

Oral History Program

OH-004a

Box # 1

Brigham Young University - Hawaii
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Sid Kamau

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-HAWAII
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
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Sid Kamau

INTERVIEW NO: OH-4a
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INTERVIEWER: Ken Baldrige
SUBJECT(S): Maori Agricultural College

SIDE A

INT It is December 23 and I'm talking to Sid Kamau about his experiences at M.A.C. Now you say your name was the very first one on the list?

PE I was the first one on the list.

(mumbling – not sure if the recorder was on properly, suggested that they start over.)

PE My name was one of the first names on the list of the college, the opening of the college in 1913, the latter part of 1913 up to 1922.

INT Oh yes. Did you stay on then after you – did you graduate from there?

PE No. I didn't graduate. I left there and went to Auckland in 1923. I spent my time with my uncle ???. He had a music shop. I spent my time there.

INT Now this is, I'm not sure I understand these dates. Now you started at 1913 and how many years was that?

PE 1913 to 1921, I think that was the last year I was there.

INT Was that 8 years?

PE Mm hm (yes).

INT Oh. That's right, they had a primary school program there too didn't they.

PE That's right. I was only a weenie boy at the time.

INT Oh yes, so, did you, was that your first schooling?

PE No, we had the church school just further down, right opposite the park, that's where the elders used to come and teach there, the primary children. That was the first school and then from there onto the M.A.C. college.

INT So there was a school before the M.A.C.?

PE Yes. Yes, there was a school there.

INT I see. So was that a primary school then?

PE Primary school, yes. Just under the church in there, now it's ??? teachers.

INT Then after that, the MAC had the first primary program and the secondary.

PE I knew that the primary program was more or less ?? and just at the ordinary college. You had to be in Standard Six before you could go to MAC afterwards.

INT I see, then the primary school, you just had the regular primary school (mumbles) then did you go into the secondary program there at ??

PE Yes, secondary.

INT Uh huh. You must've been pretty excited then, you must've been what? Five or six?

PE I was, no, I was nine, ten.

INT You were ten when you started?

PE That's right. Mm hm (yes).

INT That's right, you said you had gone to the primary school down the road a ways.

PE That's right.

INT Then after 1922, when you left, had you been through the secondary program by then?

PE No, no, I worked in the music store in Auckland and my uncle had the whole floor of the kitchen, so I also taught music there.

INT Oh yes.

PE I was only a wee lad at the time.

INT But when you left in 1922, you must've been about 18, 19?

PE That's right.

INT Now how many years in the secondary level....

PE I would say about three years.

INT OK. Now was your uncle there at MAC at that time?

PE He came to MAC and then after the MAC, after he served his three year period, he went and started his own business at his studio in Auckland.

INT I suppose you attended his classes while you were there at MAC in music?

PE That's right.

INT In fact, he thought you were a pretty good pupil so later, took you to work for him.

PE It's really a complicated story. See my brother left here with my uncle, went to America and my mother died there. So when Wallace left, came back here, he brought back my brother's instruments and he said to me, this is going to be and you have to learn it, where your brother left off, so I did. I took ?? and I really studied music, I really did. I didn't know how to play ball, no games, every opportunity I had, I was practicing different instruments.

INT Well, that's interesting. Now you were living there right at the...

PE Right at the ?? village.

INT The village. Now with MAC, did you board at the school?

PE Not at that school.

INT Not at that school, even though you ?? (mumbles)

PE (mumbles) yes.

INT Now, when the school first started, well, let me ask it this way, was there any additional buildings erected while you were there?

PE No. The whole buildings, dormitories, were all completed. And what little of the other buildings would be the stables and ?? different things like that, but the main dormitories were all built beforehand.

INT Now, who built the buildings?

PE I don't know. The contractors from the town.

INT I see.

PE We didn't have a church fund then, otherwise we would've been, ?? in labor.

INT Who was the first Head Master?

PE Professor Johnson.

INT Johnson.

PE Professor Johnson.

INT Do you remember his first name by any chance?

PE I just can't say right off (pause) John Johnson.

INT John Johnson. I suppose other Head Masters came then...

PE They served their time, three years, every three years and then we'd have a new Head Master.

INT Did (mumbles) after that?

PE Yes, after Johnson we had Harwick(?) then we had Elder Scot and then we, afterwards Elder B. Sharp, that was about the time I left.

INT Oh, yes.

PE ?? Elder Sharp.

INT Yes, I remember George Nepia mentioned Elder Scot and Sharp.

PE (mumbles) Elder Otley was my last teacher at the pa and then he was, he started to teach when the college opened, then he went back to America and then he came back as the Principal.

INT I see, so he was there as a teacher and then later as the principal?

PE That's right.

INT And then even later, as the Mission President.

PE Labor mission, that's right.

INT I know his son was also here on a mission ??.

PE That's right, in '42 (?).

INT Now in the, from the secondary program, were the, did students start straight away in the secondary program when you started there?

PE Yes.

INT The secondary program was operating well?

PE That's right.

INT What were...

(Tape is blank for a few seconds)

PE That's everything because all your meals and the only extra was your uniform.

INT Uh huh. You got to buy your books too I think, didn't you?

PE No, not at first, the books were free.

INT Oh yes.

PE Mostly, mostly. Some of the books that they had to pay for which to the New Zealand standard, we had to pay for those.

INT Uh huh.

PE Majority of the books came from America in the first place.

INT Oh yes. Now were you in that band then that traveled around quite a bit of the country?

PE Yes.

INT What instrument did you play?

PE Clarinet.

INT Clarinet. Were you in the Glee Club also?

PE Yes. I was in everything.

INT Uh huh. I guess they had some fun concerts.

PE Yes, we...

INT Maori concert party in those days too.

PE Yes, that's right. We had a beautiful choir, lovely choir. All boys.

INT Yes, from what I understand, they had a very high rating musically.

PE Yes, yes.

INT Now when you were in the secondary program or perhaps even in the primary, did you have work assignments that you did? Were you assigned to work in the kitchen or on the farm?

PE Yes. That was one of our duties right from the very start. Each student had certain labors that he had to do either before school or after school. But that was more or less compulsory that you do your share.

INT I see. What about, now was this required to pay off your fees or did you have to make money, this was part of your regular assignment and the fees were from something else were they?

PE No, the fees were for all, everything, inclusive. These – it's an agricultural school, and we grew a lot of our own animals and chickens and everything. See, we supported our school itself. We didn't have to get many things from the outside. So part of our labors, to farm your little plot, we had little plots assigned to us to develop the best way you can, and your merits were given according to whether your vegetables were good or, so forth.

INT Uh huh. How many students were there on the average during that period of time, do you remember?

PE Yes, right from the very, very start, we were to full capacity. The New Zealand people were very enthused about the school and we had a waiting list all the time, we couldn't cope with them.

INT Is that right? How many was the school equipped to hold?

PE I think from the first year, first year was a little over 90 and from then on, was about 130.

INT Now, was this primary and secondary, both?

PE That's right.

INT Do you recall how many was in each one of the two?

PE Oh, no, it was mostly secondary. Mostly.

INT Were the fees the same whether it was for primary or for secondary?

PE Same, same, all the same.

INT And the classes...

PE We had, the classes were a little bit different. There were the senior and the junior.

INT But did some of the same teachers teach the primary students for one hour and then another hour they might teach the secondary?

PE I think so. Yes, I think that is quite so.

INT When did you start your secondary? Was that about 1919 or something like that?

PE Yes. I remember distinctly, it was after the big whirl we had the flu epidemic here, 1918. I think it's right about then.

INT Yeah. Was the flu epidemic strike down many of the students at the college?

PE Yes, yes, quite a few, quite a few.

INT And the teachers too, I suppose were...

PE No, I don't think one of the teachers got it bad, no, only the students.

INT Uh huh. Well, then you were there for a long time?

PE Yes.

INT Now do you recall when they discontinued the primary part of it?

PE No, that I wouldn't know.

INT So when you left in 1922, they were still having the primary and secondary both.

PE Yes. It was round about that time I should imagine that it changed to the full stature of a college, high school, the advancement.

INT Well, I think perhaps ask some of the others that there might have...

PE Yes, they might be able to help you a little bit more on that.

INT So, vocationally, it appears that you learned quite a bit about music there while you were at MAC and of course you are still in music today.

PE That is, that is so.

INT So would you say that you learned your vocation?

PE Yes, I learned my vocation at the college.

INT Well, that's lovely. How about your academic training? Do you feel that that has served you well?

PE Yes, yes. Without the college, without my first musical knowledge, I would never have done what I have done now.

INT Right.

PE It's all, I give that credit all to the school.

INT What about your spiritual, moral development?

PE Oh yes. I'm still with the college. We still get together every now and again at the old MAC old boys, celebrate, talk about old times, yes we do.

INT That's excellent.

PE It's been a very, very big thing to us. Now that we've got older now, is to revive the old spirit of the old MAC.

INT Well, that's excellent. That's what I want to do is to help preserve that.

PE We still call ourselves the MAC but there's no more MAC. Hasn't been since 1931, '32?

INT '31

PE But we still uphold the name MAC, we have a football team, MAC, we have MAC softball team, we have that name, Maori Agricultural College, yet there is no such place now. (laughs)

INT Yes, I guess even the ruins are gone now.

PE Yes, everything is gone.

INT I saw the ruins, oh about 1962 I guess, '63 I was over here, saw them then. Now how would you evaluate the impact of MAC on the church in New Zealand?

PE Well, it's the greatest thing I would say for the Maori people and for the few pakehas that we did have that came to the school.

INT There was some pakehas?

PE Oh yes, yes, we had some pakeha boys that wanted to come to the school and they weren't members. I know a lot of them became members after. Didn't need no

encouragement, they saw the truth and in fact, many of the boys, Maori boys, that attended the school weren't members of the church at all.

INT That's what Sid told me about his experience there.

PE That's right. After the first and second year, they just naturally saw everything the right way, they joined the church.

INT I talked to Filiga Nyland's(Sp?) widow, that's what happened to him, he was not a member while he was there, but then about ten years later, I guess he joined. Well, this has been very interesting. Do you recall any other incidents and things that might be good to remember?

PE Not that, see, I spent twenty odd years traveling around. I left New Zealand here (blip in tape) many years I traveled around and the other boys would be able to tell you about that type of the MAC life.

(End of tape.)