BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Adam A. “Bud” Smyser

Adam A. “Bud” Smyser was born in York, Pennsylvania in 1920. He was educated at William Penn Senior High and Pennsylvania State University, where he received a B.A. in journalism in 1941.

During his early years as a newspaperman in Pennsylvania, he was a part-time reporter for York Dispatch, 1937 to 1941, and a reporter and re-write man for Pittsburgh Press, 1941 to 1942.

Smyser first came to Hawai‘i in 1944 as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, and decided he wanted to live here when the war was over. Upon his return, he was hired by Riley Allen of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin as a political reporter in 1946. During his long tenure at the Star-Bulletin, Smyser’s various positions include assistant city editor, city editor, managing editor, editor, and editorial page editor. He is currently a contributing editor.
MK: This is an interview with Mr. Adam A. "Bud" Smyser on June 8, 1990, being held at the KHET studios in Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

I guess first of all, we can start off with your parents’ background. Who were they, a little bit about their background, their schooling, and the types of jobs they held.

AS: I’m what’s called a Pennsylvania Dutchman. That’s really a German. The people from Germany migrated to Pennsylvania, a great many of them, early in the eighteenth century. And my own family left a town called—on my father’s side—left a town called Dinkelsbühl around 1715 or so, and migrated to Pennsylvania.

I had a chance to go back there, Dinkelsbühl, in 1970, I believe. And asked myself, do I feel any vibrations from over these 200 years, or whatever it was, 260 years, I got. And we arrived at the town at night and there was a little Walt Disney-type town. Actually, Disney had used it to film some shows, because it had the—it was a walled town, it had cobblestone streets, and very picturesque. And we went to a beer hall and I didn’t feel any vibrations at all, but it was fun.

But the next morning we went out and visited the countryside. And then I realized that these German farmers, who were involved in all the series of wars had decided to migrate away from this farming country in southern Germany, and Bavaria, and had moved to the New World, and had looked for farming country that was very much like the farming country they had left. And that was where I did—I wouldn’t say I felt vibrations, but at least I felt a sense of identity, that I knew that they had simply traced back from one farming area to another farming area.

So, my parents [Adam M. and Miriam Smyser] came through that background. They both were Pennsylvania-German entirely, I think, on both sides. My grandfather on my father’s side was a farmer and a banker in a little country town. And my mother’s father was a tailor. And my father went to the University of Pennsylvania, class of about 1909, and studied law, but never practiced. He became, first, a real estate developer and a builder in the Philadelphia area and then New York-PA [Pennsylvania] area. And then he went into a furniture manufacturing business that went bankrupt in 1927. We always boasted that he anticipated the [Great] Depression by two years. (DT chuckles.)
And so, that obviously affected our family economy. And we never starved, but we did get into situations where when milk was only twelve cents a bottle or ten cents a bottle and we had six kids, our overdue milk bill amounted up into $400 or so. And the milk bottles would be put on the back porch and they’d freeze sometimes, and the little cone of cream would come up out of it. But in an empty milk bottle there would be a note with a bill saying, “Attention is requested to this bill.” But the reason we weren’t cut off was that in the depression, the farmers had no other outlet for the milk, so they’d just as soon have money owed to them as throw it down the gutter. And basically, my father didn’t [want to owe money]. Finally, do some real estate work for the man who owned the milk company, and got the bill canceled as part of his commission. So they got their money back, but... So, we had a tight living financially, but as I say, we never starved. But the depression, I think, is a significant experience in my life and I particularly think of that when I compare my attitudes with those of young people today, who came up through a more secure kind of existence, and who take things for granted that people my age just don’t take for granted.

So with your dad going bankrupt and the depression coming on, how did the family manage?

Oh, he went bankrupt in the furniture business, and he went back in the real estate business. And he preferred the big sale, maybe the $100,000 sale, which was a very big sale those days—that would be like a multimillion-dollar sale today—out of which he was supposed to be entitled, I think, to a 5 percent commission, $5,000, which would pretty much be enough for us to live on for a year, as I remember. Well almost always, the person selling the property would talk him into, or force him, I guess, into taking only half a commission or something, so he never got the commission that he expected. But we always made do. And we, as I say, we perked along.

My oldest sister went to college with the family scratching up money. My next two sisters really worked to support her and send her through college. They never got to college. And then I was a son coming along six years behind number three sister and it was determined that a son ought to go to college. So everybody scratched around and we got the son through college, and we got my brother through college, and then my younger sister through college, too.

Let’s see, this is all in and around York, Pennsylvania? Is this western Pennsylvania?

No, this is eastern Pennsylvania near—Lancaster and York are the red and white rose counties, and they’re just a little bit ‘Ewa of Philadelphia, a little bit west (chuckles) of Philadelphia. (DT chuckles.)

And you went to public schools... .

Yes.

... there?

And Penn State [Pennsylvania State University] which is a public university.

And Mr. Smyser, when were you born?
AS: Nineteen twenty.

DT: Grammar school and high school, I think in high school you did some writing, so you had sort of a propensity toward writing? In high school at least?

AS: A good friend and I kind of put out a makeshift news, I think, even when we were in seventh and eighth grade, and in elementary school. This is one of the schools where two classes were taught in the same room at the same time. And so when the other class was up reciting, we could sometimes work on our little newspaper. And then we also worked together on a junior high school paper and on a high school paper. And so, I guess, when I got out of high school, I was offered an engineering scholarship and a journalism scholarship. And the engineering scholarship would have been more remunerative, but the die was cast and I took the journalism scholarship.

MK: What was it about journalism that attracted you?

AS: I guess just that it was interesting. And I was working, in addition to being the editor of the high school paper, I worked as a stringer, it was called, for the local evening paper. And I collected news items. I was paid by space, so the more space I could fill in the paper, the more money I got. I think I got ten cents an inch or something. But I discovered that one way to fill a lot of space was to go to the hotel registers and copy off the names of people who were visiting in town and make a separate item out of each one. After I had done this for a while, the editor called me in. I was sixteen, I guess, or fifteen [years old]. The editor called me in and said that I was writing the most interesting column in town and that I better stop, because I was reporting about people in hotel rooms who should have been home with their wives and things like that.

(Laughter)

AS: That was called off on account of rain. But . . .

DT: Gee, I was just going to ask you if you were interested in politics in those days, . . .

(Laughter)

DT: . . . you bring something else up.

AS: Well something else that happened always fascinated me. I was made the telegraph editor for a week or two on a substitute basis. And again, I don’t think I was more than about sixteen. That just meant helping to handle the wire news that came in. But I’m totally fascinated at the number of patriotic people who came in and asked what the treasury balance was. And I didn’t realize that there was so much interest in the state of the treasury, till I learned that they played the local numbers game on the basis of the treasury balance each day. So this was a part of the education of a newspaper man.

DT: But in terms of politics, you had a fairly good political machine, I think, in those days, in Philadelphia, right? And you had FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] in the White House. So you must have been intrigued by . . .
AS: Well, I had a relative—he wasn’t such a close relative, but we liked to claim him because he was successful. And his name was Samuel—middle name Smyser—Lewis, who became lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania. And he distinguished himself. I think, as lieutenant governor, he was in charge of pardons and paroles. And he had one particularly difficult case, and so he had himself committed to the prison as a prisoner and got to know the person who was applying for parole, meet him in the prison yard. Of course, in false circumstances. But I’ve forgotten which way he decided. I kind of think he decided against paroling this fellow, based on some of the things he said in the prison yard. That was a fairly well-known episode.

DT: You didn’t get excited about the Fell machine, then, in Philadelphia?

AS: No, not so much. Governor Pinchot was a famous governor of Pennsylvania. Gifford Pinchot. And he was a great environmentalist. He also was a very long, tall man. I heard it said—my mother used to say this—that when he moved into the state capitol, they had to put in a bigger bathtub, a much longer one. And then Pennsylvania didn’t allow governors to serve consecutive terms, so apparently they—when he went out, they took it out. And when he came back in, they put it back in again.

(Laughter)

AS: I don’t know if this is fact or fiction.

MK: You mentioned that you had a relative in office. And I was wondering, was your family affiliated with any one party?

AS: No. As a matter of fact, my mother and father were on opposite sides of politics. My father was a Franklin Roosevelt fan. My mother hated him.

And so my father would say, “Well, why should we go to vote, because we’ll cancel each other out.”

And she would say, “Look, if I don’t vote, you’ll sneak down and vote.”

(Laughter)

AS: “So we both got to go and cancel each other out.” So they both voted.

MK: And how about yourself during those days? Were you like a Democrat or a Republican or independent?

AS: I don’t recall having a sense of identifying with one party or the other. I think I thought Roosevelt was a pretty good president, but I don’t think I thought, “I’m a Democrat,” because of that.

DT: You worked for a number of newspapers. I think you worked for the York [Dispatch] newspaper for a while, and then . . .

AS: That was the one I told you about.
DT: . . . I guess just before the war, you went to Pittsburgh. Didn’t you, for a while?

AS: Yes, I worked for the Pittsburgh Press. That was after I got out of college. I graduated from college in ’41, June. And I went to work immediately for the Pittsburgh Press. And then was with them, covering some of the events of Pearl Harbor day. And soon after that, I knew I’d be called up in the service, so I decided I rather be called up as an officer than as an enlisted man. I went and took trigonometry at the University of Pittsburgh so I could pass the required officers’ exam, and then I did go into naval officer training school.

MK: You know, at the time of Pearl Harbor, I was wondering, what did you think about Japan and the Pacific? I know nowadays you write a great deal about the Pacific. What were your views on Japan and the Pacific back then?

AS: Well, on the day of Pearl Harbor, I was the young reporter for the Pittsburgh Press. And earlier that year I had had an encounter covering an America First meeting in Pittsburgh. The America Firsters were a pro-Nazi group whose program was to keep America out of war. And I had gone in an evening meeting just for the heck of it to hear Senator Gerald Nye of North Dakota speak. And after the meeting I had decided—the—I was also, at the time, covering the police beat for the Pittsburgh Press, so I had access to the license number file. So I thought it would be interesting to know who the people were attending the meeting. I walked around and started copying down the license numbers of the cars in the neighborhood. And all of a sudden, I had a group of kind of German-accented people around me. “What are you taking these numbers for?”

And I said, “It’s a free world. Anybody could take down numbers.” And there was quite a fuss, and I began to get a little concerned for my physical comfort. But fortunately, a police officer came by on a motorcycle and I raised my hand, “Officer!” And he came over and he dispersed the group. But in the course of dispersing them, my list of license numbers disappeared. Somebody just grabbed it. And I wasn’t too upset, anyway, because it was kind of a lark.

But come Pearl Harbor day, we heard on the phone—maybe we heard it on the car radio that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. And I knew that Senator Nye was back making a speech in the Pittsburgh Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall. And so I determined to go and hear the speech. And as it turned out—communications were different then. We had heard it in our car radio. But, I guess a lot of people didn’t have a car radio, so here was a hall with about 2,000 people in it, practically none of whom had heard this bulletin. And those of us who heard it knew that this meant we were at war. And I went backstage, along with another newspaperman from another paper, to tell Senator Nye and Irene Castle, the dancer who was a part of the program, told both of them that Pearl Harbor had been attacked, and Senator Nye said, “That’s a lie. I don’t believe that. You’re making it up.”

And so then they convened the meeting and they went ahead. And they had a program which was very—I recognized it—very much like the program I had heard previously, and it went on a long time. And no mention was made of this attack on Pearl Harbor. It went on over an hour with no mention being made of the attack on Pearl Harbor. They even passed a collection plate, to help keep America out of war, and took up a collection. And then Senator Nye was the pièce de résistance and he came on after an hour, an hour and a quarter. And while he was speaking, the reporters from the morning newspaper got a bulletin torn off the
teletype to the senator and from his office, saying that the emperor of Japan has declared war. And so he simply walked up on the stage and handed the bulletin to Nye. And Nye looked at it and then continued with the same speech I heard him make before, about the importance of keeping out of war. But then he gave it a twist. He said that President Roosevelt has been conniving for a long time to get us into this war. And that he had no way of getting us in through the front door, meaning Europe. But he's now tried to drag us in through the back door in Asia. And after a little buildup like that, he finally said, "Now I have to announce the worst news that I've had to announce in all my life. The emperor of Japan has declared war on the United States."

And somebody yelled and shouted, "Down with Roosevelt."

And some other man—well, earlier some man with a Spanish accent had stood up and tried to protest that this was wrong proceeding. I think he was saying that this country was at war, but the audience didn't understand him. He was hustled out of the hall. He wasn't allowed to stay. But finally this realization broke over the group. And then it broke up. And as I was going down one of the aisles, somebody said, "You never did do anything with the license numbers, did you?" (Laughs.)

So it was kind of an interesting introduction to World War II, to say the least. And I wrote a story about it, and the paper printed it on—it was an inside page story because, of course, the war was all page one. But the America First people sued. They said they were libeled by it. But my editor, who had a lot more faith than I did at the time, said that, "They're only doing that for show. They'll withdraw the suit. You can count on it." And that's exactly what happened after a month or two, they withdrew the suit. Because basically, the account was what I told you and accurate. And it reflected very badly on them.

But then I really had to find out where Pearl Harbor was. I knew it was out in the Pacific somewhere, but I had sort of a hunch it was in the Philippines. So that was how much I knew about Hawai'i and the Pacific. And so I found out where it was. And then later on when I got into the navy and got commissioned, my ship came out to Pearl Harbor, and I found out where it was.

MK: Shall we end here and go on to the next tape, yeah?

DT: Mm hmm [yes].

MK: That's a really interesting story.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

AS: . . . they really had a job on their hands. And the animosity that was supposed to be funneled against the Japanese was, in many respects, funneled against them.

MK: Tape number two with Mr. Adam "Bud" Smyser.

Maybe we can pick up with the story that you were just relating to us. You're covering the Chinese community in Pennsylvania right after the news of war broke out.
AS: Yeah, I think it was probably the night of December 7, or the next night, that I was asked, because again as a young reporter, to go down into the Chinese community in Pittsburgh and report on how it was reacting. And the reaction was that they were doing everything they could to get the word through that they weren't Japanese, because the perception of the people in Pennsylvania about the Pacific and Asia was such that anybody who wasn't Caucasian was probably Japanese, and the Japanese and Chinese were the same kind of people. The Japanese, and Chinese, and Koreans were not—there was no perception that these were different people. So the Chinese had to scramble—actually, I think, Pittsburgh had very few Japanese residents. But I do believe that those who might have been Japanese were probably refused the opportunity to give blood at the blood bank. Whereas the Chinese, as I remember, rushed to give blood and show how patriotic they were.

MK: And then soon after that you decided to go into military service?

AS: Well, I knew the night of December 7, that I was going to be going into the military service pretty soon, because I was single, twenty-one [years old], out of college, along with other things. But I determined that as long as I was going to go in, I would just as soon go in as an officer. And in the navy—I had a friend in the army who said, “Bud, by all means go into the navy.” (Laughs) He said, “At least you’re close to soft beds and food in the navy.” So I did take a trigonometry course at the University of Pittsburgh to qualify to pass the naval officer exam. And then I did pass it, and I finally was called up for training in, I think, August of 1942, and went through 110-day wonder school at, first at [University of] Notre Dame and then at Columbia University, and then was commissioned in about December 7, 1942, at Columbia.

And I’ll tell you a story which isn’t terribly pertinent, but is kind of the... The officer in charge—we were being turned out like potatoes or French-fried potatoes, and they started running people through. And the people who taught us were the people who just read the book a class ahead of us. They’d never been to sea, because all the people who’d been to sea, basically, they needed out at sea. And so we were getting this kind of thing. And the commanding officer of the midshipman school at Columbia University was an old retired naval officer, who I think had not had a terribly distinguished career. And he was called back, and they had to do something with him. But he delivered a graduation talk to us, in which the main emphasis—and you’ll see I didn’t take it to heart—was now that we were becoming officers and gentlemen, we always should wear garters. And that this was the distinctive mark of an officer and a gentleman. And, oh, twenty years ago or so, I was asked to make a talk to a Kalani High School graduating class. And I said that I had listened to many graduation speeches and the only one I remembered was this one. And I said I was pretty sure they wouldn’t remember mine. But just a year ago, some woman came up to me and said, “You know, my son graduated in that class you talked to, and I still remember that story about the garter.”

(Laughter)

AS: So, that’s the only graduation speech I know that survived down through the years.

DT: Well, when you got in the navy, you were sent, ultimately, then, to the Pacific area. But you weren’t out here along with so many of our other press corps who worked on *Stars and Stripes*. You never worked on *The Stars and Stripes*, or did you?
No, I was in the navy in what they called the amphibious forces, on a fairly big freighter-type ship that had been converted to carry troops and landing boats. And so we, first of all, operated in the Atlantic delivering troops across the Atlantic to Africa, and then to the invasion of Sicily. We were part of the invasion of Sicily. And then we also took a detour up, delivering troops to Iceland, and to Scotland, and England.

And then I was transferred off that ship in order to go to a new ship that had just been put in commission in Brooklyn, New York. This would have been the end of 1943, after about a year. And that ship, when it was put in commission, was sent through the canal and came out here to Hawai‘i. And so I came with it, and I found out exactly where Hawai‘i is.

And on my first day in Hawai‘i, first liberty day, I think we got in on Good Friday of '43. Was it '40... No, '44. Good Friday of '44. The first liberty day got in, some of us who were officers rented bicycles and rode out into an area I now recognize as Wai‘alae area. And it wasn’t very built-up then, of course. And we wondered what those funny bluish things were up in the hillside. And so we bicycled up and discovered they were cactus. But a farm family that was raising—near the area, I think, where Jennie Wilson, the late mayor’s [John Henry Wilson’s] wife, was raising peacocks and so on. But a farm family came out and was friendly to us. They asked us if we wanted any pineapple juice, and so our reaction was, oh, peachy neat. Here we are in Hawai‘i and we’re going to have pineapple juice, fresh pineapple juice. And we said yes. And they walked in and they came out with a blue Dole can and opened it for us.

(Laughter)

Some pineapple juice just like back home. And then they asked how things were on the Mainland. And that did great things to my mind, because I was thinking of Hawai‘i as a very faraway place. And I realized that if people used the phrase “Mainland,” were really just considering themselves an offshore island. So those were two eye-opening experiences of my first visit, first day of liberty in Hawai‘i.

How long were you in the islands back in '44 as a navy man?

Oh, we were in and out. We didn’t stay very long. We’d stay a week or so, and the ship would load up, and then we’d go out. We went through operations at a number of... We were at the invasion of Saipan, we were at the invasion of Palau, and the invasion of Leyte in the Philippines, and of Luzon in the Philippines. And we also went on to the invasion of Okinawa. We’d come back and forth here, in between. But when I was back in New York at Columbia University, and then later, I had met and married my first wife. And she was from a navy family, and so she had been here briefly. And her father had served in the Pacific. And so when I was sitting up at the old O‘ahu Country Club one day—they allowed officers to come up there—I looked out and I went, “Boy, I’d like to live here after the war.” And so I wrote to her, I said, “What would you think of living in Hawai‘i after the war?” Well, she wrote back, “Yes.” And I think if I had married a girl from York, PA, she would have said, “No way.”

(Laughter)

But Betty [Elizabeth H. Avery] said yes, and so we came out. We came out kind of
tentatively, thinking we might not stay long. But we did. We stayed until she died here seven years ago, and I'm still here. And so.

MK: You know, back in '44, what was it that made you want to live here in Hawai'i?

AS: I knew I didn't want to live in—well, I, first of all, knew I didn't want to work in my hometown. Everybody knew—I told you my ancestors were there for 200 years. So everybody had a preconceived opinion about me. I decided I didn't want to work in that town. And I felt that as much as I liked Pittsburgh, and Pittsburgh's a great city, I didn't want to work there all my life. So I was really looking for a place to settle. And Honolulu filled the bill very well, I thought. And I found it very exciting. I found, later on, covering statehood and working for statehood, it was kind of a frontier experience, that we were a political frontier for the country. We weren't a frontier in terms of a wild west frontier, but we were a political frontier. In a way, we still are a political frontier for the country. So it's been very exciting.

MK: Now I was thinking back in '44, you know, as you visited the islands off and on, what were some of your observations of the way people were living in the islands and the way society was organized?

AS: We weren't very astute. I told you about the experience with the farm people. A good many of our other experiences took place on Hotel Street and places like that where you would pay a girl a lot of money to pose for a picture with you. She had a hula skirt on, she'd pose for a picture with you. As a navy officer I was assigned to do shore patrol duty down through the brothels in Hotel Street. And we were told not to disturb the men in line [waiting to go to a brothel], just to see that they were orderly. But that we were—there was a campaign on at that time to get more morale or whatever in the servicemen. And if enlisted men didn't salute us, we were supposed to put 'em on report and give 'em a little citation for failing to salute an officer. And we were told that if we didn't give at least twenty-five citations the day we were on duty, we would obviously be delinquent. A citation meant that the guy who got it had to go back to his ship, more or less immediately, and lose his liberty day. And these fellows had been at sea for a month, some of them, and they were coming down into town and so it was a pretty cruel thing to give 'em, but I gave my twenty-five. I think all the others gave twenty-five and felt somewhat bad about it. But we didn't feel so bad that we refused to give any citation at all, because this was the military, Mr. Jones.

And so those were—and then of course, in those days, downtown streets were—I think there was no parking. But it was so full of servicemen, you walked out in the street and they were just jammed with servicemen during liberty hours. And then when liberty hours were over, I guess they'd become empty. Well, in the case of the red-light district, I think there were hours for the servicemen in the morning and hours for the construction workers in the evening, and they had this kind of distribution of duty. But these were the things I learned about local life.

And we would go to the Moana Hotel. We'd get in, and about six or eight officers in the ship would take a room down there. And rooms are hard to get, so the first person off went and got the room. And then they had liquor ration periods. And if you were very lucky, your ship got in just before the end of one period and at the beginning of another, so you could get liquor on both. You could get your bottle of liquor on both sides of the deadline. We would
all take our bottles down there and we worked very hard at consuming them. And we would, because the space was tight, we'd take the mattress off the bed and three people would sleep on the spring, and three people would sleep on the mattress, and, I guess, pass out on the mattress. That's as good description as any, sometimes. But this was seen as liberty (chuckles) in Hawai'i. And there was barbed wire out in front of the hotel, all along the beach, with just occasional apertures through it, where you could go out to swim. And with enough booze, people would get up on that banyan tree that's still there, and try and climb across the branch that goes from one side to the other. It's about fifteen feet high. And I don't remember any broken bones from that. But these were our perceptions of Hawai'i.

And then, but, I told you, then the other side was that we were allowed, as officers—I don't think enlisted men were allowed this privilege—to use places like O'ahu Country Club. And I remember going up there, and that was a different world, of course. That was away from this hurly-burly of Waikīkī. And that was where I developed the idea that Hawai'i would be a pretty nice place to live after the war.

MK: You know, since you were allowed to go up to O'ahu Country Club, were you able to, you know, mix with the more wealthy Haole elite in the islands?

AS: I don't recall mingling much at all. I recall going up, and ordering a drink, and sitting there, and looking out at the sea. And it seems to me the times I went, I mostly went alone. I don't think too many other people thought that was a great way to spend time. But I was more inclined to want to poke around the town and see it. But I don't remember establishing any particular contacts up there at all, see.

DT: Didn't have any particular contact with the press while you were in service then?

AS: When I decided I wanted to live here, yes, I made contact with Ray Coll [editor] of the [Honolulu] Advertiser, who had been a former Pittsburgh newspaperman. And this was when the war was still on, when nobody knew when it'd be over. And he said, "Get in touch with me when it's over, and I will see if we have a spot for you." So, when it was over [August 1945]—in November of 1945, I was being sent back to the East Coast for discharge. And our ship stopped here on a Saturday afternoon. And I called Ray and he was busy. I couldn't get through to him, so I figured I better call somebody so I called Riley Allen of the [Honolulu] Star-Bulletin. And Riley, if you know him, you would understand this story. "Where are you? What are you gonna do? I'll see you. Meet me at the office in an hour." And so I went down and it was early Saturday evening, I guess, then. He came down from his Pacific Heights home to interview me. And he said they would hire me. And, "Want to go back to Waikīkī now? I'll take you back to Waikīkī." So he loaded me into his car with his wife Suzanne, who was an invalid, and they took me back out to Waikīkī and dropped me off.

But that's how I made my association with the Star-Bulletin instead of the Advertiser. And in the end, I was very happy that it turned out that way, because the Advertiser was kind of anti-statehood in those days. Something I didn't appreciate as a serviceman. And the Star-Bulletin was very pro-statehood and it had an editorial position with which I felt much happier than the Advertiser's editorial position. I wound up being a political reporter, and then finally the political reporter for the Star-Bulletin, working very closely with Joe [Joseph] Farrington [Star-Bulletin's publisher], who literally dedicated his life to fighting for statehood.
MK: You mentioned, you know, as a serviceman, you felt happier that the newspaper was for statehood. Why were you . . .

AS: No, not as a serviceman. This was after the war. You know I stumbled into the Star-Bulletin as an employee without really knowing what the positions of the newspapers were on this issue. It was only after I was employed, I realized that I had happily landed on the newspaper whose editorial views were much closer to mine.

MK: Mm hmm. And then in those times that you visited the islands in '44, and maybe picked up the newspapers, did you notice any differences between, say, the Advertiser and the Star-Bulletin?

AS: Oh, the big difference was that they were working so hard to sell newspapers, that they would change the headlines on every edition. I think it’s literally true that even the headline, “Atomic Bomb Dropped at Hiroshima,” only lasted one edition in the Star-Bulletin. (Chuckles) They had to have something different in the next edition to sell more newspapers. I bought a lot of Star-Bulletins in the same day, thinking I was buying three different newspapers. It was only after I settled down to read them, that I learned they were pretty much the same. But no, I didn’t develop any strong sense of, at that time, a feeling that one newspaper was particularly better than the other, because I really didn’t. . . . I saw them spasmodically and I didn’t have any opinion. I mainly knew that I was a newspaperman and I’d like to get a job with a newspaper in Honolulu, and that was about what it came down to.

DT: You must have gotten very early, meeting with Riley Allen, you must have become very fond of, what many people have figured, was something of an old curmudgeon.

AS: Oh, I loved the man.

DT: And I gathered that there’s great affinity—from the time I got to know you in person you and Riley Allen got along beautifully, whereas many people did not get along with Riley Allen very well.

AS: Well, Riley had kind of a bear-trap mind. You would go to Riley and you would make a proposal. And he’d say yes or no. And that was it. I finally learned that if I really wanted to discuss something with him, I would send him a memo. And I’d get my pros and cons in the memo, and then I’d go to talk to him about it. And I had a better chance of getting through that way. I think if I had just gone to him, made a short statement, he would have jumped to a conclusion. But his heart was in the right place. He was totally dedicated to Hawai‘i and the people of Hawai‘i. And the Star-Bulletin was totally dedicated, through Joe Farrington, to Hawai‘i and the people of Hawai‘i.

One very significant point was that Riley was in his office on the morning of December 7 when the attack came. And so he organized an extra edition to be put out. I think it came out within two or three hours of the attack, and it was really a good job. The Advertiser, as luck would have it, had printed its Sunday edition—it was the only Sunday paper then—and then dismantled its presses, in order to clean them and repair them, and so on. So the Advertiser didn’t have any presses to print on when the Pearl Harbor attack came. So the Bulletin came out with the only extra immediately. And Riley, right from the very start, never allowed the word “Jap” in the paper. When the Advertiser finally got into print and had some headlines, it
talked about “Jap Attack on Pearl Harbor.” The Star-Bulletin’s headlines said, “Japanese Planes Attack Pearl Harbor.” And all through the war, the Bulletin maintained that important distinction. And there was a point at which . . .

DT: I think maybe we ought to stop here now and pick this up, because I do want to talk a lot more about Riley Allen.

AS: Okay.

MK: Yeah. After you can continue this story. It’s really interesting.

DT: Yeah, because this is good. This is good stuff here.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Tape number three with Bud Smyser.

And you were just telling us a story about Riley Allen and his treatment of the Japanese in newspapers, right after Pearl Harbor broke.

AS: Yes, I was going to say that Riley never used, never allowed the term “Jap” to appear in the Star-Bulletin, because he, well, obviously, it was a pejorative term and it reflected on our local people of the Japanese population, as well as on the enemy in the war. And it got to the point, though—and I still have this document somewhere, and I want to place it in the right place—that the members of the staff sent him a petition in about April of 1942, saying that the reaction of the community was that the Bulletin was unpatriotic, because it wouldn’t use the word “Jap,” and would Riley please relent. Among the signatories were a couple of employees of Japanese ancestry. But Riley didn’t relent, and I think it was, I mean, to me, it’s a mark of his character. And it’s hard now to recall the pressures, you know. That was a real hotbed in those days. And attitudes were strong and provoked. And so for him to stick with that position, against a lot of establishment criticism, was not terribly easy, but it was right. And I would say you could go through Riley’s life and find a lot of things that he did that weren’t terribly popular, but most frequently I think they were right.

DT: His manners got him into quite a bit of trouble, didn’t they? He was something of a stuffed shirt.

AS: Who’s that?


AS: Well, I think he would be perceived as starchy and withdrawn. But I really never knew any more human guy than he was. And he was always thinking of the little things. I recall his secretary’s husband was very sick, and he went to the hospital with a cot for her to sleep on.
He would always remember these little details. He wouldn’t just pay his respects, he’d do something to improve a situation. And he concerned himself with his employees and what they did. He wasn’t very generous with raises.

(Laughter)

AS: For a while, I was the chairman of the [Hawai‘i Newspaper] Guild negotiating committee. And I remember sitting across from him in bargaining sessions. And we were telling him the cost of living had gone up and taxes had gone up.

“Well, do you expect us to pay your taxes for you?”

“Well, we aren’t asking you to pay our taxes for us. We need to have enough money to live on.”

“But tell me. You really think the paper is obligated to pay your taxes?”

But we had these kind of sessions, but in the end, we usually wound up with settlements that I think the staff considered fair. They might be considered unfair now, under the circumstances, but... And just a terribly considerate man. He planned his own funeral in advance and had it written out in great detail. And one of the things he wanted read was a poem, which I’d have to look up to quote accurately, but, “I shall pass this way but once. If there is anything that I can do, let me do it now, for I may not pass this way again.” And he felt that way. That was very close to his fundamental philosophy.

DT: Now he was pretty much of a crusty, you might say, liberal Republican, was he not?

AS: Mm hmm.

DT: I think he had ties to the old Bull Moose party that existed for a while, and had very strong feelings about the La Follettes out of Wisconsin. In other words, ...

AS: Well, the Farringtons were classmates of the La Follettes in Wisconsin.

DT: Okay, well then, I guess that got reinforced.

AS: But, note. Riley, in regard to labor organization, Riley was very concerned about Communism in the ILWU [International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union] and made a big point of it. On the other hand, that never stood to him as a reason to deny Hawai‘i statehood or to deny the union bargaining rights or anything like that. But he kept pointing out that some of the leadership of the ILWU is considered to be Communist. And he was very anti-Communist, but at the same time, he was very pro-Democratic and pro-Hawai‘i having a right to express itself.

MK: You know, before we go more into Riley Allen, I’ve always associated the name Riley Allen with the paper, but I don’t know that much about exactly what position he held or his background. Can you kind of fill us in?

AS: He was born in Texas. At a very young age, like one or two, his family moved to Tennessee.
And some years later, they moved out to the West Coast. He was just a can-do person. And he became a newspaperman and he came out here to work. I think Wallace Farrington [father of Joseph Farrington] had come to Hawai‘i and was a newspaperman, I think initially with the Advertiser, [then called the Pacific Commercial Advertiser] before the Star-Bulletin was ever born. But basically, Riley did go back to the Mainland for a little while and then he returned. And when Wallace Farrington and the Atherton family put together the Star-Bulletin as a consolidated newspaper in August of 1912, Wallace Farrington became the publisher [initially vice-president and general manager, then publisher in 1929] and Riley Allen became the editor. And Riley Allen remained the editor of the newspaper until he was retired by court order in 1960. The court made him give up the editorship in order to become a trustee of the Wallace Farrington trust, which was—and the court said there would be a conflict of interest of him representing both the trust and remaining as editor. But he said, “It took a court order to get me out of this job.” (Chuckles) By that time, it had been forty-eight years, and he had to be about seventy [years old] then. I’ve forgotten. I’m almost seventy now, but he seemed older than me.

(Laughter)

DT: Well, he was very much of a, you could say, a socio-economic, political institution . . .

AS: Very much.

DT: . . . at the time you arrived at the newspaper.

AS: And he had helped form—I think he helped form the chamber of commerce and he formed the [Honolulu] Ad Club. And he was very much against ethnic chambers of commerce. He thought that they were divisive in the community. He believed in the community being all one. I think he might have changed that position later on, after statehood, but I think he saw ethnic chambers of commerce as maybe a deterrent to statehood. And anything that was deterrent to statehood, Riley wasn’t for.

But I’m mentioning, I think, that the team, or the Farrington-Allen team was important. And Wallace Farrington was a New Englander who had come here, and who had very democratic ideas, and who was very much responsible for both the creation of the University of Hawai‘i and for strengthening of the public school system, because he really believed in education for all. And the paper similarly dedicated itself to that, right from the very beginning, to urging a stronger public school system. And in the early days, things I’ve read indicate that Wallace Farrington always saw statehood as an eventual goal.

But I think the establishment in Hawai‘i in the 1910s and 1920s was well enough satisfied with territorial status, because they could get their own governors appointed from Washington and go back to the president. One of them happened to be Wallace Farrington, who was appointed governor by President [Warren] Harding in 1920. So, instead of pushing for all-out statehood, he pushed for equal rights. And he would—they would fight to get Hawai‘i included in the National Highway Grant Program, for example, get Hawai‘i included in other programs.

And so they kind of nipped around the edges of statehood until 1932, ’33, when the incidents involving the Massie case [Thalia Massie, the wife of a navy man, accused a group of local
men of rape], and the proposals for a commission on military rule after that, and the Jones-
Costigan [Act] sugar tariff, which indicated that Hawai‘i sure could be discriminated against
and even kept out of the country, then, were energizing events that persuaded a great many
influential people in Hawai‘i that Hawai‘i’s only real security lay in going for statehood, even
at the risk of the democracy, which might mean that they would lose control. And that wasn’t
a universally popular idea, but the Star-Bulletin and the Farringtons embraced it.

And in 1934 election, Joe Farrington ran for the territorial senate on a statehood ticket, and
Samuel Wilder King ran for delegate to [U.S.] Congress on a statehood ticket. They teamed
up. And they were two Republicans who said Hawai‘i must have statehood. And they both
won very resoundingly. And so then Samuel Wilder King, I guess, went back to Congress in
'35. And he did organize the first congressional inquiries here. Teams actually came out to
Hawai‘i, prior to World War II, to inquire into the possibility of statehood for Hawai‘i. Joe
Farrington, on the homefront, got the legislature to create the Hawai‘i Equal Rights
Commission, which later became the statehood commission, to fight for statehood and to do
battle.

Among the things that happened early in the [Hawai‘i] Equal Rights Commission life were
that they decided to find out what the national American reaction or knowledge was about
Hawai‘i. They commissioned some national clipping service to collect newspaper clippings
from all over, all the states, about Hawai‘i. And they found out that something over 90
percent of all the references to Hawai‘i were erroneous. Either we were referred to as a
foreign country, or as a kingdom, or it was assumed we didn’t speak English here. We didn’t
have Americans living here. Someone said to me just today, “Newspapers aren’t very
accurate, are they?” Well, they certainly weren’t very accurate. The Mainland newspapers
weren’t very accurate in regard to Hawai‘i, because Mainlanders weren’t very well informed
about Hawai‘i. So the Equal Rights Commission took it on itself to write letters to every one
of these papers where an error had been made and say, “May we call your attention to...,”
and try to explain it. And Riley Allen took it on himself.

And Riley Allen also went off to national newspaper editor conventions and political
conventions. He went to both the Democratic and Republican political conventions. He
worked with our delegates on both parties. He helped them draft pro-statehood planks and
write them into the platforms of both parties. And he would write—he kept up this—he had a
tremendous correspondence. He kept three secretaries busy for a while, mainly writing letters
to contacts he had made on the Mainland, pushing statehood, pushing statehood. It was kind
of a water-torture treatment. I mean, just going after all the details, pushing. And the
statehood Equal Rights Commission went to all these hundreds of people that made erroneous
references to Hawai‘i. And Riley Allen kept writing to friends across the Mainland. And Joe
Farrington succeeded Samuel Wilder King in the Congress in 1942, when King went into
navy service. And Joe used his newspaper connections, I think, to, first of all, get the Gallup
poll to begin asking questions about where do you stand on statehood for Hawai‘i and Alaska.
And that really helped bring it national attention. And he also worked with his editors. Joe,
I’m quite sure, was a great tipster to Jack Anderson and Drew Pearson ahead of him. Drew
Pearson, they were national investigative columnists. I don’t know how well the names
and—well, Jack Anderson still writes, but Drew Pearson was his predecessor. But Drew got
lots of items, I think, fed to him by Joe Farrington, in exchange for which he became a pretty
good advocate of statehood. And so there were all kinds of these little efforts, spreading the
word, building up support.
And the Farringtons were reasonably wealthy as newspaper publishers, and so they did a lot of personal entertaining in Washington. And at their house, in April of 1945, the night before President Roosevelt died, a senator from—no, I guess he was vice-president then, named Harry Truman, was at their house playing the piano. And then the next morning Harry Truman woke up to learn that he was president of the United States. But that probably was at least a small factor in that Harry became the first president to ever publicly come out and ask for statehood for Hawai'i, and endorse it, and so on. So there were these little efforts all along, and it added up, and added up the thing.

DT: Oh, you were very much steeped in this. You got two toughy questions here, because it's common lore in Hawai'i today, for example, that Jack [John] Burns got statehood for Hawai'i. And yet you're telling us all of this background information about the Farringtons, Riley Allen, and so forth. How do you reconcile these—or do you?

AS: Well, they reconcile very readily, because the Farringtons and the Sam Kings, and others, did this tremendously important initial spade work. And then the Congress, the opposition to Hawai'i in Congress devised these delaying tactics. They would—basically, the southern senators were at the heart of the opposition, not because they were so much anti-Asian, as they did feel that Hawai'i and Alaska would each bring in pro-civil rights senators, who would dilute their power to filibuster legislation to death. In those days, I think you had to have a two-thirds vote in the senate to filibuster legislation. And they had, I guess, with ninety-six senators, they had just about enough senators to filibuster a bill. And so their perception was the addition of these two new states would be a threat to them. And I think that was one big element in their opposition. There were all sorts of other elements. The fact that we were offshore was a factor in some people's minds. The fact that we were the only state with a majority Asian population was a factor. But all of these things had to be dealt with and were being dealt with. But the strategies of the opposition were to create difficult situations. And one of the difficult situations they began to create was to link the Alaska and Hawai'i bills together. The case for Hawai'i was much stronger than the case for Alaska. And Joe Farrington dedicated to that. And so Joe died in office in 1954, still fighting for statehood, and facing these frustrations. In fact, I think, some of these frustrations helped expedite his heart attack and death. He was only fifty-four or so when he died. But then Mrs. [Elizabeth "Betty"] Farrington, Joe's widow, was elected the delegate to complete his term. And she was also elected by fairly close margin over Jack Burns to serve the next two years as delegate. Then Jack Burns won in 1956, I guess, and became delegate. And the same strategy was being pursued of linking the bills together.

And Burns did something that I really don't know if Joe Farrington could have brought himself to do. And that was, said, "We'll let Alaska go first." Joe had fought so much to get Hawai'i under the number forty-nine [to be the forty-ninth state]. I don't know if he could have swallowed hard enough to let Hawai'i be number fifty. Well, I mean, that's a whole other set of strategies. But apparently, the Democrats in the Congress, considering that Alaska would be a Democratic state and Hawai'i would be a Republican state—they actually turned out differently, but that was the thinking then—wanted to be sure that [Dwight David] Eisenhower signed the Alaska bill, letting in this Democratic state, before they'd send him the Hawai'i bill. And this was the strategy that Jack Burns went along with and it was a strategy that paid off. So, Jack Burns finished the effort. He may even have finished it in a way that the Farringtons couldn't have finished it—Farrington and Riley Allen couldn't have finished it—but he built on the base that they had prepared. And Jack, at various times, paid proper
tribute to them. In political campaigns he didn’t go out of his way to pay proper tribute (laughs) to them or anything like that. But he acknowledged that he was all on their base.

DT: Now former governor Bill [William] Quinn seems to think there’s considerable reason to believe that at least at various times in his political career in the Congress, that Jack Burns was really fairly lukewarm towards statehood.

AS: I personally never believed that. I think Jack Burns was always for it. And they say that he didn’t make the decision. But Bill has a different perspective on statehood. He came to the islands only in the [19]50s. He didn’t really live through this long build-up fight. And so his perspective on statehood is a little more focused on those final years, and on the infighting that went on between the Democrats and the Republicans, and so on. I don’t recall him ever saying anything that I had particularly disagreed with, but I often thought that his perspective on it was quite different from mine.

DT: Well, my recollection would be somewhat according to your way of thinking, I think, closer to your way of thinking than to Governor Quinn’s. I have another tough question to ask you, but we’re going to have to stop and change the tape.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

AS: . . . them together, and then put them on a ship and take them from Vladivostok, through the Panama Canal, back to . . .

MK: To Russia?

AS: . . . Leningrad, I believe, they sailed back to Leningrad. And a Russian found out about this story not too long ago and wanted to make a film of it. And that film was going to be shown here in early July. And one of the things that’s contained in this story was that one of the children said to Riley, “How will I know my mother? I don’t remember her?” And Riley said, “You will know.” But it had a lot of poignant episodes. And it . . .

DT: What year was this? But I think we’re on the air now, so we’re sort of picking it up a little bit. . . .

MK: Back on Riley Allen.

DT: Back on Riley Allen. It’s tape number four. Are we going? Is that right, Joy?

JC: Yes, correct.

DT: Tape number four with Bud Smyser. This was right after World War I, right?

AS: I was going back saying that Riley Allen was editor from 1912 until 1960, with one interruption, when at the end of World War I, he volunteered to join the American Red Cross in Siberia to help with the repatriation of refugee children, who had been evacuated from western Russia at the time of Russian revolution, and brought to Siberia. And he and the Red Cross worked to restore them to their parents in Leningrad area. And he sailed with them on
a ship out of Vladivostok through the canal, and up to, I think the port was Leningrad, and then began returning the children to their parents. And a Russian filmmaker—whose name I don't remember but would be readily available—got interested, learned about this story several years ago and wanted to make a film of it. And he has made a film. He came here to work on it. And the film is going to be shown at the summer session here, as a part of the Russian focus of the summer session. It'll have its first American showing here.

But apparently, among other things, a narrator or somebody relates that when these children were being repatriated, one of the children came up to Riley and said, "I don't remember what my parents look like. How will I know who my mother is?"

And Riley said, "Don't worry, you will know." And the child was reassured. And for all we know, the child did know.

Now this was really a sort of a mission of mercy, akin to what Herbert Hoover [as U.S. food administrator, 1917-19] was doing in terms of food supply into the Soviet Union, or a person who's still alive, believe it or not, Armand Hammer, who apparently was a part of that entire sort of Russian relief missions after World War I.

Well, should we leave Riley Allen for a moment? I'm sure we're going to come back to Riley Allen, but it relates to Riley Allen, I guess, too, but particularly to Joe Farrington and the Farrington faction, at least that wing of the Republican party. Here you were, new to Hawai'i, a new reporter, you'd gotten acquainted with Riley Allen. But as sort of an independent political reporter, didn't it put you in something of a bind to be working for somebody who was a political figure, Joe Farrington, namely, in the Congress of the United States, albeit without a vote, but . . .

It might have put me in more of a bind if I didn't believe in what they were doing. But the whole paper was dedicated to—I mean, there're two schools of journalism really. One school is that papers ought to be totally dispassionate, and the other is that they ought to go out there and slug for the things they believed in. Well, the Farringtons were very much of the slug-for-the-things-you-believe-in school. And the whole paper, really, although we maintained some semblance of objectivity on the news pages, you didn't have to read it very long to know that we were for statehood. It just came in the choice of stories. If the story had a statehood slant, it wound up on page one in the *Star-Bulletin*. It might not even appear in the *Advertiser* or something. And when people came through town, congressmen and all, the first question they were asked is, "Where do you stand on statehood for Hawai'i?" And so we just kept beating the statehood [drum] in the news columns and on the editorial pages.

And you know, it's a case where we were campaigning for virtue as far as I was concerned. And so we violated a lot of canons of present-day journalism. Although, I'm very proud of the way the paper violated them. And I'm a little bit more for that slam-bang type of journalism, than some of the present-day editors are, who think—who put much more stock in being dispassionate. But, obviously you have to believe in your cause. But people can believe in causes that you and I think are wrong and use it. Whether they should be allowed to use their (chuckles) newspapers under freedom of the press, they are allowed to use their newspapers that way. And the readers have to judge them and the readers have to test the paper's credibility. My sense was that the Hawai'i readers—the *Star-Bulletin* built up a circulation twice that of the *Advertiser* in those days. The basic people in Hawai'i believed in
what the *Star-Bulletin* was campaigning for and they supported it. If they distrusted it, they would have stopped buying it.

MK: You know, . . .

DT: Well, there was more—excuse me. Excuse me. There was more to this, however, than just statehood. And to be the devil’s advocate here again, just to try to bring this out, suppose you were a Democrat—a capital *D* Democrat—in ’48, or in ’50, or ’51, ’52. They ran into reporters, one being yourself, for example, that was very much tied in with the Farrington, the Republican party. And if they looked to the other newspaper, they were talking to a [Thurston] Twigg-Smith who was related to the *Advertiser*, which was not only against—not very friendly to statehood at that particular time, but was also very right-wing Republican, not moderate Republican the way the *Star-Bulletin*, but very right-wing Republican.

AS: That’s correct.

DT: How would you have felt as a Democrat? Would you—do you feel that you had any chance to have rapport with the press? Didn’t you feel this as a . . .

AS: Well, the Democrats made a big political issue of this on the stump all the time. I mean, we were forever reporting stories about how we were castigated. And I think we did a pretty good job of reporting. As a matter of fact, people like Frank Fasi soon found out that the way to get publicity out of a newspaper is to attack it, that their conscience says you have to report me. (MK chuckles.) And so Frank learned this very early in the game. But so, basically, the attackers got pretty good space. In the race between Joe Farrington and Jack Burns, or other candidates for delegate, it wasn’t any question which candidate got more space, that Joe Farrington got more space. The argument might have been made, “Well, he’s the delegate in office, and so the delegate in office deserves more space than some challenger.” But on the other hand, I think what was said about the opposing candidates was fair and square, at least as far as I knew it to be, and we tried to make it fair and square.

But the news emphasis—I always felt the readers were perceptive enough to see that, and they had the right to. . . And actually, that was coincidence or fact, but the years when Joe Farrington had the worst time getting elected, were the years when the *Advertiser* supported him. There were a couple of those. It was really (laughs) better when the *Advertiser* was cutting him up and calling him a pro-Communist. The *Advertiser* in one set of elections had—I guess it must have been around ’49 and the dock strike—ran a series of “Dear Joe” letters on—across the top of page one. And the burden of the letter would be, “Boy, Dear Joe, us Communists are really making progress in Hawai‘i. Here’s how things are going.” The point was that you really didn’t know whether the “Dear Joe” was a letter to Joe Farrington or a letter to Joe Stalin. And the confusion was intended. It was suggesting that Joe is just a stooge of the Communists. Well, at those times, Joe did very well in the election, because people didn’t buy that line.

On the other hand, Joe and the paper took a very strong anti-Communist line. And Mrs. Farrington, if anything, took a stronger one. And at the time that the committees of Congress came out here, Francis [E.] Walter’s committee and, I think, the Senator [Hugh] Butler committee, to hold hearings on subversive activities. And we had the Reluctant [Thirty-nine]—we had called reluctant witnesses. They were people who refused to testify. That was,
in those days, considered the thing that only Communists did. Now, capitalists do it too. But, in any event, the paper was pretty hard on those people who refused to testify. But at the same time, the paper’s position was always in favor of the right of labor to organize. And in the 1949 dock strike, the *Star-Bulletin* took the wildly liberal position—the hierarchy thought—of suggesting that there might be arbitration to settle it. That was regarded as a pro-union position. As a result, the leading department stores pulled all their advertising out of the paper. And the women’s Broom Brigade, which was a conservative group, came and paraded with their brooms [with signs attached] in front of the *Star-Bulletin*. And Riley, in a typical Riley response, knowing the *Advertiser*, would probably take pictures of this, hung a banner right over the paraders saying, “Honolulu *Star-Bulletin*, more circulation than all the other newspapers in Hawai‘i combined.” (Laughs) But, so it was these kind of tactics going on back and forth between newspapers.

DT: Yeah, but this sort of a conflict of interest of sort that I’ve brought up wasn’t as simple as I made it seem right at the first, I don’t think, because you had a countervailing force. There was a little bit of competition in the Republican party, wasn’t there? I think maybe Samuel Wilder King came to feel that maybe he didn’t get a completely fair shot, because of the *Star-Bulletin* being owned by Joe Farrington, who of course was in . . .

AS: There was some animosity between Joe and Sam at the end. I think, in particular, one of the final things was that the governor, Sam King, authorized a delegation of islanders to go back to push for statehood, at a time that Joe Farrington felt was inappropriate. And he thought it was negative rather than positive. And that was a sore point between them, just at about the time Joe died. I don’t know if it wouldn’t have worked out otherwise.

DT: And then later, I think the *Bulletin* raised some questions about Samuel Wilder King being in the legislature as a Bishop Estate trustee, too. This was somewhat later in the . . .

AS: Was he a Bishop Estate trustee?

DT: Yeah.

AS: I don’t think he ever was a Bishop Estate trustee. [AS corrects himself later.] And I don’t recall the *Star-Bulletin* ever raised any questions about him being in the legislature. Both of those things are things I don’t remember.

DT: Well, okay. At any rate, you were satisfied that you were doing a basically good newspaper job, even as the Democrats were coming along and . . .

AS: I was satisfied that this was a newspaper that had an obvious overwhelming bias for statehood, and probably part of a bias to see its publisher reelected as delegate. And aside from that, did really a solid news job as we could do.

MK: You know, I was wondering, back in those days, given the ownership of the paper, were guidelines given to the reporters as to how a political event or political office seeker should be dealt with in the press?

AS: Oh, I don’t recall any oppressive guidelines. And editors always have to edit, and editors chose which stories they’re going to print. And so on and so forth. I never felt inhibited in
reporting. There was even one time that I very much opposed to something that Riley Allen did, and I wrote a letter to the editor, and he printed it.

MK: Can you tell us about that?

AS: Well, it had to do with some decision Judge [Delbert] Metzger made in regard to the Communist-influence cases. I don't remember the details of it anymore, but I remember I didn't think really very much about it. I wrote the letter, and Riley printed it, and a lot of people said, "Oh, how brave you are to write a letter to your own paper." But I think now the papers have a policy. They're not taking letters from their own staff, they can carry that to an extreme. But no, I thought the paper was pretty square about those things.

MK: And then back in those days, who were the other political reporters for, say, the Bulletin and the Advertiser?

AS: Oh, you know, it's so far back. I guess the two that I was closest to and I remember the best were Millard Purdy, who was on the Star-Bulletin, and Gardiner Jones, who was on the Advertiser. They were both very good reporters. They were good writers. They had good contacts. A reporter who wasn't there so long, but was interesting, was Thurston Twiggs-Smith, who's now the publisher and owner of the Advertiser. He was learning the ropes by working on different aspects of the Advertiser. At that time, his family, his particular branch of the family, had just a minority interest in the paper. But he worked on the business side and the news side. But we covered the capitol against each other. And he was a good reporter. And right after World War II, the Star-Bulletin had a reporter named Ernie May, who had covered the state capitol a lot, who—Ernie was a man with a limp. And I don't recall exactly why he left the islands. He did leave the islands about '47 or '48. He'd been an old standby. And then, of course, other names: Doug [Douglas] Boswell, Wally Mitchell, . . .

DT: Yeah, but didn't Gardiner Jones start out with the Bulletin and then switched to the Advertiser? Well, let's see, . . .

AS: No, in the years I'm talking about, Gardiner was with the Advertiser. At a later game, pretty much later after statehood, he spent a brief time with the Star-Bulletin and then he went back to the Advertiser.

DT: I thought he'd been with the Bulletin to start with.

AS: No, no.

DT: No, he hadn't?

AS: I'm pretty sure that's not true. In fact, I'm quite sure that's not true. Just as I'm—the more I think about it, I'm quite sure that Sam King wasn't a Bishop Estate Trustee. [AS corrects himself later.] But if you check me, maybe I'm all wet.

DT: I don't know Millard Purdy stands out in my mind—since you brought this into the discussion—stands out in my mind as being a very fine reporter. And I know we utilized him at the university some in the early [19]50s on statehood interviews by telephone before
classes. Do you have any recollections about Millard? I've got one I want to ask you about. I can't wait to ask you about it.

**AS:** Well, I have one favorite story about Millard. And I just thought the world of him as a reporter and a journalist, and a friend. But in, I guess it was 1956, when Jack Burns was elected delegate to Congress and beat Betty [Elizabeth] Farrington, the *Star-Bulletin*’s publisher, in the election, Millard went to Jack for an interview election night. And Jack said, "Why should I talk to you? You’re from the paper that wanted Mrs. Farrington to be the delegate."

And Millard said, “Now, Jack, you’re the delegate of all the people.”

And Jack harumphed, harumphed. But Millard came back to the office and there was a phone call from Jack Burns saying, “You’re right. I’ll give you an interview.” And so Millard went down and Jack talked to him. And he did a story about Jack’s reactions to winning the election.

**DT:** Millard had worked on, what was it, the *Wall Street Journal* for . . .

**AS:** Yes.

**DT:** . . . quite a while and other eastern newspapers right before he came to Hawai‘i.

**AS:** Well, he was a native Oklahoman. And I believe his tenure at the *Wall Street Journal* was between stints at the *Star-Bulletin*. I think he was with the *Star-Bulletin*, and then he went with the *Journal* for a while, and then he came back to the *Star-Bulletin*. And he had left the *Star-Bulletin* and was doing public relations work for the pineapple company at the time he died.

**DT:** That’s right. And that’s what I wanted to bring in. And once again, I seem to be the devil’s advocate here. But he wrote a full-page story about the Democrats succeeding in the legislature with their program after they’d come into office. And he indicated to me that things were very tenuous at the *Bulletin* for a while. And I think it ultimately led to his leaving the *Star-Bulletin*. Do you remember that at all and any of his trauma there?

**AS:** No. I don’t remember that as a factor. I do know that we carried some pretty extensive stories on Democratic positions and attitudes. But I didn’t know that Millard felt that he had been put upon.

**DT:** Yeah, well, Millard told me. And once again, all I can know with my own memory is that he was threatened for a while. This did not develop, however, but he was threatened, that being put on the sports beat, because he had come up with this full page story on the Democrats in the legislature.

**AS:** That’s news to me. Of course, the paper didn’t have to print the full page, you know.

**DT:** What’s that?

**AS:** That paper didn’t have to print the full page.
DT: No, but there was considerable reaction on both sides of the fence. In other words, the Democrats all of a sudden said, "Hey, we've got somebody here who appreciates what we've done. We've finally got a breakthrough in the press," you see.

AS: I do remember, and this may be the same story you're talking about, that we ran a fairly extensive comparison of what the Democrats said they'd do and what they did, or something like that, as kind of an evaluation of them. And that it was something the Democrats, in campaign talks, would cite at the same time they attacked us. They talked about what a terrible newspaper they were and they say, "Yeah, but the Star-Bulletin said this pro-you." And but I don't remember for sure if that was Millard's, and I didn't know that Millard was ever in any trouble for it.

DT: At any rate, Millard did go to a pineapple company [assistant public relations director for Pineapple Companies of Hawai‘i] just before he died [in 1957], right?

AS: Yeah, but so he left the Bulletin first to go the Wall Street Journal. And then he found that—I think that he really found he missed Hawai‘i so much that he came back. And then he came back and worked with the paper. And my impression was that his decision to go with the pineapple company was motivated by money. One of the things that could happen always was that the companies wanting public relations people could always offer more than a newspaper could pay. The newspaper was paying salaries across a whole staff. So no matter what they paid, somebody with just a one-person office in PR [public relations] could always pay more to draw them away.

DT: Yeah, but I'll confirm this with you. I think he was concerned, also, as I'm sure you were, that the salaries paid to newspaper people were, at that particular time, lousy. In simple words, I mean, barely a living wage. And Millard, I think did have a family.

AS: He had two youngsters in . . .

DT: Yeah.

AS: So I think money was one of his considerations.

DT: Yeah, I had no doubt about that. I wouldn't want to imply that this other was the sole consideration. But at any rate, this was a source of considerable conversation on both Democrats and Republicans about a press breakthrough. I think we're out of time again. We're going to have to get some more tape.

END OF SIDE TWO
Farrington proposed to Elizabeth Pruett, his fellow student at the University of Wisconsin, in whatever year it was, I think it was 1919, apparently he did his down-on-the-knee proposal, but he also said that, "You have to realize I'm dedicating my life to statehood for Hawai'i. And if you want to be my wife, you'll have to be prepared to share in this." And so even—that's how deep it was with him. And that was in the days when statehood wasn't mentioned. Equal rights was the term mentioned. But Joe said, "I'm dedicated to seeing that Hawai'i—to become a state." So it was a total commitment. It was great. I loved it then.

DT: And you said you had questions from the 1940s.

MK: Right, right.

DT: Here he is just a new reporter and now in 1946, '47, '48—go ahead.

MK: Okay. You become a political reporter in 1946. You're, you know, a Haole from the Mainland. And I was wondering, what was your characterization of the political situation in the islands, if you had to describe it to someone, looking back at the [19]40s?

AS: Oh, this would take the whole twenty minutes.

(Laughter)

MK: That's fine.

AS: No, it was very fascinating. It was the kind of politics that I had never seen. Politics in Pennsylvania was something quite different than politics—politics here was so very personal, so intensely personal. It was in the days before television. And so—and it was in the days when there weren't a lot of alternative kind of entertainment. So the parties would have political rallies around—they'd go into each district. The districts would be comparable in size to, say, the representative districts today. And they might have—they'd have a rally in each district in the course of the primary campaign, and another in the course of the general campaign. And each party would do that. And to keep up the schedule, that meant the candidates had to attend about three rallies a night. Now they'd appear at one, and then move on to the next one, and then they'd move on to the next one. And all sorts of colorful stories about how one guy, for example, had a white suit that he'd take off between (chuckles) appearances, so he wouldn't have to have it dry-cleaned or cleaned even though he's one of the richest men in town and so on.

But they would make these appearances and they would speak, usually, from the back of a truck or some improvised thing with poor lights shining down. And the people would be out there in the park, a park was normally the locale, with—often in night clothes. Even the adults in night clothes. But the kids, definitely in night clothes, running around and so on. And because there were three rallies every night, the candidates would come on a rotational basis. They'd come and they'd stay for twenty minutes or thirty minutes and then they'd go on to the next one. But whenever the candidates stayed, he would move out on the crowd. He moved around and pressed the flesh. And you really pressed the flesh of just about every candidate, for every office, in the course of a campaign if you cared the least about it.

And most offices then were large districts. In other words, we had, I think, seven city
council—board of supervisors it was called then. Board of supervisors had about seven members and they all ran islandwide. And the senators from O'ahu were elected islandwide, I believe. And the representatives were elected from just two districts, on the east side of Nu'uanu and the west side of Nu'uanu. So, this meant that you had to vote for a lot of candidates, but you got to shake the hands of all of 'em, or they all got to shake your hand, pretty much, when they were there. So it was a very personal kind of politics. And talks were limited to about two minutes. And they would get up there. They always tried to save some good candidate for last, or some appealing candidate, a crowd holder. You want to keep the crowd there.

One of the crowd holders was a man named Willie [William H.] Crozier. He's the father of state senator Mike Crozier. But Willie was about as colorful as they came. And he had a windup speech that was dedicated—it was a veiled attack on the Dillingham family. The Dillinghams, I told you, were against statehood. They and the Advertiser were—they were principal owners of the Advertiser. I mean, a principal minority. They were big minority owners of the Advertiser. But Willie's speech was about the fruit fly family and, of course, the analogy was with the Dillingham family. There was uncle fruit fly, cousin fruit fly, and all the other ones. And the people just loved it. And, well, he was—fruit flies, of course, were a menace. And the parallel was that the Dillinghams were a menace, too. The people just loved this speech and they'd all stay in the hall or in the park just to hear Willie wrap it up. But then when time came for voting, Willie very seldom got elected. And he'd tell me, “Gosh, if all the people who told me they liked my talk had voted for me, I'd be a big winner.” But he was a crowd holder. And there were other people who were crowd holders. They'd held them for last.

And you got—politics got very sharp and very caustic. And yet, when you're meeting people—and the Republicans and the Democrats were saying terrible things about each other on the stump. They'd meet each other afterwards, and they'd be friends. And so the island way is, I think, that you don't go too far, because you know you're going to meet the guy the next day. And so these things were done with a certain tongue-and-cheek attack.

And there were all sorts of funny stories about some politician hiring a Hawaiian speaker to speak for him in Hawaiian districts. And how the Hawaiian speaker would say what a bum guy this was in Hawaiian. You shouldn't vote for him. And I have a feeling those things really happened. Ben Dillingham, who was from the cousin fruit fly family, really appealed to the voters by going to a lot of districts and singing songs like "Three Little Fishes" instead of speaking. And he became a very popular candidate despite all the love of the tail twisting of the Dillinghams. And he won.

So, but it was a very colorful kind of politics. And, of course, politics were also interspersed by hulas. And adults—candidates sixty, fifty, sixty years old, male candidates and female candidates would—well, they're mostly male candidates, would stand up and do hulas. Well, to a boy from Pennsylvania, this is absolutely unbelievable, that a man, fifty, would stand up in front of a crowd and dance. But it was tremendously appealing, too. And as a person who followed them around, I knew that they claimed to be born in at least five different districts, or grown up in five different districts. “Yeah, well here’s where I grew up,” they'd tell the people in Kalihi. “Here’s where I grew up,” they’d tell the people in Pālama. “And here’s where I grew up,” they’d tell people. And actually, there were some factual basis, I think, for each of those claims. But there was a great tendency to claim, “This is the district I’m from.”
And actually, the Nu'uanu district, where Queen Emma [Gardens] Apartments are now, was claimed by almost everybody. I think Dan Inouye, and Herman Lemke, and a lot of others, "Here's where I grew up." But that was a big, heavy voting district in those days, too. But they were fun campaigns. But it was hard on the candidates. They really had to drill.

And the delegate to Congress was the only candidate elected territorywide from all the islands. And one of my jobs in some of the campaigns was to follow Joe [Farrington] around. And the problem that he soon encountered was that the Republican party position on Maui wasn't the same as the Republican party position on O'ahu. The Republicans on O'ahu would take one position on an issue and the Republicans on Maui would take another. Willie Crozier, who I mentioned earlier, was smart enough to pick this up, and say to Joe, "Eh, up on Maui your Republicans are saying this, and here the Republicans are saying this. Where do you stand?" And then Joe would try to straddle and not embarrass either Republican side by his answer. And it was pretty hard sometimes. I recall the editor of the Maui News, a man named Ezra Crane, just lambasting Joe after a rally, because he hadn't defended the Maui Republicans strongly enough. So these little traumas and so on.

There was also a strategy, I understood—this I never saw—but sort of loading a rally with opponents of a candidate. And when he'd—it was an old opera house and some candidates stood up. And as soon as he stood up, the front row people would, "Oh, waste time. This guy no good." And they'd walk out and they started to throw rocks at the top of the building. It was, I think, it was a metal roof, so it reverberated pretty well. But it was a very, again, I go back, it was a very personalized kind of politics. But it was immense fun to follow and watch.

And in the newspapers, in those days, we did something and—we don't do so much in newspapers now—but I still think it was a good idea. We floated a lot of trial balloons. If somebody wanted to say, "I'm considering running for office," we put in a line that somebody's considering running for office. The position now, and of course we're a more metropolitan city, tends to be, "Wait till he really files before he runs." But we helped people float trial balloons and find out what their standing was.

Actually, when Jack Burns was elected governor [1962], he deliberately leaked us the names of people he was considering to appoint for the cabinet. We couldn't say, you know, "It's rumored that so-and-so is"—I mean, we could say it was rumored that so-and-so is. We couldn't say Jack Burns told us to start that rumor. But he was able to test his appointments publicly that way, before he actually made them. And I think maybe in one or so cases, he actually backed off an appointment, because he got enough feedback that was negative. But he had never committed himself to making it. And we were a conscious part of his game. I never thought it was a bad part. Some journalists now, I think, would say, "Oh, that's terrible. You shouldn't play those kind of games." But Jack Burns said, "If you want to have a rumor that I'm thinking about so-and-so." I think he tried one out. He was appointing his brother Ed [Edward Burns] tax commissioner. I think he particularly said, "Why don't you float that one and see what happens." And he went ahead and appointed Ed, so I guess the feedback wasn't so bad.

MK: You know, I have two questions to follow up on your comment about politics being really personal back then. If they were very personal, were they less issue-oriented then? Was politics less issue-oriented back then, then it is nowadays?
AS: I think so, yeah. I think it was highly personal. One of the issues was statehood. I have a hard time—I'm sure there were other issues. They don't come to mind. But it was more personal than issue-oriented then.

DT: Well, you're talking about the [19]40s now.

AS: Forties, yeah.

DT: We're not talking in the [19]50s.

MK: Yeah, I'm talking about [19]40s, yeah.

DT: Because I think the situation changed a lot in the [19]50s.

AS: Yeah, statehood was an issue. And in connection with statehood, the question of communism in the ILWU is an issue. Those were two of the burning issues at the time.

MK: But in the [19]40s it was more person-oriented.

AS: I'm talking about the [19]40s. Those were the issues. But there was this personal participation and people turned out for politics. Probably because it was one of the few alternative recreational activities, and it was fun. I think now it's possible for a candidate to, maybe, hardly appear at all except by television. I don't think any candidate has ever really done this, but you could almost run without ever touching the flesh and shaking a hand. And then it was just the opposite. You had to shake people's hands, they had to look you in the eye, they had to form an impression of you. And they voted. I think, intuitively, I believe we got less demagogues elected in office that way than the other way, but I'm not even sure that that's true.

MK: And then another question I have is that, you know, back in those days with politics being so personal, everybody knowing everybody else, how did the press deal with political coverage then? If the press knew something very negative about a candidate, because it's a small community, would the press print it?

AS: We pretty much printed everything we knew about a candidate. And we covered politics extensively. Again, it was one of the few alternative recreations and news things. I do recall a man coming to me. This would have been—probably not in the [19]40s. And we looked up our clipping file on him and found there was a sexual offense in his background. And I told him that I felt obligated, as a city editor, which I think I was then, to print that. And he said, "I won't run." He didn't run because of it. So, I don't know if that's a clue to what you're talking about or not.

DT: Willie Crozier, you mentioned, I wouldn't label him a heavyweight, but he was quite a bit smarter than most people gave him credit for being, was he not, in your judgment?

AS: Oh, very much. He was—he had real street smarts. And he enjoyed politics. I think he made it kind of a circus of his campaigning. He rented a sound wagon on Maui to go around and broadcast his complaint that the Maui Republicans and the O'ahu Republicans weren't in touch. And he'd drive through communities with his sound truck blaring. And he loved it.
And he won some elections and he lost. Later on, he mostly lost. But he was one of the memorable, lovable politicians.

DT: He was sort of the [Neil] Abercrombie of his day, right? To use an analogy?

AS: With differences, yes. He was colorful.

DT: Let me run some other names to you that sort of belonged to the [19]40s. Johnny [John H.] Wilson, in and out as mayor [of Honolulu].

AS: Oh, again, a fascinating guy we could also spend twenty minutes on. One of my vignettes about him is of—it was educational for me—was spending the 1946 general election, assigned to cover his office. And he was running against a man named [Herbert] "Monte" Richards. Richards was an old island family, and had invested a lot of money, and had a campaign song. And I can still sing, "Monte for mayor, Monte for mayor. Mayor, the man with a plan," and so on and so forth. And it was drummed into people's ears, but... And the Bulletin endorsed Monte, I think a little coolly, but he was from the Atherton family and kind of on the board of trustees, so he got the Bulletin endorsement. But the election actually turned out to be very, very close. But I was sitting in Johnny Wilson's office, reporting on it. When the votes came in from Mānoa precinct, and the figures were something like 200 votes for Richards and 25 votes for Wilson. And Johnny Wilson said to me, "We're doing all right."

"What do you mean you're doing all right? Two hundred to twenty-five."

He said, "The last time I ran in this precinct, I only got ten votes. See, I'm up to twenty-five." He said, "If I can make that much improvement—" Dan Tuttle would know this kind of thing. He said, "If I can make that much improvement all across the board, I'm going to win." Well, actually he did win by sixteen votes in the election.

DT: But the remarkable side to that story, too, was sixteen votes difference, but Monte Richards decided not to contest it, didn't he?

AS: That's right. I don't think he did contest it.

DT: He didn't have a recount. Don't you think that was rather...

AS: That was rather remarkable, yeah.

DT:... remarkable show of sportsmanship. And I think it sort of characterized, in my mind at any rate, the politics of the [19]40s. If that were to occur today, wouldn't we have a recount vote?

AS: Oh, I think so. I think you'd feel that you had let down your constituents if you didn't demand a recount. I think there was a—and, of course, there were honest errors, I'm sure, but I think there was a belief the system was basically honest. And I always thought it was basically honest. But still, with sixteen votes, you'd say that this could be an honest mistake with sixteen.
DT: Okay, well I'm glad you brought that campaign up, because I think that's one of these sort of classic campaigns of the [19]40s. I mentioned other names. Oh, [Elwell] Percy Lydgate.

AS: He was a Maui member of the [territorial] house of representatives who I respected a lot, but not a person I knew terribly well. I don't have any great vignettes to tell you about Percy.

DT: In other words, you couldn't get over to the neighbor islands. That was one of your problems?

AS: Well, of course he was up here serving the legislature. And he was a very respected member of the legislature by me and, I think, by a lot of other people too. But I don't have any particular colorful stories to tell you about him.

DT: What about the Bill [William] Heen brothers?

AS: Well they were a fascinating team. Bill Heen, Sr., I think, was one of the very first Asians to become a judge. And then he went on to be elected to the territorial senate [1926-57], where I first knew him. His brother Ernest was on the [Honolulu] city county board of supervisors. And Ernest was a very bombastic individual. Bill was a much more austere, dignified guy, but with a great sense of humor. Quiet, great quiet sense of humor.

DT: I guess we'll have to interrupt us at this time, because we're going to be out of tape again.

MK: Okay, shall we stop today?

DT: Yeah, yeah, that's fine with me.

END OF INTERVIEW
Tape No. 17-65-2-90

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

A. A. "Bud" Smyser (AS)

June 15, 1990

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Daniel W. Tuttle, Jr. (DT)

MK: Tape number six with Mr. A. A. "Bud" Smyser. Dan, you can start it off today.

DT: Well, we covered a lot of material in our first interview. And one of the topics that we got on—and I've forgotten just exactly how we got there, but I think chronologically we got there—was the relationship, perhaps, between the publisher of the Star-Bulletin, and Joe Farrington, and Sammy Wilder King. And we covered a lot of territory in discussing him, and I believe Bud wanted to correct one maybe false impression that he had, we disagreed at the time on it. And then we have something else to talk about there right after that.

AS: Yeah, I would like to say that I probably never should doubt Dan Tuttle when he says something . . .

DT: Shouldn't do that (chuckles).

AS: . . . because Dan recalled that Sam King had been a trustee—former Governor Samuel King—had been a trustee of the Bishop Estate just before he died in 1959 after he left the governorship in '57. I think he also recalled that there had been some criticism, perhaps in the Star-Bulletin about appointment. And I said, "No, no, no."

DT: Well, there was criticism of not necessarily that appointment, but of that appointment in relation to his being in the legislature, yeah.

AS: So, but in any event, I did check our clippings. And it turns out that ex-Governor King was appointed a trustee of the Bishop Estate in, I think, September of 1957, a few months after he left the governorship, and he served until his death in March of 1959. But I still find no record at all of any criticism of that appointment by the Star-Bulletin. Others may have criticized it. But I don't remember any Star-Bulletin criticism. And in my look, I wasn't able to find any. So, I think it's important to have that on the record that Dan was right. He was a trustee. And probably other people may have voiced criticism of the fact that the man was both a legislator and a Bishop Estate trustee, which he was. Not for long, because he died very soon after he took office in the legislature.

I'd like to talk, too, a little bit about the overall relationship between the Star-Bulletin and Governor King, as I saw it. Governor King and Joe Farrington campaigned as a team back in
the 1934 election. They were the leaders of the pro-statehood movement. And Sam King went to Congress and Joe went to the territorial senate, and they pushed for statehood. Then came 1942, and Delegate King then withdrew from the Congress in order to go in the navy, as I think we mentioned on tape earlier. Then Joe Farrington was elected to succeed him. And Joe continued in office until his death in 1954.

There was one particularly significant incident in 1952, when Dwight ["Ike"] Eisenhower was elected president of the United States and won the Republican nomination in a very heated contest with Senator Robert Taft who was the majority leader of the United States Senate. After being elected president, Ike fulfilled a campaign promise that, "I will go to Korea," when the war in Korea was still in progress and there was no settlement. And so even before he became president, he went secretly to Korea in November of 1952. And on his return from Korea, arrived at Pearl Harbor on an American cruiser. And when he arrived at Pearl Harbor, he got off and went into a limousine. And the first words recorded that he said was, "Where is Walter Dillingham," which was a tribute to Walter Dillingham's significance as a political power in the community at that time. But then Ike went over and spent some time at the marine base at Kāne‘ohe. And while he was over there, he invited, I think, probably more than one prospect for governor, over to see him, because the appointment for governor would be up to him. And among the people he invited was Randolph Crossley, who was a businessman and who'd been active in the Republican party. I'm not quite sure what particular party positions Randy held then, but he was, at various times, chairman of the party and Republican national committeeman, and so on. And he had served in the territorial legislature.

So, toward the end of the year, maybe only a month or so after the visit, Crossley was called to Washington and was told that it was the president's decision to appoint him as governor. And Crossley told me later that his fatal mistake, from his standpoint, Dan, was he didn't immediately go out and announce it to the press, that he thought it was more appropriate for him to go home, I think, and announce it to the press. But the White House, following congressional courtesy, immediately notified Delegate Farrington of the intention. And Delegate Farrington found that appointment very disagreeable to him, because he wanted Sam King to be the governor. And he immediately flew into action and went to Senator Taft, who was still the majority leader of the Senate, and Senator Hugh Butler, who was the chairman of the interior and insular affairs committee, which oversaw Hawai‘i matters. And they developed a strategy to make this a basic test of strength between the president and the senate, over the right to appoint and the right to confirm. And the point was that Senator Taft was insisting the Senate have a voice in the process, that it not be a unilateral White House process. Well, the upshot of it was that Sherman Adams, who was right-hand [assistant to the president] to President Eisenhower, had to phone Randolph Crossley and say, "I'm sorry. We have to withdraw your appointment. Would you like an ambassadorship to Australia or some other ambassadorship?" And Randolph Crossley said that he would take an ambassadorship to Japan, but that wasn't offered. And so he decided he said he would take nothing. But in any event, I think that's some evidence of the closeness of the Farrington-King relationship.

There was a rift, I think, just before Joe Farrington died in 1954, because the statehood bill was having its problems in Congress. And I think Joe Farrington, as delegate, felt that congressional policy should be more or less his responsibility. And Governor King, for reasons which I'm not quite sure—I guess perhaps, local, political reasons—wanted to send a very large delegation of island people to Washington, to go to the Senate at a time that
Farrington thought was inappropriate. I don't think he was against delegations coming at certain times, but he thought this was an inappropriate time. But Governor King went ahead and sent the delegation. And I think that was a source of bitterness with Farrington. And unfortunately, it occurred I think, within a month or two of Farrington's death. So, that's kind of the story of their relationship.

DT: Well, this all makes sense, because considerable weight, I think, had been placed on the fact that in the United States Congress—not to mention the United States Senate—the United States Congress, there is a considerable amount of clubbishness. In other words, they stick together. And so here were three people—Taft, Farrington, and King, who had all been a member of this club in [Washington] D.C.

AS: And Senator Butler.

DT: Over and against the outsider Crossley. I think maybe some confusion may have developed in the pre-Republican convention in that year. Do you remember whether the Bulletin backed either Ike or Taft?

AS: I'm sure the Bulletin backed Taft, if it backed anybody publicly, because Joe Farrington was a Taft man, which was what gave him leverage with Taft after the election. Both Farrington and King were Taft men.

DT: So, then to complete the story, I guess, this pressure brought to bear then by Farrington and presumably others, so I've heard, turned Ike around as a result of the Morningside conference between Taft and Eisenhower whereby Eisenhower the winner, magnanimously invited Taft to meet with him, and Taft got certain goodies. One of which, apparently, I gather, was this quick turnabout on that Hawai‘i governorship.

AS: Yeah, well that was only a symbolic thing, but it showed that the White House had to, in effect, negotiate with the Senate on appointments then.

DT: I think that's certainly one of the more interesting stories, really, in Hawaiian political history. All right, anything else you want to add about this relationship?

AS: No, not about the Farrington-King relationship. We could talk for weeks about any of these things. But . . .

DT: Okay, Michiko, do you . . .

MK: Okay. I know that last time when you were here, we were talking about the [19]40s, early [19]50s, and we talked about Joe Farrington and statehood, and we got into some of the more notable politicians. We had gotten into the Heen brothers, Crozier. And I guess we'll kind of continue with . . .

AS: What brothers did you mention?

MK: Walter and . . .

AS: Oh, yes, the Heen brothers. Mm hmm. Walter and . . .
DT: No, Ernest and Bill Heen.

MK: Oh, I'm sorry.

AS: Ernest and Bill Heen. Ernest and Bill Heen, yes.

DT: Walter is the son of Ernie.

AS: Yes.

MK: So, we're talking about notable politicians. But we were into the [19]40s, getting into the early [19]50s. But I want to move back a little bit, back into '46, because I was just reading about the time Farrington ran against William Borthwick [at that time tax commissioner]. And at that time, Farrington got the ILWU [International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union] support. And I was wondering how Farrington got the ILWU support, and when many of Farrington's friends accused him of, maybe, hatching a deal with the ILWU, how did he react?

AS: The ILWU was a new organization and a very strong organization in Hawai'i at that time. It had—I believe the campaign with Borthwick was '48, wasn't it? Or was it '46? [Farrington won against Borthwick in 1946.]

MK: I think . . .

AS: Forty-six. Well, in any event, then it was perhaps even during the progress of the big sugar strike. And so feelings were very intense. And Borthwick was very much anti-ILWU and I think labeled the ILWU leadership as Communist. So, the ILWU wasn't about to endorse him. The ILWU did endorse Farrington. And he said, and I think the ILWU both said, the endorsement was entirely on the basis of statehood. The union was for statehood and Joe was for statehood. And they endorsed Joe on the basis that he would be the best delegate to push for statehood. It did cause Farrington a lot of trouble with conservative people. And, of course, that was Borthwick's intention to exploit it. So it became a very hot campaign issue. But that was—I think on both sides, that was stated as the basis for the endorsement. And I have a feeling that was the real basis for the endorsement.

DT: There was also a basis, a lot of the times, that the ILWU would endorse a person because they disliked the other person a lot more. And that . . .

AS: I believe this would be that case, yes.

DT: . . . is sort of implied in what you just said. They did that in '59, in the [Frank] Fasi-[Hiram] Fong contest [for U.S. Senate]. A lot of people were surprised that Fong got the ILWU's support, but they just literally despised Frank Fasi. I think there were probably some of that . . .

AS: And it was said about the ILWU, not strictly in relation to that election, but the other elections. The ILWU couldn't elect anybody, but they could defeat people. They had enough votes that they could sometimes tip the balance against somebody. They didn't have enough votes by themselves to elect anybody.
MK: You also brought up statehood again. And I was wondering, how would you assess the Bulletin's relationship with Governor [Ingram] Stainback? Stainback was very anti-statehood, so what kind of treatment did the Bulletin give him?

AS: Oh, that was a very funny and very complicated relationship. And I was kind of the Star-Bulletin's point man for some parts of it. Basically, Farrington was a Republican delegate and the administration in Washington was Democratic. Harry Truman was the president and Julius Krug was the secretary of the interior. So they didn't really turn to the Republican delegate to ask whom they should appoint as governor. But I think when they made selections, they kind of cleared them with the delegate, at least, to see how he felt. And Stainback was appointed during the war, when he and the Star-Bulletin really shared a common concern in opposition to military rule in Hawai'i. They both were very much opposed to military rule and made common cause there.

But after the war, then statehood moved back to the forefront as an issue. And Stainback's background was such that he was very kāmalua, uncertain about statehood. I think secretly he was opposed to it. But he was put in a funny position in that Farrington, the delegate, went to the interior department, when Stainback came up for reappointment in 1946, Farrington said, “I realize I have no voice in who you should appoint, but I don't think you should appoint somebody who is opposed to statehood.”

And the question then was, was Stainback for statehood or against statehood? And Stainback was kind of irascible, and starchy, and difficult, but he was pretty honest. And he couldn't bring himself to say he was for statehood when he was against it. What he did say—and I was the Star-Bulletin reporter covering the 'Iolani Palace, where his office was then. And I was asked regularly to ask him, “Where do you stand on statehood?”

And he said, “Why don’t you read the statement I made back in 1943 or '44, whatever.”

And I said, “Well we know what you said in '43 or '44, but what do you think in 1946 and 1947?”

“Read the old statement,” he would say.

And I’d say, “No. What do you think now?”

And he’d say, “Read the old statement.”

And we went back and forth this way. And it got to the point that he finally said, “You know, I don’t want you coming to my office anymore. I’m not going to allow the Star-Bulletin in my office anymore.”

And but again, curmudgeon that he was, he didn't allow me in the office anymore, but he, every morning, walked down from 'Iolani Palace to the Dean Witter stock brokerage office on Merchant Street. He watched the stock market very religiously. And I knew the pattern of his walks and I would meet him on his walks. And he would tell me the kind of things he might have told me in his office. And we never discussed this. I mean, I would just walk up to him and say hello and I’d join him. And he would tell me things. And so, I, as a reporter, never wrote that “Governor Stainback said,” but I said, “It is understood that Governor
Stainback will,” or something like that. And that seemed to work into a relationship that he never broke off.

It was also true that when he got down to the corner of Alakea Street and—no, the corner of Richards Street and King [Street], there was a newsstand with the Star-Bulletin in it and he’d stick his dime—I guess it was in those days—and get himself a Star-Bulletin. And I would know whether there’d be a story that would, perhaps, annoy him, because it might be calling attention to his unwillingness to express himself on statehood. He would go unerringly to that. It was like a magnet. It would draw him to it. And then he would grumble, and scream, and yell, and off to the stock market. Or he would go unerringly to a picture from which either he might have been cut out because he was standing on the side, or where he was in the center, he said, “Ah ha, they couldn’t cut me out of that picture.” But, there was this kind of warfare (chuckles) between the governor and the newspaper. But I, as the middleman, kind of enjoyed this access to him as long as I didn’t make a big public thing of the fact that I had this access. And actually, as I remember, I was able to get more newsbreaks out of the governor’s office than the opposition morning Advertiser was, using this technique.

MK: Did the Star-Bulletin ever make it an issue the fact that you were barred from his office?

AS: Oh, I think we called attention to it from time to time, yeah. But, as I say, it was this little back and forth. And then in the end, he didn’t get reappointed. Oren Long was appointed [in 1951], because Oren Long was clearly for statehood and Stainback wasn’t. But Stainback, simply couldn’t bring himself to—and then after Stainback was out of the governorship, he came out and openly advocated commonwealth status for Hawai‘i. He said we should be a commonwealth rather than a state.

DT: Yeah, isn’t it fair to say that there was great relief in both Democratic quarters as well as Republican quarters when Long replaced Stainback?

AS: I think so. Stainback then went on the territorial supreme court. And again, he had a good mind and he was a curmudgeon, but I imagine he delivered some very good legal opinions during his tenure on the court.

DT: Yeah. And there was sort of only one Judge Stainback to you.

AS: Right.

DT: He’s a crusty old fellow.

The tape is relentless. We’re going to have to pause. And maybe we can pick it up with some more things about statehood; particularly, maybe President [Gregg] Sinclair at UH [University of Hawai‘i].

MK: Okay.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: Tape number seven with Mr. Bud Smyser.
DT: Let’s continue with statehood, if we may, Michiko. And there were quite a few prominent people involved in this statehood effort after World War II, picking it up there, onto a time when statehood actually arrived. Do you recall any of those? I remember one in particular. I think Gregg Sinclair was a great statehood advocate.

AS: Yes. He . . .

DT: He must have had a number of . . .

AS: He was the president of University of Hawai‘i and he was very active for statehood. But I’ve forgotten whether he served on the statehood commission. [Sinclair was chair of the Citizens’ Advisory Committee on Statehood for Hawai‘i.] Abner [T.] Longley, I remember, was one chairman. He was a longtime Democrat with the Wahiawā [Hawaiian] Pineapple [Company as the] plantation manager.

MK: Gregg really was outspoken for statehood. And he also had sponsored the East-West Philosophers’ Conference or helped Charlie [Charles] Moore sponsor the East-West Philosophers’ Conference at the university. And he believed, strongly, in the east-west role for Hawai‘i and he was active in promoting that. And he felt statehood fitted in. It was true that when we tried to organize a picketing of the federal building, one December 7, for statehood, thinking we might get some national attention that way, Gregg thought it was a little bit beneath the dignity of the president of the university to carry a picket sign, which I always thought it would have been great if he would have joined and carried a picket sign. But he was solidly for statehood. He just didn’t think the university presidents ought to picket the federal building. I don’t know how the current president would feel about picketing the federal building today.

But the—there were a great many—the business community remained divided on statehood, but increasingly pro-statehood. The president of Hawaiian Electric [Co., Ltd.], Leslie Hicks, was very strong for statehood. The president of Castle & Cooke, Alexander Budge was very strong for statehood. The leadership of AMFAC [American Factors] were the Big Five company who were most reluctant on statehood. AMFAC had Walter Dillingham as a substantial stock owner [of] the Hawaiian Trust Company, which Dillingham was involved in, as a substantial stock owner. And so they were against statehood, or at least doubtful about it. But there was very strong business community support. There was very strong support from almost all ethnic groups, except Hawaiians. Hawaiians tended—not all of them, because Sammy Wilder King, himself, was Hawaiian—but a lot of Hawaiians were a little scared about statehood. They were scared of what it would do to the status of the Hawaiian Homes Commission, which was very important to them. And there was some feeling that Japanese, in particular, might take over the civil service jobs and other things, which a great many Hawaiians had in city hall and elsewhere. And I think on the—as I recall, there was quite a lot of opposition to statehood among the homesteaders on Moloka‘i. But that diminished. And in the end, when finally, there had to be a referendum on statehood, in connection with our becoming a state in ’59, Congress mandated it, I think the vote was seventeen to one, in favor of statehood. So by the time we got it, opposition in the community had really diminished to a very small level.

MK: You know, you mentioned that Hawaiians were opposed to statehood. Did you have any contact, as a reporter, with [Alice] Kamokila Campbell?
AS: Yes, mm hmm.

MK: What was, generally, her arguments against . . .

AS: Well, she was a gracious, stately, regal woman, who said, I think, in public one time, "I would never let a Japanese judge send me to jail." And that was the basis of her argument. But she was a wonderful woman, and I say, regal and stately. And she—I’ve forgotten how old she was when she died, but she was pretty close to ninety, I believe. And . . .

DT: This didn’t show up in the plebiscite, to any extent, of—did it? When we finally had a vote on statehood, why, it was overwhelming.

AS: I say it was seventeen to one. And probably, if Kamokila Campbell was still alive, she was one of the minority people, I’m sure. But they had diminished quite a bit.

DT: Do you remember Nils Tavares, who was chairman . . .

AS: Oh, very well.

DT: . . . of the statehood commission for a long time?

AS: He had been attorney general to this state. And he was a very conscientious, very dedicated citizen. Very active in the statehood fight. And he truly gave his all. Later he became, I guess, a federal [U.S. district court] judge before he died. But he was one of my favorite citizens of those days. That’s a fairly long list, but he certainly is that close to the top of it.

DT: And then there was a person, lurking in the background, all this time in Hawaiian politics that seldom got mentioned—at least as far as I know—about political history, but was considered quite a power. Maybe you had some contact with him. Fred Ohrt.

AS: Oh yes. Fred was the chairman and chief engineer of the Honolulu Board of Water Supply. And the Board of Water Supply had its own political organization, which I think organized around a pre-World War II mayor [1930-38], George Wright. Anyway, Mayor Wright’s political machine leaned a lot on people in government. And Fred Ohrt was one of his principal backers. And Fred was a very farsighted engineer, who was very sensitive to politics. You could hardly go to a political rally that Fred wasn’t there. Or if a water main broke at three A.M. or anytime, even in the middle of Christmas Day, Fred Ohrt was there. And it was Fred Ohrt, who privately, I think, helped lead the campaign against building an oil refinery on Sand Island, which came close to happening. And he later became a trustee of the Campbell Estate. And he also was very influential in getting Standard Oil to relocate and put its refinery out at Barber’s Point, where, I think, we all can be thankful it is today. And Fred took over the water system at a time when it was having lots of trouble. People were getting mud in their pipes, or no water at all, and so on. And the system was on the ropes financially. Fred took it over and built it into one of the best water systems in the country. So he was a politician, but he was the goodest kind of politician you could want. And very quiet. He didn’t, as Dan says, he didn’t seek the limelight at all. But I developed a tremendous respect for him.

DT: Yeah, sort of clear it with, see me type of relationship with politics. I think most of your
politicians ultimately went to see Fred Ohrt before they would decide to run or whatever they decided to do.

AS: I think that’s correct. And . . .

DT: And then you might be able to shed some light. Weren’t they tied in—the Board of Water Supply politicians, if you will—tied in with the development of the HGEA, the [Hawaii’i] Government Employees’ Association?

AS: I don’t doubt it, but I’m not particularly aware of the details of that. But I’m sure Fred was a strong HGEA backer.

DT: Now, I think Dan [Daniel] Ainoa was there too. You know him.

AS: That’s right. Yes. Dan Ainoa became president of HGEA. [In 1933, Ainoa was cofounder of HGEA and from 1965-69 was its executive director.]

DT: But this did occur in the [19]30s. I just thought you might have some memory of that.

AS: Mm hmm.

DT: Michiko, . . .

MK: Oh, okay. Maybe changing the topic a little bit. You know, back in the [19]40s there was a Mayor [John, “Johnny”] Wilson, from ’47 to ’54. And I think you covered the city council. So I was wondering if you had some memories to share with us about . . .

AS: Oh, I—yes.


AS: Well, Mayor Wilson was, first of all, elected mayor [of Honolulu], I think, in the 1920s [1920-26 and 1929-30]. And he was Scotch, Irish, Tahitian, Hawaiian, I believe, in ancestry. He had been raised in the royal court, because his mother, I think, had some connection with the king and the queen. So he grew up in the palace area. [According to History Makers of Hawaii’i Wilson was raised with the royal family at the Waikīkī residence of Lili’uokalani.] But then, I doubt if he ever went to college. [Wilson graduated from Stanford University in 1895.] I think he did [go] to sea. He had some seafaring background. And when he got onto the county [of O’ahu] board of supervisors, it was called then in the [19]20s, the predecessor of our city council, he was a combative fellow, who, as I recall, at one time or another, got into a fist fight with a fellow supervisor. But the story I seem to remember was that he simply walked off his chair. The mayor then presided over the board meetings, he walked off his chair and sluggd this guy (chuckles) and went back and resumed the meeting or some such. But that was—and then he was defeated for reelection after several terms. I don’t remember the exact years. And he was out of office and he served a time as territorial director of welfare. And then in 1946, Mayor Lester Petrie, a Democrat, decided not to run for reelection. And Johnny Wilson was persuaded to come back. By this time, Johnny Wilson was probably close to seventy, maybe even over seventy, he was persuaded to come back and run. And I think we did talk about the fact that he won a sixteen-vote victory, over Herbert
“Monte” Richards, and won the election. And then he went on to be opposed in a succeeding election, probably ’48, by a young guy named Frank Fasi, who raised the issue of age against Wilson, and lost. [Fasi lost to Wilson in the 1952 Democratic primary.] And then, I think, that he—Fasi came back and raised the issue again in 1950 [1954]. And this time Fasi won the Democratic nomination . . .

DT: Fifty-four.

AS: Fifty-four. Was it ’54? But this time Fasi won the Democratic nomination, with the support of the ILWU. But the ILWU, then, showing its colors, only did that to get rid of him, and then switched and supported Neal Blaisdell, the Republican nominee, for victory in November. And Neal won. But in the course of fending off this attack from Frank Fasi, who was using age as an issue, Wilson—say, who was well into his seventies—would jump onto the back of the trucks that they used for stages at the rallies, just to show how young and spry he was. And he pulled it off very well with considerable aplomb. And I don’t know if he had to go home and put liniment on his joints or not, but (chuckles) he succeeded. And the interesting thing now is that pretty soon Frank Fasi will be about that age. And I don’t know if some young whippersnapper will challenge him. But he probably won’t have to jump on the back of trucks anymore, because television has made that unnecessary. But . . .

DT: Yeah, but Wilson probably would have won that ’54 primary against Fasi, except for an inadvertent remark, I believe, he made about the people in Kailua. It had to do something with the tunnels. Do you remember he favored puka one place and Stainback favored another place, and they had this continuing argument. And . . .

AS: Yeah, my memory is not strong on that point. But I think that also the ILWU contributed very much to his defeat.

DT: Did you cover his battle of the soprano versus the alto in the Royal Hawaiian Band? (Chuckles) Do you remember that?

AS: Oh, yeah, I just have a foggy memory of that, but I don’t . . .

DT: You mean you didn’t cover it, you don’t think.

AS: No.

DT: Well, maybe we shouldn’t leave it dangling. Aunty Jennie, his [Wilson’s] wife, favored—I forgot whether it was the soprano or alto. He favored the reverse. And they got into a public controversy in the newspapers.

AS: He and his wife were both very strong-minded people. And they did get into public controversies at times. She was another very regal Hawaiian woman and a strong personality in her own right. She’s gone, but she raised peacocks up in Wailupe Valley or—not Wailupe Valley. I don’t know where it is. Right back of Wai‘alae-Kähala, there on. . . . But the descendants of her peacocks are now at Makaha. So at least that lineal descent from Jennie Wilson is still around.

MK: You know, you mentioned the young Frank Fasi—and we’re going to talk about Fasi a lot
more later—but what were your reactions to this *malihini* from the Mainland, getting involved in local politics?

AS:  Well, from the standpoint of a newspaper reporter, he was fun, because he was outspoken. And Riley Allen, who we've talked about earlier, used to privately call him Frank Fascist, which probably wasn't too far off the mark, because Frank was an ex-Marine Corps officer and he had very strong attitudes about things. But he also had pretty good political insights. And it just so happened that his birthday, August 27th, was the same birthday as my late wife. I think about a year apart. No, more than a year apart. About two years apart. But in any event, so sometimes we would celebrate birthdays together. And that was when he was living in a quonset hut out near Middle Street. But so I always enjoyed him. I very often disagreed with him. But he was a colorful addition. And he was a terrible maverick in politics. And he belonged to the Frank Fasi party. For a time he was a Republican, for a time he was a Democrat, for a time he was an Independent Democrat. But basically, he always was, and has been—he follows his own lights. And he's probably been one of the few politicians in Hawai'i's history, who can lose an election and come back. So often, when a politician loses an election, that's the end. It might be the end, because if he tries again, the voters say no a second time and he stops. It might be the end just because he's discouraged and doesn't try again. But Frank never got discouraged. He always kept coming back. And I think the last time I counted, he had lost just about as many elections as he won. But he kept coming back and kept coming back.

DT:  Wouldn't you attribute a part of this to the fact that when all is said and done, and you may disagree with me, Frank, pretty well, did his homework. In other words, he was probably, as I recall, one of the most avid newspaper clippers around town, back in the [19]50s at least.

AS:  Oh, he did his homework and he was able to turn issues to his own advantage. To the frustration of his opponents, he would take issues and turn them against them. And I recall Larry [Lawrence H.] Fuchs, who wrote the very good book about Hawai'i called Hawai'i *Pono*, said that when he came back some years after statehood, ten or fifteen years after, said that the one thing that surprised him was that Frank was still going on the political scene. He assumed that Frank's sun would set. But it didn't. And it still hasn't.

DT:  Well, since we're talking about Johnny Wilson here, maybe there could be a moment when we could sort of draw you out a little bit and at least talk about some of the heavyweights in politics. Would it have been a Johnny Wilson, or would it have been a Joe Farrington, or...

AS:  Well, fortunately, we had lots of heavyweights. My perspective may change. You know, I was in my twenties then and I'm going to be seventy this year. So, maybe these people seemed older to me and I respected them more. But it seemed to be that—and the names I'm running by you now are not, by any means, always people that I agreed with. But [Royal A.] "Roy" Vitousek, who was the speaker of the [territorial] house of representatives, was an ironhanded leader of the house of representatives, [elected to house in '31, '35, '37; retired in '39 but returned after the start of WWII, then retired again in '44.] as Hiram Fong discovered when he dared to vote against Speaker Vitousek and wound up on no committees at all, and spent his first year or two in the [territorial] house of representatives [1938-53] in lonely splendor. But then Hiram learned that technique and he practiced it himself when he became the speaker some years later. Hiram was certainly one of the heavyweights in politics. A very tough guy. A very thick-skinned guy, who could get into a slam-bang fight, and go home that
night and sleep as sound as a rock. And who kind of enjoyed political combat, and I think still does. I mean, Hiram is still perking around. I’ve seen him just recently. And he’s looking with relish to the fall campaign this year, this time as a bystander.

But Hebden Porteus was the vice-speaker of the house [1949, 1951]. I think lost a couple of contests for the speakership with Hiram. But he did his homework more than any other legislator I’ve ever known. If I as a reporter wanted to know what was in a bill, I could go to him, and he would open up his book. And he would have underlined key words in it and so on. So he was a legislative reference bureau really. He could come up with not only the meaning of a bill but the background of it and so on. And was an extremely well-informed member. He later became the president of the state constitutional convention in 1968, was it, Dan? And he was the secretary of the first constitutional convention in 1950, and a very able contributor to things.

Speakers of the house, we had a number of them. Elmer Cravalho [speaker 1959-67] is a name to be reckoned with. He simply ran the house so effectively that if he sat across from you, as I’m sitting across from you now, and said, “The house will pass that bill,” that was as good as a vote on the floor. And he might say that sometimes on a close bill. And I think the point was that he had enough persuasive powers with the house, that if the votes weren’t there—I mean, he usually knew where they lay anyway—but if they weren’t there, he could change a few, because, basically, he knew what every member of the house wanted. Almost everybody has a pet bill or two he wants to get passed. And Elmer would say, “You’ll get your bill passed, but on other issues, you have to go along with me.” And so he was able to call in enough IOU’s to get his way almost all the time.

And one time he was talking to one of the Star-Bulletin reporters, Doug Boswell, who elicited from him the fact that he often slept in his office of the throne room in the palace. And frequently he woke up at two o’clock in the morning. And Doug said, “What do you do then?”

Elmer said, “I plot.”

And I believe that that’s a (chuckles) totally accurate description of what Elmer did with a good many of his waking hours. But so he really ran the house in a very strong fashion. He’s outstanding as speakers go.

Oh, I know we can run down the list. We’ve talked about Senator [William] Heen earlier. He was an outstanding person. There were a great many outstanding figures. And Joe Farrington, of course, I totally—we’ve talked about him—I totally loved and respected Senator Sam King—were strong figures in the community. Walter Dillingham was a leader against statehood and a person with whom the Star-Bulletin deeply disagreed. But you couldn’t help but respect him. I mean, he was courtly, and gentlemanly, and effective. But he was very much against statehood. If we have time for a little story, I think of a significant story about him.

DT: I think so. And you might tie it in with Ben, [Dillingham] too, because here [tape inaudible].

AS: Okay. But when Senator ...
DT: I'm sorry. Yeah, we better stop. I'm sorry.

AS: Okay.

MK: We're out of tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Okay. Tape number eight with Mr. Bud Smyser. And we're going to continue with the Dillingham story.

AS: Well, we were talking about Walter Dillingham. And I would like to tell you about a time that Senator Guy Cordon of [California] came out here, I think it was in 1949 [January 1948], to hold what was the first senate only on-site investigation of statehood. And he, Senator Cordon, traveled through all the islands and interviewed lots and lots of people. And all of his hearings were open. Common Cause would've loved him. He allowed the reporters to sit in on everything. And one time, there was a kind of a small, little private meeting between him and Walter Dillingham in one of the anterooms of the 'Iolani Palace. And three or four of us, who were reporters, were sitting around the edge of the room, listening, in chairs. And Walter Dillingham moved up to the desk. Senator Cordon was sitting behind a desk and Walter Dillingham was on this side of the desk. He leaned over to the desk and he put his arm on the desk like this. And he said, "Senator, I want to tell you just the way I'm talking to you now. I've talked to every president of the United States since President Harding." And he said, "I don't do that to impress you, I mean, in an egotistical way, but I'm doing it to let you know that I've been very close to the government. And I think I'm sensitive to political affairs and so on." And then he went on to say that it was his concern that Hawai'i should not become a state at this time, because of the uncertainty of the situation in the ILWU and the possibility of Communists becoming a voting influence if we became a state. And this was the basis of his opposition. I always felt, incidentally, that that opposition was a cover for ethnic opposition, but that's another story.

But in any event, when it was over, and Walter Dillingham had gone, Senator Cordon turned to the rest of us and said, "What did you think of that testimony?" And we gave him some diverse answers. And he said, "I thought that some of the most effective testimony I have heard from any witness." But what he showed was that he could represent himself in Washington. He didn't need statehood. It's the rest of the people in Hawai'i who needed statehood.

(Laughter)

MK: You just said something interesting about—you felt that Dillingham was using the Communist issue as a cover for his qualms about the ethnic issue. Can you kind of expand on that?

AS: Well, it became—[J.] Garner Anthony, who was attorney general during the war, had a phrase that there's no argument against statehood. That it is or isn't unconstitutional or un-
American, I think. And what he meant was that there really weren't sound arguments against statehood. And the fears about Hawai‘i on statehood, some of them were noncontiguity, the fact that we were offshore. Some of them were Communists. But the people who used communism [as a reason for being opposed to statehood], knew they couldn’t use ethnicity as an issue. And so, many of them—I should be careful about reading any individual’s mind, Walter Dillingham’s, and others. But I think many people, who—and this would include Governor Stainback—many people who used communism, also had underlying, a concern that we would have a non-Caucasian majority voting to elect people to the state offices. And that they were very kanalua about that.

DT: Yeah, well, I think to reinforce your judgment there, the ’54 election had occurred, too, just five years before statehood. And there’s no question, that it was common—I’m sure you ran into it many times in Mānoa, and other valleys, and highways, and byways, that after that ’54 election, why, there was a great fear that the Japanese had indeed taken over. And this was being widely used, in a variety of ways, against statehood.

Now Ben [Benjamin] Dillingham [II] was a son of Walter, right? One of his sons? He got into politics in the [19]50s. [Ben Dillingham was first elected to the board of supervisors in 1946, then resigned to run for territorial senate in 1948.] I’m not sure you were still covering politics . . .

AS: Oh, I was covering politics. And I’d be a little foggy on the exact years, but he came into politics. And his father was a courtly, gracious man. Ben was a very earthy, charming individual. Big man, physically, both tall and fairly heavy, but wide bone structure. And a completely charming individual, who would vary his political talks, very much according to his audience. And so when he got into some areas, he’d make a fairly philosophical, political talk, and others he would sing. “Three Little Fishes” in Hawaiian. “Three little fishes up an itty-bitty stream,” or something. That was a very popular tune at the time. And Ben worked it out in Hawaiian and the audiences loved it. When he was elected to the territorial senate, he—and I think he was a good active senator. I don’t recall many issues came where the family concern about statehood was much of a factor. But there was a major issue over the fact that the territorial government was negotiating to acquire piers owned by the Dillingham family. And a senator named Thelma Akana stood up across the chamber, across the senate chamber, and accused Dillingham of favoring this purchase, because of the great advantage it would bring to his family, which was another point. At least it was out in the open. There was no hidden agenda there. But everybody knew that Ben—what Ben’s family’s interest were. But he was defending them. And she denounced him emotionally and heatedly. And when she was through, he left his desk, walked across the chamber, and kissed her. It absolutely demolished her. She broke into tears. She wanted some other kind of response. But Ben had this—it was kind of a natural reflex reaction to him. And it did destroy the effectiveness with her argument. But, you know.

DT: Ben had been in favor of statehood, right, and then later changed his mind, and apologized for this, when he was in the territorial senate.

AS: I’m being a little obscure. I think that he did, sometimes, take a position in favor of statehood. I think because his father’s opposition was so strong, people tended to doubt it. And I do remember that when he ran for the Congress against Dan Inouye, after statehood was granted, there was a very effective cartoon saying that he wanted now some of the
forbidden apples of statehood, which his family didn’t want Hawai‘i to have. And sort of thrusted on him.

DT: Well, I think you’re right about Ben Dillingham. He was a very appealing politician. And, of course, his career went no place after he came out openly against statehood. But I do have to toss in here, I think, because the most poignant interview, I think, I’ve ever—really, it wasn’t an interview. He came to my class on one occasion, and got involved in a long discussion with Marilyn Mitsuo Voss, who was a graduate student, a very sharp graduate student. The class occurred about 10:30 [a.m.], finished up about 11:00. At three o’clock in the afternoon, these two were still going at it. Well I was sitting there with no tape recorder, unfortunately, but here was Ben Dillingham, literally baring his soul about trying to convince this young gal about what a tough life he had had, growing up in a household as a son of Walter Dillingham. And given what you told people who are listening in on this about Walter Dillingham, perhaps that would be sort of additional appreciation.

AS: Walter Dillingham, when you speak about powerful people—I mentioned, too, earlier, you might go to Elmer Cravalho and get a—you could get a house vote by getting his opinion on something. Well you could really get a community vote by going to Walter Dillingham. If you went to Walter Dillingham with a project, and he said it will fly, it most probably would fly, because he was, I think, chairman of the board of Hawaiian Trust Company. He was an active minority stockholder of the Advertiser. He had a number of other very influential positions in the community. And it was true, in those days, that the trust companies voted stock in most of the Big Five firms. So somebody who was the chairman of the trust company could control an enormous number of proxy votes. And so when Walter said something will go, he had a lot of the horses necessary to make sure it would go. And so people would go to him for community projects. And the Dillinghams were very community civic-minded people. They supported—Mrs. Dillingham was chairman of the board of parks and recreation for a while. And they were very concerned with community development in Hawai‘i. They were also the social leaders of Hawai‘i. The apex of social success was to be invited to a Dillingham party out at La Pietra [became Hawai‘i School for Girls in 1968] on the slope of Diamond Head. They finally were somewhat challenged, in later years, by the Henry Kaisers, who thought they’d like to vie for social leadership. [Kaiser was an industrialist and the developer of Hawai‘i Kai.] And that became kind of a—sort of a fun type of community rivalry and controversy between the Kaisers and the Dillinghams. But . . .

DT: Do we have anybody today akin to this real prominence of Walter Dillingham and his family had . . .

AS: I don’t think so. I think prominent people tend to hold back from the limelight more now than was the case in those days. It’s a totally different community. At least I can’t name you a—well, I don’t think as far as politics is concerned, power is more diffuse. There simply is—you can’t go to one person, the governor or anybody else, and have his or her yes [to guarantee] it’s going to happen. You’ve got to make a lot more calls and do a lot more lobbying. And this is what we call the democratic process. So I assume the processes can be called far more democratic now, than they were back in those days. It was an autocracy. I think the people at the top had, by and large, had the community’s interest at heart, as they saw it. Some of the other people didn’t necessarily see it the same way. But I believe the autocrats could go to bed and sleep with themselves very well, saying, “I have done a lot of good things today.” Other people might not agree they were good, but they felt they were
When you used that term "democratic," you were using small $d$.

Small $d$, that's right.

Because somebody might interpret that to mean capital $D$ since the Democrats . . .

Well, actually, it became both, but the power is much more diffused now.

Now, somebody like a Walter Dods [Chairman of First Hawaiian Bank] would not be able to hold a candle to a Walter Dillingham in terms of, say, a political, social, economic . . .

I can't name any individual in the community. You might put together a group of five or ten, whose combined influence might equal that of Walter Dillingham. I'm not sure.

Well put, well put.

You know, we've been talking about statehood and communism. And I know you've been reporting since the [19]40s. And we've had a number of major events that dealt with communism in the [19]40s through the [19]50s. And I noticed that you were involved in the coverage of the [John] Reinecke proceedings. So, can you tell us about that experience back at . . .

Well, actually, when Governor Stainback began to use the Communist issue, I was one of the first reporters to whom he showed a paper that said, "Among the Communists in the school system is John Reinecke of Farrington High School." And so I hightailed it out to Farrington High School. And I think I actually knocked on the door of John Reinecke's classroom. When he came out, I said, "Are you a Communist?" And he—I've forgotten the details of that—but the effect was he believed in Marxism, and he was a Socialist, and so on. But he wasn't saying he was a Communist. I also got a quote from Walton Gordon, the principal of Farrington High School at that time, saying that John Reinecke was one of the best teachers at Farrington. He was a very good and effective teacher. So in a way, I guess I wrote one of the first stories in which some individual was actually identified as being pro-Communist. We went on from there, of course. Then there were publications naming lots of people. Ichiro Izuka of Kaua'i wrote a publication [The Truth About Communism in Hawai'i] with lots of names in it. And there were hearings, [House] Un-American Activities Committee hearings, held out here by the [U.S.] House of Representatives, and I believe, also by the [U.S.] Senate, in which a number of people were hostile witnesses. And, of course, the record that's emerged is now pretty clear, which was that we did have a lot of people in Hawai'i who were members of the Communist party, that Jack Hall and the ILWU was one of them. But essentially, they joined the Communist party, because it could help them politically. They didn't join it out of any great, ideological love for Russia. In fact, not at all. They joined it out of a . . . looking for help. And when they had a chance to go elsewhere, they went elsewhere. And I think, as the record then played out, as they won power they exercised it. And I think Jack Burns perceived this when he accepted their support. And he eventually had his own falling out with the ILWU, which Sandy [Sanford] Zalburg had detailed in his book [A Spark Is Struck! Jack Hall and the ILWU in Hawai'i]. But the ILWU leadership, the Communist party of the ILWU leadership in Hawai'i was pro-Hawai'i working people. It
wasn't pro-Russian. And they pretty well all, I think, according to their own testimony, left
the Communist party by the early 1950s. But—and they, of course, they succeeded in
achieving a major social revolution in Hawai‘i and becoming very respected figures in
Hawai‘i. I think we now have Jack Hall Day, not as a legal holiday, but as an official state
day, and he very much deserved it.

MK: You know, with the Star-Bulletin and the Farringtons being pro-statehood and communism
being brought up as a factor against statehood, did the Farringtons or the Star-Bulletin treat
the issue of communism very carefully in the newspaper to protect our chances of statehood
or . . .

AS: The Star-Bulletin was pro-statehood and very anti-Communist at the same time. And it was
always the argument of Betty Farrington, when she was delegate to Congress succeeding her
husband Joe, and, I think, later, just as publisher, that there was no Communist situation in
Hawai‘i that couldn’t be controlled or that stood in the way of us becoming a state.

DT: Is this the time to bring up the famous occasion . . .

AS: Oh, I think it is.

DT: . . . or at least discuss about what happened about the front page where [Harry] Bridges, Jack
Hall and Jack Burns were all pictured prominently on the front page together with no really
backup story at all.

AS: Well, my recollection of that is that this was the—in the 1959 gubernatorial election, there
was the special election held to elect the governor after (the) statehood (bill passed). And an
important aspect of that election was that the governor, who was elected, was going to chose
our judges. He was going to nominate the judges, he was going to appoint several hundred
people to boards and commissions. He was going to have a major role in framing the
structure of the state government and the initial laws of the state. And the position of Betty
Farrington, who was the publisher of the paper, was that Jack Burns would be a dangerous
person in that job, because of the backing and counsel he might get from the ILWU. And so
those are facts. Now, one day we had on our front page adjoining pictures of Jack Burns,
Harry Bridges, and Louis Goldblatt. And I no longer remember the caption under the picture,
but in effect said that if Jack Burns were elected, would these people be influential in his
government. And that was about it. It was regarded as a terribly foul blow. I think it had
some basis in fact. My personal hunch is that Mrs. Farrington personally requested that those
pictures be run. I didn’t see them until they did run. And many of the staff people thought it
was a low blow. I have a feeling it’s no lower blow that we saw struck in the 1988
presidential election, nineteen times, you know, in regard to the attacks on [Michael]
Dukakis, and so on. But it was—and Jack Burns always was seared by it. And he felt that it
was a factor in his losing the election. I recall having some conversations with him about it
afterwards. There was an abiding bitterness created by this. But that basically was the story
behind those pictures.

DT: In any event, it’s not a day that—one of your most celebrated days in the history of the Star-
Bulletin, I gather. (Chuckles)

AS: It’s one of the strongly remembered days by a lot of people. No, it wasn’t—I wasn’t proud of
it. I, as I told you, I can understand the background behind it. And that basically was it.

DT: But it does illustrate something about newspapering, I guess, in the United States, from Maine to Hawai‘i, and that is, the publisher may have the last word, and probably does.

AS: Well, you can get into a whole different argument that way about the virtues of group-owned newspapers versus individually-owned newspapers. And the Star-Bulletin, individually owned, dedicated itself to statehood totally, which I think was a wonderful thing. On the other hand, the publisher could say, “Let’s put these three pictures on the front page,” and did. The argument, nationally, as far as I know it, is that you can have good group-owned newspapers and bad group-owned newspapers, and you can have good privately owned newspapers and bad privately owned newspapers. I think . . .

DT: That may be a diversion. So we’ll avoid that. And we’ve got to change tape again. So, until the next tape, we’ll quit.

AS: Very good.

END OF INTERVIEW
Tape No. 17-66-3-90

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

A. A. "Bud" Smyser (AS)

June 26, 1990

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Daniel W. Tuttle, Jr. (DT) and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: Interview with Bud Smyser, tape number nine, session three. Okay, maybe we can continue with our interview with 1950 and the Democratic convention.

AS: Is that where we left off?

MK: In the [19]50s.

(Laughter)

MK: And I was wondering, did you cover the Democratic convention or were you there observing or anything?

AS: That was the convention where they had the walkout faction and the stand-pat faction. I think I was there for the walkout, or at least I have a picture of it in my mind.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: Okay, maybe we can start with the 1950 Democratic convention. I was wondering, were you there as a reporter?

AS: That was the convention that had the walkout faction and the stand-pat faction. And the walkouts got the name because they did stand up in the middle of the convention and walk out. I see in my mind, a picture of Ernest Heen, I think, and John Akau, and some others leave and walk out in the hall. I'm not quite sure that I was there or I just remember that picture from the newspapers. But in any event, it was a fairly stormy session and the issue was Communists in the labor union and the willingness of the party to take a stand on that. And the walkouts weren't satisfied with the position of the stand-pats. The stand-pats included future Governor Burns and Chuck Mau and a number of other . . .

MK: And the ones who walked out, were they primarily of the so-called old guard Democrats?

AS: I think you'd call 'em conservatives, right-wing people. I'd have to think before I can dredge up too many names, but generally, they were the more conservative of the Democrats. Not that the others were terribly radical. I don't think people like Chuck Mau or even Jack Burns
were wild-eyed radicals by a long shot. But [it] was a difference of opinion over how to handle the issue of Communists in the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union].

DT: There was no question, was there not, there was a certain period where the ILWU really wanted to take over the Democratic party? And then when they found that it couldn't really be done, they started gradually backing off and decided, I think, to work through the party, however the party was constituted. Was that not true?

AS: I think that's correct. As a matter of fact, I think Jack Hall both announced that they were going to try to take over the party and then announced that it turned out that that wasn't a good idea at all. They were going to give up trying to take over the party and that they would support candidates in both parties according to which one seemed better to represent the interests of the union.

DT: So then I think you were there in '52 when they patched this up, were you not?

AS: Yes. I was involved through all of this. You asked me to conjure up a picture of the convention. No, it was patched up and for a while—that was when Harry Truman, I guess, was president, or at least Harry Truman, yes—and so, some of his appointments were balanced between the stand-pats and the walkouts. In some judicial appointments, I think he appointed at least one from each faction. Judge [Chuck] Mau from one faction and Maurice Sapienza from the other, I believe, in the case of circuit judges.

DT: And Oren Long, I think, fit in very well, did he not, with the conservative walkout group?

AS: I don't remember him as being actively identified with it, but he probably did fit in very well with 'em. But he was a conciliator.

MK: Maybe we can move on to 1953. I was wondering if you covered the Smith Act trials?

AS: Yes.

MK: And what were your feelings about it, in reporting about it?

AS: Well, I was covering it and I was a witness. I was called as a witness to testify that I had heard Charles Fujimoto—I had been at a press conference where Charles Fujimoto announced that he was a Communist. That was the purpose for which I was called. But the feelings of community, of course, about the trial, were very intense and very divided. I remember being impressed that when the jury was out, and I think it was out for a substantial period of time, then finally came back and rendered a verdict of guilty, one of the leading businessmen in town came into our news office to find out about it and he was anything but happy. There was a great sympathy for Jack Hall and there was a lot of division over the case. And, of course, in the end, I think the seven defendants. . . . I don't think Jack Hall spent any time in jail. I think the union took pride in raising bail for him. I think the others spent only a brief time in jail. And then, in a couple of years, the decision was not reversed. I guess the decision was set aside. I mean, the jury finding that these people had been Communists was never challenged. The law that said being a Communist was a crime against the United States was challenged and was set aside by the court.
MK: What was the newspaper’s stand on the trials and the outcome?

AS: I’m not sure. I mean, I mentioned to you earlier, the newspaper stand was basically very strongly anti-Communist. So I assumed we applauded the verdict. I assume we also had some of those same divisions of heart and soul that other people had. Because there was a sense that the seven people, you might have chosen among them as to which ones you were more sympathetic with than others, but there were a lot of people that had a lot of sympathy from the public, in general.

DT: The Advertiser was even more radical, I believe, was it not?

AS: In terms of saying, hang ’em?

DT: Yeah.

AS: I think so, yeah.

MK: Okay, I guess we can move on to 1954 and the Democratic landslide. I’d like to have your observations of how you think it was achieved and why the Republicans did so badly that year?

AS: I think one fact about it is that even the Democratic candidates themselves were surprised by the magnitude of their victory. They had a sense they were doing well, but they didn’t know that they were going to win control of both the territorial house of representatives and the territorial senate, which they did by rather substantial margins, I think. It was a case of the Democratic party bringing together young war veterans, very predominantly nisei war veterans from the fighting units, and labor. And also, people of just Japanese ethnic extraction who kind of saw the Republican party as a Haole Big Five party. And of course, the Democrats worked hard to establish that image and pin that label on the Republican party. But it fit passing well.

The young Democratic candidates worked hard. Governor [George] Ariyoshi told a story about how he wasn’t even really interested in running [for legislative office] until finally, Jack Burns collared him and said, “We need you on the ticket.” So he agreed to get on the ticket at what, I think, was just about the filing deadline. But then he did get out and work hard, and I think he said that he began to get the feeling, close to election, “I might win.” And I think a lot of the others had that same kind of experience that they could sense that the public was moving toward them as the election day came, although I think very many people were surprised by the magnitude of the victory. And then, of course, that led to a legislature controlled by Democrats who had no experience in running a legislature, and a governor appointed by the president, Sam King, who was a much more experienced politician, and led to some pretty disorganized sessions, particularly in the house of representatives. And it led to what I think is an all-time record number of vetoes by the governor. I think the number the vetoes was in the eighties, close to a hundred.

DT: Well, in the ’54 election, you could virtually say that Burns and Fasi knocked one another out, couldn’t you?

AS: In the ’54 election?
DT: Right.

AS: Well, in '54 election, Burns ran for delegate against Farrington. And I believe that was the second time Burns had run. I think the first time Burns ran for delegate in '52 [1948], he didn't seriously expect to win, nor did anybody else, and he showed very poorly. Oh, and by the '54 election, Joe Farrington had died and Betty Farrington had replaced him. And, I think, in '54 then, with Betty Farrington opposing [Burns]. It was more of a horse race, and Betty won fairly narrowly. But I don't know, you were talking about Fasi knocking Burns out and I don't connect to that.

DT: Well, Fasi didn't support Burns and Burns didn't support Fasi. And both Fasi and Burns lost in the general election that year by very narrow margins, something less than two or three thousand votes.

AS: I hadn't particularly linked the two, but Fasi was running his own special show, as he almost always has.

DT: Well, while we're on this '54 election, one of the critical items in '54, in my judgement, and I may be wrong, was the 'Āina Haina debate. And that debate was replayed over the radio. To me, it's an illustration of radio being a major factor in a statewide race, really, for the first time. The only other earlier example, I think, of radio being critical was in '52, when Willard Bassett did a real hack job on Neal Blaisdell, running for mayor in '52. Do you recall those two incidents where your competing media, at least that's the way it was used in those days, was actually a factor in the elections.

AS: I don't have a strong memory of the 'Āina Haina debate. You better fill us in a little more on that.

DT: Well, if you don't have a vivid recollection, it's not the time nor the place to fill you in on it. But, to make a long story short, the Democrats and Republicans finally met in a debate and the Republicans denied what had happened. And then the Democrats replayed it over radio station KIKI. And, among other things, there was a vicious exchange between Dan Inouye and Sam P. King, who was then chairman of the Republican state party.

AS: That rings a small bell. What was happening in those years, I guess, not so much '54 or later. Political rallies used to be very, very well attended, because it was the only show in town, really. That was true when I first covered politics in '46. Then, as television began to come on the scene with its serials and nighttime events and so on, the attendance at the political rallies tailed off. I believe the attendance at the rallies was still pretty healthy in '54.

DT: Oh, yes. Until the early [19]60s, I think you're right.

MK: Well, you mentioned Burns' race against Betty Farrington. In '54, Burns lost by, I think, 800 some-odd votes, less than a thousand votes. And in '56, Burns won. And since you knew Betty Farrington, I was wondering what's your evaluation of her as a candidate and delegate?

AS: Her husband was a very warm political guy who's hail-fellow-well-met, and got along with people. Betty was a very intelligent, very bright woman, but not warm. She didn't have political warmth. Shaking the hands wasn't her cup of tea. And, I think, even when she
spoke, she didn’t come through with the same warmth that her husband did. But she was a very intelligent, very able delegate. But I think Jack Burns just beat her fair and square in ’56.

I have one little story about that that I’d like to tell you. When the election was over in ’56, of course, Betty had been both the delegate and the president and publisher of the *Star-Bulletin*. And Millard Purdy, who was the *Star-Bulletin*’s political reporter, called on Burns that night, after the returns were in, and said he’d like to have an interview with Burns. And Burns said, “Why should I give you an interview? You’re from the paper that opposed me.”

And Millard said, “But now you’re the delegate of all the people.” And I think Burns cut off the conversation, but not long later, he phoned back and he said, “You’re right. I’ll give you an interview.” And he did.

MK: And you mentioned that Betty Farrington was not a very warm person. How did she campaign then? I mean . . .

AS: Oh, she followed the ritual. I mean, she did the stumping and went around. And Joe had a very strong campaign organization. Really (there were) representatives in there of every ethnic group who would get up and speak for him. I mean, in addition to his own speeches, there were speeches made by people that represented almost every ethnic group. Betty inherited this organization, but I don’t think it had quite the same energy with her, just because of the nature of the person.

DT: Well, the ILWU had certain loyalties to Joe that they didn’t have to Betty, too, right?

AS: I think that’s true, too.

MK: And in terms of what she wanted to do once she got into office, was she more like her own person or was she just kind of following through with her husband’s . . .

AS: Well, she and Joe were absolutely dedicated to statehood. I’ve heard some people say sometimes that they weren’t. Well, I can tell you that they both were heart and soul for it. Now, he even made it a part of his proposal of marriage to her. But that I think by ’56, we had been rebuffed so much on statehood, that the Democratic argument that maybe the Democrats can do it better, would carry some credence with the public. And that was, basically, Jack Burns’ argument. As a matter of fact, I think that the thing that finally turned the corner on statehood, was Jack Burns agreement to let Alaska go first. Up until that time, they had been linked and they were kind off both shoving through the door at once, and the door wasn’t quite wide enough and the enemies of both of ’em would turn the bills back in Congress. So the idea of moving one ahead of the other had a reasonableness to it. And I think the Farringtons would have a terrible time letting Alaska go first, ‘cause they felt our claim has been so much longer, it was so much stronger, we were so much better qualified for statehood that to let Alaska go first would have been a very hard pill for them to swallow. I think Jack Burns was persuaded though, that given the dynamics in Congress with the Republican president who might not sign an Alaska bill, the Congress might send him the Alaska bill first, and if he’d sign that, then they’d send him the Hawai’i bill, and that’s exactly what happened.
MK: And earlier we had mentioned 1954. I know a lot of people have been asked the question, "Well, was 1954 really a revolution or not?" I was wondering what you think about it?

AS: Well, revolution is, I guess, implies you take up arms and you overthrow the government. This was a legal upset of the government. I think the newspapers probably used the phrase "revolution," but no, it's not a revolution in the usual sense. But it was a very surprising turnover of power, and it was accepted. Nobody—I don't think anybody asked for a recount of any of the votes or anything else. And it led to a period of considerable turmoil because the house of representatives, particularly, was not well organized. And they chose as their speaker a man named Charlie [Charles E.] Kauhane, who had a very combative personality, and who was kind of hard. He wasn't the most diplomatic person for the assignment of speaker. And I think it was that year that he wound up taking the clock off the wall in the house of representatives and locking it in the trunk of the car so that they couldn't . . . He stopped the clock and he wasn't going to let 'em start it again.

(Laughter)

MK: Let's see now. What if we move along to '59 again, and . . .

DT: Maybe before we move along to '59, maybe we ought to stop and change the tape.

MK: Okay.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: Okay, tape ten interview with Mr. Bud Smyser. I think we were just getting up to 1959. And I wanted to ask you a question about the Burns-Quinn race and your ideas on why Burns didn't make it?

AS: We talked a little bit about that, I think, previously, but it was the first statehood race. It was a special election held in August of 1959. No, I guess [it was] held the end of July '59 to prepare us to become a state in August. And the primaries, I guess, were the preceding month, in June. So the board was swept completely clean. All of the territorial boards and commissions were out of business, and the bench was cleared of judges. But the appointed governor, who had been appointed by President Eisenhower, was Bill Quinn. And Bill had not successfully been elected to office when he ran for the territorial senate, matter of fact. But he had looked awfully good, in running, and he had missed by just a few votes, being elected. And that turned out to be fortuitous, because there was a requirement that an elected officeholder could not be appointed to an office of governor, and so on. So if he had won that territorial senate election, he couldn't have been appointed governor, but I don't think anybody knew that at the time. But it was a fact. And, so, he became the governor and he was the incumbent, and incumbents always have an edge, I think, when we were going into statehood.

I think there were concerns, genuine concerns, about the—well, I think within the Democratic party, there were some requests to Jack Burns to run for the [U.S.] Senate. But I believe he was considered to be a surer candidate than if he had run for governor. But he wanted to run for governor and so he did. And it was pretty obvious it was going to be a hard race. And the issue of Burns' alliance with the ILWU came up—we talked about that in regard to the
pictures in the paper—and the concern of the people that the ILWU might have too much
voice in appointing all these judges and commissioners and so on. And Bill Quinn came out
with what was called a Great Mahele [Second Mahele]. A land distribution scheme that was, I
think, politically popular in the very short range. It didn’t stand up too well under
examination. I think he was lucky, probably, to have it defeated by the Republican senate
after we became a state. But I think it was a close race.

Then, in ’62, of course the same two candidates ran against each other. And the roles were
reversed. And one of the things I remember in ’62—maybe I’m jumping ahead of the story
too much—was that there was a debate that was to occur, I think, the Friday or so before the
Tuesday general election. And the whole state was tuned in; we were on television then. And
the general sense was the Quinn was a smooth orator and a great debater and that Burns was
kind of not a good speaker. He was a good hail-fellow-well-met, handshake man who walked
down the street and win a lot of friends, and go to a coffee hour and win a lot of friends. But
there was a feeling he wouldn’t do very well in the debate and that he was foolish to get into
the debate, I think, many people said, because Quinn would wipe up the floor with him, and
if you use the boxing ring analogy, he’d be on the mat in no time. Well, as it turned out, my
own assessment of the debate—and everybody’s is different—is that, basically, Quinn won the
fight on points if it were a boxing match, but there were no knockdowns, and that simply, the
fact that Burns had stayed all fifteen rounds in pretty good shape, really made Burns the
political winner. Then, everybody said, well, look, if he’s that good. . . . It just brought him
extra votes, I think, that he didn’t have otherwise.

DT: Do you remember who moderated that debate, Bud?

AS: Was it Dan Tuttle?

(Laughter)

DT: I’ve been waiting for years to pin you down on this one. I don’t think I’ve ever told you this
before. You wrote a story about this, from watching television. And you said there were three
scared guys in front of the tube tonight, something to that effect. And never have truer words
been spoken.

AS: I thought so.

(Laughter)

DT: I’ve never experienced—Quinn came in with white knuckles. Burns came in with his ramrod
back, and Tuttle, once he saw that, literally fell apart, so that after the session they took
pictures and Jack says, “I can’t believe your heart was beating like it was, Dan.” So, I
thought you’d like to know that at least one story was very, very accurate. Three scared guys.

(Laughter)

DT: But back to ’59, just briefly, there was that story in one of the newspapers, and I’ve forgotten
which, Burns being interviewed about his candidacy for governor while on the massage parlor
table. Now, did you do that story or was it somebody else? There were pictures of him, you
remember?
AS: No, I didn’t do it. He was not only on the massage table but it seems to me that his masseuse was one of these people who stood on him, didn’t he, who held on the overhead bars and walked up and down on him some of the time? Am I wrong on that?

DT: It was a very strange way to campaign, put it that way, was it not?

AS: This was typical Jack Burns, though. He was a man of the people. I’m sure he evaluated whether to allow the interview at the massage table but decided it wouldn’t hurt him.

MK: One of the Democratic people, Mike [Michael] Tokunaga, has said that in ’59 he felt that they just didn’t campaign hard enough. And that’s where he puts the blame. But do you think he campaigned too little, or that he lacked help from other Democrats in ’59?

AS: My sense was that they all worked hard. I do remember, after the ’59 election, Dave [David] McClung, who was in the territorial senate, took a position that Burns was a loser and had proved he was a loser in ’59 and shouldn’t be allowed to run again in ’62. I think some other people took that position. Now, I don’t know whether they based that on the fact that they didn’t think he ran hard enough. I think they just thought he couldn’t win. I mean, it might have been simple as that. But he was stubborn enough to try again, and to win, which was kind of typical of Jack Burns.

DT: I don’t know. There is the approach or the explanation that in ’59, Burns did not have unified Democratic support because he tried to base it upon Japanese AJA [Americans of Japanese Ancestry] and ILWU support. By the time they got to 1962, he had made an effort and the people who had held out, such as a Dave McClung, such as an Ernie Heen faction, such as a Tom Gill faction, came in and gave unified support to Jack Burns. Your observation would tend to bear this out or would you . . .

AS: I think so. And also, in ’62, they developed what they called kind of a dream ticket. Burns for governor, a Haole; Bill Richardson, Chinese-Hawaiian, for lieutenant governor; I guess Dan Inouye, Japanese, for [U.S.] Senate. And, I think the dream ticket went a little sour. Do we have two [U.S.] House seats in that year?

MK: Not yet.

DT: Not—’62 may have been the first year. [Hawai‘i elected two representatives to the U.S. House in 1962; they began serving in 1963.]

AS: Sixty-two. Anyway, they had a balanced ticket, ethnically, that covered the house seats, too, but that didn’t go—in the primary—it didn’t go quite the way the Democrats planned it, because Herbert [K. H.] Lee was the party choice and he didn’t make it. He was Chinese.

DT: But this was a part of the Burns philosophy, was it not? He always wanted balanced tickets, and obviously, ’59 it wasn’t balanced the way he wanted it.

AS: And ’62 was about as beautifully balanced as they could imagine it.

DT: And then Burns followed through, did he not, with a pretty much balanced administration?
AS: Oh, Burns’ cabinet was another example of beautiful balance. In fact, I was just looking at some clips on that in connection with Ed Burns death. And I see that I wrote, after the cabinet was created, that all that was missing was a Korean. They had everybody else in there. Edna Taufaasau had a good Samoan name, but she was really the sister of Nils Tavares, who was Portuguese, a judge. But they covered most of the bases in that cabinet, but.

MK: You know, you were mentioning that a couple times, the Burns administration kind of leaked out names for possible appointments. Did he leak out any names at that time?

AS: Oh, that was a studied policy. See, he had an inner circle which included his brother, Ed, and that was the first name he leaked. He didn’t leak that. He just said, right after he was elected, he said, “I’m considering naming my brother Ed as tax collector.” And then his other advisors included Bill [William] Richardson, who was lieutenant governor-elect, Dan Inouye, who was senator-elect, and Matsy [Matsuo] Takabuki, a city councilman. But they leaked almost every name before there was an appointment. And they leaked some names of people who didn’t get appointed. I don’t know whether they were seriously considered or they put ’em there for their own vanity’s sake or not. But as a result, their names were pretty well tested. By the time they made an appointment, they knew it would be all right. And they were very concerned with confidence building, because there had been this concern that Jack Burns would be too radical. And, so, he even cleared his appointment of the attorney general, Bert Kobayashi, with the business community. Bert Kobayashi went ahead, and jointly with Burns, helped break up the interlocking directorates in the business community, so it didn’t mean they were co-opted. And they got the Big Five to sell off Matson [Navigation Co.] just to A&B [Alexander & Baldwin]. But almost all the names were cleared, and in the end they wound up with a cabinet that was ethnically mixed and really, quite confident and, I think, a very reassuring cabinet for a community that had been a little leery about who is this man coming in and taking over the governorship. And the investment community back in New York was so concerned that Jack Burns made a special flight back to New York to talk to investors.

DT: By this time you had begun to move off of the political beat—right?—and into what, city editor and editor of the Bulletin?

AS: Yes.

DT: When did you become . . .

AS: I wouldn’t remember the years of those different things. I moved through a succession of positions. I think some of these things I may have been even doing; I may have been covering while I was city editor and managing editor. I believe by ’62, I was managing editor of the paper.

DT: Okay.

MK: As an editor, I was wondering what would be your role in determining how politics should be covered in Hawai‘i?

AS: Well, policies in a newspaper emanate down from the top, from the publishers, and then, through the editor. And I will say, the Star-Bulletin never, in the times I’ve been there, has
there been great conflict in this area. I mean, I never seriously disagreed with things that the publishers proposed, with an exception here and an exception there. But basically, we tried to play it straight and we knew we were going to be a lightning rod, particularly when the. . . . And when the Farringtons owned the paper, there was no question of the paper’s partisanship for Joe and Betty Farrington. That was known. It was one of these things that wasn’t undercover; it was out in the open and everybody knew this was the Farrington paper. I don’t think they expected anything else. But aside from that particular race—those particular races—and our overwhelming bias toward statehood, we tried to cover things as straight as we could. And we found that the political candidates used to try to score points against us by calling us a tool of the Big Five, by calling us everything else. And many of the young reporters with guilty consciences would report this remark every time it was made. So it was a remark that candidates would keep making over and over again because they knew they’d get in print with it. And, so, we actually printed it to excess, claims by Frank Fasi and others that we were tools of the Big Five. But I’ve always felt we gave pretty fair coverage and I think most of the candidates felt that, by and large, they were pretty fairly treated.

DT: One of your techniques, was it not, and I think you’ve reiterated this to me many times, was to make sure that you always went to the other side to get balance, if you could.

AS: Yes, that’s right.

DT: In other words, you’d have one side of the story, you’d routinely go to the other side.

AS: Yeah, we always tried to carry both sides of the story. And if we couldn’t get the other side, we’d include it in the story, the fact that the other side was not available.

DT: But then, I think about the time you became editor, you started using, maybe you used it before, the so-called editorial board, where a number of your people in upper echelons of the newspaper, would not only make recommendations on the editorial page about elections but you’d also have rather extensive interviews with various political candidates with your several editors on hand.

AS: The editorial board of the Star-Bulletin never has been a final policy-setting group. It’s been a consulting group that advises the editor and the publisher and others on decisions, but they did take advantage of the board to do these group interviews you’re talking about, in depth with some of the candidates. And we would often devote a half a page or even most of a full page presenting a question and answer with a candidate. And, at the time of the primary and general elections, we tried to cover all of the top candidates with interviews like that. And it was a hard job both in terms of doing the interviews and in terms of finding the space to print them, but we worked very hard at that. And we then got into some issues with some of the candidates in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth parties, you know. “You aren’t giving us equal time.” Well, I think we decided that we just didn’t have the space to treat them exactly equally with the Republican and Democratic candidates, but we gave them all space.

MK: And when it came time to, say, endorse a candidate, how was that decision made?

AS: Usually, it was made—in the years that I was editor—I would sit down with the publisher, primarily, or publisher group, and we’d talk about it. And as I remember, most times I’d make a recommendation and the recommendation was accepted. But at least, for political
endorsements, the publisher usually is involved.

DT: Now, sort of the sixty-four-dollar question, Bud, what about political columnists in 1960s versus today, in terms of coverage? In the [19]60s as I recall, maybe I'm wrong, you had three or four people covering politics, maybe even more, both newspapers. Now, what about today? I only find, really, sort of one person or two people, at the most, in each newspaper. As politics has become more complex, has it been true that our coverage has diminished or not?

AS: I think the total size as a news hole in the paper—the number of columns in news in the paper every day—is substantially bigger today than it was then. I don't have the figures at hand. But the percentage of that news hole dedicated to international news, to national news, to sports, to business, to feature section, and so on, is such that, I think, what's left for local political stories is probably less. We probably carry fewer stories on local politics—fewer inches—on local politics today than we carried then. And I think with it, there's been somewhat of a cutback in political columning, and I think there's been some turn away from, sort of, gossipy political columning. We have some of it, but we used to be—I felt, as a political columnist, that it was a good idea to float a name. If somebody said, "Why don't you mention that, I might consider running for so-and-so," we would throw the names in. I think there's a little more tendency now to wait until somebody becomes a serious candidate to mention names. But we took part in the early speculation, whereas I think now the tendency is to hold off until it becomes a little more jelled.

DT: And now, what about your competitor, of sorts? Television came to Hawai'i in '53 and then you began to have to compete with people, at least reading the news, if not on occasion, commenting upon the news, such as a Wayne Collins, or a Bob Sevey, or a Mason Altiery, or whatnot.

AS: Or Dan Tuttle?

DT: Well, on rare occasion. (Laughs) I was never with the media.

AS: Well, obviously, television moved in and began to establish its own role. And we didn't like it. Newspapers resisted radio coming in. They thought radio would hurt us. We actually found out, I think, I'm not talking just about politics, but that radio coverage of a big news story would boost newspaper sales. People would want to read about it. I think, pretty much, we found out the people who go to the ball game want to come back and read what the newspaper says about it. So, television grabbed audiences and, in some sense, it was even an interest builder. And, so, we tried to—we made our own evaluations as to how we should play against that. Television and radio could take our own stories and get them out to readers and viewers faster than we could, sometimes. This always galled us. The Associated Press would pick a story out of our first edition, and it would be on the radio before our newspaper was at the people's doors. But we learned to live with that, and I think, now, it's pretty clear that for breaking news, television and radio do it better. But I hope it's still true that for depth, the newspapers still have a role to play.

DT: And up to a certain point, the Advertiser and the Bulletin both owned TV and radio stations. But if we were to get your comment on that, we'll have to wait until we change tapes.
DT: Okay. This is tape eleven in conversation with Mr. Bud Smyser. And I believe, just before the break, Bud, I'd raised the question about the ownership of TV and radio stations by both the *Star-Bulletin* and the *Advertiser*. And I cut you off and didn't give you a chance to respond.

AS: Well, to take it back a bit, in 1920, there was a fight between the *Advertiser* and the *Star-Bulletin* to get on first with a radio station. They recognized this was the enemy, but. And actually, it's a long, funny story, but they sort of tore each other apart to get on first. And then they each claimed they'd been on first. But, with TV, both papers decided when TV came that they ought to get into it, and so the *Advertiser*, did own one station, and the *Bulletin* owned the other, KGMB, which was also tied in with a radio station. And when the newspaper agency was formed, the joint production facility, in 1962, allowing the *Advertiser* and the *Star-Bulletin* to continue to be owned separately but to use the same set of presses and production facilities, that had to have the okay of the [U.S.] Justice Department, I believe. And either the Justice Department or the Federal Communications Commission [FCC], maybe it was the Federal Communications Commission, made it clear that they didn't look kindly on newspapers, joint newspapers arrangements, monopolizing TV, also, on the community. So the papers, I don't think under any order, but under a strong nudge from the FCC, went ahead and divested themselves of the television stations. I might add that in the days of radio, when the *Star-Bulletin* still owned KGMB, and before the state's electronic vote counting came in, the *Bulletin* spent lots and lots of money to have people go to every precinct and phone in results. And then we did our own tallying of them. And we were the first and best official source of the election returns. Riley Allen, the editor, would sit there at the microphone and broadcast returns. And he'd give vote by vote down precincts, ad infinitum. You could get an awful lot of numbers from Riley in the course of the night. But people just hung on it because this was so far ahead of the official count, that it gave clues as to how the elections were going. And I think Dan Tuttle sat there and interpreted these returns and told the readers what they meant and who was going to be the likely winner, and so on. What year did you start doing that, Dan?

DT: Well, that's another bone I've had to pick with the *Star-Bulletin*. You see, we started in '58, Bud, thanks to Charlie Parmenter, who was a go-between between Dan Tuttle and Riley Allen. And some way or another, I still think I should send my bill in to the *Star-Bulletin*, 'cause Riley Allen paid my election night crew exactly the same as he did a person who phoned in the results from a single precinct. (Laughs)

AS: Riley never threw money away.

(Laughter)

DT: But it was interesting, and we not only continued from '58 but by '60, we were on TV. And interestingly enough, just by accident, I guess, although the ownership of KGMB did shift from the *Star-Bulletin*, as long as the *Star-Bulletin* owned it, we did election nights with the
Star-Bulletin on KGMB, and that continued on until Bob Sevey left KGMB.

MK: Yeah, I've got two related questions. I know that the joint running of certain operations of the newspapers has been a sore point with Fasi in the past. What are your feelings about that?

AS: Well, I think he picks targets of opportunity. And, the truth is, that a joint operation doesn't commit the papers to the same editorial policy, by any means. It would be totally possible for the Communist Daily Worker and the Capitalist News to work out of the same plant. In Salt Lake City, I think the newspapers are or were predominantly owned by a Mormon group in the case of one paper, and a Catholic group in the case of the other. And you know they aren't going to merge their religious policy, at least, so there's no reason why two newspapers printing out of one building can't have totally different policies. Yet, because it's a small community, we saw things alike, I think, the newspaper editorial policies weren't as divergent as some readers would have loved. The readers would have loved to have one that says everything is black, the other saying it's white. It's black, it's black! It's white, it's white! And when we did get into those situations, readers loved it. But we never—at least I never felt we should fake those situations.

DT: Well, Frank Fasi, by nature, needs something in the foil, right? And although I think he's been advised many times to avoid this, at least don't get into a fight with both newspapers in town or all the newspapers in town, somehow, when the newspaper agency came along, he ended up getting into a fight with both of them.

AS: Well, when he ran for mayor in '68, I believe it was, I was the editor of the paper and we took him on very strongly. And he fired back at us very strongly, and we fired back at him very strongly. We went back and forth and back and forth. And the readers absolutely loved it. They thought this was the most wonderful thing that happened in a long time. They said, "I can hardly wait for my newspaper to see what they got to say tonight." So I don't think it hurt Fasi, I don't think it hurt us. But, see, readers just loved to have the newspapers that fought each other and [tape inaudible] politicians, and vice versa.

DT: Now, I can't . . .

AS: If we were simply circulation-oriented and demagogic enough, we'd invent a fight like that every day.

DT: There's an old story that comes to my mind. I can't resist this, and that is apocryphally, somebody, a politician in the St. Louis, Missouri area, went into the Globe Democrat and plunked down a pile of money and said, "Give me $500 worth of hell." And, presumably, that's how all of this, with the candidate and the newspapers have all got started. And you're right, people love it.

AS: I doubt—I don't think it took that to start it.

(Laughter)

AS: I think that for years newspapers and candidates have been going after each other. But I believe there was an old saying, "When thieves fall out, the honest man gets his cow back." I think the public likes to see the people chasing each other. They figure one of 'em is a
watchdog. I don’t know which one they believe is the watchdog. Fasi would claim he was; we’d claim we were.

MK: Well, a sort of a related question. You know, Fasi is very skillful with the media, with the press.

AS: Oh, you’re telling me? (Chuckles)

MK: Maybe you can talk about Fasi and, perhaps, other people who are very good at that.

AS: Well, he was skillful with the press. And he was skillful in many ways and I hope you get him on tape to tell you how he honed his skills because. . . . Well, for example, when he was elected city councilman, he would leave council meetings early—committee meetings and so on—and go out to the television cameras who were out there and he would have told his story to the television cameras before anybody else got out. And usually, he had all the other members on the defensive by the time they got out. And he’d found that picking a fight with the newspaper didn’t hurt him. And he also found that calling a newspaper names made the newspaper think, “Well, we got to show him, we got to give him equal time.” And the result was that—it was true and I think it still is true—that if you would go and measure the column of clippings about political candidates in this state, those on Frank Fasi would exceed those of Governor Burns or anybody else. He’s good copy. He’s colorful. He says things in vivid fashion. He uses words like jackass and son-of-a-bitch and dumb and so on. But it’s strong speech that the readers love, and the viewers love, and the radio listeners love and the stump campaigners love.

I’m not at all sure it leads to effective administration. As a matter of fact, I think the editorial I wrote in ’68 that I still think was very good, was that his problem as a city hall cook was that he loved the sizzle more than he did the steak. And I think he burnt a lot of steaks. I think a number of things that might have been done didn’t happen because Frank was there. One, for example, at the time for statehood, was that he talked against the return of Fort DeRussy acres, which Bill Quinn had negotiated, saying, “I’ll get you more when we’re a state.” And, well, we never got them and we still don’t have ‘em. I think the fact that Kaka‘ako is administered now by a state agency rather than the city, is because the state felt it couldn’t reason with Frank. And I think the improvements in Waikīkī have come now, and they’ve come with the mayor’s support. And thank goodness. But there were eight or ten years there where he held things up. I think he hurt Waikīkī. So his liking the sizzle wasn’t always to the public benefit. I really think that we might have had mass transit many years before if Frank had been more willing to sit down and bargain with people on the state side.

MK: He’s someone that you couldn’t ignore, though, yeah?

AS: Oh, no.

DT: Even then, his language was more moderate than that of a [Charles F.] Marsland, [Jr.] for example.

AS: Slightly.

DT: I don’t think he’d ever go quite as vituperative as Marsland. Maybe I’m wrong.
Well, I have a column in tonight’s paper suggesting that both were pretty vituperative, but . . .

Well, let me mention another—oh, okay (chuckles), we’re looking forward to that. What about [Neil] Abercrombie? He uses the media but, perhaps, in a little different way from either a Fasi or a Marsland.

No, I think Abercrombie is really the politics of theater and theatrics, and I think he’s very good at it. And I think he finds that dramatizing his presentation and dramatizing his personal lifestyle, and so on, has gotten him attention and it paid off. And, of course, he’s a very able, quick-witted individual, but combine a quick wit and a ready tongue with a theatrical style and you’ve got somebody that the public can’t ignore, whether they like him or not, but a different breed of cat than Frank Fasi, that’s for sure.

How about if you go on the other side of the spectrum and you have George Ariyoshi?

Yeah, quiet but effective. It took a lot of movie-making, I think, to help persuade people that he was an able governor. I think he was a pretty able governor, but he was just the opposite. And I think that this shows, partly, that the voters pick and choose. And they were persuaded that when it came to it, I believe the voters were happy enough to see Frank Fasi in the mayor’s office, where the powers are less, and they were not so anxious to see anybody that combative in the governor’s office. I think maybe the quiet but effective man looked like the safer bet for governor than the bombastic mayor. I think, actually, bombast probably cost Tom Gill the governorship, too. I think people felt a little insecure about him being governor, even though they recognized that he was a terribly able man.

Ah, let’s see. I have another question about since you were an editor, you oversee the hiring, probably, and the general work of your reporters. Who, in your opinion, have been the really good political reporters of the last three decades or so, and what makes a political reporter a good one?

I almost would rather not answer that question without sitting down and reviewing names, and so on. I go back to the days when I was covering politics and people like Millard Purdy and Gardiner Jones were very strong. Millard was on the Star-Bulletin side, Gardner Jones was over on the Advertiser side. And Buck Buchwach [of the Honolulu Advertiser] did some political coverage. They were good, the strong and colorful. And we come down through the years, I think we’ve, by and large, had a fairly good succession of reporters, but I think I’m going to duck naming names.

What would make a reporter a really good one?

Well, first of all, a reporter has to have—he has to be interested, he has to have a nose for news, he has to care. He has to be able to report accurately and he has to be able to report reasonably succinctly. He needs judgement and balance, he needs all kinds of things. The final test, you know, is whether people read what you write. If you write the world’s best story and nobody reads it, then it isn’t really the world’s best story. And so, but to write a story that’s interesting and informative and still accurate and balanced, is a bit of an art. And the four—as I mentioned, I think all did that. And I think there are quite a number of others that do it. But I’d like to think more before I came up with a list of names.
DT: I don't want to push you too much, but I mean, the one person, when I think of, other than Smyser and politics and the Star-Bulletin is Doug Boswell. I mean, he just immediately jumps into mind.

AS: Doug had a lot of good solid connections.

DT: You may avoid that, I don't know.

AS: No, Doug was a very good, solid political reporter. Gerry Keir, who is now the editor of the Advertiser, was a very good, solid political reporter. So, there have been plenty.

MK: I know that like the Advertiser, I think this past Sunday, came out with an article on the guidelines that their reporters are under. How about at the Bulletin? Are there any restrictions, say, on campaign contributions on the part of the political reporters or anything of that sort?

AS: I don't think our political reporters have enough money to make campaign contributions. I know if we ever enunciated that rule, I think we would feel that way. Basically, the rules at the Advertiser enunciated that you refer to, are essentially the rules the Star-Bulletin would have followed, too. We told our reporters not to get involved in political campaigning. And if we found somebody who did get involved, we usually moved them off the beat and put 'em somewhere else.

MK: And, one more question. You know, the Star-Bulletin is now owned by the Gannett [Pacific Corporation] chain. And I was wondering how that Mainland ownership affects local coverage of politics?

AS: The mainland ownership—every owner of any newspaper gets to set his or her own policies, group or otherwise. And I'm very much persuaded by the argument that there are good group newspapers and bad group newspapers, and that there are good community-owned/privately owned newspapers and bad community-owned/privately owned newspapers. So, in the case of Gannett, their policy is to delegate editorial responsibility to their local papers. They simply don't try to administer it from headquarters, which used to be back in Rochester. And Frank Fasi used to fire a lot of letters back to Rochester and say, "Hey, your guys aren't treating me right!" And they would, simply, send us copies of the letters and tell Frank that, "We're referring your letter to Honolulu." And so, the policy was made here again, with the local publisher at the top of the line, the editors joining in, and our policies have always been homemade in that sense.

MK: In terms of, say, allocation of space in the newspaper, has that . . .

AS: Again, that's a homemade policy. The local publisher determines those things. Now, there is a national chain of newspapers, I think there are probably two, both the Hearst [Newspapers] and Scripps-Howard Newspapers insist that the newspapers they own publish their special editorials on endorsement in presidential elections or something like that. I know that Scripps-Howard and Hearst will send out, I don't think very many, must-run editorials that run in all of their papers. The Gannett company doesn't do that and never has.

MK: That's about . . .
DT: You want the sixty-four-dollar question, I want to just try this on, Mr. Smyser. There is one theory, or a possibility of a theory, at any rate, that Hawai‘i has come full circle in the last forty or fifty years in terms of basic power politics. In other words, let’s say in the late 1940s, Merchant Street was riding high in Hawai‘i. The Democratic, the people’s party, was upcoming, and then came the revolution of ’54. Now, we’re in 1990 and the Democrats are still in power, but have they not, in essence, lost their zest and are they not, really, listening to and trying to satisfy a reconstituted Merchant Street, today? Have you pondered this or do you have any reaction to this theory?

AS: Well, in the sense that I think the Democrats or anybody governing the state realizes that you need to work with business if you’re going to have a going economy and a successful economy, and that business-government antagonisms are frequently counterproductive, not always. I think most governors, and I believe this would be true of Republican or Democratic governors, would tend to want business to be cooperative. In that sense, I think Governor [John] Waihee has been cooperative with the business community, but I think he’s also cooperative with the labor community. I think power is much more diffuse now, than it was then. In those days, really, just a few people could call the shots down on Merchant Street. I don’t think there’s any one or two people who call the shots anymore. And I’m glad that the government works as well with the business community and the rest of the community—the military community, the labor community—as it does. There are times for adversarial confrontations, we’ve had those times in labor and politics. But there are also times for getting along, and I’m glad to see we’re in a getting-along time.

DT: Do you have anything else, Michiko?

MK: I’m done, I think.

DT: You’re done. I’d like to continue this last question, but I think, maybe we’ve imposed upon your time long enough. Mr. Smyser, we thank you so much for spending as many hours as you have with us.

AS: Well, thank you for listening to me. I’ve enjoyed it. I’m surprised how much I’ve enjoyed it.

DT: Yeah, well, thanks, again.

AS: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW