

ROBERT GORDON (BOY) VON TEMPSKY

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Robert Gordon (Boy) von Tempsky

(1896 - 1976)

Except for the ten years he worked at Haleakala Motors, most of Boy von Tempsky's life was spent as a cattle rancher on Maui.

Beginning with the management of the family's Erehwon Ranch in 1914, a dairy operation that he developed into a cattle ranch, he later helped to manage the Ulupalakua Ranch that had leased Erehwon and ended up at Kaupo Ranch which he successfully pulled out of a financial hole.

He married Mary Sophia Schrader in 1919 and had two sons, Robert Gordon and Raymond von Tempsky.

His maternal ancestors, the McKibbins, came to Hawaii from Ireland in the late 1850's. His father and uncle, Randal and Louis von Tempsky, enroute from New Zealand to the Alaskan gold rush, stopped at Hawaii and never left. Randal married Dora Melville Dowsett; Louis, who married Amy Wodehouse, was the father of authoress Armine von Tempsky.

In his reminiscences, Boy von Tempsky relates the background of both sides of his family and recalls his own experiences on Maui.

Lynda Mair, Interviewer

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INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT BOY VON TEMPSKY

At Erehwon, his Kula home, Maui 96790

Early 1972

V: Robert Boy von Tempsky

M: Lynda Mair, Interviewer

V: . . . the McKibbin end of the family.

M: How's that. . . ?

V: That's my mother's side. McKibbin. M-C-K-I-B-B-I-N.

M: Okay.

V: That's my mother's side. My grandmother, who was my mother's mother, of course, arrived here when she was eighteen years old. A hundred and fifteen years ago. They weren't missionaries.

M: What was her first name?

V: Her name was Mary.

M: Mary McKibbin.

V: Mary McKibbin. She married Samuel H. Dowsett. And my mother was Dora Melville Dowsett. But her branch of the family arrived here, as I say, a hundred and fifteen years ago and settled in Honolulu [about 1857].

M: What did this grandmother come for?

V: Well, they came here on account of health. Two of the boys--brothers--had died of tuberculosis in Ireland and they left Ireland on the word of Hugh Montgomery, who was in command of a whaling flotilla, saying that there was a paradise in the Sandwich Islands and he would advise them to pack up and move, which they did. It took them 208 days from the time they left Ireland till they arrived in Honolulu, which was, I imagine, a very undeveloped plot in those days. They had to be hauled ashore and my old grandmother said it was Stanley Watson who pulled them

through the reef into the harbor on a rope. And when they came there was evidently nothing. It was all just dirt roads, no streets. And they had quite a history there. My other granduncle was the queen's and king's physician and surgeon in the old days in Hawaiian monarchy.

M: Oh, he was a doctor.

V: Yes. Dr. Robert McKibbin. And he was also very, very much involved with the Queen's Hospital at the time and was a very eminent man in his profession at the time that he was in Honolulu. And his other brother, Alexander, originally started the Benson Smith, [Benson, Smith and Company] the Rexall store that's now on Fort Street. He started that. They called it an apothecary shop, coming from England of course, naturally. (laughter) And he was in that position, in the drug business, and then they moved to Maui after Mother married.

Mother was born in Honolulu and--let's see that I get these dates--she was born in 1865. And then married Father in 1891. I'll give Father's end in a few minutes. And Mother came up to live on Maui after she married Father. Alexander (nicknamed Ander) McKibbin, the granduncle, and Grandmother Mary Dowsett moved up later on and lived up here on the island next door to Mother and Father for quite a few years until Mother helped Father buy this place here in Kula that we still have. And then she lived up here until she died. Grandmother died in 1925 at the age of eighty-seven. All long-lived families. Long-lived families, I guess. (he changes the pronunciation of lived)

M: How did your mother get the money to help buy . . . ?

V: Well, that was from her Uncle Robert [McKibbin]. She was the pet niece and he advanced the money to her when Father bought the remaining shares from Uncle Von [Louis von Tempsky who was his, Randal von Tempsky's, brother] and Llewellyn Hughes, that had bought the properties of Erehwon, and that is what we own right now. Erehwon, by the by, is nowhere [or Now Here--Mary S. von Tempsky,<sup>ed</sup>] spelt backwards.

M: EREH-WON.

V: ER-EH-WON. Yes. Erehwon is nowhere spelt backwards. I guess it was nowhere in those days and it's nowhere even today. (laughter)

M: Oh, no. I think it's great.

V: So, that was where the money came from, in the family, was from Uncle Robert's side of the family [Mary McKibbin Dowsett's brother--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>]. And Father, of course, left this estate, which was in his name and which has since turned very highly valuable in comparison of what it was when it was bought. I think it was bought for \$13,000. [This was only a small portion of the ranch--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>]

M: How many acres is it?

V: Five thousand acres. [All of Erehwon Ranch is 5,000 acres --M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>]

M: You still have 5,000?

V: And we still have the 5,000, yes.

M: Wow.

V: And of course, a lot of it is wasteland. I mean, the top of the mountain, for instance. And a lot of it is very highly valuable land, which we're very fortunate to have. We want to hold onto it through thick and thin, though, you know what I mean.

Now Father's side is quite interesting. Father was born in Bluefields, Nicaragua, [1856]. I don't know what month it was. [May 29, 1856--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>]

M: Bluefields?

V: Bluefields, Nicaragua in Central America. And his father was a Prussian nobleman, Major Gustav Ferdinand von Temp-sky. And he was discharged from the German fusilier's army or army hussars, I'm not sure which. One of the famous old regiments of Germany at the time. And until very recent time, the Prussian hussars were quite a . . . There was where the Huns came from, you know. And he was sick of that life and all and of course, naturally, coming from the nobility of Germany, his outlet was right into the army or the navy. Well, it was the army that he went into. And he was discharged from the fusiliers or the hussars on account of height. He didn't measure up to the specifications of the lineup of the hussars or the fusiliers.

And then he was put in second-in-command of a German colonization--first German colonization--to what they called the "Mosquito Kingdom," which was Central America. Well, that was a complete failure. The yellow fever mosquito knocked them all out, but it didn't seem to hamper Grandfather's ardor at all. From there, after the failure of the colonization, he went in search of gold. He was always looking for gold. I don't think he ever found any-

thing very much. He was in San Francisco in the old gold rush days of 1849 and then after that he came back again to Mexico and got into the mahogany business with the Bell family, the great Scotch Bells. They were engineers. Scottish engineers. And he married Amelia Ross Bell in Nicaragua and that's where my father was born.

M: And this was in the mahogany business?

V: In the mahogany, yes. Logging mahogany. Mahogany and also engineering. They were there at the time looking for an access from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In other words, a Panama Canal. And in the interim, they were doing the logging business.

And then they moved to Scotland from Central America and that didn't satisfy Grandfather at all. Uncle Louis von Tempsky, the father of the authoress that wrote Born in Paradise, was born in Scotland in Glasgow. And I imagine the life there was not what Grandfather was looking for at all, so they packed up and left for Australia, in the Australian gold rush. And my aunt, Lina Kettle, was born on the gold fields of Australia. So they got around even in those days, didn't they?

M: Wow, yeh. About when, though, was this?

V: That was in Australia I guess it must have been--Lord, '49 in California; Australia was after that. I would say maybe in the fifties sometime [1859]. Sometime in the fifties. And then when he got there, he was killed in New Zealand in a Maori war as a British subject. He was very highly decorated for his fearlessness and he was a soldier. Soldier born and bred. And he was killed there. In New Zealand history there's quite a lot devoted to his name. He's just as famous in New Zealand history as Lafayette is in ours. And there're a lot of streets and cities and everything else named after him in New Zealand and they still use his name in their studies.

And from there the boys--I guess got their father's fever of gold--started up for the Alaskan gold rush. (laughter) When they arrived here in Hawaii, now I couldn't tell you that. I could get it but I didn't look that up. I know Uncle Von came first and Father came after Uncle Von.

M: Who's Uncle Von?

V: Uncle Von is Louis von Tempsky, who was Armine von Tempsky's father. She's the authoress that wrote all the books on the other side. And the cousins. First cousins. And then they arrived in Hawaii and both lived and died here;

married here; married local girls and lived on in the islands until they died.

M: Were they on their way to Alaska?

V: They were on their way to Alaska but never got there.

M: I see. Did their mother stay in New Zealand?

V: Their mother stayed in New Zealand and then she came up afterwards to make the home for them up here. They lived up on the upper place. That was before this house was built. Mother built this one quite recently [in 1927--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>] in comparison to the old one. So, from then on --of course Father and Mother--Father died very early in life, my life. He was only forty-seven when he died and I was two years old, so I haven't got any recollection of him at all. So Mother raised the two of us, Alexa and myself.

M: Okay. Let me get these names while we're on it. Give me your father's full name. I don't think I . . .

V: Randal. Randal. R-A-N-D-A-L. Randal von Tempsky.

M: Um hmm. And your mother's.

V: Mother's was Dora Melville Dowsett.

M: Oh yeh. How did they meet? Do you know?

V: I guess they met in Honolulu at some social functions. [Correct--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>] There must have been in the old days, social functions. I don't know what they were but they must have been something. And then they came to Maui to live.

Uncle Von married Auntie Amy Wodehouse. She was the daughter of the British ambassador to the Hawaiian kingdom at the time. From a very famous English--it's W-O-D-E. Wodehouse. A very famous English family. And they had four children, two girls [Armine and Gwendolyn--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>] and then his wife--quite a long space between the two first girls and then the second [two were] Lorna and Errol, the second platoon crop, as we call them. (laughter)

So that brings you up to when Sister and I were born. Well, I'm seventy-five and Sister's three years older than I am.

M: What's your sister's name?

V: My sister is Alexa. Alexa [Alexandra] von Tempsky Zabris-

kie. If she spells her full name out--Alexandra Gustav von Tempsky Zabriskie--I think she's got practically every letter in the alphabet, excepting three. (laughter)

M: How did your father get into the ranching? How did he decide. . . ?

V: Ahh, he was with Brewer--let's see, no, it wasn't Brewer. Did I put that down here? He came up and worked as manager of--let's see, I had that down this morning, I'm sure--Burkhardt's estate. Burkhardt had quite a beautiful property holding in the Makawao district and Father managed that. And during the time of the management of that estate, this land evidently had come up for sale, then they bought it.

M: He was already married to your mother when . . .

V: No, he was not married to Mother at that time. It was after that. The three of them bought it and then he was married to Mother when Father bought the other two shares out--the Llewellyn Hughes's and Uncle Von's share. That was the time that the money was lent to him to buy Uncle Von out, you see. And that was after they were married.

So, that's two children [Randal and Louis] on our [island] side, and then there's the other New Zealand side--Aunt Lina [von Tempsky] Kettle's. And there're only two remaining in that side of the family. They're much older than we [Alexa and Robert] are and we're kind of old ourselves. (laughter)

Now, do you want anything further than that? Or do you want any of my personal . . .

M: Yeh!

V: My personal [life]?

M: Um hmm. Why don't you just carry on with . . . like your childhood experiences, things you remember.

V: Childhood experiences? Well, of course the childhood experiences were just countrified. Our only mode of locomotion, of course, in those days was either by buckboard or horseback. Possibly a carriage when we got down below to, you know, civilization. (laughter) And I suppose most of my life was spent on horseback, 'cause I went straight into the ranching business with the property holdings here. I was a dropout; never got through college. It wasn't considered absolutely necessary in those days, I guess, so that's why my great results in studying weren't too great a thing to look at either.



M: Where did you go to school when you were. . . ?

V: Well, we were educated by a governess. Mother brought in a governess from the mainland to educate us at home, the same way that Uncle Von's family did. There were two governesses--Von brought one in and we brought one in--to educate the six [children of the] von Tempsky family.

And then I went to Berkeley at the early age of--I think I was thirteen or fourteen years old. And we were in Berkeley for five years. I went through the grammar school grades there and the first two years of high school. Then Mother became very desperately ill and they said I would kill my mother [who needed him here on the ranch--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>] if I went back to school and so I wasn't about to kill my mother. So I tried to finish off at Punahou, which I promptly stopped. I dropped out of Punahou in my --what was it, junior year? I think the early part of my junior year of high school. Came back here to work at the great age of seventeen and I've been working ever since.

M: For heaven sake.

V: Well, I worked on Erehwon to try and make a . . . [cattle ranch--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>]

M: That's this property.

V: Yes. To try and make an individual ranch of it. It was located right in the central part of the mountain and when it was good it was very very good and when it was bad it was horrid. We're subject to dry weather. And we tried it for a good many years . . .

M: Cattle?

V: Cattle. Beef. They had run a dairy up to the time I came in and then getting labor, even in those days, for a dairy was practically impossible. And transporting butter from here down [to the markets] and California butter was coming in and we just couldn't compete. So we went into the beef end and I worked on that for a good many years and was able to build up the place sufficiently to make it rentable. So it was then rented to Ulupalakua Ranch, which was then the Frank Baldwins', under Frank Baldwin ownership [about 1929--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>]. And I was involved with Ulupalakua as assistant manager over there and also set up their slaughtering end--inaugurated their slaughtering end, which was a very successful deal.

M: How do you mean?

V: Well, we were a complete ranch, in other words. We raised cattle and we killed them and we sold them. That was toward--well, about the middle of their regime over there. We used to send cattle into Honolulu and the facilities for shipping in those days were terrible. They all had to be shipped live weight into Honolulu and then killed down there--held in the yards and killed and a lot of them were bruised and you can imagine hauling them out by lifeboat to a boat and pulling a belly van under them, hauling 'em onto a ship and then that was supposed to be eatable meat in Honolulu. Well, until very recently, it was handled that way.

And then I think the housewives sort of didn't like the Hawaiian meat too much and the foreign--I say foreign; it was mainland--imports were coming in so thick and fast that we just couldn't sell this grass-fed meat anymore. So they had to convert from their old method of breeding and killing and selling into feeding of younger animals and coming into the grading of beef the way it's done now, under the federal specifications. So that was quite an advance, killing and having a complete ranch, where we would kill everything that we raised right there through our own slaughtering methods and, well, cold storage facilities and all. And that was successful. Very highly successful.

And then of course, now it's changed again. Continual change. And now they're raising cattle to jet--oh, profitably enough to put them in the feed yards in Honolulu until they're able to market them, which is the only way to have done it. That's now proving quite successful, although the ranches had quite a time to change over, you know, from one program onto another. You are not always too successful in doing that because it's a completely different form of running a cattle ranch from what it was for years and years and years. So that was most of my work . . .

(AT THIS POINT, WITH THE COUNTER AT 312, THE TAPE IS BLANK FOR THE REMAINDER OF SIDE 1. SIDE 2 OF THE 1ST TAPE IS BLANK UNTIL COUNTER REACHES 110, A TOTAL OF APPROXIMATELY 25 MINUTES OF INTERVIEW. THE CUTOFF POINT SOUNDS AS IF THE CURRENT SUDDENLY WENT OFF OR THE ELECTRICAL PLUG WAS INADVERTENTLY UNPLUGGED.)

M: There. (almost a whisper)

V: All of my life, in fact, has been with, in, and around management of ranches and cattle, with the exception of about ten years that I was at the Haleakala Motors. And I filled in there for awhile because at that time we felt that a local man was more needed to represent the General

Motors here on the island than somebody from the outside. And 'course, naturally, I knew practically everybody on the Island of Maui. Born and raised here. And so, that was quite an interesting change for awhile but not what I wanted. I wanted the ranch life, so I went back to ranching again. And last . . .

M: Did your property continue to be rented then to Ulupalakua?

V: Yes, it was rented to Ulupalakua and it's still rented now to Haleakala Ranch. We don't operate the thing at all ourselves. We have the property but it is rented to the Haleakala Ranch Company. Now that's Richard Baldwin. And we have also here a lot of farm area--diversified farm area on the ranch. About, oh, in the neighborhood of four hundred acres of diversified farms. Raising of cabbage and potatoes and onions and all that. And the farmers have proved quite successful, I think.

But ranching is the one thing that I've always been interested in. And cattle. Not so much farm ranching. But anything that grows, anything that lives, I'm more interested in than I was selling automobiles, so I went back to it again. And the last ranch was Kaupo Ranch Limited. That was Dwight Baldwin who's since gone, unfortunately. And I was there under a five year contract with them. Banks really sent me over there to pull the place out of the hole it was in and it was highly successful.

M: Where's this ranch?

V: This is on the--do you know where the Kaupo Gap out of the crater Haleakala is?

M: Well, vaguely.

V: Well, it's right at--all the lands in the gaplands are part of the Kaupo Ranch and it sort of fans out after it leaves the gap. Very, very highly valuable lands and it can be made a very successful ranch. A joy to work with 'cause you're right in the middle of the split of the trade winds where you get ample rainfall and not too much. You don't get the wet that you do in Hana and Haiku and all that country and you get beautifully developed feed and beautifully developed cattle. So that was my last shot at the cattle industry which was, as I say, thank goodness, it was a success. And they've kept me on the directorate just because I guess I knew every rock in the country. (laughter)

M: Now let's see if I can get some dates. When did you first

lease your land here?

V: That was leased to Ulupalakua--it was leased in 19. . . . Let's see, '20--'29 we started the slaughtering. The farm was leased two years after that. It was leased in the early 1930's to Ulupalakua. And it was still leased and Mr. Wendell Holmes--they call it, I think it's Ulupalakua Ranch, Incorporated now. And he didn't seem to be very much interested in this and I knew that Haleakala was, so we leased it to them about seven years ago. It was after . . . (?) came in and bought Ulupalakua. And so I think he was kinda happy to get rid of it. It was kind of a detached piece of land from the rest of his ranch and legitimately if it was going to be leased, it should have been leased to Haleakala, which it is now, because Haleakala Ranch surrounds the whole property. And they're working, I think, working it out very satisfactorily because they can move so easily from here to there and there to here, you see. And it isn't a question of any great mileage in hauling the cattle, which it was with Ulupalakua. But it is a very lovely piece of holding right now with--a lot of changes have taken place naturally. In the old days, water was our great problem.

M: What did you do?

V: Well, we had to move out. We had one reserve. I don't know whether you noticed these big gulches on the way up. We used to dam up these gulches and--small dams, so we wouldn't collect too much silt in each one. And we used to have runs at least three or four times a year. These would run and fill these dams up. And there was only one that was saved for the house. When that went dry, we had to move out. So we had to watch everything, of course, naturally. There wasn't any irrigation of plants or anything else. Just what the Old Man on top gave us, that was all. (laughter) And then the pipeline was put in in 1912, which was a good many years before you were born, I guess.

M: Yeh. (laughter)

V: And that was a revelation, that. That meant running water for this country.

M: Pipeline from down below?

V: No, pipeline from Olinda. You see, all the great wilderness country of Maui is where the rain forests are. They go into those forests and tap out water from them and this great pipeline--two pipelines now run through this area

and supply the upper elevation and the lower elevation with water, which has meant that the country has opened up tremendously. It's a lovely climate to live in. It's a bracing climate. And you'd be surprised at the number of people that live in and around this place that have weekend homes. From Honolulu they come up here for weekends, just to get the change. And of course they've got the water and the electricity and, oh, we're living the life of Riley up here now in comparison to what we used to.

Our old days were very, very simple. We live a very simple life still, however. I remember the old refrigerator was an old safe, a fly screen around this thing that used to hang up under the trees. And I'll tell you about how the beef was delivered. We used to put our beef in that safe in the shade and get the night winds and all just to keep it cool. And the blowflies were always [indicators of spoilage]--we knew then what was happening to the meat, so we used to go in and sear it to keep it a little bit longer, but none of us died. (laughter) That was delivered to us by an old Chinese butcher who used to kill ranch cows, I guess, mostly. His name was--can't think of his name now but it doesn't make any difference. [Cup Choy in Makawao--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>] The cow was killed in the afternoon. It was cut up that night and it was delivered the next day in mail bags on the back end of a pack mule. (laughter) And so, I don't know how we ever lived. I guess that beef must have been sour a lot of times but it was meat just the same.

M: That was probably the only meat you had, then?

V: That was the only meat we had.

M: You didn't eat the beef cattle?

V: Well, no, the cows--no, that was all we had. All the steers were sent to Honolulu, I guess. That was too--that was choice beef for us. We couldn't eat that. Then the chickens, another. We used to have chickens just to get eggs for the house and, of course, you'd find a nest with a dozen eggs in it. You didn't know whether they were about to peep or not.

I had a rather funny experience one time. This was when the old R-14 and Submariners were here. The old R-boats. It's when we first met Commander Nimitz--that was Chester--later Chester Nimitz, the great admiral. And they used to come up here to Lahaina and we'd go over and pick them up in Lahaina. We used to have a gang of them over weekends sometimes. And one morning, Admiral Reifsnyder, who's now retired I think, he opened his egg and he didn't eat it. And I said, "Anything wrong with your egg,

Reifs?" And he said, "Yes," he said, "It's just about to peep." (laughter)

So those are the old days--those are the old days of our own, which were very happy old days, I will say. But very, very simple. There wasn't any hot water. If you wanted hot water, you had to go out and make it yourself and then carry it in in five-gallon buckets.

M: You mean you had a fire out somewhere?

V: Yeh, fire. A big boiler outside and you had to bail it out and carry it in to an old trough that was the bathtub. Sort of an old water trough. It wasn't even enamel. (laughter) And, well now, we couldn't--we had to use a shower. That was to save water. But when you took a bath, you were only allowed about that much in the bottom. And nothing worse than a skimpy bath, I think, to get into so we had a shower here. But it was only cold water. And we'd wait until a hot summer day would come along, we'd get a really hot bath because all these pipes were exposed, you see. And you'd turn that water on and it was really practically as hot as a hot bath would be. So when we knew we'd have to take showers every day, we'd hit the time of day when the pipes were still warm. (laughter) That water used to get awful cold. It gets down to 36 [degrees], you know, some mornings here.

M: Oh really?

V: Yeh. Well, just a few weeks ago, we had three mornings in a row at 36.

M: Wow!

V: And that's getting pretty cold. 38, probably. We've had it to 36 and it was 38. And two degrees doesn't make much difference at all.

Well, we, as I say, have lived a very simple life here and--but we enjoyed it all. A lot of pleasant memories to look back on.

M: After your father died, then, who sort of ran the place?

V: Mother. Mother took over the place and managed. She had a very capable foreman [Antone Gouveia--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>] and that was the dairying business, at that time, and he was a Portuguese--a very fine Portuguese family. And she ran the place quite competently, I think, in the butter business. Used to get a wholesale price, way back in those days, of forty-five cents a pound, which was an abnormal price for butter in those days. But they would--used to sell, oh,

tons a month of butter from here. We'd make about eight hundred pounds of butter a week. [M.S.vT. also notes that a Mr. George Copp was also foreman.]

M: You must have had a lot of crew . . .

V: There was. And then old-fashioned, of course. We didn't have any milking machines. It was an old dairy that wouldn't pass the sanitary code right now, but it did in those days. It was all right. Nobody died. (laughter) I think we were more resistant to diseases than we are today. Maybe we had more microbes combating microbes to get tougher with, eh?

M: Yeh.

V: But Mother managed until 1913. That's when I came back to work. And '14, I was officially put in charge over the property here.

M: You were?

V: 1914. And the manager said, "By God's help, that I might be able to manage the place and make a success of it." Well, I needed the Old Man on top many, many a time. (laughter) Yeh. Well, it had to be one way or the other. It was our only source of income. So we had to make money out of it. And we were never very, ever very heavily in debt. We always lived within our means, in other words. It was hard; it was hard. And I don't think there were very many trips taken in those days either, because the first time I ever left the Islands was when we went away to school. That's when I was fourteen years old. Was it fourteen? Yes, fourteen. So, I guess that's about all.

M: Oh, wait. No, that isn't all. (laughter) I had a question right on the tip of my tongue. Oh! When did you first marry? This is your second wife, I guess.

V: Oh, no, no, no, no. Married to this--my old bride--we've been married for fifty-three years this year.

M: Oh really?

V: Yeh. Fifty-three years. And we were engaged for two years before that. The old war broke out and I had to go and fight for my country and I got out alive all right. I just fought the battle of influenza in Camp Grant, Illinois. (laughter) And I didn't get overseas but I was in charge of bayonet instruction in Camp Grant. Not in Camp Grant. I was ordered back to Camp Fremont and then I

transferred into the tank corps. And just about ordered to Camp Dix because I didn't want to come back to Lewis and the West Coast. All the rest of the gang were headed for overseas. So the only way we could get over, the ones that were stuck with this bayonet detail, was to transfer into tank corps and then so much of instruction in Dix in New Jersey, we would reach the Dover. I don't know why we wanted to get overseas to be made canon fodder out of but I guess that's the kid's wish, to actually go through a battle to see what he's like. See whether he'll run backwards or forwards. (laughter)

So then, after that I couldn't get married right away because I didn't have any money. Couldn't support a wife.

M: How old were you at this point?

V: I was twenty. We were married when we were twenty-three. I was in my early twenties, I guess. And then, my wife decided she would marry me even if I didn't have any money and we used to get my big salary of \$75 a month from Erehwon, which was credited on the books. Never took the money. Credited on the books. And so, we got along all right. We were fed by the ranch and had a home, so we didn't cost us any money. So that was \$75 a month in gravy. That was a lot of spending money, you know, for a wife. (laughter) And she battled through it with me for fifty-three years and we're happy as--just as happy as the day we were married.

M: That's wonderful.

V: Um hmm.

M: When I talked to you on the phone, I thought that from something you said that the reason this was a second marriage was because she was much younger than you. (laughter)

V: No, we're both the same age.

M: Oh.

V: Um hmm. Both the same age. But I have two sons, one on Molokai and one with the Haleakala Motors. He came back from World War II and went in with me at the Haleakala Motors and been there ever since. The control of the corporation is not the same as it was. It's now controlled by Robert Ching, who was with George Murphy and Aloha Motors and they bought Haleakala Motors out completely. They own the stock a hundred percent, at least Bob Ching does. So Gordon works with him and he also has a couple of sons.



And I've got another son on Molokai with Dole [Pineapple Company], Raymond, and he has three children, two daughters that are now going to school and, unfortunately, the younger one--the little boy, his pride and joy--has got muscular distrophy, which was a terrific--terrific disappointment to both his wife and himself. But I guess we have to take the bitter with the sweet. So, we're here. [Second son's name is Raymond Montgomery von Tempsky--M.S.vT,<sup>ed</sup>]

Sister was--never had any children.

M: Does your whole family continue living here?

V: Um hmm.

M: After you were married, you still had your uncle?

V: Yes, Uncle Von [Louis von Tempsky] was living here on the island.

M: But did he ever get really involved in the ranching?

V: Oh yes. He was manager of Haleakala Ranch for years. Um hmm. He managed Haleakala Ranch, which is now Richard Baldwin's ranch. That was probably owned by the Baldwin--Baldwin controlled. But he managed that for I don't know how many years. He went in with Charlie Makee at Ulupalakua and there was a partnership fracas there that blew up. And then from there, I believe it was, that he went over to Haleakala Ranch. I'm not definitely sure about Uncle Von's end. But he was involved in cattle and pasturage and all.

Grandmother von Tempsky brought all these old original eucalyptus trees up from New Zealand with her when she came up.

M: Oh really?

V: Um hmm. I guess about the first eucalyptus--the old ones, around the old house up there--those are terrific trees. And they have been cut down, the big ones, because they were such a hazard to the house that Sister. . . . Sister has a life interest; I have a half interest in the place up there which I deeded over to her for her lifetime. And she had those big trees taken out. We have terrific windstorms here during the winter from the south and they are an awful menace, but they are a beautiful tree to look at from a distance.

And a lot of the pines were brought in, a lot of the grasses were brought in from New Zealand by Father and Uncle Von. 'Course they were practical people entirely in

New Zealand, you know. It's all pasture practically--wool and dairying--butter, wool and cattle, mostly. And I guess you, in your early childhood, early manhood, you go back on that--that end of life--and they both followed it out. They were outdoor men completely.

Armine, of course, you have read. I don't know whether you've read any of her books or not. Her books  
 . . .

M: I think I have.

V: Well, this Born in Paradise is supposed to be one of the best. I don't know what edition it is now since the islands became a state. I don't know how many phone calls we get here and they ask us if we're any relation to Armine von Tempsky, that they have just gotten a book, Born in Paradise; would I autograph it. I said, "No, I wouldn't because I had nothing to do with the book."  
 (laughter) It has gone over very largely--Born in Paradise--and Aloha she was very successful in. And she had an interesting career. She was very--always tried to write and it was born in her. Grandfather wrote very well. Grandfather von Tempsky. He wrote a book called Mitler: On His Personal Experiences in Mexico. And Armine got that, I guess, from Grandfather. And then Jack London  
 . . .

END OF SIDE 2/1ST TAPE

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

I don't know how interesting this would be. It's a country boy's story, maybe. 'Course I've lived on a horse all my life practically. I was riding alone when I was four years old and I was carted on a horse in front of another person when I was two years old. And most of my life has been--well, not my recent life; not the last eight years, but before that everything I did was on horseback, except for the nine years I was with the automobile outfit, and then I was riding then too.

And we had a quite famous polo team on Maui, comprised of some very fine polo players--the Baldwin boys. Edward Baldwin, who was a great friend of mine, was, I think, the highest rated goal player in the Hawaiian Islands. Edward was rated at his highth at eight but if he'd played away from here, he'd have been up in the ten-goal category, I'm sure. But he'd go off and play in the Midwich in the West Coast with, oh, Eric Peddly and all the old famous old players. He was in that category of polo class. And his brother, Lawrence Baldwin, was also a magnificent player. And then the Dillinghams, of course, of Honolulu

were all wonderful players. That was a wonderful time in the old Hawaiian days, where they could keep horses and economically. 'Course it was never, never economically kept, I guess. You had to be rich to play. And they had a magnificent polo field here on Maui and also Kapiolani Park wasn't too bad. And there were some very, very fine polo players developed in. . . .

Uncle Von was the first man to introduce polo into the Hawaiian Islands. Yeh, Uncle von Tempsky. And that was pretty crude, I imagine, in those days. Anything went for a mallet and anything went for a horse--mules and-- (laughter) mules and horses and western saddles and everything else. There wasn't any real polo technique to it but they all had a lot of fun in some backyard, I guess.

But that started and Frank Baldwin, Edward Baldwin's father, was really a polo enthusiast. He loved the game; he loved the daring of polo, horsemanship and all that. And his whole family were--the whole Baldwin family were very much interested in polo. In fact, gave quite a bit of their fortune toward the sport, as well as the Dillinghams and Castles in Honolulu. They did a lot. And the Rices on Kauai. But, of course, as time went along and horses went out and kids were not interested in it, youth didn't go to the games.

They tried to revive it here a few years ago in this indoor-outdoor game and I think Mrs. Johnson was quite--she's dead now, Kay Johnson--she was quite behind the movement of getting polo established again. And of course my son, Gordon, was an exceptionally good polo player. He was sent away to school and educated in a cavalry school in polo and played with Richard Baldwin and Oskie Rice in the trio from Maui, which were a pretty hard team to beat. And they all played--I used to go down practically every week when they were in Honolulu. I had to watch that game. (laughter)

M: What did you folks do up here--other things--for amusement?

V: Oh, let's see, what did we used to do. It was all on horses. Jumps. We used to have regular jumps--logs, of course, and stuff like that. And then we'd have cavalry drills and Armine, of course so charming, was the cavalry leader. All on bareback. All bareback. A lot of us were on the ground more than on the horse's back, but that was all right. (laughter)

And then another thing we used to do as children was take our horses down the beach and swim them. And that is quite a sensation, to get on a horse, ride a horse into the water and have it swim under you. Sort of float, float, float. And they love it. You wouldn't think so. A lot of horses will sink but a lot of them can swim beau-

tifully. And we used to do a lot of that, as children. It was, as I say, practically all the . . . .

We didn't have baseball. There wasn't a baseball field around. Athletics of that kind were not in our category. The only athletics we had--as formal athletics we had--was horses. Riding and all that. And we never did much fishing because we were so far away from the ocean. But there was always the beach place available for us to go to and we used to love it. Go down with our horses, down to the beach and swim them every day.

M: You went down this way?

V: Yes, down the Marquette (phonetic). And then teaching my children how to fall off a horse without getting hurt. That was all done on the beaches. And to fall, keep your bridle reins with you when you fell. And I remember training them; trying to train them. They were to keep their eyes on Father, see if he was going first, and of course when I said to go I had to go too, see. (laughter) But that was about the only really fun that we had.

Of course, a lot of shooting. We had a lot of rifle shooting in the crater of Haleakala--that is, goats and bird shooting. We have quite a lot of different game up here. The wild turkey and pheasant and quail. And I used to do a lot of that when I was a young man. But it's pretty hard climbing up this old hill at 5,000 feet. You haven't got the lung power anymore.

M: Yeh. Yeh. Would you eat the stuff that you shot?

V: Oh yes, oh sure! Nothing was thrown away. Unless it was all shot to pieces. (laughter) No, when we--goats, we'd take the hindquarters, just about. We didn't take the forequarter at all. But it wasn't bad, if you didn't have something else to eat.

M: Yeh. Right. (laughter) Did you grow your own vegetables and all that sort of thing?

V: Everything had to be grown, really. You know, we didn't--all the facilities, all the imports that we have now, we never saw in the old days. An orange was a treat. Well, now they bring them in by the tons. And all the imported fruit. We never saw imported fruit, just what we raised here--grapes, maybe, or something. And we used to have guavas. I never liked guavas too much. And mangoes and bananas and all the tropical stuff. But all the California fruits, melons and all--we used to have watermelons here--but the muskmelons and all were just--that was entirely foreign to us until the, well, modern facilities, you

might say, bringing them to the Hawaiian Islands and marketing them took place.

And I think I'll have to be leaving you pretty quick.

M: Okay. Whatever you say.

V: 'Cause I'm due down at Rotary.

M: Oh, that's right. You mentioned that.

V: Umm. And I think this'll be good enough.

M: I've got a lot of good material from you.

#### END OF INTERVIEW

Randal von Tempsky (b. 5/29/1856 Bluefields, Nicaragua;  
d. 10/19/1939 Waiakoa, Maui)

m. Dora Melville Dowsett (b. 5/18/1865 Honolulu; d. 10/19/1939  
Waiakoa, Maui)

Robert Gordon (Boy) von Tempsky m. Mary Sophia (Mamie)  
Schrader

Robert Gordon von Tempsky, Jr. m. Mary Bannister

Raymond von Tempsky m. Helen Troy

Transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen, 1979

Edited by Mary S. von Tempsky, September 1979

## Subject Index

- 1 Family background: McKibbins  
Mary McKibbin; Samuel H. Dowsett  
Dora Melville Dowsett
- 2 Dr. Robert McKibbin  
Alexander McKibbin  
Randal and Louis von Tempsky  
Llewellyn Hughes  
Erehwon Ranch
- 3 Family background: von Tempskys  
Randal von Tempsky  
Major Gustav Ferdinand von Tempsky
- 4 Amelia Ross Bell  
The California gold rush, 1849  
Louis von Tempsky  
The Australian gold rush, 1859  
The von Tempskys in New Zealand  
The Alaskan gold rush, 1897-99  
Armine von Tempsky, authoress
- 5 Family history on Maui  
Randal and Dora von Tempsky  
Louis and Amy Wodehouse von Tempsky  
Armine, Gwendolyn, Lorna, Errol von Tempsky  
Alexandra von Tempsky Zabriskie

- 6 Randal von Tempsky, rancher  
Burkhardt's estate  
Purchase of Erehwon Ranch  
Lina von Tempsky Kettle  
Boy von Tempsky, rancher
- 7 Education; early ranching days  
Ulupalakua Ranch  
Frank Baldwin
- 8 Description of cattle ranching  
Haleakala Motors
- 9 Ulupalakua and Haleakala ranches  
Richard Baldwin  
Diversified farming at Erehwon  
Kaupo Ranch; Dwight Baldwin
- 10 Ulupalakua Ranch; Wendell Holmes  
The water problem at Erehwon  
First pipeline from Olinda to Kula
- 11 The simple life described  
Admiral Chester Nimitz  
Anecdote: Admiral Reifsnyder
- 12 Old-time bathing facilities at Erehwon  
Erehwon Ranch dairy  
Antone Gouveia, foreman

- 13 George Copp  
Boy von Tempsky, Erehwon manager, 1914  
Memories of World War I
- 14 Marriage to Mary Sophia Schrader  
Gordon von Tempsky; Haleakala Motors  
Robert Ching; George Murphy; Aloha Motors
- 15 Raymond von Tempsky, Dole Pineapple Company  
Louis von Tempsky, Haleakala Ranch manager  
Partnership with Charles Makee  
Introduction of the eucalyptus tree
- 16 Armine von Tempsky's books and talent  
Polo on Maui; poloist Eric Peddly  
Edward and Lawrence Baldwin  
The Dillinghams
- 17 Introduction of polo into Hawaii  
Louis von Tempsky  
Baldwins; Dillinghams; Castles; Rices  
Kay Johnson  
Maui's polo team: Richard Baldwin,  
Oskie Rice and Gordon von Tempsky  
Horseback riding
- 18 Hunting in Haleakala crater  
Home grown vegetables and fruit



## THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

In May 1971, the Watumull Foundation initiated an Oral History Project.

The project was formally begun on June 24, 1971 when Katherine B. Allen was selected to interview kamaainas and longtime residents of Hawaii in order to preserve their experiences and knowledge. In July, Lynda Mair joined the staff as an interviewer.

During the next seventeen months, eighty-eight persons were interviewed. Most of these taped oral histories were transcribed by November 30, 1972.

Then the project was suspended indefinitely due to the retirement of the foundation's chairman, Ellen Jensen Watumull.

In February 1979, the project was reactivated and Miss Allen was recalled as director and editor.

Three sets of the final transcripts, typed on acid-free Permalife Bond paper, have been deposited respectively in the Archives of Hawaii, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii, and the Cooke Library at Punahou School.