

Mary Kawena Pukui

- ~~Hano - Nose Flute~~ --
- ~~OLI~~ --
- ~~Presentation of Hookupu Lei~~ --
- ~~Honolulu Academy of Arts Welcome~~ --
- Introduction of Pat by Napoka --

On that Saturday morning of April 20, 1895. Kawena arrived with a wail, in her grandmother's house, (\*1) called Hale-ola on Haniumalu Hill in the village of Na'alehu, in the district of Ka'u. This is Po'ai standing with her sister Kalimakuhilani. *she was a turn Kalamana*

(\*1) Slide  
Po'ai w/ Sister

Papa Akoni (an uncle) went to Ahina's coffee shop in Na'alehu and sat on the lanai to await the fathers return from the fields to give him the news of the arrival of his first-born. When Kawena's father, Henry Wiggin arrived, the word was "Kaikamahine momona". He quickly jumped on his horse and raced up the hill, walked in, took one look at the new arrival and said, "Hello Tui" and for him that was her name until the day he died.

(\*2) Slide  
Porch shot

→ This is a photo of Kawena's family on the front porch of their *Kau* home  
 (\*2) Family group. Left to right - Aunt Abbie with

Sarah the cat, Maggie Makino, Mrs. Watadani, standing back of chair, Kawena sitting, Uncle Ned, holding Jimmy, the dog; Kawena's father, Henry Wiggin, seated; Kawena's mother holding McKinley, the dog; Nancy, the goat, Kawena's playmate and guardian (hated men); and lower right, Walter Hayselden. / Kawena's goat wouldn't let anyone near her

At that time the elders of the district felt very comfortable with their Christianity but few, for a moment, thought of giving up their ancestral gods. Kawena's grandmother, Na-li'i-Po'ai-Moku had been observing every move and each want that the mother, Pa'ahana (\*3) might make or desire and later the 'ewa'ewa (or ghost mother) was heard to cry out flying above the house. With that, the grandmother knew that the time was near at hand for the new arrival.

(\*3) Slide

Paahana fence

The first thing that grandmother noticed was Pa'ahana's great desire for manini and then through the course of the delivery, Kawena arrived with that loud wail, clutched her mother's big toe and turned her back to the door. These things signified to the grandmother, the longing for manini, whose home is in the sea pools, meant a fondness for home. The turning of the back to the door, a disinclination towards travel to other lands. A love for family,

especially her mother (\*4), by clutching of the toe and obedience to her commands, "At her feet" as it were, in minding her mother.

(\*4) Slide

Pa'ahana Weaving

*= Kawena never travelled at side of ~~the~~, but only place she wanted to go was Salem*

The usual procedure was observed, the placenta was carried out to the herb garden, buried, and a loquat tree planted at the spot. Nine days later the umbilical cord dropped and was carefully stored in a tightly corked bottle until the time would come when it could be taken to Pa'ula where it was secreted in the crevice of a rock in which many generations of cords had been secreted. Kawena was born (lei i ka piko) indicating that during pregnancy, the mother had worn leis.

Named Mary Abigail Tui Kawena-'ula-o-ka-lani-o-Hi'iaka-i-ka-Poli-o-Pele-ka-wahine-'ai-honua. The daughter of Henry Nathaniel Wiggin of Salem, Massachusetts, whose family were ship owners and also had large tracks of timberland in Tennessee. (\*5) The mother Ke-li'i-Pa'ahana Kanaka'ole, a pure Hawaiian, whose ancestral roots are found in the line of priests of the district of Ka'u. They were the priests of Pele and kahuna medicine, canoe building and fishing. Kawena rarely spoke of these forbearers outside the family circle.

(\*5) Slide

Pa'ahana w/ pig

Pa'ahana skilled in imu preparation

*because men went to work women had to learn*



(\*6) Slide

Sitting on chair

(\*6) As grandmother's punahele grandchild, Kawena had many kapu imposed on both her and her possessions. As foster child of the oldest daughter, Pu'uheana, she had the peculiar position of being a junior (the daughter of the grandmother's tenth daughter and reared a senior as the foster child of the oldest sister). The custom in old Hawai'i that the junior members of the family would follow the advice of the senior members when problems arose.

Raised a punahele child, many kapu were placed on her, clothing that she had once worn was not to be used again for anything but must be destroyed by fire. Food containers were kept separated from those of others and many more. The mother <sup>was</sup> never allowed to send her on errands or spank her, even when it was well deserved, until after the grandmother had passed away. Somehow she survived.

Apple story

(\*7) Slide

Close up as child

(\*7) With her grandmother, Kawena learned chants and legends of the district, memorized the prayers that were offered while gathering those plants used in healing. The treasures to be handed down from generation to generation were the oral histories, chants and legends relating to both family and district. Kawena was that heir, receiving from her grandmother, mother and other family members those

things that became such an important part of her life. With her keen sense of coloring and symbolism in these chants and legends and the hundreds she translated from old Hawaiian newspaper and other sources during her productive years, she was able with her command of the English language to preserve the poetry and Hawaiian flavor in the English translations for use today and for generations of the future.

She always felt that much of the credit for the success she realized in her work was due to her American born father who had an appreciation for things Hawaiian and a love for her grandmother. Fluent in the Hawaiian language, he always spoke to Kawena in proper English that did much to prepare her for the years ahead as a writer and translator.

(\*8) Slide  
Party slide

This is her 6th birthday party with her playmates.

(\*8) Through Kawena's father's position on the plantation, Kawena was raised in a home with servants, cook, gardener etc. It was at this time that she earned the title of doctor, M.D. that is. The gardener would come to her complaining of being sick and would ask for some medicine. She would dutifully climb up on a chair and pour him a stiff drink from her father's medicine (liquor) cabinet. This

went on for some time until mother began to suspect the gardener's strange kittenish behavior and found the source.

(\*9) Slide

Formal portrait

(\*9) Early in 1899, Kawena contracted an eye disease which became serious enough to bring her to Dr. Thompson, the plantation physician, who ordered her to bed with eyes bandaged and room darkened. Grandmother declared that it was a ma'i Haole disease and was willing to have a Haole doctor treat her. On her recovery, Kawena's mother hired a photographer to come and take a picture of her, which Kawena always felt was the most ridiculous pose possible.

As a child Kawena associated nearly entirely with people of her grandmother's and mother's generation until she started attending school.

(\*10) Slide

On Chair in garden

(\*10) Kawena, as a child, was always filled with curiosity which was attributed to her Haole father. One thing that was still being practiced was pahu or bleeding. The grandmother did not do it but a relative, Kanakeawe did. One day two patients arrived for the procedure which consisted of cutting the tongue. They were brought into a bedroom and the door firmly closed against prying eyes. Kawena quickly slipped outside, went around, climbed a tree and watched the whole procedure through the window.



(\*11) Slide

Paahana & Kawena

(\*11) Schooling was an off and on thing, when a teacher could be found. The grades usually running from first through the eighth grade. With her remarkable retentive memory, she would listen to the older children reciting their lessons and as the baby of the school and the last to be chosen among the spelling teams often would be found standing alone at the end of a spelling bee.

(\*12) Slide

Longhair w/ bow

(\*12) In Honolulu, father worked as a bailiff in the courts and Kawena was able to pursue her education which ended at that time at the eighth grade. It was at this time that Kawena saw the Bishop Museum for the first time. Having gone to see a football game where Kamehameha School was playing on the present Museum campus. She went into the Museum to wander around until the game was to start. Completely awed and literally overwhelmed at the treasures there to see. On arriving at home she promptly told her mother that one day she would work there. The reply was that only learned people worked in a place like that.

(\*13) Slide

Kawaiahao Seminary

(\*13) Soon after this Kawena was enrolled at Kawaiahao Seminary where the principal was very strict and Kawena made many blunders before she learned to toe the mark. On

entrance she was asked whether she would want rice or poi. Thinking that it was for the next meal she asked for poi. Poi was it for the entire school year. Incoming and outgoing letters were read and censored by two teachers. The use of the Hawaiian language was absolutely forbidden. On one occasion a teacher overheard her talking to a girl recently in from a rather remote country place, that couldn't understand a teacher's request. A teacher overheard the Hawaiian. Her punishment was to be seated at dinner at a small table in the center of the dining room to eat her crackers and water for a week. Needless to say at the end of the school year she absolutely refused to go back and so ended her academic life for that period of her life.

(\*14) Slide

Kawena, bow & white dress

(\*14) At age sixteen Laura Green, a descendant of missionaries, realized the potential in Kawena and urged her to start a word list and record the mele, chants and legends that she had learned. She heeded this advice and began recording and writing the stories of the elders of the family and never stopped working until age brought it slowly to a halt.

(\*15) Slide

Mr. Pukui

(\*15) Kawena was married at an early age to <sup>this Pukui</sup> a man, twenty years her senior. There was little romance resulting in less than a compatible marriage. Kawena wanted children



and being promised by a pregnant relative a baby to raise as her own, she busied herself making baby clothes in anticipation only to be disappointed by the mother changing her mind.

(\*16) Slide

Pukui & mom

(\*16) On one occasion she went to visit a cousin at her mother's whose house stood in the little park across Likelike Highway from the Bishop Museum. As she walked up the driveway he saw her and began to chant and continued without stopping until she had walked up and kissed him on the cheek. He brought a chair to the lani clearly in view of the Museum, told her to sit down. He took a place directly behind the chair, chanted and prayed and chanted some more. She listened, recognizing the words of a blessing. He told her to go into the dining room where it was quiet as he had something to tell her. "I was told in a vision that you will work in that house (pointing to the Museum) and that I am to bless you. The work will never desert you, it will be you who will leave the work". She had never mentioned the Museum to him, for from the day that her mother had expressed doubt about her ever being there, she had let the matter drop.

(\*17) Slide

Kawena & Pat

(\*17) After six years of a childless marriage, an ad appeared in the newspaper seeking someone to adopt a few week old Japanese orphan. This was during the great flu epidemic that went around the world in 1920, the mother had died during the delivery. Pleading with her husband for permission to apply for the adoption, he was adamantly opposed to giving his name to any child but his own. Kawena's parents went to the Humane Society which at that time took care of orphans, waifs, cats, horses, puppies, etc. They were successful, so my maiden name was Wiggin instead of Pukui and legally Kawena and I were adopted-sisters though I always thought of her as my mother. *Story*

(\*18) Slide (Handed <sup>baby</sup> to Kawena.)

3 generations

(\*18) People have asked me what it was like growing up in a Hawaiian household. It's a question that I can't really answer. It was a quiet, loving atmosphere filled with Hawaiian tales and hula and as I grew older, as far as I was concerned it was no different from any other household.

(\*19) Slide

Kawena standing

(\*19) In 1925 Kawena had a strange dream of meeting an old woman dressed in a smoke colored holoku, puffing on a wooden pipe similar to the one her grandmother had smoked. The woman in the dream stood up as she approached with tears in her eyes, embraced and kissed her which left a bitter

taste in her mouth and throat as though the old woman had injected saliva mixed with tobacco into her mouth, She cleared her throat and was about to spit it out but the old lady cried out "No! no! swallow it." On awakening she told her mother of the dream. Her mother looked at her and then looked out the door, saying nothing. Later that afternoon her mother mentioned the dream, saying, "A duty has been placed upon you, to speak for the people, but with it you will know bitterness from opposition and criticism. The work is laid on you and you must carry it on, you must not reject it even though you feel the sting of reviling criticism, disappointment and unpleasant experiences. Keep on!" From then on until her work ceased the words were to come back to her many times as a certain few among her own people would criticize, revile and sting by letter, by telephone and even using the "Letters to the editor" as a medium.

Dictionary story  
Dictionary story

(\*20) Slide

Hawn Mission Academy

(\*20) Realizing the need for more education, the public schools would not take married people but the Hawaiian Mission Academy would and from there she received her high school diploma in their first graduating class.

Story  
she went to graduation Xorke banquet

(\*21) Slide

Pele dancing hula

(\*21) In 1931 she had her one and only child. That night her husband Kaloli'i, stepped outside, observed the



skies and came back in to tell Kawena that it was the night of Huna and their daughter would never be close to them.

Well named after the goddess Pele, she had a mind of her own and at times displayed a fiery temper.

(\*22) Slide

Kawena w/ ipu

(\*22) Kawena, since childhood had grown up with the hula.

While visiting at Lunalilo Home: she met Victoria Ukeke story and

Victoria.

Story  
Kohala the shark

(\*23) Slide

w/ Lokalia Montgomery

(\*24) Slide

Kawena playing Ukeke

INTRODUCE UKEKE

-- Napoka plays ukeke --

(\*25) Slide

Kawena & Pat puili

(\*25) Early one morning in 1934, Keahi Luahine, one of the best hula exponents of her day, arrived at our home looking quite unhappy and told Kawena why she had come. For a year she had been told over and over again in a dream to teach Kawena the hula of her Kaua'i people. She had not responded to the dream for fear of being considered bold and forward. The evening before a woman walked up to her house

and said to her, "So you refuse to obey me!" and then vanished. Soon after Kawena and myself started learning from Keahi. After learning for nearly two years Keahi turned the two of us over to a dour Hawaiian Chinese man, a cousin, Kapua. He had a full library of chants and mele in his head. He refused to let us have pencil or paper knowing that Kawena had such a retentive memory that he constantly grumbled.

Kapua grumbled on until he got quite a scare when a car loaded with teenagers crashed in front of his house. He associated it with displeasure from the goddess Laka and so decided to graduate the entire class.

(\*26) Slide

Ilalaole

(\*26) Later that year Kawena found another noted kumu hula by the name of Ilala'ole and for the next two years of association with him, it was a happy and productive period. She concentrating on chants and drumming and me with the dance.

(\*27) Slide

Punahou class

(\*27) At this time she also taught Hawaiian culture in the lower grades at Punahou. She often remarked at how interested these little haole children were in the Hawaiian material and in later years as grown adults, when meeting her they would remind her that they had been in her class.

In the early forties, Kawena was called upon by Kamehameha Schools to give lessons in Hawaiian culture. This started first in the Prep School located in lower Kalihi on Libby McNeil street during the time that Blossom Nary was the principal. Later the school was moved to Bishop Hall on the Museum campus which was located near her office. Prior to this she would often go to the school to give lectures and often would bring me along to demonstrate the old classic hula.

This evening we have two of Kawena's great grandchildren to do one of the childrens hula's composed by Kawena during this period: Iluna la iluna.

~~Keiki hula Ka Lauae & Kalimakuhilani Suganuma~~

Kalauahi

E Pele

(\*28) Slide

Gas mask

(\*28) In 1939, Kawena was hired at Bishop Museum by director Dr. Peter Buck. While doing what she liked best to do at Bishop Museum, World War II blew on the scene and shortly after she was approached to take over a job at a Waikiki camouflage unit where there had been a considerable amount of dissent among the workers whose job was to rip up strips of burlap and other cloths to weave into chicken wire for use by the military. The material, which had been



stored in one of the southwestern States, arrived dusty and filled with scorpions, black widow spiders, etc. Her presence wasn't too welcome to the workers who immediately dubbed her "Old Lady Special".

This is a picture of the Museum staff dressed in their World War II best.

(\*29) Slide

Kawena w/ kiki

(\*29) After the war she resumed working at the Museum. Besides translating she often travelled throughout Hawai'i interviewing knowledgeable Hawaiian elders. This photo was taken at Waimanalo and Kawena holds a temporary basket, kiki, woven by her mother, Pa'ahana, who accompanied her on this trip. *story*

(\*30) Slide  
Interviewing

#30

Kawena recorded <sup>people</sup> knowledgeable <sup>in</sup> Hawaiian culture here she is

(\*30) Interviewing Ka'u historian, William Meincke.

~~#31~~ *story*

(\*31) Slide

Family in boat

*work transcription*  
*around 1954*  
*1953-1954*  
(\*31) [~~Pat ek. date?~~] Family and friends would come and visit Kawena in Punaluu where she resided for <sup>2</sup> years at the Handy's quest cottage while compiling <sup>the</sup> "Hawaiian Dictionary".

IN THE PICTURE are Kawena with her son-in-law, some of his children and Pele

(\*32) Slide

The Handy's

(\*32) The Handy's collaborated with Kawena on many projects. On one trip with Kawena they went around Hawai'i Island gathering material. Some of which appeared in the

books, Polynesian Family System of Ka'u and Native Planters.

(\*33) Slide

Kawena-scholar

[PAT ck] (\*33) When Kawena returned to Ka'u <sup>in 1935</sup> to gather Hawaiian material she recalled an earlier time when kite flying was a favorite past time for many, much to the consternation of some of the elders as it suggested to them, Olopele, a god who took the form of a kite to lure away the spirits of those who had died of sorcery. Her grandmother's words <sup>to her as a child</sup> came back to Kawena <sup>on this trip,</sup> in 1935. "The day will come when our people will leave Ka'u and fly kites to other places. Alas! Our homeland will be deserted by her children." ~~These words came back to Kawena in 1935 when she went to Ka'u to gather Hawaiian material prior to the publication of the~~ <sup>This prophecy</sup> ~~"Polynesian Family System" and~~ <sup>she</sup> found very few people of the land still in the district.

One of the first things that Kawena did was to institute a break period when they all gathered together on Sunday for fifteen minutes of prayer and the singing of a familiar hymn. From then on the morale slowly went up and soon instead of being called "Mrs. Special" her name became "Mama".

Kawena suffered greatly from asthma and not many months passed before she was forced to leave the unit because of the dusty conditions and her asthma so she returned to the Museum and her work.

*Soon*  
The time came to realize the project that she had worked on from the age of fifteen to come to a head, her word list. She had been obsessed with including everything if possible, pure, borrowed, vulgarity, everything! Previous dictionaries with their missionary influence, left much out that might hint of sex or sexual innuendos etc. She was determined that all was to be included including terms used in the Roman Catholic services which could not be found in the older dictionaries. The University of Hawaii teamed up with the Bishop Museum to produce the dictionary. Kawena had the words and definitions and she was delighted to learn that her team mate who was the head of the University linguistic department, Dr. Samuel Elbert, her own pupil in his gaining the Hawaiian language, who was to put the work into dictionary form.

*on the*



A group versed in the language went to the legislature seeking money for a review board to go over all the material at hand. This was in 1957. They got the money, offered nothing constructive, added nothing to it, were irritated with the inclusion of Hawaiianized words taken from the Holy Bible. The barbs began to fly both in letter and phone calls that damned them on high in the form of "Letters to the Editor".

Though it hurt deeply at the harsh words and accusations coming from Hawaiians (her own people), she was accused of "exposing the bones of our dead", and Dr Elbert experiencing something new to him, hatred for Haoles. With all the verbal bombardment, neither responded with any reply, feeling that in time the invectives would die down.

Of all her work towards the preservation of the Hawaiian culture, she felt that her contribution to the dictionary would remain the most important for the young people of the future though she often said, "One may learn all the grammar possible today and have a very large vocabulary of Hawaiian words at his commands, but if he fails to understand words sweetly spoken and sourly meant, he still had more to learn".

She wasn't quite through yet, Lilioukalani Trust approached her for help in their understanding of the Hawaiian culture. The members of the staff with whom she

# 34

Kawena  
w/ La'ake'a

# 35

Kawena

would be expected to work with, were highly trained in their professions and she had absolutely no training or experience in the fields of psychology or psychiatry, the area where many problems arose in dealing with the problem of Hawaiian families they were attempting to help.

When asked what her fee would be to act as an advisor there, her reply was that there would be no charge, as she said, "No charge at all, not for exchanging thoughts that would be a help to our people as they learn so will I".

One thing that I noticed when people would approach my mother with questions dealing with culture, and because of the slight differences in language or culture from island to island, she often prefaced her reply with, "In my district we did this or that." Never claiming that her word was final. One time though, in her later years at the Museum, a young scientist came to her for some information, received it and then asked, "Where is this documentation?" For once in her life she bristled up and said, "I am the document!" She would still continue to help him periodically, but she was never again asked for documentation.

was never again asked for documentation.

#36

Kawena, Aunt, Pat  
+ Pele

<sup>her</sup>  
Kawena balanced professional career with a private  
life, <sup>in KA</sup> three generation home on Birch St.

(\*34) Slide

Birch Street Home

Kawena's home was always filled w/ music and  
ohana. Talk story

(\*35) Slide

Filled with Music

(Pele, Pat, Kawena)

~~story~~ Introduce

#37 This is <sup>Wai</sup> Muki kiwai

-- Pat leaves to change for hula --

(\*36) Slide

Kaupena, Kawena, Pele

#38

Kawena

Kawena left 52 titles in Hawaiian culture and received many awards for her work from the State of Hawaii, city of Honolulu and many civic groups. A nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in literature and two Honorary doctorates from two Universities.

I am very proud of my mother, the storehouse of Hawaiian life that I learned growing up in her household and a feeling that I was wanted and that when her spirits were at the lowest, perhaps I was to some extent a comfort to her.