The late Mrs. Rich was born in Kohala, Hawaii where her grandfather, Dr. James Wight, had been a physician since 1850. She was educated in England and completed nurses' training in 1914. She then joined the British Navy, serving as a nurse and a physician's driver for the next four years. She married John Rich in 1915.

Mrs. Rich's love of horses led her into a career as a horse trainer, stable owner and equestrian instructor. She was a qualified American Horse Show Association steward and was director of the Hawaii Horse Show Association for many years. At the time of her death she was a co-owner of the New Town and Country Stables in Waimanalo.

This transcript contains Mrs. Rich's account of her experiences as a nurse, horse trainer and equestrian instructor.

Katherine B. Allen, Interviewer

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INTERVIEW WITH AMY WIGHT PATTON RICH

(MRS. JOHN RICH)

In her office at New Town and Country Stables, 41-1800 Kalanianaole Highway, Waimanalo, 96795

September 16, 1971

R: Amy Wight Rich
A: Kathy Allen, Interviewer

R: I'd give my thing as Amy Patton. Rich, of course, is my married name.

A: Yes. So your full name would be what?

R: Amy Wight Rich. W-I-G-H-T. 'Cause my grandfather was Dr. Wight, you see, from Scotland. He was a Scottish, one of the Wight Clan of Scotland. He was from there but he came up from Australia with my grandmother, heading for the gold of California. And then, when he came here, the ship evidently broke down or something happened to the ship, and my grandmother had a baby there and it died there. And then they said to my grandfather, "Dr. Wight, if you could possibly stay, we're terribly short on doctors. Could you stay?" So he stayed and went up to Hawaii where Dr. [Elias] Bond--they both worked in Kohala with Dr. Bond. And so that's how that came about that he stayed here and that was in 1850.

A: And this was Dr. James Wight?

R: Dr. James Wight. W-I-G-H-T.

A: And what was his wife's name?

R: She was Godfathers. I don't know her christian name. Heavens! What was Grandmother Wight's christian name? I don't know.

A: All right. Well, maybe it will come to you later.

R: 'Cause you see, with me, when I came on earth, you see, she was just Granny.
A: Yes, of course.

R: And (coughs) I can't even remember my grandfather calling her because he'd always say, "Go see your grandmother!"

A: Yes. Now would you give your birthdate and where you were born?

R: I was born on March 22, 1890 in Kohala, Hawaii.

A: And your parents' names.

R: Florence Patton. She was Florence Wight and she married Mr. Patton from Nebraska.

A: All right. His first name; full name.

R: William Henry Patton.

A: And her name was Wight--her maiden name--and she was the daughter of Dr. James Wight.

R: Dr. James Wight. One of them. He had thirteen children.

A: Oh, I see. Do you know the names of the others?

R: No, they're all dead. They're all dead. I mean, I know there was Clara and Maude and Kate and Blanche. Kate wasn't married. Then, you see, they did have three sons but two of them died and there was only James Wight. There're several of his progeny down here in Hawaii. I don't know any of them. Oh, and Mrs. Wood. I'm trying to think of Mrs. Wood's christian name.

A: Was her husband a doctor?

R: No, he was in business here. Wood. And then there was one more that married. You know my memory, of course, is gone completely. Shocking, but I can't help it. An Alexander. She married an Alexander and then she married another one and then she married another one but she did marry an Alexander. Mrs. Alexander. What her christian name was, I don't know. I've forgotten.

A: All right. Well, we have almost all of them here, I think. Now, your sister's name is what?

R: Marie Clara Morgan, she is now.

A: What is her husband's first name?

