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Becky Pau
Interview 11-13-91

This is Leilani Miller, I am doing a historical project for Chuck Langlois's class anthropology in the Kalapana area. I would like to introduce Becky Pau who is also known as "Auntie Becky, The Songbird of Puna."

Q: Would you like to talk a little bit about where you were born?

A: I was born in Pua Kalehua, Kau on March 13, 1929 the daughter of Annie Nu'uauu and Tomas Quihano. At the age of three we moved to the family estate in Kapa'ahu, and this is where I had been raised.

Q: (13) Who would you say were the major musical influences in your life as you were growing up?

A: (15) My family like Agnes Konanui which is the Hui Ohana whose grandfather was David Konanui, and in those days the whole family was musicians. My mother also, she really loved music and she sang in the church choirs. So there was no doubt I was raised in a musical family it influenced me to be a musician, perhaps I had already inherited the talent.

Q: And your mom was known as Annie Nu'uauu?

A: Yes, that was her single name.

Q: And she came from Kau?

A: uhm... originally we came from Puna, however because my grandfather had worked in a.. the cane with the company in Kau, so he had to earn a living this is why we moved to Kau. There they had a piece of property there in Kau and this is where my mom had grown up.

Q: So in 1929 this is where you were born?

A: Right

Q: And then in 1931 your family left that area in Kau to return to Kapa'ahu.

A: Right.

Q: (35) When was it in your childhood that you started playing an instrument?

A: Well it was in my early childhood as long as I could comfortably _____ it was in elementary school I think I was 6 or 7 years I had the desire to sing. So I had the desire to sing and plays in the school Christmas program that's how I got started

Q: And was it your mom that you would sing with or did she also play an instrument?

A: Ya my mom played the ukulele but very little, she was the one that she knew how to read notes and um she was the one that used to go through King's songbook and she would teach me songs. And in fact the song that my mom, Tina Ka'apana George Ka'apana and Lee Pavao and myself we sang on the tape _____ the song Halona (?) with my mother, you see she had a very strong Alto voice. (51) And so her voice could be heard in the background and its on the tape too.

Q: And you would sing at the church when you were growing up?

** A: well at the time I had when I was growing up I was at the Kalapana Congregational Church and we used to have hoiki's(?).

Kawaiuluo

Kaumakapili

And we used to travel to different districts and be in the choir and used to perform. And we even had song contests where choirs from other churches like um (63) Koiahu (?) Kawakapilio Churches would come and I remember it was in Hilo at the time of the song contests. We the group from Kalapana entered the song contests although we were amazed by it, you know you can't compete with Haili and Kawaehalu(?) but at least we did enter for fun.

Q: _____ What changes did you see happening in Kapa'ahu did you stay in that area?

** A: Well I notice my childhood days and it was much slower paced than it is now. Life was more relaxing uh I could recall during the evenings my cousins used to come over and we used to have jam sessions and I think that was very beautiful. Because they all had talents and you know we used to jam music!! We used to play and sing and eat. (laughter)

** Q: So what used to change you playing with the Ohana in the evenings and all coming together?

A: Oh well, graduation from our school and they had to move to another island like the younger ones since there was no job in Puna. So they had to move to Oahu and try to look for a job. So now left me back so this is why I team up with different ones and start da music.

** Q: Who are some of your favorites when you were back there in Kapa'ahu that you played with?

A: Um, my cousin Fred Punahoa he was the one that taught the Hui Ohana, the Ka'apana boys they was the twins he was the one that taught them how to play guitar.

Q: And then later on you also left Kapa'ahu to go into Hilo?

A: Right I lived with my sister, the reason why, because after I graduated from high school I had to earn my livelihood. So I moved to Hilo with my sister so that I could work. There was my sister and she had moved to Oahu and I went along with her.

** A: And what kind of work did you do when you were on Oahu?

Q: Well I was going to night school taking up a business course, but during the day I was working at the pineapple cannery.

Q: And in your spare time?

A: Well in my spare time (laughter) I used to go down Waikiki beach with my girlfriends. And so as I said I heard this program the amateur hour and I say to myself well it would be nice to be one of the top competitors to enter into that program. I wouldn't think a person coming from the boonies (laughter) to Oahu would be in the limelight there in front of the audience at the radio station. But before we appear on the program they had interviewed us and tried us out to see if they pick, they select the ones to appear on the program. So what had happened is they had selected me and at the time I was living in town with my aunt, my mom's oldest sister. And not wanting her to know that I was going to be on the program. So that night I sorta slipped out of the house and took the ukulele with me and pretended I was going out with the neighborhood kids and we was just going to have jam session. However I caught the bus and went down to Waikiki where KGMB studio was, and I appeared on the amateur hour. But I didn't give my (123) real name since my last name was Quihano its easy to remember so I called myself "Izy Queen"

great

So I sang one of my favorite songs Aloha Ku'u Home, low and behold the next week they sent me a letter and they sent me a prize. At that time it was \$20.00 was a pretty lot of money and I won first place (laughter) can you believe that?

(130)Q: That must have been very exciting.

A: It was exciting however I couldn't deceive my Aunt because after I got home and she said, "Hi Izy Queen" and I said how did you know? and she said "I could tell Your voice". But in the mean time my mom guys were listening to the radio at that time and they/ she knew my voice and my mom said she cried. She cried because that song there is a point in that song where it is mentioned I am yearning for that place. It made her feel like I was homesick, well I was sort of cause I just left home and so she said that she cried. But like I said it was my first experience in front of an audience.

Q: And that was your experience on the amateur hour which was the radio station.

A: Amateur hour , yup radio station there was no TV at that time.

Q: Did you remember who was the MC?

A: I don't really recall that was quite some time ago.

Q: Then after that period of time you moved back to Kapa'ahu? Did you continue on singing?

A: I did come back and then I sang with Lani Wong Hula Troop but prior to sing with the Lani Wong Hula Troop this is when I went to Oahu and um Lani Wong did ask me if I could be a lead singer for the group cause she was gonna anchor her on this Japanese program. So since there was only one station at that time I mean in Honolulu there were three stations but in Volcano there was only reception for that one station KGMB at that time I was performing this is where Louie had entered the picture and he saw me on TV singing and he said. "That's the woman that I'm thinking of ya know" And I'm gonna get her. So what had happened after we came back the Lani Wong's Hula Troop he called them because he said I think I remember seeing where I seen her on TV with the Lani Wong Troop. So he called Lani Wong and told her eh that wahine that sing on the TV shes gonna be with you? And then Lani said yah and she tell me (178) that Sargent Pau said that he was gonna be there. It was exciting to know cause all the kids say Sargent Pau Sargent Pau cause he used to drive the staff(?) car he used to bring all those tourists cause he used to be a tour guide. So and that may mean something but at this time it didn't mean a thing to me I said oh so well just another guy. So as we went up to KMC to perform and that was where it first started where he dated me and said I will take you home. (laughter|) And would you believe it the first night when he took me home he proposed to me. It must have been love at first sight.

(189)Q: And that was when he say you on the channel 9 station with Lani Wong?

A: Ya. He saw me on the station with Lani Wong, and in fact it was a year after that, it was in 1961 that I finally yielded to his proposal, I consented to his proposal so we got married.

(194)Q: Who were you playing music with at the time up at KMC?

A: I was playing with Hannah Santos and Juleus Wery at times he did the steel guitar or the guitar and Paul Abreu he plays the bass.

Q: And after that period of time like at KMC when you were playing music, and you stayed there and Louie had to go down to Korea.

A: Right he had an assignment in Korea. He had a one year of tour duty in Korea. So because he had to go to Korea, me and the kids moved back to Kapa'ahu and lived with my parents. But you must remember it is not the old house now it is the new house. The new house was completed in 1955. So we lived there in 1963, and at the time I had 4 boys, Gregg, Glen, Teddy and Kaleo. Then the 6 of us moved to Fort Carson Colo. where Louie was stationed. However even though while we were there there were local people that were service that were living in COLO. There was one program there, they had little ya know some kind of fundraising thing maybe it was a Hawaiian club that I performed with different ones there in COLO. So anotherwards no matter where I went because I love music I was willing to perform. One thing I remember like I said my first time I performed in front of an audience was at the radio station. But later on I performed with Lani Wong when she had her Uniki and then I was raised up in the country I was sorta afraid of crowds and ah it was my first experience singing before a large crowd at the uniki and that's how I got my heart not being afraid of crowds. This is how I was introduced to crowds and to people.

Q: Was that before you lived up at KMC or afterwards that Lani Wong had _____ It was in 61 that you married Louie?

A: No I married Louie right after I went we were performing up at KMC. And uhm this is when she _____