

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Richard Henderson

Richard Henderson was born December 20, 1928 in Hilo on the Big Island. He attended elementary, intermediate, and high school in Hilo, and graduated from Punahou School on O'ahu. He received a B.S. in economics at University of Pennsylvania in 1950.

For the following eight years he worked as a certified public accountant in Hilo. He then joined the Realty Investment Company and in 1968, he became the president and general manager.

Henderson was elected as a Republican to the state senate first in 1970, serving through 1978, and then in 1981, serving through 1988.

Tape No. 17-17-1-88

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Richard Henderson (RH)

May 19, 1988

Hilo, Hawai'i

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

Joy Chong: The following is an interview with Richard Henderson. It took place in Hilo on May 19, 1988. The interviewers are Chris Conybeare and Dan Tuttle.

DT: Okay, why don't we start. It's Thursday, May 19. This is another in our series of oral history interviews with people who've been involved in Hawai'i politics. Today, we're talking to Senator Richard Henderson. And we'll start where we have with everybody, if you could tell me a little bit about your background, where you were born, and when, and something about your parents' circumstances at the time.

RH: My parents' circumstances?

DT: Yeah.

RH: Well, I was born in Hilo, Hawai'i, on December 20, 1928, and was raised here. My parents had come from Scotland in 1923. My father [Walter Irving Henderson] was a chartered accountant and my mother [Jean (Park) Henderson] was a housewife. And my father had an accounting business here in Hilo.

CC: And you went to, what, elementary and high school here?

RH: In those days, they had English standard schools. I went to Hilo Standard School. I went to Hilo Intermediate School till the eighth grade when the Second World War started. I left Hawai'i and went to Memphis, Tennessee, for about eighteen months and then came back in 1943, and went to Hilo High [School] for my sophomore year. And then I went to Punahou [School] for my junior year, when Punahou was still at the University [of Hawai'i] campus. And then in my senior year, 1945-46, they moved back to their regular campus, and I was a boarding student for my senior year at Punahou.

CC: Are there brothers and sisters in your family?

RH: I (have) an older sister, Margaret, three-and-a-half years older than I am.

CC: In any of that early school activity, did you show any interest in school politics or class offices or things like that?

RH: No. No, I never was involved in politics.

DT: Concentrating on mathematics all the time, were you?

RH: Well, no. I wasn't concentrating very much.

(Laughter)

RH: If I was going to go to school again, I'd pay more attention, I think, this time. From Punahou, I went to the University of Pennsylvania, to the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, and graduated from there in 1950. I went back to Philadelphia when I was seventeen years old, and, of course, all the incoming students, they were all returning war veterans. They were all like twenty-two, twenty-three, very serious about their education. And anyway, I graduated in 1950. Got married in 1950. And came back to Hilo, went to work in my father's accounting firm, and I passed the CPA [certified public accountant] exam in 1951, and practiced as a certified public accountant for about seven-and-a-half years, until July 1 of 1958, when I went to work for "Doc" [William Hardy] Hill.

DT: Did your father handle Doc Hill's business?

RH: No, not really. Doc Hill was kind of the maverick businessman in Hilo, and was fighting constantly with John M. Ross [manager of Hakalau Plantation, and president of Hilo Electric Light Company] and Jim [James] Henderson [vice president and manager of Hilo Electric Light Company], who was no relation, but the old Scotch plantation manager types. And my father was mainly doing, you know, the First Trust Company [of Hilo], Hawaiian Insurance and Guaranty, Hilo Electric Light Company, and that's before Doc got control of Hilo Electric Light Company. So my father was, you might say, on the other side of the local Doc Hill, the. . . .

DT: Spectrum, huh?

RH: Yeah. Doc Hill was kind of the, what do you call it, you know the. . . . What do we call it now. . . .

DT: He was a maker and a shaker or. . . .

RH: Oh, he was more of a. . . .

DT: Right side of the tracks or. . . .

RH: He was kind of, you know, very ambitious, very aggressive kind of a businessman, and not, you might say, accepted by the regular, old (guard)—he was the new breed coming up, and (they were) the old establishment.

CC: How did you end up going to work for him?

RH: Well, my father and Doc had always been very friendly. They'd go fishing together, and I can remember when I was a young boy, I was about five years old, (went) out (on) a fishing trip off of Nāpō'opo'o, Kona, when Doc caught his first marlin. And Doc was a—he liked

fishing, you know, he's big into fishing. I'd kind of grown up with Doc Hill's—he had a daughter, Shirley, who was my sister's good friend, so we were close, a close family.

DT: Looking back just a little bit, the summer of '48, did you stay back in Philadelphia or come home?

RH: No, I came home every summer.

DT: So you missed the Republican convention back there, then?

RH: That's right.

DT: Were you a Republican at that time?

RH: I was probably a hereditary Republican, Dan. My parents were Republican, and I grew up a Republican.

DT: Born into, then.

RH: Yeah.

CC: But still weren't really interested in politics in those days?

RH: Not, not really, although once you become associated with Doc Hill, you get very much involved with politics, you know. So, I'd say I was certainly brought into politics working for Doc.

