

Oral History Program

**OH-462**

**Box #21**

Oral History Program

Samuel Rowland

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**Brigham Young University-Hawaii**  
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**Samuel Rowland**

**INTERVIEW NO:**

*OH 462*

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:**

March 13, 2003

**INTERVIEWER:**

Aleesha Gibby

**SUBJECT:** His Life & Housing in Punalu'u & La'ie Malo'o

## Introduction

My family moved to Hawaii in December of 1996. We met Samuel Rowland and his wife when we arrived at the house. They were very kind and welcoming to us. I had heard stories from my parents that Uncle Sam had to work hard for the houses, but I wanted to know more. I decided to do an interview on Samuel Rowland to get to know this sweet man even more.

Samuel Rowland is a good friend of the family's and is also my family's landlord. I have always been interested in how he and his family obtained the houses that he owns. I was also interested in where he grew up and a little more about his life. Even though I wanted to know more, this is what I focused on: the memories of Samuel Rowland when he was growing up, and how the love for his family sent him away to work for their houses.

In this interview, Uncle Sam tells about how he attained his houses in Punalu'u and La'ie Malo'o. In Punalu'u, there are three houses on the property. We did the interview in the middle house, which is a garage with a little apartment on top. On the left side of the apartment Samuel, jr's house. And on the right is the house that was built first on the property.

Hopefully, this introduction will help you get a sense of what he is talking about and put a picture in your mind as to where the houses are while he talks about them. I hope that the reader will get a sense of where he is coming from and why I was interested in these topics.

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**INT** This is Aleesha Gibby on March 13, 2003, app. 5:30pm and we are at the Rowland's residence in Punaluu, Hawaii. Can You please state your full name?

**SR** My full name is Samuel Nawelo Kekoa Rowland

**INT** That is a beautiful name. Can you tell me what it means?

**SR** I don't know all the meaning of it. (laughs)

**INT** Can you repeat it for me?

**SR** I don't know all the meaning of it.

**INT** No, I mean your name.

**SR** Oh, my name, oh, Samuel Nawelo Kekoa Rowland

**INT** That is cool. Where did you get your name from?

**SR** My mom said that I got my name from my great grand uncle (oh wow) one of my great grand uncle.

**INT** Do you know his name?

**SR** Uh, his name was- they called him Tutu Kekoa, so that's what he goes by. But what his full name I don't know, I don't know.

**INT** Oh, wow. That's awesome. Ok and where were you born?

**SR** I was born in Honolulu (oh yeah?) but what part, I don't know. I think my mom gave birth to me in the tuberculosis hospital. So I was took away from my mom and raised by my aunt. My aunt was only 14 yrs old at that time. My aunt and my grandma took care of me then I got to call my aunt mom, because my real mom passed away two years after. So I was two years old when she passed away. I never did see my mom, my real mom. So I took my aunt as my real mom.

**INT** So was your aunt's last name Rowland?

**SR** No.

**INT** Oh, what was her last name?

**SR** Her last name, maiden name was Woodwind, Emily Woodwind, and then she married John Kapu. (oh) Ok, see, now you know about me.

**INT** Ok, I see.

SR That's how I'm related to Eli.

INT Oh wow, ok, and when were you born?

SR April 4, 1032, uh, yeah, April 4.

INT April 4, yeah, got to remember that. That's soon. So, what are your real parent's names?

SR Daniel James Rowland, and my mom's name is Ellen Iliokalani Woodwind.

INT Do you know where they were from?

SR My father is from Ohio, and my mom is from Honolulu.

INT And what are your aunt and uncles names?

SR John Kapu and Emily Woodwind.

INT What is your real parent's ethnic background?

SR My father was a sergeant, and ROTC instructor at McKinley High School, and my mom was a house wife.

INT Do you know their heritage, their cultural heritage?

SR Uh, my father was, um, Irish or something.

INT So, we can just put it as Caucasian?

SR And my mom is Hawaiian and white, I don't know what kind of white, whether it's Irish or something.

INT So she was Hawaiian/ Caucasian?

SR Yes.

INT It's easier that way (laughs). O, and what about your *hanaied* parents?

SR Uh, my *hanaied* parents; John Kapu was a farmer, plus he worked for a, he was a taro farmer; he had a lot of taro patch. Plus he worked for the City and Council as a truck driver. My mom was a house wife, plus he worked at the Dole pineapple company as a, well she worked her way up from the, what do you call that, from a table worker to a supervisor.

**INT** And what was their cultural heritage?

**SR** John Kapu is pure Hawaiian, and my mom is one quarter Caucasian and three quarters Hawaii.

**INT** Wow, not what is your wife's name?

**SR** Sarah Kelona Aho.

**INT** And where is she from?

**SR:** She's from Kokololio; that's across the park that they call, uh, (Kakela?) oh what is it that they call the park's name? Well, we call it by Kokololio now but we used another name. Um, Kakela. So we used to call that place Laie Maloo, but Laie Maloo is down by Pounders, and my wife is from that area, Kokololio.

**INT** And how did you guys meet?

**SR** I knew her from, well, we were neighbors.

**INT** Oh really?

**SR** Yeah, you know where Eli stay? That's where I used to be, growing up. Part here, part there. Well, uh, how we met, was when we were growing up. But uh later on when we met, uh, oh shucks, I wasn't going to tell the story. (laughs) I was away working on Kauai, on a ranch. Then I came home and I worked in my uncle's, uh, taro. They (her family) had a taro land also. So I saw her working and taking care of her brothers and sisters. 'Cause she came from ten children, plus her, so eleven. So, she's the oldest and I guess that's why I fall for her, you know, at the taro land because I'm quite a ways over and I'm beside by myself and I see her over there with her family and stuff working hard. That's how afterwards I start asking her to go out.

**INT** And the rest is history right?

**SR** Yeah, I took her for a ride.

**INT** How many children do you guys have?

**SR** We have five children, two boys, three girls. And one of them passed away; our number four child passed away.

**INT** I guess, before that question, when were you guys married?

**SR** Uh, when were we married; 1953.

**INT** 1954?

**SR** 1954 we got married, in her parent's house.

**INT** Oh really?

**SR** Yeah, right where you folks live.

**INT** Oh wow! That's awesome. So how many grandchildren do you have?

**SR** We have fourteen grandchildren. My daughter Atlanta, she has four children; my oldest son has three, three children, and my, uh, Carol has three children; Kehau has three children, and my second son has one daughter, I think. So we have fourteen grandchildren and two great.

**INT** Wow, that's great. How have your children and grandchildren impacted your life?

**SR** Uh, what?

**INT** How have they impacted your life, like how did you, like, change or anything a lot?

**SR** Oh well, you know growing up with little children, I've been away from home most of the time. I came home just about when they were teenage. I worked away from home for about eight years, my time away. But off an on, not all eight years all together. The most I stayed there was two years in a row, but I come home every six months, for ten days, maybe then go back. Where I work at is you have to make so many days over sea, if. If not you don't have the tax free credit, yeah, federal tax. So that's why I have to go back within ten days. The longest I can stay home is thirty days, but I don't use up the whole thirty days. I use ten days, then another six months I take another ten days so I don't stay away the whole year, every six months I come home.

**INT** Oh, that's good, so can I what you were doing down, like, where were you?

**SR** Pardon?

**INT** Where were you?

**SR** Working.

**INT** I mean, just around here?

**SR** No. I was working at Kwajaleen, uh, Midway Island, Johnson Island, I've been in Korea one year. My second child, she (his wife) gave birth in October, and

November I was shipped out to Korea in 1955. I just got married in 1954, had a son, and in '55 I had another son.

**INT** So what did your job, what did you do?

**SR** I operate heavy equipment, all kinds. And also tug boat out there. You do the trudge work. I learned to run a tugboat to pull the trudge around. So my experience of equipment operator was all down under work. And I got some points down here when I came home to work. I worked on a high rise screen . The tallest building I worked on was twenty-eight stories high.

**INT** Now I understand that you own two houses in Kokololio. How did you obtain these houses?

**SR** Ok, we talked over with the family for us to all get together and put a home on there and rent it out. And then one of their children, my wife's brothers and sisters to be the administrator, like two people to be the administrator. And then to have there and then rent it out if the family want to rent it out. Everybody would make extra money. But they decided to sell it. There was too many of them and anyone would get the responsibility of being administrator. So we told them that if you're going to sell it, we'd like to buy it. So we bought it from each of them. One of the sisters gave us her share. The rest of the nine sold us their shares. So that's how we got the place there. And then we mortgage the place, put up these two homes and rent it out to pay back the mortgage. The only time we pay mortgage is when we have to do the repair, and not enough money around to pay the mortgage that coming in because some repair that we got to do.

**INT** Was it just the land that you bought or were there already houses?

**SR** No, it was just the land not the house. The whole house, they took em down, broke it down.

**INT** Oh, so they tore [the original house] down and then you guys built the two houses. How long did it take?

**SR** Well, it was a contractor thing. It took, for the two houses, about four to six months to get it all done and ready, paint and everything.

**INT** Six months? Wow!

**SR** Yeah, it's about there, could be less than that, because the ground was all leveled out. We fill in the ground so the guys never had to fill in the place. So when they came to put the house up it was fast because it's a pre-cut house. They came and they just can out it up fast. They didn't have hard time. So about six months time they had the house ready for move in.

INT That's amazing.

SR And when we rent it, we rent it out for two hundred dollars a month at that time. It was back in 1973.

INT Two hundred dollars, that was probably a lot of money back then.

SR Well, everything was cheap and that's why we rent it out for two hundred dollars. And the reason why we rent it out was because we know how people have hard time because we came in the category, you know, renting homes and living on our own, and that was our security at that time. We were living in the back of the *Makai* (seaside) chapel. We lived there for nine years. Then we came over here [to Punalu'u].

INT To Punalu'u?

SR Yeah

INT And when was that? When did you come over here?

SR We moved over here in 1964; we had this house built in 1964. It was that house down there. and then we moved there some time at the end of the year, in November sometime, '64.

INT So you guys bought this land too?

SR No, this land is my grandmother's. So we had her share, my mother's share, my brother and I, then I bought my brother's share. My brother and I had to share this whole place. But we built and he didn't build and he had problems. Se we bought his share and we have a bigger plot. If not we'd be only small.

INT So there's a total of three houses on this property, right?

SR Well, not really; two regular houses, but this is just a small, dinky thing.

INT Ok, shall we say two and a half?

SR Yeah, something like that.

INT Ok, so all these, well, all two and a half houses you built yourself?

SR No, no.

INT Were they already here?

SR We had a contractor builder while I was working on the highway. That year the family built this house. Then we stayed here, then a couple years later my brother

them sold us their place, because they divorced now. So then we built that one, we built Samuel's house. We hired one guy to come and help us put up the tile, then we build the rest. Now the concrete slab and things for his home, I had my cousins and friends come and have them pour the cement. And that house I had one guy put up the tile, and we put up the roof and then the inside and stuff. But before we build that, we have this house on the deck side. (Starts to talk about the changes in the deck house.)

**INT** I just want to ask you a little bit about the history of La'ie, and even Punalu'u. What are some of the specific changes that stand out in your mind about Punalu'u, Hau'ula, La'ie?

**SR** Ok, I'll start with Punalu'u. Punalu'u was all, we had this property all here, but before it was all bush. We had to come and clean out, and it was all taro land. And the change is that we got more homes over here. Before we only used to have two, that's it, and then they built that country cabin. So that's the improvement of this area, my grandmother's property. It's actually my great-grandfather's, Samuel Kaukai. (Says some family genealogy. I do not want to transcribe due to the misspelling of names) Punalu'u has been developed a lot from back in the '40s.

We had to run from our home close to the highway because of the tidal wave in 1946. We had to run back there, so we went run up on the hill, close to the hill. By the time we got close to the hill, we had almost waist deep water all in this area because it was low land. No road, just like a pasture like when all the grass is all California grass and might be four feet high. We had to walk through the grass and everything to go through. It's not the kind of pasture where all the grass is nice and low to the ground.

**INT** Did the tidal wave ever come up higher than your waist?

**SR** No, the water went back out and receded. From up there we looked down and we could see a lot of houses floating, some houses were floating, you know. It wasn't ten foot waves and stuff like that; the water just rise up and come in and then it suck back in. [It] wasn't like something that came in Hilo; Hilo had twenty foot waves come up, way up in the town. That was bad over there. (Refers back to the Punalu'u tidal wave) It took quite a bit. A lady and three children, it killed three children of her six children. So she has three children living now, two boys and a girl. Then there was an army camp in Punalu'u, Green Valley, a jungle training camp and they evacuated the people over there. Some of the people didn't have homes when they came back out; their homes were washed out. Some homes moved, but they moved it back to the foundation. But some houses totally washed out and got damaged.

So, and then La'ie Malo'o, by a bridge, my wife's aunty lived down there. (Names people around the Kokololio Park. I am not going to state them due to

possible incorrect spelling.) So that's all I know about the place. And then [the] shopping center start to develop in the '50s; building shopping center and homes and other sub-divisions. First was all one side, and then it went to the *Makai* side.

**INT** Do you think that the changes you've seen were good or bad?

**SR** Oh, it's good. The change is good, I've seen, because of the development and more people can work around here, more on this side of the island, the country. The work were all mostly in town, in town or building houses like in Kaneohe. The Wilson Tunnel, that's the kind of work we worried about. Only kind of work down here was city and county, and plantation, Kahuku, and sugar cane plantation. That's about it. We didn't really have a lot of industrial things around. But most of us Kahuku people, they either move out, the young people my age, or they end up at the plantation. But the plantation shut down, I think in the '50s, so not much jobs around.

**INT** Do you remember when the highway was built?

**SR** This highway down here been built in the middle of 1925, '26, some time around there. That's when the road was building. Then it was finished some time in the '30s. all the time they used to have only a horse trail over there, or the beach. They used to use the beach; they would use the beach for road. That's what I was told by my mom and my uncle, growing up over here when he was young. Because all over here was taro land, plus rice land over here.

**INT** Now, coming back to the houses, what do you think is the greatest thing that has come from building these houses?

**SR** Well, the great thing is that where we built our home, we didn't have to build any mortgage. That's why I worked away from here. We bought our home fast. I told my wife that was a good thing because we were paying rent for a long time, for nine years. So having our own home was the greatest thing because we had a lot of sacrifice. I had to be away from home. So our home was built with cash; there was no mortgage on it. And my sons house was also the same. We store the material two years before we build.

**INT** This will be my last question: What are some of the goals in your life that you set and have achieved for you and your family?

**SR** I haven't set much goals, but I have learned. I'm a self taught operator, and that I have achieved. I didn't know I was going to be a tower crane operator and I achieved it for six years. As for operating tug boats, someone taught me and then they would go home. So I didn't set much goals. I just do things, what comes, and that's about it. The goal I met is completely what I'm doing. The satisfaction out of being boat operator, bull dozer operator, crane operator and truck driver. And what I have achieved at that time, I didn't set goals for it. The opportunity,

the chance to do it, you know. And I had a lot of chance to do things. I guess all I can say is I've been blessed ten fold. And when I went away my children, although they were young, understood why I was going away. After the house was paid for, I could have gone back to work and just make money, had a big bank account. I told my wife and kids that we just going make enough money to have our home built, and then I come back and find a job like everybody else. I'm just grateful for the many blessings the Lord gave me and for the wisdom he gave me to operate machines.

**INT** Well, thank you so much. I had a great time. Once again, this is Aleesha Gibby and I am at the Rowland's residence on March 13, 2003.