

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Hiram L. Fong, 79, former United States Senator from Hawai'i

"Oh, since we're a state, our business has blossomed forth here. We have all kinds of independent businesses. It's easier to get loans. There're more banking facilities. . . . The big companies don't mind having their offices here. You see, many of them didn't want to come to Hawai'i because being a territory, we could have been cut off from the Mainland in case of any dire emergency. But now, we're an integral part of the United States. We have a republican form of government. . . . So, we have all of these fringe benefits which are invaluable to the state. That's the reason why you have so many people coming here."

Hiram L. Fong, was born and raised in Kalihi, O'ahu. Educated at Kalihi-waena School, McKinley High School, University of Hawai'i and Harvard Law School, Fong was first elected to the Territorial House of Representatives in 1938 as a Republican.

In 1950, he was elected delegate to the territory's constitutional convention, serving as a Vice President representing O'ahu. Throughout the 1950s, Fong was an active supporter of statehood for Hawai'i, lobbying here and in Washington, D.C.

Fong was elected United States Senator in Hawai'i's first election following statehood in 1959. He retired from the Senate in 1976.

Fong today is Chairman of the Board of Finance Factors, Ltd.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Hiram L. Fong (HF)

June 5, 1985

Downtown Honolulu, O'ahu

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

WN: Okay, Senator Fong, can we start by having you tell us briefly about your parents, and then eventually how you got into the Republican party?

HF: My father came here when he was fifteen years old to work as an indentured plantation laborer. And my mother came when she was about ten, accompanying her aunt. She became a maid in their household in Palama. My father married my mother through matchmaking. They were eleven of us, six boys and five girls in the family. I'm the seventh child and the fifth son. So, seven-eleven are good numbers for me. My father first worked at the plantations in Maui. He got into an altercation with the foreman because the foreman was using nails extended from a big piece of lumber (on the laborers). If the men didn't work fast, he would hit them (with the nail end). (After) he fought with the luna, he jumped on a horse and (rode) up into Kula. There he raised potatoes for the people in California. When he had enough money, he wanted to leave for China, so he came here [i.e., Honolulu]. He liked to gamble. All Chinese like to gamble. He wasn't a good gambler and lost almost all his money. So, he decided not to leave for China. With what he had, he got married. (Laughs) Then he worked as a partner in a taro farm, but the drought came and they lost the farm. He (then) went to Pacific Guano [and] Fertilizer Company and became a laborer and worked there for over thirty-five years.

I was educated at Kalihi-Waena School, McKinley (and three months at St. Louis College). After three years of work (at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard), I enrolled at the University of Hawai'i. First year, I took twenty-one subjects [i.e., credits] in (the) first semester, twenty-one subjects the second semester. The second year I took twenty-five, twenty-five. And the third year, because I was elected to be the editor of the Ka Leo, I had a limited number of credits and finished in three years and one summer school (with honors).

CC: Did your family encourage your going to school? I mean, it would seem that a lot of laborers in those days needed the sons to stay

home and do some other kinds of work.

HF: That's the reason why I went to work at Pearl Harbor after graduating from McKinley High School. All the money that I (earned) went to the family. (After three years of work), I wanted to go to the University. My mother said that if "You could see your way clear to take care of your own expenses, I think we could manage." When I left Pearl Harbor, I had fifty-five days of leave that I had accumulated, and with that, I was paid around \$200. And for \$175 I bought me a Model-T Ford. In the afternoon, I collected for the Aloha Motors delinquent accounts. I wrote for the Honolulu Advertiser, ten cents a column inch. And I took tourists to all the temples--Chinese temples, the Japanese temples--and through Chinatown about twice a week at two dollars a night.

WN: How did you get interested in politics?

HF: Well, my brother Leonard was a (territorial) statistician and accountant. Being with the (territory) of Hawai'i (as an employee), he became very interested in politics. He introduced me to some of his friends. (I was a member of) a club known as the Commercial Associates. In 1926 Chinn Ho established a club made up of McKinley High School graduates, Japanese and Chinese boys and we had a few Haole boys. Mayor [Fred] Wright asked us if we would not help in his election. We did help him, and he was elected. When I went back to school in 1927, Mr. Ike Arcia, who was then chairman of the Pat Gleason campaign for sheriff of the city and county of Honolulu, (asked me to speak for Pat Gleason). The two important (elective) positions at that time in the (territory) of Hawai'i were the sheriff of Honolulu and the mayor of Honolulu. The delegate to Congress, although he was elected, didn't mean too much (as a political office). He didn't have (too much) patronage. The mayor had a lot of patronage, the sheriff had a lot of patronage. He was able to fix up traffic tickets and he took care of the jails and he had lot of patronage. Mr. Arcia came to the University and asked if I would not campaign for Sheriff Pat Gleason. And I said I would. I was then a freshman. Every night I preceded Pat Gleason on the political stump and extolled his virtues. Told the people what a wonderful man he was. He was elected. Two years afterwards, Mayor Wright asked me to do the same thing for him. I went on the political stump every night for him. He was re-elected.

When I graduated from the University, I didn't have enough money to go to Harvard Law School. So, I sought a job with Mayor Wright, and he made me chief clerk of the Bureau of Country Waters. The job was then paying \$225 a month. Because (we were in) a depression, my pay was lowered to \$175. After working there for two years, I saved about \$2,000. Then I decided to go to law school. When I told the mayor that I was going to law school, he said, "Hiram, when you come back, I'll give you a job." So when I came back, he gave me a job as third deputy city and county attorney, and he gave me a (measly) \$25 raise--\$200 (laughs) a month.

So, I said (to Mayor Wright), "Mr. Mayor, you know I've spent three years (and) \$5,000 going to law school, and here you give me (just a) \$25 a month raise."

He said, "Hiram, you don't know anything yet. Take the job." (Laughs)

So, I took the job. I stayed there for two years from 1935 to 19---no, two and a half years. To '38. When I left there, I was getting \$225 a month. When I was working there, I felt that I wasn't accomplishing anything. I was advisor to certain bureaus. I (then) decided to run for the legislature, and I was elected. I was then a deputy of the county attorney's office, and the Organic Act had a provision that stated that if you're an officer of the government, you cannot seek election to the legislature. On that score, (and) because I wouldn't vote for Mr. [Roy] Vitousek for speaker of the House, when the members of the House, comprised of twenty-eight Republicans and two Democrats, and I was a Republican and I wouldn't vote for him for speaker of the House, he took it out on me and kept me from my seat for seven days, saying that I was not eligible for my seat because I was an officer of the government and I shouldn't have run for office. But after they checked the laws and everything and got opinions from various people that they could throw me out, they finally came to the conclusion that even if they threw me out, I was eligible to seek election and I would have won anyway. So, they sat me. And I was seated twenty-seven to two.

CC: What was the background to your dispute with Mr. Vitousek?

HF: He (felt) that I was a little maverick Republican (and was going to teach me a lesson). I (felt the House of Representatives) was too one-sided--twenty-eight Republicans and two Democrats. He was beholden to the sugar interests very much.

WN: By "maverick," what do you mean? What did it mean to be a maverick in those days?

HF: In that you didn't conform. I wasn't a conformist. I felt that things should be equally balanced. And I still think now it is unequally balanced. That it should be balanced. That one side should hold the other side's feet to the fire. That's the way you have good government.

WN: What was the Republican party like in those days?

HF: Republican party was (quite) conservative. It was (somewhat) beholden to the (big vested) interests. You had very big interests here. I think I was instrumental really, more or less, in liberalizing the Republican party. After two sessions, I was able to become vice-speaker and floor leader of the House. After another four years, I became the speaker of the House.

CC: Do you think that some of your family's own background, your father's experiences with the plantation, might have had some influence on how you related to some of the Big Five interests or . . .

HF: No, I don't think so. I think my upbringing in Kalihi among all of the various ethnic groups where you had to exercise a very independent attitude on things, I think that influenced me more than anything else.

CC: We've heard from a lot of people that we've talked to on this project about what Hawai'i's lack of statehood status meant in terms of the. . . . What were conditions like for people? Did you feel that you had a second-class kind of status or . . .

HF: Well, our governor was appointed. All our judges were appointed from Washington. All we had was a vote for delegate to Congress. The members of our legislature here and even our laws were subject to the Organic Act. We felt that we were not first-class citizens, that anytime we could have been given a commission form of government. The Fortescue [i.e., Massie] case, for example, we almost got (a) commission form of government. If we became a state, we would be guaranteed a republican form of government, so therefore we always wanted to be a state.

WN: Your name is often aligned with Joe Farrington, in that you folks were both considered moderate Republicans. Would you agree with that? Was your political leanings similar to Mr. Farrington's?

HF: Yes, I think so. My political leanings were quite similar to that of Joe Farrington. He was not too conservative. He fought hard for the people of Hawai'i and did a yeoman job in Washington. I would say that we probably were thinking alike in many ways.

WN: After you got elected, looking at some of the accomplishments of the legislation after that time, one of them was the Little Wagner Act. What was your role in passing . . .

HF: I was then chairman of (the) Judiciary Committee. I helped push through that act.

WN: Why did you push through the act?

HF: Well, I thought that it'd be fair for them to have representation, that there should be collective bargaining, even in the agricultural sector, even though they didn't have that in the Mainland. This is what Cesar Chavez had been fighting for, you know--a little collective bargaining in the agricultural sector.

CC: That didn't make you any more popular with certain people, did it?

HF: Well, (chuckles) at that time, I don't think too many people understood what it was. I don't think even the employers understood what it meant. I don't think the people in the plantations really knew what it would bring. I think it was something which was sprung on them.

CC: So, you quietly worked it through?

HF: Yes, it was quietly worked through, yeah.

WN: Did this have anything to do with your later support that you received from the ILWU?

HF: Well, Jack Hall, when I was chairman of Judiciary Committee and when I was speaker, always used to come and talk to me about things that he was interested in. When I thought that whatever he wanted had merit, I was willing to push it through for him. When I thought that it didn't have merit, I told him that I wouldn't do it. Whenever I gave him my word, why, I always kept it. Probably, that was one of the reasons why he supported me. A second reason, I would say, was that I was running against Frank Fasi [for the U.S. Senate, in the 1959 post-statehood elections]. Frank Fasi had defeated Judge [William] Heen in the campaign in the primaries. Prior to the time we secured statehood, everybody said in Hawai'i that the two senators would be Wilfred Tsukiyama, representing Republicans and Judge Heen, representing Democrats. But neither of them made it. Tsukiyama would have made it, I think, if he had been a little more liberal in his spending. I think he was a little too tight. If he had spent another four, five thousand dollars, he could have made it. He only lost by 2,000 votes [to Oren E. Long].

Judge Heen ran. He ran on his own reputation, on his old reputation. He was quite elderly at that time. I think he was about seventy-five. Here was a young upstart, Frank Fasi. He went out and campaigned very hard and he defeated Judge Heen. I think if Frank Fasi didn't defeat Judge Heen, Judge Heen would have been senator today. Many of Judge Heen's followers, even though many of them were Chinese, [would have] voted for Judge Heen rather for me, because I was then a young upstart in comparison to Heen. I don't think I could have beaten Judge Heen. But since Fasi defeated him, (many) of Judge Heen's followers came over to my side [in the general election]. (Also), the ILWU didn't look too kindly upon Frank Fasi because in (a) prior election [for mayor of Honolulu], he ran against Johnny Wilson who was the darling of the Democratic party. Mayor Wilson was a stalwart of the Democratic party, and Frank Fasi was a maverick Democrat. He ran against Johnny Wilson in the primaries and defeated Johnny Wilson. When he ran against Neal Blaisdell, a Republican, Neal Blaisdell beat him. So, I think the combination of (these) two things helped me (in winning).

CC: We should backtrack little bit. You say that you favored statehood for some time and a lot of people did. But there were people here who were really opposed to statehood . . .

HF: No question.

CC: Why was that so? Who were they and why was that so?

HF: Well, as soon as we got statehood, then their influence in Washington, their influence in their native state, didn't mean (too much). Prior to statehood, they could telephone, drop a letter to one of their

senators from the state that they came from, and things would be accomplished. But with statehood, they'd have to depend upon the elected officials from Hawai'i. I took the whole---well, I asked the members of the House of Representatives, which consisted of thirty representatives, to accompany me to Washington to campaign for statehood. The great majority went with me. We went and we saw all the senators and all the representatives that were available. The Advertiser and the newspapers called it a big junket. They played it up. The ILWU also called it a junket. All the Democratic party called it a junket. They used that against us in the next election.

(Another criticism against us was) that we did not give the government employees their salary classification and that we took away three holidays from them because at that time we were just in the transition period where we were eliminating the half a day on Saturdays and giving them (a) full day rest on Saturday. The members in the Senate thought that it was time that we cut out some of their holidays (because they did not have to work the half day on Saturdays). The House did not agree. But the fact that they were willing to accede to our demands on taxation--on not increasing the taxes at that time--we went along with them. Because the members of the governmental employees, state and city, not receiving their classification and losing three days of holiday, they went after the Republican party. That, together with the closed primary, which Mary Noonan pushed through, actually defeated the Republicans at that time.

CC: So, you think those were the factors that led to the 1954 success of the Democrats.

HF: Yes.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CC: Going back before the 1954 takeover and all that, we had been talking before about your relationship with the ILWU. You had said that you and Jack Hall--you know, that Jack Hall supported you at times. But you were at odds over this 1949 dock strike. I take it he . . .

HF: Oh, yes. I didn't mince my words on the dock strike. I said that if we had to man the boats to save the people of Hawai'i, I would put the National Guard on the boats. I was really rough at that time. When I was in Washington, the ILWU wanted a lot of things in the international sphere, but I wouldn't go. For example, they wanted to recognize Communist China, which I didn't go (for). And they wanted a lot of things which I never approved of. My voting record will show that there were lot of things that I opposed the ILWU on, but they still continued to support me.

CC: Because they felt, when you told them something, they could believe you?

HF: Yes, that they could depend upon me.

- WN: This issue of the Communists, that was one of the major drawbacks against Hawai'i's statehood, in the fact that there was a Communist threat. And I think the longshoring 1949 strike sort of fueled these feelings of Communism in Hawai'i. How did you feel about that? Or did you agree? Was there a Communist threat in Hawai'i?
- HF: There were Communists in Hawai'i, but it was (a) very, very small minority. I didn't think that we should be very much incensed about it. They were more, I would say, people who were fighting for their cause rather than being Communist. Later through the Un-American Committee (hearings some) admitted that they were members of cells. But I wasn't too incensed over it. I thought that was used as a red herring against statehood. They used a lot of arguments why we should not be a state. We're non-contiguous; ethnically, we were not the same with the Mainland; and that we had a Communist influence here; that we're too small; we're too far away from Washington. All those things were used against us.
- WN: Some people were trying to equate the ILWU with the Communist Party.
- HF: Yes, because (of) Jack Hall. Later on, I think they said that he was a member of a cell. And [Jack] Kawano. And a few others.
- CC: You mentioned before that many of these people might have just been trying to find a way to deal with conditions as they saw them and didn't see any alternatives. Do you think that a person that was interested in working people or labor in those days . . .
- HF: They were fighting for their laboring status. They were fighting for higher wages, they were fighting for shorter hours, fighting for more liberal workmen's compensation, and other things. For more fringe benefits. They thought, probably, by just going to the extreme, that they would be able to accomplish (them).
- CC: But you could respect what they were fighting for . . .
- HF: Oh, yes. I felt that they had a cause and, in fact, I say that I was more or less--by them keeping me from my seat for seven days, you could say that I was almost like them. (Chuckles)
- CC: Certainly I think it's true that many of them viewed your opposition to some of the Big Five kind of machine politics as being a cause in itself.
- HF: Yes.
- WN: The ILWU was associated with Communists, right? Okay . . .
- HF: No, not the ILWU, some of the leaders.
- WN: Okay, some of the leaders, right. Some of the leaders. And you received the wholehearted support or strong support from the ILWU.

- HF: Strong support from the leaders. Now, whether I got that from the rank-and-file, I don't know. In certain places, I didn't get it.
- WN: And also, but . . .
- HF: You can't control the members. Many of them were diehard Democrats. You couldn't get them to turn over.
- WN: But you were also very--looking back at your voting record and so forth--in terms of anti-Communism . . .
- HF: Yes, I was very strong.
- WN: . . . I think that you were very strong. Did you see that as sort of a contradiction? Or how did you justify it to people, by saying that you're anti-Communist, and yet at the same time, you're being supported by ILWU?
- HF: Well, they supported me because they felt that I was the better man or that they didn't like the other man or that they thought that my record was such that they could support me. I was anti-Communist, I was (a) strong military man. They were not strong for the military. I went there [to Washington, as a U.S. Senator], I was independent financially. If they want to throw me out, (that was) perfectly (all right). I only wanted one term. That's all I wanted. I (expected to) spend \$50,000 (during) one term, and then come home. Joe Farrington spent about \$50,000 when he was delegate to Congress. When I went there, I found that I didn't have to spend that kind of money because I had one vote and they all want that vote. You see, Joe Farrington never had that vote. And as a senator, they would cater to you rather than you cater to them. All I wanted was one term and I was ready to quit. But (when my term was up), we didn't have anybody, and the party says, "Now, you got to run again because we don't have anyone." So, I ran.
- Then I said, "I want to quit."
- They said, "No, you got to run again." (So I ran for a third term.)
- And (after my third term), Bill Quinn said that he would like to run, I said, "Fine, I'll step out."
- CC: Going back to the actual becoming a state, there was something called the Tennessee Plan and there was some idea that the territory had to develop its own constitution and some of that. You were fairly important in that whole situation . . .
- HF: Yes, I was . . .
- CC: What was that about?
- HF: . . . speaker of the House then. They told us that if we want to become a state, it would be better that we have a constitutional

convention. With that constitution framed, we would stand a better chance of having statehood. So, we did ask for a constitutional convention, and then we had an election of the delegates to the constitutional convention. I was elected vice-president--one of the four vice-presidents. Each island had a vice-president, and I represented O'ahu as vice-president. Tommy Sakakihara represented Hawai'i. I think Charlie Rice represented Kaua'i. And I forgot who represented Maui as vice-president [Arthur Woolaway]. Sam King was the president of the constitutional convention. We adopted a constitution. And I think the only delegate who didn't sign was Margaret Ashford. She didn't sign the constitution. Then, subsequent to that, I was not in the legislature at all when we got statehood. I was out five years, from 1954 to 1959. I was not in the Legislature.

CC: Another organization that was around--we spoke about one organization, the ILWU, but there was a group called IMUA. Who were they? And they were one of the groups that was saying that Hawai'i had Communists and things like that. At least, that was some of what they were . . .

HF: Well, I think IMUA was formed when they had the dock strike. They had the Broom Brigade. The women with brooms were marching. Well, you see, at that time, we were in very dire straits. The docks were tied up and we weren't getting the things that we needed from the Mainland. Many of the people were quite frantic. Businesses were going bankrupt and jobs were being lost. You could imagine then the feelings between the parties. So, many of the people who felt that the strike shouldn't have happened formed IMUA. But IMUA was not a very cohesive group. It was not a very cohesive group.

CC: Didn't have any internal discipline? People could just use the name? Was that . . .

HF: No, they had meetings, but it was not very disciplined. It was only I think a more contrary group to the ILWU strike.

CC: And yet, I know from talking to people who were involved in the Mainland part of Hawai'i statehood that IMUA continued to exist, at least in name, in sending material out about. . . .

HF: Yes, yes.

CC: So, that was a factor that had to be contended with.

HF: Well, in every movement, you find that you have organizations that probably is comprised of a few individuals with a Hawaiian name. And then, they sort of try to represent that they represent the whole community. You find that in every little neighborhood board now in every neighborhood where they want to kill a project. They just form a club and give it a Hawaiian name and say this club is against it. And the newspaper people always like to pinpoint who's against it. Then it becomes a strong opposition, but whereas, actually, there are very few people back of it.

WN: What about the Statehood Commission? How effective was it?

HF: I think they did a very good job. They did very good work. They laid plans for statehood, and they had speakers. They called for meetings. I think your uncle was one of the members of the Statehood Commission--"Kats" [Katsuro] Miho. Lorrin Thurston was then chairman, I think. But I was not too active with that. I was not active at all with that because I was in the legislature.

CC: There's another guy from Kalihi that had some influence on Hawai'i and the statehood question at the time, Jack Burns, I believe. Did you know him back in those days or . . .

HF: Well, Jack grew up in Kalihi. I grew up in Kalihi. Jack was about four or five years younger than I was. Although Jack said that---he used to tell people that he used to shoot craps with me, I don't remember any time shooting craps at all because when I was in Kalihi I never shot craps. (Laughs) I didn't have any money to shoot craps. But the fact that he became a politician afterwards and I was a politician, and we came from the same place, so lot of stories grew around us. Jack and I had been very close friends. When I was in the Congress he always would write me, and he always asked for help in various categories. I always came through with him. He always told people that I was very helpful to him. He and I got along. Personally, we were friends. Although he was a Democrat, I was a Republican, we worked together very well.

CC: How do you assess his leadership when he was in Washington before statehood? Do you think he was effective?

HF: He was effective in that the Congress was then very strongly Democratic. He became a very good friend of Lyndon Johnson. Through Lyndon Johnson, he was able to push through the act which asked for a study of a East-West Center in Hawai'i. It was Lyndon Johnson who was then chairman of the Appropriation Committee on legislative, judicial, and (state affairs). The committee that dealt with the State Department. State, legislative and judicial committee. (By our following up with) an appropriation we were able to accomplish the East-West Center. See, many, many studies had been made for various commissions, various things, but never materialized because there was no followup. Oren Long and I went to Washington and we followed up on that East-West Center, we got the appropriations. We were lucky because Lyndon Johnson was then the majority leader of the Senate. He was chairman of this Appropriations Committee. He inserted into the appropriation bill the amount of money needed for the East-West Center to start it. I think originally it was about a six or seven million dollars, something like that, although the construction cost came up to about thirty million dollars. When the bill went back to the House, it contained the provision of the East-West Center. Rooney from New York who was then chairman of the Ways and Means Committee never liked it because he was never consulted on that and he always fought it. But because of Lyndon Johnson's very, very dominant position in the conference committee,

the appropriation went through. Every year when the appropriation bill would come from the House, it would be cut. The appropriation for East-West Center would be cut, and we in the Senate would restore it back. I was on the Appropriations Committee, we restored it. Because we followed up, East-West Center is a reality. If we didn't follow up---like the North-South Center (study) which Senator Smathers pushed through. And after he left the Senate, nobody pushed it. The North-South Center never materialized. They're still talking about it.

CC: Do you think, basically, Jack Burns's relationship with Lyndon Johnson was what allowed the strategy that finally allowed passage of statehood?

HF: Yes, I think so. I think so. Because he talked with Lyndon Johnson, and Lyndon Johnson was quite a politician. In fact, Lyndon Johnson was one of the most Democratic presidents that I associated with. And out of all the presidents, I got along with him the best, I think. Although I was very close to President Nixon. But as a Republican and he [Johnson] as a Democrat, he and I got along very nicely because he had been majority leader of the Senate. When he became president of the country, we had a very fine relationship.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: One of the major obstacles while Jack Burns was campaigning for statehood, and probably before that, was the Southern bloc of senators who opposed statehood. Now, I know when you became a senator in '59, you probably met these same people.

HF: Yes.

WN: What kind of things did they tell you and why did they oppose statehood?

HF: Well, they thought that we were not ready for it. That we were infested with Communists. Although they didn't tell me ethnically, that we weren't in unison with the states, they say we were far away. But the surprising thing is that I got along very, very nicely with the Southern senators. Men like [James] Eastland (and) Strom Thurmond, for examples. They're very, very strong backers of mine. I think they thought that the person [from Hawai'i] that would go to Congress would be very, very liberal; would be more, I would say, well, far from being liberal but worst than being liberal. When I went there, they found that I was a (moderate). I was conservative in many, many matters. But when it came to civil rights and came to voting in things like that, I was very liberal.

But when it came to expenditures, appropriations, and things like that, I was (moderately) conservative. So, when they saw that I was an individual that they can speak to, that I wasn't off the deep end, they became very good friends of mine.

CC: Do you think that the whole racial question, and I think there was concern in the Southern bloc about the Civil Rights Act, do you think that was one of the reasons that they were reluctant to admit both--well, Hawai'i and Alaska, they viewed them as two votes for the Civil Rights Act. Was that an issue?

HF: Well, many of them thought that Hawai'i would be Republican and Alaska would be Democratic. But then, as it turned out, Alaska is Republican, Hawai'i's Democratic. It was a fight, naturally, between the Republicans and Democrats. We went in because Alaska went in and Hawai'i then came in. But it was one balancing the other. A Democratic state versus a Republican state. But later events showed that it was otherwise. So, many of them didn't feel that (we were ready). We were so small in comparison in population and in area size in comparison to the states, and many of them didn't feel that we should have representation. I think, probably, that was one of the reasons. After we got it, the things just. . . . There was no talk about it afterwards.

CC: What were some of the differences between politics when you were starting and when you were doing those things and how it changed?

HF: Well, take, for example, in campaigning. We used to go out on a political stump and we make our speeches, and we go home. We would pass out cards among the maybe 50, 100 people around there, and that would be all. I never went from house to house. My friend Tommy Sakakihara who comes from Hawai'i where they got to touch every voter, he came down and saw how I was campaigning and he gave me hell. He said, "Hiram, this is no way to campaign." He said, "How you expect to get elected?" He said, "You got to (go) house to house to see the people." He said, "In Hawai'i, we go three times and see the people."

I said, "Well, you're a small community, and so you have to do that. But we don't have to do it here." And that's the way we campaigned. I think when I spent \$600, I thought I was spending too much money in a campaign. We were elected for two years. One session in two years, sixty days. For example, we treated it as an avocation. It was not one of those (activities) where it was (overwhelming)--(that) we had to win to use the power that we (would then have). I was speaker of the House, I never pressured anybody. I never went out and tried to dictate to anybody. In fact, I was backing the (president of the) University of Hawai'i when (he) was a Democrat and gave him a lot of (support and funding).

I was a lawyer. I came to my office in the morning (to) do my law work. Went to the Legislature about 9:00, 9:30. When the session ended about 11:30, 12:00, came back to my law practice. About 2:00

when there were meetings, I went there. And this was done sixty days in two years. We were paid \$1,000 for the sixty days. So you can see that it was not an overriding position. It didn't mean as much to us. It was that we were elected. Yes, we went there, do our work, and went back to our other work.

CC: Do you think, today, there's more a question of personal ego involved with running for office than . . .

HF: Well, as soon as they increased the salary to \$1,000 a session--no, \$1,000. . . . No, let's see, what was it? What they paying them now?

WN: I think they get about \$15,000.

HF: Fifteen thousand dollars, yeah. As soon as they did that, I (said), well, what we're going to have is a group of retired individuals. They would be the only ones that would have the time to spend to go from house to house. And when they cut it up into small districts where each representative represented a small district of 7,000 voters--at that time, that's what it was, 7,000 voters--I said that you had to be very, very close to the electorate. And then I said we would have a group of women and retired people. But I never anticipated that many of them would not (have steady employment). Even though (chuckles) they were not retired. And you have now many people just being in the Legislature and that's their job. That's their vocation and this is their employment. I never anticipated that.

(Taping interrupted, then continues.)

CC: You said a couple of things that I think are interesting 'cause you talked about the style a little bit was easier when you were campaigning?

HF: Yes.

CC: Well, maybe there wasn't as much invested in having the office, in terms of it wasn't your full-time job. And yet, you were very innovative in terms of your campaigning later. Because a very famous campaign with you and Mr. [Thomas] Gill [in 1964, for the U.S. Senate] when you used television very effectively.

HF: Yes. You see, at that time when we first ran for office, that was 1938 when I first ran, we didn't even have radio.

CC: Just public open air . . .

HF: Just public open air. We had a lawyer by the name of O'Brien, and he had a powerful voice. He would lead the ticket because he had such a powerful voice. (Laughs) If you had a good voice, why, you really could get the votes in. You had to depend on your votes with(out) a loudspeaker. The loudspeaker came in afterwards. And

then, radio, and then television.

CC: Tell me about that television. You used a commercial against Mr. Gill that I thought was kind of interesting 'cause I think it was a really, you know . . .

HF: Well, you see, when Tom Gill was elected to office, the day that he was elected to office he began picking on me, he wanted to run against me, naturally. And he would make statements (on) what I did. And so, I chronicled (what he said). I never answered him all throughout the time and I chronicled everything he said. When he announced that he would run for the Senate against me, he came home quite early (from Washington). (He) missed quite a few votes. So, we used that against him (and the many untruths he said about me). We filmed one of the television scene where we would show an empty chair. We would have the coconut palm trees waving and somebody would strum the guitar once, and the speaker, somebody would say, "Tom Gill, he plays hookey. He can't be a senator." (Chuckles) And that was very effective against him.

(Many) didn't give me a chance at all because it was strongly a Democratic year. Lyndon Johnson was running against [Barry] Goldwater [for president in 1964], and Goldwater, as you know, is very conservative. That year, I knew that I had to make waves. So, at the convention, the Republican nominating convention for president, I ran as a favorite son of Hawai'i and I got six votes, I think, (chuckles) as a favorite son of Hawai'i. Lyndon Johnson overwhelmed Goldwater. In fact, every night when I used to make my speeches--not every night, but there were several times when I was speaking, somebody would get up and ask me, "Where do you stand with Goldwater?" There was one Japanese boy, he did that three times on me. So, one night at the Jewish hall up in Nu'uuanu, he got up and asked me, "What're you going to do with Goldwater?"

I said, "What's the matter with you? Don't you understand English?" I (said), "I've told you many, many times that Goldwater, he has his own platform, I have my own platform. I will do what I think is right. Lyndon Johnson beat Goldwater, I think, by 78 percent to 22 percent. (Yet) I was able to beat Gill. Up to that time, I think, I ran ahead of my presidential ticket with the highest vote when I got elected at the time when Gill ran against me.

Of course, Tom Gill (was eager) to debate me. (He was never bashful in speaking up). He said that I was afraid to debate him. Finally, we agreed to a debate. Fort Street was closed during the noon hour. The platform was set up for us to debate. At that time, he had asked several prominent national (personalities to come to Hawai'i) and one of them was Mrs. Humphrey, the wife of Senator Hubert Humphrey who was then a very strong senator in the Congress. I said to the audience that here I am, fighting against a whole national ticket, and that nobody came here to speak for (poor) me. Here's (this) man, Tom Gill, (who had asked) several (national figures) to speak for

him. I (accused him of not having) enough confidence in himself that he had to have these people (to plead for him). I accused him of even hiding behind a woman's skirt, of having Mrs. Humphrey coming down here (to help him). (Chuckles) That's how I ridiculed him. I won the debate (that helped me to win the election).

CC: Maybe, what are some of your observations since statehood passed? What did that mean? What had really changed as a result of statehood passing?

HF: Well, statehood meant that we have two elected senators. We doubled the proportionate representation by having two senators in the Congress. We have two representatives. If we went on proportionate representation, the number of votes in the electoral college would be (only two. With two senators, we gain two more electoral votes to four). We are doubling our power in the electoral college because of the two senators. (Also,) each senator and each representative has a choice of four candidates to the military colleges. Four to West Point, four to the Navy, four to the Air Force, and four to the Coast Guard. Because we have four representatives in Congress--two senators, two [representatives]--so there's sixteen members in the House in each military unit. This is one of the fringe benefits we have of being a state. When they pass appropriation bills for the states, Hawai'i, being a state, is included. When we were a territory, we were not included. We had to have special legislation to have the territories be included in the bill.

By having two senators there, we could influence Congress. Being a Republican, I could talk to my Republican colleagues. My Senate colleague Inouye was able to speak to his Democrats. And between the two, we were able to get things done. (Before) we went to Congress, (we) didn't (have an) appropriation for our defense [i.e., federally-funded] highway, although they were taxing our people. And so, we said it wasn't fair that you were taxing us and (not) giving us any appropriation for a defense highway. But they said, "How can you connect Hawai'i to any of the other states? How can you ask for a defense highway?"

I said, "Yes, we do need a defense highway because we have to get from one section of our town to the other section of town." As a result because he and I--Oren Long and I--were on the Public Works Committee, we were able to get thirty miles of defense highway which brought in about \$500 million dollars. So, (H-1) is a result of our being there. So, we have all these benefits and we are not discriminated.

CC: Are there any negatives? I mean, the whole population explosion? How do you see that? The fact that since we're a state, people can come from the Mainland . . .

HF: Oh, since we're a state, our business has blossomed forth here. We have all kinds of independent businesses. It's easier to get loans. There're more banking facilities. There are more facilities almost

every line. The big companies don't mind having their offices here. You see, many of them didn't want to come to Hawai'i because being a territory, we could have been cut off from the Mainland in case of any dire emergency. But now, we're an integral part of United States. We have a republican form of government. We're part and parcel of the United States. Before, we were just a territory. So, we have all of these fringe benefits which are invaluable to the state. That's the reason why you have so many people coming here.

CC: Any more?

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: How has the Republican party changed, very briefly, and what does the Republican party have to do to get back, become a powerful force in Hawai'i again?

HF: Well, Hawai'i, as you know, is unlike any other state of the union. There is no state like Hawai'i. Hawai'i has only one big city. Almost 80 percent of the people live in this big city, Honolulu. And the outlying districts, where the farmers are supposed to be conservative, they are under collective bargaining under the Wagner Act. You have the unions in the pineapple fields, the unions in the sugar cane fields. Because of that, there is no other state that has this kind of a setup where the rural section is also Democratically inclined. That's the reason why Hawai'i is such a difficult state for a Republican to win.

But now that the old time Democrats have usurped all of the positions and the younger people find that there is no chance for them, there is chance now in the Republican party for them. And I think they will be, with the president in the White House, we're seeing that many Democrats have now joined the Republican party. Like the ex-governor of Massachusetts, he's joined the Republican party. He's going to run against Governor Dukakis of Massachusetts. Two representatives have joined the Republican party. You will find that now there will be more leanings toward the Republican party because you have a president over there who can give patronage. Also, you have a Republican mayor now who can give some Republican patronage.

CC: Okay?

WN: Okay. Thank you very much, Senator.

END OF INTERVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ON HAWAI'I'S STATEHOOD

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