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Behavioral and Social Sciences Division
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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

NARRATOR: Agnus Lua

INTERVIEW NO.: OH-265

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 23 Feb.
11 April 1985

INTERVIEWER: Peter Birati

SUBJECT: Laie; CCH

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, you will hear about Agnes Lua's experience at CCH/BYU-HC as a cafeteria worker, growing up in Hawaii, home front experiences of World War II, plantation life in Hawaii and experiencing the Great Depression of the 1930.

Agnes comes from a Chinese-Hawaiian family and was born in Honolulu on March 17, 1922. She was raised at Laie for most of her life. She attended Laie and Kahuku School. Agnes is married to Makahiwa Lua. They have fourteen children. She is also one of the LDS pioneers here at Laie in establishing the Church and the school. She has had many great experiences.

The interview was conducted in her son's home and although she was sitting close to the microphone, her soft voice is sometimes difficult to hear. I also did the transcribing. Palota Purcell audited the tape and I did the editing.

Peter Birati
Student

NOTE

This interview was conducted by a student as part of a class assignment in History 121. In most cases the student selected the topic and narrator and also did most of the transcribing and editing. Usually the auditing was done by a classmate. The final typing was done by the student secretary, Rosemary Ghai.

Because we tried to get the transcripts into the hands of the participating students and narrators as quickly as possible there may be errors that otherwise would not be permitted. We usually try to clarify statements that may be confusing: in these interviews, however, unclear statements may possibly be found. Our apologies for presenting a less-than-perfect transcript, but this does enable us to get interviews that might otherwise be lost.

For most of the students this was their first interview and while they were surprised at how much work was involved they were pleased with the results of learning not only about the subject matter covered but the development of a skill at the same time.

Kenneth W. Baldrige, Director
Oral History Program, BYU-Hawaii

Laie, Hawaii
May 10, 1985

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PB: Hello, my name is Peter Birati and I am going to interview
[000] Agnes Lua. Today is February 23, 1985 and we interview at
55-490 Kamehameha Highway (home of her son, Howard Lua).
Agnes, what is your maiden name?

AL: Agnes Malia Kanahele

PB: And when and where were you born?

AL: I was born in Honolulu, March 17, 1922

PB: And what is your ancestor background, anyway?

AL: Chinese-Hawaiian

PB: Can you tell me about your experience as a youth growing up
in Laie?

AL: Well, when I was growing up in Laie, I helped my parents work
in the taro patches and I had several brothers and sisters
that I had to help to take care of.

PB: As a young child, did you live anywhere else other than Laie?

AL: Yes, for a little while in Honolulu with my aunts and grand-
parents.

PB: Can you tell us some of your experiences there?

AL: Well, we lived at Sand Island and my grandparents raised
fishes, little ones, middle size and so we need to just play
with the fishes.

PB: Oh, that (is) interesting and, where did you go to school
during that time?

AL: Oh, I came back and went to Laie School and Kahuku School.

PB: Do you have a favorite teacher during that time while you were
here?

AL: No, I did not.

PB: Tell me, how do you come to be Mrs. Lua?

AL: I worked at the Dole Pineapple Cannery and I met my husband
there. We were neighbours in Laie, but I met him there.

- PB: Was there any parental opposition?
- AL: Yes, my parents and my husband's parents were close friends and so they felt we were almost related.
- PB: (laughter). How many children do you have so far?
- AL: I have fourteen children.
- PB: Fourteen, fourteen, a lot of children. How did you cope with so many?
- AL: Now, I think about, I don't know, but one thing I know, I had to rely on Heavenly Father. He had to be patient with me and listen to all my problems. Of course, they were not any (problems or difficulties) because my children were wonderful children. They were easy to take care (of) and I think it was easier to take care (of) a lot of children than just one or two because they all had to learn to share and when I (go) grocery shopping especially for foods, I buy only what I need for that amount of children. (100) I would buy thirteen apples, thirteen oranges and that's all they're going to have. (laughter). Then when it came to their birthdays-- when they were about eight years old, they had three choices for their birthdays: a whole pie--any kind they want, a dozen egg (sic) or a dollar, but most of them chose a dozen egg (sic). They did not care for the pie or the dollar so, that's what they got for their birthdays.
- PB: Are your children alive or (did) anything (happen) to one of your children during your life time?
- AL: Yes, I lost a son (who) was one year, six months and one day old in 1941 just a few days after December 7, and he died of leukemia.
- PB: I remember and understand before our talk today that you had experience and in (the) plantation?
- AL: Oh, yes, when I was still a young girl, I worked at the plantation field and we were paid \$15.00 a month, but (at) the old Laie plantation store, we were allowed to charge for things from the store so, by the time I got my pay it all went to the store (laughter) because I charge a lot of things, you know, and so my pay went to the store so it is only \$15.00. My job in the plantation field was to pull weeds or be the water girl--took the bucket of water to the workers(laughter).
- PB: During that time, do you remember what (were) the wages--salaries, you know--for a day or for an hour?
- AL: Well, we were only paid \$15.00 a month, not by the hour.
- PB: Fifteen dollars a month?

- AL: \$15.00 a month, that's all it was, even when I was a maid, I worked as a maid for a captain at Schofield Barracks and I got paid only fifteen dollars a month.
- PB: Is there any other races of people working with you during that time in the plantation?
- AL: Yes, there were a lot of Samoan girls, boys and girls, Filipinos, (and) Portuguese, a lot of them.
- PB: During your time of working in the plantation did you experience a depression too?
- AL: Yes, it was around that time, but the food were not as expensive as it is now. You could buy a loaf of bread with a lolly-pop inside (laughter) for only ten cents and the thing that we always used to like to buy was an ice cake made in an ice-cube tray and they would sell it to us for--maybe ten (ice cubes) for a nickel.
- PB: Well, I understand that you experienced the destruction of Pearl Harbor. Where were you during that time and how did you manage to survive?
- AL: During that time--I was married and had three children and it was December 11 when I lost my son. (He) was a year and half and he died of leukemia.
- PB: What kind of work was available during the time of (World War II)?
- AL: There were a lot of work for women, you know, a lot of women went out to sew camouflage net or whatever it called, but for the military. But, I did not go because I had my children to take care of.
- PB: Is there any kind of other entertainment available at Laie during the war?
- AL: Yes, every week end there was a concert in Laie when the people participated and there were dances; we used to dance, modern dancing, and once a week we always had bazaars, too. One bazaar I was chosen to be queen by ballot.
- PB: Well, during that time how old (were) you, during that bazaar?
- AL: I was just fourteen.
- PB: Fourteen years old and I understand during our pre-interview that you told me something about your youth at Laie, especially about your father. What did your father do during that time?
- AL: My father took care of my grandfather's Poi factory where he would steam all the taro in the Poi factory and then we would help (to) peel it and clean it and then he would grind it into poi and then

we would sell the poi, you know to the people. The people who had their own taro (would bring) in to grind and make poi for them and they paid like fifty cents a big barrel. My father was also a baker; he had a cement oven, the old style oven outside. He would bake bread in that oven. Nobody else ever did that here in Laie, except my father.

PB: Have you seen (anyone doing that) lately?

AL: No, I never seen anybody else do it, but I know the Portuguese people (do it) that's how they used to bake their breads in that kind of oven.

PB: During that time, were there many other races or other kind of people from different countries that came to Laie and worked?

AL: People who were working on the plantation, yes, (the) Japanese people, Chinese, Filipinos (and) Portugueses. They were (the ones who) came here to work (on) the plantation, and the area where I live right now used to be the Filipino camp. All the plantation people used to live there. It was a camp.

PB: You mean the place which called Kulanui Street?

AL: Where my house is, it used to be a camp. A Filipino (camp) of all the people live there were all plantation workers (occupied area on Hauula-side of Puuahi Street roughly between Kulanui and Moana Streets).

PB: Who was in charge of the plantation?

AL: Well, there were several men (that were in charge). I don't remember the names.

PB: Is it the government or a private company owned the plantation?

AL: I don't think it was the government. I think it was a own, personal (thing). (In 1931, the Laie Plantation owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was discontinued and the plantation land leased to Kahuku Plantations owned by Alexander and Baldwin. Kahuku Plantation ceased operations in 1971).

PB: Well, during that time, is there any other churches besides LDS in Laie?

AL: No, LDS Church was the only church here in Laie and it burnt down (in 1941) and then they built the new church (in 1950), the chapel that we go to now, the (Laie VIII) ward.

PB: Do you know what street is that first chapel (located)?

AL: Lanihuli Street, where the new chapel is, that's where the CCH Cafeteria and the men's dormintory were and then when they moved

we have one ward chapel but the old chapel was where the I, VIII, and VII ward chapel is now, that's where the old chapel (was) when I was young . (Laie Hawaii North Stake Centre is on the corner of Lanihuli Street and Naniloa Loop. The I, VIII, and VII Ward Chapel is on Lanihuli Street, just mauka of the Stake Center).

PB: Do you remember (or) do you have any idea when did the church first arrived here at Laie?

AL: It must have (been) arrived before I was ever born. As I remmeber, the temple was dedicated in 1919.

PB: This temple? The new one? 1919 that's a (long) time ago.

AL: Yes, very long time ago before I was born.

PB: Do you remember any missionary during that time or what kind of, you know, work for the church that time?

AL: Labor missionaries.

PB: Labor missionaries?

AL: Yes, when they came and built the BYU and the (Polynesian) Cultural Center. During those times, I used to help cook and do some laundry for the labor missionaries, that's one way we give our service by doing the men's laundry and cooking some food for them.

PB: Do you know who the Prophet was during that time, (during the) building the school?

AL: President McKay, David O. McKay, but President Heber J. Grant came to Laie and I met Apostle (Matthew) Cowley and of course, President Spencer W. Kimball (came later).

PB: Came later?

AL: Yes, he came later, but it was President McKay that came to BYU-HC.

PB: Can you tell me something, what the church was like when you were a child during that time at Laie during this building or construction. You know, it sounds like (it is) very interesting. When I talked to your son Howard Lua, he told me about your good experience about (your) youth (especially) during the progressing of the church here at Laie?

AL: I wasn't too much involved in the church growth because I was busy raising my children, but you know, they all were active in church. My children always took part in (church) I think it's the same like it is today.

PB: Did all your children go to school somewhere else (or just) here at Kahuku or Laie--(Is there) any other place (they attended school) besides (the one here at Laie)?

There were three of my children graduated from Kamehameha High School in Honolulu; they were boarders i.e., they lived in the dorms there. And at that time (the tuition was) only \$125.00 (for the) school year (may be) \$135.00 (I am not really sure).

- PB: During that time (of your staying) in Laie, is that right (that all of) your kids went for high school?
- AL: Yes, we lived here, my children lived here all their lives. They were born here and raised here.
- PB: Can you recall anything (that you remember) about the establishment of CCH and BYU-HC, our campus? When it first started, what year you remember (when they started building BYU-HC) and what (was) like (during) that time, (any problems)?
- AL: When it first started, it (used to be at the parking lot) where the new chapel is (Laie Hawaii North Stake, now Lanuhuli, the Center).
- PB: Near the temple.
- AL: Yes, that where I first worked for CCH. That was the cafeteria then, while they were building BYU-HC.
- PB: Well, can you recall how many years you worked for the school?
- AL: Yes, seven years.
- PB: Seven years for BYU-HC (C.C.H.)?
- AL: For CCH and BYU-HC as a cook and a baker.
- PB: Do you remember some of your friends during that time?
- AL: Yes, I do, I worked under Mrs. Emily (Enos). She was the manager then until I left there were several ladies from Laie that worked.
(400)
- PB: At BYU-HC?
- AL: Yes, and I think there is still about three more ladies still working at BYU.
- PB: During that time, (did) all the students (eat) in the Cafeteria or they (ate) on their own?
- AL: They all (ate in) the cafeteria. If they ate on their own, I don't know.
- PB: Do you remember is there any off-campus or day students during (the) time when BYU-HC was just started?
- AL: No, they didn't have too many off-campus (students) because it was not that expensive to live in the dorms.

- PB: What kind of entertainment or social functions during that time at BYU-HC?
- AL: Just like the same as they have now, movies and plays. I know when Howard was going to BYU-HC, he performed in a lot of plays. He was in charge of a beauty pageant; I think he did a wonderful job.
- PB: During that time, I mean in building BYU were there any other races from the South Seas or from the Oriental place, Asia?
- AL: Not so many during that time but gradually they all came from different parts of the world.
- PB: Do you remember when PCC established, how it came about, whose idea (was) that?
- AL: To me, I thought the PCC was established mainly to promote a way for students to work their way through school and I think (the) President of the Church. I think it was President McKay. If not, well, they must have foreseen this was one way they could help the students to gain (and) further (their) education.
- PB: Do you remember what culture first started at PCC during that time?
- AL: Hawaiian, Samoan, Maori (and) Tahitian
- PB: So Fiji came later?
- AL: Yes, Tonga and then Fiji.
- PB: Well, were there many tourists during that time?
- AL: Oh, yes, there were many, but I think there (are) more now.
- PB: How often they had their show (at Pcc)?
- AL: Everyday, I think
- PB: Everyday?
- AL: I never did work there so I don't know.
- PB: I understand from my friends that, you know, they had a difficult time going to town from here, you know. Do you know what kind of arrangement or transportation from Laie (to) go to town or from BYU-HC?
- AL: I know we did not have buses then, so I don't know how they (get there), you mean from CCH or BYU-HC?
- PB: Yes, (when) People wanted to go to town.

- AL: Probably, they had their own buses.
- PB: Well, is there anything (else) you want to say about your experience, you know, during (the) BYU-HC establishment?
- AL: No, not exactly, it's just that I feel I have a part in PCC because during the time that they were building up the place, we used to go there and prepared lunches for the workers and helped with (the) weaving for the Hawaiian area.
- PB: Through all these experiences you told me, what do you think about the progress of the Church and the school here at Laie?
- AL: I think they done well. More students are here now. Most students come every year.
- PB: Okay. Thanks very much, Agnes Lua (for) your experiences and the story you have told me. It's going to help our program and (the) people for the future to write about this interview and I appreciate that. Thanks very much.
- AL: You're very welcome. I wish I could have said more but---
- PB: Thank you.
- (488) End of Interview.