This is an interview with Richard Kosaki on July 26, 2000, and we're at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. The interviewers are Michi Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, what we can start off with is the finishing off of certain topics that we didn't finish last session. Between 1947 and 1949, you were still at the University of Hawai‘i, and by that time, at least one-third of the student population was made up of returning veterans. And I was wondering, how that affected campus life academically, in the classroom; and socially, outside of the classroom?

As returning veterans, we had an effect in both the classroom and outside the classroom, the social life on campus. The professors tell me that for some of them, that was a golden period. They enjoyed teaching the veterans, who came as mature students, who were serious, and who would participate in class discussions. Many professors have told me that they really enjoyed having veterans in their classes. And I guess, some of us worked, but most of us, even at that period, of course, we were full-time students. Because we had the GI Bill of Rights, most of us could live on the GI Bill, we didn’t have to work extra, although some of us did. So we spent a lot of time on campus.

Now, you’re talking about the GI Bill and the golden age and so forth, is it mainly because of your age and maturity or was it something else? I mean, was it really a selected process where really talented veterans were the ones that were going to the UH?

Gee, I don’t know if they’re talented, they were the ones who were interested, several of whom would not have been able to come to the university for financial reasons. In some ways, a financial hurdle was overcome so they could enroll in university campuses.

And then, I was wondering if maybe having gone to war, were these veterans a little more confident to speak up more or to challenge things that maybe they wouldn’t have done prior to the war?

I think so. You get maturity, not only with age but the fact that you’ve been in other places, have seen other societies, have interacted with different kinds of people, I think, put you more at ease and I think the outlooks are different. This was revolution in a sense that we were all over the Mainland and we had been overseas. I think there was more confidence.
So, would it be correct to say that it was like that for yourself?

I guess so. But as I said, I was lucky. I lived in a cosmopolitan neighborhood in Waikiki to begin with. Even before the war, McKinley High School had sent me on this extensive trip throughout the Mainland where I traveled with a bunch of young people and had seen the world. Not that I was sophisticated, but I wasn’t awed by Haoles or whatever.

And then, when we were closing the interview last week, we spoke about K.C. Leebrick, who was the veterans’ advisor, what are your remembrances of him?

I got to know K.C. quite well. At that time, when he was in university, I didn’t know, he seems to have had an illustrious background. I think he was at Kent State in some high administrative position. And here he was, the veterans’ advisor. We thought he was a little too strict in interpreting the rules. But, I personally had no problems with him. I met with him much later when I was (starting) the community college on Maui. He was in charge of this small liberal arts college on Maui. And he lived in this beautiful manager’s home, a mansion. I remember he invited us, my wife and I, to dinner one night and we had a nice chat. But his reputation here, he was conservative. He was a staunch Republican and very conservative. Most of the boys who were coming back were liberal Democrats.

And, what kinds of things did the veterans and Dr. Leebrick have disagreements about?

I don’t think there were so much disagreement. As I recall K.C. was the veterans’ advisor. You could go to see him. I think he signed your papers or whatever and maybe adjudicated if there were problems. But I think he delegated a lot of this to staff people. K.C. was also a professor of political science, I believe.

And then, in the last interview, you also mentioned a government club. We were just curious, who were the members of this government club and what sorts of activities did you folks have?

People who were majoring in government at that time. And people like Ralph Miwa. Trying to think of it. Esther Kwon, who is now Esther Kwon Arinaga. I guess Barry Rubin. There were so many majors. Many of them went on to become lawyers. There was a Sarah Park who was a Star-Bulletin reporter who later died when she was riding a helicopter covering a story. But, (as) government majors, and we had frequent meetings. [Allan] Saunders, he was the adviser, and we had many meetings at his home, just discussions. Oftentimes we’d go to hear lectures on campus. This is before the days of television. We enjoyed visiting lecturers coming through, especially we had what was called the American University’s Field Staff. These were a bunch of academics and journalists assigned (to) this outfit called the American University’s Field Staff. They were journalists and academics stationed in different parts of the world. Their job was, periodically, to go to university campuses to report on the most recent developments, say, in China, or Indonesia, or Hungary, or whatever areas they covered. Shunzo Sakamaki, I guess under the umbrella of summer session, used to host these people. But these lectures were very well received. They also lectured in the classrooms, but also gave public lectures. The topics were usually around politics of the country and so forth. So as government majors, we used to religiously attend these lectures.

After the public lectures, we’d get together. I lived at that time in a very convenient place, the house on Hunnewell near Metcalf. So we’d assemble. And over coffee and
doughnuts, we'd carry on the discussions. So the government department was very good in doing that. I think it really added to our education, and the faculty members would be with us, too, who were interested.

And we also had—I don't know if they do it now—we had an annual picnic on Prince Kūhio Day, we had a very big picnic. We prepared days in advance. We were lucky to get the services of Ed Toma. I think Ed was in education and his girlfriend may have been in political science or government. But anyway, for years when I was student, I remember, Ed had the expertise and somehow he was able to get the pig that we would put in an *imu*, and that would be our main dish, *kālua* pig. We had a huge party. We usually went out somewhere in Kailua or Camp Erdman or something like that. And (we) would mingle freely with the faculty. The faculty brought their families there. I still remember marveling at—Allan Saunders usually played first base because he was tall, (and) he was very good. He could really catch. But we had a lot of camaraderie, a lot of fun.

**WN:** Ed Toma, the educator?

**RK:** Right. I think he's passed away.

**WN:** Formerly at McKinley High School?

**RK:** Right.

**MK:** And this government club, was it sponsored by the government department, or something that the students formed?

**RK:** I think it was encouraged by the department, but it wouldn't last if the students didn't participate. It was student-driven. Besides where we live close to campus, Esther Kwon has a very nice home up just this side of Punahou, and we used to meet there, too.

**MK:** So was the club in existence prior to your being there?

**RK:** I'm not sure. The beginnings may have been there, but I think when we were majors—and a lot of the veterans were government majors. Robert Fukuda, and, gee, some of them became judges, I'm trying to think of their names. Robert Chang. But at any rate, this phenomenon of after the war, the Orientals, especially the nisei feeling they don't have to become schoolteachers, they can aspire to so-called higher ['positions'], and go into other professional fields such as law and medicine. A lot of them went into law. They thought the undergraduate major should be political science. I would argue that English would be better. (Chuckles)

**MK:** And then this club, did it continue?

**RK:** I think it did for sometime, I don't know what eventually happened to it. When I got back into teaching, there were remnants of it, but it wasn't as active. One of the problems is that the campus atmosphere, I think, changes. Of course, society generally changes, change is the only constant that we have. When I went back to teaching, especially my later years, I found that the students, so many of them were part-time students. They have so many obligations outside.

When I was an undergraduate, we used to have a lot of undergraduate meetings which most people could make. But later on, even when I was teaching, I'd invite my classes to
my home for dinner, just a get-together, a lot of them would say, “I’m sorry, I can’t make it because I’m working.” A lot of them had part-time jobs, I presume, to pay for that car that they’re riding around in. But there were more part-time students, whereas most of us were full-time, fully devoted to campus activities. I think that gave us a richer campus life.

MK: Any more questions for that period? Okay, then we’ll move on then.

Later on, you went to the University of Minnesota, and we were wondering why Minnesota, not elsewhere?

RK: I thought I’d become a lawyer, but it was people like Allan Saunders who talked me into maybe going into teaching and to get a Ph.D. instead of a law degree. In choosing my graduate school, I thought I’d go East. I thought I’d go to Harvard Law School, that was my high school dream. I even had a picture taken at Harvard when I went there just before the war. I said I was interested in state and local government and Allan Saunders, who had taught at Minnesota, told me that the expert in that field was on the University of Minnesota faculty, a Mr. Anderson. Since I was going to major in that, he said, “Why don’t you go there?”

And I said, “Okay. Maybe I’ll get a master’s, then I’ll go East to get a Ph.D.” Of course, one of the reasons it was easy was because I spent my army time, I already had spent two winters in Minnesota, so I wasn’t going to be surprised at the winters there. I knew the town so to speak. So I went to Minnesota, my wife and I, and we found a lot of Hawai‘i connections. There was a strong Hawai‘i Club. Miles Cary was there teaching, and my wife became his teaching assistant.

Minnesota was very nice to us. I had my GI Bill, but I also took on-campus jobs. They gave me a job as a clerk in the International Relations Center, as a student worker. But, before long, they gave me a graduate assistantship in the department. And they treated me very well. What happened, too, is that I was always interested in philosophy, even here at the university. That’s why I had McCarthy and I took all the philosophy courses I could. Had Charlie Moore before that.

In political philosophy in Minnesota, they had a very inspiring professor named Mulford Q. Sibley, an outstanding teacher, and a well-known pacifist and a Quaker, and a socialist. He would open his class by saying, “I’m going to tell you that I am a socialist and a pacifist. So, you know what my bias is.” But he was, I think, most fair in his lectures and in presenting any case. He was so dynamic a teacher. In person, a very shy man, but so dynamic a teacher that people will sit in his classroom who didn’t register for his class.

I became his teaching assistant (during my) second year. And I got the (class) roster. We had a big classroom that would seat about two hundred people. The roster showed maybe ninety persons registered, but the room would be pretty full with all the freeloaders, which he didn’t mind at all. In fact my wife was one of them. And Shiro Amioka, who was in education, also came over to sit in. He was such a good lecturer. He’s a man who lectured—as professor, I wish I could have done what he was able to do, and that is, he would just speak but he was so provocative and his manner was such that you felt free to challenge it. Even his large classes, people would say, “I don’t know that I agree with you on that point,” and challenge him and he welcomed this. Whereas I know (other)
professors, even in seminar, who would say, "Come on now, people, participate, question me," and no one would. You get the body language.

He (Sibley) was an outstanding teacher and they had to break the rules because the university gave an (annual) award for the outstanding teacher. He was nominated so often that finally they had to give him a second one. And so, I got more interested (in) political philosophy so I switched my major from studying state and local. I majored in political philosophy and I wrote my dissertation under Mulford Sibley.

WN: Now this is a time in the [19]50s when people with that type of background and philosophy were—some were fired. Were you aware of any of that?

RK: Close to the McCarthy era. Oh yes. They burned crosses on his yard. He got hate mail and things, never bothered him. (Chuckles) The worldly things weren’t of importance to him. But, most of the students appreciated what he was doing. He was a professor who left his office door always open, and students would stream in to talk to him about everything under the sun.

WN: How open was he to capitalistic ideas?

RK: Oh, he would have discussed it. In going to political philosophers, he was just as fair to Edmund Burke as to Marx, anyone else. He was just a really open person, a great mind, and I’ve never seen a man so consistent in his philosophy. So whatever he said, he acted on his beliefs on principle. He had a lovely wife so didn’t worry about his clothes, his shoes. She’d shop for everything. Those things were not important to him. But ideas. And he was very open, never belligerent.

MK: How did veterans react to him? His being a pacifist?

RK: I think a lot of them appreciated that. Especially the ones who are battle-hardened, you know what you’re going through. It’s like All Quiet on the Western Front. You’ve seen it, you don’t think mankind should be doing such things.

So anyway, that was it. And Minnesota treated us very well. My wife got a teaching position, so we decided to stay and finish my degree there.

MK: You mentioned that you were a teaching assistant for Dr. Sibley. What were your responsibilities as a teaching assistant?

RK: The usual. You do the mechanical things on the classes. He didn’t take attendance and that sort of thing, and he let you do some of the reading of the papers. And students would come in to discuss... He didn’t believe in true-or-false exam, anything of that sort. He gave what he called take-home exams. He just gave several very general questions. You have to turn those papers in, and on the basis of those papers, you get your letter grade. So we had to read those papers. He read most of them and we read some and discussed with him what the grade should be.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

So he had these just essay questions and I had to do a lot of reading of those and discuss, so it was a great learning experience for me, too. There were some students who wrote brilliant papers. You always had to watch for plagiarism. I thought we had little of it and probably it’s because, I thought, the way Mulford Sibley, his very personality, handled it.
MK: And then, were there occasion when students would come and discuss things with you?

RK: Yes, some of them did. I have to say, the first teaching job I had was in what Minnesota called the social science department. It was a novel approach. It was a combination of all the social sciences, political science, economics, psychology, anthropology, sociology. As I recall, we were in a quarter system, so one quarter was "work," which is pretty much in economics; one quarter was "community," which was sociology; political science; and then another one was more the psychology of the individual and so forth, I forget what we called it. And I was in the second group. My second day in class—in that position, the teaching assistant, we had to handle so-called lab classes. The professor would lecture and then they break up into smaller groups, and I was assigned to one of these groups. I still recall, the second time I met with my group, we had maybe thirty, forty students, in walked the inspection team from somewhere else. All these people came, they're very important. I didn't know they were coming into my class. I was told later that they were looking at the program, because it was a novel approach, the combining of all the social [sciences]—you know, truly interdisciplinary. So they were coming to watch. Lo and behold, the students were at their best that day, they all sat straight, paid attention, asked questions, participated. When the inspectors (left), they all relaxed, and we all laughed. But the teaching experience, for me, was very, very good.

MK: And then based on your own experience at UH, how would you compare the Minnesota students to the students you knew back at UH?

RK: I really don’t find them too different. I think the common impression is that the students in Hawai‘i, especially Orientals, they’re very quiet and don’t speak up in class, and that’s true to some extent. And then in the Mainland, you have them more likely to. And it’s true to some extent. But I don’t think the difference is black and white, it’s shades of gray. And I find a lot depends on how you behave as an instructor. And I taught at Michigan State for a summer, and I had visiting lecturing at UCLA, (and) at (the University of) West Virginia. These are just one or two days, so it doesn’t matter that much. I got a lot of good response from students. I think basically, they’re the same. I think the climate depends a lot on how they perceived the instructor.

MK: And then, we know that from '52 to '56, you were a UH instructor in political science and you’re also a junior researcher at the Legislative Reference Bureau. How did you end up in this situation where you have a teaching job plus a junior researcher job?

RK: At that time, the Legislative Reference Bureau was part of the university. I think I said earlier that my senior year, I was working at the Legislative Reference Bureau with Norm Meller. So, when I was about ready to come back, I had finished my coursework and this job opening was for half-time in the department and half-time in the Legislative Reference Bureau. You know how positions are, you don’t have a full position at times. The department has a half, the reference bureau had a half. They combined it. Asked me if I was interested in that position. I said I was, so I came back for that. And two halves don’t make a whole. (Chuckles) You have to go the meetings on both sides.

MK: And then what did you teach that time?

RK: I taught the introductory government course, which I enjoyed. I taught introductory political philosophy because Allan Saunders was getting more and more into administration. State and local government was my so-called minor, but working with the Legislative Reference Bureau, I also began to teach state and local government. The
course I enjoyed was teaching Hawai‘i state government, which was a very popular course.

I also got into a field that I was trying to avoid, public administration. But in many ways, I think in public administration, the field which I knew least, I did the best job in undergraduate teaching. My theory is that, in political philosophy, I thought I knew so much, I confused the students. I thought of all the possibilities and everything else, you never simplified and made everything so complex, whereas in public administration, I didn’t know that much, I could simplify it. I think, theory can be much more complex, you can play around with it more, be more verbose. I say that because in public administration, many of them said they enjoyed the course. The first time I taught it, I saw there was a national contest, I forget what it was called, sponsored by the American Society for Public Administration. It was a national contest for undergraduates. And lo and behold, one of my students won first prize in that national contest. I submitted two or three of the best papers I had in my course.

MK: In those years, what size were the classes generally? Say, the classes that you taught?

RK: Well, the introductory courses were very large. I had a class at Farrington Hall, and that seated how many—300?

MK: That’s an auditorium.

RK: Yeah. And I had it in the big chemistry room, [Bilger Hall] 101, or whatever. We had these huge classes. We tried to break them up. The teaching assistants would take (students) into smaller groups. At one point, we were so ambitious, because I didn’t care for the fill in the blanks or true/false or multiple choice. I was a good Sibley fan and I wanted term papers from the students. We had one course in which we had students writing term papers or short papers every third week or so. I thought that was a good approach but it was very hard on these assistants and the instructors. But I found it was hard on the students and the students’ wives because years later, one of the wives says, “So you’re the one who kept my husband busy all evening?”

(Laughter)

WN: Now you were working on your dissertation at this time?

RK: Supposedly. My dissertation was supposed to be on natural law. I was really into philosophy. But I got very little done. I’m not that well disciplined, I guess. So finally we decided I needed to take the year off to complete my dissertation. That’s why I went back for a year to finish my dissertation.

WN: Now how did that decision to come back to Hawai‘i while you were still unfinished with your dissertation, how did that come about? Why did you decide to come back to Hawai‘i and not stay in Minnesota?

RK: That’s quite a usual pattern. Once you get through with your coursework, you decided well, in your spare time, you write a dissertation, which is the downfall of so many of us.

WN: That’s what I was thinking of doing.

(Laughter)
RK: Yeah, a few people can do it. I know of a few people like Norm Meller, who had a law degree, wanted a Ph.D. What did he do? He gets up four o'clock in the morning and works on his dissertation. I wasn't that disciplined. I never got very far on my dissertation, so we decided the only way I'm going to do it is to devote full time to it, so I just took a year off since I had another year of GI Bill. My wife, thank goodness, she was always working and she was offered a teaching position in Minnesota because one of the senior professors was leaving and at an opportune time, wrote and said, “By any chance, can you come and fill my position,” to my wife. So it worked out very nicely. But my wife will tell you, so we go to Minnesota, and here I am, 100 percent into writing my dissertation and about two or three months later, she comes home and she says, “How much progress?”

I said, “You know, I'm going to change my topic.” (Chuckles) I was writing on natural law. I said, “I keep looking at all this stuff on natural law, it's just a rehash. I don't know if I can add anything to it.” So I changed my dissertation to a more contemporary topic, something that has fascinated me as to whether we can equate majority rule with democracy. So I took that and I was able to finish it in three months. I was interested in that topic, too, so I was familiar with most of the literature.

WN: How did Mulford Sibley feel about the switch?

RK: Very sanguine. He said, “Well, if that's how you feel comfortable in, do it. That's an interesting topic.” I didn't have to change my so-called committee.

MK: So you were able to finish your Ph.D. while still working and by taking that one year off?

RK: No, I wasn't working. I took one year off, but I was lucky in that I was assured that I had a job to come back to at University of Hawai'i.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: We were just talking about your Ph.D. and your being able to complete it by taking that one year off. And I was wondering, what year was that? Somewhere between '52 and '56?

RK: Let me see, what do I have here? (Pause) It was really in '56 that I did it. Because I got my degree in 1956, so it was '55-'56, I think, that I was gone.

MK: And then also before you went, you were working as an assistant researcher at LRB [Legislative Reference Bureau], and again, we're wondering, at LRB, did you have like a specific assignment or area that you were responsible for?

RK: Yeah. We had a small staff, not really a specialization, most of us did almost everything. Drafting bills, there were a lot of bills that were very general that you could do, or resolutions. Because I didn't handle the heavy legal stuff because there were lawyers who could do that, and I handled mostly education and things of that nature.

Between sessions, we do research reports, and the two that I know I worked on, which I enjoyed, was one on home rule in Hawai'i. This had to do with city and county, because Hawai'i is the most centralized state in the union where the local governments are fewest as in number and weakest, the counties. And, every time I talk to my politician friends at the state level, they just won't want to give up their powers to the county government. I think the state would be better off if we gave the counties greater powers, give them
taxing powers, too, and so forth. But the state keeps everything to itself, with a very powerful governor and the counties are relatively weak.

Anyway, I did a study on home rule in Hawai‘i and in a way, I think I was saying that it’s very, very non-existent in Hawai‘i. Home rule, we don’t have home rule. It’s a very dominant state government.

The other report that I enjoyed working on was konohiki fishing rights, ‘cause that’s my big hobby, fishing. It was fascinating to do the study of this ancient Hawaiian practice of konohiki. The Hawaiians had a very intelligent way of distributing resources, especially if you don’t have refrigerators. You owned the ahupua‘a from the mountaintop, a strip that goes all the way to the ocean, out to the reef in the water, so you can have your mountain apple, your taro, and then you can have your fish. The konohiki fishing rights were very interesting.

For example, Pearl Harbor was a konohiki, and then navy, in taking it over, had to pay so much for the konohiki fishing rights. The unfortunate thing is, konohiki, is not a legal concept in the Western world, although we found it exists in other parts of the Pacific, in other societies. But when the U.S. took over jurisdiction of the islands, I think at one point they said to register land titles and to register konohiki rights. But so many of the konohiki owners did not do so, so it became very muddled. Some were registered like Pearl Harbor, some Nāwiliwili Bay and Kaua‘i, and some along Portlock Road.

The funny thing is, when I completed this report, we used to do a lot of torch fishing and my friends who went out with me were lawyers. We were torch fishing out in Portlock Road and we had this man on shore yelling at us, “You kids, get out of there! This is a konohiki, you know what that means?” (Chuckles) My lawyer friend said to me, “You may know about it, but shut up, don’t say anything.”

(Laughter)

MK: Dr. Kosaki was just talking about his work at LRB, and the two reports that he really enjoyed working on there.

RK: She was asking whether we’re assigned to certain areas. I guess education was an area that I handled.

MK: So were you handling K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] and university matters?

RK: Right.

WN: Was Dan Tuttle there at the time?

RK: Yes. In fact, when Dan left, that’s when I came in. I took his job temporarily. But later on, there was another position open so I could occupy it. Dan came just before I did, and Dan was also doing his dissertation at Minnesota. He completed his dissertation much later, but he was here before I was. The other one was Bob Stauffer. Bob was head of the teaching assistants in political science at Minnesota when he got this offer from Hawai‘i. So I remember talking to Bob and his wife Joan and they were thrilled to go to Hawai‘i, Bob was from Pennsylvania, Joan was from Oklahoma. They were both very avid cyclists, and even in the dead of winter, they would cycle from one end of Minneapolis to come to campus. They looked forward to cycling and balmy breezes of Hawai‘i. And I said, “Well, we got hills.”
MK: And he’s still cycling, yeah?

RK: Yeah, well, until recently. So department had a very strong Minnesota connection, it was Bob Stauffer, Dan Tuttle, and myself. Later on, Werner Levi. We were all from Minnesota.

WN: Now, was that Allan Saunders’ doing, in terms of getting Minnesota people?

RK: I don’t know, I don’t think so. But it was because of Allan that I went to Minnesota to study under Anderson.

MK: I think in the case of Dan, it had something to do with a bookseller who told him about an opening here at the University of Hawai‘i and he ended up here? I think Dan Tuttle also mentioned that Hideto Kono was with the LRB at about that time?

RK: Let’s see, Hideto worked there just before, I think. Hideto, he’s got a master’s in public administration from the University of Hawai‘i and in that connection, and he’s always been interested. Oh, yeah, Hideto was another veteran coming back because he and I sat next to each other when they seated us alphabetically, Kono and Kosaki, so I got to know Hideto well. He’s a year or two older than I am. Of course, he gets married to a girl who lived half a block away from me in Waikīkī. We still keep in touch with Hideto.

Hideto worked at LRB, and I think in that connection—maybe he should tell the story—he caught the eye of Herb[ert] Cornuelle. So Herb plucked him and had him work for Dole, and send Hideto to be the Dole representative in Tokyo.

MK: And then who were some others who worked at LRB back then?

RK: There was Henry Awana. Henry was a lawyer, Kamehameha graduate, and sweet guy. And Henry became the... What do you call them? The man who fixes up the law books, reviser of statutes. He became the reviser of statutes. He’s retired now, too.

MK: So the LRB was part of the University of Hawai‘i?

RK: Very much so.

WN: Administratively as well?

RK: Administrative, physically, it was here. I started out in the (building) that TIM [Travel Industry Management] is in.

WN: George.

RK: Yeah, George Hall. We were upstairs in George Hall, that’s where I first started with the LRB.

WN: Was the library there at that time?
RK:  The library had only the front section, and the back section had offices, faculty offices. And upstairs, part of it was the Legislative Reference Bureau. And then later on, when Sinclair was built, the LRB moved downstairs of the Sinclair Library. Eventually, it got administratively removed from the university. With the new state capitol, it got into that dungeon [basement offices]. (Chuckles)

WN:  Still there. And administratively, what department was it under?

RK:  It was a separate research unit. Although they had close ties with the political science or government department as we called it at that time. Dan had a split position. So it wasn’t uncommon to have that.

MK:  And, did they keep the LRB with the university because it was sort of away from the legislature and away from politics?

RK:  I think it got started just before the war. What was his name? (McClane) Somebody got it started and I think these people all had California roots. Norm Meller certainly did. Norm has his undergraduate degree from Berkeley; a law degree, I think, from Hastings, Berkeley. And he worked with the reference service, I think, in California before he got in the navy during the war and then came back here to work in Hawai‘i. At that time, when I worked for the Legislative Reference Bureau, we did the reference work for the legislators, but we did a lot of research on different topics. Like we did huge volumes on the sections of a constitution. We had these I don’t know how many volumes on every article of the constitution, giving histories of this particular item and what other states say and so forth, a big reference service for the legislature.

Of course, during the session, we were busy drafting bills for them. Other people did so, too, but they could come to us. Of course, as a government agency you don’t have to pay for it. Because I had the education beat, the Hawai‘i Education Association [HEA], which was a big teacher association, would come to the bureau. They had hired lawyers before and they had to pay a good sum and they found if they came to us, they didn’t have to pay. To their surprise, we knew almost as much, if not more, than some of the hired lawyers because we knew education. I always got a box of candy at the end of the session.

(Laughter)

WN:  Let me just turn this.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK:  So you had groups like the HEA coming to you and I guess, legislators coming to you.

RK:  Or individuals, they constantly came in. Some used us much more than others. That’s true of any legislature. Even today you’ll find some who would just introduce so many bills. The champion was Noboru Miyake, a Republican from Kaua‘i. Very, very, conscientious. He had a bill on every little idea he had. Some of them were good bills. I remember, before the session started—I was sent once before the session started to Kaua‘i to talk to the legislators and to ask each one his request for bills. I had the
extremes. I go to Noboru Miyake, I don’t know how many hours I sat there, but my hands were shaking at the end, I had to scribble so much. He had so many bills that he wanted to introduce. He was real nice about it, that guy was very conscientious.

Then I went to another legislator, and he didn’t have anything. Only had one or two bills but other than that, we just talked story. So some legislators used us; others, not as much. But a lot of them came in for not only bill drafting but for consultation, especially with Norm Meller and Bob Kamins. Bob in economics, on the tax system; Norm Meller on laws generally. They would come to ask whether this was possible, what other states did, and so forth and so on. It was interesting work and we were right there in the legislature so we could see the goings-on in the legislature.

In those days, we put out a status table. Every Monday, on each legislator’s desk would be a compilation of each bill introduced, the title, and where it was and the status of each bill. Also we had an index so if you want know what bills affecting University of Hawai‘i [you could locate it]. That was my job when I was a senior here. So every weekend my wife and I were busy doing the index and everything else and then getting ready for Sunday morning when the secretaries came in. We had to count off fifty-two cards, fifty-two lines for each sheet so they had to type the thing, we had to proofread it, and we had to mimeograph the thing. So many copies and on Monday morning, put it on everybody’s desk. Now you do it by pushing a button, the computer. (Chuckles)

MK: So during the legislative sessions, the LRB staff was physically down at the palace?

RK: Yes. During that time, we didn’t have the new capitol and so the old 'Iolani Palace was like a rooming house. They had all these offices created on the verandas. And then several, especially the minority party, had offices outside in what used to be those voting booths, those portable voting booths, so we were in housing, some of those, on the capitol grounds.

MK: And being with the LRB, how close did you get to politics?

RK: You couldn’t help but get very close. And in my case, too, a lot of the people who were in politics, that’s when the Dan Inoyes, Masato Dois, all those people got their start. They were personal friends of mine, too, so we were very close. I got caught later on with—later on, when Vincent Esposito got to be speaker, I guess—at that time I was out of the LRB—but just to tell you how much involved we were with politics, he wanted me to be his administrative assistant. I didn’t want to go back because I was busy teaching, but (UH President) [Laurence] Snyder asked me, twisted my arm, so I went back, but then he got ousted.

But Elmer Cravalho came in, and Elmer wanted me to stay on. Under certain terms, I said I would. But before that they had this factional dispute in the house, and I got caught in that. Walter Heen—I guess I’d been teaching long enough, he was a former student of mine. I know he had public administration from me. They were fighting, and one chairman after another. Finally they made him a temporary chairman. And lo and behold, he says to me, “Okay, I’m going to have a parliamentarian. Kosaki is going to be a parliamentarian.” I got caught in that huge fight. Even when we were at the bureau, the Republicans suspected that some of us were Democrats. Pat Saiki, she used to be (the) Republican researcher, I remember when I first met her she says, “You guys are all Democrats.”
But at any rate, I got caught in being a parliamentarian. I had to make rulings. And this thing was dragging on. The Democrats were split in factions so they couldn’t quite pull it off and the Republicans were numerous enough to be able to keep this going. The Republicans were hoping would get one faction on this side and that they get their people in good committee chairs and so forth. And one of the leaders of the Republican party was Yasutaka Fukushima. I still remember, oh, we were going for hours back and forth and then oftentimes, Walter would say, ‘Parliamentarian,’ (what is the rule) regarding something.

Fukushima got real mad at me, he says, “Dick, you’re not following Cushing’s *Manual of Parliamentary Practice*."

I said, “Look Fuku, you got the votes? If you don’t have, we might as well quit this already. It’s just going on for days and days.” I said, “The fundamental rule: whether you had the votes or not.”

MK: And that’s the time when they eventually ended up with Republican-Democratic coalition, right?

RK: Well, in a very small way. Let me think what happened then. I’m not sure. Everybody was in an ugly mood. We (may) have (had some) fist fights. (Chuckles)

WN: This is ’59 you’re talking about?

RK: Yeah.

WN: The changeover from Esposito to Cravalho?

RK: Yeah.

MK: Earlier you just mentioned that Pat Saiki was the Republican researcher, and she would say that, “Oh, you guys are Democrats?” Wasn’t it known that you folks were all sort of tending towards that side?

RK: Leaning but frankly, I was never a card-carrying member. I think even Pat used us because she knew that, generally, we were fair when it came to doing the research. As far as I’m concerned, you can be as objective as possible.

WN: Did you feel the need, because you were on the UH faculty as well as the LRB, to at least appear to be neutral?

RK: Yes. That’s why I didn’t think I could take part actively in party politics. So I never really joined. Although when I got out of the bureau, I was much more active because when the party members came to ask for help, we were involved.

MK: And then during those years, since you had these friends, long-time friends, who entered politics, to what extent would you as a private citizen and for your expertise be asked for advice?

RK: Oh, somewhat. There was one time when we were very active in drawing up the platform for the Democratic party. I think it was the ’59 session? I have to check back, but there was one session, in which there was almost a crusade. We drew up a—what did we call it?—the “New Hawai’i.” We had declared this, declared that, and land reform, tax
reform, and so forth, what we're going to do in education, and so forth, and we came back with twenty so-called principles or twenty items that were important. For each item, we drafted a bill. We labeled it “Senate Bill 1, House Bill 1” to the first twenty bills and we said, “That's the party platform (in) bill form. We're going to pass it.” Took it that seriously. I think most of it got passed. But I was active in drawing up the platform and helping to draft the bills and so on.

Later on I got involved when Jack Burns ran for governor. He asked me to assemble some university folk. He wanted to talk to them. As you know, university faculty, on the whole, didn't think much of Jack Burns. They were all for Tom Gill, who, by the way, was a personal friend. I had worked in Tom Gill's campaign, he had those banners, I went to his home and helped cut the bamboo and we made the banners and so forth.

WN: I remember those banners. (Chuckles) This is in '62 when he was running?

RK: I think something like that, yeah. Like the Japanese style.

MK: Mm-hmm.

RK: We told Tom, “Good thing your name is short.” (Chuckles) Got through faster. In fact, if you ask, I was never, as I said, a card-carrying member, although I got along well with Jack Burns myself. Some of his people, Dan Aoki and folks, personal friends, but they labeled me as a Tom Gill man. But Jack Burns himself couldn't be nicer. He asked if we could gather a university group, Terry Ihara, and I were asked. It wasn't that easy to assemble a group, but we did have a group. Met in Terry's house, at my home. And Jack Burns was very good. He came there and asked questions, he never gave a lecture. He drank a lot of black coffee, he never got out of his seat. He sat there for hours. Then he would ask, “What would you do in education? What would you do in taxation?”

Some of us would say something. “What do you mean?” he would probe. When I look back, he was very wise in doing that. Too often when I have politicians, they want to give the answers. This guy was smart enough just to take advantage of the people who were there, so-called university experts, especially in education. That's where we really hatched the idea of community colleges. Burns thinking we ought to give more opportunity for island kids. They had to go beyond high school. University of Hawai‘i was the only act in town, and University of Hilo was a fledgling two-year campus. University of Hawai‘i was never easy to get into. It's much easier to go to a Mainland college, oftentimes, than the University of Hawai‘i.

(There's) the story of Richard Matsuura from Waialua. Later on, Richard (told) me the story of trying to get into University of Hawai‘i but his SAT scores, they were low. Outstanding record, if you know Richard Matsuura, (in) community service. He had, as a high school student, planted trees and stuff around the community and done all kinds of community work. And a very dedicated person as he always was. But he tells a story of not being accepted (at UH). They said, “No,” but somehow made it so he could come here and talk to the admissions officer, I won't name names. But he came from Waialua early in the morning, waited outside the office all day, never got to see the man.

He couldn't make it at the University of Hawai‘i, but I guess high school people, others, knew how dedicated Richard was, so they got (him) into the University of Oregon or Oregon State. Couldn't go to the University of Hawai‘i, (but got) to Oregon State. The University of Hawai‘i wasn't an easy place to get into. People think [it was easy], but it
wasn’t. And if you can go here, you don’t have the money, where else do you go? The technical schools, the business schools. And so, the community colleges were a natural.

WN: Those meetings you’re having with Burns, was this when he was running for governor in ’59 or in ’62?

RK: We had him earlier, but it was really the one in ’62, I think, which we really stepped it up.

WN: We should back up a little bit because we’re talking about ’52 to ’56 and the LRB.

RK: Okay, I got in front of it.

MK: That’s okay.

WN: But we were just wondering that ’54, of course, was when the many of the Democrats, many of the veterans, took place, how did that affect you?

RK: Not especially. I was not in that circle running with Burns and so forth at that time. I was busy at the university. But we were helping in other ways, personally campaigning for these people. Although it was sort of a pleasant surprise to have such a bigger victory.

WN: So did you campaign?

RK: Well, not in a public way but privately. They’d call and so we’d contact certain groups of people and stuff.

WN: So ’54 was a surprise to you? The magnitude of it?

RK: The magnitude was, but I think we knew very well, there was an excellent chance of taking over, so to speak.

MK: And then what were feelings about that first session? These Democrats got in but in the final analysis what did you think of their first year as legislators as to what they were able to accomplish or not accomplish?

RK: They couldn’t accomplish all. Not everyone was 100 percent agreed upon as to what they wanted to accomplish. But I think the direction of a lot of things changed, the climate changed. I think we had problems of being new to the game, so to speak. The legislature in those days was quite different. I haven’t recently observed them, I used to go to all the sessions and especially see the last session that went late through the night, and they stopped the clock and all that sort of thing.

And then you had colorful figures like Manuel Henriques from Kaua‘i, whom you could hear, even when across the street, with his booming voice and all the orations. Real colorful characters, [William] “Doc” Hill, Charlie Kauhane. But I think, it was a definite change in the direction that the state was going to go when the Democrats came in. I think they paid more attention to higher education that I think the university benefited from a Democratic legislature.

WN: Did you notice, personally, a change before ’54 and after in terms of things like, you know, suddenly now, your colleagues, your peers, now are in positions of power?
RK: Yeah. You had a more sympathetic (ear) in the legislature. A lot of people were there to get their pet projects through. We tried to work hard to enlarge the university. We tried to see that the university got more funds and so forth. I don’t know when it was that — when did Tom Hamilton become president [of the University of Hawai‘i]?

WN: In ’63.

MK: Sixty-three.

RK: That’s after. Because the early part, too, I think the Democrats didn’t completely dominate. And then they had a period in which the Republicans made a small comeback and it was not until Jack Burns got to be governor in ’62 that things could move more the Democrats’ way and that’s when Tom Hamilton came in. At that time—well I’m getting ahead of the game in ’62—but we worked in the legislature. Tom Hamilton came in January, early January. The session started the third Wednesday or whatever it is in January. Plunged right into it. I had the job of taking him down, introducing him, and he was marvelous how he was able to gain rapport with the legislators. Good sense of humor and he didn’t look down upon them and anything of that sort.

Tom had Ken[neth] Lau, Dick Takasaki, and myself unofficially, but the three of us were the lobbyists. Ken Lau was in Legislative Reference Bureau, too. Later on he had a stint as the head, the director, of the Legislative Reference Bureau. Ken was a very good lawyer. And Dick Takasaki had experience in the state and city government in the financial area and he was a vice-president for administration. Ken Lau, what was Ken’s position then? Anyway—oh, Ken was assistant to the president. The three of us used to go down to lobby, and I think we were quite effective because we knew most of the people. In fact, I have to say that we were invited to the conference committee meeting sometimes, which was really almost a no-no. They used to meet in the old Board of Water Supply building. I even got to a point where one of the committee clerks see me coming, say, “Oh, you’re just in time, write my committee report.” So the university was well in. But it’s not only personal, because they agreed with us and Jack Burns that education was the key for the development of not only individual citizens but the whole Hawaiian community as a whole, the whole state. We had to have an educated citizenry.

MK: So it went beyond personal ties. It was because, philosophically and politically, there was a common aim?

RK: Definitely. Yes.

WN: I’m wondering, in the early days, were you ever asked to run for office?

RK: Yeah, several times but I didn’t think that was my forte, although as a student I was very active in student government.

WN: Could you be a little specific in terms of what you were asked?

RK: Usually the legislature, the house and so forth.

MK: Were you ever close to saying yes?

RK: No, I wasn’t interested.
MK: Looking at your high school and your collegiate career in student government, it would seem like that would have been a natural.

RK: Yeah. The rules were simpler in school.

(Laughter)

I had my fill.

MK: Were you involved in slate-making?

RK: Not really. As I said, I was never active in the party itself. I got called to do platforms and the things of that sort. Once they’d call us think-tank or something. Even when John Waihe’e ran [for governor] the first time—I never told you, but three of us—Nadao Yoshinaga, Roland Kotani, and myself—were designated the issues persons or something. We spent many hours, and usually at breakfast meetings, talking about mostly education. And good old Roland, he did all the work. He took the notes, he wrote it up, transposed it into issue papers, gave it to Waihe’e. But in the end, we just laughed and we said, “I think, Lynne Waihe’e should go on television, never mind the issues.” (Chuckles)

With television campaigning, the issues fall behind. But that was delightful to work with Nadao, whom I had known in the legislature—very astute, as you know—and with Roland, who really was good. I got to know Roland because he was one of my students, as a graduate student in political science. I told him that he should continue and get his Ph.D. Of course, he went into politics, too. He can take over and teach Hawai‘i state government. It’s a tragic loss. [Roland Kotani died in 1989.] So that was my involvement in politics. I was on the edges. I was just doing mostly issue things.

MK: I know in Roland’s article, he wrote that you were a member of this brain trust back, say, ’52 to ’56, where you folks would meet—yourself, Ralph Miwa, Teruo Ihara. So these were like the university group that you mentioned earlier.

RK: Yeah. The group with Jack Burns in ’62. There was an earlier group when we drafted that, you know, when the Democrats came into power. But this was, come to think of it, former LRB people: Bob Dodge, Tom Dinell. Tom Gill was active in that, too. Alvin Shim, Herman Doi.

And later on, when Jack Burns ran for governor, that’s the group we had Terry Ihara, Ralph Miwa, Lowell Jackson. Orland Lefforge coined those words that Jack Burns—what is it?—uses in his inaugural about the child and the money? They’re the famous lines of stressing education—if given a choice between, you know, the child comes first. I still remember, he (Burns) had his big TV debate with Bill Quinn and everybody thought he’d be smashed because Bill Quinn is a bright, articulate guy. If Bill would have been a Democrat, he would have gotten in. Everyone thought, “Oh Jack Burns, he’s not as smart, he’s not as good-looking, he’s not as articulate. Old Stone Face.”

I was asked to brief him before the television debate, so we’re waiting for him at the studio. There were several people there. Matsy Takabuki, other people. I was supposed to be the education guy. What if they asked you this question on education, how should you answer? I didn’t know whether I could—but anyway, we were sitting around. The debate was eight o’clock or whatever. We’re sitting around from five-thirty or so. Burns doesn’t show up. He comes in only about half an hour before the debate. So what can we do? Maybe everybody can say one line and that’s it. So my advice was not on education. I
said, “Jack, just look like the governor. Because on TV, the image counts. Just be confident and look like a governor.”

When you think about the early debates, Kennedy and Nixon, it’s the image that you have. People don’t quite remember what each one said, but they sure remembered how each one looked. Nixon looked scared and tired, Kennedy looked alive and bright, and energetic. So the image you project is important. Jack did all right in the debate and got to be governor. And even after he became governor, he called us. If I get a call early in the morning, my wife will say, “That’s the governor.” He’d invite us to breakfast after he went to church. So we’d sit with him at the breakfast table in the back at Washington Place, and he would say, “Well, now, I got this problem with this, what do you folks think?” We found that to be quite interesting.

MK: You mentioned the group that worked on the Democratic platform. That’s the platform associated with [Robert] Dodge. So there were actually two or three different groupings of people that you worked with throughout the years?

WN: There was a name for that document, wasn’t it?

RK: The “New Hawai’i” or something like that. I wonder if I have a copy of that, yeah. Someone asked me about it, too.

WN: That would be fantastic to bring out.

MK: Since we’re still on politics, Elmer Cravalho, people have many observations of him and his style. As an assistant to Cravalho, what were your observations?

RK: Elmer was a very astute leader, very, very bright. If I may say so, the fact that he was a bachelor helped him in politics. He didn’t have to rush home. (Chuckles) You know, the syndrome. You know what Plato said, “Philosopher kings won’t get married, male or female.” Elmer, in a way, he was 100 percent into being speaker, he worked at it. And he was very alert, very smart. He could outtalk most of the members of the house. He was strict about time and stuff, he wanted to move things along, and so forth. So it was nice working for him.

Under Esposito, my chief job was to refer bills to committee, and that’s a pretty crucial thing. If you assign a bill to the wrong committee or you assign it to too many committees, you’re killing the bill. But what Elmer did was say, “All the things you were going to do for Vince, you can do for me, except on the bills.” He said, “Three bills, you don’t touch.” The three bills turned out to be ones that I would have made the same assignment, but pretty much I would assign the bills. And he kept to his word. Elmer was a man of his word. I remember because old David Trask wanted pari-mutuel betting, horse racing. So he introduced the bill. So I assigned it to agriculture. I assigned it to taxation. I assigned it to education, because the bill money was going to education to sweeten the deal. And I assigned it to finance. When you get four committees, you’re going to get trapped somewhere, you’re not going to pass it. So David came rushing in, madder as heck on the assignments. He was blasting away at me because he knew I was doing assignments. So he said, “I’m going to see Elmer, and goddamn it, I’m going to change this.”

He went to see Elmer. Elmer told him no. He came out fuming. But David and I were very good friends. So it was interesting.
WN: He’s another character, Davis Trask? (Chuckles)

RK: Oh yeah. He’s still around, but I don’t hear much about him. I enjoyed David. When we were building Maui Community College, he was a great help. He’s always telling me, “Let’s go faster. Let’s go bigger.” I went with him to a conference (on the mainland). We go to eat steak, he whips out a shoyu bottle.

(Laughter)

For some reason, the governor appointed me to several commissions. Education Commission of the States, and there’s another commission. So on these travels, the Education Commission of States was a combination of educators and politicians. So I’d go to meetings with these people. Of course, sometimes they’d be up first class, I’d be in economy, but we’d get to the conferences. So I got to run around with them. It was really, really interesting, and fun.

MK: Yeah, it seems like the 1950s, early ’60s, you had all these really colorful legislators, right?

RK: Mm-hmm.


RK: Henriques. And Duarte, nice guy, but [John] Duarte was the guy who, unfortunately, is known for stealing the carpets. (Chuckles) After the session, he took the carpets home.

WN: Who was the one who moved the clock back?

RK: That was Kauhane. Not just moved.

MK: He took the clock, right?

RK: Yeah. He has a sergeant-at-arms physically remove the clock—and it’s big like almost a grandfather’s clock—and put it in his car trunk and take it home every night, so nobody would tamper with it.

(Laughter)

MK: I think someone in one of our old politicians project mentioned that from the ’50s on, we got a legislature of very educated people. This person said, well, people went to many years of school, more than before, [and formed a] not necessarily better but a different type of legislature.

RK: Definitely. Well, the whole world has changed, and more of us have more schooling but schooling doesn’t equate to being better educated or being wiser. You just get more degrees. And so what? In many ways, it was more a colorful bunch before. And in many ways, especially for the minority groups and especially for the Japanese Americans, where you couldn’t break into the big business world, the legislature was the place. As one of them said to me, “There, we have a level playing field, but I can’t break into the Big Five. I’m a good lawyer, but.” So the legislature gives you the power, the authority, the prominence that you can parlay into another career.

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So the legislature was where the more ambitious and the better people, the Sakae Takahashis, the Dan Inouyes, the Spark Matsunagas, the Masato Dois, all went into it. The Wakatsukis, the Beppus. I may be prejudiced, but they were excellent people. Not that they aren’t excellent people now, but I think the caliber may be different. I think this is nationwide, but today, they have published the new list of candidates for office. I don’t know most of them, but I can see where fewer people are running for office. There are few competitive spots. Where there’s an incumbent, very few people want to challenge. Where there’s an opening, a lot of people jump in. And before, you had very prominent names of people who made their marks in education or business, especially, or in law who ran for office. Now, those people don’t run. The money isn’t there and, of course, as one of them said to me, “I don’t want to run and expose my whole family to all these rumors.” Everything is looked upon with a jaundiced eye and all the bad things are reported. So, I think the nature (of politics) has changed.

On top of that, they don’t have the party discipline. But this has been truer since—if you remember Jimmy Wakatsuki, he was speaker of the house. In his swan song, he decried the fact that no longer do they play politics the way that he’s used to, which is have your differences out in the house caucus, party caucus, and then go from there. You don’t air every difference and all your dirty linen in public. Increasingly, he found members of the house doing that. That’s partly because of the changing nature of politics, their communication world. Because now, the politician can talk directly to the people. “I’ll go on television,” and the television stations are very happy to have someone who loves to do this, the maverick, the independent. Those are the people who are constantly shown. The insiders, the people who play their politics and who often have the power, never go on TV. You can see the difference. The nature of politics is changing, and so the kind of people who run are different. But also, our society is changing so much now that an ambitious young man, even in the minority group, and if he wants to make money, it’s tough to go into politics. You might get smeared for the fact that you smoked marijuana in high school.

WN: Plus you have the sunshine laws, too, in terms of decision-making, and caucusing is sort of on the outs now because of that.

RK: Yes, some of the laws are rather strict. Harlan Cleveland [president of University of Hawai‘i, 1969-1974] always thought that the sunshine laws are far too strict.

WN: Our original plan was right up to ’63 or so.

RK: Let’s try. If you still have time?

WN: Okay.

MK: We sort of discussed politics, and also during the ’50s, the loyalty oath on campus was an issue. Was that prior to your time or was it when you had just come back?

RK: When I just came back. It was still a live issue. There were few on campus who were still holding out, not wanting to sign the so-called loyalty oath. But most of the big debate had quieted down, but, I guess, as I recall, there were still few on the faculty who refused to sign.

MK: What were your feelings about that at that time?
RK: Coming back, I had signed the so-called loyalty oath. Some of us didn’t think it was—how did one person put it? There’s no harm done or something. But a lot of us aren’t that brave. We come back and we have debts on our schooling and so forth. And, pretty much the arguments had blown down and they had somewhat modified the original form which made it more compatible.

MK: I guess also around that time, we had the Smith Act trial.

RK: That’s right.

MK: Maybe some impact on the faculty in terms of the Red scare? What were your observations?

RK: A lot of that had started early when we were going for statehood, that’s how it got embroiled. As students in the ASUH, too, I think we took a strong stand for statehood and against this so-called witch hunting. Very much against. Of course people like Saunders, outspoken against the House Un-American Activities Committee and that sort of thing. And locally, there were some strong voices pro-McCarthy, but on campus, most of us, I think, opposed it.

MK: One more thing we should discuss before we get up to ’63. We noticed in Roland’s article on you, you had been a Congressional fellow. What did that entail?

RK: The American Political Science Association for some time had a fellowship program. It’s changed over the years. In fact I just got a card yesterday from the Political Science Association saying, “Dear Fellow, we give you the latest news on what we’re doing.” The program has changed somewhat, but when I was in the program, they had funds from different foundations, I guess. They selected five political scientists and political reporters from the United States and five from foreign countries. Ten of us went to Washington. They selected ten and they gave us stipends you could live on. And we were assigned to Congressional committees, half the time in the House, half the time in the Senate. And the purpose was, for us, as teachers of political science or as writers on politics, to really get to know how Congress operates, sort of get the insides of the legislature. Since I was doing a lot of teaching, one of the courses I had to teach was legislative process and I had a lot of experience with the reference bureau in the local legislature. I thought this would be a good sort of sabbatical for me to go and to gain this experience (on the national level).

Lo and behold, I was selected as one of the five from the U.S. There were (five) political scientists and (five) reporters. And then there were (five) from Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, India, and another country—Pakistan I guess—reporters and political scientists. We went to Washington and we had seminars as a group. We met with leaders like we met with [Dean] Acheson, and some of the other names. We met with Elmo Roper. We met with people who were watching (Congress)—I.F. Stone reporting it. People from the Congressional Daily, but also the key (law)makers in the Senate and House. We were assigned or we chose assignments. They asked us, “Whom do you want to work for?” They would contact that office, “Would you want to take a Congressional fellow?” We would go on as staff members.

I worked in the House with a Congressman from Vermont named [William] Meyer. Vermont was always Republican. As sort of a fluke, they liked this Meyer, who’s a Quaker and a pacifist. He showed me his campaign literature, fully mimeographed. What
was the war that was being fought? But anyway he was against war. It’s interesting that
he got elected. The Democrats are so happy, they gave him very important committee
assignments. That’s the same year that very well known, the guy was the ambassador to
India, [Chester] Bowles, big diplomat, was also selected from Connecticut. They gave
him poorer committee assignments than they give Meyer. So I worked with Meyer for a
few months, and he was a guy who was new to Washington, but he had lots of time and
so I could do a lot of work with him and for him. For the Senate, I wanted to see the
opposite, and through the help of Dan Inouye and Jack Burns, I got to work in Lyndon
Johnson’s office majority floor leader.

END OF TAPE ONE

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WN: We’ll find that.

RK: So I worked on the Senate side, and they got me an assignment in Lyndon Johnson’s
office, which was very rare because Lyndon Johnson didn’t need any more (staff). He
had a big staff, (as) majority floor leader. What was fascinating is, I was given an office
right off the Senate floor where Bobby Baker, they called the 101st senator, operated.
And, I sat out there and I was sort of an errand boy, too. But the errand boy really was a
full-time page, who was assigned to Lyndon Johnson’s office, who worshipped Bobby
Baker. He was a big kid from South Carolina, (or) North Carolina, (and) what an
operator. He said, “Where do you park?”

I said, “I park in the House parking lot, two blocks away.”

He says, “I’ll get you a parking pass right in the Capitol.” In those days, you could (park
there). Lo and behold, I got one. So I can just park in the Capitol grounds. He says, “You
don’t have a Congressional directory with your name in gold?”

I said, “No.” Next day, I get one.

(Laughter)

Fascinating kid, I don’t know what he’s doing now. Especially as Bobby Baker got into
trouble later. So I was able to observe these goings-on off the floor. I sat in this big, huge
room with two large chandeliers and four big desks, and I had one of them. My main
assignment was to answer Lyndon Johnson’s education mail. Eventually I got a form
letter, “As a former teacher in Texas. . . .”

And I got other interesting assignments. When the East-West Center thing was coming
up, Bob Kamins (was) working on it, (from Senator Owen Long’s office) I got involved
because they slipped it into this Mutual Security Act. Bobby Baker guys asked me, “You
know something about this?” and so forth. But the most fascinating is that’s when
Lyndon Johnson decided to run for president. I come at the office one Monday morning,
and the secretary says, “Dick, we’re going to move your desk. You’re going to be on the
other side, they said, because Oscar Chapman is going to be sitting here. He’s going to be
the campaign manager for Lyndon Johnson for President.” So it was interesting for me to

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see this going on. I see lobbyists coming in and out and I see the Hawai‘i lobbyist coming in with ten copies of Michener's Hawai‘i, which was just published, and two cases of pineapples. (Chuckles)

WN: This is after statehood right? Right about ’60.

RK: Right after statehood. The first year. It’s an interesting time to be there. Jack Burns stopped by once in a while. But also interesting, that’s when the Advertiser told me to write occasional columns. One of the columns I wrote from Washington was the fact that Jack Burns in ’59 that says, “His reputation in Washington was quite unlike his reputation in Hawai‘i. In Hawai‘i, he’s considered a conservative Democrat,” and so on. In Washington, he ran around, I found out, with most of the liberal Democrats. The [Morris and Stewart] Udalls and what’s the other guy? Harold Ickes. Harold Ickes had a beautiful farm right outside of Washington. There was a liberal Democratic group. Morris Udall was one of the leaders. I’m trying to think of the names. Clem [Clement Miller?], the guy from California. Anyway, so I got invited to some of these meetings. It was fascinating to see these liberal Congressmen talking about issues and how they’re going to stand on certain bills.

WN: Did discussions of Hawai‘i statehood ever come up?

RK: No, Hawai‘i already had statehood.

WN: Yeah, I know, but . . .

RK: No, not really. But they had high regard for Jack Burns. So I wrote a column. And then I found out later that Jack Burns liked it very much. I’m trying to think of the name of Jack Burns’ loyal publicist, Ed Sheehan’s wife, Sally. Sally Sheehan told me, “Jack was so proud of it. He clipped it out and kept it in his pocket.” I had known Jack more or less casually, but we got to (talk) much more seriously (after that). When I came back to teach, I used to have lunch with Jack Burns occasionally. I used to bring him to class, especially [when] I taught Hawai‘i state politics, to talk to the class. He was very good. But that was an interesting assignment in Congress and being in the nation’s Capitol (and) on the East Coast.

WN: I’m trying to think now, what was Jack Burns’ capacity between ’59 and ’62? He was a delegate to Congress before that?

RK: He was a party leader, out of work, out of job, out of . . . So he had time. So he used to come. Occasionally we’d have lunch at Sekiya. He was at sort of loose ends. He had time then.

MK: And then while you were in Washington, Inouye was also there?

RK: Oh yeah. Dan was very helpful to me. (His) first (session), he was busy, too, but occasionally he would see if I wanted to go to this occasion stuff and so on. As I said, he helped me get into the Johnson office. He knew it, too, that to be in his office wasn’t going to (be that helpful an) experience for me. Sam Rayburn was the speaker of the house. At that time, the Capitol was a place that wasn’t that security conscious, so I could park, you could go downstairs. I used to know the labyrinth underneath (the Capitol) so you could, wintertime, don’t go above street level. You know how to walk the tunnels
underneath to get to the House. The Senate, of course, had their little train. The congressional fellowship was very interesting.

When I got there, too, they gave me—they said, they had extra stipend. So they made me a Helen Dwight Reid.

(Laughter)

... fellow. [Political scientist and teacher Helen Dwight Reid established an educational foundation in 1956.]

WN: Were you still with LRB?

RK: No, I was pretty much in (government) department by that time. I think I was full-time in department. Let’s see. After I got my degree in ’56, I was more of an assistant professor of political science, more full-time into teaching. Then I spent that term in the legislature in ’59. When I was in the legislature, I got informed that in the fall, I was going to be a Congressional fellow.

MK: And then by ’61 to ’63, you were an associate professor by then and chairman of the department?

RK: Yeah. Also I think, in ’61 and ’62, I was chairman of the faculty senate. That was a crucial year because that’s when we were looking for a new president. [Laurence] Snyder had turned in his resignation.

Herb Cornuelle was the chairman of the board of regents. And I knew Herb primarily through Club 15. Have you heard of Club 15?

MK: What was that?

RK: No?

MK: No.

RK: This is the most interesting organization. It’s run by George Yamamoto. Not the George Yamamoto in sociology but an older George Yamamoto, an old codger, what a character, a delightful person. I don’t know his entire background, but George is an older fellow who, with [Takaichi] Miyamoto, were the lieutenants who garnered the Japanese votes for Mayor [John] Wilson. George had a job with HRT [Honolulu Rapid Transit], I think. By the time I got to know him, he was full-time into this Club 15 activity. And his lovely wife, hard-working, ran a saimin store in Pensacola [Street]. Is it Pensacola? Yeah. And we used to meet there. This was the headquarters of Club 15.

I didn’t get in on the beginning, but Club 15 evidently started as a Japanese tanomoshi sort of thing. When we joined, we had to [pay] twenty-five bucks a month to the tanomoshi and you got your share when time came. But the big event was that Club 15 developed into a rather interesting, some people call it prestigious, discussion group. It was called Club 15 because every fifteenth of the month, we met for dinner and for lectures, and you had to wear a coat and tie. If you came without a coat and tie, no matter who you were, George would turn you out and give you a lecture. You’d think it won’t go over big, but everybody in town, as I understand, was trying to get in. It was a mixture
of town and gown. It was a beautiful mixture of town and gown. I wish we could revive something like that.

So some of us from the university were invited. I wasn’t one of the early ones, but George would come around. I still remember his coming around. I had an office in social science building, called Crawford Hall, and he would size you up as to whether you’d be good enough for becoming a member. I guess I passed the test.

Club 15 had a core membership. Lot of Japanese, Toma Tasaki was one of the keys. I’m trying to think of others, old-timers that were really the beginning of the tanomoshi group. Some of us were newer at university. Mike Weinstein in sociology was active. There were several others. And then from downtown he had Herb Cornuelle and George Chaplin. And Herb Cornuelle was all for this. Herb, he was then head of Dillingham Corporation, I think. Herb did all the Xeroxing and stuff for George.

For every program, we had a huge, maybe fifty-page program printed. Club 15 and then the program, who’s the speaker. He had top-notch speakers. He had S.I. Hayakawa, he had [Edward] Teller. Whatever big names came into to town, somehow he was able to corner them. They spoke for free for a lousy teriyaki dinner. It was always the same menu, dinner—if you’re a vegetarian, maybe you had a special order—but we knew what was coming, teriyaki dinner. We used to go to different hotels, eventually we ended up at Hawaiian Regent all the time. He could only take so many. He always had great demand and he was very careful. We had a core group, not all of us could show up every time but pretty much. At first it was all male. We kind of badgered him, “Some of our wives are interested. They want to know what the heck we’re doing.”

He used to say, “Well, okay, Saturday night.”

So, we’d invite the wives. Eventually, we broke the barrier and he even had women as members like Agnes Niye kawa, I think was a member later on. In fact, Agnes called me the other day and says she had all these Club 15 material, do I want them? In a way, it’s interesting, because of who was on the program. Edward Teller, of course, talked about the atomic bomb, so they’d have articles from Atlantic Monthly and all this. I think we were breaking copyright laws, but he had all of these. Herb Cornuelle office would reproduce them. The night before the meeting, some of us who couldn’t be there, we’d go there and you see all these corporate leaders, university professors, shuffling, gathering, collating, and stamping, and all that. But it was good camaraderie. We got to know people Downtown. That’s where I got to know Herb Cornuelle very well. So it was a very good place to interact. I wish we have this now, the university could gain from this.

After George passed away, we tried to revive it but we just couldn’t. As Herb says, “You can’t duplicate it,” and we couldn’t. It was George’s personality in many ways. As I said, it was a very town-and-gown thing.

But coming back, so I knew Herb Cornuelle well because of the Club 15 activities. He was this major supporter. In one of the Club 15 meetings, I said, “Herb, we’re looking for a new president.” (Cornuelle was then chair of the UH Board of Regents.) I was then faculty senate chairman. I said, “I think the faculty ought to have a strong voice as to how we select it.”

“Yeah, I agree with you,” he says. “Can you meet me tomorrow for breakfast at the O’ahu Country Club?”
“O‘ahu Country Club is okay.” Got there and we laid out a plan which really involves faculty. So if you look back at the search at that time, and we had good (candidates for UH president), [Fred] Harrington was on top and [Thomas] Hamilton was second, and the third—we had top-notch people. The faculty committee, I was faculty senate chair, I wasn’t on the committee. The committee people—someone just told me the other day how they flew around on the corporate jet. I don’t know whose it was. To Herb Cornuelle, one of the banks, I guess. Bellinger or someone was able to get these things.

What’s his name [C.C. Cadagan], who was (also) a regent, too, with Castle & Cooke, Alexander & Baldwin. But all of these people were in Club 15. And we knew George had his ways, but we all liked him, and the whole idea was great.

MK: Going back to Club 15, who was this George Yamamoto?

RK: As I said, he was an old Japanese gentleman, who was involved in politics in that Johnny Wilson era with Takaichi Miyamoto. They were the two helpers or whatever. George had an interesting mind, very open, wanting to learn things, but very strong in Japanese, too. On one of the Club 15 covers, you’ll see this picture of this staring man dressed in kimono with a sword. That’s George Yamamoto. So he had these strong leanings. His Japanese was probably stronger than his English. He wrote a lot of things in Japanese, but his ideas (were) very refreshing. He was trying to enlarge everybody’s vision of the world, everybody was equal. Okay, he’s Edward Teller, but heck, if he didn’t come with a necktie, he doesn’t speak.

MK: How long did this club exist?

RK: For many years. When did George passed away? Herb Cornuelle gave the eulogy. And, some of us at the university tried to revive it, we had one or two meetings, but they just didn’t go over. We didn’t have the same spirit.

MK: Could be a topic itself. Kind of intriguing.

RK: If you look in the, I think, the Star-Bulletin files or something—Gardiner Jones or John Griffin who wrote about. . . . Gardiner Jones, I think, was active in Club 15. There are stories about George, his character, and Club 15. It was really an interesting operation. George was very good. He also had the military come in, the generals, the admirals. He always invited the military to sit in. He knew that I wasn’t that fond of the military. And he had assigned seating. You just don’t sit anywhere. He would very carefully, night before, he’d shuffle his cards around, place names and said, “Who will sit with whom?” I think he always tried to get a military man to sit next to me. (Chuckles)

WN: What was the ultimate goal or philosophy of this club? I mean, to bring town and gown together? Was it in anticipation of the selection of the president?

RK: No, it had nothing to do with the president. In fact, George, in many ways, wanted to get out of politics, partisan politics, that he had played so fervently before. I can use the word “intellectual.” He wanted to make it intellectual, philosophical, spiritual almost. And he just wanted good, high-level discussion. He tailored it. We had dinner and everything. But first we had the cocktail hour, which was very nice. And then we sat down for dinner, assigned tables. Then the program.

In the beginning he had two speakers and we told him that’s too long after a while. Eventually we ended up with only one. But he’d assign one of us members to be—I don’t
know what they were called. I had that role on a number of occasions. You had to say something about Club 15, introduce the topic, and introduce the introducer. So the second member would introduce the speaker, give the background, and the speaker would come on and talk. Of course, you had this program where you had a lot of background data if you had time to read it, what the topic, what the guy was going to talk about. Then you had a question-and-answer period, and usually a very lively question-and-answer period.

At first we had two speakers and that made it a very long meeting. Eventually we ended with only one. But some of the people he was able to get, Edward Teller, as I said, S.I. Hayakawa. Any big VIP coming through, he would corner somehow largely, maybe oftentimes through the university, but he had a good grapevine in town, too. So that helped the university in many ways, the town-and-gown relationship, which I think we solely need.

MK: And it was through Club 15 that you knew Herb Cornuelle and that’s how it figured into the . . .

RK: The selection of the president. Well maybe he would have had (facility input), but the Club 15 relationship (helped in) getting the faculty involved in the presidential selection. And I think we had a very successful search then.

MK: That’s the search that resulted with Thomas Hamilton?

RK: Tom Hamilton, yeah. And that’s another interesting story because he came in second. They chose Fred Harrington of Wisconsin to be president. Fred Harrington had been vice-president of Wisconsin and we knew that his heart was in Wisconsin. He wanted to be president.

That summer, after the selection was made in the spring, I went to teach at Michigan State. And I said, “Oh, this is great. As faculty senate chairman, I’m going to ‘spy’ on Harrington.” This is the Midwest, the Big Ten, I’m pretty sure (that) some of the Michigan State people might know Wisconsin and so on. So I did my teaching at Michigan State and I flew to Los Angeles to visit with friends for a few days before I came home. I’m greeted at the Los Angeles airport by Ivan Hinderaker, he’s a political science professor at UCLA and who was a visiting professor with us here in Hawai’i. I got to know him well. Ivan meets me at the airport and says, “You got a new president.”

I said, “Yeah, Harrington.”

He says, “No, it’s Hamilton.” He said, “Haven’t you heard? The University of Wisconsin president died so they turned around and offered Harrington the presidency. So Harrington asked to be excused. So you went to your number two, which is Hamilton from New York.”

I said, “Oh my. Here I am with all my notes on . . .

(Laughter)

. . . Harrington.” That’s when I found out that there was a switch. And, Hamilton came in January. Maybe it was a good choice, because Hamilton was in political science and we got along very nicely. Before you know it, he says to me, “Why don’t you help me? The legislature’s coming on. You seem to have experience.” So that’s how I got into administration.
WN: So what was your role in the actual presidential selection? Was it there to help rank the . . .

RK: Well, mostly we had the faculty committee actively involved and they reported to the senate. Things went pretty smoothly. We had the usual interviews; we interviewed Harrington and Hamilton and several others.

WN: Now, what were your impressions of Harrington and Hamilton?

RK: They're both very good, both are very experienced. Harrington was a little more aloof, I thought or he was more formal. I found it easier to talk to Hamilton. Harrington, interestingly enough, without having come here, got to know Chuck Engman. He was a young professor in engineering, but also what was Chuck doing? He was an assistant. I guess he was serving as an assistant in Bachman Hall. But Harrington liked Chuck Engman, so hired Chuck when he became president of Wisconsin. (Chuckles) Chuck Engman who was here, went to work for Harrington in Wisconsin.

Hamilton, as I said, our fields were similar, and a heck of a nice guy, very able. So it was a delight working for him. But he’s the guy who got me into administration. He wanted me to be his assistant and I said, “By nature, I’m not that type.” After the legislative session and they passed the Community College Act, he told me, “Why don’t you do that? We’re mandated to do a study.”

I said, “I don’t know anything about community colleges, except I think they’re good things. I know generally what they are, but not really.”

He says, “Well no, don’t worry.” So he gave me two books, [Leland] Medsker’s book and what’s the other book now by . . . . The name will come to me. He’s a man who rented my house when I was gone (James Thornton). But anyway, these were two Californians who had written exclusively about community colleges. He said, “This gives you the history, the philosophy, everything else.” So I took it on and then I also made extensive trips to visit community college systems throughout the country. That was a delightful time. It was a lot of work, but we were able to pull it off. And Hamilton was very good, too, because he was the one who worked hard and gave immediate responses. Nothing sat on his desk, so I was able to move along because on certain points, you would want to get his advice. Where to go next or are we on the right track? He was wonderful to work for.

And the legislature was all right. Jack Burns was all in favor. The legislature, too, opened wonderful opportunities. Larry Kuriyama was delightful. They just pushed us along.

WN: He was the higher-ed chairman?

RK: He was the higher-ed chairman. I think he was a higher-ed chairman in the house and Vince Esposito was the higher-ed chairman in senate. Both are very sympathetic, but especially Larry really worked hard. He put his heart and soul into it. So we had no trouble in getting the act passed. There was some opposition because we were taking the technical schools away from the DOE [Department of Education]. The DOE superintendent criticized us as not having a realistic budget. And some of the Republicans opposed us. I remember (Representative) Dorothy Devereaux, bless her soul, said to me, “I don’t think this is a good idea.” But the next session, she turned right around. “I’ve seen them in operation and I agree with you.”
WN: Shall we stop here?
MK: Yeah.
WN: We can continue with . . .
RK: Community colleges.
WN: Community colleges.
RK: Yeah, that's quite a story.
END OF INTERVIEW