

Oral History Program

**OH-449**

**Box #21**

Oral History Program

ODETTA B. AHNEE

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**BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-HAWAII  
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**ODETTA B. AHNEE**

**INTERVIEW NO:** OH-449

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:** February 15, 1998

**INTERVIEWER:** Kaleo Aki

**SUBJECT:** Kamehameha Schools

## INTRODUCTION

Odetta Ahnee was raised in Lanakila and Keokaha on the Big Island. She was the youngest of two brothers and three sisters. Odetta currently resides in Hilo. She has been married for twenty-three years and has three children.

In this interview, Odetta describes her application into Kamehameha schools and how she didn't want to leave her friends at Hilo Intermediate school. Odetta was persuaded by her parents to go to Kamehameha school. Odetta describes the adjustments she had to make and how she came to enjoy going to school at Kamehameha until she graduated.

This transcript contains an interview of Odetta Ahnee. She was interviewed by Kaleo Aki on February 15, 1998. Student oral history secretaries carried out the various procedures: Nani Kellii did the editing and auditing and Candice Nozaki did the transcribing and completed the final assembly. "[OH-324]" 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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SIDE A

INT Today I will be interviewing Odetta Ahnee. My name is Kaleo Aki and the subject of this Kamehameha schools. Mrs. Ahnee, where do you live?

OA I come from the Big Island in the city of Hilo.

INT Okay, and how long have you been married?

OA Married twenty-three years.

INT And, do you have any children?

OA I have three. A son, Nathan and two daughters, Leann and Lacy.

INT Okay and were you also born on the Big Island?

OA Yeah, I was born in Hilo, born and raised there.

INT How many were in your family when you were growing up?

OA I have two brothers, three sisters, I'm the youngest.

INT And, okay you're the youngest. Were you raised in Hilo?

OA Yeah, raised in Hilo.

INT What part of Hilo?

OA I was raised in Lanakila then I moved to Keokaha for a little bit.

INT Now, when did you first apply for Kamehameha schools?

OA I think my mom put an application in about October of my sixth grade year.

INT And do you remember why you applied or why your mother applied?

OA Oh, my mom applied because my sixth grade teacher recommended that she put an application in for me and I didn't want to go.

INT Why didn't you want to go?

OA Cause, I was going to go to Hilo Intermediate school with all my friends. Nobody else was going to go there, that I knew of.

INT So how long did it take you till you found out you were accepted or yeah, till you found out you got accepted?

OA I was accepted in April of my sixth grade year.

INT And so did it take a lot of persuasion for you to go to Kamehameha schools?

OA Very much persuasion. I always said I wouldn't, I wasn't going to go. I was at home during the summer, "I'm not going to go." I was on the plane, "I'm not going to go." I was at the school, "I'm not staying." (laughter) And then my mom left me there.

INT So how did you feel about your parents wanting you to go?

OA I thought my mom hated me or she didn't like me. But I knew that wrong cause I was the youngest, I was spoiled, I was her pet. But later I realized that she wanted me to get a better education. I think I could have gotten it elsewhere too.

INT Okay, have you ever been to Kamehameha schools before that?

OA Never been there, never heard of Kamehameha schools before my sixth grade year. Never heard of anyone that went there.

INT Have you ever been to Oahu before?

OA I've been to Oahu to visit relatives and my grandma but never, so I went school.

INT So, what were you expecting if you never knew anyone that went there or know anything about it?

OA During the interview, when they interview you for the school they tell you about the school, when you live in dorms and they show you pictures. So I knew I was going to live with people, from different islands and that would have been adjustment. Then I learned that I had to do my own laundry, you had to eat the food they serve you and you had to go to class. And no, I didn't know anyone; no other student from Kapiolani school got accepted that year. And there a whole bunch from Keokaha school that got accepted. So I felt lonely and I didn't want to go. And that was hard, that was hard to be an only person from your school there.

INT So how did you feel when you got off the plane, then you said you didn't want to go?

OA Yeah, I didn't want to go, cried till I went to the school, I cried while I was unpacking and cried cause my mom had left me. And went to see the house mother, the principal, of my auntie, of my dad and nobody could stay home.

INT So no one went on the plane with you?

OA Oh, my mom took me, my mom took me and then I went to school and I checked in. And the junk part was my first roommate, came in, moved in and the next day packed up and moved out. So I was in my room, all by myself for one week, till they got another boarder. And so I cried every night cause I was in my room all by myself again.

INT So how did you adjust, did you, how did you adjust to . . . ?

- OA Well, you make friends, you make friends and the hardest part was at night, I would sit by window cause I'm all by myself, look out the window and all night you hear fire engines and the rescue squad or the noise, the siren going off. And Hilo, you don't even hear that, unless there's something drastically wrong and so was like constantly every night. And I cried every night cause I miss home and I miss my family and my mom didn't want me home. But I stayed cause she said, if I don't stay, she's going to come and get me and she's going to give me lickins. So, I was going to stay cause my mom would do that.
- INT So how long did it take you before you started to fit in or got used to it or . . . ?
- OA I think after my second roommate came to school. She came on a Sunday and so made me feel good cause she was crying. She was crying more than me cause she was, they just uprooted her from her house and brought her into school. So she even more traumatized than me. So them we just came real good friends. So I think right after my second roommate came in, it got better.
- INT And how long did you go Kamehameha schools?
- OA I went to Kamehameha school for six years, from seventh till I graduate.
- INT . . . Till you graduate. And did it get easier as the years go by?
- OA Oh, got much easier. You become your own person, you make your own decisions and whatever decisions you make, you take the consequences for those decisions.
- INT So, you didn't get as homesick as before?
- OA Never got homesick after that. Totally enjoyed school and the freedom. And the good thing about being a boarder was you got to go to every activity whereas day students only got to go to activities their parents allowed them to go to. So it's the best being a boarder.



- INT What were some of the things that you, that boarders had to do, I guess too, like chores or . . . ?
- OA Oh, everyone, everyone had to get up early and if you a boarder you, we had family style meals so we, you either had to be a dishwasher, a waitress, or hostess and you had dorm job, you had to either clean the laundry room, clean the bathroom, there was always something in the dorms that needed to be done before you went to breakfast. And then came back and got ready for school.
- INT And how about like weekends and stuff, did you guys get to go out and . . . ?
- OA There was only one, one day on the weekends that you could go out, and that's Saturday. And the bus took us down to the bus stop and we could go out and we had to come back Saturday afternoon, back to campus. And you only got weekend passes if you were going off island or there was a very special occasion that weekend. But very rarely would they allow weekend passes, so it's either just Saturday passes.
- INT So, what did you guys have to do on Sunday?
- OA Sunday we all had to go to church. School church. We all had to wear white, white everything and then you come back for Sunday dinner and then we nap or quiet time for two hours and then you can take a couple hours and we have dinner and then we sleep.
- INT Were you involved in any extracurricular activities or anything?
- OA Oh no, too busy.
- INT Were there any classes that you remember that you really liked?
- OA I liked biology. I wasn't real good in science but it was an interesting class. And the teacher didn't like me too much but it's okay, you know, do the frog thing and learn about the body and I liked

that class a lot.

INT Was there any classes you didn't like?

OA I hate history, don't understand history, don't understand social studies, that's Greek and don't understand nothing.

INT (laughter) How about teachers, is there any teachers you remember or a favorite teacher that you remember?

OA My favorite teacher was my English teacher, my sophomore year, she was a single, Japanese lady that really, she's very kind and nice and we always kind of, we played tricks on her. We would put snap pop things on her chair and stuff and she always laugh, she never got angry at us and she was real kind and she would answer any question we ask her on any subject, she was never embarrassed and so she got real close to all her students.

INT How about a teacher you didn't like?

OA I didn't like Midge Moss. She was our PE teacher in seventh and eighth grade. She was tiny, little lady, with a loud voice and she made us work very hard and I didn't like PE. But she made us do it and I remember our eighth grade year when we went to class and there was this brand new boarder, she was in our class, eighth grade and then she said, oh, who's the teacher? I said, "It's Midge Mossman, I don't like her, she's mean." And Ms. Moss then heard me say something she said, "Odetta, what did you say?" I said, "Midge Mossman is mean person." But I got passed that.

INT Is there a day that you really remember at Kamehameha schools or . . .

OA Oh yeah.

INT . . . Whether it's bad or good?

OA Oh, eighth grade I had a really bad year, I had a lot of detention and one Sunday afternoon we came back, the buses brought us back to

prep school and we went to Sunday dinner and we came back and there was this bus in the parking lot and we all said, wow, where's the, somebody's going to go some where, the bus is here. Well, the vice principal came and everybody has to nap on Sundays. And she said that I had detention so the detention was I had to wash the bus. So the bus was there for me to wash the bus. Ladder came and I had the soap and everything so I was washing the bus all by myself, she left me to go something, she came back, when she left, I washed all the inside of the buses, the bus with soap and water. So all the chairs were soaked in water, so when she came back, I had scolding for doing that, I had to wash everything in the bus, outside the bus, wipe it with towels and then I had detention the next Sunday again.

INT So eighth grade was a bad year, you got into trouble?

OA Bad year, bad year, I had detention every weekend.

INT So was your dorming experience good at Kamehameha schools, all in all?

OA Was good, when you went up to eighth to ninth grade, that was high school, it was time again for boarders, ninth grade boarders, big sisters who were seniors to help us adjust to boarding life at high school. And I had a very nice big sister, very sweet, very kind, very studious. So if ever the house mother had problems with me, she'd called my big sister who would give me counsel and I would listen cause I love her very much.

INT And do border houses, when you went home during holidays, was that hard to . . .?

OA It was good going home but you always felt like you was the, I was a non-person. I would meet friends of my sisters and they would say, wow, where'd you come from, we never saw you before? It was like, Gee, nobody talks about you. We just, I'm invisible person all the time you're gone. But no, was good. Also my brothers, they all gritty-gritty, go back to school.

- INT So how did your other family feel about you coming home for holidays?
- OA I just think they thought the brat was coming home.
- INT Did you like to go home?
- OA Oh, I love going home. My mom was there, she and I would always play. That first year, when I went home, she was at the, my seventh grade year, we went home for Thanksgiving and I got off the plane and she was there and she was crying and crying. And I said, why you crying, you sent me away. I didn't want to go. And after that, it was okay. It was good.
- INT How did you feel about going back after summer time for after . . . ?
- OA I love going back, I love going back to school. Cause you always anticipate your friends coming back and all the things you're going to do for the new year. One thing we always looked forward to when we were in eighth grade was to go ninth grade to girls school. And when we went to ninth grade, they changed it to co-ed. So went to a regular co-ed school. Never went to girls school.
- INT They were changed when you were there?
- OA When I went ninth grade, they changed it, to make it co-ed. That was the first year of co-ed.
- INT Now that, if there was anything you could change, about going to Kamehameha or anything like that, you think, what would it be?
- OA I'm glad I went. It was a good, greatest experience. But I think maybe not so well, seventh grade is too young. You don't know how to do a lot things, you're very immature in your thoughts and you just do a lot of things that are not good. So ninth grade is a good time you, knowing that I could.

INT Would you like, would you encourage anybody else to dorm if they wanted to?

OA Dorming is good but I would, I never encouraged my family to go cause that would be one leaving home and I never wanted that to be cause it was always like, they would leave home too soon that I didn't want them to leave any earlier.

INT Is there anything else you would like to say or comment on?

OA Well everybody . . .

INT Looking back, I guess?

OA Looking back in, as I hear people talk about class reunions and stuff in Hilo, it's great cause they see their classmates, they see all those friends they grew up with and I hardly ever see any of, that I went to school with. But except for just one or two friends that I have on the Big Island. So it's hard when you don't, when you have all these great friends you meet, one's from Midway and all the other islands and then you next see them . . . I envy people that live on the same island as their school. They are able to see some of their classmates.

INT Okay, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW