PUBLIC EDUCATION IN HAWAI'I
Oral Histories

Volume I

Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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"On Wings of Discovery"
Ka Hieke Makalana
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Left, Laurence J. Capellas

Below left, Cecil K. Dotts
Below right, Cecil Dotts, then supervising principal of West Hawai‘i schools, and first wife Loraine Dotts, in front of his office on the Konawaena campus, 1945. (Photo courtesy Cecil Dotts.)

Below, Cecil Dotts’ tenth-grade English class performs *A Mid-Summer’s Night Dream*, Konawaena School gymnasium, 1932. (Photo courtesy Cecil Dotts.)
Top left, Hubert V. Everly
Top right, Amy Fern

Above left, Stephen S. Kanda
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Above left, Marion Lee Loy
Above right, Virginia McBride

Left, Eileen Tam

Left, R. Burl Yarberry
INTRODUCTION

This project is part of the statewide commemoration of the 150th anniversary of public education in Hawai‘i. It is funded in part by the Department of Education (DOE) to document, through research and interviews, the historical development of public education within the context of socio-economic and political change in the Islands.

In these volumes are life history interviews with ten educators who, first as students and later as teachers and/or administrators, witnessed and participated in the many developments that occurred in public education in Hawai‘i from the early years of this century to the present. The interviews cover a diversity of topics, such as the interviewees’ family background, childhood, community, early education (including impressions of their education, memorable teachers, etc.), preparation for their careers in education (e.g., Territorial Normal and Training School, University of Hawai‘i College of Education, Mainland colleges, etc.), employment (focusing on their careers in education), changes in education philosophies, policies, and practices, and, lastly, feelings and attitudes toward these changes and their careers in general.

Project Background

The Center for Oral History (COH) was contacted in early 1990 by Department of Education officials responsible for organizing and implementing the yearlong sesquicentennial observance of public education in Hawai‘i. The Governor’s Commission for the 150th Anniversary of Public Education in Hawai‘i, comprising educators, government officials, other professionals, and community leaders, was formed to guide the format and content of the celebration. COH was asked to submit a proposal and budget for a comprehensive oral history project involving interviews with longtime teachers, administrators, board of education members, legislators, and others with extensive knowledge of public education in Hawai‘i. The interviewees were to be selected statewide to reflect the different ethnic groups, socio-economic statuses, and experiences found in the field of education in Hawai‘i. They were to articulate their life experiences, with an emphasis on their knowledge of and experience in education. COH submitted a proposal calling for interviews with sixty individuals. A budget shortfall, however, resulted in a much scaled-down project of only ten individuals.

The Interviewees

With its varied and complex range of personalities, localities, and issues, the topic of public education in Hawai‘i is a tremendously broad subject to address in ten interviews. COH was faced with a dilemma in interviewee selection. After a series of meetings between COH researchers and DOE officials, it was decided to interview ten individuals with varied experiences in the field of public education in Hawai‘i, but not to attempt a collective, comprehensive picture of the topic, as was originally planned. The ten, five men and five women, ranged in age from eighty-eight to seventy-one at the time they were interviewed. Six were born, raised, and, for the most part, educated in the Islands, while the others were Mainlanders who arrived for schooling or for teaching jobs. In order of their ages at the time they were interviewed, the interviewees are:

Virginia McBride, eighty-eight
A former English teacher at Roosevelt High School on O‘ahu, an English standard school, McBride discusses in her interview her views and observations of the English standard school system. Established in the 1920s by the territorial government to meet the needs of many Haole parents who felt that proper English usage was not found in the public schools, the English standard schools were criticized as being biased against non-Haoles. The system was eliminated in 1949. McBride also discusses her teaching career at other schools, her years as a principal on Moloka‘i and O‘ahu, and
her observations on the effects of unions on teaching. She was interviewed in her Honolulu home in a
two-hour session in February 1991 by COH researcher/interviewer Joe Rossi, a Kaiser High School
and University of Hawai‘i graduate, who also attended public schools on the Mainland.

Stephen S. Kanda, eighty-seven
Born and raised on the Big Island, Kanda moved to Honolulu and graduated from McKinley High
School. He received his teaching credentials from the Territorial Normal and Training School, which
was established in 1895 to train prospective elementary school teachers. Kanda recalls his experiences
at the normal school and his thirty-eight-year career as a teacher and/or principal at schools ranging
from one-room Hīleia School in the Big Island’s Ka‘ū district, to Farrington High School, one of the
state’s largest. His experiences reflect the close relationship school principals had with the commu­
nity, teachers, and students, and the high degree of flexibility he had in running his schools. Kanda
eventually became a high-level administrator in the Department of Education. He was interviewed by
COH director Warren S. Nishimoto in his Mānoa, O‘ahu home in three ninety-minute sessions in
March and April 1991. Nishimoto was born and raised in Honolulu and attended University Labora­
tory School and the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa before attending Mainland universities.

Cecil K. Dotts, eighty-six
Like Kanda, Dotts was trained as a teacher (in California) but spent most of his career in adminis­
tration, first as a principal, then as a district and territorial administrator in the Department of
Education. Dotts ended his career as an associate professor in the University of Hawai‘i’s College of
Education, and is currently working on a book related to public education in Hawai‘i. In his inter­
views, Dotts takes a progressive view of public education. He elaborates on Miles Cary’s view of
school as a key component of the community, and Cary’s core studies program at McKinley High
School with its emphasis on non-traditional teaching methods to integrate courses of study with
everyday life situations. Dotts was interviewed at his home in Makiki, O‘ahu by Warren Nishimoto in
three ninety-minute sessions in March 1991.

Amy Fern, eighty-two
Fern was one of many part-Hawaiian and Asian women who looked to teaching as a career. Teaching
was one of few professional options open to them at the time. Unlike many of her generation, Fern
chose to attend the University of Hawai‘i rather than the Territorial Normal and Training School. By
obtaining a bachelor’s degree from the UH Teachers College, Fern was qualified to teach at the
secondary school level. Following graduation, she began a thirty-year teaching career on Kaua‘i and
O‘ahu. Besides detailed descriptions of her teaching experiences, Fern discusses her past and present
involvement with the O‘ahu Retired Teachers Association. Joe Rossi interviewed Fern in a two-hour
session in her home in Honolulu in February 1991.

Eileen Tam, eighty-two
Like Amy Fern, Tam pursued a teaching career following graduation from McKinley High School in
1928. She entered the Territorial Normal and Training School and completed her teacher training as a
member of one of the last graduating classes before the school’s merger with the University of Hawai‘i
in 1931. Unlike most teachers of her time who began their careers on a neighbor island but subsequently
moved to larger schools in Honolulu, Tam spent her entire teaching career on Maui. She eventually
became a traveling librarian on the island. Tam also discusses the impact World War II had on Maui
schools. She was interviewed by Joe Rossi in a two-hour session in Honolulu in March 1991.

Hatsuko Kawahara, eighty
The daughter of Japanese immigrants, Kawahara was raised in the ‘A‘ala section of Honolulu and
attended Central Grammar School and Japanese-language school. Although lacking a formal high school degree, she managed to further her education at the Territorial Normal and Training School, Northwestern University and National College of Education (B.Ed.), the University of Wisconsin (M.S.), and Columbia University (Ed.D.). Kawahara, who began her career in the classroom, moved into district and state offices before serving as an elected member of the board of education. In her interviews, Kawahara talks candidly about her family and personal background, education, and profession. She also shares her views on the many issues and personalities encountered during her sixty-year career in public education. Kawahara was interviewed by COH research associate Michi Kodama-Nishimoto at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in four ninety-minute sessions in October and November 1991. Kodama-Nishimoto grew up in Kalihi, O‘ahu and attended Fern Elementary, Kalākaua Intermediate, and Farrington High Schools, and the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

Marion Lee Loy, eighty
Born and raised in Honolulu and a graduate of the Kamehameha Schools and the University of Hawai‘i, Lee Loy is both daughter and mother of schoolteachers. Like most schoolteachers, Lee Loy began her career on the neighbor islands; her first job was in the rural community of Huelo, Maui. She later taught at schools in Kohala, Honoka‘a, and Hilo on the Big Island before returning to Honolulu in 1951. In her interview, she describes teaching at the schools, as well as everyday life in those communities. She also details her approach to teaching and the evolution of her Hawaiian studies curriculum at Farrington High School. Lee Loy was interviewed in her Honolulu home in three ninety-minute sessions by Joe Rossi in January and February 1991.

Laurence J. Capellas, seventy-eight
Capellas represents a long line of educators, beginning with his father and mother, who each taught at public schools for forty-nine years, most of those years at Hakalau School on the Big Island. In all, three generations, or fourteen members, of the Capellas family, have accumulated 430 years of service as educators. Laurence Capellas began his career in 1935 at Waimea High School on Kaua‘i after graduating from the University of Hawai‘i Teachers College. He was named principal in 1943 at Pā‘auhau and continued as principal at other Big Island schools, his last appointment being Hilo High School in 1959. He eventually became a DOE administrator in the Hawai‘i district office. In his interviews, Capellas illustrates the critical need for close rapport between the principal and teachers, parents, students, and the community at large, the steps he took to achieve this rapport, and how this rapport has changed over the years. The first two ninety-minute sessions with “Mr. C” were conducted at his Hilo, Hawai‘i office, while the third session was conducted in Honolulu at the offices of the Hawai‘i Education Association, where he is on the board of directors. Warren Nishimoto conducted the interviews between January and May 1991.

Hubert V. Everly, seventy-six
Dean of the University of Hawai‘i College of Education for twenty-four years, Everly has been responsible for the training of hundreds of Hawai‘i’s public schoolteachers. After his arrival from California in 1933, Everly received bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education from the University of Hawai‘i. He went on to receive his doctorate from Ohio State. After a brief career as a teacher and principal at island schools, he became affiliated with the College of Education. In his interviews, Everly discusses the role of the College of Education within the context of social change in the Islands: it trained native Hawaiian and immigrant students to become professionals, enabling them to avoid lives of plantation and service-oriented labor. Everly saw the college and its faculty as social revolutionaries who challenged the university faculty and administration and the elite business community which controlled the Islands prior to the 1950s. Conscious of the need to integrate education with the political power structure in the Islands, Everly lobbied at the legislature, remained active with teachers’ unions,
and played a key role in the Hawai'i State Employees Retirement System. His outspoken progressive attitude toward public education is clearly evident in his interviews. The three ninety-minute interview sessions with Everly were conducted in April and May 1991 at the Honolulu offices of the Hawai'i Education Association, where he serves on the board of directors. The interviewers were Michi Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto. Nishimoto, who attended University Laboratory School from kindergarten through grade twelve, had a personal as well as professional interest in Everly's experiences, since Everly was instrumental in starting the school and was its first principal.

R. Burl Yarberry, seventy-one
Yarberry's career in Hawai'i began in 1957, when, fresh from receiving his doctorate in English from the University of New Mexico, he arrived at the University of Hawai'i-Hilo as an English instructor. He soon was promoted the college's director. At that point Yarberry was selected by the board of education to be state superintendent of schools, a highly visible position surrounded by politics and controversy. In his interviews, Yarberry discusses his childhood and academic background, and how this background shaped his later attitudes toward public education. He also discusses his idealism prior to becoming superintendent, and his frustrations and disappointments as he faced the political realities. Yarberry was interviewed in three ninety-minute sessions in September 1991 in his Hilo, Hawai'i home by Warren Nishimoto.

Methodology
The ten interviewees were selected individually for their ability to recall and articulate their life experiences and their knowledge and background relating to education; and collectively, for diversity in personalities and experiences. Names of potential interviewees were obtained via meetings with persons associated with the Governor's Commission for the 150th Anniversary of Public Education in Hawai'i, the Hawai'i Education Association, O'ahu Retired Teachers Association, and the University of Hawai'i College of Education. COH interviewers Warren Nishimoto, Joe Rossi, and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto drew up a list of recommended individuals and began initial contacts and untaped preliminary interviews. The final list includes three teachers, four principals (three of whom became district administrators), one UH College of Education professor, one state board of education member, and one state superintendent of schools. The three teachers spent their entire careers in the classroom, while the other seven all had classroom experience at the beginning of their careers.

The interviews were conducted using a life history format. Education was the major topic, but interviewees were also asked about their parents, families, childhoods, and communities. Although no set questionnaire was used, the interviewers followed an outline of topics designed specifically for the interviewee. Each outline was based on biographical information gathered during the preliminary interview and on research in primary and secondary sources.

The interviews were transcribed almost verbatim by COH-trained student transcribers, and the transcripts reviewed against the audiotape by the interviewer. Then, after slight editing, the transcripts were given to each interviewee for their review and approval. Some interviewees made extensive changes, while others changed little or nothing at all. After securing the required legal releases, the interviewees' changes were incorporated into the transcripts, and the transcripts again edited and checked for accuracy. At each stage of the process, names, dates, and questionable information were verified or, if necessary, removed from the transcripts.

How to Use the Transcripts
These volumes contain a glossary of all non-English and Hawai'i Creole English (HCE) words (which are italicized in the transcripts) and a detailed subject/name index. A biographical summary precedes each interviewee's transcript. These volumes also include a photograph of each interviewee.
All interviewees were asked to read their transcripts and make any deletions or additions they considered necessary before signing the following legal release:

*In order to preserve and make available the history of Hawai‘i for present and future generations, I hereby give and grant to the University of Hawai‘i Center for Oral History as a donation for such scholarly and educational purposes as the Center Director shall determine, all my rights, title, and interest to the tapes and edited transcripts of interviews recorded on (date), biographical data sheet completed (date), and notes of untaped interviews (date).*

The transcripts represent statements that interviewees wish to leave for the public record. The majority are almost verbatim from the actual taped interviews. Some interviewees made grammatical or syntactic changes in their transcripts. Others attached additions or explanations. Interviewee additions are in parentheses.

Minor editing for clarity was done by the COH staff. The flavor and authenticity of the interviews were not compromised by this editing. Staff additions are in brackets. A three-dot ellipsis indicates an interruption; a four-dot ellipsis indicates a trail-off by a speaker. Three dashes indicate a false start.

**Audiotape and Transcript Availability**

While these transcripts represent the primary documents for archival and research purposes, audio cassettes are available for listening at Hamilton Library’s Hawai‘i and Pacific Collection, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Researchers should use the tapes only as supplements to the transcripts, since interviewee and staff additions and deletions were not made on the tapes.

The identification number, assigned to each audio cassette and transcript, indicates project number, cassette number, session number, and year of interview. For example, Tape No. 21-16-1-91 identifies project number 21, cassette number 16, recorded interview session 1, and the year, 1991.

*Public Education in Hawai‘i: Oral Histories* and other COH publications are available at the following locations:

- **Hawai‘i**
  - Hawai‘i Public Library (Hilo)
  - Hawai‘i Community College Library
  - University of Hawai‘i at Hilo Library
  - Kealakekua Community Library

- **Kaua‘i**
  - Lihu‘e Public Library
  - Kaua‘i Community College Library

- **Lāna‘i**
  - Lāna‘i Public and School Library

- **Maui**
  - Maui Public Library (Wailuku)
  - Maui Community College Library

- **Moloka‘i**
  - Moloka‘i Public Library

- **O‘ahu**
  - Bishop Museum Library

- **Hawai‘i State Library**
  - Kaimukī Public Library
  - Kāne‘ohe Public Library
  - Pearl City Public Library
  - Honolulu Community College Library
  - Kapi‘olani Community College Library
  - Leeward Community College Library
  - Windward Community College Library

- **University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa:**
  - Hamilton Library
  - Sinclair Library
  - Center for Oral History
  - Social Science Research Institute
  - Ethnic Studies Program

- **Hawai‘i State Archives**
- **Hawai‘i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts**
- **Hawai‘i State Department of Land and Natural Resources**
COH publications include:

**Transcript Collections**
- Wai'Alua and Hale'iwa: The People Tell Their Story (1977)
- Life Histories of Native Hawaiians (1978)
- Waipi'o: Māno Wai (Source of Life) (1978)
- The 1924 Filipino Strike on Kaua'i (1979)
- Women Workers in Hawai'i's Pineapple Industry (1979)
- Stores and Storekeepers of Pā'ia and Pu'unēnē, Maui (1980)
- A Social History of Kona (1981)
- Five Life Histories (1983)
- Kālihi: Place of Transition (1984)
- Ka Po'e Kau Lei: An Oral History of Hawai'i's Lei Sellers (1986)
- Perspectives on Hawai'i's Statehood (1986)
- Lāna'i Ranch: The People of Kā'ele and Keōmuku (1989)
- Oral Histories of African Americans (1990)
- 'Ualapu'e, Moloka'i: Oral Histories from the East End (1991)

**Books**
- Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawai'i. Published in cooperation with the United Okinawan Association (1981)

**Finding Aids**
- Catalog of Oral History Collections in Hawai'i (1982)

**Other Publications**
- Oral History Recorder newsletter (1984–)

The staff of the Center for Oral History, Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, believes that researching, recording, and disseminating the experiences of Hawai'i's people will stimulate further research and foster a better understanding of our Islands' history.

COH is solely responsible for any errors in representing or interpreting the statements of interviewees.

Honolulu, Hawai'i
September 1991