

**Henry Kahula, Sr.**



Tape No. 36-11-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Henry Kahula, Sr. (HK)

Hāna, Maui

April 24, 1998

BY: Jeanne Johnston (JJ)

JJ: This is an interview with Henry Kahula, Sr. It's being recorded at the Maui—at the Hāna Maui Hotel.

HK: Hotel Hāna Maui.

JJ: Hotel Hāna Maui. In Hāna, Maui, Hawai'i. And the date is Friday, April 24, 1998. And the interviewer is Jeanne Johnston.

Okay, Henry. Let's start. Would you tell me where you were born and when you were born?

HK: Okay. My name is Henry Kahula, Sr. I was born in Nā'ālehu, Ka'ū. And at a age of five, my parents were invited to come to Hāna, Maui to work at the sugar plantation, from Nā'ālehu which were the Hutchinson Sugar Plantation [Company]. The mill was located at Honu'apo.

JJ: What was the date that you were born?

HK: I was born on November 2, 1916. And in 1922, my parents decided to come to Maui with my aunty and her husband which is my uncle also. My mother and her sister married their husbands from the same name, two brothers. Of course, there were about four of them—five, six of them—in their family. All boys. And. . . .

JJ: And what was the name?

HK: My father's name was Jack Naluahi Kahula. My uncle's name—two uncles—was James. That's the oldest one. And the other, number three, was Iopa Kahula. And then we came with my aunty, and my mother, my sister, that was two years older than I. And my brother that was about four years older than I. And we came. And there was a child born that came along with us. I don't remember who it was. I think that was my younger brother. Yes, my younger brother. And then we came directly—those days you came directly by ship. We got off---we got on the ship at Honu'apo landing and that was a little ship. And it has go by way of the skiff on the wharf to get to the ship, which was anchored outside.

JJ: Do you remember the name of the ship?

HK: I think was—wasn't *Claudine*—was *Helene*. Was a small little ship. So we managed to get over

there, and went all the way—sailed all the way to Lahaina. When we got over there, we got out [at] that old pier, right near the Pioneer Hotel, that time. So we got there. From there we caught a taxi, and we drove all the way down to Kahului. By my parents and my brother and sister. And we got to Kahului. We slept in a hotel for the night. And the next day we boarded another steamer, another ship. I think that was the S.S. *Maunakea*. Then we came by boat right down here where I took a first glimpse at Hāna pier. Boy, hey that's one nice pier and we just tied up right next to the wharf.

JJ: How old were you then when you first came to Hāna?

HK: How old I was? Yeah I was about five years. As soon as I got here we registered at the Hāna School in the kindergarten. I was the third in the family. My sister was the second, and my older brother. And I had a younger brother that was still a child, a baby yet. And from there on, the rest of the children were all born here. And through that lifetime I came to Hāna. Boy this was a nice town.

JJ: Where did you live when you first came to Hāna?

HK: Well, incidentally, we lived at the house, plantation house that was the number one. Each home had a number numbered on it. And on the door, it said house number one. And that was a small little house, and it was just a two-bedroom house. But half of that section—I don't know how we all managed to get into that section because the other half of that section was used as a dispensary where the doctors—what do you call?—get their patients go there and examine and they supply the medications and all that. That was the house, the first house. During the next few years we began to move and then finally we came down here and stayed right across the, in the back of that big—what do you call that now?—right here, right across the road up there. And we stayed over there though we began to move, move, move from one place to the next but we still stayed right in Hāna. We moved up there, we moved up here, and we stayed over here. Most of the time we spent our lives like right. And then. . . .

JJ: What did your father do, at that time? What was his job?

HK: My father was a mechanic for the plantation. And then he was equipment, heavy equipment, operator. He was in all sorts of job. And he was a mechanic. And my other older uncle. He was also—well, he was pretty good at the machines and all those things. But he became a foreman for the plantation and various jobs. And they had my third uncle, he became a truck driver for this plantation. His name was Iopa. He had just one eye. The other eye was injured during an accident. They were---one day they were playing pocket knives they were throwing. . . . Somehow thing went and went right into the eye. And so they had to take him to the dispensary. There was no way of taking—there were no cars, they had to cart him on the wheelbarrow and rush him to the dispensary and he stayed with eye, with a white pupil, you know, and live up to—he died in 1968.

JJ: What was Hāna like in those days, when you were a young kid growing up here?

HK: I remember when I first got over here, there were just about five cars. Everybody was going on the foot. And there was a store here, the plantation store. There were more stores before than we have today. There's another store right down—the Chinese store. There's another one Japanese store, and there's another one way down here, Chinese store, and there was one bank down there and you go over here is a barbershop. And you come up here you get the Okada Store just right

above that church. Over there, if you went over there, there's a barbershop over there. There's another store and then there's coffee shop, a restaurant, then another store, and then another store, a barbershop and the theater. That's a---have you gone that side, yet?

JJ: Yes.

HK: Yeah, you pass that Hasegawa Store. That used to be a theater. If you see the style of that building, that was a theater. And the two doors that goes in, into the theater. And had good solid—those days get the solid seat right on. It's a big-sized theater. And those days well, ten cents admission so it wasn't too much. I think it was a silent show. And then when you come to the main picture of that evening, they get organist up there, organ with a roller thing play[ing]. Really nice. And then once in a while you have a Filipino band go inside and then serenade while we watch the picture. It really was all silent. Oh, we enjoyed it. Was ten cents admission so it didn't cost too much, Saturday and Sunday. And once in a while they would have this *dokkoi-sho*. The Japanese celebration and they start dancing around the central part. And they pound the drum and then that guy who pound the drum he said, "*Dokkoi-sho!*" Then everybody come out together, and [sing] (sings in Japanese). And the fellow, he's a crooner, too. He just sings from the top. We stayed right over there until—especially if we go to the movie and the movie gets through about nine o'clock. Everybody walk down there to the Japanese[-language] school. Just about a hundred yards from where the store—you went to the store? Down on the lower side of the road? Boy, you see one big gang down there and everybody joining the dance. But the worst part about it, when it comes to twelve o'clock, everything—the lights they all off. The street lights. But when you look it's plain dark. And this is all used to be sugarcane fields. This one across the road, everywhere. So there's no light. The street light goes on, what, one bulb, and not too strong. But when the light go off, you cannot see. You just feel your way coming home. And we used to go home about twelve o'clock at night. So lonely and no sound, you figure you hope you won't run into something maybe a horse or, you know, another guy who's walking the opposite direction. But when we finally get home, we get home want to relax.

JJ: What school did you go to?

HK: I attended Hāna. The Hāna---there was a kindergarten at first we went. And then after that I went to the first grade all through until eighth grade and we graduated from here. Then after that—see, when we were living [there], we had quite a good-size family. There was so much hardship on my father. And when I graduated from school, I wanted to go to Lahainaluna [School], but I had to stay home and help my father. So I did that. Then the following year, I went to Lahainaluna, but I stayed over there a year and a half. The sophomore year, I had to quit the school just before Christmas and then didn't return. I didn't go to school. That's all, as far as I went to school. I stayed home and helped to support my family. And then, 1935, you know I was about eighteen, nineteen years, I married her.

JJ: Nineteen thirty-five, and what is your wife's name?

HK: Marie. Marie Kan Hai. Capital K-A-N, capital H-A-I. She's a Korean Hawaiian. Her mother belongs to the Kaikala. K-A-I-K-A-L-A. That's her family. That used to be a big family living down at Kīpahulu. That's about ten miles down the road. That's the next village. That used to be a sugar plantation town, too. Up to about 1921, I think, the thing close down. When we came to Hāna the mill was just about closed. But there were stores over there, there was a camp, there were all kind. A lot of people living there. But she was born down here. It's what she said. According to the birth certificate yes.

JJ: Were both of your parents Hawaiian?

HK: Her father was pure Korean. And he, according to her, her father left Korea at the tender age of sixteen. He took off from there and caught a ship, hoping to come to someplace where he came to Hawai'i. And as far as she relayed it to me, that when he came to Kaua'i, he was working in the broom factory. Making brooms you know. He didn't work in the plantation, the sugar plantation at all. Then from here he start moving—he ran away from Korea. Ran away from the parents and came over here at the age of sixteen, I think. Then they stayed over there, then he moved—from Honolulu, he moved to Kaua'i. And at the time the sugar plantation were looking for men. But however, he was working for the broom factory. And then he came to Honolulu, he stayed over there for a while. Then he moved over to Maui. Then from there, then he ended up in Kaupō. That's about the far end of Maui—Hāna, that is, Hāna district. And he stayed over there. They came to Kipahulu and moved here and there. Finally, he met her mother and they got married and they left a lot of children.

JJ: What---now what about your parents. Were your mother and father both Hawaiian?

HK: My mother is---her father was Chinese, full Chinese. He married my grandmother, who was a pure Hawaiian.

JJ: What was her name?

HK: Gee whiz. Aiona, Aiona A-I-O-N-A. And that's what my mother said, that her father's name was Aiona. I saw the picture of his. And my grandmother. Then my grandfather died, and she remarried another Chinaman, Ah Loo. And I remembered, because when I was—I was pretty young but I get good memory of my grandfather, Chinese grandfather—and we left really when I was about five years [old]. And I remembered playing with my big brother. We used to go on the track. You know, you get that big train wheels, the car wheel. Used to push them on the side. And, yes I managed to push them on the track and push the thing up and down, up and down. Used to like to push here and there.

JJ: What did they use the railroad tracks, the railroad for?

HK: For the sugarcane. They used to haul sugarcane by rail, and transport to the mill all by rail cart. Same way with Hāna. The railway runs all the way down to Ka'ili'ili. That's in three and a half miles from here. If you see that---did anybody point you where Richard Pryor lives?

JJ: No.

HK: Yeah, he lives just in that vicinity. And that's where part of the plantation was. And that plantation had about two—maybe a hundred people, or hundred to two hundred people. And then some other places scattered here, the camps, there were Japanese camp, there were Chinese camp, Puerto Rican camp, and the Hawaiians were all scattered all among themselves. And they did pretty well, though as far as—where that guy now, that actor who's got that macadamia nut farm down here. I cannot seem to remember his name all the time. That actor [i.e. Jim Nabors] that acted as a serviceman—as a marine or in the picture he's single. Well, he had that macadamia nut—he bought that place from the five hundred acres.

JJ: Well, when you came back from Lahainaluna, where did you live at that time?

HK: When I came back? I stayed with my parents.

JJ: And where was their house located, was it in—right in Hāna itself?

HK: Yeah. Was right in back here. That's where we lived the longest. But we'd been moving one house to the next, just in that neighborhood. Someone leave or move out, we move over there. And my aunty and my uncle lived just nearby too, until they got a place down at Hāmoa that was given to them by this Hawaiian man who never had any relatives. So he was sick at one time, my aunty went down there to take good care of him. Took care, and took care, and he was just a sick old man. He have anybody to care for him. Finally he make a deed on the land and deed it to my aunt. That's how they managed to get a piece of property that was two-acre lot.

JJ: What year was that? Do you know about?

HK: Was way back in, I would say sometime in 1930, I think.

JJ: And did you move down here at that time?

HK: No we came in 1922.

JJ: Did you move to Hāmoa after they got the property?

HK: No I didn't. I stayed with my parents, but I go down there and stay with my aunt and my uncle. We go down there, and sometimes we all go down there together, and we stay down there couple days and we come home again. But it was good to live right near the beach. Have you been down there?

JJ: Yes.

HK: That place where they. . . Yeah, if you want to know I can show you how that wave, how that thing came. Came from two, three directions.

JJ: Well let's---first can you describe to me what Hāmoa looked like in those days? What did the village look like?

HK: It's just a flat, flat place I think. Only composed about. . . Well before maybe had there about a dozen homes. But it reduced down to when we—my aunt and my uncle had acquired that place, and there was less people, lot of people left. Other them died. So I think they ended up with half a dozen of them. And some people bought place over there. They built and lived over there. But there were more people living before. There were big families living over there, Hawaiian families. But my aunty was—they were so fortunate to have the place over there. And then when we came to Hāna, we never did have any place to live with. My uncle left the plantation, was working for—they had this federal project, you know, before when [Franklin D.] Roosevelt was president. They had this kind of project, employment project. They get all these private jobs that President Roosevelt start giving, you know. And—what do you call that kind of project now? Federal project. And he was working for them. And they were working. They were working like, you know that time, was two dollars an hour. Plantation was only getting about dollar a day. They were getting about two dollars an hour, four bucks a day. They had the song, yeah. (HK sings.) “. . . fifty cents an hour, (four) bucks a day.” (HK hums.) “They make you (whistle) for your money.” And they used to sing that, all these people who got a job in that. And they joke at the

plantations. Plantations only receiving about dollar a day, dollar fifty cents. But all these guys, they get about four dollars and up. They were making really good pay. And they had a restaurant down here. Boy, that place was filled when the liquor [prohibition] was lifted. Man that was the biggest business place because, hoo, people just go right into that place. And it's a restaurant, they give you food, but when come to the time when they coming for beer, *chee*. . . . And this was big business. At the time beer cost only about dime a bottle. Was cheap.

JJ: Did they play music there, too?

HK: No more. That time no. If you go to a party, yes. Parties always a bunch of guys with guitars and singers and get together. And you start after a few and start to get more and more and the party would start today and tomorrow and then go for three, four days at a time. And if it was a wedding, if that was a wedding party, it goes on and on and on. We didn't come home for three, four, five days at that time. In those days, parties really lasted, lasted. The people from the whole district just come in and join up. And they. . . .

(Pause) Yes, I'm sorry she's got a disease [HK is referring to his wife (who has Alzheimer's disease)] and it's hard to control.

JJ: That's okay. Let's see now. Can you describe the Hāna area before the tidal wave, what it looked like, what the town looked like, little bit?

HK: Before the tidal wave, oh, it was a really a nice town. And it had so much of racial groups, you know. Had Japanese, you have Chinese, you have Puerto Ricans, you have Koreans. In fact, we had---there was a Korean church down here. I think the Korean bell, that church bell, I think that's the one over there by this congregational church. Wait one moment.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

HK: And there was a Mormon church. That Mormon church is still there yet. But the main churches was the Mormon church the congregational church—that's the one over here—and the Catholic church. And the other church didn't come up. . . . But the Korean church was over there. There was a Japanese church, but they had it in a school. And that, they were the only church we had.

JJ: What were the main occupations in Hāna in those days?

HK: In Hāna? The principal one was sugar. That's where most of the people worked, had jobs. And then they get the county government, the people who work on the road. And that was the only kind of work. And then you have small-kind private kind of jobs that work out here. And then those days they had welfare. But welfare recipients get about ten dollars a month. But I think by the county government.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

JJ: Okay, in the 1940s, was there very much military around in Hāna?

HK: Yes. There were lots of them. Right down there by the harbor wall, place where the tidal wave came in, there's a pine grove over there. There's a bivouac area where the—what do you call?—some of those military boys camped in there. And then there's someplace where the next place. But you see every now and then, you see army jeeps and out and going. And then just about



before the end of the war, then they completed the road coming from this side going around the island. Before that, only one way. And if they go that way they have to either take a horse, because the road is terrible over there. Even if you take a trail [you have to] get through those gulches, deep gulches. But now with the bridge you just cross the bridge and you shorten up the trip. But those days we take the jeep. Was running around just before the war. Those were the handy equipment that can go and these. . . . But the road was began by prison labor. Prison were housed—were this side of ‘Ulupalakua. There’s a place over there they camp and then they work their way through. And they managed to get pretty close. Then the project was taken care of by the federal project. Then when they got done with it, they started to move faster. It took many years before the roads was improved. Today, oh, the roads is good. Much improved.

JJ: Where were you on April 1, 1946?

HK: Well, I was here, I worked for the plantation, and then the plantation was going to close in July, I think, of 1945. Yeah, that’s right. And I was invited to remain here and he was going to give me a good job. But I knew that they were going to ship cattle in here. And I wasn’t a cowboy at all. I didn’t like that kind of work. So I told them no, no, I’m going to the other side and work for the plantation. And I was thinking about going to the Pu‘unēnē HC&S [Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company]. Because that was a big plan[tation]. Either that one at Pu‘unēnē or the one at Pā‘ia. And finally I accepted that Pu‘unēnē plantation. That’s the time the laborers, we were all relocated, you know, to the pineapple industry in Moloka‘i, in Lāna‘i, or some other islands.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

JJ: So on that morning, were you here in Hāna, or. . . .?

HK: Yes. I was working at the other side. I came home—I usually come home during the weekend. During the weekend I come with—I had one car. On Fridays, I come home.

JJ: What kind of car did you have?

HK: Well, the car I bought was a 1930 Plymouth. It was a four-door sedan. Nice. And I bought it secondhand. I only got it for \$250. But had all the glasses and everything, and runs so good. When I got that car, I just had a license too. I could have gotten license earlier, but my uncle he already had a car but he didn’t trust me driving that car. So, well *chee*, the plantation owned pickup truck, so I practice on that one. And then finally one day I told my father, “I want to go take license.”

He said, “Okay.” So he let me take the truck and I pass the test and I got license. See, so that’s how I got. . . . But now, well those days so hard to get car because the pay was so—I was getting only—I don’t know if you believe me but those days I only earning one dollar one whole day. And *chee* you gotta stay all day you get six days a week. And you get twenty-six days. That’s all you going to get, twenty-six dollars plus you get the little bonus attached to that. That’s all you get. Twenty-six dollars, or maybe you get a little bonus. If you get that [bonus], maybe you get twenty-eight dollars. That’s all you get and day after day, you work six days a week. Come Sunday, boy, want to relax. And when you were young you look forward to a day when you can take off. And Sunday was the only day. And Sunday, what, we have to go to church. My parents they are church people, boy. When they left Big Island—in fact, my great-grandfather was a minister of the church.

JJ: So on that---you came back home Sunday and so you were here April 1?

HK: Yeah. I was---that was the day, Monday, when I was going to take my aunty to the other side so I didn't work that day and that was a fortunate thing. When it happened, she [HK's wife] was a operator, the telephone exchange.

JJ: Your wife was the operator?

HK: She was on at that time. So she got a message from my aunty from Honolulu—I mean Hāmoa. And my aunty told me, "*Chee*, that's funny. There's a big wave that came into the. . . . And hit the stone wall and broke the wall." And the wall is only about this high, it's not too big. But she didn't say anything about how deep the water went into the land. Because get the wall over there, the wall is over there by the wall, and the front of the house is right here, facing the wall. That's how close it was. And the space was the yard, see, right around the house. You can knock that wall over there, see but still come and hit that that house, too. But that was the first wave. The second wave didn't hit until pretty long, maybe to about fifteen, twenty minutes. And when it came, it went a hundred yards inland. It took everything with it. And my dad was saying my uncle said. . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

HK: My uncle said they were coming out with my aunty [who] went inside. She forgot something. She went into the house to pick up something. So my uncle said, "Hurry up, quick, because *chee*, there's another wave coming in!" And she went in but she didn't come out. Then they saw this big wave was now coming in! Then he yell again, never get any response. So he saw the wave was coming so he ran. As he ran, there was a big chicken wire fence right in front of him. And right by the fence there was a *ti* leaf plant growing. And just as he was about to run, this water came and push him so he grabbed the *ti* leaf. But after the flash, he knew what had happened. But when he found out—when after, when he got to himself again, he was climbing. He was lifted up on the coconut tree. And the coconut tree was a short tree, not too high, about like this where the coconuts hanging. The water lifted him up all the way up to the first branches, you know, up there. Gee, he was so scared. Then when he stopped, when the water receded, he couldn't hold on he just came down again. But when the water went down, it pulled all his clothes off, off his body. And then after that he just let it go, the whole thing, he said. He was so scared he just let it go. Then he started looking around for something to wear. And he look for the people [in] the other house. Only, *chee*, he and one woman. One other woman over there was—and one more I think, two women. But this other woman was who was trapped in a house.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JJ: Yes, okay. So you were talking about your uncle?

HK: Yeah. When the water receded, he said, oh boy, [he] found out the whole wave coming down just let 'em go himself right down on the ground. Then he found out he was without clothes. So he began to look around. He found something around, so he pick up. And he was looking around for my aunty. So that's when she called and told me about what happened down there. So I told her, "Okay, I going down."

JJ: That was your wife that called you?

HK: Yes. She called and at the time I had two children at home. Wasn't of age to go to school. One of them was old enough. One of my children, a daughter. She's over here now.

JJ: Where were you at that time in the morning?

HK: I was at home.

JJ: Hāna?

HK: Yes, in the back. Because I didn't go the other side. Because the week before, my aunty told me that she wanted to hang a ride with me when I come over here and going back. So I took a day off. . . .

JJ: Did you see the tidal wave at all?

HK: I saw, like I said, I think I'm the only one that witnessed the Hāmoa one. I don't think anybody saw anything. I think nobody [else saw] because you couldn't come from the other side. Because when the water came out it just closed the whole area. And the funny thing about it, not the whole Hāmoa was covered. Only was half of that part. The other side, no the wave didn't go on. So only this side, Hāna side of the Hāmoa section, was flat. The water came all about hundred yards inland. And right between the end of the wave, the hundred yards inland, that's where the airport was—Hāna Airport, Hāmoa airport.

JJ: Okay, so where---now where were you when you saw the first wave?

HK: Okay, I was on Maui going—I had the two children with me, and on our way to school. So I told them, “Hey, come on let's go.” And that was---the old sedan was all rusted, the body, so I had one pickup truck made out of that, what was left. Took off the back section of the sedan, then put a body, truck body on there, and that's what I used. And then put a cab over it. I rode that. Made it look like a bus so you can stay in the bus section [i.e., category, and] you don't have to pay truck tax. So I took my two children with me. I said, “Okay, we go.” Then I passed this place over here. Look at down here, see over here was cane field. The cane was already harvested. But I look across, I could see the pier down there, but you see the piles, there's nothing, no water underneath. And the thing just standing up like this. Gee, that must be it. Look like the wave stay way out. Yet out there you can see, hoo, something piling up out there. And you can hear big noise. Big noise coming from there. But I stop and I saw somebody was cutting grass over here for the county. And I told him, “Hey, there's something odd going on, better go look down there, see there's no water under the wharf.” Then I kept on going, going down. Then if you can go that side—you haven't seen that side yet?

