

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Agustina Villa, 91, retired Pearl Harbor Shipyard worker

"We sold all our properties in the Philippines. We don't have properties there anymore. Our house is located here, therefore we're here. The American way of life is wonderful, it's peaceful. In the Philippines, there's always trouble. Life is hard. Many things, they say, are expensive."

Agustina (Abaya) Villa, Ilocano, was born in Dingras, Ilocos Norte, Philippines on August 28, 1893. The fifth of six children, Agustina helped support the family by taking in laundry from the people of her barrio. She also sewed clothing.

Agustina married Antonio Villa in 1913. In 1924, Antonio left for Hawaii to find work in the sugarcane fields. He was assigned to Lahaina, Maui. Agustina remained in the Philippines and continued sewing and laundering until 1931, when she and two of her children joined Antonio in Lahaina. In the cane fields, Antonio was paid one dollar a day; Agustina, seventy-five cents.

In 1943, the family moved from Lahaina, Maui to Kakaako, Oahu. Agustina and Antonio both found jobs at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. Agustina worked in a chemical laboratory, washing bottles and cleaning tables for thirty cents an hour.

In 1946, they bought a home in Kalihi Kai and have lived there ever since. Today, they own an apartment building on their property. Agustina participates in senior citizens' activities daily. The couple has five children.

Tape No. 11-35-1-84I
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Agustina Villa (AV)

February 8, 1984

Kalihi, Oahu

BY: Fernando N. Zialcita (FZ)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Ilocano. Translation done by Fernando N. Zialcita.]

FZ: Hello, this is a taped interview with Agustina Villa at Kalihi, Oahu on February 8, 1984.

How are you?

AV: Fine, young man.

FZ: Where were you born?

AV: Dingras, Ilocos Norte.

FZ: What barrio?

AV: Barrio Madamba.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

FZ: Is your barrio close to the town proper?

AV: Close, our barrio is in the town proper.

FZ: When were you born?

AV: I was born in 1893, August 28.

FZ: How many children did your parents have?

AV: We were six.

FZ: Among your siblings, what was your rank? Were you the first, the second, the third . . .

AV: Oh, I was second to the last.

- FZ: Second to the last. . . . What was your mother's name?
- AV: Cándida de los Reyes.
- FZ: And your father?
- AV: My father: Nicolás Abaya. From Ilocos Sur, Candon.
- FZ: Who were the father and mother of your father?
- FZ: The mother of your father.
- AV: [His father's mother:] María Manzano. The name of my father's father: Don Segundino Abaya.
- FZ: And who were the father and mother of your mother?
- AV: The father of my mother: Lorenzo de los Reyes, from Laoag. My mother: Cándida de los Reyes.
- FZ: That was your mother.
- AV: My mother. Yes, the mother of my mother: Dionisia de los Reyes.
- FZ: What was your father's work?
- AV: My father's work then. . . . Ship cook for the Chinese.
- FZ: Good. And your mother?
- AV: My mother, her work was to collect the laundry.
- FZ: Ah, and you were living at the town proper . . .
- AV: Yes, were living in the town proper of Dingras, Ilocos Norte, Barrio Madamba.
- FZ: Was your father also a farmer?
- AV: No, he was just a ship cook.
- FZ: What other jobs did he have?
- AV: Nothing else. Only that.
- FZ: Please describe your house. What was your house like? Please describe the kind of house you had.
- AV: Our house in the Philippines?
- FZ: Yes.

AV: Our house's roof was of cogon grass, the walls of bamboo. That's because we were poor. It was somewhat bigger than this, the size of our house.

FZ: What were the materials?

AV: The roof was of cogon grass, the walls of bamboo.

FZ: How many were staying in the house?

AV: Over there? My father, my mother, my brother, my older brother, my sister, and my other sister.

FZ: What was your form of transportation then? Were there horse-drawn rigs?

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: We didn't have our own vehicle. When we went to Laoag we walked. (Laughs) There were no vehicles then.

FZ: Supposing somebody died in your neighborhood, what would your neighbors do?

AV: Our neighbors were farmers. They went fishing. They were poor, some of them. They went to fish for bukto, they went to catch bukto, they went farming.

FZ: What would your neighbors do, supposing a person, someone, in your neighborhood died? What were their customs?

AV: If someone died, people would pool their efforts together to give donations. This varied; it could be money, rice or chicken. It was like that.

FZ: Ammong!

AV: Ammong.

FZ: And if someone got married?

AV: If someone got married? Ammong, ammong, just like in Hawaii. This varies. Give to the person concerned--that's our style in the Philippines.

FZ: What was your father's and mother's church?

AV: Catholic.

FZ: And you?

AV: Catholic.

FZ: How often would they go to church?

AV: They walked to church, we lived close to the church.

FZ: On Sundays?

AV: Yes.

FZ: Every day?

AV: No, only on Sundays.

FZ: Who was the patron saint of your barrio?

AV: Oh, the patron. . . . The patron of our church was Lord St. Joseph. The nineteenth of March, his fiesta.

FZ: How was his fiesta celebrated?

AV: It was happy. There was a program, there were comedias at his fiesta.

FZ: What else? What were the other celebrations?

AV: In the town proper of Dingras, even though the fiesta was small, there was a program and many people would go and watch.

FZ: How would you celebrate Christmas?

AV: Christmas was always happy. People would make tuppig, nilappet, and other kinds of sweetmeats. Many would play the guitar and go to the houses. And we would give tuppig or money or nilappet. Many would come to serenade--on Christmas.

FZ: And how about during Holy Week?

AV: During Holy Week, we would go to church. Nobody would work, would pound rice, especially during Holy Week. None. People worked quietly: they could not cut, they could not pound rice. Everything was quiet.

FZ: During the entire week?

AV: Yes.

FZ: Could you describe your games as a child?

AV: (Chuckles) When we were children, we played pakatubre. Do you know that piece of wood that is used for firewood? We made it stand. We played baruga. We made it [the stake] stand, then we threw the bamboo. If it rolled, you won. Otherwise, it was mine. (Laughs) And that pakatubre that we call, there was a piece of bamboo that was like a

stick. We bore a hole in a piece of rubber, like this, then threw it far away. We hopped and skipped to get it. We had many other games. We threw stones once, twice, thrice on the fence. Those were our games when we were studying.

FZ: What were you studying in school?

AV: English.

FZ: What else?

AV: Numbers, how to add . . .

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: . . . like that. I wasn't able to go for a higher education. I only had a limited education because we were poor.

FZ: Up to what grade were you studying?

AV: Fourth only.

FZ: That's fine.

AV: Well, I couldn't go to the higher grades.

FZ: What did you feel when you stopped studying?

AV: Ah, we continued playing. When we had the time, we would help harvest during harvest time. We fetched drinking water, we cooked, we washed.

FZ: Oh, at your household, you had to harvest, wash, and . . .

AV: Yes.

FZ: Even if your father was not a farmer, you harvested?

AV: Yes, we went. [After the owner got tired of working, he] called on us to harvest; he gave us our day's share of the harvest.

FZ: Who was the rice field's owner?

AV: The farmer. If he could not harvest, he called on us to help harvest. In the afternoon, he gave us our day's share.

FZ: At home, what things did you learn? For instance, cooking?

AV: Cooking. Sewing. . . . Ironing. When I was growing up, I collected the laundry: the doctor's clothes, the mayor's clothes, the church's vestments. That was my work. After finishing this on Friday, I

then ironed them. I returned the mayor's clothes, the doctor's clothes, the church's vestments.

FZ: So you ironed. . . . And how was weaving?

AV: Oh, I wove. Do you know how to weave? (Laughs) I also wove. I also spun. I made cotton thread. I was doing that in the Philippines.

FZ: It must have been difficult?

AV: It was difficult. But I went to Hawaii. No more: no more spinning, no more weaving.

FZ: Where did you get your clothes? Where did your clothes come from?

AV: We got our clothes from what we wove from cotton. You spin. The spinning. . . . Then you skein the thread, then you warp it, then you weave it.

FZ: All your clothes, you wove them?

AV: All. You should weave your clothes.

FZ: (Laughs) How did you and your husband get to know each other? How did you and your husband meet each other?

AV: Our houses were close to each other. Like this. . . . (AV makes hand movement) There was a store.

FZ: How was he related to you?

AV: Related to me? Oh, third cousin.

FZ: I hear that before, the parents chose their child's spouse. In your case, what was the arrangement?

AV: Who chose the child's spouse? As long as they agree, it's fine; if they're compatible, they run away to get their marriage partner. It's like that.

FZ: Was it your parents that chose your spouse?

AV: If the parents are opposed, if the girl's parents are opposed, the boy elopes with her. (Laughs)

FZ: I mean, in your case, who chose your spouse?

AV: Who chose for us? We ourselves. We did the choosing.

FZ: What was his brideswealth? Did he give you any brideswealth?

- AV: Brideswealth, none. (Laughs) None. We just arrived at an understanding, we got married. There was no brideswealth.
- FZ: No brideswealth, eh?
- AV: If the mother and father look for a spouse for their child, a brideswealth is necessary: money, a rice field, carabao, cattle, and feasting for two days.
- FZ: But, in your case, there was no brideswealth? Why not?
- AV: Well, we just agreed. But if the wife and husband choose the child's spouse, a brideswealth is necessary, as you mention. They must give a rice field, give a carabao, cattle, and a house.
- FZ: What did you feel when you got married? You were still young when you got married.
- AV: We were twenty when we got married.
- FZ: Yes, what did you feel?
- AV: Nothing. I was in glory since there is nothing hard about having a husband. (Laughs)
- FZ: Could you please describe your wedding? What happened?
- AV: Just a small celebration took place, since we were poor. We got married in 1913. Our wedding took place on October 29. Then we had a child in 1914. But our first child died after one year and three months. That's when it died. It was ill from stomach troubles; there weren't many doctors then.
- FZ: Stomach troubles.
- AV: Stomach troubles. Do you know what stomach troubles are? There were no doctors then, only the Public Health Department (sanidad).
- FZ: Regarding your wedding, did you have a party at your house?
- AV: Oh, we didn't have a party at our house. We just went to a small restaurant. If you party, the affair has to be big. You have to slaughter a pig, a cow. We didn't have a cow, we didn't have a pig. (Laughs)
- FZ: Where did you live after your wedding?
- AV: Oh, we lived in our house at Barrio Madamba.
- FZ: At your father's house?
- AV: At our house.

FZ: At your own house?

AV: Yes. In the Philippines, no matter how poor a person may be, he has his own house. Even if he's poor, he has his own house.

FZ: Concerning your child and your other child, where were they born, at home or in the hospital?

AV: At home. Wait. . . . My four children were born in Dingras, Ilocos Norte. And one was born in Maui, Lahaina, Maui. One was born there: the last, Rizalino.

FZ: Who helped you when you gave birth? At birth, who helped you?

AV: At childbirth? An old woman, a midwife. When I delivered here, I delivered at home, but a nurse assisted me at Maui.

FZ: But, in Ilocos, who helped you?

AV: Just an old woman, a midwife.

FZ: Hmmm. How about the balitang? The balitang?

AV: I didn't use the balitang. No I didn't. When they placed me on the balitang, I got sick, I had a fever.

FZ: On the balitang?

AV: It was hot.

FZ: It wasn't able to help.

AV: It was hot.

FZ: Hot? But it's only of wood, but the balitang is only of wood.

AV: Wood, of bamboo.

FZ: How can it be hot?

AV: There is fire underneath you.

FZ: Ah, yes, yes, yes.

AV: Fire burns beneath you, fire burns underneath you. (Laughs) That was my first try, but I got sick. So when my second child came along, I didn't use it anymore.

FZ: After you gave birth, did your life change? How did it change?

AV: Oh well, not really. Our life changed when we came over to Hawaii. My husband had a job, but he had a small income. He was a street

hand, he was a boatman. He had a small income; it wasn't enough for us. Our children were growing up. My husband thought of going to Hawaii.

FZ: How did he hear--how did he hear of Hawaii?

AV: There was an agent who approached him to come over. He had been here for seven years when he petitioned for us. But one of my children who was in the Philippines was twenty days only. When my husband came over to Hawaii, that child was only twenty days old. So he was small when we came over to Hawaii.

FZ: How old or at what age did your children help you? I mean, how old was your first-born when she helped you at home?

AV: Oh, my first-born, Juanita Opilas. But she was the first child. When we came over to Hawaii she wasn't fifteen years old.

FZ: I mean, were your children helping you at home?

AV: Now?

FZ: Then?

AV: No, their work consisted of fetching drinking water, when we were still in the Philippines. The girls fetched drinking water. They wiped the house, they cooked. My son fetched water for non-drinking purposes; he cut wood.

FZ: For your house?

AV: For our house. Anything more?

FZ: Concerning your husband's migration to Hawaii . . .

AV: When he left the Philippines, it was 1914, I think, November, 1914.

FZ: Nineteen fourteen, not. . . [Nineteen] twenty-four?

AV: No, it was 1924, when he came over.

FZ: What was his first job when he came to Hawaii?

AV: Plantation; growing sugar cane. Hanawai, his first job.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

FZ: From 1924 till 1931, your husband was not in the Philippines.

AV: Not there. . . . I have only one husband. (Laughs)

FZ: What was your source of income for household expenses?

AV: The plantation, my husband was working at the plantation. Once in a while . . .

FZ: Ah, so he sent back money and other things.

AV: He sent money once in a while.

FZ: You were also working.

AV: I was working at Maui.

FZ: In the Philippines, 1924 - 1931.

AV: When I mentioned working in the Philippines, I came over to Hawaii. I worked in the plantation, I worked at the cannery. There were plenty of Japanese women who worked at the plantation. I went there since I wanted to earn.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

FZ: What I mean is, after your husband left for Hawaii, what did you do in Dingras, since you were all alone?

AV: As I mentioned, I worked, I collected the laundry. I said earlier that I sewed. Somebody from the country would get it. I sewed men's shirts. For one man's shirt, I got twenty centavos. If I sat sewing the entire afternoon, I finished four men's shirts in one day. Twenty centavos was the payment per shirt, sometimes twenty-five. That was how I earned money in the Philippines.

FZ: What sort of clothes were you wearing then?

AV: Only handwoven ones and what could be bought at the store.

FZ: What I mean is, the traditional blouse (bado) and the long skirt (saya), the traditional blouse (bado), and the long skirt (pandiling).

AV: Yes.

FZ: The traditional blouse and long skirt.

AV: Yes, that was the style then. (Laughs)

FZ: Good. What did you feel, being alone in the Ilocos? After all, your husband was away, he was in . . .

AV: Nothing.

FZ: What then?

AV: Nothing. I thought only of working to support our children that he left. Four of them. And I reared a niece. So I reared her, she was able to be of service to me. She was the daughter of my sister who was in Manila. Since she was in Manila, I took her daughter and raised her up.

FZ: What did you hear about the Filipino strike in 1924 at Kauai? In 1924, there was a Filipino strike at Kauai, what did you hear about it?

AV: Well, they went on strike, therefore Filipinos went on strike. I was in Hawaii then. They called on us to cut cane. Together with Japanese women, I went. Now there was a camp that did not go on strike. These were men. There was this camp at. . . . That came over to cut cane at Lahaina. A man said to me, "You're the only Filipina that I see working on the plantation."

I answered him, "I'm poor. I came to Hawaii because I want to earn; I'm not a wealthy person who has come over to Hawaii for whatever reason. I want to work."

A man spoke up, "Hey, her answer makes sense. Tell them that she's the only Filipina who's working."

FZ: So a strike took place as well at Lahaina.

AV: Yes, they went on strike.

FZ: What year was this?

AV: I do not know what year that was. (Chuckles)

FZ: But what did you hear about the strike at Kauai in 1924?

AV: Nothing.

FZ: In 1931, you came over to Hawaii.

AV: Yes.

FZ: When you left the Ilocos, what did you feel?

AV: Well, as though in glory, because I was able to come over to Hawaii. I heard that Hawaii was great. Well, Hawaii really is great, because, thank God, I was able to earn money during my stay here in Hawaii. We were able to stay in an apartment [later].

FZ: Who told you that life in Hawaii was great?

- AV: Well, you know, I heard this from many sources. Everybody who had experienced staying here. They returned to the Philippines on vacation. And we saw that they had money when they came in. So we came over. What else? (Chuckles)
- FZ: Could you describe your trip when you travelled from the Philippines to Hawaii? What happened?
- AV: We went to the Philippines on vacation in 1939. That's all. Then we came back to Hawaii in August, 1939. That's when the war broke out. There was a blackout on the Pacific. We didn't go to Japan anymore. We went straight to Hawaii.
- FZ: What I mean is, could you describe your first trip in 1931?
- AV: It was like that.
- FZ: In what year did you leave the Philippines?
- AV: Nineteen thirty-one. That was when I first came over to Hawaii.
- FZ: What was your transportation then?
- AV: A ship.
- FZ: A ship. From what city?
- AV: We took our ship at Manila to come over.
- FZ: How long was the trip the first time you came over to Hawaii?
- AV: Twenty---almost a month. We rode small boats. On the President Taft, I got dizzy. I got dizzy, I could not eat for nine days, I could take in only coffee. This I asked from people who were going to the U.S. Mainland.
- FZ: Who accompanied you?
- AV: Oh, my son Arcadio. He was twelve to thirteen years old then. And my son, Bernardo, was still small.
- FZ: You have four children, right? Ah, that's right, the first one died. Consolacion wasn't around yet, right?
- AV: She was.
- FZ: So, she came along?
- AV: No, she stayed in the Philippines. These children I brought with me: the two boys, Arcadio Villa and Bernardo Villa. The two girls stayed in the Philippines. The father and mother of my husband took care of them. Then one child was born in Hawaii. So, in 1939, we

went back to pick them up, the two.

FZ: Nineteen thirty-nine, so how many months were you in the Philippines?

AV: Oh, nine months.

FZ: Hmmm, rather long.

AV: We were there for almost a year. When we got there, we weren't able to go back to Hawaii for the war had begun.

FZ: When you arrived at Lahaina, in 1931, what happened?

AV: Nothing.

FZ: What did you observe about Hawaii?

AV: What I observed about Hawaii?

FZ: In those days, in those days in 1931.

AV: It was easy to earn money in Hawaii, we could work. And there was a small salary, one dollar per day then.

FZ: In what camp did you live then? In what camp did you live in Lahaina?

AV: Olowalu--Olowalu, Lahaina.

FZ: Could you describe your house then?

AV: Our house was a plantation house. It was close to. . . . It was beside the store at Olowalu. . . . Our house. Close to the main road that went to town, to Lahaina.

FZ: Was there any other family in your house?

AV: Nobody else.

FZ: You only.

AV: Life on the plantation then was good. Things were for free, eh. No rent, free electricity, cooking facilities. Only one dollar a day for the men. For the women, seventy-five cents a day. Life was hard when people first came over to Hawaii.

FZ: Seventy-five cents for a girl.

AV: Yes, for a girl.

FZ: And for a man?

AV: One dollar. And the cost of rice, for 100 pounds then, was four

dollars.

FZ: All your food you bought then.

AV: We shopped at the store. But, you know, where the sugar grew, there vegetables were also cultivated: bottle gourd, eggplants, garlic. Beside our house, we planted a horseradish tree. So that only canned goods we bought, likewise our viands. But the vegetables came from what we grew.

FZ: How about bagoong?

AV: It came from the store. It came from the Philippines. (Laughs) We bought it in the store.

FZ: What happened at the camp between 1931 and 1939? Was life hard?

AV: It was hard, our earnings were not enough. You mean here?

FZ: At Maui, 1931 - 1939.

AV: Nineteen thirty-one. That's it. Life was hard, as I said. One dollar a day, seventy-five cents for a woman. So life was hard then. Our life improved when war [i.e., World War II] broke out. People's salaries went up.

FZ: Were you able to save at all?

AV: At the plantation, nothing. We came over to Honolulu in nineteen. . . . Wait.

FZ: Nineteen forty-three.

AV: Yes. One dollar was all we had when we came over to Honolulu. I was able to work at Pearl Harbor. So did my husband. So when I got my salary, it was thirty dollars a month then. The same was true for my husband. He received forty dollars a month. So, with what I received, I bought what we needed at home. My husband was able to save more than I. So, then I deposited our savings in the bank. I had a part-time job at a restaurant at Aala during the war [World War II]; so I had an additional source of income. Thanks to God, I was able to save a little. I was able to save \$4,000. And so we, we bought this place, then a rundown house that we bought. After we had paid for this rundown house, we had it torn down and we built this apartment in 1962. That's when our apartment was built.

FZ: You have plenty of tenants?

AV: Yes, thank God, we were able to buy, we were able to build this apartment. There were many tenants. Things improved somewhat because we had a guarantor who paid for the loan.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: And we had a house at Kaumualii [Street]. But we sold it because the tax was too high. So we sold it. And now I have to pay a property tax this month: \$1575 for six months.

FZ: Interesting. At Lahaina, at Maui, were you working every day?

AV: Every day.

FZ: At the cane fields?

AV: We started working on Monday---until Friday. No work on Saturday and Sunday. It was hard.

FZ: How many hours?

AV: Eight hours only.

FZ: How were you able to cook your lunch?

AV: We brought our lunch which we cooked upon getting up. At four o'clock a.m. we got up, we cooked, we brought what we cooked for our lunch. We lunched at the field.

FZ: And your children, how were they?

AV: They were studying, they were still small.

FZ: So they brought their own food.

AV: Money, they had money with them.

FZ: Ah, money for the school.

AV: Yes, money. They had money so they could buy things.

FZ: Could you describe the girl friends you had at the camp?

AV: At our camp at Lahaina, eh?

FZ: Yes.

AV: There was Visitacion Lopez, my komare; there was Fortunata Aspile; there was Isang. I forgot her surname. I can't recall it. Only they. . . . That's all I know. And the Japanese. There were also Japanese companions. There was Sakai, there was Lichiko, there was Matsu. That was her name. All of them working on the plantation then.

FZ: Were there plenty of Filipinas on the plantation?

AV: Not too many.

FZ: Why not too many?

AV: In the plantation where we stayed, not too many. There was only one. . . . Four families.

FZ: Why weren't there too many Filipinos then?

AV: It was by camps.

FZ: What did you hear about the abduction of Filipinas, about koboy-koboy?

AV: Koboy-koboy? (Laughs) There was none of that when I arrived in Hawaii. Earlier there was. You know, before, there weren't enough women. When there was a man who brought over his Filipina wife to work, other men would go over to court the girl in the house. "Come, your husband met an accident." And he would force the girl to go with him, thus getting her. That's koboy. But, in our case, none of that anymore.

FZ: You weren't scared?

AV: No, I wasn't scared. Nobody would koboy me. (Laughs)

FZ: Were there also Japanese among your friends?

AV: There were plenty of Japanese in our area then.

FZ: Among your close friends were there Japanese?

AV: Yes.

FZ: Or Filipinas only?

AV: No, also Japanese at the camp. There were many Japanese who were our camp mates.

FZ: Your companions, too?

AV: Yes, our companions with whom we worked at the plantation.

FZ: Among Filipinos, uh, at the camp, were there any kompadres and komadres of yours?

AV: Kompadres and komadres?

FZ: Yes, who?

AV: There were, as I mentioned earlier, Visitacion Lopez whose child was baptized when I had just arrived in Hawaii. That child was born then. And there was Fortunata Aspile, my komare. She's still alive.

Visitacion Lopez, she lives in Kalihi Uka.

FZ: And for your child's wedding?

AV: For the wedding?

FZ: Yes, and for your child's wedding, who acted as godfather? As godmother?

AV: Oh, when a son of mine got married, Rafael Brinica [and] Modesta Brinica acted as godparents for my son, Arcadio.

AV: Where were they from?

AV: The girl is from my town, Dingras. The man is from Paoay. They were a couple.

FZ: How were the friendships between Ilocanos and Visayans then?

AV: The Visayans and the Ilocanos then, there were social activities where they met, they got to know each other. When they drank, they went to the store. They got to know each other. It was like that. Wait, if you met a Japanese, he spoke with you; you spoke with him.

FZ: I hear that sometimes there were problems in the relationship of Visayans and Ilocanos because they spoke different languages.

AV: What problems were there? Only jokes. That was the problem between Visayans and Ilocanos. I said to one Ilocano who asked, "Who quarrel at Aala Park?"

I told that Ilocano, "Oh, Ilocanos and Visayans."

He said they didn't even know that Visayans were also Filipinos.

FZ: Ah, Aala Park, here.

AV: Yes, Aala Park here. (Laughs) "Who quarrel?" I asked a Filipino.

"Oh, Filipinos and Visayans," he said, "because Visayans are not Filipinos." That is the trouble between Visayans and Ilocanos. Because Ilocanos do not count Visayans as Filipinos.

FZ: Did they box each other? Did they fight each other?

AV: Yes, they boxed each other.

FZ: Among your komare, was there a Visayan?

AV: Yes, Fortunata Aspile.

FZ: How were the other races in your camp, for example, Portuguese and

Chinese?

AV: Portuguese were. . . . Chinese, I hardly saw any in the camp. Just Japanese. And the Portuguese.

FZ: How were the Portuguese then?

AV: Portuguese, they were the plantation lunas. They were what you would call the camp bosses.

FZ: Did they mix? Did the Portuguese mix?

AV: Did they make friends?

FZ: Yes.

AV: They were fine in making friends. The only thing is that they were talkative, the Portuguese. (Laughs) They do not stop to think.

FZ: After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, what happened at Maui?

AV: Well. . . . After the bombing, the plantation boss got all the plantation males together to train as soldiers. So, for example, should the Japanese come to the camp, the males would know how to fight with the Japanese.

FZ: I meant to say, was there a blackout at night?

AV: There was a blackout. No person could go for a stroll at night. At six o'clock in the afternoon, you ate without a light. There was a blackout then. You could not go out. There was a machine then, they covered the machine's light to make it black so that its light would not go far.

FZ: Was it hard to look for food then?

AV: Oh yes, it was difficult then.

FZ: Food.

AV: The food because, as you know, our ration that came from America was infrequent. And so it was hard for rice, viands, sugar, soap to come in. We even ran out of brooms. You know these clothes that are old and worn out, we shredded them. Such were the floors then. There were no brooms then.

FZ: Why?

AV: Because of the infrequent trips. The ships were afraid to come over because they could be bombed by the Japanese. They came from the Mainland.

FZ: What did you hear about the war in the Philippines?

AV: That many died. They say they found people who were farming. . . . Especially the fellow they called the "Broom," he cut down people who went farming in the east, like banana trees. That's what we heard. Even my father-in-law died because of the "Broom." So did our neighbors, two of them died; they fell with my father-in-law. You know us Filipinos, we Filipinos, we quarrel if we see one another. And should an enemy of, say, Pedro, come close, this is what they do: they go and drag him down from the house and kill him.

FZ: They went to drag him down?

AV: Drag him down. They go to the house, they go to the house to kill him and take him out.

FZ: To go back to your life on Maui, was the church near your house?

AV: It was nearby.

FZ: The Catholic church?

AV: There was a church in our camp. On Sundays, we went to Mass. So did the Portuguese, they also went.

FZ: Was there a saint, what was his fiesta?

AV: Hmmm, I don't know. The saint had a statue. You know the Catholic church, eh. There was a statue.

FZ: What I mean is, when was the day, the day of the saint's fiesta?

AV: None, there was no fiesta at the camp.

FZ: Tuppig?

AV: Money or whatever or blouses or clothes. It was like that.

FZ: And tuppig also?

AV: No tuppig. In Hawaii, no one makes tuppig. (Laughs)

FZ: How about Holy Week at the camp?

AV: Holy Week, well. . . .

FZ: At the camp.

AV: There were processions during Holy Week inside the church. That's when the processions took place. The priest prayed and we followed. What else?

FZ: And were you also working during Holy Week? Was there work during Holy Week?

AV: None.

FZ: At the camp?

AV: None.

FZ: At the camp, no work?

AV: None, only the sugar mill ran. Because there was a Japanese who worked on a Good Friday, he fell at the mill and died.

FZ: Why did you leave for Kakaako in 1943?

AV: We left Kakaako, we came over here 1935, 1945. . . . That was. . . .

FZ: Nineteen forty-six.

AV: That was. . . . Ah, nineteen. . . . I forgot, we were at Kakaako for a year.

FZ: Nineteen forty-six. . . . Why did you leave Maui?

AV: We left Maui when we heard that there were many jobs to be found. So we left Maui and went over to Pearl Harbor. There was plenty of money for those who worked at Pearl Harbor then.

FZ: What was your work at Pearl Harbor?

AV: My work at Pearl Harbor. I worked at a building called Chemical Lab. Medical tests were performed there, all the gasoline was kept there where I worked. I cleaned and wiped the table where the medicine was kept; then I washed the bottles that had held the medicine. It was like that. The work was pleasant. As soon as I finished the work, we went to the restroom to play pasolan with haole girls.

FZ: Pasolan?

AV: Pasol. Those small things that are joined together.

FZ: Checkers? [AV meant jigsaw puzzles.]

AV: Hmmm. I thought it was a pleasant job.

FZ: Ah, that's wonderful. What did you feel when you left Maui?

AV: Ah well, our feelings were, we were full of happy thoughts about coming over to Honolulu, for it was easier to earn money in Honolulu than in Maui.

FZ: When you left Maui, your children were already big?

AV: They were already big. Except for my youngest boy who was studying and then continued studying at the university, the University of Hawaii. He graduate there.

FZ: That's wonderful. Was he the only one who graduated from there?

AV: He did and there was another one who did.

FZ: That's wonderful.

AV: After graduating from the university, one son worked at. . . . He graduated from Lahainaluna. His work was to make iron screws. And he was able to obtain a high position; he worked at Pearl Harbor; they made him a supervisor.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: And then what do you call that?

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: And they made him a superintendent.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 11-38-2-84I

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Agustina Villa (AV)

February 17, 1984

Kalihi, Oahu

BY: Fernando Zialcita (FZ)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Ilocano. Translation done by Fernando Zialcita.]

