

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Kapua Wall Heuer

"I looked out here and saw this great big black wall coming in like this. . . . The noise was terrific, the rolling. . . . You've heard high seas and rough weather. Well, just triple that. And then you heard the screaming. You look and people were stomping, trying to reach earth, trying to get out. Dogs swimming around. Then came the crash. . . . Well, it hit buildings, the lighthouse, and the railroad track and everything. And the roar. And I said, 'Oh, that's good-bye to Hilo.'"

Kapua Wall Heuer was born February 1, 1912 in Kainaliu, Kona, Hawai'i. She was the youngest child of Allen Wall and Christina Lilinoe Roy Wall. Heuer's maternal grandparents were William F. Roy, a Scotsman who arrived in Hawai'i in 1860, and Eliza Davis Roy, a native Hawaiian. Together, they took up ranching in Kona.

Growing up in Waihou, an area *mauka* of Kainaliu town, Heuer lived the ranching lifestyle. She rode horses, and learned to rope, herd, and ship cattle.

Beginning in 1918, Heuer spent most of her time in Honolulu attending Punahou School. She would return to Kona for vacations. After graduating from Punahou in 1932, she remained in Honolulu and worked for Hawai'i Meat Company. Later, she managed the James Robinson estate.

In 1936, Heuer, along with her first husband, Roger Burke, moved to 'Ōla'a on the Big Island. Four years later, they moved to Hilo and lived on Pukihae Street. Burke and Heuer were divorced in 1954 and in 1958 Heuer married Henry W. Heuer, a captain for Matson Navigation Company.

Heuer, who was interviewed in the patio of her Hilo home overlooking Hilo Bay, recalled getting her children ready for school the morning of April 1, 1946, when her daughter noticed that the water in the bay had receded. Because the house sits on a hill several feet above the shore, the house was not damaged, although water did reach the backyard. From her vantage point, Heuer saw people and debris being swept out into the open ocean. She later went to Keaukaha and helped in rescue efforts there.

Heuer still lives in Hilo today, but maintains her Kona ranching roots. She raised two daughters and has sixteen grandchildren and several great-grandchildren.

Tape No. 29-28-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Kapua Heuer (KH)

Hilo, Hawai'i

September 4, 1998

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: Okay, why don't we start. This is an interview with Mrs. Kapua Heuer.

KH: Heuer. Mm hmm.

WN: On September 4, 1998 and we're at her home in Hilo, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

The first question I want to ask you is, when and where you were born?

KH: Kainaliu, Kona.

WN: And your birth date?

KH: February 1, 1912.

WN: Nineteen twelve. Tell me something about your parents.

KH: Well, my parents---my father [Allen Wall] came out here years before he married my mother and he went into ranching and helping W.H. Shipman. You've heard of W.H. Shipman? Uncle Willy. See Uncle Willy's wife and my mother were half-sisters. And it was at this time that Allen Wall met Christina Roy.

WN: Christina Roy being your mother?

KH: My mother, mm hmm [yes]. And you see, Christina, her father (William F. Roy, a trader), was a Scotsman that came out here (in early 1860). Her mother was native island born. And so, [William F. Roy] married Eliza Kauha'ihau [Davis]. My grandmother and her husband took up ranching [in Kona].

WN: What was your grandmother's name?

KH: Elika.

WN: Elika.

KH: Elika. Eliza in the *Haole*. Elika [Davis] Roy.

WN: This is your maternal grandmother?

KH: That's right. My maternal grandmother.

WN: And what was your maternal grandfather's name?

KH: William F. Roy. He came from Scotland.

WN: Okay.

KH: And they lived in Kona (at Waihou, above Kainaliu town, approximately two and one half miles) where my daughter, Barbara, now lives (at Mahealani, where my parents lived). If you're familiar with Kona, if you know where the Richard Ushijima little store is. . . .

WN: Hmm. You know, it's been so long since I've been there. I know Kainaliu town.

KH: You know Kainaliu town. Well, we were just out of Kainaliu town. Going toward Kailua. You pass Lanakila [Congregational] Church, a short distance (on the *mauka* side of the road). You could throw a rock from one to the other. And Elika and her husband, [William] Roy, well, they went into ranching (at Waihou in 1866). And then Lilinoe, which is my mother's name, met Allen, and they were married. They lived a very nice life doing ranching. Also, [Lilinoe] went into a hotel business, and for years they ran the Mahealani Hotel, right there. And they were in business until the Kona Inn was built in Kailua. And of course, with all the modern facilities and whatnot, and you had to put in your own electric lights in those days. So business wasn't as good as it was when they didn't have competition. So they gave up the hotel business. But it lingered on because old-timers, you know, they'd call, "Oh, we want to come." So my mother took them until she herself, due to health, had to call it quits. But she had a wonderful reputation of the food she set. So they did that, ran Mahealani for years. They had many celebrities, like Jack London stayed there, you know. And Princess Kawananakoa and Princess Kalaniana'ole were personal friends. They stayed there. And that went on for several years. I mean, on a small scale.

