

Betty Alberts

Tape No. 36-1-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Betty N. Alberts (BA)

Pā'ia, Maui

July 17, 1998

BY: Jeanne Johnston (JJ)

JJ: This is an interview with Betty Neary Alberts at her home in Pā'ia, Maui, and the date is Friday, July 17, 1998, and the interviewer is Jeanne Johnston.

Betty, will you please give your full name and when and where you were born?

BA: My real name?

JJ: Your full name.

BA: Okay, well, I have two different names.

JJ: Real name, okay.

BA: My real name. Okay, my real (first) name is Benita. But I actually legally go now by Betty Neary Alberts.

JJ: Okay, and when and where were you born?

BA: I was born in Oakland, California. When? Oh, when, right, January 22, 1939. I was supposed to have been born in Hawai'i but my mom and my father were in California and were not able to leave as early as they thought they were going to get to the Islands so in fact I was born there, sort of by mistake.

JJ: Did they live in the Islands?

BA: Yes, they lived on O'ahu for a while.

JJ: What were they doing in California?

BA: They had been going to school. My mother had gone to college there and actually met my father through some friends of hers. That's how she met the man that was my father.

JJ: When did you move back here?

BA: I was a baby when I came over. As my mother told me, I was between six and nine months old.

I'm not exactly sure, but I was less than a year old when I was brought down as a baby.

JJ: Do you know how they got here?

BA: That's interesting. I probably could find out by looking in some of the old albums but I suspect they took a boat. That's what I believe that they did at that time. They used to refer to the boats as steamers so I don't know which boat that would have been. But I would expect a boat. I doubt whether they would have come by plane because in my opinion I think (regular passenger) plane flights from the Mainland didn't start till—well, during the war, of course, they had. But I think they started—because I know I was on one of the early United Airlines flights returning from San Francisco when I was nine years old. So I think that my mother and father came by boat back to the Islands. I know she went by boat to college. That I definitely know because we have a picture of her departing (to college with her close friend (Irene) Garcia).

JJ: So where did you live when you got back here?

BA: As a baby? I lived first on O'ahu. Because they had a business down there. My father worked in Honolulu.

JJ: What did he do there?

BA: Well, I know that he had two different kinds of jobs. One, he worked for some sort of a—it was a business enterprise of some sort. I even have the name of it written down somewhere. It was like—not a department store, but it was a store that carried. . . . Mike Lyons, in fact told me what it was when I asked him if he had ever heard of that company. I'm trying to think. It could have been big appliances or big equipment. And then they also opened a restaurant. They had a restaurant early on.

JJ: In Honolulu?

BA: Mm hmm [yes], in Honolulu.

JJ: Do you know the name of it?

BA: My mom used to mention it all the time and now I can't even think of what it was. But it was sort of like a Kau Kau Korner kind of restaurant. It was the early fast food sort of kind of a place. Because I remember my mom used to compare their restaurant to Kau Kau Korner. That sort of thing. I think they were sole owners of it.

And then what? Then eventually we---well, my father was in an accident (on the Mainland, and stayed there and died). My mom eventually moved to Maui with me. That was the reason she came to stay here with her parents. I was still very little. I was very little; I was just a few years old. I'm not quite sure what year it was. I'm trying to think 'cause the wartime I was actually here (on Maui). When Pearl Harbor was bombed, I was living on Maui. So it had to be between '40 and '41, somewhere in there.

JJ: Your grandparents also lived on Maui?

BA: My grandparents—my grandmother was born here in Pā'ia. My grandfather was born on (the ship on the way to the Islands)—his family was from Makawao. He was born on the way to the

Islands in (1882).

JJ: Where were they coming from?

BA: From San Miguel, from the Azores. He was born actually in Chile, in Santiago, on the way here.

JJ: Where was your grandmother's family from?

BA: Originally also from the islands off of Portugal (Madeira) but they were here so she was born in Pā'ia. So they were here quite early.

JJ: Did you ever . . .

BA: That's only on my mom's side, obviously, not on my father's side.