FZ: Hello, this is a taped interview with Mrs. Agustina Villa, the second part of the interview at Kalihi, Oahu on February 17, 1984.

Now I want to ask about your daughter's wedding in Lahaina. Please describe the wedding of Juanita.

AV: Juanita's wedding.

FZ: The party.

AV: We had a party at the clubhouse, when the wedding took place, and her wedding was festive. Many came to join in the merrymaking. After that, after her wedding, her husband took her and they went to their residence. So that was that. Later on, she gave birth in 1941 to a son. The war started with the Japanese, Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941, December. She gave birth in August.

FZ: For how many hours did the party last?

AV: How many hours? One night.

FZ: Wow, it was a happy affair.

AV: One night, that was our party. Many, many people came. It was hard for people to go home. They didn't want to go home yet.

FZ: The dishes were Filipino?

AV: Yes. We killed a pig, there was plenty of dishes. There was some beef, there was some pork.

FZ: Who helped cook?

AV: Our friends. Our kompadres who helped in the cooking.

FZ: Wonderful. What was your address in Honolulu? When you first came over in 1943? At Kakaako.

AV: At Kakaako? I don't know the address. At Queen Street. No, do you know that Atkinson Park at Kakaako? Here, when you go to Honolulu town, it's on the right, in front of Kakaako. Atkinson Park--that's our address.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: Kakaako.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

FZ: Please describe your work at Pearl Harbor in 1943.

AV: Nineteen forty-three. We went to work at Pearl Harbor in 1943. I was able to find work. I got a job at Pearl Harbor before my husband did. His was later. I was able to get a job that was like (AV switches to English:) keeping house. I clean the bottle, empty the medicine. That's all. Bumbai my husband come to Honolulu from Lahaina. (AV switches back to Ilocano:) So he found a job at Pearl Harbor.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

FZ: Why did you think of working at Pearl Harbor?

AV: Because there were many jobs, there was better pay for one hour than at the plantation. So we came over to Honolulu.

FZ: How much was the pay at Pearl Harbor?

AV: Our pay at Pearl Harbor, at first they gave thirty cents for one hour. And I worked for twelve hours. I came in at six o'clock and left at six. The same was true for my husband.

FZ: What did you feel about your work?

AV: Fine, it was pleasant working at Pearl Harbor. Working here was more pleasant than at the plantation. After cleaning all the tables, (AV switches to English:) I can rest, after lunch, no more, no more work.

FZ: During the war.

AV: (AV switches back to Ilocano:) That was wartime.

FZ: What happened, since Pearl Harbor was the place?

- AV: This is what happened. No Japanese could enter Pearl Harbor. Only these could enter: Chinese, Filipinos and Portuguese, haoles. No Japanese could enter.
- FZ: Were gas masks needed?
- AV: No, they weren't needed. Gas masks were needed only if, for example, the Japanese were to land and invade again, you would have to put on your gas mask. So you had to carry a gas mask, but we didn't "pack up." We merely took it along.
- FZ: You were a civilian. What were the restrictions on civilians at the base?
- AV: On civilians, only that they should work. When civilians worked then, there were strict rules on their work as civilians. You could not "bullshit," you could not say, "I'm ill." A nurse came to examine you. If you were truly ill, you stayed at home. Out of necessity, you went to work.
- FZ: And your husband came after you to Pearl Harbor?
- AV: Yes.
- FZ: What was his work?
- AV: His work? Janitor, too. That was his work then.
- FZ: From this job until his retirement, what kind of work did he have?
- AV: His work?
- FZ: Yes. Did he change jobs?
- AV: My husband? Janitor only.
- FZ: Until retirement.
- AV: Yes.
- (AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)
- FZ: What was your transportation then?
- AV: We rode the bus until the gate of Pearl Harbor. There the Pearl Harbor bus fetched us and brought us to the building where we worked. Because buses could not enter.
- FZ: When did you get your first private vehicle?
- AV: When we got our own vehicle?

FZ: Yes, one that was yours alone. In what year? What I mean is, your car.

AV: None.

FZ: Until today, you don't have your own car?

AV: None. Only my son has a car. He has a car.

FZ: Okay. What happened to your children when you moved to Kakaako, since Bernardo and Rizalino were still young?

AV: Yes. Bernardo continued his studies as a machinist. Then he was drafted as a soldier, he went to the Mainland. He stopped being a machinist. He instead took up--what do you call that, that position--"lutenik, lutenik" (lieutenant). He became a soldier at . . .

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: On the Mainland.

FZ: And . . .

AV: And Rizalino continued his studies then.

FZ: In what school?

AV: His school then was high school.

FZ: What problems did your children experience at Kakaako?

AV: Problems, we didn't experience any problems at Kakaako. Only this, our problem was that we were many living together in one house, since there was no house that could be rented. So there were many of us in only two rooms that were up-and-down. There were many of us living there.

FZ: Only your family?

AV: Family, my nephew shared the house. My nephew, but he had seven children, then us. Then only us at times. But Bernardo was a soldier then, so we were four. In addition, my daughter Juanita would visit us, we were therefore many. We would do this when we slept at night. My nephew and his seven children would sleep upstairs in two rooms; we slept below even in the kitchen. We would do this. Since Juanita, my daughter, had two children, they slept in the living room. We also lay down in the living room, which was this large (AV motions). Later on, you know the table where we ate, we went underneath it, our feet in, our heads out. Bernard slept on top of our dining table. So it was hard.

FZ: It was hard!

AV: Our life then was hard during the war.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: You can't believe how hard it was.

FZ: At Kakaako, which children of yours were working?

AV: Working? Arcadio was a child who worked when we were at Kakaako. He worked at Waikiki.

FZ: And Consolacion?

AV: None. She was married by then. She went to the Big Island; she came to Honolulu only for vacations.

FZ: What were your children's duties at home? At Kakaako, what were your children's duties at home?

AV: My children.

FZ: What were they obliged to do at home?

AV: Ah, nothing, ah.

FZ: Even then?

AV: Because Rizalino was still studying, and Bernardo (AV switches to English:) he go soldier, eh, he go soldier. (AV switches back to Ilocano:) Then my son, Arcadio, he got married and worked at Waikiki. And Juanita, her husband, worked at Magoon's laundry. Consolacion came over for vacation.

FZ: At Kakaako, where did you buy your food?

AV: Food?

FZ: Yes.

AV: At a store in Kakaako.

FZ: A corner store, a neighborhood store then.

AV: I forgot. . . . A Japanese store.

FZ: Everything?

AV: Uh huh, uh huh.

FZ: But how did you cook Ilocano dishes?

AV: Ilocano dishes. (Laughs) Pinakbet is an Ilocano dish.

FZ: Yes, but bagoong. Bagoong.

AV: You put in bagoong, tomatoes, ginger, garlic. Then you throw in eggplant, bittermelon, okra, and lima beans, and then you spoon in ebi or shrimps.

FZ: What I mean is, where did you get your bagoong during the war?

AV: It came from the Philippines. If they used bagoong and bagoong from the Philippines was used up, they made their own bagoong with tulingan (tuna). So we bought that.

FZ: Here.

AV: Here and in Maui, we made our bagoong. The tulingan is what you make into bagoong.

FZ: Local-made.

AV: Yeah.

FZ: Made in Hawaii.

AV: Uh huh. (AV switches to English:) Make Hawaii. (AV switches back to Ilocano:) There was a Japanese who also sold bagoong. He ground it. The fish. . . . He salted it making it into bagoong.

FZ: At Kakaako, where were your neighbors from? Were they also Filipinos, your neighbors?

AV: Filipinos, too. They were Filipinos. Among our neighbors were Portuguese, Japanese.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: Hawaiians. But there weren't any Samoans then.

FZ: With whom did you exchange food? Padigo?

AV: Padigo?

FZ: Yes.

AV: You entered food exchanges if you didn't buy food.

FZ: Ah, yes, yes.

AV: During the war, none.

FZ: No food exchanges.

AV: When things improved, plenty. Friends gave food gifts, viands.

Some gave fish, some gave meat, some gave vegetables, some gave squash, cooking bananas--today.

FZ: Ah, so they gave food gifts.

AV: Food gifts.

FZ: From your friends? Filipinos, too?

AV: Filipinos, Japanese. Some of the Japanese make good friends. Because even today at our meals at the Senior Citizens, there are many Japanese who are my friends, Filipinos who are my friends, Hawaiians who are my friends. They give cooking bananas, they give bittermelons, they give eggplants. (AV switches to English:) Like that.

FZ: What I mean is, today there are these food exchanges.

AV: (AV switches back to Ilocano:) Yes.

FZ: But during the war?

AV: None.

FZ: There no food exchanges.

AV: None.

FZ: Where was your church at Kakaako?

AV: The cathedral.

FZ: What was its fiesta? When was its patron saint's fiesta?

AV: Fiesta?

FZ: Yes.

AV: I don't know. (Chuckles)

FZ: Nothing, eh. How was Christmas celebrated at Kakaako?

AV: Kakaako? It was merry. Many played with so-called fireworks, they shot these into the air. You couldn't cross the streets because so-called fireworks burned.

FZ: Did make tuppig?

AV: No.

FZ: At Kakaako?

AV: No.

FZ: None.

AV: None, there was no tuppig. (Laughs)

FZ: And how was Holy Week celebrated at Kakaako? The celebration of Holy Week?

AV: None, we just went to church. That's how we commemorated Holy Week at the cathedral.

FZ: Oh.

AV: No more questions?

FZ: More! (Laughs) If you compare Kakaako to Maui, what do you prefer about Kakaako? If you compare Kakaako to Maui, what can you say about Kakaako?

AV: Kakaako. Kakaako was better than Maui because, as I mentioned, our life improved when we arrived in Honolulu. Our life was good. . . . But at Maui, our life was hard.

FZ: Even though there were many people at your house at Kakaako, life was better than at . . .

AV: Our life was better. We had plenty of money to buy our viands, to buy rice. When we were at Olowalu, we ran short on cash. We had no means for buying delicious viands. There was a store beside our house when we were at Olowalu.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: If we could not afford to buy for our dishes, Bernard, who was studying then, would run to the store to ask for credit since we didn't have money. And when our salary came, it wasn't enough to pay. We bought canned goods for our side dishes.

FZ: Why did you live in Kalihi?

AV: Here?

FZ: Yes. In 1946 why did you change . . .

AV: We were able to buy a house in 1946. And so we stayed here.

FZ: How much did you pay for the house?

AV: Paid for the house? Little only, because it was run-down. The house that we bought that was like these three houses. . . . The house was here where our apartment stands, only \$12,500 then. But a run-down

house like these three. Then, after the war, we were able to save some money. We had the smaller run-down house torn down. And we had this apartment built. The [U.S. presidential] candidate then was. . . . Hmm. . . .

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: [John F.] Kennedy. That's when our house was torn down. And we had this built.

FZ: Nineteen sixty.

AV: (AV switches to English:) Nineteen sixty-two. No, you wait. Nineteen sixty-two, October. [Editor's note: The correct date may be 1960 instead of 1962 if the house was torn down during Kennedy's candidacy.]

FZ: Your entire family came over.

AV: Our entire family.

FZ: In 1946, even Juanita's family.

AV: Juanita's family could not come over. When we bought this run-down house, I brought over my entire family over here. But Consolacion, I could not bring over because she was on the Big Island.

FZ: But your nephew?

AV: My nephew, he bought a house in Pearl City. The only [male kinsman] here in my house then was my son Rizalino who shared the house.

FZ: When you came over, Rizalino continued his studies.

AV: Yes, he studied.

FZ: Yes, until he finished. Until he finished his schooling.

AV: Until. . . . The University of Hawaii in 1951, that's when he graduated.

FZ: That's wonderful. What did he graduate in?

AV: What he graduated in machinist, that's what he graduated in. No, not machinist. Bernard was the machinist. Accounting, that's what Rizalino graduated in, and then he worked. After he graduated, he found a wife. (Chuckles) And so they got married. I told him then while he was still studying at the university. "Don't get married yet. Wait for your graduation. After you graduate, you'll have a job. You can then marry." That's what I told him then. "If you can't graduate, you won't have a job. Because if you marry (AV switches to English:) no can support your family." (AV switches back to Ilocano:) That's what I told Rizalino. He listened to what I said. After graduating, he got a job, he got married. (AV switches

to English:) "So I no worry for support the family." (Laughs)

FZ: Where was his wife from?

AV: (AV switches back to Ilocano:) From here, her mother. The mother of his wife, Hawaiian-Portuguese; the father of that girl, German.

FZ: Consolacion's husband is from where?

AV: Filipino, from Pangasinan.

FZ: And Juanita?

AV: Filipino also, from my town, Dingras.

FZ: Arcadio?

AV: Arcadio, his first wife was from Batanes. The second was a Hawaiian-Portuguese-haole.

FZ: And Rizalino?

AV: Rizalino? He's the one who . . .

FZ: Oh yes, yes, yes. How was Rizalino's wedding? How was the party?

AV: The party was merry. We went to eat in a restaurant, since we didn't want to be bothered. The good thing about a restaurant you pay, you don't have to work at preparations, you can go home after the meal. (Laughs)

FZ: That's right. That's right. How many people came?

AV: Many came, 200.

FZ: Oh, a lot. How many hours did the party last?

AV: Well, one hour and a half. You know that in a restaurant, you can't stay long. Any more questions?

FZ: Here in Kalihi, where did you buy your food before 1960?

AV: Where we bought food?

FZ: Yes.

AV: When we were in Kalihi?

FZ: Yes, before 1964.

AV: At the store, in town, we bought at the market. It was like that. But here [nowadays], we went to shop at Gem, because of a discount

on what we bought because we are senior citizens.

FZ: Before 1964?

AV: At the market in town. Oahu Market. That's where we bought.

FZ: What do you grow here?

AV: Ah well, everything. There's avocado, there's bua, there's many more. There's atis, there's horseradish, there's papaya, there are roses. Many. That's what we grow.

FZ: What's bua?

AV: That, can you see it? The betel nut.

FZ: Ah yes, yes, for nga-nga.

AV: So I planted many things.

FZ: That's wonderful.

AV: I even planted eggplants.

FZ: So many, it's complete.

AV: (Laughs) Complete.

FZ: Yes.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

FZ: Here in Kalihi, before 1964, did you enter into food exchanges with your neighbors?

AV: I had food exchanges. With the horseradish I planted, I gave avocados away as gifts. I even gave betel nut away for many like nga-nga.

FZ: Ah yes, yes.

(Laughter)

FZ: To your neighbors?

AV: Yes, neighbors and my friends who live not too far. Not only neighbors.

FZ: Filipinos only?

AV: Filipinos, Hawaiians, Japanese. I gave them gifts of avocado.

FZ: That's wonderful. Wonderful.

AV: My horseradish leaves I give to whoever asks, they even reach the Mainland. I give it to them. (Laughs) My horseradish leaves travel far; they can even reach the Mainland. (Chuckles)

FZ: Here, in Kalihi, how many Filipinos did you have as neighbors?

AV: Many then, many Filipinos were our neighbors.

FZ: Before 1964?

AV: Uh huh. They rented the house. Filipinos, they lived here, some of them.

FZ: Before 1964?

AV: Uh huh. I began to rent out in '60. . . . [Nineteen] sixty-six.

FZ: Yes, but. . . . But 1946 until 1964 did you rent out?

AV: Yes, yes.

FZ: You rented out a part of your house?

AV: Uh huh.

FZ: Filipinos, too?

AV: Filipinos. There was a mixture. There were many Filipinos, there were haoles who were servicemen--this place was still new--they came. After the war [World War II], there was a lull.

FZ: From 1946 until 1964, you had your own house and you had it rented out.

AV: Yes, from 1966--no, 1946. I started renting out.

FZ: Ah, a part of your house. So, your tenants were haoles?

AV: There were haoles, there were Filipinos.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: There was even a Black, then, a family. They were also good. They were good. I would draw up a contract that they made a deposit as part of their rent. If they leave and they cannot pay for the month of their departure, I get their deposit. It was like that.

FZ: Where did you advertise? Advertise? Do you advertise in the newspaper?

AV: No, word of mouth only.

FZ: Oh, word of mouth, only.

AV: No, the fellow comes over to inquire if I rent out. If there is, there is.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: We sold it, we sold it [an apartment at Kaumualii]. No more questions?

FZ: Okay. There are some more questions.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

FZ: When you had free time, what would you do at home? For instance, Saturday and Sunday?

AV: Oh, when we weren't working on Saturday and Sunday, we put the house in order, we cleaned it, we washed, we cooked, we ironed. When we weren't working. On Monday, we would go back to work, five days of work. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

FZ: Did you have time to chat, to see your girlfriends?

AV: For chatting, no time. Because, as I said, I worked for five days; on two days, we put the house in order. If there was a happy birthday, if there was a wedding on Saturday and Sunday, we went to party. . . . That was our work.

FZ: Where were your friends from?

AV: From all places. You know that in Hawaii there are many people from all over who come to Hawaii. Such were our neighbors. There were people from Pangasinan, from Batac, from Laoag, from Bacarra, (AV switches to English:) like that. (AV switches back to Ilocano:) There are different peoples in Hawaii.

FZ: How often would your family go to movies before 1960?

AV: Movies? None. We didn't watch movies.

FZ: You didn't watch?

AV: No.

FZ: Even then, huh?

AV: Before when we were in Kakaako we watched movies.

FZ: What kind of movies?

AV: They showed Filipino movies then of the war. We saw the Japanese take the Filipinos. That's all. But here, no more. We don't watch.

FZ: From 1946 until 1960, you never watched movies?

AV: No, no, after we came over, no more. Only in Kakaako would we watch.

FZ: Don't you like movies?

AV: We like them, but it's hard to ride the bus. So we don't like that. Once, we were already here in Kalihi, my husband and I went to watch the movies, the movies at Palama. But we waited for the bus for a long time. There were many people. We waited till ten p.m. We stood while waiting. And so we stopped going. It's hard to take the bus.

FZ: When was this, in what year?

AV: The year?

FZ: When you had to wait?

AV: When we were already here in Kalihi, '55. That was a long time ago.

FZ: That was tiring, eh.

AV: Uh huh.

FZ: Do you also go to restaurants?

AV: We would also go.

FZ: Because here in Hawaii many people go to restaurants.

AV: Many.

FZ: Yes. But does your family also go? But did your family also go often to restaurants?

AV: We went. We also went for my husband's happy birthday. We went to eat at a restaurant.

FZ: What kind of restaurant?

AV: Sometimes a Chinese restaurant, sometimes a Japanese restaurant. So.

FZ: Filipino, also? Even to a Filipino restaurant?

AV: We have never gone to a Filipino restaurant.

FZ: Not yet. (Laughs) Why so?

AV: Because those serve mung bean soup, adobo and pinakbet. (Chuckles)

FZ: Just like at home, eh?

AV: Goat kilawin, that's a Filipino restaurant. (Laughs)

FZ: What are your children's food tastes like?

AV: What kind of dishes my children like?

FZ: Uh huh.

AV: Ah, my children, there are those who like Philippine dishes, there are those who don't. My young man who was born in Hawaii, he doesn't like Filipino food at all.

FZ: He doesn't.

AV: Only pinakbet, that's all he likes.

FZ: Why? (Laughs)

AV: It [Filipino food] doesn't agree with him.

FZ: What does he like?

AV: Pinakbet, that's what he likes.

FZ: What does he eat?

AV: Dishes cooked with canned food: ham, sausage.

FZ: But the others, no.

AV: As I said, a little pinakbet sometimes. I cook bottle gourd, I mix in with shrimps, he likes that. So does his wife. Bottle gourd mixed with shrimps. But dishes with horseradish, he doesn't like. (Laughs)

FZ: What were the fun places you went to, as a family?

AV: Ah, many fun places. Sometimes we went to Waialua where we had relatives. We went to Ewa Beach, where we had relatives. We even went to Kauai, where we had relatives. We went to Maui, where my husband had a sibling who's now dead. We even went to the Big Island where my daughter, Consolacion, had gotten married and now lives.

FZ: And to the beach, you also went?

AV: The beach? Ah, yes.

FZ: You swam?

AV: Yes, ah. When there was a birthday among my relatives; they called us up and we went. We went to Sand Island, we went to Ala Moana.

FZ: And you swam? (Laughs)

AV: Yes.

FZ: Who's the patron saint of Kalihi's church?

AV: The patron saint? Jesus, that's the patron saint.

FZ: What's his fiesta?

AV: The date (pesta)?

FZ: Yes, the fiesta, his fiesta?

AV: His fiesta? Hmmm.

FZ: None, eh?

AV: I don't know. (Laughs)

FZ: None. How do you celebrate Christmas here in Kalihi?

AV: In a festive way. Many play with agpangpangato.

FZ: What's pangpangato?

AV: Fireworks. There are none of those anymore. What they have now are those things they throw on the ground.

FZ: Firecrackers.

AV: Firecrackers, that's what they were.

FZ: And Christmas tree, also? Christmas tree?

AV: Christmas tree.

FZ: Yes, the tree of Christmas.

AV: Oh. All the houses had it, the Christmas tree. Many of the fruits of the Christmas tree fell under. (Laughs) For the Mass, we went to church. We came back, we opened our presents that were given to us. Whiskey, wine. Everything, you can see. Some gave rice, others canned goods. Some gave clothes.

FZ: And tuppig?

AV: No tuppig.

FZ: Ah, the practice has died out.

AV: Yes.

FZ: It died out. That's an Ilocano custom.

AV: That's for Ilocanos, the tuppig.

FZ: It's beautiful. And is Flores de Mayo celebrated in your church?

AV: Mayo?

FZ: Yes. Flores de Mayo.

AV: It is. The Flores de Mayo leaves the Catholic church and goes around from house to house.

FZ: Do you often join the Flores de Mayo?

AV: In the Flores de Mayo. The Flores de Mayo leaves the church and goes around in procession.

FZ: Do you join?

AV: Sometimes I go, sometimes no.

FZ: How are novenas at this church? Do you join?

AV: Novenas, they have novenas, too. The sisters go from house to house when there is a saint's feast to invite people to the novena.

FZ: Saints. When someone dies, among your neighbors, what do the other neighbors do?

AV: When someone dies?

FZ: Yes, when someone dies.

AV: When that happens, they call the mortuary, then you go there to visit. It opens at six o'clock until nine o'clock. The priest comes to pray the Holy Rosary over the dead. At nine o'clock they close the mortuary and everybody goes home. In the morning, at six o'clock a.m., they open it again. They go to the church. Catholic, if it's Catholic. After the priest ends the Mass, people accompany the priest and they go to the cemetery and again they pray there. And the priest give his blessing. Many people come to the burial. After the burial, the bereaved invite all who want to join them in a noon meal. It's like that.

