

Henry Pahukoa, Jr.

Tape No. 36-20b-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Harry Pahukoa, Jr. (HP)

Koali, Maui

July 18, 1998

BY: Jeanne Johnston (JJ)

JJ: Okay, this is an interview with Harry Pahukoa, Jr. And it's being done in. . . .

HP: Ke'anae.

JJ: Ke'anae? No, we're---right now where are we?

HP: Koali. You don't want to use Ke'anae?

JJ: Well, it's about Ke'anae, but we're just talking about where it's recorded.

HP: Oh. Okay.

JJ: So it's being recorded in Koali.

HP: Koali. You met me in Koali, yeah.

JJ: On the island of Maui. And the date is Saturday, July the 18th, 1998, and the interviewer is Jeanne Johnston.

Harry, would you start by telling me what your full name is, please?

HP: Harry Kumukoa Pahukoa, Jr.

JJ: Where were you born?

HP: I was born in Hāna Hospital.

JJ: And when were you born?

HP: Nineteen thirty-three.

JJ: And your parents, what were your parents' names?

HP: My dad was Harry Pahukoa, Sr., and my mom was Mary Ann Pahukoa.

JJ: Were they both from the Hāna area?

HP: They both from Ke‘anae.

JJ: Ke‘anae?

HP: Yeah.

JJ: Were they both born in Ke‘anae? Grew up there?

HP: I think my mom born at Wahinepe‘e, before Ke‘anae. And my dad I think was either Kailua or Huelo.

JJ: Were your parents both full Hawaiian?

HP: My dad is full Hawaiian, and my mom is Chinese, Hawaiian and Tahitian. Yeah.

JJ: So how did the Tahitian come in to her line?

HP: By the Tau-a side. Her mom was Tau-a side.

JJ: I see.

HP: That’s where the Tahitian came in, from the Tau-a side.

JJ: And where did your parents meet? Do you know?

HP: In Kailua.

JJ: In Kailua.

HP: In Kailua, where they was raised, you know?

JJ: What did your dad do? What kind of business did your dad do?

HP: When he met my mom? Or what?

JJ: Yeah, when you were growing up.

HP: He was working for a small irrigation company. And then afterwards he worked for the Olinda prison guard, up at Olinda.

JJ: So did he drive all the way from there?

HP: Yeah. From Ke‘anae to Olinda, yeah.

JJ: On the old road?

HP: Yeah, the old road up to Olinda.

JJ: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

- HP: I have two brothers, me and my brother, and eight sisters. Eight sisters.
- JJ: Wow, that's a big family.
- HP: Yeah. One adopted, so make eight.
- JJ: So your family lived for quite a while then in Ke'anae, in the Ke'anae area?
- HP: Yeah, yeah.
- JJ: Let's see the house that you lived in when you were young, how close was that to the beach?
- HP: It's right on the beach. Close to the beach. Down by the church. Ke'anae Church? It's right across there.
- JJ: Now, can you describe what the house looked like?
- HP: The house still standing there, eh? And when the tidal wave came, the house didn't move because, we had *hau* bushes around. And I guess the *hau* bush protect [from] the tidal wave. And the wave *wen* hit more strongly towards the *mauka* side, to the cliff, on the east side. So that area was all wiped out. When it hit, the water came up and hit the cliff. Where you look down, the lookout to Ke'anae, the water hit that cliff. And the water fly all the way up to the top, past the top, when it hit the *pali*.
- JJ: How many homes were there down in Ke'anae?
- HP: Oh. (Pause) Say about, fifteen to twenty homes. Yeah. Right now it's not that much. Not since the tidal wave.
- JJ: So did you go to school down in Ke'anae also, when you were young?
- HP: Yeah. The school right in Ke'anae now, on the highway to Hāna. That's the school I went.
- JJ: Did that school go all the way to high school?
- HP: Eighth grade. Eighth grade.
- JJ: Okay, and then did you go away for high school?
- HP: I left Ke'anae after the sixth grade and then Paul Fagan came in that time to Hāna. So he gave a bus for the Ke'anae children to travel to Hāna. So when I went to the seventh grade, we all moved up to Hāna on the bus every day. Seventh, eighth, eleventh, ninth, all the way to twelfth grade. Kids from Ke'anae.
- JJ: Then what did you do after high school?
- HP: I went to Hāna and then—one year I stayed in Hāna then I got promoted. I went to Lahainaluna, the boarding school, start as a freshman. And I stayed there all the way till senior, graduated. Then I left. I went in the service. In the army. All-Hawai'i platoon, went to Fort Ord, basic training. And from there, I went to school in Georgia for eight weeks. I got through with that schooling. And then I went to---they gave us couple days, you know, to travel to your next

destination, so I gotta reach. Get my next one was in New York, in New Jersey. So we stayed New Jersey. When I got there we stayed in New Jersey couple days for the transfer out. When they tell you where to go then you gotta catch that bus, go down the pier.

So I was asked to go to Germany. So from there we went to Germany, from New York. Took us ten days, on the ship to Germany. Got out and then we got on the train and then I went to Stuttgart. That's where I was stationed, in Stuttgart. I stayed there for twenty-eight months. And then I returned back to Ke'anae. Came back. Discharged, I came back. Was nice experience, 'cause I can travel to the countries, to all the countries there in Europe. Was nice. I been around in Holland, Denmark, and Italy. You know, you get your furlough, you can go. Now you stay in Hawai'i, you cannot go back there, costs too much money. But was nice. You meet lot of different people, you know? That's why I encourage the kids to go to the service so they can get more experience. But now, life's changed.

JJ: So you came back Ke'anae after that?

HP: Came back to Ke'anae.

JJ: And did you get married then, at that time?

HP: I stayed Ke'anae. Well, I came back I stayed in Honolulu little while. And then my dad died, and then I moved back to Ke'anae with my mom. And then I stayed with my mom until I got married. I found my wife in Ke'anae.

JJ: She was from Ke'anae also?

HP: Yeah.

JJ: What's your wife's name?

HP: Pearl.

JJ: Pearl? And how many kids do you have?

HP: Five.

JJ: Five kids?

HP: Three boys and two girls.

JJ: Do you have any grandkids?

HP: Get three.

JJ: Three? Great-grandkids?

HP: Yeah.

JJ: How many?

HP: Just---I just get three.

JJ: Oh, grandkids.

HP: Yeah. One, we call it, *hānai*. Stay in Kaua‘i. We took care of ‘em when was baby. My wife went to Oregon to pick him up. They was going to give him away so my wife went up there to pick him up and bring him back with us. Stayed with us about four-and-a-half months. Then when this girl got through with her college, she came back, and pick him up and take him to Kaua‘i. So every other month or what we get him back and forth, you know. I just took him back last week Sunday.

JJ: How old is he?

HP: He’s three years old, going to four.

JJ: Oh, wonderful.

HP: Yeah, I love my grandchildren. Can’t beat.

JJ: So. . . .

HP: Yeah in that tidal wave time in Ke‘anae, I lost my aunty. She died in the tidal wave.

JJ: In Ke‘anae?

HP: In Ke‘anae. Had two. She died, and I heard another man died in Ke‘anae.

JJ: How old were you in 1946?

HP: I was about twelve, I think. Either eleven or twelve. Around there.

JJ: So, that morning, what were you doing the. . . .

HP: I was---my brother and I was on our way to school. We walked up, you know, to go to the school. So we came up to Ke‘anae Junction. That’s where my uncle them was waiting for their truck to go to work. So we reach up there and then we heard this loud noise, just like powder. Boom! Hit the cliff, you know? And we see the water fly up. So my uncle say that, “Eh, that’s tidal wave.” We don’t know what is tidal wave. He say, you know, he was Guadalcanal so he know what is tidal wave. He was in the service. So he start to run back down because my mom and my two sisters was down, catching those small shrimps. ‘*Ōhua*, we call ‘em, down at Kāheka’s. Small baby *maninis*. So they were down there early in the morning. You gotta go and catch. So he ran all the way down for go look for them. He knew they were down there. But when he got down there they were up already.

My mom told my sister them that the water look funny, yeah? And the way the water was coming up. They go, they walk. They run all the way up to the high grass, California grass. Then the water go back down again. Then they can see all the fish, you know? So my mom told my sister them, “Eh, better go home.” And then all the kids was home. That’s why one of my nephews down here, that’s the one, he was six years old. He know about the tidal wave. So my uncle got back down the house. My mom used to take care the church money, like that. So he went to get the money and then he start run up towards the church. Then that second wave was coming.

But within that time, my mom them was down the beach, they went home to my sister’s house.

And all my grandchild—her grandchildren—was all by the steps. They had a small house down below, the wave came and took 'em. So they was up outside on the veranda, my nephew them and my nieces. And my mom them got there and then she took all the grandchildren with her. They walk up, they came pass by the church. And they came up to this house, just about they reach to this house they saw George Ewaliko's house. When they started to get on the porch, it's when the wave came again. Wipe out under the house, eh? So Donald, he remember. My nephew, he remember.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JJ: Okay, so you were saying the water went underneath the house.

HP: Yeah, house, and then they was on the porch, on the veranda. Then after that, when the water went back down, he said he seen all the chickens and everything sweep out. Then my mother took them through the taro patch. Banks go up in the center of the taro patches to get up to the hill, eh, way up. In the meantime, they seen my aunty waving to my mom. The wave *wen* hit her—the second wave *wen* hit her—and the house all move, eh? She was in the grass, she was waving to my mom. Then afterwards when the wave all finish, we were up the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] now they call. Used to be the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] Camp. Everybody went up there. Then I seen my aunty up there. They brought her up. She was on the truck and she didn't have no clothes already, you know? The waves---funny, this wave take everybody's clothes. She just had her underpants, yeah. So my mom dress her up and then they took her to Hāna Hospital. But on the way she died.

And then, in that time, we all move up to the YMCA. The whole village people stayed up there. Stayed up there I think almost a year or over a year we stayed up there, everybody, you know? Then gradually, we started go back down. So what happened, all the parents, the families all started go back down. But some have no houses. That's why you see we move up on the highway, by Waianu, all that houses. Was all bushes up there before. Because of the tidal, that's why everybody built house up there. Then my mom them build a house up there. Then everybody had the Red Cross so they had houses from the Red Cross. That's why some of the houses still standing there. That's the Red Cross houses.

JJ: That the Red Cross built?

HP: Yeah.

JJ: Are those the wooden houses?

HP: Yeah. The green color houses, they still standing. I think get about two, three more houses. Red Cross.

JJ: Did the Red Cross bring people in to do that or did they just bring the lumber in and you have to build it?

HP: No. They brought the---I don't know who brought 'em in but they had people to build. Just like a contractor. Everybody who help each other can build the house. That was. . . .

JJ: And they were all green, all of them?

- HP: Yeah.
- JJ: They all looked the same?
- HP: Just like the army. Army kind, eh?
- JJ: So did you go into Hāna after that? After---how soon after the tidal wave did you go into Hāna, the town of Hāna.
- HP: Oh, way after that. I didn't care for come Hāna, I just stayed down there. But I know Hāmoa was wipe out. Had this other guy in Hāna.
- JJ: So when---after the tidal wave, everybody moved up to the camp there.
- HP: Yeah.
- JJ: And then who did the cleanup down below? Do you remember? Did everybody clean . . . ?
- HP: Clean up themselves, yeah. Everybody clean up.
- JJ: What did you do for food and water and everything, with all those people up there? Do you know if the Red Cross provide?
- HP: Red Cross *wen* help, yeah. Help everybody. And then like my dad them they had a job yet, yeah. Then I think he was working for the county, I think.
- JJ: Do you know if that's the only tidal wave that affected the Ke'anae area? Did any---did the '57 or '60 tidal waves have any affect on Ke'anae?
- HP: The worst one was '46. Then after that, we get waves but didn't damage, you know. Only these other waves that came about two years ago, towards the beach. The wave came up, yeah.
- JJ: What was that one caused by? Do you know?
- HP: I really don't. You see that once in a year, once in a great while or something like that was published in our some kinda *Advertiser*, or book, you know. Just like *Life* magazine or some kinda magazine that was, they say that was coming, you know. And then I had some friends from the Mainland. They told me that was in the magazine that time was going come. I seen that, but that one didn't damage too much.
- JJ: That wasn't caused by a---wasn't a tidal wave?
- HP: Nah, nah, no. Just like, high surf, you know they call 'em, eh?
- JJ: Yeah, yeah. High surf.
- HP: Once in a while they call 'em high seas.
- JJ: Do you remember high seas when you were young? Was there a lot of high seas, compared to now?

- HP: No. When I was young, we didn't—we get high seas, but you didn't get no damage. Used to come behind the yard like that once in a great while.
- JJ: Does it still do that?
- HP: Now, well, once in a while they get high surf like that, eh. 'Cause now, I clean all the *hau*, you know, behind? No more the *hau* bushes now. So I stay right close to the opening. The opening is all open now, eh? No more those *hau* bushes where I'm at now. On the side may get some *hau* bushes, but where I at, I clean 'em all up 'cause I wanted to see the ocean. So I see the wave once in a while. Doesn't matter. It goes over to the park side—down by the park—and go over the road, like that.
- JJ: When you see that water get high, how does that make you feel, now?
- HP: That make me think of the tidal wave and. . . . But sometime this high surf came one time. We was sleeping at home, and then we heard the slam one time. My wife told me, "Ey!" And I knew that was rough but we still stayed home, you know, we used to. But that night, that thing came up, we ran away. The water came right to my garage. We ran away. That was a time that came. And now, just get high surf come up and then go back down. So every time we get high surf I stay watching already, you know? I'm afraid.
- JJ: Is there a warning system down there at Ke'anae?
- HP: Yeah, we have. We have the siren now days. Every month, they get, you know? First of the month.
- JJ: So if you heard a tidal wave warning now, or they said it was a real warning, what would you do?
- HP: Leave everything and run away.
- (Laughter)
- HP: Yeah.
- JJ: Okay. Is there anything else that you'd like to add to this? Do you have any other thoughts or anything else you'd like to say?
- HP: No, no. I think that's about it about the tidal wave. All I can see—I went down, when you get down to the peninsula, going to Ke'anae and then you meet the ocean—I seen how the tidal wave come. When they go down dry all the way to that island in Ke'anae, past that island, was all dry. And then, funny you know when the ocean come back in, get funny feeling. No look just like a regular wave, like this. Look kinda sick, you know the wave. Funny-looking.
- JJ: What did the bottom of the ocean look like?
- HP: Ho, lot of holes. Lot of holes. You never expect to see that kind holes. And no more water inside. All suck up.
- JJ: Did you see any fish, or any . . .
- HP: Yeah. We see lot of fish, but nobody care for the fish, that time.

(Laughter)

HP: Had some on the land.

JJ: Did you get any of the fish off the land, later on?

HP: Nah, was all stink already. Yeah.

JJ: So what? You saw it go out? How long do you think it was? Can you just give me a guess as to how long it took for the water to go out and come back in again?

HP: About an hour. You go over back out. We wait pretty long. And then gradually it come back in and, slow, you know?

JJ: Did it make noise?

HP: No. Not noise, just regular, come in. Just like how the regular wave.

JJ: But it looked different?

HP: They look different and they build up different. That's the only difference.

JJ: How many waves do you remember came in that day?

HP: Two. Had one more but was weak already the third wave. The second wave when we was up in the junction. The first wave went hit the cliff. We was up there. The second wave when we was coming back down, I seen the houses move on the east Maui side, east side. My aunty them house was moving. That's when she got hit. I heard that the woman that was with her said that she wanted to go back for the baby's diaper. So she went back to the house. When she went back, the water was coming. Crush her. The two houses hit her together (claps twice) that's why she got hurt. The other man they found him in the taro patch. The head was face down in the mud in the taro patch. But was a mess. Ke'anae was a mess that time. Everything was not green was all brown afterwards, you know, salt water, eh?

JJ: What did it do to the taro patches, afterward? The salt water?

HP: Nobody care for the taro patches. Only just go pull the taro and go make *poi* like that but after a while then everybody go back and clean, yeah? 'Cause everything was all dead. Salt water eat everything.

JJ: Were they able to plant the taro there again, after the salt water came in?

HP: Yeah, but after a while. Everybody didn't care for the taro patch before that time. Then gradually everybody went back to their taro patches and started again. But that was hard. Some people didn't want to go back. Even my dad didn't want to go back. But my sister them started to go back down, clean up the place and all that. So gradually he came back.

JJ: It must've been hard for those families that lost everything and, and family and their homes and. . . .

HP: Their homes and everything.

JJ: Did you ever find anything? Was anything washed back up onto the land from your house?

HP: No, no.

JJ: Was it all gone?

HP: My house was standing good. Our house, because we had the *hau*, eh, around. The *hau* bush didn't move. The church yard—the hall that you see today was double the size. That was moved in the pasture and then they went build 'em again. They made it smaller like that but it's still big. But was two times like that big. Yeah, the church didn't move. My uncle when he ran through there, he said the wave was coming, the second wave. He was in the church yard he grab the coconut tree and hold 'em. And the wave pass. That's the time my mom them got on the house already outside on the porch. Then after that, the county started to come in, yeah? Block everybody else, not to go down. Then they came down, pick up my aunty them down. We can watch them, eh, from up the *pali* looking down. Hope no more like that again.

JJ: Yeah. At least there's warning systems now.

HP: Yeah, warning system. That's something good. And then now, we get on the TV, they tell you when gonna happen what's coming up, you know? Like if you going get lot of rain or the ocean's building up. They tell you the surf, eh, every day so that's something good. They get the warning signs, sirens. Shouldn't go wrong, shouldn't go wrong. You be alert.

JJ: Well, is there anything else that you'd like to add to this?

HP: No, I think it's about it.

JJ: Thank you very much for allowing me to interview you.

HP: Sure.

END OF INTERVIEW

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