

**Sam Pedro**



Tape No. 36-21a2-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Sam Pedro (SP)

Kalua'aha, Moloka'i

June 5, 1998

BY: Jeanne Johnston (JJ)

JJ: My name is Jeanne Johnston and I am interviewing Sam Pedro. We're in Kalua'aha . . .

SP: Kalua'aha.

JJ: On the island of Moloka'i and the date is June 5, 1998.

Okay, Sam, let's start with when you were born and where you were born.

SP: Well, I was born Moloka'i, 1929, August 12.

JJ: What part of Moloka'i?

SP: Well I was born at Ho'olehua. We had a homestead at the time. So we had pineapple field. After a while, my parents bought this place.

JJ: And what was your dad's name?

SP: Pedro. Peter Pedro.

JJ: Peter Pedro. And your mom's name?

SP: Cecilia. Oh, maiden name, too?

JJ: Yeah.

SP: Cecilia Kaleikoa.

JJ: And she was from . . .

SP: She was here—I mean, she's from this side of the island. From Maui, they came to east end and she stayed here. I guess she—I don't know if she met my father, but she ended up with my father. And they applied for homestead so they got their homestead.

JJ: So was she pure Hawaiian?

- SP: She was pure Hawaiian.
- JJ: Okay, and your dad, where was he from?
- SP: He's half Hawaiian and half Portuguese. And he's from Honolulu.
- JJ: His family was from Honolulu?
- SP: Yeah.
- JJ: How many brothers and sisters did you have?
- SP: Well, I got three brothers—with me, three. And two sisters. So one sister died, the oldest died.
- JJ: Did you all grow up on Moloka'i?
- SP: Yeah, we all grew up over here. Then when we get older—they way older than me—then they moved. My sister married somebody in Maui. So she stayed Maui. Then my (older) brother went in the service, and when he came out of the service in the [19]40s—I think '45—he didn't come back to Moloka'i, he stayed at Honolulu. Made his home over there.
- JJ: So when you were very young, where did you live at that time?
- SP: At that time, we were young, I was living Ho'olehua.
- JJ: And . . .
- SP: And then my parents got a divorce, then we were going all over. So I ended up up here.
- JJ: Who did---and how old were you when you moved out to the east end?
- SP: I think I was about nine years old.
- JJ: Did you live here on this property?
- SP: Yeah, we lived right here.
- JJ: So have you lived here ever since?
- SP: Yes, until I got married.
- JJ: And what's your wife's name?
- SP: Ceci---oh, no. Leimomi.
- JJ: Okay. And so where did you live when you got married?
- SP: Well, when we first got married, we lived maybe about two miles up the road. And then . . .
- JJ: Was this Hālawā?

SP: No, no. Not Hālawā. Just about a mile, at Pūko‘o. And then my mother moved back to the homestead and then we moved back here. Since then, I’ve stayed here.

JJ: And do you have any children?

SP: Oh, two.

JJ: Two children.

SP: A girl and a boy.

JJ: And grandchildren?

SP: Well, we get six.

JJ: Wow. So tell me what—describe to me what this was like when you were growing up here, this property? What it was like and what your mom did to support you.

SP: Well my mom was—she had a homestead, and I think at the time the plantation used to lease. They got forty acres, see—I think plantation used to lease thirty-five acres. So I think she was getting about ninety bucks a month at the time. And that’s always taken care of—well, the family, I guess.

JJ: Did you go to school?

SP: Yeah, we went to school. Up Kilohana.

JJ: And what about high school?

SP: No, never make high school. I think I quit school was about, probably sixteen, I think.

JJ: Did you go to work then?

SP: Yeah, that’s how I ended up at Munro’s place. Billy [William] Dunbar---anyway, now it’s Billy Dunbar. Before it used to be Munro’s. After ’46, yeah.

JJ: What kind of work were you doing at that time?

SP: Well, we used to fix fence, kill cows—you know, for the market. Go up the mountain, clean, fix things. That’s what we used to do.

JJ: Whose property was that at that time?

SP: That was Bella Munro. That was Billy Dunbar’s aunty.

JJ: I see. So you worked for his aunty first.

SP: Yeah, for the aunty. I didn’t work for Billy. I worked for the aunty and then I think Billy came back after the tidal wave, I think. I’m pretty sure. That’s when I seen him.

JJ: So tell me what it was like the day of the tidal wave? If you would describe the area first.

SP: Well, that morning we were up Dunbar's stable. I'm pretty sure we were supposed to kill cow, I think. So anyway, we were sitting—not at the stable, at his barn, he call it barn. You know, you seen that old building?

JJ: The barn?

SP: Up---yeah, right in the nice pasture. Well, right in the back of that, had one small little slaughterhouse and a corral next to it. I'm pretty sure we're supposed to go kill cow. It was still dark, well, just about dark. So we all—me and this Makaena, my granduncle were sitting in the barn and then this Alfred fellow was—Alfred Jones. Just happened he came out and look at the house, the pasture below the road across. You know, from here you look straight across.

He say, "Hey, the pipe water broke." Because we never see the first wave. Was all water in our nice pasture, yeah. Plenty water in there so he feel the pipeline must have broke. He said all water so we all came out, look. That's when we seen the big wave come in.

And then where Bella's house was, had one iron tree, maybe thirty feet. Tall tree, it was real tall. So when the wave came, you couldn't see the tree. And the funniest thing, the wave never come across the road. The wave came in, and then I think it went back or some—no, it came in and then went down, follow the fence line area, hit the river and went out again. That's when this old man say, "Hey, tidal wave."

So we all ran out and where Bella's house standing now, had a tank water up there. So we jump on the horse and rode up the hill. That's when we seen the third wave, came from east side, coming inside here. And when that thing came down and then followed the same path, straight to—past Isaac's stream, Isaac's house, and hit the river, and went out again. I think was only about three waves, I think.

And then when everything quiet down, we see one house on the road. You know that Ashford's house was in the middle of the road. They just build the house and was in the middle of the road. And then had one old house right next to it. Right now they get one—anyway, that old house collapsed. And get one house next to it, the thing—well, when we seen it, it was in Dunbar's place. Funniest thing, we only here watching and when the house settled, the door all swing open, a big pig walk out. (No one was in the house.)

JJ: Oh!

SP: (Chuckles) How the pig got in, we don't know. That was George Davies, I think. Anyway, the old man, Bamboo we used to call him, that's his house, was in Billy's place. And that's all the damage we seen. Then from there, we rode back home and down here, nothing happened. Even the fish ponds, all the fish ponds at—from Alfred Jones' house all the way down, nothing happened. The fish ponds was still standing.

And anyway, at the time up there, everything quiet down, we run in the pasture because had few cows in there. We open the gate and chase them across. And they had the—plenty pool water. You know, round—they slipped through. Whoop, lot of fish kicking in there. (JJ laughs.) So we picked fish there and came home on the horse.

JJ: So you brought the fish home on the horse.

- SP: On the horse, yeah. Well, we---no more car, hardly any car Moloka'i and the road over here was all dirt road those days.
- JJ: Yeah. (Chuckles) So you had plenty of fish to eat?
- SP: Ah, we just took enough. And then at the time, the wave—who was? I think Peter Dudoit lived right below the stream—not below the stream. Anyway, below that. At the time, they was chasing one deer. You know, the deer came on the road, somehow they ran out and then we told them that was tidal wave. And then the other one lady—not lady, girl was. . . . I remember, yeah. Her name was Mary Lane, Mary Lane Smith. She ran up towards us, get on the hill, but everything quiet down already. That's about all I know about the tidal wave.
- JJ: What about the cleanup? Do you for that . . .
- SP: Well, the cleanup time, I never do nothing with the cleanup. I went someplace else.
- JJ: (Chuckles) Do you know who got that house out of the road?
- SP: Oh, no, no. But I know who built the other house, the old house collapsed. That was—that time, Red Cross *wen* build. I think at the time, Red Cross build two houses up on east end. One in the middle and one further up, I think maybe about five miles up, I think. Kaulani—Kaulani's house, that was the Red Cross. His still standing.
- JJ: What about Hālawa? Was Hālawa . . . ?
- SP: Well I never reach Hālawa. When we go Hālawa it's a treat, so hard to get to Hālawa because hardly any cars, yeah?
- JJ: Yeah.
- SP: And most time we just travel on with horses. Only few people had cars. Hālawa, I never see the damage, but way after we went Hālawa. From the lookout, you looking down, see just all white. Maybe, say, about two, three weeks later. You know, all full of sand in the valley.
- JJ: Was that in the taro patches?
- SP: Yeah, all in the taro patches. The whole valley was taro patch. Before that, the whole valley was all taro, from the top you look, you can see all the—real nice. Hardly any trees. Then when the tidal wave came, couple weeks later we went over there, it's all covered with sand.
- JJ: Did the sand eventually go back out? Get washed back out again?
- SP: No, no. Still there yet, I think. But now sand, dirt, all mix, all these years. The trees grow back, everything—I don't know if the trees grow back. The trees, yeah, grow in. But when you look from the lookout, it's just like a jungle up there. But in '46—before '46—was really nice, clean. Nothing but taro growing.
- JJ: So was there much change down here in this area because of the tidal wave? Do you think there was a . . .
- SP: Down this side, no. Not much change. Oh, yeah. Lot of change, lot of more houses and more

people. Before just few people, yeah? And few cars but now you get more cars, more people. That's the change. And get more brush.

JJ: Do you think anybody moved because of the tidal wave? Did they get scared of the ocean or. . .

SP: No, they still here. I'm still here. Dunbar still there. Probably the people down Hālawā moved out because their taro all wash up, yeah. So they moved out. I think that's only—I know the people moved out—well, looking for job.

JJ: Do you know if anybody was out fishing that morning?

SP: No. And the funniest thing, the houses was like Dunbar's house, his Aunty Munro, Bella Munro, I think she was Honolulu at that time. And that house *wen* fall on that—what her name? Anyway, her—not her name, but his name was A'a. We call him A'a but I can't think of his real name. They wasn't home and that house was on the road, nobody was home.

JJ: Is that the house the pig came out of?

SP: No, that's the other house, at Davies house, the pig came out. Where he was, we don't know because that guy, we always see him. We always see him, but just happened. . . . And that pig, that's his pig. The pig always stay down by—maybe about a mile down the road. But how the pig got into the house, we don't. . . . Till today is a mystery.

And that old man, Bamboo, I don't know where he was. Nobody was home. And nobody died. Just the pig came out. How the pig got in the house, we don't know. (JJ chuckles.) That's the funniest thing. Was a big pig. Then he raise 'em down, oh about a mile down the road, or three-quarter mile I think. And where he was, I don't know. And that morning was, well, was Makaena and Alfred Jones, the two old men, and I was only a young kid hanging around with them.

JJ: Did you see it all when the water went out, when it receded? Did you see that part?

SP: No, no. We only seen the wave coming in.

JJ: What did the wave look like when it came in?

SP: Oh, I don't know. It just was big, huge mountain.

JJ: Yeah.

SP: Over the high ironwood tree was—I think in the front of Bella's house, was all that we seen.

JJ: How high was the ironwood tree, do you think?

SP: I think was about thirty feet I think. It's a tall thing, tall tree. And that house after that, when everything quiet down, we see the house in the swamp. You know, right near from there had one freshwater, just like a swamp but used to get—what do you call that kind? Water lily? And get lot of goldfish and mullet swimming in that water, freshwater pond. The house was in there. And had two houses, one was for Bella, and the other house was for Billy Dunbar's mother. Yeah, Billy Dunbar's mother's house, somehow went down this, further down, and Bella's house went in swamp.



JJ: Did they rebuild Bella's house?

SP: Oh yeah. They brought that—yeah, they rebuild it out. The two house stay together now. If you looking---if you up by Billy's place, you looking down the two houses. He put it together. He brought in---Billy was the one bring it out of the swamp and put the house together. So they made one house out of two house.

JJ: I see. So everybody has talked about this now, did you remember the smell after the wave?

SP: No, not that I know of.

JJ: Not down this side.

SP: Not down this side because after the tidal wave, I don't think we went back up there again. So most time, we stay here. No, I don't remember the smell. It doesn't---never had any smell.

JJ: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

SP: Nothing special. That's all about I know with that tidal wave, the '46.

JJ: What about any other tidal waves? Do you remember the ones after that?

SP: Not really, she's [SP's wife is] supposed to know it, I think. We were married at that time. Is it the '56 one?

JJ: There was one in '57, I think.

SP: [Nineteen] fifty-seven?

JJ: And 1960.

SP: I really don't know. Nothing *wen* damage over here. Only we had a boat, I think was the '50, I think, yeah? Or the '70? The '50—I think it was the '50 we had a boat over here. Ended up, well, maybe about twenty, thirty feet above. But nothing, no damage nothing. Maybe the fish pond at the time start breaking down from the tidal wave. I don't remember. I was working—at the time I was working Moloka'i Ranch.

JJ: So you weren't down here at that time?

SP: No, we were living here and then we . . .

JJ: You had to go up to work?

SP: Go up to work. So I don't remember much about 'em. Just the '46 because I seen it.

JJ: Well, thank you very much, Sam. I really appreciate it.

SP: That's about it.

JJ: Okay, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW



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