

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Sabas T. Jamito, 72, retired longshoreman and professional boxer

"Oh, plenty Filipinos, they always cheer for me. Every time, when the Filipinos, they go there, 'Sabas! Give 'em your overhand!' Because I was famous for my overhand right."

Sabas T. Jamito, Tagalog, was born in Camarines Norte, Philippines on January 12, 1912. At the age of five months, he and his family immigrated to the Big Island of Hawaii. Until 1922, when the family moved to Hilo, Sabas lived on various sugar plantations: Papaaloo, Paauilo, Ookala, and Olaa. While in Hilo, Sabas helped his father in the sugarcane fields and earned money as a shoe shine boy. He attended Kapiolani School, Hilo Union School, Hilo Intermediate, and Hilo High.

In 1929, Sabas began his boxing career in Hilo, making five dollars a fight. Around the same time, he loaded fertilizer onto boxcars for Pacific Guano and Fertilizer Company. In 1931, he started work as a longshoreman, loading sugar on ships for C. Brewer and Company.

In 1940, Sabas became a longshoreman for McCabe, Hamilton, and Renny Co. in Honolulu. He and his family moved to Hau Street in Kalihi. Sabas resumed his boxing career, appearing in places such as Honolulu Stadium and Civic Auditorium, making as much as \$800 per bout.

Today, Sabas still lives in Kalihi, and enjoys playing music and billiards.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
with
Sabas T. Jamito (SJ)
December 19, 1983
Kalihi, Oahu
BY: Warren Nishimoto

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Sabas T. Jamito. Today is December 19, 1983, and we're at his home on Kahanu Street in Kalihi.

Okay, Mr. Jamito, can you tell me first where you were born and when you were born?

SJ: Well, I was born in the Philippines in January 12, 1912.

WN: What part of Philippines?

SJ: Oh, the place they call Camarines Norte. I think it's in Mindanao, but north area.

WN: What was your father doing first in the Philippines?

SJ: Well, I don't know much, but he used to work in the rice fields before. That's all I know so far, yeah.

WN: And you folks came here when you were five months old?

SJ: Yes. (Chuckles) I was just five months old when I came to the islands.

WN: And where did you come first?

SJ: You mean, where we reached first?

WN: Yeah.

SJ: Well, we probably came here to Honolulu [first], but, you know, my parents were brought to the Big Island, Hawaii, and we were sent to a place called Papaalooa. When we came from the Philippines, we were sent to Papaalooa. Then after that, my parents moved to Paauilo. Then, after staying in Paauilo for, I think it was couple years, then my father decided to move to Ookala. It's probably about fifteen miles from Paauilo, huh? Then we stayed in Ookala for a while.

WN: Do you remember Ookala at all?

SJ: Ookala? Yeah, I remember Ookala. Because I used to go to school there, Ookala, when I was a little boy. And we used to walk way down the hill to go to school.

WN: What was your father doing? What kind of cane work was he doing?

SJ: Oh, he was, I think, cutting cane. That's what he do, cut cane, that's all. Sometimes, he go, you know--they call that "hāpai kō." They carry the cane to the flumes, eh? They carry the canes to the flumes. Yeah. Then, after working, he just come home, that's all. Come home to rest. My mother cook and all that.

WN: How many of you in the family at that time?

SJ: At that time, it was just my father, my mother, me and my brother. My older brother. My older brother was about---when they came from the Philippines, he was about one year and a half old.

WN: What do you remember about Ookala besides the school? Anything else?

SJ: There was one main thing I remember in Ookala when I was a little boy. Do you want to hear about it?

WN: Yeah.

SJ: Well, you see, one day, my mother left me home. She went down to the store. Because the Ookala Store, the plantation store, is far, so she went to Ookala to buy some groceries. She left me at home, but I was feeling uneasy. So, I wanted to go after my mother. I came down from the camp. You know, we were living in a camp. I ran down the road to go to the plantation store. Now, when I went down the plantation store, on the side of the road I saw a little donkey, you know. A little donkey. So, I petted the donkey. He's all right. Then, I don't know what happened, but I rode on the donkey. When I rode on the donkey, the donkey bucked; I fell down. I think I still get the. . . . I know somewheres I get da kine. . . . (SJ rolls up pants cuff.)

WN: Oh, scar on your leg?

SJ: Yeah. The donkey bit me on the leg over here. Over here on this left leg. Luckily, my brother heard my call. He came running down. He threw a stone at the donkey. And the donkey, after biting me, he ran away. The donkey ran away. But, chee, I was bleeding badly. So, my brother took me home. When he took me home, he put (chuckles) me on the bed, see. He cover me with a blanket. Then, when my mother came home from her shopping, she tell, "What is Sabas doing in bed? Why isn't he up yet? It's daylight already."

And my brother said, "Oh, donkey bit him."

And my mother ran and she look at my feet, eh? Was bleeding badly. So, she carried me and she took me to the hospital. Was about five hundred feet away from our home. She brought me to the doctor and the doctor put medicine on my feet. But the doctor said lucky no bones were crushed. Only the skin and the mark of the teeth. But wasn't so bad.

WN: Did you get good lickings from your parents?

SJ: Oh, I got a good scolding. They tell, "Why did you go ride the donkey?"

(Laughter)

SJ: I said because I pet him and he was good. So I figured I'd ride him. I like to ride him. When I rode on him then he started bucking, eh? I fell down and he bit me on the leg. Then I start yelling.

(Laughter)

WN: Chee, you were only about, what? Four, five years old then?

SJ: Yeah, I was, yeah, about that.

WN: When you were at Ookala, do you remember speaking English already?

SJ: Oh, I speak very little. I speak little. You know da kine slang [i.e., pidgin]?

(Laughter)

WN: Where is your father from in the Philippines originally?

SJ: My father, he is from Camarines Norte. Some part in the Philippines. I never been there, see?

WN: And your mother, what?

SJ: My mother, she's Tagalog. She's Tagalog. That's the main dialect of the Philippines, Tagalog, eh? Well, her parents moved to the area my father was living. And then, they got acquainted. You know how love is. (Chuckles)

WN: Were there a lot of Tagalogs that came to Hawaii?

SJ: Oh, during that era, that time then, most Tagalogs. Now, they have, what they call this? Plenty Ilocanos, eh? They used to have mostly all Tagalogs and Visayans, yeah, that's all. Now, they have mostly all Ilocanos coming down.

WN: So, when you were growing up, like Ookala and all these plantations, you spoke Tagalog with the other Filipino kids?

- SJ: Oh, no. Every time I see children, we speak da kine slang English, you know. They call it kapakahi English, eh?
- WN: Even with the Filipino kids, too?
- SJ: Oh, some Filipino kids, yeah, we talk. I talk Tagalog because most of the kids were Tagalogs and Visayans.
- WN: You could communicate with Visayan, too?
- SJ: Well, I communicate, yeah. Little, not much. But my father is good Visayan speaker, too. He speak Visayan and Tagalog and Ilocano. He is very good.
- WN: How did he learn how to speak?
- SJ: In the Philippines, he learned Visayan and Tagalog. But when he came to Hawaii, he mingled with Ilocanos. That's how he learned how to talk Ilocano. Sometimes, they invite him to parties. And he speak Ilocano, too. You know, when he speak to all those people there, all in Ilocano. He's very good.
- WN: Was your father a luna at all?
- SJ: Yeah, sometimes, yeah. At times, in the plantation, yeah.
- WN: So, you remember anything else about growing up Ookala side? Besides that donkey incident?
- SJ: No. (Chuckles) The only thing I know, I go to Ookala School. And then, from Ookala School, my parents, we move to Hilo. And from Hilo, then we move to O'laa.
- WN: Do you remember your house in Ookala?
- SJ: I remember. . . . I don't think so now. (Chuckles) But if I go Ookala now, I think I can find the place.
- WN: So, from Ookala, you went to Hilo?
- SJ: That's right.
- WN: How come you folks move to Hilo?
- SJ: Well, my father, he wanted to find a better job, eh? He wanted to see if he could get a better job and more money for the family, see? That's why we moved to Hilo.
- WN: Could he find a job?
- SJ: He couldn't find a good job, because my father, he doesn't speak English very well. So, only mostly Filipino, so they won't accept in

other places. So, when he go to plantations like that, they accept him because they need laborers.

WN: So, from Ookala, you folks moved to Hilo and stayed only little while, while your father looked for a job? He couldn't find a job, so he applied for job at Olaa?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: And he got it?

SJ: Because he got a friend. He met a friend. And this friend told him they get plenty job on Olaa Plantation, see? The place they call "Kurtistown" in Olaa. So, my father say, "All right. I'll go there." So, we went to Olaa. My father got a job right away.

WN: You were about six years old then, yeah?

SJ: Yeah, about that, yeah.

WN: Around 1918?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: Did he ever tell you why you folks moved to so many plantations?

SJ: Well, he said because he wanted to find and make little bit more money so that he can support us better, eh?

WN: When you were young did you work fields, too?

SJ: Oh, no, no, no. (Chuckles) I didn't work until I went back to Hilo. I didn't work in the plantation.

WN: What do you remember about Olaa?

SJ: Oh, well, I guess, I went to school there--Olaa. I made some few friends, you know.

WN: Was Olaa a lot different from Ookala?

SJ: Oh, yeah, different. But the children over there more friendly. At school, we share our lunch and everything.

WN: Did you get along with the other kids--Japanese and . . .

SJ: Oh, yeah. I get along with all the children. They all good. In the afternoons, when we got through school, we play marbles. We play tops, you know. You know how to play top, eh? (Laughs) We used to always do that. Sometimes we play da kine rubber ball. We didn't have this regular baseball. You got to have the small rubber ball. Used to play with that.

WN: Were there a lot of Filipino kids at that time? Early?

SJ: No, there were not much. During that era, no, not much Filipinos. So, I usually mingle with Japanese boys, some Hawaiian boys. Because in Olaa, there's plenty of Hawaiian and Japanese boys always, you know. Very few Filipinos go to school.

WN: So, at home you spoke Filipino? Tagalog?

SJ: Yeah. I speak Tagalog every time.

WN: At home?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: But with the friends, you spoke pidgin?

SJ: We always speak our pidgin English when (chuckles) we were little children, eh? Sometimes, I go home, my father tell me, "What you learn in school?"

I tell him, "Oh, we learn how to speak good English."

And my father tell me, "Oh, you show me some words." I show him some words. And then, my father, he can write. He write, but he can't write good English. Only, he write mostly Filipino. He write Filipino. So, he write down the words and every now and then, he mumble--you know, he recite the words. He tell me, "Son, am I saying the words correctly?"

I tell, "Yeah. (Chuckles) It's all right. You speak good now." (Chuckles) So, every now and then, my father learn little by little.

WN: So, you taught him, then, some English?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: How was learning English for you? Was it easy or hard?

SJ: Oh, yeah. It was pretty easy, because in school, I used to get very good marks. Mostly B's and A's in school. Even I went to intermediate and junior high, I always get very good grades. Even when I graduated from Hilo High. You can find out. I get good grades. That was way back in 1931. (Chuckles) You know, when I graduated, eh? But all through my school days, I had pretty good marks.

WN: When you were [a kid] and there weren't that many Filipinos . . .

SJ: Oh, those days. No, in my days, there weren't many Filipinos.

WN: Did the kids---were you accepted? Did they know that you were Filipino? You know what I mean? There were not too many Filipino kids . . .

SJ: No, not many Filipino. Well, they treat me as any one of them, you

know. They not particular over this. Sometimes, they come to me-- even some American boys, you know--in school, when I go with them at lunch time, they tell me, "Sabas, you get lunch?"

I tell, "No, I didn't. . . ." Sometimes, I don't bring lunch, see?

WN: How come?

SJ: Sometimes, in the plantation, I get up early. Sometimes, I sleep late. So, have to rush to school. My mother tell, "Eh, bring lunch. I go cook for you."

I tell, "No, you don't cook because I'm late now go school."

So, (chuckles) sometimes I go without lunch, you know. And then, at school, sometimes, I get some friends, lunch time, they tell me, "Sabas, come eat." I didn't bring lunch today. And they offer me da kine sandwich--peanut butter sandwich, you know. Or sometimes, some of these Japanese boys or sometimes Filipino boys--very few before go to school, but they bring lunch--they bring lunch before, they got rice with sardine or da kine they call "iriko," you know. Iriko or da kine codfish. You know codfish? They share. "Sabas, come eat some." So, I eat with them. Sometimes, when I bring lunch, I bring plenty lunch, I share my food with them, too.

WN: What you used to bring?

SJ: My mother fry fish or some iriko, codfish, like that. Sometimes, she make little bit soup. When we go to school before, we used to bring what they call this "kaukau tin," eh? Small da kine lunch can. Double-decker kind lunch can, small one. We used to bring those double-decker lunch to school before.

WN: That's the same kind the workers used to carry?

SJ: Yeah, yeah. Double-decker. So we used to carry that to school when we were little. And my mother tell us, "You bring back the can or you get a good spanking if you don't bring it back." (Chuckles) Sometimes, I forget my can in school (laughs) and when I go next morning, it's gone. Somebody take the can. Sometimes I get spanking for leaving my can in school.

WN: Some kids, you said, used to bring peanut butter and jelly sandwich?

SJ: Oh, yeah.

WN: This was, what? Japanese kids or Portuguese kids or. . . .

SJ: Portuguese and even haole kids, you know. American kids. That was already when I was going this intermediate.

WN: Hilo Intermediate?

SJ: Yeah. They bring sandwich. Da kine peanut butter sandwich, and then they give me, eh? But when I was real small yet, I used to eat with those other boys. They bring me da kine sardine, codfish, iriko. (Chuckles) Iriko, before--you eat iriko?

WN: I eat iriko, yeah.

SJ: Yeah. (Laughs)

WN: So, you were in Olaa about four years, yeah? From 1918 to 1922?

SJ: Yeah, yeah. That's right, no?

WN: So, you remember your house in Olaa?

SJ: Well, I went to Hilo about, let's see, eight years old. My sister still living in Hilo, see. So, I told my sister, "Oh, I want to take a ride to Olaa." So, we went to Olaa. We passed by our old home there. The place is all. . . . I know I remember the place, but the homes were all gone already. All deteriorated. All broken down. Old, eh? Deteriorate.

WN: So, your father didn't make you go work in the fields or anything? When you were old enough?

SJ: No, not in Olaa. I was too small yet. The only time, when we went to Hilo, then I helped my father work in the fields. They call that Ponahawai hills, you know. Used to have. Ponahawai.

WN: So, when you folks moved to Hilo in 1922, what kind of job did your father find? What kind of work did your father do?

SJ: First, he looked around for a job, and then they had this place they call Ponahawai. Cane. So, he worked there for a while.

WN: This was cane field? Plantation?

SJ: Yeah--yeah. For a contractor, that. He worked there for a while, and he said, "It's too cheap, the pay." So, he told me he's going to try to work longshoreman, the stevedore down on the wharf. So, he applied for the job, and he got a job on the wharf. He stayed there until he retired.

WN: That Ponahawai fields, what you did? What kind work you did?

SJ: Oh, sometimes, I go out and help my father. I go help my father carry cane, eh? Sometimes, I help him cut cane, too, you know. Of course, I was slow, you know. Small children, that's why. These old people, they cut fast. But us, we very slow. So, my father said, "I cut the cane, and you tie 'em up." Usually, he cut all the cane, and he made that--you know, the cane leaves, he tied 'em together to make it as a rope, eh? Put 'em on the ground, and he put all the cane on top, and

then he tell me, "Oh, Sabas, you tie the cane up." So, I tie the bundle up. Every bundle, I tie the bundles up.

WN: You got paid for that?

SJ: Well, I help my father. Sometimes, he give me fifty cents; sometimes, twenty-five cents (chuckles). You know, in those days, if you get twenty-five cents, good money already.

WN: So, your father was contract gang over there? He was with gang? Contract gang?

SJ: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Kompany?

SJ: Yeah, they call "kompany," before. (Chuckles) That's right, kompany.

WN: So, they got paid by the ton, eh?

SJ: Yeah, by the. . . . So, how much they make in a day, eh?

WN: Okay. So, when you moved to Hilo, what school did you go to first?

SJ: I went to Kapiolani School in the place they call Kapiolani. That's way down Waiakea side. Waiakea area side.

WN: What grade was that?

SJ: Oh, I was in the third grade at that time.

WN: That was a private school or public school?

SJ: That's a public school. Kapiolani is a public school. I stayed there at Kapiolani School for two years, then my parents moved down to Kilauea Street. They call that "Kilauea Street" in Hilo. And it's nearer to Hilo Union School. Union School is nearer than Kapiolani, see? Kapiolani, you have to walk very far. So, I told my parents, "I want to change school."

So, my parents tell, "Well, you go Union School and go register over there."

So, I registered at Hilo Union School.

WN: What grade was that?

SJ: When I went to the fourth grade, then I went.

WN: Was there a big difference between Hilo and Olaa?

SJ: Oh, yeah. Big difference. Because on Saturdays and Sundays, like

that--Saturdays and Sundays, when we don't have school--go downtown. That's when they say "holoholo," eh? You go see all the sights. It's a bigger town, see? Go all around.

I can tell you this extra. When I was a little boy, I stayed in Hilo. Well, my parents were a little hard up, too, see. My father work in the cane field. So, I decided I wanted to make a little extra money. You know what I do? I told my father, "Oh, Daddy, you make me a shoe shine box." So, I been a shoe shine boy for about--yeah, about five years. I helped my father. I make money, because I make sixty cents, seventy cents a day, you know. And I give my father, so we can buy little bit more groceries, like that. And my father asked my brother--because my brother's name is Agapito, see? So he tell, "Agapito, you want to go shine shoes, too? I make you a box." (Laughs) So, he made another box for my brother. Both of us go shine shoes. My brother and I, if we lucky, sometimes we make about dollar half, two dollars a day.

WN: Yeah? How much for one shine?

SJ: Well, before, when we used to shine, we used to shine for only five cents a pair of shoes, eh? Five cents a pair of shoes. Well, you see, when we were little boys, we go shine shoes. Then, some other boys, they shine shoes too, you know. So, when they shine shoes, they tell the customer, "Eh, I shine your shoes, three cents." You know, they want competition, eh? So, we used to beat them up (chuckles), you know. My brother and I, and two other boys, we form a gang. They used to call us "Shoe Shine Gang Boys." We used to gang up and beat up those boys. They shine for three cents. I tell, "Why you folks shine for three cents and us five cents? We going lose business."

(Laughter)

SJ: So, we used to lick those boys, you know.

WN: You used to really beat 'em up?

SJ: Yeah. Oh, yeah. When we were little boys, we beat those boys up, boy.

WN: What nationality were the boys?

SJ: Oh, some Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiians. They got all--all little boys. So, we shine shoes. Shine shoes together. After shining shoes, sometimes we go play marble, you know--play marble or play top. And we bet, too. (Chuckles) We bet for one cents, two cents, you know. Play top. When we play our top, ours stop spinning, eh? Then, the other person come with his top, trying to hit your top. If he crack your top, then you have to pay him, see?

WN: Oh, how much? One cents?

SJ: Yeah, one cents or two cents. All depend on how much you folks bet.

(Chuckles) So, we used to have lot of fun when we were little.

WN: You used to bet with marbles, too?

SJ: Oh, yeah, we play with marble.

WN: How you bet with marbles?

SJ: When you play, sometimes you shoot hard and you crack his marble. Then, he pay you so much. Or if you folks bet, you know, you folks make a line. You shoot marble, and your marble go over the line. If you shoot hard and your marble go over line and beat his one, you pay.

WN: Oh, the farthest?

SJ: The farthest, yeah. We get all kind of ways. Gambling. (Laughs) When we were little.

WN: Where you used to go to shine shoes? Where you used to hang around?

SJ: Well, you see, when I was little boy, first time I used to go shine shoes the place they call in Hilo, "Mooheau Park." And we shine in the park--Mooheau Park. And if we don't make money in Mooheau Park, sometimes, I go up to Hilo Hotel. You know, go see the tenants in the hotel. "You want to have your shoes shine, sir?" If not in the hotel, sometimes we go down on the street corners. We stand. Any person come with dirty shoes, tell, "You want a shine, sir?" If they said all right, then we shine them. Sometimes, if we make a good shine, we take our time, make a good shine, sometimes they give us ten cents or fifteen cents. All depend. If you make a good shine, they give us a tip. That's how we make our money. They give you tip. Sometimes, we get five cents tip, ten cents tip.

WN: So, you used to go, maybe, more rich places? You know, people with more money, you think?

SJ: Oh, yeah.

WN: That's where you went?

SJ: We used to go. The most, we make good money, every time, in the hotels, you know. When we go to the hotels. Especially on tourist days. You know, the steamers. Before, mostly steamers used to come in. And they bring in the tourists to Hilo Hotel. We stand outside of the hotel, see. And the tourists come. When we see the tourists, the shoes dirty, "Have a shine, sir?"

The tourist look at his shoes, "All right."

We shine shoes, the tourists, sometimes they give us fifty cents, seventy-five cents. Oh, we real happy, boy. Yeah. Because we usually

get only five cents before. Five cents. If we get ten cents, we lucky. But when they get fifty cents, seventy-five cents, oh, that's big money. Yeah. In those days, if you have fifty cents, that's good enough for one day.

WN: Yeah. So, you used to buy your own polish and . . .

SJ: Oh, yeah. We buy our own polish. Those days, you buy polish, one can, you can buy 'em for five cents, seven cents, you know. You buy small can, five cents; larger can, maybe seven cents, eight cents, like that. All depend on the size of the can.

WN: You used to make spit shine, too? Spit shine? You know, you used to spit on the shoe?

SJ: Oh, yeah. (Chuckles) Sometimes we do that, sometimes. Sometimes we go down the park. We stay in the park. Because the fountain sometimes too far [from] where we shine, eh? We usually carry one small bottle with water inside, you see? So, when we don't have water in the bottle and the fountain is too far, we tell the person--the man we shining, "Ah, I don't have enough water. Can I spit--put little bit, wet your shoe?" And we spit. First we spit on the--- you know, we have that canvas . . .

WN: Cloth?

SJ: . . . cloth. We spit on the cloth. (Laughs) Oh, we have all kind of ways to . . .

WN: Oh, you no spit directly on the shoe?

SJ: No, no. We spit on the cloth, and then. . . . We don't spit directly on the shoe because you don't know what you going to spit on. (Laughs)

WN: You know the box your father made for you, how big was the box?

SJ: Oh, small. Was about. . . . About ten inch.

WN: Yeah, ten inch across?

SJ: About ten inch across, and about, ah, about eight or seven inch wide, eh?

WN: And how deep?

SJ: Oh, it's about one foot high. One foot high because you got to put the polish inside the box, the polish, the ink--you know, the ink. You know what's the ink, eh? The ink, the polish, our brush, and all the . . .

WN: Canvas.

SJ: Canvas. We put all in there, see?

WN: You had something for them to put their foot up?

SJ: Oh, yeah. Well, we just put one little block on the box. But my father, he smart. He made one size of a foot, eh? Size of one foot, and then he nail it on the top of the box. So, when a person want a shine, he just put his shoes on the box, like that. Because on the top, there's a size of a foot already.

WN: He paint 'em, too? He paint up the box, too?

SJ: Yeah. He paint 'em or you can paint 'em. Paint 'em black or white or whatever you want, eh? Sometimes, we paint 'em our(selves). Sometimes, we get a old box, eh? No good already. We make a new box. You know what we do? You know, the ink we use for the shoes, well, that's what we use--we paint that.

(Laughter)

SJ: We paint our box.

WN: Where did you put your money?

SJ: We used to put 'em all in our pocket.

WN: You used to challenge each other who can make more money that day?

SJ: Oh, yeah. Sometimes we challenge each other, make more money. We gamble, too. Sometimes, we tell, "How much you want to bet I make more money than you today?" Sometimes, you bet five cents, ten cents.

(Laughter)

SJ: See who can make more money. (Laughs) Yeah, we do that. Especially when we were little, we do anything. Just for fun.

WN: And then, how much did you give your father and how much did you keep every day?

SJ: If I make fifty cents, seventy cents, or dollar, two dollar, like that, I give my father all. He tell me, "Sabas, you want some money for go buy candy?"

I tell no. I tell, "Oh, I spent some of the money already."
Sometimes, I go eat that kind--they call manju or rice cake. I go in the restaurant, Chinese restaurant, buy the manju, rice cake.
I tell, "Oh, I spent some money already for the food."

And my father said, "All right. If you need money, you ask me."

I tell, "All right."

The only time I ask him money when I go to school. I need little bit lunch, eh? "Daddy, I need five cents." (Chuckles) Five cents for lunch, eh? In those days, five cents, you can buy, oh, plenty stuff. You can buy gum, candy. You buy, one cents. (Chuckles) You buy the candy by the pennies, before.

WN: Did your father know that you gambled some of that money? You told your father that you gambled?

SJ: Oh, I tell my father, "Oh, we go bet, like that."

My father only laugh. He tell, "You make your own money. Up to you what you do."

(Laughter)

WN: At that time, how much was your father making? You know how much your father was making at his sugar job?

SJ: Oh, I know the first time he used to work, he used to make about ten cents an hour. Ten cents, and, I think, he got raise, twelve cents. The most, I think, he make was eighteen cents one hour, I think.

WN: You said when you were living in Hilo between 1922 and 1940, you worked cane field, too?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: What plantation?

SJ: I worked the place they call "Ponahawai."

WN: This was on your own or with your father?

SJ: I worked with my father, yeah.

WN: And how much you used to make there?

SJ: Oh, if I work hard, I make about sixty cents, one day. If I work hard.

WN: Was that before shining shoes or after shining shoes time?

SJ: Oh, after I shine shoes already.

WN: Which one you like better?

SJ: Oh, shine shoes. (Chuckles) Because if you make money, you can go store right away, buy anything you want, eh? And then, you can see places. You go with your box, you can see all kind of places. You can see some visitors, like that. Plenty visitors or friends. New friends. That's why, you going around shine shoes, better. Better

fun. Because in the fields, when you stay the whole day, you do nothing but work. And when you shining shoes, you can take a good rest. You know, take your time, play around. Nobody bother you. You your own boss.

WN: How come you quit shining shoes to work cane field?

SJ: My father said, "Why don't you try work cane field. You make good money over here." He told me. So, I tried. But I didn't like it. (Chuckles)

WN: What kind work you did, cane field?

SJ: Oh, sometimes, I go help him cut cane. And sometimes, you know, help him carry the cane. At some areas, the grownups and the people, the one that cut the cane, they put all the bundle of cane in a flume. They call that "flume." Cane flume. My father tell me, "Sabas, all that cane, you throw 'em in the flume." So, I stayed by the flume. I pick cane one by one, throw. (Chuckles) You know, you pick one by one, just light, light. Easy. But when some of these grownups, when they throw the cane, by the bundle. They throw the bundles, you know. But me, I work one cane. . . .

(Laughter)

SJ: Take my time. I don't want to strain myself, eh? When you young yet and you work too hard. . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: So, when you were shoe shine boy and cane field, this was all during when you were young boy, yeah, growing up?

SJ: Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

WN: You went to Hilo Intermediate?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: So, all these jobs that you were doing like shine shoes, cane field, that was during vacation time?

SJ: Yeah. Vacation time. And after school, I always go home and get my shoe shine box and sometimes I go do some shoe shining. Sometimes I make twenty cents, thirty cents. My father say, "How much money you make?"

"Oh, I make only about twenty cents or thirty cents."

My father, he won't take the money. He tell me, "Oh, you keep your money for school lunch."

So, my father don't take the money. He give me that money for my school lunch. So, that's how I get, sometimes, extra money. Sometimes when I go school, I tell my mother, "Eh, Mom, make me extra lunch."

"Why?"

"Oh, I need the extra lunch." But she don't know I get a extra thirty cents, eh? I keep the thirty cents. Probably I'm going to need the thirty cents for something else. So, I keep the thirty cents and bring the lunch my mother make. So, I can have extra money. Well, that's how it is. Sometimes, you got to play smart, too.

(Laughter)

SJ: You need little extra money for yourself, well, you got to play smart, eh?

WN: What other kind jobs you used to do when you were growing up? Any more?

SJ: I think, I was only shoe shine boy; I work. . . . When I grow up a little, sometimes I go for fight. Boxing.

WN: When your father was a longshoreman, did you go help him?

SJ: Well, sometimes I go help him. When you work longshoremen, they have some kind of this broken boxes, eh? Broken boxes or broken bags. So, my father, he was a gang foreman on the wharf, too. Sometimes, he had plenty broken bags or boxes. My father tell me, "Sabas, go in the warehouse, go get that tool box."

I tell, "What for?"

He tell, "All those broken box, you patch 'em up. You nail 'em up, patch 'em up. And all those broken bags, you get a needle and a thread, you sew 'em up." That's what I used to do. Go sew the broken bags and fix the broken boxes. That's all on my school vacation sometimes. When on my school vacation, my spare time, I go help my father.

WN: Was your father's pay as longshoreman better than cane field?

SJ: Oh, he used to make forty cents an hour. Better than eighteen cents or fifteen cents an hour, eh? He make more money. Yeah, those days, times were really hard, you know.

WN: So, you went Hilo Intermediate and you went Hilo High School, too, yeah?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: Did your brother go high school, too?

SJ: No, my brother, he just went to intermediate, that's all--not intermediate, to the, I think, sixth grade. He just went up to the sixth grade and pau. He quit school. He tell me, "I think I'm going to quit school."

I tell, "Why?"

"Oh, I think I go help Dad. I go find job, I go work."

WN: He found job?

SJ: Yeah, he go look around for job. Sometimes, he find job go clean yard, some person's yard. Do all kind of odd jobs.

WN: And you went all the way--you graduated, eh?

SJ: Yeah. I went all the way, graduated.

WN: Did your father want you to go school or you . . .

SJ: He wanted me to go to school. What he had in mind, he wanted me to be one doctor, before, you know. He did his best to save money and all that, but, you know, sometimes the family get hard time, well, you have to spend the money. Even what you save, you spend 'em. Then, later on, you got to save again. Then, get hard times again, you got to spend the money. So, my father couldn't keep enough money to send me to doctor's school. So, when I graduated, I guess I quit. I have to go look job outside, too, see.

WN: Did you want to be doctor, too?

SJ: Well, if my father wanted me to, I will. Because in my family in the Philippines, some of my uncles there, my relatives, they're doctors and teachers, too. So, my father, he wanted me to come up. Get little bit more learning. But he couldn't afford it.

WN: Do you think your father wanted to be a doctor himself?

SJ: Well, I can tell you this straight: in Hilo, hundreds of Filipinos always come to my father's home. Why? Because my father is a good herbalist. You know, they call "herbalist"? If he look at the ground, he see certain kind of herbs there, he tell you this kind of medicine good for you. That's why, hundreds of people come there--Portuguese, Filipinos, some Chinese, they come down there and see my father.

WN: How did he learn all that?

SJ: He learned it in the Philippines. I don't know how. He learned it

all in the Philippines. He's a very good herbalist. That's why he wanted me to be one doctor, see.

WN: How did people find out about your father?

SJ: I don't know. One time, one person got sick and he came to my house. One Filipino man. He came to my house and he told my father about his sickness. Then, my father said, "You get certain kind of plants in your house or around your yard?" These certain kind of plants.

He said, "Oh, yeah. I get that kind."

He tell, "You bring that plant tomorrow. And I show you how to make medicine out of it."

So, the person came. He brought the medicine. My father mixed-- he smart, he know how--he mix all the plants. And then, he boil it and he told the person to drink. And that person came well. After that, he spread the news around. That's why. Sometimes, he makes some medicine. He make it into a powder, you know. Certain kind of grass, he dry them. He dry all those. He dry them real good, and then he start pounding them. Make them into more like a powder, eh? Then after that, he mix certain kind of herbs together, and then he boiled it. He put it in a cup. Then, he tell you, "You wait till that cool down little and you drink 'em." Person that drink that, he came very good. He came well. So, my father was well known in Hawaii. He used to come to Honolulu [and] Maui. How many times they call him, Maui. He got to go cure people.

WN: Not only Filipinos went to him, but . . .

SJ: Some Portuguese come up to the house. Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese. Yeah, my father used to be good in medicine. When he look at a certain kind of plant, he tell you this plant is good for this kind of sickness. He's good, my father. He's a good herbalist, yeah?

WN: Did he get paid for what he was doing?

SJ: No, he don't ask you. That's one thing with my father, he tell you, "What I know, I help other people, but I don't ask for help." Any person that come to him, he help cure them. But if they ask him, "How much I have to pay you?" he tell, "I'm not asking you anything. It's what in your heart's content. If you want to give me five cents for, maybe for the medicine, or ten cents, it's up to you." And some, they give few dollars. He tell them, "If you think this all right, I'll accept it. But if you think what you giving me is too much, don't give me anything." My father, he don't charge. It's only in your heart's content, what you want to give him. If you don't give him nothing, they say just thank you, that's all. And thank you is just good enough for him.

WN: Interesting. So, while you were going to Hilo High, were there a

lot of Filipinos going Hilo High School?

SJ: Well, let's see. Vicente. . . . While I was going school, there were only one, two, three, four. Only four Filipinos of us in Hilo High. That's all I know of, only four.

WN: Out of how many students?

SJ: Oh, students, were probably about four or five hundred. Yeah, very few Filipinos in those days, yeah?

WN: This was about nineteen. . . . You graduated 1931, yeah?

SJ: Thirty-one, yeah.

WN: Late '20s, yeah?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: And about 1929 you got interested in boxing? How did you get started?

SJ: Well, you see, on one vacation, I went down to the place they call the "Volcano Arena" where the boxers used to train before in Hilo?

WN: Yeah? Where was that?

SJ: They call that "Volcano Arena." That's in Hilo Town. Well, so, on vacation day, I went. I got a friend. A friend told me, "Hey, Sabas, let's go see some boxing practice."

I tell, "Where?"

"Oh, we go down Volcano Arena."

I tell all right. So, we went down the Volcano Arena, watching those boxers train. After seeing them train, oh, I got interested, you know? I tell my friend, "More better, tomorrow, we go there. We go fool around. We go train, too." So, we asked the manager--the trainer, the one that taking care of the place.

We tell, "Oh, we want to go train, too."

The trainer--the guy keeping the place--said, "You fella want to train, all right, but you fella have to go sweep around the place. Clean the place up, too. When it's dirty, you folks keep the place clean."

We tell, "Yeah, all right, we go."

So, first day we there, we going to train. We try hit the bag. (Chuckles) You know, small boys, eh? Hit the bag. After hitting the bags, then we try to skip rope. We skip rope. Eh, every day

we try rope skipping, hey, we came good. Then, we try hitting the bags--punching bag. I mean, the sand bag. Sand bag. After the sand bag, we started practicing on the punching bag. But we were kind of short, so we have to put a little bit stool, so we could (chuckles) punch, because those boxers, they were tall. So, we had to bring a stool, and we play, practice. And from then on, we learn little by little. We learn.

WN: You folks had any kind of coach or anything?

SJ: Yeah, get. Then, when I train for about almost six months, then they had this kind, they call that smokers. So, they needed some fighters.

WN: Who was the promoter for these smokers?

SJ: He used to be George Bennett. George Bennett. One haole. He used to be what they call Wainaku Plantation boss. He used to be a big boss over there. George Bennett. So, they started to make one fight. And they needed some preliminary fighters. So, they get four preliminary fighters. And they came to me. They see me, "Say, Sabas, you train every day. You want to fight? You like make a little bit money?"

I tell, "How much you going pay?"

"Oh, we give you three dollars. Maybe, if you make good, we may give you five dollar."

Shee, I tell my father, "Ey, Daddy, they like me, I make five dollar. I go fight."

My father tell me, "You think you can make it? You think you can take a licking?"

I tell, "I don't know. I can try."

So, I signed up for that fight and I fought. I asked the promoter, "How many rounds do I have to fight?"

"Only four rounds."

"How many minutes do I fight in one round?"

"Only three, only three."

So, I tell, "Ey, easy, three minutes." What I going do, only run around (laughs). So the round go fast, eh, you run around. They put me against this Japanese boy. Ah, I forget already. I forget his name already. He's from Olaa. I forget his name already.

They tell, "You go four round with this. . . ." Oh, I think it's Shige, I think, yeah. [SJ later recalls the name was Hisashi Nishi.]

"You go four round with him. You fella make good showing--because this is the first fight--you fella make good showing, maybe you fella get five dollar." Because first they tell to me, it's three dollars, eh? They start tell us three dollars.

"But you fella make good showing, I think you fella get five dollar."

So, I tell, "I going try good."

Oh, me and this boy, we were the first one on the card, see? Chee, that was really a slam-bang fight, me and him. But I beat him. I beat him by decision. Ho, all the people clap because we made a real good showing. Give and take, you know. (Chuckles) Because we were amateur fighters. Just like amateur fighters because our first time. First time, but still, first fight as professionals. I didn't fight in amateur, before. I started as professional. (Chuckles) So, anyway, I fought him four round. Chee, I won decision. Chee, give and take. I put him down two times, but he still come up fighting. I won the fight, only decision. Chee, after that, oh, I . . .

WN: How much you got? How much you made?

SJ: I got five dollars. I got (laughs) five dollars.

(Laughter)

SJ: Ey, boy, I was really happy. Big money. Those days, money, 1929, five dollars you get, that's good money.

WN: This was only after six months of training?

SJ: Yeah, only six months of training.

WN: Did you have manager?

SJ: No, I get those guys. They call that "second." Not manager. Only they call that "seconds," eh? They give you rubdown and put bandage on your hand, all that.

WN: Who taught you how to fight, though? Who taught you how? Technique, like that?

SJ: When I see those people fighting in the ring, I just follow the way how they fight, eh? Nobody taught me how. I'm on my own instinct only. I did that.

WN: Where was the fight held?

SJ: They used to call that place the "Hilo Armory."

WN: Was downtown?

SJ: Yeah, downtown. That's right below the Hilo Tribune-Herald. Used to be the Hilo Tribune-Herald. Was right below that. The Hilo Armory. That's where.

WN: So, you won, then, eh? You got five dollars.

SJ: Yeah, I won five dollars. Oh, boy, I was real happy. (Chuckles) Big money. Those days, five dollars is good money, you know.

WN: This was 1929, yeah?

SJ: [Nineteen] twenty-nine, yeah.

WN: Had lot of people watching the fight?

SJ: Oh, had probably about three, four hundred, I think. Before, when the people fight, only by the hundreds. Now days, by the thousands, eh? By the millions. (Laughs) Before, very few.

WN: What was your weight at that time?

SJ: I was 118 pounds.

WN: And Shige was about the same?

SJ: Yeah, was about the same. Oh, not Shige. No. Hisashi Nishi. Then, this guy, Hisashi Nishi, he also became a famous da kine, what do you call? You know, handlers of fighters, before. He used to handle plenty good fighters in Hilo. This guy, Hisashi Nishi, we fought three times. Because first time I beat him, he got mad, you know. Tell he want a return match. So, I fought him again. Second time I fought him, I knocked him out in the second round. (Chuckles) He ask for another rematch. That was about two or three--almost three years later, he asked for another rematch, third fight. I fought him. I knocked him out again. But I knock him out in, I think it was in the fourth round, I think. He was a good fighter, too, though.

WN: So, you beat him three times, then?

SJ: Three times.

WN: So, after you made your five dollars after your first match, what did you do next?

SJ: Then I started fighting plenty other guys. I start lot of fighting, then I came here to Honolulu. When I came to Honolulu, I had plenty fights. I think I had about almost fifty fights over here.

WN: This is after 1940, yeah?

SJ: Yeah. During the wartime.

WN: Okay, I'll get into that later on. Okay? So, about how many fights did you have in Hilo?

SJ: I don't know. At least about a dozen fights, I think.

WN: A dozen fights? You fought for how many years, you think?

SJ: In Hilo?

WN: Yeah.

SJ: [Nineteen] twenty-nine, '30, '31. . . . About three years.

WN: So, twelve fights in three years?

SJ: Yeah. About that. Because I fight, then I rest. Sometimes, I go work. Help my father work. Then, after that, I need little bit more money, I go fight. I fight on and off at that time. Sometimes, I don't even have enough training. The promoter come up to my house, "Ey, Sabas, you want make money?"

I tell, "How?"

"Oh, you fight this guy four rounds, we pay you ten dollars or fifteen dollars."

I tell, "Oh, I don't want to fight because I don't got no training. How I going fight?"

Then, this promoter go tell me, "Well, I tell you ten or fifteen dollars. But how about twenty-five dollars? I give you twenty-five dollars."

Even I don't have training, I tell, "I take 'em. I fight." (Chuckles) Just to make twenty-five dollars, I fight. I tell, "You give me twenty-five dollars, I fight."

WN: You did good without training?

SJ: You won't believe that sometimes, without training, I go in the ring. Sometimes, in one round, I knock my man out in the first round.

WN: You ever lost, too?

SJ: Oh, yeah. I lost some fights, too. But before, those people, when I go to fights, oh, plenty people, boy. Because they call me the--- you know, I give and take every time. I'm a crowd pleaser, every time. Every round, I'm right there, slamming.

WN: Did you have a nickname?

SJ: I know, in Hilo, they used to go call me "K.O." Jamito because I used

to do plenty knockout fights, eh? In Honolulu, I fought this colored guy. One colored soldier from the Mainland--Silas Green. His name Silas Green. He's big and tall. I am this; he's this height, you know. All like that. He's higher than me, and heavier and bigger. You know what I do? Third round, I break his jaw. The referee had to stop the fight.

