

GM: Yeah.

HY: Did you remember about how many fellas would be there?

GM: I am sure it was at least fifty.

HY: Were they all freshman?

GM: No, some stayed there all four years. That was an especially good place for neighbor island people though, to stay. There were lots of neighbor island people who stayed there.

HY: How come you think it had the reputation for being kind of a party house?

GM: Oh, I don't know. Because it was close to the campus and guys there had a great time. It could be a lot of fun.

HY: Was there any kind of initiation?

GM: They didn't have anything like that. Of course, the fraternity is separate from that. A lot of the people felt that YMCA was kind of a goody-goody outfit so you don't let anybody know that you were living with YMCA. You want to be macho or something.

HY: What about your fraternity initiation?

GM: We were in Hui Lōkahi which was—of course they thought they were the best, naturally. (Chuckles) They finally got kicked out of school but anyway. It was an old fraternity. I don't know when it was established, but there for a long time. And long after I left, too.

We were mostly the athletic type. More that type of thing. It was a mixed group. In those days they had various sororities and fraternities might have been racially oriented, but ours really wasn't. We let anybody in. And the initiations were pretty rough. But not especially you couldn't take it or anything like that, and everybody got through it all right. It was based on the—the ritual and the initiation—was based on a Hawaiian tale. It was all related to Hawaiian mythology. It was pretty interesting. It was kind of long but it was very interesting. That part was good but then they had paddle boards and things like that to make sure you got the lessons or something.

HY: Can you elaborate on that a little bit? How it was based on Hawaiian mythology stories.

GM: Well, I don't really remember too much about it except that they always find some secluded place. One time it was in the Kaimukī Reservoir [Park] which is up behind the fire station. It was inside the reservoir which is empty. That made it private and that's where they conducted the initiation. Then another time we had it out at—I think we had it out in our place in Wahiawā. We used to have a mountain house in Wahiawā. We went out there and had the initiation because that was way, way from everybody. And then the guy had to walk home, so that was a long way to walk from Wahiawā to Honolulu. But the initiations were, I think, typical of any fraternity. But where they came to grief later on—and I didn't know this for a long time—but when it came to grief later on, they had a initiation somewhere and they took the guys up the university and had'em run across the campus with no clothes on. That caused them to be suspended from the university. And that was the end of the Hui Lōkahi.

HY: Well, we're at the end of this side, too.

END OF INTERVIEW