

Roland Enos

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Roland Enos (RE)

Kahului, Maui

April 19, 1998

BY: Jeanne Johnston (JJ)

JJ: This is an interview with Roland Enos, at his home in Kahului, Maui, Hawai'i. The date is April 19, 1998, and the interviewer is Jeanne Johnston.

Okay, Roland, let's start with, tell me your birth date and where you were born.

RE: April 7, 1939. I was born in Wailuku, Maui.

JJ: And tell me a little bit about your family, your parents. Could you tell me about your mom? Your mother's name?

RE: Marjorie. Her maiden name?

JJ: Yes, please.

RE: Marjorie Kunewa.

JJ: Could you spell that for me?

RE: Last name, K-U-N-E-W-A.

JJ: Okay, And where did you grow up?

RE: Right on Maui. Right in the, you know, Wailuku-Kahului area. And I was mostly raised by my grandparents. I stayed with my grandparents from a little baby, I guess—two or three years old, I think. And we lived on that Kahului Beach Road, right across from the ocean. Shall I continue with the story?

JJ: Yes please, tell me what. . . . Describe what it looked like out there when you were growing up.

RE: Well, where we lived, there was only three houses right in that, you know, same vicinity. And no neighbors other than that. It was next to---they had a big marine camp at that time. Just about maybe a quarter mile away. And between the marine camp and our house there was a little lot that the Maui Electric Company used to use for storage. And they used to store all their telephone poles and these big spools of wire. You know these big, huge. . . . That was it. And in the back of our house there was this stone crusher. I think was run by the railroad at that time, Kahului

Railroad [Company]. And they used to crush rocks. You know all these different sizes of rock aggregate.

JJ: What year was this, that you lived with your grandparents there? When did you move down there?

RE: I don't know when they lived there, but the house was always there. You know, I don't know what year it was made. It was a pretty old solid house. As far as I remember, I always knew was there. I just remember the place across the beach.

JJ: Were your parents also living on Maui, at that time?

RE: Yes.

JJ: What did your dad do?

RE: At that time, I think he was an operator for the—I don't know when—I don't know when he started with the county, but before that, I don't know, I guess he had odd jobs (chuckles).

JJ: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

RE: I got all half brothers. See, my mother was married a couple times. But from her first marriage, it was only me. Then she got married. . . . Her second marriage she had two boys. And one has since passed on. Pretty young, he was, so. And my dad remarried a couple times and he, (chuckles) from his side, I got seven more brothers and sisters (laughs), so. Basically, that was it. And you know, our relationship wasn't really that close 'cause being, like your parents being separated, I didn't really get to see them much. So, I guess that's one of the reasons I was raised by my grandparents.

JJ: Did you go to school from that home you were talking about?

RE: Yes. I used to go to Wailuku Elementary School, that was up in Wailuku. And I went to there, well, all the way through till fifth grade. Then I went to 'Īao School, just like an intermediate, from fifth to eighth grade. Then I went to Baldwin High School. I graduated in 1957. Then I went to, that time was Maui Technical School. It started out as Maui Vocational School, then they changed it to Maui Tech[nical School], now it's at Maui Community College. Took up auto mechanics. I was really (chuckles) into cars. So that was a two-year college. I stayed there till 1960.

JJ: Did you go to---did you start working at that time?

RE: Yeah, but not as a mechanic. I was doing all odds and ends, all kind of jobs. And I moved to Honolulu in 1961, eh? Then that's when I met her (referring to his wife, Rachelle Enos) in '61 or '62. And I lived in Honolulu, for what, three years. I came back in '64, I think it was, somewhere. I'm not too sure of the dates.

JJ: What is your wife's name?

RE: Rachelle.

JJ: And her maiden name?

RE: Victor.

JJ: And was your wife from O‘ahu or Maui?

RE: Yeah, from O‘ahu.

JJ: Okay, and then when did you move back to Maui?

RE: [Nineteen] sixty-four, I think, yeah? I stayed in Honolulu from ‘61 to ‘64, or something.

JJ: Roland, tell me a little bit about your grandparents and their—let’s start with your grandmother. Was she Hawaiian, your grandmother?

RE: My grandma was half Hawaiian and half German. There see a picture of her? The one with the *lei* on.

JJ: What was her name?

RE: She was Mary Hoffman, was her maiden name. That’s a typical German name, Hoffman (laughs), so. Yes she was a redhead, I think the only one in the family. And she was a very talented musician. She could play piano, organ, guitar, *‘ukulele*, bass. . . . At one time she played for E.K. Fernandez circus for a long time, playing the pipe or the calliope. She had her own orchestra at one time.

JJ: Was that here on Maui?

RE: Yes.

JJ: Can you tell me a little bit about that, about her orchestra?

RE: She---well, not that I really know (laughs). Well, they used to play for parties, like that. And at that time, I know she owned an upright bass that must have been the only one on Maui ‘cause everybody used to borrow that bass. Bass fiddle, the big, bowstring, yeah. And every weekend these musicians, they’re starting out and they would all come to the house and borrow and borrow and she just let everything (laughs). So they borrow it and bring it back the next day, or two days later. And it was really an antique, you know, like a. . . . I don’t know what happened to it, it disappeared.

JJ: So is your grandmother still alive?

RE: No, no. She passed away in 1981. She was ninety years old. And she drove up till she was ninety. She drove a car (chuckles).

JJ: Was she born here?

RE: You know, that I really don’t know. I know that my grandfather was born in Honolulu. My grandma I wasn’t too sure. We don’t have any, you know, genealogy that far back, where I knew where she was born. I guess my uncle would know.

JJ: What about your grandfather, what can you tell me about him?

- RE: Well, he was a businessman and he had his own business. At one time he was a county tax assessor—I think they called them in those days. He was good with figures, I guess. And he owned properties all over the island, even off island like Honolulu. He had pieces of land here and there. He held a lot of stocks and whatever. He was a landlord. He had a lot of rental properties. So thank goodness for him today, we got some income coming out of that so. And he had a little office up in Wailuku and we still have that property today. We got apartments. This was an old—like a hospital—he bought the whole works and he divided it up into little apartments. And he could rent them out, so. We still doing that today.
- JJ: This is in Wailuku?
- RE: Yes. Up on Vineyard Street. That's what he did. Every day he'd go up there, and he'd take me along. I'd do all the yard work, and the fixing up and painting and plumbing and whatever. So that's what I did.
- JJ: Okay. And so you were telling me that you met your wife and married. . . . Did you get married on O'ahu or did you come back to Maui and get married?
- RE: We got married on O'ahu. That was September 1965.
- JJ: And when did you come back to Maui?
- RE: Well, (before getting married), I moved back here by myself in '64. But we would keep going back and forth. Then when it was time to get married, I flew over to Honolulu, got married and then I had to come back to work. So it was basically like just a weekend. I went down to get married and come right back home to work (laughs). And she moved over. You know, brought all her stuff with her. And we settled in with my grandmother. My grandfather had passed on already, so my grandma was home by herself in this huge house. We stayed with her, we helped a lot in the financial side. And well, we had four kids, two boys and two girls. Oh, yeah, we got one grandchild now (chuckles).
- JJ: So, now was that the same house that you were in during the tidal wave?
- RE: It was moved up. Yeah, my grandfather had it moved from the old location, right on the beach. And just, sheesh, maybe little over a quarter mile away. Actually there were---I think he bought the two houses or he owned the two houses. One house belonged to our neighbor. He had those two houses moved up. And he had bought a lot from, I guess the plantation at that time. And the two houses were moved onto that lot. This was in '48 or '49. I can't remember the date. But the two homes were moved there. And we lived there until after my grandmother passed away in 1981. The property was sold, and we moved out in '82. But I lived in that household forty-two, almost forty-three years. Lot of memories there.
- JJ: Well, let's go back to just before the tidal wave. And if you would describe to me what the area looked like and the house and all that prior to the tidal wave.
- RE: Well, the house was, you know, sitting right across the beach. It was only the road and our front yard separating us from the ocean. And basically it was, our house here, and our neighbor's was over there, and there was a back house. And there was a long driveway in the middle. There was a big rock wall out in the front. Stone wall. And it ran the whole length of the, you know, our property, the front area. I guess that's basically what kind of gave us the time to run away, 'cause

that wall was there holding the water for a while. Although there was the driveway and that walkway where the water could just rush in.

Like everybody knows this was April 1st—fool, you know, everybody thought. In those days never had warnings. There was no sirens, or anything, so I got up in the morning and I went downstairs—it was a big two-story house—I went downstairs, and my grandma was making breakfast. I had already gotten dressed for school. And she told me, “Go out and pick up the milk.” In those days the milkman used to deliver milk. And well, in those days, you know, I didn’t really listen to her all the time but for some reason, I turn right around and I went, walked through the house, and opened the front door, and I was just going down to pick the milk up. And I just happened to look up and this wall of water was just coming. All I seen was water just coming in the front yard, just barely making it over the wall. So I just kind of panicked, I just ran.

My grandfather was listening to the news that morning. I told him, “Eh, tidal wave there’s water coming.” Hope he didn’t think it was joke, you know, ’cause being April Fools’ Day. And I ran in the kitchen I told my grandma, “Tidal wave, let’s get out of here!” So I went out the back door. Fortunately, behind the house there was this big hill. Railroad track used to run—the train used to run up there. So I made it. And my grandfather and grandmother they were right behind and they were just barely made the hill when the water just came. Came around the house and around the houses like that and just, you know. Well they just barely made it up the hill.

And our neighbors, they saw it but there was no time to run and tell us. And everybody just ran, man. And we turn around, everything was just full with water. And my uncle, he was sleeping upstairs. Fortunately, it was a two-story house so. Well the water I think went about I think maybe four, four feet or maybe a little higher. But it didn’t go up the stairs. He slept through the whole thing. I mean, we were yelling and yelling. And he finally got up. And you know, by the time he looked around, hey, water all around. So he came out from the second story. He removed one of the windows and he got out. He just dove in the water and swam.

JJ: Did it move your house back, at all?

RE: No. But I’ll go get the pictures out. That house was built like—it was a solid wall, stone-wall foundation, and the house was kind of built up off the ground. But it was so solid, the bottom, it never moved the house. Our neighbor’s house was sitting up like on stilts so those houses got moved around a bit.

JJ: Can you describe what it looked like after that first wave?

RE: Oh, yeah. I mean, everything came floating around. The telephone poles from the yard and the reels and the. . . Like I said that marine base that was couple hundred yards down the road, they had all these water amphibians that, you know, these water ducks that they use for maneuvers. All those came floating around the house. And they kept going around here, and around there. And the wave would come like in series, like the water would recede. And I seen the Kahului Harbor without a drop of water, (nothing). As far as the breakwater is, the water just went out all the way out to there. And you could see just the whole ocean floor. Then it would come in. It’s not like a big, huge, rolling (wave), it just fills up and it keeps filling. You know when it reaches the high water mark you think it’s going to stop but it don’t stop. It just keeps coming and coming. Just overruns everything again. Then it backs up. It did it about maybe five, six, seven times. Then gradually just kind of subsided and everything was back to normal again.

- JJ: What did the harbor look like with nothing in it?
- RE: You could see all the rocks and the sand bottom. And one wave would come and that time, there was, I think there was a barge or couple barges. You know, the tugs they used to pull. And the wave would take the (barge) right on top of the pier. And the next wave would take it back down. And it just kept doing that. Of course, all the cargo, everything that was on the pier, everything got washed off. Whatever they had on the pier, everything was just washed out.
- JJ: And you said that you were up on a hill? Is that where you were during all the waves?
- RE: Yes.
- JJ: Can you describe where you were, what it looked like, where you were on this hill?
- RE: Like I said, you know, was kind of high. There was a---like the railroad track used to run up there. And at that time, they had a couple of flat cars, and there was boxcars that were parked there. 'Cause there was a stone crusher. These cars would go under the stone crusher and they load up. And, there was like a double track. One track would go up and one track would go running in our backyard and go under the crusher. So we was all up on the tracks, just looking down and waiting to see the water and debris all around the place. My grandmother was a musician and there was a big grand piano in our parlor. And that piano went out the front door 'cause we had those double front doors. It couldn't fit in any other. But somehow, the wave just came in, took the piano right out the front door, around the house and parked it in the backyard. And it was there for several years, after the house was abandoned. The piano stayed there. Of course it was all ruined. But I went there several times and the piano was still there. And up until several years ago, the front yard—our stone wall—was still there, 'till the state improved that road then they broke it down. But there was two or three portions, of the wall still standing. So now I don't know if I tried to look for traces of it, I don't see it anymore.
- JJ: Who was up on that hill with you?
- RE: All our neighbors (chuckles).
- JJ: How many people do . . . ?
- RE: There was Texiera family, who lived in the back house, and Cordeiro family that lived on the side of us. I don't know who---like the Texiera family had some young kids. I don't know if the young one, if the youngest, was born at that time or came along later. I know most of them were home.
- JJ: Can you describe what happened to their houses?
- RE: I think it was just, you know, moved a little bit. But it was completely damaged, water damaged. And the back house that belonged to the Texiera family, that was demolished. Like I said, my grandfather moved the houses—that other two houses—on another lot so, that was it.
- JJ: Did you have any animals, any pets that were. . . ?
- RE: Yes there was one casualty from this whole thing. Our neighbor, Texiera, he had a hunting dog, you know that was his prized dog. And the dog got drowned 'cause it was chained. And he had climbed on the fence, he had climbed on the car. Till the water kept rising and you know he

couldn't go any higher so he drowned. And the old man, he wanted to go down and go get the dog, but everybody held him back, as far as I know. So that was the only casualty from our place.

JJ: Now, how old were you that day, Roland?

RE: I was six [years old], but it was six days before my seventh birthday. April 7 was my birthday, so. But it's kind of embedded in my mind. I can't forget it.

JJ: Yes, yes. And after the---what happened right after the wave? How long did you stay up on that hill?

RE: Me, I stayed maybe about an hour or so. And my mother came, everybody came. They took me up to Wailuku, one of our friend's homes. And they went down to survey the damage. Whatever was done, so.

JJ: Where did you stay that night after the . . . ?

RE: We stayed up in Wailuku. I think it was like my grandfather's apartments. We, in fact, we moved up there for about two years after the tidal wave. You know, while they were relocating the home, our house, so.

JJ: Do you remember what it was like in the community after that? After the tidal wave?

RE: Basically, no.

JJ: Did you go back to school right away?

RE: Yeah, yeah. Just like a normal every day. I went to school right away again.

JJ: And what did your grandfather do or your grandparents do about fixing the house, did you say?

RE: See, well, they didn't fix the house. It just stayed there, but all the personal stuff were moved out. And it just sat there until—I guess he was in the process of getting land and getting, you know, the moving done. The house sat there for about a year or so. But, you know, everything was abandoned.

JJ: Did it destroy everything on the first floor?

RE: Yeah. I mean more like water damage. 'Cause the house was all intact, but only had property damage and water. The house was so solid, it never moved. One of those old homes. The windows had those shutters. You know, I go get the picture. I give you one idea. I forgot about this [the microphone].

JJ: Okay. We need to do the. . . . Let me stop it.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JJ: Okay, Roland, would you go ahead and describe the picture that you have in your hand there?

RE: Well this one was taken—this must have been right after the tidal wave, 'cause the water is still around, see. It doesn't show our house. Our house was just on this side of the garage—this is the

garage—and this other home was this side so it was probably taken from the other home. And this was the back house. And this is the hill where we ran. You see those cane train cars up there? There's a boxcar and these flatcars; they were parked on the hill. And to the right of this was the stone crusher. You know, if you got a lot of time, I can take you over there and show you exactly. . . . Everything is still standing, today that. . . . But basically this was it. This was all the, like I said, the telephone poles and the Maui Electric base yard that they stored. These were all the reels of wire and the telephone poles. All those came just came washing around and around. All around the house. But basically they---see, the pictures of our home, I think they were confiscated by the state. When they brought the—I think they condemned the property, and they wanted pictures. So all the pictures we had of our home, those they took it. I don't know if they ever kept it, you know, when they took over the property.

JJ: When was that, that they took it?

RE: This was just before they condemned the properties to make the new road.

JJ: What year?

RE: I really don't know. But we owned the property all the time, till the state decided to, you know, relocate the road. And if our home was still there, the road would be running direct, right through the middle of the house. This was what our home looked like. This was the house on the beach. See, it was a big house. But you see this solid rock? This went all around the house, this rock foundation. That's why it never moved, it was solid. And this gives just a basic—and this house is still standing today. You can just barely make out these window shutters up here, this was the second floor.

JJ: Did the water go all the way up to the second floor?

RE: No, no. I'd say about, maybe half (chuckles), maybe halfway up above this window height. Maybe about halfway up.

JJ: So that would be probably about six feet?

RE: Yeah, I guess at its highest, yeah. And it was a huge front yard. Here's a big---this was a *hau* tree. You know, those *hau* trees?

JJ: Mm hmm. Now how far would it be to the water, to the beachfront? From, do you think, from the front of the house to the water?

RE: Maybe about fifty yards, I guess. 'Cause the front yard was quite big, you see. This was a picture of the front yard here. This is the wall. This is the front. The beach was just---there was a two-lane road on the other side of this wall, and the beach right there. And this wall was still standing till a couple years ago. That was all the neighbor kids and me.

JJ: Did the wave take the road out, there?

RE: No, the road still. . . . But eventually, yeah. You can see portions of the old road originally, it's still there today. So give you some idea, you know, of this. . . . This all the pictures I got, the rest are all taken.

- JJ: You said the state took the pictures when they . . .
- RE: Yes, I think they condemned the property or something. I wasn't really sure what the process was but. And our home was just on this side of the garage. And the other home was just on this side. I think this picture probably was taken from that home. And those two houses are still in use today.
- JJ: Can you tell me a little bit about the railroad? What that was for, and. . . .
- RE: Well, the train used to haul the materials and the sugarcane in those days from the mill. You know the old Wailuku [Sugar Company] Mill. They just got rid of that, too, so. This train ran right through Kahului town. Right through the middle of town and it branched off on the beach road. And there were two tracks. There was one on the hill, and there was one right below here that ran in our backyard. This went to the crusher and it stopped there. But this one---one went to the crusher and there was another, like an offshoot, where it kept going up to Wailuku. And it used to go right across the road where Mill Street meets Lower Main [Street]. It crossed the road right there and went to Wailuku Sugar [Company Mill]. And they used to pick up all the like bulk sugar and all, whatever they had to haul.
- JJ: Was the railroad damaged at all?
- RE: Basically, no. Just for water and this debris on the track. You could actually see people standing on the cars, you see? Standing. I don't know who they were, probably all neighbors. But that hill is still there today and everything is still intact.
- JJ: So all of your family, did they all make it through the wave all right?
- RE: Yes. There were only four of us home at that time. My grandparents, me and my uncle. Like I said he slept through it all upstairs.
- JJ: What was your uncle's name?
- RE: Joseph Hoffman Kunewa. My grandmother gave him her maiden name. Nobody call him Joseph, everybody call him "Hoff." And he just passed away last month. So, we went to Hilo for his funeral, so. And none of our neighbors, you know, I haven't seen them lately. I seen one---you didn't have any contact with any Texiera or Cordeiro family? They were our neighbors.
- JJ: Did it really change your life, the tidal wave, as a child? Do you remember any big changes?
- RE: No, not really. I guess being that young, you know, not too many things I guess to change. Never been exposed to much life at that time. Only six years, so, no, just grew up normal.
- JJ: Do you recall any noise being associated with the wave, or did you just see the water coming in?
- RE: No. All I saw was the water. There was no noise or no rumbling that, you know, I could hear. I think I heard my neighbors say that, you know, they said, "Oh, the wave looks kind of extra high today. Seems kind of rough." So and he went out on his front porch and he started realizing, hey, this is a tidal wave. This is not no high surf. So that was basically what I heard. Their story, you know. And after the tidal wave we just---everybody went their own way, you know, we never kept contact. Just a little, I would see them that once in a while. Now very seldom. But some them had moved away. They been away for many years now.

JJ: Okay, well, Roland thank you very much. Can you think of anything else you'd like to add?

RE: Not right off the . . . Well, you was asking about the 1960 tidal wave, yeah, huh?

JJ: Oh, yes, yes. Nineteen sixty also.

RE: I think it was a Sunday night or very early Monday morning. Me and my friend had gone—there was a drive-in theater. And, you know, after the movie, this was about ten o' clock, ten-thirty. We had a warning at that time, so instead of going home we said we stick around and see what we can see. But it was all dark (chuckles).

JJ: How old were you?

RE: Oh, in 1960, I would have been twenty-one. Yeah, around twenty-one, twenty-two. I think it came in May, didn't it? I forget what date actually, but. Yeah, I think it was around twenty-one, twenty-two. So we waited around and, you know, we had parked right where, down the road where I lived. We had parked at that marine camp. But it had been converted like to a business district.

JJ: Was this in Kahului?

RE: Yes.

JJ: Can you describe . . .

RE: You know the whole---Well, this was old marine camp that had the, I think there were forty Quonset huts, all those half round, that they use for the marine base. Anyway it was there till I think 1980s. So we had parked the car there. We were looking toward the ocean. We couldn't see anything. Was just pitch-black and there was only one street light, but we couldn't see anything, so. And at the same time we were listening to the radio. When is the wave coming, when is the wave coming? Me and my friend, we walked down the road, and all of a sudden this huge wall of water just. . . . The thing bounces almost as high as the telephone pole. All of a sudden. We turned around and we ran and the water was right behind us. We ran up---we outran the wave and we end up on this little cement slabs where these Quonset huts were. And the water was right behind us. And I think I caught the first fish of that tidal wave 'cause as soon we turn around we could hear fish all just splashing around, splashing around. You see, in the dark we was trying to find them just by the sounds (laughs). And my friend and I, we didn't go to school. We were going to Maui Tech at that time. We stayed all day down the beach, we never went home. And we picked up fish by the bags. And all of them were alive. We had a whole bag full of fish to take home.

JJ: What time was that?

RE: I think about one or two o'clock in the morning. And we just stayed out there all night till it got daylight, and we could really see the fish. And everybody was down on the beach looking for fish that day. And they were all stuck in the grass, they couldn't swim. But there were puddles of water. And everybody was just going crazy, looking, picking up fish.

JJ: What did it look like when the sun came out?

RE: Just water and, you know, debris all over the road. Then at that time, I think, the county workers came out with their machines and cleared all the roads off. There was no property damage, not on the beach road. Everything was just, you know, was just brush.

JJ: What about in Kahului? Was there damage in Kahului?

RE: Mostly water damage, yeah. 'Cause the wave went all the way up to Kahului Shopping Center at that time. I think that was the only shopping center there. Yeah, on the waterfront, got, you know, damage. 'Cause me and my friend, when we went through Kahului town and driving his car all through the salt water and we went. . . . Funny, the cops never stop us. I guess they were so busy doing something else. We was riding all around (laughs). And just kind of surveying what had happened.

JJ: What did you see?

RE: Oh, there was just water. But that water had gone all the way to Ah Fook's supermarket, if you know where that is, eh? And all the way down to Christ the King Church. 'Cause over there, just like sea level. The water comes out from the harbor and you got that Pu'unē Avenue, it goes straight down. It went all the way down to that Christ the King Church.

JJ: Can you describe the damage?

RE: I really don't know about the damage. I know several stores are on the waterfront. Like I think A & B [Alexander & Baldwin] at that time there, a lot of goods they had to throw away because of water damage. But that was it. I don't know what other companies, what kind of losses they suffered. But it wasn't as violent as the '46 wave. 'Cause the '46 wave wiped out everything and I guess nobody built really close to the water after that. So there was nothing really close, except for the harbor area.

JJ: Were there any casualties on. . . .

RE: No, not on Maui, as far as I know. I know, in Hilo, they got a lot of casualties in that 1960 wave. I guess people didn't heed the warning.

JJ: Do you have any words of wisdom for people when they hear the tidal wave warning?

RE: Just stay away from the beach. 'Cause when people hear tidal wave, all they do—they all want to go to the beach and see. I guess if you could do it from a really safe place, it'll be all right. But now they got the warning way ahead of time, and the police block the road. You can't get near anyway. So you got to look, I guess, from a distant vantage point. So, that's basically it. As far as I remember.

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

RE: I just thank God I made today (laughs).

JJ: Thank you very much, Roland.

END OF INTERVIEW

**TSUNAMIS IN MAUI COUNTY:
Oral Histories**

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

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