WN: So, overall, what was your overall record? Do you know? Won-loss record?

SJ: Oh, I didn't keep track. I get plenty good.

WN: You ever got hurt?

SJ: Oh, not badly. I got knock out one, two---I got knock out three times, too. Not too bad. But not like the kind of damage I do to other fighters. Cut up, broken jaw. I did that to plenty fighters.

WN: When you were in Hilo, did you ever fight main event?

SJ: Hilo, eh? Yeah, I fought once in Hilo, and I fought once in Kohala. Twice. Two main event.

WN: What was your toughest fight? In Hilo?

SJ: Ah, I no can remember. Too long ago (laughs). Too long ago.

WN: Yeah, too many fights, eh? So, what was the most you ever got for one fight in Hilo? Money?

SJ: Oh, the most I get was seventy-five or eighty dollars, I think. Not like here in Honolulu. When I fight, at that time, I make three, four hundred dollars, eh?

WN: So, while you were fighting, you were working at . . .

SJ: You know, one time, I fight a person here in Honolulu. Of course, every time I fight, I work. The next day, I go work, too, see? Me, I fight only on my spare times.

WN: Is this when you were working Pacific Guano and Fertilizer Company?

SJ: Yeah. Oh, the time I fight . . .

WN: In Hilo?

SJ: Yeah. I used to fight when I was working that time.

WN: How long did you work for Pacific Guano?

SJ: I think I work about close to three years.

WN: And what did you do?

SJ: In Pacific Guano?

WN: Yeah.

SJ: You know, before, they used to have this kind old train. You know, "boxcar," they call? Boxcar in train? Well, I used to load that. When the fertilizer come down the chute, I'm a loader. I'm a loader for that Pacific Guano. When the bags come down from that chute, go direct to the train car. I pick that up, I stack that in the box cars. That's my job. In those days, the bags weigh about 200 to 225 pound bags, you know. Fertilizer. And I used to carry all that. And we used to stack it in a boxcar about eight, nine high. Yeah, you know. Before, I used to be real tough. I was strong in the work.

WN: That was full-time job?

SJ: Yeah. Eight-hour day. Five days a week. Sometimes, we work six days.

WN: Was this after you quit boxing? In Hilo?

SJ: I work fertilizer company, I go box. I work stevedore, I go box. Every time, any time, they call me, I. . . . Any time they need extra fighters I go fight.

WN: When was your last fight in Hilo?

SJ: Oh, my last fight in Hilo was, I think, was about '38. I think was in '38. Nineteen thirty-eight.

WN: Wait. You started boxing junior year, eh? Nineteen twenty-nine?

SJ: Yeah, yeah.

WN: So, you fought about nine years in Hilo?

SJ: Yeah, about that. But on and off, you know. Like in Hilo, they don't have much fights, eh? Maybe I fight this year one or two time. The next year, I fight maybe one time or two time. Sometimes, the whole year, I don't fight nothing, you know. But like here in Honolulu, sometimes, especially during the wartime here in Honolulu, little more every week, I fight.

WN: Okay. Then, after you worked Pacific Guano and Fertilizer, you went longshoring?

SJ: Yeah. I went to longshore. Because longshore get better pay than Pacific Guano. Pacific Guano, I used to get only---first time I entered there, I used to get twenty cents an hour. Then, twenty-two cents, Then, twenty-five cents. And stevedore, used to be forty cents an hour. So, I changed to stevedore, because fifteen cents better than the Pacific Guano, eh?

WN: How you got the job?

SJ: Where?

WN: Stevedore.

SJ: Well, I went down the office. I ask for job. And those days, they need workers, eh? Tell me, "You want to work?"

"Yeah, I want."

"You sign this application."

I sign--I fill out the application. And no take two days. They say, "Jamito, ship is coming in a certain day. You want to work?"

"Yeah."

WN: What company was this?

SJ: Before, used to be the Matson Navigation Company. Then, later on, they change 'em to C. Brewer and Company. C. Brewer.

WN: So, when you first started as longshoreman, what did you do? What kind work?

SJ: Oh, you mean, what? Well, before, I used to help my father. I go sew bags, like that. But when I started working steady already, you know, I used to be a sugar loader in the ship. Load sugar.

WN: You mean, by hand?

SJ: Yeah. Hundred thirty-five pound bags. They come down on a chute, eh? Well, you see, there's a ship hold. The drivers bring the load of sugar inside on slings. After they bring the sugar in, all the longshoremen there work. They make a table. They call the "table." A big table. Because the depth of the hold, sometimes about twenty-five, thirty feet, see? From the deck to the bottom. Sometimes, around twenty-five, thirty. So, we have to make a table. They call a "table." Table around the hatch.

Now, after we make the table, then we bring in that, they call that, "chutes" inside. Bring the chutes. Some men around the top of the deck, they make da kine tables. They make their own tables, too. Sugar table. And they set the chutes in the ship. Now, when the chutes are ready inside the ship, then the outside gangs, they put the conveyor. The sugar conveyor. They put a conveyor inside the ship, and all the sugar come in on the conveyor inside. And us working in the hold, we have to stack all those sugars that come inside, see? I'm one of those persons that stand by the end of the chute, and when the sugar come down the chutes, I grab the sugar, I throw 'em down the hold. It's about twenty-five or thirty feet

down. I throw. You have to be good in throwing the bags. Because you don't throw the bags [good], some of the bags, they all broke and the sugar all spill out. So, you have to know how to throw those bags.

WN: You threw 'em down the hold?

SJ: Yeah. You see, you stand on the thing they call a "table" now, and the chute coming down here. The sugar coming down the chute, now. You grab a sugar bag. You have throw 'em down. You have to be good in throwing down. You throw down. Maybe you throw about. . . . Make a square over there. Throw down all the bags.

WN: And who's---somebody's down there?

SJ: No.

WN: Just you?

SJ: You have to be good in throwing. Because me, when I stack the bag, one after another, like that. Way high. And you got to make about six, seven tiers. You got to throw six, seven tiers to come up. So, when you throw the six or seven tiers, it come as high as you--about twenty-five or thirty-bags high--then you change your chute to the other side, throw it down. Then, you make another table again.

WN: Oh, it stacks up?

SJ: Yeah, yeah. Stack 'em up, yeah.

WN: About thirty high?

SJ: Yeah. And then, when it come level with you again, they have to turn the chute. Another thirty-five . . .

WN: There's a hole, then? And it's going down. Falling down?

SJ: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

WN: Free fall? I mean, the bag just falls down onto the ground? The bottom . . .

SJ: Yeah. You have to be good. Me, when I throw the sugar. One after another . . .

WN: Stack on top another one?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: What if one goes off?

SJ: One goes off, it doesn't make any difference. If one bag goes off, if that tier you building up comes up, well, you can step on the other tier, you can move your chute. You tell the conveyor to stop. 'Cause you going to move your chute. So, when he stops, then you pull your chute little bit more to you, then tell, "Okay, ready."

Then, we start throwing down. You know, the bag that fell down, down there? The first one there? You take that. You just cover 'em up. You just throw, cover it up. You can level off again. If you smart, you know how you can level off easy. I used to do that. Me, I expert on that.

WN: How long took you to be expert?

SJ: Oh, I practice. Took me only about two weeks.

WN: You used to do that all day?

SJ: I do, sometimes, whole day. Sometimes, we work eighteen, twenty hours. I do that, throw.

WN: Eighteen, twenty hours. . . .

SJ: Throwing, I working. Loading, sometimes, we get contract, eh?

WN: Oh, one day, you used to do that?

SJ: Yeah, that's right.

WN: Oh, contract.

SJ: When we get contract.

WN: How much you got? You got paid by the bags, or. . . .

SJ: No. If we can do the job quick, maybe we get about few more dollars bonus, eh? That's why.

WN: How fast do the bags come down the conveyor?

SJ: Oh, you be surprised. Real fast. Sometimes, you standing like this, eh? One bag come down. You throw 'em down. Another one come right away. You throw down. You got to be fast. It's really fast, you know. See, that's why, before, chee, when you work inside the hold, you work about five, six minutes, oh, you perspire like heck. Yeah. Chee, but really good exercise.

(Laughter)

SJ: Oh, I used to do that. And those days, the bags were all 125 pound bags, sugar bags. Like now days, all 100 pound, eh? Easy.

WN: So, about much you used to make? About how much per hour you used to make?

SJ: Forty cents an hour. When payday time, we go by the window, collect payday. Every week. Shee, we collect twenty-five, thirty, forty dollars. You work little bit overtime, you make forty dollars. Chee, good money, before. (Laughs) Yeah.

WN: You started doing this 1931. Was that maybe little later? Had depression, eh?

SJ: Yeah, '31 had depression, yeah.

WN: But was it okay? You still could work?

SJ: Yeah. As long as the ship comes in, we work.

WN: So, whenever the ship came in, that's when they called you?

SJ: Yeah. They call us.

WN: In the meantime, what did you do? You know, while you waiting for the ship to come in and they call . . .

SJ: Sometimes, if no more ship like that, I go out, go help my father. Go cut cane. Yeah. I do all kind of odd jobs. Sometimes, when my friend call me, "Ey, Sabas, I get a contract. Like work for me?"

I tell, "What?"

"We go paint that guy's house. He like me paint." I go help him painting. I do all kind job. Painting, shoe shine, any kind. I do all kind job.

WN: When you were in Hilo, you joined the union, eh?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: Longshoremen.

SJ: Yeah, I have to join the union.

WN: What union was this?

SJ: The first union I joined was CIO [Congress of Industrial Organization]. And then, later on, they changed it to ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union].

WN: So, you joined about nineteen, what? Thirty-four?

SJ: Yeah. That's right. Thirty-four. I don't know where my wife---

I still get my book. Nineteen thirty-four. Signed by Lloyd Bridges. No, by Harry Bridges. Still get his signature on top. I don't know where my wife---she know where she put 'em. You pick 'em right on the spot--1934.

WN: Oh, you told me the last time, that's why. When that was. Okay, you know, I'm going to turn off the tape now, and if I can come one more time and ask you some questions about moving to Kalihi side. That be okay?

SJ: I think all right.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 11-22-2-84 and 11-23-2-84

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Sabas T. Jamito (SJ)

January 10, 1984

Kalihi, Oahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Sabas T. Jamito on January 10, 1984 at his home on Kahanu Street in Kalihi.

Okay, last time, we were talking about your experiences as a longshoreman in Hilo.

SJ: That's right.

WN: And then, in 1938, there was some incident that people call the "Hilo Massacre," where people got killed. What do you remember about that?

SJ: Well, that day, we were on picket that day. You know, before, used to have this Hawaiian guy taking charge of that union there. I forget his name already. He told us we have to go on picket duty because we on strike. And they said that policemen and all them, they going come down there. So, we all stood by the pier so you don't have your scabs to come and work, see? Because when we were on strike, this company, they wanted to pick some other men to work the pier and we call them "scabs." So, we stood by the pier, and we don't want the scabs to work. Then, the boss from the pier told us that if we don't get out, don't go away from the pier, they going call the policemen, see? So, we stood there. We didn't go. We didn't move. Then, they call the policemen. All the policemen came down. When the policemen came down, they told us to move, get out! Some of the boys, they didn't move, see? So, they start shooting. Some of us, well, we just walked. While they were shooting, some people walked. Some got hurt, too, see?

WN: And where were you all this time? During the strike?

SJ: Oh, I was right by the pier, but I was about thirty-five, forty feet away from the pier. Some were picketing right near in the pier, some on the outside of it. They had about one, two, three rows of pickets. And I was on the third picket (chuckles), the third line. First, second, third line. So, it was kind of way out.

- WN: When you folks picket, you picket where? The entrance to the dock or the ship?
- SJ: The entrance to the dock. So that nobody can go inside, see?
- WN: Anybody went inside?
- SJ: No, so far nobody.
- WN: This was the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organization]?
- SJ: Yeah, we were CIO that time. No ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Organization] that time. We started as CIO before.
- WN: And then, your union, did everybody go out on strike or had some people that never like strike?
- SJ: Well, union boys, they were all on strike. But some outsiders, they wanted to work, eh? We stood by there, by the wharf, so that nobody can go inside.
- WN: So, after you heard the shots, what did you do?
- SJ: We just walk out. We just walk slowly (chuckles) outside.
- WN: Oh, you weren't scared or anything?
- SJ: No.
- WN: Some people got hurt, eh, in that?
- SJ: Oh, yeah. Somebody got hurt that time. Because the people that were picketing way inside. We get first line, second, third line, eh? Some of the guys picketing within the wharf area, that's where they got hurt.
- WN: And you weren't over there?
- SJ: No, I was one way out.
- WN: So how did you feel about striking? Were you scared or anything?
- SJ: No. You just in a natural mood, you know.
- WN: That was your first time? Striking?
- SJ: Yeah, that was my first time, yeah.
- WN: So, how long did you folks strike?
- SJ: Oh, striking, I think, about couple months, yeah?

WN: So, you didn't get paid all that time?

SJ: Oh, we don't get paid, no. We used to go--what do you call this? The union made some kind of team, eh, to go out to houses, like that, to ask for food for all the strikers.

WN: 'Cause you were married, eh, by then?

SJ: Yeah, I was married that time.

WN: So, was it hard being on strike and supporting a family?

SJ: Oh, yes, it's hard. Well, I had to go out look for some kind of part-time job, you know, outside. (Chuckles) You know what sometimes I do? Because I had a little truck. I go out in the countryside, go pick this kind ripe guavas or some kind of fruits. Then, I take it to the market to sell. Sometimes, in one day, I pick about four or five, sometimes seven, eight. Sometimes, if the guava season is good, I can pick about ten bags of guava. Then I bring 'em to the guava factory in Hilo right near the airport. They used to have a guava factory down there.

WN: Oh, yeah? For what? Jam, like that?

SJ: Yeah, they make jams, like that. I bring over there, sell 'em down there. And then we get paid for one bag of guava, you get paid maybe sixty or sixty-five cents. All depend on the kind of guava, see? Some, you have da kine green or half-ripe or ripe. You get paid for certain kind of "grade," you know, they call that.

WN: Not bad, eh, sixty-five cents?

SJ: Yeah, yeah.

WN: How many guavas or how heavy was one bag?

SJ: Oh, one bag, sometimes maybe around fifty or sixty pounds. One bag. We used to go sell (chuckles) those guavas.

WN: Did other people do that, too?

SJ: Yeah, plenty people do that, too. You have to make money.

WN: What else you did besides the guava?

SJ: Oh, sometimes, I go out do some carpentry job for somebody. It was small jobs. Sometimes, I go--get my friends there. Some kind of bootblack stands, eh? You know, shine shoes? (Laughs) I go to help them shine a few shoes. Make a little extra money. Oh, I do all kind of job. Yeah, in hard times like that, you have to do any kind of job just to make money. Especially if you have a family, and you want to feed your family, you do anything, yeah?

WN: What about your wife? Was she working?

SJ: No. Since I married my wife, I never make her work. She's only a housewife. Only she take care of the children and do the laundry and cooking, that's all. I don't make her go to work.

WN: By the time of the strike, how many children did you have?

SJ: Oh, at the time of the strike, I had only two.

WN: The guava---the Hilo factory, they paid you cash?

SJ: Oh, yeah. You want money right away, you go pick guavas, one bag. You go there, you sell 'em, they pay you cash.

WN: Chee, that's rough.

SJ: Yeah, really rough, yeah? During the strike, it was really rough.

WN: After the strike was settled, what, did you folks have better pay or anything like that?

SJ: Oh, yeah, we had. . . . We were having forty cents an hour, before. Then, it came up to, I think it was sixty-five cents. Sixty-five cents an hour. The first time I work stevedore, I work forty cents an hour. Like now, the stevedores, they averaging about ten, twelve dollars an hour. When I retired in 1972, I was having only \$4.25 an hour. Longshoreman, see? Yeah, I do all kind of job. I was a wharf clerk. I was a winch operator on the ship.

WN: This is in Hilo or in Honolulu?

SJ: In Honolulu.

WN: Okay. So, in 1940, you moved from Hilo to Honolulu, yeah?

SJ: That's right.

WN: Why did you move from Hilo to Honolulu?

SJ: Well, you see, the company over here--the McCabe, Hamilton & Renny Company--they needed some longshoremen. They needed some longshoremen, so they wrote to Hilo asking if they could send some longshoremen to Honolulu at the McCabe, Hamilton & Renny Company. So, the longshore union down there, at that time, the union, they asked the boys, "Which one of you folks want to go to Honolulu to work?" So, plenty of us wanted to come down here, see, because they said they have plenty of jobs down here and we can make good money. So, I signed up for the trip down here.

WN: What was the name of the company that you worked for in Hilo?

SJ: Oh, that time, used to be Matson Navigation Company. Then, later on,

they change 'em to C. Brewer & Company.

WN: Did they have any relationship to McCabe, Hamilton & Renny? Were they connected in any way?

SJ: Well, the ships that McCabe worked on and the ships that the C. Brewer Company in Hilo, they all the same. Same ships. The ships are the same, but the working conditions are different because over here, they have more jobs than the Hilo boys. So, I told 'em I wanted to come down here. So, I signed up.

WN: Had you ever been to Honolulu before?

SJ: Oh, yeah, I been here. I just came for a visit about one week, then I went back.

WN: So, how you felt about leaving Hilo? You know, you grew up over there, eh?

SJ: Oh, yeah.

WN: Coming over to Honolulu.

SJ: Well, I was excited because, oh, I really wanted change of place. The climate, too. I thought maybe the climate over here was different from Hilo, eh? But all the same. Not like in the Mainland. Mainland is different. Real cold, eh? Certain times, they are real cold. Sometimes, real hot, too, down there.

WN: So, you signed up and you got in?

SJ: Yeah, yeah. I got in right away.

WN: So when you first came Honolulu in 1940, where did you live?

SJ: I live down my mother-in-law's home.

WN: Kalihi?

SJ: Yeah, Kalihi.

WN: Where? What street?

SJ: Hau Street. You know Dillingham? You go one block down, that's Colburn. And the following block, that's Hau.

WN: So, your wife was Honolulu girl?

SJ: Yeah, she was a Honolulu girl. I met her because she played volleyball--what do you call--indoor ball for the girl's team down here.

WN: Volleyball?

SJ: Not volleyball. Indoor ball.

WN: "Indoor ball"? What is that?

SJ: You know those ball you hit with a bat?

WN: Softball?

SJ: Softball, yeah. She played. She's good in that. Her and her friends come down there to play.

WN: Hilo?

SJ: Yeah. (Chuckles) I met her down there.

WN: How you met her?

SJ: I met her through one of my friends. Introduce me. (Chuckles)

WN: When you first came to Kalihi, then, what did you think about Kalihi when you first came?

SJ: Oh, I thought maybe Honolulu was going to be something like the Mainland. I used to see the pictures of Mainland. I thought, shee, they say Honolulu is a big town, so I was really surprised, you know. I really wanted to come down here to see a really big town. Not like in Hilo, we have a small town. (Chuckles) So, I really wanted to come down. I wanted to see a big town, eh? But not much difference.

(Laughter)

WN: You mean, between Honolulu and Hilo?

SJ: Yeah. During 1940, the town wasn't so big. Not like now. Great big difference now.

WN: So, around Hau Street, your neighbors like that, what nationality were they?

SJ: On Hau Street, mostly Japanese, Portuguese and Hawaiians, before, down there. Now they have plenty Filipinos living around there. In fact, this one, two. . . . Four blocks, right up here, all the way down, there's mostly all Filipinos now days. Pretty soon, this going to be a Filipino town. (Chuckles)

WN: So, the Hawaiians, Japanese, Portuguese, did you get along with them pretty good?

SJ: Oh, all right, yeah. Sometimes, they tell me, "Oh, Mr. Jamito, you

want some mangoes?" like that. They get plenty mangoes from their yard. Some mangoes or some other kind of fruits. They very friendly, you know.

WN: Did you notice any differences in the people between Hilo and Honolulu?

SJ: Well, I tell you straight, I been living in Hilo for a long time and I think the people there, Hilo, are very friendly, you know. So, when I came over here, well, I don't know the people down here much--their customs. So, I think the people in Hilo are more friendly.

WN: Yeah, like how?

SJ: I like the people up there because I'm used to them already, to their ways, eh? Even now. I came down here since 1940 until now, when I go back to Hilo, oh, still, the people there. I usually go there almost every year, you know, Hilo. The people still same. They very friendly over there. Very good. The people down here, they very good too, but I like the customs in Hilo.

WN: Like what kind customs?

SJ: Especially the Filipinos down there. Or even some Portuguese, Japanese, like that. If they know you, chee, when you go to their home, oh, they call you quickly in the house. "Oh, come. Have some fruits." Or vegetables, or have coffee, like that. Coffee or sandwich. They good. Not like here in Honolulu. Here in Honolulu, you have to buy most of your stuff. Well, if you have really good friends, then they tell you come in their house, eat, and everything. No, but in Hilo, people there really friendly. Well, because, maybe, I been living there. They know me, that's why they very good to me, eh?

WN: What was Kalihi like in 1940?

SJ: Oh, 1940, they didn't have much homes down there, where I was staying. Only had one, two, about three or four. Only about three or four homes where I was staying. Kahanu Street, yeah?

WN: Did you used to go downtown sometimes?

SJ: Oh, yeah. I go downtown.

WN: How did you go?

SJ: Sometimes I walk. From Kalihi. I walk. Good exercise, eh? Sometimes I borrow my brother-in-law's bicycle. (Chuckles) I go with the bicycle, go around. And if I really wanted to go downtown fast, then I walk up to the other street here. I catch the trolley. They used to have that trolley bus before. Take that trolley. They didn't have these big buses, before. No. They used to have the trolley buses.

WN: How much was the trolley?

SJ: Oh, you buy a token, I think it's, sometimes, ten cents, five cents. All depend on the distance you going.

WN: You also told me that you started fighting again once you got back to Honolulu?

SJ: Yeah, that's right.

WN: How you got into fighting again?

SJ: Well, they told me that, "If you fight in Honolulu, you make more money than in Hilo."

So, I tell, "I'll take a chance. I'll try."

So, I fought here. My first fight, I think I got about thirty dollars for the first fight here. Better than in Hilo. The first time I fought over there, after they deducting all that tax, after I had only \$1.75.

(Laughter)

SJ: But over here, I had, I think, it was thirty dollars. Yeah, thirty. Well, tax and everything, I'd say about thirty. But clear money I got for take home, I had about thirty dollars. (Chuckles)

WN: Where was the fight? The first fight?

SJ: In the Civic Auditorium.

WN: Oh, in the Civic. Who came up to you to say you like fight?

SJ: They used to have a trainer over here before they call Phillips. Timo Phillips?

WN: Timo?

SJ: Yeah, Timo. (Chuckles) Timo said, "Sabas, you want to fight?"

I tell, "Where?"

He tell, "You going fight down Civic. You get good money. You go fight preliminary. Only four rounds."

I tell, "I take a chance."

I trained at Timo's gym. His helper was Tony Ganir. Both of them, they train us. Every day we go down there. Every afternoon, train at the gym.

WN: Where was this gym?

SJ: Kalihi Gym. Right up here. You know, Kalihi, right by the canal? You go up about two blocks up.

WN: What street was it on?

SJ: I forget the name of the street.

WN: Kalihi Gym?

SJ: Just Kalihi Gym.

WN: And what, Timo owned the gym or what?

SJ: Yeah. Timo Phillips.

WN: I mean, that was his own gym? Or was that the city . . .

SJ: No, no. That's his own gym. I don't know. Because he take care of that area around there. I don't know, maybe it's for the city, I think. I don't know, but he take care of the gym. It's a pretty good gym. Big gym, but kinda old, too, was. But it's good gym.

WN: So, mostly Kalihi guys trained in that gym?

SJ: Yeah. Kalihi boys. Maybe you think I telling you lie--you know [Carl] Bobo Olson, the world champion? I used to train Bobo Olson. I spar with him. Almost every day I spar with Bobo Olson. I train him. He used to come gym barefoot, you know. He was a young kid that time when he used to come down the gym.

WN: He was from where? Bobo Olson?

SJ: He's from Honolulu. Yeah. He's a Honolulu boy, Bobo Olson. He became world champion, eh? He became world champion. I used to train him. Spar with him little more every day. He's a tall, gangling kid, you know. He don't have real good body, but he's tall. And he's a good jabber, you know. I spar with him almost every day. When I go to the gym, the trainer, Timo Phillips, "Sabas, you spar with Bobo."

"Okay."

Because I spar with almost everyone in the gym, see? Sometimes, in one day, I spar with about four, five boys. Because I don't bother nobody, see, in the gym. Big or small, I spar with them. Because I used to be a slugger.

WN: So, Bobo Olson, at that time, he was good or what? Bobo Olson. Or he was just starting . . .

SJ: Oh, he just starting. He used to come to gym without shoes, you

know. We used to lend him shoes for go train. Then, after that, he came world champion. Yeah, Bobo Olson. I used to spar with him almost every day. And you heard also they get one fighter down here they call Billy James? You never hear?

WN: I never heard of Billy James.

SJ: We were all on the same team--me, Billy James, Bobo Olson. The trainer now for this Honolulu Boxing Club, Rodrigues. Yeah, Rodrigues. He's still trainer now. We used to be all in the same gym.

WN: Do you know a Jiro Sato?

SJ: Yeah, I heard about him.

WN: He's from the valley, Kalihi Valley.

SJ: Yeah, I know. I heard about him. (Pause) Yeah, I used to train with all those boys. Every day I go in the gym, I spar with one of the boys. After I get through with him, the trainer say, "Sabas, don't take your gloves off. Spar with the other person. The other man." After that, still I have to have my gloves on. Sometimes in one day I spar with four or five different men. I was real rugged. My young days, eh? That's why I still get a broken nose, cauliflower. . . . (laughs)

WN: Your ear, too. Was that the only gym in Kalihi?

SJ: In Kalihi, they used to have that CYO [Catholic Youth Organization] gym. That's way down. . . . I don't know where is that. I forget that place. In Kalihi, that's only gym they used to have.

WN: Some of the old-timers told me that long time ago, there was a arena in Kalihi. Called Husten Arena?

SJ: Yeah, Houston Arena. They call that "Houston," yeah.

WN: Did you fight in there?

SJ: No, I didn't fight there. I was in Hilo that time.

WN: Oh, so by the time you came to Kalihi, didn't have?

SJ: No, they didn't have. They only used to have fight down the stadium.

WN: The old stadium?

SJ: The old stadium. That's where they used to have the fights.

WN: That and the Civic Auditorium?

SJ: Yeah, Civic Auditorium, that's right. Those the only two places.

WN: So, who was your first fight with in Honolulu, you remember?

SJ: Down here (chuckles), was long time ago. I forgot.

WN: Was Timo the promoter for all the fights?

SJ: No, he take cares of the gym and he's more like the boss of the gym.

WN: Who was the promoter who promoted all the smokers?

SJ: Oh, [Sam] Ichinose used to promote some fights, but they used to have one other haole guy. I forget his name already. I forgot his name. They used to have one other American guy. That American, sometimes, when I come home from work he's down at my home. He tell, "Sabas, you want to fight Saturday?"

I tell, "Why?"

Tell, "Oh, I need one extra fighter. I need a extra fighter on my card. You want to fight?"

I tell, "Oh, but I got no training. I work almost every day."

He tell, "Well, I tell you what, for that fight, you fight four rounds, four-round fight, I give you--let's see, I used to give you thirty dollars, thirty-five dollars--I give you forty dollars."

I tell, "No, I don't want. Because I got no training." "Without training," I tell, "I get dirty beating. Beating up."

Then he says, "Oh, if you want little bit extra money, I give you fifty dollars, you fight this fight."

I tell, "All right. I fight."

(Laughter)

SJ: He give me fifty dollars, without training I go fight, you know. I fight. How many times he come see me. Tell, "You go fight this person." And if I don't want to fight, he offer me a little bit more. He raise the pay. So, I tell, "All right, I fight." Sometimes, I fight, in the first round I knock my man out. Because, usually, I know, when I'm not in condition, I go for broke in the first round. I go for broke in the first round. I give and take, see? I give and take. Sometimes, I give him a lucky hit, I knock him out. I knock plenty guys in the first round out, see? Because I can hit, before.

WN: What weight class were you?

SJ: In Honolulu, I started as a featherweight. Then I fought featherweight, lightweight. I fought welterweight. And I fought middleweight. I

fought middleweight twice over here. (Chuckles) I take all comers. As long they say, "Sabas, you fight this guy?"

I tell, "Oh, he's too big and too tall."

Tell, "Oh, that's all right. We offer you little bit extra money."

"How much you giving me?"

"Well, you fight him six round, we give you seventy-five dollars. Seventy-five dollars for six rounds."

Those days, seventy-five dollars was pretty good, you know. So I tell 'em, "This guy too big for me."

Tell, "How about hundred?"

"All right. I take 'em."

(Laughter)

SJ: Yeah. You don't believe, but these big guys, even they big, when I hit them, they go right down. I fought one colored champion over here from the Army. His name was Silas Green. We fought like this, see? I was short and the colored was big and tall. They had big bets outside, too, you know. They said that colored was going knock me out. So, I tell 'em I take a chance because I fighting for money. So, if I lose, I get paid. You don't believe, I fought this colored guy. He was so tall and big, he just keep on jabbing me. First round and second round, keep on jabbing me. Third round, I changed my tactics. When he come in, I just rush inside to him. I give him overhand rights, punches. Because he was tall, so I had to throw my overhand rights. When I throw my . . .

WN: The face or the body?

SJ: I throw 'em to the face. I throw 'em to the face first. In the first round. Second round, I started pounding on his body. In the third round, he figure I was going on his body again because in the second round, the whole round, I went all on his body because he was tall. I can't reach his face. So, third round, he came out. He came rushing at me. I start pounding on his body again. When he saw that I was pounding on his body, he just left his face all open. He tried to block my punches to his body. When he tried to block, I threw one overhand right. Right on his jaw. Overhand right. That's why, they call this my famous overhand right, see? I threw my overhand right. He went down and he never come up. And the physician came, look. His jaw was all broken with my punch. I won the fight. Technical knockout in the third round. You know in fighting, you have to use all kind tactics, too. If you see you can't fight a person, you can't hurt him on his face, you have to try and fight him a different

way. The two rounds, first and second round, I tried go on his belly. So, he figure, ah, the third round, "He's going on my belly again." So he left his face all open. When he left his face all open, that's when I threw my overhand right. (Chuckles)

WN: And this Silas Green, he was a good fighter or what?

SJ: Oh, yeah. He was a good fighter in the Army. During the wartime, I fought plenty Army boys. Mostly Army. Even this--not Army, but this--I don't know if you heard about him--local boy, before. They call him Herman Kaakua. He used to be lightweight champion over here. The island lightweight champion. So, after I fought this colored guy, the one I broke his jaw, they told me, "You want to fight Herman Kaakua?"

I tell, "Why you fellas want to pick me up for go fight this kind champions? You know I'm only a rookie. I'm a new man. Why don't you folks go and find some other guys?"

But my trainer, Timo Phillips, "Sabas, go ahead. Try take a chance. Maybe they give you good money."

I tell 'em, "All right. I try. I'm going to take a chance. You think how much they going give me?"

"Oh, I go see the promoter."

He wen go see the promoter. He tell, "The promoter say he giving you \$150."

"What event I going fight?"

He tell, "You fighting in the semi-final." Semi-final, that's next to the main event, see?

WN: Yeah. The one just before main event?

SJ: Yeah. Semi-final. "How many rounds," I tell.

"Oh, you fellas going fight only eight round, semi-final."

I was kinda worried. I tell, "Chee, I'm not in condition. Besides, this guy, he used to be champion."

"Ah, you no worry about it." Timo Phillips said, "He used to be champion before but that was couple years ago. Maybe he's kinda old now. You can take care of him."

I tell, "Well, if get for me that \$150, I take a chance. Even if I lose, I get money," I tell 'em. I say, "All right."

You don't believe that fight, you can ask anybody. You tell about

the Sabas and Herman Kaakua fight. First round, when the bell rang, he rushed at me because he wanted to beat me up badly, you know. I threw one overhand. Poom! First round, I knock him out. You no believe that, you go ask the promoters. Anybody, they tell you. First round, I hit him. I knock Kaakua out in the first round.

So, he told the promoter, "Sabas beat me. I want a rematch because maybe that was a lucky punch."

So, my second, Timo Phillips, said, "All right, Sabas, you want to fight Kaakua again?"

I tell, "Well, I beat him my last fight, so if he want to fight me, I take a chance."

You know, I used to have a Filipino friend down Bethel Street, before. He used to be a barber down there. Bethel Street barber.

WN: What barber?

SJ: He used to be a barber. Bethel Street. He used to own barbershop there. Filipino barbershop. This Filipino guy, he tell me, "I hear you fighting Herman Kaakua again."

I tell, "Yeah."

He tell me, "You think you can beat 'em?"

I tell, "Well, last time I beat 'em. He say it's a lucky punch, so he want a rematch."

So, this Filipino said, "If you go and fight him, Sabas, I going bet on you."

I tell 'em, "Oh, you taking a chance because he's good." I told 'em, "That was a lucky punch only."

He said, "You try fight him. And I going to try some bet. I going to bet on you." Because he got some other guys. Some guys running taxi. Used to have that taxi stand down Bethel Street. He get some guys down there, they want to bet with the barbershop guy, you know.

I tell, "How much you going to bet?"

"Oh, these my friends. They said they like bet three, four hundred dollars. They said you going get licking this time," he tell.

I tell, "I fight him. I take a chance."

You know I fought this guy. He said he want to fight me six rounds. He even ask me if I want make side bet. I tell, "If I want to fight, I fight. But I don't want to make side bet."

WN: Who asked you if you wanted to make side bet?"

SJ: (Chuckles) Herman Kaakua. I tell him, "I fight you, but I fight you just for the money. Just for fun." Then, I think he went to this Filipino guy, the Filipino barbershop, and he bet some money, too, down there. So, the Filipino guy told me, "Oh, I bet little bit extra money, more on you."

"Up to you. You taking a chance," I tell him.

You don't believe, I fought him six rounds. Every round, I put him down for nine counts for six rounds. He don't want to give up. He don't want to be counted out because I found out he get about thousand dollar bet outside. Side bet, you know.

WN: On himself?

SJ: Yeah, he bet. For six rounds, every single round, I put 'em down for nine count. As soon as they count nine, he stood up. I chase him around. He run around. For six rounds, I put him, every single round, I put him down for nine count. I beat him badly. Decision, though. The Filipino, he won. (Chuckles) The next day, I go down by his barbershop. "Sabas." He hand me one fifty dollars. "For you." (Laughs)

WN: So, among the Filipinos, did they like you? Did they always cheer for you?

SJ: Oh, plenty Filipinos, they always cheer for me. Every time, when the Filipinos, they go there, "Sabas! Give 'em your overhand!" Because I was famous for my overhand right. (Chuckles)

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Were there times when you got beat? You remember any matches that you lost?

SJ: Oh, yeah. I forget who this guy. I got beat once. . . . I got beat twice in that Civic Auditorium. I got beat twice when I fought in Navy yard. I fought one big, colored boy in the Navy yard. Oh, he was 148 pounds. Yeah, this colored boy. Big and tall. He beat me. He beat me decision though. And I fought one other guy. (Chuckles) That guy knocked me out. I forget his name. He used to be a Puerto Rican champion before. He beat me. I think, in my career here in Honolulu, I lost about four. And I fought one in the stadium. Five. I lost five.

WN: You fought in the stadium?

SJ: Yeah, I fought in the stadium.

WN: Once?

SJ: I fought once. I fought one middleweight.

WN: How many pounds were you? At that time? How much did you weigh?

SJ: The time I fought this guy, I was only 129 pounds. A junior lightweight. They call that "junior lightweight."

WN: And what, you got KO'd?

SJ: No, no. I lost decision. And his weight too heavy. He's big and heavy, eh? He fought me. I just keep going in, going in. But I can't catch him because he was kinda clever, too.

(Laughter)

SJ: All the people, "Sabas, give 'em your right! Give 'em!" They all believe (chuckles) about my right, my hand, my punching power, eh? But I couldn't catch 'em.

WN: Maybe guys with long reach would . . .

SJ: Yeah, he has long reach, too, eh?

WN: So all together, how many fights did you have in Honolulu? About?

SJ: Oh, in Honolulu, I have over . . . I have over forty fights over here.

WN: How much you figure you made fighting?

SJ: (Chuckles) I don't know. Before, when I first started, \$1.75. The highest I made was only about \$800-something.

WN: Total?

SJ: No, \$800, the highest fight pay . . .

WN: For one fight?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: Oh, yeah? Which one? The stadium one?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: You got \$800? What about, when they offer you money, did they give you incentive if you win?

SJ: No.

WN: So win or lose, the winner get the same amount as the loser?

SJ: No, no. If you win, probably you get about. . . . All depend on the event you fighting. Main event; semi-final. If you win, maybe you get about--if you in the main event--maybe you get about \$300 more than your opponent. Three hundred or \$200 more. If you fight in the semi-final maybe you get fifty or thirty dollars more than your opponent. All different rates, eh? The winner get at least a little bit more.

WN: And the people who trained at Timo's gym, most of them fought at Civic?

SJ: Some of them, yeah. They fight down the Civic. Sometimes, when I go to fight, some of my teammates, they fight, too, that same night.

WN: You folks had a name for your gym? You know, any club name or anything like that?

SJ: They call us just Timo's Kalihi boys. Timo's gym boys.

WN: Timo's Kalihi boys?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: And had lot of Filipinos on the team or what?

SJ: There were one, two, only three of us. Three Filipinos.

WN: Out of how many?

SJ: Oh, in the gym? Oh, in the gym, we had about close to twenty. Twenty boys trained almost every day. Because amateur boys used to go down there train, too, see? The amateur fighters. They don't fight professional.

WN: If had only three Filipinos, then all the Filipinos who went to the fight, they must have cheered for you folks, eh?

SJ: Oh, yeah. That's all they do. They got to cheer for us. (Chuckles) We got all kind of nationality training. We get Filipinos, we get Puerto Ricans. We get even Japanese boys train there.

WN: Timo was what? Hawaiian?

SJ: Timo, he's Hawaiian. I think, if I'm not mistaken, I think he get some colored blood, too, I think. Because Timo Phillips. His name is Timo Phillips. He must have some, maybe, colored. But he's really a nice fellow. He's a nice man. He passed away already.

WN: So, what year was your last fight?

SJ: My last fight, I think, was in. . . . Either '42 or '43. I think was somewhere about '43, I think.

WN: So, you fought about three years, Honolulu?

SJ: No.

WN: More than that?

SJ: Oh, not '43. Forty-seven.

WN: After the war was pau?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: You fought after the war, too?

SJ: Yeah, I fought.

WN: So, maybe '47, around that time, yeah?

SJ: Because even if I don't train and they need fighters, they come call me, I fight. As long they give me good money, I fight. (Laughs)

WN: So, when you quit, how come you quit? I mean, when you quit, you just said, "I not going fight any more"?

SJ: Yeah. Because my (chuckles) family, my children, my grandchildren, they tell me, "Ey, Grandpa or Daddy, don't fight again. You too old already." But that's in my blood. I fight. I want to fight every time.

WN: You didn't want to be a coach or anything like that? Trainer?

SJ: No.

WN: So, while you were fighting and everything, you worked McCabe, Hamilton & Renny, yeah?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: How long you worked for McCabe, Hamilton & Renny?

SJ: I think, almost, close to ten years, yeah? Yeah, I was longshoreman. No, it's over ten years. When I came from Hilo, I went to McCabe, Hamilton & Renny. Then when this Castle & Cooke, they needed some longshoremen, they borrow from McCabe. So, I transferred to Castle & Cooke. Then, when Castle & Cooke, they kinda slack, McCabe call us back. So, I went back McCabe.

WN: During the wartime, you were working for McCabe or you were working for military?

SJ: I worked McCabe. And sometimes, we go down Navy yard work. While I was working McCabe before, was in (pause) 1943? Yeah, I think, was in 1943, I worked for McCabe. Then, they needed some workers down the Navy yard. So, I signed up for Navy yard. I worked as a rigger. I started as a third-class rigger. I came second-class and first-class. When I came to first-class rigger--didn't take long--the war ended, eh? So, I went back to McCabe, Hamilton. I worked for McCabe, Hamilton for a while, then I transferred to Castle & Cooke. From Castle & Cooke, McCabe called me back.

WN: What is a rigger?

SJ: You know a rigger? When you work on a ship, you install this kind gangplanks to take this kind pieces out from inside the ship. Da kine broken pieces. If you a rigger, you have to know how to set the hooks. The hooks, and the planks, and everything to take this broken parts out. Or if you going to repair some parts on a ship, you have to rig the. . . . In case on the ship there's a broken metal piece on the ship, you want to bring it down, well, you gotta know how to tie that metal and bring it down. You have to put it on a pulley, you know. They call a "pulley." Pulley and bring 'em down there. Set 'em up on the side of the ship. You have to know how to place it there, so when the welders come, they weld the broken piece. That's what rigging, see?

WN: So, the pieces were real heavy pieces?

