

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Ah Kin "Ah Buck" Yee, 86, retired federal worker, beach boy

*"I started to go diving. I started to learn to swim. Then after I learned to swim, I used to go dive for coins when the ships come in."*

Yee was born in Honolulu in 1900, the second of eight children. His parents, Oi Chang and See Kang Yee, were Chinese immigrants who operated a small grocery store and restaurant in Kaka'ako. The family lived behind the store.

Yee began his education at Pohukaina Elementary, continued at Royal and graduated from McKinley High School. He also attended the University of Hawai'i.

Living near the waterfront, Yee loved to swim and became good at the sport. He joined the Healanani Yacht and Boat Club and also swam for McKinley High School's swim team. He was involved in all types of water sports including surfing, canoeing, fishing, and diving for coins at Honolulu Harbor docks. In 1922, Yee joined the Waikiki-based Hui Nalu Club. Since then, Waikiki has been his recreational spot.

Yee was hired as a Prohibition officer in 1920. When he was laid off in 1922, he tried his hand as a mechanic for Ford Motor Company on the Mainland. He returned to Hawai'i in 1927 to resume his position as an investigator with the federal government. He has serviced O'ahu as well as the other islands during his career.

Since his retirement in 1960, Yee has spent most of his time at the Outrigger Canoe Club which he joined in 1959. He swims daily and used to give an occasional surfing lesson or canoe ride. Now he helps in the repair shop of the club, patching surfboards and canoes.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ah Kin "Ah Buck" Yee (AY)

June 2, 1986

Waikīkī, O'ahu

BY: 'Iwalani Hodges (IH)

IH: This is an interview with Ah Kin "Ah Buck" Yee at the Outrigger Canoe Club in Waikīkī, O'ahu on June 2, 1986. The interviewer is 'Iwalani Hodges.

Okay. Can we start out by asking when you were born?

AY: April 29, 1900.

IH: And what are your parents' names?

AY: See Kang Yee and Oi Chang Yee. That makes it right.

IH: Were your parents also born here?

AY: No, they're both born in China.

IH: Oh, and do you know when they came here?

AY: Let's see. I know around the 1895, I think, or prior to that, my father came here. And then, he went back to China. He married and he came back.

IH: Was that marriage set up for him over there? Prearranged before he went? Do you know anything about that?

AY: Ah, that, I don't know. I don't know about the arrangements. I think it's about the custom. That's the Chinese custom, yeah.

IH: Okay. So, they came to Honolulu, then?

AY: Came back here, yeah.

IH: And what was your father doing?

AY: When he came back here. . . . Prior to that, he was a houseboy, you know.

IH: Prior to going back to China?

AY: He came with his parents. He was down in the country. And I understand my father lived with the Wong family over here before he went back to China.

IH: And he was a houseboy?

AY: Houseboy. He worked for Captain [James A.] King. Governor [Samuel W.] King's father on Emma Street. Vineyard [Boulevard] and [Queen] Emma [Street]. He never worked at the plantation. I don't think he ever worked in the plantation.

IH: Did his parents work plantation?

AY: The father worked in the rice field, I think.

IH: So, after he married and then came back here, then what did he do?

AY: Then we had a little store.

IH: What kind of store?

AY: A little grocery store down where the Honolulu Iron Works is.

IH: The iron works wasn't there, yet?

AY: The iron works was there, I think. It's right across from the iron works.

IH: Did both of your parents work in the store?

AY: They operated the store. And then, it developed into a little restaurant. Little grocery store developed into a little restaurant. And then, they just catered to the iron works people during lunch hour.

IH: So, did they prepare local foods or mostly Chinese food?

AY: No, no. All local food. Stew rice and all that stuff, you know, for the workmen.

IH: What was the name of the shop?

AY: The shop?

IH: Yeah, the grocery store.

AY: Oh, no name to it. Just (chuckles), they call 'em See Kang Store, that's all. That's about all. Well, that was only about half block from the waterfront, see.

IH: Where did you live?

- AY: We lived right there at the Punchbowl and--they call it Punchbowl Street in those days--Punchbowl and Pohukaina Streets. Right on the corner. That's where that new state building is now.
- IH: So, you lived right there at the store?
- AY: Yeah, yeah.
- IH: Was a house behind it or something?
- AY: In the same building. It was a big building, anyway. Wooden building. One side, we lived in the back.
- IH: So your father just leased that part of the building?
- AY: Yeah, he leased from Bishop Estate. That's the Bishop Estate property.
- IH: So, you lived right there across from the waterfront. Is that how you . . .
- AY: Yeah. I started to go diving. I started to learn to swim. Then after I learned to swim, I used to go dive for coins when the ships come in.
- IH: How old were you when you started that?
- AY: Dive for coins, when I was around fifteen, sixteen. Yeah.
- IH: Were there a lot of boys doing that at the time?
- AY: Oh, all Hawaiian boys. Hawaiian and very few Oriental. Oh, there were others. Several others. A few Japanese boys. Not too many. Mostly Hawaiians. I used to go dive for coins.
- IH: So, you said you learned how to swim, where did you do your swimming?
- AY: Right down there where the dry dock is. Right by the ocean. There used to be a dry dock there, see.
- IH: The dry dock is not there anymore?
- AY: No more. The marine railway that went down into the ocean, and they put the ship on that cradle, and they pull it back up, see.
- IH: Where was that located?
- AY: Right between Pier 4, which is Pier 4 now, and the Matson pier on this side. That was long time ago.
- IH: But that was a swimming area for the kids in the neighborhood?

AY: Oh, yeah, the kids all swam there. Then when the ships come in, we swim out to meet the ships.

IH: Okay. How many other children were in your family?

AY: Eight.

IH: There were eight altogether?

AY: Eight, yeah. I had two other brothers and five sisters.

IH: What number were you?

AY: Number two.

IH: Did most of your brothers and sisters also go swimming?

AY: No, very seldom. Only the younger one, the younger brother, used to go. The older brother didn't swim too often.

IH: So, what made you go so often?

AY: Oh, I was kinda independent. I used to hang around the (chuckles) water all the time, so. And then, I knew most of the Hawaiian boys. Then the ships come in, we go out and meet. And I used to swim the races, too. At the pier they used to have swimming races.

IH: What pier was this?

AY: Let's see, four, five. . . . Pier 6.

IH: And you belonged to a swimming team?

AY: Yeah, I used to swim for Healani Yacht and Boat Club. They used to be a rowing club. They had this swimming team there. I swam for them.

IH: How old were you when you did that?

AY: About sixteen.

IH: How often did they have the swim meets at that time?

AY: I know we used to swim during February 22. They call that. . . . Gee, I don't remember what they call that. Washington's Birthday, the 22nd. They used to have swimming races down the [Honolulu] Harbor, see.

IH: So it wasn't that often, then, that they had the races?

AY: Not too often.

IH: Do you remember any of the other team members? Who they were?

AY: The other team members--my team members?

IH: Mm hmm [Yes].

AY: Yeah, there was George Cunha, John Kelii. They were faster than I am. And there was John Kealoha or Gilman. He goes by another name, Gilman, too, see. And two more Cunha brothers, Lawrence and Frank. And there was (Jack) Hjorth. Not "George," it's H-J-O-R-T-H. He was our diver. And there was a Bob Fuller.

IH: This Hjorth, wasn't he in Olympic competition, also?

AY: Wait, no. No, I don't think so.

IH: The name seems familiar.

AY: Had Kruger, "Stubby" Kruger. Kruger, yeah, he was my teammate. They call him Harold "Stubby" Kruger. He was a comedian in the movies, see, too. Yeah, he used to hang around with (Johnny) Weismuller, that champion swimmer that died not too long ago. Lawrence Cunha. There was a Hawkins. I don't remember his first name, though. Hawkins.

IH: How long did you swim for that team?

AY: Until they disbanded around 1922. They disbanded. No more swimming team. It was a rowing club, anyway. There were two rowing clubs, Myrtle, Healani. And there was another Honolulu club there. Forgot the name. There were three clubs.

IH: Did you also row?

AY: No, I never did row.

IH: As a swimming team, did you ever have a chance to go anywhere else to swim, to compete?

AY: Only to the Outer Islands. (Chuckles) I never went to the Mainland, just to Hilo.

IH: These other boys that were on your team, what areas were they from?

AY: This Kelii and Kealoha, they were from Kaka'ako. Where I lived, we call that Kaka'ako, those days. Most of the others were around Makiki. Like Kruger, he lived up Makiki someplace.

IH: None of them were Waikīkī boys?

AY: No, none.

IH: Did they have their own swim team, the Waikīkī boys?

AY: Yeah, Hui Nalu [Club] had their own. Yeah, Hui Nalu. And

Outrigger [Canoe Club] had their own. This place had a swimming team.

IH: So did you compete against the . . .

AY: Oh, yeah. There were Outrigger swimmers competing down the harbor.

IH: But the meets were always held down there?

AY: Yeah. Down there in the harbor. No more pools, those days. The pools came later on, I think. Yeah, there was a swimming pool, YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] pool. That pool came---when I was in high school, I swam in that pool. You know where the Merchandise Mart building is? Hotel and Alakea Street? That's the Merchandise Mart. It was on the ma uka 'Ewa corner. There was a swimming pool in there. The high school used to swim races there. I know I used to swim against Punahou inside that pool.

IH: So, did you also swim for your high school?

AY: Yeah, I swam for McKinley. That was way back. Yeah, in 1916--'15 or '16, I start to swim for--'15, I think.

IH: What schools did you attend?

AY: McKinley.

IH: This was, yeah, McKinley High School.

AY: Yeah, and I went two years to the University [of Hawai'i]. That's about all.

IH: What about your elementary education?

AY: At the Royal School. Before that was called Pohukaina School, eh? Pohukaina, you know?

IH: Oh, Royal used to be called Pohukaina?

AY: No. Pohukaina School, you know where the library is? The big library in town? The Pohukaina School was right there.

IH: Oh, and they moved it?

AY: Yeah, they moved down the other side. After that school, I went to Royal, see. But they went to a certain grade, and then we went to Royal School.

IH: So, the library you're talking about is the one on King Street? King and Punchbowl [Streets], the library?

AY: That used to be Pohukaina.



IH: Right next to the . . .

AY: City hall, yeah. Opposite, eh? Yeah. That used to be Pohukaina School over there. But that building wasn't there. The library, they built it afterwards, I think. It was right on that property, though.

IH: And then, what about Royal School? Was it in the same place as now?

AY: It's still there. It's in the same place.

IH: And from Royal, you went to McKinley?

AY: Yeah.

IH: Now, when did you start . . .

AY: Coming down the beach?

IH: . . . coming down to Waikīkī?

AY: I joined the Hui Nalu Club around '22, see. Then I went to the Mainland. Hui Nalu was on the beach there. Their dressing place was underneath the Moana Hotel. They had a section, about two rooms, where the Hui Nalu boys used to use 'em. Went to the Mainland and I came back in '27. Ever since then, I've been hanging around Waikīkī.

IH: Okay. So, in 1922, you said you went to the Mainland?

AY: [Nineteen] twenty-two.

IH: Uh huh, and why did you go up there?

AY: At that time, they wanted some Oriental boys to work in the Ford Company. They were going to start a plant in China. So, that's the reason I went. I stayed there about five years. But they didn't build a plant in China, so I came back home. I stayed here.

IH: Okay. If we can go back just a little, you said your father had that grocery store. Did you folks as children help him in the store?

AY: Oh, yeah, we did. The restaurant. Wait table, eh?

(Laughter)

AY: Yeah, and tend the store.

IH: Oh, so that was good experience for you, then?

AY: Yeah. Yeah, that's about all.



IH: Okay. Then when you started working here, what did you do?

AY: When I came back here?

IH: Mm hmm [Yes].

AY: I worked for little while as a mechanic, I know, for one outfit on Beretania Street. Oh, only about two, three months. I never lasted in there. Then in 1928 somebody told me, "Ey, why don't you go try get a job with the Prohibition department. They need people." So, I applied. That was in '28, now. Yeah, I think it's around '28, February. And they appointed me as a Prohibition agent then those days. Then, I think I was there little over a year and they furloughed me, let me go. In the meantime, in between, I worked for the engineers down on Pier 2. U.S. Engineers. They go around the different forts, maintenance work. I work for them. Then I got back into the. . . . In the meantime, I took a civil service examination when I was out. And I passed that. They didn't call me back till around '33, I think. Nineteen thirty-three. I went back. (Chuckles)

IH: So, you were a (maintenance man) for about four or five years, then, eh?

AY: Yeah.

IH: So, when you went back in 1933, then you were rehired as a Prohibition officer?

AY: Yes, an investigator, they call it then.

IH: Okay. Now, when you joined Hui Nalu in 1922, actually, was that your first experience in Waikiki?

AY: Yeah.

IH: And why did you join Hui Nalu?

AY: I went out there to swim for them. They had a swimming team, see. But actually, I never did swim because I never had a chance. Between, I went to the Mainland, '22. I came back here in '27, see.

IH: So, were you still a member of the Hui Nalu when you came back?

AY: Oh, yeah. It was run by [Edward] "Dudi" Miller. I used to go out the beach there, hang around there.

IH: Did they have a swimming team in 1927 when you came back?

AY: When I came back, no more. Just hang around, surf then, those days.

IH: So, you said "Dudi" Miller was running the club?

AY: Oh, he ran that place.

IH: What was he like? I hear a lot of people mention him.

AY: He's kind of a strict man. (Chuckles) The boys all afraid of him. He's a nice fella. He was a musician, you know. I think he had an orchestra.

IH: When you say "strict," how do you mean, strict? Did he have rules or something that were. . . .

AY: He had certain rules. (Chuckles)

IH: Like what kind of rules?

AY: No get rowdy and all that stuff around the place.

IH: Was drinking also not allowed on the beach?

AY: I didn't see very much drinking on the beach, those days. Not much. I used to go there . . .

IH: Did you have to wear special clothes?

AY: Yeah, we used to have to wear swimming suit. Get a top, you know. Even men. We had our own suit. Hui Nalu had their own suit. It's black and yellow.

IH: So, you all had to wear that when you were on the beach . . .

AY: Yeah, we used to wear that suit. And then, (chuckles) they used to take 'em off. When they see "Dudi," they put 'em back on.

(Laughter)

IH: So, would you say he was the captain of the club?

AY: Oh, he was the boss of the place.

IH: How long did he run the club?

AY: He ran it till he passed away, I think. I forgot when he passed away.

IH: I know the Hui Nalu Club was involved in beach service, weren't they?

AY: Yeah, they used to take people out, but I never go out those days with them, you know, take people on the canoe. They used to take all the tourists. Started with them. Then, Outrigger [Canoe Club] started to do it themselves over there.

IH: But you never were involved in that?

AY: No, I was never involved in the canoeing.

IH: So, when would you come down to the beach? Would it be every day after work?

AY: After work I used to come down the beach.

IH: Every day?

AY: Mostly every day when I have time.

IH: So what other water sports would you be involved in?

AY: Not much, those days.

IH: Did you do any fishing?

AY: Fishing? Oh, yeah, I used to do a lot of skin diving, you know. That was when I went over to the Outrigger. After a while, they closed the . . .

IH: Oh, you joined the Outrigger Club?

AY: No, I used to go around. At that time, I wasn't a member then. I never did join. I belong to Hui Nalu. I used to know some boys over there. We used to go out diving, skin diving.

IH: Who are these guys that you used to dive with?

AY: Let's see. There was a fellow by the name, Ah Kong Pang. [Samuel] "Steamboat" Mokuahi. You know, he works down there [on the beach still]. Mokuahi, (Kenny Tosaki, Nip Tong Akona).

IH: Oh, you used to go with him?

AY: Yeah. [John] Ernstberg used to go with us.

IH: How was the fishing at that time?

AY: Oh, good. It's not like now days. Oh, plenty. One day, we went out here at Kāhala by Doris Duke's place. "Steamboat" found a cave of lobsters. Oh, plenty lobsters. You know, this fifty-two gallon barrel? Full of lobsters, we got that day. You know, those big fifty-two gallon barrels? Ho, I've never seen so many lobsters in all my life. Well, that was after the war [World War II], see, when we used to go dive. There's a lot of fish out. That's no exaggeration. Was real facts.

IH: What other kind of fish did you folks used to go for around here?

AY: Uhu, red fish, you know, menpachi, kūmū, āholehole. And we go

squidding, and all that. Then, they tell you, you go (chuckles) dive around, look around for rings and all that stuff around the beach. Right in front, outside the [old] Outrigger [Canoe Club]. You know, when the sand move from the bottom, you find it. Now days, they have the counters, eh? But those days, we just swim. If we see anything sparkle, we pick 'em up, whether it's a ring or what.

IH: Did you used to find a lot?

AY: Oh, yes. We found quite a bit. I sold all of mine. (Chuckles) You know, those bracelets? Those servicemen used to live in the Royal [Hawaiian Hotel] during the war [World War II]. They go swimming, their bracelets come off. We find those in the ocean. I made about \$800 on those things.

IH: Oh, yeah? Wow.

AY: I sold 'em.

IH: Gee, that started way back, then?

AY: That's way back, yeah.

IH: Oh, 'cause I know they do it now days.

AY: Now, they use these . . .

IH: Metal detectors.

AY: The metal detectors. Well, some of the boys still go there. They fan the . . . This fellow Nip Tong Akona, he goes down there all the time. He lives on Lili'uokalani Avenue. Nip Tong. He's a member of this club.

IH: When you folks went fishing and you brought back a lot of fish . . .

AY: Oh, yeah, we divide the fish. We never did sell the fish.

IH: Okay. Who were some of the other Hui Nalu members when you first joined?

AY: John D. Kaupiko, Pua Kealoha, and this fellow, call 'em "Na Box," he's a life guard. There was another "Steamboat," you know. Keaweamahi, something.

IH: [Daniel] Keaweamahi?

AY: Yeah. He was a lifeguard. That's the original "Steamboat." This other, Mokuahi, his name is "Steamboat." Mokuahi in Hawaiian is "steamboat," see. Mokuahi. Moku is "boat," eh? Ahi is "steam [literally, fire]." I know (chuckles) a little Hawaiian, that's why.

IH: Was it a large club?

AY: Not too big.

IH: About how many members?

AY: Gee, I don't know the membership. Like Joe, Joe Akana. Hiram Anahu, Paoas. The Paoas belong them, belong Hui Nalu. Paoas.

IH: Kahanamokus?

AY: Yeah, Kahanamokus. They never joined the Outrigger till late, I think. Yeah, the Kahanamokus were there. Paoas. Let's see. Kamana, the musician. Kamana.

IH: "Squeeze"?

AY: Yeah, "Squeeze," yeah. He died. I can't recall all the names.

IH: Okay. Did the Hui Nalu Club ever do other activities besides the beach activities?

AY: Only mostly beach activity.

IH: Didn't have like a golf club or anything?

AY: No, no. No more. Only individuals.

IH: Was there a lot of music playing down at the beach?

AY: Down at the beach, I understand there's plenty, but I was never involved in that, you know. I don't go out at nights.

IH: Oh, wasn't any in the daytime?

AY: Not much during the day.

IH: So mostly your involvement with the club was just having a place to stay down there?

AY: Yeah, there to swim and to surf.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

AY: [I didn't] go to very many parties, you know. Sometimes these Haoles invited us. We go kaukau, (chuckles) that's all. You know, the tourists, the ones that have money.

IH: Well, did you get to know very many of the tourists?

AY: No, I don't hang around too much.

IH: Do you remember when they were putting in the Ala Wai [Canal] or

were you up at the Mainland at the time? When they were dredging the Ala Wai?

AY: I think I was up on the Mainland in the '20s, between '22 and ['27].

IH: Mm hmm [Yes], that's about the time they put it in.

AY: Yeah, yeah. [Nineteen] twenty-two and '27.

IH: Do you remember Waikīkī before that?

AY: Yeah. We used to walk out from (chuckles) the Healanī Boat Club down to Waikīkī to go swim.

IH: Wow, that's quite a long walk.

AY: Oh, yeah. We used to walk from (chuckles) down the harbor down towards Waikīkī to swim. Very seldom, though. We don't do that too often.

IH: Did you walk right along the waterfront?

AY: Yeah. They get that dump down the ocean side.

IH: The one by Ala Moana? Is that the dump?

AY: That's where, no, the Ala Moana Center is now. Outside there. There used to be a dump down there in the ocean side. No more that park. Wasn't that park. The park wasn't there. And we walk between that and up to the beach. Yeah. Glamour, Waikīkī, so we go Waikīkī and swim.

(Laughter)

IH: That was in your childhood, then, you walked down?

AY: Yeah. (Chuckles) We had a bicycle, too. A guy ride a way and leave 'em there, the next guy (chuckles) pick it up and ride. That's how we used to do it.

IH: So, in the '20s and '30s, what was the beach front like? Waikīkī beach front? There was Moana Hotel, and Hui Nalu was in there.

AY: Yeah. Right in the hotel.

IH: And where was the Outrigger Club located?

AY: Towards the town side.

IH: Of the Moana Hotel?

AY: Yeah, town side of the Moana Hotel. Right alongside the stretch

beach, right in front there. I think the Royal [Hawaiian Hotel], it came in '27, eh?

IH: Do you remember when that was built? Were you here at that time?

AY: In '27?

IH: Mm hmm [Yes].

AY: No, no. I was on the Mainland. I got back here, I think, in October '27.

IH: Oh, so when you came back, the Royal was already open?

AY: It was already. I think I got a letter. They wanted me. Just like the Natatorium when they opened. I got a letter. That was built later, too. I was on the Mainland, too. They wanted me to come swim. (Chuckles) I was away then, those days.

IH: Oh, did they have a swimming exhibition for the opening?

AY: Yeah. For the opening. I think this lady, [Ellen] Fullard-Leo, she was head of the AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] around here, a lady.

IH: She was a Waikīkī resident, also, wasn't she?

AY: Yeah. They live up Waikīkī, Fullard-Leos.

IH: Where was their house located?

AY: I don't know where their house. They were right around Waikīkī, though. [The Fullard-Leos lived on the corner of Prince Edward Street and Ka'iulani Avenue.]

IH: Were there any residences on the beach in the '20s and '30s?

AY: Where? Over here?

IH: Waikīkī.

AY: Yeah, there's some big houses over there, right on the beach. What they call that, now? Was it--not the Wilcox. There was a Cleghorn Place. Cleghorn, I think they live across. As to all those houses out there, I don't know too much about those houses. Like the Steiners, they used to live right on the beach. Big house there. And there was another house, it's called the Youngs', where the Sheraton Waikīkī is now.

IH: That house was there quite a while, wasn't it?

AY: It was quite a while, yeah. I think when they built that Sheraton Waikīkī, then they razed it, I think. I'm not so sure. I think we already moved out here. The Outrigger moved out here in '64.



IH: When did you join the Outrigger?

AY: [Nineteen] fifty-nine.

IH: Nineteen fifty-nine?

AY: Yeah. And there was a Uluniu Club right next door.

IH: Oh, down in Waikīkī?

AY: Yeah. Next to the Outrigger.

IH: And what was that? The Uluniu?

AY: It's a swimming club. I joined that because they going to fold up, eh? I joined there two years then I quit, but.

IH: Uluniu?

AY: Yeah.

IH: I thought that was a women's club?

AY: No. Men can join. I joined there two years. They were still there, see. And Outrigger was moving then.

IH: Okay. So, you came to Waikīkī mostly when you weren't working. You never lived in Waikīkī?

AY: Oh, no. I never did live in Waikīkī.

IH: Were there other people who also did that? Used to come to Waikīkī a lot but didn't actually live here or work here?

AY: Gee, none that I know of. I used to live in--from Kaka'ako for years. I used to live on Queen Street, too. From there, after I moved from the waterfront, I used to come from there. I used to drive out to Waikīkī to come. And then, when I lived up Mo'ili'ili, I used to come regular out the beach.

IH: But you don't remember other people that, you know, might have been in a similar situation that they didn't actually work or live in Waikīkī, but they came down a lot? Like you did?

AY: Oh, I know. He passed away. Kim Wai.

IH: Kim Wai?

AY: He passed away. Kim Wai Lum. You know, the boys [i.e., sons], they go by the name of Wai? You know Lambert Wai? I don't think he live on Waikīkī. He live someplace else.

IH: So there weren't too many, then?

AY: There weren't too many.

IH: Most of the people that hang around the beach were . . .

AY: Yeah, they live right around that area, see.

IH: Well, what made you come down so much? Was it the clubs?

AY: Oh, just the water. (Chuckles) I've been hanging around the water all my life. And like to surf. And then, I used to go out canoeing when I was with the Outrigger. Take the tourists out, you know. I used to go paddle. They call me second captain. There's another one, captain. I was in front of him. The second captain sits in front the captain. The captain is back. He steers the boat, see. And the second captain supposed to be on the alert. (Chuckles) Watch, eh? I used to go out quite often. I do it part-time, only. While I was working, I was doing it part-time.

IH: Now, is that when they were still down on the . . .

AY: Yeah, down that side. I took some out here when we moved out here. I took Jackie Kennedy out here. Yeah, teach 'em how to surf right out here. Yeah, she's good surfer. She learn fast. I wasn't supposed to take them out. The beach boys--the beach captain and another. One day, I went out surfing. I came back, I brought one kid in over there, see. I knew they were going to have trouble because the waves were big. So I went there, I brought one of the kids back. What's his name? That Englishman married one of the Kennedys. What's his name? That actor (Peter Lawford)? He died recently, that actor. He used to hang around with Sinatra, that same group. Well, this kid was one of the Kennedys. Then I brought him back. So, I think (chuckles) the club president found out. They gave the Kennedys privileges, see. So, he told me, "Ey, you better go out there and help them next time when they go out." So, that's how I got involved. Otherwise, I was out of the picture, see. So, I took them out. Every time, she wanted me to teach her. I don't know. She call me every time. I'm behind, repairing board. The captain call, "Ey, we go, take her out." Yeah, she learn fast. I remember the little boy. I understand he sat in the coal, eh? John Kennedy. He sat on the coal, got burned on the backside a little bit. One day, that beach boy slap 'em, oh, he yell, he cry. Wen burn, eh? Hurt.

IH: He sat on coal over here?

AY: Yeah, over here, I think so. He got burned.

IH: Were there very many occasions . . .

AY: Oh, Lawford, (Peter) Lawford. I brought the Lawford kid in.

IH: Were there very many occasions when you folks would have to do that? Rescue kids in the water?

AY: Not much.

IH: Not too much.

AY: Only sometime when you're surfing out there, if anybody got hit, well, you always go to help him. Got to help each other. (Chuckles) Dangerous out there. The boards were bigger, those days, see. Now days, they have very smaller boards. But still, it can hurt your back.

IH: Were there a lot of accidents out there in the water? Surfing accidents?

AY: Down that side? You know, the older boys that go surf, they always give the other guys a chance. If they see a fella catch a wave in the back outside, they always let him go by, instead of try go catch it in front of him, see. Now days, you don't have that because there's so many different surfers. And those days, you know each other. Makes a lot of difference.

IH: So you think it's more dangerous now days?

AY: Well, as far as (chuckles) courtesy and all that stuff, I think so. They stay hogging the waves.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

IH: Okay. Is the surf the same today as it used to be? Are the surfing spots the same as they used to be?

AY: Yeah, it's about the same. They don't change. It all depends on the reef, eh?

IH: Do they all have names, surfing spots?

AY: Yeah, there's certain spots they call--all kind of names, they give over here.

IH: Are the names the same today as they were before?

AY: Yeah, down that side is the same. They never change the names.

IH: What are some of the names?

AY: Like Poplars, Canoe Surf. First Break, they used to call it down there. Those are the waves.

IH: Do you know how those surfing spots got their name?

AY: No, I don't remember how they get. But over here, Castle, they get their name because of Castle. The Castle property over there.

IH: When did you notice the beach really changing? Would that be after the war or before the war [i.e., World War II]?

AY: Just before the war, people start coming out. Yeah, lot of people started coming. The defense workers.

IH: Oh, defense workers?

AY: Yeah.

IH: So the beach started getting crowded?

AY: It started to get a crowd.

IH: What happened during the war with the beach?

AY: We got barbed wire all around. You can't.

IH: So you couldn't swim at all?

AY: You couldn't go out.

IH: So, you didn't come down to the beach at all during that time?

AY: No, I didn't come around during the war in the '40s. [Nineteen] thirty-nine . . .

IH: So what did you do with your spare time?

AY: (Chuckles) Just stay home, that's all. Yeah, they didn't let you go out. You can't go fishing. All fenced in.

IH: So what did the beach boys do? The ones who were working on the beach?

AY: I don't know. Go work. (Laughs)

IH: Yeah. I suppose they probably got war jobs . . .

AY: You don't take no tourist. You go out, go work. I think most of the boys went work.

IH: Then after the war, did everybody come back to the beach?

AY: Come back. Yeah.

IH: Like nothing happened?

(Laughter)

- AY: Yeah. They come back. Just like nothing happened.
- IH: The clubs were still there? Hui Nalu, Outrigger?
- AY: Yeah, the club were still--yeah, Outrigger's still there. They were still there. Yeah.
- IH: So, after the war, was Waikīkī pretty crowded? Did tourists start coming back right away . . .
- AY: Yeah, started--not right away. Gradually. Yeah, used to get crowded, that place. But [Alan] "Turkey" [Love] them, they live on the beach. They made a living, see. They know what's going on. Like I come in the evenings, after work.
- IH: But still, you used to come every day.
- AY: Yeah, every day, I came.
- IH: Yeah. So you still got a chance to see, you know, things happening and things changing in Waikīkī. How long did Hui Nalu [Club] last in the Moana [Hotel]?
- AY: Chee, I don't remember when they (laughs) kick us out of there. But I joined the Outrigger in '59.
- IH: Was Hui Nalu still around at that time?
- AY: Yeah. They're still around. This Hiram Anahu used to run it over there. All those boys are gone. Passed away.
- IH: Did he keep strict rules like "Dudi" Miller did?
- AY: I don't know. He wasn't that strict. I know he used to collect the dues. (Chuckles) You talked to Joe Akana, eh?
- IH: Mm hmm [Yes], mm hmm.
- AY: Joe know plenty. Well, he live right around that area.
- IH: So would you come on the weekends and spend all day down here, too?
- AY: Over here?
- IH: Yeah, on the beach.
- AY: Down there, yeah, I used to come weekend. Sundays, over here, I don't come around here Sundays. Up to Saturday--six days a week, that's about all, now.
- IH: Yeah, (chuckles) that's enough, eh?
- AY: Yeah.

IH: And your job with the Prohibition office?

AY: Yeah, I was with them from '33 until I retired in '60. I went back there. I was stationed on two islands, see. They sent me out.

IH: Oh, yeah? What other island did you go to?

AY: I went Maui and Hilo. I was stationed on Maui about two years, and little over a year in Hilo. I'm single. They send me all over the place.

IH: What do you do as an investigator?

AY: Go arrest people making booze. Yeah, you know, they have stills, eh?

IH: Was there a lot of that going on?

AY: There were some, not too many. But maybe a lot, we don't catch it.

(Laughter)

AY: Yeah, up in Hawai'i, on Maui, I had to stay all night in the cave. Me and another partner. Mosquitoes and everything, rats. Stay all night in the cave, wait for the operator to come the next morning. Well, we picked him up. That's the first time I ever stayed in a cave all night. Mostly, you catch 'em on the outside. You say you live out Wai'anae? Prohibition days, we used to go out there. You know Joe Gans? You ever hear of Joe Gans? He lived up in the mountains. In his property, we pick up a big still, but we never caught anybody (chuckles) there. Those were Prohibition days.

(Rest of tape inaudible.)

END OF INTERVIEW

# **WAIKĪKĪ, 1900 - 1985: ORAL HISTORIES**

## **Volume I**

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