

Oral History Program

OH-457

Box #21

Oral History Program

NORM F. THOMPSON JR.

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NORM F. THOMPSON JR.

INTERVIEW NO: OH-457

DATE OF INTERVIEW: February 25, 1998

INTERVIEWER: Coy Edmunds

SUBJECT: Surfing/Da Hui

INTRODUCTION

Norm F. Thompson Jr. was born in Sampedro, California and was sent here to the islands to be raised by his grandparents. He learned how to surf at 6 years old by his father and grandfather. Norm was also the president of the club called "Da Hui" for five years from 1993 to 1997.

In this interview Norm talks about how surfing was like when he was younger and how it has changed since then. He also talks about the origin of "Da Hui" and how it helps out in the community and in keeping the Hawaiian culture alive.

This transcript contains an interview of Norm F. Thompson Jr. He was interviewed by Coy Edmunds on February 25, 1998. Oral History secretaries carried out the various processes: Kekaula Nozaki did the transcribing, Candice Nozaki did the auditing, editing, and completed the final assembly. "[OH-457]" and other such notations tell the reader that an interview of that number has been completed with that individual and is on file in the Oral History collection at BYU-Hawaii.

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Laie, Hawai'i
June 29, 1998

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SIDE A

INT This is my interview with Norm Thompson. And I guess we'll just get it out of the way. First can you please state your name.

NT Norm F. Thompson Jr.

INT And where were you born?

NT I was born in ^{San Pedro} Sampedro, California in 1965. And I was sent home when I was a month old to be raise by my grandparents here in the islands.

INT And so you have been here in the islands most of your life?

NT Pretty much all but one month.

INT Okay, okay and how old are you now?

NT I am thirty-two years old.

INT Okay, basically, the first one I want to ask you is how long you have been surfing for?

NT I have been surfing since I was 6 years old. As far back as I can remember even going in the water. I was raised by the ocean, I was raised very close to nature, learning to appreciate the land, the people, relationships that were formed here.

INT Who was it that actually taught you how to surf or did you learn by yourself, or was it a combination of both?

NT I learned how to body surf from my dad. I learned just love for the ocean from my grandfather and all that the ocean possesses. Basically the surf was just another part of recreation we didn't, we'd start out bodyboarding or skinboarding but we would use whatever plywood we could get and shape it out like a, you know what we would call it, there's parboard and we would use that to basically teach ourselves. Us as kids, you know that was part of our, you know we didn't have Nintendo or anything, so that was part of our recreation.

INT You were saying like do it after school and just kinda or miss school and do it like just something you'd enjoy different?

NT Pretty much yea.

INT Okay, as far as surfing as a sport how do you see it change say over the past ten to fifteen years just here on the island of Oahu and the North Shore?

NT Surfing has definitely taken a toll on surfing both positive and negative whatever you bring money into a sport, it tends to change a lot of the way people look at the sport itself. Surfing for me was a natural recreation, was a natural way to feel free, it was good for the soul, we need to cleanse our soul every day and that's what surfing does for us. But when competitive surfing was introduced it changed a lot of people because money changes a lot of people and with money being involved there's a lot more people looking to go bigger or deeper or trying to out do each other all for money and recognition. Where as way back when we started it wasn't for money at all it was basically just for the soul.

INT Do you remember when the first, I guess, competition or competition for money was introduced?

NT I could remember back in '74, 1974, I was in fourth grade and that's when the Smirnoff competition came, I think it came in '72 but it was okay when it first started because it was something new for everybody but nobody knew how fast it would grow and how big it

would grow and how surfing is an industry all by itself how you can use major networks to advertises its private presents already in industry. But surfing, its I don't know, its not the same as it was before, you know people do it for different reasons.

INT So its more commercialized now and money has corrupted it?

NT Yeah, more, a lot more. Yeah, so to speak.

INT You as a local Hawaiian surfer has been a part of what is the club called, "Da Hui" and I just want to take the interview in another direction now just kind of talk about the club and how you, in a little bit about the history of the club itself and if you could explain maybe like the meaning of the name, the symbols and stuff like that and what the purpose of the club is in order to protect surfing and to keep it in its original, for it's original purpose?

NT Well first of all, it was a club that wasn't officially recognized until 1976 I believe that's when we turned it into a non profit organization. We were recognized as a non profit organization in '76 but the club itself, it's founders have been alive or have been going since of early 60's.

INT And who are some of the original founders?

NT The original founders are old time surfers like Kawika Stan[†], Pops Aikau, Solomon Aikau, Eddie's dad, just old time school boy surfers from the east side.

INT And you aren't doing it for the money?

NT Yeah, yeah. What it was, was how it first came about was when the first contest came here we as young kids would surf and we would surf around Lahina. But all of a sudden one day some foyer comes up to us and says hey get out of the water you know this permits says we can use this place and you guys get out of the water. Well we didn't understand that and we are like wow there's a foyer coming here and telling us get out of our own water. So we went back to our

uncles and our dads and what not and our uncles and our dads had something to say about that you know and I guess that's where "Da Hui" got its first representation of being like a bunch of bad boys or a bunch of gangsters, it wasn't like that, what it was, was a misunderstanding or a misrepresentation.

INT So basically say that the general purpose is to protect the waters for the Hawaiians?

NT Yeah, well the club was officially, like I said recognized in '76 and it was formed to perpetuate the Hawaiian last vow that our forefathers lived, played and participated in to preserve that last vow for our children to grow up in to teach our children all the ways of being good watermen and to over see their safe training to keep public beaches safe and clean for public use, as well as our own use. To educate the younger generation on the ways of survival in our own culture to learn to move with the sea and not against it. We'll teach our children to fish and to see, to look for fish not just to eat fish but to teach how to catch fish and how to prepare food in the ground all those kinds of things that's what we were officially established for.

INT Keep a lot of the traditions and culture alive.

NT Yeah, because there is no real schools besides Punana Leo that actually do that. You know teach the children culture and language and stuff and if we can't get a school to do it you know it's really up to us to teach our own children what was left to us to understand and hopefully we as the people can move forward.

The problem with the whole thing today is that too many Hawaiian people are focused on loss. You know we lost the land, we lost our culture, we lost this we lost that. If we continue to think of the loss that we keep our conscienceness on loss we will only be planting a seed to go lost in the future. But if we can realize what we are doing by thinking of the lost and we can turn that around and start thinking positive. Think of the things that we do have for our children, think of the things we, the resources that we still have for

our children instead of the ones that we lost maybe we can plant a seed of thought in our minds for a better future for our children.

INT Can you kinda explain the name maybe like what the name of the club, the official name, and how it got it's name?

NT Well "Hui O He'e Nalu". "Hui" means a group or a gathering of people. "He'e" is when you use "He'e" alone it means squid or octopus. "Nalu" is wave. But what put it together in a combination "Hui O He'e Nalu" means in regular terms club of the wave sliders but in translation it's a club of the surfers. Our petroglyph is the first petroglyph found of a surfer and the name was given to us by a kahuna on Maui. I don't know his name but I believe it was a kahuna on Maui that gave us the name.

INT Was it one of the oldest petroglyphs ever found?

NT Yeah, that was one of the first petroglyphs found of a Hawaiian surfer, of a surfer.

INT How long have you been president of the club?

NT For five years from '93 to '97.

INT And as president, what were some of your responsibilities or dailys during that time?

NT As president I would oversee a membership of eighteen hundred members statewide. We have chapters on each island. We have various functions throughout the year. Some community service, some just for fun. What we do is every three months we have a beach clean-up and what we do is we start from Waialeale beach which is called Valleyland today and we would clean-up to Backyard which is Backyard Sunset. That would be our first beach clean-up. The second beach clean-up would be from Sunset beach to Ehukai beach park. The third beach clean-up would be Waimea bay and our last beach clean-up would be on the east side in Laie from Temple beach across the Mormon temple to Malaekahana state park. In April we

have, we hold well in March, let me start in March, in March we have what we call an expressive session. What an expressive session consist of is we invite indigenous peoples from Tahiti, from Fiji, from Samoa, New Zealand all over Polynesia as well as the Aborigines, to come out and enjoy a five day surf choraderry type of deal what it is, its nine men in the water surfing for 45 minutes at a time and its not held in competition its held in the spirit of aloha which is just to share that very spirit of the ocean that separates our confidence our lands the most and to appreciate that spirit and have that spirit bring us together through the thing that separates us the most is the ocean. We have been successful in these past few years in holding our expressive session its usually in March and we had visitors from all over Tahiti, from Australia, New Zealand, and as far as Brazil.

Then in April we dye and hide 4,000 eggs four to six thousand eggs for the community children of surrounding communities of Sunset, Laie, Kahuku, Hauula, and Haleiwa. And what we do is we have an Easter Egg Hunt for these communities and the gold egg gets prizes and we get lots of donated prizes from all the surf merchants. The gold egg for each division which is three separate divisions its up to 12 years old, gets a brand new surfboard. Yeah so the kids are really stoked and our motto behind that is no child leaves there with nothing, every child that comes there will leave with something a goodie bag and a balloon, if anything. And that is put together by Terry and April Ahui and they have been doing that for years. In July we have a paddle board race which is I think it's going to be 19th annual this year--in July, United States Paddle board race and that's a three point five mile paddle board race from Sunset to Waimea Bay.

INT Right.

NT And we've had unreal community participation in that. We've had over two hundred and fifty paddlers. It's one of the biggest races in the state and the oldest. And then we end our year with a big luau. And when we throw luaus, we throw luaus like nobody throws luaus. (Laughter) And the kitchen is open till three o'clock in the morning and every just eats and eats and eats and nobody leaves there hungry.

INT Most of these activities have been going on almost as long as the club itself.

NT Yeah, yeah. From what a lot of collaboration, since I've been president, I've turned it around to take away the a, that bad boy image, and I've tried to instill a more responsible image to the club. And how it holds itself and presents itself and just making sure that we want the world to see what we really are and who we really are and not what the magazines or someone else says we are.

INT Or the movies or . . . ? (Laughter)

NT Yeah, exactly.

INT Alright, what do you, by my guess, where do you see surfing and the club itself moving towards in the next few years, like how do you see it working together or like where do you see going in the next few years?

NT No where actually. (Laughter)

INT Where do you see, what future do you see for the club?

NT Da Hui, Da Hui will grow and then we will always love our ocean and we'll always love our place here. But Da Hui has to be really serious about themselves and the club has to really take the business industry that serious and as far as surfing goes, surfing is reaching new heights every single day. You know, everyday someone does something different that no one ever believed that that could be done. But today it's being done. So I believe surfing is going to take off, you know, within the next say two, three years, surfing is just going to reach heights that we've never even imagined. But we'll hold on tight, take care each other, think we'll all be able to have it.

INT Anything else you like say?

NT Go big!

INT Okay (laughter), thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW