A MORMON FAMILY IN HAWAII

by

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INTRODUCTION

For Elizabeth Alina Keopuhiwa Fong's 80th birthday, her family prepared a slide presentation of her life. It was also presented at the MPH conference, along with singing, dancing, and original poems by the grandchildren.

Following is the script of the slide story of Sister Fong's life.

BEGINNING FRAME: Relatives and friends, tonight we'd like to share with you some of the highlights of our Mother's life—moments throughout her life which to her were memorable, fun, and at times, even sad.

To you who are relatives, we think you will find this quite interesting.

To you who have long been family friends, we know you will recall some of these scenes you're about to see.

PAUOA VALLEY: Let us take you back to the year 1894, where in this beautiful valley of Pauoa, Honolulu, ELIZABETH ALINA SAY was born.

She tells us that her mother was on her usual walk to visit at her Grandma's home in Pauoa Valley when ALINA decided to be delivered—and that she was barely at the doorsteps of her Grandma's home.

FONG SAY: ALINA'S father was one of the first Chinese immigrants to Hawaii, having arrived here at the age of 16 in the year 1887. He soon worked his way up from that of a plantation cook to that of a proprietor of his own grocery store in the hill of Tantalus.

KAPAHU KEOPUHIWA: Soon he met and married a quiet and lovely native lady of pure Hawaiian extraction. Her name was Kapahu Keopuhiwa.

ALINA - 6 YEARS OLD: Education was a rare privilege in those years, especially for females of Chinese families.

However, ALINA was afforded that privilege—even for just a few years. Here is MOM dressed up, neatly and prim for her first day at school at the age of six. MOM says she attended the first Normal School which was constructed way back in the 1880's and was located at the time on what is today, Fort Street.

ROYAL SCHOOL: A few years later, MOM transferred to Royal School. Here is the Royal School as she knew it then, constructed as a long low wooden building and located at the very same spot where the school stands today on Emma Street—though this building has long since been gone.

THE FONG'S CHILDREN: The years progressed and more siblings were added to her family—two brothers and a sister. Here we see ALINA, the eldest of her family on the right at the age of 14. Her younger sister, Ella, is at the left, and brother, William in the Center. A second and younger brother, Ernest, was yet unborn but is present with us tonight.

PINEAPPLE CANNERY: ALINA began her working career as a young lady of twelve at the Dole Pineapple Cannery.

Because she was such an honest and efficient worker, it wasn't long before someone recognized her excellent working manner and personal qualities and asked her to come and work for a certain Chinese merchant who operated the MO HOP STEAM LAUNDRY, first Chinese steam laundry in Hawaii located near the present Kawaiahaou Church in the Kakaako District.

MR. FONG HING: It was rather frightening for Mom, at 14, to think of having to make new adjustments in a new job, but nevertheless, she gathered up enough courage and went in for her first "interview"—so to speak—with the "Boss".
It was then that she met Mr. Fong Hing, a rather stern and serious looking gentleman, she thought. She recalls trying to avoid him and just be about her work because he was so "serious looking". But it wasn't too long before Mr. Fong noticed this quiet, hard-working young lady who spent her coffee-breaks and lunch hour either reading, crocheting, or doing something worthwhile. "This was an unusual girl--so young in years and yet so mature in mannerisms", he thought. What he observed, he liked--and soon thereafter, a go-in-between or marriage-broker, in this case his cousin, was sent to ALINA'S home to ask for her hand in marriage. ALINA says she was hardly prepared for this and was quite surprised to learn that her "boss" even noticed her--since she had tried so hard to be un-noticed and "keep out of his way".

Now, those days it wasn't proper for a Chinese to court a young lady by asking her out on a date. Instead, the gentleman sends a marriage-broker, to the father of the lady he wishes to marry and details are worked out then.

ALINA'S WEDDING PICTURE: ALINA'S DAD, considerate of his daughter's feeling and becoming more westernized in his ways, left the decision entirely in her hands......and so it was......she made the decision that she would marry this hard-working, serious, though somewhat elderly man, because she felt he would be a kind and thoughtful husband, good father for her children, and in her own words--"not run around" So, at 7:00 P.M., New Years Eve, December 31, 1910, they were married. ALINA recalls going back to her mother's home on Kukui Street for a wedding luau with her relatives and then, immediately returning to the Steam Laundry to complete the laundry that had to be delivered to the ships scheduled to leave in early morning.

So you see, there was no such time for a honeymoon.

WO HOP HING KEE: Soon after the marriage, Mr. Fong branched out into other businesses--some of which were Bo Wo Jewelry, Honolulu Chop Suey House, Fong Hing Bondsman, and Wo Hop Hing Kee, a general merchandise store. Here we see the Wo Hop Hing Kee Store in the 1930's located at the corner of Nuuanu and Queen Streets. Take note of the fancy cars that were in style at the time.

FIRST FAMILY PORTRAIT: Within a year of your marriage, MOM, your first son, Edwin, was born, and this brought much happiness to you. But sadness entered when after just two weeks of life, your first born was taken from you because of pneumonia. With unwavering courage and deep conviction that your duty as a "child to God" was to bring souls to the earth, you weathered that storm. And within the next twenty years you brought fifteen more children into the world. (Your good friend, mid-wife and doctor Tai Heong Li helped to deliver your 15 children). So, in 1936, you were able to gather your whole family together for this first family portrait taken on the front steps of your Kinau Street home.

There were many long years of work involved in raising so many of us, and never once, MOM, did we hear you complain about the washing, ironing, cooking and problems we must have brought your way. Your love came through, deep and clear and always sustained us when we needed you most.

FIRST TRIP AWAY FROM HOME--SALT LAKE TEMPLE: MOM, do you remember your first trip away from home in 1939 on the SS Lurline? You were excited. Dad thought you deserved a trip and encouraged you to go, but you were filled with mixed emotions--wanting to meet with your three older children on the mainland, and yet, not wanting to leave the twelve younger ones back at home. Finally, you decided to go--destination, Salt Lake City, where
you visited your many friends as well as the historic Mormon Temple, then on the New York World's Fair, and back home again.

You've taken many trips since, MOM, but this first one you'll always remember.

BOMBINGS, WAR HEADLINES: Then the war years came, December 7, 1941. You never seemed afraid. Your calmness and faith helped to see us through those few uncertain years. Friends and neighbors spoke of leaving the Islands for safer refuge on the mainland, but you and Dad thought of remaining here in Hawaii and looking for a larger home in which to house your growing family.

VICTORIA STREET HOME: And so, in January 1f 1943, Dad purchased our Victoria Street home from the Stanley Kennedy family who had left for the mainland.

Oh, we had fun in that home—all the elbow space that we needed and so much fun to bring our friends home too. You always welcomed our friends, missionaries, and service personnel, just like your very own. You surely made them feel at home.

FIRST GRANDCHILD, QUEEN SHIRLEY: Then your first grandchild Shirley came along. What joy she brought you—having a little one around the family again.

We all pampered her, but in spite of that, she grew up to become a lovely and most personable young lady, winning for herself triple honors as the University of Hawaii Chinese Kapalapala Queen, Miss Narcissus Queen and Miss Chinatown, USA.

SONS OFF TO WAR: In the midst of all the activity in our new home, you bade your sons farewell and sent them to war in the service of their country. Again, your faith and your prayers helped them through their darkest hour at Iwo Jima and you were blessed with their safe return.

MOM'S 50th, DAD'S 70th BIRTHDAY: In 1944 you celebrated your 50th birthday and Dad's 70th birthday with a luau feast in the garden of our home. Here we see you and Dad and Tutu, your Mom, whose back is toward the camera. And here we see you with your daughters, Elizabeth and Ella at the same occasion.

PURCHASE OF ACME MATTRESS: In 1946 Dad purchased Acme Mattress Co. on King Street and embarked in a new business. Later, he moved the company to Hotel Street where it was converted to what is known today as Sealy Mattress Company. You can see we made good use of those company trucks in bringing Santa to your home each Christmas.

DAD'S CONVERSION—LAIE TEMPLE: Your greatest moment of joy, Mom, was when Dad was converted to Mormonism at the age of 71. You recall the 30 long years of hoping and praying that Dad would join you in your faith. How hopeless it may have seemed to you that he'd ever take time to think of a God, let alone accept Him. But again, through your faith and fine example your prayers were answered when Dad came to you one day in 1946 and asked you to teach him about your God.

You remember what he said to you that day—that you had raised all your children untiringly and without any complaints and that he didn't think anyone could do such a job without some help. Then he said, "it must be your God that helped you. I want to follow your footsteps and learn about Him".

It was soon thereafter that Dad was baptized and you both were sealed for time and all eternity in the Laie Temple.

Yes, you did let your light so shine and Dad saw your good works and glorified your Father in Heaven.
GLORIA'S PASSING: Then sadness struck again, and in 1948 your sweet Gloria, our beloved sister, passed on at the tender age of 23. You weathered that storm again, as well as Dad's passing six years later.

MISSIONARIES: KENNETH AND GRANDSONS: Happy moments return again as you recall your youngest son, Kenneth, leaving to serve a three-year Church mission in Hong Kong, and of your five grandsons who followed his footsteps some ten years later serving a similar mission there.

MOTHER'S 70th BIRTHDAY PARTY: Here we find you, ten years ago with Senator Hiram Fong celebrating your 70th birthday with a gathering similar to this tonight with all your friends and relatives. That gathering took place here on these very grounds at the Hawaiian Village Dome.

HAWAIIAN QUILTS AND SINGING: Of your many talents, Mom, ranging from a sweet singing voice to sewing, embroidering and quilting, your most outstanding artistic accomplishment was that of completing some twenty Hawaiian Quilts, or kapas such as this.

It takes many tedious hours to sew one of these quilts and Mom you would take some three months of daily sewing to complete one such quilt. You managed to make at least one quilt for each of your children. We recall many times seeing you at your quilting, such as this, and as recent as two years ago, you completed your last quilt which you finally kept for your very own use.

VICTORIA HOME RAZED; VICTORIA PLAZA RAISED: In 1968, your home on Victoria Street was razed to make room for progress.

Here we see the expression on your face as you watched your home being demolished to make room for the two condominiums that stand there today.

MOTHER OF THE YEAR: In 1971, you were honored by the Chinese Community in Honolulu as the Model Mother of the Year. In your modesty and humility, you accepted this honor, followed by interviews in our local news as well as Church News in Salt Lake City.

In this latter interview, you told your story of how your life had been saved through the efforts of two faithful Mormon Missionaries who stopped at your home when you were just a new born babe--how they pronounced a blessing upon you that your health would be restored even though doctors gave up hope for you to survive.

PAIKAU STREET HOME: Today, Mom, you live in your new home at the slopes of Diamond Head--a home, not quite as large as your Victoria Street home, but large enough and just as warm--to house your huge family when they gather together for holidays and other occasions.

May we, your children, along with your 44 grandchildren and five greatgrandchildren, wish you a VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GOOD HEALTH and LONG LIFE.

And, if God is willing, May we all meet again in the year 1984 to celebrate your 90th BIRTHDAY.