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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

NARRATOR: Bessie Tam Like

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INTERVIEWER: Myrna Kitashima

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INTRODUCTION

Bessie Tam Like was born in Omoopio on the slopes of Haleaka near Pulehu, on the island of Maui where the first missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints preached the gospel and where some of the first converts were baptized. Her mother's parents were some of these converts and so Bessie grew up to the standards of this new religious movement.

Her active participation as a member began at age fourteen as a Sunday School teacher to the present day has held many, many positions as teacher and leader in the auxiliaries of the Church. This also includes the sharing of her talents in the fine arts culture of Hawaiian quilt making.

Bessie has also been a "builder" of the many chapels in Hawaii by helping in raising funds, feeding the labor missionaries and contributing in many ways to help the church grow. Her youth and enthusiasm to serve the Lord is truly the example that many around her have found to strengthen their lives. She is truly a stalwart member.

Myrna Kitashima
Interviewer

NOTE

This interview was carried out in connection with an Oral History Workshop I conducted in Mililani Hawaii Stake in May 1980. Besides the interviewing, Myrna Kitashima did the transcribing as well. Oral History secretaries Dalisay Garcia (now Hungerford) and Donene Olmstead audited the tape and I did the final editing. Rosemary Chai typed the final draft and Donene assembled the bound transcript.

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Laie, Hawaii
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MK This is Myrna Kitashima and I'm about to interview Bessie Like of the Kalihi Ward, Honolulu West Stake, on this Tuesday, June 3, 1980, at her home at 1725-D North School Street, Honolulu, Hawaii. Bessie, let's start with your name, some of your early childhood experiences and family background.

BL My name is Bessie Tam Like. I was born on a little farm on the slopes of Haleakala mountain, named Omoopio, situated on the island of Maui on January the 23, 1910. My father was Tam Loo. He was on September 6, 1853, in Canton, China. He arrived on the Steamship Quinta, here on January 12, 1881, as a laborer for the sugar plantation. His parents were Tek Ho and Sun Ney.

My mother was Rose Kahilipualokeokapiolani Kealoha. She was born on May the 14, 1888, at Ulupalakua, Maui. My grandparents on my mother's side was Joseph Kealoha. He was the sheriff of Ulupalakua, Maui, and was born in 1865. My grandmother was Analani Saffery; she was also born in Ulupalakua, Maui in 1864. My great-grandparents--grandfather was Edmund Saffery who was born in 1806 from England, arriving here as a whaler in 1828, and my great-grandmother was Waikinaehu, born in Olowalu, Maui.

There were no further records on my father's side only as far as my grandparents. He lived in the islands here ever since his arrival from China and died at the age of 96, but never accepted the gospel. He remained faithful to his own Chinese traditions.

Life on the farm was wonderful. I was taught to work and work hard. Being the oldest girl, I had to work with the boys, from holding the plows, driving mule teams, planting vegetables and harvesting, raising animals--like pigs, cows, horses, chickens--milking cows, churning butter, making cheese, riding with the cowboys and rounding up the cattle for branding and pigs and so forth.

I was taught not to be idle. Plus helping mother with house chores, ironing, washing, cooking and so forth, with no electricity, using hand power only and using charcoal irons. Father was very strict; girls must learn to cook. They love to eat and eat good food and I'm grateful, for that's how I learn to cook Chinese food. Mother was a good cook also. Father never mastered the English language nor the Hawaiian language. For that reason, we children all had to learn the Chinese language. Mother spoke Chinese fluently.

MK Bessie, you mentioned your dad migrated from China. At that time were there a lot of Chinese people migrating from China and living in that area?

BL Yes, there were many Chinese men who came to work on the plantations. Instead of working on the plantations, they went to work for little plantations; and they married all Hawaiian women, and then took their families up to these lands that were Kuleana lands and started farming.

MK Will you share with us your early experiences in the Church, your baptism, your membership in the Church at that time.

BL Yes, I was baptized by Elder H. F. Florence and confirmed by James Piialii, who was our branch president at that time, on January 12, 1918. Because we lived so very far from the beach, there were no baptism pools in the chapels, and so the baptisms were held in the mountains, in the gulches, and in the ponds. So, we had to wait for the rains to come; when the ponds are filled up enough for baptisms. Sometimes it rains only twice a year. If the first rain came and not enough to fill up the ponds we still have to wait. And when the next rain came if the ponds were filled, then our president of the branch would send out messages to all of the families to have their children and their people ready for baptism.

Many of the boys and girls for this reason were being baptized after their eighth birthday because they had to wait for the rain. Now take my case, for instance. As I said, I stated that I was baptized on the 12 of January and I was born on the 23, so if your birthday kind of close to that day of the baptism, you may be baptized. So I was baptized eleven days early. It was always a glorious sight, young and old being baptized. The converts were the older people, of course. There was a song and a prayer and a very short talk, by the time we should know what baptism was all about and so not more time was taken for that. Also, naturally, all we kids was very anxious to get into the water.

MK Bessie, tell us, how far away were the pools located up in the valleys and how did you get there?

BL The pools were a little over five miles from our home. We had to go by horseback and we'd go up the trails leading to the gulch, and then we'd leave our horses up on the flat and then walk down to the pool.

MK Will you tell us some of your experiences as a member of the branch in those days?

BL Well, we went to church every Sunday against my father's wishes. He believed in no Sabbath and felt we should be working on the farm. But mother was so very faithful and stayed with her belief in keeping the Sabbath. There were no automobiles; only the

wealthy had them. We had wagons, buggies, and horses, so early Sunday morning we'd be ready, and on to the wagons to church we'd go. We lived about five miles to the chapel so, to and from, ten miles to church every Sunday.

MK Will you tell us what the name of your branch was, and a little background on the missionaries there at that time or any leaders coming in from Salt Lake to talk with the people.

BL The little branch that I attended was called the Pulehu Branch which is still named the Pulehu Branch today. It was the place where the first missionary preached the gospel and where some of the first converts were baptized. The chapel still stands today-- the same chapel, new termite. The same bell still hanging there; it still rings.

[200] The missionaries at the time--there were not very many missionaries, but they all came together in pairs like they do today. And the missionaries at that time were much older than the young missionaries that we have today. They came by mostly on mules. They had their mission home in Kahalui, Maui, and they had to come all the way to Kula, which is quite a distance, on mules. Elder George Q. Cannon, one of our first missionaries who came to the islands, [in 1850] was also there with the first convert in Pulehu, Maui.

At that time, we did not have leaders, you know, from the Church coming over to our islands because we did not have conferences like we do today, where our leaders come from Salt Lake. But, we met in Honolulu on the island of Oahu once a year for our great conferences. Here we met with the leaders of the Church who came from Salt Lake, also we had our contests. In MIA, we had our song contest and our sports game contest. All of this was held in Honolulu in the old Kalihi chapel in Kalihi, as far back as I can remember attending these conferences in Honolulu, started back in 1925.

For transportation coming to Honolulu for these great conferences-- there were no airplanes at that time and so we had to come down on the ships. And we all worked very hard to get enough money to be able to come, all those especially who had some parts in the conference, like taking part in the song contests, in the sports or if they were officers in the Primary, Relief Society, Sunday School, Priesthood and such, because they all had to come and attend this great meeting, so they can be receiving instructions from our leaders who will be coming from Salt Lake. And it was a very enjoyable time coming on this boat. It used to take a lot of money and so we had to come on steerage which was fun.

MK Will you share some experiences with us on the social gatherings that you can remember.

BL Most of our social gatherings were during MIA time, because that's the church socials. We had the young people do their dances and

their rehearsals for different plays that we had in the MIA. For the older people we had little contests among ourselves, and so the older people had singing and dancing, which at the end of these we presented prizes to them. So we had these social gatherings where we served food, so there was a lot of fun because we had food, we had entertainment and things like that.

MK Will you tell us some of your school experiences? What was the first school you attended and how did you get to school?

BL Well, because we lived so very far from school, when we first started off to school, kindergarten or first grade, we were too little to walk and our parents were always too busy to take us by horseback or by wagon to school every day, so we went to live with our grandfolks on the plantation in Paia, Maui, where it was very short to walk to school. We attended the Paia School. That was about the only large school that they had at that time, in Paia. So from kindergarten up until about the fourth grade, I attended the same school, in Paia, and lived with my grandfolks.

[300] When we were a little older, say from the fourth and fifth grade up, we were able to walk so we went back to my parents on the farm and we walked ten miles a day to and from school. In later years when the county started to give out transportation for those children who lived far from school, they gave out bids. So my mother put in a bid and she won this bid where the county gave her a truck to take the children to school and back. Since she got the truck, well, we started from home, we got on the truck, and we drove on, all the way up, we picked all the children on the side, you know, on the roadside. And that's the way we got to school as we grew older.

MK - Were there any family experiences you can recall in your early life while living with your parents and grandparents?

BL Oh, yes, while living with my grandparents I learned a lot from them. They never spoke English, only Hawaiian. And we used to go to church together on Sundays. In those days because they lived kind of far from church also, we had all of our meetings on one day. We'd start off with Primary, Sunday School, Relief Society, MIA and then we'd have our Sacrament Meeting. We would walk to church with our ukanas or, our bundles of lunch, and sometimes even dinner, and everybody would be having a bundle to help the older people, and we would be walking down with all these bundles. The boys would be carrying the little babies on their backs to the church.

While there at the church, I remember, when I spent Relief Society with my grandmother; by the time Relief Society starts, I am already tired from Primary and Sunday School and MIA, that I would sit there with my grandmother, because she wouldn't allow me to run around the place and play. So I would sit right there with my grandmother and I would lay my head on her lap and I would

fall asleep. She would say when I would get up, in Hawaiian, "Hiamoe, hiamoe, eka moopuna, aole pau ka halawai," which means, "Go to sleep, go to sleep, my grandchild, the meeting is not yet over." Then I would lay my head down and go to sleep again. Then pretty soon she would tap me on the hair, on my head, and ruffle her fingers through my hair, and she would said, "Ala, ala ka moopuna, ua pau ka halawai, ho'i ka ua," which means, "Get up, get up, grandchild, the meeting is over; let us go home." And this is the way we spent our Sundays there with our grandmother. I'm very grateful for the time I lived with my grandfolks because that is how I was able to master the Hawaiian language.

MK Would you tell us about the "pule ohana time" or prayer time with your family?

BL Life on the plantation with my grandfolks--they lived in a little camp where all the houses are all side by side and all of my aunts and uncles each lived in these different homes, but all in one place, together. And so when the evening would come, my grandfather would stand on his lanai or on his porch and he would call out "Ohana", which means, family devotion time. We would all come running, all of my cousins, we would come running from these different homes and gather in the home of my grandfolks and we would all sit on the floor. In those days there was still no electricity; there's oil lamps, and I would just love to sit right close to the lamp, because there was a reason which I will tell you later. My grandfather always had a little stick or baton where he would lead us in singing. He would say, "Let us sing--himene ka kou--Let us sing." Of course, our favorite song was, "He aloha kou Jesu, ina keiki lii lii nei," which was, "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know." and that was the song we always sang. And if we would not be singing he would just tap us on our shoulders with that baton and he would say, "Himene, himene!" which means, "Sing, sing!"

Then after that would come our pouku paanaau which is our scripture or Bible verses. And then we would all recite a scripture. My favorites were, of course, the shortest one I could find in the Bible which was, "Aloha Keakua" which means, "God is love." Then he would always give a comment and say, "Yes, yes" in Hawaiian, "Ai, pololoi kela, aloha Keakua ia makou no kela, e pono kakou e aloha iaia keakua," which means, "Yes, yes God loves us and so we should love Him always." And the next verse that I always love was, "Uwe Keakua" which means "Jesus wept." And he would say, "Pololoi kela, uwe Keakua nokamea ai pono kakou e uwe aku ia keakua," means "That is right, Jesus wept for us so we should cry unto Him." And these were my favorite scriptures. And then when he started to pray I would lower the lamp down, because when he starts in praying he never knows when to end, and by the time he says amen all of the children would be fast asleep.

MK Will you share with us some of the experiences of your callings and positions in the Church?

BL:
[400]

Well, I started to teach Sunday School when I was only fourteen years of age. At that time they did not have too many people who understood the English language, and there were the children who did not understand Hawaiian too well; so I was asked to teach a Sunday School class in English, and at that time I was only fourteen years of age, and up until this day I am still teaching in the Church. We taught--in those days we did not have lesson books or manuals and so we just taught scriptures, Bible verses, and little songs like "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know" and "A Sunbeam" and little songs like that. Those were the songs we taught the little children, the English songs, at that time we started to have the Old Deseret Song Books, that's where we got our songs from. And we learned these songs and that's how we taught our children in Sunday School.

Up to this day, I have taught in almost all of the auxiliaries in the Church, except, of course, the Priesthood. I taught in Sunday School, teaching in different classes at the Church in Haiku, Maui, in Paia, Maui, in Pulehu, Maui, at Lanakila, at Pearl City, Aiea in Oahu. Teaching also in Primary, I held the position of Primary President at the Haiku church, of Maui, and then at the Auwaiolimu Ward on Oahu, at the Lanakila Ward on Oahu, at the Pearl City Ward in Oahu and at the Kalihi Ward, also in Oahu. In the Relief Society I was the President of the Auwaiolimu Ward in Oahu, the Haiku Ward on Maui, at the Kalihi Ward on Oahu, and also served as Stake Relief Society President on Oahu for over six years.

MK:

Bessie, you told us that you moved from one place to another by the different wards that you served in from Maui to Honolulu: can you tell us what brought your movement from one area to another?

BL:

I left Pulehu because I had to go high school so I moved to Haiku and went to high school from there. I lived with an adult and I had to get the train to school and attended Maui High School. Then while I was in Haiku I got married and so I spent my time there at Haiku in raising my children there. And that is where I first also started to work in the Relief Society and in the Primary. This is where I really started my church activities. Because of the lack of leadership here in the branch at Haiku, at this time, we had to move to the Paia Branch where we merged in together with them so we would have enough leaders to carry on the work and we stayed there in the church, serving in different auxiliaries. I served, to help like I did when I was in Haiku, in the Haiku branch.

And then we would have our conferences in the Wailuku chapel, which was a new chapel that was built and there we had conferences where we had leaders come from Honolulu, our center. At that time we had President [William] Waddoups, who was our mission president [1926-31] since we were under the [Hawaiian] Mission President, President [Castle H.] Murphy also was one of our mission presidents. And this is where I served most and did most of my church activities while here in the Wailuku Branch, while at the Paia Branch.

As time went by, the Wailuku chapel was built and that became sort of our center [on Maui] where we all gathered together for our conferences. Eventually they closed up the Paia branch and everybody had to go to the Wailuku chapel for their meetings. And then later the new chapel was built in the Kahalui area, then all the people from the Wailuku area attended that chapel, there, because they did away with this chapel that was in Wailuku. So today there is no chapel in Wailuku except in the Kahalui area, which is today their stake center.

Also they have another beautiful ward chapel built up in the Pukalani area set on the top of a hill overlooking the city. It is a beautiful Lahaina area where the people or the Saints from that area [are] attending, instead of coming all the way to Kahalui. Today there is still a little branch in Hana, which is on the far end of the island, and so the Saints that live in Keanae and Nahiku, Kipahaulu, all attend church at the Hana branch. They still have a small chapel there where the missionaries go out to help the Saints, there.

MK: Tell us what brought you and your family to Honolulu?

B:
[500] Well, at that time, Honolulu was what they call "boom town" or preparing for the battle or I guess the war. There were a lot of people that were coming to Honolulu for jobs; there were many jobs at that time and so people from the other islands were all coming to Honolulu. My husband left and came here to work for the concrete company and we moved own in November 1941. The blitz came in December, 1941. So we were here just a month before the blitz came and we are here until today.

MK: Would you share with us, some of the experiences that you remember of the conditions during the war years and some of the church involvement.

BL: During that time, I was here only a short time, from the island of Maui and I attended church at the old Lanakila Ward, at that time they were located at Holokahana Lane. I did not know too many people at the time and I didn't feel that I wanted to attend church there at Lanakila; and so I went to the Auwaiolimu Ward because I had a brother that was attending church there and I knew the Apo family that were there. So I attended church there at Auwaiolimu. And then later we were asked that we must attend our church in our own areas and so that brought me back to Lanakila, because then I was living in the Puunui area,

During the time of the war, there were many many people, naturally, on this island of Oahu, because there people from all over the islands who came here to seek for jobs and there were so much activities going on that people--church members as well as other people --were becoming so out of hand because they were making so much money. People were getting so extravagant and then the church people also were being so much and so many temptation at that time, especially keeping the Word of Wisdom although it was prohibition time,

and yet there were lots of money so they were able to get all the liquor they could get. However, the very faithful members, they all stayed together and worked harder for the Church, and this is one reason why they were, you know, able to go on obeying and keeping the commandments of the Lord. There were many community work to be done--where I helped to make--to knit socks and sweaters so that we could send them out to the soldiers and within the church there were lots of work. The Relief Society did a lot of work. We made socks, we made clothing, we made bandages and we tried to fulfill all the callings that came from the Church for the Relief Society to fulfill, so that we can send out these things for the needy people during that time. And so in Relief Society work there was always lots to do: the members were always very busy. The husbands were very busy working; they'd work from early morning until late at night, but the women always did their share at home, first taking care of their families and their children, before they were able to go out and do their work on the welfare, fulfilling their callings that they had to do. This is the way we worked during the war.

And it seems that during the war, people who strayed away from the Church--the ones who stayed back and remained in the Church really felt very bad for those who strayed away, so they did a lot of work like missionary work, trying to get the members to come back to church and to forget about the things that tempted them at that time, to lead them to go away from the Church. So there was many work to do. Then we had the missionaries who were working very hard also, not only to get to the new converts but to get the people who became inactive in the Church to again come back to the Church.

MK: Will you share with us your experiences in helping with the growth of the Church in this area at that time?

BL: When I was at the Auwaiolimu Ward they did not have a chapel. We held our meetings in the park, in the schools, until we got thrown out from one place to the other, until we finally got the property to build our chapel. And being with the Relief Society, we would go down and help the men to clear up this lot where the church was to be built. I had lots of wonderful experiences. At that time I was on the finance committee trying to make money to build our chapel, and we would have different projects to make money. I remember very well going to this church site to cut down the old mango trees and clear up the place for the building where the men would come from work, to work on the site; and I would come down on an old little truck and bring them some juice to drink and some sandwiches to eat, because I knew that they were tired and hungry and that they had just come from work. Then later when the building was about to go up--all during this time we were having projects to make money.

I remember once when our dear Bishop [Harvey] Kauhini asked me if I could make some laulaus and I said, "Oh yes, how many?" and he said "Oh, about 3000 Taulaus" And I said, "Oh, 3000?" I said, "Yes, yes, we'll make 3000 Taulaus". And after I said "Yes, yes," I thought,

[600]

oh, what did I do, I do not know how to make lauiaus. I can make only for our family to eat, maybe four or five or six but to make 3000 lauiaus, I didn't know how I was going to do it, I didn't know how much pork we'd need, I don't know where to get the ti leaves. But, we had a matter of prayer with our group in the church and I said, "Alright, we are going to make lauiaus."

I went to see the man at the Board of Agriculture who was an old friend of ours and I told him that I wanted to get some ti leaves and I said, "We're going to make lauiaus, so you give me permission to go and get ti leaves where the leaves are nice and big, not the small kinds cause we're going to make lauiaus." So he said, "Alright, I'm going to give you a permit but you have to cross two rivers" and I said, "Well, we'll cross two rivers."

I got the permission and we went up to Nuuanu. I got the ladies up there with me and the men, too; men went up there in their own cars. As we crossed the first river the ladies saw a lot of shrimps swimming around in the river, Opaes, as the Hawaiians call it, and so they stayed there and gathered opaes, I walked on up to the next river and onto the flat with the men folks to get the ti leaves and the men folks wondered why the women didn't come up so we picked the ti leaves and we put them in bags and I carried them on my back some and down we came. There were the women, each one with a little puolo or a little bundle of opaes to take home. They sat on the banks with their feet in the water and the men said to them "Aren't you folks ashamed, Sister had to come up with us to get the ti leaves and here you folks are here gathering opae."

Well, after we got the ti leaves, I said the next thing is how much pork do I need. And I said "Well, where is the money, our Bishop didn't give me any money." But anyway, our neighbor's brother owned the old pork--the Ideal Pork Shop on Liliha Street at that time, I went to him and I said, "Say, we're going to make some lauiaus to make some money to build a church." But, I said "I don't have any money and I don't know how much lauiaus need, but anyway, you think you can let me have the pork? He said, "You just let me know."

Then I said, as I prayed, and said how was I gonna do this, an inspiration came to me that I should send for my uncle from the island of Maui to come down and show me how we're going to make these lauiaus. So I sent a plane fare and I asked my uncle if he would come down and show us how to do it. My uncle did come and he said how much pork we would need and so we got this pork and we took it to a place where there was an ice house and so we got the women to come down: the men came during the day time and they cut up the pork and salted it and they went to work and the ladies would stay and wrap the lauiaus. And we would put the finished ones in the cooler until we were finished making these 3000 lauiaus. It took us two days.

Then I said, "How are we going to cook all these lauiaus?" "In this oven in the ground we call imu, my uncle said, "Don't worry." And

so there was this big, great imu or oven in the ground. And then my uncle showed me how to do it. We put all of these laulaus in this great big imu and then he blessed this great big oven, and I looked at this thing, it was about four feet above the ground. And I said, "How was that laulau or pork going to get cooked like that?" Then pretty soon we covered it all up and we put a whole truck load dirt over this great big oven and my uncle said, "That's all." And then after that, a great, heavy rain came, and it just so happened this area where that great big oven was is just where the water would settle. And so I went into the house and I just wept and my uncle said, "Why are you crying?" I said, "We're not going to have any laulaus, because the water will fill up in there, the oven will die off and we will not have any laulaus." And, he says, "Now, where is your faith; didn't you hear I blessed that oven there, that imu, and that belongs to Heavenly Father and he's going to take care of it."

The next morning, I ran quickly out to look and I didn't see anything, everything was flat and I said, "Oh what happened now?" But you see when the pork is cooked it would sink down and so it was down lower in the ground in this imu.

When we sold these laulaus, we didn't have enough to fill up our orders because we delivered them when they were hot. And they were all 3,000 laulaus--out of this 3000 bundles of laulaus only three laulaus were not very good, by that I mean, the pork dropped off from the ti leaves, from its wrappings. And so that is one way we made money to build the chapel there in Auwaiolimu. Then when the chapel began to come up and was almost ready to dedicate, they said I must go to my own area and so I had to go to Lanakila Ward because that was my area rightfully.

When I got to Lanakila Ward, same thing, they were making money for building fund and again I went on as a finance committee. Alright, so the bishop at that time--I worked under three bishops when I was at Lanakila, I had Bishop [Fred] Ellis, Bishop [Hovey] Lambert and Bishop [Henry] Machado. While there at Lanakila, they said, "Well, we're going to make kulolo and we're going to sell kulolo. We're going to sell kalua pig at the same time." They said, "You know how to make kulolo" and I said, "Yes, I can make kulolo" and so there again I opened my mouth so very fast, not thinking and finally found myself in a terrible predicament where I cannot make, you know, kulolo.

So again I sent for my dear uncle to come from Maui and he taught us how to make kulolo. We got the taro, we got the cans, we got the sugar. During that time it was war time; we cannot buy raw sugar unless you had a permit. The reason for that is because they thought maybe you're going to brew some whiskey, you know, they will not let you have raw sugar unless you had a permit and you know what you're going to use it for. So I had to get a permit, go to the grocery store and I got this raw brown sugar that we use to make the kulolo. And so we make kulolo and we sold kalua pig at the same time. I want to say that we made more money selling kulolo than

we did kalua pig, because we had coconuts free, we had taro free, and we only paid for the sugar, and the labor was all free and so we made a lot of money. And that was in the Lanakila Ward.

Then from the Lanakila Ward we had to move to Pearl City, because at that time my husband was very sick, he had a heart condition, he couldn't live in this two-storey house that we lived in. So we had to move from there to the Pearl City Ward. Well, when we moved to Pearl City, the church was the old broken down church on--let me see that--I think it was--was it the first street or Lehua Street--it was right in the back of the Pearl City Tavern, anyway. The floors were so old that when you walk you could hear the floors cracking. Well, that's where we held our meetings and then we had to build again--make money for a building fund. At that time, I had dear old Bishop [Rudolph] Tai [see OH-121], he was such a wonderful bishop and I love him very much 'cause he taught me some wonderful lessons. Well, Bishop Tai was like Bishop Kauhine, when he said you go and make laulaus, he didn't give me any money. But luckily the one whom I bought the pork from said, "Well, since it's for the church; you sell your laulaus and then you come back and you pay me."

Then when I was here with Bishop Tai, he said, "Bessie, we're going to make a luau for the building fund." I said, "How many people?" He said, "Well, we're going to try and see if we can serve, three, four thousand people." I said, "That many?" I said, "Maybe [less] than three thousand people may be better, a little better--three thousand or four thousand, that's too big." He said, "Well, three thousand." I said, "Okay, go ahead print the tickets and sell the tickets." And I said, "Oh, I don't know how to make luaus that big." I said, "I can make 200, 300 but not for a thousand," but I said, "Well, we'll try." That's all he said.

Well, we had the tickets printed, and dear old Bishop Tai left and went to the mainland. No money, nothing. I said, how was I going to get the things that I need for this luau. At that time, Apo was his counselor, Herman Apo, and I said, "Well, you printed the tickets. Well, okay, we're going to do something, we have to work."

I went to the farm, the poultry farm, and they said, "Oh we can let you have all these stewing hens because they're no good, they're not laying eggs anymore." So I had all the stewers that I could take free, but they were alive and I said, "Now, okay, we get to the chapel." And I said to the brethren, "You get a big tub so we can boil some hot water and we are going to kill these chickens over there." I asked the sisters to come down to help us clean the chickens. When we got down there, nobody wanted to kill the chickens. And I said, "Alright I'll kill the chickens", so, well, you know I was raised on a farm and I know how to handle chickens. All the sisters ran to the front of the building because they didn't want to see me killing the chickens. I killed all the chickens, left them all there and I went to the front and I said, "Come on, sisters."

chickens all dead, come and clean, feather them." So we dumped them in this hot water and we cleaned all the chickens and that's the way we got our chicken for our luau.

Then at that time, my brother just started with his kalua pig business which he still carries on today, Tam's Kalua Service, and I got the pig for the luau from him. He gave me the pig already cooked at a special rating because it was for the church. And then by that time I already learned to make kulolo, and I learned to make haupia, and the cakes were all donated and I said, "What I'm gonna do for entertainment?" So I said, "Well I'm gonna get all these people who are musicians, who are at that time a little inactive in the church and I went to them and I said, "Now you folks don't come to the church, now you donate your time." You put in maybe half an hour and you half an hour and you half an hour and we make up our time." And we had all the most popular people at that time who were entertainers to come and entertain for this luau.

We sold all the tickets; we didn't even have enough tickets and we held it at the Radford High School. Then at the middle of the luau, while the entertainment was going on, everything was going on great, the people were wonderful; they all came out to help, and somebody said to me, "Look who's here," and when I looked out the door, guess who was standing there, Bishop Tai. He just came back from the mainland. And I said, "Bishop Tai, you didn't leave me any money; you didn't do me justice, you didn't leave me anything to help with this luau." And he said to me, "Bessie, I knew you could do it, that's why I left you and went away. I came back just in time." That was my experiences in helping to build chapels, build churches.

[753] END OF SIDE A

SIDE B

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BL: I remember when I first moved to Pearl City the area there where the church was to be built; it was the day that the ground breaking was on. And I remember very well a few people who were there at the ground breaking that day. And then, as the time went by, while we're been working to get enough money for the building, then the building started to come up and at that time then I was working as a practical nurse at the nursing home at nights. And my husband had died then and I was alone so I had a lot of time to work on the building. So from eight o'clock in the morning I would stay on the grounds and help while the building was going on until it was time for me to go home. And then I would rest a little bit, I would only have three hours of sleep and back to work every day. The other sisters would come; they were faithful in coming to help but, when it was almost time that school is out they had to go home because of the children.

But I remember working many hours helping the brethren, passing the lumber over the roof of the building and scraping the tar off from the sides. I remember laying on my stomach scraping the tar. And then also scaring the--sandpapering the benches, in need for varnishing. And then when the building was finished and about to

be dedicated, again I had to leave. At that time we attended there for a little while, then the--see, the building was in use for a while before it was dedicated. But, before it was dedicated, they split the ward and I had to go to Aiea Ward.

And then again, when I went to the Aiea Ward, I had to work again as a finance committee together to make money for the building. The building was already completed but it was not dedicated and we couldn't dedicate the chapel until it was paid up for. So again we made money with luaus, concerts, shows and selling different things like, kalua pig and kulolo, and things like that until we were able to get enough to dedicate this chapel at Aiea. It seems that during this time all of these buildings were going up about the same time. And so the Kalihi Chapel was also being started.

And each of these chapels that were being built in their own areas were mostly by their own members and, of course, a few labor missionaries, but most of them were centered at the Kalihi Chapel at that time, where the labor missionaries lived there in the old building. And I recall, while being at Lanakila Ward, that the Relief Society were being called or asked to go down to Kalihi to help to take care of the labor missionaries, where we had to sometimes go down and do their cooking and prepare their meals for them. Sometimes we had to go down to do their laundry for them and help them in little things like that. That is what I can remember was going on at the same time with all these different buildings. It seemed that time, was the time of church buildings, you know where all the buildings were being built up the same time.

[100]

MK: When did you leave the Pearl City and Aiea area and move up to where you are now?

BL: I moved into this area of Kalihi in the year 1970. Before I moved into this area I was already called as a Stake Relief Society President for the Pearl Harbor Stake and I am still here in the Kalihi Ward working in the Relief Society.

MK: Will you share some of your experiences in attending the [Hawaii] Temple?

BL: Yes, I first went to the temple and received my endowments in 1953. It was something that I waited for years and years and naturally I was more than happy to go to the temple. I remember when my grandfolds and my aunts, who came to the temple many, many years ago, how they rejoiced and how they would sit together and talk among themselves of the blessings that they received [by] going to the temple, not what was done there or what they saw, but the blessings they received from going to the temple. I have been attending the temple ever since then and I must say that I have gained a lot of experiences. I know that the temple really is a House of the Lord, and I know that attending the temple, as a temple member, I have gained a lot of experiences, a lot of blessings in learning the gospel, and in being obedient to the commandments of our Heavenly father; and learning

to love one another, to share with other people. I am just filled in my heart--the anxiety of wanting others, seeing others to come to the temple. I have received many manifestations while sitting in the temple, going through sessions and I know for a fact that whatever is being done in the temple is really of the truth and is really of our Heavenly Father.

MK: Can you tell us or share with us some of the experiences you remember of people that influenced your life for good.

BL: Yes, many of them. My grandfolks were the first, like I mentioned at the beginning. My grandmother was an inspiration to me and so was my mother, being very faithful in obeying the commandments and in serving other people with love and understanding. And their faith and their prayers really inspired me. And then as I grew older and was married and had my family, my Relief Society president also were people who really inspired me.

And especially I would like to mention, I believe that many of you still remember Sister Mary Tyau. Sister Mary Tyau was really an inspiration in my life. She was at one time the Primary president. But at the time she was the Relief Society President, I will never forget her because I was already working in the Relief Society at the Auwaiolimu Ward, and I admired her because she was so faithful and she always spoke with a smile on her face and she always could say so many things in a very short time. I always said, I wish I could be like her. She could say so many beautiful things in such a short time and she always spoke so fast and yet so clearly that you could understand her. And you know that I think I got my wish granted because today I have that habit of speaking very fast but I always speak loud enough so that people can understand me. I do everything fast, I eat fast, I sleep fast, and I work fast and I try to do, you know, to be like Sister Tayu who really was an inspiration to me.

[200] Sometimes when I get up in Sacrament meeting and I'm bearing my testimony or if I'm giving a message, if I'm asked to speak, I always remind people that they must excuse me because I always speak fast, and I do things fast, but I'm always sure that I speak loud enough so that they could understand me. At one time, when I was speaking in Sacrament meeting some of boys were sitting in the back with one of the sisters and when they saw me go up they said, "Ah, there's the sister that speaks fast." And I'm grateful for Sister Tyau who really was an inspiration in my life.

Sister Murphy, I will never forget her. She's always so faithful and always so soothing. When anything happened, she was right there to soothe the problem out with such kind words and such love. And I remember her always as she bore her testimony, she always played the guitar and she always sang, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives", with tears streaming down her cheeks she would play and sing this song to our Heavenly Father. And, you know, with her love, the way she shared her love and her humility, she was one of the great inspiration to me.

My stake president, President George Q. Cannon [111]. I love him very dearly too, so humble and so kind. I never heard any rough talk from him, but he was an inspiration to me because whenever I felt down and low, he was always there with such inspiring words to lift me up and want me to keep on going serving our Heavenly Father. President [George] Leavitt, serving under him, I love him very dearly, too, because he was such an inspiration, so kind and so loving and always trying to help me and he always taught me beautiful lessons of humility.

I also have worked under some wonderful bishops, like Bishop Kauahina, who always taught me a wonderful lesson on being able to understand people and in being able to always correct myself before I go and correct other people, [he] taught me lesson of humility and love. And then there was Bishop Tai who was so very inspiring [a] Bishop to me, always taught me how to pray, how to fast and how to be obedient to the commandments of our Heavenly Father, especially to keep the Word of Wisdom and to serve Him continually and go to the temple continually. And he taught me the lesson of endurance which I am still trying today.

MK: What changes do you see in the Church during your lifetime?

BL: Well, there are quite many changes that I see today. In the early days, take the missionaries for instance. We didn't have young missionaries that we have now, we had kind of missionaries that were little older and we didn't have as many as we have today. And naturally, they had lots of areas to cover, so we didn't get to see the missionaries too often, we didn't have them to come and visit us too often. And in those days they had to travel by mules. They had cars but there were places on the islands where there were no roads for the cars to go. Now take like on the island of Maui, when the missionaries would come from Kahului on a little car, they'd come as far as Haiku, they would leave their cars there, they would spend the night with me and then the next morning I would drive them over to Peahi side where they would get their mules. And then from there on they would ride on mules all the way through trails going to Kanae, Nahiku, Kipahulu, Kaupo.

So by the time they come back it will be one week already and they always come back to my place because it seems that that's where they always stay. And when they came to stay with me I would get up early in the morning and fix their little lunches because they have to go a long ways. Each one would have a little pack of lunch. Sometimes when they get to my place, their clothes would be soiled, you know. So I would take their shirts and wash them, and their garments. At that time I didn't know what the garments were, but I knew that that was the kind of clothing they wore so I would wash them and try to get them dry overnight and where we lived, sometimes it rains and I was always worried that their clothes would not get dry. So I would hang them over a little kerosene stove in the camp and let it get dry and then I would use the iron to press them. They would be so happy to see that they have clean clothes to wear and continue on their journey with their lunch together with them.

