

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #451-1

with

John Meatoga (JM)

July 31, 1992

Makakilo, O`ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. John Meatoga, on July 31, 1992, at his home in Makakilo, O`ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Meatoga, why don't we start. First tell me when you were born and where you were born.

JM: Okay, I was born May the third, 1926, Kahuku Hospital.

WN: So you grew up where?

JM: La`ie. La`ie is my hometown.

WN: So how did you---what were your parents doing in La`ie?

JM: My parents, well, they were the, you might say, front runners of the Latter-Day Saints Church of Jesus Christ. The lead group that came from Samoa, arrived from Samoa November 1924. I don't know what year they were converted to become Mormons, but I do know that (it was) their mission to come ahead and make preparations for the Samoans to come later.

WN: Do you know about how many came?

JM: Must have been about eight, ten families. [*Fay C. Alailima, who wrote an article entitled "The Samoans in Hawai`i," in Social Processes in Hawai`i, vol.29, 1982, pp.105-12, states that five Samoan families arrived in Laie in 1923 to work for the Morman Church.*] But I don't know how many children there were. I do know about my family, there was my brother and two sisters when they came. They were ten, eight, and six [*years old*]. The oldest was my sister Felila, she was ten years old, and my brother [*Pa`ne*] was eight, and my sister [*Anovale*] was six. And I was born two years later [*1926*] in La`ie, my hometown.

WN: So actually then your parents came as missionaries?

JM: Yes. And also to work in the [*Latter-Day Saints*] temple which they eventually did.

WN: So they came to stay?

JM: Oh yeah, definitely they came to stay. Yeah. As I was growing up I went to elementary school, La`ie, eventually ending up in Kahuku. Kahuku at that time was elementary and high school. Now it is Kahuku intermediate and high school [*i.e.*, *Kahuku High and Intermediate School*].

WN: So the Church [*of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*] supplied your family with housing?

JM: Yes, supplied the family with housing and a lot. A piece of land and you do whatever you want. Well, we were fortunate we got 20,000 square feet. (Chuckles) I found that out later. Yeah, we had 20,000 square feet, and we were not the only ones, some people had more than that. And it depend on the size of the family, I guess, you know. Eventually my mom and dad gave about 7,000, I think, to their granddaughter, my niece, my oldest sister's daughter.

WN: The other families that came, were they related at all?

JM: One of the families, one or two, I think, we were related. I know one of the families we were related to was the Taualiis. We were related to them. That's my mother's aunt, technically speaking, according to the American system as to grandparents and aunts and cousins. And that's the only---oh, there were two other and they were these two brothers, Fanene. Ailama and Tom. They were our blood relation also. About third or second cousin. That's all I can remember. The Fonoimoana family, I think they were part of the group, Lolotai [*family*], Anae, with an e. A-N . . .

WN: Oh, Anae, Famika Anae's family . . .

JM: Yeah, that's it. The Samoan pronounce Anae with the e. That's right, Famika Anae. And there's---oh what's the other name?

WN: You told me last time, Maiava.

JM: Maiava also, yeah.

WN: Is that the wrestling family?

JM: Yeah, mm hmm, Neff.

WN: Yeah, Neff, mm hmm. Let's see, Leota?

JM: And Leota. Leota arrived three years before us. He arrived, well, in 1921.

WN: Oh, before you folks.

JM: Oh yeah. I think they were the first one, yeah. I'm pretty sure they came in 1921. They did not come with the others, according to my sister. And who's the other family? Tanoai, that's the name . . .

WN: Tanoai.

JM: Tanoai, yeah. T-A-N-O . . .

WN: A-I.

JM: Yeah, Tanoai.

WN: And was the Harringtons part of that group?

JM: I can't recall. I believe the Harringtons came before us. Well, not too much. See, I can't recall when Grandma Kennison came to La`ie, 'cause Harrington is also the offspring of the Kennison.

WN: Kennison.

JM: Yeah. Packard Harrington's grandfather was a former commander in the [U.S.] Navy, aboard a heavy cruiser, oh I forgot the name. And his name was Frederick Kennison. So, any Kennison you see in the telephone book—you not going to see too many. Maybe you probably won't see any, period. But if you do see one Kennison, there's a possibility that he's either from California or from here. Anyhow, Grandma Kennison put us up, in fact for a while, while we were waiting. I'm kind of getting ahead of the game now. I was born 1926, and as I grew up and the other Samoan kids came up and they were born. Neff [*Maiava*] came here when he was two years old. I believe he's three years older than I am. So anyway . . .

WN: Neff was born in Samoa?

JM: He was born in Samoa. But the rest of the clan was born here. His older sister also was born in Samoa.

WN: Everybody came from American Samoa?

JM: Uh, yes.

WN: Nobody from Western Samoa?

JM: Well, actually, we didn't have Western Samoa at that time. We called that British Samoa. My dad grew up in British Samoa, what is now called Western. [*In 1914, Western Samoa became a New Zealand mandate, after fifteen years of German rule. The country became fully independent in 1962.*] 'Cause the British [*New Zealand*] gave the Samoans back their independence and that's why they call 'em Western Samoa now, see. But at that time it was two—American and British [*New Zealand*]. Yeah. `Upolu is [*an island in*] Western Samoa, and at that time, used to be under British [*New Zealand*] domain. That's why if you notice, there are some Samoan names in these Hawaiian islands. Well, because the Samoans came. And some of them settled here. That's how we got some places, like `Upolu, on the Big Island.

WN: Oh, `Upolu Point.

JM: That's right. Anyway, going back to L\_`ie now. Other [*family*] names were, Salanoa. Another name was Uale. U-A-L-E.

WN: How about the Broad family?

JM: And also the Broads. Well, the Broads were there before us. Not only the Broads, there were the Forsythes.

WN: Forsythe.

JM: See, Forsythe married---this is Wallace Forsythe, we have to specify Wallace because he had other brothers. But he did not marry a Samoan gal. She was of Swedish extract and Samoan. Hilda. Oh man, I thought she was *Haole*, boy. Tall and all, yeah. She used to work as a postmistress. I guess she helped her father-in-law, when Mr. Forsythe was still alive.

WN: So all these people that were related came because of the Mormon church?

JM: Because of the church, yeah.

WN: Had nothing to do with the military?

JM: No, no, because they came in the twenties, that's why, see. [*In 1950, Samoan servicemen in the U.S. Navy and their families began arriving in Hawai`i.*] Let me think, there are some more names, goodness gracious, oh boy ain't like it used to be, *bruddah*. (WN laughs) Of course, see, Fanene, my two cousins, they were single men at that time. And there was a *hanai* brother, Lulago Faefae. He eventually married a Hawaiian gal. That's another *hanai* brother. He was the only one, and bless his soul, he's left us already. He died in Independence, Missouri.

WN: So anyway, we can get some names later. Tell me something about growing up in La`ie. What was it like?

JM: Well, growing up in La`ie was---I don't recall if there were swings in La`ie. But we didn't care too much for the swing. And that was the only thing in the school at that time, was the swing and maybe that, what do you call, that seesaw?

WN: Yeah.

JM: Yeah, you go on the end of the board and you go up and down. Our sports were all in the mountain, the majority. The only sport we played at home, supposed to be polo, with the stick. The stick was a branch. Came out from the koa plant. And at the stump we look for one that come like this, see.

WN: L-shaped.

JM: Yeah, almost like an L-shape.

WN: Oh, like a hockey stick.

JM: Yeah, hockey stick. And we used a tennis ball to play, 'cause we no more protection. You better believe it, boy, before the game is over there's a whole bunch of fights going on.

(Laughter)

JM: I was fortunate, because I was fast. Me and my cousin, we always on the same team. I make sure, you know, when we choose, eh, *janken a po*. I always make sure that my cousin and I on the same side. 'Cause we had the Samoans from further in the town, and we had the Samoans

on the Hau`ula side of the town, see. And most of the time, the guys on the Hau`ula side of La`ie, these the guys win, you know. Barefoot . . .

WN: Why, how do you know that?

JM: Because we faster.

WN: You guys were the Hau`ula side?

JM: In La`ie, La`ie was divided in two. We got one group down, we would call them the southwest team. And we are called the northeast team. (Laughs) And most time we win most of the games, you know. Sometimes we crook (laughs) we run and cheat, you know. You know, when we were growing up, it was a bad word to say shut up. And that was the only word we dare not say. We didn't even know all the other words. And another word was damn. We might say it among ourselves. But never at home or never any place in public, no. We weren't brainwashed, it's just we had no reason to use those kinds of words, especially profanity. There was hardly any profanity. The only time we had profanity was when one of the drunks in the town, you know. We had quite a few, I think we had about two or three. Oh boy, they drink their `okolehao man, and that's all. And I mean homemade brew. That's when we hear the bad words. In one ear and out the other. So you know, as I was growing up, most of the guys born and raised in La`ie, like me, always know not to use those kinds of words. And as we grew up that was it, when we hear we walk away. We walk out of the earshot. If we can't move, we just make like we don't hear it. We just blank.

WN: You grew up speaking English?

JM: Yeah. I grew up speaking English. All of us kids born and raised here and those that came when they were younger aboard the ship, we all spoke English. I know I did and the rest of us guys. Of course, we had our own English too, you know. Yeah, we had our own English. Better believe it. Example, "You go, I come." That was it. If you didn't understand, "You go, I come," sorry. We only said it once. (Laughs) In other words, one thing as we were growing up, we were clean. I don't know about the other guys but I never thought about a girl until I was older. And that wasn't until [World] War [II] broke out or just before the war broke out. When the war broke out I was fifteen years old. But like I said when we were growing up we didn't know all these bad words, profanity. No such thing over there. Not as I grew up. On the other town, maybe, Hau`ula and Kahuku maybe, but I don't know.

And the only *Haoles* are the *lunas*, the big boss, see. There weren't no *Haole* laborers. No way, jack. Not as I grew up. Like the magistrate we have now, Conklin. He grew up in La`ie, he graduate '43. Graduated the year before I did. Harold Conklin, he's the magistrate now. But he's local boy, born and raised in Kahuku. Course he went to the Mainland school, you know. Continue to get his lawyer, you know.

WN: What did your father do?

JM: My father [*Muelu Meatoga*] worked in the plantation [*Kahuku Plantation Company*]. Not only did he work in the plantation, but my dad. . . . Before I went to school in La`ie, my dad made three or four moves to Honolulu. Let's see, as I was growing up I think we moved to Kamakela, I was either three or four years old. Kamakela Lane right off Kukui Street. So we looking at 1930, yeah.

WN: You were a young boy then?

JM: Yeah, around that neighborhood, about '29, '30 I guess.

WN: What was your father doing out there?

JM: My dad worked, different jobs. And he worked two jobs while we lived in Honolulu. And next I remember we were down at Democrat [Street] . . .

WN: Oh, Kalihi.

JM: Kalihi Kai, right across the railroad tracks. And I think our last move was Kam[*ehameha*] IV Road. The old tree is still there, right about a block down from Jack in the Box, off of School Street.

WN: So you're still kid yet, when you were making all these moves?

JM: Yeah, when we were living on Democrat Street, I used to spend time with my sister. My sister had already married. Was right across from O`ahu Prison [*today O`ahu Community Correctional Center*]. This is a little bit funny. I didn't know it was O`ahu Prison at that time. I seen the bars, and I seen the American flag. Every time I see the American flag, I'm thinking there's a school there, see. So one day I told my sister, "Oh boy, when I get old enough, when I go to school I want to go to that school."

(Laughter)

JM: 'Cause you know, concrete building, nice eh? Yeah, O`ahu Prison look pretty, you know, back in the twenties, in the early thirties.

WN: It was at the same place?

JM: Yeah, not too far from where we were living. 'Cause they lived right on Dillingham [*Boulevard*], her and her husband. Those cottages are still there yet. Live upstairs. Yeah, my sister laugh. I said, "Why you laugh, sister?"

And she told me, "Yeah, if you naughty boy that's where you going."

(Laughter)

JM: And I caught on, from then on no more. That's the first time I found out where O`ahu Prison was.

WN: Now when you folks were making these moves, you know, your father now is far away from the Mormon church though . . .

JM: Oh yeah.

WN: What, did he continue to be affiliated with the church?

JM: Oh yeah, we still did. Oh yeah. Every now and then my mom [*Penina Meatoga*] would say, “We gotta go back La`ie.” (Laughs) My dad was making good money. My dad was making almost ten dollars a day.

WN: Working for what?

JM: Two jobs.

WN: Oh.

JM: And ten dollars a day, you know, that was plenty money those days. Back in the early thirties, you know. This is depression time, too.

WN: What kind of jobs did he have?

JM: Well, my dad was a handyman, you know. He was almost like a jack-of-all-trades, in a sense. I would say I can call my father that, at that age. He was about what, forty-four, maybe forty-five, yeah. So he worked two jobs, and I think Mom was working at the Libby [*McNeill & Libby*] cannery also. So our oldest sister used to take care of us. Me and my younger brother who was two years old. When I was four he was two. We two years apart. My sister, Anovale, took care while my mom and dad went to work.

Papa rented the house down at Democrat Street until Mama said, “No, we got to go back La`ie.” And for all I know maybe that is our last, but I do recall the three places that we moved to. I do know when I went back to La`ie, I was going back to school (laughs). From then on it was no more movement after that. That's when Dad start working for the [*Kahuku*] Plantation [*Company*].

WN: I see. Did you go school at all in town?

JM: No, no. Went to La`ie School and after La`ie School I transferred over to the seventh grade in Kahuku [*High and Intermediate School*]. And I stayed there until the war broke out, because I was in the tenth grade at that time. Halfway through the tenth.

WN: So what was your father's obligation to the church?

JM: Well, his obligation to the church was to be a good Mormon, good Latter-Day Saint, that is. Pay his tiding and if he has a calling in the church, he should be performing his calling, when the time comes, see. Like me, I have a calling now. And my calling is I am the ward specialist. I'm the ward employment specialist. In other words, people who looking for job, they come to see me and I fix up their application and I send them to certain places, where to go and who to see. That's my calling. And also my obligation is going to the temple and working. So I have that. That's another of my calling. I have two callings, see. Those days they work during the day, you know, so they can do their calling during the evening when they *pau* work. Of course, plantation worker, you get up at dark, and you come home almost dark (laughs).

WN: The other Samoan families, did they work on the plantation, too?

JM: Some of them did, yeah, some of them did. In fact, when we were living in Honolulu, my dad was like a spokesman for the other rest of the Samoan brothers. Because some of them—a

majority of them—didn't speak English. So he had to find jobs for them and he did. He did find jobs for them.

WN: So your dad spoke English real well?

JM: Oh yeah, he spoke enough to get by. Oh yeah, he spoke really good. The other people can understand. That's why he was able to work two jobs and the only reason my dad worked two jobs because he changed his name.

WN: Oh, to get two jobs?

JM: To get two jobs. Well, not only that, because they weren't hiring no Polynesian. Especially if you look Hawaiian. But my dad didn't look Hawaiian, my dad looked more like Oriental. He had beady eyes and he was fair looking. Mama was the dark one. Mama had our complexion.

WN: So he changed his name to. . . .

JM: Paul Lee.

WN: Paoly?

JM: Paul Lee.

WN: Oh, Paul?

JM: Lee. Either Paul or Ted I forgot. I know his last name was Lee. Yeah. That's how he got a job. And he was good at the job that he did, mostly carpentry.

WN: So people thought he was Chinese?

JM: Yeah. He passed. Him and his beady eyes, eh.

(Laughter)

JM: I liked when my dad talked English. When I was young growing up, he used to read the Book of Mormon or the Bible, you know, verses. He was kind of slow but I understood.

WN: Did he speak Samoan to you folks?

JM: Oh yeah, he spoke Samoan to us, but not as much as my mom did. My mom didn't speak no English until later she got years in Hawai`i. Then she started picking up a little Pidgin English. But my dad was all right. My dad knew how to fill up application and all that. Of course sometimes he'd bring it home, he'd ask my sister. But as I grew up---well, in high school, he used to ask me questions and I used to help him. In elementary I was pretty good in math. English was a humbug course, boy. If you spoke good English, boy, man, they [*i.e.*, *classmates*] knock you down in those days. Mean heads (laughs). But, anyway, we had our own pidgin in my time as we grew up. Today, I don't hear it. You only hear it among us, when I talk to another guy my age, you know, then you hear it. The word *konpa*, you heard that word before?

WN: "Together." Yeah, *konpa*.

JM: Yeah, *konpa*. Well, they used the Hawaiian words, *huki like*, among all the ethnic groups, even the *lunas*. They used that word, *huki like*. And you know what that means, too, eh?

WN: Yeah.

JM: There's quite a few of the Hawaiian words that were used during the plantation days, where everybody understood. Because the Japanese no understand Filipino or Chinese. So they had something in common. That's how the Pidgin English came about, and that's how all this Hawaiian slang came about, so each ethnic group can understand each other (chuckles). As I was growing up, my good friend was---we didn't have too many Japanese kids, you know, my hometown. There was only the Watanabe family, Kubota family, and Fujimoto. Well, Fujimoto, he's still young yet. He had just gotten married. And if he had a baby, they were still small. About this time I'm about seven years old, yeah. And there was the Ogawas.

WN: What did they do? Plantation?

JM: Mr. Watanabe was a taxi driver. And Fujimoto was a taxi driver. But Mr. Kubota worked for the plantation. He took care of the La`ie store, plantation store. The store is gone now, it is now a three-story building. Owned by one of the Goo boys, G-O-O. Big, three-story building, all concrete. That's where the old plantation store used to be, La`ie. And the building between Mr. Kubota and the plantation store was the post office. And that was right on Lanihuli Road. That's the road that took you right up to the old mission house. Between the mission house and the [Mormon] temple there was only one trail. Well, there was a road actually. It was a dirt road. You walk to the temple. The rest was banana field, toward the mountain, and sugarcane on the left side. And of course, we had our stable on the right, the Kahuku stable. They had horses and cattle. We used to use the pasture as our playground, too. Sometime we played with the two bulls, Pila and Leilehua. (Laughs) Pila was terrible. So far so good, you know. (Knocks on wood) Nobody got hurt. We go over there, we tease him, you know. Both male, bull yeah, Leilehua and Pila. Leilehua was easy. Easy come, easy go, more the domestic type. But Pila was mean. (Laughs) Pila was mean, boy. Me and a couple of other kids used to dare Pila. Oh boy, one time Pila almost caught me, boy. I just ran and jumped (laughs) in the pine tree. See, in the pasture, had a row of pine trees and they were equally spaced, you know. But they cut 'em, I don't know why. But always get some branch hanging down. Man, I'm telling you boy, that Pila something else.

WN: Were most of your playmates Samoan?

JM: No, mixture. More Hawaiian, we had Hawaiian, Japanese. . . . Not too---there's only one Filipino family.

WN: But the town of La`ie had mostly . . .

JM: Plantation workers.

WN: Plantation workers.

JM: Where my house was located, right off Iosepa Street, right in the back was a plantation camp, my backyard. That consist of one Korean family, Mr. Lee, one Puerto Rican family, Martinez,

and I think that was it. No, and there were Japanese and Filipinos. And you know, funny thing about it, the Filipino on one side and Japanese on the other side (laughs). That's right. They never mix 'em. They never mix the Japanese and the Filipinos together, no. They did the same thing in Kahuku, they never did. [*Camps housing workers of Kahuku Plantation Company were located in both La`ie and Kahuku.*] As far as I can remember, the Filipinos all on one side of the camp and the Japanese on the other side of the camp. And in between, you had the Korean, Mr. Lee, and Mr. Martinez, the Puerto Rican. And their son, he and I were the same age, we went to school together. Boy, he was a mean guy.

WN: Which one, Martinez?

JM: Yeah, Martinez. Oh, his mouth wasn't too clean either sometime. That's how we get a lot of fight. And me and him used to get into a lot of fight, boy, yeah. But he always get the worst at the end, yeah.

WN: Were a lot of these people members of the church?

JM: No. There were a few Japanese people, members of the church. Mr. Lee was, not Mr. Martinez, no. Then Mr. Lee moved out. He moved out and then he had his own place.

WN: And you folks all got along? No problems?

JM: Oh yeah, all us kids. No, we didn't have no problems, Filipino, Japanese, no . . .

WN: . . . nobody teased each other because. . . .

JM: Uh uh, no. When I went to high school, well, we had a little squabble now and then. That passed, you know. Most of the time, we did our work, we played good together.

WN: Didn't have any discrimination against someone?

JM: No, not those days.

WN: You were saying earlier, that your father had to change his name to work in Honolulu because they weren't hiring Samoans?

JM: That's right, at that time they weren't hiring no Polynesians, especially Hawaiians. I don't know, somehow, Hawaiians had a bad name. Seemed like all they wanted to do was, you know, everything free for them. Now, in a sense I don't blame them at that time. Too bad they didn't have that thing [i.e., demands for a sovereign Hawaiian nation] going on, my time. Then by now they would own all the land already. (Laughs) But I guess the *Haoles* kind of brainwash 'em, from before. Well, you can't win for losing.

Well, anyhow, as I say we finally moved back to La`ie and I went to school, and we stayed permanently. And I went to school right on through to high school, up until 1941 when the war broke out.

We don't have all these other things they have today for the children, you know. As it is now, today, this generation, they got too much. They can't make up their mind, and now they don't have it now. If it wasn't for the drugs, they'd be all right. So where else can they go? When we

were growing up, drugs wasn't our problem. We always felt, well, if we cannot play down here, we go up and play in the mountain. This generation, it's not a mountain, you know. This generation don't believe in going up to the mountain, except if maybe you pay 'em something, you know. If it's something that's going to be worth their while. Otherwise, they ain't never gonna go on the mountain. No way, jack. Not even the country ones, they don't go in the mountains today, this generation. So as I say, the mountain was our playground and the ocean was our swimming pool. The ocean fed us. Those days, we only took what we needed. Even as us kids, as we grew up, we all were taught, as Latter-Day Saints, you take only what you need. If you had little bit more, then you share.

WN: What kind of fishing did you folks do?

JM: Well, we had net, spear, and that's all. Of course, we had the surround [*net*]. We either surround at night or daytime and they call that *pa`ipa`i*. Then they have the *moemoe*, which is you put the net out in the evening, alongside the reef, and you anchor both ends of the net, the *moemoe* net, and then you leave. Then you come back in the morning and pick it up. Usually a *moemoe* net is usually a gill net. When the fish go through there, you get hung on the gill.

WN: What kind fish had?

JM: Usually have *weke*, no, hardly any *weke*, mostly *manini*. Couple butterfly, maybe, what we call butterfly. And *aholehole*. And if the *weke* is big enough, might get gilled, too. And there's the mullet, very seldom mullet though, not at night.

N: You went mostly at night?

JM: Mostly at night. This is strictly *moemoe*, eh. A *moemoe* net is usually put out in the evening. Like about eight, nine o'clock or before that. And then they leave it there, after they anchor both end. And then they come pick it up in the morning. That's a *moemoe*. The *pa`ipa`i* is when they had maybe fifty to seventy-five-foot net. And it's also a gill net, could be used as a *moemoe* net, but this time you having a little *hukilau*. A *pa`ipa`i*---in other words what it is, you banging the fish, you know, hitting the fish . . .

WN: Splash [*i.e.*, *slap*] the water.

JM: So, yeah, splash the water so they [*fish*] hit the net, and you bring the net up as you doing that, see.

WN: The net was how big, now?

JM: It's almost like a gill net, in a sense.

WN: So how many people did you need?

JM: Oh, sometime maybe all you need is about five or four. But more the merrier. Two to pull, then the other two to make noise, see. This is called a *pa`ipa`i*. And this can be done nighttime, this can be done daytime. But daytime is better because then you see the fish. Nighttime is blind (laughs).

WN: Nighttime is mostly *moemoe*, then?

JM: That's right.

WN: Because you leave it out.

JM: Right.

WN: Let me turn over the tape.

WN: Okay. How did you folks prepare your fish?

JM: Well, it depends on the---if you hungry, you build a fire and you *pulehu*. *Pulehu* is "barbecue." That means guts and all. But we don't eat the gut, just cook it, then after we cook it, the thing get soft, you know. And where the gut is we just throw it away. And *manini*, whatever fish it is. But most of the time the fish goes home. Goes home, clean, and put on the side. Maybe not for now, maybe tomorrow, or the day after. Put 'em under refrigeration. Or if you like have a little snack, you can *pulehu*, not *pulehu*, but, oh, I forgot the Hawaiian word [*lomi*]. They mash the meat or they cut it and make like *poke*. I know when I was growing up, I recall, my mother used to mash the meat soft, you know. The raw meat now (chuckles), ain't talking about the cooked meat. Raw meat, mash it up, and feed it to me and my brother.

WN: When you folks were . . .

JM: . . . were small, yeah. I don't know if my wife gave that to our son. I don't think so, because he born and raised in Massachusetts. But oh, we make sure he eat *poi*, eh. Soon as we came home, we feed him *poi*. (Laughs) He was only about six months old. Oh, my wife feed him *poi*, so he get used to.

WN: You folks ate raw fish?

JM: Oh yeah. I eat fish raw. Any kind of fish that's edible, I eat 'em raw. Yeah, no problem.

WN: Samoan-style and Hawaiian-style is similar, yeah?

JM: Almost similar, yeah. Well, because they all Polynesians. They might talk differently, but their food preparation and their eating is all the same. Very seldom they are different, hardly any difference at all. They eat the same thing we eat, yeah. In the same way they prepare, the same way we prepare.

WN: You folks eat `ulu more than Hawaiians?

JM: Oh yeah. Well, supposedly, you know. But no, the Hawaiians eat the `ulu. But I think the Samoans, they more the taro and breadfruit. But the Hawaiians, the taro is the *poi* for them. The taro becomes a delicacy when it is cooked and cut. And that was the *kai* taro. Ooh, that was the best in the west. It was just like, filet mignon. (Laughs) That's right.

WN: What kind taro?

JM: *Kai*.

WN: *Kai*.

JM: It had a sticky, but firm texture itself, the taro. It never broke apart. You can cut 'em thin and it'll stay [in one piece].

WN: That's wetland taro?

JM: Yeah, that's a wetland taro, and I don't see it anymore, I don't know what happened. All we got is this other taro, the red *pi`iali`i*. And they crack, they fall apart. They not as---well, you can still cut it. But you cannot cut it thin, you gotta cut 'em at least about half an inch thick. And then it'll hold. Then you cook and fry. So, I worked in the taro patch as I grow up, each of us Latter-Day Saints in La`ie, each family had a taro patch. Most of them either had a taro patch or banana field. We had both, we had a taro patch and a banana field. Banana field was up alongside the temple and the taro patch was right down in front of the temple, and off the temple road. Then we had another taro patch up at what is now BYU [*Brigham Young University*]. All that place used to be sugarcane and taro patches.

WN: Was the college up by then?

JM: No. The college did not come up until, see, I forgot, in the fifties I think, or the sixties. [*Church College of Hawai`i, later known as Brigham Young University-Hawai`i, was established in 1955.*]

WN: Church College [*of Hawai`i*], yeah?

JM: Church College, yeah.

WN: So, the banana patch and the taro patch was only for your family?

JM: Yeah, each family had their own. And sometime you go help the other family. Especially the family that don't have any boys, only get girls. But even the girls, too, you know, we all grew up being in the taro patch already. All those my age, born and raised La`ie, you better believe it they been in the taro patch. I don't care what nationality they are, they all been in the taro patch. The Filipino, the Japanese, they all been in the taro patch (laughs). Because it seems, as I grew up in La`ie, we had that bond between us. Even though we did not speak each other's language, we had that togetherness. When a party was given, everybody help. Whatever the occasion may be, birthday, baby *lu`au*, somebody's wedding, the whole community help. Even those [*living*] in the plantation [*camps*] help. Every time we have something going, the plantation people are invited, oh yeah. I mean, they were Catholics, but they were not strong Catholics because if they wanted to go to church they got to go Kahuku to go to church. 'Cause they no more church in La`ie, La`ie is strictly Mormon land, see. And the Mormons, they leased the land to the plantation so the plantation people can live there. That's how it was, it was nice. We all along. When I went to school, there was a good friend of mine, he graduated '44. He did, I didn't. I quit school in '42. Shinko Hamashige, his sister was older than us, she graduated in '42. And she became a nurse. Nurse in the military, army nurse. Haven't heard about her. My good friend, Shinko, he was real quiet Japanese, Hamashige. Real soft-spoken, quiet. But he became a lawyer (chuckles). That's what cracks me up. No, he became a doctor, not a lawyer. Last time I recall he was in Chicago, practicing. He went to Chicago to become a doctor, yeah. Most of these guys are. . . . Then there's the Owan [*family*], from Kahuku.

WN: Owan.

JM: Owan, yeah. He used to be lobbying at the White House. Almost fourteen, fifteen years ago. And when we had a class reunion, he used to come back. He's a '44 graduate.

WN: So, you're saying really then, that you were closer to the community, than to the church?

JM: No, on the whole, we were close to the church, in the sense. But the community was there, every day, twenty-four hours, see. The church is only on Sunday, and whatever. . . . See, us children as we grew up, we didn't have no obligations, but we had responsibilities. Meaning, each guy was responsible to do this, to do that, you know, your normal chores. Then of course you had your spiritual side that you gotta abide with, as you grew up. But you know, young kids, ain't too much spiritual in us, you know, when we young, growing up. Too much *kolohe*, man (laughs). Like you know, going to some neighbor house and turning the stone over. The guy get nice, white stone in the front of his yard, turn the *bugga* out, (laughs). Terrible, yeah? Oh, maybe go up the watermelon patch during the summer and *aihue* somebody's watermelon. (Laughs) *Aihue* means "take," see. We don't use the word "steal," we never steal, we only take.

(Laughter)

JM: Now when it concerned money, that's a different story. Then we used the word steal. The guys said, "Now, wait a minute."

You know, I tell my buddies, we in the service, "Look, you never tell a guy that he stole. If it is money, yeah, but if it is not money, then it is taking."

"What's the difference?"

There is a difference. Okay. Money, can get back sometime. But money, in a sense, is the root of all evil. That's the worst evil you can have. That's why it is more proper to use the word "steal," than to use "take." Because take, sometime you change your mind, you put back. You can always replace the take but you cannot replace a steal. Because when you taking, you only think whether he going miss it or nah, I bring 'em back later, you know. But when you steal, your mind is set 100 percent, not to return this item. And usually it is money. You see my philosophy, don't you? There's a difference, because "steal" is not a good word. "Steal" can really turn a person's whole concept of ownership, or whatever.

Oh, I got to tell you this incident. We call these train cars, that [*you*] put the burnt sugarcane on, we call 'em *kakalakas*.

WN *Kakalakas?*

JM: Yeah, 'cause they make that sound.

WN: Oh. (Chuckles)

JM: When they roll, eh? *Kakalaka, kakalaka*, yeah. That's it, clack, clack, clack, clack. So we call 'em *kakalaka*. And this was on a Saturday, I think. Saturday, noon, plantation *pau* work everything. And they left six or seven of these empty *kakalakas*, up the hill. Well, that's the

same place where Kano's watermelon field is, too, see. Well, we just thought we'd go up there and play, play engineer and all that. Train operator (Laughs). Next thing we know, the thing coming down, somebody released the brake, ain't no way we can stop 'em. (Laughs) Coming down, you know. There was five of us and seven of these cane cars. And that thing went all the way down across the highway. (Laughs) We took off. Cars no can go by, no can go by. They had to call the, I think they called some Filipino workers, you know, and they took the thing out of the highway. Right down Malaekahana. You know where Malaekahana is? You know the quarry, down La`ie?

WN: No, I don't know the quarry.

JM: Okay, you know there's a service station used to be there on the left.

WN: I don't know. I don't know La`ie that well.

JM: When the last time you went La`ie?

WN: Oh. . . .

JM: Did you come from Honolulu side, or did you come from Kuilima side?

WN: Gee, Kuilima side I guess.

JM: If you came from Kuilima side, you went through Kahuku, right? As you went through Kahuku, you going to La`ie, right? Okay, when you go---the first park before you hit La`ie was Malaekahana park on the left. Then there's a round turn. Well, as you go around the curve, then on the right there used to be a service station, but it's now Cackle [*Fresh*] Eggs [*Farm*]. Well, it was that road that went up there, that was where the train came all the way down and block (laughs). Oh, man, I tell you, it was terrible.

WN: So it used to take it to the mill?

JM: No, the train take the cane cars. The cane cars were filled with sugarcane.

WN: And took 'em to the mill?

JM: And they took 'em to the sugar mill in Kahuku, see. They had sugarcane all the way to Kahana. And they had the tracks all the way to Kahana, railroad tracks. But they had these side tracks, see, that take the cane cars up in the mountains, where the sugarcane is. And then they got this big shovel, no, they used to put [*load*] 'em up by hand. Yeah, they throw 'em up by hand, fill 'em up by hand, by yiminy. 'Cause I don't remember they had the crane. If they had the crane . . .

WN: Oh, they went up the little ladder and throw 'em [*i.e., sugarcane*] in the cane car?

JM: Yeah, in the cane car.

WN: Let me turn this off.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JM: No, not cane cars, now. Now, they have this truck.

WN: Right, right, right.

JM: Because when the truck go . . .

WN: With the grabber, yeah.

JM: Yeah, it got the grabber, so when the truck gets down to the mill, all he has to do is turn the whole truck, and all the sugarcane falls into the chute, see.

WN: What did your father do? What was his job?

JM: I guess, he working in the sugarcane field. Yeah, what they call, ho, the words they used to use. *Hukipau*, they used the word, *hukipau*.

WN: *Hukipau*?

JM: In other words, the quicker you go, the quicker you finish, *hukipau*. *Huki* 'til the end, yeah. Well, actually, that's what it means. The faster you work, the faster you *pau*. The longer the break you get.

WN: Is that *ukupau* or *hukipau*?

JM: Say that again?

WN: *Ukupau*, eh?

JM: *Hukipau*. No, *huki*.

WN: Like the rubbish man today, the faster they work, they can go home.

JM: Yeah, hmm, *huki*. *Huki* had a . . .

WN: *Huki* means pull.

JM: Has a different---it's a pull and also not only a pull, but it could be a grab, anything to lift, eh. I guess, they use the same word. I've always used *hukipau*. It's always been *hukipau*. I know my time is *hukipau*. If they change the word, it ain't my fault. (Laughs) I come from the country.

WN: You know you were saying, that you folks never used swear words . . .

JM: No, we sure didn't.

WN: I was wondering. What kind of discipline did your parents have on you folks?

JM: Ho. Well . . .

WN: With the belt though?

JM: Well, sometime with the belt, and sometime with a stick, or with a pine [*branch*]. The pine is the worst one.

WN: Hard, eh.

JM: Ho, it stings. The belt and the stick don't sting, it hurts, you know.

WN: You mean the pine . . .

JM: The pine leaves---the parents strip the thing off, all the leaves, and only the branch, you know, yeah. My goodness. I see some of the girls and some of the boys, I see them come to school. I see their leg, get the red mark. But me, I no more.

WN: Oh, how come (chuckles)?

JM: Because me, I listen that's why. Most of the time. Sometime I pass the buck over to my younger brother. But he don't get licking though. 'Cause anything go wrong I get the licking, he doesn't. I never licked my brother. I don't think I ever touch him. No. I'm always taking care of my brother.

WN: You said, you know, when the community got together for certain things, what kind of things, holidays?

JM: Holidays, you name it. The whole thing---we used to have a La`ie Day. We still do. In fact, tomorrow they're having a parade. They started the La`ie Day last week Saturday at La`ie . . .

WN: What occasion does it mark?

JM: It marks the---I don't know, it's just La`ie Day I guess. It started, you know, I don't know how. Well, it could be celebrating the beginning, with the first Mormons, the missionaries. Then La`ie became a town, yeah. We looking at about close to 100 years, I think. I was hoping I'd be able to go tomorrow, but well. . . .

WN: You still have friends and family out there?

JM: Yeah. My cousins still live there. My cousins that we grew up. My cousin's only six months younger than I am. La`ie Tualii is his name and he married that girl, Kamoha girl, her name Happy. And he lives with her on their land, the church do not own this land. The church do not own any land beyond the bridge, the La`ie Wai bridge. Anything between the two bridges there, they own. And that's a big area, boy, gee. That's how you can always tell La`ie proper. The first bridge that you enter from Kahuku side, till the last bridge when you leave the Polynesian Cultural Center. As soon as you leave the Polynesian Cultural Center, about fifty yards later, you come across that bridge, that's it. That's the imaginary boundary line, approximate. The church do not own anything beyond that. But everything straight up to the mountain (laughs) is Latter-Day Saints. And all the sugarcane [*land*] that were there, it was leased to the plantation.

WN: By the church?

JM: By the church. Yeah, growing up in L`ie was nice. I enjoyed my younger days, growing up, going to school. I think there was only one incident that marred my growing up, the killing that occurred in our plantation camp in the back of my house. [Somebody] killed the bride. He was jealous, I guess. And we attended the wedding party and everything. I was a little boy. I was about---this happened about 1939, I think, '39 or '40. I was old enough to know, yeah. But we had the police officers, Mr. Broad and Kekauoha. Arnold [Kekauoha] and Johnny Broad, both policemen. I don't think they killed him, they wounded him. I guess, only because they want to question him in regards to that. That was the only incident I recall, as I grew up, prior to the war.

WN: Who were some of the leaders of the community? Were there chiefs at all?

JM: No. The Latter-Day Saint community is run by the bishop. And at that time, as I grew up, there were two bishops, Bishop Plunkett and Bishop Kekauoha, before I went in the service. I think Bishop Kekauoha was the last bishop, prior to my going into the service, that I know of. 'Cause L`ie was one whole ward, one community. Maybe at that time consisted of, no more than 400 or 500 population. Because the majority of the population was the plantation camp. But eventually, as us kids came along, population got bigger and bigger. See, our church is built up on wards, like we do today. But those days there was only one stake, one region, one area, that's all. That covers the whole Hawaiian islands. Now . . .

WN: So those other branches like Kalihi, they all came later?

JM: They came later, that is correct, they all came later, right. Kalihi, Waikiki, Manoa, Pearl City, Halawa, Waipahu, Leeward, Mililani, Wahiawa, all came later. La`ie now has about, oh, I don't know how many wards they have. And they have a lot of bishops, too, (laughs) La`ie. For every ward, there's a bishop. In my time, there was one bishop, and one president of the temple, that was all.

And I went to school and all, I played football '40 and '41.

WN: So you went to La`ie School first?

JM: I went to La`ie up to sixth grade.

WN: How was that?

JM: Oh, that was pretty good. Yeah, but I always get beat down though. I was pretty sharp in my class. But this girl, Tamie Morimoto, bless her heart, I'm glad she's still living yet. She married a classmate. Not a classmate, but a guy above her. And she married Chinese boy, but local boy, Roger Chang. Morimotos, yeah, that's the other family, I'm sorry, that was the other Japanese family, I knew there was one more. They were the last house, on the way to the back road to the mountain, in the back of the temple. Tamie always beat me in everything. Well not too bad, you know. She had a hundred, I had ninety-five. She had ninety-five, I had a ninety. You might say we were the two smartest in the class. I don't know, I guess, I didn't know at that time, even as I grew up. But a lot of people sensed my potentials, but I didn't notice those things at all, until I came in the service. Then I found out my potential. I have a terrific memory.

WN: You do.

JM: Majority of the places that I've been, I can recall in details. All my traveling, my adventures, mostly traveling because I spent twenty-seven years in the military, after the war broke out. But growing up in La`ie was the best. As children of the Church of Jesus Christ [of] Latter-Day Saints, we were blessed with the attitude of loving each other and taking care of each other. And knowing that life is precious, and to believe in God is wonderful, everything looks nice and bright outside. No matter how bad the mortal situation is down here, hey, no worry, eventually something good will come out of it. Yeah, by golly.

WN: Do you remember other Samoan families coming in from Samoa, while you were growing up? Or did the community, more or less, stay with this core of families, and they were just having kids and so forth? Do you remember any group of more Samoans coming in?

JM: No, I don't remember. Well, if they were Latter-Day Saints, I can't recall. I'm trying to think of who came after. See, after the war, there weren't too many families. . . . Well, you see---the reason why I cannot recall is because I was not at home. I went in 1945, the war was still on. So, between the time my parents came in 1924 until '45, there'll be no Samoan family that I can remember that came from Samoa.

WN: They came after the war, yeah?

JM: They all---majority of them came after the war.

WN: So, if anybody came it would be like a family member. . . .

JM: Yeah, it's usually a family member. But we had quite a few new families came in right after Korean War, or before the Korean War.

WN: About 1950.

JM: Yeah, 1951, '52, they start coming in. [*In 1950, 117 Samoan U.S. Navy personnel arrived in Hawai`i from American Samoa, along with 257 dependents. The men were later allowed to send for remaining dependents, and in 1951, 958 Samoans arrived.*] They had a big gang came in, I think '53, they came in. Big group of Samoans. But I was stationed, where? I was stationed in Texas (laughs). I was in Texas on my way to Korea, 1953, after spending eighteen months in Waco, James County, that is.

WN: Waco.

JM: James County, yeah. Waco, the hub of Texas, yeah.

WN: That's where Baylor University is.

JM: That is correct.

WN: What I want to do is, if it's okay with you, stop here and pick up another time with the war experience.

JM: Oh, okay. All right, I'll go along with that.

WN: So we'll stop here, okay?

JM: Okay.

WN: All right.

END OF INTERVIEW