R: He is dead. George.
A: Does she have children?
R: Yes, she has four.
A: Is she still living?
R: Oh, yes, she's still living. She's living in New Zealand. She married a New Zealander in World War I--Morgan--and they came out to New Zealand in 1920.
A: Was she also born in Kohala?
R: No, she was born in America. In Omaha [Nebraska].
A: Now, you say that Mr. Patton came from Nebraska.
R: Well, he was in [Nebraska] but his family came from England. He was an English family. In fact, he was one of the Warwicks of England. I think his father was the third son of the Earl of Warwick.
A: How did he happen to come to America?
R: Well, you know, a third son, my dear, of an English family. You know, he got tired. You know how they did in those days. And he just came out here. And my mother met him. He came down here as a--in a store. Having to do with a store in Kohala and that's where my mother met him. And then they went back to Nebraska.
A: Do you remember what store this was?
R: Nothing. No.
A: I guess it wouldn't be in existence now.
R: No. It wouldn't be anything. Just a goods store, a goods, you see, that they had there.
A: And where was your mother born?
R: In Kohala. They all were. All the children were born--all thirteen of them--in Kohala. No, the baby that died, of course, was not. But otherwise, all the living children were born there.
A: Now, do you remember your great-grandparents on your mother's side?
R: No, absolutely no.
A: I mean their names or any history about them.

R: No, nothing. The tree, that, of course, I found that Mother had; I gave to my sister. We have a tree.

A: You do have a family tree?

R: We have a family tree dating back to seventeen hundred something. My sister has it.

A: And where is she located now?

R: New Zealand. She's lived there all her life.

A: Oh, I see. And you don't have a copy of that?

R: No, I didn't. I just gave it to her because, you see, I move about so much and Clara stays exactly there the whole time, so I said, "It's better for you to keep this." I could ask her to send it to me, but I don't know that it would be very interesting, would it?

A: Very. You have no idea. Genealogy is tremendously interesting. Tremendously. And actually, if you just had it, you know, for yourself I think you would find it quite interesting.

R: Well, I could write to Clara and ask her to send it to me. As I say, with me moving around and this and I knew it wouldn't be good to keep it.

A: You know, some families have three volumes of genealogy.

R: I know, but you see, we didn't, my grandfather coming out to Australia, you see, and the only way we managed to find out where the Wight clan was--because it wasn't around on anywhere--my mother kind of remembered that her father had said where it was. He was a doctor in Edinburgh and then he came out. And the clan of Wight is just south of Edinburgh.

A: I see. Well, that's interesting.

R: Yes, because we went down there to the churchyard and I think the earliest that we saw was seventeen hundred and something where the graves were. Otherwise, the rest of them you couldn't even see anything, it was so old.


R: Yes.
A: In June 1915.
R: 1915.
A: And where were you married?
R: In Southampton.
A: And he was . . .
R: He was in the bank. A banker. And he went to the war in 1916. He was called up and was taken a prisoner and was way out in the east on a farm. He was taken as a prisoner and he didn't get back to England until late 1919.
A: Who took him prisoner and . . .
R: The Germans.
A: The Germans. And where was he when he was taken?
R: Where Soviet Russia is now. It was called--I don't know what it was called--but way in--absolutely way in--the East on a farm.
A: Is he deceased now?
R: Oh yes, he died in 1940. [This date is later changed to 1931.]

END OF SIDE 1/1ST·TAPE

A: You served in the war also.
R: I went into the navy. Yes. So I was in the navy and my sister was in the army. We both served in the war.
A: You were with the British Navy, is that correct?
R: Yes, at Haslar Hospital.
A: And, going back a little bit, prior to that you were at a different nursing--was it a nursing school?
R: Yes, in Southampton.
A: This was the Royal . . .
R: Royal South Hants. Hants is a short for Hampshire ["a county in S. England, including the administrative counties of Southampton and Isle of Wight." Dictionary].
Royal South Hants Hospital, it went by the name of.

A: And you were a nurse there?

R: Oh yes. I trained.

A: That’s where you got your nurse’s training, then.

R: Yes.

A: And then you went into the British Navy and you were a nurse and also a doctor’s driver, is that correct?

R: Yes, yes.

A: Where did you serve?

R: Well, you see, I was told my husband was dead and had been killed and so I kind of came out and then I heard that he had been taken prisoner and I didn’t want to go back to nursing and this doctor in Southampton, who I knew very well, said, "Now look, I want a driver very badly." So I took my licence in driving, drove a taxi for three months.

A: How about that. That’s interesting.

R: That was most interesting, especially in wartime.

A: Was that in England?

R: Yes, in Southampton. And I drove the taxi for three months and then I got my licence and then I drove for him. And you see, we did, I think—anyway, I helped him with fifty-four babies coming into the world. (chuckles)

A: That’s quite a record.

R: Yes, it’s quite a record. All in their own houses, you see, not in the hospital. So it was really quite interesting. (laughs)

A: Yes, that would be. Very. What was your experience in driving a taxi? How did you find that?

R: Well, I was very lucky in that I knew quite a few of the men there. I had nursed them in the hospital when they were younger, so they all looked after me. If they saw any man coming to me to get my car, they said, "No, you come to me," and they wouldn't let any man that was drunk or anything come to my car. I was very lucky. But I didn't drive at night.
A: No. Well, that's very interesting. Now, how did you get into--your whole career almost since then has been with horses, hasn't it?

R: Yes. Yes. Well, I've always loved horses.

A: Yes, having been born in Kohala, you would have been born in the saddle, as it were.

R: Absolutely. I was two years old, I was thrown into the saddle and told to stay there. (Kathy laughs)

A: And did you?

R: I did. (laughter) And then, I've always liked horses. So then I went and my husband was there and I went and really looked after horses and I was taken in to help another girl training horses.

A: This was in 1922, is that right?

R: That's right.

A: And now, there's a lapse here. Between 1914 and 1918 you were the doctor's driver and nurse. But between 1918 and 1922, I have a blank space.

R: Well, my husband came back. He went back into the bank. He was a banker and we lived in Bournemouth, Hampshire.

A: I see. Then how did you get into this training show and young hunter horses, then?

R: Well, I was always interested and then--let's see, it was--because he died in 1931, my husband.

A: Oh, he died in 1931.

R: And so then, of course, I went in for the horse business. See, my mother and I were both in England in '31 up to '37. We lived there, you see, but came out to New Zealand. No, no. 1936. '36 wasn't it I left England really?

A: Yes, you must have left England somewhere about '36 because by '37 you were here, I think.

R: Yes, that's right. Well, we kept on coming in and out almost every year, down to New Zealand to my sister, my mother and I.

A: Where were you living then, in New Zealand or here?
R: No, we were living in England until 1936, but used to come out to see Clara about every year into New Zealand.

A: I see. Now, you had mentioned before this recording began that you left Kohala at the age of ten and went to England with you mother.

R: Yes, with my mother, and she left us there at school.

A: And I have your schooling. That was Girton School.

R: Girton.

A: And would you explain the reason that you left at age ten?

R: My mother did not approve of coeducation, being thoroughly British, (hearty laughter) so she just shot us off and then came back here, 'cause she taught school out here out in Kohala.

A: Oh, she did teach school?

R: Yes. And I never saw her for eight years.

A: Oh, because you were there. You were in a boarding school there.

R: Yes, I was in England, you see, and I never saw her for eight years.

A: Well, this of course is what, I guess, most of the people in those days did do. The missionary families sent their children back to England to be educated, so that this was the common thing for that time, before there were the various schools, I guess.

R: Yes, yes. Oh yes, either to the mainland or there. Yes, definitely.

A: That eliminated even Punahou [School] then, wouldn't it, at that time, because that's coed?

R: Yes. Um hum.

A: All right, now, let's get back to this. I'm interested in how you got into this horse business.

R: Well, because I did go in for training, helping this girl in those days training horses for show rings. Private horses, you see. They sent the horses to us and we trained them. Or for hunting or anything like that, we trained
their horses and that's where I really got my training of horses and interested in them. And then, when I came out here, I used to ride. And that's how it came in. But in 1937, when Mother and I were going back to England, I realized that war was coming because it was absolutely there. And I said, "Mother, it's no good to go back to England. If this war is coming, it will not be good." So we stayed. We stayed out here.

A: That was really on one of your trips to New Zealand, then?

R: Yes, to New Zealand, and we came back here and were staying here for a few months and then going on back to England. And so I used to go down to the stables at Kapiolani Park and Dr. Case . . .

A: Howard?

R: No, Lloyd Case. Dr. Lloyd Case, Howard's brother. He had the stable there and I used to go down and ride sometimes. And then I watched the teacher giving a lesson and all the children came out crying. He was really dreadful. I said "John, you really are dreadful." So he said, "Whaaa." He said, "Go and damn well do it yourself." (hearty laughter) So I said, "All right, I will." And I went in and taught the kids and I thoroughly enjoyed it. And all my friends out here said, "Well, if you're going to teach, why not have mine?" And that's how it all started. (laughs)

A: That's usually the way it is. It's a very simple beginning.

R: Yes, very. Absolutely.

A: That's interesting, though, that it would be on such a basis as that. So then, that was the Town and Country Stables in Waikiki.

R: Yes. Yes.

A: And you became a part-owner and riding instructor.

R: Yes, and then I was full owner.

A: You became the sole owner of it and that was until 1952.

R: '52, was it?

A: Between 1943 and 1952 you were sole owner.

R: That's right, yes.
A: And did you sell that or--because I have a gap again from 1952 to 1958?

R: Yes. Well, I sold it, you see, and . . . (long pause)

A: And during that period of about six years there, were you . . .

R: Well, I wasn't teaching. I used to go down. Mrs. Singlehurst was running the stable then.

A: Which Mrs. Singlehurst was this?

R: Tom. Mrs. Tom Singlehurst. And she asked me if I would go down and teach and I didn't want to but anyway, she said, "Just come once a week." So every Saturday I went down to teach. And then, when she gave up the stables and had to sell and that, I went to teach down here at Saddle City with the Gibsons.

A: What Gibson is that?

R: Dee Gibson. D-EE. Isn't that it? I don't know his full name.

A: So you were then there for about five years [1960-1965]. Again, you were an instructor rather than a trainer of horses.

R: Yes. Yes.

A: Then you became the present instructor and owner of New Town and Country Stables.

R: Yes. Yes, I bought this place.

A: So since 1965 you've been . . .

R: That's right. And it's.... Now, is this going to go down, what I'm going to say?

A: Do you want me to--is it off the record?

R: Yes, off the record. (I turn off the recorder and turn it back on with her okay)

A: Now Frances Gibson is Mrs. Frances Gibson. And the comment--you just said that New Town and Country is now a co-op.

R: Yes. Yes, it is. She [Mrs. Gibson], her son, and I.
A: I see. And what is her son's name?

R: Buddy, we call him. Charles Edward [Gibson]. (to her dog) Hogan! You're not wanted, darling. Go and lie down.

A: What breed of dog is Hogan?

R: Well, his mother is a registered collie and his father is a, you know, the police dog.

A: German shepherd?

R: Yes.

A: Yes, it makes a great combination, doesn't it?

R: Oh yes. God help you if you come to my place.

A: Why?

R: Oh my God, because he just gives tongue to anybody.

A: Oh really? Well, when I approached him, he approached me.

R: Yes. Here's all right but at my home he's . . .

A: He's a protector, then.

R: He just gives tongue to anything that comes around. (laughter)

A: Well, now, I'll remember that. That's true, probably true, of most dogs.

R: Oh yes. Nowadays, you never realize who is going to come to your house. It really is . . .

A: That's right, isn't it? These times are strange. What is it about the horses or the horse--you don't call it horse industry. You don't call it the horse business, I guess.

R: The horse business, yes. Well, of course the teaching was the main thing and I still went on with the teaching. And then, of course, from then on it's gone on and on and on. I've got more land here. It's all rented, of course. And then Buddy Gibson came in with us and he's a magnificent rider and a magnificent polo player now and a western rider. Rodeo. He's excellent. And so, all three of us now are co-op.

A: I imagine that you have done a great deal of riding yourself
and I wonder what has been the feather in your cap especially in your career with horses.

R: Just the teaching, I think, really would be. I don't think anything else. I've never gone into a show. I haven't got enough courage. (Kathy chuckles)

A: What do you mean?

R: Oh, to go into a horse show and show, I could no more do it than fly.


R: My complete answer is I couldn't do it and I never have. I never have.

A: Never have appeared in a horse show?

R: Well, only about twice and that was in New Zealand.

A: You mean the shows where you have runs or just even ...

R: Well, I mean equitation or whatever it is that you have. And of course I've hunted in England a lot. But to go into a ring and jump, I could no more do it than fly over the moon.

A: Would you tell a bit about your experience in hunting?

R: Well, hunting, of course, is very interesting and that and I began hunting when I was training these horses for other people. My head and myself used to go out with young horses and on the Salisbury Plain they hunted hares and a hare would always kind of run around. It isn't a fox. There're no foxes there. And a hare will always run in a circle and come around. So we used to go out with our horses and hope we're going to stay with them and when the others found the scent, we stayed behind, schooling our horses. We knew that they were going to come back to that place, so we schooled and then they came back again and then we went on with them a bit and that's how it really started with the hunting. Very interesting schooling them there.

A: Yes, it would be. Of course, knowing the route of the hare ...

R: Yes. Well, of course, that's it. With a fox you couldn't possibly do that 'cause you never knew--you go miles and miles, you see, with a fox.

A: It would be more erratic.
R: Yes. Oh yes. I mean, you couldn't school a young horse there. Probably for a short time. In the New Forest, yes, they did do that, but then they could leave it and come home. But, you see, we just stayed the whole time and then just schooled, because these were other people's horses, not ours.

A: What would you say is the most important requirement for an instructor?

R: Keeping your temper. (hearty laughter)

A: Keeping your temper. Patience.

R: Definitely. And the way you think. You've got to get used to the people. I mean, I don't say, get used to the people, but rather, go easy in the beginning to see what they are like. Because I'm very strict and stern with my children.

A: You do instruct children in the afternoons now, is that correct?

R: Oh, I love my children. I do all the babies now.

A: How young do they start?

R: I don't like them under seven but I have one now that I started when she was three. The Sumners. The George Sumners' Evanita. I began to teach her when she was three. And she's now in shows.

A: How about that. Well, that certainly speaks well for your training then; your instruction rather. How old is she now?

R: Six. She's going in the big show here on Saturday.

A: Yes, you're having a show on Saturday and one on Sunday, aren't you?

R: Oh yes. And next week Saturday and Sunday, but that's western. I don't profess to teach western.

A: You're a qualified American Horse Show Association steward. Now what exactly is a steward?

R: Yes. Well, a steward is one of the most important things in a show.

A: In what way?
R: In that you've got to see that everything is correct, see that the people behave, and see that there's no—you have to correct the people when they come into the ring, before they come into the ring, that they have everything, that their bridles, their saddles and everything, correct. You do not let anybody go into the ring with something wrong.

A: I see. In other words, everything has to be checked.

R: Absolutely as it's written in the book. I am a judge too. I've got my things for judge. I used to judge, but not now. I know too many people, you see. I can't.

A: Because you might be prejudiced toward all these people?

R: Yes, so I never have. In the beginning, I did. I judged quite a bit, but not now. (laughs)

A: I wonder if you can remember any of the experiences you had when you had your stables in Waikiki. Was it a popular sport?

R: Oh yes, it was definitely popular. Yes, but I didn't have as many there as we have here, of course. I had a girl that used to come and help me. She loved riding and that was her only chance of really riding, so she used to come and help me teach. Her name--this is where age comes in. She isn't here anymore.

A: You don't remember her name?

R: I will by and by perhaps. I should remember. Isn't it awful.

A: Well, this happens to all of us, you know. It doesn't matter what our age, I don't think. Every once in a while, all of us have lapses of memory.

R: Oh my, it's simply dreadful.

A: No, it's not dreadful at all. Do you have any avocations or is horseback riding and the equestrian life entirely your interest? Do you have any other interests or avocations or hobbies or anything?

R: No, not really. This really takes up all my time. I love reading, of course, at times too.

A: What kind of books do you enjoy reading?

R: Detective stories. (hearty laughter)
A: Oh really? Who-done-it.

R: Who-done-it is right.

A: Do you remember any stories or anecdotes about your family experiences in Kohala before you left Kohala? Anything at all about Kohala in those early days?

R: Well, one is that I think that my grandfather had a horse come up from Australia. He was eighteen and a half hands high, which is very tall, very tall. Great big horse and he brought it up from Australia. His name was Dapple. You see, I can remember those things. And the horse absolutely could beat everybody in the whole of Kohala. His strides were so long, he'd just pass everybody. And Grandfather was the only one who could really drive him. And then, I loved him and he liked me and at four years old I used to go down to his pasture and he used to come up to me, right up against the thing, and I used to get on his back and sit there, legs straight out, and sit there and when he got tired of me, he went very slowly and very carefully under a branch and said, "Get off!" That's the only thing I can really remember that's kind of amusing. (laughter)

A: That is. That's very good. That was a very good story.

R: Oh, he was funny. Really, he never hurt me. Anybody else go into that pasture, that was just--I've always had this love of animals in me and they often--I've heard people say, "Don't touch the horse!" I said, "Why?" And I'd go up and talk to them and then he said, "You're the only person that's ever really touched this horse that he doesn't know." There is something with me and animals. It's the same with dogs. I think I must have been an animal in my last thing. (hearty laughter)

A: Well, we're all animals [creatures, that is], but there are some people who just have that sort of simpatico.

R: Well, I have got it. Yes, there's something between you and an animal.

A: Especially with horses, too, I think.

R: Horses and dogs, I think.

A: Yes, that's true.

R: So that's it. Now I don't know of anything other that was funny.
A: Any experiences that you and your sister had together that you can recall?

R: No, well, you see, my sister went to America to school. She's five years older than I am and so she went to school in San Diego.

A: Can you remember what the general atmosphere was like in Kohala at that time? Did you know the Low family there?

R: Oh yes. The Bond family. The Hind family. Yes, yes.

A: And the Jarretts?

R: I didn't know them. I was away then when they came, you see. But those others and the Wallaces. Those were the ones that I really knew.

A: What activities do you recall mostly there, other than the . . .

R: Riding.

A: Riding horseback. I guess that really was not only the means of transportation but the means of enjoying . . .

R: Yes, yes, you had to. You had to ride everywhere. One thing that made me want to ride was watching the Hawaiians riding. It was simply beautiful. Just a punuku [rope] and the horse, no reins, no nothing, and they'd just ride along and look like part and parcel of the horse. And I thought to myself, "Ooooo, if only I could ride like that." That went through my mind as a child, so it must have been born in me.

A: Yes. What was it you said, just a . . .

R: A punuku is a rope over his nose. Punuku. That's a Hawaiian word.

A: Yes, how is that spelled?

R: Now, PU-NU-KOO, I think it is. Or KO. (She pronounces it: punuku)

A: Rope over nose. No saddle or anything.

R: No, no. Just part and parcel of the animal.

A: I can visualize it, as you tell it.
R: Beautiful, beautiful, yes. Beautiful.

A: Kohala, at that time, of course, was mostly a . . .

R: Just cane. That's all. That's all there was. And two doctors: Dr. Bond and my grandfather. And a couple of stores.

A: And your father's was one of them.

R: And my father was in one of them. And otherwise that was all.

A: Did your father own the store?

R: No. No, no, no. He came down, he came down [from Nebraska]. You know, everybody talking about Hawaiian Sandwich Islands, (laughs) in those days, and, as I say, met Mother. But his family, as I say, lived in America. General [George S.] Patton is about a second cousin, once removed. He's of the same family. PA-TT-ON. He was the rich part of the family. My father wasn't. (hearty laughter)

A: Probably lucky.

END OF SIDE 2/1ST TAPE

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen

Final typing by Marjorie McIntosh
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In May 1971, the Watumull Foundation initiated an Oral History Project.

The project was formally begun on June 24, 1971 when Katherine B. Allen was selected to interview kamaainas and longtime residents of Hawaii in order to preserve their experiences and knowledge. In July, Lynda Mair joined the staff as an interviewer.

During the next seventeen months, eighty-eight persons were interviewed. Most of these taped oral histories were transcribed by November 30, 1972.

Then the project was suspended indefinitely due to the retirement of the foundation's chairman, Ellen Jensen Watumull.

In February 1979, the project was reactivated and Miss Allen was recalled as director and editor.

Three sets of the final transcripts, typed on acid-free Permalife Bond paper, have been deposited respectively in the Archives of Hawaii, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii, and the Cooke Library at Punahou School.