

Oral History of Ramona Noelani Akiona-Teves

July 26, 2019

Family Arrival in the Islands

Paternal grandfather Lum Cheong, 100 % Chinese immigrated to Hawaii from China. 11/16/1863 – 1947. He came on a boat as a worker. He married and settled in Maui upland nestled against the mountain about three miles from Lahainaluna High School with their nine living children; Lucy, Francis, Mary, Annie, Helen, James, Peter, John and Lawrence. At age 17 Peter with a friend got on a boat for Honolulu and was stranded when his friend left to visit his family. He became homeless and found a pick and shovel job doing roadwork.

Paternal grandmother; Victoria Pualoke Kahimakaualele, 100 % Hawaiian, 11/20/1876, Uluapalaku, Maui.

Maternal Kupuna, born in Ko'olaupoko, Oahu: Kulioholani and Konawahine.

Parents were dad Peter Kaiu Akiona from Lahaina and mother Julia Kamaka/Konawahine Pamaiaulu. She was born in Hana, Maui and was a descendant and heir to the Kuleana lands of Papa Opio, Nakahili & Pamalaulu. They had eleven children, seven girls and four boys. We were 10 living children. My mother had separated from our father and she gave up our rooms for cousins, uncle and temporary visitors. To make room we children slept on the floor. Uncle Lawrence lived with us and took good care of us as family. Mrs. Ah Yuk, Momi and Loretta, my big sister, were so good to us. As a result we became responsible young adults.

In 1933 with Tutu Walanika Paka's ashes in a white cylinder urn that were mailed to us by her son July Paka, from California. I made a comment at the luncheon table, "what is that, toilet paper?" Dad gave me an angry look! The Manoa Valley Hawaiian Graveyard was donated by Queen Li'liuokalani, and my mother and brother, Robert are buried there along with other family members.

When Uncle Lawrence, a Defense worker was staying with us we would awake very early as he ate his breakfast in the hallway-we had blackouts then. We stayed with him as he ate his breakfast and prayed for his safety. He then left for work in the early hours with his co-workers. Later in 1945 he was drafted into the U.S. Army.

My maternal Kupuna is from the "Ko'olaupoko/Waihe'e, Oahu. We are now planning our 2020 Ohana reunion. Each December 31st, since 1965, we gathered with the Hui KuKa KuKa and caroled the traditional Hawaiian New Year's mele throughout Oahu. By midnight at our last stop, we celebrated the New Year at the Kawelo-Ching home in Kahalu'u, by the Sea with fireworks and songs and the best food ever.

Also on New Year's Eve we would have a reverend stop at Tutuwahine Kawelo, an immaculate home. She is the last O'ahu Hawaiian islander permitted to be buried on her land, which we witnessed. I now know my Kupuna Konawahine lived on Kuleana land, Ko'olaupoko, O'ahu next to Tutu Kawelo according to the island map.

Earliest Childhood Memories

I remember as a very young girl being at the Tateyama Camp on the corner of East Manoa Road and Huapala Street. I lived in a rental house. There was a long dirt lane leading to Tateyama Camp and at the far left was the Kindergarten with a huge, old Banyan tree with long roots dangling from it. The rental where I lived was a cottage with a partial open veranda. Later my dad enclosed the veranda with screen so that it was converted into a useable room. Another rental house had long steep stairs in the front leading to the entrance and the parlor. Below and alongside the house was a cement culvert with ice cold, clear, clean running water. Brother Roland caught a large black catfish from the culvert. One of our neighbors was pretty, Mrs. Murakami a dressmaker. Our family was the only Hawaiian family among our Japanese neighbors.

My father purchased the land parcel at 2714 East Manoa Road from Mrs. Mary Ann Perry and he built a one-story, three-bed room sturdy house. He later built a basement. There was an immaculate green lawn that was kept tidy by my brothers. There were colorful Zinnias, which won my brother Peter a first prize at Manoa Elementary School. In addition we raised corn and other vegetables on the empty hillside lot beside the house. For a time we raised a milking cow. Our parents knew how to appreciate and malama their land and home.

Uncle Abraham Maikai told me, each time he returned home from the Navy, that his mother (Mary Ann Perry) was entertaining and Prince Kuhio's carriage was parked on the roadway. Per Mary Ann's granddaughter Mina Souza, she and my mother, Julia (Pamaiaulu-Akiona) were assigned to do all of the kitchen chores and Dad would come over to accompany Mom home after the parties.

Personal History

I attended Manoa Elementary School as children were required to enter school by first grade. I loved going to school. Miss Eva Mitchell was the principal of Manoa Elementary School. The "old Manoa School" was set on a knoll with one Noni tree located across the street from where Manoa Valley Theater and the Hawaiian Cemetery are today. I remember that they served the best of the best hot lunches. Teachers were never angry and music was my favorite class that was held in the cafeteria. Once I was handed a "pitch pipe" to start the class in music.

When Manoa Elementary School was located on East Manoa Road and Huapala Street, I remember listening to the brothers strumming their instruments and singing Hawaiian music each evening. This happened while neighbor children played on the school grounds. After dinner and bath we were allowed to go to Manoa School. There, Kahinu and Dempsey Gonsalves every evening would sit on the knoll at Manoa School with their guitars and sing. I would lie down next to them and listen while others would

run around the school grounds and play. Also each evening (now a teenager) we would gather in our living room with Billy Gonsalves as the leader and arranger and his older brother George (Cookie) and I sang lead and clashed a lot. The Gonsalves moved from East Manoa Road to live on Pamoia Road. Billy formed another band. Later, Billy, who was well loved by everyone, successfully produced the popular "Paradise Serenaders" featuring a young vocalist Rodney Arias. He nurtured young "wanna be's" into the Hawaiian Culture and its music.

I miss our elementary school friends from the Salvation Army and upper Manoa Japanese families. Many moved away when the home developer Joe Pao started to build the Bishop Tract. Recently a memorial service was held at Hosoi Mortuary downtown for James "Blondie" Okamura. He was the youngest and last of the original owners of the Okamura Store on East Manoa Road. I lived 100 feet away from the store.

Annually Billy's niece Agnes (Neki) Kamana and I have an luncheon with Sis Verna, Josiah Bray and Marie Maikai Kam, except this year we also included Sis Dot and Kek Keuewa. Marie is the granddaughter of Mary Ann Palenapa, Perry-Maikai. Josiah is 95 years old and is a "Living Treasure of Hawaii and Manoa History". He stands tall with a full head of white hair like me and he has a sharp memory. He walks and takes the bus for transportation. He is very independent and dependable. He is hearing impaired.

I then attended Washington Intermediate School on King Street. I loved typing class and music and studied well and Placed in the "Horse Race" with other great looking girls. And then I attended McKinley High School where I was a Song Leader my junior year. I could not continue being a Song Leader because I could not afford the uniforms and leis. Instead after school I worked at the Waikiki and Kuhio Theaters in Waikiki. This is where I discovered delicious Chinese Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs in a restaurant behind the Kuhio Theater. I graduated in June, 1946 and have long been a class reunion board member.

As a housewife my earnings for a five-year period were as a hula dancer with the Kodak Hula Show then learned to ride a horse and rode in the Kamehameha Day parades and the Aloha Week parades as a P'au Rider. I became one of the founders of "Hui Holo Pa' U Mena Hoa Hololio, and shared the Art of "Pa'u draping the riders and the Hololio groups.

Along the way I worked at the Catholic Gift Shop on Fort Street. In 1964 I went to work at Sear Roebuck & Company working in the Credit Department. I retired in 1992. I loved working at Sears and retired after a 28-year career. They were like family.

After retiring from Sears I volunteered at my church St. Pius X on Lowery Avenue and also did my Kulioholani & Konawahine genealogy research.

As a side career, starting in 1963, I was a member of the well-known Leo Nahenahe Singers with Mr. Ka'upena Wong for over 50 years in 2013. We were "Live on Stage" performing for "Aha Hipu'u at the Japanese Chamber of Commerce. They recorded four albums under the Trade Wind Recording Company. The group was among the well-known Recording Artists and won a Lifetime Achievement Award. I was also involved with the Hui Kuka-Kuka instructing the Boy Scouts of America in the Hawaiian

culture where they earned merit awards and served two terms as the State Commissioner on the King Kamehameha Festivities. I also was on the Aloha Week Parade Committee with the late Mr. Nelson Fujio (The Parade Man). I am currently a member of St. Pius X church on Lowery Avenue. I have performed at Washington Place for then Honorable Governor & Mrs. George Ariyoshi and visiting dignitaries. Some of these were England's Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, the Prince of Wales, prince Akahito and his bride-to be of Japan and others.

