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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Richard Kosaki (RK)

August 2, 2000

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: Okay. Today is August 2, 2000. We're here with Dr. Richard Kosaki. We ended the last session right about 1962, 1963. You sort of returned to teaching. You returned to the department of political science. And in 1963 you were named assistant to the president.

RK: Let's see, in January of 1963, President [Thomas] Hamilton came to become our president at the university. I was chair of the faculty senate. Met with him quite frequently. As I said, we were in the same, more or less, field of political science. And we seemed to have gotten along. Inasmuch as the legislative session was starting, he wanted some help. And knowing of my work with the legislative reference bureau and knowing several of the legislators, he asked me to come aboard to be his assistant.

WN: Was this an assistant in general or assistant for a special task?

RK: In the beginning, it was an assistant in general. He said he came in fresh, he's new, and he needed, you know, help in several areas. So it was a general assistantship. But primarily my work was tied in with not only with some sort of faculty liaison but also with the community liaison, especially with the legislature.

WN: What was the university administration like when Tom Hamilton took over in terms of who were under him? Not necessarily names, but the structure, the administrative structure?

RK: I think at that time, of course, we didn't have the community colleges, we had just this fledgling operation in Hilo. So it wasn't a complicated organization. I think there were essentially two vice presidents. It was a vice president handling academic affairs and there was a vice president for—I think they called it for administration and the administrative fiscal matters.

WN: And your title was assistant to the president?

RK: Yeah. I worked directly with the president, essentially, as the title says, just as general assistant.

WN: And what were your duties?

RK: Well, whatever the president wanted me to do. As Tom Hamilton said, he was new to the community. In a way, he wanted several of us who were members of the faculty or who

were members of the community to help him, you know, sort of make his adjustment, to see his way around. As I said, specifically, I did this, taking him to the legislature. He was a very fast learner. In driving him down to the legislature, I'm describing to him some of the legislators, the characters that he'd meet in the hearing. He absorbed this very quickly and well. Oftentimes he would say, "Well, should I make this opening statement?" or, whether this or that. Or, I would make suggestions, and it was remarkable the way he incorporated these suggestions into what he was saying. He made it sound better than I sounded. (WN chuckles.) He had a style about him with words and in handling people that was quite remarkable.

WN: Can you give me examples of some advice that you'd give him on how to deal with local personalities?

RK: Well, not really. He succeeded, generally, because in general he was a very democratic person. You know, democratic with a small d. He treated everyone fairly and equally, and he respected others. He was personally rather shy and retiring, almost. You couldn't tell this when he gave public speeches. He was very effective. He had a keen sense of humor which tided him over, I think, many hurdles. He was a big hit with the legislature because they thought he came in and treated them with respect. Of course, he was new so he didn't know everything, and he was one who would say, "Well, I don't know the details of that, but I can find out." And he would follow through. But he was very honest, and they liked that. He was very forthcoming. So he got along well. Of course, he was very punctual. He used to embarrass some of the legislators when he had early morning hearings, that Tom Hamilton was never late. When he said a meeting started at 8:30, it started at 8:30. He didn't dilly-dally. He was one man that didn't waste time. So when the meeting in downtown, the legislative session, I remember sometimes, it would be at eight in the morning. I'd drive him down and we'd always get there ten, fifteen minutes before the session would start. I still remember on occasion where we were locked out because the door to the hearing room was still closed. He and I would sit out there waiting for them. The legislators were sometimes a bit embarrassed, but, you know, they respected his being on time.

WN: What about things like cultural aspects of adapting to Hawai'i? Was he good at that?

RK: Oh, I thought he was very good. Not on foods. He had a very limited diet. As far as I know, he loved hamburgers. He didn't care for exotic foods and stuff. He liked his occasional drink. And he smoked (a lot). He and his wife, Jenny, they smoked (a lot). I think that affected their health. But I still remember we often had lunch at the Willows, one of his favorite places. I remember once we were a mixed group. It was Ken Lau, who was Chinese, and there were some other people who were *Haoles* and so forth. We were joking, and there were a lot of racial jokes thrown around. And Tom Hamilton said—well, he came from New York, where this was a sensitive issue—and he said to us, at first he was quite startled at the way we would say, "Oh, you *Pāke*, that's why you don't want to pay," or whatever. I remember him saying once at lunch, he just concluded that this was a higher form of tolerance that you confronted each other with racial jokes and laughed. We didn't feel insulted or anything of that sort. We joked about all the racial backgrounds and so forth. And he said, "Oh, I think this is a higher form of tolerance." With that attitude, he got along very well, I think, with people in general. I think he liked Hawai'i, too. One of the reasons, when he resigned from the presidency, he didn't leave the islands, because I think he became very fond of the people here.

WN: Okay. And you said also that one of your jobs was to implement or work on the community college system.

RK: Oh yes.

WN: What was that about?

RK: Yeah. As I indicated earlier, some of us in helping Jack Burns during the campaign for governorship, talked a great deal about education. One of the things we were after was opening more opportunities in higher education. As I said, when Tom Hamilton came, we had the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and the two-year campus in Hilo. Very limited, and some of us said the best way to spread educational opportunity, especially throughout the islands geographically, was to have community colleges. The legislature accepted this.

Well, what happened was, Jack Burns asked, with his connection in Washington, D.C., had the U.S. Office of Education under Health Education and Welfare Department (send) down here a couple of experts to do a study on community colleges. The leading man, the head of that delegation was S.V. Martorana. And there was a Martorana report. Marty, as he was called, was a very conscientious person. And he put out a voluminous report. I don't know what it was called. Some title about the University of Hawai'i and higher education in Hawai'i. His strongest recommendation was that we establish a series of community colleges, which tied in with what the Jack Burns' campaign emphasized. So the legislature, which was very friendly to us, passed a resolution saying to the University of Hawai'i, do a study, a feasibility study on community colleges and report at the next session, which meant do it in six months.

At the end of the session, as I told Tom Hamilton, as (his) organization kept solidifying, I said I didn't want to continue as assistant. And that position went to Ken Lau. So Tom Hamilton asked if I would do the community college study.

I said, "Well, I know generally about community colleges, but not really much. He said, "Well, there isn't that much to know. It's education, basically."

Tom Hamilton had come from New York where they had a system of community colleges in the SUNY system, which he headed. He knew all about community colleges. So he gave me two books: one by [Leland] Medsker and the other by [James W.] Thornton. These are two big advocates, leaders in the community college movement at that time, and this was 1962.

He said, "Just read these two books and you'll know as much as anyone in this country. So you do it."

I said, "Okay."

So I took it on. I set up in a small office in, is it the Sinclair Library? My wife, who was unpaid, was my chief co-worker because she knew a lot about education. She could do the statistics that we needed for this study, I thought. We had terrific student workers who helped us. We studied the history of whatever attempts that were made in Hawai'i. There were attempts made in Hawai'i previously, in the private sector and elsewhere. What was his name? Deal Crooker, who was with the department of education at one time, was interested in community colleges. We reviewed the brief history of community colleges in Hawai'i. The question was, "Would high school graduates in Hawai'i go to community

colleges?” So what we did was ran a survey through all the public and private high schools in Hawai‘i, a four-page questionnaire. We got an amazing ninety-plus return. Lo and behold, most of the students said they would favor, they wouldn’t mind going to a community college. Of course, there were those who were going to four-year institutions and especially were going to the Ivy League colleges and so forth, weren’t interested, but we found there was a great middle who said they would consider going to a community college. And we found some variations in areas of O‘ahu, Kaua‘i, Maui, and the Big Island, and so forth, but generally speaking, a very favorable response. So we wrote a report in time for the 1963 session which opened in January. In the meantime, too, I wanted to get better acquainted with community colleges so I visited community colleges on the Mainland, especially the strong state systems in California and in Florida. I looked at the one in Pennsylvania because Pennsylvania had a system of two-year university branches, not really community colleges in the pure sense. Tom Hamilton told me to look at the New York system which had some very sophisticated community colleges which specialized in certain areas. Like in the heart of New York City, the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Anyway I made an extensive visit to community colleges on the Mainland. We wrote a report and the legislature accepted the report. Governor Burns signed the bill. And lo and behold, we’re on our way to creating community colleges here. So as soon as that passed, Tom Hamilton says, “Okay, now you implement it.” I guess the title then was Vice President for Community Colleges. So I got that title and I had to—well, one of the things we recommended, since Hawai‘i already had technical schools, they had very limited purely so-called vocational schools. You know, Honolulu Tech, Kapi‘olani on O‘ahu, and they had it on Kaua‘i, and in Hilo, and on Maui. Our recommendation was that those technical schools be turned over to the university and become the beginnings of community colleges. I must say that one recommendation we made was rejected. As I recall, there were two that were rejected, but one was at Hilo because we already had a two-year campus, that we combined that with the Hawai‘i Technical School in Hilo. We have in combination the first full-fledged community college. But this was opposed by the legislators from Hilo because they wanted Hilo to become a four-year campus. This was their crusade. And you don’t blame them. They were holding (on). They said, “If we gave in and made a community college, we won’t get a four-year campus, and we want and deserve a four-year campus.” So that was one recommendation that (was not approved and) we had to modify the law to exempt Hilo or the Big Island from the Community College Act. Later on, they did come in.

