

Tsunami Interview from Moloka'i Island

Speaker: Sam Kalilikane

Year of event: 1946

Location: Pāko'o Harbor, east end of Moloka'i

Age at time of event: 8

Experience: Sam Kalilikane, Sr. was born in 'Ōhi'a on the east side of Moloka'i in 1938. During the 1946 tsunami, he and his father were anchored off shore when the waves came in. He describes how the event affected the people in the area and the damage it caused.

My dad and my oldest brother, and myself. Just three of us. We had a twenty-four footer, flat-bottom boat. So we went out there to pick up the net. What we do, the nets that we lay is, today, is illegal. But we make a big round, you know. And then we make the two wings and one center like and then all the fish go in and go right here. And then next morning we go we just go over here and close up that. And then all the rest we pick it all up. The rest of the nets we pick it all up.

We were out maybe I think, just about quarter mile. It's in east end. Pāko'o Harbor. Anyway, we went out there and then we were going out was nice. And then all of a sudden when we got out there, what you call, the swell started to build up and we was thinking, hey, what was going on? The thing started rolling from outside. We look, oh, that's the first time we ever seen something like that. Just the water just rolling. And the thing is high. Maybe about, I think maybe about six or eight feet. Or maybe even more.

So that thing started to roll all the way up to the shore. Then when the thing comes back out, the water rolls back out, the coral all dry. The coral all sticking out of the water. The water goes out again, you can see only coral sticking out. My father said, he started to talk Hawaiian to me, to us and told us it's kaimimiki. I remember that he said, "kaimimiki." So, I was saying what he's talking about, you know I didn't know what he was talking about. Then he explained to us what he said. He said, "This is tidal wave."

I thought we wouldn't have made it. When I seen them big waves I said, "Oh, my." That's the first time in my life I ever see waves like that. So big and long. Real long and that thing just rolling, rolling. Was spooky, man. Really. So my father said just stay on the boat, and I don't know. My father was—he was praying I guess, yeah. He was praying in Hawaiian I think, I don't know.

So he said not to jump in the water. So we just throw the anchor and stay on the boat and just wait until this thing finish. But the thing lasted for about half an hour. So the thing kept going out, coming in, you know, go out. And when the thing goes out, catch the other one and goes, start rolling, yeah? Real high. I would say maybe about ten feet high. And just coming in. Rolling, right up the shore. And wipe whatever is on the shore, like there was

people over there that had boats on the shore, you know, dry dock, yeah? The water just picks it right out and sweeps it right out. Take it right out with the waves.

You see pigs inside the water going out, you know, the pigpen. There was one piggery kind farmer there. He had a whole lot of pigs, yeah? Oh, the tidal wave went right into his pigpens and when the tidal wave went back out, wiped out all his pigs. Right out in the ocean.

Well when the thing started—stopped rolling, eh? So we said, oh maybe. My father said it's okay to jump in the water. But you know, then I was too scared because I didn't want to jump in the water maybe the thing start rolling and take me out, too. So, my brother and I we said, "No, we not going to jump in the water." But so we stayed on the boat for about half an hour, or so. But my father jumped in the water. My father did, so my father he was in there, so we looked at him, well, we said we going to go in there too, you know what I mean?

We picked up all the nets. And, see, when we went out, see, our net was all surrounded. And we could see all the fish in the net. There was lot of fish in the net but we didn't get nothing because the tidal wave wiped it all out. Well, after that rolling of that water washed everything. Everything gone.

Well we looked on the shore, all the shore in the taro patches, right where we were, right where that, what you call, the Wave Crest Hotel is all that used to be taro patches before. And when the tidal wave got in there, there was nothing because all the boulders that was from the fish ponds, the boulders, you know, that rocks, all went into that taro patch. Yeah, the taro patch was big. Was about, oh, maybe about a quarter acre or maybe even more bigger. Yeah. That was all raised taro, yeah? But after that tidal wave got in they rolled all that, I mean boulders all into that taro patch. So then the people gave up raising taros anymore, eh, because to get all that boulders out is hard time, yeah? Hard to get them and big ones, too. How big, you know, big kind of boulders, my goodness, I cannot believe it's in there.

Yeah, the people that on the east side of Moloka'i, more further to Hālawā, they are the people that hurting the most because all the rubbish, those trees that have the nuts that you can eat those nuts. What's that kamani, eh? You know the kamani tree, well those makes a lot of rubbish, yeah? Those trees, when the tidal wave had broken all them, all those was inside of people's yards. Because there was a lot of people living in Hālawā Valley. Due to the tidal wave, they all had to move out. Not really move out, but you know, the, what you call, it damaged a lot, in there, eh? So that's why little by little everybody moves out.

Lot of damage. Total damage, Yeah. But I still remember that. I can never forget it. That's why people tell about the tidal wave. I said you better be prepared when you in one of them.

