

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Margaret Spinney, 70, former coffee sorter and lau hala weaver

"I know how much work is involved in preparing lau hala, you know. Because when I was small I worked with lau hala, and in fact I didn't get to finish school because I had to stay home and help work the lau hala so we could afford our younger siblings an opportunity to finish school with the money that we made with our lau hala work."

Margaret (Kamaka) Spinney, Hawaiian, was born September 26, 1910 in Kalaoa, North Kona, Hawaii. Her parents, Jacob Palakiko Kamaka and Kalua Pimoe Makahi, wove and sold lau hala items.

In 1930, Margaret moved to Kailua, Kona and worked as a coffee bean sorter at the American Factors' coffee mill. A year later, she married Arthur Spinney, a commercial fisherman.

In 1937, they moved to Oahu, where her husband began working as a parks keeper in Nanakuli. Ten years later, they returned to Kona.

Margaret today enjoys crocheting, gardening and lau hala weaving. She is also active in senior citizens' activities.

Tape No. 9-42-1-80 TR
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Margaret Spinney (MS)

December 16, 1980

Kalaoa, Kona, Hawai'i

By: Larry L. Kimura (LK)

[Note: Interview conducted in Hawaiian. Translation done by
Larry L. Kimura.]

LK: In those days, the house that you folks had down at the beach,
well, to get there there was no real road, was there?

MS: There was only a footpath.

LK: What kind of house was that that you folks had down at the beach?

MS: It was lumber house. My father got the lumber on his sampan and
brought it over and his friends helped him to build the house.

LK: Do you recall what year, approximately, that house was built?

MS: Gee, I think I wasn't even a year old when that house was built.

LK: And then you had mentioned earlier that when the war [World War II]
started that house had to be burned down?

MS: That's right, that was the way it was back then; they (the army)
didn't want to have any homes down at the beach area.

LK: Maybe it was because the military was afraid that it would burn a
fire or a light down at the beach and it would be seen by the
enemy.

MS: Perhaps that was the reason, but it sure was a waste to have burned
it down because all of my family was living there down at the beach
at that time. And when (we) got older (we) go to school. Take my
brother who's now living in Honolulu, he used to walk all the way
from the beach to school, as well as myself. He would come up to
where I was staying and then we would both walk up to school together.
We would go to the school and then go home every day.

LK: Gee, that seems like a long distance.

MS: Of course in those days the land was clear. There was not all of these bushes and plants that you see now covering the landscape. The vegetation was so low, very low; you could see all the way down to Kailua. Now, when you look, you can't see Kailua, it's all blocked with this dense growth of vegetation.

LK: And what year was that, approximately, when that house was burned down at the beach?

MS: Well, I was in Honolulu in 1941, so about 6 months or so after the war had broken out in 1941. That's when I (was told that) the house burned down because I went to Honolulu in 1937. Gee, I stayed in Honolulu for 10 years, from 1937 to 1947.

LK: Where did you stay?

MS: I lived at Kaka'ako because at that time my husband was working with the parks board. I was already married and we had our four children--two boys and two girls--here in Kona and then my husband was called to go to Honolulu for this job. This was actually through friends of his that he got this job. He went to Honolulu about two months ahead of us to look for a suitable place for us to live. He found a place and then we joined him. Actually he was there in Honolulu previous to that, going back and forth between Honolulu and Kona and he went to Nānākuli. When he thought it was okay for us to join him there, he came back to get us and we went to stay at Nānākuli. What he had in mind was to go fishing there--'ōpelu fishing close to that park called Nānāikapono. At that time he was working at that park and when he got through working at 3 o'clock [p.m.] then he and I would go out fishing for 'ōpelu.

LK: Oh, so you helped him as well?

MS: Yes, and my children stayed home with a friend of mine, because at that time our friend was living with us.

LK: And so you folks could catch 'ōpelu right outside of that park area?

MS: Yes, we went in that area there, not too far out from the park. Right there, all the 'ōpelu would be found.

LK: Gee, that's nice and close.

MS: Yes, it was very close to shore. As soon as you get out of the harbor, there the 'ōpelu would be.

LK: Were there other fishermen at that time?

MS: There were a few others. When they heard we were fishing for 'ōpelu there, well, they came to catch too.

LK: How did your husband find those fishing grounds?

MS: Well, I guess he just knew where to look, and of course he wanted to go fishing and the ocean then was very nice and calm. You could see the 'ōpelu very clearly swimming in the water. We came back to Kona in the year 1947 and he went fishing for 'ōpelu too.

LK: So the major activity in Nānākuli was fishing for 'ōpelu?

MS: Yes. That's what he did until he went back to work for the parks board, because his boss called him and told him to abandon the fishing and get back to working.

LK: What kind of work was that with the parks board?

MS: That would be taking care of the parks.

LK: And so is that when you both went to stay at Kaka'ako?

MS: Yes, from there we went to Kaka'ako to live. My husband still has some cousins still living there in Nānākuli. That's Peter Kamealoha, he's with the parks board. I think he's still working, I'm not quite sure, maybe he's already finished by now.

LK: So you folks lived in Honolulu for about ten years?

MS: Yes, that was enough, my kids were getting older and we wanted to come back to Kona. And of course my other reason was that my guardians were in a bit of an awkward way here in Kona. They were getting older, you know how it is, so we came back to take care of them.

LK: Now who were your guardians?

MS: Kaikala and his wife. They had no children living with them, just the two of them, that's all. And so we went to live with them to take care of them.

LK: So these two guardians were guardians for your husband, and that's when you folks came back in 1947 to take care of them?

MS: Yes.

LK: So during the war years you folks were in Honolulu?

MS: Yes.

LK: Those were the blackout years?

MS: Yes, all over there was blackout, even here in Kona. My parents were living up here with my son, with blackout in effect during the war years.

- LK: And how was it during the war years, was it a very difficult time, livingwise?
- MS: No, we had everything. There was nothing that we needed or wanted. We were well provided for. Of course, in those days you couldn't just sit and do nothing. We had to work for a living and I used to weave (lau hala) hats with my mother.
- LK: This was when you came back to Kona?
- MS: Yes. But really, this is what I did way before I was married, I wove hats. I would make hats until I got about a dozen and then I would take them to the store to exchange for food. Because that's what the people wanted in those days, they wanted hats.
- LK: And who were the people who wanted to buy these hats?
- MS: Well, there was this Japanese man by the name of John Fukuda, he was the one who came to get our hats.
- LK: Was he the man who used to sell shoes and material?
- MS: Yes, do you remember him?
- LK: I never saw him or met him, but I heard the story about this man going about travelling about on his car selling various goods to the people.
- MS: Yes, he would go all over this island selling his wares to the people who were making lau hala hats. I think John Fukuda has now passed away.
- LK: Was he from Hilo?
- MS: Gee, I don't know.
- LK: So he would get on his car and go around selling, peddling his goods?
- MS: Yes, and he would bring yards of cloth or food articles, you know. Actually, in the beginning he didn't bring too many goods with him because when he first came he would place his orders with these people. He left his hat orders with these people to make a lot of hats for him, and in exchange he would get orders from the hat makers, depending on what they wanted from him. It could be maybe some food articles for the home, or bolts of cloth, or practically anything that you needed. During those days the hats were being bought for 50 cents a hat. We sold the hats to him for 50 cents.
- LK: Did he come on a truck or a regular car?
- MS: It was just a regular old car. So he would come and collect all his hats that he had ordered, and in exchange give the people the things that they had ordered from him and what they wanted. That's how he collected all his hats until he had what he wanted.

LK: And what did he do with all of his hats?

MS: Well, he would sell these hats in turn to some other people. Of course, we didn't know how much he was selling the hats for once he bought it from us. Because when he sold the hats, the money that he got, well, that's the money he used to buy what the hat makers had ordered from him, you see.

LK: So this was more like an exchange kind of system?

MS: Yes, swapping. And of course we used to make so many hats in those days, but when you think about the hats being made today, well, look at the price first, the price is so high. Today you don't hear anything below ten dollars. And where are all these hat weavers today? Well, all of them are in the hotels working now, it's faster money.

LK: Do you know who actually started this hat weaving business?

MS: I don't know. When my mother was living with her in-laws--her parents-in-law--she didn't know how to do that kind of work, hat weaving. It was my grandmother who taught her how to weave hats. (My mother) learned very quickly how to do it from her mother-in-law.

LK; And how did you learn?

MS: Well, that was later.

LK: You know, I've heard from people that before, the first hat that you made, you had to burn it?

MS: Yes, that is true. I experienced that for myself, that's how my mother taught us. She told us that when we make our first hat, no matter what shape it was in, whether the weaving was full of holes or it had a lot of spaces in between, that didn't matter. But we had to burn that hat; by doing that, later on we would know how to do it better. We would receive all this knowledge on hat making. Then you could weave whatever you wanted after that. That was how she was taught by her mother-in-law, you see. My mother was a favorite of my grandparents--or her parents-in-law. She was also taught about sewing patchwork quilts and quilting, too. But she didn't really care for sewing patchwork quilts; what she really liked to do was weave lau hala. And because she liked to do this work so much, she planted several acres with lau hala. This would be the lau hala kōkala'ole.

LK: Oh I see, and was that just below here?

MS: Yes. [Below the present site where MS is now living, approximately in the Kona Palisades area.] And so when the lau hala trees grew to maturity, she had a lot of lau hala to use for her own weaving, whether it be for mats or hats, and so forth. Most of the people of Kalaoa would go to these fields that my mother planted to get their lau hala to use.

LK: And so those lau hala trees really belonged to your mother?

MS: Yes.

LK: Because nowadays I hear people are actually selling just the leaves. How was it before, were the lau hala leaves sold?

MS: Before, lau hala was not sold by the leaves--like prepared and rolled into bundles and sold that way--no, that was not done. So, if you wanted lau hala and if you came to ask me how much it was, I would just tell you to take the lau hala home; you don't owe me anything. Yes, I did hear of people selling, but we used to just give it away. That's how my mother was taught by her mother-in-law; if people come to your home to ask for lau hala simply give it to them, because we would always still have lau hala.

LK: Which lau hala is the better one for weaving, the one that has dried on the tree or the one that has fallen onto the ground?

MS: Well, the lau hala that has dried on the tree is softer and also lighter and cleaner in appearance. Of course, some that has dried and fallen to the ground is just as white, but it's not as good as the one on the tree. The one that has dried and falls to the ground is brittle and not as supple as the one that has dried on the tree. So the better one is really the leaf that has dried and still is on the tree, rather than the one that has fallen to the ground. The one on the ground is tough and hard and brittle.

LK: So when you get the one that has dried and still clings to the tree, do you get that leaf down with a kind of hook?

MS: Right, that's how we do it, with a hook. Because I am taking care of the lau hala down here. [MS is referring to the lau hala trees situated at the Keāhole Airport. She has permission to collect the lau hala there for her weaving.] And so when 'A'ala Akana started this special program with the older people at the King Kamehameha Hotel, I offered my lau hala to be used there.

LK: How often do you pick that lau hala?

MS: I pick it about once a month. Now the trees down at the airport have grown tall and the branches are extending here and there, and so that's the lau hala that we are weaving. Perhaps next month again I will go down to pick some more. Because when we go and pick next month, well, one picking will be for her ['A'ala] and next time we go it will be for the older participants in this special program at the hotel. When they see the lau hala and they say to you, "Oh, this lau hala is very nice," then all you can do is give it to them, you can't think about selling it. We have enough for ourselves, we load it on the truck and we have a whole truckload full of lau hala. Then we take it down to the King Kamehameha Hotel, and every Friday I go and get a bundle of it and take it into the lobby. There we would cut the tips and the bases of the leaves off and strip the thorns off and we would have, in other words, some activity for the older participants to do.

- LK: Well, you're fortunate to have gotten permission to go and get the lau hala at the airport.
- MS: Yes.
- LK: If they didn't give it to you they would probably burn it anyway.
- MS: That's true. I've been late sometimes in getting the lau hala and that's what they do, they just gather it up and burn it. That's such a waste. I know how much work is involved in preparing lau hala because when I was small I didn't get to finish school. I had to stay home and help work the lau hala so we could afford our younger siblings an opportunity to finish school with the money that we made.
- LK: Well, it seems that was the popular activity or work of the women of Kona during those days.
- MS: Yes.
- LK: Were hats more in demand for sale back then than mats?
- MS: Yes. To make a mat it would take a longer time, and more lau hala of course.
- LK: How was the lau hala weaving before? Was it really more an activity of the Hawaiian women rather than any other nationality, or were there other nationalities?
- MS: Well, later of course, the Japanese got involved, the Japanese women. At the beginning of the war in 1941 and on, that's about when the Japanese women started to get involved in weaving lau hala hats commercially. They learned it from our older people and our parents. In fact, there are some Japanese women still living today who are weaving lau hala.
- LK: And what about World War II, were there many Japanese involved in lau hala weaving?
- MS: Yes, there were a lot. If you see some older Japanese women or men today and you ask them for lau hala they say, "Here, take the lau hala" because we know that kind of work, we used to do that during the war years.
- LK: And what about Filipino men, weren't some of them involved with that?
- MS: I don't think so, there weren't that many of them. Most of their time was occupied in coffee farming and regular vegetable growing.
- LK: Because we always hear about lau hala hats being made in Kona.
- MS: That's true. Because in those days South Kona was well known for lau hala weaving. And you know, throughout the general area of Kona, of course.

LK: And you know we have heard of the Kona hat, with the short brim.

MS: That's true. (Laughs) The brim would only be about 1-1/2 to 2 inches, and that's all there was to that Kona hat brim. Gosh, I don't think that afforded much shade or protection from the sun.

(Laughter)

LK: Are these hat blocks? [LK is looking at some hat blocks that are displayed in her living room.] Are these called lona or ipu in Hawaiian according to what you know?

MS: Well, I've heard both names used for the hat blocks in Hawaiian, called ipu or lona. The one that we use most frequently is ipu.

LK: And what kind of hat block is that under the table there, it looks sort of narrow, almost like a sushi cone?

MS: That was given to me by Aunty Molly.

LK: Can the piko [the beginning of the hat] be made on that kind of hat block? It looks a little difficult to do.

MS: Well, first we make the piko, then you place that onto the top of the hat block.

LK: And what are the different names or the different sections of the hat?

MS: Well, you have your beginning, the piko. Then the flat portion, the pā, then you come to your crown itself, called ipu and then you come to your brim which is called 'ēkeu or 'ēheu, they are both the same thing, it's just a variation in the name.

LK: What was the weft size for the hats that you folks usually made for this Japanese man, Mr. Fukuda?

MS: It was one-eighth inch. And if you were a fast weaver you could probably make four to five hats a day, that's if you didn't have other distracting jobs to do at home. And if you were a good fast weaver, of course in no time you could finish about five hats a day, you know the weft was kind of big, too. And you make your piko and put it onto your hat block, and make your pā and in no time you can complete a hat because the brim was not that big.

LK: Was there any better time during the day to weave hats than any other time?

MS: Yes, a good time of the day would be the morning. Say, if you wanted to get up around 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the morning to weave hats, that would be a very good time. By the time it would be sunrise, you would already have finished a hat, that's when the lau hala would be nice and supple, easy to work with.

LK: You would weave hats in the dark?

MS: Of course we had lanterns to weave by. You know, we didn't have electricity back then.

LK: And usually women would get up that early to weave hats?

MS: Oh sure, we did that. It would seem as if the women were competing, one with the other to see who could finish their hats first or who could make the most. Sometimes they would work from evening all the way to sunrise. I have seen my mother do that. If we saw her resting during the day, then we knew she would be working that night. In the evening after she fed everybody and the kids were all put to bed, that's when she would begin to do her lau hala work. She would stay up all night weaving hats until the sun came up the next day. And all her hats would be finished. If she made up her mind to do something, she did it, she completed her work.

LK: Did she also make coffee picking bags?

END SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MS: Yes.

LK: And what about mats, was there a demand for house mats?

MS: No, I don't think there was much of that, I guess that was because the people were already getting into different kinds of carpeting. Just like me, I don't have lau hala mats on my floor, I have this carpet.

LK: What did the lau hala coffee picking baskets look like?

MS: Gee, I wish I had one to show you here. Anyway, it's not too high, it has a round, wide mouth and it has four corners at the bottom. If I'm not mistaken, the Kimura Lauhala Shop may have some there.

LK: So it's not very deep?

MS: No, it's not deep. Because if it's deep and you pick a lot of coffee, your basket will get very heavy. It's kind of shallow, maybe about six inches deep. Because as soon as it is full, you just pour it into your bag.

LK: Wasn't that also a job that you did--pick coffee?

MS: Just once in a while, sometimes.

LK: Did you harvest your coffee on your own property or did you harvest coffee for some other people?

- MS: We didn't grow coffee, but we picked coffee for our Japanese friends.
- LK: And the season is just about over right now, isn't it?
- MS: Just about, but there are some places still picking coffee yet.
- LK: And as soon as the season for picking it is done, the flowers start coming out already?
- MS: Yes, they start blooming.
- LK: So this is the flowering time?
- MS: Yes, I think so, I think this is the time for flowering.
- LK: So when you came back from Honolulu you continued doing lau hala weaving and also picking coffee?
- MS: Yes, but I've not picked coffee for some time now, I think it's enough.
- LK: Did you ever work in a coffee mill?
- MS: Yes, it was about 1926 or so, I worked in a coffee mill, that was at the American Factors Mill in Kailua, Kona. I worked inside the mill. There was a container where the dry coffee was poured into--they called that parchment coffee--then it was conveyed into a trough. What we did was to select the junk coffee from the good. Those that looked black and spoiled, well, those were the ones that we culled out from the good. That was the American Factors Mill right where the King Kamehameha Hotel is now standing. That's where we used to work.
- LK: How long did you work there?
- MS: Gee, I think I worked there for about six years. You see, that was about the only kind of work we could do back then.
- LK: And while you were working there in Kailua, where did you folks live?
- MS: When I was working at that mill, we lived in Kailua so it was very close for us to go to work every day.
- LK: So during those years you weren't married, then?
- MS: Right, I wasn't married yet. When I had already gone to Honolulu, well, I was married, but when I was at Kailua my work was at the coffee mill.
- LK: Were your grandparents still living at the time you folks were living at Kailua?

- MS: No, my grandparents were all gone, my parents were living then.
- LK: Did you folks all work at the factory, your parents included?
- MS: Yes, we all worked there at the mill. And in those days, it was only 60 cents a bag. So if the coffee was good, it wouldn't be much work to do and in no time you would get your 60 cents.
- LK: And how heavy was that bag of coffee?
- MS: One hundred pounds, and if you were a very fast picker or selector, maybe you would get three or four bags a day done. You see how it was then if you were to compare it with today; if you ever offered 60 cents to people today, they would think you were crazy. But in those times you couldn't be particular, you had to take what was offered, what was available, but of course we survived until today, thank God. Mr. [L.C.] Child and Mr. [Charles] Hinders were our bosses.
- LK: This was at the American Factors Mill?
- MS: Yes.
- LK: So the 60 cents you got, this was not for picking the coffee in the field?
- MS: No, this was the parchment coffee that we culled in the mill. But if you mean the coffee right from the tree where we picked the coffee and put it in the bag, well, I remember going with my mother several times and I think we got 60 cents too, for the bag. This was the ripe coffee and one full bag would not be quite 100 pounds because the regular raw coffee would have the skin and everything on. But the one we worked with in the mill--the parchment coffee--was without skin, that would be 60 cents for 100 pounds that we had to work with.
- LK: Do you remember what hotels were there in Kailua back then?
- MS: Let me see, there was the Kona Inn, that was the first hotel built there.
- LK: During those times they were still shipping cattle from Kailua by dragging the cattle into the ocean?
- MS: Yes. There were many people who used to bring their cattle down to Kailua from over Captain Cook area, and this area. During those days, the steamships Hawai'i and the Humu'ula would come to get the cattle, and what we did was go down to the wharf to watch all this activity, to watch how they loaded all the cattle onto the boat. It was such a fun thing to see and those days would be like holidays for us. Sometimes we would be at staying at Ho'onā. And when we saw the steamship coming in from Honolulu, passing by our place, we would start walking towards Kailua and when we got to Kailua town, the steamship would be coming into town about that time too. We

didn't have much of that where we used to live in the country area, so it was something to see. That's how we got to Kailua, by walking from where we were at Ho'onā, and that 'a'ā was nothing to us. When you look at the distance now, you think it's far but to us it was nothing.

- LK: I guess folks didn't miss any cars in those days, you didn't have any?
- MS: That's right, no cars could go where we were staying, there were no roads there. It was by horse and donkey that we travelled in that area then. Now you have your planes and cars.
- LK: What do you think about the changes that have occurred?
- MS: Well, I am very regretful about all the changes. I really cherished those things that we had in the past. Just like where the Keāhole Airport is now standing. If the lava had not flowed there and the state had not taken it over, it would still belong to us today. Whenever we wanted to go to the beach, we would have a place to go. But now there is a security guard there and you can't go down without permission.
- LK: When you look at the old pictures of Kailua back when you were living there, it looks like a little town compared to today.
- MS: Exactly, there are so many buildings there now. It looks so ugly when you look at it now, most of what you see is just concrete. That's really too bad, and maybe later on Kailua will be completely covered with concrete, then what?
- LK: I think one of the oldest buildings standing there now is the Hulihe'e Palace.
- MS: That's right, that's the original site of the palace.
- LK: And also the church.
- MS: That's right, the [Moku'aikaua] Church as well. Those are the only old buildings standing today.
- LK: Do you know anything about the visits of Queen Lili'uokalani?
- MS: No, I really don't know much about that.
- LK: What about campaigning in those days, how was that?
- MS: Political campaigning?
- LK: Didn't you folks have a sheriff during those days?
- MS: Yes, I can remember our sheriff was Nāhale.

- LK: What about this man Ka'elemakule, I've heard his name a lot; perhaps he was a kind of well-to-do person?
- MS: Well, yes.
- LK: Wasn't he the one who had a store at Kailua?
- MS: Yes, and now he doesn't have it, of course.
- LK: Was he some kind of sheriff too?
- MS: I don't really know about that. It was his son who married Lei Collins and they had some children. I'm pretty sure Lei knows the story about her father-in-law, John Ka'elemakule. That's the same family with Tom Lincoln.
- LK: I've heard some old timers say when they were working on the steamers in those days when they docked at Kailua, one of the first stores they would go to was Ka'elemakule Store.
- MS: That's right, that was the first store that was built there, as well as Kim Chong Store. Wait a minute, there was Ka'elemakule's then Kim Chong and also Fong Lap. Ka'elemakule Store was around where Alii Drive makes a bend by King Kamehameha [Hotel], where Kona Tei is. Then if you go further over [towards Keauhou] by the banyan tree there, that's where Fong Lap [was]. That's where we would go to drink coffee because there was also a restaurant there at Fong Lap. And just above where Hulihe'e Palace is now, on a corner above where this two-story building is now situated, that's where Kim Chong Store was. Those were the only stores I remember back then, as well as the palace and the church. And of course, later on when American Factors was dissolved, the King Kamehameha Hotel was built. The one that is standing now is the newer one, there was another one that was built earlier, further seaward.
- You know where the wharf is right now in Kailua? That used to be the cattle pen. That's why they built the wharf right where it is now, and of course it goes into the sea. The purpose [of the wharf] was to assist in improving the shipping of cattle, because they didn't have to ship the cattle in the water anymore, the cattle would just walk right into the boat. You know, that was a lot of work in those days shipping cattle the way they did, with the horses dragging the cattle into the water. Of course, there was some pollution caused by the cattle, but what they excreted into the water was grass, nothing more than that. If that was still going on right now, I bet those restaurants like Rose Chong's [Oceanview Inn] would put up a big complaint about it.
- LK: Well, in those days it was okay because that was the only means of transportation and means of shipping cattle, there were no planes in those days.
- MS: Right, there were no planes. That was the only way we had to travel from island to island; going on the steamers and getting to

Honolulu. But those were good times, they were fun times. It's not like today, of course today is unavoidable.

LK: Your husband seems to be well known for charter boat fishing.

MS: Yes, but before, he was a regular fisherman. Later on, he bought a boat and used it as his charter boat for fishing. While he was in this business, along with other charter boat people, they would be catching the marlin. Then the question came out, how to make use of this marlin commercially. So my husband thought about this for a while. One of his sons was on the Mainland at that time, and another was home here. He had a boat, so they decided to sell that boat and get into the business of selling the marlin--taking it to Hilo and selling it there to Suisan [Fish Auction Market].

LK: Oh yes, they use that to make Japanese fishcake.

MS: Yes, and there was another company, now what was that name, Suisan and another one. . . . [MS goes on, seems to have forgotten the name of the other market]. From that time on, until the FDA [Food and Drug Administration] or something like that came into the picture saying that the marlin fish could not be eaten; it was prohibited to be eaten because they discovered that it had a certain content of mercury in it.

LK: What year was that when this came about?

MS: Gee, not too long ago, it was just about in 1970, I think.

LK: But was that just a temporary thing?

MS: Well, at that time it was forbidden for marlin to be eaten. So my husband and I said to these people that, you know, it is a funny thing because if you folks go and find all of these people, especially the elderly Japanese who have been eating this marlin fish all their lives, you won't see any signs of illness on them. And you know, they are in their senior years, they are very old people. They have not been affected by eating this fish that you claim has mercury in it. Why is this so? And of course, they couldn't give us an answer, and then later on they lifted this law and it was allowed for us to eat marlin meat again. And here we are, still eating this marlin fish. In those days there was so much fish to be caught, every day, there was fish to be caught. And every day we were taking the fish to Suisan in Hilo. And to this fishcake factory in Hilo, gee this Japanese man, I've forgotten his name.

LK: Oh, you mean the more round-shaped fishcake?

MS: Yes, now what is that name, I've forgotten.

LK: Yes, I eat that fishcake all the time, I've forgotten the name of the factory on that label.

MS: Well anyway, they told us that that [marlin] fish was very edible. They told us that a lot of Japanese liked that fish because it doesn't have a lot of bone; because the little children would get into difficulty eating fish with a lot of bones so that would be a good fish for them to eat. And we really felt that it was an unfair thing to prohibit the eating of that fish. When my father and brother were going fishing in those old days before, they used to catch this fish once in awhile, and would bring it back and we would clean it and strip it into strips and salt them, then we would dry it in the sun. Then when it was good and dry we would broil it over the fire, and that would be the fish that we ate. We ate it just like a snack, just by itself with nothing else. And from those days onward, until now, I have been eating that fish.

LK: What about 'ahi fishing?

MS: I didn't go for 'ahi fishing, we didn't do that. It was mainly the marlin and 'ōpelu. Now there are very few people who go and get 'ōpelu with a net. Most of them go at night to get the 'ōpelu fish.

LK: Oh yes, with those big bright lights.

MS: Yes. That's what the majority of 'ōpelu fishermen are doing, and that fish that is caught in the night has firmer meat, good for drying. And the 'ōpelu that is caught in nets, well, it has a much softer quality of flesh. It is good for eating raw or lomi, you know, and to me that's a favorite fish, eating it lomi.

LK: Were canoe races conducted here in Kona?

MS: Yes, the year 1932 was when the canoe racing was started here in Kona.

LK: So, you would have all your different teams from different districts here in Kona?

MS: Yes, and I believe Arthur Stillman was the coach here. Arthur was active in canoe racing; but you know, really, during the time when my father was young, they used to race canoes too.

LK: Maybe it sort of dwindled out from your father's time and then later on it was revived.

MS: Yes, that's right. There is a canoe now at the Bishop Museum and it's name is, gee let me see now, it's name is written on the canoe itself. Sometimes my younger sister goes there and she sees the canoe still there. And when she was younger she used to paddle canoe too.

LK: You mean this is your younger sister?

MS: Yes, she has her picture in one of those photographs there.

LK: And that canoe in the museum, how did it get in the museum?

MS: That canoe is from my grandfather and he gave it to my father. Then my father gave it to the Bishop Museum. Yes, the name of that canoe is 'Ā, now I remember it. The reason that canoe was taken to the Bishop Museum is because that's the oldest canoe they could get, since there was an oil explosion down at Kailua and a certain section of that canoe was burned. If I'm not mistaken, it was the back area, on the side of the stern area.

LK: And then it was sold to the Bishop Museum?

MS: No, my father just gave it to them. Well, let me see, there are so many things that I've forgotten now and so many years that have passed that I've forgotten so many details.

LK: What kind of name is that, 'Ā?

MS: I wonder what kind of name that is, I don't know. Of course, there must be some meaning to that name.

LK: Well in Hawaiian, 'ā has something to do with burning.

MS: Well, maybe that's something. Because, you know, in those days our old people attached so many deep meanings to their words. And you know, most of our adult people today, they don't really understand too many Hawaiian words. Just like me, I've forgotten so many of those words and language that I heard when I was younger. And that's because I have no one to talk to to keep my Hawaiian up.

LK: Now, your husband's work in selling the marlin in Hilo, was that before he got into charter boat fishing?

MS: No, he was into charter boat fishing and then he left and went into selling the marlin. But you see, when he was charter boat fishing and all these other charter boat captains came in with their catch, they just didn't have any place to sell their marlin, so that's when my husband got involved in selling the fish to Hilo.

LK: Didn't your son work with your husband too?

MS: That's right, he worked with my husband. Of course, he is still in the business, that's Charlie Spinney.

LK: So he's still in the charter boat fishing?

MS: Yes, but now, really, he has his sons doing it, he has five sons so they are carrying on the business. And so these grandchildren of mine, they are carrying it on and the father is building a new boat. Not a big boat, just a small one for himself to use to go hand line fishing.

LK: How recent is this charter boat fishing here in Kona, according to your knowledge?

MS: Well, I remember Henry Chee being one of the first to start this charter boat fishing in Kailua, Kona along with my brother Henry [Kamaka]. No, excuse me, that was my brother Henry and Kaliko Wa'ahila. They were the ones taking the tourists out fishing.

LK: I guess the only major hotel in Kailua, Kona then was the Kona Inn.

MS: Yes. And that's the reason why this charter boat fishing business was stimulated or undertaken by people. And then later Henry Chee came in, after my brother folks. And from him on, this industry became widespread among others.

LK: When your brother and his friend Kaliko started in this charter boat business, do you remember approximately when that was? Was that still when you were working in the coffee mill?

MS: Yes, it was approximately then, while I was working in the coffee mill.

LK: Was it about 1925 or so?

MS: Yes, I think so, about then. And actually my brother folks were working for this man, Bob Finlinsen [Finlayson], I think his name is spelled F-I-N-L-I-N-S-E-N, something like that. Anyway, he owned the boat and my brother folks worked the boat for him.

LK: Do you remember the name of that charter boat?

MS: That was Amco [spelling uncertain] and then later when Henry Chee came into the business, had the charter boat Mālia. And from Henry Chee's time on, this industry just mushroomed into big things.

LK: Yes, of course we have all heard about the marlin tournament [Kona Billfish Tournament], fishing tournaments being conducted here in Kona; it really is a big thing.

MS: Of course.

LK: Does it ever seem like there will be a time when marlin will be fished out?

MS: Marlin fish is still swimming in the ocean until today.

LK: It seems like these charter boats go out every day and they still catch the fish.

MS: Of course, it will be the men first that pass away before all this fish is fished out.

(Taping stops, then resumes)

MS: Now the Protestants, I remember, used to have song competitions like the Haili Church in Hilo, that's what I heard about.

LK: Are you Protestant?

MS: Yes.

LK: Do you belong, then, to this church up here, the Protestant church Mauna Ziona?

MS: Do you mean the Moku'aikaua Church?

LK: No, I mean this church just up here in Kalaoa.

MS: Well, do you know this church in Honolulu called Ka Makua Mau Loa?

LK: Oh yes, that's in Kalihi?

MS: Yes, well anyway we are a branch of that church. We are not really of that church, we don't belong to that particular church, but we are a branch of that church. My family--my children and my daughter.

LK: Well, I think there is a branch of that church too, in Waimea, it's under the minister Mahi.

MS: Oh, I see. Well anyway, our church is just me and my children and my oldest daughter, and another older son hasn't joined yet, but it is just us. So we have been in this religion for over five years as well as another branch in Kāne'ohe.

LK: And what about the district in Kona, is there no other group here that belongs to your church? Wasn't that original church started by John Wise?

MS: Yes, it was started by John Wise.

LK: Did you attend that church before?

MS: No, previously when I was young, I was a Catholic. So were my grandparents, they were Catholics but my mother was a Protestant and so I would go to Catholic church first, and later on I would go to the Protestant church.

LK: During those days when you were going to Catholic church, was the Hawaiian language used in the Catholic church?

MS: Yes, because that's when our older people were still around, you know, and they spoke only in Hawaiian, so they were the ones to carry on the Hawaiian language in church.

- LK: What about the priests, could they speak Hawaiian?
- MS: I'm not sure about that, I haven't heard them use Hawaiian today.
- LK: No, I am referring to the days of before.
- MS: Well, before, of course they spoke Hawaiian.
- LK: Can you recall who your priest was when you were a young girl?
- MS: I've forgotten his name already, I don't remember.
- LK: Who were some of the ministers at the Mauna Ziona Church?
- MS: Well today there is . . .
- LK: No, I mean before.
- MS: Well, there were many of them.
- LK: Do you recall Mr. Upchurch, Reverend Upchurch?
- MS: Yes, I know him and his children.
- LK: Wasn't he blind?
- MS: That's right, he was a blind minister. And presently Norman Keana'āina is the minister there and also Henry Boshard who is at Moku'aikaua. And of course Reverend Sterling is a minister in the church as well, here in Kona.
- LK: And what about this coastal area here where you folks had your house, were there any churches down in those beach areas?
- MS: Yes, I think there was one in Makalawena, and of course there was one at Honokōhau.
- LK: Wasn't that a little village down there at Honokōhau?
- MS: Yes, a lot of people lived there. In fact, all along this coastal area here people lived, but of course no longer.
- LK: Because my uncle told me that there was a church down at Ka'ūpūlehu.
- MS: That's right, there was a church down there too and the minister for those churches would be this Reverend Upchurch. He was like a travelling minister. One Sunday he would be at Ka'ūpūlehu then later another Sunday he would go to Honokōhau. And so he would travel all about going to different churches conducting services every Sunday.

