

**Interview**

**GEORGE ARIYOSHI**

**REEL 1**

**(Shot 1)**

**59:34** bars and tones

**(Shot 2)**

**00:00** **(MEDIUM) GENERAL CONVERSATION**

**00:48** QUESTION: **(MEDIUM)** Governor, um, could you tell us something about your birth, your parents, where you grew up, your education, and so forth?

**00:55** ARIYOSHI: Okay; I was born um, uh, in 1926, March 12, 1926. And my parents had uh, come to Hawaii from Japan. My mother came—uh, was called uh, her parents came to Hawaii from Kumamoto earlier, and my mother was called to come later on when she was uh, seventeen or eighteen years old. My father was working on a—and he was from Fukuoka, and he was working on a uh, Japanese uh, uh, ship. And the ship uh, came to Hawaii for—to refueling and provisions. **(01:28)** And uh, my father and some of his uh, uh, friends had got off the ship and decided Hawaii was a nice place, and didn't go back on the ship. Uh, so in essence, he made an illegal entrance to the United States. So I didn't follow up on that story—and that was in 1919. And I did not know until 1951. I had come back after my second year in law school. I was going back for my last year in school, and he told me for the first time in 1951 about his being uh, having entered the United States illegally. And I was flabbergasted, and I told him, Papa, weren't you concerned uh, that during the war years that uh, you were gonna be uh, picked up? And he said, Oh, yes. He said uh, he had made up his mind that he was gonna be picked up, but nothing happened. Uh, and about the time that he was uh, saying this to me, the Walter McCarren Act passed. And one of the provisions there was that if any person can show that they were residents in the United States from 1924 and continued thereafter, they could become permanent residents. **(02:28)** So my first task after I came back in '52 and became a lawyer was to uh, work on my father's um, uh, situation. And I had to get a lot of affidavits. And it's very difficult. You know, today we take it for granted. Government records like social security, uh, tax uh, payments. Uh, but those days, everything was done with hand. And you know, as a result our government records were almost uh, uh, uh, nil. And so I had to—get a lot of affidavits to make it possible for my father to get

permanent resident. And he could not go travel anywhere, he couldn't do anything, get—couldn't get a passport until he was—became registered.

(Shot 3)

03:04 QUESTION: I would imagine that growing up, it had to be difficult for him as an illegal alien to have gotten work and—

03:15 ARIYOSHI: Yes. But we never knew it, and he never let us know that happened, and he uh, took it all. Uh, he worked uh, on the stevedore—uh, as a stevedore and uh, became very good uh, as a stain—stone mason also. And uh, at one point, uh, he got a contract uh, to supply equip—uh, uh, rock and gravel to the McCandless contractor who was fixing the road in the Kahuku area. So he went out there, he ran the quarry, and he had a number of uh, people who worked under him. And he was powder man; he didn't want to trust that to anybody else for fear that people might get hurt. But he had to climb up the mountain to go uh, blast uh, to break up the uh, the rocks.

(Shot 4)

03:54 QUESTION: Wasn't he wrestler?

03:57 ARIYOSHI: Yeah.

03:57 QUESTION: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

03:58 ARIYOSHI: Uh-huh. He was a sumo wrestler. Uh, he was quite a good sumo wrestler, very strong. Uh ... and uh, uh, I recall the years when my father wanted me to take judo, for example. But he never let me take part in any tournament. And I couldn't understand why. And later on, I began to understand that for him, uh, uh, taking judo and learning the art meant that you uh, learned uh, the—the—the skills, but it also became something that gave you peace and security.

(Shot 5)

04:31 QUESTION: Where did you [UNINTELLIGIBLE]?

04:34 ARIYOSHI: I uh, (04:36-04:53-ZOOM IN from MEDIUM to MEDIUM CU) we—when he was uh ... uh, running the quarry at uh, in Laie, we lived in uh, uh, uh, in the Laie area. I went to the first grade Laie School. And we came downtown, my father became—worked—worked as a stevedore. We lived in Palama. And uh ... uh ... my father also had a tofu shop. When I was born, uh, I was born in Chinatown. Uh, he had a tofu business, small tofu business downstairs uh, and we lived in what—what we would consider to be tenement houses up there. Uh, a long row of uh, veranda . Uh, we had two of those rooms up there. Uh,

uh, community kitchen facilities that my mother used to cook for us. Uh  
...

(Shot 6)

**05:20** QUESTION: And do I remember a restaurant in your family; your mother had a restaurant or something?

**05:27** ARIYOSHI: Yes; uh-huh. On Smith Street uh, uh, (**05:29-05:41-ZOOM IN to tighter MEDIUM CU**) uh, we had a restaurant and she served beer also. Uh, and that was uh, uh, when the war broke out, uh, we couldn't uh, continue to be uh, live there, and uh, we had to uh, leave. Uh, so my parents left everything and went up to live with my car—uh, cousins in Manoa.

(Shot 7)

**05:49** QUESTION: You couldn't live there because of—

**05:52** INTERRUPTION/GENERAL CONVERSATION

(Shot 8)

**06:00** QUESTION: Tell me again why you had to go up and live in Manoa Valley. During the war, what happened to Japanese Americans?

**06:08** ARIYOSHI: The uh, military felt that we were uh, too close to the waterfront. And they felt that uh, uh ... uh, at least my folks uh, should not be living there, and so we had to move out to uh, my cousin's who had a farm out at Manoa.

(Shot 9)

**06:22** QUESTION: How old were you then?

**06:23** ARIYOSHI: I was fifteen years old then.

**06:25** QUESTION: So you remember wartime Hawaii fairly well.

**06:29** ARIYOSHI: Yes, I do.

(Shot 10)

**06:30** QUESTION: Could you describe what the living conditions were for most people under martial law?

**06:34** ARIYOSHI: Well, it was uh, (**06:35-06:50-ZOOM IN from MEDIUM CU to CU**) we had blackout for one thing. And uh, our junior year, our junior prom, we ... had our prom uh, from one to four-thirty uh, because six o'clock we had curfew, we had to be off the streets. Uh, so all during my time uh, when I was in high school, we had curfews and we had

to be off. Uh, our graduation prom, uh, was at the Mormon Tabernacle, and we had to pull the drapes uh, during the day from one o'clock to four o'clock. We had to pull the drapes to make it look dark, and put dim lights on to provide the atmosphere.

