BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:   KA'AII BATALONA, 25, taro farmer

David Ka'ai Batalona, son of Joseph and Harriet Batalona, was born on September 24, 1953, in Kukuihaele. One of eight children, he is Filipino-Hawaiian-Chinese-Caucasian. The Batalonas lived in Honolulu from 1960 to 1969. Ka'ai attended school until the 10th grade. For six months he attended Hilo Community College.

Ka'ai has worked in Hilo as a delivery person, in Waimea on a vegetable farm, and in a service station. His common-law wife is Haunani Kanuha; they have three children.

At present Ka'ai farms taro part-time and hunts for some of the family's food.
BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:  

HAUNANI KANUHA, 22, housewife/mother

Fay Haunani Kanuha was born in Waimea, Hawaii, on October 12, 1956. She is Hawaiian-Japanese-Portuguese. She went to Waimea School (1st to 9th) and Honokaa School (10th to 12th), graduating in 1974.

From 1973 to 1975, she paddled with the Kawaihae Canoe Club. In about 1975 she and Ka'ai Batalona had their first child. At present they live in Waipio Valley next to their taro patch. Two more children have been added to the family, making a total of three, one boy and two girls.

Haunani's hobbies include swimming and cooking.
VL: This is an interview with Ka'ai Batalona and Haunani Kahuna. Today is June 26, 1978. We're at their home in Waipio Valley.

Okay, can you first give us your full name?

Ka'ai: David Ka'ai Batalona.

VL: And where you were born.

Ka'ai: I was born in Honokaa Hospital, 1953.

VL: Where were your parents living, at that time?

Ka'ai: They was living in Kukuihaele but they came down here weekends like that.

VL: Haunani, your full name and your maiden name? [Correction: Haunani and Ka'ai are not married.]

Haunani: Fay Haunani Kanuha.

VL: And when and where were you born?

Haunani: Honokaa, Hawaii; October 12, 1956.

VL: Where were you brought up?

Haunani: In Waimea.

VL: How did you folks meet?

Ka'ai: I used to see her down in the valley and in Waimea. And I met her in Honolulu.

VL: Now, how did you get to Honolulu? How did that happen?

Ka'ai: Well....
Haunani: We went for one concert, eh?

Ka'ai: Yeah, I went to one Doobie Brothers concert. And, then I met her at her uncle's house. I was staying there.

VL: Where did you grow up?

Ka'ai: I grew up over here, I mean, Kukuihaele. For about, maybe, seven years. Then we moved to Honolulu for about eight years, we stayed in Honolulu. I went to school over there. Then we came back here in the 1970's. Well, I used to come over here back in the 1960's, when we moved to Honolulu. I was coming here weekends like that, staying with my grandmother them and stuff like that. But most of my time was in Honolulu. Then we moved back here.

VL: "Here" meaning where? Where you moved back?

Ka'ai: I moved to Hilo. Then I moved back over here, Kukuihaele. I had my own house up in Kukuihaele. Then I moved down here. I mean, I was staying with my tata Felix. And, I was staying all over the place, in the mountains like that. Just camping out. And then we finally moved here.

VL: When you were growing up, before you were seven, or before you went to Honolulu, was your father raising taro?

Ka'ai: Yes, they was. They had lot of taro fields. I remember because he used to make us come down here and pull some grass. Yeah, we used to come here a lot. But my older sisters, they used to come down here all the time. Help my old man. Since they was the oldest, eh.

VL: How did you like pulling grass?

Ka'ai: I no used to like it. I used to hide. (Laughs) I mean, the taro used to be real big and we used to be small. And can hide right underneath. Just wait till lunch time. And then come out. Yeah. But after that, we started to clean the banks like that. I started to get into it little bit. Then we moved to Honolulu. I don't know why.

VL: How about after you came back, did you have any involvement in taro?

Ka'ai: Uh huh. When I was staying up in Felix's place, I was working for some people. I was working for Kelly Loo and....well, the place Felix stay on, that's Chun place. I was working for them. I was working for Daisy mostly, Ikeuchi, you know that. She got some taro patches over there too, I was keeping hers. Then....

VL: Was that sharecropping? Or did they hire you?
Ka'ai: They just hired me to keep the grass down. Just like what Felix used to do. And stay in that house there. And he was all right. He used to show me all kinds, for planting taro like that. When you dry the patch and when you give more water. Yeah.

VL: Haunani, after you folks got married, where was the first place that you lived?

Haunani: In Waimea.

VL: Why did you folks decide to go to Waimea?

Haunani: He had a job on the farm, Okura Farm.

Ka'ai: Raise vegetables. Eh, that was heavy.

VL: So, what made you decide to leave Waimea?

Ka'ai: My job was over. So we just moved down here. I mean, we wanted to stay down there long time, but we couldn't find one place like that. We couldn't camp down the beach either. So, I don't know. My parents got this place from one of our relatives. They got the lease for this place. And we just living here and raising the taro.

VL: How long did it take you to fix up this place, like it is now?

Ka'ai: Almost one year. And I'm still fixing it. Because we don't want to buy wood. All this wood here, my old man, he bought a house up in Haina. Plantation house, but half of the house was all rotten. And this is all the wood I got.

VL: So how long have you been living here now?

Ka'ai: Eleven months. Wait, next month make one year. Eleven months.

VL: How come you wanted to live down in Waipio?

Ka'ai: I don't know. Because, maybe....I don't know. My ancestors was here probably. Because, every place I go to, I live up there couple months. Waimea, all that. Kona. I always coming back to Waipio. I don't know how come. Just like somebody's calling me back. Well, you never know. But, I like it down here. It's real nice. I like my family to be raised over here. Eat all kind fruits from the land, all kinds. Doing all kind stuff down here.

VL: Have you harvested any taro yet?

Ka'ai: Uh huh. Yeah, we harvest one patch once. This patch didn't have any taro inside yet. And that patch was 10 months, before we harvested. Started to get rotten, eh, so we pulled it before the whole patch be rotten.
VL: Do you know how many bags you got?

Ka'ai: I don't know how many bags but I know how much money we got.

VL: Oh.

Ka'ai: We got almost a grand [$1000].

VL: Out of that one patch?

Ka'ai: Yeah, out of that one patch there. But the taro wasn't ready yet. If didn't have no sick, we might have made more. But, that's how it goes.

VL: So, to support your family now, your three young children, are these two taro patches enough?

Ka'ai: Not enough but. Well, we doing now all right. I mean, I get money somehow.

VL: Another business?

Ka'ai: Yeah.

YY: How is it raising your family down here?

Ka'ai: It is better than raising 'em up in the cities. Cities get all kinds in front of you that you need, and all kind stuff like that. To me, why need all that stuff there. They used to do 'em in the old days without 'em. So....we like it, though.

YY: Haunani, what do you do if the children catch cold or something like that?

Haunani: Well, I rub them with Vicks and give them cough syrup and leave them in the house. Don't go outside.

Ka'ai: Once in a while, when they get real bad, we take 'em to hospital. Yeah. My father come pick us up like that.

VL: Right, you folks don't have a truck right? So, how do you get around if your father can't come pick you up?

Ka'ai: I do all the walking around. She stays home a lot. I mean, if she needs to go up town, I walk up the hill and tell my old man. Then he comes pick us up. Sometimes, I go up the hill on a horse. Go to the store, with mail.

VL: About how often do you leave the valley?

Ka'ai: Once a week. Maybe not up there, but once a week out of the valley. Like maybe today, she was going up.

VL: Oh. And so how often do you leave, Haunani?
Haunani: This is the first time [today, after interview] I'm going to walk up the hill since we moved here.

VL: Eleven months ago?

Haunani: Yeah.

VL: Oh, wow.

YY: So then, will you leave the children at home and you go? Or....

Ka'ai: Yeah, she leaves it with me. Well, she's going to.

YY: So because of your arrangement, then both of you take care of the kids a lot?

Ka'ai: Mostly her. I mean, I do all other kind stuff like that. But mostly she been watching.

VL: Do you find that living without electricity, running water, flush toilets; how do you feel about living that kind of lifestyle?

Haunani: It's good because you save energy and you save money. Yeah. And you still getting light and water.

VL: What are your needs from the outside world, so to speak? What do you need?

Ka'ai: We go up and shop once a month, like that. We buy food and some clothes for the kids. But mostly kerosene and Coleman gas. That's all. Mostly kerosene, Coleman gas.

VL: How about your food? How much of it do you raise and gather, and what kind of food is that?

Ka'ai: I go get all kind fruits. They got hoio, and pupu. And they got taro, haha. I go pick tilapia, prawns, mangos and papayas, bananas. All kind fruits. I gather all that every month. Like now is mango season so we got mango. And we'll be having mountain apple pretty soon. And we buy some food from the health food store and from regular grocery store. Canned goods and milk for the kids. Cereal. Whatever we need. But we don't buy too much stuff. We hardly buy anything.

VL: How about your plans for the future? Say, when the oldest one reaches school age.

Haunani: I want him to go school. But he wants me to teach Shawn at home. But that would be convenient, at home, because we don't have no truck to take him to school.

VL: So right now, it's up in the air?
Haunani: Yeah.

Ka'ai: But we planning to live....I'm planning to stay here all my life. Even when they grow up, when I'm gone, they probably stay down here too. I like them to stay down here. They look happy, to me, when they stay down here. You go outside and yell at all the animals and everything. Just cruise around.

VL: How about playmates for them?

Ka'ai: They got no playmates. They just play themselves. Play with the canned goods, like that. They got no toys or anything like that.

Haunani: They had plenty toys but they throw 'em all away.

Ka'ai: Yeah, they had a lot of toys. They threw 'em all away, so they play with whatever they can find. Books, just rip 'em up. All kind stuff.

VL: Can you tell their names and ages?

Ka'ai: She can.

Haunani: Shawn Pio Kanuha, three years old. And Sheena Malia, one years old. And Sara Kehaulani, five months.

Ka'ai: They all was born in Honokaa. Yeah? Yeah. All in Honokaa Hospital.

VL: Are you planning to have more children?

Ka'ai: Three is enough. I mean, look at the world now. We probably going only have this much food to eat. No make no sense to me, for raise kids too much. They might suffer more, eh, the way the world is coming to.

VL: Oh, how do you find out about the outside world? News that's happening around.

Ka'ai: I used to a lot of hiking and all kind. Camping out Kalapana, Volcano, all over island. Somehow, I wanted to find out about the Hawaiians, like that, too. I go check out City of Refuge, that Queen's Bath and all kind, all the places the Hawaiians left some kind legends like that. I used to do that a lot.

VL: When you were married?

Ka'ai: No, when I got out of school. I started hiking all around and doing all kind stuff, all over the island. Meeting all kind people.

VL: How about now days?
Ka'ai: No. Not too much. Kind of hard walking around now days. I used to do a lot of hitchhiking too, that's why.

VL: What do you folks think is the future of the valley?

Ka'ai: I don't know. They probably build hotels and stuff like that. They built that Ti House there, so I don't see why you can't build skyscrapers. Maybe they will.

VL: How would you feel about that?

Ka'ai: Well, would feel kind of bad, but. Having to see buildings up in the valley. I wouldn't like that too much. But, you know, we can't do anything about that.

VL: What would you like to see happen in the future, in Waipio?

Ka'ai: Nothing. I mean, just like this. No roads, no nothing. Just leave it the way it is.

VL: How about the future of taro in this valley?

Ka'ai: Oh yeah. Open up all the taro lands. They got lot of places used to have taro before around here. But got lot of grass in 'em. And you might as well open 'em all.

VL: Who will farm it?

Ka'ai: I don't know. But we got some here, four-point-something acres, I'm planning to open this all up. We have about seven patches down here with all them cattails inside. And when I probably get this done here, probably ask those other farmers if they would lease 'em or something. We could work out some agreement. But I like to see the taro industry get it on. Everybody should get into raising taro.

VL: Well, people say that young people don't want to go into taro farming because it's too much hard work and it's too muddy. What do you think about that?

Ka'ai: Well, that's a bunch of bull. I mean, I'm young too. And I like it. And you can make money out of that. It's better than farming regular vegetables. Regular farm work in Waimea is twice as hard as this. They harvest every day. Well, mostly every day. And taro, once a year. But if you got lots, you be harvesting, maybe, twice a month or something. But I like to see the taro business get it on down here.

VL: You think young people would come into Waipio and farm?

Ka'ai: Yeah, they would. I mean, all the local young people, they like to get into this trip here, but they don't know how to go about it. Us Hawaiians, we kind of slow and not too well educated. They get hard time. I know plenty friends, they
like to come down here but they don't know how to go about getting land. Who to ask. Maybe they shy or something, but.

VL: Are there any other obstacles in their way?

Ka'ai: No. The city life, probably. Maybe they getting into more of the city lights than, you know, forgetting it about this place. But all the haoles, they getting into the trip too. Well, they not too much in raising their own taro, but they work for the farmers.

VL: How would you feel if the young haoles came and started opening up taro patches in Waipio? Like, some of them are, right?

Kalai: Would be good. That way would be all right too. Might as well. If somebody's not going to do it, might as well those guys. If they want to. But I doubt it. They got taro patches, yeah, but not that much. They not too much into getting really involved with the trip. Like, I always think about why they no make cooperation down here. Probably everybody can help everybody. But like things going now, is every man for himself. That's kind of hard. For raising taro, you got to get some kind of cooperation, so everybody can pitch in and, State can come in too and help. All like that. Plow all our ditches and everything. But there's no way it's going to come like that. Lot of old people, they doing all right for themselves, that's why. And probably, they don't like each other too, so I don't know.

VL: When you first started raising your own taro, did older folks give you advice, or help in some way?

Ka'ai: Nobody used to say anything. Because my old man, he's been into this trip before. So we just followed him and we doing all right. Lot of people, they jealous like that. Around this kind small parts. But that's how it goes on, I guess.

VL: Haunani, you have family in Waimea, still?

Haunani: Yes, my mom.

VL: Do you ever miss Waimea?

Haunani: No.

Ka'ai: They like it down here better. Well, to me, I can see like that, so. They like it a lot. They ain't complaining. You know, when we used to live in Waimea, we used to have all kinds of things. That was too much.

VL: "Things," what do you mean?
Kalai: Electric light bill. Grocery bill was way up. All kinds. You had to pay to drive. They still do. What, make no sense.

VL: What is your vision of a good future for you and your family?

Kalai: Raise more taro and live here all our life.

VL: How about you, how do you feel about the future and your visions for it?

Haunani: I don't know.

Kalai: She doesn't know. She take it every day as it comes. No future like that. Well, to me it is.

VL: You have anything you want to add?

Haunani: No.

VL: You have anything else you want to add?

Kalai: No, about what?

VL: Anything.

Kalai: No, not too much. Whatever there's need to know.

END OF INTERVIEW
WAIPÍ'O: MĀNO WAI

AN ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I, MANOA

December 1978