

**OH-445**

**Box #21**

Brigham Young University – Hawaii  
Oral History Program

**Kalo Soukop**

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-HAWAII  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
Behavioral and Social Sciences Division  
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Kalo Mataele Soukop

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## INTRODUCTION

Kalo Mataele Soukop came to BYU-Hawai'i for school. Her father felt that she would be safe in any part of the world where the church was. She was determined to work hard to see her parents again or to help bring her family to Hawai'i so they could experience what she was experiencing there.

Kalo was born into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is a very strong member. She has been doing temple work for eight years and says that she couldn't think of giving it up. She owes her success and life to the faith she has in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Kalo has been very successful in her life. She started with a shop and then opened many other shops, dealing in wholesaling and retailing. She shares her views on life, success, and achievement in the following interview. Kalo is currently the President of Kalo South Seas Travel and Tour and the Director of Kalo South Seas Review Polynesian Show.

This transcript contains an interview of Kalo Mataele Soukop. She was interviewed by \_\_\_\_\_ on March 1, 1994. Student oral history secretaries carried out various processes: Noreen Orta did the transcribing and editing and Candice Nozaki completed the auditing and final assembly. "[OH-440]" and other such notations tell the reader that an interview of that number has been completed with that individual and is on file in the Oral History collection at BYU-Hawai'i.

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Laie, Hawai'i  
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SIDE A

KS Kalo Mataele Soukop. I am the President of Kalo South Seas Travel and Tour and I am the Director of Kalo South Seas Review Polynesian Show.

INT Kalo, I know that you went to BYU-Hawai'i, what made you come to BYU-Hawai'i for school?

KS It wasn't really my choice. It was because of my father. If you recall, my father is Sonilono Mataele and he is the second son of Sosia Mataele who invited the missionaries to come from Vovaa to Tonga Ta and then he felt that because of the church he wanted me to come to Hawai'i and further my education because he feel that in any part of the world where the church is it will be that I would be very safe to be in Hawai'i with the church.

INT Can you give me some of your first thoughts and experiences that you had while being at school that made you want to be successful.

KS Yes, I think the most thing that I thought about when I first came to Hawai'i that I've been away from so long and far away and very lonely from my parents and I thought I would never see them again and made me have this ideas of really work hard and commit myself that someday I would return to see my parents because you know when I came here I didn't have any money or anything and I didn't think that I could ever go back home. I thought if I graduate from Brigham Young University-Hawaii then I would either work or to go back to school then but I really want to work and help my family to come here and to share with me what I have experienced here.

INT Why did you go into travel and into the show?

KS Well, really first, my family back home Mataele used to have a big department store that's where I first started. When I came here to Honolulu, moved to Honolulu, the first thing was that I wanted to go into business as retailing or wholesaling. So my brother Kauwasi and I went into wholesaling, every big department store he met here in Hawai'i we furnished them with goods from Tonga and from Polynesia. And then when I thought was a little girl back home that I used, we used to have a little store. And I used to work in the little store after school so I thought, wow, why not, go into retailing because in the past we had that and I thought instead of just having wholesaling, retailing is the money doubled. So I went in and applied at first at International Marketplace in 1964 and got into Hilton Hawaiian Village and I opened there and of course little did I know that I would go out and have so many shops but then I guess it just tied in together with the wholesaling and retailing and having experience from a little girl to sell things. So, it was just part of me, retailing a business.

INT What is your philosophy about life and achievement?

KS To me it's beautiful to achieve and beautiful to think that you're successful but I think it has to go hand in hand with helping. You know, community service. [Like] helping people. That's what really makes you feel good inside, because it is no use of just doing well and show to the world that they make it. To me, to make a person feel good that you share your time and your talent and what you know to help other people; to make them like you mentioned in the earlier part to be successful. Successful is not just to be lucky, no, you have to really work hard, you know. Nobody else can do it. You have to do it [yourself]. That's the only way that you can prove that you have to work hard and not be selfish, work hard and try to share your time and whatever you have. You share with people and whoever and help out. Reach out to people and help [them] because it's not too good because there are people who are very successful and they are very selfish. That's good for them since that's what they want to do but with me it would be, I feel much better to know that I helped, a day that I helped someone and you know that I must say this to whoever is listening to this. There is nothing in this world that you

cannot get. If you think positive and work hard you can do it and you can make it. To me always, and complimenting people, and complimenting your employees, complimenting people that work and tell them the truth about yourself--what you do and instead of hiding it you should share with people what can you do and it's up to people to do it but I think if you always try to relate to people and try to help them and tell them how its not hard, if you get there and work hard and do it. You can do it. Anyone can do it. I consider myself always that I was penniless and I was nobody and I came here and didn't know anyone but if you be humble and always remember to know the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in him, have faith in him and do all those things. Someone, is not because of your power, not because of your knowledge, not because you're smart but because you have that belief in him and trust in him he will be with you in anything that you want to do.