(Shot 11)

**07:11** QUESTION: Did you as a Japanese American feel any resentment toward martial law and toward all of these restrictions?

**07:19** ARIYOSHI: (**07:19-07:20-PAN RIGHT**-subject goes from center of frame to the left) No, I felt that it was a very necessary thing. Uh, I felt that uh, uh, the people who were in charge uh, felt that it was for our security that uh, we had martial law, that we had to be off of—off the streets. So I went along with it. I didn't uh, feel any uh, have any feelings against it. I think one of the things it did was bring our family close together. Because we couldn't go out at night uh, and so we had to learn to get along well together. And we played checkers and chess, and uh, Chinese checkers [CHUCKLES]. We did a lot of things together that we might not have done uh, under different circumstances.

(Shot 12)

**07:58** QUESTION: You said you started out school at Laie and then move into town.

**08:05** ARIYOSHI: Yes.

**08:05** QUESTION: Where did you go to school in town?

**08:06** ARIYOSHI: I went to Kaiulani School. Kaiulani School; then I went on to Central Intermediate School. And it was at Central that I had a teacher who uh, Mrs. Margaret Hamada, who was my teacher for three years, uh, my core studies teachers. So the bulk of my time during the three years that I spent with her—and she was the one who uh, talked to me about what I wanted to become in the future. And I used to write for the uh, reporter for the uh, uh, the school paper. And so I was very interested in journalism. And uh, she sent me to—she set up—set up an appointment for me to go see a lawyer in town, Arthur Trask. Uh, and I went to see him, and he talked to me about what his work entailed, uh, about he was involved in helping so many people who uh, needed help. And then I decided that gee, maybe I wanted to become a lawyer. (**08:59**) So in the eighth grade, I made that decision that I wanted to become a lawyer. And I told my father about that, and he was very happy. My father always used to tell me, I can leave you material things, I can give you money, but you can spend it all and it'll be all gone. But if I can help you get an education, you will always—it will always be with you. And so he was very happy when I told him that I wanted to become a lawyer.

And he told me—he used the Japanese word; hadaka ni nattemo. Even if I become naked, you can have the shirt off my back for uh, make this—uh, to make this possible. I also at that time had a very ... uh, strong lisping. And uh, that led to stuttering from time to time. And sometimes I would want to participate in a class discussion, (09:47-

**09:56-SLOW ZOOM IN to tighter CU)** I would think so hard about how are you going to uh, produce the sounds that sometimes I would forget what I wanted to say. And uh, I felt uh, very strongly then after I talked to Arthur Trask uh, and he did a lot of trial work, that unless I could learn to speak well, I could not uh, become a lawyer. And so Mrs. Hamada uh, in her own ways uh, tried to help me. She was not a speech pathologist, but because she cared so much about me, and she had me come over weekends, spend time with her. She'd tell me, Oh, I need some help in class uh, to fix up some things. Uh, could you come over and help? And I went, and I spent maybe—we'd spend thirty-five or forty minutes uh, doing that. And then she'd tell me, I want you to read to me. And so I had—she—I read out uh, aloud to her, and she helped me. And I think more than anybody else, uh, I think she helped me overcome the problems uh, difficulty that I had. Uh, she had me appointed as a uh, on the student court as a defense attorney. Uh, she encouraged me to take part in oratory contests. Uh, she followed me through McKin—uh, to—into McKinley High School. And when I represented McKinley at the uh, uh, state uh, the Honolulu—Oahu finals, she came to see—uh, listen to me. And she encouraged me uh, throughout my career. So I uh, owe a great deal to my teachers who spent so much time to help me uh, develop uh, uh, to participate in ways that were very meaningful.

**(Shot 13)**

**11:16** QUESTION: You had met at McKinley High School, Miles [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

**11:20** ARIYOSHI: That's right.

**11:20** QUESTION: Was he still principal when you were there?

**11:21** ARIYOSHI: He was principal when I went there, but he was there for only a short period because the war broke out—broke out and—during my sophomore year and uh, he went to Poston, Arizona to take over the school system out there.

**(Shot 14)**

**11:33** QUESTION: You got involved in student politics.

**11:39** ARIYOSHI: Yes.

**11:39** QUESTION: You were the student body president or senior

class—

**11:42** ARIYOSHI: I was the senior class president; uh-huh. And uh, uh, a lot of it was because of the encouragement that I received when I first was there, exposed to Dr. Cherry for a very short period of time. But even though I was there as a sophomore, exposed to him for a very short time, I—I had uh, pursued my interest in uh, journalism, so I was a reporter for the Daily Pinion at that time. And as a result, I came in contact with him frequently. And he was the kind of person who made you feel good about being alive, living each day and how—what a wonderful it is. He was always that way. What a wonderful day it is today, isn't it? And he talked about how important it was for people to participate uh, to be—find themselves uh, involved in ways that uh, were very meaningful. (12:27) And so I recall the school, how it encouraged the—the core programs, how it encouraged participation. That no matter what background you had and how—where you came from, that America, Hawaii offered the opportunity for people to participate in very meaningful ways.

**(Shot 15)**

**12:43** QUESTION: Didn't you feel some sort of contradiction? I mean, here's McKinley High School teaching democracy and participation and courts and journalism and so on, and yet you live in a territory where appointed governor and no elected representatives, but in a modern city and so forth.

**13:02** ARIYOSHI: Yeah.

**13:03** QUESTION: Was there any sense of contradiction to that?

**13:03** ARIYOSHI: No; I didn't feel that very much. Because growing up, I didn't think—see the great distinction between statehood and uh, the territorial status. Uh, and I think what was important to us was the ability to participate. So we had forums and we had uh, all kinds of ways in which they wanted us to participate in very meaningful ways. **(Shot 16)**

**13:21** QUESTION: You graduated in 1943?

**13:24** ARIYOSHI: '44.

**13:25** QUESTION: '44; and then you went to the Army, right?

**13:28** ARIYOSHI: I went—I went to the uh, u—uh, University for a while. And then I got drafted into the Army in 1945.

**13:35** QUESTION: And you did two years service?

13:37 ARIYOSHI: Year and a half. Year and a half; I went to Fort Knott uh, uh, for my language uh, MIS uh, uh, language uh, uh, training there. And uh, uh, I went to Japan uh, for—with the occupation forces. But I was there for such a short while, and I could have stayed longer by uh, uh, reenlisting. But I was very anxious to uh, come back and—and get into law school and become a lawyer.

(Shot 17)

14:02 QUESTION: When you got out of the service, did you come back to UH or did you go to Michigan State?

14:06 ARIYOSHI: I went—came back to University uh, Hawaii. And I spent a uh, semester at the University of Hawaii. But that's the time when all the veterans were coming back, and lots of partying and drinking and going on. I just felt that uh, it may become difficult for me to pursue my career if I got involved in uh, uh, doing that. And so I felt it's uh, be—better for me to uh, go away. And I did so without even uh, uh, notice that I was going to be accepted by in the school. And I wanted to go to Michigan, because I thought about the law school at Michigan, they have a very fine law school. But when I got there, they told me that registration for—at Michigan State for—at Michigan for out of state students had been closed. But that Michigan State was still open, and maybe I could go there and enroll. So I went there. I enrolled and they accepted me, and I became a student at Michigan State for a year and a half.

(Shot 18)

14:57 QUESTION: And you graduated from Michigan—

14:58 ARIYOSHI: I graduated from Michigan State.

14:59 QUESTION: Then you got into Michigan Law School?

15:01 ARIYOSHI: Yes; uh-huh.

15:02 QUESTION: And moved over there. What memories do you have or perception that Michigan State students or your law school classmates had of Hawaii? Were you seen as a pineapple guy, or did they—

15:23 ARIYOSHI: You mean, that others had of us?

15:25 QUESTION: Of us.

15:25 ARIYOSHI: Yeah.

**15:26** QUESTION: Yeah.

**15:26** ARIYOSHI: Yeah; they used to ask about, oh, what kind of a home do you live in? Especially at Michigan State; not so much at Michigan. But uh, in my—during my undergraduate years, they talked about the food we ate. Uh, I recall once uh, when they asked me about what kind of food uh, do you eat? Uh, and my first response was, sashimi. And they said, what's sashimi? I said, oh, sashimi is raw fish. They said, oh, my god; you eat raw fish? Uh, you're like a savage. And my response was, oh, you eat raw meat, don't you? [CHUCKLES] And they probably had the perception, when I said raw fish, that I was taking one of these small fi—fish and just eating uh, of the fish like that. (16:03) Uh, uh, but I also had an experience when my parents uh, used to send me food from Hawaii. And they sent me uh, dried uh, uh, tako, octopus. And we had uh, these uh, heaters in the room, uh, the old radiator type heater. Uh, very hot if you touched them. And I put a piece of tako on there to uh, kind of uh, warm it up. And then after awhile, I heard the commotion outside of the room, and somebody uh, knocked on the door and they opened, they came in. They said, yeah, this is the place. I said, what's wrong? They said, oh, the smell. [CHUCKLES] What are you doing? And they came and smelled the tako, you know, from uh, my room. And wha—I told them what it was. They—and I told them it was octopus. They said, oh ... they can't eat that, you can't eat that. I said, but I do. I've been used to eating it.

(Shot 19)

**16:51** QUESTION: When did you first become aware of the issue of statehood as something that some people were upset about or felt that there was some urgency that Hawaii get statehood?

**17:02** ARIYOSHI: You know, Dan, in many ways, I led a—I had a very protected life. Uh, uh, because of the whole—uh, because uh, we lived in a tenement uh, uh, house where we had only two rooms, and that became our uh, living room, our dining room, tables rolled out, the futon rolled out after that. Uh, and because we were very close, uh, we—and my parents—my mother also al—always wanted to know where I was. Uh, and so I always told her where I was going. And if was going to someplace else from there, I always made it a point to come back and let her know. Uh, and so in many ways, uh, my parents uh, were very close—looked after us, very protected. Uh, uh, I grew up as I went to—through Kaiulani School, uh, I uh, grew up with people of all kinds of uh, background and races. I never felt uh, any uh ... prejudice or bias or any different from the rest of the kids while—while I was growing up. (17:57) Uh, when I uh, uh, came back from uh, law school, uh, as I started to practice law, I began to feel that there was—there were differences in



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how we were looked upon. And I met uh, Bert Kobayashi, Sr., who was—who became Attorney General under Jack Burns' time. And I uh, was told by Bert that though he was working for uh, that uh, Lewers & Cooke, and that he—he worked himself up to a certain level, and that he could never hope to get above that. And so he decided to leave his employment, go to law school, and become a lawyer. That really uh, struck me, and I looked around and I felt the same—that happening all over Hawaii. The Big Five so much in control of the economy, and the people not having the kind of opportunities based upon their talent. It was who you knew, what groups you uh, knew. And it was not confined—it was not a racial thing. Because many Caucasians also were in the same kind of situation. And so that's when I began to be—feel that Hawaii was very different. (18:57) I began to also feel that Hawaii's destiny was tied so much to the mainland. It was the President of the United States who was appointing the governor, President of the United States appointing all of the judges, circuit court judges. And I began to feel very strongly that we must have an opportunity for us to control our own destiny, that we must have the ability to elect our own people uh, uh, through our people who were not uh, uh, performing on the basis of our—our needs.

(Shot 20)

19:26 QUESTION: You had a rather fateful (19:28-19:36-ZOOM OUT from CU to MEDIUM CU) meeting, I believe, in 1954 with a guy at a school here in town and during the election. Could you tell us about that meeting?

19:38 ARIYOSHI: In ...

19:39 QUESTION: Jack Burns.

19:40 ARIYOSHI: Oh, Jack Burns. Oh, yes; uh-huh. Yeah. I had just uh, come back from uh, uh, Michigan uh, Law School and had not been practicing law very long [CLEARS THROAT] when a friend of mine uh, Tom Ebisu, who became—was my best man when I got married, uh, wanted me to go to a meeting at the old Nuuanu YMCA, which is ... uh ... on uh, very close to the current YMCA—kitty katta from the uh, uh, current YMCA. And he wanted me to meet uh, Jack Burns. So when I first met uh, first met Jack Burns, uh, Jack started to talk to me about uh, Hawaii, how did you feel when you were growing up, did you feel any bias, any kind of discrimination. And because I was not grow—uh, brought up on a plantation, I didn't feel some of the bias that the plantation people felt. And my response was, no. And he said, how do you feel now? I told him, well, I felt that—feel that Hawaii is a very different kind of place that—from where I grew up on. Making a living—earning a living here is very different from just growing up and

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playing here. And he wanted to know what uh, I felt uh, I could do with it. (20:50) I said, well, I don't know what I can do, but I feel very strongly that we sh—must have equal opportunities here in this community. So he told me, after about fifteen minutes, he told me, run for office. And I thought he was talking to somebody else. I turned around, looked, and I ... then he says, no, you; you run for office. And my response, but I'm so young. And I haven't been uh, practicing law very long, and people don't know me. And he said, but that's not the point. It's how you feel. And how you feel, what you want to see done in the community. And there are some other people who will be running this election. So he said, run for office. (21:24) At the time that this conversation took place, it was three days before the filing deadline, and it was only thirty-three days before the primary election. And uh, when I—Tom Ebisu came to see me the next day, and he said, let's go file. And he had my papers all signed up. Uh, I told him, Tom, it's so sudden. I need to think about this. So he said, let's go talk. We went to Ala Moana and got a plate uh, s—uh, stew rice, uh, and we sat out there and we talked about our childhood days, and we talked about the circumstances now, and we talked about what Hawaii ought to be. And so after we had that conversation about two hours out there, we came back and I said, Tom, I'm not ready to file. I said, one more day. So I waited until the last day before I decided to file. (22:12) At that point, now, we only had thirty days before the primary election. And if you recall back in those days, that district that I was going to run in, the 5<sup>th</sup> dis—se—uh, representative district, we had only two representative districts on this island. Now we have about thirty-six or thirty-seven. And my district was—Nuuanu Avenue was the dividing line—all the way out towards uh, Waianae, Nanakuli, Wahiawa, Kahuku, back to the Kaneohe area. So I had a huge district to run in, and I only had thirty days to campaign. We had to start making brochures and all the things that needed to be done before we—before we could go out.

(Shot 21)

22:49 QUESTION: But you won.

22:51 ARIYOSHI: Fortunately, yes. You know, (22:54-23:02-ZOOM OUT from MEDIUM CU to MEDIUM) Tom Ebisu was a Farrington graduate; I went to McKinley. He got all his Farrington classmates, and I got my McKinley classmates, and we had s—re—referred to the campaign as lots of Indians, but no chief. And we had no idea what we were—how we were gonna go about campaigning.

(Shot 22)

23:09 QUESTION: The unions played a big role [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

23:12 ARIYOSHI: Yes.

23:12 QUESTION: That district particularly, they helped a lot.

23:14 ARIYOSHI: Yes. But you know, um ... we had uh, thirteen Democrats uh, running in that primary. Uh, six uh, to be nominated uh, in the primary. I came in third. I came in—Kauhane led, uh, [UNINTELLIGIBLE] uh, came in second. I was third. [UNINTELLIGIBLE] came in fourth in that campaign. And the ... unions were very strong. Plantations uh, very active and—at that time. And the ... ILWU was very concerned about how strong I had uh, been in that uh, election. And they uh, came to our first meeting after the primary meeting. And we had our candidates meeting on—we had this meeting on the s—election on Saturday, and on Monday we had the candidates uh, who had uh, won coming together. (24:05) And they started to talk about our campaign. And they—I was told that I had to campaign as a team. I was told that I had—that I could not uh, print any brochures, have my own brochure, that we had a team brochure. And my response was, oh, but what do I do with all the people who are work—who've been working with us, who have been going house-to-house and canvassing with our brochures? What are they gonna pass out? They said, well, they can pass out a team brochure. And I told them, no, they're not gonna do that. And I need to have something that I can—is—which is my own that can pass out. And their response was, but we'll get elected as a team. I said, no, we won't get elected as a team. I'm a brand new face that very people know, and unless there is an extra effort on my part to get—do something, I don't believe that I can get—I can make it. And I told them, you know, you folks are political pros, but I think I think more like a person, the average voter, because I've not been involved in politics that long. And they wouldn't give me their blessing until about two weeks later, I finally uh, uh, told them that I uh, was going to go ahead and print my—get my brochures printed. And they finally agreed with me. Okay, can you do it during the next week, but the last week, don't print it, don't use any uh, individual brochures.

(Shot 23)

25:24 QUESTION: And did you [UNINTELLIGIBLE]?

25:26 ARIYOSHI: I was uh, came in third. I came in third during that uh, uh, election.

25:31 QUESTION: But there were two spots. In the general you came—

25:34 ARIYOSHI: There were six spots.

- 25:35 QUESTION: Oh, it was six spots.
- 25:35 ARIYOSHI: There six to be elected, yeah.
- 25:36 QUESTION: And you [UNINTELLIGIBLE].
- 25:37 ARIYOSHI: That's right.
- 25:37 QUESTION: You could have gone into marketing instead of politics.
- 25:39 ARIYOSHI: [CHUCKLES] There were six spots; right.
- 25:41 QUESTION: What [UNINTELLIGIBLE] you of ...
- 25:44 ARIYOSHI: You know, but that's—that's election when we ... uh ... all the Democrat incumbent, Kauhane, [UNINTELLIGIBLE] and uh ... uh, [UNINTELLIGIBLE] survived. Uh, the only Republican incumbent to survive was uh, Taka Fukushima. And Hiram Fong—Hiram Fong and [UNINTELLIGIBLE] Shimamura were defeated during that election. That's the only race that Hiram Fong ever lost.
- (Shot 24)
- 26:12 QUESTION: That was [UNINTELLIGIBLE].
- 26:14 ARIYOSHI: Yeah; uh-huh.
- 26:19 QUESTION: Did statehood play much of a role in the [UNINTELLIGIBLE] of that campaign? I know Jack Burns ran for Delegate to Congress that year and you must have stood on the podium with him on a couple of—
- 26:32 ARIYOSHI: Yeah.
- 26:32 QUESTION: --occasions, and in your own campaign. To what extent was it part of the Democratic [UNINTELLIGIBLE] and what was the Democratic—
- 26:38 ARIYOSHI: Statehood—
- 26:38 QUESTION: --Party [UNINTELLIGIBLE]?
- 26:39 ARIYOSHI: Statehood I don't think was a big issue during that 1954 election. But in the ni—uh, and Jack uh, did uh, speak about uh, statehood, but I think most of the people were not that concerned at that point about statehood. They were more concerned what happens here

in—in Hawaii. And it was in 1956 that—election that really the statehood beca—uh, thing became very, very important. Everybody spoke about statehood. And uh, uh, Jack Burns uh, got elected in 1956. And when he got elected, he uh ... I'm—I'm sorry; he did not. He got elected in 1950.

**(Shot 25)**

**27:17** QUESTION: No, he did get elected in '56. He lost in '54. And Joe Farrington died in '53 and Mrs. Farrington won that special election, and Burns ran in '54 and lost by a very short margin.

**27:36** ARIYOSHI: Uh-huh; uh-huh.

**27:37** QUESTION: And then in '56 he [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

**27:40** ARIYOSHI: Yeah; okay. Now, after the '56 election, uh, Jack Burns uh, became uh ...

**(Shot 26)**

**27:50** QUESTION: Before you go there, I want to go back to that first session. '54, you're a state representative.

**27:58** ARIYOSHI: Yes.

**27:59** QUESTION: You're a territorial representative in the Territorial Legislature,

**(28:02-28:11-ZOOM IN from MEDIUM to MEDIUM CU)** and you guys are passing a whole load of new legislation and if I'm not mistaken, Sam King, the appointed governor just veto, veto, veto in 1955.

**28:16** ARIYOSHI: That's right.

**28:16** QUESTION: Could you describe the frustrations of that sessions from your point of view, and to the extent to which those frustrations led to statehood?

**28:23** ARIYOSHI: Yeah. I think that '55 session was a very productive session where we passed so many bills that really uh, would have changed Hawaii uh, very drastically. But as uh, uh, because we had a Republican appointed governor, and that was uh, not Judge King, but his father Sam King, uh ... vetoed uh, tax legislations, he vetoed um, uh ... all the progre—very progressive type of legislation that we uh, passed during that session. Uh ... we were able to override uh, um, some bills. Uh, I recall some tax legislation that we were able to override. But most of the veto uh, stood and we could not get uh, enough uh, Republicans to come along with us to override.

**(Shot 27)**

**29:11** QUESTION: What committees were you on; do you remember?  
In that first session.

**29:19** ARIYOSHI: I—I think that I was on the military and civil  
defense uh, committee. That first session.

**29:26** QUESTION: And some of your colleagues decide  
[UNINTELLIGIBLE] ...

**29:36** END

## Interview

## GEORGE ARIYOSHI

## REEL 2

## (Shot 1-wasn't able to capture question)

00:04 ARIYOSHI: (MEDIUM CU; 00:04-00:09-crew member in shot) --and the Gill group together, and very concerned about what might happen in fif—the next election if they—they continued to slip. But I couldn't get Tom to come along. We couldn't get Tom to come along. He just felt that he was gonna be there.

00:19 QUESTION: Yeah.

00:20 ARIYOSHI: In fact, after that 1956 uh, Democratic Convention, county convention, uh, I called Tom. Tom Ebisu, we talked. And Tom said, hey, look; Tadao Beppu was uh, Burns' uh, uh, group's candidate, and Tadao Beppu had lost. And so we said, you know, we can't continue this feuding. We gotta go on, we gotta help Tom. So Tom Ebisu and I decided we would do that. I called Tom Gill and I said, Tom, I said, now that the election is over, we're gonna [UNINTELLIGIBLE], but we're gonna come ba—we want to get in and help. And his response to me was, I won, I'm picking up the marbles.

## (Shot 2)

01:00 QUESTION: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

01:03 ARIYOSHI: And you know, I did something very similar after that. After the 1970 uh, primary ... when he ran against Jack Burns, and I, you know, ran against Vince Yano and [UNINTELLIGIBLE] and a few other people. After the primary election, I talked to Governor Burns and I told him, you know, Governor, Democrat Party always come together after the primary. And we gotta do that; we gotta come together. And he said, I'm not talking to Tom Gill, but you can go if you want to. So I went, and I asked him whether or not it was possible for us to close ranks. And he told me, nope.

## (Shot 3)

01:36 QUESTION: He was ... are we going? Yeah; he was always that way. (01:43-01:46-PAN DOWN to subject's reflection on table) I want to go back to 1956. And as a result of all those vetoes and so on, (01:54-02:03-PAN UP to MEDIUM CU of subject's face) the Democrats thought we'd win maybe even a little bit bigger in 1956, and Jack Burns is

elected to Congress in 1956. Tell me about what role you played in lobbying for statehood. If I'm not mistaken, there were twenty Congressional hearings that were held. (02:23-02:25-PAN DOWN to subject's reflection on table) I know that there were a lot of Congressmen who were coming out here, delegations were going up there. Were you involved in any lobbying?

**02:30** ARIYOSHI: (02:30-02:45-PAN UP to MEDIUM CU of subject's face) In an indirect way, but I was never directly involved. We had a Statehood Commission that was uh, out there pushing uh, for statehood. Uh, uh, whenever we had a chance to talk to anyone here, uh, we did it, we expressed our—our feelings about statehood. And I think what we tried to do was to try to convince people here in Hawaii that statehood was in fact a very important, good thing uh, for Hawaii.

(Shot 4)

**02:55** QUESTION: Tell me about Jack Burns himself. You watched him [UNINTELLIGIBLE] you saw him when he came back. What did he do and how successful was he?

**03:08** ARIYOSHI: Yeah. I was not uh—you know, we had the Gill faction and the Burns faction. And in 1956, I supported Jack Burns. In fact, my father—he wanted my father to help uh, uh, in the campaign. Uh, and we provided that kind of support. But I was never part of the loyal Burns uh, grouping as such. Uh, uh, Russell Kono, who was a representative uh, from the 4<sup>th</sup> district uh ... and Bert Kobayashi who became Attorney General later, were my law partners. And we were not uh, classified in any—any side. Uh, we were Democrats, we wanted to bring the pa—groups together. So that was my relation to Jack Burns. But after that 1956 election, I watched Jack Burns on the statehood issue. And when Jack Burns decided that Hawaii could never become a state unless they unblocked some pu—uh, things that were uh, important to the uh, uh, particularly the senators out there. (04:02) And what he sa—uh, de—concluded was that Hawaii was regarded then as a Republican state, and Alaska regarded as a Democrat state. And that if they did not permit—and Democrats controlled the uh, uh, Senate at that time. Jack Burns concluded that the way to unblock it was to let a Democrat state uh, uh, territory become a state first. With that assurance that the Republicans considered the state to be—considered Republican could follow. And he made that—he was ma—willing to make that switch, because he could see that uh, felt that that was the only way Hawaii could become a state. And uh, to his credit, he was absolutely correct. And as a result, after 19—uh, before the 19 uh, 68 election, Alaska became the 49<sup>th</sup> state, even though we were billed as the 49<sup>th</sup> state for uh, before then. I looked at that as a very courageous act on his part. He's coming back to face an election in 1958, and he was coming back without statehood to Hawaii. But he had



let another state get ahead and become uh, become a—a—a state. And I—I felt uh, that this man was a man of great courage, a man who was more concerned about what was good for the people, a very principled person, rather than his own political good. (05:30) And I remember that campaign so well, because in that '68 campaign, I went out and I really campaigned hard for Jack Burns. I spoke for him, I referred to him as a man of courage, a man who was willing to give up his own political future in order to make statehood possible for Hawaii. And that I felt that uh, we—uh, we had not yet become a state, but we were going to become a state now with contin—with the same person continuing that effort and getting the congre—the—and especially the US Senate to support uh, Hawaiian statehood.

(Shot 5)

06:02 QUESTION: Where were you in March when those bills passed the House and Senate (06:06-06:25-SLOW ZOOM IN from MEDIUM CU to CU) and President Eisenhower signed it? Where were you when statehood passed? Do you remember your emotions and your—

06:12 ARIYOSHI: Yeah.

06:12 QUESTION: --feelings?

06:13 ARIYOSHI: I uh—[CLEARS THROAT]—the sta—the problem was uh, was not with the Congress uh, with uh, House side. And we had passed, so I was not uh, concerned too much about uh, when it passed uh, but I was very concerned that we had to get the Senate to pass the—the statehood bill. And that statehood bill passed on March 12, 1959. And it was my birthday. And I was in the uh, uh, we were in session at that time, and I just—when the news came out, I just happened to be with a friend of mine who was from San Francisco. He was visiting and he—his name was Richard Goldman. Turned uh—he is now—he's one of the great philanthropists in the Bay Area, and he was there with me. And I celebrated statehood. I was—I was so happy too with him, and he was so happy that Hawaii became a state also.

07:00 QUESTION: It was a big day.

07:01 ARIYOSHI: That was a big day.

07:02 QUESTION: I remember I guess it was the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of [UNINTELLIGIBLE] and you were governor, and you dedicated the day to Jack Burns.

07:09 ARIYOSHI: Yes.

07:09 QUESTION: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

07:10 ARIYOSHI: That's right.

07:10 QUESTION: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

07:11 ARIYOSHI: That's right.

07:11 QUESTION: When you were governor.

07:12 ARIYOSHI: Yes.

(Shot 7)

07:13 QUESTION: But there were bells ringing and—do you remember the celebrations that day, what happened?

07:20 ARIYOSHI: We were very busy in the Legislature. But a group of us also walked over to uh, Kawaiahao Palace—uh, to Kawaiahao Church. And uh, there Reverend Akaka (07:37-07:48-SLOW ZOOM IN to tighter CU) uh, delivered a sermon, and we were—we rejoiced to the fact that Hawaii became a state.

(Shot 8)

07:37 QUESTION: Were you aware of that at any time in this process from when you came back in '51 until statehood was achieved in 1959, do you remember at any time [UNINTELLIGIBLE] or hearing the opposition of business interests to statehood, or of Hawaiians to statehood?

08:00 ARIYOSHI: I think that uh, many of the Native Hawaiians were very concerned about statehood. And I heard uh, them express uh, feelings uh, and doubts about uh, statehood. We had a—uh, we had at least one plebiscite here in Hawaii, and I think even during that time the concern was expressed by uh, some Native Hawaiians that this was not good for Hawaii. That they were uh, giving up uh, uh, to become part of the United States. We already were, but they felt that we were becoming a part of the United States really, by becoming a state.

(Shot 9)

08:31 QUESTION: Did you know anyone personally, any Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian personally who said anything like that?

08:37 ARIYOSHI: No, I don't know of anybody personally. I don't remember.

