BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Ella Ling Wong, 74, retired schoolteacher

"We had to go to the beach to get what they call that pūpuu, you know the shells? And there were lots of them. My two brothers, Bob and Donald, and I, after school we had to go to the beach to get that and bring it home so that the ducks can eat it... Calcium, maybe... Of course, we had to gather the eggs. That's another thing. And we helped to feed the chickens and watered them. Well, there was lots of work for us, we were always busy."

Ella Ling Wong, the ninth of twelve children of Sam Fat Ling and Heu Shee Ling, was born Christmas Day, 1912 in Honolulu. At about age six, Wong, along with her family, moved from their leased land in Sheridan to fee simple land on Hobron Lane. There they owned a pond and raised ducks, fish and chickens. Wong grew up on the farm and performed her share of daily chores.

Wong attended Ka'ahumanu Elementary, Washington Intermediate, and McKinley High Schools. She then attended the University of Hawai'i and received a teaching certificate.

In 1936, she married Clifford Wong. She is the mother of four sons.

The Ling family still owns the land that their farm sat on, on the corner of Hobron Lane and Līpe'epe'e Street. Her younger brothers own and manage apartment buildings on the property.
Tape No. 13-99-1-86

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ella Ling Wong (EW)

June 16, 1986

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Ella Wong on June 16, 1986 at her home in Honolulu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay Mrs. Wong, can you tell me first of all when you were born and where you were born?

EW: Oh, do I have to tell you? (Chuckles) Yeah, I was born in Honolulu, Sheridan Street around there anyway, and when? December 25, 1912. Old, huh? (Laughs)

WN: Depends on how you feel. (Chuckles) Can you tell me what you remember--I know it was a long time ago, but can you tell me what you remember about that Sheridan Street area?

EW: That Sheridan Street? Actually I don't remember too much. I know there were ponds around. There was a big fishpond, I remember, and let's see, in the middle of this fishpond was an island and they had kiawe trees and things growing in there. It was really nice. I don't know too much about the neighbors. I know there was some Chinese people and there was a Portuguese family, but I was too young to really know. And then from the back of our place we just walk out--there's our own private road. Then you walk straight out and then you get to Sheridan Street. That's all I know about that place really. And of course the vegetable garden in the back of us.

WN: Was that your father's vegetable garden?

EW: No it wasn't. I think it was a group of Chinese men. I think it's a hui or something and then they get together and grow vegetables.

WN: What kind of vegetables?

EW: Oh, all kinds, like mustard greens, lettuce and all kinds of vegetables. I think they even had sweet potatoes and it's all done by hand, no machinery. So it was really... It was a beautiful place.
WN: How big was the vegetable garden?

EW: Gee, I don't know, but it was quite big. It was a big area and they had, what do you call those borders where you can walk through? And then they had something growing in the water. I know it wasn't taro. They had watercress, I remember. I know it was big and they had vegetables and, as I say, watercress.

WN: And that fishpond you were telling me about, was that your father's?

EW: Yes. They had a big fishpond.

WN: What kind of fish?

EW: They had mullet. I don't know what you call the other one, awa.

WN: Awa.

EW: That's all I know, and they had, what do you call that? It's not carp but it's about this big. Goldfish they call it.

WN: Oh, about a foot long?

EW: Yeah, goldfish I think. I don't think they had carp. Oh, they also had swamp cabbage, I remember. We had an area, it's all water and then there was a little bridge running over it and they had swamp cabbage growing in there. It was good.

WN: How do you eat swamp cabbage?

EW: Swamp cabbage, oh, you just cook it with garlic. The Chinese people cook it with garlic, tastes good.

WN: So you were about how old when you moved to . . .

EW: Gee, maybe six, I think. I was going to ask my sister about that. (Laughs)

WN: So when you moved can you describe for me what that area was like, on Hobron Lane?

EW: Oh, well, there were a lot of Hawaiian people living around there. We moved to a corner lot. It was one big house and that was all [there was] in this big area. It was a little over two acres we had in the corner there and only one house. Then later on my father put up some duplexes and rented them out. Then he put up a couple of cottages. But he didn't put anything else after that because we had the fishpond.

WN: What was the fishpond like?

EW: Just a pond.
EW: A great big pond and there were some trees around it. It was quite nice.

WN: Was it bigger or smaller than the Sheridan Street pond?

EW: Oh, it was smaller, much smaller.

WN: Did he have the same kind of fish in there?

EW: Yeah, same kind of fish. And then they had one kind of fish. I don't know whether--were you born here?

WN: Yes.

EW: You ever heard of 'o'opus?

WN: Yes I have.

EW: They used to have that in one area of the pond. It's so funny. They'd just stay in one area of the pond and usually stay around the rocky places.

WN: How big were they? How big did they get?

EW: Oh, they got about this big.

WN: Oh, almost a foot long?

EW: No, not a foot. About this, it's not a foot.

WN: Eight, ten inches?

EW: And they were good eating but they were funny-looking fish. They were ugly.

WN: They had big heads, yeah?

EW: Yeah, but it was a good-eating fish. They have it on Kaua'i. Every time they have a heavy rain, it comes down the river. That's when they go get it. Of course we used to play in the fishpond. (Chuckles)

WN: Doing what?

EW: We had a little rowboat, and we used to go in there and row around that pond. Sometimes we would take our little nets and go fishing to way in the back part of the pond because they had a--what do you call that kind of grass that used to grow so wild in the swamps?

WN: Manienie?
EW: No, not manienie grass. It's something like bulrushes. You know what bulrushes are?

WN: No.

EW: It has long... It grows straight up and then a lot of times there are birds that go in there, too. They call it bulrushes and it grows in the water, so they had it also at our neighbor's place too, in the back because they raised hasu. They had a lot of those grass in their pond, too. They'd have to go clean it out because it wasn't good for the hasu. And it was really muddy because hasu has to grow in mud. But right in the back of us we had a little river running and it runs out. I don't know where it runs-- somewhere out into the ocean. You know it goes down that way and down Ala Moana way.

WN: Near where the [Ala Wai] Canal is now?

EW: Yeah, and then it meets up with that river [behind] Kam Look Store. In the back was a river and this little stream would meet up with that river. And they used to have what they call--the Hawaiians call it 'ōpae. You know what 'ōpae is?

WN: Uh huh, that's shrimp.

EW: Shrimps, yeah. Oh, they had lots of those.

WN: How did you catch 'ōpae?

EW: We had little nets. All the kids used to go. All the girls and the boys. You take your little can with you and then you take your little net and somebody would lift up the rocks. (Chuckles) And then sometimes it's in the grass and somebody would stamp the grass and all those things would come out. It was really good.

WN: So this stream was like a smaller stream that fed into the bigger one [i.e., Pi'ina'i'o Stream].

EW: Yeah. Uh huh.

WN: And then the bigger one emptied out by where the [Ala Wai] Yacht Harbor is [today].

EW: Yeah, yacht harbor.

WN: Is that the stream that fed into your father's fishpond?

EW: Yeah, that's the one. That's all I know about the fishpond.

WN: You said that you used to take a boat around...

EW: Yeah, right in the fishpond.
WN: How deep was it?

EW: Oh, it was quite deep. But then, you know rowboats. You don't need deep water.

WN: Did you swim in the pond too?

EW: In one area. In one area we used to swim because that was a nice clean sandy area. When we were hot we used to go down there and sit in that water. (Chuckles) Kids don't do that now. They have nothing like that to go to.

WN: I was wondering--I've never seen--people talk about fishponds in the old days in Waikiki but in terms of the size, like compared to say this room was it . . .

EW: No, it was bigger than this. It was bigger than this.

WN: Would you say like, if you were to estimate by foot, you think you could give an estimate? I just need a general idea.

EW: Oh, let's see. You know where those apartments are on Li'pe'epe'e, right where my brothers' apartments are? Well, where they are, the first apartment, and then it runs down to I would say, where the Ala Wai [Canal] is and then it comes circle around. It's sort of a circular pond. It was quite big. It was big enough.

WN: Your father's lot was about two acres?

EW: A little over two acres, the whole thing.

WN: And what percentage of it do you think was pond?

EW: Oh, I don't know. Not much, I think. Gee, I can't say. I wish I knew how to explain it to you but I don't know how.

WN: Hard, yeah. Well, I have an idea how big the lot is.

EW: Yeah, then after that, of course, they filled that pond up.

WN: So besides fish, what else did your father raise?

EW: Oh, they had chickens. They had ducks. And then our tenant--they [EW's parents] leased part of the area--raised lots of chickens, you know, Japanese man.

WN: What's the difference between raising chickens and raising ducks?

EW: Ducks need water. (Chuckles) Chickens like it dry.

(Laughter)

WN: Dumb question.
EW: The ducks love water. They just love water. They used to go into the pond, too. So that was all they raised. They didn't have pigs or anything. Our neighbor, the Lees, had pigs. They had lots of pigs. And then the Kaneshiros, that's not right on Hobron Lane. It's right near us.

WN: They were on Makanoe Lane?

EW: Yeah, I think that's what it is. That's where all the Hawaiians were, right? The Hawaiians moved from Kaka'ako. Is it Kaka'ako?

WN: Yeah, I think by the incinerators, Ala Moana.

EW: Yeah, the old incinerators. They used to have the squatters over there and then they moved up our way. That's when all the Hawaiians were there.

WN: What did that Squattersville look like?

EW: Just houses. They just built houses and moved in, old shacks, all old shacks. Some of those people were really wild, but some of them were so nice. Of course in our lane, Hobron Lane, we had this Japanese camp. I don't know what they called that camp. From 'Ena Road down [towards Kalakaua Avenue], both sides were mostly Japanese people. It was sort of a camp and gee, they lived there for a long time. Children grew up and there was one family, Yoshioka. They were living in the back of us too. She was a widow and she brought up all these kids. They were nice kids, too.

WN: Besides you and the Lees next to you, what other Chinese families were living in that area?

EW: All the way down Hobron Lane?

WN: Uh huh.

EW: There was a Chong family, there was a Ching family. Let's see, besides the Lees that used to own that Kam Look Store. That's about all the Chinese I know that were there. You know the Chongs.

WN: Were they in farming, too?

EW: Yes, the Chongs had pigs and their father drove the hack. You know, just like taxi? And so did the Chings, the same thing. And of course, Kaluokalani lived there for a long time, too. And the Ikeoles were there, and Manohas. Those were all Hawaiian people. In fact, I just thought of the name of these people but they were on Ala Moana [Road], not on Hobron Lane, the Dykes [family].

WN: So these families that you're talking about besides . . .
EW: That's right in Hobron Lane now, all this.

WN: Going toward Ala Moana?

EW: Yeah, going towards Ala Moana. And then when you get to Ala Moana that's where the Kahanamokus and the Clarks, Paoras and the Tsujis [lived]. Oh, there was a Campbell family also on Ala Moana. Gee, I really forget all those people. It's been so long.

WN: Oh, did your father raise vegetables, too?

EW: Just for home use. Oh, we had sweet potatoes, real big. We had papayas. And he raised all kinds of vegetables for the family.

WN: What about the chickens, ducks and fish? Was that for market?

EW: Not really. The chickens were and the eggs were and I don't know about the fish. I don't think they marketed the fish, just give it to the neighbors. That's all I know.

WN: What were some of your chores around that area?

EW: We had to go to the beach to get what they call that pupu, you know the shells? And there were lots of them. My two brothers, Bob and Donald, and I, after school we had to go to the beach to get that and bring it home so that the ducks can eat it. So that the eggs would be nice and red or whatever I don't know. Calcium, maybe.

WN: You just laid it out and they would eat it?

EW: Yeah, that's what they did. That's what my mother did. We didn't feed [the ducks]. We just went to get them [i.e., the shells] and that was hard work. Of course, we had to gather the eggs. That's another thing. And we helped to feed the chickens and watered them. Well, there was lots of work for us, we were always busy.

WN: What do you mean, water them?

EW: Oh, give them water.

WN: Oh, oh.

(Laughter)

EW: Give them water so they have water to drink. We had to do that.

WN: You come from a family of twelve children, right? You said you and Donald and Bob . . .

EW: We were the younger ones.

WN: . . . you were the younger ones. What did the older ones do?
EW: They went out to work, I think. Yeah, they went out to work, but then when we were in Hobron Lane we didn't have that much of anything already. But still we had a lot of work to do, keeping up. Then we mingled with a lot of Hawaiian people. But you know, in the old days the Hawaiian people were really nice. They were very nice people. So that's all I can remember about Hobron Lane.

WN: So there were a lot of Hawaiians, a lot of Japanese . . .

EW: Lots of Japanese.

WN: A few Chinese.

EW: Few Chinese.

WN: Did you folks all get along together?

EW: Very good. We were just like families. When anybody was sick, everybody was there and they came over and they helped with everything, the chores and everything. It's really just like a family, even now. When we see one another it's just like seeing your own family. But of course everybody's spread out all over.

WN: What was your house like?

EW: Oh, it was a two-story house, and I remember we only had two toilets in the house and five bedrooms. Of course, two living rooms, one upstairs and one downstairs and the kitchen and a bath. It was a big house. We needed a big house for the kids. It was a lot of work. Every Saturday we had to do the house. Boy, you know the old days, the kids really have to work, yeah. We had to clean house on Saturdays and wash clothes, everybody's clothes, and we did it by hand.

WN: Where did you do it?

EW: We had a little wash house, which was good. But we had enough laundry to have a wash house. And then Sunday was ironing day. We just iron all day on Sundays, get ready for school on Monday and the house had to be cleaned. Every weekend you have to mop the whole house. That wasn't fun. No vacuum cleaner like now. But everybody kept the house real nice and clean in the old days. They really scrubbed.

WN: Somebody was telling me during flooding times in Waikīkī, was when the streams would . . .

EW: Run over.

WN: Yeah. What do you remember about those times?

EW: Hey, you know one time I remember one of the girls in the lane got married. I was young yet and I was sitting on the porch waiting
for the bride to come along. And here was this great big storm. The trees were falling and oh, it was just terrible and the car couldn't get over, couldn't travel. And here was this bride and I don't know what they did with her after that. But then she didn't live a good life. Her life was very bad. Her husband was not good and her husband's family didn't care for her, and oh, it was really sad. And she didn't have children which made it worse for the old people. Then later on she died.

WN: So that may have been like a bad omen? The storm might have been . . .

EW: That's what they say. But it was really a bad storm. The trees were falling and all the chicken coops fell in the water, fell in the pond. Oh, that was really terrible but . . .

WN: Did you used to lose chickens during these storms?

EW: One time I remember we did. I remember the coop fell in this pond and it was so windy nobody could go in and do anything about it. And great big kiawe trees would topple over. That's all we had around that area, kiawe trees. And you know, the soil is kind of sandy, and when there's a storm and rain and wind, well, that thing just dried out.

Of course Fort DeRussy was quite close to us. And then one time there was one soldier. I still remember his name, Lavana was his name. He was colored but he was the nicest fellow. And the Caucasian soldiers didn't get along with him because he was Black. In those days they were very prejudiced, I think. He was very unhappy but he always came over and he learned to play the ukulele, not from me though. And he used to strum that ukulele and sit around and he was really nice to have around until he went back. We haven't heard from him. But he was very happy coming over and everybody would be nice to him. But he was very unhappy on base. We always remember him, Lavana.

And we never lock our doors. We never own a key to the house and once in a while a soldier would walk in the house at night. They get in the wrong house because they've been drinking. So my father said, "No, that's not your house." Then they turn right around and go out. No trouble.

(Laughter)

EW: In those days we were not afraid of anybody, too, because everybody was--they were good. They're not like today's people. You can't even go in the back yard without locking your front door. But in those days we never had a key and everything was safe. Everybody was okay around there. Everybody came and went freely as they want.

WN: Hard to believe.
EW: Yeah. That's why I say, "Oh, it's so wonderful to live here, so safe." And I can't say that now, not in Hobron Lane. A lot of people come to rob. In fact my sister-in-law, one time she collected some rent. That was Friday and she couldn't go to the bank because it was late, so she came out to visit me on Saturday. When she went home she lost all that money, over $2,000.

WN: Was this long time ago or recently?

EW: Oh, over ten years ago, I think. And they took all her jewelries too. But I kind of think it could be someone who knows them because she's always home. At that time she wasn't home [but] they probably knew she wasn't going to be home.

WN: What did you kids do to get some spare change or some money?

EW: Oh, my mother gave it to us when we needed it. 'Cause when we were older we babysat, but was so cheap.

WN: You mean babysat other families?

EW: Other families, yeah.

WN: You were telling me the other day about collecting kiawe beans.

EW: Oh yeah, that's right. We did that. We used to go to, you know where Halekulani is?

WN: Uh huh [yes].

EW: Right across there was a big tree. Then we would go way down close to the zoo. Along Kalakaua Avenue there were a lot of kiawe trees at one time. And we used to go there and gather up the beans. All the neighborhood kids went so we had a lot of fun. And they have a wagon, too. Those kids had a wagon and we would put our beans on their wagon too, but we had to help them to push. Oh, that was hard work.

WN: Who supplied the bags?

EW: Oh, we took the bags ourselves. We got it from home. I don't know where my parents got them from, but I think Dairymen's gave it to them because they sold the beans to Dairymen's. Somebody from there used to come and buy it from them. Fifteen cents a bag. (Chuckles)

WN: How long did it take you to fill one bag?

EW: Oh I don't know. It took quite a while. You know us, we're slow. Half of the time we were playing. Then we'd leave everything and go down to where Halekulani is. You know Gray's-By-the-Sea? We had to go over there and do a little swimming and come back to the beans again and nobody ever took our bags away. Used to have lots
of fun.

WN: How come you had to go all the way over there? Didn't you have *kiawe* beans by your house?

EW: We had, but they gathered them all and then we have to go out the other way, gather them all over. But the stronger ones did all the work while we just gather. Sometimes we just raked them in a pile. That was one way of making a little extra money.

WN: So Dairymen's bought them because they could feed them to the . . .

EW: Yeah, to the animals.

WN: I see. Anything else that you folks did to get some extra . . .

EW: Money? No. Just had to get our money from our parents.

WN: Did you sell fish or anything like that?

EW: I never did. But we sold eggs.

WN: Oh.

EW: Yeah.

WN: Where?

EW: We used to go around the neighborhood with a basket of eggs, real fresh eggs and boy, we had no problem with that. Everybody wanted eggs. So that was all we did, nothing else. And babysat when we were older. That's all.

WN: Did your father have any other work?

EW: No, but he used to buy property, I think, and he [sold] them. We had a nice place in Waikīkī right near the zoo and he wanted to move out there but my mother won't leave the place [i.e., Hobron Lane]. She said she [didn't] want to leave, so we stayed so he sold the other one.

WN: So your father made money by having that farm and . . .

EW: Yeah. And in those days I guess it didn't take too much to live. Everybody had lots of food to eat. Nobody was hungry.

WN: Did he sell any of the things over Downtown Kekaulike Street market or anything like that?

EW: Not that I know of. I don't remember that. He never did go. My father never did go.

WN: So what else did you folks do when you were kids to have a good
EW: We had lots of good times.

WN: I know you went swimming a lot. Where did you go swimming?

EW: Pierpoint.

WN: What was Pierpoint like?

EW: It was just a long bridge [i.e., pier] going out. You walk on that bridge from the Niumalu Hotel. You walk until you come to the end of the bridge and there's a swimming hole there, good place to swim. Most of the kids [would] go there to swim and sometimes our friends had rowboats and we would go out rowing. We did a lot of rowing and we swam. Actually, when we first went out swimming, we didn't know how to swim. (Laughs) But we were just lucky we weren't drowned because we went in deep water, too. Just lucky.

WN: So besides Pierpoint, where else? Did you go by where the 'Ilikai is now?

EW: Yeah, right over there, there was a nice place, in the night especially. We used to go out there. You know where the Kaimis used to live? Right over there. Oh, we used to go out there and it was sandy. And then we used to go torching at nights. We used to have lots of fun. My neighbor used to take us torching, Japanese man. This Japanese man loved to go and he needs our help so he takes us because he had this long net [with a] stick on each side. Somebody has to hold the other end and boy, we used to go with him and he'd catch all kinds of stuff, lots of shrimp, is it sand shrimps or whatever? It was really good. And then ooh, sometimes we'd step on an eel at night and they slide. Oh, when you scream he get so mad with us. He say we making too much noise. He gives us heck. And we'd bring the dog. The poor dog gets so cold, shivering away. But we come home with all kinds of fish [and] he [Japanese man] eats them.

WN: Did you folks eat them too?

EW: No. He ate them, but we liked the shrimps. Yeah, we used to go a lot. People don't go torching anymore. You know, you have a torch and then they put kerosene in it, I think, and then they light it and somebody has to hold the torch so that they can see in the water. Used to do that a lot. That was before the canal was dug. After the canal was dug, we don't go.

WN: You said that when you gathered those shells for the ducks--where did you go to get them?

EW: Ala Moana. You know where the bridge is?

WN: Up by Kaiser Hospital?
EW: Past Kaiser and then past the canal. Right around that area all the way down to, near Kewalo Basin because it was all shallow over there one time.

WN: Oh. That's a long way.

EW: Oh yeah, but we don't have to go all the way. If we didn't have any on this area we moved to the next area. But that's what we did. But we liked that. Although it was hard work, we enjoyed doing that because it was heavy work. And I was so skinny, (chuckles) but I was tough. We used to go to the rubbish dump, where they empty all the rubbish. You know where Ala Moana is now right there. That used to be the rubbish dump.

WN: Where Ala Moana Center is now?

EW: Yeah, right across. Where the [Ala Moana] Park is.

WN: Oh, okay.

EW: And there was a Hawaiian man there. He was supposed to take care of all the rubbish that they bring in. And so when the trucks come in, they just dump those things and then he burns them over there. And he was a good storyteller. He used to tell us weird legends and we used to come back for more all the time. He found some boxes for us to sit on so we'd all sit around in a circle. Everybody sitting on the boxes. Liliko'i is telling us all these stories. Ooh, we got so scared and yet we want to hear some more. (Chuckles) Oh, it was good. It was fun. Yeah, he was really good. And my brothers, oh they just loved to go over there too. And it smells. We would smell all that stuff burning. It's a wonder we didn't get any kind of disease. (Chuckles) And they even brought in old cars and dump it in there. Just about fill up the ocean. All those old cars.

I remember from my father's fishpond we had a river. It just drains right into the sea. And when we have a real big storm and the river overflows, all my father's fishes would all run down to the sea. And everybody comes and pick it up.

WN: And where did the river empty out?

EW: Where?

WN: Yeah. Was it near where the [Ala Wai] Yacht Harbor is?

EW: No, not that close. It's more on the other area, where the park is now . . .

WN: Oh, Ala Moana Park.

EW: . . . right around there. That's where it was and oh, I tell you, when there's a flood and the fish runs out, you see them all over
the ocean. People go and pick fish up by the bags.

WN: Oh yeah?

EW: But it was my father's loss. That's where he sold all his fishes.

WN: Where?

EW: In Sheridan, the old place, that's where we had the big fishpond. So it was a business at that time.

WN: Where did he sell the fish?

EW: I think to the market.

WN: Oh. So when you went from Sheridan to Hobron and you had a much smaller area, he didn't go into fish as much?

EW: He was kind of retired I think at that time.

WN: What about your mother? What did she do?

EW: She didn't do very much, took care of everything around the house. Well, she helped with the little farm too, but not much.

WN: I guess with twelve children, that's a full-time job.

EW: Yeah, but [we] were grown when we were over in Hobron Lane, so it wasn't too bad. But I think my sister can tell you more about Hobron Lane than me. (Laughs)

WN: Well this is---you're doing really good. So all what you've been telling me mostly was before the canal was built. Now what do you remember about the canal actually being dug? Did you used to watch them at all or anything?

EW: Yeah, we used to love to go and watch them and hear that grinding sound all day long. All that coral would come up through the pipes. And then everybody used to go out and gather up shells. There were lots of beautiful shells [that] came up. The kids used to love to do that. They worked down there for a long time, this dredger, dredge on and on.

WN: Did it affect your farm at all?

EW: No, it didn't. It wasn't that close, really, but it was noisy. You hear that grinding all day long.

WN: You said that after the canal was built you told me that you used to swim across the canal?

EW: Yeah, we used to swim across the canal. It was clean then, so we used to swim. Was fun. That was really taking a chance.
EW: And we'd go in the water with our clothes and all, just dive in and go. And they had lots of that little black crab that the Hawaiians like to eat. What do you call it?

WN: 'Alamihi?

EW: Yeah, 'alamihi. And there was an old Hawaiian lady that just loves that [but] she can't walk. I don't know who puts her on the edge of the canal and she sits there and she has a pole and a string and some meat on the bottom of the string and she sets it down like that. And then the crab will bite onto it and she would bring it up and . . . I know we used to do that for her. We used to catch a lot for her.

WN: Was this in the canal?

EW: Yeah, after they dug. There were lots of crabbing over there before. They had a lot of regular, those three-dotted crabs and the Hawaiian crab which is very good. Everybody used to come with their net and go crabbing over there. It was a good crabbing ground. But no more now, I hear.

WN: When they built the canal they had to fill in certain areas.

EW: I don't know where they filled. I don't know whether it was on the other side, but you know where the Ala Wai Boulevard is? Right around there. I think they filled some land over there, too.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Did the stream dry up? I mean did. . . .

EW: I think they filled it up. I have to find out about that for sure. But we miss those streams 'cause it was fun to go into them.

WN: Getting back to the time before the canal, did the neighborhood have any kind of get-togethers or celebrations where the whole neighborhood came out?

EW: Not really, but they visited a lot. The neighbors were good in those days. When you needed them they were always there. It's not like now, you don't see your neighbors very often. You can go to your neighbor's house anytime. You don't have to call them and say, "Oh, I'm coming." You just go. And they just come anytime they feel like it. And in the evening time the kids used to always like to sit in the front yard and everybody'd gather in a big circle and just talk and do nothing else, and then everybody goes
home. And they call that fun.

(Laughter)

WN: You didn't think it was fun?

EW: Well, in those days I thought that was nice, but now I think back, gee, what was so funny about that?

WN: What about holidays?

EW: Holidays? Well, we stayed home as usual, nothing special. But the Chinese people sometimes have a special holiday and they'd make things. Like certain holidays they would make mochi and then for New Year's they would make puffed rice and they would make that pudding. You know that . . .

WN: Gau?

EW: Gau, yeah. And we had to pound that rice into powder.

WN: With what?

EW: Oh, Mother had a stick, a piece of iron. It was about this long.

WN: A foot long?

EW: Yeah. They had two. We used that to pound. Oh, we just pound away until that thing turned to flour. And then they sift it. Then they put it out to dry. You do your own. Now, you just go out and buy your flour. Oh, in those days you have to pound it. We used to hate that, and used to run away (chuckles), but, oh, we always got caught. We had to come back. We never can stay away too long. We had to come back and do it. Every year we had to do those things and the neighbors would come over and do it together. They have a lot of fun and they make puffed rice together. Now, if you want puffed rice you just order it from someone still making them.

WN: Did the neighbors come over to eat?

EW: Yes, they come over to eat and then we would go over there to eat. One of our neighbors, there was one girl, she always wanted to make sandwiches. And every time I go out with her we'd go out to get food for the rabbits. She would bring this wagon with her and we'd ride in the wagon and she pulls us in the wagon. And she would make sandwiches for us, and the bread is this thick, two of them, two pieces, real thick bread. And she puts sardines in between. In those days I couldn't eat that, oh, to save my life. But now I like sardines.

WN: Canned sardines?
EW: Yeah, canned sardines. Oh, I just didn't know how she could eat that and she'd say, "Eat it, it's good for you." I take a bite and oh, it was so difficult to eat so I'd give it back to her.

I said, "Cannot. No can, no can eat." And then she would eat it.

The next time she comes she said, "You have to learn to eat sardines."

And then I said, "Oh, cannot eat sardines." But it took me a long time. There are a lot of things that they ate. They're Chinese, too. But still I guess we cook different and they cook different and I just couldn't eat what they had. But I eat sardine now. At that time I thought it was the most horrible thing to eat.

WN: Where did you folks get your groceries?

EW: In Chinatown. And of course we bought a lot of stuff from that Kam Look Store--from the Lee store--like butter and bread and things like that, little things we get from the store. But then all the Chinese goods we get from Chinatown which was good.

WN: As far back as you remember did you folks have a car?

EW: My brother had a car I remember, but we didn't have a car. My father had a--he had a horse wagon one time and we used to ride in it. Gee, we thought--we felt so elegant when we rode on that.

(Laughter)

EW: Yeah, we used to like to ride in that wagon, the horse wagon. And when we get to sit on the top, you know how the seat is on the top like that and then this bed. That's your wagon. We usually sit in the bottom but then when we get to sit on the top oh, we thought that was really something.

WN: Where could you go on a wagon like that? What roads were . . .

EW: They were kind of bumpy roads. Ala Moana was full of pukas. But it was all right. The horse made it. The wagon made it. They had those great big wheels so it was all right. It never got stuck.

WN: Did you go all the way to Chinatown in that?

EW: I never did, but we used to catch a ride on our neighbor's wagon to go to school because the horse goes so slow and there was one of these wagons that is low. You ever saw those? It's real low and it's just like a great big box.

WN: Horse drawn?

EW: Yeah. And then it's so low we can just jump on. We used to ride on that. All the girls used to jump like that and ride part of the
way.

WN: To Ka'ahumanu School?

EW: Yeah. We go up Kalākaua Avenue 'cause he's going up Kalākaua and we're walking. We just jump on in the back. There's no such thing as law where you can't do this, you can't do that. There's no more laws those days.

WN: Do you remember the streetcar?

EW: Oh yeah. We used to ride that too. And it comes right up to Punahou [School]. There was a junction there and then there's another streetcar that starts from the junction going up Punahou way and all the kids used to get on the streetcar. When we're late we come home on the streetcar and then all the school kids [were] eating crack seed. Remember Amalu, Sam Amalu?

WN: Sam Amalu?

EW: Sam Amalu. He used to go to Punahou, see, and then he always gets that streetcar. He always has to come from Punahou and he's on the one going to Waikīkī. And we're on this one. Then he gets on this one and he [sits] right in the front of the streetcar where the motorman is, and he would take some girl's crack seed and he would just be eating their crack seed. He was really a rascal boy, rascal boy. He died, yeah?

WN: Recently.

EW: He was brilliant though, if you can cheat so many big business people. But he got along. But oh, that man. He was really--he teased the girls.

WN: Did he live in Waikīkī too?

EW: Yeah, he lived Waikīkī. He lived way down towards where Alice lived. I think that area.

WN: Oh, Alice Abe?

EW: Yeah, I think he was living somewhere around Lili'uokalani [Avenue] now, that area. Yes, we never forget him, 'cause all the girls, you know, we were really country hicks and he's so rascal and so outgoing. We were scared of him, sit down in the streetcar and just watched. There comes Sam Amalu.

WN: Did you folks consider yourselves country?

EW: Well, not in those days. But when I think back, I was, I think. (laughs) Not in those days 'cause everybody was the same.

WN: Do you remember peddlers coming around to your house?
EW: Oh yeah. There was one guy, what's his name now? I think his name was Wong, too. They used to come right to the door and sell. They even sold vegetables, they had everything. And there was one Japanese couple that had a wagon. I still remember. It was a big one and it was almost like a store. He had everything, even material.

WN: Yeah?

EW: Forgot his name 'cause I wasn't interested. I never did buy anything. I used to see that wagon coming all the time. And we had a candy man. Oh, those days we looked forward to the candy man. He puts this big thing around his [neck]. He hangs it up, this big wide canvass on his neck and then his candy box is about, I think about this big.

WN: Two feet by two feet?

EW: Yeah. And he has a little hammer and he had pink candy and white candy and if you want to buy candy he'd just get that hammer and break it up, sells you a bag. And they were good, it's chewy.

WN: So he would walk then?

EW: He walks all over. And then there was a man who sold material. Oh, he carried all his material on his shoulders.

WN: Really?

EW: Yeah, and then people buy it, yardage. He'd go from house to house and we used to buy material from him, too.

WN: And he was Japanese, too?

EW: No, he was Chinese.

WN: Chinese.

EW: His name was Lau. That's all I know, Mr. Lau, the material man used to come. We had lots of those salespeople come around so it was convenient. They come right to the house.

WN: That couple you said it was like a store. You said they'd have material. What else did they have?

EW: Oh, they had vegetables. They had everything, candies, everything. It was a big wagon. Gee, I wish I could remember more of those days. We had some fun times. And when anybody is sick, everybody's around. They all come to the house and take over your household, clean the house for you, bring you food, everything. It's not like that today. Nobody cares.

And we used to carry fish. My mother always made a basket. She
put eggs and she put fish and she put all kinds of goodies in this basket and my sister and I used to carry it over to the Lees when they owned the store 'cause Mr. Lee was sick that time. And I wondered why he doesn't walk. And my mother, she never tells us. They never explain anything, that he had a stroke and that was it. I was old when I learned about him having a stroke. That's why he couldn't help himself and we wondered why his wife had to always hold him and guide him. We didn't know. We knew that he was disabled, [but] we didn't know what was wrong with him. And the old folks, they never talk about it. They never explain anything to you. But they always send the food. We had to take it down, take fish, papayas, everything she had from the garden she puts 'em in the basket.

WN: This is one time or you went often?

EW: Oh, not only one time. We went often. Every time she had something packed. We go. Red Riding Hood.

(Laughter)

EW: Those days were really something.

WN: What did Kam Look Store sell?

EW: Oh, they sold staples--bread, butter and a few medicines and a few canned goods. But they didn't have meat or anything. A lot of crack seed and things, candies. I know the Hawaiian kids always go in for crack seeds. The Hawaiian kids just love that. That's about all they had, really. I didn't see any vegetables, just a little country store like. But now it's a beach market, right?

WN: Right, right.

EW: That's a supermarket now, isn't it?

WN: Well, it's a small mini market.

EW: Real small, yeah. But I think they're doing good 'cause the hotel people are nearby and they go.

WN: Were there other stores in the area?

EW: Not over there. On 'Ena Road they had some small stores. But they had one, kind of a big store they call it "Taki Store." I think it was owned by this Japanese man. I don't know whether his name was Tagawa or . . . Anyway, we called it "Taki Store," and it was a nice store, big store. You know, [from] Hobron Lane you go straight out [and] you hit 'Ena Road. Well, right at the corner they had a nice store. This Japanese woman and her husband used to run it and they did very well.

And then across the lane was another store. This lady stayed home
and kept the store, and I think her husband was a taxi driver and they had a boy that was handicapped. He was always kept in the buggy all the time and he'd just lay there and she takes care of him and keeps the store at the same time. And then a little further up was a little--there was another little store. And that's all. That's all the stores there were.

WN: There was a barbershop, too.

EW: Yes, there was a barbershop. We used to go there. In between was a barbershop. That's all the stores I know. And of course across the street was this great big amusement park, right?

WN: Oh yeah.

EW: Aloha [Park].

WN: This is after the canal was built.

EW: Yeah, oh that was . . .

WN: What did they have?

EW: Oh, they had just like a regular amusement. Like they had ferris wheel and they had the roller coaster. You know, the dipper, they call it. Oh that thing was dangerous. People got killed in that because they stood up, and then when they get into the tunnel they get caught in the ceiling. It goes so fast you can't breathe. One time and that was it. That's enough for me.

WN: Was that all year around or only certain times of the year?

EW: It was almost all year around. They had the merry-go-round and they had all kinds of games and things. But I wasn't really too interested in that place. And they had dancing too, there.

WN: Was that the Rendezvous Dance Hall?

EW: I don't know what kind of dance hall it was, but it was a big dance hall and they held dancing there, ballroom dancing. Lots of people go there to dance.

WN: Did you go?

EW: No. My mother'd never let us go dancing till we were older. School dances we were allowed to go, used to go up to the University [of Hawai'i].

WN: You said that you went swimming across the canal and you went all over. Were there places that you weren't allowed to go?

EW: No. You can go any place you want.
WN: I mean your parents never....

EW: Around there?

WN: Yeah.

EW: It was all right. But they didn't know we swam across.

(Laughter)

WN: That's right, yeah. You don't have to tell them.

EW: They didn't know. We did lots of things that our parents says, no, no. And we were just fortunate that nothing happened. Like going swimming when you didn't know how to swim, and we went deep because everybody else went so we went, too.

WN: So you must have known how to swim though, to go out deep?

EW: No, I didn't know how to swim like that. We drank a lot of water, salt water. Well, we paddled, but after that we learned to swim.

WN: How did you learn how to swim?

EW: I don't know, just swam. And there was an old Hawaiian woman. Her husband used to take her down to go swimming. She doesn't walk but she can swim. Hawaiians believe in salt water. They say that's supposed to be good to cure whatever you have.

WN: I'm wondering, you know those houses that were alongside Ala Moana [Road], you know like you said the Paoas and the Dykeses and the Jarretts and so forth. Did you consider them a little more better off than you folks, financially?

EW: Not really. The Clarks were considered kind of well off but we don't know. Maybe they were better off than us, but as a whole I think everybody's the same around there. But I think, like the Dykeses, I think they were [better off], 'cause they had good jobs and I don't know whether he was [an] army officer or what. I just can't remember that. I know his wife was a big Hawaiian woman, very elegant. I think she wasn't pure Hawaiian. She looked like she was part-White. Well, like the Akanas, Espinda, we call him Akana.

WN: His middle name I think was Akana. I think that was his middle name [i.e., David Akana Espinda].

EW: And he can speak Chinese, too. He was rascal and he had a lot of kids too. The Clarks had about four I think, either four or five. I don't know how many the Paoas had [twelve]. And then the Kahanamokus--you know that Bernice Kahanamoku is still living?

WN: Yeah, that's what I heard.
EW: She lives up Hilo. I met her one time when I went last year.

WN: Oh yeah?

EW: Here we were in the shopping center and then here came this elegant-looking woman. I said, "Hey, looks like Kahanamoku." I looked at her and I said, "Are you Kahanamoku?"

She said, "Yeah."

And then I said, "You remember me?" And she didn't remember. I say, "You remember the Lings?"

She said, "Oh, yeah." (Chuckles) She's married to Lee or something, yeah?

WN: Gilbert Lee.

EW: Yeah, she still looks good. Still healthy-looking. I think she's quite old 'cause she was already grown when we were young yet. So she must be quite old but don't look it. Still looks good.

WN: Most of the people I talked to from that side of Waikīkī, they all mentioned the Lings. (Chuckles)

EW: Oh yeah?

(Laughter)

WN: There was a Japanese family near your home, Sakai?

EW: Oh yes. We liked Mrs. Sakai so much. She used to do washing. And then I think he was a carpenter or a fisherman. And then there was one Homma, I think. I don't know what happened to him. He was living in the camp and he was a fisherman. Yeah, we knew all of them over there.

WN: There were a lot of fishermen living in those areas.

EW: Yeah, lots of fishermen. Catch a lot of fish and that's their living. And Mrs. Sakai had to do laundry. She did lots of laundry to supplement, I think. In those days they don't go to welfare if they needed money. They worked for it. She was a nice lady.

WN: So I know your father owned the land . . .

EW: Oh yeah.

WN: . . . on that area but lot of those people around there didn't.

EW: No, like the camp people, I think a lot of them rented. I think they rented from Magoon. If I'm not mistaken I think it's Magoon. I'm not sure though. I know Magoon used to own a lot of land up
there on that [ma uka] side of [Hobron Lane]. But all the rest of the people on Hobron Lane, I think they owned their own land, the Hawaiians too. They owned their own land, like Manoha. I think he owned his own and who's this now?

WN: Kalauokalani.

EW: Kalauokalani, yeah. But [David] Kalauokalani was supposed to be a, well, not a rich man but he had a good job in those days, considering. He was city and county clerk. So that was considered a very good job. But his wife I think comes from the Hobron family, you know the rich family? They used to own all that Hobron Lane.

WN: You were telling me, I'm not gonna ask you the date, but filling in the pond, what do you remember about that?

EW: I have to ask my sister that. Maybe you better ask my sister that when you see her. I think she would remember more about filling up that pond.

WN: Yeah, your father's pond?

EW: Yeah, because I remember we used to watch the trucks come in and they had a Portuguese man, he was sort of a foreman over there. His name was Tony and he did all the footwork and everything. He was the boss. And Nolle Smith, you know who he is?

WN: Yeah, Nolle Smith.

EW: The father, you know, he was the one that took the contract.

WN: Nolle Smith's father?

EW: Yeah, big colored man. Yeah, Nolle Smith's father. He did it. It was nice after it was filled and I don't know how long it took. I think my sister would know.

WN: What became of the place after it was filled?

EW: One area was sort of a playground, the neighbor's kids came to play. They had a volleyball net put up and they played baseball. Did everything in the yard.

WN: Was it filled after your father died?

EW: No, before he died.

WN: Before he died.

EW: That was his idea. He wanted it filled. I think my father died in 1929. What poor memory I have. I should remember those things.

WN: I think your brother told me he was twelve years old when your
father died.

EW: Oh yeah?

WN: He [i.e., EW's brother] was born in 1914 so I thought maybe it might be 1926. That would have made you about fourteen.

EW: No, I was sixteen. I think I was sixteen years. No, maybe about fourteen. That's right. I don't know.

WN: Okay, that's okay. After your father died what became of the--how did the family get income?

EW: I don't know really. My mother had some money. And in those days they saved and she had quite a bit of money. But she didn't work.

WN: Did she carry on any parts of the farm?

EW: Yeah, she did.

WN: Well, without the pond what was left?

EW: What was left? Nothing but the little farm.

WN: Oh, you mean like the chickens.

EW: And then of course she leased. Oh, she got her rentals.

WN: Oh, I see.

EW: Forgot about that.

WN: Oh, so after it was filled?

EW: No, before that they had some houses, but he [also] had some duplexes. Then after it was filled---but he didn't put any houses there. It was in the other area of the yard.

WN: And that was rented out?

EW: Yeah. That's right. She had rentals.

WN: What kind of people did you rent to?

EW: All kinds. Mostly Japanese and they were the best. There was one family that lived there about twenty-something years, and they went to Japan. When they came back they wanted to come back to the house but then we already had it rented. When the house was vacant they did come back. And then after that I think we needed the house. I don't know whether it was for one of our brothers that was coming back or something. So they moved. They moved to Kaimuki.
WN: I see.

EW: Otherwise they'd still be there. They just stay and stay, 'cause cheap rent. We had mostly Japanese tenants.

WN: So after the pond was filled then you said that that became just like a big vacant lot.

EW: Yeah, big vacant lot. But that was all. They didn't do anything with it until they put up those apartments. And I don't even remember. I was married already I think when they put the apartments up.

WN: The apartments that are up now [i.e., Moani Apartments, owned by the Ling family]. So you got married in 1937.

EW: Thirty-six.

WN: And then you moved out.

EW: Almost fifty years.

WN: So when you did move out you were about twenty-four years old?

EW: No, twenty-two I think, twenty-two or twenty-three, I think.

WN: Okay. Yeah. What changes did you notice between the time you were spending as a young child till the time that you moved away from that place? What was different about the place besides the pond being filled?

EW: What was different? Well, there were more cars. That's one thing, more cars. And let's see. I don't know really.

WN: How about the people?

EW: More people coming through and more people coming in to live around there. So, different kind of people.

WN: How did you feel about moving out?

EW: I didn't like it in the beginning. I went up to Kaimukī to stay and I didn't like it. I felt like I was really shut in because the other yard was so close to us. You're in your house and you just look across, here's another house, so close by. I sure didn't like that. But I got used to it and adjusted to all that 'cause we always lived in a big wide open space and we liked that. I missed that a lot. In fact, it was terrible to live in a place where you're so close to somebody else.

WN: We've been talking today about your house in Waikīkī, what are your feelings toward that place as you look back at it now?
EW: What do you mean?

WN: You said you missed it.

EW: Yeah, I miss that place. Because we really had a lot of places to run and a lot of places to do things and we just didn't have to go out and get into a lot of crowds. We never had a crowd around there. Even when we had a lot of people around it wasn't crowded at all. So that's what I really liked. Of course I'm used to it now. I've been away from it for so long that it's...

WN: Would you say that Waikīkī was a good place to grow up?

EW: Yes. Very good. For kids I think it's the best place.

WN: What do you think of Waikīkī today?

EW: Not much. I think it's too crowded and too many peculiar people, I think, now in Waikīkī. I wouldn't want to live in Waikīkī now. And I notice there's lots of crimes in Waikīkī. In those days, gee, you don't have to be afraid of anything. No matter what time of the night, you walk on the street, you're safe. But not anymore. Even walking through Fort DeRussy you were safe before—even the soldiers (chuckles) were good. Well, there weren't any drugs, right?

WN: Your father never got rid of that property? He still hung on to the property?

EW: Yeah, and then the boys [i.e., EW's brothers] have it now.

WN: Well, before I turn off the tape, is there any things you want to say?

EW: I think I've said enough. (Chuckles)

WN: Well, thank you very much.

EW: What I can remember anyway.

WN: I think your memory's real good.

EW: Oh, I don't know. I didn't think so.

WN: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW
WAIKIKI, 1900 - 1985:
ORAL HISTORIES

Volume I

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