

WENDELL FRANCIS CROCKETT

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Wendell Francis Crockett

(1892 - 1977)

The late Judge Crockett was born in Montgomery, Alabama and came to Hawaii in 1902 at the age of ten when his father, an attorney, had an opportunity to practice law in Wailuku, Maui.

After graduating from the University of Michigan in 1917, Judge Crockett joined his father's law firm. In 1919 he accepted the position of deputy county attorney which he held until 1949. He was elected to the territorial senate in 1950, served one four-year term, and was then elected to the Maui County Board of Supervisors. In 1959 he became a judge and served in that capacity for two years until the mandatory retirement age of seventy. He served another term as a Maui County supervisor before returning to his private law practice. He married the former Myrtle Len Tai Lau and had two sons and one daughter.

In this interview, Judge Crockett discusses the nineteenth century licencing of attorneys, the types and incidences of crime during his years as a prosecutor, and some of the interesting cases he prosecuted. He also recalls his early years on Maui; its terrain, its transportation system, and its labor force.

Lynda Mair, Interviewer

© 1979 The Watumull Foundation, Oral History Project  
2051 Young Street, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96826

All rights reserved. This transcript, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without the permission of the Watumull Foundation.

INTERVIEW WITH WENDELL FRANCIS CROCKETT

At his office, 1063 Main Street, Wailuku, Maui, 96793

Early 1972

C: Wendell F. Crockett

M: Lynda Mair, Interviewer

M: Maybe you could just go on telling me something about your experiences with the law when you first started.

C: Well, that was one of the, as I say, very interesting facts that, prior to about 1900, which you can check up in some other way, any person who was elected to the legislature--as I said, the House of Representatives--was automatically given his licence to practice law in the district courts; and if they were elected to the Senate, why, they got a licence to practice in the circuit court.

And up to, I'd say about 1910, it wasn't necessary for a lawyer to go to law school, but it was possible for him to study law in the offices of some practicing attorney and then take a bar examination. And quite a number of early lawyers, especially among the Hawaiian lawyers, why, that's the way they got their education. However, I say that since 1900 the vast majority of the lawyers, both those who were born locally and those who came from the mainland, did get their education at qualified law schools.

One of the men that I knew was quite a successful lawyer who'd only studied with a man by the name of William C. Achi--A-C-H-I. I'm not sure he was pure Chinese--I think he was pure Chinese--but he was born here and he became quite an astute lawyer.

M: Uh huh.

C: And I knew quite a number of others here on Maui. There was Judge Kalua, who served as circuit judge, and I'm sure he didn't get any--didn't go to school. Judge [Noa] Kepoikai was also. The judge that was here when I first came to Maui was Judge John W. Kalua, a Hawaiian, who had served in the House of Lords, I think they called it at that time, and he had one of these licences to practice as an approved attorney and became judge of the circuit court.

There was also, as I said, Judge Kepoikai. He fol-

lowed Judge Kalua and he was appointed by [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt. He didn't have any--that is, no training at a law school. However, interesting thing was the judge--I mean, Achi, as I just mentioned, he had a son [William C. Achi, Jr.] who was a classmate of mine at the University of Michigan. And Judge Kepoikai had a nephew--you've heard of the Aluli family in Honolulu?

M: Um hmm.

C: Well, his nephew was Noa Aluli. He was one of the first--one of the early ones who went away to the mainland to study and . . .

M: Noa Aluli?

C: Noa Aluli. That is, the grandfather--I'm not sure--I think he's--no, I think he's the father of the Alulis down at Honolulu. He also went to the University of Michigan and studied law and came back. So, as I say, after 1900, why, practically everybody went away to study law, although one of the prominent fellows down Honolulu, after that time, that I know never went to law school was O. P. Soares. Did you ever hear of him?

M: Yes, I interviewed his sister.

C: Yeh. You hear what?

M: I interviewed his sister, Olympia.

C: Oh yes, Olympia. Oh, I see. Yeh, Olympia. He never went to law school but he was a clever attorney. He studied in a law office. So as I say . . .

M: When did you get back out of school to practice here?

C: I graduated--I went to the McKinley High School. You know that McKinley High School--the old, I think they call it, is that Jefferson High School, the one right opposite Thomas Square? What's that school?

M: Ah, Linekona? [Linekona means Lincoln, the former name of the school which was originally McKinley High School.]

C: Linekona, yeh, that's right. I guess that's the name of it. I went to that school the first year it opened.

M: Oh, you did?

C: That was in 1908 and . . . in 1908, I attended that. Then I finally graduated from the University of Michigan in 1917 and, hell, I've been practicing law ever since then.

M: Did you come straight back after law school and start your practice here?

C: I graduated at twelve o'clock and eight o'clock I was on the train coming back. (laughter) And I never went back again until fifty years afterwards.

M: You're kidding!

C: That's a fact. I did go back to the mainland when I was in the army, just for about three months in 1918, but I never went back to the mainland till 1967.

M: Well, you like Hawaii, huh?

C: Well, it was too darned cold back there. (laughter) I wasn't going back there and freeze. No, I wasn't going back there and freeze, so I stayed here. And then too, there was still other reasons. You take one of the things which people don't realize now, and that is that, prior to the war, people didn't travel back and forth like they do now because it took you a week to go and a week to come back. So, if you had two weeks' vacation, why, you spent it all in your traveling. So many of us never went back to the mainland. And that was one of the reasons. That was one reason I didn't go back. And then also, right after the war [World War II ended August 14, 1945], my children began to go over there, going to school, so naturally, if we had any spare money for traveling, why, let them come home, instead of me chasing over there. So that was the reason I never particularly cared about going back.

M: I see. Did you marry a local girl? From Maui?

C: Yeh. My daughter--I mean, my wife [nee, Myrtle Len Tai Lau] was Chinese extraction. She belonged to what is known as the L. Ah Leong family in Honolulu.

M: The Ah Young?

C: L. Ah Leong. Have you ever heard of them?

M: No.

C: Well you know A. B. Lau? Not A. B. Lau. What's the name of the Lau that's president of the American Security Bank? [A. L. Lau]

M: Yeh, yeh.

C: Well, that same family. And Hung Wo Ching is also married to one of our nieces.

M: Oh yeh.

C: So, her family was quite prominent back in those days. You want to write a history of the people, the L. Ah Leong family was one of the biggest merchants in Honolulu, prior to World War II.

M: Oh really? How do you spell that, 'cause I still don't get it.

C: Well, the name is L--that's L--and A-H L-E-O-N-G, see.

M: Leong. Oh.

C: That would cover L. Ah Leong. L. Ah Leong, see. But his first name, according to the Chinese style, was Lau. L-A-U. Lau, see. So all the children and grandchildren go by the name of Lau. That's their family name.

M: Oh, I see.

C: And this Lau, that is the president, or at least was the president or chairman of the board or something with American Security Bank, he's the grandson of Lau Ah Leong. So he goes by Lau.

M: Oh, I see. Uh huh.

C: They have a terrifically interesting family, really. Probably more interesting than mine and anything that I . . . because, as I say, their grandfather came here as a plantation worker and went down Honolulu and started up a little grocery store there and, prior to his death, why, he was one of the biggest store-owners in Honolulu. Chinese store-owner in Honolulu. Yeh. So perhaps the most famous thing I ever did was marry one of his daughters. (laughter)

M: I want to ask you, how did you happen to come here? You said you were ten or something?

C: Well, my father [William F. Crockett] graduated from the University of Michigan. Then he went down to Montgomery, Alabama to practice law and I was born in Montgomery, Alabama. And he had an opportunity to come over here and so he came over here and we came over here when I was about ten years old, and been here ever since.

M: That would have been what, about 1904?

C: No, I think he came in 1901. I think it was in 1901. I always have to figure it out and then I get mixed up again.

1898--'99--yeh, he came in 1901. I came about a year after that, 1902, and been here ever since.

M: You mean to say you're eighty years old?

C: Yeh.

M: You know, when I talked to you on the telephone--I don't need to put this on . . . (the recorder is turned off) . . . your impressions of Maui as a child. What it was like in 1901 or '02 or . . .

C: Yes, well, that's a nice subject to talk on. Maui was a very--to me it was--interesting place. You see, when we first came to Wailuku here, we lived right near that Hawaiian church there. This was known as Main Street, then there's Market Street and most of your business, at that time--at least not most of the business but there were a couple of stores uptown and this was downtown--and then, between here and around where the mill is, if you might have seen it, and around in that whole valley there was practically all taro and rice fields.

M: Oh really?

C: Yeh, taro and rice fields. First year I was here I lived on the plantation. We lived on the plantation and I used to come to Wailuku on the train. It came around that point you know, and up alongside of the Sandhills and the station was down by the corner of the road down there. And then you had to, well, coming uptown you passed just little cottages and various things like that. And it was a very beautiful valley because of these taro patches and rice patches in there and very few houses; just a few houses along the road. You see some of the old pictures somewhere. I don't know where.

And then, of course, also, right straight on up the valley, there was--well, above this street, in that valley there, were gardens and things like that. And then as you go up in the Iao Valley, there were these taro patches, a few little houses up there.

And you might say our greatest delight was to go up to Iao Valley, hiking. They had a road up there and the stream--it was interesting--it zigzagged like that. We went up over here and then we had to cross the stream and that was called the First Crossing, where you had to wade across that. Then you went up again and you had to cross back on this other side. That was the Second Crossing. And then you go up the other side and it was the Third Crossing. (laughter) And then you get up in there--if you've been up--you haven't been up there yet?

M: No.

C: Well, as you get up there, at the present time the road goes right straight to what we call the Needle Point. [The Needle, a rock pinnacle in Iao Valley Park, is 2,250 feet high] Well, the Needle was the Third Crossing. Then we used to climb that hill and go up to the top and back in there, there's a, oh, kind of a trap door or a basin, you might call it. We used to go across that and there used to be a lot of wild roses in there and they'd climb up, growing up a tree, you might say.

M: Wild roses?

C: Wild roses. That's what they call them. Maui Lokelani.

M: Yeh.

C: And they were the kind of a climber-type of rose, you know, so we'd climb up the trees and pick roses and come back with--we had rose leis, you know. See. And then, that place was kind of high, so we'd come down the hill, right straight down from there and we'd hit the stream and that's where we'd go swimming. You didn't have to have any bathing suits, those days, to go swimming in there. (laughter) Then we'd come on back and sometimes we'd pick gingers and make ginger leis and come on back down to--come back home.

And of course, if you wanted to go anywhere, unless you had a horse to go, why, you more or less had to walk, so that there was not much travel back and forth between the different towns. However, I was fortunate in the first place because I had a horse; and in the second place, I had one interesting job at that time, although I was only ten to eleven years old.

There's a man by the name of William Walsh--you can take this down if you want, I don't care. Did you? Are you?

M: Yeh.

C: Well, a man by the name of William Walsh and he later became the superintendent of the Kahului Railroad, he was the representative of the San Francisco Examiner. And so, for some reason or other, I don't know why, he turned his agency over to me and so I claimed to be the first newspaper boy on Maui. (laughter) I tell you. And then the superintendent of the railroad at that time was a man by the name of Fuller--R. W. Fuller and . . .

M: Fuller.

C: Fuller. F-I-L-L-E-R. He later went over to Hilo and be-



came the superintendent of the railroad over there. And he gave me a pass on the train--on the railroad. So I used to . . .

M: So you could just go.

C: So I could just go back and forth on the railroad anytime I wanted. And I sold papers here in Wailuku, down in Kahului, and on up different places along the line.

M: Did the railroad just go mainly between Wailuku and . . .

C: No, the railroad at that time ran from Wailuku to Paia. To Paia. Then there was another line that went to Puunene. And one of the things which was rather interesting, we had no cable service in those days, mind you, and [The Pacific] cable didn't come here till about, oh I guess about 19--, I don't know--maybe it was 1906 or 1907 or something like that. [December 28, 1902] I was selling the Examiner newspaper and people didn't know what was going on in the --on the mainland until they bought my Examiner papers. And, for example, the San Francisco earthquake and fire occurred in 1906 and we didn't know about it until a week later.

M: It took a week to bring your papers over here?

C: Yeh, the steamers in those days required just about a week to come over here. They didn't know anything about it.

Well, coming back to Wailuku and Maui, there was very little movement, you might say, between the different places. Now Waikapu was a small little community and it had its taro patches and people over there. And also the Waihee group, which today is practically nothing, why, that had a small group of people. And also at Waie. And in all these places, it makes you wonder. The beautiful things about it were these little patches, taro patches and things like that, and the sound of the water flowing from one patch into the other. 'Course one of the bad things about the taro patches, there's a heck of a lot of mosquitoes. You couldn't go to sleep at night without putting up a mosquito net. That was the bad part about it. As I say . . .

M: Who was cultivating all this taro? Was it mainly Hawaiians?

C: Huh?

M: Mainly just Hawaiians cultivating the taro?

C: Yes. Yes, you might say the Hawaiians were the main ones who cultivated taro in those days. And it wasn't cultivat-

ed so much on a commercial scale. There were a few people who did cultivate it on a commercial scale. And also the Chinese were getting into the taro patch business. The Chinese ran all the--they had some rice patches that they--we had a rice mill down here that was operating and they

. . .

M: Oh, you did? Milled their own rice.

C: . . . cultivated quite a bit of rice. But I'd say that the Chinese were the ones that usually made the poi and the Hawaiians sold the taro to them. But the Hawaiians, I think, cultivated. And it wasn't cultivated so much commercially, but, you might say, almost a kind of a family project with the Hawaiians working outside and just cultivating on the side.

Now you take then, we did very little traveling, of course, in those days, and a trip going to Lahaina, for example, was an all day excursion. Or going to almost any place around here, even up to Paia and Makawao, now a trip that you can make in twenty-five or thirty minutes. Why, if you took a trip up to Makawao, we had to go by horseback, see. Or you might have what we called a hack or carriage. But, of course, that was too darned expensive. (chuckles) If you went around to Hana, why, that's usually a week's trip. That is, you could make it around faster but, of course, you went around more or less with the idea of staying a little time. The steamer went to Hana.

My father had served as one of the registerers of voters. At the present time, all the voters have to go to the clerk's office to register, you know.

M: Um hmm.

C: Or be registered by people there. But at that time, they had a Board of Registration. There were three individuals, who were appointed by the governor, and they had to go all around the islands. It took about two or three weeks to go around the islands and register people. (background noise) And after they registered them, why, they made up this list and that was the voting list. And you see, my father was one of those appointed for that, on that work, and so he had to travel all around. When he went, why, he was gone for about two or three weeks. And they had to travel by horseback. And then even at that time, on Molokai, there were some few people who lived on the North Shore. Have you ever been over that side or seen that side?

M: Uh, pictures, that's all. I don't . . .

C: Sometimes the plane flies along that North Shore. Well, so they even had to go into that valley up there to get their registry. And . . .

M: Wow. (in a hushed tone)

C: . . . he also, at that time, went down into Kalaupapa Settlement, which was, I understood (background noise) (hesitant speech and nervous chuckle), quite a kapu place. [Kalaupapa, an isolated peninsula on the north side of Molokai, is a settlement for Hansen's disease patients and, until recently, outsiders were prohibited from going there. It was commonly known to Islanders as the Leper Colony.]

M: He registered the people who worked down there and the . . .?

C: Well, it was the patients and everybody.

M: And the patients too.

C: Um hmm, yeh.

M: Well, what happened, then, when people voted? Did they have to go around and collect the votes from everyone?

C: No. Well, no, each little place had its own little precinct, you see, just like they have now. In other words, Hana had its precinct and Haiku, Keanae, right straight on around. Then after this list was made up, they were mailed over to the different precincts and when they got into the precincts, why, on voting day they'd all meet at the precinct. Then of course, the results were telephoned in to headquarters, wherever they were, so that the . . . [votes could be totaled]

Then we had, in regard to the court system too--each district had its own district court. It's the same as we used to see, what they call the police court. Well, that's almost the same today but they have changed the--they don't have so many judges. For instance, there's one district magistrate, we call him, for Hana; one for Makawao and one for Wailuku; one for Lahaina and one for Molokai. And these small cases, like gambling or fighting or anything like that, were tried before those district magistrates. Today the legislature abolished it so that now we only have two for the whole Island of Maui. That is, they go out to these districts from time to time and try cases.

Well, my father was in the county attorney's office, prosecuting, so sometimes when he had to go to Makawao to try a case or go off like that, why, he'd be gone all day. Go to Hana [fifty-five miles from Wailuku] to try a case, it'd take him all day to go and come back. The road was

made to Lahaina--that was a road big enough for horses and carriages--I'd say sometime about 1900, I think. And you could really get a carriage or hack, as we called it in those days, and drive over to Lahaina. It will take you about two hours and a half or more to drive there and, of course, you had to rest the horses and if you came back the same day, why, you'd come back some time that afternoon. So traveling--these trips that my dad took around the island, why, he went on horseback all the time; or rather, on a mule. (chuckles)

M: Oh really?

C: Yeh, he had a little. . . . We have a friend who lived up in Kula who I rented a mule from, you know. You can imagine a mule running around the island over there.

M: (laughing) Yeh.

C: However, as I say, that because of the fact that I had a horse myself, why, I managed to travel around, I'd say, almost more than some of the other people. I'd at least been up Makawao. I went up there about, I'd say lucky if I went there about three or four times.

M: And you lived the rest of the time right here in Wailuku.

C: We lived right here in Wailuku.

M: Your family didn't move around the island at all?

C: No, we didn't move around. I went up to Kula one time for a vacation with a friend of mine. We went on horseback, went up, went through Kihei, right straight up the mountain, up to what's called--ah--Kona--Konaulu. Keanu--Kanaulu. (phonetic spelling) (he seems uncertain of the pronunciation) Went up there and spent about a week over there.

And I remember I went over to Lahaina several times. One of the first automobiles that was ever on Maui--not THE first, but one of the first--a man over Lahaina bought it and he was running back and forth here, so I had a chance to ride over in his automobile . . .

M: Wow!

C: . . . which was a great stunt. (laughter)

M: Yeh.

C: Yeh.

- M: Your father's law practice was here, then did you just come back and sort of go to work for him, after school?
- C: Well, we worked together. That is, I came back, worked together, but shortly after I came back, why, at that time the county attorney here wanted somebody to work with him and so he offered me the job of working as deputy county attorney. That was Mr. Bevans (phonetic), one of the persons, I say, that nobody would remember his name, who is living today (chuckles), but he. . . . And he and I worked together for about thirty years, then he retired.
- M: When did you become a judge then?
- C: Well, I didn't become a judge until 1959, right after statehood [March 18, 1959].
- M: Ohhh.
- C: Right after statehood I was--I was deputy county attorney with Mr. Bevans until 1949. And then in 1950 I got elected to the Senate, served one term, and then--that was four years. And then I also, later on got elected to the Board of Supervisors for the County of Maui. And after that, why, I became a judge and I only served two years for a judge because I was. . . . See, under The Constitution, when you're over seventy--when you're seventy, why, you have to retire. So when I reached seventy, I had to retire. And then served on the Board of Supervisors for the County of Maui again for another term. Then I got licked, so I quit. (laughter)
- M: And now you're back practicing law.
- C: Well, that was after I came off the bench from judge, why, I really started practicing law, since being a supervisor in those days wasn't a full-time job. It was just a part-time job. So I've been practicing law ever since my son [William Francis Crockett] came back about 1955. When I became judge, why, he went in partnership with [Sanford Jackson Langa] and after I came off the bench, why, I came down and worked with him. So I'm their junior partner.
- M: Oh. (laughter) Yeh.
- C: I'm the junior partner.
- M: Do all the kids in this whole area go to the same school? Grade school.
- C: Well, the school in Wailuku must have been pretty old, because when I first came to Wailuku. . . . (Lynda coughs)

M: Wait a minute. What? (recorder is turned off momentarily)

C: When I came to Wailuku, why, the school building was right by the--where the courthouse is up here. The post office is on one side of the street, then there's a street, then there's a courthouse and that building right adjoining, built in 1907.

Well, the school was a two-story frame building that was pretty old at that time. I don't know how long, so I don't know how old it had been. And we only had three teachers at that time. And about a year or so after I went to school up there, why, they built the new school-- what we call the New School. That's further down the street, right near where the--next to the Union Church. You can see it from there.

M: Down this street out here?

C: Well, it's High Street, the one up there.

M: High Street. Oh, I'll have to walk down there. (in an undertone)

C: And so the school moved down there and, in the meantime, they tore down the old jail, which you'll see--a building up there next to the courthouse. And eventually we built the jail and then afterwards they tore down the old school building and then, on that location, they built the courthouse.

As I say, when I first went to school there, we only had three teachers. And then, when they moved over to the new school, I think they increased it to about five at that time. We had five teachers. But we did have another school here in Wailuku and that's St. Anthony's School.

M: Oh yeh, that's right.

C: It was a Catholic school. Really what we called it--we didn't call it St. Anthony, we called it Brother Frank's School. Brother Frank was the principal of the school and it was a Catholic school and, also, they had only three teachers. So you take the whole community of Wailuku, only had six teachers. Except the Episcopalians had--oh, they had a group of kids that used to go to their school but I think they only had one teacher there. So in those days, we had three (the final word is aspirated as a whisper). (Lynda chuckles) But now, of course, they have a small school at Waikapu and they have a small school at Waihee.

M: But you had all the Wailuku Plantation kids at these schools here in . . .

C: Yeh. Between the two. Between the public school and the Brother Frank's school, as we called it. So . . . but you take--say that, well (sudden sharp sound, like that of a judge's gavel), there again, I know, you didn't have so many kids, for some reason or the other. See, one of the interesting things was that, well, the Hawaiian kids, of course--I suspect that the--I guess the population predominated with Hawaiian kids, who came up to this school. The Portuguese kids, most of them went down to Brother Frank's school. And quite a number of the Chinese boys went to Brother Frank's school. So that's where, you might say, that wages were more or less divided.

And another interesting thing; Brother Frank's school, the Catholic school, they kind of leaned towards the commercial subjects--business subjects, like bookkeeping and shorthand and things like that--while the public school didn't teach that. So a lot of the kids, who wanted to take those kind of subjects, you know, why, they all went to Brother Frank's school. And so, there's actually a general school system that is set up.

END OF SIDE 1/1ST TAPE

M: . . . I imagine then was in the plantation.