- LK: Is his wife pure Japanese?
- MS: No, she's part-Japanese.
- LK: I believe she is still living; I think she is at Lunalilo Home. Of course she is very old now.
- MS: I wonder how her children are?
- LK: Isn't her daughter Louise here in Kona?
- MS: That's right. I think she's at Keauhou ma uka.
- LK: I guess she's still planting taro.
- MS: No, not anymore. She told me now that she is getting old and it's difficult for her to do it all alone. There were several acres that she planted in taro several years ago and we had some of her taro for making poi. It was very good taro, very good for making poi. I guess now those fields have been abandoned, I don't really know what has become of them.
- LK: When your grandparents planted the taro and did their garden, how was it done? Was it close to home?
- MS: Yes, they would have a section close to the house for planting sweet potato and there would be an area for planting taro. Also we had pineapple planted and 'ulu [breadfruit] trees. All kinds of food things to be eaten.
- LK: Wasn't it a familiar thing in those days for Hawaiian people to plant their own food--their own taro--in the upland area and then go to the beach to catch their fish?
- MS: Right, that is right.
- LK: I've heard that some Hawaiian families went way up into the forest to plant their taro and they left their taro and returned down to the beach to do their fishing until the taro was ready to be harvested.
- MS: Yes, that's true. And so when they knew that their taro was ready to be pulled, then they went upland to get it. And they would harvest their taro, you know, on a regular basis so they never went without food or taro to eat. And when the ocean was rough, when it was the rough season down at the beach, then they would all come back upland and set up their temporary shelters to stay in while they did their agricultural work. Those kinds of homes were just little shelters, like stone walls with iron roofs on top.
- LK: Who were some old people who lived in this area, some old time people? Are you familiar with the name Kawaimaka Ha'o?

- MS: Yes, I've heard of that family. Some are in Pu'uuanahulu.
- LK: Because this name of your mother, Kalua and . . .
- MS: Yes, that's Kalua Pīmoē Makahi.
- LK: Oh, excuse me, I was thinking of Kalua'ū.
- MS: Oh yes, well, that family is over on the other side, that's at Pu'ukala side.
- LK: What about this Mahi family? Isn't this a big family here? I think one of this Mahis is from Hāmākua District but another Mahi family is from this area.
- MS: Yes, there is a Joe Mahi here in Kalaoa. His father is Mitchell Mahi.
- LK: Isn't that the one from Hāmākua?
- MS: No, no, there is another Mahi, this Pelika Mahi.
- LK: I guess there are a lot of new people living here now.
- MS: Oh yes, we have so many new people living here.
- LK: What was the major race that lived here during your time? What was the majority race?
- MS: They were Hawaiian people. Later, Japanese came and lived together with the Hawaiians that were living here.
- LK: Where is this Ahuna Store?
- MS: Is that for this area here in Kalaoa?
- LK: Yes, I believe so.
- MS: Oh, that's already pau, but the daughter is still living. She is Mrs. Akona, that's Henry Akona, she is the daughter of the old man Ahuna.
- LK: Yes, that's the one that had a store?
- MS: Yes.
- LK: And the store just below here that's being built, that's a new store?
- MS: Yes, its owner is Japanese. You see, he had a petition circulating to apply for a store and a service station, but then as he started to build this building, he enlarged the building. And at this recent planning commission meeting, he was asking for space to rent out for realtors as well as other business rentals that he wants to

put into this building that he's making now. And then it was opposed by the planning commission.

LK: Do you think there is enough people in this area here to make a business for this man? Especially for buying groceries?

MS: No, I don't think so, I doubt it. Of course, his intent is to service the people who live up here. But of course, if his food prices are going to be higher than that of the supermarket down in Kailua, then nobody is going to patronize his store. You know, Taniguchi is a very popular supermarket here in Kona.

LK: What's the name of this man who is building this new store up here?

MS: I think it's (Matsuyama), I'm not sure. It's a common name, his name, gee whiz, I've kind of forgotten.

LK: I see the store isn't completed yet, that business complex is still being built.

MS: Yes.

LK: Well, here we have recent history, not past history being made.

MS: Yes.

(Laughter)

LK: Well, it's for other people to come later to find out about this new business complex up here, through their oral history interviews.

(Laughter).

END OF INTERVIEW

**A SOCIAL HISTORY
OF KONA**

Volume I

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**Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

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