

Notes by Jeanette Howard

Compiled from her written reminiscences and from two interviews
(5/29/98 and 5/18/99) by Charles Langlas

Written Reminiscences by Jeanette Howard [Material added from
interview notes is placed in brackets.]

1. family and early life

My name is Jeanette Kaulani Akiu Howard. I was born in Punalu`u, Ka`u, Hawai`i on August 19, 1923. My mom died when I was about six months old from T.B. She and myself were adopted by our real grandmother's sister, Mrs. Adelaide Apo Akiu, and her husband, Mr. Henry Akiu. My adopted grandparents had three children of their own--two boys, Edward and Henry, and a girl, Annie Leimomi--besides me, which makes four. Henry died at a young age.

[Besides her adoptive grandparents' children that Jeanette lived with, she also grew up with George Iopa, who they hanai'd. He was the son of her adoptive grandfather's brother or sister. George Iopa was the one who wrote the song "Aloha Punalu`u." Alvin Moa also spend half his time with them, although he was hanai'd by Pu`u Moa. She called all of these people aunt and uncle because they were older than her. Jeanette's mother's real sisters were alive as well.]

My real mother's name was Mary Manu Akiu. Her sisters were Adeline (Paliuli) and Emmaline (Poupou). As for my dad, I was not told who he was, so until today he is unknown to me. Adeline was hanai'd by the Ne`ula's and later was married to Henry Andrade. They had five children. Emmaline married a Japanese fisherman from Japan. They had one child. He came to Hawai`i working on a Japanese sampan (boat). He got very sick and was put ashore at Punalu`u to die. A tutu found him laying on the beach, still alive, and brought him home, and cared for him the best way they knew how until he got well. He only spoke Japanese, but later learned the Hawaiian culture each day he lived. He also taught our tutu's some of the Japanese culture and told them his name (Koma Kakutani). He was known for throw-net fishing. He died about 1953.

Grandma and Grandpa didn't have much money, but whatever they had went a long way. Things didn't cost much and you got more. Today they cost more and you get less. Edward and Annie were already married and had children of their own [when I was young].

Grandma was a housewife, weaver of lauhala and loulu hats, quilter, teacher and a preacher for the Hokuloa Church in Punalu`u. Grandma made sure that we grandkids went to church with her every Sunday. otherwise we were not allowed to go swimming, which was our favorite thing, to swim till we had purple lips and wrinkled fingers. Voting time Grandma was in charge. We like it because the candidates, and some others who wished to do so, would bring a lot of food for everyone to eat. It was an all day and

part of the evening thing.

We lived in a four-room house--two bedrooms, a parlor and kitchen--with a long front porch or lanai and another one at the back. (The front was facing the ocean.) From the front door you went into the parlor, to the kitchen, then you went to the back door and back porch. The bedrooms were one to the left of the parlor and the other to the left of the front porch (lanai). On the back porch, half was for a dining table with two long benches.

The other half [had a] kerosene cooking stove, a screened in safe to keep leftovers and etc., a place to keep galvanized buckets and pans of water for drinking, cooking, washing dishes, etc. We got our water in buckets from a well, at high tide only. At low tide you were apt to get dirt and whatever that settled at the bottom.

Our outhouse sat far at the back, with one regular hole and one smaller hole for us keiki. We chased spiders and lizards first before going in, used newspapers for wipers after softening. The ink didn't rub off like nowadays.

We also carried water for washing clothes. We filled large galvanized tubs. We used a large smooth stone for a scrub board, which was found at the beach on the shoreline. And we used brown bar soap and a paddle-like stick to pound the heavy clothes. later we had blueing bar soap. When it was low tide, we would take the clothes down to the tide pools and wash there or at Kauila pond (Kawaihū`oKauila). We hung clothes on the line or on the stone wall. Used straight clothes pins, and later the spring kind. Clothes were mostly home-made from pretty, colorful rice or chickenfeed bags. Sometimes Grandma got some nice print materials. Our underwear was [made] of bleached rice bags. [It was made] with a draw string closing. Sometimes we pulled the wrong string. Then we were in big trouble. We ordered shoes from the mail order catalogue--Walter Field. A charcoal iron was used for ironing. Grandma used starch to make some clothes really stiff. We had kerosene lamps, kerosene lantern, and sometimes candles for light. A crank telephone was installed at our home for emergency purposes. One long, 2 short [was our ring].

Around the well, Grandma planted blue hydrangeas, orange lilies, and small blue or purple lilies. Also around the house we had yellow plumeria trees growing and ball flowers we called lehua, of purple, white and pink colors. We also had sugar cane (for eating), sweet potato, papaya, ti leaf, pumpkin, banana, sweet guava, p_hala, loulu and coconut trees [in the yard]. We raised chickens for meat and eggs, and pigs for lu`au (at church conventions) or to sell or give as gifts when there was plenty. [Jeanette's grandparents went up to their farm at Wailau early in the morning to work. They brought down taro to cook. Her grandfather did all of the cooking and the pounding of the taro into poi.] They kept a horse and donkey for transportation--to go up to Wailau (at the foot of Pu`u `Enuhe) to farm taro, banana, sweet potato, sugar cane. They also cared for trees that were already growing there--common mango, rose apple, sweet guava, ti leaf, avocado pear, waiawi, etc. For food we had poi, rice, Saloon Pilot cracker, sometimes bread; also fish, meat, pork,

chicken and eggs; also `opihi, limu, pipipipi, kūpe`e, hā`uke`uke, wana and `ōhua.

Grandma was also Grandpa's eyes at times. Grandpa became blind sometime around his late twenties or early thirties while working as a cowboy at Kapapala Ranch. he was a good husband, father, businessman, fisherman, and a hard worker. Although blind, he could do many things for himself, with a little help from those with good eyes like myself. He also used a cane to help touch his way around. Although he did not drink beer, making homebrew was his side business. We grandkids got to help him by seeing that the bottle is clean, the beer poured in at the same level, and by putting the cap on the bottle. He sold it for 25 cents per bottle. He made a bid for a contract to transport children from Ninole, Punalu`u, Hīlea, Wailau, Kawā and Ka`alaiki to Na`alehu school. Some had to walk down or up to the main highway to be picked up. The bus was at no cost to those families. Children from Honuapo had to pay, cause they were only three miles from school. Grandpa bought a crackerbox-looking bus--no glass windows, hard bench-like chairs, leather curtains that rolled up or down when it rained. Licensed drivers were hired to drive. The contract lasted a few years, till someone else got the bid.

[Jeanette's grandfather was an `opelu fisherman, even though he was blind. He owned a canoe, and would go out with two other fishermen. In the front was the fisherman with the glass box to look for the `opelu school, in the middle was her grandfather with the palu bag (chum), in the back was the steersman. Her grandfather would throw out the palu bag when the first man told him. He made the palu by grating taro and pumpkin. They never used `pae or other chum like they do in recent years.]

My grandparents always told me never to go maha`oi (be nosey) in other people's house. But sometimes I don't listen cause the other people would like for me to come in and play with their children, or to have something to eat.

My grandmother could see when a kai pi`i (tidal wave) was occurring. She would tell us children not to play on the beach, to go up inland and play. If we asked "How come?" she would say, "`A`ole, never mind. Just go like I said." And we did. Later, they explained to me how we get tidal waves. The beach was not like you see today. It was much larger, and all the rocks that you see now were all covered with black sand.

Do you know that anytime you're at the kahakai (beach) you can really get hungry? Anything and everything that is edible will taste good, even if you don't like it. So whenever we wanted something from the kahakai to eat, my grandmother used to take me along so that she could show me how to pick and what was good to eat, or not good to eat. This is when I was about 10 or 12 years old. She would pick a nice calm day with no wind and when the tide was low. She would pack us a little lunch of rice balls or poi with some dried fish or shrimp, spam or Vienna sausage, hard

boiled eggs, whatever was available to take along. Then we would start looking and picking from Pu`u Moa (chicken hill, where the county pavilion is now) all the way down to Ninole. She picked only what we could eat at the beach at lunch time and take the rest home for dinner. Sometimes she picks extra to share. "No waste food," they said.

2. life history

There was no school in Punalu`u during my time. My grandparents had moved to Hilo for some reason during my early years. Kapiolani Elementary in Hilo is where I first started school, in the first grade. I was already seven years old. This is where I got vaccinated on my left arm. Boy! did it hurt, and made a big scar. But to look at it now, you can hardly see it. Then we moved back to Punalu`u and I was bused to Na`alehu Elementary and Intermediate School. Later I shifted to Pahala Elementary, Intermediate and High School. While in Pahala, I lived with my aunt, Annie Leimomi Akiu Boshard. (I called her mom and her three children brother and sister.)

During the summer I worked for the plantation doing "hoe hana" hoeing weeds in the cane fields. I got 35 cents a day, \$12 a month, which I gave to my mom. Those days \$12 was a lot of money. Sometimes the luna (or foreman) would give us workers a break by giving us 75 cents a line if we finished before lunch, and then we got to go home early.

In 1940, which was to be my eleventh grade year in high school, the family decided to move to Oahu to better themselves and took me with them. I finished my last two years of high school at the Wallace Rider Farrington High School there.

[Jeanette's present husband Howard was her boyfriend during her high school years in Honolulu. Jeanette married her first husband about 1943 and they soon moved to his hometown in Virginia. Jeanette has had three husbands. She had a daughter from her first husband, two daughters and three sons from the second husband, and one step-daughter from her third husband.

In 1949 Jeanette came back to Honolulu to live. Her grandmother had died while she was on the mainland. In 1950 she came back to Punalu`u and took care of her grandfather until he died about 1951. She has been here at Punalu`u ever since.]

3. Punalu`u village and changes

[When Jeanette was growing up the sand went far out, you didn't see all the rocks that you see now. On the east side there were still the two warehouses where they used to keep sugar that was shipped out. The cement foundation of the farther warehouse is still there. The foundation of the nearer warehouse was bulldozed to create parking space for the fishermen who use the

ramp. On the hill above was a store.

In the middle of the present beach (across from the Dahlberg house) there used to be a pond, called Ka Wai Hū `o Kauila, that was covered in the 1946 tidal wave. The large pond that's in back of the beach used to be mostly covered with bullrushes (nanaku). Jeanette never heard a name for the pond and thinks probably it was just called Punalu`u.

Before her time there was a schoolhouse at Punalu`u, at the place where her house is now. That's where her adoptive grandmother taught. The Hokuloa church was a Kalawina (Congregational) church. Her grandmother was the kahu or preacher there when Jeanette was young and she continued until she died. Jeanette remembers only two Catholic families, the Bangays and the Kalunas. They went to the Catholic church in Pahala.

She remembers eight families living at Punalu`u when she was young, listed below starting from the mauka side and coming down to the corner, then turning west along the beach road.

- 1) Lucy Ahina
- 2) Iping (a Filipino with a Hawaiian wife)--to the west of Ahina house (after him Ito stayed there)
- 3) Fred Punahoa + his sister Emma and her husband Lohiau
- 4) Sarah Ah Sing (She married Ford, then Hoopai, then Lum Ho) (Lahela her mother, married to Ah Sing)
- 5) & 6) in same house (old Peter Lee hotel)--Kumukahis (children Sam, Hannah, Kalei) and Kuanonis (father Willie, mother Mary, children Willie, Mary and Clement); the two families were related

lot of Monserratt (was no house there; lot was bought by Doc Hill, who built a house and servant quarters; then sold to Pete Beamer, who rebuilt after the 1946 tidal wave and again after the 1960 and 1975 tidal waves; given to daughter Baby Beamer Dahlberg, went to her son James Dahlberg)

lot of Kupake'e in front of it (later taken over by Beamer/Dahlberg)

lot of George Napoleon (Jeanette's family used it to raise pigs and chickens/ now many owners)

- 7) Akiu (on lot owned by Whittingtons and later their daughter and son-in-law Carmichael; after the 1946 tidal wave it was empty; then after the 1960 tidal wave Carmichael built an A-frame house; not rebuilt after the 1975 tidal wave)
- 8) Bangay (they rebuilt after the 1946 and 1960 tidal waves, not after the 1975 tidal wave)

next lot claimed by Bangay's by adverse possession, after their house was washed there by the 1946 and 1960 tidal waves

On the east side of road where the old restaurant is now, the

plantation owned a big house. In the 1950s Kahalewai lived there, then they moved out and it was used for parties and community gatherings.

There were canoe houses built on the beach when she was young, pole frames covered with coconut leaves. The 1946 tidal wave destroyed them, but new ones were built afterward. They were destroyed again by the 1960 tidal wave and not rebuilt as nicely, only rudely.]

The house I was born in belonged to the Whittington `ohana, who were related to my adoptive grandmother. My grandparents were given permission to live on the land for as long as they lived. but on April Fool's Day in 1946 the house was washed away by the tsunami of that day. Later, after the 1946 tidal wave or tsunami, the land was given to one of the Whittington daughters, Margaret, who was married to Cecil Carmichael. The land where I am now living was given to my grandparents to build a house on by the plantation manager of C. Brewer's Hawaiian Agricultural Company, Mr. Campsie of Pāhala. This land then belonged to Bishop Estate and was leased to C. Brewer, and then leased to my grandparents at \$100 a year for 99 years. The Red Cross helped them by furnishing the lumber for a four-room house--two bedrooms, a parlor and a kitchen. Not long after they were settled in the house, grandmother got sick and died, in 1946. I was living on the mainland when she died.

The old Hokuloa Church had to be torn down, due to being weatherbeaten and termite-eaten. It was later replaced by the little chapel that you see now. The only thing saved from the old church was the bell you see.

The demolished pier or landing--you can see the cement pillars of it sticking out of the water. The cement foundations (there were two) were warehouses. Around 1928 they discontinued railroading sugar from Pāhala to Punalu`u. [Before that] the bags of sugar were piled and stored in the warehouses until the ship came to get them. It also housed the train when it was not in use. Grandma and Grandpa used to take us along whenever the ship came so we could watch how they would get the sugar bags and throw them down a chute and into a rowboat. When the boat was filled, the stevedores would row them to the ship, which was docked out where it was deep. From the boat, the bags were hoisted up into the ship. Sometimes when cattle were to be shipped they would blindfold the cattle, tie them alongside the rowboat, and row them out to be hoisted onto the ship. (The blindfold was to keep the cattle from being scared.)

[When Jeanette came back to Punalu`u in 1950, there were still fishermen doing `opelu fishing in the old way with the bag net, as well as bottom fishing on canoe. Later there was a shift from canoe to boat and from catching `opelu with the traditional bag net to catching them by hook and line. You don't catch as many by hook and line. Jeanette thinks probably they shifted because there weren't enough men left for a crew to handle the bag

net.

By the 1960s, several men from Pahala (Lauro, Ortega, Teramoto) had built new canoe houses on the beach for their canoes. They had put outboard motors on their canoes and could go farther. In her grandfather's day they mostly paddled out in front of Punalu`u. With the outboard motors they went as far northeast as Kamehame, as far southwest as Kawā and Honuapo. (But no one went as far east as the park boundary.) In the late 1960s a boat ramp was built where the present one is. (They didn't have permission from the plantation to build it.) Some were using the ramp in that period to launch small boats. Then in the early 1970s Jeanette's husband (Arnold Howard) asked the plantation to bulldoze the area to get access to the ramp area. He had the first big fishing dory at Punalu`u, which he built at that time (the early 1970s).]

4. neighboring communities

Ninole:

[There were two ponds at Ninole. On the Na`alehu side (makai of the golf pro shop) was the pond fed by Pūhau spring. It was turned into a fish pond by a Japanese who lived there. Later it was covered by soil which washed down from the river. On the Hilo side was the pond fed by Kauwale spring. it's still there, but mostly covered with grass. Farther to the Hilo side was a little bay called Kōloa (Ka `Ili`ili Hānau `o Kōloa), where a number of people had built little houses to live. Between Nīnole and Punalu`u is a point of land called Puu Moa, where the park pavilion is now.

When Jeanette was young, she remembers at least seven families living at Nīnole. Beginning at Kōloa, where some houses were built on top of the `ili`ili, pebbles:

- 1) Ikaia (fisherman with a peg leg)
- 2) Kalawaia (with a child Mokulehua)
- 3) Aunt Emmaline Kakutani and her Japanese husband Koma, daughter Nele
- 4) Kale`ohu

probably some others

farther mauka:

- 5) Ne`ula, Kaumakekai
- 6) Pu`u Moa

mauka and way down Na`alehu end:

- 7) Kaluna

When Jeanette came back in 1950 other families had built houses on the Na`alehu side of the present pavilion--Ahu, Mizuno and Cachola. Farther over in Ninole were Poha, Ke, Ka`apana and Kauwe. The 1960 tidal wave took the houses at Punalu`u, but not those at Ninole. Kaluna was the last one at Nīnole. She thinks that maybe he was still there after 1960, but not Poha, Ke,

Ka`apana and Kauwe.]

Pahala and Kapāpala Ranch:

[When Jeanette was young, the people who lived up mauka didn't come down to fish. Her family used to go up to Kapapala Ranch to visit]:

I remember we used to go up to visit `ohana, the Kanakaoles, at Kapapala Ranch and what we do is take whatever we have, Hawaiian style. Hawaiian style whenever you visit somebody you have to take something. You don't go empty handed. And whatever they have they share, like meat and milk. We get it from up the ranch. And we take fish up there or opihi or whatever we have.

[Jeanette remembers several plantation camps above Pahala, Upper and Lower Moa`ula camps, Higashi, Meyer, Kushimoto, Ke_iwa (generally from west to east). Within Pahala were several camps too, called Korean camp, Portuguese camp, Hawaiian camp, Haole camp, Chinese camp, Filipino camp. Generally the camps above Pahala were mixed. Even the camps in Pahala were not just one nationality. In the plantation camps there were some Hawaiian families, but not too many.]

5. Use of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

[a. Her grandparents took them to see the eruption at Halema`uma`u a couple of times, the first when she was about 7 or 8. She doesn't know for sure (she was too young), but thinks probably her grandparents took something as a present for Pele, like one of her grandpa's homebrews.

Her aunt Annie Boshard also took her to pick `ohelo berries in the park, just above Namakani Paio on the caldera side of the road. And to pick blackberries in Volcano village. Her aunt used the berries to make pies, jams and jellies.

b. She taught herself to make haku lei in the 1950s. She just picked it up, starting with what grew in her yard. When she wanted native plants to use, then she started to go up to the park for them. But she gathered like her grandparents had taught her, not to take more than she needed.

At the park she sometimes picks palapalai, `a`ali`i, liko, pūkiawe for lei mostly. She doesn't pick to sell though. Once she used the "moss" that grows on the `ohi`a tree.]