# SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: AN ORAL HISTORY STUDY OF TWO ENDURING AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL HEADS IN HAWAIʻI INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

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# ABSTRACT

Surviving and Thriving in Independent School Leadership: An Oral History Study of Two Enduring and Successful School Heads in Hawai‘i Independent Schools

Robert David Gaudi Jr.

The purpose of this study was to use narrative to document and examine the experiences of two successful, long-time heads of school who have remained at their same Hawai‘i independent schools for a minimum of 20 years - Dr. Robert Peters of Hanahau‘oli School and Dr. James K. Scott of Punahou School. The main guiding research questions were: (1) What were the memorable events in the leadership journey of Dr. Robert Peters and Dr. James K. Scott?; (2) What lessons can I and perhaps other school leaders learn from the stories of Dr. Robert Peters and Dr. James K. Scott?

This study followed a qualitative research design whereby in-depth oral history interviews were used to study Dr. Robert Peters and Dr. James K. Scott. The goal was to use narrative inquiry to richly describe their thoughts, memories, and stories in ways that not only inform and improve my practice but perhaps that of other school leaders in Hawai‘i and abroad. The one aspect that perhaps most clearly distinguishes oral history from other forms of narrative research is that it is presented “in the words of the person telling the story” (Atkinson, 1998, p. 2) and thereby “preserves an individual’s own words and perspectives in a particularly authentic way” (Etter-Lewis, 1993, p. xii). With this in mind, all of the data shared in this study is presented as first-person narrative entirely in the words of the participants.

The data analysis resulted in the identification of eight lessons that I found most edifying in my own practice and hope to be instructive for other current an aspiring heads of school. The major lessons learned included: (1) Acknowledge insecurities/self-doubt and ask for help; (2) Patiently persuade rather than publically push; (3) The head of school is chief storyteller – critical in fundraising; (4) Do not work in isolation - Communicate honestly, collaborate effectively, and think deeply about the whole system; (5) Stay stimulated by serving the broader community; (6) The head of school must learn to manage the board of trustees; (7) Mentors – Important to have someone believe in you; and (8) Finding a good match is important.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

***"I interview because I am interested in other people's stories. Most simply put, stories are a way of knowing" (Seidman, 2006, p. 7).***

It does not take an expert in organizational management to realize that efficient, productive, and well-run organizations are likely to have skillful leaders at the helm. From small mom-and-pop shops at the end of the road to large non-profits and enormous conglomerates stretching across the globe, there are myriad examples of successful and thriving businesses being run by strong and competent leaders. Long time leadership author, Warren Bennis (1989) feels so strongly about the influential power of leadership that he believes that leadership breathes energy and empowerment into the entire workforce and "can be felt throughout an organization" (p. 22). The importance of leadership is not only evident in the business world but also in the educational realm where leadership is found to have profoundly positive effects on overall student learning (Leithwood & Riechl, 2003; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). The positive correlations concluded by Marzano et al. (2005) were so compelling that they asserted leadership to be "vital to the successful functioning of many aspects of a school" (p. 5).

## Importance of Leadership in Independent Schools

This importance of leadership holds true for both public and independent/private schools. In an independent school, the chief administrator or head of school is tasked with the all-important role of setting the tone or climate for the entire school (National Association of Independent Schools, 2009). The tone can be one that is inspiring, productive, and congenial or with the wrong person at the helm perhaps tiring,

destructive, and demeaning. A good head of school is a socially skillful and savvy leader who among other qualities, has a pragmatic problem-solving wisdom, a capacity to handle challenges, an appreciation for the importance of relationships, a clarity of purpose, a keen self-awareness, and an authentic desire to be themselves (Booth, 2002; Evans, 2010). According to Evans (2010), this shrewdness or as he calls it "savvy" (p. xi) is a product of years of professional experiences and life experiences as well as natural intelligence and common sense. The value of professional experience is lauded by school heads themselves as they reported that only after years of on-the-job experience did they feel prepared to deal with some of the school's key governance areas such as strategic planning, fundraising, financial management, and working with a board of trustees (National Association of Independent Schools, 2009).

Littleford (1999) takes the importance of professional leadership experience for a school head a step further by touting the benefits of a school head staying at one school for an extended period of time. Littleford believes so strongly in the importance of school head longevity that he asserts that a head of school's "long-term impact on a school only begins to occur after the head has been at the same school for 8-10 years" (p. 2) when parents, board members, and alumni begin to feel an appreciation for the head's accomplishments. This need for effective and sustained leadership in our independent schools is summarized nicely when Adams (2002) says, "schools with effective, long-term heads thrive, while those with more frequent head turnover, progress, at best, by fits and starts or, at worst, flounder" (p. 13).

**Statement of the Problem**

With the importance of effective and sustained leadership in our independent schools being so abundantly clear, it is troubling to know that schools are facing what Evans (2010) terms a "school leadership crisis" (p. ix). In both public and independent schools, fewer teachers and school administrators are seeking to become school heads because of increased stress of the school head position and because of the many other options now available to educated teachers and administrators (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; Fraser & Brock 2006; Moos, 1999; National Association of Independent Schools, 2009; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003). According to the National Association of Independent Schools' report on The State of Independent School Leadership 2009, there is an aging population of school heads and a limited number of current school administrators who are interested in becoming a school head. The National Association of Independent Schools reports states,

> "With 68 percent of heads planning to change jobs or retire in the next ten years, (and) 78 percent of responding administrators indicating that they are not interested in pursuing a head of school position…, the independent school community could face a serious leadership crisis in the coming decade" (National Association of Independent Schools, 2009, p. 16).

This potential leadership crisis should be a concern for those involved with independent schools and represent a call-to-action.

There is a vast amount of literature regarding leadership and what constitutes successful leadership (Bennis, 1999; Bennis & Nanus, 1997; Burns, 1978; Bush & Glover, 2003; Gardner, 1990; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003); however, there is far less research focused on longevity in leadership (Small, 2001). And because independent schools tend to have smaller budgets

and are typically not as heavily involved in large-scale research projects as are their counterparts in the public sector, there is not the same breadth of research available specifically for independent schools (McLay & Brown, 2000). There are studies focused on independent school heads (Berman, 2003; Nicklas, 1982; Small, 2001; Ruoss, 1992), but there are none concentrated on school heads in Hawaiʻi where approximately 17% of school age children attend independent/private schools as opposed to approximately 10% in the rest of the nation (United States Census Bureau, 2011).

Given the knowledge that long-term leadership is beneficial for independent schools, the fact that independent schools are potentially facing an impending crisis of leadership, and the lack of research focused on independent school leadership in Hawaiʻi, a study focused specifically on successful, long-time school heads in Hawaiʻi's independent schools is needed. After all, as Lyman, Ashby, and Tripses (2005) observed, "a great deal can be learned about how to lead by studying those who do it well" (p. 1).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to use narrative to document and examine the experiences (memories and personal commentaries) of two long-time heads of school who have remained at their same Hawaiʻi independent schools for a minimum of 20 years - Dr. Robert Peters of Hanahauʻoli School and Dr. James K. Scott of Punahou School. As a head of school, I was hoping that by studying successful long-term school heads I would be able to derive knowledge that will inform and improve my practice and potentially enhance my own leadership and perhaps that of other school leaders in Hawaiʻi and abroad.

## Research Questions

The main guiding research questions were:

1. What were the memorable events in the leadership journey of Dr. Robert Peters and Dr. James K. Scott?
2. What lessons can I and perhaps other school leaders learn from the respective stories of Dr. Robert Peters and Dr. James K. Scott?

## Definition of Terms

**Leadership.** With the importance of leadership being so clearly documented, one would think that our understanding of leadership would be as equally well-defined. However, the reality is that our understanding of leadership is a bit more elusive. James Burns (1978) described the nebulousness of leadership well when he said, "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 2). A few years later Bennis and Nanus (1997) supported Burns' claims when they explained that decades of studying leadership had produced over 850 definitions of leadership with no clear agreement on what differentiated a leader from a non-leader or an effective leader from an ineffective leader. And according to Evans (2010), more than twenty-five years has passed since Bennis and Nanus made their assertions, yet we are not much closer to a clear understanding or consensus on leadership.

To muddy matters even more, leaders come in many forms and in many different contexts. Churchill, Gandhi, Lenin, MacArthur, Eisenhower, and General Patton were all great leaders, but their styles and attributes were very different (Garner, 1990). Moreover, if you are able to, in fact, define a particular leadership style, you cannot forget what (Goldman, 2000) professed and that was, "the best leaders don't know just one style of

leadership – they're skilled at several, and have the flexibility to switch between styles as the circumstances dictate" (p. 1). Albeit leadership is hard to define, comes in a variety of forms, and is adaptable, many would argue that they know good leadership when they see it. Yukl (2006) asserted that most of the definitions of leadership shared one and only one unifying commonality. They all shared the assumption that influence is being exerted by one person onto others. With this and all the other complexities in mind, we will settle on Peter Northouse's very succinct definition of leadership for the purposes of this study. Northouse (2004) defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3).

**Independent School**. According to the National Association of Independent Schools (2012), independent schools are non-profit schools that are self-determining in mission and program, and are governed by an independent board. They are different from other schools in that they are not supported by tax or church funds. Rather, independent schools are primarily supported by tuition, charitable donations, and endowment income. For the purposes of this study, an independent school is one that fits the above criteria and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools. In order to be eligible for this membership, a school must be independently governed by a board of trustees, adhere to non-discriminatory policies, be accredited by an approved accrediting body, and hold a non-profit 501(c)(3) status (National Association of Independent Schools, 2004) .

**National Association of Independent Schools.** The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) is a nonprofit membership association that has been providing services to schools and other associations since 1962. NAIS currently serves

more than 1,700 schools and associations of schools in the United States and abroad (National Association of Independent Schools, 2012).

**Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools.** The Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools (HAIS) is a nonprofit membership association founded in 1962. HAIS is the state affiliate for the NAIS and currently serves approximately 100 private and/or independent schools and approximately 40,000 students in Hawai‘i. In addition to the many services HAIS provides to its member schools, HAIS has three general goals which include encouraging high educational standards and academic excellence, promoting independent education as an option for parents and children, and preserving the independence of Hawaii's private schools (Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools, 2012).

**Board of Trustees.** For the purposes of this study, the board of trustees is the ultimate authority of an independent school (Small, 2001). The board is the guardian of a school's mission, oversees the fiduciary responsibilities of the school, and is responsible for the hiring, development, evaluation, and firing of the head of school (National Association of Independent Schools, 2013). According to Edwards (1994), the relationship between the board of trustees and the head of school is an important one in determining the overall health of the school.

**Head of School / School Head.** For the purposes of this study, a head of school or school head is defined as the chief executive officer of a school. The head of school is the educational, instructional and professional leader of the school and is tasked with overseeing all of its administration. The head of school or school head is directly

accountable to the board of trustees and works with the board and staff to implement board policy (National Association of Independent Schools, 2008).

**Oral History.** For the purposes of this study, oral history is defined as "collection, preservation, and dissemination of historical data obtained through planned, in-depth, life history interviews" (Nishimoto, 2007, p. 3). These well-planned interviews seek to collect memories and personal commentaries of historical significance by recording the exchange in audio or video format (Ritchie, 2003). And as with any oral history project, an important goal of mine was the same as many other oral historians and that was to ensure that the product of this oral history study was preserved for long-term preservation as well as unrestricted public access (Charlton, Myers & Sharpless, 2007).

# CHAPTER 2

# METHODOLOGY

***"In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument. The credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork" (Patton, 2002, p. 14).***

This chapter will provide the research design, criteria for selection of participants, participants, data collection, data analysis, presentation of the data, participant consent, preparation for the interviews, validity and reliability, limitations, and role of the researcher. Current research clearly points to the importance of good leadership in independent schools. This leadership is the product of natural intelligence along with the accumulation of years of valuable experience (Evans, 2010). Unfortunately, the research also finds that there is a crisis of leadership in America's independent schools (National Association of Independent Schools, 2009). This study seeks to use narrative to document and examine the experiences (memories and personal commentaries) of two long-time heads of school who have remained at their same Hawaiʻi independent schools for a minimum of 20 years - Dr. Robert Peters of Hanahauʻoli School and Dr. Jim Scott of Punahou School.

## Research Design

This study followed a qualitative research design whereby in-depth oral history interviews were used to study two school heads who have successfully led their individual Hawaiʻi independent school for 20 or more years. The goal was to use narrative inquiry to richly describe their thoughts, memories, and stories in ways that not only inform and improve my practice but perhaps that of other school leaders in Hawaiʻi and abroad.

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative researchers are basically "interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13). This meaning can be studied by collecting qualitative data in the form of interviews, observations, and documents (Patton, 2002). The qualitative research design for this study utilized a narrative analysis approach in which interpretation of stories and the texts that tell the stories were used to make meaning of two participant's experiences, provide access to their understanding, and put their behaviors in context (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006).

Data were collected from participants about their knowledge, values, beliefs, past experiences, feelings, opinions, attitudes, and perceptions. While the purpose, research questions, and narrative analysis framework were clearly defined and provided a practical structure for focusing our inquiry and interpreting our data, this study was not tested deductively as might be done in an experimental design where the researcher is testing a theory. Rather, the framework was informed more inductively whereby theory was formed as a result of the data that was collected (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research lends itself well to inductive studies (Merriam, 2009; Patton 2002).

**Participant Selection**

The participants were selected using "purposeful selection" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). It is also often called "purposeful sampling" and "is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77).

Since the goal of my research was to do in-depth oral history interviews, a deliberate decision was made to focus the research on a small number of participants rather than a larger more generalizable number. The logic being that studying a fewer number of what Patton (2002) calls "information-rich cases" (p. 230) would allow for a greater and more in-depth understanding than would a more superficial study of a larger number of participants.

Both participants were purposefully chosen for three reasons: (1) they both had been heads of their respective Hawaiʻi independent school for a minimum of 20 years; (2) they both are well-respected in the community and are commonly regarded as being highly effective and successful school leaders; and (3) they come from two Hawaiʻi independent schools that are similar in that they are both highly desirable and prominent educational institutions but extremely different in their respective sizes. Dr. Robert G. Peters recently retired as the head of Hanahauʻoli School which has approximately 200 students, and Dr. James Kapaeʻalii Scott is the current head of Punahou School which has approximately 3700 students.

**Dr. Robert G. Peters**

Dr. Robert Peters began as Head of Hanahauʻoli School in Honolulu, Hawaiʻi in 1982 and after 30 years as head of school retired in June of 2013. Hanahau'oli School is an independent, co-educational school with approximately 200 students in junior kindergarten to grade six. The school was founded in 1918 and is regarded as a preeminent independent elementary school in Hawaiʻi. In 1986 Hanahauʻoli was selected by the Council for American Private Education and the National Department of

Education as one of sixty exemplary private schools in the nation in the first Excellence in Elementary Schools search.

Dr. Peters is very active in education at the local and national levels. He is currently the chair of Hawai‘i’s Early Learning Council, is on the board of directors of the Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools, and is on the boards of various Hawai‘i independent schools. Dr. Peters is also currently serving as the Board President for the Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation. Dr. Peters served as commissioner for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges from 2006 to 2012, and was on the board of directors for National Association of Independent Schools from 1991 to 1996 and from 2000 to 2003. He is a past president of the Hawai‘i Alliance for Arts in Education and a former board member for the Elementary School Center and Hawai‘i Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Dr. Peters was a 2011 recipient of the Ho‘okele Award given by the Hawai‘i Community Foundation in partnership with the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation for excellent leadership in Hawai‘i’s non-profit sector. Dr. Robert Peters holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree (B.A.) in History, a Master of Arts Degree (M.A.) in American History, and Doctor of Education Degree (Ed.D.) in Foundations all from the University of Massachusetts – Amherst.

**Dr. James Kapae‘alii Scott**

Dr. James Scott is in his 20th year as President of Punahou School in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. He took over as the 16th president of Punahou in 1994. Punahou is an independent, co-educational school with approximately 3700 students in kindergarten to grade twelve. It is the largest independent K-12 school on a single campus in the United States of America. Punahou was founded in 1841 and is widely regarded as an

outstanding independent school in Hawai‘i and has received numerous accolades. Punahou School was named top Green School in America in 2006, received the title America’s No. 1 high school athletics program in 2008 and 2009 by Sports Illustrated, and is recognized as an Apple Distinguished School.

Dr. Scott is actively engaged in leadership roles at both the local and national levels. He served as College Board Trustee from 1994 to 1998, Secondary School Admission Test Board Director from 2001 to 2012, and as the Secondary School Admission Test Board’s Board Chair from 2006 to 2008. He is on the board of directors for the Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools and Hawaiian Electric Industries. He is a member of The Klingenstein Center Advisory Board, Country Day School Headmasters’ Association of the United States, and National Association of Independent Schools. Dr. Scott was awarded the prestigious Diversity Leadership Award in 2011 by the National Association of Independent Schools. Dr. Scott holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree (A.B) in political science from Stanford University, a Master of Arts Degree (M.A.) in Private School Leadership from the University of San Francisco, and a Master of Arts Degree (M.A.) and Doctor of Education Degree (Ed.D.) in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from Harvard University.

**Data Collection**

Unlike quantitative research where surveys, test items, and other numerical data represent the tool or instrument, in qualitative research the researcher is the data collecting instrument (Patton, 2002). The data collection entailed conducting detailed oral history interviews of the two participants. Each participant was interviewed on three separate occasions with each interview lasting approximately two hours. The goal was to

keep the participants relaxed and comfortable during the three interviews, so the locations of the interviews were chosen by the participants. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format where the researcher had general themes along with some planned questions (Appendix D). The participants were encouraged to speak freely and share their stories which were organized into an oral history narrative spanning from their early years to present day. Although the focus of this study was squarely on school leadership, it was important to look at the participants early years because doing so brought a sense of context to their later stories. The goal of asking about their early years was not to do a formal life history analysis where early experiences were used to make what Cole and Knowles (2001) refer to as "broader contextual meaning" (p. 22). Rather, the goal was to simply bring a better understanding of the participates' lived experiences and put their successful school leadership in the context of their lives (Seidman, 2006). After all, stories are more compelling when one understands the context from which they came (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

The interview format followed was first designed by Schuman (1982) and later advocated by Seidman (2006). The participants were first asked open-ended questions to help them feel comfortable and to enlist them to freely share their accounts in an unrestrictive format. The open-ended questions were typically followed by a series of more specific questions which were emergent in nature and were asked to clarify any ambiguity in their initial responses. This technique is advocated by Ritchie (2003) who asserts that interviewers should use a mix of both open-ended and specific questions while adhering to the premise that interviewers should "let interviewees explain what they think…before beginning to narrow the questions" (p. 92). This type of one-on-one,

open-ended interviewing allowed the participants the freedom to thoroughly share their stories without interruption or guidance from the researcher while affording me the discretion to probe the participants for specificity with the follow-up questions.

While the interviews were semi-structured and lacked a specific prescribed set of ordered questions, I did enter each of the three interviews with specific goals in mind (Seidman, 2006). The goal of the first interview was to establish the context of the participants' experience. The second interview focused on allowing the participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third interview encouraged the participants to reflect on the meaning their experiences held for them. All interviews were recorded with a digital audio recording device. It is important to note that both participants appeared to grow more relaxed with each subsequent interview. As a result, the participants seemed the most comfortable during their third interviews and answered their questions with little or no hesitation.

Shortly after each interview was completed, I took time to write post-interview field notes and reflections. These notes and reflections were organized onto a template (Appendix E) that Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2013) refer to as a "Contact Summary Form" (p. 124). These writings represented an opportunity for me to immediately document my thoughts regarding the interviews by specifically summarizing the main issues or themes that emerged, detailing what information was gained or not gained during the interview, reflecting on any salient points made during the interview, and noting any potential follow-up questions for subsequent interviews. It was a valuable process that I began immediately following the pilot interview and repeated for each of my six interviews.

The entire data collection process can best be characterized as possessing what Patton (2002) describes as "emergent design flexibility" (p. 40) where the data collected throughout the interview process was continually used to inform and guide the later questions. This design provided the study the structure and framework it needed to withstand methodological scrutiny but the freedom and flexibility necessary to nimbly adapt and change direction depending on where the participant responses took the conversation.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis process began with the prompt, professional, and verbatim transcription of the digitally recorded audio interviews. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber and sent to me once they were completed. I then listened to the audio recordings while reading and carefully editing the transcripts. Ritchie (2003) states that "editing is usually necessary to make sense of the spoken word when it is put down in writing" (p. 68). The editing process generally followed that advocated by Ritchie (2003) and modeled by Nishimoto (2002), and specifically involved me correcting spelling errors and punctuation, removing false starts and other unnecessary words or phrases that made the transcript difficult to understand, filling in words that the transcriber could not discern, and generally making sense of what the participants were saying. Occasionally, words were added for clarification or smoother transition. The added words were bracketed [ ] as is advocated by Nishimoto (2007). Despite the thorough editing process, great effort was taken to make certain the edited transcripts represented as closely as possible the actual audio recordings. According to Davis, Back and MacLean (1977), "The ideal transcript is an accurate verbatim reflection of the

interview's content, preserves as much of the quality of the interview and the individualities of the speakers as possible, and is easy to read and understand" (p. 35). While editing the transcripts, I also began what Saldaña (2013) refers to as "first cycle coding processes" by highlighting and flagging salient words, phrases, passages, paragraphs and then assigning them summative codes and/or descriptors that I could easily refer back to at a later time.

Once the transcripts were edited and coded, I re-read all of the transcripts identifying excerpts that I wanted to include in the findings and enter into public record. The excerpts were purposefully and subjectively chosen based on their readability and usefulness in telling respective stories of the two participants. Specifically, I affirmed as did Marshall (1981) that "my feeling of rightness is important" (p. 399) and relied on my own judgment to select readable sections of the transcripts that I found meaningful, noteworthy or otherwise compelling. This process of recognizing and utilizing one's own professional judgment to select transcription excerpts is supported by Siedman (2006) who says, "There is no model matrix of interesting categories that one can impose on all texts. What is of essential interest is embedded in each research topic and will arise from each transcript. Interviewers must affirm their own ability to recognize it" (p. 118).

After the selection process was completed, I sent the transcript excerpts to the participants for their review and final approval. In what was a very collaborative process, they were asked to elucidate any confusing statements, highlight any areas that might contain sensitive information, and check the transcripts for accuracy by verifying names, dates, and other pertinent facts (Nishimoto, 2002). The participants took approximately two weeks to return the transcripts with their changes and formal approval. I then

discussed the implications of their stories in my own practice by detailing what emerged as important to me, what I learned from their stories, and how the lessons learned might impact my future leadership or the leadership of others.

**Presentation of the Data**

The one aspect that perhaps most clearly distinguishes oral history from other forms of narrative research is that it is presented "in the words of the person telling the story" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 2) and thereby "preserves an individual's own words and perspectives in a particularly authentic way" (Etter-Lewis, 1993, p. xii). With this in mind, all of the data shared in this study is presented as first-person narrative entirely in the words of the participants. Atkinson (1998) explains that doing this allows the stories themselves to become "not only a primary document created by a collaboration of the researcher and the interviewee but also a secondary research tool" (p. 2) for other researchers to use as a resource in their own studies. The approved transcript excerpts were therefore organized and assembled into two separate chapters - one chapter containing Dr. Peter's stories as told entirely in his own words and a second chapter containing Dr. Scott's stories as told entirely in his words. Most of the interview questions were removed from the final narrative; however, some questions were left in the text to help the reader establish context for the shared stories (Nishimoto, 2002).

**Participant Consent**

The University of Hawai‘i Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study (Appendix A) with one of the requirements being that the two participants signed consent to participate forms (Appendix B) before the interviews were initiated. Then after the interviews were completed and once the participants read and approved the transcripts,

both participants signed an interviewee agreement form (Appendix C) granting permission for the publication of their approved transcripts. The purpose of the interviewee agreement form was to garner written evidence assuring that the participants clearly understood the rules and guidelines for the future use of the approved transcripts (Center for Oral History, 2011).

**Preparation for the Interviews**

Great care was taken to assure that I was properly prepared for the data collection phase of the research process. I thoroughly investigated the two participants before beginning the interview process and also conducted a comprehensive pilot interview. This process is advocated by Merriam (2009) who equates getting good data with asking good questions and strongly recommends that researchers conduct a pilot interview to test out the interview questions before beginning the actual interviews.

I piloted the interview with the recently retired and highly respected Dr. Val Iwashita. Dr. Iwashita retired from ʻIolani School in 2013 after seventeen consecutive years as its Headmaster. ʻIolani School is a culturally diverse, co-educational, college preparatory school with approximately 1800 students in kindergarten to grade twelve. The school was founded upon Christian values in 1863 and like Hanahauʻoli and Punahou has a reputation for being an outstanding educational institution.

After thoroughly researching my interview themes and questions, I met with Dr. Iwashita for a nearly two hour pilot interview that I recorded with the same digital audio recorder device I used for the actual interviews. The pilot interview provided me with the opportunity to practice my interview questions and my interviewing techniques as well as get comfortable utilizing my recording equipment. I took field notes during the interview

to immediately reference any salient points and to note any questions that either worked especially well or were perceived to be confusing. Following the interview, I transcribed the audio recordings and reviewed the transcripts along with my field notes to help determine which questions were successful and which ones were ineffective. Overall, it was a wonderfully educational experience that gave me a tremendous amount of confidence going into my actual interviews. In fact, I found the pilot interview to be so effective in preparing me for the actual interviews that I found myself more relaxed and comfortable going into the actual interviews than I did for the pilot interview.

**Validity and Reliability**

Threats to the validity and reliability of a researcher's data must always be identified and understood. Often times these threats revolve around data collection instrumentation such as survey questions and testing tools in addition to analysis techniques. In qualitative research involving narrative analysis it is important to recognize that the interviewer himself or herself is the research instrument and is the one that largely determines the credibility of the data collection and analysis process. We must therefore acknowledge the fact that human error and subjectivity can potentially be of great concern in a qualitative study in both the data collection and analysis processes and work to mitigate those threats.

Maxwell (2013) claims that there are two broad types of threats to validity in qualitative research – researcher bias and reactivity. Maxwell (2013) explains that researcher bias is created by the "theories, beliefs and perceptual lens" (p. 124) that the researcher brings to the study, and reactivity is the "influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied" (p. 124).

**Researcher Bias.** While I worked hard to minimize research bias and to assure the credibility of the process by organizing the interviews into a systematic and rigorous data collection process where the goals remained consistent and transparent, it was imperative to recognize that my own values, beliefs and understandings did not go away during the interview process and could, despite my best efforts, prove to be a distraction or otherwise bias the process (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002). After all, subjectivity cannot be completely eliminated. It is an ever present part of our being that is "like a garment that cannot be removed" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). Rather than trying to futilely eradicate it, I did as Peshkin (1988) suggests and enabled myself "to manage it – to preclude it from being unwittingly burdensome" (p. 20) as I collected, analyzed, and reported my findings. As a school leader with over twenty years of educational experience - the last seven of which were as a head of school, I cannot deny the fact that I possess my own ideas regarding leadership, and so I did therefore work to understand my own biases and realize that they could influence the data collection and analysis processes. I also worked to remain cognizant of the aspects of my daily life that might have become a distraction or impediment to an objective process (Patton, 2002).

**Reactivity**. The participants in this study are educational professionals with decades of experience in the field and are accomplished enough in their own right that they should not have to worry about what data the researcher may want to gather; however, there is nevertheless always a danger with interviewing that the participant says what they believe the interviewer wants to hear (Ritchie, 2003). Furthermore, although I worked hard to assure that the meaning being made in the interviews was a sole function of the participant's recreation of past events, I must recognize that the participant

responses were to some degree a "function of the participant's interaction with the interviewer" (Seidman, 2006, p. 23). In other words, no matter how hard I tried to be objective and ask questions systematically, there was always the threat that my actions and interactions to some degree influenced the responses.

Other researchers such as Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba tend to look at validity and reliability a little differently and prefer to think of it in terms of trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that the value or "trustworthiness" (p. 290) of a research project lies in among other things its ability to establish credibility. While there is clearly no way to guarantee that every word a participant shares is completely credible or valid, Seidman (2006) contends that the use of the three interview format which I systematically utilized in this study does increase the validity or what Lincoln and Guba (1985) term trustworthiness of the responses. After all, if the goal of the process is to better understand how the participants make meaning of their experience and "if the interview structure works to allow them to make sense to themselves as well as to the interviewer, then it has gone a long way towards validity" (Seidman, 2006, p. 24).

**Limitations of Study**

This study was purposely limited to only two participants; however, because the sample size is so small, the implications are not generalizable to a larger community. And since the participants are both heads of schools in Hawai'i, the results are specifically limited to Hawai'i school leaders and should not be generalized to a broader community on a national or international level. This study was further limited by my role as a novice researcher. While every effort was made to properly prepare myself for this research project, my overall lack of research experience nevertheless limited the study.

**Role of the Researcher**

I as the researcher was the sole data collecting instrument. My role was that of an active listener seeking to hear. I asked opened-ended questions to prompt or facilitate the sharing of the participant's life experiences, stories, and feelings. During the interviews, every attempt was made to minimize my own voice and opinions as I worked to garner the voice of the participants.

In the spirit of action research, I could be positioned as an outsider researching an insider when you consider the fact that I am an outsider to both Hanahauʻoli School and Punahou School. However, one might also be able to argue that I am what Herr and Anderson (2005) call an "insider in collaboration with other insiders" (p. 36) if you consider the fact that both of the participants and I are school heads in Hawaiʻi independent schools and are all members of the Board of Directors of Hawaiʻi Association of Independent Schools. Although we lead three different and competing schools, we work together collaboratively as peers and colleagues in our service to the Hawaiʻi Association of Independent Schools as respective board members.

# CHAPTER 3

# DR. ROBERT G. PETERS

## The Early Years

### Born and Raised in New England

*Figure 3.1.* Hanahau'oli Head of School (retired) Dr. Robert G. Peters. (Hanahau'oli School)

The early years go back a long time to the 1940's. I was born in Massachusetts, lived with my mother and father in a small apartment in a little town called Willimansett which is just north of Springfield, Massachusetts and south a bit from Holyoke, Massachusetts. We lived there until about age 10; then we moved to a small town in the country.

I have two biological brothers and one adopted cousin who came into the family at the age of six months, so there were four boys. We were all four years apart. I was a typical oldest son who did nothing wrong, achieved well in school, and I think my brothers probably could've shot me if they had the opportunity at some point. I was always interested in school. School was always fun for me. I went to a very small elementary school within walking distance of our house in Willimansett.

We lived in a tenement, and my father worked in a brewery, and my mother was a stay at home mom until I was in high school. She was pretty much at home until then. We were very much a blue collar family. My father's education was through eighth grade. My mother's was through high school. My mother came from an Irish family of 10. My father came from a German, French and Swiss family of two, so very different types of families. On my mother's side, most of the family were firemen or policemen –

typical of Irish families I think at that time in that part of the country. And my father's side were laborers and that was typical of them.

My childhood memories are happy. I know they struggled financially. I can remember very, very clearly my mother counting every penny and budgeting very, very carefully, but I never felt lack for anything. We lived close to my father's parents and so spent a lot of time there. And I remember being particularly fond of Friday nights which were my nights to go be with my grandparents. It was always an evening where whatever I wanted to eat was what was prepared, and we'd listen to the radio, believe it or not, until late at night.

I remember going to a YMCA in another town to swim regularly which I really enjoyed doing. I used to ice skate a lot which was another thing I really particularly enjoyed. I tried baseball at one point and was really bad at it and gave it up. And then my parents built a home in the late '40s or early '50s, and we moved to a very rural community where we were the only house on the street and the nearest neighbor was a good two or three acres away from us.

I loved living in this area because you could ski out in the backyard if you wanted to, a lot of bicycle riding, and trees to climb. It was just a whole different kind of experience, and I think what it did for me was to bring out probably a real desire to do a lot of exploring and finding out, discovering. And during that part of my life while I was there, from sixth grade through high school before I went off to college, the setting we lived in began to grow a little bit but it was still very, very rural. You had a local telephone company. You had bread delivered. You had milk delivered - that type of thing. You might wake up one morning and have cows in your backyard just because

you’re out in that area. But it truly was a rural existence during those years where you had to go away pretty far from home to connect with people.

**Parental Trust and Influence**

When I think about my family’s influence, probably one of the things that stands out to me most particularly about my mother and father was that they trusted me to make my own decisions and much of what I was interested in was new and different to them. So when it came to things like what courses I was going to take in high school, I would say, “This is what I want to do” and they would say, “Fine.” And so when I was applying for college, that was really my process. They had not lived through it. I was the first one in the family who really moved off to college; so, that was a whole different experience.

My mother had an incredible influence on me I think because she was a very quiet but strong person which I think is what I’ve become as I look at myself and who I am. And Pat, my wife, particularly sees the two of us as very, very much alike. My mother could speak very loudly without raising her voice, and I think probably I have taken on that persona. Somewhere within the genetic structure it’s there. The other thing my mother loved was reading, and I read and read as a child and continue to do that now. At that time, I’d be happy to walk a mile to go to library to get books and return them. It was that kind of thing.

**Not Wanting to Disappoint Father**

I can hardly remember being disciplined. We weren’t spanked. My father was strict but he wasn’t rigid, and he also wasn’t harsh as a person. It wasn’t a fear relationship at all. It was more I didn’t want to disappoint. I never wanted to disappoint my father. I’m sure the reason I tried out for baseball which I hated was because he liked

baseball and that's what a son did and I was the eldest son. I never felt pressure from him to do it. But if he said you had to be home at a certain time, you were home at a certain time. If you had chores to do, you did them and you didn't argue.

My mother was a great buffer. When I wanted something that might "break the rules," I'd use my mother as the person who would check in with him and set the stage for me. I don't think I ever tested him enough to know how far I could go. I also know that he was very proud of me, but he never probably really understood what I was doing. When I went for a doctorate, that didn't have a great deal of meaning to him having an 8th grade education.

He was also an incredibly capable person who could fix anything, could build anything and that was a skill that he learned. I watched him learn that. When we were building the house, our house, he had to be in his 40's at that point. It was something he'd never done before, but he was willing to dig in and learn it which was probably also a good model for me.

*Figure 3.2.* Robert Peters (center) in 1956 at the age of 14 with his two younger brothers. (Robert Peters)

**Family was Important – Large Irish Family**

I think the Irish side of the family as a group had an influence probably just because we saw ourselves as Irish, and we took pride in being Irish. It was also a big enough family that it added to making family that much more important. My grandfather lived to be 96 and his house was a gathering point every Sunday for most of the family; so, it was one of

those clannish kinds of things where everyone came together. So that sense of family was strong.

**Little Diversity Growing Up**

I grew up in an environment where diversity amounted to whether you were a Protestant or a Catholic. And you probably had two Jewish families in our high school who provided the diversity. So it was a very, very white background and that may also be one of the more interesting influences on me over the years because as I got into college and exposed to a variety of people, the whole issue of multiculturalism became interesting to me. I had black friends for the first time and lots of Jewish friends and Indian friends, very few Asians. There just weren't that many Asians at that time when I was in college but prior to that it was very much a white Caucasian Christian environment for me.

**Civil Rights Debates with Father**

I used to have some intense conversations if not arguments with my father, particularly over civil rights in the '60s, who was – I'm not sure if bigoted is the right word. Ignorant is probably a better term, and he had a lack of exposure. He was one of those people who would say things like, "Gee, they hired a new black guy at work, and he's a nice black guy" that kind of comment.

As he got older, he mellowed incredibly, and that was always kind of interesting to me. My interest in the civil rights issues and anti-war issues in the '60s were very hard for him to understand. It never brought us to a place where we couldn't be together, live together, and talk, but I learned fairly early on that there was a limit to the conversation. I don't know if that spurred me to want to know more, to explore more in trying to

understand him. I was a history major in college, and I think part of the reason was just trying to get a better handle on where my family came from and how did they get their particular views.

**Summer Jobs – Good Motivation to Stay in School**

I do remember that by the time I was 12 or 13, I had a job during the summer. I worked summers all the time. I did everything from the first job I had which was working at a chicken farm to helping to clean up the schools during the summer and eventually working in the libraries around town. That's just what you did. You worked during the summers.

The other job I had that answered any questions I had about whether or not I wanted to graduate from college and have a profession was one summer when I worked in a Lestoil factory. This was in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Lestoil was a house cleanser. I worked on an assembly line 12 hours a day, six at night to six in the morning, and six days a week. It was great money at that time for a kid who was going through college. I lasted for about six weeks I think and then I finally said, "I can't do this anymore." I'd earned enough money, and I quit. It truly was an assembly line. I mean as packets came through, you had to make sure the tops were tight, and if anything fell out, you had to repackage it and make sure it moved on. It was very monotonous over a 12 hour period. If you go from the chicken coop to that, the motivation, if it had ever been lacking, was heightened to keep going and finish college.

**Class Leader – Loved Debating**

I think from the time I was young I always enjoyed things like debating and speaking and that's where I became most active in terms of extracurricular activities. I

have always been a class leader. I was president of my class in high school, president of my class in junior high school, that type of thing. So I've always liked either the limelight or the responsibility or some combination of those two. I think I learned to speak on my feet through debating. That may have been the most valuable experience I had outside of just the general academic world, the extracurricular world. I started debating when I was a 7th grader. We did regional and state wide competitions and that sort of thing.

**Was Expected to Help those in Need**

I think the sense that you are required to help others in need was very much an expectation. We were brought up Catholics and so that's where some of the social justice conversations got a little bit heavy. I always thought the Catholic Church ought to be out there preaching civil rights and fighting the war, and my father used to say, "That's politics, that's not where the church should be." But we were fairly religious in a sense of mass every week. We had all the catechism stuff that you do when you're growing up. And I reached a point where for me the beliefs of the Catholic Church didn't make too much sense. But I think it also laid a fairly solid basis for us in terms of family was important, community responsibility was important, a sense of celebrating together was important, and rallying around when somebody was in need was also important and that was a combination of both family and church. I think they're both of those things.

**Was Expected to Be Responsible**

I think I was the responsible one in the family. I was a very typical first born. I accepted responsibility. I directed my brothers. I watched over them. I took care of them. My brothers were four years apart from me, so by the time we hit a certain age, my parents were very willing to have me babysit and take care of them. I didn't mind doing

that. It wasn't an additional chore that I recall anyway. But I think the expectation was because you were the eldest you knew better and you would be responsible. It could also be that I placed high expectations on myself. I don't know.

**Was Expected to Go to College**

Education was important to my parents. There was no fooling around with education in our house. They had goals for us to go to college. There was no doubt in my mind that I was expected to go to college and my brothers as well.

***Interviewer: Did you feel that your dad, because he had not gone to college, wanted a better life for you?***

Yeah. I think that was probably it, and he knew that he never paid much attention to school. He didn't like it. He didn't want to go, and he regretted not having had that opportunity. He grew up during the depression and went into the service fairly young as well. He lied to get himself a job because the family needed to be supported at that point, and that was what you did. So yeah, he didn't want us to have to work as hard as he did and struggle as hard as he did. That was a way out. Whether he saw what the end would be, I'm not sure. He just knew that was an avenue to be successful and admired people who had done it.

**High School – Provided Slightly More Diversity**

I went to high school in a small college community and so I did get exposed to different types of kids at that point in terms of their socio-economic level, and their thinking. They brought a different culture to the conversation. And consequently I suspect that was probably where the beginnings got laid for different ways of thinking about things. But it was still mainly white. In fact, it was all white. We had some Jewish people, that was the first time. The socioeconomic mix may have been a little bit broader,

because that's where you tend to bump into the children of faculty members of Mount Holyoke College which was in the same community. They often stayed through junior year and then went off to a boarding school. But it did expose you to probably a broader cultural base than I had in a smaller rural community prior to that.

**University of Massachusetts**

***Interviewer: How did you make the decision to go to the University of Massachusetts?***

Some of it was financial. It was affordable. I got some good scholarship money to go. It wasn't far from home which was also appealing at that point and it was going to provide me with the breadth that I was looking for. I was still a pretty naive individual about colleges. I didn't apply broadly. We didn't have great college counseling back then. I would never have thought of applying to Amherst College because I didn't see myself aligned with the class of people who went to Amherst College. And even though that was in the same community, we couldn't have afforded it unless we got a lot of money. Also, nobody was urging you either saying, "Gee, why don't you think about these other options?" So I pretty much navigated that on my own.

***Interviewer: What sort of role, if any, did your parents play in which colleges you applied to and eventually attended?***

I pretty much said, "This is what I want to do," and they [Dr. Peter's parents] said, "That sounds fine to me." They weren't in a position to support me financially and so if I was going to navigate it, I had to figure out a way. They obviously didn't have the background to be able to suggest possibilities although we talked about another teacher's college that was fairly close by. Distance would've been difficult travel wise and expense wise. I was attached to home enough that I didn't want to be far away from home. So coming here [to Hawai'i ] surprised a lot of people as you might expect.

**Moved Home after One Year**

I lived away [from home] the first year [of college]. My parents were going to get a new car, new to them, and they had an old car that if I wanted it, I could have it. But I couldn't afford to run the car and live at school, so I decided to live at home and have the freedom of the car.

I kept my clunky old Ford and drove it back and forth. I wasn't home for dinner. I wasn't home much except to sleep, wash and iron my clothes - that sort of thing, and then I was out again. My parents did not put expectations on me particularly other than if I weren't going to be home overnight, they would want to know that I wasn't in a car accident. The interesting challenge for me at that point was sometimes getting my family to understand that the studying piece was heavy enough that I couldn't be doing all the chores around the house that I'd done before, which I had not anticipated when I moved back to get the car. But it worked its way out, and it was not problematic.

**College Offered Greater Diversity**

It was much bigger than my high school. So going there was a big adventure in its own way. I was not a fraternity brother type and never joined a fraternity. Well I did join a service fraternity at one point but not a regular one. I was pretty much on the straight and narrow. I don't think I drank until I was 21. I wasn't heavy into the social scene. I was fairly serious about school. I collected, probably starting my sophomore year, a group of friends who were also history and poli-sci majors, and we began to spend a lot of time together. And that's the group that really broadened my view I think more than anything else. The student center was called "the hatch" and was where you went for coffee in the morning and in between classes and where you might go for lunch. And this

group straight through graduate school met at the same tables pretty much every day and read the New York Times and talked politics.

***Interviewer: What you're saying is that you used those conversations to broaden your views?***

Yes. And this was a fairly liberal group of people I was with. And because we were into the history part of it and the era that I was most interested in was the progressive movement itself which addressed a lot of social justice issues, it became a natural attachment and attraction I think for me.

***Interviewer: Were they all the same ethnic background?***

At that point I think they were. I can't think of anybody in that crew that was not white. And remember this is in the early '60s so you didn't have a huge African-American population on the campus. There were African-Americans. I knew some. Some were in my classes. Most of them were athletes. There was more diversity at the graduate level, particularly in the sciences. There were a lot of Indians, some Chinese, some Japanese. So the exposure was there to the variety of cultural mixes in the sense that they were within the community and you bumped into them, but not in terms of tight, close friendships at that point.

**First Job out of College – Agawam High School**

I worked on my masters' right away after completing my bachelors' in '64. I spent one more year [at school], and then I went to work teaching and finished up my masters in '66. I was working at Agawam High School, and I was a young teacher at the high school level. I was so young looking in the classroom, believe it or not, that actually I had teachers ask me why I was walking in the hallways in between classes. We used to have cafeteria study halls of 300 students, and 2 or 3 teachers would be in charge. There

was this big old lumberjack type nurse at the school, and she came up to me one day and said, “You need to sit down” and I said, “I beg your pardon.” She said, “You need to sit down.” And I said, “I’m a teacher, I’m not a student.” She said, “No, you’re not.” I said, “Yes, I am.” And she said, “I haven’t met you.” I said, “No, we haven’t met.” So I took her to the teacher’s lounge which was in the back and I asked, “Will somebody introduce the two of us please?” And they did. So strange experiences like that happened.

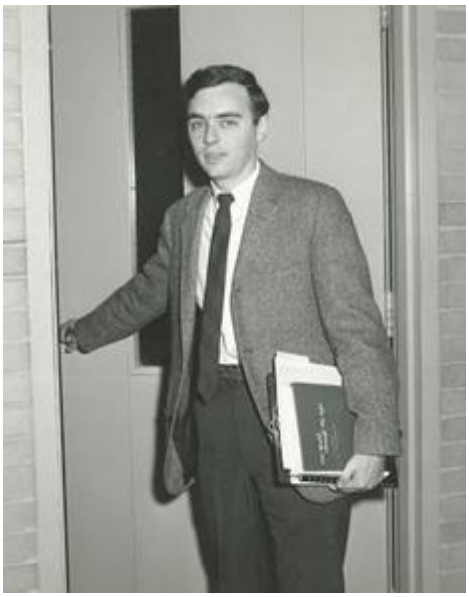

*Figure 3.3.* Robert Peters teaching at Agawam High School in 1965 at the age of 23. (Robert Peters)

I worked in the high school for five years form ‘65 to ‘70, and then in ‘70 I took the job at the Smith College Campus School. I started teaching seventh, eighth, and ninth grade at Smith. I had been there for a year, and they decided to close that part of the school. They asked me if I would stay on and teach a fifth and sixth grade combination, and I agreed to do that. And once that happened, I think I’d taught fifth/sixth for three years, maybe four, and then I began to take on administrative positions. I supervised the graduate students. I did some curriculum work. Eventually I did the assistant director’s position and was the acting director there the year I got hired to come here [to Hawai‘i].

**Smith College Campus School – Mentors Provided a Great Learning Experience**

Barbara Fisher was a definite mentor over the years at Smith. She came to Smith when they changed the structure/organization in the school and was brought there having been at the Corrine Seeds School at UCLA [University of California Los Angeles] which

was a laboratory school for UCLA. She was invited to be the director of the school, was also a part of the education department at Smith, taught courses there and worked within the department. So she was brought in for that position, and she brought a gentleman with her named Kent Louis as the assistant director.

The first time I sat down with the two of them [Director Barbara Fisher and Assistant Director Kent Louis] was when we were all invited to talk about our curriculum for the coming year. I had one of those epiphanies that first grew out of annoyance but became one of my most important learning experiences as an educator. I presented this curriculum about Native Americans that I was going to do with this combination fifth and sixth grade.

I finished sharing, and had given them an outline of what it was going to be like, and they looked at each other and then Barbara looked at me and she said, "Where are the children?" I looked at her and I said, "I don't know what you're asking me." She said, "This is very logical. It's very rationally oriented. It's very content driven. But I don't see the psychology. I don't see the children. How do they interact with this? Why should they find this important? What are they going to be doing?" And I left there just furious, as I felt they were questioning what I was doing. I mean I thought I was a good teacher. I got rave reviews when I taught in high school. I actually invented a few new courses that I taught that nobody else had taught. I got to pick my own students for one of them and they're questioning me? I was dumbfounded! I was so taken aback. It was probably the best learning experience I've ever had because I did go back to them and said, "I really didn't understand what you were talking about." And they said, "We weren't meaning to be critical in a sense saying that you're not a good teacher but there is something really

seriously missing here and that is - and this is where the Dewey stuff really got started for me - the notion of 'if I can't see how the children will interact with the content, then I've only done half the job.'" And so they began to open up to me, and we started having conversations at that point. I began reading some Dewey. I would meet with them regularly and Kent who was the assistant director was equally that kind of person and understood it, and they really guided me to the place of getting inside the kids you're teaching so that it became a matter of students taking priority over subject matter. I've been coming from that point of view ever since asking, "How do you bring the two together?"

Barbara's influence was extraordinary on that level, although Kent probably showed me more how to implement it. Kent is also the person who really introduced me to being an administrator, learning how to deal with kids on a different level than I might have done before, and learning how to deal with faculty. So the two of them shaped me within that environment. It was a "we're going to build new leaders here" notion. They were huge influences, and I don't know where I would've gone as an educator had I not encountered them because they opened up a new world for me and really a new way of looking at things.

**Doctoral Pursuit**

When Barbara came to Smith as the new director, her husband joined the Foundations Department at the University of Massachusetts. As I got to know them, she said to me, "You should apply for the doctoral program." I wasn't sure I wanted a doctorate in education because I really was still much more interested in the history and philosophy notion. And so I sat there with Lou, her husband who eventually became the

chair of my dissertation committee, and he talked me through the historical and philosophical pieces that I could become a part of if I pursued this doctorate. And because they were very much into Dewey, and he had been the president of the National Dewey Society at one point, it all fell into place. So I thought if we're going to live here and if I'm going to be here, I might as well apply for the doctoral program.

It was an exciting time at UMASS [University of Massachusetts – Amherst]. The gentleman who was the dean of the college was very controversial. He had brought a whole new group of people to UMASS and they had turned the place upside down. It was thriving. I mean people were writing dissertations about not writing dissertations. It was that wild!

They were considered very progressive and very liberal and had attracted a lot of wonderful people from across the country. It was a good place to go. So I applied and got into the program and spent from '72 to '80 working on it. I think I started in '72. It was 7½ to 8 years. I worked full time the entire amount of time that I was there, except for a residency year.

**Interested in Multiculturalism**

One of the things that was interesting for me personally was my question about could I compete with the students who were there? I had been out of school for a while, not a long time but a while. And I really wasn't sure and what I discovered was yeah, I could. And that just generated that much more enthusiasm for the program. I love to study and had some demanding people but some great people and it probably just broadened even more so. But I think it was also the kind of program that not only

expanded the Dewey side of it but the multiculturalism got expanded at the same time and that's really where I focused.

There was one other very defining moment [besides being at Smith] that leads to all this that happened while I was still teaching in Agawam. I went to the NDEA [National Defense Education Act] Institute which was funded by the federal government and was for social studies people. It was in '67 or '68, and it brought high school social studies teachers from around the country together.

There were five or six African-American women in the program from the south and our thinking was challenged. We were taking courses on Islamic history as well. So we got exposed to Islamic thinking, and we had some Indians in the program. One of the things that I will never forget was having a conversation on the bus coming back from some learning trip and having one of those African-American women say to me, "We really are more comfortable in the south than we are up here in the north at Smith." And I said, "You are?" And they said, "Yeah" and I said, "Tell me why. I don't understand that." And the response was, "It's very clear where we stand in the south, but when we're here we don't know if we can trust what white people are saying versus what they're thinking, what they really believe and what they really value." And for me it was like a "I never thought about it that way" kind of notion. I mean here you are in the liberal north. You had – how lucky you must feel to be comfortable with groups of people. It really opened up my eyes to really looking more deeply at how do people demonstrate their inclusive natures if they truly have them, and it made me step back and look at my own practices.

**Doctoral Program - Initial Insecurities**

***Interviewer: It sounds as if you were perhaps a bit insecure with your own abilities when you first began your doctoral program.***

I was very insecure. I think part of it was that I moved into a coterie of people who were already in their second or third years of the doctoral program who weren't working, who were just studying. And they brought a different academic flavor to the conversation. A lot of it was talk for the sake of talk I realized after a while. And many of them were not informed from an experiential point of view but they were much more conversant than I was with the general literature just by virtue of the fact that's what they did all day. And in fact some of them were teaching assistant's so they were teaching at the same time. So I think walking into that type of a setting where you had some pseudo philosophers, some real academic students, and some very bright people was challenging, and getting to the place where I felt I could assert my opinion and feel confident with it took some time.

I know I was fairly quiet in the beginning. I wrote some good papers, and I think probably part of what really got me beyond this point was there was a history of education professor who worked with me originally. In fact, he was one of my advisors who really encouraged me to speak up in class, recognized the work I was doing, and gave me the confidence in front of the group. It was a validation. He would say, "Yeah, you're thinking on the same level they are. Some of your thinking is more creative than theirs and go ahead and share it." But I needed that invitation in a way to get myself comfortable. It's probably surprising given how much I talk these days, but I think that's probably a fairly common experience.

**Getting into School Administration**

I became an administrator through a variety of positions. The two primary administrators [at Smith] were a director and an assistant director, and they asked me to supervise the graduate students which I did while I was still teaching. Then they asked me to take on the graduate program supervision with some curriculum coordination, and then I did some work in the library in the graduate program. And then for a year, the director was going to be away so the assistant director took over, and I was an interim assistant, and then they both left. I became the assistant director and eventually the acting director. They did a two year search for a director when the director and the assistant director left and brought in an interim because they did not find anybody that first year. I did not apply that first year. I did apply the second year, and I was not selected. They selected a public school superintendent who lasted three years and then left.

**Not being hired as Smith's Director – A Difficult Time**

What happened was that in December of '80 they chose the new head. I had applied that year and was one of the finalists. They made the decision in December, and I was told that I would not be offered a position to come back. Here we have four kids; two of them were sixth graders at Smith. This was a decision by the president of the college. She was the one who made the final decision. And I was fairly devastated because I really thought I had laid ground work, proven myself, and felt I had a fair amount of support. They weren't really looking for an educator. They were looking for somebody who could make the program economically more solvent than it had been and more stable.

And on a rational level I can understand that but from an emotional level I had been there for 11 or 12 years and really loved the place, was excited about it, saw my future there. We had a home with four kids. Pat was teaching at a local community high school. Our lives seemed to be moving ahead in a way that was promising. So when there was no position, it was a little frightening. And I immediately began to search more for college teaching positions and some administrative positions. I was not looking at independent schools. I was looking more at public superintendencies and in the not too distant radius because my family was there. Pat's family was in Boston, and we didn't want to go too far away with the kids. I had a few interesting things come up but nothing that was really going anywhere when the Hanahauʻoli [opportunity] came by the desk.

I did a number of phone interviews, then we got invited out [to Hawaiʻi] for a final interview. So we came out here, went back to the mainland, were offered the position, and then we moved here in June of '82. But that year from '81 into '82, I was not working officially. I did some consulting with the school. I taught a couple of courses at the local colleges, but I was an itinerant worker. However, by June of '81 I had agreed to come here [Hanahauʻoli] in '82. So we knew we had something to come to.

It was a little scary. Our thought was we would come here and try it out and spend at least five years. Then it got better and we thought we might stay, but we just didn't know what that was going to look like long-term and whether we could afford to even be here over the long haul.

That in-between year was one of just getting ready to come. The hardest part was from January of '81 when the decision had been made until June of '81 because I had to finish out the year as the acting director of that school [knowing I hadn't been selected as

the permanent director]. I had to introduce the new head to the community; that was my job. And, the president of the college, very glibly in something she wrote said, “We’re really supportive of Bob Peters moving on to a new career.” I’m thinking, “Pardon me!” I didn’t have a job at that point.

**Smith Provided Good Administrative Experience**

Working at Smith in the administrative positions was good for two reasons. I saw things I really wanted to do, and I saw things that I said I would never do. I was watching the other administrators and probably it was more these are things I want to do than not.

There also was a year, the year they had not chosen the new head but the old head had left, and I was the assistant director while they were doing that first year of the search. The person who came to be the interim director was a woman named Mary Elliot who was at the Shady Hill School in Cambridge.

They [Smith] invited her to spend that year as the interim director while they began the first year of the search. She was a great person to learn from, and that’s when I was the assistant director. She helped me to understand the independent school system in a way that I would not have been able to get from Barbara and Kent because they weren’t really independent school people in the sense of the tradition of independent schools, whereas Mary had gone to independent schools. She had gone to a private college. She’d been part of the independent school world her entire life, and had been on committees for NAIS [National Association of Independent Schools]. So I got really inside the independent school world from her, and I think that was really helpful to get an understanding of it.

And I saw a different way of leading than Barbara and Kent had led. So that was interesting to me, too. She [Mary] was much more – directive isn't the right word but there was a level of, "I'll listen to you, but I'm going to be the decision maker and we're going to move forward" in a different way than Kent and Barbara had been. Kent and Barbara had more of a collegial style and sometimes surprised people when they made decisions. I think it was a good thing on one level but at times it may have interfered with people really understanding where their decisions were coming from, whereas with Mary there was a much clearer definition of the decision making role. Mary was very savvy. She was the right kind of political and knew very well how to clearly express something that was not very positive in a way that other people could hear. So I brought a combination I think of those two things with me, not always successful at either one but having at least witnessed both.

## The Hanahau‘oli Years

### Hanahau‘oli Searching for a Head of School

I’m very glad now that it all worked out the way it did. My last year there [at Smith] was ‘80 - ‘81 because he [the newly appointed Director] wanted to bring in his own assistant director. So I was out of a job. And Hanahau‘oli was doing a search at that point. They did a national search. And I was home working one day and the information bulletin came across the desk of my secretary and she called me and she said, “I put something in your mailbox that you ought to look at. I think it’s a school you ought to consider applying to.” And that’s how it all began. It was serendipitous. What made that happen? That secretary saw it, and she might have just tossed it away. She actually read it and said, “This school sounds like a place you would enjoy being at.” And I thought, “What have I got to lose? Nothing.”

### An Unlikely Move to Hawai‘i – Taking a Risk

It’s pretty incredible when I think about it. It’s even more striking to me because of how narrow the extension of my life had been. I had never moved more than 30 miles. And in fact I’d only been on an airplane once before I came here for the interviews. I don’t know what else to call it whether it’s a naïveté kind of thing or a youngness, but I don’t think I was ever as streetwise as a lot of people my age as I was going through college. I wasn’t as experienced in any way. I don’t know if sheltered is the right word. It may be. But there was also a piece and I’d love to know more where this came from that I was willing to try things even though they might not have been within the experience of the people I associated with or was brought up by.

So that had to come from my mother and father. I didn't know where else it could have come from. When I think of my parents building their own house, I'm amazed. My father had a friend who was a carpenter and the two of them, along with my mother as well, built a house from the ground up. The only thing they didn't do was the plumbing and the electricity. There's something about people who are willing to do that and serve as your models and they did it with not much money behind them, but they were determined to make it work. They wanted better living conditions for us and our family. It took a long time and a lot of hard work, but they made it happen. So I can't help but think from a modeling point of view that there is something there. And maybe by the two of them just giving me enough free reign to trust me gave me the confidence to try out some of these things.

**Transitioning to Hawai'i – A Real Jolt**

The two younger boys Josh and Ben were really excited about coming [to Hawai'i] and they came with me first because Pat still had a couple weeks to finish up teaching. Chris and Jay, the twins, absolutely did not want to come. I think they were 11 at the time. They just finished sixth grade and they were leaving their friends, and we thought that would be a good time because they were going to be changing schools no matter what. We didn't judge how huge a change that was going to be for them, and in the beginning it was really difficult. It was just a real jolt because everything was so different. For a while when we first came they didn't want to be way up on the top of the ridges because all you could see was ocean. But it did not take them long. Within about three months one of the twins - I think it was Jay - asked me, "How long is your contract

for?" and I thought uh-oh. I said, "It's for three years and then we'll see what happens." And he said, "Well, we've decided you better do a good job because we want to stay."

**Transitioning to Hawai'i – Financial Struggles and Moving Four times in First Year**

Probably the biggest issue though for us was financial. And that was a little bit of a cloud that hung over us just because we had sticker shock seeing the price of houses, and we were having trouble selling our own home. So that was a bit of a challenge. We thought it would be a great adventure for our kids and we kind of approached it from a "We'll do this for at least five years and see what happens."

One of the things that had happened was that Pat couldn't find a job. Pat had been a German teacher, and the number of German positions on the island diminished by almost half between the time we accepted the position and the time we moved. Schools started getting rid of German, and we had assumed that Pat would come and be able to find a teaching position.

And there were no jobs available, and so coming out here under the assumption that we would both have positions and then suddenly finding a brick wall about the availability of positions really made the financial situation that much more challenging for us. Looking for housing was really, really difficult. And while we had an agreement with the school to support us with a down payment loan, we realized that we were not going to be able to buy a house that we could all fit in that was close enough to town to make it an easy transition for us. We did not buy this [our current] house until the end of that first year. This house was the fourth place we moved to in that first year.

When this house [our current house] was on the market, we looked at it just on a fluke. We had a wonderful realtor who really, really worked hard for us and she had had

some connection to the school. And we were driving by, I think we were looking at a house over on Apo, and we're coming back this way with her and she said, "You know, you should take a look at this house on the corner." She told us what the price was and we said, "There's no way we can even consider that." She said, "Let's go take a look at it." So we looked at the house and we said, "Boy, this would be an ideal location." And I went back to the board and said, "We have found a house. It would be perfect. We're tired of looking. We're tired of moving. Can we consider another arrangement?" So they agreed to purchase the house with us which was what allowed us to be able to buy this house with the idea that over 12 years we would buy out the mortgage from the school.

This was '83 the height of mortgage rates. The only way a joint ownership could be approved was through an ARM [Adjustable Rate Mortgage] and so we had an interest rate of like 14% or 15%, but we did it. We bought the house. We finally settled in. That was probably the biggest personal challenge along with Pat not being able to find a job that first year. But it was a little scary for a while there.

I'm not sure how we survived that. I guess the other thing I brought with me was a lot of optimism that this was going to work out and the willingness to say, "Okay, we made this choice, and we've got to make it work for us." But having moved a family of six at least four times was almost beyond belief!

**Values Brought to Hanahau'oli**

I think one of the primary ones [values brought to Hanahau'oli] was multiculturalism. We talked about that fairly early on, just the beginning awareness of when I got into college and being with that group of people I was with as an undergraduate and then through graduate school. And then once I really began teaching

and worked on my doctorate, I think I really had an appreciation for cultural diversity and for the independent individual but within the context of social responsibility as a community member.

**Initial Struggles – Breadth of Job**

In a small school, the head of school has to be much more skilled in a variety of areas than a head of a larger school. The demands are incredible. The breadth of the job of head of school didn't allow much time to focus on curriculum. The elements of the small school were truly all there. The head of school did admissions, physical plant, finance, board work, and development work. There was nobody to do any of those other things. There was a part time development person but that sort of was finishing and had more to do with their very first capital campaign that they had done.

I walked into a situation where there was way too much to do for any one person and do it well. I don't think it was anybody's fault. It was a lean mom and pop kind of operation and it was the way that the school had functioned for years. The head of the board had taken out her checkbook and written the difference between the bills and what the revenue was going to be for the year. So there was a lot that needed to be accomplished, and I was walking into a situation much more naïve about headship than probably most people do because being at Smith was a very different kind of experience.

I think I had some basic leadership talent. I had led a faculty. I had worked on curriculum, so I knew how to do those pieces and I could tell the story of the school but to be out there raising money was going to be a whole new thing.

**Initial Struggles – Not the Choice of all the Board**

I also knew pretty early on that I hadn't been the choice of all the board members. What I didn't know, and I learned toward the end of the first year was there had been an in-house candidate who was not selected. So that made some of the faculty not as happy. This person who was not selected had left the school.

One of the most wonderful things that's happened, is about three years ago at the memorial service for one of the faculty members. This person who had not been selected came up to me and said, "I need to tell you they made the right decision you know." So things do come around after a while.

**Initial Struggles – Working with a Board of Trustees**

Working with a board [of trustees] was probably one of the most challenging pieces because I don't think I understood the role the head of school as the leader of the board in partnership with the board chair. I think I saw the head's role as being much more maybe acquiescent to the board's direction than really is that relationship over time. So I had to learn that.

I think most of the board was reasonably supportive of our being here and wanted to make it work. However, there were board members who had supported the in-house candidate who were not as supportive and maybe also wondered about an east coast person coming here [to Hawai'i] with whatever new ideas. I could never figure out what they thought, but they never looked happy. There were not a lot of them, just a couple. But they were some loud voices on the board.

I also walked into a situation where I don't think I had any idea it was going to be quite as challenging as it was. They were building a whole new wing of the school that I

had not been part of the planning for, and I was trying to keep that on track at a time where I didn't really know what was going on.

**Initial Struggles – Lack of Confidence / Not Asking for Help**

This was a time when boards would come and ask what kind of help do you need but they didn't provide a supportive environment. And while there were [other school] heads here that were supportive like Joe Pynchon and Rod McPhee, they were distant and I didn't know to go to them and say, "I need some real advice." And so I think that's something that was lacking in my beginning. I might've been able to confide more in the board than I did but I'm not so sure, and I wasn't confident enough to do that. I assumed as I think most people do when you take over a headship that you're supposed to know how to solve problems and you're supposed to deal with problems, and it took me some time to realize that you can use the board to support you.

**Initial Struggles – Faculty Issues**

The faculty issues and the personnel issues that came about had a lot more to do with the curriculum changes, I think, than they did in dealing with me personally. That related to teachers who were very happy with what they were doing. They thought what they did was really wonderful, and I was challenging them to say, "What are kids really learning here?" I don't think I did it in any kind of a confrontational way. That's just not my style. It also became clear that there were not too many choices. The train was leaving the station and going in a particular direction, and people needed to get on-board. That was going to mean that some questioning was going to go on and some change of program was going to occur so that no longer was it going to be acceptable for teachers to say, "We do this because I'm interested in it" or "I like to do this" or "Kids find this fun."

Those were not going to be accepted explanations for doing it. You had to be able to justify what kids were learning and why they were learning it. So that was kind of the context that I walked into. It took me probably three years to begin the shift.

**Initial Challenge – Curriculum**

I think the biggest initial challenge was getting that curriculum in place so that it was in my view substantive enough and sufficiently aligned with progressive education. That took some real work, because that was also a cultural shift. And looking beyond the, "this is fun so we're going to do it notion" to really getting into what's important for kids to be learning, and how do you justify what you're doing in the classroom. And then once you know what's important, you have to determine what you need to do to make that happen. So that, plus the focus on the learning and not the teaching, was challenging and was a lot of work in the beginning.

**Not Making Payroll**

This was one of the most embarrassing things that I've ever had to do. It occurred during my first year at Hanahau'oli. The person who was the bookkeeper/secretary/health person handled all the finances, and I superintended them and did the budgeting and that sort of thing. So she went off on a vacation to Africa in December [of Dr. Peter's first year] and left me the instructions to how you get payroll done. The Bank of Hawai'i did payroll for us. She was gone and payroll was coming up for the end of the month so I submitted all the information for the December 30th payroll, and I got a call from the bank saying, "You can't cover this, you don't have enough money in your account." I said, "What?" They said, "You don't have enough money in your account." I said, "How can that be?" The person said, "I don't know. You don't have enough money." I didn't

know what to do. I went home and said to my wife Pat, “What do you think I should do?” She said, “Well, you better call the board president who worked for the Bank of Hawai‘i.” So I called the board president and I said, “Look, this is what happened, and I couldn’t call the other person because she is in Africa somewhere.” And he said, “Don’t worry.” He was really good. He said, “I’ll talk to the bank, and we’ll cover the payroll.” When she came back I said, “How did this happen and is it going to continue to happen?” And she said, “No, it happens periodically because we only bill for tuition once a year then we wait for the money to come in.” And she said, “Usually in December more money comes in but it just obviously hadn’t come in yet.” I thought well that’s going to change pretty quickly. So when I say mom and pop operation where you trusted everybody, you get the picture.

**Exciting First Year Despite the Challenges**

I think that first year was still really exciting. There was so much to learn. Going on learning trips with classes and just finding out about Hawai‘i , going up to the Lyon Arboretum and being introduced to shampoo ginger. Things like that were all very different and interesting. So I think there was enough pull still for me that I thought, “Yeah, there’s some real challenges to overcome but there were so many opportunities here and there’s so much that’s exiting about it that despite the challenges, I’m not disappointed we made the decision.”

**First Order of Business – School Culture and Curriculum**

I had begun working on the curriculum that very first year actually. And probably within the next two to three years we had redesigned the whole curriculum but that’s also when I was getting pushback from some people and realizing that the status of keeping

some of them [the teachers] was going to impede the progress that we wanted to make. By that time, we had really begun to ask ourselves, "What did we want the school to look like?" And that was the major change that I was seeking at that point well before I sought to change the administrative structure. I went so far I recall as going bit by bit with the faculty and looking at what do we want classrooms to look like? What did we want the playground to look like? What do we want kids moving around the campus to look like? What do we want the assemblies to look like and how do we get there? I did this so that we got on the same page. And a lot of what we said we were doing was not really what appeared to me to be happening. And there were behaviors that I just couldn't approve of, and we weren't following through with some things that we said we believed in. So it was I think in a way trying to say we have the potential for a culture here that's really strong, but we have to be clear on what that culture is going to look like in terms of how we relate to each other, how we relate to kids, how we relate to parents that then has a curriculum foundation that supports the cultural nature of what we're doing.

**Substantial Pay Raise - Provided Confidence to Lead the Board**

One of the things the board did was recognize that the salary I was getting paid was probably going to be a major factor in us not being able to stay long-term. I had a wonderful board member who chaired the finance committee and by that time I had been able to begin to create an administrative structure that was different. So I had hired a business officer who was in charge of physical plant and in charge of the finance portion of budgeting and that sort of thing.

As we were beginning the budgeting that year, we're looking at salary and she said, "I'm going to do a comparative study of salaries for your position." Then she went off and did it on her own. She was pretty akamai and she came back and said, "We have to go to the board" because she knew my family was struggling at that point. And I said, "I just feel really funny about that." She said, "Would you allow me to talk to the board treasurer?" And I said, "Okay." So she went to the board treasurer who then came to me and said, "We don't want you to leave. What can we do to make you stay?" So I said, "I don't know how much this school can afford." They said, "Stop thinking that way. You need to start thinking about what can the school not afford if you leave?" We had used up all our savings. Pat still wasn't teaching. She had tried real estate, but that didn't work, so we were really struggling. And I think Josh was probably about to go off to Punahou so we were about to pick up a third tuition.

*Figure 3.4.* Dr. Robert Peters sharing birthday books with Hanahau'oli students at morning flag in 1984. (Robert Peters)

So they went back to the board and significantly increased my salary in that time period. That gave us so much freedom to breathe. I think it also gave me confidence. It was a big factor in saying, "Okay, if the board feels secure enough that they're willing to invest [in me], then I'm going to feel secure enough to go back to them and say, 'These are some of the things we need to really work on and to begin to push the board toward helping me.'"

**Learning to Manage the Board**

Between the third and fifth year, I began to see real changes in the school. I think that's probably pretty typical. It takes three to five years to make an impact. During that time, I had begun to learn about how to work with a board. I had started really going to NAIS things and following the headship track, and learning more about it. I knew more heads, so I was being educated in the process as well.

And I was learning that the head's role was not to follow the board but to manage the board and to help the board realize the mission by providing a vision on where the school needed to go and honestly sharing with them where I saw the strengths and weaknesses. We began to do serious long range planning during that time period as well. The board committees became stronger and the board committee structure began to grow.

The board committees had charters and they had work plans and they had schedules and ways of reporting to the board. So we were all growing together during that process. And that portably took 10 to 15 years to get to a place where it was really strong. I think the board needed to learn its role as well, and HAIS [Hawaiʻi Association of Independent Schools] became stronger during that time period, too, so there were more board education opportunities.

**Appreciating the Importance of the Board Chair / Head of School Relationship**

I don't think I was initially consulted, but certainly in the past 15 years and probably even more than that, I've been consulted about who should be the board chair. I really do think that our board understood that it's got to be a working relationship or you can't go anywhere. And if you think about the number of projects we've had and the

amount of money we've raised over the past 15 years and the changes that were made, you understand that there had to be a good relationship between the board chair and me.

I've had board chairs who I met with weekly - sometimes at their request and sometimes at my request. I've had board chairs that I saw once a month. When David McClain was board chair, he was also president of the University of Hawai‘i, so I knew that was going to be a challenging time. It was a succession thing. It was his turn, and we made it work. I also know that it's my job to call the board chair and say, "We need to do this." It's my job to write the letter for the board chair and say, "Sign this." And I have always felt I could go to my board chairs with something that I was worried about - not always but in recent years - that "this could blow up, just know, be ready. This is what's happening." And I think board chairs have been comfortable coming to me. I really am proud of the fact that if the board hears a complaint from anybody they tend to redirect them, so they really do get that role.

**Convincing the Board to Expand the Administrative/Organizational Structure**

And I felt comfortable enough to be able to go to the board and say, "in order for me to do my job, I need more administrative support. I'll keep this as lean as we can, but I can't be doing all these pieces and do any of them well. If you really want to see the school change, I've got to have a structure that's going to be workable." And I think it was at the end of that third year if I remember correctly when I finally went back to the board and one of the board's member said to me, "You tell us what you want, and we'll give you enough rope to hang yourself or to do it." I said, "Okay."

I designed a structure that was going to allow a business function and a physical plant function, eventually an admissions function, and eventually a development

function, and we would grow into those functions. In the meantime, I would still kind of navigate them but over time we would get to that place so that the organizational structure would never feel too top heavy. But that was always a worry of the board that parents would see too much money going to the administrative structure and not enough tuition money going into the program and paying for the program.

I think that was a layover from the time when it was so lean. You're accustomed to have only a couple people do everything and that was what they had grown up with. So there was a real responsibility to educate them that if you're going to be a school that was sustainable and that really had extra value or value added, you had to have an organizational structure that could support the kind of leadership that could move the school ahead or it wasn't going to work. I had to learn that. Then I had to educate them about that. And they were willing to be a part of that.

**Building an Administrative Team**

I first hired a business officer who only remained about a year-and-a-half, before moving back to the mainland for her husband's position. Then I hired the next person who did much "learning on the job" as our budget situation did not allow hiring people with extensive experience. She grew into the position with some guidance from me but that was challenging because my experience with finance and plant issues was limited. Shortly after her hire, the school's first full-time development director joined the staff. She was and continues to be a very skilled fund raiser in our community, and I wished that I never let her get away. Finally, a part-time admissions director was hired. I debated over time the need to make it a full-time position but at half-time it made a huge difference in how my time was spent.

Additional positions have been added over the years to support the individual departments, most of them part-time. The development office has two part-time people which became necessary as we became more sophisticated. The business office has one full-time person, and we also have a physical plant manager which we didn't have before.

***Interviewer: You never had any pushback on your ideas for expanding the program and administrative capacity?***

I was able to make enough of the case and build it over time that it was seen as reasonable particularly because they wanted to move more into the fundraising area. And there was no way we were going to be able to do fund development without freeing up some time and really do it seriously. I think the board began to realize those things and the demands that were on my time.

They also saw value in allowing me to be more active in the community for the school which I couldn't do either with all of those pieces. So I think it all just evolved in a way that made sense, and I used the committee structure to help defend the position, and I would bring issues to the committees and say, "Help me think about this. This is where we're having trouble."

**Push to Continually Improve**

We did our first accreditation in 1990, and I did that very purposefully with the idea that I wanted us to look at ourselves. And there has always been a back of my mind fear that the school could revert to a perception of itself that I thought I might have had when I first came, and that is that it's a very precious place. It's too wonderful to need to get better. It has too many good things. Kids are happy there. Parents are happy there. It does fun things, and it's a happy place.

So I think there is a danger that it can become self-satisfying particularly as you're sought after. And we have been a school that's been sought after. So having that in the back of my mind plus I'm an achiever obviously, and that's going to drive it. I probably made the teachers, the faculty into achievers of certain types too over time. But that first accreditation process was important. Part of it was that it was going to force us to get in a cycle of looking at ourselves periodically and saying, "How can we do better than what we think we're doing?" So there was a bit of a conscious, "Let's try this out and see how it makes us better." And I think that began to get the board in the mindset of it's not enough to stay good but there's a hill we need to keep climbing.

**Plans to Expand the School**

We reached a point where within that first ten years that I really thought the school was not so much too small but confining for kids in ways. And the confinement had to do with the fact that they traveled in one group throughout their years there and spent eight years together which for some kids was not productive and really they dug holes for themselves. And kids found themselves in roles that never changed. So I began to think about what is it that we could do that would allow kids opportunities to experiment and explore? And I went to the board at one point in the late '80s early '90s, identified these issues, and said, "I want to take some time to come to you with a plan about how do we help kids not get stuck in roles? How do we give them opportunities to try out new things? And really promote this individualism we say we're all about?" So I took three or four days off and had some ideas that I wanted to look at, did some research, and came back to them within a month with a plan of expanding the school to two classes per grade level, except for the junior kindergarten which we would start with

one. This was also the point when we were expanding at kindergarten from 20 to 25 with 250 applicants.

We did a whole series of studies about what would have to happen to the campus. We did long range planning, strategic planning, and financial planning. We did some preliminary conceptual planning for campus design in order to determine how we could expand classes on the campus and came out the other end with a notion of this is way too expensive. We can't afford to do it. In order to do it, it would be way too disruptive. Also, we couldn't really achieve what we wanted. But the goals were worth achieving. Then the task was to take those goals and come back with a different plan.

**Moving to Multiage – New Buildings were Needed**

The board said to me, "See if you can come up with a plan that achieves these objectives differently." I had been waiting since I got there to do something with multiage. I had come from a school where it was done. I thought from a philosophical point of view it was the right thing to do. It would allow teachers to team which our faculty wanted to do, and it really would allow kids a greater flexibility.

I tried to set the stage for multiage by asking the board, faculty and eventually parents to complete a quiz checking off those items that characterized Hanahau'oli's unique features. The items included characteristics of graded and multiage schools. The only item identified that was not the same as a multiage school was the school's organization; the school was organized in a single graded structure and did not combine age/grade levels. I, then, asked each group to examine our mission closely to determine if our single, graded structure really suited what we believed about individual attention and child development as it relates to readiness. We recognized that our mission

supported a multiage organization and that we already had much in place that made us function as if we already were a school structured that way.

So we went about the study of should we be a multiage school because we think it will achieve the goals we wanted and it might make us more philosophically true to what we believe about the way kids learn and the readiness issue. We [the ad hoc committee] studied that for about 2½ years. Simultaneously one of our buildings was infested with live termites and we knew we were going to have to do something about this building. So it was reaching the point where we had to make some decisions about moving forward and the ad hoc committee made a proposal to the education committee which then went to the board; the board said, "Let's go for it." We've been educating parents all along. We were going to do this educating the faculty as well. We were reading things together. We had done the research, the community was ready to move forward and I did say to them, "You know we'll probably lose some families over this." But we had planned how to evolve over a three year period. We would not do it as a whole school. We had figured out what kind of time teachers would need to be supported. It came as a bonus from the previous accreditation because teachers had asked for ways to team at that time. So there

*Figure 3.5.* Dr. Robert Peters celebrating his 50th birthday at Hanahau'oli School in 1992. (Robert Peters)

were a lot of things in its favor. It was going to be a lot of work, but it did mean that we could look at designing a classroom to support the multiage function as we transitioned to multiage because we were going to have to replace the building anyway.

**Capital Campaign – Three Phases**

That first project I think was like 1.6 million if I remember correctly and that was to build a new building for the new [grade] two/three [program]. We built the building in 2000. So we continued to raise money, much of it from foundations and then from our own community, and we were able to raise close to two million and did the second phase which started in 2003 which was going to be the junior kindergarten. We had ideas about building an admin building next but we didn't know quite how far we were going to be able to go with that because we didn't know if we could get anybody to support it.

So we did the second building, the JK, and again we exceeded the [fundraising] goal there. I think we surprised ourselves with how much money we raised. And then we reached the point after that [the junior kindergarten] building where we realized that the existing fourth and fifth grade rooms really weren't working, and we knew we wanted a new administrative building because the current one wasn't big enough. Knowing that we could not go out and raise funds for an admin building, I said we could probably put an admin building on top of a classroom, and we really needed the classroom. So that was the third phase of the campaign. That was about six million. We raised about 6½ million for that one. And again that surprised us. We were able to raise that much money given our population is so small. I mean our mailing list is only 3,000 and that includes all sorts of people. But again foundations came through tremendously.

**Fundraising – Discovering what is Important to the Donor**

I had one of those wonderful experiences with the admin building with one of our major donors. Two of us had gone to lunch with him and his wife and we were sitting there talking about fundraising, and I was going in to ask for 500,000. That was the biggest gift I had ever asked for and I thought this is going to be a little tight. I don't know what it's going to be like. And he kept talking about you know, "It's really important when you ask a donor not to insult them. You want to ask them for something that's a reach for them." He had been on the UH foundation and these were things he had learned as a donor. So we had this menu of options with a naming option and those things. So I'm going over those and I said, "I really would like you to come in at this amount" and I pointed to the 750,000. "This would really help us. These would be the benefits from it. It would be the lead gift and would really get us off the ground." And so he said, "Certainly, I'm happy to do that." Actually I left and emailed the other board member who was there with me and said, "Tell me, did I hear this right? This is what I heard." She said, "Yeah, that's what she heard." This was on a Friday afternoon. I come back to school Monday morning and there's a phone call on my voicemail from him. I call him and he said, "You know, I've changed my mind" and my heart sank. He said, "I think that's not enough. I need to give you a million." I said, "Boy, that would be wonderful." He [has since] said, "One of the main reasons I first started giving to Hanahau'oli and it's what made me up my gift [from $750,000 to 1 million] is I so believe in what the school does for its graduates." And he said, "You convinced me the first time you gave me a tour when we walked in and out of classrooms and you turned the lights off after we left that you weren't going to waste my money."

And I thought, you never know, right? You know when they say you have to get inside what's important to the donor, boy that was a huge lesson in this case.

**Fundraising – Ask and People will Give**

When I was planning to retire, we figured that that was a good time to raise money for the endowment. The committee and the board looked at what we really wanted to achieve which was to double the amount of the endowment which was around 4 million. We were looking at it very much from the point of view of trying to give some flexibility should some property arise. But more importantly to add to the financial aid so we could better meet the needs of current families and not lose the middle class. That was really the primary thing. So we figured out how much money we needed to raise in order to be able to do that better.

The committee left to go to the board retreat saying let's go for doubling the endowment. However, we couldn't get the board to buy that. They said, "It's too much money." They wanted it to be successful so we backed down to two million. They said, "Okay, we'll do that." They figured we could do two. The challenge was going to be that we couldn't go to foundations anymore; so, we really had to reach our own people mostly. We hit 1 million with the board before we even announced it. That was a surprise.

By the time we announced, we had changed the goal twice. We went from to 2 to 2½ to 3½, and when we hit the 3½ we were blown away. It was euphemistically called the "Bob is bait Campaign" and that obviously had an appeal, but I also think we made a pretty good case for what we did and about how we've got all these things in place. We said, "Let's help a new head not have to worry about fund raising too much in the near

future and create some more sustainability." I don't think we sold our souls in any of this process. But we have raised more than we ever thought which also tells me that, "If you ask, people will give."

**Financial Aid – A Push to Increase Diversity**

***Interviewer: What has Hanahau'oli done to increase its ability to give financial aid and what is the goal in terms of diversity of the student body?***

We have a diversity vision and it is to provide socioeconomic diversity as one of the high goals which, right now, is focused on a middle class group. We've never been a school that's done outreach to bring in a lot of scholarship, financial aid type members of the community. And that could change in the future but that's been partially my push as I've talked to the board over the years. I've always believed in financial aid, and I think there's richness in kids being able to have a broad spectrum of people with whom to interact. At the same time I also believed that you have to be sensitive to the people you invite into your school that they can find their comfort level in being a member of that community. And if we were a big school, I would approach this differently because I think big schools can have enough financial aid to provide a broad enough campus community that people can probably find the socioeconomic comfort level and not feel not a part of it.

I think there's also an obligation particularly at secondary schools because it's less apt to happen at the elementary level to ensure that those kids can participate fully. So you support money for proms. You support money for class rings, whatever it may be. We don't have quite that same thing. Although, we do, for example, have things like a camping experience, the Big Island trip, and we will offer financial aid for that sort of thing.

But from the very beginning, the school has had financial aid and it has been important. It is I think an essential piece of a progressive school that you have social diversity. You're supposed to reflect the community that you're a part of as much as you can, although there are limitations to that. You don't want an artificial reflection either.

We have tried to ensure that we could support families sufficiently so that once we admitted them, they could stay. It's challenging because you know, once you've admitted somebody, expenses are probably going to increase during their eight years. They're not going to totally decrease. And so our goal has always been not to have anybody leave for financial reasons. We haven't been totally successful at doing that. And at the same time to take a look at how do we ensure that there is sufficient diversity so that people feel comfortable within that community.

We don't use any tuition income for financial aid. All of our financial aid comes from fundraising or endowment scholarship funds. So that means that we've got to be out there raising money every year in order to have an increase. And our fundraiser annually is shared by the board and the parent association. Half the proceeds are the board's. That money goes strictly for financial aid and then we do the typical grant route that everybody does and additional fundraising to the annual fund. And then a percentage of the endowment that is set aside for scholarship aid supports financial aid.

# Reflection

## Lessons Learned – Family First

Over the first two or three years at Hanahauʻoli, I began to recognize the necessity to understand as the person who supervises others, the impact a personal life can have that has to be accounted for in some way within the professional domain. One of the biggest learnings I think for me in those early stages was to recognize that you had to provide opportunities for people to address the needs of their families as their top priority. So that if a child were sick, it was better for a teacher to stay home with that sick child than it was to come to school.

I think that was learning a bit more about gender than maybe I had recognized before. It's a recognition of something that I think allows you to build up social capital not consciously but just does. So that when you call on people to extend themselves, they recognize that extension is not asking them to do something that is out of line with what you want because you've recognized their needs at other times.

## Defining Moment – Realizing that the Head must manage the board

One defining moment for me was when I first asserted myself with one of my board presidents in a way that I don't think I had done before in terms of primarily saying, "This is not a father-child relationship. This is a supportive relationship where, yes, you are my boss but we need to figure out how to do this together." I think that was an awakening for that person but it also was a stepping forward on my part that became the point at which I thought, "This is my job to manage this board and to work with the board chair in a different way." I had been much more subservient to the board chairs and probably to the board in general not really grasping yet the need to assert myself at

certain times and to really push for certain types of things. This was within the first five years.

**Biggest Achievement in the Early Years - Changing the Culture**

I personally see my biggest achievement in those early years as creating a culture in the school where teachers stopped focusing on who they were and what they did and began to focus on how kids learn and how we can make that happen more so that the conversation shifted from what's wrong with this kid to what can we do to help this kid be better.

**Patient Persuasion**

I think I'm a person who is relatively savvy about interpreting other people, being able to read a group, being able to watch how people interact. And sitting back and trying to figure out how do you take somebody to a place where it seems is a good place to go without driving them in that particular direction. But I think my observational skills have always been particularly strong in that sense, and I don't jump in right away necessarily. I don't think my voice is all that loud, but I do try to sense who the people are in a group and I think I'm pretty good at reading people.

**Good Leadership Defined**

I think in my view, a good leader is somebody who has a fairly clear vision of not only the mission's implementation but some sense of where the school or the institution needs to go in the future and then sees his or her role as providing the resources to make that happen whatever that may be. Help people to think about how they perform their roles to meet that vision and that mission and to provide the support that's necessary to get there. It may be teaching people how to do things. It may be sending them for

professional opportunities. It may be providing them with facilities or even in our case instructional materials that make it happen.

That's really the leader's role. You're providing a sense of direction. That direction may come from the board in that they may be laying the foundation, but you're taking that foundation and saying, "Okay, this is what's going to happen" and then you're making sure that whatever is necessary to get to that place is provided to those who have to implement whatever the plans are to achieve that outcome.

**Developing Own Leadership – Learning How to Tell the School's Story**

***Interviewer: What helped you develop your own leadership over the years?***

I think there's no doubt that [my leadership was developed] by becoming involved with NAIS and going to conferences and pursuing leadership tracks. Defining goals annually with the board was a really important piece of this whole process as well and then asking the board to support the growth that I was trying to achieve during that time. I read a lot about leadership. I never took a course on leadership per se. The Klingenstein Fellowship was another one that was really critical because you had to step out of your leadership role and take a look at it. It was just a wonderful opportunity to go away and talk about leadership and problem solving and approaches with other people.

Watching new people come into schools was also fascinating to me and HAIS over the years became much more of a professional development organization for heads of schools. There was a period when the heads and trustees meetings and the heads' retreats really focused on a lot of shared issues. That was leadership from an administrative point of view within the independent school structure. I used those organizations [NAIS and HAIS] to support it.

I also had a lot of opportunities for leadership, whether it was on the HAIS board and serving as president for two terms, through the elementary school center, or through NAIS and being on those boards. So I got to be with a lot of other leaders and there is a lot of learning that I have always done by observing others. I got to watch people in executive director's positions. I watched Peter Relic [NAIS President from 1991 to 2001] while I was on the board of NAIS.

I think putting yourself in the position of constantly being a learner is important. It models for the rest of the faculty that you want to learn. Also, going with them to conferences and presenting with them at certain times is important. It really allows you to exert a different type of leadership that's more collegially related.

***Interviewer: How has your leadership changed over the years?***

I think that the basic change is I don't think in the beginning that I probably was a leader in any true sense. I was an administrator, and I was an educator, and I had to learn how those two things came together. I was much less an administrator than an educator and so I've really learned the administrative side of things and got a sense of where my strengths are and what people I needed around me to be able to support them. But I suspect the biggest difference is that I've learned how to tell the school's story well enough that in this community my leadership for the school is recognized and validated through fund development.

***Interviewer: Do you think that part of the head of school's responsibility is to be a storyteller in that school?***

Yes. Absolutely! I think it's critical! If the head of school can't tell the story of the school and that's left in the hands of other people, then I don't think you can communicate the value added. And really be able to make the case that what you're doing

is worth somebody investing in whether it's tuition, whether it's fund raising, whether it's time to be on the board. If you're going to get board members on your board, you've got to be able to go out there and say, "This is a good place for you to be. This is what you're going to be out there promoting, and you want to be a part of this."

So yeah, I think I've always been able to tell the progressive story, but I learned how to tell the Hanahauʻoli story and perhaps even created some of the Hanahauʻoli story over time. That's an advantage you have when you're around for the long term.

**Institutional Leader vs. Instructional Leader**

I think that I am more of an instructional leader. That's where my expertise is, and it's also what I enjoy. I've had to learn how to do a lot of the other pieces, but I think what I've realized is in order to really move the instructional agenda forward I had to use the other elements of the institutional leadership to move that agenda. They don't work separately from each other. When that old term headmaster used to exist, that to me was head teacher. This may change in time. In fact, it is changing with the emphasis on more of a business model than we've had before, but my sense of a head of school is somebody who is the teacher of the teachers, the teacher of the community, and is also a learner with them. They're about the business of learning and maybe that's a

*Figure 3.6.* Dr. Robert Peters visits with a class of students at Hanahau'oli School in the mid 1990's. (Robert Peters)

luxury of being in a small school that you can play both those roles and you can assume them.

Would I have ever been the head of a large school? I don't know. I mean that's interesting to think about. We had talked for example a couple of times about bringing somebody in to be in charge of curriculum to release me, and I fought against that every time. It wasn't that people were looking to change the direction of the school but just to take some of the burden off, so I could focus more on the institutional piece at times. I never wanted that to happen, and I didn't think it would be healthy for the school. My foundational belief is that the head of school really needs to be an instructional leader. But I think there may be levels of instructional leadership and that you could do it within more of a business model as long as you had the purview of what good education was and you knew what was necessary to make that happen and that you saw yourself as an instructional leader providing the resources necessary to provide a quality program.

From my point of view personally, I like the teaching of the adults as much as I do the leading of the independent school. It's personally satisfying to me to take the faculty through faculty meetings and see different ways of thinking by the time we're finished. That's exciting, and I think it's probably what I did the most of over my years.

**Job Stress**

***Interviewer: What do you think has been the most stressful aspect of being a head of school?***

One is those times when you really debate, "Is this a teacher that should be kept? Is this a teacher I should let go? If I'm going to let them go, have I done enough evidence gathering to make that happen?" That's been one.

A second one is at times being the mediator when people weren't getting along within the structure, where there were administrators and teachers not getting along and trying to calm that down. Parents upset with teachers and trying to play the dual role of supporting the teacher and letting the parent know they've been heard. That's probably been the most stressful piece.

There were times when I felt stressed about going to the board. I always felt fairly comfortable, particularly with board chairs, being able to say, "I want you to know about this. Something may be coming down the road." But there were a couple of board members I was not always comfortable with particularly in the early years because I never felt I knew what they were thinking and wasn't always able to predict, "Were they supportive? Would they be happy to see me gone?" I had less concern going to the board as time went on.

**Risk Taking**

I think I'm comfortable with risk if I feel I've had enough time to think through it and plan it. I'm not the type of person who is going to do extreme sports of any sort. But the fact that we moved out here knowing no one to me is indicative that there's some risk taking involved. The moving to the multiage, that was clearly a risk. But again, it was set in order before it happened. So yeah, I think I'm willing to take risks, but they're calculated risks.

***Interviewer: Do you think the ability to be a risk taker is an important quality for a school head to have?***

Yeah. I think it is because I think there are certain times where you have to look at what's the future of the school. Schools in my view are basically conservative institutions to start out with because what you're doing is passing on a culture, so you

operate from a conservative base. But you live in a world that's changing. And so you've got to be willing to say, "If the world is going to change, I may have to risk moving the school in that direction if it's what I believe is best for the school, for the institution." I think there's a danger in getting caught up in pop culture education. That's why in my mind instructional leadership is such an important piece of good institutional leadership because then you're usually operating from some sound best practices and understanding learning practices and understanding a learning point of view. I think it is easy to jump on bandwagons.

I think if you're going to take risks, you've got to be sure that there are the right people on board with the risk and there is some definite solid basis for saying, "This is a good risk to take and worthwhile doing." But to come into leadership without some sense of being willing to take the risk, I suspect, diminishes your ability to lead. For example, if Hanahau'oli had indeed found that it could not sustain a sixth grade following all the admissions changes at other schools, I don't think I would've fought it until we were down to three or four students. We took the risk to stay the same but it was a calculated risk. We did not take the risk to add a middle school which I would love to have done because I couldn't justify, after researching it, that we had enough space, that we could provide the kind of program that we wanted to do without an exorbitant cost.

**Other Job Opportunities**

I don't know how many people even know this, but I was offered the vice presidency of the NAIS organization at one point and turned it down. I was approached by the head hunter because I'd been suggested by some of the staff members as somebody to pursue. I initially turned it down and they came back to me and asked,

"Would you reconsider?" So I did go through the process. The interview process was great. I saw some exciting opportunities to go and do it. The idea of living in DC was exciting. That had some appeal, not so much for Pat, however, but it did for me.

What happened in the course of that were two things. One, a contract got sent to me without a conversation which annoyed me. It was just assumed I would take the position if it were offered. I think that kind of framed a little bit of how I reacted in my own stubborn side. But the other piece of it was that the more I went through the process and talked about it, I realized the position was being redefined and it was going to be limited access to schools and it was going to be much more internal operational.

While there was a real need in my mind to see that place [the NAIS] become a unit - it was very much operating silos without a lot of good supervision - and while I saw some exciting possibilities of things I might do there, I didn't feel I wanted to be away from schools. And so I talked about it and said, "You know, with this redefinition of the position, I'm not as excited about it." Because what I realized is if we're going to be at NAIS, it's the president's job I would like to have because he gets to go and visit all the schools and that's much more appealing to me.

**Longevity – Due to Many Factors**

***Interviewer: What do you believe to be the main factors that have contributed to your longevity at Hanahau'oli? In other words, why have you stayed so long?***

I think there have been enough changes over time that my interest has remained piqued. If I hadn't seen the progress, I'm not sure I would have stayed as long. But the fact that every five to six or seven years there was some major initiative we were looking at, kept me interested, kept me excited, and was intellectually challenging.

The second piece was I really was encouraged by the board to spread my wings and become involved in things that I wanted to be involved in both nationally and locally. Whether it was serving on boards or the NAIS and HAIS involvement, they were very supportive of going out and going to conferences. I had asked them to really beef up the professional development for faculty so I could move faculty along. So there was no constraining of my interests. And I think they recognized that I needed that.

Teaching at UH for a while was really a good thing for me to do. It helped me to clarify my thinking even more so about what I believed in curriculum. Being involved in the educational community, being involved in the independent school community, and then reaching out to become involved in other nonprofits like the symphony gave me opportunities to expand my understanding, and to have some freedom. And that never was called into question. I always let the board know [open communication with the board] that I was considering it before I did those things, and their response was, "Go ahead as long as you think you can manage it."

The fact that the board was supportive of changing the administrative infrastructure to really let me focus on where I thought my talents resided was confidence enough to keep me going. Keeping a faculty all those years, and seeing it grow and change, and the desire to keep learning by faculty members was very motivating to continue to be the instructional leader of that [Hanahauʻoli] place. I really think it is a professional learning community, and I've seen it grow into that. I think I've helped to mold it into that. It's become the expectation of being part of that community. A lot of parent education opportunities also were a part of it.

Just living in Hawaiʻi is part of it. I mean why would you leave Hawaiʻi? And I think for somebody like me, the smallness of this island has expanded opportunities that probably I would not have had had I stayed in Massachusetts. It's been a very fertile place for me to grow professionally and the opportunities have been tremendous and I can only see that for some reason here, the opportunities were there and I took advantage of them as they came before me.

**Connecting with Broader Educational Community**

One of the things that people said to me before we came to Hawaiʻi was you are not going to find enough intellectual stimulation on that island. I did not find that to be true. And I think that has a lot to do also with the broader community of educators here that I've been able to interact with. So yes, the board made it possible for me to have those opportunities or at least encourage them, but there were also the people here who made the conversation a rich one for me. And the fact that I could extend that to be connected to the mainland was important. I think the NAIS board was a huge piece for me because that's when I really became connected to other school heads. I had had minimal connection but not a lot. That opened it up in many, many ways for me and allowed me to exert leadership in another setting.

**Advice for New School Heads Coming to Hawaiʻi**

Probably the biggest piece of advice is to listen and watch. I think coming here is different from other places and that it truly is more about relationships here than it is elsewhere and that one of the things that a new head needs to figure out is how to relate to the various groups that provide the stakeholders for their institution, and I think you learn that by listening and watching. I think a second piece would be as you're listening

and watching to develop and express respect for the diversity that you see within the community and to recognize it as having value in and of itself and then to look at how it impacts the institution.

I think, too, that coming in with the idea that you're going to change things and jumping into the change process too quickly may be a mistake. Change needs to be managed carefully and this may be more my style. I don't know if this is just coming to Hawai'i. It may apply to all independent schools, I'm not sure. I have a feeling that many heads come into the new headship with the idea that they are change agents, and I think you become a change agent. I don't think you arrive as a change agent. Figuring out how you manage change and persuade people to be on board with change, and getting your own board to support you with sufficient time to change an institution is key to really minimizing disruption and taking people along for the ride for a change process.

So figuring out what are the issues that can support change, what are the issues that are going to be challenging during change, and planning then how do you pave the way to minimize those challenges or to be ready for them and know how you're going to deal with them I think is critically important. And you've got to develop trust in the community. I mean you can't function without people trusting you. And I think sometimes that can be hard because people are suspicious and they want to know where you're coming from and you still have to prove your mettle one way or the other that you really know what you're talking about. I think it's a very complicated role and it may be in any type of leadership position, but I think schools as cultures are very different from businesses. And that when somebody comes into a culture, the community that's there wants to know that you have some respect for what the culture is and where it's come

from and that you're not going to try and move it to a place that the community isn't ready to move to. I suspect that's very hard for lots of people because you're with a board, you tell them how you're going to bring about change before you get hired. And I think boards need to – this is where boards can be more supportive – recognize the pace in which change needs to happen.

Now, obviously if you're walking into a place where things are falling apart, you may have to really make some changes very rapidly. One of the things that the new head at Hanahauʻoli and I have talked about was when she went to new heads [gathering at NAIS] she said she couldn't believe some of the situations that heads were walking into. There you may have a mandate for change before you come, but it also may be the kind of thing that people may not be as ready for change as the loudest voices share. Somebody needs to advise new heads. At the same time I think it is smart to make some things look different so it looks like you're a new person. Even if it's just moving the furniture around, you need to establish yourself too. So you can respect the past, but you have to find that delicate balance between saying, "Yeah, I'm the new leader here, and I'm bringing it all with me."

**Advice for Experienced Heads of School**

I think the basic advice would be for them to figure out what is it that keeps them sufficiently challenged, and to know whether or not staying in the setting you're in is the best way to continue. Obviously I see advantage to staying long-term in some place and the advantage I see in long-term is that you have an opportunity to build stability and to shape something in a way that you don't over a short period of time.

At the same time if you feel that you've reached the point where you're not being stimulated any longer by where the school's going to go and what it has to offer you intellectually as the head of school, I would question the value of staying unless you're going to just continue to move into the maintenance role. Is that enough? On the other hand, maybe it's really important to take some time to step back and look at, "Are we as strong as we can be? Do I want to take this place somewhere else? And do I have the wherewithal and the support to do it or is this a good time for me to move on to a different kind of challenge that's going to make me grow?" I guess the big question is, "Are you professionally growing in a satisfactory way and are you perceiving it as a job as opposed to a profession?" If it becomes a job, then I worry that you maybe overstayed your time.

**Ideal School Head**

I don't know that there's a one ideal. I think there are some characteristics that to me would define most heads, but I suspect individual institutions probably shape heads differently as well. From my point of view, obviously the instructional leadership is still a key piece. You've got to have somebody who knows what good education is, what good learning is, who keeps up with current trends, who isn't whimsical about current trends but really has some substantive understanding of what good education is all about and is interested in maintaining an institution that continues to look at that side of it.

I think you also need somebody who is able to look to the future and consider what kind of a world are the kids we are dealing with going to grow up into so that I can help to lead this school in a direction that will help our graduates to function effectively. I have a bias against the notion of preparation. Personally, I don't see schools as

preparation for schooling. I see it as developing skills to allow you to be a lifelong learner in no matter what role you see yourself. I know that's a real trite term, but I think learning at the moment is as important as learning for the future. You want to be developing the kinds of skills, attitudes, values, understandings that will allow you to effectively continue to function as a learner no matter what the demands of the environment may be. So I think I would want somebody in leadership who knew how to shape an institution to do that.

I think you need a good communicator and it probably needs to be both an oral and a written communicator. It may be more important to be a good oral communicator than a written one if you have to choose because you can always have somebody check out your writing. You need to be somebody who is collaborative and sees the leadership role as one of supporting others to be successful in their jobs, wherever they may be within the institution and appreciating what those people do.

One of the most important things that I think leaders don't have enough time to do is to thank the people who have made it possible for them to be leaders. And the more you can say thank you, no matter what it is for, the better. And recognizing people is important. I don't mean give out a trophy to everybody because they participated but to recognize when somebody has done a good job at their job so that they get the feedback.

I think it's important to be able to provide evaluative feedback in a non-judgmental and impersonal way which I think is one of the hardest things that any of us have to do. But I think that's a skill that you need to develop so that evaluation is much more in terms of where the institution is headed and what that person's function within the institution is than personal characteristics that a person has. And that when you see

yourself in a supervisory role that the objective is one of promoting growth and progress and so evaluation becomes a tool for that. That doesn't mean that you don't ever reach a point where you say to someone, "This isn't working out." But on the other hand you're doing everything you can to promote growth which is what education is all about in my sense. So that's a key characteristic.

In the sense of an independent school, you certainly have to learn how to be able to function with a board and particularly to be a dancing partner with the board chair. You have got to have some relationship there that allows you to be on the same page and to function really effectively together. And that may be much more the head's job of cultivating that relationship than it is the board chair's. And one of the things I've wondered about personally over the years is there's been a lot of urging of heads of schools to really cultivate board member relationships and to get to know board members on a personal level, and spend a lot of time informing them. That is not something I've done as much as probably some heads have done, partially for time reasons and partially because I think these are busy people. But I also think I didn't want to be overly solicitous, but I wonder sometimes did I do as good a job in keeping board members "on-board" if you will with issues and up to date as I might have?

I wonder in terms of what I read in the literature and in terms of when I go to professional workshops where they say, "You need to have these one-on-one encounters [with your board members] all the time." But that I think is something to consider too. You need somebody who can cultivate relationships and not be off on their own making decisions and that board relationship is really the important one. Listening, really listening and just being attentive is part of it.

Knowing when you have to be the decision maker versus when it is a time to share the decision making and being clear with a constituent group about who the decision makers are under certain circumstances. I think those are all key characteristics of good leadership as a head of school.

And from my point of view, interacting with kids is critical. You got to be somebody who's visible to kids. I think who has interaction possibilities so that you never lose sight of why you're there and what it's all about. And we haven't talked a lot about children but just the interaction and in elementary school for example I think it's really important for kids to see you as somebody who's playful, who enjoys sitting on the floor reading to them whatever it may be, and who's willing to do silly things once in a while. That's part of validating who they are and being able to hear them and respect them as individuals who have points of view.

You know what I didn't mention but I think really important is that you can't take yourself too seriously. You've got to be able to laugh at yourself publicly. If you can't do that, it's too hard.

**Lessons Learned – Patience and Humility**

I think one of the lessons I've learned is the patience lesson. Even though I think it's who I am, it's been reinforced that you need to be patient with change and with people and give them an opportunity to grow. That really is a critical piece. I think another important lesson is that no matter your successes, it's important that you still project humility and appreciation for others.

I've learned that leadership is helping people to know what is right to do and not necessarily what is expedient or what is going to have the greatest outcome and greatest

impact and effectiveness whatever it may be. I say this because there are times when you really have to do what is the morally / ethically right thing as best you could judge.

**Lessons Learned - Pastoral Function of Leadership**

Another huge lesson for me that I don't think I understood until I was in the position for a while is the importance of the ministerial function and the pastoral function of leadership, particularly in a school setting where you have to be able to understand that the human needs need ministering to before you can take people in the directions you want to go. And you have to respect the situations people find themselves in and be as supportive as you can at certain times of the whole community. Those are times when you have to show strength, and I think its strength of character, while acknowledging your feelings and helping the community to brave its way through the challenges that they're facing at a moment. Some of them range from very personal impacts on individuals in the community, some that affected just Hanahau'oli, and others that were worldwide incidents that you have to deal with because that's your role and you can't just say, "That's outside the purview of our institution." That's not what we're about when they impact people so greatly. I don't think that was an unnatural thing for me to do, but I think I've learned its incredible importance and learned that there are times when I needed to get support and guidance in order to be able to do that and do it well.

**Lessons Learned – Listen more than you speak**

There are still times when I will just sit and listen. That's partially my style, and I will speak out when I really have something to say particularly once I'm comfortable in the setting, but I'm probably not going to be the first person to speak. I'm still not that way unless it's something I feel very strongly about that I have to speak up.

I think that's just been the pattern from the very beginning and it is a confidence level. It's also, "Is what I have to say worthwhile? And is it going to make a difference?" And there are others who seem so confident whom I suspect speak a lot because they're not confident, but talking a lot makes them sound well-informed.

**Lessons Learned – Good leadership is knowing when you need help**

I think another lesson for people who begin the leadership role is that they have to know that it's okay to ask for help. I don't think I knew that in the beginning in this role. When I was an assistant head it was much easier for me to ask for help because I didn't think that I had to show people that I knew it all. It's that whole burden you put onto yourself of what leadership looks like and maybe something that you have to rethink as you go through it. Good leadership is really knowing when you need help.

It's important to understand that it's okay to rely on other people. I think one of the hardest lessons to learn for me, and I suspect this is for a lot of people, is that you don't have to have all the answers. You don't have to assume that you are the one who's in charge all the time and you have to make every decision.

**Insecurity – Not necessarily a bad thing**

Anything new has an insecurity about it. I can't imagine anybody going into a new position with sufficient confidence. In fact, I think there's a danger in probably having too much confidence. If you did that, you're not going to see what's not working for you. A little bit of anxiety is not a bad thing. It's like you don't want kids going in comatose to take the SAT [Scholastic Aptitude Test]. You want a little bit of adrenalin flowing, because fear is not necessarily a negative thing. If fear incapacitates you, it is detrimental. But if fear motivates you, it may end up with very positive results.

**Legacy**

I think probably from the very beginning there was a legacy notion on my part that when I left, whenever I did leave, that I wanted Hanahau‘oli to be considered a really good school, if not the best school in a progressive sense. And that the community of teachers there were as professional as they could be about their jobs. That to me was the most important legacy. More people have probably talked to me about the legacy than I thought about the legacy. It was more important I think that I left with people saying that I did a good job on behalf of kids to make the school the best that it could be. The buildings are nice, but I don’t consider the buildings as my legacy. The kind of education that goes on inside those buildings, yeah, I consider that my legacy. And that’s to me what it was all about, to create a school that was reflective about its practice, that constantly was learning how to do it better, and that kids were excited and challenged as learners and happy to be there. If those things were achieved, then I figure I’ve left behind what I could.

# CHAPTER 4

# DR. JAMES KAPAEʻALII SCOTT

## The Early Years

### Raised on Windward Oahu

*Figure 4.1.* Punahou President Dr. James K. Scott. (Punahou School)

I was born in Waimanalo. I was told at the time, my dad was unemployed and then when I was born he decided he needed to get a job because his ambition was to send his son to Punahou. At the same time, he wasn't unemployed because he was a very educated Hawaiian. He had gone to Stanford and Punahou and went to Stanford on a GI Bill.

So it's important to talk about my dad because he's an influential person in my life. He came to Punahou and graduated 1943, got in to Stanford and at the end of his freshman year thought that the World War II was passing him by so he enlisted in the Marine Corps. He served in the Pacific, comes out in 1945, and the GI Bill helped him to finish his undergraduate because he thought he'd be playing football, and he'd get a little money for that. So he comes back to Hawaiʻi and marries my mom. I come along in 1952, and I think that's what made him set the specific goals in his life.

So my early memories are warm and cuddly. I mean my parents were both working. From what I can tell, my mom and my dad were both working my entire life, and they moved from Waimanalo to Kāneʻohe and from Kāneʻohe to Kailua. And so I grew up on the windward side. And it sounds like you've spent some of your time on the windward side and still do. In fact, my memory of the first house is right around the

corner from Saint Mark's in Puohala Village on Hilinai Street [in Kāneʻohe]. And there's this little tiny two-bedroom, one bath home that they were able to buy as a young couple but also with a newborn.

I was surrounded by lots of love from my folks. His [Dr. Scott's father] folks lived in Kāneʻohe, so I had lots of aunties in the Kāneʻohe area and then my mother is also from Hawaiʻi but her parents lived in town. So I grew up calling one "the Waikiki grandma" and the other one, "the Kāneʻohe grandma", and both were very loving in their own way.

My dad was half-Hawaiian and half-German and Irish. My mom is half-Chinese and half-Romanian. If you think about it, my brother and I can't think of another combination that we've met with that ethnic background.

I remember going to preschool at Pali View Baptist School in Kāneʻohe and my aunties being babysitters, but I came to kindergarten at Punahou when I was five. My parents were making that commute every day. My brother who is 2½ years younger and I were both raised in Kāneʻohe and Kailua. By the time I was about first grade we had moved to Mokapu Boulevard in Kailua next to the Marine Corp station, and all that was relatively new. You probably heard people talk about the old days when people didn't lock their homes. That's how it was. My summers were go outside and play and come back for lunch, and we just would sit around getting ready for our little league to start at Kainalu. I would just go play sand lot baseball.

So growing up on that side [the windward side of Oahu] was magical. We got to go body surfing. At that time, we still had great access to the Marine Corp base for body surfing and surfing. We'd walk to the stores and places. My mother's sister lived on that

side too, so I grew up with my cousins. So the small kid time for me, especially summers are very memorable.

By the time I was in probably fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh grade, I started to realize that those neighborhood kids were going to different school than me. So they would be at Kainalu or Kailua Elementary or Benjamin Parker - all the neighborhood schools. I'd see them after school when we were playing baseball, and I remember them saying, "Where do you go to school?" And I say, "town" because at that time, it wasn't real cool to be going to Punahou because people felt only rich haole kids went there.

**Dr. Scott's Father – Family was a Priority**

I think the early memories are good with my dad being an influential person in my life. He was a great athlete and a great student at Punahou. He was musical, he was handsome, and he was fun. He was just very gregarious in a way. Mom is very nurturing and so then they both worked hard to make sure that my brother and me had a chance to go to Punahou. So from early on, there's that middle class family that are saying, "Here's our role in our kid's education." My parents were frugal but they were frugal because they're paying for private school education.

The first time we ever took a trip to go to the mainland was when I made an all-star baseball team when I was 14. Sometimes we went to a neighbor island but most of the time, it was like staying home, going to the beach and going camping. So we had middle class background but a very warm and loving family.

***Interviewer: It sounds like they definitely put education up on a pedestal. Was your father at that time working multiple jobs to pay for Punahou?***

My dad went to work for Hawaiian Tel selling yellow page advertising and then climbed the ranks. My mom also worked at Hawaiian Telephone. She was a service

representative and operator. So they climbed the ranks and by the time he retired he was the marketing director for the phone company and then a division head of the central division area.

The joke in the family was that Hawaiian Tel paid for the Punahou education. As I got older, I kind of understood that my dad had a chance to actually advance within the company, but Hawaiian Tel by the mid ‘60s had been bought out by GTE [General Telephone & Electronics Corporation] that had headquarters in Stamford, Connecticut. And so here is this bright, attractive, hard-working local guy, and they said, “If we’re going to promote you within the company, your track is to go to Stamford, Connecticut and get some training with the big company and then come back.” And he said, “No way! I wouldn’t pull my kids out of Punahou, and I’m not going to go by myself.” And I think given the corporate ladder that was a signal to the higher-ups that said, “Well, this guy doesn’t have much ambition.” And so again, I kind of got it when I was going through it but it wasn’t until years later that he kind of explained to me that he felt he was being passed over but he made a decision not to do the corporate ladder.

*Figure 4.2.* James Scott (second from right) in 1964 at the age of 12 with his mother (far left), brother (second from left) and father (far right). (James Scott)

My brother and I have an early memory of our sport lives being like an extension of his own life. He was our coach in little league, and he was my coach in Pop Warner. When I was playing at Punahou, he would come to practices right after work. He'd be at the game. If I was the starting pitcher and the game started at 4:00, he was there at 3:00. So he was able to manage his time.

And so I think also if he passed up some of the advancement within Hawaiian Tel, it was because he understood how much work it would take. Although he was an executive and had a solid job, a good paying job, his next step would have been to be a vice president. And he just decided that the flexibility he had in order to be a part of his sons' lives were I think more important.

***Interviewer: Do you think you would categorize him as a strict father?***

It wasn't like he would pour over my report, but I liked school. I was good in school. I worked hard in school. And my brother didn't work particularly hard at school, and he never felt the wrath of my dad. So he wasn't strict. He wasn't a disciplinarian. It was my mom like most moms who probably sort of kept the law, kept the structure. She was the nagger. She was the one that would keep us going.

**Ethnic Identity**

When I first got home in 1994, all the Hawaiians wanted to know who you're related to because they couldn't trace Scott. A lot of people knew my Dad. But my father was adopted or in the Hawaiian tradition - hanai. He was hanai'd because his birth mother was 16 when he was born. His birth father was out of the picture early on and his birth father was James Liloa Purdy from the Big Island and Molokai. The Purdy side is the Hawaiian side and is also the direct descendant of Kamehameha.

He was adopted by his grandmother who had remarried a guy named Leslie Scott. So he took on the Scott name. But in his early years – he would reflect on it pretty honestly with me and my brother – the conflict was not knowing who his dad was, and the conflict was his mother gave him up to be hanai'd. She went on to remarry a guy named Whitford. And all his half brothers and sisters grew up in Kāneʻohe. They still are there. He was sort of apart from them for a number of years and then he was like the older brother.

So my father was the one that went to Punahou when they all went to Kamehameha or Kailua or Castle. I think that although he himself was hapa haole and you could tell he's got some ethnic mix, he didn't pull the Hawaiian. He actually had a scholarship to go to 'Iolani and that's where he went for fifth, and sixth and seventh grade. He transfers to Punahou in eighth grade, and this is where he finished up. And some of his best friends were a lot of the part-Hawaiian kids who played football and basketball and baseball. He was a three letterman, and he was president of his class. He was a star at Punahou - at school that was probably 75% or more haole at that time. So that's in the early '40s. Then he goes to Stanford and he was probably one of the few non-Caucasian. If he was conflicted, it was never visible through his trajectory or rise in education or in his professional life. My father, brother, and I were always comfortable and confident going through Punahou.

**Importance of Education - Financial Sacrifices**

I know they [parents] were making sacrifices. I don't know what Punahou cost at that time but it was relative. They paid the mortgage and the Punahou bill first. And then if they're able to save, that was a good thing. I remember being a small kid at Punahou

and getting to May and people started planning their summer vacations and you realized, you know, you're not going skiing. You're not going to some summer home on the North Shore. And that's where I realized that sacrifices were being made.

We did not think of ourselves as a family with financial hardship. But education was valued, and may parent's hard work made it happen. Both of my parents were working full-time the entire time I was growing up. Their combined incomes, along with a little bit of financial help from Punahou, allowed my brother and me to each attend Punahou for 13 years.

There were a lot of kids that didn't have two working parents like we did. Where I felt the sacrifice was my mom feeling the responsibility to work or otherwise they wouldn't make ends meets. I remember right around the middle of eighth grade, coming home and my mom is still in her high heels cooking leftovers or something, you know. And I was a good kid but when you're a 13 or 14 year old boy, you say things that you don't mean. So I said, "Why don't you stay home like other people's moms, then you would have dinner ready?" Or just some snotty thing like that. She didn't appear to be very happy at her work. And so she blurts out and said, "Well, I work so you and your brother can go to Punahou." I said, "oh." So I remember thinking about it and saying, "If I didn't go to Punahou, then that would take some pressure off my mom so she wouldn't have to work and maybe she'd be happier and more fulfilled." Because she'd rather be, you know, serving her kids

*Figure 4.3.* James Scott as the Eighth Grade May Day King at Punahou School in 1966 at the age of 14. (James Scott)

and her husband. So I announced to them that maybe I should go check out Kalani High School which was right around the corner from where we were. And they thought I was kidding. And I said, “No, I’d like to go and try to do this.”

So against their better judgment, I actually spent a morning at Kalani just to go check it out. And I ran into some former classmates who had either left or been kicked out of Punahou. They were looking at me and saying, “What are you doing here?” I said, “I might come here.” “Why? Did you get kicked out of Punahou?” And that’s when I looked at the classes of forty kids where people were sitting in the back without any homework done, the teacher was talking to the blackboard, and the kids were just making noise. And this was one of the best schools in the state at the time. It was new. Kalani was founded around 1965, and it was right around then. So it was like spanking new. So that’s why I obviously changed my mind and apologized to my mom as much as a 14 year old boy does. I went to ninth grade at Punahou and it made all the difference. But that’s my early memory of money being tight, and it had to do with the Punahou bill.

**Selecting Stanford**

I remember waking up on Sunday mornings when we lived in Kailua to get the paper - dad and mom were sleeping in, and I remember that if Punahou won their football game and if Stanford won the football game, then my dad was going to be really happy. And that was back when Punahou and Stanford were winning about half their games. There weren’t exactly powerhouses.

I had no idea even where Stanford was or how hard it was to get into. I remember there was an eighth grade science teacher named David Eldredge, and he was this legend because he was a football coach, baseball coach and very harsh, strict, very scary. We

were getting our quizzes back one day, and I had like a C+ or B- on mine. So, I'm starting to put it away, and he says, "Scott, I want you to see me after class." Of course, my class was going, "Oh, you're in trouble now." So he looks at me, and he's a big burly, Hawaiian guy and he goes, "Where do you want to go for college?" And I said, "Stanford." That's when he said, "Do you realize what it takes to go to Stanford?" I said, "I figured if my dad got in, how hard could it be?" So that's how oblivious I was. And he had gone to Stanford too, David Eldredge.

The next day, I'll never forget, the Cooke Library had just been built and he [David Eldredge] had me meet him at 7:30 in Cooke Library. So I'm in the high school where they have this college catalog section, and he pulled out the Stanford catalog and said, "These are the type of grades you have to have. This is called the SAT. It's a test you have to take. These are the scores you need, this is the average that most Punahou students get." So that's when I started to set my goals and realize that maybe I needed to have certain grades and everything else.

Now having said that, I also applied to Santa Clara because that's where Bob Garibaldi [the professional baseball player] went. I applied to Claremont McKenna - it was called Claremont Men's at that time - because, I don't know, I knew a few other people that had gone there. I had a dean that had gone to Dartmouth and every time I went to his office for something, he would be talking and behind him would be [a picture showing] that Dartmouth Green in the winter and spring. I kept looking at this thing and thinking, "Whoa." I had never seen snow before. So I applied to Dartmouth because Mr. Iams went to Dartmouth. Then I applied to Cornell because somebody said that they had a good hotel management school. So it was all over the place. I got into all of them, but

figured I wanted to go to Stanford because that's where dad went. They didn't have any money for baseball, but they expected me to walk on. And by the spring, I knew I had the Naval ROTC scholarship.

**Leaving for Stanford**

In 1970 when I went off to college, and that was back in the day where the whole family came to see you off at the airport. It's a big deal. I was one on the first cousins to actually go to college. And this was when you can go to the departure gate. You remember those days? So we get there early, everyone is there, and my dad takes me aside. I could tell that this was my dad's heart to heart. He was a little teary and said, "I want you to know how proud I am that you got into the college of your choice, but your mother and I want you to know that we can only pay for the first two years." And the naval scholarship only covered the tuition. It didn't cover room and board. And I thought, "Wow!" And then he went on to say, "Doug [Dr. Scott's brother] is coming along, and we have to think about our own retirement."

And the reason I tell that story to the parents is because at that moment my dad made me a financial partner in the enterprise. He essentially said that as much as it's my responsibility to provide for you and give you a great start, this is big bite for us to try to do two college tuitions and do what we want to do. And when you do that for a child, they then realize maybe that they should get a part time job. I remember going to summer school one summer because I realized, it was actually cheaper to take a summer quarter and actually graduate a little bit earlier. I lived by my wits. I was a RA [Resident Assistant] in the dorm because you got your room and board free. I was the president of my fraternity because you got your room and board free. So there are ways that I could

help my parents with the bill. I worked hard during the summers for jobs. And my brother did too. Although I was little stunned getting on that plane, I remember sitting there thinking, "Okay, well, now it's on me. They're going to do the best they can."

**Summer Jobs**

I remember working during the summers because that's what supplemented the cost of a Stanford education. My parents didn't expect me to pay tuition but all my own expenses and stuff used to be on me. I had two well-paying sort of Federal jobs. They were local companies with Federal contracts that I got through classmates' fathers. The first one was planting grass on the freeways during the summer. So it was outdoors. It was hard work. I got to the place in Palolo Valley at six o'clock in the morning and got back by five. But after that, I would go straight out to play baseball. And so, that was for two summers and then I had a summer working at a moving lines - a trucking company that had these grants to move military families. And that was hard work. That was my senior year and my first back from college, but with good pay.

I think what I learned on those two jobs from a number of seasoned, local people who were thrilled to be working with us but they said, "Hey boys, stay in school because when you're 50 years old, your body gives out. Right now you're outside and you're having fun and you're athletic, but it's no good when your knees start to give."

So when I turned 50, I remember thinking about those old days, wondering what happened to them. I remember this one guy during a conversation, he said, "You dropped out at Stanford and you're working here?" I said, "I didn't drop out. I'm not here full-time." And he says, "Go back there man."

**Struggles at Stanford**

***Interviewer:*** ***So you're at Stanford on a Naval ROTC scholarship, were there obligations to the Navy after you graduated from Stanford as a result of the scholarship?***

Yes, but I didn't finish the scholarship. I had a great freshmen year, played ball, and did fine academically. But by spring of my sophomore year, I realized that probably I was not going to make the [baseball] team the following year because even Stanford back then was bringing in four all-world pitchers that they expected me to help them recruit. That's when I realized how average I was and how competitive it was.

This is kind of linked to Vietnam. By the time I am preparing to go to college in spring of 1970 is when Kent State happened, and the anti-war fervor was evident. Kent state was where five undergraduates were shot by the National Guard in Ohio. If there were people who were not active anti-war protesters at that time, then that act made them more active because they thought these are just innocent people protesting. And so what happened in the spring of 1970 was that most college campuses closed early to avoid any of the rioting. And I remember a lot of those college kids coming back to the Punahou campus in my senior year and it kind of spilled into this place, too. So I had a scholarship and over the summer, the Stanford Faculty Senate had voted to kick ROTC off campus. And we're getting this letter saying we're going to honor your scholarship because that's our pledge to you, but you need to know you're going to take your ROTC courses at San Jose State and not on the Stanford campus.

So I would put on my uniform there once a month to go do my little training and I remember people in my freshmen dorm calling me "baby killer." It was a hard time to be in the ROTC. So when you hear the stories about those people coming back from

Vietnam and not being appreciated, I mean, I was getting just a piece of that as being a part of ROTC. And in ROTC, you had to keep your hair cut short at a time where most people were growing it around the ears and down to the shoulders. So it was just a different time.

So fast-forward to spring of my sophomore year, I quit the baseball team before I could get cut, broke up with my girlfriend, and dropped my ROTC scholarship once I got my draft number. And by that time, I had lost track of my credits, so I wasn't even quite sure if I was on track to graduate in four years. This was back when if you sensed that you're getting a C, you kind of just dropped the course, and you didn't have like people following around saying, "Hey, you don't have enough credits."

I felt like I was wasting my parent's money, and I thought maybe I needed to reassess whether I should be in school. So I remember writing my dad saying, I think I'd like to stop out and not come back. I didn't say, "drop out." I said, "stop out." I just needed to have a little more focus. That's why I came back to Punahou. As a senior, I'd been pretty critical of the counseling system here [Punahou]. And so one of the deans had contacted me by spring break of my sophomore year in college and said, "We have an idea and we need your help and that is to come back to Punahou for a year to essentially supplement the counseling system by being a part of it, being an intern." That was the spring of '72. That's 41 years ago. And that was a tough time in my life. That's the first real turbulence that I had felt. That was actually the first really big argument I had had with my dad. Because remember he's a World War II vet, and if I was not going to serve my country in Vietnam, he wasn't sure he wanted me to be under his roof. Again, I never

feared him. It was never, “I’m going to crack your head.” It was his disappointment which was worse than a beating.

***Interviewer: And you sense a little bit of disappointment at this point?***

Yes. Think about it. His son just quit the baseball team at Stanford. He wasn’t going to [become a professional baseball player and] sign for $100,000. At that time, you didn’t have to send your grades home but it was beginning to dawn on them that it wasn’t the A’s, B’s that they were expecting.

***Interviewer: So how did that year go?***

I think my dad had mellowed. By ‘72 and into ‘73 – even the hawks were thinking maybe this war that was not a good one and that maybe we were being lied to. So you go from Vietnam to Watergate, and as a teenager I would say, “Your government doesn’t lie to you. That’s not how America works.” And I think kids don’t see this now or even your generation, but that’s why Richard Nixon for me is a real villain because he lied. And so that loss of confidence in your institutions, I think, would start to permeate people who started to graduate in the early ‘70s. But it also led to healing of those Vietnam War vets who were lost, and who did come back to an angry and hostile America. But I think by the mid ‘70s that was starting to change. So I went back to Stanford more focused and more self-directed. I had a new girlfriend who I eventually married so that helped.

***Interviewer: Did you ever have any doubt about going back?***

No, I went back and that was the advantage of being [at Punahou] actually with my former teachers. They’re saying, “You’ve got to finish your degree. You can’t let us down.”

**First Job after Stanford Graduation**

Actually, right out of Stanford I worked in admissions at Stanford. So during my year off, the deans [at Punahou] got a visit from the dean of admissions of Stanford who was visiting schools [in Hawai‘i]. And the [Punahou] dean said, “Jim, we need your help in making sure he [Stanford dean of admissions] gets around the island and sees the place. Ask him if he needs a ride anywhere.” So that’s where I met Fred Hargadon who was the [Stanford] dean of admissions. He wasn’t the one who admitted me; he was new. And I remember him saying, “When you get back to campus, let me know.” He could arrange for my campus job to be giving tours or doing interviews. I said, “Great”. That led to a full-time appointment [after graduation] for less than six months because then I was let go because of budget cuts. So I was there for six months working and just let go, and then got a job at Stevenson.

I remember going back to the fraternity house on a Friday right after I was laid off. If you’re going to give someone bad news, you better give it at 3:30 on a Friday. And I was engaged to be married, my fiancée was finishing at Stanford, and I was thinking, “Whoa, my world was just turned upside down here.” At a party the next night, a former fraternity brother sort of hears about this and says, “I’m teaching English at a school [Stevenson School] down at Pebble Beach, and I’m going to go to law school. I have a good buddy who’s teaching history who is just about to tell the head master on Monday that he’s going to law school too. Why don’t you get your application in?” So that’s what happened. I actually got my resume together on a Sunday. I sent it on Monday, and got a call on Thursday from the head master of Stevenson, Gordon Davis. He said I needed to teach five sections of U.S. history and I said, “Yes, but I was kind of

a PoliSci major." "Yes, but you went to Stanford, so you can learn some history over the next three months." So that's what I did. I came home that summer after I got married in '75 and just read all summer long, and I actually got a syllabus ready. I was literally just always about four weeks ahead of the class.

**First Year Teaching at Stevenson**

***Interviewer: How was that first year in the classroom?***

I think that all new teachers are petrified that they're going to be exposed as an impostor especially by the brightest kids. I had this fear that I wouldn't be able to control the class and at some point they'd like just walk out, and I wouldn't know what to do.

I joined this faculty where the entire history faculty were generals and admirals and colonels, all these retired guys from World War II who just held conservative political views. There were just real disciplinarians. I remember this admiral's words of wisdom to me in the first week of school were, "Don't smile until Thanksgiving." And I said, "What?"

**Delving into School Administration**

There's a guy name Phil Perkins who came in to Stevenson same year that I did, and he was like my dad's age. He had headed two other schools. He'd been pressured out of his last job as head of school. Gordon Davis was one of his buddies and offers him a job teaching English. So here I am a newlywed and kind of just following this old guy. And he was the one who said, "You should consider a leadership role in independent schools."

He and I ran a dorm together for two or three years. Our dogs were best friends. We [Jim and his wife] didn't own a TV set yet, and so we would go over to his house and

watch Roots and the ‘76 Olympics, the bicentennial, and drink wine. He and Headmaster Gordon Davis felt this responsibility to be mentoring a next generation, and as I’ve started to feel this same way in the last couple of years.

I went into Gordon Davis with another faculty member and said there’s this new [master’s degree] program they are starting at USF [University of San Francisco] that’s being launched by two Jesuit priests out of Gonzaga University that are founding this program called Private School Administration. It was mainly for Catholic school leaders but they realized that the curriculum they were building was appropriate for all non-public school leaders. So they were happy to get some non-Catholics in there. I did that over three different summers which was quite a commitment.

And then at Stevenson, this is fortuitous as well, things were changing. The academic dean also did the college counseling. And the school was going co-ed, expanding, and the head master had tasked him with leading the WASC [Western Association of Schools and Colleges – Accrediting Commission for Schools] Self-Study. And of course he said, “Well, something has got to give.” And somebody said, “Well, we’ve got this young guy named Scott here, and he’s done some admission’s work.” So I was actually given the college counseling, and they essentially reduced my teaching load by a couple of sections. They gave me about a third of the class to do college counseling with, which I loved. Among my best years as I look back on in my professional life are when I taught two or three sections with U.S. history, did college counseling, and I was assistant coach of the baseball team. That was just a full life. And of course we didn’t have kids yet. Plus we’re living on campus still where you can save money. So that was the first foray into administration. And because there was no admissions director during

the summer, we just sort of would take turns sharing some administrative oversight load. And the college counseling led to some academic advising, just working with kids and teachers and scheduling. So there was this moment where there was some sort of a coup that happened where this academic dean was moved over to do college counseling full-time, and I was asked to take over for him [as academic dean]. By that time, I was 28.

The head master made my old pal, Phil Perkins, the Dean of Students. I was the Academic Dean. We got even closer. Stylistically he and I were very much different. He was kind of old school, but the two of us did a nice job together. Then Gordon Davis left. He took a job in Florida as the head of another school that was called the Out-of-Door Academy in Sarasota. Phil Perkins was named the interim head of the school. And then there was an Interim Dean of Students. I was the Academic Dean, but I took on even more responsibility and was almost like an assistant head. It's like Gordon knew that he was about to leave and he needed to take care of business and move some people around. I think there was great confidence in me from Phil and Gordon. Both have passed now. I just think about them a lot.

David Mallery who did the NAIS professional development for a number of years, asked us at a conference or a retreat to write a letter to someone who made a difference in our careers. And both of these gentlemen had passed already, so I wrote it to their wives.

***Interviewer: And what did you say in the letters? Did you talk about their mentorship?***

Every student or athlete in their road to success has someone who believed in them more than they believed in themselves which seems improbable. What do you see

in me that I'm not seeing? Because I'm still seeing the impostor. I'm still seeing what I can't do. And they're saying, "Yeah, you can do this. You can do this."

**Move to Harvard**

When they were doing the search [for the new head of school at Stevenson], when Phil was Interim Head, there were members of the [Stevenson] faculty who thought that I should become a candidate [to be the next head of school], which I thought was even more unreasonable. I was a kid. This school needed more and deserved more. I would have been the safe choice for some of the teachers because I was known. Even Phil encouraged me, he said, "I'll stay and help you. You can do it." And that's when I realized that, "Okay, I can imagine myself being a head of a school and I know I've got the temperament for it, but I don't think my toolkit is complete yet even with the first Master's degree." And that's when I had had my eye on this Doctoral program, one at Stanford and one at Harvard. The one at Stanford is where I thought I was going to go. It was called Administration and Policy Analysis, APA. The one at Harvard is called Administration Planning and Social Policy. And I just assumed with my wife and I having Hawai'i roots and California roots that I would stay on the west coast. I got into both.

And so I remember one of my former English teachers here [at Punahou] who actually was a good pal and mentor when I was here actually taking a year [off from Stanford]. His name was Paul Berry. I call him Doc Berry. I remember sitting in his class when I was 16 years old as an American Lit student; I must have been reading a Frost poem or something. He was talking about challenging yourself to stretch and do something that's going to be different. And so I remembered him saying that we should

consider getting a degree on both coasts. And that really struck me. I said, “Yeah, I’ve been to the mainland once playing baseball.” And I said, “Both coast of what - south shore or north shore?” What’s Doc talking about? And then I realized it was West Coast and East Coast. And there I was 30 years old, two letters of acceptance, thinking about leaving. I was already told that I wasn’t going to be a candidate to be the head [of Stevenson]. In fact, I needed to leave so that the new head could appoint a new guy.

I call him up, and I said, “Doc, what did you mean?” And it’s like we just had the conversation yesterday [but it is fifteen years later]. And I said, “What do you mean you should have a degree on both coasts?” He said, “You know, someday someone is going to be looking at your resume.” I said, “Yeah.” And he said, “And your resume is going to be a series of transitions.” And I said, “Yeah. Each of those transitions will be a story.” He said, “Make your story more interesting. Go East.” So I put down the phone and said to my wife, “Doc said, we should go East.” By that time we had moved off campus. We had saved and bought a home. We had got some help from our parents to do so. We actually ended up selling the house, putting our world belongings on a van to Boston. We traded our car in for a second hand Volkswagen Vanagon, and we camped across country in the summer of 1983 heading towards Boston. And Doc was right because I think a lot of the independent schools in the west are sort of looking over their shoulder at the East Coast. I think I read that somewhere that over half of the independent schools in NAIS are in the Eastern Time Zone which makes sense because that’s where they started.

I kind of just wanted to live back there and experience it. So I did my course work at Harvard, finished the qualifying paper, and panicked that I wasn’t ever going to get a full-time job again. I was going into debt. My wife at the time, we are not married any

more, and I lived outside of Boston in a town called Dedham. We would take a commuter train at the South station. She would take a train to the Back Bay where she worked at the Hancock Building as a computer consultant. She paid the bills. And I took the red line up to Cambridge. We did that for two years. I lived in a world of ideas, possibilities, people from out-of-town, and she just hated it back there.

***Interviewer: Were you working?***

I was working part time. I fell back on my admissions' skills. I was working part time in the Harvard Undergraduate Admissions Office, at the time when they were still visiting some of those feeder prep schools to go interview the kids. And the Harvard staff hated it because it was like interviewing children of privilege with a sense of entitlement. And so I said, "I'll do this." So for two years I interviewed people, and read folders, but I also volunteered to go to some of these prep schools in the area with some of the senior people [in the Harvard admission's office] which got me inside of these schools.

**Leaving Harvard Early**

And so when I finished my course work, I realized that I wasn't going to stay [at Harvard] and took a train down to NAIS to interview for the Catlin Gabel position. I wasn't unhappy; I was just a little fearful. And part of it was actually just maybe my growing disappointment with the Harvard program. Doing course work in Harvard for two years without a lot of guidance is like being in a candy store. You can pick and choose. You had to take a certain amount of courses at the school of education, but I was at the business school, the law school, and the Kennedy school of government. I could take the best courses. I took two courses in organization behavior at MIT at the Sloan School of Management. I had some of the best teachers. But then we got to the

dissertation phase, and it's like all bets were off. It's like they started to quiz you about your methodology and quantitative methods. And I realized that nothing led us to this. I remember going into my advisor and saying, "Okay, I'm going to do this." I just got this job at Catlin Gabel, so I've got to go do this from afar. And I remember him looking at me in his office and saying, "Your chance of finishing this program just went down to 15 percent." And he tried talking me out of it. And he says, "You are here. You are focused. You are on your way." And I just said, "I need to go."

## The Catlin Gabel Years

### Head of School at 32

Portland is a great city, and Oregon is a great state. I was the wild card candidate, obviously. I was a grad student, who had never headed a school who's 32 years old. When I went down to interview for the job, I met with a guy named Len Richardson who was doing the search at that time. I said, "What am I doing in this search?" he says, "Well, you know, my job is to give the search committee a kind of the wide variety of options out there. And, yeah, you're going to be with competitive people who have had some experiences. But, you really come highly recommended." And then he said, "And besides you need to go through this for practice and you have something to fall back on which is finishing the darn degree." So, it wasn't like, I had to get the job. I think my wife would have been happy. I remember her saying, "Take me to the west, anywhere, just get me out of here [Boston]." West for her could have been the state of Illinois. I don't know.

When I went back for the first round of interviews as a semifinalist, I started to fall in love with the school and its progressive roots and its philosophical ways and the passion that people felt for it. I just loved the kids. But as I listened to myself answer questions, I said, "I think I can do this." In fact, I think I'm feeling like it's a good alignment. And then by the second interview I remember calling my wife and saying, if I get invited back, you'll be coming with me, and I really think you'd like this place too. And she said, "Is there snow there?"

So just to kind of give you a flavor of what kind of place this is culturally, at the end of the first day of the interview, I noticed on the interview sheet that at 3:30 there

was an all-school faculty meeting. And I remember asking the trustee, “How does this work?” He said, “Oh, we just meet in the upper school library. The entire faculty sits in a semi-circle a couple of rows back, and we put you in the middle and we have a conversation with you.” And given my Punahou experience as a student, even the Stevenson experience which was pretty buttoned down, I thought “ooo - talk about being in the cross fire.”

So I’m introduced, and there’s this faculty member on the search committee who actually moderated the whole thing. He’s a very seasoned veteran on the upper school faculty. I remember the first question was from an old, battle axe of a teacher that had been there for years. She said, “How old are you anyway?” I’m thinking to myself, “I don’t think you can ask that.” And then I could hear, this audible gasp, and then her follow-up was, “What makes you think you can govern us old farts?” And I thought, “Oh god.” Of course, the other people in the faculty were kind of looking at her and going, “You can’t do that.” Well, ninety minutes later, it was a conversation. Ninety minutes later there’s a moment where I could watch myself answering questions and asking them questions. And I could tell by the nods that there were like, “Okay, I think this might work.” And then I get invited back as a finalist. It’s the middle of April by now, so it’s really kind of late [in the hiring season]. My wife is there with me. The second time around, the search committee wants me to meet the rest of the board. I think there was a dinner party at one of the trustee’s home. So there’s sort of a little reception that we all sort of gather in the living room where there’s a Q&A. I think one of the trustees has to leave early. He’s a former judge or something. People kept calling him judge. He pulls me aside in the kitchen and says, “Are you the one who can come next year?” And I said,

"Yes, sir!" And then he goes to the head of the search committee, and I could see him giving a thumbs-up. That's when I realize what I was probably up against. I learned this later, of course, that, there were two heads of school in the search who probably were good candidates and probably were in front of me but who ethically could not tell their schools [that they were leaving] that late [in the school year].

And again, this is the serendipity again that Catlin Gabel in the spring of '85 had had four heads of school since 1980. So not only were they experiencing recession in the mid-80s in Portland, but they had this turnover of heads, declining enrollment, faculty that essentially said, "Well, heads come and go. It's the faculty that sort of governs the place." And, I think the board at that time took a leap and said, "This is the guy that can come next year, and we think he can do it. And we're going to give him all the support we can."

**Establishing Trust at Catlin Gabel**

***Interviewer: Were you consciously thinking about the need to establish trust or were you just being who you are and trust followed?***

I was constantly thinking about the need [to establish trust]. I knew that every conversation I was having individually with a faculty member would either be repeated or described to five other folks. It's like us and our faculties. They are just looking for that consistency or the clues. I remember putting up an overhead projector showing money in and money out and saying, "This is why we're in debt. This is what we're collecting. This is what we're spending. This is where I need your help. And if we're able to do this, and we're able to retire this debt, and raise some money, and increase enrollment, then these are the things are going to happen." And that had never really been explained to the faculty. That was all somehow done by the trustees and the heads

somewhere else. I was just saying, "This is what I know. This is what I don't know. What do you want to know? Ask me stuff." And I think that candor, that transparency helped to build trust.

**Improving Communication and Stability at Catlin Gabel**

I think the faculty, as arrogant as it sometimes seemed, were feeling a little self-conscious that nobody wanted them or that the school wasn't as good as it could be. I remember the trustees, of course, paying for me to move back [to the west coast] and making all the arrangements and I remember I said to my board chair, "There's this new heads workshop in Wellesley, Massachusetts that I want to attend." So that's what I want to do. I want to get there [to Catlin Gabel], get settled, and come back [to the east coast] to attend the workshop. And he actually said, "No!" He said, "We need somebody in that chair on July 1st and don't want you to leave on July 8th to go to a new heads workshop for half a week." That was startling at first. Everyone goes to a new heads workshop. I am supposed to go. But that's how brittle the place felt at times. What was happening is that it [Catlin Gabel] was so principled in its progressive roots that it was getting in the way of positioning itself as a viable choice. So to give you an example, the high school didn't have grades. They had them eventually because they had

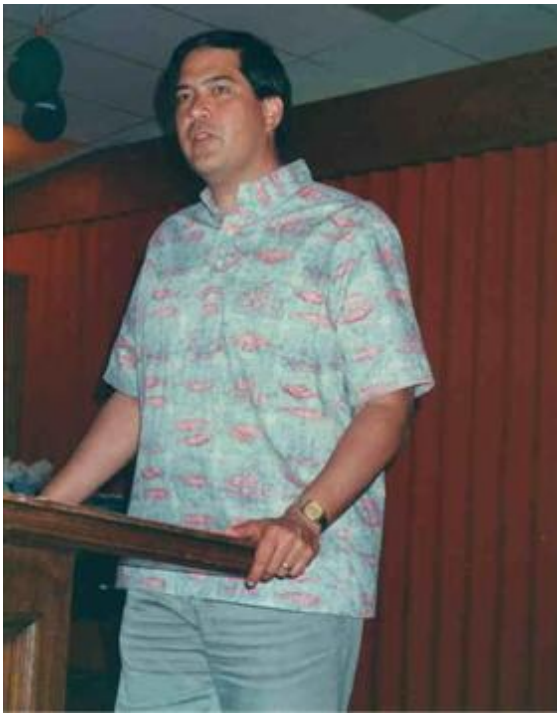

*Figure 4.4*. Headmaster James Scott of the Catlin Gabel School addressing the faculty in 1990. (James Scott)

to offer the colleges something, but you would have to ask the registrar to give you the grades. And they had no AP courses when I got there.

***Interviewer: So these things changed under your leadership?***

They were better communicated under my leadership. They were better sort of debated and reasoned. I think those trustees and some of the old-time teachers would now say that it was the Jim Scott years that helped to preserve the best of the past, while positioning the school for the future. School had been in debt, and we had to climb out of that, and so there was raising money. And, as you know, when you try to raise money, everyone is looking for an excuse not to give to you. And for the previous five years, it had been, "Well, why should we give to Catlin when every two years you guys get a new head?" So, building trust not just internally but externally too was very important. The fact is that because of previous financial instability, enrollment challenges, and Headmaster turnover, there was no recent confidence in fundraising. During my nine years, we stabilized the finances and enrollment, had some good fundraising success that my successor has built upon and taken to a new level.

**Board Members as Mentors**

There were a couple of Board members who were really invested in my transition. I think I mentioned that there had been a revolving door of school heads at that school. And because they were on the Board, they were on the Search Committee, and because the current parents were meeting with the past parents, they just really wanted me to be successful. And so, they became not just Board members, but mentors, friends, strategic partners and help buttons. I think that taught me that your board can be your boss and they can fire you tonight, but they can be a resource in many ways. And, in fact, there's

power and influence in asking for help because there's a certain humility in doing so. There's that window of self-doubt where they say, "Hey, I can be helpful to this guy. He's good, he's got tools but this is an area where I can give him some advice."

**Colleague from another School as Mentor**

The former headmaster at the Lakeside School, named Dan Ayrault, was very influential. So I was this 32-year-old head of school in the summer of '85, and I get this call from Dan at the Lakeside School. In the country, it's this very revered place, but in the Northwest, it was what everyone wanted to become. They had all of the resources. They had the thoughtfulness. So for this guy to reach out to me really meant a lot. The connection he had at Punahou was that his wife was a Punahou graduate. But he called in the middle of the summer and said, "Look at your desk. There's a bunch of mail and you're going to be sifting through it. There's this one letter from the Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools inviting you in the first week of August to come to a summer retreat." He said, "Don't miss this. This is important." And then he called back, and he was really kind of insistent. It was the culture of the Pacific Northwest Association. You had about a dozen schools in the Portland, Seattle area that would get together with their families in the first week in August at different vacation spots and do the association business, but also have some downtime in the afternoon. They would share their cooking in the evening, and they sat around. And that's how you built friendships. And so, when I came to Hawai'i, that's what I wanted to bring here. It's not quite the same and people don't have that same culture of camping and retreats and things like that. Anyway, Dan was sage, wise, and insightful. He was probably my first model of leadership.

Whenever I would get in the car and drive three hours on I-5 from Portland to Seattle, I would stay with him for the PNAIS [Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools] meetings which were like twice a year. Then I was on the Board with him, and he would be like my professional development serum. We would sit up and drink wine together and I would guide him. And so, after a few, I said, "So Dan, what do you think about a head taking a sabbatical?" And he always had answers for stuff, whether you wanted to take it or not. But he didn't hesitate. He said, "If you're a head and you want to take a sabbatical, then you are really ready to leave, so don't fool yourself." He says, "If you're ready [for a sabbatical], maybe you just need to think about whether you want to be there." So I say, "So when do you know when it's time to leave?" And then he said, "After seven years, you should ask if you should stay? After ten years, you should ask why you should stay?" And that's why when I was being pressed by Punahou, how many years are you going to stay? I'd say seven to ten years because that was the time horizon in my previous post, but that was also Ayrault talking. So I think he just believed that in order for the association to be strong, we all needed to be strong and Catlin needed to keep leading, and that was his message. And I think he just didn't want me as the newbie to misread what could be a great opportunity, and that is to have some downtime with your colleagues.

So, he died in his office on the job in 1990. In the inside of my day timer is the program from that, which has the prayer from Saint Francis of Assisi, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace," and it was his favorite. He had had kind of a bad ticker anyway, although he rowed in the 1960 Olympics. He had gone to Stanford and did a doctorate at Harvard. I think about him a lot. And there's actually a bunch of us who

keep looking in on Susan, his widow, because she's very special and his kids. Also, it made me during my last few years at Catlin Gabel want to reach out to younger heads which were just coming into the association. I gave them a call, usually about first week in July and made sure that they are coming to the retreat.

**Finishing what you Start - Completing the Dissertation**

I would try to finish. I had this advisor and would work summers and vacations. And finally I got this letter saying, "If you don't finish by X amount of time, we're going to have to drop you from the program." So I said, "How am I going to do this?" So I went back [to Harvard] and got some advice from a former colleague who was in the program who said, "You need to get this advisor because he's got a good reputation for getting people through the committee of degrees." So I did. In fact, his first words to me because he had to interview you before he would take you on, which I get. And he said, "Well, you need to check your ego at the door, do exactly what I say, and shut up," which is like hardly scholarship, right?

I also thought to myself, "I got my first headship without a Doctorate. Why do I need to finish?" And it's actually my former wife, who said, "You'll be with kids your entire life teaching and you always want to tell your students, you need to finish things you start. You've got to man up." There was something about that, maybe it's my dad and my former wife and all the sacrifices she made to be there, and I thought, "Yeah." So I sat down with my board chair and said, "I need to finish." He actually gave me an incentive to finish. He said, "You finish this thing, and we will help pay back your student loans." In fact, they had given me a loan to get into a house. I didn't have a

place on campus like I do now, but they gave me a loan to do a down payment for our house and they forgave that loan too. So then I had a financial incentive to finish.

So in the summer of 1990, I spent the entire summer writing, like I had done during the last couple of summers. I came back from our home up in the mountains, started school, and then took another month [off to write] in the fall. I had someone run the day-to-day of the school, then I came back. And my goal was to then tighten it up and ship it off by Thanksgiving. And it's like when you think you're pau with this and you go, "Got this done," and it's Thanksgiving.

So, it was like the Friday just before Christmas, and I get this box in the mail from Kent my advisor. I opened it up and on the first page, it said, "Jim, this is a great start. Now let's go to work." Can you imagine that? I don't cry very often. He turned it around between Thanksgiving and Christmas. It must have been like two and a half weeks. This is why he had that reputation of getting people through. But he must have spent a long time doing this. And he said, "This is what you need to do." I didn't even look at his comments, I just put the thing back. Luckily it was the last day before Christmas break, so my former wife as her gift to me that Christmas, went through all of his comments and synthesized them and then sort of summarized them in a separate letter to me. It was actually pretty brilliant. She said, "You know, Jim, there's a theme to this. This is what he wants you to do and this is what you need to sort of focus on. If we can work on this, I think this is doable." So, probably right around New Year's Eve when I opened it up again, I started to read her comments, and she was absolutely right. And so, I called him [Kent] and said, "Okay, we're going to go to work."

Now, my board and I think we're finished. We've got our headmaster back. There's some things brewing and people are saying, "Where's Jim?" What I did was to set up a schedule until spring break, from January to March, where I took Fridays off. I didn't schedule anything on Fridays. It didn't always work that way, but that was the hope which meant I was working my tail off during the rest of the time. But Friday, Saturday, Sunday I would edit and write, and I would send him back stuff. And so finally my goal was just to get it all done by I think March 1. And once he signed off on it, the other two did as well. So again, now that I'm talking about it, and this is why I sort of reach out to every doctoral student on our faculty, there are so many things that I could just lead you to say, "Screw this." So, even that was serendipitous.

**Mentor Support Helping to Complete Dissertation**

One of my mentors at that time in Portland would call me about once a quarter. And whenever I got stuck, she'd say, "Imagine yourself walking at commencement." Just run that tape over and over. It's a beautiful spring day. You're in the middle of Harvard yard. And the other thing she helped me do is she actually had me think about doing each chapter in a separate draft, a separate disc or something, so that I could see it as five separate papers rather than an analytic paper. And literature review feels like it's never-ending. You never know when you're through and you never know when and if or why you're through because it just keeps going. So she sort of helped me with that. But I remember one of the things she kept saying was, "imagine yourself walking." I did get through it, but that wasn't until 1990. So I started my program in '83, left in '85, finished the program in 1990.

**Harvard Graduation**

My dad had died by then, but I remember my mom flew out for my graduation. And, I was asked by the bookstore if I wanted to buy my doctoral robe. So I said, "I can't afford 500 bucks." So she says, "I'll do it. You're going to need this." I said, "Come on Mom, no I won't. I'm never going to wear this again in my life." She said, "Well, do it for me." So she bought it and of course I wore it in my graduation. I wore it for one graduation at County Gabel because I was going through a commencement with that class – the class of 1991. Then I packed it up. By the time I left in '94, I realized that the tradition at Punahou is that the president wears his graduation gown.

# The Punahou Years

## Transitioning to Punahou

After being at Stevenson and being at Catlin, I just felt that I just needed to be in a bigger pond. I thought I would be a public school principal, a superintendent, maybe teach at a university. But the Punahou job comes up only every generation, so I felt this responsibility to go see it. The good thing is that Punahou is well-known enough on the mainland especially on the West Coast, and especially for people who knew me, that they said, "Well of course, if that job comes open, he's got to go take a look and we grant him that." It was such a different calling from what Catlin was.

The way this search worked is that they spent the spring narrowing down the list of candidates to four based on reference checks and interviews. So the first time I came for an interview was exactly 20 years ago, July of 1993. The challenge with that is that in order to see the school up close, other than the statement of opportunity which of course seemed wonderful and masterful, I had to become a finalist. So by the early fall, I was informed that I was one of two finalists and I was invited back in late September, early October. And that would become a material event. I let my Board Chair know at the semi-finalist level. I think your current Board Chair always needs to know. And then my community had to know when I came back in the fall [as a finalist]. I think I was offered the job in early October.

When I look back at it now, it [the transition year] was one of my best years because when they made that announcement [that Dr. Scott was leaving], it didn't come as a surprise because they already knew Jim was a candidate at another school. But all the political stuff went right to Andrew Beyer [the associate head]. It's like for the faculty,

"Who has power in the organization? Andrew." It allowed me to finish up with the capital campaign, to do the farewell tour, to be able to make two or three trips back here [to Punahou] to make that transition, to make it clear that there was one president at a time and that guy is Rod McPhee, and although I'm here to help with the transition, I am not making decisions about budgets, and professional development, and admissions. And then once that clarity hit, that was great. When I left Catlin, their gift to me was an endowed scholarship in my name which was great because they didn't have a huge endowment.

Ka Punahou
Est. 1919
James Kapae'alii Scott
1994 Person of the Year

*Figure 4.5.* The Punahou school newspaper, Ka Punahou, announces Dr. James Kapaeʻalii Scott as its new president in 1994. (Punahou School)

**Values Brought to Punahou – Making a Large School Small**

My mantra for 20 years has been how do you make a large school smaller? I think it's my own style but also it was my successful experiences in a smaller school that can allow me still to stand up in front of a faculty to have a conversation. And we do so about four times a year in a large group. Then I also have different, smaller faculty meetings. Same thing is true with the chapels and assemblies with kids. We gather the student body together twice, once at the beginning of the school and once at the end of school. So in that sense, even though this place [Punahou] is still sort of corporate in its

structure - it needs to be, you know, because of its size and complexity - my personal style was shaped in smaller environments where I felt comfortable in my public speaking both one-to-one in a small group but also in a large group.

**Uncovering Punahou's Progressive Roots**

I was able to sort of uncover Punahou's progressive roots. Sometimes from the outside, people see the AP [Advanced Placement Courses], and the college placement, and the division one athletics, and it just feels like this machine. But at the core of it, there is this progressive, constant renewing, cutting edge, what are the best practices, how do kids learn, how's the world changing, what are we doing to get kids get ready for that changing world? And I didn't bring that. It was there. And it wasn't just my predecessor who started it. I think it was the autonomy of those two previous principals. When you go back and read the history of Punahou, it was very Dewey driven, experiential. So it's been able to keep its innovation and creativity because of its traditional success. So this tension between history, continuity, tradition, standards, 175 years, reputation, and brand, allows for innovation, change, transition, experimentation, which is probably harder to do in a smaller school.

When former NAIS president, Peter Relic came in, he kind of just said, "schools like us [Punahou] should move away from the AP and show the college board that even Punahou doesn't need AP," but the fact is we're big enough so that we could have AP U.S. history and regular U.S. history and to be able to challenge the top half for the kids but also encourage the bottom half. So I think that my progressive attraction to Catlin allowed me to uncover the progressive virtues of this school [Punahou].

**Financial Aid - The Push to Increase it**

When I got here 20 years ago, there were two sources of money for the financial aid budget. There were restricted endowment funds which were not professionally managed and fundraising. The [annual Punahou] carnival was our major fundraiser. This meant that depending on fluctuations of investments and whether or not it rained at the carnival on Friday night that your financial aid budget was at risk. And so the reason that so many people want to know how the carnival did was because that was the way we diversified the school. "Sorry, financial aid has to go down because the endowment wasn't quite what it should have been this year and it rained Friday night." I was thinking, "Gee! it's Punahou. What are you guys doing?" And on top of that, the financial aid director was also the human resources director, and she didn't really get to financial aid until like June. So you would admit these kids. They would wait to see what they got financially. Meanwhile your school and other schools are saying, "Well, here's your admissions, here's your financial aid."

So some people think it's a miracle. I think it's kind of more common sense. But I said, "We're going to not just grow the financial budget, but we're going to limit uncertainty and ambiguity and just kind of make sure it's there." So I brought that as a best practice from my two previous schools. And I think that the earlier riddle for me was not just how to make a large school smaller, but how does the largest independent school in America in a population of less than a million on Oahu stay highly selected when there's some pretty good options? In our case, you have Maryknoll, Mid-Pac, 'Iolani, Saint Louis. There are really some solid places, legitimate schools, and options. And I think for me, it wasn't just brand and reputation and network of the alumni. It had to be a

financial aid budget that had philosophical aspiration that said, “if you’re admitted, we want you to come here regardless of your financial circumstances.” And to do that, you have to give a 100 percent demonstrated need - noble and ambitious, but expensive in a K-12 school as you know, especially with the economic downturn where people’s uncertainty has them applying for financial aid just to keep their bases covered.

In the last five years, Punahou has reflected what most NAIS schools have reflected and that’s the importance of affordability. People ask, “How is it possible that a family making $180,000 can still be on financial aid?” Well, they have four kids, two of them are in college.

**Fundraising and Storytelling**

As heads of the school, we don’t talk a lot about fund raising. We all do it. It’s not a well-kept secret. It’s probably on one hand maybe one of the things that we like the least, but what I learned at Catlin was that because of that turnover, people stopped giving. And because of two schools merging, although the merger itself was successful, essentially what they did was like cut off their history from those two legacies. Both the Gabel Country Day and the Miss Catlin alumnae felt their school died in 1957. The fact is I spent a lot of time telling the story again. I had a couple of good fund raisers on my Board, had good fund raising consultants, had a great development director in Portland who sort of helped this sort of young head of school become a better storyteller. And that’s what I actually ended up realizing was that raising money is telling a story. And even if someone turns you down, at least you’ve had a chance to tell them your story.

***Interviewer: And how important a role do you think the storytelling has played when you're asking for big donations?***

I think it's vital. I mean people give money to people. People will give money to vision and aspiration and ideals. People give money to the promise and potential of a human being. And if you've got a good story, it's helpful. My former Board Chair at Catlin used to call it his theology of giving that you need to tap not people giving to need, because we all have needs, but tapping people's need to give. And so that storytelling almost becomes kind of a religious passage. When Steve Case gave the money to build the Case Middle School, it was to honor his mother and father who made the sacrifices for he and his siblings to get through here. When Pierre & Pam Omidyar gave the challenge to get us over the top for the K-1 neighborhood, they believed they were building an example for the planet not just for 150 kids.

When I first got here, our first project was the Science Building. We worked like heck and did pretty well. And the trustees at that time always felt like you sort of get geared up, raise money for the Science Building, and then you kind of fold down the tent and let go of some people. And then you kind of rest and wait for the next campaign. And it was the carnival in 1999, and we're just about to open the Science building, and I thought that Steve Case was going to give us a gift to kind of wrap it all up. He instead gave us the lead gift for the next project. So we had to keep the tent up and hire a few more people. And so when we finished the Case Middle School, we were just exhausted but my intuition at the time was to not fold the tent. We just said, "We're going to keep going."

I think that what felt a little counterintuitive for some trustees ended up to be a good investment. And that is that we've grown the advancement staff. We've become

more like a college model. We've got a vice president for advancement, and she's got four direct reports who are essentially major gift officers. And like a college or university, they just work in that list. And they're cultivating them. Before I go [on summer vacation], I've got notes, letters, emails of people that I need to just touch in on. An example is the Omidyars, their routine is go to France and one of the staff members had all these pictures put in a book, and I signed the book saying, "Thank you for helping us to change the planet."

Just last Saturday, we got the lead gift for grades two and three. And that has sort of lifted everyone's sights and that will become the largest gift in the history of school from someone who was not quite on our radar screen.

We also have half of our graduates who live off the Island of Oahu, so we have to behave more like an Occidental College than an independent day school because our alumni are everywhere. When I first got here, we didn't have a full database because we didn't have an IT system that could house it all. We didn't even have email in 1994. For all our success, it wasn't a terribly sophisticated operation. And part of it was because it was kind of lean and mean. If we keep tuitions down, by having large classes, larger teaching loads, heavier teaching loads, and a pretty lean administrative system which I think intuitively sounds good, you can't reach your full potential if that's your only model. And it's been controversial with the trustees. The joke in the faculty is how many advancement people does it take to change the light bulb? One more every year. I don't know how much we've raised in 20 years, but we've averaged around $12 million a year.

So when we take our football team to San Diego next month, I'm going to go earlier. And again, this is the success of a great advancement team. I am going to spend a

full day with a person who's celebrating his 50th high school reunion who never went to college, never got married, and followed his passion. He developed sound systems for the entertainment business. He's become a multimillionaire, and we just discovered him. So he's not only going to give the lead gift to his class, but he has a chance to put his name on the music building. And he told our staff, "I've been working so hard my entire life by taking care of my niece and my nephew, maybe it's time to do something for Punahou." So those are the types of stories that end up inspiring others.

**Becoming a Better Storyteller**

***Interviewer: Do you have any advice for others in terms of improving themselves in their ability to tell stories?***

I remember having a fundraising consultant at Catlin Gabel who felt that my toughest challenge was management of my attention because I'd rather be shooting basketballs with kids or helping the Social Studies Department with their new requirement in economics. It's my background. It's what I love. But she used to say, there's only one person who's head of the school, and therefore there's only one person that this potential seven-figure donor is going to want to talk to. So what are all the things that only the head of school can do? And let's put them down on paper and let's focus on those. And to the extent you get those done then you can play basketball with seventh graders. I think that the head of school is the chief storyteller. And it's not just for donors. It's for parents. It's for kids. It's for teachers because I think that's what inspires people to be in schools.

I think they [heads of school] need to have a chief development officer or in our case, it's the vice president for advancement. They've got to be a really good partner and someone who not only has access to you, but who is just a true partner. You can say

things to each other that other people can't say to you, and someone who also has the respect of the community and the trustees to sort of set the table for you. And when you're talking strategy, because I tend to be all over the place, there are people who narrow down not just strategy, but the message. So we're starting to get some good communications people who are just looking at everything I write, everything I say in public and just beginning to just refine and hone the message, and we have to practice it.

**A Couple Early Missteps**

After about three years [at Punahou], I decided to have Win Healy [long time Principal of the Academy] step down. He was loved by some, revered by some, but not by a lot of others. So when I made that announcement, I didn't really let my board members know ahead of time. Because I'm thinking, again, this is kind of a misread, "This is my direct report. It's not a material event for the trustees to know." But I learned early on that was not a good thing to do, because, one, it's a surprise and my covenant, as your covenant is with your board, there are no surprises.

Jim Wo [Board Chair] said, "I felt dumb. People were asking me, 'Were you consulted?' and I said no, 'I couldn't help him.'" And I said, "Jim, it wouldn't have occurred to me to consult you because I didn't do that at my last school as a direct report." He says, "Yeah, but this guy has been here for 29 years in that same position. He might be controversial, but he's also revered. You should have let us help you." And so there was that moment where you think you're younger than you really are, and you think you need to prove yourself more than you really do. I think there's always a part of every leader, even of the most pompous leaders, that feels that they're impostors. I don't know that for sure, but I see it in myself. There's a part of this you didn't deserve or earn, or

that you're not quite as good at, but you can't let anyone know that. So, that's where I was vulnerable.

One of my schoolmates at Punahou was a guy named Arnold Morgado. He was great football player/athlete who went on to Michigan State and to play with Kansas City Chiefs. By the time I came back, 24 or 25 years later, he's running for mayor. So I got a call from his campaign manager. He says, Arnold is running an ad in this Sunday's paper, and he wants to know if he could list your name as one of the "Hawaiians for Arnold". I said, "Yeah, sure. Arnie, he's a good guy." Well, Dan Case, one of my trustees, sees this paper and he calls me up and he says, "You know what, you're not a private citizen here. You're the President of Punahou actually making an endorsement of your good buddy who's running against somebody who's probably got kids or grandkids in the school." So that was, again, a kind of an early warning that I'm not going to put a bumper sticker on my car.

***Interviewer:*** ***Was there ever a time in your early years, because of issues that came up with the board or missteps you made, where you thought perhaps your time at Punahou is going to be cut short?***

No. That's actually pretty amazing. But see, I think that goes both ways. It's a board that expects that its president is going to be here for a quarter of a century. I think if I had two or three of those missteps in a row or had repeated them or had been dishonest somehow or untruthful. I also have a very savvy wife who's not caught up with the imperial nature of my position, our home, her role, that is very clear about financial matters, and what's the school and what's us. So I'm kind of a boy scout with that kind of stuff. I've held myself up to a different standard because I know that over 20 years

you can get careless or arrogant about those financial matters and that comes with power and influence and status and success.

**Board of Trustees – Pros and Cons to having a new Board Chair Every Two Years**

And so I come to Punahou and there are no term limits [for the Board of Trustees]. There are age limits. It used to be 70 then they moved it to 72 and then 75. They called it the Thurston Twigg-Smith rule because every time he came up they would say, "This guy is one of the top donors to the school. We're not going to get rid of him." So at first, I thought that this rule would be a weakness. I'm thinking, "How the heck do you have these 70-year-olds sitting around the boardroom? Do they fall asleep? Do they show up? Are they up to snuff?" And they were the same age as my dad. So when I first got here, the people in search committee were my dad's schoolmates, Mr. Wo, Mr. Case, Mr. Twigg-Smith. I grew up with their kids. I remember Jimmy Wo said, "You can call me Jimmy." And I said, "I can't, I grew up with your kids, I can't." For me, the age limits have worked because the board is so highly selective in replenishing itself. They believe that they are appointing a board member for life. They believe that the selection process goes beyond the traditional wealth, wisdom, work. They can imagine every new board member eventually chairing the board. They've got that skill set and that capacity, and probably, willingness. So what that has translated to in the last 20 years has been a new board chair about every two years.

***Interviewer: There seems like there would be pros and cons to that.***

Yeah. So let's start with the pros. That means I've got in the board room at least half the people who have been my board chair. They have sort of seen up close and personal what sometimes the rest of the board doesn't see. You have then people who

are a source of support and insight and access for the board chair. Claire Johnson just went off as my board chair. She was the first woman board chair in the history of the school. She was great, but the way we were able to talk her into it was that we told her that she's got resources sitting around. There are also cons to having a new board chair every two years. You've probably seen the NAIS research that says that the transition in heads is directly related to a transition in board chair. I can see how that could happen.

So the metaphor that I used in our last WASC self-evaluation was that it's like getting used to different relief pitcher every two years - different stuff, different style, different temperaments. Some people want to be called once a week. Some people say, "Don't call me at all unless you've got a challenge." Some people feel that this is my chance to finally get some things through that I've wanted to. But the good thing about it is that the board is bigger than any one person, although they got some strong characters. The school's bigger than any one person. So, that helps to mitigate some of the self-serving things that could happen with a strong board chair. So, I think that if I felt vulnerable sometimes, it's because some board chairs have different needs to be busy looking at details and accountability. It kind of depends every year on what people want. For the most part we've been able to sort of smooth that out, but there are some times over the last 20 years where I felt more vulnerable.

**Helping the Board to be Successful**

I think that realizing I have to help the board to be successful came with some maturity, confidence and the understanding that these people are not just giving us resources, they're giving us time and there's a pride of association. I needed to have them have a successful experience every time they took a vote, every time they entered into an

argument. It's a healthy board and it's healthy not because they're all marching to the same drum but because there's a respectful candor and discourse that is really special. It means circling back with people. I could just tell after two or three of the financial aid conversations that some people were just uncomfortable understanding it but were afraid to air it too publicly because they didn't want to feel like they were being anti-Jim or anti-diversity. So, just circling back with them to sort of really get at some of their assumptions is important.

**Getting Others to See the Whole**

My predecessor was great. He was fun. He was humorous. He was quick on his feet. He loved the cocktail circuit. He was on a lot of boards around town. He was great with most of the parents. But he's essentially sort of left the running of the school to the two principals. Essentially, I have that same model. I pay Mike [Punahou Lower School Principal] and Kevin [Punahou Academy Principal] well, and I hold them responsible for great teaching. And I give them the resources to do that. But the role of the head then becomes to hold the system together, to keep people from sub-optimizing. To make sure that Kevin, Mike, and I are talking every week about what's K-12 and getting them to see the whole system. You don't make a decision out of context from a whole.

**Administrative Team - Promoting "Group Think"**

I need people that can see broadly, can see the whole system, who understand their interdependence with one another, who are good seekers and problem solvers, and who value sort of the group think. And I try to model that in my own meetings. There are things that are left sort of uncertain or undecided in this quadrant, in this box that need time. But I can't stay in that box too long; otherwise you sort of suffer from either

poor mental health or an organizational paralysis. And oftentimes, the feedback is easy but they'll look at me and say, "Okay, what do you want to do boss?"

I have a great relationship with Mike and Kevin. When I hired them, I knew in my heart that I needed to go outside the organization although that was controversial because I couldn't let their predecessors pick their successors, which is sort of how it went before. For as wonderfully progressive as Punahou was, it just needed new lenses with different experiences and perspectives to bring that out even more. And I needed to hire people who were capable of being a head of school. In fact, whose next step should be a head of school. Kevin and I are the same age and he just finished his twelfth year. Mike just finished his fifteenth year, so they're entering their 13 and 16. So the relationships are solid.

There's a former dean that I went to visit when I was in Cleveland a couple of years ago for a meeting or a conference. She's at one of those schools up in Shaker Heights, and she was head of the upper school. So we went out. I said, so what do you miss [from Punahou]. She says, "You know, I just miss the group." At Punahou you're a dean, but you're one of like nine deans. So you actually bring a problem or that one area, that one quadrant where your soul's sort of searching for the right way to frame it, and the group think helped you. She says, "That's what I miss. Here, I might have my head, but he's in and out, and I don't have a lot of colleagues."

**Administrative Meetings - Critical Success Factors and Leadership Development**

***Interviewer: Can you just talk a little bit about what you're trying to accomplish in your weekly administrative meetings?***

Their best use of me is strategy. I try to invert the agenda so that we get a lot of the sort of operational stuff done pretty quickly where they just need to check in about

something, and it's usually about money or people. But if there's a tough people issue, if there' a curricular transition where you're moving people and ideas, that's where we end up spending more time. So it's an hour and a half every week or we'll add people.

How those meetings go is that we have critical success factors based around certain areas, learning environments, faculty innovation, and access. So they [Mike and Kevin] have their own critical success factors usually around some of these areas. I'm pushing them. By changing the agenda around and talking about strategy, I'm also saying I'm checking in with them about some of the goals they set with me back in August knowing that the annual goals are sort of areas in transition. Sometimes they're three to five year goals. So in many ways, coming in here [president's office] or me going to their office is a bit of a respite, but it should be engaging enough so that it's forcing them into the quadrant that may not be urgent, but it's important. We tend to focus on things that are always urgent and less important because there'll be two messages waiting for me to call people when I leave this meeting. And that becomes something I've got to do.

***Interviewer: Are you focusing on developing the leaders around you?***

I don't assume that I'm developing them for them to leave. I'm developing them to become better for the school and better with their parts of the organization and better for me. At the same time, when that happens, you become more transparent to them so that you can help them develop that leadership even when they do leave.

**Faculty Relationships**

In terms of my own personal relationship with the faculty, I think as the years passed, I worry that I'm not getting to know the younger teachers as well, and that's a missed opportunity. At the same time, I've got 350 faculty members. If I know all their

names, it's a miracle. At the same time, I see myself as an educator. I see myself as a teacher first. And I'm still called in to some history lectures and economics classes just because I've got some expertise. So I'm not teaching a class like I did at Catlin Gabel, but I'm in front of kids a lot. And I feel like I'm teaching every time I'm in front of them in chapel, in assembly or a small group like when I'm invited to talk to a team that is about to go play a big game.

And I think that the faculty can tell whether you're a good connector with kids, and that's meaningful. In fact, I'm also curious about what they're doing. And that curiosity is an intellectual curiosity that helps me to grow and change because I'm in front of the faculty a lot asking the same question, "How is the world changing? and What are we doing to get our kids ready for that changing world?" It's just not about the sequential nature of their class.

**Faculty President's Advisory Council – Changes Had to be Made**

I have a faculty president's advisory council that meets quarterly, and they're elected. At first it felt kind of like a union shop, and some people probably still have a memory of that. The culture [of the council] I inherited was that three parts of the school had elected representatives to the president's advisory council. Essentially, the format was just they go around the table and they list their concerns and gripes. And so, different parts of the school have different ways of doing that. Sometimes they send emails saying, "Okay. I've got to go talk to Jim. What do you want to know?" It ranged everything from compensation benefits, which is a good topic, to the quality of the yard work in front of their classrooms. What it did is it circumvented natural ways of communicating. And so, as I replaced a lot of the administrators, especially the principals, I essentially said to

them, “This is your job, and in fact I’m not going to let the president’s advisory council bypass the issues that you should be dealing with directly,” which they appreciated.

The second thing is that we reworked the purposes of the president’s advisory council and kept it to policy issues, strategic directions, things that they’d like to talk to the trustees about. So it elevated the conversation to policy and strategy. Every so often, something would come up then I would say, “Okay. I’d like your help. Tell me where you think that should go next, the director of the physical plant, your assistant principal, your dean, your supervisor?” I’m trying to improve the quality of communication by clarifying where I prefer that they go next. Now sometimes if there was a personnel issue or if there was something going on at certain parts of the school, then I would meet that group offline. I think it took time. It took me figuring out what it was. It took some leadership changes, changes in culture, but I had to become much more overt and specific and explicit. Also we had to rewrite the purposes around what you want to talk to me about.

So, it’s not a gripe session, because my job is to kind of put it back into the system. If someone’s got a concern or gripe, taking it straight to the president is one way to deal with it, but having me help them to figure out how to fix it is better. However, if there’s a pattern where they’re feeling a blockage or inability to operate, then that does become my problem. Right now, they [the council] help me to set up the agenda about sort of school-wide issues affecting the faculty. It keeps my ear to the ground. And also, it forges a relationship with them [the faculty] because they [the council members] rotate. It means a lot to me that they’ve been elected by their peers. I’d like to believe that it’s because they are a respected key opinion leader. On my own, I would start to seek people

out or get some feedback or advice, or sometimes I'd ask, "What should I be paying attention to?"

**Involving others in Decision Making**

I try to involve faculty members whenever I've done searches. So the principal searches, AD [athletic director] searches, and even the search for the CFO [Chief Financial Officer] are a way of not only getting that broad base of opinion, but also broadening someone's perspective for the purpose of putting them on the committee.

There are areas of the school that don't naturally come under the two principals and they usually are K-12 issues. Let me give you an example. We're about to build a music building over the next few years. That involves the K-12 music faculty, plus the faculty of the music school. It's a tough group. I know them and like them individually. Collectively together they have a hard time forging agreements. I met with the entire department during Orientation Week and let them know this was going to happen, then I've met with two members of the administrative leadership team who are going to help me with those conversations, and then they are going to be picking representative people from that group. That's an example of being as communicative as I can, but also finding the key opinion leaders that are going to help me to lead.

**Job Stress**

Sometime today, probably right now or tonight, there are adults and students making judgments. And at some point, I don't feel always ultimately responsible, but if it's a coach with a kid who's going to play a volleyball game, I'm ultimately responsible for that person's behavior. Luckily, we've got good systems in hiring, so I don't fret about it, but there's a part of me that's always feeling vulnerable about them, stressed.

Right at carnival time, I realized that there are a lot of things that can go wrong here. If I worry about it too much, I probably wouldn't want to do the carnival and that's not an option. Every time a bus leaves campus, I pray to go God that the driver is sober, that there's someone on the freeway that's not going to hurt them. There are all those moving parts, so that's one thing. At some point, if you can't manage that stress, you need to get out of it.

Fundraising, it's not something we talk about a lot as heads, but I just feel ultimately really responsible. In fact, I feel it's almost my obligation. For me, it's not the ego of fundraising. It's the health of the organization. In fact, I was just telling the parents, "if you have strong enrollment, endowment that adds value, robust fundraising, then on the revenue side, you're going to be pretty secure, and that allows for innovation, the reflection, the experimentation." But I feel like when I got here 19 years ago, I inherited a huge, deferred maintenance challenge around the facilities, and if they were easy to raise money for, then my predecessor would've done something about it, so I was just driven by that. The next seven or eight years, I just want to leave this place a lot better than the way it was found. Anyway, the financial health of the place is a source of stress. It shouldn't be. From the outside -- you're probably looking at me going, "What's to worry about here?" but it's the stressfulness of fundraising. You just always feel like you could've done more, that you should be doing more.

**Managing Stress through Shared Leadership and Increased Vigilance**

The last three years, I started to go to talk to coaches who gather naturally by season before their season starts to have the orientation from the AD's. I ask for some time with them and I essentially say that, "You're not a member of the coaching staff.

You're a member of my faculty. Our kids are about to spend more time with you this afternoon than any one teacher will on a given day, so you are an educator, first and foremost, and these are the things that I expect from you." I also say that, "Every time you leave this campus, every time you get off that bus, every time you confront that ref, you are representing the school." And so, we began to talk about that more, about that shared leadership. So what I want to be able to do is to share that stress with folks so that they understand that they all have this obligation. In fact, someone's thinking about it and worrying about it. That's one way.

The second thing is having enough people who are just keeping their eye on the ball, not being negligent, and just anticipating. About 10 or 12 years ago, we had a football team that did a pre-season game on Kauai. After the game the next day, they stayed and coaches were chaperoning. The pressure was off and they had some beers in their own room. The kids noticed that and just started to have some beers in their own room. I just felt so wronged that I said, "Never again am I going to let a football team travel," so we had to resolve all that. In the last several trips, what we've done is essentially over-resourced the trip, not to relieve the coaches of anything, but just to actually be prepared. We sent deans and counselors so that the kids know that every transition has been anticipated and planned for. We put the coaches to work when we took the kids to the Chargers and 49ers pre-season game two weeks ago. They sat with their position coach. If they wanted to go get something to eat or go to the bathroom, they went with their position coaches. Anyway, I bring that up because there was the example of the adjustment made in order to be much more vigilant, especially in a school this large.

**Balancing the Personal and Professional Demands of the Job / Lack of Privacy**

I've got great kids and a great wife, and they understand that there are a lot of benefits that they get that come with this job, but there's a certain toll to that too. So, when my kids and I were in the car the other night. We went to go grab dinner because Maureen was running late and I asked, "So where do you want to go?" And then my son says, "Let's go someplace where no one knows you." And Tessa [Dr. Scott's daughter] goes, "Yeah, yeah, yeah". And they never agree with anything. So they're in the back seat, I'm driving along and I was thinking, just when they think they have me, I'm saying "Hi" to someone.

And even last night, Tessa and I went to this summer play which is *Honk - The Ugly Duckling* the musical. She had studied for finals so she could do this hour and a half. And when she was ready to go home and I said, "Well, I'd like to go say hi to the kids and families." And I could just see her face going, "Dad, this is not what I signed up for". So we separated. She was okay to go back home on her own, and I did my thing. I was walking back thinking that could have been a moment that I could have been walking with her talking about the play. So, it's a constant balance in a place this large.

**The Need to be a People Person**

***Interviewer: You must feel like a big weight is lifted off when you go to some place where not everybody knows you.***

I was reading something about Bill Clinton the other day, about how it was hard on his staff because he was so energetic and such an extrovert. He just loved talking to people, being with people, smoozing with people. There's a part of me that's kind of introverted, but if you don't like this part of the job, then you're not going to last very long.

We had a PFA [Parent, Faculty Association] lunch, and I had some pieces of bad news personally with a couple of friends, and so it was hard to be just on and focused, but I genuinely enjoy people. It's not like I'm hiding in the back, but I'm just a little preoccupied. I'm sometimes a victim of my own preferences. I don't necessarily feel a lack of pressure or have a lot of release when I don't have to see people because I kind of miss it.

**Successes – Fundraising, Financial Management, Financial Aid, Maintenance, and Public Purpose Initiatives**

***Interviewer: Are there two or three things that you really feel good about that help you feel that you have succeeded at Punahou?***

We've increased the [school's] fundraising capacity and confidence and actually enlarging the pool of people who have never been asked before or who aren't used to being asked. I think financial management processes have been improved. We've never had a plant reserve. They would run surpluses, but there's not a PPRRSM [Provision for Plant Replacement, Renewal, and Special Maintenance] account where you can actually see a plant reserve, so that's big. We allowed people to pay the bills when they wanted to, when they could, and we wrote off some bad debt. It was very lax. I think the notion of a private school serving a greater public purpose is important. I really believe it. It actually allowed me to stay in these second ten years, but I had to have that understanding with the board that I was going to spend some time with the PUEO program with ITLII [Institute for Teaching, Learning and Instructional Innovation] - essentially being a resource for public schools. Also, just really pushing the financial aid budget is big. So, financial access, public purpose initiatives, fundraising capacity, getting at the deferred maintenance are important.

**Challenges – Developing Systems Thinkers and Managing Athletic Expectations**

I think anytime you attract talented, strong people who come to build a program here in their area, it's hard for them to see the whole. And so, developing systems thinkers is just a constant challenge. It's what Senge [author Peter M. Senge] says, "that people tend to sub-optimize." So whenever someone comes in with an area or an issue, I try to get them to see the whole, be it scarce resources or not being on my agenda yet, but that lasts for a while and then it kind of rears its ugly head again.

There is a downside of athletic success that's hard to believe from the outside, but it's attracting a culture of parents and some kids who expect to be playing, expect to be winning, expect to be going to college on a [NCAA] Division I scholarship. And when that's not happening, somehow the transaction is not working. So as much as I love the success of the athletic program, my goal has not been to collect state championships. The goal is to have those kids imagine themselves in the hunt for state championships all the time, to have them feel competitive all the time. We've had to work more. There's more pressure on the AD's and the coaches. More people have been chased out by that or just burnt out trying to manage it. We've just been thinking about how we can now improve ourselves even more, and it's going to take a lot of us as a group of coaches and educators, to just help to educate parents and kids about what we're about and why. I've even changed my language, too. At graduation, we don't list all the things we have won.

We've got this outstanding music program that has worked in conditions that have just been constraining, so they excel in spite of their spaces. As we've been raising money to just renovate K-8 and science, I just want to improve and expand teaching spaces for the music program.

And then on a real selfish basis, we have a baseball field out here that can't even be our home field because the right field fence is too short. We practice on it, but all of our home games are at the Ala Wai. So compared to St. Louis and Kamehameha and 'Iolani and Mid-Pac, we're lacking. When we won seven baseball championships in a row, people said "See we did it without a field." It's not failure, but it's kind of a loss.

**Preserving the Past while Building for the Future**

Yeah, so we're able to preserve the former boys' dormitory, Wilcox Hall, and integrated it into the new design, but the former girls' dormitory with the way it's placed and the way it is, the master plan calls for it to come down. It's iconic, but we are betting on the fact that we're going to build superior spaces for the 4th or 5th Graders, and in fact, we are going to increase and enhance green space, open space, play space, and athletic space. We're going to reaffirm the area around the lily pond at the center of the school. Those are all of the values and principles that will carry the day as we also honor the memory of Castle Hall and all of the wonderful things that went into it.

***Interviewer: Are you fearful that there are going to be a number of detractors with that idea?***

Not fearful. There won't be detractors. There will be grief and lament. It will have to be like acknowledging death. And part of what I've learned from people like Rob Evans is that it's important to acknowledge that, that we need to celebrate endings before we celebrate beginnings.

There is enough shared vision and common ground that potential detractors will see the benefits of improved 21st century classrooms and the benefits of more open space and green space that orients the entire campus towards the common core – the lily pond and Ka Punahou.

## Reflection

### Changing Leadership Style – Asking for Help

***Interviewer: How do you think your leadership style or philosophy has changed over the 20 years you've been at Punahou?***

I think I'm now better at asking for help. In my first couple of years, one, it was a different governance style, but I was young and in the largest independent school in America. I already had been at another school for eight years at the time, but I was just a young head with experience in a tinier setting – a different scale. I think there was a part of me that felt that I had to prove myself and live up to the billing.

As the years passed, I've realized that by asking for help, I'm actually developing my influence because people like it. It's sincere. They feel they really can be helpful. I'm letting my guard down and saying, "This is what I know. This is what I don't know," or "This is what I'm feeling, but this is the question I have. What do you think?" and they feel like they've been brought in a little closer. So, I've had a series of events that have allowed me to feel better about that, whether it's about student discipline or firing a teacher or administrator, to a tough parent. Asking help from people on my board, asking help from colleagues – both here but also on the mainland – and then developing a real nice connection with my direct reports are all important.

### Leadership Lessons Learned – Being Comfortable with What You Are Not Doing

I've taught history for a number of years and the growth in a history teacher is knowing what to leave out of your course, what not to cover because a young teacher who's not very confident has what I refer to as the "tyranny of coverage." They want to get through all of this because my God, it might be on the test or the person next door is going to say, "Well, he's not covering that," or some smart kid who's a lot smarter than

you is going to say, “Well, that’s bogus.” So when you translate that to a leadership management, it’s feeling comfortable with what you’re not doing or the role you’re not playing or the JV volleyball game I won’t get to this afternoon. In order to flourish in this position, in your position, you’ve got to legitimately love all aspects of school.

And so, what I’ve learned to do is to look for those moments that are just most visible, most significant. If I go to the second JV game tonight, the parents are going to be there, the kids are going to be there, I don’t have to be there the whole time. That’s just one example. I’ve found ways to be in chapels, assemblies, special events. That’s where I get some advice from department heads, AD’s, coaches who say, “Hey, I’ve got a big game coming up. You may want come by for a little while.” It’s just having some confidence about where I’m not spending my time.

**Leadership Lessons Learned – Rehearse, Visualize, and Anticipate**

I think the other area where I’ve grown more confident is the whole area of public speaking. People are watching you all the time. I was just telling you how this has been a week where I just had chapels, assemblies, open houses, PFA meetings, board, and faculty obligations. What it means is I’ve got to be on. And so, I just can’t go from a meeting like this, walk over to a high school faculty meeting, and talk about hiring an architect for the libraries. I need to develop that space, so that takes a discipline and a structure, and trying to rehearse those transitions ahead of time.

I visualize my day usually the night before and I visualize all the transitions in my day and the outcomes, but also my role because one of the challenges here is everyone is always yielding. “Jim’s here. He must want to talk.” I can’t sit quietly in a meeting without someone saying, “Jim, what do you think?” So that notion of being on and also

getting yourself ready is important. And then people will go away and talk with five people about what Jim said, so I have to be really just mindful of that so it would be crisp and diligent, and sometimes choose not to speak.

Like Monday, I know at 1:30 I've got a pretty challenging fundraising call, just a tricky couple. So what I need to do is to - probably with my advancement directors - just kind of rehearse all the possibilities, so I have the discipline to let them know what we need, but also flexibility to understand where they might want to go, and that takes a certain amount of anticipation of five or six different things. And so, it's also surrounding myself with people who can think about multiple possibilities simultaneously and just be able to chat with me about that, so it's almost a rehearsal.

**Self-Doubt – We all have it**

I think there is a part of all of us that doubts ourselves. We do a pretty good job of concealing that. And it's usually the people who are closest to us, either the parents, the spouse, a good buddy or someone that sees that.

Nobody sees themselves as a wonderful fundraiser because it's like sales. There's always the one that got away. There's always the "could've", "would've", "should've". There's always, "This is nice, but it was totally an accident." And so, you see all the stuff that you didn't do to get that big gift, and yet people go, "Wow! You can raise money." So sometimes, when we're asking [for money] or when I'm with somebody, there's a part that says, "Who am I to ask for this?" And so, people say, "Yeah, but you're the president. They only want to talk to the president." So fundraising early on would be an example.

Another example would be separating a long-term employee from the school. In our style and culture here, we don't surprise people, but when you actually say the words, you just change someone's life. There's a moment of self-doubt where you're saying, "This can't happen too many times in a sequence of time; otherwise, it begins to catch up with you." People look for patterns. Those are the two areas that are tough, asking for money and also separating someone from the school, especially a longstanding person.

**Being Hapa**

***Interviewer: What does it mean to you, if anything, to be the first head of Punahou that is of Hawaiian / Chinese ancestry? Do you think about that at all?***

I do sometimes about the Hawaiian part, but not often. It's probably because I think of myself as mixed race; I never put myself in a category. So when the Advertiser [Honolulu Advertiser Newspaper] headline said, "Non-Haole to Head Punahou School", the first thing that occurred to me and I said to my mom was, "What about the haole part? I'm half haole, quarter Hawaiian, quarter Chinese, and the rest of me is Romanian, German, and Irish." That's when I realized that the issue of the ethnicity is not too far below the surface.

Whenever I travel, I try to get together with some college kids, who are my kids now; they're my babies. So I buy them pizza. I don't take up more than an hour of their time. They want to see each other. They come from different schools. One time about three or four years ago I was in the Bay Area, and there were some kids from USF and Berkeley, and a couple of kids from Stanford. I ask them, "Is there a way we [Punahou] could have done a better job?" Sometimes they go, "Well, you know, the English part could have been stronger." There's one girl who says, "You should've gotten us ready for hapa issues" and they all started nodding. I said, "What do you mean?" They said, "Well,

if you go to the mainland, we felt we had to choose Asian or haole or Hawaiian. A lot of the people thought that the Asian kids were Hawaiian." So they never thought about their ethnicity until they went away.

I sometimes feel more available to the kids because they're not quite sure what I am, so it's a good connection. But in terms of Hawaiian side or the Chinese side, I've never seen that as, "Wow! I'm the first one." Every so often, I get introduced that way. In fact, a few weeks ago, I was speaking to the fall coaches at that coach meeting, and I was introduced as the first Hawaiian president of Punahou School. She had this big bio, and I looked at her and said, "I'm only quarter Hawaiian."

**Advice for New Heads**

***Interviewer: What advice might you give to an aspiring or a new head coming to Hawai'i?***

I think know thyself. You need to have become a headmaster for the right reasons, not because of prestige or money or the big house because if you don't have the passion or don't have your eyes open about all the stress levels, I think people, especially other teachers and kids can tell how you're motivated.

So for a new head, it's just knowing why you got there [to the school] and then why you were a good match for where you are, and that your skills, qualities, experience, and competencies are a good match for the needs and directions of your current school. So that matched alignment and knowing thyself are important.

I think for me mentors and good friendships are important. I think I told you stories of early on when I first got to Catlin Gabel, people who took me under their wing maybe because I was just a kid. I was 31.

There's a level of candor that's involved in the match too with your board. Boards, I think, are also pretty brittle in terms of governance, or there can be. Dan White, another good friend, a mentor, a colleague for me, I remember him saying one time, something that I always understood, but never really thought of that way. He said, "Whenever we go to head an evaluation of a WASC self-study or the visiting team, I look for two things that I can tell in the first hour, finance and governance." The school spends all kind of time on programs, which are important, but he says, "If you've got issues in finance and governance, that's how places don't get full accreditation," and he's absolutely right. That's been my advice [to aspiring heads]. Make sure there's some transparency that you can effort in the search [when aspiring heads are interviewing for a job] and in your first couple of years [on the job] about finance and governance because those are where the surprises are.

**Advice for Heads that have been around for awhile**

Ask yourself whether it's a place where you can reinvent yourself, or if you have that self-awareness and self-candor, and enough of a relationship with your own board to say, "Where do we need to go over the next ten years, and am I the right person to go there?" One of my mentors was the guy at Lakeside [School], Dan Ayrault, who said, "After seven years you should ask yourself if you should stay, and after ten years you should ask yourself why you should stay." I said, "Is that what you did?" He goes, "Yeah."

**Ideal School Head**

I think you have to love kids and you have to love teachers, and love that whole interaction between them. You need to love that you're going to reduce all the obstacles

that get in the way of their focusing on one another. You have to love that you're serving their needs, so there's this selflessness that starts with that.

I think that it's possible not to have a teaching background and still be a good head, but you have to be comfortable in the world of ideas and be curious and be intellectual without having to have a PhD in American Literature. I think the old prototype of that teacher, department head, or division head, which was sort of my background, may not be necessary. I'm just wondering if someone with a background in fundraising and financial management and governance issues, who's got some experience in practice, who also loves kids and is intellectually curious might be able to do the job. It's possible that you can get someone who's come out of industry who can be a great manager and leader, and find the right combination of people, if you're able to delegate it, to be the instructional leadership in school. At the same time, what you can't delegate are those

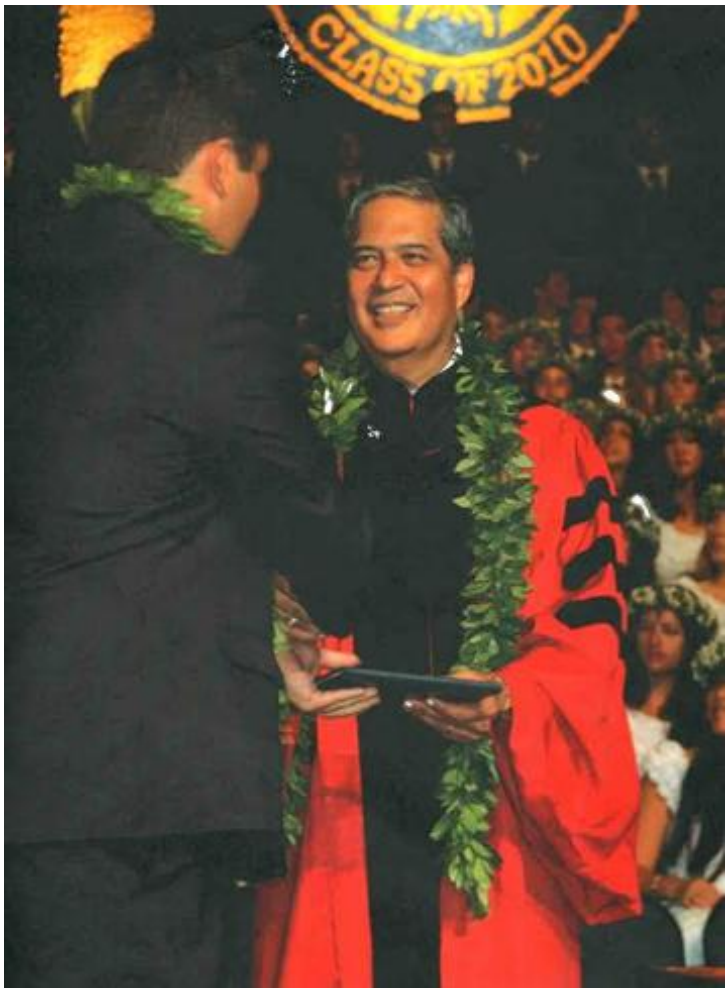


*Figure 4.6.* Dr. James Scott distributing diplomas at Punahou's 2010 commencement ceremony. (Punahou School)

public speaking appearances, that ultimate call when you have to separate someone from a community, or to be able to articulate to a parent or to a donor why your school. I don't think 20 years of teaching is a requirement for that, but you have to be able to have that both halves of the whole.

I think people who can find balance and who love all aspects of the school including maintenance. It is 360 degrees and a lot of things can come at you, and people can perceive that you don't have an interest or experience or background. When I travel to Los Angeles, the boys' water polo team is going to be there and it's really important for me for those kids and their parents to know that I want to be seen with those guys as much as I want to be with the football team. My point there is that the kids are very sensitive and their families are sensitive of where people's attention is.

**Legacy**

***Interviewer: Do you think much about your legacy?***

No, only in moments like this. We're celebrating the 175th anniversary in 2016, which means the 2015-2016 school year is when we're going to do it, which means that in two years, we're in it. And they're already talking about how the opening convocation is going to go, what the senior class is going to be like, and what's the world wide toast going to be? But this morning, the conversation was we have this book we're going to do about the 175th and it's really defining the Jim Scott years over the last 25 years since we did this for the 150th. I said, "No. Why would you do that?" They said, "Well, it's the reality of the 25 years and that's what we did when we did the Rod McPhee years." I just can't let that happen, and there's some pushback. The staff said, "Well, now it is going to happen. How do you talk about the last 25 years without talking about you? And then

how do you talk about the next 25 years without talking about what will continue and what needs to be done?" So I'm kind of wrestling with that. My instincts were saying, "Don't make a book about the Jim Scott years," but they said, "It won't be entitled the Jim Scott years, but de facto."

I was just going to give it the weekend to think about how that worked. So when you brought up, "Do I really think about my legacy?" I thought of the Hawaiian word for humility – "ha'aha'a" which means to make yourself low. Maybe there's the Asian-Hawaiian part of me that is not ambitious for those types of things like legacy. At the same time, if it helps to make sure that this hasn't been a blip but it's been a change in trajectory, then if you interviewed me in 15 years, I might have a different perspective about what that means.

**Instincts**

***Interviewer: What role do instincts play in your decision making*?**

I think it's a great question. I don't think enough had been written about it because it's hard to quantify. I just used that word today. We closed a gift in San Diego two weeks ago. The guy is doing a major gift to the music building. And the staff wanted me to write a letter saying "thank you", but also summarizing the terms of the gift, and I said, "Sure," and I played with it last night. And then they said, "Well, can you email him the attachment and then we'll send the letter to him?" But we needed to get it to him this weekend because we need to make an appointment with him next Monday. I said, "Oh, yeah."

And so I had to do chapel and when I got back, Sybil [Dr. Scott's executive secretary] had actually put it on my email, loaded the attachment, and I had already

personalized a note. But then she said, “Okay, here’s the email. Can you just write a quick note, a cover note email?” I stared at the screen and I said, “I instinctively feel this is a bad idea because it’s not me.” My staff has been asking me to do it. I think that when someone’s giving you $1.6 million, you don’t just email him a pledge card because someone needs him to get it so they can make an appointment. So I just had a quick huddle and I said, “I get paid for my instincts, and my instincts are that this doesn’t feel good,” and they didn’t hesitate. They said, “You’re the boss, one, but secondly, we trust your instincts. In fact, let us think this through. Let’s still send the letter and then we’ll have the email contact coming from a different office saying, ‘The letter’s coming. Would you like to have it now so you can start thinking about it?’”

So I think that instincts are important, but I think that my hunch -- and I’m still developing this -- is that it really can’t always be done in isolation, that when I called the advancement officer in along with my administrative assistant and I said, “This doesn’t feel right, “ they could’ve talked me out of that. They could’ve said, “Jim, he’s not going to mind. We know him.” So what you want is that guy making the third [down] and short decision to call timeout, gather his team, it doesn’t always happens this way, and say “What do you say? What do you think?”

I had a situation in my last school where we had a division head search for the head of the lower school. The guy that we found was late in the application, and he already was well down the path of an interview in several other places. So his timing and my timing were not good. Usually, I would say I’m not going to truncate a process just because our timing is off, but he was so far along at other places. I had to trust my instincts. I had to tell the search committee at the time that I’m going to stop the search.

And there were a couple, three people that it wasn't about him; it was about the process. But at the same time, they said, "It's your call," so we've got to go with it. And I never looked back on that decision. It was a great decision.

We had a tough personnel issue about four or five years ago involving a dean. There were some accusations made in an anonymous email, so we did some research over the summer and I just decided that there was enough there to let him go. But because the email was so widely distributed, covered by the press, and everything else, I felt that at that first faculty staff meeting of the year, I needed to just speak right to it. Our public relations consultant said, "Jim, this is a mistake because as you speak, there will be people in the audience texting someone who's going to forward it to the Advertiser and forward it to wherever." I said, "That's the risk I have to take, but I have to have confidence in myself that I'm going to go to the faculty and speak from my heart," in spite of the public relations consultant. At that moment, I needed to trust myself.

The outcome was positive. The people appreciated the candor to the extent that I could share, because we can't talk about personnel issues publicly, but I needed to acknowledge some of the rumors and everything, I said, "This is what we know. This is what we don't know. This is what I can tell you. This is what I can't tell you and you need to trust me that this has been a well-considered decision." The funny thing is two-thirds of the people had no idea what I was talking about.

**Schools Tried to Pull Dr. Scott Away**

There was a headhunter out of Dallas who called me one time because I knew him. He had done a couple of searches that I had been involved in before I got here. There was this school in Irvine, a new school, and they were looking for a head. They had

some money and in order to take the school from its birth to the next step, they needed somebody who had been at a real school. This guy calls me and said, "Well, I'm going to fly out there and talk to you about it." I said, "No, you don't have to fly." He says, "No, I want to." So he flies out. They [school staff] didn't know who he was. They figured he was some friend from the mainland. So we talked, and then after a few hours we walked to go see my daughter, who was in second grade at the time. I said, "We need to go by the chapel because her homeroom is in charge of the chapel." He's sitting there and just looking at the whole thing. He's watching kids come in and out. He sees my daughter up there. As we were walking out of the chapel, he says, "You can't leave here."

So that was probably the closest I came to actually taking a close look at something, not just because he was seductive, but because this was before my son was applying [to Punahou]. My daughter was young enough. It was right around that 10 or 12 year time when I was thinking if I were to leave, it would be for another challenge. It wouldn't be for more money, and that seemed to be like an interesting challenge.

**Longevity- Expectation of Longevity, Professional Renewal, and Freedom to Explore Passions**

***Interviewer: What do you believe are the main factors that have contributed to your longevity?***

Remember when I said the board kept asking me how long I was going to stay? I think it may be so specific to Punahou and such an insular mental model, but they truly believe that you come when you are 40 and you stay for 25 years and you retire here. So they wanted to be sure that I was going to do that and not put this on my resume and go do something else. So the expectation of longevity cuts through a lot of stuff.

What I found early on about some of those errors I made and not trusting people, is that it wasn't like they're looking for me to fail. They felt they're appointing someone for the next 25 years, so how do we get you to stay? How do we get you to be stronger so you'd stay? And it took me a little while to get that because it wasn't anything they've done or said. It's just that I've seen my own life in seven to ten-year eras. So the expectation of longevity would be one. You know, when I first got to Catlin Gabel, not only was I young, but there had been some turnover in the headship. And so, I had about half of the upper school faculty that said, "Well, we're just going to outlast you," because that had been their experience.

At Punahou, I think a lot of the faculty issues never got that way. You get strong characters and you may have some people that feel like a union shop, but it's not really that way. They're not recalcitrant. They're not belligerent. There was not a major uprising, and that comes again with the expectation that this guy is the trustee's guy. He's going to be here until his mid to late 60s, so that's one.

The second one is when I did go to Teachers College and I wrote that letter to my board chair. I think when you have largeness and complexity and are full of possibility in trying to reach an organizational potential, I think that it has allowed me, and maybe others, to reinvent themselves, to renew themselves and to say, "Okay, this is how my first era went. This is what I think I'd like to do on my second era. Is this still a good fit?"

So just on the faculty side, we've got people who've changed grades, changed classes, become deans, gone back to the classroom, had sabbaticals. There's renewing. So Win Healy was in many ways a tough one because I had to let him go, but he was also this mentor, my former basketball coach and my former AP English teacher. I remember

asking him, “How did you last for 29 years as a principal?” because it’s as hard as my job, if not harder. He said, “Well, I didn’t.” That’s kind of Win like. He’s always poking at you. I said, “What do you mean?” He says, “Every eight years, I take a sabbatical.” He felt that during the sabbatical he came back with an idea that he’s going to implement, and he had the support of the head to do so, and the faculty kind of braced themselves for it. “What is it going to be?”

So his first sabbatical, he came back with an idea for a variable schedule. Second sabbatical, he came back with an idea to have a mentoring program for young teachers, the MAP [Mentoring at Punahou] program. The third time, he wanted to reinvent the requirements for graduation. All were really progressive, thoughtful ideas that were rooted in research around the sabbatical. He also shared the load by assigning people to help implement it. All three of those ideas coming out of renewal, professional renewal, changed the course of the academy. So I would say the same thing. Even though I haven’t taken three sabbaticals, I feel like I can take an idea and move it. And that for me is renewing.

The whole public purpose stuff is important. If the board shut me down ten years ago and said, “You know, Jim, your job is to make Punahou the best it could be, and not to be saving Roosevelt High School” things could have been different. And there are a few people on the board that could have had that sentiment because it’s a board that expresses itself. It’s diverse. If there had been a critical mass that said, “That’s nice, but this is the Punahou that we want”, then that clarity would’ve been important to me and then I think I might have been looking around.

**Match is Important**

I think this notion of match is important. We talk about when kids apply to schools and kids apply to colleges. It's actually easier because you get more choices and you get to research. With schools, the match happens to be the opportunity at the time. I guess maybe it's possible to be waiting and then suddenly, oh, there it is. That's the spot, but that doesn't usually happen.

I felt good about the match here [at Punahou], but there was a part of me that wasn't quite sure because my predecessor was different. I knew in my heart that I couldn't define the job the way he [my predecessor] had. And when I was getting closer to being offered the job, I actually had to have that frank conversation with a few people in the search committee and was relieved to see that they said, "We're looking for someone who's not going to define it the same way." That helped me with the match question because it's not quite like marriage or courtship because there are a lot of artificial things that come into being and a lot of other pressure points, and you don't have many moments to kind of measure it up and think about it. Sometimes you get lucky, but sometimes it was a poor match. So learning how to get out and when to get out is just part of it.

# CHAPTER 5

# DISCUSSION OF LESSONS LEARNED

***"A great deal can be learned about how to lead by studying those who do it well" (Lyman, Ashby & Tripses, 2005, p. 1).***

This research project has been a journey of discovery for me. I have gained valuable insight about leadership and have learned a great deal about the research process. The purpose of this study was to use narrative to document and examine the experiences (memories and personal commentaries) of two long-time heads of school who have remained at their same Hawai‘i independent schools for a minimum of 20 years - Dr. Robert Peters of Hanahau‘oli School and Dr. James K. Scott of Punahou School. As a head of school, I was hoping that by studying successful long-term school heads I would be able to derive knowledge that will inform and improve my practice and potentially enhance my own leadership and perhaps that of other school leaders in Hawai‘i and abroad.

**Research Questions**

The main guiding research questions were:

1. What were the memorable events in the leadership journey of Dr. Robert Peters and Dr. James K. Scott?
2. What lessons can I and perhaps other school leaders learn from the respective stories of Dr. Robert Peters and Dr. James K. Scott?

The first research question was answered in chapters 3 and 4 with the richly detailed, first person narrative of Dr. Robert Peters and Dr. James K. Scott. The stories they shared were emergent in nature and detailed the memorable moments in their lives

spanning from their early childhood to the time of the interviews. I relished their stories and deeply appreciate the understanding I have gained from them. I hope others take the time to read their stories.

The second research question was fairly difficult to summarize as I found the stories of Dr. Robert Peters and Dr. James K. Scott to be compelling, entertaining, and abounding with practical and wise lessons of practice. In fact, through my conversations with them and the thorough analysis of the transcripts of our conversations, I was able to see numerous themes and common experiences emerge which I then painstakingly narrowed to eight over-arching major lessons learned. The following sections are the eight major lessons that emerged as most edifying in my own practice, and I believe to be potential instructive in the practice of other current or aspiring heads of school.

**Lesson 1: Acknowledge Insecurities/Self-Doubt and Ask for Help**

We all have our own insecurities and moments of self-doubt where we question our abilities and decisions, and it was no different for Dr. Peters and Dr. Scott who both openly described on multiple occasions moments where they struggled with self-doubt and insecurity, especially in the early parts of their careers. They also shared that they felt a strong need early-on to prove themselves.

It is evident from the narratives that masking or attempting to otherwise conceal one's insecurities have the potential to be extremely disruptive. It can lead to a fear fueled paralysis where the head of school is unwilling to take any sort of risk or it can perhaps lead to a false sense of security where an overconfident head of school is obscured from recognizing what is not working or what improvements are required. According to Dr. Peters, both of these potential outcomes would seriously diminish one's

ability to lead. It would therefore seem imperative that heads of school recognize and embrace their insecurities/self-doubt and work to properly compensate for them. Blanchard (2007) supports this idea when he talks about the profoundly adverse effects an organization can endure when leaders become "fear-driven…do-nothing bosses" (p. 262) or have a "false pride" (p. 262) as a result of overcompensation for their self-doubt.

One way to overcome feelings of inadequacy is to simply ask for help. While some leaders may find seeking assistance to be an easy proposition, others might consider it to be a more difficult task – especially in those early years when uncertainty pervades and new leaders are feeling compelled to prove their mettle. Clark (1992) explains that some people may not want to ask for help because doing so "makes us feel vulnerable – vulnerable to being discovered as imposters who don't know as much as we pretend to know" (p. 82). The importance of setting aside this compulsion to prove one's self and instead confidently seeking the counsel of others emerged in both narratives as a meaningful lesson that must be learned. After all, asking others for assistance not only reveals one's honesty and transparency, it demonstrates a willingness to put one's trust in others and can actually strengthen a head of school's leadership. Dr. Scott put it very nicely when he said, "There's power and influence in asking for help because there's a certain humility in doing so." It therefore seems as if it would behoove school heads to very quickly realize that it is perfectly okay to rely on other people for assistance despite how unsettling that notion might be for some school heads – both fledgling and veteran – to accept. This lesson was particularly difficult for Dr. Peters who shared, "I think one of the hardest lessons to learn for me….is that you don't have to have all the answers."

In addition to possessing a willingness to ask for help, the importance of recognizing when help is needed also emerged in the narrative when Dr. Peters defined good leadership as "really knowing when you need help." While learning to recognize when it is appropriate and necessary to seek assistance may be challenging for school heads, especially for neophytes who's inexperience means that they do not know what they do not know, it nevertheless warrants our attention as a worthy goal to which all heads of school should strive to achieve.

These stories are a reminder to me and should be a reminder to other current and aspiring heads of school that we must work to understand ourselves (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). In fact, Dr. Scott's first two words when giving his advice for new school heads were, "Know thyself." However, we cannot stop there. We must take that self-knowledge and use it as an impetus to acknowledge our own shortcomings and ask for help whenever we are faced with potentially difficult situations. The sooner a head of school understands that it is not only okay to ask for help, but beneficial and perhaps even essential in the development of his/her leadership, the better off they will be, and potentially, the longer he or she will endure.

**Lesson 2: Patiently Persuade rather than Publically Push**

The need to be patient and not force change upon a school community was another lesson that emerged from the stories shared. Both Dr. Peters and Dr. Scott repeatedly demonstrated their patience not only in the early years of their leadership but throughout their extensive and successful careers.

Dr. Peters described himself as a fairly patient person in the narrative; however, he did explain that despite his innately patient personality, his years on the job reinforced

the fact that he needed to be "patient with change." He also very astutely said, "Figuring out how you manage change and persuade people to be on board with change…is key to really minimizing disruption and taking people along for the ride for a change process." Dr. Scott on the other hand did not specifically describe himself using the word patient, but it is apparent from his narrative that his leadership style exudes patience. Dr. Scott has spent his career patiently listening and learning. It is evident from the stories that Dr. Peters and Dr. Scott both take the needed time to build meaningful relationships and then work those relationships in an on-going and patient effort to convince their constituencies to embrace their ideas and initiatives. In other words, rather than pushing and bullying, they are essentially trying to sell their ideas with patient persuasion. The potential problem with this tactic is that it tends to take a tremendous amount of time. In fact, Pink (2012) found in his research that full-time U.S. workers spend approximately 40 percent of their time in "non-sales selling – persuading, influencing, and convincing others in ways that don't involve making a purchase" (p. 21). That being said, it is nevertheless always better to try and persuade and convince rather than force and impose as it tends to engender genuine supporters who choose to follow their leader rather than disgruntled detractors who are required to capitulate to their dictator.

In essence, successful heads of school are what Pink (2012) terms as "movers" (p. 22). They spend time moving their school and the people in their school in a desired direction. However, what I have learned from the narratives is that we must understand and never forget that this movement should whenever possible come through thoughtful and patient persuasion as opposed to any sort of impulsive coercion. No matter how long a school head has been at a school and no matter how much success he or she may have

realized, the head must remain patiently humble and refrain from exerting hasty force. If a school head wants to realize successful change initiatives and be around for the long haul, it is wise that he or she take the time to garner the necessary support by convincing the key stakeholders and influential opinion-makers why the change is needed.

**Lesson 3: The Head of School is Chief Storyteller – Storytelling Critical in Fundraising**

The need for the head of school to be the school's chief storyteller emerged in both narratives as a vitally important responsibility for a school head to embrace and develop. Dr. Peters shared that one of the most significant ways his leadership improved over his years as head of school was that he learned "how to tell the school's story." This ability to tell the story is critical in inspiring others to support the school with their financial gifts as well as their gifts of time and talent. A good story can resonate with donors, parents, students, teachers and board members both current and potential. Dr. Scott echoed this point when he said, "I think that the head of school is the chief storyteller. And it's not just for donors. It's for parents. It's for kids. It's for teachers because I think that's what inspires people to be in schools."

It is very clear from the narratives that storytelling is above all else an essential ingredient in a successful fundraising program which emerged as another important responsibility of head of school. In fact, Dr. Scott said storytelling is "vital" and that "raising money is telling a story." He explained that "people give money to the promise and potential of a human being" and sharing a good story is very helpful in establishing those connections and discovering what is important to the donor. Furthermore, he said that the head of school is typically the only person that a "potential seven-figure donor is going to want to talk to." Recently retired NAIS President Pat Bassett affirmed the value

of storytelling in independent school leadership when he explained that storytelling was the head of school's most important role. Specifically, Bassett said that storytelling was the "most important role in various elements of the [head of school's] job, including fundraising" (Wheeler, 2010, p. 302).

Given the reported importance of storytelling as part of the head of school's overall responsibility, especially with regard to fundraising, and if the head of school is the only person who can ultimately tell the story, then it would seem advisable for heads of school to focus some of their time and energy on improving or perfecting their story telling ability. One way to do this is for heads of school to surround themselves with people who can help them craft and refine their stories in ways that connect with their target audiences. As Dr. Peters so clearly articulated, it is absolutely "critical" that the head of school be the one person responsible to "tell the story of the school". It simply cannot be left in the hands of others.

**Lesson 4: Do not work in Isolation - Communicate Honestly and Collaborate Effectively and Think Deeply about the Whole System**

The narratives of Dr. Peters and Dr. Scott continually revealed the importance of not working in isolation. Both men detailed stories of inclusion and collaboration. They emphasized the committee structure and greatly appreciated the input and value that others bring to the various conversations. From sharing the burden, to helping them codify strategy, the power of the collective was for them an indispensable part of their leadership styles. It is also apparent that they did not include others in the conversation to duplicitously generate what might be termed as an illusion of inclusion; rather they genuinely regarded the collaboration as necessary to help them fully reach their potentials and ultimately succeed in their roles as heads of school. Dr. Scott relies on "problem

solvers" who can "see broadly" and value the "group think." He needs people who can help talk him through situations, rehearse possible scenarios, and think systemically. Both men are true collaborators.

Effective collaboration requires honest communication. It involves the head of school openly sharing what they know and what they do not know. It also entails knowing when to speak and when to listen. According to Dr. Peters, the ideal school head is an attentive listener who is not necessary the first to speak. Both men shared that they are very cognizant of when they speak and what they say. Dr. Peters shared that "I'm probably not going to be the first person to speak up," while Dr. Scott said that he works to keep his comments "crisp and diligent" and sometimes chooses "not to speak." The importance of communication as a precursor to collaborative leadership is strongly supported by Gardner (1990) who said, "If one had to name a single, all-purpose instrument of leadership, it would be communication" (p. 166).

I surmise from the narratives that a good head of school is one that forms committees and regularly meets with groups to solicit input, gather information, and listen to dissenting views. An important role of the head of school is getting people to see the whole system or developing what Dr. Scott calls "systems thinkers." While it may at times seem easier and perhaps more efficient to operate as a committee of one, involving others in the conversation and helping them to understand the whole system thereby distributes the leadership responsibility and ultimately makes the head of school's life easier. Not only does it disperse some of the burden associated with being the head of school, it empowers the school community and promotes systemic accountability. All of which should increase leadership efficacy.

**Lesson 5: Stay Stimulated by serving the Broader Community**

Possessing a sense of public purpose and a desire to serve the broader community surfaced in both narratives as valuable components of Dr. Peters' and Dr. Scott's overall leadership. In addition to their daily obligations to Hanahau'oli and Punahou respectively, both men share a common passion for service to the larger community. This service is taken very seriously and seems to provide them with a sense of satisfaction and invigoration. When other school heads might have begun to let the more mundane aspects of the day-to-day grind begin to wear on them or facilitate feeling of stagnation, Dr. Peters and Dr. Scott found refuge and revitalization in their service to the community.

While both men attributed their longevity to many factors, they both shared that having their respective board's support their public purpose endeavors was critical in helping them remain so long at their respective schools. Dr. Peters said, "I really was encouraged by the board to spread my wings and become involved in things that I wanted to be involved in - both nationally and locally." Dr. Scott shared that "things could have been different" and that he "might have been looking around" if his board had shut him down after his first ten years and not supported his need to serve the broader community.

I too find service to the larger community to be very fulfilling and believe it is something that all heads of school should consider doing once they have established themselves as confident leaders at their own school. Not only is community service an obvious benefit to the community at large, it is also of value to the heads of school. It brings visibility to the school, provides a sense of altruist fulfillment for the head,

generates powerful networking opportunities, brings new perspectives and edification to the head, and ultimately helps to keep the head of school feeling refreshed and energized.

**Lesson 6: The Head of School must learn to manage the Board of Trustees**

It is easy to assume the role of an acquiescent follower to the board of trustees when assuming the position of head of school. After all, the head of school is hired by the board, answers to the board, and can ultimately be fired by the board. However, it is clear in the stories of both Dr. Peters and Dr. Scott that a successful head of school must understand the relationship between the head and board as not being one of simple subservience but rather one of respect and collaboration where the head of school gradually develops trust and confidently learns to effectively manage its board of trustees.

This type of trusting and collaborative relationship may take some time to develop. In fact, Dr. Peters shared that it was not until between his third and fifth year that he began to learn how to truly work with his board. Dr. Peters collaborated with his board to strengthen the board committee structure and explained that not only did he have to learn how to work with the board, but that they also needed to learn their role in working with him. He gained insight on board relations from his work with professional organizations such as NAIS and HAIS as well as from other heads of school. A defining moment for Dr. Peters occurred when he first "asserted" himself with his board chair, realizing that it was his "job to manage this board" and that he and the board needed to work together in a supportive and trusting manner if they wanted to ultimately move the school forward. He shared an exchange he had in his early years at Hanahau'oli with his board chair where he said, "This is not a father-child relationship. This is a supportive

relationship where, yes, you are my boss but we need to figure out how to do this together." What Dr. Peters realized is that at certain times it was his responsibility "to really push" for those things that he thought were important and not to always acquiesce to the board's opinions.

Similarly, Dr. Scott took time to develop into the board leader he is today. Dr. Scott developed a realization that part of his responsibilities as head of school were to help the board "be successful." Coming to this realization took what Dr. Scott explained to be a "maturity, confidence and the understanding that these people are not just giving us resources, they're giving us time and there's a pride of association." Dr. Scott wants his board to have a successful experience every time they take a vote or enter into an argument. He shared, "It's a healthy board and it's healthy not because they're all marching to the same drum but because there's a respectful candor and discourse that is really special." So, Dr. Scott thinks it is important to spend time "circling back" and working with his board members one-on-one to manage expectation and understand assumptions.

The narratives of Dr. Peters and Dr. Scott have demonstrated to me the clear and vitally important need for the head of school to cultivate trusting relationships with their board members so that he or she can realistically be able to one day effectively manage the board. This need is consistent with Edwards (1994) who found that schools thrive when a school's board of trustees and head of school have a trusting relationship. For new heads of school it would seem that the faster they let down their guard, begin to ask questions, and work collaboratively with the board, the sooner they might be positioned to exercise meaningful leadership in managing the board. While the onus falls on the

head of school to establish and nurture meaningful relationships with the members of the board, I do also think it would behoove boards to do their part in making sure that they are sufficiently supporting new heads of school as they are acclimating to the demands and culture of a new environment (Drucker, 1990; Edwards, 1994). Doing so should help a new head to feel more comfortable and thereby presumably help facilitate the development of those productive, trusting, and respectful relationships that are the hallmark of any good independent school.

**Lesson 7: Mentors – Important to have Someone Believe in You**

Bennis and Nanus (1997) explained that most leaders are able to identify a small number of mentors who helped them to shape "their philosophies, personalities, aspirations, and operating styles" (p. 176). What I discovered in the narratives takes the Bennie and Nanas assertions a step further and shows that mentors for Dr. Peters and Dr. Scott actually helped to give them confidence in themselves.

Dr. Peters shared that one of the professors in his doctoral program encouraged him to speak up in class which he said, "gave me the confidence in front of the group." Dr. Peters explained that it was the invitation he needed to publicly and comfortably share his thoughts and the validation he needed to realize that he was as capable as the rest of the class. Dr. Scott shared similar stories of the encouraging role mentors played in his development. He explained that a mentor can actually believe in a mentee more than they believe in themselves. Dr. Scott asked, "What do you see in me that I'm not seeing? Because I'm still seeing the impostor. I'm still seeing what I can't do. And they're saying, 'Yeah, you can do this. You can do this.'" Brookfield (2006) refers to the phenomenon where students and teachers feel that they possess neither the talent nor the

intellect to be taken seriously in a classroom as "impostorship" (p. 91) and he asserts that it can have crippling effects if taken to extreme levels. However, impostorship can be combated by admitting it, embracing it, and discussing it. One way teachers and administrators can help mitigate this problem and reassure those whom are under their influence is by openly sharing their own stories of struggle. Brookfield (2006) powerfully sums up the potential benefits of openly sharing one's own struggles when he says, "To hear someone you admire talking graphically and convincingly about their own regular moments of impostorship is enormously reassuring" (p. 95).

I believe Dr. Peters' and Dr. Scott's stories of encouragement should be an impetus for both aspiring and current heads of school. I think all aspiring heads should make it a point to seek out mentors and solicit their supportive input in ways that will validate their feelings and potentially facilitate greater self-confidence. And I think that all current heads of school should use these stories as a call-to-action. Current heads of school must realize the importance of mentoring others and explicitly set aside time to express their support and belief in those whom they lead and instruct. For me, the charge is to be more cognizant of those within my influence and remember that no matter how competent and confident they may appear, they too may be feeling like imposters and looking for someone to believe in them or give them that little endorsement or extra bit of encouragement when times grow tough and doubt creeps into the heavily fortified and seemingly impenetrable crevices of one's mind.

**Lesson 8: Finding a Good Match is Important**

The idea that the head of school needs to be a good match or fit for a prospective school emerged in both narratives. Dr. Scott talked explicitly about the value of match

even saying “I think this notion of match is very important.” While Dr. Peters did not as specifically purport the importance of match, it was inferred throughout much of his stories about Hanahau‘oli – especially with regard to his own progressive philosophies and how they aligned with those of Hanahau‘oli.

No matter how much one’s leadership skills have been developed and refined, it appears that it might behoove independent school leaders to above all else think long and hard about whether or not they would be a good fit before committing to a particular school (Wheeler, 2010). Prospective heads of school need to take their time and look carefully at the mission and philosophy of the school while also thoughtfully and thoroughly assessing the expectations of the board of trustees to determine to what degree their own beliefs, philosophies, and skillsets match with that of the school’s. After all is said and done, I cannot help but wonder how much the longevity of a successful school head has to do with his or her experience and skillset versus simply being a good match for a school and understanding the board’s short and long-term expectations for the position.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

Every research effort should be committed to not only answering current questions but also to the development of new inquiry. This study revealed several areas that I believe to be worthy of further research. One such area of study could focus on examining the initial insecurities and vulnerabilities that new heads of school may experience in their early years on the job and how boards might work to better understand and assuage these feelings. Given the documented importance of the relationship between a head of school and his or her board of trustees, it might also be wise to

investigate how heads of school can learn to better manage or cultivate their boards. This is especially necessary considering the fact that this type of training is not typically part of a head of school's official educational program. Related to this, it might be wise to do some future research to determine what the optimal term lengths are for board members and board chairs. I also believe this study surfaced a need to more carefully explore the renewing effects that heads of school perceive as a result of their service to the broader community. And finally, because of the richness of these stories and the valuable insight derived from the wisdom of the participants, it would seem appropriate to have future studies that focus on the stories of other established and proven school leaders. Specifically, I think it is worthwhile to study other successful independent school heads – possibly some who have overcome substantial obstacles or major hardships during their leadership journeys. After all, as Lyman, Ashby & Tripses (2005) so profoundly stated, "a great deal can be learned about how to lead by studying those who do it well" (p. 1).

**Conclusion**

The time I spent with Dr. Peters and Dr. Scott coupled with the process of analyzing their stories proved to be a tremendously edifying experience that has impacted me in the following three overarching ways: (1) it confirmed and validated many of my own personal feelings as well as professional struggles; (2) it helped me to develop, codify, and crystalize some of my more incipient thoughts on school leadership; and (3) it introduced me to a variety of completely new ideas and thought-provoking viewpoints. All in all, it was most certainly an illuminating experience whereby I derived great joy and true satisfaction in telling the individual stories of these two inspirational leaders. I

echo the powerful and eloquent sentiments of Seidman (2006) who summarized his own feelings regarding the interview process as follows:

> "Interviewing provided me with a deeper understanding of the issues, structures, processes, and policies that imbue participants' stories. It has also given me a fuller appreciation of the complexities and difficulties of change. Most important and almost always, interviewing continues to lead me to respect the participants, to relish the understanding that I gain from them, and to take pleasure in sharing their stories" (p. 103).

It is my contention that the shared stories of Dr. Peters and Dr. Scott should be thoroughly read and continually revisited to fully derive and appreciate the wisdom of these two special and enduring school leaders.

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# APPENDIX A

Office of Research Compliance
Human Studies Program

UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I®
MĀNOA

February 20, 2013

TO: Robert David Gaudi Jr.
Principal Investigator
Educaitonal Foundations

FROM: Denise A. Lin-DeShetler, MPH, MA
Director

Re: CHS #21012- "Surviving and Thriving in Private School Leadership: A Case Study of Two Enduring and Successful School Heads in Hawaii Private Schools"

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On February 20, 2013, the University of Hawai'i (UH) Human Studies Program approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46.101(b) (2, 4).

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/manual/appendices/A/belmont.html

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Human Studies Program. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via email at uhirb@hawaii.edu. (The subject line should read: Exempt Study Modification.) The Human Studies Program may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the Human Studies Program at 956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.

1960 East-West Road
Biomedical Sciences Building B104
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822
Telephone: (808) 956-5007
Fax: (808) 956-8683
An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

# APPENDIX B

**University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa**

[Date]

To: [Participant’s Name]

From: R. David Gaudi Jr.
Doctoral Student in College of Education Professional Practice Ed.D.

Re: Letter of Consent

**Consent to Participate in Leadership Oral History Research Project:**
*Surviving and Thriving in Independent School Leadership: A Case Study of Two Enduring and Successful School Heads in Hawai‘i Independent Schools*

My name is R. David Gaudi Jr. and I am a doctoral student at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa, in the College of Education. The purpose of my research is to examine through case study analysis the factors that contributed to the enduring and successful school leadership of two long-time school heads in Hawai‘i’s private schools. The study aims to document their experiences (memories and commentaries) by detailing their stories in ways that will not only richly inform and improve my own leadership practice but hopefully that of other current or aspiring school leaders in Hawai‘i and abroad. You were selected to participate in this project because you have been at the same Hawai‘i private school for at least 15 years and are well respected in the community as a successful school leader.

**Project Description - Activities and Time Commitment**: In person interviews will take place on approximately three separate occasions at a time and place convenient to you. The interviews will last for approximately 90 to 120 minutes and will be recorded using a digital audio-recorder. The interviews will be informal and conversational as I want to get your personal recollections of your leadership.

After the interviews, all audio-recordings will be transcribed into a word document. I will check and edit the transcript for accuracy. Once the transcriptions have been confirmed and organized, I will give the transcribed data to you to check for reliability and accuracy. You are free to make any changes to the transcription as you deem appropriate. I estimate that it will take you several hours to do this, depending on how many changes you indicate. I will then incorporate your revisions into the transcript and, at a later date, type the final transcript.

The plan is for me to use excerpts from the final transcript in my dissertation. It is possible that at a future date the final transcript will be distributed to libraries (or in other ways disseminated) for use by other researchers, oral historians, or the general public. Others will be permitted to use, in unpublished works, short excerpts from any of the transcriptions without obtaining permission as long as proper credit is given to the interviewee (you) and the interviewer (me). At the completion of the project, I will erase the audio-recordings.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this project is voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time, up to the completion date of this project, which is expected to be Summer 2014. During the interviews, you can choose to not answer any question(s) at any time for any reason. If you disapprove of, wish to change, add to, delete, or otherwise change the transcripts or the audio file of the interviews, you may do so at any time up to the completion of this project.

**Benefits and Risks:** I believe there is no direct benefit to you in participating in this research project. However, your participation in this project might help me and other researchers learn more about school leadership as well as contribute to the historical record of Hawai‘i private school leadership. Because of the need to create an authentic record and make available to scholars and the general public a reliable historical document, it is important that your actual name appear as the interviewee on the transcript. Thus, one potential risk to you is a loss of privacy. Another potential risk is that some topics you discuss during the interviews might bring back painful or unpleasant memories. In such cases, we can take a break, skip that topic, and/or you may choose to stop participating altogether.

**Privacy and Confidentiality:** As noted previously, in order to accurately document your leadership history, it is important that your name appear as the interviewee on the transcript. However, you retain the right to change, delete, or add information in the transcripts. Legally authorized agencies, including the University of Hawai‘i Human Studies Program, have the right to review research records.

**Questions:** Please contact me, R. David Gaudi Jr., by phone at (808) 381-5426 or email at gaudi@hawaii.edu or my dissertation advisor, Nathan Murata by phone at (808) 956-4717 or email at nmurata@hawaii.edu should you have any questions. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this project, you can contact the University of Hawai‘i, Human Studies Program, by phone at (808) 956-5007 or email at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

---

## Agreement to Participate in
Leadership Oral History Research Project

*"I certify that I have read and that I understand the information in this consent form, that I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions concerning the project, and that I have been told that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without any negative consequences to me.*

*I agree to have my actual name appear in the results as the interviewee. (please check a box)*

☐ *YES*

☐ *NO*

*I herewith give my consent to participate in this project with the understanding that such consent does not waive any of my legal rights."*

_____ _____

Printed Name of Interviewee Signature of Interviewee

_____

Date

A Copy of this Consent Form Will be Provided to the Participant

# APPENDIX C

**University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa**

[Date]

To: [Participant’s Name] (Interviewee)

From: R. David Gaudi Jr. (Interviewer)
Doctoral Student in College of Education Professional Practice Ed.D.

Re: Interviewee Agreement

**INTERVIEWEE AGREEMENT**

I the undersigned interviewee give and grant to the interviewer all rights, title and interest to the following:

APPROVED EDITED TRANSCRIPT EXCERPTS of interviews recorded on:

**[ Various Interview Dates ]**

ALL BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION provided to the interviewer.

It is understood and agreed that the interviewer may utilize and authorize public use of any parts of the above for such scholarly and educational purposes as he shall determine. The interviewer currently plans to use excerpts from the final transcript in his doctoral dissertation. It is possible that at a future date the final transcript will be distributed to libraries (or in other ways disseminated) for use by other researchers, oral historians, or the general public. Others will be permitted to use, in unpublished works, short excerpts from any of the transcriptions without obtaining permission as long as proper credit is given to the interviewee and the interviewer.

_____
Name of the Interviewee

_____
Street Address

_____
City, State Zip

_____
Signature of Interviewee Date

A Copy of this Agreement Will be Provided to the Interviewee

# APPENDIX D

## – 1st Interview –

**Establishes the context of the participants' experience**

### Interview Themes and General Questions

Let's begin by talking about your **early childhood**. Can you please tell me a little about family and the values they instilled in you while growing up?

What kinds of things did you **do for fun**?

Did you get into trouble much as a child? How did your parents **discipline** you and your brother?

What was your **community** like growing up?

What were the **difficulties/challenges** you faced while growing up?

Who were the **most influential people** in your childhood (or life) and why? – Peer and Adult?

What type of student were you in **high school**? Did you have a favorite teacher, coach or mentor?

**Colleges**

Dr. Scott:

Can you talk about how you ended up attending **Stanford** after Punahou?
What lead you across the country to **Harvard** and then back to the West Coast at Catlin Gabel?

Dr. Peters:

Can you talk about how you ended up attending **University of Massachusetts**?
What lead you to **pursue a master's** and **doctoral degree**?

**Professional experiences prior** to Punahou/Hanahauʻoli

What did you do and where did you do it?
And how did these experiences help prepare you for taking over as head of Punahou/Hanahauʻoli?
Which job or experience helped to best prepare you for the demands of Punahou/Hanahauʻoli?

**Mentors**

Mentors before coming to Punahou/Hanahauʻoli?
Mentors after arriving at Punahou/Hanahauʻoli?

## – 2nd Interview –

**Allows the participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs**

### Interview Themes and General Questions

What **values** did you bring with you to Punahou/Hanahauʻoli ?

What were some of the **initial challenges** you faced in your first few years at Punahou/Hanahauʻoli?

**Board Relationships**
How important is the school head / board chair relationship?
Talk about the importance of the relationship with the board chair and managing other board members. What have you learned through the years?
How did you cultivate those relationships?
How did you manage changes in board leadership?

**Admin Team Relationship**
Can we talk about your philosophy regarding your administrative team and what sort of relationship you have with them? How has this changed in your time at Punahou/Hanahauʻoli?

**Faculty Relationships**
How important are faculty relationships vs. board relationships?

How have your **relationships changed** over time?

**Building Projects**
Can you talk a bit about your experience with capital building projects as head of school and the importance of them for school heads in Hawaiʻi? How have you managed the politics?

**Fundraising; Financial Aid; Diversity**

**Balancing Personal and Professional Demands**
How did/do you manage the demands of the school and the **demands of your personal life**?
How were you able to maintain any sort of **privacy**?
How did having your **own children** attend Punahou/Hanahauʻoli affect you in your role as head of school?

**Professional Responsibilities** outside the walls of Punahou/Hanahauʻoli?
Can you talk a little about your professional responsibilities outsides the walls of Punahou/Hanahau'oli?
How important is it for a school head to be involved in professional/community organizations?

After so many years at the same school, what has allowed you to stay **refreshed, invigorated** and **renewed** in your role as head of school?

# - 3rd Interview -

**Encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experiences have for them**

## Interview Themes and General Questions

**Leadership Development**
How has your **leadership style** or **philosophy** **changed** in your years as head of Punahou/Hanahauʻoli?
What does it mean to you to be a **good leader**? Or how do you **define good leadership**?
What most helped **develop** and **sustain your leadership**?
How has **being in the public eye** for so long changed you?

**Self-Doubt**
Can you talk a little about a time in your life at Punahou/Hanahauʻoli when you grappled with serious self-doubt? And how you overcame it?

**Successes and Failures**
What do you consider to be your **greatest success(es)** or **major accomplishments** as head of school?
What do you consider to be your **greatest challeng(es)** faced or **failures** as head of school?
Can you give an example of a time when **you made a big mis-step?**
What are the **challenges** for a school head that are **unique to Hawaiʻi**?

What do you believe to be the **main factors** that have contributed to your **longevity**?
Why have you lasted so long?

What do you find **most stressful** about your job?

**Advice**
What **advice** would you give to a **new school head in Hawaiʻi**?
What **advice** would you give to a **school head** who's been at the **same Hawaiʻi school for 10 years** who wants to thrive for another 10-20 years?

What are the **greatest lessons learned** in your time in your time as head at Punahou/Hanahauʻoli?

**Ideal School Head in Hawaiʻi**
How would you describe the **ideal independent school head**?

**Legacy**
What do you want your legacy to be?
What are some of the joys of headship?

# APPENDIX E

## Contact Summary Form

**Site:** _____
**Date:** _____
**Time:** _____

**What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions you had for this contact.**

_____
_____
_____
_____

**Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this contact?**

_____
_____
_____
_____

**What new (or remaining) target questions do you have in considering the next contact?**

_____
_____
_____
_____

# APPENDIX F

# BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEET

FULL NAME _____ PHONES _____

ADDRESS _____ EMAIL _____
_____

BIRTH YEAR _____ BIRTH PLACE _____

ETHNICITY _____ LANGUAGES(S) SPOKEN _____

MOTHER'S NAME _____ ETHNICITY _____

FATHER'S NAME _____ ETHNICITY _____

SISTERS/BROTHERS (interviewee's place in family)
_____
_____
_____

MARITAL STATUS & DATE OF MARRIAGE _____

SPOUSE'S NAME _____

CHILDREN'S NAMES & BIRTH YEARS
_____
_____
_____

PLACES LIVED (and dates)
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

EDUCATION:
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL _____
MIDDLE SCHOOL _____
HIGH SCHOOL (year of graduation) _____
COLLEGES (years of graduations) _____
_____

WORK EXPERIENCES (and dates)

ORGANIZATIONS – MEMBER OF (past and present)

AWARDS

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

RELIGION (optional) _____ Active _____ Inactive _____

ANY OTHER PERTINENT BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION