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Period 4

*Interview- Guy Takahashi*

M: The following interview was conducted on behalf of the oral history program of Century High School. The interviewee is Guy Takahashi. The interviewer is Matt Maglalang. The interview took place at Century High School on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2002 at 3:11PM.

M: So coach, how many years have you worked at Century High School?

T: Five years, since the opening of the school.

M: And how could you describe those five years?

T: Well it's been very exciting; lots of challenges, lot of different events took place. Especially the first year, getting the school culture, getting the school developed to have some senior leadership was a bit frustrating. But, each year, we see a lot of good things and it's been a fun place for me and I really enjoy being here right now.

M: I see, so um, about the culture, it's interesting how you mentioned about the culture, how could you describe the culture in how its transitioned between these five years?

T; Well, the first year, here at Century, we had like a it was compared to a big junior high, where there was kids just playing around, no seniors to tell them what should be done in high school, what shouldn't be done in high school. Kids just kind of went and found out on there own things what they shouldn't do by getting in trouble. Things you wouldn't normally see in a high school. These silly games played, and you know running around, playing games in the cafeteria, that you normally don't see were all seen then. Also the other aspect was with the first year of school we had a big cultural problem with different diversities, gang, kind of related, Hispanics, Asians, no one really had a defined Century so everyone was trying to come in and prove or get there own turf, like what "Well this is trying to get there own" you know, get there grounds. So they were all trying to... and that's where we have the first year we had a fight like fifty kids in a parking lot. So, that was just a sting that got outta hand outta control was pretty for some stupid reason. I can't even remember what now but yeah it was silly things like that. Also, the first year we....gosh I can't even remember.

M: That's ok; we can always come back to it.

T: K, come back to it.

M: Um, so what was your first involvement with Century High School?

T: Um, involvement, meaning why I came here?

M: Why you came here and what was your first position?

T: Oh, ok, Why I came here was to coach wrestling. That was our main focus. I applied late; there wasn't a teaching opening for me. I just got done with my student teaching and everything and there was no teaching job opening. So they offered me a security job with other things being the head wrestling coach and football coach. So, I was willing to make a sacrifice and work in the security for a year, knowing that I would get out, but also just because I really wanted to coach and be in that aspect of the world, you know, the coaching realm.

M: Have you any other experiences with other high schools and working in high schools?

T: Yes, I've been at junior high, I've been at Neil Armstrong of Forest Grove, I've been, I've coached at the forest grove high school, and also you know, did my student teaching at Gaston, elementary through high school. Also, I did some you know, some teaching at the Neil Armstrong area.

M: So this wasn't your first high school involvement?

T: No, no not at all.

M: Ok, so as a security guard, could you just pinpoint your like challenges and successes?

T: Ok, one thing about security is you learn a lot, you learn what the kids think, and what the administration has to put up with. So you see both world cause a lot of times teachers they don't want to deal with a lot of problems so you send them out or forget about them and then its all security and administration to pick up. So one thing about when I was security, I saw a whole other aspect of the school that I would've never sawn, never seen if I just went into teaching. I would've never seen how the administrators always discipline what goes on on their discipline. I would've seen kids wandering, why there wandering, all the problem kids, you know, you deal with all the bad kids. All the kids who don't want to be here. All the kids who fight every reason to get attention in a bad way. There not the good job kind of kids, there the ones that look for attention by something bad. But, in that, you got to learn to deal with these kids so you don't have all these conflicts, you don't want to always get angry cause if your dealing with these bad kids all the time it makes your life just horrible because your going to be pissed off your whole day. But if you learn to deal with it, it becomes ok and all the students understand when they're breaking the rules so you never have to lecture them. You never have to say you know, "Why?" you just say, "This is what you did and this is where we got to go." And you never have to beg or plead you just keep doing what you do and kids all understand, and they all expect consequences if they break something. And when you don't come through with consequences or people break down thinking they have to be friends, that's when you run into problems when its security and that kinds of position.

M: As Century ran for its second year, and it had a senior class, how did the culture change?

T: Well, see it changed some but not that much yet, now you had seniors. But the seniors were, they were top of the class for two years in a row, they had no one really showing them, you know what I mean?

M: Yes.

T: So they were kind of getting there but we didn't really have any real leadership. You had some seniors kind of get on people but it wasn't the real seniors like what we have now, you know where they really can look down and put real peer pressure on a freshmen. Peer pressure is the biggest influence in high school. I mean, it can be a bad thing but it can be a real good thing for creating the right environment, if we have the right leadership. And when we didn't, we don't have enough leadership that's when we create a lot of problems. It's like I anything else, no leadership, you don't know what's going on. Bad leadership, you don't go anywhere. So it's the same deal when we had some leadership the second year, but they weren't sure. So it's kind of were getting there but it wasn't good yet.

M: How would you view the culture now?

T: Well now I view our school is pretty set. We are accomplishing some good things in athletics, you know we have set some boundaries for sports and what we expect and what students expect for themselves. Set up a lot of things in arts, you know, the drama, in the music, and all these other things, the dance. I mean there's a lot of things already been set and kids are held up to these expectations. Hardest thing in building any program is getting there. Like wrestling, you don't have any wrestlers to get to them to the state. To get them to the state is a big goal. Once you get a state placer, they know what it takes to get to the state. They are willing without you yelling at them or talking to them to get there. And they're going to spread that to the rest of the team. So once you get that taste, it's easy to keep that going. If you've never accomplished that, you don't know what its like. And so they can't spread it among the team. So, its that kind of situation. And that's how you get constant tough programs, it that constant taste and they are spreading it throughout the team or any programs you have.

M: So, how has Century affected the future of your career so far? Do you feel that you're at your prime?

T: Oh no I'm not at my prime yet, I'm still learning, I'm learning, I'm getting better, I'm getting stronger I mean besides I'm personally growing. I feel like Century is growing as well. Programs are still growing. I think that there's a lot of good to come from Century. I think there going to be some good, not just sports programs, but also academic and other achievements that will happen here. And we will set a lot of standards.

M: Speaking about the sports programs here at Century, how has the wrestling program has grown since its opening?

T: Well like I mentioned earlier, wrestling, when we first started here, we had, no one knew how to wrestle we had two people that maybe knew how to wrestle. And they were not varsity of course; they were not at a varsity caliber when they came here. So we started off here, and we worked our tails off and none of them had any varsity experience or knew what varsity wrestling was about. So I mean, we got crushed our first year, and even the second year, we still had a young team. But, we made some improvements, people got tougher and then we kept them working. By our third year, we had three district champs, three or four, four district champions. We placed thirteenth in state, and then for the past three years, we have had the same record in the metro. Were right on the top of the metro, k? But it's again like I said, it's that building it up once we had that taste of state, it was contagious. Going back to like the first time we got Ben Friberg to place in state, he knew what it was like and it spread. So that was a good thing. He placed and became a champion. Next thing we had Devin, and Jonathan, and Bifano all placing in state this year. And they'll be back again next year and the underclassmen see that, they'll place. I mean it's a chain reaction. So were still going up. My goal as a wrestling coach is to build a state championship team. Not just a champion, I want everyone, I want a team. I want everyone to get tough.

M: So you say that's pretty much the vision that you have for the wrestling team for Century?

T: Yes, yes.

M: Throughout the next few years and even longer?

T: Well longer... I mean you can't get a state championship team over night. I mean it's impossible. Next year we have a high potential being in the top in state for wrestling cause weve got all our young teams growing old. I mean the majority of the squad is going to be seniors next year. So we have a real tough shot at being at the top in state. But, you know, to say that were going to be a state championship team... ionno... I wish... but we'll see.

M: As wrestling coach for five years already, what traits do you believe that you possess that other metro coaches do not have?

T: Um, one trait I guess, communication. I believe more then anything to communicate. If I couldn't communicate, my aspirations, my feelings, to the team and having to spread that, they will succeed. I know the level of competition. I know what it takes to be champion. Not many coaches around this area have ever been in the national finals. They haven't been a three time all American, see? But I know what it takes and in my book, it's not about me. The reason why I want to coach you is I want to help as many people as possible. Wrestling effects people's lives not just your athletics. It is deep imbedded into winning, into surviving. A wrestler always succeeds in life. I found that, I mean

you'll find this after a while even look at yourself Matt, if you ever go to a job interview and say, "Yeah, you know, I wrestled in High School." The guy, if he knows anything about wrestling, he'll look at you and have a totally different respect for you just because he knows that kind of commitment you put in, the kind of discipline you have during practice but all the way through around the season, all season long, the kind of commitment and discipline it takes. People have a different respect for wrestlers. I mean, I hear it every year, seniors graduating; they might have not placed in state like Van Lom. It was his only year wrestling but he went to interviews and said, "Yeah I Wrestle." And he was so thankful that he wrestled and he came back and told me. He said, "Coach you know, I told them I wrestled and once I told them that everything changes and the conversation shifted, and all of a sudden he was on my side. " That's what kind respect wrestlers get; I mean that's why I love wrestling.

M: So the saying that, "Wrestling is not just a sport, It's a life." You definitely agree with that?

T: Oh! I definitely agree with that.

M: It effects in every aspect of your life.

T: It does effect in every aspect. I mean, sports in general effect you life. It teaches you communication, teaches you teamwork, teaches you a lot of things, but it doesn't have the discipline that wrestling does. Doesn't have the... You don't need to have the tenacity. You know, do whatever you can, never give up, never quit that a wrestler already has. Cause in life if you give up at a certain part, your going to go downhill. Life is not as you know, you can't just give up. That's a week person. Wrestlers never give up, never. Those kind of people bail out.

M: All right, so that vision for the wrestling team of becoming a state championship team through time. How much of that vision has been realized?

T: Well, a lot of it has came up with top individuals like Brookins and Mair, Bifano, and coming up will be Kearsely and Meuseen next year and Fisher and keep and going on. You know all these juniors I mean a lot of those guys is helping that vision out. But what's really going to happen is I see it happening with the youth coming in. Were going to have a real tough youth club and that's really going to start kicking in hard next year. I mean, taking time, having kids find out and kids and parents say, "Learning what the wrestling culture is from young times." So when they come to high school, I don't have to teach it. It's already self-explained. They know what it is, they expect it, and they just go with it. A lot of the first years, no one knew how to wrestle. I had to coach the parents what wrestling was about. It's ok not to eat for a little while; it's ok no to drink water every 15 minutes. You know, people think that's absurd. It's just a matter of being a little disciplined. Your body works good, better when it's not eating all the time. But for people who have never done it, don't understand it, who don't work out hard, they think exercising like this is crazy! Eating a controlled diet is crazy! And then that's when you hear me say time in time you hear people who criticize wrestlers, "Look at them, they are

out of shape, don't work out hard, and undisciplined." And they criticize wrestlers because we work out hard, very disciplined, and were healthy. They say that were unhealthy cause we watch what we eat...? That doesn't sound like it makes sense to me. But I mean I just, I really just what upsets me about the stereotypes about people in wrestling that were unhealthy people when it's untrue.

M: Um, What have been the barriers to realizing this vision? What's been holding you back?

T: Um... lets see, barriers... Mostly it's with athletes. You need bodies. People, we need bodies to participate. Coaches, this year was hard because I didn't have consistency in coaching. Those have been two obstacles this year, but I don't really look at barriers, I look at them as challenges, and I think I'll overcome them. No problems too big to overcome you know. You just work hard and you can overcome it. Maybe another thing is community support since there was no wrestling around this area. I don't have the support for youth wrestling that like Glencoe or Hilhi would have because there already set programs that have been going around. People graduated through the program have kids already and that that there already set, and so that they gladly want to help to the school that they went through. There weren't, there wasn't that here. So getting that kind of support is very hard. And that's kind of frustrating.

M: But presently in the community, how well have we tapped in to the youth and establishing programs?

T: Um, presently we have a youth program and it's doing well. It's like, what, two national champs. A youth program, but as far as numbers wise we don't have the numbers like others. But my focus is isn't numbers. I don't like babysitting even from little kids. I want people who want to do it. I don't want to have people just people, parents drop them off and say, "Ok, you can go and I'll pick you up later." That's not my goal, that's not my vision. My vision is I see wrestling as a bonding like in our team. Bonding, we bond well. I want the wrestler's parents to come and support them as youth wrestling. I want that to be a bonding. I don't like the idea of babysitting and just dropping them off. And that's what you see a lot at Glencoe and Hilhi. I know they do it cause I've seen it. They have a hundred kids. They just drop them off. Kids playing like zoo and it's not like a structured program.

M: Um, ever since you've done wrestling in your life, how have the stereotypes about wrestling affected you and maybe when you were younger, just maybe how you looked and how people stereotyped you?

T: Well, stereotyped wrestlers are seen crazy... which is fine for me. I was a small guy throughout high school. My brother was a 6' 1" 350-380 guy and I was only about 5' 2" and a hundred pounds and I used to get beat up by him. So I had to be tough to survive. In Hawaii, people fight, it's not problem, you don't worry about guns or knives but people fight all the time. So you had to be tough and when you're tough, people don't worry about you. Wrestlers are always tough. So you got that type and you don't worry

about small problems. It was fine; it didn't bother me because wrestlers have that tough image. The wrestlers not cocky cause they're not mouthy because if they're mouthy you just want to finish it. You don't start till you finish it. They know wrestlers come assure of themselves, that they don't need to talk. Talk becomes people who don't know how to finish things, can't finish things; don't have the skills to back their word. And that's what becomes annoying, but stereotypes.... I did not mind it. It didn't bother me that people think I was crazy cause we worked harder. The only thing that really bothered me was people thought I was unhealthy. To some extent, from what I did, especially through college and high school might have been a little unhealthy... we won't go into that... But it was learning. But what people do now is not even close to what people did then. We can't, there's no way you could cause of all our testing we do. Body fat testing, doctor comes in. We can't, it's all changing, and you can't do things like it was before. So that's changed but some of the stereotypes of being unhealthy is still there and I just don't like that.

M: So, um, for next year, the 2002-2003 season, what are your specific goals for the rest of the team next year?

T: \*Pause\*... Kick everyone's butt. In a nutshell, beat everybody and go to state and take 18 people to state and even more, and just be in the top five, I want to be.

M: All right, is there anything that you would like to say in this interview?

T: I have nothing else to add. I mean... I don't know what to add. I mean if there is more questions you think of you can ask me. Or is there's something that you don't understand that I can say or clear up for you I'll answer again. But, I don't I don't have anything else.

M: All right, thank you very much for your time.

T: Thank you.