

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: SERAPHINE ROBELLO, retired electrician, Waialua
Sugar Company

Seraphine ("Slim") Robello, Portuguese, was born in Waialua on August 21, 1905. His father came from Portugal with his parents at an early age. His mother, also from Portugal, was a housewife.

Slim finished the eighth grade at Waialua Elementary. During the summers, he carried cane for Waialua Sugar Company. He worked as an electrician for the plantation from 1922 to 1969. Slim has been an active member of the ILWU since it began.

In 1926 he married Lucy. They have three children. He lives with his wife in Waialua. Since his retirement, Slim enjoys fishing, yardwork, and repairing machinery.

Tape No. 1-71-1-76

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Seraphine Robello (SR)

August 17, 1976

Waialua, Hawaii

BY: Chad Taniguchi (CT)

CT: This is an interview with Mr. Slim Robello at his house. Today is August 17, 1976. Mr. Robello, first, you could tell me little bit about your parents, what they did in Waialua?

SR: Well, my father came as an immigrant with his parents. And what the age that he was, I'm not sure. But he started boiling sugar at the old plantation when he was 14 years old. After that, he operated steam pumps--'as water pumps. And then in 1900, when they built the new factory, he came in there to boil sugar, and he was a supervisor. He started boiling sugar at the new factory up till 1925.

Then, unfortunately, he got a paralysis stroke---before that, he was recuperating from a hernia operation. While recuperating, he got a paralysis stroke in 1925. So, he was not able to return back to work, so they put him on pension, retirement. And those days, there were no such thing as a retirement plan. The company gave them whatever they thought they should give him on voluntary basis. But he started his retirement with \$75 a month. And at that time, there was a manager by the name of Thompson. Well, he went along with \$75 a month for a period of time, then we changed managers. And the new manager that came in was John Midkiff. He continued with that \$75 pension for a few years and then his pension was reduced down to fifty dollars a month.

And then till a few years later, the pension was reduce down to \$35. But they weren't giving him \$35 in cash, now. He could go to the plantation store and get the value of \$35 in groceries or whatever he needed. Well, the company buying the whatever goods they got on whole-sale, and when they retail that, that was much less than \$35 a month. I wouldn't have the idea what it amounted to, but it wasn't a value of \$35. So, he stayed on the retirement up to I think, '51. He passed away at '51. And that was his career in the plantation.

CT: From 1935 until 1951, he got \$35 a month?

SR: The value of \$35.

CT: At the plantation store. And you said he started work at 14. When was he born?

- SR: That's another question that I'm not sure. I should have known that, but I have no idea.
- CT: Well, I was wondering how many years he had worked. You say he got a pension 1925, so he must have worked at least 25 years (since in 1900 he had worked at the new mill)?
- SR: Yeah. Not less than 25 years. Those days there was no such thing as a retirement plan. The company gave the retirement according to what they thought the individual should get. Maybe on the pay that they were making and stuff like that.
- CT: But it wasn't spelled out, eh?
- SR: No, it wasn't spelled out. There was no such thing as guarantee for life or anything like that. Maybe if conditions in the plantation was bad, maybe they would reduce the retirement according to the way they wanted. It was not spelled out, "This \$75 is for life," or anything like that, no.
- CT: Oh, you mean, if they had a bad year, they might....
- SR: Yeah, if they figured they were not making the amount of money that they should....like, my mother, after my father died, well, some of the widows, they used to have the house and maybe ten dollars, fifteen dollars a month. But when my father died, all my mother got was the place she was living, because they felt that she could take care of herself without any help from the plantation.
- CT: How about your mother? What was her story? Did your mother work?
- SR: No. She never went out to work. She just was a housewife and raising kids and saving the old man's money. I think she made better off by doing that. He was making a pretty good salary at that time. There was no need for her to go out and do work. She did better by staying home and taking care of the household, so she never worked for anybody.
- CT: Did she have any brothers and sisters?
- SR: She had one brother. That's all. And he never worked for the plantation. He was a stone mason and he died young. He only lived up to 28 years old, and left the wife with four children.
- CT: How about in your family? Did you have any brothers and sisters?
- SR: There was four of us in the family. The second died in '53. My sister is still living and my oldest brother just died last year, November. He was an overseer for the plantation.
- CT: Are there any children younger than you?
- SR: We had one brother, but he only lived to 18 months and he died. That was the last. So, I'm the youngest.

CT: Can you tell something about your childhood?

SR: Well, my childhood days, I used to like to go out swimming a lot. But that's one thing, the old people---at least, my parents, they hated me to go out swim, because they thought I get drowned sometimes. I used to sneak out and do it. And I used to like to ride bicycles a lot. I'm still able to ride the bike facing the back of the handlebars. We used to go downhills and everything like that.

To tell you the truth, I wasn't an angel when I was small. I was rascal. But not to cause trouble, but to have fun. I don't know if you ever heard about pinning a pin to the window and run a piece of thread out with a wet cloth and just rub that thing on the cloth. And you'd have a sound that it's hard to stand while you're inside of the house. We used to do those tricks.

CT: You put a pin?

SR: Yeah. Pin it to the window someplace. And get a thread.

CT: And how would you pin it?

SR: We put 'em, to the wood. Or you could just get anything that would stick there and you just get a piece of thread to run it on. Get a damp cloth and just rub it on the thread thing. That's a terrible sound.

And another thing, we used to get a spool of thread. You know the thread? We used to groove that and put a nail through and get it on the window pane with a string around. Just wrap it. You feel as if the whole thing is coming down. Those little tricks.

And then, we didn't have streetlights. (Laughs) We didn't have streetlights or anything like that. We used to stuff a stocking and one guy would stay on one side of the road and one on this side. Just wait for people to come by--no lights--and as soon as they got close to that, we used to pull it and get it between their legs and that would scare the daylight out of them.

CT: How you do that?

SR: You get a black stocking. You stuff it with grass or some stuffing. And one guy would be on one side of the road and another on this side with a string tied to it. And people come close to that place, then you just pull that between the legs and they used to jump.

All those things like that, you know. And we used to get an old Chinese place up here used to have a wooden fence. We used to go out and get the bomb shells, square, made out of bamboo. Pile it up around the fence and just light a match to it and the splinters go up in the air. Just little things like that, you know. But fortunately, I never had a police record. Never once.

And there was very few people in the plantation that owned an automobile.

Fortunately, from since 1922, we owned automobiles. By that time, my brothers were all out married and I was the only one home left and I had the cream of...having a car and stuff like that. To tell you the truth, we had a Model T, 1922. Then, later on, we got Studebaker Special 6. We got a Studebaker Light 6. And then we got a Chrysler sedan. Then when I got married, I had to ride a bicycle. I couldn't afford an automobile until about 1928. Then we got our first automobile. But until then, I had to do my little transportation by bicycle.

But of course, we had our chores to do. We had---my grandmother came from Maui to stay with us.

CT: Why did she come?

SR: Well, because my grandfather thought she was getting little too old and sick that he couldn't take care of her. He stayed in Maui, and my grandmother came to stay with us. Then my parents decided to buy a cow. Maybe a pen, keep in the backyard. We had to go look for six bags of grass everyday for the cow. And then we had to milk it before we went to school. That went for a while, but they thought it was cheaper to buy the milk than to have that, then they did away with the cow. And that was a blessing.

Besides the cow, we had a donkey to go out and load the grass on the back and bring the donkey home. So we had a cow and a donkey. My brothers used to go hunting. They had hunting dogs. We had rabbits. We had guinea pigs, white rats. We had a zoo in the backyard.

CT: What the white rats for?

SR: Had it just to raise, that's all. And came a time that we did away with the whole thing, because it was no sense. We were raising rabbits, and we wouldn't eat them. Just for the fun of raising them. So, my father gave them all away to a Japanese once, and that was the end of the rabbits, because there was too much job and we were not making use of that.

CT: What made you decide to go to work in 1922?

SR: Because I thought everybody else was doing it, so I just started a trade, eh. I didn't do any field work or anything like that. Stayed on the electrical department from '22 up to '69. On different branches, of course.

CT: Did you have any training before you started work?

SR: No. Right after school, that's when they started. Electricity was going to be installed, so we went out and wired all of the plantation houses. And those days, even if you had a manhole, you didn't go and do the inside wiring. Did it all outside. Clips and knob work. Open wiring. And to begin with, they went ahead and installed the meter inside of the house. To get the readings, the guys that working with the meter reading had to do a lot of after work time to read, because

they couldn't get in the house because people were not home. Eventually they changed that system.

Another system that they had to correct was you drop one service line from the pole to one house, and the houses were all in line. They used to bridge it right across from one house to the other. By the time the guy got on the end of it, his voltage and line drops was so bad that we had to pay more for kilowatt to heat up a pot of water than the guy up front. That electricity was costing them more. So they had to make a correction on that. Drop service to each house.

CT: When did they make that correction?

SR: Oh, we start bridging that somewheres around '23, and a few years after that, that had to be all corrected.

I went up to Kawaihoa to do all of the housewiring up there. I started working '22, and I was still making ten cents an hour, ten hours a day. Then we got two Japanese boys, and about four Filipinos to come and do the wiring. Of course, I gave them instructions and everything.

CT: This is in 1922?

SR: (192) 3. So, I was responsible for all the wiring and the men. And I was making ten cents an hour and they were making ten cents an hour. They didn't give no consideration about, "Well, he's running the job and I think he should get more than that."

It stood that way up until 1924. That's when Thompson came in. The first manager was Goodale, who was an Englishman. I thought by having a Scotchman it's going to be worse, but it did not work that way. When the manager Thompson came in, the electric shop superintendent, well, he tried to get a raise from Goodale, before, but he (Goodale) said, "No. He's learning a trade and he's still making pay." So when Thompson came in, I got a hundred percent raise from him. Twenty cents an hour. So I thought, gee, that was good. And about a year after that, I got another 25....I was making two dollars, and raise to 25¢; that was two and a quarter. In 1926, when I got married, we were making two dollars and a half a day.

CT: How did that compare with other kind of jobs; say, field work?

SR: Oh, field work was all dollar. But the thing was this, now. Some of the field work were on incentive rates. On contract. The reason why they really had to put the field work on incentive rates was because if you going to pay them just the straight day work, they wouldn't produce like they would on an incentive. Incentive rates, the more you put out, the more pay you make. But it didn't make much difference, though, on the incentive.

CT: What do you mean by that?

SR: With lot of the field work which would be a dollar and they had incentives,

the comparison in pay wasn't too much difference. Then, I was making two and a half a day, but they considered me a shop man, now. Shop boys are working ten hours a day. When I went into the factory-- maintenance electrician in '25--they considered me a shop man. So they gave me two hours overtime everyday. And the job required Saturdays and Sundays. So, that way, the take home pay was a lot more than two and a half a day, because I was getting paid for overtimes and stuff like that.

CT: You mean eight hours regular time and two hours overtime?

SR: We used to work 12 hours. 12 hour shifts in the factory. Ten hours would be straight time, two hours overtime. That's time and a half. That was everyday, now.

CT: Seven days a week?

SR: Yup. And then Saturday and Sundays, of course, that was paid time and a half, too. So, by about '27, I was making something like....a little better than hundred dollars a month. That was considered good pay, but there was a squawk going on that I shouldn't have been making as much as some of the engine tenders in there. So, the superintendent came to me and he said, "Well, we are going to put you on salary, see." So, he quoted the price of \$75, and I turned it down. I told him, "If you going to pay me only \$75 for 12 hours shifts, seven days a week, I go back to the gang for two and a half a day and I don't have to work nights, Sundays, and holidays." So....he went back to the office and came back and said, "Well, we put you on ninety dollars a month."

About five months of the year, I was just working straight ten hours. No overtime involved. So I figured the difference. If I get ninety dollars a month, I'd be a little better off than that straight two and a half. So I accepted the ninety dollars. Then I had my vacations, and sick leave, and all included there.

CT: So, in 1927, they did give vacation and sick leave?

SR: Well, salary workers, yeah. But not labor. Not guys on day pay, hourly rates, no.

CT: How much vacation? How much sick leave?

SR: Two weeks vacation. And sick leave, chee, I don't think there was a limit, because when I was operated in '35, heck, I was off for over two months and I got my full pay. That's what it was. I was ninety dollars.

Then, when they build a new powerhouse-- that was the automatic leader turbine--so the superintendent wanted me to go in there, get training from the Westinghouse engineer, and then he wanted me to stay in there temporarily until he got the operators to go in there. So I did that for a while, then he said, "No, I want you in here permanently." So I told him, "Well, I'm not going to take this job for the same pay." So, he said, "We'll make an adjustment. We'll give you a \$110 and we'll work

it up later." So \$110 what I was making for 84 hours a week.

CT: Plenty hours. Only dollar something an hour, then. (Interviewer makes mistake since it was \$110 a month, 84 hours a week).

SR: Yeah. So, that's 84 hours a week. 110 (dollars)....and we considered that fairly good pay, you know, for those days. But if you figure the hours, well, you take the department heads. Well, about '25, '26, '27....they still making only two hundred dollars a month.

Then it went on that way up to....let's see, now. See, they had a job evaluation. And the mistake that the boys were doing was, see, the company wanted that job evaluation. They had a job evaluation and they had from each department, a representative there, see. And instead of helping one another out, no, what they were doing was, "Oh, my job is more important than yours," and "Mine should have a higher rate," and all stuff like that. Because the company knew sooner or later the union was going to come in.

CT: What year you talking about, job evaluation?

SR: That was sometime before the union get in. I'd say somewheres around '43.

CT: Maybe we can go back to 1927. By that time your father had a stroke already and was on the pension. Was that \$75 a month enough for him to live on?

SR: Oh, those days, sure. It was more than enough.

CT: So you didn't have to help?

SR: No, I didn't have to help, because, actually, what they did, they invested in real estate when he was young. They could foresee the future, which a lot of guys didn't. And even while he was on his retirement, he bought places in Makiki on Davenport Street. And then the place thatmy grandfather had in Maui, 33 and one-third acres. A lot of my father's money went there, too, buying plows and horses. And my grandfather did farming there. But he (father) was financially pretty well fixed up. So he didn't need any help from us or anything.

CT: You know, if we can go back few more years to 1920, before you started work, there was that 1920 Japanese strike. Do you remember that?

SR: I remember lot of Japanese died on that strike. And I had lot of school friends, too. Like Nakatsu, Kamiyama, and all that. I don't know whether they had some place down Haleiwa there. Some church or something that....the place was so crowded. Then they had that influenza came in. The flu. And a lot of them died. That was a pretty bad strike. What I mean, the worst part was they got these strike breakers come in from Honolulu to do the job of the strikers. And they paid something like about three times more than what they were paying the labor at that time. That's what they call the strike breakers.

CT: Did any strike breakers come from....

SR: Honolulu.

CT: None from Waialua?

SR: I don't remember of any Waialua....well, they had some Japanese in favor of the plantation, too, and lot of them got konked on the head, too, you know. They used to call 'em puppies. And, I know from town, a lot of strike breakers came out. Now, what gains they got by going on that strike, I don't know what the gain they got on that.

CT: What were you doing at the time?

SR: Wasn't doing anything. Was just still going school, I didn't go out. Nobody tried to go out in the field to work. What I mean, to strike break. Because it wasn't a safe thing to do.

And then there was a lot of cane fires, too. Whether the strikers were doing that or somebody else doing that so the strikers will get the blame, (I don't know). But there used to be a lot of cane fires.

CT: Did you actually know of any strike breakers?

SR: No. Lot of them from Honolulu. I wouldn't know anybody.

CT: What I mean is, did you see them working? Where did they live? Did they commute from town?

SR: Gee, I can't recall that. But I know they hired a lot of strike breakers. Whether they commuted or the company had places for them or not....a lot of those strikers were evicted from their homes, too. Lot of them were evicted from their homes. That's the reason why they had to go all down to Haleiwa and pile up all in one place.

CT: You know, you were going to school at that time. Were some of the children that you were going school with, were their parents striking?

SR: Yeah. Because that's why I say, these Kamiyama and Nakatsu and quite a few of them, yeah. They were having a bad time.

CT: Did they still come to school?

SR: Yeah.

CT: Did any of their families get sick or something?

SR: Well, the ones that I really know, I don't know whether they got sick, but I know there was quite a few that died. See, way back in the '20s, that's quite some few years back, now. But I know for a fact that, I think, one of the Horibatats lost a son. But I can't remember names.

CT: As a Portuguese, what did you feel about that strike at that time?

SR: Well, I think it was justified because of the pay. The pay was so low and that it was pretty hard to make ends meet. There's one merchant here that was Fujioka. He helped a lot of Japanese. Those that was really in need, he used to let 'em the money with the agreement that when they were better off and the children were able to work, and make money, then they would pay him back. That's how a lot of people got by. Fujioka, the old man, now. Well, he's dead quite some time, now, but he helped a lot of these Japanese financially.

CT: Do you remember your father saying anything about the strike?

SR: He had it pretty hard, because....when the Japanese went out on strike, you know, they had to get all greenhorns in the factory there to get things operating. They had to put in lot of extra hours and a lot of headaches. But as far as I recall, he didn't say that they shouldn't strike or anything. They were striking for a good reason.

My father spoke Japanese pretty good, because the majority of the workers in there were Japanese, right in the factory. I would say all of them were Japanese until the Filipinos start coming in. And I'm telling you, he could speak Japanese pretty good. He's Antone-san. That's what they used to call him. His name was Antone, but they say Antone-san.

CT: And then, a few years after that, when you start going work, there was a 1924 Filipino strike. Do you remember that one?

SR: Well, that didn't last too long, though. That one, I really don't recall that.

CT: Yeah, was kind of a short one.

SR: That was a short strike.

CT: You know, as a working electrician and having these new generators and stuff come in, I guess you can call that more mechanization?