JJ: Right. Where is your dad's family from?

BA: Columbus, Ohio, is originally where they were from.

JJ: Had they been here, too? His . . .

BA: No, no, no, they hadn't. You're probably aware because when people were from the Mainland then, it was not a common thing to come running down to the Islands in the late [19]30s. Even though there was quote, tourism, I think that was much more common after the war. People started coming down to Hawai'i.

JJ: So what was it that brought your dad to the Islands?

BA: My mom. I mean the fact that he thought—he had gone from Ohio to California and really liked the West Coast. My mom wanted to come back to the Islands and he thought that was a good idea. I mean that's—I only know from what she told me. You know, I mean, I have no proof of any of this but that's what she said, that he really wanted to come down to the Islands. My aunts and uncles said that they really liked him, he had been a really nice guy and all that stuff, (and they knew him in those early years on O'ahu).

JJ: So you grew up in Pā'ia then?

BA: Mm hmm. So basically yes.

JJ: Can you describe . . .

BA: My beginning was here, really here, because I didn't know anything else. And my mom continued to—well live here but she taught also elsewhere, as well—(in Kohala on the Big Island as well as on Maui).

JJ: So your mother was a teacher?

BA: Mm hmm. Well, she had a mixed career. She started out being a teacher and as soon as the war broke out, because of her high level of skills—she was highly educated. She also had taken (business courses and) originally she was going to teach business so she was completely (able to) do typing, shorthand, and so forth. So she ended up working for the head officer down at NASKA

[Naval Air Station at Kahului], the naval air station. She was the assistant to the person who was in charge. So that was during those early years when they needed people. They were desperately looking for people who could do things. So instead of continuing to teach, she went ahead and basically worked for the navy at that point, for those few years. Then when she got out of—when the war stopped and all of that quieted down and when NASKA, when it was no longer a high-need job, she returned to teaching and she taught elementary school because she had also gotten a certification for teaching both elementary and secondary school. (She preferred working with younger children.) So she taught then for twenty-seven years for the Department of Education in Hawai‘i.

JJ: What was it like growing up in Pā‘ia?

BA: It was great.

JJ: What did you do as a kid?

BA: Well, I spent a lot of time playing. (Laughs) Well, I grew up in really what, which you see now is still sort of the plantation village that it was. Although many of the houses that used to exist here in what we used to call the camps, the plantation camps, don’t exist any longer. But right around this area that you’re looking at right now there’s a bunch of houses in the back there and all the houses here and on the side here. All of these people were people that were living and working, basically, in Pā‘ia. Couple of them would work down in Wailuku or Kahului but their children were all my friends. It was a very mixed community, mostly Asians and some Hawaiians and some *Haoles* mixed around here and there. But in Lower Pā‘ia there weren’t that many *Haoles*, and there weren’t that many—there were Portuguese-*Haole*, there were a few of us down here but there were some living in the back. We had just a real international group of friends. It was (my whole world).

JJ: What kind of games did you play as a kid?

BA: Oh gosh. Well, we used to do a lot of climbing of trees. As you can see, we have a lot of trees. We used to go the beach, obviously. Games, one of our favorite games happened to be creating a little store. I’ll never forget how it was a real big deal and all of us would have a trade and we would have a store and a beauty parlor. You know, we were mimicking basically what was going on down in Lower Pā‘ia in that old garage back there, which unfortunately no longer is ours. Back door to it became the place where I would put a table there and that was our store. Inside of it, it had all of these shelves with all kinds of goodies. It was funny because during the war, of course, we had stored rations. Sometimes some of those, quote, rations were still back in there and they were used as part of our store equipment.

(Laughter)

BA: We would just have a great time. Oftentimes we would use play money, not real money, obviously. But real play money, all denominations. I think we just all enjoyed it. Couple of the kids who played it, their parents owned Yamato Store and Zane Store, right here and they would be playing with us. (Laughs) That was one of our favorite things (to do).

Rollerskating down the sidewalks was another thing we used to do a lot of. We used to play marbles, we used to play milk tops, jump rope. We became major experts at jump rope. You know, all the different kinds of carving (of the rope), you know, back and forth. We used to play

card games (especially when it rained). We played a lot of—I had ongoing card games or monopoly games with some of my friends in the back of the camps (the Fernandez girls and the Ogata kids). Sometimes we'd just leave the game up if we had to go home and (laughs) continue the next day in someone's house.

And then the Apos were very good friends of mine, a Hawaiian family that now, I think, only one of the (relatives) lives there still, with some of the younger offspring. But all the old-timers have died, unfortunately. (Mother) Hannah Apo died a couple of years ago. Anyway, because our (large) property then went right to their fence, we had a gate that we would just go back and forth between each other's houses. They were my good friends and we just had great times (doing all kinds of things together).

Also, my mom would take us places or their parents—I used to go out to (Nāhiku) and Ke'anae 'cause they had some cousins who lived out there. It was another big thing, a big treat is when someone's parents would invite you to go with them on a special trip to some part of the island. Because here, Maui is small but we thought boy, it's really great, we're going to go to Hāna. That's a major, like going to (O'ahu or) the Mainland (which few of us ever did till much later). Or we'd go to Lahaina 'cause going to Lahaina then took almost as long (laughs) as going to Hāna. And so those kinds of things (made up our life as kids).

And then besides my local (Lower) Pā'ia friends, I developed friendships with other kids once I went to Pā'ia School for kindergarten and so I got to know all the local, right around here, kids. Because all the Upper Pā'ia kids went (to Pā'ia School). I got to know a lot of those (kids). But then I went to Kaunoa [School] for grade school. So then I developed friendships with people from all over the island, because it was a magnet school. To this day, as I was just telling you, my friend Judy Baldwin and I became fast friends when we were in first grade, and we're still friends. Joy Woolaway (and Lamela Holt) were there. You know, a lot of these people. So my social life expanded in terms of what we did and who we knew as a result of going to a grade school where I got to know people from up in Kula. They had the group transportation for kids coming down to Kaunoa down the mountain. (Students,) usually not from Lahaina, but from Wailuku, Kihei, Keawakapu. There were all carpools to bring kids in to Kaunoa as a magnet school.

JJ: Where did . . .

BA: I was going to say, but I continued very close friendships with my neighborhood friends even though some of them (continued at) Pā'ia School and some of them even went to Kahului or Wailuku schools, if their parents worked there. Oftentimes they would not necessarily just go to Pā'ia School, they'd go somewhere else. So we were kind of going to different schools, but we played with each other right up to high school.

JJ: Where did you go to school after Kaunoa School?

BA: I went to Punahou [School] to high school. I boarded.

JJ: Then after that where did you go?

BA: I went to Simmons College, a woman's college in Boston, [Massachusetts]. Graduated there and then subsequently I've taken a lot of courses (at several different universities). I think I started a master's degree six times (laughs) but never stayed in the place we were going to stay long

enough to get it done. Maybe that's an exaggeration. It wasn't six, it was like three. Then I finally, when we moved to California, pursued and finished a master's degree. Took a while, though. So I can say I'm slightly overeducated. (Laughs)

JJ: When did you get married?

BA: I got married at the end of my junior year in college, 1960.

JJ: Do you have any children?

BA: I sure do. (Laughs) I have three biological kids and one foster child.

JJ: Can you tell me about your kids?

BA: Sure, okay. My oldest daughter, Beth, was born in 1964 and she is now married and has two young children, my grandkids. Do you want their education and do you want anything like that?

JJ: No, . . .

BA: What do you want?

JJ: . . . just a basic outline of . . .

BA: What they do or anything?

JJ: Uh huh [yes].

BA: She was a teacher, she taught, she got her master's. She undergraduated at [University of California,] Berkeley and got a degree in biochemistry and took her master's degree at Stanford [University] and taught high school. Taught after she got married as well. Then moved up to— came to live in Hawai'i (on Maui with my mom,) and then is now presently living in my house in San Francisco, so she's taking a leave to raise her kids, basically.

My second child is Jonathan, who is a graduate student in mechanical engineering at the University of Washington in Seattle. He graduated, undergraduate as a physics major from Carleton College in Minnesota. Took his master's degree at Purdue [University]. Now he's trying to finish up a very intense mathematical thesis. He's to be married next week here in this house.

Michael, my younger son, is just fourteen months younger than Jonathan. He went---we had all moved to San Francisco so the kids all went to Lowell High School in San Francisco, which might be of interest. Michael went to Dartmouth College and he went to Mayo Medical School. He is now doing his residency at the UCSF program in emergency medicine at Fresno, [California]. He was married two years ago and lives in Fresno.

(Dog barking in the background.)

BA: We don't have a dog. (Laughs)

JJ: And you . . .

BA: And then my foster daughter, we got her when she was thirteen years old. And she had been

living in various foster care homes and her name is Gené. She's now thirty-three. She had lived with us right till she was able to become relatively independent. She came back and forth living with us into her twenties and then finally became totally independent and worked. Then she got together with this man, whom we didn't approve of. She never married him but she did have a child, who's now going to be seven years old in September, Ruby.

Gené has remained a single mother and continues to be employed by PG and E. She unfortunately did not go (to college). She started going to the community college but since we had struggled to get her through high school she was not exactly a focused student, although she's very bright. So she decided that college, at that point, was not something that she could do so she did, before working for PG and E, that's Pacific Gas and Electric Company, she did the California Conservation Corps program, which is a really excellent program, and learned a lot of skills, developed there through their program. Doing things like fire fighting, maintaining highways, planting, building trails in woods, that sort of thing. She really enjoys being outdoors. In fact, she does an outdoor job for PG and E, she actually works on the line with men. Because that's what she really enjoys most. She's been pretty good, she's managed. She's not on welfare, that's a good thing.

JJ: Tell me a little bit about your husband.

BA: Oh gosh, where do you want to begin? It's very complicated. He's got a lot about him. He has a ten-page bio, I think. I met him when (we were both) in college. We met at a social mixer. (He was a Harvard sophomore.) We obviously liked each other a lot and (dated) and got married three years after we had met each other. He had never come to the Islands until we were married. He was from the Midwest, from Chicago, a little north of Chicago. Then he decided he was going on to graduate school (at Harvard) so we stayed in the Boston area. He went on to graduate school and got his Ph.D. (in biophysics/biochemistry).

Then we went on a post-doctoral grant to Switzerland. We lived in Geneva, outside of Geneva. Then he got a job at Princeton University and we moved there. We were there for ten years and he became department chair. Then he decided he was interested in a change. We went to London for a sabbatical. We lived in London for a year (with our three kids).

Then instead of returning to Princeton, he decided to take a job offer at the University of California in San Francisco. So we moved to San Francisco and we stayed there for—well, we still are there—we bought our house in '76, and in '93 he accepted an elected position at the National Academy of Sciences so he is now president of the National Academy of Sciences and chairman of the National Research Council. That was a six-year position, which should end next year but he has been renominated and so he will probably, more than likely, be elected again, which means that we have to be in Washington for another six years. Not exactly to my liking, but I'm trying to deal with it.

So his basic specialty is molecular biology, cell biology. But he is now (not) doing (lab) science—he still runs a lab but he's basically doing science policy. He's also the author, a senior author, of a very well-known textbook. That's another thing that he spends a lot of time doing, which necessitates going back to London quite often. So we tend to---our life tends to basically be peripatetic, between London, Washington, San Francisco, and Hawai'i. So he and I manage to cope. We manage to cope with each other's demands and needs.

(Laughter)

JJ: Well, it sounds like your life is very busy.

BA: Yeah, I think it is. I think it's probably busier than most people's lives. Not all, but many.

JJ: Well, okay. Well, we'll get back to Maui about the time of the tidal wave. Can you describe what the town looked like prior to the tidal wave?

BA: It was pretty much an active plantation town. People were working on the plantation mainly (or in the pineapple canneries). I'd see a lot of trucks pick up people early in the morning. A lot of people didn't own their own automobiles in those days. They'd get picked up to go to work. People would—there'd be pick-up points through out. I remember that very well. If I was up early or I went to school early or we went to church early—well, usually not on the weekends—but if we went up to somewhere early (just after sunrise,) there would be pick-up points and drop-off points for the people that worked on the plantation.

People tended to be, like I am today, dirty. They had a lot of red dirt in their fingernails and toenails and on their arms and faces. People used to wear, you know, these hooded (hats and kerchiefs), which they still do, you can see out in the cane fields, to keep the sun off.

We had a wonderful town, which now is somewhat more devoted to tourism. All the shops used to be devoted, in town there, to people's—what their basic needs were. So there were mainly grocery stores, unlike the (many) restaurants that they have now. We had a few little restaurants. The wonderful Pā'ia Mercantile, which was at the corner, which had everything. It was a really wonderful general store. So it was sleepy town in some ways. It was a town that closed down at night. Now we have a nightlife down there. But it was very definitely a different kind of a town.

I think basically, the focuses were (on earning a wage and raising a family, and enjoying family Sundays). There were so many different churches around, too, which there still are. The Buddhist churches that we'd always (find fascinating with their cemeteries) you know, the two Buddhist churches down at the ocean. Also there used to be, long time ago, a Chinese church down there somewhere. Then a couple of Hawaiian churches and the Mormon church. The church we went to was at the top, was in Upper Pā'ia, Holy Rosary. But that was a very important aspect of the lives. Social things would take place at these different churches and that was—you know, we'd go to the *Bon* dances at the Japanese (temples) and *lū'aus* at the Hawaiian churches. I was even, when I was in grade school, I was the Virgin Mary at the Mormon church because they needed somebody with light hair and they wanted somebody to look like her (laughs) and they chose me. My neighbors, (the Apos,) were very active Mormons (and they would always invite me to events).

So it was this kind of town. It was very active, everybody was very active. Most of the activities took place in Pā'ia. You would occasionally go to a *lū'au* or go to a family gathering or go someplace else (like Wailuku or Kahului to shop). The reason I mention the churches is because (my recall of them is so strong). We used to go a lot to the church in Huelo. It was a Hawaiian church. We used to go there. (My grandfather and the minister would speak in Hawaiian to each other.) We used to go up to Kula, to different churches, and Makawao or to parties (on weekends). That was the kind of the activity that people had. They were just usually pretty hard workers, the businesses, daytime businesses. I don't remember anything—probably a couple of bars down there, small bars, that were open at night to a certain hour, but it was mainly a local, little village. Most people worked in either the pineapple fields or in the cane fields (or at the mill of the Ha'ikū or Kahului canneries).

JJ: Do you remember what you were doing on the morning of April 1, 1946?

BA: (I think it was a school day (I was seven) and Kaunoa was flooded so there would be no school.) Well, I do remember my grandfather saying that we were going to go down and look at the tidal wave. We never called anything tsunami, it was tidal wave. And that there was a big tidal wave that had hit Pā'ia and we were going to go look. So we went. We got in the car and we went and we were at a distance and I have a recall of being somewhere in the cane fields and being able to look. I also remember at some point that we went up towards Kū'au because there's a high point there, to see. Then also, we went—eventually we went to Sand Hills where my uncle now lives—my uncle did live. No, he didn't live there then. But we had friends, (the Pascuals,) we had relatives that were (in Wailuku). We went up to Sand Hills because it was a higher elevation so you could see the Kahului Harbor. You could see windward Maui. So I know that my grandfather and I went around at different vantage points. I don't remember what time (it was). I know it was relatively early. I actually don't remember what time the tidal wave actually came. But I do remember that there was—I know that old man—he was either a Chinese or a Japanese. He was a Japanese old man who had trouble walking. I remember kind of what he looked like (with the cap he used to wear). I was told that he did not survive. That he was one person that died. I assume that that's correct, I don't know. Then, I remember looking at all the houses that were damaged, really badly damaged, along by Baby Park.

