

ELIZABETH MEYER MCVEIGH

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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(1898 -       )

Elizabeth McVeigh describes her childhood with her six brothers and sisters at the self-sufficient Meyer home on Molokai. Her early education was obtained at the Molokai school established by her grandfather Rudolph Meyer for the children of his family and staff.

Family background, visits to the leper colony at Kalaupapa, family associations with the colony and anecdotes regarding Father Damien are related.

Mrs. McVeigh and two of her daughters discuss her move to Honolulu for further education, her marriage to John D. McVeigh, and family life that centered about the raising of her four daughters and their close relationships with other family members.

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INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH MEYER MCVEIGH

(MRS. JOHN DEVINE MCVEIGH)

At her daughter Elizabeth Maguire's home, 4374 Kilauea Avenue,  
Honolulu, Hawaii

June 14, 1986

M: Mrs. Elizabeth McVeigh  
F: Marian McVeigh Fremgen  
EM: Elizabeth (Tita) McVeigh Maguire  
S: Alice Sinesky, Interviewer

S: If you would like to start by telling me your full name, your maiden name, where you were born and something about your parents.

M: Elizabeth--I have a Hawaiian name--Kailikulani Meyer.

S: That was your maiden name. And do you want to tell me a little bit about your parents--your mother's and dad's first names.

M: My mother's first name was Victoria and my father's name was Henry--Henry Meyer. My mother's maiden name was Bannister.

S: And how did the family originally get to Hawaii?

M: Well, through my grandfather. He was from Germany. Old man Rudolph Meyer. M-E-Y-E-R. He was a very well-educated man, but I can't tell you the date he came here.

S: Approximately?

M: I can't remember.

F: Before 1850 because he married my great-grandmother in 1850 or 1851. So he was here prior to that. He was a surveyor from Germany who came here to survey the King's lands. And they have the old home, the original R. W. Meyer home that was built in Kalae and it's still standing today. [In Alfons L. Korn's News from Molokai it is stated that Rudolph W. Meyer (1826-1897) arrived in Hawaii in 1848]

It's now in the process of being restored. The house is over a hundred and some years old because it was built about 1851 and that was her (Mrs. McVeigh's) grandmother.

M: So it's well over a hundred years. So he married my grandmother and they had quite a number of children. Six boys and five girls and they lived on the island of Molokai. We all lived there.

F: And your father was one of their sons.

M: When my grandfather died, he left the boys land and the girls money. The boys got the land that we still have on Molokai. The girls got the money and got married and left Molokai.

S: Do you remember your grandparents?

M: I hardly remember them. I remember old Grandmother though and Grandpa had a big long white beard. I don't quite remember.

F: She was the High Chiefess Kalama. That was her grandmother. That's who married Rudolph W. Meyer. His name was Rudolph Wilhelm von Meyer, but I think they dropped the von during World War I.

S: And what year were you born?

M: I was born in 1898. And I married John D. McVeigh, Jr. His father was the superintendent of the leper settlement on Molokai. My husband's father.

S: And when did his family come over?

M: His family didn't come over. He lived there, but he came home about every two or three weeks to visit his family and stayed with them for a few days and went back to Molokai again. But he really lived on Molokai.

F: He didn't want to take his family there because it was a leper colony at the time. So his family lived here in Honolulu and he more or less lived over there because he was the superintendent of the settlement. I guess it was before the turn of the century. I don't really know. Yeah, it was, because Daddy was born in 1892.

S: And how did his parents get to Hawaii?

F: My grandfather was French-Canadian actually. This is what I've been told. He was on a trip around the world with a tutor and he came to Hawaii before the turn of the century and he was kind of a problem child and he jumped ship here. He ran away from the tutor and the boat and everything else. They looked for him and they couldn't find him. I don't believe my grandfather ever left these Islands.

S: He never made any contact with his family?

F: My father's sister, who was older than my father, did tell us that at one time--I believe it was around 1920 that a man came to their house--they lived on Alexander Street. He said that he was Charles McVeigh and he wanted to know if Jack McVeigh was there. My grandfather was known as Jack McVeigh. My aunt said, "Just a moment," and she went to call her father.

She says to this day--and she's ninety-some years old--that this man looked exactly like my grandfather, but he came to the door and told this fellow that he'd made a mistake--that he'd never seen him in his life. You see, we know nothing of my grandfather's background other than jumping ship here. He never discussed it. And that was the only contact. His name was John Devine McVeigh. What his family and who they were--he was one of those who came to Hawaii and just severed all connections with his family. And that was the only time in my father's life--she swears to this day that that was his brother, but he said, "No." The man had made a mistake. That's as far as we know on my father's background.

And my grandmother was a Weed, wasn't she?

M: Katy?

F: Katherine? Katherine Weed. She's the one who married my grandfather Jack McVeigh. She had several sisters here.

S: And how were you educated back in those days?

M: I went to a little country school that we had in Molokai there until I got in the sixth or seventh grade, I guess. Then I came to Honolulu to go to school.

S: What school did you go to here?

M: I went to the Territorial Normal School. No, I went to the Kaahumanu School. The grade school.

F: I think you should tell her about the school your grandfather built and hired a teacher for his grandchildren. He built the school and hired a teacher from England.

M: Oh, yes. Miss Sobey.

S: This was on Molokai? And it was your grandfather who had established it?

M: Yes, he and his brothers. To educate their children. It was a family thing, you know.

- F: It went to the sixth grade and that was it.
- S: And how many children did they have? Just the family?
- F: There were thirty-two grandchildren and possibly some of the servants' children. If they had forty, they were lucky.
- S: Ranging from first to sixth grade.
- F: The teacher was from England and educated all of these children until sixth grade. Then they were sent to Honolulu to continue their education. And the teacher's name was Miss Scobey.
- M: Sobey.
- F: Scobey or Sobey?
- M: Sobey. S-O-B-E-Y.
- S: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?
- M: Let's see now. There were seven of us in our family; five girls and two boys including myself.
- S: And where did you rank in the line?
- M: I was the youngest. And I'm the only survivor in my immediate family.
- S: When you came over to school in Honolulu, who did you stay with?
- M: I stayed with my sister, my older sister Victoria. She was working in town and later married William Akerman.
- S: That was the advantage of being the youngest.
- M: Yes, she took care of me. And I went to Kaahumanu first and I got through with eighth grade and went over to the Territorial Normal School. I didn't graduate. I was in the junior class when I left school and got married.
- S: You were very young then.
- M: Yes, I was seventeen years old. And I got married then and that was the end. After I got married I had my four girls; Katherine, Elizabeth, Marian and Genevieve. My youngest daughter lives in Louisiana. She married a dentist there and she has two children, a boy and a girl.

- S: How many grandchildren are there?
- M: I don't have many grandchildren. I have more great-grandchildren. Nine grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren.
- S: So you got married at a very early age and lived here in Honolulu.
- M: And after my four girls were quite grown, going to school, I thought maybe I should go back to school again. So I went to business school at Phillips Commercial School. I went to work for a little while.
- S: And what did your husband do?
- M: His first job was at the railroad. Oahu Railway. And finally he got transferred to the Navy yard at Pearl Harbor and he worked there until he passed away.
- S: In what area of Honolulu did you live?
- M: We lived in Kalihi in the house where we all lived while attending school. My husband and I bought the house from my sisters following my father's death. We had our home over there. And the girls went to school and got through school. Marian, you'd better tell about the schools.
- F: Well, I went to Kapalama and to Roosevelt High School. I think we all went there. I went to Lincoln School first. In those days everybody lived closer to town. This (Kahala area) was sort of like the country. If you went to Kaneohe or Kailua, that was the country. You will notice that nowadays so many of the people still call it "the country." We always had a beach cottage in Kailua. We would go to the country for the weekend. That's what we always did.
- EM: In those days they had the English standard school. When they built Kapalama, that was the English standard that took care of Kalihi, Palama and took care of everybody.
- F: Including the military, too. Because remember the admiral's daughter came to school there. You had to speak English well and that's why there were more haoles there. I don't know if you want to put this in or not.
- S: In a number of interviews people have talked about English standard schools.
- F: Well, if you couldn't speak properly, you were not allowed in. Then they had the regular schools. To me, it was a goal for the kids. Most of our teachers were haole teachers and it's not like it is today. You either passed or

flunked. You just repeated. In those days it was like that. Today they just keep shoving them ahead.

S: But in those days even McKinley with a large Oriental student body had a lot of mainland haole teachers.

F: I never had an Oriental teacher from day one. From kindergarten through high school. It's just since World War II, I think, that we've had this influx of Oriental school teachers.

S: Well, what was it like living here then and raising the four girls? You said they were pretty well grown when you went back to work.

M: Oh, we had a very happy family. The girls got along and they had a lot of friends who used to come to the house all the time.

S: What did you do for entertainment?

M: Well, they had their own entertainment.

F: But what did you do?

M: Oh, nothing. I just stayed home.

EM: You and your friends were great card players. We all play cards to this day. We played cards, we went to the country.

S: Because these were the days before television and all. How often would you go up to Kailua?

M: On weekends. We'd go Friday and come back Sunday.

S: Did you enjoy the beach and swimming and all that?

M: Oh, yes. We used to go swimming and fishing and enjoyed it.

F: In those days there weren't too many houses in that area and it was sort of abandoned. I wouldn't say "abandoned," but there were few homes in the area. You could go to the beach and look from one end to the other and there wasn't a thing around. Occasionally you might see a fisherman. That was the old Hawaii.

S: And when the girls had their friends in to socialize, what did they do? Did they dance? Did they play musical instruments? Did they sing? Did they play cards, too?

F: We danced to the phonograph. We talked. We went hiking in the Kalihi valley. You were able to go to these



valleys and never be bothered. I remember that Mother used to pack our lunch and off we'd go. We always walked. We walked up into the valley and there was a little swimming hole up there. We'd go swimming up there and we'd come home.