My father, when he was in his late seventies, I think it was—eighties. I think he was eighty-six or eighty-seven, he was killed in the branding pen there. They were branding cattle one day, and of course the corrals and branding pen were right behind the house. My brother Roy was there also roping. And we yelled at Father, "Get out of the pen! Get out of the pen!" and he'd go like that, walk away. Well, this particular day, there was a *pipi* in there. You know what a *pipi* is, huh?

WN: Yeah.

KH: Yeah, had the animal in there. And Roy saw Father coming down as he yelled at him, "Father, get out of here! These cattle are not tame!" But he persisted, he was going to walk right through. And one of the cowboys had a *pipi* on the end of his rope. He'd roped it and was waiting his turn to pull him in and then he'd be knocked down so he could be branded and castrated. [My father] couldn't see it well. This animal just pulled his head up, and behind him was a man on horseback. He was ready to drag him in and someone else put another rope on

him. You've seen branding before, huh? Yeah, okay, yeah. I've done a lot of roping. I know that. (Chuckles) So Roy yelled, "Father get out of there!" Well, that animal turned and went for him and he ripped him all the way up to here.

WN: Up to his chest?

KH: Oh, yeah. Right up to his chest. I was not there. I was down at Keauhou Beach.

WN: How old were you at that time?

KH: Me? Oh, I was a married mother. I mean, I had two kids. I think the date he died was, I think, [1944]. I can get these dates accurate, I can give them to you if you want them. And he was rushed to the hospital. And Dr. [W.J.] Seymour was a doctor in Kona for a long time. He just looked at us, my mother and my brother and me, and he just shook his head. We knew that there was nothing we could do to save Father. But, Seymour kept saying, "Allen, be quiet. Don't talk."

And Allen, my father, would, "You keep quiet. I haven't much to say and I want to say it." So first he called my brother. And he told Roy what he wanted done. And then, he called my mother—this in the hospital room. He called my mother and he wanted to say good-bye to her. Then he called me. He held my hand and his words were, "Take care of mother. You and Roy."

We said, "We will, Father. We'll take good care of her." And then he leaned down and he kissed her. So then I said to him, I came out, I was very open. I came out and I said, "Father, where do you want to go?"

And he said, "I'll tell you, your grandmother built that Lanakila Church. She had a battle with Chief Keōua and she won the battle so she constructed that Lanakila Church." And she didn't—that church was going to remain her *kuleana* so. . . .

And he leaned over and he kissed Mother good-bye and of course, the tears were flowing down her. And then now, I said, "Father, where do you want to go?"

And he said, "You don't put me across the street." That's the Lanakila Church, see. See, the Lanakila Church is here and Mahealani is right over here. You just cross the street you were in Mahealani. If you know where the Paris home is, right across.

So, he said, "I don't care where you put me. But I'm not going across the street." He says, "Those people did nothing but fight in life and is still fighting underground and I'm not going to join them."

And with that, he threw his arms around my neck and he was gone. He was a very wonderful man, I mean, he was a wonderful father, he really was. He taught me a lot. He taught me how to—well, your saddle got *pilikia* with it, learn how to repair it. I knew how to cut leather and knew how to repair it, providing it wasn't a serious repair. But put on a new strap with that, I could do that. But he was very proud of me because I was capable and I used to cowboy for the Parises, I cowboied for the Greenwells as well as my own family, and Mr. White.

So after Father died, (seventeen years later, December 19, 1961), my mother died. And, of course, Mother was very lonesome over there. We had Asa Nagawa that worked for her, worked on the place. And we had two Filipinos.

WN: Where was your older sister?

KH: She was away. Elizabeth was not a cowgirl or cowboy. No. She was a very polished person. And my mother did not raise her much. When Elizabeth was born, her sister, Caroline Robinson--I don't know, you probably heard of Mark Robinson.

WN: Yeah.

KH: Okay, okay. So Aunt Carrie married a Robinson. And Aunt Carrie had no children. So when Elizabeth was born and she got to be of two years of age, it was found that she was asthmatic. Aunt Carrie had no children and she came to Kona often to see Elizabeth. And one time she came, the child was really sick. The doctor told my mother, "You'd better move this child away from here. This asthma's not going to do her any good."

So Aunt Carrie said, "Let me take her. Until she's all right."

So Aunt Carrie took Elizabeth at the age of two to Honolulu. Well, she never returned again to her parents. Aunt Carrie said to my mother, "You have children. Let me take Elizabeth. She can come to see you, but let me have her. I have nobody." So Elizabeth went to live with Aunt Carrie.

WN: This is where?

KH: In Honolulu. Aunt Carrie did everything for Elizabeth. She put her through school, she sent her away to college. So Elizabeth didn't know her parents (very well). Once in a while she came home from Honolulu and visited Mother and Father for a week or two. Other than that, she was Aunt Carrie's little girl. She never changed her name from Wall to Robinson. No, she kept her name. And when she went away to school, she went through Casteleo High School, then graduated from Mills College. She graduated as Elizabeth Wall. So Aunt Carrie had a big house in Honolulu. So Mother allowed that because Elizabeth, when she was in Kona for four or five days, would start to wheeze. Back to Honolulu she'd go. And up to the time she died, she never lost her wheeze. She lived with Aunt Carrie from the age of two, until she died at the age of (about fifty). So, that was that. So when I was sent to Punahou at the tender age of seven, I didn't know too much about my parents either. I came home for Christmas and long vacations. And I said to my brother years later, my mother too, "You have no idea how hard it was to be torn from your parents and sent to school."

WN: Did you board?

KH: Yeah, I was at [Punahou]. And my brother, he went to HMA [Hawai'i Military Academy] in Honolulu.

WN: Oh, yeah.

KH: Way out. I mean by Kaimukī. So we two kids were the ones who were gone for school, home

for vacation, gone for school, home for vacation.

WN: What was it like growing up on the ranch?

KH: Oh, I tell you. I knew the ranch. I grew up on the ranch. I had pets, I had my own horse. I did everything. They need an extra cowboy, "Where's that Kapua? She's coming home next week from school. Then we go *ho'ohuli pipi*." Oh, I was well known. I was good with a lasso. And I could pick up the hot iron and brand them. It didn't bother me. I pulled out my pocket knife and cut the ear, I could do that. It was when I got a little older they said, "Well, I go show you how to castrate now."

I said, "That's all right. I'd do that."

And boy, that was a delicacy to have *laho pipi* thrown on the fire for *pūpū* and it was. . . .

WN: How would you eat that?

KH: Oh, we cooked up there. We threw it on the fire there.

WN: You threw it on the fire.

KH: When we brought it home, then we cleaned it a bit. Cut it, cleaned it inside and split it and fried it in butter or something like that. But out in the sticks there we just threw it in the fire. So as I said, I grew up. I knew as much about ranching as some of the people that were hired out to do ranching. I could rope as well as any of them.

WN: How many acres was the ranch?

KH: Well, in those days it wasn't a big, big ranch. There was a couple of thousand acres to it. And then when my parents died, the ranch was divided between Roy and me. And that was all right. I would still have my part of the ranch. My brother's got his part. He's dead, too, but his son's running it. I don't know, he must have maybe a couple of thousand acres or so. But my share, I immediately divided it with my two daughters. That's what I wanted. Give it away now. All clear. I said, "I don't want any squawking."

[Roy said,] "My sister, I don't want her to have it." I heard that. He was squawking all the time.

But I said to Roy, my brother, "Come on now. Let's sit down. This is Mother's land. This is all her land. And half of it's yours and half of it's mine. Let's divide this now."

He wasn't very willing about it at first but that was all right. So he had a son and a daughter to do what he wanted with his land. But the son was the one that was interested in the ranching and not the daughter. So brother and sister live over there on Roy's land now. She has her share, and he has his share. And like my two daughters, it's already divided. And couple of times (Barbara) wanted to increase their land. Well, between the two of them, this property isn't big enough to divide it again. But they have purchased, from all the people that were trying to sell small parcels of land. So they're doing all right. Allen has a nice ranch. Patty, his wife, has planted coffee. Got a nice coffee field. And so they run their own little

ranches together. I mean it criss-crosses, you go this way and you're back in Barbara's land again. They go through the same gate but there's no *ho'opa'apa'a*. They don't make a hell of a lot of money but they have kept the lands. (Pudding also owns land with Alan which is in coffee.)

WN: What did you do to have fun, growing up on that ranch?

KH: Fun? Every day I was on horse when I was home. Every day. If we weren't chasing cattle, we were building fences or repairing fences. Cutting stuff out that had no business there. Ranch work is endless. And then, of course, we'd go hunting. Go hunt sheep. When it came to cattle, they were shipped to Honolulu to the Hawai'i Meat Company. And that was always a big day. Of course between the two ranches, it wasn't big enough for just one person to take over and say, "Well, this is my shipment. I've got a hundred head, two hundred head to send out." So they called up William Paris.

"You got any *pipis* you got to ship?"

"Oh yeah, I have." And so the shipping would be combined with maybe Tommy White, Allen Wall, and Bill Paris. And we'd ship from Keauhou. I think I showed you a picture in there.

WN: This is when they put 'em—tie 'em to the side of the boat.

KH: Yeah. Yeah.

WN: And row 'em out to the big ship.

KH: That's right. There was always work to do.

WN: So did you go down to Keauhou?

KH: Sure. I took a *pipi* out to the boat.

WN: Oh yeah?

KH: I rode 'em, swim 'em out. Oh yeah.

WN: So they had a pen down there, right? On the beach? Is that how they did it?

KH: You remember Keauhou? There's a wharf there?

WN: Yeah.