JJ: Could you describe them?

BA: Well, there were a number of houses along where the ballpark is—in fact where the ballpark is, now the Baby Park. (I knew it well, as) that was where my grandparents used to live (before I was born). Their first house was there. My grandfather just got fed up with having problems with erosion and the high waters and things like that. They never really had a tidal wave yet then, but they did have water coming into their home.

My mom used to tell me as did my grandfather and my uncle, that they actually got in into these, either whiskey barrels or some kind of alcohol (or wine) barrels because my grandfather actually had (these barrels as he went from the) dry goods business to the liquor business with a man called Mr. (Walter) Scott. At first it was a dry goods business and then they did liquor. This was, of course, after Prohibition, obviously. It was not *'ōkolehao* but regular (distilled liquor). So the house was down there. And there were buildings where originally the dry goods and then the first liquor establishment was down near the beach. My mom said that they would float in (the barrels) when the high waters would come in (to the yard and house). So my grandfather got very fed up with these waters coming in. That's why he moved the house here. My mom was born in Pā'ia Park (at the old house) because they used to (give) birth at home.

So we were (very) familiar with that area down there but by then our house was here. There were all these houses that were along there. I do remember going down there and just seeing a lot—enormous destruction. Houses that were on their sides and coconut trees and everything that were down. (And houses moved far from where they originally were situated.) Big areas where sand had been pushed up. I do remember, I'm not sure exactly where I was, but I do remember seeing an enormous ebbing of the wave. I think this was one of the subsequent waves. It may not have been the biggest wave was coming in but an ebbing so that you could see way far. So my grandfather must have taken me close enough (on a high point I guess), we must have been somewhere where we could see this ebbing 'cause I had never seen so much sand. Because the water had just pushed back. Then I do remember that we left because my grandfather said it's very dangerous, we have to go. So he had an automobile and we (left). I remember that very well.

Exactly where that happened (along the shore), where I was, I'm not quite sure.

Then after that we mainly saw the aftermath. All the destruction in the lower part of the town. Although the water had come right in to the town. It didn't come (too far). By that time my grandfather owned the property from Mercantile, the old (store), which is where the corner, all the way up. The water did come up (to the Mercantile in town), as I recall, to where the cane field is on the other side of the road (along the main road into town). The water came up that far. I don't think it came any farther than that into Pā'ia town. My understanding and recall was that the destruction was primarily on the (beach) side of the road. It did come to Mercantile, to where the old Mercantile was, into that building, but it didn't go beyond that.

JJ: Do you recall what it looked like?

BA: What what looked like?

JJ: What the damage looked like?

BA: Oh yeah. It was just horrible. Everything was strewn all over the place. It seemed like after that for weeks and weeks and weeks, whenever we'd go to the beach we'd find something that had come from somebody's house, floating around. We used to go to Ho'okipa Park. We used to go to Priest Papa, which is where Mama's (Restaurant) is now. What is now Baldwin Park, I don't remember when that name was given but we used to call these parks Pā'ia Parks. We used to go down there and we'd always find stuff around. We'd all say this is from the tidal wave, even if it may not have been. (JJ laughs.) But there were things constantly. It was a real mess, especially the houses right between (the present) Baldwin Park and the Baby Park. There were houses there. (Then they were gone.) There was an old lime kiln. I think the lime kiln was also up at that time. That would be interesting to research because it seems to me I remember going down to the lime kiln road and parts of it had been damaged, had been torn down. That's my recall. But it's possible that could have been another storm but I believe that that lime kiln was already up there and was (initially) damaged in the tidal wave. But definitely the houses were just really devastated. It was just incredible. All I remember (about the people loss was) that there was one death and it was that old Japanese man. I'd love to find out if that's true or whether's other information that you find. But there really weren't deaths, (just huge property losses).

JJ: Yeah, there were thirteen deaths on Maui.

BA: Where?

JJ: I'm not sure exactly.

