

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #451-2

with

John Meatoga (JM)

August 26, 1992

Makakilo, O`ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with John Meatoga, on August 26, 1992, at his home in Makakilo, O`ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, let's start with our second interview. Why don't we start by having you tell me what you remember about December 7, [1941].

JM: Well, I remember, as I was on my way down to the beach, which is early in the morning, could've been about maybe eight-thirty [A.M.], I guess. Yeah, between eight-thirty and nine, thereabouts. As I passed the Mutual Telephone Company, which today is called Hawaiian Tel, there was a guard there. There was an [U.S.] Army soldier and he had his rifle and on his rifle he had his bayonet. And he stopped me. He asked me where I was going.

I said, "I'm going to the beach."

He said, "No, you're not, you're gonna go home."

I said, "Why I'm gonna go home for?"

He said, "There's a war on. The Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor."

Well, I didn't say nothing. I turned around and went home and sure enough, yeah. My sister was crying, I guess my brother-in-law was getting ready to leave. In fact, when I got there he was already getting in his car with his clothes and everything, to go to Pearl Harbor, 'cause they were calling all the servicemen back. And at that time my brother-in-law was a first class. Now I know he's a first class because he get three stripes, see. I remember he had three stripes when the war broke out. And we never see him for about a week. I was fifteen at that time, and I went up to my. . . . No, I stayed home for a while, yeah, and listened. Then I went up to my cousin's place, then I went to Hau`ula, with some other friends. While we were there we looked up in the sky and we see the Japanese planes. Looks like they were heading toward Bellows Field [and] Kane`ohe Naval [Air Station]. People were just going all over the place. The radio guy was saying—it was KGU—was saying that they were using all private vehicles, too, for haul all the wounded from Pearl Harbor. And also, even Downtown, Honolulu, 'cause they tried to bomb the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], and probably tried to get

the governor's mansion. But I think was more so the YMCA. Because . . .

WN: Downtown YMCA.

JM: Yeah, Downtown, because that was the armed forces [*i.e.*, *Army-Navy*] YMCA. It was no civilian. It was strictly for the armed forces. Usually they got a lot of people in there, GIs. Anyhow, the bombs landed--I think there were some carpenters or painters right down the road. Well, what's so ironic about it is it killed two or three Japanese workers, local, yeah. Supposedly there was a bomb dropped, I guess it was meant for the governor's mansion, and it dropped on Beretania [*Street*].

WN: Was this Japanese or was this anti-aircraft American bomb?

JM: No, no, no, this was a Japanese bomb. If it was American, man, there'd be a big hole. But, anyway, this all happened on December 7. [*Reports claim that shells which struck the lawn of Washington Place and other Downtown Honolulu areas were American anti-aircraft shells.*]

WN: Okay, now tell me, you folks were up in La`ie . . .

JM: Yeah.

WN: . . . which is pretty far, pretty far from Pearl Harbor. Were people excited and everything up there?

JM: Well, we were kind of excited, in a sense, some of them were angry, you know. The funny part about it. . . . We had Japanese family, living among us, that went work for the plantation, Mr. and Mrs. Fujimoto and Mr. and Mrs. Watanabe and Mr. Kubota, the two brothers, they worked for the plantation. And I believe, that was the only Japanese families in La`ie, at that time. No, there was another family, Koizumi, lived up in the back of Lanihuli, to the right of the temple. He was our egg man, besides, he raised chicken. And that was it, that was the only people.

WN: When the sentry stopped you and told you that Pearl Harbor was bombed, did you believe him at that time?

JM: No, I didn't believe him at all. But, I wasn't going to argue with the GI with the saber on that rifle of his. He didn't have no protective cover, everything was bare, man, he looked like he was ready for poke somebody (laughs). So, I didn't believe him at first, but I didn't say it either, I just kept my mouth shut and listen. And then I turned around and went home, and that's how I knew. I don't recall hearing [*about*] it the first time, 'cause I was up early and I made my breakfast, ate little bit, whatever was left over the night before. The night before was Saturday. Well, the night before, I forgot, I think San Jose [*State University*] played University of Hawai`i. And I don't know if that was the Shriner's [*game*] or what, see. [*University of Hawai`i's football opponent on December 6, 1941, was Willamette University in the annual Shrine Game. The San Jose State University football team was also in Honolulu, but was scheduled to play the University of Hawai`i the following Saturday, December 13. The game was never played.*] And then we went home.

WN: You went to the game?

JM: Yeah, of course Kahuku High School was invited, the band. And I played on the band, see. And we were Diamond Head side of the *makai* bleachers.

WN: This is the old stadium?

JM: The old stadium.

WN: Honolulu [*Stadium*].

JM: Down, right on Isenberg and King Street.

WN: So, you guys were at the game?

JM: Yeah, we were at the game Saturday, Saturday afternoon. And we came home. And of course, what happened after that, jiminy Christmas! We seen all the trucks, the army trucks coming down in the late afternoon. All the engineers, they start laying barbed-wire fence on the beaches.

WN: This was right away, the next day, or Saturday?

JM: No, this was in the [*Sunday*] afternoon, they start coming.

WN: That day?

JM: That day, yeah. And right on through the night, you know. And the next day again, too. Monday, all day. I don't know how long it took 'em, but they had barbed wire going all over the island. I believe so. Even Nanakuli side, Barbers Point. `Ewa, I think they didn't have too many homes down there. I don't recall any homes down there. All I recall was `Ewa Plantation [*Company*]. So, December 7, it was exciting in a sense. Some of the guys joke about it. And we kid our buddies, you know, Japanese, eh. All kind of jokes and whatnot. But it's all in fun, because we're all teenagers, you know. And my friend, Watanabe, he and I attended the same school. He was my very, very, close friend. 'Cause he lived just the road up from me, on the same side of the temple road. We call it the temple road. I forgot, I don't know what they call it now. I'm trying to think of the name.

WN: Not Iosepa?

JM: No, we lived on Iosepa [*Street*], but there's a cross road that comes across Iosepa, there is a name now, but I forgot. All we used to call it was the temple road. 'Cause the temple road come down the old bridge, then it came down, made a left turn, and then pass in front my house, and then by Kanno's corner. Oh, that's famous Kanno's corner. Oh, yeah, I forgot Kanno also, he was a laundry man. The wife and daughters took in the laundries for the people in La`ie. And also, Kanno was a farmer. That's the one I tell you, we used to steal watermelons from him.

(Laughter)

JM: That's the closest patch, that's why, to the La`ie Quarry. Anyhow, so December 8, the [U.S.] Engineer [Department], oh man, they had all kind army vehicles all over the road, on the highway. Well, that was the only vehicle traveling. All other vehicles either had to be guys going to work, like the City and County of Honolulu, and probably guys in uniform, GIs. Well, there weren't too many military guys. I know my brother-in-law, that's the only one I know was in the military, active duty, [U.S.] Navy. I don't remember anybody else.

WN: So, military trucks, where were they going? Putting up the barbed wire . . .

JM: Putting up the barbed-wire fences, yeah. And then of course, they brought in some military guys later, and they went up in the mountain. And this supposedly be the coast artillery, see. We can see them with the big guns. And today--after the war, you know, I found out what the guns were. They were 155 millimeter, yeah, and no problem, you know. From the mountains there is only three miles [to the ocean], and the [guns shot] further than that. So what they did was, they used to practice. They shoot at that little island out there, in La`ie. There's Goat Island, then the little island [Pulemoku], and then Laniloa Point [i.e., La`ie Point]. So, that's the one they'd aim [Pulemoku Island]. They won't aim at the one that was close to Laniloa [Mokualai Island], 'cause it was too close to La`ie Point. Because nobody lived there anyway, there weren't no homes. Eventually, they took over the pasture, we had a pasture there. Actually they took over the Kahuku Ranch. They took over Kahuku Ranch.

WN: And they used it for what?

JM: They used that to live there.

WN: Oh, I see.

JM: They pitched the tent, and they had troops around there. And the troops lived there. They lived there for I don't know how long.