C: Yeh, the bulk of the people were working for the plantation. The railroad employed quite a number--stevedores and various other capacities. And the county. A lot of older Hawaiian men worked for the county as--that is, you know, in labor capacities.

There were very few, so far as Maui is concerned, government employees on this island. You believe it or not, I think even till 1918, in the tax office, they had about, well, hardly ten in the tax office. That's each division had its own tax office, you see, and there's hardly ten in the whole island. There were three up at this office; two at Makawao, two at Lahaina, and I think one at Hana, and maybe one on Molokai. I'm not sure about Molokai. Yeh, I think one. And there're no social services. The Board of Health had one Board of Health agent and one public nurse. And your teachers were the largest number of territorial employees, so that the county--the bulk of the people who worked for the government were working for the county.

Federal offices, except for the post offices, they had practically nobody here. I don't think--it was about 1918, why, the Internal Revenue department [known then as the Bureau of Internal Revenue] sent one man up here. They had one man as a--let's see, what was his, oh!--he had a part-time job as collector of customs. [Customs Service] (laughter) So they had no federal offices here.

M: Yeh. What about policemen? You must have had.

C: Well, the police force on Maui in those days, hardly; between fifty and seventy-five. There's a very small police force. And the rest of the county offices, why--oh, I don't know. Take the county attorney's office. We only had three. Had myself, and the head, and one stenographer.

Hardly any of the other offices had more than two or three in their offices, so the bulk of your men who were working, were working for the Road Department. There's no Parks Department. Nobody took care of parks. The Waterworks Department was under the Board of Supervisors and had a superintendent and maybe half a dozen people, so it was a very small force, so far as that's concerned. And each district--see, we had five: Hana, Makawao, Wailuku, Lahaina, and Molokai--each district had its own little, individual work force on the roads. And that's about the biggest number of employees we had.

M: Was there enough business here to keep your father busy full-time in private practice?

C: Well, that's a . . . (laughter). Considering the times and the day, why, yes, he worked on a full-time basis; but when you say that, why, I doubt whether he made as much in a month as our expenses are today. (Lynda laughs) 'Cause you make two hundred, two hundred-fifty dollars a month, why, he was doing good, while our expenses today are over a hundred dollars a day. You take--we have five girls working for us. I don't know how much they get, but it averages out at least to twenty-five dollars a day. That's a hundred and twenty-five dollars a day, our expenses.

Well, there's enough legal work to keep people busy, but no lawyer made any large amount of money. And, well, you see, your standard of living was so different. For example, the county attorney. You take the county attorney today gets about two thousand a month. Well, our county attorney got two hundred and fifty dollars a month. And as deputy, I got a hundred and fifty. (Lynda chuckles)

When they had a depression, instead of raising taxes and raising people's wages, why, they chopped us. My pay had been increased, oh, after working about ten years, I was getting about two hundred and seventy-five per month, which was big pay, you know. And when they began to run short of money and couldn't collect enough taxes, they called me in one day and said, "Well, you're cut down to two twenty-five." Gave me a fifty-dollar chop.

M: I talked to someone else who was a public health nurse in Hawaii and the same thing happened to her.

C: Yeh? Well, that's a fact. And then on top of that, what



added insult to injury, because I was working--my wife was also teaching--they said, "You're fired." They fired my wife. (chuckles)

M: Wowww!

C: "Because your husband's got a good job." There were several of them. Several of them got fired. That was about 1929, the depression time. We just . . .

M: That must have been kind of tough for awhile, huh?

C: Well, I tell you, it was. It was. It was tough in this way, that if you had bills and mortgages and notes to pay, why, that was the toughest part about it. But your cost of living practically went down, so that that part didn't cost. Lot of people, people that I owed bills to--mortgages and so forth--I said, "Well, I'll pay you when I can." And they were good enough not to do anything. (chuckles while saying this)

M: Yeh.

C: It was a little tough in those days, but there again, you take your cost of living wasn't so awfully high. For example, I bought--my mother, rather, when I first came here, my mother bought the first Ford roadster that was brought to Maui, new.

M: Oh really.

C: And you know how much it cost her? About three hundred and fifty dollars. (laughter) Brand new Ford! Three hundred and fifty. Well, that was in 1917. Then in 1919, I drove into one of the dealers' place one day and he had a Chevrolet. He says, "You want to turn in your Ford for a Chevrolet?" I said, "Well, how much you want for it?" He says, "Nine hundred dollars." This wasn't a brand new Chevrolet but had been slightly used. "Nine hundred dollars! How much you give me for my Ford?" He says, "Six hundred dollars."

M: Oh, wow! You'd like to get [six hundred dollars] off on it. (laughter)

C: Yeh, in other words, I bought it for three hundred and fifty, about, used it for two years, and when I turned it in, why, they gave me six hundred for it. (laughter) So as I say, things were. . . . And you take eventually, later on, I bought a secondhand Packard in wonderful condition for about six hundred and fifty dollars. In fact, if it was

today, it would probably cost you--if you could get one, it would cost you about eight or ten thousand dollars, comparatively speaking.

M: Yeh. Yeh.

C: So as I say, your standards have gone up. At a hundred and fifty dollars, that I started off with, why, it didn't inconvenience me particularly. I bought a lot and I had it paid for and after I got married, why, I built a house on it. House only cost me five thousand dollars. Today, five thousand dollars'd just be the down payment on it and you'd pay for it the rest of your life. (chuckles)

M: Right. (in hushed tone)

C: So . . . (long pause) You take another thing that is interesting. That is, you take, in regard to politics, for example. Now when a person wanted to run for office, as I say, he has to travel around the island, get on a horse and travel all around and visit all the people and it'd probably take two or three weeks--be gone away from home but in actual cash, why, he either spent one or two hundred dollars. And even as late as 1950, when I used to campaign, why, I never spent more than about five hundred dollars in a campaign. But today, if you want to get elected to office, why, you got to go and give a hundred-dollar plate dinner in hopes that everybody comes and contributes. So life was very, very, you might say, comfortable here on Maui. We never thought--that is, you didn't have the rush and you always got enough to eat, so. . . .

M: Yeh. (long pause) Was meat and things like that grown locally?

C: Hmm?

M: Did your meat and produce and stuff like that come locally? Grown locally?

C: Yes! You take at that time all your local meat, pork, fish--all produced locally. For example, talk about Kahului's railroad, riding back and forth. I used to like to go down there on Saturday afternoon. See, at first the boat used to come up on Wednesday, I think it was, then she'd go over to Hana and then she'd come back and go back to Honolulu on Saturday and, as she went back, why, she'd pick up all the freight. And one of the things we used to ship, coming to Honolulu every Saturday, were--oh, what would be the equivalent of truckloads of pigs. (laughter) Yeh. Kids liked to see them load on the pigs on Saturday afternoon. Yeh, oh I'd say, they shipped down fifty or

seventy-five pigs every week down to Honolulu.

M: Who was raising the pigs?

C: They'd raise them at--I think they mostly were raised up in Kula. See, Kula in those days was quite a farming area. There's quite a number of Chinese up there and they used to raise a lot of corn and they'd raise these pigs and fatten them up and ship them down to Honolulu. Yeh, they used to bring them down from Kula. They had these old ox wagons, pulled by a bunch of oxen. Oxen.

M: Oh really?

C: Yeh, Kula raised a lot of pigs, chickens, and vegetables. Corn and potatoes used to be quite a crop up there. So your potatoes were quite a crop but particularly corn was quite a crop, and raising these pigs. And then of course, there's always been the pastures up there and so all our beef was right in Kula. So . . .

M: What did most of the Hawaiians do for a living?

C: Hmm?

M: What did the Hawaiians do for a living mostly, then?

C: Well, I guess at that time, most of the Hawaiians were either working for the county or working for the railroad. There's those that were around here, working for the railroad. And a few of them raised taro but not so much. A few of them raised taro. Now in Lahaina, quite a number of them at that time were working for the plantation. On H. C. & S. Company [Honolulu Commercial & Sugar Company], there weren't many Hawaiians. I'm sure there weren't too many Hawaiians that worked on the plantation, just a few. And the same at Hana, a lot of them worked from the plantation. Then quite a number up in Kula worked on the ranches. But I'd say that the big majority of them worked for the county, on the road--the road, we used to call the Road Board.

M: I see. Was that a perpetual job, keeping the roads in repair?

C: Yes, because back at that time, particularly, you didn't have this asphalt dressing, you see, consequently a little rain would wash them out. And also, there was the job of extending the roads and things like that, you see.

M: You mean, you didn't have concrete or anything, you just had gravel?

- C: No, you didn't have the concrete. You had gravel and it was--well, what we called at that time--water-bound, see. They just sprinkled it with water and then, by drying, why, it would kind of make a hard surface. Well of course, when you had a heavy rain, why, it kept on washing out and you had to more or less replace it. But, well, they had a force, maybe about twenty-five or thirty, taking care of the roads and so forth. It wasn't until, oh, after the automobile came in, that people began to use oil on the roads . . . (long pause) or macadam, as they call it now.
- M: Uh huh.
- C: So it was the road bunch. And then, like in Hana, they had a lot of work, keeping the weeds and foliage cleaned off the road because of the weather conditions over there, see. So we always had--they were quite an extensive group in the county all the time. And a few other jobs. But I'd say that's more or less what the Hawaiians did.  
Of course, the Japanese were mostly on the plantation. And the Chinese used to be on the plantation but they began to move away from the plantations, I'd say, along about--oh, beginning about when the Japanese began coming in, see. That is, the Chinese got older and they would move away and so forth. And they moved up in Kula, some of them; some of them moved down to raise taro, raise rice; and some went into business and stores and things. Take, at that time, you might say, the street of Market Street, every store was practically owned by a Chinese.
- M: Oh really! (chuckles)
- C: And very few Japanese were in business at that time. I'd say, along about 1905--between 1905 and 1910--the Japanese began to go into business and start off small stores. One of the most interesting things in regard to the Japanese going into business--I suppose maybe you've come in contact. . . . Did you ever come in contact with what they call the Tanomoshi System?
- M: Kind of vaguely. I've read about it or something.
- C: Well, the Tanomoshi System was brought in here by the Japanese and it was very interesting--very interesting--because, say a group of twenty would get together--they didn't make much money--so the twenty would get together and each one of them put up ten dollars, you see. Then they would bid for that. Let's see, you'd have twenty at ten dollars--two hundred dollars, huh? Then they'd bid for that. Each one'd say, "Well, I'll pay so much and so forth." Well,

that was your interest for the money, you see, so whoever made the highest bid--maybe they'd say, "I'll give a dollar a piece to each one of them," or maybe two dollars each, see, so that person would get that pot that month. Then he couldn't draw anymore but he had to still put in his twenty dollars, you see. And the next month, when they'd get together, they'd bring in another two hundred dollars, well then, they do the same thing. Then of course, the guy that didn't need the money, why, he got his share of the interest each time. And that's what they call a Tanomoshi. And that's the way the Japanese would develop their capital to go into small businesses and things like that.

M: That's clever, isn't it?

C: Um hmm. Yeh. There's one case up in the Supreme Court as to the legality of the thing. I can't remember just what it--how to find it right now, because I don't remember the name of it, but I know where the Supreme Court--where they describe what it was and how it worked and whether or not it was an illegal something or other or what. But a lot of these Japanese who today are very, very wealthy, you go back in their history, you find that they got their original start through a Tanomoshi.

M: Is that T-A-N-A--Tana?

C: T-A-N-I. Tanimoshi. M-O-S-H-I. Tanimoshi. [Tanomoshi is the correct spelling.] You make a note of it and ask some of the old Japanese friends about it and they can give you more detail. But they're quite popular.

Now you take the one who organized it, he got the two hundred dollars--the first two-hundred-dollar payment. He didn't have to pay anything. That was his compensation for organizing it, see. So he'd get two hundred dollars but he'd still have to pay that--pay back, you see. And it's just like a kind of a loan, you see, which you pay back in installments.

Well, sometimes this guy, if he wanted quite a bit of money, he'd organize this group, and organize this group, and organize three or four groups at one time, see, (laughter) and he got enough capital to start his business, then he'd go pay it back. And there were several of them that, here on Maui, they got their starts and did very well with the thing.

M: I wanted to ask you. What sort of work--what sort of cases did you handle mainly or what sort of thing were you mainly concerned with as a county prosecuting attorney?

C: Well, as prosecuting attorney, I handled all the criminal cases. Criminal cases. That is, cases where people commit

crimes and that was most of my work. Somebody killed somebody, go ahead and prosecute them. Burglaries, prosecute them.

It's interesting the change, you might say, in the nature of crime. As I told you, we have two courts. We have the district court and we have the circuit court. Back in those days, why, there weren't many traffic cases. In fact, practically no traffic cases. And most of the people who were brought up in the district court were brought up for gambling. (chuckles)

M: Oh really.

C: Yeh. Each Sunday--each Monday morning, we'd have about fifteen or twenty gambling people--people up for--fifteen or twenty people up for gambling. Well, that didn't take much time. I didn't bother about those cases. But--so that if there were the murder cases or assault with a weapon or burglary and things like that, why, those were the type of cases that I took care of as a prosecuting attorney.

M: Hmm. (long pause)

C: So we had quite a number of murder cases here on Maui. About a couple a year. Two or three a year.

M: Hmm. (long pause)

C: A lot of--quite a number of--well, a few burglary cases. But we didn't have too many--when you come right down to it, we didn't have too many burglary cases or even murder cases.

You know, one of the things that, you might say, we had more cases of--of any one type--was cases involving sex--what we call sex under sixteen. See, the Filipino guys came here and, like everybody else, they came unmarried; and from their standards they have back in the Philippine Islands, why, the age of consent, you might put it, was very low. And girls under sixteen or fourteen, why, they'd make love to and first thing you know they'd be having relations with each other and whenever those things would come to the surface, why, it was a criminal offense and we had quite a number of those cases to prosecute. And I guess, as I say, if you'd look back at the records, why, I guess there were more of that particular type of case than there were of any other. The murder cases were very few. And . . . (long pause)

M: What kind of penalty would people get for this sex-under-sixteen thing?

C: Well, I'd say nine times out of ten they probably got probation. (chuckling) They got probation, that was it. I don't believe, in too many of them, that we actually sent them to jail. If there was an actual rape case, why, they probably sent him to jail. But beginning--you see, the idea of putting people on probation really began, I'd say, along about 1920. Before that, almost every case that came up, if it was a felony case, why, the person was either given a fine or else sent to jail.

I don't know when the first probationary law was passed--a law permitting probation--but it probably--I think it was sometime between 1915 and 1920, giving the court authority to put people on probation. So from that time, from 1920 on down, we began to use it, particularly if a person were charged with--on the first--that is, for the first offense. If they came up with the second, third offense, why, probably they'd go to jail but perhaps in the majority of cases, well, they were given probation.

M: Ummm (in hushed tone) (long pause)

C: We had a few--few embezzlement cases. Not too many. So it was, oh, all kind of variety.

M: Uh huh.

C: We had one interesting murder case. It took us a whole month to try. That'd be the--they call it the Wailau Case. That was a murder that happened over on Molokai. It was quite an interesting case. It happened in 19--the man who, I think he was from Honolulu, went up to Molokai. He wanted to operate a fish farm. You been to Molokai?

M: No, I haven't.

C: Well, they have a lot of fish farms over there and so this fellow wanted to operate a fish farm but the fish farm is, on Molokai, shallow water where they build a stone wall around it and then they get mullet in that pond and then they grow and then they ship these to market. Well, he found--it seemed to him, or at least he had reason to believe, that somebody was coming in there, stealing his fish. So he went out one night to check. He disappeared. Nobody's ever seen him since. That was in 1917.

And then in 1923, the sheriff went over there to investigate but couldn't find any clue about it. Everybody didn't know what happened to the man. In 1923 the sheriff went back over there on some other business and somebody commenced talking about that murder case and one of the guys who's--who claimed that he is with the bunch that were stealing the fish, why, he really came up and told the sheriff the true story, what happened. So, based up-

on that and then, from that, why, they made some other investigations and so forth.

Then in 1923, why, they indicted those people for murder and tried the case. It took us about a month to try it and they found the guy guilty, second degree murder. They went to jail for about ten years. I guess that's about the most famous case that I was ever--ever with. They called it the Wailau Case.

Then they had a couple of cases, during the strike time in 1946--in 1946, when they had the first big sugar strike [September 1, 1946]. The unions--well, they started out pretty rough and they not only started to picket but anybody that tried to cross the picket line, why, they got together and, in fact, they beat him up.

And so, I was prosecuting officer at that time, so we brought charges against them and, oh, we had quite a long drawn out case. The court finally ordered them not to--what they call--mass picket. They had to, you know, to let people--allow people--to go around; let them have a line if they want, but they couldn't go ahead and block a person who wanted to go to work.

So . . . however, in the final settlement of the strike, I don't think . . . well, I think they gave some of the fellows who had been charged with this mass picketing, they gave them fines or something like that. But it was quite an interesting case when it did come out. And ah . . . since that, oh, they had--they had several incidences at that time, which were--which could have developed into something quite serious. And I remember especially on--you know the Bastille Days?

M: Yeh, July 14th.

C: Well, July 14th, when Bastille Day comes around, I always think about an incident that happened over Lanai. (chuckles while saying this) This was an extract, about 1947, I think. Yeh, '47. And they were on strike over there and a bunch were trying to load the pineapple barges and they had this picket line, so a whole bunch of them came down there and they rushed these guys and some of them jumped over into the water and they jumped up on there and they were throwing pineapples at them and trying to . . .

M: Who was in the water, the picketers?

C: No, the strike-breakers, you might say. They were in the water. And the picketers, they rushed right up on top of these boxes where they were getting the pineapples from and commencing hitting them on the head with the--hitting them--at them--with these pineapples.

Well, as I think about it afterwards, it's darned lucky that nobody got drowned, because if they'd happened



to konk somebody on the head just as he was coming up in the water, why, he would have been knocked unconscious and he'd have just sunk there, but nobody was--nobody was seriously injured. But I had to prosecute those cases and also some of the incidents that happened over there at Lanai. So, for that time, it was quite an exciting time for all that.

M: I know. (laughs)

C: So that was our experience during the strikes over there. You know, we tried to impress upon the people who were striking at that time that as prosecuting officers we weren't trying to break up the strike but we just wanted to insist on peaceful picketing, as we called it.

And there were some incidents that happened down at Oahu, too, at the same time and so I think--I really think --that the result of our taking rather vigorous action at that particular time more or less set the pace or set the tone, because since that time there's been very little. I can't stand violence so far as the crossing of picket lines is concerned. There have been a few isolated incidents, resulting from the--I mean in the picketing, but, generally speaking, our picketing here has been very, very quiet.

M: One thing I want to ask you before I forget. When you went from here to McKinley, to high school, how many kids were there your age that went to high school that year? Do you remember? Just to get an idea.

C: Well, I doubt whether it was--I estimate, roughly speaking, in our freshman class we had about forty, maybe about fifty. I think we had two sections that'd be about fifty. Your sophomore class was a little less than that and, in your senior class, there was hardly twenty, I think. I think there was just about twenty. So add them all up together, you hardly had over a hundred and fifty in the whole thing. You had fifty in our classroom.

M: But that's the numbers. That's the total number. But how many, like in your freshman class, were from Maui like yourself?

C: Outside?

M: Yeh.

C: Well, there was hardly a dozen of us.

M: From Maui?

C: Yeh. I know there's one or two from Hawaii and there were

two or three of us, I think, from Maui; and I'm not sure anybody from Kauai. I don't think anybody. Well, there wasn't a dozen of us from the outside islands, because most of those who went from the outside islands, they either went to Punahou or St. Louis or Kamehameha--those were the three--because they were boarding schools, you see. All three of those were boarding schools and you'd probably find, oh, about fifteen or twenty at St. Louis and maybe the same number at Punahou. But the reason more of us didn't go to the high school down there was because there were no accommodations.

For example, did you read the story in the paper the other day about Mrs. James A. Rath? It was quite an interesting article in the paper.

M: Oh! Ragna Rath?

C: Huh? Huh? R-A-T-H. She's an elderly lady now, about ninety years old.

M: I interviewed her.

C: Huh?

M: I interviewed her.

C: You did?

M: Uh huh.

C: She and her husband were living down at Palama and I stayed with them, doing the yardwork for them while I went to school.

M: Oh you did! Yeh, she (the recorder goes off for a moment then comes back on) . . . about her experiences there at Palama. And you stayed with them.

C: Yeh, I stayed with them.

M: Ohhh.

C: And, well you see, there was no accommodation for anybody to live down there. The only way you could do it is like I did, if you happened to get a job . . .

END OF SIDE 2/1ST TAPE

END OF INTERVIEW

Final typing by Marjorie McIntosh

Transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen, May 1979.

## Subject Index

- 1        Licencing of attorneys, pre-1900  
          William C. Achi, attorney  
          Judge John W. Kalua  
          Judge Noa Kepoikai
- 2        William C. Achi, Jr.  
          O. P. Soares  
          Olympia Soares  
          Judge Crockett's education
- 3        Myrtle Len Tai Lau Crockett  
          Ah Leong Lau family  
          Hung Wo Ching
- 4        William F. Crockett
- 5        Boyhood memories of Maui
- 6        William Walsh, Examiner agent  
          First newspaper boy on Maui  
          R. W. Filler, railroad superintendent
- 7        Railroads on Maui  
          Newspaper circulation  
          Agriculture on Maui
- 8        Transportation and travel

- 8 Voter registration, early days
- 9 Kaluapapa Settlement  
Election day process  
Maui's court system
- 10 Transportation and travel
- 11 Employment history  
William Francis Crockett  
Sanford Jackson Langa
- 12 Early educational system on Maui
- 13 Labor force on Maui  
County and federal offices
- 14 Salaries and expenses  
Standard of living comparisons  
The Depression years
- 15 Comparative prices of automobiles
- 16 Cost of real estate  
Campaign expenses, pre-1950  
Agriculture and shipping
- 17 Employment of Hawaiians on Maui  
Road construction

18	Japanese and Chinese employment Tanomoshi System
19	Types and incidences of crime
21	The Probationary Law The Wailau Murder Case
22	Labor strike cases The Lanai labor strike
23	High school student body, 1908 Neighbor Island students in Honolulu
24	James and Ragna Rath

## 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.