

(3) Under the House

As one heads west toward central and west Oahu one is geographically forced to pass through the township of Aiea. The northeastern reaches of Pearl Harbor leave a slim corridor against the southern slopes of the Koolaus. This land beyond Red Hill then known as *ewa* was sugar and pineapple country, fertile and red dirt rich.

The town of Aiea itself evolved in the shadow of the Aiea Sugar Mill. The oceans of green wavy cane that stretched over all the uplands from Red Hill to Waiawa were brought to the Aiea Mill after harvesting. Harvesting by hand and mule transport gave way to train transport, then machine harvesting and truck transport. Kashin Kakazu did several jobs for the sugar plantation, but mostly he tended to the rows of young cane doing everything from weeding to irrigation.

Around the main street of Aiea, complete with stores, pool hall, and saloon, all under buildings with high front facades, lay the quarters of the plantation workers. The quarters tended to be ethnic “camps” scattered around the main street where today you will find some shopping areas, the Aiea Library and a Shell Station. Chinese camp was located somewhere in the east Halawa area. Filipino camp was closest to the town and included bachelor quarters. The Portuguese camp was primarily a few groups of homes woven amongst some of the other camps, but easily identified by the aqua and white house paint and outdoor ovens. The Japanese were in force in what the plantation workers knew as down camp, middle camp, and up camp (and later as Old Mill and New Mill Camps). Interestingly enough, down camp was known for outhouses, middle camp for a gravity sewer system, and up camp for flush toilets. The *lunas* (*foremen*) and some of the *haole* big shots lived in upper Aiea or on side streets exhibiting large southern colonial style homes.

The Kakazu house was your typical example of a plantation home: small porch, three bedrooms, one bath, a rear wash house, all under corrugated metal roofing. Most of the homes in up camp and especially the Kakazus’ were elevated on “stilts” to account for the hilly terrain. The lowest end of the house was propped up so much that a door was cut into the lower lattice work and one could walk in the lower region and crawl around the rest. Here things were stored and Mrs. Kakazu would sometimes have *okolehao* brewing. Ken Kakazu chose this under the house area as the location of the Bible study Gerald Hemmet had commissioned him to carry on.

The group met on Sundays and sat on old wooden crates. At first Kashin Kakazu objected to the group meeting under his home. It wasn’t only that he was a Buddhist, but the size of the group would mess up and relocate some of his stored items. But after a bit of grumbling, he gave up and Bible study continued.

Ken Kakazu took Gerald Hemmet’s charge very seriously. He listened to radio preachers to get sermon ideas. But mostly the group would read from the Bible. They started with Genesis and worked into Exodus. Remarkably, they soon became convinced from their

reading that the Bible sabbath was the 7th day, so they changed their day of meeting from Sunday to Saturday. They also decided to call their group the “True Sabbath Keepers.” A wooden sign was made saying “True Sabbath Keepers” and placed on a post in this makeshift sanctuary. Ken would be the first to tell you that at this point he was the most unqualified to lead a Bible study. But he had his Bible, he had accepted the call, and God was in the midst of them, yes, even under the house.

Often it seems when God wants to encourage a leader or give impetus to a movement He shows His presence and love through a miracle. To a young Ken Kakazu, God’s reality could be seen in a miracle that seemed unthinkable and seemingly petty. How could the God of the universe be concerned about poor kids in the cane fields of Aiea? Could a supreme being who knew everything and could do anything be concerned about a child’s cry and children’s prayers? Would the Christian God perform a miracle for those who really didn’t know Him? Would God give grace to a teased Okinawan kid always picked last on the playground? Ken was blessed with answers.

The day was typical as Ken and some of his schoolmates played in and around a small stream after school. This day however, was infused with excitement as Conchita Arranda came around showing off her new white shoes she had received as a birthday gift. Since no one had shoes, Conchita felt rich and beautiful. For the entertainment of her peers she modeled her new shoes as a Filipina princess. But soon the novelty wore off and the group was splashing around and doing their usual craziness.

As the group was preparing to leave, it became apparent that Conchita’s shoes were nowhere to be found. She searched frantically. Others joined the search. But soon the young girl was driven to tears, and left mumbling something about how she would not know what to tell her father. Inspired by his new leadership position, Ken Kakazu stepped to the plate. He organized the group and together they scoured the banks, waded around the small bridge where the shoes most likely would be if they had fallen, and walked side by side moving downstream feeling every inch of the muddy bottom.

When all human effort turned up futile, Ken now thought about what Mitchell and Hemmet had taught him. He remembered the stories of prayer and miracles. Why would his God not be able to bring back a simple pair of shoes? Ken gathered the flock into a prayer circle, and there beside a small stream in the middle of the cane fields of Aiea, this motley group of misfits knelt and prayed to the God of the Universe asking Him to find Conchita’s lost shoes.

As Ken’s eyes opened he quickly focused upon the pair of white shoes resting nicely on the bank he knew they had scoured many times. Ken’s flair for the dramatic kicked in here and he told the group to keep their eyes closed and to keep on praying. Ken quietly and quickly maneuvered and retrieved the shoes and placed them in the center of the prayer circle. When he led in the “Amen,” the resulting moments were stunning. Stunning enough that Ken was later questioned by Conchita’s father in regards to his religious affiliation, and good sources have said that several members of the Arranda family were later baptized into the Baptist church of Mitchell and Hemmet. For Ken

Kakazu, he now knew that nothing was too small for God. His God was also the God of the teased Okinawan kids, a God who even cared about a crying girl, and one who honored a child preacher with His love and grace.

The Bible study group continued. Word got around that there was something organized, so attendance grew. Some simply came out of curiosity. And some, like Kenneth Fujimoto, attended faithfully. Knowing that the Salvation Army in the area had a baseball team, Ken Kakazu decided to start a team out of boys from his group to challenge them. He also made a rule that one had to attend the Bible study at least three times before he could play on the team. This incentive helped the Bible study to gain in popularity. It is said that at its height the group crowded 60 people into the Kakazu under house.

Ken continued listening to radio preachers to find information for his sermons. Kenneth Fujimoto remembers firstly Ken Kakazu's preaching, then secondly the singing, and thirdly the Bible reading. It was Ken Kakazu's radio interest that eventually led him to listen to the Voice of Prophecy broadcast. The offer of free Bible lessons was just what these poor kids needed. When Ken sent away for lessons, about twenty-something enrolled. The group numbers had dwindled it is felt because Buddhist parents did not agree with the Christian message and forbade their children from further attendance, or because some had come simply to be a part of some organization but wearied of the commitment.

The lessons were going well and the group was thrilled to have found a denomination that believed in the 7th day sabbath. But when a lesson came about clean and unclean meat the group, with Ken Kakazu's lead, decided to throw the lessons into the cane fields and have nothing to do with the SDA church. They, we must remember, lived in a subculture where Portuguese sausage, Spam, and Kalua pig were delicacies; and that Okinawans ate basically every part of the *buta* (pig).

When the local VOP representatives saw twenty or so lessons stop coming in, they sent a local Bible Worker, named John Alapa, to investigate. When the group realized Mr. Alapa was from the VOP, they hid in the mountains and cane fields. Mr. Alapa, however, did not give up easily. Sometimes he waited till some of the boys returned from hiding, or he came very early before the Sunday group could make their escape plans. Even though Mr. Kakazu was a staunch Buddhist, he implored his son and friends to at least be civil and to hear the man out.

Mr. Alapa tried to answer the boys questions and to work with them. He realized that something special had begun especially in their acceptance of the sabbath message. Because of the interest in Aiea, Elder George Kiyabu, a young pastoral intern was sent to the Aiea area to follow up on Mr. Alapa's findings. At first Brother Alapa told the boys to continue their Saturday meetings but to come, even just to observe, a "branch Sabbath School" he and Elder Kiyabu were holding in the Aiea Methodist church on Saturday afternoons. It was through this branch Sabbath School that Elder Kiyabu eventually was able to give Bible studies to the Kakazu siblings and others.

Since Kashin Kakazu spoke very little English, Elder Kiyabu arranged for Elder Miyake from the Japanese church, and also Mr. Ishikawa and Mr. Yahiku who were members of Japanese church, to come and study with Mr. Kakazu. God used these men as well as Elder Kiyabu to reach Kashin who at one time wanted Japan to win the war and for Buddhism to control the world.

Elder Kiyabu's Spirit-led work had begun to convict some of the Aiea kids. The decision was then made at the Mission level to hold an evangelistic effort in Aiea using another young pastor, Elder George Munson of Wahiawa, as the principal speaker.

A large tent with saw dust floor was set up somewhere above where the Aiea Union 76 Station sits today. When some in the community realized the prospects of an Adventist church coming into Aiea, hostile attacks were launched to discourage the effort. Human feces were smeared over the pulpit area after the first few meetings. Ken Kakazu and some of the boys decided to sleep in the tent as a result. The next night Ken, a light sleeper, was awakened to see the form of a person outside the tent trying to start a fire. The boys were able to scare off the potential arsonist and to extinguish the pilot flames. When Elder Kiyabu and Munson heard of this, they took over the night watch.

Even if the tent would have been destroyed, nothing could destroy the fire of God's Holy Spirit. It was this evangelistic effort, with Elder Albert Munson doing chalk drawings, and the preaching of Elder George Munson, called "interesting" and "good" by some of the Kakazu siblings, that led to the conversion and subsequent baptism of the first wave of Aiea's charter members. The Adventist message of a second coming of Christ warmed the hearts of many of these "kids." Those who once had known only ridicule, poverty, and a future of hard work in the cane fields, now had a dream. . . a dream of a kingdom of power and majesty, a kingdom where everyone stood on equal ground clothed in righteousness and grace.

Following the meetings, the group in a sense now an Adventist company, met on Saturdays with Elder Kiyabu in the Aiea Methodist church. In 1947 the company purchased for \$50 an old army building, probably about 12' by 50', and they installed it somewhere above where the tent had been pitched. It is at this point that one can say that the Aiea SDA church had been established. In just a short time a simple sailor-led Bible study had evolved into a small church. Ken's little group that once met under the house, now worshipped under a house of God.