DT: You started out working for him as an accountant or . . .

RH: No, I went to work at the Realty [Investment Company] as the treasurer. And you know in the old days, Dan, the head guy that ran a business, at least here in Hilo, was always the treasurer and the manager. That was the title that kind of indicated that you ran things. You managed it and you also signed all the checks. I went [in] as the treasurer. Doc, of course, always was the manager. With Realty, in those days, Pete Beamer [Peter Carl Beamer, Sr.] was the (president). Although Doc Hill controlled it, Pete Beamer was the president. And then Doc, when I came in, instead of being the treasurer and the manager, he became the executive vice president. And then after Doc died [1970]—and after I and a group of others bought Doc's interest out—Pete stayed on as the president until he died, and then after Pete died, then I became the president.

DT: Well, Doc Hill was certainly a colorful character. I think if I have my dates correct, he went into the legislature the very year that you were born.

RH: Oh really?

DT: In 1928.

RH: [Nineteen] twenty-eight. Was that it?

DT: He went into the [territorial] house [of representatives], I believe.

RH: Yeah.

DT: I'm not really sure. And then went over and, I think moved up to the [territorial] senate very rapidly. It may have been 1932, I think.

RH: Well, he lost an election [1936], you know.

DT: There may have been a break in there somewhere, I don't know when, but I told you there'd be sometime along the road in this interview that we'll be asking you for a Doc Hill story or two. He was just an amazingly colorful fellow, and I remember he brought a certain breed of bird up with him.

DT: [Tape inaudible.]

RH: Yeah, Doc could go on telling you stories forever. He used to have a lot of sayings, you know. He'd say, we'd [be] sitting around, "Boys,"—and he'd be talking to myself and the other younger fellows that worked for him—he'd say, "You gotta do things when you can, not when you can't." In other words, if there's a deal to be made or something that you want done, you do it when you can, and that means right now, you know. And so Doc had a lot of. . . . And he had another saying, "Remember George Day." And George Day was an older fellow who had a substantial estate and had asked Doc to prepare his will for him. So Doc went out and had an attorney draw up a will, and he took it up for George Day, and Doc was going to be the executor of the will. And he took it up to George Day, who was staying at the Hilo Hotel with Doc, 'cause Doc used to live there. And George looked it over, he said, "Well, Doc," he says, "let me--I'm going to have my lunch, I'm going to take a nap, and after my nap, I'll sign the will." And of course, George Day took his nap and he never woke up again. So Doc always said, you know, "You do things right away." (Chuckles) "You don't--remember George Day."

DT: Quite a lesson there, I think.

RH: So anyway, he could tell a lot of funny stories, though.

DT: He wasn't selling eyeglasses in your recollection or was that earlier . . .

RH: No, that was way before. I think he must have done that in like 1910 or something.

DT: And he opened a jewelry shop. Did he have a jewelry shop . . .

RH: He sold that to Fred [Frederick] Koehnen, and that became Koehnen's.

DT: And you really consider Doc Hill sort of part of this power structure of the time, didn't you, pretty much?

RH: Well, Doc, I think, eventually, became probably the most influential businessman on this island. There's no question, I think. He eventually got control of, at that time, the Hilo Electric Light Company [later the Hawai'i Electric Light Co.] which really, you know, [is] a

major operation here. Of course, he had always been involved in the General Motors' dealership. He had the Wailoa recapping facility here. We had nine theaters around the island [Hilo Theatres, Ltd.], which was a---I might say the theater business was a very good business before television arrived.

CC: With the quality of television, it might be good again.

RH: Yeah, right, yeah. I think it's coming back. Of course, Doc had Hilo Thrift and Loan [Hilo Finance and Thrift Co., Ltd.], which eventually became what we have now, is Realty Finance. But Doc was involved in all kinds of real estate ventures. He probably owned every piece of—I think Doc told me he owned every piece of property along Kamehameha Avenue in Hilo, at one time or another. But Doc would always buy and sell. [Peter] Beamer was the kind of guy—[he] was Doc's business partner—who would buy and keep. He, Beamer, I don't think ever sold anything until he passed away.

CC: Did Doc approach his term in the senate with the same kind of style? I mean, was he . . .

RH: Oh, yeah. Doc was a very, very smart guy. I mean, he was—he would take a problem and look at it, and maybe figure, you know, three different possible solutions to that one situation. Extremely smart guy, yeah. I'd say he was probably the smartest person that I've ever met, bar none.

DT: He always gave the impression of being a very shrewd lawmaker.

RH: Shrewd guy, yeah. Really smart, though.

DT: And not a bad orator, either, when he got wound up, as I recall.

RH: Yeah. He used to tell us [about] when he filibustered. . . . He filibustered Duke Kawasaki's appointment of [Herman S.] Doi as the ombudsman [in 1968]. He got that confirmation of that appointment put to the end of the [legislative] calendar, right after the CIP budget. So that the second to the last item was the Capital Improvements Projects budget, and then the last item on the agenda was on the confirmation of Doi.

DT: Doi, mm hmm.

RH: . . . ombudsman. And so Doc got up, and then he started to talk about all of the projects in the CIP. And all he did, he started out on a road trip down the Hāmākua Coast. And he talked about the new gymnasium that needed to be built at Pāpa'ikou. And then he went on to, you know, to 'O'ōkala and Laupāhoehoe and Pa'auilo and Pāpa'aloa and Haina and Kukuihaele, and he went---and pretty soon, you know, the clock was (chuckles) running and they finally figured it out, that he was filibustering the Doi confirmation. And finally the thing was all over and I think they lost the CIP that year, and the confirmation. But he was a shrewd guy.

DT: Yes, his span was really remarkable because by the time he ended up his tenure, I guess, he'd been in the legislature for something like forty-two years.

RH: Yeah.

DT: This is probably close—if not a record, close to the record.

RH: Yeah, he was out for two years.

DT: So when he became ill, obviously, I think you had a pretty good story about [how] that leads us into how you ever became active . . .

RH: Yeah.

DT: . . . in politics. Apparently, you hadn't been doing much by way of politics. During the [19]60s, had you been active in the Republican party?

RH: Me?

DT: Yeah.

RH: No, I'd been a precinct president or treasurer or something like that, you know. Actually, we were really like Doc Hill Republicans, you know, Doc had his own like part of a Republican party that was strictly Doc Hill type people. Anyway, Doc got sick and he had emphysema, and this was like in December of 1969. I was at the office and he called me about four o'clock, and he asked if I could come up to his home, because at that time, he was in bed. And so he said he'd just come back from the doctor, and the doctor told him that he had about six months to live, that he would not be able to go to the legislature—it was going to convene in January 1970—that he had to resign. And so he told me he was going to do that, and that he was going to call the governor and tell him that, and he wanted to know if I'd be willing to take his place, that he would ask the governor to appoint me. So, I said yeah, I would be pleased to do that. I should have talked to my wife first, but I didn't. (DT chuckles.) But anyway, I said I'd be pleased to do that, and so he got on the phone, he called Jack [John] Burns and he asked if Burns could come up on Sunday, if he could fly up to Hilo and to bring along with him David McClung, who was the president of the [state] senate. And then Doc said he wanted to talk to him. So the governor said, yeah, he would be happy to come up. The meeting was scheduled [for] ten o'clock in Doc's house, in his bedroom, and so then he told me, "Richard, you come up at ten o'clock Sunday morning."

Sunday morning I got up there and the governor and McClung came in, and Doc was sitting in his bed, had emphysema, smoking cigarettes still, you know. And so he said, "Governor, I've done you a lot of favors in the past and you've done me a lot of favors," and he said, "but I'm going to ask you for this one last favor." He said, "You know, my doctors tell me I have six months to live, that I have to resign from the senate, and I'm going to do that. But I'd like to have you appoint Richard Henderson, here, to take my place."

And of course, Jack Burns never said yes or no or anything, and he just kind of listened, you know, and McClung offered that that sounded like a good idea 'cause nobody had ever heard of Richard Henderson before, you know.

So, the governor didn't say anything, so Doc says, "Well, let me tell you something, Governor," he says, "you either appoint Richard Henderson into taking my place, or I won't resign. I'll go to the senate and I'll die, and you'll have to give me a state funeral."

So, Burns (chuckles) kind of nodded a little bit, you know, and so pretty soon, I guess it was—well it wasn't right away, but it was, I guess about three or four days before the session started—I got my notification to go down there and I was given, I forget what they call it, Dan, but it's a nomination. And so then I was sworn into the senate when they convened the third Wednesday in January of 1970.

DT: That gave you pretty much of a full term, didn't it, to start with?

RH: Gave me one session, yeah.

DT: One session.

RH: One session, yeah.

DT: So then you had to stand for reelection.

RH: Then I had to stand---then I ran in 1970. That was my first campaign. And we had a full ticket. We had—it was an island-wide race—was John Ushijima and Stanley Hara, who were the incumbent Democrats, and myself, and then, I think, Elroy Osorio and, I think the Cunningham, one [Michael] Cunningham. . . . Anyway, we had a full, full ticket, six of us running for three seats.

DT: How was your---what was your reaction when you got to the senate? It must have been totally new to you because you hadn't been playing much politics down here even, and suddenly you were thrust into the circle in Honolulu.

RH: Yeah.

DT: But they tell me we're going to have to change tapes, so we'll have to pick that up later.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is videotape number two of the Richard Henderson interview.

DT: We're talking about how, or we're trying to get your reaction to, your feelings, when you moved into the senate for the first time right after you were appointed by Governor Burns.

RH: Yeah, well, Dan, I was a businessman, independent businessman. I'd been working since 1950, '51, sort of like twenty years I'd been involved in the business community. And my idea of what the legislature would be like, and the people that were in it, was entirely different from what the real world was. I found that they really were pretty smart people, you know, and that I really hadn't expected to find the caliber of person in the senate that I actually found there. You know, at that time, they were like [Nadao] Yoshinaga and Sakae Takahashi, Donald Ching, and there were a whole—Larry Kuriyama—there were a whole bunch of people that were pretty smart individuals, you know.

DT: So as a businessman, now, you were prepared to kind of dismiss this?

RH: Yeah, I thought they were, you know, kind of a bunch of dummies down there, but they

weren't. They were pretty smart people.

DT: At that stage, you had a well-rounded, well-educated legislature, probably one of the better ones, period.

RH: Oh yeah, I think much more experienced people, you know, coming out of a real business experience. Sakae Takahashi was, of course, an attorney and chairman of Central Pacific Bank, and you had a whole---people with some real substance to them, and a lot of experience. A lot of them, of course, like Nadao [Yoshinaga] and John Ushijima were buddies in Italy during the Second World War. They fought all through Italy together [in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team]. And [Seichi] "Shadow" Hirai, who was the clerk of the senate, was another one that was with Ushijima and Yoshinaga, so there was this camaraderie, you might say, that you don't find there today.

CC: What was the mix between Democrats and Republicans when you started? Do you remember?

RH: I think we had about eight---there were about eight Republicans and seventeen Democrats, yeah. There was Heb [Hebden Porteus] and Andy [D.G. "Andy" Anderson] and Fred [Frederick] Rohlfing and myself, and Wads [Wadsworth Yee], Toshi [Toshio] Ansai, I think Percy Mirikitani, and I think Eureka Forbes. I think that's what it was.

DT: Was that hard for you to deal with in terms of having come from your own business experience and being sort of in charge, and then finding out, you know, you had to . . .

RH: Not really. I guess my first, really, experience in politics was on the abortion vote 'cause that had been brought up along, I guess, in '69 and was carried over into 1970, and it was a big issue. And Doc [Hill] had told me, he said, "Richard, that's got to be a no vote." You know, on abortion. But this was my first experience in [the] legislature and they had all these hearings. We had---they had night hearings in the auditorium, and they had everybody and their brother coming in to testify. And so I listened to all the testimony and, finally, I came to the conclusion that a woman ought to have the right to do what she wants to do. So you might say, [a] pro-choice position because from the testimony that we were getting, that it was---the women were having abortions, illegal abortions anyway, and if they wanted to have an abortion, they're going to have one, and they might as well have it in a safe and sanitary facility, you know, like a hospital. So I decided to vote, on that issue, I decided to vote up. I think it was my first roll call vote. So I was sitting in the back row, and Wads Yee was sitting next to me, and I said, "You know, Wads, how are you going to vote on this thing?" And he said that he was going to vote up. Well I felt a little better about that, you know. So they call the roll and then start the vote off, and there were ayes and nays, and all the way down. Gets to me, I vote aye, and they go all through the end of the thing and come to Wads Yee, and he says no. And I look at him and said, "Wads, you told me you were going to vote up."

And he said, "Richard, it had passed already. So, they didn't need my vote." And he said, "The political vote is no, anyway," so he voted no. But it had passed because, you know, he was counting all the votes as they came up. But that was a good experience for me because I found out that some people, you might say, vote aye or no, depending on what the vote is. But that was a real political lesson for me.

DT: It included a lot of parliamentary games. That may have been an eye-opener, too, at times.

RH: Yeah.

DT: At any rate, you adjusted very well, and then all of a sudden, you have to come back and face a campaign. How was political campaigning in Hilo when you first ran?

RH: Well, I, Dan, had the benefit of having Doc's organization. I had Kaz [Kazuo] Kimura as my campaign manager, and Sugi [Tadashi Sugiyama] was involved in that campaign, and all of Doc's old-time people were, in effect, my campaign. David Ikawa, (Teru Takahashi) all of these people that campaign(ed) for Doc became my campaign group. And so we went around and I got endorsed by the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union], went to all the stop-work meetings, and it was a real experience, you know. We had to campaign around the whole island which was a pretty big—when you have to be at a stop-work meeting in Kohala at five o'clock in the morning, you gotta get up pretty early in Hilo to get there, you know. But it was a real experience.

I ran, I came in second, I think. It was Stanley Hara who got the most votes and I got the second, and Ushijima came in third. But it was a real experience. Doc used to say that politics was two things. There was the campaigning which is one part of it, and then there's the serving which was the other part, and he much preferred the campaigning, you know. But it really—it is an exciting thing. I think it's a good thing because you get to go—like going door to door, you go up and you're, in effect, right in the constituent's home. You're looking into the home, you're talking to 'em, you're seeing what the conditions are. I think it's a good thing to do that. You get a real feel for the people that you're representing.

DT: So you really came to enjoy the campaigning aspect, although at first, I'm sure you didn't think you would.

RH: No, you know, I wasn't really an outgoing type of person, I was more of an accountant-type. And I think I got to a point where I really kind of—I enjoyed that. Yeah, it's certainly different from serving, you know. And you meet a lot of people, and it's good fun, yeah.

