

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Daniel T. Aoki, 67, former administrative aide to John A. Burns

*" . . . I think Burns should receive more credit than he's been given. . . . And I don't know how many other people will say this, but, as I've said it time and time again, they were never for statehood. And this is why they were never successful. But the fact that they had used that issue so much and so often, when statehood did come by, they had to be part of it. . . . Now, this is why during the statehood celebrations they put so much emphasis on the other people saying, well, because of the groundwork that King. . . and Farringtons and what have you, have put it, that Burns merely put the cap on. But if they really studied the situation, Burns's tactics were completely opposite of what they were doing. This is why he was successful."*

Dan Aoki was born in Kona, Hawai'i in 1918. At the age of nine, Aoki and his family moved to Pu'unene, Maui to live on the sugar plantation. After graduating from Maui High School, he attended the University of Hawai'i.

During World War II, Aoki and other nisei joined the 442nd regimental combat unit and fought in Europe. Upon his return, he became interested in politics and helped form the Democratic party in Hawai'i. Around this time, he met and became associated with John A. Burns.

Aoki eventually became a close aide to Burns during the latter's terms as delegate to Congress (1956-1959) and Governor of Hawai'i (1962-1974).

Now retired, Aoki lives in Pālolo and enjoys golf.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Daniel T. Aoki (DA)

September 12, 1984

Mānoa, O'ahu

BY: Chris Conybeare (CC) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: Okay, Mr. Aoki, can we start by having you tell us something about your early background--where you were born?

DA: Well, I was born in Kealahou, Kona, Hawai'i. That just happens to be on the border of North and South Kona. Born there 1918. My parents were Protestant preachers. And we left Kona in 1927 and came on to Pu'unēnē, Maui, where we recently had our Pu'unēnē reunion--thirty years or something like that. Then, after graduating Maui High School, I came to University of Hawai'i. And then the war came along. That kind of led me into my political life, I suppose.

WN: Your father was a Congregational preacher. How did he . . .

DA: Congregational preacher, yeah.

WN: Was that unusual at that time?

DA: Yeah, I presume it was. Because everybody thinks that my dad should have been a Buddhist priest or something like that, but they had some Japanese Protestant preachers.

CC: Do you know how he got into that?

DA: Well, I understand that he wanted to be a doctor when he left Japan when he was sixteen years old. And I think he came from a broken family, as I understand. I don't know too much about his family. And after serving his year of a labor contract, he went on to school, Mid-Pacific, and staying over at the Okumura dormitory. Rev. [Takie] Okumura finally talked him into becoming a doctor of the human soul instead of the body. And that's how he became a preacher, as I understand.

CC: When you look back, do you see any of the influence from having a father who's a preacher maybe instilling you with some of the ideals that led to some of your interests in politics? Is there any relationship . . .

DA: Yeah, Chris, I firmly believe that. I believe that it's my family background. It's my dad's teachings, his preachings, that sort of ~~led me into that particular field--~~more into the sociology and interest in our society and things like this. Oh, people kid me about it, you know, and they say, "Gee, if your father only knew that you were a politician, you know, your father would turn over in his grave."

And I say, "Well, he was interested in the souls of people after this world. I'm more interested in the souls of these people in this world." So, I guess we're about the (chuckles) same. Doing about the same thing.

WN: What kind of work did your---oh, your father was a preacher, right?

DA: Mm hmm.

CC: Well, what about your experiences? You grew up, then, in a plantation community. What was there about that kind of life that either helped advance your understanding of things or caused you to maybe take the direction you did with your later career. What was it like? What was it like . . .

DA: Well, I tell you. I think you're familiar with the kind of plantation life that existed. It was a paternalistic system. They had control of everything. They even provided you with wood for your---to make your furo--in Japanese, you know, the bathtub. Then they provided your kerosene for your kerosene stove. And they provided you with hospital facilities. And they provided you with everything. Of course, my dad being a preacher, well, he was treated a little better. And he had a very nice home. He had indoor plumbing, whereas the others did not have indoor plumbing, things like that. However, when you see your friends and their families having to live the way they had to live, and then watching them trying to better themselves by forming the union, the ILWU, and the difficulties they had to go through, and the treatment that they got, then you finally begin to realize that there's no opportunity for yourself in a society such as that or community such as that. And consequently, many of us that left plantation life and came out to the university never did go back to the plantation life. Very few people stayed back.

WN: How did your dad raise you? Was it in a traditional Japanese way?

DA: No. In that regard, I must say that my dad was sort of a unique individual, I suppose. It was a very much half and half kind of a thing. Very much American way of life. I walked in the house with shoes just like the haoles do. Walk in the house. You have rug, you walk in the house with shoes. And we didn't observe--being a Christian, I suppose--he didn't observe all of these Japanese traditional things. Like, we never celebrated New Year's like the way the Japanese do. As far as my dad was concerned, the big day was Easter, Christmas, things like that. He spent all of his energy

doing that. And so, what little I know about Japanese customs was from my friends and their families. So, I was very free.

CC: Was it hard, though, as a kid, if all the other kids are going to Japanese school and you're not, or if you're a little different? I mean, you know, kids are kind of hard on each other sometimes.

DA: I'd like to say this, though. You know, I never went to a Japanese school until I was ten years old. And the only reason I didn't go to Japanese school was my dad never sent me because he said that was just waste of time. Because you're not going to do any. . . . I suppose he saw what developed from the youngsters that were going to Japanese school. They didn't learn too much. Few did, yes. So, he didn't enroll me in Japanese school until I was ten and I insisted on going to Japanese school because all my friends were going. Basically, to play with them, this is what it amounted to. So, well, as it turned out--well, I don't want to take anything away from Japanese school. I must say I learned some good things there, but as far as the Japanese language, I don't think I learned too much there.

CC: But you didn't experience---I just thought maybe being a little bit different when you're a kid sometimes, you know, other kids are kinda hard on the kid if you don't go to school and they do, and things like that.

DA: That's true. You just got to be one of them all the time.

CC: Yeah. Did you have a nickname?

DA: Well, I tell you. You find this to be true in the plantation--not too much in the city, but in the plantation--everybody had nicknames. People had names like "Tartar" and "Shorty," you know. I guess I was named "Fatso" and I had all kinds of funny names but I don't quite remember all of them. But everybody had a nickname. And especially when you're Japanese too, you don't have an English name. Well, in my case, my dad baptized me as "Daniel," being Christian. But all my friends didn't have an English name. The schoolteachers provided them with their names and they got stuck with it. But . . .

WN: Oh, because . . .

DA: It's easier to call them by nicknames rather than by names, yeah.

CC: So the schoolteachers, to aid their own pronunciation or whatever, would give 'em. . . . Why did you leave the plantation? I guess, was it just graduated from school and went off to college, or why . . .

DA: That's what it amounted to. And I was such a bad egg at home anyway. They all say that the preachers' sons are the worst ones all over,

and I was no different, I suppose. And I wanted to stay out of school after I graduated from high school and my dad said, "Uh uh. If you stay out of school one year, I know you're not going to go back to college." So he says, "Off you go, and you go to college right now."

Now, I still remember--let me tell you this story. Just as I was getting ready to leave that night, my dad comes up to me. He says, "Well, son, what are you going to study?"

I looked at him and I knew exactly what he was thinking, you know. And I says, "You know, dad, if I told you that I was going into the ministry, I'm sure you'd be the happiest man in the world. But, sorry, Pop, I never got the call." (Chuckles)

But anyway, he says, "Well, son, that's all right. Whatever you do, do the very best you know how, okay?" And I think it was good advice.

But to answer your question, just went through school. And then after school, naturally, went on to university. And only place available was here [University of Hawai'i]. I couldn't go away to the Mainland. And my dad was not in any kind of position to send me off to the Mainland, so came to university here. And that's the way it just went. And my return back to Maui was only to visit the family every once in a while, maybe two or three times a year.

CC: Let's get back a little bit to the plantation though. When you say that everything was, you know, paternalistic and things like that. There wasn't also any real political freedom, was there? I mean, people couldn't--did people vote in elections? And were they able to exercise their real decisions?

DA: Not at all. As a matter of fact, somewhere along the way, I read some history where the plantation bosses took you into the election booth where they hung the pencil from the ceiling right to the paper. And as the guy walked in, the booth was closed, but they could see the pencil. And if the pencil moved to the left, they knew that you were voting in the wrong column. If you voted the right side, you were fine. But then the moment they found out ~~and if you voted on the left column or whatever the case may be,~~ well, you weren't working for the plantation too much longer. But as I said earlier, I could see for myself that there was no opportunity for me in Maui in the plantation. I might go further in saying this: there was no political freedom in the plantation area. Democrats could not hold a rally in the plantation property. If they had any rallies, they had to be outside of the plantation area or, as was mentioned, in the federal property--in the post office building or someplace where they couldn't touch you, see. But that's how much control they had in Hawai'i. And all over, in every plantation.

WN: When you were young and growing up in the plantation, do you remember noticing that kind of injustices, or did it only come

later?

DA: I noticed that when I was still going to. . . . Well, you see, the ILWU organization started about the time when I was in high school. So, some of my friends that I went to school with were organizers of the ILWU. They were working in the plantation. And to tell you how tough things were, they really had to do things underground sort of way. Now, if they were having a meeting at your house, you had to pull down the shades and darken your house completely. And if I were going to your house, I had to have somebody drive me there. And we'll drive there slowly and make sure that there was no plantation policeman around. And at the opportune moment, we slow the car down as slow as we possibly could and I would just roll out of the car from a moving car. Roll into the hedges, some plants or something like that, and just wait there while the car just keeps going so there'd be no stop, right? So no one would be suspicious of anything. And then, when nobody comes around, then I'd crawl in from there and give a secret knock. They close the lights in the house, open the door, you're in, then they open the lights again. Now, this is the kind of life that took place. Now, when you witness and know of things like this, it doesn't take much for a guy to say, "Hey, this is no life for me," right? So, there was no desire for me to go back.

I might also say that I had some friends of mine that went out, did some summer work in the cane fields. I told my dad, "I want to go work in the cane field." That meant that he had to go buy me a lunch can, and a hoe, and all that stuff, and denim pants.

He says, "You sure you want to work in the cane field?"

I says, "Yeah."

He says, "You sure now?"

I says, "Yeah, I want to do that."

He says, "I don't think so. I don't think that's the life for you."

I says, "No, I want to do it." So he bought me a lunch can, and clothing, and a hoe. I went out one morning early, about four thirty in the morning or five o'clock. I went out there, I worked about hour and a half, maybe two hours, and that was too much for me. And just threw the hoe down, everything else. Opened my lunch can, I had my lunch about nine o'clock in the morning. And that was the end of it. Next day, I says, "Oh, I no go back (chuckles) to work again."

So my dad says, "See, I told you." (Laughs) That's hard work. And I didn't want to do that again, you know, for the rest of my life.

CC: What were you planning to be when you first started school? What

was your first idea when . . .

DA: Well, I guess I'm no different from most people. I had my sights up there. I wanted to be a dentist. And I wanted to go to [USC]. And I guess things just keep going along and things change. My dad couldn't send me to a Mainland college anyway. So I thought I'd go and earn a few dollars of my own and I went down to get a job as a stevedore. The ILWU had already organized the stevedores and I was working there as a union member. But I found the work too hard. I wasn't tough enough, I guess. So I changed over to be a clerk on the docks. And they didn't pay us very much. We weren't organized. And so I told a friend of mine, Tadao Beppu, he was a clerk with me on the docks. I said, "Hey, Tadao. Why don't we organize the clerks?"

He said, "It's a good idea."

So we went out to see Jack Kawano who was the leader of the ILWU at that time. And he says, "Yeah. Be very happy to help you." He loaned us his attorney--Mr. Patterson, as I recall--and we started to talk with all the guys. But one of the clerks was a son of the big boy bosses of the Castle & Cooke. So, we had to work around him. But eventually, the word must have gotten into him, I don't know, but we worked around and we got everybody agreeing to it. We got the contract all set up. We were all ready to go and propose a deal, a union, to Castle & Cooke when Mr. Tojo decided that he's going to bomb Pearl Harbor. So, there we were. So we didn't have a chance to get our proposal into the bosses. And when we went back, we didn't have a job. The fact is, they closed the waterfront for a while. And then, when they called us back, all the Japanese clerks had to walk around with a black badge to identify them, you know, being Japanese. And about two weeks later, we got called into the office, Tadao Beppu and myself. And they says, "Well, we're going to have to let you two boys go."

