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Interview 8 with Helen Lee Hong 6/13/89

by Charles Langlas

Tape 1, Side A

1) untranscribed: houseplan of Pe`a house--HLH repeated that Gabriel had the porch bedroom, her Grandma had the adjacent bedroom inside

C: Was there beds or mats in the bedrooms?

H: Well, the floor was covered with mats, and then we slept on mattresses, mattress on the floor.

C: What kind?

H: Well, during those days, they bought it from the furniture store.

C: Made here in Hawaii?

H: They were brought in I think to the stores.

C: In your dining room, was there a dining table?

H: There is a big long dining table, enough for the family.

C: And in the kitchen what was there?

H: In the kitchen was a stove. During those days, we use the cast-iron stove, you know, that you cook with the sood, and then there's oven.

C: And the wood...

H: Outside, there was a section where we stored the wood. That was part of our daily life--go to school, come back, and go pick wood and chop it. Store it away into the storage room.

C: The girls and the boys both?

H: Yes.

C: The parents too?

H: Well, the parents helped too. When they got big ohia logs, well, they help in splitting it.

C: So, you went and got smaller...

H: Smaller wood, where you could cut with a cane-knife.

C: That was all stored in your cookhouse?

H: Yeah, cookhouse.

C: When people came over, did they eat in the dining-room with you?

H: Yes. We had a big long table, enough for guests to come, and family.

C: I heard that there was lots of lu`au's downstairs?

H: Well, downstairs was just a plain, open basement. When we held lu`au's it was there, downstairs, where all the room was.

C: Did people come to help make the food for the lu`au?

H: Well, was mostly family, so they did come to help, those who was free you know, not doing any work.  
(bit omitted)

C: Could you tell me some of the relatives that usually came to help?

H: The aunties and uncles, cousins, came to help--my mom's cousins. They lived close by.

C: Which ones would that be?

H: That's the Kamelamelas. They were close by. They live right in Kalapana when we were in Kaimu, see.

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C: Anyone else?  
H: My aunties would come also.  
C: The ones from Hilo?  
H: No. They live in Kilohana. My other aunty, the Elderts. Kahikina. They were not too far, so they would come.  
C: Anybody from in Kaimu would come?  
H: The neighbors would come to help.  
C: All of them?  
H: All those, mostly the men. When there was work for the menfolks to do, well, the menfolks turned out to do their part. Like kalua pig, or maybe kill a cow, and clean. Those days the family kept, you know, raised their own cattle and hogs. And when it came for a time for a party, they already prepared. They have all that. But just do the work, do the slaughtering, cleaning.  
C: How many men would it take to make the imu and slaughter?  
H: I don't think you need too much, maybe six--whoever was available at the time, who of the families was available to come.  
C: So, maybe from the Wai'au's might come?  
H: Yeah.  
C: And from the Ahia's?  
H: Keli'ihomalu's, Ahia's, the near neighbors would be coming. Right.  
C: When you were living with your folks, do you remember going to lu'au's at Kalapana, at families?  
H: We went, when there was lu'au's, we did go.  
C: Do you think you would have gone to all the lu'au's in Kalapana?  
H: No, I don't think so. We couldn't go to all of them. When there was a good, big lu'au, the family went. Some families, they have their own. You know, just the family get together, they don't...  
C: And if you're not so close...  
H: Yeah, you're not too closely related [you don't go].  
C: Do you ever remember going with your folks to lu'au in Kapa'ahu?  
H: In Kapa'ahu, yes, different families.  
I mean we lived in area, look like everybody was related to us, you know. When there was a lu'au, everybody went, yeah. The Konanui's.  
C: Were you related to Konanui's?  
H: I guess from our great-grandparents. Just partly related, you know.  
  
C: You said there was a couple of hanai nieces that your mother kept.  
H: Kept. Niece and nephew, yeah, Kaleihua and Eddie.  
C: One was a nephew?  
H: That's Keleihua's brother, Eddie. That was the two last hanai mom kept.  
C: Who were their parents?  
H: From Kapoho. Their parents was Eddie too, I think.  
C: Were they younger than your brothers and sisters?  
H: They were younger.

C: After all the brothers and sisters got older, then she took them?

H: Yes, then she took them. I was married when they came.

C: Did she get them when they were just born, or...

H: No. They were already older. [She didn't know if they had any other brother or sisters who stayed with their real parents.]

