Tape No. k-kp-3

Oral History Interview for the Kalapana Project
with
Kini Pea (kp)
(October 1, 1987)
Kalapana Hawaii
By: Johnie Jovanovich

jj: This is the third interview that I had with Kini at Star Of The Sea Catholic Church in Kalapana, Hawaii. Today I would like to focus on school life his relationship to his parents, work that he did around the farm and church life. Note: THIS IS NOT A WORD FOR WORD TRANSCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW, IT IS A SELECTED VIEW FROM THE INTERVIEWER.

kp: Part of the work around here was the upkeep of the old county road here, from here to Pahoa. And my adopted dad was, like foreman from down here. Sonny Hall was the Puna District overseer, and he always got my dad to clear the side of the road and all that, you know, road repair. Certain time of the year at Kaimu Black sand beach, that black sand used to come over the road, and that's extra work. So when it was real bad, where they needed a lot a workers, they had even us kids going down there with a shovel and shovelling sand off. Paid us, you know, what kids usually get I guess. That's part of the work they had down here.

Truck-farming was something my adopted dad was interested in. Japanese people talked him into it, from Pahoa. And he started around where we were staying, and had a pretty good truck-farm up in the Black Sands subdivision now. And we had a house up there also, just like whattayou call, farm-house. During the week, we stay up there, and then weekends we came down here for church or whattayou call. He try to get people interested in truck-farming. None of em would. My oldest brother Gabriel was the only one that took it up. He went truck-farming. Made his living farming, and besides made him lauhala leaves and ship em to Honolulu. Go out and get `opihi. Cause `opihi, market those days was $10 a gallon. Now it's $90 a gallon. Lauhala, I don't know how much was a roll.

The other business down here was dried coconuts. They used to husk coconuts. And I forget how much a bag was, but it was around $2.50 in those old days, mid-20's. And a lot a stores bought it, take it to the stores. Like my adopted dad, he dealt with Kawamoto store in Hilo.

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The other job here, every summer, was goat drives in the National park. Well, they get all the people, even outsiders they would come down, to go for the goat-drive. Cause, for one reason is, they can get goat meat. And some live goats were sold, to the Filipinos, they like em, and other nationalities. Used to be dozens of head goats, drove up from below Chain of Craters road way out to Apua and all a that, brought up to [illegible]. There's a big pen there. And some were skinned,.

People were skinnin them. Any goats they skinned, my real dad got the hides. And the goats had to be counted, and report to the National Park. Cause those drives were to kinda cut down the goat population in the park. And that's about all the jobs there was in the area.

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I don't notice it hurt me at all, but I used to travel around quite a bit. In fact the folks, at times my adopted dad would have some kind of carpentry work some place, like at Hilo, Haili church, or at Olaa. We stayed in lotta area during the period, well from Monday's to Friday's roughly. Like the old county stable in Keaau, they had semi-living quarters in there. And Sonny Hall, his house was in Keaau. So we stayed up there. And of course, I went to school up there. Then, we in Pahoa, go to school in Pahoa. I would say my chidhood days were quite interesting as I was scattered from place to place.

jj: When you were back here up on the farm what type of duties or work that you had to do around the farm?

kp: Well just help my dad like watermelon season we planted watermelon, tomato season tomato, sweetpotato. One of the main plants we had was straight back in the forest area, Kaula. [Kaola]. We used to have our taro patches. All the people in this area went back in the hills there to raise taro, so many acres. We go fishin in the morning if we goin fishin. Afternoon we're up in the hills, farmin.

jj: So did you have any jobs that you had to do on the farm? Could you give me some experiences of working in the field. Did you have to work in the patches?

kp: Yeah I helped. My dad got smart, my adopted dad, made a big huge horse strapped with metal and had chains on it to pull out stumps. See in those days no bulldozers. In those days, that's what we used to do--cut down the forest, mostly guava. Then we used to move this thing around and pull up stump. That was back breaking. It was heavy. The other job was digging, making preparations for planting. My adopted mother helped too. She was out there in the field. She was one of those lauhala weavers, she was always makin lauhala mats.

Cucumber season we raised cucumber. Sweet-potato, I think we had two crops a year. Watermelon, so that is out for Fourth of July. Tomato. And when I was in 4-H club, I had a little patch of cabbage, carrots, several other things that I grew. Course, tomato was automatically, out in the big field. Round the house I had made myself a garden for 4-H club. Mr. Gough was in charge of it. He lived at Olaa. He used to come down. There was a few of us got involved in it. And pretty soon it was just old thing. Interest wasn't there. He used to take us, visit different farms, in Puna area.

JJ: You didn't find it interesting?

KP: Well, farming was kind of in the blood. And I was workin on a regular truck-farm too, so what's the difference? But the

money was good from those things that we sold to stores. And of course, sold some of the vegetables in Pahoa also. The Japanese were buyin a lot of it.

Course, part of the activities used to be was fishin, for `opelu season. Go out and get `opelu, come in, go in Pahoa and sell it to the people in Pahoa. Course take some home, clean em, salt em, and dry em. Dried fish. Beside that, would be for raw fish. As a youngster, I used to eat a lotta raw fish. But now I don't seem to care for it too much. Just poke.

And up here, by Kupahu`a, that's where actually we started our farm. And then we start movin, up to Black Sands subdivision, and there was another one down below, Opihikao or Kehena area.

Course, the coconuts weren't as abundant as you see now, around here. The land used to be pretty clear in the area. Like I said, part of the sellin material was coconuts. In those days that coconut milk wasn't the thing, till lot of the hotels start usin it for fresh coconut. Course, there's times when mango season. We used to pick mangoes and sell em.

jj: What would you describe as a typical day for you? Get up in the morning and....

kp: It all depends where you are. Like if we up at the farm I used to get up early because I rode my horse down to school. I rode my horse to the house over there, unsaddle him and let him loose and come to school. When school is over I go to the house and saddle him up and go back up in the hills. School days I used to do that quite often. Even up here at Kupahu`a when we had a farm up there. We stayed up there very few times. We just come back home. Fishing was every night just about. My adopted dad we used to come home from farming or whatever. Well, he'll get the net and I'll get the bag and we go throw net for supper.

jj: This is when you were up?

kp: Well up the mountain or down here same thing, need fresh fish for supper. He would grab the net and I would grab the bag, come down here. I `ve had kind of good experiences in those fishing times. Twice my dad and I were half way to the rocks going to that point there (rocks behind the church in the ocean) where these moi fish was, well what we call poho. It's a deep area in the ocean there that the fish hangs around. We were just about to throw the net then we saw a dog running from the east on the surface of the water. It was one of those stories that was true, I've seen it. And then right there he said "No. Pau, lets go home." Next time, I don't think it was in the same area but in the canoe landing, we saw-you heard of the akualele ?-well, we saw one land on our house. And my dad he said "Hey, better go home. Something's wrong." But then, just when we were about even with the church, that thing took off again and went toward Kapa`ahu and landed on a person's house up there and he died that night. It's a weird story but it's true, I experienced it. You know where the 55 flow is right below the spatter cone? Right below it, is what we call ohi`a loloa. Well in the old days if

you carried any pork with you, you didn't get past that place. You stop, I mean cars would stop. Till you tossed some of it out, then you would go on. I experienced it myuself in Honolulu once. I was goin with this girl . She was in the girls' school and I was in the boys' school. We were goin down to her folks' place in Kailua I had a 41 Chevy. I just came back from down under. And just before I made the turn to go down the old road at the pali, my car stopped. It wouldn budge. I put it in reverse, it won't back up. Put it in low gear, it won't go ahead. Just set there. I said, "Damn you mom." It was my real mother. She didn want me to go with this girl. One of those, you know, they call it kahuna ___. And like my adopted mother, she is one of those that could fix when somebody get sick by kahuna.

jj: So she was a Kahuna?

kp: Well kind of. We had one behind us he was a good one.

jj: And his name was?

kp: John Makua. ....Farming, actually, well I'll tell you what, to be honest with you, when I went to Kamehameha School I kept going I wasn't about to come back farming. Not only me, but my brothers the same thing. They went to Honolulu to work. ...Carrying, well we used to have kerosene box, two five gallon square cans. It's full with tomatoes. And carry that from where the farm is to the road. It's back-breaking. Some of my other brothers were doing to help with my brother [Gabriel]. But once they got into Hilo to finish high-school, well, they kept going. One went, Peter, he went to Honolulu, and he worked for Young Brothers. The other one, John, why he went to workin on the prison. As a guard. And after that he became a policeman. Cause in those old days, a guard and a policeman were close. So he became a policeman, and then eventually he transferred back here.

jj: So you had certain things you had to do on the farms such as carrying crates?

kp: Well digging, cutting. Then we burn the rubbish when it's dry to clear the bushes. Then start digging. Then were the stumps are, we go around and gig it out so you get a better field. Cause you leave em in, it's kinda hard to dig around. Those guava roots are son-of-a-guns. They are hard. And they're pretty well scattered, underground. Then, gotta fertilize em. But, watermelon, even the tomatoes, this fruit-fly wasn too bad then, but, they were badf enough. So watermelon, when it came to--after they flower and start bearin fruit-- I think 3/4 inch the most you can let em get big. Then we start coverin them with real fine slivers of wood. That's how we used to cover em to keep the flies off. We never put insecticide of any kind around at all. The only thing we ever used was poison to poison the weeds. But then we used to go around, we had a handle with a

round thing with a mosquito net. We used to go around. see if we could catch them fruit-flies. But, like I said, when you start harvesting. Boy, it was back-breaking.

jj: You would get up in the morning and go to school and come back home during school time you would work on the farm too?

kp: Well no after school and on the weekends. except Sundays. Necessary things only on Sundays. My dad went around, see if he can catch some fruit-flies, things like that. if it's time to fertilize, and if it needs water.

Side B

It was kind of hard to believe that people didn wanta do something for themselves. Just like now, they'd rather be on welfare than break their back.

Course, fishing was kind of a fad, it always has been. Fishin out here, they used to have night-fishin too. I've gone up, we used to go all the way to Opihikao by canoe. But, of course, it's hard work goin up. But comin back, it's not too bad. Current comes this way. Night fishin was good. They call it mempachi now, those days was ʻuʻū. Big eyes, red fish. And the other was kawelcʻā, looks like a barracuda but it isn't. The mouth part is not like the barracuda.

Opelu is the thing they used to do during the day. The net is hung on the outrigger. Then when they get out to where their going to do the fishing or they know where there's opelu they lower the net in the ocean. Then trying to get a real big loop under the canoe. Of course, line is pretty big that's attached to it at the top. But onces they get it set down there, then they put shrimp. We use to have red shrimps. Lonowai, that was a famous spot for that. We used to go over there with a small scoop-net, a new with two handles. My dad and I used to go to catch the shrimp for bait. The other thing we used with it was papaya, and if we had pumpkin growin, pumpkin. Mixed with it to throw it in there, and attracts the fish.

jj: So you would put the net in a big circle and you would throw the bait into the circle?

kp: Well no we would put the bait into a sack that was open on each end and you let it go down in the center of the net and you would jerk the sack and the bait would come out. Once the net had plenty of fish in it we would pull it up.
JJ: And then how would the fish get in the net?
KP: Well, they swim in.
JJ: On the top?
KP: Well, you still lower the net even more down. Then you wtach if you have. A couple of the oarsmen have a glass-bottom box that they look under [with]. When there was plenty in there, plenty of it, they pulled it up.

Here it was just plain hard work, no matter what, in those days. Taro-planting the same thing. Dig and dig and plant. We

go with animals. They can carry the things down. Mules and donkeys. My uncle had horses. We had horses, so, we took horses to bring the taro from the taro patch up there.
jj: So what would you do as a boy in the taro patch?

kp: Go out weeding, but before we start we would clear the land. But those days we never had that horse, large horse. We only used it in the regular watermelon patesh, cause that was for market. But up there was for home use.
..of course playing we played in the school yard for sports. baseball and things. But then Father Everest, that used to be a big gym there. We had basketball and volleyball in there. Cause weekends, it was always. Later on Father Evarest got the county, helped put this volleyball and basketball court in. Actually the youngsters didn't do much but play around home unless they came down here to play in the gym. The gym was not just restricted to catholic kids, everybody could come. Every Saturday night he used to bring movies down here. pahoa was the only movie house in the close area. All the neighbors used to come. I kinda liked Father Everest. I used to come at night and watch him paint the curch. Course, I used to get my ears pulled for not doing my homework, too.
[talks about National Park taking land, incl. Pe'a property in Panau. Hauanio land next to school old family property.
Gabriel hired Filipino workers later on. He never married: "There was a girl he wanteds to marry. Why my mother, my real mother, didn wanty it. And the girl's family sent her on to Maui. I was smart, I went to another island."]
jj: How far of a horse ride was it from your house to shool?

kp: From Waiholoku'i, I say about four or five miles.

jj: So you would get up in the morning and would you do any work before you would go to school.

kp: Sometimes it all depends on the season. Like sometimes my dad goes up to Hilo early. Well, we load the car. He had an old chevy touring car that he cut the back off and made a truck out of it. Had a Plymouth convertable for a family car. Most of the time produce was taken in on Wednesday and Saturday. That's when everybody goes to town. So Wednesday morning before school we load up the truck before my dad goes into Hilo. On Saturday, sometimes just my step-dad and I go in.

jj: Did your mother fix you breakfast in the morning?

kp: Oh yeah, well my father too, he was a Chinese/Hawaiian so he liked cooking too. Of course Hawaiian meals were plain mostly poi and fish and meat sometime.

jj: Even for breakfast?

kp: (laughs and shakes his head yes) Some time no fresh fishand meanwhile there was dry fish we always had dry fish. (talks again

about a type of fishing).....

jj: In the morning you would do chores somedays and eat breakfast and then..

kp: Saddle up.

jj: Where way your horse?

kp: Next to my home.

jj: Did you saddle it or ride bareback?

kp: No, saddle. And I would usually meet the kids by Kaimu on my way down and...

jj: Did they have horses too?

kp: Well no I was the only spoiled brat. (laughs) I was way up there. The horse were mine. I had quite a few of them. Although folks told me, you take care of em. The old days use to be nice down here. From Kaimu and up, the animals--horses, cattle--were all bunch. In the evening they're here; during the day they were way out, around Kapa`ahu. THe evening they all come home for water in the ponds. And if you want em, you just come out, whistle at em, and you get em and take em home. But mine wasn't, it was a ornery one. My uncle had one, Diamond, a white horese, it goes with em, cow and all. But then, of course, at the last, my brother had pigs. he was raisin pigs there in Kaimu. And he hadda pen all his pigs. (It was a law, because?) case of accident, why your're liable for the animal of course. Finally he sold em all. During those days, well, Model T and all that, they don't go that fast. The animals get out of the way before you hit em. All the way up to halfway up to Pahoa was about the same thing.

jj: What would you get the milk in?

kp: Jars. Because every afternoon they would milk the cows. When I was going up the hill I usually won't stop because I have to go to work. Cause it's late in the evening, afternoon, that the animals come in for watering, and you catch em and milk em.

My real folks was the only ones that had cattle down here. But Kapa`ahu, Mr. Stone had a pretty big cattle...He had some cattle up there where Royal Gardens, that area this way. He had quite a few he ran. xxx

Pig, of course, you can go huntin for those. Wild pigs. Was always a lotta pigs up in the hills. I guess some of em get loose from the herd that comes back and forth.

jj: As far as school goes, you would let you horse off and walk to school. What would the kids do before school in the morning?

kp: Those days the didn't have the pledge of Allegence and all that. We just go into the class room when the bell rings. There

was a warning bell and the another one to start the day.

jj: Would someone ring the bells by hand?

kp: Yeah. Down here where the tool shed is that use to be a high two story well nothing down stairs. It was just an upper-floor classroom and them below it ran to ...the sandhill has moved back. There is a longer building where a classroom is. Two classroom, and that's the extension up to sixth grade. 7th grade you got to go the Hilo, Junior High.

Tape 2 (Not revised by C.L. from this point on.)

jj: There were two school buildings is that what you were saying? The one was a two story and the other was a long building...

kp: I don't know if it was two stories or there I'm not so sure. On the corner on this side of the Halau (church side) was the teachers cottage.
jj: Mrs. Gusans?

kp: Well Mrs. Gusans didn't stay there she stayed down the way with her family. She's kind of a local girl. I think she was born in Pahoa. The teahcher stayed right here on the grounds.

jj: So, it was one through sixth grade here? All in, there was a one room class room?

kp: I believe it was a combination, (unclear) Mrs. Gusans was a up in ?? I think she was principal at that time. (talks about mpowiong around going to different schools) Sometimes I'm at a disadvantage. (because of moving) whether it is good or bad I don't know? I played around too much so it probably didn't make any differences.

jj: What were some of the pranks that some of the kids would do in those days?

kp: Throwing things like rubbers of little objects that we pick up.

jj: You would throw them at a?

kp: Somebody in front of you or the the side them. Most of the time out side in th playground, playtime.

jj: So as far as lunch goes would you eat then right at school?

kp: No, we brought our own lunches.

jj: What would you usually bring for lunch?

kp: Well a sandwhich of some kind. Then right across canoe

halau there was a what they call amu store like kids used to sneak over there and eat candy and buy cookies and crackers and things like that.

jj: You went to Mauna Kea potestant church when you were growing up how often were services?

kp: Every Sunday. Of course they have different things in the morning before around the-o-clock cristian endevor that was mostly for the older people. Of course they had I can't remember right now. My adopted father was quite a composer. He composed quite a few songs, he used to take the English version of the church songs and make it in Hawaiian.

jj: He played ukulele?

kp: No he never did he would just sing, I played the ukelele... Of course to me a lot of things went by and quite a few years (laughs).

jj: As you talk about them more and more things will come up. ;;;;;;;;;;gap talk about pop. trends

jj: More on the childhood that is good information I think this is probably enough for today. Thanks a lot. Next Thursday do you want to get together again.

kp: Yeah Ok.