

Interview 1 w. Gilbert Hauanio, Jr.

4/18/2010 by C. Langlas

CL: So Gilbert, were you living in Kalapana when the flow came in in 1990? Were you still living there?

GH: Yes, I was. 1983, I guess, when it all started. And I was around there till we had to move out, cause it was threatening our homes already. We all had to move. And so we were just helping one another move out of the community to... families in the nearby community, yeah?

CL: And where you move then?

GH: I have a piece of property up in Black Sands Subdivision, so I moved my stuff all up there. And then my parents were living, they had another place also in Black Sand. So that's what happened. We all moved up to Black Sands Subdivision.

CL: It wasn't so bad for you then.

GH: No, it's just losing the property down there, and all of the memories. That's the only thing I can say was bad. Cause I was raised... I wasn't born right down there, but I was raised up down there. And like I say, that was my childhood. I liked it down there, and so I never did move far away from it. As you can see, I'm still close by, eh? It's like my roots. Hard to get away from my roots.

CL: When did you build this place here?

GH: I just built this place this year, 2010. Cause I guess it's closer to Kalapana, and then I got county water and electric, all that. It's a lot more convenient for us, instead of up in Black Sand. It's nice up there too, but I had problem with the water situation. Always having to buy water, haul water. And I got tired of doin that. We have this area down here that was set aside for the people of Kalapana that lost their properties, and I decided to start building. So I can live out my life down here in Kalapana. It's not actually in Kalapana, but close by.

CL: How does it feel down here?

GH: It feels great. My wife likes it, and as long as she's happy, I'm happy. It's just great down here. It's almost like being back in Kalapana again. Almost, not quite, but we try to make the best of it.

CL: So what's like being back in Kalapana, and what's not like?

GH: You just don't have the families around you that used to live down there anymore. They all scattered all over the islands. So, that's why it's not quite the same. But, like I say, we gotta try to make the best of it. There's some people tryin to move back onto the 'āina down here. But, I know it's gonna take time, eh, to get that going. Cause like

everything else, always finances in the way. People somehow gotta find some kinda solution to come up and get some finance to build and start all over again, yeah?

But yeah, we're very happy here. I like it here.

CL: Aside from the electricity and the water, is there anything else better about being down here?

GH: Seems like we have better weather down here than probably anywhere else on the island. If it's raining everywhere else, most times it's not raining here. Coming down here, raining probably up the hill, and when you get down here, it's not raining. That's what nice thing about it, the weather is pretty good. We get a fair share of rain—that's good for the 'āina and all the plants, but it's pretty nice. So it reminds me of Kalapana. always nice, sunny weather. People come from all round to enjoy that nice weather, yeah? I see em go by, I know they just cruising by, enjoying the area. That's the way I feel about this place. Nice, beautiful weather.

CL: You go holoholo at all out here?

GH: I go every now and then, right out front. Which is about a ten minute walk or so to the edge of the pali there. But...I usually go holoholo at the market. I guess it's the lazy man's style you could say, but every now and then, well I get relatives come by, they bring me fish, you know, like that. But yeah, you get the fishing resources right there. Just gotta exercise, and take the time to go do it. But I don't work on the island, so I'm always off the island working.

CL: Yeah, so that'd be hard for you. You're only here, what, two days a week?

GH: Yeah, Friday, Saturday. Sunday I leave to go back to Maui and work, yeah? I been flying away a lot in the last five or six years. I used to fly to Kauai for the longest time. So, it's just usually my wife here, and friends visiting her every now and then. But like I said, we been here over a year already. And it's been really nice. We really enjoy it. I just glad we finally built our house—it's not finished year, still workin on it. It's my first legal house, you could say. My house up Black Sand was never legal. That thing was build not to code, and I never did finish my house up there. So this time I'm trying to do it right from the beginning. Get all my paper work together. You know, do things right from the beginning.

(bit omitted)

It takes time. Like anything else it takes time, but if you be patient, and like Hawaiians say ho'omanawanui, then you get things done, yeah.

CL: So you doing the building yourself, yeah?

GH: Actually yeah. Homeowner-builder. I had a carpenter come in and build this for me, but the guy never did a great job. So I gotta get another carpenter here to help me finish the house. I always get somebody here tellin me this is wrong, that is wrong. It's too much, so I never call him back. I just had somebody else come and help me—friend,

relative. They just helped me finish the railings during the past week. And it's good to have family and friends that can come over and help you, or guide you. Cause I'm not a carpenter. I try to be, but then my wife say, no, you gotta get somebody that knows what to do. So, I call somebody else that knows what to do.

CL: So, you must have started 2009, yeah?

GH: I think you are right. I did start just before Christmas I think. I had to go through the holidays without railings, without steps. I climbed up the ladder; I got tired of it. And finally I brought the guy back to do the stairs and then finish the roof. Pretty hard to go up and down the ladder every day for a couple months.

(bit omitted)

CL: Did you ever think about rebuilding at Kalapana after the flow stopped?

GH: I thought about, yeah. Somebody was trying to get me to get my corner surveyed down there. Cause I think the guys place was close to mine, so he thought if we would all get together and then put our money together for a survey, then we can find our 'āina back down there again. But I never followed through. It's still sitting out there. Half-acre acre parcel, under 30 feet of lava.

CL: You close to Ka'aukai's?

GH: Yeah, my property's in front of theirs. I'm next to Peleiholani's, right next. Their lot is here, I'm on the Ka'ū side of them. Just a little half-acre parcel there. But there's so many lot owners right around there. Lalakea was in front of me. Kama was on the side of me, on the Ka'ū side. And they had a big estate. They were tryin to take pieces of our property away from us, and it's only a little half acre. And they were claiming that a certain area was theirs. I don't know if it ever got settled or what, but if I go there I gonna make sure I get my half acre.

CL: They were tryin to take that before the lava flow?

GH: Yeah, exactly. They would come over and start trouble. So happen I would have family over, we'd be partying, drinking, and there you go. Big trouble. Next thing you know, somebody calling the cops. Because they came over and started questioning, and then my cousin started going off because they like trespassing. That thing never ended. It was always something that went on and on, forever. That's the only thing about the old folks, their property... You know, back in the days, they never had things down in black and white. I think it was mostly by word of mouth. This stone wall there, to the coconut tree there, back to the... That's how it was. I think that had some of it on paper, but most of it was by word of mouth. And that is really hard—where somebody thinks they own more than they ought to own, you know, more than their share. They start takin people's land away. I think that's how some of the oldtimers lost some of their property.

CL: So that would be a reason not to [build down there].

GH: Yeah, exactly.

CL: How does it compare here to being back in Kalapana?

GH: It was a community that everybody was so close together, everybody knew one another. And, again, we all got separated after the lava flow. Everybody's scattered all over the land, but slowly they coming back on the 'āina down here, to build. Cause I got Maile right here. And then there's Jessie Kaawaloa, he's takin over his mother's place, Auntie Minnie, and he's starting to build there. And like I said, slowly the people of Kalapana are coming back to build and to try to live the life style that we once had down in Kalapana. But I think it's gonna be a while before we can get this neighborhood really going and up to par, yeah? Right now, I'm the fourth house down here. And then, soon there'll be Floyd Quihano, Poto. He's right next to Maile. And you know Kaulani, she's on the back side. Leroy's place, two-story. Right next to Brenda. But see, if you ask me, Brenda, she's not even build to code, her place. She was the first one living here, because they didn't have no other place to go. To me, I wouldn't call her place as a dwelling, cause it's under our specs. It's supposed to be 800 square feet or bigger. That's in our by-laws. So that wouldn't be accepted as a dwelling. But they've been living like that for many years already.

(bit omitted)

I look at it and the tent over there is bigger than the house, I think it's like a 20 x 30. I started out with a 20 by 40 [tent]. And then I downsized since the house got up I downsized 20 x 20, cause that's just my kitchen right there. Temporary, until I finish my kitchen, and then I don't need that any more. But it's just a small little one-bedroom. Bath, kitchen, living room, and then this big lanai, yeah? To enjoy ourselves looking out. I can't really see the ocean—a little bit—but I don't need to see the ocean. Like I say, this is fine just the way it is.

(bit omitted—talk about interviewing Gilbert Sr. about fishing in the park and ulua fishing)

He was—to me he was more like thrownet man, yeah? And he would do some ulua fishing. Cause we went with him when we were young, me and my brother. We'd always go with him. And then a lotta times he went by himself. Cause you know us young kids, we got side-tracked doing playing. Your younger days. But he'd always come home with a fish or two. And then he'd share with the community. That's was his style—always catch, and always share with the community. It's like when he share, he gets back more, yeah? Cause we used to go as bag boys with him before. And we never had room for all the fish. We hadda go run home, go get one pakini, and fill em up some more. Was right down here, was Wills. You heard about that? He would throw once. Take all the fish out. Throw again. In one place, in one same spot, three times. Over a hundred we had. Aholeholes. Throw net, my dad used to always go there. That was a nice spot over there. In fact it's still there yet, but it kinda changed after the lava. But we used to go there a lot. Hey, I never did see anybody catch one 'uhu in a thrownet but him. This fish was so smart, he outsmarted my dad for the longest time. Then one day, he was so lucky. Unreal.

I was sitting there under the hala tree. Takes a long time. You gotta watch the fish come in and go out with the tide. And then finally that thing came so far in, he went fly his net right on top him. Hoh, I couldn't believe it. I jumped up and went out there and helped him grab it. That thing was huge.

CL: I didn't think 'uhu would come that close.

GH: They used to back in those days. Cause the limu, they come in to feed on the limu, yeah? Usually you catch this spearing. You usually spear this thing. To catch em with a thrownet, wow, that is awesome man. You know what I so bummed about, I never did follow his footsteps in throwing net. So, what I did was, I bought my son a thrownet, so he can do that instead. So he does, he goes and thrownets every now and then. I try to pass on down to my children, so they can learn the culture ways. But ulua fishing, I've never down that on my own. I always went with my dad, or my uncle Kauhi. But he used to do that cowboy style. But he was so mean, man, that's why never used to like to go with him. Cause he would yell at us, scold us. You know, we couldn't like move. We had to just sit there and wait. But, you know how kids, we're impatient and start pointing, and he start getting pissed off. So we never used to like going with them, cause, we would get scoldings. I used to help my dad with the ulua fishing. Pound the eel head, chumming the water for the ulua. The short time that I been with him on those ulua trips, I really enjoyed it. It's really exciting. We was down at the canoe landing, out front. I'd say the cliff is about 60 feet, maybe more. Right by the pine tree. It's still there yet. He brought up a 90 pound ulua. I think my cousin Aku was there. He almost got pushed in the water, cause the fish shaking, eh? fighting it, coming up. That thing almost hit somebody, I think it was my cousin. But we all managed, hold onto each other, help each other out. But that's the first biggest ulua I ever saw. The eye so huge. That thing had so much meat. Unreal. Just shared—took em home, and cut em up, and just shared with all the family.

CL: So Gilbert, what are you hoping for this place?

GH: I'm hoping to see all the families moving back home here. And we're trying to build a community center down here, so that we all can come together as one. Like we used to do down in Kalapana. You know the Harry K. Brown Park, that's what we tryin to do is duplicate a park like that down here. We have a four acre parcel for a park, so eventually I wanta all the families move back here, and just getting together at the park—you know on Sundays or Saturdays we all have pa'ina or something like that, that's what I wanta see down here. Hopefully it happens soon. Like I say, we tryin. It's not easy. Like everything else it takes time, yeah? You gotta fight the legal system and stuff like that. There's always something standing in the way. Always.

CL: I think if you can build your own house it's easier than if you have to get loan, and pay somebody else to build it.

GH: Well, to me, seem like you gotta have the capital to do it. The only way I did it was get some finance, just so I could build this much. It's hard just to get the loan down

here, because not everybody wanta finance anybody out here in the lava zone, eh? The banks think twice before they give you the money. So I decided to build it different way.

CL: So you didn't get a loan.

GH: No. I actually took money outta my retirement plan, from my company. Cause I figure I can at least enjoy some of this money. I can at least enjoy it in my house, some of it, before I go. That's the only way I had to build this house. But then hopefully, I like to see all the families move back down here, and we all could get together at the community center, and just have fun. I know we did it a few times up in Pahoa, and all of a sudden we just stopped doing it. There was a few that they put together, I know Piilani Kaawaloa, she did some.

(bit omitted about Herbert Ka'aukai)

Even like him, I used to envy when I was young. Cause I go to their house, he's patching his net. It was interesting to see stuff like that. I used to even watch my dad do that. Or my grandfather, my dad's father. I used to watch him do that. Fix the net. But we, as young kids, we always was impatient, and we run off and go play with other friends and stuff like that. So we never stayed there and really paid attention, eh, to what he was doin.

CL: I think you probably have to get to a certain age before you start doing stuff like patch net.

GH: Well, I guess when you get like in your twenties maybe, and up. If you get into that hobby [thrownet], then of course you gotta mend your net, eh? Cause guarantee you gonna come out with pukas in em. I guess you just gotta watch where you throw your net, how you pick it up, so you don't tear it up. Cause I used to remember, you could hear him pulling the net and just—ee, ee, ee—tearin the net up. But, see, he fixes his own net, so that's no problem. But we try to hold the catch as much as we could, so we wouldn't lose it, eh? And then take it up on the land as fast as possible. That was something else. I even went with him on some fishing trip down 'Apua side. To me, that was the real fishing experience of my life. Right there. I never saw so much fish in my life. It was unreal. There was fish everywhere. And you know, they would just take what they need. You take some for eat. You know, they would preserve the fish out there. Dry it out on the rocks with Hawaiian salt. And then we'd put it in the burlap bag and bring it back, at the end of the week. We'd stay out there like the whole week. One whole week we'd stay out there. Turtles! Man, I never saw turtles [like that]. Before, we used to eat em. And now it's forbidden. You cannot even touch em. Hoh! the turtle was unreal before. That was one of the food that we used to eat. And that's why I cannot understand why today it's forbidden. Yeah, that was my greatest experience, fishin down there.

I know it's not as plentiful as back then, but, the resources are still there. And we still are able to go out there and do our fishing out there.

(turned recorder off, then started it up again)

...that was down in Kalapana get back together in this community down here. That's my hope that I wanta see for this area. I wanta see it happen real bad.