

Interview #1

Mrs. Dorothy Ching

February 24, 1990

Mrs. Ching was born on Oahu but grew up in Kalapana. Life was free and fun, although they had chores to do and the life was hard. They had to work for everything. To get spending money they would pick and sell mangos and coconuts. Once a week their mother would take them into town to sell. At that time Hilo Hotel used to make coconut pies and pastry. They would pay \$1.50 for a bag of fifty coconuts.

She has an older sister and younger brother. Her other older sisters were living in town then.

Her mother used to weave mats. There was no welfare then. She was a single parent and raised them herself.

They used to go to the beach to get their fish and to the mountains. During ulu season they used to pick ulu once a week to pound their poi. When it wasn't in season they raised taro up in the mountain where the '55 lava flow came down. Before that^{it} used to be dirt land. A lot of people in Kalapana used to lease the land there for taro. Most would lease one or two acres. Her mother and the three children used to take care of their taro themselves. Few grew taro to sell. It was for the family to eat. They also had land that was in the family.

The Kama family had some land that is now National Park. Every so many months some of the community would ride horse and go fishing or corral some goats. They would either dry the goats or bring them home.

They ate goat, dried fish, fresh fish. They caught pole fish and also got fish from the catch of the ones who went out in the canoes. They would help push the canoe in, "hapai waa", and the

fishermen would share their catch.

Sunday was the only day they had off.

They used to raise their own cattle, a few head. Mother would milk every morning. They raised their own pigs and chickens. They were kept in pens. They fed them grain mixed with coconut and honohono grass. The cows were tied. But other people let their pigs and cows run around the whole area. Everyone knew who they belonged to and nobody would steal someone else's. They fed the pigs papayas and ulu, coconuts and honohono grass. Gathering that was part of their daily chores.

On Sunday after church in the gymnasium in back of the church they used to show movies for 10¢. They'd have 5¢ to spend and 5¢ for the collection in church.

There's about 4 or 5 years difference between Mrs. Ching and her brother and her sister Bessie is 2 years older. Mrs. John, Mrs. Awai and another sister that died were the older group of sisters. There was about 5 or 6 years difference in age between her sister Bessie and Edith (Mrs. John). In 1946 Mrs. Ching moved to Hilo to stay with Mrs. John because her mother died. Her brother also lived with her. The older sister was living on Oahu then.

C= Mrs. Ching

M= Midge

C: In those days it was discipline, that's what really counted. Today's kids are not...they don't care you know.

M: ...in your time the kids were really needed to help.

C: Of course there were families that didn't do nothing, you know. They sat down and played music all day long...

M: How did they manage though?

C: The father and mother used to do the work.

M: ...the kids don't have to do anything.... So your family was Catholic?

C: Our family, my mother was Protestant. We grew up as a Protestant and as we got older we chose whatever religion we wanted. But prior to that when we were younger, we were all Protestant.

M: What church did you go to over here?

C: When we were growing up, when we were little, we were going to the Protestant church on the mauka side of the road. And then the Catholic church is across the street.

M: Did they have little things for the kids, ...programs

C: They had Sunday School and things like that but I think the children learned more then then today. And whenever there was Christmas they had, everything was just done up so nicely you know. Today people just take things for granted. "Oh Christmas, and we have to buy this and spend money and give gifts." But those days it was what you could do for the next. That's how we were brought up. But today everything is, "Oh, I have to go to town, Christmas is coming around the corner" and everything is fine, you know.

M: What are some of the things you used to do for people on Christmas?

C: Those days Christmas was a little more sacred. And after Christmas, then they'd celebrate and have a big party. And the party would last for about a week, but that's after Christmas. But before Christmas, well, we'd go out and help the older folks. They need help clean yard or do something for a few days, just something. But not everybody did that. It was like certain families, certain families would say, "We need to

do this" and so my mother would send the children over to help for a few days. But to us it was just a chore.

M: So what kind of things would you do?

C: We'd go and help them, maybe they have to clean a certain area of their yard. Those days people used to get their things, like clean their yard and make things look nice.

M: And what kind of presents...

C: Nothing much, maybe a coat or a petticoat or a dress and that was something real ...

M: Did you make anything?

C: When we were growing up my mother used to sew most of our things. She used to sew on, you know the sewing machine with the (foot peddle)

M: How did she make her lauhala mats? She made mats and what else?

C: Mostly mats. We used to make the dinner sets, you know, place mats, and take that to town. My sister and I use to make twelve little sets, place mats, with a big one like a center piece and we used to get \$3.00 or \$2.50 for the whole set and that was a lot of money to us. Enough to buy nail polish or polish remover or something like that.

M: Where did you get the lauhala from?

C: Around, along side the shore line or we'd go up Kehela, there's a lot of lauhala around. And people used to have the lauhala in their yard. But down the park used to have a lot. But the old folks knew exactly what tree had good lauhala.

M: How do you prepare it?

C: We have to strip it, you know, take out the thorns. Those days we had to soften it by pounding it, we call it "ho'hoa". There's a wooden pounder, they use to shape it out of wood. It was this long,

came down with a handle, and we used to stack... after we dethorn it then we roll it flat then we used to pound it to soften it. But as the years went by somebody made my mother a lauhala grinder. You put the lauhala in and you can grind it to soften it. It was much easier.

M: So much work. You pick it, pound it...

C: Then you strip it

M: ...to the size you want. After you strip it, then you're ready to start weaving it?

C: You make it even like cut off the ends and make it even then you make enough and then you start weaving.

M: And how long does it take to weave?

C: Depends how much you're going to weave. Like sometimes my mother would have an order for a mat, maybe 10X20. You know people used to order. Take her a couple of weeks, and that used to be day in day out.

M: And how much would she get for one of those?

C: Maybe \$30.00, \$40.00. And that was a lot of money in those days. Then as we got a little older, my mother had a, we used to call it a banana wagon. You know what it is, a station wagon. It was made out of wood. You know ...those days they have wood around the car. And she used to take passengers into Hilo once a week, every Saturday. People would come over and it would cost them \$3.00 I think to go into Hilo and come back. They go in for shopping. In those days the road wasn't as nice as now. It was winding and bumpy. And if she had enough room for us we'd go on Saturday. We'd gather things or weave enough to take into Hilo and sell it, my sister and I, so we could go to a movie or something.

M: Did your brother weave too?

C: No. He was a fisherman. He was always down the beach. When we were growing up you work all during the week but on Sunday you don't go to the beach. In those days when we used to go to the beach it was to gather opihi or limu or something like that, not to swim. Not like today, you go to the beach for a picnic. But my brother used to always hide and go to the beach. Whenever we couldn't find him he would be along side with his, maybe a piece of twine, and he'd get a headpin and make it into a hook and he'd go fishing. He used to love to fish.

M: Did he get plenty fish?

C: He use to get those little fish. But my sister and I didn't like it because we had to clean it. We use to hide...throw the fish away, something like that and tell him don't tell Ma that you went to the beach, you know. Because it was like a no no to go to the beach on a Sunday.

M; And he used to go on Sunday?

C: Ya, that was the only day we went to play. We have a free day. When we were growing up we just couldn't just any time have a free day and do whatever you want.

M: Cause when you weren't working, then you had to go to school?

C: We'd go to school in the morning, but before we'd go to school we had chores to do, certain things to do. Then we'd go to school. After school we had chores to do. We had to do...you know was so funny, we always used to say, see my mother, those days they had kerosene stoves, you know what it is...we'd have a kerosene stove in the kitchen but we couldn't use it. It was only for when company

came or on Sundays. We used to cook all our food in the cook house outside. We had to go gather wood. Everyday after school one of us used to go gather wood. We all had something to do. And that cookhouse had to be full of wood because when it rains you cannot cook with wet wood. So that was a chore. That cook house was suppose to be full of wood.

M: Was it hard to find wood?

C: No, not really because we had to clean, keep the brush down, like guava and the holly berries. We had to cut it down every so often when it grows into a tree. And then we'd leave it and after a couple of weeks it'll dry up, then we'd go gather that and bring it home and chop it up.

M: How about school, what was school like?

C: It was a one room, 1st, 2nd, 3rd grade, was one teacher. All three, three grades in one room.

M: Was that all the school went up to, the third grade?

C: No, sixth grade, but there were three classes in one room. There were two teachers.

M: So how many kids would be in one room?

C: Gee, I don't remember exactly but we used to sit like ~~two~~ in a desk, those were double desks, would be about 20 kids in one room. First to third grade, then the other room would have about 20,25, depending on how many students. And we had a cafeteria downstairs. But as the years went by maybe there were less. But when I was going to school we had about 20, 25 students in our class, in our classroom but each grade maybe 10, the other one 8 depending.

M: What kind of things did they teach?

C: They taught us penmanship in the lower grades and we learned how

to read. We learned arithmetic, multiplication, fractions and things like that.

M: Do you think that school was better than today?

C: Yes, I think so. When we went to school, we had to learn. You went to school and not to eat lunch. Because they had authority to spank you if you did anything that they didn't approve of. And the parents didn't go to school and threaten to give the teacher lickin' like today, you know....so this is why the children are like the way they are today.

M: Like before the parents used to back up the teacher.

C: Whatever the teacher said it was, like that's the same principle, even at home, whatever the parents said that was law. Whatever law the parents laid down for the children, that was what it was gonna be. That's the same thing when you went to school. If the teacher says this and this and this, that was it. But of course the older children were rascal, but they did things out of fun. Nothing that somebody would get hurt or... I remember in the classroom next door, I think I was in the 2nd or 3rd grade at that time, and this one teacher, well she was the principal of the school, after lunch everybody takes a nap, everybody, put their head down on the (desk) and she'd fall asleep too. But she had an alarm clock that would ring and she would get up. When she said "It's time to sleep", it's time to sleep, you go to sleep. But the older boys and girls used to set the clock and they'd go swimming. Kalapana used to have water all where Harry K. Brown Park is, water on both sides of the road. It was a pond all the way up to the hills just before you reach the church. That's where we used to wash our clothes in the pond. And the kids would go and set

the clock and go and swim and they'd know what time to get back. These were the rascal kids. But nobody would squeel. Nobody would say anything. And when they'd come back, time to switch the clock again and in less than two minutes the alarm would go off and the principal would get up, she had a good rest. But these were the things they used to do, the older children. But not all, just a few. But when you look back... at that time it was something bad, what they did was bad, but today when you think about it, what the kids do, it's different. That's why I say, life was good then. It was hard, we didn't have everything we wanted, we couldn't today say, "well, let's go out for dinner", no such thing. You just come home and eat what you have, what the family prepare for you. And everybody would sit at the table. You don't go eat what you want when you're hungary, you wait until everybody is ready.

We appreciated whatever we had then. We didn't have a lot of things but Kalapana was such a small community we use to walk. Everything was walk. We'd walk from Kalapana over this side. This is called Kaimu. Like in Hilo they have Houselots, Homestead, you know, different sections. but that's the same thing. And they were people living in Kapaahu, that was three miles away, and we'd walk there. And the kids would walk three miles to school every day. There was no school bus. In no time you'd be there. But today you tell a kid walk about a mile to school "Wow, I have to walk?" They tell you that. But those days, kids from Mokuhulu used to walk to school, walk back after school and it would take them maybe an hour.

M; How about if people got sick and things like that? Was there much

sickness and did you have herbs and medicines?

C: The only thing I remember was little things like if you had a cough, the old folks would gather popolo. The shoots, they used to pick the shoots and pound it and put it in a little white cloth, clean cloth, and squeeze about a spoonful and you take that like a...to clear your throat or something like that. That's about the only thing they used to take. Oh, uhaloa, that was good for tonsillitis. Whenever they say you have to open your (mouth) and if they see that a little infected then it's this root, it's a plant that they just take out the bark from the root and you can either chew on this root or they pound it and squeeze it like that and have you take it. But see, I don't exactly remember how it was done. But most of them used to talk about whenever they gave you a Hawaiian medicine you take it for maybe three days in succession and then you rest, some would be five days and then you rest and then you take it again. But as far as all those herbal things, I don't know much about it.

M: Was there anybody in the community who especially knew about these things?

C: Ya. There were older people that whenever you'd get sick or they'd call a certain person and they'd prepare the medication for you and you have to take it. And then, like home remedies, like whenever you'd come down with, well maybe we say we had the flu, we felt like we had the flu, and then they'd gather this weed. They'd have to go out and gather this weed and they'd boil it and then put it in the tub and cover you. You sit in there and like taking a steam bath. They call that Ho'opuluolu'u. And then maybe you sit in there for half an hour. They say you inhale all this thing,

this weed or whatever it is and you take a rest after that. And then the next day you feel better. We tried that. I remember trying that several times and it worked. Like they say, you have to sweat it all out. And that's about the only kind of medication. But we very seldom went to a doctor.

summering in
They had midwives for women giving birth. Children didn't ask about those things. The old folks stressed children should be seen and not heard. They were not to talk unless asked. But they took everything in.

While growing up boys and girls played together and were friends. They just played and had fun. There was no boyfriend/girlfriend type of things. Mrs. Ching's sister was given "a couple of whacks" by her mother at age 25 for coming home after curfew. Her sister went to Oahu in the 11th grade. At that time there was no such thing as having a boyfriend. One went to school to learn. Other families were different, but that's how she remembered it.

M: How much land did you have in the park that they took away?

C: Well it wasn't ours, it was my older sisters. I'm not sure how many acres but they condemned it in the '30's. Maybe about 500 acres. Those days there were a lot of people living in this area Kalapana, Kaimu that had land. The land that my three older sisters (had) were left by their grandmother and that was Kealakomo. That's where the people know as the goat corral. They had a corral there where the goats used to come down from the mountain to drink water from the ocean. The water would splash up and the water would sit in these ponds and they'd come down to drink

it, the goats would come down to drink it. Those days there were a lot of goats in the National Park. But gradually the National Park people shot them and got rid of them. I don't know, but my opinion today is they shouldn't have done that. They should have let the people, you know give them hunting permits and let them go and hunt just like that, instead of just destroy it like that. They just killed them off. They said they were eating all the vegetation and the kind of plants that would be extinct, the goats were eating it. But, I don't know, I remember the old folks saying like, "whatever was put forth, it's not for you to just waste it." Because that was wasting when they shot them like that and left them there. People, they eat goats. We used to eat goat. It was good eating. The meat was good and it wasn't too much fat like in the beef. The goat meat was good because that's what we had. We had to eat what we had. Those days you put forth something on the table and you can't turn your nose up and say, "Oh I don't want that." You just eat it or starve.

M: And you used the hides too?

C: We used to dry it out and people used to make rope. They call that "kaulaili." The hide they used to strip it and I think they used to braid it a certain way and make it. It was a good rope.

M: They just made it for themselves? Did they sell it at all?

C: Just for themselves. Most of the things people use to make was just for home use. Very few things were for sale.

M: On the park land, how much did they pay the people for the land?

C: Very little, very little.

M: Did they just say, "I want that land" and they just took it?

C: They met with the residents of the area and they said that they

wanted that land and they were going to take it, they were going to condemn it to put it into National Park. But the residents agreed because nothing grew on that land. It was all lava and they couldn't farm there. But there were a lot of things that the National Park said they were gonna do but a lotta things has changed. Even my sister used to own that land, Mrs. John, she was one of the people that got paid for that land but they couldn't go, they said that as long as you you're a Hawaiian living in the area you could fish and, who's going to live in this area all their life? They have to go elsewhere. But till today her children can't go into the National Park because they're not residents of the area. We can, we can go but if you're not a resident you can't go.

M: Do they check up?

C: They do. The rangers do. You have to be Hawaiian. But see like anything else it's who you know. They let their friends go in, you know, the rangers let their friends go in to fish. Because I know that they're not residents in Kalapana. I know who lives here and I know who don't live here. But they let them in to fish.

But like I said, it's who you know. But it's not fair.

*little more about
on the tape that*

M: In the old days you folks never have any volcano problems did you?

C: Oh yes. There were volcano but see, it didn't flow down this way, it was mostly confined in the crater. And I remember the old folks my gramma used to, when they go out, those days we had out-houses. Our bathroom wasn't in the house so if you want to go she-she or go to the toilet at night, you go outside. It was always away from the house. And they'd look up and they'd say, "Oh", they could see the glow and they'd say, "Oh ke ammainekea a ka Pele"

the fire is going. Sometime 2,3 o'clock, once they see that going in the morning they'd want to go, 2,3 o'clock in the morning they'd want to go to the volcano, to the crater. So we had to all bundle, you know we were kids, bundle ourselves in blankets and drive up there. It'd take us about 3,4 hours those days the cars weren't fast to get there.

M: And when you get there, what?

C: All we do is sit in the car and wait for the old folks. They probably take there offering or something, I don't know. We were too little to understand these things but whenever the volcano would erupt my gramma would always go. Could be 2,3 o'clock in the morning everybody get up and get on the car and going.

M: And this was your mother's mother?

C: No, on the father's side. (The other three girls' father)

Mrs. Ching's mother's mother died when mother was young. She was put in a boarding school. She had one sister and brother. They were Hawaiian on the mother's side and Irish on the father's side. They knew the mother's sister but didn't find her brother until much later. His name is Garrett Campbell. He was 2 or 3 when the mother died and he was hanai'd.

Mrs. Ching's mother, Annie, came to Kalapana with a girlfriend of hers who went to the same boarding school and lived in Kalapana. When she came home she brought Annie with her.