SR: Yes, because we used to get all of our electric power from Hawaiian Electric. And then we had a small hydrodriven plant. 'As water driven plant down in the gulch. Down at Kemoo there. That was just a small unit and power was limited. But way before 1923, when they start installing power lines and everything, we were living right here, close to the mill. And we had electricity way before the utility company came out with their power line. Because it was so close to the factory there and the factory had the power from the Hawaiian Electric and the hydroplant that we had electricity before the other camps came in.

CT: They use oil or gas?

SR: Well, they don't use any fuel oils for steaming unless emergency. They have all that bagasse, pulp from the sugar cane. Well, it starts with the cane cleaning plant (and goes) right through. By the time it gets

through the crushing plant, when it goes through the last set of rollers, it's squeezed enough so it will burn. All of the juice and water and everything is extracted from the bagasse.

And then it goes right to the boiler. They only have one boiler, now, to operate that whole factory and that new generator that they have. The excess bagasse goes into storage bin there. And then, during the weekends, to boil off when the factory shuts down--you have all of the juices and everything to process; they have carriers that will feed the boiler with the excess bagasse. And then they don't use the fuel oil. Should there be a breakdown on the conveyors so they can't supply the boiler with trash right away, then, automatically, they put in oil burners. And that's the only time that they use fuel oil for steaming.

Now the Hawaiian Electric, they got after them so badly. They don't want no smoke coming out of the stacks, now. So, they went into this high price fuel oil with low sulfur. And that's the reason why the electricity is costing us that much more, now. Everytime the oil price comes up, we get socked for electricity. But the plantations here are still using that old crude oil. And sometimes, you can't see the sky up there with that black smoke coming through. And, well, the people living in town and around Waiiau and all there are all human beings like we are, so they say that's pollution. So, this should be pollution, too. But, I don't know how they are getting away with it.

CT: But you say until the plantation brought in the generators in was it 1925?

SR: '25. That's the first Corliss compound engines.

CT: You mean, they had electric lines all the way out from town to here?

SR: Oh, yeah. They had the transmission lines all the way out. In other words, when we installed those engines, we didn't go on our own. We went and hooked up with Hawaiian Electric. What I mean, we were synchronized with them. And if we had a small load, well, the generators would be on, automatically. Now, you would feed in or feed out, whichever. And we had a bank of transformers outside the station there. You could step them down from 6600 to 480 volts, or from 480 volts up to 6600. Vice versa, you could do that. Well, you hooked up with them, you geared with them. If their cycles would drop, we would drop, so, they geared in with that.

CT: So, did that mean that there was more jobs as a result of the generator or less jobs?

SR: No, was just one operator and his helper on each shift. Six men more. 'As all right there. Not any more than that. Then, of course, for repairs and everything, in those days, the machine shop used to take care of that.

CT: In your work, you remember any kind of mechanization that caused people to lose job?

SR: Well, I'm going to tell you one thing about Waialua Sugar Company that I must give a good word for them. Whenever there was mechanization, and it required less men on the job, they never laid 'em off and say, "Well, we have no more job," because they always fitted them in some job in the plantation.

Now, with the privilege of watching the bulletin board. Whenever there was a vacancy, you could go ahead and apply. And if you were qualified for it, you would....maybe step from a lower grade to a higher grade. But there was not one that I know of that was ever laid off. Say, "Well, your job's been eliminated. We don't have a job for you." They always fitted that particular person in some job in the plantation. There were never one laid off.

Maybe if they had a higher grade and they were transferred to another grade, they had grade protection for a certain number of months. Then, when you exceeded the months that you were protected, you would go onto a lower grade. And then that was up to you to watch the bulletin boards and apply for higher grade job. If you were qualified, you would get it and go back to a higher grade. On that part, I say, they were fair.

CT: You talking about before the union?

SR: Yes.

CT: So, all this mechanical planters, crop loading machines, tractors, mechanical cane cutter, all was...

SR: Well, this mechanical cane cutter just came in recently, now. And it's not doing as well as they expected it to do. They have too many break downs. But it would be better, because if this mechanical cane cutter would work good, then you will cut the cane right down close to the ground there. Right now, they have these rakes and grabs and all. There's a lot of roots and everything coming out from year to year. Your tonnage is going to be less. No question about it. Your replants line will never get up to the ratoon, so, until they have a perfect cane cutter, it's not working as it should.

CT: To not lay off people, is that a policy of Waialua Sugar?

SR: I think it was a policy of Waialua Sugar. And another thing, now. Waialua Sugar Company's higher paid than any other sugar plantation.

CT: On Oahu. In the whole state?

SR: I think in the whole state. They were---I forget how many cents. About eight cents an hour or something like that, above any other plantation. You take, like, Ewa and Waipahu and all of those, Waialua was the highest paid sugar plantation.

CT: So, they claim that there have been no lay-offs.

SR: No. I don't remember no lay-offs.

CT: Well, during 1931, there's a great Depression.

SR: I had a pay cut temporarily. From \$110 at that time, I was cut down to ninety dollars.

CT: What year was this?

SR: I think was when the Depression, really Depression came on. And that was only temporarily, though. When conditions came back, I came back to where I was.

CT: Was anybody else cut?

SR: Oh, yes. Lot of the people had a cut in pay.

CT: Do you know if it was a across-the-board? Everybody?

SR: I think it was across-the-board, yeah.

CT: Including management?

SR: That....I couldn't say, because I don't know how they work their.... (Laughs) that was really confidential, I guess. Well, I guess, I think they were fair enough. If everybody got a cut, I'm quite sure the management went along with the cut. I don't see any reasons why they shouldn't.

CT: Do you know anything about that extra molasses they had in....1931?

SR: Well, I was a kid. Not a kid, but I know that we lost a lot of fish out in the ocean. Lot of these akule and fish. That water was just red with molasses. And...they just threw it away. Threw it out in the ocean.

END OF SIDE ONE.

SIDE TWO.

SR: That's all with the molasses. And there's a lot of acid in there. Just ruined the grounds there for years.

CT: Oh, where was this?

SR: There's a drain ditch that goes down Puuiki here. They just run it through the ditch and out to the ocean. Now they claim that they didn't have storage for the molasses. Well, those days, as everybody know, the Big Five controlled the islands here. They could do just practically anything that they wanted to do, so they could get away with stuff like that. But now days, everything is different. I know that we lost lot of fish and the grounds were ruined for quite some time.

CT: Did you used to go fishing over there?

SR: Yes, we used to go. I used to do a lot of throw-net. And that was really good fishing grounds.

CT: You know that molasses? Was that...

SR: That's waste molasses. That's the molasses that they feed the cattle with. And I guess they have more use than only feeding cattle, but.... that waste molasses have all the sugar extracted out of the molasses that they can and then that's waste.

CT: Would it have been possible to give the molasses away even?

SR: Well, the amount of it---well, I guess if guys had tanks that would come there and put it in their tanks and haul it for the cattle and all that, I guess it was possible. But the thing is I don't think they had those things in our days. If it was today, the remedy which they would have was to shut down the factory. Don't produce no more waste molasses. They wouldn't allow that to be discharged out into the ocean.

CT: Besides a cut in pay, anything else affected you during the Depression?

SR: Well....it didn't affect us too badly.

CT: How about the price of food?

SR: Well, it went up. But we never went hungry. Because, to tell you the truth, when we first got married, we started building a nest for the future. I wasn't one of these good timers to have parties and drink and extravagant your money, like a drunken sailor or any stuff like that. We went down to business and try to build a nest for the future. And I think it paid off. Fortunately, I had a wife that was more smart to take care of the household.

The kids didn't get what the kids today have. They have their wallets and five, six, seven bucks in their pocket. And when they ask their parents for money, it's not 25¢ or ten cents. When we got ten cents when we were kids, we thought, gee, such big money. But now days, it's al - together different. The world is the same, but the people are different. Yeah, when they had a little church carnival, if we had 25¢ to spend, we lucky to get it. Now days, it's five, ten, fifteen dollars. Just like nothing.

So I had three children and I thought three was plenty. Well, it's not easy now to raise a big family, you know. Your clothing, your food, and then to give them a proper education, it's hard.

CT: As a young electrician, how did you like your job?

SR: I liked it real good. That was a big field. To tell you the truth, you have education. But there's no teacher like practical experience. You have practical experience, you can master your trade. By book study, it's

alright until you have your practical.....and then it's going to take you quite some time.

CT: So, you were learning a lot....

SR: In all different branches of electricity. Like, it wasn't only house-wiring. I climbed poles, string power lines down to the houses and everything for ten cents an hour. Then we put up transformer--well, this is in a gang with the supervisor--put up transformer station. And run transmission lines.

And those days, we didn't have trucks with winches. We'd get a bunch of pull pikes and carry that close to the hole there. And then we had a wooden horse that we picked that pole up to a certain height and put it on the wooden horse, and then we got a bunch of pull pikes over the---holes were about two inches in diameter with a steel pike in the front. And we pike it from the sides and from there. And then that's the way we used to plant our pole.

CT: Get four, five people doing it?

SR: Yeah, about five. Six with one that handling the wooden horse. Get as high as we could and then keep up with the pikes. And you had to balance that. You had to coordinate that thing, otherwise that thing would fall over to one side and.....that was hard work. Ten cents an hour. Really, that was hard work. Then, after we get our poles planted, tamp it then put in our cross-arm and string our lines and everything. All was school kids those days. We had oldtimer linemen and the rest were all young kids. Now you can plant the pole with the winch in no time and it's so easy to do it.

CT: Anything you remember while working, after the Depression? You know, that 1930s. Anything significant?

SR: No, everything went almost about the same till start talking about union. I didn't have much changes from the '30s till we get to '46.

CT: When did you first hear about the union?

SR: Well, before that, you couldn't even say one word about union. Before '45.

CT: Did you hear about it before...

SR: Well, there was a guy come around. They used to call him IWW--"I Won't Work." He used to come around try to organize, but that guy didn't last long, boy. He didn't show up no more.

CT: When did he come around?

SR: Oh, that was the early '20s. No, he couldn't sell us.

CT: (Laughs) You remember that guy?

SR: He used to ride around on a bicycle.

CT: Do you remember his name?

SR: No, I don't remember his name. What he used to go by, "I Won't Work." IWW. And that didn't work.

CT: (Laughs) What was he trying to say?

SR: Well, get organized, you know. And get better benefits for labor and all that, but gee, he disappeared fast. That, I remember that.

CT: Did you ever have chance to listen to him talk?

SR: Well, as soon as he came around to talk, if management found out about that, he'd get out of there before he had a chance to say very many words.

CT: Was he a local person?

SR: White. No, he was from away. Not that he was local that I know of. He must have come away from someplace. Try to make a fortune for himself but it didn't work.

CT: What you mean? He was trying to....

SR: Well, start something and then, you know how it is. The union officials, today is not a bad job, one that's full time.

CT: So, aside from that guy, IWW, in 1920s....

SR: No. No more.

CT: How about in the late '30s?

SR: Well, you didn't have a chance to even talk union.

CT: Did you think about it?

SR: To tell you the truth, no. When the Longshore got organized, they were talking about organizing sugar, eh. Well, Jack Hall said, "No." He said, "It's impossible." You know, the power that the Big Five had, he said that it was impossible to organize sugar. So, finally, they came around, I guess, when Roosevelt made it law that you could get organized.

CT: 1935?

SR: Yeah. But nothing happened at that time, you know. So, they said it was impossible to organize union in the plantation. So, around 45, 'as when the thing start getting real hot. But the first contract that we got, it wasn't a contract. It was just a piece of paper with black ink. Was hardly any benefits. But just to get organized.

CT: What do you mean, "things got real hot in 1945"?

SR: About organizing sugar plantations.

CT: Somebody first talk to you or, you know, how did you hear about the union?

SR: Well, that's when Mike Nagata and some of the other boys said they were going to organize sugar. And there wasn't a thing that the companies could do. It was law. And they couldn't fire you, just trying to get organized. And....finally, they start signing up the guys.

Midkiff found out about them getting organized, he wanted Waialua to be the last plantation to get organized. He had no choice, now. Now, if Waialua would not want to be organized, they would boycott Waialua sugar. Then would be worse then. He knew that he had no choice. So he had the boys up his place. Had a big beer bust and all that. I didn't go, but he said they could get organized, join the union, but he would want to see Waialua to be the last plantation to get in. I don't know what gains he got, but that's actually what happened, now.

So, we were the last to sign on. My name had been appearing in the annual report as a power plant foreman for many years. I used to go the manager's dinner and meetings. And when we got organized, I asked my boss, the superintendent, Wallace, what my title was. He said he didn't know. He was going to find out. So I told him, "Gee, if you are interested in the men that are working under your supervision, you should know what each individual's title is." So he said he'll find out and let me know--never did.

So, they came over and see me. Lot of guys told me, "Chee, well, you can't join, because your name been...." I just said, "Well, I don't know how my name ever got there. Not that I was told or got a promotion in pay or stuff like that, so." They didn't tell me anything for about three weeks. So I signed up.

The organizer came back to check names with the manager, so he checked my name off. And later, he called me and he ask me why I join the union. I told him. I asked Wallace what my title was and he never did give me an answer, and I'm doing work like everybody else is doing, so I signed up. He said, "No, I want you to stay on the company's side." Then he called Wallace to find out what the situation was. He said, "Well, as far as"--that's Wallace, not Gordon--he says, "As far as I'm concerned, he's a power plant leading man. If he wants to join the union, he has the rights to join." But Midkiff told him, "I want him to stay on the company side." But he was stubborn that I was a leading man, see. So I signed up. And I told Midkiff straight, that I couldn't work under his (Wallace's) supervision as a supervisor, because I couldn't stomach it.

CT: You mean Wallace?

SR: Wallace. So, what they did was at that time, when we got organized, I was making \$160 a month salary. 'As 84 hours a week. So, when I signed up,

they converted the salary into hourly rate, and then they gave me my vacation credit. Whatever vacation pay, they added it to my rate. Sick leave, added that to my rate. And whatever benefits that I was going to lose by not being on salary, that went all into the hourly rate. And that brought my red circle rate way above grade pay.

I got paid for every minute that I worked. Before that, I worked regardless of hours, never got overtime for it. And then, later on when the eight hour shift came on, that was easier yet. Instead of working 84 hours a week, I worked 56 hours a week and with much more pay than....

CT: When did this eight hour shift come out?

SR: I was living up at Ranch Camp, yet. Somewhere in the '40s. Wait now.

CT: See, this information I have over here is that eight hour day came to Hawaii in general in nineteen....

SR: I was up at Ranch Camp when had forty hours. Chee, now, I can't remember that.

CT: Yeah, it says that 1936. So, you say...

SR: Oh yeah! That's right. That eight hour shifts came in before we got organized. Yeah, I was working 84 hours a week before that, and then, that was cut down to 56 hours. But the pay was the same.

CT: \$160?

SR: \$160. Wait. No. I'm wrong on that. When we got organized, was \$160. Then from a \$110, I think, went up to \$125. Then, up to \$140. And then, before we got organized, they gave me a choice of taking \$150 with overtime. And we were just about ready to get organized. So I figured if I'm going to take the \$150, when you convert the salary to hour rates, there's going to be a drop on the percentage. So, I took the \$160, no overtime. So they converted that, I made a few bucks more than that. That's right.

But, actually, when we got this....perquisites converted into cash, well, that's when we got organized, now. And we join the union.

CT: This is after the 1946 strike?

SR: No! That was before the '46 strike. Because I know I advise some guys not to leave the plantation house until the conversion was made. That was before the strike. As soon as we got organized, we had to pay for the house rent.

It wasn't after. It was before. Because Herbert was working up at Poamoho. And he was living there. So, he was paying the company ten dollars a month, see, for the room. And then, when the conversion was made, that was up for me to collect the ten dollars from him, see. I was propped up by like five cents an hour in my rate. That was before the

strike.

Because, you see, when we was on strike, some of the boys told me, "Oh, I'm going to move down with my relatives," or stuff like that. I said, "Look." For instance, one here, Plimmer, I told him, "Don't" because I was going to the negotiations, so I know more or less when that thing was going to wind up. I told him, "Don't leave the plantation house until the perquisites is all converted into cash. That way, you going to have a higher rate. Then, when you go out, you still maintain your rate." See what I mean? So that guy took my advice, Plimmer, and he stayed. That's how I remember it was before the strike ended.

CT: Oh, before the strike ended?

SR: Yeah.

CT: But it was during the strike?

SR: During the strike time, the conversion was going to be made. According to the negotiations, now, see. So, after the strike came back, then that's when they made the conversion. But that wasn't in the process of the negotiations, now. So, like I was paying \$36.50 a month for this rent. So, what they did, instead of me getting a raise and then still pay that \$36.50, whatever I was paying--\$36, (plus) dollar and a half for water, all the water you could use. \$37.50. They converted that perquisites into cash. They gave me that \$37.50 plus whatever raise we got. In return, well, we pay them the rent back. We didn't take it out of our raise, now. The conversion was made and we just pay them back the \$37.50, which was reasonable.

CT: In the '46 strike, you mentioned that you were picket chairman. What was your duties during that time?

SR: My duties was to see that all the different camps had...the guys picketing. And they had to have a picket head, now. And then we had the camp picket head. We made an agreement with the company. The night that negotiations break down, Midkiff wanted to meet us at the office. And he wanted us to cooperate with one another; had lot of utilities to do like garbage. The mules had to have cane cut. And plumbers, electricians, and fire equipment drivers, like the rakes, fire trucks and all that; so they wanted us to have a set up for utility works.

It was my job to go and pick the guys. And we had to make a survey of the guys that are really financially hard up. And the guys that were really qualified to do work on utility work, that's the guys that I picked. And the union policy was to kick back 75 percent of what they made. Well, I really objected to that. A guy's got to get his own food and everything, go out and work eight hours, and the kick back....I told them, no, I wouldn't go along with that. So we went and make a survey of the guys that are really hard up. That's the guys I went ahead and got the utility work for them.

CT: This is in 1946?

SR: '46, yeah. And then, like Jose Corpuz, when he came here, man, I tell you, that fellow didn't have a thing to eat in the house. When I heard about that, we went up and make an investigation. Went to the store and got his groceries. I found him a job on a garbage trucks, hauling this garbage,plantation. And hundred percent of what he made went to him. Union policy was 75 percent kick-back. I told them, "I don't give a damn. It's not going to be that way, because how can a guy with big families and all kick back 75?" So, I went according to the needs, the financial needs of the individual. Some, 25 percent kick-back. Some, nothing. All depends.

CT: What was the most that they kicked back?

SR: 25 percent was the highest they ever kick back.

CT: This was your duty as picket chairman?

SR: Picket head chairman, yeah. I had to see that all camps had picket heads. And they make a rotation of who would come on what time and all that. But I had guys under me doing that, because you couldn't take care of everything.

CT: How many camps you talking about?

SR: Oh, we had quite a few camps at that time. We had Halemano, we had Kawaihoa 3. Opaeuola, Pump 5 camps. Oh, we had about eight, nine camps at the most.

CT: Why did they have to have pickets by the camp?

SR: To tell you the truth, in 1946, we got away with....a lot of things that they wouldn't be able to get away with right now. The IRD (Industrial Relations Department) personnel, they couldn't go in the plantation camps. They stop 'em, right at the picket line. And they could have gotten the police or stuff like that, then, but they was trying to minimize the troubles during the strike.

CT: You mean, you didn't want the Industrial Relations...

SR: No. In the camps....were barred out. Now, these peddlers, which that was illegal, now, the peddlers come around to go sell fish and stuff in the camps, they have to come to union hall. They (union) have a pass. I never did sign my signature to one of those passes, because I knew darn well that was illegal.

CT: Oh, to even issue it?

SR: Even to issue a pass. We didn't own the camps and all of that. So, lot of guys, they issued that. I never did put my signature on one of those, because I know I wasn't authorized to do that. But the plantation just was good enough just to let things go by. And, well, man, I tell you, it

was rough. Even to go to the Fujioka Store, there was a picket right there. If anybody coming, "Where you going?" "Store." "What you're going to do?" And all of that stuff. Could never get along. That, I disagreed with. What could I do? I couldn't do much.

CT: Who set down the policy?

SR: Headquarters.

CT: In Wahiawa?

SR: No, that was from town, eh. And we had to have, like this kick-back. 75 percent and all that. But issuing out passes through the local, that was right here at the headquarters. I disagreed with that. Did you folks interview Sam Kawahara.

CT: I don't think so.

SR: He would be a good guy to interview. He lives up that Kamaloa. He was an overseer, section overseer. Well, you see, what they were doing, they were running water for one field to the reservoir not to let the reservoir drop. And then some of the water just spill over the ditch little bit in the cane, eh. They say he was irrigating cane. No, he couldn't go out of his house. Had the picket right in front his house there. He couldn't get out.

So one day, assistant manager, Anderson, saw me and he told me about that. So, I went back and see the boys, they say, "Oh, he was irrigating cane." I said, "It's impossible for a man to stick his neck out and go in the cane field and irrigate the cane with a strike like this." So Anderson told me, "Now, we're going to get a policeman. Just don't let that man go free."

So, I went up there and I had a talk with Sam. And he told me, "Slim, you know better than that. You think I'd take a chance go out there and irrigate cane like that?" So, I told all the guys on the picket, "Guys, you let that man in and out anytime that he wants to go out, and don't even try to stop him." Well, I had to stop that. Those things were like that, you know. It was really tough!

CT: You guys were looking for hundred percent shutdown?

SR: That's true. And we had it, too.

CT: Except for services?

SR: Utility work, services.

CT: So, people would just stay around his house?

SR: Stay there. No, he wouldn't be able to get out of the house.

CT: Even night time?

SR: Yeah. I stop that. I told them, "Gee whiz, this is going too far. You just go ahead and let that guy alone. Just leave 'em alone. You can't convince me that he was irrigating cane." Until today, this Sam has that grudge against Mike Nagata, yeah. Still have that. No, it was really terrible.

I had to go in every morning at 6 o'clock in the morning to see that all of the utility workers came in. That was 6 (to) 2 (o'clock) and 2 to 6 (o'clock) in the morning. I had to go there in the morning and then at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, then, at 10 o'clock at night to make sure that all of the utility workers came in and all that. They stayed right in the laboratory. The office in the back there, that's where the headquarters was. And, I'm telling you, I had to run around. Oh, gee! That's over 16 hours a day I used to put in. And family life was all change, boy.

CT: You had any children?

SR: We had three kids already.

CT: At home?

SR: Yeah. Yeah, the youngest one. And Herbert was working up at Poamoho Station.

Really, you know when the conversion was made and then I had to cash the money, ten dollars, from Herbert to pay the company, what I could have done--I knew when the negotiations was going to be over--I could have send him out of home for about a week or two. And then after the conversion, everything was made, I could do. But, I figured, ah, where the heck he was going for two or three weeks, so I let 'em go. And then he moved into town shortly after that.

CT: You were in negotiations in town?

SR: Lot of times. Not every one, but I used to go in. As an observer, anyway. I wasn't on the negotiating committee, but they used to pick guys into.....but this much I must say about Goldblatt. That guy was really hot. And he didn't have to have very many notes of the previous meeting. He was sharp, really sharp. Yeah.

CT: Did Goldblatt do most of the negotiating?

SR: He was the one, the main negotiator, yeah. Jack Hall had something to do, but Goldblatt was the.....and then Bridges once in a while used to come in. That guy (Bridges) is radical, really radical.

CT: What do you mean by that?

SR: Rough. What I mean, you know, the aggressive type, eh. But Goldblatt was really cool. I used to like him.

CT: Could you go observe anytime you wanted to?

SR: You mean at the negotiations?

CT: Yes.

SR: Me, yeah. Well, if I had time that I could spare, I used to go in.

CT: This was as a observer?

SR: Observer, yes. I didn't have no voice.

CT: No, but because you were vice chairman?

SR: Yeah. I could go in. And we gave a few boys chance to go in besides the negotiating committee.

CT: What is the purpose of that?

SR: Education, eh. You learn a heck of a lot by going there and listen two sides. Yeah. Then, we had a test case, once here in town, who was covered by....certain regulations they had. Gee, I forget what year was that, now. I think the early '60s. But, a test case who was covered by certain regulations. And they picked one employee from each department to go represent the department.

Oh, gee, but they pick some guys with seniority, eh. They hardly spoke English, eh. And Attorney Gladstein was the attorney for the union. They hired him. And then, Attorney Poole was from the Mainland, representing the industry. And Gladstein had a bad time with some of the guys, you know, to....express themselves. They hardly spoke English. No interpreter there.

So, I represented the power plant then. And I had additional job beside the power plant. Air compressors. Well, they called the department, the name of the person to.....so I went up on the stand there and Judge Metzgar, he was the judge of that. And he was pretty close with ILWU, too. So, when I had my turn to go up and testify for the power plant, well, that attorney made some boobos there, boy, I'm telling you. As far as the job was concerned, I could argue with him. But outside of that, well, he make rags out of me.

But as far as the power plant and the crushing plant and all that.....so he asked me a question about what kind of generator we had, so I told him that we had two Corliss compound engines, double - accentric, and one automatic bleeder turbine. And I told him all of the extracted steam from the turbine, supplied to the boil house to boil sugar. Also, the extracted steam from the corliss engines. And he asked me how they were operating the crushing plant. I said partly by steam and partly by electricity. Like air compressors, cane knife motors, juice pumps, that's all electricity. Then, the crushing of the cane, that's all with singular centric engines.

And he told me, "Well, you made a statement that the extracted steam goes into the boiling house to boil sugar. But according to what I understand, extracted steam from the turbine goes in to run the Corliss engines in the crushing plant." Well, I couldn't help but laugh, you know. I said, "The extracted steam from the turbine is only ten pounds. Extracted pressure, now. In other words, back pressure. And you mean to tell me that you can run a hundred and fifty pound steam engine, single extraction, with ten pounds of back pressure. If you could do that, I'm telling you, you'd be a rich man today!" Oh man! I told him, "Look, to tell you the truth, you were misinformed or you know very little about engineering."

CT: Is this in court?

SR: Right in court, now. The session going on. And chee! You see that Gladstein had that smile as far as here. Then they start question me about steaming. I say, "Well, the steam is supplied to the power house. We have nothing to do with the generation of steam." And then they ask what the use of fuel oil and I told them what bagasse and all that. The girl didn't know how to spell the word, bagasse you know. So they spelled it out for her and everything.

So when we went out for a recess, well, they had Anderson (the office manager) and lot of big wheels from the plantation. So when we out for recess, they called me in. They weren't clarified with the steaming. So, I said they don't use anything else but the bagasse. And the only time they use fuel oils is, as I told you, it's a case of emergency. So, when they called me in, oh, Gladstein just followed me right in, and told them, "He just made a statement. As far as generating steam, is out of the question. Period." So we walked out then. And when we went out, 'as when he told me, "Gee, if everybody would have testify like you did, it would be easy for me." And really, it was tough on him.

But the thing is we got that settlement out of court. Three hundred fifty thousand dollars. And each one of the guys that were-qualified was supposed to get their share. You know where that money went? Down to Alaska!

CT: For what?

SR: There was a ILWU unit out there. The spruce lumber business, and they lost a case of three hundred fifty thousand. And the division director, he approved that and they sent the money down to Alaska before we got it. Then, they went through all of the plantations to explain the thing, and we were the last. We were the ones that went in as guinea pigs. And we were the last ones to approve that money went down here. We had quite a squabble. But the best thing to do---well, the damage was done, was just to let it go.

CT: You mean they did it without...

SR: Without approval. Then they come to explain. And the division director at that time with the ILWU was Castner Ogawa. I don't know if you ever

heard of him. Yeah. But he was the one that approved that. But they were hauling freight whether we sign it off or not, because we were the guinea pigs that went down for a test case.

CT: Oh yeah. They should at least consult you. Get your approval. Well, anyway, going back to 1946, you guys were out for....

SR: It wasn't six months. Was little over three months, I think.

CT: And how many days a week you had that picket line?

SR: 24 hours a day. Right around the clock.

CT: For the whole three months?

SR: Yes.

CT: Oh, you guys were real tight, then.

SR: We had picket shacks built all over the place.

CT: You know, you talked to other union people from other plantations. How did Waialua, the unity compare with the....

SR: Waipahu was rougher than us. Waipahu, they had the most trouble with the management and labor. Was Waipahu. We weren't too bad. Like, after we got organized, if there was a grievance, we had a grievance procedure to follow. But before we had union, there was no such thing as grievance procedure or you couldn't settle a grievance, because you had no protection or anything. There was no procedure that you could follow. But after we got organized, we had that. But never once we had a grievance here that went up to arbitration. Never once. It always got settled one way or the other.

CT: You know, for three months, being on the picket line for 24 hours, say, one person, how many hours a day or hours a week...

SR: Like, we used to divide the camps and then, maybe, only you put about four hours out of that 24. We had enough guys to fill in.

CT: And, as far as you recall, did people continue to go out the whole three months? You never get people who wanted to slack off?

SR: Well, on the end, we had a little trouble with the rice. Because.... the statement that the union had made was they had about ten thousand bags of rice stored away, eh. They didn't have that. And then when the plantation got their quota of rice, they were good enough to sell us part of that. And then one shipment we had, white rice, came in and then the union send in pre-cook rice, the brown rice. Well, we had issued out all of the white rice already. And then the next batch was the pre-cook. That's when people got really up in the air. Say, "What's the matter? That guys get white rice and we get the brown rice?" And all

of that stuff. And we had to do a lot of fast talking, boy, to keep them together. But, as a whole, they went along.

And then, another thing that we had little trouble with, we went back, I think, one day later than we should have gone. Because some of the guys went out of the plantation, work outside, and when we got settled again, they came back in to the plantation to get the benefits like everybody else that were on picket lines and everything. So we oppose to that. We wanted to blackball those guys, but it was illegal to do that. So we just let them come back in again. There was a few of those. Not too many.

CT: They had the benefits, but...

SR: They got the benefits, yeah. But that was pretty hard to stomach, there, to work with certain guys, eh.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 1-52-2-76

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Seraphine Robello (SR)

August 18, 1976

Waialua, Hawaii

BY: Chad Taniguchi (CT)

CT: This is a second interview with Mr. Slim Robello at his home in Waialua. Today is August 18, 1976. And today, we're going to talk about World War II, the 1946 strike, 1953 dispute over the tourna haulers, 1958 strike, and then summarize the whole interview. On December 7, 1941, what were you doing?

SR: I was home washing my car. Then we noticed planes flying overhead. And we were wondering, chee, we heard machine gun firing. And we thought, gee, that must be a dry run or something like that with blanks. But then, we looked up and we saw the Rising Sun on the side of the fighter planes. Then we got an announcement---my brother-in-law is a policeman at Wahiawa Police Station. So he called up and said they was attacking Pearl Harbor by Japan. And they were flying all over the place and they were shooting at a storage tank at the stable there. That was a feed for some kind of experiment that they were making. And they thought it was a gasoline tank and so they just fill the thing full of bullets.

CT: In Kawailoa?

SR: Waialua. That's right by the stable when they still had the mules and horses there. So then I was home. Then I was called to come into the factory to get the power plant ready in case we had to run. But fortunately, Hawaiian Electric was not bombed. And we didn't have to run the place, but we got everything ready to run.

CT: Who would you have supplied electricity to?

SR: Well, as much as we could to certain circuits, because we only had a small plant. We have different circuits that we could supply electricity to.

CT: Was it to supply Waialua or to supply someplace else?

SR: Mainly would be Waialua. Because we didn't have the capacity to supply any other place but Waialua. But fortunately, we didn't have to.

And then we went out on blackout. And at that time, I was living up at what you call Ranch camp just above the high school. Then we

were operating the factory. Blackout. Locomotives were operating with blue lights. And all these policemen and all these to patrol....

(Tape recorder turned off because of a lawn mower. Taping resumes.)

CT: So you were talking about the blackout.

SR: Blackout. It was miserable to operate that factory with blackout conditions. There was no lights visible from the outside. Right over the switchboard, they had a sandbox with a one-inch steel plate right over the sandbox for protection in case of bombing. But I don't see how much good that would do. We had to stay right over the steel plate in the sandbox, watching our controls right from the sandbox there.

CT: So the next day? I think December 7 was Sunday. The next day, did you report to work?

SR: I did. I reported every day after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

CT: What about those who were either first generation Japanese or second generation Japanese?

SR: Well, the first generation Japanese, some of them were interned. Then the second generation Japanese, I didn't see anything wrong. If they said anything, they didn't come out publicly, now. But not that I have heard them criticizing anything.

I know it was pretty hard to work on those blackout years. Your house, you had to have it all sealed. No lights. You didn't care to go out at night, because you had no place to go. So it really was something different from what it was before the blackout came in.

CT: How about the attitude of the Filipino, Portuguese, Puerto Rican and haole workers toward Japanese workers?

SR: Well, I had nothing against them personally, now. I don't know about the other guys, I cannot say anything about the other guy. But, personally, I felt even the first generation Japanese and the second generation, I don't see why they should have anything against them, because they were not responsible for that. I feel they were not responsible for that attacking Pearl Harbor.

CT: You felt that way at that time?

SR: I felt that way at that time. And I still feel that way. I don't see any reason why anybody should feel that, "Oh, this guy is to blame. They're Japanese," and stuff like that. No, I felt that they were not to blame for it. That thing must have been cooked up in Japan. Whether they got any information from anybody back here in Hawaii, that, I don't know. And I wouldn't say they did.

CT: You continued to work, and as far as I know, under martial law, wages on Oahu were frozen. Now how did this apply to Waialua?

SR: As soon as that martial law came into effect, the government took over the power plant. They had security guard. Well, the soldiers, they're guarding the place and everything. And we were paid by the federal government, which was higher pay than what we were making from the plantation.

CT: Oh, you became hired by the federal government.

SR: When they took over, yes. And that's where we were getting paid, from the federal government. But through the plantation, but we got paid by the federal government.

And the guys that were not working for the plantation, like airports and stuff like that, guys that are working for the government, they were paid by the government, and they were charged for perquisites. They had to pay for their house rent. If they were employed outside of the plantation on defense work, like installing airports and whatever they were doing outside of the plantations, working for the federal government, they had to pay for the perquisites.

CT: Were people frozen to their jobs or were they able to....

SR: No, they were frozen to the jobs. They were not free to move around from place to place.

CT: Do you know if some plantation workers at Waialua wanted to or tried to get jobs with the military or with civilian work?

SR: I have no knowledge of that.

CT: And here (looking at chronology), I also see that there were jail sentence or fines for unexcused absenteeism or unauthorized changing of jobs. Anything like that happen here?

SR: I don't think anything like that happened here in Waialua. What they did elsewhere, I don't know. But I don't think anything like that happened here in Waialua. Everybody was too scared to do anything that they shouldn't do at that time.

CT: Scared of what?

SR: To get thrown in the can. You know what I mean. If you do something against the rules they set up, they wouldn't hesitate to do something, because war was going on, was something serious.

CT: In 1941 or early 1942, was the ILWU beginning to organize here?

SR: The ILWU? No, that was way late. According to my knowledge, they started somewhere around end of '44 or '45. They may have been planning and stuff like that. But not **that** I heard anything there earlier than about late '44 or '45.

CT: So, for the rest of the War, you worked for the federal government?

SR: No. The federal government took over the plant. I forgot for how long, but it wasn't too long. And then it went back again. Then we started getting paid from the plantation.

CT: Do you remember what the difference in pay was?

SR: Oh, I think was, at that time, that was something like about sixty to 65¢ an hour. When the government took over, it was about a dollar and a quarter an hour. And that was about that much difference.

CT: About double the pay, then.

SR: Yeah. Then after the War, after this World War II, that's when outside wages and cost of living and everything start rising. I think that was the beginning of this situation that we in right now.

CT: What do you mean?

SR: I mean, after World War II, the construction workers and all that start getting higher pay and cost of living start increasing. Gasoline. Well, in fact, everything. The cost of the living went up. Started rising up from since World War II. That's my way of thinking.

CT: And what about wages at this time?

SR: Actually, what made the big difference in the plantation in pay and fringe benefits, working conditions, that was after the ILWU got organized. Before that, you could be doing the same job. Say, two guys doing the same kind of job. Maybe one was single, one was married with a family. That wasn't equal pay for equal job, now.

CT: Oh, what you mean?

SR: For instance, you and I was working in one department doing the same kind of work. Maybe you were married and I was single. They'd give consideration to the married person. He'd get a little higher pay than the guy that was single. Wasn't equal pay for equal job, now. In fact, they use to fool around. They use to do it just the way they pleased. No question about that. And even before the War, if you had any grievance, there was no grievance procedures to follow. And you couldn't settle no grievance. You had to take it whether you liked it or not.

CT: What example of grievances that you might have had or some other people had before the union?

SR: Well, maybe they felt that they should be promoted to a higher job, and they were kept down. And maybe they thought they should be getting better pay. And things like that. You take for instance, I had a case when I first got married. But I got that straightened out, though. I ask for a laundry tray. They use to make laundry trays out of redwood with two partitions. So when we got married, we didn't have a bathroom. You had a shower outside and a outside toilet.

So when I ask for a laundry tray, what they send me was a fifty gallon wooden drum sawed in half. And my wife was supposed to do the laundry in that. So I went back and I saw my superior which was the electric shop superintendent. Then he got promoted to factory superintendent. So I went to him and I told him, "Look, I'm working 12 hours a day. We just got married. We don't have a bathroom. We have an outside shower and a outside toilet. And I asked for a laundry tray for my wife to wash her clothes. What they sent me was a fifty-gallon wooden barrel. They sawed that in half and my wife is supposed to do her laundry in that." So he ask me to get that drum and put it outside his office, which I did.

The manager came by at that time--our manager was Mr. Thompson, J.B. Thompson--and he asked the manager whether the plantation wasn't able to supply a regular laundry tray, redwood laundry tray with the partitions. And he wanted to know where that came from. So he told him the whole story. So he went over to the carpenter shop. Then he chewed that head of the carpenter department. He chewed him up. And by the afternoon, I had a redwood---they told me they were not building any more of those. And they were sending them out to the camps which I know that. But afterward, when I got home, they had a redwood laundry tray there with a platform so my wife could stand on. So that was one grievance that I went to my number one boss and I got the results there.

CT: Can you give me an idea of what other kind of grievances there were, either for you or to other people you knew working there, that weren't settled satisfactorily?

SR: Well, as far as on the job there, I was treated fair. I guess the boys that worked in my department, the department that I was working, we had no complaints. Outside of the field and stuff like that, I wasn't familiar with. For promotions and stuff like that, they did it just the way they felt like. It didn't have a system which we have now since we have the union. Before you could fill a guy in a position, you would have to post it out on the bulletin board and then guys that felt they were qualified applied for it. Then they would get the most qualified one. And then, years of service was one factor that they would take into consideration. But there was a material difference, too, now. Not only seniority covers now. Because you can have a guy with lot of years of seniority, and the guys with less years, but the material difference was quite a bit of difference, so they would, I guess, pick the most suitable person.

CT: Well, what I'm trying to find out is, actually, why you and other people from Waialua join the union. Because according to what we know, Waialua had better pay than most other...

SR: Many other.

CT: ...plantations. The working conditions seemed to be better. And like other plantations, you had so-called free housing, medical.

You know, they provided sports field and gym, things like that. So, you know, why would people join the union?

SR: For one reason, they had no choice. Whether they would want to stay out of the union, I think it would come to a point that the plantation would convince people to join the union because I don't see how they could operate the plantation when the rest of the sugar industry was unionized and Waialua not. I think it would come to a point that they would have to. Not force, but convince that they should join the union. And I joined the union because I had a choice to stay out.

CT: You had a choice to....

SR: I had a choice to stay with the company. And the factory superintendent at that time wouldn't consider me as a power plant supervisor, see. So then he considered me as a leading man and I could join the union. The manager tried to convince me to stay with the company. But I felt working for that particular person as a supervisor, it seemed impossible for me. I worked for quite a few superintendent, but that was one that I just simply couldn't work under his supervision as a supervisor. So I chose to join the union.

CT: It was for that reason? Was that your main reason?

SR: It was not my main reason, but consider the supervisors and then the pay. I know I wouldn't make as much pay if I stayed as a supervisor. Because I know if I would join the union, well, the conversion of the salary would be converted into hourly rate with the vacation credit, sick leave credit and overtime. I'd make much more than what a supervisor would make. And, well, really, one thing that I wasn't too particular about being a supervisor. What I was interested in was the take-home pay. And then you had protection. When something came out that you wanted to blow steam, all you got to do is just release the valve and blow. Like if you were a supervisor, you had to think twice before you open your mouth. So I felt since he wouldn't consider me the power plant foreman, I would say the best thing for me to do is to sign up and stay with the union which I did.

CT: Okay. Earlier you said that in a way the workers at Waialua didn't have much choice about joining the union or not because, say, if Waialua people didn't become part of the union, then what would happen?

SR: Well, most likely, the ILWU would refuse to handle the sugar. That's one possibility.

CT: When it went down to the docks?

SR: Went down to the docks. I guess an idea try to force them to handle that, they'd take job actions, too. So I felt they had no choice but join the union. Because the manager had no objections for Waialua joining the union, now. But he wanted Waialua to be the last to join the union. For what reason, I don't know.

CT: Okay, now, I trying to understand whether the majority of workers

felt like they wanted to join the union or that it was just the thing to do.

SR: No, I think the majority wanted to join. We had a few free riders that didn't sign up.

CT: In 1945?

SR: Yeah, when we got the first contract. That's '45 or '46. I know we had a contract but that wasn't worth anything. I think it was '46.

CT: In 1945, you got a basic contract between the planters and the union. And then 1946, you negotiated a second industry-wide contract.

SR: That's when we had the '46 strike.

CT: So there were people who, in 1945, didn't sign up?

SR: Yes, and '46 we had some free riders. So...

CT: If you can give an estimate of how many people did not sign up in 1945?

SR: There was only a few. I cannot give you the full figure. But there was few that felt a little more obligated to the company or they didn't want to belong to an organization like the ILWU. Well, the thing was this. What wasn't right was they didn't pay the union dues and they didn't take any part whatever in the union policies and they were by themselves, anyway. And when it came to negotiate new contract and better working conditions and all of that stuff, they got the same benefits as the ones that were paying the union dues and following the policies.

But those guys, they were having a pretty hard time to work with the workers. You know what I mean? So when it came time that they negotiate---I don't know what year that was, now. Whether you join that union or not, you would have to pay the same amount union dues either to the union or to any organization of your wish, now. So but then, that thing, they had to put in the union dues, so they went in, I guess. All of them went in and paid the regular union dues. I know of a couple of them. We approach them to sign up and all that. And some say, "Well, we'll pay our union dues without going through the payroll deduction or anything like that, now." That's just like we paying on the table.

One particular guy told me, oh, he don't want to join the union, because what the ILWU is doing is trying to break up the sugar industry. So I gave him a few points. I say, "Okay, that's your feeling now. Now, whenever there's a fire cane, all of the guys that are close by and lot of the union members go out and try to put out that fire. So if you **think that they are trying** to wreck the sugar plantation, you think we'd go out and try to put out the fire? If that's the attitude that the ILWU had, I would let them burn the whole thing down. But we went out and trying to help the company put out

the fire." And a few other examples I gave. And so, finally, he consented to join the union. Yeah, he had that feeling. Well, I guess, there was more than one that had that feeling but they didn't come out openly. But I never once had the feeling that the ILWU was out here to put the sugar plantation out of business.

CT: Why did some people have that feeling? You know, what could cause them to have that feeling?

SR: Well, I don't have an idea what made them think that way. But there was quite a bit of talk about ILWU was Communist dominated union, now. But I didn't believe that. If they were, that would have to be proven first before they could convince me that they were. Never in my mind once that they belong to the Communist Party or they were trying to destroy the sugar industry and stuff like that. My feeling was when we organized, ILWU wanted to get better wages, better working conditions, better places to live, and, well, to better the workers than what they really were.

CT: At the time when you got organized in 1945, were these charges about being Communist being brought out already?

SR: No, no, no.

CT: Those were brought up later?

SR: Brought up later. And then when Jack Hall and that bunch got pulled in, that's when they try to say, "Oh, that you can see now they were arrested and all that." But they couldn't convince me until they were proven guilty. But for what reason they were turned loose, that's still a puzzle to me. They didn't have, I guess, evidence enough to really say they belong to the Communist Party.

CT: Going back to 1945 then, who organized Waialua?

SR: Well, Major Okada had a lot to do from Waipahu out here with Mike Nagata.

CT: Nagata is from Waialua?

SR: Waialua, yeah. He was a first unit chairman. And, in fact, when they start getting organized, they came to me and told me the union was coming in and they were just signing people up. And I told 'em right off the bat, say, "Look, there's quite a few guys that are considered foremans. And I'm not going to do anything until I see my boss and ask him what my title was." And I did. And he didn't give me an answer so I signed up. And later on, he admitted that he considered me a power plant leading man and not a foreman. So that's when I signed up, and I stayed in.

CT: So Major Okada....

SR: Mike Nagata, and, oh, there was a guy by the name of Peters Raymond. He's not here any more. He's with Foremost. He was one signing up.

So, I think, was quite a few others that didn't approach me that I didn't know, since I was....and even quite a few foremans in the factory, they came to see me. "Eh, you better not sign up, because you know you go to the meetings with them and go to the manager's dinners and all that." They say, "You better not sign up." So I didn't take no interest at that particular time. But after the superintendent told me that I was considered a leading man, I said, "What the heck, I'm going to sign up." So I did.

CT: If he had told you you were a supervisor, you would have probably stayed with the company?

SR: Well, if (it was) on my line of duty, yes--that was electrical--I would maybe take it into consideration. But later on, '48, when they start offering jobs to these union officials, Mike Nagata got a promotion into crushing plant. Warashina was, that they had a plantation store, then. They had a promotion down to the recreational director down at the gymnasium. And when they start getting the leaders, giving them a supervisor's job, and they called me in and they wanted to give me a job in the boiling house as a relief boiling house foreman, I turned that down.

CT: Why did you turn it down?

SR: Because I felt I was better off the way I was. And then, I think, was a few years after that, I was approached again by the boiler house superintendent. He told me, "Sometime ago, they offered you a boiler house supervisor's job and you turned it down. How do you feel now?" I said, "I feel the same today as I did a few years back." And I stayed in right through until I took my retirement.

CT: Was this a common practice on the part of the management to offer management jobs to....

SR: Well, you could see right off the bat they were trying to get all of the leaders out. But you take one out and you get another one in just as radical or worse. Because there's a lot of guys work on the plantation that are intelligent enough to become a unit chairman. And lot of them, they don't want to do it, because there's too much headaches. I, for one, I didn't care to be a unit chairman which I was convinced more than one to run for. But I felt I could have helped out as vice or head steward of the industrial group and stuff like that, so I didn't care to be a unit chairman.

CT: Well, in 1945 when you were elected....

SR: First vice.

CT: First vice chairman. Who nominated you?

SR: Well, from the ranks, they submit the name, now. Well, maybe, could be from the ranks, they submit the different guys, now. You could

decline if you wanted to. There's no law says that you have to, regardless. So, they nominated Mike Nagata and myself, Warashina, and Justo Dela Cruz. Mike Nagata was chairman and I was first vice. And Warashina, he was secretary. And what was Dela Cruz, now? Treasurer or something. I know he wasn't officially in the unit at that time. That was '46. '48, those guys were out already. Then Dela Cruz, I don't know what year he ran for office at local places. And he got to be division director. Now, what year was that, I don't recall right now.

CT: So it was a rank and file nomination? Did the local have anything to do with it?

SR: On the nomination of unit officers? Not that I know of. I know that the unit members submitted the names. Mike Nagata, myself, Warashina, and Justo, the names were submitted and we didn't decline. Didn't have to take a vote or anything, now. There was no opposition, now. Nobody running. They just submit the name and they agreed and that's the way it started.

CT: Where did this occur? Was there a meeting?

SR: Yeah, there was a meeting. And I think that was right out in the park there. But when the plantation was running the gym--they owned the gymnasium before the State took it over--and we used to hold our meetings and everything in there. And then, when the State took that over, we use to hold lot of our meetings in the theater there. The guy by the name Picot, he use to let us have the place, because stir up business, eh. And then, after the theatre burned down, we use to hold it out open in the park there.

CT: Why do you think you were nominated and why did you run, or why did you accept?

SR: I accepted that because I felt that the members that join the union had confidence in us that we be able to lead the unit. So I felt, well, I'm going to take a crack at it, so I did. Then I was off as a member for a few years. And then....

CT: Wait, what do you mean?

SR: I wasn't a union official throughout since '46 up till I retired, now. I took a rest a few years now and then. And well, you didn't expect the old guys to continue going through. We wanted some new leadership. Some, maybe, they had better ideas. We had quite a few. Some of the guys that didn't even take any part in the union in the beginning, and later they became unit chairmen. Like Nobu Nakatsu. He became chairman in the late part. Bert Nagata. And we had Rania.

CT: Tony?

SR: No, Tony Rania was local chairman. He only stayed here awhile. Then

he ran for local, and he was president of the local. And I don't know what happened to him. He went to the Philippines and I never saw him no more.

CT: So in 1945, when you guys got organized, you say Major Okada and Mike Nagata and....

SR: This guy by the name of Peters. And could have been more but I really do not know---they didn't approach me because I was....but the reason why the manager check my name off was because when the organizer came back....

CT: The organizer? Who was that?

SR: I think was top from the local. So they came back to check names with the manager. Checked my name off. Then he called me in and he wanted to know why I signed up. So I gave him the whole reason as I first stated previously.

CT: In 1945, what was the pitch they were making, those people who were signing people up, you know?

SR: Just to get organized. The main thing was to get organized and then what they stress on if you're going to get organized, you're going to get better pay. You're going to get better working conditions, maybe, housing and stuff like that. So all they were interested in getting the contract. Whether it was worth anything or not. And then wait for the next negotiations.

CT: Did they talk about, like, the fact that you couldn't settle your grievances in a systematic way? That promotions weren't systematic? Did they bring that up?

SR: According to what my knowledge, they said by joining the union, you'd have better benefits in general, all over. Everything that you are not having now, you're going to get it and better conditions.

Because that was a terrible change from no union to union. Because they had some real hard head supervisors here. And the name calling, dirty names and everything, they didn't hesitate to call them before the union. And they tried to keep that up after we got organized. And we were always having grievances nearly every day of the week to settle this up. And then when you went to settle the grievances there, there was no more this bowing your hat and stuff. You didn't know who was the boss and who was the worker, because you had a voice. You went there to express your feelings and tell 'em just what you thought of the whole works. And that was not easy for both parties, you know. To change from no union to union, especially the sugar plantation. And lot of the supervisors, they hardly could sign their names. But since they were old-timers and they were good on the job---those days, it wasn't what education you had, is what you know

about your job and how you can handle the men. That was the main thing. This apprentice business, there was no such thing as apprentice classes and you had to complete so many lessons and books before you could become a journeyman. Just went in there for practical experience for four years and then you became a journeyman.

(Taping stops for lunch and then resumes.)

CT: Just before we had lunch, we were talking about the big change from no union to union. And you mentioned name calling on the part of the supervisors. Can you talk about that some more?

SR: Well, I wouldn't say all of the supervisors. There were some of them that had that practice. And it was pretty hard to change them. As they say, it's pretty hard to change from non-union to union. So a lot of guys had to be educated about what union was all about. Fortunately, I'd never had anyone call me any dirty names, because I wouldn't stand for it.

CT: But there were others that....

SR: There were others. For a fact, I know, that they used to use names that they shouldn't have used. And words, you know, where they use to talk to the workers.

CT: You mean, to just call their names or to...

SR: A lot of them had the habit of not calling you by your name. "Hey! Come here!" But we stopped that. After we got organized, they said, "People, they have names so if you want to have anything to do with the individual, just call 'em by name and tell 'em just what you have to tell 'em." That actually happened. We brought that up at the meetings to top level management to make that correction.

CT: Was that one of the demands?

SR: Oh, that was not in the contract, but verbally, we asked them to tell the supervisor. At least, if they want to say anything to anybody, just call 'em by name. Not "Hey! Come over here."

CT: This is only at Waialua or is...

SR: Well, I don't know about the other places, but I know that happened here in Waialua. And it worked out alright.

END OF SIDE ONE
SIDE TWO

CT: ...how they use to run elections before the union?

SR: Well, the early years, say, around early '30s, before the elections, we use to have meetings in the old show house, which was called the Casino. And they were practically forcing the workers to vote Republican instead of Democrat because I remember hearing them say

that if we'd have majority of Democrats, it would be bad for the plantation, bad for everybody. So they wanted to have Republicans instead of Democrat.

CT: How many people would be called to this meeting?

SR: Well, they was just notify there was going to be a meeting there and whoever felt like going went. It wasn't force that you had to go otherwise you have your ears pulled or anything like that. They just say it was a meeting and they wanted people to hear what they had to say. And that, the old Casino, doesn't exist any more.

CT: Was it called a casino for any reason?

SR: No. That was show house, but it was called the Casino. But it was nice. You could go to the meeting there and listen to what they had to say. But when you go into the polls there, you could vote just as you please. That's one good thing about elections. Nobody have to know what you are doing.

CT: And this meeting, was it during work?

SR: No. After work. In the evenings.

CT: I see. Did you go?

SR: Yes, I went. I listen to what they had to say. But I felt that that was my business to vote for who I wanted and how I wanted to vote, so. One good thing, you go in there and do just as you please.

CT: What about if there were Democratic candidates? Did you ever listen to them? In the '30s?

SR: Those days, elections were something really important. They use to have luaus during election and they would have music and everything else. We use to listen to lot of the candidates from both sides. It's almost the same as it is now. Dog eat dog. They use to fight one another, say, "I'll give you this, and I'll give you that. And I'll do this and I'll do that." In the end, you get nothing. It was the same. And those days, we had a sheriff and deputysheriffs and all of that, now.

CT: Oh, you mean that were elected?

SR: Elected, yeah.

CT: Where did you hear the Democratic candidates?

SR: Well, they use to come down campaign down where the courthouse is here. That was the popular place for the candidates to meet. That's Haleiwa. That's where the elections were held, right in the courthouse there. But now, they have it at Waiialua High School

and various places. Well, of course, the population is larger now than what it was at that time. And then if you didn't have transportation, there was no worries, because the company would furnish transportation to the polls and back home. Free. No charge.

CT: How? Well, did they just come around and pick you up or did you have to tell them...

SR: No, they would come around. And if there was anybody that wanted to go down, would just get on the car and go down.

CT: Did you ever use that?

SR: I never use that because I had my own car. Well, a lot of people did use it. Maybe, husband's working and then wife's home, they didn't have transportation. Those would take advantage of that.

CT: Did candidates ever come into the camps?

SR: Yeah, they came around. But not as much as they do now. They come from door to door, but mostly they would pick one central location to have the public go and listen what they had to say. Not too much of this door to door like we have today.

CT: So if there was a candidate, a Democratic candidate or Republican, they could come into the camp if they wanted.

SR: They could. Yeah. In the really early days, don't make it known that you would vote Democrat because that was bad medicine.

CT: What would happen?

SR: Well, possibility of you getting in bad with the top level management, and anything could happen.

CT: You know anybody...

SR: I don't know of anybody been fired off of the plantation for that reason, but I guess everybody was smart enough not to come out openly and say, "I'm going to vote for Democrat," and stuff like that.

CT: Let's see, you were 21 in 1926, '27. And did you vote the next election after that?

SR: Well, I voted from when I was of age, yeah. And that's the reason I say I attended those meetings about voting for Republicans instead of Democrat. You could get better results out of Republican than you could out of a Democrat.

CT: Why did they say that? I mean....

SR: I don't know if you know as well as a lot of people do, because

Hawaii here was controlled by the Big Five. There's no question about that. I'm sure you heard about it. And they had a lot of power, and they could do almost anything that they really wanted to do.

CT: What I'm saying is, okay, that they told you you should vote Republican because you going to get better results?

SR: Everything would be better for the plantation, as a whole.

CT: And did they get more specific than that? Like say, "Democrats are going to do this. Republicans are going to do this."

SR: Oh, they say if you vote Democrat, it's going to be so bad for everybody, for the plantations, and the public. So the only thing to do is to vote Republican, and you'd be better off all around.

CT: No, but did they tell you why, what the Democrat would do that would be so bad?

SR: No, they didn't say that. They just stress that the best party to vote for would be Republicans because conditions would change and it would be better for everybody. Plantations and everybody included. You know what I mean. In general, would be better to have a Democrat in than Republican. (SR meant to say "to have a Republican in than a Democrat.")

CT: Were there any well known Democrats that they point out and said...

SR: No, not that I know of. But I know they use to call them in and I wouldn't say force them to vote, but they made it so that you would think it would be better to vote for the Democrat (SR meant "Republican."). But as I say, when you got to the polls, you could do just whatever you felt like.

CT: We talking about the difference between the union and no union. You know, did you ever notice what kind of wages, housing, living conditions that the working people were having? And then, how that was different or same from what the managers had?

SR: You mean, the difference of what labor had compared to what management had? Well, management always had better housing than labor did until came such a time that they start developing land for housing. Then they start building and selling the house to the employees and all. And in the beginning, the house and lots were something like seven thousand dollars. And that was considered reasonable.

CT: This is after unionization?

SR: After unionization, yeah.

CT: How about before unionization?

SR: Well, then, to tell you the truth, we had so many camps on the plantation before we got....well, you can see for yourself in 1926

when I got married, I didn't even have a bathroom. With a shower and outside toilet. And then the first time I had a bathroom was when I moved up to the new houses they build up at Ranch camp, they call that. And that's when we had a complete bathroom with shower. But until then, was all open outside toilets until Board of Health came to a point and say that was out. So they start building cesspools and inside bath facilities and toilets. But before that was all outside showers and bathrooms.

CT: When you had outside showers and bathrooms, what kind of showers and bathrooms did management have?

SR: Well, they had a regular cesspools with toilets inside. That was the difference. And to tell you the truth, when we were kids, a section which was called the Skilled camps, there was a few guys in there that we couldn't get in and play in this particular area because we were chased out of there. And there use to be some big husky Scotch overseers and rough guys.

CT: As a rascal boy, did you, you know...

SR: I use to. I use to. And sometime, those big haole kids use to chase and beat us. When we get them outside of their district over there, we'd give 'em the same in return. Yeah, it was quite a few. In fact, when I was a kid, we lived in this section. That's what I'm talking about, this Skilled camp section. And my father was a sugar boiler, as I stated before that. Then our grandparents were in Maui, so we went there for a summer vacation. When we came back, they had a new house for us across the street, away from this section. And that's where I was brought up. It's close to the factory there.

CT: You were living in the Skilled camp area, then you moved?

SR: Out of the Skilled camp area to Mill 7, they call it. And, in fact, where I'm living now, that's where the so-called big shots use to live.

CT: That move, after you came back from Maui, was that something your father planned?

SR: Well, they wanted to build him a new place over there, but they didn't give any reasons why. Just they build a new house there. And on this section here, they had a Portuguese worked in the office there. Then, they build another house there and got him away from there. They wanted to stay by themselves, this so-called big shots. So, in fact, I'm living just a block and half away of where I was born. Little ways down the street.

CT: What about other differences that you notice, between what the managers had and what you had or other people like you had?

SR: There's very few people here in, say, the '25, ('2)6, '27 owned an

automobile. But all those haolés had automobiles. I was the last in the family. Since 1922, I always had a car. We started with a Model T. 1922 Model T and all the way up to Chrysler Sedan. That's when I got married.

CT: How about education? You went to...

SR: Waialua Elementary School. That's all. Well, there's no high schools around here to go to.

CT: How about the children of the managers, like that?

SR: Well, they had Punahou. They had the means. And kids went. They went to grammar school here. And then after high school, they get away. And you could send them away. They had the means to send them away to college and stuff like that which the poor people didn't have that kind of money to send them. Education was a problem those early days. You have so many high schools, now, it's all over the place.

CT: Oh, you went to elementary school with them, and....

SR: Yeah, some of them went to complete elementary school. Then they went on to high school, maybe, Punahou or something. By that time, Punahou was a high school already. Before, you know very well that mostly so-called haoles went to Punahou. Now, you get everybody, as long as you can play good football or basketball, they let you get in there. Yeah, Punahou was suppose to have been more of a haole school. I wouldn't say haole. They call themselves haole. The world haole means a foreigner, as far as I understand. We use to have lot of husky Scotchmen here in the plantation for overseers, you know.

CT: Okay. What about social events? You know, social life?

SR: They had a clubhouse. And nobody could use that but the big shots. From a top level management, anyway.

CT: When did that change?

SR: For quite a few years now, they had a clubhouse up at the where they use to call the Lower camp. Like the other clubs use to use that place there. But for a few years, now, they were using the Annex Building for weddings and parties and stuff like that. Since they had that fire in the office there, they using that for the industrial relation and the Civil Engineer's office. So they don't use that place any more.

CT: You mention the clubhouse that upper management could use?

SR: Yeah, we couldn't use that. No other club or organization could use that but the plantation top level management.

CT: Did you ever get a chance to use it?

SR: Nope. No.

CT: Not even after unionization?

SR: No.

CT: And yesterday, you mentioned that your mother had a brother who died when he was 28.

SR: Yeah, he never worked for the plantation. He worked in Honolulu as a bricklayer----stonemason. But he never worked for the plantation.

CT: Who did he work for?

SR: Well, at that time, gee, it's anybody that needed---they didn't have construction like they have now. Maybe bridges or there's stone walls that they need, but no such thing as big construction buildings. I don't know exactly who he worked for because, heck, when he was 28 years old and I was just a baby then. I don't remember who he worked for.

CT: Do you know if his family was taken care of or how did they get along?

SR: Well, she remarried again, his wife. And he left four children. So I'm sure that they got along alright.

CT: You know, now days, if somebody is killed or is injured, you have workmen's compensation, disability....

SR: But those days, no, they didn't have such thing.

CT: Now if, say, you had a young widow, maybe thirty years old, and several young kids yet and that the husband had been working on the plantation. Say, in the 1930s or so. How would they have been taken care of?

SR: Mm. I can't recall of any. Gee, I'm not able to answer that question. I guess that what they would do is try to remarry again. Welfare before was altogether different what it is now. When you applied for welfare, if you had an automobile, you had to sell it. If you had appliances, you have to sell it. You have to own zero before you could get help from welfare. But now days, according to what I was told--not that I know it for a fact--but if you have an automobile and you can't get your no-fault insurance, welfare's going to pay for it. So as far as I'm concerned, I think this welfare is a racket.

CT: I just was trying to get an idea of, you know, the conditions that existed on the plantation that people might notice and they would want to join the union. I'm trying to get an idea why they joined the union.

SR: Oh. You take, like my mother. When my father died, all they did was let her have the house that she was living. But no monetary involved. Just the house. And some other people, like the lady in the lane there,

she got the house and I don't know something like \$15 or twenty dollars a month, because the husband was electrician foreman. So she had the house and a few dollars anyway. If they felt that you had the means to support yourself, they didn't evict you out of the house, but they just let you have the house but no money. No retirement. Well, there was no such thing as a retirement those days.

CT: So the union was organized in 1945. In 1946, they strike. They stayed on strike for three months. You were the picket chairman. You organize the pickets in the different camps. And people who needed work, who needed money to support their family, you would have them go to Utility.

SR: That's right.

CT: Was there any other services that the union provided to the members in the 1946 strike?

SR: No. There was no other work provided. Like farmers that needed manpower, we use to send some workers there as picket duty. And in return, they use to give us vegetables and stuff like that. But no cash. No money cash, now.

CT: This is 1946?

SR: '46, yeah.

CT: What kind of farmers? Can you remember any?

SR: You mean the names of....

CT: Yeah.

SR: Oh, and another thing was this, now. Some of the boys had, like the Cazenias up on the hill up there, they had a vacant lot there. It was pretty hard to find job for everyone on picket duty, now. We use to send out a bunch of guys there. Raise vegetables and everything to bring it back to the union hall. But like the farmers, '46 wasn't too much of that, you know what I mean. Sending them out to help them. But '58, we had a lot of that. Kunihiro was one of them. Has a farm at Haleiwa. Even I went down there, do a little harvesting of won bok cabbage, and bak choi, what you call. This green mustard. And we use to get some vegetables in return. But no pay, though.

CT: 1946, did you do that at all?

SR: No, '46, I don't remember having any farmers, we going out and do picket duty. But, like once, we---what year was that, now? Fifty something. Went out to clean all the graveyards. Voluntarily, now. Clean one up there and here. That's voluntary work. Keep the pickets going, eh. But '46, I don't remember doing any. And we

didn't have soup kitchen in '46, now.

CT: So everybody make their own.

SR: Took care of themselves. And that was pretty hard on lot of the Filipinos that had just arrived here.

CT: How many came to Waialua of them?

SR: Wait a minute now. See, we had a convention in Hilo. One objection was ILWU had objections about bringing the Filipinos here to Hawaii. For the simple reason that in a short while, there were going to be a surplus labor. But they did come. I forget what the number was.

CT: Six thousand came to Hawaii as a whole.

SR: Was it six thousand?

CT: Yeah. You don't know how many came to Waialua?

SR: No. Well, some of them went to different islands, but a lot of them worked there for a while and they came back to Waialua. I guess, Waialua is a better plantation to work for for some reason because quite a few came from different islands. Well, even here, from Waipahu, Ewa came to Waialua. But the exact figure, I have no idea.

CT: What other ways did you use to hold the members together in the '46 strike? You had picket duty and I suppose people would talk to each other at that time.

SR: Oh, we had meetings. Try keep 'em together. And explain to them how the negotiations was going on. And we ask them to sacrifice because it was going to come to an end and they were going to be better off than what they were. And it wasn't easy. You know, you stay off for three months. By the end of that time, thing gets pretty rough.

CT: What gets rough?

SR: Well, the guys start kind of getting uneasy and want to go to work and stuff like that. And I know one case, the lady came down to the union hall and she start raising Cain there. The husband had to go to work. So I said, "Okay, if he has to go to work. You folks cannot afford it?" She said, "Yeah." So I got him a job in the millyard punching clocks. And to keep things quiet down, we gave him all that he earned. Then a few weeks later, he came back, he say, "Oh, that job is too tired, because you got to walk around all the time." I said, "Well, I don't have anything else for you to do. So you either take that or you go back home and take care of yourself." Things like that. But we always try to pick the guys that really were most financially hard up.

I can tell you of one case. Guy had a bunch of kids. And I got him

a job. And I knew he was really hard up. And the first payday, I caught him rolling dice. So I told him, "Look. I got you that job for you to support your family. But if you are going to come here and roll dice again, well, I'm going to give you 75 percent of what you make. And I don't want to see you rolling dice no more." And that was the end of it. Whether he went out and rolled dice again, I don't know. Because never happened where he use to come to.

CT: When you started the '46 strike, did you have any idea of how long it would last?

SR: No. But we were determined to fight it out until we got what we thought we were entitled to.

CT: You know, I don't understand the sugar industry that much. But how long can the management afford the strike? That is before the cane will dry?

SR: Well, the thing is, and my opinion now, that '46 strike, regardless of what issues, the answers was no.

CT: On the part of?

SR: Management. So as far as I'm concerned, I think what they were really trying to do was to test the union's strength. Whether they were going to break 'em or whether they're going to...we stress that to members about sticking together because that was a test. The company was having a test what kind of a union we had and how we could hold it up. But to tell you the truth, I wouldn't want to see a strike go on for six, seven, eight months and then get the cane all burned and everything. Everybody's going to suffer then. They wouldn't be able to give what they would normally want to give if.... but that's not the intent of the union. Like even this '58 strike we were thinking about letting 'em go out and irrigate. We didn't care about keeping the cane alive, now. The main thing was not to put the sugar in the bag. You know what I mean? So came to a point that it didn't need to and then we got that settlement in '58. But no, I would be against trying to see all the cane die. Because, chee, how you going to start the new crop again? It's going to take years. And then, I'm quite sure there'd be a lot of lay-offs. And nobody could stop that. Three months is bad enough. Especially during the summer months. Cane get all yellow.

CT: So if it's the summer months, then you figure the management breaking point is about three, four, five months? Is it fair to say that as part of the way you folks looked at it?

SR: Chee, I don't think they would hang on to five months. I don't think they would hold up five months.

CT: They would try to settle before?

SR: Yeah.

CT: Then how about in '46 in particular?

SR: When the contract expired?

CT: In July. It said negotiations began in July and the strike was called in September.

SR: That's when the expiration date of the contract.

CT: Yeah, right.

SR: In September. Well, that wasn't too bad, 'cause that's just the rainy season. But now it was changed to....now days to what? It's not in September any more.

CT: You changed the time so that it would end at a different...

SR: In the summer time. No, I think they've changed that some. I don't know. Well, anyway, when I retired in '69, the expiration date of the contract was January 31st. That was the regular labor contract plus the retirement contract. Just every five years we have a retirement opening. They just came in. Yeah, that was February the 1st. And I worked up to the expiration date of the contract. Then I went off. Took my retirement. And there was not a settlement. And they had a one month strike. But I didn't have to have anything to do with the strike. So whatever gains they got on the increase of the retirement, I was covered, because I worked right up to the expiration date of the contract. So that's the reason why I worked up to January 31st.

CT: Going back to 1946--and I know sometimes it's difficult to think back that much--but did you have an idea or did the ILWU local leadership give you guys an idea of how long it might take?

SR: No, they didn't give us an idea how long the thing was going to take. Because that was the first strike, and they didn't know exactly what the company's position would be. So all we did was go out on strike and fight it out. Of course, to make up your pay for that three months take you quite a long while to make that up again. But if you only going to think about that terms, well, you'd never have improvements of working conditions, wages, and housing and stuff like that. But if you can have a settlement without a strike, that would be wonderful. Because it's a hardship, not only for the companies, for the workers and their wives and kids and everything.

CT: Did you feel that way in 1946?

SR: I really did. I'd rather not have gone out on strike if we could have a settlement, but I had no choice. To tell you the truth, you have to have understandable wife, now. You get up in the morning, you go out. And sometime you don't come home for lunch. You don't come home for supper. And you come home 10, 11 o'clock at night.

And that's no monkey business. That's work now. And you're not getting paid for it.

CT: As picket chairman, you...

SR: Well, not only picket chairman. All officials. That's not an easy thing. And especially '46, we were green. We didn't know a thing about union. And I worked. I worked really hard. And by the time you come home, the kids are all asleep. You get up in the morning and you go out again, they still sleeping. And you hardly see them. And if a wife doesn't understand, then you can have a lot of trouble, you know.

CT: Were there some people in the union who felt that no matter what the cost, even if the cane were to die, and then the main thing was that the union stuck it out? Were there people...

SR: Not that I heard anyone say that, "Oh, heck, let 'em all burn," or anything like that. "We're going to stick it out until we get what we want." I didn't hear any of that remarks. Maybe somebody had that feeling, but maybe they wouldn't come out with it. But I think that would be a foolish attitude to take because (Laughs) well, you take all the cane that's supposed to be harvested. And then that thing just dried up, what would you expect? You wouldn't expect to have a job until they would---maybe keep whatever crew they needed and rebuild it up again. I think that would be silly for anybody to have that kind of a feeling. I know I didn't think of anything like that.

CT: So when probably plantation put out a newsletter like that, and maybe they talk about, you know, the ILWU is trying to break the industry or destroy the industry....

SR: Everytime we had a negotiation session, the plantation used to give us a bulletin on the results of the negotiations. But they never openly in that bulletin accuse the ILWU of breaking the plantation. Because, as I told you, that one particular guy before that didn't want to join the union, he had that idea until I made it clear to him that wasn't the intent.

CT: Where did people like that get that idea? Was it an idea that the manager was talking about? Maybe not written down, but promoting that or is just in that person's mind?

SR: Not that I heard the management saying that ILWU is going to break the plantations, but maybe some of them had that feeling. Maybe they talk to the next guy and then try to tell this to the guy that was the purpose of the ILWU going out on strike now. But I didn't have that feeling.

CT: So you folks were able to hold everybody together...

SR: Until the last, almost the end of the strike when that rice situation happened. Some of the guys started breaking down the picket houses

on account of the rice.

CT: Breaking down the picket houses?

SR: Yeah. They wanted to go back to work because we were getting the rice. Wherever the plantation got their share of rice, they always sold us an allotment of so many bags. And then we use to package that out and issue it out to the strikers, now. That was one of the hardest things to convince them to eat bread or potatoes or stuff like that. Rice, rice, rice. And we use to tell 'em, "Gee, if we only could get rice, we'd get more but there's no rice now." And then what happened that day, we got I don't know how many bags from the plantation. And the union send out a number of bags of rice. But they send out that pre-cooked rice. And we had already issued the white rice to some people. Then the next ones got the pre-cooked rice. And that's when the war started. Somebody (say), "That fellow get white rice. We get this brown rice. This only for baboy kaukau." That's...

CT: Pig.

SR: Pig feed, yeah. We even went down to the union hall, cook a batch, and took it up to them, they wouldn't even look at it. And we had to do a lot of fast talking and hoo! A lot of crow eating to keep them all together.

CT: Was this only at Waialua, this rice that you ate?

SR: Well, I don't know about the other guys whether they had any problems, but I know, Waialua, we had big problem about rice. You couldn't get rice. That didn't bother me. I can get along without rice if it's needed.

CT: Did this kind of problem over rice, how did that affect the overall negotiations? You think there was a effect?

SR: No, I think that was brought up to the ILWU local about not being able to get rice. And we explained the situation what happened. White rice and the brown rice. I don't think there was very much they could do.

CT: When the 1946 strike was over and you had succeeded in renegotiating a contract, what was your feeling?

SR: About what? I thought it was worthwhile going through that strike. But that was just the beginning. There was more yet to come. More benefits yet to come. So.

CT: Oh, you mean as a result of...

SR: Of this union. Yeah, union been organized. Of the plantation being unionized.

CT: Then I see in our chronology that in 1947 requests for house repairs averaged 250 a month, and that Waialua Agriculture Company began selling houses to workers. What about these house repairs? Did people come out...

SR: See, like in the union, we have all different committees. And one housing committee chairman. And then if anybody had any complaints to make, they use to report on the IRD (Industrial Relations Department) the house need repairs, see. And then, the civil engineer and the carpenters come under the civil engineer. Well, they would go around and check and see what was needed to be done, and I think they did a fairly good job on repairing.

END OF SIDE TWO

SIDE ONE; TAPE #1-72-2-76

CT: This is the second tape for interview of Mr. Robello, August 18th. After the strike in 1946, the Waialua Company sold stores, their orchards, the dairy, theatres, and cattle ranch.

SR: They wanted to go strictly on production of sugar. They use to supply electricity to plantation homes. But when we bought this place, automatically, they went out and Hawaiian Electric start running their own lines. And we start purchasing power from Hawaiian Electric. But previous to buying your place, we were getting our power from the company.

CT: In other words, the company was just going to produce sugar and as far as services--stores and other things--that would just be private?

SR: Yeah. Like, they had a store up at Kawaiiloa and they had a branch store here at Puuiki. And the Fujioka. Fujioka was operating four stores. And then this store burned down. And Kawaiiloa store doesn't exist any more. And that Puuiki branch store don't exist. Just that Fujioka main store now. That's plantation property. And they paying a rent for the place which is very small. I don't know how much they are paying. But the overhead cost there is low because, more family enterprise.

CT: Well, you know when the company began selling all these things, how did you react?

SR: Well, it was inconvenient for the people up at Kawaiiloa, because there was another store there. What you call that. Below, there was right a Japanese store. I forgot his name, now. But he gave that up, too. And the plantation store up there gave up. And was inconvenient for the workers, but there nothing they could do about it. We couldn't force them to maintain the store. So they had to get their groceries and stuff by some other means. But it was inconvenient for the workers up at Kawaiiloa. But now, Kawaiiloa's camp is getting smaller and smaller. So right now, they have Kawaiiloa and they have Opacula--that's down in the hole there. Farm 3, they call it. And up by the old mill there. That's about the only three camps now.

CT: When the management did that, did people think that was retaliation for the strike or...

- SR: I don't think that it was. Just that they thought of going strictly on sugar. That's my opinion, now.
- CT: Then the next year, 1948, Waialua Agriculture Company had the Golden Anniversary. Did you attend any of those activities?
- SR: Yes. I think they had a big '48---let's see. Whatever was that? Do you have any report where that was held?
- CT: No.
- SR: No. I know once they had one down at Camp Erdman. And then they had another big one at the gym grounds there. Gymnasium. I don't know which was which, but I know they had two. And I attended both of them.
- CT: What was your attitude towards each other at that time?
- SR: Well, go there and eat and have a good time on company's expense. I had no objections. (Laughs)
- CT: Then in 1949, there was a six months shipping strike. Did that affect Waialua? Did you folks...
- SR: No, they had lot of storage space for the sugar. Those days was still....when did they convert from bags to bulk?
- CT: 1955. From bag to bulk.
- SR: To bulk, yeah. No, they had lot of storage space. We kept operating. That didn't stop plantation from operating. They had lot of storage space.
- CT: How about food for you folks?
- SR: Well, lot of people, as soon as they got the word of shipping strike, some of them stocked three, four, five bags of rice. And I don't know how good that was. Said they use to stick nails in the bag to keep the worms out. Now whether that did any good or not, I don't know.
- CT: Stick nails?
- SR: Yeah. Put nails right through the bag. But I think if you get rice too long, it'll have that worms in there. I think it's more flavorable, eh, to have that. (Laughs) We didn't bother about rice. If we had rice, we ate rice. If we didn't have rice, we ate potatoes or bread. Lot of people, they just simply couldn't live without rice.
- CT: Did the workers out here have any contact or support, the dock workers?
- SR: You mean we support them? There was some donations. And, of course, the best we could help them was financially, eh. Yeah, we helped some of them.

CT: Yeah, then I'm really interested in what we were talking about earlier that ILWU was accused of being Communist dominated like that. In 1950, I see that Harry Bridges was jailed in a trial. And supposedly he had lied about not being a Communist several years before. And there was a territorial wide strike. Do you remember that one, in 1950?

SR: Territorial strike or a walk out?

CT: Could have been a walk out. I'm not sure.

SR: Walk out, not a strike. They supported Bridges on that one day. But even if I wasn't---I was on duty. That day, pumping was running and I couldn't get out. But even if the majority was agreed to go out on that one day support Bridges, you couldn't very well hold back whether you liked it or not.

CT: What do you mean "hold back?"

SR: Go to work and not support him. Because, you know, when people get up in the air, just like a bunch of cattle, you know. There's no control. And you wasn't going to risk get your block knocked off. That's one way you got to look at it. Because you don't see too much of that. Well, you don't see it here in Hawaii like you see in the Mainland, now. When they don't like a guy that's supposedly doing something that he's not supposed to do, that guy can disappear, you know. A lot of people don't realize when you have an organization like that and then you think about the majority want to go out, and then you don't want to support them, go to work, it's some serious thing to do, you know. So whether you like it or not, I think, you had to support that. But he was not convicted, though. Gee, if I only know if they jailed him and everything and then he got out of it. And not being convicted. I would like to know how he got out of it. That means, if he was a Communist and they had proofs, he would be convicted.

CT: As far as you were concerned...

SR: Well, he was not. Because he was not convicted. They didn't prove that he was a Communist. That's the way I looked at it. Maybe, (Laughs) in other words, maybe he was, but they didn't have the goods on him. 'As the way I feel, eh. So he got out of it, so.

CT: Did it make a difference to you?

SR: It didn't make a bit of difference to me.

CT: Why was that?

SR: Because I felt that he was not....what do you mean didn't make a difference to me? Whether he was or whether he was not? No, if I knew that he really was and, as they claim, he was trying to

overthrow the United States government, I wouldn't want to have anything to do with a person like that. Then, I could convince people really, he's no good. So we may as well get into some other union or something. But he wasn't convicted. And I wasn't sure that he was one. So I wouldn't want to be belonging to some organization wanted to overthrow the United States government. Because I'm satisfied with this type of government. They have little loopholes and all of that, but I think, to me, I think it's the best in the world. That's the way I feel.

CT: At that time, you know when they were accusing him, did they ever say what a "Communist" was? What is your understanding of what a Communist was?

SR: Well, what I use to hear, the Communist Party was taking orders from Russia. But the main purpose of overthrowing the United States government. But they used to say that, but they couldn't prove in what way they were going to do it or stuff like that. So I didn't believe that. I didn't believe it.

CT: They use to print those "Dear Joe" letters.

SR: Yeah. But I wouldn't want to belong to any organization that has the intentions of overthrowing the United States government.

CT: What about during the Korean War. And I know your son Herbert was...

SR: Yeah, he was drafted.

CT: Drafted, yeah. And if I'm not mistaken, I'm not sure if Harry Bridges himself....well, did any people like Bridges oppose the Korean War?

SR: Not that I know of. Not that I know of. I personally felt--I had a son going into war, now--which we had nothing to do with Korea. Why should we send our sons there to fight and get killed there while they weren't defending the United States government? So I thought that was wrong. That's the way I felt.

CT: You felt the Korean War was wrong?

SR: Yes. I felt that we had no business to go in there and defend there. If somebody attack the United States, then I'd say I'd sacrifice right down to the limit. But we weren't fighting for the United States. We not protecting our country is what I should say.

CT: Then in 1951, there was this Hawaii Seven.

SR: Yeah, Jack Hall and Reinecke and the bunch that they were arrested. Mhm. Well, we felt pretty bad about that, you know. About them being thought they were Communist and all that.

CT: What do you mean you "felt pretty bad?"

SR: Well, we thought, gee, if we belong to a Communist dominated union, hell, we taking orders from foreign countries, something like that, hell, it's about time that something be done, but they weren't convicted.

CT: Well, they were found guilty in 1953.

SR: Yeah, and then what happened then?

CT: Then five years later, the decision was finally reversed although they appealed. Do you remember them being convicted?

SR: Chee, I know they were jailed. In '53, I wasn't really active in the union. I was off for a while. And I didn't follow up on that.

CT: So as far as you're concerned....I guess you guys began to wonder.

SR: Yes, we did wonder whether they really were or not. But as you said, they were convicted and they appealed. I thought they were not convicted. Were they really convicted?

CT: Yeah. They were found guilty.

SR: Yeah. And then they appealed that.

CT: But they didn't spend too much time in jail.

SR: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, just short while. And then they reverse the decision. I wonder how did they reverse that decision. Well, I guess....

CT: Supreme Court.

SR: Supreme Court, yeah. Then, I guess, after they were cleared, guys didn't think any more about it. But really, that's something that was pretty big blow to, you know, when we found out that they were all jailed, eh. And lot of guys began wondering whether we were on the right union or not.

CT: How long did you keep on wondering? Was there any point when you figured...

SR: Well, after they got cleared up, I felt that, heck, it's a matter of people trying to get them in bad because of that situation. But after that, everything cleared up and didn't have any more feelings like that.

CT: Do you remember the Honolulu Record?

SR: That was a union newspaper. Yeah, we had a few issues out to us.

CT: Now days in the Dispatcher like that, Harry Bridges has a column. Even in the Voice of the ILWU, they reprint his column. And he talks about the Soviet Union and things like that. Do you remember if he did talk about the Soviet Union back then?

- SR: Meetings^s, no. He never mention anything about the Soviet Union. Because we use to have negotiating meetings and stuff like that. He use to come down, eh. But never, if they had anything to say, they never come out openly and say anything like that. Whether I miss some of the meetings and they did or not, but as far as I'm concerned, I didn't hear anything about that.
- CT: You know, one charge was overthrowing the United States government. Was there any talk about--not destroying the sugar industry--but taking over the sugar industry?
- SR: Never heard of them ever mentioning taking over the sugar industry. 'Course, lot of the executive board meetings and all that, I didn't attend because lot of times the shifts and all of that. I couldn't get off. Like in the power house, you just can't walk out and get time off anytime you wanted it. So we had to give advance notice so you could get replacement. And then whether anything like that took place is beyond my knowledge. Now, to come out and admit--not to destroy the sugar industry but to take over--when you saying that to a bunch of people, that thing is going to go out just like wildfire. That thing is just going to spread. And I don't think they would be that freely to make statements like that. Whether they had that intention or not, I don't know.
- CT: So when I mentioned that, that's about the first time you ever heard such a thing?
- SR: Yeah.
- CT: In 1956, six thousand ILWU members had a stop work to protest the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee hearing headed by Senator Eastland. And Waialua had almost hundred percent shut down. You remember that?
- SR: That's '56, yeah.
- CT: What was the issue there as far as you were concerned?
- SR: Well, I remember about that '56. What the main issue was, I can't recall that now.
- CT: Can you go over the 1958 strike again?
- SR: Yeah. Well, yeah, we might as well get this over with. Go ahead.
- CT: Mr. Robello, regarding the 1958 strike, what was your job for the union at that time?
- SR: Relief Committee Chairman. What I mean by Relief Committee Chairman was for the first few weeks, we didn't open up soup kitchen. Then as we saw the thing dragging for a long period of time so we start getting prepared with the soup kitchen. And as far as

the soup kitchen was concerned, I had nothing to do with that. All I did was go out and make a survey of the people that were really in need of relief and find out their financial standings and all of that. Some, we didn't have to go to them. They came to us.

We had a little storeroom like where we use to store all of the groceries and baby food and all stuff like that. And we use to issue out groceries and bread and stuff like that. But the grocery, once a week. And we had a Relief Committee there that were working. And one assistant chairman did all of the ordering of the necessities for the relief people.

And the bread, we were getting one-day-old bread from the bakeries for free. And we had a regular order to deliver that to their homes. And it came to a point that they stop giving us that free bread because they were going to sell that for making stuffing and stuff like that. So we had to go out and explain the whole thing to the workers that, the relief people, we were not getting any more free bread. That we were going to pay for it. So some of them had the impression that we were giving them too much. But actually, we didn't set the number of loaves of bread for each individual. They made a statement of what they needed. So since we told them that we're going to pay for the bread, they had the attitude that they would have to pay for it. So they say, "Oh, you giving me too much bread. Just cut off so many loaves and be enough." So it was a tremendous cut on bread delivery. So when I reported back to the unit headquarters, they said I couldn't do that because I was cutting down too much of the bread. I said, "No. I didn't cut it down. They did it themselves, because they committed that I was giving them so much and they needed so much only. So I told them that they were not going to pay for the bread. We were going to buy it, so they couldn't ask for more because they already committed themselves." But in lot of cases, I felt that some of the guys that were on relief could have just come on over have their lunch and supper from the soup kitchen.

CT: Oh, relief is beyond lunch and supper?

SR: Yeah, that's for beyond the lunch and supper now. They had the privilege of having lunch and supper plus you had corn beef, Spam, even salmon. Those can salmon and all this. That was expensive stuff. And still, we had to list what each individual was supposed to get, and we use to box that up. That, they use to come down to get it. We didn't deliver that. The only thing was delivered was the bread. And we use to go down as far as Sunset Beach.

CT: To deliver?

SR: To deliver the bread, yeah. And fortunately for us, we purchased about four thousand pounds of New Zealand beef. Boneless beef. And we had that stored in a cold storage in town. And then we brought it out here as we needed it.

CT: The Waialua unit....

SR: Unit bought that. The unit itself, now. And we used to give them lunch and supper. And we use to feed the school children. Elementary school and the high school. And that was, actually, food that was really good. They had stews. Chicken stews, beef stew, and noodles. Even a lot of times we had chicken hekka. Well then, to tell you the truth, for that period of time since we open the soup kitchen up to the end, the cost again was something like forty thousand dollars.

CT: How much did you have in your saving?

SR: We used everything we had. Just about the end of the strike when we exhausted all we had in the treasury. And that was not a easy task. And when they use to cook rice was about seven to nine bags of rice a day for lunch and supper. Breakfast, they would have to get their own breakfast. But lunch and supper, they could go there and have it. Well, we had a punch card system that you went there with your card, and when you went for your meals there, they punched a hole in the card there, and keep a record of that. But I never use the soup kitchen. I use to have my meals at home.

CT: You mean you cook your own?

SR: My wife use to get my meals ready. And sometime, I use to be out, I use to eat outside of the---maybe a hamburger stand or something like that. But I never used the soup kitchen.

CT: Although you could have?

SR: I could have if I wanted to, but....yeah, that was a pretty hard job to handle, because it's kind of easy to please maybe five or six people. When you have couple of hundred, then it's pretty hard to please everybody.

CT: You mean as far as what kind of food?

SR: Yeah. But the school principal came down to ask permission to go down and see what the kids had to eat, and when she went there, she was really surprised. And we had one-day-old pastries from the bakeries. We use to give that to the school kids. And milk. They had the carton of milk whether they drank milk or not. But the beginning of the serving of the meals to the school children, they were giving them too much of a large portion. Some of them would eat it all, and some couldn't eat it all. They put it in the swill can, and then some came for seconds, and they wouldn't eat it all. Some of them accepted the milk, didn't drink it, and just poured it in the....until I made the corrections. Told them to give them a fair portion to begin with. And if they came back for seconds, just give 'em much less than what you gave 'em the first time. And try to save as much as we could. There was times that they used all they had and they had to come back for more. Back to the kitchen. But after the correction was made, a lot of the times, food was brought back to the kitchen. They didn't use all of that.

CT: When you say "Relief Chairman," were you also responsible for the food being cooked and all that?

SR: Not in the kitchen. Just for the school....the relief for the people that were having the relief. But as far as the kitchen, they had the chairman in the kitchen there who was ordering the meals for the kitchen. And all I did was, as I say, we had a little storeroom for baby food and stuff that people that couldn't get by without that relief. And there's quite a number of them.

CT: Where did you get this Spam that comes in...

SR: I use to order from town. Deliver that out from Honolulu. And that...

CT: Oh, you bought...

SR: Yeah. That was the fellow that use to order all of the food for the kitchen. Order the whole thing and we use to take our allotment there. And all I did was see that each individual person on relief had his share for the week. And there was only one person here that had fresh beef twice a week. Of course, he was a diabetic and he was a pretty sick man, and used to have his vegetables regularly and he had beef twice a week.

CT: Very good.

SR: If it wasn't for that four thousand pounds of New Zealand beef we had---what was the price? Something like forty cents a pound or something like that. And it would have been really hard. And you could fix that beef in so many different ways.

CT: How about asking for donations?

SR: We went around to different....well, we had a Bum Committee, now. That's what they call a Bum Committee. And then Bum Committee Chairman. But I never went out on the Bum. They use to go to the merchants, the businessmen, and all that. Some of them use to give 'em a fair donation. Some of them didn't want to be known. Even some of the plantation overseers, a few gave. But, of course, with that, had to be kept quiet, eh.

CT: Otherwise they would get in trouble?

SR: Yeah. I guess so, they would. That's supporting the strike, eh. As I said, like in '46, borrow the truck.

CT: And then what about fishing and hunting?

SR: Well, to tell you the truth, in '58, we stop. In '46 we had a fishing committee and hunting committee and all that. But we were having more expense. The gasoline and all of this stuff. And they were

bringing in fish. This place, you go hunting is limited. And there was nothing coming in so I stopped that. And lot of guys didn't like the idea because they said, "Well, that's part of the picket." I said, "No." They had these lobster nets and everything, but if they bring, say, two dozen lobsters in, how you going to feed the workers with that? The only thing to do is sell it and then use the money to buy something. But it was not worth it. 'Cause more was going to go out than coming in, so....

CT: The fishing part?

SR: Yeah. Fishing and hunting. That was stopped then. And we didn't have it no more in '46, and that '53, and '58. We didn't have any more of that hunting. Was quite a few fishermen with boats, now. And as long as they did their picket over there, number of hours picket duty for the day, after that, they could go out and fish and do whatever they felt like. That's...

CT: They just fish for themselves?

SR: For themselves, yeah. So we didn't stop them from doing that. But if you have a fishing committee, go out fish and bring fish for the strikers, couldn't do it, because...

CT: That didn't work over here?

SR: No, it didn't work.

CT: In other places it worked though?

SR: Like Hawaii and places like that, they have lot of places to hunt. And fish is not scarce like out here. So I think it worked for some places, but not here in Waialua. They operated for a while then we stopped it down here. We just gradually wore out and the fishing and the hunting committee, we give 'em some other picket work to do.

CT: Then what about, you mentioned farming, helping farmers?

SR: That's in '58. See, like....

CT: Oh, the fishing and hunting, you talking about....

SR: That's '46.

CT: '46. And then you didn't do it in '58?

SR: No, no more. '58, we did only helping out that Kura....

CT: Kunihiro?

SR: Kunihiro farm. A few times we went down supply some labor, and get vegetables in return.

CT: What about raising your own gardens?

SR: Well, lot of people had their own backyard garden. And even now, this last strike they had, they plant their own. Right now, there's a garden in the union hall ground there. It's, anyway, you call that stuff--it look like a potato with hairy like. It grows on a vine. The vine...

CT: Bitter melon?

SR: No, not bitter melon. It's down in the ground, the fruit. It's starchy. Maybe you see 'em in the markets sometime, but I don't know really what they call that. They have their own planted in there, see. Individual raise, over there. Way back in '56, I had a backyard garden, but I had to let it all burn, because I didn't have time to upkeep that.

CT: So, in '46, the main issue was to establish the union. In '58, that was no longer the question, right?

SR: No, that was get all you can. We were established already.

CT: Try wait. (Does something with the microphone.)

SR: You got it off now?

CT: Now, it's on. Oh, you mentioned something that happened before unionization.

SR: And then after. Well, before we got unionized, the company use to have the office staff help the workers with the income returns. They did that for a while. Then all of a sudden, they discontinued all of that, and then you had to get your own accountant, tax man to help whoever couldn't do their own income returns. That was pretty hard on lot of the people since they were so used to going over to the office and have it worked out there. Then they had to go out again, so. What reasons they did that, I still don't know, but I think they still could have continued doing that. So my attitude towards the company since they stop that was anything that involves the company's doings, I wasn't going to volunteer any time to help them. So since they stopped helping people on income tax and stuff like that, I thought, well, I'm not going to donate any time that involves any of the donation time to the company.

CT: Like what did you use to do before?

SR: Like carnivals And stuff like that. Wiring and stuff like that, so. Or preparing for luaus and stuff like that.

CT: Was that a company carnival or community?

SR: That was company and Haleiwa Community Association combine.

We did all of the dirty work, and those guys hardly did anything and they shared that.

CT: They shared the proceeds?

SR: The profits. Yeah. So very few of the Haleiwa Community Association people use to come and help. Most was from Waialua.

CT: You know when Ewa and Kahuku closed down, did that affect you?

SR: No, it didn't affect me at all. You know what happened to some of the boys. See, we were really short of electricians here. And lot of times in the meetings, I use to stress that they better start getting prepared because the old-timers were going to retire someday and we, really, were going to be short over there. You see, what the plan was, lot of the Kahuku electricians, if you wanted to get out, you'd get a severance pay and get out, now. Then, since they needed electricians here in Waialua what they did was got 'em a job here. And for the number of years that they worked in Kahuku, that was added. The seniority was added for them to come here. So that was not start at Waialua on zero. So that there's some here that's pretty close to retirement age now. One guy by the name of....gee, what's his name. But he's just about ready to retire, but he's going to carry seniority from Kahuku here so he won't start from zero. So when he gets 65 or 62, wherever he's going to go with, and he has the number of years to qualify for the maximum, he'll get his maximum retirement, same as if he would get at Kahuku if they were still operating. So those guys, they didn't lose out, but some of the guys got jobs with the City and County parks and stuff like that. But it didn't affect Waialua any at all.

CT: Well, did workers in Waialua begin to think about whether Waialua would continue or that Waialua might close down, too, after some years...

SR: Well, as far as I'm concerned, Waialua is here to stay. For the amount of money that they are putting in for irrigation pumps and converting from irrigation to drip irrigation, they're here to stay for many, many years. That's my opinion. And improvement of these cane cutters and these haulers and new cleaning plant and all that. They wouldn't be throwing millions and millions of dollars if they don't expect to stay for a long time.

CT: In '68, when Ewa closed down, was there concern, though? I mean, now, you can see that they put...

SR: No, we could see the conditions of Ewa and Waialua. Take like Ewa, at most, well, that was a lease land, and it's just like a desert there. The bottom is nothing but coral, and the cane don't grow in Ewa like it does here in Waialua. So as far as concern about them closing down, no.

Like when they were supposed to have stopped burning cane in '55. But that one, somebody started crying so loud that they extended that to any indefinite period. But I tell you, when they burning that darn cane close by and you get all of that smoke and that dust and ashes and all that, nobody can tell me that's not pollution. That's not air purification. But they say that's not harmful, so whether there'll come a day that they going to stop burning cane, I don't know.

CT: So Waialua, as far as you concern, it's productive?

SR: Productive. They making money. There's no question about that. They always did and always....that's the reason why they felt they could pay a little bit more than any other plantation.

CT: Why did you think Waialua is so successful?

SR: Well, mechanization is one. And I guess, they had good management. Management has a lot to do with....according to what I hear right now, the tons per acre has dropped some. Tons of sugar per acre has dropped. And you can't go out from year to year and start raking and pulling roots out and everything and then replanting and get the same amount of sugar because the replant won't be the same as the ratoon. What I mean in terms of sugar, when you have your ratoon cane, by the time you replant that, it never be the same as the ratoon cane. And then this...

CT: Ratoon would be more?

SR: More, yeah. And then you can see for yourself. You go out in the field after they get through harvesting, all they do is burn the cane. And then the rake goes in there and just rake that cane and pile it up. That's roots and everything come through, which that supposed to be cane coming out of those roots that were pulled out. And then sometime it takes a long time before they go in and replant. By that time that ratoon cane is growing already what they replanting that. And it's not the same. I was never a field man, but I can see that that's not doing any good. And they know themselves. That's the reason why they want to convert from irrigation to drip irrigation. There's no lines there. Just flat, now. And if that cutter is successful, it just cuts the cane, chop it and put it in the hauler and take it right down to the factory. And then you don't have any roots pulled out. But so far, they having a lot of trouble with that cutter. It's not working as they expected the thing to work.

CT: So you say that you think the success of Waialua, that it stayed around is: one, due to mechanization, also to management. Any other factors?

SR: Well, I think that's the main thing is mechanization and good management, and proper irrigation, fertilization, and all that. That got lot to do.

CT: What about the land and the climate like that?

SR: Well, Waialua is a good place. It's not hot like Ewa was. Like Kahuku is all sand. Nothing but sand. It wasn't real good soil, eh. You could see the cane. Kahuku cane was so skimpy compared to Waialua. Waialua, the thing just lies down and it grows so long. That's where the trouble is with the cane cutter right now.

CT: Not straight?

SR: Not straight up, yeah. You take like in Florida, that's where they built those cutters now. Cane is straight up, and the thing just goes through and cut that without any problem. When you have a cane that's lying down, and the thing to pick it up and cut it to the border, that's another question.

CT: You get more sugar, but also harder to harvest?

SR: Harder to harvest, yeah.

CT: Then what about labor? What about the working people as a factor in the success of the plantation?

SR: You mean the output or how they work or....

CT: Yeah. I mean...

END OF SIDE ONE; TAPE #1-72-2-76
SIDE TWO

CT: I was saying that you thought Waialua successful because it had survived where Ewa, Kahuku, and others had closed down. And that some of the important factors have been mechanization, good management, and that Waialua is a better place to grow cane. So I was asking you about labor. How important is labor?

SR: I'm quite sure now, workers in Waialua seem to be good workers as long as they're treated right. They're going to put out what they're supposed to put out. And the conditions to raise cane and the soils and everything much better than Kahuku or Ewa was. It takes a lot of water to raise sugar cane. And one advantage the Waialua Plantation have is that Wilson Dam that they have up at Wahiawa. And then they have pumps scattered out through the plantation. There's quite a few irrigation pump, deep well pump. So as far as water is concerned, they have the source to raise cane.

CT: You know, looking at the whole history of sugar in Waialua-- started in the 1800s, anyway. 1844. And up to now, more than hundred thirty years of trying to grow cane, would you be able to single out what is the most important component in the success?

SR: Well, you know, they've improved new breeds of cane, too, now. Like before, maybe they have just one variety, and they used to keep up with that. One popular variety that used to be before is Lahaina cane. But unfortunately, that thing got diseased. And then, I think the next variety they converted to, that was H109. But still, they kept on improving and it takes quite a few years to

get a new variety of cane. We used to like to chew cane before. But now days, you're not able to because it's all just like bamboo. It's so hard. But it has the sugar. They don't care whether you're chewing cane as long as you have sugar in the bag. (Laughs) Before, there was no such thing as experiment station. They used to experiment this, experiment that. So now it's everything put together. With this mechanization, and getting new breeds of cane, and then one thing I have to say that good success was when the ILWU came in, and made a lot of changes.

CT: What kind of changes?

SR: What I mean....the attitude management toward labor, that was a big change there. That's one big factor there. As far as I know, there was very little respect from management to labor before we got organized. But if you treat it right, the labor going to put out what they supposed to put out. Of course, there's some goldbricks. No matter where you go, you have that. But one thing I must say, that the old-timers use to work harder than this younger bunch now. They were more devoted to their job, but I think, as a whole, they're doing a fair day's pay. They were working, more so the guys that are in incentives. Because the more they put out, the more they make, and that was good.

CT: You know, you mentioned the old-timers. Probably before, you had all these immigrants and the Hawaiians clearing the land like that, it wasn't much of a place to speak of, right?

SR: No.

CT: What if somebody were to say that before the immigrants and these old-timers started to come clear the land, make it productive, the land wasn't productive. And that through the years because workers, they work hard on the land, cleared it, made the stuff grow, work, that in the final analysis the labor by the workers is the most important component of the success of sugar. How would you react to that?

SR: I wouldn't say only labor. Because, labor, there would just do what they were told to do. But the financing and the management and all that, I think I give management just as much credit as I would give the labor. Because they're the ones that going to lose out whether it works or not. Of course, the laborer would lose their job and stuff like that. But money wise, now. So I think management has a lot credit to be given to.

CT: Okay, the Waialua Sugar Company's probably worth millions of dollars right now.

SR: Oh sure.

CT: When it started, money value was different back then.

SR: Oh, of course, that's true.

CT: But because land wasn't cleared and all that, it must have been worth much less. So in creating all this wealth in this community so that you can have houses like that, if somebody were to say, "Looking at it overall, it was the workers who really..."

SR: Well, sure, the workers played a big part in it. Sure. Not only management. But I said both parties should have credit. But I think labor had a really big part. You take like clearing places for plowing and all that. There was no such thing as tractors those days, steamplowers. I don't know if you ever saw one.

CT: Saw a picture.

SR: Yeah. So that one end of the field and one up on this side with a big cable and a plow. This one used to put it down there, plow and then move ahead. And this one would pull it back and so forth. That's the way they used to plow. But when they had tractors and bulldozers and all that, it's much easier than the steamplow. A steamplow, you had to get coal or whatever they use to use for steaming, because it was a steam engine. And then they had to have the water wagon supply the boiler with water all the time. And they had to get that early in the morning and fire that thing, the steam out. Now you get on the tractor and you start the thing out. In a few minutes, you plowing already. Conditions now and what it was before are altogether different.

CT: So you know, in that change...

SR: Labor has a big part in what we are today. And you can see if it was only for management, no labor, it couldn't do a darn thing.

CT: You wouldn't have cleared all the land.

SR: You wouldn't. Labor has lot of credit for the success of what we have today.

CT: Now, Waialua Sugar is part of Castle and Cooke. And Castle and Cooke has also expanded from....

SR: Sugar to everything. Bananas and Bumblebee salmon, and, oh, a lot. You look at the report sometime in the newspaper. And that profits they make on bananas and pineapple and fruits. Dole Pineapple is subsidy of Castle and Cooke. It's not only sugar. They've expanded. Like Amfac did.

CT: So now that sugar is a smaller part of the whole Castle and Cooke operation, it's possible that depending on the world sugar price, depending on other expenses, that Castle and Cooke might make a decision. Doesn't look like it now, but they might make a decision in the future that...

SR: Maybe. Could be in the future. But right at present you can't see that they're going to go out. But conditions might worsen. And nothing is going to stop them from saying, "Well, we're going to go out of sugar business." I wouldn't want to see that happen, because I only have a few moons more to go. But I'm thinking about these younger guys.

CT: That they should have jobs?

SR: Yeah. Without a sugar industry here in Hawaii---they depend a lot pineapple and sugar, you know. What else? Unless they go into potato farming and all this. Like they do back on the Mainland. They could raise it year round, which some places on the Mainland, all you have is one crop a year. But I'd rather see sugar business going indefinitely (i.e. indefinitely) here for good in Waialua. Keep on going until....I don't know they say the end of the world is coming pretty soon, but I don't know. (Laughs) So I think Waialua is in a pretty good shape, the sugar.

CT: Do you think you would have some say in the decision?

SR: Whether to continue sugar or not? They would tell you to go fly a kite. And "If you don't have a kite, we give you one."

(Laughter)

SR: Once, like you look at Kahuku. They tried so hard. Tried to keep on going. In fact, the bad years, all they was keeping Kahuku going was for tax purposes. But then in '74, when the sugar price went sky high, well, they wished they had Kahuku operation there, but. You take like Kohala. Look at what they tried with this task force all of that. It was a flop, eh.

CT: Oh, okay. What I'm saying is Castle and Cooke is a much bigger operation now. So sugar is a small part of this. Now because Waialua is a good location to grow, because you have the mechanization already, because the people who working, the probability is that Waialua is going to keep on producing similar amount of sugar.

SR: They are increasing, now.

CT: Yeah, increasing. Now if Castle and Cooke, though, sees that as a whole, although they're making some money on sugar, but maybe if they sell the land or something and they go into another industry, they can make more money. Now, in that decision, you think you would have a say?

SR: Well, I doubt it. Because it's pretty hard to go and tell somebody like Castle and Cooke or anybody that had his own business, "No, you not supposed to (do) this, you supposed to do that way. You not supposed to go out of cane business and then do something else." That's just like telling them how to run their business. But

I think if Waialua, if Castle and Cooke would decide to discontinue sugar business, they have to be losing quite a bit of money. And I think while they're still making a reasonable amount of money, I think they're going to continue raising cane. Because for the amount of improvement that they are putting in right now, it would take quite a long time from now before they would decide not to go on in the sugar business. That's a tremendous expense they going through right now to improve. And they took what? Close to four thousand acres pineapple cane and converted that to sugar cane. And that cost quite a bit of money to do that. So as far as I can see, I think they'll be in the business for a long time to come.

CT: Then you say that if somebody like you or other people who work or used to work here were to try to tell Castle and Cooke what to do about sugar, that wouldn't be possible?

SR: I don't think you could....

CT: You know, your father worked here, other people's grandfathers and fathers worked here. You know, really made Waialua what it is. Would you say that the descendants of those people and people like you who worked and the people who work today should have more of a say in what happens?

SR: Yeah, but the trouble with now days, I'm telling you, it's not only with the plantation. You can work there fifty years. You take your retirement. And after you have your retirement, you out. You don't have no say. And it's not only in the plantation. It's almost all over the place, now. It seems to me that they don't care what you did. And you out, because you out. You got your retirement and that's it.

CT: You agree with that?

SR: I agree with that. What I'm saying right now I don't agree that it should be that way, but that's the way it is. Well, you take like this increased cost of living now. We have a law with the Social Security now. Everytime the cost of living increases we have an increase. Recently, I had one. Eight percent. I think it was a year or two years ago. The plantation gave all the supervisors a cost of living increase and didn't give one guy in the bargaining unit a cost of living increase. And we were workers. It wasn't all the supervisors that put the sugar in the bag. So if they gave it to the supervisors, why in the heck couldn't they give the guys in the bargaining unit a cost of living increase? That's something that I don't understand and I'd like to know why. So I'm quite sure, now, if you do an inquiry why they did that, they would say, "Well, that's different. You guys were all negotiated increases and stuff like that." What the heck. So we said, "We don't belong to the unionizing any more. We retired. We're former plantation workers. And we worked darn hard. Especially guys start in the '20s. And if they could give the

supervisors that cost of living increase, what the heck couldn't they give the guys in the bargaining unit. That's what I don't understand. And I think that's unfair. See, we were all workers.

CT: You worked forty, fifty years, yeah?

SR: Well, they give me credit 46.1 (years), but more than that. But they took some months off on account of strikes, disputes, and stuff like that. But it didn't affect my retirement. I had the qualified number of years for the maximum. But I took an early retirement, so I took a loss from plantation and Social Security, but it was worth it. It was worth it. I was satisfied.

CT: But earlier you were saying that once you retire, they say, "Well, that's it. You retired." You don't have anything more to say. What you did was history. And you said you agree with that. But is that the way you think it should be?

SR: No, no, no. I say I don't agree with that. It shouldn't be that way. They should still think about the old-timers, and if they going to do something for the supervisors now, they should do something for these guys that are retired. And another thing with the Hawaiian Insurance Company. They had us insured. When you still working, for instance, Waialua, now. Eighty cents of your union dues goes in for a thousand dollars group insurance, alright. So for about little over a year, year and a half ago, they called all of the retired people into the union hall. And they told us that the Hawaiian Insurance Company didn't want to insure us. You see, when you were working, you got a thousand dollars working insurance. After you retired, they cut it down to five hundred. But the unit was paying that forty cents for five hundred group insurance. So they called us in, say that "Hawaiian Insurance Company said they won't insurance you guys for forty cents for five hundred dollars group insurance, now. Now if you want to continue that, the unit is not going to pay that forty cents any more. You would have to pay a \$1.65 a month for five hundred dollars." And then they said, "But we're going to call you folks back again and give you guys the decision, see." Then I asked, "What about the guys that are working?" "Oh yeah, we trying to get some insurance company to take them over."

So alright. Then they call us back in again. And then they say, "Well, we can't do anything. The Hawaiian Insurance Company, if you want to continue your five hundred dollars group insurance, you'd have to pay \$1.65." So I asked the speaker, "What about the guys that are working, now?" "Oh, yes. The Hawaiian Insurance Company going to continue insuring them. Keeping them on insurance." I say, "How much are they going to pay for a thousand dollars?" "Well," he say, "same. Eighty cents." The guys that are working only pay eighty cents for a thousand dollars. The guys retired, it's \$1.65 for five hundred. So I asked, "Well, why is it?" "Well, you guys are old already." "Yeah, but when the heck did we start

that? Not today! In fact we started the union and everything! And now we're going to pay \$1.65 for five hundred? And the guys that are working are going to pay eighty cents for a thousand? This is unfair." He say, "Well, we have no choice. That's the way it is." So I tell him, "You know what to do with that five hundred dollars." I said, "I ain't paying another penny. You folks can do what you want to the five hundred dollars. It's not the idea that I can't afford the \$1.65. It's just the principle involved. I don't want to have any damn thing to do with that Hawaiian Insurance Company." Well, it's a union insurance, anyway. So I tell, "I don't want to have a darn thing to do with that," and I told them what they could do with that five hundred dollars. I dropped off. I don't give a darn. And a few other guys, you see, that's unfair, now. If you ask me. Sure, we're advance in age now. But we started that from long time ago. It's not right now. So everytime that Hawaiian Insurance speaker come on that TV, I feel like punching two guys.

(CT laughs)

SR: See, things like that you make these old-timers feel bad, you know.

CT: Going back to the possibilities. You know, just thinking of hypothetical. That if Castle and Cooke decided that they wanted to close down Waialua Sugar, and people didn't want that to happen.... just like Molokai, eh. People don't want that to happen. And in Molokai, chee, they get forty percent unemployment or something. Something real, like that. What if somebody were to say, "Look, you guys just cannot close down like this! You should consider what will happen to us. If there's no sugar out here, we won't have jobs. Big unemployment. You know, we might not be able to pay out our home. Not enough for send the kids to school, and stuff like that. And all our grandparents, our parents work on this land, made this community to what it is. Waialua Sugar has expanded as a result. Now you guys should give us more say in what happens in the decision." Would you agree with a statement like that or you think....

SR: Well, sure! They should take into consideration like that, see. But now, are they making money, or they losing money, Molokai?

CT: As far as I know, they making.

SR: Well, I think, if a situation like that would come in like that that they want to close down....but people there wouldn't have no place to find jobs or anything.

CT: Well, they getting few jobs from the hotel, but...

SR: Yeah, but that don't amount to hardly anything. Now, they going to close that down, see. How many people are going to go without job, and there's no future there for a job. So I think, a thing like that, they should try and convince them to keep it up. If cannot and they going to shut down, put that much people out of work, I think the government should get in and make an investigation. And if they feel that they making a reasonable profit or something

like that, I think they should try to convince them to keep that operation going. Or...

CT: I don't think they losing money over there. They said they making more money in the Philippines compared to here.

SR: Yeah. It's cheaper labor and everything else. If the government can prove that, heck, try to convince them to keep that up. But for the individual workers try to convince them to that, that's going to be pretty hard, you know. Once they make up their mind they want to get out, they....but if the government gets in and try to do something. And then it's a possibility of them to continue. That's the way I look at it. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think it's one solution that could be worked out.

CT: Well, that's the way you look at it. In this community, in the union, like that, where do you consider yourself as giving an opinion? More on the conservative side, the middle, more on the radical side?

SR: I'm a radical guy. Yeah. I'm radical. There's no question about that. But if I'm wrong, I'm going to admit that I'm wrong. But if I'm right, I don't care who I'm going to buck, but I'm going to buck. That's the reason that I had a lot of humbug meetings with the company. If I had something to say, I tell 'em. I don't care who it was. I just let 'em have it. And it's not that I don't want to make wrong into right, now. If I was wrong, I admit I was wrong. But now, if I was right, I don't care who. Some guys, they're afraid. They want to back off and stuff like that. No, but. You don't have to hit me with a shovel to get me real mad. Because if I'm right and somebody's trying to take advantage, I don't care who he is.

CT: Yeah, 'cause I heard....some people were saying that you had the chance to join the management, but you didn't want to. Stayed with the union.

SR: Yeah. Because I felt that I could better myself and I could help some of the members with their problems. They tried to get me out for a long, long time. Because even right now this Batad told me he heard about that. But I felt, no. I can stay and help. I helped a lot of guys. And it's not only the education. Of course, you have to have some education. I didn't have much. But in comparison to what I seen with lot of guys, you can have a lot of education, but you had no damn common sense.

(CT chuckles)

SR: That's the main thing. If you use common sense and patience with a little bit radical in there, you can go long ways, boy. You can. Yeah. I had lot of run-ups even before I retired, before this new power plant was installed. A young guy got to be a

assistant production superintendent. He was an assistant. And we used to change our shifts from....you work on Saturday, you don't go back again until Sunday night. So he wanted to cut that out and make us do in Sunday night instead of Monday night. And that would cut your off period quite a bit, see. So he wanted to save some overtime. But it used to take me about eight hours or over eight hours to do all the preventive maintenance after the place shut down. But what he wanted to do, as soon as the boiler house got through boiling off, shut everything down, go home, and come back Sunday night. With the fireroom. When we get steam up and everything, put the units back on the line. But how could I keep up my preventive maintenance? So I couldn't do it.

So I told the chief electrician I couldn't do that because I wouldn't have enough time to do all the maintenance work and all that. So there was a messenger boy. He didn't come to me directly. When he couldn't get nowhere, he came back to see me. He say, "Well, that guy say you this, this." I say, "No, no, no. Don't use the word 'you.' I just happen to be the spokesman for the boys in the power plant. They don't like the idea because we all getting old, now, and we need our rest." So I told him, "I know why you want to make this change now. You want to cut off the 16 hours overtime in the week, and two hours on Monday morning." I told him, "What the heck is 18 hours of overtime for a plantation like Waialua?" He said, "You want to listen to what I have to say?" I said, "No. I don't give a damn to listen to a word you have to say, because I listen so darn much to this and this even stinks." I told him.

So he turned me in to the manager and assistant manager. So they asked him why is this sudden change? He said, "Well, cut off some overtime. And I have too much trash. Want to burn it Sunday night." And then they ask him, "What do you normally do when you have too much trash on Saturday?" Said, "We burn it Saturday night." "Well, go ahead and burn it Saturday night, and leave these shifts just as they are, because I've had good compliments about Slim, the way he carries over in the power plant. When you have your new plant"--they were starting to put up the new plant--"when you have your new plant, then you going to make out your schedule, but as it is right now, leave it alone. Don't touch it." Boy, that guy was mad! So he came back and he told me, "Well, if you don't want that---" I said, "Alright. Not 'you.' It's the boys." Said, "If you don't want to do it on Sunday night, continue doing it as you been doing it in the past." And he took off. Well, that's one way I had my way.

But another way, now, if they insisted, in the contract it says the company has the right to set the time of the shifts more or less schedule. But he knew darn well if they would have done that, would have too damn much trouble there, because we couldn't do the preventive maintenance work, eh. And that's the main thing. That's one time I had my way. So I was little bit in the opposite

side of where he was. I didn't give a damn. I was going to take my retirement. Boy, used to have some mean meetings. Terrible.

CT: When you say "radical," you mean willing to fight, eh?

SR: Aggressive! If they had something to say, you just give 'em right back and keep that way. But the thing is when you went in there for the meeting, you had to prepare yourself, you know. And I had a little black book in alphabetic order. And lot of times, I used to see guys on the management side doing something not so good, I used to jot that down. The time, date, everything. That was not to make trouble, but just for reference to prove, see. And they had meeting, then I used to just open that thing out and just read 'em out. They can't say, "I think," or "maybe." I say, "You cannot do that." You have to have experts. Those ain't no bunch of fools in there.

I used to go there with a beef sometime and I used to have to ask them some questions. This, and this, and this, and that other. They used to give me the answer. And then I used to rap 'em. What's happening now with this and this and this, see. They committed themselves already, but they could not do anything.

CT: So looking back over when you started in 1922, retired in 1969....

SR: That was all in one department, only different branches.

CT: What would you say about the life before and the life now? The good and the bad? How would you...

SR: When the early '20s, even when we got married, we worked hard, money was less. Cost of living was way, way lower that what it is now. And everybody seemed happy. Now you have everything that you need.

CT: Material wise?

SR: Yeah. Even money. You have everything you need. You have cars. You have a better home. And you have more recreation. And a lot of people don't seem to be happy. But the best years of my life, I think, it was from '69 up to now. My retired life. Because I worked really hard. I worked 84 hours a week for many years. And 84 hours a week is 12 hour shift. That's seven days a week. Of course, was on different shifts, now. Back, when we use to change our shifts, we use to be on 12 hour shift. Now, if I was on the day shift and I was going to change to night, I use to go out in the morning early, six hours. I'd come back home lunchtime, take a rest, and I'd go back work another 12 hours. That's putting 18 hours out of 24 just to change the shift. One guy would have only six hours. The other guy has to put in 18 hours. And that wasn't easy to do, you know. And in the power plant there, it was pretty hot, too.

CT: So you say, back in the '20s, didn't have that much money, but you seemed to be...

SR: Happier.

CT: Now, you got the money....

SR: Yeah. All the necessities that you need. You have better homes, cars, and the children are all grown. But it's not the same feeling as in the early days. I don't know. Because maybe I was younger. But a lot of people have the same idea about people; they not satisfied today.

CT: Would you say that a lot of the material gains was due a lot to the union, the formation of the union?

SR: That's true. Nobody can tell me that if it wasn't for the union here in the sugar plantation, that we'd be making the same pay, and the same working conditions, the fringe benefits as we are having now if it wasn't for union. Even the supervisors wouldn't be getting what they are getting today. They owe that to the union. But some of them, they don't realize that. But some do. If it wasn't for the union, wouldn't be getting all the benefits that they getting right now. It would be miserable to be working on the sugar plantation. I'm not afraid to say this. This is just the way I feel. That's my feeling.

CT: We have better material things now. And I guess, now, at least, you can, like you said, talk back when you...

SR: Yeah. As long as you right. As a man to man talk. But I don't say that we should take advantage just because we have a union. But when you come to business, you have the right to say just what you want to say.

The last year was kind of---in 1967, we had few meetings. And there's one particular guy there, as I told you. He was in the service (Armed Forces), and he thought that you had to crawl to him and everything. Well, I had a lot of run-up with him. He wanted people to go directly to him instead of you see your representative. Well, that guy, I just simply couldn't stomach. Until today, I cannot.

CT: Well, I'm trying to get an understanding that material things weren't that good back then. Probably the upper management had more control over you back then, but you said you were happy. You weren't happy about the lack of material things or about the control, but...

SR: Life seemed to be happy. But a lot of guys, even today, they tell me, 'Gee, it's not only not happy.' But not satisfied is what I mean. With all they have, and still they are not satisfied. I know the way I'm living with my family and all, and I'm not unhappy. You have your ups and downs, but you got to try to make the best of it. We get along damn good.

CT: But it's not that the union shouldn't have been organized or anything...

SR: Well, no. If the union was not organized, then I said it would be miserable.

CT: Miserable?

SR: Yeah. That's the proper word to say. Miserable. The best thing that ever came to sugar industry was getting organized.

CT: That's the only thing that hard to explain is why some people not satisfied today.

SR: One thing, the unions are good. Providing they are run right, now. They can make a lot of humbug, too. Unnecessarily. I want to be fair, now. Just because you belong to the union and all that, some guys take too much advantage, you know. It shouldn't be that way.

CT: Well, I think all your comments and all your stories really gives you better understanding what it was like, and those things you guys going through.

SR: Oh yeah, it was hard. It wasn't easy. And lucky I had an understandable wife. To tell you the truth, she practically raised the kids. Because you take like from '26 on, man, I was on shift, 12 hour shifts until it came to the eight hour shifts. And then still, I had to work every day of the week. And she practically raised the kids. I don't say I have angels for kids. But they never give me what I mean is serious problems with police records and all that stuff. Never had that kind of trouble. I intend to help them as much as I can, because I am responsible for them being in this world, you know. That's the way I feel. Some people think differently, but I don't.

CT: Before we close, you have anything else you want to mention?

SR: If you want to take it out bunbye or not, but one person here. I don't care. One person from the plantation is not popular with labor and part of management, I think. I asked him a personal question once. "Why is it that the majority of the people won't have a good word for you? Is it because of your job or your character?" He said, "Because of the job." I said, "No. They say it's because of your character." And I still feel the same. See, he's not popular even with his own nationality.

CT: What has he done to....

SR: He's a hundred percent company man, now. Whether it hurts his friends or not, he don't give a damn. As long as he holds his job. Not only my feeling, but what I heard of a lot of his own nationality, one person that you cannot trust. If you want to scratch that out or you leave it on, I don't care.

CT: What we do is type it out so that you look at it. And then you make the decision. Okay, thanks a lot.

END OF INTERVIEW

WAIALUA & HALEIWA

The People Tell Their Story

Volume IX PORTUGUESE

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**ETHNIC STUDIES PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII, MANOA**

May 1977