

Tape Number 34-21-2-00

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Helen Ing (HI)

Honolulu, O'ahu

June 15, 2000

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: Okay, this is the second session with Helen Ing. We're at her home in Dowsett Highlands. It's June 15, 2000 and the interviewer is Holly Yamada.

Okay, I had a couple questions. You talked about last time—this is going way back—your father's side business. You mentioned that the firemen and policemen came to have their bones mended.

HI: I know.

HY: I'm wondering, did he have his little side practice in the same building with his tailor shop?

HI: Oh, yeah. It was just a thing that, as I said, he had no license. He just did it.

HY: Did they also come to the house sometimes?

HI: Yes. but most of the time, they would go down to the tailor shop. Because the tailor shop used to have a back area where he would cut the patterns. He would go back there and treat them.

HY: I'm wondering how it was that those customers were firemen and policemen?

HI: Because they used to go to him to make their uniforms. Khaki pants.

HY: Oh, I see. Oh, okay. Interesting.

HI: Even the tax people.

HY: The tax people?

HI: Yeah, the people who used to work at the [territorial] tax office.

HY: Used to come to him for mending bones? Were they also customers of the tailor shop?

HI: Some of them were. Mostly they knew him from the tailoring.

HY: As far as you know, was that an effective means of mending bones?

HI: Very. As I told you, they used to go to the orthopedic surgeon, I guess. They would put them in a cast from here to here (HI indicates the length of her arm). And he would take a hammer out. I used to watch him take the hammer and crack the cast to break it off. But I don't know, somehow, I think, usually when an accident happens, they would take them to an orthopedic surgeon. And then they would set the bones and put them in a cast and then let it heal that way. No medication or anything.

HY: Did the physicians know that he was doing that?

HI: I don't know. The person knew, the patient knew, but they never went back to the. . . .

HY: To the doctor.

HI: Their doctor.

HY: Oh, interesting. Okay last time we were talking about the university.

HI: Yes.

HY: And you said you didn't have that much time for social activities.

HI: Yes, because I would go to school and come home to take care of the store. We ran a grocery store.

HY: You're so busy. But the one thing that you were able to do was go to football games.

HI: Oh, I telling you, every football game. Well, that was a Saturday afternoon at the old Honolulu Stadium.

HY: I'm wondering, too, since you were an education major around the time . . .

HI: I told you, there was no education division at the university until my fifth year.

HY: Right, right. That's what I was going to ask you about. It became a teachers' college [in 1931] when the Territorial Normal [and Training] School was incorporated into . . .

HI: The university.

HY: So I'm wondering, I was going to ask you about that transition as a student. You know, how it was for you as a student having that part of the university . . .

HI: No, they just opened and we all attended the classes in that area. You know where university comes up and there's Metcalf [Street], University Avenue, that corner there?

HY: And wasn't Wist Hall a new building that year?

HI: I forgot. But still, when we had graduation, we went up to Hawai'i Hall, that quadrangle there.

HY: So as a student, were you aware of that transition of having it being incorporated into the university?

HI: No, we just attended class as usual. It was just another . . .

HY: Not something you thought [about].

HI: Instead of being in arts and sciences you'd be in the education division.

HY: Did you notice the students that came in from [Territorial] Normal [and Training] School were any different or. . . .

HI: No, we just mixed together.

HY: Okay. And so, then you graduated from your fifth year in '32.

HI: I earned it in '32 and then I didn't start teaching until '36.

HY: I think you mentioned you worked for the board of health in between. Is that right?

HI: I worked there in—let me think, now. Oh I worked there '35. It was between '35 and '36 because that was when—I think it was Fred Carter who was the president there—he called me in and he says, "Since you trained to be a teacher, you resign and take that teaching position."

HY: And he was your supervisor at the board of health? I think you mentioned that when you went to Laupāhoehoe to do your first teaching, you went by yourself, right?

HI: Yes, I left the children home with my husband.

HY: How was that adjustment for you?

HI: Well, I would come home every holiday. Like when we had Thanksgiving, I would come home. And then, Christmas. There weren't airplanes then, not that frequent, so we used to ride the *Humu'ula*, the cattle boat.

HY: What was that like?

HI: Oh, it was fun because you'd hear moo-moo all night long. It was an overnight sail.

HY: Did you feel you were well prepared as a teacher for your first year of teaching?

HI: I didn't have any problems because we did not have the whole year of—I think they have a whole year now of practice teaching. I knew the system. We only had the experience at Washington Intermediate [School] for one quarter, I think, or one semester.

HY: So did you feel like you were ready then?

HI: Well, I was well versed in my subjects. So.

HY: What subjects did you teach there?

HI: I taught math and typing. Even when I retired, I taught typing at Stevenson [Intermediate School]. I mean, that was my last job.

HY: Where did you live when you were there?

HI: Where?

- HY: When you were teaching at Laupāhoehoe?
- HI: There were teachers' cottages that the tidal wave swept to sea. I left there just before the tidal wave.
- HY: What were the teachers' cottages like? Can you describe them?
- HI: Oh, they were huge things. There were four people in a cottage, two rooms on each side, kitchen, living room in between. We'd have to do our own cooking. We took turns. We used to go to Hilo every Saturday on the bus to shop for the week. Because all we could get, I think, right in the neighborhood, was eggs and chickens. They had a chicken farm near there. There was one store up the hill where the post office was. There was a sort of a grocery store there, but we did most of our shopping in Hilo.
- HY: And so after that first year then you . . .
- HI: Transferred to Kalākaua [Intermediate School].
- HY: Did you notice a difference between the Big Island kids and the O'ahu kids?
- HI: Oh, the O'ahu kids were tough kids. I had (chuckles), I told you about that boy who threatened going into a fit because he didn't want to sit down to do his work.
- HY: So, you think there were—when you say “tougher”—more discipline problems?
- HI: Yes, there were more. In other words, the country kids were there to learn and the kids in town care less whether they learned or not. That's the feeling. That's why we had to be real strict with them.
- HY: Did you feel that that was something that had changed since you were a student in the public schools?
- HI: Oh, yes. I was at Ka'ahumanu first to eighth grades. We took English and social studies from one teacher, and math from another teacher, and science from another teacher. It was a three-ring circus then. I think that was when I was seventh and eighth grades and they just began to separate, you know.
- HY: And did you think the attitude of the students, when you were a student at that age, you were more interested?
- HI: Oh, we were there to learn. But even when I was teaching at Kalākaua, the kids were there to play.
- HY: Why do you think that is? What happened?
- HI: I really don't know. I think it was parents. They were not strict. They let their kids do whatever they wanted to do.
- HY: What about classroom size? I'm wondering if that had changed.
- HI: Oh, I used to have, at Kalākaua, I had thirty-nine and forty in a class. I think the classroom sizes are now smaller.

- HY: So you were there a couple of years and then you went back to Laupāhoehoe?
- HI: I went back for one semester, I think. And then I had an opening at a Leilehua [High School] in Wahiawā.
- HY: From there you were at Farrington [High School] and then . . .
- HI: From there went to Farrington. And then from Farrington, let's see, I taught there until 1950. When I had my last child I came out, then when I went back [to teaching] I went to Stevenson.
- HY: How were the students at those schools? Leilehua, and Farrington, and Stevenson?
- HI: Oh, the kids at a Leilehua were good. I have a whole slew of doctors and professional people who graduated from my Leilehua class. In fact, some of them have already died. And retired. One that I taught became a veterinarian and he's retired. I saw him not too long ago. I think his children are also grown up. He happens to be my brother-in-law's brother. That's how I run into him every once in a while.
- HY: What about Farrington and Stevenson?
- HI: Farrington. . . . Stevenson, I think there's still those two kids in town who see me. Even the one I used to teach in Laupāhoehoe. Last year, I met one in town. She stopped me in this street. She used to be our housekeeper at the cottages when she was a student. She's a great-grandmother now. Said, "Oh, for goodness—." She said, "Oh yes." What's her name now? Thelma. Thelma-something, I forget .
- HY: And so, over a span of about twenty years then, you were in the public school system.
- HI: I taught for seventeen years.
- HY: Seventeen years. Maybe I can just ask a general question about changes that you may have noticed over the time that you were teaching in terms of the discipline as also academic interest and readiness.
- HI: Well, let's see, I think after we came to a time you could not lay a hand on the kids. That was when? Yeah, I think Kalākaua, when we came down, the rules were so strict. You couldn't discipline them. The rules were written, I think, you were not allowed to discipline them.
- HY: You mean, physically discipline?
- HI: Yes. You can't spank. I used to (slaps hand). We learned to just slap the hand because it doesn't leave any marks, huh?
- HY: And that's when you were in school . . .
- HI: When I was teaching. Oh, when we were in school, I remember the yardstick or the ruler. The teachers used to hit us with those.
- HY: How did the teachers feel about being restricted?
- HI: Well, that's the results you have now.

HY: Did you feel like your fellow teachers felt the same way?

HI: Oh, most of us felt that way. Especially, the eighth grade is the most difficult years. The students are the worst in that grade.

HY: That's what they say, yeah?

HI: Even now?

HY: Yeah, that's what they say, yeah. That's a difficult age.

HI: Our time it was. The high schools were all right. They were there to learn.

HY: What about how academically ready? Did you feel like they were interested in learning and did learn?

HI: They were not. I had to teach. Let's see, I made a statement once that you have to teach the seventh- and eighth-grade math to the kids in high school. More less, they didn't know how to divide and. . . .

HY: Oh, re-teach them you mean?

HI: But when I was at Farrington I had social studies and typing. So I didn't have to do too much. When I went to Stevenson, it was all typing classes.

HY: I'm wondering if there was a kind of philosophy about teaching that you learned coming out of the university.

HI: You know, they did not have as good a system then as they do now. I think they are more personal now with the students, aren't they? I mean, from what I read in the papers.

HY: More personal?

HI: I think so. I don't know. I've been out of the system since 1957.

HY: So you retired from Stevenson then. That was your last school.

HI: Let's see, '57. Yeah, '57 I retired from Stevenson. That was my last school.

HY: Did your husband pass away at that time?

HI: In '57. Right after he died I quit teaching.

HY: Is that why you quit teaching? You wanted to . . .

HI: So I could take care of the business. Because we had a going business then.

HY: Where were you living? Were you living here?

HI: I was living on School Street. I was here since the latter part of '57. Because we had subdivided this area and we had these two lots sitting here. I've been here since '57, the latter part of '57 I think. October or November, that's when we moved in. Yeah, because I remember my daughter was in Columbia [University] on the Mainland, and my son had

just finished UW, and he was home here. She had finished her fifth graduate work at Columbia and she wanted to stay in New York. But we told her you better get back here, because we had the business and we were busy. At that time my youngest was only seven. He was attending 'Iolani. In fact, my son just reminded me we were living on School Street then. And then after he died, we built this house and moved up here. Latter part of '57, I think, it was toward the end of the year.

HY: I'm interested in teachers in the public school system and where an they send their own children to school. You mentioned your son was in 'Iolani. Maybe could tell about . . .

HI: No, my daughter attended Roosevelt [High School] and my son went to 'Iolani. Because my husband's family attended 'Iolani. And 'Iolani was an Episcopal school. And my husband's family were Episcopalians.

HY: Was it more for that reason that you sent him?

HI: That. He attended 'Iolani. It was all boys then, no girls. So all my boys attended 'Iolani.

HY: So both your sons?

HI: Let's see, both my sons and all my grandsons.

HY: Do you feel your daughter got a good education as a public school student then?

HI: She went to Roosevelt, and after Roosevelt she went to the Mainland college. What the heck she went to? In Stockton. Then from there she went to Columbia in New York.

HY: I just want to ask you a little bit about your husband's business and the business that you're actually still doing today.

HI: Well, real estate.

HY: Real estate. I guess he was a developer especially in Kailua with the Tim Ing Building. That's your building.

HI: Kailua. Yes, and it's still there. I told the kids, "Those parcels in Kailua supposed to remain. Don't ever sell them."

HY: Did he have some kind of, for lack of a better word, vision about how he wanted to develop that area?

HI: I guess so, because he bought acres and acres of land. Let me see, [Harold] Castle, I think, Castle owned most of the land. One of his good friends was the bookkeeper at Castle. Anytime Castle wanted to get rid of something, he let him know. As I said, we bought tracts of land at one time for six cents a square foot. Because, you know, the building where the Pioneer Bank was, that building is still there. We only have a one-story. The other building across the street from the fire station we bought that ten thousand-square-foot lot from an individual. We built a two-story building there that was destroyed by fire. The tenant we had upstairs he was running it as a nightclub. He was sent to jail because they proved that it was arson.

HY: That was fairly recent.

HI: Yeah.

HY: Yeah, I think remember that.

HI: You remember that big fire in Kailua?

HY: Yeah, yeah.

HI: Well, that was the building. Then we, with the insurance money, we rehabilitated and it's okay now. We have a bicycle shop there. In fact, there's one vacancy. I'm still chasing this guy. He wanted to rent and he hasn't opened up yet.

HY: Now, did you folks own the land that Castle hospital. . . . That's something else then?

HI: No, Castle was the one who sold us the property at that corner at the Tim Ing Building. They owned the land in the beginning. They sold that land to us. That was the land I got for six cents a square foot.

HY: Okay. So that had nothing to do with the . . .

HI: No, had nothing to do with this other one. This other one, we bought from a private person. I think I paid dollar half a square foot for that one. But still, that was cheap. Now it's assessed at almost a hundred dollars a square foot.

HY: Yeah. At today's standard. Okay, is there anything else we didn't cover?

HI: No, that's all aside. That's going [more] into real estate and development, than the university.

HY: Yeah. I just wanted it to ask you a little bit about that. Okay. Anything else about the university or your family or anything else?

HI: How far did we get? We went right through the courses and the teachers there too, didn't we? [This is] a list of all the teachers I had.

HY: Oh, [Jen] Ostergaard.

HI: He was just more practical, I think. He was not the one with all these doctors. He was very practical. He taught us how to dissect and everything else.

HY: You also had Sinclair, Gregg Sinclair.

HI: Gregg Sinclair. In fact, he was my English teacher when he first came to the university.

HY: How was he? What was he like as a teacher?

HI: He was good. He was very—how would I say?—very English. You know, aristocrat like.

HY: Did you feel comfortable with him as a teacher?

HI: Oh yes. We had those big classes, hundred or so. In fact, he taught freshman English.

HY: And I notice here you have May Gay?

HI: May Gay, she was the phys ed [physical education] the teacher. She was the one that told me shall never teach me how to swim. (Chuckles) The most I did was float from one side of the pool to other.

HY: Were you required to take?

HI: Oh, yes. Everybody was required to take one year of physical education.

HY: I find it interesting that so many people in Hawai'i never learned how to swim.

HI: I know. Well, Orientals, when we were young, we didn't go to the beach as often as other people. But now we have a lot in Lanikai that is right across the street from the beach. So my kids all know how to swim.

HY: But you didn't learn from May Gay.

HI: May Gay. She had to pass me. If you didn't pass that, you couldn't graduate.

HY: Did she give you a hard time?

HI: No, I guess she understood. At least I went across the tank.

HY: Yeah. Was that the end of your swimming career?

HI: That was the end.

HY: And I notice you had [Andrew] Lind.

HI: He was sociology, I think. I just went through the annuals and then I refreshed my mind.

HY: Well, it seemed like when I talked to you before the teacher that sort of had a bigger influence on you [was] Ruth Yap, you had mentioned a couple of times.

HI: Yes, she was my math teacher.

HY: Well, it looks like a lot of your teachers are teachers they've named some of the buildings after.

HI: I know.

HY: You mentioned [William H.] George.

HI: Yeah, George Hall. He was [political] sciences.

HY: Anything else?

HI: I think that covers it. The university was really compact then. Let's see, I think the last year, you know the building that you come up University Avenue? Is there and an education building at the university and now?

HY: Well, there's the Wist Hall.

HI: That's—yeah.

HY: Yeah, that's still there. Well, maybe just to wrap up your days at university, if you could just make some kind of a statement of how you felt about being a university graduate and what it meant to your family and yourself.

HI: Oh, as I said, I was the first one. Afterwards everybody went to college. As I told you, I had one sister who didn't want to go. I insisted that she go. And then she got a good job at the state after she finished.

HY: So was your family pleased with your graduating or did it mean much to them?

HI: I don't know. It took somebody from the outside to tell my father that I had done so much at the university. I think I told you about it. And he asked me. It was no big deal to me. I think one of his customers told him. I don't know how that person knew.

HY: Okay. Thank you.

HI: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW