

Tape No. 34-43-1-00

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Phyllis McEldowney (PM)

Hawai'i Kai, O'ahu

June 29, 2000

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This is an interview with Phyllis McEldowney. We're at her home in Hawai'i Kai Retirement Community and it's June 29, 2000, and the interviewer is Holly Yamada. All right let's just start with when is your birth year?

PM: Nineteen seventeen.

HY: Where were you born?

PM: In San Francisco. Ten days after World War II. Oh!

HY: World War I, the other one.

(Laughter)

HY: Don't worry. And you spent your early childhood in San Francisco.

PM: Yes.

HY: Maybe before we get into that I'll ask you about your folks. What were your parents doing at that time?

PM: My mother [Jessie Holland Van Orden] was a housewife. My father [Henry Van Orden] was a sales representative for several shoe companies and he used to travel up and down mostly the Pacific Coast.

HY: Where in the birth order are you? First of all, how many siblings do you have and then where in the birth order?

PM: A brother and sister and I'm the last.

HY: You're the youngest. And like I said earlier, you spent your early childhood and San Francisco.

PM: Yes.

HY: Maybe you could describe little bit about the neighborhood—where in Francisco in the neighborhood you grew up in.

PM: It was near Golden Gate Park within easy walking distance, which we did frequently. My mother liked to be in the park and be outdoors so she would gather us up and take us to the park. My sister and I were just fourteen months apart so we enjoyed doing things together.

HY: What did your house look like? What kind of dwelling did you live in?

PM: It was three stories and our living quarters were on the second and third. And it was on the side of a hill and many steps to go up to get into it. I remember it with good memories, very good memories. We had a nice backyard to do things in, and my mother was interested in a garden so she planted the whole garden. It was a good place to be.

HY: And were the other dwellings around that area also three-story, single-unit dwellings?

PM: Some were three, some were two, (some were one). It was already old. I don't know what it looks like today. But it was comfortable, a good place to live.

HY: Were there other children in the neighborhood?

PM: Yes there were. My best friend across the street and that sort of thing.

HY: A lot of times I ask people what kind of games they played when they were . . .

PM: Jacks. And jump rope. I think it was before hula hoop.

HY: Yeah, I think hula hoop came in later.

PM: Of course you get enough kids in the neighborhood you'd play tag, that sort of thing.

HY: So you played outside a lot.

PM: As much as we could, weather permitting.

HY: And what about that ethnicity of the neighborhood? What kinds of people lived there?

PM: Well they're mostly like us—Caucasian. But the next door, very close—the houses were very close together—there was a couple who had a Chinese girl living with them and helping them. And her reason for being there was so that she could easily go to school. There were strange ideas about nationalities in those days, San Francisco particularly. The Japanese were welcome, the Chinese were not, which doesn't make sense because they had a wonderful Chinatown. but they were more confined to that area. I remember this little girl next door. She was not out playing most of the time. She had to go to a special school, and she had her chores to do and she was dedicated to learning. So we just sort of passed her on the stairs.

HY: Speaking of chores, were there certain chores you were expected to do at home and around the house?

PM: I don't know how much was expected, or if we just took it for granted or if we didn't do anything.

(Laughter)

PM: I don't know. I don't remember being burdened by chores. Of course it was a whole different life from what life is today, not many of the conveniences. But we did have a washing machine. I remember that.

HY: Oh, that's a fairly modern appliance.

PM: Mm hmm [yes].

HY: Now were your parents originally from that area?

PM: My mother was born in San Francisco. My father was born in New York.

HY: Do you know what brought him to the West Coast?

PM: I think he was interested in seeing what it was like.

HY: Just as an adventure?

PM: I think so. He stayed and met my mother and would go on from there.

HY: Maybe we could talk about your schooling. You had an interesting beginning.

PM: I had a good school. I did have an interesting beginning. It wouldn't be interesting to everybody but it turned out to be fairly interesting. School was about two blocks away. It wasn't a big school. My mother had to register my sister to start first grade, and of course I was a tagalong. So she took both of us down and had the interview. And then the teacher said, "What about the other twin?" (Laughs) And my mother said that she heard that question many times about the other twin—which I'm not.

She said, "Well she's not a twin but she's the one who would really like to go to school."

So the teacher said, "Well, why don't you let her come as a visitor?" Which was very sweet of her to take one more student in first grade. So my mother thought that was a good idea. So I went and I went and I went. I was a constant visitor all year.

(Laughter)

PM: And that worked out well. Then my mother got the message at the end of the year, that school year, she better keep me home the last day because they couldn't promote me because I'd never been registered officially. So that went through okay. So then, the first year was *pau*. Well we didn't use the word *pau* in those days.

(Laughter)

HY: Not in San Francisco.

PM: I just realized what it sounded like. So then came time to register me for real for the first grade. And the principal said, “She’s already done the work for the first grade. Is it all right if we put her in the second?”

My mother said, “Oh sure.” So they put me in the second grade. Of course I was younger than most of the people. I was four years and nine months when I started the first grade, which today is pretty young to start the first grade. But I went on from there. That lasted in that school until part way through the fifth grade, because the San Francisco schools were on a semester-like basis. You could start in August or you could start in January, and we had started in January. Of course that doesn’t jibe with Hawai‘i’s school calendar. So are we on to that now? On to Hawai‘i?

HY: Maybe before we get your schooling in Hawai‘i, you could talk a little bit about the subjects that you liked when you were in school in San Francisco—or didn’t like.

PM: I was interested in reading—and anything. I wanted to learn.

HY: And were you a good student?

PM: Yes I was. (Chuckles) That sounds like bragging, doesn’t it? No, I had no trouble in school.

HY: So were your interests mostly academic?

PM: I think so, but I also liked to play games and be outdoors. Jump rope, tag, all kinds of things.

HY: So you found you had time to play.

PM: Yes. And with neighborhood kids it was very easy—and very little traffic. We played right in the street and you could hear the cars coming up the hill. It was up from Golden Gate Park, straight up the hill. You can hear the cars coming. Get out of the way. It seems a bit foolish now (chuckles).

HY: Now it does.

PM: It would be foolish.

HY: And what about—if you have any recollection of disciplinary attitudes in the school at that time. Do you recall any—you know, I mean, corporal punishment was more . . .

PM: I’m trying to think. I don’t really recall, except for talking in class when you shouldn’t. I think I was guilty of that sometimes. (Chuckles) But no, I don’t remember any—I think the kids behaved then. They were expected to when they went to school. They were expected to behave and do what the teacher said. It’s a little different today.

HY: And what about class size? Do have a recollection of about how many students per class?

PM: I don’t know but I imagine the first grade had no more than twenty. But it’s a little hard to determine now. But this lovely first grade teacher was willing to take on one more.

HY: Now since you're about a year younger or more than your classmates. Did you feel like you fit in with them?

PM: Yes, yes.

HY: You did.

PM: Yes. I liked to do the same things that they did. Yeah, I didn't have any trouble adjusting. They treated me as if I were one of them. It worked out well.

HY: Were you in the same class with your sister then?

PM: Yes I was.

HY: I'm wondering why your parents had decided to move to Hawai'i then. You were about nine years old, is that right?

PM: Nine years old. My father was a sales representative for several shoe companies who sent him to Hawai'i. He was mainly, at that time, interested in boots. Not all, but there were a lot of plantation people here who needed boots so he made trips to Hawai'i twice a year. Then he decided he'd like to move us all to Hawai'i. My mother didn't quite know how she was going to take that. But she moved us.

HY: Now had you been here before—did you go on any of his trips?

PM: No. You didn't do that that much in those days. You had to go by ship and it took seven days on the *Mānoa*, the slowest ship. Between six and seven days on the *Wihelmina*, which was the ship that we came on. It took a while.

HY: Maybe you can describe that journey if you have memories of it—the accommodations .

PM: It was fun. One memory that is really scary: They had playthings for kids and they had a seesaw, and the seesaw was not really anchored to the deck. So once on the seesaw—of course were two of us, one on each end. The ship rolled, as did the seesaw toward the railing. And it was a bit scary. (Chuckles) I do remember that.

HY: Which end were you on—the railing side?

PM: It was parallel.

HY: Oh I see.

PM: Both of us.

HY: Oh I see. Yikes.

PM: But it turned out all right. It was a little scary.

HY: It's interesting that they had that type of equipment on board.

PM: Yeah, well it was a long trip. It was going to take six or seven days. They had to do something to entertain these kids that were aboard.

HY: Do you have any memory of the food on board?

PM: Memories of the food—except that I was seasick at first, and then I was all right. Didn't like to think about food at that point, but it worked out all right.

HY: I wanted to ask you if you know the companies' names that your father was representing.

PM: Buckingham Hect. I think at first it was just Buckingham—or after it was just Buckingham—but at one point it was just Buckingham, another point it was Buckingham Hect, H-E-C-T.

HY: And was that the primary company that had sent him to Hawai'i to sell the boots?

PM: He was on his own. Oh yes, yes it was Buckingham Hect.

HY: So you arrived in Honolulu.

PM: At five o'clock at night. It wasn't really night because we got in about 5:00, 5:30. So it was still light. And the main impression was beautiful street trees. Pensacola Street had golden shower [trees] and Pi'ikoi [Street] had pink showers and Wilder Avenue had *Poincianas*, and it was a beautiful sight to come into.

HY: All the flowering trees.

PM: This was in July. It was really very pretty.

HY: Where did you folks live then?

PM: Wilder Avenue, just up the street from the Makiki Fire Station. And in future years we moved all over that block. We went around the corner and up Pi'ikoi. We were in three different houses on Pi'ikoi. Then farther on up we got to Pensacola and we lived in a Pensacola Street house for quite a while. Then after a while we moved to Liholiho Street, which was just a couple of blocks away.

HY: Were you a teenager when you lived on Liholiho [Street]?

PM: By that time I think I was. . . . Yes, I was definitely a teenager. 'Cause on Liholiho I was at the university.

HY: Since you were around that same neighborhood most of your growing up time, maybe I'll ask you to describe that neighborhood a little bit and maybe compare it to your former neighborhood in San Francisco. What seemed different and what seemed the same to you?

PM: All the moving was kind of burdensome sometimes but. . . . I don't really---San Francisco was so different, it's very hard to make any comparison except it was a different life. Going barefooted was one of the best things. We were amazed when we saw other children in the neighborhood going barefooted. But it didn't take long we were

joining them, thoroughly enjoying it. My mother wasn't quite sure it was the thing for us to do to go barefooted, but it worked out.

HY: You said she had kind of a tough time adjusting.

PM: She missed her family. She was a family of eight girls and one boy, and most of them stayed right there in the San Francisco area. She really missed that. There were also friends, old-time friends. She missed them. So in the islands it was hard to make new friends at that stage of her life. So it was pretty much of an adjustment for her. I look back on it now and I think she was brave.

HY: A different perspective.

PM: Sorry (PM is tearful).

HY: That's okay.

PM: I'm a chicken.

(Laughter)

HY: Do we need a Kleenex?

PM: I'll get one when I need one. That's okay.

HY: I should remember to always have.

And then your father, he came originally to—there was a big market for boots in the plantation and he . . .

PM: Still went interisland.

HY: And he continued in this business? And it was a profitable business?

PM: We didn't expect much in the way of high-powered living. It was adequate. We didn't know that some people expected to have a lot more money. It worked out as far as that was concerned. He was happy being in Hawai'i .

HY: Unlike your mother he adjusted much better?

PM: Oh yeah, because it was his decision to make the move.

HY: This neighborhood—the Pi'ikoi area, Wilder—what was the ethnicity of the people in that neighborhood? Let's see, this must be in the [19]20s, mid[19]20s.

PM: [Nineteen] twenty-six, mm hmm. Most of them were *haole*. Or would you rather I use a different . . .

HY: Oh no, I'm comfortable with the term that you want to use.

PM: Okay. Most them were *haole*. But every so often there was a Chinese family. I remember going to play with one of the little Chinese girls and she was teaching me to count in Chinese, which I have never forgotten (chuckles).

HY: Is that right? You do have a good memory.

PM: (Counts.) But you better not check up on that. (Chuckles) I might have slipped.

HY: Were most of the people there immigrants like yourself, newly arrived, or were they old-time families?

PM: There were some old-time families but most of them were not long time. I don't know where most of them came from. I don't know whether they were East Coast, West Coast, Midwest—I don't know.

HY: I know since you moved into several places there, was there one home that you sort of considered that you spent more time in growing up?

PM: I think the corner of Pensacola Street (and Pi'ikoi). That was a big home and had been owned by—was still owned by—Mr. Clarke, who was the owner of Hind-Clarke Dairy out in Niu.

HY: Tell me about this house. What did it look like?

PM: It had a porch that had been screened in, so you entered the house . . .

HY: That's a bit unusual.

PM: Screened in, mm hmm. And then it went off into a living room/dining room combination. The whole thing was kind of L shaped. The dining room was in part of the L, and off that to the left was what they called the sleeping porch. It had screens and glass windows. It didn't look much like a porch, but it was. It was a bedroom for my sister and me. Off that was another bedroom and then a bathroom and another bedroom and then—not joining that but beyond that—was another bedroom. Off that was a kitchen. We're coming around again. There was a pantry, which was nice to have. You don't hear much about pantries these days. But it was good.

HY: Well you mentioned you had a washing machine in San Francisco, were you able to have one in Hawai'i too?

PM: Yes. I don't know how that came about but I remember in—I think it was in the kitchen. I'm pretty sure it was in the kitchen in the Pensacola Street house. It was part of the bedroom in another house we moved to—just anywhere it would fit.

HY: Did it have a yard?

PM: It had a big yard. Pensacola Street had a big yard.

HY: Do remember what kind of vegetation was in your yard—trees?

PM: There were trees. There was a lot of open space, grassy. That's the Pensacola house.

HY: Was this all one level?

PM: The house was all one level. But the lot was not level, so there were quite a few steps up the back steps.

HY: Did you folks have a garden?

PM: No my mother didn't go for garden much there—some in the front. I grew potatoes.

(Laughter)

HY: You did?

PM: I did.

HY: Now how did that come about?

PM: I have no idea. (Chuckles) But I was forever digging them up to see if they were ready. It was fun.

HY: What kind of games did you play? Were they similar to when you were in San Francisco—you said jacks and jump rope—or were there different games?

PM: Well, the neighborhood of course was different, and there weren't as many children in the neighborhood. So two of the places we lived in on Pi'ikoi opened out into a wide area with a few trees and a lot of grass and an owner who was perfectly willing for us to dig holes to make a golf course, which we did. He was a very interesting person. He participated in the rebellion in Hawai'i in the late [18]80s

HY: Do remember his name?

PM: Ziegler, [Captain] Charles [W.] Ziegler. I guess he liked children because it was perfectly all right with him for us to do that. There were some trees that I liked. I remember avocados particularly, getting an avocado ready to eat, climbing up the tree with it, and sitting in the tree in the backyard eating my avocado. It was fun, and sometimes other kids would join me and we'd have lunch out there.

HY: Now, it's interesting that you said he didn't mind you digging holes for golf.

PM: Yeah.

HY: Was that a game that you played?

PM: Wee golf. They had opened up some wee golf things in Waikiki, McCully, Mō'ili'ili, various places. It was just a fun thing. We went out and bought . . .

HY: Wee golf, like W-E-E golf?

PM: Yes.

HY: Did you have clubs?

PM: We went out and bought clubs—a golf club, one, (chuckles) to share. It was good. It was a good part of my life. I was younger than most of the kids in school so I enjoyed the outdoor type stuff at a different time from them. They were—part of that time—they were interested in boys in school, which didn't impress me at all. When dances started—not for me. 'Cause I was young.

HY: You were still climbing trees.

PM: Yes, I was still climbing trees and enjoying it. I did quite a bit of hiking. We lived near Tantalus, and my sister and I and other kids did a lot of hiking up to Tantalus, Makiki Falls all that. It was safe in those days.

HY: Yeah. That was my question: Did you feel safe?

PM: Absolutely.

HY: What about types of food that you ate at home? I'm wondering if it changed at all.

PM: Not much. I'm sure we ended up with more rice. The rice we were used to in San Francisco—we had rice in a bowl and added cinnamon and sugar and butter and milk.

HY: Cinnamon, oh my goodness.

PM: Cinnamon and sugar and butter and milk, that was how we had our rice in San Francisco. Well, we changed to the real way to eat rice.

HY: Well, I'm wondering if you were a potato eater since you were so interested in growing potatoes.

PM: Yes. Oh yes, we were potato eaters.

HY: So what other kinds of food did you eat? Did you get into—well San Francisco has a lot of fish too.

PM: We had some fish but we were not really a fish family. We did have some fish, but not nearly as much as the local people eat.

HY: Maybe you could explain what happened when you started going to school here.

PM: I horrified my mother by coming home without my shoes on one day. (Chuckles) But everybody else was doing it.

HY: You were talking about how you . . .

PM: Go about entering school here?

HY: Yeah.

PM: That was a problem because I was halfway through the fifth grade. My mother took us down to Lincoln School to register. So what do you do with this kid who is halfway

- through the fifth grade? My mother was perfectly willing for me to go back and repeat that first part.
- HY: The first part of fifth grade?
- PM: Yeah. But: Sorry we have no room. They can go out to Ali‘iōlani [School], which was in Kaimukī. My mother didn’t quite like the idea of my having to get on the streetcar. Go down to Pāwa‘a junction, transfer to the streetcar to go out to Kaimukī. So she thought she’d talk some more about that at Lincoln School. So they said, “Well, we’ll give her an exam for the sixth grade and if she passes it then we’ll just skip that second part of the fifth grade.” So I took the test about the little mouse and the pink lemonade, and that was in the test. I was supposed to read the story and then tell somebody what the story was about. (Chuckles) So I did that. And: Oh sure she can go to the sixth grade. So when school started in the last part of August or September, whenever it was that year, I went into the sixth grade.
- HY: Now by this time you’re . . .
- PM: I was nine.
- HY: Yeah. So you’re quite a bit younger than your classmates because you had started early. What was that like for you?
- PM: I had friends. I didn’t like to do some of the things that they were doing, more grown-up type things. I wasn’t interested. There were enough of them who were interested in hiking and jump rope and things that I did. It worked out all right.
- HY: So their attitude towards you?
- PM: Some of them didn’t know I was there. Kids can be like that. But I don’t remember it bothering me because I wasn’t interested in the things they were doing either. So it was all right and I had no trouble in school.
- HY: Academically it was not a problem?
- PM: No it wasn’t. But I wouldn’t recommend it. I have said to other people—to my daughter who had twins and they were in a quandary about what they were going to do. They missed the mark by three weeks for starting school. I said better for them to be a little late than for them to be the youngest in the class. So she did, and she’s happy that she did.
- HY: So even though you feel like you’ve adjusted well enough, in hindsight you...
- PM: I wouldn’t recommend it to somebody else today. I think it’s better to be the same age or like my grandchildren were, slightly older than most of the kids in their class. It worked out very well.
- HY: Do you think it’s an issue of maturity level?
- PM: I do. I do. I still wanted to be climbing trees and that sort of thing. Going to dances had no (laughs)—forget it!

HY: Do you remember some of your teachers at Lincoln?

PM: Yes, Virginia McBride. She was an English teacher and I had her for two years. I had her for sophomore year and senior year, or junior and senior—I think it was sophomore and senior.

HY: This is when you went to Roosevelt [High School]?

PM: Yeah. My class was in the first class that was there in the new building. We started out at the old Territorial Normal [and Training] School, on the corner of Emerson and Lunalilo [streets].

HY: What were your impressions in terms of—I know you did well academically—but in terms of difficulties or how challenging school was or wasn't compared to what you were used to in your school in San Francisco?

PM: Don't remember it being a challenge.

HY: Did it seem too easy to you?

PM: No I don't think so. I think it was just my pace. I don't remember it being challenging.

HY: What about classroom environment?

PM: Well That's hard to depict because there's a big age difference and kids were talking about different things that were not of interest to me. And I would not be of interest to them either because they had passed me.

HY: Did you notice if there were different types of discipline problems in the classroom?

PM: Miss McBride had a saying which she used fairly often. She'd spot somebody chewing gum and she'd say, "Swallow it or out the window." Of course she meant gum out the window, not the child.

(Laughter)

PM: So these kids would get up, go to the window, and throw their gum out. I do remember that. She could not stand these kids chewing gum in her face.

HY: Did it seem like the students generally respected their teachers?

PM: Sometimes they would push it as far as they could go, till they found out they couldn't. But generally I think they were respectful, most of the kids.

HY: What about—now you have a different ethnic mix in school, too.

PM: Oh yeah. That wasn't an adjustment—it was all right. I was trying to think of—one of my close friends was Felice Wong, and she married Tommy Kaulukukui.

HY: Well he was sort of a big . . .

PM: He was important.

(Laughter)

HY: Big man on campus.

PM: He was, and he was nice. Tommy was a really nice person. I don't need to use past tense. Tommy is.

HY: Okay, let's continue talking about schooling. McBride you remembered.

PM: Yes, Virginia McBride and Sarah Matthews was history and social studies. She was a little bit different. She was from Chicago, I believe. She was very dogmatic about some things. The older kids had a great time with her. She just fit in so well with their chatter and such. They thought she was great. She was all right as far as I was concerned, but they were on a little different level.

HY: You think again that's the age difference?

PM: I do.

HY: What about other activities in school that you may have participated in?

PM: Oh I was in the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], the Girl Reserves.

HY: Girl Reserves, tell me about that.

PM: It was connected with the YWCA and we had our meetings, and I think we thought we were kind of important.

(Laughter)

PM: I have to have the Roosevelt [High School year] book there for that.

HY: Do remember what kind of things you did with them?

PM: Oh yes, with Girl Reserves we were helping people. Somebody would line up a family who was needy. So we would do something about collecting some clothes for them or collecting food for them. It was the Y[WCA] influence, which was very good. So I was president of Girl Reserves for two years. It didn't matter to them that I was younger than other people. It didn't matter. And, what else?

HY: Do remember who else was in Girl Reserves with you, any of your classmates?

PM: I have a picture right here. I have pictures.

HY: Oh, we can look at those later. Maybe when we do the transcript we can insert some names.

PM: I think unfortunately—I know that's a bad preface—Margaret Kwon was there. Just weeks ago she went to the hospital with a stroke. She went all through school with me

from Lincoln to Roosevelt to the university—all through. And she was out here [Hawai'i Kai Retirement Center] and I was surprised when her name appeared on the list, and it was nice to reacquaint with her. She's coming along well in her therapy.

HY: Oh good. Now is this Margaret Pai?

PM: Kwon, K-W-O-N. Her name now was Pai, P-A-I.

HY: Holly [PM's daughter] mentioned her to me.

PM: They pronounce it "Pa-ee," and I can't get it. It isn't really Pai, it's "Pa-ee."

HY: I'm not too good either.

PM: I would have to practice it. I have corrections all the time. Most people call her Pai.

HY: Now she was a classmate all the way through with you?

PM: Yep. At the university we were in the same language, literature and art category [major]. We were both in that. We had classes the same, not all.

HY: What about some other organizations or activities you did in high school?

PM: Probably not too much, I can't think right now of—there was more activity when I got to the university.

HY: Okay, we're running out of tape on this side so I'm going to turn it over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: Okay, so you graduated from Roosevelt in 1933. Had you always thought you wanted to go to college?

PM: My mother assumed it so consequently I did too. It was rather a rough time financially, but she was determined I was going to go. I was willing.

HY: Did you have any jobs prior to entering UH [University of Hawai'i]?

PM: No. I probably was too young for most of the things that would have been available.

HY: So you had always thought that you were going to go to college. It was an expected thing to your family.

PM: Yeah. This is an extraneous thing you don't need to use. When I was halfway through college I was going to work one summer for the telephone company. So they told me I had to have a physical. I went for the physical and I didn't pass it. They said I had a heart problem. Here I am today.

(Laughter)

HY: We should all have this heart problem, yeah?

PM: Good idea. So the telephone company said they couldn't—the insurance.

HY: This was when you were a junior at UH?

PM: Yeah, between sophomore and junior year.

HY: Do you need . . .

PM: Did you (refers to her husband, GM, i.e. George McEldowney) hear that noise?

GM: No.

HY: That's all right.

PM: I thought it was upstairs.

HY: It will probably pick it up but they'll still be able to hear you well enough.

PM: I could yell at them to be quiet but I wouldn't. Is this being recorded?

HY: Yeah, it's okay. So I'm interested in, if you remember, the application process at UH. You planned on going to UH.

PM: What did I have to do?

HY: Gosh, you're very young then. You're sixteen.

PM: I was sixteen for most of my freshman year, till the middle of April. Then I became seventeen.

HY: Do remember anything about the application process?

PM: I don't really. I know I had to fill out some stuff, but of course I had to have my grades from Roosevelt. They didn't have too many people from Roosevelt because it was only the year before me, and then my class.

HY: You were the second graduating class.

PM: Yes. So I really don't remember what else we had to—of course we had to investigate how much it was going to cost.

HY: Do remember that as being a problem?

PM: It was at that time, but it was surmounted. But the depression hit Hawai'i later than the 1929 one that was all over the country. It sort of got to Hawai'i a little bit later.

HY: Did that affect your father's business?

PM: Yes it did. It had a big impact. People were not buying shoes as frequently. There was a big difference. My mother used to walk to town to do things that needed doing in town, and that was from Makiki to Downtown Honolulu. It was quite a walk really. She was determined.

HY: How did you manage financially to go to college then during this tough time?

PM: Well, there was a very nice woman who helped that I was determined to repay some day and she wouldn't take it.

HY: She financed your college?

PM: Part of it, part of it.

HY: Now who was this?

PM: A woman named Waal, W-A-A-L. She was a neighbor. She was an Austrian.

HY: And your family had a friendship with her?

PM: Yes, my mother in particular, but it was embarrassing. But it did work out.

HY: Did she also help with your sister?

PM: No, my sister went to nursing school on the Mainland and she got into that and it was free. There wasn't any outside—well, just the pin money, you'd say, that somebody would need. We weathered the storm.

HY: How did you get to UH?

PM: Streetcar, and sometimes we'd take Punahou streetcar and we transfer to Mānoa and go up and over Lanihuli—I think it was over Lanihuli—and down and around and be deposited at the university. Well, it stopped at the top of the hill, I think, but it was right there at the university, bordering on Mid-Pacific.

HY: Now when you entered UH, was there any type of counseling or guidance or orientation for you as a new student?

PM: I feel as though there must have been, but I wouldn't be able to recall exactly what it was. But they did care about these students becoming adjusted. So I guess that's about it. I had to talk to someone about what courses to take. I'm trying to think of who it was.

HY: Did you know you were going to be a language, literature and art major or was that something you arrived at later?

PM: I think it was there from the beginning.

HY: Because of your love for reading?

PM: [Yes], however I was determined I wasn't going to take any art.

HY: Now why is that?

PM: Because I didn't feel I had any ability except for the rabbit that I drew when I was seven, which I've never forgotten. He was a wonderful rabbit.

(Laughter)

HY: Downhill from there, yeah?

PM: We left him when we left San Francisco, we left the rabbit.

HY: So you were interested in literature.

PM: Yeah, language and literature. Did take French, and I took Latin in high school, and I took Spanish at the university. But it didn't go on and it was not a major part of my life.

HY: What were your impressions of the campus early on?

PM: It was a lot of green space and a few buildings, which you wouldn't be able to believe today. All these new buildings, most of them, are named for the professors that were around in my day. It's kind of fun to think.

HY: I'm going to ask you to name drop.

PM: [Shunzo] Sakamaki, [Ernest Charles] Webster—I didn't have him but I knew [of him].

HY: You had Gregg Sinclair.

PM: Oh yes, Sinclair of course. 'Cause I worked for him.

HY: The [Sinclair] Library wasn't there.

PM: Yeah it's later, right.

HY: [Paul] Bachman.

PM: The main one, Bachman was the main one [who PM worked for] and Dean [William H.] George of George Hall. It was Hawai'i Hall and they renamed it, I think. [Hawai'i Hall was used as a library until the new Library Building was built in 1925, this was later renamed George Hall when Sinclair Library was built in 1956.]

HY: There is a George Hall and there is a Hawai'i Hall today, and there's a little quadrangle and there's two buildings.

PM: Oh, so maybe I'm wrong. I hope so 'cause I'd liked them to have kept Hawai'i Hall and to honor Dean George, too.

HY: Did you have him as a professor?

PM: Yes in political science for one semester or whatever it was.

HY: Do remember what kind of a teacher he was, your impressions?

PM: Well, he was in charge because it was a big group and there's not much individual thinking about what he was teaching. I mean it was just a general [course].

HY: It was a big lecture.

PM: Of course later on I worked at—you see I'm skipping ahead.

HY: That's okay, the chronology doesn't matter.

PM: When I worked at the university the secretarial office was right next to Dean George's office so we saw him frequently. So we got to know him better that way from the work we did for him in the secretarial office.

HY: Than as a student.

PM: Oh yeah, much more.

HY: What was Sinclair like as a teacher?

PM: He was---let's see, we had Oriental literature. First of all we had sophomore literature. That was just encompassing American literature and whatever came to his mind. He was a good professor. He was. He held your attention, at least he held mine. I had him in the big class, and then later I had him for Oriental studies. It was a much smaller class, and then you got to know him better. And of course I worked for him later.

HY: When you say big class, how big are the big classes?

PM: Farrington Hall, the whole front section. Farrington Hall is still there I think. Isn't it? Or not?

HY: Yes, but it's not used like that. [HY corrects herself later. Farrington Hall was demolished in 1975.] I kind of interrupted your discussion of the campus itself.

PM: Well, there was Farrington Hall where they had the plays and things like that. I was interested in the Theater Guild for all the years I was there—backstage, not upfront.

HY: What plays did you work on? Did you work on all the plays during that time?

PM: Most of them I think, when I had time. They were very nice. They gave me a medal at the end of the four years, silver medal.

HY: Is this for your work . . .

PM: Backstage. Oh, I know what was really nice about it, they gave me four credits for it, which I had not expected. So that was nice.

HY: Was that considered an art credit?

PM: You name it. (Chuckles) I can call it that—fill in for the language, literature and art.

HY: Now was that Arthur Wyman that was there?

PM: Yes. I knew him well. He was a character.

HY: Is that right?

PM: Yes.

HY: How so?

PM: Theatrical. He knew his trade, I felt.

HY: What was his rapport with the students?

PM: I think anybody who was interested in the theater liked him. There were probably some students who had no connection whatsoever thought he was a little different perhaps. I don't really know. He was always nice to me. Of course it's kind of good to see a professor when it's not in the classroom. This theater stuff, this backstage stuff, it wasn't in my classroom so you got to see him as a person, which is kind of neat sometimes.

HY: Did you not have him as a teacher—you only knew him as . . .

PM: That's right.

HY: What was it that made you interested in theater?

PM: I think it was something to do, where I didn't have to appear on stage. There was one production I was in a—what do they call it?—a whole bunch of kids in the sorority were in it.

HY: You were in the chorus?

PM: Yeah, but not—Tarara boom dee yay—if that means anything to you. (PM and HY sing together). It'd be nice if I could sing.

HY: So that was your one stage experience.

PM: I think that was enough—kicking and dancing.

HY: Who attended these performances? Was it students mostly?

PM: And their parents. (Chuckles) Parents do that, and the outside world.

HY: Did the community come, too?

PM: Yes.

HY: It was well attended then?

PM: It was. I felt it was well attended. I think there was an interest.

HY: Were there any fund-raising activities?

PM: I don't know. I mean—with the theater?

HY: Yeah, specifically for them.

PM: I don't recall. I really don't recall.

HY: You were also pretty active in other clubs. When I first met you, you were telling me about your rifle club. How did you get interested in the girls rifle team?

PM: My brother was four years ahead of me, and he was in ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] and the rifle team. So he was teaching me before I got to the university how to handle rifle, and I was interested. It was before I got to the university that I was interested.

HY: Where did you practice?

PM: Under the gym. What do they call the gym now?

HY: Well we have the Stan Sheriff Center but it's Klum Gym.

PM: It was Klum. I remember Otto Klum.

HY: So you practiced underneath.

PM: Under the gym—under the stage, that's where it was. They had a range, a rifle range under there. I enjoyed it.

HY: You learned a little bit prior to coming.

PM: Yeah a little. I felt comfortable with a gun.

HY: Where could you practice before you came to UH?

PM: At home.

HY: Just like out in the yard or something?

PM: No, in the house.

(Laughter)

PM: I think if I had been out in the yard with the gun, people would have been wondering. No, in the house. There was no ammunition in it. It was just a case of how you—it was all a prone position, laying down. How you do that, how you hold the rifle, how you hold your breath and focus on the target, and if you haven't focused you stop, take another breath and start again. I enjoyed rifle. I really enjoyed it.

HY: About how big was your team?

PM: It varied from year to year or rather even semester to semester.

HY: But no more than about a dozen?

PM: I think that would be the most, sometimes maybe eight.

HY: Do remember any of your teammates?

PM: If I look at their pictures.

HY: Okay. Maybe [we] should get out your yearbook.

PM: Virginia Jackson was one. Saw her the other day. She lives on the Mainland half the year, and half the year at Lā'ie.

HY: Here you are. We're looking at a picture [in] the *Ka Palapala*. Let's see, how many people are there—two, four, six, yeah twelve, thirteen women it looks like. You mentioned Virginia Jackson.

PM: Yeah, but I'll know whether she was there during this issue.

HY: Yeah, she's in this picture.

PM: Virginia's there? Oh good.

HY: I don't know, can you see this?

PM: No I can't. The names, I'm probably familiar with most of the names there. If you want to read off the names I'll tell you.

HY: There's Peggy Hocker.

PM: She was army. Her family was Fort DeRussy.

HY: Lydia Chun.

PM: Oh Lydia, yes. Lydia went on to be a school principal. I remember Lydia very well.

HY: In Honolulu?

PM: Yep.

HY: Betty Chun?

PM: No I don't remember her.

HY: Louise Purcell.

PM: Oh yeah, Louise. She was a plantation person. Her family was at 'Ewa Plantation.

HY: Aldeline Indie?

PM: Aldeline was a good friend from Roosevelt.

HY: So she was a classmate of yours from Roosevelt and you entered UH together. Was she a language, literature and arts major?

PM: I don't know. I think she was in Teachers College. I feel pretty sure but I'm not really positive.

HY: So looks like there's Chinese names and *haole* names.

PM: Oh yeah, anybody was welcome.

HY: You had mentioned last time, too—you actually did compete with other teams.

PM: Oh yeah, by mail.

HY: Yeah, so explain how that worked.

PM: Well we go in one day. We had it, or you'd announce it ahead of time—I'm not sure—that this was competing day. So of course we tried to do our best, as we always do naturally. Then they would mail the targets to whatever university it was we were competing with.

HY: You would actually take the sheet of the target paper, or whatever it is, and . . .

PM: Yes, the actual target.

HY: And mail it to the competing schools.

PM: Yes.

HY: So they would all . . .

PM: They would know that it was . . .

HY: Legitimate.

PM: Right. Fool you!

(Laughter)

HY: How did you folks do?

PM: As I recall, we did very well. But I don't know whether they picked the universities so that we would do well or—it's hard to tell.

HY: Who were the schools?

PM: I don't remember. I think there was some West Coast and Midwest [schools]. I don't believe we went east. I don't remember the names of any of them, sorry.

HY: That's okay. This was affiliated with ROTC.

PM: Yes. The sergeant was in charge.

HY: This is Clarke?

PM: No. The sergeant was [Arthur] Meniatis.

HY: Oh, was he the one that taught you?

PM: Yes. I thought he did a good job.

HY: Now is this an activity that you continued beyond UH?

PM: No. I did once in a gathering in Hilo on a rifle range, indoor. But that was just sort of a dropping by thing. It wasn't an ongoing [thing].

HY: This is much, much later.

PM: Yes. I kept my target because I made a bull's eye.

HY: (Laughs) Do you still have it?

PM: I wouldn't be surprised, but in our move a lot of things did not come with us. So I'm not sure whether the target came. But it was my favorite target. I did well.

HY: Now you talked about how—you know because you were younger throughout your intermediate school and high school years—you kind of felt a bit of a gap with your classmates. By the time you're at UH you're still pretty young, but did you feel . . .

PM: No, the gap was gone.

HY: You felt like you were on the same page with your classmates.

PM: Yes, because they didn't treat me as if I was, "Oh that young person." Or anything like that. I felt there was no gap.

HY: So you felt more accepted.

PM: Yes.

HY: Let's talk about some of your other activities. How about your sorority, let's talk about that.

PM: Well, I enjoyed the sorority. Where do I start with that?

HY: Your sorority was . . .

PM: Gamma Kai Sigma.

HY: Weren't you the president?

PM: For two years. Much to the chagrin of the person who thought she was going to be president during her senior year. So I was embarrassed.

HY: How did that happened?

PM: Voting.

HY: So within the sorority you voted. Did you campaign?

PM: No I never would of campaigned for that. No, the kids wanted me and that was it.

HY: Where did you meet? Where did you have your meetings?

PM: Anywhere. There was no special room or anything like that. We had to meet in an unused classroom somewhere, we had to. I really can't focus on the specifics.

HY: Did you have a supervisor?

PM: Yes. There was always an adviser there and it varied from time to time. Often it was the wife of one of their professors and that generally worked out pretty well.

HY: Was their role just to oversee?

PM: Yes, we had to have somebody in charge to guide us if we needed it or if they wanted to. They were never pushy or they never took over or that sort of thing. They were doing us a favor.

HY: Why did you decide on this particular sorority?

PM: They decided. I didn't.

HY: They asked you to?

PM: Yes.

HY: Was there any kind of initiation?

PM: Oh yes. Pretty ridiculous.

HY: What hoops did you have to jump through?

PM: Oh, of course they had a serious initiation, candlelight and all that sort of thing. Then they had their silly type thing, trying to embarrass you.

HY: How did they do that?

PM: Well they had you wear an evening dress to school. I remember that one. That was horrible. What else did we have to do? Do something that was noticeable to the public. I don't know what. (Chuckles) hopefully something embarrassing.

HY: Have you blocked that from your memory?

PM: I probably have.

HY: Now what sort of things did you meet about? What kind of activities did you do?

PM: I don't know. We tried to be helpful with things, just like Girl Reserves did.

HY: Were you involved in community service, that sort of thing?

PM: Yeah, we did some of that. We wanted to feel that we were worthwhile.

HY: Do you remember any specific services that you were involved in with your sorority?

PM: I remember that high school one.

HY: We can go back to that.

PM: Salvation Army. And that I think was handled—might not have been handled—primarily by the Salvation Army, but food for the poor. We went right to somebody's house. That's embarrassing now when I think about it. "Oh you poor people. We are donating food to you."

HY: You brought food?

PM: Yeah. I hope it was accepted in the right spirit. It's embarrassing to me now to think we intruded in their lives. We thought we were being helpful. I hope we were.

HY: Was it received. . .

PM: I don't recall, probably because I was hiding my head. (Chuckles) I don't know. I was embarrassed for them. But I'm sure they received it graciously.

HY: Do you remember what neighborhoods you went to to donate food?

PM: Kapahulu. It was Kapahulu, which is very different from today's Kapahulu.

HY: Yeah, lots of food on Kapahulu now. All the restaurants.

PM: It's a whole different area.

HY: Now this is with Girl Reserves?

PM: Yeah.

HY: Interesting. Now back to your sorority, what about social functions with them?

PM: Oh they had a yearly dance. They tried to meet up with one of the fraternities to have a gathering of some sort.

HY: Did you call them brother fraternities?

PM: No. I think that Hui Lokahi was one that the Ka Pueo people latched on to. But we got them sometimes too. I think there were some of the girls in the sorority who were interested in some of the boys in Phi Delta Gamma, so that sort of became a connection but there wasn't a great deal of tie in.

HY: So you would, if there were dances, would you invite them?

PM: Yeah.

HY: I see. Where were dances held for you folks?

PM: Oh, there was an interesting one at the old Hale'iwa Hotel. That was where I got my scar.

HY: Now, how did that happen?

PM: On the ride home. A soldier, who had beer in his car, plowed into us.

HY: Oh, you had a car accident.

PM: I was in the back seat and I flew forward and hit on the back of the front seat.

HY: You're pointing to your eye but I can't really see.

PM: It's on the side. Right there.

HY: That sounds like a pretty bad car accident.

PM: Well they took me to the hospital. It wasn't Tripler—maybe it was Tripler. Anyhow, I was at the post—doctor clinic, or whatever it was, at Schofield. And he (put) the stitches in there and bandaged me up.

HY: Prior to your accident you had been at the dance.

PM: Yes.

HY: Having a good time, I assume.

PM: Oh yeah, yeah. And it was this soldier's car, who had the beer in his—then his car was on the wrong side of the road.

HY: Was this somebody who was attending the dance, too?

PM: No, just one of the soldiers.

HY: Who attended the dance? Was it the UH students?

PM: We'd invite the other sororities, or members of the other sororities. It was good fun.

HY: Did you have live music then?

PM: I think they did. I think so. I'm almost sure.

HY: What about other social functions?

PM: We had the functions at the beginning of the year to become acquainted with the new students and look them over, which sounds very crude, and see if maybe we would like to have them or maybe they would like to have us. It was their option too. We used to have a couple functions like that.

HY: Where were those held?

PM I can say various places, but. . . I know one of the alumni members held it at—two of the alumni members, two different alumni members, invited us to their home for tea. So we went to tea.

HY: Do you remember who that was?

PM: I remember Dorrit Clark was one, and I can't think of who the other one was.

HY: That makes me think of another question about the characteristic of the classroom. Was there an informality where teachers would have students to their homes?

PM: The adviser had us come to her home. Her husband [Felix Kessing] was in the anthropology department and she had us go to her home for a meeting.

HY: This was your . . .

PM: Sorority. I remember that well. Do you want an addendum to that? She committed suicide because her husband died on the tennis court in Australia—or New Zealand—when they went back there. He had a sudden attack and he died, and she couldn't take it. So she committed suicide. We don't like tidbits like that but they're in your memory.

HY: But you knew her when—many years earlier. Is that right?

PM: No just at the university.

HY: Oh, so this happened while you were at the university?

PM: Well, no they had gone back. They had gone to Stanford. He went to Stanford to teach. He was there. I think he had retired (from Stanford) but I'm not sure.

HY: So were your relationships with your advisers then, like her, were they—did you feel a big-sister [kind of relationship]?

PM: Not that close I think, but respect.

HY: What about professors, did they ever hold classes outside of the classroom? I think that's something they do in graduate school actually little more often. I don't know about undergrad.

PM: I don't know. It was strange when you saw them in a setting, or were with them in a setting that didn't have anything to do with the university. I remember there was a case

like that. The daughter of another faculty member and I went to a picnic that these older people had, and it was strange to see them in a setting that was not the university.

HY: A social setting.

PM: Yeah, on the beach. They had a beach home. It was on the beach and it was outside. I remember that. I was probably shrinking in the corner somewhere. (Chuckles) I don't know. But that's not important.

HY: Well, it sounds like there was sort of a distinct—for lack of a better word—role, where you established a certain relationship with your professors that was specific to the...

PM: Formal.

HY: Yeah, I guess formal.

PM: They were formal. And scholastic. They knew one of your friends is the daughter of one of the professors and that sort of leads to seeing them outside of the university too.

HY: I want to backtrack a little bit because I didn't ask you when you're talking about being involved in the Theater Guild, this is where you met your husband.

PM: Yes. I had seen him.

HY: How did that happen?

PM: (Laughs) I think I told you.

HY: Yes.

PM: I was working backstage and he was part of the crew. I have pictures in there somewhere. Not this book, it was an earlier *Ka Palapala*. He wanted the set up for him to be just so, and I thought it wasn't necessary to be just so. We didn't have an argument, I just (PM makes tsk sound) he's too fussy. I don't think I told him that to his face. That was about it.

HY: So that's how you met.

PM: But I didn't start going out with him until a later time.

HY: Were you in any of the same classes together?

PM: We were. We were in an economics class together. I don't know who chose it to be that way or it just happened. I don't know. It was an economics class.

HY: Do you remember who was teaching it?

PM: Cameron, Merton K. Cameron.

HY: How would you characterize his teaching style?

PM: Up on your toes, down again. Up on his toes, down again. All through the class, while he was talking, he was rising to his full height and back down again (laughs).

HY: Why?

PM: I don't know. It was a habit he had. Maybe he was intriguing the students by keeping them awake. I don't know.

(Laughter)

PM: It was a strange habit.

HY: Did you learn something from him or was it too distracting?

PM: Well I passed the course; I must have learned something. I think I did. It was an advanced economics class, not just a basic Farrington Hall class. It was in the ag[riculture] building.

HY: I think we have room on this tape for another question. Who would you say, of all your professors, is there someone that stands out as sort of being more influential on you?

PM: Well, it had to be Bachman because I knew him later. And that's quite different (from) knowing him that way.

HY: Maybe you can just talk about him as a teacher then. Then later on we'll get into your working time.

PM: As a teacher—well, the poli[tical] sci[ence] course was about as boring as any other poly sci course, I would think.

(Laughter)

PM: It was just for the freshman or sophomores. [There was] a whole bunch of kids and the professor talking from notes—not just from notes, because he had a wide background.

HY: I'm a little curious—I don't know if you would remember the content of the class but [do you remember] if he talked about politics locally?

PM: No.

HY: It was more global?

PM: It was the book part of it, though I can't remember a specific book we had in that class.

HY: We're right near at the end of this tape.

END OF INTERVIEW