## 2) Ua pau ka U`i o Kaimu

C: I wonder if you could talk in Hawaiian about Ka U`i o Kaimu, mamua. What was beautiful about it, when you were younger, and then how it's changed.

H: (thinks a little while before answering)

Ua hānau `ia au ma Kaimū, Puna. I ke`u mau lā `ōpio, hele mākou e `au`au kai ma mua. [He one wa...] He lau papa one wale nō ma mua, mai kekahi kihi a hiki i kekahi kihi o ka `āina. He nani ka nānā `ana aku i ka lau papa o ke one, ke one `ele`ele o Kaimū. A hele nōho`i au e `au`au kai ma mua. I ka wā ma mua, e hele nā mākou e lawai`a, he `upena ku`u kā lākou hana. Hele nā mākouakāne me ka `upena ku`u, a ku`u i ka `upena, a lawe mai i ka i`a ma ka pae one, a, i ka loa`a `ana o nā i`a he nui, ua māhelehele `ia ka i`a o na `ohana like `ole o Kaimū. A he `ala nōho`i ka lipoa ka līmu kaulana o Kaimū. Ke holo a`e `oe ma luna o ka pae one, he `ala lipoa wale nō. `O ia ka līmu onaona ke `ala ma ke one o Kaimu. Akā, i nā makahiki hope mai nei, ua hiki mai ke kai, kai pi`i nō ho`i, a ua lawe `ia aku ke one, a ua ne`e mai ka `āina i loko. I kēia lā, I kēia wā, ua li`ili`i loa ke one ma Kaimū. He `ehā paha alanui i pau, i lawe `ia e ke kai. Kēia lā, ua pili pū mai ke one i loko. Pēlā nō ho`i me nā `ulu niu. Ua hā`ule aku nā kumu niu i loko o ke kai. Kēia lā, he pōhaku wale nō kāu ike ma nā paepae o ke one, a ua li`ili`i loa ke one. A ua pau nō ho`i ka nani o Kaimu i kēia lā, ke nānā aku. Ma mua, he wahi kaulana i ke one `ele`ele o Kaimū, akā, i kēia lā, ua loli ka `aina, a, ua pau ka nani o Kaimū.

(failed to record the rest of side A)

about marriage: How did you get along with your husband? well

How were your children as teenagers? good, no trouble, the boys worked with Gabriel, all graduated from Pahoa H.

S., Lizzie graduated from Commercial School as well

about houses:

Lee Hong house (that she moved into)--up above: parlor & bedrooms (had beds); down below: kitchen & work area (had dining table)

Wai`au house (of H's Gpa)--same as Lee Hong house; had up and down, but they used mats for sleeping and dining instead of beds and dining table

her two older children often slept over at Wai`au's house

## Side B

C: Do you know what the mats looked like that they slept on? Were they ordinary mats?

H: What? Lauhala mats. Of course, the Grandma folks, they

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know they had their sleeping mats. They wove the fine weave. That's only for sleeping. If they wanted to sleep on the floor, they would roll the mat, sleeping mat. We even had mats to eat. That was only for dining, if we sat down and eat. That mat was only for eating mat.

C: So that's what they had.

H: Yeah, they had. We would sit across on the floor and eat. Most of the time was sitting down the old fashion way of sitting down and eat.

c: Both houses then had their own kitchen and also their own cookhouse?

H: Their own cookhouse. Yes.

C: When you made poi...

H: We had our own boards and stone, pounder. We pound our poi and then they made their own poi. Sometime when they had too much overleft they would share, you know, if we didn't have. Cause my husband's father was Chinese and he ate mostly rice. So the mom would eat poi and us.

C: While your husband was going on the ship did you make poi?

H: No. Grandma and Grandpa would make the poi and would share with us, and we'd eat together. We'd go over and help peel the taro and the breadfruit to make the poi, so they shared the poi.

C: But then after he got the job here...

H: He came back to stay, and we would make our poi and they made theirs separate.

C: So once he came back did you start growing your own taro too?

H: Yes, once he came back to stay, we started going up to the forest and get our own plants up there. We planted taro, bananas, sweet potatoes.

C: Oh, you planted sweet potatoes up there?

H: Yes, we planted some. It came out alright.

4) dating her husbands jobs

paraphrased: She had all her children (Liz was the baby) before her husband stopped working on the ship. He just worked on the ship about a year, then came back to take over the Grandpa's job when he retired. He worked a little while at that job, then got into the police.

C: Was he doing something else before he went out on the boat?

H: He was workin part-time with the county, road department.

C: Was that every day work?

H: Well, in the beginning only part-time, and then they worked every day. Federal project jobs. I think USED.

C: Was that right in the area?

H: Right in the area. The roads were all gravel roads. It wasn't any paved road like today. So they need to be patching the holes, and cut the grass. Those days. Was all hand power, no machinery then. You bring your own sickle and bars and what. Cause the county supplied whatever they had.

C: How far up do you think they went? as far as Pahoa?

H: Yeah, and Opihikao. They went all over, where it needed to be fixed.

C: Did they drive up there?

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H: At that time, yeah. They had the Model T Ford cars. Workers got together and go in one car and come home. Pool car.

C: When he was working for the USED, do you think most families had cars by then?

H: No, not all families had cars then, just some, those who could. Although there was a Chinese family down there, they bought cars to transport people, go to town or go to do shopping--the Lees.

C: Did they get paid?

H: Yes, you gotta pay for your ride.

C: I heard too that Gabriel gave rides up. He didn't charge?

H: He didn't charge I guess, some who needed help, if he knew they couldn't afford.

5) C: Did you and your husband raise any pigs, or cows?

H: We raised pigs, mostly pigs. Had a pig-pen where you go and feed the pigs.

C: You kept 'em penned up?

H: We kept them penned. When they were tame, we would let them go in the day, and then in the evening they would come back. And when the families lived over there, everybody raised pig. They knew their pig by the ear-mark. Oh, that's so and so's pig. Also cattle--but my husband didn't raise cattle.

C: You and your husband had your own earmark? Different from Wai'au's?

H: Yeah, different from the Wai'au's. I think it's just a cut under the ear, like an arch. po`a, underneath, just a little arch. (On left ear. See diagram.)

C: Did you register this?

H: No, not the pig. The cows [brands] were registered.

C: Do you know how many pigs you would have had?

H: No. That was my father-in-law's, that's what he used to do too. So I don't know, because I don't tend too much, you know. Although, I know they build a pen. You cook slop everyday to feed the pigs. You know, we have breadfruit and honohono grass, they would boil it up in the tub. That was part of the food for the pigs. With middling. Middling was like wheat, in the bag. That you have to buy. It's expensive. They would mix it [with the cooked slop], so the pigs would like it better, to give the taste. And coconuts, all we did was just split the coconuts in half, and then the pigs just loved that. So much coconuts. So you didn't have to buy commercial feed, yeah?, all the time, since had coconut. All they need was water. Then when mango season, there's so much mangos fallin, they would live on the mangos. Papaya, of course, wild papaya.

C: The pigs went everywhere?

H: Around Kaimu they go. And afterwards, when they came to be a nuisance, yeah, you had to pen your pigs.

C: When?

H: People were stealing, eh? Even the cattle. Outsiders were coming in and, comin hunting in the area, yeah? And that was problems.

C: When do you think that was?

H: Oh, I don't know, but we had problems. Even the cattle were. They kill the cattle, slaughter the cattle. When you go, you find the head and the skin, you know. They just take the meat. So, was hard to raise animal after that.

C: Was that after the park was opened?

H: You mean before the park was open. Outsiders were comin in. They know we plenty pigs down there. And the pigs go out in the open fields. So they just come. All you do, you'd be missing, so many pigs missing. You don't know who.

6) C: You know those goat-drives, how long did those keep happening? Still in the thirties?

H: No. The last, I don know. Before the national park road went in.

C: During the USED work, were they still having the goat -drives?

H: Yeah. Cause they haven't started to make the park road yet. So they used to go on horse-back. (She thinks not after WW2.)

7) C: I heard Gabriel was called the mayor of Kalapana.

H: Yes, they always did call Gabriel the mayor of Kalapana. They nicknamed him. I mean that was what people called him. Well...he was a bachelor. He was a hard worker, farmer, go and make 'opihi down the beach. You know, he worked for himself, his livelihood. Make coconuts, whatever he had raised. Planted watermelons, and tomatoes, and brought in to the market. He was a hard worker.

C: I know after you married, you wove with the mom still, did you ever weave with your husband's grandma?

H: No, no. She did her own weaving too. I would just go watch her.

C: I wanted to ask you about the lauhala a little, cause I wasn't sure. When you pick the lauhala, do you pick only the leaves that are still on the tree?

H: No. You can pick the ones [on the ground too], the fresh ones. You know which ones is, you know, fell down on the ground. You pick the ones on the ground too.