(Shot 10)

08:43 QUESTION: It's now 1959, statehood has arrived; you had

come back in 1951. [UNINTELLIGIBLE] How did you feel as a Japanese American when you heard some of the opposition to Hawaii's statehood, being that it's got too many people who are not ready and Japanese who we were recently at war with. How did you respond to that? [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

**09:10** ARIYOSHI: Yeah. I didn't uh—you know, this was after the ... uh ... uh, battles in j—Europe, uh, in the Pacific, uh, the 442, the 100<sup>th</sup>, the MIS was not yet uh, well known during that period. But I just felt that uh, there was no need for us to respond uh, that we had proven ... that loyalty. Americanism was not a matter of race, uh, it was a matter of how people felt uh ...and we all felt very strongly about being Americans. We all felt very strongly about wanting to participate in very meaningful ways uh, in ways that affected our future. And so I didn't uh, uh, it didn't bother me.

(Shot 11)

**09:53** QUESTION: In 1959, you're still practicing law with Russell Kono and—

**09:58** ARIYOSHI: Yes.

**09:59** QUESTION: --and Bert Kobayashi, and statehood happens, [UNINTELLIGIBLE] happens, and the war in Vietnam will heat up in the next few years [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. How did statehood, to what extent do you think statehood contributed to Hawaii's economic boom following 1959?

**10:20** ARIYOSHI: You know, there was a great boom that followed uh, in the early uh, 60s. And I think that the fact that people—well, when we became a state, it gave us great uh, credibility as a uh, as a te—from a territory to state. People ... in other words, Hawaii was put on the map, so to speak. More people learned about Hawaii, became familiar with Hawaii. And I think some of the messages that were being given out at that time, that this makes it possible for us to control our own destiny, that we have control now who's going to be our leader. We have control about the judiciary, who's going to uh, pass judgment on—legally on the things that we do. And I think that made—gave people a great deal of confidence and uh, want—coming to Hawaii, uh, uh ... doing business in Hawaii. We even had people like Henry Kaiser, who got interested in wanting to come and do business uh, in Hawaii.

(Shot 12)

**11:17** QUESTION: And [UNINTELLIGIBLE] was business getting better? Was everybody— (11:25-11:39-ZOOM OUT to wider CU) was the ship rising for everybody?

**11:27** ARIYOSHI: Yes; uh-huh. My uh, business uh, my—uh, my practice was uh, getting better. And I had been practicing for uh, quite ... oh, eight, nine years uh, by that time, so my business was uh, uh, steady, uh, getting better. Uh, I think the general economy, general businesses, every businessperson in Hawaii began to feel that things were better. And part of it, I guess, was because of the—the tourism uh, and visitors. You know, when Hawaii became a state, for example, we only had seventeen thousand Japanese coming to Hawaii. And within a short period at the time, the tourism numbers from Japan uh ... increased tenfold, twentyfold.

(shot 13)

**12:11** QUESTION: You saw Dan Inouye, one of your contemporaries run immediately for ...

**12:20** ARIYOSHI: Congress.

**12:21** QUESTION: Congress or—

**12:22** ARIYOSHI: Yes.

**12:22** QUESTION: Congress and then the United States Senate, and Patsy Mink

(**12:24-12:37-PAN LEFT** and then **PAN RIGHT**) and Sparky Matsunaga. Were you ever tempted to run for higher office [UNINTELLIGIBLE]?

(Shot 14)

**12:29** ARIYOSHI: No, I was not. In fact, I was not tempted to run for governor un—uh, when I was asked to make that decision. And I was content to be where I was. I was uh, busy with my law practice uh, uh, I was a family person, my children were growing up, and I felt an obligation to them. And I felt that my place was here in Hawaii. So I never was tempted. Uh, when Sparky Matsunaga died, and that was in ...

**12:57** QUESTION: '76.

**12:58** ARIYOSHI: Yes. Uh ... no, in uh, eighty uh ... '88 or '89, or thereabouts.

**13:05** QUESTION: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

**13:07** ARIYOSHI: Yeah. Uh ... Sparky got elected in 1976. Uh, there were people who was en—were encouraging me to go after ... the uh, the seat. But I uh, decided that I did not want to uh ... I had served as governor and I could make my own decisions and do what I wanted uh, as

governor. I didn't want to get involved in a situation where I was so dependent uh, and voting with other people and doing things that I had to do that maybe uh ... I—I didn't want to do.

(Shot 15)

13:40 QUESTION: You didn't want to be just a mere legislator.

13:42 ARIYOSHI: Right; yes. And I felt that when I was governor, I had a chance to do—look at Hawaii, look at the kind of things that I wanted to—to have here in Hawaii, to make those decisions. And uh, I felt ... that I didn't want to be involved in any other way.

(Shot 16)

14:00 QUESTION: Do you have any regrets about statehood? Are there times when you look around and you say, well, I remember the good old days, there were things about Hawaii in the 30s and 40s and 50s that are missing and statehood helped to bring this thing upon us. Do you ever—

14:14 ARIYOSHI: No, I don't feel that way. And I don't blame statehood for some of the changes that have taken place. I am very concerned about Hawaii's future. (14:21-14:49-SLOW ZOOM IN from CU to tighter CU) I am concerned about what has happened to uh, uh, in Hawaii. But it's not the fault of statehood. I think it's the fault of our people who did not look ahead, and who today aren't looking ahead and asking the question, what kind of place do you want Hawaii to be ten, fifteen, twenty years from now. And to me, that's very vital. And if you recall, I adopt—I got a uh, state plan uh, adopted by the Legislature in '77 or '78 uh, session of the Legislature. I had a very easy time getting those plans adopted. But those plans called for the passage of—adoption of twelve functional plans, more specific uh, uh, plans regarding tourism, education, health, uh, the economy uh, the environment, uh, water. And I had great difficulty getting those pla—plans uh, adopted, because now we're getting very specific. And people are very concerned about uh, becoming specific and looking to the future. I involved a lot of people, over two hundred to—two hundred to four hundred people on each of those functional plans. (15:21) They were the ones; they were not Ariyoshi's plans. It was their plan that they wanted for the future of Hawaii. And to me, that was very important. Because we took those functional plans afterwards, and we looked at them, and when our—we—in our preparation of a budg—budget, every department came to me uh, wanting to do certain things. I always asked them, how does it fit in with the functional plan, are we moving in the right kind of direction? And to me, if you don't have that, if you don't know what you want this state to be some years down the line, you're gonna be taking problems as they come, and solving it in the current context, not in the future context. (15:59) That's not the fault of statehood. And I fault those

who have been involved who have ignored the need for us to look at our future. If you look at the developments taking place now, what's going to happen after all the development. The economy is good now, but what's going to happen after all the development is finished. What kind of land are we going to have? What about our water resources? Uh ...

(Shot 17)

**16:26** QUESTION: You had to be the first Japanese American governor of any state in the Union, and you went before presidents for twelve years as the first ja—I don't think another Asian governor came along when you were in office. You went to the governors' conferences [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. How did that feel? What kind of responsibility did you feel as the first Asian state governor?

**16:47** ARIYOSHI: Well, personally, my feeling was that I had to do a good job as uh, the governor. But I had to be very careful that I did not do anything that reflected badly upon m—those who were my ethnic background. Uh, we have a Japanese word, uh, haji, shame. And my parents always talked about the importance of each of us doing the things that will be good for the whole community, but never to do anything that will bring shame to the family, to those that we are close to. And so that was a very uh ... much in my mind as I assumed the duties of governor. I felt also that I had a responsibility to do the best job that I could, that if I did not, I would make it difficult for others who would follow me. By others, I mean not just uh, the uh, Japanese uh, Americans, but any other person, local. See, the 1974 election—you gotta go back to 1970. (17:39) Jack Burns wanted me to run for lieutenant governor with him. But he was more interested in getting some assurance from him that uh, whether I was gonna be available in the 1974 election. Jack Burns wanted me to succeed him. And the reason why he wanted me to succeed, not because I was George Ariyoshi, but because he felt that if a person like me could get elected governor—because until then, there had been no governor born in Hawaii, no governor who was non-White. And his feeling was if I could get elected, I would break the barrier and perhaps it might provide opportunities for some others to be able to follow me. And so I was very mindful of the charge that Jack Burns gave me. And he—and I felt very strongly that I had to do a good job, that when I left I would—could go—leave with the feeling that people would say that, oh, I did an okay job, that they would not have a bias against others who would be following me.

(Shot 18)

**18:35** QUESTION: It was during your governorship, '76, that Hokule'a makes its voyage to Tahiti and the Hawaiian sovereignty movement really begins.

**18:45** ARIYOSHI: Yes.

**18:46** QUESTION: Tell me, where do you think the Hawaiian—how did you respond to all of that and particularly to the sovereignty activism? (**18:52-19:14-PAN LEFT** to window and **PAN RIGHT** to CU of subject's face) How do you feel sovereignty is going to ... where does sovereignty fit within Hawaii being a state?

**19:03** ARIYOSHI: Yeah. I believe that the ... uh, we need to do some things to provide some repayment to the Hawaiians for the loss of uh, their rights uh, here uh, as uh, uh, the—territory and then as uh ... members of the state. But I feel at the same time that all the rest of the people who are non-Hawaiians also have a right to a place under the sun here. And I think that's what my feeling is. That Hawaiians are entitled to sovereignty or whatever they want, and they should be the ones to make the decision about what they want for themselves. But it must be in the context of providing for the rest of the people here who live in Hawaii. Because both have a right to coexist here in Hawaii. And in that context, I support the rights of Hawaiians to be—have some sort of sovereignty, and it should not be a sovereign—kind of sovereignty imposed upon them by us. But it ought to be the Hawaiians themselves deciding what it is that they want.

**(Shot 19)**

**20:03** QUESTION: You're arguing that they can't step on the toes of the rest of the—

**20:07** ARIYOSHI: That's right. We can coexist. They can—they have their own—and I think that the rest of the people can coexist. And I think that's what—that's the magic of Hawaii. I often talk about Hawaii being a place where you have diversity. And diversity in other place separates people, because they're talking—will be talking about differences. But in Hawaii, it's a diversity that draws us together, where they can be exposed to somebody else's point of view. We get exposed to somebody else's culture and background. And as a result, we become more understanding, more tolerant. And that's what—that's to me what the magic of Hawaii is. That a di—very diverse people, saying that every person can be themselves, be their own, live their own lives, uh, do things in their own ways, and coexist with other people. And that—through that coexistence, each become more tolerant and more understanding. Because you understand somebody else's ways. And I think that's what Hawaii is. And maybe people from outside of Hawaii can't see that. But I can see Hawaii with the differences uh, and different uh, uh, existence uh, coexisting and living together. And I feel that rather than separating, I think that the people come together more because you recognize the rights of some people, other people in the community. And I think that will be a co-recognition of each other's rights.

**21:31** GENERAL CONVERSATION

**(B-Roll 1)**

**21:51 PAN DOWN to CU of hands and reflection on the table**

**22:05 PAN to CU of subject's face reflected on the table**

**22:17 PAN UP to CU of subject's face**

**(B-Roll 2)**

**22:33 PAN LEFT and PULL FOCUS to background scenery (subject's face at right edge of frame)**

**22:40 PAN RIGHT and PULL FOCUS to background scenery (subject's face at left edge of frame)**

**22:56 PAN LEFT and slight ZOOM OUT; PULL FOCUS to background**

**23:12 PAN RIGHT; PULL FOCUS to background**

**23:24 PAN LEFT; PULL FOCUS to background**

**23:39 slight ZOOM OUT; PANS RIGHT and LEFT**

**(B-Roll 3)**

**23:50 ZOOM IN to subject's aloha shirt, belt buckle, hands**

**(B-Roll 4)**

**24:32 PAN UP to CU of subject's face; PULL FOCUS to background; PANS**

**(B-Roll 5)**

**25:31 (CU of crew member) room tone recording, take 1 (NG)**

**25:53 (CU of crew member) room tone recording, take 2 (NG)**

**26:56 (CU of crew member, same shot as above) room tone recording, take 3**

**27:25 END**