JJ: No.

HK: Okay, if you do go, as you getting down, going on your way down, there's a big hill (Ka Iwi O Pele) sitting right ahead of you and sitting on the edge on the *mauka* side of the beach (Lehoula). From the right through, below the hill, had this beach over here, you can see right through, you can see Hāmoa. When I come to the part I saw—what I saw I couldn't believe my eyes. Had this big wave, this water from the land was going out. Brown water. And on that water, there were two homes going out. When I saw that, gee, so this is what they call tidal wave. The water was going out. Taking out these two houses. And there were about six houses in that area. But that were the two biggest two houses that were sitting right where that first two houses when you get

down to Hāmoa. And as you come, you drive around that hill you come alongside the road coming down, and you go right down. And right down there is—before was all clear, there was no forest. There was a airport this side. And where the houses were, there only a few coconut trees. Otherwise, there were hardly any trees over there that place you can see right through.

I couldn't get—you know I have photographs that I got, I don't know where it is. If I had it I would show you, then you can see how the place look. You can see right through as if there was nothing. But later on, now you go there you couldn't see anything across. Boy that water came inside.

By the time the next wave came I was going down the other side. On the road going down all the way up to the edge of the water. And just as you come, then you can see the water going toward this side already below the hill. On this side of the hill anyhow, going down the road toward Hāmoa. Boy, I was going down there, that's when I saw the water hit the road right ahead of me and that's where the beach is. When I saw the water, then I thought yes, this damn water going all the way into the land. So I told the kids (Henry Jr. and Annie), "Hey, I'm going to park my car right over here, then I'm going to make a run around." To try see how far I can—and this goes to the high ground. So I told the kids, "Don't go out from the car, stay in the car!" They said okay so I ran out. And found the whole place all clean out by this water took out. . . . Boy, I went down and I saw my uncle and he was looking out at the water. I was wondering what he looking at. He looking for his wife. Then I saw this big water came down. I was so scared that I ran. And then I went back down there, and you know I saw another woman who came out of the ocean. That woman was in the house, that big house that was taken out by the ocean, with her grandmother in it with two babies. They were trapped in the house. Because when the water came up, it trapped them. The door, it locked stuck. The pressure of the water kept them from opening the door.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

JJ: So now you were talking about—you were down—you left the children in the car?

HK: Yes. And that's about where I went down. By the time I got down there, there's another wave came in. But you see the wave come from different directions. When I went down, the wave was coming from this side, going that way. And run right into the lands straight the other side. Then the next one came directly and came right all the way up to that old airport. It came in about hundred yards. And then after that it came from that direction, come this way. But only this side of Hāmoa. Didn't go the other half. The other half wasn't touched but only this side wave damaged how many homes now. . . . (Ben) Dusson had two homes over there. Then the other one, Pahuwai, then my uncle's one, then the next—my uncle had two house, three houses.

JJ: What was your uncle's name?

HK: James Kahula. And his wife is Mary, my aunty. And then I had another uncle was living down there, too. His brother, younger brother, he was staying at one more other shack in the back. We had to get the other neighbor next. Had one nice, pretty new house. Then the next one—that's one, two, three, four, four homes. But all the homes the other side never been affected by this wave. Only this side. Man, part of the house was lifted on the stone wall and left—small little house lifted on the stone wall. Then later on they managed to get the house out of the wall and put 'em back to it's original. . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

JJ: So you were telling me also about the ladies that were in the house that was washed away.

HK: The ones was trapped in the house. Yes, the young woman just got married not too long and she had one first child, she was holding one. And she was holding the sister-in-law's child in the other arm. And the grandmother was in the house. Both of them got trapped inside the house because the door was shut. And then they went way outside but she tried to go open the door but it couldn't open. And finally the door opened, one door opened then the water came inside knocked one of the babies from her hand, her arm. She hang on, no can, so couldn't do it so she let them go. And she hang on to—and then she lost the other one, too. But when she lost the other one too, the first thing she thought was for herself. She didn't know where the grandmother was.

And to find out later, they found out her remains was about—say about two, three, two and a half miles I think, that way. They found her on the beach. Just, we know, what's left of that. She was an old woman. Somewhere around seventy-five years old.

And she told me that when she got free from the babies, she climbed on the roof of the house. And she stayed there. When she got a chance, she just dove in the water and by some miracle the wave managed to get her up. And she came, she came right up to the—from the beach come right out. When I saw somebody walking up there, I was so surprised. I was going down to grab her. Boy, I see this wave coming in, shucks, I took to the hills, boy. But I didn't know how strong the wave was going to be. But after that I start to go that water was just coming in—it was doing that every day. But I said at certain time it just go inside. Boy, the water go right in. And go all the way inside and go to the airport. The first one, I don't know how far that thing went. Way inside. Boy, you don't see nothing but dirty water going out. And then when I went around there you see all kind of type of fish on the ground. You see the eels, and what you call this kind of octopus. All this darn thing all scattered all around. Boy, you had lot of people coming later run to grab the fish. Want to take it home and try to eat it. But to find out later they couldn't eat it because the mud and everything got into the system and really made the fish all not worth the effort to go ahead and try and cook it. And even many hours. And same time we were looking out for any. . . .

They found the babies which was lost by this woman who was holding the two babies. They found them right in there. The current took them right back inside. Someday they found them. But not one place. My aunt was found someplace around about seventy-five yards, I think, away from where the house was. And the water took her up and then pulled her around and go to the neighboring house. That's about, say about hundred yards, no, no, seventy-five yards away. They found her under a stone wall. She was dragged all the way to that place. The babies were found here and there. I don't know where they found. . . . But, boy that is a big damage.

And that's---there was a little bridge over there where the little stream goes that go down to that—right near the airport. That whole thing was clean up. But every time where the wave come in, we see where the wave coming from because there were three directions. Coming from this side, coming from this side, coming from that side. But that side, on the half on Hāmoa was not affected by this. It's only on this side, I think, because there was so much growth and little bit higher ground over there. But this side the ocean, ho man, that thing just came right inside. I was so scared, boy. Made me so scared how many times I had to run up and down, run up and down. And there were a number of coconut trees bordering the piece of property that my aunty and my uncle were living. And there was another woman right next neighbor. She was still over there, but she was very ill. She had pneumonia . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

## SIDE TWO

HK: She died later. But this other woman, that old lady, we found her way down the other side. She was dead. But that place, after the tidal wave the whole place was just clean. Just like one desert. Over there you guys see everything around boy, it was all clear. I had those photographs, you look at the photographs. You couldn't believe, if you see that place now. The place now is so overgrown with trees and coconuts and everything over there now. And there's a lot of tree growing alongside the fish pond. There's a fish pond over there. So the wave come all the way from outside it climbed through the—go into the fish pond then come out.

JJ: Now what about the cleanup? Who did the cleanup in that area of all the debris?

HK: Well, I think the county did that. It was a slow process. Took time. But never had much to clean. Because you see, most all these things are all pile up together because the water just took here and there. My uncle had a car and my uncle was piss off because the pandanus tree. It's all bent, smashed. And I don't know who else's cars was over there. But that tidal wave only went in there maybe, I would say, would cover about eight acres, I think. That's about all. Just go further outside. This side this the only place where they affected.

JJ: What about rebuilding? Did anybody rebuild on the same place?

HK: Oh yes. After that the government came in and built house for those who lost their home. You know, just a house for them to live in for a while they can do whatever they want. And not only that place was effective you know the one at down here, Waikaloa. You know here, down here the beach. But down here too it happened. There were three boats, three boats fishing boats that's tied to the wharf. These boats was just taken around by the wave and everything. Then bang—began to hit each other. First thing you know it sank. And there was a big boat owned by one of the fellows in Hāna. They took from the launch, you know, the boat because the launch—you know they bought that and used it as a fishing boat. Boy, that boat got a strike out of them. (Laughs) Aw shucks. Yeah, down Hāna Bay, the water ran all the way up.

I've got pictures of that how far the water came up. And *chee*, when the water go down there's nothing. There's all this---you could see the bottom and the boats resting at the bottom, that's all. But it goes out so far. Just before you get out of the bay, that's where the water is. The ocean just stay out there. Maybe that's where I think deepest so couldn't go further down. But out here was just empty, empty of water. But you couldn't believe that thing happened.

JJ: What did the bottom look like when the water went out?

HK: The bottom was what?

JJ: The ocean bottom look like when the water was out?

HK: Flat. It's flat but the pictures was taken on top this—from up here the hill. Right where the—this is the hotel here. Right down and from over there, you can overlook because over there there's a—the hill begins to rise from over here. Not too far here because to go up then you can see right over into the bay and you go by the edge of the hill you can see down plainly. That's where the fisherman used to go spot schools. Over here on the hill.

JJ: How did you feel about the ocean after the tidal wave?

HK: Nothing. Was like normal. That's the funny thing about it. But only thing you no remember how the beach was, how they looked, because you took everything all around there. All kind of growth is just cleared. Anything was growing over there's nothing. Nothing. It was just clean. But now, the place all overgrown with all kind of trees growing near the ocean. I don't know where they came from, but.

JJ: What were the changes that you saw in Hāna from just before to just after the tidal wave?

HK: Lot of changes, but a lot of people from different bought properties over here, too. And they got those homes—all get those the kind of boat houses. Better way, because, you know, there's a law to that. You built houses, gotta build.

But my cousin---see, my cousin it was lucky thing. My aunty got—this is Jackie—they actually came from the Big Island. There were three brothers. Three of them brothers, three or four of them. And there was an accident that happened where the man and a wife kill each other, their parents. Jackie's parents. And when he killed, nobody saw until later. Then they start to call and they got hold of my aunty. When that time we still had to go by ship. Never had any plane in here at that time. So he went over there. She went over there and brought the children and Jackie was one of the four boys. Was all boys. And then when they got over here, I don't know, how long later, then he, they, what you call, they took. . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

JJ: Okay, And what would you say if somebody asked you what to do if they heard the tidal wave warning now?

HK: Well, Just about few years ago, it was six, seven, eight years ago, I think, they were talking about tidal waves, 'cause there was a tsunami someplace in Japan or Chile or someplace over there. And it was going to hit. And it hit---already hit Guam I think, and it was aiming towards Hawai'i. Man, I tell you the people came down by the beach. You know where they staying, they were staying right on the high ground. They were staying up, gee I think about thirty feet I think. And they were looking down the beach and they hoping that the tidal going come up. I thought to myself, *chee*, that big tidal wave never come up that far over here. And they were way up make sure they stay away from this big wave, but never happen. Maybe came up about one inch.  
(Chuckles)

JJ: Lucky thing.

HK: But that was a tidal wave, boy. Boy I saw that day I couldn't believe that water can come all the way into land. Boy, and that whole place was flooded. It came inside. It came way in. Into the cane fields, too.

And then my sister was living over there—she died, she just died—my sister and some of the children and some of the rest of the people around that neighborhood, they ran up the hill. And good thing they were up there earlier. You know, they---from there stayed up there. I never saw them. Because all the stuff was happening down here, we try to get everything and my aunty was coming in. I got the ranch truck, we got her and put something on and then we took her to the mortuary to get her dressed and everything. So we were busy doing all that kind of stuff. But, ho

everybody was busy running up and down. But as far as I know, only I was down there. Nobody else was down there, at that time. And the children, like Jackie and all them, they already gone to school. Then nobody else except me and my two children was on that truck with me that morning. There was nobody around that was alive except, well, that woman that was in the house. She can tell a really good story about that, boy. She got---they just got married. And she had a baby. And then after that they moved out to Honolulu, and never heard from them anymore.

JJ: After the tidal wave?

HK: After that, yes. Never heard from them, for long time. Cullen, Cullen was the name. C-U-L-L-E-N. There's a family that married into this Duggan that was living over there. And the children were living here. And this woman was married to one of the Cullen's children. And later on I think I heard that they were divorced.

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

HK: Well, only thing I can say is that since my uncle them and all the children were down there [they] never have any house, they came and live with me, up here. And good thing I had a big house. They all came stayed with me and stayed over here.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

HK: I had to go back to the plantation and see my superior tell him I had leave the job over there because it was very important that I come back so I can accommodate my parents—my family that just lost their home. Had no place to go except the place where I. . . . That place I was living, I was working for the plantation I had for free. But I left, they charge me for rent. But that was only ten dollars a month, so that was nothing. So after that then I told them I reported to my superior, and put in there, tell him I had to go back and take care of my family. Well they were grateful for me going and telling them about this. And he said, "Well, anytime you want to come back, that job's open for you."

I tell, "Thank you." But I never come back again. Yeah. So I stayed here worked for the ranch and then she [HK's wife] was still working for the telephone operator. Then when the telephone system phased out, then the manager of this hotel approach her and asked her if she wants to work for the hotel. And she asked, "What kind of job?"

He said, "Oh, become the waitress, head waitress."

She said, "Well I don't have any experience."

He tell, "Why don't you come over here. We teach you how." So she came. She seemed to like it. She always would be the—what you call—the people to greet, you know, that she has to greet with. And then she made lot of friends out of these tourists that came to Hāna. And because of that they make sure they come every year or they come every two years. They come, they stay for a month or so. Boy, she had really responsible for a lot of the friends. Every time they come through they ask for her. She put them in their seats.

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

HK: You had those pictures? I don't know where those pictures went. Somebody took them.



END OF INTERVIEW



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Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

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