

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Helene Hilyer Hale

Helene Hilyer Hale was born March 23, 1918 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She was educated at Washburn High School, the University of Minnesota—where she received her M.A. in 1940—and Claremont College.

She began her teaching career in 1945 at San Diego State College. In 1947, she moved to Hawai'i and taught at Konawaena High School for three years. She later taught at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo from 1965 to 1966.

In 1965 she became the president of Hawaii Isle Realty, Ltd. and president of Hale Consultants, Inc. She served on the board of supervisors for the Big Island, 1955 to 1963, and was the chairman and executive officer from 1963 to 1965. She returned to county politics in 1980 as a member of the county council (formerly the board of supervisors), and served until 1984.

Tape No. 17-57-1-88

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Helene Hale (HH)

May 25, 1988

Hilo, Hawai'i

BY: Chris Conybeare (CC) and Daniel W. Tuttle, Jr. (DT)

Joy Chong: The following is an interview with Helene Hale. It took place on May 25, 1988, in Hilo. The interviewers were Dan Tuttle and Chris Conybeare.

CC: Okay, it's May 25. We're doing another in our series of oral histories with people who've been important to Hawai'i politics, and today we're talking to Helene Hale.

I'm gonna start exactly the way we started everybody else. And if you could tell us a little bit about your early background, when you were born, and where you were born, and something about your parents' circumstances at the time.

HH: Well, I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota. You want the date? (Chuckles)

CC: Yeah.

HH: March 23, 1918. And I was the first child. My father [Gale Pillsbury Hilyer] was a lawyer and my mother [Ellen (Harris) Hilyer] was a housewife. And what else would you like to know? I went to school in Minneapolis. I grew up; went to Washburn High [School], University of Minnesota. Graduated from University of Minnesota. And I was the third generation from the University of Minnesota because my grandfather had gone there, and my father had gone there, and then I went there, also.

DT: Well, in grammar school, were you the least interested in politics . . .

HH: I suppose, because I remember my father ran for municipal judge one time. And when I was about eight or nine years old, I took cards around my neighborhood for him. All I really remember about that was that in one house that I went to, the lady had a reputation as kind of a very strict old witch. And she came after me with a broom.

(Laughter)

HH: But my father was always interested in politics. He was a Republican, and during election times he'd always have these little things they gave away, you know, souvenirs. Little Republican elephants and things. So I liked that season because I was always kind of popular

around that time. I could give the students these things; the other fellow students. But outside of that---and in high school I belonged to a club called the Politics Club. We, I don't really remember what we did. Not very much, I guess. But, and then in college I was very interested in the peace movement. This was before World War II.

CC: Maybe you could describe that a little bit. What kinds of things were students doing?

HH: Well, it was during the time when the sit-down strikes, as far as organized labor was concerned. And we held---we put on plays. I remember a play we put on called "Gas," and depicted what would happen in New York City if gas ever came up to this apartment. And we went around making speeches. We didn't really do the kinds of things that later students did. Mostly it was meetings, and talking, and maybe rallies on the campus. That kind of thing.

CC: But that was in Minnesota, somewhat of a populist, anyway, kind of tradition that had developed prior to that.

HH: Yeah, that was in the heyday of the labor . . .

DT: Democratic Farmer Labor?

HH: Democratic Farmer Labor party, yeah. So we had a tradition of kind of being maverick, maybe you'd say, in Minnesota.

DT: Your father might have been interested in the [Harold E.] Stassen Movement. I think he was governor about the time you---about the period you were heading into the University of Minnesota.

HH: Possibly. I can't really remember who was governor at that time. I think maybe I was a little before Stassen. But that was quite a long time ago. (Chuckles)

DT: Well, even Hubert Humphrey was beginning to emerge, I guess. It was a little bit before his emergence.

HH: It was before he became mayor of Minneapolis [1945].

DT: Right, but Harold Stassen had been there and was cutting quite a national circle.

HH: I really didn't know much about Hubert Humphrey.

CC: Did you ever . . .

HH: It was in the days of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

DT: That we can be certain . . .

HH: That, overall, you know, that overshadowed everything.

CC: Did your affinity to the FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] kinds of politics bring you in any conflict with your father and his Republicanism, or did you discuss those things?

HH: No, because really by that time, Daddy had turned Democratic, too. The Democrats, I recall, probably saved our house, you know. They put a halt on all mortgage foreclosures and things like that, and was right during the depression. So I think Daddy really became a Democrat at heart by that time.

DT: But he never formally changed his registration?

HH: As far as I know, he, by that time, was not really active in politics so.

DT: And what did you major in at college?

HH: I majored in English.

DT: English?

HH: In education, English. Minored in speech, sociology.

DT: And prepared yourself to be a teacher right after that?

HH: I prepared myself to be a teacher because in those days, during the depression, number one, I wanted to be a lawyer like my father. But number two, lawyers weren't doing too well during the depression because they didn't get steady salaries and people didn't pay their lawyers. And the other thing was that it was quite unusual for a woman to be a lawyer, so they thought, you know, being a traditional middle-class family, I had to become a schoolteacher, like most of my aunts and the people they knew that were respectable. And also schoolteachers, at that time, were guaranteed. It was more of a secure position, so they were looking, you know, for security.

DT: And you moved to South Dakota right after Minnesota, then, did you?

HH: No, I moved to Nashville, Tennessee. I went to Nashville, after. I graduated from the University of Minnesota, and I couldn't get a job in Minnesota because I'm part Black and they wouldn't hire me anywhere in Minnesota. And so I went down south to Nashville, Tennessee and I got a job at Tennessee A&I State College.

DT: You were down there for how long?

HH: After graduation, and I was there for about a year. And then I got married and we went down to Georgia. My husband [William J. Hale] taught at Fort Valley, Georgia. And that lasted about a year and then we moved around from place to place. We moved to New York and moved to other places.

DT: Somehow it's difficult to imagine your being in the deep South for very long. (Laughs)

HH: Well, it's quite an experience. In Georgia my husband taught at a Negro college and it was a little town in Macon, Georgia. And just outside of Macon, Georgia. And we lived on Scuffletown Road and we lived in a trailer, because there wasn't any decent housing down there. And we went down to Florida and bought a trailer and took it up. Lived in the trailer. But it was an interesting experience. We only stayed there a year.

CC: Did you get involved in any political activity in any of your moves around the Mainland? Did you, when you . . .

HH: Uh, well, living in New York, my husband was very active in the march on Washington. And then when we went back down to Tennessee, he became the National Youth Administrator, director, or something—I don't remember the exact title—for the state of Tennessee, for the Negro population. And so he traveled all over the state. And I became involved with the Fellowship of Reconciliation. And I became one of their youth secretaries. And I had a really interesting experience. I went down to Montgomery, Alabama, which was the home of my mother. But I had no relatives down there at that time, so I didn't know anything. But I did go down to Tuskegee Institute and gave speeches on nonviolent resistance as practiced by [Mohandas (Mahatma)] Gandhi. And I often wonder whether Martin Luther King, [Jr.], might have been down there about that time. But I don't know. We had very small turnouts for things like that. But I did it long before Martin Luther King came along with his nonviolent resistant movement.

DT: That's very interesting.

HH: Yes. The Fellowship of Reconciliation is a nondenominational but kind of—it was not a really religious group, but I guess it grew out of a number of church groups. And one of the things they did also, was to go down into Mississippi—in Jackson, Mississippi—and had a work camp, based much on the Quakers' work camp idea. Only the Quakers would never go into the South with an interracial group. And the Fellowship of Reconciliation went down into Jackson, Mississippi back in—this must have been in the early [19]40s. And they went down and had an interracial work camp in Jackson, Mississippi. And it was very interesting because about half of the group was White and half was mixtures. But, we had a number of the White sharecroppers come around—we were building a camp for underprivileged children—and a number of the neighbors, the White sharecroppers, came and helped us. And the first time they'd ever associated on an equality basis with Blacks and Whites.

CC: Did you encounter any real negative experiences?

HH: No, not really. We didn't, no.

CC: I guess with much of that, really the hostility . . .

HH: Oh, possibly it was the way we were doing a project that would help the whole community, and it was something they could see was needed. You know, we weren't protesting and that sort of thing. Not even registering people to vote or anything like that.

DT: Apparently, they didn't perceive any political threat to them at that time.

HH: No, there was no threat.

DT: Then you gravitated west, did you, before you came to Hawai'i?

HH: Then we went to—my husband and I went to California. And he was 4-F, during the war, so we went to California and he worked in the defense industry. And just about that time we had our first child.

DT: And you taught at San Diego State [College] for a while? Is that right?

HH: I taught at San Diego State, but that was before. Then we gravitated around. We went to New York, where I had the baby, and we did many different things. We went back to San Diego, and that's when I taught at San Diego State.

DT: I see.

HH: My daughter was about two or three years old at that time. The interesting thing about that is that talking about the race problem, my husband and I are kinda light. We can pass for anything we want to. But the first time we went to San Diego, his uncle—who was a Black doctor and quite active in the community as the spokesman for the Black community, or Negro community, as they called it in those days—got him a job in Consolidated Vultee Corp. (aircraft builder). And they weren't hiring any other races in the early part of the war, so they put him—with a master's degree from Columbia University—sweeping the runway for the (chuckles) test planes. We stayed there about six months and then we went to Tucson, Arizona where he got a job on his own, an office job. So when we came back, he got a job on his own and I got a job on my own, and the race problem didn't appear, but it would have been detrimental if it had. So, still at that time, they were not hiring, even in the school system in San Diego, they were not hiring anything but White people.

So we've seen a lot of changes, you know, over the years. We've seen this whole Black power movement. We didn't get very involved with it, though, however, because we, having started to raise a family, wanted to raise our child in a more—in a freer environment. And that's why we came to Hawai'i. We wanted to be in a place where people could be of any kind of background and maybe be accepted on their own.

CC: What brought Hawai'i to your attention in that regard?

HH: Well, my sister-in-law had gone to Columbia and she was a very good friend of Florence Ahn [who was from Hawai'i], they had roomed together at Columbia University. And Florence Ahn, became—I think she became a very famous singer afterwards. Anyhow, my sister went to Hawai'i and—my sister-in-law—and my husband went to visit her. And she sort of made us interested in Hawai'i, when we found out more about it.

DT: So you decided to come. What year was this?

HH: So we came to Hawai'i right after World War II, in 1947. And we came as schoolteachers. Really, my husband came as a schoolteacher and I was going to stay home for another year, 'cause my daughter was only a little over three. But there was such a shortage and a dearth of schoolteachers, that we couldn't get a teacher's cottage to live in, unless I could teach. They didn't even ask me if, whether I was qualified to teach.

(Laughter)

HH: They wanted somebody to stay in the classroom in those days, because teachers—and particularly in the country. We, oh, I know why we decided to go Kona. Don Blanding came to San Diego State College, where I was teaching. And I was a freshman instructor and all the professors of the English department, they looked down on Don Blanding who was known

as a people's poet, you know. He wasn't a real famous poet. And so they gave him to me to take around the campus at San Diego State College. And I went to this convocation where he spoke on Hawai'i. And he told about Kona. And that seemed to be just an ideal place. So I went home and I told my husband, "Kona is where we want to go." We didn't want to go to Honolulu; we didn't want a big city. We'd always decided we---both of us were big-city people, but we thought we wanted to live in the country. And so we went up to look up Kona, and couldn't find it on any map. There's no such place as Kona on the map. And finally we figured that it was Kailua he was talking about.

And so my husband came over and applied for a job. And the department of education thought that he was crazy. Nobody wanted to go to Kona to teach. I mean, all the Kona teachers wanted to go to Honolulu, you know. So we were kind of suspect from the very beginning, because why would we want to go to Kona and teach, you know. But then when we got there, there was no housing, so I had to teach. They didn't really care whether I was [a] teacher or not. Luckily I was, but I wasn't teaching what I was qualified to teach. I had to teach physical education, which I was not qualified to teach. But the school system, at that time, really didn't care much about qualifications, I think.

CC: What were the schools like? What kind of student---who were the students you had?

HH: I taught at Konawaena [High School], both of us did. And the students were basically, well, I suppose 70 percent of 'em were Japanese. Hawaiians, the other. The *Haoles* all went to private schools; they went to Punahou. They didn't even go to the elementary school. There was a private elementary school in Kona for them. So, one of the things that we---this was right after World War II. You have to remember the Japanese had been suppressed during the war. And of course, coming from the kind of backgrounds that we came from, we didn't like any of it. We didn't like the economic system, which reminded us of the South. It was just like an old southern plantation. The feudal system; it was feudalism, really. And we advocated capitalism, where people could own their own land and build their own houses. And if you advocated capitalism in those days, they could call you a Communist, which they did, you know. So that's where we got that reputation. Actually, we were advocating capitalism, but they were in the feudal economy in those days, so they didn't really know.

But one of the things that my husband did was to dig up an old Japanese legend, and he put on a show for the assembly of the students about this. And this was---and then we danced in the *Bon* dances. And all of this was very bad. You just didn't do that, particularly if you were from the Mainland and if they thought you were a *Haole*. So you just didn't do things like that. And so we sort of became mavericks, right from the very beginning, I'd say.

CC: So you got in a little hot water with the school officials . . .

HH: Got in a little hot water, yeah. Then my husband only taught for one year and he went and tried various things. He sold---luckily we had a little other income, so we weren't that dependent on it. But he started a business of candy machines and some other things. Then the lava flow came down in 1950, came within 200 yards of our house. We were cut off on both sides and we couldn't even go home for six months, till they built roads over the lava flow in South Kona. And we bought---we had, in the meantime, bought an acre way down in South Kona, because that was the only place in Kona where you could buy fee-simple land. And we weren't about to get stuck with leasehold land and Bishop Estate or the Greenwells or

somebody telling us what to do, which is the way they controlled things in those days. So we went way down the country and got a piece, parcel of fee-simple land, which Madame Pele almost took, but didn't. It's still there. And well, I don't know. I can go on and on.

(Laughter)

DT: We may want to do this, by this time you were getting pretty well integrated into the community, more than you really bargained for.

HH: Yes, well, as I said, we'd been there three years. In 1950 my husband---well, it was the first constitutional convention.

DT: Right.

HH: So my husband decided to run for that, and he did. And I'm still teaching at Konawaena High School, because I didn't quit. He quit after a year; he got so disgusted.

DT: Okay, let's talk about that as soon as we change tapes.

HH: Okay.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

Joy Chong: The following is a continuation of the Helene Hale interview. This is videotape number two.

DT: From 1947 to 1950, Mrs. Hale, you became very well integrated into the community, it would appear, . . .

HH: Yes, we were active in the Democratic party, which in those days was real radical, you know. I mean, in the plantation communities, if you met in Nā'ālehu, I remember, you had to meet in the cane fields. So we went through that period in the development of the Democratic party, too.

DT: Now at that time, the Democratic party was divided, I guess, up in Honolulu and on a statewide basis, into the standpatters and the walkouts. These were the days . . .

HH: Those were the days, yeah.

DT: . . . in '48 to '50 when the conservatives, as I remember, sort of walked out.

HH: But you see, on the neighbor islands, the Democratic party was organized by the labor union [the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, or ILWU], which was at that time really getting a foothold on the plantations. And that's where the Democratic party was strong. It wasn't strong in Kona and it wasn't—was somewhat strong in Hilo, but mostly in the plantations, which dominated the economy of this island.

DT: So I think you started to mention after three years in Hawai'i, then your husband decided to run for the con-con.

HH: Yes, he decided to run for the constitutional convention. We thought we could do some changes. So he ran and that was a special election, nonpartisan, but there had to be a runoff if nobody got a majority. And there was a runoff. He beat Esther Richardson, who had been in the legislature for four terms—eight years—by that time. And because he was advocating the breaking up of the plantation system and selling the land in fee simple, which most of the Big Islanders couldn't do because the trusts had tied up their land. So they couldn't sell it in the deeds. But we advocated selling the land in fee simple to the coffee farmers, so they could build decent houses and live decently and people could own their own homes. And that was the predecessor [of] the Maryland land law. In fact we, I think we called it the Maryland land law. And of course, that really shook up the establishment in Kona. And because I was teaching at Konawaena, they tried to put pressure on my job, and you know, tell me he had to be quiet. Well, as I say, we were always independent, and somewhat financially independent, too, so I just wouldn't take that, and I resigned. I resigned my job as a schoolteacher, because I just didn't want the hassles. We'd had a number of hassles, and I'm not very soft about my hassling. (Chuckles) So, we had run-ins with the principal and whatnot.

But he didn't win in the general election, but it really shook 'em up that he beat this old longtime, established politician in the primary, in the first election. And then there was a runoff in which he didn't make it. And then he ran again in the next election, for the house, and I think he ran a third time for the house, maybe it was what, 1950 and then 1952.

And then in 1954, Joe [Joseph] Farrington was delegate to Congress, and he died in office in the summer. And by that time, I was selling books—I was selling children's books—and I was the territorial manager for the Book House for Children. And I was on the island of Kaua'i, training some new salespeople, and I get this call from my husband saying, "Well, if the reporters come to see you, don't do anything."

"What do you mean?" Then somebody knocked on my door in our motel unit, and here's the press. I'm running for delegate (chuckles) to Congress, because, by God, my husband had gotten out and circulated a petition in our 'Ala'ē precinct, which wasn't anything. And he had announced that I was running for delegate to Congress. Well, I always did tell him that, you know, he wasn't campaigning right; he wouldn't go around. And, in the meantime, you see, I'd been selling books. I'd been knocking on doors, and I'd gone house to house on practically every place on this island. And on other islands, too. So I had gotten used to that kind of thing. And I told him, "That's what you should do in politics." And of course, being a good loyal wife, I didn't want to show him up. But he did it, so (chuckles) I've always said it was his fault. And of course, I had no chance at all running against Betty [Elizabeth] Farrington. But he decided that he couldn't run, 'cause it was a woman and she was a widow, I had to run, you see. That was his reasoning, so I ran.

And I ran on the commonwealth [platform] until statehood. 'Cause having been in the South and the South was, you know, seeing the politics on the Mainland, I just was convinced that we would never get statehood. And therefore, I figured that we should be for commonwealth, at least not pay our federal taxes. And so that was my platform. And Judge [Delbert E.] Metzger, I think, ran in that same campaign, and he was for statehood. And of course, Betty Farrington beat everybody. She owned the TV station, the [*Hilo*] *Tribune-Herald*, the *Star-Bulletin*. She's the widow of the dead man and, I mean, how could you beat her? But we had fun. We put up soapboxes in 'A'ala Park and (chuckles) we went around. (Chuckles) We really had fun.

- CC: Who were some of the other people that were attracted to the commonwealth idea? I think that's kind of a . . .
- HH: I'm trying to remember. There's a fellow named [William H., Jr.] Willie Crozier.
- DT: (Chuckles) Yes.
- HH: Yeah, and then there was another lawyer. I can't think of his name right now.
- DT: Are you thinking of Hogan, are you?
- HH: Hogan.
- DT: Bob [Robert G.] Hogan.
- HH: He was very interested and active. And there were a few other people that were espousing this idea.
- DT: And what was the genesis of this Commonwealth party? Did it originate with you folks or . . .
- HH: Well, I think Puerto Rico had gotten commonwealth status by that time, and so we felt . . .
- DT: No, they'd talked about . . .
- HH: Well, they were still talking about it then, and at any rate, you know, we were paying a lot of federal taxes. And we weren't getting our money back, so it just seemed. . . . And this way, we'd be able to elect our own governor, which you know, coming from the Mainland, for us to have an appointed governor from Washington was just not democratic, you know.
- CC: Actually, Governor [Ingram M.] Stainback kinda flirted with the commonwealth idea, too, I believe, through Hogan. Through---I'm not sure if that's true, but Hogan was close to Stainback at one time.
- HH: My theme was commonwealth until statehood. I really was for statehood, but I just felt that we'd never get it because the southern senators were controlling things.
- DT: So when statehood did come, it sort of surprised you, I guess, along with other people.
- HH: Well, by the time it came, I wasn't surprised. I knew commonwealth was not going to be a viable thing, because we didn't get statehood right away. It took a long time. We had to become the fiftieth state, not the forty-ninth state, and the deals had to be made in Washington. So by that time, we were all for backing—we were backing "Jack" [John] Burns [delegate to Congress] and his statehood [plan]. There was no doubt about that. It's just that at the time that this occurred, we thought we weren't going to get it.
- CC: The other thing that surprised many people was that the Democratic party emerged shortly after that.

HH: Well, that was in 1954. Then, you see, because I'd lost but I gained some exposure as a candidate, and because I think—I always told them and I think it's true that they didn't want my husband to run again because they knew he wasn't going to win. And so they thought, here's a viable candidate. So at that time, Tom [Thomas M.] Cunningham was running as a perennial candidate for [Hawai'i] County chairman [predecessor to mayor's office]. He'd been a Republican, he'd been a Democrat, he'd been back again, and this time he was a Democrat. and that year, Jimmie [James K.] Kealoha [a Republican] was the county chairman. But that particular year, in '54, we had had a supervisor from West Hawai'i, Sakuichi Sakai, that had been on the board of supervisors for eighteen years as a Democrat. And sometimes he was the only Democrat. Sometimes when Tom Cunningham was a Democrat there were two of them. But that year Jimmie Kealoha pulled a "Frank Fasi" on us. [HH is referring to Frank Fasi, the mayor of Honolulu who encouraged three Democratic council members to switch to the Republican party in 1985.] He [Kealoha] signed up Sakuichi Sakai as a Republican. And Sakuichi Sakai, who was from North Kohala, by the way, he was an accountant from North Kohala. And he figured that well, he'd always been elected by Republicans, so why not change? So he changed and the Republicans beat him in the Republican primary that year.

So because they didn't have any Democrat running then from West Hawai'i, because Sakai had changed, and Tom Cunningham—there were three supervisors from West Hawai'i, three from East Hawai'i, and the county chairman—he [Cunningham] wanted to make sure he had four votes. And he wasn't sure about it because he would've been sure if Sakuichi Sakai was still a Democrat. So they approached me to run as a Democrat on the [Hawai'i] County Board of Supervisors. And so by that time, I'd gotten my feet wet in politics and I always did like it, so I agreed. And my husband agreed. And so I did; I ran. And because, as I say, because I had been all up and down the coast and (telephone rings) knocked on doors and sold children's books very successfully, by the way, to plantation people. And people did know me and I was used to knocking on doors. And I was the only Democrat then, on the ticket. And people in West Hawai'i were used to one Democrat. They'd give one Democrat. So I got in in 1954, on the board of supervisors. But Tom Cunningham didn't get in, so the Republicans still controlled our county in 1954. But they [the Democrats] took the state [territorial] legislature that year.

DT: Now that was a big election year for . . .

HH: That was a big year.

DT: But you---it's interesting. You didn't stick with the Commonwealth party, except through that one occasion then, when you were . . .

HH: It wasn't really a party.

DT: Well, it lasted till statehood. It lasted until . . .

HH: I wasn't a member of a party. Well, maybe it was a party, but I wasn't really a member of a party. I just---that was my platform, that's all.

DT: It was sort of a loose association, shall we say?

HH: Yeah.

- DT: Willie Crozier, I think, was still running for office on the Commonwealth ticket as late as '59.
- HH: Was he? By that time, as soon as I lost that election, I dropped Commonwealth.
- DT: So you went back to your status as a Democrat.
- HH: I was a Democrat. See, that election was a nonpartisan election. It was, yeah, it was completely nonpartisan. It was a special election; an election for Elizabeth Farrington. It was a special election and you didn't have to declare a party.
- DT: So officially it didn't really . . .
- HH: So officially I was not Commonwealth or Democrat or anything. Officially I was nonpartisan.
- CC: When you first ran, were gender or race any kind of issue when you threw your hat into the more serious—I mean, I gather . . .
- HH: Well, as far as race was concerned, I think most people thought I was a Mainland *Haole*, but I had been a schoolteacher for three years and there was an awful lot of respect for schoolteachers. So I had a lot of my former students who would help me, and I think that helped a lot. Of course, my husband had been a schoolteacher, too, but as I say, he wouldn't go out and knock on doors, you know, whereas I would.
- DT: There weren't many women out there, though, knocking on doors and being in politics, were there?
- HH: I was the first woman ever elected to a board of supervisors in the state.
- DT: I thought you were.
- HH: There was one on Moloka'i [Caroline K. Rodrigues], elected that same year, but she lasted only one term and I never met her. But we were the first. She was on Moloka'i and I was here on Hawai'i.
- DT: Not only were you the first, but you kept getting reelected, too, didn't you?
- HH: Yeah. Well, after you once got in, it's a little easier. People got used to a woman. [Up to] that time, you see, people had not considered a supervisory job a woman's job because most of the supervisors considered themselves super-road-overseers. They spent their time patching the roads. And I considered myself a policymaker, (chuckles) so I didn't stand out on the roads and tell the road people how to. . . . But I was very active in the UPW [United Public Workers], getting organized. And I worked with Steve [Stephen] Murin [a UPW organizer] and with—who was the—Epstein.
- DT: Henry Epstein?
- HH: Henry Epstein [state director of UPW]. They were very active. And we got---some of the things we did. We got the road workers to be civil service. Up to that time they were not

civil. I was concerned with these kinds of issues, not whether they were patching the road or not. I left that to my fellow men. But we got the road workers, who at that time were all per diem workers, they got hired ten days out of the month. And around election time, they got full-time jobs. And around Christmas they got a little extra, so you'd get money. And of course, that was a system that was just rampant with rotten politics, 'cause who got the jobs? Of course, the campaign workers. So I fought hard to get them civil service status, which they finally got. And I worked with the union in the old days. And the irony of it is, that although I was identified with the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] and the UPW, they have not been very happy to support me in the future elections because as they got more independent and got more powerful, they sort of wanted somebody they could tell what to do. As long as they were underdogs, I was very willing to fight for them. But when they became upperdogs and tried to tell me what to do, we didn't get along. (Chuckles)

CC: What were some of the other issues, though, in terms of the. . . Obviously, the plantation system was changing and you were looking at a rural plantation economy moving into something else. Were you involved in trying to talk about issues of development and things like that?

HH: Well, some of the issues we faced are haunting us today on the board of supervisors. For instance, the rapid development of Puna in the subdivisions on which a lot of our politicians were involved. They bought big tracts of land in Puna and sliced 'em up into paper subdivisions, without roads and without water and without utilities. And sold 'em on the Mainland because by that time, Hawai'i was getting known. We were just about ready to get statehood. And when statehood came, all of this big boom. Everybody wanted a piece of Hawai'i. So, you know, some people made lots of money subdividing our land. And it was a controversy. And I remember being concerned that we were allowing this to go on. But I was a schoolteacher, background. Remember, I didn't know very much about real estate or business, or anything else in those days. But it did seem to me that we would face problems down the way if people ever came and lived on those lots. And I used to warn my colleagues about it.

But on the other hand, we faced very practical problems, too, in terms of our real property tax. Because remember, we were still talking about getting home rule in the county in those days. Home rule was our real rallying cry. And we didn't even have the power to raise our real property taxes. We could set the rate, but we had a limit on the amount of money that we could raise, \$1,200,000. And this was, of course, to keep the plantations from spending too much money on their real property, which mostly they owned. So we could only raise \$1,200,000, and our fight was to get the ceiling lifted so at least the prices could go up and we'd get the ability to set our rates, which we, over the years, managed to get with a Democratic legislature. And this was all part of the Democratic platform, and it did work.

So, our concern was in this subdividing of these lands, that it would spread the tax base, and a lot of it would be paid by Mainland people. And they could no longer charge—assess that—pasture land or wilderness land, as they called it, for twenty-five dollars an acre. Twenty-five cents an acre, I mean. That's what it was assessed at. At least it would be a dollar an acre. (Chuckles) It would be four times as much revenue, and it would be paid by Mainland people. So this was why we got into those kinds of problems, but I think if you realize, in terms of the problems that we had then, it probably was as good a thing as we

could do. We didn't have any other alternative except our land. There wasn't any talk about any other kind of industries coming in. Tourism had not taken off. Even statewide it hadn't taken off.

DT: But you weren't content just to stay on the board of supervisors. You decided to break some new ground and decided to run for the chairmanship.

HH: I never wanted to be. I loved this island and I didn't want to go to Honolulu. I don't like Honolulu. I didn't like it in those days, even when it had only 200,000 people. It was too many for me. (Chuckles) We'd gone to live here, and I wanted to stay. So I was content to stay on the board of supervisors. And I got elected for four terms. And then, by that time, we were beginning to get some authority on the—we were beginning to get some home rule. I had been very active in starting the Hawai'i State Association of Counties, and we were getting together with other counties. And I was elected the first president of this Hawai'i State Association of Counties. And because it was our island that sort of started this thing, and by that time, we were beginning to get some little measure of home rule. But things were still running in the same old pattern, and [Hawai'i County chairman] Jimmie Kealoha had gone on then to be lieutenant governor [in 1959 with William F. Quinn]. And in his place had been [Thomas K.] "Lofty" Cook, who's a very sweet gentleman. A perfect gentleman and a beautiful person, but not much of a leader. And he took over the Jimmie Kealoha machine and the Jimmie Kealoha machine was running rampant. And then when Jimmie Kealoha ran against Quinn for governor [in 1962], Lofty Cook, who wanted to get along with everybody and was so nice, he just couldn't take sides. 'Cause his brother was [Elmo] Hinano Cook, who worked for Quinn.

DT: Can we pick it up right after we change tapes?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

Joy Chong: The following is a continuation of the Helene Hale interview. This is videotape number three.

DT: Well, I think we were just about to pick up the story about Jimmie Kealoha's leaving . . .

HH: Okay, Lofty Cook was chairman, and he, as I say, he's a very nice person. You just can't help [but] like Lofty, but he was not a strong leader. So as a result, because by that time, in 1959, I guess, we had gotten a majority on the—Democrats. I think we got 'em in '57, but at any rate, we had a majority of Democrats on the old board of supervisors. And what happened was, we were running the county. And the irony of it is, that a lot of the things that we put into motion. . . . Because basically, the old board of supervisors was an administrative body. They could, you know, they could make administrative decisions, but the problem was that the chairman was full-time and the board only met once every two weeks. So, you know, you can't administer something every two weeks. You'd make policy decisions and they wouldn't be carried out. And then you get frustrated. So, as a result, I decided, well, enough of this. This was---and I didn't realize that eight years wouldn't give you a pension.

(Chuckles) I wasn't even thinking that far ahead, you know, I didn't even worry about things like that. I decided that I couldn't stay on the board of supervisors unless we had a stronger chairman.

And I really didn't think about being chairman myself. I went to the leading Democrats. I went to see Stanley Hara. Stanley was involved in some of these subdivisions out here, and he felt that would be a conflict of interests so he wouldn't do it. I went to see Nelson Doi. I spent two hours in Nelson's office in the legislature. When he was senate president, Nelson was worried about beating the Jimmie Kealoha machine. And Nelson's always been a very cautious politician. He wants to get in with a big majority. I remember the first time he ran, he had to have 1,500 names on his petition before he would run. But, he's always been a very successful one, and I knew he could win. But he---you see, the Jimmie Kealoha machine had been in power for sixteen years, and it kind of mesmerized the Democrats, locally. They just felt, well, they could take over the board, but they couldn't take over the administration. And we had, Bob [Robert M.] Yamada had run [for chairman in 1958], and [Hiroshi] "Scrub" Tanaka had run [in 1960]. They'd all gotten beat, so, they were very discouraged about taking it over.

And I said, "This is the year! This is the year," I said, "because Lofty Cook will not take sides, and that whole machine will go down because the whole machine was interested in Jimmie Kealoha." And they were out for Jimmie. They'd care less about (chuckles) Lofty, so I can see that, you know, this was the chance to take over that machine. And so, anyway, then I told Lofty. I said, "Lofty, you can't sit on the fence." Jimmie had put him in where he was. He had been appointed, originally, by Jimmie [1953]; he had taken over from Jimmie. And I said, "You gotta be for Jimmie Kealoha." I wasn't for Jimmie, but I mean, Lofty had to be. But he couldn't make up his mind, you know, and so he tried to be neutral, as a neutral Republican, when there was a big Republican fight. And I told this to all the big-shot Democrats. And I saw Lofty. I even went to Scrub Tanaka. I said, "Scrub, you can make it this year." No, no, nobody wanted to try.

So I always, being an English teacher and a mother and reading the nursery rhymes, "The Little Red Hen," (chuckles), you know. Nobody else would do it, I said, "Okay, I'll do it myself." I'm either going to run this county or I'm gonna get out of it, because it was just no fun being there and making policy and doing all these things, and then not having them happen. So I ran [in 1962]. And as I anticipated, you know, the Jimmie Kealoha machine did not get very enthusiastic. And the Democratic party was then behind me, and Shunichi Kimura was chairman of the Democratic party. (Chuckles) And they didn't think I had a chance to win, you know, but they had to be backing me.

DT: They had to.

HH: So when I won, I never will forget the night I won. We had my campaign headquarters at my house. I had a little one downtown, but we had very little money. And we went down to the old, what's now the Woolworth building, was then the Hoffschlaeger building, where the Democratic party had a big headquarters. And I went in there. And I'm the new county chairman, you know, and all the big politicians were in the back room, poring over the charts, trying to figure out how I did it. I beat him by 200 votes, that's all. But, you know, 200 votes is 200 votes.

So that was the beginning of my troubles because they really didn't want Helene Hale as county chairman, and right then all of the big leagues decided that they could be. If I could be, they could be. And so they began to fight among themselves. Stanley Hara, and Shunichi Kimura. They weren't sure which one wanted to do it. And finally they decided. I had two years and I had to make a decision because I knew, I sensed, what was going on and I knew they didn't really want me. And there hadn't ever been a woman and, you know, women couldn't do a thing like this. So I said, "Well, I'm going to do it." And I fired all the Republican department heads, most of 'em. Went out and got my own. I even advertised through civil service, and I was told by one politician, "You can't do that. You don't pick your department heads by civil service." You know, well, I hadn't a machine. I didn't promise anybody any jobs, so I did. And I was lucky.

I couldn't find any women that were qualified that would take the jobs, but I put as many women as I could on commissions. But, so, I got almost all men. And in fact, I did get all men. But they were all local boys who had grown up here, and who had gone off and gotten degrees someplace else, and education, and experience. And they wanted to come home, but there were no jobs over here. So my engineer [Hajime Tanaka] was from 'Ōla'a, my parks and recreation director [Robert T. Omura] was from Kohala, and my planning director [Edgar Hamasu] was from near Honoka'a. But they were all local people. So we had a real good team, and I think we did a real good job, but we didn't play politics. And two years is not very long. And I had been concerned about waste in government, so we didn't hire a lot of people. So we didn't have new people to go out and beat the bushes for us [at] election time, you know. But at least I look back on those days and I feel that I can live with myself. I did it the way I thought it ought to be done. And if I stepped on toes, I stepped on toes. I had, during the process, fired my campaign manager [Harry Tanaka] who was the only political appointment I made, as purchasing agent, because there wasn't many qualifications for purchasing agent, really. And he wanted that job, so I gave that to him. And he got involved with one of the supervisors in some nonlegal bidding at Kohala Hospital. And I tried to make him put the blame on [the supervisor], Ikuo Hisaoka, but he wouldn't. (Chuckles) So he went down in the process. So when you fire your campaign manager, you've sort of lost, particularly if he's Japanese and (chuckles) has a big influence on the Japanese.

CC: Let's stop. Can we stop here? We have a problem.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

CC: You were saying that you won the chairman's job, and quickly ran into some difficulty with the supervisors.

HH: Well, you see, Democrats had been playing footsie for years with all department heads. And I fired 'em all. I wasn't going to have any of 'em, and so that didn't sit too well. And I hired a bunch of new people that none (telephone rings) of them had anything to do with, so they weren't going to approve my appointees.

(Telephone rings. Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

HH: So that was my first fight. And ironically enough, it was Shunichi Kimura, who later beat me, who got all the Democrats together and they finally all agreed that they would. The real one in controversy was the fire chief [Edward J. Bento]. The fire chief wanted to stay on. The

rest of them weren't really a problem, [but] a lot of them [supervisors] had obligations to the fire chief. And I insisted. The fire chief was one of the main ones I wanted to get rid of, because some of the things that had been going on that I was aware of was that he had been borrowing great sums of money for various and sundry things. And he had been getting his firemen underneath to co-sign notes. And I thought this is illegal. Now we have laws against such things. But you didn't have any ethics, you didn't have any laws in those days, and to me, he was the main one that had to go. And he was the main one that was going to stay, and so we fought this. And the thing is, that there was a statute that the fire chief had to live on the island for a year, so I couldn't go off the island and get a fire chief. I had to get it from within the department, and all the firemen were afraid that I couldn't win, so none of 'em wanted to apply for the job. (Chuckles) But finally, one of them did tell me. He says, "Well, if you don't hire Bento, I will be available." He was a battalion chief.

And so, I said, "Well, I'm not going to hire Bento, so you're it." And we got him, and we won the battle. We got our department heads. I just published all their names and all their qualifications in the paper and said they were appointed. And [if] the board of supervisors wasn't going to approve 'em, they were the ones who got to learn. So . . .

DT: You won that . . .

HH: We got 'em. We won that battle.

DT: You won that one and then quickly . . .

HH: But then, you see, in my inauguration address---and I had Governor [John] Burns down here, and Nelson Doi. We had a big inauguration. Remember, this was the year that Burns got elected, too. So I'd copied after him. He had a formal party with tuxedos. We had a formal party with tuxedos. We did everything Burns did. The Democrats were taking over (telephone rings) Hawai'i County. And so, at any rate, in my inauguration speech---I had been working for a new county building. Our county building was coming to pieces. It was full of termites and we were going through the floor. And we had let a contract. We had designed one and everything. And so I said we were going to build that county building. And that was my Achilles' heel. They went to the state legislature that year, and that was after the tidal wave of 1960. So they got a million-dollar appropriation to---if we put the county building in the Kaiko'o Mall. And we'd already chosen the spot for the county building. It was twenty acres out here where the nursery is. And we had plans drawn, we were ready to let the bid and everything. And in fact, ten days before the bids were to be opened, the board of supervisors decided that they would not open those bids. So I never got my county building built. And although I did get the county building started while I was there, and signed the contract, my name is not on the county building. My name's only on the water---we changed the name from sewer treatment to water control pollution plant. (Chuckles)

CC: Maybe tell it. It's kind of a good story. You said that you went to Washington and . . .

HH: I went to Washington. I worked with our congressional delegation, all of whom were very helpful. I managed to convince 'em that our sewer system was worse than anything outside of Washington, D.C. And they gave us the second-largest grant. And by the way, my fellow board members didn't want me to go to Washington. They would not approve my trip until they had called Dan [Daniel] Inouye's office and talked to one of his assistants, who assured

them there was no way possible I could get this grant.

(Laughter)

HH: So, then they approved my trip to Washington. But I worked hard and Dan Inouye didn't know anything about this. And so I worked with all of the congressional delegation, and we did get the [grant]. But when I came home, the irony of it, when I announced this \$5 million thing, I also had to announce I fired my purchasing agent [Harry Tanaka], who was my campaign manager. (Chuckles) So they sort of, you know, canceled out one another. But by that time, what the heck. I had done what I wanted to do. It's just too bad. I brought some good people down and we were really getting to straighten out the county. But . . .

CC: You also ran afoul with the ILWU about somewhere . . .

HH: Well, I did because they wanted Eddie [Edward] DeMello on civil service [commission], or something, and I wanted a woman. And I said, "I'll appoint a woman." And there were two appointees at that time. There was one from Honoka'a, who was a plantation man, and there was Eddie DeMello. And my point was, "I'll appoint Eddie if we don't appoint this other guy and I can appoint a woman." But, you know, when the ILWU wants something, they want something. They wanted these two and they wanted them tied together. And they wanted 'em done right then, and I wouldn't do it, so they got mad at me. And that's why they. . . . Also, I ran afoul of George Martin because—that Eddie DeMello thing, by the way, was before I became chairman. The one that [I] was chairman was George Martin. He wanted to be on the Hawai'i Redevelopment Agency [HRA], and that was having problems. And the (telephone beeps) superintendent of schools over here, at that time, I can't think of his name now. [Ralph H.] Kiyosaki was . . .

CC: Excuse me, but is that the phone? Do you think. . . .

HH: He was there because he had been on [the HRA], and you could only appoint one every year. And George Martin's term came up. And Kiyosaki [HRA chairman, 1960-64] had sat in my office and told me how George Martin was running things, and what a difficult time he was having. And so I said, "Okay, I won't appoint him." And then when the time came, you know, everybody—the whole HRA said George Martin's a wonderful person. They all disappeared. So I got in trouble and they finally. . . . George Martin stayed on. But the ILWU got angry with me. George and I are good friends now, but these things do happen. That's politics.

DT: You decided, though, to run for reelection?

HH: Oh, yes. I wasn't going to give up. But, I guess I kind of knew it was a hard battle. Meantime, Shunichi Kimura, who was a lawyer, got a job as the third deputy corporation counsel in the county, which meant that he went out into the country. And I got reports all over the island that, you know, he was supposed to be doing legal work, but he was also on the board of education. So he was making---and the board of education, in those days, had (telephone rings) a big say so about the principals. So he managed to get a whole coterie of vice principals moved up to principal, acting. And he never resigned from the board of education. And of course, they knew that if he got back on and they didn't vote for him, that they wouldn't be acting principals anymore. So all these schoolteacher friends, all of a

sudden, turned against me. Not all of 'em, but the principals, many of whom I had depended on and who had been for me. So that's the kind of politics that was played, but I just felt well, if that's what it takes, it takes.

DT: But even after being defeated in '64, I guess it was, you came back on . . .

HH: I came back again and then again because . . .

DT: . . . the county council.

HH: . . . he had undone a lot [of] the things I did. (Chuckles) And I wanted people to know it. But he was a good politician, and I wasn't. And Kimura's the kind of person that, you know, he's a real smooth talker. And a nice person. Basically, he's done a lot of good things. I'll say that. He had done a lot of good things and he tried hard. But the system was just a little bit more than he could handle, and he wasn't willing to sacrifice himself for the system. So that was why I ran again. Then I ran again in 1968, this time for the senate. I ran for the constitutional convention. And that was the year that all the incumbent senators got in. And so then I gave up for ten years.

DT: You weren't on the county council after they got home rule? Did you serve on the council at that time?

HH: Yes, in 1980 I went back, 'cause I went to the con-con [constitutional convention]. After ten years, in '78, I ran for the con-con and I got in. And by that time, I was no longer with my first husband, who had run for the con-con. And I had a second husband [Richard Kiyota], and I ran for the con-con, and then I got in and I got a taste of politics. And I was very much a maverick, and an independent in the con-con. I didn't go along with John Waihee. And we had an independent group that worked hard for initiative, referendum, and recall. We didn't get it, but we came close. And then I decided, in 1980, I'd try again for the---I'd try for the council. And this time I won. And I led the ticket.

DT: You served until '84.

HH: And I served till '84, then I decided that [Dante] Carpenter wanted to be mayor, and nobody was going to run against him. And I just didn't believe that anybody should get the job of mayor without competition and I was as qualified as he was, so I decided I'd run for that. And I was having trouble, also, with some of my positions on the county council, because I could see the business community was beginning to turn against me because of my stand on the nuclear ordinance and a few other things. So I decided . . .

DT: I see. Maybe you could talk a little bit more about this period, and I guess we'll have to change tapes and pick up this period in a little bit.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

Joy Chong: The following is a continuation of the Helene Hale interview. It's videotape number four, and this is the last tape of the interview.

DT: Did you have a position on putting the legislature in a straitjacket about the limitation on the

amount that they could appropriate?

HH: Oh yeah. I was all for the financial things.

DT: You were all for the financial things.

HH: I was for the financial things.

DT: You constitutionally liked to restrict the legislature.

HH: And giving the money back to the people. Yeah, I was all for that.

(Laughter)

DT: I won't ask whether you're still for that or not.

HH: Yeah. I think it should've gone back to the people. At least not just a token. I think they should've sent something back.

DT: Well, once it's on the books, I suppose . . .

HH: Hundred dollars, or something, at least.

DT: Well, you enjoyed the con-con experience, then, I gather, a great deal.

HH: Oh, I enjoyed it because I didn't have any responsibility and I could go and just, you know, do my thing, which I did. I enjoyed it.

DT: It gave you a chance to get acquainted with John Waihee, who later became governor.

HH: Well, I watched John Waihee. I watched how Waihee put his thumbs up and his thumbs down and this little fifty votes jump up and down. (Laughs) But John and I weren't getting along too well in the con-con.

DT: But you've since patched things up, I think, you said.

HH: Yeah, and I mean I'm not . . .

DT: For ceremonial occasions.

HH: I mean, politics to me, is a serious business. But it's not a personal business. Not personality. And I don't carry chips on my shoulder. I'm, you know, I'll even be civil and nice to Shunichi Kimura and to Stephen Yamashiro, if he'll let me.

(Laughter)

DT: And then after the con-con, you reentered politics, I guess, after getting a taste of it again.

HH: Yeah, that was in '78. So in 1980 I ran as a county council [member].

DT: By this time, Hawai'i County had achieved home rule some several years before.

HH: Oh yes, yes. We got a charter in 1969, so now we were a council.

DT: And . . .

HH: And I had immediately ran into difficulty there, because we [the Democrats] had a majority on the county council. But because I led the ticket, and because Stephen Yamashiro was chairman, he was deathly afraid I wanted to be chairman of the council. So the next morning, when I went in to congratulate him, he's poring over the results, trying to figure out why, you know. And he calls a special meeting of all the Democrats, except myself and Bill [William] Kawahara, at the Naniloa [Hotel], and assures himself of the five votes necessary to be chairman. And I didn't really want to be chairman. That's the irony of it. He never really believed it, but he. . . . And so, he got himself his five votes and then one of the votes was a little bit weak. And we could have put Merle Lai in as chairman, but Merle wouldn't go for herself. She would have been the fifth vote. She said she had made a commitment to Yamashiro.

So we started off on the wrong foot, and all because he called this meeting without us. If he called the meeting with us there, he still had the five votes and he would have been able to do it. But when he ignored us, Bill Kawahara and I—who were Democrats and Bill was from Kona and he had been fighting Bill in the previous council—I went to the Democratic party and I said, “Look. We all campaigned as Democrats. What is this? Holding a private caucus without inviting all Democrats.” So they got us all together and they'd already made their. . . . I said, “I don't want to be chairman.” But I, you know, I didn't want him to be chairman. But, really, I was the only one who voted against him in the final analysis, because I just felt that the way he did it wasn't right.

But I did manage to save the rule on the council that would allow people to speak on items on the agenda before the meeting. And that was one thing that Yamashiro had unsuccessfully tried to get off. And so we compromised. We said---before that, there'd been a lot of controversy, before I was on the council, and people had come up and talked about extraneous things, you know. And so we made a rule: if it was on the agenda, you could speak before the meeting. If it was not on the agenda, then you could speak at the end of the meeting. Which was all right. I would agree to that. That was a compromise. And so that was the way it was. And then in 1984, when I ran for mayor and got beat, I knew that one of the first things Yamashiro was going to do was change that rule back again. And sure enough, he did. So I've been fighting him for the last four years on that rule, until we got the state legislature through Common Cause to pass the law saying that all commissions had to allow testimony on items on the agenda. Then the question was: is the council a commission? And we had to go through all that. But we finally got a ruling from the corporation counsel, and they had to change the rules. But it took us two years, and I [worked] as an outsider to get that rule changed.

But that, to me, is why I'm going back on the county council right now, hopefully. Because to me, it's very important that we have open government, and that we listen to the people, and that we let them put their input in. Suppose it takes all day. We're getting paid; they're not. And I think we have an obligation to sit and listen to people. I don't care how radical they are or what their positions are. I will always listen. And so that's one reason I'm going

back on the county council, or I'm trying to go back on the county council.

CC: What were some of the other issues in that 1980 to '84 period? What were some of the other big issues happening over here?

HH: Well, a lot of development issues because Kona was growing very rapidly. One issue was very interesting because I brought it up last night at a meeting I went to. There was a development called Y-O [Limited, a residential development in North Kona]. And it was just above the proposed new Kona sewer treatment plant. And Bill Kawahara wanted to force 'em to put in dry sewer lines so that when the sewer plant got built, that they would be able to hook on. And Yamashiro didn't want it. So he called a special meeting, the first week in December. He wanted to call a second meeting the second week in December, which is very unusual. And on the second meeting we had four votes trying to call for a public hearing, because our charter says that if three members will call for a public hearing, we can have a public hearing on any ordinance. And he used all kinds of parliamentary tactics to not allow that vote. And we couldn't find the corporation counsel, who was in cahoots with him, who disappeared. So we couldn't get an opinion. And so they passed this without the sewer lines. And the irony of it is, that six years later—just a couple of months ago—they still have not built this subdivision, with or without the sewer lines. And they're asking for an extension, you know, because they didn't get the money, and it didn't pan out, and they didn't make their millions. And so finally, the council didn't extend it. But it was that kind of fights that we were having on charter and on procedure. And when you're dealing with a very dictatorial chairman, you can have a lot of fights if you don't believe in that kind of leadership.

CC: Somehow, you've got a reputation over here as having a nuclear-free county. How did that happen?

HH: That's right, we did. 1981 we passed a nuclear-free ordinance. It would have exempted agricultural products, however. And then in 1984, it became an issue because some of the activists wanted us to go out there and stop the navy ships from coming in for the Merrie Monarch Festival, which was ridiculous. And I tried to talk to them. And I said, "Look, Jim,"—I talked to Jim [James] Albertini [anti-nuclear activist] and I said—"All you're going to do is get the ordinance." Which is what he did. He jumped in front of the boat and that, you know, that coalesced the opinion of the community that this was wrong. And I said, "That ordinance was only symbolic." We were the first county in the whole—first local government in the whole country—to pass such an ordinance. And now there's some thirty-four, thirty-five that have done it since. But then they put an amendment to exempt the military. Well, if you exempt the military, who else carries nuclear weapons, you know. So the thing is meaningless right now.

CC: Dan?

DT: You ran for mayor in '84, then, against Dante Carpenter.

HH: Yes, that's right.

DT: That was sort of like running against Mr. Picture Perfect, wasn't it?

HH: Well, that's right. I mean, a handsome Hawaiian, you know, who looked the part of mayor

(chuckles) and who talked glibly, and he had a number of. . . . But there was opposition. You remember that Dante Carpenter who was the one who put in [Richard] Wong in the senate [as president].

DT: Right, right. There were problems there.

HH: And broke John Ushijima. So I had a feeling that maybe there would be an undercurrent, you know, against him. And there was, but not enough.

DT: It wasn't sufficient.

HH: Wasn't sufficient. They wouldn't come out actively to support me.

DT: And so now you've decided you'd like to go back on the council for the sake of these government issues . . .

HH: Well, the council because there are three incumbents, and I'm going to have to knock off one of 'em. They're Democratic incumbents. It's not going to be an easy fight, but we'll see.

DT: So you anticipate a tough primary.

HH: That's right.

DT: Before we conclude, would you like to, would you care to, maybe you'd care not to, but would you like to react to some of the, remember the outstanding traits of a few names like Bill [William F.] Quinn, for example?

HH: Well, Bill Quinn is a nice affable guy, and I think he made a fairly good governor for his time. He was a Republican and I was a Democrat, but when "Jack" [John] Burns ran against him, I was for Jack because I felt that the Republican party just doesn't represent the people of this state, in my opinion. And it was mostly because he was a Republican, than himself as a person.

DT: So you had a lot of kindly feelings for Jack Burns then, which would be another name I would list.

HH: Yeah, Jack and I were friends from the days when we fought, you know. We didn't get along too well, toward the very end, because the people surrounding Jack were the people, a lot of 'em, were not for me. So I wasn't very close to him toward the end.

DT: What about Jimmie Kealoha? You mentioned him. What stands out in your mind about him?

HH: Oh, Jimmie is an affable Hawaiian, you know. He was the Dante Carpenter of his day, and . . .

DT: I don't know. You might disagree with me, but of all the politicians I think I've ever known, he had more charm than any individual I can remember.

HH: He did.

DT: I don't know. You might disagree.

HH: You couldn't dislike Jimmie, you know. You couldn't dislike him. I fought him tooth and toenail on issues, but we were always good friends. Yeah. I even, when I was chairman, named a park after him. James Kealoha Park.

DT: Well, very generous.

(Laughter)

HH: And he was still living.

DT: What about George Ariyoshi?

HH: George and I have an interesting history. He got elected in '54, when I got elected. He was chairman of the public utilities committee [of the senate], and we got through his committee, a resolution asking the rural electrification administration to come down here. We had to even go find that resolution, which had disappeared off his desk in the bottom drawer of "Doc" [William] Hill's desk, who was head of Hawai'i Electric, so those kinds of things went on. But George has forgotten all those things, and George's people and I don't get along. They're not my kind of politicians. They're machine politicians, and I'm not a machine politician. I didn't think too much of George's administration, very frankly.

DT: Well, you had a choice . . .

HH: I liked his controlled growth, you know, preferred development or whatever he called it. But I thought it was all mouth.

DT: Didn't know . . .

HH: No, there wasn't much substance to it.

DT: Well, this in mind, and given the passage of years, and given your long-standing history in the Democratic party, what do you see as the future of the Democratic party? Is there a party there for the future or is it going to be strictly party politics?

HH: Well, it's probably going to be a splintered party. It always was, right, [as] you pointed out in the very beginning. And it'll be more and more splintered. But we're getting a lot of people coming into this island, and I think all over, who are Democrats—*Haoles*—which was not true in the old days. The *Haoles* all tended to go to the Republican side. And that will make a difference in the Democratic party.

DT: I would, sort of by implications, say there's not much of a future for the Republican party, then?

HH: I don't think there's any future. I always said they have a death wish. You know, they get two good candidates on the West Hawai'i side, and they got people running against 'em. And we got some no good Democrats, they ought to run against, and they don't put any candidates up against them, so they just don't make sense to me.

DT: So organizationally, you can't follow them.

HH: Well, I can't follow them philosophically either, but particularly after [Ronald] Reagan.  
(Chuckles)

DT: Whoops.

HH: Whoops.

DT: You tossed a name in there that I hadn't even mentioned.

HH: Reagan? Reagan's a disaster. He, however, acts the part of president beautifully. It's probably the greatest acting role he ever took. But I don't think actors can be president.

DT: I think I'm about finished. Do you have anything more, Chris?

CC: No, I want to thank you very much.

HH: Thank you.

CC: We've had a very interesting time here, this morning. And I've learned a lot and I want to thank you.

DT: Yeah, thanks a lot. I appreciate it.

HH: Oh, okay. It's fun. I like to talk to people.

DT: I thought you'd enjoy it.

HH: Especially if you put me on television. I don't know whether I'll like it when I see it.

(Laughter)

END OF INTERVIEW

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