

Interview with Mrs. Ching #3

4/18/90

Mrs. Ching's full name is Dorothy Leilani '(Lee) Ching. Her brother's full name is Abner Manena Kama.

M: Your mother came over from school and married Kama. And from him she had...

C: Five children. Mrs. John, Jenny, another sister that died, and a brother that died, his name was Abner too, and then Bessie.

M: And after him...

C: When he died, then my mother married my father, Lee. And after I was born then they were divorced and she carried the name Kama again or something like that, and then my brother was born so he went under Kama.

M: In the meantime you mother also married Kini Aki right?

C: Ya, that was after, way after. Kini Aki. She was married to Ahia, David Ahia.

M: David Ahia, he was after your father.

C: Oh ya, way after. I was big, maybe I was about seven, eight years old when she married David Ahia. And then, she divorced him.

M: And she never have any kids from him?

C: No, no. I think my brother was about five years old when she married him. Then she divorced him and then way after she married Kini Aki. When she married Kini Aki I was maybe about fourteen, fifteen around there.

M: And then after she married Kini then..

C: she died. They were married only for about a couple of years, two, three years I think. Maybe a little longer, and then she died. My mother died when she was fifty-one. She died very young.

M: What was it she died from?

C: They claimed she had tuberculosis, but you know those days there were a lot of that ya. From a bad cold they don't take care. And she used to go to the beach see, with all these children to bring up, she used to go to the beach and she used to, we used to pick limu and things like that and if she got wet like that, she stayed wet all day. So the doctor felt that's how, you know, from a bad cold and she ended up in the hospital with pnunomia and after that the doctor, after they took x-ray, I think she was in the hospital for like three, four weeks, then

the doctor took x-rays and then said that she had a slight touch of tuberculosis. So we couldn't live with her see. Those days tuberculosis was like contagious or something like that and so we lived with my sister and my step-father Kini Aki took care of her. But I used to come home and come on weekends and help do the laundry and things like that. I'd clean her room.

M: So then when she died then you and your brother just stayed with your sister.

C: Ya, well when she died, ya, we stayed with my sister but I didn't stay very long, I moved to Honolulu. My sister became his (her brother) guardian, see. Because we couldn't live with her, because we were minors or something, the Department of Health, those days they were real strict, not like today you know, we couldn't like in other words be in contact with her. Even when you go to the hospital to visit her when she was in the hospital, they'd make you wear a mask, a gown and things like that because you were visiting a patient with tuberculosis. But they claim now they know more about things like that, it's not as bad. But those days they put you away in one corner and you can't come in contact with other people.

M: Was she in the hospital long?

C: For about three months.

M: It must have been long for her.

C: Oh yes, especially when you're used to doing all these things and....

M: So your mother, half the time she was single but she was married to different ones so then they would usually do the work when they ... (shook head no) They didn't work, the men?

C: Only Kini Aki. That's why she wasn't married to David Ahia very long. Because she had to do everything like she used to do.

M: What did he do?

C: Nothing, just roam the streets like a, you know today we call it hippies and stuff. But he used to drink a lot, roam the street and... In fact I don't think she was married to him more than just about two years or maybe less. And she couldn't take it, you know. She had to support this person, this extra person and so she kicked him out. But you know, we always had a home. We had a great time. And we didn't, you know, have to go to live with other people like that. We had a home.

M: Did you always stay in the same house? I remember last time you said something about the farm, you had to go up to another place.

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C: Ya, not too far up the road. But that was like a little shed, you know, during the time the crops would be in production, it had to be harvested. But otherwise we'd always be in our house.

M: What was your house like?

M: We had five or six bedrooms. One, two, three, four, five. And a big living room. We had a big house. We used to live in the back of the church. And then a big dining room. And you know those days, the homes were with porch, they always have a porch.

(Some things on the tape about the house they have now and how Mrs. Ching's husband remodeled a couple of the bedrooms so they could rent them out to tourists who needed a place to spend a night or two.)

M: So on your family house, did everybody sleep in the bedrooms? Did everybody have their own bedroom?

C: Everybody had, well my sister and I had a bedroom, but as we grew older you know, we had, everybody had there own rooms.

M: You had a place you said was downstairs where you used to pound the poi and stuff.

C: and weave mats. So we had rooms of our own and we had a big, those days they don't call it living room, they call it parlor, where when my gramma was living, after dinner everybody sit around in the parlor. More like a sitting room but they used to refer to it as a parlor. And the Hawaiians, you know after dinner everyone sit around in the parlor and they, we call it "Ohana." She would say a little speech or a sermon, just among the family, and then each one of whoever's present, the grandchildren or the children would say a verse. We'd call it a "pauku". I don't know if you know what that is. In the Hawaiian churches they say pauku like a verse. You pick a verse from the Bible and you recite it. And our famous, we used to always rush to say it. You see, everybody take their turn and our famous one was aloha keakua, God is love. Because it was so short and easy you can't help but remembering that. But that was done every day. You know we had to, that was when my gramma was living. She would read a scripture from the Bible and then she would explain it to the family. It's not long, maybe about half an hour. And then each one would say their verse, you know. And so after that then, it's more of an open discussion. If you had something to say about the next person or if you did something you would have to come out and say it. You know if you did something you weren't suppose to do, you know when you're kids, you're rascal and, see we didn't have a place of amusement or anything like that to go to so we made our own amusement and sometimes we did things to the next kid and you know. So that is like, according to them you sit there and you like say your thoughts or whatever you have on your mind, just like share it with everybody so you don't--see they claim by doing things like

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that you don't think about that so much that some people get frustrated, or if they get stress or something. And they used to call it Ohana, where the family sits around together and then maybe sing one or two songs you know. Every evening. Because we didn't have TV. Every evening after dinner, after everything was cleaned up. See we had to shower before the sun goes down because we didn't have electricy. All the lights were kerosene lamps, so when it's dark, everything has to be done. And so everybody would sit around and ohana. But it would be in the living room. At that time we didn't think anything about it because we had nothing else to do, no radio, no TV. It was like a routine thing, everyday. Unless there would be an occasion, maybe there was a party or something that we weren't going to be home for that night. Then we were exempted. But other than that, as long as we were home we had that, or whoever's at home just gather around and....

M: And so your mother and your grandmother and you and Bessie and Abner

C: and my oldest sister, the one that passed away, Edith.

M: And the other two were away to school by then?

C: Ya. But whoever would come to the house. See my gramma knew a lot of people and sometimes people would drop by and spend the night, like that. I remember, I forgot who that fella's name was, he stopped by with a family friend and you know, it was late at night, well not really late but this was like unexpected guests. And you don't have a freezer to just go get things and you know prepare something, for them. Being that they didn't have dinner my sister and I had to run to the store, Amoo's store wasn't very far, buy a couple of cans of sardines. You know those days, not the oil one, the one with the tomatoe sauce. And my gramma fed them sardines and poi. I forgot who it was. He was a pretty famous, out of the royalty family, they came from Honolulu and apparantly they were interested in surfing (?) so they brought him down to see my gramma. And so they partied a little and so she served them sardine and poi. And we talk about it every so often, I forgot his name. Maybe his name was David ~~Koananakoa~~ Koananakoa or something like that. And at that time my sister and I we didn't think anything about it because we didn't know anything about things like that but as we grew older we learned and we said, "eh remember that guy we had to go buy the sardine for. Imagine, gramma fed him sardine and poi." And he was kinda famous you know. But living in the country like this you know.

M: So that store, was that the Dunn's store?

C: Ya, not Dunn. The Dunn is her granddaughter. Yong, they were Yong. The old man and the old lady was Yong. They didn't have any children. We knew her as Amoo. Amoo means like aunty or something. And his name was Yanawai. But they adopted these children. The daughter is married to a Dunn. So that's how they

and so you know things like that was...

M: How did she discipline you folks?

C: With the stick. "I told you not to do it." Pack. Ooo we'd scream, yell and everything and we'd do it once and we won't do it again. That's how we were disciplined. Spanking. When she said "no you can't go" that means no you can't go. That doesn't mean ya later on or something, no is no. And that's it. We know better not to bother her again about that same subject.

M: So she was the main one who did all the discipling, like your grandmother she didn't...

C: Ya. Well my gramma, she didn't bother about discipling us because like it was out of her juristiction. But we were taught to be respectful this is how. Your know those days ya, if you're a child or something, you are to be seen and not heard.

M: You were talking about the land that you gramma would give out. Look over the map here and what places. (Map in back of book)

Pete holani

C: Right here where it says Kini Aki, actually this is all one parcel. This is all one parcel over here. And so she gave Kini Aki's wife, his first wife, half an acre more or less to put their house and then so when they died then Kini Aki only had one sister, one brother, last name was Kaliholani, so that's who lives on that parcel now. And right next door she gave the Hauanio's half acre more or less. (the one on 17) And then we still have this, all this. In fact my son-----? I think this is all wrong though. But anyway we still own all this.

M: Tell me what part you think is wrong.

C: The way this map is drawn see, Kini Aki, it's not a big piece over here you know, it's just a strip over here. (half of 19) and all down here (into 17). Over here is another parcel. See this one.... (more looking at the map) Acually a lot of these people used to live there but they didn't own the place. This one, number 16 is not owned by Alama Kahilihiwa. His wife, and Mary Kahilihiwa, is like an estate, Mary, Louise and Charles Kaina. They're brothers and sisters, it's an estate. You know that's whats wrong with the Hawaiian land. This is why a lot of them lose it. You see, when the parents die, they have so many children, they become heirs. For instance like you and your husband, you folks don't make any will or anything, who gets the house or what, when you folks pass away, all of your children will become heirs. They all gonna own it, have a share in it. See, a lotta time, the Hawaiians, maybe they move away and one say, oh I don't wanna live there, you can have it. But not in black and white. Legally, they still all own it. So when it comes time to settle it, it costs too much money. The attorneys want so much money and they don't have that kind of money. You know a lot of them, maybe only one person has been paying the taxes on it like that, but as long as it is an estate, regardless

of whether you paid the taxes for thirty years its still an estate. Now in order to settle it, you have to get one attorney and do this and so a lot of them say I don't have that kind of money. So-what do they do? They sell it. And so this is why, ya, I don't agree with what they say, oh the haoles went take their land. But that's not true, cause I seen this many times. This is what happened in Kona. You know when Hawaiian families, maybe they don't settle it in this generation but the next generation its gonna be bigger, more people own it. And it's even harder to sit down and compromise when its so much, you know, so naturally some goin' say, oh I don't want it, you can have it. But legally they didn't sign off. And it keeps going like that. You know, in fact there's still a family in Kapaahu, well use to be Royal Gardens on that side, they call it Popo. I'm pretty sure they have I think fifty acres with three hundred somewhat heirs.

M: What family is that?

C: The Kononui family. Because some families, the mother and father died and so all their children came in, it kept going like that and she still couldn't save it.

M: So they're leaving it like that.

C: That the lava had covered it. So I don't know what they...legally they still own the land but if they don't have the money to, you know settle it when the lava didn't cover it, now to them it's not worth anything, but I don't know. This is why I always, I didn't care about Alulike. I found that they were not helping the Hawaiians. Because like I said many years ago when I first moved back, I was kinda active in the community and Mrs. Akinsio from Hilo, she was like a maybe a social worker for Alulike or something like that in this area, and she asked me several times, "We have money, Alulike has lots of money. What are the needs of the Hawaiians." So I tried to explain to her, I said, "You know, the Hawaiians are rich, they have lots of land but they don't have the knowhow, they don't have the money to hire the attorneys to go settle their estate and try to get it probated where they can subdivide it or they can share it among themselves. If you want to keep yours, you keep yours but get it to where you can say yours, and not with so many people. But a monthe later she can back and she said, "Well, I talked to Mrs. Lee Hong and she said no, they don't need the help." I said, "You know what Maile, you only talked to one person. There's lots of Hawaiians here...", then there were quite a few kupunas still alive, I said like Aunty Mary (Kahilihiwa), there's three of them, she, the sister and her brother. But yet they still couldn't compromise, you know try to... (quite a bit more on that and what happened to some of the land in Kona. Experience of her daughter in law. Also how much it cost them to work out their land.)

M: You got your mother's land right?

AKimseu

C: Ya, we all, everybody, all the kids. But prior to, when we had it settled, one sister sold it so many times, you know her share so many times. And then the other sister sold it, then sold it to somebody else and so whoever bought it first is the legal, you know. And that's why it was so hectic, you know. So even among the family, they try to sell. When somebody come and offer you something you take it. Keep going like that.

M: So do you still have your original place like your house?

C: Ya. We still have it but there's no house on it. My brother in the early '70s when he came back, nobody was living there, it was all deteriorated so he kinda felt sad about it so he burned it down. No more foundation, no nothing. Cause it was all wood. But my son has a house in another lot right next. He built a house, so he lives up that side. Below the highway in the back, below that we have eighty-seven acres and then above the highway we have two-hundred and seven or two eleven or something like that.

M: And that's all settled (legally). How about the lava did it come...

C: Well the '77 flow took maybe about ten or twenty acres but we still own it. No matter, then we'll have virgin land.

M: Did you notice any difference in the way things were from the '30s to the '40s, the way people worked together, was there any change?

C: No, not in that short time. But after the war, ya, there was a slight change. I guess people were exposed to, they had USED ya. It was a government like a city and county, but this was for the federal government. They had jobs see, after the war, so people got little bit more, not in their life style but, more outgoing and stuff like that.

M: So the community wasn't as close because they would be out working and stuff? What kind of things did they spend their money on?

C: Ya. A lot of people used to buy their poi and stuff like that. But most of the Hawaiians, I hate to say this, spent their money on booze, partying up and like that. They'd party from Friday to Sunday and you know. That's the sad thing about it, you know.

M: All that was ^{after?} before the war, before the war you didn't have that?

C: Well you did have parties, but not too much of the kind of bought whiskey and beer and stuff like that. Before that they used to make their own home brew and things like that. But when they got little money, the younger ones going to work, they had

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their own paycheck, they bought, most of them would...

M: How about the churches? Was there any differences in how they did things together?

C: Oh they still do, up until... They were still like a close knit thing but until in the '50s I think, I don't know because we weren't here then. But even when I came it's still, but not as close as it used to. You know people used to, because I don't know maybe cause of the simple reason that's there's a lot of outside influence and stuff like that, so maybe it's different but... I go to the Catholic church we do a lot things. (A little more on that and what they do.)

M: What were the families that were the musicians?

C: The Kononui family. Like, Dennis Pavao (?) comes from the Kononui family, his mom was a Kononui girl and the Hui Ohana's, their mom was a Kononui girl. They all come from that side, the mom's. So they're the musician families in Kalapana, musical families.

