

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: ROY TOKO, 45, County Parks and Recreation Department worker, part-time taro farmer and assistant minister

Roy Toko was born in Kukuihaele June 5, 1933, to a Filipino father and a Chinese-Japanese-Hawaiian mother. His maternal great grandfather was among the first 100 immigrants from Japan in 1868. Roy, the oldest child of Hannah Toko, was raised in Kukuihaele by his maternal grandparents who taught him to speak Hawaiian.

He attended Kukuihaele and Honokaa schools, graduating in 1951. Two years later he married Gladys Hauanio, daughter of a minister. Roy has had jobs as a construction worker, a Department of Public Works employee, a custodian at Kukuihaele and Honokaa Schools, and is at present a groundskeeper for the County Parks and Recreation Department. In 1958, he and Gladys began raising taro on a part-time basis on one acre of land. That same year Roy became assistant minister for the Ka Hale Hoano O Ierusalem Hou church in Kukuihaele. The Tokos expanded their taro land to five acres in 1962.

Roy has been active in the Parents Teachers Association, the Hamakua Development Council, the Democratic Party and the Waipio Taro Growers' Association.

The Tokos have five children and one grandchild.

Tape No. 4-16-1-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mr. Roy Toko (RT)

April 6, 1978

Kukuihaele, Big Island

BY: Vivien Lee (VL) and Yukie Yoshinaga (YY)

VL: This is an interview with Mr. Roy Toko. Today is April 6, 1978. We're at the church in Kukuihaele.

Can you first tell us a little bit about your family background, say, your mother's side first.

RT: Yeah. My mother was, well, she wasn't married and she was a secretary for an attorney in Hilo. And she got pregnant to me. My grandfather didn't want the attorney that she got pregnant from, so he took me away from her. And eventually, my mother never got married because my grandfather didn't want. He [the attorney] was a Filipino and in those days, back in the 1930's, they never wanted Filipinos. And that's the reason why my grandfather didn't want any Filipinos. And when he took me away from her (my mother), that's according to him (my grandfather), I came down with bad pneumonia and he, my grandfather, and my grandmother doctored me until I got well. And from there, they raised me up. Actually, I was brought up by my grandfather and my grandmother.

So when my grandmother passed away (October 14, 1942), then my grandfather brought me up all through high school. In fact, not through high school, I think it was back. I got out of high school in 1952 and I think it was in the late 1940's, he remarried again and I couldn't live with his second wife, so I moved out. I stayed by myself. I supported myself through high school, my sophomore, junior, senior year. I had to work odd jobs with Seiko [Kaneshiro] and [Ginji] Araki, doing poison job, poison pump and just working my way through high school, just to get out of high school.

VL: Okay. Can we go back a little again? Your mother's grandfather, you said before, was one of the first immigrants from Japan [in the first 100 immigrants group]. Do you know any more about him?

RT: No. The only thing I know, I talk to Mrs. Hamasaki in Kapulena. Well, she's already passed already. And she told me he was a very stern man. He stand very straight, and he had mustache, and he was a very liked person, as far as the Hamakua Coast is concerned. He was a very handsome man. That's all I remember about him.

And another thing I remember about him was that he was a butcher for Parker Ranch in Waimea. So they always told us, as the generations go by, to watch for a sword. You know, like the old Japanese used to do samurai? Yeah. They always ask us to watch for that sword because that was his sword he brought over all the way from Japan. And it's somewhere within the State of Hawaii. They think, because my great-grandfather, my grandfather and the rest of my uncles and aunts wants to get their hands on that sword.

VL: But they don't know what he did with it?

RT: No. Somebody stole it from up where he was working. Being a butcher for Sam Parker, Parker Ranch.

YY: What was your great-grandfather's name?

RT: My great-grandfather's name was Tokujiro Sato.

YY: And how did the name Toko evolve?

RT: I guess they cut it short. Instead of calling him Tokujiro Sato, they just call him Toko.

YY: Which was actually part of his first name.

RT: Yeah, part of his first name. And instead of spelling it T-O-K-U, which actually it supposed to have been spelled, they spell it T-O-K-O.

VL: And how about background on your father's side, do you know anything about him?

RT: Well, the only thing I know about him is he was an attorney in Hilo, and then he eventually, he wanted to get married to my mother, which, like I said earlier, my grandfather didn't want him. So he went to Honolulu, and then he and his brother eventually formed a travel agency in Honolulu. And he had five houses in Honolulu, and he sold all those houses to his brother, and he moved to the Philippines and he formed a college in the Philippines. He's the president and owner of a college in the Philippines.

VL: Was he first generation from the Philippines?

RT: First generation. Yeah.

VL: So, you were raised by your grandparents.

RT: That's right.

VL: Where did you folks live?

RT: I was born right below my [present] house, and we lived there and eventually, I was taken in to Hilo. You know, staying with my great-

grandaunt for awhile there. And then, from there, I was brought back to Kukuihaele by my grandfather. Then I lived with my grandfather in Kukuihaele and then my grandmother had a place in Waipio, which is owned by the Matsunamis now. And we used to spend our summers down in Waipio.

VL: Okay, I'll get to that in a little while. Who else lived in the household, then, with you and your grandparents? Anybody?

RT: Yeah, there was my uncles and my aunts, my grandfather.

VL: That's your mother's brothers and sisters?

RT: Yeah.

VL: What did your grandfather [mother's father] do for a living?

RT: Oh, he was a rodent control foreman. Department of Health. Yeah, he started off as a trapper, then he worked his way up to foreman, until he retired. He retired when he was 70 years old. He was forced to retire.

VL: Oh. How about your grandmother, did she work?

RT: No. She stayed home, and I remember she usually stayed home and do quilt work.

VL: Did she sell these?

RT: No. She used to just give it away. Just for different church projects and then just give it to the church, and it's up to the church to sell it. And I used to be underneath her quilt work and fall asleep and wake up. (Laughs) That was amazing.

VL: As a young boy, did you have chores in the household?

RT: Yes I did. I had a lot of chores when I wake up in the morning; I had to go over to my mother's place, which is right above my grandfather's place, across the street, and I had to rake up the yard before I go to school in the morning. So I'd wake up about 5:30 in the morning. And by the time I get through with breakfast and everything, would be about 6:00 and clean up all the yard. My mother had a loquat tree in the back, so I had to rake up all the rubbish from the loquat tree, and pick up all the rubbish in the yard, and then go to school. We was Kukuihaele Elementary School at that time. And by the time I get to school, just about five minutes to, or two minutes before school starts.

VL: What would you eat for breakfast?

RT: (Laughs) That was something else. Usually, one cup of coffee and that's it. Just one cup of coffee.

VL: Is that by choice?

RT: No, that was because times were hard. One cup of coffee and if, maybe, we could get enough flour, then they make pancakes. And we eat banana pancakes or just plain pancakes. Eventually I got used to that and I used to like that pancakes.

VL: Then how about lunch? What would you do for lunch?

RT: Well, lunch, I was pretty fortunate. My grandmother, at first, when I first started school, I remember, she used to tie the 5 cents or 10 cents, whatever it costs, I think it was 5 cents. She used to tie them in the corner of the handkerchief and put 'em in my overalls. And put 'em in the front pocket. And I used to go school. As soon as you get into school, the teacher would take it out and that was our lunch money. And my first teacher, I remember, when I was in first grade, was Miss Lee. That was her name. I forget her first name.

VL: Where did you folks' food come from? Did you buy most of it at the store?

RT: As far as living in Kukuihaele, yeah, most of the things were bought from the store, and some of the things were picked up from Waipio, and some of the things we picked up from in this stream here. The stream in the back of my house [Kukuihaele]. We used to pick up little shrimps with the shrimp net. Pick up shrimps, and go out in the cane fields and find weeds, they used to call pakai grass.

VL: And you ate that?

RT: Yeah. Potato leaf and all that. And watercress. This person over here used to....what his name was....Ueshiro. He used to raise watercress in the back here, so we used to pick up that. Buy for, maybe 10 cents watercress be about great big bundle. I'd say about three pound bundle for 10 cents. Pick up those bundles.

VL: And when you went to the store, would you pay cash?

RT: Well, usually not. Usually not. They used to have charge it and end of the month, my grandfather used to pay.

VL: Was he able to pay regularly?

RT: Gee, I really don't know because I was so young, and I just cannot remember. Yeah, I just cannot remember. But I know we used to go pick up; oh, those days the food was pretty cheap. We pick up a great big package of ebi for about 10 cents, a big package, maybe about a pound, just about a pound for about 10 cents. That was something else. And we used to pick up, oh, the most things we used to eat was codfish, butterfish, salt salmon and ebi. Those were the cheap food, then. And now, it's the most expensive you can get.

VL: So you would buy those?

RT: Yeah. They'd buy that. Like the salt salmon, we used that with. The salt salmon, the butterfish, and yeah, salt salmon and butterfish. They used to use that with either taro, you know taro stalks. And just boil it. Either with that or cabbage. Just to stretch it out. And the codfish, they used to use that either just throw it on the fire, they roast it, broil it. And broke that all up, and put water inside and just have that.

VL: What was your favorite food at that time?

RT: Salt salmon. Salt salmon and poi. The poi, we used to pound our own.

VL: Yeah, can you tell us about that? Like, where would you get the taro?

RT: Well, right in the back of my place, that was all taro paddies, from the road down. And my grandfather had 1, 2, 3, just about 4 paddies down there. And we used to tend those patches up here in Kukuihaele. And everytime we need taro, then go in the patch and pull maybe 25 or 30 pounds. Come out and cook 'em and they used to pound 'em. Guess I was young at that time. They used to pound 'em.

VL: And did he sell any of his taro?

RT: No, no. Just for home use.

VL: About how often would you go and get the 30 pounds or so?

RT: Just about once a week. That's the way I learned how to pound. After I grew up. Grew up to about 15 years old, then I used to pound poi.

VL: How did you learn?

RT: Just by looking, and after that we had to pound because my uncles and aunts had to leave home to get married, and then move out. So eventually, just my grandfather and I, after my grandmother died. And my aunts and uncles had to move out, so then, eventually, he taught me how to pound.

VL: What did he teach you?

RT: Well, the first thing he told me was, he said, "Not to put too much water inside." Because as soon as you put too much water inside, you have all lumps inside. All the lumps from the taro. So you have to really pound, and get that thing smooth before you can get water inside. The only water you use is to get your hands wet and just slap it under the stone so that the stone won't stick to the taro as you pound. (The poi pounder was from my father-in-law.)

VL: How about cooking it? How did you folks cook it?

RT: Oh, we cooked it in cracker cans. In the old days, they used to sell those round cracker cans, eh. And they'd pick up maybe one, two cans a month, or I don't know how often. But I don't know. Amazing, you know. They used to keep those cans so it won't get rusty. And we cook our taro in there.

VL: Over wood?

RT: Charcoal. Yeah, wood fire. All wood fire. Go out and cut wood, and bring it back and chop it up. And that was a chore. (Laughs) That was a chore.

VL: You had to do this every week, yeah?

RT: Yeah. Every week.

VL: What else about pounding poi did he tell you?

RT: Well, he try to teach me how to do the oli and I never did catch on. I never did catch on. After we stopped pounding poi, then he asked me if I could do the oli. I told him, "No, I cannot." Then, I regret it because as the generations gone by, I felt it's something spiritual, or something that we should have learned when we were young. Our minds were not that set because we didn't want to pound poi in the first place, because that was too much of a job. Being there just about half day, trying to pound poi.

VL: Continuously, half a day?

RT: Continuous. Yeah. Well, some people do it faster. It depends on the individual. See, I was about 14 years old when I started pounding poi.

VL: I have no idea what the oli sounded like. Can you describe it?

RT: No, I cannot describe because it was so long. Really, I didn't even comprehend the oli. Never did comprehend that oli. I've heard of people cracking the stone and making music with the stone, but not actually the oli. They used to make music. They crack from where I live and the other person would be pounding that same time [a distance away], he crack his stone.

VL: How does it sound?

RT: Oh, beautiful. Just like, I'd say, like a cannon shot. And the people down below would hear that, they'd answer, and the people above would hear and they'd answer, and it just goes and goes until they through.

VL: Can you make the sound?

RT: Oh yeah, just like clapping of the hand. [Claps hands once.] That's the sound. Just like clapping of the hand. That was beautiful. Beautiful.

They make all kind of sounds, you know. Like, they hit the stone, they hit the poi, and then back to the stone and back to the poi, back to the stone, back to poi. Those that were really good, they used to hit the stone, their hands and the poi, stone, their hands, and the poi. This three ways.

VL: What would they hit their hand on?

RT: On the rock.

YY: Can you do it?

RT: Yeah. They hit the stone down and just hit the poi [makes clapping sound]. "Pack" on the poi. Then they put water on their hands so he crack again and they hit right in between, right where they hit the stone into the poi, there's a hollow in there. Then they hit their hand right in that hollow, he make a crackling sound. [Claps hands again.] Whack! Then down the rock would go and then the sound would burst right up. Like...[Makes sound by alternately hitting table top and clapping hands.] Just like that. Beautiful. Really beautiful.

VL: You know the oli, did they have different ones all the time?

RT: I don't remember. I really don't remember because I was just about 10 years old when the oli was just about fading away. I was about 10 years old. And when I was about 14, 15 years old, there wasn't anything already.

VL: After you pounded the taro, how would you package or store it, the poi?

RT: Oh, they put 'em in crocks. All in crocks. Just leave it in crocks. They mix the top and just don't touch the bottom. Because the more water you put, if you churn the whole crock, the whole thing would get sour. So they just take the mixed top, whatever they need, and take that from the top and don't touch the bottom.

VL: And this would last how long?

RT: Just about a week. Yeah. And after we get the next poi making, then they take out the bottom and put it in, put the fresh poi into the crock and take a little of the sour poi and mix it up again.

VL: Did you ever have excess from the week before?

RT: Yeah, sometimes we have excess and that's another Hawaiian trick, you know. The Hawaiians believe that you don't waste food. So if there's too much excess and the poi get too sour, then they cannot use it, they just let water run and run and run into the poi and let it just run into the ground. Instead of just picking up all poi, and just throw it out where the animals can eat it, or birds and everything, no. The Hawaiians didn't believe in that. They just let the water run and let

the old sour poi just deteriorate right into the ground, or into the sink, or whatever.

When I was brought up with my grandfather, he used to just take it out in the back and just let the water run, and just run right into the ground. And he dig it up and put, maybe a couple of huli there to raise some water taro, like the mana taro or the Chinese taro. You know, the taro that they making chips now? Then he'd plant that. And then we could use the taro and the stalks and the luau leaf. He used to do that. Just like using that thing for fertilizer. It was taboo just for grab the poi and throw it outside; no, that was taboo.

VL: Did you have poi everyday?

RT: As far as I'm concerned, no. Because in my generation, when we were coming up, poi wasn't that much a everyday....well, we used to use it most every evening. Every supper. And I was more on the rice. But I ate poi. I used to use more rice. Well, I don't know. Being the oldest of the grandsons, I think my grandfather used to favor me more than the rest of the children, and whatever I wanted, I get it. And I used to want rice, so rice was there all the time for me. But I used to use poi, and I like poi.

VL: Did you have chores in the taro patch?

RT: Oh, yeah.

VL: What did you have to do?

RT: Every afternoon, we come back from school, check around the taro paddies, see if there's any broken banks and patch it, and weed out the patches and see that there's enough water coming into the patches. And that was kind of rough.

VL: Hard work?

RT: Uh huh. It was hard. Especially when the banks broken. As soon as the banks broken, we had to patch it up. Like today, we use plastic, you know those like plastic bags, they sell those big plastic coverings that you can use for camping and all that. Well, today, if a bank brokes, we use that plastic just so the water don't go through. But in those days, there was no plastic so we had to use just mud. And we would walk about, gee, maybe about 10 or 15 yards away, and cut out just a patch of mud and carry it in the hand, or in the shovel and come there and patch the taro banks. Just so the water don't just keep on running.

VL: Were there certain things about raising taro that your grandfather taught you, like maybe things were taboo or the certain right way to do it?

RT: No, not that I can remember.

VL: For example, a certain way to cut the huli?

RT: Yeah. Well, my grandfather didn't teach me that. My father-in-law taught me how to cut huli, as far as that. After I got married [1953]. Because my grandfather used to do all the work, as far as raising taro, and the only thing we had to do is weed all the patches. Just weeding and tending of the water and the banks. But my father-in-law taught me the rest of the things.

VL: Okay, I'll ask you about that later. So, when you were younger, how often did you go into Waipio?

RT: Every vacation. Easter, summer and Christmas. Because my grandfather and my grandmother own that portion of land, like I said, by Matsunami's. It's about 2-1/2 acres in there. And that land, actually supposed to have been mine, being the oldest grandson, my grandmother wanted me to have that land. I guess my grandfather got deep into debt, then he had to sell that land to pay his debts. My Uncle John in Honolulu and my mother were the last two to sign it over to him. Because it was an estate, that was my grandmother's land.

VL: How did she get it?

RT: She got it, I think it was through her parents. It was hand-me-down to her. Then, my grandfather got his share, so, in fact, the whole thing was an estate after my grandmother died. And that couldn't be sold until everybody signs it.

VL: Did you ever go into Waipio, just on weekends?

RT: No, no, no.

VL: Only on vacations.

RT: Yeah.

VL: Who would you go with when you went on vacation to Waipio?

RT: You mean down our taro land?

VL: When you lived down there on vacation.

RT: My grandfather, my mother and my aunt. My aunt and my uncle.

VL: What would you do?

RT: Yeah, we had to clean up every summer. I remember we had to clean up the whole area. In fact, every vacation, we go down and just clean the whole area over and over and over and over. That's all. Clean that up, and it overgrow, and next vacation we go down, clean it up and overgrow. But I remember, when we used to go down, it wasn't boring, just working.

Because we had to, right across my grandfather's place, there was an old man living across there. Old Chinese man. They call him, I think his name was Ah Wah. Yeah, Ah Wah. Right above the, you know where the spring water is?

YY: Over by the school?

RT: No, no, no. Right across Matsunami's, going into that stone wall. Right below there.

VL: This is where Kaaekuahiwi are?

RT: Yeah, right in the back. Well, we used to pick up gallon cans of water. For every gallon can, the guy used to give us one package of cracked seed, the old man, Ah Wah. And we used to go back and pick up. Say, for instance, if he needed two gallons of water, we go and pick up two gallons of water, he give us two package cracked seeds. And cracked seeds was good. It came direct from China, so we used to chew the package and all after we get through.

(Laughter)

VL: The land, 2-1/2 acres, was that being used for anything?

RT: No, nothing. It wasn't used for anything.

YY: What kind of grass and other vegetation was on that land that you had to clear?

RT: Oh, mostly pikake, wild pikake. And, they call it cow tongue, the grass. And we used to call it oheohe. Hawaiians call it oheohe. Yeah, we used to clean all that out.

VL: Did you have fun down there?

RT: Oh yeah. We used to ride horses with Sonny Ah Puck and his brother, Apu. Ride horses and Bill Nakagawa, that's Sonny's half brother. And we used to ride horses and go around down the beach, fishing. Oh, those days, fishes was, they was terrific. The old folks would, he set a net, they used to have oopu nets for setting. Set oopu nets. If the river is about, maybe about 10 feet wide, the mouth of the oopu nets would be about five feet wide or eight feet wide. So you can't cover the whole river. We had to go across the banks and cut guava leaves, and the hoio leaves, and just pile it up and put rocks on 'em. Then everybody would go up from above stream, cut a stick and just poke, poke, poke, all in the river. When just about coming to the net, everybody would dig down and shake all the rocks, and just shake it up, shake it up, and just make a hell of a noise under the water, so the oopus would get all inside. And sometimes, we get, one time we get, you know, one setting, one net would get, say, about 4-1/2 to 5 gallons of oopu.

VL: You say everybody would do this. Who's everybody?

RT: The family. The family; my grandfather, my grandmother, uncles and aunts. And just one setting. We build a fire right next to the river and throw whatever oopus we can, just enough for the family. And the poi would be there, and everybody would eat right there, right on the side of the river.

YY: What did the net look like? What kind of material?

RT: The material would be, oh, string. They make it out of string and look like saxophone. Yeah, really, look like a saxophone. It's big in the front and it goes right down to the end. I'd say about 10 feet long, I think; 10, 12 feet long. And at the end, there'd be a big pocket in the back there. Now, the oopus would be way in the back of the pocket, that's the reason why everybody comes down; and as soon as we get to the net, about 5 or 10 feet to the net, everybody would just shake all the rocks and pick up the lid and the oopus would go all the way back to the end. And there's two iron stakes on both ends of the net to hold the oopu nets so he won't run away. And couple guys would pull up the stakes and then pick up the net. And at the end, there's a string there, a cord. And then they just put that, the end of the oopu net, right into the buckets. And just open the cord and everything would fall right into the bucket. Aholeholes and oopus and come what may.

VL: What would you do with the extra fish that you didn't eat right then and there?

RT: Ah, they take it home, we take it home, and string it on strings and dry it out. They salt it and then dry it out.

YY: Did you clean it first?

RT: Yeah. Clean it all up and dry it out. And that is what we used to use; take maybe about 10 or 15 of it and throw it over charcoal. And then some people would just eat it from there, you know, just pull it out of the string and just eat it with the poi. Oh yeah, that was good.

VL: How about hunting?

RT: Well, I never did any hunting until I was about 17 years old. So about 16, yeah I was 16. We go out hunt. Right above the Ti House, which is called Apua. Above the Ti House. That's right below Hiilawe. And we used to go up there hunt. The first time I remember going up there, I was with my grandfather. And the first time I went out, I remember, we caught five pigs. Yeah, five pigs. Well, I never caught the pigs. I had to climb the tree because I was scared of the pigs and the dogs. That was my first experience. And he used to kill the pigs not with shooting. The dogs would hold 'em, and he'd go there and grab 'em by the legs, turn 'em upside down, and poke it with a knife. Uh huh. Yeah. Then, right in the back of our place, that's in the back of, well, they call that whole area Hiilawe. The pigs would come from up top of the

ridge and come in the back. Sometimes, we'd be in the back working and he'd hear the pigs making noise in the back. And he go in the back there, and all of a sudden, you hear dogs barking. And he pick up the pigs and bring it back to the house. Cut it up and smoke it.

YY: Were these pigs mountain pigs?

RT: Yeah, yeah. All mountain pigs, all wild pigs.

VL: Were there things about hunting that your grandfather taught you?

RT: Yeah. One thing he told me was that, "When you go hunting, you don't pick any maile, or you don't eat any fruits, like strawberries or oranges, whatever grows wild in the mountains. You don't pick that until you through hunting, on your way home. Then you do that. Otherwise, you get lost in the mountains." That's what he taught me.

And I remember that distinctly until today. I always tell my boys, "Remember, when you go hunting, don't you do any maile hunting or eating of fruits, until you come right back. On your way back, then you can pick maile, you can go exploring here and there, or pick strawberries or fruits, whatever fruit, guavas and everything. While you hunting, you don't eat anything that's on the land. You get lost in there."

VL: How about in terms of finding the pig, or any other things that he taught you?

RT: Yeah. The thing he taught me was when you get up to a place where the pigs are around, the first thing you do is to check on the footprints of the pigs, if you can see it. Because the boars, the hooves are wide. And the females, the sows, they're narrow, the hooves. That's the first thing you check. Because the boars can cut you up, and the females can bite you, and they vicious. I more afraid of the females than the boars.

Then, the next thing is check on the place they rubbing their back. You know, when itches. They'd go on a hapuu or whatever tree they can find. Check how big they are because when they roll in the mud and when they rub their back against the trees, you can see the mark. So he said you check and you figure just about six inches from where you see the mark, they're six inches above that. Six inches bigger than that. So if you check from the ground, up to where they rubbing their back, where the mud is all squashed against the hapuu or the ohia, or whatever trees, they six inches bigger than that. See, you go over there and measure and just about three feet, so you can figure six inches more. Some will be eight inches bigger than that.

VL: Can you tell us if there was a most exciting incident when you were hunting?

RT: Oh yeah. There was one time, we were hunting up at Waima. And that was when I was about 17 years old, I think it was. And I had a dog named Sparky, and that dog used to listen to me, really used to listen

to me. And we were hunting up there, and he barked. And I got a sign that there was pig over there. So I took off with my 30.30 and the 30.30 jammed as I was ready to shoot it. And there was about two pigs, right in that---there was sort of like a cave. I couldn't get in. And the two pigs came out, and my 30.30 got jammed and I says, "Oh, no." Good thing was when I call, "Sparky, get 'em!" So he picked up one of the pigs, he just grabbed it, and then the other pig turned around to fight the dog. That got me out of getting into trouble because actually, he saved me because there's just one dog and two pigs.

And there was another incident in Waimanu, when I was out hunting with my Uncle Sammy Mock Chew and his brother. Yeah, was his brother. And they were above, oh, I'd say about a mile above, I think. And I was with my carbine. I was about 19 years old, then. And I heard the dogs barking so I climbed. I thought it was a hill, but it was not a hill. When I ran, I thought the dogs barking in the back. And as I ran over, I tried to climb the hill; it wasn't a hill, it was just a rotten guava tree that fell down with the California grass grew over, and I fell right inside. And I just open fire with my carbine, and I don't know how many pigs was in there, but I got two. I dropped two pigs. And that was scary because I was right in the pile of pigs. Because I saw pigs running all over the place. That was really scary and that was in Waimanu.

VL: You told us one time, about going canoeing and visiting all the valleys.

RT: Yeah, yeah. I went, the first time we went, it was with my Uncle Sammy Mock Chew, George Nakagawa, and Clyde Kaholoaa. We took off from Waipio in the morning, I'd say about 5:30. And we went all the way over to Neue, they call that place Neue.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

VL: Okay, and you started 5:30 in the morning.

RT: Yeah, we started 5:30 in the morning, and I really don't know what time we got to Neue. That's past Pololu Valley, there's a small bay past Pololu Valley. And we did some fishing there. It's a beautiful bay. We did some fishing there, so when we got out of....no, it wasn't Clyde. It was George Nakagawa, he was captain of the ship. And Sammy, myself and George Nakagawa. And he was running the motor. And we got to Neue because George used to live in Laupahoehoe and he knew all the areas, so we decided to go. That was my Uncle Sammy's second trip on his canoe. And then George decided that we go all the way to Neue. So we got in there, and then we did some fishing in there. So we wanted to come back. We couldn't come back because the wind was kicking up. So we went, we ate mangos, and to bring back evidence that we got to there, we pulled out some taro that was growing there. Apparently, some

Hawaiians were growing taro there. But it was all covered up with grass, so we picked it all up and then--not all but--took out so many plants of taro, and then we brought mango. We had to leave there 3:30 in the afternoon because the Coast Guard was outside. And the canoe never had license. It wasn't registered with the Coast Guard. But anyway, it wasn't registered so we had to wait until the Coast Guard went out so we came back.

Then, after that, we used to take different trips into different valleys. See, there's five valleys, eh? No, seven valleys. Seven. That's Waipio, then Waimanu, Honopue, Honokane, Honokaneiki, Neue. No, not Neue. Pololu. That's six. What's the seventh? Now there's supposed to have been seven valleys. Waipio, Waimanu, Honopue...

VL: Honokea?

RT: Yeah, Honokane, Honokaneiki, Honokea, Pololu. Yeah, seven valleys.

VL: Is there something unique about each valley that you could tell us?

RT: Oh yeah. Like in Waimanu, there's a lot of pigs. A lot of pigs and heiaus and home sites. And Honopue, there's pigs and goats. And there's heiaus there, too, and home sites. And so is the rest of the valleys. And then Pololu is, well, Pololu, we never went in with the canoe, just from top, top to bottom. Walking down.

And Honokane, Honokaneiki. There's all home sites and heiaus in there. Yeah, we've been through all that. And hunting, good hunting. As far as pigs and goats, good hunting. Honopue is one of the valleys I really like, because there's no access except by canoe or helicopter. They can make it from the top, from the Kohala Ditch Trail, they can come down to Honopue. But the thing I like about Honopue is because you can go into it; it's a bay, like. You can knock off your motor and just paddle your way in. In fact, when I was about 15 years old, I think we spent couple of nights in Honopue. We had about five canoes in Honopue.

VL: When you were visiting these valleys, did anyone live in them?

RT: No. None. None whatsoever. That was back in the 1950's.

VL: But you think some people were growing taro in Pololu?

RT: Well, when we got down to Pololu, there was nobody raising taro there, just cattle.

VL: Which was the one that you brought taro back from?

RT: Neue.

VL: Oh.

RT: Yeah, that was from Neue. But I really don't know if they were raising taro because it was all in grass. And according to what I found later, that the Sniffen family, there was this Sniffen family living above Neue. Whether they were growing the taro in there, I really don't know. We tried to get to the Sniffen house but there was too many dogs there. So we had to stay out and chew cane instead of drinking water. (Laughs)

VL: And the times that you visited Waipio, when you were younger, do you remember any political rallies?

RT: No. Well, the only political rally I remember, when the old Waipio school was still there. And my father-in-law, well, I wasn't married at that time, but I call him my father-in-law, he was with the Democratic party, and he was one of the clerks, or whatever, working in the polls. And they used to ride, I remember going down; I never went in there because we were young and just horsing around. I remember them, after the election they'd pick up the ballots and bring it up on horseback, up to the top. Because there was no jeep road at that time. All on horseback.

VL: Where was the voting place?

RT: At the old school. And it's right now, the Peace Corps. They had a school there. Old Waipio School. Another thing I remember about the rallies in Waipio, my grandfather used to supply horses for the politicians to go down and make their speeches down there. I remember a guy named--because I used to saddle his horse for him--Tom Pedro. Tom Pedro. I don't know what kind nationality he was. I think Puerto Rican. I remember saddling his horse and my grandfather used to rent the horse to the politician to go down. Yeah.

VL: Did you go to any of those rallies?

RT: No. The only rallies I used to watch is the ones at Kukuihaele. Yeah, I remember those. Those days, they used to have lot of music, you know. Hawaiian music, hulas, and everything.

VL: At the rallies?

RT: At the rallies. Yeah.

VL: Who would pay for those?

RT: Gee, I really don't know. I really don't know. I guess the politicians, eh?

VL: How about celebrations or big events in Waipio?

RT: Well, actually, I don't remember. I've heard of events like they had Fourth of July parades, and they used to have baseball games. Different teams would challenge against different teams in Waipio. Like, maybe Hiilawe would have a team, and then Napoopoo would have a team, and

Waimihi would have a team, and they all challenge each other. That's the only thing I can remember. But that's only through hearsay. I never did see those things.

VL: At that time, when you would go down for vacations, what did you think of Waipio?

RT: Well, actually, I never thought of Waipio too much at that time. Because I was too young. And to me, it was a place for food and relaxing. Because, you know, food was so expensive, although they were making small money and the things were cheap. But yet, it was really expensive to them. Because I know my grandfather used to make about 75 cents a day, I think. Just, you know, 75 cents a day. And to buy a package of cracked seed for 10 cents, that was pretty expensive. Compared nowadays, 10 cents, you can't even buy a package of cracked seed now.

VL: So it meant food?

RT: Yeah. Up to today, it still means food, down in the valley. I always call Waipio as the supermarket. Where everybody goes down, all different ethnic backgrounds--Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiians, haoles, Filipinos--they still go down pick up all that hoio. When I say hoio, the Filipinos call that pako. Oh, Japanese call that warabi, too. They go down there for that, and then they go down there for the snails. Top-shell. They call it top-shell, they call it pupu. Hawaiians call it pupu and the Filipinos call it lik dig. Everybody still go down there.

VL: I'd like to ask you about taro now; how you got started raising taro.

RT: Okay. Back in the late 1950's. I think was 1957 or 1958. We were digging ti root for Okolehao Hawaii. That was in Kona. There were two different people running that. Seiko Kaneshiro was running and William Kanekoa was running that, for ti root, Okolehao Hawaii in Kona.

YY: What do you mean, "running that?"

RT: They had a business and different people would work for Seiko, and different people would be working for William Kanekoa. And just so happened, my father-in-law was with Seiko Kaneshiro. Because my father-in-law had---you see, in those days, back in the 1950's, not too many people could have four-wheel drive vehicles. So my father-in-law bought a 1957 or 1958 pick-up truck, and he was one of the guys that had the contract to haul the ti root from the bottom of the valley, or wherever we dig it, from the top, right down to the valley and around the valley. Okay? So he had a truck because he was working Board of Water Supply, and he needed one truck, for his taro farm as well. And he had a contract to haul the ti root up. So one day, he told me, "Eh, you want to go dig ti root?" So I asked him how much a pound. It was 1-1/2 cents a pound to dig ti root and to haul it up it was another 1-1/2 cents. So he told me if I dig ti root, he'd give me the 3 cents. And 3 cents a pound, that was a lot of money. Because

the heaviest, I think, was Joe Kala. He dug one ti root, was about 120 pounds. One ti root. Yeah.

So then, I told him, "Okay."

So one day, we were digging up on the road between Kukuihaele and the bottom of Waipio. We were digging all on that area above, so it was easier for us to roll 'em down. We dig, maybe, about one ton and just pile it. And when ready to roll down, they would have one guy down below watching, and we just roll that thing down. By the time you get down to the bottom, if you have a ti about 60 pounds, by the time it gets down, it's about 40 pounds. You lose about 20 pounds when we rolling down. He broke. So then, we were digging, and then we had so much hassle because the people would be grumbling. They'd come up with truck or jeep, and then the rocks would be coming down. So then they stopped everything. We couldn't dig on the top. So then they told us we could dig from the intersection that goes up to Waima, and the intersection that goes over towards the rest of the farms. They had to put a flag from the cliff, going down to the bottom, that the Kanekoa gang could dig on one side and the Seiko gang could dig on the other side. So just so happen that George Nakagawa and myself were digging up, right above my father-in-law's place. And I was looking from up, I looking down and then I told him, "You know, all that taro land over there, all going to waste. Instead of digging ti root, I going raise taro."

So he tell me, "Oh, if you can get the land from your father-in-law, right on."

So I told him, "Yeah, I going get 'em."

So then, it was all in guavas. I saw the mule was rolling over, the horses rolling over. So I tell him, "I'm going to raise, I'm going to open up that land." So I gave up digging ti root and then, in fact, the people that were raising ti root, Joe Kala, myself, Robert Kahele, all the people in Waipio was digging ti root because that was good money. So I told him I going give up because things were getting tight and I lost, in fact, the company went bankrupt. So everybody lost. I think Joe Kala lost one of the biggest. He lost, I think, one of the biggest, as far as the ti root that is out of the ground, ready to ship out. And Maehira was the one involved in shipping the ti root to Kona. So I told them, "Eh, I going give up." Because they not paying already. Then we went into taro raising and...

VL: "We," is who?

RT: My wife and I. My wife and I, we went into taro raising. The kids were young. And the first patch, I remember, we opening, just about open up. No, before we started, I told my father-in-law we wanted one taro land.

So he said, "Okay." At that time, he had quite a bit of money coming in from the ti root. They were still paying him, but they wasn't paying the diggers, but they was paying him for back payment. So he bought a jeep for us. Yeah, he bought a jeep for us. And then we'd go down with the jeep and we'd clear up our land. And then my father-in-law told my wife and I, "Make sure, when you folks get into the taro, make sure you upkeep the land."

So my wife got angry, and my wife said, "Oh yeah, we try, see what we can do."

So we started, we started with all hand. And the guava trees were, I'd say, maybe six inches in diameter already. The guava trees were big. So we had to chop it down and chop it all up, burn it. Whatever won't burn, then we pack it on, put it on the side. And we'd put water inside and my wife would cry because working so hard.

My father-in-law would pass and look at us as if, you know, "You damn kids, you folks cannot make it." He just walk pass and just look at us and keep going.

VL: How much land were you trying to clear?

RT: One acre. Just about one acre. So finally, we got two patches opened up. Then, my mother-in-law, she really was really up, really up with us. So she was doing more to help us. So we finally opened up two patches, and then we started to work on the third one. After we got the third one going, then my father-in-law came in. Then he started to help us out.

But I don't know. He was kind of leery, we were going to open up all that, and we're going to go into his place. But I told my wife, "No, no, no. As long as we get one acre, that'd be enough." So finally, we opened up the one acre, and we had the taro growing.

Then, ready to harvest, I had three patches ready to harvest. And then Seiko comes around and he says, "You know, I give you \$310 for all that taro."

I told him, "No way. If I pull my bag, I make more money, instead of selling the whole thing."

And then he told me, "Well, I don't know. You better sell 'em by patches."

So I told him, "No, no. I'm going to sell 'em by bags." At that time, the taro was \$3.05 a bag. So then, Seiko was the one that bought my taro, my first harvest.

So he told me, "Okay, I pay you \$3.05 a bag, and I give you \$3.25 a bag [if] you harvest, pack it out with the mule, so my truck can come pick 'em up."

So I told him, "Okay." But I told him, "You got to supply me with the mules." So he loaned me three mules. And that three mules, we had a bad time because we put two bags taro on and they fall down in the taro patch.

(Laughter)

RT: Anyway, we just struggle and struggle along. And finally, I told my wife, "If he going pay 20 cents a bag for packing, I might as well pack 'em on my jeep."

So we try work in a way, so we could get the jeep close to the patch. And I had to carry the bags on my back, that's about 120 pounds, you know. Yeah, I had to carry my taro, it's about 100 yards, 125 yards, on my back. And that was about 20 bags a weekend. And pack it on my back, put 'em on the jeep, take it out. Be easier. And then my father-in-law would bring it up to the top for us. You know, kind of save little money.

I didn't know how to raise taro. Just by fooling around with my grandfather up in Kukuihaele. So, Kukuihaele and Waipio, that's two different ways of raising taro. Yeah, two different ways. Like down in Waipio, when I first started, my father-in-law never told me how to raise taro, but I had to just feel around. Feel around with, like George Farm and my Uncle Sammy Mock Chew. And when I got the hang of it, then my father-in-law told me just how exactly how to raise the taro. From about after you plant it, when the taro get three leaves, let the water run. Then, when just come about seven months, close the water, let it get warm. Nine months, close 'em more tight, let less water get in. And about 12 months, just close it entirely, and just let the water get warm so the taro mature.

VL: [At] 12 months, then, is it sitting in the water?

RT: Yeah.

VL: About how deep?

RT: Oh, I'd say, from mud up, would be about four inches. Not including the mud, just water.

VL: And no flow?

RT: No. It flowing, it's flowing. But very little flowing. The excess water is kicked out into the main river or the main ditch.

So we started from there, and we had just about that acre, then when my father-in-law passed away, my mother-in-law thought that since we were working on the land, she transferred the lease over to me, to me and my wife. So she did that; she gave me and my wife the lease.

VL: When you first started, did you pay your father-in-law for the land?

RT: No, I never paid him for the land, but I paid part of the lease. Part of the lease.

VL: How much was the whole lease?

RT: The whole lease was, I think, was \$112, I think.

VL: For the acre?

RT: No. For the whole seven acres.

VL: Oh.

RT: Yeah. Right now, it's \$117 a year for seven acres. And I'm only farming five acres.

VL: Back then, what did you pay for that one acre?

RT: I just gave him about \$25. You know, \$25 for that one acre.

VL: How did you know how to make the patches?

RT: No, the patches were already made. The only thing we had to do was get in there and clean it up, put water, and plant.

VL: Did you prepare the soil in any way?

RT: No. No preparation. Just go down there and cut the grass and shoot poison. Let the water get in, and the water would get the grass to just melt away. And the grass on the banks, we'd just sickle and hoe-hana, and just throw the grass away. And then, the initial planting, we had to poke with the stick, because the ground was hard. So we had to either use a stick or an iron and just go gradually, one by one.

VL: Did you harrow?

RT: No, the first patch, we never harrowed. Then, first, second, I think was the third patch, then my father-in-law came in, help us harrow and level 'em. Because at first, he was kind of leery, so he never help us out.

VL: So where did you get the first batch of huli from?

RT: Oh, my father-in-law. Yeah, we helped him pull the taro, and then we got the huli from him. First taro we plant was haakea. And that was a taro to pull, man. That taro has a lot of roots, lot of roots. Unless you dry 'em, then it's easy to pull. You had to dry 'em about, I'd say at least two months. You know, off and on, dry and let go water, dry and let go water. So the roots would die. Otherwise, that darn thing sprout anywheres from about 8 to 10 babies. Yeah. Nice

taro, but ho, the roots. Especially if the patch is deep. Man, the roots. You stay all day to pull about five bags. Yeah, so eventually, everybody turned over on to apii and lehua.

VL: So who was doing all the work on your patches, your early patches? Was it just you and your wife?

RT: Uh huh. Me and my wife. Me and my wife. And then, as the children grow older, like Ellaham, well, he's 25 years old now. But he was a guy, he really worked. Then Alston, after that, and then Naaman. Ellaham really worked, Ellaham and Alston, they really worked on that taro patches. Because when my father-in-law passed away, Ellaham was the oldest, and we got all the taro land so we had to get him into working. And he really worked.

VL: You expanded after that, after he died?

RT: Yeah, from one acre, we expanded up to five acres. We got all the lease.

VL: What year was that?

RT: 1963, my father-in-law passed away in December. No, 1962, in December. Christmas Day. And we started in mid-1963, summer, I think. And we got the rest of the land. Then we started from there.

VL: Now, the one acre was providing you with 20 bags a week?

RT: Yeah, just about, for about four months. Four months of 20 bags a week.

VL: And your water source was from where?

RT: Oh, the same ditch that we having water now. That's right in the back of my house, down in the valley.

VL: What kinds of things did your father-in-law teach you about the proper way of raising taro?

RT: Well, after he got the hang of me, my wife and I raising taro, then he started to teach me about, you know, how much water flow to come in, what month to shut it off, what month to dry it out, what month to put the water back again, and basically, it came down to the point where it came just like raising taro in Kukuihaele. You know, for the first, after you plant it, you let it dry for awhile, maybe about, just about two or three weeks. Then, let a little water go in. And after that, you let little more water go in until it gets about three leaves. That'd be about month and a half, or maybe less. Then, you let water just free flow, just come in and going out. And then maybe six, seven months, kind of shut the water so that the water would kind of build up. Then, gradually, go 10 months, and kind of shut it little more. Twelve months. And don't go inside. You don't go in the patch after 10 months. In those days, you don't go in the patch after

10 months because you broke the root. And once you broke the root, it's begin the rot from there. But now, you don't have to worry about that because it rots anyway.

(Laughter)

RT: Whether it's one month or five months or eight months, it gets rot anyway.

VL: Did he teach you when to plant? When was the best time to plant?

RT: No, not necessarily. He never taught me that. He never taught me that. Well, as soon as we get the huli, we just put it in. But, my wife had a theory that if she planted on Thursdays, she'd get good taro. Yeah. And it worked. I don't know why, but she tell me, "You just plant it on Thursdays." She tried it on her flowers, anthuriums and her orchids. You know, when Thursdays come around, she plant. It worked. I cannot say it didn't work. It worked. You can see her orchids now, eh?

VL: Uh huh.

RT: Yeah, she planted Thursdays.

VL: How about in relation to the moon?

RT: No, we never took that into consideration. Until lately. I'd say about two, three years now, I think.

VL: Oh, now you do?

RT: Yeah, now I do.

VL: How come you switched?

RT: I don't know how come, but I just....I don't know. By looking at the calendars, I guess. But we never thought about the old Hawaiian way of planting. But just was going back into the calendar again.

VL: Your father-in-law didn't plant that way?

RT: I guess he planted, but he never did tell us about that. He never did tell us about that. Because, well, he'd go down and plant on Saturdays, because that's the only weekend we have, eh? I mean, that's the only time we have to plant. It's on the weekends, Saturday and Sunday. Well, him being a minister, he couldn't go down on Sundays, so he try to get his job done Saturday. Friday afternoon and Saturday, and then Sunday afternoon, after church. So regardless of whether it's full moon, or five days after full moon, or new moon, the huli has to go in the ground. Otherwise it's going to get rotten.

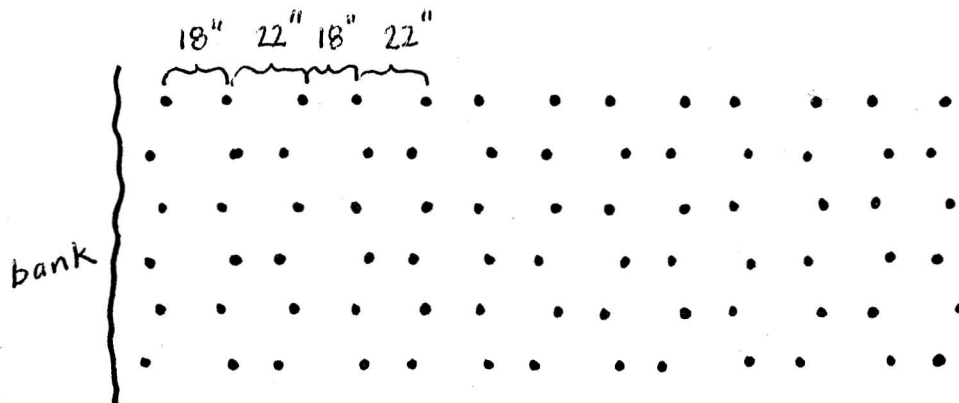
VL: So he was a part-time farmer?

RT: Yeah, he was part-time, yeah.

VL: How about in the way you planting in the rows, any special way?

RT: Yeah. I forget the name of what they call that in Hawaiian, but it was a system where they plant far, near, far, near. You know, from one huli. If you plant the huli, maybe, let's say, 18 inches. And the next would go about 22 inches; 18 inches, 22 inches. And he used to tell me, "You plant like this. You plant far, near, far, near." I never got the hang of that, you know. Until one day, I was talking to him, he says, "When you stretch your leg far, you plant the huli far. And when you turn your other feet over, then you plant near. In other words, like I plant right handed, so if my right feet is back and my left feet is forward, that's wide. And when I throw my right leg over my left leg, that's near. And then it goes far, near, far, near. That's the way I learned. And I still doing that, yeah. That's the way. You see, that is so the sun could catch into the taro paddies. I mean, in between the plants.

YY: How about the next row, after that? Like, you have far, near, far, near.



RT: Then he goes opposite.

VL: So that you've got this pattern going down one row. Now the next row is...

RT: The next row you go, if you started at near, the next row you go with far.

YY: But does this make lines?

RT: Yeah, it makes lines, no matter how you look at it. No matter how you look at it, there's lines. You see, you got near, far, near, eh? So the next one, we go right here, right here, right here and right here. Then you continue right here, right here, right here. Okay? Now, no matter how you look at it, it go this way, it go this way, it go this way. You have to go at least 10 lines before you can really see it.

No matter how you look at it. One day you come up my place, I show you.

It's not as perfect, but no matter. Even if you go off, but that far-near is still there.

VL: When you cleared that one acre and the paddies were already there, did you make any changes in the shape of the paddies?

RT: No. As far as the shape of the paddies, yeah, we did, we did. Yeah. The smaller paddies, we made it bigger. Yeah, we made it bigger. I hired bulldozer, I made it bigger.

VL: Why did you do that?

RT: We did that because instead of, you see, if you have a small patch, you have that much more banks to clean. But if you broke the banks, then you have less banks. So you broke the in between banks, then you have less banks to clean. Yeah.

But that one acre that we first started, the river came and ate it all up. So we get just about one-fourth acre now, in that area.

VL: How did the river eat it all up?

RT: Well, I don't know. Somebody been fooling around with bulldozing so they tried to divert the river. Anytime they fool around with bulldozer, then the banks get soft. And whenever it gets soft, the water would come and find the soft spot and keep eating, eating, eating. That's how we lost. We lost all that acreage. And part of my land that I'm leasing now is under water. So we only got just about quarter acre where we first started off with one acre.

VL: When something like that happens, what can you do about it?

RT: Well, just can't do anything. (Laughs) As they say, is act of God. Well, we made a fuss quite a number of years back. I don't know when. Quite a number of years back. We tried to make a fuss with the Department of Ag. They told us not to be diverting rivers, not to be stream-banking. Because anytime we stream-bank, then the ground, he get soft.

VL: What is stream-bank?

RT: That's when the river eats up your land. Then we go into the river and we bank up our paddies again. Bank up the river. Eventually, when we bank it up, sometimes, if we bank it up today, and tonight there's a heavy rain, and then floods, and everything is soft and everything runs away.

So they stop that. That was funded by the Federal Government, the stream-banking. So they did away with that.

VL: They thought that it would help at first, to do that?

RT: Well, at first, we got for stream-banking; they'd pay 75 percent of the cost and we'd pay 25 percent. They thought that would help. Then eventually, they found out that it didn't help. So we stopped the whole project. Because it was plenty, you know, lot of farmers were losing out because of the erosion of the soil, and rocks and everything. Yeah, we were losing out.

VL: When there was a storm, there would be too much water coming down?

RT: Yeah. Too much water coming down, so we have lot of erosion. Lot of erosion, and we lost part of our....especially the land that is on the side of the main river coming down. The water would flow too much, and we would lose, maybe one flood, you lose about two feet of land, and then the next flood, maybe you lose about 6 inches of land. And then, as the years go by, you keep losing, losing, losing. Then the river start moving in to your property.

VL: Does this mean the river becomes much wider?

RT: Well, not necessarily much wider, but it goes and it digs down deeper and it tends to move into the softer area. Like all the taro farms are all mud and all that. So eventually, it goes over to the banks, it breaks the bank. And once it breaks the bank, you know your taro paddy, then it takes away all the mud. Then you find out there's no bank there. So you have to build up another bank and get a smaller patch.

VL: How about shortages of water?

RT: Well, shortages of water, yeah, we noticed that for the last, I'd say about three, four years. The water's been short. Because I remember....no, longer than that. Because I remember, when I was young and we'd go crossing the river down that Wailoa river, the opening that goes out into the ocean, we couldn't walk across. We'd have to either swim or ride in a outrigger canoe going across. And now, you can just wade, you know, just walk right through. And according to what we think, there's more water flowing into the--- not into, but there's about 100 times more water that's going underground than it's going above. So I don't know. Maybe there's too many bulldozers running around and broking all the bottom or the top, so the water seeps down and just goes out.

VL: So when there's a shortage of water, how do you determine how much you get?

RT: Well, we had to go way up to our water head and build the dikes higher to get water coming through to our paddies.

YY: How far up is this water head?

RT: Let's see. Where I'm farming, it's about, just about half a mile above where I'm farming. Gee, I'm one, two....I'm just about the third farmer from the top.

YY: And so each farmer will...

END OF SIDE TWO

[TAPE NO. 4-17-1-78] SIDE ONE

YY: When there's any problems, say, with flooding, will the three farmers go up to the water head and work on it? Or do you have another system?

RT: No, I wouldn't say three farmers, but whoever uses the water that comes down through our water head, then everybody goes up. All the farmers that realize that they using the same water, everybody goes up and try to build up the dikes so that the water would be, we have sufficient water to take care of our taro land. And so is the rest of the farmers. Like William Kanekoa and Sammy Mock Chew and John Loo, and the rest of the farmers. They have their own water head. And different people have their own water head. That's taking out of the main river.

VL: And this water is not sold?

RT: No, no, no. It's not sold.

VL: Then, after you harvest, how soon do you replant?

RT: When we first started, our practice was when we harvesting, we plant immediately after we harvest. But now, we cannot do that because of the rot. So we have to let that paddy stand for about, well, as far as I'm concerned, I usually let my paddies stand for about one month before replanting again.

VL: Wet or dry?

RT: Wet. Yeah. Some of the farmers let it dry, but I cannot let it dry because once you let it dry, the [weed] seeds will germinate and you will have a lot of weeds and to get that weeds down again, it's going to be a problem. So what I do is just let the water stay in there and have it high enough. I'd say about two inches of water, at least, so the seeds won't germinate. And just leave it for about a month. And hopefully, planting it back again, we'd have better crop.

VL: So then, when you plant a month later, where is your huli from?

RT: Yeah, usually, we keep a couple of patches for about a month. Then, when we harvest that patch, then we have another huli ready. That's the reason why I not going harvest this weekend. Because I'm trying

to save my huli for the patches that I getting ready. I got one, just about 1-1/2 patch to plant. So I'm going to stop my harvesting now, for about a month.

Otherwise, we have to go and help somebody else harvest just to get the huli. And that's rough. Some of the farmers won't give you huli because they need their huli anyway, because of all the rot. And when we have rot in the taro, everybody broke up their huli and throw it away. And depend on the next crop. If it's going to be good, then they can use the huli. Otherwise, they have to go help somebody else, providing that person is not going to use their huli.

VL: Can you buy huli, these days?

RT: Yeah. As far as buying huli, you can buy huli.

VL: From where?

RT: Oh, from the farmers in Waipio.

VL: What would it cost?

RT: I don't know how much it cost. It used to cost 2 cents a huli. I think it cost just about 5 cents a huli now. But I never bought huli for quite awhile now. So I don't know.

VL: Is it more common to go help harvest and get huli that way?

RT: Yeah, it's more common. It's more common because everybody wants, the more hands you get in harvesting, the faster it is to harvest and the farmer will have enough time, after harvesting, to take care of the rest of the....like controlling the water, controlling the weeds. They have more time.

END OF INTERVIEW.

Tape No. 4-37-2-78 and 4-38-2-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mr. Roy Toko (RT)

May 30, 1978

Kukuihaele, Big Island

BY: Vivien Lee (VL) and Yukie Yoshinaga (YY)

VL: So, when you were growing up in Kukuihaele, before you mentioned that there was quite a bit of taro up here. Can you tell us where it was being grown?

RT: Yeah, it was grown right in the back of where we were born. And right below the main road going over towards Waipio. The first patches right below the road were grown, to what I remember, a man by the name of Robert Hind. And he used to raise the taro. He's somehow related to the Hind Ranch in Ponohulu.

VL: So Hind first, then...

RT: Yeah. Then Pine and Kane. And below that was my grandfather. And below my grandfather was the Kahele and Kala family. Raising taro.

VL: It's Robert Kahele?

RT: Robert Kahele and John Kahele, Joe Kala. They were all living in the back of our place.

VL: Back how far did all those taro patches extend towards the ocean?

RT: Oh, it extended right to the....oh, I'd say maybe about 25 yards away from the ocean. On the bluff there. Uh huh. Our water was picked up from that Lalakea River coming through Waiulili Stream.

And then, right above the road, where the Mock Chews are now, there was some taro. A little bit of taro, most watercress. Grown by Ueshiro, one Japanese man. And there was a beautiful pond, I remember. They used to call that Hind pond because the river goes through that place over there, that Lalakea River. And that pond was really blue and deep. And we used to have lots of fun.

VL: Up?

RT: Right above Mock Chew's house. And that was the beginning of the

water head that comes down and feeding all these taro lands down here. And the watercress patch.

VL: What happened to that pond?

RT: I think in 1960, I forget what year it was. There was a great flood that came down, and the thing filled up with debris, rocks and everything from the sugar field. And the sides of the pond gave out. It just fell right in.

That was our favorite pool. Every summer or every hot day. We'd dive about 25 feet from the top and never hit bottom. Direct dive. It was small. That pond was actually small, but deep.

VL: At that time of that big flood, was taro still being grown all over here?

RT: Yeah. James Nakanelua was the last. He was raising taro just right in the back of my house, just below the road. And above him was Mrs. Kanekoa, Moi Kanekoa. Well, actually, her English name is Elizabeth Kanekoa (Well, God bless her; she is dead now). She was raising. Then she gave up. And her brother, Sammy Apo, moved from Honolulu up to Kukuihaele and then he start raising taro in the back there. That was on Robert Hind's place.

VL: So, up until the early 1960's, taro was still grown up here.

RT: Yeah. Uh huh. Yeah.

VL: And what happened to Hind and Kane, Kahele? What happened to their taro patches?

RT: Well, actually, where we were picking up the water from, we got floods. As floods come and come, the water head began to erode. And it took more effort to get the water back into the paddies again. So they finally gave up. Because you could put it up today and maybe a week from now, the flood waters would come and tear it all up. And then it takes about a week and maybe two weeks and you get your water back again.

VL: Who would go to repair it?

RT: Usually the farmers themselves. Yeah. They would all pitch in and put in a share. But I tell you, there were a lot of frogs in the back of my house. Oh yeah. Frogs and catfish and pupus (snails). And we never used to starve for food. If you hustle, you can get back there, catch frogs. Up till the time I bought my place--I bought my place in 1958, I think, 1957 or 1958--there was this guy Takamoto that I bought it from. And he used to go right in the back of the house and hook maybe half a dozen frogs in the afternoon. And cook it.

VL: Hook 'em?

RT: Hook 'em.

VL: How?

RT: With a bamboo, short string, a hook and a red rag. A small piece of red cloth, just to attract 'em.

VL: So they were hooked like a fish?

RT: Yeah. They'd open their mouth, jump. You know, they think it's a fly or something. The red rag attracts 'em. Then they just jump and grab on 'em and just pull 'em up. And we used to do that for extra money. Pick up about a dozen and go down and sell it to the, oh, Filipinos, for dollar-half [\$1.50] a dozen. Pick up extra money. Just so we can go the movie or buy cigarettes.

VL: That time, when it was being grown, and your grandfather had a patch, about how old were you?

RT: Up to about 17, I think. Because I remember, when I was about 15, I had one taro patch and my uncle Sammy [Mock Chew] had one taro patch there. And my uncle "German," Elmer Auna, had one taro patch there. And my grandfather had the biggest one there. And we were all raising taro. And Nelson Chun tried one time. Because my mother wanted to raise taro there, so Nelson Chun raised, I think one crop, in one little taro patch there. For my mother. He not going like that eh. That's all right.

VL: What varieties were being grown up here?

RT: Apii and lehua. And, I think, if I'm not mistaken, the old man Hind had pueo taro. And then, they used to raise mana, the piko, mana melemele, and I think was the mana ulaula. If I remember. Yeah, I remember, we had a fishpond in the back, right in the back of our house. We had lot of gold fishes in. And right where the water goes out, my grandmother used to plant all kind of mana taros. I forgot the name of those taros. And that was used for poi too. And pololu taro.

VL: For the luau?

RT: For the luau and the poi. But that was rough to pound. Like rubber, once it gets cold. And I used to fool around with that pake taro, you know the Chinese taro they using for taro chips? We used to raise that too.

VL: Which variety did you find to be best for poi?

RT: The apii. Apii was the best.

VL: And why was that?

RT: Apii poi had more flavor and it was much easier to raise. Especially up Kukuihaele here, the water is not as cold as some parts of Waipio. And the apii taro would mature faster than the lehua. And they would grow bigger and stronger. You get more babies out of one apii taro than....if you raise it right, you get more babies out of one apii huli than you would get from a lehua. And the poi is better. Now, they going for the color. They not going for the taste of the poi. They just going for the color.

VL: You notice a difference in taste?

RT: Uh huh. Most poi eaters know the difference in taste. They know.

VL: What is the best poi that you've ever had? What variety was it from?

RT: Apii. And sour. Got to be sour. (Laughs) Never fresh. Apii's the best.

VL: All the taro that was grown by Hind, Kane, your grandfather, and so on, was this sold to poi mills?

RT: No. Most of this taro was just for home use. Because there wasn't too many poi mills. I think the only poi mill was....well, no sense they ship it to Waipio because Waipio had all that taro. And Mock Chew had his poi shop. Let's see. Leslie Chang had his poi shop down there at that time, and well, before that. And no sense they ship 'em. Mock Chew was the last to have his poi shop down there. So the only poi shop, I think, was in Hilo, if I'm not mistaken. Ah Hee, I think, in Hilo. But they never shipped 'em out. Just for home use. Or, you know, if the family wanted taro, then they'd give 'em to them. Or give 'em the poi.

VL: How about families that were further towards the Honokaa side? Did they also grow taro?

RT: Not that I can think of. They might have raised some dry land taro. I don't think so. I'm not too sure.

VL: So the taro grown in Kukuihaele was mainly those names that you mentioned?

RT: Yeah, uh huh.

VL: They're all Hawaiian?

RT: Uh huh.

YY: Did you know what the other Hawaiian families, who didn't raise

taro, where they got their poi from? Before the Chinese came in and set up factories?

RT: Gee, I really don't know. I wouldn't want to comment on that.

VL: In the last interview you mentioned that there was a difference in the way growing taro up Kukuihaele from down Waipio.

RT: Oh yeah, yeah.

VL: What's the difference?

RT: Well, we have more sunlight in Kukuihaele. We have more sunlight in Kukuihaele and you don't need that much water, as much as you need in Waipio.

VL: Why is that?

RT: Because, when you have more sunlight, as long as your paddies are moist....well, doesn't have to be really flooded. With all the sunlight you have, as soon as it breaks in the morning, the sun is on the taro already. As long as it's moist, it'll grow. It'll grow vigorously. Because the taro needs a lot of sunlight.

VL: I would think you'd need more water if there's more sun, to keep it cool.

RT: No.

VL: So up here you didn't need as much?

RT: Well, you need it. As far as to keep it cool, you're right on that point. Because in the beginning, you want the water to run. Water run, as long as it's running. Like I said, you have more sunlight and you have less chance of....well, I call it the retardation of the crop. When it retards. Because if you don't have too much sun, maybe you have a good day of sun and then a week of rain. Well, let's say you have a good month of sun. Then a week of rain. Then there's a retardation in your crop. The crop, you notice the taro leaves will get all holes in. And when they come up again, the leaves are small, when the young shoots come out. It comes smaller. But if you have the steady sun, like during the summer months, way back. Yeah, I remember even when I started to raise taro in Waipio, the more sunlight you get, the better crop, you can get 'em out earlier. You don't have to wait for about 15, 16 months. I think the taro used to come out 12 months. Yeah, one year. It gets bigger than the taros down in Waipio that they raise 'em for 14 and 18 months. Yeah.

VL: What were some other differences?

RT: Well, I don't know. I can't think of some more other difference.

VL: I wonder why, then, more taro wasn't grown up here?

RT: Not enough water. See, after the floods and everything....then we've been having earthquakes and earthquakes and earthquakes. Then the springs....we're depending on this stream here, this Waiulili Stream. We're dependent more on spring water. See, with all the earthquakes, underneath of the streams beginning like a crack. It cracks and then the springs all run away.

See, at one time, we had the whole Kukuihaele area, up to the Kukuihaele Store. Was supplied by two springs up in this Lalakea Stream. Two springs. The Lalakea Springs in the Waiulili Stream. One used to go just to the plantation employees. And one used to go just for the village people. That was the one the Kuikahi family put in for them. Then, from there, the people started to tap. Those who had Kuikahi lease.

VL: And both of these springs were from the Lalakea Spring?

RT: Yeah, the intakes. The intakes were from the Lalakea Stream. And then, they were piped out. All concreted you know. They still there yet.

VL: And then this Waiulili? What was the source of that stream?

RT: All spring. All spring. That the reason, now, we don't have as much water now. That's the reason why we cannot raise taro up here. And, when the spring was beginning to go down, then they had this flume that goes over. It used to leak a lot of water. And that used to help the taro farmers too. Because the water used to leak through the flume. So everytime the Hawaiian Irrigation go there, they patch up the holes and then less water again. You know, people used to depend on that.

And when we had the drought in 1958, 1959, or 1960. We had a long drought. And everything turned to dust. In the yard, it was all dust. And that's when we got our County assistance, because the stream really went dead. We couldn't get water anywhere. The only ones got water was like the sugar manager, the plantation people. Because they had a better spring. But as soon as the County came in, they stop everybody else from having water.

VL: Their spring was which now?

RT: The Lalakea. Right above the Kuikahi Spring. Right above. It's only a matter of about 10 yards above. But a better spring. It's still strong till today. And they still using it too. There's about two homes--I won't mention names--that still using the water. And the water is strong. The pipeline goes right in the back here. Right above your car. It goes through.

VL: Is that connected with the Hawaiian Irrigation ditch?

RT: No, no. Definitely no. It's a spring in the river bed. It's an intake right in the river bed. And then, now, the new highway is going to go right across and over that. And I hope they don't....well, if they blast up there, then they going to lose everything. The County went down and then they tapped the Waiulili Spring down here, below. And they pumping that water up. And then that's the water we are using from the County.

YY: Otherwise it doesn't run off to the sea?

RT: Yeah, it runs out into the ocean. But there's a lot of veins going out. All springs, they call it Waiulili Spring.

VL: Now, when you first started growing your own taro in the valley, 20 years ago, what were your main problems at that time?

RT: Well, the main problem was to get the land ready for planting. The main problem because we couldn't afford to have tractors. Those days, it was something like \$8 an hour. And that was ridiculous, \$8, those days. A guy bringing home \$58 a month, or \$56 a month, you cannot. So what we had to do is all do it by hand. Open up a patch that, maybe, say about....the first patch we open up was about 70 bags, I think. Roughly, about 70 bags. But I was fortunate, I got 90 bags out of that. Anyway, we got that going. And we opened up the other one with the money that we made out of that one. Then I hired Andrade. He worked for me for four hours [tractor work]. And that's all I could afford, four hours. But he did a pretty good job in four hours.

VL: So after you got that cleared, did you have any problems once you had begun planting?

RT: Water. The water problem. Guys would shut off the water that's coming into our patches. So we had to go down practically every other afternoon, just to check the water.

VL: You mean farmers further up would divert water for their own...

RT: Yeah. They divert the water. They put a rock just to block the water so you can get enough water for your place. Then they put another four rocks there to close up yours and vice versa. Then you talk to them and then they get mad. And finally we decided we go way up top and build up a better water head where everybody can get water. And everybody did it. And we got enough water.

VL: This was when you first began?

RT: Yeah. Uh huh. In fact, it began way before then. What everybody did was, like the farmers across, like William Kanekoa folks, they

found their own source of water. They had their problems too. And us on this side, we had our problems. So we went up and we build up a better dam.

VL: No, who is "we?"

RT: George Farm, myself, and my father-in-law, Victor Hauanio. And Loseo Cosare. And who else was? George Farm's daughter. And I forgot. Quite a bit of us. But, like I'd go up maybe on a Saturday that I had time. Then, maybe my father-in-law and I, we'd go up. And then the following weekend, whoever has time would go up and build it higher. And the following weekend, whoever has time would go up and build it better and better and better. Till finally, we had a good ditch coming through our places.

But we still have that problem, guys shutting off water and pulling here and pulling there. We still have problems, they even go with tractors. We still have problems.

VL: So then, after you built that better dam, all your water problems were solved at that time?

RT: Yeah, it was solved. As far as I was concerned, it was solved. Because, at that time, I had only two patches. We started with actually four. But I had two at that time. And as we began to get better water, more water, then we started by hand opening up another patch. Then, after we found that we had ample water to continue on, then we opened up another patch. All total, we had four.

VL: Historically, Waipio, I think, has had ample water. So, how do you figure that your stream was not giving you folks enough water?

RT: Well, you see, Waipio had ample water, it has ample water. But the thing is, to get it to your patch, you cannot depend on the main river to bring it to your patch. You have to bring it to your patch. So it's a man-made river, a man-made stream. You don't want to get it too big because you'll have the main river ending up in your taro patch. So you don't want to get it too big. But you just want to have it just enough so everybody has enough. And you don't want it small, the stream being small, and not enough water.

VL: So the ditch runs alongside the main stream?

RT: Yeah, alongside the main stream. Well, in the old days, they first made it, the Hawaiians are some engineers. They'd follow the main, the contour of the land.

VL: You want to draw it?

RT: No, no. They just follow the contour of the land and just follow. Wherever the water goes and if it's little too high, they'll dig a

little and just let it go. And then they let nature take it's course after that. As the water goes, it rushes through. Then it washes the dirt and washes the pebble. Then they go there and then scrape it out, put it on the side and let it get deeper and deeper and deeper.

VL: So the ditch was already there for starters?

RT: Yeah, it was there.

VL: And you just improved the dam?

RT: Yeah, uh huh. Another thing is, we couldn't put a dam that was so tight that the water could not break it. You had to put a dam so that, when the water comes down and it breaks when you have these great big floods, it breaks. When it breaks, then you don't have to worry about your taro land. It's going to get dry, but at least you not going to have your taro down in the ocean. And your taro paddies all ruined.

VL: So then, after it breaks, who would fix it?

RT: Well, usually the farmers themselves. Yeah. Those who have the time will usually go up. Like if the thing happens on Thursday, and George Farm goes down on Friday--I say George Farm because he's usually the one checking on the water, because he's the full time farmer--now he goes down on Friday. If it clears up, he goes down Friday and he checks. And he does what he can. And if he can't do it that day, he'd call me and he'd call the rest of the farmers. With the Loos, myself, and ask us if we could go up on Saturday to help get water in our paddies. And naturally, we have to go because without water, we cannot harvest anyway. So we'd all go up. Go up there, and as long as we have ample water for harvesting or for whatever, then we'd quit for the day. All depend on the weather too, and the time of the year. During the winter months, you don't want to fuss around and go up there and put in 10 hours of work. And come back. In the matter of 15 minutes, the water comes down and that's it. The dam's gone. So what you do during the summer months, you just have ample water for your patches so you can work 'em.

VL: You mean winter months.

RT: Yeah. But by going up, you can tell more or less by looking at the clouds way above Koiawe and Kawainui, in that area. More or less you can tell whether it's going to really rain heavy. If couple guys agree that it's not going to rain really heavy, then we just build 'em up pretty well solid, and hope it doesn't rain. And sometimes it last about two or three months. So, you know, we have enough water.

VL: Are you building it up all by hand?

RT: All by hand.

VL: Did you ever make a party out the day or something?

RT: No. Because everybody too busy. As soon as the water comes in [to the ditch], we look at the time, "Eh, that darn taro got to get up top [Kukuihaele]." Come back and everybody harvesting. And that's it. Every family goes to their own place and harvest. Or work, whatever. The part-time farmers are the losers because if you don't harvest on Saturday and you don't get your water in on.... say, if the water comes in on Saturday, late in the afternoon, and you cannot harvest on Saturday, you got to go down on Sunday. If you don't go down on Sunday, then you have to go down Monday after work. And that's a lot of work. [Water in the patch is necessary for harvesting.]

We tried to have that thing done by getting the water in Saturday. And if not, if there's no way, sometimes it takes about two to three weeks before we can get water in. That's when we cancel all our orders. The poi shops go without taro. Like some of the other farmers, if they have their water in their paddies, then they'll harvest for their factories. And the factories that we deal with are affected without any taro.

YY: Have you seen any change in big water patterns over the last 20 years?

RT: Definitely. One good example is where Steve Mochida lives, where Gilbert Chang lives right now. The river was not there. There was a cement wall and the Chang Store there. And then the floods came, I don't know what year was [approx. 1941], the floods came and took that store and wall away. When I remember, the river used to come down the Peace Corps road, come across between Araki and that poi mill there. He used to go through there. And I remember stepping over rocks to get over. The water was swift. Lot of water.

And then, next thing you know, another flood comes. And then it changes, it goes into where Peter Kaaekuahiwi lives now. It goes between that. And then, one time I remember, and not only one time. Gee whiz, I don't know how many times, that cement wall [around Kaaekuahiwi's house] there was brought up about three times, I think. I think, if you look closely from inside, you can see the mark, where the wall was brought up. Was almost level, that wall.

YY: You mean level with the road?

RT: No, with the yard. It was almost level with the yard itself now. You see that basement they have underneath? Did you go underneath the basement? But you see those windows there? It was further

below that. And when it floods, it floods over that window. It goes over there. I remember shoveling out gravel from that place [the basement]. Almost to the ceiling, yeah. Even opaes running around in there one time. So long they had the water--you know, water was running through--there was even opae.

VL: How come you were shoveling Kaaekuahiwi's basement?

RT: Well, Mrs. Kaaekuahiwi, Albert Kalani's wife Mabel, is my aunty. Because Mabel's mother and my grandmother are sisters. So that's my grand aunt. My grandmother and Mabel's mother were sisters. The whole Kaaekuahiwi family is all my family.

VL: Going back a little to what you were talking about part-timers lose out, would it be better to be a full time farmer then?

RT: Well, right now I would say no. Because of the disease that we're having. But without the disease, like I was telling my wife yesterday, just yesterday. And without the disease and just my wife and myself and the two girls, with whatever land we have now, I could make a living, a decent living. If wasn't for the disease. Because if you can....say you gross maybe about 13, 14, maybe \$15,000 a year. That's a damn good decent living for part-time farming. Imagine if full time farming. Could double that, you know, full time farming.

Say, you gross 15 [\$15,000] for part-time farming, on whatever I have now. And if you go in full time farming, you always there on the taro land. So you going double your profit.

VL: Would you do that? Would you prefer to be full time, if there was no disease?

RT: Definitely. And I have nobody to tell me what to do. I work on my own time. My own schedule. And I would rather work....well, my job leaves me working outdoors, but I would rather work where like in Waipio. I don't know. Nature, I guess nature is with me while I'm there. Because you can be working. And you can be tired, tired, dog tired. But you stop, you wash yourself up, and you sit for about five minutes. And you not tired anymore. The peacefulness of the valley. It just perks you up again. It's so quiet, peaceful. And you just sit down there. And then you can just look around the mountains, the trees and the clouds moving over. And the rustle of the wind and the rustle of the river. That really builds your morale. And you can just go right back to work again. Really.

VL: How about, though, the uncertainties of nature? If you were dependent on taro for your living. Floods.

RT: Well, that's something you have to cope with. Like, in my case, where I'm from, the floods, the only damage that it will do in my

place, it will not give me water if the waterhead brokes. That's the only problem I'm going to have, if I'm a full time farmer. And I can get to it as soon as possible. And another thing is that I cannot come up to Kukuihaele, because of the rivers being high. But other than that, it's no problem, with flooding on me over there. There's no problem.

VL: I read in a newspaper, an old one, 1963, mentioned your name and that there was a big flood and you had had a \$1,200 loss. Do you remember that?

RT: Yeah. Uh huh. That was from the waterfall that comes down, Kakeha, right in front my place. It came right through the gate. Because there was no ditch. My father-in-law, when he had that place, he always did gamble. He never put a ditch there. So my father-in-law and I dug it, a little ditch going down, to divert that main water coming down. But during that flood, the ditch was too small so it wiped out three of my patches. Right, as soon as you enter the gate, the three patches going all the way down. And right after that, I had the federal government come in. And we did the flood control in the front there. That's the reason why there's a bridge that goes over. There used to be a dip over there. But the water jumped that dip and came right into my taro land. So after that, like I said, the federal government came in and they paid 75 percent of the cost to have a diversion ditch right in my property, alongside of the road going down.

And, there was still a dip there, going down and up. So I didn't like that too much, but that's all they could do. So everybody was using it like that. So when the Peace Corps was in the valley, they asked me if I could find a little stream where they could learn how to build bridges. I told them, "Oh, to find a stream in Waipio is easy. Come over my place, I show you one."

It wasn't running water. So when they came, they told me, "Eh, we cannot build a bridge yet, because it's not running water."

I told 'em, "No, you build a bridge because it's going to run water."

So they did it. The Peace Corps did it. They put a concrete wall on both sides. And they put up the bridge with 2-by-4s, one overlapping the other. And it lasted for about four years, I think. It was all right. It's a good bridge.

VL: On the main road so trucks could pass?

RT: Yeah. It's hard to recognize now because the trucks been going over and over and over. It looks like it's dirt. It's all full of mud, eh.

Okay. After four years right? Yeah. And then there was a guy that went over with a heavy load of taro. I think it was 30 bags of taro in his truck. Well naturally, the lumber was getting rotten. So he made a hole in it, he fell in. So then I got a hold of the County. At that time, the County used to go all over the place help out the farmers. I got a hold of the County and they were the last to repair that bridge. So that's how we got that bridge there.

VL: Also at that time, late 1950's, early 1960's, who would you say was growing the best taro in the valley?

RT: Late 1950's, early 1960's?

VL: Yeah, when you first started down there.

RT: Oh, everybody was growing good taro down there. I think William Kanekoa. I would say William Kanekoa and George Farm. Yeah, they were raising one of the best taros down there. And then, my father-in-law had pretty good taro. But he was part-timer eh. Most of the full timers were raising good taro. Nelson Chun, he was raising good taro.

VL: "Good" meaning what kind of qualities in the taro?

RT: Oh, A-1 quality.

Another person that was raising real good taro, gee I forgot about him. That, I got to admit, Nelson Mock Chew and Wilfred Mock Chew, the two Mock Chew brothers. In fact, Sammy too. The three Mock Chews. They were raising big taro. They talk about 20-pound taros. Nowadays, I think some people are raising something like 18-pound taros and all that. But in those days, without fertilizer now. And I know Nelson Mock Chew and Wilfred Mock Chew, even Sam Mock Chew and their father, raising taros up to 20 pounds. Twenty pounds, I'm telling you.

VL: The mother?

RT: Yeah, the mother.

But the father (Mr. Mock Chew), he wasn't raising taro in the 1950's. It was mainly the three brothers. And they were raising big, huge, taro. Beautiful taros. They were quality taros. Really. Most was apii. Yeah, George Farm is the son-in-law of Mock Chew, so he was raising good taro too.

And then, during the mid-60's, up to mid-70's....now somebody going to disagree with me, but I started to raise lehua, the lehua taro, because everybody was getting rid of the lehua. Because they were getting more rot in the lehua. But it wasn't the disease that

we have now. Then, when my father-in-law passed away, in 1962, the land was given over to us by my mother-in-law. So I told my wife, instead of we raising haakea--my father-in-law used to specialize on haakea and lehua and very little apii. So I told my wife, "Everybody is looking for red taro because they're going away with red taro."

Most of the farmers below [towards the ocean], where the water is warm, they cannot raise red taro. No way they going raise red taro because the water is too warm. And William Kanekoa had plenty red taro that time. And he was starting to get rid of his red taro. I go down to the valley and check the farmers. Without they knowing, I'd go around their place and walk around. I check the farmers, how much red taro they broking. So I told my wife, "Our only solution is to get the red taro going. Because that is my whip." That was supposed to be my whip in my hand. Because when the people are going to cry for red taro, they going to have to come to me. So I had about three acres in red taro. And that was what happened. They (the poi factories) were all looking for red taro, they were calling me up for red taro. Then I could name my price.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

VL: So then, with the lehua, did you have any problems with those three acres?

RT: No, I never had problems. Oh, I had beautiful taro, beautiful, really. My boys, they used to like to go down pull when we used to pull, because the taros are big. I had nice, at one point, I think I had the best lehua in Waipio. Until they came out with, they call it the Seiko Special, but actually it's the Kauai Beauty, I think it was. That taro that Seiko [Kaneshiro] brought from Kauai. And they, finding out that the lehua couldn't stand warm water, they went out for a different variety of red taro. And then they brought in from Kauai and from Maui. I think Sammy Mock Chew brought in from Kauai, a different variety. I don't know what variety. Not the same as the one Seiko brought in. He got another variety. And then, after they found that the factories was demanding red taro instead of white taro, well, they want it [taro] regardless but the demand was for red taro. Then, they started going out looking for red huli, besides the lehua. And some people went back to lehua.

VL: Where was your lehua huli from?

RT: Originally from one land.

VL: In your own farm?

RT: My father-in-law's, yeah. And then I picked that up.

VL: So at one point, you were one of the only ones growing lehua?

RT: Yeah, at one point, I wouldn't say I was the only, but I had the bulk of the lehua down in the valley.

VL: And so what did you do with the haakea?

RT: The haakea, I got rid of the haakea because it's one taro it's hard to pull.

VL: That's the one with lots of roots?

RT: Yeah. The only way you can pull it real easy, but you have to fight with the grass, is dry it dry. Bone dry.

VL: How much haakea did your father-in-law have?

RT: He had quite a few. He had about 400 or 500 bags of haakea.

VL: How did he deal with the roots?

RT: Dry it all up. But you see, he dry it up because he had a means of cleaning up the patches. He had a harrow horse he could use to harrow. In fact, after he died, I used the horse until the horse couldn't be used again. He'd dry up all the patches. And sometimes, it's not as dry. But, hoo, I used to go down help him. My wife, all her life she's been pulling taro anyway. She'd go down and help and we have a hard time pulling. Most of the time he dry it all up when the taro's getting big.

VL: Yeah, what was good about haakea?

RT: A lot of babies. Lot of keikis and the taro is solid. You don't have to worry, that taro is solid. I think the haakea taro is better than the lehua. Because there's more keikis and you don't have to worry.

VL: Was anybody else growing haakea, besides your father-in-law?

RT: No, not that I can remember. Because the people below our place don't want to raise haakea and lehua because, for one reason the lehua, it's because the water is warm. And the reason for haakea is because the patch is deep. So, if the patch is deep, if it goes up to your knee in mud, that's how far your root goes down. And our place was all pebbles. So the deepest, oh, I'd say, maybe the mud goes about little over your ankle. The rest is all pebbles. So it [the roots] just goes down and crawls on the pebble. It's easier to dry 'em out. If you get 'em in the deep patch, you stay there all day to take out one bag [100 pounds of taro].

VL: Now the Waipio Taro Growers Association, that club that was started a few years ago, you were a member?

RT: Yeah, I was a member.

VL: How did you first hear about the club?

RT: Oh, let's see. Oh yeah, one night they called me to go to a meeting. And I was wondering what the meeting about. Is it the latest Waipio Taro Association you talking about? Or is this the first one?

VL: I'm talking about Mr. Toledo's.

RT: Oh yeah, they called me to a meeting one night. And I went over and I joined. Because everybody was pretty interested in. Well, I wouldn't say everybody. Some people were pretty skeptical because of....well, to tell you the truth, some people didn't like Toledo, period. That's the reason why they didn't want to join. Well, actually, I found it was wrong because no matter if you don't like the person, and if everybody is in one, it's hard to break. But some people did not like him, and that's the reason why. At one time, we had about twenty....just about half of the farmers in. At one point, uh huh.

VL: Why did you join?

RT: Well, I joined because we wanted to have....the way I felt, if I joined, then we'd have the benefit of the things that we could get from the County or the Federal or the State, or whatever. Being a association or being an organization, you have the power, you have the backbone. But being an individual, no way out. You can scream and scream and scream as an individual. They wouldn't listen to you. But as a club or an organization, they'll listen.

So I thought, if I joined, maybe I can entice somebody else to join. Maybe another farmer might like me and then join. Well, we got some other farmers in but well, you know, like any other clubs, they started arguing and arguing and nothing's being done. I think the last time that the association was really strong was when we got Dr. de la Pena and Al Martinez [from the University of Hawaii] and all those people over to check. The first time they came over to check the rot in the taro.

VL: When was that?

RT: Wow. I think was middle 1970's, I think. Yeah, I guess so. 1974 or 1975, I think was. Yeah. I think just about that time. Uh huh.

VL: How long did it last, the association?

RT: Just a couple of years. But before that, we had one. In fact, they have more than one. Well, I wasn't a farmer at that time they had one. I think that was founded by Ginji Araki, that one. And then they broke up. And then they started another one. That, I joined. The second one they started. And I was just starting to farm [approx. 1958].

VL: Who started that second one?

RT: Araki again. Araki, Harrison Kanekoa, myself. I joined and I would say myself and Suei Kawashima. And that's when we started that new, well I wouldn't say new, but that poi mill down there. That poi mill actually just to threaten the rest of the markets. Now, I'm going to say that out clearly so they know why.

VL: The purpose of the poi mill?

RT: The purpose of that poi mill we built down there was to threaten the poi factories. Because they were giving us lousy prices. We getting \$3.50 a bag, then \$4.00 a bag, then \$4.50. Then, we ended up with \$5.00 a bag or \$5.25. And, at that time, we were shipping to Waiahole, Kalihi, Puueo and Honolulu Poi and....oh, another, that poi shop in Kona that was run by Higashi. And Ah Hee in Hilo. I don't know how many poi factories was buying. So we figured we do that. And if they didn't want to negotiate for price, like we were having \$5.25, I think at that time. So we wanted to up the price and they said no. So we couldn't do anything.

So we thought, maybe by putting up a poi factory in the valley, then we'll just tell them, "If you not taking our taro, we going to stop. We going to mill our own poi and sell it for...." I don't know how many pounds it was at that time but we were going to go like five pounds or six pounds per dollar. Because there was not too much overhead. We just pull our taro, bring it to the poi mill right in the valley.

VL: So that was less than all the other factories were selling poi for? You would sell it for less?

RT: Yeah. More poundage for the same price. Like maybe they were selling for three pounds for dollar. We'd sell it for five pounds per dollar. And if they come up maybe four pounds for dollar, we'd come up six pounds for dollar. Just so that they would give us the price. And as soon as....in fact, it was not even completed. Then, the taro price began to come up. Because they saw that the mill was really coming up. We had the grinder and everything in there. That mill is ready to run. That's all, all we need is that water to flow in that ditch and spin that wheel. And the two big belts. And that mill will go.

VL: So what did the prices come up to?

RT: (Laughs) It came up to, in the past I don't know how many years, but right now, we having \$16 a bag. I just heard, that's just through hearsay, it's \$19 a bag now. That's not only the mother, anything. But actually, we had it \$16. That I know, \$16 a bag. And that's damn good.

VL: So then, what is the reason that the poi shop didn't keep going until it opened up?

RT: The reason was, because we were having good price. Because \$5 a bag, then boom, it came up \$7 a bag. So from five to seven, that's a pretty damn good jump. Then from there, it gradually came up and up and up. Because we figured, if the factories, we didn't want to close any factories down, as far as that. So we told them, "Well, we won't press for price." And while we were building that, we got stuck too, in that association. We were shipping through Suei Kawashima was our agent at that time, he and Araki. And we were shipping to Waiahole Poi. And Waiahole Poi folded up, they called bankruptcy. They never paid, oh, lot of the farmers. I got stuck with about \$300. I forgot what year it was. Yeah, it was in the 1960's. Yeah. And \$300 was a lot of money. I know Suei got stuck and Ted Kaaekuahiwi got stuck, and I don't know who else. Yeah, we got stuck. I went to Honolulu. And we tried to get a hold of the guy, the guy took off. Went back to the Mainland. Filed bankruptcy and that was it. But he didn't own the damn place in the first place, he was leasing it from the owners.

VL: Going back to the most recent taro growers association, I know that Mr. Toledo was president. Were there other officers?

RT: Yeah. When we went there, Daisy Ikeuchi was our secretary. I forgot who. Oh, Jimmy Wright was our treasurer. Jimmy Wright, he's married to Barbara Loo. He was our treasurer. I forgot who was the vice-president. Yeah, that's all officers we had.

VL: Were your officers elected?

RT: Yeah, elected. They are supposed to have a two-year term. Then, after Toledo got into the two-year term, we wanted to put him back [i.e., re-elect him president]. But he didn't want to go back. And we supposed to have had a meeting for election of officers. I was on the nominating committee. And we'd call a meeting, we had a nominating committee out there. And we put in names for various offices. Then, we'd call for a meeting and we go to the meeting, no quorum. Then we call for a next meeting. Go to the meeting, no quorum. And, finally, everything folded up. That was it. Everybody gave up.

VL: So the main problem was what, do you think?

RT: Well, the main problem was that the taro farmers could not see eye

to eye. That's all. Just dog eat dog. That's the main thing that I have in mind.

VL: How come they're like that?

RT: Well, I don't know. Everybody thinks they own the valley. Everybody's trying to get more land, which they can't take care of. And, you don't want to give up your lease, they get angry with you. Well, in a way, I don't blame, because you know for yourself. You go walk around that valley and you see more wasteland now than you see taro land. And the people that are with the wasteland cannot farm the land. They know very well they cannot farm the land because they getting old. And why don't give 'em to the younger people who want the land to be farmed. But they don't want to give up the lease. And that's one of the things that we bring up in the meetings. And then, goes that up flare, and everybody jumps and guys walk out of the meeting. So we stop at that.

Eventually, what I feel, is the Bishop Museum should send maybe two representatives from the museum themselves. Instead of sitting back and collecting rent, come over and survey the place. When I say "survey," I don't mean going out with instruments. Just go, they have a representative here which they could go with. Go out and check all the Bishop Museum land that's not kuleana like. You know, people who own their own land. All the Bishop Museum land. That's my suggestion.

And look at that, the land. And say, "Hey, how many acres you have here?"

And if the guys says, "Oh, I got 10 acres."

"And how many acres do you have in taro?"

"Oh, two."

"And what about the rest of the eight acres? You going to farm 'em?"

And if he's not going to farm, take the lease away from 'em. Advertise 'em in the papers or something, "Land for lease in Waipio for taro farming." And let it be taro farming alone. Then we bring in more, younger people who really want to raise taro.

VL: Are there younger people around that really want to raise taro?

RT: Yeah, there are. I don't want to mention names, but there are. Really willing to raise taro. But they are not from around here. That's sad to say. They not from around here, they from different places. Maybe Hilo, Kona, Ka'u. They willing to raise taro.

YY: What are the older people holding on for, if they can't themselves farm?

RT: That's the thing we want to find out. Why. One reason is, the way I feel, the land leases are cheap. I hate to say it because I got to pay leases too, eh. The leases are cheap, really cheap. If they let it go, maybe they just jealous. Probably because they been on that land for years and years. It seems as though it's part of their life. So what they should do is maybe let them farm a small area, maybe two acres. Then let that be their life, let them live if they want to live, live on that land. Let the lease be as it is, and let them farm the land. But let the rest of the acreage go to those who really want to farm it. I know there's some people in Waipio still wants more land.

As far as I'm concerned, the way the taro is going now, I don't think I'll be farming. If it continues the way it goes, I don't think I'll be farming for much longer.

VL: What kind of losses have you had because of the soft rot?

RT: I'm going to a point now, I'm getting about 35 percent loss. And that's a lot of loss.

VL: And what do you think is causing the rot?

RT: That's a good question, very good question. For one thing, I think it's just nature taking it's course. That's the way I feel. Because they've done all kind of tests. And nothing's positive. So far, everything's negative. I found out something that year. You see, when we were back in the old days, even the old people will find out, like I said if the weather is beautiful...let's say we have a whole year of sunshine. We go into a whole year of drought. I'm talking about the 1950's, in the old days. If we go one year in drought, they'll never beat the taro from Waipio Valley. Provided we have sunshine every day. But the water flow is there. Because the sun, being beautiful, the weather being nice, your taro gets mature faster and much bigger. See, when we had the drought in 1960, that was the best year that the farmers ever had. Yeah. Brought out the best taro in Waipio.

Easy to pull. See, when you shut your water, you know when it's ready to mature, when you shut the lower and let little water come from the top gate, the water gets warm fast. Then the taro begins to go down. That's why, you can actually tell when the taro's going down, down, down. And then your leaves get small and your stalks get small, that mean your taro is getting big. And when you walk in there, you just kick the taro, and it falls over. It's so big. And the roots are all dead. The taro is that mature already. So you didn't have to wait 14 months, 16 months. They take it out 12 months. As long as it grows fast, from when you put it in the ground, the first six or seven months, up to nine months, the most important time. That's when you want the taro to grow as much as possible. Vigorous. And if you get the stalks big, and boom, that

beautiful weather hits you, and then your taro goes down, boy you have that taro, you don't have to worry.

But now, it's different. It's opposite now. Your taro will grow real nice. The moment the water gets warm and staley looking, your taro will rot. Right there. And get spoiled. And in a matter of two weeks, you have a rot a size of a cigarette, the back of a cigarette. Or maybe the size of a dime. And after that, forget it because you going only see taro stalks standing up. And if a wind comes, the stalks will fall right down. There's nothing to hold 'em. And, in some cases, like the lehua, it'll melt from the leaf, right down to the nothing. But you just look at it, the next time you go look at it, there's water and mud. Nothing.

VL: Are you doing anything right now to prevent the rot?

RT: Well, what I'm doing now is strictly confidential.

VL: Oh.

RT: No, no, no. I'm just joking.

(Laughter)

RT: What I'm doing right now is to try get as much fresh water in the patch, which we don't like when it's almost matured. But try to get the patch running with water all the time. By doing that, it's....before, let's say 10 months, have the puka wais, the one that goes out from the taro paddy, shut up tight. High. But the top, let it flow, continuous flow. So the water won't get too warm. Once, like I say, if gets warm, then your taro will go to heck fast. And just let it go like that.

VL: So it's deep.

RT: Deep and not warm. Cool. I've had some success in that already. I've tried it, yeah. \

VL: How about other methods, like fertilizing or some added...

RT: I did away with fertilizing because I found that, if you fertilize and if your market does not need your taro right away, the acid in the fertilizer tends to get your taro faster too. It gets rotten fast. That's the reason why I did away with fertilizing. I figured, just let it flow, let the water flow, and it'll grow. Well, I tried some crushed coral and I don't know what's going to happen, I just tried it. Put some calcium back in the ground. Lime and sweeten the soil again. So I don't know what's going to happen, I just tried it. And I'm going to do it right after, I'm going to start harvesting this weekend coming. I'm going to do that to that paddy that I'm going to harvest. I'm going to just

harvest and clean it up and just leave it. Little bit water. Then, as soon as I can get the crushed coral, and then just throw it in. Without fertilizing.

VL: A little earlier, you said that the cause might be nature taking its course. Why would nature do that?

RT: I don't know. You know, some of us, we just farm, and we farm, and we farm. And we forget that there is a person as the Lord. And we forget, you know, He gives us the strength that we need to go and farm, to do our work, to bring our families up to what they are now. And a little token of appreciation, anybody would like. If you get, let's say, from our paddy, maybe you harvest about 100 bags. Okay, you get \$1,600 from that. Why can't you give about \$60 to the church. Show an appreciation to the Lord. Then, He appreciates that. Everybody needs a little pampering at a certain time. Or maybe just talking to Him. Maybe that's the way the Lord comes down. He teaches us.

"Oh, you folks been making money all this time. Making money and taking advantage of me and not even talking to me. Not even wondering if I exist." Which some people don't believe, which I don't blame 'em. Everybody has their own belief. Well, that's the way I feel. Then, maybe He says, "Okay, that's the way you folks want it? I'll show you folks something." Then everybody's taro gets it. Little by little, little by little, everybody gets it.

VL: But now, that rot hits you too. And yet, all along, you've been thankful to the Lord, and shown your appreciation. But it hits you anyway.

RT: Well, sure, it hits me too. Because, the way I feel, I'm not a perfect person. Everybody falls on the wayside. So I may have fallen on the wayside also. Along the line, we all fall on the wayside. So He's probably telling me something else too. Which I cannot, somebody from somewhere might tell me my faults. I cannot see my faults, I can't even see my nose. So I cannot see my fault. Somebody has to tell me my fault. If I would have known my fault, maybe it wouldn't happen to me.

YY: Can you relate all of this, what's happening with the disease in Waipio, to more of a global scale? What's happening in the rest of the United States.

RT: Yes, yes. If we go back, spiritually speaking, we go back to the "Book of Revelations," it says that there are going to be times of wars and rumors of wars. And pestilence and all manner of illnesses. And this is the pestilence now, that's affecting the taro. And throughout the world, we find pretty near every day you have earthquakes.

And all this has to pass before the Creator will come back again. Now, I'm going on the spiritual side of it now.

But speaking on the spiritual side, it's also on the bodily side. Because we, even those who don't go to church know. They can hear, they hear the people talking of war. And we actually see people killing each other. And we feel earthquakes and we hear of earthquakes in different places, and all of these things. And all manner of illnesses. Say, about 40 years ago, nobody knew what cancer was. Or maybe they knew but it wasn't spoke of literally like today.

VL: But you will still try to correct the rot problem?

RT: Yes, I will. To the best of my ability, I will try in different ways. Not only spiritually, but physically.

VL: What do you think the future of taro is in Waipio?

RT: Well, I hate to say it, but it looks kind of bleak. It looks kind of bleak at certain stages. And yet, by watching some of the younger farmers--when I say younger farmers, I mean the newcomers. The newcomers from the Mainland that come over. They seem to be enthusiastic about the raising of taro. And if they get a hang of it, I think it will eventually pick up again. And then maybe, the younger generation, maybe my grandson might pick the hang of it. Because, as far as I'm concerned, my grandson will probably pull taro with me.

VL: Would you like your children and grandchildren to follow your footsteps in growing taro?

RT: Well, not commercially, no. Just for the culture of it. For their home use and the family use, then it's all right. But for going into commercial, I wouldn't advise. Because it's too much work. It's too much work for them. And I would rather they have an education and go to school, and have a better job.

VL: Do you think that taro should be grown in the valley?

RT: Oh yeah. As far as taro being grown in the valley, that I must say, I surely would like to see it. Because, if God willing, I don't know how long I live, but if God willing that I be able to go into Waipio at, say, age 80 or 85, still able to see, I really would like to see taro leaves still shaking in the wind.

VL: What would you not like to see happen to Waipio in the future?

RT: I would not like to see hotels getting there. Hotels and, you know, big industries. I would just like it to be simple as it is right now. Where nature is. Actually, well, nature is all around.

But as far as the valley, everybody who walks in the valley, if he or she doesn't feel the presence of nature itself, there's something wrong with that person. Definitely. The way I feel, I think the thing that held me back in Hawaii is Waipio. If it wasn't for Waipio, I would have been gone. Maybe not to another state, maybe to Honolulu. Looking for better place to work and all of that. But it was because of the valley. Not only Waipio. The things that I grew up with. Going into Waimanu, Honopue, Honokane, Honokea and all that. And doing hunting and fishing and all that. And I hate to see this valley spoiled. I'm a nature boy. And I just love it.

I can't stand the city. Give me the city for two nights. And that's it. They can keep it. If somebody would tell me to go Hilo, go to a nightclub....I drink, as far as that, I drink. A lot of people know I drink. To go to a nightclub in Hilo. I would rather pick up a case of beer and go down to Waipio. I always mention Waipio. Really, I love Waipio. I rather grab a case of beer and go down to Waipio and drink. And have a nice time in Waipio than in a nightclub. Really. Even if I had to spend \$100 in Waipio, I rather spend it in Waipio than spend it in a nightclub. Really.

My wife, she loves Waipio. She talk like heck, you know. I don't blame her, she's tired of raising taro. But it's in her blood. She always says, "Oh, give up, give up."

Sometimes I tell her, "Okay, we going give up."

Then she would say, "Yeah, but poho. Of all the hard work, now we going give up?" See, I know it's in her blood. She cannot. But she loves the lights. She always says she loves the lights. She loves to go Honolulu. All right, deep down in her heart, she wants to see those things. But it won't last long. I know she can take it for a month. Maybe two. But past two months, believe me, her heart and her mind and her inner most feelings will be back in Kukuihaele and the valley; really!

Because she's always told me, "Because you, that's why I get back in the taro patch." It's not that. It's not because of me. Because I asked her before we went into taro patching, if she wanted to go back. She told me, "Yeah. Might as well." Because we were having hard times in the 1950's. I just bought my place. And she told me, "Okay then, we go try." So when she told me for try, I never stop. I figure, once you have your foot in the door, no sense let it go out. Might as well push your way right through.

VL: I forgot about this earlier. Can you tell us how you became a minister?

RT: Well, I was taken ill. Well, I was brought up in a spiritual family. My grandmother was doing a lot of church work. My

grandfather was against church. He was a real heathen when he was young. He was never a spiritual person. And being with my grandmother and my grandfather and my family, my whole family, my aunties and uncles, they were all spiritual people. Except my grandfather. And my mother, she was spiritual. So then, we used to go to Sunday Schools. And as we grew up, my grandmother passed away. But those things were implanted within me. Like, it's implanted in everybody. Some people really take a hold of it, and some people don't. Well, I didn't know I really took a hold of it. As I grew up, I found that I was being fed well, spiritually. I'd ask for things, I'd get it sometimes. Sometimes, I don't get it. But if you don't get it, well, sooner or later you'll get it somehow. Then, after my grandma passed away, and one of my uncles passed away--I think it was about a year or so after. He was the youngest one, about 18 years old.

Then my grandfather began to change his ways. Then he became the spiritual one in the family. Then he started to drag me into church. And I used to stray away. But when I met my wife, when I went school with my wife, my wife being a minister's daughter, she had to come to church every Sunday. So, in order to see my wife, I had come to church. And everything would be blank. They could be preaching on the pulpit, but I couldn't hear anything. But my eyes was on my wife.

Then, going on like that. Then my father-in-law folks used to invite me to the house. Then I go over. And after we got married, I continue on going to church. And then laid off and go to church. And our children began getting sick. And my father-in-law, he was a minister so we would call on him for the healing by prayer. He was that type. And he could pray and he would really heal sicknesses. I see him do lot of miracles. And there was a, well, we used to call him grandpa. John Simeona. Iaone Simeona. We used to call him Tutu Iaone. When I was young, he really introduced me to....now I'm going back again. He really introduced me to church. Because he was always coming to our house. See, my middle name is Iosua. And he's the one that gave me my name Iosua. And he always told my folks that I was the son of, not a son of God, I was going to be a son of a preacher, or something of that sort. Or a preacher or something.

So I didn't take heed to that. So he used to always come and call me by my Hawaiian name, "Iosua, pehea oe?" That's mean, "Iosua, how are you?"

So I'd say, "Okay."

And one time, I got this terrible headache. Oh, this headache was terrible, migraine headache. I was young. So he came and he prayed. And the headache went away. And then I was stricken with infantile paralysis. My left side, I couldn't move. They had to carry me. I was just stuck.

And there were three cases of infantile paralysis that I know of. There was myself, one Japanese boy down here, the road. And the Chong boy. Harry Chong, Junior. He lives in Kamuela. And his father was a minister. And the old man Simeona, he was the one that went into fasting with my grandmother and some of the other ministers like my father-in-law. He wasn't my father-in-law then. They went into prayer and fasting and everything. See, they used to carry me from the bed to the bathroom and back and out and wherever. So finally, one day, I moved my legs. And that was a good sign. And my legs were small. My legs was just bones, skin and bones one side. My arms was skin and bone on one side. Then he told me, "You going to be perfect, you going be normal. A normal boy." And sure enough, thank God, I'm normal, there's nothing wrong with my body, everybody is the same. But the other two, they walk with a limp. And their legs are small. And the hands are funny. But they work. Yeah.

And then, after we got married, I was stricken with a back ailment. I couldn't move. Yeah, we had Ellaham already, our oldest son. I was living with my father-in-law. And my wife had to move me off the bed. And I'd sit down on the bed and then stand up and she'd have to help me. I went to all kind of doctors. So, one day, the Bishop, he was Reverend Edward Ayau at that time. He came into Hilo and he told me, "You go to Hilo." Then I went to Hilo, we slept in the church. And they fasted. I slept right in the booth, beside the pulpit. And then he told me, if you had a dream, in the morning, to tell him the dream. But I didn't have a dream, that morning when we woke up. But his wife had the dream. His wife had the dream that, I forgot what was the dream. Anyway, the interpretation of the dream was that they supposed to have ordained me as an assistant minister. In my 20's. And I didn't want. But they told me, "That's the only way you can stand and walk. That's the only way."

So I came home, after we had the Sunday School services and everything. We came back at home, we were living with my father-in-law. And it went away. So we moved out and it was all right. And then it came back again. Then, the Bishop told me, "I told you, you supposed to be ordained as assistant minister."

I told 'em, "I cannot. Too young. Still in my 20's."

He told me, "I'm sorry. But when the Lord wants you, and if He needs you, you got to go."

So I told him, "I don't know."

END OF SIDE TWO

SIDE THREE [Tape No. 4-38-2-78]

RT: So I told him, "I really don't know."

Then he told me, "Well, that's all right. God will show."

Then he went back to Honolulu. And then it happened again. At that time, I was living in the house that we living now. That was in 1958 or 1959. And it happened again. Oh, I got sick, sick, sick. Then, he called me up from Honolulu. He told me, "You sick."

I told 'em, "Yeah, I am."

"Okay, you go to Hilo, you catch the Aloha Airlines flight. Your way is paid already. Everything is set. You just go to Hilo, catch that flight in, and you come down on Thanksgiving Day."

I went into Hilo. My wife took me into Hilo. I flew down all by myself. I flew down on Aloha Airlines that evening. I got down that evening. And Sunday after Thanksgiving, I was ordained assistant minister. And everything went away. It didn't go away at that time. Gradually, you know, gradually it went away.

And then, Joy Kauhi was an evangelist. And I was the assistant minister when my father-in-law passed away. My father-in-law died in 1962. And, after he passed away, I was wondering, "Gees, I wonder if I going to be the minister? I still young yet, he's 62." That was in 1962. After he passed away and everything, they came up. The Bishop came up and the rest of the ministers from the churches around the islands. They all came up. And we had a meeting in church.

They said, "Well, Joy Kauhi is going to be made the assistant minister. And Roy will be upgraded to minister."

Man, I fought them. I said, "No, I cannot." I even cried, you know. I told 'em, "I cannot. I'm not ready. I'm not ready." Because an assistant minister and a minister are two different....you know, once you are a minister, then all things are aside. An assistant minister, it's all right yet. You can still be doing your thing. But once you become a minister, then you really dedicated. Wholeheartedly. Your life is really dedicated. So anyway, I told the Bishop, "No. I'm not going to be."

He said, "Well, I'm sorry. You're going to be. That's the only way."

I said, "No, you cannot force me. You cannot force me."

"Anyway, tonight we go fasting. We don't eat. We go in prayer. And the one who comes to church on Sunday...." Naturally, I come

to church on Sunday too. "The one who is in church on Sunday will be the minister."

You know, I went home that night, I felt sick. Four o'clock in the morning, the Bishop had to come down to my house and pray for me. Because I couldn't stand the pain. I had a pain in my lower back. And the doctors said it was my bladder. And they rushed me all the way to Honokaa Hospital. I screamed all the way, I woke up the whole hospital. Just screaming in pain. This is God's truth. I ended up in the hospital, they said was gall stone passing through. That's what the doctor said. He give me medication. And I was out like a light. In fact, when I got in the hospital, I yelled for morphine. And they thought I was a drug addict. But I knew morphine would take away the pain fast. So anyway, I don't know what prescription they gave. Anyway, I got two shots, one in my arm and one in my back-side. And I went out like a light again. And I never showed up in church, my wife never showed up in church because I was lying down in the hospital bed and she was there too. And that was God's wish, that I did not become a minister at that time.

And Joy Kauhi came to church and I was not in the church. And he was ordained the minister of this church here [Ka Hale Hoano O Ierusalem Hou]. And I was his assistant until now. See how God works in a mysterious way? Even my wife can vouch for that. Everybody who knows, that saw that thing happen. Even the minister himself, Joy Kauhi, he knows that. And he didn't want, but he was the one that was chosen. So up till today, I'm still the assistant minister. But Joy hardly comes over because he lives way up in Pahoa or Nanawale. Hawaiian Beaches anyway, in that area. And he comes out every so often.

So eventually, when the Lord needs me as a minister, well, I cannot refuse. Unless something happens along the way. And somebody else be the minister, I still be the assistant. It's going to be that way.

VL: Now, the name of the main church....

RT: King of Kings, Lord of Lords.

VL: And your branch?

RT: Our branch is under the King of Kings, Lord of Lords. But the church name is actually The House of the New Jerusalem. And it's in Hawaiian, it's Ka Hale Hoano O Ierusalem Hou. And that's a tongue twister.

Under the denomination name, The King of Kings, in Hawaiian it's Ke Alii O Na Alii A Me Ka Haku O Na Haku. King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, in English. That's the name of the denomination.

VL: Do you have anything else that you want to say about Waipio, or your life, or taro, or anything?

RT: Well, no. I think I out-talk myself already.

No, as far as Waipio, like I say earlier, I would like to have Waipio stay as it is, in all it's beauty. And, as far as taro, I would like to make another comment for those who going read these books.

For those who have moved out of Waipio, if they have their younger children that want to come back into Waipio--and most, lot of them, own land in Waipio yet--instead of selling their land, let their children come back to Waipio. And let 'em know what life is really like. At least grow one taro patch of taro. Even if it rots away, let 'em grow one patch of taro. Or go work for somebody for a while. And see how their family were brought up. Even if it's their grandchildren or great-grandchildren, let 'em come back. That's the way I feel.

Even, like I say, even Matthew [grandson]. When he grows up, he's going to have his chance. Whether he's going to be really working or not, but he's going to know what taro is like. And probably, his children. Because, I know for sure, Ellaham will put his grandchildren in the taro patch. I know. Even if they don't have the land in the valley, he's going to do it. Because, hopefully, he can purchase a piece of land and give it to the kids. And that's what I looking forward to, in the valley. Get a piece of land of my own. It doesn't have to be big. Even one acre is enough. What I'm trying to do is to get the Bishop Museum land that I'm leasing now. If they're going to sell it, I'm going to buy.

VL: You lease how much now?

RT: I have, actually, seven acres in lease. But I have just about four acres in taro. Because, the rest, well, you have the banks and the diversion ditches and all of that. So actually in taro, I have 4-1/2 acres.

VL: Would you like to expand?

RT: The way taro is now, getting rotten and all that, I wouldn't like to expand. But if, in time, if it gets to a point where the taro is good like we used to raise 'em before, oh yeah. I would like to have another, let's say, I would like to have another four acres in taro. Because, hopefully, I'll be retiring in another 10 years. And, even if we have just about five taro patches, I plan to still continue on raising taro. I know my wife's going to give up, she said she's going to give up. But, like I say earlier, I doubt it. Because wherever I go, she follow, wherever she goes, I go. (Laughs)

END OF INTERVIEW

WAIPI'O: MĀNO WAI

AN ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Volume II

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**ETHNIC STUDIES PROGRAM
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