C: The ones you pick from the tree are already dry?

H: They dry. Some dried on the tree and they still [there].

C: You never picked the green ones?

H: Well, the green ones were made separately. They would boil it, or... Then you get a white lauhala.

C: Did you weave those kind too?

H: Those boiled ones were made for sleeping mats. Very fine weave.

C: Is it more flexible when you boil it?

H: Yes, it is. Easier to make a small weave.

C: Is there a different name for the two kinds of weaving?

H: For the hats, they had different names of weaving. But the mats were just plain. Regular floor-mats were just plain

weaving. But, like the hats, they had all kind different weavings, so they had names.

C: When you boil it...

H: You have to dry. It has to be good, dry, sunny weather. So it can dry well after it boils. If it rains, it's going to be mildew, you know, it would spoil the leaves.

C: You don't call those mats from the green leaves different?

H: No. Well, the sleeping mats are different--small and fine weave. Those mats you only use for sleeping.

C: Both of them are moena?

H: Moena. Both of them are moena. Moena is a big name, that's why. But...different type of. The boiled ones are the ones you make for sleeping.

C: Moena moe?

H: Moena moe. Moena hiamoe.

C: And for eating?

H: Moena `ai. Moena pakaukau `ai.

C: And then, when you took off the thorns off the dry leaves, you use a knife? or nail? or just fingernail?

H: Well, we used a knife. Then, during my time, we used knife.

C: When you boil the green leaves, do you take the thorns off first?

H: No. Some don't. After you boil it, and dry it, then you take the thorns off.

C: When you made hats, which did you use, the green or the dry?

H: They used the green and the dry for making hat. Both.

C: Did you do that fine weving yourself?

H: I used to help my mom. Oh, it's hard.

8) C: I'd like to ask you too about after your husband retired. There was just the two of you I guess. And the grandma. What was your husband doing--was he still healthy?

H: No, no, he wasn't healthy then. He took disability. Retired after 21 years. He took a disability retirement. Cause he was having high blood pressure. So doctor reccommended that he retire, do light work.

C: So you couldn grow anymore.

H: No, he didn want. We stopped that.

C: Did you take any grandchildren to help. Did any come to live with you then?

H: No.

C: But after your husband died, one of your grand-daughters came down to stay with you?

H: Yes. Just one. The other ones stayed with their mom, they didn want to come. They go to school. But this one volunteered. She wanted to come down and stay with me.

C: Who was that?

H: That's the mother of these two little children that I'm keeping.

C: Oh. What's her name?

H: Bernadine.

C: Hawaiian name?

H: Alohalani.

C: Do you have a grand-daughter Haleola?



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H: Yes, different one. My daughter's oldest daughter.  
C: This is the sister of...  
H: Yes. This is the sister.

Tape 2

H (contd.): After, when my husband died.  
C: 1971? Does that sound right?  
H: I think so. It's kinda hard to remember now.  
CL: How long did you and the granddaughter live there after that?  
H: We stayed there. She went to school. Pahoia. She was only youngster then. Grade-school and Junior High.  
C: Did she go all the way to graduate at Pahoia?  
H: No, she didn't. She moved back with her mom.  
C: Did you stay down there alone then, or move up too?  
H: No, I stayed down.  
C: How long did you stay alone? It was just you?  
H: Just... myself. The other older grandchildren would come down. My husband's [family], neighbors, the sons and their children.. We were. There was family around, so wasn't too lonesome.  
C: Was Keli`iho`omalua's there?  
H: Keli`iho`omalua's were there. Yeah, the family close by. Keli`iho`omalua's, the Wai`au's, children and grandchildren. They would come down. There was always somebody.  
C: Was Gabriel still alive?  
H: No.  
C: So you stayed on down there... When did you move up here?  
H: I only moved here lately, when I had to come to school here [to teach at the university]. I used to have a car. I used to go home, eh? Then my grandson wrecked my car, and I had no means of transportation. So I used to come and go home. Just come to school here and go right home in my car. But I didn't have any car, so I have to come back, stay with my daughter, the one here. That's the reason why I had to come and stay. No means of transportation. Otherwise I would come and go home. I'm used to my place. Still.

9) C: Simeon Wai`au.  
H: Yeah, Simeon Wai`au Bill.  
C: Was his taro patch at Ki`ula?  
H: Ki`ula. Had a taro patch at Ki`ula, cause they had a homesteading land up there. They would go up there and plant their taro up. Ki`ula.  
C: Did he walk up?  
H: Walk up by the path. There was a trail right in the back to go straight up to the Ki`ula.  
C: That was the same path to your parents' place?  
H: To our... also had my parents taro patch up there too. Those days no cars. Either walk or take a donkey. Most of the time was walking.  
C: Did people ride horses around very much?  
H: They rode horses, but not too many people had horses, those

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days. Kind of expensive. Only the cowboys, the ranchers would have horses.

C: Did anybody have horse and buggy?

H: Yeah. My dad had a horse and a buggy. During his days, yeah, they used to go up, to Ki'ula. They couldn't drive [car] up there. Was rough road. You need a buggy with a horse. Up on the trail. It was wide, a buggy could do it.

C: Today a jeep could do it.

H: Today a jeep could do it. Today they bulldozed it. That's where they were cutting those woodchips. Up there in Ki'ula there. Somebody. Who? Campbell's Estate or whatever, eh?

C: You know, like your dad's place at Ki'ula and Wai'au's place, did they have different small names?

H: Not that I know. The big name was Ki'ula. They didn't have small names.

C: What about the houselots in Kaimu. There wasn't small names for those was there?

H: Just Kaimu, the big name. I never heard of small names. Kaimu, and then Makena. Makena is where the coconut grove. Then Kalapana.

[bit omitted]

10) [During the following section, I led the informant. She often said I'm not sure, I never heard. I have transcribed only her statements where she herself gives information.]

C: About the time you were married, there were still some people getting deeds to places in Kaimu. Do you remember hearing anything about that?

H: Land deeds?

C: Like homesteads.

Like, Louise Keli'ihomalu said she and her husband homesteaded.

H: They were homesteading I think, people who could. But you didn't get your deed. I used to hear that. You have to stay on your place for so many years, and then you pay so much, whatever they going pay the land department. And then you get your deed. After that. But it was open for homesteading I think, some areas of the land [not in Kaimu village itself].

C: I'm trying to figure out what happened in Kaimu. Long ago it was...

H: Crown land. That's what I heard. [bit omitted]

All I knew was the Kaimu lands were all crown lands. Then they gave each family so many acres to live on. And of course, maybe the other lands they could homestead. If it was government land.

C: People talked about how it used to be crown land?

H: All I heard was crown land, was the aliis', you know, the royalty. Gave each family so many acres. That's how Kaimu... When they came [they asked] who stayed here? Well, you have your ten acres, ten acres. That's how the Kaimu land there are all divided, in ten-acre lots, given to the families that were living there.

C: They were already living there?

H: They were already living there. It was like that.

C: Can you think of anything that you think is important that we haven't talked about?

H: I think we've talked about most of everything. But we probably forgot, eh?

C: When we did that videotape, at the church, you were talking about how you were the choir leader.

H: I was in the choir, I wasn't the choir leader, but. I was the leading voice, a soprano, eh? I didn't really direct.

C: But you were the one that started em?

H: Yeah. Just like the leading voice.

C: Would you hum the right pitch?

H: I guess. We would hum. No tuning fork.

C: You picked the right pitch?

H: Yes.

C: How would you start all together?

H: Well, give them the sign, one, two three... and sing. Yeah.

C: Where all did you go?

H: With the choir, we went all to different islands. Yeah. With the choir, the first time I ever went to Kaua'i. During those days they have song contests. Like [at] the 'aha pae'aina, statewide.

C: You went to Maui too?

H: Yeah. Went to mostly all the other islands, singing in the choir.

C: Did the church pay your way, or did you try to make money?

H: We tried to raise fund for everybody to go--some kinda sale, food sale, like that. Go take order and make laulau's. That was big help.

C: Did you keep singing in the choir after you were married?

H: Yes. My husband came in and joined us too. (laughs) He wasn't a singer, but..            You know, we got in together, like James and Frances. We really enjoyed.

C: Did you do that many years?

H: Quite a number of years, till finally we stopped. Everybody was losing interest. They had their reasons, so not coming. So that was it.

a couple of questions asked after tape turned off:

--John Pe'a li'ilii [lived at Keaukaha] never came to Kaimu to visit her family. She never saw him, in fact.

--She never knew any of the Kaimu folks to take offerings (ho'okupu) up to Pele, like those described by Emma Kauhi.

--According to Julie Williams, HLH told her her family kept the goats at Panau in a stone corral. They stayed in (although they could have climbed over the stone wall) because fed with strawberry guavas.