BA: Uh huh, because one definitely in Pā'ia. 'Cause you know, all the way to Kahului and Kanahā and of course there weren't really residences there. But as I recall, also Hāna got it, yeah?

JJ: Mm hmm, and Hāmoa.

BA: And what?

JJ: Hāmoa.

BA: Right. So Hāna, Ke'anae, so I think most of the deaths were there and definitely the one man in

Pā'ia. Other than that, most of the land is high.

JJ: Do you remember the cleanup and rebuilding at all in Pā'ia?

BA: I remember that they did rebuild a couple of those houses. The house that is now the Pā'ia Youth Community Center, one of our teachers at Kaunoa, Mrs. Lily, lived there. By 1950 there were a couple of other houses along the beach all destroyed between Pā'ia and Baldwin Park. (Some) houses were rebuilt and they did occupy them. (Also the Shinto temple was destroyed and rebuilt in Baldwin Park.) Now there is only one house, which is a community center, (at Pā'ia Beach) because I think they also subsequently had other erosion (and high waves, but no tsunami on the west side). However, they are building these two houses near Baldwin Park now, which I still don't understand. But they're building them up on very high stilts, iron stilts, and building the houses there. Why they think they're going to survive if we have another tidal wave, I don't know.

JJ: Did the tidal wave change your attitude towards the ocean at all?

BA: Yeah, I think I was a little more frightened of it 'cause I do remember going down, and when the waves would be really big I'd say, "Oh my gosh, is it going be a tidal wave?"

(As kids,) I know we talked about tidal waves a lot. We really did. And yeah, I think even though I loved the ocean so much, I think I would be very reluctant to have a house right at the water after (that experience). I would have to be very assured that the house would be safe. It would have to be high, really high. But that's definitely kept me from being too enamored with getting a house right at the ocean. Then having heard it from my grandfather, the fact that he moved from the park where my mom was born to here because he said he just didn't want to endanger the family any more. That the chances of---and that's why the store moved and that's why he bought the property higher up because of the fact that everything was just too vulnerable. (I know he was relieved after the '46 tidal wave.) Even though we haven't had a major big one since. The last time they had one it was on the south shore. So we haven't really had any destruction as far as I know.

JJ: Do you recall any social or cultural changes after that tidal wave?

BA: (Pause) The only thing I can think which might apply is that a lot of the local Hawaiians, there was a number of them that lived very close to the ocean in rather small houses and everything. I think some of them felt they needed to not be as close to the ocean as they had been and they moved away from (those properties). I've seen—it looked like some of them have gone back to some of those areas where they originally abandoned. But I'm noticing that there are definitely—now they're kind of starting to build the houses closer, like Kū'au right above the Japanese cemetery. Nobody would have thought of building houses there way back. Not only because it's right next to a cemetery but also the fact that it was vulnerable. People would be worried. But now on the spit out—on Pā'ia spit, there's new houses out there. So I think there was a social change in that people were much more reluctant to build right close to the ocean until the revolution of the (late) [19]70s and [19]80s came along and then people started—putting houses right where the erosion and into now, as I say, two houses going up in an area where you witness the erosion right in front of you. But I think culturally and socially, people that wanted to be near the ocean no longer felt comfortable. I think that definitely made a big impact on people's attitudes towards being so close to the water (after April 1, 1946).

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

BA: Not really. You know, I can't think of anything that might be relevant at this moment.

JJ: Okay.

BA: I think Pā'ia town survived, I think that was great. I think that people took it as being—because we are right on the ocean basically, but they felt, hey we're okay, we'll rebuild (on the *mauka*) side of the road. So they did. But they didn't do anything like try to build a stone wall or do any kind of retaining walls. Everyone seemed to just go ahead and eventually rebuild the businesses. For a long time there were no houses (built on the *makai* side,) but in subsequent years they've been building them, as I said. All sorts, some rather small, unstable sort of shacks, and others are quite elegant houses. It's a real mixed situation.

JJ: Okay, well, thank you very much for letting me interview you.

BA: You are welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

**TSUNAMIS IN MAUI COUNTY:
Oral Histories**

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

March 2003