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But today--the change I've seen in the missionaries today, we have so many, many missionaries, every area there's a group of missionaries. They are much more younger. They are more strong. They can travel faster, some of them have cars; they have bicycles that they can travel on. Another change I see in the missionaries today that they can walk and go out doing their work without coats on, they just wear their ties and white shirts. In the olden times no matter how hot it was, they always had to keep their coats on, always had to go with their suits on.

Another change that I see is, of course, during that time because we live far from the churches, we held all our meetings in one day, and today we see where we're kind of going back to that time where we are holding our meetings, all at one time, one meeting after the other. That's the way we used to do it in the old times, we see it done today. Then in the olden times--like the baptisms for instance--we had to baptize in pools, ponds, they didn't have baptism fonts in the chapels 'cause we didn't have elaborate chapels like we have now. That's one thing that I see. Then of course, I see now where more people are coming into the Church and I think one reason for that is because we have more missionaries that are doing missionary work.

The people today are more enthused about their families, enthused over the things that [they] learn of the gospel, what's being taught they are trying to put them all into practice today. For instance, educating our children, the parents are encouraged to educate their children and so we have the seminaries; we have these different classes. Those are the big changes we have today. The olden days we didn't have--we only had the grammar schools, very few high school. We see more people and larger attendance.

MK: What is your present position in the Church?

Well, right now, I am a teacher in the Relief Society in the Kalihi Ward; I'm teaching the Spiritual Living lesson in the ward. I have been working since 1970, since I went to the temple. I have received many, many experiences while working in the temple as a temple ordinance worker. I know that that really is the House of the Lord and whatever is within the walls, really belongs within the walls of the temple. I have gained many experiences, many manifestations that I have received have really helped me to grow. I would advise those, really advise all those who are able to go to the temple to go and seek counseling from their bishop, see if they can get their bishop to give them their recommends and go to the temple and do endowments. Work for themselves, for their own endowments and also to work for our dead, because that is only one way so that we can enter into the highest kingdom. We must do work for our ancestors.

Also today I would like to say another change I find is the great work in Genealogy work. We find lots people are doing their genealogy work, so that they can have work done for their people who have gone on beyond, who never had the opportunity of going to the

the temple. That's why we have these [branch] genealogy libraries. My husband is taking care of one of the libraries. We are also teaching genealogy at the Kamehameha Schools. Many of the people that came there are non-members and while coming there to his classes they've learned a lot and found a lot of records of their ancestors. Then they are also coming to our libraries, to use our libraries, and finding records in our libraries. I was thinking now, why would my husband want to go and teach genealogy at the Kamehameha School. I said, "There's lots to do here in the Church." But he says, "But think of all those names that those people are going to get, all those records." Someday those names their work will have to be done, probably not now, but probably during the millennium when all the temple work will be done. So he said, "Think of those names", and so that's why he goes.

MK: Bessie, as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, what counsel would you give the generation of today?

BL: Well, in all my experiences as a member of the Church, serving the Lord in the Church, I would like to share with you what I have learned ever since I was baptized into this church, and while serving in the Church and serving under different people, different leaders. I would really like to counsel and advise you, especially the young people, because you are going to be the leaders of tomorrow. The old people have done their part and they'll soon be leaving here, and you are going to be the ones who is going to carry on the affairs of our Heavenly Father's church. So my counsel to you is that you study the scriptures, get an education and learn the scriptures, study it well.

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Learn to receive counselling from the elders, from the leaders of the Church, the elders of the Church, from your parents, because they are the ones who have really learned, and now they want to pass it down to you younger people. That you try to be always faithful, and first is that you seek our Heavenly Father in all the things that you do, in all the things that you do counsel with our Father in Heaven and He will show you the way. He will help you. Young people, if you can, try and fulfill missions, try and go on a mission and do your part as a missionary. Be obedient to the commandments of our Heavenly Father; attend your meetings.

And whatever you have anything, any problems that you would, first counsel [with] the elders, the older ones, the older people, and go to your Heavenly Father with fasting and prayer. I speak of this because I have experienced this many times. Problems have sometimes been so great that if it wasn't for the counselling that I received from my elders, from my older people--like going to our Heavenly Father and counsel with Him in fasting and prayer--I don't know where I would be today.

So that would be my counselling: that you go and seek an education, learn, study the gospel, read the scriptures. Someday you may not have the scriptures to read. We have to go without books, so now

learn the scriptures; learn to memorize them. Share your love and your experiences with other people, and always remember to do all that you do with an eye single to the Glory of God. Always be willing to work for Him and endure to the end.

MK: Bessie, thank you so very much for sharing your life experiences with us. It helps me to be more humble. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to be part of your life this day and it is hoped that as we go through life we will continue to live the Gospel and endure to the end. Thank you.

[446] END OF INTERVIEW.