Mr. Larry Hanneberg chauffeured the Leo Nahenahe Singers to the Blue Chateau on Kapiolani Blvd. to sing at the crib side for the newborn Baby, Prince of Tonga. His grandma was being hosted by Kamokila Campbell at a luau in the Kapahulu/ Waikiki area.

My most recent entertainment gig has been on May 18, 2019 for the "Kahauanu Lake Foundation", sponsoring a benefit fundraiser. The donation proceeds went to Baldwin High School where I sang two songs at the Lao Theater in Wailuku, Maui.

Early Memories

I enjoy thinking about the memories of looking out my bedroom window at 2714 East Manoa Road, inhaling the early morning moist air that was always refreshing while looking at the front lawn with dewdrop on the blades of grass. If someone left the house we would know because they left a dark green pathway through the first morning dew that led to the roadway. I loved the "first morning dew".

I also like thinking about the two tall wooden bridges on East Manoa Road, living briefly on the Tateyama Camp and the fat black catfish my brother caught at the corner of Huapala Street and East Manoa Road by our home.

I remember seagulls flying from Waikiki or the south nestled on Wa'ahila Ridge above our home. The sky would turn gloomy and gradually darken and then a storm of wind and rain would follow.

After dinner and our baths, the Gonsalves and Akiona young children would gather at Manoa Elementary School. I would lie back on the grass and listen to Kahinu and Dempsey strums their guitars and sing.

During World War II my uncle had a second hand black Buick. He used this car to go fishing and joy riding with "the boys". My mama had no driver's license so she asked Poli, my sister to drive her to the fish market and to visit family and friends.

Life During the War

. During the war citizens we all adhered to the government Martial Law and curfew restrictions. All windows on homes were covered in black. Automobiles were issued gas ration cards and Block Wardens wore helmets and gas masks while they patrolled the neighborhood. About 9:30 pm we could hear someone tele typing because the nights were still and silent. Everyone was issued and carried a gas mask. McKinley High School students participated in the war effort by selling and buying Savings Bonds.

We were sent out to work in the pineapple fields and we came home completely exhausted and covered in red dirt. We had to ride the HRT bus home in our dirty condition.

During the war defense workers were brought in from the mainland. Our cousins Albert and John who lived with us were drafted into the Army and Uncle Lawrence worked at Pearl Harbor. Mom had them kalua a pig and prepare a luau for Hickam Air Force base workers. She had me featured as a soloist singer and my cousins, brothers Roland and Peter and Uncle Lawrence as musicians. I was given one of the ladies gowns and had to have it shortened. We became the Hawaiian band for mom's friends and her parties when asked.

Unique Experiences in the Valley

We created swimming areas in Manoa Stream and gave each pond a special name. Mr. Kala Kamana, who later became a fireman, and Flora G., would stop by the Maikai and Akiona houses for the adults and girls and little children in their care for a visit. We walked mauka on East Manoa Road to "the first bridge" and then turned right walking through tall bushes and trees to reach "small pond". Sister Josie, with Lulu, Alice and Kala Kamana would go to the bottom of the river and carry out rock and boulders to deepen the middle area of the river and pond. These rocks were dammed downstream to create a wading pool for the little children. The names of our swimming areas were "Cement Pond" by the bridge on Kahaloa Drive off of East Manoa Road, "Small Pond" alongside the Manoa Service Station and McDonald's, "Mountain Pond" that was by St. Francis School off of Pamoia Road and the backyard for the famous "Bill Woolsey" swimming pool.

What I Miss the Most that is No Longer Around

I miss the Memorial Day at the graveyard and the abundance of fragrant white and yellow Ginger (Awapuhi) blossoms. They grew in the water bog back by the Chinese Cemetery, which was my walking route to Upper Manoa Road (today known as Manoa Road) to visit my friend Violet Suehiro. This route is now the Joe Pao subdivision. I DO NOT MISS THE 'BOG' OR THE STREET CAR.

To get to the streetcar we walked from East Manoa Road, a very narrow path alongside Yano Store to reach Kahawai Street and then walk up the hill to O'ahu Avenue. This was the end of the streetcar line. At this point everyone had to get off of the streetcar and the conductor would turn the car around facing south toward Waikiki.

What do I Want Preserved and Maintained in the Valley?

Two legacies of the valley are the Chinese Cemetery and the Hawaiian Cemetery. The Chinese Cemetery contains three parcels or sections and all are well manicured. The Hawaiian Cemetery is located on East Manoa Road and is a legacy from Queen Li'liuokalani. Kawaihao Church is the owner of this cemetery. Kamaaina families, friends and the Manoa community have joined the Manoa Valley Theater with their annual ground and grave cleaning. Recently on June 1, 2019 the Alawa descendents celebrated the 100-year passing of my grand aunt Nakike by doing grave cleaning and prayers, reading of her bio and

enjoying a potluck meal. I was delighted to see mango pickers with long bamboo poles. Today the Manoa Valley Theater employees and the Gonsalves family continue this tradition. Cemetery families and community volunteers (like Malama Manoa) join in the annual cleanup.

The Hawaiian Cemetery became our playground on “Pua Melia” Pickin Day and on Memorial Day. We spent the day with the Hawaiian tutu cleaning graves and watching them, with the “Omole”. Eventually the tutu were walking zigzag like, cussing and slugging. They were drunk, but they did not frighten or harm us and they didn’t fall into Mr. Wong’s taro patch. There were keiki running about, avoiding the “Auwai” waste stream or brook alongside the church, with ice cold, clean, clear water flowing towards Okamura Store.

Other times we gathered Pua Melia to be sown or picking common mango with long bamboo poles with metal hooks at the end alongside the stonewall boundary as you see them today. There were also Rosie Apple trees that stood tall. Plumeria blossoms provided an income for the Gonsalves family. The girls strung “Frangipani for Plumeria” or “Pua Melia” blossoms into leis to be sold when the “Lurline” docked at the Aloha Tower pier at the bottom of Bishop Street. It was called “Boat Day”. Sis Josie was invited to join the lei sellers. She loved it and was given a stipend. Brothers Peter and Roland’s source of income was selling fresh homegrown Avocado and Papaya. They mostly sold to our neighbors at five cents each. They also were Honolulu Advertiser and Star-Bulletin newspaper delivery boys both in the morning and the evening.

The Gonsalves family had the younger brothers climb the trees and pick the flowers, using unseamed rice bags, open flat revealing four corners. The bag was placed against our chest and the two top corners were tied around our neck and the lower bag corners were tied around our waist. This was the container to hold the blossoms. To release the blossoms, we would unite the neck. Sister Josi was invited to join them as she tells me now at her 94-year-old age.

Favorite Foods and Holiday Dishes

At Christmas each child would receive two toys and new clothes for the holiday. Early in the day we each bathed and slept to be awakened and dressed for our prepared nine course Chinese dinner at midnight. In preparation for the holidays our house and yard had a good cleaning; out with the old and in with the new! On New Year’s Eve dad would come home from work, well before 11 pm, and set off the huge fireworks at 12 midnight. We then would go to our bedrooms to pray and thank the Lord for our good fortune and keeping us all well. Then when mom and dad separated, all this disappeared.

Lifetime Manoa Valley Resident

I have lived in Manoa Valley since birth on June 6, 1928. I am now 91 years old. My birthplace was on the corner of East Manoa Road and Huapala Street and I was delivered by a mid-wife. As a very young girl I had the fleeting thought that I would meet a tall, lanky, white man and live in Manoa. The tall lanky husband of 51 years retired from Pearl Harbor Shipyard and then became a 15-year volunteer for the Rehabilitation Hospital of the Pacific. He is now resting above. Our children and I are forever grateful to

Papa Antone and Nani Eva Hall Teves for making it possible for us all to be five generations of Manoa Valley residents.

In 1947 I moved mauka from the place I lived for the first 19 years of my life. In the uplands Antone and I raised out family with a different culture. We had large animals; horses, milking cows, chickens, geese, rabbits, domestic and hunting dogs, wild goats and Hapu'u ferns from the Big Island of Hawaii. There was a nasty, mean turkey named Gladys who attacked or chased Ethylene when she would go into the pasture to pick Maunaloa flowers from the vine to be strung into lei. We learned to ride horses and then rode in the parades in the 1950s.

Also in the 1950s I learned to make butter using "Nucoa" for the yellow coloring and we would visit Mom's house to watch television that came to Manoa in the early 1950s. While watching television the skimmed cow's milk in a clean Mayonnaise bottle was passed around and shaken until it became a moist clump. The Nucoa was folded in and we had fresh butter.

The 2714 East Manoa house and property were sold in 2001 after my Dad passed away and left nine children and over 200 survivors.