

**OH-204**

**Box # 11**

Brigham Young University – Hawaii  
Oral History Program

**Haunani Kaanaana**

OH-204

1984

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY - HAWAII CAMPUS  
Behavioral and Social Sciences Division  
Laie, Hawaii 96762

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

NARRATOR: Haunani Kaanaana

INTERVIEW NO.: OH-204

DATE OF INTERVIEW: February 14, 1984

INTERVIEWER: Grace Edmonds

SUBJECT: Growing with Polynesian Cultural Center

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

I, Haunani Kaanaana, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, voluntarily give to BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-HAWAII CAMPUS the full use of the information on the described tape recordings and transcripts thereof as a donation for such scholarly and educational purposes as the university shall determine.

Haunani Kaanaana  
Signature of narrator

54-047 Waikulama St. Hauula, HI 96717  
Address of narrator

Graue Edwards  
Interviewer

2/14/84  
Date

Showing with Polynesian Cultural Center  
Subject of tape(s)

## INTRODUCTION

Haunani Kaanaana is being interviewed. Haunani is employed at the Polynesian Cultural Center and she has been employed here for many years in various areas of responsibilities. At present she is manager of guest services. Her responsibilities include supervision over all village areas and personnel, and included are the hospitality employees, namely foreign guides, Laie tours, orientators, canoe tours, tram shuttle guides, and VIP guides. Haunani lives at 54-047 Waikulama Street, Hauula.

Grace Edmonds  
Student

## NOTE

This interview was conducted by a student as part of a class assignment. In most cases the student selected the topic and narrator and also did most of the transcribing, auditing, and editing. The final typing was done by the secretary of our Oral History Program.

Because we tried to get the transcripts into the hands of the participating students and narrators as quickly as possible there may be errors that otherwise would not be permitted. We usually try to clarify statements that may be confusing: in these interviews, however, unclear statements may possibly be found. Our apologies for presenting a less-than-perfect transcript, but this does enable us to get interviews that might otherwise be lost.

Kenneth W. Baldrige, Director  
Oral History Program, BYU-Hawaii

Laie, Hawaii  
5 Oct 1984

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>TAPE</u>	<u>TRANSCRIPT</u>	
Side A	Page	
000	1	Advantages of ethnic background as manager of guest services
118	2	Performance evaluation; training; success of students with PCC experiences; women managers; encouragement to students
333	4	Hula Halau; Hawaiian or American thinking; family background
400	5	Link between alumni president and present employment
431	5	END OF SIDE A
Side B		
000	5	Personal qualities; unfilled wishes
071	6	Europe experience
116	6	Special contribution; "Life is Sweet"
171	7	END OF INTERVIEW

Side A

[000]

INT: As manager of guest services and as a Hawaiian, how does your ethnic background help you in this present position that you have, or has it helped you?

HK: How has my ethnic background helped me in my present position? I honestly feel that as a Hawaiian I am emdued with that aloha spirit; it's just part of being Hawaii I think. Because of that I have been able to get along well with all of these different ethnic groups, and also because of that I have been able to find a way to help them perform in their positions or function well in their positions.

INT: That leads us on to our next question. You have to deal with students from many parts of the world. Have you seen a change over the time that you've been here?

HK: There's been a little change. When I first came here in '66, the attitude of the students were of children in a toy shop. They enjoyed everything. They enjoyed performing; they enjoyed doing these demonstrations; they enjoyed talking with people. This was in '66, and this attitude prevailed up until '72-'73. They thoroughly enjoyed what they did. They did everything you could ask them to do, anything. They would sing and dance and talk and just, just do everything and you could tell they enjoyed it. I guess things change, even down in the islands, things change. Attitudes change, hence when those students came up from the islands after 1972; it was different; they were different. I remember, they were brought up differently. Now they have become farther removed from basic Polynesian culture, removed from basic Polynesian cultures and traditions. When they came here to the Polynesian Cultural Center, a good many of them learned much about their cultures here. They didn't come with it from the islands. Many had become westernized, so it was not a child-in-a-toy-shop attitude anymore; it was a sophisticated child in a toy shop. They already knew what everything was about, or so they felt. It was not a feeling of an outburst of spontaneity anymore, they were more reserved; they were not prone to outbursts of hospitality as such, and I found it a little different. I am working with them now to try and re-live that attitude or acquire that attitude of spontaneity. It's working to some extent . . .

INT: You've had many positions in the center. Have you seen any progress?  
[100] Do you still use implementations, like for instance as personnel manager?

HK: Well they're still using the same personnel action form that I initiated when I first began in the personnel office. We're also using the same performance evaluation that we initiated when I was there in personnel at the time Dennis Shipley was here. That was back in 1973. When I worked in maintenance, I saw the need for a work controller. I was there to help with the ground-work of starting a position for work controller, and they're still continuing with that position. It is something that works really well in maintenance.

INT: What about training?

HK: Oh training! Training is one of my favorite subjects. I think if I was not a manager of a department, I would like to be a trainer. I acquired an affinity for training when I worked in personnel, and it was my responsibility at the time to orientate all new employees to the company to the policies of the company. I found it very, very enjoyable. Well! Through that I realized that a person can do anything if he knows what it is he is supposed to do. So I felt if I ever did become, or work in an area where I'd be responsible for a group of people, I'd make sure there'd be some ongoing training, and when I moved into the department-- It was called at the time Cultural Orientation--this was the department that took care of the guides, Laie tours--we initiated the training program. Myself and Afani [Hokum] who was my assistant at the time, and we used Johnny Mapu, I remember to head that section or that area of responsibility called training. We got some good results from it. I find that training is very, very important. Anyway, no matter how small a job you have, you need to have some training; you need to train the employees to know, not only what to do, but how to do it.

INT: This training program--were you out on a limb of your own with other managers? Was it favorably accepted or did you have to prove it to the Center, to management as a whole?

HK: Well, no. Management realized that training was essential. Throughout the Center there was always some type of training program. I don't know why it never continued and expanded to become more easily acceptable by other departments. I'm sure that's what caused the demise of training, so-called training as it used to be. There was always some sort of training here at the Center, under the direction of Corporate Administration. For some reason it always seemed to fade away after a few years. I always wondered if we were not able to choose the proper personnel to head it out. I used to think about that. But I knew the fruits of training was all important and so I continued it whether other departments agreed with me or not. I am not sure. I can't remember any feedback from any managers. I don't think I did it with the consent of other department managers. I did it with the consent of my own immediate supervisors, and corporate administration was in favor of it. I'm sure they would have been in favor of training within any department if the department managers had proceeded.

[200]

- INT: Let's talk about statistics. Can you think of any students who have succeeded in their vocations because of their PCC experiences?
- HK: The one that comes to my mind immediately is Shu Narayan, who is controller of Westinghouse in Honolulu. Bret Chedester and Kyle Sanada, working as assistant managers at the Turtle Bay Hilton. They're just apparently new; they've just left the Center. Afani Hokum who now serves as manager here at the Center over a department I think he's our security. Bode Uale who worked as a guide on Laie tours; who is now in his last year at law school. When he left Laie to go to school at UH he became a supervisor in the Waikiki office.
- INT: The next question is, you are one of the few women managers at the Center.
- HK: Very few.
- INT: How does it feel?
- HK: Terrific! Especially to be managing one of the largest departments here at the Center. Now I say that facetiously. It's great. In Polynesian, really, this is unheard of. In Polynesia, men do not refer to women as their boss.; maybe it's not only Polynesia. But I know for a fact that it is that way in Polynesia among Polynesians. I even had a difficult time when I was first put into this position. All the supervisors--we called them chief at the time--all the supervisors of the villages were very unhappy and they even thought to have a meeting with the general manager who was President [William] Cravens at the time; they wanted to have a meeting with him to ask that he not place me in this position. It just wasn't Polynesian for these men to have a women as their boss. It caused quite a stir in Laie even. I caused a stir in the community.
- INT: Did it intimate you in any way?
- HK: Not at all.
- INT: What encouragement would you give to a bright aspiring young student?  
[300] How would you encourage that student?
- HK: Do your best at what it is you're doing, and never, never, look and see or complain about what they other fellow is doing, or not doing. If you do your best at what you are doing, those most concerned about you will recognize it, and you get chosen to be a leader, only because you are an excellent follower.
- INT: You're walking through the Hawaiian village. Does it bring memories of the past for you, any feeling?
- HK: No. I must confess I am a child of the twentieth century. I've never lived in, you know, in these circumstances. I've always lived in a nice frame house with hot and cold running water from



the faucet. I've always [ had an (laughter) ] indoor bathroom that flushed so I don't know what it's like. I really feel far removed from Hawaii as it is represented here.

INT: So that answers the question why you've joined the Hula Halau.

HK: Yes. I joined the Hula Halau because in my position I felt I needed to learn more of my Hawaiian culture. When I was growing up--and I'm past forty now--but when I was growing up here in Hawaii, parents were not allowed to teach their children to speak Hawaiian. We were not allowed to be Hawaiian; we were to be American. So my mother being very obedient, taught to achieve. Most Polynesians are not taught that way; they are not to be that way. You'll notice that that's why many of our Polynesian students here seem a little intimidated by aggressive American friends.

INT: How did you think: As a Hawaiian first or an American?

HK: I think first as a Hawaiian. I honestly feel I'm Hawaiian. I know I'm Hawaiian. I love being Hawaiian. I think my personality shows I'm Hawaiian. I think my Hawaiian presents itself in those circumstances where I need to draw upon my Hawaiian heritage, my Hawaiian background; my Hawaiian-ness, which I learned from my parents. Although they wanted us to be Americans, my parents were very much Hawaiian, and we learned from example. You can tell me what I should do, but I will copy what you do. I feel I copied my parents, who were very Hawaiian.

INT: Did your parents encourage education?

HK: Up to high school, yes. They, my mother especially, insisted that everyone graduate from high school. She was not a--how do you say--she was not too much for us going to college, and none of us before me, no one, in my family had gone to college; there were nine of us in my family. No, none of us would have gone to college.

INT: You were the baby?

HK: No, no, no. There are five ahead of me and four after me. How many did I say were in our family?

INT: Nine [brother and sisters. There were originally eleven children, eight girls and three boys. One younger brother died in infancy, the other two were killed in Korea and Vietnam wars. The eight girls still alive.]

HK: Well there were nine, just not all of them are here today. I'm not the baby; but I was the first one to go to college.

INT: As [BYU-Hawaii] Alumni president, is there any link between your present employment now?

HK: Has my employment here today helped me as alumni president?

INT: Is there any link between the two?

HK: Any link between the two, I don't know if it has anything to  
[400] do with my position. I think it has more to do with my accessibility, my being available. [laughter] I'm more accessible to the association, by being here at the cultural center. I don't know really. I haven't really thought about it if there is a link between my position here and my being alumni president.

INT: Well, I was thinking. You're in amongst the hub of the students, and Alumni is usually there to help the students.

HK: Oh! O.K. Well, then it's helped. My being in this position really does help me as a board member of the association, because I'm aware of the needs of the students, and this year on the Alumni Association, we are concerned with recruiting more Hawaiian high school students, to come here to BYU. We are more actively engaged in recruiting with the BYU advancement team under the direction of Charlie Goo, who also is a member of the Alumni Association and we've become more involved. We are aware that there is a high mortality rate. Many of the Hawaiian students drop out of school after their freshman year. Some of them even after the first semester, and we are concerned. We want to be able to keep them here, and my being in this position gives me a chance to meet some of these students and find out what it is that causes this high mortality rate.

INT: Let me turn over the tape.

[431 ] END OF SIDE A

Side B

[000]

INT: Now tell me some of your personal qualities that you would like to generate.

HK: Oh, love of life, love of doing. I remember when I was a cashier in the box office, I enjoyed doing that because that was what I was doing. Sometimes I think it's not the way to be, but I honestly enjoy whatever I happen to be doing at the time.

INT: O.K.

HK: And I want other people to feel that same way. I want people to enjoy what they're doing at the time and not worry about what they could have been doing, or what they would like to be doing. Circumstance have found them to be here as the manager of the guest services department, and so enjoy it, and then tomorrow if you're given another position as trainer, enjoy that too. You

cannot do a good job if you are sitting in one position worrying or greeing over what you are not doing. Yes, I want people to realize that; I have found many people like that. They fret over things that they cannot change, and then they don't do a good job. But if they would enjoy what they are doing, no matter what it is they're doing, they'd find life much more fun to live.

INT: So that would say that you don't have any unfulfilled wishes.

HK: Oh, no. I have fulfilled all that I've ever dreamed of. For a while I came to an impasse, you know, I was becoming bored within myself and the things around me, and I hadn't set any more goals. I was busy looking for tangible goals, looking for higher positions, more money, and I forget there are other goals that are intangible that people should strive for. My one goal is to not complain. I learned that I was a complainer; I didn't think I was, but people close to me said, "You know, all you do is complain." I did not realize that. So, I was keeping score and I found that yes, when things displeased me, I went and complained. So I've decided that my goal would be to accomplish things without complaining.

INT: What did you miss most about the islands when you lived in Europe with your husband?

HK: I lived eight years away from the islands, and I missed Hawaii. What did I miss? The friendliness of the people in Hawaii and yet when I have lived away from Hawaii, people were very friendly to me. I think, you yourself can create whatever atmosphere you want. Now at first I say I missed the friendliness of the people, but maybe not really. I think I missed my family more than anything. I missed my mother. My mother was my great friend; she was my mother, but she was my bestest [*sic.*] friend. I think I missed her more than anything.

[100] Anyway, I found people very friendly. In fact we have many friends, very close friends, from our stay away from Hawaii. No. I think what I missed about Hawaii was my family first of all, and the fragrance of the islands. You ever smelt the ginger on the way to Honolulu? You miss that. You ever smelt langling in the community? Gee! You miss that. You smell the pikaki; the smell of the fragrant flowers here in Hawaii. You miss that when you go to the mainland. All you smell is the diesel oil.

INT: As a Polynesian, is there a special contribution that you feel Polynesians can make to the world through the Center.

HK: I think Polynesians can teach the world . . .

INT: Someone has said they have heard you make the comment, "Life is sweet." Is it?

HK: Of course; life is the greatest thing I can think of. Only God

kenw what he was doing when he put men on earth to experience life [laugh]; mankind himself don't realize that He really put us here on earth because He knew life was sweet and it's just each man himself needs to realize that. I think if we were to look at the Polynesians here, they know that life is sweet. I think Polynesians know they were put here on earth to enjoy life, because life is sweet and maybe, that's what makes Polynesians different from other people in the world. Polynesians never came to experience drudgery, unless they lived on the very lowest scale. In Hawaiian culture, they were the Ka'iwa's, or the slaves. But I think in general, Polynesians can teach other people of the world to enjoy life and have good fun.

INT: Well, that ends our interview. I chose you because you have lots of qualities that I feel young people whether they be Hawaiian or whatever culture, could read and learn from. I asked you a question back here. Tell me some of your personal qualities, [such as] enthusiasm and energy.

HK: I'm not sure what qualities are?

INT: Well, you know, those are some of them that I had spoken to three people who know you. Some who know you real well, and some who don't know you real well. They all said enthusiasm. They said they feel when they're around Haunani, it's like a cracker. You let off all these little sparkles; it's sparks going everywhere, and it illuminates.

HK: Is that good?

INT: Yes.

HK: Good.

INT: There were a lot of things that I wanted to add on but I've enjoyed my interview.

HK: Well, thank you; I hope I've [laugh] answered the questions properly.

[171] END OF INTERVIEW