
forum

the residents' fight at Waiahole- Waikane

"Save Waiahole-Waikane, Stick Together" "Stop Pao Now" "People United Will Never Be Defeated." These are just a few of the slogans that have become synonymous with the struggle being waged by Waiahole-Waikane residents in their attempt to stay on the land and protect their livelihood. The area, like many of the other rural communities on the windward coast of Oahu, is being planned for urban development within the next few years.

Waiahole (meaning "water-hole") and Waikane (translated "waterboy") are adjoining valleys located between the rural communities of Kahaluu and Kaaawa. Local developer Joe Pao had hoped to build 6,700 new homes for 20,000 people in the valleys. This development, and several others being planned for all the way up the windward coast as far as Kahuku, would bring new windward population figures to approximately 300,000 people.

Attention was drawn to the agricultural valleys last year when Mrs. Marks, McCandless lands heir and then owner of large amounts of lands in the valleys, applied to the State Land Use Commission

by Karleen Chinen

(SLUC) to have 1,337 acres of agricultural lands re-zoned — 752 acres to urban and 585 acres to rural. When the residents heard rumblings of development plans, they organized to fight back to protect the valleys.

Waiahole-Waikane is often said to be one of the few remaining communities in Hawaii where the old ohana system of sharing is still practiced. The people range in age from 104-year old Mr. Urbano Incabio, to 80-year old Mrs. Kawa, to youngsters who, through this struggle, have come to learn the true meaning of their home in Waiahole-Waikane.

On October 21, 1974, more than 800 residents and supporters at the King Intermediate School cafeteria in Kaneohe offered testimony and support to keep the land in agriculture. The people sang songs, read poetry about their lifestyle, and presented researched testimony on diversified agricultural production in the valleys.

Approximately 161 persons in 46 households are involved in farming. Diversified agriculture in the

valleys has provided Oahu with 15% of her bananas, 30% of the island's papayas, and 80% of Oahu's sweet potatoes. In addition, a significant amount of the island's eggplant, stringbeans, cucumbers, bittermelon, and other fruits and vegetables are produced in the valleys.

The SLUC unanimously rejected Mrs. Marks' application to have the land zoned urban. Had the commission voted in favor of her request, 6,700 new homes would have been erected by island developer Joe Pao and his Windward Partners development firm. Despite the SLUC's ruling that the land remain in agriculture, Pao has stated his intention to develop what will inevitably be high-cost homes on two-acre lots. This is legal under the present agricultural zoning.

Landowner Mrs. Marks' plan for development of her valleys by Joe Pao was designed by Community Planners. It called for units for high, moderate to medium, and low income families. For families with annual incomes of below \$10,000, the plan designated 850 units of garden apartments and

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townhouses at approximately \$40,000, depending upon cooperation from City and State agencies. Four thousand one hundred fifty units had been allotted for those with moderate to medium incomes of between \$10,000 and \$20,000. The plan set aside 1,700 units consisting of 1,300 garden apartments and townhouses and 400 half-acre estate lots for high-income persons of \$20,000 or more. Those units would cost up to \$300,000 a unit.

Pao's Windward Partners firm has named the project, Koolau Estates. In addition to the housing units, the project would have included acreage allowances for a village center, an activity center, a school-park, Kam Highway realignment, a McCandless home, a cemetery and church, and 712 acres set aside for agricultural production. Development would have taken place over a period of 15 years.


The Waiahole-Waikane Community Association (WWCA) rejected Pao's agricultural lands offer saying that most of the land set aside for agricultural usage is mainly "billy-goat land," flood gullies, or land that actually belongs to the State and other private owners; in short, land that the farmers found unsuitable for farming.

A notice to all tenants dated May 1, 1975 from Mrs. Marks (signed Loy M. Marks) said that there had been a change of ownership of McCandless properties in Waiahole-Waikane, and thus new tenancy agreements had to be signed. In the letter, she noted that a current survey of the Waiahole-Waikane area indicated the necessity to update rentals in accordance with present market values and increased tax schedules that would be effective June 1, 1975.

The residents' rents were raised on June 3 and 4, 1975 by Mrs. Marks. The new rates were increased, in some cases, from 100% to 745%. Some of the larger increases were: \$37.50 to \$200, \$18 to \$100, \$60 to \$200 and \$50 to \$135.

One of the residents said that he

Rally--Rally--Rally
WAIAHOLE—
—WAIKANE



Support Rally & Potluck

Sun. Sept. 7th 1pm
Just maula of Waiahole sch.

There will be a hike & tours of the valleys fr. 8-12am

WAIAHOLE—WAIKANE

DEMONSTRATE AGAINST RENT RAISES!



JUNE 16, 1975
MRS. MARKS HOUSE
CITY HALL

UNFAIR NEW LEASE TERMS
 WWCA AS THE
 COMMUNITY
 TAKE A POSITION

leaflets in protest campaign

could understand paying such high rates had they been interspersed over a long period. These jumps, however, came all at once when the residents decided to put up a fight to defend their lifestyle.

Thirty dollars or \$50 for rents seem cheap, cheaper than what most of us are accustomed to hearing about. However, one must also consider the fact that some of the residents are still without electricity. Many of them cleared the land; put in the roads; built their own homes, often installing their own plumbing; and cultivated the land for farming. Clearly, the valleys are worth what they are today because of the hard work put in by the residents.

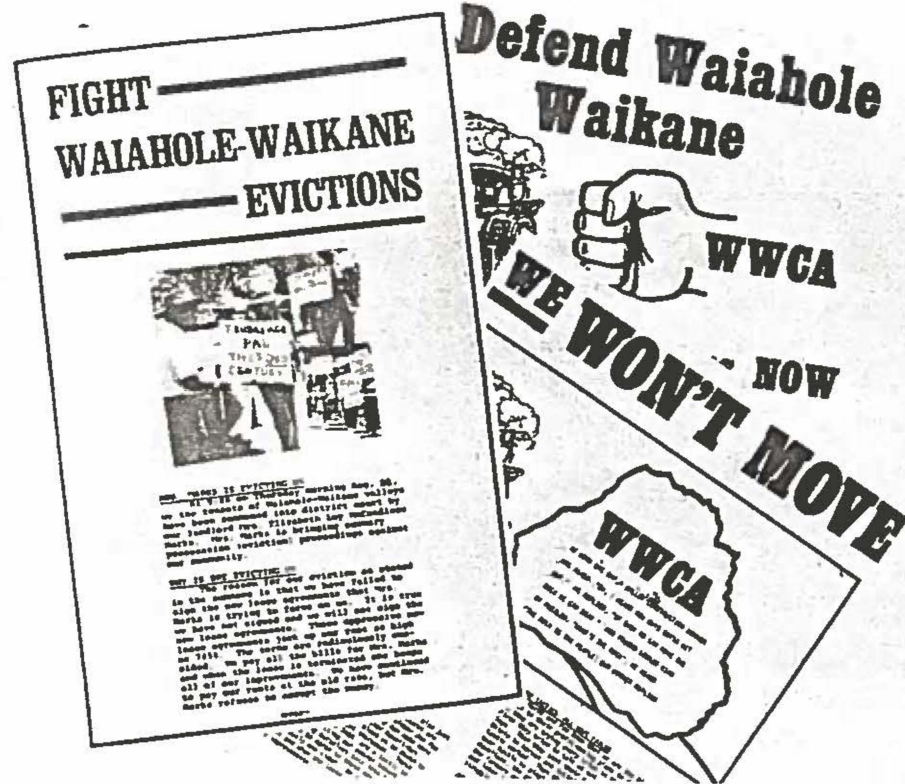
The residents refused to pay the new rates and on July 1, 1975, attempted to pay their rents at the old rate scheduled to Hawaiian Trust Co. Ltd., rent collectors for Mrs. Marks. Ninety-two of the 120 leasees pulled together and attempted to make their payment of \$5,848 as a group. The check, representing payment by the 92 leasees, was not accepted. WWCA officials had been trying to get Mrs. Marks and Joe Pao to recognize

the association as the official bargaining agent of the residents. Pao and Mrs. Marks, however, do not recognize the association and have made public their intention to deal with the tenants as individuals. The WWCA has opened a trust fund in Kaneohe in Mrs. Marks' name and have been making rental payments to the fund.

Although development and agriculture have often surfaced as the major issues, the most important issue is the people and the eviction fight they are waging. Both the City and State government have strongly endorsed continuance of agriculture in the valleys, and have even expressed hope for further expansion. Both have strongly opposed Pao's development plans. Neither of them, however, has said much of anything concerning the fate of the approximately 800 people who reside in the valleys.

"So, in other words, the place won't be developed; you'll have agriculture there; you just won't have no people there," rationalized Waiahole-Waikane supporter Pete Thompson.

The people in Waiahole-



Waikane are defending what they feel is their right to continue the lifestyle they've had for generations; they are defending the land that many of their ancestors had their roots in in the early days of old Hawaii.

Many of the adult residents who grew up in the valleys still reminisce the days when they fished in the streams, camped, swam, hiked and built dams for swimming holes.

"We grew up loving the land and ocean as part of our daily lives," said Mrs. Helene Leinaala Uye-hara, a resident of Waiahole since 1958 when she was 13 years old. Her husband, Lawrence, was born and raised in adjoining Waikane valley. Their home stands under the shade of several banyan trees whose roots may very well be more than 100 years old. "Our roots in Waiahole may not reach as far back as those but they are just as deep and real."

The lifestyle of the people who live in Waiahole-Waikane cannot be dug up and transplanted in apartment buildings and townhouses. The people will not be the same. Many will grow old and sick

from the heartbreak of being away from the people who had, for so long, been a part of their lives.

And so the people in Waiahole-Waikane were backed up into a corner which offered them few options. Either they collectively stayed on the land and fought, or they went out individually and fended for themselves. The people elected to fight. They have attempted to educate the public as to the circumstances of their fight and have tried to make the public see that only by uniting with these workers' struggles, can little people win. They have established four major positions which appear on the association's petitions. They include: 1) Stop all evictions in Waiahole-Waikane now; 2) Stop Pao and Windward Partners' plan to destroy our homes and farms; 3) Fight for fair and reasonable rents; and 4) We want reasonable long-term leases for all lessees.

Most of the residents leasing land in the valleys are on month-to-month leases. Their only right as tenants in this case is 28 days notice before they can be evicted by the landlord. Because of this uncertainty in the direction their lives

will take, many of the tenants and farmers have been hesitant to make extensive improvements on their lands. Expansion is discouraged and loans and credit are almost impossible to get.

For many, the valleys have always served the dual role of work and home. Many depend solely on the natural environment, on the land and the sea, to provide a living. Some of them have always farmed or fished; they have been trained for nothing else. Others supplement their incomes by performing these tasks part-time.

Community cooperation is a special characteristic in Waiahole-Waikane. The residents lend their neighbors things that they have and the neighbors return by helping in the construction of their homes and sharing food.

The search for adequate low-cost housing as a solution has emerged as another issue because such housing is almost impossible to find in Hawaii. Rents are high and 80% of Hawaii's population is priced out of the state's housing market. At the present time, 8,000 housing units — condominiums and homes — sit empty and vacant because Hawaii's residents cannot afford to buy these homes. If these 8,000 homes sit vacant and unsold, "Is there really a housing crisis?" we ask. The people involved in these struggles have concluded that homes aren't built for people; they're built for profit. This, they say, is the reason even many middle-income families cannot afford to buy homes and are forced to rent units.

The people have faced many uphill battles in this struggle. Several prominent Hawaii firms and residents and a Guam businessman have entered the picture as investors and promoters of Koolau Estates.

On July 15, 1975, John Henry Felix, then-chairman of Honolulu's Board of Water Supply, announced that he was resigning from that post to join Pao's Windward Partners firm. He appeared

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on KGMB's "Cross-fire" and KITV's "Word 4 Word" panel programs, and said, "The profit motive is secondary in my case. I want to contribute something to my community by providing fee simple property to individuals who

could not ordinarily afford to acquire these lands."

Felix, however, despite his statement that the profit motive is secondary, has gone along with Pao's plan to develop two-acre estates in the valleys after having had the original Koolau Estates plan turned down by the SLUC.

Honolulu Federal Savings and Loan (HFSL) has also entered the picture as the people loaning Pao the money to develop Koolau Estates. Checking out rumors that the savings and loan institution was fronting the money, the Waiahole-Waikane residents approached John Baird, president and general manager of HFSL, to ask him whether his company was in fact providing Pao with a loan. After finding out that HFSL was putting up the money, the residents asked Baird to turn down the loan. Baird responded by saying that his company was obligated under Federal law to grant the loan if Pao met all established requirements.

Waiahole-Waikane residents then set up a picket in front of HFSL's main branch on Merchant Street, carrying signs urging HFSL "Don't Give Joe the Dough." Since then, the WWCA has encouraged members of the public to boycott the savings and loan institution by withdrawing their savings as a protest to HFSL's role in the development of the valleys.

The advertising firm of Fawcett-McDermott-Cavanagh was hired to do the promotion work for Pao's Koolau Estates. The firm is the same one that was hired by the city last year to put together a narrated slide show that said that new urban developments should be located in the Ewa area.

Other investors whose investments range from \$10,000 to \$3 million include Guam businessman Kenneth T. Jones, Jr., Teamsters leader Arthur Rutledge, former State legislator Mitsuyuki Kido, and approximately 22 others.

important issues. Issues that concern lifestyle, housing, tenants' rights, landlord's rights, the government's role, agriculture, the role of big business and those who are financiers, and an attempt to preserve the quickly-diminishing past for the children of the future so that their picture of the past need not be seen only in the pictures and artifacts kept safely under lock at the Bishop Museum or the State Archives.

The oldtimers in Waiahole-Waikane refuse to be evicted from the valleys because of what they hope to preserve for their children. Mrs. Betty Batalona, at the October 21, 1974 SLUC hearing said, "Our struggle is not for today, but for tomorrow, for our children. Our struggles and our hard times may have passed, but what of our

children who can learn from our way of living." Her concern in preserving what has been home for the children of the valleys was joined by many other residents, including Mrs. Helene Uyehara.

Said Mrs. Uyehara, "Today, as adults with children of our own, our relationship with our valleys and the ocean has not changed. If anything, it has deepened. We continue to do things with our children that we enjoyed when we were small and we hope their children will be able to benefit from this relationship with the land and the sea."

Farmer Sei Serikaku summed up the feelings of the Waiahole-Waikane community when he said, "Development is change, but not all change is progress. If it hurts the people, then it isn't progress."