Much idea came to this Ward in 1954. And when they asked me to help with this history of it - why me - is it because I'm the oldest now. And I hope it's not because I'm the oldest. And it was so that the he said, honey just today, and just to talk because Sister Chong, who is the matriarch of our ward, was not able to be here because she's in the hospital. And so I was grasping with trying to find out some of the history with the Ward that has to do with this area. And I was very happy to be able to interview Sister Tom and Sister Margaret and they will tell you. And Margaret has consented to come and help me today.

We look back into the area of the church, being the founders of this area, in about the early 1850. It was a man that lived in Waimanu Valley. Well he was in Pololu and which is on Kahala side and by canoe came over into the valley, Waimanu, and then into the valley of Waipio. It was actually the grandfather of Sister Loo's husband.

This man brought with him the gospel into Waipio, and about sixty to seventy people attended the chapel everyday. They built a chapel in Waipio Valley and they built a chapel there, had as many as sixty to seventy people on Sundays every week. The older people stayed in the chapel to have their classes while the children had their classes out on the lawn of the Church next to them. There were four religions in the valley at that time. They were the Protestants, the Catholics, the Chinese Church, and the Mormon Church.

The missionaries lived in Honokaa, which is here, and really the top of Waipio Valley is about nine miles away from this chapel, and then they had to walk a couple of miles down the road. And all of this was done by foot. The missionaries went into Waipio Valley and stayed about two or three days in the valley and worked and lived and talked with the people. And they had their, I don't know if you remember, Cottage Meetings. I'm that old; I can remember'em. They spoke their language, ate their food that the people prepared for them.

Paul Nakanelua was this man that brought the gospel into Waipio. His roots have extended into Honokaa and produced three bishops and many priesthood leaders. His daughter, Martha, married Edward Loo, and had sixteen children. They produced the bishops. These were the people that produced these bishops. Sister Lily Chong, for some of you that know her, was brought up in the valley. Her father was a first counselor to Paul Nakanelua. Her father married again. Her mother died when she was very young and her father married again. Her dad served as counselor and to other officers in the church under several different Presidents.

They were called Branch Presidents at the time. Lily remembers much of the time that she spent in this valley. The church was also established in Kalopaa, it's about, you past it, it's about three miles out of this area. There was a building there, and there was no land. It was not owned by the church. It was donated to the church to use as long as they were using it as a church and when the church gave it up, it wasn't too long ago because I remember going there in the 50's to farm in the welfare garden. Sister Lily
Chong remembers the welfare garden as raising potatoes and taro and means for the table and giving it to the poor members of the church.

When this church left this area, all of the people moved their membership into Honokaa. The other place that we also had a piece of property was Kukaiau. And Kukaiau is about seven miles away from here and you passed it along your way. In Kukaiau, the church owned a piece of property in this area. But Sister Chong does not remember any chapel there. She remembers going to meetings in the homes of Sam Kawaihoopolio and Abby Kekoolani. And they conducted these meetings in their homes and had missionaries come and spend time with them.

The land was turned into a cemetery and on it and very recently given to the Catholic Church because many of their members were buried on their property. I remember receiving a call from Mr. Pete Gabriel inquiring about our cemetery because he said he had been informed that his mother had been buried in that land. And it was really kind of interesting because he really thought his mother was going to hell, being buried on our property. And he was so, he was frantic, and wanted to dig her body up. But I gave him the information about where he could get in touch with someone that would know what to do and where to transfer him. Finally, after a whole bunch of things that went on between the Catholic Church and him, the Church gave that property over to the Catholic Church because there were so many of their members buried in our area.

I remember that you met with Sister Abby not too long ago. And as talking to Sister Abby I remember that Sister Abby says that she used to live in Kukaiau for a while and remembers having cottage meetings there in her home and in Sister Needham’s home up in the mountain area. And she says that she remembers going to cottage meetings at the Needham’s home and they met in the garage with only gravel and benches and she said to Sister Needham. And she said to Sister Needham, "Why are we meeting in here?" She says, "Well, where was Christ born"? She said, "In a stable." She says, "well, was he any better, and are we any better than he." And this was the best that she could offer. And she said you know, you got to tell them that story because they’ll know me. And that was very interesting to find out.

And what was very interesting to find out about us having to deal with these people in the past was that they remembered all these little things that happened. The little things that were important to them. The food that they ate and how they went without. And as a child I could remember going to the Kukaiau Chapel in Hilo because I was brought up in Hilo. And everybody spoke Hawaiian as I was a child, and our meetings were conducted in Hawaiian. And so we sat through them half bored, you know. But then when we went to classes we were talked to in English. So that’s how we were learned the gospel when I was growing up in the Ward. And I can remember that a lot of the chapels around here, in the times before, spoke only Hawaiian and we had very few books and we had very few magazines to learn from. And so our testimonies were given to us by those that conducted the meetings and spoke to us.

And I’m glad that I was able to gain this testimony from a mother that did not give up on me, that a mother that was always true to her faith. And, I was saddened at the time that my parents went to the temple and that I was not able to go to the temple. When they let us go to the temple as single people I went to my bishop. And my bishop gave me permission to go to the temple. And while I was in the temple my mother sat with me through the whole session and that makes me happy. I’m glad that I’ve had this
opportunity to speak to you. Our pictures were not ready for us and so I said to the brethren that I will get them together and have the pictures of these past areas and places sent to you so you can put them in your binder.

And what was really coincidental. I'd like to tell you something. May I share it, Margaret? I had interviewed Margaret and asked her if she could please help me with this today because she is really from this area and from this ward and her inlaws are those people that were strong in the gospel and these are the people that built up this ward to where it is today. And Margaret came to me the other day when I gave her the information that I had typed out so that we could have some kind of plan. She said to me, "Delores, you must of known." And I said, "Known what?" And she said, "The Bishop called me into the office to be the Historian of the Ward." And I said, I didn't know that. I knew that they were looking for one and hinted that I didn't want them to have me be one and to think it over. And Margaret said, "Well, I got the call. You must have known." I said, "No, I didn't know." And so Margaret shares this with me and I'm really happy that she's going to be the historian of our ward because we need to put these things together and we really don't have very much put together and we're sorry about that. But I'd like Margaret to share the time from Waipio Valley that they came out of Waipio Valley into Kukuihaele and from Kukuihaele into Honokaa.

Sister Margaret Loo
Church History in Waipio
March 24, 2001

Aloha. You may look at me, and think I am a haole. Now what is a haole? A haole is a foreigner, not white skin. Right? Akamai, yeah? But anyway. What I'd like to tell you is that I'm a convert to the church. I became a convert in the church in 1953, but I knew the Mormons because some of my teenage friends were Mormons and I remember attending MIA, the Gold & Green Ball, and things of that sort. But anyway, and they used to have the MIA in the Kukuihaele school cafeteria because the Kukuihaele chapel was too small. You remember Sister Ramos saying that the building from Kalopaa came to Kukuihaele. Well that's not the chapel that is standing now because they converted it into a home. It was a smaller one. It was like, from the right, this wall there by the side of the piano and this. Right there. That little area there. That was the Kukuihaele chapel that I remember as a teenager attending MIA. And they only had that for meetings. And I remember the branch president there was John K. Thomas. He was a schoolteacher in Kukuihaele. He also was the principal later on at Kukuihaele School.

Now, going back to Waipio, my husband's grandfather, Paul Hanai Nakanelua, excuse me, I get emotional, was in Waipio and I remember my father in law telling us stories and my mother in law because they had this home in Waipio, but when I got married to my husband they had already moved to Kukuihaele. But being a large family, my mother-in-law always had family home evening. At that time the church didn't have Family Home Evening, but my mother-in-law had Family Home Evening.

And so, I remember my mother-in-law and my father-in-law telling stories to us about Waipio and how her father would do the work of the Lord there, because he was