

Oral History Program

OH-450

Box #21

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

CAROL HELEKUNIHI

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**BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-HAWAII
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
Behavioral and Social Sciences Division
Laie, Hawaii 96762**

CAROL HELEKUNIHI

INTERVIEW NO: OH-450

DATE OF INTERVIEW: March 1998

INTERVIEWER: Eden Mannion

SUBJECT: Perils of Carol

INTRODUCTION

In this interview, Carol Helekunihi speaks about her perils. She made a decision to move to Laie from Hilo on the Big Island. Her husband and son got to attend school at the same time. She speaks about her trials of getting a reliable car. She also talks about the house she currently lives in and how she came about getting it, it was a miracle to her. Her biggest struggle was getting her son baptized into the LDS church. Now she is looking forward to her first grandchild.

Carol currently attends Brigham Young University-Hawaii campus. She is a History major and is planning to go to graduate school. She would like to be able to study the history of modern China and wants to learn Chinese some day.

This transcript contains an interview of Carol Helekunihi. She was interviewed by Eden Mannion in March of 1998. Student oral history secretaries carried out the various processes: Candice Nozaki did the transcribing and completed the final assembly and Nani Keli did the auditing and editing. "[OH-321]" and other such notations tell the reader that an interview of that number has been completed with that individual and is on file at the Oral History collection at BYU-Hawaii.

William K. Wallace, Director
Oral History Program
Brigham Young University-Hawaii

Laie, Hawaii
April 29, 1998

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SIDE A

Page

- 1 Decision to come to Laie through a prayer; moving from Hilo to Laie; husband and son going to school together at BYU-Hawaii.
- 2 Son went on a mission; moved up to the Point; husband went to school at UH-Manoa to play football; miracle of moving in her present house on Pauahi street.
- 3 Going to school; praying for a reliable car.
- 5 How great grandparents became members of the LDS church; great grandparents were really good friends with Queen Liliuokalani.
- 6 Queen becoming member of the church; Carol deciding to become a History major; plans after graduation.
- 7 Like to be able to study the history of modern China; wants to learn Chinese.
- 8 Current goal is to graduate from BYU-Hawaii; decision to stay in Laie; biggest struggle.
- 10 Getting son Isaiah interested in the church; Isaiah is baptized; Carol is looking forward to her first grandchild.

END OF INTERVIEW

SIDE A

INT Okay, Carol why don't you tell us, tell me the story then of why you decided to come to Laie?

CH Okay, this is really cool. We were a family with a father, myself and the kids and I had just given birth to two in a row. I can remember us all saying a prayer one night and we were all on this one couch, on our hands and knees and we were praying, we'd asked what should we do, you know, we'd asked the same question. While my husband at the time was saying the prayer, I saw this, I saw Jesus with his hands around the David O. McKay building facing out with his arms around the flags, you know, where all those round flags are. And I thought oh my gosh, my husband is supposed to go to BYU-Hawaii and he had wanted to play football at Manoa and so when prayer over and I told him about, what I saw, he wasn't very happy about it. But in like the following week or two, we had gone to see Bruce Meyers, who at the time was part of the stake presidency in Hilo. And Bruce was interviewing my husband and they were talking about options, you know, what to do now and at the very end of covering all the things that my husband wanted to do, Bruce in his prayer that they were having, said, and there's one more thing I need to ask. And at that point, my husband started to cry because he knew at that time that Bruce was going to ask him, should their family move and should he attend BYU-Hawaii? And sure enough that's exactly what President Meyers had asked. And so like compilation, they both knew that that is what we were supposed to do.

So, we did, we packed up cause he, I think he was a sophomore or just in the middle of his sophomore year at UH-Hilo and we got rid of everything, we didn't sell anything, we just gave it all away. We took whatever we could afford and we came over a little bit ahead of time, found a place on Moana Street. We moved in there and my son, Isaiah had already had a semester out here at school. And so he spent the second semester living with us. And it was really nice, he and my husband were going to school together and then my husband,

let's see, what happened? We moved. Isaiah went on mission and we moved up to the Point and we lived in Brother Stone's house. And it was really big and parents lived with us and it was a nice place. But then my husband . . . (tape difficulty)

Okay we were living up on the Point and okay, so my husband still wanted to play football at Manoa, even though he was told that there [would] be more people cheering for him on the other side of the bound if he stayed and went to school here, by being able to spent more time within the temple and that spiritual kind of thing but he still wanted to play football. So he did, he started commuting and he got into school and boy, then he got really involved in the football training and while he was training, he didn't really want to come home as often and he started spending a lot of nights away and then pretty soon it was obvious he didn't want to be part of a family unit anymore. So we, my mom and dad wanted to move into town, which they did, we found a house by school that we could afford, just our family and so my husband moved out, my parents moved out and myself and the kids moved into the house that we're in right now on Kulanui, Pauahi street.

So then I prayed, I thought, well should I go back to the Big Island, what should we do? And finally this house was just a miracle, there was just no other way to explain it. We looked at everything but I knew the house we were going to be in was going to be close to school in case we didn't have a car that worked, which did happen and I knew that it would be affordable for our family. And so we got down to ten days we had to move. And in that ten days we, everybody's going no, no you'll never find it. So my friend that was working on campus, she had a lady come in, and the lady believe it or not had paint on her sleeve, so my friend goes oh, you painting something. She goes, "Oh yeah, we're painting this new house, we have to move out of our house and we're moving into a new house and we're painting." So my friend goes, "Which house are you moving out of?" And found out it's the house that we're in now and she found out and so I called the owner of the house and they said, "Well, we're holding because somebody else wants to come and look at it." And I go, "Okay." But I knew that was the one because the way it happened

was just a miracle. And another three days now, we got like seven days left that we had to be out of our place. And in those last three days, the couple that she was waiting for, she decided not to wait for them and so she called me and she said, "Well, why don't you just go ahead and take the house." And so, even though I knew that that was our house, I still had those panicky three days where, you know, I wasn't sure, positively sure but anyway, it worked out. And I knew that we'd be in this house for the four years cause I had prayed.

And I knew that I was supposed to go to school but I didn't have like this huge, GO TO SCHOOL! What I got was, okay just take the next step and then the next step. So the first step was to take the ACTs and since I've been out of school for almost thirty years, I just thought oh, I can't take this. Well, I did enough, the math was horrible but the other areas were fine. And so I passed and I'll be able to get that part done and got all the paper work done and I got all the scholarships from Kamehameha school, it's just everything, you know gradually seemed obvious. Okay, so we knew that that's what Heavenly Father wanted us to do. And we knew that we'd be in this house for the four years that we were here. And ton of stuff happened in those four years, it's just that Heavenly Father helped us through each and every moment of our lives because it's too hard. We had to have two jobs and carrying fifteen credit hours and making sure the kids didn't go to jail or do something bad, you know, trying to be a full time mom and dad, student and everything else, it's been really hard. But Heavenly Father has come through on everything that we did.

Anytime there's this enormous obstacle, like just recently we had this car and it was just, yeah, I had paid five hundred dollars for it, like a year and a half ago and it ran and the car was running okay but the body just completely fell apart. One door flapped open anytime we went around the corner, the other one was hermetically sealed. And so I prayed, I go, "Oh Heavenly Father, we need a car, we need a really big car." And we had like a thousand dollars and we had, we looked at everything in that price range and really this is not too breath taking it yet. So all the kids prayed, we prayed. I put my name on the temple prayer list and then one day I had this feeling

that we were going to have a car. It just wasn't ready yet. And so I stopped panicking and I said, "Okay, Heavenly Father we'll do this in your time." And I told the kids, I said, "Let's not panic because Heavenly Father will handle this, it's just not ready yet." So about a week after that happened I get a call from the financial aid office, it's a BYU, and they said, "Well, when are you going to come pick up your money?" I said, "I already picked up all my money, I don't have any money left." And they reminded me that I had a second portion of this loan that I signed up for which I totally forgot about. So I went, I ran in the next day, I grabbed it and I was walking back to my piece of junk car and the test girl, Anna Lee, she stopped, I said, Oh, congratulations on, you know, winning all your whatever, titles and all this stuff for tennis. She says, oh thank you, by the way, do you know anybody that needs a car? And I knew that was the one, I just knew it from the moment she said that, that that was the one that Heavenly Father prepared for us. So I didn't have all the money she needed but what had happened for her, she had planned to move to Atlanta in ten days and all of sudden things didn't work out with her VISA and she was told that, by immigration that she would have to go back to Sweden instead of moving. So where she had planned on shipping her car to Atlanta, she no longer was gonna, you know, it wasn't an option because Sweden was just too far away to even think about shipping a car. So she needed someone in a hurry and we didn't have all the money but she said, well you can pay the rest later. So I just said well, that's it, that's the one. And I also knew it was going to be a four door and I also knew ahead of time it was going to be five speed and I knew it would be a car that everybody that knew us would have to say Heavenly Father had to do this cause there's no way she could have done something like this on her own. And it's true, I couldn't and so it's pretty cool, so we got the car and some how we were able to pay her off, even before she left, got all the paper work done and don't ask me how that happened, I don't have no idea. So every, you know, every time when I can't do it on my own, I know as long as I do my part then Heavenly Father will come in. I mean I can't just say, Oh do it. I still had to go out and do the leg work on everything. Okay, any other questions?

INT Have you always been a member?

CH Yes, always. My great grandparents had five children and the oldest daughter was nineteen and got so sick that the doctors told her that she was going to die. And the parents lived in Hawaii and I think they were part of a Catholic church and they had a friend who's name was Peter Kealakai Honua. And he was an elder from the LDS church, the Mormon church. And he came over and he healed her, he gave her a blessing, used his priesthood. Bless her, well the parents were obviously were just so happy that they wanted to know more about the church and they subsequently, the entire family joined within a month or two of each other in 1895. They have all of their five children, they were all baptized and the parents were baptized. And then because they were already settled, they had a couple of houses and they would pick up the missionaries, at the dock and take the missionaries to their one house. And the missionaries would learn the language there. And then once they learned the language, the missionaries came to their other house and lived with them in that house. That was mission home. So that would have been 1895.

And then they were really good friends with the Queen. Queen Liliuokalani and they wanted her to join the church. So when she was put under house arrest, they went and they visited her, every day. And she, my great grandmother would wrap things up, really nice, food or whatever, wrapped up in newspaper and give it to the Queen. And this newspaper, and I thought eew, that's so ugly. But she wasn't allowed to have the newspaper. But the guards, because thinking oh, it's wrapped, it's something wrapped in this, thinking it's wrapping paper and they weren't thinking beyond that, that was her way of giving her what was going on outside of the palace. So every day she would take so that she could read the newspaper. And her husband, my great grandfather, because he was part of the Queen royal guards, there was, all the royal guards would be put in prison. And so he fled, he lived in a cave and they would bring him food until everything kind of settle down. And then she was able, the Queen was able to get out and travel. But she was concerned for the saints in Iosepa, in Utah. And so they all, all of them, my grandparents and their families and great grandparents. They had gone to Salt Lake and when the Queen got there, they, all the people in Iosepa, they

held a reception for the Queen at the hotel in Utah, who she had a chance to meet with the Hawaiian people. So, let's see, then she was on her way, the Queen was on her way to Washington. So anyway, at some point in time, they were all back in the islands and my great grandfather asked if it would be okay for George Q. Cannon to come over and give her a blessing. And the Queen said yes, she would like that. And so he blessed her. And within, oh, sometime from that, she decided to join the church and so he, Abraham Fernandez, baptized her a member of our church.

INT That's a really interesting story.

CH Yeah, so we've been members ever since.

INT What made you decide to History major?

CH I always wanted to see the gospel show up, historically. You can see principles of the gospel if you look back in other people's cultures, different part of the world. It always fascinated me to see the little pieces of gospel doctrine and gospel principles historically. I've always been fascinated with that.

INT What do you want to do after you graduate? Are you going to graduate school?

CH If they let me in (laughter). I don't know if they're going to let me in, I have really low GRE results and I feel it's fair because I'm not very smart. And if they really want to know how smart I am, that's it, not very. But my grade point average is okay, it's just that I can't write papers. I can research papers, I love that but I can't write a paper. So I can, I've done a lot of leg work, I've gone down and applied for UH Manoa, History Department, Graduate school. And I talked to the head of the program and I him, you know, it's something I really want to do, so he said he'd let me know in March or April. I'm just waiting on that.

INT What do you want to do after you get your degree, like if you go on afterwards?

CH Well, I'd like to study the history of modern China cause I think that China is going to open up it's borders possibly. For sure China is going to be more of an economic power than it's been in the past. It's four point three billion people, you know, talking about the field, what is the part of this. That you have the temple missionaries, older couples, they're in our ward and they said that in just two months alone, they've handed out the Book of Mormon to hundred people from mainland China. So it's something that I'm interested in number one because I don't think we learn enough Chinese history in our school systems. And we give a lot of credit to some European country where really the credit was due to people in Asia. You know, maybe they develop things soon or whatever. So I don't like that slight, you know I'm not threatened by the fact that some other culture came up with something while we didn't. So I think it's a lot more fair to give that type of information to the kids and then as China emerges, we won't have that fear of the unknown. We'll have some background as to their history and their culture. For that reason and because I think it's the gospel is an important thing, we're going to have an opportunity to preach the gospel. We aren't always prepared.

INT Do you want to go to China?

CH Yeah, I'd love to go there as a, you know, a member of the church. Not so much as a teacher because I'm not smart enough to teach but as a well to go there as another missionary.

INT Would you ever think of learning Chinese?

CH I have to, yeah, I would have to and I think that's possibly the hardest language on the face of the earth.

INT I heard it's supposed to be. There's so many different dialects too.

CH I mean, I'm proud of myself for having the English thing down so I can't imagine how I'm going to take on Chinese.

INT What are some of your goals, right now?

CH Well, to graduate. As a same person.

INT Is it so great because you're so close to it?

CH Yeah, four years ago, I was old, I was fat, I was ugly and I was stupid. (Laughter) And now, this is four years later, I am older, fatter, uglier, but not quite as stupid. So, for me, that's like this like, yeah, we can do this, this is pretty cool.

INT Have you thought about staying here in Laie?

CH I don't know, I mean I totally, I know this sounds like in an Ouigi Board but whatever Heavenly Father wants me to do, I would do that. I prayed about the China thing and then I prayed for confirmation because I like Chinese food and that's it. You know, I don't know anything about that part of the world. And so I felt like that was my answer to Heavenly Father. But whether or not, you know, I do it through graduate school or what and I don't know where I'm going to work and I have this responsibility, you know, to be like I should know, you know, I'm the parent, I should know where I'm dragging these kids to. But I know Heavenly Father will at some point in time, test my faith and then tell us what to do and I'll do it.

INT What was your biggest struggle?

CH Okay, great question. This goes back few years and people on the Big Island, that's where I raised my kids, my older kids did not join the church, the dad would not let them be baptized. So one year, my parents were visiting and then they went off to go on a temple mission but before they left, they gave my oldest son, a blessing. And my dad said that he would do things in the church. And I'm thinking well, he's not even baptized, so I went in and I talked to my stake president and, Kenneth Fujigami, he's like the counselor in the stake presidency. And he said well, then let's structure everything around him.

So for a year we focused on everything he wanted to do. We had all these parties, all these church parties, all these missionary meetings, we had everything that we did, we did for him. Had five jobs in the church at the time and President Fujigami said oh, that's nuts, you can't spread yourself so thin. So like if somebody called me said well, it's time for a stake choir practice, I'd go, Isaiah, do I cook dinner, is it okay with you if I go to stake choir practice? He'd go, well, I'm hungry. So I'd tell them, I said, well, I can't come to choir practice, I'm, you know, a little busy. So everybody knew that this, except for him, everybody knew that this was my goal.

And I spent so much time on my hands and knees and we were living in this house that I didn't see Isaiah very often because he stayed with his dad. So I prayed about that. I said okay, how am I going to get him to be around us. So Heavenly Father prepared a house for us, I mean, I can't explain it, there's no other reason for it. But because Isaiah surfed a lot, the house that we moved into was the first house that you up Honoli'i, which is the surfing beach on the Big Island of Hilo. There wasn't any other house and as soon you came up the stairs, walked up and there was the house. And so it turned into like this little surf club. So it had an indoor swimming pool, it had a game room, it was all glass, I mean it was right above the ocean. It had a ping pong table, pool table, bumper pool table, it was room, it was just like, it was huge. And that's what basically it turned out. It got to be like a YMCA. He had all his friends over and that's where we could have all the church parties and everybody at church wanted to have a party there. And we were happy that we had single adult parties there. So every time Isaiah turned around, he was surrounded by member of the church. He and all his little surfing buddies. And I knew that the reason we were in there wasn't because we were wonderful but it was because Isaiah needed these opportunities.

And so when I met my last husband, he would challenge Isaiah, well, don't surf on Sunday. You know, why don't you come to church on Sunday. Or why don't you read, start reading the Book of Mormon. He would challenge why me as the mom, I just eew, you know, I just had a hard time giving these little goals. So Isaiah did, he started

reading it and he started participating, he started praying about, he stopped surfing on Sundays, started going to church, did all these little steps and so he decided he was going to be baptized and his dad had not been supportive about the church, at all. And so he finally said, I know the church is true and I want to be baptized and I want you there as part of my program. And so, oh we were so happy and then the dad said, why don't you wait till your grandfather comes back cause then my parents were on a mission and so why don't you wait till they come back and have grandpa, you know it was just another stall, so my dad just said, look you want to get baptized, do it now, don't wait for us to come back. So he eliminated that last excuse and then he started, he became very supportive of the whole idea. He and the step-mother, okay, he really wants to do this. So we had them on the program and he, I don't remember, he gave a talk or something. So Isaiah was baptized at Four Mile beach, on the Big Island and he had a wonderful baptism and everybody was there, all his friends and within a year after he was baptized, eight of his friends were also baptized. He baptized them. It was just like a hay day for the missionaries. Even at church, all these people just started, all these kids, the youth started coming forth, started bearing their testimonies. We had people that weren't even members of the church cause their parents wouldn't allow them but they'd still get up and bear their testimonies. Such a wonderful time at church. That was my greatest challenge. Since then he's gone on a mission, he's gotten married in the temple and now his wife is expecting our first grandchild.

INT Wow, congratulations. How exciting!

END OF INTERVIEW