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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Richard Kosaki (RK)

Mānoa, O'ahu

June 6, 2000

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

WN: This is an interview with Dr. Richard H. Kosaki on June 6, 2000, and we’re at the offices of the Center for Oral History at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, in Honolulu, O‘ahu. The interviewers are Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto.

MK: What we’re going to do is we’re going to take you back to your birth, and start from way back there. And so we’ll concentrate on your birth, your family background, and your early life in Waikiki. And, probably the furthest we’ll get if we even reach there would be McKinley High School.

We’ll focus in on your early background and the idea being that eventually we’d like to look at your attitudes towards education—education you got here locally—your parents’ influence, the community influence, influence of any other community-like organizations that may have impacted your life, influence of friends, the whole environment and the whole educational system that you went through that you’re a product of. So, we’re going to start from your birth.

WN: We intend this to be a series of interviews. So we’d like to stop at a certain point, and optimistically, as Michiko said, we’ll probably get no further than McKinley High School.

RK: I think you people have been at this for some time, so you know. But, what, most people run out in two hours or whatever? Depends I guess on the person.

WN: Yeah.

RK: And I don’t know how good a recall mechanism is and how selective it will be. But, you people are aware of that. I was trying to think if there’s anything in the record—Roland Kotani interviewed me . . .

WN: Right. We have that [Hawai‘i Herald article].

RK: So he did some of the early things. I wrote an autobiography in the ninth grade but I don’t know if I want to show you that (laughs) with my cartoons in it, too. My wife [Mildred Doi Kosaki] thinks it’s hilarious. And anyway, I lost it. I wrote an essay [at the University of Hawai‘i] in my freshman English class with Miss [Laura] Schwartz on my education, which was quite long, great emphasis on how valuable it was to me. But I’ve
never been able to find that copy. I’ll try to remember. As you’ve indicated, education
has been very, very important to me, good for me. Well, it’s been my life.

WN: Why don’t we start.

RK: Okay.

WN: First of all, with when and where you were born?

RK: As far as I know, I was born in 1924. Because I, myself, don’t remember, but that’s what
the records say. I was born in Waikiki, almost on the beach. I was born on the corner of
Kalākaua and ‘Ōhua avenues. There were storefronst along Kalākaua, especially from
‘Ōhua Avenue to—what’s the next road over now?

WN: Paoakalani [Street]?

RK: Paoakalani. I was born when both were anchored by stores. On Kalākaua and ‘Ōhua was
Aoki Store. I think a remnant of that is still at Beach Walk, or somewhere on Kalākaua
Avenue, near Beach Walk now. I think it was called Aoki Camp. And I understand I was
born in the vicinity right across Saint Augustine’s Church. Most of my childhood was
spent in that area.

Later on, I understand, we moved to Lemon Road, which is the first road in from
Kalākaua, between Paoakalani, and then it used to be called Makee [Road], but now it’s
Kapahulu.

Later, we moved to the second road in, which is Cartwright Road. We lived in a camp
[i.e., rental cottages] called Sasaki Camp. That was 2556 Cartwright Road. Lived there
till just a month or so before the war started, December 7 in ’41, when we bought a home
closer to the park, Kapi‘olani Park, on the same small block, Cartwright Road. At that
time the owners had the sign that says “2575 Cartwright Road,” but it was wrong because
it was on the mauka side and mauka side was even numbers. We found out that it was
supposed to have been 2584 Cartwright Road. That’s where we were when the war
started. That’s where we remained till I got married.

MK: And in your family, what number child are you?

RK: I’m number three. The eldest is a sister Nobuko, although I’m told that my mother had a
stillborn child before that. By the way, all of my siblings are still alive, which we’re
grateful for. The eldest is Nobuko, and then my brother Mineyuki, Frank, and I’m the
third one. And then below me is K., Kazuo, another brother; and then the second sister,
Mabel; and then the youngest brother, Albert.

MK: And I noticed that your last two siblings have English names, whereas the earlier ones
have Japanese names.

RK: That’s right. I think that’s the reflection of the times. Then later on, I got an English
name. My older brother married into a family who wanted to sort of adopt him. So he
took on, his name is Frank Hibino, and he’s a kihei. The one below me, Kazuo, was born
in Japan and he had great difficulty coming back into the country because he was born
there after 1924. We had to hire lawyers, I understand, and so forth, for my mother to be
able to get back into the country with us.
MK: What was your father's name?

RK: Kazuki.

MK: And your mother's name?

RK: My mother's name, she was given the name of "Kaneo," she was Ozaki Kaneo. She didn't like "Kaneo," she says it sounded masculine. So when she got to be naturalized, she changed her name to Kayo, K-A-Y-O.

MK: And I don't know what you've been told or researched about your father's family background, but if you could share with us what you know about your father's family's background in Japan?

RK: Our parents never said much and we never asked until it was too late, I guess, but I think I gave you a copy of the thing that my sister [Nobuko] did on the family history, so that's as far as I know. My father's family—it's unusual in the sense that we come from Kochi-ken. I looked at the chart that was prepared during what was the centennial celebration. Kenji Goto and others compiled a list of people who came from different Japanese prefectures in Japan. Hiroshima, of course, was on the top. Greatest number, Yamaguchi, Okinawa, and Fukuoka, and the very bottom was Kochi-ken. So there are very few. And on my father's side, it's still puzzling to me—I don't know why they came—but they didn't come as plantation laborers evidently.

I'm told that my grandfather, on my father's side, drove a taxi in Hilo when he came. I've seen a picture of him standing next to an old Model-T or whatever it is. But both my father's parents returned to Japan. My father, I think, as far as I know, was the only son and there was a daughter. When I look back now, I guess my father's family was pretty well-off because even at that time, he went to high school. He was sent to high school in Hiroshima. So he got more education than most people for that period.

MK: And I know that later on, your father, Kazuki Kosaki, came to Hawai'i in 1913 as a yobiyose, he was brought over. When he was brought over, what did he do?

RK: I think he was still young. He may have gone to school, but I'm not sure what he did.

MK: How about your mother's family's background in Japan?

RK: That's even more puzzling. Because we know so little about my mother's side, she's an Ozaki, and also from Kochi-ken. Although on the Ozaki side, Grandpa Ozaki and Grandma Ozaki, I have known when I was kid because they were alive and they were in Hawai'i, they were in Hilo, living with my mother's side. She was the eldest daughter, and then she had her brother, Otokichi, and then a younger sister, Haruko. They were all in Hawai'i, so I remember. The sister Haruko lived with us until she got married. She married Uejio, who had Royal Trading Company, and he had the Ajinomoto franchise in the beginning. His son took over, but I think they're no longer—Royal Trading Company—is no longer in business.

MK: And your mother's family, what were they doing in the Big Island?

RK: My grandfather was a plantation worker. I recall when I was in high school—I don't know whether I was a sophomore or, I guess it was the end of my sophomore year—that summer I spent—you know, we were living in Waikiki. But I represented the family and
went to my Grandpa and Grandma Ozaki’s fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration in ‘Amauulu, Hawai’i. Do you know where ‘Amauulu is?

MK: Mm-hmm.

RK: I’d like to go back and visit, they had a house right next to the gymnasium. I spent the summer there, baby-sitting; my cousins were young. I got to see what the lifestyle was for Grandpa and Grandma and Uncle Oto[Ozaki] and Aunty [Hideko] Ozaki. My grandfather was a quiet man, I always remember him as a man of few words, hunched over, who was a very conscientious, quiet worker. From what I understood, he was an independent kind of cuss. (Chuckles)

Even when he lived (with us), during the war, he always took a clove of garlic every morning and that he said was for his health. Maybe he knew something. I used to tell my mother that’s to prevent people from coming close to him, he wasn’t very talkative. (MK and WN laugh.) That gave him peace and quiet, so he lived long. He was really a man of few words, with a nice sense of humor, but very conscientious, good with his hands.

Anyway, I understand that what the plantation did was they had a piece of land that was almost inaccessible, one of these outcroppings where you have a small patch, big enough to maybe raise some cane. But how do you get to it? It’s sort of a gully with an outcropping. He said they assigned him that patch and he had to build his own bridge to go over it. No one else would trust that bridge, but (he) cultivated that piece by himself and brought the cane over for the milling. He was also a very independent person.

I don’t know how true it is and want to go check on this. One of the reasons why we don’t know much about my mother’s side is I understand that my grandmother who seemed so quiet was from a well-to-do family. I understand they still have an inn in that little village in Kochi. My grandpa was a hired hand, a yardman, and they fell in love. They eloped. So my grandma’s family cut her off. So my mother never talked about her relatives. Of course, then they came to Hawai’i. And they had, so far as I know three children—my mother and her brother, Otokichi, and youngest sister [Haruko].

MK: You were saying that you spent one summer with your maternal grandparents on the Big Island. That’s plantation sort of community . . .


MK: What did you think about that plantation community in contrast to the urban Waikīkī area that you came from?

RK: I don’t know, at that age you know it’s different, but it was enjoyable. I remember going out to Hakalau to visit some distant relatives and they said, “Oh great you are here, we’re going to have hekka tonight.” So they run out and grab a live chicken. (Chuckles) I see them do the whole thing. But was fun. It was different. Of course, then you had to go by ship, which was terrible for me because I get awfully seasick. It’s a different—but it was enjoyable.

MK: And then you mentioned that your mother’s brother is Otokichi Ozaki, who we know as the poet, Muin Ozaki. What was your impression of this uncle?

RK: He was a very interesting man, a very intelligent man. I have great deal of respect for him and he was very nice to me and we were pretty close. It was his house because actually
he was head of the household in ‘Amauulu. [The Ozakis resided in Camp 1, ‘Amauulu.] He was then a Japanese-language school teacher, I think, at Hilo Dokuritsu Gakuin or whatever. My friends tell me he was very strict. But he was a very hardworking person, very intelligent. I used to marvel at how he used to get up early in the morning and take care of his plants. I don’t know how he learned how to handle plants, in the backyard he had orchids and anthuriums.

I found later that out of all of these, he had tubes and things—I don’t know where he learned to do these things—but he was the one who propagated the Ozaki Red, it’s called, an early anthurium, which was long lasting. I don’t think he got anything out of it, except his name was attached to it. But he had all of these orchids and anthuriums in the backyard which he experimented with.

Then he taught Japanese-language school, which was pretty much in the afternoons. At night, I would hear him listening to short wave radio, now this is what, in the ’30s? I watched him there with his earphones and he’s listening to this. It’s all in Morse code, di di dit di di di dit di dit di dit. It’s Domei News from Japan, and he understood it, he wrote it, and he used to give the Japanese radio station the Domei News that he got. And he rigged up, as far as I know, this radio stuff himself. I see his high antennas and all that sort of thing. So when I look back, he was quite a remarkable person. Very curious, very intelligent, and largely self-taught.

I understand that the Morse code, he decided he’s going to master it and did it on his own, taught himself, and within six months was able to do it. When he came to Honolulu occasionally, we had great fun because he used to play with us. I still remember at New Year’s. We were challenging each other as kids as to who can hold a firecracker the longest. We used to have the penny firecrackers—we don’t do it like they do it now, so exorbitant, blow up a whole [string of] 10,000, 20,[000], whatever it is, 100, 000 firecrackers. We had to dole them out one at a time. We had the penny firecracker, which was a very small one that we could kind of hold at the end our fingertips and let it go off.

He said, “Oh that’s nothing.”

I remember once, we’d goad him and say, “You think, Uncle, you can hold a five-cent firecracker?”

He say, “Oh, yeah.” Good thing he didn’t lose his fingers.

(Laughter)

But he was always curious, trying to do things.

MK: And then I know that your parents married in October 1918. They eventually came to Honolulu. Would you know how that came about?

RK: How and why, I don’t know. Probably it was job opportunities. Why they settled in Waikiki, I don’t know. But my dad worked in the hotels. I think he started at Moana, I think the Royal Hawaiian, but then, eventually, for many, many years he worked at the Halekulani.

MK: When he was at the Moana and Royal Hawaiian, what was his job there?

RK: I think he was mainly a waiter most of the time.
MK: And then at the Halekūlani?

RK: He was a waiter, but later on they put him as a bartender in the [Halekūlani’s] House Without a Key, because my friends used to tell me that they liked his drinks.

MK: What did your father tell you about his job or his feelings about his job?

RK: He didn’t say much except the inconvenience because he was not home during Thanksgiving or Christmas, he had to work. So he missed a lot of meals, and the family things. But he had mornings. I remember sometimes he’d go fishing with us in the morning when he’s available. Waikiki was a great place to grow up. The beach was always there, the zoo is there, the aquarium was there, and the Natatorium. It was a great place to grow up. The weather was always good.

MK: When your dad was working at Halekūlani, who were his co-workers?

RK: The head man was Mr. Ukishima, nice man. His daughters were at McKinley with me. Oh, there were others. I don’t remember their names now. But at that time, my dad worked there for I don’t know how many, thirty years, or whatever it was, there’s a lot of stability, I guess. Mostly they were Japanese, I think, waiters who worked there.

MK: What did he say about the clientele or the owners, the Kimballs?

RK: The Kimballs were nice, paternalistic but nice. And, the Kimballs, well, I still remember on Christmases, the biggest celebration was at the hotel. What they did was, they had these guests, most of them are regulars who came at Christmastime. Then they asked their employees to bring their kids and to dress them up. That’s the only time I put on shoes, I think. And had to wear nice, clean shirt, but the girls had to dress in kimonos. Lot of the girls came in kimonos. The guests were very generous in that we all looked forward to seeing Santa Claus and being given Christmas presents, which were quite substantial for us in those days.

And Mr. [Kingie] Kimball himself took an interest. When I got in the army he gave me a senbetsu and, and he did other things, inquired as to how I was doing. When I went to the hotel occasionally to pick up my dad, or when I saw him he would always chat with me.

WN: How was your dad’s English?

RK: Quite good. His penmanship was better than ours, and his Japanese calligraphy was very good so he was always in demand because he had education in Japan, too. The whole neighborhood always came over to our house and to ask our dad to do the calligraphy and so on. His English was very good, he worked in the hotel so he understood enough, could speak it, he could get around.

WN: Did you find that many of his fellow workers were pretty good in English, too? It was prerequisite, you think?

RK: They had to understand a minimum to get the orders and so forth, they could manage.

MK: You know at home, what language did the kids use?

RK: Mainly English. Of course among and between the kids, it was English. With our parents, it was sometimes a little Japanese. Of course, we all went to Japanese[-language] school
so we had that training, too. Our parents helped us with our Japanese and we had tried to help them with their English.

MK: And when you say that you kind of helped them with their English, how did that work out?

RK: I didn’t realize it. Well, occasionally we had to write [letters]... Well, for example, I was down at the [Japanese] Cultural Center [of Hawai‘i] the other day and I’m going to be at a meeting on Saturday. They’re looking over or they want to do something with the [Muin] Ozaki papers. But when all of my siblings were here the day that I got the award from the consul general, we went to lunch at Kirin [restaurant]. My sisters especially wanted to see the Ozaki papers at JCCH, [Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai‘i] so they made arrangements for us to go over and so we looked at it and we were astonished to see what Uncle Ozaki had kept.

If you look at the files, there’s a letter that I wrote and, my God, it was very legible, but it was on behalf of my mother, you see. My mother was dictating to me English-Japanese and I was writing it in English because that’s all, I guess, they’d allow to be sent to those relocation or concentration camps. So there’s a letter that I wrote [to Muin Ozaki] at my mother’s request, because I signed my name. I said, “for Mother,” or something at the end. “Do you need blankets, sweaters?” I don’t know what else I was saying. My sister did most of it, she wrote a lot of letters and she was surprised it was all preserved by Uncle Ozaki. We had forgotten about them, but there they are.

MK: So during the war, you were writing letters, say, for your mom?

RK: Yeah, well as you know, Uncle, because of his Japanese-[language] school, and I guess especially getting the short wave from Japan, Domei News, and I guess having close relationship with whatever the Japanese were doing in Hilo, got taken away in the middle of the night. [There is a] dramatic poem about how he left in the cold night, looking at the sleeping faces of his kids. He thought it’d be temporary. Of course it lasted over three years or whatever. But I think it was because of his, not the Japanese school, but because of his radio thing that he did.

MK: You know this would be getting ahead of us a little bit but while we’re on the topic, while your uncle was detained, what was your reaction and your family’s reaction?

RK: We were not too surprised but disappointed. We thought it’d be temporary, he’d be back, but we’re always hoping he’d be back to the family. Poor Aunty was very unhappy. We were in touch. Eventually when the family decided to go over to join the father that was very poorly handled. We went over, especially my sister, to plead with the officials not to have Grandpa and Grandma go because they were in advanced age. So when they came to Honolulu, we went over and got them to stay with us, so Grandpa and Grandma Ozaki stayed with us during the war and the rest of the family left for the Mainland.

Another irony is, as I was leaving to go, the war had just ended and I was sent to Japan for occupation—Manila first. Well, I stopped by in California and I went to see my uncle. Here I am in uniform, I went to see my uncle in Tule Lake. I don’t know if I wrote to Mildred [RK’s wife] about this because I don’t recollect doing too much, except feeling sort of strange, going through this country on the little bus and seeing the signs, seeing, “No Japs here for haircuts,” that kind of thing. Then checking with an MP [military police] there. Here I am a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army going to see my uncle and
his family in Tule Lake. That was the last camp that they stayed in. When they returned, they stayed in Waikiki. The kids, especially the girls, Sachi and Yuri, used to come over and play with us every afternoon after the war to get their adjustment.

Another irony is, here’s Uncle Ozaki who’s been declared, in a way, war criminal and interned, he had four children, two boys and two girls. Earl the eldest one who turned the records over [to JCCH], Earl was very bright, too, and I don’t know if he completed his master’s in horticulture here at the University of Hawai’i but his specialty was (Hawaiian) ferns, very bright. He was close to getting his master’s but he got a job with the Department of Agriculture and he served in New York.(and) other places. Eventually he ended up heading the agriculture department for the Far East. He was stationed in Tokyo so when I saw him once, when I visited Tokyo, he was living in this diplomatic compound in the American Embassy. Had a beautiful home. (Chuckles) Here he is working, and he has a tremendous interest in orchids. Anyway, so that was a good job for him to cover the Far East. The younger brother, Carl, got a job with the U.S. Army Signal Corps. So the two sons end up working in rather sensitive positions for the U.S. government. (MK and WN laugh.) I guess that’s America for you.

WN: Lot of ironies.

MK: Okay, well, we’ll move back to the old days. We were talking about your mother’s brother, Otokichi Muin Ozaki, and his family. But going back to your mom, she married, she started a family, they were living in Waikiki. What was she doing?

RK: She worked very hard. All the ladies there in the Waikiki neighborhood had home laundries. Most of the, if not all, of our customers were Haoles, living in Waikiki or Diamond Head. We as kids went to pick up the laundry on Mondays and Wednesdays, delivered on Thursdays and Saturdays or something, but that was a routine. My mother worked seven days a week, morning to night. Of course we helped, too, we did some of the ironing. I got to be a real good person with the roller, the electric roller, in doing certain kinds of things. We used to boil the clothes. In the summertime our job was to start the fire and do the clothes. That’s why I like to go to school. In the summertime I had to work so hard at home helping my mom. (Chuckles)

MK: You mentioned something about an “electric roller,” what is that?

RK: Well, there are different devices, but I guess my mother’s business was busy and there are certain things like trousers, especially khaki pants and other things, and sheets and things that are flat, instead of a little iron going down, it was easier to [use a roller]. She was able to purchase [it]. I don’t know, it must have cost quite a bit. But it was about this long, and it’s a circular thing that goes around, like the ironing board and then the top comes down the flat thing. So it’s like a big iron, so you pass and the controls are all at your knees, you hit it and it rolls, you just hit it, and it stops and you adjust it. Like sheets, you can just roll it all the way through, trousers, you had to go so far, bring it back, do the other side and so on.

WN: So you do it with rollers?

RK: Yeah.

MK: At that time, was it usual or unusual for your mother to have that sort of equipment?
RK: Well, I don’t know who else had it but I think others had it, too, because all of this were sort of a cottage industry. It’s a laundry business from home. When I think about it, I have to talk to my sister to substantiate it, but I think one of our customers was Robert Shivers, the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] guy. He had a nice, beautiful and gentle wife.

MK: About how many clients did she have?

RK: I don’t know but quite a number. Some brought their laundry. The Shivers used to bring their laundry. Lot of it was referrals. She did very well, she was never short of customers. Some, she had to turn down. Half of them, I guess, brought it in, half of them we went to deliver. Another funny thing is, on delivery, some of them will give us tips. It was pretty good so we used to identify them. We said, “That’s the one who gives us five cents. That’s the one who gives us ten cents.” On occasion we’d say to my mother, “Now if she gives us five cents, can we spend it?” because you can buy a whole candy bar, Big Hunk or Mr. Goodbar.

And, oh, there was another. We did laundry for Hollister Drugs on Kalākaua and I like to deliver there, because we probably take it in on a Monday or Tuesday, and Mr. Hollister would say, “All right boys, take whatever newspaper you want.” So we used to be able to get some of the comics, Sunday news, or whatever it was that he used to import. That was fun.

WN: And how would you deliver the laundry? Would it be all folded up?

RK: Yeah, all folded up and nicely wrapped and packaged. Sometimes, the hardest thing was to carry it by hand for blocks. Like one, way out Diamond Head, for example, eventually because we had to baby-sit, too, especially when the youngest one, Albert, came along, I still remember. So we bought at that time a very nice baby buggy, which was perfect for delivering laundry. And I still remember, especially the one at Diamond Head, every Saturday, we had to deliver. That’s a trek from, all the way through the park [Kapi‘olani Park], to the very end. What was it called? Hibiscus? What’s that little circle? [La Pietra Circle.] Just below Dillingham’s place anyway, Hibiscus Drive or . . .

WN: Oh, where the fountain is?

RK: Yeah, beyond that. You know, where La Pietra is now, that was the [Walter F.] Dillingham’s residence, just below that we had a customer called [Agnes Elizabeth] Larsen and she was a very nice lady. I remember always going through the park, my brother and I, K., would be maybe pushing it, I maybe doing it. Our youngest one, Albert, was too young. He would sit on the wagon.

MK: And, besides doing the deliveries and the collections, what else did you folks do in this home laundry?

RK: As I say, in the camp, there were four or five families in the camp, they did laundry. And they were assigned certain times when they use the furo in the bathroom and start their fires, each one had his little place. But on certain days, because, at that time, there were no electric dryers you had to hang them up. Waikiki was nice because it didn’t rain as much.

So all of our places had yards and yards of clothes lines. But they were assigned and you do it Monday and Thursday or someone does it at a certain time so that you can hang
your laundry out. Later on, I guess we all had washing machines, although we still had to scrub some things. Then you had to boil the clothes, and then you rinse them, and then you had to hang them out. That was another job that we had, besides doing the fire and after you got to be strong enough to take the clothes out of the boiling water, we would help our parents do the hanging by getting the rinsed ones and handing it to them as they strung it along the line. It was a tedious process. Another well-known customer we had was John Kelly, the artist. You know him? John Kelly, used to be Marion [Kelly’s father-in-law].

WN: They lived in Black Point?

RK: Yeah, that was a long haul. But generally they drove over, the mother drove over. She was an awful driver but she drove over. Sometimes we went because I remember going to their place. A beautiful place on Black Point, that’s where they lived. And young John Kelly, used to tell me how he used to. . . . He was a very nice person. He was a young man at that time, I think he was going to Punahou. But anyway, he used to dive off that cliff and go for uhu and stuff. He was a very good diver and swimmer.

In fact the mother came to us once and says, “My son got a medal.” He got (it) in the navy during the war, and something happened, anyway. They had to defuse a bomb that was far down but the divers with their clumsy suits couldn’t do it. And, John said, “I’ll do it,” and he dove all the way down, I don’t know how many feet, and defused it and got a medal for it.

MK: I noticed, too, in your sister’s work, that your mother had always worked as a maid?

RK: Yeah, we found out earlier that when she first came—must have been Honolulu (before) she married—I guess so. She worked with some family here and that was a help when she needed character witnesses to re-enter the country in 1925 or [’26]. But then she never said much about it. But I remember (her) saying when I first went to the Mainland just before the war, she says, “Well I’ve been there.” She said, “Oh, I went to San Francisco and Yellowstone.” She was a maid for a family, so she did the cooking and baby sitting. And therefore she knew quite a bit of English and she really knew Western foods. So, in our family, we had a lot of pot roast, we even had liver. (Chuckles) And, we had hamburgers, we had mashed potatoes. She was good in making pancakes and doughnuts. So we had a lot of Western food, because that’s what she did when she cooked for these people. Although her Japanese food was, I think, much better. Even Mildred tells how her umani and other things were so good. And she was an Ozaki and she was also very bright and curious. My mother had lot of get-up-and-go.

MK: So your mom worked for these Haole families, and then she did the laundry . . .

RK: Well I think, the Haole families came earlier, maybe before she had children or something. That’s what I (recall). She never said much about it. All we know is that for some period she did it, and at one stage they even took her to the Mainland to be the babysitter. But, I think after she had children she had to stay home and therefore the laundry thing came on.

WN: So as far as you remember, you mother’s primary job was laundry?

RK: Oh yeah. I still remember when the war started we all had to go and get fingerprinted. So we went to get fingerprinted. I took my mom. Alien registration especially. And the guy
who fingerprinted us, he said to my mother, “You a truck driver?” Because in ironing, you’re constantly doing this, she had very tough, especially her right hand. The guy told me, “That’s what truck drivers have.” (Chuckles)

WN: When you went to drop off laundry, did you also pick up at the same time?

RK: Yeah, usually.

WN: They were usually how? In bags?

RK: Depends on—some of them were very neat, others weren’t. We had some that practically tossed things out. That would mean I had to put it in a bag. Others neatly had them sacked. Great variations in customers. Most of them were very nice. Most of them paid their bill. One or two were a little difficult but on the whole, it was a pleasant experience. And great deal of respect for us. Because we kept in touch with some of them. I remember when I was in the army, Mom says, “The Martinsons moved to New Jersey and that’s not far from New York, so you go to New York you stop by and see them. This is their address.” So I wrote to them and I stopped by and I was a newly minted second lieutenant, I was very trim and looked good in my tight uniform and stopped by in Camden, New Jersey to say hello. I wanted to, in a couple of hours, take the train and continue on to New York. But she kept me there and she wanted me to meet this neighbor and that neighbor and everything else and I missed my train. By the time I got to New York, I lost my room. Gosh.

(Laughter)

Mrs. Martinson—the Martinsons were very nice. They lived close to us and they really treated us as family.

MK: You know I’m curious, since there was billing done, how much would your mother get paid for the laundry?

RK: I don’t know. I think among the people who did laundry, the common understanding is, shirts were twenty-five cents or whatever it’d be. Trousers were twenty cents or whatever. They had a price list more or less and my mother would sit there and she would write on this, sometimes just on the laundry thing, how much it was. So the total would be $4.75 or whatever it’d be. I guess she kept her own books, she did it all by herself.

WN: Let’s just turn the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: So, now we’re continuing with your discussion of your youth, we want to ask you questions about the neighborhood that you grew up in, especially your years at Sasaki Camp, at 2556 Cartwright Road. You referred to Sasaki Camp, what was this camp?

RK: My earliest recollection would be at Sasaki Camp, I don’t remember the time that we spent on Lemon Road. At Sasaki Camp, let’s see, how many units? It wasn’t a very big piece of land, but the Sasakis who owned this lived in one of the nice homes in the front.
There were two homes in the front, very nice ones, substantial, self-contained homes. Sasakis lived in one and Tomomitsu in the other. And in the back, in the middle—
it’ll help me if I draw it. Maybe I can give you a drawing of the camp. Here’s Cartwright
and Sasaki Camp would be in about this end, this would be the passageway in, and this was the Sasaki home, nice and substantial home, and they had a telephone that we all used. Tomomitsu lived here.

WN: What did they do? Tomomitsu?

RK: Also, Mr. Tomomitsu, we call him “Mister,” he was sort of younger and his English was good. He worked at the Moana Hotel and his wife also did laundry. The people in the back changed but then there were these so-called duplexes in the back, more than duplexes. So this was one unit, maybe two bedrooms, another one two-bedroom [unit], two-bedroom, two-bedroom and only one room in the back.

And the bath house was here, the furo. This is where we did our fires and our laundry, and all the laundry lines were here. We could play here when there was no laundry. And these were two-story things. So we could play under the house, and eventually that’s where my mother used to do her ironing and stuff downstairs. Upstairs were the living room, bedroom, kitchens, bathrooms.

MK: So each unit, had how many bedrooms?

RK: We also had two. We lived in this one, and later on as the family grew larger, we moved to this one and we took over these two, so we had like a three-bedroom or more.

MK: And the furo was in the center area of the Sasaki Camp?

RK: Yeah, right here. And you walked through. This is the public entry. It was maybe I don’t know, five feet across or more. And the small fence, fence around. The Sasakis had a car. The Sasakis, their son—gee, I forgot his name—he was a dentist.

WN: Tsutomu?

RK: Tsutomu, yeah.

MK: Tsutomu Sasaki.

RK: Yeah, that’s Tsutomu.

MK: What did the father and mother of the Sasakis do?

RK: I don’t know. The father was a very interesting, quiet man just like my own grandpa. Mr. Sasaki, very good with his hands. Back here somewhere he had a sort of a carpenter shop. I used to admire the stuff that he had there, the files. He had a wheel that turned. He was very good. He could repair the things around. I don’t know what he did, he worked just around. And here, either they worked in the hotels or Mr. Komori did yard work. That’s another thing we did, like my brother K., he had many yard jobs. Got on a bicycle and go and mow lawns, a lot of the lawns, and so forth. Mr. Komori did that. He didn’t work in a hotel.

MK: And, who lived in the other units?
RK: The Moritas lived here. They came later, I didn’t know too much about them. I think he had some kind of, Mr. Morita. . . . She did very little laundry, but Mrs. Komori did a lot of laundry. Morita, I think worked with some kind of business downtown. This was stable, we were stable, Komoris were stable, but this one had people moving in and out and back here, too, people moved in and out temporarily.

MK: And you mentioned the dentist, Dr. Tsutomu Sasaki, he’s older than you are.

RK: Yes, much older.

MK: What did you think of Dr. Sasaki? He was one of those in Waikiki who got something more than a high school education early on?

RK: Yeah, as you can see, I think he was the only son. The Sasakis were pretty well off, they owned this. And they lavished their attention and resources on him, so they could send him—he was much older than we were, yeah—to dental school. He even had a car, as I recall. The rest were all daughters, I think. Four daughters at least.

MK: How about the Tomomitsu children?

RK: Yeah, Tomomitsu had two, both younger than I was, much younger. Gee I don’t know what happened to—we call him Mami. He played football for McKinley. He became a fireman, but I lost touch. And I don’t know what happened to the youngest sister.

Next door was interesting. Here was Matsuzawas.

MK: So next door to the Sasaki Camp was Matsuzawas?

RK: Yeah, on the ‘Ewa side. The Matsuzawas had a beautiful home. Mr. Matsuzawa, I think, worked for Lewers & Cooke. And then they were nisei, Mr. and Mrs. Matsuzawa. But they also had their—I don’t know. Guess Mr. Matsuzawa’s. . . . I don’t know whether it was Mr. Matsuzawa’s parents or. . . . Very interesting old couple. That grandpa was the one who had this candy (cart)—wonder what he called it—kiosk on wheels that he took from here all the way to the end of the car line in Waikiki, parked it there. As you got up the last stop on the street where I can go and buy candy from him. He pushed that cart by himself, back and forth every day, morning. His faithful wife would wait for him. As she sees him turning the corner, she would go up the street to help push that cart back into the garage. Mr. Matsuzawa ran the candy (cart)—I know he sold candy, I don’t know what else. Every day, faithfully, take it all the way out to the end of the car line and bring it back. And Mrs. Matsuzawa, both of the [younger] Matsuzawas were very good in English, and she worked as a secretary or something. And they had two children.

MK: And then as you move along, next to the Matsuzawas. . . .

RK: Next to the Matsuzawas was the De Rego family on the corner. The son was very fast. He was a star football player for Saint Louis, I think, Dan De Rego in his time. Next to the De Regos were the Harakawas. That’s Fannie Kono’s (family). They owned Banzai Cleaning.

I don’t know who was here, but in the back of Sasaki Camp here were the Kaawakauos, Hawaiian family, and then Ewalikos, another Hawaiian family. There were some Japanese, Sako. But across this way was the Hawaiian family, which was kind of interesting, especially when we used to watch them do their imus. Pigs. And they taught
us—we had breadfruit trees—how to eat breadfruit. Ewalikos had their problems and so forth but the Kaawakauos was a very stable family. Mrs. [Emma] Kaawakauo was my fifth-grade teacher, very nice, gentle person. Her daughter was with the DOT [Department of Transportation] for many years. I don’t know what’s happened, she’s retired, I think. Kaawakauos were very nice, really stable, middle-class Hawaiian family. Real gentle and generous.

MK: You mentioned a Hawaiian family that did imus and things, would that be the Mervin Richards’ family or a separate [family]?

RK: I don’t know the Richards. Across us from Cartwright Road were the DeFries, it’s a Hawaiian family. And, in a way, that’s where I went to kindergarten before I went to Waikiki School. Waikiki School was right on the side. Another very nice family, gentle people. Mr. DeFries was big, Mrs. DeFries was very big, very gentle. It was sort of an informal kindergarten, I remember going there in the morning, just for the mornings and playing.

I don’t know, there was an Emma DeFries, I never found whether that was the Emma that lived here, she became sort of like a kahuna later on.

John DeFries was a year or two younger than I was but he was, of course, a foot taller, hundred pounds heavier but he was so gentle, we used to push him around. Tell Johnny, “You do this, you do that,” play basketball because he was our center. He was very good at it. Years later I met him, he was a salesperson selling Dodge cars, for, I don’t know, one of the car dealers. And he’s passed on. But the funny thing about a year ago, when I went to Kapi'olani Community College—I don’t know what it was, occasion, but here’s this boy who stands up and said, “I was born in Waikiki. My neighbors were ....” He turned out to be John DeFries’ son, which I didn’t know. Because after a while, after high school, I sort of spent most of my life away from the neighborhood.

MK: In your talking about the neighborhood, it seems like it was a very mixed neighborhood.

RK: It was a very cosmopolitan neighborhood. There was a big family here but there were no kids and we didn’t get to know them too well. On the other side was the Lorches, and Ruth Lorch was my classmate. In fact, occasionally I hear from her, she’s on the Mainland. Later on when we moved down the street to Cartwright Road, to the house that we owned, 2584, our neighbors were the Ornelleses. Mr. Ornelles, (he) was a well-known figure who owned the baseball team, the Braves, I guess that’s (the) Portuguese (team).

And, I remember they had a big family, Emory was the older boy, Axel was my contemporary, and then the younger twins, Marty [Dermott] and Gordy, I could never tell them apart, but they were the ones who became baseball stars at Saint Louis [College], I think they’re both dentists now. The Ornelles were next door. Because they had a big house and they had two rental units which kept on changing.

And the other one that I didn’t get to know as well because I was gone but after we moved to Cartwright Road, the back were the Baders, B-A-D-E-R. When I went to the Bishop Museum display on Waikiki they interviewed her, [Esther] Bader, she’s very nice. But as I said my family would know them better because after high school I seldom stayed home. But the Baders were very nice to my mother. They were neighbors kitty corner.
When we moved 2584, on the corner was the Ormelles. On the other side were Billy—what's Billy's last name now? A German family, a widower, very stern man who hardly spoke to us. He always wore a hat. But he had a very nice (son), Billy Donnelly. And here's another coincidence, one of my classes about twenty years ago, a student comes up and say, “Hey, my dad knows you.”

I said, “Who’s your dad?”

“Billy Donnelly.”

I said, “Oh, my neighbor.”

(Laughter)

Small world.

WN: You called it “Sasaki Camp,” I was wondering back then did you folks refer to it as “Sasaki Camp?”

RK: Yes. Two major camps, it was Sasaki Camp (on Cartwright Road), and on Paoakalani, (there) was Asuka Camp. Asuka Camp had Asukas, Akamatsus, I don’t know who else was there.

MK: That was one owned by Miyo Asuka?

RK: Yeah, that’s the one.

MK: And earlier you had mentioned that there were businesses in that area, Aoki Store. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about the businesses that you remember?

RK: Oh yeah. As I said, on Kalākaua, fronting Kalākaua from ‘Ōhua to Paoakalani, as I remember, across the street where Saint Augustine is, (that) corner had a gas station run by the Sanos. I don’t know if you heard of them? Sidney Hashimoto is married to a Sano girl. But anyway the Sanos ran the gas station. I used to go there to buy gasoline for my mother who did some dry cleaning. Twenty-five cents a gallon.

And then the Aoki Store, which was like a supermarket, very nice. We used to go there. I used to grind my own coffee, but not for me but (to) take home. Occasionally my mother would splurge and say, “Go down and get some ground coffee.” I could smell it all the way home. We used to go (and) ask Mr. Nakano, the butcher, for one cent we got one little shrimp, so we could go fishing [for] 'oama, moi li‘i.

Next to Aoki Store was a barbershop run by Mrs. Terada. My sister is married to George Terada, her son. She became later on Mrs. Kobara, she was a widow. And, Mr. Kobara owned Blue Ocean Inn, and he got it at the right time because the war [World War II] came and by God, all the war workers who lived there in the neighborhood, they all went there for their meals. My brother (and) my sister worked there. Uncle Ozaki worked there. And then there (were) two dry cleaning shops, one was the Harakawa one, Banzai; the other was Yasumatsu, I think they called it Kapi‘olani. And there was Unique Lunch Room, the Fujikas. Was there anything else?

MK: The Ibaraki Store.
RK: Before the Ibaraki. Ibaraki was on the other corner, (from Aoki Store).

WN: What type of restaurant was Blue Ocean Inn?

RK: As far as I know it was something like... Gee, what would I call it? Zippy’s, Columbia Inn?

WN: So Western food, all kinds of food.

RK: Yeah, people go there for the ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, and hamburgers. I don’t know, you can ask my brother who worked there as a cook for a while.

MK: And then you mentioned the Fujika’s Unique Lunch Room, what was that like?

RK: I never ate there. I never ate at Blue Ocean Inn. We never went out to eat as far as I know, when we were kids. (Chuckles) I remember going into Fujika’s, I know what the insides look like, to talk to friends and stuff.

All I know is Fujika’s, for example, my seventh-grade teacher was Mrs. Kauaihilo, a beautiful lady who was a beauty queen, married to Norman Kauaihilo, the great football player. Mrs. Kauaihilo used to say to me, “Oh, you live in Waikiki. My favorite restaurant, Unique Lunch Room, they have the best pipi kaula.” We knew that, Mr. Fujika made it by adding shōyu. I guess, he made it more tasty. And then they had the best dog in the neighborhood, Jackie. Why? (Because) he was the best fighter.

WN: Did you folks have a dog? A pet?

RK: My mother liked dogs. But we had a big, at one time, German Shepherd. My father said, “No we can’t afford to feed this (dog), he’s eating us out of our...”

So my mother said, “Okay, I’ll get rid of him.” So she took him to the end of the Ala Wai towards McCully, past McCully, and she let the dog go, and then she got on the streetcar and went home. The dog was home before her.

(Laughter)

But my mother liked dogs evidently, but we couldn’t afford, we didn’t have room at Sasaki Camp. This was before we lived on the other road, which is now Kūhio but was called Hamohamo, I think. But anyway I still remember that incident because my father said, “No, we got to get rid of the dog.”

But later on when I was in the army, during the war, my mother had, I understand, several dogs, especially one which even my whole family said was a beautiful, obedient dog but that got run over. My mother loved dogs. And she loved plants, so she had some beautiful anthuriums, she even nursed a maple. Every morning she fed it with a bucket full of ice cubes in Waikiki. I remember, during the war, we had to have victory gardens. She was very clever, she loved to garden. We had a very small patch, but she did celery. I don’t know where we got the seeds, but she did celery. She said to make it white you puts cans over each one, I don’t know where she learned these things. So my brother took it to school and won first prize for a good-looking home vegetable.

MK: Earlier you were mentioning that you used to go to the butcher and you would get shrimp real cheap at Aoki Store to go fishing. What kind of fishing did you do in Waikiki?
RK: Oh, Waikiki was glorious. It’s a really good fishing ground. Right now we get too many tourists, so we can’t (go fishing). When my brother retired, we found out later that my sister liked fishing, too, but as a kid we never let her come along. But they became avid fishermen and used to go all over the island. They go to Moloka‘i and they go to other places to fish, but they found out that Waikiki is as good as any right now.

Waikiki was beautiful, we had schools of ‘oama always coming in, even mo‘i li‘i. We used to go spear fishing and we spear small kūmū and menpachi. Of course, you always have to watch out for eels. But it was a very beautiful place and it was beautiful. Not only get around to surf but we did a lot of spear fishing. We made our own spears and own slings.

Mostly the fishing, we look forward to the ‘oama season. We didn’t have enough to go after the ulua, although some of the older boys did, and were partly successful but we didn’t have the kind of equipment to catch the ulua. At night we went torch fishing and we also went to what we call, “surround net.” That’s an interesting one. Komori had two children, older than we were. Hisashi was about three or four years older than I was and then they had a daughter that was my sister’s age. So Hisashi must have been five or six years older but anyway, he and Kuni, you guys may have interviewed Kuni, the one who lived in . . .

MK: Fujimoto?

RK: Yeah, Kuni Fujimoto, we were great buddies, ’cause Kuni lived in that big Lili‘uokalani house. That’s where we went to make nets. So Kuni and Hisashi made the big nets, surround nets. So at night, my younger brother and, I guess, the Tomomitsu boy, myself, three of us would carry everything, so [three] boys, the two big men, the older men would just go out with their sticks or their broomsticks. We’d start laying nets, usually the first one would be at San Souci’s, we called it, there were two . . .

WN: Groins.

RK: Groins out there. We’d start, usually with the middle, and then the Elk’s Club side and then the Natatorium side and we’d do the Natatorium and we do what we call Queen’s, where would be Chris Holmes’ place, whenever we could. There was a huge net that we’d put out. The two older boys would put out the nets, then the three of us younger ones, would hit the water and chase the fish in. Very lucrative. By the time we got to seven, maybe six or seven lays and then we got to our home in Kūhiō Beach, we had half of a kome bag full of fish, usually weke, pāpio, small ones and mo‘i li‘i. Occasionally we get a big mo‘i or big weke. But it was a lot of fun.

MK: And what would you do with all the fish?

RK: Take it home, give it to the neighbors, share it with the neighborhood. As far as I know, we never sold any.

MK: And then for fun, besides the fishing, what else did you folks do along the beach or in the water?

RK: We did surfing. I think most of us couldn’t own surfboards. They were made out of redwood and they were big and heavy. We eventually got one for our family and we learned to surf. But we also, the other thing we did was paipo boards. (On) every board, we draw pictures. My board was Dopey, you know, seven dwarfs. Snow White and the
*Seven Dwarfs* was a very popular movie then. And, my youngest one, Albert, he had the Lone Ranger. That was a difficult one to draw, the horse and the Lone Ranger. But anyway, someone had Doc, Happy, and so forth. I used to draw. I remember going to the beach and I got stopped by a Haole lady who said, “Where did you boys get these boards?”

“*We make them.*”

“Who draws those pictures?”

“I do,” I say.

“Oh, can you do one for my son, I’m going to pay you for it.” I never did though. I used to buy the paints, they were ten cents a can at Kress on Fort Street. That was called paipo boards then, what they call boogie boards now, we used to call them paipo boards and we used to make our own. It was fun.

The first money I earned, so-called earned, I was in what they called Baby Pond, which is at the foot of where ‘Ohua Avenue hits Kalākaua. There was a restaurant there, Dean’s Place, on the water. The diners could look down and there was a beach and there was what we called Baby Pond. There was a place set off by small rock wall, very small. It was very tame, so as young kids, that’s where we could go, inside. The waves were outside. I still remember the first time, looking up, smiling and being tossed a nickel or whatever it was from the diner.

And then when we used to do the spear fishing, sometimes the spear fishing you get small menpachi especially red, some kumu or something. We used to sometimes be asked by tourists to hold the fish and pose and sometimes they give us money. My more ambitious friends used to shine shoes when the navy came in for the maneuvers. We also sold newspapers. I didn’t do it but I used to help my friend who sold newspapers. And he gave me a little bit. Sunday morning we’d go around the neighborhood say, “Paper, Sunday morning paper.” Wake up the neighborhood and then they’d call. Some people would say, “Quiet.”

And there’d be other people going around selling flowers, (carrying) baskets. The man would say, “Flowers, flowers.” Also there was a manapua man who came around. Then the candy man came around with his truck. And the yasai man, as we called him, the vegetable man, they came regularly. In fact, there were two. Of course most of us have ice boxes and ice is delivered. We have [food] safes. We don’t have refrigerators in those days.

So the families all had to rely on these daily. The guy blows his horn, the housewives run out and see what he has for the day, what kind of fish or pork or whatever, what kind of vegetables. That’s the way it was. Later on, although at that time there was the Ibaraki Store and Aoki Store we used to go to get most of our staples. Later on Tanabe Superette, for some reason, came over. The guy would come in the morning and share gossip with the housewives and take their orders and deliver in the afternoon.

WN: Tanabe on Ke‘eaumoku Street?

RK: I don’t know why it was Tanabe, but, boy, the man who used to come around was a very hardworking, cheerful man. So after a while the yasai trucks didn’t come around as often, it was more home delivery.
MK: And then in addition to your water activities, what do you folks do for fun?

RK: The zoo was close by. One summer we had a routine, my younger brother and I played tennis, there were the tennis courts over there. We got on our bikes early in the morning. He’s the one who usually gets up and gets me up so we go at sunrise to play tennis. Then after that we bicycle over to the Natatorium and swim, and then go to the zoo and see and feed the monkeys and go home.

One morning, I woke him up and we went. He says, “Wait, still dark, what time is it?” It’s three o’clock or whatever it was. We had to sit and wait till daybreak.

(Laughter)

But we had the whole zoo and the tennis courts were there, the Natatorium was there, the whole beach was there.

In the summertime we usually put on our shorts and that’s how we lived. We had to help around the house, do the sweeping, mopping every day. I did the inside, my younger brother usually did the yard work. My sister did the cooking. My mother usually was twelve hours a day doing laundry. That was a good life. The park was full of date trees at that time. During date season we can go pick dates. That was quite a ritual. We had certain trees that we liked. There was one tree, (with) unusually large sweet dates. And it was shaped like an ice cream cone, so we used to call it the ice cream date tree. And the rule is, we go usually in the afternoon, bunch of kids, we’d all pick up so many rocks and when the signal is given, we’d all throw rocks where the tree—you know, the thing is high up there so you had to knock down the ripe dates by hitting it with a rock. And, after everybody threw their rocks, we’d all at the same time, we have a signal and rush in and pick up what you can.

(Laughter)

There was a polo field there, too. I thought the Dillinghams owned the darn thing. They were getting it cheap for cheap rent. We used to watch that. We used to root for the Dillinghams, O‘ahu Blues. Gay [Henry Gaylord] Dillingham was number one, Lowell Dillingham was number two, Old Man Walter Dillingham was always number four, the goalkeeper. They were a good team, Gay, Ben and Lowell and Old Man Dillingham, and they played the Baldwin’s yellow Maui team. They played the army team which we hated the most, the Reds. The O‘ahu Blues, the Maui Yellows and the Army Reds were the three teams. They used to charge to get in but we used to cut the wire and sneak in. We used to try to steal the balls because we played polo without horses. We made our own mallets. But we needed the ball so we tried to steal the balls.

(Laughter)

We played on the streets. I remember once, I got hit on the head, had a big gash, and blood all over and I went home. My mom got so angry she burned all of our mallets.

(Laughter)

WN: Were you aware of class differences in Waikīkī?

RK: Only that there were Haoles, there was sort of a, I guess, a dividing line, ‘Ōhua Avenue. This side were the Cosmopolitans, not just Japanese but Chinese, few Chinese couples,
and Hawaiians, but there were some Haoles, too, like the Gillettes. Gillette played harp for the Honolulu Symphony, lived (on Cartwright Road). He lived in one of the homes across. Very nice gentle man. So there were some mixtures, but mostly on the other side were the Haoles on 'Ohua Avenue.

WN: So Diamond Head side of 'Ohua Avenue?

RK: No, no, the 'Ewa side of 'Ohua, Diamond Head side was the Cosmopolitan. In fact when I took a sociology class here, one of the professors said, "Waikiki has all these ghettos." Anyway, he said Paoakalani Avenue has all these poor homes. I said, "Have you ever been there?" I don't know, maybe we're poor economically but, in a way, Harrington, who wrote that book *Poverty in America*, was right. The definition should be more in terms of spirit. (By) his definition, if you're motivated, you're not poor. And if anything our parents were too motivated for us.

So in a way 'Ohua Avenue was a dividing line, because we sold newspapers, flowers everything on that side. You don't go selling newspapers on Paoakalani, Cartwright, and so forth. And I took it there were a lot of transients, too, on that side. We knew a few of the boys, like Carlos Rivas, lived in one of the homes there. He was nice.

MK: So ethnically, on that side of the line it tended to be more Caucasian?

RK: Right. Well because segregation was in terms of the schools, English-standard schools. Waikiki School was for everybody, and then they decided to build Thomas Jefferson School, Jefferson School which became an English-standard [school]. The irony is the kids from Kapahulu had to walk past Thomas Jefferson to go to Waikiki, and the kids from the other (side) of 'Ohua Avenue had to go past Waikiki School to go to Thomas Jefferson. And here again you talked earlier about names and how the youngest, Mabel and Albert got English names. Albert got to go to English-standard school, he got to go to Thomas Jefferson. I don't think it did him any good.

(Laughter)

Then he went to Roosevelt [High School]. That's English-standard.

MK: Earlier you mentioned too that your parents, your father was literate, people would come by to your house to have him write things for them. What did you see as like your parents' role in the community?

RK: Well, they did have a, they call it Aloha *Kai*, I think, the Japanese mainly in that region formed their club. And, my dad had sort of leadership roles. In fact my mother told him, "Don't get elected chairman anymore, I don't want to be cooking for everybody every time." I don't blame her. She had to carry the brunt of it.

MK: And then I know in the old days, some of the families would get involved in *tanomoshiko*.

RK: I don't know if my parents did, I know very little about the finances.

MK: And then in terms of religion, what did your family do?

RK: Very little. I remember two or three occasions at New Year's we went to Daijingu or in Liliha, Izumo Taisha, or so I guess it was. Speaking of Izumo Taisha, another thing,
I was in occupation duty in Japan, I brought home a family sword. My grandmother said, “Your father is my . . .,” her only son and so forth. “So you take this sword home.” It was a beautiful small sword with a dragon (design on it).

Later on we’re told that during the war the Japanese government asked people to turn over everything that’s metal. She turned in that sword but they took it back to her. They said, “This is too nice a sword, you should ‘t have them melt it down.” So I brought it home, but my mother who didn’t want any weapons of this kind (in the house) gave it or said she took it to the Izumo Taisha. We never got it back, but it was a beautiful sword which is probably worth quite a bit now.

MK: They might still have it.

RK: I don’t think so. Probably someone sold it and it’s somewhere in the market. It’s too bad. It was a really beautiful sword.

MK: I know that some of the people who lived in that Waikiki area, they went to like a Christian church, say during the holidays, but they would go to O-bon during Bon season, what about your family?

RK: We did that, too. I’m a good example. When I was young, I guess my parents, they weren’t religious. They were too busy. My mother was too busy, she had to work on Sunday. She didn’t go to church and that’s all, I think. So religious wise, they never pushed anything. The usual moral principles about work hard, be honest. But when they opened the Okumura Church, had a church, as you may know, on ‘Ohua Avenue, Mom said, “You kids go to the Sunday school.” [Rev. Takie] Okumura is a nice man, respected.

WN: This is Takie Okumura? Or is this . . .

RK: It was part of the Makiki Christian Church, it was part of that. Mr. Okumura himself seldom came. We’d go to Sunday school there. I don’t know if it’s still there, on ‘Ohua Avenue. I think the drug rehabilitation people took it over. It was right next to the Shomura place, but anyway next to the big plum tree. So we used to go to that church, I still remember. If you get good attendance, every time you go you get one golden chit. You get twelve chits in a row and you get a free pamphlet or something about Bible stories. I used to remember going there and generally, not so much singing the hymns but there was someone who told us a Biblical story by using puppets of something or a story board. So in elementary school, I did go to that Christian church.

But seventh grade, my parents sent me to Hongwanji on Fort Street, “black coat school.” That’s Buddhist, so they told me, “You go to Buddhist church.” Of course, it’s an adaptation. Buddhists never had a Sunday sermon or whatever, regular Sunday services. Eventually I ended up being quite active in Sunday services. I was the—I don’t know what you call them but Takeda sensei said, “Help me on Sunday mornings.” So I had to wear my yellow robe and stand up and say, “All stand for the chanting,” of this and that and I had to do the readings, get the response. “All rise, for hymn number 154 found on page 63.” I did that for a while. So I did both, with no real grasp of the religion except for the general teachings. But no real grasp for the fundamentals of either one.

Our family itself never was strongly one or the other. Except later, my parents when they were to retire went quite regularly. My dad especially after a while when he became a
widower, every Sunday went to Makiki Christian Church. I guess they were leaning
towards Christianity because I’m named after a Christian minister (who lived in Japan). I
guess I told you this, my sister writes it down, (about) the Christian minister, (our
Japanese names) were the same characters although pronounced differently.

END OF SIDE TWO

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MK: So we’re just saying that Dr. Kosaki was named after this Christian minister.

WN: Ozaki Kōdō.

RK: Yes.

MK: Who has the same characters but read differently. So somewhere along the line your
parents probably had some interest or Christian influence.

RK: Evidently.

MK: And then in addition to, say, the Okumura Church, Hongwanji, were there any other
institutional influences, other than school in that Waikiki area?

RK: No, as I said they had the Japanese organization, Aloha Kai, with their annual picnics and
things of that sort. But for the young people, not really. Waikiki School was a good
playground, so we played in the afternoons, weekends, basketball or whatever there,
baseball, softball, ran around the parks. But institutions, I don’t think so.

MK: I don’t think I asked you, but how about 0-bon in Waikiki?

RK: Yeah. They did have. Back of the storefront on Kalākaua, there was an empty lot, so to
speak. The ground was primarily rough, crumbled coral but, they had Bon dances there. I
remember as a kid going to them to eat some of the food, shave ice, or whatever. I was a
young kid and looking at all these older people dancing. In Sasaki Camp we used to put
up a tarai, some of us boys would cut up the broom sticks and we’d hit the tarai and
make our own Bon odori. (Chuckles) Until the parents say, “That’s enough, you’re going
to wreck the tarai,” but we used to play, we used to try to imitate the drummers, twirl the
sticks, and hit the thing. So they did have Bon dances in Waikiki.

MK: And you mentioned that you’d go there and you’d eat. I’m just curious, what did they
serve at the Bon dances back then?

RK: I don’t remember much, but there were maybe hot dogs, shave ice, whatever. I don’t
remember because we didn’t have much to spend anyway. I remember one or two—I
don’t know if it was every year, But I remember going to one or two of those Bon dances.
And of course, doing our own drumming.

MK: Shall we end here and then continue your schooling on the next one because we’ll be
covering your subjects, your teachers, your classmates, your activities at Waikiki,
Washington, then at McKinley.
RK: Yeah, that’s a long story, too.

MK: And Japanese-language school. Especially since you got close to Miles Cary. I think that would be real interesting and because you were so active in student government, and the war started and there were changes at the school. I think the schooling would be very interesting.

RK: Yeah, that was a big part of my life and I enjoyed schooling.

WN: Okay, we’ll stop here then.

END OF INTERVIEW