KH: All right. From that wharf we went in the water there. Across the street and up the hill, Umi, a Hawaiian family, lived there. And at the bottom of the hill there was a wharf. They made another pen there. People used it to change clothes, wanting to go swimming. Keauhou is a wonderful place to swim. The water was warm and it was never too rough. And so when they shipped the cattle it went out by boatload. Well, of course they had the brand on. . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

KH: They all had brands on them. And when they got to Honolulu, Honolulu knew maybe there were forty head coming down from William Paris and maybe sixty-five head from Allen Wall. It was already on paper, so when they got to the slaughterhouse, that was just taken off, taken over, and written down. So they knew. Speaking of Hawai'i Meat—I was not married at this time, I was an adult but I was not married—I went to work for Hawai'i Meat Company and this A.W. [Alfred Wellington] Carter.

WN: And this is after Punahou?

KH: Oh yeah. (Summer) after Punahou [graduation]. Long after Punahou. I worked for them. I wasn't on a horse when I was working for them. I was on a typewriter.

WN: (Laughs) This is Honolulu?

KH: Honolulu. (WN laughs.) There was a G.J. Waller.

WN: G.J. Waller? How do you spell that?

KH: Waller. He spelled his last name, W-A-L-L-E-R. And the initials were G.J. He was a religious man. And when the cattle had been slaughtered and the report came back, how many for Waller and how many for Wall, Paris. It was all on paperwork then and it's all marked down what it was. He had three girls that worked in his office. One was a Japanese girl and the other was, I think she was Japanese-Hawaiian. She looked Japanese-Hawaiian. And another one was from Hilo. They were the stenographers and whatnot. I'd learned in high school how to work a typewriter but I was no stenographer. And so Mr. Waller needed somebody that could file papers and put them in the right drawer and this and that, so that was my job. And then when this shipment was *pau*, I mean everything, papers were *pau* and everything, he always wanted, every now and then, to go out to the slaughterhouse and see that things were running smoothly, the place was clean. Because the navy and the army came down there to select their beef. They got first choice of the fresh meat. And it couldn't be over 135 pounds. This is for the select veal. It couldn't be over 135 pounds, and it couldn't be under a certain amount of pounds. It was all marked off and put in the chill room there. Well, I don't know how it came to be, but one day I said to him, "Can I go with you?"

And he looked at me with these big eyes and he says, "You? You're only a kid. What do you know about going to slaughterhouse?"

I said, "Why don't you try me out?"

So I went out. That was it. He found somebody he could take with him to the slaughterhouse with a notebook and could write this down. Write this down.

WN: Where was the slaughterhouse?

KH: You know where the old police station is, in Honolulu? Downtown on Merchant [Street]?

WN: Yeah.

KH: Well, right across the street.

WN: Bethel and Merchant?

KH: Yeah. Bethel and Merchant. Hawai'i Meat Company was---there's Bethel and Merchant and there's another street that goes down.

WN: Alakea?

KH: Alakea. No, more this way.

WN: Nu'uaniu?

KH: I guess it's Nu'uaniu, yeah. Big building Hawai'i Meat Company, yeah that was it, the Hawai'i Meat Company was there. And right on the corner was the Hawai'i Meat Company's offices there.

WN: That's where you worked?

KH: Yeah. So he was just astounded, you know. I said, "Why?"

"You're only a young girl, you know."

I said, "I'd like to go. I've been there before."

So he took me. And that ended that. When he wanted somebody to go out there and write down, he'd say, "Miss Wall. We have to go to slaughterhouse today."

I said, "Okay."

So I worked there for him until A.W. Carter asked that I be sent to his office in the downtown Dillingham Building. It was upstairs. So I went over there to work for A.W. Carter. A.W. Carter was a very stern man. I knew A.W. Carter because he was a friend of my father's. I mean, he knew all the ranch people. So everything went fine for a while until one day, A.W. Carter got peed off at something and I happened to walk in the office at that time. Carter was known for his blowing up. And of course, when Richard Smart was coming home from vacations, he stayed at Pu'u'ōpelu [Parker] Ranch. I used to be invited over there as one of his playmates for a week or so. And Richard was regimented. Always a guide by his side. Well I don't know what Mr. Carter was *huhū* at but I walked in the office with the mail, and he yelled at me. And I looked at him and I took the mail and threw it down on the desk like that and walked out. Before the day was over, I was fired.

(Laughter)

KH: So about a week later, he called, he wanted to see me. In the meantime, Miss Armitage had been working for him for years. She wasn't afraid of him. Everybody, other people were afraid of Mr. Carter. He was so stern and a deep voice.

So I walked in the room and I said, "Did you want to see me, Mr. Carter?" I mean, nobody's going to do that to me, and fire me and not tell me why. So I wasn't very pleasant. "I came to see what you wanted of me."

He said, "Miss Wall." He always called me Kapua but He said, "Miss Wall. I want you to know, I'm a stern man. But I'm not a severe man." And he said, "No, I don't need you here anymore."

So I was canned. Miss Armitage told me later, "Anybody talks back to Mr. Carter, they've got to know how to talk back to him." She says, "You were the only one of the under servants who flung back at him. He says you can't do that."

So, I said, "Okay." So I was canned. I went home. A week later, I was called down and he says, "I want you to take over the management of (the Robinson) house. See that the servants are doing all right. See that everything is purchased all right. And I want you to keep the record of it, which I will see at the end of every other week."

I said, "All right."

WN: This is his house?

KH: No, not his house, it was the Robinson house.

WN: The Robinson house. This is in Nu'uaniu?

KH: No, on Beretania Street.

WN: Oh.

KH: All related to the Nu'uaniu ones. Caroline Robinson, you've probably heard of her, she was a great politician.

WN: So this is the Mark Robinson house?

KH: No, no. (James) Robinson. So, I went to work there. I was doing all right. I went to the market, I knew how to buy fish, there was enough Hawaiian in my family, they were big fish eaters so they knew how to buy good fish. You know. They buy fish to make *pūlehu* fish, *poke* fish, eat it *Haole* style. So

WN: What is *Haole* style?

KH: White man's style. Not necessarily White. What you would be considered a *Haole*. Say you went to New York City. You been there before?

WN: Yeah.

KH: Yeah, okay, all right. But you would be a stranger there nonetheless. I've been in New York City and I'm still considered a *Haole* because you don't live that way. Nice way to live in some cases but not always. But anyway, *Haole* style is the stranger style, anyway.

WN: But you mean cooked and so forth.

KH: No, I didn't cook. I paid the servants, there were six servants, I planned the menu, I had a Cadillac at my disposal to go shop for the house. Yoshi was the chauffeur. And everything ran very smoothly. And Mr. Carter was very, very happy. Then I checked in with him every week. And one day he said, "Miss Wall, "you are through with running this house, taking care of the servants and whatnot." He says, "Now I want you to take up full management of buying what the house needs, of paying the servants what they're to get." And he says, "I will pay you a hundred a month." So I guess this time, I must have been about nineteen, eighteen, nineteen years of age. So that was it, everything went smoothly until I announced that I was going to be married.

WN: How did you meet your husband?

KH: I met him---how did I meet him? (Pause) Let's see. I was introduced to him by some military personnel. So that was my career, every time I got a job I lost it.

(Laughter)

WN: Well let me just stop and recap a little bit. You graduated from Punahou School in 1932.

KH: Uh huh [yes].

WN: And then right after that, you started working with [Hawai'i] Meat Company. And after that you started working at the Robinson home.

KH: Mr. Carter was very firm but Miss Armitage, she'd been with him for over twenty years. She says, "I'm so used to it." She says, "I let him growl. I just go in the bathroom and have a cigarette. When I think he's cooled off I come out again."

WN: Miss Armitage, do you know her first name?

KH: Lucille.

WN: Lucille Armitage. So you got married in 1933.

KH: [Nineteen] thirty-four, I think.

WN: Okay. So when you married him, that's when you left working for the Robinsons.

KH: Oh, yeah, I left working there. That's when we came over here to Hilo.

WN: And why did you come to Hilo?

KH: Well, one reason. My father said, "I'd like to see you stay home sometimes." He says, "You know, in the service, you don't know where you're going to go."

So I said, "Father, get a job for us in Hilo some place."

And he got a job. We went under Billy Williams, who was a manager of ('Ōla'a) Sugar Company. I knew Billy from way back 'cause he and Pat (his wife) were friendly with my

parents. So we moved to Hilo out at ('Ōla'a).

WN: Your father was still living in Kona.

KH: Oh yeah. He was still living in Kona. So that was it.

WN: And where was your husband from?

KH: He was from (San Francisco). Then I divorced my first husband (in 1954). And my second husband was really a dream. My first husband introduced me to my second husband.

(Laughter)

WN: Now, Henry Heuer was your second husband?

KH: Yeah.

WN: Oh, I see. Okay.

KH: Yeah. He was a dream. Everybody loved Harry. He [was at] Guadalcanal for four years [during World War II, before we were married]. (He was a captain for Matson Navigation Company. He was away at sea a lot.) But I waited for him very faithfully. He was a very wonderful person.

WN: So when did you marry Henry?

KH: Henry? (March 9, 1955.)

WN: Okay.

KH: He was navy. Very popular with. . . .

WN: He was with Matson [Navigation Company, also]?

KH: Yeah. He was with Matson (for forty-three years).

WN: So you came to Hilo with your first husband . . .

KH: Yeah, I came . . .

WN: . . . in '36.

KH: . . . with my first husband.

WN: And where did you live?

KH: In 'Ōla'a.

WN: That's because of Waiākea sugar plantation [i.e., Waiākea Mill Company].

KH: Yeah, mm hmm.

WN: And when did you move to this house?

KH: My father gave me this house in 19[40].

WN: So when the 1946 tsunami hit, you were here.

KH: (No, not at 74 Pukihae Street, but at 84 Pukihae Street.) I lived next door where the condominium is [today]. This house hadn't been lived in at all. My father just waited, he said, "I'd like to see that house occupied." He built it, you see, in 18[87]. He gave me the house before he died.

WN: I see, okay, so tell me about April 1, 1946. You were living right here.

KH: Yeah.

WN: So what happened that day?

KH: I told you when you were here the first call, you know.

WN Mm hmm. Yeah, but I have a tape recorder now. (Laughs)

KH: Oh. My youngest daughter, Pudding was out here, leaning over the rail or something.

I told the kids, "Get ready for school." See, this was 7:00 in the morning.

And Barbara came, "Mommy. Why is there no water in the ocean?"

And I said, "What do you mean no water in the ocean?"

She said, "Come."

So we came through this door and walked out here. I said, "Go call Daddy."

So she did. And he came on out and looked out here and this [Hilo] Bay in here was empty. Now, maybe the water in the bay was maybe a foot, two feet. And going out like that. And there were dogs---this was all housing down here, you see. All these houses in here were all washed up in the yard here. And I looked out here and saw this great big black wall coming in like this. By that time, Roger [KH's then husband] had gotten out here to see what was what. So he and Barbara were standing here. So, we walked down. We go on down and see this mammoth, big, black mountain coming in and the water spilling out.

He says, "Let's get out of here."

So we ran back, got in the house. The noise was terrific, the rolling. . . . You've heard high seas and rough weather. Well, just triple that. And then you heard the screaming. You look and people were stomping, trying to reach earth, trying to get out. Dogs swimming around. Then came the crash. Down here, across the [Wailuku River] bridge where the old lighthouse

is. That lighthouse was there when this house was originally built. I've heard father talk about it. Well, it hit buildings, the lighthouse, and the railroad track and everything. And the roar. And I said, "Oh, that's good-bye to Hilo." You could hear it all.

And sure enough, when the second wave came (KH makes sucking noise) like that going out. But not slow, fast. Because when it hit then dumped inside and it's coming back, the pressure was here. By this time, the second wave was still a ways out. And they collided again out here.

WN: You mean sucking out and the approaching wave collided.

KH: Yeah. That's right. Collided. When that collided and the water came running in again, he said, "Let's get out of here." Where the railroad track crosses into Pukihae there was an old man (Willie Stone). He was washed up there, naked.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

KH: And reached down to pick him up and Roger said, "We gotta get him out of here." By that time, the water was being sucked back, going back and we were in water and hanging on to two kids. We got him back and the police arrived and they took him. And the houses down there, now where that little apartment house is right down the end here, that house was taken. Belonged to a Japanese doctor here in Hilo [Dr. T. Kutsunai] and the remnants of it is still there. There was nobody living at the house at the time. The houses in here were all taken.

WN: This place is okay because you're high up.

KH: Yeah. I'm high up. I was working for the ordnance. (Roger) was at work at C. Brewer. And the kids had to go to school. So there was quite an effort to get out of here and get on the road and get them to school. 'Cause the water was running this way and that way and the bridge was down.

WN: The water actually come up here in your yard?

KH: Oh yes. Oh, yes. Water was up here in the yard in here. There was a great big tunnel back down in there that was a hiding place for anybody who wanted to escape. And that was underwater so they crawled out and beat it. And behind the house over here, there was latrines and toilets had been put up there so that they. . . . This is all military in here. The barbed wire fence ran from here, all the way on up till the next gulch down here. And there was all kinds of things. You see, the military took this [area] over before the tidal wave took it over.

WN: Oh, I see. During the war . . .

KH: During the war . . .

WN: . . . the military took over.

KH: Oh yes. They kept it for three, four years.

WN: What did they do?

KH: It was a place where they could house military personnel. We had over 200 people here.

WN: Staying in this house?

KH: Yes. We had to get out. We had to get out. And so we rented a house next door. After the tidal wave hit, everything was a mess around here.

WN: So by the time the tidal wave came, you were back in this house.

KH: No. We were (at 84 Pukihae, next door). The next pitch was the military wanted this house. And there were trenches all around, ammo [i.e., ammunition] dumps, and you see where the three coconut trees are there?

WN: Yeah.

KH: And the ground chops off?

WN: Mm hmm.

KH: Well, there was (ten) feet of land from there out. We lost (ten) feet from here down. From here.

WN: Because of the waves.

KH: Yeah, it just chopped off the land, so . . .

WN: Wow. So how many waves did you actually see?

KH: I think we took to our heels and ran on the third wave because the waves got bigger and they got higher. And when we came back down here to see them—(Osorio's) house . . .

WN: This is your neighbor, right here.

KH: It was gone. Yeah, right there.

WN: As we sit here, you know, we're right on the bay, Hilo Bay. And we can actually see downtown, right in the distance here. Could you actually see houses and buildings and people washed out?

KH: Oh, you could. Yeah, you could. But it was hard to retrieve those bodies because one wave after another. It's hard to retrieve them.

You know, I have to pick up a package. Ride with me for a little ways and I'll talk to you.

WN: Oh, okay.

KH: Come.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay. So, you and your family left here. And where did you go?

KH: No, I remained here.

WN: No, I mean, you left this house.

KH: Well, we lived next door. That house is still on high ground, see. It's up on the slope so we lived there and continued to live there. Then that place was sold. We had a prostitute work on that deal. (Laughs) She said, "Yes, yes, yes." The crooked politicians we had tore down the house. That's it. And we watched that house being—the house they tore down was just an old frame house. It was nice. We watched the procedure of building that condo that they put up.

WN: Okay, so you were actually living next door when the tsunami hit?

KH: (Yes.) And we'd had the plans all drawn up to remodel it. I think I showed you a picture of this house before it was remodeled. We kept the house as was.

I said, "No. It's my father's house." I said, "Keep it as is." But, there had to be some remodeling done. The only thing I regret was, I was hoping that we could keep the roof tile, like in the house you saw inside. Old-fashioned. But there was no way we could get building materials. So I said, "Well, just put a roof on it then."

WN: Okay. So then you said that you worked for the ordnance?

KH: Yeah.

WN: Okay. So did you go down there, that day?

KH: I went right on down there. And I said to the boss man down there, after a while, "Why don't we go down to see what's happened? Down by the dock."

WN: This was Keaukaha?

KH: Keaukaha. Well, you go to the airport now and just before you get to the exit back to the main street you can see the military is doing work there. So anyway, after a while, he said, "Yes."

He said, "Call one of the boys and we go on a truck." And we went.

WN: And where was your husband and your kids? Your kids went to school?

KH: He had taken them to (a sitter's house) and he had to go to work. And I had to go to work. Just because the seas were running wild didn't mean—if I was capable—that I didn't go to work. And so, we went down and when we got just past the dock where the ships come in, I saw this kid come up the road on a horse. And I knew there was a road that went back down like that toward the sea. And that there was a little colony of homes down there. I said, "Ey,

lend me your horse, yeah? I got friend down here. I go see if they all right.”

He looked at me. I said, “Get off the damn horse, you not going anywheres.” So he did.

And I got on. I turned and I rode into this little valley-like. And hadn't gone a hundred yards, I don't think. I saw Sam walking out and I said, “Sam, where's Meredith?”

And he shook his head. I knew then that Meredith was gone.

WN: Meredith was . . .

KH: His little daughter.

WN: . . . his daughter.

KH: Yeah, three-year old. Later when I got to really find out what happened, I asked Sam, “What happened, Sam?”

He says, “I don't know.” He says, “I was in the living room, I was getting ready for work and was going to take Meredith to school. And water all of a sudden came and just washed into the house. ‘That's funny,’ I said, so I got up and I closed the door.” He said, “There was water coming in all around and the house just seemed to be sort of floating like.” He says, “When the next wave hit, I knew I had lost Meredith.”

So he walked out with me back to the highway. He was crying and later he talked to his wife. She had been taken to the hospital the evening before to born their son. She told me, “When I heard the tidal wave had hit Hilo. I knew I had lost my baby.” But the son was born, they got her out to help and assistance medically when she was able to have the baby. What's sad was, as Hawaiians would say it, *pa'akiki*, stubborn, you know. But you would have thought that when the water rushed into the house, he would have rushed out. But he continued to stay in the house. So he lost the maid and he lost his child.

WN: The child, Meredith, was with the maid at that

KH: Yeah. Meredith was with the maid. She was about 2½ to 3 years old.

WN: So this is Sam Cody?

KH: Cody. C-O-D-Y. And then we continued on down go look-see. The next big corner we came to was the crossing you make by the bridge. Continued on down and on the right side, where that pond is, there was a Japanese (home). It was Japanese-owned. (Later it was turned into a fish restaurant.)

WN: Was this Seaside? Or

KH: Seaside, yeah, Seaside [Restaurant]. And their restaurant survived. I suppose it was all right because there's so much water inside as well as outside there was not enough to crush it. But on that corner there, there'd been a house recently built (across the street) by Wendell Carlsmith, an attorney that was here. And it was demolished. There's no signs that there was a

house there. We walked in to look-see what we could see, there were some wine bottles that were just laying on the sand. It hadn't been washed out. And I saw a chair that I recognized. It came from the Carlsmith home. That was that. Otherwise, it was no signs of any life there. The houses had been taken.

WN: Were you still on the horse?

KH: No, I wasn't on the horse. This was later in the day. And things began to hop around, I asked, "Why don't you send a truck down here that they could put 'em on these land rafts." You know, the military has some. And they did. When they got down there and they threw rope down the cross bank [where the road was flooded] and put in like a little military raft or something you could hang on to, and pulled a couple of people back. But we were too late because those people mostly came from the hospital down there. The Pu'umaile Hospital. They were tubercular and they had been in bed for a long time, they couldn't move fast, and when the wave hit that hospital down in Keaukaha—where are they at now in Keaukaha?

WN: At the end of the road.

KH: At the end of the road, yeah. They tried to save what they could, tried to get the people out that they could. But they weren't that successful. They saved those that they could reach and others preferred to crawl and find refuge. But as one said to me, "You know, we never walk long time." They were not capable of walking or running. They were *lōlō* down below from being bed-ridden for so long. This one woman we saw, she was still hanging on to a sweater and a stick where the Seaside is now. I wondered how she got to where she was. And I asked her, and she said to me in Hawaiian, "This is what saved me." She had a log she was hanging on to. And she got across to safety on the other side.

WN: What do you mean, when you say the "other side" what did you. . . .

KH: The other side of the (road), yeah. Here's the (road), here like this. Water under here. And she didn't have the strength to walk, she had to crawl. And she was hanging on to this stick. But she made it. And Dr. Leslie Weight, his house was gone. Les said he didn't know anything about it. Coming home from Honolulu on the plane, they announced it over the radio.

And he says, "I died on that flight. When I [left for] Honolulu this morning there were all houses. I came home this afternoon, there were no houses." The sea came right into shore and took [the houses] right out. And then for days there were people wandering around not knowing where they were. All those had lost everything.

WN: You told me last time that you had to swim across the lagoon.

KH: That's right. That's right.

(Airplane flies overhead. Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: Okay.

KH: When we got to the crossing, as I said there's the (ocean) that comes in and goes into the pond.

WN: You mean the one by Seaside [Restaurant]?

KH: Yeah, by Seaside. And while going through this land with the fellow I was with we spied an arm sticking out of a tree. Phil was the G.I.'s name, "Let's go look-see." And while in that forest, we saw couple of chairs in the trees, stuck. Then when we came to the arm, nothing you could do. It was dead and it was wedged in the branch. Couldn't pull it apart. So, and the two of us, we jumped in that lake or pond or whatever you want to call it, to swim over to the (house). The waves would come in and hit and when they broke and they receded back out again. They didn't come that fast because waves in front of them pushed them back. We got out all right. We got in our trucks and we went back. When we reported to the boss what was going on down there, he quickly got in the car of his own, took off, look-see. But it was scary, it really was.

WN: So pretty much, the roads and bridges and so forth were washed out there?

KH: Oh, they were gone. They were gone. When you get down toward the end [i.e., heading south from Hilo], the houses were down lower [i.e., closer to sea level]. There was not that much height off the ground. They were gone.

And there were bodies. All you could see was a leg or something and you go look and they were dead. They were trying to pick up the live [ones] and save them. And they brought 'em up to Dodo Mortuary on (Ponahawai) Street. Dodo had a mortuary there. If they were alive, they'd try to do something, medically with them. If they were dead, then they marked 'em. And then they called people to come in. [If] they were missing anybody they knew, come by and try to identify them. There were several that were identified. They wore the tag on the big toe, foot sticking out.

And those that were dead, they didn't know what to do with them, was all filled up. So the military took them and took them down the icehouse. As days went by and nobody was able to identify them all, then they just hope and opened to the public, if there's anybody you know, you might be able to identify them. Well, some bodies were identified but a lot more were not. And then the day came when the army said, "We've got to do something about these bodies here." Because it was stuck together, you know. They put one on top the other so they were iced together and still in the icehouse. They weren't going to thaw out. I didn't see that but I was told by one of the fellows that I knew, "What a mess." He said they had to come in and chisel them to separate these, because they didn't put anything between the bodies. They couldn't. They were sent to rescue lives, not to smat 'em together.

WN: So how soon after that did life pretty much return to normal?

KH: Oh, it returned to normal pretty fast. People were very uncomfortable when they saw the wreckage and the damage that had happened and still hadn't been cleaned away, took away. But . . .

WN: So you were able to come back here and there was no . . .

KH: No, we came back here.

WN: . . . damage to your home?

KH: No, not too bad damage, no.

WN: Do you remember the 1960 tsunamis?

KH: Yeah. (Harry was on his) way to California. He said he was at sea, and he just felt a little different motion but looked around and nothing happened until later, they got the report over the radio what had happened. Harry was a ham operator as well so I heard from him, every day. Hilo was full of ham radio operators and he had his office here and he was always on. . . . So never a day went by that they didn't hear from him. Whether he was at sea or where he was.

WN: To what extent did the tsunami change Hilo?

KH: I really don't know to what extent Hilo had changed without the tsunami. You know, the noise was terrific.

WN: You mean the noise of the wave?

KH: The noise with the wave and the noise of yelling and screaming that you could hear.

WN: Well, before I turn off the tape recorder, you know, you've lived here for quite a number of years now and you've led a long and productive life.

KH: (Laughs) Yeah.

WN: How would you evaluate or assess your life?

KH: I'd say that God has been very good to me, healthwise. I've had some pretty bum accidents but I've survived them. And I just hate to see people abuse people, animals, and abuse their families. But we have a lot of that. We have a lot of that.

WN: Well, thank you very much. I'm going to turn the tape off now.

KH: You're very welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

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Volume I

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

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