

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Donald Dias
Frances Dias Koo

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BY: Arlene Ching (A.C.)

Donald Dias, Frances Koo and Mildred Chinen were interviewed on July 20, 2007, at the home of Donald and Twila Dias in Ewa Beach, O'ahu.

A.C.: And today, Mildred, Frances and Donald are going to talk about primarily being in old time 'Aiea and some of the different places that they knew. Donald, what do --- when you talk story with your family and you tell them about old time in 'Aiea, what do you tell them about?

Donald: I tell them about when I was young and growing up as a child. And I used to explain to them, in the language that they can understand. Just a common language. Sometimes we use 'pidgin' to communicate with more, because depends on what nationality, makeup we are. Or, we use the Queen's Language as commonly called by the newspapers.

A.C.: But when you were growing up in 'Aiea, in all different camps there were, wasn't pidgin more commonly used?

Donald: Pidgin was used very, very much because of the ethnic makeup of the different workers that were assigned to the plantations.

A.C.: And what were those ethnic makeup?

Donald: The ethnic makeup was, as history tells us, that the majority of the people, who were brought in, were from outside of the United States and they were foreigners. And they came from as far as Japan and China. They came all the way from the Philippines. They came from Europe and as far as Portugal and the Azores, and other parts of the world, including South America, and the majority of the Pacific Islands.

Kalauao Pump Camp (1932-1935)

A.C.: And what about your family? How did your family end up in---settled in 'Aiea? Was it the plantation?

Donald: My father worked for the City & County of Honolulu as a timekeeper, prior to 1931. There was change in government. As a result in the change in government and the mayor lost his job, my father also lost his job because they call it the “spoils” system. And whoever was in office, would bring his own people into office. So, it was recommended that my father seek assistance with Honolulu Plantation which is known to be the plantation in ‘Aiea. And this was done before I was even here. And, he was fortunate to getting his assignment and getting his family settled. And I believe they settled in Waimalu Pump area, which is known to be Pearlridge Shopping Center.

A.C.: The pump area?

Donald: The pump area is known to be the Sumida Watercress Farm.

A.C.: So that pump area was plantation?

Donald: Yes, the plantation was using it to irrigate their sugarcane fields and the surrounding area. They installed water pump and the natural artesian system coming from the ground, was used to irrigate the different sugarcane fields.

A.C.: What was your dad’s job?

Donald: My father’s job was to transport the workers in the morning to the various fields that they were assigned to coordinate the irrigation of the sugarcane fields. That was done in the early hours of the morning, I believe anytime after 4:30, 5:00. After this assignment, he would come back and he would pick up the young children, and transport them all to the different schools surrounding the plantation areas. ‘Aiea Elementary [when it was formerly located near the current Waimalu Elementary] There was one in Pearl City and (one) up by Halawa. After that, he would be assigned to pick up the elderly people and take them to their different medical doctors appointments.

A.C.: Was he taking them to a doctor’s appointments in ‘Aiea?

Donald: He took them to the ‘Aiea Hospital.

A.C.: What kind of vehicle was he driving?

Donald: He was driving a White. It was a brand of the truck. And it was made up with a cage in the back of the truck. They had one door in the rear of it. And it was wired in. And it had canvas in case it was raining. You could lower the side and stuff, to protect the people sitting inside this truck.

A.C.: So people would have to step up into the back of the truck and they have benches that they could sit on---

Donald: Right. The whole thing in the back had benches on both sides of the truck.

And they would be seated and he would take them to the different appointments that they had.

A.C.: So he was ferrying people in his truck back and forth?

Donald: Yes. And he moved to meet the various people throughout the entire plantation. And at the end of the day, after the medical appointments were finished in the late morning, besides he ate, he took his lunch hour, is that, he would return them to their houses. And now, school was letting out. He would pick up the different children and take them off to the various camps surrounding the plantation that, uh, they came from. And then, by the time that those finished, he would pick up the different workmen from the fields that he dropped them off in the morning. And that was his regular workday.

Now, coming down into the weekends, he also was assigned by the plantation, to pick up the different young people who belonged to the Hi-Y Club, for the YMCA clubs, and take them to their meetings or competitions throughout the leeward side, all the way out to 'Ewa, Waipahu, Waialua Plantation, Wahiawa, Hale'iwa, Kahuku. And these young people would compete in the various sports, depending on the season, with the other plantation children.

A.C.: And were these sports like baseball, basketball?

Donald: There were all the sports, with baseball. They were basketball. They were football. But this was the barefoot league. They didn't have the high schools at that time. And eventually, when that came down, he didn't have those assignments. Schools took care of their own. And this went on until 1941. So I came into the plantation, I believe. I was born in 1931. In Kalihi. And –

A.C.: May I interrupt for a minute? What part of Kalihi? Were you born, like lower Kalihi?

Donald: I know the exact address, because, there's a little story that's connected with it. It's 728 Mokauea Street. And why I say this is that some years later, I asked my mother, "How come the application on my birth certificate has Kapi'olani Maternity Hospital scratched out on the address? And it has 728 Mokauea Street?" And she said, "Because you didn't make it to the hospital! You were born premature. And that's correct. You're born at that address. On the front steps of the house." I told them, "Oh. Oh boy. Must have been rough."

A.C.: Well. Let me ask Frances at this time. How many brothers and sisters are there in the family?

Frances: Two brothers. three sisters. Five of us. I'm number (pause) four. Donald is number five. (Discusses the house in Kalihi and the family move to Honolulu Plantation's Kalauao Pump Camp.)

A.C.: I didn't even realize that, uh, there was a Kalauao Pump.

Frances: Yes, Pump Six.

A.C.: Because that the fresh water, uh, artesian (water) that's coming out of the Sumida (Watercress Farm), is Kalauao. There's actually is a sign on the farm there, and it says Kalauao Wells.

Frances: Yes.

Donald: And if you look on the bridge right over there on Kam High--- Kamehameha Highway, it has Kalauao.

A.C.: The stream. But you said it was Pump Six?

Frances: Yes.

A.C.: Well, how big was that camp?

Donald: It only had four houses and one pump house...Well, right next to it, was 'Aiea Hospital...So, the hospital has its own hospital rooms for the various patients and the staff that lived on the property. So even though the pumping station was in the lower portion, it didn't look like it was huge, and all this land, true, but you couldn't put anything on the water that was coming out, so that's why Mr. Sumida worked a deal with the landlord, which was Bishop Estate at that time. Today it is Kamehameha Schools. And they get their lease through that and they worked out a deal, to work it separate. So, the land was just makai of the 'Aiea Hospital. And then, right next to it, had some other homes, but was not connected with the plantation.

A.C.: The 'Aiea Hospital was not part of the plantation?

Donald: It was connected with the plantation, but not contracted. It was separated.

A.C.: But the land, that the pump was on---Was that plantation?

Donald: That's plantation land... We grew up. We didn't stay there too long. I think we stayed there for little over a year. Then they moved us up to New Mill Camp. Which is located in 'Aiea adjacent to the sugar mill.

New Mill Camp (1935-1947)

A.C.: So about when did you move, when did you move to New Mill Camp?

Donald: That's about 1935 plus. I believe it's sometime in 1935, according to my older sister who lives in Las Vegas.

Frances: We had three bedrooms and one bath.

A.C.: Did the plantation help you move? Or did neighbors help you move?

Donald: Yes. They helped you move everything. And then, you would have to furnish your own furniture and stuff like that. But every time, we made a move, for the young children, it was like a circus. Well, it's a lot of fun! Plus, you're changing your surroundings. You're meeting more people. So, you know, say goodbye to the old friends and see you later! And you get to meet new people. So I took it as enjoyment---enjoyable. So when we moved up to New Mill Camp. Then we got to know our neighbors, surrounding us in the area. We were right across the street from the boarding house. Why did we call it the boarding house? Because the majority of the workers were all single men, of different nationalities. They all worked for the plantation. They had their own dormitories there. They had their washhouses. They had their furo, so they could take a bath. And, I believe they had a cafeteria area.

We lived there a little over a year. Then my parents told us that we were moving to another house. "Again!" "Boy! I like this!" I don't know about my sisters. They're much older and probably, they got a little upset. But, we moved up the road to the top of

the section of where the New Mill Camp was, and they had built ten homes. And these homes were four bedrooms. Two full baths. Living room. Dining room. Kitchen. Washhouse. A garage underneath the house.

The plantation built all their homes. And what they did from the Pacific Northwest, out of Washington state, plantation "Big Five," they had their friends up there. And they would order their lumber in logs, and they would float them, connected together. And have them, come across the ocean, and that way, by it got to Honolulu, the salt water would treat the lumber, and get rid of all the bugs and everything that was in. And then they take it into the plantation. They had their own lumber mills. And they would cut the lumber down to the different sizes. And they would use the lumber to build their homes. And their buildings that they needed to run the operation of the plantation. And each plantation had their own! Here in Honolulu. Not one plantation had one, and the other one didn't. They all had the same type of operation.

A.C.: So at Honolulu Plantation, they could---they had a shop that could do that?

Donald: Yes. They had their own carpenter shop. The only thing---if they needed metal, they went to Honolulu Iron Works. And then---the houses had corrugated iron roofs. So they would order the corrugated iron, the size for the roofs. And then they would use that to put on the roof, for the houses. And why, is that, I guess, the corrugated iron, the way it's make up, the metal, lasted longer than wood. There wouldn't be wood rot. And that's why you used it. And you find out, as you travel throughout the different islands, as you go across Maui. You go on the Big Island. As you go close to plantation areas, you start to see all these corrugated iron roofs. And you know, the plantation was nearby. Yeah. And then they had their resources. They had the contacts. They had the money. And they knew exactly how they would spend it. And how much would go for the price of one home, to care for one family and how much that family would put out and return the money to them eventually.

A.C.: So. Your father and mother moved to this home. Did the plantation approach them and say, "Do you mind paying more money?"

Donald: We didn't pay any rent.

A.C.: Oh, you didn't?

Donald: Nope! To my knowledge, we didn't pay any rent at that time. And this didn't come unto a later date. So. Up to the time we moved into the big home, which

was the latter part of the year. I believe it was close to November of 1937. They moved into the last of the big homes. And then, uh, we had a bigger yard. And you could look from the home. Look straight into Pearl Harbor. You look straight into Battleship Row! And that is where our house sat. To today, it sits right there. And then, when you look out, you can see all this. And it still exists today.

A.C.: Who are your neighbors? Did they---

Donald: Next door neighbor, and because we were in a row, was the Muraki family.

Frances: Hideo Muraki.

Donald: And he worked, I believe, in the metal shop. And he was good friends with my father. And the next house, there was a road in between. Plantation road that went down into the valley. And right there, the house, continuing on, it was the Torres family. And he had, I think, was three sons and one daughter. And Mr. Torres worked in one of the machine shops. And next to Mr. Torres's house. I forgot where it was---

Frances: Pimental.

Donald: And who's that Hawaiian family? Spencer?

Frances: Uh. Further down.

Donald: Yes. There was another house after that. Mr. Spencer and his family. And uh, his two sons became police officers. And then, going actually, all ten houses, we knew who the people were. But then, today, my sister Frances lives in our family house. Till today.

House Lot Sales

A.C.: Okay. So when you lived in that home, did it have an address?

Donald: Yup. The address was in the back of the house. And they assigned it to "Aiea Heights Drive."

A.C.: Oh. So they had already used the name 'Aiea Heights Drive in the 1930s, and they gave you, like a street number?

Frances: Yes, because we had the homes going up to the 'Aiea area.

Donald: Because the street that came down, in front of the two houses, our neighbor's house, it was the fisherman's house.

Frances: Hakina. No. Oh. Kaulainahe'e. Yeah. My property starts from Kaulainahee. Because my driveway comes in from Kaulainahe'e (Street). And right across the street, is Hakina (Street).

A.C.: Now, are you on level lots? Or is sloping?

Frances: Sloping.

Donald: Sloping. And why this was all done. The plantation had it in the works that they were going to sell the house. That was not made public yet. When they were subdividing all of this, and giving the different addresses. House number. New Mill Camp. With your name. And that's it.

And eventually, after they named the street going mauka makai, you find it out that ten houses; those people get their addresses after that. They're using the house numbers. Like Mr. Torres. Because, what happened, is that, at a later date, they moved our neighbor's house, up in the corner. Moved the whole house.

A.C.: But at that time, in the later thirties. Already, the richer, more affluent people were living on 'Aiea Heights Drive?

Donald: Yes. They were above us on 'Aiea Heights Drive. Going all the way up into the hills.

A.C.: But you were among the first families to live in homes that were not just in the camps itself. But above it. And you were living on 'Aiea Heights Drive, like these other people?

Frances: But that was part of the camp, though.

Donald: We were part of the camp.

A.C.: You considered yourself living in New Mill Camp?

Frances: Right.

Donald: Yes. Right. And then, the war came. 1941. That's another story. At another date. And then, toward the ending of Honolulu Plantation, they said---there was a big announcement. Plantation announced. It was selling out its property, of the plantation in 1948. Which they did. But they already notified the landowners, who was going to be able to buy. And who was going to be able to stay on the property. And who was going to be able to stay on the land. All others, that didn't get this notice, would have to move within thirty days.

A.C.: Wow. That's a short period of time.

Donald: Shortly thereafter, there was the strike of 1949.

A.C.: But the strike wasn't just at Honolulu Plantation?

Donald: No. The strike was in town on its transportation portion of the HRT (Honolulu Rapid Transit Co.). That was a big strike. But then that's when the plantation decided, we might as well pull the plug at the same time. To soften the cushion. Which they did. And not much the unions could do. They squawked loud. And threatened a lot of things. But ----

A.C.: Did your father come home and talk about this?

Donald: No. No. That was none of our business for the children. No. Then we heard all kinds of stories in the camp. And we just kept it to ourselves. And then, he didn't even tell us to keep our mouths shut.

A.C.: Well, people talk. I mean, of course. But personally, your father's kept these things to himself and only talked it with his---

Donald: Yes. He talked with my mother and that's it. And he wouldn't explain any of the "A-Z" about the dealings of the plantation. And I got to know more about it, as I got older. We'd learn a little bit more, a little bit more. And when I got older. That's another portion.

A.C.: Could I backtrack and ask you about your mother for a few minutes? During this time, did she work for the plantation?

Donald: No. My mother. When we moved, she was a housewife. Always. From Kalihi. And on the plantation, with the early years. Until the war years. Then she got a job, working at Waimano Home. In Pearl City. As a caretaker. And she would work with patients up there. And quite a few of the females on the plantation. We found out later. They were nurses. Clerks. And they all worked up there. Quietly, without telling each other what they were doing.

A.C.: Why was that?

Donald: I guess it was such a good thing that got the help of the plantation again. And then. You don't say too much. Don't worry about it. And it was a silent thing. You don't talk about it. And then, this went on, until the outbreak of the war. But that's another story, because she continued to work for government after the outbreak of the war.

A.C.: And just to close off this side of the tape, your mother is the Hawaiian side of the family?

Frances: My mother is pure Hawaiian. She's from the island of Moloka'i. Born and raised.

Donald: My father is mixed. Half Hawaiian. We never knew how much Portuguese we were, other than our last name. We're Chinese ancestry and a little bit of English. That I know of, because, our ancestry on my father's side is English ancestry.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

'Aiea before World War II

A.C.: I'm looking at an O'ahu map book, uh, 2003 edition, of 'Aiea on page 59 and 60.

Donald: Moanalua Road and 'Aiea Heights Drive. And that's the beginning of 'Aiea town. Now, Moanalua Road has many, many lanes. But it's still the same road that it was all these years. And that hasn't been modified. Only the lanes have been widened. But the road and the design of the intersection have not changed. It's sloping and it's going uphill. I don't know what the percentage of grade is.

If you go towards—Look towards the Honolulu direction. You would see Moanalua (Road) and 'Aiea Heights Drive. If you look across from the store, there used to be big banyan tree. And the taxi stand---the taxis used to park underneath the tree. In front of the store. Right off the road. And the store was in the background. And it's like---almost like a three story building, but it actually was only two story. And you walk up the front steps, you go into the main store. 'Aiea General Store.

A.C.: Was it like Arakawa's (Arakawa's in Waipahu on Depot Road, a general store in business from 1909 to 1995)?

Donald: Yes. Like Arakawa's, which is wide-open with all the counters like this, and you would have all the display of goodies over there. For the different departments. Linen department. They sold stoves, you know. Stoves. Charcoal stoves.

A.C.: Were things neat and organized in there?

Donald: Yes. It was---and they would have prices on it. Including, ah, lunch tin.

A.C.: Oh. The aluminum kind with the lid on it.

Donald: Yes, because the school children had to take their own lunch from home.

A.C.: I know that adults could have credit at the store.

Donald: And they also take, uh, their lunch. Now that was the 'Aiea General Store. And then the credit, that you lived off the plantation, they had a little tablet book with your name on top. And they had a bongo number. And this bongo number---the adults used it. Not the children. It's that they would use it to buy things. They didn't have enough money to pay it off. They would mark it in the book and they would give you credit. And the next closest payday, you would settle with the store.

A.C.: And how often was payday?

Donald: I believe it was twice a month. Yeah. And they would get paid, out in the different areas. They had a paymaster for the business office. And then they took the payroll out to the workers. Out in the field. In the different areas, where they paid you. They would be paid accordingly.

A.C.: But your father didn't have to do that.

Donald: Well, he went into the paymaster's office. Even though he worked out of the business office.

A.C.: Oh. That's how he would get his assignments too?

Donald: Well, he would have to take things in town, for the business office. Take a lot of paperwork for the main banks, I believe, and do the business for the plantation besides his regular assigned deliveries and dropping of people, and stuff.

A.C.: So did he work seven days a week?

Donald: I would say he worked about----something like that.

A.C.: Mean less on the weekends? He had his regular---

Donald: He would schedule. He could modify sometimes he'd be off on a Saturday. Sunday, he'd be off in the afternoon. But in the later afternoons, he would have to go pick up the boys from their---- either, uh, games that were dropped off earlier. And then they're all coming back home.

A.C.: So, since they didn't have cell phones, I mean, did he use a telephone sometimes?

Donald: Okay. 'Aiea was located out in the country. And the zone--- we had to talk to the operator. Yeah. We were out of the zone of, uh, Fort Shafter or Moanalua. So we were out in the boondocks. And then, if you want to call beyond that zone, you 'd have to ring the bell. And then you talk to someone down the line. If they would answer. If not, you try later. But if you to call beyond that, you have to talk to the operator. I believe you get charged or stuff. Long distance.

A.C.: For your father's job, did he have to use the telephone a lot?

Donald: No. Most of the dealings, he dealt with the office. Because, where the sugar mill is, there was another office over there. And that's the office that he worked in

and out of.

A.C.: So where your father would work--- if I looked at this map, and I know where the mill was, where was his workplace in the map of the mill?

Donald: Okay. You see the building of the Hawaii Sugar Planters (former Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association building, now Hawaii Agriculture Research Center), that's where his office was. That's where his office was. That building was not there. That was put in many years later. The plantation was part of the sugar mill complex. And that's where he parked his truck all the time. Right there in the back.

A.C.: So, when he finished work, would he walk home? Would he take a shortcut from his office?

Donald: Oh no. He had his own Model A car! He would drive it to work, if my mother wasn't going to use it. And then he would park it over there and go work with the plantation truck, until the end of the day, then come home with it.

A.C.: He'd drive home.

Donald: Let's say that, even though we lived on plantation, we lived comfortably. Lot of things, you know, people didn't know (we didn't pay for), especially, no rent. That I knew of. Until a later date. Now after the plantation was sold. Ah yes, the rent came out.

A.C.: Do you recall how much the rent was?

Donald: Well, it varied for the different people in the house, so---

A.C.: Was it based on the house? Or was it based on the worker's salary?

Donald: I couldn't say for the people who were paying the rent to the plantation. When they sold, they sold directly to my parents.

A.C.: And the house was theirs, and the land?

Donald: Yes, And then, there was a note on the house. And we paid the note to the bank.

A.C.: Was the bank, the Bank of Hawaii?

Donald: I believe it was.

A.C.: It's right there in 'Aiea.

Donald: Yes. A few of the people decided not to take the 'sweetheart' deal. But they were upset because they could no longer live there.

Well, you said that the sale of the homes occurred----

Donald: In '48.

A.C.: And the plantation strike was around that time.

Donald: Yeah. Right after that. When the plantation found out anything. Because it belongs to the ILWU (International and Longshore Warehouse Union) now. The longshore workmen people.

'Aiea School

A.C.: I just wanted to ask a few, like, everyday kind of things about the plantation. (Questioning leads to asking about school) How far away was the school from where you lived I? (More questions about the route)

Frances: I know you walked down from where the theater used to be. And cross over to where the shopping center is now. I don't think there were any ditches then. We didn't have to cross any ditches. I know there were steps coming down because--- Oh. We had to pass over rail--- the railroad---

A.C.: The railroad for the mill?

Frances: Yes. It was right where those homes are.

A.C.: I heard that the mill used to have, like, um, what to do call it? Siren?

Frances: The whistle.

A.C.: The whistle was for starting work. But it also told you that school was

going to start too?

Donald: No. School had their own system.

A.C.: But you could hear the mill whistle at the school?

Frances: For the workers. Um hmm (Yes). Because it's right close by.

A.C.: Were there other sounds too? Other than the sound of the whistle?

Frances: The trains. Hauling up the cane.

Donald: And then when the mill would start up, the generators inside the mill and everything, would be rumbling and everything. And the sound coming out. And you would see the raw cane going in, up the chute, being washed and everything. Then they grind it all up. Then it would disappear. So then, later on, you would see the trucks come up on the side and---- (Arlene asked if it could be seen from the school.) No. It's inside the building.

Frances: In fact, the classrooms only had windows on one side. Because there were walls.

Donald: And the roof sloped down.

A.C.: And was the school like, with galvanized iron roofs? Was it regular roofs?

Frances: I don't think so. It was regular.

Donald: Had that red, yeah?

Frances: Yes. Red rooftop.

A.C.: But the color of the wood was----red?

Donald: Was it clear? Little more expensive wood.

A.C.: And the school. It wasn't on the ground? I think it's raised above the ground because you had to walk up steps?

Frances: Maybe one or two steps.

A.C.: And each classroom, um, different grades?

Frances: We had about two classrooms for one grade, I think. Or was it one? A-B-C. A Class. B Class. C Class.

A.C.: Oh? In each grade?

Frances: Um hmm (Yes).

A.C.: But when I'm looking at the class pictures, it's like they're holding numbers. Is it the classroom number?

Frances: Probably room numbers.

A.C.: Did they use the same room numbers for each---you know?

Frances: For different grades.

A.C.: But the following year, would that classroom pretty much be used for the same grade?

Frances: I think so.

A.C.: Did you wear a dress to school?

Frances: Yes.

A.C.: Did your mother make sure you were wearing dresses? Or you just liked wearing dresses?

Frances: We were not like children of today, where you can wear shorts to school.

A.C.: Really? Girls didn't wear shorts? OK. Always wearing a dress. Is there anything else—

Donald: I'll tell you about the dress (code). I had to wear button up shorts with matching shirt.

A.C.: To 'Aiea School?

Donald: You know, like you see the Our Gang comedy.

A.C.: Somebody was ironing and washing clothes?

Donald: We had a women do our laundry for us. Take care of the interior of the household. Do the starching and ironing. But I went to school like that, all the way to the ninth grade. And I didn't like it. Because I looked like Mortimer Snerd. [Ventriloquist Edgar Bergen had a character named Mortimer Snerd in a radio show from 1936 to 1956.]

Frances: Well you had shorts on. Only the style was different in those days.

Donald: But I had button up shorts on my matching pants and mother used to buy the outfit from Yat Loy Clothing down on King Street and Nuuanu (Street). Right? Yat Loy?

Frances: Yes. Nuuanu and King.

Donald: And when I transferred to school down to Central Intermediate, that first day, she let me out of the car. I didn't want to go into the school! Everybody was

laughing and “Look that boy!” And I was a ninth grader! I was already turning into a man already!

A.C.: Well, remember. I saw that yearbook picture. So I can kind of put the shorts on the face.

Donald: And then we were well dressed actually. Plantation kids. You know, we weren't sloppy or anything. We didn't just wear coveralls. You wore proper school clothes. Now, if you went to Japanese school, later on, you would have to change your clothes to your black pants, your white shirt. Depending on what the occasion was.

Frances: We had our own handmade, what you call, school bags. It was made so your arm slid inside the strap. The strap went across your chest and the bag hung on the side of your body with books inside.

A.C.: So all the kids have the same kind of bag?

Frances: Yes.

A.C.: Would people would buy it or make it?

Frances: Make it.

Donald: Make it at home. And then, when the war came, you had to include your gas (mask) bag.

A.C.: Oh yes. Because you had to carry that.

Frances: You see, it's something like this. With a handle over here, where, you know, you can open this up over here. And the handle would be on one side, this side. You can put your arm in. You know, like this.

Donald: And your lunch tin in there, too!

A.C.: And isn't the lunch tin, oh, about this big?

Donald: Oh no. Small. Just enough to feed you.

Frances: Small, like that.

A.C.: So what kind of schoolbooks would you be taking back and forth? Were they writing tablets?

Frances: Yes. Writing tablets. You know, those black-and-white marble ones on the outside.

Donald: You carry your own ruler. A six-inch ruler. And then you keep your pencils. And your sharpener.

Frances: And you had this little container.

Donald: Little container, you put it in. Sort of close it up. And put it in your bag. And then you have the book. Tablet. Not the folder. Tablet. You know the one that look like a rock on the cover?

Frances: Black and white. Composition book.

Mildred: We used to call it "black" tablet.

Donald: You'd do a subject and everything. You would get graded. Right in the same book.

A.C.: How many books did you have to have?

Donald: Sometimes, you'd have about two or three. Depends on what class you're in. But we didn't carry the books, like they carry today. We left the reading material books right there in the room. And if you needed something extra, you'd go the library. Sometimes, as you got older, you worked in the library.

A.C.: Did you used to have a book car come and bring children's books?

Frances: At the school.

Donald: Yeah. At the school.

A.C.: Yeah. The Library of Hawaii, the downtown library, took care of that.

Donald: And that was a treat to go on an excursion and go to the real Library of Hawaii. The big white building downtown.

A.C.: All right, going down to the school, from what I'm hearing, you had eighth grade? Kindergarten to eighth grade?

Frances: Ninth.

A.C.: Ninth grade. And there may have been three classes for each grade?

Donald: Junior. Junior school. It was called.

Frances: We had three. Because they split. In your classes.

A.C.: So "A" "B" and "C" reflected on what kind of student you were?

Frances: Yes,

A.C.: (Based) on your grades from the previous year?

Frances: Right.

Donald: It was a junior high school. That's why.

A.C.: So. By the time you're in seventh, eighth, ninth grade, are they already, sort of telling you what kind of jobs you might be interested in?

Donald: No. Because you're going up to high school. You're going to finish ninth grade and then you're going to go to Waipahu High School.

A.C.: Well. But some people didn't. Right?

Donald: Yes. They finished and they went to work.

A.C.: And people wanted to work. They could do it.

Donald: Yes. And they were asked if they wanted to do that. Some of them had to help their parents. And as times changed, the plantation changed. They changed. But they didn't take you out of school, ah, right away. They would try to get you your full education. High school. And then, Waipahu was so far away. So a lot of kids went to town schools. That's why they ended up going to Kapalama. They went to Stevenson. They went to Roosevelt. A lot of them transferred to McKinley High School. Farrington came out in the thirties.

A.C.: But the plantation didn't drive the high school kids?

Donald: No. They didn't serve any transportation. They had the O'ahu Railway and (Land) Company that had the bus service going around the island. And that's what you called it.

A.C.: But to go to Waipahu High School by bus, that must have taken forty minutes? Half an hour?

Frances: We went by bus in those days.

Donald: Yes. You would make sure you'd get the earlier one (for school).

Frances: They had school buses. In the morning, they had school buses.

A.C.: So there was a bus stop where 'Aiea kids could catch---

Mildred: Yeah. There were so many places with buses.

A.C.: So if you were going catch it to go McKinley or Farrington, or----

Mildred No. Um, this was only for Waipahu High. They would pick us up. There was always a bus going and coming home.

Donald: Then, Wa 'anae had just started its high school program also, you know. That's after Waipahu. It started much later.

World War II

A.C.: Now, when the war started. Of course, school stopped for two months or more?

Donald: You just kept to your home. And then. I think we went to work out in the fields for the--- raising the vegetables. The Victory Gardens. And then some of us, got to work on the pineapple fields. And some of us were asked to go work in the cane fields.

Frances: That was during school times. One day (a week),

A.C.: Was that because the workers were helping with the defense efforts? Or did they just need more people?

Donald: Actually, the first year, the school was shut down for a good six months. Because there was a lot of confusion.

A.C.: My understanding was that they were using the schools---

Donald: Well, the military came in and they temporarily set up over there. I know up at the 'Aiea Gym, where the high school is today, the military took over that entire complex over there. And that was the (U.S. Army) Signal Corps. And up on the hillside, where you were talking about the truck that parks, below the football field?

Frances: Yes,

Donald: That was the Army Artillery.

A.C.: Oh. The Signal Corps and the artillery?

Donald: Yes. The artillery was over there.

Frances: There was no high school over there.

Donald: Yeah. And how I know this, is that, after school, I would sell newspapers. And these were all my routes that I used to go sell to the military. I would sell the Star-Bulletin. The evening paper.

A.C.: So the Signal Corps would be over where the high school was?

Donald: Where the gym is.

A.C.: And the artillery was--- where, again?

Donald: Where the football field is. 'Aiea (High School) football field. Not the baseball field. The football field.

A.C.: Was the land pretty level there?

Donald: No. It's modified. But it was up high.

Frances: The school wasn't there.

Donald: There was a valley going down. Kalauao Valley going through there. And it eventually became the H-1.

A.C.: It wasn't called Enchanted Hills at that time, was it?

Donald: No, no. no. No.

A.C.: Okay. That was where the subdivision went (up).

Donald: Way later. Way later.

A.C.: But did they have that road going up? Kaamilo?

Donald: No. That was all plantation roads. No Kaamilo at that time. And Ulune. Wasn't existing in the old days. Was just a plantation road.

A.C.: The Aiea Hospital was over there.

Donald: Yes. You can get to it by coming around through 'Aiea town on Moanalua Road. And then, you come around the corner. And you would hit the supervisors' homes, after the 'Aiea General Store. Both left and right side. The right side was up on the hillside. And all of your plantation supervisors were assigned to the big homes up there.

So the homes that are on Moanalua Road, right before Alvah Scott School is right now. Are those supervisors' homes? There's quite a few.

Donald, Frances: Yes.

A.C.: And then after that, on the ridge, is where the manager's home is?

Frances: The manager's home was there.

Donald: And that was sold to the individuals. Or other people that the plantation decided to sell it too.

A.C.: And then when you got to the hospital, were there just homes there?

Donald: On the right hand side, before the plantation hospital, were the---

Frances: The nurses' quarters.

Donald: Yes. On the bottom part. Actually the hospital was out on like a plateau. And then you would have to drive up on the side of the hill. And to come up, in the back of the hospital. And on that side, they had cottages for the nurses.

Frances: Where Pali Momi (Kapi'olani Medical Center at Pali Momi) is.

Donald: At the outbreak of the war, the Navy had two locations. And actually, what they're talking about is, you know, Camp Smith? The Marine Corps? That was Aiea Hospital for the military. [Aiea Naval Hospital, was constructed on Halawa Heights in 1941 and deactivated in 1949. Throughout World War II, it served as an interim treatment stop for thousands of wounded sailors and marines on their way home from the war in the Pacific. Following the battle for Iwo Jima in February - March 1945, the hospital was filled to overflowing with 5,676 in-patients.]

A.C.: So, they would take the patients all the way up (the mountain)?

Frances: Halawa area.

Donald: The plantation had used it, along with the military. They had its operating room and everything. Well, they made the military one. But they already started to use--- and then, they had operated on the ones that needed the operation as soon as possible. Then, reassign them to the military hospitals. Whether you go back to Hickam Field. Or you go back to Fort Shafter, where they had this old Tripler General Hospital. It existed over there. On a smaller scale.

A.C.: But the bigger hospital was up at Camp Smith? And that's where---

Donald: That's where the Marine Corps eventually came. And that was General Smith. He's the one that made famous, something to do with Iwo Jima. [The installation was renamed on June 8, 1955, in honor of the first commanding general of the Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific and a highly regarded Marine leader during World War II, General Holland McTyeire "Howlin' Mad" Smith.] I wasn't in the Marine Corps. You got to ask a

marine about that. And that's what they're talking about, because 'Aiea Hospital had its own patients. And if they needed the priority, they would get the same. They wouldn't be kicked on the side, you know, because of their status.

A.C.: So, then, Donald, the hospital that was where Pali Momi is, what that--- that couldn't have been called Aiea Hospital at the same time?

Donald: That was Aiea Plantation Hospital. And then, eventually, it became known as Leeward Hospital. The name changed after the war. The doctors got together. The doctors bought out the hospital. And they got it from the plantation. And that's when everything began to change. Today, we know that, uh, the hospital is owned by Kapi'olani Maternity Hospital.

A.C.: I'm going to stop the tape and we're going to take it up at another time.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

A.C.: I'm Arlene Ching and I'm going to be interviewing Donald Dias. So the tape recorder is going on August 3 here at the Dias home. So, we had a wonderful talk the last time and I wonder if you have anything to add.

Donald: Yes. What year are we going to start from?

A.C.: Well, I think that the last time I was here, Mildred and Frances were in the background, probably wanting you to correct something. I can make those corrections in my transcript like I mentioned, in parentheses. So, do you recall, was it something about where you lived in 'Aiea? On Kalauao Pump Camp.

Donald: We started living in 'Aiea down in Kalauao, which is known today as Pearlridge. The area that our home was located at Pearlridge today, is right on the edge, where there's a restaurant over there (Monterey Bay Cannery).

A.C.: And that is the pump camp, you were saying, for Kalauao?

Donald: Kalauao Water Pump. There was a big pump house and we're located on a hillside. Underground, going into, there was an artesian well. That water was coming

out, openly, into the land. There was a Japanese family that was farming watercress in the wetlands, on the bottom part of where we lived.

A.C.: Was the family the Sumida family?

Donald: That was the Sumida family.

A.C.: So that was first generation.

Donald: Yes. That was from 1935 until today that I know of. We only stayed there for about a year and a half.

Frances: I know the Oshita family lived, what you call, Kalauao. Because I know Paul lives up the heights. Paul Oshita. I don't know where Howard lives. But he's still alive.

New Mill Camp in the 1930s

A.C.: So were you, when you moved into this home, your family was the first family to live in this new house.

Donald: Yes. I didn't see any other people over there. I don't know if we were the first or second.

A.C.: You were telling me that the homes, some had a garage underneath?

Frances: That was later ones.

Donald: Not in this area. There were no garages. This was a three bedroom homes with a bath and toilet, was in the house. The kitchen area had a stove and in the back was a water heater. The stove and the water heater were separate. They were close by, because the fuel was kerosene. That got to be my assignment everyday was to see that the kerosene bottles were filled up. In the backyard, there was a big can turned on its side, which was about a twenty-five gallon can and it held kerosene. I would take the bottle over there, fill it up and then take it back to the heater and you'd flip the bottle upside down. You'd put it down and through gravity, it would feed it to the water heater.

My job was to light the water heater at that time of the day.

A.C.: And would that be at nighttime then?

Donald: No. It was during the afternoon.

A.C.: When you came home from school?

Donald: Yed. I didn't put in on high. I used to get started and then, uh, I'd forgot about it. Then I would have to check the stove and just see if the kerosene bottle was full of kerosene. I didn't light it up or anything like that. I just made sure it was full.

A.C.: So then the kerosene was provided by the plantation?

Donald: Yes. It would come around about once a week and they'd run the hose to the backyard. They had a tanker out in the front of the house. Run the hose all the way to the back. They would hand pump it until it was full. Then they would leave.

A.C.: What color was your house painted? Do you remember?

Donald: It was sort of like a gray color that had a white stripe on it.

A.C.: In the middle? Going around?

Donald: Yeah, because certain portions of the plantation, the basic colors were actually green. Dark green with a white trimming.

A.C.: Was it painted or was it stained? Shiny? Or was it dull?

Donald: No. It was painted.

A.C.: And the roof was?

Donald: Roof was corrugated iron. Silver color. Gray. A silver color.

A.C.: Were the doors painted the same color? Was it a screen door? Two doors?

Donald: Yeah. Screen door was on the front portion of the house with a big solid door in the back. This was inside. Between the washhouse and the kitchen, there was a screen door inside the house.

A.C.: And were there steps going up to the house?

Donald: Uh, yeah. In the front, there were two steps. In the back, to go from the house to the washhouse, there were two steps. They had a wash tray area, a double wash tray area.

A.C.: Cast iron or cement?

Donald: It was cement. In later years, they brought in a washing machine and you could add to that area. Wash your clothes.

A.C.: So what kind of washing machine?

Donald: (It had) Rollers. And that was during the war years too, the rollers. Eventually they went to electric.

A.C.: And then in the back, there would be (clothes) lines for the washing, to hang the laundry?

Donald: Yes. The lines had holes to it, so, being that my mother was short, she would hang it on the wire, then raise the middle pole, and the clothes would all come up.

A.C.: Was it like an umbrella kind or a long one?

Donald: In the center was the high point. It took it off from the ground. And underneath the ground was the grass.

Frances: It was lying this way and it'd just go to the center part, and just lift it.
That's it.

A.C.: And, uh, was there cement for the floor for the washhouse?

Donald: Yes. In the washhouse area, it was concrete.

A.C.: Was the washhouse roof open-air?

Donald: It had lattice like that. You see the lattice over there? (Points to a fence in the Dias yard) The top half of the washhouse had lattice work. I don't know if it was screened. I guess eventually, it was screened in. But that's why the screen door was in the back over there, to keep the mosquitoes out.

Frances: No. I don't think the wash area was screened. It was just lattice.

Donald: It's open.

A.C.: And when you moved into this new house, did they have screened windows? And you had the casement for the windows that go up and down?

Donald: Window screens. Sash-in-door. We stayed up there up to 1938. I believe it was close to Thanksgiving. And then we moved up to the big house, further up the road and it was still in the same camp now.

A.C.: Right. New Mill Camp.

Donald: Only it was a bigger home. This home we moved into, was four bedrooms, two full baths, large living room. It didn't have anything like a dining room place.

Frances: The kitchen.

Donald: You ate in the kitchen area.

Frances: There was wall between the kitchen and the living area,

Donald: It was more of a custom rather than the design of the home.

Frances: And a one-car garage.

Donald: And a one-car garage was underneath the house. The house was raised up.

A.C.: Do you remember when the houses were being built, knowing that you were going to move into that house?

Donald: Yes. We knew what house they were going to. After I got through with school and did my chores, I used to go up the street and all my other friends who were moving in the near area, we went up to play. We'd look at our new houses, so we got to familiar with the house. Only thing I didn't like is that, this new house had an extra large yard.

A.C.: (Laughs) And you knew you would be doing the yard work.

Donald: I'd have to take care of the yard work. I told my father, "Are you getting promoted so we can have a yard man?" He said, "No. You're going to be in charge of the yard." I thought, "Oh no!"

Frances: We had a porch.

A.C.: Was the porch on the street side?

Frances: Facing Waikiki.

Donald: Actually, it was facing our driveway. And then, they'd look straight down if you sat down, if you looked, you could see straight to Pearl Harbor and you could see all of Pearl Harbor, part of Ford Island and all of, what do you call, Battleship Row. You could tell when the Navy was in town and when they were not. The number of ships in

the harbor and the number of ships that weren't in the harbor. And then you had a full view of the sugar mill. And on top of the sugar mill, just the roof line, was like a huge warehouse but you knew it was sugar mill and that's where they processed the sugarcane. They cleaned it. Then they came out with raw sugar which was brown in color.

A.C.: Large crystals or small crystals?

Donald: The crystals were mostly from the molasses that they extracted from the sugarcane. We used to call the crystals "ice candy." It wasn't that much, but, I used to hang out with a bunch of other kids, and we used to get to know the workmen at the mill. Then they asked us if we wanted "ice candy" but don't tell the (inaudible) so they gave us the "ice candy" which was the sugar candy. That was the start of the decaying of our teeth! (Laughs)

A.C.: No kidding! Too much sugar. At these kids, your age, you're also beginning to lose your real teeth.

Frances: And getting hyper.

A.C.: And Frances said, "And kids would get more hyper too." (Laughs) Well, that sugar was being processed, but it also was being refined.

Donald: Yeah. And actually the brown sugar was shipped out to California. It was refined. We didn't know that Honolulu Plantation was slowly turning into a refinery.

A.C.: So they didn't really announce it to the workers.

Donald: Oh, they didn't tell anybody. Right.

A.C.: Then people would worry that they would lose their jobs.

Donald: Yes. Not only that. Then they would ask for more money and stuff like that, so the plantation people were part of what you call, the Big Five. They knew how to get a budget, stick within a budget... And then, this, I guess, leaked out and problems came up, but before the problems came up---

December 7th 1941

Donald: December 7th, 1941, without knowing anything, I was on the front porch, eating an apple... I was eating the apple and I was looking down. "Oh. What's this? Smoke over there." Then one thing led to another. I called up into the house. My older sister. We called her "Sister," which was her nickname. Her real name was Juliet. "Sister!" "What do you want?" "Oh, they're making a movie out here." "Oh, don't worry about it." She was in the house. She just said, "Don't worry about it." So. I was watching it for about a good five or six minutes. O-ooh-oooh. I look. This man inside. He waved. I waved back at him. Huh! He waved. "Oh, he looked my neighbor. Japanese." You know. I look back down, and I start seeing smoke coming up. I see these things coming in and they dropped something in the water and it streaked the water and at the end, the thing go boom! Torpedoes.

A.C.: Do you think you saw the (U.S.S.) Arizona getting hit?

Donald: This was before the (U.S.S.) Arizona got hit. That's when I hear that the war started at 7:55. That's when the (U.S.S.) Arizona blew up. But before that, they were attacking Hickam Field. Because, Hickam Field in the background toward the ocean, had two big hangers. You could see the hangers. And they were burning down there. And in between the hangers, there were a lot of buildings. In between was burning. (A.C. mentions something about the planes on the ground) And over on Ford Island, we could see the center of the field, but it was too far away to see the activity of what they were doing. And then, the other ships started to move, trying to get out of the Pearl Harbor and they were being fired upon. This was going on, a good forty-five minutes before the (U.S.S.) Arizona blew up and it started to burn, and all the black smoke started to come out. That was the oil burning. And then the big explosion. And that was 7:55. And then, that darkened. I couldn't see beyond that. But my sister had come out in the interim. And when she saw, she was older than us, and she said, "Get in the house!" And I said, "No! I want to watch this!" "No, get in the house. This is nothing nice to be looking at." And then my father came up the driveway with his car.

Frances: With the bus.

Donald: The bus that he used.

A.C.: You mean, the bus? The plantation one with the seats inside?

Frances: Where he would pick up the boys every Sunday for baseball.

Donald: He told us, "Get in the bus, get in the bus!" So we got in the bus, and then I took my dog. I had a small little dog called Spot. He was running crazy because in the back of the house was Aiea Heights Drive. And all the people were walking! And all the commotion and everything. The dog got excited. So he broke his tie. I finally captured him and grabbed him. I took him with me. And my father took the whole family up to the Heen's residence. Way up to Heen Way today. We stayed up for about three months.

A.C.: Did you live in tents? Or in the house?

Donald: They had several houses on the property over there. We slept on the floor. We got our own. Stuff like that.

A.C.: When your dad gathered all of you, everybody, of course, is trying to move up and you know, so, some people were walking.

Donald: Majority of people was walking. You don't want to take most of the people because otherwise, you're overloaded.

A.C.: Did you grab your bedding and some clothes? Some food?

Donald: No, no. Nothing.

A.C.: You just evacuated?

Donald: Yes. Just left the house like that.

A.C.: Do you recall ever thinking that people were dying? That this was war?

Donald: No. I was too young to notice this. And I couldn't see from where I was at, to determine if death or whatever it was, 'til the later time. We came home, a couple times, not to live, to get personal belongings. More clothes and go back up.

A.C.: When you were living up at the Heens---no more school, no more church?

Donald: No more school. No nothing.

A.C.: So, did you guys play war?

Donald: Oh yeah. We played war. Growing up over that. But the Heen family. They were much older than I was. Only one boy was just one year older.

Frances: Juggie was same age as you?

Donald: No, one year older. Ernest Heen Jr. He works for the Office of---OHA. The brother is the judge. Walter Heen. Walter was there in 'Aiea too.

Frances: Harvey used to work for building (department).

A.C.: So what was the Heens' connection with 'Aiea?

Donald: My parents knew the Heen family because Mr. Heen was on the Board of Supervisors, which are council people today.

A.C.: But living up on the heights? They were just renting a house from the plantation?

Frances: No. That was their own property.

Donald: Their property. He was a politician.

Frances: 'Aiea Heights [Homestead tract] was privately owned.

Donald: And his brother-in-law was a clerk for the City and County of Honolulu. Eventually, Mr. Heen, after the war, bought a house in Diamond Head. But they still had the house in 'Aiea. He passed away and they sold the one in 'Aiea. (They discuss that the Heens moved near Diamond Head.)

A.C.: Getting back to the Heen's place though, after families lived in a place,

um, the streets would be named after them? Or because you bought the property, the street would be named after you? (Laughs)

Donald: I don't know. I'm surprised to see the name because when we were playing, it didn't have any name or anything. It was just a lane. It didn't have a name or anything. I guess somebody called it Heen Way.

Frances: Yeah, that's what it is.

A.C.: So, was it above Aiea Rest Home? Or below?

Frances: Below. Way before you got to the rest home. If you go up (Arlene says she can find it on a map)

Donald: Right over there, because that's the beginning of the Amona family's property.

A.C.: So, your family stayed up there. Frances, you lived up there, too, with the Heens?

Frances: We stayed maybe, about three days?

Donald: We stayed over three months!

Frances: No! Not that long.

Donald: Maybe, you guys came home. But I stayed. Nobody was home, that's why I stayed up there. They didn't have any school or anything. Everybody went to work.

A.C.: Did your mom and dad's jobs change after December 7th?

Donald: No. My father still worked for the plantation. My mother worked for Waimano Home in Pearl City.

A.C.: And of course, because of martial law, people couldn't be out at night.

Donald: Yes. Then she would have to work like a fireman. You go to work and stay there twenty-four hours. She was off for twenty-four hours. Unless you worked over the weekend, you worked the entire weekend.

Frances: Over here (Looks at a map) is the Amona family, right next to Heen Way. They owned that. The rest home is up here. Right here.

Donald: Amona owned all of that property, go down the hill, the valley, come back up the hill, where the white house is. That's the Clark estate. That's the care home. But below that, in the valley, was the Amona family.

A.C.: You mean 'Aiea valley?

Donald: No, no. Right above the Amona property.

A.C.: So, the Amona property and the Heen property. This was bought in the thirties, because people could buy land then?

Donald: I think before that. I think before the turn of the century.

Frances: Oh, but the Amona, they had acres and acres.

So what did they have on the property before all the houses were built?

Donald: Only the big house. Amona house. And that was it. The rest was his land with forest and stuff like that. No other homes.

Frances: There was a red door.

A.C.: Oh, a white house with a red door?

Frances: Yeah, it was a Chinese----

Donald: Chinese design.

A.C.: And then, was there a yard?

Frances: Just land.

Donald: Then he had three daughters?

Frances: Two, I think. One married your friend.

Donald: This other guy, he went to Kamehameha School. Ah Sing. Robert Ah Sing. He's class of '47. He's passed away already and he married the youngest of the Amona girls.

A.C.: Did they go to Aiea School?

Donald: I don't know what school they went to.

Frances: They went to private schools.

A.C.: Interesting. You know how some of the families have streets named after them. There's no Amona Street in 'Aiea Heights.

Donald: And they owned the general store. Right down in the bottom part of the village, where the tree was.

Frances: Yeah, right across from the Shell service station.

Donald: And where the taxi stand was. That big building in the back, with the pool hall in the bottom part of it. The store was on first floor.

A.C.: So when people say the Amona Store, it's actually what was called the general store---

Both: Right.

A.C.: That's the one where the bus stop was in front, with the big tree.

Donald: Yes. The O.R.&L. bus stop was right in the front of the store and it was across the street from the bank and the post office.

A.C.: Did they own any other stores or buildings?

Donald: No. But the store was big! It covered the entire block over there. And it went down into the village.

Frances: And from their place, across the street, they owned that too. That's where he had the condos built. As you're going up on the left hand side.

Donald: Aiea Heights Drive. That's up on the ridge.

A.C.: You mean the ridge? Aiea Park Place?

Frances: Above Heen Place.

A.C.: Let me stop for a minute.

END OF INTERVIEW