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

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

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

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

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

Now retired, Aoki lives in Pālolo and enjoys golf.
WN: Okay, Mr. Aoki, can we start by having you tell us something about your early background--where you were born?

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

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

DA: Congregational preacher, yeah.

WN: Was that unusual at that time?

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

CC: Do you know how he got into that?

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

CC: When you look back, do you see any of the influence from having a father who's a preacher maybe instilling you with some of the ideas that led to some of your interests in politics? Is there any relationship . . .
DA: Yeah, Chris, I firmly believe that. I believe that it's my family background. It's my dad's teachings, his preachings, that sort of led me into that particular field--more into the sociology and interest in our society and things like this. Oh, people kid me about it, you know, and they say, "Gee, if your father only knew that you were a politician, you know, your father would turn over in his grave."

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

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

DA: Mm hmm.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CC: Yeah. Did you have a nickname?

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

WN: Oh, because...

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

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

DA: That's what it amounted to. And I was such a bad egg at home anyway. They all say that the preachers' sons are the worst ones all over,
and I was no different, I suppose. And I wanted to stay out of school after I graduated from high school and my dad said, "Uh uh. If you stay out of school one year, I know you're not going to go back to college." So he says, "Off you go, and you go to college right now."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I says, "Yeah."

He says, "You sure now?"

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

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

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

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

CC: What were you planning to be when you first started school? What
was your first idea when . . .

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

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

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

I says, "Hey, how come?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I says, "Yeah."

"Prove it."

I says, "I was born here."

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

I was surprised. I said, "Oh."

"I want to see your expatriation papers." Expatriation papers? Well, here again, uniqueness of my father again. He just did not register us with the Japanese Consulate and had not thought about expatriation because if you're not registered, you don't have to
expatriate, right? But then, the chief says, "If you're born before 1926, you're automatically a dual citizen."

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

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

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

CC: And that was the 442?

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

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

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

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

DA: Well, my information—and I found this out later—Mr. Burns was born in Montana but he came here when he was very young, I think when he was two years old or something like that. And he lived in Kalihi. He grew up with the boys there. He lived with the kids,
and he played with them, and he knew the people there. And he had all the confidence in the world with the youngster that he associated with. And when he became a police officer and assigned to the FBI as the liaison officer, that's when, you know, he did a great deal for the Japanese community. Because as far as the Japanese community was concerned, with the martial law and what have you, they were scared to death. And they were scared to death of all the Haoles. So, as soon as the Haoles came around, well, they weren't about to go and listen to them. As a matter of fact, they shied away from them. And this is why Mr. Burns called in some of the Japanese leaders and he formed the so-called Emergency Committee, formed of people like--they're all passed now, passed and gone--people like Dr. [Ernest] Murai, and [Mitsuyuki] "Mits" Kido, Dr. [Katsumi] Kometani, and [Wilfred] Tsukiyama, people like that. And then told them, "You guys American citizens, aren't you?"

They said, "Yeah."

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

They said, "What can we do?"

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

Now, he also--at the break of war as you know, there were many leaders in the Japanese community that were taken in the concentration camp. But there were some people that Mr. Burns knew personally and knew to be good citizens. They would not fight or do anything wrong. And so, he got people out from the concentration camps. He got them back into the stream of our society and things like this.

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

DA: No. As I told you, the whole system in Hawai'i was to keep us in the dark. The trick of the Republican people, the people that ran Hawai'i--the hegemony, as Mr. Burns always referred to them--their philosophy was to keep people like us in the dark. Keep 'em in the dark. They told us, "Hey, no politics. Politics is a dirty business. You leave it to us. We'll take care of those things. It's not for you." You take our educational system, it was one of the worst systems in the country. My recollection is that General Oran had an article in the paper, as I recall, many years after the war, and he compared our university system--University of Hawai'i--to the Negro colleges in the South. He said some of the Negro colleges in the South were better equipped than the University of Hawai'i.
That's how bad off we were. Not today, but at that time. But the whole thing was that they wanted to keep us in the dark because the more educated we had become, we would only be problems for them, right? And so, at the time that I went to war, we weren't thinking about Democratic party or we weren't thinking about anything like that. It's just that, "Hey, Jap, you going fight for America, or what?" (Chuckles) So we just had to prove ourselves. But after the war, yeah, it was a different story.

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

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

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

DA: No. It wasn't, no.

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

DA: The Mainland?

CC: Yeah.

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

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

DA: Oh, yes. Very difficult. As a matter of fact, we had Congressman [John] Rankin from Mississippi. We were training in Shelby and he tried to apply the Jim Crow act on us. You know, which meant that we would be considered Black and be treated as Black. As you know, there were restaurants for the Black and restaurants for the White. Restrooms for the White and restrooms for Black. And things like that. And the sidewalks, the Blacks walked on one side and the
Whites walked on the other. But fortunately, they weren't successful in applying the Jim Crow act on us, so we were free to run as we were.

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

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

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

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

DA: I suppose it does, yeah.

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

DA: Oh, yes.

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

DA: Very definitely. Very definitely. As history will show, the leaders of the House and the Senate were Southern Texans—Mr. [Sam] Rayburn in the House and Senator Lyndon Johnson as leader of the majority in the Senate. And they were not for statehood prior to the time that Mr. Burns went there. Well, let me put it to you this way, at the time that we saved the 36th Division Battalion, we weren't thinking about becoming honorary Texans or anything like that. It was just work, you know. They assigned us to go penetrate the line
and free the Texan soldiers, which we did, which the other outfits had failed to do. And so, we lost more men than we saved. But that's beside the point, I presume. But nevertheless, when we saved their battalion, there was a big outcry in Texas and they made us honorary Texans. You know, for your information, it was only on paper at that time. It was not even official. And later on, when Mr. Burns became delegate and went to Congress, he reminded Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Lyndon Johnson about, you know, "Yeah, lot of my people in Hawai'i don't look like your constituents, but they're honorary Texans."

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

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

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

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

Oh, boy, that was rough.

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

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

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

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

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

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

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

And so, as you asked me earlier, Chris, how did we--Burns and me--meet? Well, it was, I think, a mutual kind of a thing. And Mr. Burns, history will show this too, that Mr. Burns had been trying to develop a Democratic party in Hawai'i. He had been doing his very best working with this group, working with that group, working with all different groups all over the place. And then, finally, the time came when the 442 and the 100th and everybody came back. And we were just angry. We wanted to see some changes. And he didn't have too much difficulty convincing us what needed to be
done, how it can be done, you know? But we needed a leader. We needed somebody that we felt knew how to do these things. At least, that's the way I felt. And this is the reason I stayed with Mr. Burns all the way through. Because he demonstrated from the very beginning and gave us leadership to prove to us that we can do it, we can develop these things.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DA: Oh, yeah. That's an interesting question because, you know, it was an educational process because when you really think about it, and as people talk about the Democratic party and they talk about the Republican party, just using rough figures, let's say 90 percent of the things that the Democrats and Republicans believe in, I think we all agree on. We have no differences. But if we're talking about the 10 percent that Democrats and the Republicans differ so greatly, it's different from day and night. In the area of taxation, in the philosophy of the land, and the attitude toward public education, attitude toward labor—the dignity of men, as they say. All of these things. These are the areas that we differ from the Republicans and we believed in. And so, this is the area that we campaigned on.
Now, prior to 1954, Republicans always spoke about platform—we believed in this and believed in that. But they had complete control. They were the only party, so when they got elected they just threw away whatever promises they made and it didn't make a hill of beans of difference, right? But in 1954, we said that our platform was going to be meaningful. And we campaigned on that platform. And when we became the majority in the 1955 session, we proved that we would do what we said we would do. As a matter of fact, Millard Purdy, who was the reporter for the Star-Bulletin came out right after the session was over, and in big, red letters on the front page—right across the front page—he says, "Democrats keep 85 percent of their promises." And I think this is the basis on which we live today, you might say, as far as the Democratic party is concerned. We live on past glories of the fact that we have done things in the interest of the mass of people in Hawai'i.

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

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

And we started to. . . . I think the big thing that I want to mention here is the education field. The Republicans talked about public education. We had a fellow in our Democratic party who came from the state of Washington, Robert Dodge. And he told us, "You know, in all the years that I went to school, the only thing I remember paying for was thirty-five cents for a flask that I busted in the chemistry lab." The state provided everything. This is what you call a real public education—free public education. But here in Hawai'i, there was no such thing as a free public education. We paid for everything. I took a typing class and I had to pay six, eight, ten dollars just for the use of the typewriter. I took a chemistry class and I had to pay six, eight dollars for taking chemistry class. Or during the elementary classes, I had to go to school with two, three bags to even take my own toilet tissue and what have you. And hand towels, and pencils, and tablets, and everything else. And then, the PTA had to provide for all of the extra things. If they needed a piano for the music classes, the PTA had to provide that. The state only provided one telephone line into the school. And if the school needed two or three more lines, the PTA had to pay for it. And the PTA had to pay for the Daily Readers, or whatever they call it, and things like that. But, you know, what it really amounted to was double taxation, the very thing that the United States, you know, they had a revolution about. But in times gone by, I think we've changed that.
Another thing was the fact that when I went to school during my time, there were only women teachers. Let me tell you, as far as this University of Hawai‘i was concerned, if you wanted to, say, divide the students by, say, ability or whatever you might say—you know, if you had the first top, the middle, and the last—the very top went to TC [Teachers College]. The women folks basically. Because it was a respectable profession to be a schoolteacher. But they were not paid respectable salary. Because the hegemony people, the Republicans as they were in control here, their attitude was, "Why should we pay the women?" And maybe this is why we have so much trouble with ERA today. You know what I (chuckles) mean? But at that time, they said, "Why pay the women? Women only bringing home extra pay for their husbands. Supplemental income. So why should we pay them any kind of wages?" This is why we only had women in our school system. But since we came in, we take a different attitude. We look upon women as women, as individuals. They have to go to the university five years to get their certificate to become professional teachers. And so, we said, "Don't look upon them as Mrs. So-and-So. Look upon them as individuals and pay them accordingly." And I was active in the PTA activities also. And this was always coming up. And you know, how do you answer a question: "What is adequate pay for schoolteachers?" That's a hard question to ask. But I came across one article that says, "The day that the parents encourage their children to become schoolteachers is when you are paying the teachers enough salary." And I think that makes some sense, doesn't it? And consequently, I think we are paying comparable salaries to the schoolteachers and that also attracts lot of men into the education field. So, these are the kind of changes that we made.

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

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

DA: Well, that took place during the campaign. As I said, we developed a small, short platform. We stuck to it, we campaigned on it, we spoke on it. We had debates. We debated on it. Now, let me tell you a little story here. I'm sure Mr. Burns won't mind this. I'm talking about Ed Burns. This is Jack Burns's younger brother. He was in the Republican party for many years. But they had a club where they met every Friday for lunch, and Dan Inouye was one of the members of that luncheon group. And so, Mr. Burns, Ed Burns, says, "You know, Dan," he says, "if you people are successful in this
election and become the majority and do what you say you are going to do, I'll join the Democratic party. Because that's exactly why I am in the Republican party. They said they would do it, but they haven't done it yet. And they've been in the majority." So, he says, "Dan, if you guys become majority and do what you say you're going to do, I'll join the party." So, as soon as—referring back to what I said about Millard Purdy putting that headline that says, "Democrats keep 85 percent of their promises"—Dan just put the card in front of Ed and he says, "Okay, sign 'em." And that's how Mr. Ed Burns became a Democrat.

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

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

Mr. [Alexander] Budge, as I recall, was a great friend of Mr. Burns. He was president of Castle & Cooke. And he [Burns] approached Mr. Budge and told Mr. Budge what was necessary. "We need to have people participating politically and in the political party of their choice. And unless your Republican party relaxed just a little bit," he says, "you are going to force this thing to become a racial thing, which is a very dangerous situation." Life, in our society, revolves around three basic elements—economic, social, political. Now, you take like Castle & Cooke. If I'm an employee of Castle & Cooke, then for me to associate with them socially and everything else, I better also be a Republican. And if I'm not a Republican, I'm going to be ostracized socially and I may lose my job. You see how it all works around? And everything in life in our society revolves around three points. And consequently, or to
a degree, I think Mr. Burns was successful in convincing Mr. Budge that he should release the people. And we had Mr. Norwood, Bill Norwood, in Castle & Cooke at that time. And so, Mr. Budge had passed the information to his employees in Castle & Cooke that, you know, "I encourage you to participate in politics. I think it's your responsibility that you should do your share. And we would like to have you participate in the political party of your choice." In other words, assuring them that there'd be no reprisals for their participation. And in that way, he says, "Those that have inclination toward the Democratic party will contact Bill Norwood. Those that have inclination toward the Republican party can contact Mr. Russell Starr." And they would have people participating. They would get coffee hours, or gatherings, or discussions or what the case was.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WN: Despite Burns's involvement during the war with the FBI, he still had this kind of a label?
DA: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had people within our own party fighting him and calling him names and Communist follower and what have you. We had all that kind of problems, too. And so, not only from the Republican side, but from within our own party. And it was very difficult.

CC: Now, in speaking of that, his association with the police force here was one of the ways that he became familiar with the community and then later as a liaison with the FBI. As I recall, in some of his national campaigning, he was able to use information that the FBI provided to offset this threat of the Communist menace or whatever. What kinds of things would he say when they would say, "Aren't you guys all Communists out there," or whatever.

DA: I think you're entirely correct. I think the fact that he was a liaison officer for the Honolulu police force with the FBI, having known the FBI, working with them, knowing some of the records and the information and so forth, exposed him to the point where he knew what it was all about, and he was able to say with some authority as far as the Communist activity as it was publicized was not true. So he could definitely come out and say the activities of the Communists was not a real threat. To have information is one thing, to be able to stick up and say it is another thing. And Mr. Burns was just one of those kind of guys with enough gumption to come out with it.

CC: What was IMUA? What was that organization and what role did they play in terms of . . .

DA: It's been so long ago, I really don't know the real composition of the IMUA organization. But my recollection is, the IMUA, I believe, was an independent so-called—to give an independent appearance. It was just the Republican party in a different clothing, you know. And like the Ku Klux Klan, if you want. I don't think you have to say it that radically, but . . . They were fighting Communism. You know, basically, they were fighting Communists. This was a basic issue. And because of Communism and so forth, then we shouldn't get statehood and they're fighting statehood. This is what it amounted to. But they were, as far as I'm concerned, the members that were in it were one and the same. The Republican people and the IMUA were one and the same people.

WN: Today, when one thinks about the Democratic party, you know, names such as Jack Burns, Dan Inouye, Spark Matsunaga come up. What was Dan Aoki's role? What did--especially in the early stages, what did you do?

DA: Well, I suppose they classified me as an organizer. I helped Mr. Burns and, you know, he needed a certain nucleus to stick together and get things organized and get a party going. And you have to get—when you get into a convention—you have to get enough votes in the convention and see that the convention runs properly. And look for new candidates, encourage new candidates, and things like
that. I joined the party with Mr. Burns about the time that we started to get all of this young, attractive candidates, you might say, that were coming back from professional school and so forth, to have enough people to become candidates that we put them up in the front. We didn't want them to be blemished in any way. We would take all the guff in the back, and we'd get things organized so that we can get them elected. This was the whole idea.

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

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

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

He says, "Oh, yeah. Naturally."

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

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

I said, "Oh, great."

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

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

He says, "Hey, you're revolutionist, aren't you?"
I says, "No. I think that's right. That's what we fought for. That's what we should get." (Chuckles) But this is the way things went.

CC: Okay, I think that's it.

END OF INTERVIEW
WN: Okay, Mr. Aoki, John Burns was first elected delegate to Congress in 1956 where he defeated Mrs. Farrington, but in '54, he lost to Mrs. Farrington. Can you give me what you remember about that '54 election?

DA: The '54 election... Well, let's put it this way. Mr. Burns has been the organizer of the Democratic party as far back as I can remember, and being the organizer, you know, you alienated a lot of people at the same time as well as friends. Well, people never took Burns seriously as a candidate. And as a matter of fact, we had difficulty trying to sell Burns to our own group to run as a delegate in 1954. And he became a candidate in the very last minute. It might be interesting for me to tell you that the gang was interested in Ernest Heen as a delegate. And the group had appointed Mike Tokunaga and myself to approach Ernest Heen--Bill Heen, no, Ernest Heen, that's right, the younger one--to be the delegate. And he held us up to the very last minute, but we had Burns's papers all done, ready, so 11, quarter to 12 or so, we just put Burns's paper in. That's how he became a candidate. But as I said, no one took him seriously as a candidate. The unions didn't buy him for the election. We didn't get any kind of support at all. However, he lost the election by just 800 votes. In other words, 400 votes either way would have made the difference. And when that came about, people realized that he can be elected. And this is why, in 1956, I think, he was more successful in the election.

CC: What kinds of things happened between those two elections? Did he go mend some fences, or did you consolidate some support in the unions? Or were some of those things overcome for the next election?

DA: I think the results of the '54 elections proved that Burns was a viable candidate, and consequently, we didn't have to do much selling. But they realized that he could be elected, and therefore we got more support in '56. And so, it was a much easier campaign. [Nineteen] fifty-four was an uphill campaign for us all the way. We just had a handful of people that thought that he could be elected. But in '56, we had a pretty good campaign going.
WN: What do you think went in the minds of the voters? Obviously, they made a big turnaround because the '56 election was very lopsided. What do you think the electorate thought as they changed their minds from Farrington to Burns?

DA: I don't know that there was a drastic change. Because if you recall, in 1954 elections, that was the first time that we won the majority in the state legislature. We had an overwhelming Democratic victory. I think the only one that we missed was electing Burns delegate. So, the fact that he had made a good showing in '54 only proved that he can be elected, and therefore, we got the people to support him in '56. But the major thrust was in '54, when we were able to get the majority into the legislature. And as I said earlier, when the majority Democrats in '54 that got elected—and in the session of '55—when they proved that they... You know, as I told you, Millard Purdy came up and says the Democrats keep 85 percent of their promises. I think that proved to the people that, hey, these Democrats are for real. I think that had a great deal to do as far as getting Burns elected in '56.

CC: Now, did Burns challenge Farrington on the whole statehood question, about the way to go about it? Or did he promise that he would try to do it differently? I know he promised he would be successful, but obviously, she said that she was for statehood, too, I believe, so...

DA: No, I don't recall that Burns had confronted Mrs. [Farrington] directly. You know, another thing that I might like to mention here, and that is that Mr. Burns was, as they say in Hawaiian, akamai, you know. He was a good prognosticator of politics. And as he viewed the people of Hawai'i, he says the people of Hawai'i are not like the Mainland people. You don't go and slap them in the face back and forth, and name calling, and what have you. And the people of Hawai'i don't quite like that. And so, that's not very successful. And I think you've noticed that many of the so-called Haole candidates are more prone to name calling and more of the rough-and-tumble type of campaigning. Hawai'i candidates are a little more subtle in their campaign. And so, it's got to be a little more positive type of thing.

CC: So, he didn't take Farrington on that way. More so, he just sold himself on his ability to do the job?

DA: That is right. Now, as I think I mentioned this previously too, when Mr. Burns came off the stump in the '56 election, when he outright came out and said, "If I don't bring you statehood in this term, I will not stand for another election," no one believed that. Neither did I. So, it was more on the positive type of campaigning, I would say.

WN: Who were the Farringtons? Obviously, Mrs. Farrington was able to withstand the '54 Democratic takeover. What kind of people were they?
DA: Well, they were very popular. Standard-bearer for the Republican party. They owned the Star-Bulletin. They had poisoned the minds of the people of Hawaii for decades. And they had baffled the people, you might say, as far as statehood was concerned. And as I said before, statehood was always an issue for election. And I'll say it again, I don't think they were ever really interested in statehood. They only wanted it as an issue for election. Because I'm sure that they were aware of the consequences of statehood. I don't think they were interested.

WN: Why were they so popular?

DA: Well, I don't know. That was the only thing you could buy, I suppose. That was the only thing in the store. And again, going back again, in '54, I think we would have elected a delegate, too, if we had a delegate that was a proven candidate, someone that had been elected for some high office, etc. But as I said, Mr. Burns was not a proven candidate at that time in '54. So, we won a majority in the House and the Senate, but we failed to elect the delegate because, as I said, Mr. Burns was not a proven candidate at that time. But subsequently, Mr. Burns got elected in every election he ran. [Burns was defeated by William F. Quinn in the 1959 election for governor.] Just a matter of proving that he was a viable candidate.

CC: There was one he didn't get elected.

DA: There was one. I'll take that back. He was a candidate also in 1948 for [delegate to] Congress, but he was not a serious candidate at that time. He merely put himself, his name, up there merely for the purpose of having people to vote for someone that they. . . . Those that were not interested in voting for Farrington.

CC: He wanted to see a Democrat on there.

DA: That's all it was.

CC: Now, the Statehood Commission was another organization that had a lot of Republicans involved with it. Do you feel that those people were sincere about wanting statehood, or were they more in the same way as the Farringtons interested in promoting their interest in statehood more than statehood itself?

DA: I would go along with you. They were just like the Farringtons. People that were on the commission were merely society people in Hawaii. Take Lorrin Thurston, who was the chairman of the commission [1955 to 1959]. He was very much against statehood. He outright said so. And he had just changed his position supposedly. And my recollection reading something was that the Territorial Legislature had appropriated a good deal of money for that commission. They even had a secretary in Washington and all that kind of stuff. However, it was just a big show.

CC: Were they a factor, though, that you had to work with in terms of
when you did get to Washington?

DA: Well, when we---when Mr. Burns got to Washington, he did utilize that commission. As a matter of fact, I might say, you know, you shout your interest in a certain project enough and then you get to a point where you're going to have to produce. And this is what did happen. I mean, the Statehood Commission and the people shouted about statehood so much that when they saw it coming, they just had to be part of it or else they would have been left out completely or become a laughingstock. And in that fashion, Mr. Burns utilized the Statehood Commission and the Chamber of Commerce in Hawai'i, and used them to approach the Republican elements in Congress. So, as I said earlier--I'm sure I said this--Mr. Burns utilized every possible means that he had at hand to further his statehood efforts.

WN: Was there any kind of friction or confrontation between the Statehood Commission and Burns?

DA: No. Not much, really. But there was slight confrontation between the Secretary of Interior, [Fred] Seaton, and Governor [William] Quinn. Because Burns told them, "Hey, just stay out of my way. I'm going to get statehood. You people merely mess things up. So just stay out of my way." But, you know, this is why, there're some stories in the history which will tell you that when statehood was passed, he [Burns] called Seaton and I called Quinn, as I recall. "Okay, now the bill has passed, you better come in. The job is done." But until then, he told them, "Just stay out of my way."

CC: I want to get back to that later, but when you went to Congress with Mr. Burns and he was there, how was it different for him? Not having a vote means that he had to, I suppose, operate a little differently than other congressmen.

DA: Oh, yes.

CC: And what did that mean? The fact that he was really there without capability of voting, and how did he go about representing Hawai'i under those circumstances?

DA: It was a real difficult job for Mr. Burns. As you point out, no vote and everything else, that's true. However, he had all the privileges of a congressman except the voting. And he had the privilege of going on the Senate floor as well as in the House. Both floors. And so, the only thing he could do was to sell himself to the leaders of both the House and the Senate. And fortunately, it just happened to be [Sam] Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson. So, he sold himself to Rayburn. You know, it's like anything else, as I saw it. You just got to be sincere about what you really want and what you really believe in and to convince the next person that you are really sincere about it and that's the right thing to do. And I think history will also tell you that Mr. Rayburn was never one of the greatest supporters of statehood. As a matter of fact, he opposed us all the time. It was only Mr. Burns that was able to
convince him of Hawaiian statehood. And Rayburn, in turn, convinced Lyndon Johnson, and that's the way it went. However, as it was pointed out in a recent movie, the fact that the 442 had saved one battalion of the 36th Division and had become the honorary members of Texas, let's put it that way, Burns had used that along with everything else to talk to Rayburn [and] Lyndon Johnson.

CC: So, in some ways, he approached Congress the way you would a political campaign for votes. I mean, he went and met everybody. You said he visited most of the states?

DA: That's right. But, as I said, he visited most of the states merely so that he would be able to understand . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CC: Well, basically, from what you've said, it sounds like Mr. Burns approached Congress the same way you would approach sort of a political campaign. You said he traveled to all the states. He would make, I guess, appearances at luncheons and things. Maybe you could just tell us the kinds of things that he did and places that you and he went, or that you went. What kinds of things he talked about.

DA: Well, it was, basically, getting to know the people. Know the congressmen and the senators. As I said, selling himself first and being concerned about their problem as well as having them concerned about your problem. And to understand every congressman and senator and why they voted and acted the way they did, Mr. Burns made it a point to travel all the states, as I said. He traveled every state in the union and talked to the people so he could understand the conditions that were behind there and the kind of people that each congressman or senator had to represent. And this way, as long as I knew you or the kind of constituency that you had, then I would understand your behavior, right? And so, I'd be able to work with you much better. Now, he took every possible opportunity that he had. He traveled all the way down to Florida, Indiana, or wherever he was invited to appear on TV programs or what have you. And, I might say, as I mentioned earlier, about the statehood . . . What was that, now?

CC: Mendel Rivers? No?

DA: Oh, Mendel Rivers was another good example. As I said, he [Burns] was one of only two outsiders from the South that was invited to Mendel Rivers Day in South Carolina. I'm talking about the state society. He used that as an instrument, too. And prior to that, that organization was never used to advance the Hawai'i statehood efforts.

CC: Okay, I think we're out of tape here. We'll have to put another tape in.
(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CC: Why don't you finish telling us the story about how you ended up going to Mendel Rivers Day in South Carolina and what happened.

DA: Well, as I was saying earlier, Mr. Burns befriended all the congressmen that he could befriend. And some of the people were really in high places. People like "Admiral" [Carl] Vinson from Georgia, Mendel Rivers from South Carolina in the Armed Services Committee. Subsequently, as you recall, Mendel Rivers became chairman of the Armed Services Committee when "Admiral" Vinson retired. Well, they have a celebration, Mendel Rivers Day in Charleston, South Carolina every year. Well, Mr. Burns was invited. As I said, he was one of two outsiders [not] from the South that was invited to that function. And Mr. Burns had every intention of going to that celebration because he was seriously working with the Southern representatives as well. Well, it so happened that Mr. Burns had to come home to Hawai'i when the Mendel Rivers celebration was going to take place. And so, he says, "Dan, you're going to have to go to Charleston, South Carolina to represent me."

"Charleston, South Carolina?" I says, "Oh, no way. No thanks."

That's when he says, "Say, Dan, there are lot of things that I do that I don't want to do, but I've got to do because I'm the delegate of the people of Hawai'i." And he says, "So, you, being my assistant, you're going have to do many things that you don't want to do, but you're going to have to do. And this is one of them."

I says, "Oh, my God."

So, he says, "You got any kind of medal from the war?"

I says, "I only got a bronze medal."

So he says, "Well, get one of those . . . "

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CC: Maybe you can just start with where he told you some things you're going to have to do.

DA: Yeah. Well, he said, "You know, there are many things that I do which I don't want to do just because I'm the delegate for the people of Hawai'i." So, he says, "You're going to do the same thing. Because you're my assistant, you're going to have to do some of the things that you don't want to do. But you just have to do it. And this is one of them."

Then he asked me if I had any medals from the Second World War. And I says, "Well, the only medal I got is the bronze medal."

So, he says, "Well, get yourself. . . . Do you have one of the pins?"
I says, "Yeah. I have."

He says, "Well, you wear it."

I says, "What the hell should I wear that for?"

He says, "No, I want you to wear it."

And so, I got all dressed and went to the office that morning. And he says, "Where's the medal? Where's that pin?"

I says, "Ah, I don't have to wear that stuff."

He says, "I told you, you need it. Now, you get your 'okele downtown and you get yourself one of the pins and you put it on."

So I had to run all the way downtown, pick up a pin, put it on. And then we went out to Andrews Airport. Air Force plane was ready for Mendel Rivers and his entourage. And we went all the way down. Oh, I might also mention that before Burns made this switch, he called Mendel Rivers. He says he couldn't make it and he asked if it's okay for him to send me in his place. And Mendel Rivers says, "Sure. Fine. Send him over."

And so he [Burns] says, "Hey, wait. I'm just going to have to tell you, you know who my assistant is?" He told him that I was not one of their people, you know. I'm a little different.

So, he says, "That's all right." That was fine. So Burns asked another friend of his, a congressman from South Carolina, comes from the opposite end of Mendel Rivers. William Jennings Bryan Dorn. And he comes from Greenwood, which is the extreme west end of South Carolina. He was a wonderful guy. And so, Burns asked him, "Hey. How about taking care of my assistant? He's going to go in my place."

So, he was a very congenial guy. So, I got along very well. He took good care of me. And we flew down to South Carolina. We landed at Mendel Rivers Airport. And as we went parading through town, they says, "Look, that's what Mendel Rivers brought, that's what Mendel Rivers brought."

You know, the veterans' hospital and what have you. Everything in Charleston was Mendel Rivers. And so, we went to The Citadel. And as I said, I think I mentioned this earlier, those cadets there paraded for us. I always paraded for the dignitaries, but this time, I was on the opposite end, reviewing the troops. When it was all over, the commandant there at The Citadel had invited the people there, Mendel Rivers and his group, who went to his residence. And naturally, I'm the last, right? All the congressmen go in, then I was the last. And I look up there and I says, "My God, General Clark." Mark Clark. I looked up at Mark Clark and I shook hands with him. I said, "You know, General," I says, "I never thought I'd get this close to you."

He looked at me. He says, "Well." He says, "Are you with the 100th?"
I says, "No, I was with the 442nd."

He says, "Well." Then he put his arms around me, and turned me around, and addressed the whole group, and told them, you know, what a great job the 442nd had done. Great soldiers that they were and so forth and so on. And that kind of set me up for the whole trip down in South Carolina and made it much easier.

CC: Didn't hurt to have General Clark's backing.

DA: It was a great help, yes.

WN: Were there any other kinds of incidents you remember going by yourself or with Burns to a certain area that you remember?

DA: We drove out to Detroit. Then after we got through with that show, we went down all the way down to Florida, to Miami. And it was a very nice trip. We stayed at Key Biscayne. I didn't realize how big Miami was, though. But it was, you know, things like that. Of course, many times, Burns would combine trips with other things, so I didn't join him. If he couldn't go, we always had somebody go. You know, we had Mr. Burns's eldest son in our office. And he made speeches all different places, too, and talking to different people.

CC: What kind of impressions did you really get of the Mainland and seeing all... You really got to see an awful lot of what people were thinking about and what was going on all over the country at that period of time. What kinds of things impressed you about those years?

DA: Well, primarily, at that time, the one thing I noticed was that the people in the Mainland did not know Hawai'i. This was even true, worse, when I went there [with] the 442nd going cross-country. You tell them that we're from Hawai'i and they says, "Oh, where's Hawai'i? In the Philippines someplace?" You know? People were not too aware of where Hawai'i was and what Hawai'i was all about. Now I might mention this, that after we were successful in getting statehood, as you know, the migration to Hawai'i increased tremendously. And I think the only reason for that was because when we became the fiftieth state, then the people realized, "Hey, that's part of United States." They didn't have the same feeling when we were a territory. They thought that we were a foreign country. And just the simple thing of taking inoculations and what have you for traveling purposes. They thought that to come to Hawai'i they needed to take all that kind of shots and clearance and what have you. But once we became a state, well, they realized that in the Mainland, as you know, you drive from one state to the other. You never know when you cross the borders of each state. And so, when we became a fiftieth state, I believe people began to feel it's no difference going to Hawai'i than going from one state to the other. And so, ever since statehood, as I said, the population here, the migration from the Mainland has been tremendous.
CC: So, you really had to overcome a lot of just general ignorance about the situation. People just didn't know at all.

DA: That's for sure.

CC: And that allowed a lot of the rumors, and some of the tactics--there were some fairly manipulative critics of statehood who talked about Communism or talked about racial problems and things like that. You really had to sort of overcome people's . . .

DA: Now that you mention it, yeah, I believe that was very true. The fact that they did not know the people of Hawai'i, the fact that they did not know the makeup of Hawai'i made it very possible for them to believe lot of these things that were said about Hawai'i. Because the only thing they knew was that one-third of the population was Caucasian. So, as Mr. Burns pointed out, "I'm here asking for statehood because of the two-thirds, not the one-third." And he said, "Let me assure you, they might not look like your constituents, but they are as good Americans, if not better Americans, than your constituents." But, so as you point out, ignorance of Hawai'i made it easier for the people to believe . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay. You were in a high administrative position representing Hawai'i. And this was about ten, eleven years after the war ended. The fact that you were a Japanese in a high administrative position, how did you feel about that and did you get any kind of reactions from other peoples?

DA: I tell you. Mr. Burns got elected delegate and he asked me if I would join him in Washington. Being in Hawai'i is a different situation. I didn't think much about it. I says I'd be very happy to go, you know, whatever it is. Of course, it meant that I had to uproot my whole family and take them up there, not knowing when I was going to come back. It's pretty hard traveling with three children, especially when they are very young. Well, I didn't really think that it was going to be a difficult proposition when I first accepted the position there with Mr. Burns. But when I went to Congress, I found that I was really an ugly duckling there. I was the black duckling in the whole pond. Well, as it turns out, I don't think they ever saw a Japanese fellow up there in Washington or in the Congress. As a matter of fact, I was the first one there working. And so, I really felt out of place. It was difficult for me to work. And I entertained the idea of calling it quits and coming home. I just felt that I was in the wrong place. You know, a square peg in a round hole.

So, just before I went up to Mr. Burns to tell him that I was going to quit and come home, I just thought to myself, "Hey, maybe it's not them. Maybe it's me. I'm the one that's getting the vibes. Maybe I was just interpreting it wrong." You know? So, I kind of changed my attitude about the whole thing. I went around and just
said hello, talk to people. I think it was just a case of selling myself, that I was just like anybody else. That I spoke English, the best that I could, and I could communicate with them. And I joined one group, and another group, and found that I made friends along the way. And the more I was outward about things, I felt, well, wasn't too bad. I was being accepted there. So I was convinced that it was me that was all wrong and it wasn't them. And so, it was just adjusting my own attitude and adjusting myself. And so, oh, it wasn't so bad. And after that, I enjoyed my stay there.

WN: Did anybody bring up the war at all?

DA: Yeah. Mr. Burns had a purpose in taking me up there, I think. As I said earlier, someplace along the way, Mr. Burns was the first delegate ever from Hawai'i to take an entire staff from Hawai'i. Other delegates did have members from Hawai'i in their staff, but lot of these people were people who were going to law school in Washington, D.C. and were working part-time. They were never full-time employees. And they generally hired professionals that ran around in Washington constantly. But Mr. Burns took an entire staff from Hawai'i. He once told me, "Dan, the reason I did that was I wanted the other congressmen and senators to see for themselves that the Hawaiian people could do the job like anybody else can." You see the point there? And this is why he took an entire staff from Hawai'i.

And so, Mr. Burns was confronted with those kind of questions about the 442nd and the 100th. Then there was one congressman who was a veteran. I understand we had a number of veterans, many of them. And they would ask Burns, "What's with these niseis? Why do they fight so hard?" Things like that. And so, Mr. Burns would say, "Well, rather than me trying to explain the situation to you, I have a veteran there from the 442nd." He said, "Why don't you go talk to him? He's in the office." And so, we'll have lunch together or something like that. He'll come up and pointblank ask, "What was it that made you kids fight so hard?"

So, it gave me an opportunity to talk to some congressmen and tell them what I thought. Well, it was a very simple thing. I just told them that, "You went to war, yes, but you had one purpose, that was to fight for this country. That was the same reason I went to war. I fought for this country, that's true. But I had another reason. An added reason. And the fact that we were questioned, and, you know, they wondered whether we were going to fight for this country or the mother country, whatever it was. So we had this second purpose. We had a double purpose where you had just a single purpose." It wasn't necessary for me to go into other details, I'm sure.

CC: Now, the other problem that would seem...

END OF SIDE ONE
SIDE TWO

CC: I guess the other question that comes to mind in addition to the whole question of Hawai'i's Japanese population, you were also in Congress at really the sort of the tail end, but still, I'm sure, the McCarthy era had some impact on people's thinking. And the whole question of the Red Scare and the propaganda about Hawai'i being infiltrated by Communists, and things like that. Did those questions get raised in very direct ways and how were they dealt with?

DA: By the time we got there, by the time Mr. Burns got there, the McCarthyism, the Red Scare, and so forth, as you say, was at a very tail end. I presume it was a subliminal effect, but, you know, there was no frontal attack on the things like that. I might also point out here, though, that when Mr. Burns got there in 1957—he got elected in '56 and the session started in '57, January—there was some question as to whether they were going to seat Mr. Burns in the Congress or not. And Mr. Burns was a little concerned about that. But when session started and everything else, he had worked it out in such a way that it was no problem at all.

CC: You mean, there was a question over that kind of problem?

DA: Yeah. Of course, you know, as I said, Mr. Burns had been accused of being a pinko, of being a Communist follower and things like that. And he was never a Communist, but, by God, they had raked him over the coals, you might say. As I said earlier, you talk about these things often enough, people begin to believe these things, right? And so, Mr. Burns had some question as to whether somebody might bring this thing up and redbait these things around. But nothing did come up. No problem at all.

CC: So, there were still some undercurrents then . . .

DA: Well, maybe, yes. But it never surfaced to any extent, no.

CC: Warren, why don't you . . .

WN: Bill Quinn defeated John Burns for governor in '59. What happened? Why do you think that happened?

DA: Well, let's say, number one, I think Mr. Quinn was a very attractive individual, attractive candidate. Bill Quinn was the governor of the territory of Hawai'i. He was here all the time. He was in front of the people constantly, whereas you had Delegate Burns who was in Washington. Yes, he [Burns] brought statehood, but, as I said before, the statehood issue was kind of running out of gas. And when statehood did come by, yeah, there were lot of excitement and what have you, but it was sort of a, well, "it finally did come" kind of an attitude.

Now, some people say that had Mr. Burns come home and taken the
bows that he should have done and things like that, maybe things would have helped. But I just want to point out and remind you of what I said earlier. As I said, Mr. Burns had utilized every possible means with the Chamber of Commerce coming up to Congress to help with the statehood effort. And Mr. Walker was the president of the Chamber of Commerce, I think it was. And when Burns was successful in getting statehood passed in Congress, I told you that he received a wire from Mr. Walker. And Mr. Walker says, "Burns, run for Senate, we'll support you. But if you run for governor, we'll have to fight you all the way." Well, that made him run for governor. But that also tells you that they were really concerned. I mean, the people here in Hawai'i, the big interests. The Chamber of Commerce and the business people, the Big Five, which had been operating at that time. They were really concerned, they were scared of what statehood can bring and will do to Hawai'i. They were really concerned.

As a matter of fact, I might move just away from here, they even poisoned the mind of Wall Street. I'm going a little ahead now. In 1962 when Burns got elected, they passed the word down in Wall Street that we got a Communist governor now. You see, the Communist propaganda was very strong here in Hawai'i. And so, when you bring that up, say up to Wall Street, and says, "Hey, you guys better not put any money in Hawai'i or do anything like that in Hawai'i because we got a Communist governor now." And so, Burns had to go all the way up to Wall Street to answer questions and straighten these things out. And I believe Mr. [Matsuo] Takabuki and somebody else went along with Mr. Burns to straighten these things out with the people in Wall Street.

But as I was saying, they were really concerned about Hawai'i and they were really scared. They didn't know what was going to happen. And therefore, they came all out in 1959. And that was the one election, as I recall, the plantations, the managers and everybody else got really involved. Directly involved in Quinn's campaign. They all got involved. And the plantations just provided Mr. Quinn with any and all possible aid in campaigning. But subsequently, they haven't done the same thing. You see. This is after Burns beat Quinn in '62. But that's a different story again. Quinn beat himself, I would say, in '62. But after Burns got elected and proved himself to be an upright citizen and not the Communist that they said he was going to be and all of that, well, things have changed. They didn't fight him as hard or all out as they did in 1959. I know people say that had Burns come home, he might have made a difference. I don't know. I doubt it very much. But the other side of the story, there was lot of unfinished business in Congress that he had to attend to. And he just couldn't afford the time to come home to Hawai'i and go back and get his business finished in Congress.

WN: Do you think Mr. Burns received the credit for statehood that he should have gotten?

DA: No. I presume you're asking me if Burns got his full share. And my answer would say, no. Because I think Burns should receive more
credit than he's been given. But you know and I know that they're not going to lay back and say, "Oh, yeah, Burns, you got it all." Right? And I don't know how many other people will say this, but, as I've said it time and time again, they were never for statehood. And this is why they were never successful. But the fact that they had used that issue so much and so often, when statehood did come by, they had to be part of it. And so, what they're saying is, that, well, statehood would have eventually come anyway because of their efforts. Now, this is why during the statehood celebrations they put so much emphasis on the other people saying, well, because of the groundwork that [Samuel W.] King, and Quinn, I mean, Farringtons and what have you, have put in, that Burns merely put the cap on. But if they really studied the situation, Burns's tactics were completely opposite of what they were doing. This is why he was successful. And as I said earlier, too, Burns brought this matter to Joe Farrington and mentioned about this straight admission bill which would prevent having to go through the Rules Committee. He brought this matter to Joe Farrington. Joe Farrington kicked him out of the office. Now, I told you about Hayden from Florida. He says, "You come in with one [elected] representative and I'll vote for you for statehood."

He [Farrington] says, "Hell, I'm deserving of two and I'm going to come in for two."

"Get out of here."

"Okay," he says, "Fine. I'm against you."

Instead of making friends, he was just making enemies on one side, and on the other hand, he says, "I'm for statehood. I'm going to get statehood for you." You got to put two together.

WN: When the time came to sign the statehood bill, Eisenhower didn't invite Burns. How did you feel about that?

DA: I think that was the greatest mistake, or smallness on the part of Eisenhower. I don't know. I blame Eisenhower for that. Whether the people in Hawai'i had any influence on that or not, that's beside the point. But you always blame the man that's at the very top, and Eisenhower was the one. Even Rayburn pointed this out to the President, the grave mistake that he had done of not inviting Burns to the signing ceremony. But to add insult to injury, you know, when the President signs a bill, he signs with several pens and passes them onto the people around there. And he asked Rayburn if he wanted a pen and Rayburn says, "Hell, no. On second thought, oh, yeah, give me one. I'll give it to Burns." Which he did, okay? But that was just like adding insult to injury. But it was a real partisan operation, that's what it was. It was shameful the way it was handled, but, well, that's all water under the bridge.

CC: Speaking of water under the bridge, it's been a number of years since statehood. Personally, what's your personal view of what's been
accomplished? Was it worth it? Would you do it again? How do you feel about it?

DA: Yes, as you look back, I'd like to just compare it, as simple, maybe, as saying, like baking a pancake. You know, you just flip the whole thing and you completely turn from one side to the other. I think we've made a major change in Hawai'i. We've flipped Hawai'i completely around to the benefit of all the people of Hawai'i. Oh, naturally, I can't say all, but to the mass people, you might say. For 90 percent of the people.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CC: Well, here we are, celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of statehood. As you observed before, there's lot of water under the bridge at this point. Has it been worth it? Would you do it again? And what's been really good about it and are there any negatives that you see?

DA: Well, I can't think of anything that's negative. I think it's a wonderful thing. And as you said, if I had to do it all over again looking at things the way things are and looking backwards, yes, I would do it all over again. It was exciting, interesting, and very satisfying. But let me just say that as far as statehood is concerned, it was a wonderful thing. It was just exactly what Mr. Burns said, that bringing statehood to Hawai'i would be the greatest thing for the people of Hawai'i, and for the state of Hawai'i, and for the country, as a matter of fact. And, you know, as I was saying, I've said this many times, I think we've made tremendous changes here in Hawai'i. We've turned Hawai'i completely over. And the very things that the hegemony and Big Five been trying to preserve here in Hawai'i for so long, we've succeeded in turning things around, changing. We changed the tax laws, we changed the land laws. We improved the educational program. The Republican party has always said that they were for public education, but they never demonstrated that. And this is true nationally as well as locally. But we had the chance of improving things to the point where we've given the people the dignity that they deserve and given them the opportunity to do what they want to do, and to develop Hawai'i as they want to develop themselves. Now, time has gone by to the point where I don't think we'll ever get back to that old times again, but we brought Hawai'i to the stage now, where the people can . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CC: Why don't we pick it up with some of the accomplishments. What do you see some of the real accomplishments for Hawai'i are since statehood?

DA: Well, basically, the biggest thing that I can think of is that the people are now participating in their own government. And they are now determining their own destiny as far as Hawai'i is concerned. I think this is the biggest change that we've made. The people
themselves decide what they want. And the day that they're dissatisfied with the Democrats, they're going to have the Republicans come in. I think the time is coming when the so-called long Democratic reign in Hawai'i is going to end one of these days. And then the Republicans are going to have a chance to come in and do their part. And if they fail, the Democrats are going to have a chance to come back again. This is the kind of chances that we never had before. But in terms of the changes that came about it was basically in the areas of land, taxes, school, attitude that we have toward the unions. You know, these are basically the areas that we've worked around.

CC: You said that at least now there's a chance that more than one party can have a chance. Before, that was never true.

DA: That's true, that's true.

CC: But do you think that people are seeing today that government's gotten big and they don't... I mean, don't you sense that there's a feeling of dissatisfaction amongst the public about how responsive government is and if they're being addressed...

DA: Isn't that true throughout the country? And I think that reflects down in Hawai'i as well. And as long as we have a democracy and a socialistic system, you might say, we're going to continue in this fashion. But it's gotten to the stage that up to now, they've just been on a go, go, go. But I think now, they're beginning to talk of a balanced budget and they're getting to be concerned about the inflation and the debts of the nation as well as the states. I listened to that tape last night on TV about the big Senate race that's going on in [North] Carolina. And the governor came up, he's a candidate for Senate against [Jesse] Helms. And he said that even in the South, the candidates are beginning to change today. The Democrats from the South are not the same Democrats that we used to elect many years ago. They are concerned, they are interested in civil rights, you know, and things like that. And that they are concerned about balanced budget and things like this. Everyone is talking about balancing the budget.

In Hawai'i we've been concerned about that from the very beginning when we came in in 1955. Prior to 1955 many a times the legislature didn't even finish the session. And toward the end, they would just say, "Oh, heck, Governor, you settle the whole thing yourself," and they walked out. But they were not responsive. But today, ever since 1955 when the Democrats came in, we said that we were going to finish our session within the prescribed time, which we did most of the time. I think, majority of the time. We have to extend the sessions once in a while of late. We've come out with balanced budgets. And we've tried to work within ourselves. But we're beginning to find that we're having to pinch here and there from now on. But not up to now. But, as I said, things are changing. It's a chance the Republican party can come in.

I'd just like to point this one point out. When we started, as I
said, Mr. Burns got the 442 and the 100th Battalion involved very heavily in politics. We were the angry ones coming back from war. We felt that we had a place here, that we had a job to do, complete our job. At the same time, we were labeled, as Mr. Burns was afraid of, being labeled as a Jap party. And for a long time, I believe we did have that semblance, but as of late, you begin to find now that we're beginning to get other people involved into the political system. And I think this is wonderful. It's going to be a time when we're going to have, as I said, the Republicans coming back. The Democrats, the shade is going to begin to change. And we're going to have everybody participating, and it's going to be all for the better of Hawai'i.

WN: What do you think is the more significant date in Hawai'i's history? [Nineteen] fifty-four when the Democrats turned over the hegemony or '59 when statehood was achieved? If you were to choose one date as being significant.

DA: Well, I don't know that you can separate the two. Oh, wait awhile, now. Yeah, I think '54 would be the most significant date. That made it possible for the election of Burns who was able to get statehood through. But without statehood, we would not have had this continuation, you might say. Without statehood, we would not have the chance to determine our own destiny, as you say. We would not be a sovereign state. We would still be under the thumb of Congress. And it would have been a very difficult operation because the governor would have been appointed by the president, and so was the judiciary. But now, we elect our own people. We have our own judiciary. And we determine everything for ourselves. And what becomes of Hawai'i is entirely our own responsibility. And so, I hope that we did our share. It's for the younger generation to carry on now, and I hope that we left them something where they can do something about it and continue building Hawai'i for the better.

CC: That's good. Good place to end, yeah?

WN: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW
PERSPECTIVES ON HAWAIʻI'S STATEHOOD

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