

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Mary Souza, 72, homemaker and retired substitute schoolteacher

"We had Kalihi Theater. It was located where the Salvation Army is located now on King Street. During the summer, they had bargain matinees. It was ten cents and we all walked. A group of us walked from here to Kalihi Theater to pay ten cents to see a movie. Every week my mother allowed us to go and we all went, my brothers and sisters and the kids from the neighborhood."

Mary (Freitas) Souza, Portuguese, one of nine children, was born and raised in Kalihi Valley. She attended Kalihi-Uka School, Kalihi-Waena School, and Sacred Hearts Academy, graduating in 1931. She also enrolled in courses at the University of Hawaii.

Mary was a substitute teacher in Kalihi's public schools for eighteen years. She also taught at a privately-operated pre-school, preparing four- and five-year-olds for the islands' English-standard schools.

Married since 1937 to David Souza, she is the mother of one daughter and one son. The Souzas still reside in Kalihi Valley and are active members of Our Lady of the Mount Church.

Tape No. 11-9-1-83

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mary Souza (MS)

December 19, 1983

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Mary Souza at her home in Kalihi, Oahu, on December 19, 1983.

Mrs. Souza, I'm going to begin the interview by having you tell me when you were born.

MS: I was born on May 6, 1912, in Kalihi Valley, corner of Nihi and Laumaile Streets.

MK: And how many brothers and sisters do you have?

MS: I have four brothers and four sisters; with myself makes five sisters.

MK: What was your mother's name?

MS: My mother's maiden name was Pauline Grotta, G-R-O-T-T-A.

MK: When and where was she born?

MS: She was born here in Honolulu, on Punchbowl, in the year 1891.

MK: And now I would like some information about your mother's mother, and mother's father.

MS: Oh, my mother's mother was Amelia Grotta. She came from the Azores, and her father was Antone Grotta, he also came from the Azores.

MK: What do you know about their background in terms of what they did for a living?

MS: My grandfather worked with dynamite. They did a lot of (this at that time). Whenever they built roads they used dynamite and that's where he met his death. When he set the dynamite, it didn't turn off and he went to see (why it didn't) and then, it exploded. My mother was twelve years [old] then. He died, but my grandmother lived to be eighty-two years old and we lived with her in her house. She was a beautiful woman. I know my father worked and we lived there and she never worked. (If) she worked prior to that--I don't know.

- MK: Since your grandparents came from Portugal, at home did they practice a lot of Portuguese customs and speak the language itself?
- MS: She spoke, but my father and mother never spoke Portuguese to us. Of course, our cooking was mainly Portuguese food, but my mother was a terrific cook. She could cook almost anything you wanted.
- MK: What types of things do you remember then, cooking in the kitchen back then?
- MS: Well, we had an (outdoor) oven. I vividly remember my father worked with my uncle, and he was more (or less) a superintendent. At Christmas time (the workmen) brought us apples and suckling pigs. I can see my mother stuffing this pig and sticking it in this brick oven for our dinner.
- MK: I don't know how much you know about your mother, but how many brothers and sisters did your mother have?
- MS: My mother had three sisters and one brother. She was a beautiful woman; she had dark hair and very blue eyes.
- MK: And what did she tell you about her growing up years?
- MS: She worked hard because there were nine of us. They sent seven of us to Catholic schools. My four brothers graduated St. Louis, and three of us (girls) graduated Sacred Hearts Academy. In fact, my mother was the first playground director up here, in Kaiulani Park.
- MK: How about your mother's own education?
- MS: My mother went to Sacred Hearts Convent [School]. I think [she went] as far as the seventh grade. She could read and write Portuguese. She said they did go to Portuguese school. (Yet we didn't speak Portuguese at home.)
- MK: You mentioned already that your mother was the first director of Kaiulani Park. Can you tell me about her job?
- MS: She worked under Arthur Polison. He was the head of the (Park Board).
- MK: What did her job entail?
- MS: Well, every afternoon from two [o'clock] to five [o'clock], sometimes she stayed at the park till about six o'clock. She had quiet games and they had baseball games going on, like they do today; basketball, volleyball. I know once a year, around this time, at Christmas time, she put up something big, and I know that they used to have a flagpole and they greased it so much and they put something at the (top). They'd (then) climb to get that prize. I remember so well as one would come down they would grease it again for another to go

up, and it used to be good, good fun. And then every Sunday they had (a) baseball (game). Different teams from the valley would challenge and it was great.

MK: How were the teams organized?

MS: Right in the valley, the men--(teams from different districts). The valley was big. Even Herman Wedemeyer's father played first base.

MK: Do you remember any of the teams' names?

MS: They took big league names. It was fun. (On) those Sundays we had Jell-O and cake for lunch. Every Sunday that was our lunch so we could come home and eat and go back, but was really fun.

MK: The whole community was involved?

MS: It was all the community, it really was beautiful. I wish they'd do some of those things today.

MK: What park did they play on?

MS: Right here, Kaiulani Park.

MK: Oh--would you know something about the history of that park, since your mother worked there?

MS: I don't know. I always remembered that park. (Our) first fire station (was in a corner of the park). Then when the war [i.e., World War II] came on, they had homes there; they evacuated all the Army and Navy [personnel] and placed some of those people (in these homes). My father was the head of the civilian defense up here, (in Kalihi Valley).

MK: You mentioned your father--what was your father's name?

MS: John J. Freitas.

MK: When and where was he born?

MS: He was born in Hana, [Maui], in 1892.

MK: Can you tell me why it was that he was in Hana?

MS: I'm not too sure but I think when they came, his father and mother came from Madeira. They went straight to Hana to work. Then they came (to Honolulu).

MK: About when did they come down here?

MS: I don't remember.

- MK: In your conversation with your father, did you find out how many brothers and sisters he had?
- MS: He had two sisters and four brothers.
- MK: What did he mention about his childhood years?
- MS: His mother died very young and he was brought up by his brother and sisters, mostly his oldest sister. I think that's how my mother met him, because he came (to Kalihi Valley) to live with his sister.
- MK: What do you know about his education?
- MS: He's a very bright man. He went to St. Louis as far as the eighth grade in the days when St. Louis was first started.
- MK: Was he active in athletics, community activities?
- MS: Community activities, yes! Very much so. Very much in the Lady of the Mount Church.
- MK: What was his occupation?
- MS: He first started with the county as a carpenter. Then his brother Henry started Henry Freitas Contracting and he went (to work for) his brother. He was the timekeeper, and also the superintendent. Then my uncle formed Pacific Construction, and he [MS's father] (continued to work for him). He did their payroll, in fact, and went off to pay (the men). They built Schofield Barracks, they built the Advertiser [building], they built St. Louis High School.
- MK: How many years did he do that?
- MS: He worked until he retired at the age of sixty-two. Eventually my uncle's son took over the business when my uncle died.
- MK: You mentioned earlier that during the World War II period, your father was . . .
- MS: The head of the Civil Defense up in this valley. At Kalihi-Uka School. That was their headquarters.
- MK: What was Civil Defense arrangements like in the valley at that time?
- MS: They took care of air raids. They went around to see that everything was blacked out; that there were no lights on, and that people were in their bomb shelters (when an air raid signal went on). We had a beautiful bomb shelter. It was built above the ground and it was wide, I don't know how many seats (were in it). It was filled with black sand. The floor was above the ground. I don't know how many feet thick (with sand) the roof (was), and we had benches and we had a table. We had flashlights and we had our food. We had everything

in (there so) that we could run in. But of course, I didn't live at home. I was married and when the war [World War II] started, I had taken first aid and home care nursing, and I was called immediately down to Farrington [High School], which was transformed to Tripler Hospital. And I went in to set up beds and then we had our own emergency unit under Dr. [Minoru] Kimura and I worked there. Volunteered--I didn't get paid, I just volunteered.

MK: So you and your father were both active?

MS: (Yes). I also did Red Cross work, folding bandages when I wasn't busy there. I had no children [at that time], so I went right in into Red Cross doing bandages.

MK: You mentioned earlier that your father retired at the age of sixty-two, so he worked beyond the war years?

MS: Oh, yes.

MK: You know, as you look back on your life together with your grandparents and your mother and father, what do you remember most vividly about those days?

MS: Going to school, I guess. I went to Kalihi-Uka School until the sixth grade. Then I went to Kalihi-Waena School. My older brother and my older sister, we walked from here to Kalihi-Waena [School], that's on Gulick Avenue, but we walked down Kalihi [Street] and then through the taro patch down Gulick [Avenue] to school; (the same route) back home. (We also went to Kalihi Theater to the movies.)

MK: I think I'm going to ask you about your school years a little bit later. I want to go back to your parents, and I want to find out how did your parents meet?

MS: I don't know. I guess they knew one another because they both lived in the valley.

MK: Were there many marriages that occurred among the families of Kalihi Valley?

MS: Oh, yes, I guess so.

MK: And, um, I remember you . . .

MS: They got married at the cathedral, Fort Street Cathedral.

MK: Can you kind of describe what you remember about that wedding or what you have been told about your parents' wedding?

MS: No. I have a picture (of their wedding).

MK: That was held at the Fort Street Cathedral in 1910?

MS: (Yes).

MK: Based on what you heard from your parents, what did the area up here look like back then, physically?

MS: Had a lot of guava bushes, and the homes were sparse; but to me, my grandmother had a beautiful home.

MK: What did it look like?

MS: Her porch--we had two entrances to the living room. Her doors were not just wooden doors, it was glass with a lot of embossed [ornamentation]. When we were little kids, we had an out toilet. That I remember (well).

MK: How was the other facilities like?

MS: (We had a brick oven outside where my mom cooked bread and even roasted meat.) We had (no) electricity (when I was very little). I remember we did not have screens at that time, we had shutters. After, my father put in screens. (I can recall my grandmother going with other women to the stream to wash clothes.) We had our bathroom in the house, we had our toilet in the--it became very modern as soon as things came in.

MK: When did that happen?

MS: (When I was a little girl.)

MK: Prior to the war, many years . . .

MS: Oh, yes, many years before that. We lived with my grandmother and then we moved down to this other place--down to 2307 Kalihi Street (about 1922. We didn't move into this home until the sewers were installed. I believe we were the first to have sewers.) We had a big home that accommodated nine children. We had a (four-)bedroom home, but the fourth bedroom was more like a dorm. We had four single beds there, two dressers and two closets in that big room. But the girls shared beds; we shared double beds.

MK: You know, going back to the house that your grandmother had, how did it compare with all the other houses in the neighborhood? Was it very different and much more . . .

MS: I don't think so. I think all the homes (were alike). We did a lot of hand sewing. We were taught embroidery when we were young, we all did. My sister Stella [Moniz] is a very good embroiderer. She can do most anything with her hands.

MK: [When] your grandmother was living, those early days, what type of people lived in the neighborhood?

MS: Portuguese. You knew everybody that lived next to you. It was friendly, very, very friendly. (There were some Hawaiians, Chinese, and Japanese people also in Kalihi Valley.)

MK: At that time, did you know about how many Portuguese families lived in that vicinity?

MS: No, I don't, but I know it was quite a number.

MK: How about other ethnic groups--were they also present in the valley at that time?

MS: Yes, we had Chinese, Hawaiians, [and] Puerto Ricans, but the Puerto Ricans lived up on Nihi Street. There were a few that (were) scattered, but mostly it was up that way. I remember the Chinese man going down the street on his horse and buggy with the bananas.

[Later, after] we moved down (to 1307 Kalihi Street), my grandma (sold her house and) moved in with her (daughter, Rosie). We had a beautiful childhood. We were brought up very, very close. We still are close.

MK: You mentioned there are a lot of Portuguese people in the valley. As a Portuguese community, what sort of activities did people participate in?

MS: Oh, we'd have--they still have, once a year, a big feast up in the valley at Lady of the Mount Church in August. [We] had a nine-day novena (at the church). The church services, they'd light dynamite before the services (at the hillside). They had a very large procession (on Sunday). The Hawaiian band used to lead it. And people--all the Portuguese from all over the islands used to come to this. In fact they still have that organization [in charge of the festivities] up here in the valley. It's still run by Portuguese people. It's not as active. (But, we have a statue of the Blessed Virgin in the hillside and in August we have a candlelight procession to this hillside.)

MK: I was wondering, how were the Puerto Ricans that lived there? What sort of activities . . .

MS: I don't know.

MK: How about at that church? Many Puerto Ricans were also . . .

MS: Catholics. In church, there was unity (regardless of race. Everybody was a great family.)

MK: Do they, too, participate in . . .

MS: Oh, yes, there was unity. And the feast, it would go on from Saturday night all day Sunday, and they had everything there that you could

think of. (Foods, rides, games, and even a raffle of a car.)

MK: What did you like most about that feast?

MS: I guess it was, you know, the time that we got new clothes like Christmas, and there was the feast. You looked forward to it, and people that (you knew) came to visit.

MK: And, um, you were born in 1912?

MS: Yes.

MK: I'm not sure if you have heard any stories, but have you heard any stories about your birth, where it occurred?

MS: Home! Home with a midwife. My mother had nine children and all nine children were with a midwife.

MK: Who was the midwife for this area?

MS: There were two. (There was) an old Portuguese woman, I don't know her name. When my youngest brother was born, I knew her name then-- it was a Mrs. Gonsalves. I remember going to pay her. My father told me to go and take this money. He put it in an envelope, and he said, "You take this to Mrs. Gonzalves." When I went, it was a gold piece, and she said, "This is going to be a very lucky boy; he is being paid with gold." He was our baby [brother]. I remember that well.

MK: Oh, sounds like a really special occasion, then, when a new addition came into the family?

MS: Oh, it really was, but that one I remember vividly. Every time someone was born, we had ice cream. We had one of these freezers that you cranked, and when we were baptized, it was a big feast. It was a celebration. Cake and ice cream, you know, because someone was being baptized.

MK: What happened in a baptismal? I've never seen . . .

MS: You've never seen--ah, oh--the godfather and godmother take the baby to church. It's dressed in its finery, and the priest prays, and the godparents pray, and they pour water (on its head) and it's anointed with oil. It's a beautiful (service). And (there are) lighted candle lights (and a godfather and godmother who takes the baby to church. The father and mother also attend this service.)

MK: And those days, they--how were the names of the children selected?

MS: I don't know. I was named after my grandmother, I know. My grandmother was Mary Violet, and I was named Mary Violet.

- MK: As a child growing up here, what was a day in your life like? Try to recall a day from the time you woke up, the sounds you heard, and activities you participated in.
- MS: Well, we did quite a bit. We helped to wash clothes before we went to school. We bleached clothes and boiled clothes at that time.
- MK: So you did the wash in the morning, then . . .
- MS: Then we took the bus (to King Street). When we went to the (Sacred Hearts) Academy and came home it was quite late because we went by trolley (from Kaimuki to King Street). From here to King Street by bus, and then onto the trolley, and then to school. We rode the trolley.
- MK: How would you get down to King Street?
- MS: By bus, [Honolulu] Rapid Transit, they called it. It was cheap-- five cents with a transfer. We went all the way [from King Street] to Kaimuki [by trolley], took us over an hour to get to Kaimuki, but we got there.
- MK: I know that once your husband mentioned that there was a truck that used to come up . . .
- MS: Oh, that was prior to that. That was when we were kids.
- MK: Can you explain how that mode of transportation was?
- MS: There were two buses. See, David is about seven years older than I am, so he would more or less know more about that. But I remember my mother going on that bus to the market, to the open market (on King Street) to shop.
- MK: Was it a makeshift bus, or . . .
- MS: Everybody rode the bus. Went down to Kekaulike Street and (they) parked the bus, shopped and came home.
- MK: And the bus just waited for everyone to finish?
- MS: A certain time and everybody came. I don't know how many trips they made. I don't remember. I may have rode that bus, but I don't remember that well. Because we moved from, you know, my grandma's house down to this other house when my grandma sold.
- MK: How was it different from the earlier place that you lived?
- MS: Well, when we lived at my grandmother's, we had (an) outside toilet, and (a wood stove. When we moved to our new house, it was) the first house to have sewers in the valley. They had these meetings, improvement meetings (in the community). It was called Kalihi Valley

Improvement Club. We couldn't move in until the sewers (were installed). The people didn't want to pay (the assessment) for (the) sewage. (The Kalihi Valley Improvement Club worked with the City and County and finally sewage was installed in Kalihi Valley.)

MK: I've heard stories about water tanks and water trucks, could you tell me about it?

MS: Yes! Oh, yes! When we lived at my grandmother's--this (man called) Mr. Brown came with a water truck, twice a week. I remember having a (water) tank at my grandma's house. She had a tank, a water tank that we used to bathe and to cook. (It was rainwater.) We had a wood stove at my grandmother's.

MK: Did the boys in the family have to go out and gather the wood?

MS: No, my father (brought) wood (home). I don't remember my brothers cutting wood. No, I don't remember--no. When we came home from school we sat down and (did) homework. Yes, we were brought up by the book.

MK: All nine of you?

MS: All nine.

MK: Now that you've mentioned a little bit about how you were raised, can you elaborate more on how your parents raised nine children; their feelings on discipline, education?

MS: Education was the thing at home.

MK: So, as soon as you got home . . .

MS: We did our chores, and as soon as dinner was done, we had this long table which seats twelve people. (My father) built (this) big table. We sat around that table, and my father sat also at the table because he did payroll (and we did our homework). Now we all sat at the table doing our homework after dinner. And we took turns doing dishes. The boys took turns doing the yard 'cause we had a very big yard. We took turns doing washing, and we took turns baking bread, because my mother baked her own bread.

MK: Those days, was it outdoor oven?

MS: No. When we moved down, no. We had electricity; we had everything electrical. Guess we were kind of spoiled when we moved into the new house.

MK: You mentioned you had nine children in your family. How were your relationships with your brothers and sisters?

MS: We were brought up very close. My mother always said you never go

to bed without speaking to your brothers and sisters, so we fought and it was over. Every brother and sister (do) have arguments, but to this very day we are very, very close. I told you that I spoke over a half hour to my sister on Saturday, in Indiana. She's visiting her (daughter there). In fact, we call or they call, we speak to them once a month, and yet we write, that's how close we are.

MK: Very close family.

MS: Very close.

MK: Every child plays games and all sorts of things. What sort of games or activities did you participate in as a child?

MS: Well, our house was built on one lot. We lived on a corner. We (had) a driveway that came into the garage (from the side road). The lower lot, we had a lawn, and we had shower trees, no fence, (a) table, and benches around one tree. We had a croquet set, we had a volleyball set that we played, that was ours. We (seldom) went out but we had games (in our yard). We would go to the park with my mother, but we had our own activities at home. We always had a piano.

MK: Where did you go for piano lessons?

MS: Played by ear. My mother played it beautifully by ear. Everybody picked (it) up. (My) parents couldn't afford to send us to a private school and yet give us music lessons. But we had one, we had a Victrola. I remember we had a piano. We listened and we played it by ear.

MK: So in the evening, say um, when you were done with your homework or it was the weekend, what sort of activities occurred?

MS: We went to the park to watch baseball, or we'd (go for a) walk. We had a group of friends that we'd walk (with from) home right up (in the valley up to the orphanage. The orphanage) is now St. Anthony's Home. It was Kalihi Valley Orphanage, St. Anthony's Orphanage. They took in orphans, and we'd walk (up) and walk back, and you could walk on the street and nothing happened. You knew everybody on the street that you could talk (to). That's how we spent our Sundays, walking or we'd go to the Princess Theater (to the movies).

MK: Where was the Princess Theater?

MS: Princess Theater is where Kukui Plaza (is located now).

MK: What sort of movies did you enjoy then?

MS: I don't know. We had Kalihi Theater. (It was located) where the Salvation Army is located now on King Street. During the summer, they had bargain matinees. It was ten cents and we all walked. A group of us walked from here to Kalihi Theater to pay ten cents to

see a movie. Every week my mother allowed us to go and we all went, my brothers and sisters and the kids from the neighborhood.

Kam School [i.e., Kamehameha Schools] is not where it is now. Kam School (for Boys was) where Farrington [High School] is now. The Bishop Museum was (always) there, (and) where the Star Market is now, (it) was their dairy. Across the street where the [public] housing is was the [Kamehameha] girl's school. When they had football (games), they had football at their (own) field across the street. They had (their own field called, "Kam Field.") Everything was held there. They (had) pep rallies, and they had big bonfires, and we'd all walk (to see their) pep rallies. Farrington was not in existence. It was prior to Farrington.

MK: You're really not Hawaiian--why is it that you were going to Kamehameha rallies?

MS: Well, because it was an activity, it was something for us. It was an outing for us. (Our) parents went. There were as many activities as you have today, (although we) led a more secluded life, and when something came about like that it was something that we went (to). Of course, we're always for St. Louis; we all went to a Catholic school, my four brothers, my father, we all went to a Catholic school. We went to the [Sacred Hearts] Academy, and the Academy was the only girl's school at the time, they didn't have St. Francis, they didn't have Star of the Sea, they didn't have Damien.

MK: So it was a big thing to go to St. Louis football games?

MS: Oh, it really was, and we never missed it. We bought season tickets. My father and mother bought season tickets for all of us and we all went to the games. My father and mother also went to the games.

MK: So as a child you played in your neighborhood, went to see movies, you attended football games . . .

MS: Pretty good life.

MK: How about the other children in the neighborhood? Were they primarily Portuguese around your area?

MS: Yes. Across the street (lived a) Portuguese woman married to a Hawaiian man, Kama. He was in charge of the water tunnels way up (in) the valley. They had water tunnels and they had water conservation. You could go as far as a certain (area in the valley). I don't know if they still have those water tunnels up in the valley. It was restricted. You could walk as far as the gate and turn back, but we went in many times because our neighbor was in charge of those tunnels, so (he'd take us) with him.

MK: What were the purpose of those water tunnels?

- MS: I guess our water came from there, I don't know because we still have water tanks up in our valley. [But] I don't know if they're still in existence.
- MK: You mentioned that your neighbor was a Hawaiian man--what can you tell me about any of the Hawaiians living up here in the valley?
- MS: They were nice people. Beautiful people.
- MK: Was there a Hawaiian community?
- MS: I remember on Perry Street there were Hawaiians there and further down, the Millers lived; and the Kawanos.
- MK: I noticed nowadays there are a couple stores up here in the valley. Were there such stores . . .
- MS: We had two stores; one store first. My father's sister--where my father lived, they owned the first store up here.
- MK: What was the name of the store?
- MS: I don't know. But I know they have a Nobrega Street. The streets were named after people. They have a Machado Street, that's after my uncle Peter Machado; they have a Nobrega Street, that's after my uncle John Nobrega. You know, John was married to my father's oldest sister. They have a Perry Street if you noticed. Then they have a Monte Street because the church was the Lady of the Mount.
- MK: Do you remember about when these street names came into being?
- MS: No, I always remember these streets. I don't remember--but I know these streets were always there.
- MK: You know, the stores that you mentioned that your family had--what sort of goods did they sell?
- MS: They sold everything. After they sold it to Kam--we used to call him Apao--then he had everything. I remember going to Apao's stores to buy cracked seed in a package for five cents, a big package.
- (Taping interrupted, then resumes.)
- MK: So can we continue talking about that store that you visited, they had everything?
- MS: Oh, and you could charge. If you had no money you could go in and buy, and (they) kept a record. If you went in and you had no money to buy whatever you wanted, you bought. (They) recorded everything, and at the end of the month you paid for it.
- MK: Was it a family account that (they) kept track of?

MS: Uh huh. Uh huh. I remember that. Later on they sold that store to Yee Ah Kin before the war [World War II]--the people that owned Holiday Mart. You know later on they bought Holiday Mart? They also became very close friends of ours. They had a house back of the store. They lived there. To this day we are quite friendly with them.

I had two sisters that did not care to go to a Catholic school. My youngest sister went to Kalakaua [Intermediate School], and then to Farrington [High School]. She finished in the first graduating class of Farrington and she worked after school for them. She went to work for May's Market. Liberty House owned May's Market; and then from there she went to Liberty House and she is still at Liberty House. She works in the office.

MK: That store that you mentioned, was it a store that served . . .

MS: The store is still there on the corner. It's (owned by) Ted Yap-- they bought the store. He's leasing it now to someone else. Ted doesn't run it. But the Yaps ran that store for a while. The Kams sold it to the [Yees]. First they sold it to Yee, then from the Yees it went to the Yaps.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: You know, while your sister was here, she kind of talked with us about the time you went up to the water conservation area. Can you again describe that area, and what was there, and what you did?

MS: Well, after you passed the orphanage, it was like a dirt road. You know, I don't think that road is macadamized today. It could be a two-way street, but at one time I think it was a one-way street--was more like a dirt road. And alongside of the road, you know, there were mountain apple trees. You could find sparsely, even rose apple trees, a lot of rose apple trees in between. We'd go way up because there was so (much) ginger--white ginger and yellow ginger. We would sit there and make leis. There was even a water lily patch way back before you got into the reservation. The Miles had a bamboo forest up that way--close by to William Miles, I remember quite distinctly all of that.

MK: You mentioned that there was a swimming hole?

MS: There is, and to this day there is still a swimming hole up that way, that the kids go back and forth to swim.

MK: You yourself never went?

- MS: No, I never swam. My mother was a park director, and I remember the bus coming and taking the children during the summer to Waikiki Beach for swimming lessons under Mrs. Thelma Wiki. I'd take water wings because I was so afraid of the water. It'd hit my knees and I would run out. I never learned to swim.
- MK: Oh, and then while your sister was here, um, there was also some talk about the old-style political rallies that you attended as a child. Could you describe them again for me?
- MS: It was at Kaiulani Park; they'd put a big banner (notifying the people there was to be a) Democratic meeting tonight or tomorrow or [a] Republican meeting. Then they'd come early in the morning and set up chairs, and then at night they'd have these meetings and every candidate brought a Hawaiian troupe with them; and we'd go. The people, if they favored candidates, would put leis on them and we kids, we'd go. We'd pass [campaign literature] cards whether we knew the candidates or not. It was something to do and have fun.
- MK: And you mentioned that one of your relatives ran for office?
- MS: Yes, my uncle Henry was Senator Henry Freitas. And when he made trips, if it was a time to make a political speech, my father got up on the podium and gave (the) speech (for him at our district). They had trucks; they had a piano on (a) truck on election day, and they'd travel from [election] booth to booth. In fact, I think every politician had a truck with a piano and a Hawaiian group that would go from booth to booth to serenade the people with their candidate. They don't do it today. Today everything is on TV, you miss all of that old-fashioned political gatherings.
- MK: And you also mentioned a lot of old-time politicians were from this area. Could you again mention their names?
- MS: Bill Furtado was one. I remember there was a Mr. Pacheco, John Wilson (the mayor for whom the tunnel is named after), Blaisdell. Who else, there was John Asing, it was not the [City] Council then-- it was [the] Board of Supervisors.
- MK: Was there any one candidate that you vividly remember for this area?
- MS: At one time my father was a staunch Republican, and he worked at the head of the precinct booth, you know, counting ballots. I worked also in a booth but we counted every ballot; one, two, three, four, five was tally. We counted like that and we (worked) all night counting. There was no such thing as computing.
- MK: I guess those days, people really waited for those results to come.
- MS: Uh huh. And it was all night. You never knew until the next morning (who was elected). I remember being a clerk working.

MK: And also, um, we talked about--can you again share some information about the Nolle Smith family and their house lot here in Kalihi?

MS: No, Nolle Smith was our favorite, of course! 'Cause Nolle Smith was a (very) good friend. The Smiths (were) very good friends of ours.

It was more than a lot, they had acres and acres of land, and (a) beautiful home. In fact, they had two homes, one that his mother lived and his sister, and his brother Donald lived in. Donald was a well-known football player for the University of Hawaii.

MK: I didn't know that.

MS: They grew up here--yes, grew up with us. We're still friends.

MK: I know that later on, you worked with Mrs. Nolle Smith and I'm going to be asking you that later when we get into your career, but staying on the topic of your childhood, you've talked about the Lady of the Mount feast at the church. How was the other holidays celebrated? Say Christmas? Easter?

MS: We had midnight mass. Well, say, way back when we lived with my grandma they had a nine-day novena, but the masses were very early in the morning. It was four o'clock in the morning and we'd get up and we'd go with my grandma to these masses. Christmas (there) was always midnight mass and the chicken soup--when you came home, and sweet bread, (and fruit cakes). We had that outside oven (where) the bread was baked in.

MK: How about Easter?

MS: Easter. We always had new clothes for those big occasions. In fact, we had three types of clothing when we were small.

MK: What were they?

MS: We had home clothing, when we came home from school; we changed our clothes to home clothes. Those were the discarded school clothes from the year before. Then we had church clothes--our outing clothes that we dressed to go to church. (Of course, when we went to the Academy, we wore uniforms.)

MK: There were also other ethnic groups living in the valley. When they had their Chinese New Year, Japanese celebrations, did the Portuguese also participate?

MS: Well, our neighbor was Chinese, so on Chinese New Year we always went there for dinner. You know, my mother never cooked on that day because Mary Kam always had us there. And the firecrackers. I remember my mother making a big pot of soup and calling Mary, "Mary, don't cook today, I made soup." She'd give her her dinner over the fence. If Mary cooked something she knew we liked, she'd say,

"Pauline, come."

MK: Was that a very usual occurrence?

MS: I think it may have been. When we moved here (to 2909 Kalihi Street) we had no fence either (and) there was nothing back here but bushes. We raised a cow, we raised rabbits, we had chickens, (and so did our neighbor).

MK: Gee, I didn't realize that.

MS: Yes, because there was nothing back here. At that time you could raise [livestock]. That was what, thirty-four years ago. (Our neighbor) also raised, so when we had eggs we shared. When our cow gave milk, we shared. When their cow gave milk, they shared. And this is how we lived when the Gomes lived next to us. (When) they moved to the Mainland and sold, we put up a fence. But prior to that, we had no fence between us.

MK: Should I end here now and then continue next time?

MS: But you're going to have to come after Christmas.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 11-17-2-84

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mary Souza (MS)

January 6, 1984

Kalihi Valley, Oahu

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Mary Souza at her home in Kalihi Valley on January 6, 1984.

Okay, we're going to continue today's interview by talking about your schooling at Kalihi-Uka School that you attended until the sixth grade. Can you tell me at what age you started at Kalihi-Uka?

MS: (I) was six years old. But I did go to kindergarten.

MK: Oh, where was your kindergarten?

MS: We had a private kindergarten up here taught by Mrs. Apo. And then, into Kalihi-Uka.

MK: Tell me something about that private kindergarten because I've never heard about it.

MS: It was located on Monte Street. We had a little building there. That's where I went there for a while under Mrs. Apo. I guess it was free. Whoever wanted to go went there.

MK: What types of children attended that school?

MS: From the valley. Whoever was in the valley that wanted to go. It was small. Very, very small. But it wasn't called kindergarten. I don't know what it was called then. We just went.

MK: And then, later on, when you went to Kalihi-Uka, where was Kalihi-Uka located back then?

MS: Kalihi-Uka was right where it is now. I went there as far as the sixth grade under Mrs. Abramson. Then, from there, I went on down to Kalihi-Waena.

MK: I've heard stories about how imposing the Kalihi-Waena building

was.

MS: It was beautiful.

MK: Can you describe it for me? What did it look like?

MS: It was a stone building. You went into (the) hallway, and it had rooms on one side---first it had the office, it had rooms, three rooms downstairs. Then we went up the steps and the steps divided one to your right, one to your left, and the rooms were upstairs. And the flag was in front of this building, and every morning we had the usual flag drill. And then, marched into your rooms. Everybody marched in and everybody marched out. Not like today where everybody takes their time in getting into a room. This was all order.

MK: In those days, how did you get down to Kalihi-Waena?

MS: We walked.

MK: From here?

MS: From here. And we cut short through the taro patch in these little lanes between the patches. We went down to Gulick [Avenue] and back the same way. There was a group of us that went that way. Nobody walked alone. It was fun.

MK: What do you remember most about your days at Kalihi-Waena?

MS: I just went to school.

MK: How about your teachers?

MS: Beautiful teachers.

MK: Does one stand out in your memory as having been really memorable?

MS: I know Mrs. Abramson did because I had her from the first grade right up until the sixth grade. And yet she was the principal, but those days, they taught.

MK: How were they different from the teachers of today?

MS: I know there was order. Nobody walked around like they do today. You came to school and you sat and you did your work. The bell rang for recess. You went out and you came back in order. Nobody ran up and down steps.

MK: Very orderly?

MS: Orderly.

MK: And then, later on, you went to Sacred Hearts Academy. Why did you

decide to go there?

MS: (I went) there because it was a Catholic high school. My four brothers went to St. Louis, so went to the [Sacred Hearts] Academy.

MK: What did you enjoy most about your days at Sacred Hearts Academy?

MS: It was school, school, school. I was strictly into academic. Four years of French, two years of Latin. Plane and solid geometry. First and second year algebra. Chemistry. Guess that was it. Math, and reading, and reading comprehension. It was a very, very good school. I think today it is the top.

MK: You mentioned that in 1931 when you graduated, it was a very small class.

MS: Thirty-one of us.

MK: How many of the thirty-one came from the valley?

MS: I was the only one.

MK: You were the only one?

MS: That graduated in that class from the valley. But then, there were (few) girls from the valley that went.

MK: I know that you spent most of your career as a schoolteacher . . .

MS: That was a while. I helped my mother in the playground first, because my mother was a park director. I helped my mother with whatever she had to do. Mostly her reports, and I went with her to her meetings.

MK: As a schoolteacher, I was wondering . . .

MS: As a substitute teacher.

MK: As a substitute teacher, I was wondering what is your evaluation of Kalihi schools when you were attending them back then? A teacher's judgment of schools back then?

MS: I enjoyed subbing. I really and truly did enjoy it.

MK: What schools did you . . .

MS: Only in the Kalihi-Palama area. If a principal was transferred, he usually called me and I usually went. I usually followed the principals in the Kalihi-Palama area. I tutored at Maluhia. I went out also tutoring the children that are sick. It was under Tate Robinson. They'd call me and I would go to tutor to the homes. The schools furnished the books.

- MK: Before you did the substitute teaching and the tutoring . . .
- MS: I worked in (a) private (preschool).
- MK: You worked for. . . .
- MS: Mrs. [Nolle] Smith.
- MK: Can you explain what kind of school Mrs. Smith ran?
- MS: At that time, they had English standard schools. It was not called a day care center. It was more like a preschool where she took in children that were five years old. From four to five [years old]. We prepared them for the English standard schools to take the exams to go into the English standard. That's what it was.
- MK: Ethnically, what type of students did she have?
- MS: Oh, we had all kinds of students. I mean, it made no difference.
- MK: Their parents paid a fee?
- MS: They paid a fee. It was not a large fee at that time. Of course, wages weren't what they are today. We took them to different sites. To the Academy of Arts. We took them to the zoo. We took them [to] anything--the Junior League was putting a show or something like that. Mrs. Smith, we took them.
- MK: You've mentioned Mrs. Nolle Smith. I believe they, too, were from Kalihi?
- MS: Yes. They were from Kalihi. They had about forty-two acres of land.
- MK: Did you know much about Mr. Nolle Smith?
- MS: Oh, yes, very much so. We knew all of them. They were in our house and we were in their house at all times. We were a family. We still are a family.
- MK: How did you get to know them, though?
- MS: I guess living up in the valley, you knew everybody. The homes were sparse [in number]. One here and one there. You knew everyone up in the valley, and everybody knew you.
- MK: So, I bet when you got married back in 1937, everybody knew that you were getting married.
- MS: Absolutely everybody did.
- MK: Can you describe how you met your husband?

- MS: I didn't meet him. We just knew one another. As I said, my mother was a park director. Whoever went to the park, we met them. That was it.
- MK: How was your wedding ceremony?
- MS: It was beautiful.
- MK: Can you describe what happened and where?
- MS: It was held right at home, because my father put up a platform and a tent. We had a dancing floor and an orchestra. Food was made right at home. I had a church wedding. Got married in the morning.
- MK: I've seen the photograph of yourself and your husband on your wedding day.
- MS: It was a large wedding.
- MK: Then, when you first got married, where did you live?
- MS: I lived with David's mother for eleven and a half years. [The house] was down the street from us, where I could walk back and forth to my mother's house.
- MK: What kind of job was your husband involved in back then?
- MS: He was working for Inter-Island as a shipping clerk. Inter-Island Steamship Navigation. He worked there for twenty-six years. Until they liquidated.
- MK: As you first got married and you started life as a couple, what kinds of activities did you and your husband participate in in the community in those early years?
- MS: Oh, we went out to shows, to dancing. Until the children came. We were married almost seven years before I had my daughter.
- MK: How about your church activities up here in the valley in those days?
- MS: Oh, I was involved in church work. I always was.
- MK: As you got married and World War II came along, what were you doing on December 7?
- MS: Well, prior to December 7, I had taken a Red Cross course in home nursing under Dr. [Minoru] Kimura and Robert Faust. Doctors. Right there at Farrington [High School]. When the war came, I was called to come to Farrington because (Farrington High School was) made the hospital. Went in to make beds at the first-aid station there under Dr. Kimura. We were trained to give injections, to

issue out the gas masks; I volunteered. Never got paid. It was beautiful work. I really enjoyed that.

MK: Were you ever afraid?

MS: Well, in the beginning, yes. The first few days (because we were told that the enemy planes had landed. You got afraid, but later on, well, [that] was that.

MK: You know, I just interviewed Mrs. ["Gussie"] Ornellas. She told me the story of what happened on their street. Was there anything like that in other parts of the valley?

MS: Yes. Back of my mother's and father's house. There was one shell that exploded, but nobody was hurt. It just dug a big hole. It was not in our yard. It was in the Kobayashi's yard, back of us. But we didn't have anything in our yard.

MK: So, it was only near the Kamaikai Street area where that tragic event occurred?

MS: Yes. She [Mrs. Ornellas] lost four.

MK: As martial law came into existence in Hawaii with the blackout and the rationing, how did you and Mr. Souza fare during that time?

MS: I tell you, we never drank. I didn't drink at all. But do you know that I had a permit (chuckles) to buy liquor? Isn't it funny? I mean, in times like today, I'd never think of that. But everybody had one, so why not? (Laughs) I also bought liquor.

MK: Oh, so you did go out and use it?

MS: Yes. I think I still have it [ration coupon] inside as a souvenir.

(Laughter)

MK: Was there a person up here who took care of the rationing of gasoline coupons and everything? Up here in the valley?

MS: I don't remember.

MK: And then, your children were born in 1943 and 1945.

MS: Yes. (Paula) and Ronald.

MK: You raised your children up here in the valley. What are your feelings about raising them up here in the valley?

MS: Well, my daughter didn't associate (much) with the people in the valley because she went to school, to the [Sacred Hearts] Academy,

and it took her about an hour or forty-five minutes to get there and to come home. By the time she came home, it was time for her schoolwork. And she had cousins and she associated more with (them) and her school friends. She had (many) school friends. In high school, she'd bring them home to sleep or she would go (to their house). Depending if there was a social, that this girl's house was closer.

MK: How about your son?

MS: My son, no. There were so many boys from the valley that went to St. Louis. He would ride with one of them that lived down the street. He had so many friends then, yes.

MK: How about when they were just younger kids and playing around in the neighborhood? What kind of activities did your children participate in? Especially your son, since he played around here a lot.

MS: Oh, football, basketball, swimming. He used to go sailing. He loved sailing, because he was very friendly with Dr. Vasconcellos's children. They are sail enthusiasts. He was with them all the time.

MK: Last time, you mentioned there was a swimming hole way up in the valley?

MS: I never went there. My children never did, either.

MK: Your children never did?

MS: No, Ronald went to Vasconcellos' swimming hole and swam there, but my kids never went to any other swimming hole. My daughter doesn't know how to swim. She was not the athletic type. Ronald, definitely yes.

MK: He still looks kind of athletic.

MS: In fact, he played basketball for St. Louis.

MK: I'm going to change the subject now. You were serving as a DOE [Department of Education] substitute for eighteen years.

MS: No, thirteen years, and five years with Mrs. Smith.

MK: Oh, thirteen years?

MS: Five years with Mrs. Smith. That made teaching eighteen years.

MK: What kind of children did you teach? What grade?

MS: From kindergarten up to sixth. I enjoyed it immensely.

MK: What was so enjoyable about it?

MS: I guess, going in and working with children. I love children. And the different kinds of children. The different backgrounds. It was so, so interesting. Then, I'd go to the university and take courses, summer courses, to keep up.

MK: You mentioned that you did most of your subbing here in Kalihi-Palama. Why is it that you never ventured out of the area?

MS: Because I love my area. And it irks me when the paper talks about Kalihi.

MK: Can you explain your feelings about that?

MS: Well, Kalihi has always been home for me because I was born and raised in Kalihi. And I guess it's this love for this valley. To me, there is no spot in the island as beautiful as this valley. Mountains on both sides. I love mountains. I don't like the sea.

MK: So, you have a lot of love for this area . . .

MS: Yes.

MK: Did you at any time in your life ever consider leaving the valley?

MS: No. Never.

MK: Even as you saw your friends leave . . .

MS: (Some) family has moved. [But], I have two sisters living here, and, of course, my children. But no, no desire.

MK: What made you like the valley so much?

MS: I guess being born and raised here. Going to school, come back. There was no other place to go to. This was home. And everywhere you go, as soon as you turn up School Street, you know you're home.

MK: I'm going to be closing this interview. I was wondering if you had any comment that you'd like to make about your life or your life in Kalihi, specifically? Or your family?

MS: I just love all my family. My brothers and sisters, we are a very close-knit family. And life has been good to us, to both David and I. We've got beautiful children. We make a point to take our children--not every, but nearly every Sunday--to breakfast. We find some spot to go. It makes no difference. We go to the Pagoda. Not too long ago we went to Queen Kapiolani. Last week, (chuckles) we couldn't find a spot. We landed at Kelly's. But it is David's wish--not exactly mine--but it's David's wish that while he is alive, that we take our children out once a week. This is what we

do.

MK: That's a really nice tradition.

END OF INTERVIEW

KALIHI:
Place of Transition

Vol. I

**ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL
HISTORY PROJECT**

**Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawaii at Manoa**

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