INT You know, you've basically just answered all the questions that I had but one thing that comes to mind. When I was coming here a girl had asked me and I told her that I was coming to meet you and she said, "Oh, she's a beautiful Tongan woman." She was complimenting everything nice. She said you were beautiful; she said you were talented; she said you were kind and generous and everything else because she had danced at the nights show several years ago. It's the very thing that you've given me. What is success to you?

KS Success to me like I mentioned is not money. The love and the things that you offer to people; the service you offer to people; the love that you show people too. Money is not success. No. What you have done for the community and what you have done for the church and what you have done for everybody to share what you have and that's where I just came from. I'm in the, with The Honolulu Rotary Club that is the mother of all clubs that we meet every Tuesday that is the thing that you put in and help and whatever money we donate in there involves overseas students and we help the sick people. We have the poor people we help. In anything, to me that is another part of the church. It is not only what we do for people to know but what we can offer and give and I feel that whatever I do there on Tuesday I am helping all over the world and its not just Hawai'i. All over the

world we can reach out to Europe and [the] kids that come here as exchange students and I have been with them for many years and I feel that is what you say being successful [is]. It's not just because of you and your family alone, you have the whole world that you have to reach out and help.

INT You know Kalo, when I first came here I really admired you. As a student looking up to people like you I really really admired you even up to now and I still look up to you in so many ways. I was just wondering you know, people started off with selling leis and selling you know everything else can you tell a bit of that story? How you felt at the very beginning of a new life?

KS Yes. See, when we first started here in Honolulu when I came here of course I had no money at all and I used to go and buy my clothes from the Salvation Army you know they have some good clothes there and I said, "Why not?" You know, one thing that I always think that I be humble. That I need to go according to what I had and every penny that I worked and earned I saved because I had plans that I wanted to help my family to come here. But to me whatever you do it doesn't mean nothing because I mean whatever you do to earn money it doesn't matter if you sit at the office or if you're selling leis or you're cleaning the kitchen; it's whatever you do to earn money that is important. It doesn't matter. Some people maybe it's very important to think that I'm working as a secretary at the President's office but to me it wasn't. Even now, it is not. to me, as long as you have a job, you are lucky. Whatever job you have. If like, lots of Tongan people do some yard working. If you do that, do that and do the best and be honest because you will know it in the long run because instead of do one then jump to another because the other one is doing that and make money there; concentrate what you can do and stick with it. Because that is the problem. Because even my sisters and my nieces are still trying to sell leis. Why not? One lei is five dollars and they have twenty leis; they make one hundred dollars a box. Where can you go to make that everyday. And that is why I keep telling them. My nieces and nephews, I still have that at the marketplace and I licensed that spot that they must be there to sell and they earn and most of my brothers and sisters they own a



home through selling leis. You know, to me what is the difference? It's you earn money and part of it and be sure that whatever you sell you earn money to pay your tithing of ten percent. And remember that job and money that you have is not yours. It will be taken away from you perhaps tomorrow because it belongs to somebody and if you honestly pay a tithing you will . . . more will come.

- INT That's what I wanted to get at. You didn't just become successful. You worked hard and you start when you young and you worked at it. With our own people I know you've said a lot of things too about taking the [kool-aid and putting it into the ground] but what would your advice be as a successful woman and as someone that people would look up to--to our own people.
- KS See, my advice to all the Tongan people [is] to send your children to school. I think that is your best investment with your children. We tend to look back at ourselves like myself and the Tongan and we don't have a good education but with our children they are our future and we wanted our children to have a better step above us. That I think is the most important advice that I want [to give the] Tongans. If you have your children here please advise them to go to school and support them in anything. If they are good in sporting, support them in sports. If they is anything you see in your children that are good that tie in with school, support them because someday their children will be better. See, what I look at is like a step. We are the bottom step as parents. The next step will be our children and their children will go up to a better step and will go on and on and on and I think Tongan people will be in the future will be; we will find them in government here in America; we will find them in many many good positions not only with the government but in schools, in church, in everything. And I advise the Tongan people not only to live the American custom and American ways but I ask you to teach your children our Tongan custom. And I thought that the Tongan customs is one of the most beautiful customs. You know, I will never forget when I was raised back home my parents taught me when they called, "Kalo" and I said, "Ko'au!" instead of said yes. We don't say that. Respectfully we say Ko'au and I think we should show our children that there are a lot of Tongan customs that is beautiful to

apply to our children's lives. If they grow up with that they will never forget and the love that we have as Tongan people and our love for each other will never be taken away because it is a part of us. That is what I recommend and advise all the families to help our children to grow and to have that feeling of trying to reach out to everyone. Don't forget, we don't just say Tongan, we are all Polynesians, are one family. Instead of saying that the Tongans are better than the Samoans or the Samoans, no, we shouldn't think like that. We should have all the Polynesians to love each other and work together and try to help our children because they are the future of our lives.

INT You know, when you say that I thought back to . . . I think it was 1991 it was a graduation year that they gave you the most prominent prize for service at BYU-Hawai'i and then a few days after that I'm not sure whether it was before or after that you got [to] be called as the first woman on the Board of the Polynesian Cultural Center and it was . . . to me I had thought that seeing you successful and everything else ended here, but it seemed to me that your success keeps going and going. Will success ever end for you, or do you plan to live a fulfilled life and keep on going?

KS Well, like I sold lots of my shops and I thought that you get to a certain age you are not younger anymore and you think of certain things that you can do when you get to simmer, retire. So I thought, well this is the best thing in my life to get rid of and to little and maybe do lots of traveling and see places and do things and still be involved with community service and with people and do things with the community. But then whatever is added up for people to honor me or to recognize me here and there that is its something is above me. In other words, it is someone else and it is not me, you know what I mean. When Elder Oaks, one of the apostles when they came here to interview I understand were about fifty to one hundred people. They were interviewed to look in to someone to replace someone in the Board of Directors. I didn't dream in my life you know, I always said to myself, "I am just a little Tongan woman, I'm nobody. I'm a workaholic." My husband said I'm a workaholic. And I love to work. I don't look forward to any success anymore. I felt

that I get there already and I'm just staying normally as a housewife and work in church, work in the temple, teach primary, be involved in our ward and you know, I am very satisfied. I am very happy. And I don't look for anything anymore. Why am I sitting here in this office? I really enjoy talking to Tongan people that I never really did in the past. You know, with the Tongan community I am the President since 1984 and they keep voting for me to be a President. Of course we only met once a month but only few executive people that we meet. With this travel agency I get to talk to Tongans. Almost every Tongan call to this office and they ask, "May we speak to Kalo?" In the past, I was so busy involved in other businesses. This is the first time since Tupou left that I really got involved with the Tongans and I talked to a Tongan everyday and I really enjoyed it. I really did enjoy it because I didn't have this opportunity in the past and everyone and I told Koa that I would answer the phone because if they are Tongan I would rather talk to them you know. And I love it. And I return every phone call and lots of people at the conclusion of our talk they would say, oh, ko Kalo koi, is this Kalo?" And I said, "Yes, this is Kalo." "Oh, we are very happy we talked to you." And I said, "Everyday if you want to talk to me I am here." And this is one of the most successful feeling I feel that I deal with my business that I get involved with Tongans everyday.

INT You know, as you're talking, I'm admiring you so much because I see the status of where you're at and like you said before I guess it's just like the . . . it's just what she said your . . . can happen because I know Kalo, as a young Tongan BYU-H student basically nothing is hard for Kalo Mataele because the world is so big, it was like, it was difficult for me to communicate my real feelings because I was so shocked that you were talking to me and to have you be accepting all the time to spend with me and I know you do good for the purpose of education for the students and I. I would like for you to say something to the BYU-H students. What would you say to them? You said it to our people but what would you say to the students that are getting an education now.

KS Well, to the student that I think to always go back to the same thing that I said in 1991 when they honored me at one of your graduation

dates. That it is very important for you students to come to Brigham Young University to go to school but remember that there are a few non-members but you have your choice to come to Brigham Young University. Brigham Young University you don't come there just to study in order to get your Bachelors or your Masters but they are mixed with some religion and I think that is the beauty of Brigham Young University and I feel that I should say to those who are non-member or anyone as a student to take advantage of those classes. There are some religion classes. Even though you don't believe in it but at least you learn and learn about it because it is just so beautiful and I cannot see anyone intelligent that would deny it. I know it is very hard for some of your parents to accept it but at least you have the knowledge of it and the beauty of it because I felt that I was born in the church; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but more when I came here and learned at the University all about the deep end of the church more that I appreciate and more that I make myself as a woman this day because of the humbleness that was taught from the church. Of course you came from your parents and you came in to some of the faculties that are members of the church and all the principles and the ordinances of the gospel is just the same and you know its up to you students to take your choice which way you want to go but the principles and ordinances of the gospel is all the same. That you and I know it. You read it in many many books that its up to you or me to take which road that you want to take. To be humble; to be open and try to do your best in school because not everyone is grade A and not everyone is smart and I don't consider myself as a smart woman but I consider myself as a working woman and try to love and try to be humble and try to do my best whatever I can do. In whatever field I know I can do, I will just try to do my best. So that goes to all of you. Those of you who are Freshman and those of you who are going to graduate. When you go out don't forget, you go out and find the job that you like the best and get involved with the church; get involved with the community and then you have a full life and get involved with your family.

INT With all of that, we've talked mainly with success but I know that, you've probably mentioned this but I would like you to mention it

again because it motivates people. What is some of your trials that you had gone through or name one specific trial that you remember clearly in your mind and what you did to overcome that trial.

KS I think that the trial that I had when I was single was that I had to decide because I was engaged four times. I think that is the biggest thing in which I had to be strong and try to not to get married just to get married. There were many trials that I went through and when I went home to promise my family I would bring them and I said to myself, "Sacrifice your life to try to do what you want to do and if this is what you really want to do is to get married and that's it or keep your promise that you made to your family that I would come back here and work and bring all of them here to Hawai'i." And that is a big trial for me because first, second, and third and two of them married to both first cousins of mine; the same two men and the third one which didn't work out and the fourth one, I guess I was ready. But that was the biggest trial that I had in my life to try to give up the men that I thought that I would get married to and I said, "No, I'm sorry, I am not ready to get married." It's not easy to be engaged to someone and say I'm sorry, you can take back your ring because I am not ready to get married. But there was the ring and it was not fair with any man for me to marry to and then work hard and give all the money to my family and forget about my husband and family. That was a big trial in my life when I was younger.

INT Kalo, any last words? Any last words that you would like to give; I guess I've just been sitting here overwhelmed by everything that you say.

KS You know, it is almost all the same and it comes down to the same and it goes to anyone that we must remember Jesus Christ lives and listen to our prayers, and whatever yours or mines is his. For us to remember that. What he did sacrifice, his atoning sacrifice for us--for all mankind to maybe to be saved because of him. And that is one thing that I always remember. If he can do it for us why not we return it to him--Jesus Christ. I think I want to conclude it with that and I hope that we will all learn something that there is nobody perfect; we all try everyday to be perfect. That is the most

important thing is to try. I thank you very much.

INT Thank you.

KS There is nothing on this earth that you cannot do. And believe me you can do it but is hand in hand. Don't go there and say, "I am smart, I am strong, I can do it." It is through your prayers that someone will help you. And you have that beautiful warm feeling come to you all the time because of that. And direct your ways not to do this, do this and many many times that i go through that with businesses; the strongest voice comes to me, "Don't do that!" and you have to obey to that little voice; the prompt that comes to you all the time. It's so important that people maybe sometimes they are too busy and because certain people are very proud. No, I don't want to do it because I can do it. I'm strong. But I tell you, you cannot do it without the spirit. If you want it, it will come to you if you accept it and take it and ask for it. When I see people I don't criticize people. When I see people and they try some businesses and stuff and it doesn't work I say to myself because they think they are smart and that they have lots of money and they can do it by themselves. You cannot do it by yourself. You have to ask. It says in the book of James, [that] Joseph Smith did it. He didn't hide it. He put it in the book for us to read it and follow it but we people do certain things in different ways but comes down to the same thing. We pay our tithing. Many times the IRS don't believe me and they want to see the letter from the bishop because I felt that I'd rather give more to Heavenly Father because I felt that I'd rather give more to Heavenly Father because it belongs to him. [For] whatever he wants to do with it. And it makes me feel good but then you see many ways of coming here and there. You know, we have many Tongan students who are very, very smart and I respect them if they use it right, [with] their knowledge, they can do anything. That is my advice to every student and every Tongan. Be humble which I have said many times and be with the person who gives us everything under this earth. Always. On our wall is a picture of Jesus Christ that I hang there. Any difficulties I have I just look at it and my heart melts and I say that's it. That's the person that I should look at. You know, it's just beautiful. And I think if we all have that in

us there is nothing, nothing that you cannot do. You know, when I went to college it was you know, I didn't have the better education like you kids now. But when you come out [its] how you use it is what's important. There are a lot of people I talk to with Masters and you look at them, and they can do things but not successfully. And then I say, "Why?" There is something lacking in what they are doing. Of follow what it has given to us wasn't hiding from us. It has given us many many books and it is up to us to follow. And that is what is in me, in everything I do, it shows. My husband was a strong Catholic and he's baptized. I never dreamed [he would] but he did. And I asked him what made him and he said my example is very great and I hope someday that he will take me to the House of the Lord to be sealed for time and all eternity. That all those things that have come first in my life. I am always down here and Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is always above me. That is what is the model of my life. That is my goal that I hope someday I will never stay away from that because once I stay away from that I'm nobody. And I'm sure when they picked me to be in the Board of Directors that there are hundreds and thousands of people who are much smarter than me and when I hear the [compliments] that this is the best thing ever happen to our Board of Director's to have you--Isn't it so--I cry all the time when they talk like that. It's so humbling for me. I said, "Kalo, remember that it's not you, it is somebody else with you." And it's so beautiful. And I'm thankful for that. And I'm thankful that I have the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to lead me to the thing that honored me here. You know when the Girl Scouts honored me as a business woman in Hawai'i for one year it just you know, couldn't believe and it's when you're around with the County's wife and the Mayor's wife all the time and have lunch and dinner and things and I keep saying, "Remember that it's just a little Tongan woman but someone is with you all the time." When you drive, do you think about them. You know, Jesus Christ. Do you think about them all the time? It's like me, I do. Always thank him you know. Lead me. Please help me. Let me be honest with people. We [were] suppose to go this month to Israel, my husband and I, but the biggest strongest feeling told me, "Don't go!" This is not the right time. "No! Cancel. I don't feel good about it." You just go along. Lots of us we listen to people telling you "do this or don't do this." You

know, its good to talk to people but the best thing is the little voice that is coming to you. That is the best thing. Better than anything. We believe that every person has a mission of your own. Our church believe in that. We have the President to lead us because he is above us but we as individuals have our own leader for our own family; for our own doing; for our own thing that we do everyday. But if we are very careful and try to concentrate that is part of my working in the temple that I love every Saturday that I go there and I sit and just see. Monday through Friday I work for myself and Saturday and Sunday, only two days of the week that I commit myself to Heavenly Father. That is not enough. You know, it is not enough. But you can do lots of other things. Service is part of it. Many many other things. Like now you're married and I think we women of course our husbands have the Priesthood; they are the leaders in the house. But still we are the biggest to convince them the best thing to happen in the home. Like I mentioned before, I'm not perfect, I'm not perfect but we try everyday to be perfect in our doing things and being with people and all those things. And few people talk to me and surprise me sometimes you know saying, "You don't need to work anymore." Why not? "You should travel around the world. Why do you sit here and listen to the Tongan people?" I love it. I do. I really enjoy it. Love it. I don't know. Some people have a very different outlook in life. I don't look at that like that. I said, "This is a beautiful opportunity for me." All these years I never did. And this time I do. Maybe some people interpret it different. I can hire someone to come int but I love it. I love to do it. Maybe this is a part of my mission to be with our people and to mingle with our people. I mean, I don't mingle but on the phone talking with them and I learn about certain families and I ask. I think some people think I am nosey. What family are you and where do you come from and . . . it's so nice. It's so wonderful. I want you to know that they put me in the Board of Directors for Brigham Young. They call and I told them, "Oh no, I don't want to commit myself to too many things and I cannot meet and I cannot be at your meetings. And they said, "No, no, no. You and Lokelani Lindsey are the two ladies and we want you two to be in it and if you cannot come to the meeting at least once a year for your testimonial Sunday. [laughter] I said, "I accept it, but remember I don't want to accept it because I cannot be in every meeting cause I



have once a month meeting with PCC and we have four times a year meeting with PCC--meeting with the Board. And I cannot do it all. My husband wanted me to quit temple and I told him, "No!" "No! No! No!" It's a no no. It is part of my commitment that I cannot give that up. I think I've been there for eight years now. But I enjoy. Just like love it. It just like a part of me. You know that I'm the type that once I commit myself to something I will just stick it and do it the best. No matter what. In anything that I do. I use to run around every Sunday to visit sick people in the hospital. I find time right after church. I tell my husband, "Oh, I'm just running here and I'll run back." So that's what I tell him. And I have two cars. So I'm running to the hospital and see the old people and give them a balloon or . . . it just makes me feel good. Old home and see them and I feel that it's just a little part of me) But I tell you when you do [it], makes you feel good. That is the most important thing--inside. What you feel inside here and not what the people see because you are dealing with yourself. Are you satisfied? Are you happy? You know, I still have lots of things to do. To reach out to people and of course community service but I cannot do it all. I can do it but at least I do it like he wanted to sell this business and I said, "No, what am I going to do. I'll die to just sit at home. I loved it. It's just beautiful. I have my niece will be start working here next week.

END OF INTERVIEW