

Interview 1 with Johnny Ah San  
(unrecorded)

5/23/96

P.O. Box 176, Laupahoehoe

born 1907 at Laupahoehoe here  
1933 began work for forestry dept,  
1935 worked for CCC, became "mountain cook" at Mauna Kea camp,  
Mauna Loa camp  
1940 joined Natl. Guard and then army (assocd. w. Col. L.H.Bryan)

worked under Bryan in forestry dept., put in charge of Mauna Kea  
from Piihonua north'

lived here (Laupahoehoe) while working for forestry department

trails and sites:

1) Pohakuloa to Kona trail: road to Kona built by army in 1948 by  
Col. Bryan and Blue Kaawa (engineer); hiked the trail w. Bryan (35  
miles) to Judd Trail; doesn't remember wooden mile markers, only  
stone markers; says an old Hawaiian trail

2) Kaumana trail: walked it with the army boys (mechanized  
cavalry) to show them; was footpath, or could ride a horse

3) Puu `O`o to Keawewai trail:

4) Keawewai to Kahuku trail:

5) Hale Ho`omaha--a place on Kaumana trail, north of Saddle Road  
about at Forest Reserve line, where Hitchcock's used to stop on  
the way up to Puakala; had a pool of water--hole in rock fills up  
with water from bottom, but doesn't overflow-- and a little  
shelter (but not a house); only place with water--he used to  
always drink the water when he checked forest

6) Boogenville--white people camped there; used to start from  
there to go to Puakala & kept horses there acc. Bryan; covered by  
lava flow [not sure what trail was used]

7) Morita camp--Japanee camp, go in to Wailuku R. and go up; they  
used to kill pigs and cows (Shipman's cows) and smoke meat--when  
he was young boy  
    didn't hear of Puerto Rican camp

8) `Umi trail: leads up from Laupahoehoe to Keanakolu, on up to  
Mauna Kea adze quarry

    Maulua trail: has glacial remains [morain], and stream runs  
"uphill" over the morain

9) `Umikoa named after `Umi making canoe

10) before U.S. took over Hawaii, a German Meyers rented Maulua,  
had a butcher shop at laupahoehoe & killed wild cattle from Piha

11) Keanakolu: 3 caves, one supposed to go Hilo, one Kona, one

Hamakua; located above Keanakolu road

12) prisoners used to build Stainback Rd; govt. wanted to connect to Saddle Road, but WW2 stopped the building effort

13) Camp Tarawa: just this side of the Parker ranchhouse; he was stationed w. General Gibson them [at Hilo]; Gen. Gibson and A.C. Carter cooked up the name Kamuela for the P.O. because the army kept getting confused between Waimea here and the one on Kaua`i

14) 1950's he found nene feathers at Pu`u `O`o; geese come there in monring and then fly over to Mauna Loa

Interview 2 with Johnny Ah San 6/20/96

1) correction of first interview notes--Ke ana kolu (3 caves) is mauka of the road, between CCC camp and Ka lua kauka

--Umikoa, ranch named that, but the trees actually were cut in Niupea

2) Germans at Keanakolu--built the log cabin there, orchard, etc.; was during gold rush time, they sold hides and vegs.

3) cooked for CCC for 5 yrs--started at Mauna Kea when building fence there, later at Hualalai building fence, then Mauna Loa building fence

4) Carter had a wagon road to Keanakolu before 1935 but only a horse trail from there on to Humu`ula

allowed CCC to build a car road through Keanakolu so could bring in fenceing supplies, then the boys packed them up on mules  
miserable work

5) use of Pohakuloa:

--Ka`ohe was all leased to Parker before; had an old shack at Pohakuloa (where Mauna Kea cabins now)

He was at Humuula & decided to stay there; warned of ghosts but he didn't believe; got there and couldn't stay because of rats & birds; left on horse in moonlight--scared because sound of hooves on lava sounded like ghosts following, saw puakala and they looked like Pele in black dress w. white hair.

--in 30's the lease came up and Parker outbid by a Portagee; but he lost money on it and gave up

--by 1935 CCC there & built camphouse; area full of goats: after the boys went out to work, he used to shoot goats that came to the tank in back of CCC camp

--army took over during war, then turned into a hunting lodge after the war

--afterward, Pohakuloa was made a bird sanctuary; Yearling from mainland brought nene up there c. 1947 & he helped take care initially

6) Saddle Road above Kaumana:

The old road made a loop toward river ab. 1 1/2 miles above Olaa flume road. That's about where the old koa sawmill was acc. Bryan--covered by 1881 flow. Loop cut off when army improved road.

Original SR followed the old trail, built for use by jeeps. Maybe 50's the army straightened and improved it for use up heavy equipment.

Old road closer to Saddle House at Pu`u `O`o ranch re-aligned at same time.

1) when Shipman took over ranch, contracted Japanese to build fence on the forest boundary (about the time U.S. annexed Hawaii); they camped at Wailuku River ("pocket") and that's how the name Morita Camp came about

they used to take meat of slaughtered cattle down to Hilo, bring back food

later hunter camp called Morita Camp, built just a little below forest line

during the war the fence went down (Shipman didn't have enough workers) and cattle went back and forth between ranch and forest; hunters shot Shipman cattle

after the war he and Kono (worked for ranch) warned the hunters away and broke up their camp

2) besides `Umi trail up from coast, three other trails go up and meet the Mana Road, Humu ula trail (other side of Ka`awali`i gulch), Niupea trail, Kalopa trail

his father a storekeeper at Ookala, told him that Humu`ula trail built by Chinese and Germans (who lived at Keanakolu and built log cabins there); the Chinese used to pack food up and bring salt meat and hides down during time of Gold Rush

3) personal history:

--about 1934 he made first trip to Humu ula--working at Puakala and sneaked across to see the shearing, got lost coming back

--his work for CCC: connected with state forestry (camp on state forestry land) but paid by federal govt.

--while he was in charge of Piihonua forest, lived at Laupahoehoe and checked the upper forest boundary about once a month; rode horse along most of the trail, but had to walk the Puakala section because so swampny; used to stay overnight at Puakala ranch or sometimes at Puu `O`o

4) when CCC starting, he went over to Pohakuloa to check the old waterline and corral there for CCC to use;

--Parker had a line down from the spring to a horse corral near the old house (the one where he tried to sleep overnight, in back of present cabins where old eucalyptus trees are)--but the waterline had broken because it froze and the corral fence was down; Parker lost the lease about 1932 and it went to a Portagee who talked of hunting goats, but went bust; that's why the line froze; they had to let the water run during cold nights so it wouldn't freeze;

--the house at Pohakuloa occupied by Mehrtens first and longest, others later

5) his father's correct name was Leong Sun; called Ah San when he got here