

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Robert H. Rath, Sr.

Robert H. Rath, Sr., son of James Arthur and Ragna Helsher Rath, was born in Honolulu on July 17, 1915. His father was the first director of Pālāma Settlement; his mother taught Sunday school and English to immigrants there. She later did substitute teaching at Pohukaina School in Kaka'ako.

For the first fifteen years of his life Rath lived on the grounds of Pālāma Settlement, utilizing the facilities and playing with the neighborhood children. The Rath family moved out of Pālāma Settlement after James Arthur Rath died in 1929.

A 1932 graduate of Punahou School, Rath attended the University of Hawai'i but left after his junior year, 1935.

From 1935 to 1970, he was an executive with Union Oil Company.

Although active in many community organizations, Rath has always maintained close ties with Pālāma Settlement. He has served as president of the board of trustees.

He and his wife, Jacqueline Jacobs Rath, have spent many hours working on the settlement's archives and have devoted much of their efforts to the celebration of the settlement's centennial.

The Rathes raised one son and two daughters and have four grandchildren.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Robert H. Rath, Sr. (RR)

Honolulu, O'ahu

October 17, 1996

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Robert H. Rath, Sr. on October 17, 1996 at his home in Makiki, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto. This is for the Pālāma Settlement oral history project.

[I'll begin by asking] when and where you were born.

RR: Well, the when part is July 17, 1915, and the where part is at the corner of King and Liliha streets in the Pālāma Settlement home we had which later became Komatsuya Hotel. And it's now where Burger King is at King and Dillingham; there was no Dillingham Boulevard at that time.

WN: That was the first original site of Pālāma Settlement, correct?

RR: That's right.

WN: Okay. Before we talk about growing up there, why don't you give me a brief—what you remember, what you know—a brief history of Pālāma Settlement and how it got started. We'll try to—if you can sort of work your way up until the time you were born and as a child.

RR: All right. The genesis of Pālāma Settlement was Pālāma Chapel and a man named Mr. P.C. Jones who was president of C. Brewer and Company, and one of the founders of Bank of Hawai'i, and a strong member of the Central Union Church. He felt that the church [should] spread its mission and gospel and bought some land—Liliha Street dead ended at King Street—and he bought some land across from Liliha Street between the railroad center [i.e., O'ahu Railway & Land Co. depot] there and King Street and put up a chapel. He then turned that chapel and land over to the Central Union Church to operate as an outreach—you might say—branch of Central Union Church. And from then until 1905 the various brethren were assigned from Central Union Church to hold, first the Friday services and then Sunday services and Sunday school. There was a succession of them because first of all, lots of them didn't talk Hawaiian which made it hard for them as it was mostly Hawaiians [living] in the area then. Secondly, it was kind of a tough job getting those people [Hawaiians] really interested in religion [i.e., Christianity] per se.

But that was the genesis of it and it ran through until they turned it [Pālāma Chapel] over to

the Hawai'i Evangelical [Association] in 1904. The society was pretty much a group of influential people in Honolulu and they studied it from the point of view that they needed to expand its activities from simply church, Sunday school and a small kindergarten to more, you might say, social service work. And this is something that was beginning to spread throughout the world and United States. So they sent a Dr. Reverend [Doremus] Scudder to search out a superintendent, or head worker, as they used to call them in those years. And he contacted my father [James Arthur Rath, Sr.] and mother [Ragna Helsher Rath] in 1905 in Massachusetts. My father had graduated [from] Springfield College and they referred him [Dr. Scudder] to my father. And they came here in spring of 1905 and turned it into a settlement house and changed the name to Pālama Settlement at that time. So basically, the genesis was an effort spreading, you might say, the gospel from Central Union Church.

WN: You called it an outreach center of the church, an outreach branch. The reason for that was to tend to convert the Hawaiian population that was living out in Pālama?

RR: Well, yes, the history of the population is interesting and also contributed to the change from the strictly church activity into the broader aspects of social work. Queen Lili'uokalani had a home in that area. She liked to go there because [of] the informality as compared to being in the ['Iolani] Palace. A number of her retainers and a number of the *ali'i*, Hawaiian *ali'i* lived in the area where they were near her.

WN: You know where and what . . .

RR: Well, Desha Lane was one of the places, pretty much Desha Lane and King Street on up to what is now Ka'iulani School. Kaumakapili Church is there and from Kaumakapili Church towards Honolulu was basically the area. What made it hard, therefore, for Central Union Church was they were trying to, you might say, recruit members to the church in an area where the predominantly Hawaiian group would in their minds connect Central Union Church's leaders with the overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893. So there was a reticence on the part of the adult population of Hawaiians to assimilate with the Central Union Church. And so it was mainly a matter of getting some youngsters, hopefully, in for kindergarten [which was] originally a Sunday school. But they had a succession of so-called superintendents that they sent down there, changing almost every year and sometimes twice a year. It was really not a successful church effort.

WN: And so when this reverend, Dr. Scudder, went to Springfield to try and recruit your parents to come over, was there anything else going on in that Pālama area that caused them to change from a church endeavor to a settlement house?

RR: Well, something very dramatic, and that was the bubonic plague hit Honolulu Harbor and the Honolulu area. And they purposely burned down, they thought, a small section of Chinatown where people who had the plague had been residing. The fire got out of hand and decimated, just burned up that whole area, what is now called Chinatown all the way through to 'A'ala Park. And that meant that those people had to be—they were displaced. And in a hurry tenements went up from 'A'ala Park, Liliha Street on through to what is now Mayor Wright housing. And that made it much less desirable for the Hawaiian families to live there. They had enough wherewithal so they moved out and it turned into a vastly different community.

WN: More of an immigrant community.

RR: More of an immigrant community or, you might say, the less wealthy Hawaiians and others. There still [was a] substantial share of Hawaiians but they were not the *ali'i* retainers, Queen Lili'uokalani type of Hawaiian in there.

WN: This is the Chinatown fire of . . .

RR: Nineteen hundred.

WN: . . . nineteen hundred.

RR: And with that happening and this big change, that's when, say, a few years later, the Hawaiian Evangelical (Association) pretty much got together with them [Central Union Church] and there were common members there, but decided that really the mission should be changed and broadened. And that's when they went searching for someone to make that change, head it up, and my father and mother came here.

He had gone to Springfield College which is a YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] college and was there after having been born and raised in India serving in the Indian army—his grandfather had gone there and my father was born there. After he [RR's father] left the army in India he went to work, at the YMCA offices there. And the YMCA international group headquartered in Springfield College, Massachusetts paid his way to go to Springfield with the idea that when he finished his four years at Springfield College he would go back to India and take up and spread the YMCA work there. I don't know whether it was the Indian side or the American side but it fell through. There was nothing for him in India when he finished Springfield College. So he went to work for a General Electric company in Lynn, Massachusetts in personnel, working with people. Met my mother who was teaching school in Lynn, Massachusetts and they were married. And as I say, they came here in 1905 at the solicitation of Dr. Scudder.

WN: So your father actually was a British national?

RR: He was a British national and one interesting facet of that is there were quite a few British here [Hawai'i] because the sugar industry brought a lot of Scotch engineers or others. And they had a strong British society and he was one of the few Britishers to become an American citizen early on. And they were a little bit *huhū* at him because lot of them retained their old British citizenships but he felt that he should be contributing as an American citizen, (since he was) going to make his life here. But as a Britisher he starred and played cricket. There was quite a British society here at the time.

WN: But over in India he was—do you know why his father was in India?

RR: His father was a doctor in the British army as his grandfather had been. They had come from the British Isles. And so he gravitated into the military himself, fought in some battles and in those years they had battles about salt, importation of salt. It was a taxable item and the Indians needed it and there was a lot of smuggling. It was that type of war. In those years you had princes still in India. Fascinating time, but he didn't want to make the British army his career. He went into the YMCA work.

WN: Okay, before we actually get into your father coming over here in 1905, can you tell me a

little bit about the genesis of the settlement house [concept] itself?

- RR: Well, the word "settlement house" is derived from the concept that a group of pioneers had, like Jane Addams who (founded) Hull-House in Chicago. In New York it was the house on Henry Street [Henry Street Settlement]. A few of these places were becoming, as they called them, "settlement houses," the philosophy being that the head worker, as they called them, settled in the community. Instead of going in to spend the day working and coming out, they settled in, raised their families there and in that way learned, one, what the people needed, two, gained their confidence so that they could help them fulfill their needs, and then, three, went ahead and designed programs for exactly what the people needed. So they were settlers and therefore they called them settlement houses. Which is what the origin of Pālama Settlement was because (my father) and my mother settled there and all five of us children were born and raised in our home in the settlement.
- WN: Which is what Jane Addams did in Hull-House in Chicago?
- RR: When she went there, yes. She devoted her whole life (to it and) lived in the area. And this is interesting enough, but the concept was started by [Canon Samuel and Henrietta Barnett who established] Toynbee [Hall] in London, England in the nineteenth [century], say, in 1895 or so [1884] the concept started. And graduated from England over . . .
- WN: Was this during the industrial revolution . . .
- RR: Mm hmm [yes], in England.
- WN: . . . immigrants coming in. I see.
- RR: Right. So by all of this living and growing up in the area, my father and mother living there, you first of all, certainly find out what's needed, but secondly, the reception you get for your different programs is vastly different, as you're part of the community and your kids are playing with their kids. So that was one of the major reasons, I think, that the settlement house where the kids of the head worker grew up could be more successful.
- WN: So Reverend Scudder, in looking for a head worker, do you think that he had the idea of a settlement house or was it your father?
- RR: Well, Reverend Scudder and (the Hawaiian Evangelical Association) felt innately that that building, the Pālama Chapel could serve much broader purposes than Sunday school, church services and so on. So that's one reason they went, for example, to Springfield College and the YMCA because they knew that they were teaching the broader aspect of serving people. So they already had the idea that it should go beyond church services. And they needed somebody to take the job and take it beyond. And my father's idea was that [under the] settlement concept, the only way he could really do it was to go in and live there. We first lived in Desha Lane, and then later when our house was built about 1907 at King and Liliha, (our family) moved there.
- WN: So you don't remember Desha Lane at all, living there?
- RR: No. None of my siblings would either because we moved into what became Pālama Settlement

buildings in 1907, very early on.

WN: Was your father a strong Christian?

RR: In one way, (his family) in India was quite religious. And I would say yes except when he came here he found that he really couldn't as the predecessors of the Central Union Church, use it as a principal place of preaching the gospel. And he pretty much broke away. Well, he did break away from Central Union Church and there were some hard feelings among the prominent Central Union Church members. But by then he had gained the confidence of other strong business and leaders in Honolulu to the point that they could back him and he could, in effect, pull away from the church and say, "This is a settlement house. We'll have Sunday school, but we're breaking away from the concept of converting people to either Christianity or to the Congregational church, and so on. So there was some antipathy towards him from certain groups who were very strong adherents and proponents of Central Union Church.

WN: Do you know when that break occurred?

RR: Oh, 1906.

WN: Oh, when your folks . . .

RR: Right after he got here. Hereafter he could see that, really, the break was necessary so that people around there understood this was not a branch of Central Union Church. This is a settlement. Completely new objectives.

WN: So from the beginning his salary was paid for by the settlement itself?

RR: Well . . .

WN: But did he get any salary first from the Hawai'i Evangelical [Association]?

RR: Yes, they did. And then it's a question of, like, throughout all his career ordinarily the boards would say, well, "We authorize the construction of this for this program. Now the head worker will go out and raise the funds." I think a lot of it was those in town who did embrace the concept of Pālama Settlement created a budget that included his salary. And we lived on the premises all of the time he was alive. So housing and—some household help because he would have the trustees' functions at our home and a lot of other functions, settlement functions. So it's sort of like a plantation manager's concept, the housing and some help being provided.

WN: So, okay, you were born in 1915. Tell me something about the King and Liliha area, the first settlement.

RR: Well, looking up Liliha Street from the settlement, on the right-hand side we had three-story tenement buildings, walk-ups. And the left-hand side were stores on the lower floor. Typical neighborhood type of grocery—and so on—stores. Our archives will show pictures of these two- and three-story walk up places that were true neglected tenement areas, particularly as immigrants came in with different concepts of cleanliness and all. I recall that on King Street, *makai*, there was a (long) building and it's been replaced by one put up in 1921. And again,

typically in those years you had stores on the street area, and people lived above (them). Certainly the store owners all lived above. And extended families, they would bring in all (their relatives). And there was one *makai* of King all the way towards 'A'ala Park, and we had a playground just *makai* of it sandwiched between it and the railroad repair center and turntable area and all. ✓

Many of the homes that were there—I don't recall any homes there were just [single-family homes]—were community living. Lots of people packed into that area because, remember, there was panic when so many homes and so many people were displaced that things were thrown up (quickly) for people to live in. Expediency was the rule. Get something built quickly and move 'em in. Most of them, lot of them, had common cooking facilities. They didn't have their own kitchens. Common bath facilities. And I can remember as a kid mostly Japanese kids that I grew up with, you'd see 'em with their little towel and basket with soap. They used their (community) bath houses. They didn't have bathing facilities at home. This is one of the things that was a godsend when Pālama Settlement had a gym and locker room so they could get their showers there. But it was a jammed-packed tenement area. ✓

WN: What was your house like?

RR: Well, it was a multipurpose building. It had a basement, a large basement and the nurses operated out of there and we had a dispensary and the doctors were there. On the second floor my father had his office, and bookkeepers and secretaries and so on were there. Then next to it we had our living room and dining room. And then we lived on the third floor with bedrooms and a big sleeping lanai screened in looking right over the railroad repair shops, turntable and so on. No backyard to speak of. And interestingly enough, there was no Dillingham Boulevard. We had a stream running back of us which would be now through Mayor Wright [Homes] all the way out to Sand Island. And occasionally when it flooded we'd take one-by-twelves and float all the way down to where we could look at Sand Island. And you have to remember that there were taro patches up above what would now be Vineyard Boulevard, and rice fields. Those were all rice fields and taro patches.

WN: Facilitywise, what was there? Can you remember?

RR: Well, that was remarkable how quickly things went up. An enclosed swimming pool was put in, in about 1907 or '08. And that building was composed of an enclosed swimming pool on the ground level, game rooms and activity rooms next to it, and on the second floor a large gymnasium. And we're talking 1907 to '08. Well, the enclosed pool was kind of a godsend to the people around there because you had swimming periods of [boys], they'd be *pau*, then the girls would come in they'd be *pau*, then the men. And they didn't have to—and they couldn't afford them anyway—wear bathing suits because it was an enclosed area for them. The Dillinghams gave us property on the Honolulu side for a playground and a small athletic field. Football teams used to practice there.

WN: And where was this outside field, playground?

RR: Well, back of where the First Hawaiian Bank building is now, in back of where that series of stores put up in 1921 is now.

WN: I see.

