

**Paul Matayoshi**



Tape No. 36-16a-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Paul Matayoshi (PM)

Pūko‘o, Moloka‘i

June 2, 1998

BY: Jeanne Johnston (JJ)

JJ: Okay, this is Jeanne Johnston, and I am interviewing Paul Matayoshi, and we are doing the interview in his home, on the east end of Moloka‘i, and the date is June 2, 1998.

Okay, so what we’ll start with here is. . . . Paul, can you tell me when you were born, and where you were born?

PM: I born Okinawa, and you know, Yonagusuku-*son*, then the *aza*, Ike. Ike, the small island. Now they all connected, bridge all connect now.

JJ: That’s all part of Okinawa?

PM: Yeah.

JJ: And when were you born?

PM: The island. Ike Island.

JJ: Yeah. In 1903?

PM: Nineteen three.

JJ: Okay. How old were you when you came to Hawai‘i?

PM: Sixteen year old.

JJ: Did you come with your parents?

PM: No, my father stay over there. And then my brother, and then they call me and then I come and then my father then go back Okinawa.

JJ: And you stayed?

PM: Yeah.

JJ: Were you working here?

- PM: Oh, yes, I doing any, before, fisherman, and then one year, the tuna boat. And then I after, maybe I think I twenty, yeah, about nineteen, nineteen [years] old, and I turned for the *koa* shop work. *Koa* furniture.
- JJ: Where were you living then?
- PM: The Beretania [Street] side. The *koa* shop.
- JJ: Honolulu?
- PM: Yeah, Honolulu.
- JJ: Okay. Did you get married while you were in Honolulu?
- PM: Yeah.
- JJ: And what was your wife's name?
- PM: Tai Shisano.
- JJ: And you had children?
- PM: Yeah, I had one, one boy. Tommy.
- JJ: Tommy? Okay. And then you moved over to—when did you move over to Moloka'i?
- PM: Nineteen forty-nine.
- JJ: Forty-nine.
- PM: And then Kailua, I stay, sixteen year, Kailua stay. And then move over there, and then this area, the Dr. Straub own. So give me the shareholder, I come back.
- JJ: Okay. And what kind of work did you do on Moloka'i when you were . . .
- PM: I doing the farming.
- JJ: Farming?
- PM: Yeah.
- JJ: Right here?
- PM: Yeah. I do carpenter side. Sometimes, carpenter doing, and then my job was a carpenter. Cabinetmaker. And after the war, start war, then changing, I farming.
- JJ: Oh, I see, the wartime you started farming.
- PM: Yeah. I stayed Kailua wartime.
- JJ: So where were you in 1946?

PM: Forty-six. . . . Forty-six. . . .

JJ: For the. . . . And the tidal wave . . .

PM: I stay O‘ahu. I move over there ‘49.

JJ: Over here, ‘49. So 1946, where were you?

PM: Forty-six, I stay Kailua.

JJ: Do you remember what happened that day in 1946?

PM: Forty-six . . .

JJ: April first?

PM: Yes. April first one. The one I saw that tidal wave when my niece call. “Uncle, come and try.” She stay down beach side. And then she call, “Uncle, try come, the tidal wave coming.”

“Nah,” I told them, “April fool.”

“No, not April fool, come down, try beach side,” near the beach side, see.

I go try to go, start walk, and then go beach. Here come the tidal wave. The ocean all dry ‘em up. You can see all the rock, everything. And then the tidal wave come. And then the water, Lanikai side, all the boat went through the bedroom, through, the boat. (Chuckles) And then that Kahuku side, all fish, all plenty fish coming out. The breaks all break and lobster everything then they put inside.

JJ: I see, you got plenty fish.

PM: Yeah. The Kahuku side and Waimānalo, too. And then after, and then I saw three times they coming, the wave.

JJ: Three waves?

PM: Yeah. Wave. They go all go down and they dry all, everything dry. And then water [i.e., waves] come one by one.

JJ: Did it make any noise?

PM: No, not making noise. Yeah, you know the seabird, they outside the water making noise.

JJ: Oh, the birds made the noise.

PM: Yeah. And then after all *pau* then I go look down Lanikai. The bedroom, the boat throw inside there, all. (Laughs)

JJ: Oh wow. So, what happened after the three waves?

PM: After that, they go all looking for the fish. Looking for fish, all . . .

- JJ: The land.
- PM: The lobster all up, and then the. . . . After that, Big Island have big damage. My old friend stay there, all. And then my. . . . Yeah. Friends that I go visit over there, them. All the—terrible, all the big water.
- JJ: Terrible odor? Mm hmm [yes].
- PM: So many people all died, yeah?
- JJ: Mm hmm. Did you go over there?
- PM: Laupāhoehoe, the school, all, yeah.
- JJ: Did you go over to the Big Island after?
- PM: Yeah, I have the picture of. . . . Plenty I have a picture. But I don't know where now. I move the house. Maybe it's someplace around there.
- JJ: You took a picture in Hilo?
- PM: Yeah.
- JJ: Yeah. What did you see when you were there?
- PM: The Hilo side I stay. I visit Hilo, and then to family I go look. They all right, all, but house all mess up.
- JJ: Which part? Shinmachi?
- PM: Yeah, Shinmachi. Shinmachi all . . .
- JJ: But the family was okay?
- PM: One, down there, shop stay, but she's all right. She say go on top of the roof. The concrete house that's why, cement house.
- JJ: Oh, they had a cement house?
- PM: Yeah.
- JJ: So the house was okay?
- PM: They go on top of the roof, they all right. And after I look for the, you know, the. . . . Waiākea, the other side, I go look for the coconut trees. Coconut on top all the rubbish, all on top.
- JJ: On top of the tree? Wow. So the wave went over . . .
- PM: Yeah, I think big wave knock 'em down and then the coconut come back, and then all rubbish over there on top.

- JJ: Wow.
- PM: And then one Hawaiian man, he go climb on top the pine tree. He's all right.
- JJ: He climbed all the way up? Or did he go up . . .
- PM: He say he go climb up the pine tree.
- JJ: Oh. And he was okay.
- PM: And then some family, they go house all down the beach side. Float, three fella. Three family, they all right.
- JJ: So did you stay and help clean up there in Hilo?
- PM: Oh, yeah. After all thing, somebody way up in the banana field that they no can find.
- JJ: So it was bad, then.
- PM: Waiākea River and then way up, way up and then the water push out. (Pause) The Big Island, sixty-something people, they died that time.
- JJ: Was your family okay, though?
- PM: Yeah. My family all right.
- JJ: Then in 1960, where were you during that wave?
- PM: Nineteen-sixty, stay over there. Number two one.
- JJ: Over here on Moloka'i?
- PM: Yeah.
- JJ: Did you see anything . . .
- PM: Yeah. The one has a warning for the—tidal wave warning, after waiting, waiting, never come. Ah, more better sleep. Went sleep. Then stay down side, the house. I get another three more house, at the time. Stay down. And then I sleep. And then one o'clock, the goat, I get thirteen goat stay down side, the kitchen side. They cry, cry. The mother say, "Ey, Daddy, get up. Something wrong. The goat all cry." I go look. Oh, the tidal wave come up halfway, wave come. Oh, I go pajama and they no can . . .
- JJ: You had pajama?
- PM: . . . pajama and go down. And then go down, go throw all outside the kitchen. And then the water, this side, all halfway again come, the wave. That time all the other side, Hālawā side, the water damage. Taro patch, water go in. Plenty the Hawaiian people, they stay over there. But at the time, after tidal wave all move out already, Kaunakakai side.
- JJ: Yeah, moved.

- PM: Few people they stay over there. Mostly taro patch over there, plenty.
- JJ: Did you move out of your beach house then?
- PM: Beach? No, only the halfway come.
- JJ: Were the animals okay?
- PM: I'm all right. And the next, other side the house, they gone, all. Other side, about quarter mile away. The house all gone.
- JJ: All gone?
- PM: Yeah.
- JJ: Wow.
- PM: The other side one. This side, not so bad. The Hālawā side, Hālawā and then Honolua side. That's all house gone. This side protect for the—two island protect, that's why, not so bad. Only slowly coming, going up, up, up, to. And going time, everything wipe out.
- JJ: Did it just come one wave that time?
- PM: One wave.
- JJ: Just one wave?
- PM: Yeah.
- JJ: So were there any other tidal waves that you remember?
- PM: The second one, and then not so bad. Another one like that some more. But that one was not so. . . . I never heard Hawai'i has tidal wave. For the first time. Maybe long time ago that's why, yeah.
- JJ: But you didn't know they could . . .
- PM: No.
- JJ: Surprise, though. The 1946 was a surprise.
- So what did you think after that about living by the water? Did you feel safe to live down by the water then? After that tidal wave?
- PM: After tidal wave was (pause). Yeah, after tidal wave, my son, the small tin-can boat. He no more that. Way down the wave, he find down the other side. They find, they bring 'em.
- JJ: Oh, was way down the other side?
- PM: Yeah.



JJ: Did you move up here after that? Move up from the water then?

PM: No, after the tidal wave, all, I, rubbish all, clean 'em up.

JJ: Just clean 'em up and you move back and stay there?

PM: But the house, nothing, my house. Two, three house, I own. Nothing damage.

JJ: That's good.

PM: Yeah.

JJ: Okay, is there anything else you'd like to add, to say, before we say good-bye?

PM: Ah, that's all I can remember.

JJ: Okay. Thank you very much for letting me interview you.

PM: Yeah. Now, ninety-five old already.

JJ: Yes, yeah. Ninety-five years old. That's wonderful.

PM: I remember the stay the. . . . But only that---after that hard time walk already.

JJ: I see. Well, thank you very much for letting me interview you.

END OF INTERVIEW



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