

Oral History Program

OH-005b

Box # 1

Brigham Young University - Hawaii
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Tipi Kopua

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-HAWAII
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
Behavioral and Social Sciences Division
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Tipi Kopua

INTERVIEW NO: OH-5b
DATE OF INTERVIEW: December 23, 1971
INTERVIEWER: Ken Baldrige
SUBJECT(S): Maori Agricultural College

INT I'm in the home of Brother and Sister Tipi Kopua, Tokomara Bay, 23 December, 1971. I'm chatting with Brother Kopua about his experience at the Maori Agricultural College.

Brother Kopua, when were you at MAC?

PE First went to the MAC in 1918.

INT 1918. All right, and how long were you there?

PE I was there four years.

INT So you were able to stay around and graduate then were you.

PE I graduated in 1921.

INT 1918 to 1921. Where were you living when you went to MAC? Were you living up here?

PE Yes. I was living here.

INT Living here in Tokomaru Bay.

PE Yes.

INT Did you go down on the boat like some of the others I've heard?

PE Yes, in those days, that's right.

INT So you took the boat to Napier?

PE To Gisborne and then to Napier.

INT Oh yeah. That must've been quite a trip.

PE It was.

INT And then you met at the train station in Hastings, is that...

PE Yes, we were met there by one of the elders, they used to call it, it wasn't the buggy it was a white top in those days. Used to take about four passengers I suppose, two horses.

INT OK. Now were you a member of the church at that time?

PE Yes.

INT Why did you decide to go away to MAC to go to school?

PE Well, actually it was my cousin which is Kaiser Paea's (?) father, we're first cousins. He got me to go to MAC.

INT Was he going there? The cousin?

PE No no. No no. He was here. He was an old man.

INT I see. But he just encouraged you to go.

PE He encouraged me to go.

INT Now when you went, did you go into the secondary program or the primary?

PE I went to the, I started off first year in high school.

INT First year in high school. Did they have the primary school at that time?

PE They did. They did and they had the standard five and standard six I think. I remember well.

INT Someone said that they thought that later the primary program discontinued, but I don't know.

PE I think it was.

INT You think it was?

PE I think it was.

INT But during your time, they had both the primary and secondary. OK. Now what were some of the subjects that you took that you remember?

PE I took up chemistry, astronomy, botany, bookkeeping and accountancy, geometry and maths of course, I suppose algebra and geometry would come under that wouldn't it?

INT Did you have any vocational type courses, woodworking? Farming?

PE Woodworking, yes. Farming, that was part of our training too. Each student had to spend a day on the farm because we had horses, no tractors in those days.

INT Now was the farm work and the various other assignments, were they part of every boy's assignments?

PE Yes, it was. It was.

INT What about you, did you have different assignments?

PE Yes. One week I would be feeding the chickens, and we'd change around every week and then I'd go on looking for jobs that I didn't like much, and then we would spend one day on the farm that somebody else would take care of the next day. Change over every other day.

INT Now the fees at that time, let's see 1918, what were the fees?

PE Thirty two dollars, in other words, sixteen pounds.

INT Sixteen pounds.

PE Sixteen pounds a year.

INT Now at that time, did that cover the books as well as the board and room?

PE No. We had to buy our books.

INT You had to buy your own books?

PE Yes. But that was cheap, sixteen pounds.

INT Sixteen pounds.

PE I think the church subsidized towards the...

INT They must have.

PE Yes. Yes.

INT During the summer, did you pay your fees by working there during the summer, or

PE Some of the boys stayed back and more especially the Samoans and the Tongans. There was no need for them to go back to the islands so they stayed back and worked on the, worked around the college. And they were paid, and they came back home.

INT I see. Now the...who was the Head Master at the time you were there?

PE The first Head Master was Elder Welch.

INT Welch.

PE Welch.

INT W E L...

PE C H, Welch. And after him it was Elder Sharp.

INT Elder Welch was there until when? Do you remember when he left?

PE I think he left when I, when I was in my second year of high school.

INT So that would've been about 1919 some time?

PE Yes.

INT He left and then Elder Sharp...

PE Elder Sharp took over.

INT How many students were there in 1918?

PE I would say there about 80 in my time.

INT Uh huh. Was that same number maintained all four years approximately?

PE Yes, yes, approximately around that figure.

INT Now you were there during the flu epidemic then I guess weren't you?

PE 1918 – flu epidemic.

INT Was that quite a serious blow to the...?

PE It was. It was.

INT Now some of these questions I pretty well have the answers to now, oh, maybe you can give me an idea as to how, approximately how many non Maori students that were there. How many islanders?

PE I would say there, there would be in my time, there would be some where around between 24 and 36, in my time.

INT Now this was out of, how many did you say? 80 altogether?

PE There was 80 students.

INT And these were mixed, Samoans and Tongans?

PE Yes, yes, yes.

INT OK. Now the dormitories of some of these I understand were cubicles some what like we have here at CCNZ, two or three boys in each room.

PE In a room. That's right.

INT And then of course you had the assignment of keeping up your own –

PE That's right. We had to look after our own rooms.

INT And you did your own cooking and everything too.

PE Yes, we did our own cooking, yes. Certain boys assigned each week.

INT Now were there people that were hired professionally to supervise things or was it all done by the elders and the boys themselves? Was there any paid cooks for example?

PE I think there was only one paid old fella then, a man that did the banking.

INT And the maintenance work and all this was all done by the students?

PE Was all done by the students. There was a supervising elder there all the time.

INT I noticed you had a Hawkes Bay rugby jacket on, did you play rugby at the college?

PE Yes. I played in the First XV (Fifteen).

INT Oh yes.

PE Captain of the First XV.

INT Yes. You had some pretty strong teams in those years?

PE Yes, yes, George Nepia, the famous All Black, Louie Paewai he was an All Black, Albert ?? he was a Maori All Black, quite a few of them.

INT That's right, George Nepia was there in 1921 wasn't he?

PE Yes.

INT He was '21, 2 and 3 I think he said as I remember. I talked to him in Masterton the day before yesterday.

PE That's right he's in Levin area.

INT Looking well.

PE He came in and saw me, man I've never seen a man look so pretty.

INT Yes, he does. He looks very good.

PE He's about 67.

INT Uh huh.

PE Just about a year ahead of him but he looks fine.

INT Yes, you wouldn't hardly believe it.

PE Walks straight.

INT Uh huh.

PE And here I am, half crippled (laughs).

INT Did you play other sports?

PE Played a little bit of tennis in college, that was all, football.

INT Now was Elder Mozer(sp?) there while you were there?

PE Yes. I remember he was our coach.

INT George Nepia spoke very highly of him.

PE Yes, yes, not that he knew about rugby, but he saw that we trained.

INT Yes.

PE He was there to chasing it around, he would run with the boys and he would be behind.

INT Yes. George said, first the forwards would go up and then the backs would go up and Elder Mozer, he'd go up with both of them.

PE Yes. He was a good man.

INT Uh huh. What about dramatics? Were you in any dramatic production while you were there?

PE No, no.

INT Concerts, in the band?

PE No, but I'd go in with the quartet singing.

INT They had a Maori concert party?

PE We didn't have any Maori concert party. I think it was, they had the Maori concert party when W... Smith was there, but W.. Smith just finished before I went in 1918.

INT Yeah. Now how do you feel, in your four years there, you graduated, do you feel that the academic training that you got there was high standards that has enabled to take you places in the world?

PE Yes.

INT How about the spiritual and moral training that you received there?

PE Yes, that was one of the main subjects there, theology. Took up the Bible and the Book of Mormon, but a funny thing that every time we studied the Book of Mormon, I seemed to go to sleep on that, on that book, but I read it right through and it certainly changed my mind about it.

INT It some how sunk in whether you were asleep or not.

PE Yes.

INT How about vocationally? Did you learn anything at the college that you later used in your vocation?

PE Yes. Yes.

INT What have you done since you left college by the way?

PE Well, when I left college, I came back home. I did a lot of driving trucks of the county here and of course when the opportunity came from the job that I've been on for about, going on 29 years now, in an office, and that's where the bookkeeping and accountancy came in.

INT Oh yes. Now right now you're with one of the Land Boards?

PE Yeah, with the Maori Incorporations. I'm the secretary out there.

INT So what you learned at the college, definitely did prove to be an asset to you.

PE ?? ...that's grand.

INT Now what do feel that the impact has been of the MAC on the development of the church in New Zealand?

PE Well, I think it was, the MAC was a great boostment. I mean every time we went to town into Hastings daily, the business people were very good to us and I think the boys, too, themselves, they behaved very well as students.

INT The business people in Hastings would've liked to ...

PE (mumbles) go there again.

INT Oh yes. Well that's pretty good.

PE They did consider, they did consider the old MAC, they had a good look around and then they went to Tirau, looked around there, and even came to Gisborne. Even right in Auckland when President Otley was the President of the mission. Until President Gordon C. Young came out, and then he came to Hamilton away there, out to Tuhikurau, Tuhi around there, and he found the site.

INT That's good. What, if you were to try and pick out one or two highlights of your four years there, what would they be? Incidents that stand out in your mind?

PE (long pause) Well, the association I have with the other students, didn't matter whether they were islanders or any part of New Zealand, we seemed to get along well together. There was no discrimination and I had a lot of fun, had a lot of fights too but it was good, clean fighting. And we had a very strict punishment there, if we didn't do our job properly, well, the punishment was that you had to go, had to miss one meal, that was the punishment. They didn't use the iron rod.

INT Was that pretty effective?

PE It was. I tell you, you didn't want to miss the second meal. I think it was very effective.

INT So there were no...you say there were fights but there wasn't power versus Napuhi(?) or anything tribal anything just one boy against another boy type of thing?

PE Yes. But we never harbored against each other (mumbles). And of course, even the Elders were very cooperative.

INT Do you remember any of the teachers that you had?

PE Yes.

INT Names?

PE Elder Cook, he was a fine man. And I met one of his grandson's just returned back home.

INT Mmm. Was he a missionary here, his grandson?

PE Yes. Yes from Dakota. He was telling me and we were talking about the MAC and he said Oh, I had a grandpa there, Elder Cook. I said, well, he was one of my teachers.

INT Do you remember his first name?

PE I just can't remember, but he was a pretty big elder.

INT What did these elders do during the summer? Did they go out and do missionary work or did they stay back?

PE They stayed and worked on the farm. We had a 200 acre farm, the MAC.

(mumbling – woman's voice)President Anderson.

PE Oh yes, that was one of my teachers, President Anderson, he was President of the mission. Elder Scott and Jorgenson.

INT He was a coach too wasn't he?

PE Yes, Jorgenson.

INT Elder Mozer.

PE That's right, I remember a time when he brought out his American football gear, you know.

INT Did you play? George Nepia was telling me about the time when you fellas in the First XV I guess were going to have a go with the faculty and after a while started chucking off the head gear, chucking off the pads, they reckon they couldn't run with all the equipment.

PE We couldn't. We couldn't. But Elder Jorgenson showed us how to play those kinds of togs no trouble, he just come right in. But whether it was a bit, you know...

INT Do you feel that some of the American tackling, you felt that added to your rugby skills?

PE Yes. Yes, the tackling was there all right and deadly.

INT That's what Mr. Nepia seemed to think. Just a few little things like that helped a lot.

PE Oh yes. Too many of us were going too high for the man, of course Elder Mozer said, no,no, no, go down low, where the ankles are. You know, you bring him down, catch him down there, not up here.

INT Yeah, you can't bring down a big man up high.

PE No.

INT You knock him down...

PE You knock him down below, yeah.

INT Well, I'm glad to hear that. Well, I think that pretty well takes care of it. Can you think of anything that he has, heard him talk about over the years that might help Sister Kopua?

Wife One thing I'd like to say, every time I visited the college, the boys rooms were absolutely spotless, the drawers, you could see your face in it. I've never seen any other schools to compare with it down at MAC.

INT When did you go down there?

Wife We used to go down there for ??

INT Oh yes. This was later, this was after you were married.

PE '29, President Ballard.

Wife Yes, when Sid Crawford was there.

INT Oh yes.

PE President Ballack was the president.

Wife President Ballard was the president of the college at that time.

INT I didn't realize that the ?? was printed there.

PE Te Kuri (?) was printed there at the college.

INT At that time. They had the hotels(?) there too.

Wife Yes, they had the Rita's(?) there.

INT Was this something was there just about every year? While the MAC was running?

PE No, one time they would have it there and from there it would come to Nuhara.

INT I know, there were a lot of them there at Nuhaka.

PE Yes. Just between those two places.

INT I see. So they kind of alternate one year one place, the other the next.

PE Very seldom they would have one way up Ngaruawahia.

INT Oh yeah.

PE We had one in 1938 when George Albert Smith came out, he was still an apostle then, with President Rufus K. Hardy and with President Cowley.

INT And there was one in 1921 wasn't there?

PE 1921 when President David O. McKay came. He came to visit us at the college.

INT Yes.

PE And he took us, an English class.

INT That's right (mumbles) So he taught the class then, did he?

PE He took over.

INT Must've been a thrill.

PE Yes, it was.

INT How long was he there at the college?

PE I would say about two days.

INT Oh, well, that's good. Well, thank you very much, I appreciate the chance of talking with you on this.