WN: Hilo did have a technical school at the time.

RK: Oh, yes. They had a nice, very thriving Hawai‘i Technical School in Hilo.

WN: So that remained in its former state?

RK: Yes, for a while. Eventually (it) became a community college. After the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo knew that they could become a university, a four-year campus, then it was all right to convert that, it was safe to convert the Hawai‘i Technical School. Although, I must say that the Hilo high school students were as much in favor as anyone else in having a community college. Because I remember challenging one of the Hilo legislators who said to me, “Dick, you come to Hilo, we’ll lynch you.”

I said, “You and the business people, but let’s talk to the students and see who gets lynched.”

The other recommendation that the legislature didn't buy from us, they bought the organization, the timetable, assigning it to the university—which by the way, was very unusual. Many of my Mainland friends [felt] attaching the community colleges to a university system would kill the community college. But we based it on the fact that we're a small state, highly centralized, and so on. I wanted closer cooperation in transferability between community colleges and university, which unfortunately did not materialize. But the other recommendation that the legislature did not accept was that the tuition for the community colleges, as I recall, we said should be—oh, what was it, 80 percent . . .

WN: That's correct. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

RK: . . . of the university tuition. The university tuition at that time was a hundred dollars then. The community college students would pay eighty dollars. The technical schools were charging, as part of the department of education, hardly anything. I think they were charging twenty-dollar fees or twenty-five-dollar fees. Lo and behold, the legislature in its generosity said, "No, not eighty dollars. Twenty-five dollars." That was the biggest bargain. So the reason we said eighty dollars was that, in our survey among the students, we had a dry run to test our questionnaire and the one question we had to change was the question where we asked them, "How much are you willing to pay?" We had, I think, four categories: zero to twenty, twenty to forty, or forty to—I don't know. We didn't go very high. In our pre-test we found on that one, the great majority were hitting the top. So we had to spread it out more. We found that most of them were willing to pay as much as, you know, going to the University of Hawai'i. In a sense, I guess, you know, this is a common, I think, way at looking at things. If it gets too cheap, maybe it's not that good. I'm willing to pay for something that's of value. I think that was the attitude that most students had. But lo and behold, the legislature in its generosity said the community colleges shall charge a initial tuition of twenty-five dollars, which was the greatest bargain in the country.

WN: I know it's stated in your study, but what would you consider to be the major justifications behind the starting of the community colleges?

RK: Basically enlarging educational opportunity. You just look at the world as it was developing, or even today. At one time, maybe, grammar school education was sufficient for one to make a decent living. You had to be a good citizen. Another time, maybe, was high school education. But by after World War II, it was clear the world had become complex, technology was on the rise, and people were living longer, too. It only made sense that everyone should be given a chance to have post-secondary education. Doesn't have to be a four-year degree, but some opportunity after high school. And I really had in mind to not just immediately after graduating from high school. Oftentimes due to, "Well, we're sick and tired of school," or, "Because of family obligations we can't continue to go to school right after high school graduation," if you get that far. But later on in life, things get settled in your thirties or forties and you may say, "Hey, I don't mind." I looked upon a community college as really serving this in terms of life-long learning. I really visualized a community college as being sort of a shopping center, open all year round, with a whole family able to go there. Father can take something in, maybe, auto mechanics. Mother can take something. If she hasn't learned to type or want to learn computers. The daughter can go and take a math course or whatever. The son can go and take electricity or something. I thought it was, anyway, we could do several things.

WN: So we talked about expansion. I'm sorry, go ahead.

RK: The other thing that struck me, when I went to the technical schools in Hawai'i as they were run at that time, they were run like high schools. They had strict rules about dress. In one particular technical school, if you were absent you had to bring a note from your [parent] and these are already students who are already eighteen and over, who are graduates of high schools going to technical schools. And one of the technical schools, you were absent from school, you had to have a note from your mother or father or guardian or doctor before you got back into school. They all had very tight schedules. They had a cafeteria which served lunch from 11:30 to 12:30. And (a) set menu. And really symbolic of all of this, the restrooms were for "boys" and "girls." And the faculty had a separate room. I thought that the students who went to technical schools were adults. They should be treated no differently from those who went to the University of Hawai'i. "Men," "women," "gentlemen," "ladies." I felt very strongly about this. They should be treated as adults.

WN: What kind of resistance did you get, if any, from the DOE [Department of Education] in this transference?

RK: Well, as expected, nobody likes change. Also DOE wanted to keep the technical schools. A lot of people believed sincerely that what we really needed was more technical-vocational education. That if you can gave it to the university. You'll have all of them taking these "useless" liberal arts courses. We won't have the carpenters, and the electricians, and plumbers that we needed in our society. So the official DOE position, in fact the superintendent of education at that time, who was a friend of mine . . .

WN: Was that Burl Yarberry?

RK: Yeah, Burl Yarberry said our report was lacking in the most important thing.

I said, "What was it?"

He said, "You don't have dollar signs on it. How much is it going to cost to have all of these colleges built?"

Well, we had worked on some of these figures, but we didn't publish it with the report so I gave him a supplement, which he thought was too high. Also the technical school people, especially the principals and some of the teachers, were much against this conversion. It brought change. Some of the principals belonged to the old school of vocational education. They believed sincerely that what they were doing was most worthwhile, that the state needed this sort of training and we had to be strict and disciplined. The faculty, most of them, were nervous. They said, "Gee, do we have to get Ph.D.s to be with the university?"

We said no. They just had to be competent in teaching whatever they were teaching. But what we were going to add were the liberal arts. We wanted more theoretical approaches. We wanted to change the strict eight to two o'clock or two-thirty school system that they had, including changing the cafeteria to be open like a snack bar all day long.

One of the principals said, "You mean you want your students to eat hamburgers and hot dogs?"

Well. So this was the attitude that we met. In fact, I was invited at Honolulu Technical School, which was the biggest one, biggest technical school then. They set up an assembly before the student body and the public. They brought along the educational

spokesperson from the ILWU [International Longshore and Warehouse Union]. They thought he would debate me on this question. The question was whether we should convert the technical schools to community colleges. But they didn't know Dave Thompson, who was the director and a friend of mine. Dave was much more for liberal education than even I was, I thought. He got there and to the surprise of the technical faculty and staff, he was making a strong case for community colleges and why this was good conversion. So anyway, we had the votes, so you know, the thing went through (the legislature). Most Democrats voted for it. The Hilo Democrats, because of the Hilo situation, did not. There were one or two, one another friend of mine in the legislature said, "One of my campaign managers is principal of one of the technical schools. For his sake I got to vote no."

I said, "Oh sure, we got (enough) votes."

Mainly the Republicans, some Republicans were for it, but I think the majority of the Republicans, I recall, were not. But on this score, I will say that the next session after we had started community colleges—partly it was not knowing in Hawai'i what a community college was like. They kept on thinking it was more like a big university with all the entrance requirements and so forth, while we had drafted a law that said anyone over eighteen or high school graduation could enter. But the idea, as it became better known, the community colleges, the opposition died down. In fact, one Republican legislator was quite strong in her opposition to community colleges. At the next session, said to me, "I think you're right. We should have more community colleges."

In a sense the Republicans were strong in Windward O'ahu. That wasn't the only reason, but one of the reasons Windward O'ahu got a late start. It was Republican territory, and they didn't push it as hard. But neighbor islands, Maui especially, got a big start because the Maui legislators were all for it. They were constantly after me to, "Let's get going. Let's get a community college on Maui." We thought we needed (it) in urban Honolulu. Leeward was growing. The Kailua people said, well, the drive over the Pali wasn't that long. They could get to Honolulu or Kapi'olani. So that was another factor, geographical. But also because the Republicans, who were more or less heavy on Windward O'ahu, didn't care for it. But this representative said, "No, I think we better build one there, too," the next session. Because, you know, when they found out that a community college was really like or could do to serve the people, the opposition really faded.

WN: It was interesting when you talk about expansion of educational opportunity, in essence you're talking about three methods of expansion: one is geographical, one is economic, and one is academic. In other words, someone who didn't qualify for Mānoa could qualify for attendance.

RK: Open admissions. Right. You know, under the general name of this being accessible geographically, financially, academically to most of the people who are here.

WN: And how did you deal with the issue of personnel? For example, you had technical school principals.

RK: Well, they were all retained. Some of the principals were close to retirement. They retired. We kept a few who operated for a while as heads. But we knew that we had to replace them because a lot of them didn't appreciate bringing in liberal arts and so on. And so in order to make this fast turnover, I turned to California where I thought I'd find some experienced people. I tried to get some university people to help us, too. In this

regard, I went after several of my friends on the Mānoa campus. And one who was really helpful was Len [Leonard] Tuthill. Len was in, mmm, what was he in? Chemistry? He was in one of the sciences, and a senior professor. But Len, nice guy, liked the idea, and he ran with it. Len was a long-time faculty member in Mānoa who lived in Mānoa, close to the campus. Lived on Mānoa Road. But as soon as he decided to join us and came aboard and became the provost, the head of Leeward Community College, he moved out. His family moved to Leeward to be with the community. The community appreciated that. He was very successful. He grabbed hold of the idea of community colleges and really pushed it. At Leeward Community College I think they tried innovations like no grades, no failing grades. Tried to get a new approach to education. So I was very happy that we had people like that.

Walt Steiger from Physics, another veteran professor. Big heart. Walt was made provost of Kaua‘i Community College. Later on Ed White, who was an admissions officer here—and Ed had earlier served as principal of Kaua‘i High School—Ed went back and became a provost of Kaua‘i [Community College]. So we had university personnel. And John Hoshor went to Maui Community College. Later on there were more university people who were willing to go.

But we also tried getting Mainlanders here. I must say, that generally fell flat. I failed in that respect. I brought promising young men. One to Honolulu Community College and one to Maui Community College, but they didn’t last long. The one on Maui, especially, turned out to be an extreme elitist in a sense. When I saw what he was ordering for his library, ordering Thomas Aquinas and all that sort of thing, I said that was a bit far (out) to start with Thomas Aquinas. But eventually things settled down. But initially, we had some rough times in trying to get the right leadership.

Eventually the community colleges, as the idea caught on, you know, we could nurture our own, people like Joyce Tsunoda. Joyce, who is now head of the community college system, was a young Ph.D. fresh out of Mānoa. And I think Len Tuthill was her adviser, the first provost. So Len immediately had her join the faculty at Leeward Community College. And Joyce was one who beautifully rose through the ranks. But staffing was a problem. But at that time, too, one of the most successful pools—we didn’t deliberately do it, but I found later—[were] a lot of people who had Peace Corps experience. [They] had returned and had gotten master’s degrees in different fields. They seemed to have the people-touch that I think is so important in teaching, especially [at] community colleges. So in time—we had some rough beginnings, staffing and so on, but I think things settled down.

WN: It seems like community colleges is a nice blend between academics and the vocational ed aspects. Did you see it that way?

RK: Well I don’t—well maybe “blend” is a good word, but I don’t think of them as being separate. You could argue that. You know, becoming a doctor. What is it? Or a lawyer. That’s vocational. Doctor is technical training in many ways. And what we try to say in training for even our electricians, our plumbers, and so forth, I said, “They really got to know their math.” Even the auto industry, I said we should give them a course in the development of the automobile and what the automobile means to society. I said, “Hey, you got to have your boys take math because the computers are coming in cars. And fixing cars you have to learn how to calibrate and know computers.” In plumbing we had to retrain our teacher because the plumbers said, “Hey, the guy is doing cast iron. We



don't use cast iron anymore. It's plastic, it's new materials and so forth." So we had to ship him to the Mainland to get some new techniques.

He came back and said, "Hey, you got to learn a lot. You got to learn to read and write and understand, do math."

I said, "Sure. So don't your kids ought to do the same?"

So in a way it's a blend, but I don't think we should really—it's not separate. Human being is a whole. You can argue that a doctor or a dentist is pretty technical.

WN: But how do you convince someone who wants to be a welder, for example, and expecting to get training in a technical school and yet incorporate the need to take Shakespeare?

RK: Well, I don't think you have to go that far in doing Shakespeare. But you have to have that person be able to read and write English. Well, the hardest thing was, the English teacher all said, "Oh, my goodness. It's such a struggle." I remember in Maui, this English teacher saying to me, "So what do we do? These kids have had twelve years or whatever and they can't spell, they don't know grammar."

I said, "Well, that means that whatever method we use in high schools and down to grammar schools isn't working so we better do something different." Community college, you do what you think is best.

"Like what?" she says.

So I said, "Stand on your head if you have to." You know, literally, use a different approach.

Because I think, mainly, it's getting people to be comfortable in school. Because learning is the most human thing, the most exciting thing in many ways. And kids, most are born very curious and everything else. In many ways you can argue that they go to school and we kill their imagination, the curiosity. We put them in a box. And I said, "In community colleges, we can be the most flexible. In many ways, while universities, in a way, are regimented, too. They've come through history. They have their rituals, and their fifty-minute classes, and lectures, and so on. I thought the community colleges could experiment. I was willing for them to have a different calendar. But the faculty union and the regents didn't go along with that. Wanted Honolulu Community College, which was heavily in the vocational area, instead of having a semester system—what was it, two-and-a-half months each or whatever—to adopt. And the provosts at that time were willing to adopt a system of short courses throughout the year. So someone can come in and out. Plumbers can come in and say, "Hey, I got to learn the new techniques of dealing with plastics." So you have this special course or whatever intensively, and take it on that basis.

Another thing is that a lot of us can't continuously go to school full time. So a lot of evening classes, but also (or) sometime (to) take a break. Because it still pays to go full time if you can. So you can go six months or so many months full time, drop out, come back again, have flexible scheduling. I thought the community colleges should be, and I think they are to some extent, the most flexible in terms of time, what they offer, how they offer it, credit/non-credit, it didn't matter as long as someone's gaining something, someone's learning. The best way to learn something, well, it depends on what the

subject is, who the teacher is, and how he or she wants to do it. The main thing, I think, in teaching is to capture the students' interest and run with it.

WN: In preparing for this interview, I came across a speech that you gave. It's for a conference called, "Education Highs and Lows," or something like that. I wonder if you remember, but you gave an anecdote of a person that you knew. You wanted to take him on a trip. The person's [son] taking a trip was third grade. And the person would have had to take him out of school, out in the third grade.

RK: Well, I'll tell you who that person was. It was Ken Lau.

WN: Oh, okay.

RK: Why, it was so long ago. Yeah, I know the people involved. Anyway this was Ken Lau's brother-in-law, who worked as a chemist at Pearl Harbor. They finally, after the war, got time out to go to a conference at Washington, D.C. Should he take Dickie, his son, out of school. I think he was in elementary, grammar school. He was going to miss maybe a week and a half of school, or whatever. And the wise advice was, "Well, you should go to Washington, D.C., beautiful museums of natural history, American history, and all for free, too. It's a beautiful place to go, to see the nation's capitol, et cetera. And all the monuments. And so Ken's advice was, "Take him along. Don't let schooling interfere with a child's education." I think, what I was trying to say is you have to make a distinction. Because, I think, we fool ourselves in thinking that school or a formal class necessarily means a person is getting educated or learning anything. More and more now, we're putting the emphasis not on so-called teaching but on learning. And you can learn in different ways. You don't always have to have a so-called teacher, another person called "teacher" so that you learn. You can sit at the computer and learn. You can learn by reading. You can learn in different ways by doing something. You can teach yourself how to make a rock wall by doing it yourself, reading a book. It helps to have experience personally. That's what the teachers should be, to expedite, to facilitate. But so often, you know, when we're in school you get regimented. And as I say, your curiosity gets killed. The typical anecdote is a little boy goes to school and says to the first-grade teacher, "Why is the sky blue?" And the teacher says, "That's a question you should ask when you go to college." (Chuckles)

WN: Well, you talk about flexibility and, you know, another thing in the justification for community colleges was the public programs, and concerts, and lectures, and so forth.

RK: Yeah. That's another aspect. The public service part ought to be larger. I don't know if you would call it "public service," but I thought college should be part of the community. That's why it's called a community college in many ways. And especially when we look at Leeward where they had no theater—not a movie theater but a performing theater and so forth—I really wanted Leeward Community College to have a performing arts theater. Because I wanted plays and musicals, lectures, and others to be held out there. And I also wanted that to become a place where they can gather to have festivals and things of that sort. To some extent this is being done like in Windward Community College where they had the *taro* festival. And I thought a lot of the community colleges could—well, aside from this role, but this is, as you're saying, they're asking me about the role in the community. I wanted them to be not just a formal classroom but really participate. And in many ways, Leeward started off very nicely in that way. The community organization, Major "Hideo" Okada and others were very much involved in helping to develop the school.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, we're talking about community colleges. You used the word "community college" as opposed to "junior college." Do you see a difference between the two?

RK: I do. While in a way, it can be used interchangeably, in the early days, it was more common to speak of the junior colleges. While the junior college in a way was the predecessor. The junior colleges, I believe, got started in Illinois. And they were junior colleges. They were junior to the senior college or university. They provided the first two years, basically, of university work. And you would transfer. That was the so-called pure junior college, junior to the senior institution. But as this concept developed, especially in California, it came to be more that it was a combination. It didn't mean that you had to transfer, especially immediately. You could take training for other purposes and get an associate degree, which in itself was a completion of a unified course of study. They took on, as we're talking about, service to the community. You know, doing other things—being a community center, providing performing arts, band concerts, other things as well. More and more, they thought the word, "community," would be more descriptive of what is developing. By the time Hawai'i got into the community college movement, in a sense rather late, although at that time California still called their colleges, "junior colleges." Because I remember going to California and saying I think we'll just call ours "community colleges" and you ought to change, which California eventually did. The whole nation did because the term, "community," was more descriptive of what the colleges were doing. I like the word, "community," because it gives you a sense of—a community is not a collection of disparate individuals but individuals with a connection, with a feeling for one another, a feeling of community, which is something that we sorely lack today.

WN: When you talked about, in essence, converting the technical schools that were run by the DOE into what you would define as being community colleges, what kind of opposition did you get from say, Mānoa faculty, academicians, to the idea?

RK: In the beginning, it wasn't a large opposition. But I remember I had to present this idea to the faculty senate of Mānoa. I probably told this story before. And mainly here again, a lot of the faculty did not know what a community college was. So I explained what we had in mind. Many of them looked at it favorably saying this will relieve Mānoa. Because that time, the Mānoa campus felt the pressure of increasing numbers of students coming here. They couldn't handle the large number. They thought maybe some of them weren't prepared for university work. Well, these community colleges would prime them before they transferred. But it was always feared that the community college transfers would not meet the standards of Mānoa. Unfortunately higher education plays a very hierarchical game. Some institutions are better than others, superior, and so forth. Because one of the functions would be for the community colleges to be able to have their students in the liberal arts transfer to the Mānoa campus as juniors, some of the faculty thought this may not be a good idea because, after all, they may not have qualified faculty or whatever. So the suggestion was made that anyone transferring from a community college to Mānoa would have to take a test. Just like taking an SAT to get to Mānoa. You have to take a test to get in. My quick retort was, "Oh, I think it's okay. All juniors will take a test,

including Mānoa. Don't you think that's fair?" They could see it immediately and it was dropped. (Laughter)

Because I said, "I don't know what you're afraid of."

"Well," they said, "you know, you are going to send me students that are not qualified."

I said, "Yeah, but I don't think we should a priori (say) to someone, 'You're not qualified.' " Because they said, "We have standards."

"Well, keep your standards. And (if) the student doesn't meet it, you flunk him. So what's your problem? Don't a priori prevent him from coming in. That's not fair. How do you know? And you could keep your standards. No one's telling you to lower your standards. You flunk students." That's a way of, we think, we're keeping standards. But a flunk often means we're not doing a good job but anyway. . . .

WN: What about the issue of territoriality? You know, in terms of funding for example?

RK: Oh yeah. That is a problem. The community colleges came at a time when the state coffers were plentiful and the economy was booming. You know, post-war and everyone is optimistic so it was good time, unlike the so-called second campus that we talked about. So people weren't worried about the money aspect, the financial aspects as much. But I still remember telling Tom Hamilton, "If the legislature is going to be doing the financial distribution, I would worry sometimes about Mānoa because the community colleges may have the clout because they have the neighbor island people backing them up. If the community colleges do a good job, you know, nice and friendly to the community, and the representatives come from these little districts then they feel a close affinity to the community college, than to, you know, the ivory tower at Mānoa." And to some extent in some of the faculty here in our field, that is the case. The community colleges have better access to their legislators. So Maui gets a great deal, Kaua'i gets this. Hilo has always been able to get quite a bit because the Hilo representatives have been very strong, especially on the finance committees. But that's always a problem, I think.

WN: Do you remember what Tom Hamilton's reaction was or response?

RK: Oh, nothing special. He said, yeah, that could be the case, I guess. But it wasn't a worry in the beginning.

MK: Even in one of the articles I was reading, it mentioned there was some opposition from the Big Island to having a community college. And at one point someone said, "Well if they don't want one, we won't force one on them." But why would Hilo be opposed to having a community college?

RK: As I was explaining to Warren that that was the one recommendation that we made that fell on deaf ears. We said the first community college will be in Hilo. The (two)-year university campus will be combined with the Hawai'i Technical School, and you got the major elements of a community college. You have to have the proper mix plus more things. The Hilo politicians were against it because they wanted Hilo to be a four-year campus. And this would kill, this would stop that. The community college was a institution complete in itself. But a two-year institution is still developing. Two-year institutions don't last (as) two-year. (They) become an orphan so to speak (in higher education). And Hilo desperately wanted a four-year campus. So that came first.

So the Big Island Democrats—well, there was Joe Garcia who was a Republican from the Big Island, but the others, good friends of mine, too, all said, “Sorry but we’re going to leave Hilo out.” So Hilo was left out so that they could pursue their dream, their goal of making the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo a four-year campus. Once they succeeded in doing that, then the technical school became a community college. They had good reason for doing it. Because look at Hilo now. Where would they be without a four-year institution? This is a major economic vehicle.

I was on a consultant job to Puerto Rico, of all places. I saw the same thing happening in Puerto Rico. They were trying to get community colleges started so they had asked some of us from the United States to go over and look at it. They had one place, it was just like Hilo. They had a two-year campus, then they wanted—I saw the same thing happening. When we went there we got greeted by, “We don’t want a community college. We want a four-year university.”

- WN: I was surprised in reading articles that, other than an article or two on Burl Yarberry and his reactions to the transference, there really wasn’t much in terms of territoriality between the DOE and the university. Is that something the DOE wanted to get rid of?
- RK: No, they really didn’t. They wanted to retain the technical vocational schools. I said there are certain elements in the community that wanted to do that. The Republicans were more of that thinking, not all of them. We had some local organizations against it. They expected labor unions to be, but the labor unions as I pointed out, were not. They all, after all, wanted their sons and daughters to have a chance to go as far as they can education-wise. Generally, as people began to understand what the community colleges were, the opposition faded. As I said that time, too, with the Democrats coming into power and this rising expectations of the population and economy that was on the rise, people were optimistic. As I said, everyone knew that given the technological changes, we all needed more education. The community colleges was an idea whose time had come. I was just riding the wave. So the opposition wasn’t really heavy in Hawai‘i. There was opposition, but you know, it wasn’t anything that really hindered the movement.
- WN: I think what’s remarkable, too, about your involvement in all of this is that you were involved in the study, the feasibility of it, and so forth, but yet at the same time after that, you said Tom Hamilton said, “Okay, now do it.” And this happened in a pretty brief time, you know?
- RK: Oh, yeah. As I said, we had six months to do the study. And by God, you know, we did it on time. I had very good help, especially from my wife, and terrific student workers. We really worked hard and put out a report. But the time was ripe. The governor wanted it, the majority of the legislators wanted it. And it was selling the idea. The biggest hurdle was getting across the idea of what a community college is. I went to many a Rotary meeting and Kiwanis meetings, and other places. I was invited to conventions, and I asked to be invited so I could talk about the community colleges, to sell the idea. Actually, to spread knowledge as to what a community college is, or was, could be.
- WN: So not only the feasibility study and so forth but also the actual implementation and opening of the colleges happened very quickly. Is that the same wave that you were talking about?
- RK: Yeah. The legislature passed the Community College Act, which we wrote very simply, you know, two or three paragraphs, very brief sentences. And the governor approved it

right away. Got him to act. Tom Hamilton, the regents, were ready to run with it. So Tom said, "Okay, now you do it."

WN: Okay, so what did you do?

RK: So I had to go and get the technical schools. I had to do a lot of traveling all over to talk to the technical schools and figure out the conversion as to who would—we couldn't do in one time. We did Maui first, I think and then moved the Honolulu ones around. At the same time I know Kapi'olani was too limited where it was. So we had to move Kapi'olani. With Kapi'olani we were looking to get Fort Ruger. I remember going to see the general at Schofield Barracks and he said, "Oh, yeah you can have it. We don't need that fort anymore, except our Cannon Club. And of course, the theater, the Honolulu Community Theater wanted the theater. I wanted to get the theater, too, but no. And we (also) tried to work in the (adjoining Leahi) Hospital because of the programs in health that the community colleges might run.

So we didn't quite succeed in getting all of that involved, but it was a very good location to have a community college on that side of Honolulu. It's doing very well. Some of the criticism was, "You put it in Kāhala, those Kāhala people don't need a community college. They're sending their kids to Punahou and they're sending them to Stanford, you know, to the Mainland." But if you look at it now, it's very well used. The fastest growing area was the Leeward area. And there, we had tremendous community support. By coincidence, the Department of Education was negotiating with the federal government to take over surplus land. This was after the war and the government, the military especially was willing to give up some of the lands, surplus lands. I found out that the Department of Education was negotiating with the federal government to have a tract at Leeward O'ahu. In Leeward O'ahu, the fastest growing area. So I just followed up and went to Washington and tried to track down who was in charge. They said it was a San Francisco office. I still remember going to San Francisco office and barging in on the lawyer, nice lady, who was working on these transfers. She tells me, "Oh yeah, yours is number eighteen here in the stack." So I tried to get her to move it up, which she did. And we got forty acres for one dollar, whatever it was. But the DOE was already on track to get it so we just, you know, followed up. So we got forty acres. I really wanted, frankly, Leeward Community College to be either in Waipahu or in Pearl City. I wanted community colleges to be in our community. The land I really wanted was that land that's above—it's (that) army storage area. I think it still is army storage area (at) Waimano Home Road. Right in the middle (of residences). I really wanted that piece. But the military didn't want to give that up at the time. But I thought that would be perfect for a community college, right in Pearl City. If I had my druthers, have another one in Wahiawā or somewhere. The one in Leeward, the land was there, but I worried about the traffic pattern. It still is bad. I went to talk to Fudge Matsuda, my friend and classmate, who was then head of transportation. But Fudge said, "No, I'm sorry. You're too late. We cannot."

I said, "Can you get a turn-off going into . . ."

He said, "No, the plans are too far along." So.

And of course, the conversion was different from Wahiawā and from Wai'anae. And the conversion in that Pearl—makes it very difficult. So he said, no, we cannot get another outlet. And so Leeward Community College, while the land was cheap, it wasn't my choice for the best (location). You got a beautiful view of Pearl Harbor and everything

else, but what I wanted was convenience for people to get there. More people can walk there, the better. And that was the handicap for Leeward.

WN: So the locations the technical schools were already in place was probably a simpler solution than, say, Leeward where you actually get land.

RK: Yeah. Kapi'olani, we wanted to move out because I didn't want to be next to a high school.

WN: The one right next to McKinley?

RK: Yeah. But one of the things that—the earlier junior colleges were built next to high schools. And their characterization was they're high schools with ashtrays, just to show the difference. But I don't think we were good neighbors to a high school. I don't want high school graduates to be still. I didn't think it was a good . . . So I wanted to get out. And the Kapi'olani Community College was in such a small area, and to serve the Honolulu district, the most populous area, we needed something larger. So we really went after the Fort Ruger, which we got. And as you know, Kapi'olani now is the most popular, largest community college. It's thriving.

MK: How about in the case of Windward? Where was that? Windward Community College?

RK: Yeah, we had a problem with Windward, too. But we couldn't find suitable land. There was no big tract of federal land, whatever. At that time, too, they were giving up—the state hospital was there. And we were at the stage where they were moving people out of institutions. And they said, "We got all this surplus buildings now. Why don't you use that?" So that was a quick fix.

WN: And you were saying that Windward was a little later than the others because of the politics . . .

RK: Yeah. Because of partly politics, but partly because we thought that population-wise, they weren't that much in need. It was more an affluent place where their kids' college-going rate was very high. But not all areas because we knew we got to serve Waimānalo and other areas. But on our timetable, we had put it behind because the drive over the Pali, we think, wasn't that great. So we had to have stages of development.

The other thing we tried to do and to some extent we succeeded but not as much I wanted to, was I wanted the community colleges to specialize. In a way they were specialized already, especially in Honolulu, where Honolulu Technical School was heavily into the so-called hard technology, auto mechanics, electronics, plumbing, carpentry, and cosmetology, they called it then. Whereas Kapi'olani was mainly a business school for training people for the business, office work.

And also, Kapi'olani had a fledging culinary program. In fact, the program we took over trained waiters and waitresses at the Ala Wai Boathouse. And it was a very restricted program. And the cooking school was a very small one. I still remember Shiro Matsuo was one of the instructors. He became the chief instructor for a while. Maybe the only instructor. Shiro's Saimin. And I got a lesson from him. We were looking at retention rates in different programs. His program was terrible. Kids started and never got through. His program was maybe two years or he had a one-year program, and kids never quite went all the way. So I went to see Shiro. "Shiro, what's happening?"



He says, "Oh, you know, like today the Kāhala Hotel calls me. They want somebody to help with the pastry (chef). So I send my best student. So he doesn't graduate." He tells me, "You want them to graduate, or you want them to get jobs?" (WN laughs.) So he had the right approach. He said, "You just got to worry about how much I keep. Maybe they not so good."

WN: But that's in keeping with your philosophy of a piece of paper that . . .

RK: Yeah, sure, sure. But here, you know, as an academic, and myself, and everything else, we still have there hang-ups. We worry about retention rates, we worry about test scores. And now we find test scores to mean very little, except you're good in taking tests. But anyway, so that was interesting. But I wanted Kapi'olani to develop more their culinary (program), which they have done by the way. Now, this is great. And I'm still talking to Windward or to Leeward—in fact I was, even until recently—to do something in what we call Hawaiian entertainment, the dance, the song. To produce more Danny Kaleikinis and Don Hos or whatever. Just perpetuate Hawaiian music, develop it, and so forth. I was hoping they'd specialize in that and have big, big summer festivals and folk music or something of that sort. I wanted Kaua'i to do something in graphic arts. You don't have to go to a four-year university to be a good graphic artist. But especially as graphic arts depends more and more on computers and other technology, I thought we should have heavy specialization, which I didn't think was a university four-year campus program. There are several of these programs that (I) wanted community college to specialize in and to develop (to) full flowering—to have summer festivals, to be known as a place to go. Not quite like the Fashion Institute of Technology, but as I said community colleges are very flexible. And to think that they're the junior, the inferior to our university or four-year institution, is a big mistake. They specialize in certain things.

And I got this lesson early when I visited the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. It's a community college in the New York system. Most of its enrollees have four-year degrees. But they need the specialization to work in the competitive fashion industry. And this college is right in the garment industry in New York City, the heart of New York City. The president has a beautiful suite on the top floor of this building in the middle of Manhattan. But you see, the specialization is such that four-year institutions may not want to touch it. As is now, a lot of, I think, some of these people with degrees are going to Kapi'olani to take up some fields in which they could maybe be a law clerk or something of that sort. You could be an English major, but then, oh, you want to be a legal assistant. There's a program there you can enroll in.

WN: So, in other words, you can get a four-year degree from Mānoa and TIM [Travel Industry Management] . . .

RK: Or anyplace else.

WN: . . . and specialize in culinary arts at KCC [Kapi'olani Community College] after that.

RK: You could, yeah.

MK: Just like a graduate program.

RK: Yeah, for whatever, yeah. Mm-hmm. Because they specialize in different things. You need training in different areas in different ways, and not all the training has to be at a four-year institution or universities, which are so tradition-bound, and hide-bound. The



community college can offer this as a six-month program or one-year program or whatever it be. Or maybe all you need is two courses. Well, you can take them there and so on. That's where I visualize community colleges. But they can also specialize in cooking, or fashion, or graphic arts, something that requires skill. You can learn technique and things, but you don't have to spend four years and so forth. And you can learn it in different aspects. If you want to learn 'ukulele, that's something. You learn dance is another thing.

WN: So were you looking at the community colleges as being similar to the magnet school system, you know, where, say, Kapi'olani emphasizes culinary arts and . . .

RK: I guess you could say that.

WN: Rather than have each community college . . .

RK: Yeah, we can't afford to do that. You can't afford to have—or maybe you can—you know, full-fledged kitchen with all the new contraptions and microwaves and everything else. The stainless steel, whatever they use. Although a lot of liberal arts has to be everywhere. In certain programs, computers should be everywhere, at least the basics. But those highly specialized areas, we had to be careful as not to have them—we can't place them in every community college. They got to have the specializations. Like health is mainly in Kapi'olani. We don't have auto mechanics in Kapi'olani. We have it in Honolulu, and Windward has it.

MK: On the neighbor islands like Kaua'i and Maui, do you still have that same situation where they specialize in certain fields?

RK: Well, no. As you know, it's so much more difficult. For that reason, I advocated dormitories for community colleges, which is against the idea of what a community college is. Community college is somewhere in the community that you can get to easily. But given our geography, I thought if a Kaua'i student wanted to do—well, they do have culinary arts in Kaua'i, but maybe he wants to be more highly specialized, he should go to Kapi'olani. But in order to do that, maybe we should have dormitories like the university has. Why should the university have dormitories but not community colleges? Although, generally, it goes against that concept of community colleges.

While we're talking education philosophy, too, I have to say that David Riesman, the great sociologist, (author of) *The Lonely Crowd*, criticized the community colleges in that he said, "For someone to grow up after high school, it's to get away from the family, get away from mom and dad. Be on his own." And the community college doesn't make that possible in many instances. He still stays at home. He doesn't grow up in some ways. For someone like David Riesman, going to college means becoming a mature individual. You don't mature when you're tied to your mother's apron strings. So there is that handicap, so to speak, on community colleges. I thought, why not have dormitories in community colleges? A Kaua'i boy wants to specialize in electronics or now at Honolulu Community College, aviation, come to Honolulu.

WN: But, still in keeping with the philosophy of, you know, expansion of education for all, geographically, economically, and academically, to have everyone have the experience of going away sometimes is not possible at the expense of expansion for everyone to go to college.

RK: Yeah.

WN: Before we leave this subject, you know, I wanted to just ask you one more question. You're called the "father of the community college system" and I know we touched on some of this, but as you look at the community colleges today, are there certain aspects of it that you're very pleased with in terms of what you originally envisioned? And what aspects are there that you are not happy with and wish would go in a different direction?

RK: Well, on this "father" business, you know, as I said, I just happened to be at the right place at the right time, so to speak. The community colleges coming to Hawai'i, it's an idea whose time had arrived. And as I said, I just, you know, rode the wave. I didn't make the wave.

As to community college development, generally, I think they developed very well. I remember initially when they got started how gratifying it was to get on—once I had to travel a lot and I don't know, I got in a cab to the airport, and this cab driver going past Honolulu Community College telling me how great that was for this and that reason, not knowing who I was. You know, the unsolicited thing.

Once, later on, a Woodrow Wilson fellow, one of these students who got this prestigious Woodrow Wilson award was a Mānoa enrollee at that time, a Mānoa student, but for some reason was taken back to Honolulu Community College where she had started. And she was telling me how much better the teaching was at Honolulu Community College and the feeling and the campus than here in Mānoa, you know, which was interesting. And the first graduates of the Maui Community College, being very grateful. Some of them later got Ph.D.s and were so happy for the start they had on Maui. They couldn't get off the island, at least they got the start and they knew they could do it. So it was very gratifying. I haven't kept up recently what's going on in detail, but generally speaking, I think the community colleges are doing fine. I always worry that we try too much to ape Mānoa.

One of the things I wanted to and didn't succeed was to have—since we had the mantle of University of Hawai'i, why we couldn't get access to the athletic events. Now let me back track again. At one time, junior colleges often become feeders. For sports, they become feeders. California is famous for that. And now the Mānoa campus football team has junior college transfers. Basketball especially, and football, and so on. Well, the basketball coach at Mānoa approached me and said, "Hey, why don't you start a basketball league among community colleges because I want some players to come in." But he had a very talented player from the Mainland whose grades were horrible. You know, SAT scores, non-existent. So he said, "Why don't you . . ." So we probably had started a small team at Honolulu so we placed him on Honolulu Community College team. And every time he played for us, we won. When he didn't show up, we lost.

(Laughter)

But I don't think he was that disciplined because eventually he disappeared. And then I don't think he could transfer to Mānoa. In many instances they go to community colleges to get the grades, get the experience, and then transfer to four-year institutions and sports.

But generally, it's a struggle to be flexible in education. But community colleges just generally, I think, are on the cutting edge. They are the ones who stress learning instead of teaching, who put a great deal of emphasis on the student. And I think that's good.

You know, I wish we could be much more flexible in scheduling and other things. And we can always branch out more in serving the community in terms of lifelong learning. But the problem is always one of finances. Whether the people going are willing to pay the price and how much the state can afford to finance these operations. When there's a pinch, I think community service loses.

WN: Okay. Well, we're getting to about '69 when you—well, you were a vice president for community colleges until 1969, and that was the same year that Tom Hamilton left the presidency, 1969. I know you talked a little bit about Tom Hamilton in the beginning of this interview. But what were your feelings when he resigned?

RK: Yeah, that was very unfortunate. Tom was very popular, very effective. You know, this was the Vietnam—this era, and my colleague in political science, Oliver Lee, was on the forefront of those opposing the war. The problem was that he had used university materials, time, et cetera, et cetera to do this. Anyway that whole flap of the Vietnam era affected many campuses. It affected us in such a way that it became—Oliver Lee's position, tenure, and so forth became questioned. Tom Hamilton, which is true to his nature, took the rap for it. It was really not the department chair, but the dean of the college who had direct supervision, more or less. But in the wake of all the public fuss, Tom Hamilton said, "Ultimately, I'm the one to blame if we made the wrong decision or an unpopular decision." The faculty had passed a resolution, I guess, backing up Oliver Lee. So Tom says, "If I don't have the confidence of the faculty, I resign."

Some of us tried to talk him out of it. But, you know, he was a principled man. In fact I know some of the leaders of faculty made a personal visit to him and tried to say, "Look, it wasn't personal. It's not against you. We want you to stay on." But he had made up his mind. It was too bad because he was a very, very effective president. Of course, the times were good for him. He came when Hawai'i was on the upswing, but he was the right man in the right place.

WN: It took you more or less free rein to implement and . . .

RK: Oh, yeah.

WN: I mean, I'm sure he gave you guidelines, but did you feel that you had a long leash?

RK: A very long leash. Working with him was very wonderful. Every Monday morning I had a session with him when he was in town. Most of the time he was. And it didn't last very long. I had a list of what I wanted to discuss. He had a list. Mine was usually longer, but I would go over and say, "These are the things that are going to happen." Or, "I have to make a decision on this." Or, "I have a problem with this campus on this score and I think I'm going to do this." We'd discuss it and very quickly and briefly.

Most of the time he'd just say, "Yeah, fine. Go ahead." Occasionally, he'd say, "Well, I'd wait on it. Check with so-and-so before you do something."

It was very, very easy. Mm-hmm. And his philosophy, as he said, was his job was to get people who could do it and his job was to get out of the way. He said, "I just pour more gasoline or give them more." More fuel to go. "I rather keep out of the way."

WN: When Harlan Cleveland was named president in '69—I guess I have to ask you, were you ever considered a candidate at that time?

RK: Not really. I worked with the people who were selecting, who were trying to select and Harlan's name came in from the side and then floated on top.

WN: And you were named vice president by Harlan.

RK: Yeah, that was an interesting development. When Harlan Cleveland was named president, he asked that all of us, I think Dick Takasaki was acting president. Bob Hiatt . . .

WN: Right, Hiatt and then Takasaki, I think.

RK: Yeah. So when Takasaki was acting president, Harlan Cleveland said, "I want to talk to your administrators." So Dick rounded up about five or six of us and we went to see Harlan Cleveland in Syracuse. And he was with Syracuse before he had come into the State Department or the ambassador field, he was dean of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. So we met with him at Syracuse. I had turned in my resignation, whatever. I always used to give the new president a letter of resignation that can be dated at any time. Because, I think, as administrators we don't have tenure. We have to work with the president or the person in charge. But anyway, Harlan Cleveland, I remember, we met with him for hours. Harlan Cleveland, being a diplomat or whatever, he can sit at meetings for hours. But anyway, after that meeting, Dick Takasaki—we came home to Hawai'i—and Dick Takasaki says, "Harlan Cleveland wants you to be his vice president."

I said, "Why?"

Well, anyway, Dick, as I recall, saying he said, "Well, he thought you were the one who was the most forthright, honest." As I look back some people were trying to give rosy pictures of this or that. I was just saying what I thought.

You know, they said, "Well, the schools in Hawai'i are bad."

I said, "Wait a minute. I went to the public high school. Did any of you? You know, what grounds? You send your kids to Punahou?" You know, I was very frank about this. And Harlan really liked that. So he named me vice president without portfolio. In other words, it means "general." Like I was assistant in general to Hamilton. When Cleveland came, I became vice president generally and did all kinds of things. Also like with Hamilton, I took him around to meet community people and so on.

WN: And how was that different from taking Hamilton as opposed to taking Cleveland around?

RK: Cleveland was much more formal. Hamilton was much easier in terms of he—it was easy to mix with people and everything. Both of them were very, very capable people, very smart. Hamilton maybe gave better speeches, but Cleveland was a good writer. In fact, he spent a lot of time polishing his prose and phrases. But Hamilton was much more skillful with people, I thought. Cleveland was more an Easterner in that sense. So Hamilton was much more effective in working with the regents and the legislators. Cleveland had some good ideas, and he thought he had very big ideas for the university.

MK: People associate Cleveland with the term, I forget the exact term, but ambiguity.

RK: You mean Cleveland? Yeah.

MK: Yes.

WN: Creative ambiguity.

RK: Yeah, creative ambiguity. Yeah. Some people found Cleveland's—although he was in public administration, and has written books about how to administer, they found his administrative style somewhat difficult. And as you said, one of his favorite terms was creative ambiguity. His advice was, "Don't be so sure about your immediate goals. You don't know." Be always open to opportunities that may arise. He said life is not so certain. It's not a straight path. You have to—the world changes—you have to be flexible. And so you have to roll with the punches, and adjust, and modify as you go along. And that made it difficult for some administrators who wanted straight answers.

END OF TAPE ONE

TAPE No. 31-63-6-00; SIDE ONE

MK: We talked about Cleveland and his creative ambiguity. As an administrator, vice president for general things, how did you manage? Or how did you feel working under that sort of situation?

RK: My assignment was general. I didn't find it that difficult. Harlan treated me well. You know, I had little assignments, like do the first draft of a development plan for the university, and so forth, and so on. In many ways, I guess, I wasn't in the position of the deans who had to make immediate decisions. I had a more open position of planning and things of this sort. So it wasn't that difficult for me to deal with it.

WN: Harlan Cleveland, you mentioned that one of your major duties or your major duty as vice president would have been to develop a state-wide university system.

RK: Yeah, that's what I said. One of the things he wanted me to do was to outline a organizational scheme and also a general plan for the development of the university as a state-wide system. Because we had added the community colleges under Hamilton and now he wanted some consolidation or, you know, some systematic plan to see how these pieces would fit together. So I had done an early report with some faculty members, and then he added to that. And he had some, as I said, he liked to write, and so you can find his ideas of how the university should develop. I forget the titles, but one of them was called, "Five Years From Greatness," or something like that, and "Still Growing [Holding]," you know.

WN: I think he did an article series called "Prospectus for the Seventies."

RK: Yeah. Right. Someone did the legwork and groundwork for some of his thinking on those areas, not that he followed everything we put down. My job was to sort of get the parts together or get the preliminary thinking going.

WN: And at this time, you know, you were vice president now under another president. In terms of your own professional goals, at about this time, what were they? Did you feel . . .

RK: I never figured a life in administration. I enjoyed my teaching. I wanted to go back into teaching. So I asked for a year sabbatical. Harlan Cleveland was interesting in having a—because his forte, his field, was public administration, he wanted us to develop a strong public administration school here, international public administration school. So one of the things he told me was, go to the East Coast and find out how they're doing at Kennedy School at Harvard, and the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton. So I went to Princeton for my sabbatical. And through my friend at Princeton, I got a little desk at the Woodrow Wilson School. But there wasn't—well, what I learned was, I don't think Hawai'i was quite able to do something of that stature or nature. We already had the East-West Center which was doing parts of that. But to have a highly specialized school in that area, I thought, I'm sure that was (not) the way we wanted to go.

WN: Also, funding was starting to level off at this time.

RK: Exactly. And it was when I was on sabbatical, but there was still the pressure of, maybe, the Mānoa campus being too crowded, and we should have a second campus. So Harlan Cleveland, I remember, called me when I was at sabbatical at Princeton and said, "Why don't you come back and plan for the second campus?" That's why he gave me the title of Chancellor for West O'ahu College. Here I get best chancellor's job, but I had no staff, but I had no students, and no faculty. (Laughter) So I spent a year drawing up plans. And also my job was really to try to—by that time, the second campus had become controversial. Economic times are getting harder, and the faculty and the students—the faculty at Mānoa had started the idea of a second campus, but they were beginning to doubt it. And the students, university students, opposed it saying they were just taking money away from us, "We need more money for the Mānoa campus."

Then we had a terrible time in terms of land politics. Nobody wants a prison, but everybody wants a campus on his or her property on his or her terms. The Bishop Estate, the Campbell Estate, we talked to all of these people. And I don't mind. I said, "Okay Campbell Estate, but can we have this one here right near the water?"

"No."

"Can we have this around the plantation manager's house?" Bishop Estate, they want us to go up on the hills where it's hard to develop. And I'm saying, "No, the campus has to be in the center of the development," which they didn't think was a good idea. Maybe a big shopping center, but not a campus. Because you get land politics. Land politics here is pretty heavy. As one of them told me, if you turn over a rock on the Leeward side, you find five politicians and two developers under every rock. (WN laughs.) But anyway, we ran into land politics and never could decide where to go.

So in a way I was spinning wheels on that score, but I was writing this academic plan, which I did write for the so-called second campus. My biases were for a strong liberal arts emphasis and trying to get sort of a residential campus, which people think are outmoded now. I wanted great attention paid (to students). I had freshmen in small classes. I had seniors roaming the campus, and not being in class, and teaching, and so forth. I remember trying to present my budget to the bureau of the budget, and they wouldn't accept it. They said, "No. Nationally, a freshman costs \$25. A sophomore costs \$50. And a senior costs \$200. And medical students costs \$2500."

I said, "No, but you got to change it. See how many freshman flunk? That's where we need to put our resources."

They're all capable, but somehow we are not able to retain them as learners. So putting all my marbles in the freshman year retained them. The way to learn is to teach. So the seniors are going to help us teach. They are all going to do papers. I had a funny requirement which was—and everybody, before they graduate has to have some real work experience. You know, not be wet behind the ears. Anyway, I thought it was fun developing it, but it never got off the ground. Although some of the people who finally ended up at that second campus, which is still struggling, West O'ahu, which is not a glamorous name, but I guess, that's the name I gave it to just to show where it's going to be, some of the faculty liked it, but nothing close to that has come about.

WN: How different were the issues in starting community colleges throughout the state and starting a second university?

RK: Well, to begin with, the times were different. To me, the (community) colleges got started when there was a great demand and the economy could stand it. The second campus idea came at the tail-end of that. That's why the faculty at the Mānoa campus were worried about, gee, too many of them trying to come here. Hilo couldn't handle them either, so have a second campus. But by the time we started to work on it more, the economy has turned down somewhat, the pressure wasn't on as much, so people thought, "Gee, we don't have the money and the demand isn't there." And now, with the distance education and all this sort of thing, maybe the demand is even more difficult. But also, we got caught, terribly caught, in the land politics.

WN: So was putting temporary buildings on the Leeward Community College was like a compromise at the time?

RK: Well, no. I was out of it at that time. Eventually, what did I—I went back into teaching?

WN: Yeah. You resigned in '76 as vice president . . .

MK: VP for Academic Affairs?

WN: Yeah.

RK: What happened was [Fujio] "Fudge" Matsuda became president in 1974. Fudge asked me to be vice president for academic affairs. So I served two years under him as vice president of academic affairs. So I gave up the West O'ahu thing which wasn't going very far. He appointed Ralph Miwa to be West O'ahu—and Ralph was the one who started the campus first in the shopping center, Waimalu or somewhere.

WN: Oh yeah. That's right.

MK: Newtown Square.

RK: Newtown Square. So that was Ralph Miwa took over. He started that and then eventually moved to. . . . But I was out of it. When Fudge Matsuda came in, Fudge wanted me to be his vice president for academic affairs. So I served, I think, two years under Fudge.

WN: Yeah, I was reading the paper. It said that, in essence, when you first became vice president for academic affairs, you had three hats. You were in charge of Mānoa academic affairs, you were in charge of the community colleges, and you were in charge of West O'ahu for a time. It must have been a lot of work. (Chuckles)

RK: Well, all of the issues and things were familiar to me. And I had a good secretary.

WN: Where was your office?

RK: In Bachman Hall.

WN: Oh, was it in Bachman Hall? But when you were chancellor for West O'ahu, where was your office?

RK: In the Varsity building.

WN: Oh, wow. So you were chancellor of an idea, actually?

RK: That's what I'm saying. Yeah. I had no faculty, no staff, no problems, and a good secretary.

(Laughter)

WN: You know, I was looking at some articles. In 1976, there was some controversy where you needed to go to the legislature in support of West O'ahu. And representatives such as Neil Abercrombie, Donald Ching, Nadao Yoshinaga, Ben Cayetano, were sort of . . .

RK: Yeah, by that time the tide had changed. And people wondered, "Can we afford it?" And that's when I got to know Ben Cayetano. Ben was a young legislator from that district and I still remember the hearing. I don't know whether it was some kind of economic report put out by, maybe, department of economic development. He was reading some report. He said, "Do you know what the report says on page so-and-so?" He reads it out and explains to the audience. Because by that time there was a great deal of opposition from the students, especially, and they were there. But after the meeting I said to Ben, I said, "You know, I was going to (say), 'Okay, now turn two more pages and you read a different paragraph.' You know, that was one where they were presenting pros and cons. You only read one part of it." I said, "I don't appreciate you giving me the one-sided thing, but I don't want to confront you in public." Well, we became good friends since. When he ran for lieutenant governor, I was on his advisory committee. I don't think he took any of my advice, but anyway. (Laughter) By that time, the opposition was very strong. Because they were worried about what it might mean in depleting resources from Mānoa.

MK: So the opposition was primarily financial then? Economic?

RK: Yeah. You see, when Fudge became president, that's one of the things we worried about, that we were on a plateau. Fudge's job was to manage well. It wasn't like Hamilton's time when we were on the upswing.

WN: Okay, I know there was a lot of controversy at West O'ahu and you ended up resigning, eventually.

RK: Well, I gave it up because as you said I was wearing three hats for a while. But when Ralph Miwa took over the West O'ahu job. And the community colleges eventually, that, too, was a separate office.



- WN: Before we get into, you know, from '76 on, when you returned to teaching, that's on your resume, in 1974 you were a very viable and serious candidate for UH president after Cleveland resigned. Can you talk about that?
- RK: Yeah, my name was put up. And on that score, earlier, when Tom Hamilton resigned, Eddie Nakamura, one of the regents, reminds me that, informally, they had offered me the job temporarily. But there were senior members Bob Hiatt and others. I didn't think I should be considered then. But after Cleveland left, there was a strong reaction to not having someone from the outside come in. Maybe a local person could do it. And the two contenders were McKinley classmates and friends, Fudge Matsuda and myself. I would say that Fudge had the inside track in terms of working in the state government. I will say that in many ways the presidency is political. It's not an academic choice or anything of that sort. My downtown friends told me that I won't have a chance.
- WN: Now you were vice president for academic affairs. Fudge was vice president for Business . . .
- RK: Yeah. That's right. Fudge was already, but he had, before that, established himself in the state. In many ways, they tell me that, I don't know how Fudge feels about it, but they brought him to succeed Cleveland. But, as I said, Fudge and I were classmates since the seventh grade. And when he became president, he asked to become his vice president. Because he knew that I had a long experience with the Mānoa faculty and Mānoa generally.
- WN: Two other candidates, Ken Lau was also on the list and Wytze Gorter was also on the list. It's like a four-person local—were there national candidates as well?
- RK: I don't know whether they considered any at that time, but you're right. The finalists (were) four locals, I think.
- WN: How did you feel about this discussion or this issue of needing to get a local person as president?
- RK: Well, I don't know that you have to go one way or the other. I think you should choose the best person. And now we're searching for another university president. I think it wasn't so bad at that time. But I think the process has become too complicated with all the rules about affirmative action, this and that. I guess I'm getting more old-fashioned. I think the regents should themselves decide what kind of person they want and go after that person. To ask people to nominate themselves or nominate other people and to go through all this, I think, is time-consuming. I think in many ways, it was the old-fashioned way to go out and decide who you think is the best person. Because, right now people are very reluctant. Even in the presidential searches on the Mainland, they have problems because the leading candidates often don't want their names to be known, and so forth, and so on. You have to play this game. Many people don't want to run because it's not as bad as running for political office, but they dig up everything about your past life as to whether you had an affair forty years ago, whether you smoked marijuana in high school, or whatever. They bring up all these things. That's too bad. So sometimes your best candidates will not apply for the job, or publicly say they are not interested. But it seems to me that an institution should be bold enough to say, "Well, this is the kind of person we want. You're the kind of person we want. We want you." You know, "And these are the terms." And we'll work it out. Or have a list of that sort and go down the line. But maybe that's too old-fashioned now.

- WN: It was a time when the local issue was a very big one. I mean, I know Wally Fujiyama, I think, was on the board at that time. You know, really being a spokesman for the local person. Larry Price, I think, was named football coach around that time, a local person. So it seems to me that was a . . .
- RK: Yeah, I think so. You're right in that there was—for change, and it wasn't looking abroad. My friends in Guam usually say to me, "I don't know why you people must go out and get a president. At University of Guam, we just choose our own." Of course, University of Guam, every time the governor changes, the president changes. (Laughter) When I was on the accreditation commission they sent me to Guam to lecture the regents on how to behave, what their role would be. So I spent the day giving academic lectures on the role of the trustees and regents. We're having dinner that night and the chairman of board leans over to me after the second drink and says to me, "Come on Dick, it's all politics." (Laughter) He has a point.
- WN: I just want to ask you one more question before we end this. At that time, in 1974, did you want to be president, or did you feel qualified to be president?
- RK: Well, I thought I could do it, although I don't know if I would do in a way. I talked to Wally Fujiyama. He's another friend of mine, a Kapahulu boy. He's younger than I am, but I've known him for many years. You know, his neighborhood. I was in Waikīkī, he was in Kapahulu. And Wally's very frank. I guess he paid me a compliment, he told me, "Damn it, you're too damn independent." Because there are certain things, understandings, that he wanted. But, I think, mainly it's my. . . . People wanted to campaign for me and I discouraged that. I never really sought that position. As I said, I enjoyed the university. I enjoyed teaching. And I don't know, the president was a. . . . I've seen the presidents, and it's a big headache in many ways. Many ways you don't become your own person. As a teacher, you could. But as an administrator, you got to be aware of public expectations and so on. That's in a sense why, I think, I never ran for office or like I was active in student politics but not grown-up politics.
- WN: (Chuckles) Did you have any idea or agenda as how you would have run the university at that time?
- RK: Well, later on, I think, when [Albert] Simone got selected, I was again put in the position of being a candidate. In fact I was highly recommended by the committee, but in facing whatever, I put a very heavy emphasis on undergraduate education, which turned the researchers against me because they thought that I would not. . . . I strongly believe they thought I was taking my community college philosophy too far. But I strongly believe that as a state institution, you know, our first obligation is to educate our students in the most effective way. I think research is very important. But a lot of the so-called research that some of us in faculty do is not really that significant. And, maybe, my wife was right. The federal government coming in and paying for research distorted the university in a sense. Maybe the federal government should have had research institutes and invite the hot-shots to come there and do research full time. Let the universities pay more attention to students, and learning, and teaching. Although, you can't argue that the best teachers, oftentimes, are not the best researchers, too. They have an active and curious mind. They not only like things that they work with, but people as well. So you can have a combination, which is the best. But most of us can't meet that. And as a state university, I thought we really had a job, too. Because more and more I think about it, today the education is so important. It's basic. It's basic education for undergraduates. That's a core

of our economy, too. If you educate your people too, you know, have better family situations. Fewer social problems. But I guess that's just an educator's dream.

WN: Okay, so we got you to '76. I think we will require one more session.

RK: Okay.

WN: And that should do it. (Laughs) We promise.

MK: Yes.

RK: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW