

SARAH MOANIKEALADONAFUAMAKAHIKINA WOOD NALUAI:  
THE STORY OF MY LIFE  
by Victoria Kekuaokalani

I was born along the sea coast of Paia, Maui, on August 5, 1909 to Louise Kaillewa and Tong Lock, also known as Ah Look. My father was from Canton, China. He was one of the first Chinese immigrants who migrated to Hawaii to work at the sugar plantation on Maui. My mother was Hawaiian-Tahitian, her father having married a Kuae'a Piva, who came to Hawaii from Tahiti. I had two sisters, Louise and Helen Ah Look, who passed away in their childhood. I also had two brothers, Samuel and David Ah Look. For various reasons, my parents' marriage did not fare well. Eventually my father returned to China and we never heard from him again.

Sam and I were raised by a grandaunt, Sarah Kaiapa, and her husband, John Moses Kekuaokalani. I was about seven, and Sam about three when we went to live with them. We called our hanai parents by pet names: Mama Dear and Papa Dear.

Papa Dear, it is said, was of a royal heritage. In ancient times, the name Kekuaokalani was identified with a famous priest who was a nephew of Kamehameha himself. Papa Dear was handicapped with two club feet, but he had a great gift of the Spirit. Even before he joined the Church, people said he had mana -- the power to bless and heal. He did not ask any favors from those who needed his help, but out of gratitude they would often pay him with things like bread, rice, or butter. Papa Dear was always fasting, praying, and reading the Bible. Later when he was baptized, he began to read the Book of Mormon and became more aware of the Gospel teachings. When he received the priesthood he took my Mama Dear into the House of the Lord, the Laie Temple.

I shall always remember Papa Dear for taking care of the spiritual side of our life. Whenever we were sick he was there to bless us and give comfort. Whenever he prayed or layed his hand on our heads, the influence of the Holy Ghost was so strong because of his great faith in our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ. When he died at Kahana years later, there was a great thunder and lightning along the Koolau range towards Kahana Bay, but no rain. His burial was up the mountain in Kahana, and there was a little mist of rain and sunshine that day--a good omen. He was a true patriarch, a man of God.

I am so thankful that Sam and I were raised and baptized in the Gospel. We used to go to church with Mama Dear. After Papa Dear was baptized, we all went to church together. The chapel in Maui was very small. One thing I remember as a little girl was shaking hands with a man who had a long beard. His name was Joseph F. Smith. The Saints at that time called him Iosepa. My early lifestyle was a very simple, humbling experience. We lived off the land on what we planted. We harvested fish, crab, limu and wana from the abundant sea. Part of our daily food also included poi, taro, flour, sugar and rice.

Mama and Papa Dear spoke fluent Hawaiian, which is how I gained knowledge of the language. One day, though, we were preparing a garden, and I was told to get a relative's pick ax, or kikipua. I returned empty-handed because I had said ipu kuha, which means spitoon. I had really misunderstood what I had been sent to fetch.

I attended elementary school in Maui. Mama Dear made my wardrobe of baggy dresses that had to be tied up around the waist because they were also too long. She made undergarments from rice bags that were bleached out in the sun so they'd look white and clean. I must say Mama Dear was a hard worker and an extremely strong woman. She actually managed the affairs of the home. She was also a good fisherman and could fill baskets with he'e (squid), oama, and other food from the sea. My brother and I probably added to her work, but as she and Papa Dear had no children of their own, we were their pride and joy.

I was eleven years old when we all left Maui. We boarded the interisland steamship Claudine and stayed downstairs in the steerage. It was the area blocked off for low-fare passengers, and you had to sleep in that area with everybody until you docked into the city of Honolulu. What an experience! They fed us fish and sour poi. When we arrived we took a cab to our trolley stop in town, then caught the trolley to Puunui Street along Nuuanu Avenue. We stayed a few months with family and later moved out to Kahana Bay.

Beautiful Kahana was owned by Mary Foster from up towards the mountain on down to the sea. It was known as Konohiki land. My former home is still there, not far from the Crouching Lion Restaurant on Kamehameha Highway. It sits at the bottom of a little hill, slightly concealed by roadside trees, on the Kaneohe side of Kahana Bay. Our home consisted of two bedrooms and a large living room. The kitchen was built in a separate area away from home. There was no electricity, no running water, no bathroom; only an outdoor house with no water to flush. Yet life was clean and simple.

We planted our own onions, taro, papayas, and vegetables. Mountain apples, guavas, and other fruits grew wild and were plentiful. The rest of our food came from the ocean.

Kahana was considered a rich fishing ground where the many families residing there worked [hard] for their livelihood. Regular hukilaus were money making projects. When the schools of fish were in the right position, a watcher on the mountain would alert everyone in the village to help pull the nets in. Akule, anae, and o'ama were very plentiful in Kahana Bay. When there was a heavy rain, o'opus and opae would be abundant in the river. We took our fish into the city to be sold. Visitors who would stop and participate in the hukilau were given fish to take home. It was the tradition to share the catch, and this in turn would encourage the coming of good omens. It was wonderful to have everyone come join in the hukilau. It felt like a great family. We were ohana.

There was a Filipino camp and a Japanese camp at Kahana because of the sugar plantation. They used to haul the sugar cane by train to the Kahuku Sugar Mill through Laie.

I attended Kaaawa School and attended church in Kahana. We

had a little chapel with a large bell. My brother Samuel used to ring it by pulling it up and down. Brother Pua Ha'aheo was our branch president, and also Brother Sam Nuhi.

My hula training began in my early teens, when I used to go to Laie with my cousin, Hattie Au. Her friends were Lucy Munson, Kay Nakaula, and Keaka Kanahale. I took hula from them for several months. I had had thirteen lessons before Mama Dear advised me to leave the hula because of its rituals and hula kapu. So I did as asked. I was fifteen years old at the time.

At the urging of my grandaunt, I soon got married to Harry Makanoa, another Kahana resident. We had three children: two boys, Samuel and Harry, and a girl, Emily. Harry and Emily died, and I was left with one son, Samuel "Sam Ball" Makanoa. He was called "Sam Ball" because of his outstanding play on the volleyball court. He was one of the best slammers in the Koolau area.

From the start, my marriage had been a difficult one, and as time went by I got a divorce and moved into town. These years were hard ones for me. I went back to Maui for a while, but then returned to Honolulu. Fortunately, I became very active in the Church again.

I lived on Green Block on Vineyard Street and used to go to Lanakila Ward on Holokahanu Lane off Liliha Street. I went to my meetings and activities. One activity I enjoyed was volleyball, and through this sport I met Michael Keoni Wood.

Michael Wood attended [The] Kamehameha School for Boys. I used to travel from School Street and pass through the [The Kamehameha] Boys School to practice volleyball at Kalihi Mission Gym. We started a courtship, and on April 3, 1935 we were married. It wasn't long before Michael was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He became very active and soon held positions in the Church. For a time he was Ward Clerk with Bishop Fred Ellis. I was the chorister for the ward and also held other positions. We later adopted two children, Barbara Ann Wood, and Michael Earl Wood.

In 1940 we were sealed to our adopted children in the Hawaiian Temple. My own children, Harry and Emily Makanoa, were also sealed to us.

My hula training was an ongoing thing. After I had left Kahana, Pua Ha'aheo asked me to train under him. For six months I studied with him, then went on to Elizabeth Lau who taught modern hula in Kapahulu. Her kumu had been Pualani Mossman. The lessons I took cost twenty-five cents each and lasted half-an-hour. You'd get about six songs in thirty minutes, and it was up to you to grab what you could get.

In 1941 I began teaching informally at Kamehameha Housing with Auntie Alice Namakelua. In 1945 I decided to teach hula on my own in the back of the Lanakila Chapel. There was a big home there that was used as an activity hall. I paid a rental fee and managed to grow in business in hula. Irene Peters, a school teacher at Likelike School and a member of the Lanakila Branch, was instrumental in helping me get established. She was a good organizer and acted as my "promoter." My husband Michael was my constant companion and proved to be very supportive in all that I did. In 1946, we moved to Kam Housing and I was offered a job as recreation director to help in the Lei Day and Kamehameha Day

programs.

In 1946 also, Auntie Rose Joshua asked me if I wanted to learn from Lokalia Montgomery. She told me to go down to Charles Street in Kapahulu where I would be expected. Lokalia had the greatest influence on me. There was something in her speaking and her kindness and the way she projected herself. Up until this time I had been trained only as an olapa, but she began to give me chants to learn. If we didn't know them at class she'd make us repeat them until we got it right. Malia Kau of Moanalua helped to paka our voices to oli and after three months I graduated. WE had our uniki in Lokalia's backyard. She had built up a little green backdrog with a little grass stage and it was like going into a forest.

After my studio was established, we were always busy with recitals and luaus. I would usually take care of the entertainment, and my brother and his family would cater the food. We held recitals and activities at the House in the Garden on Nuuanu Street, Likelike Elementary Cafeteria, Palama Gym, the Armory behind Iolani Palace, the Hawaiian Civic Auditorium, and Matson Point in Kaneohe.

I used ti leaf skirts and cellophane costumes in my hula recitals. Mrs. Emily Zuttermeister made all of my cellophane skirts. Miriam Lei-Lani Keawe also helped. Genoa Keawe and her musicians played for my performances. Alvin Isaac led the band that played for our dances after the recitals. It was known as the K.M.M. Orchestra. The Tanaka Band also played for our dance activities. We had hostesses for these after-recital dances, and they were usually receptionists from Hawaiian Pineapple Company. We had fun and were very successful in my hula project.

Sometime after my training with Lokalia Montgomery, I was asked by Brother Wylie Swapp to teach for the Church College of Hawaii in Laie. Later, from 1963 to 1981, I began the long association with the Polynesian Cultural Center as the Hawaiian hula instructor.

Since those young days in Kahana, when we used to serenade homes for church fund-raising, I have had a rich and varied life in the field of entertainment. Here are some of my experiences and blessings that have contributed to what I am today.

- 1937 -- Glee Club
- 1937-1943 -- Isaac K. Joshua, Moana Entertainers
- 1942-1943 -- USO Group
- 1950 -- Lei Collins Trio
- 1947-1954 -- Church Fund Raising
- 1956 -- New Zealand Tour, Church Fund
- 1963-1981 -- Polynesian Cultural Center
- 1979-1981 -- Hula Instructor
- Aug 8, 1980 -- Auntie Sally Day
- 1980 -- Living Treasure Award, Polynesian Cultural Center
- 1981 -- Merry Monarch Judge, Hilo

Years ago I lost my eternal companion, Michael Wood, through illness. But in May, 1979 I married George N. Naluai in the Hawaiian Temple. He also lost his wife, Lucy, through illness. The Lord has blessed me with a wonderful companion for these special

years of my life. His love for Heavenly Father has shown in his everyday living towards his family and mine.

Several years ago we were both called on a mission to San Diego, where we served for a year. This was very, very important to me because I never dreamed that I could be chosen to go on a mission with my companion. I had always been in entertainment, and it is not an easy life. I have made mistakes, I have regrets, I have adversities and trials, but the Lord has shown me over and over that he is always by my side. My brothers, my sister-in-law, and their families have also been loving and understanding whenever I needed help. I owe all of my talents and service to my Heavenly Father and to the teachings of Jesus Christ. I have learned much. My testimony has grown and I hope that I can always be a valiant servant.

#### ENDNOTES

1. "Little Tales About Hawaii: The King of Kauai Meets the Conqueror," by Clarice B. Taylor, Honolulu Star Bulletin, 1957  
  
"Little Tales About Hawaii: Alapai Warns His Son to Care for Kamehameha," by Clarice B. Taylor, Honolulu Star Bulletin, 1957.
2. Nana Ina Looa Hula Look to the Hula Resources, edited by Wendell Sylva and Alan Suemori, Edward Enterprises, Inc., Honolulu, Hawaii, 1984, p. 109.