

Interview 1 with Louis Pau                      by Russell Rapoza                      2/9/90  
(Corrections/additions made by Becky Pau 2/12/2010—marked by shading)

RR: As I stated earlier, our teacher gave us these questions to go over with our new informants. We just want to get a basic background about your experiences that you had, you know, down in the Kalapana area. And from that we can later decide what is important and we can come back and ask you later. First of all, let me ask you about your family. And for you—you're not from Kalapana, but do you have any family down in Kalapana besides your wife?

LP: No.

RR: No, you didn't.

LP: Well, I had Pavao. Edwin Pavao is a relative to my cousin, who was Alice Pau, now is Alice Bondaug. They related by her mother's side, whereas I related to her by my father's side.

RR: Any other relative down there, or family down there that you can tell me about down there, including your wife's family. that make up the special area of Kalapana?

LP: Well, Kapa'ahu.

RR: Kapa'ahu?

LP: Yes, mostly all the family—the Ka'awaloa's, Kauhi's, Pavao's, Pai's, Roberts, all in Kapa'ahu, and Ka'apana.

RR: How was the, you know as you frequented down in that area, how was the household composition? Was there a lot of extended families, or a lot of nuclear families? Like extended families were like they had their grandmother, the children, and then the grandkids with them. Or was it just the parents with the kids, and the grandparents live someplace else?

LP: Well, you know, in Kalapana itself we had Kahilihiwa's, Mary Kahilihiwa, next to the Painted Church. They've been there ever since I frequented Kalapana many, many years ago. She had family, her children, her grandchildren, etc. living there with her. And the Kamelamela's and the Peleiholani's the same things, and Hauani'o's, and the Keli'iho'omalu's, Lee Hong's all of course from the Kalapana side. And of course in Kapa'ahu, and I mentioned the Ka'awaloa's, and in Kapa'ahu, of course you had the Pavao, the Ka'awaloa's, and the Roberts, and that was all families.

RR: And that was all extended families?

LP: Oh yeah.

RR: They was all living with their grandparents and having kid live with them?

LP: Well, some of them had their children with them, and others used to move out and return frequently.

RR: So the family was real close then, the Hawaiian type of 'ohana type family. Or just the modern day now—this was when? back in...

LP: This was back in the late forties when I used to frequently go down there. I was in the service. We used to go on guided tours to Kalapana, in fact on guided tours to different parts of the island. I was a tour guide. And, ahh, as far as I know, well I remember when I used to pass by, 'as the time we had the dirt road going to Queen's Bath, Punalu'u Pond. And I recall my brother-in-laws used to play basketball on the road. They had a basket on an 'ulu tree. And every time I used to pass by, they used to say Sergeant Pau, Sergeant Pau, and the kids used to all wave too.

RR: So this was in the late forties then.

LP: Yeah, late forties and earl fifties.

RR: We just trying to get the date correct. So the family, the household, the 'ohana as the Hawaiians would say, was it real close?

LP: Oh yeah. They used to gather at night sometimes and play music. They work together, help each other.

RR: And did you go down there and play music with them?

LP: No, no. That was altogether different.

RR: So this was basically among the family itself then.

LP: Right.

RR: Okay. How about the houses down there, the design of the houses when you used to go down there. Like a lot of the haoles, they come in to Hawai'i and they look at Hawai'i, and they say, "Where is the grass shacks?" What kind of houses were there? did they have wooden structures? or what kind of wooden structures did they have?

LP: Well, wooden structures. Some of them were partitions added on, with the cook house separate, and out door toilets. The rest rooms were outdoors, because there were

no cesspools at that time. In fact, later Kalapana got its song. “Just Press.” If you listen to that song, it tells you about where they used to go to the outhouse and use old newspapers or magazines, because they cannot afford to buy toilet paper.

RR: And what kind of roof did they have—metal, corrugated metal roof? or thatch roof? or...

LP: Corrugated. Well, as far as I know it was just metal roof.

RR: The kind that HPM get?

LP: Well, not that fancy. Just tin metal, or corrugated metal.

RR: How about the insides of the houses. Have you been inside the houses? What did they look like—was it just one big flat open space, or did they have rooms?

LP: Well, I remember where we used to stay before the lava came and covered the house. Well, my wife guys used to live in an old termite-eaten house below, because they were building the new house in the early fifties. Then they used to climb from one house on to the porch of the other, and they used to sleep on the floor on the lauhala mats. Most of the houses had lauhala mats, so you could sleep right on the floor. It was warm, even with a concrete floor, especially those with two story houses.

RR: Most of the houses were two story?

LP: Ah, quite a few. The Roberts was, our, Pavao’s, Ka’awaloa’s. They all were two story.

RR: And all of them had separate cooking house?

LP: Well, the reason they have separate cooking house is that, when they used to have the cook house and the wash house, and they wash clothes and take a bath outside in an enclosure. And, of course they used to make the hot water by boiling the water in a pan to take a bath with the firewood and the furo type. And they used to put water in a big tub and pour the water over you, and you soap yourself, you rinse yourself, and stuff like that. And the pond we had before in the back of our house was the same crack that extended from Queen’s Bath, which continued on. And of course my wife them used to go down and get water from the pond and haul it up to take a bath when the water in the tank was low.

RR: So there was no pump or anything, so they had to go down with buckets and haul it up?

LP: Yeah, that’s what they used to do until my father-in-law had a pump run by regular gas to pump the water up in the big tub. .

RR: And that used to be your cooking water, drinking water, bath water, everything?

LP: Well, they used to catch the water. They had a concrete tank they used to catch the water off the roof.

RR: So you guys had catchment back then.

LP: Yeah, all catchment, 'as they only way you get water. Catchment. And if the water is low, then you go carry um up from the deep crack, because the water good, eh? Same water they use to swim in a t Punalu'u Pond, wash their clothes and take a bath.

RR: So Punalu'u Pond was Queen's Bath, or was it another pond?

LP: Well, what they call Queen's Bath is actually called Punalu'u. But for tourist and servicemen that go down there, they call it Queen's Bath. **We don't really know who made up that name.**

RR: What about childhood activities over there. I mean, what did the children do as they were growing up. When you drove past, do they play around, or were they always working, or... What were they doing?

LP: Well, each household, they used to tend their sweet potato. They used to plant their own sweet potato, vegetables, taro, and stuff like that. But the families all used to work in their own area, and the kids used to work at least half a day with their parents, and then the parents allow them to go swimming or stuff like that. Or play games with other kids, **mostly family**. Because the houses wasn't too far apart. Not like today, right next to each other, they were a few hundred yard apart. And in the evening the families used to gather and talk stories and stuff like that, and play music. They made their own entertainment, that's why. They had no TV **and only a few had radios**.

RR: What kind of games did the kids play? Was it the Hawaiian games like pa'i 'uma? or did they play modern games like stick ball or basketball.

LP: Well, they used to play basketball, **volleyball, marbles**, and different small games **they make up**. And I remember my wife telling me that her and Ku'u lei Pavao, they used to walk from Kapa'ahu to Kalapana, next to the Painted Church, and which is approximately two miles. They used to walk there to go to school. And as they walk along the road going to school, one would walk on the left and the other on the right. One would pick the guavas on the left and one pick the guava on the right. And they had this moa plant. I don't know if you know what it is? It's a common plant, it grows and kind of **switches** off. And they used to pick it off and they used to put the small branches together just like a wishbone, and they used to pull. And if yours doesn't break off, well, you'd say cookadoodle-do. You know what I mean? And maybe that's how they get the word Kamoamo. Because they had a lot of those herbs. It's a Hawaiian herb, the moa plant.

RR: Interesting. What about the families' subsistence? Did most of the families go out and work the way they do now, or did they grow their own taro? How did they get their food?

LP: Well, mostly they worked at home farming. My wife's parents had nine children, so they would plant all kinds of vegetables, and when it's ready to harvest, the kids would help out so that they could take the produce to the market to sell it. And of course some people used to go hunting. They had wild pipi down there, wild goats, and wild pigs, and stuff like that. So they used to share quite a bit with each other. They go fishing, and they raise their own chickens. They had no chicken feed, so they used to grate coconut and feed the chicken grated coconuts. And that was mostly on special holidays or when family or friends from far away came where they had chicken and other stuff like that. I remember my wife telling me that when they were small they used to share food with the ohanas, their taro or ulu or whatever is available. They make poi, and when they make poi they stretch em. To stretch em, they added cooked flour to it, and it was called flour poi. My father-in-law used to work as a yard person for people, the Branco family in Hilo, the Ho family in Pāhoa, and stuff like that. But, of course that was only twenty dollars a month that he used to get. And to feed a family of nine kids, well, that would be kind of stretching it. So with the fishing and whatever food they had they used to be happy it. They never wasted anything.

RR: So the foods they had was, they main food was poi, fish, they go hunting, they hunt for pipi and pigs. Anything else? They go hunt for birds—like wild turkey?

LP: No, they never had wild turkey in those days.

RR: Oh, it was brought in later?

LP: Yeah.

RR: So basically that's what they went hunting for then, the beef (pipi), the pork (pigs).

LP: And they had their coconut, and they raise their own sweet potato. In fact, I remember people from Hilo used to come down to my father-in-law's place and buy sweet potato from them. And during that time it went for about ten cents a pound. Which, for half a bag maybe you paid one dollar for one bag of potatoes. Some would go to the beach to pick opihis to sell it to the market. And with that, they used to buy staples such as rice, flour, sugar, canned goods, and other fresh foods, as they did not have refrigerators in those days.

RR: How about the children, what did they do—other than like you mentioned your father-in-law working for the Branco family, do you know of anyone else that was doing cash work? Or any of the kids were doing cash work at the time? Maybe during their spare time, when they were not working for the family, did they go out and help the neighbors for cash, or food?

LP: Yeah. My brother-in-laws used to go out and work for Bob Lee. He was a rancher down there. They used to go and cut hāpu‘u. And I think he used to pay them fifty cents a day. Or fifty cents an hour? But I think it was fifty cents a day at that time. And they work from morning to night. And, of course as they were going to school, after school and weekends and stuff like that. So, other people used to go to work, some people used to work in Hilo **or at the Volcano National Park**. But most of them in the family, they used to make—my mother-in-law them—used to make lauhala hats and mats like that, and people used to buy them. A hat at that time used to sell for seven dollars for one lauhala hat. **But the two-tone brown and white ones were sold for \$20**. And at today’s price, I would say that the same lauhala hat would be about one hundred fifty, two hundred dollars.

RR: At that price because of the cost of living was low?

LP: Right.

RR: Did the kids work a lot when they was—or did they work for other people or for the family?

LP: Was mostly for the family. Because not too many people with businesses down there.

RR: How about the families—did they get along with each other, the neighbors like that?

LP: The old saying, you never talk bad about anybody in Kalapana, to people in Ka‘ū, or even in Maui, because somehow or another, they are kind of related to each other. From Ka‘ū to Kalapana, and Kalapana and Maui. So I would say they got along real great. They are all close families, cousins and aunties and stuff like that. Even today, if the place wasn’t wiped out by the eruption, people would still be living there. But lot of them had to move away and find jobs after they got through with school, because there were no job over here. In fact, all of my wife’s family, most of them are in Honolulu. There is only three of them who are here, and six that’s in Honolulu.

RR: So they had a big family then?

LP: Nine of them.

RR: How many boys, how many girls?

LP: One, two, three, four girls, and five boys.

RR: What about your family? Did you have a big family also?

LP: No, no I had two brothers.

RR: Two brothers. You are originally from where?

LP: Waiakea.

RR: Waiakea side. And you what, Hawaiian?

LP: No, I'm French, French-Portuguese.

RR: French-Portuguese. You kind of look Portuguese. I'm Portuguese also.

LP: Yeah? I thought you were Japanese. You half breed then?

RR: Yeah, yeah. So the relationship between the neighbors and everything was alright. But they did have their squabbles didn't they?

LP: Well, I guess like anything else. But they were all cousins and stuff like that so they got along okay.

RR: How about the kids going to school and things like that. Did they go to school regularly, or when they had a lot of work to do around the house they just don't go? Or how was the impact of school upon them growing up in the Kapa'ahu, Kalapana area in the forties and the fifties.

LP: Well, I don't know about the forties and the fifties, but I used to see the kids walking, walking going to school like that, and having up to sixth grade in Kalapana. Next to where the [canoe] halau is now used to be the school. And I believe the teacher's name then was Mrs. Sharp, I think.

RR: Haole lady, Mrs. Sharp?

LP: No, Hawaiian, hapa-Hawaiian lady. And a different nationality, Norwegian or something like that. I don't know.

RR: So you really don't know about the school, because you just...

LP: Well, I used to pass by. I remember the kids used to be outside, waving at the KMC buses as they pass by. This was in the late forties and early fifties.

RR: How about church. Did you used to go there on Sundays? did you see them going to church too?

LP: Yeah, well, the churches, they had the Hawaiian church—the Congregational Church, and the Catholic church—the Star of the Sea—right across each other. You know, some used to go to the Catholic Church and some used to go to the Congregational Church. There was a lot of people, but a lot of people used to go to church.

RR: Did the people who went to the different churches, they got along good?

LP: Oh yes. In the same family, one cousin go this side the street and the other goes the other side of the street.

RR: Because a lot of people nowadays, especially in the mainland, if you go to this church, you no talk to the people who go to that church.

LP: On, no, no. Especially, one a year they used to have, the Congregational church use to have all the different Congregational churches to gather in Kalapana for ho'ike, and they had food like they serve at luaus. And a lot of people used to go church on that Sunday. They used to call them kaukau delegate because that's the only time you see them at church.

RR: How about outsiders? How do the people of Kalapana and Kapa'ahu feel about outsiders coming in?

LP: To my knowledge, they never really bothered too much. Because ever since I used to go down there regularly, people was always friendly and the kids were always waving at us while we were riding the buses or walking. Or whoever could afford a bicycle used to ride the bike. Or whenever they go with a car, usually lot of people ride in one car. It sure beats walking, you know, the Model T's and the A's.

RR: Yeah, they were nice cars. You cannot beat the old cars. Any other thing about the churches and the schools?

LP: No. As I said, the school was next to the Kahilihiwa house, and the Painted Church was right next, and the Congregational church was right across the street.

RR: The Painted Church was Catholic, right?

LP: Yes.

RR: And that one is still standing.

LP: Yes, and the Congregational church is still standing. That and the drive-in.

RR: That's interesting. Did they have a lot of stores back then?

LP: Well, I remember the old Young Wai, the old store right across the school. I don't know when it was torn down, but that building was still standing in the sixties I would say. He died. I remember that he used to meet us every Thursday at Harry K. Brown Park. He wait till the picnic was over. he used to cut grass for his cows, and he used to wait, because we had left-over beer that we used to sell for ten cents a can at those times. And he would come over with a dollar or two dollars and buy some beer. We used to sell



em to him. And he used to mix them up with his grass and carry that back and go home. He was happy for a week.

RR: And this was Mr. Young Wai?

LP: Yeah, Young Wai himself.

RR: Did he ever take the beer and sell it in his store?

LP: I doubt he would, no, no. No, he save em for himself or his friends. But I don't think he ever sell it. Because you couldn't get beer at that price anything, and rather than take it back, we used to just [sell it]... the same price, we used to sell it to the tourist, the KMC guest, at the same price.

RR: At that time, was it still like you could get stuff more cheap at KMC?

LP: Well, not like today. KMC at that time, for dollar a day you had your room and board and tour, transportation and everything thrown in. Whereas now, maybe breakfast cost you five dollars.

RR: But that just for the military, right?

LP: Military and their dependents. And whoever they brought in as sponsors. Just like today, people can go up there. As long as you're a guest of someone, you can go and enjoy. But you pay for everything nowadays. You pay for your tours, you pay for your meals as you go, and I guess the lodging you pay separate.

RR: Well, that's all the questions that I have.

LP: Well actually, in fact KMC had a big hand in helping the community of Kalapana with that pavilion.

RR: Which pavilion in this?

LP: The big pavilion you see there today, at Harry K. Brown Park. The first pavilion that was there was the small pavilion there next to it, toward the heiau. Used to get only one pavilion, and set up a grass shack. Then, of course, the area on the side used to be where they held their courts, next to the heiau. And they used to have a grass shack over there, and Sergeant Clarie who was family to the Moniz family in Hilo, used to live by the Japanese church, the Hongwanji right in the center of town on Kilauea, by where they get part of the green house still standing. That used to be the Moniz place.

RR: I think they tore it down already.

LP: No, part of it is still standing. And he used to work for the Tribune Herald. And Primo Moniz—that's not his real name, but that's what they used to call him. Well that,

his brother-in-law Clarie used to be stationed at KMC. He, in turn, used to go down to the Board of Supervisors and see, I don't know if it was Kealoha time or Spencer's time. But they talked it over, and somehow or another, KMC supplied the material, and then the county supplied the workmanship or something like that. But that's how the pavilion was built. In fact, it's still standing today. And lot of the picnic tables, the rocks were brought in from temple of Kuku'i and Kapoho. Those large slabs of stone you see over there, and some of them are still there today, that was during Mr. Hall's time.

RR: That was when—forties, fifties?

LP: Oh, that was in the late thirties and forties.