SJ: Oh, yeah. Heavy pieces. If you want to take any da kine furniture or damaged parts in the ship, eh, you have to know how to tie the pieces up. When you rig, they call you a "rigger," because you have to know how to tie the articles or the materials in the ship. You have to be able to tie them so you can take 'em out safely out of the ship or put back in the ship. That's what they call "riggers." We rig the materials to bring 'em in or we rig 'em to take 'em out.

WN: And was attached to what? A crane or something?

SJ: No. If it is within a ship, we have to use our own block and tackle. They call that "block and tackle." Because cranes can't go in the ship hold. Unless it's all open. Outside, all right. But if it's only in the ship hold, no, we have to use block and tackle. When you rig that material, you gotta know--if the area is kinda small for take out--you have to know how to take it in sideways or in certain angle way, you know. Take 'em out. I wen do all kind job. I wen rigging, any kind.

WN: When you worked for the Navy, did your pay go up?

SJ: Oh, yeah. It came up. When I first started there, I worked as a

rigger, first time I went there I had \$1.39 an hour. Then, you came second-class rigger, you came up to \$1.75. First-class rigger, you have over two dollars an hour. During the wartime, see.

WN: That was higher than what you were getting at McCabe?

SJ: Oh, yeah.

WN: McCabe, how much you were getting?

SJ: When I started there, during the wartime, McCabe, I started as a laborer. I got ninety cents an hour. Then, later, they raise 'em up to \$1.25 an hour.

WN: Then, wartime, you made plenty---more money, then, yeah?

SJ: Maybe you make little bit more only.

WN: You also said you were a winch operator, eh, for McCabe?

SJ: Oh, yeah. I drive the machine. I drive out all this kind automobiles, food cargoes.

WN: You operated the winch?

SJ: Yeah. I drive the machine. You have to be good because some of those. . . . Especially if you take da kine steel beams out, they very long. You have to know how to drive your winch so you can take 'em out certain angle. Take 'em out of the ship. You take 'em out on the winch, and if you not good in driving, you hit the load. You take 'em out, you hit 'em on the side of the ship like that, it's going to be all broke. So, you have to be good. When you take 'em out, you have to take 'em slow and fast, too.

WN: How long did it take you to learn how to be winch operator?

SJ: Winch operator, took me about couple months. I was winch operator for, say, about twenty-five years. I was a winch operator, I was a wharf clerk there. I put all around.

WN: For McCabe and for Castle & Cooke?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: What did a wharf clerk do?

SJ: When the truckers come in for haul their cargo, well, you see, maybe they want some cement, or apple, orange, or any kind food articles. When they come, you tell them, "Is this the articles you want?"

You know, they tell you. He say, "I get about 100 box orange." Or fifty box apple like that, or some rice bags, or sugar, or any kind

article. Or grapes like that, fruits. Every article that they take, you write 'em down, see? First, you write down the company's name that taking that, the trucker's name that taking the articles out. And then, after you make a tag out for him, see. For all the different articles he taking out. After he get everything loaded on his truck, then you double recheck. You tell, "I see you got certain this, this. This kind of cargo, you get twenty bags or thirty." You recheck everything. If everything is okay, then you tell, "All right." You give him the slip. You keep one slip for you, see? The slip that you get, you give 'em to the office. And the other slip, the trucker take 'em. We always have to have one slip for the company. I been doing that clerk job for, yeah, over fifteen years.

WN: You do all kinds, then?

SJ: Oh, I do all. I do cooper job, too? You know what is cooper job?

WN: Fixing the boxes?

SJ: Yeah, fixing the boxes, sewing the broken bags. (Chuckles) All kind. I do all kinds.

WN: What job you like the best?

SJ: The best one I wanted was a winch operator.

WN: That one required the most skill, eh?

SJ: Oh, yeah. Especially if you get da kine steel beams or da kine flagpoles. You know da kine telephone poles? You got to know how to drive 'em out, because on a ship like that, lengthwise. And then, when you bring 'em out, you have to know how to turn 'em with a winch, you know. So, you go down straight on the wharf. When you going down on the wharf, you have to know how turn that way, go down straight. Winch operator, hard job, you know. You got to use lot of skill, too.

WN: You ever made mistake and crack the boat?

SJ: So far, no. I never made mistake. But some other drivers, they made mistake. You see this--my crack on the head here?

WN: Oh, on the right top of your head?

SJ: Yeah. Well, you see, one time I was working on a ship. I was in the hold working. I was working for a certain gang. One of the winch drivers, he jerked the load. When he jerked the load, the winch hook break. When the winch hook break, the broken parts flew, hit me right on the head here. Oh, nothing but blood coming all around there. They have to take me to the hospital that night. They gave me, oh, about five. . . .

WN: Was that stitches?

SJ: About nine stitch.

WN: You got Workmen's Comp[ensation] for that?

SJ: Yeah. I get about almost \$800, I think. Yeah, close to \$800. I (chuckles) stayed home only about one week. I stayed home one week.

WN: Where? Hospital?

SJ: That night I got hurt I went to the hospital. The doctor sewed it up, everything. He told me, "Sabas, you want to stay in the hospital?"

"No, no, I'm going home. My wife waiting for me." She don't know I got hurt.

So the doctor fixed everything. "All right. You can go home." So, I went home.

I was home two days, then my wife said, "Oh, I think you going to stay home about one month."

I tell, "No, no, no. I not going to." I tell, "Next week, I going back work." Following week, I went back to work. But I had easy job, eh? Go sew bags. (Laughs) Cooper job.

WN: You know, after ILWU came in, you had more pay?

SJ: After ILWU came, we had more pay.

WN: Had different working conditions or what?

SJ: Well, every year, they change. They make better conditions.

WN: I think '49 had a strike, eh? Long one, six months or something. You remember that ?

SJ: Yeah. Long strike. Yeah, I was still in Hilo that time.

WN: Oh, '49?

SJ: Yeah. I came here '49, then I went back again. I always go back and forth to Hilo.

WN: To work or what?

SJ: Yeah, I work.

WN: So, '49, you went back Hilo?

SJ: Mm hmm [yes].

WN: And what you did in Hilo?

SJ: Longshore job.

WN: Yeah? What about McCabe? They never say nothing that you moving?

SJ: No. I say I just want to go back home. I tell, "I homesick. My parents living in Hilo." My mother still living, eh? My father died in 1942. I tell, "I gotta go back. I gotta take care my mother." My mother is a small woman. You know how heavy my mother is? She's only seventy-nine pounds. My mother is small. She's about four feet only. My mother is very small. But I never see a better cook than my mother. She's a very good cook.

WN: What she used to cook?

SJ: Filipino food, you know. When she came from the Philippines, all what she do is only cook Filipino foods. Oh, but she know how to make da kine Filipino rice cake and all that. Like Japanese, they smart how to make mochi, all that. In Filipino, my mother make rice cakes, Filipino coconut pudding, and all that. She smart how to make that.

WN: When did your mother pass away?

SJ: My mother passed away in 1968. So, almost every year, I go to Hilo, go visit my mother's grave. Put flower on the grave.

WN: Do you still go?

SJ: Oh, yeah. Last year, I went. I mean, this year. Last year, I went. This year. Almost every year, I go down. Just for put flowers on my mother's grave. Sometimes I write to my sisters, tell, "Hey, do you go visit Mama's grave?"

Tell, "Oh, we going. We going. Next week, we go put."

I tell, "No worry. I'm coming down." (Chuckles) So, I go down.

WN: So, you went back every time. You used work over there little while?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: So, McCabe and Hamilton folks, they didn't say anything like, you know, you gotta come work?

SJ: No. No, they real good. They said, "Well, if you have to go, you go, that's all. And you want to come back, come back."

WN: So, in 1972, you retired, yeah?

SJ: Yeah, I retired. I retired on disability. Because I was working once on the pier, and I was going on a high lift. I rode on the high lift to go on top of the van--you know, cargo van? The high lift prong--you know, the prong--break. I fell down. I got hurt.

WN: Where you got hurt?

SJ: I got my ankle and my back, I fell on my back. I couldn't hardly stand up. So, they took me to the hospital. Then, afterwards, they told me to go home, take a rest. But when I come home, sometimes I can't hardly get up from the bed, you know. Too painful, eh? So I stayed home about one week. One week, then, I don't know what came into my mind. I don't want to stay home. I always want to go work, see? So, I went to work. They gave me easy job. Cooper job. I work cooper job. Then, sometimes, when I came little bit better, they tell me, "Sabas, you go do part-time clerical job."

I tell, "All right." That's easy. Only pencil and paper. I do that. I do all kind job they tell me.

WN: You told me, too, that you were security guard for little while, too?

SJ: That's right. When I retired from McCabe, Hamilton & Renny Company, I stay at home one, two nights. You know, I feel so restless doing nothing. So I told my wife, "I'm going to apply for job."

She tell me, "But you can't work heavy job."

I tell, "No, I take easy job. Only walk around."

"Yeah? What kind job?"

I tell, "I going try go apply for security job." Da kine security officer. Because they only walk. I see the security officers on the wharf, they only walk around, you know. I tell, "I going try security job. Only walk around."

She tell, "Well, you go try."

I applied for a job. I got 'em right away. The Freeman's security job. I got a job.

WN: Where? On the wharf?

SJ: No. Well, later, they put me on the wharf, too. But first time I work security job, I go work this kind condominiums, you know? I watch. I go patrol nighttime, the condominiums. After that, they change me. They tell, "Oh, we want you to go up the quarry." You know where that. . . .

WN: Which quarry? The university one?

SJ: No, where. . . . Way up that. . . . I forget already. Anyway, was way up by Kaimuki side. Not Kaimuki, but Kaneohe side. So, they tell me, "You go over there work. Nighttime, you go work in the quarry, watch over there."

I tell, "All right. I go." I go there nighttime. I bring this kind of gun, you know. But the gun we get, it's only pellet guns. Most security guard, they don't--well, maybe some now, they get da kine real bullets, but the guns we used to get before, all nothing but pellet guns. Sometimes when you go by the quarry, you go from post to post, where you punch clock, sometimes they get da kine wild dogs, like that, come around, eh? If they come around you, you shoot 'em with a pellet gun.

So, I say, "Okay." But nighttime, they give us trucks to go from post to post. They give us trucks to go and punch the clock, see? Maybe we drive the truck here to this post, we go down, punch the clock. Then, pau punch the clock, we go to the other post. We drive the car, go to the other post, punch the clock. Sometimes they get da kine wild dogs, though, by the post, eh? "If the dogs come, you shoot 'em." So far, I go down there, no more dogs.

WN: You did that until '74, yeah?

SJ: Yeah, yeah.

WN: And then, you retired. You know, when you were living in Kalihi from the time you moved from Hilo, what kind things you used to do for recreation?

SJ: (Chuckles) You no believe this, but every day, when I don't have any. . . . Sometimes I go down my mother-in-law house. I go lawn mower the yard. After that, I ran in town, play pool. For recreation, I play pool only. I used to shoot pretty good pool.

WN: You used to play same place or different places?

SJ: Sometimes, down by Kukui Street. Kukui and Bethel Street. I go there every time. Most time, I go over there, play. We get some fun, you know, small games. We play dollar, two dollar game. Just for fun, sometimes, we play fifty cents, twenty-five cents game. Just for get some good fun. We just spend the time away, eh?

But now, I don't play much pool now. But I go most cockfighting. I go every Saturday. Maybe Saturday, Sunday, or holidays, like that, I go to cockfightings. But the cockfighting good. You want to bet, you can bet a hundred, two hundred, three hundred, five hundred dollars, up to you. Maybe you get your own chicken, you want to get good money, well, up to you. You can bet four, five hundred, thousand dollar, two thousand dollars. Just like this last Sunday, my friend living up Kalihi Valley, he phone me. He tell me, "Ey, Sabas, I going fight my chicken. You want to go

with me?"

I tell, "Why?"

He tell, "I want to borrow your car, so we can go in your car. Go down Waipahu."

I tell, "How many chicken you going bring?"

He tell, "Oh, I going bring only one chicken. I going try 'em out."

So, I told him, "All right. Okay, we go."

So, Sunday, we brought his chicken. We fought his chicken down Waipahu. We fought his chicken about three thirty in the afternoon. We went down early, you know. We was down the cockfight game about eight thirty in the morning. He fought his chicken only about four thirty. But in meantime, they had plenty other cockfight there, too. So, every time they get a cockfight, we bet maybe four dollar, five dollar, ten dollar, fifteen, twenty dollar, up to--all depend on how much you like bet. But when came to my friend's chicken, he match 'em with the other. . . . He had a red chicken. The other side had a black chicken. So, they match with my friend's chicken. They said, "Ho, we make small bet."

My friend said, "Oh, five hundred dollars, all right, 'nough."

The other side said, "What's the matter? We almost going home now. Why only five hundred? Why don't you raise 'em up little bit more?"

So, my friend say, "How much you fella like bet?"

The guy said, "Oh, what do you say, how about thousand dollars?"

My friend said, "Ah, you folks chicken must be real good for bet thousand dollars." But my friend, he had some friends down there, too.

His friends said, "Oh, go ahead. That's a good match. We fight your chicken."

So, my friend said, "How much you fella want to bet?"

The other side, "Oh, we want to bet thousand dollars."

So, my friend said, "Why don't you folks make it \$1,200?" My friend said that.

So, the other side said, "Oh, yes. All right. Okay." So they said they wanted more. They said, "If you folks want it about \$1,500 or \$2,000, we cover."

My friend said no. "I told you folks, I like only \$1,200. If you

folks want \$1,200, we fight. If you fella don't want, well, we going home."

So, other side said, "Okay, okay, okay. We fight."

We fought the chickens. The chickens, they fought for almost one hour. Those two chickens, they real good. My friend's chicken caught 'em one good one. Almost the end of forty-five minutes, my friend's chicken caught 'em one good one right in the heart, kill 'em right there. But my friend's chicken was all cripple, too, you know. Cripple, but that lucky blow wen catch 'em. Ah, we won (chuckles) that fight.

WN: Thousand two hundred dollars?

SJ: Yeah. And I was scared, you know. The other chicken was heavier and little bit taller too, you see. So, my friend said, "Sabas, how much you been bet on my chicken?"

I tell, "I no bet on your chicken. I was afraid. Because the other chicken was big and high." Heavier and higher.

My friend tell, "Gee, Sabas, I told you to bet my chicken."

I said, "I just wanted to look. I didn't want to bet."

So, when my friend collected his money, he tell me, "Here, Sabas. Take this." He gave me seventy-five dollars cash. He tell, "Hey, Sabas, here your tip." (Laughs) He give me seventy-five dollars tip, my friend.

WN: So, the thousand two hundred, what? That's people putting in?

SJ: No, my friend, himself alone, he bet \$840. And the others, they chip in. The others chip in, made for \$1,200.

WN: Chee, big money, yeah?

SJ: Yeah. Oh, had one fight two months ago, I think was. Two months ago. Seven thousand dollar bet.

WN: You not afraid of getting raided or anything like that?

SJ: Oh, they raid. Sometimes, the cops come over there. They see the fight, eh? They wait till the fight almost finished, then they go in the ring. They rush in the ring, grab the chickens, and the two persons that let the chicken go, and the referee. Three. They always catch three. The two persons that let the chicken go and the referee. Three persons. They always catch.

WN: Oh, yeah? Not everybody in . . .

SJ: No. They no bother the spectators.

WN: And what? The chickens get da kine on? The razors or . . .

SJ: Yeah, the razor blade. The razor knife, I think. When the police catch you over there, you hold your chicken. One other person take the knife out. After they take the knife out, the police tell you, "Show me your card." Your. . . What do you call da kine?

WN: ID?

SJ: ID card. "Give me your ID cards." So, he take your name down and everything. And then, he tell the two persons, "You fella go in the car with me." And they bring 'em down police station. Take 'em down police station. No take fifteen, twenty minutes, the two persons come back again. Start fighting again.

(Laughter)

SJ: Sometimes, the police come about two, three times, one day. And they just tell the person, "Take the knife out." Then they take the two persons down police station. Only two or three.

WN: Yeah. They gotta pay fine, though, eh?

SJ: Yeah. They pay fifty dollar fine.

WN: And what? They can keep the chicken again?

SJ: The chicken? Yeah. They keep the chicken. Policemen, they only take the knife. They only take the knife as evidence. They take the knife, then they go. They take the two persons and the referee. They take 'em police station. In fifteen minutes, they right back. Fighting again. (Laughs)

WN: How do you raise one chicken to fight? You gotta train one chicken or what?

SJ: Yeah. You gotta train 'em. You gotta feed every. . . Person, they feed the chicken, only most time, once in the afternoon. We get chickens over here. We get two chickens. This person. That person next door keep the chicken. Before, used to have about a dozen chicken behind here. The inspector came over here, he tell, "Oh, some neighbors, they reporting that the chickens make too much noise over here nighttime. So you fella have to keep only at least two or three chickens over here." One dozen chickens make too much noise in the morning, eh? Some people, they work at night and they want to come home and sleep. They can't sleep because the chicken making too much noise.

WN: How much one chicken cost? One good fighter?

SJ: You know, before, when I first started go to cockfight before, you buy a good chicken for twenty-five dollars, thirty dollars. You know, now days, one cock, you buy one good cock, cost you about \$125 or \$150, \$175, one. Even you have one cock that is not really good, you know, he's slow in fighting, it cost you about \$80, \$90 for one.

END OF SIDE TWO

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WN: Okay, so \$80, \$90 for one cock?

SJ: One cock, yeah. You don't believe, these old Filipinos, as soon as they see the marks on the feet, if they like the chicken, they pay you even \$100, \$200. Without seeing the sparring, you know. As long as they see the marks on the feet, the scales, they say that chicken is very good.

WN: What, the more marks or something?

SJ: No, they get certain kind of marks they look for on the scales. And they count the scales, too, on the feet. How many. Some, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-one, like that. They count the scales. Certain amount of scales, they said is good, you know. Me, I don't believe that one. I believe only if you fight the chicken and the chicken is a good hitter, that's the kind I like. If you get a good chicken that only flies and don't hit, I don't like that kind. I like da kine chicken that is a good hitter and when he bites the other chicken, he won't let it go. You know, he just bite and keep on hitting. I like that kind chicken. Well, some people, they like this kind chicken that flies--good fliers. They fly high and just pounce on the other chicken. But I don't like that. I like the chicken with plenty action. You know, da kine that bites and do lot of kicking. That's the kind I like.

WN: That's how you was when you was fighter, eh?

SJ: Yeah. Every time I like plenty action.

WN: When they fight, what, it's fight to the finish? I mean, one has to be dead?

SJ: When they fight, one have to be dead, that's all. That's how they fight.

WN: So, no more decision or anything?

SJ: No, no more. If the other chicken is dead. And then, both of them of them are cripple and they can't fight any more. But the referee,

he takes the two chickens and put them together. The one that bites, wins. But if one bites and the other one don't bite, the one don't bite lose, see?

WN: How long one average bout last?

SJ: Oh, all depends. Sometimes, a good fight, sometimes last one minute. Sometimes a fight last for about half an hour or one hour sometimes. All depend on how badly they are cut, you know. Because those knives, they razor sharp. Sometimes, you go in the fighting arena, get about six or seven fights. The janitor that cleaning, ho, the plenty feathers he have to rake, put 'em on a He brings a basket every time or pan. He put 'em in. Oh, whole day, he shovels this kind feathers. When you see the chicken fly up, when they come down, you see all the feathers flying down. The knife so sharp, you know, it cut all the feathers.

WN: They eat the chicken afterwards?

SJ: Oh, yeah, they eat. If you fight my chicken, if you lose, I take your chicken, I take your money. I go make soup with your chicken. (Laughs) And I take your money, too, see? Winner take all, eh?

WN: Besides the price of one chicken, any changes over the years in cockfighting at all?

SJ: The prices.

WN: Yeah. I mean, anything else? In technique or anything over the years? Or same?

SJ: Oh, so far, everything same. Only the prices of the chickens. They vary every time. The prices all come up now days. I don't blame them, because the chicken food, everything, all come up. The prices too, eh? Persons making this kind chicken boxes--you know, the chicken boxes, where you put your chicken in to bring 'em to the cockfights. Some people, they make those chicken boxes. They bring 'em down to the cockfight games to sell. Shee, sometimes they sell one box for twenty-five, thirty dollars, one. Before, those boxes used to cost only about three dollars, four dollars. But the price of the material now. You buy lumber for make boxes, hoo, cost too much. That's why the prices come up, too.

WN: Had any cockfight ring in Kalihi?

SJ: Oh, yeah. Sometimes they have down right by the church? The church. You know the church?

WN: Kam IV Road?

SJ: No, you go down here. Kamakuamuloa Church. Right inside the street over there. You go in about one, two, about three houses. Three houses going inside. They always have cockfights over there.

(Chuckles) They get raid, too, over there.

WN: Yeah. They know, everybody know. Cops know, eh?

SJ: Sometimes, they get four fights. Four or five fights, six fights down there. Even, you know by Tamashiro Market? Right behind there. Sometimes they get, too. Sometimes they get one dozen fights over there. Sometimes, on Saturdays, Sundays. Oh, we get fights all around.

WN: So, you go cockfight and go play pool. What else you used to do? I know, you play music, too, eh?

SJ: Oh, yeah.

WN: How you learn how to play music?

SJ: Well, my brother used to be a good musician. He play steel guitar. He play mandolin. Play ukulele. That's where I learned, from him. Ukulele and guitar from my brother. My sister, good pianist. My father used to be a good guitar player. That's how my brother learned, from my father. My father used to be good guitar player. My uncle, too, used to be a good guitar player.

WN: What kind music you play?

SJ: I play all kind. Jazz music, any kind. I used to be a saxophonist in Hilo for da kine dance halls. You know taxi dance halls? I used to play saxophone. I played saxophone for about little more seven years for da kine taxi dance hall in Hilo. I first played saxophone my last year in high school. Hilo High School. I played saxophone in the band. High school band.

WN: Had plenty taxi dance halls in Hilo?

SJ: Oh, yeah. One, two--we had three taxi dance hall.

WN: What was the name of your band?

SJ: We just call ourselves by our name. They call Jamito band. Or if my other friend, the Filipino, he leads the band. . . . If you lead the band, then the name go under you. But if get one of my other Filipino friend, they call 'em "Tinoy," he leads the band.

WN: Tinoy?

SJ: Tinoy, yeah. Tinoy, his name. The other one, we get Pascual. As long as you lead the band, the band go under your name.

WN: You used to go all around?

SJ: You don't believe it. Especially on paydays, we go plantation camps,

we go play music over there. Bumbai, maybe the following week, they tell, "Ey, next week, where you fella going play?" Like today, in Hilo, we play down the place they call Papaikou. And then, next week, they tell, "Where you fella going?"

"Oh, we going down Pepekeo." That's way down another place.

Sometimes, they tell, "Next week, where you fellas going?"

"Oh, we going Olaa." We go all around. And you be surprised. When we play music, those people, they come. The Filipinos, oh, they like dancing.

WN: What kind music you played? Da kine American kind?

SJ: Yeah, American.

WN: Oh, not Filipino music?

SJ: No, not Filipino music. We play all American.

WN: Oh, like ballroom dance? Swing kind?

SJ: Yeah, yeah. Swing kind. Swing, jazz. Sometimes we play rhumba. (Chuckles) Some Filipinos, they like rhumba, you know.

(Laughter)

WN: You used to get paid?

SJ: Oh, yeah. I get paid for playing music. Oh, we get cheap pay before, eh? Sometimes we get paid five, six dollars one night. If no more too much people, we get about three, four dollars. (Chuckles) All depending on the crowd. If you get big crowd, you get little bit more pay. If you get small crowd, ah, small pay, too. Big crowd, we get big pay.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: So, at any time, were you band leader?

SJ: Oh, yeah. When I play my saxophone, yeah, I lead.

WN: How many in your band?

SJ: Me, a saxophone. Sometimes we get two saxophones. One mandolin. Sometimes we get two guitar, one ukulele. Sometimes we get five, six players.

WN: So, just after you graduated from high school?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: So, in the 1930s, then, about?

SJ: Yeah. Thirties, yeah. When I graduated from high school, that's what I do. I do part-time. I play music at dance hall.

WN: You did this mainly on weekends?

SJ: Yeah. Especially weekends or when da kine paydays. Plantation paydays, eh? We have to go plantation camp, play over there. Those people, the Filipino people over there, they like dancing. When we tell them, "Oh, we coming to your plantation certain day, get ready." When the orchestra reach there, you see the hall full already. The people, they all standing by. "How many girls did you folks bring? How many girls?"

(Laughter)

SJ: Sometimes we bring four or five girls, six girls, you know, go dance with them.

WN: Oh, taxi dance.

SJ: Yeah, taxi dance.

WN: Oh, you folks bring girls?

SJ: Yeah.

WN: And you pay them?

SJ: Well, we don't pay the girls. Taxi dance, they dance and they get paid for ten cents a dance. Used to be ten cents a dance. But if the girls, they smart, they pal up with the men, eh? They get tip. Sometimes, four or five. Some Filipinos, they crazy. They give you ten dollars. (Laughs) The Filipinos, they say, [SJ whispers] "We go out, make love." They go. They go tell the leader of the dance. "We going out little while." They come back. You know, that's extra money they make. (Laughs) What I do is only play music.

WN: You read music or you played by memory?

SJ: Me? By memory.

WN: You could read music?

SJ: I read little bit. When I was playing Hilo High School, I read music. But after that, when I play with these boys, I left that reading notes. They all play by ear. I hear music, I play 'em right away. Any kind of music.

WN: The people in your band, they played in high school, too?

- SJ: No. The people that played with me, all Filipino men, they not high school. That's why I play by ear. They all play be ear only. They are good musicians, but all by hearing only. They play guitar. Very good guitar players. Mandolin. Or this other Filipino guy play with me, me and him go duet every time on the saxophone. He's a good saxophonist. They play all by ear. You play a phonograph now, I listen. You tell me play 'em. I play 'em on the sax right away. Used to be good on that.
- WN: You still have your saxophone?
- SJ: No. I didn't play saxophone now for about--almost thirty years now I no play. But you bring one saxophone now, I guarantee you, I can play couple songs. I used to be a good saxophonist.
- WN: How many saxophones you had in your band? One?
- SJ: I play the E-flat alto. My friend, he play the C melody.
- WN: So, you had alto and tenor sax? Tenor sax or alto?
- SJ: C melody. C melody and. . . .
- WN: Alto?
- SJ: Alto, eh?
- WN: And then, what? Trumpet? Had one trumpet?
- SJ: No, we don't have trumpet. We have only the mandolin or guitar. Sometimes ukulele.
- WN: And drums?
- SJ: Yeah. Oh, we never miss a drum, yeah.
- WN: How about bass? Bass player, too?
- SJ: No, we don't have bass. Some of the other Filipinos, when they play guitar, they good on the bass, you know. They play on the bass. Good bass.
- WN: Okay. Well, chee, you did all kind things, yeah, in your life to make money.
- SJ: Yeah. To make money. You got to support your family. You have to do all kind of job.
- WN: Before I turn off the tape, you want to say one last thing about what you remember about your life or anything?
- SJ: So far, up to now, I been having a good life. No problems with me.

I support my family well. I give my wife every. . . . Of course, like now, just me and my wife alone now. All my children all married and they living far places, too. Just me and my wife. No botheration at all. We do whatever we want. Before, I used to own a home before on. . . . What do you call this? What that place called up the. . . . Right below Red Hills? I sold 'em.

(Voices in background.)

WN: Thank you, Mr. Sabas [Jamito].

SJ: I glad to meet you.

END OF INTERVIEW

KALIHI:
Place of Transition

Vol. I

**ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL
HISTORY PROJECT**

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