RR: Sandwiched between, in effect, our house and the railroad properties on the Honolulu side. But over the years the railroad group [O'ahu Railway & Land Company, owned by] Mr. B.F. Dillingham and then little later, Mr. Walter Dillingham, were very generous in first letting us use and then giving lands to Pālama Settlement.

WN: So the land was originally owned by the Dillinghams?

RR: Good deal of it, yeah.

WN: The railroad depot was still there, that's the same one?

RR: Right. Our house looked right down into the repair shops and turntable areas. So I guess you could say we lived on the right side of the tracks.

(Laughter)

WN: What are some of your earliest recollections of growing up there?

RR: Well, I may have, but I sure don't ever remember asking my mother, "What'll I do, I have nothing to do." Because all I had to do was walk out of the house and there were all kinds of kids my age, little older and younger, and the same for my two brothers and two sisters. They were there to play with and do things with. And we had the facilities. We had a game room with Ping-Pong, billiards, other activities. The swimming pool, certain hours we could use it. The gymnasium. All of this supervised. And the playground with swings, slides and a little athletic area. So as I say, I never seemed to lack for something to do. We as a family, the five of us and my older brother who incidentally went to Springfield College also and came back to Pālama Settlement and was athletic director, and a very good coach . . .

WN: This is James, Jr.?

RR: Yes. My sister who went away to Wellesley [College in Massachusetts], came back and worked at Pālama Settlement for a while. And my brother, second brother who is five years older, my sister a year and a half older and I never really, you might say, [got] close 'cause we didn't need to play with each other. We had all other kids our ages out there to play with. But there's always something to do.

WN: And how were you treated? Were you . . .

RR: Well . . .

WN: . . . treated as one of the guys or was it . . .

RR: Yeah, as far as the regular—the people who came there all the time were concerned, they, of course, recognized me as the so-called boss's son. But I was in the sun so much I was dark, and they couldn't tell my pidgin English from theirs. No, I'd get into fights like anybody else and get into groups. I was part of the Nishikiya gang, for instance, and I was just one of the kids. And when we went to play, say, at 'A'ala Park, teams and so on, oh, Fern Park in Kalihi, none of them knew I was a Haole. I think they thought I was probably Portuguese-Hawaiian, but in any event I was just one of the group going along. And only our own players

would know that I was the boss's son, but when you get into competitive things none of that matters anymore.

WN: Were there other Haoles around the neighborhood?

RR: No.

WN: None at all?

RR: We had Russians, and that's an interesting story. We had a large group of Russian immigrants, but they were considered Portuguese. And interestingly enough the Portuguese were not considered Haoles, I think. That's just the nature of it. So no, I'd say from Nu'uuanu Street all the way through to Moanalua Gardens we were the only Haole family. And none of them thought of us as Haole.

WN: And you were saying that the socioeconomic status of everybody was pretty much the same?

RR: Yes. They were all in the same fix because you have to remember that one of the objectives of a settlement house and certainly Pālama Settlement was to teach them, you might say, social skills and amenities, getting along, working with people with the idea you work your way out of what is a slum area, which we were, face it. And the whole idea is to teach 'em to graduate out of the slums. And as a result, very few, maybe one family that I grew up with is still in that area. They worked their way out of it.

WN: Being the boss's son do you think you were given any special privileges?

RR: (Chuckles) No, not when you get in a basketball, football game or whatever, you're just one of the players. When we went to 'A'ala Park to play football or soccer or went to Fern Park in Kalihi they had no idea who I was. Just one of the boys. And the same with my two brothers. We were all active in sports; you couldn't help it with all the facilities and amenities around there.

WN: I know most of the activities there were probably organized, supervised and so forth. What about unsupervised things? What did you folks do?

RR: Well, the playground was there for that and the game room. The swimming was not supervised or anything, it was just free swimming, free periods. And even when we went to, what we called, a new settlement in 1925, you had an hour for boys and an hour for the girls and then it all worked up until later in the afternoon the adults took over. Most of it was unorganized play. We had teams of the better athletes, and they played in citywide and other leagues. The rest of it was unorganized or say, in the summer period you would join a group, like I was one of the Black Cats. And you'd go from barefoot football to basketball to volleyball to swimming to use up the whole summer. And you stayed with that same team right on through. We had the game room so anytime we had to wait for the gym or for the pool or anything, had a lot of activities there. And of course, the football field was so big you could have all kinds of activities along with an organized game going on. And we had a sixty-yard track—this is at the new place (starting in 1925). Even at the old settlement at King and Liliha they had the older boys form football teams and they played against the University of Hawai'i, the Town Team and so on. They just loved athletics and they were good. My father would

bring in athletic directors from Springfield [College] which is almost like a coaching college. When they got through there they could coach a number of sports as my brother did, for example. So (my father) would look to Springfield [College] since he had gone there, bring them in and they would organize groups and get into city leagues and all. Gave them a lot of pride to be able to compete at that level. And then every other youngster was working to get on that senior team. All your sports was sort of, "Well, someday I hope to be. . . ." And (my father) had clubs. He had what he called an E and A club. And every person there was hoping he could be in that club; that was a prestigious club.

WN: What did that stand for?

RR: It was (named) after couple of Greek (words)—it's Greek alphabet, E and A, I don't (recall).

WN: Oh, E and A.

RR: And (members of) all other clubs someday hoped to go into the E and A. So there was this element of, you might say, of competition, but friendly with the idea that . . .

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes)

WN: One question I had, you said that your father was bringing people in from Springfield and I was just wondering, was there any kind of talk about turning it into a YMCA? Because the purpose seems to be similar.

RR: Really, number one, YMCA is Young Men's Christian Association. And my father felt that he had to back away from any of the proselytizing of the Christian aspects of it. Secondly, YMCAs generally in most cases catered to, you might say, the middle class. You pay an annual fee to be a member and you often pay for their activities. And the settlement had to be, anybody come, everything's free. You participate in what you want. And we had Sunday school and my mother taught Sunday school classes, and one of the things she taught early on was English at night. Because we had a lot of Chinese immigrants, some Japanese, worked all day and so she had her English classes (starting at) eight o'clock at night. And this is the whole philosophy of the settlement house: you cater to whatever needs there are. You don't say, we're teaching English from five to six. You find out that they need English, when can they come and you tailor your program to that. She had been, of course, a graduate of Teacher's College in Massachusetts and had taught there so she fell into it.

One of the other things that grew out of this settlement house concept was how important it was to try to get parents of kids out of their particular environment sometime during the year. So early on, say, 1911 or so they started taking families out to Kaipapa'u and different places and putting up tents, and in effect, camping for a week with the kids and parents and all, just to remove them from that area, and teach them more about hygiene and so on. There were sort of rolling camps until 1915 and it was definitely proven that something was needed. And my father leased eighteen acres of Bishop Estate land for practically nothing out at Waialua right next to one of the railway stops. And from then on it was called a fresh air camp.

There were fresh air camps around the country; this was a philosophy. And it was the idea of getting people out into fresh air and a whole new environment, you see, for a longer period of time, changing their lives. They'd go back, hopefully, refreshed and learning some hygiene

and so on. The (construction) portion of it, we ended up (depending) on the [sugar] plantation [i.e., Waialua Agricultural Company] and the managers helped a lot, but then our own people also put up cottages. There were twelve cottages that could handle up to sixty kids, [and] a nurse's cottage. And this is the Waialua fresh air camp I'm talking about, starting in about '16 or '17 and growing. And a large community kitchen dining area and a big pavilion so in case it rained all the kids could be under cover. And this is right next to the beach. It's now called Kaiaka Park. We had a house there and couple of cooks' cottages and a caretaker's place.

What it evolved into was that every summer fifty-five youngsters would come out on the train for five weeks. They'd go back to town and another fifty-five would come for five weeks. And those youngsters were not necessarily what you might say Pālama Settlement members or in the community. We had seventeen district nurses, it grew into that many, and they would pick in their area for consideration, youngsters who were malnourished, maybe subject to TB [tuberculosis] if they didn't put on some weight and so on. And so from (the nurses') suggestions they would pick fifty-five youngsters.

My mother ran the camp every summer, my sister helped and they got some counselors, they always had a nurse, the dentist would come out from Pālama Settlement every week, the doctor would come out on a visit. But the nurse was there all the time.

WN: How were the kids selected?

RR: By the nurses.

WN: Oh, I see.

RR: The district nurses.

WN: Oh, oh, I see.

RR: They were not just Pālama members, in fact, almost—it was rare that a Pālama kid would come because he had a lot of the amenities there at the settlement. You know, 1906 they started a pure milk depot and they were well into health and teaching them that. But a couple of the [later] distinguished, you might say, people who had went there were Reverend Abraham Akaka, he went there a couple of summers. His brother, John, he was a musician. Ah Quon McElrath was one of our summer girls. But it was a complete change. The first night they were taught to brush their teeth and wash their hair. We had kerosene handy in case they had 'ukus in their hair, and washed their hair in kerosene. But they were taught hygiene along with being given three healthy meals a day. They had a cook assigned to the camp, he lived there for the whole summer.

WN: Let me turn the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

RR: The nurse and the doctors and dentists gave them a going over and did whatever work was necessary, so they just had this five weeks right there at the beach.

WN: Did you go to these camps?

RR: Oh, always---we lived there all three months until my father passed away and I was fourteen at the time. We spent every [summer] at Waialua; that's the reason we have a beach home at Hale'iwa. We liked the North Shore when it wasn't popular because of having been there. From the time I was a year old I spent every three months at fresh air camp at Waialua. Extremely successful program. And Pālama funded it, kids didn't have to pay a thing for the five weeks. And my father and the trustees would go out and get funds to run this camp. The counselors, my sister was one, she would get some Punahou classmates, people like Aggie Ault. And good friends of hers who would teach hula and could teach ukulele and so on. So they spent the whole summer there, too, with us. And my brother, Buster, worked there and he got people like—Hebden Porteus spent a summer or two working there. But this was a complete change for these youngsters and I'm sure changed lot of their lives.

WN: So you started out---you were there and you were there as a . . .

RR: Till 1929, yeah.

WN: And eventually you became like a counselor?

RR: No, later on in my working career, I was a trustee, and then I was president of the [Pālama Settlement board of] trustees—and now we're jumping to Vineyard and Pālama Street which, incidentally used to be named Asylum Road. But I felt that I should do more than just attend trustee meetings and so I formed a boys' club of Farrington High School kids, and my wife formed a club of Farrington girls, and we met once a week, Wednesday nights. And then I took them camping and had them camp in our backyard at Portlock Road; took them torch fishing. A group of them were very good musicians. And Saturdays I'd take them down to KGU and they'd play live on radio. Pālama Dukes, the name of the club. And then during the week the radio station would play their music and say this is the Pālama Dukes. Well, these kids, the reason I had them was really, nobody else wanted them. They had brothers or fathers in prison, and they were pretty rugged, tough kids. But I'd start with about eight, end up with about twenty-four. And initially they, you know, I guess they looked at me, "Well, who's this Haole coming down?"

And the first time we went and I'd asked them, "What do you want to do, play basketball?"

"Yes."

Well, always the first time of a new year—I had them for three years—some kid would knee or elbow me or bang into me. So the next time we went down the court I'd knock 'em up against the wall. Tell 'em, "If that's the way you want to play, fine. Don't forget, I played basketball at the University of Hawai'i and for Pālama. Don't fool around." And from then on I never had any trouble. (Chuckles) The next year might be another incident on the volleyball court or one time, the swimming pool. But they had tested me every time. And it's interesting, you know, I'd grown up with that, you test the new guy. But . . .

WN: You mean because you were Haole?

RR: Yeah, "Who's this Haole coming down here?" After one incident they'd start asking around and find out my background. Of course, if they'd asked that first I wouldn't have had the incident, but anyway, after having the incident then they'd find out. But it was rewarding and I took them, say, camping. (Chuckles) When we were living at Portlock one interesting incident is this: I had a home not on the water but next to the water. And we had an outdoor shower you could go into and come out without going into the house so you didn't mess up the house. Had a good-size backyard. When the kids came over they said, "Mr. Rath."

"Yeah."

"You must be millionaire, eh?"

I said, "Why?"

"Oh, you get all the hot water you want. You get big shower, all the hot water you want."

(Chuckles) That was his idea of being rich.

WN: (Laughs) Was there hot water at King and Liliha?

RR: Oh yeah, but the kids couldn't go in and just shower anytime they wanted. They showered after an athletic event and all. You didn't go there for your daily bath or anything like that till later. It's part of the athletic complex, let's say that, in by the gym and in by the pool.

But one interesting thing happened, you don't realize that things are taking place. Our anniversary luau in June, one of these boys, young man, well, not so young now but, came over and said, "I want you to meet my wife," forget his name, so-and-so, it was a Pālama Duke.

I said, "Oh, sure."

So I went over and the way he introduced me to his wife was, "This is the man who saved my life." And I had no concept of what I ever did other than I had the club these three different years. But I guess it happened to be the thing at the right time that kept him from getting into trouble because he had something to do and look forward to.

WN: When did you have the club?

RR: Early [19]50s for three years and then I was transferred away [i.e., job related] in 1953 and I had to close it then. I was little upset that they let the club fade away, but they said, "Well, we don't have anybody we can trust to run it."

WN: I'm wondering, you know, you were there, there were so many children there, there were so many families there. Did your family have any kind of a so-called family life?

RR: Yeah . . .

WN: Things you'd do together?

RR: My father was British, had been in the British army, strict disciplinarian. And we had to be home for dinner, and I don't recall, it was 5:30 or 6:00. And we had a strict regimen. With the age difference while we were all at Punahou, say, you gravitated to your own gang at school, and when you're at home you gravitate to your own gang there. But we had all our meals together and had very good family life.

WN: Who cooked the meals?

RR: Well, we had a cook most of the time because of all the entertaining that was done for trustee dinners, luncheons, staff events. One of the things my father and mother dreamed up was anytime a Pālama team won a championship in a city league and all, they got a very special chicken dinner at our home. And all of them remember that as the first time any of them sat down with tablecloth, napkin, knife and fork, and the whole bit and they had a nice dinner. But no, I'd say we [siblings] weren't close because we didn't have to play together and amuse each other. But we had a very good family life. And all of us lived in the same home, of course.

In fact, later when my brother came back from Springfield, he was coaching a swimming team and I became a diver and because of his coaching and being there at the pool I won the state championship when I was fourteen. Diving, went on to swimming and then later coaching and all. (My brother) formed a soccer team (at the settlement) that was one of the best in the city. And that was part of the Springfield training; they were very heavy in the theory and coaching of athletics. Tumbling. We all tumbled, diving over bars onto mats and all that kind of thing which, again, was a strong Springfield Y[MCA] type of thing. And my other brother played soccer and volleyball on the Pālama AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] teams. So we were just really part of the whole gang except, let's face it, we were the boss's (chuckles) sons, you know.

WN: I'm wondering, you're looking at the settlement house as a institute of social reform. And I was just wondering, were your parents—was your father a Democrat?

RR: Well, he couldn't—he never played any—you're talking about politically, now?

WN: Yeah.

RR: Well, you gotta remember, in those years it was murder to be a Democrat. Republicans ran the place. But no, he never, ever took part in politics. One, he was too busy. And you have to remember in 1923, the genesis of the present site—I gave you the Pālama Chapel history—we as a family in 1923 when I was eight years old moved into what was called Lanakila Hale. It had been sort of a dormitory building for girls on Robello Lane back of what is now Pālama Theatre. That property was purchased by the trustees with the idea that Pālama Settlement had outgrown King and Liliha. Especially the medical, dental, so on area burgeoning and it was in that little dispensary. And they had to have more room. So they bought (Lanakila Hale) and it was a big U-shaped building, with the idea that they could [eventually] get more land towards King Street, up towards where Pālama Theatre is, and in effect move the whole Pālama Settlement over there. Sell the King and Liliha land and move in. So we lived there for two years on Robello Lane.

WN: So it was like a whole new pattern?

RR: For us. And we had a little basketball court and playground area. So for couple of years we—my brothers and sisters and I—didn't really go to the settlement itself that often. They had taken over our house for the expansion of medical, dental, other activities. I say our house, that I described to you, the basement and so on. So we lived there for two years, and some of the staff lived there, nurses. They found out they couldn't buy that additional land. So then my father went up to Vineyard, Pālama, well, Asylum Road and found a piece of property there that was taro patches, rice fields that could be suitable. So 1923 they broke ground—'24, I'm sorry—broke ground there and built what is now [today] the settlement buildings. Sold the King and Liliha property which, as I say, later became Komatsuya Hotel, and sold the Lanakila Hale, Robello Lane property. We moved then as a family into what we called a new settlement, 1925. A house was built for us, with five bedrooms and master bedroom in the upper area where it would be part of the [H-1] freeway now. The freeway would have taken it out except they moved it [the house] down below before that happened.

Asylum Road, was called that because at the end of the road was the insane asylum. The building . . .

WN: Is the road still there?

RR: It's now Pālama Street.

WN: Oh, okay.

RR: So the new facilities were remarkable. Guy Rothwell was the architect. For example, in the gymnasium he did such a good job, the University of Hawai'i asked for our plans and built the same type of gymnasium on their premises.

WN: You mean Klum Gym?

RR: No, this is prior to Klum Gym.

WN: Prior to. . . .

RR: It's the one I played basketball in and all. But in any event, our facilities then consisted of a brand-new gymnasium with a partition that could be pulled in, wooden partition, and part of it was a girls' gym, part of it the boys' gym, and a gym office and a little area for boxing on the right. The (coughs) excuse me, big athletic field, complete football field, a swimming pool just back of the gym, twenty-five-yard pool, a girls' locker room at one end of the pool, boys' locker room at the other end of the pool, and then a U-shaped building that's still up, and it was the medical-dental building.

We had five to six volunteer doctors and later had our own full-time doctors. But from then on, as I was telling you, we had the district nurses going out, too, and we had a lot of them. So we had the dispensary, the medical clinic, operating rooms, and one wing was built because of the Strong-Carter Clinic. Governor [George R.] Carter and his wife Helen Strong and the Strong family from the East was always interested in dentistry—preventive dental hygiene, particularly. So they gave us \$33,000 to build a wing for a dental unit. Mrs. Carter had the

idea that she would build in town a dental preventative and hygiene (unit). But the city said, "No, we're gonna condemn that property. It's gonna be part of city hall." She then combined with us. So we had six dentists and hygienists as well, and every year the Carter family gave us \$30,000 to help operate the dental clinic. And we had very good dentists, the major reasons being they had a residency requirement here before you could take the local dental exam. So these very good dentists from the Mainland, worked at Pālama Settlement for their three years, then they qualified to take the dental exam here and move into the community. So that was the dental wing.

We had the medical wing, then we had the administration building now called the Rath Building, and that had the offices and had a boys' game room on the right-hand side with billiard tables, Ping-Pong, checkers, you name it. And the second floor was the girls' area; and they had a domestic science wing where they taught domestic science, kitchen facilities and all. They had their main lounge area, then there was another area up there where they taught arts, crafts and so on. And little later back of that building they put up an auditorium which seated about a couple of hundred people. And every Saturday night there would be free movies and different productions and all. So early on we had a projectionist come in and put on movies for the kids or they'd put on plays or skits and so on.

WN: These buildings are all in the general vicinity of . . .

RR: The medical . . .

WN: . . . what's there now?

RR: . . . medical-dental building is intact, it's still there. The one back of it was the staff cottage that was up at the corner, I was telling you about where the freeway cuts off our *mauka* corner. And there was another very interesting building and we had three nurses living there on eight-hour duty. So you had twenty-four hour coverage. And they were for prenatal and natal care. When someone was gonna give birth, and they didn't have a doctor, they'd get hold of us. And one of the nurses would go there and be in attendance with the idea of trying to get a doctor, getting away from the midwife concept and having care at the time of birth. Because the rate of death at birth was relatively high. So those are the three buildings on the *mauka* end.

And the other buildings were separated by the large football field, as I said. The gymnasium now is plunked right down on what had been the football field. That gymnasium had to be moved when they widened Vineyard. Across Vineyard Street we had two tennis courts, the maintenance parking shed and then a large Castle playground that—Castles gave us money for the playground and the preschool building later on. That's now the Pālama Manor apartments. Once Vineyard was widened, there was no way our youngsters could cross Vineyard (Street) safely to get to them, so in 1962 or so it was turned into apartment buildings, three-story walk-ups. And they're still there.

WN: So the land was sold?

RR: No, leased.

WN: Oh, I see.

- RR: To Blackfield [Enterprises] who then built the apartments for some special federal housing thing. And then the Ing (family) bought it from him and they now own it. And we're negotiating right now for them to buy the land from us so we then can take that money and use it for improving or rebuilding a lot of our properties. And certainly have enough money to make sure that the place goes on, in effect, forever because this would be in excess of \$4 million it would act as a pool to spend on capital improvements.
- WN: Okay, so things such as medical and dental clinics, did you take advantage of that also or did you. . . .
- RR: Oh yeah. All my dental work was by the—well, see, Pālama Settlement ran it, and it was funded by the Carter family until the [19]60s when [the] Strong-Carter Foundation took it over. Interestingly enough, too, our nursing program and medical program was funded (early on) by what was called the Shipper's Wharf Committee which was a committee of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce. It started in the early 1900s when we got into the medical facilities, 1906, 1907, when we started nursing and all. And when we got into the health aspect of it, or activities, the [Honolulu] Chamber of Commerce was anxious that it be continued so that it would not have another plague or infestation in the area, because it would shut down the wharfs. So they put a modest tax on all the goods coming in and out of the harbor. And that came to us to help support our nursing medical program.
- WN: There has been a good partnership between the city and the territory and Pālama Settlement?
- RR: Yes, that was essential. And they recognized early on, what the settlement was contributing to the city. Incidentally, there's an amusing story about that. Iwilei, you know, used to be a terrible red-light district. And the reason it was located there is it was right next to the wharfs. The whalers and the sailors and the rest of 'em used it. And my father was one of those instrumental in getting them out of that area. And he ran into some problems by some people who were making money off this thing but he had enough support. But they were right next to the settlement. You look at it, the settlement was here, the railroad station, and there was Iwilei. So they cleaned that area out. He wasn't very popular among some people. (Chuckles) And he did it.
- WN: Growing up at King and Liliha, who were some of your playmates in terms of ethnic groups?
- RR: Well, it's interesting, the mix changed and is changing. Initially there were a lot of Hawaiian, part-Hawaiian, Chinese—lot of athletic teams were Chinese. And then a little later the Japanese started coming in off the plantations. So by the time I was ten, eleven, twelve, early teens, I'd say at least 40 percent of them were Japanese who'd come in off the plantations and working in town, and naturally they gravitated to the cheap-rent area waiting to work their way out of it.
- So my recollection is lot of Japanese youngsters, Hawaiian, quite a few Chinese, we had a Korean population. We all called 'em *yobos*. Found later when I worked in Korea it's really a word of affection. A husband and wife called each other *yobos*. We sure didn't know that at the time. But, you know, the Chinese were *Pākēs*; I was a Haole, there weren't any around, as I say; Hawaiians, it was nothing to call them *kanakas*; and Japanese you could call them *buddhaheads* or whatever. And we had some Portuguese and Puerto Ricans, and then as I say a few of these Russians—and that's a story that would be interesting to develop some time,

about how the Russian population got down there. But sure, you knew the other guy was this, that, or the other, but it didn't mean anything. We all spoke the same pidgin, we all played the same games.

The Filipinos started coming in in the early [19]30s off the plantations. And my first recollection of where they settled was in back of Kaumakapili Church, there was a three-story tenement place. And they loved to play tennis. It was sort of a prestige thing with them at our courts. And then they became a good part of the settlement complex. I know by the time I had my [Pālāma] Dukes club we had quite a few Filipinos, very good musicians and kids.

Now, we see an influx of—'course there have been lot of Samoans lately, some Tongans. We have quite a few Samoans. And we're getting some Vietnamese in now, and Laotians. And it turns full cycle. My mother taught English to the young Chinese who were ambitious to learn it. Now we have night classes for the Vietnamese and Laotians and so on in English. So historically—and I guess it will always be that way—the immigrants and those coming from plantations gravitate to a section like Pālāma I think for two reasons: one, economic; and two, they're with their compatriots, you might say, they feel more comfortable. They wouldn't move in, say, to Mānoa or Kaimukī or so on.

WN: Now, did the different ethnic groups live together in groups or was it split up?

RR: No, that has been one of the blessings there. They just---sure there were (some groupings) like Nishikiya Camp across from Pālāma Theatre, a gathering of Japanese youngsters. I was part of that group in athletics for quite a while, but basically, no, they lived spread out. Well, I should correct that and say maybe a few Puerto Rican families felt more comfortable next to each other but you didn't have a whole barrio, you might say, of any nationality.

WN: Okay, and amidst all this and all the activities and hanging around with all of these kids from ethnic groups, you went to school at Punahou. How was that in terms of lifestyle change?

RR: Well, like turning [a] switch on and off. (WN laughs.) I took the streetcar, took three transfers: (Fort and King streets), 'A'ala Park and Liliha. Then of course, no pidgin at Punahou. And I was a good student, in fact I skipped one grade. So you just lived a life among the privileged, you could say. I always had a scholarship. And then when I got off the streetcar at Pālāma, you just turned one personality off and put the other on. Very easy.

WN: So did you really feel a big contrast . . .

RR: No . . .

WN: . . . with the two atmospheres?

RR: . . . you know, I'd had it all my life as a youngster and it's just a natural thing. I was the only one [at Punahou School] who ever went that side of Nu'uanu Avenue. That's where it was and my four brothers and sisters went Punahou. Same feeling. And there was no resentment at Punahou about it either.

From Punahou, in the [Great] Depression—I was the class of 1932—and I had worked for five summers at Alexander & Baldwin. Right after my father died I worked every summer. And I

was hoping there would be a [permanent] job there for me. And after my three months in the summer of '32, they were forming the Pineapple Research Institute, so the secretary from A & B was putting that together and I continued as an office boy with her for two or three months and then that was finished. There I was with nothing to do. We had had to move out of Pālama Settlement two years before that to Makiki, so rather than do nothing I went up the University of Hawai'i and applied for a scholarship. And I didn't have to take any exams. My transcript from Punahou was okay. So while I was at the UH I had a scholarship. Then I left the UH January of '35 which was a tough thing because I was on the basketball team, track team, swimming, water polo, soccer, and so on, helped backstage in plays and all, but anyway, there was a job opening at Union Oil Company. People at Alexander & Baldwin called me so I couldn't pass up the opportunity. It was a hundred dollars a month and a car allowance.

WN: I want to get into those things maybe the next session.

RR: Okay.

WN: Backing up just a little bit, I have a couple more questions. How did you actually feel about moving from, first of all from King and Liliha to Desha Lane, I mean, to . . .

RR: Lanakila Hale

WN: . . . Lanakila Hale, then from next move from Lanakila Hale to Pālama? How did you feel about that? Were you saddened when you had to leave . . .

RR: Well, I think going to Lanakila Hale I missed a lot of the facilities at King and Liliha. But we did have a basketball court and a playground. So we'd get our own activities going. Lanakila Hale was a huge place. And we had our own family game room up there. Had my electric train and my father had a billiard table and so on. That was only about two years. Going to the new settlement was, of course, a tremendous thrill because of the facilities. Brand new, tremendous facilities. And it was very exciting and, of course, quite an accomplishment for my father too, 'cause there wasn't a place like it in the (United States). There are settlement houses but nothing like the facilities Pālama Settlement had on eight acres over there. So, now leaving it when my father passed away was something else because we'd been in the settlement housing all our lives and we had to go off on our own, my mother, sister and I, brother later.

WN: Yeah, I guess we'll get to that shortly. I would assume then, the land was a lot bigger at the new place.

RR: Yes, it was eight acres. And I would say at the most, acre and a half, two acres at King and Liliha. Where we lived in Robello Lane, was never really—you might say it's an adjunct of the settlement. But none of the settlement programs were brought over to be operated there. We did have a basketball court, as I say, which could be converted into volleyball, and a small playground. But it was just a little separate unit. And total activities (at King and Liliha) kept on and increased because they took over our home for increased activities.

WN: I never really asked you about your father as a—you told me he was a strict man. How did he discipline you?

RR: Well, I got spanked (chuckles) when I deserved it. So made sure I didn't deserve it often. Someone remarked, looking through Jackie's [i.e., Jacqueline Rath, RR's wife] archives and albums that they never ever saw him smiling. He was six feet four [inches tall], 190 pounds, so you can imagine in those years how big he seemed to the population in the area. That place was immaculate. If one of the bigger boys was sitting on a fence and so on and he wasn't supposed to, my father said, "You're not supposed to be there," and he'd [the boy] say something, he'd [RR's father] just slap him in the head. (Chuckles) And all of them, that's fine, you know. He's out of line, that's good. And he'd just have to do it once and then no more. But gosh, we had to have meals on time, we had to—whenever he drove us to school. . . . I did become relatively close to him when he was not well.

From the time he finished the settlement at Vineyard and Pālama—he put tremendous effort into raising the money, to begin with. It was almost half a million dollars [\$500,000]. It wasn't all paid for when we moved in so he had to raise (more funds) and—he had a [\$]120,000 debt that he had to work off (for the facilities). And he was never really healthy. You have to remember, he had had malaria when he was [living] in India. And I think that sort of caught up and weakened him. So weekends quite often we'd go to the fresh air camp, our house, and he would take along somebody from the [Honolulu] Chamber of Commerce or the Aloha United Way, I think, to talk to him and work on him, or a trustee. And I would go along because there was a nine-hole golf course next to the fresh air camp and I would caddie for them. I'd carry two bags. And caddie Saturday afternoon and the rest of the time like Sunday morning, I was free to play with the Kiyonaga family who were the caretakers.

So he [RR's father] was stern, and then he wasn't all that well and he passed away with heart trouble. But he was extremely well respected. I can show you headlines where they say, "Rath Takes On Department of Health Chairman," or something. He was completely fearless when it came to getting an objective for Pālama Settlement. And that became recognized that he's never doing it for himself, it was for the settlement. He never had any ambitions to become wealthy, in fact, quite often—the trustees, you remember were Dillinghams, Castles, Cooks, Doles, you name 'em. And they'd say, "Rath, here's an opportunity to get into something."

He'd say, "No." He didn't want to make a lot of money and felt that that would divert his attention, or we'd move out of there or something like that. And I'd say we got along (financially). When he passed away, I think they had just raised his salary from \$5,000 to \$6,000 a year for twenty-four-hour (chuckles) duty and my mother doing the camp and all. But that was fine. We got along. Trustees helped with scholarships for my brother and sister when they went away [to Mainland colleges] with the idea they would come back and work at the settlement which they did. And I suppose they had some influence in our getting scholarships at Punahou. And I know Mr. [Charles] Hemenway helped me at the University of Hawai'i to make sure I got a scholarship, so these things paid off. But basically, he was not a warm, friendly, fuzzy bear type of person. (Chuckles)

WN: What about your mother?

RR: She was an extremely strong woman. And incidentally, she lived till she was 102. Was never paid but ran all kinds of things for Pālama Settlement. She lived with Jackie, my wife, and I, for twelve years. And her grandchildren, our kids, say that that's one of the things that helped them a lot because she was always there. Type of woman never had any problems with Jackie, never any, you know, "You should be doing this," or any criticism and all. Extremely capable.

Not effusively warm, but obviously had this great love for people. And everything she did was *manuahi*. The [fresh air] camp, three months she ran a camp, mind you, with 110 kids. Ordering the food, taking care of the menus, hiring the cooks, supervising the whole thing. And, you know, to her that's just part of the program. Remarkable person. It was really a team effort and everybody recognized that. The two of them were the settlement, not just my father.

WN: I'd like to stop here and if we can continue another time and then we'll continue with the Pālama Settlement, get to the time when your father passed away.

RR: Okay.

WN: Okay, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 27-2-2-96

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Robert H. Rath, Sr. (RR)

Makiki, O'ahu

November 8, 1996

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Robert H. Rath for the Pālama Settlement oral history project on November 8, 1996 and we're at his home in Makiki, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, I think we left off last time talking about the move from King and Liliha streets over to the present location over on Vineyard.

RR: Mm hmm, yes.

WN: So what do you remember about that?

RR: Well, we had been living for, I guess, close to two years at what had been Lanakila Hale on Robello Lane, so that they could take over our home at King and Liliha for an expansion. And the idea had been that Lanakila Hale would serve as a core and then they'd buy additional property between King [Street] and Robello Lane and move the settlement to that property.

WN: Right.

RR: But it turned out they couldn't buy the additional land, so my father located this land at what is now Pālama Street—was [known as] Asylum Road—and Vineyard [Street], and was able to get eight acres there; six acres on the *mauka* side of Vineyard, and two acres on the *makai* side. So he had to raise about \$470,000. But they converted what had been rice fields and taro patches into the gymnasium, swimming pool, medical-dental clinics, recreation buildings and the whole bit in 1925, and everything moved over then. And the property at King and Liliha was sold and Lanakila Hale on Robello Lane to help pay for the new facilities.

WN: You were ten years old at that time. How did you feel about . . .

RR: Yes, I was ten years old. Oh, it was great. The facilities were just phenomenal and we lived right in the settlement in the *mauka* part of the property. And to have at that time, probably the most modern swimming pool and gymnasium, it was such a good gymnasium that the University of Hawai'i used those plans for theirs. And the football field and club rooms, game rooms, all kinds of planned and unplanned activities, so I loved it. I took the streetcar, transferring twice to go to Punahou [School], and then the same thing going back. But as a

youngster that didn't seem to bother me at all.

WN: Okay, so I know your father passed away in '29, and you were there until 1929, so you were there roughly four years . . .

RR: Yeah, we stayed there an additional, about six months before we had to move out. So, right, it was close to five years or over.

WN: Just tell me---I know Pālama Settlement, if you sort of divide up [i.e., categorize] the programs you would say health, social, recreational, educational and cultural. Would that pretty much sum it up if you were to . . .

RR: And some outreach work into the community.

WN: So if you could tell me . . .

RR: Oh, excuse me, and the camp, the fresh air camp . . .

WN: Fresh air camp.

RR: . . . at Waialua was a very important adjunct of the program. Because it was used all year round.

WN: Okay, why don't you tell me something about the health programs first, if you can just concentrate on that period while your father was the director.

RR: It began---my father and mother came here in March of 1905 and being a social worker not part of the church group from Central Union Church who had been operating it previously, he could see---and living in the area---a number of things that needed immediate attention and probably the first one to do with health, was a pure milk depot. Obviously there was a lot of infant mortality. Because remember, the area changed, now, you have a lot of Chinese and Japanese, and the *ali'i* type or the queen's retainer type of Hawaiians had moved out. You still had a lot of Hawaiian but they were the less affluent ones. So one of the things he did through the Castles and other people in town, was set up a pure milk depot. And they set one up originally at the Pālama Settlement and then they had other branches. And they were given pasteurized milk every day and handed it out free to the mothers who came to pick it up. And they made sure that the mothers had sanitized containers in which to pick it up. And 1906 also, they started with the first nurse part time.

WN: A public health nurse?

RR: Yes, well, their own nurse. Also at that time there was a Chinese hospital in the area not affiliated with Pālama Settlement until 1906 when my father got on the board. The problem they had at the Chinese hospital is that supposedly they catered to Chinese. The Chinese went there, really, to die. They didn't go there to be in the hospital like we think of convention. They felt that when they went there it was to die. So I've looked at the statistics and you had, maybe, one or two Chinese there and the rest were Portuguese, Hawaiian, Japanese. So my father went on the board and C.K. Ai who founded City Mill company was very active. And they decided to change it to Pālama Hospital in 1907. But it was never really a success. But

that was also in that area.

But it gradually early on started at district nursing. We would have our nurses go out initially only in the Pālāma community but then it spread, with the idea that the type of population we had there was suspicious of anything having to do with a new organization, and ignorant about what could be done. So that was the start of district nursing and eventually it ended up we had seventeen district nurses going from Waikīkī to 'Ewa. The thing was so successful. And we had a lot of clinics, medical clinics. For instance, one up in Papakōlea, Punchbowl, one near Waikīkī all the way out. Kalihi had one, of course, Pālāma Settlement had one.

And eventually, following along on this nursing area, now, Warren, Mabel Smythe was our head nurse and was so until close to the middle [19]20s. My father sent her for additional training on the Mainland, and when she came back it was the start of moving towards a state [territorial] nursing program. And she actually left Pālāma Settlement to go over, with cooperation of Pālāma, to set up the state [territorial] nursing program. And as you know, the Mabel Smythe auditorium is named after her. She was a remarkable woman. Her sister was my father's secretary many, many years. And another sister was, I guess you'd call it today, legally blind, but spent her life giving her time to helping the blind people. Three remarkable ladies. But the nursing program grew from there as the need was evidenced. And an interesting thing about the Pālāma medical program is that the bulk of its support for many, many years was from the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce who wanted to prevent another bubonic plague from taking place and (forcing the government) to close down the Honolulu Harbor which would have ruined business and commerce here. So it grew. Obviously doctors are needed. For a long time the doctors were volunteers. Gave their time. As many as five or six.

WN: Was there a territorial board, though at that time?

RR: No, I don't think so.

WN: So in other words Pālāma Settlement's program . . .

RR: The nursing was a start of a . . .

WN: . . . forerunner for . . .

RR: . . . territorial program, right.

WN: 'Cause I know eventually the territory [of Hawai'i] took over the functions of public health nursing and so on.

RR: Exactly. But you see, again, this is the concept of a settlement house, that you pioneer. Because you're a privately supported organization, you can look at needs in a given area or a city and experiment with your own funds to see if programs that you've devised will fulfill those needs and work. And then if they do, why, have them spread out over the rest of the city and state and then eventually get out, turn it over to a city or state entity and go on to some other things. And this is, again, I've explained the concept of the settlement house, [which is] settling in. The other is pioneering, constantly pioneering. We had the first swimming pool practically, here. We were the first ones to start something like accessible playgrounds and basketball gyms and swimming pools and club rooms and all to the neighborhood kids at any

hour, practically. And that spread into the city building parks and playgrounds. We always had a playground. And there were many other things, nursing certainly was one of them. Now the dental, nursing and medical.

The dental program was an interesting one in that Governor Carter's wife, Mrs. Helen Strong Carter, through the Strong Foundation had become very interested in dental care, particularly for children and particularly the hygiene aspect, the prevention of tooth decay. And she had a free dental clinic in Honolulu town, about near where the [state] capitol [building] is. In 1924 she wanted to build a clinic where city hall [i.e., Honolulu Hale] is now. Would be free but would teach dental hygiene and take care of youngsters to prevent tooth decay. The city told her they were going to condemn the land and build the city hall there so that plan couldn't work.

Pālāma Settlement was building the settlement at Vineyard and Pālāma streets so she came to the settlement and told my father she would like to fund a wing, a dental wing and fund the operation of it. So the medical wing handled the doctors, the nurses, the dispensary, they gave free drugs and medicines. And they added a wing to that which became the dental clinic. And (the Strong-Carter Foundation) gave \$33,000 to have that wing built. And then annually supported it in its entirety to the tune of about \$30,000 a year. Pālāma Settlement operated it, hired the dentists and the dental hygienists and handled the books and the whole bit. It was an integral part of Pālāma Settlement but the Carter money funded it. And it went that way until the [19]60s when Mrs. Carter felt that they should be running the thing themselves. So on an amicable basis they took over the operation, hiring the dentists, handling the whole business end, physical end of it, not paying any rent to Pālāma Settlement, just occupying it and having the Strong-Carter Clinic there. Most people never really thought of or felt any change. They still were going into the Pālāma Settlement clinic right up until the place closed a couple of years ago. So it was very amicable arrangement.

They always had six dentists. Later on they tied in when University of Hawai'i had its medical program going, the dental hygienists were from the University of Hawai'i and then, of course, they got training by Pālāma Settlement's dentists. It was very successful because in those (early) years (of the dental clinic) they had a two- or three-[year] residency requirement before you could even take the exam to practice dentistry in Hawai'i. And this was a great interim period. The dentists were paid enough to live here and get by, put in their three years and then move into the community as dentists on their own. So that was the dental part of it.

The medical part Pālāma kept. And at one point after my father passed away, in 1930, the new [executive] director, Dr. [Phillip S.] Platt felt he wanted to go strongly into TB [tuberculosis] prevention. And, incidentally, it was (not) a long time (that) Pālāma (ran) a preventorium in TB.

But in any event, that is when we moved out of our house and they moved that building, our home and a staff building down to their locations now by the administration buildings in order to try to develop a TB program, which didn't work out, as it turned out. But that's one of the reasons we had to move out in 1930.

WN: So the medical department was pretty much self-contained at Pālāma Settlement, whereas, the dental was more like a . . .

- RR: No, it was self-contained but it was funded by the Strong-Carter Foundation, in other words, the Carter family.
- WN: You mean the dental?
- RR: Yeah, we ran it until the [19]60s. Then it became Strong-Carter Clinic. And it has always been tied in with the schools. The schools would schedule their youngsters to come in. They hoped you would pay ten cents a treatment. Later on it went up to the big sum of twenty-five cents, but if you couldn't, you didn't pay anything. And you went there as long as it took to fix up your teeth.
- WN: In terms of facilities, I know, okay, they had dental chairs and so forth there.
- RR: Six dental chairs.
- WN: I was wondering, on the medical side of it, was it really a clinic where people could come in or did the nurses go out into homes?
- RR: Was both. The seventeen district nurses that we ended up (with in the) middle [19]20s did not operate at the settlement. They operated out in the districts. We had additional nurses handling the clinic at Pālama Settlement dispensary, pharmacy and assisting the doctors right at the settlement. That was an operation contained within Pālama and the visiting nurses were another separate aspect. We had a third aspect which the house next to us on the Pālama Settlement—next to our home, we had three nurses, and they were on twenty-four-hour call. Eight hours for each nurse to attend women giving birth, because they still had a lot of postnatal deaths and lack of care. And they, then, would get the doctor there to help in the delivery. And a sort of wooing them away, I guess, from midwives to get to some real professional delivery and postdelivery care. But they lived right there on the premises as we did.
- WN: I know, for example, well, the medical and dental departments went outside of Pālama, right, to—you said the dental worked with the schools and so forth. Did this put any kind of a strain on the staff and the . . .
- RR: No, it was a completely separate department. Funded as district nurses. And again, the city—you have to remember the city and somewhat the state [territory] but mainly the city—recognized this work and helped fund it. But through Pālama Settlement. They had absolutely no control over the program, they simply saw—I mentioned what the [Honolulu] Chamber of Commerce did with the wharf committee giving the money to us for medical aid—that this is good for the city, might prevent plagues or anything happening in the city. And no, the district nurses were, in effect, an entity run out of Pālama Settlement under Mabel Smythe. But they did that work and then the nurses at the settlement did their work with the doctors. Lot of times these patients just needed nursing, they didn't need a doctor, necessarily. And also lots of giving them information on what they should be eating, nutrition, what they should eat, how they should take care of themselves, hygiene and the rest of it.
- WN: So in essence, Pālama Settlement was performing a territorywide function.
- RR: Well, later, as I say, they proved a need and the territory then took it over.

WN: Okay, so, well, there were other things such as well-baby clinics and VD [venereal disease] clinics and so forth, was that . . .

RR: Yes, they were all started there. The first well-baby clinic, first VD clinics. As I say they started to go pretty heavily into TB prevention but I had left the premises at the time, I'm not familiar with why that didn't fully succeed, but it didn't.

WN: Okay, let's go over now to the social aspects in those early years. What was available?

RR: Well, one of the things that my mother recognized along with my father was the lack of proper English (being taught) or any English at all by some of the Chinese and Japanese people. So she started teaching English at night because they worked all day. She started classes eight [o'clock] at night. They went into—for the girls—sewing classes, cooking classes because none of them cooked the, you might say, American way or bought (American) foods, didn't know anything about nutrition. Of course, they had later on a kindergarten. Because remember there were no kindergartens in the state [territory] in those years. And a playground connected with a preschool.

WN: What about after school tutoring?

RR: No, not a one-on-one type of thing. It was just basically to teach them English.

And then with the gymnasium built, (the settlement) built the game rooms where they could play billiards or Ping-Pong, checkers, and as I mentioned, an enclosed swimming pool and gymnasium above both those facilities. And [social] clubs were formed. This was one of the (new concepts), and that was Pālama's history for a long, long time, of clubs. The first one, it was an E & A club. I don't know why the initials, but, Greek initials. And everybody's ambitions was to be able to be elected to that club. They were the senior boys and young men. But then you had a variety of other clubs of different ages. They would have club meetings and then go on out and play their basketball or volleyball or go camping. Fresh air camp was built in 1917. Prior to that they had camps in different places in the island. So there was never a lack of something that kids could do once they got on our premises. I think the forming of the clubs—and I ran clubs and my wife did at Vineyard and Pālama—I think in one way it satisfied their need to belong and kept them from forming gangs like you've got today. I just think a kid wants to belong to something active, strong, feel like he's got friends. And without a club, why, they become gangs on the street instead of clubs in a facility, where you have your meetings and you're planning things. And we used to plan picnics, overnight camps, put on our own variety show type of thing, our own dances. We'd go off and play basketball or swim or whatever they decided, volleyball, (after our night meetings). So you felt—I think you're fulfilling a need for a kid to belong with a group. And I think a lot of the gang problem today is they want to belong but they belong to the wrong type of organization, well, disorganization. There's no adult supervision or guidance in that thing. Just a bunch of kids that get together to see what hell they can raise.

WN: I guess an offshoot from clubs and recreational facilities would be sports teams.

RR: Yes. They all—let's take football, barefoot football, of course. You didn't have to have a uniform. We played in what we called *sailor mokus*, they call 'em dungarees now, and just plain shirts, barefoot, with no expensive uniforms. We used to have a 90-pound league, maybe

three or four teams. We went by weights rather than ages. Hundred-and-ten-pound, 120-pound [leagues], and then we considered the big leagues 150-pound leagues which played at the old [Honolulu] Stadium. Everybody was trying to get up to that level. But these teams would go from one sport to the other. Usually your team became a club, too. And when football was *pau* you went into basketball. When that is *pau* you went into volleyball. Then we had a track meet, and swimming. So the whole year round you had this continuity of going from one sport to the other, and your club meetings.

WN: And of course, the cultural classes, music and so forth.

RR: Well, every nationality belonged to every club. We didn't have any ethnic clubs. There [was] not a written rule or anything but it just wasn't practical or needed because there were so many kids that got to know each other. In the girls' end, of course, they had domestic science. We had a section on the second floor, what's now the Rath Building, administration building then, was a domestic science center. They learned cooking American style, they learned, again, the nutrition, the shopping, the cooking, the serving. And they had classes so they could go on out [working] as waitresses. And they had sewing classes in addition to the fun stuff like hula, ukulele so on. They were teaching them that.

They had a crafts area where you learned some woodworking, pottery, so on. And later, a very large music school where they taught everything [from] piano to band, small bands and Hawaiian musical groups and all. So it really just covered almost any aspect the kid might want to perform.

And all the years that settlement was there the beauty of it was—and I think it still pertains—that the parents knew that once they were at the settlement they were: number one, under supervision; number two, they were going to behave because the youngsters were issued cards as members of Pālama Settlement, might cost them ten cents, might cost them fifty cents, if they didn't have the money they could earn a scholarship doing chores. And one of the things that always kept them in line, you might say, was the threat that they might lose that membership card and not be able to come to the settlement.

I never heard any swearing. If we got into a fight they'd take the two of us and put us in the gym and put gloves on. (WN laughs.) And everybody'd watch and we went at it. One guy won the other lost. You shook hands, *pau*. You'd go out play again. But you're not gonna stop kids from taking a swing at each other occasionally, but when that happened, boom, the counselors, the locker room attendants and so on would just stick you in the gym, have it out. And you knew if you wanted to fight, fine, that was the way it was gonna end.

WN: How did you get a membership card?

RR: Everybody could. All they had to do was say they wanted to join. And as I say, if they could pay the ten cents or fifty cents they did. And my father always believed that you should—a person felt there was more value to a service or so on he's being given if he paid something for it. That's why we wanted twenty-five cents for a dental visit. But nobody was turned away. As I say, the locker room or swimming pool or some attendant would arrange that the kid earned his scholarship doing something. And that's how you got it. And the kids were pretty proud of it.

Now, the interesting thing about being proud of something, when my father raised the money for the present settlement, 1923–24, the neighborhood area, he conceived this idea of a square foot panel, and if they gave a dollar, they got this square-foot piece of cardboard. And in effect, they were buying a square foot of Pālama Settlement. I can remember getting into arguments with kids as a boss's son, you know, the kid says, "You no can throw me out. My father *wen* buy one square foot. I standing on my square foot."

(Laughter)

RR: So again, the pride of, "We helped build this place," was obvious when you start talking that way. (Chuckles)

We were just talking about it the other day—one thing the city did that we participated in that was great was that Arthur Powlison—I don't know if you know the name—turned out later I coached his son, Peter, at Punahou. And Peter became a very good swimmer, went to the University of Washington, won some national meets. He then was a teacher at Punahou for a long, long time. Very, great family. But Art Powlison started what they called a citywide athletic association, and Pālama always participated in it. And I was into swimming and some of the other sports, but it meant that teams from Kalihi, Pālama, Kaka'ako, Makiki, Kaimukī, that various organizations were there, YMCA, whatever, would form a team and play in this citywide league. And you played at different places. We'd play at Pālama Settlement, we'd play at 'A'ala Park which had a full football field then, we played at Makiki Park a lot, and Kaimukī. So this was a great way the city brought together the total various groups in the area because Kalihi boys didn't know Pālama boys or Kaka'ako boys. For many, many years [it] was a good, successful program and Pālama Settlement was right up their alley. They were doing that already in their own area, so then they competed in the citywide programs.

WN: Okay, well, 1929 your father passed away.

RR: Passed away.

WN: What happened next?

RR: We stayed on, as I mentioned, at the house for—till they wanted to move it to use it for the TB prevention. And had to find a place. At that point my brother and sister were away to the East, college. My brother came back and was working at the settlement, assistant athletic director, and my sister as well. And so he [father] passed away and my brother worked there for another three, four years. My sister married and didn't work there after a couple of years but we had to move so my mother found a place to rent on Lunalilo Street just a block from Makiki Park. And my brother, well, middle brother, Buster was at University of Hawai'i when my father died. He had to drop out since there wasn't any money and go to work. And he entered the Hawai'i Sugar Planters' Association trainee program, ended up in the sugar plantation at Waialua. We had scholarships so my sister and I continued at Punahou. She was a class ahead of me. And life just went on.

I finished Punahou [during] the depression so I tried to get a job and couldn't. So the second semester I enrolled at the University of Hawai'i. They gave me a scholarship so I went to UH majoring in business till the middle of my junior year. I had worked five summers as office boy right after my father died at Alexander & Baldwin, Ltd. And someone from there called,

said there was a job opening they heard about at Union Oil Company because one of their supervisors was close to the assistant manager at Union Oil Company. So I had to give it a lot of thought. I was on the swimming team and water polo team, played intramural football. At that time I was going to be starting forward on the basketball team, I ran track and then I helped a lot in backstage theater work which I'd done at Punahou. But I decided—first time in my life I ever got a headache thinking—but I decided to apply and try to take the job.

So I applied and they offered me the job but with a caveat that I had to have a car. So a friend who was also a University of Hawai'i graduate who was at Alexander & Baldwin, his father was in the real estate business so he said his father would lend me the money. I was going to get a twenty-five-dollar car allowance to buy a car, then I could just give him the twenty-five dollars that I got for car allowance each month. So I bought a Model-A for \$275. I didn't have a driver's license. So another friend I played basketball with at the UH took me to the police station so I could get a driver's license so I could get the job. (Chuckles) And then the first week, the boss called me in—he had a great big Studebaker—and he lived in Kailua and he wanted me to go to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel and pick up some business associates and drive them over to his home in Kailua. I had never driven the Pali [Road], in the old, winding road even in my own Model-A and I was sure I was gonna crack up and be out of a job. (WN chuckles.) An hour later he told me it was canceled so I was lucky.

(Laughter)

WN: So this is back in 1935.

RR: [Nineteen] thirty-five.

WN: When you first started for Union Oil.

RR: Right.

WN: Back up just a little, now. Nineteen twenty-nine your dad passes away, six months later you move out of Pālama Settlement to a . . .

RR: Lunalilo Street.

WN: . . . home in Lunalilo. I was just wondering how you felt about it. I mean, there's a lot going on now. You're about fourteen years old when this is happening, how did you feel about . . .

RR: Yeah, I was thirteen. Well I used . . .

WN: . . . just kind of packing away and leaving Pālama Settlement?

RR: Well, I took the streetcar every weekend to Pālama. I kept going back.

WN: But what about not living there anymore?

RR: Well, I was at school and so it wasn't—when summertime came it was pretty dramatic except I worked then all day at Alexander & Baldwin so that filled that void. I worked for a full three months. The other void, I just took the streetcar and kept going down to Pālama Settlement

weekends. And when I was at the University of Hawai'i I used to go down there and go to their dances Saturday night and still participate in a lot of their things.

WN: Let me just . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, but your father was gone and so in other words, he was no longer the . . .

RR: No, my mother, she had been a teacher in Lynn, Massachusetts; she'd gone to Teachers College. And so she went back to the [Territorial] Normal [and Training] School here for a few months to brush up, and then she got a job initially as a substitute teacher, Pohukaina School, Kaka'ako. As you can imagine, not too many substitutes wanted to (chuckles) teach in Kaka'ako, but with her background and them knowing who she was she never had any trouble. And just went back into teaching to support us. Then when I was at the university I took advanced ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] which would lead to a commission and then they paid me for that. So we got along, scraping along monetarily because there was no pension arrangement at the settlement and there were just a, I think, a \$30,000 life insurance policy. And that was it. No income from pension or retirement or anything like that. So we got by and it wasn't elaborate living but as I say, my connections with Pālama, I just kept going back.

WN: Who was the new director?

RR: Dr. Philip [S.] Platt.

WN: Who recruited him?

RR: The trustees. And again, you see, [because] he was a medical doctor, they felt the emphasis was going to be very heavy in continuing the medical area. He said, well, we should branch out more into that TB prevention. But as I say, that—and I'm not familiar with why—but it didn't go over.

I felt badly that my mother was completely cut off from anything. She wasn't brought in to participate in anything at the new settlement, and there's some bitterness about, you know, the whole family had been born and raised there and bam, you're out right after your father dies. But as I say, I kept going back streetcarwise.

I remember one incident, I was down there and I guess I was probably a senior Punahou, but I had ten cents in my pocket to take the streetcar back, and I hung (my clothes) up in an unlocked locker. When I came back there was no ten cents. So I walked from Pālama Settlement to Makiki Park. (Laughs) After that I was pretty careful about what I did with (chuckles) any ten cents I had.

WN: Were you treated any differently now that you weren't the boss's son anymore?

- RR: No, no, because at that point I was at the age where we were going into the citywide leagues, and then junior AAU [Amateur Athletic Union]. Then when I went to the University of Hawai'i, there [were] about six of us in my gang, Nishikiya (Camp boys), and a group I was close with who were at the university with me. After a year I formed a barefoot intramural football team composed of the seven of us from Pālama Settlement and the fraternity Hui Lōkahi. And we did very well in intramural football, barefoot.
- WN: I'm wondering, I know you weren't really involved in it because you weren't living there anymore, but when Dr. Platt took over, did he make any changes?
- RR: Well, I'd say he tried to go heavily into the TB thing but really, I sort of pulled out of it, we all did because we had to go on with our lives and they didn't seem to want or need our help. My brother had left the settlement to go to the Mainland and my sister had left to be married, so we didn't have that connection. While (my brother) was there he was my coach in several sports. So we really sort of broke away other than for my going down weekends. And then when I got to the university, got involved there [UH] in so many activities, I was going down there [Pālama Settlement] less and less. And really, I had activities tied around the university and my work during the summertime so I—really out of touch for quite a while there.
- WN: I know you eventually returned to Pālama to serve as president of the [Pālama Settlement] Board [of Trustees].
- RR: Yes, mm hmm.
- WN: Do you remember when that was?
- RR: Um, early [19]50s. I was asked back on the board. Naturally, I was happy to go on. And then I became president and during that period I formed a club, called 'em the Pālama Dukes. And my wife, Jackie, formed a club called the Flashy Frosh. Both of them Farrington High School youngsters. And we met—my club met every Wednesday night. And elected officers, decided whether they'd want to go camping, and I had 'em camp in my backyard at Portlock one time, took them torch fishing, have a picnic or give a dance or we'd put on a show at the Pālama auditorium to raise money for musical instruments; these kids were very good musicians. And for three years I had them and then when I was transferred back to, I'd say again, back to the Mainland in '53, why, naturally I had to break that off and Jackie had to drop her Flashy Frosh girls. But I felt I could get flavor of the Pālama Settlement better by having a club and working with these youngsters and being down there at night and some of the time. We'd have car washes where I'd take them out to Union Oil service station, say, at Kāhala and they'd wash cars for money. Took one group down to KGU Saturday mornings for a while. And they played and recorded music. They were very good, you know, Puerto Rican, Filipino boys, part-Hawaiian, very good musicians. Then during the week they'd replay these and they'd say these are the Pālama Dukes' recording, so it gave them a pretty good sense of pride. And they were given to me because their brothers were in jail, the fathers, they were tough kids. And nobody really wanted to take 'em on, but I didn't worry about it because I'd been born and raised there. They always tested me the first session, and I'd (handle) 'em and then from then on we were all right.
- WN: Well, that's . . .

RR: I've got one amusing story about that—I don't think you recorded this—my wife's Flashy Frosh sort of looked down on my boys because they were—one of them had a brother that police were chasing all over the place. And they came—the police—to one meeting and asked about his brother. I went down to the police chief and just chewed him out about entering our premises and shaming this youngster. "Don't ever do it again."

But finally my wife's girls decided they would have a dance with our boys at Pālama Settlement. The second floor was a large area where they taught dancing. Had a good kind of jukebox, so we started the dance at about 7:30 and my wife and I got up to dance to get it started and maybe one other couple got up, but not much was happening. So a kid came out, one of my boys came and said, "Mr. Rath,"

I said, "Yeah."

"The light too bright."

I said, "What do you mean? You know, you want to see her."

"Naw, you know what?"

I said, "What."

He said, "I shame go ask one *wahine* for dance. The other guys can see me, eh. Make 'em more dark so they don't know, they don't know."

So we darkened 'em and then more of them got up and danced and all, and after about an hour the same boy came up, he said, "Ey Mr. Rath."

"Yeah."

"Make the light more [bright]."

I said, "Well, so you wanted 'em [dark], now you want 'em [light], what's the matter?"

He said, "Oh, I get all jam up. You know what happened, I *wen spock* one *wahine* no dancing. I *wen* ask her for dance and we *wen* dance, and you know what, Mr. Rath?"

I said, "What?"

"The girl get mushy kind face. Turn the light up so we can see."

(Laughter)

RR: But these kids were good musicians. It's interesting, the parents of some them used to take them out to cockfights they were operating to play music during the cockfight, you know, it's almost like a festival along with the cockfights.

One of them one time had a carton of cigarettes. I said, "What are you doing with those?"

He go, "Oh, I going jail, I take 'em to my father."

And another time one of 'em had an epilepsy fit during a game, and fell. And I didn't know what to do but the other kids did. They put something in his mouth, and he came to. He hadn't taken his pills that day. It scared me to death, but it shows these kids learned to take care of each other. They knew what to do and then I drove him home.

But when I left in '53, thirty of them came down and all lined up to shake hands with me as I got on the plane. Was quite moving.

WN: So you were on the board until '53?

RR: Yes.

WN: I see. Let me ask you a little bit about some of the past [executive] directors. I know [Dr.] [S.] Philip Platt served for quite some time [1929–42], Mr. Rhea . . .

RR: Ted [Theodore R.] Rhea [RR corrects WN's pronunciation of Rhea].

WN: Ted Rhea [1942–48] . . .

RR: He had been . . .

WN: . . . was there.

RR: . . . at Farrington High School, I think. He was a very, very capable person.

WN: And then there was a person by the name of Eileen Watkins [1949–51].

RR: Yes.

WN: I was reading about some past articles about some problems that came about.

RR: Well, she was not forceful. I think I may have been president [of the board of trustees] when I let her go. And well, an interesting incident, I said, "Well, why haven't you handled this problem?" And she was very religious, Catholic.

And she said, "Well, you know, when these things come up I go home and I pray and I get the answers for what to do." And that was, in effect, she was praying and getting her guidance but then she herself was deciding what she was going to do. Hard to get through to anybody like that. There were some things that weren't going along very well. But the programs just started bogging down.

WN: Well, what did you look for in an executive director?

RR: Well, wanted a lot of imagination, innovativeness. Somebody who would either go on outreach themselves to find out what the community was like and what they needed or to send people out. And come up with new, innovative programs that fill new needs. Because population's always changing in a area like that. The whole idea is that you teach them to want better

things and strive for better things and get better things so then they move out and you get new people coming in.

WN: I'm just wondering, when you came in the early [19]50s as chair of the board what changes did you notice from the time when you left it back in the late [19]20s or early [19]30s to the time you came back in the early [19]50s. What changes took place in Pālama Settlement?

RR: Oh, not much. As you can see from the past, these programs are pretty much in place. The nursing was gone; the territory had taken that over, which is a major change, of course. The dental clinic was still there. So the emphasis then was on group work and athletic activities and so on. And you have to remember, too, that the thing that happened after that, in the [19]60s particularly, I came back from my 5½-year sojourn on the Mainland, [and] I got back on the board again. But in the [19]60s we had the Great Society, and the settlement pretty much embarked on Office of Economic Opportunity [OEO] type of work. And a good deal of that was casework, almost one-on-one with problem youngsters and families in the area. It was federal money, some state. And Jackie now, my wife, is destroying a tremendous number of (duplicate) files. Every time anything happens it looks like they had to write it up three or four times to get it to the state and then to the federal people. And it was an awful lot of paperwork and shuffling. But we did, the settlement, did go very heavily into the Great Society type of program funded completely by the government.

WN: Federal government.

RR: Federal government. And they dictated pretty much what and how you did it. And the fallacy of that, of course, is that these programs came and went. As they came and went your personnel came and went and the programs died or a new one was brought on. So we had an era of, oh, good fifteen years, maybe twenty years of a tremendous number of federal and state programs that were thrown at the settlement because it was the place that they felt [was] convenient and could put these into effect.

WN: All part of LBJ's [Lyndon B. Johnson] war on poverty program . . .

RR: Yeah, main one was OEO, Office of Economic Opportunity, but it was very labor intensive. Extremely. (Our executive director, Lorin [T.] Gill, liked that type of program.)

WN: Yeah, because wasn't his brother heading that OEO up maybe later?

RR: Tom [Thomas P.] Gill, yes.

WN: So there must've been a . . .

RR: But I was going to be president again, and this is when Lorin Gill was there. And on the board we had Masuto Fujii, Bill Gee, who was a writer for the [Honolulu] Advertiser, sports writer, and Jerry Tarutani who had handled the judo [instruction] and helped there a lot. And we expressed our real concern that the settlement wasn't open Saturday afternoons and Sundays, and holidays, particularly. We said that's what, in our opinion, a settlement house was for. When people have time there's a place automatically to gravitate to that's supervised and has the activities going and other people your age whether adults or youngsters. And we were beating our heads against the wall on this. I was first vice president, I guess. So finally the

four of us got together and at one meeting we said, "Look, we'd like the board to agree that we open on Sunday." And Masuto Fujii who had his own Asahi baseball team, and coach and player at the university when I was. . . . Masuto Fujii.

WN: Masuto Fujii.

RR: Masuto Fujii. Still alive up in 'Aiea. Bill Gee who had played basketball with me, and continued his tremendous interest in sports. Jerry Tarutani who had been teaching judo all that time, and myself. So I said—Bill Gee will handle the athletic field and be in charge of that, Masuto Fujii will take the gym, Jerry will take the game rooms and that part, and I'll handle the swimming pool. After all, I was a coach for ten years including University of Hawai'i, Punahou, Nu'uuanu Y[MCA], you name it. Well, the question put to me was, "Do you have a Red Cross life[saving] certificate?"

And I guess I said, "Isn't that ridiculous? You don't think I can get one when I coached the University of Hawai'i for three years and Punahou ten years and all? I'm not capable? My scholarship at Punahou for three years was as a pool attendant. And I got a scholarship at UH in swimming."

It was obvious that they were going to fight it, and they wouldn't open [weekends]. So the four of us just left the board. We just didn't feel that a settlement was a settlement unless it was open particularly holidays and weekends when we felt that the men would be there to keep kids active.

WN: About when was this? Who was the executive director?

RR: Lorin Gill.

WN: Lorin Gill. In the [19]60s?

RR: Yeah, the [19]60s. Well, early [19]60s because we went to Hong Kong in '66. I guess it was about '64, you're right.

WN: Well, Gill came on in '64.

RR: Right, it was then.

WN: Till '69.

RR: Mm hmm. And I think '65 I got out.

WN: And how many years were you on the board in the [19]60s?

RR: I would say in different periods—and I've been trustee emeritus now for ten years—I guess I've been on the board a good twenty to twenty-two years. Different times.

WN: Jack Nagoshi [1962–64], he was director when you were on the board.

RR: Yes. And Lorin.

WN: What about Arne [E.] Larson [1959–62]?

RR: I was there when Arne Larson was. And he is very kind of a—think he'd been in the [U.S.] Navy and so on. He lived there [Pālama Settlement]. He lived on the premises. And I always felt that that was something highly in favor of the person running it when he actually, one, were willing to live there and two, got the advantage of living there. I think that was one of the problems of Dr. Platt who replaced my father. He lived up in Mānoa. So you're down—again, you're getting away from the settlement principle—you're down there to put in your eight or nine hours and then go home. As against somebody living there all the time, and available all the time right on campus.

WN: Was Arne Larson the first to live there since your father?

RR: No, some of the other—Eileen Anderson did, Ted Rhea didn't.

WN: You mean Eileen Watkins . . .

RR: And then Walter Ehlers [1952–59]—one time when I was [board of trustees] president, Walter Ehlers was executive director. He and his wife lived there.

WN: So quite a bit, then.

RR: Yes, quite a few of them did. 'Cause it was a very nice house and brought you closer to the action, that's for sure.

WN: I'm wondering, in the [19]60s when there was a lot of the Great Society programs, lots of federal dollars coming in, was there any kind of movement to, say, prioritize programs? In other words, there should be more programs dealing with the war on poverty, casework, social work and so forth, and maybe less emphasis on, say, clubs and sports and things like that.

RR: That did happen. Because the money that was coming in was specific. You know, this is a grant by OEO, this is the Model Cities Program or this is such-and-such a program, and you will spend your money this way, and you will send in reports. My god, the paperwork is. . . . Jackie's still trying to clean [them] out. And then the [family] court cases we took on with money from the courts. And that program's still going. And that was boys and then girls. The boys do it on a daytime bit, the girls lived in what had been our home on campus. And they were kids being given a chance to rehabilitate, get back in society or [else] be sent to Ko'olau [i.e., Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility]. We still have that program, [it's] drug (and alcohol) affiliated. And we'd have about fifteen or sixteen—they called this the in-community treatment program—fifteen or sixteen youngsters. And if they succeeded with us then they kept—actually they did their schooling there. And one of the main objectives was to get them up to the grade level they should be in so they could really fit back into society. If they made it there [i.e., completed the program] the court discharged them. If they didn't, they didn't bother to come or we couldn't rehabilitate them, they went on to the correctional schools. And that program's still going.

Then [with] the girls it's a dormitory type of thing. At one point in the [19]60s, [19]70s, we had a girls' dormitory in what had been the medical building, a good deal of it for girls coming from the other islands who didn't have family here who were going to work. And they

lived there at the dormitory, and we had a dormitory supervisor and got support from the community for it until they could get their feet on the ground after having a good enough job that they could go out and pay rent and live on their own.

I'd say the bad part about the OEO, Model Cities, so on type of program is it does get cut off at some point. And then you just drop everything and you've got voids. Because you've had a lot of your staff and your supervisors spending time on that. And it's pulled out from under you and you gotta try get the momentum going again.

WN: I know Arne Larson was let go in 1962, and I'm looking over some old clippings and there was a panel that was named to review the Pālama Settlement. And let me just run some of these by you, and then get your reaction.

RR: Mm hmm [yes].

WN: This panel came up with the conclusion that some of the programs were vague and more activity centered than people centered.

RR: Is that the . . .

WN: I think this the . . .

RR: What's the report?

WN: Harleigh [B.] Trecker . . .

RR: Trecker, Trecker report, right. The Trecker report supposedly became the bible for the trustees to change the program into what they were talking about. I was on the board and familiar with the Trecker report. And a lot of it, I think, said, "You've got to get more community oriented. You should have more trustees from the community on the board, and do a lot of outreach soul searching so you get programs that are relevant to your community." Because some of the other types of programs, you know, you automatically drew from way outside your own community, some of the federal, state programs. Yeah, the Trecker report became pretty much the bible in trying to rework programs. [In the summer of 1962, four consultants conducted a critical study of Pālama Settlement and its programs. The team consisted of: Harleigh B. Trecker, dean of the University of Connecticut School of Social Work; Kiyoshi Ikeda, University of Hawai'i sociologist; John C. Pixley, executive director of the Honolulu Council of Social Agencies; and Hiroshi Minami, council consultant.]

WN: Another thing that came up, another conclusion [of the report] was some of the programs were little too departmentalized. They brought out things like day-care, music, the physical education, the camps, the girls' dormitory, stressing those types of things rather than stressing programs that really meet the community needs.

RR: Yeah, I think the music school—and John Kelly was running it. I hired him at the time. He was a Juilliard [School] music graduate. And he married Marion Anderson, a local girl who's up at the university. 'Cause the music school started out with our own local groups, for example I got money from the Kiwanis Club—I was a member—for them to get a band started and band uniforms for our kids. It got to the point where it got too sophisticated in that

there were a lot of piano lessons, violin, and so on, and away from the band, the ukulele the hula type of thing. And I think at the time the Trecker people went in, (the music school was) serving probably 90 percent of the people from outside of the Pālama area. Was the cheapest piano—well, the cheapest music school in town, about what it amounted to. You go there and you get lot of this talent teaching you, you'd be paying a lot more out of the community. And certainly it was justified in the music school and I think they felt some of the other programs were reaching outside the community instead of doing something to pull them in from our own area.

WN: Actually, then, it was a program originally started in the community and it was getting a little bit too far out for this commission . . .

RR: Yeah, I think they were right. That sort of feeling, [that they were] an entity of their own and they [were going to] build up a great big program, become a big music school, forgetting that it was there to serve the community, not the total city. Could be one reason is, of course, is that there were a lot of those same skills being taught in town. And the other thing you've always got to keep in mind—and we had to do this with the dental and medical professions—make sure you didn't step on the toes of those in those activities or professions, and cut off your community funding that way because we always went to the community for funds, businesses [and] organizations. So we were pretty careful ordinarily that we didn't compete against them, you might say. And the music school was beginning to. And some of these other things might have been doing that.

WN: What circumstances moved the Trecker report to be done?

RR: Well, the trustees felt after looking the situation over that we weren't fulfilling our mission in the community and the only way was to get somebody from outside, a Mainland person to come in with a background that was necessary in that field and take a look at it from an outside point of view unbiased by city, state or local inferences or preferences. But I'm glad you brought that up because it became kind of a bible for a number of years, the Trecker report. Referred to constantly.

WN: It also came up with the things such as there was a lot of infighting between the staff and the executive director, not enough communication between the executive director and the board and the staff.

RR: Well, I think that happened. An illustration of why the Trecker report was needed was the point I made about not being open Saturdays and Sundays, and nighttime closed down. Where historically, you know, it had been a place you always felt your youngsters could go to and you were gonna be safe and under supervision. It started not being accessible to the neighborhood.

WN: I also read something about fees being a little too high.

RR: Yeah, well, that's right but in one way certainly now, and I assume it might have been then, [what] we used to call the United Welfare Campaign, and then it became the Aloha United [Way] campaign, there was a lot of nudging from them on the director and the trustees of different organizations to be more self-sufficient. "You're not charging your people enough." And in the Trecker report, I remember there was a section on that as to where it was getting

out of line. The fees were high enough and I think the music school was certainly an illustration of that—they were beginning to charge more there—an illustration of kind of getting away from our mission in running a music school instead of a Pālama Settlement.

WN: I see.

RR: You know, a music school as against the program. The fees were probably increased there. And that sort of---and another department says, well, if they're charging I'll charge. You know, this thing can become a snowball.

WN: I see, I see. So you're saying then, that the music school was sort of like a catalyst for some of these problems?

RR: Yeah, I do and it was taking too much focus from some of the other things.

WN: And it was something that you didn't anticipate when you said it started.

RR: Oh no. When Johnny [Kelly] came down [it] was set up strictly for piano and maybe some violin, [and for] Hawaiian groups and go into hula and that type of thing. It was never the idea that it would become a complete entity in itself. And they weren't performing per se for our functions. They came down and took their lessons and away they went. When we had a music department before it was as we have now. We have ukulele, we have hula, we have the seniors doing their line dance and all. Well, when we had our [centennial] luau we didn't go outside for entertainment. They did all of it. And one time we used to have free Saturday night movies at our auditorium, they would come in and perform. You know, sort of a hammy introduction but they would put something on. And it was integral part when we'd have different events. When there were swimming meets or basketball or whatever there'd be a group playing some music.

WN: And you said the Trecker report had become sort of the bible . . .

RR: Well, at that time it was kind of a bible. And telling us, "These are the directions now in which you should go." And by bible I mean the trustees took that as its new mission. And any programs we go into or continue should conform to the basic tenets of the Trecker report.

WN: Were there any disagreements to the report among the board?

RR: Well I think---not among the board. I think the directors of the different departments didn't like it. Certainly the executive director being told, "You're failing in your mission. You're not doing what the. . . ." You have to remember this is a marvelous facility. There isn't any other like it. There wasn't any at that time and there isn't now in the United States where you have that large a mass of facilities capable of performing so many things as a settlement house not operated by any government entity. And I think this has been certainly one of the secrets of its success in that it has never been controlled, although its gotten very good support and help from the city and state, and feds. It's never been controlled by the city or state. The parks and playgrounds, kindergartens and that kind of thing which we had were. And a lot of them came later patterned after us but the Pālama Settlement was free to go in and set its own policy, decide its own participation by people and go its own way not being too concerned with the whole city or state. That these are our people, you know, we thought in terms of Waiakamilo

to Liliha or extended to 'A'ala Park. These are our people. Our mission is to take care of them. Mayor Wright [Homes] housing came in, and we had to work out programs to bring them [i.e., the housing residents] in to help them and are still doing it. Ka'ahumanu [Homes] housing . . .

WN: Okay, maybe we can get into that the next—in our third and final session.

RR: Okay, yeah. This---well, tell you later about . . . Mayor Wright.

WN: (Chuckles) Okay.

RR: . . . Mayor Wright. I don't want to be hooked up.

WN: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 27-3-3-96

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Robert H. Rath, Sr. (RR)

Makiki, O'ahu

December 6, 1996

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Robert H. Rath for the Pālama Settlement oral history project on December 6, 1996, and we're at his home in Makiki, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, let's start session number three. And I wanted to ask you about the coming up of Mayor Wright [Homes] housing around 1953 and how that affected the settlement.

RR: My personal acquaintance with that took place after we came back from a tour on the Mainland with Union Oil Company which was in '59, and I was back on the Pālama Settlement board [of trustees] then. It lent a new dimension to activities in that, obviously, this is low-income housing, and recreation and keeping the youngsters, as well as some of the adults, busy became extremely important. We were all just half a block away, so we were a natural for them to participate in programs.

That's continued down to today. You read the other day about that incident right up on Vineyard [Boulevard] across from Mayor Wright housing. Had a youngster who was killed. And talking to our people this week, none of our boys, per se, were involved. They apparently are a Samoan gang from Kūhiō Park Terrace and Samoan boys who lived in Mayor Wright [Homes]. One interesting facet is that some of the families in Mayor Wright [Homes] are sending their kids away at this time to live temporarily with Samoan relatives on the West Coast, till they feel this blows over because they're afraid that there will be further repercussions.

We get those youngsters basically in our Pākōlea football, basketball, baseball programs, but that program runs only up through they're fifteen. And these youngsters appear to be a little older that got into this mess down there. But our whole idea is to try to straighten them out before they reach that period where they do join gangs and so on.

WN: So Mayor Wright, was it built with any recreational facilities? Or did Pālama Settlement become the recreational, social . . .

RR: No, they really have nothing. They're just a bunch of buildings jammed in between Pua Lane and Liliha Street, down to King Street, and wiped out Desha Lane. There are no big open spaces for them to use. And Ka'ahumanu housing is nearby and that's the same thing, low-

income housing program, so we get quite a few of those youngsters in.

So the Vineyard and Pālama buildings were put up—and facilities—in 1925. And obviously they're still needed because you have now built up since that time, low-income families moving into these housing areas and there's no way the city or state can provide sufficient recreation areas for them. Because remember, we have six acres, and that's a lot of land, but has to be used to provide a really good recreational program.

WN: And I would assume the city and the state, the state especially, since the government [in] building Mayor Wright [Homes] sort of had a financial obligation to help out Pālama Settlement in terms of recreational facilities.

RR: No. None at all. You know, it's an interesting facet. I was just reading the other day a good analysis of settlements. You remember I gave you the history of the settlement program. And we certainly found this last year—it was in the Union Settlement [Association] in New York—a good many of the settlement houses per se ended up, in effect, supervising or conducting federal, state and city programs, not their own innovative ones or their own privately supported ones. And I remember at the Union Settlement, the director said that they had to spend a lot of time lobbying the city as well as the state to continue funding these programs that they supervise including running some housing programs. We have stayed—Pālama Settlement—stayed independent of that. We have programs like the family court program for youngsters who were in trouble and they are given an opportunity of straightening out with us and studying to the point they get into the grades they should be. Or if they fail, they go to the boys' school [Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility] certainly until they're adults, they have to be incarcerated. So we do have that state program funded by them, and get help during the summertime from the city with counselors, junior counselors, to work with our programs. But no, not the impact of something like Mayor Wright [Homes] and the other housing, have really not lent themselves to the government giving us more money.

Now, our so-called tenant building that used to be the medical-dental building, we keep in good shape and we rent that to social service organizations. And that provides substantial income to us to continue our own programs.

WN: You know when that started?

RR: Well, the renting out, you mean?

WN: Yeah.

RR: The dental wing, of course, was actually operating as a dental wing until just two years ago when the Strong-Carter Foundation closed the clinic. And that's been rented subsequently. The rest of the building's been—at one time was part of our administrative offices, but I'd say for twenty to twenty-five years we've been getting revenue from renting it. This building was put up, remember, in 1925. And as an illustration of service, Kalihi-Pālama businessmen came in and fixed up the interior and repainted it all so it would be, you might say, more rentable and so on. And we have an offer now, somebody who wants to paint it, the outside, so it's presentable along with the Rath Building and so on. So obviously, we don't get the kind of rent they do downtown, and we shouldn't from the social services groups. But it's kept full by them.

WN: These are government as well as private nonprofits?

RR: Mm hmm [yes]. Various city, federal programs and they headquarter there.

WN: Also, while we're on the subject of Mayor Wright [Homes], so about the mid to late [19]50s, they decided to widen Vineyard Boulevard, Vineyard Street. How did that affect Pālama Settlement?

RR: What year are you talking about, now?

WN: I don't know, I have . . .

RR: Was in the [19]60s.

WN: Late [19]50s, early 1960s, okay.

RR: Well, dramatically. They took land on both sides of what had been Vineyard Street. Our people were [once] able to walk across Vineyard Street which was a relatively narrow two-lane road—two tennis courts we had there across the street. We had all of our maintenance headquarters and facilities and garage and mechanical [equipment] working there and stored there. And then towards Mayor Wright housing, we had a large playground, Castle playground, which became Castle Preschool and playground and little wading pool. That was all wiped out on the *makai* side when they widened Vineyard. And it has been turned into Pālama Manor which is a moderate-income rental unit. On the *mauka* side it wiped out the gymnasium, along with taking a lot of our frontage, but it didn't affect the medical-dental building. It pushed the sidewalk right up to within a few feet of it, but as a result of that, we had to give up a large football, soccer, track field and put the gymnasium right in the center of it, that field, where it is today. Because we had eight acres, we were cut down to about six acres. And that was the only place you could put the gym.

WN: And then H-1 coming up, I guess, earlier, you said it took away from the field.

RR: Right, so we really weren't left with enough land to reproduce what was taken away. And secondly, it's [Vineyard Boulevard] a divided highway with a fence between, we have no way of access from our six acres to the other two acres. You can't get across Vineyard Street except going down to the traffic lights, and. . . . So the only thing left, the trustees at that time applied to the city to try to get a business zoning. They thought they could maximize the revenue from that property—because there wasn't anything they could do with it in connection with Pālama Settlement—they could maximize the property best by being a little shopping center or grocery stores and so on. They couldn't get that zoning, but they did get apartment-hotel zoning, at which time they leased it to Blackfield Enterprises who put up Pālama Manor and began paying \$20,000 a year for the leasehold rental. And that was locked in for (forty) years, because to qualify for FHA [Federal Housing Authority] financing and the moderate-income housing program, (Blackfield Enterprises) had to have a long-term fixed and an extended rental term after that.

WN: So Pālama Settlement still owns the . . .

RR: We own the land. Blackfield subsequently sold it to Sheridan Ing Trust. And they own the

buildings and they operate the apartments. There are about 117 of them. And they rent in the area of (\$550 to \$700 a month) for one- and two-bedroom apartments. And they have their own parking.

WN: So when the Vineyard was widened, that [land] was condemned?

RR: City condemned it and they gave us money, but it wasn't enough to pay for the new gymnasium, and therefore, what is now the AUW [Aloha United Way] and that group agreed we could use the revenue from the land leased to Blackfield to go towards paying off our capital improvement cost, plus, after that was paid off, utilize it for program money.

(Pause) It was a dramatic change because it meant we lost a football field and a track, and it really knocked out the utilization of the field by older groups. All we can have are the younger ones, up to about fourteen or fifteen [years old] who don't need a complete, big [100-yard] football field.

The gym, of course, is state of the art and is utilized a good deal by not only our people, but—oh, for instance, the police use it three mornings a week for basketball, volleyball, their exercise program. And weekends it's used for an ardent Ping-Pong group, real serious Ping-Pong and other activities. You go by on a Sunday morning, you'll see a lot of cars parked there. And they also have city basketball, volleyball, so on, leagues. Don't hear much about them but they're active every year. So the gym is used for basketball, volleyball. And then, of course, we have that outdoor court so that when those are busy by an organized event, the kids still can shoot baskets or dribble or play on the outdoor asphalt court between the swimming pool and the gym.

WN: Right now, Pālama Settlement is sort of sandwiched in between two major thoroughfares, Vineyard Boulevard and the H-1 Freeway.

RR: Well, the freeway took away, again, part of our field—the upper field—and took away a fair amount of land and cut across. . . . Well, when our home and the two staff buildings were moved in the early [19]30s down to where they are now closer to the other facilities, the caretaker's cottage was left there, and a couple of garages. So the caretaker always lived there. The freeway widening wiped that out and left us with an odd triangular-shaped piece.

For a while they---if I remember it, when I was on the board, (chuckles) it was used for gardens for people around it, somewhat like the city program where you're allotted so much space and you grow your own vegetables and whatever you want. And we (chuckles) closed that down when we found out that some of the gardeners were selling their plots of land for \$100 to somebody else; it was our land. (Laughs) Selling them the privilege of using our land. But eventually that will make a nice softball field. We're working on getting that done.

WN: Well, let's look at Pālama Settlement today. Right now, what's happening today is probably an offshoot of the Trecker report and the recommendations that took place there, trying to be more relevant to the community and so forth and so on. How would you assess Pālama Settlement today in light of its history?

RR: Well, I think the one major difference between now and when I was growing up, when I was active with my clubs and all, is that we have relatively few programs for older teenagers. And

as far as the youth are concerned it's more an emphasis on serving them and getting them active and letting them feel that this is a second home to them during the, you might say, ages when you can get to them, up till they're fifteen. And programs, a lot of them aimed at that.

The senior citizens' program is extremely active and there are many of them that come there every day, have their meals there and they have their own classes. There's a very strong senior citizens' line dancing group. It's gotten so strong and so well known and run so well that people are coming from outside our area even to join it. We're talking about eighty people, now, in that group.

So you do have---I think the Trecker report indicated our people needed---well, the senior citizens needed some help, and we have a strong program there. It's beginning to be more and more the place we want it to be where the kids just come down to, you might say, hang out instead of on the streets getting into trouble. So I think the community use of that is increasing. And we have an awful lot of growth in unsupervised care because we just haven't the budget to have a lot of staff. It's functioning in that we're starting English lessons again, 'cause we have a fair number of Vietnamese, Laotians. So here's a full cycle again, you know, 1906 my mother was teaching English to Chinese, Japanese, so on. Now we've got these classes going. They have an excellent learning center with twenty computers and individual carrels for study. And we have a program for helping youngsters who are having trouble in school keeping up with their classmates.

WN: Were they recommended by anyone to come?

RR: No, they just know they're in trouble and they come, know that they're falling behind. The schools cooperate very well with us in keeping us informed about their progress and they also keep in touch with us on our Pākōlea Program, where the youngsters have to keep their grades up in school or they can't practice or play [sports]. So we work with the schools there for reports on the youngsters, make sure they're doing well, and then counsel with them. And some days they can't play, they have to do extra study work. And we have the computer room. So I got that through McInerney [Foundation] and other foundations about (eight) years ago or more. I didn't want our kids being computer illiterate in this society.

Of course, the court program, in-community treatment program is a heavy user of our educational facilities. Because that's one of the things the youngsters have to do, to study enough to get up to the grade level in their age, go back into society. They've been referred to us by the court because they are, you might say at that point, kind of misfits in the community. Ed [Edward] Nakamura's had that program now for about twenty-three years. And he has a success rate of about 50 percent, which I think is remarkable. If the kids don't bother to show up, we then have to call the court and say we can't do anything with the youngster if he or she doesn't come. But that's been a long-term program supported completely by the family court.

WN: How would you measure success in these cases?

RR: Oh, I think it's generally accepted in social services activities that for remedial programs of kids in that much trouble---remember they've been referred to us because they have police and court records---if you can keep 50 percent of 'em, get 'em back into the mainstream, you're doing very well. And obviously, the courts are happy with it because they've kept supporting

this. And we don't seem to feel—our executive people—that there will be cutbacks because of state financial difficulties, because the courts feel that we're doing a good job and this is an important program.

WN: You said earlier that compared to the past there are—the clientele is less geared around young adults. So are you saying, then, that the majority of the clients today are young children and senior citizens?

RR: Up until fifteen, maybe sixteen [years old], our programs are geared to that. And, well, the people who are in that work, for example, the police chief was on our board for a number of years, and some others in that. . . . Well, Pat [Patrick K.] Yim, a judge, and some others, feel that we really can't try to take on a bunch of teenagers. At that point, it's just too critical and too labor-intensive a problem for us to try to run too many programs for them. First of all, you have to remember we were the only swimming pool, gymnasium, athletic field when we originally moved in to the area. Now the schools have them. And the kids have their football, volleyball, lot of their school activities. And we certainly don't want to interfere. So I think your older teens have lots of opportunity in their schools to participate where the younger kids don't. We have the programs for them. And it's up to the coaches and the employees to steer them correctly in what they're doing, their attitudes and all.

The facilities are such that there can be a number of separate activities, meeting rooms, activity rooms, so on. The one thing that's been a tremendous help has been the Blackfield recreation room. Blackfields gave us the money and equipment, et al, so they have three billiard tables. It's a supervised program; there's always a pretty rugged (chuckles) supervisor handling the room. But they have various electronic and hand-movement games and a TV there. But it's a gathering room, and that's for the younger teenagers. Again, it's, "Nothing to do. Let's go to Pālama," you know. Go to the game room or participate in one of the programs. Not a supervised program but we do have supervision.

WN: So the group that's missing at Pālama is fifteen to, what age?

RR: Goes down to about six or seven. We don't have a preschool any longer. Oh, and then a lot of senior citizens.

WN: Ages six or seven to about age fifteen.

RR: Right.

WN: And then senior citizens. And those that take English lessons are basically adults, young adults, or . . .

RR: Young immigrants. I say young, most of them I'm sure have families. Or part of the family and they come over. They're adults, they're not youngsters. 'Cause the youngsters that should be in, are in school. We do have, as I say, these younger people coming to us, and we have a program—remedial you might say—where if (youngsters) are having trouble in school, they get tutoring. It's not a one-on-one thing but it's a labor-intensive tutoring thing for them to get caught up so they're back into the grades in which they should be. Nothing more [inducing] to a kid dropping out of school than not being able to keep up on his class work and so [on] with his equivalent youngsters.

- WN: Just wondering, today, there's so many things for youngsters and so forth available. Is there a problem of duplication?
- RR: Well, my answer to that would be a settlement house doesn't and should never duplicate, because the whole idea is of pioneering, of finding things that are not being done that need to be done. We're not there to copy somebody else or try to supplement something. We're there to innovate and get programs going that aren't being put on elsewhere. We have outreach where our people go into Mayor Wright housing and set up programs there in Mayor Wright and in Ka'ahumanu housing. Because again, less-educated people have kind of a reluctance, sometimes, to go seek anything. So we have a outreach program set up in those—in Mayor Wright and in Ka'ahumanu, programs that they then participate in and carry on themselves. That's always been. From the time I mentioned that district nurses, settlement goes out into the community, outreach. Because that type of person that you want to help is—I don't know whether they're too ashamed or they don't know these programs are available, but they're reluctant, sometimes, to come to you. So we certainly, the trustees, aren't interested in duplicating anything just for the sake of having (chuckles) a program.
- WN: Well, I didn't really mean duplicating. I meant, for example, health insurance is a lot more readily available today than it was, maybe, fifty years ago. Now, employers are more or less obligated to provide health insurance. So that would sort of eliminate the need to have clinics or medical facilities . . .
- RR: Well that's exactly why Strong-Carter [clinic] closed down. All of the labor union contracts pretty much stipulate you pick your dentist. I think employee programs, dental programs, are the same. So our trustees of Strong-Carter Foundation—I'm still a trustee—we then had to really work with the DOE and schools to get their youngsters to us. I went across the street, talked to the principals of Ka'iulani and Likelike [schools] and they just felt they couldn't really work with us to get the kids over there during school [hours] because they'd lose some school activities, and after school they didn't want the responsibility of them, and yet we're just across the street. So with lack of cooperation from them, we were running a cost of almost—because of the decline in usage—sixty dollars a treatment per youngster, which didn't make any sense. Strong-[Carter] Foundation then felt it could do more for the community by closing that, and then giving money to organizations like Pālama Settlement to use in other programs.
- WN: Yeah, I was gonna say, too, the schools that probably—another, I guess, a source of complication, I would say, for activities or for . . .
- RR: For the dental work, you mean?
- WN: Well, not just dental work but a lot of things.
- RR: No, they send their---the schools have a "learn to swim" program with us because we have a swimming pool. And I'm talking about the elementary and junior high, we don't handle the high school kids. And they utilize our services for that. And the facilities are there for them because during the daytime, we don't have a demand, other than senior citizens, [for] the programs I mentioned. The facilities are pretty well open until the kids are through school. The big impact of lot of bodies around Pālama Settlement comes after school. But there is utilization by the senior citizens and special teaching and in-community court things and all

going on. And they also use the various facilities.

WN: I guess the problem that faces many organizations is funding. Do you see that as a major problem?

RR: Well, it is. And it prevents us sometimes from expanding and going into programs that we would want to develop because they aren't being done. I've been in charge for fund-raising for ten years for Pālama Settlement and been able to be pretty successful. We raised (each year) about \$50,[000] to \$60,000 from former trustees, former participants at Pālama Settlement, and a few businesses. We are not able to go out on a total broad-scale program; AUW doesn't want us to do that because they've already done it and they give about \$450,000 a year in funding. But when I ran a ten-year projection—looking back, rather—I took the cost of living index for Hawai'i for ten years and took the increases or decreases for one or two years of flat funding from AUW other years, and we ended up way short. In other words, my calculations were that we should be getting—if they had just kept up with the cost of living contributions to us, we'd be getting \$140,000 more annually. Now, I guess the answer to that I would get from AUW is that they have taken on a lot of new clients, you might say, during that ten-year period. So we've been fortunate to be able to get what we got the previous year. We have to go out if we want to expand new programs and get new money.

I think I covered it earlier, but, a major problem in getting contributions is that the foundations and a lot of corporations all want to give to bricks and mortar where you're going to build something, and are reluctant to take on contributions for programs. I think a lot of it is because [funding programs] sort of involves a continuing obligation. I think you generally will find all over that raising money for structures or additional buildings and facilities is ten times easier, at least, than for programs. I think they're going to have to change. I think that, what's the use of putting up new buildings, new structures if you're not going to fund the reason for the building, which is the program. (Laughs) I give my lectures to them, and I hope it helps.

(Laughter)

WN: Well, planning a building, in essence, is a short-sighted reason because it's something concrete, and once it's done, it's done. Whereas programs, you know . . .

RR: Exactly. They . . .

WN: They want to look at results, you know.

RR: They're obligating themselves to. . . . And the philosophy is one board of directors of either corporation or trustees of the foundation sort of feel, "I don't want to obligate future boards to continue something." And I just think that it has to begin changing and the facilities are going to have to take a back seat, put the money into programs.

For example, I got \$1.2 million from Weinberg Foundation. But, the condition is that we spend \$200,000 immediately in renovating and improving our facilities, then the [\$]1 million was put in the bank, and the [\$]67,[000]—\$70,000 a year we get from it in interest has to go into facility maintenance. I did get them to agree that if we were really in a bind we can go to them and ask a release of, say, [\$]20,[000], [\$]30,[000], \$40,000 of that, but basically that is their idea.

I'm pushing—and we're having some success with—somebody giving us \$100,000, say, and again it's put into Hawaiian Trust or somewhere and we get the interest, amounts to \$7,000—Henry Clark just did this a couple of years ago—and that \$7,000 goes to scholarships in-house. So youngsters---say the football program costs seventy dollars because we have insurance, we have uniforms, we have the rest of it. A youngster, well, some of them can get half scholarships, some can get full scholarships. And we have, maybe, five different football teams. And get somebody else to do that [get funding], and I'm doing it. I'm giving money for scholarships so that. . . . Go to the head of the Pākōlea fellow and say, "How many do you need to field all your teams and get your total activities going?" And then we go out and get that funding for specific scholarships.

Then the summer program has to be heavily funded with scholarships. So I see that as something where the scholarship is named after the donor, so it is continuing recognition and name continued. And yet it's program money, as against—for instance, we gave this one individual an opportunity to decide whether he wanted to fix up an exercise room for that money, or scholarships for, say, youngsters in the Pākōlea Program going to St. Louis School, which some of them have been able to do. Or doing it in-house, and he felt he wanted it in-house. And I'm certainly hoping that we can build that up so the programs will continue this source of income for scholarships.

Summer program's a big one. We have 350 kids in that, in the two sessions. And the Pākōlea Program handles several hundred. And they usually go from basketball to volleyball to baseball, and we have for the girls, cheerleader section, about thirty of them, and they participate in cheerleading, and then go on into the volleyball and basketball. So it's a co-ed thing.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

RR: Many of the coaches are parents and we have to have supervisors there so that we don't end up with the little league syndrome of the parents trying to run the program or messing things up.

(Laughter)

WN: I'm wondering—if we can talk about the future of Pālama Settlement, now—is it getting more and more difficult to maintain the settlement house philosophy?

RR: Because of funding restrictions, yes. You can think of a new program that obviously has a need in your direct community. But you can't perform them without good staff supervision, organization and so on. And therefore, you have to have paid staff. And that's a principal lack in being able to move forward, having enough funding. Let's say the AUW, I would assume they didn't make their quota this year, and it'd be pretty hard for us to—and we'll find out this month—get any increases. Last year we had an increase, I think, of \$3,000 which was rare for any agency. Well, the cost of living, you know, is about 5 or 6 percent increase here. And your salaries, you can't just keep people frozen at those. So it's hard enough hanging on to

what you've got and doing as good a job as you should do, as against coming up with new ones. If you told us, "Here's a quarter of a million dollars [\$250,000]," we could find a lot of programs that are needed and could be funded with that money.

WN: So the settlement house philosophy of, "In the community providing for the community at little or no cost to the clientele," you think that can continue?

RR: Well, I think it will have to. Because we aren't a YMCA where your clientele could be young business people in town or people with fairly substantial means. I gave a lot—I coached Nu'uanu Y[MCA] swimming team for several years when it was at Nu'uanu Street. In those years it was, almost from the athletic point of view, competitive to Pālama Settlement in the athletic end only. I never got paid, I gave my time coaching and did it for three months. Now you go to the Nu'uanu Y[MCA] and you gotta pay for every activity. And same with the Central Y[MCA] down on Atkinson Drive. It's a different concept than ours which is, we try to make everything free or at very low cost, or if they can't afford it, give them scholarships. Years ago, we used to—just for their membership, which is modest—have them do a little work. Might not be really constructive stuff for us but at least it was the idea that they're earning their membership card. Put in enough hours so they earned it and gave them a sense of pride, "I belong to Pālama Settlement." Concept's different now throughout the city. Since you've got so many city, state, federal programs, we have to be careful that we don't become somebody just supervising their programs. We have to have innovation and get kids in there for a lot of free activity, feel like it's a good second home for them.

But I worry about the financial support and we don't get enough now that we can innovate a great deal, with hanging on to the previously innovative programs we've got. Sounds familiar, everybody needs money, Warren.

(Laughter)

RR: And you have—I keep coming back—people talk about funding and so on, and we've been relatively successful. But we do not have a wealthy alumni. We have come out of an area, low-income housing, low incomes, where if they have successes, they're relatively modest. So other than a Dr. [Richard T.] Mamiya who's been generous with us, we don't, like schools and colleges and so on, we don't have a lot of wealthy success stories to call on to support us. The drives I've been holding aren't towards that kind of alumni, and so on. And \$50 or \$100 is quite a generous gift from them. Occasionally we get more.

And now, I mentioned, at sixteen or seventeen [years old], we kind of lose them. We don't have a lot of programs for them except the night city-wide basketball leagues that—we put a team in that. So again, they drift off at that point and are in other activities. On the other hand, I don't think that a settlement—certainly we aren't desirous of just becoming somebody who operates city, state or federal programs. You're losing the innovation and the feeling the settlement gives if all you're doing is implementing their stuff.

There's a lot of that going on in our rental building by the social services group. Those are all nonprofit-supported groups—no, I shouldn't say all. For example, the [Hawai'i Council on] Portuguese [Heritage] is in there renting a space, and we did have the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] for a while as tenants, and they would be independent, but this is the kind of area they should be in. People feel comfortable coming

there as against going into more sophisticated area of town, you might say.

The Garden Club of [Honolulu], we got them interested. And they gave us \$10,000 one year, \$5,000 the next, plus a lot of labor. And they landscaped the area between our kitchen-dining room facility and the swimming pool and the gym. They blocked it off and planted it beautifully. And they've done that in the front building. And we saw it as a poor man's Halekūlani Hotel. We've had a tremendous number of weddings there. And it's a source of revenue for us; they pay us. There was somebody (the other day) putting on baby luau for 150 people. We can handle that kind of a crowd easily. So again, it's lending itself as a facility to the community for, you might say, first-class functions in the way of baby luaus, dinners or weddings, parties and so on. We have a commercial-size kitchen, and it's easy to feed 150 people under cover. So again, that's something in the community that isn't available normally to them.

WN: Right now, then, it's a combination of basically innovative programs started by Pālama Settlement as well as implementing programs planned or started by someone else.

RR: Yes, we're doing both. And again, I say that we must have been successful, must still be successful for them to continue these programs with us. We have a family-court-supported home for runaway girls. And how many we have depends on the funding. We have a matron; they're there twenty-four hours a day. They're pretty desperate youngsters by the time we get them from the court. But it's a lot different than the Salvation Army type of thing in that we're simply trying to get them straightened out and back into society. Don't plan to have them there all the time.

WN: I'm wondering, has there been any political backlash in terms of what kind of programs do you implement or what kind of tenants you have at Pālama Settlement? For example, Planned Parenthood [of Hawai'i], I know, was one such tenant. Has there been any problems?

RR: None at all, none at all. When we—Strong-Carter—had the dental clinic, and even years ago when we had the medical work and all, we made very sure we're not impinging on private dentists or doctors or so on. We made sure they [patients] really were, you might say, indigent and not able to pay the going rate in town. No, we're not interested in competing with anybody and taking bodies away from them if they're able to provide it at whatever their costs are.

No, they're very supportive, and the fascinating thing about when I write letters or go to foundations or ask for anything, you don't have to explain Pālama Settlement. You know, it's been going for so long, it's done so many things. Especially this year with our anniversary and the publicity, when you mention it they know what it is. So often you have to go in and start telling them what (your organization does). That doesn't seem to be necessary with Pālama Settlement over the years.

WN: Yeah, I think you're right.

RR: And the word immediately connotes to them a certain type of function and contribution to the community.

WN: Well, I think we're just about finished. Before I turn off the tape recorder is there

anything—any last things you want to say about your life, about Pālāma Settlement?

RR: No, I think as far as me personally is concerned, I would say that because of Pālāma Settlement, growing up near the settlement and with the kids, I've been almost a nut in contributing time and effort and money. I started out coaching at Punahou as assistant [swimming] coach and diving coach. And after a year of that, I went to the University of Hawai'i and coached their team for three years, all gratis. The last year, as a matter of fact, I did have Keo Nakama, Halo Hirose, that group. Bill [William S.] Richardson who's a [retired chief] justice of the supreme court, was one of my swimming captains. Larry Kuriyama, who was the legislator, was one. And because the seasons were different, I could coach at Punahou and help, and then do the university. Then I'd do the Nu'uānu Y[MCA]. And then later on, after the war [World War II], I went down and for three years I had my own club of Farrington High School kids. And Jackie, my wife, had a club of Farrington High School girls. And after the war I coached—started the whole Punahou swimming program, boys and girls, junior varsity, varsity. And for three years, until I was transferred away to the Mainland, I've been on all kinds of boards of institutions, and eleemosynary institutions. It just sort of gets born into you. And I think if I ever had a real bad operation, when they took blood out, there would be a winged P [Pālāma Settlement's logo] floating around in it.

(Laughter)

RR: But it does. And I think this is the same with a number of us so-called graduates. And some of them have been excellent coaches in the community and handling activities. You learn to give back, you know, which is very rewarding and fun.

WN: Well, as this oral history project progresses we'll be probably contacting a lot of these graduates and see . . .

RR: Do you know Moke Kealoha at all? Moses Kealoha? He was with Servco Pacific. And he is a wealth of information. Remarkable recall. And he'll tell you, you know, "Except for Pālāma Settlement, I'd have been in O'ahu prison [O'ahu Community Correctional Center]." And we have several of them telling us that.

WN: Okay, Bob, thank you very much.

RR: Great.

END OF INTERVIEW

Reflections of Pālama Settlement

Volume I

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