

Interview #2 with Monty Richards

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Interview #2 with Monty Richards 3/25/94
(KM stands for Kepa Maly)

Start of side A of tape)

MR: In time it will come through so. But as I've told others is the reason for it is that as he gets smarter and I slip further into senility why the quality of work coming out the door will hopefully be the same.

KM: Was your wife (MR: Phylis Richards, HPA) I was telling Chuck that I had been up here years ago. I did some instuction classes, I was teaching, when Hawaii Bound was first getting started, I was doing ethnobotanical and workshops and so I was up here with your wife around '75 or so ? how briefly. So I was wondering ?

CL: So, let me just get you to say once again, you say, Ahunoa.

MR: OK. My name's Monty Richards and I'm participating in an interview on March the 25th at about 1:10 in the afternoon. The hill behind Waikanonula we have always called Ahumoa. But the USGS has seen fit to rename it from our standpoint Ahunoa. Does that...

CL: That's great. And would you tell us your understanding of the names of Puu Ahia and Puu Mala.

MR: OK. Again the USGS map calls Puu Mala, the hill that we always referred to as Puu Ahia, however again the next hill in the forest we always referred to as Puu Mala and the USGS refers to that as Puu Ahia. As to who is really correct I don't know but I think we know as much as the USGS. They may however have better sources then we do.

CL: You mentioned the paddock was...

MR: Yes the paddock, it's no longer a single paddock. It's referred to as the Keawewai cell which was the combination of two paddocks, Puu Ahia and Keawewai.

CL: And I have one small question which is not really about Puu Mala or Puu Ahia. I've come up against James Woods and Frank Woods. Do you know whether that's a father and son?

MR: I do not know. Frank Woods was the owner of this ranch before the current families or the current group bought. I'm not sure but I don't think he, at the time that he had any issue. But I don't know that for 100% fact.

CL: Do you think that he was related to the owners of Puu Hue?

MR: Oh ya. There was relationships there whether they were brothers or cousins, that I don't know. I believe though that his

wife was a cousin of the Parkers, was Mrs. Woods.

CL: James Woods' wife was supposed to be a Parker.

MR: OK, I'm not sure but Frank Woods wife now, (Someone talking in the background) I'm not sure if it was James Frank Woods. We may be talking about the same person, I don't know. Be interesting to check.

CL: OK. Maybe that's right. You never saw him though.

MR: Oh, huge man I'm told. (CL: Old, was he old?) I don't know how old he was at the time of his death. When he was here I really don't know, I guess 50 years old, he was 60, but very big. I guess not only tall but rotund.

CL: So maybe in 1930 60 years old?

MR: Could be, ya.

CL: The one that married, Mary Parker, married about 1885 [wrong--1868].

MR: Look at it. James Frank Woods, I think they're probably one in the same. And did they have any children?

CL: I think there was heirs, I think there was ? heirs but they didn't ranch it...they gave it to a Kohala Ranch cooperation for a few years.

MR: That I don't know. It'd be interesting you put all this together, I want a copy of it.

CL: Alright, I'm working on it.

MR: I don't give a damn about my babbelings, I'd like to see what you finally come out with.

CL: I'm working on it. Somebody died. Frank Woods supposed to have died 1883, James Woods supposed to have died 1883.

MR: Maybe Frank was his son then. That may have been it, and then he was J. Frank Woods, known at Frank, not to get mixed up with his father. It's a guess anyway. Hey hell, if you can't, if you don't know the facts be creative.

CL: So let's talk about these ditches then.

KM: Just curious, we've got the map that the NEXRAD people sort of put together and it shows what we're looking at is Puu Ahia, Puu Mala, Kilohana Gulch, and you know the large paddock that's right here, stone wall enclosure. It was very interesting to note

that there's a fairly well--in areas--marked through alignments ditch `auwai [lowest of the ditches found by PHRI], goes though here and it also follows quite a way along through some of what appears to be the natural drainage. But it may be is walled. There's a little bit more alignment down closer to the road. Do you have a sense or a feeling about use of this ditch, historic...

MR: No, I don't know. From my time I don't know what something like that would of been used for unless it was the water in the enclosure, to provide water. This road [Kohala Mountain Road] has been reworked around here as you can see this. There may have been something below but as you notice it gets pretty steep right over there. Now maybe they have something. This road has been constucted, or this piece, since I've been here. The old road's right here.

MR: These are, I think there's one or two, one `auwai that does come (KM: the reservoir pond?) Yeah.

KM: This [higher ditch] is also clearly marked as a ditch. We followed it out, it appeared to end at this silted-over reservoir/holding pond there. Do you have an idea if it continued?

MR: I'm sure it did. There's a pond right around here with water in it. We dug this. This isn't ancient.

CL: Did you dig the ditch?

MR: No. At least not in my time. So I think there was an old `auwai that did come across and was probably to intercept this stream, that came down here [to the Waip_hoehoe] because of the settlement down below it, here. They had to have water.

This is an `auwai that comes across, and I'm not sure, I think there's one more around here some place [higher up and opposite the "wall" that is actually an old wood fence].

KM: So what do you think was the purpose of..

MR: Just to increase this [Waip_hoehoe] so that you had more for the settlement [Horepa] which was down here.

KM: What do you think about the age of these? Do these sort of date the ranching activities and Hoepa settlement or?

MR: No clue. But I would imagine it would date the settlement.

CL: Anyway, as far as you know, it's been there as long as you've known.

MR: Oh yeah, right, we didn't dig it. Okay, I've been actively on the place for just about 40 years. I used to come up as a kid.

The other thing that you gotta realize is that you didn't really have a lot of reasonable equipment available until after World War II. Somebody may have a DA tractor on the plantation but in those days I don't think you even had hydraulic tools, I think they were all cable tools. So start crunching through here, it was either by hand in the real early days at the time they put the tunnels in or I guess you could dig it with mules and plows or something, but this stuff was probably all dug by hand for the settlement. Because you've got a far better water source here. (CL: in the Keawewai [sic: Kilohana]) Ya and then I'm sure that if you go back in here there's probably some `auwai's bringing it from, this Kilohana I think, so you more it over and then you come in here, so I'm sure that if you go back far enough you'll probably find that that's probably true right there too.

CL: One other thing Monty. One of the, the old lady I was talking to, Mrs. Aweiro, was talking about a dam on the Waipahoehoe, from which their `auwai came. Do you know where that might have been?

MR: Ya. Well there was an `auwai that fills this [pond]. You can see this here is really not a stream. I think you'll find it is, right here, this is the stream. I think that there is an `auwai, this really was an auwai [just to the south of the Waipahoehoe]. I'm trying to think. It's a place where it kind of flattens out on the rock. We got a gate there, it's a crossing we used to go across on horses and all back there. But I don't recall concrete dam. The only concrete dam is up here.

CL: No I think she was talking about something probably rock and earthen or something like that.

MR: Could be but in this stream here when you get water like you have today, look at everything running, clean it out. If there was no concrete there's no dam.

CL: Anyway, you don't know of a dam here or down below either.

MR: No. The only dam that I know of and it's on the other stream, the one down here below the road is above what we call Popomino, and that was put in after the was to divert water from that stream. (CL: on the Keawewai?) Ya. We owned this chunk of land, not this one but the one over. So that dam was built by Kahua. And there is a slight dam on the stream that goes here, which was built by us. It's right mauka of the road. On the bridge you can look down and you can see it. And that was done for cattle water. I think they use it today, not sure. Might as well get all this crap down you know. I might die tomorrow. What a blessing.

CL: This dam and this land that you were talking about, past in a stuff that Keawewai had? So on Kawaihae two.

MR: No, it's Kawaihae one, wait, Puu Loa, this is Puu Loa, there's

this paddock that we have, and you come across and you crossed it down... Anna's thing is here.

CL: I thought that Anna's thing included at one time, included all of this in here.

MR: Ya that's right, it did. This is what I think they leased from Parker Ranch. So there's a stream that goes down which I don't see here. This is probably the Parker Ranch pond that they have there. So it's, the property line follows the kahawai and it cuts off but, I can show you on the air photo, it's easier for me to figure out. There is a stream that goes down but it does not go through here. The stream goes through here and they built an auwai here and took the water out of the normal flowing stream and they put it in there if you really want to know.

CL: Into the Parker Pond?

MR: Ya. And this red line is about where the boundry would be.

CL: Yes, I think that's the boundry between the two ahupuaha.

MR: Ya and this is Anna's site up here where her house is. They built a big dam there now I understand.

CL: So where's the dam that you folks ?

MR: It'll be right, it's Keawewai stream, it's Honokoa Gulch that we want.

CL: Well Honokoa turns into Keawewai.

KM: Do you have any sense of what may have been occuring here before ranching. Did any of the old hands talk to you at all? Was there ever any indication of any dry land agriculture or anything, did you're familiar with the growing of sweet potato, anything?

MR: I think if you had any of that that was, if you notice those long rills, those are not really up in here, too rocky. They're in Kohala, there's some in the Waimea side, but this part in here didn't really do so much. I'm sure this was all forest at one time.

KM: It's interesting to notice that still in areas where the cattle couldn't get and it's obvious reason why, but you actually see a nice representation of kawa`u, ohi`a, there's some amani scattered, k_lea, even `akala, I saw along some of the ___ so it's obvious that there was a fairly good makeup of forest in here and your feeling is that, when do you think the forest started?

MR: Well I've got pictures taken in 1885 and the forest was gone.

I've got a picture of Anna's place taken about that time, half of the house was thatch roof and you can see some of logs lying there, whitened logs.

KM: Do you understand how this was used, the enclosure at all?

MR: No. Kahua is leased it since about 1930. I think Parker had it before. (CL: at one time Nawahie had it.) Well Nawahie had it, right. And he built a big stone corral which is down below where the village is.

CL: Is that got trees around it, iron woods?

MR: It did before. I haven't been there in years. We hold a master lease but it's now leased to Jack Ramos.

CL: Cause I saw a discription of that in the archeological report that they did for Kawaihae Development. And I wondered if it might have been

MR: Ya we all was called Nawahie.

KM: One last thought. On these ditches, and I know that we've covered it briefly but do you, what purpose do you feel these ditches served. Was it solely ranch or do you think that it...

MR: You mean the auwais? No I think that the auwai was strictly for the people.

KM: Strictly for the people. So associated with like the community at Hoepa?

MR: Ya, absolutely. The only one that would have ranching... (KM: it dates them then also) I would think so. The only thing is with this pond here, this `uwai, why the pond was there, who built it originally, I don't know. Whether that was stock water...

CL: You folks, you don't know about building that.

MR: We didn't build it. We've cleaned it out an all but I don't know if, I don't think Kahua was the first to do it. Maybe they did but I'm sure that if the `auwai was built earlier it was not for cattle. Was the `auwai first and then the pond or what, or the same time. I would suggest that because you've got those other auwais... I really wouldn't know, maybe because it's all going to come down the stream anyway. Why would you do a lot of extra work here.

CL: Well the other thing you see is the Horepa community was taking water from this North side, not from the South side. So I can understand maybe trying to get water from the Kilohana over to the Waipahoehoe but not this dam up here to feed down here.

KM: Unless what Pono had indicated as a thought was that this was done to get a stock pond for ranching.

MR: For cattle. Ya that could have been. I don't know. If the auwai was dug strickily for the pond, for water, for stock water, or was it dug for the pond, dry times people have to come up and get their water or whatever, I don't know. But of course you see, as the forest is gone back, water doesn't flow as long, as often.

KM: When did ranching begin in this area as a big issue?

MR: I don't know. I really don't. I guess ranching in the big sense of the word, Vancouver started that when he jumped them off in Kawaihae and said, "Welcome cowboys, here you go." But those may not have been his exact words but I don't know when it became. I guess when Parker started he probably started it and then other people....

CL: I have a little bit of information on the ranches up in here. The one that's hardest to pin down is Kahua.

MR: Oh it is. Well I think part of the reason is because the land until 1932 was owned by the Austin estate, out of Boston. It was not owned here, it was merely leased.

CL: Except you know what, I did find, check me on this Monty, I did find some record that Frank Woods had owned (MR: 50 acres) Kahua, Kahua Liilii, and Waika but Austin owned Kahua...

MR: No, no. The only this that Frank Woods owned was 50 acres. (CL: You don't think he owned Waikaa too?) Nope. The reason I say that is because the ranch under the current ownership bought the land. What happened with the 50 acres was Frank Woods had bought that from the Austins and what nailed him was he had no right of way to the government road. He had no right of ingress or egress.

CL: But that 50 acres was in Kahua Nui right?

MR: It's right here. I guess it's in, it would be in, let's see, Waikaa is the furthest one over I think and Kahua 2, Kahua 1, ya, I guess that's in Kahua Nui. He did not own Kahua Nui.

CL: Ya right. The record that I found indicated that the Austins owned Kahua Nui but that Frank Woods had owned Kahua Liilili.

MR: The reason I say this is because, I wasn't there but at the time Kapua bought it all (CL: They bought it all from the Austins.) All from the Austins except the 50 acres from Frank Woods. Because the Bureau of Land Records would know but I think if you look, cause it's all land court title, so it isn't some phony baloney, it's there and the thing that, I think I told you this story about Frank Woods and all and that's because he

couldn't get to the government road, and the link. McCandless owned it all. I was never told that there were other. Now there are three individual royal patents. They're not all the same. They're all different ahupua`as. There were some different owners way back then but I think Captain Austin put them together. I think he was a sea captain and all I know is that it's land courted now so they can't boot us out. As far as I'm concerned, we own the upper part and if there's Hawaiian law that the ahupua`a, the guy had the, you know the head ahupua`a, chief, he controlled the water and all the rest of the stuff, "I'm here man, now go ahead. Boys tell me, you want to go back old Hawaiian way, I'm here folks. Tell your water commission buzz off. We'll tell you how this sucker's gonna be set up."

CL: So Monty, I got a couple of other things I'd like to ask you if you have a little bit of time. At one time Kahua set up a water piping system down to Horepa. I thought that might have been in the '30's. You don't remember that.

MR: It could have been in the '30's, in the early '40's. But see people moved out of there. And if they did it, they did it only as an accomodation. Kahua and Ponoholo each own a kuleana in there.

CL: Ya right. But you don't know about that piping in there. OK. I was gonna ask you too about Sam Awaa. I know he worked here for a while. Was he living, when he worked here was he living here? (MR: ya.) You don't remember him living at Horepa? (MR: No, he lived here.) OK, so from the time you came, maybe '56?

MR: I hired him back you see. There was quite a hiatus. He wasn't here when I got here. There was broken service in there.

CL: Do you know when you hired him back?

MR: I'd have to look it up.

CL: OK. And then his son, Ronald, did he ever work for you?

MR: Oh yeah, he worked here. Hired him too. He died just recently.

CL: Was he still working here when he died?

MR: No, he had worked for Parker for quite a while. He left here and I helped him get a job at Parker Ranch. His wife was born and raised here. Hannah Awaa. You talk to her you can probably...

CL: I did talk to her. I'd like to talk to her again. It's a little bit hard to hook up with her. When you folks, I know at one time there was a house for the ranch workers, right close to the office here wasn't it? (MR: Right behind.) Right behind here? How many houses?

MR: I don't remember, there was about two or three houses and then there was a kind of a camp thing where they'd share kitchens and that sort, very much like the plantation had. (CL: For single men?) Single men ya.

CL: And then, do you know when that was...

MR: Ya, right after the war.

CL: Then you built the houses up...

MR: Ya, moved some of the houses and built some new houses.

CL: So maybe like '46.

MR: Probably around in there, 1946.

CL: Was there more people living on the ranch as opposed to living off?

MR: Well when you built some houses you had more. But the other problem that you had too is that not as many people had cars and so we did it, even when I first came, one guy would take a truck home, he pick up a whole bunch of people and bring them up and that was in the 1950's. One truck would go to Kohala and one would go to Waimea and Kawaihae.

CL: All the way down to Kawaihae. When there was just a couple of houses here, do you remember which were the men who were married in those houses?

MR: I remember some of the names. There was Jim Lincoln and his wife Ida. Jim Lincoln, they both since passed away. Jim Lincoln's children, Hannah passed away, Ruby died. Jane is alive in Kohala, her last name Jolanino. Butchie, the youngest boy, he lives in Kohala. He's James Lincoln Jr. I believe. Oldest boy was Eddie Lincoln. I don't know where he lives now but he would know.

CL: So they were living here. They weren't living up...

MR: No, they were living here.

CL: One guy that worked here for years, his picture was in the paper. Other than the last two months lives in the Hilo Health Care. I think he had his 100th birthday. He was a Korean named, Portorican named, well John Torres was his name, but around here he was known as Dick Alekoki. At McCandless Ranch he was known as Bill Jack. So he had enough names to go around. He lived here but he wasn't married. But there was Frank Chang, that lived behind. I think he was single at the time. I think, I'm not sure if Peter Kainoa lived up here. Kaulu Pohaku had his own place.

John Iokepa lived up here, that was Hannah's father. Well we got Kahua's Kawaihae but there was John Kahaikapuna, I think he lived in Waimea. He's since past away. Joe Makini, I think he lived up here. (CL: Not Kai??) No, this is his father. John Kaiamikini's father. And then there's (CL: In one of the houses.) Ya, I think Joe lived up here, I think so. Anyway that's...(end of side A)

Side B

MR: Willy Hook lived up here also.

CL: OK. And he was married too right? (MR: Yep.)
When people were around here was there any Hawaiian being spoken?

MR: Ya sure. More when I first came than there is now. You always gave orders in the corral, usually in Hawaiian.

CL: Did you speak Hawaiian at all?

MR: No, I didn't speak Hawaiian but you knew what was being said. If you wanted the middle one or the two or one or ekolu, three, when you're parting out you learn the hard way. Get yelled at you know.

CL: Have you got any idea of how long you might have heard Hawaiian spoken very much?

MR: Probably 20 years as the olders time people went why none of the young people do any more.

CL: Maybe 20 years ago then stopped.

MR: Ya. It kinda fades out you know. It's not like slamming a door, it just kinda fades, and it's too bad. You go to Niihau and it's all Hawaiian. I can't even understand what they're talking about but that's alright. As long as there's an extra place at mealtime why that's important.

CL: Would you characterize your own ability as able to understand.

MR: Not much, very little.

KM: Not much. The common sort of ranch command, the things that were going on.

MR: Ya. If they yell at you, "pani ke puka paa" and that means "shut the gate." You're going to learn that pretty fast.

KM: I understand you've been having a hard time with people pani ka puka paa.

MR: That's right, damn right.

KM: I don't understand it, I'm sorry. I know that it, when we were up I was very careful to make sure of it and I told Carol. I grew up on Lanai and I understand you find a gate, you leave it the way you found it.

MR: If it was open, leave it open. If it was shut, damn it, close it. So I've got to the point now, I finally called the FAA and I said, "Hey, Monday through Friday that's it, finished." I think there's one guy that might be doing some botany stuff and I'm not gonna pull him out. If he gets stuck tomorrow it's up to him. If he wants to walk down here I'll give him, he use the phone to call a tow truck.

KM: ? extra key up today so I gave it to Carol ?. It can be locked, you'll keep the key here and she can give him that other key, that other master lock.

MR: OK good. That'll be helpful because we're getting the point... Oh seven days a week. And the other thing is seven days a week damn it. After all the guy told him, "Well we're just working for peanuts" says I'm not getting anything out of it. FAA isn't paying me. Neither is Hawaiian Homes. Zero. I mean it's Hawaiian Homes land and we aren't even getting paid for the land. It isn't as though we've sold a very fabulous lease to the FAA. We're getting el zilcho. Nothing. Oh when we go to sleep we can think about all the airplanes that are gonna be able to tune and come into Hilo. So now (CL: So you get something anyway.) No. Headaches. Seriously, that's all it is. We don't get anything. But anyway, so it goes. That's part of life and part of citizenship.

CL: There's one other thing that I wanted to ask you. I've been hearing about different people who were born here. Some people said John Iokepa, some people said Henry Raphael, some people said Kaulu Pohaku and then I heard Rally Greenwell. (MR: No he was manager.) He was manager, OK so foreman is different than manager. Would you have had more than one foreman at a time?

MR: No, not usually, not of the so-called cowboy group.

CL: So these three guys was one after another.

MR: Ya. But if you want em in correct order you'd probably have John Kahaikapuna first, or no, probably maybe, he was involved but John Iokepa was first and he was probably pretty much the overall. Kaulu Pohaku was more or less cowboy foreman and so was Henry Raphael. But I guess Henry would have moved up because I kind of broke up the gang thing, you see. Fenceman, cowboys and all that stuff, bullshit, you all work together you know. I feel that's the only way to go but in the old days there was quite a hierarchy. Oh ya, it was amazing.

CL: So fencemen were one thing and cowboys were...

MR: Oh ya. You used the fencemen on the other thing, but if there was horseback riding that was cowboy crew. You know for just getting, shipping cattle or something like that, the fence guy, "Hey here's you hammer and get going," you know. I didn't like that much. Oh they had separate lockers. Oh yeah, I mean, you know, they had pipe unions, pipe wrenches and that sort of stuff, broken pipe. Cowboys don't happen to have any unions, we didn't have any kind of centralized supply, so cowboys [say] "Ah, we need one." So I said, "Go ask so and so who's head of the fence," was Clem Hoopai. No we don't have any. The shop had, the garage had some, "No we don't have any." And you find you know how come, "ey if I give em mine and something happens, I can't fix it because I don't have any more."

CL: So garage was separate, the fence was separate, cowboys was separate.

MR: Oh yeah. Known as turf, t,u,r,f, turf.

CL: So that's why I'm getting all these foremen.

MR: Jim Lincoln ran the shop so he was involved there so he was a foreman too. It depends how it went. And as I say John Kahaikapuna was also, Willy Hook was a foreman in the Kohala section when we used to ranch down there. OK? CL: Ya (end)