FZ: And there's a novena afterwards?

AV: There is, nine days of novena. After that, people make sweet cakes for the commemorative feast (omras) for the dead. The following day, a party takes place.

FZ: Do you also make atang (food offerings) to the dead?

AV: Yes, ah. I make food offerings to the dead.

FZ: Once a year?

AV: Once a year?

FZ: Yes, on the deceased's anniversary.

AV: A novena takes place again for nine days.

FZ: Do you also have an omras (commemorative feast for the dead)?

AV: Yes, ah. Once a year, you pray the novena for nine days. You come on the ninth day to prepare the omras, the next day you throw a feast.

FZ: You offer busi and nilappet?

AV: Yes.

FZ: Ah.

AV: Many know how to make them.

FZ: This is because in the Ilocos I have seen many broiled foods, foods that are placed on the table for the dead: busi, nilappet.

AV: There are. They also make them here. (Laughs) They give food, they place sweet cakes on the table. They have bought this food. They make them here.

FZ: Supposing you broil, supposing you cook meat or sweet cakes, do you make food offerings to the dead?

AV: Yes. You have to make an offering to the dead.

FZ: Even here.

AV: You have to make atang. As long as you're a Catholic, you make an atang. But others, the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses, they don't make any atang. They don't believe in God. (Chuckles) Only Catholics make such food offerings.

FZ: How is ammong practiced by neighbors when someone dies? Ammong?
In-ammong for the dead?

AV: I don't know.

FZ: Arayat? For the. . . .

AV: Arayat?

FZ: Yes.

AV: Oh, arayat, you contribute arayat in the form of money.

FZ: For the dead.

AV: For the dead, people give five dollars, ten dollars, twenty dollars, like that.

FZ: In the Ilocos, they give such contributions as eggs, rice.

AV: That's the Philippines, ah! Rice, chicken.

FZ: Yes.

AV: Eggs. Any kine. But here, money.

FZ: Only money.

AV: Money.

FZ: Could you tell me how you built your apartment in 1964? Why did you build an apartment?

AV: We had it built because our house was run-down. Every year we had to have it repaired. So we had it torn down. (AV switches to English:) Waste the money every year (AV switches back to Ilocano) that we have it repaired. We therefore had it torn down and had this apartment built. We borrowed from the bank and paid a contractor. It was like that. When this apartment was completed, we moved over and people came to rent. And the rent of our fellow residents I paid to the bank where I secured a loan for paying the contractor. It was like that. That's what I did.

FZ: Who was your contractor?

AV: Filipino.

FZ: A Filipino also?

AV: Uh huh [yes]. From Bacarra.

FZ: Oh. Ilocano also.

AV: Manuel Bulusan, the contractor for our apartment. We became his sponsors when he got married.

FZ: Wonderful.

AV: But now, he's not in Kalihi, he's not in Honolulu, because he is in the Mainland. He lives at Lancaster. That's where he lives now. He bought a place at Lancaster.

FZ: And you had many tenants here?

AV: Many.

FZ: By word of mouth only? Word of mouth only? You don't advertise in the newspaper?

AV: No, people get to know by word of mouth. They come over if I have space or not. If I have, (AV switches to English:) "Okay, come inside." (AV switches back to Ilocano:) But I don't want children to come here. Because it's humbug if there's a child. Many things get destroyed.

FZ: No child.

AV: None. But it's like this. Some have children simply because they became pregnant here.

FZ: It's different.

AV: Yes. But if they come over and they have a child, I don't take them in. Only the child that was conceived here, I accept.

FZ: Are the tenants here mostly Filipino?

AV: There are Hawaiians, there are Mexicans. This one (AV points) is married to a Puerto Rican. They're wonderful. They don't give any trouble, this couple. Even before the end of the month, they give the rent for the next month. So that's good. But the others, Hawaiians too, after the start of a new month, they give the rent. But we Filipinos delay in paying the rent. So other peoples pay the rent more readily. Now that the month is almost over, some have not yet given the rent. When they come over looking for a room, and there is, I tell in all the contracts. "Yes," they say. "Before the fifteenth, give me your rent. I have to pay the building's mortgage," I tell them.

"Yes." But after a long while, "Oh, we don't have money yet," and so I have to wait. I am irritated by our habits as Filipinos, especially of some. Or else, they go away. They don't tell me. Even if many things get broken, they take all the bulbs and they go away.

FZ: It's hard.

AV: It's hard, especially if the man is single. He just walks out and

disappears into the night. He takes all the bulbs with him, he takes all the door locks.

FZ: Terrible.

AV: You don't get notified that he has left.

FZ: Terrible. From 1946 until now, how many times have you visited the Philippines?

AV: In 1982, I went to New York and New Jersey.

FZ: Oh, you went on tour, eh! You saw a lot of things.

AV: I accompanied my daughter-in-law, the wife of Arcadio. His son works in New York, he works at United Airlines. And so we went.

FZ: What do you think about going back to the Philippines to retire there?

AV: I don't understand.

FZ: Would you like to go back to the Philippines?

AV: Now?

FZ: Yes.

AV: No more, we sold all our properties in the Philippines. We don't have properties there anymore. Our house is located here, therefore we're here. The American way of life is wonderful, it's peaceful. In the Philippines, there's always trouble. Life is hard. Many things, they say, are expensive.

FZ: Who are the relatives you petitioned to come over from 1946 to today?

AV: Here?

FZ: Which relatives of yours from the Ilocos have you petitioned to come over to America?

AV: An--my niece--we petitioned for her together with my sibling. Those were the only ones who were able to come over.

FZ: How about your mother and father?

AV: They were dead already.

FZ: Over there?

AV: When we came over to Hawaii.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

AV: They were already dead.

FZ: In 1970, you retired. You retired from . . .

AV: Yes, I retired.

FZ: . . . at Pearl Harbor? When you retired from work you were at Pearl Harbor then?

AV: Yes, at the laundry, at the Navy Exchange at Aiea. That's where I retired.

FZ: At Pearl Harbor?

AV: I worked at Pearl Harbor, but the laundry where I worked transferred to Aiea. And so I too went, that's why I retired at Aiea in 1971.

(Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

FZ: You retired from Aiea in . . .

AV: Yes, I retired from Aiea in 1970.

FZ: What did you feel when you retired?

AV: Ah, I felt good. I retired pleasantly because I stopped working. They gave me my pension, so it was wonderful. I was able to rest, I had my pension.

FZ: What do you feel about Kalihi's future?

AV: The future of Kalihi?

FZ: Yes.

AV: Nothing, ah.

FZ: Concerning the future of Kalihi, what can you say?

AV: Ah, none. There's nothing I can say, except that I am waiting for death.

FZ: Death? Oh!

AV: There's nothing else to wait for, except death. An old woman, an old man, that's what we are.

FZ: What can you say about your life?

AV: About my life?

FZ: Yes.

AV: My life has been wonderful. We have a pension we can use for our needs.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

FZ: Would you like to live up to . . .

AV: How many years?

FZ: Up to a hundred years?

AV: But it's the Lord God who will cut it short. No matter how much one may want a long life, if he calls you, nothing can stop that. Because even if there is a doctor who attends to you, if the Lord God calls on you, you just have to go.

(AV's husband speaks. Interview resumes.)

FZ: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mrs. [Villa].

END OF INTERVIEW

KALIHI:
Place of Transition

Vol. I

**ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL
HISTORY PROJECT**

**Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawaii at Manoa**

JUNE 1984