

September 21st, 1953
Wailuku, Maui
Territory of Hawaii
U. S. A;

Dr. W. F. Libby
Institute of Nuclear Studies
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Dr. Libby:

Some time ago two friends and I dug some carbon out from under a lava flow at Ulupalakua. Reconstructing the picture, it seems that a banyan tree nearly eight feet in diameter was growing in the orange clay of the region. About a hundred yards away the earth opened up and lava spouted out which came down as cinder. This part of the eruption lasted only a few minutes because the cinder is only an inch or two deep. Then the lava poured out and engulfed the tree to a depth of about six feet. It cooled quickly to form a tree mould. The carbon we secured is from roots under the cinder.

On the island of Maui there is only one known lava flow which occurred just prior to the arrival of Capt. Cook. According to native stories that flow must have occurred about 1750. This flow at Ulupalakua is considerably older than the 1750 flow. However there is an interesting Hawaiian legend associated with it so it must have occurred during the last couple of thousand years.

If the age of the carbon can be determined the date of the flow can be secured and some idea obtained of the length of time this island has been inhabited. We have the carbon wrapped in newspaper inside of airtight cans. Please advise what the charge is and how long will be required to process one sample. How large a piece do you require?

Very truly yours,

Grote Reber