

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Kenichi Itakura, 68, retired plantation store employee, and camp store worker, Spreckelsville

*"When the World War II [started], we used to sell saimin, like that. Not plate lunch or nothing. Just saimin. Once in awhile, maybe, we used to make sandwich, but we gave up....When the servicemen days, we don't make manjū. No time to make manjū. Kitchen is all taken already. You know, with steaks and like that. Bacon and eggs. You know what I mean, eh? Hoo, full of people in there. All servicemen."*

Kenichi Itakura, Japanese, was born November 11, 1911, in Camp 2, Spreckelsville, Maui. At the age of sixteen, he quit school to work at Kitagawa Motors in Camp 3. A year later, he began working for Japanese Mercantile Company in Kahului, one of the "big 5" Japanese stores which served Paia and Puunene at the time.

In 1933, Itakura left Japanese Mercantile and began working as a portable track layer in the sugar fields of HC&S. Around that time, his mother started Itakura Store in Camp 2. Itakura worked as a track layer during the day, then came back to help his family in the camp store, which also was a restaurant. When World War II brought thousands of military personnel to the Spreckelsville area, Itakura Store was busier than usual.

In 1943, Itakura quit his job as a track layer and went to work at the Camp 1 Plantation Store in Spreckelsville. While at Camp 1 store Itakura served as a union steward. He remained there until 1956, when the store closed down. He then became a salesman for A&B Building Supplies. He retired in 1973.

Itakura now lives in Kahului with his wife. He spends time orchid growing and fishing. He is an avid golfer.

Tape No. 7-30-1-80

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Kenichi Itakura (KI)

January 29, 1980

Kahului, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Kenichi Itakura. Today is January 29, 1980, and we're at his home in Kahului, Maui.

Where were you born, and when were you born?

KI: November the seventh, 1911.

WN: And where?

KI: Spreckelsville. Camp 2.

WN: Okay, what were your parents doing at that time?

KI: Oh, they were working field--growing cane anyway, right? They used to call 'em "kompang" or something, right?

WN: Your father was kompang man?

KI: Yeah.

WN: Oh, what about your mother?

KI: Same thing. Same job. They used to work together in that. "Kompang" means the group take care a certain field, eh? [Whatever] the tonnage [sugar] cane they produce, they get bonus for that. So, they call 'em kompang man, but I don't know what [it means]--not company man, kompang must have been . . .

WN: "Kompang" means help each other . . .

KI: "Kompang" means you and I going be partner. That was the meaning, I think.

WN: So, your father and mother was partners?

KI: Yeah. Would work together in that cane group. In one group, they

get about five or six in one gang, see? One group. They work, maybe, two each, raise the cane. And finally, they harvest. With the tonnage, they get bonus for that--producing the tonnage of sugar. But they used to work.

WN: You know how long they was doing that--kompang?

KI: Twenty to thirty years, around there. As far as I know, even when I got married, he still was working. My father was working, but my mother was in our store already. You know, that Camp 2 store [Itakura Store], right? She left [kompang work] earlier than my father. My father, 1940, he went to Japan; he died [there].

WN: You got married in 1932, so in that time, they was working [kompang]?

KI: Yeah, he still was working, you know. My father work in the field, yet, yeah?

WN: So, do you know about when your mother started that store? Itakura Store in Spreckelsville?

KI: Oh, about three years ahead of . . . . I think about 1937, I think, or 1936. That's when she first started the store.

WN: So, when you got married in 1932, she never had the store?

KI: We didn't have the store, yet. So, it's about 1935 or 1936, around there, she start work in the store, see? I'm pretty sure HC&S [Hawaiian Commerical & Sugar Company] has the record, you know. We were paying the rentals, yeah?

WN: Okay. What was your first job?

KI: Kitagawa Service Station. After I came out from school, you mean, eh? Kitagawa Service Station and [later] work JM [Japanese Mercantile] Company. Four and a half years.

WN: Wait now. What did you do at Kitagawa Service Station?

KI: Oh, just service the cars, like that. Fix tires, like that. And you just fill up gasoline--the customer.

WN: How old were you at that time?

KI: Fourteen years old. (Laughs) When I first start working, see?

WN: So, you left about 1925, yeah? How much you got paid over there?

KI: Oh, was pretty good. They gave me fifty dollars, fifty-five dollars a month. Working every day, though.

WN: How many hours a day?

KI: Oh, let's see, about . . . . About fourteen hours, I think. Twelve to fourteen hours one day. Six [o'clock] in the morning to . . . . Yeah, about fourteen hours. Eight o'clock [p.m.], we shut down. Eight, 9 o'clock, yeah, during evening.

WN: You quit school about eighth grade, Puunene School. How come you quit?

KI: Oh, I don't want to go school. I want work, eh? (Laughs) Had to. Plenty guys get plenty money, and (laughs) we don't have any.

But my parents told me, "Ah, you better go high school." Because [there was] Lahainaluna High School, see?

I told 'em, "No, I ain't going. I going work."

Those days, they teach you to work from after you come out from school. Public school, you know what I mean, eh? I had chance to go, but I didn't go. Lazy. (Laughs)

WN: This is Kitagawa Motors in Kahului, eh?

KI: No, that was Camp 3. That used to take care the Spreckelsville district, right? But plenty outside [customers], we used to [service]. The new highway this way, but old highway, you had to pass from there to go Paia side.

WN: Oh, [traveling] from Kahului to Paia, you had to pass Camp 3?

KI: Yeah, yeah you have to, even [traveling to] Puunene, you have to pass that road. You know what I mean, eh? Before. Now, get the new highway, the one going now. The old highway used to travel down to that service station and pass. We take care plantation people and the outsiders.

WN: Had other service stations nearby in that area?

KI: Far away. Paia or Kahului. That [Kitagawa Service Station], the only one in the center.

WN: Only one in between Kahului and Paia.

KI: They used to make quite a good money. And they used to get-- alongside them--get Iwanaga Photo Studio. Below, was Sam Sato's store.

WN: [In] Camp 2?

KI: Camp 2. He [Sam Sato] bought over there, yeah? So, he and I used to be about same kind of business. Take care the camp people mostly, but they used to be on the highway. Us, within the camp.

WN: You're talking about the store, eh?

KI: Yeah.

WN: Okay, we'll get to your mother's store a little later. After you worked Kitagawa Motors, you worked for Japanese Mercantile Company in Kahului?

KI: Yeah.

WN: What kind of store was that?

KI: That deal in grocery and poultry--you know the livestock. Oh, it's usually--just like the Spreckelsville stores--they all groceries, yeah?

WN: What kind of work you did in that store?

KI: Warehouseman. Take care all of the feed and the rice, and like that. The big stuff. We used to go down the wharf and pick it up from the pier, you know, and you bring it down there. Used to stack 'em all up. Actually, that was my job was. Then, once in a while, they have new month, or something.

WN: New month order?

KI: Yeah, yeah. Then I have to go with the order man [to the camps], deliver that things, see? Once a month. The rest, I stay in the store. Maybe one week ahead, when new month come, I had to make everything ready for . . . . The thing all set for them to take. All come in hundred-pound [bags]. Everything used to come in hundred pound. You know, rice, feed, like that--poultry feed.

WN: Where they got the goods from?

KI: From Matson freight. Come in from Mainland, see? They used to have that salesman from the Mainland come every month. Take the order in, see? But every store, like Onishi Store, Kobayashi Store, JM Company, they have their own insignia or marker on the rice. You know, the bag rice? Japanese Mercantile Company, Nippon--that's maruhi. You know the hi, eh? Yeah, they make 'em. That's our brand rice. You can spot right away. Onishi has that certain way, they different, yeah? Kobayashi used to get "K", I think, [within a] circle like that. All kind. So, easy to find, when that thing come down from that boat, eh?

WN: Japanese Mercantile was right near the . . .

KI: Oh, yeah. Oh, let's say about quarter mile, or half mile to the pier. The pier, same thing [as today]. [Pier] one and [pier] two. Only thing, they come bigger, now. Used to be small before.

WN: So, you said one of your jobs was to get the next day deliveries ready, yeah?

KI: All ready. Everything.

WN: So, the salesman [order taker] would come back and give you the orders?

KI: Well, not take orders, but [gather] the [orders] all ready every day for them. Then, once in a while, in the morning, all us, we get couple trucks. We [go] down the pier, load rice, chicken feed. Go down, come back and stack 'em all up, see? During afternoon, used to get some, I go pick up myself. Those days, strong, you know. One hand, I used to lift up. You know that twenty-pound rice? About five, six times, like that. I press 'em. When I was about seventeen, eighteen years old. Skinny. Only 123 pound, but, oh, get muscle. (Laughs) That's how we grow up, that's why. We ain't afraid to work on hard job. You know what I mean, eh? We not like you, maybe, soft, eh?

(Laughter)

WN: Okay. Even when wasn't new month order time, you still got deliveries ready?

KI: You mean, the order time?

WN: Yeah, I mean, new month was busy time, yeah? What about when it wasn't new month order time?

KI: Well, we still have that--the sales is not big like that once a month [i.e., new month] one. That, gradually, they going buy everyday things or some other stuff. So, they just go and take order every day. They go, maybe, this camp today. They alternate. Next, maybe, two day, they go different camp. So, maybe, they might have about four guys go out, take order. So, every day, it's a different camp. They bringing order in, but. They make [i.e., gather] their own order, but I have to be ready with that big stuff. Oranges, like that, come out from that crate, eh? Because plenty. Some of them rotten.

(KI lowers voice.) They say, "Well, get 'em all, wash 'em all, and put in the counters," see?

They used to fill up from there. We had to take care all that. You know, potatoes come from Mainland--from Oregon or someplace. California side, too. Some used to get that eyes sticking out already. They would get too old, eh? We used to take off that, and then you can pile 'em up, put in the box, and put with the [other] potatoes. The guy who take order. When they make [i.e., gather] their own order, see? So, lot of job. (Chuckles)

WN: Did you ever go out deliver, too?

KI: Yeah, once a month. In the new month time. Help them.

WN: So, you would help the . . .

KI: Yeah, the order guys. That guy takes the order certain camp, I go with him. Then the next day, maybe different guy come to different camp, see? So, maybe, let's say the new month delivery, not going to be all one time. Where he goes, I go help them deliver, see? Three or four [order takers]. They'll have their own camp. Puunene, Paia, and Kahului. Paia is big district before. They go to Pulehu, Kaheka, Keahua, you know. But the Puunene had plenty camps, too, right? They got Camp 1, Camp 2, Camp 3, Puunene--Mill Camp--all that, Japanese stores used to go in. We used to deliver there, too, see? So, every day, you had so many camps to deliver.

WN: How long did it take to do the whole area?

KI: Cannot, one time, because too big the area, right?

WN: But, would it take, say, one week to . . .

KI: Yeah, yeah, yeah, maybe three days, four days, we finish. Because we go with a lot of guys, eh?

WN: How many guys?

KI: Oh, maybe, about four. Four or five guys, we go together. And with two trucks, we go with.

WN: Two trucks. So, how many houses would you go to in one day?

KI: Ah, quite a few. Let's say, not a few, many, because fifty to hundred homes do in one day. Not everybody going to have big order like that because some of them, they don't raise chicken, right? Don't eat rice. But some raise chicken like that, some raise hog like that, so we deliver their feed. So, the chicks and the big chickens, the feed are different. They probably come in about hundred-pound [bags]. And then, you know Japan-made goods? Had shōyu--Kikkoman Shōyu. Come [in] da kine big tub. One whole tub, they buy in the olden days, you know.

WN: How big was one tub?

KI: Oh, let's say, about four gallon, I think, or five gallon. Pretty big, the tub. Roughly about four gallon. Little more, maybe. Not full five gallon, I don't think get full five gallon. Then, the miso. You know the miso? They used to come from Japan. Come in da kine same kind of tub, too, like that. They buy by the tub, see? Those days, big the stuff. All the containers are big. No such thing as four, five pound one. You know, four, five pound, they don't sell over there. They don't have in that gallon---oh, maybe the gallon they used to have, but not the small one. You know, today they have tiny size, too. Olden days, no. Come in all big tubs.

WN: Japanese Mercantile Company, was it a bigger store than the Spreckelsville [plantation] store [i.e., Camp 1 Store]?

KI: Oh, no, smaller. Spreckelsville, bigger. It's under A&B [Alexander & Baldwin], so big store, though. Maybe about three times, four times bigger, I think. Area big, too. Square feet.

WN: What do you think the volume of sales was at Japanese Mercantile? Like, one day?

KI: Oh, well, those days [goods] used to be, you know, Warren, cheap, eh? Everything used to be cheap. Oh, might be . . . . Five hundred dollars, around there, or four hundred dollars. So, four, five guys [order takers] going out, now, the volume of sales. Everything used to be cheap, see? Bag of rice used to be \$3.75 or \$4.00 for the hundred-pound rice, now.

WN: When you moved to the Spreckelsville plantation store, after the war [began]--1943--did the price of rice change?

KI: Oh, the price was way different already. Oh, let's say, by about 30 percent the price was different already. They were making better money in the plantation than what used to be when I was working. Price, altogether different already. When that union came in [the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, which organized sugar plantation workers in 1946], price start going way off again. Come higher and higher.

WN: At Japanese Mercantile, how did the salesmen collect the money?

KI: Well, they go to the camp, you know, while they taking the order? And plantation has once-a-month payday. [According to] how many days you work, they used to pay them, see? So, they call it payday. They go, and they taking orders. Customers pay them, see? They don't bring 'em down [i.e., come to the store to pay]. The salesman used to collect already.

WN: You folks had people that never pay?

KI: Some people don't pay because they hard up, eh? Some gamble, too. They throw all their money away. So, I don't know what they do. No such thing as garnishee before, you know. We [KI's family] were paying every month straight, too. We don't have any balance. But some people, pretty good balance. Family are big, too. And the pay was cheap, too. And they have to send 'em to school, like that. But [the] Japanese stores used to give them that chance to build up.

WN: What percentage you think was charge at the Japanese Mercantile. What percentage of the volume of sale was charge?

KI: Charge is pretty---practically all of them were. Very few were



cash. Most of them is charge, when we was the plantation. I didn't go collection, but sometime poor, certain month. Sometime, good.

In our time, used to work kompang man, right? Once a year, or two years one time [eighteen to twenty months], they went collect their bonus. That's when they pay all--what the balance is. This Japanese stores, they used to gamble with that customers. [If] cane crop good, right there, get the money already. So, they have to produce the cane to get the money. But they have, every month, so much coming. Like maybe about dollar quarter [\$1.25] a day or dollar a day. That's all plantation used to pay them. When come to the end of the harvesting, then they used to pay them the bonus of the how much tonnage the field produce.

WN: So, that's kind of long time to wait?

KI: Yeah, two years.

WN: So, about how much was one average debt?

KI: [KI misinterprets question.] All depend. Maybe you get only about two, three hundred dollars. Sometime, you make--when the tonnage is good--about six, seven hundred dollars. All depend how the cane come out.

WN: In two years, how much of a debt would one family accumulate at the store?

KI: Ah, pretty good. Let's say, three, four hundred if you have big family. But, when come to that [pay]day, they pay off [their debt] right away, see? The thing is, those days, the stores doesn't charge them interest. That was the good part of it. But, today, you cannot. We were in da kine debt, so we don't know. You know what I mean? But lot of them were in debt.

WN: The people that JMC [Japanese Mercantile Company] was serving, was it mostly Japanese?

KI: Practically all Japanese. And the Filipinos, they used to have the Filipino store, right? Come take order in the camp, too, see?

WN: You mean Maui Shōkai?

KI: Maui Shōkai, they used to get the Filipino workingman in there. They take care the Filipinos. They take care the Japanese, but we, I think, most Japanese.

WN: All the salesmen of JMC was Japanese?

KI: Japanese. Onishi Store, too. Kobayashi Store. Just the Maui Shōkai was Japanese and Filipinos working in there. They used to

deal with the Filipinos, huh?

WN: So, competition must have been pretty good, eh?

KI: [For example], that's your parents in the camp. Maybe they like this salesman [order taker]. They want to buy from him more. You - know what I mean? He [the customer] go give you better business than the other store. But they always have that, you know, the personality. All the stores have. So, once you lucky, make more money from the camp. Three, four of them used to come. Oh, Onishi Store, Kobayashi, and JM Company.

WN: All to your house [in Spreckelsville]?

KI: All them used to come, too. But we used to buy from JM Company, because the boss there used to be good friend of our parents.

WN: When you say some people like a certain salesman more than another, what was a good salesman? What he had to do?

KI: Well, maybe, when they were in debt, they help 'em out, right. They don't chase after you [to collect] or give you punishment, right? So, they might like him.

He go back, he tell 'em, "Don't have to worry."

That's the time, we have to find pity for that family, right? So, I think, that's how the business comes in.

WN: Okay. You worked Japanese Mercantile from 1928 to about 1933. That was depression time, eh?

KI: Oh, not quite yet. The depression came after that, see?

WN: Oh, in Hawaii, yeah?

KI: Yeah. That's when . . . . President Roosevelt wen lift 'em up. Lift that depression out. Was Hoover's time, yeah, when the depression came?

WN: So, how come you quit the JMC?

KI: You know, then, Warren, you know the hospital? Medical, now. I talking about medical. Hospital used to get only [on the] plantation. We used to have County Hospital--now [it's called] the Memorial [Maui Memorial Hosptial]. [If you work for the] sugar plantation, you [receive] free medical [benefits]. And my wife was pregnant when I was working JM Company. So, what the hell, plantation more important, I figure, see? So, I went back to [work for the] plantation. My girl was born over there. Get free medical. I work about three months, and my wife gave birth.

You see how the difference was? They [plantation] used to give

you plenty, even housing free. But you don't know how that thing is. I don't know how they keep pay, see? When union came out [in 1946], everything--black and white--came out. Start charging you rental. [But before the union] it was taken out of your pay, [so] we don't see [the money].

WN: Your wife got pregnant, so you decided [in order] to get the free medical, you went to work in the plantation?

KI: Yeah, go work plantation.

WN: Yeah. When you were at JMC, where did you live?

KI: Oh, same camp. With my father, mother. Because they working plantation, right?

WN: Oh, I see. So, you could just quit JMC and join the plantation and get the free benefits.

KI: Right through, I work till after retired, see?

WN: So, you were a portable track layer, then, for the plantation for about ten years, yeah? Until 1943. Can you describe that job, or what you did?

KI: Way back, we have to lay tracks in the field--the harvesting field. And all was done by hand. Before that, even hāpai kō used to be done by hand. They go climb that papa, they call that, that's something like ladder. And then they pack [the cane] in the [cane] car. That work was done by hand, now. Human beings did that. Afterwards, the crane came inside. Crane. That's when I wasn't there. Now the crane, when you go hāpai kō, get cable--two cables. Sling, they call that. They have to lay 'em like this and lay the cane. Across, eh?

WN: Across the cables?

KI: Yeah. [When] the crane comes, they just hook 'em [the cane] and that thing roll like that. Make one bundle, and they roll right in the car, see? Then they take that sling off. They go one more smaller pile. One bigger pile, one smaller pile in the back. Two pile, you have to make. And then, they take off the sling. By that time, you go on a different car already. You keep on dropping [the cane] because if you no make fast, you cannot make money. They all contract, see? They take the weight of the cane [i.e., they would get paid according to the weight of the cane loaded].

Then, that's where the cars going in [the field]--we have to lay the tracks. When the conditions are poor, the cane, maybe, very poor condition. Hoo, work hard! You gotta work double or whatever--ten time more than the good field. When come to da kine seventy-, eighty-ton field [i.e., a field with a good yield]--the tonnage per

acre, hoo, easy. Maybe you lay only about two or three cars, one day, of portable track. Maybe get sixteen pieces for one car. That's all you lay. About 3:30 [p.m.], 4 o'clock, you get through. But when it come to the poor field, you have to lay about twenty cars. See how hard it is?

WN: How come you had to lay so many?

KI: Because the field so poor in the canes, yeah?

WN: Not much cane in the field.

KI: Yeah. You have to lay more because the hāpai kō guys, they going be real fast piling up the cane already. When come to good field, they cannot go [far] because too many cane--they all stay one place. That way, not bad. But when rainy season, hoo, boy, portable track laying is not easy because that thing--the weight--come double with all the mud, you know.

WN: You actually laying out the track while they cutting cane?

KI: Yeah.

WN: And as they move more and more back, you laying track, and then the car is moving behind them?

KI: Yeah, yeah. The cars coming in. As soon as we get through with the laying that long line of track, right? Both sides, field all ready. I mean, the cane ready [to be carried into the cars]. Then the cars come in. You go to the next one [field]. The good field, you don't work much, but more cars [are needed] than the poor field. Put all close together, the cars. Hoo, you know, the cane so plenty, abundant, because the tonnage is high because the field is good. That kind tonnage, life is not bad.

Like we have, every two weeks, we lay the iron, okay? Get two gang, now. The wahines clear the cane--you know, they plow that, make 'em [the ground] level, for the track go in. But, after two weeks, another gang come. After the field is harvest, we go take the track off, right? This go to the next field, the one [track]. Other one, laying. We'll have to supply them the tracks. So, that's how we used to alternate.

WN: So, the good kind field, you would . . .

KI: Oh, yeah. Not too hard. The life easy. More yielding tonnage of cane, the easier the life. When come to poor field, hoo man! You sure work.

WN: How many of you would be laying the track one time?

KI: One brakeman, one bar man . . . . Four guys or six guys. And then,

those days, you know, Warren, the mule. Plantation, we have mule. You know, like I'm the brakeman. Just go tug at the rope, see? The flatcars. Tug, the mule come inside. Go so many steps. They know how many steps to take. [If you want them to] go to the right, you got to hook, eh? To lay. Now, these are flatcars, like this. Over here, get track; over here, get track.

WN: Tracks on both sides.

KI: Sixteen--eight [on each side], going come sixteen, see? Sixteen pieces on one flatcar. Oh, but good life. That's why we come tough, you know.

(Laughter)

WN: How many hours a day would you work? Doing that?

KI: Let's see, eight, nine hours. Because we used to have our own contract, see? Not working by hours, those days. We have to lay. That's why I say, if you have good tonnage field, you make more money. Because more cane load go out, right?

WN: So, you folks working on your own contract? Different from the guys cutting cane?

KI: Yeah. Guys cutting the cane, they get their own contract. Now, our gang is the portable track layers plus the wahines. Plus the guys who drive the mule and make level, that ground. Get one small little tractor, see? You plow the field when the wahine take off [clear] the cane [off the ground]. We lay over there. After they make 'em [the ground] flat, then we lay the track.

WN: What if the cane cutters are slow or something?

KI: Well, you have to wait.

WN: Just leave 'em, then?

KI: No, you have to wait until they [the fields] open. Those days, they used to get Filipinos. About four to five hundred in the field. Just cutting cane. When come to poor field, they fast. You know what I mean, now? Too many hundred cutting the cane.

WN: Your contract, how did that work? You got paid by the tonnage or by the [number of] fields?

KI: Tonnage. By the tonnage of the cane. [The cane] go to the mill. From there, we have the luna. He take care contract. He take the contract, see? He pick up whatever from the main office, even the money. We used to have little higher pay than the wahines because we do the dirty---I mean, the heavy job, right? Portable track layer used to be the highest paid man in there.

- WN: So, it all depended on how much tonnage you folks got? That's how much contract you folks made? Not how much track you lay, something like that?
- KI: No. The tonnage of the field, see?
- WN: So, when they compute the tonnage, the people cutting cane would get a certain amount?
- KI: Their own. They go by their own--how many lines they cut, yeah? They all contract in the field. Then after all the cane cars go out, then they pick up the leftover [cane]. You know, when the cars go out, some [cane], they fall out, eh, here and there. So, they used to get the pickup gang. They would put little by little. The wahines would pick up that and throw in the car. That go by contract, too. They get tonnage, too, on that, see? So, everybody used to get contract. You know, harvesting field.
- WN: So, you never get any hourly pay at all?
- KI: No, no.
- WN: All contract?
- KI: All contract.
- WN: So, about average, how much would you make, say . . .
- KI: Over there, we used to get the highest pay--the portable track layers. The gang. So, let's say--plantation, we were one of the best-paid guys--sixty, sixty-five dollars a month.
- WN: One month. Okay, so about 1943, you quit that work, eh? Off and on, while you working in the cane field, you worked in your mother's store?
- KI: Yeah, during evening, I used to help them. Just [help] customers [who] come in late. They [KI's parents] doing something in the back--pastry work, like that. I used to help them. Sell soda all the time. Just family, you know. I'm not getting paid. (Laughs) It's part of our shares, yeah?
- WN: Yeah. So, you worked daytime [on the] plantation; nighttime, you went to your mother's store. What kind of things did your mother sell in that store?
- KI: Pastry. Homemade pastry. And sometimes, we get pastry from Nashiwa Bakery. And sodas. You know, sodas, ice cream. And some groceries--can goods. Some dry goods, let's say, paper products. That's all we used to have.
- WN: What kind of homemade pastry you used to make?

KI: Oh, that's why, you going to eat the manjū? [KI offers WN a plate of manjū.] That one, taste 'em. You try taste that. Manjū, and she used to make pies. And doughnuts.

WN: Big pies . . .

KI: No, no, the regular. Used to sell for ten cents way back.

WN: What kind pies?

KI: Apple pies, coconut pies, like that. Today, get half, eh? They call 'em moon pie or half-moon pie or something. Before, used to be, oh, round like that.

WN: Where was your mother's store located?

KI: Camp 2. Right in the village, in the camp. The center of the camp. The Camp 2 used to be the old camp. And there [was] new one, see? So, was right in between.

WN: How far away was it from the Camp 1 [Spreckelsville] Plantation Store?

KI: Oh, about one mile.

WN: One mile. And how far was it from, say, Sam Sato's store in Camp 3?

KI: Oh, about two miles.

WN: Two miles. And were there any other stores in that area besides those?

KI: Yeah, Camp 1 used to have that Morihara Store. That was located in Camp 1. In the camp, too--Japanese camp, see?

WN: What kind of things did that Morihara Store . . .

KI: Same, same. But they used to have that billiards parlor there, too. And fish market. We never [had] that, see? But they used to have fish market and billiards parlor there. Sell mostly . . . . Ah, the camp people, too, and plenty Filipinos used to be in there, too.

WN: What was the best-selling item that your mother would sell?

KI: Manjū.

WN: Manjū. What they used to call her manjū?

KI: Itakura manjū. Name Itakura, eh? Itakura manjū. But that wahines right over there--niban. [They called it] niban manjū. "Niban" is "two," eh?

WN: Camp 2?

KI: Yeah. Two, see?

WN: And Sam Sato's was called what?

KI: Oh, yeah, they call 'em Sato manjū, eh?

WN: Which one was better?

KI: I don't know. People, all depend how they taste, you know? (Chuckles)

WN: How much was the manjū?

KI: Oh, used to be three for dime. But costs start coming up, oh man, you cannot make three for ten cents. We used to make pretty big, before, you know. Now, little bit smaller, that, eh?

WN: How much would you say, in one day, volume of sales, your mother made in that store? Let's say, 1942.

KI: To me, weekend, we made pretty good. But, let's say, during day, maybe about ten, fifteen dollars we sell.

WN: A regular day?

KI: But when come weekend, maybe sixty dollars, like that.

WN: Like during the war [World War II], when the soldiers started coming in? How much you think the sales was?

KI: Boy, every day, used to be couple hundred dollars. Sometimes, more. During the war, [for] about one year, I think. That's all that time, make your money, base time. After that, all the soldiers left already. The servicemen all left from our place. And [during] the war was inflation, too. Cannot buy anything to serve them, eh? Hard to get. Meat, like that. All frozen [i.e., difficult to obtain]. So many a pound, they used to give out, that's all. Everybody [i.e., many people] had their own, they call, restaurant, too, eh? Hard to get meat, those days.

WN: So what you folks mostly sold to the soldiers?

KI: Sandwiches and regular steak, like that, we used to get. (Chuckles) Hamburger sandwich, like that, yeah? And they [soldiers] used to buy a lot of soda. They don't drink water because they only buy and drink Coca-Cola, like that. We fortunate to have one guy--that delivery man.

WN: Where you got the soda?

KI: He used to work Coca-Cola Company.



WN: Coca-Cola in Maui?

KI: Uh huh [yes]. One stay--Wailuku. Still have, over there, eh?

WN: So, what kind wholesalers you folks dealt with? Your mother's store? Where you folks got your goods from?

KI: Oh, from A&B Commercial. [Prior to 1950, it was called the Kahului Store.] All those grocery stuff, now, I talking about. Bacon and eggs, like that. And the soda from Coca-Cola Company, and Nashiwa Bakery used to give a case of sliced bread every day. That what we would have to order.

WN: And where you got the ingredients for your mother's pastries?

KI: All that from old A&B Commercial. Flour. And shortening, sugar--all that go inside. Lima beans. All from there.

WN: Lima beans? You used to use lima beans for the an [bean jam]?

KI: Lima beans. Inside is white, see, that's why. With azuki, [the an] come blackish-red, yeah? Taste altogether different, too. Lima beans better. We were the first one to make da kine, you know, Warren--lima beans one.

WN: What costs more? Lima beans or azuki?

KI: Well . . . . Today, I think azuki cost more, but way back, lima beans was cheaper, too. And then, that wasn't so popular, right? Azuki, everybody used to make azuki. Anything from that. Used to come from Japan. Today, they import from Mainland, but before used to be from Japan. But, after the war, maybe, not much. Hard to get from Japan. Everything stop coming up. Lima beans was cheap way back. Let's see, a hundred-pound bag used to be about thirty, forty dollars, I think. Less than that, I think. Now, you gotta pay over hundred dollars.

WN: About how long would a hundred-pound bag of lima beans last?

KI: Well, those days, maybe within a month, it's all gone already. We used to make plenty. We buy from A&B Commercial [Kahului Store]. These guys would come--we used to call in over there. When they order their own lima beans, they let me know.

So, we tell 'em, "Eh, bring five bags for us, huh?" Five hundred-pound bags, see?

That's how we used to bring in. Every time they order--maybe, couple of months later--they used to order, and we put the order in again, see? Just like standing order. You know what I mean? Because you don't want to run short of the lima beans. The shortening--manjū, you cannot use cheap shortening. It have to be the expensive

one. The Crisco, like that. You use the cheap one, hoo, the outside come rough and funny kine. Everything, you gotta use good materials. Ingredients.

WN: What percentage of sales would you say the pastries was, compared to the other things you folks sold in that store?

KI: Mostly, this would be the best-seller. Let's say, about 60 percent, 65 percent. That, best-seller was.

WN: Would people put in big orders?

KI: When come weekend, like that. During weekdays, we make not too much. Let's say, about four, five dollars. It's gone so many times. Because, outsiders, they come. The truck drivers, like that. You know, when they stop by. Used to eat that and a bottle of soda. By afternoon, all gone already. (Laughs) You see, good-seller.

WN: Did you folks used to have tables, like that? Like a restaurant?

KI: Yeah, in the back. Restaurant. Where the kaukau place is. Long table.

WN: Restaurant kind stuff, what did you sell?

KI: We used to sell--when the World War II--we used to sell saimin, like that. Not plate lunch or nothing. Just saimin. Once in a while, ah, maybe, we used to make sandwich, but we gave up. When servicemen days, we don't make manjū. No time to make manjū. Kitchen is all taken already. You know, with steaks and like that. Bacon and eggs. You know what I mean, eh? Hoo, full of people in there. All servicemen.

WN: So, you would make meals, then? Instead of . . .

KI: Yeah, they eat their breakfast, lunch, and dinner. On the way back, they eat their dinner, go back. In the morning, breakfast. During the day, those guys--construction, da kine Seabees, Construction Battalion--used to come during day. They eat their lunch. All those big trucks used to. When they . . .

WN: Seabees guys was building the airport?

KI: Yeah, the airport was building. Hoo, big gang used to be here. The Marines came in. That's when 40,000 came in. Camp Maui, right? Oh, that's when you see servicemen. Before that, was the Army. Army guys, had some. A Battery, I think. Oh, let's see about 50, 100 guys, that's all. When Marines came in, hoo man!

WN: Marines came in about when? What year?

KI: Ah, about forty . . . . 1944 or 1945, around there. The war start,

1941, servicemen came in. Nineteen forty-two [1942], they came in. Nineteen forty-three [1943], many of them were gone. They went to Borneo, someplace like that. They went to different island, too. Then, that Marines came in. And then, had infantry guys from Chicago--all the colored guys, you know, from camp. Right after that, the Marines came in. They were going to Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, already, see?

WN: They were stationed up by Haiku side?

KI: Haiku, yeah. The Camp Maui.

WN: They came all the way down to Spreckelsville?

KI: Yeah. They had to go to Wailuku, eh? So many guys get pass from one battalion. Let's say, maybe, 50 to 100 get pass. On the way, they know my store there already. On that same highway, they just cut in--the truck drivers. They know where to cut to go in. Us, nobody come around, eh? All in the camp, now. They park about one dozen trucks over there. (Laughs) They eat their breakfast. Then, they go all the way back. Always drop in again, over there. They eat their steak, and they go back.

WN: Did you folks give credit to people?

KI: No, no, no. Only the plantation people. Gave them credit.

WN: You gave credit to plantation? How did you work that?

KI: Just pay [KI's family store] every month when they get paid. But lot of them, the Filipinos, they single, eh? They gamble, like that. They don't have too much money, so [credit] getting pile up, pile up, pile up. End of year, many of them, they no--till today--they no pay us the credit. We just forget it, you know. Oh, they were nice to us, so we gotta be nice, too.

WN: What percentage of your customers was Filipino?

KI: Yeah, most. But plenty Japanese, too. All camp people, see? Filipinos and Japanese. The Japanese all right--they all family guys, huh? The Filipinos, all single. See, most of them are single. They have their wives [in] Philippine Islands, but over here, they gamble like hell, you know. They might lose; they cannot pay. So, that thing pile up, pile up, pile. Little by little, but. They don't buy plenty. Maybe one guy owe about fifteen dollars. Then, we closed down, gone already.

WN: Yeah. When somebody comes in to buy something and wants to charge, what you did? How you . . .

KI: Yeah, when they get paid, they'll come pay. They . . .

WN: You wrote down the number and . . .

KI: Yeah, we know their plantation number. They call 'em bangō, right? Then, get a notebook--how much you bought today. So, that thing total. My wife and my sister used to do that. They know. So, they just look at them; they know their number already. The thing already stay in their head, see? So, they put in the book how much he bought. End of the month, when they get paid, they used to come pay, see?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: People buying with cash, did you give them anything special?

KI: Same thing. Uh huh [yes]. Nothing to give special, anyway.

WN: Yeah. What about when kids came in? You gave 'em candy or anything?

KI: Yeah. My mother used to give.

Tell the kid, "Oh, your mommy [KI's mother] wild lady, but good inside." Because, every once in a while, [she] used to give them candies.

WN: What about like delivery service? You folks provided anything like that?

KI: Over there? No. Just, maybe, on Sunday, like that. When we make our pastries--doughnuts, and cake, cupcake, like that. Used to go up Camp 11. Just above our camp, see? Then, there used to get plenty Filipinos there too. So we used to go with our car and then, ring the bell. Oh, they all come. Buy all the pastry and pau, come back. Let's say, about half an hour time, all gone already. They, pretty far to walk down [to KI's family store], see? Let's say, about one mile, two.

WN: That was cash?

KI: Yeah all cash. Collect over there, see?

WN: What about the store hours? From what time to what time, the store . . .

KI: Open? In the morning, from 4 o'clock in the morning till about 8, 9 o'clock [p.m.]. Usually, 8, 9 o'clock, we close down.

WN: You open 4 o'clock?

KI: Yeah, in the morning. Because while they making pastry, the store is open already. Guys who work on the plantation, they have to catch the train, about 4:30 [a.m.]. They come early, see? Always dark,

we used to go. We wouldn't see sun in the morning. Had to go to working place, then we see the sun. But, when you work [plantation] store, different again. You open 7 o'clock [a.m.], right? When I went to portable track layer, we gotta get up 4 o'clock in the morning. Four thirty [4:30], we gone already. (Laughs)

WN: While you was gone--working in the fields, and later, when you moved down to the plantation store--who worked in the store during the day?

KI: You mean, you want me to name them?

WN: Yeah. Was your mother . . .

KI: Was my mother. Just by herself. That's all.

WN: What about your sister?

KI: My sister, way back, that, I talking about, when used to help us. When she was single. You know what I mean? After she married, she moved, see? When I was working Spreckelsville [plantation] store, my mother used to run by herself. That was under her name, that's why--the store, right? I was helping her, but I wasn't getting paid.

WN: So, what exactly were the things that you did [in Itakura Store]?

KI: Sweep and mop the store, once in a while, before they close the store, right? That the most heavy job, used to have. Clean here and there. And fill up the sodas, like that. Most heavy jobs. And then, some heavy, little things, stack the can goods like that when the Kahului Store used to deliver that, yeah? Stack all . . .

WN: They used to deliver?

KI: Yeah, they used to deliver our camp. Every week, once a week, somebody come, take order over there. From A&B Commercial [Kahului Store]. All our grocery stuff, like that--what we need, eh? Flour, like that. Shortening, like that. They used to deliver once a week.

WN: This A&B Commercial [Kahului Store], they were wholesale, right? So, they just went to all the stores?

KI: Yeah. Because they used to have one guy---maybe, let's say, about three salesmen. Some go to Lahaina side. Some, Kahului, Wailuku district. Puunene, the rest. Some take all the camp store district, right? Paia side. So, they used to come once a week. Every, maybe, Tuesday or Wednesday [to take orders]. Their delivery day used to be Thursday, every week. Come Thursday, they delivered what--my mother give 'em the order, see?

WN: Your mother didn't have to go down to someplace and get anything?

KI: Like now, you don't have too many of those wholesale stores, right? You gotta go pick [goods up] yourself, now. Olden days, no. They all used to have wholesale--plenty wholesale stores.

WN: Was there a lot of competition between, say, your mother's store and the plantation store?

KI: Well, let's say, the competition is not much. I look at it, not much, because we don't sell like them--let's say, dozen at a time. One, one, like that. Individually. Those, they [the plantation stores] sell by the dozen. Half a dozen at a time. Even that Spreckelsville [plantation] store used to get once a month--new month. You know what I mean?

Oh, when I was working there [plantation store], once in a while, I go out take order, because my district was that Codfish Row. All the Portuguese was. And they used to go right up till that school, see? Spreckelsville School was. So, they call 'em Codfish Row. The Portuguese. Nothing but Portuguese [living] over there. Pretty good order, they used to give us every month. Once a month, see? About two or three times, they have to deliver--that many orders, I used to bring 'em in. Every Tuesday or Thursday, I had to go take orders. But when come new month, hoo, man, the Portuguese can buy.

WN: This is when you started working for the plantation store, eh, around 1943. What made you go to the plantation store?

KI: Go to there? Because when the war start, Warren, to get the bacon and eggs [for KI's family store], like that, you have to contact from there to A&B Commercial [Kahului Store] in the wholesale department. So, I have to work there [the plantation store]. If I work there, I know what coming in over there--the main store. The management tell me.

"Eh, this thing in." He get the first word of what coming to our Spreckelsville [plantation] store, right? "Eh, get bacon and egg, came in, so you better go put your order in."

If I work plantation, portable track layer, I don't know what's coming in. Now, for course of the wartime, the money [received from portable track layer] is nothing compared to the store. We were making the money on that camp store, so [I] work for there purposely already. To get the goods--the groceries. Those days, you have money, but you cannot buy. All frozen. Everything was frozen [i.e., goods were rationed], right? But, now, to sell these Marines, the servicemen, you gotta have that bacon and eggs. Eggs by the case, we used to order--the Mainland eggs. Every day they eat. I think, A Battery, but they had so many men in there, so every day, so many guys, they get pass, right? So, every day, you have about fifty battalion boys coming in [to eat]. Sometimes, the Air Force guys come in, too.

WN: This is your mother's store?

KI: My mother and my wife used to feed them. Hoo, only stand by on the soda. You know, when they bring the soda, like Coca-Cola, I used to stand by over there. And then, they pay me. I put 'em in the cash, see? That's when my mother and--well, let's say, [for] about six months--my wife and my mother, they didn't even get sick. They work every day till midnight. How can you get sick when the money coming in? You know what I mean?

(Laughter)

WN: So, you decided to work for the plantation store because . . .

KI: Of the war.

WN: . . . you could be able to tell what kind of goods was coming in?

KI: Yeah, yeah. Right. So I can grab 'em, right? In hand.

WN: And then, what? Give 'em to your mother?

KI: No, I call in over there, and they deliver for me right away.

WN: A&B, you mean?

KI: Yeah. A&B Commercial [Kahului Store]. I call from Spreckelsville [plantation] store. Call in. I don't have to go down. Unless necessary. You know what I mean, now? Lunch hour, I might go. My lunch hour was one hour lunch. Pick up with my car, delivery--the necessary stuff. The ones they can deliver, just deliver 'em. They deliver for me, see? They going reserve for me anyway. They come once a week to our camp, right? My store. They would deliver, see? Because large, big things, that hard for me to handle. My car cannot handle, eh? So they bring that. But the small little things--that necessary stuff--I gotta pick up my own. I go down lunch hour, see?

WN: Wait. I don't understand how it would help your mother's store if you was working in the plantation store.

KI: Any new thing now, okay, what I need in my store. Let's say, when the servicemen was there--Camp Maui, I talking about, and in our camp--okay now, Warren? Every day, they eat bacon and eggs. Every day. Lunch time, certain sandwiches, eh? Okay, when come afternoon--they go back to their camp--they have their dinner. So you have to get what they going to eat, right? So, bacon and eggs--that's the most important thing already. And the butter, like that. You don't know when . . . See, you cannot get the thing right off the bat because they [Kahului Store] don't have any stock sometimes. Because everybody buy 'em. Because they distribute to all, to each store. When I work in the Spreckelsville [plantation] store, the Camp 1 Store.

The management would tell me, "Hey, Ken. You better go call in because the bacon and Mainland eggs stay in now."

WN: Oh, the manager used to . . .

KI: Yeah. All slight--you know, one crate. They might have, maybe, twelve carton, one crate.

"Give me the whole crate," I tell 'em.

That, heavy, already. Get about 120 pounds. They deliver for me. And then, the shortening like that for make some kind of . . . . Crisco, all the shortening, like that, for make pastry. We gotta put in the order right away. They had the information ahead of me. You know what I mean? So, if you run short of your things, you going be the loser anyway. You have to get the stuff in the kaukau place, eh? That's why, I have to work over there [plantation store]. Just to get the information from the management.

WN: But did the management know that you were . . .

KI: Sure. He know ahead of time. That's why he told me to "come down, work with me." He used to have his own store, Wailuku, too, see? Small little kaukau corner. You know, the restaurant. He and I, we used to work together.

WN: The plantation didn't mind that you were supplying the store?

KI: They don't care. Because they not going to feed the meal to that Marines, the servicemen. No. They only sell whatever they buy from there--the can goods or whatever. They don't serve dinner or breakfast, eh? Like, today, they have all--in the big market--they do have that kaukau place, right? Olden days, no more. They [plantation store] don't care because they worry more on the camp--the laborers. You know, the one working for them? They worry about that--if they could sell 'em. They gotta bring in the kaukau for them. They don't care [about] the outsiders--the Marines, like that.

WN: Was that the only reason why you moved to the [plantation] store?

KI: Yeah, because if you work there, you don't have worry already. I no care for that portable track pay already. Too cheap, compared to what we were making in our [store]. My mother cannot compete on that because they don't have time to go down. And they don't know what to order, right? I used to have connections already, see?

WN: How much you got paid at the Camp 1 Store?

KI: When the war was . . . . Let's say, about fifty-five, sixty dollars [per month], I think. (Laughs)

WN: When you first started?



KI: Yeah.

WN: Did that change at all? I mean, as you worked longer?

KI: Yeah, well, longer--when the union came in--I was getting seventy-five dollars. But salary, now. You know, used to be salary, Warren. But after the union came in, wen come to hourly base, yeah?

WN: Oh, before union, was salary? Fifty-five to sixty dollars a month?

KI: Yeah. I started with thirty-five dollars. Wen come up to seventy-five within two years time. Maybe year and a half to two years time, see?

WN: Because union came in about 1946, yeah?

KI: The rate came regulate.

WN: Do you think it helped your store out a lot when you started working in the plantation store?

KI: Oh, yeah. In couple years time, that's all. After that, it's all---come natural again. After the war.

WN: Oh, the soldiers left?

KI: Yeah. I still work over there long, but the pay came different again. Pretty good pay already. The Labor Board came in, too. You know what I mean, now? The set pay was made for every laborer. Then, they negotiate. Negotiations on the union contract--plantation. They ask for so much, you get the wages. Not bad. But we made money during war--the camp [KI's family] store--so I wasn't worried about this already, you know. (Chuckles)

WN: About what?

KI: About this money. We didn't worry already. Because we had enough saved already. You know what I mean.

WN: Was all cash, too, eh? Your mother's store was open until 1960, yeah?

KI: Yeah.

WN: Did you find that the clientele changed at all? The number of people started to change . . .

KI: Yeah. Business came slow. All moved out, eh?

WN: When did you start to notice that?

KI: Oh, when the first increment [of Kahului Dream City homes] stay

come in, start making.

(KI speaks to visitor. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: So, those increments starting coming in about 1948, I think, first increment was starting to be built.

KI: First increment, 1948 . . . . Yeah, 1948, 1948. And then, 1949, 1950, second one came inside, I think. That's when had the second increment, yeah?

WN: Spreckelsville people started moving out to the present . . .

KI: Yeah, they start going out, see? From the first increment, start going out already from the camps. The second, many of them went out already. The Filipinos was bad--they couldn't afford to move over there, but. Then come third, fourth, fifth, hoo, many was gone already.

WN: After your mother closed the store in 1960, they broke down the store?

KI: Yeah. They broke down the camp. They closed the camp. Everybody had to move already. They have to. Guys who didn't buy the increment [in Kahului], they [would] move to different camps, see? The ones close down later on. See, they had all the schedule on, right? So, like our camp was one of the earliest to close down. So, we moved. We had this [Kahului] home already.

WN: Another thing. Your mother was paying rent at all to the plantation to have the store?

KI: Yeah.

WN: About how much, you . . .

KI: At the very start--I talking about before the war and little after the war--used to be one dollar a month. Rental. Then, after the war, when this KD--Kahului Development Company, that one take care all the camps--they the one start investigating everything. We were paying pretty good already. We was paying about seventy-five dollar a year. Something like that. Once a year, they took 'em--collect, see?

WN: Seventy-five dollars a year, then?

KI: Yeah, yeah. Afterwards, you know. When we closed down. When they wen close over there, see?

WN: So, when you were working plantation store, what were some of the things that you did in the store?

KI: I was work clerk over there. We had to go out sometime, deliver. [Whenever] somebody go vacation, I used to take order. I used to be clerk in there, see? And sometimes, pick up freight, down A&B Commercial [Kahului Store]--da kine necessary things. The wholesale department, huh? I used to be kind of the truck driver, too, see? My title. That's about all. That's about all I used to do. Union steward, too. (Laughs)

WN: Were the plantation [store] workers unionized?

KI: Was unionized. When I was in Spreckelsville [plantation] store, maybe, two, three years later [after KI started in 1943], they unionized over there.

WN: Yeah, 1946.

KI: And then, when they close down, it were all union already. Long time, union. When move to A&B Commercial here [in 1950], all unionized already.

WN: You folks were same contract as the plantation workers?

KI: Yeah. ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union]. We were under plantation, those days . . . . Then, eventually, we came separate. And the commercial guys--you know, the store [workers] and the plantation [workers] come split. Same thing--part of HC&S, but still separate union. They come, they negotiate. Same contract, same day, but they negotiate different way. They go one [contract] for store, one [contract] for sugar, right?

WN: So, in that first strike--the sugar strike, 1947 . . . .

KI: Six. Six, yeah.

WN: Nineteen forty-six [1946], you folks . . . .

KI: Was unionized already.

WN: . . . you folks struck the same time as the sugar plantation workers?

KI: Yeah. We were working there, but just to feed the plantation people, right? Sugar people. But we were on strike, too. Only thing, guys who work in the store, we have to work, see? So, we were giving 70-30 [percent]. [Of their pay], 70 [percent], we give to the union; we take 30 [percent]. Thirty percent.

WN: Didn't the managers try to keep you folks out, or anything like that?

KI: Oh, yeah. Try to. But not---my manager not bad, but the one--the big one. But we were under union, they cannot do anything, see? We have to walk out. We have to walk out already. I used to get

bad time. I told you plenty time, eh? That, because steward, me, the first one to leave. When the home office call and tell you walk out. Remind your men, you know? If they no want to go, just walk out. If no come back, two, three days, you suspended.

"One week, you no work," he tell. No more no pay.

WN: Who told you that?

KI: The management from the other side. A&B Commercial [Kahului Store] management. You know, the big boss tell me that. You know, they fight the Camp 1 Store managers, yeah? Well, I know what's going on.

So I tell 'em, "Okay, thanks."

"You can come down Friday and Monday."

"Okay, thank you, but I'm at home." They suspend me, see?

WN: How come only you?

KI: Because other guys no walk out. Only me, walk out. Because I'm the steward, eh? That's how they used to treat, you know. Today, I don't think they can do that. The whole outfit going to walk out, yeah? But before, they [the management] used to control little bit. ILWU wasn't that strong yet. You know what I mean? Wasn't organized that strong. Today, they cannot do that. You know, the early part, I talking about, right?

WN: You never try and convince the other workers in the store to walk out?

KI: Told them. "You want the union, it's up to you guys."

I cannot tell [them that] inside the premises. But they should know. They go to the union meeting, right? They should know.

"When this guy go [walk out], you guys follow." They tell, eh?

Something, get labor trouble, the other side, so they going walk out, see? But, [as I look back] today, we were foolish to walk out. What the hell, the other side getting the labor troubles, why should we walk out? You know what I mean?

WN: By the "other side," you mean plantation . . .

KI: Wholesale [i.e., Kahului Store], Paia side [i.e., Paia Store], or someplace. They all under one unit, right? I mean, the same unit. So, one place go [walk] out, they like for everybody go out from the whole store [i.e., all the plantation stores]. That was wrong, I think, today. That's what I figure. But I'm so strong in the

union, I go, right? Then I'll get suspended.

WN: What percentage, you think, of all the storekeepers [i.e., plantation store employees] walked out?

KI: Very few. Maybe only two or three walked out [from Spreckelsville Camp 1 Store]. The rest, all go stay back. There wasn't that much, honest to the union, I think. But, I say, [some] go only one side. Some go the other side. No good. If you going definitely-- you [should either] go to the company or with the union side, that's all.

WN: Why you think it was such a small turnout among the store employees?

KI: We had pretty good, though. There were about twelve guys working, eh? All of them under union. Hoo, only me, one, walk out from that. They [fellow employees] worry, eh? I don't blame them. Because, maybe, not enough schooling. Like if they were like you, Warren, different. You not afraid to talk, right? These plantation people, they were afraid before, see? Really afraid of the management, you know.

WN: You think if was like this among all the sugar workers, too? This kind feeling?

KI: Sugar workers, the leadership was different than the store guys. They have more power to advise men. You know, the union officials. They were stronger than our business place. Different.

WN: So, percentage-wise, the walk-out rate among the sugar workers was higher?

KI: Yeah. Like sugar, too, higher. Because they, maybe, about 90 percent walk out. Sugar side. Our side, maybe, 10 percent walk out. Opposite come. Ninety percent work.

WN: Who was the leader?

KI: Poor leader, maybe. Poor leadership, huh? They were afraid of the . . . . Not enough education, that's why. That's what I think. If we were educated like you, now, let's say that twelve guys was working in there. I bet you every one of them would go. They know what they doing. The management ever calls them inside, they can tell them where to get off.

WN: Why didn't the leaders of the sugar plantation people talk to the storekeepers, too?

KI: Well, it's all right, but they have to get the okay from the management, right? May they come in to talk.

WN: The store management?

KI: Yeah, yeah. Can they [union leaders] come in, talk to the working people. They have to close down the store little while, right? Maybe, let's say, half an hour or something? But they don't want that. The management, maybe, yeah?

WN: In 1946, when they first organized the union, the storekeepers voted for . . .

KI: Sure. Right. Then, they tell them what to do. But they afraid. What I mean is, not enough schooling, that's why they afraid. They afraid of those haoles, you know. We were brought up like that. You know, way back. You know what they used to tell us before the union organized?

"Damn you. I'll kick your goddamned ass." That's what they used to tell you, those haoles. Real mean to the working guys.

WN: This is in the store, or . . .

KI: No. When I worked plantation. I heard that. To one Filipino, that guy, the haole, talked, yeah? Cannot say anything. You fired--you know what I mean--if you talk back. Was that hard, way back, you know.

My father guys, more worse. When they moved from Waialua to Kihei, nothing was--not even one piece of cane--was in this plantation yet. Now, they have to dig the well, right? I mean, the pump for the well for the sugar cane. They going start growing sugar cane, eh? And he'll tell me the story. They used to get certain kind of sickness once in a while. Maybe living conditions bad, those days. They would get sick. Plenty of them used to get sick, see? Plantation people---I mean, they would call 'em lunas, before--the foremen. He come with a whip. They used to whip you up and then take you to the working field. How many of them died. That's what he say. He say he would never move to Kihei.

He died early, but till today, my mother says my father used tell, "Never move to Kihei."

You get bad ground there. Too many guys died right in front of him, eh? When they would fill in that well, too. Hoo, was bad. Coffee. So windy--Kihei is all open. Dirt, eh? Red dirt. Maybe, get small camp restaurant or something. You buy coffee, you come back to your shack, bring that. All red with mud already. (Laughs) That, the condition was. Way back, you know. Nineteen hundred [1900], maybe, around there. Eighteen ninety-nine [1899], 1898, like that.

WN: Your father told you all this?

KI: Hoo, plenty died. He say lucky he never die. He was sick, too, but, you see. They used to whip 'em. Real slavery, before, you

know. Well, they came in, contract, from Japan, right? They got to work so many years to get your contract paper clear, eh? Then, you go under your own. (Chuckles) More worse than animal, they used to treat them, I think. Way back.

WN: You wen walk out, yeah, of the store? But you have to come back work because you folks had to feed the striking . . .

KI: Yeah, well, when I wen stay walk out, I going get suspended. But only thing, you walk out. Then the next morning, if you come back, all right. You report to working place again. See, they won't suspend you. You know what I mean? By that time, they negotiate the other side. They fixing up the trouble, right? But, I no come back, see, next day.

"Suspended one week," they tell you.

Well, no care, because I had money, those days. Work, work, work. Bumbai, another trouble come in. Walk out again, eh? Two, three times, I walked out. Two, three times, I had suspended.

WN: So, during that strike, plantation stores stayed open?

KI: Yeah. All of them was open.

WN: Did the strikers get . . .

KI: Yeah, they charged. You can get. You cannot get your pay already, right? Because you not working. We used to charge them. Plantation allowed charge. Maybe [if] they go too high, maybe, they warn them. Usually, the strike going--the 1946 one went about sixty-something days [the strike lasted 72 days], I think--because usually more short. Lot of them, maybe, about two, three weeks. Settle, eh? When come to long one--the longer the strike goes--they get panic, you know what I mean?

Hoo, they start worrying, "Hey, how I going feed the kids?"

That's the point. So, they used to have their own, da kine union soup kitchen, they call that. Farmers, sometime, donate any kind. Everybody donate. They used to go throw one net to catch so many turtle and fish, like that. They all come soup kitchen, they eat. All the strikers.

WN: Your mother used to donate?

KI: Like us, we had our own store, so we don't worry about that, eh? But, union guys, they strike, they come. We used to charge. That cannot help. You guys cannot starve, eh? Go ahead, buy. You help them out, in return, they buy plenty. They pay you off when come after the strike. As soon as they get their money, they pay, see? We used to get good customers, you know. Very understanding

customers. But really hard life, olden days, you know. Oh, not like today.

WN: You said that you took orders, and you delivered, too, eh? You said, like when somebody took vacation? That wasn't your regular job?

KI: No, no. When somebody go on vacation--the truck driver go vacation-- I help them. He go, maybe, two weeks, vacation; two weeks, I help. This guy, maybe, go order man. You know, the one go out in the camp, take order. He wen go two weeks, vacation. I go take his place, see? Too many guys get. Sometimes, maybe, about two, three months a year that I take order, see? So, I know practically all the plantation camp people. I got to [take the place of] three, four guys who taking order, so I know practically all in the community, right? So, all friends, already. You know, when go take order. Till today, they no forget me. Even we don't meet long time, but sometimes, once in a while, meet 'em down the street or shopping center.

"Hi, Ken!" You know. Good-natured guys always get plenty friends, you know. You be bad to them, you no more friends. That's right, you know. Yeah, Warren? True, you know.

END OF INTERVIEW



Tape No. 7-39-2-80

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Kenichi Itakura (KI)

February 29, 1980

Kahului, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Kenichi Itakura. Today is February 29, 1980, and we're at his home in Kahului, Maui.

Okay, last time, we were talking about the Camp 1 [Plantation] Store in Spreckelsville. You started [working] there in 1943. Can you tell me what was being sold over there--Camp 1 Store?

KI: Well, groceries, and dry goods, some hardware, and then meat. You know, meat--pork, like that. Then we used to have a liquor department, too. Something like general [store]. Only thing, we don't sell the plumbing stuff, we don't sell much. Very few. Mostly groceries. Chicken feed, too, you know, chicken and pig meal, like that. We used to carry mostly all what the camp people used. They used to have plenty piggeries, all the camps. And poultry, everybody used to have, those days, way back, and they used to raise their own chickens. They had quite a lot. And the groceries--that's the most. Then we had dry goods. They sell material, like that. Shirt and very few pants. Something like what the all kids used to wear. They call that denim pants, like that. Khaki pants. That's about all. Not the woolen ones.

WN: Did they sell work plantation clothing?

KI: Yeah, yeah. Well, the working clothes, most likely. Chambray working shirt. That's about all we sell.

WN: What about da kine going out kind?

KI: No, rarely. I don't think so. Mostly only working one. We used to carry some sport shoes and sport shirts, like that. Very few, but. Not like da kine pants stores.

WN: Was it like today's modern department stores. Did they have different departments?

KI: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's right. Let's say, small general store

just like. Not da kine big one today coming out. You carry everything, but few things. Not too many. Because we have to have that turn-around--faster turning is better--to have the new stock every time in the store. You know what I mean, eh? Turnover supposed to be fast, see?

WN: Was it open shelves? Anybody can just . . .

KI: Well, we just get the showcase. This the display one. You know, something in that. Customer cannot open that because they have to go from the back. But they used to have display in the display window, too. Sometimes, new materials come in, like that, stay over there.

WN: So, groceries, dry goods, hardware, meat . . .

KI: Meat department. Not fish, though. We don't carry fish. We used to have the vegetable department, too. I don't know, that thing wen fade away. They used to contract with the outside people, the vegetable store owner. They used to have one [stall] in the corner. In the long run, that thing fade away. I don't know, maybe rent was too high, I think, yeah? But we used to have our own meat department, because I used to pick up the meat from Camp 5 Store or someplace where they corral for all our stores. So, we used to have meat, and pork, every once in a while.

WN: When you folks had the delivery service, what areas did the delivery cover?

KI: Like Spreckelsville store, we used to deliver Camp 1, Camp 2, Camp 3, Camp 4, Central Power Plant . . . What else? All Camp 1--the Hawaiian Camp, Spanish Camp, and Codfish Row. All that vicinity, right near to the--they call that Spreckelsville district. So as far as the Hospital Camp, they used to be under Spreckelsville. And then, Central Power Plant--the one you go to the airport? It's a small, little camp over there. They get power plant over there. That used to be under Spreckelsville. That's the district called Spreckelsville. Then, Camp 11, closed the camp, way back. We used to have a small camp there, too--right above Camp 2, see? Beyond that, come MA [Maui Agricultural] Company, before. MA Company and HC&S [Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company] was different company--sugar company, right? Then, they merged, came HC&S [in 1948]. That used to be Keahua, Paia, all used to be for MA Company. Pulehu, like that. Yeah? That's right, eh?

WN: Yeah. So, had Camp 1 Store, and then had Camp 5 Store, yeah?

KI: Yeah, Camp 5 take care their own district. The Puunene district, they call that, right?

WN: Which store was bigger?

KI: Oh, well, it's all about same, but the customerwise, Camp 5 used to

be bigger than us.

WN: More customers?

KI: More customers, because the camps are big, too, over there. More camps than Spreckelsville. Ours, maybe scattered camps, but not that big camps.

WN: In the Spreckelsville area--you know, you said where the deliveries go--how many stores would you say--other stores--had in that area?

KI: Yeah, that's the one, I tell you, Morihara Store, my [family] store, and Sam Sato's store. Three--one, two, three. Yeah, that's all. Then, the service station. We used to have Kitagawa Service Station, over there, Camp 3, next to Sam Sato. Then, used to be Iwanaga Photo Studio. And then, below, to Kahului side, used to get Yoshizawa Barbershop. And then, used to get the pool hall and all, over there. About a four-business section, there. The rest, all camps. Camp 2, used to be our store, that's all. And then, Camp 1, used to be the Morihara Store.

WN: So, someone living in that area of Spreckelsville had a choice of going to the plantation store, your family store, Sam Sato, and Morihara?

KI: Yeah. Right, right, right, right. Yeah. I told you, our store, the plantation allow us to run that store over there because of the plantation people, the one living our camp. Some of them, you know, Filipinos, all single. Sometimes they wake up nighttime to catch the train or the truck--the labor truck or labor train. So, they got to get up early in the morning, see? Sometime, maybe half an hour, they get late. Oh, last minute, come down, pick up something, can goods, and they go back. And then, just pack 'em, and they go work. The plantation allow us to sell them because they cannot go to Spreckelsville store. It's not open, eh? Because we open early in the morning. So, the plantation--[for] the laborer lower class that just go work--they give us orders to open the store there.

WN: So, you're talking about 1943 time when you were working . . .

KI: No, go way back. Way back. Chinese guy used to own the store. We bought from him. In 1930-something, we bought. Chinese, I don't know how long, over there. The same location was until we moved. Same location, the store was. Only we enlarge it little bit, yeah?

WN: How about salesmen [order takers] coming from big stores in Kahului, like Onishi [Shōkai], like that? Did they come in a lot?

KI: Maybe couple of times a week, they come around. Or once a week. But, well, you know how Japanese people are. (Chuckles) Anything, Japanese talk, they [order takers] associate with the customer.

So, they used to buy here and there, but they used to give more business to Camp 1 Store--Spreckelsville store. Because that's where the plantation money going out, right? Through there. It all used to be under HC&S, before. Then come to A&B [Alexander & Baldwin] Commercial, later on [in 1950].

WN: So, more people shopped at the Camp 1 Store than at Onishi?

KI: Oh, yeah.

WN: I mean, why?

KI: Well, goods are cheaper [at Camp 1 Store], too. Compared to the small and the big one. We have more overhead, but still, the price is cheaper than outside stores. You cannot compete [with] plantation stores. But only thing, maybe, the obligation with some Japanese stores [i.e., Japanese stores are more lenient], when they might be back [i.e., behind] in the paying.

WN: Also, the Japanese stores, did they sell things that you couldn't get at the plantation store?

KI: No, no. Same thing. Same--what we carry, they carry, too. Dry goods, same thing. The plantation store has more capital backbone. They have more than the Japanese stores. So, the buying power is there.

WN: What about the Japanese foods?

KI: Same thing. They all getting from the same . . . . You know, the [wholesale] salesman comes from Honolulu. He sells to all the stores--Maui's, eh? Y. Hata Shōten. Before, used to Fuji Shōten, way back. All the big outfits from Honolulu. That's where the goods come from. In fact, I think, the olden days, they used to [order] direct from Japan. Certain connection to the Honolulu big firms. They get direct shipment, I think, come in. They don't have to bother. Maybe, unload at Honolulu, and then--before, not used to be barge--used to be the inter-island boat. You know, when the freight come in--the passenger boat, the freight boat. So, they all in a group--Big Five, right? So, that's how they used to handle. That's what I think. Young days, we didn't know that. They all--the Big Five [i.e., American Factors, Castle & Cooke, Alexander & Baldwin, Theo H. Davies, C. Brewer]--control that Territory of Hawaii, before.

WN: So, A&B [Alexander & Baldwin] controlled a lot of the goods that were coming into Maui?

KI: Well, controlling that, I don't know, but most of the--Maui--the biggest wholesaler was A&B Commercial, yeah? They have buying power. That's the difference. The other stores cannot buy [as much]. They don't issue to small store like what A&B buys. That's the difference.

WN: By "more buying power," it's like they have the backing of A&B?

KI: Sure. They have the capital in the bank. (Laughs) You know? But the small store, they might have so much, and that's all. So, they cannot go over the limit to buy, right? They scared. They afraid, because if they cannot pay, they stuck already. You know what I mean?

WN: This is like stores like Onishi and Japanese Mercantile?

KI: They have, but they don't have the buying power like A&B. A&B used to take care all the plantation stores, right? Commercial. That used to be Kahului Store, before--the main Kahului Store. They used to deliver the stuff to all that . . . . But our branch store [i.e., Camp 1 Store] order through Kahului Store, they deliver--bring the big truck for us. We just unload in our warehouse. But we run short of the grocery or something, then we go with our small truck. We pick it up down Kahului Store, the wholesale. That only for that moment. The rest of the monthly stock, all, they delivered.

WN: How often would the big truck come?

KI: Well, maybe once a week. But before the truck, they used to deliver with railroad train. The boxcars. Back of our store used to have the tracks--right by the unloading platform.

WN: Do you know when that stopped? When they stopped bringing it on the railroad?

KI: About during the war [World War II] years, see?

WN: Oh, so, all the time before the war . . .

KI: All the mechanization wen start rebuilding. All that, gave away that. All, would be the big truck, they used to deliver. You know, that railroad, like that. Kahului Railroad. That's why all the locomotive, all they gave up. Even HC&S gave up locomotive [use in the cane fields]. The Tournahauler came in, right? When I first work, all locomotive. They bring the labor in, and they take the cane in and out. You know what I mean? Hoo, all locomotive, before.

WN: So, when they started going on the trucks, they had to build roads?

KI: Right. Yeah, right. In the field. You know, in the harvesting field, they have to make the road for the Tournahauler to get in, right?

WN: Yeah. What about from Kahului to Camp 1 Store? Did the trucks go a different route than the train did?

KI: Oh, yeah. Different, because they had to . . . . They had these

county roads. You know, these main highways, they had to use that road to come in the camp, see? It's all connected with the camp roads, anyway. So, only thing, to save expense, they gave up all the locomotives. They use the big trucks. They call 'em ten-ton trucks, like that.

WN: When the trucks came in, was it easier on you folks?

KI: Oh, more easy, because the truck come right to that platform, right? They unload, we unload. We help unload. We stack in our warehouse. They unload the freight from the [truck] with small, little hand trucks.

WN: Before the war, when the train was coming, what you folks had to do?

KI: Yeah, before the war. They come in a boxcar, because it all depend what kind of weather. The rice especially, and the feed, like that, you come in there because we unload from the back. We start by the back entrance to that track--the unloading platform. Right there, see? That's where the thing . . . . We don't need because the locomotives, they gave up, eh? All the trains, like that. When I start--from plantation, I went to the store [in 1943]--that thing was still coming in through locomotives. You know, bag of rice, 100-pound, those days. So many 100 bags in one boxcar.

WN: Was it easier to unload a truck than it was to unload a boxcar?

KI: Hard because we stay in there, hot like hell, inside that boxcar. You know, small opening. When we start, easy, but when you go inside--with a plank--we got to take 'em [the merchandise] out.

WN: But when the big truck came . . . .

KI: Easy. Where the thing back up, come right by the . . . .

WN: The dock?

KI: Where you unload 'em. Then, they come in with that cases, like that. You know what I mean? But they're easy to unload.

WN: You know, the new month order time--you were saying--that started on the twentieth?

KI: Maybe, let's say, about the twenty to twenty . . . . Once, you have one camp, see? Let's say, from the twentieth, they tell, "We start from Camp 1." Take the whole Camp 1. Filipinos and the Japanese, the ones take the order, right? They go over there. Then, the next day, you go the next camp. So, the thing, alphabetically, maybe, you did that. I mean, numeral way--[Camp] 1, 2, 3, and they go Central Power Plant and Camp 4. Maybe going be same time. And Camp 10, like that, same time. The thing is, new month means, you get the goods ahead of the following month. You pay one month

later. So, they buy big amount on a new month--they used to call that.

WN: What if somebody wanted to buy something on the nineteenth, would they give them a break?

KI: Well, we give 'em, but we charge them on the--we hold back our bill--we charge 'em [as if it were purchased] on the twentieth. We still charge, but we make the date "twentieth." You know what I mean? Yeah, so he don't have to pay [until the payday after next]. But he can get this stuff little bit early. Maybe certain stuff, but we don't give everything on that date, see? But we keep our record.

WN: So, sometimes, you would give them a break, then?

KI: Yeah, yeah. The one desperate for stuff. You know what I mean? But usually they know. They don't ask for that stuff already. They know already.

WN: So, if you folks start going out taking orders for new month on the twentieth, how many days would it take you to cover the whole area?

KI: Maybe three, four days. They have ahead of time, the groceries, whatever they buying--material stuff--way ahead of the month. Then, the following month--let's say, March going to come. We get [new month] on the twentieth again. So, you stay one month ahead of buying the (laughs) kaukau stuff. You pay later, in other words. You get the goods early, you pay later.

WN: An average family of, say, four people. How much goods would they buy in new month time?

KI: Oh, well, those years, you know, money value was low. They used to buy, let's say, thirty, forty dollars. Thirty, forty dollars, you know how much grocery you have? One month supply, almost. In the meantime, maybe, they run short of certain things, and then they'll buy little by little. You go over that, you have to pay anyway. So, sometimes, they---you know, come balance for so many months.

WN: The new month salesmen [order takers] would go out, say, on the . . .

KI: No, the same salesmen. Same salesmen, yeah.

WN: Oh, yeah. And then, would he only go out once a month, though? New month time? Would he go out . . .

KI: Every week, every day. Every day. Six days a week, we work, right? Six days, he go out, take order. So, he rotate. Maybe, my camp, he come twice a week. Camp 3, he come twice a week. That [Camp] 3 is a big camp, already. Pretty good, over there, the coverage. Then, they go Hawaiian Camp one day again. Hawaiian

Camp and Codfish Row, like that. Then, they have to go the small ones, now. Camp 10, they used to go upper Camp 3, then Camp 4-- Central Power Plant. So, roughly, we used to get two Japanese salesmen--two or three. And then, Filipino salesmen, we used to have. All camps get Japanese and Filipinos.

WN: So, they would have a regular schedule, then, every day, yeah?

KI: They know where they going, already.

WN: So, just that at new month time, it would be more busy?

KI: More busy. I mean, they got to cover . . . . Well, they go same thing. Only thing, they get more business. Order going be big. When you, salesman, you go take the order, you come back, you got to make [gather] the order. And the truck--our truck--the delivery boy going to deliver that, see?

WN: The following day?

KI: Yeah, the following day. Maybe he get couple camps [to cover], that's all. Then, next day, going to be same thing again. But once the new month pau already, it comes easy again. The routine kind delivery comes again.

WN: When they would get billed every month, people would pay all at once?

KI: Well, it all depends how their family are. But now, maybe, they give them chance to pay so many months. They give 'em time to pay. But if they building up that balance higher, they would stop the deliveries.

WN: Could they deduct from the people's paycheck?

KI: Well, they give warning when they come. Because they have to change [cash] their [pay]checks at our Spreckelsville store. I don't think the other stores will accept their checks. Because we used to go down the bank, maybe, let's say, give 'em about . . . . So many hundred workers, our Spreckelsville district. So, the checks come every two weeks, see? You got to change over there--our store--because we bring the cash in from the bank. They cannot go to the other stores, [because] they don't have that cash on hand. (Laughs) They going run short of the cash.

WN: So, people could come into your store and get cash from their paychecks?

KI: The olden days, you know how they used to pay. They used to (laughs) come in the envelope--gold [coins], before, I was telling you. That's how they used to pay, you know. No such thing as currency, those days, way back. (Laughs)



WN: You said they got paid every two weeks, yeah?

KI: Yeah, afterwards.

WN: Before, used to be . . .

KI: Before, once a month.

WN: Do you remember when they changed?

KI: Oh, well, I'm pretty sure when the union [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] came in [1946]. After the war, then they start paying twice a month. Before that, once a month. I know we used to get monthly salary. Once a month, they used to give me.

WN: So, even after that, when they got paid twice a month, they still had new month order?

KI: Oh, yeah. Right through. That's how to make business. If not, they'll go to that Japanese store because they giving that [new month] to everybody, too.

WN: Oh, the Japanese stores in Kahului had new month, too?

KI: Sure. Yeah. Because I used to work over there [Japanese Mercantile Company], I know. They used to deliver.

WN: Same time? New month, twentieth?

KI: New month, but maybe same time with the Spreckelsville store or other stores. Like, let's say, Kobayashi, all, all about same time. You know, Kobayashi, Onishi, JM [Japanese Mercantile] Company, like that. And then, they used to get the Filipino Maui Shōkai. Most, about same time, the new month. Even the plantation stores, too. I see the plantation trucks deliver it.

WN: I wonder, if the Japanese companies, in order to get more business, maybe, if they extended the new month. You know, made it more early or anything like that?

KI: Same thing. You not going to buy. Because you cannot pay in the long run. You not going to haul the groceries. You cannot eat if you haul too much. You know what I mean? You can buy as much you like, but how you going to pay? Your income is set already, you know.

WN: Yeah. But what if they made it, maybe new month would start on the eighteenth instead of the twentieth?

KI: Yeah, maybe, they might have better sale than the . . . . But they would stop 'em, I think. Plantation would stop 'em.

WN: Oh? How would they do that?

KI: Well, they tell them, "You come in our property." You know what I mean, now. Camps area all under HC&S. Stop 'em from coming our camp. That's all plantation camps, now. Plantation own . . .

WN: Did that happen?

KI: No, no, never happen, but they can do if they want to. You know what I mean? They fair enough because these Japanese stores buy [merchandise] from Kahului Store, too. They got the upper hand. The Big Five get the upper hand, I don't care how you look at it. The small ones, if they like fool 'em, they can fool 'em. Too much, in the bank. (Laughs) Not today, but in the olden days. Even today, they still have that power, too.

WN: So, if people didn't pay their bills . . .

KI: No such thing as garnishee. I don't remember plantation used to garnishee unless they really not up and up.

WN: So, they would never actually deduct from somebody's paycheck?

KI: Well, it all depends if they garnishee 'em. Then, from your payroll, they . . . . And you have to pay the expense [for] hiring the garnishee guys, right? I don't think they ever did that. I never hear nothing about that, but they can if they like. Some guys, really, they no pay, see? They living in luxury, and they don't pay. Plantation would get after them. Because they used to have camp police. Every camp, the police used to come. You know, the one who rides the horse. "Hey, you better pay," they tell 'em.

WN: You mean, the store manager would give the name . . .

KI: Information, right. Maybe from the main office come. You know, the HC&S office? That's where all the paperworks goes.

They tell 'em, "This guy, chase after."

He just go. "Hey, come on, you. Get on the ball," they tell 'em. "If no going [pay], they going stop you, you know."

WN: While you were at the Camp 1 Store from 1943 to 1956, you noticed any kind changes in the delivery process?

KI: About same. Never changed. We used to deliver same way.

WN: When you were there in 1943, that was still during the war and had lot of soldiers around, how did the soldiers buy from the plantation store? Or did they?

KI: Well, they come around when they get pass, like that. Buses, they used to run. So, our Spreckelsville [family] store used to be the stopping point, too. You know, where the bus stops, right? Some

of them come down in there, but [not] to sightsee, [because] that's only [plantation] camp for the soldiers. Many of them, they don't even go down, but some of them come down. Then, they take the next bus and go. Every once in a while, that bus stops, see? Once in a while, the truckload of--not the ones on the pass--guys, maybe, who had to work certain place with that fatigues. I know, with that working clothes, they come down. Then, hoo, the whole mob come in one time. About fifty, sixty guys. You know, they drink soda water, those days. They cannot buy liquor. We don't sell liquor, those days. All stopped. So, you know the lemon extract, like that? Hey, they put inside that Coca-Cola, they drink. Whew! Telling you, man, those days was rough.

WN: You folks couldn't sell any liquor at all during the war?

KI: No, [only] after the war.

WN: Did the Camp 1 Store sell liquor before the war?

KI: No. I don't remember. Because way after [the war], the liquor [started being sold]. Let's say, before they closed [1956], about five, six years before that, the liquor first started selling in there. We used to sell quite a lot because Spreckelsville used to have that beach area. You know that beach area, now? With all those haoles? All the plantation haoles, the bigshots, all was lined up, [living along the beach], the country club. You know the golf links there [Maui Country Club]?

WN: By Kawanoa School?

KI: Kawanoa School, right up, the [Maui] Country Club. All used to be haoles over there.

WN: From where?

KI: You know the golf links? The country club, right down Kawanoa School. You know where that airport is? Airport, this side. Back side is the beach. Little further up, used to be all haoles, over there.

WN: The haoles used to come and shop at the Camp 1 Store?

KI: Yeah, they call in, and we used to deliver. But they used to shop every once in a while. They come for the liquor, see? Sell a lot of liquor over there. And then, Filipinos, they buy wine, man. Hoo! One Filipino, every other day, he buy one gallon wine. Those days, one gallon wine, only about two, three dollars. Cheap, see? Case of beer used to be \$2-something.

WN: How come the plantation store started to sell liquor?

KI: They figure money there. Olden days, I think, they don't want the

laborers to drink too much because they don't go work next day. They want all the people to work, see? The sugar is the main product.

WN: Was there anyplace in Camp 1 where somebody could get liquor during the war?

KI: They don't allow camp stores. Nobody can. In the first place, I think the county [liquor] commission, they don't give you the license to run. The license too high, I think. So, we couldn't afford to buy liquor, our camp. You know, camp [family] store, small, like that. We used to pay ten dollars for grocery license and ten dollars for tobacco license. That's all--two. County of Maui, see?

WN: So, just before the wartime, where could a Camp 1 resident go to buy liquor if he wanted?

KI: Paia. He come to our store. Our store, most, see?

WN: Your mother's store?

KI: No, no, no, no, no. The Spreckelsville [plantation] store. But before that, well, they have to buy from some other place because the Japanese stores used to carry.

WN: In Kahului?

KI: Yeah. They used to come take orders. We [KI's family] buy sake from them, but we don't used to drink. Except for New Year or some kind of special occasion, we buy sake, like that. They carry all kind good kind sake, too, because imported from Japan. But beer, we hardly drink.

WN: The salesmen [order takers] used to take orders for beer?

KI: Well, those guys--the Japanese stores--was selling the liquor before that Spreckelsville [plantation] store. They used to sell ahead of time. Now, the camp people---as far as the Filipinos, too. The Filipinos, that Maui Shōkai come in, so they carry all kind of wine. Very few hard liquor, though--I don't know, but--they used to carry. Because, I think, the license are different--soft and the hard liquor--the license are different.

WN: Soft liquor is beer and wine?

KI: Yeah, beer and wine. When come to hard liquor, I think the license are different. You have to pay two separate license, if I'm not mistaken, in the olden days.

WN: So, before the war, the reason why the camp [family] stores didn't sell liquor was because the license was too high or was it because the plantation didn't allow?

KI: The plantation no allow, I think. They no allow the small camp stores to sell liquor, see?

WN: The plantation didn't mind that Onishi and Maui Shōkai came in to sell liquor to the workers?

KI: Yeah, because that soft liquor. I don't think they used to carry hard liquor. I remember they used to carry sake, wine--that's about all. We didn't know anything about hard liquor, those (chuckles) days.

WN: So, couldn't the plantation allow the camp stores to sell soft liquor?

KI: I don't think so. We couldn't afford to buy the license, I think. That's why, I think, nobody carrying . . . . Too high, the fee. In other words, no worth. You cannot make that much money by selling only wine and beer--sake and beer. We got to, maybe, sell higher than the Japanese stores. We cannot get the amount. [What if] they tell you to take so much amount and you cannot afford, what? You know what I mean, eh? Over there [Kahului Japanese stores], they can because more capital. After plantation store came in [i.e., started selling liquor], see the difference. We can buy any amount. Buying power is there again, now. Just like the groceries. So, we sell 'em whatever the liquor company tell us what price to sell. We know how to put the profit on top. They the ones tell, "Well, you get enough profit already." Easy, you see. They fill up the . . . . Take care all that. They bring 'em in, they fill up the shelf for us, see? So, they all different kind company. Maybe six, seven different [wholesale] salesmen used to come in.

WN: After the war, when Camp 1 Store started selling liquor, you sold hard liquor and soft liquor?

KI: Yeah. And soft liquor.

WN: From when to when was the Camp 1 Store opened? What time to what time?

KI: Oh, in the morning, 7:30 [a.m.] to 4:30. Afternoon, 4:30. Because we work, one hour lunch, you try figure, eight hours.

WN: Yeah. So, the store would close every day at 4:30?

KI: Yeah. Every day.

WN: And what time was pau hana in those days?

KI: Oh, the field workers, they usually pau work 3:30 [p.m.]. So, they get one hour time to come already. Those days, well, they used to get the trucks already--labor trucks. So, they come home quite early. Some of them, even the kompang man, used to come home about

3:30, already. Before, used to be about 4:30, because their own contract. But after that [i.e., unionization], all, no such thing as contract already. You know the bonus? They wipe it out, see?

WN: So, was it open at all at night?

KI: No. Not once we worked night. You have to buy already before 4:30. But we open from Monday till Saturday. Only Sunday closed.

WN: So, that means, a worker only had about one hour, then, to shop at the store?

KI: Yeah. Uh huh. But our salesmen always going out, taking order. They come only to buy, maybe, some kind of meat or something. Last-minute stuff. Liquor, or something. So, they come.

WN: But most of the time, they wait for the salesman?

KI: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because they don't have to take 'em back. We going deliver for them.

WN: Another thing about the wartime, could the soldiers charge at all?

KI: All cash. Strictly cash. The soldiers, they outsiders. Just the plantation people [could charge]. So, they'll have their own bangō. You know, the number, eh? What they call "bangō," in other words. And then, their name registered all in plantation main office. Or not, you cannot work plantation. So, they get 'em set, those guys, already. So, you, charge account. But if they come behind on the payment, they start shaking them, see?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Would the MA Company employees charge at the Camp 1 Store?

KI: When was merged, all right.

WN: [What about] before the merger? [Maui Agricultural Company merged with Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company in 1948].

KI: Before, no, cannot. You got to get special credit card. You got to apply for that.

WN: Oh, was it easy to get one?

KI: Well, you go to the main store. You know, the main store? The Kahului Store. Then, the bulletin come out to our store, this guy, he can charge. And then, if the guys are delinquent in paying,

quick, stop their account. The thing come out every once in a while. Every week, in fact, somebody's name used to come in. Then, don't accept checks--that kind.

WN: These are outsiders, right?

KI: Yeah. They no trust, yeah? How many guys used to forge, in the olden days. That's why, they deal with mostly plantation people. We'll take some outsiders, but they all pay cash. They write check, got to call in--okay or what--the main office. The main office say okay, give 'em, accept that.

WN: You mean, if they write a check, right on the spot, they would call?

KI: Yeah, yeah, yeah. If I don't know that person, his check came in--he want to pay for the grocery--[if] he's all right, accept it. "Okay, give 'em." Maybe they check the bank, I don't know.

WN: So, Camp 1 Store, when you were there, you were a clerk? Was there a big demand for a store job? Did lot of people want to work in the store?

KI: Ah, I don't think so. They pay used to be cheap.

WN: Was less than field work?

KI: Sure. I think the pay was cheaper than the field worker's. Even before I came to the store, I was having little more or double of what they were giving me [at the] Spreckelsville store. Because in 1943, I was earning about--1942, 1943--over \$100 already.

WN: Where?

KI: Through that portable track gang. Because I was working plenty overtime.

WN: And at the store, how much did you get?

KI: Thirty-five dollars a month, I start off. (Laughs)

WN: You started at thirty-five, and when did you get a raise?

KI: Oh, well, every three months. When I was getting seventy-five dollars a month--was, let's say, couple of years--then the union came in. Oh, first was labor law. Labor Department came in. Everybody have to get minimum, so much, already. So, the thing wen come little bit up.

WN: How much up?

KI: Let's say, about little over \$100 or something. Then, the union came in. So, they make grade one, grade two, grade three. All

depend what you do. Then, your job description [is] all written out. Maybe you get so much, one hour. So, that thing wen come up higher than what was getting monthly.

WN: After the union came in, do you remember about how much you were getting?

KI: Maybe, let's say, about \$40-something a week. But we don't used to get raise. Very few raise, we used to get, because we were not like the field workers. Same union, but field workers used to get better deal--the sugar workers. So, before I came salesman for A&B Commercial, I was getting only \$50-something a week. A little over \$200, I was making. Gross pay, now, not net pay. Gross pay, only little--about \$200. Then, they offer me salesman job. Hoo, cheap pay, before. Man.

WN: Did you get any overtime?

KI: Well, overtime, very few overtime, we used to do, unless inventory--physical inventory--and then, sometimes, last-minute, big freight coming in. Very few overtime.

WN: Did you ever feel that you wanted to go back into better-paying job?

KI: Plantation? Long time ago, I wanted to go back. Because all the guys that I used to work with--portable track layers--all got their luna jobs. You know, to other jobs, see? And the supervisors over there, good pay, they was getting, the sugar workers. Hoo, good pay. They start off with about \$600, maybe, a month. Compared to half of that I was getting. All of them, today, over \$1,000 a month, they make. Well, today, plenty retired, too, but you know what I mean. Pitiful. You know kompang man? You know how much they make today with overtime? Two thousand dollars a month, they make, you know. Higher than certain supervisors.

WN: They still doing lot of kompang today?

KI: They still get da kine taking care. Irrigators, they call that. Small field--small cane--before harvest, [they] take care, right? They get plenty overtime. But during summer, water come scarce, right? Not enough water, so they got to work till late to feed the cane.

WN: So, today, they get paid by the hour, plus they get the big bonus?

KI: Probably, right. Big pay, they get. The overtime. Plus the bonus.

WN: The tonnage, yeah?

KI: Tonnage bonus, they get. Let's say, end of the year, they get so



much, I think. Like HC&S, sugar tonnage stay high, little bit way up. Because the biggest plantation, every time, they give bonus. You know, the guys who push the Tournahaulers and the tractors, all them get bonus, end of the year. Or, maybe, monthly, they used to get. They go so much ahead of the job, they give them, automatic. I don't know if today, but before, used to be like that. Two, three years ago. So, more they work, right? You know what coming. You work. Even me, I work. That's greed. They call that greed.

WN: So, how come you didn't go back to the fields?

KI: That long I work in the store, for what I go back? You come lazy, too, right? You wear nice, clean clothes and work. If you go back [to the fields], all come muddy and dirty. I tell 'em no dice.

WN: Okay, let's see. While you working at the store from 1943 to 1956, there were some changes that took place. Like in 1948, HC&S and MA Company merged, eh? Was there any difference in how the store operated before the merger as compared with after the merger?

KI: Same thing. Because they were doing the same thing--Paia [Store]. You know what I mean? But [after the merger] they eliminate certain jobs up there. The clerks--[when] we needed some this side, one or two came under us when the companies merged. Maybe the dry goods girl left--they call that "buyer"--so they bring from the other side, see? We don't accept the new ones, [because] they don't know what, they got to start from scratch. And these guys [from Paia Store are] experienced, eh? Maybe the [wholesale] salesmen come from Honolulu or Mainland. They go to the section, then they check, see? And then, they buy what they want [i.e., those who transfer from Paia Store know what to buy from the wholesale salesmen]. That's why, couple, I know, from Paia Store, they came.

WN: Any differences in, say, the wholesaling--Kahului Store? Any changes in how you got the goods, anything like that?

KI: No, that, too, was same thing. We call in. I was over there for couple of months. We call the main office. They call [to tell] you what's coming in on that Matson boat, see? Tell you, oh, today the can peas coming in, can corn, maybe corned beef, sausage, or something, they tell. They have so much on this boat. So, you want to place in [an order] how many you want. All the branch stores, they call--the one take care the groceries. "Oh, give me five case of this, five case of that, ten case of that." You know, all the good sellers, anyway. So, don't have to be the other kind, because just the main good sellers, so you don't run short. They deliver for you, that, when their big truck come. Easy to operate. Paia Store closed down early, anyway. When we moved over here [Kahului], they closed down, already. When I came into building mill [A&B Hardware Center].

WN: Nineteen fifty-six [1956], Paia Store was closed already?

KI: No, no. When we came in, they still was up there. That's the main wholesale was, for the Paia branch stores. So, just like us. The small branch stores fold up early. We were one of the first to close.

WN: Camp 1?

KI: Yeah. Through our Puunene HC&S district. Was small, compared to Camp 5 Store.

WN: Camp 5 Store stayed until later?

KI: Yeah, little later. And that Kihei Store, the last [to close]. That's the only stores HC&S used to have--Spreckelsville, Camp 5, Kihei. Three stores.

WN: Plus the Puunene Store and Kahului [Store]?

KI: Yeah, that [Puunene Store] was right across the wholesale department [in Kahului], this side. [Puunene Store was located in Kahului. Not to be confused with Camp 5 Puunene Store.] They have grocery, but used to be more on dry goods, before. Oh, they used sell plenty of the women's and men's wears, yeah? But they used to get--in the back--small, little meat-cutting department. They were mostly on the dry goods, but, later on, they came to da kine. But, I know, was more on meat--poultry and meat, like that. They used to have their own department over there, see?

WN: And 1950 was when the first increment [of Dream City] was ready to be . . .

KI: Right, yeah. Nineteen fifty [1950] or 1949? Nineteen fifty [1950]?

WN: They started building in 1948.

KI: Nineteen forty-eight [1948], huh? I think, the first one, about 1949, start moving. Later part of 1949. Because 1951, had second [increment] already, see? Then, they just came up--1951.

WN: Did you notice lot of people moving out about that time? Out of Spreckelsville?

KI: No, not much from Spreckelsville. Well, with the second, many came up from Spreckelsville.

WN: Second increment?

KI: Yeah. Because the first was so good--the deal is real good. The second one, the price came up. The houses was better built, second one. Maybe about \$2,000 difference--house and lot, now--but the second increment was better house because they make with all this hollow tile. That first [increment homes] was hollow tile, but

inside, they have canec, the partition. Over there one [i.e., second increment], redwood. Partition was different. You know, the one inside this house, room by room. You know what I mean? I know the first [increment] is bigger houses, but inside is all canec, they used.

WN: So, 1949, 1950, people started moving out, yeah?

KI: Gradually, yeah.

WN: And then, you stopped working at the Camp 1 Store in 1956?

KI: Around there, yeah.

WN: Was it because it closed in that year?

KI: Yeah. Because the program had that certain camp have to be closed when come to certain year. So, before I moved, our camp closed-- you know, the Camp 2. Camp 1 Store closed earlier than us.

WN: Your mother's store closed 1960, yeah?

KI: Yeah. So many years---later on, see? Everybody got to move from there. They closed down the camp. The program was [that] certain camps [were to close] certain year. Two, three years later, certain camp got to close again. And the big ones going be left over. Outlying to Puunene Mill, that was the last. [Portions of Mill Camp and McGerrow Camp still exist today.] Still they have that, right? That camp. Eventually, all going out, already. The program, I don't know when--1980-something, at the most, yeah?

WN: So, 1956 was when the Camp 1 Store closed? And that was the first HC&S plantation store to close?

KI: No. I think over there, too--Keahua Store. That's MA Company. I think they closed earlier than us because guys working over there came to our place to work--the clerks.

WN: Oh, Keahua?

KI: Keahua Store. And what, now, they used to get?

WN: Hamakua Poko?

KI: Hamakua Poko Store was under [MA Company]. Yeah, I think, that one, too, they closed down. I don't know if Hamakua Poko had the time I was working. But, anyway, Keahua Store closed down earlier than us.

WN: And the Keahua employees came to Camp 1 Store?

KI: Yeah, one of them came to work for me when I was working Camp 1 Store.

WN: But as far as the old HC&S [plantation stores]--Camp 5, Camp 1, Kihei . . .

KI: Yeah, Camp 1 closed the earliest. Camp 1.

WN: So, up until 1956, did you notice less business?

KI: Oh, well, wasn't that much bad. I was keeping the books--was all right. Because they had that laborers, yet, in the camp. Very few moved. Only those supervisors--had little bit money guys. That's the guys moved. Plenty guys cannot afford [Dream City homes], yet. The pay was so small. But the supervisors, they have higher salary than the regular workers. So, lot of supervisors moved, I know.

WN: Right after the merger, the A&B Commercial Company was formed [in 1950]. Did that change the wholesaling at all?

KI: In those days, the Kahului Railroad Merchandise, they call that--the one I working now, the building mill--that used to be under Kahului Railroad, and that merged to A&B Commercial. All those plumbing, electrical, and then lumber supply, lumber product, all went under A&B Commercial. This merchandising concern, all came to A&B Commercial. Was big. You know what I mean? Came bigger than what the grocery [Kahului Store] used to be. You see, when I first came there, ho, man, so many million dollar merchandise was in that warehouse. Paint, industrial supply, building mill, electrical, tools and supply, and one more. Six different departments was in there, you know.

WN: That's when you came in nineteen . . .

KI: Yeah, when Camp 1 Store closed. Came 1956, that A&B Commercial.

WN: Before that, where did they sell all the hardware kind stuff?

KI: You mean, A&B Commercial?

WN: Before A&B Commercial was formed, where did they sell the hardware kind of things?

KI: All over there. That merchandise.

WN: Oh, Kahului HC&S [Store]?

KI: Yeah. Now, it's building mill [A&B Hardware Center], they call that, right? They moved to Hana Highway. Before, used to be--the old--where that Longs Drugs [in Maui Mall] is. Used to be all lumberyard, over there. Our warehouse was where the parking place now. You know the Maui Mall parking place in the front? Parking lot. That all used to be the main store.

WN: And then, in 1951, Kahului Shopping Center was built, eh?

KI: Yeah. Nineteen fifty-one [1951]?

WN: Yeah.

KI: Oh, yeah. I think so, yeah, around there.

WN: And you were still at Camp 1 Store, yeah?

KI: Yeah, yeah. Right.

WN: Did you notice any kind of changes in people's buying habits or anything like that, when the shopping center came up?

KI: You see, the plantation people, they don't have time to go shop in there. Only Sunday, right? So, they used to deal with plenty of the ones living in the vicinity of Kahului--the Kahului district. Let's say, 1951, 1952--first, second and third increment--that's about all was built, yet, right? So, we didn't feel much of the pain--I mean, selling da kine--till 1956. In the long run, they told us the purpose of making that food market [A&B Supermarket] there is to close down the camp [plantation] stores. Eventually, that thing came. The dream came perfect, see? Because all these guys who start moving this side, today they have this fourteenth, fifteenth increment, now. Yeah? If you call that by the number. All going come shopping over there, right? You out, already, you stay in the camp, like that. You not going get that much customer. All moved this side. They grab all the outsiders, too. See how smart they are? The small Japanese stores all closed already. You don't see 'em today. You see da kine? They think ahead.

WN: You mean, A&B?

KI: Good. What they doing today, millions of dollars of business, now. You know what I mean? But, today, ah, you know, Star Market. A&B gave up their own grocery line [A&B Supermarket]--right?--before they gave [sold] to Star Market. Longs Drugs rent 'em over there, that's all. Rental business, they make money, now. Big money, they dish out. Too much humbug with the union, I think. But they get same hired hand, you know, from the old supermarket.

WN: Star Market?

KI: Very few guys change. Even from the management right down, they still have. Only the new workers, maybe, change, that's all.

WN: Star Market bought out the A&B Supermarket?

KI: Oh, well, yeah. Something like that. Longs Drugs, too, eh? The two goes together, I heard, even in Honolulu. The Longs and Star, on the side. That's what I heard. I don't know.

WN: So, you were saying that in 1956 when they closed, the Spreckelsville

store wasn't doing that bad, then?

KI: Wasn't bad, yet. I used to take care the bookkeeping, that's why I know.

WN: Did anybody get mad or anything--you know, the residents?

KI: All the customers. Many of them got mad. They even go the big boss, "What's the matter with you guys, for close this store?" Now, they got to shop in Kahului--to market, like that.

WN: After that, they had to go to Kahului to shop? Could they go to Camp 5 Store?

KI: Well, Kahului used to be much easier. The transportation was easier. Bad road to Camp 5 Store, like that. That's why, we used to go shopping most every week, come down here [Kahului]--the new supermarket. It used to be new, that one, yet, you know.

WN: A&B Supermarket?

KI: Yeah. Even us, we used to shop over there.

WN: Most families had car by then?

KI: Oh, yeah. Most of the families come down here. Everybody used to get car, those days, already.

WN: When did most people start to get car?

KI: Well, when the union came in. They get better money, eh? Those days, the car wasn't that high. One, two thousand dollars, you can buy a brand-new car, those days. Until about 1960, the price of car was cheap, yet. I bought my Model A for \$450, I think, brand-new. Yeah, way back, 1930, \$450, I think, I paid. Hoo, you know how cheap, those days. And then, I had my Studebaker--1947 or 1948 Studebaker. Ho, man, only about \$2,000-something, I bought that. Good car, that. Big car, used to be, that. Then, the (chuckles) Chevy I bought would come about three, four thousand dollar. I know my Buick--what model was that?--1960, I think, was. Oh, the good Buick, that one. Last me eleven, twelve years, I think, almost. Until I went inside the ditch--one time, drunk, I went in the ditch--that thing went all haywire. (Laughs)

WN: So, like 1956, you started at the A&B [Hardware Center] in Kahului, yeah? They had a job for you lined up, guaranteed, or you had to go look for that job?

KI: You mean, when I moved to this A&B from the Camp 1 Store? That thing was already lined up through seniority. You know, I worked long [for the] plantation. So, the guys, not enough seniority, same type of job, he's going to get bounced, anyway--through union

contract, see? So, that guy's job, I take. He got to go out. They had job for him, but the plantation, maybe. But better off. When I went, plantation was better off, instead of bumping the other guy's job. I could have done that, but I don't want to go to that dirty work anymore, eh?

WN: What about the other Camp 1 Store employees?

KI: All was same. They bumped the next guy out. Only thing, the less seniority guy had to go out first. He got to bump the next less seniority guy with same job. That's how that union and company contract was like that, see? So, I had seniority; I don't have to worry. When I came in there, I had about 20-something years service, already.

WN: So, what did you do? What kind of work you did at the A&B [Hardware Center]?

KI: Oh, selling building material stuff. Just a warehouseman.

WN: You were warehouseman?

KI: Yeah, warehouseman. What get in our warehouse, every day, we have to make order, because the order come in--big orders. That's when first, second, third increment start coming up, huh? Ho, plenty job. And we take care the plantation. You know, steel, we used to carry. Pipe, cement products, all kind of stuff, we used to carry. Plumbing products. Oh, big warehouse, that one was.

WN: So, you would sell to Kahului Development or to private people?

KI: Kahului Development. The contract comes from outsiders. They used to come in when they like something . . . . Misawa-something Company from Honolulu. That's the contractor.

WN: Misawa?

KI: I think, Misawa or something. Something like that. They used to . . . . First, second increment. Later on, KD--that's Kahului Development--took over that. So, I think, they were taking over third, fourth, fifth, sixth. That's when . . .

WN: Oh, I see. So, one and two was . . .

KI: One and two, I think, was the Honolulu outfit. Second had about almost 500 homes, I think. First one, not much. Oh, let's say, certain hundred homes, yeah?

WN: This [where KI lives today] is what?

KI: This is sixth.

WN: Sixth increment?

- KI: This one get plenty. This is one of the biggest, too. But, this, our district, you got to make your own home. You cannot buy the plantation homes. This is good district, they call that. Only so many streets--three streets, that's all. Beyond that next intersection there, all camp houses, already. You cannot bring [i.e., transport] camp houses, here. Agreement, we had.
- WN: First and second increment, you could bring your house from camp?
- KI: No, no, no. That is all brand-new homes. But this one, the sixth increment, was the cheapest, the lot. I mean, they start selling the lot, now. Like down here, they had that Johnson Pacific came inside. Alaska [firm]. Those are the ones that made all the low-income homes, over here. All low-priced homes. They buy their own house and lot, let's say, \$12,000--I don't know--\$15,000, they pay. But cheap-looking house. But over here, I made, myself, see? Do-it-yourself. I made myself.
- WN: This house?
- KI: This home, with all hired carpenters, like that. I hired two main carpenters. The rest working for free, eh? I mean, free labor. So, I made 'em for about \$12,000, that's all. House and lot.
- WN: How much the lot itself cost?
- KI: Oh, I paid only about \$2,700.
- WN: You folks had to draw lots to get the lots?
- KI: Yeah, yeah. You got to go to the KD office and draw. First, second . . . First one get his choice. They take you around, see? All around. When they hoping to sell a lot. So, my wife--I was fishing with my son--my wife came with my daughter. She said, "We stay take the biggest one here." (Chuckles) It was the biggest, and used to be high [up]. All can see, eh? Scenery was good, this one, you know. Over here, the lot is all big. Very few has--only over here get about . . . Some get 20-something thousand square feet.
- WN: So, when did you move into this house?
- KI: Before, about 1960--1959, 1960.
- WN: When you started at A&B Building in 1956, you were still living at your home in Spreckelsville?
- KI: Yeah. So, about 1959, I think, I moved here. Nineteen fifty-nine [1959] or 1961. Nineteen sixty [1960] or 1961, around there.
- WN: What about the people living in Spreckelsville who couldn't afford to buy these?



KI: Well, all depend. If big family, like that. If you have a big family--let's say, eight, ten kids, like that--hard to make a go, eh? We were different. We had our store. So, easy to---we had the money in the bank, already. During war, the servicemen came inside, eh? So, we had in the bank quite a good savings. So, before, easy for us for compete with other guys. Some of them, plenty expense for them, every month. So, they couldn't move. They cannot buy here. At the very start, if they can't afford to buy here--you know how cheap they can get 'em--plenty cannot.

WN: So, what did they do?

KI: They stay back. Now, they having the kids all go college, or maybe they working, they married. Plenty money, now. The prices, you know how different compared to about ten, fifteen years ago. Hoo, man, today you got to pay two dollars or three dollars a square foot. They get money now, but they cannot afford, too. Cannot afford because the bank won't loan them, not like our days.

WN: You retired in 1973 from A&B? So, what you been doing with yourself since then?

KI: Fishing, golf, take care orchids.

WN: Actually, most of your life is involved with stores, eh?

KI: Mostly, yeah. But out in the field, pretty good, I worked. Hard labor, now. In the hard labor side.

WN: As you look back, which one did you enjoy more?

KI: Well, work in stores. You meet all kind of people. The grumblers, and good guys, and all kinds. It's the personality. Like us, we get personality. If you got to blow up, you just turn around, and then listen what he says. We good salesmen, eh? Then, he cool off. Dale Carnegie says he going cool off, see? He no going be burned up right through.

When cool off, you come in nice way, "What can I help you with?" Quick, he cool off. Now, you going help him.

"Oh, what's wrong?" You get the business.

WN: Did you learn that or just came natural?

KI: Oh, natural, that. Try look my retirement, what the sales manager said. He never hear one stinking word from my customer saying I make bad for the customer. Hoo, the remark, he gave, right in front the whole crowd.

WN: You mean, at your retirement party?

KI: Yeah. Not one complaint, he get from his customer. That's what

they call good salesman.

WN: This is your A&B [Hardware Center] days? Before that, too? Camp 1?

KI: Yeah. Not Camp 1, but when I retired at building mill, see?

I tell 'em, "Eh, thanks, eh?"

"That's true." He tell me, "I work here six, seven years, but I never hear one complaint from your customer. That much you take care. In other words, you never pass the buck."

I tell 'em, "Yeah. No matter how tough the job, take care myself. Never go to the next guy, because the next guy is busy, too."

"You call him, he's right there. That material stay down my place, already," the customer tells, see?

Real grumbling contractor used to get. Sometimes, the salesman call me when the guy stay inside. "He talking nice about you, you know," he tell.

"Yeah, this boy, he take care me plenty," he [the customer] tell. "That's the kind salesman you got to get. He never grumble. I grumble at him, he always tell, 'I can fix you up, no need worry.' Material stay there. Never pass the buck. Always take this . . . . "

You pass the buck, no good. There's two guys concerned already. If the guy pass 'em, come three guys. Yeah? That material going be stalled, I no care what. The department manager we get, some, only look. They don't help with the material. What we used to know. Sick and tired, that thing came. That's why, we take early retirement.

(Loud engine noise.)

WN: So, as you look back, you grew up in Spreckelsville area, and now, everybody moved to Kahului, and the stores are gone and get shopping center and everything, what are your thoughts when you think about what it was like before?

KI: Shee, that the happy life, eh? Cannot beat plantation life, you know, when we was in the camp. Because the people mingle. When you go away from there, all separate, already. They all dislocated, already. Here and there, right? Before, the camp guys--all the camp guys--they click together, see? Anything happen--funeral, somebody die there--all the camp there. The whole Spreckelsville, maybe, they might come. That different, you know. The life of the . . . . Way back and today. But, today, we get, let's say, this time, somebody might pass away. We got to go help, already. See, but camp people different. The life is different. Hoo, everybody

click together. That's the most thing I miss.

And then, our age guys, you know how we used to go down the beach, go camping. Ho, used to be fun. No more haoles, like today, those days. All open, the beach. Nobody come around.

WN: The Spreckelsville Beach?

KI: Nice beach used to get over there. Country club, and then Camp 1. Right below our store, all nice sand beach over there. And plenty fish. Ho! Dime a dozen, those days, the fish. We used to go with the staight pole. You know the small pāpio like this? By the hundreds, I used to catch 'em. Today, no more. They throw, and they go in with the net, like that.

Hoo . . . . Filipinos--during 1946 when that sugar company import them--that small one, they catch 'em with the net. No more chance of growing, the pāpio. They make bagoong out of that.

WN: Do you have anything to say about how the stores were different in those days compared to now?

KI: Shee, no. You take the camp store, mostly was same. I mean, the plantation stores. They mostly about same, the way the run the program.

WN: Those days compared to now?

KI: Oh, well, today more modern. Get more machine in the store. Way back, when we left the Camp 1 Store, we don't know what is jitney. The lifter. You know, the jitney they call--lifter. Today they get the plank under, eh? You just go with the lifter and bring the goods inside. Little heavy stuff or something was all stack on the crate under, see? You just lift 'em. Our days, all by hand. Hoo . . . . That's the difference, you know. Today more modern, now. Ho, you can stack the thing way up. With the machine, they bring 'em down. You don't have to struggle. That much difference. More modernized with the machinery. But to me, that's why today's kind kids, they no more the strength like old guys. And then, the technique of working, no more comparison. They only like with the machine.

WN: Too much machines, I think, nowadays.

KI: Before, all by hand, eh? You got to do certain way, or not, you cannot fill 'em up. You know what I mean? That different.

END OF INTERVIEW

**STORES and  
STOREKEEPERS of  
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