They used to call bangō. That’s the number given to you, and most time, they call you by the numbers. They say, “Hey, bayaw, you come here, 7488.” And that was the thing I objected to. I tell ’em, “I have a name. I wish you’d call me by name.” [But] the situation for you to think you’re a human being was out of the question.

At age nineteen, Faustino Baysa left his native Ilocos Norte, Philippines, in 1927 to labor in Hawai‘i’s sugar cane fields. Assigned to Waialua Agricultural Company, Baysa worked in its cane fields, dairy, sugar mill; and from 1931 to his retirement in 1972, the plantation’s hospital, where he received patients, dressed wounds, took X rays, and assisted in the morgue. In 1938, Baysa visited the Philippines, where workers returning from Hawai‘i were dubbed Hawaiianos. On a later visit, Baysa met his wife Laurena. They made their home in Hawai‘i and raised a family of six. Until his death in 1979, Baysa remained active in the Waialua community.

Vivien Lee, a COH researcher-interviewer, conducted over three hours of taped interviews with Faustino Baysa in the summer of 1976. Lee’s notes include this description: “Mr. Baysa speaks very softly, is deeply tanned, and has an easy smile. He appears much younger than his sixty-eight years.”

Faustino Baysa’s complete interview transcript, from which the following narrative is edited, is part of COH’s inaugural project, Waialua and Hale‘iwa: The People Tell Their Story. This project documents lifestyles, cultures, physical surroundings, and ethnic relations on Waialua Agricultural Company’s plantation and in Hale‘iwa, a neighboring town located on O‘ahu’s North Shore. When Waialua plantation shut down in 1996, after a century in business, it marked the end of sugar cane production on O‘ahu.
HAR DENED PALMS

We had a family who did not have all the luxuries. We plowed our own fields. We planted our own rice, tobacco, corn, beans; and we harvested them ourselves. I was unable to continue my education. I wanted to go back to school badly. My parents could not afford it.

I made up my mind to come to Hawai‘i, following my uncle. I expected to return sometime. But before then, I thought maybe if I earned enough money, I would go back to school. They [the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association] used to recruit only bona fide field workers. The procedure was to feel your hands, looking for calluses or things like hardened palms. I tried my best to make my palms hard enough by pounding rice, cutting firewood, digging [in the] garden. And they accept me.

This place was entirely different from where I came. My housemates were experienced because they were old-timers. Very few of the laborers in Waialua were younger than I was then. I was used to depending on my parents. I could cry when I found that I was not ready for [this] kind of place.

I remember three popular [Filipino] families in here when I came in. [Such families were rare at this time. The Filipino population was composed predominantly of men without families.] And some of the children were of our age. We were invited to join them on their activities and it made us feel good. And feeling at ease, [we] forgot [about] being homesick. Leaving the playground and back to our own homes, we were with the old people [older workers] and again became father and son to them.

My first work down here [paid] only dollar and ten cents a day. Weeding—hard work then. Turn out for work, early morning, at least six o’clock. Used to wake up about three o’clock in the morning, and then cook our own provisions, get ready for the train to come in. And if one don’t wake up early enough, the train pass, and you are left behind. As soon as you reach there, except for lunch break, work until they call it pau hana at 3:30 p.m., time to go home.

A HUMAN BEING

Being new, and environment was not the same as where I was raised up, I objected [to] any ridicule. They used to call [the worker’s identification number] bangō. That’s the number given to you, and most time, they call you by the numbers. They say, “Hey, bayaw, you come here, 7488.” And that was the thing I objected to. I tell ’em, “I have a name. I wish you’d call me by name.” [But] the situation for you to think you’re a human being was out of the question.
Not being used to it, my [work] speed was not the same as a regular farmhand’s. So, as soon as I had the chance, I applied for another job. The plantation used to have a dairy. I landed up with tending to cows. We used to go and take care of the cows in the pasture right on the foot of the hills down here at Ka‘ala Mountain. [But] the time came on a rainy day [when] I got tired of the cowboy work. I applied for factory [sugar mill] work doing all kinds of odd [jobs] inside there.

The sugar room was where I stayed most of the time. It’s where the sugar juice [was] processed, limed, boiled in tanks, [and] passed through the evaporators. My immediate luna at the factory was Chinese. The other was Portuguese. They used to call me by first name. And then, I liked it. I felt like I was someone, a human being.

I used to love my work in the factory because there was something more than work. It was the attitude of my boss [Bill Ecklund] being friendly, showing us how to relax after work. He used to be a good tennis player, so he showed us how to play it. He must have been a well-known person in tennis because the people who used to play for the Davis Cup, whenever they pass [through] Hawai‘i, he used to bring them as guest [to] the haole tennis court. Since we were guests of my boss, we were lucky enough to be called in to watch the game. We used to call it the haole tennis court [because] we used to have [a separate] tennis court for the laborers.

Very few of the Filipinos before I came in did socialize. They didn’t go around and eat with the rest of the group. They had their own, and when
they invited guests it was their own kind. That was the routine way of living around here where [if] your group in there were mostly Filipinos, well, Filipinos eat together. The situation then was Japanese Club was just Japanese. The Haole Club was haoles.

We started making [i.e., participating in] that Cosmopolitan Social Club before. We had schoolteachers and plantation supervisors. But among the workers, they were either not willing to go in, or they were shy. Well, we joined in, and since we started playing together, play games, we began to understand that there was a gap. You go in there, and pick a little piece of paper, grab a subject, and supposedly talk about it, just to talk even if it were funny. We had to try our best, and since the intention was to socialize together and trying to know each other more, we began to like it.

THE CHALLENGE

They used to ask for volunteers to do odd jobs outside the factory. That’s what happened on the off-season’s time around October and November. So I was one of those volunteers to go out and do some dynamite work. We used to enjoy the blasting work. When you’re young, you think you’re capable of doing lots of things.

We were on one of the gulches down ‘Opae‘ula when the camp police came for me. The policeman came in and said, “The [plantation] boss wants to see you at the office.”

I inquired, “What did I do?”

He said, “I don’t know. He just wants you, the boss.”

I dreaded the trip to the office. When the big boss came, he said, “Well, you didn’t do anything wrong. I want you to go to the hospital. The office boy went for a vacation, and we don’t have any help up there, so you help for maybe one month.” It turned out that this man never came back, so I kept on relieving day in and day out.

In the first night, I had to do some unpleasant work. Somebody was blasted and so I had to help examine the corpse in the morgue, and I had to sew the remains. I was not used to it. The doctor [kept] urging, “Oh, keep on. You’re doing all right. I’ll stay with you.” When we finished working and I went home, [I] could not sleep because I could see everything on my first experience [in my] imagination. So (laughs) my reaction in the morning was to resign.

[But] the challenge was there. Different jobs. We had to do clerical work, and we had to help in the dispensary. Those days, we didn’t have adequate facilities for all, like your modern facilities now. Whenever we had an accident case, we took care of the accident.
Most of it would be cane knives: cuts, lacerations, bruises, incised wounds, and abrasions. Clean, dress ’em up, took care of the paperwork, history of the accident, and made the accident report. Those were the things I was told to do.

In the beginning, before mechanization, they used to have men loading the cane cars. People used to pile the cane, arrange ’em up, bundle ’em up little bit. The men used to come in and grab it, carry ’em on their shoulders, go up the ladder and put ’em into this cane car. There used to be all kinds of accidents, including falling from the ladder. When you fall from a ladder, what would happen [is] you either have a strain, or broken back, broken leg and arm.

[Women] who came from the Philippines were not used to having prenatal examinations. They would go [instead] for manipulation on the stomach. They called it hilot. They just massage your abdomen, and then convince you that they are turning the baby so it will be normal when it comes to term. We would tell them, “It would be easier for you, and it’s cleaner, sanitary [in the hospital]. And if there’s anything hard or [a] complication, the doctor would be there right away.” But occasionally, we would find that even if they came in for prenatal clinics, pretty soon the midwife would come in and register the baby. Delivery at home!
THE REAL THING

I was at home [on December 7, 1941]. We thought they were practice shooting because we heard that all the time. But, actually, we saw the plane passing on this side was different from ours. And then, the superintendent of the factory came out rushing, and he said, “Faustino, you go tell the people it’s real thing!” So I told the next-door neighbor it’s war. But people were not so convinced that it was real until they finally heard shooting here and there. And then, of course, the radio was blazing [with the news].

Whenever we went to the [Japanese] camps, some look and say, “This people, I wonder if I can trust them. . . .”

I say to ’em, “If he’s your friend, well, why should you change now?”

Most of my friends working together, with whom we eat at work, were Japanese. There used to be [a] Japanese girl who took care of the dispensary. The language we used had to be either pidgin English or broken English. And when we don’t understand each other, we had to add some other words that would help to explain ourselves. That’s how this pidgin English comes out beautiful.

ROADBLOCKS AND RATIONING

We were supposed to stay home after it gets dark. [There were] limitations on going around after curfew hours. Very few were given a pass, and I was one of those who had a night pass. If I was called for work at night, then I would carry my pass. But with the new boys [soldiers] from the Mainland, we had complications at the roadblocks. They halt you, and they look at you. They
didn’t know the difference between Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiians. I was never called a Filipino until I showed my pass. Everyone who was not white was Japanese as far as they were concerned. They get you scared because they have their gun pointed at you.

They used to allow only ten gallons [of gasoline] a month that time, and you were supposed to economize. But people who were working used to have extra [ration] coupons. Whenever we talked about going out to see people who were sick, the coupon came in very handy. The problem came when someone swipe the gasoline from your tank. [One time] I got stuck on the way and [I] say, “Gee. What happened?” No more gas in the tank. Then the idea of locking the cap came up. But we never thought of those things before. We trusted everybody.

**HOME GUARD**

During the war, how many times I wanted to go into the service. And we couldn’t get [in] just because they thought what we were doing was more important than going to the war. Agricultural work was supposed to be frozen. [During World War II, sugar plantation work was deemed “essential” to the war effort. Several full-time workers were restricted from leaving the plantation for other work.] [So] they gave us home guard [duty]. We were not shipped out, [but] they gave us commission, rank, training. We were attached to the Twenty-First Infantry. They used to come and pick us up for training at night, about nine o’clock. They furnished us guns. We practiced at the shooting range, with all the ammunition we could get. They even taught us to read the map and [plan] strategies.

We used to train people for home guard and tell them that whenever someone was approaching, they have to challenge them three times before one can do any action. One of the boys was on guard on one of the cane field roads here. Just happened that one old Japanese man was approaching.

This guard say, “Halt!” Then he say, “Halt!” again.

[The old man said,] “I halt already.”

“Halt!”

“Why you say two, three time? I first stop already.”

“I have to say ‘halt’ three times so I can shoot you.”

The following day, camping [at] night at ‘Öpae’ula, one of the boys tried to repeat what the guard on duty said: “Halt. Advance to be recognized.”

So he [the learner] tried, “Halt, who goes there?”

“Friend.”

“You advance. You are very nice.”

These were actually happening when they practice up like that.
FOUND, THEN LOST

The good part during the war was [seeing] my younger brother whom I have not seen since I left the Philippines. I was sending him to school, and then [he] went to the [U.S.] Mainland. [When] the war broke out, I didn’t know where he was. First thing I knew, one telephone call came in, and here he was. He say, “I’m here at Pearl Harbor.” He was a submarine officer. United States Navy. The USS Scamp was the submarine he was on. While they were waiting for repairs, he stayed with us here. Stayed a whole month.

[Later] they were on the mission to intercept the Japanese Navy between Japan and the Philippines. [On November 14, 1944] their submarine was lost. We don’t know what happened after that. They were just presumed lost and no trace of it. The officer in charge, usually a chaplain, came around. It was real bad news, but the way he came in and relate [it] was so smooth. Storytelling first, then eulogizing. But my brother was lost. So that ends my story of the war.

A NEUTRAL SIDE

[After the war] the union [International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union] came in; they started bargaining. They tried to canvass everybody. So one of them came in and asked me if I wanted to join in on that thing. I just tell ’em I was not eligible for joining in because we were supposed to be a neutral side. My boss, he say, “Management and labor on [either] side and you’re in the middle. You going to help both ways, so don’t get active on certain sides only.”

I had members of my families on two sides so I just had to keep quiet regardless of what all they were going to do. The union is on strike, all right, the hospital was open. So what we used to say is, “If you need help, come.”

Well, in the end, one of my friends who was doing all the organizing tried to blame me because they were unable to organize the whole crew at the hospital. It must have been just a manufactured word [i.e., lie] because as far as I knew, I didn’t work against it. But I didn’t work for it, either.

NO COMPLAINTS

When I went for vacation [to the Philippines], nothing was said about going to get married. My wife and [my] brother-in-law were relatives. She used to work with missionaries in the Philippines. On their way back and forth moving from one town to another, our house in the Philippines was their stopover
section. We met one time, but we never thought anything would happen. I don’t know how it [the marriage] actually happened.

No more that carefree stuff already. I felt that the responsibility is much more recognized when you have your own family. That happens to me. I have to think twice before I do it. There’s something with having a family who is understanding [that] you always want to come home and do your best as possible.

We have our six children, and no complaints. With three children in college, you would imagine what you would pinch. Actually we are pinching all the time. We raise our own vegetables. We try not to buy things that we cannot afford. But we manage. And I tell them often, “You have to be better than Daddy, regardless of how hard we struggle to put you through. Otherwise, pohö.”

**GLOSSARY**

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<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bayaw</td>
<td>brother-in-law, a term of address</td>
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<tr>
<td>haole</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
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<tr>
<td>luna</td>
<td>overseer</td>
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<tr>
<td>pau hana</td>
<td>end of work</td>
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<tr>
<td>pohö</td>
<td>wasted effort</td>
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