Moses W. "Moke" Kealoha was born in Honolulu on December 22, 1928. His father, Enoka Kealoha, was a carpenter and painter; his mother, Maria Kekai Gardner Kealoha, a housewife.

The youngest of sixteen children, Kealoha attended Likelike School, Kawānanakoa Intermediate School, and Farrington High School (class of 1946). He was also educated at University of Hawai'i (class of 1949), University of Miami, and Columbia University.

As a youth he participated in activities at Pālama Settlement. Later he served on its board and maintained close ties with the settlement.

An automobile sales executive since the 1950s, he retired from Servco Pacific in 1996.

He and his late wife, Ululani Baldwin Kealoha, raised three children.
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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Moses W. Kealoha (MK)

Honolulu, O'ahu

January 21, 1997

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Moses "Moke" Kealoha on January 21, 1997 and we’re at his home in Honolulu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto. This is for the Pālama Settlement oral history project.

Okay, Moke, let’s start. First, tell me when and where you were born.

MK: Let’s see, when and where I was born. I was born at 533 North School Street, December 22, 1928. And the address I just gave you is—let’s see, if you take today’s geographics over at the School Street area, we were directly across of the Hawaiian Electric plant on School Street, today. At the time I was born, the electric plant was about fifty yards 'Ewa of the present 1997 electric plant, meaning that they expanded. They bought out some private properties and they expanded the electric plant. So, today, at the Diamond Head edge of the plant directly across the street, in other words makai of the electric plant, is where I was born.

WN: What is there now? Where you were born?

MK: Now, I think there’s a mango tree fronting the street. That’s about it. And in the back of that slope, it’s about a 16, 17 percent slope, and that’s the H-1 Freeway. So about the year 1954 or ’55, I’m not that sure of the date now, those houses along School Street were purchased by the state Department of Transportation. And our house was designated as one to be condemned. But to our dismay after we agreed to sell—we didn’t want to sell, but anyway, my mother and I consented to sell the property to the state. There is a portion left that you could still build a house on, and I say this because, on the ‘Ewa side of us—now remember, we lived on the makai side of School Street then—where our house was, there’s still about a hundred feet of land still empty. Open space.

WN: Till today?

MK: Till today. And three or four houses on the ‘Ewa of us, those houses still remain intact. So I’m kind of disappointed that we were not recalled to see whether or not we could repurchase that portion remaining, you know. And I go by there today—in fact I was there last week Friday—passed by. And it kind of breaks my heart, because it’s vacant land, see? But my point is they have never tried to contact us to see whether or not we would buy that [land back]. Whether it’s a remnant, whether it qualifies to build a dwelling on, I’m not sure. I feel
it is, because of those other existing homes. And, you know, you can take the guy out of Pālama but they still yearn to be part of the place. But if I have that opportunity I would put a dwelling of some kind there.

WN: Right now it’s owned by the state?

MK: I assume so though. I assume so. I don’t know if it’s the exact parcel that I’m looking at, but I think that mango tree was one of (chuckles) our mango trees, so to speak.

WN: So the H-1 Freeway, that’s not the viaduct part.

MK: No.

WN: It’s built right on the ground.

MK: It’s where our house was, you mean? Yeah, it’s flat. It’s about a 17 percent slope. Maybe it’s a little steeper. But the viaduct is more toward Lilihā Street, and that’s more Diamond Head of where we used to live. On the ‘Ewa side of where we lived, directly contiguous to our house was Tin Yao Goo family. He was an educator at Kalākaua [Intermediate School] and later on he taught at Farrington High School. His two sons are still alive. In the back of us, going further makai, you had more Chinese homes, and little bit, maybe another twenty-five yards going backwards, then you would run into a connection to Waipā Lane where you had a Japanese camp in there . . .

WN: That’s where the Japanese[-language] school is, huh?

MK: Pālama Gakuen? Okay, in that area was all Japanese. So from our house, you can just walk through the backyard and then connect yourself right to the Japanese Camp. Only a fence separated us, you know. You remove one of those partitions and you go right through and go down.

WN: Was there a name for your folks’ neighborhood?

MK: A name, not really. We had individual homes. Well, next on the ‘Ewa side, about another twenty-five, thirty yards, had a Korean old man’s home. And there were some Korean families. In fact, [circuit court] judge Robert Won Bae Chang, he comes from there, see. That’s just ‘Ewa of our house. And you had a few Koreans in that area.

Then there’s a fence separating that portion to Pālama Settlement. So we’d just go right through the fence. And that’s the Pālama [Settlement] field. Today it’s part of the [H-1] Freeway. You know where they dump dirt and all that stuff? That fence separated Pālama [Settlement] from the Korean Camp, which you could just walk through. So, it took us maybe four minutes to get from our house to Pālama [Settlement], going in the back way. Then connected to that area was Yamaguchi Camp, where you had a concentration of Japanese. And in that Yamaguchi Camp had one Korean family, the Kim, K-I-M family. They had two part-Hawaiian families in there, [but] mostly Japanese. Oh no, there was a mixture, I take that back. Hawaiian-Chinese, Hawaiian, Hawaiian-Haole, and they called that Yamaguchi Camp. That leads on one part, right to School Street, across St. Theresa’s church. Today St. Theresa’s is still standing. Then if you continued walking towards ‘Ewa direction, then you would run
into the concentrated [area of] Chinese people where Bobby Kau and Bobby Wong, those guys came from. Sing Loy Lane, [a.k.a.] Crack Seed Lane, and then you come onto Likelike School, that’s where we went to school. So, the proximity from our house to Pālama [Settlement], to Likelike [School], where we spent our elementary days, it’s only like four minutes here, four minutes there. Everything was so close.

WN: The area you’re talking about is mauka of Vineyard [Street]?

MK: *Mauka* of Vineyard. Pālama [Settlement] right on Vineyard. The gymnasium was right along the sidewalk. The main building was in a loop. The [Strong-]Carter Clinic was on the *Ewa* side of the loop, adjacent to Pālama Street, going up, connecting to School Street. Those days, ever since I could remember, I don’t know whether we spent more time at Pālama or more time at home. I think we spent more hours at Pālama. You just went home to eat, and went home to sleep. The rest of your waking hours was at Pālama. If not Pālama then we’d go on our own excursions, like, climbing mountains. Nu’uanu Pali, we did that during the summer especially, all the time. Every chance we had, a big gang of us.

WN: Who lived in your neighborhood?

MK: On School Street?

WN: Yes. You said they had Korean Camp, and Japanese Camp, Chinese. But what about your folks’ place, was it Hawaiian?

MK: Okay, 533 North School Street was about the fourth house from Liliha Street corner. Sitting on the corner of School and Liliha Streets, had a market run by a Chinese family—I think was Lee—called the Waverly Market. And on the *Diamond Head* corner of School and Liliha, was the original Star Market. Star Supermarket, the Fujieki family, that’s where they ran the store. On the *mauka*, *Diamond Head* corner, had a little bakery called Modern Bakery in those days. Then on the *Ewa* corner, *mauka* corner, had a Shell service station, we called Sato’s Service Station, had a little bar connected to the service station. I give you that landmark, the proximity. Then from the market that sat on the *Ewa*, *makai* corner of School [Street] and Liliha Street, contiguous to that had the bus turnaround. Eventually, when the City [and County] of Honolulu had those electric buses, you connect to the wire up above, that was a bus turnaround.

WN: Right—School and Liliha?

MK: Right at School and Liliha. Next to the market. In other words *Ewa* of the market. Then directly connected to that bus turnaround, was the Funn family. F-U-N-N. Part-Hawaiian, Spanish. The two boys went to Farrington [High School], one boy went to Kamehameha [Schools], and they had two girls. Next to that family, the Funn family, had their cousins, and I can’t recall that name. So that would be the second house. The third house was my father’s brother’s son, Seaweed Kealoha, he lived in the third house.

WN: Seaweed?

MK: Yeah. Actually all our family were called Seaweed in those days. (WN chuckles.) Then ours is the fourth house. Then Tin Yao Goo family next to us going *Ewa*. And next to Tin Yao had
another Chinese people, and then you had a small little lane that goes to the Korean old man's home—elderly home. From that little lane, down to Pālama had all Chinese. The Chin Sun family, the Young family, the Tyau family, all in that area, and on the 'Ewa side of that little lane, that's where you had a lot of Koreans in the little camp. I would say there was about eight, nine families in there. There was a fence that separated that [Korean old man’s] home and Pālama Settlement on one side, and you had more Japanese going down towards Vineyard Street. And going 'Ewa of the Korean home, you had Yamaguchi Camp—and we call it Yamaguchi Camp because it had more Japanese than the other ethnic groups—but scattered in there had Chinese, Koreans, part-Hawaiians, going on all the way down to Pālama Street.

Now interestingly, Pālama Street coming out of King [Street], going up to School [Street], ends. It's a very short street. It's from School Street to King Street. Where Tamashiro Market is today. That’s Pālama Street, and that’s the same street that connects to School Street. They had a broom factory, and in there had a cluster of homes, mostly Koreans and Puerto Ricans. We used to call it Borinque Camp . . .

WN: On Pālama Street between . . .

MK: 'Ewa of Pālama Street.

WN: 'Ewa of Pālama Street, okay.

MK: Along School Street. Makai of School. Mauka of that was Lanakila Park . . .

WN: I was just going to ask you, Lanakila Park was there at the time?

MK: Was there. Was always there. ‘Ewa of Lanakila Park was the old—we used to call it crazy house.

WN: Oh yeah, Asylum Road or something?

MK: Well, a lane. Today it's a [state] Board of Health complex. That was the old—we called that abandoned—pupule house. You know, for crazy?

WN: That was probably owned by the territory [of Hawai‘i], huh?

MK: Yeah, by the territory. And, oh, like only a few months after December 7, 1941, the military used that as a bivouac camp, and they used part of Lanakila Park at the beginning of the war [World War II]. Going further towards Kalihi, 'Ewa direction, then you had some homes again. Most of the homes were duplex homes, going along mauka of School Street, and makai of School Street, going up to Houghtailing. Then after Houghtailing and School, mauka going towards Kamehameha [Schools], had all homes. Next to the graveyard, and going further where the Kapalama Shopping Center [is now] was empty. Only Kapalama [Elementary] School [was there].

WN: Across the street?

MK: Yeah, and the Kamehameha Schools were behind, makai of Kapalama Elementary School, where today you have the [Bishop] Museum. But that was Kamehameha [Schools] until '44,
'43, '42, somewhere in there, then they moved up the [Kapālama] Heights. But prior to that, there was an old Kamehameha School for Boys. The girls were situated where [Kalihi] and King is today. The girls boarding . . .

WN: Wasn't that where Kaʻahumanu [Homes] is now?

MK: No. Where's Kaʻahumanu [Homes]?

WN: Kaʻahumanu [Homes] across from Farrington High School on King Street.

MK: That was Kamehameha? Today they call it Kaʻahumanu [Homes], it's still in the development/completion, eh?

WN: Right, right.

MK: Well, Pālama [Settlement], situated on Vineyard and Pālama streets, there was a baby park [Castle Playground] across of the main Pālama facilities. We called it “baby park” because it was primarily for the younger, kindergarten, first grade, preschool, I think up to third grades where the pool was only, maybe, two feet deep. They had a swimming pool in there, you know. And a big lawn, big playground, and a low-slung building for classrooms.

WN: This was Pālama Settlement?

MK: That's part of Pālama Settlement. Today that's the [Pālama Manor] apartment houses across from Pālama.

WN: Across Vineyard?

MK: *Makai* of Vineyard. That was what we call “baby park.” Next to it, you had the service department that serviced the Pālama trucks, and whatever else. Next to that we had tennis courts. Can you imagine Pālama Settlement with tennis courts?

(Laughter)

WN: So where the present Pālama Settlement is now on Vineyard, you're talking about across Vineyard where the apartments are, *makai* of the present building?

MK: Yeah. We had tennis courts. (Laughs) I mean, it's just amazing. Only the rich play tennis.

(Laughter)

MK: But, we played tennis. I mean, two Hawai‘i state champions came out of the Pālama program. Chinn Sunn and, I forget the other guy. They became tennis champions. Then had Lefty Nakano, he used to go, he was a great tennis champion. They developed a lot of tennis players. The Safferys, the Pu‘uloa brothers. But it's so amazing, that place. You got a great big gymnasium. When it rained, you played baseball in the gymnasium, you played touch football in the gymnasium. You had one big gym—I guess you can compare it to a standard college-type, or pro-type gymnasium—where you have one big court going, say, east-west, and you had two other courts within that court. You'd go sideways. And then . . .
WN: And was wooden floor?

MK: Wooden floor. And then connected to that had a partition. We call that girls' gym, so the girls can play in that gym by themselves.

Now, the activities conducted in the gym included: badminton, volleyball, basketball, indoor baseball, what they call BCA, Boys Club of America, activities, such as broad jumping, high jump. We had boxing room, we had weight-lifting room next to the boxing room. They made room for every kind of activities for the kids. No reason for you to get bored, see?

In the main building, of course you had the swimming pool, we had a locker room, and most of us took shower at Pālama. You didn't take a shower at home because you go in the tub, you in the tarai. You know, get the pot, pour water over your head, rub the soap. Then get out of that, pour some more water, and then go outside the house, get the hose. Whereas if you went to Pālama, you get hot and cold shower. So most of the people went to Pālama to take a bath. And we had a playroom [with] billiards, we had pool table, Ping-Pong. Then in the main building we had arts and crafts. We learned about wood burning, like, we used to go out and hustle dry coconuts, cut it on the top, make cigar man. Make all kind figurations with this electric carving stuff. Anyway, you had that, you had . . .

WN: What is cigar man?

MK: You get a coconut, and you draw the face of a man on the coconut—the husk—and you draw the mouth, and you get a little hole on the side and you poke the cigar in there, like a cigar man. (WN laughs.) You know, they taught us all kinds. In the evening we had dancing. Can you imagine? This is in the middle [19]40s. These programs developed like, from the [19]30s. So now, in the [19]40s we were eligible because we were all fifteen years old, between fifteen and going on. You had adult classes, young men, and then you had [program for] kids.

But you had those activities, and then they encouraged us to form clubs. Those days we had junior helper clubs. Whenever they had a function they called this club to do this, that club to do that. Anyway, we had carnivals, all that stuff, once a year. So, I would say there were about thirteen clubs, fourteen clubs. Our club, although it disbanded over time, people get different natures, they grow up, get their families, and logistics, and geographics, everybody move all over the place, but we still pretty well in touch. And we had Pals Club. The name of our club was Pals. P-A-L-S. We do, sometimes, some projects for Pālama. Not much, I don't think we're doing enough. We should do more. But, understandably you have social changes, attitudes change, environment change, people change, the economy changes, so therefore people change. That's another reason people change. But still yet, we're still capable of doing more for the settlement.

Anyway, that's part of the activity in the main building, and naturally the classes got bigger and bigger—like dancing for example—ballroom dancing, jitterbug, the samba, the rhumba, the tango, the classes got so huge they had to conduct 'em in the gym. And primarily, the kids hanging around Pālama, you drew from Farrington [High School], and McKinley [High School], primarily. 'Cause those are the only two [public high] schools, huh? Most of them came out of Pālama and went out.

WN: I know Farrington came up a little later, so when you were like, elementary, was Farrington
MK: Farrington, first graduating class, I think was 1938. And that was part of Kalākaua. You know Kalākaua Intermediate School? And them houses you talking about, Ka‘ahumanu [Homes]? Which once upon a time, before they had the Kam[ehameha] housing—I forget now whether it’s Kalihi War Homes or Kamehameha housing? Anyway, right on the corner of Kalihi Street and King Street, is the original Farrington [High School], connected to Kalākaua [Intermediate School]. They used to call it the “chicken coop,” because they were all dilapidated buildings. And I think in 1940 or ’41, they moved across the street to the present location, Farrington High School location. So it was rather small.

WN: So actually it was kitty corner from the present Farrington, diagonal from . . .

MK: No, directly across the street.

WN: Directly across, so . . . . Makai side?

MK: Yeah. On the corner of Kalihi and King . . .

WN: Okay, that’s right. That’s where Kalākaua is, right behind there.

MK: Yeah. See? That used to be “chicken coop.” After they tore that down, and this school was completed, then they developed the Kalihi War Homes. That took you all the way down to the bakery. In fact we used some of the Kamehameha School facilities after they moved up to the mountain. Like, the old military building they had, Farrington [High School] used that as a locker room. The old gymnasium that they had, Farrington [High School] used that, too, as a gymnasium, for part of their program. So all the kids, all the way into Kalihi would be a part of Pālama program.

WN: So Kalihi kids could go into Pālama Settlement too?

MK: Oh yeah, oh yeah. As far down as Libby [McNeill & Libby] cannery. You know, Nimitz, Mokauea, Kalihi Street. That was not that heavily populated. I would have to say where today is, Boulevard Saimin, and in the back of that is Foodland, Food City whatever, that area. All the way to Pālama. 'Cause it's really a short walk, you know. You walk down Dillingham, along the train tracks and you cut up, the vocational school [New York Technical Institute], cut right through. And you in Pālama.

WN: Waiakamilo?

MK: Yeah.

WN: You could go up there, yeah?

MK: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Where did you consider---what is the border between Pālama and Kalihi?

MK: I didn’t know there’s a border.
WN: You never thought of—was there any rivalry between Kalihi and Pālama?

MK: Not really. Not that we knew of. Just the guys hanging around, maybe, Kalākaua [District] Park, or the guys that hung around Kalihi Uka School. Kalihi Uka, that's by Beckley Street. Lot of those guys, certain kinds of activities they played for Pālama. You know, young kid kind stuff. And then certain other things they played for Kalihi park, or whatever.


MK: Kalihi Thundering Herd...

WN: That wasn't out of Pālama Settlement was it?

MK: Nope, that's definite Kalihi. Lot of Pālama guys played for Kalihi Thundering Herd though. But you see the reason is, some guys couldn't make a certain weight. (WN chuckles.) You either too heavy or too light. So you play for somebody else. They had guys from Kaka'ako playing for Pālama.

WN: No kidding?

MK: Yeah like, Boyd Andrade for example. He's born, raised in Kaka'ako. Boyd was a big guy. For his age he was big. He'd come over Pālama and play for Pālama.

WN: How come he didn't play for Kaka'ako Sons?

MK: He's too big. For football?

WN: Yeah.


(Laughter)

MK: They had best players over there.

(Laughter)

MK: So he'd come because Kaka'ako can only field one team. Pālama, we can field two, three teams. You see? That's the basic difference. It's not because—I have to take that back, not because he's junk. Because those guys can only support maybe ten guys to one team. Maybe twelve. I think they used to carry twelve to fifteen.

WN: Those days they used to cut players?

MK: You just form another team. Another group. And when you did that, you didn't put all the good guys on one team. You try to split the good guys to balance the other teams. The idea is to share in learning, your abilities, to share with the next guy. So if you had all the good guys on one team, then forever and ever, you only going get one good team, and you cannot develop. Pālama program was to develop people. The body, mind, soul. Really, athletics was
just a secondary thing, just to keep 'em occupied, no get in trouble. But the educational side was just terrific. Tremendous.

Now in recent times, we tried to develop a sort of program I helped develop some years ago. There's this lady—if we were in the era of monarchy, this lady would be the princess. That's Abigail Kawananakoa. About fifteen years ago, seventeen years ago, I approached her one day and I talked to her about Pālama Settlement. They know all about Pālama Settlement. Beautiful people. I said, "We have a program, we get hard time with the kids, we want to keep 'em around Pālama, keep 'em out of trouble."

They said, "Okay, get to the point Moke."

I said, "Shoot. This 4-H Club, every year they have a carnival, and they award two prizes for the best-bred heifers. You know Monte Richards [i.e., Herbert Montague Richards, Jr.]? He owns Kahua [Ranch] and Alex Napier was the big boss. So I asked him if he could help Pālama Settlement. He said, "Shoot. What can I do?"

I said, "We buy the cow, you guys slaughter 'em, you chill 'em up for us, and then we come pick 'em up and use that to serve at Pālama Settlement."

The idea is to serve lunch, or maybe breakfast and supper, or lunch and supper [to the poor]. We started with the summer program, because it's very difficult to go all day, no eat. Very difficult, and they going wander around. So Abigail Kawananakoa said, "Eh Moke, I'd be glad to help," and she did that [i.e., donated the cow].

So we used to get 'em. And Bobby [Robert H.] Higashino, the [executive] director of the time [beginning in 1970], was very instrumental in getting that facility. The kitchen, and all that stuff you have today. So, we take the meat down there, and they went into a program. If the boys doing good in school and no cinches in school, then his daily attendance at Pālama makes him eligible to do whatever he can do. That's play and participate, and then they have dinner. Free. And then go home. That's during the school year. For those that get cinches, and the school reports to the Pālama Settlement, those with the cinches can attend Pālama, cannot play, but, they can have the meal.

That's very important. I keep stressing over years and years, the important thing in depressed areas is food. You get food, they hang around there. No more food, they going meander on. In terms of hours of the day, the most critical hours is like around five o'clock [P.M.], going around to eight. Those are critical hours, see? 'Cause you cannot hold 'em at the settlement, they going wander off. They not going home. They going hang out someplace else. By serving the dinners, we can hold the guy. Then you get the next activity going on after dinner, like night volleyball, night swimming. All those different activities. 'Cause those guys not going be the first ones to jump up and down and go study hall. But you can gradually work that into it by different kinds of activities, and it worked very well. Then we did that over the summer program. I forget what they did now. I know they served dinner, and I don't know whether it's lunch and dinner free, or breakfast and dinner, free.

So I was just talking to Mrs. [Jacqueline] Rath last week. I had to take down some donations for some people, and they're trying to put that program in. I said, "When did you stop?"
She said, "Well, the cow stopped coming." Ho! Then I gotta go look for sponsors, now. You know, put that program again, but very, very, in fact, effective.

WN: So when you were going to Pālama Settlement as a kid, did they have any kind of meal program for you folks?

MK: (None.) Didn’t have. You just get together, you going rob a store, you going steal something from the store, or you going do what we call “eat and run.” Or we take a hike someplace and go in somebody’s yard pick the mango, ask the Pākē man if we can pick the tamarind, you going hunt around for food. 'Cause there’s not much, but it’s not the kind where we going stick ’em up. We were pretty resourceful, like, you know, the cannery down Nimitz Highway? They leave the train there with the pineapples, eh? So we climb on the side, we take couple pineapples, we make it back to Pālama, we eat pineapple. Or during the summer, we going hiking all over the place ’cause we coming back with mountain apples you cannot believe. And they have apples, rosy [rose] apples (MK whistles), all over the mountains. So we used to do a lot of hiking.

WN: You mean, Kalihi Valley?

MK: Going Kalihi Valley, go up Nu‘uanu.

WN: When you said—I’m sure you didn’t mean, when you said “rob” a store you meant more like shoplifting, kind?

MK: Yeah. Yeah. Not stick ’em up. I mean, you walk past, and they get—see the old days, almost every store they get the bin right alongside the sidewalk. This one get onion, this one get, what do you call, Irish potato. That kind. So you walk by, you take one. Then we make fire, we throw ’em on the fire. We cook ’em. All black, eh? You peel ’em and you eat. Those menial stuff. But after a while, you not kidding nobody. 'Cause the guy in line, that’s his parents’ store too!

(Laughter)

MK: So that’s why they, “No do that. My father guys cannot make money, this kind. No can live!”

WN: You guys ever got caught?

MK: Oh yeah. (WN laughs.) Oh yeah, we got caught.

WN: What happened?

MK: Good for us we got caught. So they suspend us from the settlement and the police come down, they investigate. They gave us break, but you get good scolding. But what really hurts is when you get suspended. Can you imagine the Pālama Settlement, suspending us, and we not even members!

(Laughter)

MK: So we used to laugh, okay. You know what, suspension, I tell you it hurts. I rather get licking.
I rather go home, my parents give me licking than me getting suspended, 'cause I got nowhere to go.

WN: So that means you couldn't even come onto the grounds?

MK: You cannot. See, the football field where we coming from—regardless what direction you coming from—you cannot go in the gym. You going sit by the sidewalk, and watch everybody go in and out, and you say, “Nelson, can I play?”

“Stay there.”

Or you hanging around outside the swimming pool, “I like swim.”

“Stay there.”

You cannot—oh, I tell you boy, that bugga hurt. I mean hurt! And you cannot attend the club meetings. In the evenings you have club meetings, and then you have storytelling, you got share and tell. Those kind. Every night something’s going on in Pālama, and you cannot attend. Hah! Boy, you straighten up fast.

WN: So who enforced that? I mean, who was the one who actually told you though, you suspended?

MK: Any one of the counselors. Any one it doesn’t matter. Male or female. They just say you suspended, and they submit your name in to this guy, Nelson Kawakami. Or when Mr. and Mrs. Rath [James Arthur Rath, Sr. and Ragna Helsher Rath] were still active—they used to live on the settlement grounds, you know. Bobby [Robert H.] Rath’s parents. They’d come down to the director and all the counselors, that’s it! That’s it. So you really got to watch the calendar what month you going get suspended. You get suspended the wrong month you cannot participate in anything. One day, two day, not too bad. But you don’t want to get suspended on a Saturday, because there’s movies. Pālama had a little theater, an auditorium, where we put on plays, they teach us how to act. Sing songs, like Pālama got alma mater, and all this kind of stuff. So, they issue a little card like that, and that card is good for a month. Every time you go in the movie, you got to check in and they punch the card. That’s something, tremendous you know.

WN: How come they got to punch card? Was free, eh?

MK: Yeah, free, but see, you cannot go in and give the next guy the card. (WN chuckles.) You got to have your own card. No more card you cannot go in. If your card was marked, that’s it. That’s it for that week. So we used to have Saturdays, the movies. First one, eleven o’clock. . . . There’s two shows, one in the morning, one in the afternoon. The younger guys, between age here and age there can go in [the morning], and then the older guys go in the afternoon.

WN: How many people did the little theater hold?

MK: I can’t recall. I think more than fifty though. The projector room, you know the kind—ten, nine, eight, you know, [count down] on the screen? So, by the time it gets to six everybody’s
yelling, "Five, four, three, two, yea!" You know, the kind.

(Laughter)

**MK:** We had wood shop. You learn how to do small carpentry work, how to measure things. Amazing.

I forget whether fifty cents a year, to be a member. You know, like 90 percent cannot afford the fifty cents. You go sell newspaper, you get lucky, okay, but, you could work it out. You could perform labor, and get credit towards a membership, and that's how we were able to do it for years.

**WN:** So what did you do?

**MK:** Well, all kind proj---like, see, the Castle family, they did a lot for Pālāma also. The Athertons, the Castle family. So when they wanted to build—that was our time—the gym was too small. So many kids coming to Pālāma, so they had to divide up the baseball field. We played soccer, too, you know, down there? Golf! Can you imagine Pālāma kids playing golf? Anyhow, so our role as kids, go down there, we got to learn how to dig the trenches and stuff. The grubbing, grouting, no more tractor, so all manual labor. That's our role. You perform so many hours and you get credit. Then you can go over there, they'll give you credit for next year's credit. So we learned how to use the blacktop, learned how to pour cement, besides digging, measuring, and all that stuff. So, lot of the facilities we had before, they put the kids to work. And the beautiful part was you can go work on a Sunday. You had guys come in, the adults come in, work on a Sunday. Church day. If you supposed to go church, you not coming, period. They see that they send you home. But all those kind of things for us to do.

**WN:** Did you have to go church?

**MK:** Oh yeah. Oh yes.

**WN:** Your mother made you?

**MK:** Oh yes. You sit on a stand. We're Mormons, see? You sit on a stand, and he count—he just look sideways, and he just count—right down the row. We had to be in row four. And he just look. If there's a little space in there, he know who's missing.

**WN:** (Chuckles) Who's "he"?

**MK:** My father.

**WN:** Oh, your father. Oh, okay.

**MK:** He was what they call one of the counselors in the Mormon church.

END OF SIDE ONE
SIDE TWO

WN: So you were at the Mormon church on . . .

MK: Lanakila Ward. Just one lane above School Street, there's a little lane called Holokahana Lane. I don't know if you've ever heard of On Char.

WN: Yeah, the photographer?

MK: Yeah. His house [was] right next to the church.

So my father would look down, and somebody's not in row four, you had it. We had to go church. Which was good for us. Real good. We were very active.

Actually, my father had the—I forget who he worked for—but they had the contract to paint the Pālama Settlement. The exterior of Pālama Settlement . . .

WN: The current Pālama Settlement?

MK: No, the old Pālama.

WN: The old Pālama Settlement?

MK: The one on Vineyard, but not the current one, no. It's a makeshift, see? The gym, today, is not the gym of old. It was sitting right on Vineyard Street. The main building was in a different location, but it had to be removed. So, I guess maybe I was (pause) gee, I don't know—maybe four years old?—where I'd go down, sit in the park while he's painting. But that's how long I've been going Pālama. From that time, when you start walking around already, before I even attended kindergarten, I was at Pālama.

WN: Where is your father [Enoka Kealoha] from originally?


But they had so many things going, the Raths—Mr. and Mrs. [James] Rath—they're so funny, too. Nice people. She used to bake cookies on certain days, for the staff. But she make mistake, that wahine. She don't know about the wind, and the birds and the bees, I think. She used to put 'em outside by the window of their place, to cool off. That smell travel all the way down to the swimming pool and gymnasium. (Laughs) Then after she came back . . .

(Laughter)

MK: . . . all gone.

(Laughter)

MK: All gone. Yooohoo!
WN: What were they like, the Raths?

MK: Beautiful people. Beautiful people. They were active. They were part of the counseling team. 'Cause they conducted classes too, you know. The old man and the old lady. Beautiful. Well, let's see, I would have to say they preached humanity to the counselors, understanding the importance of compassion, that kind of thing. Because Pālama staff people, they never ran out of patience. Down to the janitor, the night watchman even. That's the kind people they had around there, and they all poor people. But the kids were first.

WN: Did the counselors, and the staff come from Pālama, too?

MK: No. Lot of them they come to train at Pālama, you see, and they got the training. The free [i.e., unpaid] counselors, I think those days when you were, I think, a junior in college, [for] part of your credit work in social [work], you go to Pālama Settlement or YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] program. I think they're still doing that today.

Well, the guys who went to Pālama, they had a lesson. I mean they ran into things that they never knew existed, because we were different. The Pālama kids were different. They listen, they attentive, but if the counselor got little bit out of line, the kids would let 'em know. Some couldn't last, some couldn't take it. By that I mean, ey, anybody give us humbug, he got to deal with twenty guys, one time. (Laughs) And we going pile on. Young kids, us, huh. We going take 'em on, one on one, whatever it is. See, because we had to learn how to—-we had judo class, we had boxing class, we had gymnastic class, we had swimming class, we had any kind of class, and you had to attend. So over time you become pretty agile. You get to know a little bit of this, a little bit of that, and you get a few smacks from the older guys. You take on anybody, and if you cannot do it, you just tell the guy, "I no think I can take care this guy, you better come help me."

"Okay, shoot."

Two against one, three against one, whatever it is. But lot of guys couldn't handle the Pālama kids.

However, a lot of guys really straightened out the Pālama kids, and that's the good part. See, had plenty good guys. Johnny Naumu was a counselor, before he became famous as a football player. Philip Haake is another one.

WN: Haake?

MK: Yeah, H-A-A-K-E. Philip Haake. (Pause) Oh, shoot. Warren Higa. Jerry Tarutani. Even though he [Tarutani] was a Pālama boy, clean-cut gentleman, but he straightened out all the bad eggs. Had so many. Lorin [T.] Gill, that guy, amazing. He also became the [executive] director over a period of time [1964–69]. That Lorin Gill, he's worse than a donkey, or a goat. I don't know which, 'cause he'll take care the mountain and he's going. That guy can walk. This way, that way, this—-anyway. Whoo! Beautiful guy, just beautiful. He was there as a counselor, later on he came back as [executive] director.

WN: I'm just wondering did you have to... Okay, say you become a member of Pālama Settlement. Could you leave at any time? Could you just say, "I don't want to do this
anymore," and just go? Or did they try to keep you there?

MK: Oh no, no. You go. You mean you want to quit the settlement and go join the YMCA for example? Yeah.

WN: I'm sure they had some people who just didn't want to take all these classes, and so forth. They just maybe wanted to hang out, or something. Are those the ones who eventually left?

MK: Yup. Lots of 'em. I tell you, there's a very dear friend of mine. All the boys would call him "Bobo." Some of the guys call him "Chocolate" because he's very dark. Bobo, if he was alive today, would be my age. His two older brothers—one was about three years older, the other one's about five years older than Bobo. They left the settlement over time, 'cause they only wanted to do certain things. So they said, "Well, I quit." They went. Both of 'em landed in jail. One of 'em died in jail. Both of them ended up on marijuana, heroin, drugs and all that stuff. They got all bust up. Bobo, no problem. Stuck around. Always got in problem, I mean, you know, face the cops, and stuff like that. Very intelligent guy. Very clumsy, athletically. Two left feet, and all that stuff, but, he just got adjusted. Everybody got along, they looked after each other, and was always like that. Never got in trouble. Never got into dope, nothing.

When we became adults, went out into life. They shot him, just like his brother. Someway, somehow, he got involved with gambling, drugs and stuff, bang-o. Dead. On the other hand, we had other people that left the settlement when we were in high school. Before they left, they got in trouble. They got into dope, they landed in jail. There's many that somehow sensed they were going in the wrong direction, they came back to the settlement—they rejoined. Others went straight to the YMCA program. The YMCA has a wonderful program also. Just terrific.

But, see, I feel very strongly that as long as that boy, or that girl, attended Pālama Settlement, went through the activities, the chances of him going jail, getting in trouble, is almost zero. And this is a number that I'm not inventing but somehow I get this number—not even 5 percent of the kids that stayed with the program, went jail. It's all the kids that left the program. Today it's unheard of. Today there's gang fights over here. They come out of that area, but they don't go through the program. They abandon the program, lot of these kids. Our biggest humbug today is the Filipinos, not so much the Samoans. The kids who come out of PI [Philippine islands]. That's our big problem, even the police get problems.

Like [Edward] "Skippa' " Diaz. He was a prime, prime, prospect for jail. He stuck with the program. I was a prime candidate. I think I was the top candidate to land in jail, but lucky for Pālama. Lucky for me. We had this guy Ernie Santiago. Could do everything. Good boxer. I think if he stuck with the program he'd be a world champion. Eddie Matias, another one. Stuck with the program, they'd be champions. They quit Pālama. I give you something interesting. I cannot mention name, but after I can take out this. Try turn this off, one minute.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: See, but in time you begin to understand how wealthy you are, just by attendance. 'Cause everything is here. And the people, somehow, I think there's magic, what the Rath family developed. There's some kind of magic, that people just give.
WN: When you talk about attendance, that means that when you come, once you come you have to participate in whatever activities they have. It is kind of like school then. You cannot just come and do what you want, or take this class and not take this class?

MK: You can. You can take this, and not take that. Oh yeah, you can. What I’m saying is that the program is there for you. So you don’t want to take this class, you don’t take this class, but hang around. Or if you’re going study, go study. If you’re going to the beach, go to the beach today. You going come back tomorrow, fine. Whatever, but don’t break away from the program. Stay with the program, and the fellowship develops.

From teaching, you learn. Then from learning you have that ability to teach maybe, more appropriately to share. But it’s always there.

(Refreshments are served. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: You were telling me off tape that there’s some families that sent their kids to Pālama, who didn’t live in Pālama, but wanted to straighten them out?

MK: Yeah, they wanted to straighten the kids out. They couldn’t behave at home, and they showed signs of differences—not conforming to the standards of the family. So, to put ‘em in line they gave ‘em a taste of heaven. They sent ‘em to Pālama to get straightened out. Like, you know I said that the Cookes used to send their kids down there. They straightened out fast. Dr. Lee Chong’s son, Richard Lee, he got straightened out in one summer. In fact, the second summer he came back he brought another boy, Wallace Reed. He got straightened out fast. Then you had guys like the Brilhante brothers, Bill Bonner. Oh, there’s a whole, whole bunch of guys.

WN: These are not necessarily poor families either.

MK: No. They were okay, you know, they’re from the east side of town, so-called better side of town. They sent their children down there to get straightened out, and those guys straightened out. Then, later in their adult years they come back as volunteers at Pālama Settlement.

But you credit, really, the institution, in the sense that what the original Mr. and Mrs. Rath established within their staff, within the counselors, the philosophies, I guess, of humanity and the Divine Being. The individuals, whether in or out of Pālama Settlement, still used to welcome people to the program. Naturally you’re not going to get 100 percent, 100 percent of the time, but I think they got pretty close to 100 percent. Like 90 percent, 90 percent of the time.

But what is interesting is that if you look back, I think you going find that the people that stay in the program—regardless of what era, dating back to our time—is that the incidence of getting into major crime, major violations, going to prison, and stuff like that, I think you’ll find that less than 5 percent of the Pālama boys. I’m not saying it’s a perfect place, but it’s very commendable for a nongovernment-funded agency.

When I look at the future, I say, well, how long will this last? How long will the memories and the teachings, the doctrines of the Rath family, how long is it gonna last? That’s a big question we have to answer ourselves.
But I know there’s a lot of people that give back, like we just discussed earlier. Lot of guys from the east side send their children at one time or another—and there were a lot of ‘em—that Pālama had a definite, positive influence in their future lives. When I look at it in that sense, and all the curious people that have heard about Pālama and its programs, where we gonna go in the next 50 years, 100 years? Where we gonna go? How long can we last? How long can Pālama be outstanding in its programs?

Well, you know the economic times—I’m not citing this—last five years of hardship with the economic index. When you look down the road, I think more, not so much government, but I think businesses in Honolulu, or in the state of Hawai‘i, can help this kind of program. With their contributions, you can help statewide, eliminate crime rate, drug rate, homeless rates and all this negative impacts in society, by contributing to this kind of program like Pālama Settlement. By that I mean, if they took maybe 2 percent of their employees who has a good background, who came from humble beginnings, like Pālama, and give them like, three times a month, one hour and a half. So that’s a total of four-and-a-half hours a month. Then they can contribute to Pālama Settlement. The example, let’s say the guy gets through at 5:00 or 4:30, 4:00 whatever it is. So you let him off at 2:00 he goes to Pālama Settlement. You pay him for that hour. You get credit for that community service, and that man performs counselor duties, or shares his talents with the kids, so there’s no cost to Pālama. You know, financial cost, but it’s a financial aid, so you pick up the burden. Now, if the companies can do that, I can see the programs going on in perpetuity. I can see that. Even with YMCA programs.

But, it’s a hardship for the individual to take that full day’s work, get through at five, and do community service, and then take care his household. Very difficult, and he has a cost. And all this cost is after tax dollars. It’s all out-of-pocket money. Very difficult for people. But I think the big businesses—when I say “big,” I don’t mean only Amfac[-JMB Hawai‘i, Inc.] and so forth—businesses that have a good standard, and good operational procedures, and a good business plan. Those kind of businesses, big or small.

They can contribute, actually, to themselves. By having people perform these duties, YMCA, then you don’t have duplication of agencies spending unnecessary dollars. Lot of the monies the government spends today, are duplications that achieve very little, because they really don’t have a place to conduct the business. Half of them are renting the building—a room here in building so-and-so, and in building so-and-so, there’s no parking. They have all kind of problems. But at places like Pālama and the YMCA, you have all that parking facilities, open space. You get everything that you could ever hope to get, and Pālama don’t use government funding. The state or the city. In fact, they take in some of the city’s outreach programs and develop it and meld it into the Pālama program.

So yes, the [Aloha] United [Way] do have some contribution, but basically, they [Pālama Settlement] are independent. That’s the only settlement outside of New York. There’s only two in the whole United States. The one in New York is still on-going, and this Pālama Settlement. So its been 100 years. So where we going in the next 100 years? I don’t know. Times are getting tough.

WN: You’re saying some of the problem is getting people, personnel, to work at Pālama Settlement? Right now are there a lot of full-time workers there, or is it mostly part-time?

MK: Mostly part-time. Well, we have full-time, but it’s very small. To conduct the program at the
level of achievement that you had in the past, you gonna have to have more people. 'Cause
today’s people don’t have the heart that they had in the old days. We did everything by heart.
Today, you do everything by compensation. If big business can compensate those people, I
think we could make the program go. They would be supplementing the staff.

I’m proud of these two boys, Brother Noland, and Tony Conjugacion. They’re up in Pālama.
But, that’s only two out of how many thousands of people. We have the space. Pālama has the
space. But we need more people to get in there. Bilingual, you know. We don’t have
accredited English teachers, Japanese teachers, we don’t have ’em. Right now it’s critical, we
should have some Filipinos. But they cannot work for the kind of salary that Pālama has to
offer. You cannot get ’em. But I’m sure if you had so many companies offset that cost to that
person, yeah, we can make this place go. I mean, it’s going, but we need to be assured that,
yeah, we can go for another 50, 100 years. That’s my really big concern. What we did no
mean nothing. What we have to do in the future is everything, and I always talk about that.

WN: When did you notice the changes taking place, in terms of compensation, getting people to
actually devote their time to Pālama Settlement?

MK: When I realized that even myself, I want to go back more often. But I have to take care the
house, take care the family, take care the kids and stuff like that, so that lessens the time.
That’s when I realized it. So in sense of time, probably about ten years ago. I really became
more aware. Why? Because I was removed over time, busy schedule. In this last reunion we
had June 1996, I said, "Oh my, that realization is here. It’s here.”

Had this group of women. Some came from Maryland, Virginia, California—old-time women
from Pālama. Some used to work there, some used to hang out there; heard about it some way,
and they came home to help for that event. It’s amazing. Really, that made me start talking to
myself and say, we cannot just be proud of them for coming. We gotta be proud of something
we can do, and take pride in what we have to do for the future, to sustain that program in
Pālama Settlement. Like Mrs. [Jacqueline] Rath is doing a hell of a job. One-man gang, she’s
doing the [Pālama Settlement] archives. I don’t know when she’s gonna crack up, going drive
herself crazy . . .

(Laughter)

MK: . . . but for one person that’s hard work. And she’s not a youngster. But when I look at these
things I say, wow, how long can we last? We gotta do something.

WN: I know right now you’re renting out space to [community] groups. Is that the bread-and-butter
right now?

MK: No, it’s a supplement. Like upstairs, we do a lot of renting. But you leave ’em vacant you get
different problems. So it’s better to occupy it and have things going. But these are spaces that
you can utilize in your program. You see? To me you get a higher use. Higher and better use.
Collecting rent is not the answer. To incorporate and make a stronger program is the answer.
That’s what we need to do.

Take like [city councilmember] Donna [Mercado] Kim for example. She’d love to do
something, whatever she can do, but it has to be on a part-time basis, which is fine. But can
you schedule her on a part-time basis? The answer is no, you see, 'cause she has to answer to her peer group. But on the other hand, we have a lot of people in business, or in other professional occupational status, that given the proper compensation from their employer, would be only too happy to come back here. And really there’s no loss. The employer does not lose. He gets the benefits of participating in community service, and he gets an employee who’s more appreciative for permitting him to do community service.

We watch it on TV. They asking you for seventy-one cents a day, someplace in Africa, or whatever. We wanna be able to ask somebody for hour and a half a day, three times a month, and this is right at home.

WN: Do you feel that there’s as big a need for Pālama Settlement as there was when you were . . .

MK: That’s correct. Absolutely, more so. You know why? We having a population explosion. Even the state cannot handle the population we have now. We have over a million people right here on this rock. When we count the outside islands, we come out to about 1.3, 1.4 million, but right here. Even though the percentage in the program such as this is small, the [benefit] to the state is humongous, because when you fight crime, you fight drugs, you fight the homeless, you fight everything else.

To accommodate the homeless is very expensive. We could do it here. We could do it in the YMCA program. Now they’re talking about using Barber’s Point for the homeless. We could accommodate some of that at the YMCA program. You know the YMCA has hotels for transients. With participation over there, those guys could do some work at the YMCA. There’s lot of people homeless that are very intelligent. What reason they’re homeless, I really don’t know, but we could utilize those talents. I think they’re [i.e., government] using their best judgment, but I wish they would pay more attention to places like Pālama and the YMCA program. I cannot leave [out] the YMCA program because they comingle, they function almost the same way. But YMCA gets more money. (Laughs)

WN: Was it always like that?

MK: YMCA? No, no. I think they depend on contributions. Like we going through now what they call SMD, special membership drive, for the summer programs. Like, a big cost is summer camp. Like Pālama we used to have Pālama-by-the-Sea, [which was a] fresh air camp. We don’t have that anymore, but that’s another big, big—one of the most effective programs is summer camp for the kids. Boy, I’ll tell you. You want to straighten a guy, boy, you send him to those camps. It’s a good program worthy for any child to participate in.

See, long ago, part of that program—the summer camp program that Pālama Settlement had—was to take care the undernourished. That’s why they sent ’em out there. The Raths thought about that. Get ’em out of the household, get ’em out of their environment, put ’em in the fresh air, put ’em in the ocean where they can get the rest, they get proper exercise, they can meditate in their own religion, their own self, and beef ’em up a little bit through proper dieting. Then the thing worked. It worked in those days, and it can work tomorrow and forever and ever. But we need the facilities, including the human resource, to continue the program, and it’s getting less and less.

WN: I was wondering what kind of relationship did Pālama Settlement have with the schools? In
other words, in terms of how a student is progressing in school, how that related to Pālama Settlement.

MK: Well, like when I attended Likelike School, for example, the relationship was a close connection. Meaning that, if we weren’t doing good grades in school, we had a problem when we went to Pālama Settlement because the teachers would communicate the students’ affairs directly with Pālama Settlement. So you had a problem. They’d send you home. You cannot come Pālama, you need the endorsement from the schooleachers. So they had a very good rapport.

Part of the academic process from grades one to six—I forget if it was once a week, or once every two weeks—but part of your school period included Pālama Settlement. Either the gymnasium, or the swimming pool, or the ball park. ‘Cause we would go there, the third or fourth grades would meet, different classes would be at Pālama, you’d have games. Today was swimming, tomorrow is this, tomorrow is that. That kind of stuff. So it was part of the public school curriculum. Primarily Ka‘iulani School, and Likelike School, and Kauluwela [School] down the street. So, the three schools.

When you went to the intermediate, and intermediate meaning Central Intermediate [School], Kawānanakoa [Intermediate School] and Kalākaua [Intermediate School], the frequency of use within that program was, I think only three times a year. In other words, part of your school class at Pālama, I think you only went. . . . I forget now, maybe it was once a month. If nine months in the school year. . . . Yeah. I think it was only once a quarter. But, they had a relationship with the public school system. My recollection at that time was, I think Oren E. Long was the superintendent of education [1934–46].

WN: So then you can really see the community in action, where you misbehave or do something wrong in school then . . .

MK: Oh yeah, oh yeah. You bad news. That news travels so fast, even your church members knew what you doing. Huh! Oh yeah, but again, we don’t call it part of the system but it was good growing up that way. Maybe it was a threat, but it was a good threat, because what they’re saying is that, you cannot be a good student without becoming a good academic student. You cannot be a good citizen without being a good academic student. They not saying now you got to make A [grade]. Meet the standards, that’s all they’re saying. Whether it’s C or D, but certainly F is unacceptable. That’s the message we got, is that you got to stay in there and keep plugging.

WN: Was there a study hall over there at Pālama?

MK: Oh yeah, upstairs. They still have ’em today.

WN: They told you that you have to go to study hall?

MK: They don’t tell you nothing, they just point.

(Laughter)

MK: They just point. Whether you went there or not, they not concerned. They just point. See,
'cause you cannot come this side, you cannot go that side, you cannot go this side, they just point. This is where you can go. You want to run away, run away. No big deal. That's no problem. You not coming back tomorrow. You come back tomorrow, you still got to go the same place. Until the teachers say, "Okay, this guy is doing good, he's doing okay," until such time, you only got one place you going. Is in that room.

You know the beauty? They had tutors. Whether it's another student or whether it's an adult, they always had somebody to help you out.

WN: So in essence then, Pālama Settlement becomes like an extension of parents or family . . .

MK: That's right.

WN: 'Cause the teachers say you doing badly in grades. They could just go right directly to Pālama Settlement. But if you weren't going to Pālama Settlement, what is the recourse for the teachers?

MK: If you weren't attending Pālama Settlement, then I guess they try get the parents at the PTA [Parent Teachers Association]. Right? Then if they got the parents through the PTA system, which was only once a month, I think those days. I think was only once a month. Then they not going to reach the parent and the student, together. This is where a lot of kids had the fallout in the system.

So what do you think? What is the normal reaction, if you can think—if you can try to think, maybe like us in those days, or think like how our parents' reaction would be in those days in the [19]40s. If the kid not doing too good in school, if the kids run away from school, if the kid is not studying, more better he go work. That's why lot of kids went to work early. It's not that the parents insisted they go to work to make ends meet. All parents want their kids to go to school, but they used their best judgment. You don't want to go school, then you going work. "Ho, right on, I can go work! I don't have to study." Then comes the dawn twenty years later, fifteen years later, "I wish I wen study."

But, lot of the cases, the kids kind of blame the parents. "They made me go work. I had to go work, otherwise they cannot make ends meet." And I have a problem with that. Every time I hear that, I have a problem with that. Because in our area where we lived, the Japanese Camp, the Pāke Camp, the Yobo Camp, the Borinque Camp, all parents were almost identical. They all want their kids—ho, the fights, argument, everything—they argue at Pālama, they argue at home, they argue at the street corner—"My damn kid don't want to go to school! I force 'em, I do this, I do that, they don't want, they run away from home, more better he go work." The minute they put the kid to work, the kid go home every night.

That's the relationship that Pālama had created with families, and the students, is that, I don't want to see you regret one day, you going land in jail because you don't know nothing. You go hungry. Maybe you don't understand the boss. You going get a job, you don't understand the boss, what you going do, fight back? You'll get in trouble. You're too young to work. Some parents resented it, but those were good advice. Educational system gave us guys in that time period, wonderful advice. Wonderful.

I have to defend, like I said earlier, a lot of the parents, they preferred the kids go to school.
You don't have to set your sights to be a professor, or anything professional, just be proud of what you do in school. Take pride in what you did. That's all they emphasized. Stick in there.

But Pālama tried to supplement that so-called discipline by the suspension rules they had, what you can and cannot do. If you're not doing good, you can come Pālama, but you got to go study hall. Maybe change of environment, or change of scene going help the students. So they provided a room for you to kind of sneak to find the answers, or whatever you want to call it. Guys didn't take advantage.

WN: And the penalty is, if you don't do it you're gonna miss out on all these programs.

MK: Oh yeah, that hurt. That hurt.

WN: But I'm just wondering, there's maybe some people who didn't really care if they missed out on these programs.

MK: Had plenty guys. But they come back. You know when you go out, people all around you, and you lonely. They come back. Like, we walking to school in the morning, we all meet, maybe my house, here. This guy pick up, this guy pick up, we walking 'eh? Say you got a group of ten. Nine guys talking about what happened yesterday. One guy cannot participate in the discussion all the way to school because he wasn't there.

(Laughter)

MK: He wasn't there. And you know what? We going camping next week, or we going hiking up here, and you cannot come. See? People all around you but you're lonely. Very lonely. It's amazing.

WN: You think we can stop here and then we continue another day?

MK: Anytime you like.

WN: I think this is a good place to stop, but I had some more questions. What I want to do is to talk to some more people before I talk to you.

MK: Oh, grand, sure.

WN: Okay?

MK: Sure. No problem.

END OF INTERVIEW
WN: This is an interview with Moses "Moke" Kealoha, on February 11, 1997. We're at his home in Wai'alae, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto. This is for the Palama Settlement oral history project.

Okay, Moke, let's start. Last time we were talking about---lot about Palama Settlement, but I wanted to just get started, and have you talk about your family for a little while. You said you were the youngest of sixteen children. What was it like growing up, being the youngest of sixteen children?

MK: (Laughs) Slavery.

(Laughter)

WN: For who? For them or for you?

(Laughter)

MK: Whoo-whoo. Well, you know being the youngest, you the baby, and naturally, I mean without some deep thinking, all my brothers and sisters tend to call (me "Mama's pet"). The age difference between myself and the oldest sister in the family, was like little more than thirty years. So, if I was ten years old, the oldest sister was forty. So you see there's a disparity in age. And then the closest above me, was my brother Enoka. And he was four years older than me. And above him, my brother Tommy, he was like about three years older than my brother Enoka. So number fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen as a result, became the closest, simply because (we were close by) age. So you see we had a big spread, you know.

So naturally, they all became bosses. (WN laughs.) Being the youngest I'd have to get up at five in the morning. Clean the yard, rake the yard, pick up the leaves and do those chores. Then get to the corner of School [Street] and Liliha Street, sell the morning paper for about an hour so we can make that commission, eh? You got a penny for so many papers that you sell. That paid for my soup in the elementary school. Your lunch money and stuff. So that's how we got by. So that's a daily chore from Monday through Friday. On Saturday, you still got up early in the morning, because my father, to make ends meet, had us working like, yard work. You know, you see contractors driving around in their trucks, with the lawn mower and stuff.
like that. Well, we used to do that. Same thing. Difference is, we'd take our sickle and our
glove—no goggles—and we'd walk up Nu'uanu Avenue, the Old Pali Road, and some
weekends we'd go to Mānoa. All the rich guys, we do the yard, and come back home. You
know, we used to do the Damons, the Dillinghams, we go up the Cooke family, Walker estate.
We used to go every Saturday, do those chores.

WN: Who's we?

MK: Me, my two brothers above me, my father. And we'd go out. So, you get used to that life. So
from childhood till today, I still get up five o'clock in the morning. Only difference is I go to
the Y [Young Men's Christian Association]. (Chuckles) You see? But, that's a good habit.

And growing up in that time, being number sixteen in the family was very rewarding for me,
because it's a good training we had about family life, family responsibilities, doing the chores.
Taking on those things that your older brothers or sisters from time to time weren't available
and you could cover. We even learned how to sew our own clothes—patch pants, patch
shirts—learn how to starch the clothes and iron it. And naturally we washed with the
washboard. No more machines. You wash clothes with the saddle soap. So all those
upbringing was very rewarding for us, because by the time we get into manhood, raising our
families, you kind of know what is life, bringing up family to keep 'em close, to be
responsive.

I think the reward is the evidence today, where even with the kids we have—the oldest is
thirty-five, and thirty-two, and thirty—they're independent. And we're really grateful to those
kids—we, meaning my wife and I, 'cause we have no problems, they're not into drugs, they're
very responsible, they're very independent, they all went on to school. We were fortunate
enough to provide them with Hanahau'oli [School] from the preschool, and then they all
graduated from Punahou [School]. They all went on to college, they all have masters degrees.
One is a Ph.D. And they live their own life today. And you know, we don't have those kind
of worries, eh? So we credit that to the kind of upbringing—family responsibility, keeping the
family close—and again, when you see the final product, you know, thank God for them more
than yourself.

But those upbringing, played a definite role. And the fortunate part about it is my wife
[Ululani Baldwin Kealoha], born and raised in Maui, had the same kind of upbringing, like
most of the population all over. Poor families, but with good values. You know, religious
values, family values, take on the responsibilities. So, again, it wasn't a hard life. It was a very
rich life. We were wealthy in terms of how we could cope with nature, and what nature
provided us, and how to identify those provisions.

And of course we were brought up heavy into Hawaiian herbs, so to speak, you know.
Different kinds of plants were used for sickness, for colds, diarrhea. You name it. Our parents
taught us how to identify and prepare, and process certain kinds of plants. For example,
banana. The leaves, we used every time we got injuries of some kind, or cuts. You know from
the [tin] can cuts? Yeah, they taught us how to chew the old banana leaves with Hawaiian salt,
and get all that juice, like tobacco. Then you put 'em on the wound, wrap it up with any kind
of cloth. Doesn't have to be white cloth, any kind of cloth. In twenty-four hours you take 'em
out, the cut is clean, they extract all the bacteria and germs. And you have a nice-looking,
clean-cut, wound. And the use of the aloe plant [for] scrape on the skins, bruises, you know all
external stuff. Of course the internal we used the bananas, and what we call the pōpolo tree. We boil the leaves like you do tea, and we use that when we get colds, or the flu. We drink that.

WN: You had all this in your yard?

MK: We have all in our yard. Ko'oko'o'olau tea, we drank tea. May not be the exact scientific use but, it worked for us. This looks like a old shrub—weeds—that we call ko'oko'o'olau. We slit the branches, cut 'em in small pieces [along] with the leaves, we dry 'em, and then we boil 'em. And that's our tea. Comes out nice, dark maroon, and that's our tea. Till today, I still drink ko'oko'o'olau tea.

WN: Ko'oko'o'olau?

MK: Ko'oko'o'olau. There's two types, the dry land or lowland, and then you have the high elevation ones. Naturally, because we [lived] lowland we prefer that one. But it has a very, very, good, honest taste. Taste a little sweet. It's not like the Oriental tea where it's kind of (pause) I don't know what culinary terms they call it, but kind of sharp taste. The ko'oko'o'olau has a nice blend, even, and a little sweet. And you can drink it with or without sugar.

WN: Could you buy that at the store?

MK: I think you can buy 'em in some stores. I know if you go to Hilo, every now and then they have a whole bunch. You buy it for three dollars, you get a whole bunch. And it's pretty prevalent in Kalapana today. Way back, they were all over the place. Any island, all over. Then of course you had the other plant, the 'ualoa plant which they grow all over Pālama. Vineyard Street, School Street, Houghtailing Road, hey, you want it, just go out and get it. I don't know the biological or scientific name. And you add the noni—today it's quite popular, they sell it.

WN: Right.

MK: So we were brought up on those natural plants which were available at that time, all over the place. But now, it's not available, obviously because of progress. But that's what it's like in part, growing up in a big family. You gotta be independent, yeah. And for food, we became very good fishermen. Net fishing, dive fishing, you know. Limu picking.

WN: Where did you folks go?

MK: Well, because we lived on School Street, that's fronting Pālama, the closest was Sand Island. So, we do that at Sand Island. [And] our parents used to take us to Waikīkī. Today you call it Halekūlani, those days we called it Grey's Beach. That's a favorite spot. Well, we had Dead End Row, at that time we called 'em Dead End Right. Today you call it Ka'alāwai, where just below Triangle Park, over there by Diamond Head.

WN: Oh, okay.

MK: And down Kāhala. Kāhala was very good. They're all good fishing ground. Actually, you go anywhere in the island those days, depending on what you wanted. You see, we wanted a
certain kind of *limu*, we go a certain place. But the closest was Sand Island, and Sand Island was very bountiful because you could get anything. Any type of fish, any kind of *limu*. And lot of times when my father had work around Waikiki, or Kapahulu, then that’s where we’d end up going. And everybody walk home.

WN: Walk home?

MK: Walk home. Walk home. (Laughs)

WN: How long it took you to walk home from Waikiki?

MK: Oh, not too long. Maybe forty-five minutes, one hour. Not too long.

WN: Geez, that’s walking.

MK: Those days, this is nothing, eh? Nothing. You cut through here, cut through there. But, like I say, we’re very grateful for that, you know. And our parents used to tell us, preach to us, we were wealthy. We were wealthy because, Hawai‘i had everything we needed and more. You know, you could go anywhere, you never starve. The thing was to identify, recognize what’s around you, and then learn how to prepare it.

I tell you something funny. You know in those days, until I actually enlisted in the [U.S.] Army in 1946, we knew how to cook, or prepare fish, only three ways besides raw. We either boil ’em, we fry ’em, or we dry ’em. (Laughs) That’s the only way we ate fish, besides raw. And everything, you salt ’em. That was the spice of all spices. Everything had salt, even the pork. We had meat, we call *pipi kaula*, everybody likes that today. Over time, everybody made their cultural improvements, but the Hawaiians, all they did was salt the meat and hang ’em up like they do dried fish, and you had dried meat.

WN: You folks didn’t *lāwalu*? You know, put ’em in the ti leaf and steam ’em?

MK: Oh yeah. Yeah, we do *lāwalu*. We *kālua* pig. My father taught all my older brothers how to *kālua* pig, so we did that every New Year’s Eve. We start about, maybe eight o’clock at night for New Year’s Day lunch with all the family come over. So we *kālua* the pig. Or two pigs, because the surrounding neighborhood, eh? They’d come, and you gotta have enough to take home. So we’re diving the whole week, gathering *limu*, and get the chicken, and so forth, and so on. And then our neighbors would come over. The Tin Yao Goos right next door to us, and we had Chin Sun family. In fact, Chin Sun was a famous tennis champion. One of the first tennis champions out of Hawai‘i. They lived right behind our house. But, all the neighbors, they’d come over, pitch in. And New Year’s Day, we’d get a big blast. All kinds. But like I said, you had to cook more than you need. Because everybody gotta take home, eh?

WN: So you *kāluaed* whole pigs?

MK: Yeah, we *kālua* two pigs. Usually New Year’s Eve. And we’d put ’em in like about, maybe one o’clock in the morning, take ’em out five o’clock.

WN: So that’s New Year’s Eve day?
MK: New Year's Eve. Midnight. Well, that's New Year's Day. At 1:00 A.M. in the morning. And then you have your lunch around noon. I mean, hoo, eat though. Lots to eat boy.

WN: I bet.

MK: So you go by in order of age, eh? So the older guys [siblings] get the more important chores to do, and the younger guys, over time you do the more important things, eh? Like my job when I started out was to clear the imu. Some call it imu, some call it the umu, the Samoans call it umu. Hawaiians call it imu. So we clear 'em out, and we learn how to set the rocks, and learn how to set the sticks. And then the big kiawe on top of that, and then the charcoal on top the kiawe with a center stick that we run the water in, so you get the steam going after the rocks get hot.

WN: You guys had water in there?

MK: We used to put water in the hole.

WN: Just put 'em on top the rock?

MK: No, no. In the hole. You put a center stick right in the middle, you run the hose down the center of the middle. So you get like a pond on the bottom. See?

WN: How much water you put in?

MK: Very little. Maybe half a gallon that goes into the hole. Then you light the fire, and after all the rocks are almost white hot, then you take out whatever wood, or kiawe that's burning. You take that out, just leave the hot rocks, and we stuff 'em in the pig, eh? You stuff the neck, the shoulder, the stomach, the two legs, then bind [the pig] in wire. Put that in, then you put the potatoes. Sometimes we put turkey, we get some chicken, we even do that. Everything is kalua. All kind stuff in there. And then you put the hālīʻi first, what we call the banana stumps, or banana leaves, and then you put the pig on and everything else. Then you cover with more banana leaves, branches, ti leaves, then wet bags all over.

WN: Canvas?

MK: Then the canvas after the bag.

WN: Oh, okay.

MK: Put all bags all over. Overlap each other, all wet bags. And then the canvas is also wet, and that goes over the entire hole, and then you cover with the dirt, yeah? And then you gotta be watchman. See, every time you see smoke leaking, you gotta cover that with dirt. So you pack 'em in.

WN: That was your job?

MK: That was our job. So they all do something else, and our job is to just stay there and watch, and walk around. Play like the big deal, eh? (WN laughs.)
WN: So you stay up all night then?

MK: Yeah, but you know, the time go by is so interesting that the learning process leaves you in awe. So, you like to do it, you like to be the boss. Real graduate, eh? Do more things. So it was very interesting. So the time isn't anything. I tell you when you get tired, when everybody's sitting down and eating, that's when you fall asleep. (WN laughs.)

WN: Did other Hawaiian families in the area do that?

MK: Well, we were the only Hawaiians. Had a part-Hawaiian, our very dear friends the Funn, F-U-N-N, the Funn family. They were two doors away, but we were just like family. So they part of the family. And of course, the Tin Yao Goo family next on our 'Ewa side of our house, and further that, the other Chun family. And we had one—you know [circuit court] judge [Robert] Won Bae Chang? Retired? He's about five houses down the street. So, everybody come over.

WN: So they come, certain times of the day, and then they eat . . .

MK: Contribute, yeah. And they contribute. They come see what they can do and stuff. And for them it's a treat, because Hawaiian food, eh? And especially the kālua pig, and people like my mother's ake, the liver. Raw liver.

WN: Raw?

MK: Yeah. Hawaiians . . .

WN: Beef liver?

MK: Yeah. That's tasty.

WN: How did she prepare that?

MK: Well, the process is so tedious. You take a hose, and you gotta stick it in the liver and shoot all the blood out. We get this big tarai, yeah? We fill 'em with water. We throw salt inside. And if we can remember, we bring home some of the clean [ocean] salt water, put 'em in the tarai, soak 'em in there. And you flush all the blood. That takes long, long. If you had a ten-pound liver . . .

WN: Ten pound?

MK: . . . you try put 'em in sections. For example, if you had a ten-pound [liver], you try to cut 'em in sections, so that you shoot and clean section by section. Get all the blood out. And you shoot 'em with the hose. Find a hose, stick the nozzle in there, and you see the blood coming out all over. And when that's clean, now you chop 'em smaller and you gotta peel it. All that ligament eh? The cover, you gotta clean that so there's nothing. And then you cut 'em in little bits of pieces. They'd be about a half-inch square, so you going end up eating 'em like that. So we put limu in there, and then little salt water, little pimento for coloring, and that tastes the best with what we call limu huluhulu waena. It's a very fine, thin limu. And you mix that up. And, of course, we always made lū'au stew, and chicken long rice, and lomi salmon, and raw salmon, and poke salmon, lāwatu fish, and raw 'ō'io. You know, the lomi 'ō'io, eh?
WN: Yeah, yeah. 'O'io?

MK: 'O'io.

WN: Oh, bonefish.

MK: Bonefish. Oh, that's (MK smacks his lips together) good. All the good stuff.

WN: You don't---like, fishcake? I mean you . . .

MK: We do.

WN: Spoon 'em out. Is that how you do it [i.e. prepare 'o'io]?

MK: Yeah, you spoon 'em out. Or you can roll 'em with a Coca-Cola bottle, and you cut one side of the tail, and then just roll 'em back and forth. So only the meat ooze out, and the bones stay in.

WN: You know that liver, by the time you eat it, is it still red? Not red anymore, 'cause you flushed out all the blood?


WN: So what color is it? Brown?

MK: It's kind of brownish. But you can put coloring, see? For coloring we use pimento. You know, it doesn't have . . .

WN: Oh, reddish.

MK: Yeah. It's only for coloring. Looks more appetizing, yeah.

WN: What else get? Onions inside?

MK: We put limu huluhulu waena. Yeah, that's it. You can use onion, that's up to the individual. But, you know, Hawaiian style you like onion, you chew the onion, and down the liver. (WN laughs.)


MK: Yeah?

WN: Yeah. Would you eat that today?

MK: Oh, yeah. Oh, that's good stuff. That's good stuff. Sounds a little blah but, you know, every culture has it's own—some looks delicious, some look yeach. But you know, the founders of all cultures, the granddaddies, they knew what they were doing.

WN: Right.
MK: That's real experience. But today, even if you want to do it, you have a problem. Because society changes. Methodology changes. I don't think the cows today taste as good as the cows yesterday. Everything change.

WN: Like where did you folks get the pigs?

MK: Sometimes if we no more good luck, and our pigs didn't grow—we used to raise 'em in the corner, in our yard. Or sometimes you go down and we kompa-kompa with somebody else. We get the pig at birth, and we send 'em down to the—right across, closer to the river by Kapālama Canal. Over there, you know they get a pen, eh? Everybody kompa-kompa like. They share and raise their pig. Go down, feed 'em. So, was good. Good stuff.

WN: This is every New Year's?

MK: Every New Year's. Every New Year's.

WN: What you folks did Christmastime?

MK: Christmas now, you have a feast. But the big deal was New Year's. That was a big deal. Christmas, more you spend with the church, eh? Because we're Mormons. So everything is geared to the church. And then the week later it's your family. It's more keeping the unity of the family, identifying the new guys on the block. You know, keeping the genealogy, eh? That's the primary purpose. For the New Year's gathering, it's to have everybody come together and see who was born in the last eight months, or year, whatever it is. And our parents were pretty good at that. Excellent, because they made us identify each family so that—they used to say hilahila. Shame if you walking down the street and you don't know your own relatives. So, we had to have these kind of gatherings, see?

But all over in that area, I guess all over the world they have that same thing different ways. And even at the [Pālama] Settlement, sometimes people would ask if they can use a certain section [on the grounds] to do kālua pig, and stuff like that. And the thing I like best, not best, but one of the good things about the settlement, they were pretty strict in certain things. And this is one of those things where, when people wanted to kālua pig in the settlement—and lot of open space—they wouldn't permit it. 'Cause going get out of hand. And it almost did get out of hand for a while. But then you realize that later, yeah, you just gotta make your own thing. You want to kālua pig, gotta find someplace else. But, we always recognized what they provided for the community.

Funny yeah? Now that we were talking like this, I'm reflecting back. All over the place, well, from Nu'uanu over to Houghtailing, it's just like everybody else was concerned with everybody else's welfare. Like the family got together, or they getting together. You feel relieved that you know that the other family is having the same, what we call, ho'oponopono. And the Japanese had their own [New Year's celebrations] too. Because of course, that was big, eh, the Japanese. And that's the thing we miss, you know. Because we want to get out of our house, and get to our friends' house, the Japanese house. Sometime like around two, three o'clock, or four o'clock, or something, 'cause we gotta get that sushi and the macaroni salad, and daikon (chuckles), and whatever else.

WN: New Year's, you mean?
MK: New Year’s Day. Was a big deal, you know.

WN: (laughs) So you ate at your family one, then you went out.

MK: I split. It doesn’t matter to me if I didn’t eat. It doesn’t matter. So long I can get there. I want to get with that sushi and everything else.

WN: So what Japanese families did you go to?

MK: Oh, the whole camp. You just go house to house. (WN laughs.) Just go get it. Yup.

WN: What you folks had to drink at these luaus?

MK: Oh, us guys no more drinks.

WN: But had soda, or something?

MK: Sometime, yeah, we get soda. But it’s Kool-Aid. Lots of Kool-Aid, or water. But, you get guys who you can tell they feeling good, whatever. But you couldn’t drink at our house. You could not. My father was a devout Mormon and he believed in the Word of wisdom. And so you just could not. My older brothers, sisters, they drank. But they had to hold their breath because (laughs) they couldn’t drink in the house. They gotta sneak off someplace, and then come back.

WN: You told me one time when we first met about your father, and how he didn’t really want you to go to Pālama Settlement too much, and to play sports and things.

MK: Not really. He don’t mind you going there, so long as you do your school work, and be home to do your chores. So he didn’t mind you going to Pālama, because he know where can find you. What he didn’t care for, was for me to be actively participating in sports that would take me away from the chores, and the primary responsibilities, and get away from a good, rounded education. Like, we had to be home—to do it properly—I should have been home by, the latest, 4:00 every day in the afternoon. ‘Cause that’s how long it takes to prepare the fire, and get the hot water. Got to cook fifty-gallon drum water. Get it hot. So when he comes home by 5:00, 5:30 [P.M.], that water gotta be hot. And he does his things, put his tools away or whatever it is, and he takes a bath. And then after that’s done, then we gotta prepare for dinner. And then with the leftover water we gotta prepare to wash dishes and stuff like that. So you put ’em on the next burner. We had three burners, you know, make your own kind. Like the red bricks, you stack ’em up. So with the leftover wood, all those embers, then we make toast. And then to feed the family, that’s about four, five layers of [bread] we gotta [toast]. There was bread to make toast, ‘cause poi alone—we eat poi every day, those days—it’s not enough. Let me try describe what is enough, what is not enough. (WN chuckles.)

We eat poi every meal. Every Saturday in the afternoon, we going make our own poi. Make our own poi means you get the fresh poi, that from the taro you boil, and then you clean the skin, and then you smash ’em, you pound ’em, and you get the poi. And then you have to water that down, thin ’em out. And then you have to strain that to get the pu’upu’u, the so-called leftover dust, or the ingredients in the poi. Same process as they use today, but all
mechanized. So after you do that, you mix the poi, you have 'em nice and thin, ready to eat. Well, to that, we would need at least fifty pounds of poi in that fashion, ready to eat. To that, we get about another twenty pounds of flour. Whole wheat and the white flour, we mix 'em together dry . . .

WN: Oh, with the taro? With the poi?

MK: No, separate. Poi ready to eat. To that now, we get some whole wheat flour, and regular white flour, we mix that dry together. Meanwhile we cooking hot water. Hot, hot, hot, hot, hot, hot. And we get like a two-by-four, you cull 'em down, you make 'em look like a paddle. Once that water is hot, then you add this flour into the hot water and you stir 'em slowly, and pretty soon they come thick. And now that looks like poi. When that’s done, you have the proper texture and everything else, you gotta let that cool off. And now we strain that, take whatever residues and stuff, we thin 'em out, and that looks exactly like the poi. So you have about twenty-five pounds of this dry flour that you just mixed with water. So now, maybe that’s what, forty pounds. And this poi. Now you mix these two together. So we get roughly about a hundred pounds of poi. By the time—and if we did this on a Saturday, when the next Friday came along, we were out of poi. That’s not enough for one week.

WN: So you stretched 'em out then?

MK: That’s how we stretch the poi. You eat the fresh poi with the homemade poi that you make out of flour. You put that two together and they get what we call, the Hawaiians call, poi palaoa, [pronounced] ("plaua"). You convert this to English it means flour poi. Now, that’s hundred pounds roughly. Right? We still gotta eat toast with the meal. Otherwise, the poi going run out.

(Laughter)

MK: It’s only one week. So what is that? One week, that’s four hundred. But at least four hundred pounds a month we eat poi. (Laughs) That’s a lot of poi.

WN: You folks raised the taro yourself?

MK: Yeah, we raised on Kaua‘i.

WN: You mean you knew somebody who raised, and you got . . .

MK: No, our family had taro patch in Kaua‘i, but that mostly goes to commercial route. So we buy from See Wo Poi Factory. Down Liliha Street there was a little Chinese poi factory.

WN: You bought the taro?

MK: We buy 'em down there and make the poi. Can we take a break?

WN: Yeah.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)
MK: But before I forget, there was this guy, Nelson Kawakami at Pālama Settlement. I knew him since I was like, maybe eight or nine years old, until he died. He was just a wonderful guy. His nickname, we call him “Opu” ['opot]. And he hated that name. But we called him Opu because he always had a pot belly. And he’s probably the most odd-looking athlete you ever saw. (WN chuckles.) And he was very agile for the way he was built. To simplify that Opu, he looked like one sumo wrestler. But he was very agile. He could play good tennis, and he taught tennis. And basketball, and he kicked the football. He couldn’t run very fast as he got older, but he did everything. He was a hell of an athlete. But he took care of every little boy or girl that ever walked near the locker room. He was just an amazing guy. He was sincerely concerned for every guy. He would call the parents up, [even] if you have to walk to the house, he’d be sure that the boy or girl had permission to come to the Pālama Settlement. ’Cause sometimes, you know, you might come with me, right? I say, “We go.” And your parents not aware where the hell you went. So they looking for you four, five hours. Always made it a point, where the new guy on the block, either have your parents come here, or I go to your house. That’s the kind of guy he was.

And I think if you ask anybody who was ever associated [with] Pālama, they can tell you what a wonderful guy that is. He was in there morning, and he closed the joint at night. Nine o’clock. So his normal day was like, sixteen, seventeen hours, whatever it is. Just amazing guy. And he was always encouraging the guys to participate in anything. Woodcrafts, music, dancing, whatever it was. I think that’s the most amazing guy I’ve ever experienced life with at the Pālama Settlement, was Nelson Kawakami. He’s a guy that was not formally educated, but he made sense. He got the respect of the parents, the kids, and he was a good teacher. Not certified, but he had compassion. The only thing he told the kids is, “Don’t bring me your homework because I don’t know how to add and subtract. (WN chuckles.) I might give you the wrong answer.” He was up front that way. But, he pointed to the main building and there were the volunteers in there. He says, “Go in there.” And if you went in there, you ran into people like [Margaret] Iizaki, and Mrs. Ho, and Queenie Vierra, the Safferys. All those people in there. Just wonderful, they always help you. They always help the kids. Amazing you know. So you see the kind of wealth we had. Besides the physical plant, we had people. Boy, if they weren’t there you [were] lost.

Then, every Saturday, we had a little theater as part of the administrative building. There was a little theater that can seat about, I guess sixty of us. Maybe little bit more. And we had movies. That’s a treat for us. So the ages between, let’s say nine to fourteen, or whatever it is, you gotta get there maybe—the first show was ten o’clock to twelve o’clock. And then the older guys can go in at one o’clock to three o’clock. Two shows daily on Saturdays. (Chuckles) I mean, we had that entertainment. Every so often they had other entertainers come down the settlement and perform.

WN: That was free? The movies?

MK: That was free. That was free. Another thing they provided for us was, you can go to either Liliha Theatre, which was situated on Liliha just below School Street, or the Pālama Theatre. We could go there Wednesdays, and take a whole bunch of fliers like, 8½-by-11 [inch paper], or little smaller. I forget now. But you take a whole bunch, and then you gotta go deliver ’em to. . . . And get lot of tenement houses, so you go deliver between this block and that block,
between this street and that street. You go to every house, every business, you deliver the fliers. In that says, "Movies of the week." On Mondays what gonna have, Tuesdays, what gonna have. And if you did that, you qualify for the Mickey Mouse Club (WN laughs) on Saturday mornings. See? And then you can go to the Mickey Mouse Club, and you can so forth and so on. Pālama Settlement made that arrangement with the Consolidated [Amusement Company] theaters. And half of the kids were Mickey Mouse Club.

The kids were passing out papers. I mean enthusiastically. Wednesdays you run down, stand in line so you can get a share of that stuff and deliver 'em. And you know that thing work, because in the weeknights the older group, you know, the adults, would stand in line and go to the theater. They didn't have to advertise in the newspaper. Just put the fliers, have the kids go. And the area you covered was all the way down, like to Nu'uanu Street, going above Liliha by Pu'unui. One above Pu'unui is up to Wyllie Street. All the way up to 'Alewa. See, we draw a circle, that's about mile-and-a-half radius, that qualifies you for Mickey Mouse. So they did provide different kinds of activities to help the kids out. They made the arrangements, eh? So it's just wonderful. So you see, I keep coming back to the same thing. The guys who stayed in the program, whether men or women, boys or girls, the percentage of delinquency—when I say delinquency, I mean had to go to the, what we call the big house, jail—was almost zero. Almost zero 'cause you could do so many benefits they tried to provide for us. The guys who quit the program, their names come in the paper, they going in jail.

WN: I'm gonna turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Nelson Kawakami, what kinds of things did he teach you folks. What was he a teacher of? Swimming?

MK: He was, yeah. That's a good term. Teacher. Not really a coach, a teacher. Everything. Swimming, volleyball, basketball, tennis, badminton, how to kick the football, oh, how to hit the golf ball.

WN: You guys did golf too?

MK: We had golf. Ey, we had golf. And we had soccer. We played soccer. And Nelson would teach us what is a dribble, and what you see the kids doing today. You lift the ball up with the front toe, and with the heel you going right or left. We used to learn that. We were kids at Pālama Settlement. It's amazing. It was after the war, that that thing just died. The soccer. It just faded out. I don't know, I can't give you a reason, but I was surprised when we didn't have 'em. I think the education department [Hawai'i State Department of Education] had more to do with it than a place like Pālama or Nu'uanu Y[MCA]. 'Cause I don't know why they didn't have it. They didn't encourage the Pālama Settlement and Nu'uanu Y[MCA], the old Central Y[MCA], all these different places. They didn't encourage to develop that. They just keep emphasizing football and swimming, and basketball, and that stuff. And then weight lifting, and I don't know. Soccer just dropped off. But he taught us everything except boxing.
And as far as judo, why, we had some people that come in from Nikko. Dr. [Henry S.] Okazaki’s studio over on Hotel Street. So I don’t know where Jerry [Tarutani] got his degree from, but I think he went to Nikko, you know.

WN: Nikko was a judo . . .

MK: The judo, yeah, Okazaki’s [Nikko] Sanatorium. That’s where I used to walk to go take judo when I was nine years old. Us guys, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday. Saturday morning. And then, when Jerry owned his black belt, then he taught judo at Pālama Settlement. I still carried on with Nikko because I was dedicated to Nikko. I’m a student of Okazaki’s sanatorium, his dojo. But Jerry developed a judo program at Pālama Settlement.

But also, Nelson encouraged volunteers to come in and teach sports that he could not excel in teaching, like boxing, and then later on weight lifting. We even had water ballet, we learned how to, you know, this ballet thing in the water.

WN: Yeah, synchronized swimming.

MK: Synchronized swimming. They used to have that at Pālama and those girls were good. Very good.

WN: What percentage of the programs at Pālama were sports oriented, would you say? Let’s say while you were going there as a child. Would you say like, majority of the resources were spent on sports?

MK: No, I don’t think so. When you say resources, including the financial side?

WN: Yeah, time and staff, and . . .

MK: All volunteer. These volunteers recruited that guy, that guy recruited that guy. So I would say about half, not all because they were more into the educational side. What they did, most of the athletic side just came because people took to outdoor sports. And the older guys taught the younger guys. They participated with ‘em. But they put a lot of emphasis on like, woodcrafting. I don’t see it today. We had something like this little wire you plug in the thing, and over here get hot. And you can make design and . . .

WN: Oh, on the wood?

MK: On the wood.

WN: Or bum the wood, eh?

MK: Burn the wood, and coconuts. We used to have coconuts all over. You know, you could do those things. So you had that, you had study hall, and then you had other wood crafts—how to make bracelets—and we had a wood shop, like a carpenter shop. Mr. Ogawa used to teach in the shop, and he was a volunteer. And of course you had Strong-Carter [Dental] Clinic, the dentist place, and you had ballroom dancing. You had all varieties of—in fact, even singing and the ukulele. So I would say they had their share of the more educational side, the academic side. And on the athletic side, you had a lot of volunteers. People that came in and
just helped coach, helped teach. So with respect to numbers, that's the part not so good. More kids participated on the athletic side and less on this side. If you had a hundred kids, maybe seventy over here, only thirty in the building. And that's what they struggled to increase, was the attendance in the building. Let me put it that way.

WN: 'Cause I know like today, women's athletics is, you know, really big now. But I was just wondering in those days, were women or girls encouraged to participate in athletics too?

MK: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Boy, we had the Hawaiian, Lulu Kea. Ah, too bad, we missed her too. And I feel sad because she was a champion swimmer. Lulu Kea, we had Helen Asing, we had George Paoa, the entertainer's wife, Pua, what an athlete. What an athlete. And we had a lot of the Japanese girls. Outside of swimming, you didn't have statewide program. Pālama had. Pālama had baseball team. Girls' baseball, underhand. Pālama had girls' volleyball team, Pālama had girls' basketball team, you see? Pālama had girls playing badminton. We used to challenge this park, and this park, and the wāhines one day would say, "Ey, we going challenge Kaimukī." So we all got to walk up Kaimukī. I mean you see a bunch a girls are there, yeah, they waiting. But it was not organized. But yes, Nelson Kawakami did in fact encourage wāhines to participate. We had two divers. Had a lot of tennis players came out of Pālama. Women. We had lot of basketball players.

Those days the women [had different rules for basketball]. If you had five girls on one court, on one team, three girls on this side [of the court], two girls on that side. Then they changed. I think was six—three on this side, three on this side. In other words, you bring the ball on half-court, you pass off. Then you gotta stay on your side of the court. You belong on that side. That was discouraging, but they did have girls' basketball team. And it was only recent times where girls play almost the same rules as men. But they encouraged a lot of athletics. We had lot of women, especially swimming.

WN: Were there women coaches?

MK: I'm trying to think of her name. (Pause) Can't think of her name. We had one lady, one Haole lady was a swimming coach. She left the islands a long time [ago] and her name was Miss West. I can't think of her first name. She was a synchronized swimming coach, she was the wāhine swimming coach at Pālama. After that, had another Chinese lady. Can't think of her name. She became a good golfer too.

WN: So all these things that you're describing to me, is basically before the war, yeah? At Pālama Settlement.

MK: And going into, and shortly after the war.

WN: So what changes do you remember that the war brought on to Pālama Settlement. I think we touched on that little bit. Plus you were getting older too, eh?

MK: Yeah. You see, after the war we were absent a few years because a lot of us, lot of the guys got married, developed their family and lot of them live in Wai'anae, elsewhere on the homestead land and stuff like that. So, like anything else you have, that's the social change. I went to a Mainland school and I came back, then you outgrow the Pālama program. You know? So that took me over to Central YMCA, but now I'm doing off-touch contribution to
Pālama Settlement. From time to time they call me and I go help, this and that. Or I go look for volunteers, and then sometimes I actively participate in the coaching, recruiting, attending, and stuff like that. So slowly you find yourself moving away. But you still, let me put it to you—you took the boy out of Pālama, but you never took Pālama out of the boy, kind of thing, see. So it's still there.

WN: So I know today you go to Central YMCA, but would the same opportunities be there if you went to Pālama? Is it an adult situation, or is it more [for] kids?

MK: Still youth program. That's what I mean, we outgrowing the program, because it's strictly focused for the youth. And they're doing a hell of a job.

WN: Is there ever a movement to try to make it more adult oriented?

MK: We, a long time ago, thought about it and I started talking with our club members, our Pals Club members, and I found that they only have fond memories for Pālama. That's all they have left. They don't have the energy to participate. That's one. Secondly, the youth program is more critical than to try to complement the program by having an adult program there. Because the money spent for an adult program would cost ten times more, with a minimum attendance. So I think it's well worth it to just focus on long-term development, but expanding the youth program. I feel strongly that Pālama should go out and get more youth participants. More so, we realize that people that are there today, could not be there in ten years. Maybe 10 percent remain. Ninety percent by succession going move off and you going have a new bunch. So knowing that's what happened when we were there, that's gonna happen again after we gone. I think I touched on that earlier, in some way. Where we gonna go in the future, so we gotta go take a hard look over here.

And I'm all for expanding the Pālama facilities. And I'm all for either a sub-trustee board, or maybe, say like, directorship or committee, whatever, to formulate—to accomplish, or at least step in that direction sooner than later, to reorganize the structure of the board of trustees, and in that same audit, look for one below that, that can reach out to the staff and the community. 'Cause right now you have a board of trustees that look beautiful on paper, I mean their intentions are honorable. But I think we can do more on a direct basis, with a different composition of the board of trustees. And yet, people that are serving with that kind of profile today, still we need 'em. So they can see what's needed in the future, but they stay at a different level. Because they don't know what it takes to run a program. You know, you cannot go there once a month for one hour and say, "Okay, here's the agenda. Oh, right on. Doing good," and ask a few questions. You just cannot. But if we can encourage a second look, some kind of review committee for the Pālama Settlement, review the board of trustees, encourage these guys to come in. Make ex officio, the senator from that district, the house of representatives of that district, become an ex officio in the settlement. And we gotta give a heavier punch (MK makes hitting sound) because we need some of those people in the community directly involved, on the board of trustees. And then hopefully we can get, like I said, lot of these big businesses, get guys to punch the clock, punch out, two o'clock, go over there put in their time. So forth, and so on. And these are the guys we need to put inside those committees too. See? Because they serving the employers.

With this I think we can reorganize that settlement, and then expand the program. 'Cause I see duplication of unnecessary spending by government. It makes me sick. Abused women, abused
this, abused that. Shit, we can do that program right there in Pālama. What you going need one damn office like this, and the wāhine come in, and then go out and the husband waiting two blocks down the damn street. You know? You can do those programs over here. We can do 'em. But we gotta get the know-how. We can't do those things now.

WN: I was wondering, is Pālama still community oriented?

MK: Yeah.

WN: In other words, you have to be from the community to participate?

MK: No, it was never. Only that was the best opportunity, because no more car. You cannot go Kuli'ou'ou any time you like, right? So where do you go for recreation? Pālama. We used to bring guys from outside of Pālama to come see our program. Take a guy like me, okay? I bring in so many Punahou guys to the program, you cannot believe. When I was a young kid, you know how I bring 'em in? Because I used to go cut their grass.

(Laughter)

MK: I go to the Cookes' house, and I go to the Guards' house, and so forth. And Pfleugers always lived down here. But I get to know 'em. See? I go in their house, cut the grass, and they about my age, little younger, or little older. You know, we get together, they used to come Pālama Settlement. So we end up challenging Outrigger. Us Pālama kids, we challenge the Haoles. We gave 'em dirty lickings, but they find out what kind of program you have. So Dick Carpenter, Dick Cleveland, the Cookes, all come down Pālama. And they encourage.

WN: So by getting outsiders coming in from maybe, better-off families, it will help both sides?

MK: Two sides. Yeah. The new guy coming in and the guy [that's] been there.

WN: And were people in favor of this, or were there those that said it should be just for the community?

MK: Well, usually the people—there's two sides to it—but lot of guys are more concerned with the people in the community, because their thoughts are that, "Ey, wait a minute. We don't want to start a war over here. We might not be able to handle." But over the years, from time to time, the board, or lot of the committees, they invite the police in the area to come attend meetings. And if they listen what the police has to say, we going jump two-fold. We going make improvements. Because the police, they get street talk. They get street questions, and they get street answers. And we listen to them, yeah, what they said make a lot of sense. We need to provide these kinds of services, and essentially what they saying, more volunteers. That's really what they're saying. More volunteers. And get away from the Little League concept where these volunteers that go help coach, like the kid be one champion. And that's not the program. Things fall into place by themselves. Everything is the responsibility of life, responsibility to society. That's everything. Responsibility to the family. Be proud of your name, take pride in what you do, and just the whole thing, that we can turn things around. And I think we can, but we have to take another look. You look from the top down.

WN: Was there any criticism bringing outsiders to strengthen the athletic teams at Pālama?
MK: No, we never had too many outsiders. Only the paid [staff] guys and they were very few. Well, let's go back thirty years ago. We brought in Kenneth Ling, a graduate of 'Iolani School, he's from Kaimuki side, and the kids fell in love with him. Then we brought in John Sharp. Michigan State [University] all-American, the original pony back, Black [man] talking that ebonic language. They fell in love with the guy, they played for him. Then [James] Kalili, local boy, Pālama product, they did that. Now we get this other Black [man] down there now. I forget his name. I think we'll do wonders. He's talking incentive, if I can line up our team to go to the Mainland this year, or next year. See, these things, the kids can look forward to it. But with that incentive, you can straighten out these kids fast. Just what we had with the [Edward] "Skippa’" Diaz, and the Dick Jensons, and those kids before. Lot of them, they straighten up. Lot of talent. But I don’t think there’s that resentment from outside, it's how to handle. Their concern is can we handle, from a human resource side.

WN: Should there be more Pālama Settlements, you think?

MK: Actually you have 'em now. You have a lot of Pālama Settlements. But they’re facing the same problem that we, in the sense that if they can get more volunteers, they can do a hell of a job.

WN: You mean like Boys and Girls Club, for example?

MK: Yeah.

WN: Was that similar to . . .

MK: Yeah, that’s right. You have the Big Brothers club, Big Brothers/Big Sisters [of Honolulu, Inc.], and they do their fair share. They doing pretty good job. But they taking the cross, which is good. So we need the mass, see? And that’s where we got to come in. That’s where we got to focus our attention to. That group. This bottom and this top, and this top and this bottom, inside here.

WN: Yeah, the middle group.

MK: Yeah. Yeah. 'Cause we get a few jerks up here, that when you turn that thing upside down, they really belong here.

WN: (Chuckles) On the bottom.

MK: Yeah, because there's no access. That's something that I have to look at the state and say, "You know state, you costing the taxpayers so much dollars with duplications that, even with the no-fault [insurance] and this other deals with the teachers you trying to work out, hey man! You just putting the burden from here to there. Make this look like there's a cut over here, but the taxpayers still gotta pay the burden." So you really accomplishing nothing. This has a similar effect. The only difference is that if we can convince the, in one sense, businesses to permit their people to represent themselves and go to—not only Pālama—other outlying clubs that have the same purpose or goals. Yeah, you get the attendance. The main thing is to get the attendance. Your program going take care of those people that attend. The greater majority will definitely change for the better. The greater majority.
WN: Well, you know, as I look at your own life, you’re someone who I would say made it in life. You’ve become a success. After your Pālama days you went on to Columbia University, sports star, came back, built a successful career in auto sales, and so forth. And yet now you’re giving back to Pālama Settlement. Why are you doing it? And is that a typical feeling among others like you who have done well in life?

MK: Oh yeah. Not [only] the guys who do well. Even the guys who don’t do well. I don’t think we ever do well enough. But even people who, in their life, after they leave one spot. Like I said, “You take the boy out of Pālama, but you never take Pālama out of the boy.” But the change in society made it literally impossible for them to visibly give back. To visibly demonstrate where other people can notice they’re giving back. In their same way, little way, what they do is condition their social group, or their peer group, or their new group, and they talk about where they came from. That’s their way of giving back, you see. But as far as the people giving back—I think they give back from the time they left, for whatever reason, or I should say separated themselves from the physical plant—they already started giving back in whichever way they can. But it’s so hard for those guys because I think, through my own experience, the (Pālama Settlement Board of) Trustees at that time separated the ability for people to give back, as opposed to the small numbers who were able to brave those trustees and just walk up and say, “I no give a shit what you guys going do. This is what I want you guys to do. Here’s what I’m going to do.” There’s only a small number that would defy the trustees.

But you try to meet a lot of the guys who came out of that area, and you don’t have a really central answer. But they’re there. All the different answers really come down to something that’s so hard to identify. They get this kind trustees that we don’t know what the hell they doing with the settlement. And they get the audacity to say, “I pass by there.” Shit, it only took ‘em thirty seconds.

I say, “It’s not the same.” So, we have to find a way to get these guys to demonstrate more forcefully, that giving back is not hard. You don’t have to give back hundred dollars, but you can give back time.

WN: So, maybe then, you coming out of Pālama, because you had that experience, and you’re saying that you used a lot of those experiences you learned at Pālama in your future adulthood, and so forth. Is that an advantage for you to be active in Pālama today? I mean is that really the key? Is that important to have people like you, who went through the program, to be involved in the present and future, as opposed to others who didn’t?

MK: Well, I don’t think it’s that important. I think for me it’s important, not because I came out of there, it’s important for me because I tasted New York City. I tasted Florida. I tasted Moloka‘i. I tasted Germany. I been to France, all over Europe, I went to Australia, I went to New Zealand, I taught those Australians how we dive in Honolulu, I taught the New Zealanders and the guys in Samoa how we dive fifty, sixty, seventy feet over here. So I’ve seen this same kind of program over there, so I can bring back what other people are doing. Same thing, but they all have different techniques and different approaches for this kind of similar situation. So we don’t have—-which you made a good point, should we bring outsiders in there. Well, there’s no such thing as outsiders. But you know, people from outlying community should get a bird’s eye view on the functions and goals of Pālama. Yes, we should, we gotta. I can get new ideas. What’s the difference between young and old? What’s
the difference between here and there? We need that, 'cause they going bring in something that we could use. And if we cannot use 'em, fine. Thank you. Now maybe this same thing could work only a different twist. New idea, new approach, and yet it's old because somebody has been using it somewhere else. And that's what I bring here.

But that's a problem I have with my contemporaries in Pālama, is that they separate themselves from Pālama, went to another community on the same island. They took Pālama with them, not realizing that they really living the same lifestyle, forty years ago. So they living only in dreamland about Pālama. And those are the guys that say, "You know when I pass by. . . ." Oh, shit. You know, funny. Like no more feeling.

I was sad, because at our last hundred-year celebration, this [past] June of '96, a lot of guys my age, then a little younger group, the guys around age sixty-two, sixty-three, like that, sixty-four, they didn't really come out. You know, "Oh Pālama going have a reunion. Right on!" Only thing in their mind is they're going celebrate. But they said, "Because of my age, I cannot help. I cannot do this." So they didn't actively participate to make the program go that particular day. And all they did was the same old shit like little kids, they go in a little corner. The same group they had, get their own beers, standing up and drinking beer (WN chuckles), and let the rest of the world go by. And that's sad. And I felt so embarrassed, because here we have so many other people that came [from] so far away, trying to meet, get a cross section of those memories. Was disappointing. And I felt so sorry for Bobby Rath, those guys, because they put so much in.

And yet on the other hand, I didn't feel too bad because I think the people in charge didn't plan that properly. They eliminated. They did not give those old-timers an opportunity to participate, and I think that's what offended a lot of guys. You know, they just went in their corner. They had a whole year to plan that thing out. But if I had my way, I would've had the Royal—to start it off—Royal Hawaiian Band. I get a big blast going. Then, I would have a big section for the aged. I would have police all over the place. The aged over here, and then I get a booth right there. I would have registration. And a guy who was about seventy years old, "This is your table, you register, this is your table." Regardless who comes in, but representative group. And when they walk in, I would've had [signs saying] "1928 to 1938", "1938 to 1948", or whatever. Bang, bang, bang. I'd be taking all kind pictures. The band is going on. I would like 'em in the administration area, show off all the old trophies, whatever. And yet you going have cocktail on the way, punch for the old folks, chairs, all they can sit down, reminisce and they would cross each other. And then by the time you get to 5:30 [P.M.] or the entertainment part, now they be in the tent ready for eat. But I would occupy their time. Did you know that they spent two hours just sitting in the tent waiting for something to happen? So from that standpoint I would've done it different. I would have a big band over there. I mean, like, Dr. T, you know Dr. Takushi? I would have his band play the old music. Glenn Miller and all that kind of—that's what I would have had going. The old farts would go crazy. You know, the youth of today going have their day tomorrow. So what I did anyway, anticipating these things, I had my son-in-law come down, bring his camera and everything, and I took pictures. Then develop it, and they gotta have the names of all the guys on there. Gotta turn 'em in to the archives. But I did tell Jackie [Rath, Pālama Settlement archivist], "We're gonna have to do it [i.e., the next reunion] a lot sooner, one more time to get some more registrations going." And I would do it within the next ten years. We have to do something within the next ten years to come alive.
WN: I think though, what the centennial did do was make people, or at least illuminate the fact that Pālama has a history. You know, people are only looking at their own experiences, and the good old days, and so forth.

MK: Yeah.

WN: Okay, I'm not there anymore, I'm doing something else.

MK: Yeah, right.

WN: Even myself. I grew up reading about Pālama Settlement, but I never really thought about its history until this whole centennial thing came up, the newspaper articles, and then now we're doing this [oral history] project. So now I have this feeling now. I mean I tell people, "Oh, we're working on this history of Pālama Settlement."

And they go, "Oh, Pālama Settlement."

And everybody has some impression or story about Pālama Settlement. So, if the centennial is anything, it can be a beginning.

MK: That's what I was thinking of. I think you got it. It's a new beginning.

WN: Next hundred years.

MK: I think you got it. We can start there, and that's why I think it's critical that we cannot wait for hundred years. We gotta do one in ten, because we gotta bring so much back to the public. We have to bring so many things alive. And the living gotta participate, and that's why we need more and more strong focus. And it doesn't have to be all good stuff. Actually you get some bad, some good, or whatever actually happen, we should dig it out. And in that vein, I think you going find that anybody who was actively, or inactively, with or without consent associated with Pālama, they proud like hell, boy. "Ey, I'm Pālama." Man or woman, boy or girl, they are so proud it's amazing.

WN: Let me just...

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 27-8-2-97; SIDE ONE

WN: Tape number two of interview with Moke Kealoha, on February 11, 1997.

You were talking about pride. What is the feeling if you're a Pālama Settlement alumnus? Is it something of pride, or is it something to say, "Well, gee, we were poor back then. I had to go to Pālama Settlement"? What is the feeling? First, let me ask you, what is your feeling? Are you proud to say, "I went to Pālama Settlement"?

MK: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I think everyone, anyone, boy or girl, male, female, whether they run away
from home or they had consent to attend Pālama Settlement, they all so proud. You know, like Bobby Kau. You just met him. He’s so proud. He only realized how proud he is after he left Pālama. And then you venture off in the world and you find that, ey, this gymnasium, only the color different. There’s something about the environment, the association, the geographics, the logistics. The feel. Mostly the feel, though. You had compassion every day. But everyone, regardless, everybody was poor. Everybody know they’re poor. Everybody was only poor because they didn’t have sixty-dollar-a-month income, or whatever it is. But we all felt so rich because we had the world (chuckles). We had the world. You know, as kids we say, “Ey, this mango season, we go up there, see if get pākē mango.” And we going up Kalihi Valley or wherever it is, and the first mango tree you see, you going raid ‘em. And you know what is opiuma?

WN: Opiuma. No.

MK: It looks like a tamarind tree, and the fruit is sort of like cotton. And it’s like a tamarind. You know what a tamarind is, eh? Like string beans. But this is orange, red, and when they ripen, the shell crack and you see just like one ball cotton inside. We eat that. Or the tamarind. We go way the hell on top of the Pali to get gardenias. During the summer months we bringing home gingers by the bundle, and we sit around the Pālama [Settlement], we sew leis. And then we go to Roosevelt Theatre. And we’re so proud next week of what we did last week. We so proud tomorrow what we did yesterday. And then after you leave the place, you so proud of all the years you spent there, how it helped you. Measure your upbringing with a totally unknown person’s upbringing, only by association. Like you know, you went to school, and you meet different guys. Whether or not they take a bath, whether they wash their BVDs at night, or however they dress, you know. You see the difference, you say, “I’m so proud.” Pālama told us you take a bath, even if cold water, wash yourself good. Wash your clothes. We know how to wash clothes. The guy you just met, thirty years later, he don’t even know how the button is sewn on his shirt. But these are the thousand little perfect things we came across, that made us so proud where we came from. 'Cause if your shirt dirty, and your shirt puka, they tell you, “Ey, go sew. You don’t know how, Nelson going show you, get the needle and thread, and here, do this.”

We did so many things that, I think they found out after a few years, they became so proud. And today that lingers on. I don’t care who it is.

We take a break. (MK coughs.)

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Or you know, like even politicians, so forth. It’s anybody who has made it big in something. They always say, well if they’re from Kalihi they say, “I’m from Kalihi,” or, “I’m from Pālama,” or, “I went to Farrington.” It’s like, this kind of a badge of honor, right, to say that you came from a poor area, and so forth. Do you feel the same way about lot of people?

MK: Oh yes, definitely. I met this lady, she’s a personnel director—I forget where we met—through someone else.

"Yeah."

"Ey, I'm from Pālama you know. You know the fire station? I live right in back there. Iona Lane."

"Yeah, yeah!"

You know that thing. And boy you can't stop 'em. (WN chuckles.) The thing go on, and on, and on. (Chuckles) And you never met in your life. Never met. But that's the Pālama boy, or the Pālama girl. Regardless of the age, regardless of what era.

My wife is from Maui. And you know, get plenty people you meet throughout your life, and you know they so proud of where they came from. And they say, "Oh, I'm from Pu'ūnēnē," and bam! You know, Pu'ūnēnē. Like Keo Nakama.

WN: Oh, Pu'ūnēnē boy, eh?

MK: Yeah, Pu'ūnēnē. I see him every day. I know him well. They used to live Pālama Settlement, you know. Pālama provided that team. He's proud of Pu'ūnēnē. But not as proud as he is of Pālama, even though he stayed Pālama only a short while. And he went to the reunion. You see? When Keo Nakama, Howell Hirose, Jose Balmores, Mits Higuchi, Chick Miyamoto, and all that famous Maui swimmers took the United States and the world by storm. This is right after the war. And they became very famous. And from Pu'ūnēnē they had 'em come over here and train, and get prepared for the big swimming meet at the [Waikīkī] Natatorium, and all that stuff. And all the world's best coming down here. So, Coach [Shoichi] Sakamoto at that time, was granted permission to house his team over here, at Pālama Settlement, the first year they came. And they were known as Three-YAC. Three-YAC stood for Three, Y year . . .

WN: Sports Club?

MK: No, swim.

WN: Swim Club.

MK: Three-YSC. Swim club. Bill Smith was not part of that group yet. So, they came here, they conquered all of [them], and we played together every day, whatever, whatever. And then, a new year start, they go back home, then next year they come back again. Became a habit. Until this day, they so proud. All these guys. They so proud. Jackie Robinson was so proud he was housed at Pālama Settlement. (WN chuckles.) So, it's a question that is kind of difficult to answer, in part, but the subject itself, the person, bingo! They can talk about their experiences at Pālama Settlement, and they so proud to be a part of it. And I really don't know, I cannot put a finger on—is it because they were poor, no place to go? Or because they learned something? I think it's the sharing that they learned. And then thereafter they had a measuring stick, they had a benchmark. And I think that's what happened. So then today, it's a treasure. It's a period in your life.

WN: Does the same kind of sharing go on today at Pālama Settlement?
MK: I have to tell you, I really don't know. And I'm ashamed because I'm out of touch with the kids. So I really don't know, 'cause I have removed myself to the point where I haven't been in touch with the actual participants, the youth part of the program. I understand from Bob Omura, and Ingrid them, it appears that the kids are proud of what they have. With one qualification. I think they have problems with the Filipino, PI kids, because they not communicating too well, so they really don't know the feel. But for the Samoan kids, and the other mix, they happy. But like I said earlier, if we don't keep that wheel moving, the program moving, and make it more comfortable for the kids, we going lose them too.

WN: Figure like today, there's so much more competition for time, and for entertainment, and things like that too.

MK: Yeah. That's right. Well, sometimes it's hard for them, the volunteer groups, or the staff group, to get what the main interests are, from especially the imports, yeah, the PI kids, because they don't say too much. We know they attracted to fast cars, and two-door sedans, and black cars, and heavy music, boom boxes and stuff like that. That's about all you know. And because Mama and Papa get three jobs, it's one of the problems. But notwithstanding, it's still our job to make it interesting for them to come to the settlement. So, that's a problem we get. How can we reach inside their mind?

WN: Well, before I turn off the tape recorder, you have anything, any last things you want to say?

MK: No. I was thinking of a poem, but I don't know. (WN laughs.)

WN: That you have, that you wrote?

MK: Yeah. In line with what you said, lot of guys are going say, "Yeah, I'm glad I had my once upon a time kind of stuff at Palama Settlement." From kid time, where everything were fairy tales and rhymes, those countless yesterdays where you build dreams upon a comic book. And those things take you to Buck Rogers, and Batman, the Green Hornet. All those things take you way up to heaven, eh? You in your glory, and that's our once upon a time there. Even though the words may not fit the environment, like fantasies and rhymes, and fairy tales. But still those things went on just as though a guy was brought up in a castle, because you have your own once upon a time, see? And even though we all had crazy foolish ways, they own those memories. They own all those treasures, and there's about a million of 'em. And it's these kind of things, as they go on through their life, they journey to the hard, the good, the bad, they still own those million yesterdays. No more lien, they don't owe nobody nothing for those memories, those thoughts. And that's why I think those guys, lot of them are so proud to come out of there because those kinds of things is theirs. You know, when they reflect back. And that's what makes them so happy to have been a part of Palama Settlement at one point in their life. That's their once upon a time, their fairy tale. And I think, if you look back, yeah, with a smile, all the things they talk about they never thought it could happen. They didn't even think how it happened. Didn't even realize that lucky they didn't go jail, or get run over. You know, we used to time the damn train coming out at—you know that Nimitz Highway? The train track?

WN: Yeah.

MK: We'd stand over here and see who can run the fastest across those train tracks. And the train
come, just about ready and you running for 'em.

(Laughter)

MK: You beat it to the spot. I tell you. When you think of those things, you say, "Man, oh man, what if you slip, trip, that's gone." These kind of fairy tales, eh? And I think that's why a lot of those guys so happy to have been a part of Pālama. They don't know if going get Pālama forever more, you see. So I think they can be proud of that. I think that's what we all proud of.

WN: Okay. Thank you very much, Moke.

MK: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW
Reflections of Pālama Settlement

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