But I remember your lunches. You used to make the biggest lunches for us and we'd get hungry--I don't think we ever made it to our destination without eating. We were too lazy to carry it. We had pork and beans, rice balls, a million and one things, cookies and all kinds of things. And we had friends who went with us--about ten or twelve kids.

S: Could you tell me approximately how old you were when you decided to go back to school? When you decided that you wanted to do something else and work for a while.

EM: About twenty-eight.

F: I don't remember you going back to school.

M: You remember me going to Phillips.

F: No, I remember you going to the Bishop Museum.

M: Yes, I did typing for the university for a little while.

S: This was after you went to school and decided that you wanted to work. You actually worked for the university or the Bishop Museum?

F: She was involved with the University Foundation. She did their typing.

M: But I didn't work too long. I got tired of working so I stayed home and did whatever I had to do.

F: And my mother also made the most beautiful feather leis.

S: Oh, tell me about the feather leis and how you got the feathers. I've heard a lot of different stories about how people gathered feathers.

M: Well, whenever they'd go out and shoot birds--when they killed them, you'd take the feathers off and save them. I got them from friends. They used to give me feathers. And I bought a lot of feathers, too. I made these leis and sold them for good money, too. In those days the leis were cheaper. You can't get them for that price now.

- S: Do you do any of that any more?
- M: No, I don't. I haven't sewn any leis for many, many years.
- S: Tell me about the different leis.
- M: The little neck feathers--the blue feathers--about an inch, I guess. I used to sew them on a piece of flannel folded up to get the right size. You had to sew the edges first with feathers with three stitches in each feather.
- S: Three stitches in each feather and each feather was handsewn?
- M: You'd sew up the sides first and then you'd work on the inside. Three stitches in each feather.
- S: And did they use these for hatbands and what else?
- M: Oh, yes. Sometimes they'd wear them around their head. The ladies used to put them around their hair.
- S: Did you make anything besides the feather leis? I understand there was a time when paper leis were popular.
- M: No, I never made paper leis.
- F: She made duck feather leis. She dyed the feathers--the different colored feathers. They also were hatbands. Beautifully done. Nowadays they just sort of glue them. I don't know what they do, but these were all handsewn with three or four stitches on each feather.
- S: What kind of a dye would you use?
- M: The same kind that they have now.
- F: It was Tintex in those days. I remember the name because I used to help her dye the feathers. She made a lot of money. Actually, it was during the Depression in the early thirties and she did quite a bit of that feather lei making and my father always had a very good job, but with four girls I think that was probably why the Depression really didn't bother us. It was bad on the mainland of the United States, but Hawaii never had the Depression that they had.
- A few people would come around and, of course, there was no welfare. If you didn't work, you didn't eat. That was how it was. And we always had lots to eat. Of course, there were times when you couldn't go out and buy a new car, but we always had nice clothing, a nice home, and everything was

really up to snuff. But lots of people never had. Going to high school we always had nice clothes.

M: I used to sew dresses, too.

S: Oh, that's one of the nice things about having daughters, isn't it?

And how long did your husband live?

M: I think he was seventy-two and he was an invalid. He had a brain tumor that required two operations.

S: And how long did he work at Pearl Harbor?

EM: Until his late forties.

M: I think he worked at Pearl Harbor a little over thirty years.

F: Until 1940 something and he passed away in 1964 and he was an invalid for twenty-one years, off and on. I think he was forty-seven and he had a brain tumor. In those days they did surgery on him and removed the tumor, but the tumor had grown around the part that controlled the left side of his body, so he was paralyzed on the left side. It left him that way. He was able to get around not very well and then, finally, he was in bed for ten or twelve years. He lived in Maunalani Convalescent Hospital.

M: He died in Maunalani Hospital.

F: We took care of him at home and we had a person that came in and lived with us in order to help us because he was a very big man and we couldn't handle him. So we had someone who lived with us until it got to the point where you needed a registered nurse. So he was in Queen's Hospital for a couple of years, St. Francis Hospital for a couple of years, then to Maunalani Hospital. I think he was there for at least ten years and he passed away.

S: And how long did you live in Kalihi? While you were raising your family?

M: I lived in Kalihi my whole life.

F: No, you didn't; until the early fifties when you bought your house in St. Louis Heights.

M: Then I sold my place in Kalihi and moved to St. Louis Heights.

S: And that was around the mid-fifties.

M: I lived alone up there for a while. The girls were all married and had their own families. So I thought I'd better put the place up for sale. Then I stayed with Mrs. Maguire for two or three years and I thought maybe it would be nice if I had my own apartment, so I went and bought myself my own apartment. That's where I'm living today. In the same apartment I bought over twenty years ago.

S: And where's that?

M: On Makiki Street. Punahou Terrace. And the girls come to visit me all the time.

S: And three daughters are here and one on the mainland.

M: Yes, three daughters are here and one lives on the mainland, but she comes over every year and spends about three months with us. She's a widow.

S: It's nice that she can get over.

F: All of us are widows with the exception of Tita. (Mrs. Maguire

M: There's not much to my life now.

F: You just have to remember little incidents. They used to go to the outside Islands so much. She and my father.

S: I was going to ask you about travelling when your husband was well.

M: We used to travel around the Islands all the time.

S: How did you go?

M: By boat. The Inter-Island boats.

F: When we went to Molokai, they'd park the Hualalai off Kaunakakai; then you'd have to go down into these little launches. We'd leave here about six o'clock at night and get there about one o'clock in the morning and we'd go on this little launch.

S: Why would they take them over to land in the middle of the night like that?

F: Because they were going on to Maui or Hawaii. I remember so well because this was in the thirties and they'd have certain people that they would take to the leper settlement and they would bring the lepers aboard and put them down in the hold and it was the most pitiful thing. But

they did not have a boat for them exclusively, so they were brought down in busses. They were transferring them from here to Kalaupapa.

S: Would they pull in at Kalaupapa or did they have to come down?

F: I think that they went in by launch also.

S: Yes, but I meant would they make a special trip near Kalaupapa at that end to let them off?

F: Yes, yes, and I believe it was the Hawaii and they'd have cattle and these poor souls were down with them practically. And they'd be leaving here and leaving here forever--really to go and not ever return. They were very well-advanced cases. We were just little kids, but I remember as young as I was it was very, very sad. And I can still see them going aboard. We had staterooms, but they were down below and that was part of Hawaii that we probably don't want to remember.

S: But it was there.

F: It was there.

S: When you went back to Molokai with your children, would you stay with your family and what would you do?

M: I had a sister over there and we stayed at her place. The girls used to go every summer for the whole summer. They would go the first day that school let out and they hated to come home.

S: But you stayed here during the summer months? (M nods affirmatively) But you sent them to "summer camp." (laughter)

F: My aunt didn't have any children and she was just like a second mother to us. My Auntie Kalama. And she was patient, wasn't she? We were kind of naughty kids.

S: All four of you would go?

F: Lots of times all four of us would go or three. Whoever wanted to go would go. And she was patient. In those days there was no such thing as a washing machine and we had old Kamisan, Mrs. Nishida, an old Japanese lady, and she would get out into the--it was my mother's original family home, but my aunt lived there. It was a very large home. A big, old sprawling thing. It was very unusual to have two bathrooms, but we had two baths. And Kamisan would get out into the one near the kitchen and she'd make a fire out back with buckets of some sort and boil the clothes with some kind

of soap in it. And after she'd bring it out and put it in the big tub, and with the washboard and stick trying to beat the dirt out. And Kalae is noted for its red soil and I don't know how the clothes actually got clean.

M: With the bleach.

F: And she'd hang everything on the line.

S: And the sun would help bleaching, too.

F: And they had those old irons that you put charcoal in. I can remember we had a lot of fluffy, little good clothes with ruffles and she did it.

S: Even on Molokai you were wearing ruffles!

F: Yes, if we were going somewhere, we always had to have a few nice dresses for get-togethers, for parties or something and that with the long stockings and shoes. Like the little girls today. Sort of coming back to that. With the under-waist. Because my aunt and mother used to sew all our clothes.

S: Did you go back to Molokai very much to visit?

M: Now and then I'd go back to Molokai. It's another whole world there.

S: Do you remember any stories in particular about growing up there with your brothers and sisters?

M: We used to go horseback riding all the time.

F: Tell her about the times you used to go to the settlement. To Kalaupapa.

M: My sister was married to a doctor who worked for the settlement of Kalaupapa. They lived there. They had their home there. I used to go and visit her sometimes and go on that road--that Pali road.

F: Trail!

M: You've heard about that trail?

S: Well, I've gone over and I've taken the mule ride down to Kalaupapa.

M: That's the road we used to go down on to visit her. Go down that trail.

- S: Was it in better condition then? I understand they used to maintain it. But you walked up and down that?
- M: No, we used to get on a mule and ride up and down. Walking down is not so bad, but coming up is pretty bad, so I used to get on a mule and ride all the way up.
- F: My grandfather, her father-in-law, was superintendent of the settlement at that time and Dr. William Goodhue was married to my aunt so that was another reason for them to go down and visit.
- S: What do you remember about the leper colony in those days? Did they keep the lepers totally isolated?
- M: Oh, yes. My sister had a place there. She was very careful. She had three children. She lived there for many years.
- S: Were her children educated there or did they have to come over to Honolulu?
- M: They had to come over to Honolulu.
- S: Did she have any fears about living there?
- M: No, she didn't. They lived a normal life.
- S: But when you went to visit her, you never saw the lepers?
- M: Oh, they used to walk around the place, you know, but I never got that close to them.
- S: It wasn't like it is now because the few who are remaining are supposedly totally noncontagious.
- M: And when her children were old enough, she moved out of the leprosarium and moved to Honolulu so that her kids could go to school here. Her husband lived in Kalaupapa and she used to visit him now and then, and he came to visit her, too.
- S: When you would go down there to visit, would it be for just a couple of days?
- M: Maybe a little more than that. Maybe a week or so.
- S: Because it was a long trip you were going to make it worthwhile.

M: Yes, to go back on that terrible trail.

F: Auntie Kalama would go with you now and then, wouldn't she? (M nods affirmatively) Because I remember some pictures of her with Willie and Jackie and Buddie. You never took us down there, did you? (M nods negatively) I didn't think so.

S: Well, even nowadays, if I'm not mistaken, when they do the mule rides, you have to be at least sixteen. They won't let anybody under sixteen down there. I think that was one of the restrictions.

But you were free to come and go as you wanted in those days? They didn't place any restrictions on you?

M: Because I had family.

F: Because her brother-in-law was there and her father-in-law ran the settlement. But I don't think like myself--being an outsider--if I decided I wanted to go down and look around, I don't think they would allow that. It was very restricted. It was just the family connection. That was the only reason they were allowed to go down.

S: Well, how did you get around Molokai when you were growing up?

M: Horses and buggies. That's about all. No automobiles. But we used to have fun though.

F: Tell about how self-sufficient the Meyer place was. You folks had your own cattle, your own sugar mill--the oldest sugar mill on the island. Each brother did something--Father had four brothers and they ran the Meyer land there. They planted, and they had their own cattle for milk, and they slaughtered--everybody had their own--they had coffee. I remember a coffee mill. You were very self-sufficient.

S: Was there anything that you had to send to Honolulu for? Was there anything that you really missed that they couldn't provide?

M: Well, they didn't have all the food that we had in Honolulu here.

S: You had to bring some staples in, but anything that you could grow or raise on Molokai, you did.

M: Yes, we had our own dairy, our own butter and everything. My father ran the dairy and we had our own milk--all the milk you wanted to drink--cream and butter. We made our own butter.



- S: Would you can your fruits and vegetables?
- M: No, my mother never did can vegetables because we had fresh vegetables all the time. The climate's just about the same all the year around.
- S: What about making things like guava jam or mango chutne
- M: Oh, my mother did that all the time. She was a great cook, too. Jams and jellies. She made her own bread.
- S: So you all lived very well.
- F: You must tell her about your pig.
- S: You had your own pig?
- M: Oh, I raised this pig at home like a pet and I guess my mother and father got tired of it.
- F: It got too big.
- M: So they gave it away and they didn't tell me they were giving it away.
- S: I understand pigs are very intelligent creatures. Did you have a smart pig?
- M: Yes, and I was very fond of this pig, but they gave it away without telling me. When I found out, I cried so much they had to buy it back again from the man they gave it to.
- EM: And a couple of days later, it died.
- S: The pig died after they went to all that trouble to get it back for you?
- M: Yes, because they had to take the pig on horseback. And I guess it was so tired or something. Anyway it didn't live very long. And it died and I was satisfied.
- S: Well, you can accept the pig dying better than you could them giving the pig away, right?
- M: Uh huh.
- F: The pig wanted to come into the house and she, being the youngest in the family, that was her pet and naturally they couldn't bring this thing into the house it was so big and fat. I remember my uncle telling us about mother's pig. That they got rid of it and how it came back and died.

S: Did it have a name?

M: No, I didn't have a name for it. But my sister had a sheep by the name of Mollie.

F: What sister was that?

M: Mabel.

S: Did Mollie come into the house?

M: No, she didn't, but we had this great big goat with horns that would come into the house and would look into the mirror. One day we missed this goat and it was in the house looking at himself in the mirror. This great big goat with his horns sticking out and he used to chew all our clothes up.

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S: Oh, isn't that funny? Probably trying to figure out what it was staring back at him? That's funny. But that must have been an interesting time and place to grow up.

M: Oh, yes. I had a wonderful life. Even after I got married I had a very good husband. He was good to me and he was good to the children, too.

S: That's important.

M: When he got sick, we missed him so much.

S: And what did the other family members do? Your brothers and sisters. Where did they all end up?

M: Well, they all got married and moved away from Molokai. My oldest brother got married and moved to Laie. He married a Hawaiian girl, a Mormon, and got into the religion so we saw very little of him. Then my brother Ernest--he lived on Molokai--got married and he had no children, but his wife was already married and had children, so he adopted one of the children.

F: His granddaughter, Eugenia.

M: The youngest one. He adopted her. He lived all his life on Molokai and she (his wife) died long before he did, so he was a widower for I don't know how many years. He passed away three years ago. He was in his nineties. He lived to be ninety-two or ninety-three. Then my sisters all got married, too, had families, children.

S: Did they stay here in Hawaii?

M: Yes, they all lived in Hawaii. They're all gone; they've died and I'm the only one left of my family.

S: And what about the Meyer's land on Molokai?

M: That land still stands up there like an estate. They've turned it into a corporation. It's run by the family--the family is still in control.

S: What part of the family is still over there?

M: There are quite a number of relatives who live on Molokai and they run the estate and I still have an interest in it, too.

F: Just cousins actually.

M: We have some beautiful land over there. We have a lake up in the mountains.

S: What is it used for now? Farming?

M: Some of it is leased out for raising cattle. They've sold parts of it. A lot of the families live on it.

F: About 3,000 acres.

S: Three thousand acres. That's a good hunk of Molokai.

F: It's all mountainous land. Lots of water. Beautiful country. Gorgeous.

M: Have you ever been over there?

S: Yes, as I said, I did the mule ride to Kalaupapa.

F: The Meyer estate is right there as you go down to the settlement. The Meyer estate is all that mountain land right there. It's gorgeous. Ginger and maile and everything else. You folks used to go swimming in that lake, didn't you?

M: No, we never did go swimming in that lake, but we used to go boating because that water was too muddy. We couldn't swim in there.

- EM: We did. (laughter)
- F: We used to and it was cold as a ... very cold.
- S: Did you do any hiking or camping there?
- M: Oh yes, we used to go hiking all the time and we'd go in the mountains and pick flowers and make ginger leis and maile.
- EM: Mother was always fond of hiking. When we were growing up, she'd go with us down here in Honolulu.
- F: We went up into Aiea Heights and she could hike better than we could. Than I could.
- M: Those were the good old days.
- S: I can imagine. Did you have any particularly close friends? You were busy with your family, I know, but what about friends?
- M: Do you mean on Molokai?
- S: Well, either here or Molokai. Who did you play cards with? Just the family?
- M: Family, I guess. Cousins and my husband's family.
- F: It was family that we were always with. It was such a large family. My mother's mother--was it your grandfather on your mother's side--who was Alexander Adams?
- M: I think it was my mother's--my mother was a Bannister--grandfather, I guess.
- F: Then he was the one who made the Hawaiian flag, or am I wrong? Wasn't it Alexander Adams who brought the Hawaiian flag to Hawaii?
- M: We claimed that he made it, but today it seems that somebody else had made it. We really don't know.
- F: Because it was so British and I think it really was Alexander Adams.
- S: I know one thing I always like to ask people. I like to find out what people were doing and what they thought on December 7, 1941. Pearl Harbor Day. What were you doing and what do you remember about it?
- M: Well, we lived up in Kalihi and the girls know all about it. Marian, you tell her.

F: You tell her.

M: Well, it was Sunday morning when they attacked us and we were going to our country house. We were ready to go. I had lunch all packed. We were ready to go and all of a sudden I saw these planes flying over the house. Isn't that right?

F: We saw the smoke and we didn't know what it was.

M: We saw the planes, too. They were flying over the house. And my husband looked and said, "My, that's funny." And before we knew it there was a radio announcement that said, "We're at war with Japan." So we unpacked and everything, and before you knew it they were bombing Pearl Harbor.

S: He was still working at Pearl Harbor then?

M: Yes, he was still working at Pearl Harbor and before you knew it he got a call to go down there and go to work. I stayed in the house with the kids and the bombs were falling all over the place. I didn't know what to do. I put them under the bed. We were so afraid and we didn't know what to do. We stayed in the house and I said to the kids, "You'd better get under the bed for protection."

F: Before my father went to work that day he got his guns out. My father was a great hunter--not a hunter--he liked target shooting and he'd go hunting a lot. I remember him sitting us on the back steps. I had never had a gun. She (indicating Tita) was fine. Tita always liked to shoot targets. I was scared to death.

I remember him sitting us all down there and he said that, first of all, it was an unknown enemy that was bombing us and he brought out his ammunition and showed us how to use these rifles. You (indicating Tita) were the only one--I was so scared. He loaded them and all. You see, there were wild rumors flying--they were landing all over the place--and us, being four girls, he couldn't really leave us in the lurch like that and I remember him showing us how to load and fire. I remember you (indicating Tita) firing into the ground. Tita was the only one who could do it. We were so scared. I still don't like guns. Tita was our protector.

M: Daddy had to go back down to Pearl Harbor.

F: Then we would be alone. The children and my mother.

S: And at that stage, nobody knew what to expect.

F: No, we didn't.

S: Did you and your husband ever go to the mainland?

M: No, we never did go to the mainland. We just travelled around the Islands.

S: Have you since then made any trips?

M: Oh yes, I've made several trips to the mainland. I went to visit my daughter Genevieve in Louisiana and stayed with her two or three weeks, then I went to visit my granddaughter in Texas and stayed with her for a while. Then, of course, came back.

EM: In Mama's old age she's very fond of Las Vegas. (laughs) She gets there at least once a year.

M: Sometimes twice.

S: So that's your recreation now.

M: I enjoy going there.

S: Who do you go to Las Vegas with?

M: With my family. Whoever wants to go.

EM: There's always somebody ready to go.

S: That's good. Were you involved with any clubs, committees, social groups, that type of organization?

M: No.

S: The family was uppermost, right?

M: I don't know why. Even my girls aren't involved with anything.

S: Well, with the big family you've had enough to keep you active.

EM: Well, I'm still working.

M: Yes, the girls all went to work. They're still working. Of course, they don't have to work if they don't want to, you know. But I think they like to go to work.

EM: I don't like housework. I don't like yardwork. I get down to the office and I'm right at home there.

S: We've covered quite a bit, but I have a feeling there's probably a lot more.

F: There are a lot of things like the lives of your sisters, which was a part of our lives. They were all so good to us, they were just like mothers, our aunts, everyone of them. There were five girls in their family and, as I said, they were just like mothers to us and my mother was like that to their children. That was the way our family was and it's still like that today.

M: We were a very close family, and especially me and my four daughters.

F: We would care for one another. I don't know how to explain that.

S: It sounds like the true meaning of ohana--the caring, the loving, the extended family.

F: When one of the sisters or the brothers passed away, the family was heartbroken. There was always that love that was there and even down to us--we're just nieces and nephews--but when one of my aunts passed away it was a sad day in our family--the whole family--not just for the individual like their children. It was like your mother passed away. We were that close.

S: Was there much emphasis on religion when you were growing up? Did you go to church over on Molokai anywhere?

M: Now and then we used to ride our horses to church. It was quite a distance. It must have been over ten miles, I guess.

F: There were a lot of Catholics; the majority of them are Catholics, but I don't think you could say that they were overly religious. We're all Catholics in my family, but to go ten miles to church--I don't think I'd do that either.

And also, Father Damien baptized my mother's older sister, Victoria.

M: And she was the only Catholic in my family. We were all baptized as Protestants, but some of us converted to Catholicism.

S: I had wondered if the presence of the Catholics--Father Damien, in particular--on Molokai had any influence on the people living there.

M: Well, we didn't see very much of him. He kept to himself at Kalaupapa. I wasn't even born then, but when my older sister was born Father Damien came up to our home and baptized her as a Catholic. He was asked to come up and baptize my sister. That's what my mother told me and he baptized her as a Catholic. Then when I was born--the rest of my sisters were all Protestants--and after I came to Honolulu here I converted to Catholicism. I've been one since 1952 and my girls were all baptized as Catholics.

F: My father came from a Catholic family.

S: A lot of people like to express their feelings about politics or statehood. Were you into politics at all?

M: No, I wasn't into politics at all. I guess statehood is all right.

F: We're all Republicans. I don't see any progress. I can see progress, but more towards the tourist industry and I think we have too much tourist industry in this state. Before World War II you could go to Waikiki and it was really nice. Most of the visitors who came to Hawaii in those days--there was none of the \$200 round trip thing--it was the tourists who had the money to travel. I think that's what's ruining the Islands. It's these package deals--people that come here and I don't know what they're contributing to the Islands.

EM: It's our own greediness. It's the almighty dollar. Some people who live here are just as responsible. They'll do anything to get the dollar.

F: And I think it's the Oriental influence. The old kamaainas aren't like that. You don't see them down on Kalakaua Avenue with a cart with shells and things from Taiwan. And I think that our stores--our beautiful stores--our laws are lousy, too. Like the fact that they were ever able to put these things out on Kalakaua Avenue or any place and start selling their goods.

I know where I live on Kaneohe Bay Drive--just off of the Bay Drive--there's a little medial strip there, so when I drive up my street--it's a dead end street--when I drive down, there's cars for sale. We have no laws that stop this. They're selling pickled mangoes here; they've got tools; they're selling flowers; it's like a bunch of vendors and if you can't get out of your own driveway, that's your problem. But the cars for sale. And the other day they had a couple of vans and you couldn't see down the highway. And that's where our laws are wrong here.



EM: Can't you call the police?

F: Yes, you do and they come and they have to move the trucks every few minutes, but you can't stop them. And that's what's wrong with Waikiki. They've got all this turmoil.

S: I just wonder though with the growth and all if the tourism wouldn't have come along whether we were a state or not. Because after World War II with the development of the jet planes and all it was bound to happen.

F: And with more money. People all working and they were able to save their money and come here. Everybody wants to come here before they die. You've probably heard that. I think that has a lot to do with it.

S: What do you find the most disturbing thing about all this growth and crowdedness and population? Do you worry most about crime? What do you worry about mostly or do you worry? (laughter)

M: I do worry. I worry very much about crime because when you live in Makiki there and they say the crime is just terrible there. People come in raping you and everything. So I keep my doors locked all the time.

S: Do you get out to do your own shopping now or do the girls take care of that for you? Do you get out by yourself at all?

M: The girls take care of me. They'll take me to get what I want.

S: And you never cared about getting into any of the senior activities?

M: No, because I find it hard to get around. My legs hurt me and I don't get around very much.

EM: When she was younger--and this was only a couple or three years ago--I told her she should join some senior citizens. They have a very active group around the area that she lives in and she said, "Don't think I'm going to get mixed up with those old people." (laughter)

M: Well, I guess I'm just as bad myself. I don't know. But these old people--you get them talking and before you know it they're telling you about all these ailments that they have. And then you start to thinking, "I wonder if I have the same thing, too?"

EM: And Mother enjoys her crocheting and knitting.

M: I pass my time. I do a lot of knitting, crocheting, sewing. I guess that's about all unless you'd like to ask me a few more questions.

F: Tell her about the time you took hula lessons.

S: Were you very much interested in Hawaiian things besides the feather leis?

M: No, and I don't know why it is the girls never learned the hula.

S: You never told me how you met your husband or anything about your courtship.

M: Oh, no.

F: That's interesting. Where did you meet Daddy?

M: I'll think of it and write it down and let you know.

F: You can't remember where you met him?

M: Well, his father used to be the superintendent of Molokai and during the summer he'd come up and visit. Only he didn't go there. He came to our house and stayed at our place and that's where I met him.

S: But you were over here going to Normal School when you got married.

M: Yes, and he was going to school, too.

EM: They eloped. You did elope. Got on the train and went out to that hotel in Haleiwa.

M: But we didn't get married there. We used to spend our Sundays down there once in a while.

F: Where did you get married?

M: We got married--when we planned to get married, he went to see his mother and told her he was going to get married. His mother said, "My goodness, why are you getting married in such a rush?" He said, "I just want to get married." So anyway he came back and told me what his mother said and he said, "Let's go and get married." I was living with my sister--she and I and my husband went over to the minister's house and got married there.

S: Right in Honolulu.

M: We didn't go for a honeymoon or anything. Just got married. That's all. Then he lived with us in Kalihi there. We had our home with my sister.

EM: But they were kids together on Molokai.

S: Was he much older?

M: He was older. He was born in 1892 and I was born in 1898.

S: So he was about twenty-three when you got married and you were seventeen.

M: But we had a very happy life. He was a good husband to me. And he was good to the children, too.

F: My father never ever spanked us. His theory was--naturally kids always get to arguing with one another--and he would put us on chairs in the living room, the dining room or somewhere. And I remember so well that he'd say, "You sit there and you sit there." Say Tita and I were fighting. Before you know it we were friends and Daddy's sitting on his rocker reading the evening paper paying absolutely no attention to us, and finally after sitting and sitting and sitting we'd ask, "Can we get off?" And he'd say, "No, I'm not ready." He'd make us sit there for over an hour. I remember so well. I fell asleep one day and fell off the chair. (laughter) If she and I were fighting, we were friends again. It worked beautifully, this correction thing that he had.

And do you remember when he'd threaten us with his belt? He'd just get it unhitched. I don't think he ever pulled it out. He never hit us. But we were so scared that we'd run and hide. And he was just as patient as Job when we were sitting there. He gave us a lot of time to cool our heels. And I've raised my son that way. I never had to spank him.

S: Were you strict with the girls?

M: In a way, but they were very good when they were growing up. Was I strict with you girls?

F: In some ways. There were certain people that we couldn't be friends with. That we weren't allowed to visit. It was strictly a matter of her approving of our friends, but I think that was the trend in those days.

S: And, of course, it was easier to raise children in those days. You didn't have all the problems that you have nowadays.

EM: We never knew what drugs were or anything like that.

F: We had our reading and we had a radio. There was no television in those days, so the kids did a lot of reading. Something they don't do today. And another thing--our meals at home--three meals a day--the table was set and the entire family sat for their meal. Nowadays everybody comes in and helps themselves and runs. The table was set and cleared off and that's how it was. I think all the families did that.

M: Not anymore though.

F: And we had one family car and now all the kids have their own cars. I remember so well that my father was the driver in our family and in 1944 or 1945 none of us knew how to drive, so I took the car one day--rather than let it rot in the garage--I taught myself--practically took the house down. We had a long driveway. So I was the first one to learn how to drive. My oldest sister still does not drive.

S: You never drove either?

M: No. Well, I tried to drive, but I never got a license to drive.

F: Don't you remember Momma taking us to get guavas in Kalihi valley?

M: We had a Ford then.

F: I don't remember what year it was, but we had this open-air touring car and she took us up there and we were going to pick guavas. She and my aunt were going to make guava jelly or jam or something and I can remember us getting into the car and you kind of lost control of that thing coming down that hill. I think that's the last time she drove.

M: I didn't know what to do.

EM: I don't remember that.

F: I think it was Auntie Tina who was with us and Momma was the driver. And I don't even know whose car it was, but it was an open-air touring Ford and we got into this car and went up into the valley, but there were hardly any homes there in those days--it was like nobody there. We picked all these guavas and on the way down Momma kind of lost control

of the brakes or something. But we made it home. I don't know how yet.

EM:           It wasn't our time.

F:            Life's little comedies.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

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## THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Watumull Foundation Oral History Project began in June of 1971. During the following seventeen months eighty-eight people were taped. These tapes were transcribed but had not been put in final form when the project was suspended at the end of 1972.

In 1979 the project was reactivated and the long process of proofing, final typing and binding began. On the fortieth anniversary of the Watumull Foundation in 1982 the completed histories were delivered to the three repositories.

As the value of these interviews was realized, it was decided to add to the collection. In November of 1985 Alice Sinesky was engaged to interview and edit thirty-three histories that have been recorded to mark the forty-fifth anniversary of the Foundation.

The subjects for the interviews are chosen from all walks of life and are people who are part of and have contributed to the history of Hawaii.

The final transcripts, on acid-free Permalife bond paper and individually Velo-bound, are deposited and are available to scholars and historians at the Hawaii State Archives, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii and the Cooke Library at Punahou School. The tapes are sealed and are not available.

August 1987