CC: First time around when you got the ILWU endorsement, one thing we've been exploring is the fact that labor didn't always back Democrats. Sometimes [the] ILWU would back Republicans and other people, was that . . .

RH: Yeah, Jack Hall [regional director of the ILWU], I think, was very strong in believing that the ILWU should back both Democrats and Republicans. I think that labor has gotten away from that, now. I think that they just put on their blinders and go Democrat, but I think it's a bad mistake on their part because I think they need to have kind of a balance in the legislature. Matter of fact, I think the legislative process would be a hell of a lot better if you had a better balance of Democrats and Republicans, either—you know, at least a third of the body should be the minority because there are certain constitutional things that come into play. For instance, you cannot authorize any bonds without two-thirds votes, so if you have a minority that's got nine members in the senate, for instance, you have leverage on the majority.

The other thing is that a third of a body can pull a bill out of committee (after it's been there

twenty days) so that you got that tool to, if some chairman is sitting on a bill, you can, with a third of the body, pull 'em out—pull the bill out and put it on the floor for a vote. It doesn't happen now because all of the Democrats are committee chairmen, and they don't want to do that to one of their cohorts because it might happen to them, too. But I really think the whole process would be a lot better off if you had, you know, a third of the body of—a minority of at least a third of the body.

DT: The trend is going in the opposite direction.

RH: That's right. But I don't think people know that though, Dan, you know.

DT: Probably not, because so much of it is personality politics. At any rate, in '74, did you also receive the ILWU backing?

RH: Yeah, I got endorsed in '74. Matter of fact, in '74, I led the ticket, in that race. And I got—I came first and I think Stanley Hara came second, and John Ushijima came third.

DT: Anything about those two, first two long terms and a portion of a term, that sticks out in your mind of being, other than the abortion . . .

RH: Not too much. I think, at that time. . . . Of course [Nadao] Yoshinaga was chairman of ways and means committee. At that time, the Democrats were much more a cohesive group. They had like a program that they wanted to implement, and they weren't all free agents doing whatever they wanted to do. They were—everybody was pretty well in line. So I think it was, it was much more of a clubby affair, I think, then it was later on.

DT: Then in '78, something happened.

RH: Yeah, I lost the election.

(Laughter)

DT: But there were reasons for that were there not? Wasn't there a reapportionment of sorts or . . .

RH: No, it was still an island-wide race, yeah. And of course at that time, Dante Carpenter had entered the race for the senate. I felt that there was no way, if I had come in first in the last election, no way I figured I could lose. I figured, you know, I'd come in second maybe, or third, but there's no way I was going to come in fourth. And they told me, you know, at that time, everybody was out sign waving, and this kind of stuff, and I thought that was crazy, you know. They said, "Richard, you have to go out and wave signs on the side of the road."

I said, "I'd rather lose than do that." And I did. (Laughs) But I think the reason I lost was the Republicans all voted for—there were about 1,500 Republicans, voted in the primary, and they all voted for Dante and me. Well, when they voted for Dante, I lost by, I think, 300 votes or something like that. So really, it was a Republican vote that voted me out and Dante in, so it's kind of crazy, but anyway it happened.

DT: Well, this is rather shocking, I think it shocked the Democrats as much as it did the

Republicans on a statewide basis, to lose you out of the senate, I think.

RH: Yeah, I was shocked. That was a real shock because I didn't expect it.

DT: But then you came back. You didn't---you weren't about to go out losing an election, were you?

RH: No, I didn't want to do that, yeah, so I decided I would run again in '80. Of course by that time, we had, no, we hadn't gotten reapportionment yet. But they had staggered the senate by that time, so that there were---every two years there was senatorial elections. So instead of having to wait for four years, I was coming back (in two years). . . . So, was Dante. Who came back in that election? Dante---there were two to be elected, right?

DT: Normally, I think, yeah.

RH: Yeah, Dante, and Kats Yamada ran against me. And then Dante and I and Kats ran. Anyway, I got reelected.

DT: So you only had to lay out two years, then?

RH: Yeah.

DT: Then you began an uninterrupted tour of duty again from what, '80 to '87?

RH: Eighty to, ['87], that's right Dan, yeah. Eighty, '87, yeah.

DT: Anything in those years that strikes you as being important that you wrestled with?

RH: Yeah, we had the coalition, I think, it was '80---was it '81 coalition? Yeah.

DT: [Tape inaudible.]

RH: Yeah. I think that was really probably the (best) time of my legislative career. That was probably the best part of my experience there. I was chairman of the [senate] economic development committee. We had, I think seven Republicans and eleven Democrats, or something like that (in the coalition).

DT: Which was your one and only taste of what it's like to be in the majority.

RH: Be in the majority, yeah. It was really pretty good because you really control things, you know. And we had Republicans and Democrats sharing different committee chairmanships. We had a rule that if you didn't have fifteen votes in the caucus, it wasn't a caucus position. So things ran pretty good, you know. We had guys like Neil Abercrombie and [Benjamin] Cayetano [who were Democrats], and myself, [D.G.] Andy Anderson, Wads [Wadsworth Yee], and it was really---Mary George, Pat [Patricia] Saiki. Had [a] good group, yeah.

DT: I think you also toyed with the idea of running for governor [in 1986], didn't you?

RH: Well, you would have talked to me about that, yeah?

(Laughter)

RH: Yeah, I never . . .

DT: I ask a question here that, I think, at least one or two newspaper articles showed up.

RH: Yeah, there was some talk about that, yeah, but there was never any real support for my candidacy, so nothing ever happened. It was just—it was kind of suggested, and nothing, nothing developed.

DT: Nothing in terms about the party itself?

RH: Party or any, you know, newspapers or anything. Yeah.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

DT: There was some support, as I recall it, in letters to the editor, but it seems part of the discouraging factor was the fact that the Republican party hierarchy didn't react at all.

RH: At all, yeah.

DT: Perhaps because, some people feel that there is a prohibition of any neighbor islander should ever become governor.

RH: Yeah, maybe.

DT: And so you have to sort of fight that jinx, I think, along with everything else.

RH: Oh, John Waihe'e's a Honoka'a boy.

DT: It's always nice to, I guess, to be able to say you're from someplace, but then when you have a good power base, why, it has to be on O'ahu.

RH: Yeah.

CC: Were you also always kind of an independent Republican? Even though you were Republican, you sort of had your ideas and weren't shy about . . .

RH: Yeah, well I think I got the carryover of the Doc Hill Republican image where Doc was a very independent Republican. He didn't, I don't think Doc ever participated in any party activities or anything like that. He kind of did his own thing and that was it.

DT: Well, he was sort of to the Big Island what Johnny [John H.] Wilson [Democratic mayor of Honolulu] was as an iconoclast to the O'ahu people, sort of a renegade independent.

RH: Yeah, that's right.

DT: But then, the fact that you---the trial balloon was floated for governor and nothing developed in part, a large part perhaps, because of the party. You shocked everybody by suddenly

quitting.

RH: In '87?

DT: In '87.

RH: Yeah, well I had had---what Buddy [W. Buddy Soares] and I were trying to do in 1986 was to (get to nine). We felt that we were a minority of five Republicans, and it just didn't make any sense. And you know, we really needed to get to nine. That was our goal initially, get to nine. And if you get nine Republican votes, you can get four Democrats in any issue and you might be able to make a difference, at least---you got to count to thirteen in the senate [for a majority]. And so we had encouraged Fred Hemmings to run against Bert [Bertrand] Kobayashi. We had encouraged Mike [Michael] Liu to run against Tony [Anthony] Chang, [Republican Michael Lily was defeated by Anthony Chang in the 17th district state senate race in 1984] and I felt that Tony Chang---we'd done some polling and we felt that Tony Chang was vulnerable. He was coming off his chairmanship of the [senate] judiciary committee and made a lot of enemies, almost like Clayton Hee today. There was no question that Hemmings would have beaten Bert Kobayashi. We'd talked to Bill [William] Paty about running against [Gerald] Hagino and he was all set to go until [John] Waihe'e [in 1986] tapped him to be his campaign manager. [Paty subsequently became director of land and natural resources.]

So anyway, after we didn't (get anywhere). We actually elected Rick Reed, (he) beat [Gerald] Machida (of Maui). But we never did make any (other) progress. Then Buddy quit to go and work at the University [of Hawai'i at Hilo] and moved up here. And I just felt that the time had come. I'd spent now, what, from 1970 with the two-year break, seventeen years, you know, spending four months of my life down at the legislature every year, and I just felt the time had come for me to go on and do other things, and that, instead of serving my term out, I would like to have Bob [Robert] Herkes, who was a friend of mine, who was interested in serving in the senate, be appointed. And so that's really the reason I resigned, really to be able to get Herkes appointed so that he would be---have at least one session under his belt before he had to run for reelection.

DT: With that, we'll have to pause and pick up after we've . . .

CC: Changed tapes. (DT chuckles.)

JC: The following is videotape number three of the Richard Henderson interview, and this is the last tape.

DT: All right, Senator, you were giving us some of the background into your decision to resign from the state senate. You might want to pick it up, maybe reflecting back upon the election of 1986, when the Republicans looked like they had a good chance of winning the governorship, the lieutenant governorship, and yet didn't succeed.

RH: Yeah, well, I think the basic problem was that---and it's interesting, Dan, because at that time, when Buddy [Soares] and I were trying to recruit people to run for the senate, we had talked to [Muliufi] Mufi Hannemann about running for [Neil] Abercrombie's seat because we felt that he could be elected. And he said no, he really wanted to run for the [U.S.] Congress. He wanted to run as [a] Republican but there's---he had tried to talk to Pat [Patricia] Saiki

about letting him run for the Congress as a Republican. And anyway, in our conversation with him, we came to the conclusion that if Pat ran, if Pat ran as a Republican candidate for the first [U.S.] House seat to the Congress, that there was no way that Mufi Hannemann was going to beat her in the primary. But we had hoped that---and I felt that if Pat had run as lieutenant governor with Andy [Anderson], there's no question in my mind that Andy would have been the governor, and Pat would have been the lieutenant governor. Mufi Hannemann would have run as a Republican for the Congress, and I think he would have been elected. So that the whole course of, you might say, the political destiny of the state might have changed if Andy had been the governor and Mufi Hannemann had gone to the Congress as a Republican. Pat was adamant, she wanted to run for the Congress, and she did and she won. As a matter of fact, Hannemann ended up running as a Democrat. As you remember, the screwy election where he got the nomination of the Democratic party for the general, and Abercrombie won the open seat, the short-term seat. Anyway, but Pat beat Hannemann by 33,000 votes on O'ahu in that first (congressional district)—and it would seem to me that with that strength that she showed in that campaign, if she had been running with Andy, I don't think there'd be any question in my mind that Andy would have been the governor.

- CC: Did it appear to you that Andy Anderson's campaign did not go full speed ahead towards the end, or is that just, I mean, that's been observed by others. Do you feel that he could have . . .
- RH: Yeah, I don't think Andy had that fire burning in his gut that you need to have when you take on those kind of races. You know, in any political race, if you have that real desire in your inner being, you go out and do what you need to do to get elected, and I don't think Andy ever—he kind of just went through the motions, so to speak. I think that was one of the reasons that Pat didn't want to run again because she had had that experience with him previously where he wouldn't show up, you know, she'd have to cover the bases and that kind of stuff, and that's a real problem. If you don't have that desire, it's hard to do what you need to do.
- DT: There's also the problem of the sort of Anderson attack upon [John] Waihe'e, at least he was equated with that in the last ten days of the campaign, *palaka* power, that sort of thing, which seemed to many people at any rate, to backfire.
- RH: Yeah, I'd forgotten about that, Dan, but it seems to me that, well, I don't think that John Henry Felix—John's a nice fellow, but I don't think that John Henry Felix really added anything to the campaign (ticket) as—Anderson and Felix, governor and lieutenant governor, just was not a good choice.
- DT: Well he was underscored, I guess, embarrassingly, by Frank Fasi [Republican mayor of Honolulu], was he not?
- RH: And Frank won't even talk to John Henry, I don't think.
- DT: Oh really?
- RH: Yeah.
- DT: Despite the fact that they had been close buddies?

- RH: Frank was apparently very against that combination.
- CC: Let me ask you this. It seems that you were talking about Mufi Hannemann maybe being a Republican, maybe being a Democrat. We've just mentioned Mr. Fasi who's been a Democrat and a Republican, and there are a number of these kinds of--what does it mean to you? What's the difference in the parties? What does it mean to you, being a Democrat or a Republican?
- RH: Well, I don't think I could ever be a Democrat. It's just—I don't think the way they do. You know, I see a lot of populism out there which I don't think is good. I believe in a representative democracy, not a participatory democracy. I don't think the people should be making the town hall kind of choices. So I just---my philosophy is entirely different from, (the philosophy of) the majority of my colleagues are down there, even some of the Republicans. They're populists, you know, and I don't believe in that.
- CC: Do you see a change in the kind of people that were serving in the legislature from the time you started to the time you ended? Would you characterize . . .
- RH: Oh yeah. I would say that they're much younger. Mostly inexperienced. No other jobs, full-time, which I think is terrible. Not really aware of what the real world is, either economically or socially. So I think you really have a very, very young, immature kind of a legislative body nowadays.
- DT: You think the salary increase which goes into effect, I guess, for this next time around . . .
- RH: Yeah, I think, Dan, that—I don't think it's going to help. I think it's going to make it worse, as a matter of fact. I think you're going to end up with more full-time legislators and I think that's a terrible thing, because all they have to do. If you're a full-time legislator, you make---the work fill the available time, right? I mean, there's probably going to be a lot of make-work projects. I don't think it's a good thing at all, frankly.
- DT: In a way, would you characterize the older days as being one where, okay, a guy might represent business interests and a guy might represent labor interests, but at least they could go at it, whereas today, they don't have any of that kind of background. Is it more they represent government for government's sake, or . . .
- RH: Yeah, I would say so. I think that they are—they're easy to move. You know, good lobbying can move these people in any way they can be moved. And there's no question, in the old days, you had labor, you knew who the people were—Nadao Yoshinaga, straight, [Mamoru] Yamasaki, labor, you know. And then you had the business people—Heb [Hebden] Porteus, Andy [Anderson] and myself. So you had it kind of split up, it's kind of an even playing field. But these young people, I don't know. I guess they don't seem to me to have the knowledge, basically, that would benefit them to consider the kinds of things they have to consider in the legislature.
- DT: What would be your reaction to the idea—excuse me—of the notion that the legislatures are better schooled than they used to be, but are less well educated?
- RH: (Chuckles) Yeah, I think that's a good way to put it.

- DT: Because, in part, I think you check the age of them, they're not as young as it would appear on the surface. I was surprised when you checked a couple years ago, that where they are little bit more youthful than other times. It's not, it's certainly not as youthful as the legislature was, let's say, in 1955 or '57 period.
- RH: Yeah, but I think that they were much more serious people, you know. You take the guys that came out of the Second World War. They were much more serious about what the real world was all about than what these people are today. I just---there's a world of difference between what happened here in the 1950s and [19]60s, and what's happening today.
- CC: What about the Republican party today. You left the legislature, obviously, with some frustration at not feeling that you could accomplish even a good minority, let alone a majority.
- RH: Yeah.
- CC: What about the Republican party today? There's this sort of a [Pat] Robertson faction [that] has developed, and it doesn't seem the Republican party quite knows what to do with it?
- RH: Yeah, I think that that could really be a pretty good thing for the Republican party, the Robertson faction. On this island, I think they got like ninety percent of all the delegates to the convention here. Then there are some very attractive people in that Robertson group that should run for office. Now, whether they do that or not, I don't know. That's one of the big things that we're looking at now. There's some people over in Kona who were leaders of the Robertson organization on this island—young, I guess thirty-five, thirty-eight, attractive, intelligent, that have this huge grassroots organization already in place. I mean, they look to me like they would be naturals to run for office and get elected. And I don't know, what they're thinking about, this one fellow I talked to, he said, well, he didn't think the time was right.
- And I said, "The time could never be better for you if you want to run for office than right now." And well, he said he was thinking about further reorganizing the party. I said, "Forget the party. You know, if you want your values to be represented in the legislature, you gotta run for office and get elected. You can't do it through reorganizing the Republican party."
- And what I think, I think it's too bad that the Republican party didn't grab these people and embrace them, you know, and do whatever they could do to get them motivated and going. But maybe it's going to work out. Matter of fact, this week, I'm supposed to talk to a fellow in Kona that's a Robertson guy. I've asked him if he's willing to have his name put in a survey questionnaire. So I'm trying to find out whether he's even willing to have his name put on a survey questionnaire, you know.
- DT: So you are active in the party still?
- RH: Well, I want to see the party do better than it's been doing. I think we've got to get more people, good people, running for office. I think it's in the total public interest to have a more meaningful minority in the legislature. And by meaningful—it's got to be at least a third of the body. And I think those are the kinds of things I'd work for. But I think I've done my bit. I'd spent seventeen years involved in the legislative process, and I just figured it's time for

me to do some other things, and so I decided to say adios.

DT: Well you wouldn't issue, necessarily, a Sherman-like statement would you, but the next thing to it maybe?

RH: [Tape inaudible] like what, Dan?

DT: Well, saying that you wouldn't under any circumstances . . .

RH: To run again, yeah. (Chuckles)

DT: Never say never.

RH: Never say never, yeah. But I think right now, I would have no—I don't miss it. I don't miss it. Right now, I couldn't see myself getting involved in the legislature. I just don't have any desire to do that. Something else, I don't know. Right now, I can't think of anything I'd do.

DT: Well, at least you're in a position, I'm sure you're concerned just to consider future direction of things in Hawai'i. Even though you don't necessarily like the direction in terms of the inter-party play [that] has been going, do you remain somewhat optimistic or is there a basis for optimism as well as . . .

RH: You mean, politically . . .

DT: . . . in pessimism? Politically, yeah.

RH: Well, I think there's some optimism. I'm optimistic that things will come around. You know, I gotta believe that the Republican strategy has got to be to work on either one house or the other. I think you—my strategy would be to work on the senate because if you can control the senate, you can confirm the governor's appointments, confirmation of judges. I think, to me, that is the key body. And which would mean that you'd have to have the Barbara Marumotos, and the Mike Lius, and the Fred Hemmings, and those people take the chance and run for the senate and presumably get elected. And I think when you have these older incumbents, that they tend to get kind of, you know, complacent. (For instance,) a fellow like Clayton Hee, obviously, has alienated all kinds of people, even within his own colleagues in the senate, he's alienated them. So that I would think that somebody like a Whit [Whitney] Anderson running against Clayton right now, is something that might happen. And I think he would have a very good chance of getting elected, you know. So that's where I see the play should be, would be what we were trying to do in 1986. It should, you know, that should be the plan for 1988.

DT: Building up to another try in '90 for the governorship.

RH: That's right, yeah.

DT: Would you say the jury is still out on the Waihe'e administration or do you join in those who say it's all a bed of roses?

RH: I think the jury is still out because, you know, it's all been—so far, it's all been rhetoric. You got to start looking at what the accomplishments are. You know, affordable housing, he's

taken as a major issue. A convention center, another major issue. We have to see what happens. If we don't have affordable housing in 1990, if we don't have a convention center in 1990, we don't have the waterfront fixed up in 1990, we don't have the America Cup races here in 1990, maybe people are going to wonder, "Hey, what's going on here?" you know.

DT: You have anything else, Chris?

CC: No, that's good.

DT: Anything else you'd like to add without having a question poked at you?

(Laughter)

RH: No.

DT: Well, we thank you very much . . .

RH: Okay, Dan.

DT: . . . for taking your time spent with us and briefly reviewing your career and . . .

RH: My pleasure.

CC: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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