

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Albert L. Stanley

“ . . . it was definitely a tragedy. Something that not many people witness. . . . Well, you're so awestruck. I mean, I didn't have a keen mind like you have where I could generate all these thoughts, I was just there with my mouth open saying, 'Good god, what is that?' You know what I mean? . . . We never even knew about a tidal wave. It's something that since then they've come up with all their early warning systems and everything, but at that time nobody knew.”

Albert Louis Stanley was born August 31, 1930 in Hilo, Hawai'i. His father, Clyde LeGrand Stanley, was originally from Missouri. He journeyed to Hawai'i as a young man in 1916 in search of excitement. Settling first in Hilo working for Hawaiian Dredging Company, Clyde Stanley married Rosina Bassler, a public health nurse in Hilo. The couple eventually moved to Laupāhoehoe, where he worked as a maintenance superintendent for Hawaiian Consolidated Railway, Ltd. After suffering a crippling accident in 1942, Clyde Stanley became a well-known and prolific woodworker.

Albert Stanley and his three sisters grew up in Laupāhoehoe. He attended Laupāhoehoe School through twelfth grade and graduated in 1948.

Following graduation, Stanley worked as an ironworker for companies that converted scrap steel from the defunct Hawaiian Consolidated Railway, Ltd. From 1952 to 1956, he worked for the Hawai'i National Guard in Laupāhoehoe. In 1957, he went to Midway and was a storekeeper for Hawaiian Dredging Company.

Beginning in 1959, Stanley attended an airplane mechanics school at Northrup Aviation in California. In 1960, he began his thirty-five year career with Continental Airlines in Honolulu.

Retired since 1995, Stanley lives in Honolulu. He and his former wife have five children and seven grandchildren.

Interviewed in his Honolulu apartment, Stanley recalled the tragic events of April 1, 1946. A Laupāhoehoe School sophomore at the time, he remembers being driven to school by his mother. Halfway down the winding road leading to the school, Stanley noticed the peculiar behavior of the ocean. Stopping the car at that point, he witnessed the tsunami's destructive force on the school and peninsula.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Albert L. Stanley (AS)

Honolulu, O'ahu

August 28, 1998

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: Okay, let's begin. This is an interview with Albert Stanley on the 28th of August, 1998. Interviewer is Warren Nishimoto and we're in his home in Honolulu, O'ahu.

First question I want to ask you, Albert, is when and where you were born?

AS: I was born in Hilo, Hawai'i on August 31, 1930.

WN: Well, happy birthday.

(Laughter)

AS: Pretty close.

WN: Okay, so Hilo. Now you were born in Hilo because of the hospital there? Or was it because . . .

AS: Well, yes, my father [Clyde LeGrand Stanley] was living in Hilo at that time. He was building the breakwater in Hilo [Bay]. My mother and my father were living there at that time. And after the breakwater was completed, he went to work for the Hawaiian Consolidated Rail[way], Ltd., which was just being completed. He moved to Laupāhoehoe at that time, and I lived there through my high school years and a few years after.

WN: What did your father do for Hawai'i Consolidated?

AS: He was a superintendent of maintenance on the railroad, in the Hāmākua section.

WN: Okay, you also told me he was pretty handy as a woodworker?

AS: Yes, well, when he became an invalid, he fell off the trestle going down to [Pāpa'aloa] mill [Laupāhoehoe Sugar Company], it was in December 1942, he became a paraplegic. And then he turned to woodworks, making small items out of Hawaiian native woods. Just something to do and keep himself busy. And he became quite complacent doing that. In those days they didn't have the facilities and the methods of taking care of invalids at home like they have today, where the people today are very fortunate. You know, the state provides them with all

kinds of different things, you know, outlooks. He became the envy of many people, they came over and interviewed him, trying to get other invalids and people that stayed at home feeling that they could do something that was constructive instead of just being dormant. If you stay home and you don't have anything to do to take your mind off your problems, you're hurting. Lot of other things could develop.

WN: Could he make a living off of the woodwork?

AS: Well, yes and no. Tourism was just getting started. And couple of the tour bus drivers wanted to stop by and bring their tourists over. But they'd also want a little bit of the kickback from, you know, they're not doing that out of the goodness of their heart, everything's in business. And he didn't think that he could provide enough to keep a big thing like that moving. So he worked at his own pace and it moved pretty good. It wasn't something to really make money, he just did it for something to do. And people would stop by and buy something and visit with him. It was nice to have somebody come and visit, rather than being home isolated.

WN: What kind of stuff did he make?

AS: Oh, he made cribbage boards, and picture frames, and little lamps, and several games, small games. And they moved pretty good. Jewelry boxes. So things that he could handle; he couldn't handle really big stuff. I used to hustle around and get wood for him. Rip it up, and our neighbor had a big saw, so we could rip up the logs and the small stuff which he could use. And kept him busy.

I learned quite a bit about Hawaiian woods myself, you know, going scouting around. Coffee is a nice, white wood, almost like ivory. In the early days, the homesteaders that moved in that area planted a lot of coffee for their home use. And some of those trees got big. In fact, I got one that was about almost twelve inches in diameter. That's a good-sized coffee tree. You see the ones in Kona, (chuckles) maybe two or three inches. But on our side, I found a couple of 'em in the mountains that were big trees. Of course, they had to get big because of the guava and everything else; kind of survival of the fittest in the jungle. And I got all kinds of wood for him.

WN: Did they have *koa* up there, too?

