

Leimomi Pedro

Tape No. 36-21a1-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Leimomi Pedro (LP)

Kalua'aha, Moloka'i

June 5, 1998

BY: Jeanne Johnston (JJ)

JJ: My name is Jeanne Johnston and I am interviewing Leimomi Pedro. We're in Kalua'aha, Moloka'i, and the date is June 5, 1998.

Leimomi, would you tell me when you were born and where you were born?

LP: Born on October 6, 1933, O'ahu.

JJ: On what part of O'ahu did you live in?

LP: All over.

JJ: All over. (LP laughs.) Where did your parents live when you were born?

LP: I'm not sure.

JJ: What's your mom's name?

LP: Hattie.

JJ: Hattie. And your dad?

LP: David.

JJ: David. Okay, and last name?

LP: Luther.

JJ: Luther, okay. So do you know what your dad was doing at that time?

LP: When I was born?

JJ: Yeah. What kind of work he was doing?

LP: I don't know. Not when I was born, I don't know. But he was doing carpentry work, from what I remembered. So carpenter.

- JJ: Where did your dad's family come from?
- LP: O'ahu.
- JJ: Originally, where did they come from? Were they Hawaiian?
- LP: They were Hawaiian. He was pure Hawaiian.
- JJ: Pure Hawaiian, okay. And your mom's family?
- LP: My mother is Japanese. She's born on Kaua'i. And I guess those days, everybody was poor so she got *hānaia*ed out to a Hawaiian family. But she's pure Japanese.
- JJ: And she was raised with Hawaiian.
- LP: Those days.
- JJ: Did she speak Hawaiian?
- LP: She spoke, read Hawaiian.
- JJ: Both of your parents did?
- LP: Yes.
- JJ: Do you?
- LP: No. (Chuckles)
- JJ: That's okay. So did you go to school on O'ahu?
- LP: Uh huh [yes]. Went to school on O'ahu, and in 1948, came to Moloka'i and finished school here, at Moloka'i High School.
- JJ: How did you happen to come to Moloka'i?
- LP: Because my family, my parents, moved here. My father is from Moloka'i.
- JJ: So they moved back here?
- LP: They moved back so we moved back.
- JJ: How many brothers and sisters did you have?
- LP: Five brothers, no sisters. I'm the last.
- JJ: You're the only girl with . . .
- LP: Only girl.
- JJ: Oh my goodness. Okay, and then what did you do here on Moloka'i when you moved back?

LP: Finished school. Then after school, didn't go to college but just worked at couple of jobs.

JJ: What year was that? When you get out of school?

LP: [Nineteen] fifty-one.

JJ: [Nineteen] fifty-one?

LP: Uh huh.

JJ: Okay, so you worked here in Kaunakakai area?

LP: Kaunakakai, that's right.

JJ: Is that where you lived at the time, in that area?

LP: Right.

JJ: And then when did you get married?

LP: Nineteen fifty-six.

JJ: Nineteen fifty-six.

LP: Same guy all these years.

(Laughter)

JJ: And you have---how many children do you have?

LP: We have two children, boy and girl.

JJ: And grandchildren?

LP: Grandchildren, six.

JJ: So your family had lived out here, also then. Before you got married, your family lived here.

LP: Well, we lived in Kaunakakai most of the time. And then we moved up to Pūko'o, stayed there couple of years until we got married. We stayed at that Pūko'o house. And then couple of years after, we moved here to Kālua'aha.

JJ: Where were you in 1946?

LP: O'ahu.

JJ: On O'ahu?

LP: Mm hmm [yes].

JJ: And do you remember anything about the tidal wave? Or hearing anything about it?

LP: Can't remember.

(Laughter)

LP: Too young.

JJ: But then you were here during the 1960 tidal wave?

LP: Right.

JJ: Can you describe to me where you were?

LP: Yeah, we were living at the top house, the first house from the highway coming in. That was the only house in this area at that time. And I recall that night we got the warning. I'm not sure if there were sirens but I remember the police running around the road, informing everybody about the tidal wave and that we were supposed to get out of the area. But we didn't do that. We thought we were—Sam [LP's husband] and I—thought we were just high enough from the ocean that it was okay so we just slept through it all.

And I can't remember if it was a work day or it was a weekend. All I remember is next morning when I—I don't know why, I guess I wanted to see what might have happened during the night that this tidal wave happened, if there was any. So I walked down to the beach. And those days, it was all trees. Everything overgrown. And what I saw on the beach, was this beach grass. You know, tall. I think it was about a foot, the beach grass, and it was like somebody had just combed the grass. And that really gave me chicken skin and then I don't know why, I looked for my father's boat and his boat was pushed up by the water. So everything frightened me at that time. And I said, wow, here we slept through it all, and we could've been affected by it. But that grass, like somebody had just combed it, that really scared me. That's about all I remember about the whole thing. I mean, outside of hearing that lot of people died in Hawai'i. That was the time. That's about it.

JJ: Well did you---was there any damage to the boat?

LP: No.

JJ: No? The boat was all right.

LP: The boat, from what I recall, it was just the boat that was pushed up.

JJ: How far away was that from where the water came to your house, where you were sleeping that night?

LP: Oh, 300 feet to our house. Well, from the ocean, 300 feet up, yeah. And then another couple of hundred feet to our house on the road.

SP: [SP, Sam Pedro, is LP's husband] Oh, no. From the ocean till the boat was.

LP: That's about three hundred feet? Well, maybe hundred fifty feet.

SP: Hundred fifty feet.

- LP: Say hundred fifty feet from the ocean to where I found the boat.
- JJ: So you weren't very far from the water at all.
- LP: No.
- JJ: So if there's another tidal wave siren, would you sleep through it?
- LP: (Laughs) I don't know.
- JJ: Another warning, would you sleep through it?
- LP: Well, we should, I know. . . . I guess it depends on which way it's coming because we've had some other warnings, daytime, and I know we carried all these things away from the ocean, went up a hill, but nothing happened. I guess it depends on which way it's coming. Like you know, we have Maui on this side, and Kaho'olawe, Lāna'i on this side so it depends. We should move though. (Laughs) Get out.
- JJ: And how far does the reef go out here? It goes . . .
- SP: For a mile. Till the break, you see the white water?
- LP: White. The white wave.
- JJ: So the reef goes out about a mile here so the reef protects you a little bit.
- SP: You think it's a mile up to the white?
- LP: Not quite, yeah.
- SP: Not quite.
- LP: Not quite a mile out.
- JJ: Was there anybody else in this area that was affected that you know of?
- LP: Not that I know. I can't remember. I can't remember.
- JJ: Now, do they have a warning system out here? Now is there a siren?
- LP: Now there is. They test it once a month, the first day, 11:45 [AM], once a month.
- JJ: So you can hear it.
- LP: All plain. Very plainly.
- JJ: Do you have---what would you tell the kids about tidal waves after your experience?
- LP: Well, don't come looking for it. Get away from the beach. And should take heed. (Laughs) Like this section of the island, like I said, we kind of protected by the other islands on the side. Now if we were some other areas, then I'd say take heed and obey the warnings.

JJ: Okay, well, thank you very much, I really appreciate your allowing me to interview you.

LP: Okay. Sure.

END OF INTERVIEW

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