

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

With

Jordon Higa

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BY: Arlene Ching (A.C.)

Jordon Higa is a junior at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He was born in 1987. Jordon attended Alvah Scott Elementary School, 'Aiea Intermediate School and 'Aiea High School. Arlene Ching interviewed him on July 20, 2007 in 'Aiea. This is a condensed account of his interview that Jordon edited on November 7, 2007.

Jordon: I live in Enchanted Hills, right above 'Aiea High School. I can actually see the high school from my house, along Kaamilo Street... in a suburban single family home. My grandparents told me that the houses were built in the '50s and '60s. The houses all look similar. A lot of the older houses have been torn down and the new ones have been put up, so, it's actually not that similar... My grandmother told me that they moved into the house, about four years after the neighborhood was built up.

A.C.: Tell me about the house.

Jordon: It's a three bedroom, one and half bathroom house. One story. From the garage, you go directly into the kitchen. Beyond that, there is a living room and a dining room that's connected. There's a hallway that goes to three bedrooms and the main bathroom. And next to the main bathroom, that's where the front door is, the main entrance. But we never use it. I don't know why we don't use it. As long as we've been living there, we've never used it. It's (the house is) made out of redwood. The garage is cement. We have a yard. Not a big yard. But big enough, when I was little, the neighbors' children could play hide-and-seek... We used to have more trees than we have now. Some of them were cut down, and we replanted them with newer trees. The property itself isn't that big. There's a gulch behind our house that goes into Kalauao Valley. Our property goes about two hundred feet into that gulch. In the backyard, in the gulch, we actually have a mango tree. My grandfather planted it right after my mother was born. (Jordon found out that the mango tree was planted by his grandfather's brother in the mid 1960s after the birth of Jordon's mother.) When I was really young, as far back as I can remember, most of our property down there was overgrown, like overgrown grass, except for the trail that went down to the mango tree. We would just go down to the mango tree whenever it was mango season, and pick the mangos, and bring them back up. After my grandfather retired, he had a lot of free time, so he started clearing the entire area out. Now our entire property is clear back there. It's a big garden down there

now. When I was in high school, when I was really bored, I used to go and climb the mango tree and study for my AP exams up there. When the pigs came around, if it was mango season, I would shoot them (with a BB gun) because we were growing pineapples down there. They would eat all of the pineapples. Otherwise, I'd just watch them. They didn't notice me.

A.C.: Anything else you remember?

Jordon: I guess the land beyond our property is owned by the Bishop Estate, and past that is the Pearl Country Club golf course. When I was little, I would watch the golfers down there golf. My grandfather had made a trail that went through the Bishop Estate land. There are power lines, and actually, there's a trail that HECO uses to get those power lines. Beyond that, my grandfather had made another trail that went down to the golf course. I think, when my mother was little, she and her brother would go down that trail and collect golf balls. I went down that trail once with my grandfather, but we didn't go the whole way because it was pretty overgrown. It was pretty hard to maintain it, because it was a long way and every time it rained, the grass would sprout up again.

A.C.: You went to Alvah Scott Elementary School. Do you remember the principal?

Jordon: It was Mr. Matsuyama. I don't know his first name. He was the principal until I was in the fourth grade. After that, I think it was Helen Sampei. Mr. George Lai was the vice-principal during that time. I remember him, just walking around campus. He would always "hi" to me. I don't know if he knew me or anything... (In his sixth grade year, he was in the student council) A lot of my friends were in the council. The advisor was Mrs. Crocco. She's still there. She's the language arts enrichment teacher.

A.C.: What do you remember about Alvah Scot (Elementary School)?

Jordon: Elementary school---everyone got along. I don't remember ever there being a fight. We had about 700 students. I remember a teacher telling me. Each grade level had four classes. The lower grade levels had four classes. The upper grade levels had three classes. The younger grade levels had eighteen to twenty-two people. The upper ones had up to thirty.

A.C.: What was it like to go to 'Aiea Intermediate School?

Jordon: That was a big change. If I remember correctly, every Friday, there would be a fight. At our school, you'd just be walking around. People would tell you, "Eh, there's going to be a fight today at "Corners." That's where the fights would be. It would be off campus. They knew different than to do it on campus. It was boys and girls. A boy would never fight a girl. Girls would fight girls. Boys would fight boys. I don't think they have fights there anymore. Now they do it at the sugar mill, over on the sugar mill road.

A.C.: So what else do you remember? Who was the principal when you were going to intermediate school?

Jordon: Before I started intermediate school, the administration before was Mr. Fisher... All the teachers would complain about him. I guess the teachers weren't satisfied... The new principal was Mr. Delude. He was an acting principal. I think he went on to Nanakuli Intermediate... he got let go by the superintendent. I thought he was a good principal. He was nice. One time, my friend and I, we missed a bus for a field trip. Mr. Delude found us. We were, like "Okay, we'll go to class today" or whatever. But Mr. Delude said, "Oh, no you're not." So he stuffed us in back of his pickup truck and took us down to the... He was a nice person. I was kind of disappointed when I found out that the superintendent let him go. I was there two years, seventh grade and eighth grade. There were two principals. I think he's still the principal now. (Mr.) Kurashige. I was in band my eighth grade year. I was in the science club. What happened, was, between seventh grade and eighth grade, our principal, Mr. Delude had left, and (Mr.) Kurashige had come in----when (Mr.) Kurashige came in, it was kind of disorganized. What happened was, because he hired so late, he didn't have a chance to hire all the teachers. So, the scheduling got messed up. And to make matters even worse, the computer that did the scheduling, something happened, I guess. It broke down. So what happened was, we came to school on the first day. None of the students had the classes that they were supposed to have. So, during the first week of school, we had to go through the entire registration process all over again. They gave us the forms and said, aside from the classes... like the core subjects like math and English; they made us choose our electives, right? I think the previous year, I had signed up for a computer class and a speech class. But I don't know what happened... The speech class wasn't offered. It was kind of like that. I had to choose another elective.

So I ended up choosing band. That was kind of weird. Most people started band their seventh grade year and go on through high school... I ended up taking up the flute because it was the cheapest thing. You don't have to buy reeds... I continued it for three years and I ended up switching to percussion my senior year. My schedule conflicted, so I ended up dropping band. But I stayed in the marching band. What happened, we had the smallest marching band in the state, on the island, pretty much. It was kind of funny. At the Aloha Stadium, they would have all the bands come on the field at once, to give all the certificates of participation. Every year, they would stick 'Aiea, the smallest band on the island, next to Moanalua (High School), the largest band on the island. Moanalua's band is three hundred, four hundred people. 'Aiea's band, (in) my senior year, had, I think, thirty-six. So, that was one thing. When I was in band, the program had high turnover, and we went through band directors, like nothing. So the band program had a hard time building itself up... We made jokes, comparing Moanalua versus 'Aiea. I was the historian for three years. I tried to make a slide show for the end-of-the-year banquet. (Each) of my slide shows had jokes comparing 'Aiea with Moanalua, or 'Aiea and Pearl City... poking fun with the size. What happened, my senior year, I was supposed to play flute, but we had a shortage of percussionists. You kind of need percussionists in a

marching band. The only percussionists we had, were two freshmen snares and a freshmen quads player... A quads is four drums. They didn't have any bass players at all, and they needed another snare player. So they started "robbing" other players to become percussionists.

A.C.: When you went to 'Aiea High School, did you get the classes you liked?

Jordon: We all liked 'Aiea High School. We make jokes about 'Aiea. I have a friend. If you ask him if he'd send his kids to 'Aiea. 'Aiea isn't that great academically. If you go to 'Aiea, you'll be better for life, because you get to interact with people. Different kinds of people. You know what weed smells like. Overall, I think, it's a pretty good school. It's a small school. You can't do some of the things if you go to a bigger school, maybe, like Roosevelt or Moanalua. There's less programs, but, some of the teachers---they take pride in what they do.

A.C.: What were your favorite classes?

Jordon: I took Japanese for four years... Mrs. Cindy Wong. She doesn't teach at 'Aiea (anymore).She ended up teaching at Moanalua. (Jordon and A.C. talked about a project that the teacher assigned. Jordon gathered information about 'Aiea history, translated it into Japanese and did a display board.)

When I was in high school, that's when they started implementing "No Child Left Behind." Everything became "standards-based." So, the teachers were under a lot of pressure to meet the standards. The principal was trying to get the teachers to implement the standards, and the teachers were trying really hard.

A.C.: How did you feel as a student?

Jordon: We all hated it. One of the standards was connecting with the community. So that was one of the things my teacher (Mrs. Wong) did. There was whole lot of other things she did. We did projects on Japanese culture. We would research on all the different cultures in Hawaii and write it in Japanese.

END OF INTERVIEW