AS: Oh yes, *koa*. And I even got a lot [of] sandalwood. That's one thing. See, in the early days, sandalwood was a native of the islands. With all this reforestation that they're doing, they're raising eucalyptus for pulp wood. Why don't they reforest with sandalwood here and there? You know what I mean? I don't know the growth rate of a sandalwood tree, whether it would be economically feasible. I mean, it's a long-term investment, whatever it is. But since it was grown here as a native, it must be compatible with this environment. I don't know.

You stop to wonder how these woods got established here because when the White man came, there were forests of sandalwood here. How did it get here? (Chuckles) They're talking about saving the forest or indigenous plants and things, nobody says anything about the sandalwood. They could reforest it with that.

So anyway, he kept busy doing his woodwork and kept happy. He had a lot of pain because of the, I guess, the nerves in the accident. He had several operations. Eventually they convinced

him that he would never walk. So they could sever some nerves and keep the pain away. But he went through days, I don't know whether it was the weather or cycles of the body, there were days it was very. . . . He took a lot of codeine and, boy, he swallowed half a dozen aspirins at a time, you know. And codeine can kill a person, you know; your body builds up a resistance, an immunity. I was a young boy, I used to go over to the hospital. They didn't have controls on drugs like they have today. I never even thought of popping any pills. I brought them home. But it got so it affected his digestion and the doctor decided—well, he was already an addict, you know—and pulled him off cold turkey and I seen some withdrawals. You know, he really went through a lot of really miserable times. But that was all part of the treatment, you know. I guess doctors, in those days, they did the best they can. They didn't have the medications they have today.

And all till he died, he went through good days and bad days. I remember one of the neighbors used to come down and visit with him. And that day he was in pain. I could tell, I used to help him sometimes, around the shop. And he was in misery that day. Anyway, Joe Say sits down. He came down quite frequently and visited with my father. He was maybe couple years younger. But anyway, he's pouring his problems out to my father and my father is talking and making him laugh and this and that. Visited a couple hours, and then he went home. They lived right close by. And he said, "Oh, Albert, take me to bed." I had to wheel him into the house.

Over his bed we had a trapeze where he could hold the forward end and I'd pick up his legs and put him in the bed because he couldn't get in the bed by himself. And I said, "And he think he got problems." (Chuckles) You know what I mean?

WN: Where was he born?

AS: He was born in Missouri.

WN: Missouri?

AS: Yeah. Well actually, he was the second generation. He had half brothers that were old men. I mean, he was the youngest of the second generation. My grandfather died when he was a young man. His brother's name was Albert, and he was in Colorado working in the mines. And my father ran away. He was a teenager—thirteen, fourteen, real young. Jumped on the, you know, they rode the rails those days, like hobos. And he went to Colorado, stayed with his brother, and then got jobs, you know. So he never had a high school education. It was a hard life. He came up by the grassroots.

They used to travel on the rails. He said one wintertime there was this big flat car, and there was a boiler on the flat car, they were going to take it somewhere. It was cold. You know how the wind's whippin' and he was just jumping on this train. I guess when it was going up the hill, it'll go slower. He figured, well, there's a firebox on this boiler, he's gonna crawl in the firebox and get out of the wind. He opens the door, these fireboxes had a latch that'd flip up, you know, lock down. And when he opened the door, there was somebody in there. He was dead. He froze. Because you get in, for a while it's okay, but the temperature is so cold and you can't move around. He said it could've been him. You know what I mean? And these things that he's experiencing nobody experiences, you know? Man.

WN: How did he end up in Hawai'i?

AS: Well, you didn't read that yet? (Laughs) [AS is referring to an article appearing in the *Hawai'i Tribune-Herald*, dated June 26, 1955 entitled "Laupāhoehoe Man Handicapped into Becoming Expert Woodworker." The article contains an account of Clyde LeGrand Stanley's accomplishments, and how he came to Hawai'i from Berry County, Missouri by flipping a coin with a friend: if it came up heads, they would go to Alaska; tails, Hawai'i.]

WN: Well, I did read that, I wanted you to tell us about the flip of the coin and stuff like that.

AS: Okay, yeah.

(Laughter)

AS: That's true.

WN: He was a real journeyman then?

AS: Yeah, well, he's footloose and fancy-free, you know what I mean? He came here, there was no job. He said they got off in Watertown. Watertown, I think, used to be down where Pearl City is.

WN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think it's near Hickam [Air Force Base], that area?

AS: Yeah, I don't know exactly where it is.

WN: Yeah, I think where Hickam Air Force Base is, in that area.

AS: Well, he said they got off in Watertown. And they walked and got on the railroad track and was coming in to Honolulu. And he saw right over there, *hanawai*, you know they used to have cane fields and irrigation [ditches], raising all kinds of taro and rice and whatnot. Anyway, he said, "I can do that kind of job." So he went over there and asked the guy how much he was making. He worked eleven hours and made a dollar a day. (Chuckles) And my father says, "Well, I don't figure I need that kind of job."

(Laughter)

AS: But those days was hard work. Anyway, he got into town and roamed around. And then he got a job, they were building the dry docks in Pearl Harbor and he went to work there in the [Pearl Harbor] Naval [Ship]yard for I don't know how long. And then he got a job with Hawaiian Dredging [Company] and used to do a lot of work with them. And when they went to Hilo to make the breakwater, he went over with Hawaiian Dredging. And from there he went to work for the railroad.

WN: Laupāhoehoe.

AS: Yeah. And that was where he finished.

WN: What about your mom?

AS: Well, my mother [Rosina Bassler Stanley] was born in Missouri, too. In the early days, they moved to Canada in covered wagons. My grandfather went farming up there in Canada. And I went up there when I was about five years old. My sister and my mother and myself, we went up for a summer and stayed on a farm. And she moved to California and went to a nurses' school there. And then came down to Hawai'i, I guess, with a contract with the state [territory] as a public health nurse. That's where she met my father.

WN: They met in the Big Island or they met in Honolulu?

AS: I think on O'ahu here, and then they moved to the Big Island when he started working there. I don't know all the complexities of their relationship. Anyway, she became a housewife and started raising a family, which was me and my three sisters. And two sisters became nurses. In fact, after they got through raising their families, they went back into nursing and retired as nurses. And my oldest sister still does a little bit of private duty. You know, somebody that needs help at home. And my youngest sister lives in California, she became a schoolteacher, retired as a schoolteacher.

WN: So what was it like growing up in Laupāhoehoe?

AS: Well, let me tell you, people talk about discrimination, I was a minority, you know. *Haoles* were minorities. And *Haoles* were, I don't know, I don't think it was envy, but you know, resented in a lot of ways because they were bosses. The *Haoles* would discriminate against them and racial discrimination was quite prevalent. (Chuckles) You don't believe, but I know. All my life I've dealt with discrimination. And sometimes I wonder how frivolous people are today. If somebody calls me a *Haole*, doesn't bother me. But if somebody calls a colored person a nigger, oh they get all upset. Why? I mean, why have this. . . .

Even today, look at [Governor Benjamin J.] Cayetano, during his speech he called colored people *Pōpolos* and they got all upset. Now to me, that's carrying this too far. If you go to that point where you can't tolerate some kind of—I don't think it's discrimination, it's just the way people live. I mean, I live in the old school, but today even I have to watch how I conduct myself because people take offense so easy. And I'm not out there trying to project any offensive thing.

I know when I was young, gee whiz, I got pushed around (chuckles), believe me. In fact, when I married a Japanese there were a lot of doors slammed in my face because of that. You know, even jobwise, you know, in the islands. But I never went and hollered about this, it's just the way things are. I mean, if society's that way, you have to learn to bend a little bit and try and project yourself.

WN: So what form did it—you said discrimination growing up? For example . . .

AS: What form?

WN: Yeah. Was it subtle or direct or . . .

AS: You know, that's why the schools was trying to teach everybody English. I could speak good English, but believe me, if I went down to school and I started throwing my English around, somebody would want to pound me. You know what I mean? And I remember as a young, I

think I was first or second grade, first grade, my mother dressed me up in a little sailor suit. And I cried. I didn't want to wear that to school. And you know, "You gonna wear that." Boy. And afternoon there's somebody waiting for me already.

(Laughter)

AS: This little *Haole* sailor (laughs), you know what I mean? It got so there were certain kids that resented me. They didn't even know who I was. It was no offense, it's just, you know, you're a *Haole*. And so it didn't take long. I had some good friends that could come over with me.

WN: What elementary school did you go to?

AS: Laupāhoehoe. I went from the first grade through high school at Laupāhoehoe High School.

WN: Now was that unusual for a *Haole* to be going to the public school at that time, in that area?

AS: Well, there were several, but normally when the kids grew up, lot of them went to Punahou. The parents sent 'em to Punahou. And the high school years, my sisters and myself, we all graduated from Laupāhoehoe. There weren't many other *Haoles* graduated from that school. They all moved away.

WN: So elementary there were many *Haoles*, but once you were in high school . . .

AS: There were several of them. And high school, there was two or three. The Lothians, she had a girl, I think, graduated. When they graduated, I wasn't concerned with that, but I know I was the only *Haole* boy in one year, junior year or something. But look at 'em today, there're a lot of *Haoles* here in the islands. And discrimination is still---there's resentment. I think the Hawaiians carry the strongest resentment against the *Haoles*.

There's different resentments, you understand. Maybe it's especially like today with this sovereignty movement and the Hawaiians realizing that the United States government shafted them out of all this, which was a terrible thing, but I had nothing to do with it (chuckles), you know what I mean? I'm just here pounding around, doing my thing. I shouldn't be held responsible.

It's just like our government's actions around the world. We're becoming endangered right here, it's endangering our lives. Look at the security programs that we have to live under, stress that the government imposes. The government imposes this upon the people. You understand? Same thing like moving in, confiscating all the Hawaiians' assets, land here and downgrading them. Well, I don't blame them for having resentment, but why hold it against me?

Our government, it's all economic. Same thing like moving into Africa and funding even Russia. Funding Yeltsin because of democracy. So we can infringe our big companies, even Bank of America and all their---how did they get there if we didn't buy our way into that government? See, we're trying to get in and the next thing, we're in the oil companies, we're in the utilities. Actually, it's imperialism, forcing our way in. That's why we want a democracy, where we can get in there and have more influence on these countries.

See, all busting in on all these little countries; they're mineral rich. But, these people are resenting this, and that's why we get bombed and we say, "This is terroristic. Boy am I gonna start lobbing a whole bunch of missiles on a country." They [U.S.] didn't even declare war. They just figure, well, we're gonna retaliate. Even like going down and grabbing [Manuel] Noriega, you know? They knew Noriega. Our CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] was dealing with him. You go into a country and grab its leader and haul him out, that to me is same thing like the Hawaiians [losing their land], you know? Now we're screaming and hollering about this Pan Am plane that got bombed. What about our latest cruiser which shot down an Iranian airliner? They don't even say anything about that. They should be brought to trial.

We're influenced with thoughts. People forget so easily about what happened. The young children, they're demoralized. Gets so you can't even have a decent family because you can't afford to live. They take so much out of taxes. They should publish a financial report like we publish our financial report, individuals and government, IRS [Internal Revenue Service] takes that, okay? But nobody from the government tells you where the money. . . . How many millions we've fed into Israel, protecting the Jews. We instigated the problem there. You understand? And the problem is going to exist. And it's getting more prevalent all the time.

And the average guy here at home, they don't take care of. If they pump that millions of dollars into this country, people could live decently, and families could probably stay together because they're more financially secure. And there's a future projection. I look at—my children, actually have, fortunately, thank the Lord, come above this. But how about their children? You have any children?

WN: Yup.

AS: You ever thought about that? You know, it's a tragedy. The government's got every control. Let's go on.

WN: Let's get back to Laupāhoehoe.

AS: Really.

(Laughter)

AS: Okay.

WN: No, that's okay, there's a connection to everything.

AS: You know, you said how I was discriminated against, okay. I didn't hold that resentment. I grew up and it's influenced my speech. From young, it's not the educational system, it's the environment. I mean, the people.

WN: Influenced your speech in what way?

AS: Well, when I speak to local people, I speak broken English. In fact, I can give you some pidgin that kids don't understand today, you know? Because I grew up in that kind of environment. And even when I speak to people today, like Japanese or Hawaiian, I break into [pidgin]. And they have pretty good English, but it's something that's in me. Something that's

embedded within me. I mean, I don't feel comfortable speaking good English. You understand?

WN: Mm hmm.

AS: And that is generated from years of society. Now, you take a kid that grows up in Harlem [New York] or Watts [Los Angeles] or someplace, and in an environment that they grew up with, they've got resentments because they live in a demoralized society. Maybe some of them don't even have a father, or a mother, maybe both. They're living with grandma or somebody. And lacking in aspirations. You take the Orientals that come from the Orient, you know, any country over there. They come here, they've got a strong family unit, and most of 'em will progress. I mean, they go to school to study, and they've got some kind of inside motivation.

We've got how many politicians that hire whole massive studies to try and analyze it. That's baloney, you know what I mean? They're just absorbing taxpayers' money and not projecting society like it should be projected.

WN: So what'd you do to have fun as a kid growing up over there?

AS: Oh, my goodness, we used to play baseball, basketball. We had teams, you know. The plantations promoted sports pretty well. In high school I used to play. And I used to like to hunt and fish. The country life, garden, raise animals. I had a garden, I had pigs, as a kid. Today, how many kids . . .

(Laughter)

AS: You know what I mean?

WN: Yeah.

AS: They depend on mom and pop, you know, let's go down to McDonald's. We didn't have any good eating places. One little saimin place and movie theater across the little fountain.

WN: You folks were up *mauka* side?

AS: Yeah.

WN: How far did you have to go to go to the theaters and stuff?

AS: About a mile. Pāpa'aloa had a movie theater. And they didn't have TV in those days. We used to listen to all to *The Shadow*, *Bulldog Drummond*, and *The Lone Ranger*, all on radio those days. And we hovered around that and enjoyed that.

WN: Was there a town of Laupāhoehoe?

AS: Laupāhoehoe is down in the valley. Laupāhoehoe, *lau* means "leaf" in Hawaiian, *pāhoehoe* is the smooth type of lava. So "leaf of lava" is the name of that point down there. [Pukui and Elbert define Laupāhoehoe as "smooth lava flat."] And where I live is called Pū'alaea, above Laupāhoehoe, our little town's name is Pū'alaea. And Pāpa'aloa is the town that's about a mile

away. These Hawaiian Islands, every little nook and cranny has a different name, but a lot of these are kind of melting away in the transition of time, I guess.

WN: Who were your neighbors?

AS: My neighbors?

WN: Yeah, did you have neighbors?

AS: Oh yeah, we had neighbors. Gonsalves—this is when I was young—Gonsalves lived next door, and Wilbur lived on the other side, and in the back we had the Kumumuas, and we had Fernandezes, that was our immediate neighbors.

WN: And what kind of work did those families do?

AS: Most of them worked for the plantation. And lot of them, like Kumumua had taro patches, he used to make *poi*, and Kumumua taught school, but he also. . . . Most people had kind of a side job, you know. Fernandez had lot of cattle and they used to butcher and sell meat. In those days you didn't have all the inspection programs and things like we have today. And Gonsalves, he was a judge [and] he was a lawyer, in the legal profession.

And Wilbur was an old retired—I don't know what Wilbur did when he was young. I mean, he was an elderly man. He was a German, very capable of doing anything. He's the guy that had a big saw, he made it out of an old car engine and got a big blade, had a little trolley, you know, you'd put these logs. . . . Actually, he built his own house, it's a log house and he ripped up his own logs to build his house and landscape his yard. He did well. The school, Laupāhoehoe School down in the valley, in the early days, he landscaped a lot of that. Made fish ponds and connected the fish ponds with little ditches like. He made a real nice job of that. But what he did, he probably farmed, he had a lot of cane land. In fact, I helped him plow, one time actually he was planting corn. First and only time I ran a plow, you know, the kind that. . . .

WN: With the horse.

AS: Yeah, with a horse, and just plowed through. But you know, I don't really know what Wilbur did. But they were all good neighbors, we all helped one another.

WN: Were you all in the same socioeconomic status?

AS: Well, I would say so, yeah. I would say so. There wasn't too much power. Around there, they owned all their own places. Some of them had a lot of acreage, cane land and whatnot. My father was the only one that was not really progressive so far as real estate, but he made a good wage, he was making about average wage. When we were kids we had two maids, we had two yardmen. I mean, families didn't have those things. We were well positioned in life.

WN: So compared to, say the sugar plantation workers . . .

AS: Oh, he was way up. Oh yeah. Oh sure, oh sure. Because the plantations never paid that much. So actually, lot of these people, even today, they're land-rich. You know, land-rich but cash-

poor. If they went and sold their assets, their land and everything, they would be [rich], because land values have increased dramatically. I could've bought Wilbur's place for \$5,000. He had three acres. I was pretty young. I was what, about nineteen, twenty, and I didn't want to work for the plantations. When he died. . . . Anyway, can you imagine today, probably [worth] \$200,000, maybe more. (WN chuckles.)

WN: Let's talk about April 1, 1946. Tell me, how did that day start for you?

AS: Well, April 1, 1946 was a kind of rainy morning. It was a Monday morning and my mother was going to take us to school. Well, that was fine and dandy with me.

WN: Did your mother take you every day?

AS: No, no, because it was raining.

WN: Oh, okay. How did you usually go?

AS: Walk.

WN: Oh.

AS: We'd walk down the hill [to the school, located on Laupāhoehoe Point], about a mile down. My friend Johnny DeCaires used to come down every morning and we'd go to school together. So we were out there shooting baskets in the backyard, I had a basketball place to play in the backyard, and we'd shoot baskets, play around until it was time to go. And I told Johnny, "Eh, stay and come with me in the car to go to school."

He said, "Ah, no, I'm going." When it came time to go he just jumped on his bike and zipped down the hill. And about ten minutes later we got in the car and started going down the hill.

And I already used to spear fish and I was quite interested in how the water looked. As we were coming down looking through the trees, I told my mother, "My goodness, I've never seen the ocean this rough." So when we got a little farther down where we could see better, well, that ocean was really, you've seen the pictures. And the water receding, came in, come up. By the [boat] landing there, they had a boat house where they used to keep canoes and everything, it took that out. Then the water went way out.

WN: You could see the bottom?

AS: Oh, I could see the bottom for half a mile. Right till the end of the point we could see the bottom. Mass amount of water, because that water out there is maybe, I would say, the average depth is probably seventy or eighty feet. And then we could see this welling up outside. We started screaming and hollering because all this activity had brought a lot of school kids running down to check on what's going on. But when that water started coming in, they started running. But you ever try to outrun a wave by the beach, there's no way. I mean, those waves move. It came in, a lot of the kids were pretty far up and getting away, but they could see this thing looming up. A lot of them climbed up on the grandstand, they had a ballpark there, and climbed up on this grandstand, and if they'd just gone another ten feet up the road there they would've been all right. Anyway, that grandstand melted down.

WN: So the people on the grandstand got swept out?

AS: Well, swept out or swept. . . . At that point the wave wasn't that big, lot of them probably just got scattered around, was able to get away. But the ones farther on down, they were all swept out. The teachers' cottages, two of them went across the ballpark there and got stashed on the side, by the school farm. One of the [cottages] got swept directly out. I noticed one teacher up on the roof of the house and when the second wave came in, everything, they never heard from the teachers in that cottage.

And this guy, Herbert Nishimoto, you interviewed him. I didn't realize, I thought he went out, across [the ball park], but he said he got swept straight out [into the ocean] from there. And he was with Fred Kruse, the schoolteacher, and they never did find him [Kruse]. I was supposed to stay with Herbert and the other kids [over the weekend prior to April 1, 1946, which fell on a Monday], but I was raising pigs so I had to go home and feed the pigs. Over the weekend, everybody stayed down at [the teachers' cottages following a class picnic] and we went to sleep at [one of the] cottages there, and go fishing.

WN: Oh, so there were some students staying down there in the cottages?

AS: Overnight, because it was weekend. And rather than go home. And Herbert was there, and (pause) I have difficulty with this guy's name, he died, Mamoru Ishizu. Anyway, his body [Ishizu], they found a few days later, it was washed up on the shore.

WN: So when you went down in your mother's car, where did you folks stop to look at it?

AS: We stopped about, oh, a third of the way down. It's all clear up there, and there's some [stone] walls, and my mother—we're all standing on the stone wall looking down—and she got all hysterical and we took her home. That's when my sister and I came back and took these pictures. And this was after the big wave had gone. The action was, you know, it progressed up slowly to what I call the climax, the big wave, and then it worked itself down again. And the whole process was, oh, I'd say forty-five minutes, an hour maybe.

WN: So by the time you'd gotten there, the big wave had already . . .

AS: No, no, we saw the big wave come, yeah, oh yeah.

WN: That was like the third wave or something? Second or third wave?

AS: Oh, I don't know. I mean, when we came down, the action was already in progress, you know what I mean. I didn't count all the waves. There were several waves, but it was just building up to it.

WN: So you turned the car around and your mother drove home?

AS: Yeah.

WN: And then you folks came back by foot?

AS: No, my sister had to drive us.

WN: Oh.

AS: She was already seventeen. In fact, I think I was driving, too, I don't know if I got—yeah, I had my license, I was sixteen? No, I wasn't sixteen yet, I was fifteen. But anyway, my sister had a license. Because we would've wasted a lot of time. But it was definitely a tragedy. Something that not many people witness.

WN: You remember what went through your mind as you were seeing people getting swept away?

AS: Well, you're so awestruck. I mean, I didn't have a keen mind like you have where I could generate all these thoughts (WN laughs), I was just there with my mouth open saying, "Good god, what is that?" You know what I mean? I don't consider myself an analytical person. I mean, I might analyze, but it takes me a week of thinking to come up with something like that.

(Laughter)

AS: You understand? We never even knew about a tidal wave. It's something that since then they've come up with all their early warning systems and everything, but at that time nobody knew.

WN: So I know that, okay, at the point, you know the road goes down and then there's the teachers' cottages that were nearest to the ocean.

AS: Yeah. Mm hmm.

WN: And there was a ball field, and then the school was more inland.

AS: Yeah.

WN: How far in do you think the wave went? Did it actually get to the school?

AS: Well, it went along, actually the wave didn't come directly in, it came from two sides [of the peninsula]. See, it was following the terrain. The wave's general direction was hard to analyze exactly, it didn't come straight in like you see the waves there today, it came in more at a cross-section. And then I guess it got caught on the Hilo side of the point and the water corralled up and came in, it swept across the point [i.e. from south to north]. See the point is like this, huh?

WN: Yeah.

AS: And the wave came something like this.

WN: Oh, okay.

AS: And you look at the contour, since then I've done my analytical thinking (chuckles), you understand?

WN: Yeah, right.

AS: The force of the water got bottled up in here [i.e., the Hilo side of the peninsula] and then swept across this way. So when it met and both forces came, I remember a big geyser in the middle of the park where (claps) two forces kind of came together and pushed up.

WN: So the receding and the incoming force.

AS: Yeah, well, I would say that, yeah. Anyway, you had a mixture of forces there. But the main force swept across the point, from there it took the teachers' cottages this way and then cached them on the side of the ballpark there. We used to go diving after that and we could see the principal's car and cars that were swept out into the ocean there, they were quite a ways out. I mean, stashed on the bottom there.

WN: Is that Mr. [Clarence R.] Ferdun?

AS: Ferdun, yeah.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

AS: I don't know, there were several cars there. But it was. . . .

WN: So you were there at the top, more or less, looking down and ready to take some pictures.

AS: Yeah, we were far away from. . . . After that we went down to the point, you know . . .

WN: After that when? Right after?

AS: Well yeah, I guess, an hour or so later, I don't know.

WN: So you felt safe?

AS: Yeah, everything was over. Maybe we could go down and help people, you know, there were people running around looking for their families. It was big turmoil.

I can just imagine how people feel when our missiles fall on their town and blow everything up. We talk about screaming and hollering about a little Oklahoma bombing, and we rip up whole towns, have no concept of the common person. That's the thing, that's the trage[dy]—they have no concept of you and me, the government doesn't. We have to run around, and security, people are retaliating. See, you don't need big missiles and battleships. All you need is a guy with a little book of matches and come in here and burn up our whole country, you know what I mean. And throw a little Molotov cocktail. That kind of army, how can we get away from? Anyway, that was the tidal wave.

WN: So you went down . . .

AS: And we went down.

WN: What kind of help were you able to give?

AS: Well, I remember one house, [it] was not all the way into the ocean, but ripped up. [There was] money all over. They didn't believe in the banks, I guess, so we picked up the money and threw it all in a box they had there. And there were people picking up fish. I didn't pick up many fish, I wasn't concerned. But it's amazing how many people were running down there. I imagine it's like any flood, in a disaster, there's pocketing a lot of stuff that they find. But it was utter devastation.

WN: This John DeCaires, your friend, was he . . .

AS: They never found him. That family lost three children. [John, Janet, and Madeline DeCaires all died in the tsunami.] They never found him or two of his sisters. So, really hard to explain something like that, a natural disaster. I've seen earthquakes. One place, when we were in Puna, this last eruption down there, I took my uncle down and an earthquake come along and the road cracked, you know (chuckles), it's kind of exciting.

WN: So when did school start again? This was a Monday, right?

AS: Yeah.

WN: Did you go back the next day?

AS: I don't know if they shut—see, it was May or June. I cannot say exactly when. [Other interviewees remember returning to classes approximately three weeks after the April 1 tsunami.]

WN: Probably because you were an underclassman? See, the ones that graduated—for years . . .

AS: Yeah, they would remember, yeah, yeah.

WN: I don't think they ever went back.

AS: Yeah, I don't remember going back, you know. There was a lot of turbulence there. Like you say, the graduating class, I don't know where they had their exercises, the graduating exercises. Because at that point, they had the whole May, and then June usually, the first, second week of June that school is out. Yeah, I can't tell you. I really can't recollect that, how it affected me. But the following year we went back to school there. They didn't shut . . .

WN: On the same grounds?

AS: Oh yeah, because the main school building wasn't demolished. It was just the teachers' cottage and under the shop. Well, actually it wasn't a shop. That was the ag department. Underneath one portion of the school was swept out, but the building stayed intact on top. There was just the downstairs portion [that was damaged]. So I don't know. I just imagine how many things happened that doesn't register here.

WN: Yeah, sure.

- AS: Anyway, that school, then they started building the school up above. [The \$875,000 Laupāhoehoe High and Elementary School, located in the *mauka* section above the original school, was dedicated in October, 1952.]
- WN: You remember like your mother telling you, hey, you know, now we know what a tidal wave it, what a tsunami is . . .
- AS: Yeah, well, we knew about tidal waves, because, you know, kids, we get sassy, "Oh, I wish a tidal wave come, *hemo* the school." (Chuckles) You know how kids talk, "*Hemo* the school, we don't need go school." Never even realized that something like that would happen. But I can remember those words coming out of my mouth. But when it really happened . . .
- WN: You don't remember your mother telling you, "Be careful," or, "Don't hang around the ocean."
- AS: Naw, hey . . .
- WN: Did you feel differently about the ocean after that?
- AS: My mother, she never—no, I used to go diving, I mean, it never occurred to me that. . . . But actually, today you feel more secure because if we were to go diving and we have a [tsunami] warning, you wouldn't be caught. For instance, [if] I was out there diving that morning and it started coming up, [I could] probably get to shore, but (chuckles) you better start running.
- WN: Was it actually a wave coming in? You know like how you associate a large wave . . .
- AS: No.
- WN: Some people associate it as being like a . . .
- AS: You saw the pictures.
- WN: Yeah, sort of a tilting of a bucket, and then . . .
- AS: Yeah, water rushing. Like a flood, like a flood coming in. You know, a fast-rising flood. I can remember we were taking out the railroad bridges way over by Pa'auilo area. And we dismantled this bridge, we just pull it and knock all the timbers down, you know, and then we get down there and burn the bolts, pound 'em out. We had a winch, and hauled this twelve-by-twelve, big railroad timbers. And it was a hot muggy day, real miserable. You look up in the mountain and you see this dark cloud up there. The next thing, we hear all this crackling and roaring, "We better get out of here." We were lucky to make it out. This big flash flood came. Water, trees, just rumbling coming down, and swept this big portion of this timber. From there there was a cliff under the ocean, we're right by the ocean. Swept all this out. And in one way, seeing this water come down, reminds you of a tidal wave. But of course it's like in a big ditch, in a gulch, it's big but funneled in. But the ocean, you must imagine from the depth to the surface, a tsunami is moving.
- WN: Right.

- AS: So when it comes in, there's no holding it. I mean, it'll just come in as strong as it is. Actually, it could be capable of just coming right up here if there was an enormous enough action somewhere in the ocean. So I imagine in the early days, with the Earth shifting, just think if a big meteorite landed in the ocean, there'd be tidal waves, it would be inundating a lot of these little islands.
- WN: Right.
- AS: No, the water rushes in not like the average person would think, like a curling surface wave. It just comes in. Its reaction to the shore depends upon the topography of the ocean floor. So it will react differently in different areas. Same thing like waves here. There's good surfing spots and there are places with none because of the structure of the bottom of the ocean.
- WN: I think too, the fact that it's a peninsula has something to do with it. It's jugged out and there are two sides of open ocean.
- AS: True. It reacted that way definitely. Look at Hilo Bay. The way it came in, it got caught in this bay, the water bottles up from the sides depending on how big the bay is. Say the bay is this big, okay? And this is twenty miles and it sweeps in, it'll all start pushing to the middle, the forces come this way and Hilo Bay happens to be in the deepest part of it, it's gonna have much more effect. Now if [the ocean bottom] was all flat, there's no way the water can, you know where I'm coming from.
- WN: Similar to probably Coconut Island, right? The similar thing happened over there.
- AS: Yeah, yeah. Well, an island is like so, okay. When the wave is coming from [one] side [of an island], that side will get the brunt of it, and it'll run around it, and you won't have the forces because the forces are kind of running away. So one side of the island, hardly any [activity]. That's one thing I guess these people that are dispensing the warnings could tell other people on the side that the activity, whatever happened, they would know that that is the most dangerous side, and concentrate more on that side.
- Look at this last hurricane that hit, how people adhere to the warning, just beautiful. I see 'em all bailing out and that's paying attention to what happens. Like they had the early warning system here after that ['46 tsunami], and there was how many false alarms, and people got to the point, "Never mind this [cry] wolf business." And a lot of them wouldn't adhere to the warning.
- WN: That's what happened in 1960.
- AS: That's right, absolutely.
- WN: Okay, so you graduated in 1960, I mean '48, I'm sorry.
- AS: [Nineteen] forty-eight.
- WN: Why don't you tell me briefly what you were doing from that point on.
- AS: (Chuckles) I got my book here. Anyway, I went to work. Actually, before I graduated, on the

weekends and whatnot, I was working for the railroad and the Industrial Development Company from September '48. So through June '51 I worked for Industrial Development Company. They bought the railroad. After the railroad shut down they bought the whole railroad.

WN: The railroad shut down because of the [1946] tidal wave, right? I mean, the tsunami.

AS: Well, not really. They shut down. . . . That was my assumption until I read this.

WN: Oh really?

AS: Yeah. The railroad, see, had already voted to liquidate because the plantations were converting to bulk sugar and they didn't want to sign a contract. It would've been cheaper for them to haul by truck, see. Because the taxpayers subsidized the highway. The railroad had to be subsidizing on its own. That's all it amounted to. And this guy Bobby Yamada was one of the big instigators, he got elected into politics. Bobby Yamada started as a chicken farmer. Down in Laupāhoehoe he had a chicken farm down there. You heard of Bobby Yamada? His son still—they have a contracting company there in Hilo. And I know the sons, they all went to school with me.

Anyway, he formed this trucking company to haul sugar into Hilo, this is all bulk, it wasn't bagged like in the old days. So the plantations didn't want to sign a long-term contract with the railroad, so '46 was just enough to shut 'em down. So they were going to continue a little longer until everything got established, but the tidal wave. . . . To make repairs to all the railroad wasn't feasible, so they just shut—that was the terminating factor of the railroad. And this Industrial Development Company came along and bought 'em for scrap, you know, whatever they could salvage from the railroad.

And that went on until June '51, and Independent Iron Works came into view. And from June '51 to August '52, I worked as an iron worker. They had bought the railroad, bridges actually, they wanted the steel. See Independent Iron Works . . .

WN: Is that the name of the company?

AS: Yeah. And they'd already negotiated to build these highway bridges for 'em, because they were coming through with a new highway. And so they tore up all the bridges, the existing steel bridges, and hauled it into Hakalau. That's as far as they could get towards Hilo. And they had a big yard there where they stacked all this steel up and refabricated the steel for a highway bridge. There's several of the bridges there now that are on the old track bed. The existing bridge is still there, all they did is build another bridge on the outside and make the deck larger. So I worked there.

And then I went to work for Hawai'i National Guard there from August '52 to October '56. I was the unit technician there.

WN: This is where, in . . .

AS: Laupāhoehoe. They had built an armory down there, way down in the corner where the tidal wave had removed the. . . . Actually, it was close to where [Fred] Kruse's cottage was. They

put an armory there. So I went to work for the Hawai'i National Guard. And then I don't know what year it was, they had what I call tidal waves that came in and hit the armory. These were all surface waves. These big, exceptionally big waves came in. And it did excessive damage at high tide. Because it could come in that much farther. So all it amounts to is a tidal wave, I guess.

Anyway, it shut the armory down there. And across on the upper side of the [former] school they had a gymnasium. They moved the armory up to the gymnasium, and I worked there until I left the National Guard.

WN: That's the new school. The new school . . .

AS: No, no, at the old school.

WN: Oh, Laupāhoehoe School.

AS: Yeah, the gymnasium is still there. You saw it? Did you look around the valley?

WN: Yeah, I did. The gym is still there?

AS: Yeah, it's still there.

WN: Oh, I gotta go check it out.

AS: You should. It's open for the public. You can go in there, go in the back, and you can see where the old armory, they built a vault like to keep all the weapons and everything. Anyway, I worked there until '52.

WN: [Nineteen] fifty-six, you mean.

AS: I mean, yeah, '56. And in '57 I went to work for Hawaiian Dredging [Construction Company]. When I left there I went to Midway, stayed there from September to July working as a storekeeper for Hawaiian Dredging.

WN: Storekeeper?

AS: Yeah. Because I really was kind of lost in my fantasy. You know, how you go through life. Like I say, my tracking system got a little bit disarrayed somewhere along the line. (Chuckles) And I was at Midway, and I was thinking, where is my life? I'm about thirty years old. Actually I was twenty-eight. I figure, ah, I want to go to Alaska. I had crazy aspects. I was married, I had one child. I figure I'd go to Alaska. I wanted to get myself a fishing boat and also I wanted to become maybe a bush pilot and whatnot. I had these grandeurs of hunting; I loved to hunt. Figure I'd better learn how to fix airplanes because I gotta learn how to fly and get my little airplane, and fly back in and take people into the interior, hunting and fishing. So I went to school [in California].

And when I was going to school I was working for McCulloch Corporation. That was from September '59 till August '60. McCulloch on Century. You know McCulloch chainsaws? They were making chainsaws and drone airplane engines for the government. Anyway, I worked

there while I was going to school.

WN: From 1959?

AS: Yeah. I was going to school during the day, and at night I was working for McCulloch.

WN: This is what, aircraft mechanics school?

AS: No, no, I went to Northrup. During this time I was going to Northrup Aviation School there. And. . . .

WN: Oh, this is to learn how to fly?

AS: No, no, this was to make money. I had a family, I had to pay my rent. Nobody was paying, you understand?

WN: What were you doing? What were you learning at Northrup Aviation?

AS: Aircraft mechanics.

WN: Oh, aircraft mechanics.

AS: Yeah, and during the day I'd go to school and at night I'd work in here. Long days, let me tell you. How many people do that anymore?

Then, when I got through there, I went to work for Continental Airlines. It was August 1, 1960 I went to work for Continental. And I stayed till '65 with Continental, working in the aircraft game. What happened that I never ended up in Alaska is my wife got pregnant and with two babies, it's pretty hard. My attitude changed. I figured it'd be better to hang on to something that's a little more secure. So that is my work record.

WN: So what happened from '65?

AS: Not '65. [Nineteen] ninety-five.

WN: Oh, '95.

AS: [Nineteen] ninety-five. Oh, did I say '65?

WN: You said '65, but that's all right. You worked there thirty-five years?

AS: Yeah.

WN: You retired in '95.

AS: There you go.

WN: Okay.

AS: August 31, right here. Look at me (chuckles) three years retired.

WN: Oh, you retired on your birthday.

AS: There you go. I was sixty-five, I said, "That's enough. Uncle Sam, I paid you enough."

WN: How long have you been living here?

AS: Well, I've been living here about a year, a little over a year. After I got divorced, I decided at my age, I don't need a home. I mean, I don't need a big house. I'd much rather spend the money rather than keeping it in a house.

WN: How many children do you have?

AS: Five.

WN: Five children. And how many grandchildren?

AS: Seven.

WN: Seven. Seven and counting, right?

AS: Yeah. (Chuckles) Yeah, six and a half, anyway.

WN: Okay.

AS: That's the shot there. Is there anything else you . . .

WN: I think that's all. Thank you very much for your time.

AS: Okay. Shut it down.

END OF INTERVIEW

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Volume I

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