

Finding Aid

to

Valentine Ako Oral Interviews

1996-2004

Kauai Historical Society

Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii

MS 92

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Valentine Ako Oral Interviews

Extent: 1 box of 8 file folders

Abstract:

This manuscript consists primarily of oral interviews of Valentine Ako which were conducted for specific projects such as, a Fisheries Project, Alii Highway Realignment, Wailua Archaeological project, Sustainable Resources, and the Coco Palms Resort. Mr. Ako recalls Hawaiian traditions and knowledge that pertain to fish behavior, fishing, and the preparation of fish in Hawaii and in the Pacific region. The most detailed information is about fishing in Kona and Kauai. In addition, he recalls many families who lived in Holualoa during his childhood and families that lived in Kauai particularly those who engaged in fishing.

History:

Valentine Kalaniho`okaha Ako was born in Kona in 1926. He was raised in Holualoa and Kailua, Kona. He was from a family of 15 brothers and sisters and his father was a businessman who died in 1939. The family was well off but Val preferred staying with his grandparents, a simpler way of life. In 1944 he worked for the Inter-island Stevedore Steamship company as a stevedore but then moved on to work for the Military Sea Transport Company which allowed him to travel to the North Western Pacific Islands, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands and other remote islands. After 9 years he became a Captain. He was drafted into the army in 1950 to serve in the Korean War and was sent to the front lines. In 1952 he was discharged, and then employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (Dept. of the Interior) for a few years. Val met his wife Elizabeth Ka`onohi Johnson in Honolulu and they moved to Kauai to begin their family in 1954. He worked in the pineapple fields but was disappointed with the pay so in 1960 he went overseas to work "down under" in places like Kwajelin, Johnson Island and Wake Island. After returning, he worked in construction for Monroe-Burns and Pacific Construction for 30 years. Val worked on various large projects on Kauai including the Coco Palms Hotel, the Marriott Hotel, the Kauai Surf, and the Waiohai. Throughout his life Val was a devoted fisherman, first as a young man in Kona where he fished from Kiholo to Keauhou extensively, then in Kauai where he and his friend, Barlo Chu, fished the coast from Wainiha to Kalalau, and eventually he gains experience fishing all over the Pacific. During his lifelong journey he met many fishermen and accumulated a body of knowledge both traditional and modern. As a longtime resident of Wailua he was often called upon to share his knowledge of fishing and Hawaiian culture. He died on May 22, 2020.

Acquisition Information: These records came to the historical society on 8/9/2021, deposited by Helen Wong Smith. **Restrictions:** Kepa Maly holds rights to transcription and should be consulted for anything other than personal research use.

Kauai Historical Society Accession Number **2021.021**. Processed in 12/2021 by R. Kincaid.

Scope and Content:

This collection consists of four interviews given by Mr. Ako about his life and activities on Kauai and about fishing on Kauai and the Big Island. There is one transcript of a group discussion that he participated in regarding fishing in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. There are also some letters he received about the Kapaa Bike and Pedestrian Path and Kawaihau Elevated Boardwalk projects. Mr. Ako was knowledgeable about traditional and modern fishing in Hawaii. These papers were received from Mr. Ako.

Please note that Hawaiian diacritical marks have not been used in this finding aid.

Container List

Box Folder

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| 1 | 1 | Valentine K. Ako, Oral History Interviews with Kepa Maly, January 8-10, 1996. Proposed Ali'i Highway Realignment Oral History Study. |
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This interview is about land use, site histories, and fishing on the North Kona community particularly Kahului to Keauhou. According to Mr. Ako the place name of Kaupulehu known today was Kaulupulehu in the past. Mr. Ako is from Mahaiula. He harvested limu pahee, manini, nahumanini (piaea) near his home. He provides an explanation of koa vs kuuna fishing grounds and the use of punawai. The area of Kaulupulehu was noted for kala, puala, manini, palani, pualum uu and upapalu. They fished with paka (bait sinkers) for opelu. He relates story that Kalaemano was the house of niuhi where fishermen carried ipus to distract the shark. Salt "bowls" were located near the ocean. Ala stones were used for stone path and poi pounders. Some laau lapaau and laau kahea treatments are mentioned.

Mr. Ako recalls that Kahului has a heiau for weke. Fishing for ulaula, opakapaka, and ukikiki took place nearby. A type of fishing, ka elemakule, was used. Hee fishing by Kanes (family). Pelekanes (family) fished in Pupu a. At Pahoehoe an oio fishing site was nearby. Kaiwi point blowholes were destroyed by the plantation. Hawaiian practices took place at Mahai ula.

He remembers using akulikuli kai as pale or halii for imus. Ako spent some years growing up in Holualoa and Kailua. He mentions Palakiko Kamaka as a fisherman and weatherman and Akuiwa Lisui as a deepsea fisherman for opakapaka, ehu, ukikiki and strange fish. He used the kuukaula fishing method known today as palu ahi or make dog. Types of fish caught were opelu, paouou, and humuhumu. A Filipino fisherman, Catalino Palacat, used opae lolo as bait for humuhumu. The cotton factory was owned by Ashizawa family and Mr. Kakazu made charcoal. Hulihee Palace, had a pond for mullet and a connection to the Maoris of New Zealand. Hattie Hart was a well-known fisherwoman. The Kanoholani family is his mother's family. Other families in the area, the Aalona family and the Keawekamalinui family. Many families, migrated to Honolulu

and Hilo during the Depression. He speaks of fishing on Po Kane nights (moonless nights).

Ako describes using ala ala to catch manini, collecting limu kohu, lipoa, pilikoa (okole), loli pua and in, sharing food, and food preparation safety. Some of the family names in Holualoa were Kahulamu, Kailikini, Komomua, Waiaha, Spencer, Liftees, Whitmarshes, Keawe, Pelekane, Kamalu, Ako, Kane, Nahale, Ahuna, Thompson, and Alapai. He mentions dynamite fishing, family fishing areas, and fishing in Kaloko for turtles. Makaeo was an opae ula fishing area and a canoe landing. In the past a makaha for fish ponds was built of ohia. Fishing areas are koa where families trained fish. Maunupau fisherman used kuula. Ako's family had old olona nets. Kupunas in Kailua were Punilei, Kamaka, and Mano (Gilbertese) and Sheriff Lakalo or Lazaro (Gilbertese). Kipi Waahila found the first Kona crab; Ernest Pua, Nakamura and Picalo Kaninau also caught Kona crab. He discusses, the Kuakini wall, Laniakea (Thurston Cave), Judd Trail, and ala stones that mark trails and relates the destruction of the blowholes by the Kona Sugar Company.

In the Kahului area Ako describes the Weke Heiau, growing watermelons, and a fresh water well. In Puapuaa, he mentions the Kona Echo and cooking leho (cowrie). In Holualoa he covers hula ili, kumu hula William Keliiaimoku. Kamalu, Hadashi, Yamanaka and Hoopale families. Of Pahoehe he speaks of hee fishing and remembers Frank Lithum who built koa furniture. Near Kamo Point, anae was found in a punawai. In Kahuluu, the Thomson, Ahuna and Pea families lived. Nearby was a pond with sacrificial stone and petroglyphs ulu kou. The Alapai family lived beyond the pond. Around Kailua town there was the Mookini Heiau, pipi chute, Hackfield building. Kailua coffee mill workings, sisal mill, and saw mill. Living near Palani Road were the Pauole, Kealoha, Hart, Spinney, Kaaikala, Springer, Pilipo's father, Yamanaka, and Kailiwai families. Ako comments about development in Kailua. He mentions the fish peddlers, Akona, Julian Akao, and Homer Sakaria. He also discusses the original roads for Alii Drive, Kuakini, and Hualalai.

Also includes the release form:

- Proposed Ali'i Highway Realignment Oral History Study Personal Release of Interview Records

- 2 KUHI 3 Wailua, Interview with Valentine Ako, Wailua, Kauai, January 28, 2003. Cultural Surveys Hawaii, Inc. Representative is listed as the interviewer and Valentine Ako is the interviewee.

This interview is about the geographic area of Wailua, Kauai. Mr. Ako begins by discussing his family and how he cared for them. He talks about how he met wife and how they moved to Kauai. He purchased land in Kauai; worked in the pineapple fields and later went to Kwajelin, Johnson Island Wake to work. He

relates stories about Filipinos on Wake Is., cooking kalua pig, dog, iloko, na`au pua`a, and kauyuk. He lived in Wailua Houselots with neighbors, Ngao, Aiu, Ki`ilau, Tanaka, Morgan, Burgess, Baptiste, Yoshida, Takashima, and Nakamura. Mr. Ako explains how Hale`ilio road was named, about the loi flooding with he`e, and building Wailua Bridge. He relates the story of the mo`o in Wailua river that belongs to Deborah Kapule and a mo`o at Ulukanu Stream in Pila`a adjacent to Jimmy Pflueger's property. Ako helped build the foundation to Coco Palms Hotel in 1978-9 and was in charge of graves and reburials by Grace Guslander. They found a huge pupu (helmet shell) on the property that may have been used by the head kilo for Wailua to tell everyone that akule was coming into the bay. Some items he harvested in Kauai were Kalapaki's wawae`iole, limu kohu, kumukumu and lipoa in Wailua River. Other limu that he found on Kauai were limu kala, limu pahe`e, llimu lu`au, limu pe`ep`e, and limu huluhuluwaena. He describes the real hukilau (with ti leave) vs Ka`upena (with net). He recalls that Tso Young was the last fisherman in Wailua but other fishermen were Walter Smith, Apana, and Andrew Lovell.

3 Valentine Ako, February 14, 2003 (Fisheries), [Kepa Maly, Interviewer].

This interview covers Mr. Ako's history from his youth to his later years as an experienced fisherman. He begins his account by mentioning his friend Barlo Chu (of the Hailama family) who was his fishing and diving partner on Kauai. They fished from Wainiha to Kee and Kalalau including Hanakapiai, Hanakoa, and Honopu. At Kalalau river mouth he mentions catching hinana, upena and oopu, opihi (yellow and black) and pupu near Hanakapiai, lobsters in Hanakoa, and pipi (ahi) in Kalalau brought in by the Robinsons. He mentions the hermit of Kalalau, Bernard Wheatley, who was from the Virgin Islands. Ako fished for nenu and moi and recalls Hanohano Pa as a wellknown fisherman. Other fish he caught were manini and kala near Maniniholo. The Kinney family received Haena area from the king but later, the Haena Hui was created. Kinney had many children. His son Arthur was chemist for McBryde & the Hawaiian Home Lands manager and Ernest was a wellknown akule fisherman. Some of the families involved in the Haena Hui were Hailamas, Makas and Mahuikis. Ako recalls that Haena was known for ka ala, the large aweoweo, the baby aweoweo is called alalauwa. When huge alalauwa school (millions) comes to Kauai it signals a bad omen. He remembers lobster fishing in Haena and honu fishing in Wailua (a well-known Wailua fisherman was McKinley Kim). He fished for honu at Barber's Point and discusses tumors found on the honu. He mentions firebrands from the pali of Makana. He remembers fishing in Wainiha for kawelea and Henry Gomes as an oio fisherman there. Other fish he caught were nenu, manini, maiko or popolo, paiea or manini or ohua, and crab. He also harvested limu such as huluhuluwaena, limu peepee, limuluau or limupahee, limukohu, and kumukumu. He experienced longline fishing for ahi near Kipukai and other long line catches were ahi (shibi), ono, mahimahi, sword fish, and

maguro (tuna). Maguro was caught by Padillio the head fisherman for Henry Akona in Kona. Ako relates a story about a 4-ton lupe (kite fish) that got snagged which was the mother for the opelu (opelu kuuna) according to Sara Kahalewai. They fished for kinau, mackerel and sardines in Hanalei Bay. In Kilauea he caught walu. Ako discusses the konohiki of various areas; Akana at Wanini, Coney at Nawiliwili, Kelekoma at Ahukini, Allerton at Lawai, and abolishment of konohikis in Kauai by Bill Kanakanui. Some of the modern problems of fishing are discussed such as out-of-state fishermen, fishing buoys, GPS, depth recorder, FADS. Traditional methods such as the koa method of fishing grounds, responsibilities, and conservation are also mentioned. Ako recounts his Fish and Wildlife experience of conducting hydrographic soundings, he speaks about the introduction of taape and tilapia, and hot water [geothermal] sites in Wailua and Nomila.

- 4 Na Moku `Aha (The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands) Oral History/Consultation Interview October 27,2003 with Kapa Maly. The document is marked as a draft and not for distribution.

This interview was conducted to gather information (history, traditions, and values) about Na Moku `Aha, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). The participants are kupunas Louis “Buzzy” Agaard, Valentine and Elizabeth Ako, John Dudoit, Eddie Namakani Kaanaana, E. Kawika Kapahulehua, Walter Kellioekai Paulo. The kamaiina practitioners present were William Aila, Pua Aiu, Isaac Harp, Melody Kapilialoha, Melody Kapilialoha MacKenzie, Bill Puleloa and Kawika Winter. In Honokohauiki the tradition was opelo fishing with kakus. In later years in Maui, hee, ahi, opakapaka, and ulaula koae were caught. In Kealia, Kona and Milolii, they fished for opelu and ahi. One fisherman was involved with the Opelu Project and Kaala Farm. In Milolii the koa system was used for opelu. In Kealia they caught opelu and akule. In Nihoa, Adam’s Bay, Necker, and Shark Bay they found omilu, akule, moi and aholehole. Some went fishing after WWII in North Western Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). They saw Russian trawlers and Taiwan fishermen. The Western Pacific Fishermen’s Management Council (Secretary of Commerce) established in 1976. Their studies showed the collapse of the sea-mount fishery, black lipped pearl oyster fishery and lobster fishery in northern atolls due to lack of nutrients. Currents, counter currents, planktonic mass contributes to cycle of fertilization. Monk seals and sea turtles were found in the NWHI. Some fishermen speak of puuhonua and kapu for certain NWHI. Moku Manamana an island where Niihauans fished (possibly Nihoa). Opini, wana, haukeuke, auma and ulua were caught there. In a typical trip, they would take on provisions in Kalalau. Captain Cook reported Hawaiians at Kure in 1779. One fisherman reports fish spawning in Adam’s Bay or Shark Bay. Types of fish found there are maiii, maninin, uhu, weke lobster, opihi, haukeuke, wana, crab, puhi. Ulua fishing went down and never came back. On the Island of Kaula some harvested

bird eggs. One man describes mano as his aumakua and kiai at Kaula, named Kuhaimoana. Possibly Moku Manamana could be French Frigate Shoals. NWHI or Line Islands fishing could have been training for young men. One member remembers fishing at Honomalino with nets, another remembers akule fishing on Molokai, also kala and enenu. In Kona the head akule man was Thomas Maunupau. Koa canoes used for catching particular fish ilike aku, opelu, ahi, and haiku. There are fishing kapus in the Marquesas and Samoa. There were seasons for fishing and death for kapu breakers. What would you fish for in NWHI? Some fishermen respond with moi, aholehole, wana, opihi, haukeuke, ulua, aama, and papaiaama. Iao was used as bait fish for aku. opelu, lobster, and puhi. Old stories mention eating birds and using bones to tattoo; eating Kolea and quails (manu papale); turtles and loli. Honu were used to clean ponds. Others mention a Waikiki koa and raising moi in cages. NWHI is ceded lands. It is important to protect NWHI as spawning ground that benefits main islands. Also included in this folder:

- November 10, 2003 Letter to Kupuna Val and Elizabeth Ako from Kumu Pono Associates, Kapa Maly, Cultural Historian & Resources Specialist. This letter asks Mr. and Mrs. Ako to review the transcript of the Oct. 27th meeting for corrections.
- November 17, 2003 Meeting Agenda for Subsistence Fishing Discussion Group, Convened by Sustainable Resources Group Int'l, Inc. November 17, 2003 Honolulu International Airport Conference Room. The agenda includes a list of Meeting Participants.

- 5 WAIL 11 Coco Palms Resort, Val Ako, 8:00 am April 29, 2004, Coco Palms Resort Interview, April 24, 2004. This is a Cultural Surveys Hawaii interview for the Coco Palms Resort Project. AM is the interviewer.

Mr. Ako provides a brief timeline of his move from Holualoa, Kona, Hawaii; his time as a merchant seaman; his enlistment in the US Army; and how he eventually settled on Kauai. He speaks of working for Monroe Burns, a construction company that built the second and third increment of the Coco Palms Hotel. They discovered burials which were disinterred and reinterred elsewhere on the property. He was appointed by Grace Guslander to oversee the burials. Ako goes on to speak of burials in general and those in Kona on Red Hill. He also mentions a heiau at the Waiohai Hotel property and the impact of Hurricane Iwa later on. The Shell restaurant was located near Coco Palm, it was formerly a clinic and Dr. Paterson was the original owner. The original owners of the Coco Palms were the Tams, Williams, Hills, then Guslander. Ako mentions rice being grown in Wailua by pakes (Chinese) who used flumes. He discusses fishing in Wailua to Pilaa and sharing values with his grandchildren. On the Big Island he dove for limu pahee, limu kohu, limu peepee, and limu lipoa. Ako speaks of family fishing grounds, ko`a, and the bait used to catch opelu. He mentions that there were two fishponds on the Coco Palms property

but they dug them out and made a single pond. Ako discusses heiaus and how they should not be touched.

- 6 January 2, 2015 Letter to Mr. Valentine and Ms. Elizabeth Ako from Ford N. Fuchigami, Director of Transportation, Department of Transportation, State of Hawaii. Subject: National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 Consultation, Kawaihau Elevated Boardwalk, Island of Kauai, District of Kawaihau, Ahupuaa of Kapaa, TMK: (4)4-14:30.

This is a request for consultation and evaluation of the Kawaihau Elevated Boardwalk project.

Received June 14, 2006. Memorandum of Agreement submitted to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation pursuant to 36 CFR 800.6(a) among the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Officer and the County of Kauai, Department of Public Works regarding the Lydgate Park to Kapaa Bike and Pedestrian path Project Kauai, Hawaii.

Accompanying documents are as follows:

- Map: Overview of Kawaihau Spu with View Points
- Map: Section, Lydgate Park to Kapaa Bike/Pedestrian Path, Phase A, Wailua to Kapaa
- Map showing Lydgate Park to Kapaa Bike/Pedestrian Path. Map shows project area and area of potential effect, ahupuaa boundary, traditional cultural property boundary, general area of Wailuanuiahoano, Wailua River and wahi pana.
- Map: Overall Bike/Pedestrian Path Alignment in Phases, Lydgate Park – Kapaa Bike/Pedestrian Path, Phases, C & D.
- Map: Kawaihau Elevated Boardwalk, Lydgate Park – Kapaa Bike/Pedestrian Path, Final Environmental Assessment.
- List: Lydgate to Kapaa Pedestrian Bike Path, Section 106 Consulting Parties.
- 1-12-2004 Letter to Mr. Pat Phung, Project Engineer, US Dept of Transportation, Federal Highways Administration from Peter T. Young, Chairperson and State Historic Preservation Officer. Subj.: National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 Compliance – Historic Preservation Review of a Preliminary Scoping Letter for the Lydgate Park- Kapaa Bike and Pedestrian Path, Lihue and Kawaihau Districts, Kauai Island, TMK: (4) 4&4.
- 7-12-2004 Letter to Mr. Glenn Kimura, Kimura International. From Daniel S. Quinn, State Parks Administrator. Subj: Section 106 Consultation for Lydgate Park to Kapaa bike and Pedestrian Path, Kauai.

- 7 Five pages of typed notes of an interview of Val Ako about fishing. Some of the subjects he discusses are the origins of manini, cooking turtle, a giant he`e, the kolenukuheu, and red-eye kole or kolemakeaona. No date is indicated.

No date: Four pages of written notes presumably an interview of Val Ako because some notes are contained in other documents in this manuscript. No date is indicated.

Three newspaper articles on Valentine Ako:

A lifelong impact, The Garden Island, May 26, 2014.

Living Treasures honored Saturday, The Garden Island, August 1, 2018.

Obituararies for Sunday, July 26, 2020, The Garden Island.