

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Thomas Yagi

Thomas Yagi was born of Okinawan immigrant parents on March 16, 1922 in Waihe'e, Maui. He attended Waihe'e School and St. Anthony Boys' School.

He worked as a laborer at the Wailuku Sugar Company cane fields and as a dairy hand at Waihe'e Dairy. In 1944, Yagi was appointed secretary/treasurer for the ILWU Local 144, later known as Local 142. During his long tenure with the union, Yagi served as business agent, Maui county division vice president, and division director, a position he retired from in 1983.

Yagi was active in the Democratic party. Yagi died in 1995.

Tape No. 17-33-1-89

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Thomas Yagi (TY)

November 9, 1989

Wailuku, Maui

BY: Larry Meacham (LM) and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

Joy Chong: The following is an interview with Tom Yagi. It took place on Maui, at the Valley Isle Realty office. Interviewers were Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Larry Meacham. The interview took place on November 9, 1989. This is videotape number one.

LM: This is tape one for Mr. Yagi. Could you tell us your name and where and when you were born?

TY: My name is Thomas S. Yagi. I was born March 16, 1922, at Waiehu, Maui.

LM: Okay, what did your parents do for a living?

TY: My parents [Seizan and Kamado Yagi] were laborers, they came from Okinawa in 1907. And they had no schooling at all. And they first arrived in Hāwī, Hawai'i as immigrants. Then they came to Maui and settled at Ha'ikū, Maui in the pineapple fields—to work in the pineapple fields. Then they later settled at Waiehu, Maui, worked as field laborers at Wailuku Sugar Company.

LM: So, did they continue working as laborers at Wailuku Sugar?

TY: Yes, my father worked thirty years at Wailuku Sugar Company. And the last two years, he quit in disgust, and worked for the Wailuku—the USO [United Service Organizations]. That's the army organization. And that was the best years of his life. And the way he expressed himself at that time was, due to the fine treatment that he had from the servicemen, the young servicemen coming over to Hawai'i from the Mainland, as well as from down under [Australia and New Zealand] that, you know, they do the battle and come back for rest. And this was the kind of interesting life that he had with them.

LM: So, when you grew up, where did you go to school?

TY: I first attended the Waihe'e School. Then, I graduated from the Wailuku, St. Anthony's Boy School [St. Anthony's School for Boys] in 1939. Later, I also attended the California Labor School for five-weeks intensive short course. The Waihe'e School, the Waihe'e Japanese-Language School, I graduated from, and had the high school diploma through the adult

education. But the education that I received, the union [ILWU, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] gave me, was a very good education. I learned a lot.

MK: You mentioned the California Labor School. Tell us what that was and what you did there.

TY: Well, back in 1946 when we had the first [ILWU] conference at Hilo, I, together with ten [or eleven] others were selected to attend this special training school in California, known as the California Labor School [see also Edward Beechert, *Working in Hawai'i: A Labor History*]. And also the . . . training with the officers and training me how to conduct the various union meetings, parliamentary procedures, news bulletins, and seeing firsthand of the international executive board meeting at that time, and meeting with the international officers, discussing union problems.

LM: So, besides the mechanics like newsletters and stuff like that, what sort of issues did you discuss there? Do you remember?

TY: Yes, besides that, we discussed grievances or that . . . firsthand information on seeing how grievances are processed, how the international officers negotiate contracts. All of this has been the topics that which we—strike strategy, political action, economics. These are the intensive studies that they gave to us.

LM: What was their analysis of the economic and political situation in Hawai'i? How did they see it?

TY: Well, to begin with, they thought that Hawai'i was controlled by the Republican party, which was so. And that the union would have a very difficult time passing labor legislation through the legislature. And because of all this, they gave us a full lesson in how to go about electing people that would be sympathetic to the union cause. And we had asked many questions of this nature.

LM: How did they analyze the economic situation in Hawai'i?

TY: Again, the economic situation has been one that Big Five [Amfac, Alexander & Baldwin, C. Brewer, Castle & Cooke, Theo H. Davies] controlled, and in 1946, they have seen that the workers are tied down to their jobs, that they can't move about in a way in which they want to. In other words, full control on the part of the lives of the working people in Hawai'i has been so bad, it takes the union or any other organization to try to unleash that [hold].

LM: Was your father involved in community activities at all?

TY: No, my father was not involved in community activities. They had their own social get-togethers, but the thing that . . . Most of the things that he had been doing was work, work, work, for the poor conditions, poor living standards we had, and to support the family was one of the most difficult things for them.

LM: What were his political views? Did you discuss things at home?

TY: Well, not much of his political views because he was doing more work than staying at home and trying to sit down around the table and discuss things. His mind was more on making

money and supporting the family.

MK: How large was your family back then?

TY: Back then, I had myself and my kid brother.

LM: Okay, so you graduated in '38, I think you said.

TY: Thirty-nine.

LM: Thirty-nine, sorry. And then what did you do?

TY: Then, I worked. First of all, before the graduation, two years before graduation, I worked as a part-time employee at the Wailuku Sugar Company, the field division. And as such, did lots of field work on the basis of—through Saturdays, Sundays, holidays and summer vacation. That was part-time. That, seventy-five cents a day.

MK: What did you feel towards that kind of work back then?

TY: Well, although the boys were enjoying it, we didn't have any more other work to be done, to do, to earn money. So, we didn't feel much. But the job was a tough one, to work out in the field. And the field job was very, very difficult.

LM: From school, had you gotten stuff about democracy, and equality, and stuff like that?

TY: No, we have not—I haven't had any kind of teaching of democracy, primarily because of the fact that even though [St. Anthony's was] a private school, most of the donations came from the Big Five, and they are reluctant to speak or talk about democracy or try to see to it that our standards would even be elevated. No such things.

LM: So did you go from part-time work to full-time work on the plantation?

TY: Yes, after graduating St. Anthony's School in June, that very month, I worked as a full-time employee of Wailuku Sugar Company. And worked as an irrigator, long-term irrigator, also known as *kompang* man, at that time, for more than a year.

LM: Okay, and this brought you up to the beginning of the war or . . .

TY: No, then I, after working for a long time [as] irrigator and all plantation field work, I went to dairy, Waihe'e Farm. And that was in 1940 or so, or early '41. But prior to that, I would like to state that the field work that I have done—for the younger people to understand which field work—they don't exist anymore, such as cut cane; *hāpai kō*, that means carry cane; flume canes; and also the train. You load that cane in the train, the cars, and you also throw the cane into the flume with water. Fertilizer, carry a fifty-pound fertilizer [bag] on your stomach, and throw fertilizer out in the cane field lines. We have also hard work on the basis of cutting seed. And to cut seed, they all go by incentive. You have to cut the seed and bag it, and the bag, they go on a ten cents per bag, that's the incentive. So you just barely making day work of dollar fifty cents a day, at that time.

LM: When you moved to Waihe'e Farm, did you make more money?

TY: Yes, they gave me ten cents more. That's \$1.60 a day. And at times, I might have, because of the type of work that I did down there, was at two dollars a day. The two dollars a day was from delivering milk from eleven-thirty in the night to two o'clock in the afternoon. It's a tough job. There's no such thing as overtime. They just give you two dollars flat.

LM: Okay, when did you first get involved in union work?

TY: Then I transferred from Waihe'e Farm to Wailuku Sugar warehouse. And that was in the beginning of 1945 that I transferred over. And in doing so, I was then a warehouseman and participated in the union [ILWU] organization. I first started [by] learning, attending classes, seminars learning the union steward system, bylaws, constitution, and what the union can do for the working people.

LM: So, from the beginning, you weren't just a worker. You started immediately getting involved in the union organization.

TY: No, I was a worker at [the] warehouse. But the thing is this, that while employed as a warehouseman, I had [the] privilege of going over to attend meetings as well as going to seminars, workshops.

MK: I was wondering, what got you interested in joining the union?

TY: Well, the thing that got me interested in joining the union is because the warehouse I worked for is the place that which all of them [the workers were] in the union. And it made it easier for me to join with them, in seeing that whatever we can get, we get, collectively.

LM: But many people would just join the union, and they wouldn't go to the classes and stuff like that.

TY: No, at that time, no. But the interest on my part was, this was the thing that gave me an incentive. Before my father died at fifty-eight years of age, in 1945, early 1945, January to begin with, he had asked me, he told me that he would like to see me get a better job, in or out of the plantation. And that better job was to see to it that I can support my family. I married in 1942 to [Theresa] Miye Komesu, of Mountain View. And I had my first child, December 1942. And as a result, my father was very, very concerned, together with my mother, that I should be a man, to have a better job although I had limited education. That was the—and as a result, I felt determined to some way, somehow, educate myself for a better job.

LM: Did the war affect you personally at all or your family?

TY: The war did not personally affect me, but—it did not affect the family—but it did, personally, affect me on this grounds, that when I was working for Wailuku [Sugar] over at Waihe'e Farm . . . when Pearl Harbor, 1941, came through, I was working there. And later on in 1943, I was asked to volunteer for the 442nd [Regimental Combat Team]. All of my friends did, and they went and some of them didn't return. Well, I was not able to volunteer, simply because in 1942, as I mentioned, I had a first daughter, and I cannot leave them. I was told

that with eighteen dollars a month pay—that's a buck private—no way that I can support the family. And in that respect, I felt that it was best that I should not volunteer, and be drafted if it becomes necessary. My classification, at that time, was 4-A, agricultural worker.

LM: So you wouldn't normally be drafted?

TY: No, and that was the pains that I went through. It was trying times to see my friends go, and I'm left behind. And . . .

LM: But they didn't have the responsibilities you had, yeah?

TY: Yes, they were not married, they were single. And that's one of the, I would say, the advantage that they had, and I did not get at that time.

LM: Plus your father had died, so were you helping support your mother?

TY: No, my father, at that time, was living.

LM: Oh, okay.

TY: But he was very, very—well, not in good financial position.

LM: Okay, so you started getting involved in the union. Now there was martial law during the war, and limitations on unions and stuff. When did the limitations start to lift and when did the union start to get active?

TY: Well, first the union in 1944, prior to my going to the warehouse, started this organization by the longshore people in Honolulu. They had numerous meetings here. I didn't attend because I didn't know about it. And in that, we had Jack Hall [later ILWU regional director] and longshoremen having secret meetings. They couldn't expose themselves to the bosses or to the company stooges or policemen, that they were having meetings. But all in all, what they had, they succeeded in organizing the industrial workers, namely the workers in the mills and canneries and warehouse. And this, they have succeeded in spite of the fact that under martial law, or strict martial law, at that time, some of the longshore organizers were deported from Maui. That's how strict it was. But in spite of that thing, despite all this hard times they have had, they met with various workers. And we have had blackouts. But the thing is this, that the organizers go in the night, meeting with various workers and spread the word around that union is here to stay, that we're organizing, union is here to stay. And they had good people organizing.

LM: Okay, we ran out of our first tape, so let's switch tapes and then we can . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is a continuation of the Tom Yagi interview. This is videotape number two.

LM: This is tape number two. So, how were your relations with your bosses at these various jobs?

TY: Well, the relationship was lousy. It was on the basis that I didn't like them. Let me give a

little brief background of how this came out, the relationships came about and all. When I was working in Wailuku Sugar Company, even as a part-time worker, then later became a permanent [worker], I was fired three times by the boss. And my father used to go back and beg for me to go back to work. So, they gave me, on that basis, a chance. And even in Wailuku Sugar warehouse, to see the manager was a very difficult thing. To ask for more pay, to get a better job, was just out of this world. One of the assistant managers at that time, [I] went to ask him for a better pay, at least ten cents a day increase, he came out and bluntly told me, "You like my job?"

I told him, "Oh yeah, sure. Why don't I sit on your desk, and you can move away so I can take your job over." Ho, he didn't like that. He almost fired me. Now, this is the kind of relationship that I have had with the bosses. I just don't like that.

LM: Why did you get fired? Give us one example.

TY: The thing that I was fired in three occasions, was the boss didn't like me, the way I work in the fields, and I used to tell him that, "Why don't you come down from your high horse and do the work." Well, he told me, "Pack your *kaukau* [food] tin and go home." That's the way, I think. Because it was a very difficult job, and to have someone come back, come to you and tell you, you not doing your job and all, what, the thing make, just boils you, and the only thing I didn't chase him with the hoe, but I was about to, anyway.

MK: How did your father react to that type of behavior on your part? He worked for twenty-eight years, you know, with the plantation, but how did he . . .

TY: Thirty years.

MK: . . . react to you?

TY: Well, I got lickin'. Come home, I got lickin' from my father. (Chuckles) He was a strong man. He was good, solid, 130-pounder. And he just whipped [the] hell out of me, so made me learn something. But still yet, besides that, two more other times I got fired. And again, I got lickin'. But in spite of that thing, because of my—not hatred of the work but hatred of the boss attitude and the way they have treated people, it's one of those things that I couldn't stand at that time.

LM: So, when you joined the union, what—I mean when you got involved in union activities, what sort of things were you doing? You say you went to classes, what other things were [you] doing in the union?

TY: Well, that—classes and being, becoming a shop steward, assisting the membership in collecting dues. See, we didn't have an automatic dues checkoff up at that time. So as a result, we went over to various individuals, pick up the dues money, and see to it that it's being properly handled and given to the person that is in charge. So this was the kind type of work that I had done in working in plantation, just before [I went to work for] the union.

LM: Okay, and when did the union, when could the union start getting very active again?

TY: The union started in 1940—early part of 1945 when they had an election taking place of all

the pineapple cannery workers as well as sugar mill workers together with the warehouse.

LM: The martial law had been lifted, yeah?

TY: No, the martial law was still in existence.

LM: Oh, so they had elections during martial law, then?

TY: Yeah, the martial law was slacking little bit off. I don't know what time martial law was taken away [October 1944], but martial law was found unconstitutional anyway. So in that respect, we had lots of guts in [doing] it.

LM: All right, so you had elections in '44 and '45?

TY: We had elections in 1945.

LM: Forty-five?

TY: Yes. And it was a very, very interesting election. And for the record, I think I should give you the results. This election took from March 21 over to March 30 because of the various plantations they had to go to, and canneries. Wailuku Sugar, we had 228 for the union, 3 against. That's my company. Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company, we had 562 for the union, 21 against. Maui Agricultural Company, at that time—they later merged with Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company at Pā'ia—we had 398 votes for the union and 18 against. And Maui Pineapple Company, the cannery in Kahului, we had 115 for the union and 40 against. Libby, McNeill and Libby, we have had in the Ha'ikū cannery, 144 for the union and 6 against. And all of these, the results of the work that the organizers did, and the type of trend, the mood, the feelings of the working people to join the union to get away from all of the hard knocks that they received from the bosses. As a result of this shows the . . .

LM: Who is the leadership that you saw as a Maui union guy?

TY: Maui union leadership was Shigeo Takemoto, the late Shigeo Takemoto. He was employed at Wailuku Sugar Company as an electrical engineer in the mill. A very, very aggressive man, lots of guts, and he had lots of knowledge of the union in presenting for organization purposes.

MK: Who first approached you, or introduced you to the union?

TY: Well, the first thing that I was introduced was, a fellow worker by the name of James Gushiken. And Jimmy was—I was working under him, too, and he's always nice to me about working in the warehouse. As usual, I was not too keen of the job that I was in, getting \$1.65 a day. It was very, very trying.

LM: Okay, so these elections were all successful for the union.

TY: That's right.

LM: When did you start getting more active? You said you were shop steward and collect the

wages . . .

TY: Collect dues.

LM: . . . dues, sorry. Collect the dues, and then what post did you go through after that?

TY: Then later, in 1945 of November, the officers of the unit, Wailuku unit, came to see me. Said that if I would like to apply for full-time job in the union. That was in 1945, November—October of that year. And before I did submit my application, I spoke with my father, my wife, and my mother. They didn't know what the union was at that time, but they said just try it because they knew of my discussion with my father to get a better job. And I applied and I was selected to become the full-time secretary-treasurer of Local 144.

LM: That was just for Wailuku Sugar?

TY: No, that was for the entire local, that.

LM: The entire local?

TY: Entire local.

LM: Okay. And so what sort of work were you doing as a secretary-treasurer?

TY: As a secretary-treasurer, it's the routine work on the basis of bookkeeping, taking down minutes, writing many various reports. And later, I was, in December, selected, instructed by the president of the local to attend the first territorial conference in Honolulu.

At the territorial conference, we have had numerous discussions. One was the Fair Labor Standards Act settlement of \$1.2 million with the Big Five. [The settlement actually amounted to \$1.8 million, of which the companies paid \$300 thousand to the Internal Revenue Service for income tax the workers would have otherwise had to pay. Of the \$1.5 million remaining, \$300 thousand paid for attorney fees, and \$1.2 million went to the workers.] This settlement was only, solely for the industrial workers that were covered under the Fair Labor Standards Act. They didn't cover agricultural workers. And [the discussion] came on the basis that, what we should do with the money of [\$]1.2 million? How should we distribute? And it came some, one . . . Local 142, one of the officers for Local 142 in the Big Island, said that they will like to distribute themselves. As far as we [Maui] were concerned, we like to have it distributed by the Honolulu office instead of by us. So names and all the things had been done, given probably by the employers, and checks were made out and distributed by us.

Then later in the discussion on the policy-making, we have had discussion of political action, and how political action did get this kind of type of money. The political action was by the Mainland unions in passing the Fair Labor Standards Act. And in doing so, this is part of the Fair Labor Standards Act settlement. The Fair Labor Standards Act was primarily designed to work forty hours [a week]. Any time you work beyond forty hours, time-and-a-half. The Big Five wasn't paying that, the time-and-a-half after forty hours. So as a result, this was the settlement. We discussed on this basis. And that's when I met, for the first time, Jack Hall, regional director, and Richard Gladstein, attorney from San Francisco, together with the leadership of the entire territorial units.

LM: Okay, now in the 1940s, wasn't the ILWU already active in Hawai'i politics?

TY: Yes, they were active in Hawai'i politics. In fact, they have elected two labor representatives. One, is Joseph Kaholokula, president of Local 144 [Maui]. And the other was Amos Ignacio, president of Local 142 [Hawai'i]. And so, they were active from 1944 on. Then in 1945, we had our so-called taste of the political victory of electing our president [Kaholokula] in the legislature. And we start working on the basis of political action meetings by the membership.

LM: What was this election in the legislature you're talking about?

TY: Joseph Kaholokula [to the territorial house of representatives].

LM: Oh, okay. And didn't "Doc" [William H.] Hill and [William E.] Fernandes also have some good relations with the ILWU anyway?

TY: Well, I don't know too much about Doc Hill, but Fernandes, I know he, we had a good relationship. He was a Kaua'i senator, and he did a tremendous help to the IWLU. But let me get back on the basis of my activities in the union. Will that be all right?

LM: Sure.

MK: Mm hmm.

TY: After that conference that we have had, we had another conference in 1946. See, these was the latter part, 1945. In 1946, we had a conference in Hilo, a territorial conference of lots of delegates there. And at that meeting, I was selected with ten others to [go to] the California Labor School.

Then in that meeting, we discussed on the basis of an active discussion, was the 6,000 Filipino imported laborers that were to come. We immediately huddled and got in touch with the seamen's union [Marine Cooks and Stewards Union] to help us sign these people up before they reach Honolulu dock. So they did a good job, and before they came, before they reached the Honolulu dock, they were ILWU members, signed up. (Chuckles)

LM: That's great.

TY: And in the 6,000. . . . One thing that came into my mind was that World War II, the Filipinos had a terrific bad time, killings and all that, from the treatment from the Japanese soldiers. And we're afraid that they may be, the ones that which comes here—instead of cooperating, working with the workers here in Hawai'i, especially the amount of Japanese people. . . . But that fear was subsided because they joined the union, and later found out that they [union members] were good people, and they found that Hawai'i people was not like the Japanese that treated them [badly], although it was Japanese descent. So relationship between the Filipinos and the local workers became very good. And in 1946, that same year, we geared up to strike the plantations. And the 6,000 who were—some were assigned in pineapple, and [those] who were assigned to sugar joined us in the strike which was a very, very good thing to do. They were very difficult [times] for them because they didn't have enough [other] income to go on strike.

LM: Could you tell us a little bit about the strike? Why did you decide to strike? How did it help?

TY: Nineteen forty-six, we struck for better wages, working conditions, as well as to see to it that we had better living conditions. And in that strike, we had some scabs at Pā'ia, Maui Agricultural Company. So we intensified the strikers to picket, both at the place of work and at the home of the scabs. And we have assigned many of our members to gardening, fishing, hunting, palming committee, and all those things that—and, but the thing is this, that the people who did the picketing of scabs, seventy-nine of them were arrested, [union] officers. And the seventy-nine officers were arrested for unlawful assembly and riot act. When they were arrested, we had to put up bond to bail them out. We called on John [Gomes] Duarte [territorial senator from Maui] at that time. He was very friendly with the ILWU, with the leadership, and right off the bat, he brought out \$6,000 cash, \$6,000 cash, at that time, was like ten times—[\$]60,000. Some of the cash was moldy, anyway. He had them hidden someplace. But these are the kind of support we have had from people like John Duarte. And the seventy-nine people did not stay one day in jail. They were out. They were later indicted, but the law was found unconstitutional.

Let me give you a background with the law. And the background with the law is that, that law was passed hundred years ago, at which time, that was to prevent the native Hawaiians from protesting, by assembling together and protest against the Big Five for stealing their lands. That's how blunt it was, the law was to prevent that. And they used this hundred years [old law] on us. Then we found the law unconstitutional. We have good lawyers, [Harriet] Bouslog and [Myer C.] Symonds, and they fought that and found that on the basis, [the case against] these people were dismissed.

Then, we have had another twenty-two people at Pioneer Mill arrested for riot. Well, how did they go about [getting] arrested was they piled into one of the supervisors that tried to irrigate the cane on the fields, and they were indicted but were not convicted of that riot act.

LM: Okay, I think we better change tapes here, okay, then we'll continue.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: The following is a continuation of the Tom Yagi interview. This is videotape number three.

TY: . . . keep track of expenses, negotiation expenses, but we still had some hard ones and tough ones that just refused. And being in a democratic country, you just cannot catch 'em by the neck and force them.

LM: Were people, some people, still afraid even after the unionization was legal?

TY: Yes, they had some people afraid because they think that they might have retaliation from the bosses, on the job as well as other, you know, places. Like for example, if I had my wife working for a plantation manager as a housekeeper, and I am a union member, said by God, my wife would be taking, you know, would be retaliated at that. And this are the kind of

things, fear that the workers had.

LM: What was the attitude the employers—you mentioned this guy “King” Walsh. Could you tell us about him?

TY: Yes, “King” Walsh was a manager by the name of Bill [William] Walsh, manager of Kahului Railroad Company. He was a tough cookie. He wanted everything his way. And in fact, what happened is that he was so tough, that whenever there’s a show in Kahului Theater, he has a seat there, special seat for him. If he didn’t show up, the show didn’t start. Had that kind of a situation. He had a number of stooges around, the company stooges around. And one of them was a main one that reported all incidents to him. So that longshoremen were, very, very—longshoremen or the employees of Kahului Railroad in the merchandising department—were very fearful of this man. But eventually, they overcame it by organizing.

LM: When you were working at Waihe’e [Farm] dairy, could you afford to buy the milk or meat that you were producing?

TY: With \$1.60 a day, I don’t think anybody would be [able to] afford to pay that kind of [money] for milk or meat. So what would happen is, milk, butter, because we do the—well, I perform to make butter, and milk. We just take ’em home. Whether they [management] know or not, but we just take it home. We go to the refrigeration and pick up the quart of milk and just walked out of there.

LM: Back when you were shop steward, what was collecting like?

TY: Collecting of the union dues was the most difficult thing from a worker. A collector has a tremendous job to go over and ask for union dues. And the giver has one of those [situations] that is because of his pay at which time was so low, [it] was very difficult to give. So whenever I collect, whenever I [as] steward going over to collect, well, some of them start doing some other type of work or disappear from you. So we had to chase them around the place to get that—and most of the time, miss some of them, and come back again to collect dues. But it was a very difficult job, for both the collector and the giver. (Chuckles)

LM: Okay, let’s go back to the ’46 strike. You said there were two sets of arrests, one, seventy-nine arrested, I think you said.

TY: One, seventy-nine at Pā’ia, and twenty-two at Lahaina, Pioneer Mill.

LM: What happened to the people who were arrested?

TY: The people who were arrested, we had it bailed out, and see to it—they were later indicted, of course. But in the case of Pioneer Mill workers—you see, the unlawful assembly act in Pā’ia was found unconstitutional. So that got the thing off the hook. In the case of Pioneer Mill, the workers, twenty-two workers, we fought on the case, on their own, but not the case itself as a—what they had done. In [that] case [it was] the composition of the grand jury. And in that case, the judge ruled unconstitutional as far as the formation of the grand jury. By looking at all the voters, well, majority of them is the working people, it’s not the employers. But majority of the jury people were employers’ representatives sitting. So it becomes lopsided. And anytime a guy is up for indictment by a grand jury, automatic, he’d be indicted

regardless of what the circumstances when once you have the employers against you. [According to Edward Beechert, *Working in Hawai'i*, the accused Pioneer Mill workers pleaded no contest to the charges, and the judge issued fines and suspended sentences. As for the unconstitutionality of the grand jury, TY might be referring to the case against the Reluctant 39.]

LM: So aside from the arrests, how did the strike turn out? How long did it go on?

TY: We had a strike seventy-nine days in strike at the territory-wide, including Wailuku Sugar, Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company, Maui Agricultural Company, and 129 [125] days at Pioneer Mill, Lahaina, simply because we had another type of king of a manager, John Moir [Jr.], who was the manager at Pioneer Mill. Was so hard-headed to take back some of the strikers who had committed such a thing, such a so-called alleged crime of jumping on the supervisor scabs. And these are the things which had prolonged the strike. We won, of course, all of the strikes.

LM: How or what percentage, or [do] you remember how many cents an hour increases did you get?

TY: I couldn't recall how much percent, but it was a good-sized amount of money, and was about twenty-five cents, I think, an hour increase. And we went through from [per] day work to, later on, to an hour basis. In 1945 negotiation, in 1946 it became an hour. And we also was recognized by the employers that no perquisite system anymore. In other words, they [employers] rent you a home, and you pay for it. They had a legal grounds during the strike, that because they were on the perquisite system, they [the workers] could be kicked out from the houses. And we were prepared for that. In other words, you kick us out, we be right here to protest, to tell our house. That's the kind of confrontation we have had. We had the courts, we had the police, we had the whole Big Five against us during the 1946 strike. It was a tough struggle.

LM: How does, looking back, I know it's before your time in the union, but how does the 1946 strike differ from the strikes in the twenties?

TY: In the twenties, the difference is this, that in 1946, we had all of the workers together, all ethnic groups, all racial groups—the Filipinos, the Japanese, Portuguese, Hawaiians. All of them together. In the 19—in the early twenties, they had only the problem of Japanese, they struck, themselves. The Filipinos, they struck, themselves. And these are the kind of problems, 1936, the Filipinos had. They didn't have the support of the Japanese people, the workers, nor the Portuguese workers to support their strike because they were not in it together with them, although they would benefit by it. But that's the kind of problem they faced. So this strike, 1946 strike, was a first that we struck the plantations in that fashion.

LM: Aside from activities within the territory, did you get any help from the union outside?

TY: Yes, we did have lots of help from the Mainland unions. We have had the—lots of help from the non-striking members, in the pineapple as well as in the longshore [units/locals].

LM: What sort of help?

TY: Well, they had financial, and we used to do palming, so they used to give canned goods or whatever things that they had, to give it to us so we didn't starve. Nor did the workers starve on account of the strike. Not one of them.

LM: How about the Mainland chapters? Did they help?

TY: They have given us monetary contributions to support our strike.

LM: Didn't they also boycott the shipping, too?

TY: Boycott of the shipping came on the, more on 1949.

LM: Forty-nine, ah, I see.

TY: That was the longshore strike.

LM: Okay.

TY: That they saw to it that nothing move from their dock to Hawai'i.

LM: Okay. So that hadn't happened in 1946.

TY: Now, I go forward in 1949, at that time.

LM: Sure, why don't you talk—okay.

TY: Okay, I'll go on the 1949 strike.

LM: Okay.

TY: Nineteen forty-nine, the longshore workers, which part of the longshore members on strike were Kahului Railroad, came under Local 144. And the longshore strike took more than 157 [177] days, about 157 [177] or six months. It was a tough strike. The strike alone was the thing that we have had [to settle grievances]. Fortunately the sugar and pineapple workers were working, and supported the longshoremen in Kahului. The longshoremen mobilized and organized themselves into various committees, committees such as fishing, and those days we—that was the days that we ate nothing but turtles at the Kahului strike headquarters. And territory-wide, [we] thought the strike was very solid. We experienced, while I was in Honolulu, experienced the Broom Brigade.

LM: What was the Broom Brigade?

TY: The Broom Brigade was the people with the brooms marching up and down, picketing the ILWU office for a change. Instead of the ILWU picketing, they picketed us. And when they picketed us up here, nine or whatever the thing is, these were the housewives of employers, you know on their side, not on our side.

And we have had another bad experience or the tough struggle was, when Governor [Ingram] Stainback tried to break the strike because the longshoremen, up in the Mainland, refused to

haul any kind of goods to Hawai'i. So he had a bill introduced [in the territorial legislature] for dock seizure law. That dock seizure law was to see to it that government do the work, the longshore work. But yet, it was stopped by the Mainland locals, cooperating by saying, "Well, you can have all the workers you want, but we ain't gonna send the ships over." So we have had not only the longshoremen, we had the seamen's union supporting all of us. So this was a terrific strike of 1949.

LM: Some people say the union didn't win that much from the strike. What's your assessment of the strike?

TY: Well, let me put it this way that, we have learned and we have earned and we won through the strikes won. It's, eventually, to see to it that we have West Coast wages. And that, we won. Because of that strike, 1949 strike, the longshoremen today [are] receiving the same wages as the longshoremen up in the West Coast. At that time, it may look as if that, oh, they struck for nothing or they got a very few things. But in the long run, they made it very good. And for a long period of time after that, in fact till today, they haven't struck. Only once, I believe, they did in respecting picket lines or whatever, but other than that, they haven't struck.

LM: Okay, how was the ILWU playing politics in the legislature and other elections in the late forties?

TY: Well, in 1946, because of the 1946 sugar strike, 1947 pineapple lockout for one week, the workers tasted the struggle against courts, against the police, against the Big Five controlled elements. In doing so in 1949, also, but mostly on 1946 election, (coughs) we had the . . .

LM: There's water if you like?

TY: . . . we had it geared to the extent of playing politics to help the union pass legislation, which will benefit workers, of course. We tried, at that time, to have the unemployment compensation for the agricultural workers covered. We had also the ILWU Memorial Association tax exemption. We also had many legislation introduced, but very few of them passed. And in fact, in the late fifties, I believe, we have had the workman's [unemployment?] compensation for agricultural workers passed. And this was because of the fact that we played a tremendous politics on endorsements, as well as seeing to it that friends of labor be elected to office.

LM: How would you help friends of labor be elected to office?

TY: The friends of labor were elected to office, won. We formed a political action committee, went before the membership explaining to them of our endorsements. We did not endorse Republicans because they were controlled by the Big Five. So we endorsed mostly Democrats. In fact, all of them Democrats. And in doing so, we worked out, through the political action committee, house-to-house canvassing for the candidates who have had rallies. The Democratic party rally want one night here, the Republican party, that one. All of our members were encouraged to go to the Democrat party rallies. So, in view of all this, we have helped them be elected.

LM: Did you contribute money, also, to their campaigns?

TY: Very little if any, because the thing is that, money was the scarcest thing that we have had in all, you know.

LM: Did you help them print leaflets and stuff like that?

TY: Oh yes, we had our own printing leaflet, mimeograph machine that we used. Later on, we did print, of all endorsed candidates, pictures and brochures and whatever the thing is, for our membership consumption. And that we have done in the later elections. But before then, we didn't have that type of money.

LM: Just endorsements.

TY: Endorsements and go out. All footwork.

LM: Okay, it's time to switch tapes, so let's take a little break.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is the final tape with Tom Yagi. This is videotape number four.

LM: This is tape number four. Could you tell us, Mr. Yagi—we want to talk about the relationship between the Democratic party and the ILWU. Say, in 1946, what's the relationship between the union and the Democratic party?

TY: There was no relationship with the Democrat party. We only had the relationship with the Democrat candidates who were more sympathetic to our cause. And we did not trust the Republican party candidates. So party had nothing to do with our endorsement at that time.

LM: Okay, how about the next election?

TY: Then in 1954, after getting a tremendous election, legislation-wise, we have had conventions which the officers recommended. And in that [pre-1954] convention, we recommended that we join the Democrat party. Not for the sole purpose of controlling the Democrat party but assist the Democrat party and to see to it that we work within the Democrat party on platforms that [are] beneficial to labor. We succeeded in that respect and elected legislators in a landslide, on Maui as well as territory-wide.

LM: So why did you decide to work with the Democratic party?

TY: The reason, the thing is that we have found that we had Governor [John A.] Burns involved in it. He was one of the most key figures in getting the Democrat party organized in such a manner that it was a very powerful political organization, became a political, I mean, under his leadership.

LM: Okay, well, he made it stronger. Go ahead.

TY: Yeah, go ahead.

LM: He made it stronger, but how did the two organizations start to cooperate? How did that

happen, do you know?

TY: Yes, when we were asked to join the Democrat party by the convention, and when we joined the Democrat party, we went all out. We became, we were elected in the territorial convention, Democrat party territorial convention [in 1950]. And I was one of those elected to the territorial central committee. And we participated in that Democrat party, but . . .

LM: So you worked on the platform plans?

TY: Worked on the platform. We had numerous fights within the Democrat party, we had the standpat and the walkout factions. The Democrats. We were the standpat. The other faction was a walkout.

LM: Why did they walk out?

TY: They walked out because they didn't like the way we run the Democrat convention, probably. And not only the ILWU, but the people who were sympathetic and friends of the ILWU, and these were the people that were leading the fight with our backing, with our support.

LM: So, how did the change happen? Nineteen forty-six, you weren't working together, although you endorsed some Democrats. Nineteen fifty-four, you're working very closely together. How did that change?

TY: That change came on the basis because of legislation. We failed many times in our legislation, for passing of legislative laws, to benefit the workers. We getting nothing but shellacking, and [it was] very difficult to get the Republican political party members to side with us because they were controlled by the Big Five. The only way we could find a way is to join the Democrat party, to strengthen the Democrat party, participate in it, and sit with the Democrats, I think.

LM: So you decided to do this when?

TY: Nineteen fifty-four.

LM: So that, and you party conven—in your, rather, your union convention, you decided to join with the Democratic party.

TY: Prior to this, yes. The union convention, we decided to join the Democratic party and play on the basis of—together, work together with the Democrat party.

MK: And back in 1950, you were attending the Democratic convention with the standpats, and the walkouts, right?

TY: That's right.

MK: So, even . . .

TY: Well, maybe I got my dates wrong, probably, . . .

MK: So . . .

TY: . . . year wrong, maybe 1954. But '54 was the year that which we had a landslide.

MK: You saw the results.

TY: Results of the political action of the ILWU.

LM: Okay.

MK: You know, we're wondering also, who were some of the key Democrats supporting the ILWU's involvement with the Democratic politics prior to 1954?

TY: We had people like Chuck Mau. We had people like Lau Ah Chew, "Jack" [John] Burns, and Ernest Murai, I believe, Mits [Mitsuyuki] Kido. They were the strong Democrats that were participating with us. Mits Kido was one of those supporting the ILWU cause. He was also, I think, member or director of *Honolulu Record*. That's what I understand, as I understood, because I was also a member of the *Honolulu Record*, too. So all of these people have done a job convincing the ILWU that these are the key, that is the role that we should play. And the biggest player on the ILWU side was our regional director, Jack Hall. Jack Hall was one of those that convinced the leadership to join the Democrat party and work with them.

MK: You know, in that time period, you know the red scare [communism] was taking place. Were there some Democrats who did not want to be associated with the ILWU or who were not friends of the ILWU?

TY: Yes, we had many Democrats in 1950, during that period of time when we were summoned before the House Un-American Activities Committee. And I, with thirty-eight others, the so-called infamous Reluctant Thirty-nine, was summoned before the House Un-American Activities Committee to answer questions of alleged Communist activities. Bluntly they put [it], "Are you or have you ever been a member of the Communist party?" And of course, we did take the First and Fifth Amendment and refused to answer such question for incriminating ourselves. The very interesting part of this is that attorney Myer Symonds representing us, we have had a meeting with him. He said, "Well, you people have to choose one of the three things."

We said, "What's that?"

He said, "One is you say that you—[the question is] are you a member of the Communist party? You [can] say, yes. The second one [choice] is, if [the question is]—are you a member of the Communist party again? You can say no. And the third [choice is], you can refuse to answer."

We said, "Well, what's the consequence?"

The consequence was that if you answer yes, that you are a member of the Communist party, then the next question would come, who are the members? And you have to be a stoolie of your own membership. It was very difficult. Then if you say no, you had a parade of witnesses, government witnesses, testifying that they maybe saw you at the Communist party

meeting, which is a half-truth. The whole truth is they saw us at [a] meeting, but the half-truth is this was not the Communist party meeting. So it becomes a half-truth on that basis, and you can be framed for perjury.

So I said, "Oh, oh. So what's the third alternative?"

The third was, refuse to answer. If you refuse to answer and be indicted and convicted of that refusal, what would happen is you be two years in jail and \$1,000 fine. Well, we start pondering ourselves, which one is—each individual has his own mind to make up. But one of the things that which Myer Symonds came out—he was serious, of course, everybody was, and he was, too. He said, "I was in the army as a buck private. I fought with the Germans." He said, "When I was in Germany, across the street was a German. The Krauts. We could hear them talk, and they could hear us talk, too, because we were just across the street. Then all of a sudden, a sergeant said, 'Symonds?'"

He say, "Yeah?"

He say, "Are you there?"

He said, "Yes, I am."

He said, "Well, you dogfaces, let's go across the street and get the Krauts."

He [Symonds] said at that time bullets flew. And some got injured and some got killed. He said, "That's the worst. But you're going to face the House Un-American Activities Committee, only words will fly. And the end result, you may be two years in jail." (Laughs) So you had no choice. So these are the things.

But later on, the hysteria mounted very much. Hysteria mounted to a point at which the local dailies [newspapers], Honolulu dailies as well as the local dailies played it up. They played it up—the two years in jail and \$1,000 fine, and they played it up propaganda-wise. [Editorials would] say, if you are a Communist, you should say you're a Communist. If you not, you should say you are not. This same line was peddled by relatives, friends who were not in the union. But fortunately for the thirty-nine people the ILWU membership, general membership, gave them the full support and expressed their confidence and trust with the leadership. The House Un-American Activities Committee was brought to Hawai'i for the sole purpose of dividing the leadership, and thus [by] dividing the leadership from the membership, they can destroy the union. That was the sole purpose of that thing.

Then we had another hearing in 1956. This was the Senate Internal Security Committee [U.S. Senate Subcommittee to Investigate the Internal Security Act]. That was headed by a bigot by the name of Senator [James O.] Eastland. He was from Mississippi, I believe. And in that hearing, they have asked the same questions. Same type of role. But [the] purpose of [that] hearing was a different thing. It was to show to Congress and to others that Hawai'i should not be given statehood, because they were Communist-infiltrated. That was purposely done by the foes and the enemies of statehood in Congress, as well as the Republican party here in Hawai'i and the Big Five. They were not happy to get statehood for Hawai'i. They were against it. Later on, they conditioned themselves, said, we for statehood after that. But the people who have done a tremendous job was, on that basis to get statehood, was Jack Burns

as a delegate to Congress. He was instrumental.

LM: Okay, so what finally happened to you as being one of the Reluctant Thirty-nine?

TY: As one of the Reluctant Thirty-nine, I was indicted by the federal grand jury. And I was not acquitted, that Judge [Delbert E.] Metzger ruled on the basis of—in our favor. And so I didn't go to the two years of jail. And on . . .

LM: Wait, you said you weren't acquitted. You were acquitted?

TY: Were acquitted by Judge Metzger.

LM: Okay.

TY: So, I was indicted, though, but was acquitted, and was not convicted. And there's three different things in that. Means, indicted, acquitted, and convicted. So this way, I'll make it very clear that we were acquitted. (Chuckles) In other words, my record was clean.

LM: Okay, let me ask you this. How effective, would you say, the ILWU endorsements were? Say you had nine or ten endorsements on Maui, say ten endorsements in Maui, how many would generally get elected?

TY: The number of endorsement—the endorsement that we made, a good percentage got elected. Our endorsements were very effective. Were effective on the basis that we did lot of jobs [like] house-to-house canvassing. And most of the candidates that were endorsed, were elected. We had very few, one or two, that were not elected.

LM: Did you make sure you only chose strong candidates?

TY: No, we didn't take that kind of attitude. We took care of the fact that [the] candidate was a good candidate.

LM: Was an ILWU endorsement sometimes an hindrance to a candidate?

TY: Later on, that became a hindrance, later on. Later on, we—in the Honolulu district where we didn't have any ILWU members residing, they said, "Hey, we don't want your endorsement," because that becomes a kiss of death. I understand very well. (Chuckles) But in the plantation district, they never said, "We don't want you," and in fact, they welcome it. And one of the most skeptical things on the part of the candidates, they look at the number of votes and number of people who the ILWU represent. So in that respect, they come out and very clearly say that, "I don't want it," or "I want it."

MK: What was required for a candidate to get the ILWU endorsement?

TY: Well, number one is the candidate's character, the candidate's attitude towards labor, and whether we can depend on him or trust him. Then the last resort is his commitment to the ILWU cause, to the labor legislation, or labor cause. And if their commitment was satisfactory to us, we endorsed them. Otherwise we won't.

LM: Suppose you have a new candidate? How did you know whether you can trust him and what his real attitude is toward labor?

TY: Well, a new candidate usually comes from the ranks of the people, from the local people. It wasn't a Mainland person. It's a local person, and in that respect, we know him through his life history, and what kind of a person he is, and what kind of person he will be. And commitment as such, we'll take it, not on paper, black and white on it, but his word.

MK: To what extent was the Democrat—was the union involved in making up a slate of candidates from Maui?

TY: We have been instrumental in making, not slate. We've been instrumental in getting them elected. And as a result, this is what happened, that we had steady people, number of people running for positions. In other words, we had Elmer Cravalho, he ran. Then David Trask, Mamoru Yamasaki, and all of these candidates. Then they didn't have the other—very poor type of candidates opposing them. So they becomes practically a guarantee to get elected, with the ILWU endorsements.

LM: Did you help to recruit candidates that you approved of?

TY: Yes, we have recruited many of the candidates from within the ranks, in the ILWU ranks. People like Tom Tagawa, people like Goro Hokama, Mamoru Yamasaki, Pedro de la Cruz. All of these and Lanny Morisaki who was a former ILWU chairman at Baldwin Packers [Ltd.]. These were all of the candidates that we have encouraged them to run.

LM: And you were also an official in the Democratic party. So you had some influence there in helping recruit and support candidates, too.

TY: Yes, I had, well, just a little, very, very little, tiny influence as far as the Democrat party was concerned. But I would say a major influence as a [ILWU] division head.

LM: Okay.

MK: Well, I wanted to ask you a question about the late mayor, Eddie [Edward] Tam [chair of Maui County Board of Supervisors]. Where did he stand in terms of the union?

TY: Eddie Tam was very, very—a nice person. He's been very friendly, and he has been always trying to see to it that the union compromise or employers compromise—in-between type of person. Eddie Tam was a very good politician, a daily politician saying "Hi," doesn't have any axe to grind against you, and he doesn't show. So we liked him.

MK: Did he receive union endorsements?

TY: Oh, yes, he did receive union endorsements many times. As a chief and chairman of the county supervisors, County of Maui.

MK: Okay, shall we stop here?

LM: Okay, we've run out of tape.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 17-41-2-89

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Thomas Yagi (TY)

December 19, 1989

Honolulu, O'ahu

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

Joy Chong: The following is an interview with Tom Yagi. This is part two. It took place on O'ahu at the KHET studios. Interviews were conducted by Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto on December 19, 1989. This is videotape number five.

WN: Let's start then. This is an interview with Thomas Yagi at the KHET studios on December 19, 1989. This is tape five of part two.

Okay, Mr. Yagi. Why don't we start by talking about the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] local consolidation that occurred in 1952. If you could talk about the history behind that consolidation.

TY: Well, let me give you the background, original background. ILWU, when the workers organized in 1944, '45, they received a charter from the international union, that [in] early 1945. In that we had, on Maui, we had Local 144, ILWU, and that was Processing Warehouse and Distribution Workers' Union. We had eleven units then. Each unit represent a company. Unit one was Maui Agricultural Company, later consolidated with Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company. Unit two was Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company. Unit three, Wailuku Sugar Company. Unit four was American Can [Company]. Unit five, Maui Pineapple Cannery. And unit six was East Maui Irrigation [Company]. And unit seven, Libby, McNeill, Libby, Ha'ikū Cannery. Unit eight was Baldwin Packers Cannery. Unit nine was Pioneer Mill. And unit ten was Maui Soda [& Ice Works Company]. And unit eleven was Kahului Railroad [Company]. That's where we had the longshoremen, merchandising, bus and train operators. All this was comprising the eleven units of Maui.

And in the other islands, we have had Local 148, at this 'Ōla'a unit, local. Local 142, that's the entire Hāmākua Coast Plantation, sugar. And Local 137. And that is the—36 or 37—that's the longshore local.

On O'ahu we have had Local 150, miscellaneous. One fifty-two, pineapple. One forty-five, the sugar workers. That's where "Major" [Hideo] Okada was a secretary-treasurer then. And Local 136, longshore, that's where Jack Kawano was president.

Then in Kaua'i, we have had Local 149 or [1]48, [1]49. And at that time it was sugar

workers, sugar unit. And the, also, longshore.

All of these locals, they had each individual autonomous power. In other words, a local can make up his mind whether they would like to go on the basis of endorsing people or not, territory-wide. What happened in the situation, in order to have a stronger economic base, we consolidated all of the sugar workers together. And that was Local 142, the sugar workers, and 152, pineapple, and 136, longshore, and later, 150, on the basis of miscellaneous.

In 1952, we consolidated all of the groups together under various industrial grouping. And [later] the autonomous power became one. One local, autonomous power. Not separate by each industrial grouping. But we recognized the people in various industrial groupings like pineapple, longshore. So that when negotiation for pineapple takes place, pineapple have his own caucus, leadership have his own caucus, and negotiate contracts. So [also] with sugar, longshore and miscellaneous units. That was for the purpose of strengthening both economically, economic and political strength. And this, as a result, we have had great success in electing people to Congress.

WN: If that system was in effect, say, during 1946 when the first [ILWU] sugar strike, would that have, you think, strengthened the strike?

TY: Well, we feel that the strike itself was strengthened enough, because all of the locals support it 100 percent. The longshore, and pineapple, and the miscellaneous units supported sugar at that time. And it makes, in a sense, psychologically—in a way that consolidation, make it stronger. Although we were strong at that time because of this support. Even in the 1949 longshore six-month strike, the whole entire Hawai'i locals supported the longshore. And as I said, psychologically, it would have been much more stronger on the basis, saying that if we had all one union. Today we have one union and that's the way the thing shapes up.

WN: Prior to '52, or prior to '48, when the Local 144 on Maui was divided into eleven units, which unit were you involved in?

TY: I was in unit three, Wailuku Sugar unit.

WN: And in what capacity were you serving?

TY: I was serving as steward, shop steward when I worked at the warehouse in Wailuku Sugar. Then later on I became committee member, serving committee on committees. Then in 1945 on November 1, I was appointed as full-time secretary-treasurer of Local 144.

WN: And how did that 1952 consolidation affect you?

TY: Nineteen fifty-two consolidation, I became the division director, since then. Prior to that, I was on a temporary basis, 1948 to '52, business agent as well as division vice president. And prior to 1942, I was a secretary-treasurer.

WN: So who was the leader of, prior to '52, who was the head of unit three, Wailuku Sugar?

TY: We had Shigeo Takemoto, and Charles Saka, and Tadaichi Morimoto. They were the people that were leading the union then. And we had various other leadership, secondary leadership,

in other units or plantations.

WN: So I guess prior to '52, there was that possibility that maybe one unit might go on its own way, you know.

TY: No, there was no feeling of any unit seceding or, whatever you call, seceding going out of the ILWU local setup, because the Local 142 was solid enough. But we have had one problem when we had Amos Ignacio, then president of Local 142, revolted against the setup and the entire organization. [Amos Ignacio had been president of Sugar Workers Local 142, but became vice president in 1947 when the ILWU consolidated sugar locals under the United Sugar Workers Local 142. In December 1947, Ignacio led a short-lived rebellion, the "Ignacio Revolt," against the ILWU leaders, and announced the organization of a new union, the Union of Hawaiian Workers.] He had had some help, friends from the island of Maui. But later on we overcame that, those problems that we have faced with. And that was our only time that revolt took place in the ILWU history.

WN: Okay. Last time when we finished the first interview, we were talking about 1954. And I wanted to ask you, what was the relationship of the ILWU to the Democratic party at that time? [Nineteen] fifty-four was that big, first big, major Democratic revolution.

TY: Well, one of the years, I'm not so sure of the years. However, the ILWU took a position through convention action that we join the Democratic party. And in doing so, many of the ILWU leadership joined the Democrat party, in order that they take active [role] in the party, and to strengthen the party. And it was not on the basis of trying to capture the party or run the party. But it was to strengthen the party in that respect. And we succeeded in that. That's one of the things that which we had the, I believe, the standpat and the walkout Democrats. And we, all the time, we walked out on the jobs, but this time we stayed (chuckles) on the convention floor as the standpatters [1950 convention].

WN: Was there any kind of, well, to what extent did the Democratic party welcome the ILWU? I know this is only about, what, four years after the red scare [communism within the union]?

TY: Yes. The ILWU was welcomed on the basis that because it provided them strength. And they were always on the losing side of it, politically. The Republicans were powerful. Had more of a Republican control in both legislature, including the governorship, other than [Ingram] Stainback was in as a governor. And these are things that which developed into a point where they felt it was best to have the ILWU join their ranks as Democrats. And as a result, also, I joined the Democrat party and became a territorial central committee member, at the time.

WN: How would a candidate get ILWU endorsement? Was there any kind of a formal questionnaire or interview at all?

TY: Well, first of all, the candidates themselves, we have looked into their past records. And in looking at their records, we find that the candidate is good for labor, then we have an interview. What his position is, if in the event there's certain things come up. And if his answer was to our satisfaction, we recommend for endorsement. And . . .

WN: What kind of questions were asked?

- TY: Well, the kind of questions is, "What about the workman's compensation? What about the unemployment compensation? What about the wage and hour law?" These, you know. Minimum wages. More pertaining---questions pertaining to labor, labor matters. Not questions pertaining to schools, or whatever, education, but questions mainly on labor. And the reason for that is because we may win economically, you know, by strikes against the bosses and that benefit be wiped out by the stroke of the pen, when the legislature takes action against the workers. Governor signs it, you have nothing then.
- WN: Did you interview every candidate?
- TY: No, we haven't had time to interview all candidates. But we have met various candidates from, periodically, day to day, or month to [month], you know, on [that] basis. So we became aware of their problems, as well as aware of how their position, how they stand. And as a result, interviewing them would be a repetition and waste their time as well as ours. But we know how they exactly feel.
- WN: I know that the union has backed candidates in some elections and sometimes the same candidate, you wouldn't back them in another election.
- TY: That's correct.
- WN: You know, why did that take place?
- TY: Well, one session—let's take example. One [legislative] session they may be good to take a good vote on it, and vote for labor. That's certain percentage-wise, they in favor of labor. Then another session they are completely opposite. At that time when they become completely opposite, they not become for labor, then at that time we take a position of not to endorse them [the next time]. This is so-called to teach them a lesson that they cannot have their endorsement as they feel it. You know, just handed them on a silver platter. They have to work for it and earn it.
- MK: You know, like you were a member of the Democratic party . . .
- TY: Yes.
- MK: . . . and you're in the central committee. And I know that there were times when the ILWU did not support a Democratic candidate, but supported a Republican candidate. How did that kind of situation sit with you being a Democrat?
- TY: Well, in that situation, let's take, for example, Senator Hiram Fong as a Republican that ran. Before Senator Fong ran as a Republican for Congress [U.S. Senate in 1959], what happened is that ILWU got out from the Democrat party. Through convention action again, they became independent. And as a result of that action taken by the union, I resigned from the party, got out from the party, and took independent role. And when the union took an independent role, they had the freedom of going—not only the freedom, but the thing is they're going freely along on the basis of endorsing Democrats or Republicans or Independents, or whatever the thing is they felt. And in that respect, gave us much more strength in trying, politically, to get things done for the working people, because friends of labor has to be endorsed, regardless of the party line.

WN: Was Hiram Fong a friend of labor?

TY: Hiram Fong has been a friend of labor, yes. In Congress, when he was a senator there. He was very, very sensitive to the cause of the working people. And he was a very good senator.

WN: In that same election, '54, John Burns lost in his bid for delegate.

TY: Against [Elizabeth] Farrington?

WN: Against Farrington, right. And I also read where the ILWU didn't support Burns in that first election.

TY: I'm not so sure on that. But Burns was not well known. You see, Burns was not known in the labor circle. He was known probably to certain people, labor leaders, but not on the labor circle. So as a result, the first time when Burns ran . . . [when] he became a delegate, then we knew him. But before then it was very difficult to even know Jack Burns at all.

WN: Who were the Republicans that the union supported?

TY: On Maui we supported [Marquis] Calmes, a Republican. Oh, and "Stu" [John E.] Milligan, a Republican. I'm not so sure if we supported Herbert Jackson. But these are the Republicans that which we felt were sensitive enough to the cause of the working people.

WN: Also, I know like, for example, Maui is a three-island county.

TY: Yes.

WN: How was Moloka'i and Lāna'i organized in terms of getting ILWU-backed candidates elected?

TY: Well, when we consolidated, Moloka'i and Lāna'i came under my jurisdiction when I was a division director. And as a result, we have numerous meetings with the Moloka'i and Lāna'i leadership. And every month they have executive board meeting at which time Moloka'i and Lāna'i delegates come over. And in that respect we have discussed many issues, labor issues, pertaining to politics. And they have been very aware of what was going on, not only in Moloka'i or Lāna'i, but in Maui County as well as the state—territorial level at that time.

WN: Who were some of the Moloka'i and Lāna'i people?

TY: Moloka'i was Colotario, [Regino P.] Colotario, James Lindo. And both of them, unfortunately, are deceased. And on Lāna'i we had Pedro de la Cruz, deceased; Goro Hokama, presently he's still active in the union; and Shiro Hokama, his brother. They have been very, very. . . . Catalino Agliam. And many others that have been. . . .

WN: Did Maui candidates often go to Lāna'i and Moloka'i to campaign? Or did they leave it up, more or less, to the . . .

TY: No, they go over to have their campaign, show themselves to—we insist that they do. We don't want to have an absentee candidate that we only push on that basis [of union endorsement].

WN: Okay. Well, shall we change tapes?

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: This is a continuation of the Tom Yagi interview. This is videotape number six. Part two of the interview session.

WN: Tape number six with Thomas Yagi. Okay, were there any attempts by the Democrats to distance themselves from the ILWU in '54 or thereafter? You know, because of what was happening with the ILWU, the dock strike, the talk of communism within the union. Do you remember anything like that?

TY: Yes, I do remember that there had been Democrats trying to isolate themselves. They don't want to be tainted with the ILWU, and the reason why is that we were called all kinds of names then at that time. And as a follow-up, they had the hearing of the House Un-American [Activities Committee], as well as the [Senate] Internal Security [Committee]. The House Un-American [Activities] Committee [in 1950] was to destroy the leadership, later on destroy the [union]. And the Senate Internal Security Committee hearing [in 1956] was for the purpose of painting Hawai'i as a communist-controlled base, where the ILWU controlled, and to prevent Hawai'i becoming a state. And that's one of the. . . . But we have had many of the politicians that were friendly to us at that time, try to alienate themselves from the ILWU.

WN: And in '56, John Burns defeated Mrs. [Elizabeth] Farrington for delegate. Do you remember being active at all in that campaign?

TY: Yes, at that time we were active in delegate Jack Burns' campaign to defeat Betty Farrington. And the reason for that is that we felt that we should at least get a better representation up at Washington. And we proved right on the basis to our membership, that we had a good man.

MK: In those early years when Jack Burns was just starting to organize the nisei, and also building up strength with the union, what was your assessment of the man Jack Burns?

TY: My assessment, first, looking at Jack Burns, I thought he would never be a politician. He has a poker face, or they call that stone face. He doesn't smile. And so when I knew that man, I used to always kid him along, tell him, "Can't you smile?" But he had a good heart. And he was a good politician in the sense that [he] was sincere. But he was a kind of, type of politician that was a good one, that which was sincere. That definition of a politician may have two sides, but his one is on the good side.

WN: In '59 he ran for governor against [William F.] Quinn and lost. Why do you think he lost?

TY: Well, this is a long story that which—to make it short. Governor Burns, when he first ran against Quinn, was not on the basis that because he appeared as such. Quinn, of course, was a good candidate. He's photogenic. He'd go before TV or anyplace else. He's a very likable guy. His program of Great Mahele [Second Mahele land program] and all that thing has convinced people that—whether it's right or wrong—has convinced people on that basis, that he was going to help the people. And which in certain terms he did. As far as Governor Quinn was concerned, I had no quarrels with him.

And Burns, of course, in his own inner circle, political circle, unfortunately had people looking for jobs. Grabbing the bag for jobs, "I want be this, I want be that," kind of self-appointed administrator of certain things. And in that respect, campaign became loose. They said, "Well, I don't want the guy to be the comptroller." And so it begun---that kind of situation did not focus on Jack Burns as a candidate. It focused on the basis saying that, "Oh, look that person. He going be the comptroller. Not while I'm. . . ." They [won't] elect Jack Burns. So these are the kind of people, so-called, to make it short, they were cutting the pie and various---cutting each other so that they'll get the job. And this resulted in a tremendous loss to Governor Burns, the first election. And there were many factors, of course, but that's one of the things that which was very, very bad.

WN: And in '62 when he defeated Quinn, what was done differently?

TY: Well, in '62 there were no cutting of the pie. Everybody was working together to see to it that---you know, they didn't know who's going to be the comptroller, who's going to be the director of whatever that thing is. Health director, or, you know, transportation director. Whatever things, there's nothing of that sort of, that dimension. And as a result, everybody were just behind Governor Burns.

MK: And in '62 when Burns ran, you know, like "Pundy" [Masaru] Yokouchi was active in the campaign. How did the union get involved in that campaign for Burns?

TY: Well, the union got involved in that because, first of all, they knew Governor Burns. And secondly is that we have had people like Pundy Yokouchi very close to us. Pundy has been an independent person as a Democrat, but as an independent person. His name is Pundy because from baking *pao duce*, you know, bread. And these are the kind of things that he had been doing for his brother, working in a bakery. So it's a very, very close relationship that we have had with him. And as a result, his role for Governor Burns, to elect Governor Burns, and support Governor Burns together with many other friends that he had. [He] came to us, his friends. Because of the friendship, the tie-in came on that basis with Governor Burns. And that's one of the reason why I was one of the people that had supported Governor Burns from the union.

WN: What about some of the other Burns' men? People like Dan Aoki, Mike Tokunaga. Was there that same kind of a good rapport?

TY: That's right. Dan Aoki, incidentally, Dan and I hit it very good. But Dan and I have the same kind of problem. Very vocal, very---when we talk off of the things---sharp tongue. And when two sharp tongues gets together, well, that's it. Everything blows. But the fact remains that Dan and I became very close, then we have been very, very closely working together in the election of Burns. So this . . . Tokunaga and many others on Maui as well as Kaua'i, like [Turk] Tokita. And there's like in Big Island. All of these people that have been working closely. And because of them, Governor Burns, I think was elected.

WN: Now, in '59, Mamoru Yamasaki was elected to the house. And he was a union employee. Did the union do anything unusual to help him get elected?

TY: Well, we took a position that in the ILWU, we couldn't just depend on those people who are not members of the ILWU, who are elected to office, to depend on them to support us on all

legislation or labor legislation. That's tough ones. So we felt that it was best that we have somebody from the ranks. And Mamoru Yamasaki has been one of the persons together with Goro Hokama. In the situation of Mamoru Yamasaki was for legislature, Goro Hokama was for the council, that means for the county. And that we have some way, somehow, some handle of approaching people through them, as well as to them, in getting labor legislation. And this has been very helpful. And as a result, Yamasaki, Goro Hokama, both of them have received 100 percent endorsement from the union.

- WN: Okay. Well, we can talk now about some of the relationships with some of the Maui Republicans. Like Toshi [Toshio] Ansai and others. How were relations with them?
- TY: Well, Toshi Ansai, first of all, was my boss, while I was working at Waihe'e [Farm] dairy in 1940, '41. And as usual, I never liked bosses. Never did. Never trust them. And Toshi was one of those. And Toshi, incidentally, was a supervisor at that time, was running for politics. And Toshi was very smooth. We used to say that he's the only guy that can fool [all] the people all the time. Not sometimes, all the time. And when he put it on the basis . . . he was one of those vote-getters, people liked him because he was very articulate in speaking. So he was that kind of person. And as we proceeded on politics, we never had endorsed Toshi. And primarily because maybe I was the head of the union (chuckles) that didn't like him to begin with, didn't trust him. So as a result, we have not endorsed him, although I have known him for many, many years.
- WN: Well, to what extent did the union take on your personality? Did you have that kind of influence upon the entire union as far as endorsing candidates?
- TY: Well, the thing is this, that what's important for the union was, or for me, that they trusted me, as far as the membership are concerned. And I tried to be as honest and as practical as possible with our membership. And because of that, in any kind of problems or battles, I have to lead them, I have been there. And that trust and confidence have been established. Communication-wise, I have not gone on the basis of saying, "I." Always the question of "we." Never use the word, "I." Because that would be "I" trouble. And as a leader, leaders taking leadership, we always put it on the basis of "we." The reason why is that it's not only me, Tom Yagi, that did this. It's a "we," that the leadership, secondary leadership, did this. And we have cooperated together, we've collectively worked together in taking things [on]. Some of the decisions made by the majority of the leadership, I disagree. However, it's a majority rule basis, so I carried [it] out no matter what the situation is. Carried out to a point and make it good on that basis. So the respect and the trust I had from the membership. And because of that, when we talk of endorsement, when the committee endorse people, and I lead the committee on the basis and face the membership, why we endorsed that particular person, they believe. That was the important thing.
- WN: What about your relations with, say, Jack Hall [ILWU regional director]? Were there any times when there were disagreements between you two?
- TY: Yes, we have had many disagreements with Jack Hall. But the disagreement was honest, sincere to a point where we had a very, very good understanding. And Jack Hall had one thing that which he had to carry out, was his mandate from the international union. Jack was appointed regional director, and he had his orders from the president, vice president and secretary-treasurer of international union. And he has to carry [out] certain things here in

Hawai'i. Whereas we local people, the kind under Local 142, we've had disagreement, because of the fact that we are local, we're thinking about the local setup and not thinking about international setup. So these are the things that which we have had some. But gradually, that has resolved.

Like for example, we care less about what the international union do on the basis of international relationship. That means, foreign countries' relationship. We're looking [out] for ourselves only, (chuckles) not other countries, workers of other countries. But the international constitution provides that we have to look on the basis of helping the worldwide working people, see. So, we were thinking narrowly on that labor . . . that ourselves first, they come secondary. But the whole concept came on the basis—that's the reason why we were, in 1960, headed delegations, going out [as] delegations to various countries. Like for example, in 1960, I went as a chairman of a three-man committee to Japan, India, Calcutta, Hong Kong, and later I went to Okinawa. These were the overseas delegation. Some of them went to Cuba, some of them went to the European countries. To Greece as well as. . . . This was to make us fully understand worldwide problems, or worldwide workers' problems and see how that. . . . We were advised, warned, that don't compare the standard that we are living, with the other countries, poor countries. And these are the kind of things that they made us understand. But prior to that we have lots of disagreements.

WN: How about any conflicts with, say, the Burns people in terms of endorsing a candidate or disagreements upon a certain candidate being endorsed? Anything like that?

TY: With the Burns people? Well, the Burns people has taken a good position on it. They're taking the respectful position on the basis that the union has to do whatever they have to do. They cannot take in the dictates or the things from the Burns people, whatever the thing is. The union has its own role. And whatever the union decides, they take that role. They may disagree with us, or we may disagree with them, but yet we have a mutual respect on the basis saying, "Well, this is our job. This is the way we're going." So that's the way the thing has been going with the [Burns] people.

WN: Were there any, if you remember, any candidates that people weren't sure about in terms of endorsing? Any disagreements? In other words, if the Burns people want a certain candidate endorsed. Did any of that come about?

TY: Well, in certain cases they had that thing. But that has not been our worry. Our worry was to endorse and convince our membership. And one of the biggest problem we have had on endorsement was Hiram Fong. (Chuckles) Because he was a Republican then. That's the biggest hurdle, job we have had to convince our membership for voting for Hiram Fong. We succeeded, though.

(Laughter)

WN: He never lost right?

TY: [He] never lost.

MK: Should we stop here?

WN: Oh, let's change the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: This is interview with Thomas Yagi. This is videotape number seven. Part two of the interview session.

WN: Okay. Tape number seven with Thomas Yagi. How did you end up convincing members to, you know, to vote for somebody like Hiram Fong?

TY: Well, the thing is this that, we have had many incidents in the legislature where Democrats turned against us. And in that respect we didn't trust some of the Democrats. And we cannot go on the basis of going straight Democrat, vote straight Democratic. So we felt that some of the Democrats are good Democrats, some of them are bad Democrats. So in order to replace the bad Democrats, we have to get some Republicans in order to support our so-called labor issues. So we explained that to the membership in a very, very—not a way of putting the fanfare, but very practical, realistically to the membership, saying to them, "This is the best way of handling our problem of getting things done for ourselves." And as a result, they felt that Hiram Fong was all right. We gave them his background, gave them that legislative background, as well as his knowledge. And he's sympathetic to labor. And in that respect, they had bought [that]. And because they bought that, he was elected. So our endorsement was carried out.

You see, in any endorsements of candidates we have to explain that very carefully to the membership, giving them all of the details of it, so that they could understand what we are driving [at], why are we endorsing them. And that's very important. You just cannot go say, "We are endorsing him, so that's it." No, we don't. And you cannot have membership follow you if they don't know the issues.

WN: So that was part of your job is . . .

TY: That's part of my job.

WN: . . . to let them know the issues.

TY: Mm hmm.

WN: Okay. Do you want to go to that question?

MK: Yeah. Also, during the, I guess it was during the early sixties, Eddie [Edward F.] Tam was the mayor of Maui [chair of the Maui board of supervisors] . . .

TY: Yes.

MK: . . . and he had been getting ILWU support. And there was some talk that Elmer Cravalho

wanted to leave the, I guess, the house, and return to Maui to run for mayor.

TY: Yes.

MK: I was wondering, what do you know about the situation back then about that?

TY: Well, Elmer, Jack Hall and myself met together at the Waikīkī Tavern. And at that time we met because Elmer wanted to go Maui, back Maui. He was the speaker of the house then, a very powerful speaker of the house of the territorial legislature. And as a result, he felt that it was best that he go back to Maui and run for mayor, for Eddie Tam's job. Then we met and Jack Hall told him point-blankly, "We don't want you to go back. We want you to be the speaker of the house. You can do more for us being the speaker of the house, than to become the chairman and executive officer of the County of Maui, taking Eddie Tam's place. So that's it." And Jack just walked out of the room and left me, and left El and I looking at each other.

I said, "Elmer, that's it." And well, Elmer cannot bunk it on the basis, because of what we were, then, very influential with our membership on our endorsements. And we had that, I wouldn't say power, we had that influence with our membership. And so any politician would not dare cross us kind of situation. So that was the incident that took place.

MK: What were your personal feelings about where Elmer Cravalho should be politically?

TY: I agreed with Jack Burns on that. And the reason why I agreed with Jack Burns is that . . .

WN: Jack Hall or Jack Burns?

MK: Oh, Jack Hall.

TY: I'm sorry, Jack Hall, was because of the good that this person can do for us. And secondly, is that why should we go against a person whom we have always supported and still [have] the friendship—that's Eddie Tam—by having some other person [run against him]. Eddie Tam wasn't a bad guy. He was not a good administrator, but he was a good politician. That was Eddie Tam. So, and he was not a vicious, vindictive person. He was a very nice person to get along with. And why should we not endorse him, and endorse another person over him, just because that particular person wants to go back. No. So I agreed with Jack Hall.

WN: Was Cravalho expecting union support if he went back to Maui to run for mayor?

TY: I don't think he was expecting union support if he went to go run for mayor, back running for, at that time, chairman. The reason why is that then he has to face a consequence that which we have to explain to the membership why.

MK: And how was your relationship with Eddie Tam, or the Maui ILWU's relationship with Eddie Tam throughout his career?

TY: Maui ILWU's relationship with Eddie Tam was very good. But the thing is that, in the latter part of it, there was a ugly rumor going about on the basis that he would be making Tom Yagi police chief, control the police department. And that's laughable. But, you know, to me,

you know, the reason why is that I'm not qualified to be a policeman to begin with. Not even a patrolman. And to be a police chief, tried to control politically [the] police department, that's just out of this world. But people believed that, some of that. Why, the reason why is because of the influence we carried at that time, probably, politically. And that kind of situation developed.

MK: Oh, and then after that rumor came out, and the elections came about, how was the union's relationship with Eddie Tam?

TY: It still was a good relationship with Eddie Tam. You cannot get mad at Eddie Tam. And the reason why you cannot get mad at Eddie Tam is just he's a daily politician. He makes you laugh when he comes to you. For example, I [was] playing golf on the golf course, Waiehu Golf Course. He comes up on the basis and on the loudspeaker, because he had a pink car then, and said, "Hi, Tom. How're you shooting your golf?" Oh, my god, you know, what would happen in that situation? You just want to crawl underneath.

(Laughter)

TY: Well, that's the kind of a person he is. That's Eddie, a very jolly fellow.

WN: Well, let's talk about Jack Burns now. What your relationship . . .

TY: My relationship with Governor Jack Burns was very good. In fact, I have fond memories of Jack Burns, Governor Burns, that we have had numerous, many occasions—breakfast meetings to discuss Maui matters, Maui politicians and discuss on the Maui developments, as well as what can be done for—the best thing for the Maui from the statewide [standpoint]. And in one of the breakfast meetings that we have had, he had offered me a job. That was in 1969. A job that which I turned it down. But that was the labor industrial relations appeals board. That would have been a ideal position [for] me, since, because of the fact that I had a heart problem and because the situation that which I would be taking it easy every time. No kind of confrontation. You come with a tie and a coat and you'll be faced with attorneys and discuss on workmen's compensation. So this is the kind of case that [I] was supposed to get and double my wages, of course. But I turned it down on the grounds that I had a membership that had trusted me. I had a membership that had been behind me supporting all the way through the House Un-American Activities [Committee], as well as the [Senate] Internal Security [Committee hearings]. And they had convinced me that on the basis, that I was there to be their elective [union] representative. As a result, I turned it down.

One of the other things that which Governor Burns did was offered me this appointment or commission. And that was funny because it was the University of Hawai'i regent. I started laughing, I couldn't help but laugh. And he said, "Buddy, I'm serious. I'm not laughing on this one. I'm serious."

I said, "Yeah, but I'm not serious on it, because," I said, "University of Hawai'i regent." I tell him, "I cannot become a regent."

He said, "Why can't you?" He said, "You graduated college."

I told him, "No, I didn't." I told him, "I graduated Wailuku Sugar Plantation college, but not

University of Hawai'i or any other college."

And he was surprised. He said, "I thought you did."

I told him, "No, I. . . ." So that disqualified me from becoming a regent for the University of Hawai'i. And also just like a disqualification for being a police chief.

But the thing is, then another thing that happened was a very interesting one, which I think this should be recorded, such it was on the basis that he called me and said, "I recommended your name to the brass of the Mainland, to the armed forces," that I was to be one of these goodwill ambassadors to Okinawa. And then he later found out that the armed forces rejected my name on grounds that I was a security risk. So he had appealed to Dan Inouye but nothing could be done. So what he did was a very daring thing, is that, "Eh, Buddy," he called me up. He said, "Eh, Buddy, since they turned you down for security risk, I want you to review the National Guard."

I told him, "What?"

"The National Guard." So we went over to Ko'olau Mountains and reviewed the National Guard. And at that time and in view of all these situation developed, this man said to me, Governor Burns told me, he said, "You have a thick record, FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigations] thick record of yourself. Now we'll make it thicker by putting your pictures inside."

(Laughter)

TY: So he took nothing but pictures of me standing with the general. At that time was General Lassiter. And we had a wonderful time. And he proved that, he said, "That's security risk." That was Jack Burns.

And the sad part of Governor Burns is that the last few months and weeks, I visited Governor Burns at the hospital, St. Francis Hospital, and his home at Kailua. It took about two weeks before he died, he passed away. I was at his home and talking to him. And as a result of that I was very, very sad to see him suffer at the hospital when he had chemotherapy, you know, administered to him. And also that I was unable to attend his funeral. I was in the hospital with an operation at Maui Memorial Hospital. And I understand that I was named one of the many pallbearers, honorary pallbearers. I was very sad about it. It was . . .

MK: I think I read somewhere that you were also one of the men that really encouraged Jack Burns to run for governor in the latter years of his career, when . . .

TY: Yes. On the latter years of his—but he was unfortunately sick. He gave [George] Ariyoshi the governorship. Turned over the governorship to Ariyoshi. And these were the sad days. It was very, very disheartening for us, for me, rather, and I think for many of the friends that we have had. Namely "Pundy" [Masaru] Yokouchi, you know, all his friends. Dan Aoki. They were the real down-to-earth people with Jack Burns. And I was also very fortunate and privileged to have met Governor Jack Burns.

WN: Okay. How has the ILWU in politics changed? Compare today, how it is today, with how it

was when you were . . .

TY: Well, I think the change has come about because of the membership. Unfortunately, the membership have not gone into the economic struggle, that they fully understand the struggle that the old-timers went through. And they are new, they are young, they are working on the basis of saying, "Well, look, let's make money now." They have been offered jobs, as well as wages, on the silver platter. And though, our days, we were not offered. We have to fight for it. And in order to fight and struggle for it, we did that. And these are the kind, things which today it's different where they don't have that type of struggle. All newcomers, they haven't had that type of history of the labor movement. And it's unfortunate the young boys doesn't know the history of labor movement. They don't know how ILWU came about. And even though they say, "Well, the ILWU was there," but everything was all offered them on a silver platter. And today they have no struggle as such.

WN: Has the leadership changed?

TY: Well, the leadership from the old has changed into a new, but that's not too much of a change. But the unfortunate part of it, the membership has changed. And I hope that the leadership would take a position of going over, back with them, the membership, and give them the so-called history of the membership, the ILWU. To give them little history of it, so that they're aware of the struggle we went through.

WN: What about changes in political endorsements, or let me back up a little bit. What was the question I was going to ask? Is there change in endorsement of candidates?

TY: Generally, I don't think there have been changes in the endorsement of candidates. I think the leadership today have taken the position of interviewing various candidates. Also, looking into the history as we have done in the past. And they are making good recommendations because of the type of people, candidates, running today. And I have no quarrels. I think that they're doing a good job on it, on the recommendations.

WN: Would you say that the ILWU still has strong political power?

TY: I wouldn't say that the ILWU has strong political power at this time. They have some influence, but not that kind of type of power. And it's unfortunate, that's a trend of unions. Union's endorsement don't mean much at this stage of the game. Because the thing is this, that membership meetings are called. They should explain that to the membership meetings. Like for example, in the case of various meetings we have held, always there is political action report, issues on political action. I don't know if they having them today but, you know, it's the very thing that which they may have the job kind of issues. But contract issues, world issues [are discussed], but not politician issues.

WN: Well, you know, recently, for example, Frank Fasi running against Ariyoshi [for governor]. Frank Fasi would consistently take O'ahu, but then it was always the neighbor islands which carried the Burns' . . .

TY: Ariyoshi's group.

WN: Yeah, right. So that still shows that there is some kind of . . .

TY: At the present time, no. The thing is this that we have lots of new immigrants, newcomers coming in. The *Haole* group. And as such, this turning around. They are the majority, we are the minority. That's the problem.

MK: And that's on Maui?

TY: On Maui.

WN: Okay.

MK: Should we close here . . .

WN: One more?

MK: . . . and do—start . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: This is the continuation of the Thomas Yagi interview. This is videotape number eight and the last videotape in the series.

WN: Okay. Tape number eight with Thomas Yagi. I want to ask you one more question. You know, today people say that Hawai'i is an anti-business state. And a lot of people blame the labor unions for this. How do you respond to something like this?

TY: Well, I don't think that the statement, as far as saying that Hawai'i is anti-business, is true. I think the business themselves is thinking along those lines, because they couldn't get whatever they want on their side. But the fact remains that labor unions, here in Hawai'i, they are here because we have capital. And this, I think, the people who are saying that should know that without the capital there would be no union. And we must recognize a free enterprise system. The free enterprise system is that if there is capital, there's labor. If there is labor, there's capital. But more so, if there's capital, there would be labor. And as a result, it's unfortunate that that kind of atmosphere has been created. Because some of the time, some of the things that which has contributed to that was this strong position that the legislature, certain legislators took on the labor committee, taking a very strong position for labor legislation. Like, for example, the wage and hour, the minimum wage, the so-called unemployment compensation, all of these labor legislation that they took strong [positions for] and see to it that the working people has that protection. And biggest problem that which business faced was on the basis that they were disorganized to begin with. They were not organized. So they only blamed someone that they say, "Well, so blame the governor or blame the state, that they are anti-business." But that's not true.

WN: Okay. Can we talk a little bit about the different commissions and government positions that you held in the past and the present?

TY: Presently I have been appointed to the board of directors of the Research Corporation, the University of Hawai'i. I have served three years and now I'm going to one more term [year] of four-year term. I also have been appointed by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Native Hawaiian Historic Preservation Task Force. And these are the present position that I hold in

government.

County level, I was a member of the first charter commission on Maui [in 1967], Maui County. I have been on the hospital board of trustees for more than ten years. I have been on the board of appeals [Maui County Adjustment and Appeals Board]. They call that adjustment and appeals board, Maui County. And these are the commissions from Maui County that I have.

On the association or organizations that I belong to on the basis now is the Maui Okinawan *Kenjin-kai*. Also on the basis of serving as the director of the Maui Community Arts and Cultural Center. And also the council member, community council of Cameron Center. And I am also a trustee of the *Hale Mākua* [care home] right now, taking care of the old men or elderly people. So these are the commissions and boards, as well as civic organizations that I belong to. And in fact it's too much for me.

(Laughter)

WN: Did you ever have political aspirations in terms of running for office?

TY: No. I'm not, in that sense, the derogatory way of saying a politician. I'm quite blunt and never did try to evade or try to hide from things. So, I don't profess to be a politician. And I cannot be a politician. Nobody would vote for me because I'm blunt.

(Laughter)

TY: Call a spade a spade.

(Laughter)

WN: Okay. I think that's it. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

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