I says, "Hey, how come?"

"Oh, well, you're good clerks but we just have a surplus of clerks, so you guys will have to go."

I says, "Hey, there're other people who came in after us."

He says, "No, but we slowly, you know, letting the guys go. We have nothing against you. We'll even give you a letter of recommendation," and all of that stuff, which they did. And so, we got away, honorably left the job. And we couldn't get jobs later on. But let me also tell you, later on, Mr. Beppu got married to a woman that worked in the Castle & Cooke office. And she found our names in the file and it said Dan Aoki, Tadao Beppu, we got fired! We were caught sleeping behind rice sacks or something like (chuckles) that. But that's the way they used to work out in Hawai'i.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CC: You had just been telling us that World War II provided an opportunity for the company to actually release you from your clerk's job on the waterfront. What was it like trying to find other work then, being Japanese and the kind of atmosphere that prevailed here--martial law and those kind of things. What did you do in terms of work?

DA: Let me tell you this. Lot of people may have forgotten that, but when Japan struck Pearl Harbor, the Japanese really had a tough time here in Hawai'i. And the Chinese didn't want to have any part of the Japanese because, you know, they didn't want to be identified with the Japanese, so I think, if you remember, the Chinese went around and said, "I'm Chinese." They didn't want to be identified as Japanese. I went out and made applications at all the different places. As a matter of fact, Congress passed a law which said that all eligible men unemployed had to register with the unemployment office. They had to know where all the eligible men were. Well, I went there. They referred me to several places. One in particular was Hawaiian Electric. I went there and then made an application. They looked at my application. "Oh, wonderful, we can use you. You Chinese aren't you?"

I says, "No, I'm Japanese."

"Oh, gee, I'm sorry. But we'll hire you. Go down to the warehouse on Ward Avenue. Report there Monday morning."

I went out there, and it was pick and shovel work. And work one day and rested five, work another day and rested four. It wasn't quite profitable at all. And then, this was true with all the Japanese boys. They just couldn't find any job anywhere, anyplace. Until somebody told me that there was a job with the fire department. And the fire department had a requirement that you had to be at least five nine. You know, they wanted big fellows and everything else. But I guess they lowered the requirements during the war days because they couldn't get enough people. And so, they said there was a possible job there. I went. I saw [former] Mayor [Neal S.] Blaisdell's father, at that time who was the [fire chief]. And he says, "Yeah, we can hire you, but you're an American citizen?"

I says, "Yeah."

"Prove it."

I says, "I was born here."

He says, "That doesn't mean that you're an American citizen."

I was surprised. I said, "Oh."

"I want to see your expatriation papers." Expatriation papers? Well, here again, uniqueness of my father again. He just did not register us with the Japanese Consulate and had not thought about expatriation because if you're not registered, you don't have to



expatriate, right? But then, the chief says, "If you're born before 1926, you're automatically a dual citizen."

So, I says, "Well, what am I going to do? Can't go and expatriate now, we're at war with Japan."

He says, "Well, get me an affidavit from your father to the effect that you were not registered with the Japanese Consulate." Which I did, and I got hired as a fireman. Well, very quickly, let me tell you. I was the only Japanese in the fire department in Pearl City. And a friend of mine who's a doctor today--a very successful doctor, Dr. Yoshida, who's a surgeon--he was the only Japanese policeman. And we were two, both kind of older fellows. I was twenty-five. And you can imagine when this volunteer call came through. Every so often they'd look at us and says, "You going to fight for this country? You going to volunteer?" It got to a point where we just had to go and volunteer. So I called home and I told my dad. And he said, "Well, this is your country, son. You go and fight for it."

So I says, "Fine." So I camped myself at the FBI office and practically begged them to take me in. As I said, I was twenty-five years old. They were interested in youngsters that were eighteen and nineteen. They didn't want old people like me. But I wasn't that old, I suppose, so fortunately, I got in. And that's how I got into the service.

CC: And that was the 442?

DA: That was the 442. You see, the 100th was composed of men that were drafted before the war. And then, unfortunately, when the war came, well, they took all their arms away and put them into labor battalions until they finally decided to get them all grouped together, and make them an infantry battalion, and send 'em over to McCoy for training. But I presume that just one battalion, a Japanese battalion on top of that, they'll have difficult time trying to attach them to some, say, Caucasian outfit, right? And so, I think this is when they came up with the idea of developing a all-Nisei combat team. And they wanted to develop a full team of Japanese boys. And this how the 442 came about.

CC: You didn't know Jack Burns yet at this time, did you?

DA: No, I didn't know him personally at that time, no. I didn't meet him until after the war.

CC: But he had some role with helping to encourage the formation of the 442? Or what was his activity back in those days that was related to all that?

DA: Well, my information--and I found this out later--Mr. Burns was born in Montana but he came here when he was very young, I think when he was two years old or something like that. And he lived in Kalihi. He grew up with the boys there. He lived with the kids,

and he played with them, and he knew the people there. And he had all the confidence in the world with the youngsters that he associated with. And when he became a police officer and assigned to the FBI as the liaison officer, that's when, you know, he did a great deal for the Japanese community. Because as far as the Japanese community was concerned, with the martial law and what have you, they were scared to death. And they were scared to death of all the Haoles. So, as soon as the Haoles came around, well, they weren't about to go and listen to them. As a matter of fact, they shied away from them. And this is why Mr. Burns called in some of the Japanese leaders and he formed the so-called Emergency Committee, formed of people like--they're all passed now, passed and gone--people like Dr. [Ernest] Murai, and [Mitsuyuki] "Mits" Kido, Dr. [Katsumi] Kometani, and [Wilfred] Tsukiyama, people like that. And then told them, "You guys American citizens, aren't you?"

They said, "Yeah."

"Well, why don't you act like one?"

They said, "What can we do?"

He said, "I want you to go into the Japanese community and tell them about the martial law, and tell them what it was all about. They don't have to fear the martial law as long as they don't do something wrong." And this is the way. . . . And he always helped them.

Now, he also--at the break of war as you know, there were many leaders in the Japanese community that were taken in the concentration camp. But there were some people that Mr. Burns knew personally and knew to be good citizens. They would not fight or do anything wrong. And so, he got people out from the concentration camps. He got them back into the stream of our society and things like this. So, he helped them along. And because of these things, when we came back and formed the 442 Veterans' Club, we honored Mr. Burns by making him the first honorary member of our veteran's club. This is how I met Mr. Burns.

WN: While you were away during the war, what were your conceptions of what a Democratic party was, or did you have any at all?

DA: No. As I told you, the whole system in Hawai'i was to keep us in the dark. The trick of the Republican people, the people that ran Hawai'i--the hegemony, as Mr. Burns always referred to them--their philosophy was to keep people like us in the dark. Keep 'em in the dark. They told us, "Hey, no politics. Politics is a dirty business. You leave it to us. We'll take care of those things. It's not for you." You take our educational system, it was one of the worst systems in the country. My recollection is that General Oran had an article in the paper, as I recall, many years after the war, and he compared our university system--University of Hawai'i--to the Negro colleges in the South. He said some of the Negro colleges in the South were better equipped than the University of Hawai'i.

That's how bad off we were. Not today, but at that time. But the whole thing was that they wanted to keep us in the dark because the more educated we had become, we would only be problems for them, right? And so, at the time that I went to war, we weren't thinking about Democratic party or we weren't thinking about anything like that. It's just that, "Hey, Jap, you going fight for America, or what?" (Chuckles) So we just had to prove ourselves. But after the war, yeah, it was a different story.

CC: Who were some of the other guys that went to war with you? Who were some of those other people that you later then worked with in terms of some of these things? When you went away to war, who were some of the other people in the 442 that you remember, or did you have any close friendships with any of the folks you worked with later?

DA: Well, let me put it to you this way. [In the] 100th and 442nd, you had people like Sakae Takahashi, Masato Doi. Matsuo Takabuki, Dan Inouye, Sparky Matsunaga, Nadao Yoshinaga, right down the line. And these were the core of the Democratic party.

CC: But at that time, you were saying that this wasn't on your mind then.

DA: No. It wasn't, no.

CC: What about what you saw of the Mainland--does that provide your first experiences on the Mainland, then, when you went to train with the military, or had you had some experiences before that?

DA: The Mainland?

CC: Yeah.

DA: No. It was the first time that I'd been to the Mainland. But it was funny to find that the Mainland people didn't know anything about Hawai'i. We would be going through the country, you know, going to [Camp] Shelby--the 442 was--and the people would come up to us. They [were] curious, we looked different from them. We tell them that we were from Hawai'i. And so funny, they say, "Oh, is that the place right outside of Philippines?" (Chuckles) You know? It's funny. I guess people didn't know too much about Hawai'i at that time.

WN: Down in the South, at that time, there was probably a lot of segregation. Did you witness any of that?

DA: Oh, yes. Very difficult. As a matter of fact, we had Congressman [John] Rankin from Mississippi. We were training in Shelby and he tried to apply the Jim Crow act on us. You know, which meant that we would be considered Black and be treated as Black. As you know, there were restaurants for the Black and restaurants for the White. Restrooms for the White and restrooms for Black. And things like that. And the sidewalks, the Blacks walked on one side and the

Whites walked on the other. But fortunately, they weren't successful in applying the Jim Crow act on us, so we were free to run as we were.

Along that line, if I might say, long after the war and after I'd gone to Washington D.C. with Mr. Burns when he became delegate to Congress, my youngsters were able to go to the White schools, not the Black but the White school. I was curious. I didn't have time to go to the PTA meetings, but my wife did. And so, I asked her one time, "Hey, why don't you go ask them how come they permit our kids to come to the White school?" And then she told me, she said, "You know what the answer was?" She says, "'Well, you're not Black. So you must be White.'" You realize how thin the line is? It just could go the other way, right? Since you're not White, you're Black. That's how rough things were. And that's about the size of what it was like in Mississippi. But fortunately, we came through that, the war, you know.

CC: Actually, some of those issues would later have a great deal of effect in terms of Hawai'i's own admission to the union and the fear of Southern states about how Hawai'i might vote on civil rights acts. Some of those things would later have some effect on things.

DA: I'm sure there must have had something like that. However, let me tell you this, that when statehood came about for Hawai'i, that we got a vote from every state of the union. There were many congressmen that I know--and Mrs. Burns did a great job as the wife of Delegate Burns in Washington. She worked on the wives of the congressmen. There were congressmen that approached Mr. Burns. They says, "Hey. Your wife is really making it hard for me." He says, "You know, my wife says I'm going to have to vote for statehood or else she's not going to live with me anymore." (Chuckles) You know, but things like that.

CC: Politics always involves that dimension, doesn't it?

DA: I suppose it does, yeah.

CC: How about, there's also another Southern connection with statehood and that was the whole rescue of the Texans . . .

DA: Oh, yes.

CC: What was that all about and did that help influence things later?

DA: Very definitely. Very definitely. As history will show, the leaders of the House and the Senate were Southern Texans--Mr. [Sam] Rayburn in the House and Senator Lyndon Johnson as leader of the majority in the Senate. And they were not for statehood prior to the time that Mr. Burns went there. Well, let me put it to you this way, at the time that we saved the 36th Division Battalion, we weren't thinking about becoming honorary Texans or anything like that. It was just work, you know. They assigned us to go penetrate the line

and free the Texan soldiers, which we did, which the other outfits had failed to do. And so, we lost more men than we saved. But that's beside the point, I presume. But nevertheless, when we saved their battalion, there was a big outcry in Texas and they made us honorary Texans. You know, for your information, it was only on paper at that time. It was not even official. And later on, when Mr. Burns became delegate and went to Congress, he reminded Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Lyndon Johnson about, you know, "Yeah, lot of my people in Hawai'i don't look like your constituents, but they're honorary Texans."

"Oh?" They were surprised. And they checked through the records.

And you know, there was nothing there, until Mr. Burns told them about it, and sent them records and so forth. And then, at that time, they made it official through the legislature of Texas and we became honorary Texans as of that (chuckles) time.

CC: But that had some influence on Rayburn and . . .

DA: Oh, yes. But then, that, you know, it's all human relationships in Congress, okay? And Mr. Burns won the hearts of Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson. And that's the biggest hurdle, right? And this is how he started to work things out in the House and in the Senate. I might also mention this, that to be able to get along with people, you just got to understand the people you're working with. And this is why Mr. Burns made it a point to travel, and I think he traveled every state of the union. If at all possible, he would drive through a state so he could talk to the people there. When he drove through the South, he would know what kind of problems the Negroes were having, what kind of pay they were receiving and the double standards that they had, the double pay--the Negro pay and the White pay. In this fashion, Mr. Burns would be able to understand how or why the congressman that represented that area voted the way he did. Because he's got to take care of his own constituents. So, he was a real student of politics so that he could understand all of the people there.

I might also mention that Mendel Rivers was the vice-chairman of the Armed Services Committee. He'd come from South Carolina and Charleston was one of the toughest places in the South. And they celebrate Mendel Rivers Day because he's done so much for Charleston and South Carolina. He's got an airport over there and he's got a harbor and everything. And so, they have a Mendel Rivers Day celebration. And Mr. Burns was one of only two Northerners that were invited, even if we are the Southernmost state as far as America's concerned. Mr. Burns and Mr. Ahrens from Illinois were the only two real outsiders that were invited to the affair. And when the time came, he couldn't go because he had to come back to Hawai'i, and I had to go in his place. And, oh, gee, I didn't want to go to Charleston. He says, "You know, Dan, there're lot of things I don't like to do or want to do. But being delegate, I have to do those things." So then, he says, "Even if you don't want to, this

is one time you are going to have to do this. You're going to have to represent me in this function in Charleston, South Carolina." Oh, boy, that was rough.

CC: We'll get back to that. We just ran out of another tape here, so.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: After you got back from the war, what happened? What had to be done to get the Democratic party formed?

DA: Well, let me answer you in this fashion here. There were lot of people involved. From our side, you take--well, from what I know--you take people like Sakae Takahashi. He was thinking along that line. He sort of convinced Dan Inouye along that way because they were . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Let's start by having you tell us what had to be done to get the Democratic party started?

DA: Maybe I can say that lot of people were thinking, like Sakae Takahashi convinced Dan Inouye. They were both convalescing in the same hospital in New York. They got hurt in the war. Others must have been thinking about the same thing themselves, too. But you got to also understand this, that we came back from the war. As I said, when we went into the war, we weren't concerned about developing a Democratic party, or having a revolution in Hawai'i, or anything like that. But the fact that we lived through the war and now that we were coming home, and then having seen lot of our friends being killed alongside of you and things like that and making the supreme sacrifice, then you begin to think. "What the heck?" You know? They shouldn't be pushing [us] around. We got our own rights. We can now exert ourselves. We get to feel that way. As I said somewhere along the way, we were angry people. We were really angry. We wanted to do some things. We wanted to make some changes. And we felt that we had the right to do these things now, before which we didn't have, okay?

And so, as you asked me earlier, Chris, how did we--Burns and me--meet? Well, it was, I think, a mutual kind of a thing. And Mr. Burns, history will show this too, that Mr. Burns had been trying to develop a Democratic party in Hawai'i. He had been doing his very best working with this group, working with that group, working with all different groups all over the place. And then, finally, the time came when the 442 and the 100th and everybody came back. And we were just angry. We wanted to see some changes. And he didn't have too much difficulty convincing us what needed to be

done, how it can be done, you know? But we needed a leader. We needed somebody that we felt knew how to do these things. At least, that's the way I felt. And this is the reason I stayed with Mr. Burns all the way through. Because he demonstrated from the very beginning and gave us leadership to prove to us that we can do it, we can develop these things.

Now, let me tell you, when we were campaigning for him. And he campaigned in 1948 for delegate [to Congress]. He didn't expect to win. Dan Inouye campaigned for him at that time. But he said, "Look, we need to have somebody there for the people that did not want to vote for the other side to vote for someone in the Democratic column." So he put his name there. He knew he wasn't going to get elected.

But in 1954, he saw the chance of getting elected. But, unfortunately, we didn't have the support that was necessary. And I think you know that he lost the delegateship at that time by just some 800 votes, which meant a switch of 400 and some-odd votes would have elected him. But in 1956, he got elected delegate. Now, in the campaign in 1956, as I recall, we had a platform. Those days, we went out to the community and spoke to the people from the platform and things like that. And this was Downtown, I think in front of the post office. We had a platform there. And I heard him say, "If I don't bring you statehood, I will not come before you and ask you to elect me to the delegate to Congress again."

Oh my, I says, what the hell is this? And when he came off, I said, "What did you say?" I say, "You mean that?"

He said, "You damn right, I do."

I really---you know, I was really surprised. And we went to Congress. He got elected that year. We went there, we worked and worked and we got Alaska through. And he held back Hawai'i. And this is why he ran for election the second time. And when we went back the second time, they dispensed with all the hearings and everything else. And they said, "Well, we heard enough. Let's get it through." And boom, boom, boom. And this is why Hawai'i passed in March. So. . . . But I'll tell you, I'll be honest with you. I was totally surprised when Alaskan statehood went through. Because at that time, he told me, "Hey, Dan, go into the Senate. They going vote on the Alaska bill." And he just took the stuff and he just left, you know. And I was really surprised. Because if Alaska went through, Hawai'i was going to go through.

CC: Why did they hold back? Why was it decided, wait till the next session? Do you know why?

DA: Some people might tell you otherwise, but this was Mr. Burns's strategy. As you know, Hawai'i and Alaska bill had always been put together. And everytime they were put together, they would get killed in the Rules Committee because you're compounding the enemies of the

two bills together. And again, the fact is that others had not studied the rules of the House well enough, which Mr. Burns did. Because the rules of the House says that--as you know they run by the Cannon's rules in Congress--and they said that a state asking for a straight admission bill need not go through the Rules Committee, it can go straight to the floor. So we can bypass the Rules Committee. And this is why he convinced Mr. [Bob] Bartlett who was an old-time delegate from Alaska to put in a straight admission bill instead of an enabling legislation which was a double deal. You just prove to them that you're now able to become a state. But this time it was a straight admission bill, "We want to become a state." And so, Mr. Burns finally convinced him. It was the first time that this ever happened as far as Alaska and Hawai'i is concerned. And Mr. Burns also had a straight admission bill for Hawai'i. So now, when Alaska bill had gone through, it bypassed the Rules Committee and went straight onto the floor for a vote. That's how Alaska went through.

Now, you asked me the question, why Alaska first and separated? The reason is, there was only one argument against Alaska. And that was the fact that Alaska was not a contiguous part of the United States. Hawai'i, we were not a contiguous part of the United States. We also had the Communist problem here in Hawai'i. We also had the so-called Jap problem in Hawai'i. So, it was more difficult for Hawai'i, right? So, his plan was to separate the bill, get Alaska in first. If Alaska gets in as a state, then you knock off that non-contiguous argument. It only leaves the Communist and the Japanese arguments. And Mr. Burns was able to overcome those arguments by the fact that the FBI records show that the Communist activities in Hawai'i was not any worse than what it was before. As a matter of fact, it was less. And far as the Japanese, well, we had, you know, the 100th and 442nd, and the rest of the boys who fought in the war and did a great job. And so, that's the way it was.

CC: Getting back to right after the war, what were some of the goals or the platform of that early Democratic party organization? What were the things about Hawai'i that people really felt needed to be changed and that you tried to address with those kinds of campaigns?

DA: Oh, yeah. That's an interesting question because, you know, it was an educational process because when you really think about it, and as people talk about the Democratic party and they talk about the Republican party, just using rough figures, let's say 90 percent of the things that the Democrats and Republicans believe in, I think we all agree on. We have no differences. But if we're talking about the 10 percent that Democrats and the Republicans differ so greatly, it's different from day and night. In the area of taxation, in the philosophy of the land, and the attitude toward public education, attitude toward labor--the dignity of men, as they say. All of these things. These are the areas that we differ from the Republicans and we believed in. And so, this is the area that we campaigned on.



Now, prior to 1954, Republicans always spoke about platform--we believed in this and believed in that. But they had complete control. They were the only party, so when they got elected they just threw away whatever promises they made and it didn't make a hill of beans of difference, right? But in 1954, we said that our platform was going to be meaningful. And we campaigned on that platform. And when we became the majority in the 1955 session, we proved that we would do what we said we would do. As a matter of fact, Millard Purdy, who was the reporter for the Star-Bulletin came out right after the session was over, and in big, red letters on the front page--right across the front page--he says, "Democrats keep 85 percent of their promises." And I think this is the basis on which we live today, you might say, as far as the Democratic party is concerned. We live on past glories of the fact that we have done things in the interest of the mass of people in Hawai'i.

CC: Were those exciting days for a bunch of young folks to really take charge of some things? Was it really exciting? What was the feeling?

DA: Oh, it was very exciting because, the way I see it, at that time the changes we made were major changes. It was like turning the pot upside down, if you want to put it that way. You take taxes, for instance. Everything at that time was regressive taxes. Republicans wanted it in that fashion. Then we put on a progressive type of taxation. The more you make, the more you pay. Republicans didn't like that. So, you know, all the taxes we had in Hawai'i was all leveled taxation, regressive type of taxation.

And we started to. . . . I think the big thing that I want to mention here is the education field. The Republicans talked about public education. We had a fellow in our Democratic party who came from the state of Washington, Robert Dodge. And he told us, "You know, in all the years that I went to school, the only thing I remember paying for was thirty-five cents for a flask that I busted in the chemistry lab." The state provided everything. This is what you call a real public education--free public education. But here in Hawai'i, there was no such thing as a free public education. We paid for everything. I took a typing class and I had to pay six, eight, ten dollars just for the use of the typewriter. I took a chemistry class and I had to pay six, eight dollars for taking chemistry class. Or during the elementary classes, I had to go to school with two, three bags to even take my own toilet tissue and what have you. And hand towels, and pencils, and tablets, and everything else. And then, the PTA had to provide for all of the extra things. If they needed a piano for the music classes, the PTA had to provide that. The state only provided one telephone line into the school. And if the school needed two or three more lines, the PTA had to pay for it. And the PTA had to pay for the Daily Readers, or whatever they call it, and things like that. But, you know, what it really amounted to was double taxation, the very thing that the United States, you know, they had a revolution about. But in times gone by, I think we've changed that.

Another thing was the fact that when I went to school during my time, there were only women teachers. Let me tell you, as far as this University of Hawai'i was concerned, if you wanted to, say, divide the students by, say, ability or whatever you might say--you know, if you had the first top, the middle, and the last--the very top went to TC [Teachers College]. The women folks basically. Because it was a respectable profession to be a schoolteacher. But they were not paid respectable salary. Because the hegemony people, the Republicans as they were in control here, their attitude was, "Why should we pay the women?" And maybe this is why we have so much trouble with ERA today. You know what I (chuckles) mean? But at that time, they said, "Why pay the women? Women only bringing home extra pay for their husbands. Supplemental income. So why should we pay them any kind of wages?" This is why we only had women in our school system. But since we came in, we take a different attitude. We look upon women as women, as individuals. They have to go to the university five years to get their certificate to become professional teachers. And so, we said, "Don't look upon them as Mrs. So-and-So. Look upon them as individuals and pay them accordingly." And I was active in the PTA activities also. And this was always coming up. And you know, how do you answer a question: "What is adequate pay for schoolteachers?" That's a hard question to ask. But I came across one article that says, "The day that the parents encourage their children to become schoolteachers is when you are paying the teachers enough salary." And I think that makes some sense, doesn't it? And consequently, I think we are paying comparable salaries to the schoolteachers and that also attracts lot of men into the education field. So, these are the kind of changes that we made.

Take the land. We changed the land laws. The Republicans, their attitude was, they tax the land on the basis of the use of the land--the way they used it. They owned it, they controlled the use, right? But we felt that the land owed a responsibility to the society and it should pay its rightful taxes. And so we said we don't give a damn who owns the land, they should pay what the land should pay. And these are the kind of things that we were running on. And so, major changes were made, yes.

WN: To achieve that kind of changes and to--like in 1954 there was such a tremendous Democratic victory--there had to be a lot of education on the party leaders' part onto the public. How did that take place? To communicate your ideas and your goals to the voting public?

DA: Well, that took place during the campaign. As I said, we developed a small, short platform. We stuck to it, we campaigned on it, we spoke on it. We had debates. We debated on it. Now, let me tell you a little story here. I'm sure Mr. Burns won't mind this. I'm talking about Ed Burns. This is Jack Burns's younger brother. He was in the Republican party for many years. But they had a club where they met every Friday for lunch, and Dan Inouye was one of the members of that luncheon group. And so, Mr. Burns, Ed Burns, says, "You know, Dan," he says, "if you people are successful in this

election and become the majority and do what you say you are going to do, I'll join the Democratic party. Because that's exactly why I am in the Republican party. They said they would do it, but they haven't done it yet. And they've been in the majority." So, he says, "Dan, if you guys become majority and do what you say you're going to do, I'll join the party." So, as soon as--referring back to what I said about Millard Purdy putting that headline that says, "Democrats keep 85 percent of their promises"--Dan just put the card in front of Ed and he says, "Okay, sign 'em." And that's how Mr. Ed Burns became a Democrat.

CC: Back when you put together the kind of rejuvenated effort at reviving the Democratic party--because there was a Democratic party, although maybe not a very active one. The leadership came from the Japanese community, but what about the relationships with the other ethnic groups here, and why did the Japanese community become the leadership of that party? What factors caused that?

DA: Well, I think, at that time, if my history serves me correctly, at that time the Japanese population amounted to around 40 percent, you know. We felt like we were really the majority of the people here. However, that's not the answer to your question. Basically, the real angry people were the Japanese boys, the AJA veterans that came back from the war. These were the people that were willing to stick their neck out and fight for what they believed. Now also, you got to also remember, as I said earlier, there were reprisals for misbehaving, going against the hegemony, and things like that. Well, the [G.I.] Bill of Rights after the war helped us a great deal. Made lot of our boys that would not normally or would not normally be able to go to professional schools able to go to medical school, law school, dental schools, whatever. And they all became professionals when they came back. And they wanted to make a place for themselves also, but at the same time they wanted to change the nature of our society. And so, we had all of these people to work with, okay? I don't think we antagonized too many people. As a matter of fact, Mr. Burns recognized the danger of this coming about. And we were branded as a "Jap party" and all that kind of a thing, that's true.

Mr. [Alexander] Budge, as I recall, was a great friend of Mr. Burns. He was president of Castle & Cooke. And he [Burns] approached Mr. Budge and told Mr. Budge what was necessary. "We need to have people participating politically and in the political party of their choice. And unless your Republican party relaxed just a little bit," he says, "you are going to force this thing to become a racial thing, which is a very dangerous situation." Life, in our society, revolves around three basic elements--economic, social, political. Now, you take like Castle & Cooke. If I'm an employee of Castle & Cooke, then for me to associate with them socially and everything else, I better also be a Republican. And if I'm not a Republican, I'm going to be ostracized socially and I may lose my job. You see how it all works around? And everything in life in our society revolves around three points. And consequently, or to

a degree, I think Mr. Burns was successful in convincing Mr. Budge that he should release the people. And we had Mr. Norwood, Bill Norwood, in Castle & Cooke at that time. And so, Mr. Budge had passed the information to his employees in Castle & Cooke that, you know, "I encourage you to participate in politics. I think it's your responsibility that you should do your share. And we would like to have you participate in the political party of your choice." In other words, assuring them that there'd be no reprisals for their participation. And in that way, he says, "Those that have inclination toward the Democratic party will contact Bill Norwood. Those that have inclination toward the Republican party can contact Mr. Russell Starr." And they would have people participating. They would get coffee hours, or gatherings, or discussions or what the case was.

And slowly, other companies did the same thing. You know the gentleman that we saw as we were coming out of the restaurant, Mr. [Ted] Morioka? He was working for Hawaiian Telephone. And there was Ward Russell there also. And Hawaiian Telephone took the same line. And those that had inclination toward Democrats would contact Mr. Morioka and others would contact Mr. Ward Russell. And all different companies. And then Mr. Dodge took this matter to the Chamber of Commerce and other companies took this on. But this way, we tried to encourage people to participate politically. But I might say that the rambunctious people, the more angry people, were the veterans that were coming back. And they were the ones that became professional people. And they became independent. And they were not tied to any organization or whatever in our society at that time. It made them free to participate with the Democratic party. And they were mostly youngsters of Japanese ancestry.

CC: There also seemed to be, at least in some areas, a place where the interests of the newly organized ILWU and the union movement and some of the interests of the Democratic party both had some similarities and some common directions--statehood, for one--and probably some places where there were some disagreements. What was that like and kind of how did that get worked out or in what areas did people agree or disagree?

DA: Well, as you know, ILWU got organized before the Democratic party did. I mean, well organized before the Democratic party. And the ILWU, the fact that it was successful in getting themselves organized and in their bargaining and so forth, they also felt they should continue on and be more powerful in our community. And they were about to form the third party in Hawai'i--the so-called PAC. Now, I think this demonstrated very strongly. I forget the year, but it was one year in 1930-something, I believe, '37, '38, the PAC endorsed thirty-three representatives for the House of Representatives. And we had thirty members at that time. And if PAC had eighteen, they had the majority, right? But when the time came for organization, fifteen were Democrats and three were Republicans. And the fifteen voted for the Democrats and the three went over to the Republican side. And consequently, they couldn't get the House organized for

some thirty-some-odd days. But things like this did happen.

And then, finally, Mr. Burns and Mr. Jack Hall got together. Because, after all, the union's goals, their aims, desires, and the desires of the Democrats, run parallel. Maybe ours run on a longer basis than theirs--their short-term interests and so forth--but basically, we run parallel. They got enough problems of their own with the union etc., but anyway, it's my understanding that Mr. Burns and Mr. Hall came to an understanding at one point some time late in the '40s, and about that time Mr. Hall also was convinced that there was no place for a third political party in Hawai'i. And so, the politics was left to Mr. Burns and the unionism was left to Mr. Hall. Of course, the union activity and the union participation in politics together with the Democratic party strengthened our efforts considerably. And it's through the ILWU efforts that made the Democratic party very much a majority party in Hawai'i.

CC: Isn't it one of the things that also threatened the Old Guard? The fact that the union was--well, it was used against the organizing efforts in terms of the Red Scare, the tactics that tried to paint Democrats, union members, everybody, as Communists?

DA: Yes. Yes, oh, very definitely. I think on time frame, if you were to put it this way, as I said, the unions were organized before the Democrats came about, and this Red Scare was already put on them. And when we came along, as far as the Democrats were concerned, when we started to form the Democratic party, we had to fight the IMUA organization and the big boys in the Republican party. And they start tagging us as the followers of the Communists and so forth. And naturally, I think that's a common thing, right? But we managed to overcome that.

CC: You shared a story about how they'd put pictures in the newspapers one time? What was that about, where they. . . .

DA: Oh, I think that was the election of 1959 when Mr. Burns was running for governor, and they were very much afraid of Mr. Burns getting elected governor. And consequently, there was a rogue gallery picture in the front page of the Star-Bulletin. And they had pictures of Harry Bridges, [Louis] Gold[blatt], Jim Hoffa, and somebody else, I forget who it was, and Mr. Burns on the side. Not a one word, no caption, nothing. You know, the Chinese say, a picture tells a million--what? A big story or something like that?

CC: "A picture is worth ten thousand words."

DA: Ten thousand words? And that's about the size of it. And it really crucified Mr. Burns at that time. Because this is about the time when Jimmy Hoffa was talking about taking over the entire trucking business throughout the country, remember?

WN: Despite Burns's involvement during the war with the FBI, he still had this kind of a label?

- DA: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had people within our own party fighting him and calling him names and Communist follower and what have you. We had all that kind of problems, too. And so, not only from the Republican side, but from within our own party. And it was very difficult.
- CC: Now, in speaking of that, his association with the police force here was one of the ways that he became familiar with the community and then later as a liaison with the FBI. As I recall, in some of his national campaigning, he was able to use information that the FBI provided to offset this threat of the Communist menace or whatever. What kinds of things would he say when they would say, "Aren't you guys all Communists out there," or whatever.
- DA: I think you're entirely correct. I think the fact that he was a liaison officer for the Honolulu police force with the FBI, having known the FBI, working with them, knowing some of the records and the information and so forth, exposed him to the point where he knew what it was all about, and he was able to say with some authority as far as the Communist activity as it was publicized was not true. So he could definitely come out and say the activities of the Communists was not a real threat. To have information is one thing, to be able to stick up and say it is another thing. And Mr. Burns was just one of those kind of guys with enough gumption to come out with it.
- CC: What was IMUA? What was that organization and what role did they play in terms of . . .
- DA: It's been so long ago, I really don't know the real composition of the IMUA organization. But my recollection is, the IMUA, I believe, was an independent so-called--to give an independent appearance. It was just the Republican party in a different clothing, you know. And like the Ku Klux Klan, if you want. I don't think you have to say it that radically, but. . . . They were fighting Communism. You know, basically, they were fighting Communists. This was a basic issue. And because of Communism and so forth, then we shouldn't get statehood and they're fighting statehood. This is what it amounted to. But they were, as far as I'm concerned, the members that were in it were one and the same. The Republican people and the IMUA were one and the same people.
- WN: Today, when one thinks about the Democratic party, you know, names such as Jack Burns, Dan Inouye, Spark Matsunaga come up. What was Dan Aoki's role? What did--especially in the early stages, what did you do?
- DA: Well, I suppose they classified me as an organizer. I helped Mr. Burns and, you know, he needed a certain nucleus to stick together and get things organized and get a party going. And you have to get--when you get into a convention--you have to get enough votes in the convention and see that the convention runs properly. And look for new candidates, encourage new candidates, and things like

that. I joined the party with Mr. Burns about the time that we started to get all of this young, attractive candidates, you might say, ~~that were coming back from professional school~~ and so forth, to have enough people to become candidates that we put them up in the front. We didn't want them to be blemished in any way. We would take all the guff in the back, and we'd get things organized so that we can get them elected. This was the whole idea.

CC: So, you're one of the behind-the-scenes guys? Did you like that role? What'd you like about it?

DA: What did I like about it? I enjoyed it. It was hard work, but I felt that we were accomplishing something. I think that's it, you know. I could see that we were accomplishing the things that we said we would do and the things that I wanted to see done. Now, another angle is, I wanted to see these changes come about but I didn't have enough gumption within myself to feel that I could do some of these changes, you see? At that time, Mr. Burns, when I ran into Mr. Burns--and Dan Inouye is the one that introduced me really to Mr. Burns--I saw in Mr. Burns the determination the man had. I believed in what he was telling me, and I felt that he was the one who would be able to accomplish those things that he said he would do or can do. And these were the same things that I wanted to see changed.

Now, I was--just let me tell you a short story here--I was asked by a friend of mine, and not mention his name. Coming from Maui, one time, early after the war, he asked me if I would come back to Maui and run for the Board of Supervisors there. And I says, "As a Republican member?"

He says, "Oh, yeah. Naturally."

I says, "Oh, no. Not as a Republican."

And then, you know, Maui is all Frank Baldwin. Frank Baldwin ran Maui with an iron fist. And he would tell me, "You know, Dan," he says, "I can go and see Mr. Frank Baldwin any time, any time of the day without an appointment. Did you know that?"

I said, "Oh, great."

"And you know something else? I can get almost anything I want for the veterans." Veterans were the big thing those days.

I says, "Hey, friend, it's great. I'm glad you're able to do that. But the difference between you and me is that I am not interested in what Frank Baldwin wants to give me. I am interested in what Frank Baldwin don't want to give me but which is rightfully mine and ours. That's what I'm interested in."

He says, "Hey, you're revolutionist, aren't you?"

I says, "No. I think that's right. That's what we fought for. That's what we should get." (Chuckles) But this is the way things went.

CC: Okay, I think that's it.

END OF INTERVIEW