

SIGNA WIKANDER

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Signa Wikander

(1894 -       )

Miss Wikander, who was born in Honolulu, could aptly be called the teacher of famous men. During the forty years that she taught Latin at McKinley High School, she had as her star pupils such notables as United States Senator Daniel Inouye, Associate Justice Masaji Marumoto, and the internationally known investment banker Chinn Ho.

Her father, a building contractor, came to Hawaii in 1891 to install some cabinet work in Kawaiahao Church. Although he intended to return to California in six weeks, he decided to remain. His wife soon joined him, arriving at Honolulu on the same day as King Kalakaua's body was brought back from San Francisco on the USS Charleston.

In her reminiscences, Miss Wikander relates her family's history; recalls her early years on a Waipahu plantation and some of her more prominent students, as well as other personages of Hawaii.

Katherine B. Allen, Interviewer

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INTERVIEW WITH SIGNA WIKANDER

At her Makiki home, 1112 Lunalilo Street, 96822

July 5, 1971

S: Signa Wikander

C: Clarence Wikander, her brother

A: Kathy Allen, Interviewer

As taping begins, we are discussing the Revolution of 1893 and the insurrection of January 1895, when royalists attempted to overthrow the republic and restore the monarchy. Miss Wikander's father, Fred Wikander, participated in 1893 against the royalists.

S: [My father was] with the revolutionary troops who at one time were camped in Punchbowl crater. There was the Wilcox insurrection and it was a very bad time.

A: [Robert W.] Wilcox. Oh yes, he was opposed to the . . .

C: He was a royalist, yes.

S: He was a royalist, yes. It was a very rough time for all of us.

A: Now how is it that you moved to Hilo?

S: This was after. . . . It has been said that all four children were born each in one period and the last one, Clarence, was born at the end of the--when we became a territory. [What she means is that in the 1890's the four Wikander children were born in different periods of that decade--one under the monarchy, one under the provisional government, one under the republic, and the last during annexation to the United States.]

C: During the annexation.

S: And then shortly after that--I think it was in 1902 . . .

C: 1897 we went up to Hilo.

S: 1897 we went to Hilo.

A: Well, tell me more about this revolutionary period. Do you remember it as children?

C: We were too small, I believe; too young.

S: We remember mostly that we heard countless accounts of it and we remember that when independence was declared, the Hawaiian flag was taken down and the American flag hoisted. There was great sadness among the Hawaiians. They cried and I remember Theresa Betters, a very well-known Kaimuki resident, and her parents. Mrs. Betters came all the way out to the plains--I was born in Makiki here; they called it The Plains then--and she came all the way out to be with my mother. They were very frightened. And then Mr. Betters and my father came out for dinner. It was a very frightening day.

A: Why was it frightening?

S: Well, the emotion. The Hawaiians were so bitter about it.

A: Do you think that could be compared to the bitterness of this present uprising of people? [That is, the general protest of the Hawaiian people against the appointment of Matsuo Takabuki, rather than a Hawaiian, to the Bishop Estate's board of trustees.]

S: Yes. Yes it was very much so. Yes, they felt that all hope was gone. There was no--and Queen Liliuokalani did finally, before her death in [1917], she did appear once on the platform with Governor [Sanford Ballard] Dole but it was a great concession. There was bitterness among the Hawaiians, especially down at Kawaiahao Church where they would gather and talk it all over about the haoles, you know, and how they were being. . . . And now this insurrection right now is very close.

A: Very similar, isn't it?

S: And I wish the people would wake up and listen.

A: Yes. I think they must.

S: We feel that Takabuki will hang on, but when the next occurrence comes--say Frank Midkiff, who's very old now, and when he goes--they'll never dare to do anything except put a Hawaiian in.

A: I would think so.

S: It would never. . . . It was most unfortunate. I can't imagine how they would put--who would put Takabuki's name in there. It's so inappropriate.

A: Well, it seems that they could have found a qualified Hawaiian. I must say, I think they should have.

S: Yes, it was terrible. And you know, Sam [Samuel Pailthorpe] King's name was on the list. And you heard [Associate Justice] Masaji Marumoto on the TV [television], he explained it?

A: I read it in the paper.

S: And he said that there were five applicants, as many as there were judges, and he didn't name--Sam King himself said, "I was one." And then, Reverend [Abraham] Akaka was on the list. And here they had those names and yet they allowed themselves. . . . It's popular to put in brilliant Japanese, that's all it is. And I can't say that Governor [John A.] Burns had a direct contact, but his whole administration is Japanese. There isn't a single appointment, is there--hardly a single appointment, except possibly the regents of the university--that isn't Japanese?

A: Well, I've noticed that a lot of them are in key positions, that's for certain.

S: Yes. I can't imagine why Takabuki would want so terribly much to take this position. Masaji Marumoto said it was a financial sacrifice to him.

A: Yes. Well, of course, there's power--great power--in that position too.

S: Yes, it's a very dignified position.

A: All right, now, let's see here.

S: Let's see. We went to Hilo.

A: Yes. Was there anything else about the annexation that you wanted to talk about?

S: No, it's . . .

A: I wanted to ask you, though. . . . Now, you were born in, all of you . . .

S: I was 1894, you see.

A: 1894. But where were all of you children born?

C: In Honolulu, except myself.

S: And Clarence in Hilo. And on The Plains here. When my parents came, my mother was pregnant several months and so Helga was born six months after she arrived. She was born in an old, very famous boarding house called The Fort Street House. It was run by the grandparents of the well-known Blom family--B-L-O-M. And that's where Helga was born. It's just where Central Grammar is now located. [City Directory 1892-93: Fort Street House, 184 Fort Street.]

And there was a small town--awfully small town--and Mama said that the main hobby of everybody was to go down to the steamers when they came in once in awhile and they'd bring flower leis. It was a very quiet--very quiet--town.

A: And what was your father doing here? He was working on the Kawaiahao Church then.

S: Yes, that's how they happened to come.

C: Six weeks, doing cabinet work.

S: And it was the making of my mother. It was the saving of my mother's life, probably, because she was always--lung trouble.

A: This weather here was good for her.

S: This climate was perfect. Perfect for her. Up to the end of her life, it was the asthmatic thing, you know. Toward the end that was the biggest cause. So it was wonderful that she should come here. And it was only ten years from the day she left Sweden.

A: Do we have the birthdates of all the children? Are they listed in here (in the biodata written by Clarence)?

C: Helga's is December 12, 1891; Signa's is May 10, 1894 (she corrects him when he says May 2); Carl's is June 3, 1896; and Clarence, myself, is April 19, 1900.

A: What did your father do while you were in Hilo? What was he working on then?

S: Building several . . .

- C: He was the manager of the Hackfeld [and Company, Limited] lumber yard.
- S: In a later time [about 1910]. The time she's speaking of he was just building several houses in Hilo.
- C: Oh, that separate year?
- S: Yes. Building several houses.
- C: I don't know what he was in when he moved there in 1897.
- S: He built the home of the Thaanans, you remember? [City Directory 1900-01: D. Thaanum, foreman, Hawaii Herald, Ponahawai, Hilo. 1910: residence, Waianuenue Avenue.]
- A: Which homes?
- S: TH-AA-NUM. (after Clarence corrects her) And several other homes in Hilo.
- A: Do you recall the names of the people?
- S: I don't think so. It was brought out in his obituary when he died that he built several of the homes in Hilo.
- A: Sometimes it's good to have a record of that; the homes that he did build in Hawaii.
- S: Yes. Well, Mrs. Thaanum would give that. She was the one. In fact, they put that obituary in the paper. I still have it.
- C: It's all we remember.
- S: He was a very fine builder. Very fine. In fact, we know him to be a very brilliant genius-type. Clarence happens to be perfect, that image of him, in physique. And he was the lively man of the family. My mother was a very quiet little wren.
- A: Well, that's the usual way, I guess.
- S: That's the way. That's what attracted them to each other. Yes, we know that. Actually Helga also resembles.
- A: Helga is spelt H-U-L-G-A.
- C: HEL-GA.
- A: I want to be sure of that. (it sounds like Hulga)

S: There's another name, Hulga, that you must not mix it with.

A: No.

S: Mrs. Addison Erdman is her name.

A: Now you moved back to Honolulu in 1902.

C: That's right.

A: And then was it that he . . .

S: We went to Waipahu.

A: No, that he worked for--you named a company. You mentioned it first in reference to Hilo and then Signa said, "No, that was later."

S: I think that we'd have to put Waipahu in there when he went back.

C: I don't know what he did after he got here. He was still building. I don't know what he did. I was too small then.

A: Hackfeld's or something, you mentioned.

S: Oh, Hackfeld's.

C: Well, when we went back again to Hilo in 1910, he was the manager of the Hawaii Island Planing Mill.

S: This is right after we returned and then we were due to go out to the plantation.

A: All right. (I now read the biodata written by Clarence)

C: I went to the Waipahu school, in the little kindergarten and the first grade.

S: He was very little. Have you got that mentioned here?

C: No, I didn't mention myself.

S: Well, you just tell her then. Yes, he was the only one who attended . . . Waipahu. Not Carl?

C: No. Well, Carl was there for a short time but then he decided to go with you and Helga to the Honolulu school.

S: But Clarence, you tell her about the school there.

A: (to Signa) What school did you . . .



- S: Central Grammar.
- C: It's now the Central Intermediate School but in those days it was called Central Grammar School.
- S: But you were just a little boy.
- C: Oh yeah, I was just too small.
- S: (to Clarence) Have you got about Mrs. Sophie over here? The principal.
- C: No, I don't think I mentioned her.
- S: You could just tell her about that. Or Waipahu School, tell her about that.
- C: Yes, I mentioned in there Waipahu School.
- S: It was a four-room school and Mrs. Sophie Overend, a very old-time, much-respected principal.
- C: Yes, I was pet in school and Mrs. Sophie Overend--there were only four rooms so she taught everybody from the second grade to the eighth grade in that one room.
- S: Country school. Country school. Clarence was the only one who attended that there. We had already started down-town.
- A: At Central Grammar School.
- S: But, oh Lord, what a trip that was. Um hum.
- A: What do you remember about it?
- S: The racing down the hill. That little dizzy street is still there.
- A: What street is that?
- C: I don't know the name of it. There's a lot of old houses --old stores. They're still there even. [Waipahu Depot Road, probably]
- S: Looked like old Japan. And we went down to the railroad station, which was called a historic landmark and Nancy [Bannick of the Historic Hawai'i Foundation] fought for it --to keep it--but they didn't listen to her and they tore it down. It was a very old railroad station. Yes. And that little dizzy street is there. It just makes you diz-

zy to watch it, you know.

C: Very winding. I don't know why it was winding around like that. It was a cow trail.

S: Well, that's the Japanese habit. An old cow trail, yes.

A: Now, I notice that you say, "We probably spent the happiest years of our life in Waipahu."

S: Indeed we did.

A: All right. Now would you talk about that for a little bit?

S: Well, the life. . . . Is the life mentioned there--the type of life--because I know you wrote about it.

A: "It was very isolated and we managed to find our friends there," you say.

S: Yes. Now there must be a description in there.

A: "It was a small bustling town."

S: Yes, this is it.

A: "And the main street ran through its center." Do you remember Mr. Bull's name? [E. K. Bull, manager of the Oahu Sugar Company, Waipahu, where Fred Wikander worked as a carpenter.]

S: No. He was a Norwegian, that's all we know. Very much of a Norwegian. No, I do not know how to find that out.

C: Unless Helga would know. And possibly--my father's dead, so. They would know.

S: No. No. No. Very much of a Norwegian. But Mr. Ahrens had been before him. He was very famous. [August Ahrens was the first manager of Oahu Sugar Company.]

C: There's a school in Waipahu that's named after August Ahrens.

S: Oh, is there? There was my great chum. We were so isolated. To go to Honolulu, except in the school term, was just miles and miles away, so that's terribly isolated.

C: Did Dorothy Podmore go on the train with you? She didn't go through the Waipahu School.

S: Dorothy Podmore. No, no, no. But there was a very fine family there--Dorothy Podmore--and that was my great friend during the years and we had a lot of fun running around barefoot. And just our little friends, our little wicked friends out there in the country. And we never felt the least bit lonely. There was always activity. There were the little trains running through Waipahu every minute. I never saw so many tracks in my life, except in a railroad terminal. And right in our yard there, were the railroad trains--little engines.

It was a very prosperous plantation. Still is. And those engines were forever running and little old cars, so little we couldn't read their names on them--like Waipio, Waipahu, the names of the engines--but he [Clarence] saw the wheels go round and all he had to do--all he did--was to look at the wheels. He'd say, "Waipio! Waipahu!" and we used to be so amused, you know. And that activity was going on all the time and freight trains galore. It was a very, very rich plantation. All the cane. And very noisy at times. The home was very large property, very large. The yard was large and there was a servant house and then a very fine home and a big pasture where we kept the cow and chickens.

C: We had a great big chicken yard and kept chickens and ducks; guinea pigs and rabbits.

S: It was very--a country life.

A: Now, what was your father doing?

S: This was the home. He was in charge of all the building on the plantation. A very big job. "Carpenter Boss," the Japanese would call him. "Cahpentah Boss." I can still hear them say that, yes.

He was a big man, my father. Very big man. And noisy; great talker. But it was, without our being able to give you details, a very wonderful time of our lives. See, I was from ten to fourteen, eh?

C: Yeh. That's right.

S: And then, of course, in the winter time always school, school, school, school. And I graduated very young--just a little over sixteen when I got through high school--so that I was a very busy person. I was a horrible student from the word go. Terrible student, yes. Devoted to books, you know. Well, something like you, you know. And I've been all my life.

Now, anything more that you want there, you just go ahead and read. It may not be too apropos.

glad to come.

C: I guess when he was in Oakland someone from Hawaii sent a word up to Oakland that they wanted some people to do some cabinet work and maybe some people didn't want to come down to Hawaii. I don't know.

S: Well, there was a young, very active man. Good heavens, if any of us were--had his energy . . .

C: He was about thirty-two years old at the time he came down to Hawaii. My mother was six years younger than he was. Six months, rather.

A: Did you have any contact with any of the alii or the relatives of the alii?

S: No, just--just . . .

C: Just plain people.

S: Just hearing more about them and always having a vast curiosity. I was born up here, just where Davenport and [Wilder] and Pensacola streets join. And Princess [David] Kawanakoa was right here, where the Seventh Day Adventist College is right now on Pensacola [Hawaiian Mission Academy, 1438 Pensacola Street]. And her sister, Mrs. [Frederick Walter] MacFarlane, just exactly across the street from where we were. No, the royalty was very stand-offish. Very much so, up to the end of their life. Liliuokalani [Kawanakoa] never mixed, you know. And by the way, she was Mrs. Clark [G.] Lee--she died about three years ago--and now the Uluniu Women's Club has just bought their property, or just voting on to buy it. It's out at Laie.

A: Liliuokalani's property?

S: Liliuokalani was the youngest daughter of Princess Kawanakoa. The youngest. And all the family is gone but she died three years ago. She was Princess Liliuokalani and she owned this fine property at Laie.

A: This is the woman who's named Mrs. Clark Lee you're talking about.

S: Mrs. Clark Lee, yes. [After Clark Lee died, she married Charles Everett Morris, Jr.] So that property is very, very fine. The Uluniu Club, when they had to disband, put in the bank \$150,000 which they realized from the property [in Waikiki]. And they didn't know what they were going to do with it, except some day in the future--couldn't

find an inch of land in town. The men found they couldn't find an inch. And so, two weeks ago the prominent members --many prominent members--Ethel Spalding and Constance Hart and Bernice Warner were among them--they went out to Laie to look it over. I don't know if it's going to cost the entire \$150,000 but it's a wonderful place. There's seashore and mountains, very isolated. There were three buildings on it. And they looked it over. And they're buying it more as an investment because it's forty miles away. And it doesn't seem practical to expect--they wish to have the members join and they're putting the dues up even.

A: Oh, they'll get the members, I would think.

S: They might build cottages, but it's not been suggested that they do, so people can go out there. But that happened--that's happening right this minute. They're supposed to vote for it, Ethel Spalding and Constance Hart--veteran members, you know, there and many others. But that is the last piece of, you'd say, royal property.

Princess Kawananakoa was right across the street. We very often saw her. No, there was no contact between an ordinary family and [royalty].

A: Do you remember any stories that you might have heard about any of them?

S: Plenty, yes, plenty. They were not angels by any manner of means. The princess herself was a very beautiful woman, looking like--sort of Spanish beauty. Large, stout. And she was prominent as a civic leader. Daughters of the Americans--of Hawaii. Let's see, what do you call them?

C: Sons and Daughters of Hawaiian Warriors. [Daughters of Hawaii]

S: Yes. And she was a great leader among the Hawaiians but she had not very creditable children. The son, Prince David, got mixed up with a couple of murders even.

C: In a drunken brawl, he killed a white woman, a girl friend of his.

S: But with her influence, you know, he got out of jail. For some reason, he was not put in jail because of who he was. And her two daughters married very ordinary men. And this Liliuokalani had the temper of a terrible woman and she had two or three marriages. There is one daughter, Princess Kekaulike, that is considered very, very fine [but not a titled princess, really].

A: Yes. Abigail Kekaulike [Kawananakoa], I think.

S: Yes. And she's pure--she's the blondest person on the face of the earth. You'd never dream--her mother used to say, "I won't take her out to the park in a car. They think I'm a Negro mother, a nurse." She was as pure--and her father was William [J.] Ellerbrock, her first marriage. Pure blond German. He was a terrific blond. There was this child, Kekaulike, and this is the only one she ever had. And that ended in divorce. She later married at least twice--[Charles Brenham; then] Clark Lee was, I think, the third. [correct] Or maybe the fourth. [Charles Everett Morris, Jr. was her fourth husband.] She was a very fine looking one but her life was . . .

A: You saw her then. You saw these people?

S: Yes, we often saw her. Yes. Her life was a dissipated one but I think Kekaulike is all that is fine. With that name--Dorothy Wikander, my niece, went to school with her in Punahou [School] and she said everybody called her Kekau. And her cousin, the other granddaughter . . .

A: Poomai? [Poomaikalani Kawananakoa]

S: Poomai. They were in Dorothy's class [1944] and they were awfully nice girls; awfully nice girls. And of course, they're terribly wealthy and have traveled a great deal. I think Kekaulike is well on, more like your age.

A: Yes, she is approximately.

S: And she's Dorothy's age, you see. Dorothy's in her early forties now. And she took her mother's place in the renovation of the palace here [Iolani Palace] when Mrs. Morris died. She was the one who was in charge of the committee --chairman--and Kekaulike took her mother's place and she was in the paper because they weren't renovating it properly. She has been riding horseback at times in the parades here and in the event of June [Kamehameha Day, June 11].  
I guess you'd never dream Muriel Shingle was as blonde as I am.

A: Muriel Shingle. Is she . . .

S: She was one of the daughters of the original Mrs. [James] Campbell.

A: Of the original Mrs. Campbell.

S: Muriel. She was just as blonde. She looked very much like

my sister Helga.

C: She was Princess Kawanānakoā's sister.

A: Princess Kawanānakoā's sister. Now is Shingle her maiden name?

S: No, she married Robert [W.] Shingle, a very prominent businessman who died after awhile. They had six children.

A: Are they both dead?

S: Both Muriel Shingle is gone and Bob Shingle. Yes, both.

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S: She [Kekaulike] lives a very secluded life. Oh, I've seen her in public many, many times.

A: She has a home in Laie, I believe.

S: Uh huh. Well, that would be her mother's place. This is the place that's being bought. Laie. Is that right?

A: I see her listed in the telephone directory at Laie.

S: Well, a very natural thing. That's the home now bought.

A: Muriel and Robert Shingle had children, didn't they?

S: Half a dozen. Six children, I think.

A: And would one of them have been Muriel also?

S: If so, I don't know.

C: I'm not sure.

A: Because I remember reading in the Punahou Bulletin about a Muriel Shingle, Mrs. Ross Sutherland.

S: Well, that's probably one of the children, of course. Mrs. Ross Sutherland is one of the original, very prominent.

A: Well, in what way are the Shingles related to the Amalus then?

S: Well, then several years after Bob Shingle died, she married [Charles K.] Charlie Amalu, a very distinguished man. It may not seem so but . . .

- C: Sammy [Samuel Crowninburg-Amalu] is the one who got into that jail sentence.
- S: Yes, he was a very distinguished alii. Very much so. A delightful, charming man.
- C: Charlie Amalu, yeh.
- S: Yes. Uh huh. She married him. But she died several years--he's gone too now. She was Mrs. Amalu when she died. And of course Sam Amalu would be the son of Mr. Amalu, nothing to do with her. She was not the mother of Sammy Amalu, no. There was enormous wealth always. Every one of the Campbell heirs had terrible wealth.
- A: Then who was Sammy Amalu's mother?
- S: I wouldn't know. No, I wouldn't. But, you see, he brags that--the first thing he says when he opens his mouth is that he belongs to a very famous Kauai family called the Crowningburgs. Crowninburg. He calls himself a prince.
- A: Yes. Is this correct? Is this fact or fiction?
- S: Oh, it's fact. It's fact. His pedigree is faultless. It's very . . .
- C: He claims to be a descendent of Keoua, the king who fought against Kamehameha.
- S: Of Kauai.
- C: Keoua's [from Kau,] Hawaii.
- S: Nobody tries to contradict him and he has the background. And of course Mrs. Muriel Shingle knew that about the father, you see. You wouldn't think there was a drop of Hawaiian blood in her, unless the lazy eyes. All of them were very different. Not a one of them looked like the other [of the four Campbell girls].
- C: [Alice] Kamokila Campbell was another sister.
- S: Beatrice Wrigley--the great Wrigley gum--that's the youngest one. She married the great Wrigley man and she's terribly rich herself. [Mary Beatrice Campbell married George C. Beckley and after he died, she married Francis L. Wrigley.]
- A: This is all Campbell family. That family is extensive, isn't it?



- S: There were four girls. And the Wrigleys are great philanthropists. They are supposed to have built a huge Unity church in San Diego. A very magnanimous family, I guess.
- A: All right. There was Muriel; there was Beatrice; there were . . .
- S: Beatrice was the baby. Abigail is the oldest; that's Princess Kawanakoa.
- A: Abigail.
- S: Yes, she married Prince David. He was an heir to the throne, after Liliuokalani. [Queen Liliuokalani named Prince Jonah Kuhio Kalaniana'ole and his brother, David Kawanakoa, heirs to the throne after Princess Kaiulani died, according to historian Gavan Dawes.]
- C: Prince David died in 1908.
- S: Alice is Mrs. MacFarlane--Mrs. [Frederick Walter] MacFarlane. But she's now called Kamokila Campbell. She's changed her name after several divorces. There was a divorce there and then several marriages and divorces and she ended up by calling herself Alice Kamokila Campbell. And she's terribly revered by the Hawaiians, you see. Tremendously. Then came Muriel Shingle and last of all Beatrice Wrigley. Muriel was the blonde one. Something like Kekaulike, I guess.
- C: Is Beatrice still living?
- S: Oh yes. They were down here last year.
- A: She lives on the mainland.
- S: And she was down last year. Very interesting.
- A: She had a birthday, I think. They had a celebration for her birthday.
- S: And she came out with some very cute little remarks about Queen Liliuokalani, how she used to go and see her all the time and Queen Liliuokalani smoked little cigars. And she was telling a lot of those little interesting things that none of us ever, ever heard.
- A: Try to remember some of the other things she said.
- S: She called her Auntie Something. She was all the time, as a child--the queen always called her Baby.

A: Called Beatrice Baby.

S: She was brought up practically in the home of the queen. Very, very aristocratic family. Her mother was a big, handsome--very handsome--not-too-dark woman with a big figure. She didn't wear holokus. We saw her many times. I guess she was what you call alii. They were very snooty.

C: Her mother was, I think, the daughter of a chieftain.

S: Yes. They never were mixing much with the ordinary. You always knew their place.

A: Where did you, when you heard Beatrice telling about all these things--about little things that you didn't know before--was this at the birthday celebration?

S: Yes.

A: And you attended that?

S: No.

C: We read it in the paper, I think.

S: It was all in the paper and it's not impossible to get back editions, you know, provided they're not too distant. But it was a delightful interview and she herself was lovely. I saw her picture. She was not like herself--a big massive face; she had grown very slender. But a very charming woman. I remember writing to Helga. I guess I sent the clipping over. She turned out to be very lovely. And they built the church for the Unity group and she brought the Unity minister down here as her guest on that occasion.

A: Oh really? Beatrice did all this?

S: Yes. And they called her Auntie Bea; that was her name. Auntie Bea. And everybody gathered around. She was extremely gracious. I was very glad to see that. And Alice Kamokila is a very nice person too, very pleasant and terribly revered by the Hawaiians.

A: And Mrs. Morris is another one also.

S: Mrs. Morris is the one I was telling you about who is so dissipated. She was Kawananakoa's youngest daughter. She married at least--there was Ellerbrock and I think there was a Brennan [Brenham] and then she married Clark Lee. That was the only one that stuck, that marriage. And then

she married Morris and she died with the name of Mrs. Morris.

A: Oh, she died?

S: She died three years ago.

A: It was after Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier] Kennedy's visit then, because wasn't she the person who showed Jackie Kennedy [later Mrs. Aristotle Onassis] through the throne room?

S: Yes, I think so. It was three years ago. She was put by Governor [John A.] Burns in charge of the renovation of Iolani Palace and she worked very, very hard there. Her death was quite a loss to that project. Then her daughter, Kekaulike, stepped in. And they're in the process now of that project and there was an awful fight in the paper that Souza, who's in charge of building operations here, stood in the way of the renovation. And a great architect, brought especially from the east--he had renovated the great Independence Hall in Philadelphia; very famous man--they persuaded him to come down here and this Portuguese, Souza, in some position here, stood in his way. And here he hung around for two or three years and finally there was a volcanic burst against this man. I think he's been removed and now it's going along. And I am very eager to see it. Restoring it to the days of the monarchy. That's a Kekaulike thing.

C: Yeah, the Iolani Palace is the only palace in the United States.

A: Yes, I've read that. Uh huh.

S: They're going to restore Kalakaua's bedroom upstairs where the governor used to be and the bedroom of Queen Liliuokalani where she was imprisoned for several years [seven months]. And the whole thing is going to be made just a replica, as near as they know, of when it was a home. When it was a home. I'm very eager to . . .

A: Now that they no longer use it as offices as they were doing.

S: Oh, it's going to be--it's really going to be a museum. Yes. And a great many of the relics were stolen or auctioned off and now they're gathering all of those, as near as they can, and some of them are being given back.

C: A lot of the people who used to own them are returning

them.

S: Yes. Either they stole it or they bought it or--things are coming back.

C: Probably just bought it or given to them maybe. A cup and a **saucer** here, maybe, or a vase here and other . . .

S: I don't mean to say that this Liliuokalani was any different from any dissipated American rich woman, but that's what she was. Really quite an awful creature.

C: Queen Liliuokalani?

S: No, I mean Mrs. Morris. Oh, not Queen Liliuokalani, no.

C: Queen Liliuokalani was a very lovely person, they said.

S: Yes. Uh huh. That's what this Beatrice said. She was a delightful, charming, charming woman. We saw her in our youth many times.

C: Yeh. Queen Liliuokalani, she aged very quickly. I remember in 1915, when Madame Melba gave a concert in the opera house. There was a Royal Opera House in the grounds where the post office is now. They tore it down years ago. And Queen Liliuokalani, she was a very aged woman and they ushered her to the royal box there.

A: Were you there in attendance?

C: I was there. Signa and I went to hear.

S: We went to all of those. Melba, John McCormack, Schumann-Heink. Oh golly, it was a lovely thing. It's a pity they had to. . . . But we saw, many times in the side streets --quiet streets--Queen Liliuokalani would take a drive with two horses and a surrey. And they always picked quiet little streets like Vineyard and School, but she was out. I think she had a daily drive and it was a common sight. I saw that many times. Yes. Finally, she got so she was more reconciled and she did get up on a platform with Governor [Sanford B.] Dole and there was reconciliation. But she was a very bitter woman, I think, for many many years.

A: Well, I certainly understand why she would be.

C: I think in the latter part of the 1890's she went up to the states to Washington to see Grover Cleveland, I think it was. [She went in 1896 during President Cleveland's second administration, 1893-97.]

- S: Well, he was her champion.
- C: To claim--to complain about the way she had her throne taken away from her. Of course he was perfectly lovely to her but, of course, she didn't get her throne back.
- A: No, she didn't, did she?
- S: But he was her champion. Um hum, he was. He criticized the way she was thrown off. She was a dignified woman.
- C: Well, she was going to take away lots of the--she was going to take a lot of the rights of the white people living here. I guess her advisors gave her a lot of bad advice, I think.
- S: So she established a lottery too.
- C: But people like Governor Dole and people like that knew a very up-and-coming, hard-boiled individual so, of course, they weren't standing for that. Then they had this revolution. There were some white people, though, who stayed on the side of the queen. They were on the royalist side.
- S: Yes, oh yes. Then the Wilcox insurrection was for the queen. Helen Peterson, a white--she lives at Arcadia--she had an uncle who was a royalist and the opponents of the queen put him on a vessel to the coast without a coat or sweater or anything and his death came. Helen Peterson told it in detail to the Senior Citizens about that. She's a big authority on that, too. She's Mrs. Simes [T.] Hoyt and she lives at Arcadia. She was Helen Peterson. And she's written several books.
- A: Oh. There's a Caroline Peterson also.
- S: Well, that would be a cousin of hers. One of the Peterson brothers married Caroline Peterson, the florist. She was a very fine florist. Part-Hawaiian. But Helen Peterson is the daughter of Dr. Peterson who lived in the islands here. She's got quite a reputation as a writer. She's written many things. She's strong on Hawaiiana. Believe me, if you can get her to talk, you could get a very great deal of that period. She specializes on it and gives talks. She had a slight stroke a year ago and we've seen very little of her at the AAUW [American Association of University Women]. She's very fond of them. And when I had my fiftieth year of attendance at AAUW, she was my sponsor. She wrote--she was the one who wrote my little speech, telling about my fiftieth. That dates me pretty well.

A: Oh well, we're not going to worry about that. Part of the reason you're being interviewed is because of your rich age.

S: Oh. Well, that was the fiftieth anniversary of my joining the AAUW and Helen Peterson Hoyt wrote me up there.

A: I wondered about your other affiliations. I don't believe they're listed here.

S: Well, I'll tell you. Teachers usually belong to several teachers' organizations and, of course, there was the Scandinavian Club in early days.

A: Swe-Nor-Den.

S: Ah, I don't know of any others. So many people list hundreds, you know. No, I'm not a club woman. Never.

A: You belong to [Central Union Church] Senior Center, AAUW, Swe-Nor-Den.

Well, now, what I'm really interested in too is--tell about some of the people--the prominent people--you have taught Latin to. What was the occasion . . .

S: Yes, oh yes, I could tell a lot there.

A: Please do. And please begin by telling the occasion when I think it was Mr. [Daniel] Inouye spoke of you. Remember when you were honored as being the . . .

S: Well, I'll tell you. After I retired, these young people --I've taught hundreds and hundreds because Latin is called the "cream subject," you know; you get the best students always--they began to be old enough to want reunions. And so there were many reunions like the Class of 1916 and 1917. And the famous Class of '24 has many, every three years. That's the one that has Hiram Fong and Chinn Ho and Masaji Marumoto, the [Associate] Chief Justice, and ever so many dentists and lawyers, all prominent, you know; all very prominent. That was the Class of '24. Now Dan Inouye came in the Class of 1942. He's only forty-eight years old now, you see. And he has spoken of me in public too. And Chinn Ho's picture is right on the wall here, back of you. He insisted--the last reunion was three years ago . . .

C: He insisted that my sister pose with him.

A: That's a nice picture.

S: Yes, it is of him particularly.

A: It's a nice picture of both of you.

S: And so, he said that to the assembled. After, he said, he was going to have that picture. And there's a little appropriate thing about how much I have done for them all (inscribed on it).

But Masaji Marumoto has been exceedingly flattering to me. He is the Chief--Associate Chief Justice--that is prominent in this insurrection thing around now and a wonderful, wonderful man. There're many doctors and lawyers in that particular class.

And then there was a reunion just two or three months ago in June--the 1936--and I was invited there. And there, Duke Cho Choy--he's a very famous pediatrician here--he gave me a great flattery. It was a monstrous--three hundred reunion people. The tables many--thirty-six tables. And during the intermission, at least twenty of these class members came from whatever part of the room they were in to speak to me and they seemed so awfully eager to talk. They said I had changed little and they told me things like the Latin had done them a great deal of good during the years and there was a Dr. Tanada. He is now in the science section--diseases and insects--up at the University of California at Berkeley. And he wouldn't let me alone. He talked a long time about how much I had done. He said, "You were a strict teacher." I've heard that many times. "And I was sick. I was off for three months. I was a senior and you wouldn't let me get away with it. You kept me after school till I made it all up. And I'm very grateful to you because if any subject was valued, it was the Latin." You see. He took his bachelor's here at the university; and his master's. Then he went up to Berkeley and got his Ph. D. and he's employed there and has been for many years. Dr.--the first name I can not recall--but Tanada. I memorized that. So out of an enormous amount of honor in this Class of 1936 . . .

A: But wasn't it Dan Inouye who stood up at that one reunion for the Class of '42? He stood up and said of you that you had been his Latin teacher.

S: Oh yes, yes. I don't know whether it was a reunion. There was a public--yes, he spoke of it. He even recited "hic, haec, hoc;" and he started "amo, amas, amat" in public to remind them that I was his teacher. Then he spoke at Saint Andrew's Senior Center once. There were five teachers of the McKinley group that came out to hear him and he again spoke. I do not recall if there was a reunion--has been--of the Class of '42.

- A: Well, maybe it wasn't that. Maybe it was something like the NEA [National Education Association] or some teachers' group that . . .
- S: Saint Andrew's Senior Center, he very specially brought out that I was a former teacher. Now maybe you remember better than I, but there have been public utterances by Dan Inouye several times, I would say. Yes, Dan Inouye. He was an A-1 pupil, as you know, and he came to speak to the class during Korea Week. Came to my group to talk and the boys just crowded around him. He was then a war hero too, you see. So I've had contacts with him; I don't know, seems to me that I had many.
- A: May I read what is on this picture up here?
- S: Can you make it out maybe?
- A: "To Miss Wikander--Your guidance has been \_\_\_\_\_(?) to us all. Mahalo. Chinn Ho." (none of us could make out that one word)
- S: He has sent me flowers at Thanksgiving time each year. It's very risky to write it on a photograph but he wanted something. . . . That (picture) came about two years ago.
- A: How about that. That's a very nice picture. Very nice.
- S: Yes, it was fun to have it. I wrote back and said I was going to frame it. Now, we have the new Superintendent of Public Instruction who sat in the front seat in one of my classes. I taught the three brothers. They were all in my class. The present--he's just been made a Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- A: Is it Aoki? Shigeru Aoki?
- S: Not quite. No. He hasn't been in more than two or three months. He was a very favorite, special pupil. His brother, Wallace, first then--they're college professors, all of them. Wallace and then--Oshiro, is the last name--I think Isamu Oshiro. Oshiro is the last name. Wallace Oshiro is the oldest one. And this one, I was amazed that he would take this job. He's been a Ph. D., a Dr. Oshiro for years up there and why he would take such a risky job and no one ever lasts very long as superintendent.
- A: It's a very insecure one, isn't it? It's so terribly political.
- S: I'll say it is.



A: But what isn't? What isn't now?

C: That's right.

S: Isamu Oshiro. He's kept his Japanese name. And he would be a very prominent. . . . And this Duke Cho Choy, Korean, a pediatrician. I meet them every day of my life in the streets.

END OF SIDE 2/1ST TAPE

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

. . . a great reunion of several hundred people attending. It was the class and their wives.

A: Class of 1924.

S: He said, "I was brought up on a very quiet plantation." This is Masaji Marumoto, Associate Chief Justice, one of the five of associate chief justices. He's been in there four years, appointed by Governor Burns. And he said, "I wanted to speak of an instance. I came from a very quiet background in Pahala and was very, very shy and I had difficulty with my speech--English. I always had terrible trouble with my English marks. No teacher ever gave me a good mark because I had this impediment in speech. So I got to my senior year and the first semester, Miss"--and he gave her name--"a teacher, gave me a C-minus and I was in despair because I wanted to go on to college. And I never had very good marks but this was terrible. And so I went to another teacher's class for the second semester and at the end of the year she gave me a B-plus. Now notice, she did not give me an "A;" she gave me a B-plus but it was the turning point of my life, because I went on to the university on the mainland and from then on I had no trouble. I had good grades."

Now, he has conquered the impediment. He speaks as clear as a bell. But he felt he had to tell that story. And then he said, "And that teacher was Miss Signa Wikander." Well, you know, I nearly fainted. I was sitting with a bunch of seven teachers, the only surviving ones, you know. I had no more idea than . . .

C: You saved his life, in other words.

S: He said it was the turning point in his life. And so, I turned immediately to this person--he was at my elbow. He said, "I was going to write you a note." But he was again very, very complimentary. And now, since then, he's done me a great favor. I had to ask once for some help and

and he's done a very fine favor. And he's a kindly man and he has told the other members of his class, "If ever you get into any legal trouble, call on me." Very Japanese man. Very Japanese.

A: What do you mean by that?

S: Old-fashioned. Terribly old-fashioned.

C: He has perfect English, though.

S: Wonderful English. A small man. And of course he's had wonderful contacts. He mixes with people. He has a sort of a high-pitched voice and he's got the Japanese courtesy to the nth degree. Not brassy like so many of them. His own son--we've met him too--he's kinda sophisticated. But that was a very fine surprise, a compliment to me.

Now I know that if I met this Oshiro--I haven't been in contact with him--he'd come forward because he was a very favorite pupil too. It's impossible to tell how many compliments there have been. That's what happens to teachers, you know. That is, if you've won their respect and their liking. And their liking, apparently. And they come up voluntarily. I don't recognize them because I can't and besides I don't see too well. But they come up voluntarily and almost always that--the Latin.

C: It's so hard to remember all of them but you taught thousands in your day, long gone. And you pretend you remember names, but you haven't.

S: Oh, I can't remember their names. Hiram Fong I did not teach but he thinks of me as one of the high school teachers. But Chinn Ho, I did. I had him in Kaahumanu School first and then later in McKinley. He was a chairman one year. I think, a very fine man. Very fine.

C: Signa even taught Hilo Hattie in Kaahumanu School.

A: Oh, did you really? Clara Inter. [A popular Hawaiian entertainer, whose professional name is Hilo Hattie, is noted for her comic hulas.]

S: I taught Hilo Hattie. She was a little bit of a homely little girl. A very little one. She had a lovely handsome brother, John. But she was quite a droll little woman; little girl. She had a sense of humor and she was quite a leader. Her brother, John, became some kind of a musician afterward. I would have yet to have a personal contact because she's in so many of these night clubs, you know.

- C: Signa would like to meet her again and see if Clara Inter would remember her or something.
- S: I don't know why I haven't. How could she help (but remember)?
- C: You look the same as in those days.
- S: Yes, well, I mean all the others remember me. Seventh and eighth grade I taught--history and English--at Kaahumanu School.
- A: Oh, she was in the seventh or the eighth grade . . .
- S: Seventh or the eighth grade with me.
- C: Did you tell her about that story? Once Signa was out at Waikiki. I was standing on the sidewalk and there was a dray came by and on it was [William] Willie Kahanamoku, Duke Kahanamoku's brother, and he turned and said, "Ho, Miss Wikander!" You remember that one?
- S: Old-time Hawaiian, he screamed out, "Oh, Miss Wikander!" And I hadn't heard of him for years.
- C: From Kaahumanu days. It must have been easily forty-five years since you saw him there.
- S: Yes. Oh, the Kahanamokus.
- A: You had all the Kahanamokus?
- S: No, no, no, because, you see, Duke was way older. But I had this boy, Willie. Many that I don't even know I had them, you know, but they remember. They come forward. And, as I say, that they can even recognize me after all these years is a compliment enough, isn't it?
- A: Oh, I should say.
- C: Oh yes.
- S: Oh yes, we must show you our latest photographs and tell you about that. You know Clarence and I said, "My, at this stage of the game we ought to. . . "
- C: Before we pass on we ought to have some photographs of ourselves made.
- S: That's it. So we went down to . . .

A: I want to take a photograph of you too, today. Several, in fact.

S: Oh, you mean in connection with this?

A: Oh yes. (she shows me their colored photographs) Well, now let's see.

S: I coach once in awhile. I had you (as a private Latin student for one year) and then I had Mrs. Kunasaki--she was Susan Kamori--she was a German [language student]. I revived my German, 'cause that was my major. I hadn't taught it through all the years, you know, because they didn't have it in the schools. But I had coached her. But now, you see, with the eyes I can't do it. (she is losing her sight)

C: You can't teach anymore.

A: That's too bad because it was wonderful for you and also for those of us who . . .

S: Oh yes, I was very pleased that I could keep it up, you know, because for years I substituted. I couldn't bear to --I was one who did not want to retire. I very much opposed it and I kept up for five years substituting and then, when I got to be beyond that, they wouldn't have me, you see. I went to Punahou [School].

I told Mr. [Kenneth O.] Rewick a story the other day. We had a section meeting, people of Makiki who were asked to go to Central Union for a zone meeting. We all sat around in a circle and we had to tell who we were. And our experience, you know. Everyone would say, "I am So-and-So. I was a businessman." "I was a teacher." So it came my turn, so I said--I told who I was and then I said, "After I retired from teaching, I substituted and one of the places I substituted was Punahou. I did whenever Miriam Sinclair was sick. I went up there to substitute in Latin. And one occasion, there was a very bright little girl, the little Rewick girl." I was telling this to Reverend Rewick, you see. "And the other students told me she was a 'brain.' She was a very lovely little girl but she was the brain of the class. And then we went over to the assembly. I had to go with my class to the assembly that day and there was a sea of blond heads and I was used to only the blacks at McKinley. And splendid discipline. And up on the platform was Chaplain Rewick and he was a very strict disciplinarian. He was a no-nonsense man. I went home and I told Clarence, I said, 'My, what discipline.'" And I told all this and he had never seen me in his life, you see--Rewick. He was very interested and

spoke to me afterward. He said, "Did you then know Florence Hodgson?" She was the famous Latin teacher at Punahou. I said, "Yes, quite well." And since her death, her sister has gone to establish some sort of a memorial to her at Central Union Church. And Mrs. Rewick thanked me. So that was a pleasant incident.

C: When you told him he had good discipline, what did he tell you?

S: He said, "I'm sorry, but it isn't that way at Punahou now." Evidently, you see, he was a favorite chaplain, very much beloved.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen

## Biodata by Signa Wikander

My father and mother were both born in Sweden in 1859. They met in Omaha, Nebraska where they were married in 1888. They lived in Seattle and in Oakland before coming to Hawaii.

My paternal grandparents were Frederick and Anna (Olsen) Wikander of Vermland, Sweden and my maternal grandparents were Samuel and Sophie Samuelson of Bes-torp, Sweden.

My father, a building contractor, came to Hawaii in 1891 to install some cabinet work in Kawaiahao Church, intending to return to the mainland in six weeks. He was so attracted to Hawaii that he decided to remain and wrote to my mother in Oakland, California to come and join him.

When my mother arrived in Honolulu, she found the city in mourning. King Kalakaua had died in San Francisco and his body had been brought in on a United States warship the same day as her arrival. [On January 29, 1891 the USS Charleston arrived with both Hawaiian and American flags at half-mast, indicating Kalakaua's return--dead, according to historian Ethel Damon.]

The 1890's were turbulent years. The monarchy was abolished and the four Wikander children were born in different periods of that decade--one under the monarchy, one under the provisional government, one under the Republic and the last during the annexation to the United States. [Although the Hawaiian Islands were annexed to the United States on July 7, 1898, it was not until April 1900, when congress passed the Organic Act, that a territorial form of government was established.] My father took part in the Revolution of 1893 against the queen. He was encamped at Punchbowl crater.

We moved to Hilo, Hawaii in 1897 where we stayed five years during the end and turn of the century. Hilo was a very small and rainy city in those days. There were no modern macadamized roads such as we have today. The streets were a sea of mud. The town was on the seashore in the shape of a crescent, hence the name "Crescent City." There were practically no automobiles in those days and the mode of travel was by small buses with seats facing each other. [The sampan bus, indigenous to Hilo, was a variation of the station wagon and had one long seat along each side of the car. Since there were no windows, these were open-air buses with isinglass flaps that could be rolled up or down when it rained. It is doubtful that these buses were operating during the per-

iod of 1897-1902, but they may be remembered from a later visit to Hilo.] The main road, Front Street (now Kamehameha Avenue), had stores on each side of the street. The April 1946 tidal wave destroyed all of the houses and stores on the ocean side of the street. The largest store on the seaside was the large Osorio Dry Goods Store. Three of the prominent churches were Haili Church, First Foreign Church, and the Portuguese Protestant Church.

We moved to Honolulu in 1902 and remained there until 1905 when we moved to Waipahu. [They were in Waipahu in 1902 and in 1905, according to the City Directory.] My father was employed at Oahu Sugar Company where he had charge of all building work. We three children commuted to Honolulu to go to school everyday at 7:00 a.m. on the early train and ran down a very quaint winding street to barely catch it on time. We passed Pearl City where Herbert Keppeler's father was station agent and where Mrs. James Campbell, wife of the great financier, often stepped on the train with her three daughters after a weekend at her country home. After arriving in Honolulu, all three of us rushed from the railroad station to Central Grammar School at Fort and Vineyard streets to be on time for classes.

We probably spent the happiest years of our life in Waipahu. It was very isolated and we managed to find our friends there. It was a small bustling town and the main street ran through its center. The Oahu sugar mill was not far away and dominated the landscape. The town consisted of a population of mixed races. The laborers who worked in the fields were Japanese, Chinese, Porto Ricans [Porto Rico was the official name of Puerto Rico until 1932.], Portuguese and others.

The manager of the plantation, Mr. [E. K.] Bull a Norwegian, lived in a large residence at the rear of the town. There was a small private street on the outskirts called Society Lane where prominent people of the town lived. Some of these people were the Podmores, Pierces, Worthingtons and others. The Patersons had just left and so had the manager, Mr. August Ahrens, for whom a Waipahu school is named. Mr. Paterson's son, William, became manager of United Air Lines on the mainland.

There were great numbers of railroad tracks and plantation engines were constantly clattering by. It was the age of freight trains, no longer in existence now. There were no Filipinos in Waipahu at that time and hundreds of Japanese, very quiet and humble.

Some of the highlights in Signa's life were her college course in Berkeley [California] and considerable travel, such as two trips to Europe when she visited her mother's ancestral home in Sweden and saw all her relatives

there; a trip to New Zealand and one to Mexico and several trips to the United States mainland. There were two years spent as an exchange teacher in Fort Lee, New Jersey from 1923 to 1925 and visits to her married sister [Helga, Mrs. Addison Erdman] in New York City. For several years she spent her summers with Miss Margaret M. Cooke in her Volcano woods home.

The coming of the airplanes has revolutionized the inter-island travel both in speed and comfort--no more seasickness on the rough inter-island channels on the Hawaiian steamers.

Written by Clarence Wikander

1112 Lunalilo Street, Makiki, 96822  
July 1971

#### EDUCATION

Central Grammar School (now Central Intermediate)

1911 - Graduation from McKinley High School

1912 - Graduation from Territorial Normal School

1918 - Graduation from University of California, Berkeley

1919-20 - Post graduate, University of California

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1912 - 1916 Kaahumanu School (7th and 8th grades; history and English)

1919 - 1959 McKinley High School (Latin; head of Latin department)

1923 - 1925 Exchange teacher, Fort Lee, New Jersey

After her retirement in 1959, she taught at Saint Andrew's Priory for a year and later substituted in Honolulu schools--among them Punahou School--for four years.



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## THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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.