WN: So, during the war years, you remember soldiers walking around town?

JM: Oh, yeah, walking around our town. Not that much soldiers, you know. It was just a small complement of them. And they used to come down from the hills, you know. I guess, that's [Kahuku Ranch grounds] where they eat, they live and everything. And they go up there [mountains] during the day. Or they have, you know, night, and they rotate, I guess. That's where they camp, right there, in [Kahuku] Ranch, past that. And that was right across from the church, that's a big lot, too. And they pitched their tent. And I know, because (chuckles) us kids we used to go over there, watch you know. We can smell the bread cooking, you know, when they bake the bread. 'Cause the army got---they bake their own bread. We didn't know that, but at that time that's what they did.

WN: You mean, they baked it in the field . . .

JM: They brought their own oven.

WN: Oh.

JM: Portable ovens, yeah.

WN: What about the [*Mormon*] church? Did they take over any parts of the church?

JM: No, they didn't take no part of the church. See, from La`ie all the way on the leeward side and probably on the other side, the North Shore, and all around to Mokula`ia and Ka`ena Point, coming down this [*leeward*] side. And even, probably in Waipahu. Well, they all had the guns. In 1942, I think, latter part of '42 or early part of '43, they removed the gun emplacement here [*i.e., in `Ewa*]. That's how we get the two big bunkers over there [*`Ewa*] now.

WN: Oh, you mean the . . .

JM: Yeah, Fort Barrette. You can see 'em tomorrow. Anyway, so December 7 was an excitement for us, 'cause me, I'm a teenager, you know. Man, I'm gung ho when it comes to excitement, you know. We kidded our Japanese friends. That was all. But, the *Haoles* didn't, the *Haoles* were something else, man. 'Cause I don't know, I only hear stories.

WN: You mean the *Haole* soldiers?

JM: No, I'm talking about the *Haole* people.

WN: Who lived out there?

JM: No, the only *Haole* people we had out there was the school principal and one, two, three teachers, four teachers, the elementary [*school*]. Now, I don't know about Kahuku [*School*]. No, when December 7 came, the principal was Mr. Miyamoto, right. He was our principal. Of course, we didn't have school.

WN: Yeah, for how long?

JM: I don't know how long. I can't remember. Maybe it wasn't that long actually. We're looking at maybe---we were out of school maybe only a few days, yeah, just a few days. Eventually, over the radio [*announcement*], everybody had to go back school. So when I went back school, I was only fifteen, no. Every Sunday I got up early in the morning, I go up to the beach and I just watch, you know. I don't have my throw net, but my cousin has. So, I go out and I see the school fish and I run back to his house. And this is all before church begins. You not supposed to do that, but it ain't my fault I'm just young kid, you know.

(Laughter)

WN: So, you went back school?

JM: Yeah. We went back to school and I quit school on my birthday, May the third, '42.

WN: What made you do that?

JM: 'Cause I wanted to go work. I was sixteen and you was eligible to resign from school if you

want to, but you gotta work. You just can't resign, you know, because boy, they gonna (chuckles) probably give you a hard time.

WN: How were you doing in school at that time?

JM: I was doing pretty good. I was averaging about a *C*-plus. Oh, my math wasn't too bad, I had *B* on my. . . . So, my lowest grade was a *C*-plus. That was my English.

WN: Quitting school was your own decision?

JM: Was my own decision, yeah.

WN: Were other kids . . .

JM: And my parents went along with it. Sometimes you cannot quit school, you know, you gotta have your parents' permission.

WN: What about your classmates?

JM: See, they could have quit school later, when their [*sixteenth*] birthday came around. But my classmate, Watanabe, did not quit school. He graduated in '44. And a lot of my other classmates, I don't think there were any of the Japanese boys that quit school. They all finished their education and then they went in the service, some of them.

WN: What about other Samoans?

JM: There weren't too many Samoans. Maiava quit school, Neff. Who else? I'm trying to think if there was any other Samoan boys besides me and Neff. . . . That's it.

WN: So, there weren't too many other boys quitting school to go work during the war?

JM: If there were, I didn't know. There weren't too many at all. I know I was one of them, and Neff was one of them and that's all I recall. I was at that age. Neff was eighteen. He went to war later, they drafted him.

WN: So, that's what you wanted to do? You wanted to quit school and work?

JM: Yeah, go to work. Because of the money.

WN: They were offering good money?

JM: Well, it wasn't so---at that time it was good money, fifty cents an hour. But mainly because I wanted to help, too. Do my share, in a sense.

WN: Oh, the war.

JM: The war, yeah. See, I never knew how to drive. That's how I learned how to drive, working. I started pick and shovel.

WN: So, if say the war didn't start. You think you would have quit school?

JM: No, no, my ambition was going to `Iolani School and then on to University of Hawai`i. I was pretty big, you know. I was pretty much an athletic type. I could play any given sport, halfway decent. I mean, I could play any sport and make the team. But, you can't play [*only*] sports, you have to have a little brain too. You ain't got no brain, you ain't going to be able to play sports. Anyway, there was one sport, that you know today, you don't need no brain, all you need is muscle (chuckles). That's a boxing game. I never was a slugger, I always box with my head, not with my arms. By the same token, that's how I work. I work with my head, not with my hands and feet. I'm always thinking the most expedient and easiest way to accomplish my project (chuckles).

WN: So, you had a job lined up already by the time you quit school?

JM: Well, in a sense, yes. I knew that I was gonna work at the [*La`ie*] Quarry. 'Cause they was looking for laborers. You sixteen, no problem. That's a law, you know. That's a territory law [*allowing sixteen-year-olds to work*].

WN: So, you just went down and applied?

JM: Applied, yeah, after I made sixteen. Then I went and applied for the job. I went work right then and there.

(Laughter)

WN: Fifty cents an hour.

JM: Fifty cents an hour. City and County [*of Honolulu*].

WN: So, this is not [*U.S. Army*] Corps of Engineers [*which at the time was known as U.S. Engineer Department*]?

JM: They all came under the corps of engineers. Because we were getting paid by the corps of engineers. Of course, through the city and county. Of course, it's actually the U.S. government, because we eventually came under martial law. When you under martial law, you know, that's it, military government is the boss. Civil government is second in command. They take orders from them. So I worked there, and I didn't work too long because eventually I went to. . . . See, I only worked May, June. I worked one month I think, or maybe less than that.

WN: What did you do?

JM: Pick and shovel at the [*La`ie*] Quarry. And then I transferred over to Kahuku. They had an opening in Kahuku, Marconi Wireless Station at the Kahuku [*Airfield*]. They were looking for a handyman, guy to---what they call today, custodian. Take care the cars, there were two or three cars, I can recall.

WN: Was it better pay?

JM: Oh, yeah, it was a better pay. My pay went up to seventy-five cents an hour.

WN: When you were working at the quarry, like who else was working there?

JM: There was my friend Herbert Nihipali . . .

WN: Local guys?

JM: Local guys, they all local people.

WN: From the area or from all over?

JM: From the area, from Kahana all the way up to Kahuku. Yeah, we had guys who went quit school from Kahuku, and they went to work. But some of them didn't last too long because they got drafted fast or they went volunteer, see. 'Cause some of them were what, eighteen, nineteen [*years old*]. Those are the guys that stayed back (laughs). We had some old guys, you know, in my class, tenth grade. Them guys were seventeen already and eighteen, man. And I'm only, what, fifteen, tenth grade. Eventually they all made out all right, though.

WN: So, didn't have Mainland guys coming in to work quarry or anything?

JM: No, no, strictly all local. Supervisors, workers, all local, yeah. The only Mainland people, I found out, was down when I got transferred to Kahuku [*Airfield*], Marconi. We still call--we all know it as Marconi Wireless Station on Kahuku base. And well, I got to see some *Haole* faces.

WN: Were they your bosses or. . . .

JM: No, no, they just workers. They just work, they operate the heavy equipment. Then eventually--I didn't work too long, I think I worked there only one month.

WN: Marconi?

JM: Marconi, yeah. And then I moved up. They looking for truck driver. I was able to drive by then. I got my license in July '42, and eventually went to work as a grease monkey, otherwise known as the grease gang to go out and grease all the heavy equipment. Your tractors, your graders, your rollers, turner pulls, and crane and shovels.

WN: This is where?

JM: This is all in Kahuku.

WN: Oh, you still in Kahuku.

JM: Yeah, I'm still in Kahuku. See, I move up fast, man. From the time I went to work in May, May, June, July, within three months I was getting dollar an hour. No, I think seventy-five cents an hour. And then I got transferred, I went from seventy-five [*cents*] to dollar twenty-six

[\$1.26], I think, or something, as a grease monkey, grease gang, you know. Then in '42 I got transferred from Kahuku to Mokula`ia. And I worked in Mokula`ia till May of '43, I think.

WN: What were you doing there?

JM: Grease gang, greasing all of the heavy equipment. Same job I was doing, only we were boarding at Camp Erdman.

WN: You said heavy equipment, like for what . . .

JM: Heavy construction equipment.

WN: What were they constructing?

JM: They were building runways. They were building roads.

WN: Up La`ie side?

JM: Yeah, at the Kahuku Marconi Wireless Station [*i.e.*, *Kahuku Airfield*]. And in Mokula`ia, the same thing. They were building runways and roads. Mainly runways. They took over a portion of that sugarcane field that belonged to Waialua plantation [*i.e.*, *Waialua Agricultural Company*].

WN: They were also building that Pupukea Road, too?

JM: That's where I went, too. When I worked for the city and county in La`ie, I not only worked for the quarry, I also had to go up the Pupukea trail, the Pupukea Road. The road eventually went all the way up to where the Boy Scouts [*camp*] is. But I think we went further than that but the reason it stopped right there after the war was because the rest is considered the federal reserve. The trail ends--the road ends at the Boy Scout camp up there. But I know during the war it was further than that. (Laughs) That was only for the war purpose, that's why. There weren't too many people living up there. I don't think there were more than five or six houses. That was it. And it wasn't tar, black top. Those days was all dirt, man. The *bugga* rain, good night, you hope that the truck make it up the hill (laughs). And we didn't have all them bumps that they do now, you know, they get bumps and they get that drainage. When that *bugga* rain up there, ho, it's cold in the morning. Get warm in the afternoon, during the day it gets warm, then it gets cold again, before we ready to come back home, you know. We stayed up there about eight to ten hours. And then we come back. As soon as the guys bring the coral rock, they unload the coral, what we do is we chop the coral and smooth it out. And then there's a roller come by and roll. It was nice. I think I went work up there for about a month, 'cause like I say I don't think more than a month in La`ie because, boom, I was down to Kahuku next, then, boom, in July I was down in Mokula`ia next. (Laughs)

WN: All working on the air bases?

JM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Wasn't that Dillingham[-owned] at that time?

JM: That's right. That was Dillingham at that time. It was called Dillingham. But the place was Camp Erdman. It belonged to the Dillingham family. I never tried to find out why they named the camp [*after Erdman*].

WN: I think Harold [*R.*] Erdman, I don't know who he was though. [*Harold R. Erdman was a grandson of B. F. Dillingham.*]

JM: Could be a relative. But, yeah, we couldn't go swimming because they had barbed wire fence. And you know, you work from dawn to dusk, ten hours a day. And that's seven days a week. But you gotta be real sick, sick (laughs), I mean extremely sick, you know, not to work. Otherwise, boy, you better get on the job. Well, anyhow, when I got my appendicitis removed, I had to quit that job.

WN: They gave you room and board? They gave you meals, too?

JM: Yeah, at Camp Erdman, yeah, meals, everything. They had a nice cafeteria over there.

WN: And it was mostly local, you said?

JM: Oh yeah, majority local people. Not too many---they used to gamble down there. The flyers, GIs, they come back from their mission. Payday, they come. During the summer, the only thing they do is lose their money, man.

WN: Did they let Japanese work over there?

JM: Well, I had two Japanese boys working with me. I was the supervisor. One of them was older than me, but I was bigger.

(Laughter)

JM: And they were my buddies. We all from---they're from Kahuku. They also went quit school.

WN: I'm wondering, the people that worked plantation, that time, some of them, were they able to leave those plantation jobs and go work for defense?

JM: Yeah. They did.

WN: They didn't have to stay on the plantation?

JM: Well, see, that portion I don't know. I think the sons maybe, and the daughters [*moved to defense work*]. But the parents still stayed [*with the plantation*], you know. The sons and daughters did, but not the parents.

WN: Oh, I see.

JM: So, it didn't matter, you know, if they wanted to go work. Oh yeah, there's nothing wrong with the children going to work for the defense. They still were able to work at the [*Kahuku*]

Airfield. No big thing. We worked side by side, together.

That's how I knew that one of my buddies, one of the good *Haole* friends I made, the *bugga* turned out to be a FBI [*Federal Bureau of Investigation*] agent (laughs). Yeah, and I had to pick him up. I didn't know that, see. After my appendicitis operation, I transferred up to Punahou. [*The U.S. Engineer Department occupied the Punahou School campus shortly after the outbreak of World War II.*] Again I went back to fifty cents an hour. Anyway, I had this call to go pick him up, dispatch, and I said, "Okay." The name didn't ring a bell at that time, but I don't forget faces. When I went by to pick him up at a certain building up at the Punahou campus—our [*motor*] pool was right at the campus anyway—I saw him in a nice light gray suit. I look, "Eh, David! (Chuckles) I didn't know you were FBI."

(Laughter)

WN: You mean, he was [*once*] a worker with you up at Camp Erdman?

JM: No, at Kahuku [*Airfield*]. He was a grader operator.

WN: So, he was there like undercover or something?

JM: Yeah, he was undercover, checking out all the Japanese.

WN: Oh, very interesting.

JM: Yeah, so I tell him, "Well, now I know. So, what is your evaluation up there about my Japanese friends working over there?"

"Oh, them guys all right. That's why I'm back here, because there's nothing."

"I presume you guys had some guys down Mokula`ia, eh, where I was working?"

"Oh, yeah, we had two [*FBI*] guys down there, too. But nothing."

WN: What was he? Was he like a supervisor up there [*Kahuku Airfield*]?

JM: No, he wasn't, he was just a worker. Oh yeah, they go like [*as*] plain workers, too, you know. They had to know how to operate that thing.

WN: So, he never said anything to you about being FBI?

JM: No, he never say nothing. 'Cause when I used to come over there and grease his vehicle—he's a grader—I said, "Hi David. Eh, I'm ready to grease your car, your equipment."

"Okay John, stand by."

So, he moved the grader around, so I can get to it, and then I tell him back up. See, I get two Japanese boys with me. Local boy, right from Kahuku, too. I forgot their name, gunfunnit me. That's the trouble, you know. I forget names, but I no forget faces. Anyhow, we grease his

equipment. I forgot who the other [*Haole*] guy was, gunfunnit. They never tell me. Well, I could care less, you know. That's none of my business, anyway. Well, at least I knew him [*David*]. 'Cause he was friendly that's why, see. The other guys, there were couple more *Haole* guys, you know, working heavy equipment. One operate the crane, the other one operate a roller, I think. They no talk too much. Ain't my fault. They no talk too much, I no talk. But David was friendly. Real friendly. Because of his friendliness, I used to bring fruit for him. Just before I went into Mokula`ia. He was still there when I went to Mokula`ia. Well, I worked all the way through, from there I went to work at Punahou campus [*in 1943*].

WN: Before you went to Punahou, you know, things like blackouts you guys had to . . .

JM: Oh yeah, we had blackouts, yes. Windows, all curtains down. You cannot use strong light, so we use *kukui hele po*, which is the lantern, at home, see. Between the time December 7, we looking at about six months before I quit school, we using lantern at night. Save electricity, eh. And the only time we use electricity is right before blackout. Of course, blackout was early too. Later on blackout became a little bit more lenient, I guess. Of course, I don't remember 'cause I was out, I was in the army then.

WN: Later on.

JM: I remember when the war was over, I was aboard ship the *Evangeline*, when we were halfway between Hawai`i and Palau, the Ulithi Islands, when the war was over. And he remove all the blackout. So used to go in like this, see. Go into the mess hall, and wherever, you know. All the boards came out. And I hate to say it but, they threw the boards overboard (laughs). They threw 'em overboard, in the ocean.

WN: What were the boards used for?

JM: That was the blackout.

WN: You mean to cover the windows?

JM: See, you know the entrance was like this, eh. So, they blackout over here, they blackout over here, and . . .

WN: The windows you mean?

JM: No, no, the doorways.

WN: Oh.

JM: And what they did was paint the windows, either paint or I don't know, put something. The portholes, they called. I do remember they did have these boards that go like this zigzag, you know, to go into the entrance. And they removed all the boards, and I thought they going save 'em until they get to land. Heck no, they dump that in the ocean. I'm telling you, Americans are terrible. Course, you know, it's none of my business those days, you know. You're only a nineteen-year-old, eh.

WN: So, when you working the quarry, like that, you were only a young kid, eh . . .

JM: Oh yeah, I was only about sixteen.

WN: Were you about the youngest?

JM: No, there were other younger guys than me. Some of them used to work part-time. No, I don't think they were part-time. There was no part-time those days. Not that I recall. But I do recall there was a lot of sixteen-year-olds. Well, like I say, you know, some of them were old already, they just quit school. Some of them were eighteen, seventeen. They never even graduate yet. So they went to work. So, when this war broke out, that was a cream for them.

WN: Let me turn the tape over.

WN: Okay, how were your bosses?

JM: Oh, my bosses were good. All my supervisors, especially my supervisor down at Kahuku [*Airfield*]. His name was Smith. Used to call him "Snuffy Smith." (Laughs) You know the cartoon character?

WN: Yeah.

JM: He always chewing his tobacco.

WN: He was *Haole*?

JM: Oh, yeah, he was *Haole*. And I thought he was one of them guys, too. But he wasn't. He wasn't FBI.

WN: Did they take any cane out of production or anything like that?

JM: Oh no, the cane production, she went on. Oh yeah, still went on.

WN: They didn't take any cane land to . . .

JM: They did, they had to take some from the—not from Kahuku, not the Kahuku Plantation [*Company*], well, they might have took a few [*acres*], but not all. But they did take over the ranch for a while, Kahuku Ranch. I can't recall, 'cause I left home in, what, '42, '43 I left home, and I very seldom came home. I stayed in Honolulu most of the time, 'cause that's where my job was. And when I was in Camp Erdman, you know, that's where I stayed. I came home once in a while. And, '43 I got transferred to . . .

WN: Punahou [*School campus, which housed the U.S. Army engineers during World War II*].

JM: Punahou.

WN: Okay, how did you get that transfer?

JM: Because I asked for it. Because of my, what do you call . . .

WN: Appendicitis.

JM: My appendicitis. I cannot lift no more.

WN: I see.

JM: Yeah.

WN: So, what kind of job did you have at Punahou?

JM: Well, I was in the sedan pool, I was a driver. And, so I worked there until December . . .

WN: Forty-three?

JM: Forty-three. See, I worked there for a little while, then I got transferred down. They needed a foreman down at the wash rack. Which was Melim station number one [*i.e.*, *Melim Service and Supply Company*] What is now right across from the [*Downtown*] post office.

WN: Queen Street?

JM: On Queen Street. I don't know what, that's a new outfit over there, building. I think I see there's a restaurant there. There was an ice cream factory right across the street from Melim, and they called that base yard one, Melim.

WN: So the [*U.S.*] Army [*engineers*] took over [*Melim Service and Supply Company*]?

JM: Yeah, the army took over. What they did, mechanic, you know, all the workers down there fix only the military vehicles. Sedan, pickup trucks—those days they didn't have pickups, they had more like weapon carriers. But, they wanted somebody down there to be in charge of the wash rack. And the wash rack had five deaf and dumb; two Korean, three Japanese. So, that means I had to learn the sign language. So, didn't take me long, boom, I got it made, boom like that. Within one week already I was talking to them. I didn't know I had that ability.

WN: Yeah, it's like learning a foreign language.

JM: Yeah, and I was, what, seventeen now. [*Nineteen*] forty-three, eh. Seventeen years old. I'm a young `un.

WN: Let me back up. Let me ask you little bit more about Punahou. Where did you live when you . . .

JM: Oh, I lived on K

WN: You didn't live on campus then?

JM: No, no, no, no, nobody live on campus. Well, they did have, they had the defense workers,

living in one of them dormitories. The whole military took over, they moved Punahou School some other place. I have no idea where they went move them to. But they took over Punahou campus, yeah.

WN: So, what was it like? Did they have like stores and things in there?

JM: No, they didn't. What they had was, oh they had little restaurant, I think. Cafeteria and a snack, you know. Maybe they did have, but I never got to use it because I'm always on the go and us guys we eat outside, see. We order lunch. I don't know if they used to have a lunch wagon come by. We used to send the guys out, just down the road and go pick up lunch, and then come back. And well, I believe in '43 we also had Bob Hope and Langford, I forgot her first name [*Frances*], and the clown, Corony. All three of them performed as part of the USO [*United Service Organizations*].

WN: Oh yeah?

JM: Yeah, for the guys up there.

WN: Where at?

JM: At Punahou campus. They set up everything, stage and all. Yeah, I watched it. He [*Bob Hope*] was a young guy then, comedian, him and his nose.

(Laughter)

JM: His jokes, terrific. And [*Frances*] Langford, yeah, she sang. Terrific. That's how I remember Bob Hope. I never got to see Bob Hope in Vietnam. He did come but I didn't go.

WN: So, your job was to pick people up?

JM: Yeah, pick up people and take. . . . That's how I knew about Fort Barrette. I had to bring the engineers down. And that's how I got to meet my friend David, find out that the *bugga* was an FBI man. He was up Punahou campus and I had to take him down to the FBI headquarters which was located on Bishop Street. Bishop and right off of Merchant. Merchant is the last [*cross*] street before what is now called Nimitz [*Highway*] and part of Ala Moana [*Boulevard*]. So I worked there [*Punahou*] and I lived on Kina`u Street, right below Lusitana. Well, Lusitana ran right into Kina`u, and of course Alapa`i [*Street*], and Lunalilo [*Street*].

WN: How come you wanted to come to Honolulu?

JM: No, I didn't want to come, that's where they transferred me to.

WN: They just transferred you?

JM: Yeah.

WN: Oh, you didn't have any choice?

JM: No, I didn't have any choice because of my ailment. I couldn't lift no more, anything over twenty pounds already.

WN: They didn't have any jobs up in North Shore side?

JM: No, they didn't have any. So what the heck, I might as well go Honolulu. So I went to Honolulu, and I rented this place. I get up in the morning, catch the bus, went to, what do you call . . .

WN: Punahou?

JM: Punahou. See, Punahou was running twenty-four hours a day. So the midnight shift, I get up a certain time of the day, in the morning get ready. Then the guys come by, pick us up. The day drivers come by pick me up [*at home*]. I didn't have to catch the bus. And that was legal, 'cause that's where they get their workers in fast, they don't have to wait for the bus. Bus take forever and a day to get down here. That was the Nu`uanu-Punahou bus. And the bus come right up from King Street or Beretania. Beretania and King Street were both going east and west. Yeah. Anyhow, so I worked there until . . .

WN: So, Punahou had lot of *Haoles* and locals working there?

JM: Majority locals, not too many *Haoles*. The *Haoles* we had was Mr. Wooten. He was the head supervisor for the motor pool, for the sedan pool. But he lived right down the street, 'cause he local boy, too. Yeah, most of the *Haole* civilians, they all local boys, majority. But up in the hall [*i.e., dormitory*], one of them halls up there, the campus, had all them *Haole* defense workers, they all come from the Mainland. But none of them work in our sedan pool, we all locals, that's all. In fact, every one of us was local. We had Japanese, Chinese, Puerto Rican, Hawaiian, I'm the only Samoan. And there was my other friend, Logan, I think, Logan worked there too.

WN: You folks drove all over the island?

JM: Yeah, I used to go Wahiawa. Very seldom we went to Kahuku or Laie. There wasn't no reason to go down there. Well, mainly went to Schofield, like that, Wahiawa.

WN: You pick up VIPs?

JM: Oh yeah. Not so much VIPs. What we do is we take---I even gotta pick up gals, man. From Punahou campus take 'em Downtown. 'Cause Downtown get the office, the federal building down there. Take 'em down and wait for them while they do their business, you know. And then wait for them and then *pau*, bring 'em back up. Or else if there's another pickup someplace. . . . See, those days, they didn't have this two-way radio. So, you know, it was hard. When I came out to the country, it's not my duty, it's the passenger's duty. He's responsible to call in, not me (chuckles). I'm just a driver, I pick him up.

One I didn't pick up, it was the same day that I took them down to Fort Barrette, on the way back. Nimitz Highway had three lanes. Right in front or just past Camp Catlin, what is now, you know, the bridge, when you pass the Ke`ehi Lagoon? That DAV [*Disabled American*

Veterans Hall] part, you see the bridge over there?

WN: Yeah, oh, you mean on Nimitz?

JM: Yeah, on Nimitz. I don't remember if that's the regular bridge that was over there. Well, anyway, there was a bridge and that was the old road right into Honolulu, go right into Dillingham [*Boulevard*]. And I plowed into one guy, I was following too close. The two guys in the back, they didn't get shook up 'cause I was only doing about thirty miles an hour. When I *wen* hit the brake—this was one of the new Fords came out, yeah, they put me on the new Ford. You gotta pump, pump, pump, eh. Me, I went step one time and the *bugga* never catch, man. I tell you, keep on going, the second time, by the time he [*i.e., the brakes*] caught, boom, I hit the car. There was more damage done to the Ford than the Buick. Oh, 1941 model Buick, yeah. The only damage was his license plate and a little paint job, but my damage cost \$156.

WN: Yeah, but you didn't have to pay it, eh?

JM: Oh no, it followed me all the way while I was in the service, though. I didn't have to pay it.

WN: Oh, it went on your record though?

JM: It went on my record. But I didn't have to pay. And I lost the record, I don't know what happened to it.

WN: What about like ID [*identification*]? Did you guys have to carry ID around?

JM: Yeah, we had ID.

WN: Badges, too?

JM: Yeah, and our picture taken. Of course, I look like one criminal. Look like one guy from O`ahu Prison. Oh man. Told me, "Eh, how come I no can smile?"

(Laughter)

JM: The guy at the ID place, that was up Punahou. We all had to have, even when I was working the quarry. Every time you gotta change [*jobs*], your ID gotta show that this is where you work. My last ID was in Kane`ohe Naval Air [*Station*]. In 1944, I resigned my job at the [*Melim*] wash rack.

WN: Yeah, tell me about the wash rack.

JM: Well, after I learned how to speak the [*sign*] language, all we did was, all the official vehicles that come down [*from*] where I used to work the sedan pool, like the FBI organization, General Lyman's staff car, they come down and go through the rack. Melim station [*i.e., Melim Service and Supply Company*] had one of the most up-to-date car wash in Honolulu at that time, prior to the war. And because the government took over [*the station under*] martial law, they improved the place. Well, everything was on lease anyway.

WN: So, this car wash was on Queen Street and . . .

JM: Yeah, Queen and Alakea.

WN: Alakea, okay.

JM: Queen and Alakea. The [Downtown] post office is right in the front of us. The rear end of the post office is what we looking at from Melim service station.

WN: Right, right, right, okay. So, Melim was on the *makai* side and the post office was on the *mauka* side of Queen.

JM: Right.

WN: Was it a pay increase you got to go work wash rack?

JM: Yes, it was. I got little bit more. From fifty cents I went up to a dollar [*an hour*]. So, then he wanted to increase my pay to \$1.40. I said, “No way, I’m quitting. This job is killing me. I’m just a young man, I’m only seventeen.” [*Nineteen*] forty-three, I’m seventeen. So, I quit, I went home La`ie (chuckles).

WN: Since you were Downtown, there were a lot of activities Downtown, eh, you didn't enjoy that?

JM: Oh, of course I did.

WN: Like what, what was available down there?

JM: Well, you had a nightclub that opened. But blackout, see. Oh, but hot, boy, inside there, whew!

WN: They had plenty nightclubs?

JM: Not too many, but they had a few. And they had a *mahu* club down at Kalakaua Avenue, run by Lo, Mr. Lo, Pake.

They call that “bottle club.” [*John Meatoga is talking about the Downtown nightclub.*] Take your own bottle inside. Coke was fifty cents. Coke, eh, you can get 'em for nickel or dime, but no, they was charging fifty cents over there (laughs).

WN: You weren't underage to go?

JM: You got that right I was underage! But I was big enough to pass. The guy see me coming and then he say, see you later, *brah*. He let me go in. I had no problem, but I didn't take advantage too much, I usually cool it, and even when I went in, I behave myself. I drank moderately, enjoy the music. So, that's what I came in there for, to enjoy the entertainment. I used to watch Genoa Keawe. Linda—I forgot her name, Filipino girl. And I can't recall, Vera, was probably in the Mainland learning to become one of them singers. Anyway, I don't know when she married Akuhead [*J. Akuhead Pupule, a.k.a. Hal Lewis*], probably after, after the war. But anyhow, there weren't too many [*nightclubs*]. I wasn't able to attend the “Hawai`i Calls.” I

don't know if they had it or not.

But I quit [*U.S. Army engineers*] in 1944, I believe it was in October or November. And I didn't work December, January, February. Finally my dad say, "Son, you better go back work." And all I did was fish. The fish I caught, I sold, and this is how I got by, I got my cigarettes, I got my drinks, I got my clothes.

WN: Where did you sell your fish?

JM: I sell my fish right around La`ie, Kahuku, Hau`ula, yeah. Close by.

"Eh, what you got for us, John?"

"Oh, I got *he`e*." I used to use throw net, mostly mullet, *manini*, and only seldom get *uouoa*. I used to walk across to Goat Island, all by myself. And I used to look at the big sharks come by, at the other end of the island, Goat Island. In a sense, I was a loner then, those days, all by myself. All the other guys working, eh. And, those days, you no work boy, they going send the MPs [*military police*] on you. So before the MPs came, (chuckles) I went work. I caught the transportation to Kane`ohe [*Naval Air Station*], eh. So, I went there, I started. The first day I went in, that's the day I started work. There ain't no such thing as coming home, no.

WN: Kane`ohe was part of [*U.S.*] Army, still?

JM: No, that's [*U.S.*] Navy.

WN: Oh, that's the navy.

JM: That was navy.

WN: Before it became marine base [*i.e., Kane`ohe Marine Corps Air Station*]?

JM: See, what happened, they swap, eh. During or after the Korean War they swap, Barbers Point Air Marine went to Kane`ohe and Kane`ohe came this side, naval base came to Barbers Point. [*In 1952, Kane`ohe Naval Air Station was transferred from navy jurisdiction to marine corps jurisdiction, becoming Kane`ohe Marine Corps Air Station.*]

WN: So, what did you do in Kane`ohe?

JM: I started out on a degreasing gang. The whole complex is called engine overhaul, but get specific departments. The first department is degreasing. In other words, they get that powerful degrease chemical that removes all foreign particles from the engine parts, and then you wash 'em down with a solvent and then it goes through on the rack, and then it dries up. And then the other guys pick it up and the next department pick it up, from there on. I worked there for a little while. Let's see, I started February '44, March, April, May. I think June, I got an advancement. By June I was in the paint shop. So I worked from June to March of '45 in the paint shop. By that time I was getting \$1.16 an hour.

WN: You know you said you had to quit Melim [*i.e., U.S. Army Engineers*], eh? How come you

quit?

JM: I quit because . . .

WN: Too much work or . . .

JM: No, no, the money wasn't sufficient to support myself, see, the boarding room and all that.

WN: You were still living Kinau Street?

JM: Yeah, I was still living Kinau Street. Things wasn't too good, anyway. I got to thinking, eh man, I better not sit around this Honolulu, things been getting pretty rough lately.

WN: What do you mean rough?

JM: Well, I don't know. I was the outgoing type, but I'm not the social type, you know, I wasn't too much going out and dancing and all that, and drinking. No way, jack. No, no. So, I went back home [*to La`ie*]. That's the main reason why. There's too much social going on [*Downtown*]. I didn't care for it. Even after World War II, they used to go down eat, the guys go drink, I go in the bar, I eat all the *pupu*, and they drink. I don't drink, no way. Maybe I take one or two and that's it, I stop. Yeah, and then I'm eating all the *pupus*.

(Laughter)

JM: I make a meal out of *pupu*. Then when they go eat, I tell, "No, I not hungry, I full already."

(Laughter)

JM: So, I came home, and that's the main reason why I came home.

WN: And you lived at home?

JM: And I lived at home with my mom and dad. Until February, when my dad told me, "Son, it's time for you to go to work." And that was it. So I work up till March of '45. See, 'cause in May I made eighteen, '44 I went down to Waiialua local board number three, and the post office and put in for my application, volunteer. And ten months later, which was March '45 I got that letter from President Roosevelt, to report to Schofield [*Barracks*], yeah. So, that began my [*U.S.*] Army career.

WN: So, March '45, was that Truman or Roosevelt by then?

JM: No, no, no, it was still Roosevelt.

WN: Still Roosevelt.

JM: Roosevelt.

WN: He died that year, I think.

JM: Yeah, he died in April [1945]. He died the following month. He died while I was in basic [training]. By April, the first week of April, we were already in Texas. You figure from March to April, in three weeks, we were already in Texas, taking basic. Yeah, I think he died April 14 or 15, I forgot. [Franklin D. Roosevelt died April 12, 1945.]

WN: Going into the military was what you wanted to do all that time . . .

JM: All that time, yeah.

WN: From the time you were sixteen?

JM: From that time, yeah, I couldn't wait. The marines and the navy came over my house and my sister told my mother not to sign the paper. I was working.

WN: You couldn't anyway, though, you were underage, right?

JM: That's right. No, but, I wasn't underage for the navy or the marines. I was already old enough, sixteen and a half they were taking 'em.

WN: Oh.

JM: Even when I was seventeen my mother wouldn't sign the paper. 'Cause my sister talk her out of it. The [U.S.] Marine Corps and the [U.S.] Navy.

WN: What did your sister not like about it?

JM: Well, she said, because I'm too young.

WN: (Chuckles) What did you say?

JM: I ain't got nothing to say, *bruddah*. Our older sister, she was a top advisor for my mother, you might say executive, the advisor to the chairman, the chairperson. And that's what she was (laughs). And what she says, Mama went along with the program, as far as me and my kid brother was concerned.

WN: But once you made eighteen?

JM: Nah, that was it, I was on my own. My mother knew that as soon as I made eighteen I was gonna go. So my mother was all for it. She wanted to sign, you know, but my sister talk her out of it. Yeah, too young and this and that. Tell her all the bad things. Boy, oh boy. Didn't bother me, didn't bother me a bit. I didn't know, see. 'Cause all the time that they came, they talked to my parents, see. They never talked to me. They couldn't talk to me. No way, 'cause I'm working. Only when I come home, then my mother would talk to me. They would tell me about it. Well, when the marine guy came, I didn't hear it till about two months later. I heard it from my other sister (laughs), my other sister here. Yeah, that's why hard, boy. She came down to visit us one time. She was already married, she lived in Honolulu. She came down and visit us, she and her husband. And then she told me, "You know, Mama didn't sign the paper."

“What for, sign what paper?”

“Oh, for you to go to marines.”

“I don't want to go in the marines.” Well, I didn't care to go to the marines, but the navy was what I wanted. I wanted to go on the ocean, man. I'm a sea-going guy (chuckles). I didn't care for the army or marines. Well, anyhow, so I went basic, '45. And. . . .

WN: By then the war was ending already?

JM: You better believe it! Like I said, the war ended while I was halfway through Ulithi.

WN: How did you feel about that?

JM: I said, “Oh, no, jiminy Christmas.” Oh boy. But then, I changed my mind quickly, you know. I said, well, it's nothing wrong, it's okay. So I went to the Philippines. I volunteered couple of times to go pick up the Japanese stragglers, you know. Ho, they all skin and bones. I treat 'em real good. I treat the best I can, as I should as a conqueror to a prisoner, you know. The main thing we had to be real careful about is not leaving 'em alone with the Filipinos. Because of the atrocities that they did during the war. And because I knew a little Japanese, I talk to them. Real little Japanese. But they understood, eh. Of course, they understood, and they talk to me. Some I understand, but some I don't. Because of my learning over here, that's why. 'Cause I used to wait for my buddy Asami Watanabe, from school, *pau* school, regular school, then he gotta go Japanese[-*language*] school, before the war. So, I wait for him. One hour, man. Sometime I go home, and I tell, “Okay, I'll meet you in an hour, certain-certain place, okay.” So, I went home, do my chores, and I meet him certain place. I miss him boy, son of a gun he passed away four years ago. We were very close. His *Haole* name was Albert, but I always used to call him Asami. I see his brother, his brother still driving taxi. He's about sixty-one, now, Hideko. That's the first time I went `au`au in the *furo*. First time, you know. I just to like go `au`au over there.

He tell, “Eh, John, come my house and we go `au`au.”

“Okay.” (Laughs)

Good fun, boy, kids, eh. I really enjoyed it. He's one of the closest Japanese friend I had. Growing up together. Going to school, elementary, all the way up to high school, and then the war. He graduated, then he came in. But he sat in only for little while, then he worked as a federal employee in the fire department. And he retired, he retired as a [*fire*] fighter. And he didn't last long, four years later, he was dead. Oh my. We both the same age. I think I'm a little---I think two months older than him, that's all.

WN: So, you became a career soldier, then?

JM: Yeah, from then on I got to thinking, well, I want to go home. So, I re-upped for the [*U.S. Army*] Air Corps. In October '45 I re-upped for the air corps, in the Philippines, and I said to myself, well, no way I going carry this gun for the rest of my life. But actually, I wouldn't be

carrying any gun because I was in the quartermaster. I should have just re-upped for the quartermaster. But then again, because I was in the quartermaster, army, I didn't have to go Korea when the Korean War broke out. But then again, I volunteered to go Korea, they wouldn't send me. Twice I volunteered for the Korean War, they wouldn't send me. Because I guess, they went on the basis that I was the only child in my family. I know they got my application. So, that was it, I didn't go Korea till it was over. Anyway, I re-upped for the air corps in '45 and the [U.S.] Air Force became its own in 1947 when I was stationed on Guam. I spent two years on Guam. Philippines, I stayed September, October, November, December, January, only four or five months, yeah. But I was able to talk Tagalog. Oh, it didn't take me long, only about a week or so. It was pretty easy. And even at that time I didn't know that I had a gift of tongue. And I spoke without accent, even when I'm on the telephone. I talk Japanese, the guy don't know I'm Samoan talking Japanese. Even when I was in Okinawa, or even today. You know, I talk to a Japanese and his back is to me, and he turn around and look at me, he be shock because, eh, no accent.

(Laughter)

JM: Anyhow, so I was able to get by with myself in the Philippines. So I even went as far as to learn how to sing some of the songs.

Well, after that I came home. What decided me to stay in, was when they had that Berlin air lift, in 1948. That's what decided me to stay in. The air lift was over. But in a sense it was a beginning, that gave me the thought to re-up again. And I re-upped again in '49. On the eighty-fifth day of my civilian life. I was out eighty-five days and on that day I went back and re-upped.

WN: How come?

JM: 'Cause I couldn't get no job. My brother wanted to use his influence. Well, I wasn't coming with that baloney. You know what I mean? I ain't coming with that, you know, it's who you know. I figure I do it on my own, eh. Well, my sister received a letter from the [Honolulu] Police Department, calling me for interview. Well, at that age of the game, at that stage and that age, and you know, I just had my military experience, they ain't gonna turn me down 'cause those *buggas* are hurting. I knew I'd be a policeman. But I didn't know that until ten years later. My sister went and told my mother what's happening and then she, both, they hide the letter. Knowing the fact that if I don't get no call from the fire department or the police department, I'm gonna go back [*into the military*]. And so, I didn't get nothing, so I said, that's it, my time is up. So, I re-upped, on the eighty-fifth day. And I didn't know until ten years later that my sister held up this police department interview.

WN: So, you could have been a policeman, by now, till today?

JM: That's right. I'd be retired already.

WN: Retired policeman.

JM: That's right. And I wouldn't be a policeman on the block. No highway patrol, things like that. No, I'd be administrative. 'Cause I'm too goody-goody that's why. I mean you know, I could

never be. . . 'Cause I was an MP [*military police*], before I went quartermaster, I was an MP, you know, in the Philippines. Yeah, I forgot about that. I was an MP, the 328 Battalion. And I was in one of the company. And they the meanest guys in the Philippines, man. Well, me and my partner we go out in Manila town and we walk for four hours, you know, four-hour beat. He come back with fifteen or sixteen tickets. I come back with only four. And the sergeant at the desk would say, “Eh, how come you only get four and your partner. . . .”

“Well, you look what he got and look what I got.”

My partner got all kind, “no button, cap crooked, button unbuttoned, the sleeve, zipper, belt,” you know. All those little . . .

WN: *Manini* stuff.

JM: *Manini* stuff. So compared to mine, eh, mine get “no hat, had no hat on the head,” and the other one would be “two sleeves rolled up.” You not supposed to have your sleeves rolled up, man, you gotta have 'em buttoned. Now, if you have one sleeve that's unbuttoned, I tell 'em, “Eh, you better button 'em.” And that's it, let it go. I could care less, you know. But no, when the guy got two sleeves rolled up, man, that's time for ticket, yeah. And I can't recall the other two. But mine was never *manini* kind, man. Mine was strictly out of uniform, 100 percent out of uniform, yeah. Anyhow, I didn't last too long. Two to three weeks, boom, they ship me out. They check my form-twenty file. Oh, I used to be a truck driver during the war and a painter. So the best place for a guy like that is quartermaster. So, they send me to quartermaster. So, when I re-upped in October, yeah, it didn't take long, man. I landed there September 30, we landed there. Went to the MP October, two weeks in October, no, one week, one week I stay in the outfit, boom, they ship me out. That was it. Then I went quartermaster. So, I re-upped and I quartermaster October 25.

WN: This is still army, eh?

JM: Yeah, still the army.

WN: So the air corps . . .

JM: Then I went re-upped for the air corps October 25.

WN: Nineteen forty-nine?

JM: Nineteen forty-five.

WN: Nineteen forty-five.

JM: Yeah, that's the air corps, U.S. [*Army*] Air Corps.

WN: Part of the army still?

JM: That, part of the army, still the army. Yeah, and then 1947, the air corps became its own through the National Security Act, which was passed by [*Harry*] Truman. Truman was

president. [*The U.S. Air Force was established under the Armed Services Unification Act of July 26, 1947.*]

WN: Air corps became [*U.S.*] Air Force?

JM: Air corps became air force.

WN: You transferred with them?

JM: Yeah.

WN: Oh, so you became air force.

JM: Yeah, I just stayed the same. They just changed the name. The name was changed, that's all. Nobody moved no place, yeah. Maybe the higher-ups did, but not the low ranking.

WN: So, you served until when?

JM: Till '48.

WN: Forty-eight.

JM: Then I went out.

WN: Then you came back.

JM: I came back, re-upped again '49. And I stayed till I retired.

WN: You retired in '72?

JM: Seventy-two, yeah.

WN: And you lived over here?

JM: Yeah. I went through all the crisis, Korean, Berlin, Cuba. I smiling, because when [*John F.*] Kennedy called his bluff, Nikita, what?

WN: Khrushchev?

JM: Khrushchev, yeah, in '62.

WN: The Cuban missile crisis, right?

JM: I was on alert. I was stationed at Morocco when that happened. Nobody went off base. We sent all the Moroccans home. The only guys on base, was strictly the military [*personnel*] and their dependents. Till the crisis was over and then they came back to work.

WN: Let me change tape.

WN: Remember I asked you during the interview, you know, when you quit school, would you have done that if the war was not going on? I was just wondering, if you could just kind of think, if the war never started, what do you think would have happened with you?

JM: Well, like I say, I would have eventually gone on to University of Hawai`i. And who knows from there. It depends, I guess, eventually, most likely, I would have become a lawyer. (Laughs) Either that or I would have become a linguist. I could have gone either field, eh. But in my younger days in the service, I used to get myself in trouble and get myself out of it. More time as not (chuckles).

WN: Do you regret your decision to quit school?

JM: No, no, I don't regret, because eventually I knew that I will get my diploma. And I did, 1960, I went back to education department in the air force. I was stationed at that time in Idaho, and I continued to attend the classes, which is called a GED, eh. And eventually I passed it, and they sent my passing grades, the equivalent anyway, to my school, Kahuku. And when I came back I had an equivalent of a tenth grade. So, with that equivalent, I figured, well, I better hang on, wait till I retire. So when I retired [*in 1972*] I went to school. I went to Leeward Community College. I took all my electives and not so much requirements, you know. I had requirements, but I eventually decided after three years over there, I went to KCC [*Kapi`olani Community College*] to work on my major. My major was hotel operations with management. Well, I didn't do so good, the first time. I needed an average grade of 2.5, I had only a 2.4. So, I figure, well, I better try one more time. At that time the VA [*Veterans Administration*] would let you do it, see. You can't do that now. So, I figure, well, I better study more hard now. So, I did. So I ended up with a 3.0. And I graduated. In '77, I got my A.S. [*associate of science*] degree. A.S. degree in hotel mid-management. Then I sat out one semester, '77, spring of '78 I went back.

I didn't go to school until '73. August of '73 I went to Leeward.

WN: Right after you retired?

JM: I retired a year before.

WN: Seventy-two, right?

JM: A year before, and in between that I was doing odd jobs. And retirement [*pay*] was low then. I only had about \$300 a month. My house payment was only \$124. So, I was working odd jobs. Anyhow, I decided, well, might as well go school and see what happens. Course, when I went school I got all that VA benefits. The reason I went back in '78 in spring, they raised their tuition up for the VA, disabled, see. Then I was, I was at that time 60 percent. So, I went back to school to get the other portion of the hotel business, which is the food service. Well, I didn't complete it. I needed two more courses. Godfunnit, oh boy. 'Cause my time ran out. My [*VA*] privileges ran out in '79. So, I had to go to work. So I worked civil service down here, Barber's Point, communications center. I worked there for nine years and I retired. I retired under their system. Five consecutive years in sixty and over, the age for retirement. So, I was sixty-two when I retired. I had nine years with the civil service, plus I had three and a half

during the martial law during World War II [*with the U.S. Army Engineers*], Hawai`i. So, they gave me twelve-and-a-half [*years*] and that's it.

WN: How did you meet your wife?

JM: I met her in a bakery shop. My niece was working. My niece wrote to me and told me about her, when I was in Korea. Went to Korea '53, yeah, I stayed there one year. Actually I stayed there only ten, eleven months, 'cause I spend one month (chuckles) at home. 'Cause, you know, no big thing.

WN: Nobody objected to Hawaiian marrying Samoan?

JM: No. See, by then, you know, my time, you don't want to marry your own kind 'cause you don't know if you're related. So you marry the other Polynesian group or another one. *Haole*, Japanese, *Pake*, whatever, but never another Samoan. And that's true, you know. Even the Hawaiians, of course some Hawaiians don't know, you know, they marry Hawaiians, but that's all right. But there's fear of, eh, they blood related. That's not too good, but what the heck, they used to do it. Brother used to marry sister. And all their royalty, you know, those days even the Samoans used to do it, too. All the Polynesians did it. You better believe it. That's the reason why they call 'em Polynesians. You know what "poly" means, eh? You better believe it (laughs). It come from the word polygamist. You better believe it. So, you never can tell. Anyhow, yeah, when I think about Polynesian, I gotta laugh, you know, as I got older, you know.

WN: You know, as a Samoan, born and raised here, you know, your parents were one of the first, early Samoans to come here. And now, especially since [*1960s*], plenty Samoans are coming in, living in Hawai`i, how do you feel about that?

JM: Well, the only thing I feel about it, is that, well, I like them to learn our ways. Learn that they're not in Samoa anymore. They can keep their culture, but by golly, they gotta change their attitude about taking other people's things that don't belong to them. And it's a next-door neighbor, and especially when they ask for something, take only what you want for and don't take the whole thing. Come over here get a mango, you know, they clean up the mango tree. Green and all, you know, jiminy Christmas. But like I say, to them, there is no tomorrow, some of them. They think they still back home. The law no mean nothing to them here. Well, they crazy. But I don't know, I wish I was able to speak fluent Samoan, godfunnit, I can't. I don't know too much. I can't understand some of the Samoan words that they speak sometime. As I listen to them, I can understand, most likely I can interpret maybe about 60 percent of what they say, not all. So, I have a little bit downfall, yeah.

WN: Well, it's like me and Japanese. Same thing.

JM: One just has to go and live where your home [*land*] is, where your parents come from, at least one year, so you can understand, fully, how to speak the language and know what it means. 'Cause they got two different classes over there in Samoa, now. They say they don't, they lot of baloney, I know they do. Yeah. Because Western Samoa still has the *matai* system, see. And the *matai* means, they get one head and he's the main one that distribute all the goodies to the different families within that group, within that `ohana, man, that's it. Well, that's what the

Hawaiians are trying to do again. Well, I hope they don't go that way 'cause that's wrong, man. They don't know it, but that's what they're heading for. I don't say too much about it, but this seems like they [*Samoans*] not too interested in education, not too many of them. Few of 'em do. I would say, of the Samoans that came here, those that came in the '50s, right after the Korean War or during the Korean War, they are well versed in the way of Hawai`i *nei*. And the constitution of the United States, they. . . . But those that came after the Vietnamese War, oh my goodness, that's a big flop.

WN: Why, what is the difference?

JM: The difference is that some of them are in the jail house. And well, they didn't learn anything from the Samoans that came here.

WN: These are those that came after '65?

JM: Yeah, oh yeah. These came after '65. These are all, the majority, well, I can't say majority, I say about, 10 or 20 percent of them are troublemakers. Especially the generation, the young boys and the young girls, they seem like they it, you know. Especially if they big, man. And that's bad. And one example is the boy who wrestling. He'll never make it. He'll never make it, because his attitude is bad. He got a bad attitude in that Japanese culture. You gotta learn, you know, you got to be humble. But there's no humbleness in that Samoan boy. Oh, the mother and dad are proud, I don't know what they proud about. They don't want to admit that he has a fault.

So, the majority of the Samoans, I'm happy for them to come here. Only thing is we don't have enough counselors. And if we do have counselors, they not too well versed in the American system. They still try to fall back on their own system, and that's not too good. Hanneman is my nephew. Or you can say third cousin by---we're blood-related. Mufi Hanneman. And all the rest of his brothers and sisters. Mufi is good. Mufi is good because he speak their language, he understand. He don't speak it too much, but he's a good counselor. But there ain't too many guys like him. You don't have enough of that. My friend Neff [*Maiava*] would have been a good one. But he clown too much. He don't mean it, you know, but he clowns too much. He's older than I am, about two, three years older than me. But we get along real fine. He calls me, sometime I call him, you know. How you doing? How your day? Checking up on each other, making sure we still kicking (chuckles) since we past our sixty-fifth birthday already.

But I still believe that the Samoan community has done pretty good. Of course, there's a few of them, those in the jail house, I'm sorry, you know, jiminy Christmas. See, one thing I like about the Samoans, they got a strict discipline. But sometime, that discipline go beyond reasons (chuckles). Especially if you do something real bad. But their discipline I don't take it away. The old style, use the brush, use the stick, and the Samoans still do. As far as I'm concerned that's all right with me. You better believe it, because I'm telling you, some of this generation kids boy, you gotta pound 'em in the head. So they can straighten up and fly right. But other than that, I'm all for the Samoans coming over here, but I want them, you know, they come here they gotta change their attitude. And they gotta leave that *matai* system at home, back where it belongs in Samoa, not over here. They try to apply it here, see. And of course, there's a difference between the Samoans that come here and the Samoans that come from L_`ie, because we are two different religions, that's why. They got the Catholic Samoans, the

Baptist Samoans. They got the, I don't know if they got Jehovah, too. But then again, the LDS [*Latter-Day Saints*], the Mormons, we different. But when they get together, they all right, up to a point.

WN: So there are basic philosophical differences between Samoans who are Mormons and non-Mormon Samoans. Differences in where they come from, too, the background or the discipline?

JM: No, the background they get is still the same. It's just that we have two different beliefs here. But when they have festivities going together, you know, they both attend. Like the Samoan Day they have every year at Ke`ehi Lagoon. They all come, they all join in. The Latter-Day Saints, all the Samoans from all over, they come and participate. So far so good. See, Samoans, some of them, they don't want to lose, you know, they don't want to lose. They want to win all the time. And if they lose, oh man, that's it, that's trouble already. They find something to. . . . But I don't know, maybe this generation, maybe it's different. But the old generation, oh yeah, they don't like to lose. But they all right. I think each generation is little better. 'Cause last I heard, they had the Samoan Day at Ke`ehi Lagoon, there was no trouble. That's good. The only time they have no trouble is if they don't drink liquor, beer especially, or hard liquor. 'Cause sometime they act like a bunch of Indians. And no offense against my Indian friends.

The only thing that cracks me up is, I love my Samoan brothers, you better believe it, but sometimes I gotta turn my head, man, and walk the other way because I don't want to see what they're doing. And only the law can handle that. And I've been brought up to leave well enough alone, sometimes. But when it comes to the Samoans, I don't usually pin 'em down too much. I watch what I say to them because I can't say the same thing I could say to the Hawaiian or to the Japanese or the *Haole* like I would to the Samoan. Because of their inferiority complex. Some of them get angry fast for no reason at all, sometime. But some of them are cool, but you ain't gonna find too many of them, cool headed. So, when I was among the Samoans, I watch what I say. Even though I'm the oldest in the group, and they respect me, but that's it. As long as I don't rile them up (laughs). But they could care less, yeah. I'm telling you, this generation, terrible now.

So, other than that I'm glad to see the Samoans are here now. And I think the majority of them are doing all right except for a few. Every now and then they have a little. . . . So far I haven't heard no hassle from Kuhio [*Park*] Terrace, yet. So far it's been good. And I hope they keep it up that way. Of course majority [*living*] over there is all Samoans, man. If not majority, I would say about 40 percent is Samoans over there. Some of them are just satisfied with what they have at the present, and for tomorrow, each day. Well, their philosophy is all right, in a sense.

WN: Okay, well, I'm ready to turn this off. Do you have any last things you want to say about your life?

JM: If I live another ten years, I'll be happy. If I live another twenty I'll be more than happy. Then you come back and interview me again.

WN: Okay.

JM: Ten years from today. In fact, come on my birthday month. Yeah, ten or five years. Let's make it five years.

WN: Five years, okay.

JM: Five years, 1997.

WN: Okay, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW