

FORTY YEARS AFTER

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A Snapshot View of the 1954 'Democratic Revolution'

Originally published in the HAWAII HERALD, Hawaii's Japanese American Journal
Vol. 15, No. 1 – January 7, 1994

[ORIGINAL] EDITOR'S NOTE: *This year [1994] marks 40 years since the landmark 1954 Democratic "Revolution" – often touted as the election that wrestled political, economic and social control of Hawai'i from a Republican oligarchy that had ruled the islands for decades. With this issue we begin to look back at that historic election. In the months to come, the herald will attempt to document different perspectives on that election – from those who actually participated in it, to those who can only look back to assess its impact on the course of modern Hawaiian history. Arnold Hiura begins this series with a survey of the '54 players.*

Its medium was the rich, warm Hawaiian soil, primed by the toil of immigrant plantation workers and fertilized by the social injustices of the World War II. Its seeds lay in the education and experiences of a young, multi-ethnic generation of Americans who could no longer accept anything less than full equality. Its catalyst were a corps of ambitious, war-toughened nisei and bold labor leaders...and a man named Jack Burns.

Many of its key players are gone now. What might be more surprising to some are the number of those who remain, still active, involved in the machinations of elective politics and government operations in Hawai'i. Chances are that the ghosts of the 1954 "Democratic Revolution" will be conjured up often this year, given the party's concerns over the 1994 elections and the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the '54 Elections. What was the '54 revolution and what did it do for/to Hawai'i? We often refer to it in very generalized terms. For a more objective perspective, a glance back at the media's coverage of the event tells us in straight numbers how broad a change it actually represented. Contrary to its popular image, the Democrats' sweeping victory in 1954 was not wholly unexpected. Significant inroads had been made since 1946, especially in the previous two elections in 1950 and '52.

Still, entering the Tuesday, Nov. 2 1954 general election, the Republican Party controlled the territorial Senate and House of Representatives. In the 1953 legislative session, Republicans had enjoyed a nine-vote advantage in the House, and a slim, one-vote edge in the Senate.

John A. Burns had been gathering support even earlier, and by 1948 had become the Oahu chair of the Democratic Party. In the fall of 1948, Burns made his first run for elective office - a last minute and ill-fated bid against popular Republican Joseph Farrington for the prestigious post of delegate to Congress. In that 1948 race, however, Burns attracted growing support from key nisei veterans, including Dan Inouye, Dan Aoki and Sakae Takahashi. A multi-ethnic band of young union leaders-Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian and Portuguese-helped turned the grass roots groundswell

into a potential tsunami. Between 1948 and 1950, the Burns group grew to include other key players, such as Mike Tokunaga, Herman Lum, Bill Richardson, Shigeto Kanemoto, Mitsuyuki Kido and Matsuo Takabuki.

By 1952, Burns had risen to become the party's territorial chair. Sakae Takahashi had been named territorial treasurer by Democratic Gov. Oren E. Long. The stage was set for 1954.

The "revolution" was anticipated-it was more a matter of how much, rather than if. Nearing the close of a hard fought campaign, both Democrats and Republicans pushed harder in the days just prior to the election. On November 1, the day before the election, both parties held large political rallies. The Democrats held a 14-hour rally at Ala Moana Park, which was carried over radio. Various candidates and party speakers took turns at the microphone, answering questions from the crowd and others called in by radio listeners to a phone bank. Speakers hammered at and harangued the Republican Party for failing to meet the needs of the people.

Outgoing Democratic Mayor John Wilson addressed a smallish crowd of less than 100 at Crane Park at the last rally of the day. Wilson had been ousted in the primary by an aggressive young newcomer, Frank Fasi. Following the rally in Ala Moana Park, Fasi held his own "talkathon" on KULA Radio and KULA television from 4 p.m. that day to 11 a.m. on election day.

Republicans gathered on the eve of October 31 at Washington Intermediate School, where candidates addressed their positions before a crowd of 100 people. On November 1, they gathered at a huge rally on the grounds of McKinley High School; one reporter estimated the crowd at McKinley at over 2,000 people. Furthermore, the rally was carried over radio and television-the first outdoor political rally ever televised in Hawai'i.

ELECTION DAY- NOV. 2, 1954

Voter turnout on election day was extremely heavy. Over 142,000 Island residents went to the polls to cast their ballots. The 142,409 votes cast was the most in Hawaii's history, representing 88.5 percent of all registered voters in the territory. Hawai'i County led the territory with a turnout of 90.8 percent. Kauai County also topped 90 percent, with a count of 90.6 percent. Maui County followed with 89.9 percent, and Oahu with 87.5 percent. By day's end, Democrats had taken the territorial House of Representatives, 22-8, and the Senate, 9 to 6, for the first time in the history of the territory.

SENATE RACES

Of the 15-member Senate, each party had four holdover senators, leaving seven seats contested. Democrats captured five of the seven races, seizing a 9-6 margin in the Senate. The race for the three Oahu Senate seats garnered considerable attention, in part because it pitted 100th Battalion veteran Sakae Takahashi against James Lovell, the former commanding officer of the 100th, a candidate on the Republican ticket. The race divided the loyalties amongst the 100th veterans, and some controversy erupted late in the campaign over the use of certain 100th Battalion veterans' names on endorsement ads.

On November 2, Democrat William H. Heen led the ticket, Sakae Takahashi came in a strong second, white Republican Wilfred Tsukiyama held on to the third spot.

Democrats took three of four Neighbor Island seats. In the First District, on the island of Hawai'i, newcomer Nelson K. Doi led the ticket, while longtime Republican incumbent William H. Hill barely held onto the second spot, edging Democrat Tom Okino by a scant 33.4 votes. In Maui's Second District, Democrat Dee Duponte unseated Republican incumbent Wendell F. Crockett. On Kauai, incumbent Democrat J. B. Fernandes rolled to an easy victory over Republican Dean Y. Ishii. In the aftermath of the election, one newspaper article pointed out that, far from being a pack of wide-eyed radicals, the 15-member Senate was really rather conservative. Their roles included six attorneys, five businessmen, two ranchers, and a printer. The sole female senator, Duponte, was described as a "housewife".

HOUSE RACES

The Democratic sweep of the territorial House was significant in its magnitude. The 22-8 advantage gained by Democrats assured them enough votes to over-ride a governor's veto, an important distinction, in view of Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower's appointment of a Republican governor for Hawai'i. One of the most dramatic changes in the House took place in the Third District, on the island of Maui. Of the island's six House seats, four newcomer Democrats led the vote totals.

In order of their finish, they were: Elmer F. Cravalho, David K. Trask, Robert N. Kimura and Nadao Yoshinaga. Republican incumbents E. P. Lydgate and Manuel G. Paschoal held on to the fifth and sixth spots, respectively. Oahu's Fourth District, one of Hawaii's largest, had long been a GOP stronghold. A Democrat had not been elected in the Fourth since 1946, and Republicans had held all of the district's six seats for the past six years. For these reasons, many came to view the battle in the Fourth District as a key point of interest. Education was one of the main issues throughout the campaign. Democrats hammered at issues such as lower teacher-student ratios, funding for improved school facilities, and raising teacher salaries. At the basis of this and other such debates lay the Democrats' contention that the Republican legislature had previously failed to fairly assess personal, business and property taxes in order to protect moneyed interests.

Democrats proposed to overhaul Hawaii's tax structure in order to help fund schools and other public programs. On November 2, the Fourth District Democratic landslide was symbolic of the scope of the electoral revolution. Led by newcomers Daniel K. Inouye, Spark M. Matsunaga, Masato Doi, Russell K. Kono, and Ann F. Kahanamoku, a schoolteacher with 17 years of service with the Department of Public Instruction, Democrat themselves were overwhelmed with the results. Republican incumbent Hebdon Porteus was the sole survivor of the onslaught. Unseated were incumbent Republicans Webley Edwards, Walter F. McGuire, Russell Starr and J. Ward Russell. According to one newspaper account, the surprising upset caught even victorious Fourth District Democrats somewhat off-guard.

At campaign headquarters, the reporter found little in the way of the expected hilarity and joyous back-slapping. Instead, a rather dazed group quietly shook hands and talked, almost as if they could not believe their incredible victory. Kahanamoku, stricken with the flu, had gone home to bed and was not aware of her victory until she was awakened the following morning.

In the Fifth District, two normally strong Republican candidates were upset, including Hiram L. Fong and C. Y. Shimamura. Democratic incumbents Charles E. Kauhane and Steere G. Noda led the ticket, followed by George R. Ariyoshi, O. Vincent Esposito (incumbent) and Philip Minn, respectively. Incumbent Republican Yasutaka Fukushima hung onto the sixth spot.

In spite of the huge Democratic victories in the Senate and House, there were a few bright spots for Republicans, who captured two of the election's biggest races.

Betty Farrington, who had been appointed delegate to Congress in place of her late husband, defeated John Burns in a very close race. Burns had led as the early results were tabulated, with strong support on the Neighbor Islands—Burns had carried the islands of Hawai'i, Maui and Kauai. At 1 a.m. with 43 of Oahu's 71 precincts accounted for, Burns held a slim 1,959 vote lead. An hour later, that lead had dwindled to 989. By 2:45 a.m., with returns from 55 Oahu districts in, Farrington had slipped into the lead. By the following morning, she led Burns 69,619 to 69,036. In another tight race, Republican candidate Neal S. Blaisdell edged out Democrat Frank F. Fasi for Honolulu mayor.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS (COUNTY COUNCILS)

On Oahu, Democrats took six out of seven spots on the board of supervisors. Leading the ticket was Noble K. Kauhane, followed in order by Mitsuyuki Kido, Matsuo Takabuki, Herman Lemke, Richard M. Kageyama and Mistuo Fujishige. The sole Republican incumbent to retain a seat was Sam Apoliona, who clung to the seventh spot. One of the biggest upsets of 1954 was a defeat of Republican Leonard K. Fong, auditor of the City and County of Honolulu for 14 years, at the hands of Democratic newcomer James K. Murakami.

Kauai already held title as the most Democratic island in the territory even prior to 1954. That year, four Democratic incumbents in the House of Representatives won re-election: Toshio Serizawa, William Fernandez, Toshiharu Yama and Manuel S. Henriques. Kauai also re-elected Democratic incumbent J. B. Fernandez to the Senate and A. C. Baptiste, Jr. to the post of county chair (equivalent to mayor). Democrats also swept to victory in races for the Kauai County board of supervisors, with Hiromi Choriki, George K. Watase, Raymond D. Souza, Tony Kunimura, Louie Gonsalves, Jr. and Tom Okura gaining victories. Toshio Kabutan, Democrat, was elected county attorney. Only Republican Treasurer K. C. Ahana kept it from being a complete Democratic sweep on the Garden Island.

Maui re-elected Democrat Eddie Tam as county chair, while Democrats George Fukuoka, Shigeru Miura, Tom Tagawa, Clarence Crozier and Manuel Molina won seats on the board of supervisors. Democrats Caroline Rodrigues (Molokai) and Goro Hokama

(Lanai) joined the board, leaving Hannibal Tavares as the lone Republican voice on the Valley Isle council. The Big Island remained the most Republican island in the territory, with James Kealoha winning the county chair, and Republican board members Thomas Cook, Sherwood Greenwell, Charles S. Ota, William Thompson and Richard Lyman, Jr. winning seats. Democratic newcomers to the board included Hiroshi Tanaka and Helen Hale.

Coming in the January 21, 1994 issue: What did the newly elected legislators do?

THE '54 DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

What Did They Really Accomplish

Originally published in the HAWAII HERALD, Hawaii's Japanese American Journal
Friday, January 21, 1994

At 1:31 p.m. on Friday, May 27, 1955, Senate President William H. Heen rapped his gavel, thus bringing to a close the business of the territorial Senate for the 1955 legislative session. An hour later, Speaker Charles Kauhane followed suit in the territorial House of Representatives. The marathon, 88-day legislative session had finally come to a close. The official date of adjournment was recorded as April 29, nearly four weeks prior to the actual date of adjournment, as the lawmakers had "halted the clocks" on that last legal day of the '55 session.

The 26-day clock-stoppage was a record, the local newspaper declared. Previously, the longest use of the stopped clock in the Islands was 72 hours. A check of the United Press bureaus located at state capitols across the country confirmed that the old political gimmick had never been used for more than a 24-hour period. And, prior to rules changes in 1934, the U.S. Congress had used clock stoppages to complete business before its deadline ran out, but never for more than a few hours. Such was the usual nature of the first legislative session in which newly elected legislators from the 1954 "Democratic Revolution" participated.

The session had been punctuated by factional strife; long, sleepless committee hearings and deliberations; emotional name-calling; and general confusion made worse, in part, by the large number of first-time legislators involved. There was much to be done, however, and the list of major legislation under consideration was long and ambitious. Some of the larger issues which made their way through the '55 session in the waning hours were landmark budget and tax bills, economic development measures, land reform bills, a revised insurance code, a bill authorizing a tourist authority, civil service code, and pay increases for teachers and government workers, among others.

Almost like a house of cards, all of these items had been stacked on a foundation formed by the Democrats. Reform-minded Democrats had long chafed under Republican-dominated legislatures, which for decades had refused to raise government revenues and services. Powerful business interests had held to the Islands' flat 2 percent tax on payroll wages and low tax ceilings on business income and real property. In order to improve schools and deliver other public services that the Democrats felt were necessary, they would first have to raise the money to fund the changes.

Included in the comprehensive Democratic tax package were the following provisions: repealing the 2 percent compensation tax on payroll wages and salaries in favor of a personal income tax; raising corporate net income taxes, bank excise taxes, inheritance taxes, liquor and tobacco taxes, as well as taxes on public utilities and insurance premiums; adding new taxes on hotels and savings and loans institutions; and raising fees

for various types of licenses. The measures, if enacted, would increase state tax revenues by an estimated \$8.4 million, from \$94.6 million to approximately \$103 million. With additional income from various government departments, federal aid and \$3 million from the sale of Sand Island land, the Legislature expected to raise a budget of over \$122.8 million. Of that sum, \$49 million was earmarked for capital expenditures, including \$17.7 million in school bonds for school improvements and construction.

Other big capital improvement projects included: \$5.3 million for a Kalakaua Avenue realignment and beach expansion; \$2 million to acquire land for a capitol building; \$543,000 for a physical education building at the University of Hawai`i; and \$350,000 for the first unit of a men's dormitory at UH. Also added were provisions for territorial office buildings in Wailuku, Hilo and Lihue.

Throughout the 1954 elections, Democrats had maintained an uneasy relationship with organized labor. The powerful ILWU, especially, had delivered thousands of votes throughout the territory and was a key to Democrats' success. With persistent criticism of the union leadership's "Communist" connections, however, Democrats had to constantly explain their relationship with the union and frequently made public pronouncements of their independence from the union.

The 1955 Legislature, however, did focus considerable attention on labor issues, passing bills to: increase worker's compensation benefits to a weekly maximum of \$50 and the death benefit ceiling to \$20,000; increase unemployment insurance benefits from \$25 to \$35 per week; and raise the minimum wage from 55 cents to 65 cents on the Neighbor Islands and from 65 cents to 75 cents on Oahu.

Democrats had also campaigned for a 40-hour work week, but that issue was left unchanged at 48 hours. However, other new legislation would grant injured workers the free choice of doctors in worker's compensation cases: re-establish November 11 (Veterans Day) as a territorial holiday; expand industrial safety requirements; provide standard wages and hours for workers engaged in public works project; and grant two days paid leave to government workers upon the death of an immediate family member.

One of the ILWU's pet bills, placing agricultural workers under unemployment compensation laws, failed to pass, however. Other bills falling by the wayside were 30 pension bills, including one to establish a \$500 a month pension for former Honolulu Mayor John H. Wilson. The proposal was killed in the Senate by Neighbor Island senators, even after a proposal was made to lower the pension to \$250 a month.

The scope and breadth of the bills passed was impressive. But Hawai`i was then under the administration of Republican Gov. Samuel Wilder King, who had been appointed in 1952 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Historians view King as a generally popular governor who earnestly tried to balance the interests of many new competing forces emerging within the post-war Hawaiian society. For example, King had supported federal mortgage loan programs to veterans and worked to implement Hawaii's post-war school construction program. He had resisted considerable pressure from conservative

Republicans by trying to develop much-needed house lots and believed in acquiring lands held by large landowners via condemnation.

But as the mountain of bills moved to his desk in 1955, King exercised his veto power over most of the reform measures. He vetoed the bill amending the Worker's Compensation Act, saying it would be too costly. He vetoed a measure that would have abolished the fixed ceiling on the amount of money that could legally be raised by taxes on real property. He vetoed a bill that would have enabled counties to classify land for tax purposes at its best use rather than its actual use.

King vetoed eight so-called "home rule" bills that would have transferred more power to county executives, in large part because Democrats and organized labor were especially strong on the Neighbor Islands. Included were measures transferring police home rule and liquor home rule to counties. In all, the Governor vetoed 71 bills passed by the Democratic legislature in 1955. Although the Democrats had swept the seats in the House of Representatives, their 9-6 margin in the Senate was one vote short of overriding the Governor's veto. Only two of King's vetoes were overridden, including one that would blanket-in the veterans' council employees into civil service.

Pressing to pass many key measures in the closing hours of the session, one of the key bills, establishing a \$4.6 million pay bill for teachers, almost failed because of a technical error. The original bill had been passed in the Senate, but was amended in the House to include pay increases for government workers. However, in changing the nature of the bills, the House neglected to change the title of the bill. Since the law required that the title of a bill agree with its contents, the error threatened to kill the measure, since the mistake was discovered after the Legislature had adjourned.

Predictably, the Democrats' performance in 1955 was roundly criticized by Republicans, including Gov. King, who pronounced that, "They did a poor job. This new group came in with arrogance, with conceit, and with cock-suredness that they new it all. They treated Republicans with disrespect, both big and little Republicans, including me."

Former Republican territorial chair Randolph Crossley stated that the "lack of emotional stability" demonstrated by the '55 legislature had set statehood for Hawai'i back by 20 years. Returning from a Mainland trip shortly after the close of the Legislature, Crossley told the media that the prevailing feeling in Washington and across the country was that Hawai'i is "ruled by a group beholdng to a Communist-led union leader, a group bent on showing who is boss; and determined to institute reprisals for all of the wrongs-real or imagined-for past decades."

The close of the session also laid a bitter conflict in the House between freshman Democrats and speaker Kauhane. At one point, first-term Rep. Spark Matsunaga told a reporter he was to disgusted with "dirty politics" that he would not seek re-election. Earlier during the session, Kauhane had apparently used such volatile racial references as "Pearl Harbor" and the (Japanese) "Diet" while describing the block of 15 first-term legislators. But in the end, Rep. Daniel Inouye told Kauhane from the House floor, "You

are of the old school and you have had 15 idealistic, naïve and earnest Democrats. I can see the conflict...But we have learned a lot ." House members, conciliatory after a brutal-but memorable-session, wrapped up singing *Hawai`i Pono'i*. In the Senate, Nelson K. Doi, a first-term senator from the Big Island, closed with a quote from Thomas Jefferson. "Vigilance," he noted, "is the price of democracy."

Coming in the February 21st issue: Major Reform Issues.

LEGACY OF THE '54 'DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Major Reform Issues Pressed in Ensuing Years

Originally published in the HAWAII HERALD, Hawaii's Japanese American Journal
February 11, 1994

Although the electoral "revolution" of 1954 has more commonly dominated the pages of history, it is interesting to note that the actual business of reform occupied the work of the Legislature for many years that followed. Starting in 1955, and continuing for more than a decade, legislators grappled over many key areas of change — including education, land reform, economic development and diversification, equal opportunity issues, and labor law reform.

Also, throughout this period, the heart of all changes — and one of the points of greatest controversy — was the Legislature's attempt to pass comprehensive tax reform measures. Only through taxation could government raise the revenue it needed to pay for the added costs such changes would incur. As noted in a previous article, the 1955 session was colored by a large and zealous freshman class of legislators that introduced a mountain of key measures aimed at transforming Hawai'i. Most of those bills were vetoed by Republican Gov. Samuel Wilder King, however.

The years from 1956 to 1959 are best remembered as the period in which the drive for statehood took place. It was a debate that spread beyond these Pacific Isles and the halls of Congress.

The nations as a whole took part in the emotional and often bitter debate that encompassed cries of racism and Communism. Locally, however, the once wet-behind-the-ears crop of young Democrats gained experience as they hammered away at their broad reform agenda. In time, some of their names would fade from memory, while others were destined to become permanently etched in Hawaii's history—names such as Daniel K. Inouye, Spark M. Matsunaga, Pasty Mink, Tom Gill, George Ariyoshi, Nadao Yoshinaga, Tadao Beppu, Elmer Cravalho, Nelson K. Doi, Sakae Takahashi and Mitsuyuki Kido.

In 1956, following the landslide re-election of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, William Quinn was appointed Governor of Hawai'i. Popular Honolulu Mayor Neal Blaisdell won re-election over Democratic challenger William Vannatta. It would be the faith of Republicans Quinn and Blaisdell that would serve their terms in the face of overwhelming Democratic pluralities in both the Legislature and Board of Supervisors. Democrats maintained their control of the territorial Legislature, although they actually lost some ground in the House where the 22-8 advantage they held in 1954 was whittled to an 18-12 edge in 1956. In the Senate, Democrats increased their margin of power from a 9-6 plurality to a 12-3 advantage.

Notably, the '56 election also witnessed John A. Burns' smashing victory in the delegate race for Congress over incumbent Elizabeth "Betty" Farrington. For the next several years, Burns' life in Washington, D.C. would be devoted to the singular task of attaining statehood for Hawai'i.

As the 1957 territorial Legislature convened, its members were again prepared to introduce hundreds of bills, including many that had been vetoed by Gov. King in 1956. High on that list was education.

Historically, the leaders of Hawaii's plantation industry had sought to curtail educational opportunities offered to the offspring of immigrant workers. Such opportunities, they believed, would be detrimental to their need to maintain an adequate work force. However, as more and more youngsters and their families demonstrated their determination to obtain an education, they pressed the limits of the facilities established by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

Most of the young legislators were themselves products of the DPI's system of "English Standard" schools. Established in 1924, the system served largely to segregate white and non-white students. To improve much-needed educational facilities, the '57 legislature stepped up education appropriations, advanced salaries for teachers, provided for more students scholarships, and established free citizenship classes.

The key to the Democratic plan was an ambitious \$129 million omnibus tax bill that proposed to increase the general excise tax (at the retail level) from 2.5 cents to 3.5 cents. The plan also called for the repeal of the flat 2 percent tax on wages and salaries in favor of a graduated net income tax, with rates ranging from 3.5 to 9 percent, based on income. The proposal would also restructure corporate income taxes, taxes on public utilities and insurance companies, and would raise taxes on tobacco, liquor and public utilities.

In the labor arena, the Legislature extended Hawaii's unemployment compensation laws to include agricultural workers, and passed a \$1 an hour minimum wage law. To create more economic opportunities, the Legislature established an office to coordinate economic planning and development on a territory-wide basis, with increasing attention being paid to the promotion of tourism. It encouraged business development loans and investments by various groups. Confronting the issue of Hawaii's tight land market, the Legislature sought to revise real property tax laws to raise revenues and to encourage the productive use of land for business and housing.

For many years, large landholders had enjoyed protection from taxation. Although land values in Hawai'i were skyrocketing, established property tax ceilings had kept the actual dollar values collected very low. Attempts to raise real property taxes initiated in 1955 had been vetoed by Gov. King. In 1957, the ceiling on real property taxes was maximum ceiling on rates rather than on dollar amounts.

Still at issue, however, was the method in which land values were assessed. According to reformers, assessments fell far below actual market values-as low as 30-40 percent of the actual sale prices. They sought to reclassify and rezone undeveloped lands, leaving it to land assessors to determine when such lands were ready for conversion to a higher use. Land, they contended, should be assessed at its "highest and best use."

In 1958, Burns swamped Republican challenger Farrant Turner, former commanding officer of the 100th Infantry Battalion, in the race for delegate to Congress. The issue of statehood had come to a head. The territorial Legislature itself was reapportioned, with Democrats winning 16 of 27 races in the Senate and 33 of 51 seats in the House.

As the dawn of statehood crept toward the broad Pacific horizon, the 30th and final territorial Legislature convened in 1959, prepared to tackle many unresolved issues. In '59 Legislature passed a bill limiting the portion of an estate's assets that could be held in land. Such a proposal would force Hawaii's large land-holding estates to sell its holdings exceeding that legal limit. It was but a single salvo in the battle to force estates to either put their large land-holdings to use, or to sell it to private developers.

Although the bill was vetoed by Gov. Quinn, land reform remained a high profile issue. Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians opposed such measures, fearing it would hurt the Bishop Estate's ability to fund Kamehameha Schools. In its continuing efforts to liberalize labor laws and aid Hawaii's working classes, the Legislature extended unemployment compensation benefits to include seasonal agricultural workers.

Education remained at the forefront of budget discussions. By 1959, the enrollment at the University of Hawai'i had risen to 6,000 full-time students. Public schools were still in need of financial help to alleviate low teacher salaries and high student ratios. Hawai'i teachers were being paid a starting wage of \$3,120, while their Mainland counterparts were receiving an average of \$4,000. Education lobbyists pointed out that Hawai'i ranked 90th out of 110 school systems of 100,00 to 500,00 population in terms of teacher salaries, in spite of Hawaii's high cost of living.

Teachers were granted a \$75 a month, across the board raise, totaling some \$9.5 million. The 1959 Legislature also appropriated some \$10 million in pay increases for government workers and \$1 million for cafeteria workers. University of Hawai'i faculty and staffers were slated to receive a 20 percent pay hike. In total, salary increases totaled more than \$20 million, inspiring a Honolulu Star-Bulletin editorial to dub it the "Loose Dollar Legislature".

Ironically, when statehood finally came in 1959, it turned out to be a bittersweet victory for its chief proponents. Burns lost in his quest for the Governor's seat in the special statehood election that year by a narrow 4,000 vote margin to incumbent Quinn. In that same election, Democrats lost their majority edge in the Senate. It would be the only time since 1954 that the Democrats would have their control of the Legislature challenged. It would not be until 1962 that Burns would finally rise up from the political ashes to trounce Quinn in a 114,000 to 82,000 electoral landslide.

Although the fabled "Democratic Revolution" occurred in 1954, and legislative actions from 1955 to 1962 did produce many changes, it was really from 1962 that Burns and the Democratic legislature truly flexed its collective power. As governor, Burns would hold direct appointive powers over all state directors and deputy directors; he would also exercise budgetary control over the Department of Education and the University of

Hawai`i. He would be empowered to appoint the UH Board of Regents and members of the Hawai`i Supreme Court. Much of what was initiated in 1955-and more-would find fruition in the '60s.

Coming in the February 18, 1994 issue: A look at the Burns years.

THE '54 REVOLUTION

So-called 'Democratic Machine' comes of age in '62

Originally published in the HAWAII HERALD, Hawaii's Japanese American Journal
February 18, 1994

Tens of thousands of people danced in the streets when statehood officially came to the islands in 1959. For Democrats, however, that dance later turned out to be a political "cha-cha-cha," with one step forward and two steps back. John A. Burns, chief architect of Hawaii's statehood drive in Congress, lost his bid against incumbent Bill Quinn in the special statehood election later that year. Burns' running mate for lieutenant governor, long-time Democratic stalwart Mits Kido, also lost out. The Democratic setback also included Frank Fasi's loss to Hiram Fong in the U.S. Senate race, as well as its once-dominant majority in the state senate. Under provisions established by the last territorial legislature to convene in 1958, those elected in the special election of 1959 would hold office until 1962.

In 1962 Democrats presented a reunified front. With popular Lt. Gov. Jimmy Kealoha challenging incumbent Governor Quinn in the primaries, it was the Republicans, this time, who seemed to smart from a house divided. Burns won in a landslide, along with Lt. Gov. Bill Richardson, Dan Inouye for U.S. Senate, Tom Gill and Spark Matsunaga for U.S. House.

There were also clear majorities in both houses of the state Legislature.

For nearly a decade, Democrats had pressed for-and passed in piecemeal form-legislative packages built upon several key issues: tax reform, land reform, improved educational opportunities, economic development and diversification, and greater home rule for the counties. With significant support coming from labor, legislation governing minimum wages, unemployment insurance, workers compensation insurance, and workers' leave had been passed-mostly notably in 1957. In 1962, new Gov. Burns added his own "spin" to these issues, emphasizing the "highest and best" use of land, as well as the concept of Hawai'i being the "hub of the Pacific."

By 1963, the Republicans had been stripped of their gubernatorial veto over the Democrat-controlled legislature. Fearing the power organized labor and ultra-liberal Democrats would now race, unleashed, over longtime management dominance, Republicans braced themselves for the worst. Instead, Gov. Burns set out on a delicate tack of trying to balance the numerous special interest that had been traditionally been at war in Hawai'i. He made certain overtures to Merchant Street-and even Wall Street-to convince them he was not a revolutionary hell-bent on destroying them. He composed-through his broad powers of appointment-boards, commissions and councils where labor leaders served side-by-side with prominent members of the "Big Five."

Ever-conscious of the ethnic factors that constituted Hawaii's multicultural society, Burns and his advisors would create their own brand of "politically correct" appointments throughout his newfound administrative domain of department heads, deputy department

heads, judicial appointees, UH Board of Regents, and much more. This is not to say, however, that Burns abandoned the party's quest for reform while exercising his form of consensus-building governance. On the basis of state and federal anti-trust law, for example, Burns and Attorney General Bert Kobayashi sought to break-up the widely practiced form of interlocking directorates which had served to control business opportunities in Hawai'i for decades. Although no formal legislation was passed regarding this issue, the administration did win voluntary reforms from a broad spectrum of Hawaii's biggest corporate players.

The state also attempted to recover all surplus lands held by the federal government, laying claims under the 1959 Statehood Act. In April 1963, however, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 8-0 against the state. The Court's ruling limited the state's claims to "surplus ceded lands" originally turned over to the United States when Hawai'i became a territory in 1898, and did not include surplus fee lands acquired by federal government since 1898 through purchase, gift or condemnation.

Legislatively, the closely related issues of economic development and land reform came to dominate the 1963 Legislative session. It was an era of significant changes. Starting from about 1962, developers with independent financial clout, such as Chinn Ho and Henry Kaiser, emerged as major players in Oahu's critical real estate market for hotel, condominium and single-family home development.

Jet service to the Islands promised to transform tourism from a limited economic component limited to the privileged and wealthy, to a mass market industry. Predating the wave of investment capital from Japan, resort projects financed by Laurence Rockefeller and Boise Cascade were amongst the first to crop up in the mid-60's. The total impact of these changes challenged the long-standing dominance of the traditional estates, trusts and factoring companies.

Private ownership of land, for home ownership as well as for commercial use, lies at the crux of many Americans' sense of well-being. As they had in previous years, Democrats sought various means of wresting control of Hawaii's limited real estate away from the large landholders and placing it before the burgeoning middle class. In 1962, the Legislature had created a mechanism governing the lease and sale of state-owned lands. In 1963, the media "buzz-word" was the Maryland Land Bill. As its namesake implies, the legislation was modeled after a Maryland law. As it was introduced in Hawai'i, the bill would allow, under certain circumstances, for a person who owned a home on leased land to purchase the fee simple title to the land after five years of tenancy.

Predictably, the bill created a great deal of controversy. In addition to the estates, trusts and large landholders, the most emotional opposition came from the Hawaiian community, who viewed the proposal legislation as a direct threat to the Bishop Estate's ability to operate the Kamehameha Schools. Even after revising the House version of the bill to specifically exclude the Bishop Estate, the key measure was killed in the Senate by a slim 13-12 margin.

Burns personally disagreed with the forced lease-to-fee conversion concept. Interestingly, the swing vote in the 1963 Senate showdown was cast by George Ariyoshi, whom Burns would later favor as his successor.

Although it received less press than the Maryland bill, the 1963 Legislature did pass a new tax bill called the Pittsburgh Law. Again pressing the so-called “highest and best use” of land, this bill would assess land at a higher rate than buildings and other improvements on the land, theoretically stimulating construction on undeveloped lands. Agriculturally zoned lands would be exempt. At the least, proponents claimed, such a practice would incite landholders to sell off undeveloped or underdeveloped lands to private developers.

The cumulative impact of Democratic pressure on landholders and the rising value of real estate was to raise the proportion of real property tax collections into the state’s coffers. In 1963, Burns also sought to increase gasoline taxes and vehicle weight taxes in order to build and maintain highways.

In 1963, the “Democratic Revolution” of 1954 had finally come of age. At that selfsame moment, it may have very well donned the official mantel of “Democratic Machine.” With the exception of U.S. Sen. Hiram Fong and Honolulu Mayor Neal Blaisdell, the checks and balance of Republican opposition were nonexistent. On the surface only the personal self-restraint, fiscal conservatism, and broader democratic vision of Burns were left to moderate the changes.

Underneath the surface, however, the Democrats had already developed a form of factional infighting that really crated “parties within parties.” So-called Burns Democrats shared an often uneasy alliance with the powerful ILWU. Other noteworthy Democratic legislators, including the likes of Sakae Takahashi, Patsy Mink and Spark Matsunaga, often left the fold of Burns Democrats on specific issues. Others, such as Tom Gill, Nelson Doi and Frank Fasi, served notable roles as fiercely independent members of the loyal-and often vocal-oppositions.

The “machine,” however, has prevailed as the dominant symbol of the ’54 Democrats-Burns legacy. In the 1992 publication, “Drawn and Quartered: Hawai`i Politics Rendered,” writer Ian Lind notes that in the years following 1954, “they (Democrats) scrambled to find sources of economic power that could provide alternatives to the plantations, and embraced militarism, foreign investment, and resort development as the foundation of their new society After 40 years of dramatic changes, the radical solutions of 1954 have become our modern problems.” Present-day Democrats, “now holding virtual one-party control, have become the new oligarchy seemingly intent on grabbing what they can, while they can,” Lind concludes. Lind’s is a widely shared opinion. And, when piggy-backed with the 1985 publication, “Land and Power in Hawai`i,” written by George Cooper and Gavan Daws, discontent over present-day politics is clearly linked to the foundations established in 1954.

By way of an "introduction," this series has now stretched over four installments. The purpose of this retrospective has been to look back on some of the changes

implemented in the decade following the "Democratic Revolution" of 1954. In coming issues, we will be interviewing a variety of individuals for their opinions on that memorable, and still-influential, political era.

ALICE MORIWAKE

Photo Brings Back Memories

Originally published in the HAWAII HERALD, Hawaii's Japanese American Journal
Friday, March 4, 1994

In the third article of this series, on the 1954 "Democratic Revolution," the Herald published a photo of John A. Burns celebrating his first electoral victory as Hawaii's delegate to Congress in 1956. In that photo, Burns is surrounded by supporters Matsuo Takabuki, a member of the Honolulu Board of Supervisors and future Bishop Estate Trustee; Delores Martin, Democratic National Committeewoman; William Richardson, future Chief Justice of the Hawai'i Supreme Court. It was with the fifth member of that historic scene, however, that the article and photograph were shared, and with whom the Herald had an opportunity to visit and reminisce.

She was a rather unlikely candidate to get involved in the "Democratic Revolution" of 1954. At the time, Alice Bright was a young mother of two children. A graduate of Farrington High School, she had grown up as Alice Joseph in a middle-class, multi-ethnic neighborhood on the slopes of Alewa Heights, just makai of the Natsunoya Tea House. He had never been involved in politics prior to her introduction to the upstart Democrats in '54. In fact, she admits she had never even voted prior to that.

The Joseph's neighbors were almost all Republicans. And, perhaps more significantly, her family had strong Republican roots. Much earlier, her grandfather, Levi Joseph, had even served as a territorial representative from Hana, Maui, on the Republican ticket. One day, however, Alice's father returned home and asked her to help campaign for a friend named John A. Burns. She's not even sure what her father's political leanings were in those days, only that he, Cupid Joseph, was a captain in the Honolulu, Fire Department and Burns was an officer with the Honolulu Police Department. "At that time, when he asked me to help, I didn't know I was going to go all the way," she says.

Well, "go all the way" she did. From 1966 to 1973, Alice (whose married name then was Kashinoki) Moriwake worked full-time for the state Senate as its assistant sergeant-at-arms under the presidency of Sen. David McClung, until Sen. Richard Wong assumed the Senate's reigns in 1973. Moriwake also took leave from her Senate duties to serve as assistant sergeant-at-arms at both the 1968 and 1978 state constitutional conventions, where significant new directions were set for the state and new generation of politicians made their debuts.

Over the years, Moriwake has remained very active in Democratic Party activities. She is proud to have never missed a state Democratic Party Convention, and she remains a delegate to the conventions till today. Recently, somewhat to her own surprise, she returned to work at the state Senate as a committee clerk for Sen. Brian Kanno (D-Ewa Beach, Makakilo), who presently chairs the Senate Committee on Labor. In between these stints, Moriwake also attended her first national convention with longtime friend

Patsy Mink in 1959. It was gathering of Young Democrats in Reno, Nev. In 1972, she and Elmer Cravalho represented Hawai'i at the Democratic National Convention in Washington, D.C. Cravalho served on the credentials committee, while Moriwake sat on the national platform committee.

In spite of her impressive resume of service to the Democratic Party and that the state Legislature, politics at first did not seem to hold much promise for Moriwake. Having been "volunteered" by her father to help on Burns' campaign, she recalls going into downtown Honolulu to pass out brochures. "I'll never forget it," she says, shaking her head. For about a month she stood on the corner of Bishop and King streets, near Hawaiian Trust, where Tamarind Park is currently situated. "After they got the brochure from you, people would just dump it in the rubbish can, right in front of your face," she recalls. "No, it wasn't like that today," she explains. "Back then, if you were a Democrat, you're an ass."

Naïve to the game, Moriwake had a hard time dealing with the often harsh realities of politics. "Oh, I felt like a fool. I was still young. I know I cried. I cried because people-local people like yourself-had no feelings." In spite of the hardships, Moriwake survived her tough apprenticeship. "My father must have know, but he never told me anything about politics. I'd go home and tell my father, 'Gee, Daddy, our own kind, they throw the brochure in the rubbish can.' He'd tell me, 'Don't give up.'"

One of the biggest problems facing the group's campaign efforts was a constant lack of money. Jack Burns was not personally wealthy, nor were most of his supporters. "Back then we had very little media," Moriwake adds. "We had TV but TV was too expensive-radio, too." Instead, she held signs-junk kind signs - simply the candidate's name stapled over cardboard taken from a Prim beer box. Even the brochures they used were not what people are familiar with today. "The paper was just like news print, maybe more junk," she adds. "I guess that's all they could afford."

The Democratic Party was head-quartered in Chinatown, next door to C.Q. Yee Hop. Conditions there were "the junkiest," Moriwake adds. "they had no light, no water. Later, they put a pipe in from the other side. It was a struggle just to pay the rent." No matter what strategies the committee members laid out, funding was always an obstacle. "Everybody, all the individuals, chipped in what they could. I was young, I had no money, so I borrowed from my parents."

Burns campaign was run out of a small office on the second floor of a building on Nuuanu Avenue, where Sweet Leilani Florist is located. The building was owned by Takaichi Miyamoto. "I don't know if it was free or if they paid rent, but that was headquarters," Moriwake notes. She remembers that individuals like Matsuo Takabuki and Ken Saruwatari, along with other Democrats, were constantly canvassing for funds. "I really give a lot of credit to them, all the Japanese boys that stuck together. They really got their families involved because that was the cheapest way."

With no money, individuals had to take care of their own areas through grassroots method-holding signs, passing out brochures, walking house-to-house , block-by-block ,”she adds.

They utilized other campaign practices, now long forgotten. “That was the end of the era,” she says, when musicians would go around on the flatbed trucks to attract support.” Moriwake also recalls traveling with Burns on the “motorcade” circuit. The idea was for a candidate to go around the island in an open-top car decorated with banners. Candidates, adorned with leis and lauhala hats, would make predetermined campaign stops to make speeches. “ We’d stop at places like Hauula Park, Kaaawa Park, Kailua Park, Kaneohe (up by state hospital) Kahala Park.”

Throughout it all, Moriwake says she drew strength from friend and party stalwart Delores Martin. “Early on she told me,” ‘Alice, politics is not fun.’ And she was right. It wasn’t fun. We worked hard, but I stuck on because of Delores Martin. She was a go-getter. She did a lot for the party. At that time, we were hanging, we had nothing. She strengthened me.”

Martin called Alice “Cha-Cha.” “ She told me, ‘Cha-Cha, you gotta' think that in politics, everybody’s out for something.’ But that was the furthest thing from my mind, because I looked around and nobody seemed to be getting rich. They all looked poor. They were all struggling.”

On the day of the 1956 election, Moriwake worked the polling station at Lanakila Park. It was a Republican box,” Moriwake notes. Nevertheless, for some reason, she remembers feeling the momentum shift their way on election day. After they had completed their tally, she went from Lanakila to Burns’ headquarters in Nuuanu. Used to seeing just a small group of regulars normally crowded into the tiny office, she was surprised to find a large crowd assemble there on victory night. “ I couldn’t believe it,” she recalls. And as the realization that they had won sunk in, Moriwake remembers stepping out and sitting down on the curb on Nuuanu Avenue. “ There used to be a saimin and okazuya place there. I sat down and said to myself, ‘I can’t believe we won. I just can’t believe it.”

A photographer from the newspaper arrived, but before he could take a picture, Burns stopped and asked, “Where is Ehu?” “He used to call me Ehu because I used to have reddish hair. Now, all gray,” she laughed. “When he was told she was downstairs, Burns ordered, ‘Get her up here.’” I never like be in the picture, but they shoved me in. And that’s how that picture was taken, in Burns’ headquarters, upstairs in Takaichi Miyamoto’s building in Nuuanu,” she says nostalgically.

Although seldom in front of the news cameras, over the ensuing decades, Alice Moriwake has enjoyed a behind-the-scenes perspective on many important events in modern Hawaiian history.

For example, when Matsuo Takabuki’s appointment to the Bishop Estate’s board of trustees drew fire from the Hawaiian community, she took exception to the ethnic argument. “ I could accept it. He’s not Hawaiian, but he’s local. He’s smart: he’s articulate; he’s a money man with the foresight to invest. And Burns stuck to it. Eh, the

haoles was there 50 years before us and nobody said anything, but when a Japanese went on, wow.”

Over one-half Hawaiian, Moriwake also remembers watching a demonstration at Kawaiahao Church, protesting the (Democrat-sponsored) Maryland Land Bill. “Sometimes, people don’t look at the whole picture. All they knew about the whole was that it would affect the Bishop Estate,” she notes, and that the Bishop Estate funds Kamehameha Schools. Moriwake’s whole spin on the Kamehameha Schools is interesting. Although she never attended Kamehameha, her youngest daughter Tracy did. “For one thing, it’s not free. The average Hawaiian can’t afford it.” And, she asks, “Why do they take the smart ones? If the really want to help, they should take the ones that don’t make it (the entrance exams), not the ones who make it.” Moriwake’s granddaughter, Genesis, is presently a sophomore at Kamehameha. “She’s smart. No matter what, I know she’ll make it (in life), but the ones who didn’t make the test, are the ones who might not make it.”

Moriwake was also privy to the sometimes bitter differences between Tom Gill and Jack Burns. “I liked Gill, personally,” she says, “but I didn’t care for some of his campaign workers. Although it didn’t set well with Jack, Gill had a vision.” Moriwake credits the late Dan Aoki with helping to manage the party through its growing pains. “Our nickname for him was ‘Barrel.’ Maybe he could be a blunt, arrogant person, but I liked ‘Barrel.’ I liked his style.

He was loyal, and he never forgot to take care of the ones who never made it. He never forgot everybody came from. In a lot of ways he held things together.”

Moriwake has survived the generational transitions within the party. She meet her present boss, Sen. Brian Kanno, through her friend Pasty Mink. Moriwake served as Mink’s vice chair in her recent primary race against Mufi Hanneman. Kanno was Mink’s office manager. “I was impressed with this young man. He was bright, and so well-organized,” she says. Then, when Kanno ran for state office and was elected, he approached Moriwake about joining his staff. “

I told him I was old,” she says. Kanno’s answer was, I don’t have a problem with that. Do you have a problem with that?”

Although she points out that there are individual bright spots. Moriwake does not ignore the current challenges facing the Democratic Party. Referring to recent public opinion polls that reflect a strong discontent towards incumbent Democrats, she speculates, “Maybe when you get too many of them in one party, it’s natural that they start to disagree with each other. It’s going to be ‘to each his own,’ I think. Today, it’s more individual, no teamwork. I don’t know why.” It wasn’t like that back in the early days, Moriwake says. “People helped each other-everybody ‘tight’ you know. I wasn’t brought up on the plantation, so I couldn’t tell you how they were treated, but I know I didn’t feel any different when we were growing up. No matter what kind of blood you had, what mixture you had, we were close. We lived among the Anzais, the Teruyas, the Takeuchis, and we were close. I give my heart out to them. It didn’t matter if you were Filipino or Hawaiian or Japanese.

Moriwake's desk is adorned with photographs of her five children and a brood grandchildren. 'This one married Japanese, this marries haole,' She says as she proudly shows of pictures of her clan. "Hey, now they all part of me, too." At the age of 62, Alice K. Moriwake embodies Democratic Party politics, both past and present. "Anyway, that's how I got my start," she concludes. "I never always agree with them, but I'm comfortable."

It's a legacy that many have forgotten, Moriwake believes. At the last party convention, a movie about the history of the party, how it got started," was shown. "I looked at that and thought, 'But we were before the movie.' I said to myself, 'Gee, where's Delores, where's the rest of us?' I feel the party never gave enough credit to her. She gave everything. Because of her I stayed involved." But Moriwake, who is usually not shy about sharing an opinion, chose not to say anything about the slight at the time. "I just thought to myself, no more 'Barrel' now. But that's not the beginning of the party. We had nothing and at least we ended up with something."

WILFRED OKA

Democratic Party Pioneer Puts His Unique Spin on the '54 'Revolution'

Friday, April 1, 1994

Seven months ago, 82-year-old Wilfred Oka fell ill for the first time in his life. After returning home from an operation, Oka passed out and had to be rushed back to the hospital. He remained unconscious for three days. When he awoke, he looked around and joked. "Hey, where the hell am I anyway? And who are you?" he mugged, making the attending nurse laugh. "At least I still had my sense of humor," Oka recalls with a kolohe grin. "Me, I gotta' laugh-at myself, at other. That's the only way I can live. Besides, I can get away with murder by doing this."

For practically all his life, Oka has gotten away with murder with murder, using his quick wit and sharp tongue to poke at and to prod the assumptions of the pompous and narrow-minded. While still in the hospital, he gave a young doctor a quick attitude adjustment. "Eh Doc," Oka called in his best pidgin English, "I can ask you something? You local boy... you Japanese... you third generation... you went to Burns School (of Medicine), yeah? Come, I tell you something. Take a good look at me. My name is Oka," he began, drawing the doctor's close attention. "If wasn't for guys like us, no more this kind Burns school, you know? You guys would be *hoe hana*, digging ditches on the plantation. But I gonna' tell you something else, too. As a doctor, you not there. There's plenty old guys like us, we over the hill. Why don't you give each one of us at least five minutes of your time. Give us counseling and guidance.

You treating me just like I'm one old fut. Yeah, I am an old fut. But, c'mon, give us a little more credit. We lived through all of this, you know. The guys of our generation, we made the University of Hawai'i, we made the Richardson School (of law) and the Burns School.

You lucky you can go over there. So I'm gonna' tell you something," he concluded, leaning forward for emphasis. "I think I'm in good shape. I can turn around and I can kick your ass..."

The nurses who were within earshot of the exchange burst out in cheers.

Oka describes himself as an educator and self-styled satirist. His life has been dedicated to fighting a litany of liberal causes, and includes a longtime commitment to the Democratic Party. Oka's life story, like his mercurial personality, would be impossible to capture, but a few vignettes may help to provide a glimpse into this feisty, yet engagingly whimsical, party pioneer.

As the head swim coach at the Nuuanu YMCA in 1939, Oka took his talent-laden team to the national championships on the Mainland. When his team and other teams comprised largely of ethnic minorities were only granted night access to the pool to train, Oka hit the roof.

He threatened to call a press conference and lead a boycott of the competition on the basis of discrimination. The organizers quickly caved in, afraid of the negative backlash.

"Even more than winning the national championship, I viewed that as the major victory for us," he reflects. "It opened the doors not only for Japanese Americans, but to Blacks and Mexican Americans as well. The following year, Oka was chosen to represent the YMCA staff before the national board to argue for equal rights. He implored the YMCA to adopt the same standards as the YWCA, which he said had earlier instituted equal opportunity and equal pay for equal work politics.

Oka admits that his outspoken nature has not always served his own best interest. While attending classes at Columbia University in 1940, for example, Oka believes the speeches he delivered denouncing the Japanese military probably cost him a fellowship to study at Doshisha University in Kyoto.

Later, during the war, Oka worked for the federal government to enforce the Davis-Bacon Act. At the construction site of a bridge near Honolulu Airport, he discovered that Japanese workers were being paid only half as much as Caucasian workers. To dramatically make his point, Oka told one of the senior workers to gather 20 other AJAs on the crew together. He then confronted the contractor. "I told him to get 20 haole guys, and we'd challenge them to build this bridge.

We would have won hands down," he scoffs. The case ultimately was decided through a hearing. The firm was cited and the laborers won their case.

Oka is best remembered for his role as the director of adult education for Nuuanu YMCA.

He worked out of an office located near the corner of Nuuanu Avenue and Vineyard Boulevard. The building was owned by Takaichi Miyamoto. Next door, John A. Burns and Mitsuyuki Kido organized the work of the Emergency Service Committee during the war. That same office would later serve as Burns' campaign headquarters.

"Takaichi Miyamoto was a true Democrat," Oka states. Miyamoto was an early Japanese entrepreneur who managed to amass a respectable fortune through such enterprises as Pacific Liquors and by trading in Japanese goods. Oka would later run Miyamoto's Bethel Street liquor store for him, and eventually bought the operation from him. "He was a brilliant guy."

Miyamoto was closely involved with the Democratic Party at a very early stage, and enjoyed an especially close relationship with Honolulu Mayor John H. Wilson. One day Miyamoto called Oka over to his office and asked him to "go help Johnny Wilson." It was Oka's first major political project. His first objective was to open up the Honolulu Fire Department to men of Japanese ancestry, so they cut a deal. If Wilson got elected, he would hire seven AJA firefighters. "You've got to understand, back then we had to fight for things that are taken for granted these days."

Oka's involvement in the labor movement and Mayor Wilson's campaign preceded the rise of the so-called "Burns Machine" in the Democratic Party politics. "In my view, the guys who were the original organizers of the Democratic Party were people like (former Supreme Court Chief Justice) Bill Richardson's father, Chuck Mau, Mits Kido, Takaichi Miyamoto, Charlie Kauhane, Noble Kauhane," he says. "They were before the Burns

guy.” Oka also points out that the significance of the Hawaiian Homerule Party, which essentially merged with the Democratic Party, is too often overlooked. The other key element, Oka adds, is, “The real old-timers of the Democratic Party were motivated by the labor movement.” Although it was never employed by the union, Oka always maintained a close relationship with labor activist of his day. He worked to sign up Democrats from within the ranks of the ILWU, and helped to “ghost write” speeches and other materials for the union’s cause. As a writer, Oka also penned a regular column for Koji Ariyoshi’s pro-labor weekly, *The Honolulu Record*, from its inception to its closure. Even in the genre of its writing a sports column, Oka says he sought out subjects affecting discrimination and economic hardships.

For example, he wrote about boxers getting killed and maimed in the ring, but who had no insurance. He interviewed Black pitcher Satchel Paige when he was in Hawai`i, when the general public did not even know who Satchel Paige was. Oka believes he naturally developed his strong affinity for labor issues while he was growing up, simply by seeing the way Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Hawaiian workers were mistreated. As a youngster, he remembers taking food to strikers camped in tents at Aala Park. “My father had a aku boat. My mother made musubi. Father made aku, and they used me to help deliver the food. That was my first impression-circumstances created me,” he reflects.

Later, Oka remembers going to Aala Park to listen to charismatic Filipino labor leader Pablo Manlapit speak. “I was a great follower of Pablo Manlapit,” he adds. But the main lesson to be learned through the early Filipino and Japanese strikes was that individual ethnic groups could not successfully organize separately. “The ILWU created the greatest amalgamation, intercourse between ethnic group,” Oka insists.

In time, however, it seemed Oka’s fortunes moved in reverse order with the rise of the Burns group in the early ‘50s. “the members of that so-called veterans group were like super patriots in those days; and they really let us have it. Anybody with labor connections was classified as a radical and a left-winger.” Although he long maintained precinct and district leadership roles within the party; Oka became a victim in the party’s move to rid its self of any labor affiliations. I got dumped by Dan Inouye as secretary for the Democratic Party by two votes. “I’ll never forget that. They went up and waved an American flag at the Democratic County Convention on Oahu. That was a key election, because Democratic Committee was controlled by Honolulu.”

Still, Oka smiles and say, “They (the Burns group, aided in large part by nisei veterans) did a good job. We (organized labor) still continued to help. I wouldn’t rally call it a rift,” he says.

During the Statehood hearings, however, it seem as though the Democratic Party wished it had a broad, gaping rift between itself and labor. Oka remembers being put on the stand and asked “over 100 questions,” each attempting, somehow, to link the Democratic Party with labor activist. Oka refused to succumb to the “Red-baiting” tactics employed during the hearings by refusing to answer.

Most of Oka's political life has been spent as an insider's-outsider. In the landmark primary battle between Tom Gill and Kenny Brown for lieutenant governor, Oka again found himself squarely in the ranks of the "dissident group." "I could understand what Burns wanted," he reflects. He wanted to get the support of the so-called moderates, the bankers and the Big Five. I saw Brown as a Republican, and I said so. I was right on the s-it list."

Oka recently stepped back into active Democratic Party politics. "I went to meeting recently... was too intellectual for me," said the learned gentlemen. "I couldn't follow them." As usual, a measure of sarcasm may have lurked below the surface of his demeanor. "Hey, I'm a pragmatist. You know what I believe? I believe we gotta' go after the 18- to 35-year-old group, that's what we really need to do. Not only Japanese, but the newer immigrant group like the Vietnamese, Laotians, the Thai, the Hmong — we gotta' get those guys into the Democratic Party. The intellectual approach won't work. "We gotta' do all over again what we used to do. Start with a small group, assign one guy to get five to 10 guys. Utilize the principle of concentric circles. One starts and then it ripples out. That's what I'm after.

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