

Alex Franco
Oral History Interview
Maui, March 9, 2021

LW: Today is March 9th and I am speaking to Alex Franco for his first PHOF interview. He's actually on Maui. Where are you exactly on Maui?

AF: I live in Makawao. It's up country in Makawao.

LW: Okay. He's in Makawao and I'm in Hilo. We are on a conference call. We're meeting on Zoom. So, tell me when you were born, Alex, and where and what your parent's names are.

AF: I was born on November 16th, 1957. And my dad's name is Augustine Franco, Jr. and my mom's name is Bernadette Franco. And I have two sisters. One older, and one younger. But I also have a brother. So my parents had four children in the family.

LW: And do you want to give their names?

AF: My older sister's name is Sheila Chevez and then myself and my brother Roy Franco and my younger sister Wendy... now Wendy Daniels.

LW: Do you have children?

AF: I have two boys. Lindy and Lyman. I have no grandchildren.

LW: Are they married?

AF: Lindy has a fiancé... they haven't set the date yet. And Lyman is not married.

LW: Great. Wonderful. So, your dad was involved in ranching or was it his family in general? What are your early memories of ranching?

AF: Well, it all started with... my dad... my dad worked for... let me start with my grandfather. My grandfather worked for Kaupō Ranch, which was owned by Dwight and Dagmar Baldwin. And because of an illness, he retired early, and then my dad continued to work for the Baldwin family, but not in the capacity of the ranch. He worked as a handyman for the Baldwin estate... the Baldwin property. Dwight Baldwin's yard was 28 acres. And so my dad maintained that for the Baldwin family. But to make ends meet, my dad raised cattle part-time. So on the weekends, we would go out and help him with the cattle. It was just a few head, but it helped pay the bills. But my dad would always mention about my grandfather's work with Dwight Baldwin. And what was interesting, my grandfather and also worked with Dwight Baldwin. You know, we hear of diversification today. But really, they were well diversified back then in the early... in the 1930's. Dwight Baldwin, although he had a 28 acre yard, on the surrounding property, he ran cattle. He had a large poultry farm. He had an orchard on which he raised mangos and

avocados and litchee. He also had a cattle feed yard here. He was one of the first people... I'm not sure if you're familiar with this, but he was one of the first people to feed a pineapple by-product... the skins of the pineapple... and they were the first people to start feeding that and ensiling that. And that's how this feed yard grew. And my grandfather worked with him... along the side of Dwight Baldwin. I know they worked together and in trying to pioneer some of these new feeding techniques... and they also worked with the university. My dad would always be telling me these stories about what they used to do, which seemed to be a bit ahead of their time. But the quality of cattle that Kaupō Ranch had... now Dwight Baldwin's farm was in Haiku. That's where I grew up. But on the opposite side of the island, he owned Kaupō Ranch as well. So all of the calves growing out at Kaupō, basically ended up in Haiku in the feed yard. And they would slaughter them there and would sell the carcasses to... I think it might have been Maui Meat Company at the time. It was here on Maui. And it was very interesting. Every time he brought it up and their breeding programs and various things they were doing at the time. So I basically got interested as a young boy... read books and did this. And on my mother's side of the family, my uncle raised cattle and had a beef processing plant and slaughter plant so I worked there part-time.

LW: What was your mother's maiden name?

AF: DeCoite... capital D, small e, capital C, small oite.

LW: And what was your father's father's (grandfather) name?

AF: My grandfather's name was Augustine Franco, Sr. And my dad went with the name "Sonny." Everyone knew him as Sonny. Because he was the horse trainer, right.

LW: So you talked about them. What was the feeding technique? Their feeding technique... what was that?

AF: Well... what they did was they pretty much started the first confined feeding programs here on the island.

LW: What is that? What's a confined feeding program?

AF: A confined feeding program is where they had the cattle and they might have sixty head of cattle in a one-acre lot. Something like that. So they were in a very small area with feed trucks. And what happened was they would go to the cannery which was located in Haiku. They would go to the cannery and pick up all of the pineapples and they would bring back to Haiku... it was pretty much... maybe about a half hour away... they would bring the pineapple skins to feed yard and feed the cattle. But they learned from the beginning that they had this tremendous supply on a seasonal basis. And then there's no supply. But what the pineapple lent itself to was, they started experimenting with ensiling the pineapple.

LW: What is that?

AF: Ensiling is where they take the pineapple and preserve it. They allow it to pickle to preserve itself. Now if we compare it to our counterparts on the mainland, they use a lot of corn silage. And the thing with corn silage is, as they were building their... as they were ensiling the corn, they ensiled the ears and the leaves and everything. They chopped up the entire plant. But as they're ensiling it, they had to pack. They had to run it over with a tractor and impact to really get the oxygen out of it. And what they found with the pineapple was it was self-compressing. They didn't have to do anything with it because of its weight. It basically ensiled itself. They would lose a little bit of crust on the outside, but they basically did well. And they fed the cattle but they also added grains and some corn, all of which was imported at the time. At that time when they started all this in the '30's, shipping was not a problem. Shipping was very low cost at bringing products in. So a lot of the grains came in and it made feeding cattle economical provided they had a very cheap by-product that would make up the majority of the ration... the bulk of the ration. And pineapple did that. And it was very palatable; the cattle really liked it. The cattle did good on that again with the grain mix. And they did well for a number of years. And the cattle was slaughtered on the same property and then went to a cold storage in Kahului so the carcasses were shipped what we called "hot" in those days. No refrigerator trucks or anything like that. Right after slaughter they would load them into the back of a truck... I was told a "wagon..." and basically taken down to Kahului... or in addition to that, the train passed right close to where the slaughter plant was. So some of that... I don't know if they shipped any by train... I don't think so because I don't see any places where they could load up. But I think everything went to Kahului on truck. To a cold storage down there and also ultimately that's where they went to market.

LW: So your grandfather... the DeCoites... were they ranching or...?

AF: Yes. My grandfather had his own dairy. Up in a place called "Kokomo"... and...

LW: Say that name again.

AF: Kokomo... K o k o m o (he spells)... my mother had a very large family. There were 18 children in the family. And... my grandfather had a dairy, but he also worked for the County of Maui. And did the dairy part-time. And then, eventually as he got older and retired, one of my uncles... didn't continue the dairy, but he used some of the land to raise beef cattle, and put up a beef slaughter house on Maui, and in fact the original slaughter house that he built is still there... but back in the late '70's, he erected another slaughter plant... a larger one, that is still operating till today. So that's where... and my uncle, his name was Anthony DeCoite. He was very knowledgeable from a... what we call a "meat" standpoint. He was very knowledgeable on cattle from a live basis, but he could pretty much tell what type of quality of beef an animal would produce. And be able to evaluate those beef carcasses in a cooler very well so, I learned a lot from him in evaluating beef carcasses. So all of that pretty much kept me going. So I was...

LW: So did you just accompany him when he was evaluating meat or... did you talk about how you evaluate... how did you learn that?

AF: What would happen is my uncle... the plant that he ran... was a U.S.D.A. inspected plant. And a federal grader would come in to evaluate the carcasses and determine which carcasses are "choice"... "select"... or "standard." And if they're too old, they end up being, what we call, commercial. So, after the grader went through, and my uncle would kinda go through and mark down how many choice we had and how many selects and standards... I'd try to get my job done so I could follow him around, but it'd be okay to follow him around if I got my job done. And then he would explain to me what certain things meant. How to determine an age of an animal by looking at the carcass. How to determine degree of marbling.

LW: How do you determine those things?

AF: Well... degree of marbling, marbling is what is used to determine quality. And it's the amount of speckled fat within the meat. So he would show me that and he'd show me what determines age. And it was very interesting... just by looking at the bone structure and that sort of thing on the animal.

LW: So, they were slaughtering at about what age?

AF: The cattle were coming in out of the feed yard. The majority of the cattle were coming off the Ulupalakua Ranch where Jimmy's at. They had a cattle feed yard when I was in high school. And those animals were coming in about 24... 28 months... thereabouts.

LW: And so, they're not your replacement beef. They're back in the field somewhere. Still.

AF: So basically, what happens is as far as the animals that go for market, are basically the steers, which is castrated bulls. And there are some heifers. Normally, the heifers that are not selected to become mother cows are also in that program. And that's what's fed and ultimately go to market. The better heifers, the better quality females are kept back for future generations... for future cow herds... to resupply the cow herd.

LW: So what was your job that you had to finish before you could hang around with your uncle?

AF: Well, it's pretty, washing the cooler... and then in addition to that... in those days... we don't do it today... and the reason we don't do this today is people don't sell carcasses any more. They sell primals... primals in a box. But in those days, they would sell carcasses. So they needed to make the carcasses look as good as possible. And as clean and neat as possible. So what they would do is they would do what we call shrouding. And they would take this white cloth... this is after the animal has been dressed. And after the carcass has been split and weighed... they would take this cloth; they would soak it in hot water; and then they would put it over the carcass, and pin it to the carcass. But what they would do is they would make that cloth as tight as possible on that carcass and the next morning we would take those cloths off. And this carcass would have this nice, smooth fat around the whole carcass. It made the carcass look pretty impressive.

Well, my job was to take it off the next day. I hated that part. I just hated that job. 'Cause it was cold and the cloths was cold and I had to have gloves on and I was in there and pulling all those pins, taking off all those colths, and it was like unnh! But anyway, that was my job so I just kinda hurry it up, get that done, get that out of there. By the time the grader be done and I could get into the other cooler and see what's going on.

LW: Yeah... interesting! (Chuckles.) Okay... so the DeCoite family is a really big family so mostly as a young person and when you were in high school you were working for the DeCoites and doing things like that. Your father has freezer beef, right? He's keeping freezer beef.

AF: That's correct, yes.

LW: And you're learning to handle that. You guys used horses or was it small enough you just used you hands and walking and...?

AF: We... my dad's operation was very small and for a number of years, we just did everything on foot. But I had a liking for horses, as well. And my dad... because my grandfather was on a ranch, my dad used to go with my grandfather on horseback and my dad saw that I wanted to learn how to ride a horse. So, he went on a trip to Molokai... and he came back with a Palomino filly from one of my mother's cousins... Mike DeCoite, that lived on Molokai. And I don't know if you know Lynn DeCoite, who's a representative... anyway that's her father-in-law. So we had this young horse... too young to ride... I'm in seventh or eighth grade... and then a good friend of my dad's... Charlie Aki... he's also in the Paniolo Hall of Fame... out at Kaupō, told my dad "Hey.. I'll give you another horse." And so, it was another young horse. He had it broken and when he was through breaking, he just brought it out. He didn't charge my dad anything for it. "Here's the horse." And we named him Kaupō King and the other horse, we named her "Bargie Girl," because she got hurt on the barge coming over here. And from there when those horses were old enough, I started to ride. And I got really into riding, and there was a friend on the DeCoite side that did a lot of riding and training and that sort of thing. He kinda took me under his wing, and he kinda showed me how to ride, and various things, and I kinda really got into it, and still loved the cattle, still loved the horses, and from there I started to rope a little bit, and ride. So, that gave me a little bit or horsemanship background to utilize on the ranches that I worked on. But that's kind of how it all began.

LW: So, did you do rodeo? High school rodeo or...

AF: Yeah... I did high school rodeo... no, no... not high school rodeo. There wasn't high school rodeo at the time. (Chuckles.) But we were in high school. And I didn't ride bulls or anything like that, so basically, I had this good friend... married my cousin... Joe Medeiros. He's still here on the island. We're both retired, so, we compare notes, but we roped together. In fact, we went to... we started going to Maui Community College together. And while we were going to Maui Community College together, we didn't have any money. So we couldn't enter the rodeos. And he approached me one day, and said,

Alex, "Let's clown... for the rodeo." Clown? You out of your mind, clowning? Well, I'm trying to get ready to transfer to go to college on the mainland. Get some of those courses out of the way down here. But he kept pestering me and pestering me, and finally I gave in. So, we clowned for the Makawao... the 4th of July rodeo, which is the largest rodeo in the state. But the deal was, if we're going to clown... and the Makawao Rodeo didn't have clowns for years... although, when I was a little boy, I saw some clowns there and it was hilarious! It was hilarious! I just loved it, so we decided, if we're going to do this thing, we're going to do this thing right. So okay... we came up with these acts and everything else and... in those days no internet so we searched how to make explosives... we could be arrested for that these days, I think. How to make explosives and stunts and this and that and everything. But to make a long story short, a couple of the acts... one act was... I don't know if you remember Frank Fasi... the mayor of O'ahu. He was running for governor that year. And it was a big thing. So during the Grand Entry, all the previous champions would come riding in, and there's an American flag and a Hawaiian flag and the queens would come, and it was a big deal. The queens would come and they would all line up and everything else, line up in the middle of the arena. Well with all of the previous year's champions, they brought in Frank Fasi. And again, he was running for governor, and he had a very good chance of winning, but he didn't win. But they brought him in and they all lined up and our job... the first stunt we had was, we're going to present the queen... it was a blown-it-up doll. My friend was on a small Shetland pony... his legs almost touching the ground. We got a friend to deliver what we call a "donkaloosa," which is what you call an Appaloosa mule, they didn't ride for about five years... and put a saddle on it the day before and rode it around... I would never do these kinds of things today... that's just suicide. Rode it around, and he did okay, he did okay, and everything. We can just ride him in for the Grand Entry. So, as we're going in for the Grand Entry, Joe has his blow-it-up doll and I'm going in... there was a third clown... his name was Jerry Caires. He wasn't part of this act. In fact, he kinda joined us later in the program. So he wasn't in on the planned acts or anything. He said "Alex... I want to clown with you guys." I think he was a police officer, too, at the time. And so, he was older than us. As we were riding in, Jerry approaches the donkaloosa. And he says "Alex... can I jump on with you? I want to go in." And I said "I don't know how this horse is going to act, but jump on." So, we went in... just going in and we get there and Joe presents the queen with this blown-it-up doll but what I didn't know was that Jerry had this bucking bull bell with him. And we were in the middle of everything and he rang that bell. Calang, calang! And then mule just started bucking all over the place. Horses was all over the arena. Frank Fasi's horse took off and he's holding onto the saddle horn ... and people are trying to save him, and it was total chaos. But the crowd just loved it... they just loved it. They were cheering him, and so, although it made some people unhappy, the crowd was happy, so everybody was happy. But that was our first act. And then to end it all, the climax... the next act was, we had this... we welded these fifty-five gallon drum together... connected to each other... and then we buried it in the middle of the arena on top of each other, so there's this big... like tube in the ground. But there's about two feet of dirt above that. But what we did was we put a thick plate... iron plate over the top of that barrel... covered it up, and all weekend long, they roped on that thing. They roped in the arena and no one knew there was a hole there. Some people did know. But most of the people didn't know that there was a hole there. And they roped all... we

made it safe so nobody could get hurt. And then right after the last bull ride, Joe and I got into this fight. And again, we're doing all of this because we don't have money to rope. But anyway... we get into this fight, and while we're in this fight, the cowboys carry this house into the arena that we made out of plywood. And they set it over right where this hole is. So, I chased Joe into the house, he locks the door. I can't get in. So, I'm all upset and I leave the arena. And then we had this other cowboy that would make sure that Joe got safely into this barrel... and when I saw him get out that was my signal and then I came into the arena I came in with this huge rubber-tire tractor, I'm coming in. I'm making doughnuts at the end of the arena. The crowd is going what is going on? So, I'm watching the cowboys... Bobby Carvalho. He's still a good friend of mine today. I'm watching him, and he's sticking his head out... he doesn't want me to run him over. (laughs.) So, I'm watching him. But what he didn't pay attention to, as Joe was getting into the barrel... he wasn't in all the way. He dropped the lid, the one-inch-thick lid... and it hit Joe on the head. It kinda knocked him silly... it didn't knock him out, but he was in the barrel, he covered it up, and out he came, and I came around and ran that thing over. I flattened the house, and I was expecting the crowd to just go "Wow!" but it was total silence... total silence. It was like, nobody... nothing... and I thought, wow, I thought this would be so funny! They thought I killed him. But then they thought I killed him. Because he didn't get up. And there was a group of nuns from St. Joseph Church in the bleachers, and somebody told me there was about 12 nuns. And all the... (he laughs)... and all the guys above them said... the nuns blessed themselves... and then all the cowboys came in and started to take all the rubble off and... and then we had the announcer read a prayer. That made it worse! Lead a prayer... But once Joe came out of the deal and showed himself, it was like... then the crowd went crazy. And then we made a deal and I told Joe "That's it! We're going to leave on a positive note. I'm not doing this again." So that was our last clowning. But anyway, I kind of went off on that one but that's how we kept ourselves occupied.

LW: Are you in high school at that point?

AF: It was... Community College.

LW: Okay. I noticed that you say in your bio that you worked for the Sakugawa family when you were in community college.

AF: Yes.

LW: Tell me about that.

AF: Well, like I said I worked for my uncle. And it was a very hard job and I kinda wanted to... my uncle wanted me to work full-time, after I graduated. And I didn't want to work full-time. I didn't want to be in the meat processing business. So, I quit and was looking for another job and right away the Sakugawas hired me to worked for them, and they used to kill a lot of cattle at the facility, and I worked for them. With them it was pretty much... although I had a lot of cousins and stuff, very few of us ended up going to college. So, it was kind of... you didn't know how to go about doing it... my mom and

dad just went to the 8th grade. And so, I had to figure things out. And what the Sakugawas did... not only did they really teach me a lot from a livestock standpoint, they also kind of showed me how to get into college. What I needed to do. And so, I ended up going to the same college they went to. There were three... it was Mr. and Mrs. Sakugawa with three sons. Eric, Ronnie and Jerry. And they told me what to do, and I followed what to do, and I ended up going to Fresno State. I stayed there for two years and then graduated with my degree, and went to two years in the Community College in Maui... two years there. But I learned a lot from them. You know, what is amazing with them is they really know their livestock. They are very good livestock people, hog producers and cattle producers, and they feed cattle. And they market cattle. And they knew their stuff and what's amazing with them is they're now on... from the people I know, they're on the third generation. All supported on the farm. Which is... amazing... that they can do that. For generations, they can work with each other and get along with each other, and try to build a business. And agriculture is very, very tough in Hawai'i to know. Very tough. And they've done a pretty good job. So I liked working for them.

LW: What kinds of cattle did they have?

AF: What they had was... they had a small cow herd. Probably just a hundred cows or so. But what they had was a cattle feeding operation. They would buy a lot of cattle. They bought a lot of cattle from Maui. They bought from Kaupō Ranch and from Charles Ota, who I later worked for. They bought some cattle from the Big Island, and they would feed them, and they developed a market, and they would go to the markets. But they were kind of very innovative, too, because pineapple was still going strong on the island. And there was a very large dairy here on the island called Haleakala Dairy, all part of the Haleakala Ranch. But that large dairy consumed pretty much all of the pineapple waste products that was coming out of the large cannery here. And that pineapple waste product was dehydrated and was sold as what we call pineapple bran. So, instead of doing what my grandfather and Dwight Baldwin did, feed the fresh stuff, they basically cooked it down to where instead of being 90% moisture, they cooked it down where it's now 80% dry meal.

LW: And who was doing the cooking?

AF: Maui Land and Pineapple Company.

LW: Oh... they did that at the pineapple company...?

AF: At the pineapple company and then they sold that to the dairy, so the dairy was pulling all of that. So, from the Sakugawa's standpoint, they really had no cheap roughage to feed their cattle. Because everything was spoken for. So, what they did was, they modified a corn harvester... and again, this was kind of going on, on O'ahu as well. People were trying to figure out how can grade the speed-bump. They modified this corn harvester to go into the pineapple fields after harvest and just chop the pineapple plants. And you can take a pineapple field with no pineapples in them, and you can put cattle in the pineapple field and they're not going to eat that pineapple plant. They're not going to eat it. It's just

too... the edges are too sharp, and they got to be starving to eat that. But they went in and they chopped it through this corn harvester that they modified and it made great feed. Cattle loved it. And the same with as rest of the plant, they can sile it themselves and it's self-packing. So, they built their feed yard on it.

LW: Where was their feed yard located?

AF: In Ōma'opio.

LW: Ōma'opio.

AF: Here on Maui. And that... they fed cattle for a number of years doing that. Unfortunately, what happened was that on O'ahu, they was feeding the same type of products to a lot of the dairy cattle. So, the Sakugawas were doing it here on Maui. Many dairies on O'ahu was doing the same thing, so they kind of shared information. But unfortunately, on O'ahu, there was a pesticide used called heptachlor. And they found it in the milk residue. So, they stopped that thing cold turkey. And they did not use heptachlor here on Maui. But just the notion of it, the markets didn't want it. The markets didn't want it. We don't want you to be using that product. We cannot really defend that to our customers, so they lost that source of feed. And that really hurt them. Although they kept raising cattle and their big thing was raising hogs. They were big hog producers.

LW: How many hog were they raising?

AF: I would say they were running about 150 to 200 sows, which is quite a bit of pigs. And they had a lot of the hot pork market here on Maui. Hot pork meaning fresh pork. And that was in demand. And then they decided... they figured out. They're very innovative. How could they keep making money on cattle? And the Sakugawas was one of the first people to ship calves to the mainland. So, they started shipping calves to the mainland. They weren't the first, but they were one of the first, and buying calves, and shipping them to the mainland. And they still do that til today. So, they bought some property in California, and they ship the calves there. Grow them out, and then feed them in the feed yard, and then sold. That's part of their farming enterprise there. People buy.

LW: So, you the three brothers and you went to Fresno State?

AF: Yes... yes.

LW: And where is Fresno State again?

AF: It's in Fresno, California. The San Joaquin Valley.

LW: Tell me about that. You were there how many years? Two years... four years?

AF: I was there for two years. I went two years here and then two more years up there. And it was... again, I was very interested in cattle. And one of the things the Sakugawas made

me do and thank God they did, was to get all of your general ed stuff out of the way. Your English, your math, your chemistry, your biology... zoology... get it all out of the way. So, when I went up there, I was pretty much taking only ag classes. I think I had just one American history class and that was it. So, I really got into the ag program there. And when I got to Fresno State... again it's years after the... the Sakugawas are older than I. They're about... maybe 8 to 10 years older than I. And when I got there... not being on a mainland campus... when I went in 1978, it was pretty much my first trip to the mainland. Never been to the mainland so... it's like my parents took me up there. We went, looked at the school. Everything looks good but when you get into the program. When you look into the program, you realize no, it doesn't really have what other schools I read about have. So, it was a little bit disappointing. But at that same time, they had a new Dean of Agriculture and some new professors that came on board that were dynamic and they turned the whole program around, and I was right in the middle of all. So, it was like I was part of the comeback you know... and the beef unit, etc., etc., etc.

LW: What kind of changes were they making?

AF: They made changes from the standpoint of the beef unit. Trying to pool the genetics that they had. John Edwards, who was my instructor. He basically went out into the livestock community and got donations by way of high-quality purebred cattle. "Hey, give us a couple of the old cows," which was terrific genetics, but they might have one calf left in them. But they would donate that to the school and Dr. Edwards would say "We got to try and see if we can get three calves out of these." You know... because he would get the genetics. And, so they did that. So, they did that and they brought a... there was this lady called Wendy Gauld... she ran the beef unit. But in addition to that, John Edwards also got... picked up the San Joaquin Experimental Range Station which was located in the foothills above the school. And they hired this person by the name of Bart Topping, and Bart Topping was just a heck of a cattleman and a heck of a horseman. And I was selected to go work with him. And it was like... so that was my spot up there in the foothills, and I would commute back and forth to school, and it was great, but before we transferred up to the foothills, I got on to the livestock judging. And John Edwards was the livestock coach. I don't know nothing about judging cattle. I mean, from what I know from my dad or whatever... nothing. And the first class of cattle... they have they call classes, and four animals in each class. And I just judged my first class. And I blew it. And... Dr. Edwards... John Edwards would say, "you got to look at this, you got to look at that." And I go, "aha... okay! Okay! All right!" And I started going and kind of really got into it, and we were the first livestock judging team to kind of bring some degree of respect back to Fresno State.

LW: So what do you have to look for. Tell me what you have to look for.

AF: Well, what it is... is, they'll have classes with four animals. And not only cattle. We would be judging sheep... excuse me... we would be judging cattle, sheep, hogs and horses. And so, they would have these classes for four animals and you would place the best on top and the worst on the bottom. So, 1, 2, 3, 4... but they would be lined up from left to right... animal 1, animal 2, animal 3, animal 4, and you might place them 4, 3, 2, 1,

because the better animal was the 4th animal. And you could just jot that down on your card and, but where it got very tricky is some of the classes were what they called “reason classes.” You have to defend why you placed them that way and you could only do it in two minutes. So, it got to where I... in those days, my first VCR player at Fresno State... Kansas State was the killers in life longevity. Nobody could beat them. I got a tape from Kansas State of these people giving reasons. I would sleep with that tape. I would just study it... study it... until I could kind of give reasons nicely, too, you know. And the highest we could score on a set of reasons was 50... and in a contest... I believe in a contest... a collegiate judging contest you probably have two or three 50s in the whole contest. That might be a bunch of... I don’t know... 6 or 7 universities competing. On a national level it was way more than that. And I would go and give reasons and I would blow some and I would... as we started to go and that sort of thing. And I have this problem of pressuring, you know. And so, during the Cow Palace I kind of blew one class that kind of messed up from winning the thing. And so, I felt bad about that, but we still went on to the national competition. And all of these schools... all together giving reasons in this hotel. And it was four floors of reasons being given. And for various classes. And I remember this very clearly... that I gave my set of reasons... I don’t know what it was for at the time.

LW: Give us an example of a reason.

AF: Oh... it’s like... I can’t give you the whole thing but it’s like if you’re looking at... a set of... let’s say that they’re Hereford bulls. And you would go in there, and you would stand up in front of the judge who’s sitting behind a desk, and you’d put your hands in the back of your back, cuff them together, and you would give your reasons. And you would go in there and you would say... you know, and I placed the set of Hereford bulls 4, 3, 2, 1. I started with the big redneck bull because he was with the largest mane, longest sided, deepest muscled bull in the class. And then you’d go... and then I followed with... it’s been years... you would go and do the whole thing. But what was amazing was, there’s two things that really stick in my mind about giving these. One was, at this one hotel where we were giving reasons, as soon as I got through... if you’re not in time you get a zero. And that’s how they keep the thing functioning. Otherwise it’s a mess. I got out of my class and I needed to get up... I going to give a reason... this is on a set of Angus heifers. And so, I end up on the wrong floor. So I get back in the elevator, get down to the floor... no, I took the steps... took the steps, I got in there right at the right time, and I’m huffing and puffing... and I square off, and gave my set of reasons to this... to this lady. And I had the class right and everything. And basically, after I’m through, she looked at me and says, “Are you from Hawai’i?” And I’m going, oh my pidgin... my pidgin came out. I blew it. I can imagine what she was going to do. She gave me a 50... she gave me a 50... on that class. And it was really good. And then another class that I remember was a set of horses. And, I went in there and I gave my reasons on this set of horses. I was really confident in that and low and behold... the whole competition just blew the horses. They blew that class... because the judge picked the ugliest horse and placed him first. And his reasoning was... and being in the livestock business today, I can totally agree with him. But his reasoning was... hey, if he was roping as much steers as that horse has roped, and as old as he is, he’s number one in my

book. And so, the whole... it didn't affect the contest because everybody missed it. But what the judge said really... really made me kind of think a little bit. Well you know, he's basically bringing reality into the whole thing. By functionality and performance and... all that kinda stuff. And then in closing... there was one of the horse judges... not in this contest... name of Bill Verdugo ... very famous in Hawai'i. Bill Iiwi, who is in the Paniolo Hall of Fame was very good friends with Bill Verdugo. And there's another gentleman. His name is Vince Genco... they bought a lot of calves. Like I mentioned, the Sakugawas was one of the first to ship calves to the mainland. The first to ship calves to the mainland by boat. These guys were shipping calves to the mainland by air for years. And what happened, the dairy industry in Hawai'i was so prominent and so powerful that they actually brought in dairy heifers from the mainland to Hawai'i by air. So they had this 747, or whatever, all set up with cattle pens and everything. These guys would coordinate, put a bunch of calves on it... and that's how they made a living. Buy calves, send them to the mainland on the back haul. Anyway, Bill Verdugo was on the mainland and I gave a set of reasons to him and he said, "I know who you are" (laughs). And we became very good friends. I didn't know him personally because I'm just a kid on the block. I knew who Bill Verdugo was... never met him... and he was very prominent in the horse world. Not only the horse world, he was prominent in the cattle world up there. And very good friends with my coach. So it was kind of nice to meet somebody like him.

LW: So what classes at Fresno State did you not have? What kind of classes had you hoped to have that were not there?

AF: Well, I pretty much had a lot of the classes that I wanted but what I was disappointed in was the facilities, were kind of run down. But with the new faculty change in new infusion from the Alumni Association that brought it all up to speed again. And so pretty much all of the classes I wanted to take, I was able to take in the two years I was there.

LW: So what were those classes anyway?

AF: Well those classes were... basically animal science classes, farm management classes. Artificial... well, we took artificial insemination. There was also a meats lab. And one of the things about me was, in comparing to what I've done in my whole life in the cattle business, I've always tried to work myself out of the meat processing business. In my uncle's plant, I wanted to get to the live animals. Well in Fresno State... when I got to Fresno State, pretty much there was nobody in the meat lab. And this lady by the name of Patsy Houghton, who was a young teacher and basically... and she was also a live stock judging... helped John Edwards with the coaching. She was from K state. So I got that VCR... that tape from her. And she judged for K state. She said "Alex, I need your help." And she was very knowledgeable. She knew beef cattle inside and out but not the actual slaughter and not the actual processing. She had some of that schooling but not enough to teach it. So, she said "Can you help me out?" So I started getting involved in the meat deal and the slaughter and all of that. And I kind of worked my way out of that, so I could kind of get into the range unit... and then I got away from that. But... so I was involved in that... involved with... well, there was just a number of classes. We had to take other livestock classes with swine and poultry and some of these other type of

classes. And then one of the things that... this one was a little disappointing for me. There was an instructor by the name of Robert Selkirk . Robert Selkirk was the dairy science instructor. And Robert Selkirk retired the year before I got there. Their dairy program was top notch. In the old agricultural dairy... there's two programs that Fresno State had that was ongoing, the dairy program, they had some of the best dairy cattle in the nation, and their viticulture program. The best in the country. So, with those two programs, that's what held Fresno's agricultural program together in a very big way. Animal science kind of came along with it but like I said the new Dean of animal science wanted to strengthen the beef cattle unit and the hogs and all that, and he did a great job. But Robert Selkirk ... not only did he develop one of the best dairy herds in the country there, and they were all registered pure Holstein cattle, in that area in San Joaquin Valley there were a lot of dairies. You wouldn't believe how much dairies were in that area at that time. That's all gone today. But there was another instructor that took his place. And I took classes from him but.. and not that... I don't want to discredit him. He was pretty good, but I was hoping to get Robert's help. And I never got to, from a dairy standpoint. So I never got to too many dairy classes.

LW: So, what was James Sakugawa like as a person?

AF: James Sakugawa was pretty much a tough individual from a standpoint that as tough as business was in Hawai'i, this is where you got to credit him and his sons. As tough as the agricultural business climate was in Hawai'i, it's even back in the '70's, and it's even harder today. He made it all work. He made it all work. And his wife... Mrs. Sakugawa, she worked in the hog operation. She took care of all the farrowing, the young babies and that sort of thing. But they kind of kept it all together and they were able to put all their kids through college. But he ran a very tough operation, and basically, he was one of the first people on Maui to go out and buy cattle from the Big Island to bring to Maui. Very innovative in trying to stay in agriculture. They had no pool of money. They had no outside sources of income. Everything was produced on the farm. So you got to take your hats off to them. They're still in business today. And they always pay their bills, and they have very good credit, and so hats off to them.

LW: So what was your Uncle Anthony DeCoite like?

AF: Oh... (Laughs.) My Uncle Anthony DeCoite... like I say, he was very knowledgeable, but he was tough. He was tough. And he had a temper. He had a temper, and I got a lot of scoldings from him. But you know... he was... but the whole deal, I wanted to get to not only to look at the carcasses, but if we were done early we could go out and help on the ranch. I could go help on the ranch. One of my cousins, built an arena to practice roping so I helped him build the arena so I could rope. Stuff like that so... but yeah, my uncle again was very tough and again he supported his family all on the income coming out of that facility. And he had probably about 400 mother cows and he had quite a bit of cattle... that he made work.

LW: So, you come back from Fresno State... but that's about 1980... what... or 1982?

AF: '81... or...

LW: And what's going on when you get back to Hawai'i?

AF: Well basically, I was asked to go on an internship in Idaho. But I wanted to come back home. And Fresno is not the prettiest place in the world. Although I did see part of the rest of the country when we were judging livestock. But that was all during the winter months. So I saw... cold... every place we went to was cold and nothing's growing, and so on and so forth. So, what happened was, when I was home on a summer vacation, it was always nice to come home and visit the family. I was home... Charles Ota... Landmark ranch... when I worked for the Sakugawas, he would deliver Brangus cattle. A lot of weaned calves came off of him. And he approached me one day. "You want to work for me? When you come back from school?" And I said "Maybe... let me..." I had some other things going on but I wanted to come back home. And so, I ended up working for him. And coming back home to run his purebred Brangus operation. Charlie Ota was a businessman. I wish I would have picked his brain more. But my deal was on the cattle... end of it. He always looked beyond things. As an example, everybody made fun of Charles Ota. "This bloody Japanee doesn't know nothing about cattle." But he knew more than people thought he did. What I liked about him was the fact that he was very innovative. He would do things that is practiced still today, that no one did back then. A good example is on Maui, we would just use what we called...to transport cattle, we would use cattle trucks. So it would be this large flatbed truck that we put sides on it and back it up to a chute and load the cattle, and every rancher had a cattle truck. And the way things went is how big your cattle truck is, is how good you're doing as a rancher. And Charlie Ota, he had a cattle truck but he said "Got to be a better way to do this thing." And he bought the first goose neck trailer here on Maui. In other words, you know what a goose neck trailer is... a goose neck trailer is pulled by a pickup truck but on a fifth wheel. So it gave it gave you a lot of flexibility to go in and out of pastures and you didn't have to back to the chute. You could load them up right from the ground. And everybody said "Oh, that's crazy. Why is he doing that?" Well, you look at Maui today there's only one cattle truck on the whole island. Everything is goose neck trailer... all the ranchers do goose neck trailer. He had the very first one. The way he went and built fence, although he supposedly didn't know anything, he said "Well, this is what (we'll do)." Instead of putting all the posts in the ground... all this kiawe posts, and why don't put one kiawe post and another hundred feet another kiawe post, and we'll use these steel pins and put that into the ground. And there were some other people using it but not in that way. And he built a lot of fences... he got a lot of lease land, and built a lot of fence, and that's how pretty much all fence is built today. It wasn't... when I was growing up everything was a kiawe post every 8 or 10 feet, and you'd put that in the ground and... so he simplified that, and but yeah, he was a very, very good businessman. And another thing that he did was, the livestock that he picked. He was kind of ahead of the game. He was like, he looked at what will these ranchers need. If I'm going to raise purebred cattle, what will be in demand 10 or 15 years from now. That's how long it takes you to get into it. So he picked what they call "Brangus" cattle. Brangus cattle is 3 eighths Brahma, 5 eighths Angus. And it's a hybrid, but as purebred cattle. And he had that cattle for a number of years, and then I came along years later, and started to work more with the

Brangus, and the same year that I worked with... that I came in, he brought some bulls from Brink's Brangus in Texas. And so, we used that genetics and we did artificial insemination, and we did this and we did that. And then boom... Parker Ranch came on board. They said "We want to buy all your bulls." So, most of the bulls went to Parker Ranch with the exception of a few ranches here on the island. Every year they would take all the bulls, and Parker Ranch was pretty much all Hereford cattle. So, if you look at them today, Parker Ranch is mainly Angus cattle. They got out of the Brangus breed but the Brangus is also 5/8ths Angus. So, it was... but they started to infuse that into the cattle to add hybrid vigor, to add production... note production fertility, a number of different things, but if you're going to look at Parker Ranch or other ranches today, a lot of them are using Angus cattle. And Charlie was the first one to start using... not the first one... Ulupalakua Ranch was also using Angus cattle but not Brangus at the time but he was very innovative, so he hit that market just smack on, and sold a number of bulls.

LW: So... what was the idea behind using the Brangus on the Hereford?

AF: What they needed is... at that time Parker Ranch and a number of ranchers were feeding their cattle in Hawai'i... for the local market. And the local market demand was for U.S. choice beef. And a lot of the Hereford cattle, not all of them... were not breaking into the choice breed. The Brangus lines that Charlie Ota had, which was smart on his part, he selected for Brangus lines that had some marbling ability. So by crossing the Brangus onto the Hereford, not only did you add hybrid vigor, you added milking ability, you added facility, you added performance, but you also added carcass quality. So that made it very attractive to use his Brangus cattle. And in fact, here on Maui, when Charlie was about... maybe about four years before I came, he bought out a very... a small commercial operation here in Maui that also had Brangus cattle. And, he bought them out, but what they used to do, they would raise their Brangus cattle and they would slaughter about two animals a week that goes to a local market here on the island of Maui. And those two animals a week, what is very unusual, is to have animals grade U.S.D.A.... in those days... have animals grade U.S.D.A. prime, which is above choice, but with a thin rind of fat and not be very wasteful, and that small little Brangus ranch had more U.S.D.A. prime, yield grade ones, than all of the cattle being fed in the Hawaiian Meat Feed Yard on O'ahu, which... I think they were feeding then maybe 13,000 head, and killing probably a couple of hundred head a week. That little ranch had more than they had, so that even... and people learned about them and said this is the way we can beef up the genetics so that cattle can grade choice because the market is looking for choice cattle, which was not being introduced at the time.

LW: So the little ranch is which ranch now?

AF: The little ranch was a commercial Brangus operation that Charlie Ota purchased. He had his purebred operation but as he was in it for a number of years, he also bought these people out and took over their ranch which made him bigger.

LW: Does it have a name or no?

AF: It was called Haleaku Ranch.

LW: Oh... Haleaku Ranch.

AF: Yes... (spells) H a l e a k u.

LW: So, they had just bred well or how did they end up with such good...?

AF: Pretty much around the same time or around the same time when Charlie was bringing his Brangus cattle in they also went to the Mainland and bought Brangus cattle. So, they were fairly innovative. The owners of that operation were the DePont Brothers. And they had good genetics and Charlie saw, and say... I might as well try and buy all of his cattle. With that he bought their commercial herd; he was able to expand his operation.

LW: So what was Charlie Ota like as a person?

AF: He was a good man. As I look back and working for him... you're young and sometimes you don't stop and smell the roses. I wish I would have spent more time picking his brain.

LW: Yeah, because he had a business brain, too, huh?

AF: Right. He was good. He made his money with... the cattle operation was a hobby for him. He made his money with Japan tuna. In other words, he would service all of the Japan tuna fleet in the state of Hawai'i. So they had all of these small shipping vessels that would come into port and service up. And he would service them up. He would basically coordinate hotels and that sort of thing for them. For the sailors to stay at and recuperate for a couple of days before they went back out to sea. And so, he did that. But where he made his most money was, Japan tuna had this mother ship... and the mother ship was huge. It's a big vessel. It was a large ship. I can't tell you how long it was. But what would happen is, that was like a store out in the Pacific. They would come in to Hawai'i when they were close to Hawai'i... the small fishing boats. But when they were out on the Pacific they would go to this huge mother ship. And that would provide all of their groceries and their fuel and everything and they would stay out for months. Also R & R... they had rec rooms on there. And they took care of their people. And he would basically... when that ship came in, he would coordinate and he would have farmers just bringing cabbages, lettuce and cucumbers... and I mean they... bought a lot of local produce. I mean huge amounts, and he would coordinate all of that. He said "Alex... you want to make money? I sell them the fuel." And I think they would take like a million gallons of diesel fuel. And I mark that up. I don't know how much he marked it up. I think it was like... he told me ten cents a gallon... or something like that. But that adds up on a million gallons. And they would come in like every port. And so, he had it all figured out, and his brain... the way his brain worked and that sort of thing. But later on, the Japan business was kind of slowing down. Something was happening to Japan tuna. I don't know... I really don't know the specifics, but his business was getting smaller and smaller. And so, he decided to run for County Council. And he got in. So he dabbled in

politics a little bit. And he was also a real estate appraiser. And he would dabble in that but... he wanted to do something else. (Laughs) and I remember he would come in and telling me... And it was kind of a... but who took over the business was his wife, but it was his brain child... and he said "You know what? There was this irrigation company on Maui. And I'm going to buy them up. I'll buy them up. I think there's going to be a big future in PVC irrigation pipe." And that time the hotels were starting to use... the biggest user was HC & S. But they were so big that they would bring it in themselves. But Charlie was so innovative... get this now... they've been shipping this pipe in in containers for years. Charlie gets in and he says "No, I'm going to do this differently." What he would do is, they would ship in this big pipe, and they would fill this container with this big pipe. And what they would have is this ten inch long PVC pipe. A whole container filled with them. So, he got the manufacturers and said "Look. This is what I want you to do. I want you to take the ten-inch pipe and put an eight inch inside of that and put a six inch inside of that and a four inch, and a two inch, and then a one inch. So he just tripled or quadrupled the load. His freight costs went down, down low enough, and he kind of kept it quiet. Down low enough where he could approach HC & S and he said "Hey, I can beat your costs." And they gave him all of the business. So, his business hoo... just grew. Because he was innovative. And he researched the various valves. But his family kind of grew up around that whole irrigation hook up and they're still in that today. And he's passed away a good twenty years now... fifteen years, I guess now. And you know what is amazing? One more thing about Charlie Ota. His brand was a Hawaiian petroglyph. You know with the head, the arms and the legs. I said "Charlie... that's not..." and nobody ever used them, a Hawaiian petroglyph for a brand. And I said "Well that's a nice brand." And he said "Yeah. It spells my last name. O T A..." That's the kind of guy he was. Anyway...

LW: You mentioned Kipukai Ranch at this point in your bio so I'm wondering if it comes in here.

AF: It does. Basically, when I was working for Charlie Ota, you know being young at the time and working very long hours because my whole focus was on cattle. And there was a situation that occurred when I got upset over something. A rumor that wasn't true... and as I look back on it now... well I left because of that.

LW: You left...?

AF: Charlie Ota.

LW: I see, I see.

AF: And he was upset with me... I was upset with him, but later on we became good friends and... that's all behind us. But young at the time... "okay... I'm right and you're wrong... it was stupid." But anyway, what happened was, where Charlie Ota's headquarters was, a person who lived up the street was a person by the name of Lindy Sutherland. And I really... I knew him some... I knew him some. As I was working for Charlie, he worked for Kaupo Ranch... at the time... with Soot Bredhoff. Soot is also in

the Paniolo Hall of fame. And Lindy would have been in the Paniolo Hall of Fame years ago, but he's one of those guys that doesn't like recognition. But what happened was, after I left and word got out that I wasn't working for Charlie Ota any... any longer... and, I started to put feelers out about where I'm going to work, you know. So, I applied for a couple of ranches... one of them Parker. And actually, Parker and Kipukai but I really got to like Lindy. We got to know each other, and he would take me to Kipukai and show me the operations. Kipukai was owned by John T. Waterhouse, which was the uncle of his wife, Cherry Anne Sutherland, and upon her uncle's passing, he asked Lindy to manage the purebred Hereford operation at Kipukai. And in describing Kipukai, it's an amazing place. It's right outside of Lihue, and as you're traveling outside of Lihue, and you get to a place called Kipu, and that's where they filmed a lot of the "Jurassic Park" scenes there. And you go over the mountain range, and you come to this valley that is picturesque. And what it is, is it's a mountain that goes from the ocean like a halfmoon. It goes from the ocean and in between its four sand beaches. The longest one is a half mile in length. And it encompasses eleven hundred acres. And some of that is... a lot of that was irrigated... by John T. Waterman. He had it irrigated, and so he asked Lindy to run the operation. So, Lindy started to run the operation, and he got to know me, and he said "Hey, Alex, why don't you come and work for me?" And I was actually offered a job at Parker. And but I decided... I really like this guy. He's such a... and till today, we're the best of friends. I named my son after him. And he's just a good guy. So, I started to work for him. And he says "Alex... I need to bring in Angus cattle. We got all sorts of cattle... I want to start a purebred Brangus herd." And so... he sent me to the mainland... and brought in purebred Brangus cattle. Bought most of the cattle at a disbursement sale... from Clayton William in Texas. And it was a pretty good set of cattle that came in and, worked with him and, we started A.I., artificial insemination, and so on, and so forth. Then all of that went good. Parker Ranch started to buy some of the bulls... they were still buying bulls from Charlie Ota. And they started to develop that. We also brought in some Beef Master cattle, which is a Brahmin short-horn cross... Brahmin short-horn Hereford cross. And we had a small herd of those going. And (I was) working there. But what happened was, I was there a year and a half. And I had a hard time... I had a hard time because every morning I would get up, and I wouldn't... you know, they had this beautiful beach. But you wouldn't see the beaches because they were all... there's the sand dunes and the beach... there were these tall Norfolk Pine trees. So, to see the beaches you actually had to go down to the beach... but every morning I got up, and felt this big mountain right in front of me. I felt so isolated. I just felt so isolated. It was kinda driving me crazy. But I said I love working for these fellas... I love working with them. But I'm having a hard time. But I kept doing it, you know... working for them. In fact... well, make a long story short... but then I got offered a job with Big Island Meat... to go and work for them on the Big Island. And I always wanted to work on the Big Island. In fact, James Sakugawa, I wanted to mention this... James Sakugawa took me on my first trip to the Big Island. And I was in awe of Parker Ranch. I mean I was, wow... look how beautiful this place is, and we slept up on Mana Road. He had somebody he knew up there. And oh man, getting up in the morning was just a... like fabulous! And I always wanted to go there and so this was an opportunity, and I was kind of in isolation on the Big Island so...

LW: You mean on Kauai... you were kind of isolated on Kauai...?

AF: Isolated on... excuse me...isolated on Kauai. Kipukai Ranch is on Kauai. It's a good thing we caught that. Otherwise, it would have been like, what??

LW: No kidding... so you're not around your family...

AF: It was just isolation... and then it was irrigation... and irrigation was good but we had to move pipes every day. So, you know I really wanted to get into a larger scale... but Lindy was such a fine...

LW: Where's Lindy living? On Maui?

AF: Lindy lives on Maui. He still lives here. He's 90 years old. And his wife Cherry Anne is still living.

LW: But when you were running Kipukai, they were living on Maui still... they were...

AF: But they would fly over every weekend.

LW: Oh wow... no kidding?

AF: Yes... every weekend they would fly over. Those were the days of \$35.00 flights. They would come over weekend and Cherry Anne would feed me and... (laughs) and it was something.

LW: And you had to move irrigation for plants or for animals?

AF: For the grass... to grow the grasses. For the cattle to eat. And John T. Waterhouse... this is what's kind of amazing. John T. Waterhouse really had a terrific set-up down there. He had a small, little dairy... they used to make their own butter... and milk for the house. John T. Waterhouse basically was a C.E.O. for Alexander & Baldwin at the time, and he would go over there on weekends, and he had his own spread, and he did his thing out there with raising purebred Hereford cattle... and did a pretty good job at it. But then with age and that sort of thing, he wanted Lindy on board, and come and take care of it. But he also raised *nene* over there. And this was a time when *nene* were, I think, only being raised in captivity and there were only a few wild ones living out of captivity. And he had these runs with all of these *nene*. But what happened was, Hurricane Eva hit before I got there. About 3 or 4 years before I got there... something like that. And it destroyed the *nene* run. So, when I got there, there were only a few cages of *nene*. The rest kinda went wild. Then Lindy got involved and John T. Waterhouse wanted to keep raising them in captivity... I think they're supposed to be raising them in captivity, but I don't know what happened, and before endangered species and all this kind of stuff. So, Lindy decided he didn't want them and, he let them all go, and they flourished. The absolutely flourished. And you would see these *nene* just hovering over the valley and, that was a beautiful sight. But actually, now this is all Hereford cattle for years, and

years, and years. The horses only saw Hereford cattle. The *nenes* only saw Hereford cattle. So, one of the things that happened while I was there is, my dad passed away. And Lindy being the kind of person he is, he said... because we had to shut down my dad's small cattle operation... and he said "Well, I can buy all of your dad's heifers." But they were all black heifers. But they were half Holstein and half Brangus. Or half Jersey, half Brangus. So, we decided, why don't we bring them here. We can use them as recipient cows for embryo transfer. And so, we said let's just get them. So, we got them. I remember them coming in, and we off loaded them into the corral, and the horses started to snort. They were afraid of these things. What are these? They started to blow and I'm on the horse now. He won't take me near those things. And the *nene*... the *nene* were hovering like they usually do, but they stalled over the cattle about three or four times like... (makes a honking sound)... and they came back, and stalled again, you know. Until they figured well, it's just cattle with a different color, you know. But they can tell color. They can tell color because that was proven to me on that day. I was just surprised. But that was really interesting. What was also interesting at Kipukai, was on that half-a-mile sand beach, during rough Kona weather, where those waves really come crashing onto that sand beach, it would expose a large kind of like a coral rock. Sandstone... a large sandstone rock, I would say maybe about four foot wide... maybe three and a half foot wide and about five to five and a half feet long. And on there was a giant petroglyph. That took up a whole view of a man... like Charlie Ota's brand. He should have been on Kipukai. But every time bad weather came, we'd all go look for that rock because it was so amazing. But during the... it gets covered with sand for most of the year. Except when the bad weather comes, it exposes it. But that was a very interesting sight. But John T. Waterhouse and the Sutherlands did such a great job but what happened was, I approached Lindy one day and said "I'm sorry, Lindy"... and he says "Oh... I kind of figured as much." I remember him saying that. And I know I really disappointed him. But I promised him that I would try to find somebody to come and work there. And I was very fortunate to find a person by the name of Brian Caires. Brian Caires, who just retired from Parker Ranch, ran the purebred operation at Kipukai and later was hired by Parker. And he really did a terrific job at Parker with the genetics program. And he came to Parker Ranch. So pretty much Lindy Sutherland was the mentor for the manager at Haleakala Ranch, which is Greg Friel... Brian Caires... a person by the name of Bobby Ferreira... he's from Kauai now, and he also runs Kaupo Ranch.... And myself. He was our mentor. He taught us all, and he really... he wanted to help the younger generation, you know, and although I was leaving him, and yes, Brian was coming on board, and Brian came with a lot of credentials... he was out of school, and he was working at Kahuā Ranch... but again, working for Lindy was attractive because he had a great reputation. And so, he came over but about that same time, on Maui, there was a... my brother and I, we were talking one day and he says, "You know ... Alex, you really should invest in some property in Maui, you know." And I said "Yeah, I think so." But I didn't have much money, and at that time, it was double digit interest rates. And I was leaving Kipukai, and already hired by Hamakua Sugar... for Big Island Meat. And basically, where I lived today was a large land auction... of all these half-acre house lots with underground utilities and everything else. And my brother and I were just walking on the property and there were a lot of people here. Just a lot of people. And I think the interest rates were about 16 or 17 percent. Something like that. And so, we kind of both

looked at each other and I said “Roy, I think the bargains in the sale are going to be about the first two or three lots. People are going to hang back and figure that bargains at the sale are going to be at the end.” So, we bought the second lot out... and that’s the lot I’m on right now here. But I was able to do that but the reason I bring it up is because of the double interest rates. We bought the lot for \$49,000. I put down \$15,000. But that wasn’t enough. And I needed somebody to co-sign the loan. And Lindy was aware that I was doing all of this. And he came to me and said “Well... do you need any help?” So, I said, “well, I need somebody to co-sign for me.” He said, “I’ll take care of that.” So, he co-signed for me. And I was leaving. And that’s the kind of person he was. He was just a terrific human being. So anyway... now I’m on the Big Island.

LW: Wow. Okay... so that’s about 1986? That you...

AF: Yeah... about ’85... thereabouts.

LW: So the job you take on the Big Island is actually for Hamakua Sugar?

AF: Yes. Hamakua Sugar... I was asked to go over to work for Hamakua Sugar by a person by the name of Gene Aguiar.

LW: Yeah... we hear his name.

AF: Gene Aguiar was the Industrial Relations department head for Hamakua Sugar. But he was also looking into diversification for Hamakua Sugar after it was purchased by Francis Morgan. Francis Morgan is the same Morgan family that owns Kualoa Ranch on O’ahu. John Morgan... David Morgan is the son. And so, Francis Morgan bought Hamakua Sugar. Here’s a very interesting point. We’re getting off the subject a little bit. But, Hamakua Sugar was owned by Theo Davies. Hamakua Sugar sold to Jardine Mathison. They bought the plantation for \$19 million dollars. They hit a sugar spike and paid it off in two years. And then they turned around and they sold to Francis Morgan... which was in the sugar business for a number of years... so he’s seen all the sugar spikes come and go. So, he figures at some point in time it’s going to happen in his tenure, you know. But we never had a sugar spike... I think 1979 was the last one ever to happen. So, they had the plantation but they were looking at diversification and Gene Aguiar was a big part of that so, Gene felt, what about a cattle operation? What about utilizing some of the by-products, which made sense, that would be generated by the sugar mill, which was bagasse, which is not the greatest feed in the world but it could become part of the ration. But maybe, growing some other stuff like seed cane crops or whatever... so they decided to go for it and invest in Big Island Meat. And they did a great job of building the feed yard. We brought in a person by the name of Stan Switzer who built the feed yard that is still there today.

LW: Still where today?

AF: In Hamakua. The cattle feed yard.

LW: Where in Hamakua?

AF: In Pa‘auilo. And he also built the Pa‘auilo slaughter plant which is still in operation today. I’ll go over the history of that later but, Gene was instrumental in getting all of this going so he hired me to work in the feed yard with Stan Switzer. And as soon as I got there, the person that they had lined up to buy the cattle for the operation was a person by the name of Elmer Raben. Elmer Raben was an extremely knowledgeable cattle buyer but as crusty as they make it. I mean, he would make a drunken sailor blush. And he was as mean as they make it, and ah goodness... but basically, he told Gene Aguiar, “I don’t wanna work for you.” After saying he was. He was actually the driver for General Patton in World War II. So this guy has a lot of history, he’s a Jewish guy. So, he just knows how to do business, you know. And he was one of the guys who took shipping calves to the mainland to another level. He made his own business in doing that. There were other people doing it but he made it... because he had all the contacts on the mainland. But anyway... Elmer decided, I’m not buying the cattle for you from Hamakua Sugar. Actually, what happened was he decided to buy the cattle for Hawai‘i Meat, a competitor owned by Parker Ranch. And basically, he came to me and told me and said, “Alex, you’re buying the cattle.” And basically, I’m going, I never bought cattle, you know. But, you know, so I’ll buy the cattle. So, I went out and it was a very steep learning curve. I mean, I made a lot of mistakes, bought the cattle for the operation... in addition to buying the cattle for the operation, I helped out on the feed yard, but pretty much Stan Switzer had it going. And later on, Stan Switzer left and worked for Molokai Ranch.

LW: Wait... what would a mistake be? When you say you made mistakes? What did you mean?

AF: In buying cattle... you know, sometimes you pay too much for the cattle. And sometimes, you might not pay enough, and you lose a batch. And it was very competitive because there were three major cattle buyers, four major cattle buyers at the time. You had the Pacific Airlift with Bill Eby, Vince Genco, Bill Verdugo still buying cattle. You had Hawaiian Meat. They needed to keep the feed yard full to keep it economical. You had Kahuā Meat needing the same thing. And then all of a sudden you bring Big Island Meat into the mix and it’s just like... are you crazy... there’s not enough cattle to support all of these plants. But they felt being that they could grow the feed and do various things they had a good shot at it. So, I made some mistakes but I remember this day very clearly. I might have been buying cattle for about two or three months at the time, so I started to get a little bit better at it. And, started off from Pa‘auilo, went through Hilo, up through Kurtistown, Volcano... Kapapala, South Point, Kona, Waimea, and Pa‘auilo. I went right around the island that day. Stopping at ranches and just going and just buying cattle. Well, Elmer Raben was doing the same thing that day, but he ended up at all the ranches that I just left. And the cattle was all bought already. And he was so upset. He says, “that bloody schoolboy, he doesn’t know anything and dada, dada, dadaa... and why the heck are they having such a dumbass buy cattle,” and on and on and on he went. I don’t know. I kinda took it as a compliment. It’s like... and then, you know... was this serious competition that went on so I bought the cattle and in addition to that we bought so much cattle at a young age that we needed to pasture them on various ranches on the

Big Island, so I was in charge of that, and then one of the ranches that I was... we would rent pasture... on a gain basis. We'd take these calves and they might weigh 500 pounds going in and when we took them off of the grass if they weighed 700 pounds, we would pay them for 200 pounds gain. In addition to that, there was a ranch close to the feed yard called Kipu... no, excuse me... called Kukaiau Ranch that was available. So, Gene negotiated to lease that, and we took a lot of stocker or calves up there, as well. So, we had probably about maybe 7,000 head out on grass that I was in charge of, and taking them to the feed yard and all of that. What really hurt the feed yard, I think, was its location. It was in a very wet area and not conducive to feeding cattle in that environment. The other thing that hurt the feed yard economically was, right about when the feed yard was completed, grain prices plummeted. Grain was probably the cheapest it had been in 30 years. So, they could land... I don't know what barley was bringing. Barley might have been bringing 10 cents a pound or... I don't know. Or 15 cents a pound. Not a pound. We gotta talk about tons. I forgot what it was. But what happened but barley was like... \$40 or \$50 bucks a ton. It was compared to \$175 to \$200 dollars a ton. So, it was dirt cheap, and they had the sugar ship that were coming to the Big Island. Normally those sugar ships would come empty, pick up sugar, and go back. So, they had to haul it out and they would store all of their grain at Kawaihae. And there were some mistakes made there with... you know. Prior to storing feed at Kawaihae, it was always dry. Put feed there, it rained. All the feed got wet and...

LW: Did they store it... how did they store it there?

AF: They stored it in big, tall piles. And what was supposed to happen was... again, everything the way it was kinda done was based on the way they did it in the mainland. And again, not taking into consideration the humidity here. But what happened was when you have these rainstorms coming in the dry areas on the mainland that have the grain stored outside, not many places would do it. But some would, where you'd end up with a crust outside and it would kind of seal the water from getting into the rest of it. But that didn't work here. It kinda kept going through it. So, they lost quite a bit of grain so the next thing was let's haul it to the mill and store it in warehouses there. And so, they did that. So, that got better but then after two years of cheap grain, now it's expensive grain. Market turned around and it's... now ration costs are up, cattle performance was average because... during the wet environment... and then Hamakua Sugar wasn't doing well. And basically, it ended up in Chapter 11. So, what happened there was the Department of Agriculture loaned the Hamakua Sugar ten million dollars. So, when it went into Chapter 11, the Department of Agriculture said, well okay, we're going to take the feed yard and the slaughter plant and 300 acres surrounding it in lieu of our ten million dollars. So, the trustee granted that. That's why our facility still exists today, and it's owned by the Department of Agriculture. And now the feed yard, Gene Aguiar's family took over the feed yard, and uses that as a staging area to ship calves to the mainland. And then what happened with the slaughter and meat processing plant... now mind you, I'm trying to get out of meat processing and meat slaughter, right? And I finally... you know I go from my uncle's place and I got out of that. I go to school and I get involved in that. Now I'm out of school, I'm free. I'm working in the cattle business. But what happens is, Palama Meat Company purchases the feed yard. Not purchases but leases the slaughter plant

from the Department of Agriculture. Donald... Donald Lau. He's the owner of Palama Meat Company. He leases it. And I'm unemployed... I'm unemployed and... I knew Donald Lau and he's always nice to me. Always personable. But he had a reputation. And the reputation is, number one... of his reputations was, he was a very, very successful businessman, okay. That was one. The second one is a shrewd pake. Okay. And I was kind of, "Oh, wow." So, Donald Lau called me one day. He said, "Alex... would you mind coming over to O'ahu? I'd like to talk to you. So, I went to O'ahu, and he took me to the office there. Palama Meat was very successful and at the same time, Big Island Meat closed down, but Hawai'i Meat Company was shutting down as well. It was a major change in the local feeding and slaughter operations. Parker Ranch was starting to ship calves to the mainland on a large scale, but there's this major shift going on. And so, Donald was buying up all these packers, and now he's the biggest packer in the state of Hawai'i. And while the other guys were in operation, he had this small, little market. He built it up till he was a major competitor, and eventually bought them out. I remember sitting in the office where all of his meat buyers are, you know. He never took me to his office. (Laughs) He had a nice office. But that office was... I mean you can see that this is a working office. You can see the wear and tear on the desk. They weren't ugly desks or anything but just from the paper shuffle... I mean you can see this is a serious office. There's a lot of stuff going on in his office. And this is kinda... just starting with computers and you know, and that sort of thing. So, I don't have a job. I live in Hamakua. He's offering me a job. And I'm stupid not to take it, right? So, I said, "Yeah, Mr. Lau... I'll work for you. Yes, thank you very much." So, he hired me. One of the best guys I ever worked for. He was just a sharp businessman. He was a... he took good care of me. He was great to work for. And I worked for him about three or four years, I think it was. And then what we did was we started a grass-fed operation on the 300 acres surrounding the slaughter plant. And we were grass finishing cattle, and everything was going good, and one day I sold a bunch of cattle to KTA. Sho Hirata. And then, I called Mr. Lau up and said "Mr. Lau I sold all the grass finish cattle at a rate of six or seven head a week to KTA." And he politely told me, "Alex... you just stick to raising the cattle. You let my people sell the cattle. That's what they do." And I said okay, fine. So, we slaughtered that cattle, and I had to renege on my deal with Sho Hirata... I said, I'm sorry. I overstepped my boundaries. I wanted to take these cattle and sell them in Honolulu and da dada da..." What happened was, I walked in the office one day and Susan, the secretary is selling cattle to Sho Hirata. I said "Susan, what are you doing?" And she said "Oh, they wanted me to sell these cattle." I'm going, "Huh?" "I mean we had this thing all set up and what's going on?" And so, she's talking to Sho Hirata, the meat manager. "Let me talk to Sho." So Sho gets on. I say "Sho, I'm sorry. This thing is the same cattle that I tried to sell you here but they went to O'ahu. They were processed there instead of here. So, they're coming back here." He said "Okay, we'll take them." So, they did. They sent them. And the unfortunate thing is Donald Lau is semi-retired. Okay. He's phasing out and he's training family members to take over the marketing and all this kind of stuff. This thing with grass finished cattle is all brand new, and people don't really have a good grasp of it. But what happened was, they took that cattle and mixed it with some inferior cattle and sent it to Sho Hirata. And Sho called me up, and called me everything in the book. And I told myself, I don't think I can develop a grass-type of finish here with those kinds of restrictions and especially with Donald Lau basically semi-retired and all of that

so... about the same time I got a phone call from Lindy Sutherland. And Lindy says, "Alex... I want you to come work at Kaupō Ranch.

LW: He said he wanted you to come and do what?

AF: To work... to manage Kaupō Ranch on Maui.

LW: Okay. Okay.

AF: And I thought about it, and I decided to come... my mom is here on Maui, and my wife's parents lives in Kahului, and my wife worked for Pioneer Federal Savings, and was transferred to First Hawaiian Bank. She was pretty much working her way up within First Hawaiian Bank on the Big Island. And now I want to make this change.

LW: Now, so you met your wife during this time when you were on the Big Island?

AF: I met my wife when I went over and worked for Hamakua Sugar. I met her on Maui, and after we married, we both lived on the big Island.

LW: Oh, I see. What's her maiden name?

AF: Kaho'ohanohano.

LW: So, her family is from where then?

AF: Her family is from Kahului.

LW: Wait... I have one more question before we go to Kaupō. You were kind of starting to create a grass-fed program when you were there at Hamakua Sugar?

AF: Not Hamakua Sugar... Hamakua Sugar is all grain-fed. The grass-fed program was with Palama Meat Company.

LW: That's Donald Lau's... right, right... Palama Meat Company. Okay. Just describe how you were envisioning that or how it might... might... if you really finished it out, how it might have worked. Just describe it...

AF: Pretty much... most of the cattle in Hawai'i was grain-fed. Or during this time, when we started to grass finish. Most of the cattle were being shipped out of state. As calves. Now there were a few producers that were producing grass-fed cattle. And doing a darned good job of it. And they pretty much had...you know... had some markets kind of sewn up.

LW; So who were those ranches?

AF: Oh, you had a Chun Lee... that's one of them. You had Anton DeLuz... you had Andrade Slaughter House... Jill Mattos... they had their own slaughter house at the time. You had some Hawaiian Homes ranchers that was producing grass-fed cattle on a small scale... being sold... the large market was KTA... who bought most of them. There were some small mom and pop stores that were being sold to but KTA was in the beginning of trying to expand this focus, expand their meat counter, but trying to get more grass finished cattle. So pretty much what we wanted to do was to... you know again, was produce a high-quality grass-fed beef that would basically measure up to what some of these other people were doing raising grass-fed cattle. I mean, the reason they were still raising grass-fed cattle is that they did a heck of a job. And produced that same kind of quality and get into those markets on the Big Island. Because we saw a void there that more numbers were needed being that most of the cattle were being shipped out in the form of calves. So, there was a beginning of a grass-fed market there, and unfortunately, what Donald Lau envisioned was quite the opposite of what I was looking at. He saw... he saw producing grass-fed cattle as a way of producing high quality beef that could compete against mainland choices. In other words, it could compete against commodity beef coming in which was really not how the grass-fed business survives today. It's more of a premium quality. But that's what he envisioned. And... but I think if he had a little bit more, I mean, if he wasn't semi-retired, I think we would have been able to do some things. But anyway, I hope I answered your question.

LW: Okay so... so Lindy Sutherland. Is he running Kaupō Ranch?

AF: Well, what happened is, he was still involved at Kipukai. What I didn't mention was... we're going to have to jump back to Hamakua Sugar. The manager of the Hamakua Sugar's feed yard at the time... I was out buying the cattle, I was out running the grass growing operation, but after Stan Switzer left, and went to Molokai Ranch, who took his place was a person by the name of Bobby Ferreira. Okay. So, he managed the feed yard for a little while. Did a really, really good job. But when Chapter 11 hit, he was out of work, as well. Meanwhile... meantime Brian Caires at Kipukai was looking at moving back to Maui. So, Lindy was out looking for somebody and I made the connection, between Bobby and Lindy Sutherland. And they're still great friends till today. So, Bobby went and started running Kipukai Ranch. But he was from Hamakua Sugar originally. So, with all of this going on at Big Island Meat and Hamakua Sugar, now Palama Meat Company, I'm still connected with Lindy Sutherland, you know, as a friend, as a confidante. And so, he sees my struggle and says "Hey"... So what happened was, Kaupō Ranch... as he's doing all of this on Kauai, Kaupō Ranch approaches him. One of the daughters sold her shares to three businessmen on the island of Maui, which was Steve Goodfellow from Goodfellow brothers. Jimmy Haynes, Maui Petroleum, and Jack Keene, a local developer. So, they bought out the sister's share and being the Lindy had history working at Kaupō Ranch, before he retired to go work on his uncle's place, they went and said, can you do some consulting on our place. Kaupo Ranch saw some pretty hard times. And, they wanted to kind of rejuvenate the ranch. And so, Lindy got involved. So, about a year and a half... about a year before he even called me, to go work at Kaupō, and then I gave Donald Lau six months' notice. So, it was a while before I got there so, year and a half, two years he was already kind of going with the program and

trying to make some changes. Then I came on board. And we kind of worked it together. But so, that's how I got back up on Maui, and then it was hard for Trisha. My wife to come back 'cause she's settled in her job. I'm the one without a job. But, because of her parents, it made sense for her to come back. They were aging and that sort of thing, and she transferred First Hawaiian Bank back to Maui. And they stuck her in Lahaina. So, she had to commute from Makawao to Lahaina every day. And I was commuting from Makawao to Kaupō every day. So, it was kind of tough in the beginning. All for the sake of helping her husband. But we were close to family. And I was able to work on a commercial cow/calf operation. It was what I wanted to do. And then ... I then ran away from another meat processing operation. The third one. I'm in the cattle business once again. I don't have to worry about slaughtering, caring for and you know... worrying about everything. So, I'm now working at Kaupō Ranch. Great set of owners. And Lindy was there. He would come least two or three times a week to come with me to Kaupō. And Lindy and I... you know, we had a very good relationship. We were very frank with each other, and sometimes so frank that the people around us were wondering if we were fighting with each other. But he got it going and then one of the things that happened was we were... I was there about a good four years at Kaupō. Genetics were starting to change around. Uniformity was just starting to come on. And we were shipping calves to the mainland. That was our only source to get income. And we had some cattle that we were ready to ship. And what we would do is we would... Kaupō is way in the boondocks so, what we would do is, we would bring those calves out and they would go to Buddy Nobriga's feedlot, right outside of Wailuku. And then, we would keep them there, there was still some pineapple silage available at that time so, we would keep them on pineapple silage and some grain for about thirty days, wean them, and load them on the trailers, and off to the mainland, and we did that for about three years and it worked terrific... really terrific. And it was on that last year that there was a shipping strike... with Matson. And we had all the cattle in the feed yard, all the containers there ready to load up... and that's when we called Matson, and we said, we don't have to ship these cattle if there's going to be a strike, you know. But negotiations were going good, and they told me don't worry about it. We're going to get over this and ship the cattle. We shipped five container loads, took them down to the wharf... shipped them. That evening I got a call from Matson Navigation. They called me and said, "Alex... you need to come and get the cattle." They're on O'ahu now, okay. "You need to come and get your cattle. We can't ship them." I'm going they're on O'ahu... what am I going to do? Right? And I told them I asked you guys, and you guys said go ahead, and I was so upset. So made a few phone calls to some of the ranchers on O'ahu, and with the help of those ranchers, and one of the other cattle buyers... Kenneth Yee... we worked out a pasture arrangement there, which is never good because you have no control. But we got all of our cattle out. In that regard, it was good, but that cattle actually stayed there for about six weeks. Nothing... negotiations still going bad. And then we decided to ship them back to Maui so, we shipped them back to Maui, and all at additional costs. And I had to take them back out to Kaupō Ranch... it was just one train wreck. And I told myself, shipping cattle to the mainland for me and Kaupō is for the birds. But now don't get me wrong, because, it's a very viable part of our cattle industry. And very, very good. But for us, at that time, it was very difficult because we had all of these things going on. But around the same time, we started to have meetings with Sumner Erdman at Ulupalakua Ranch, Greg

Friel with Haleakala, and the manager of Hana Ranch, Buddy Nobriga, about forming Maui Cattle. And, we can try and see if we could at least market a portion of our cattle locally, and the rest, made sense to ship to the mainland.

LW: This is about 2002?

AF: This was about... this is 2002... that's correct. And so pretty much what happens is Maui Cattle Company is formed in 2002. And, the partners in Maui Cattle Company is Nobriga Ranch, Ulupalakua Ranch, Haleakala Ranch, Hana Ranch, Kaupō Ranch, Lindy Sutherland, Floyd Miller... there were seven partners initially. Floyd Miller had a small ranch on Kaua'i and was a marketing expert. He made his money in marketing. Eventually Floyd Miller moved to the mainland, and he sold his share, and so, it was just the six ranchers. And, we started Maui Cattle Company. There was a small plant that we rented up in Kokomo that we rented from Bobby... a good friend of mine, Bobby Carvalho... it was a small sausage plant. DeCoite packing plant here on the island, the only slaughter plant on the island for beef cattle. They were slaughtering for us. And then, we took it to the small processing... they processed for us. And we got it to the markets. And we started at... basically two head a week. And within... within the first year... we jumped up to fifteen head a week. And by about the second year we were at 32 head a week and the third year we were at 40 head a week. And it just grew because... it just grew. And what really helped us was we were able to feed the cattle in the feed yard. Got consistent. But what always threatened us was again consistency because Maui Land & Pineapple Company was going out of business. Especially the canning business. So, we saw the fruits... the pineapple skins were not available, or wasn't going to be available. And the alternative to that was extremely high cost of grain. And Buddy Nobriga, he did a good job of feeding the cattle for us and that sort of thing. You know... tried to make the switch but the cost was too high. And so, we decided with our expertise in intensive grazing, and some of the practices that we already had on the ranches, that we could convert to a grass finish operation. And we switched over gradually to into a grass finish operation. Unfortunately, on our first year at it we hit the beginning of a six-year drought. And it took us from doing 45 head a week and supplying all the Whole Foods statewide and doing a number of markets, of various restaurants, and various islands, and Alan Wong and Roy's, and everything was going so good. The drought hit and we had to downsize to 70%. And basically, ownership was looking at shutting down. And then we approached ownership, the employees at Maui Cattle Company and the person who was helping me, Eli Funikoshi, who used to work for Maui Land & Pineapple Company and we hired her to assist me with Maui Cattle Company. The best move I ever did make. And, we approached ownership and said you know what? Just... just give us a chance. Let's try and pull this together. And we... we did and we actually were very profitable as we were turning this thing back around and without much cattle, but we did get cattle from the Big Island, and we were purchasing carcasses from Jill Mattos, and kept the pipeline going, and we kept doing it, and it was working, and so, all of this was occurring, and then what happens here on Maui is during that six year drought we were educated to the standpoint that we really without some consistent... without that segment... having the grass finish segment, you have the cow/calf producing side which produces the weaned calves. What is done with the wean calf is the wean calf gets

shipped to the mainland. And I really want to make it clear to the person that's going to go through all this when I said, shipping cattle to the mainland is for the birds, it was said out of my frustration. But shipping cattle to the mainland is a major part, a good part of our industry. But basically... kind of lost my train of thought there... because I wanted to make this point. But...

LW: We're... getting tired but let's see... so you're at the end of the... end of the drought... no wait... you've been keeping the company going through the drought. Now when is the drought? What is that time period?

AF: Six years.

LW: So, starting about when?

AF: In two thousand and... it really started about 2009. And it ended for us about 2000... no... it started about the ending of 2007, and we got our first good year about 2013... About six years... that's how long it lasted. Meanwhile we're still getting some cattle from the ranchers but small... cattle coming in, and the ranchers that supported Maui Cattle Company were very dedicated. They supported us through thick and thin. But it got... it got to the point where it just wasn't making... we were profitable but it got to the point where... yeah... how we going to grow this grass-fed calf... we kinda got our behinds kicked, and how do we plan to do this, you know. And about that time, H C & S was looking at converting or looking at the possibility of converting their sugar cane fields that was the furthest away from the mill into something else. And cattle was one of the considerations. And at the time, there was a young man working in the IR Department by the name of Jacob Tavares that basically kind of took on trying to see if they could grow cattle out there. And started the ball rolling and then basically H C & S said "Ah... maybe we can do more of this." So, they expanded a little bit. But then, lo and behold, they shut the plantation down. Nothing to do with what we were doing. It's just the economics of the plantation. They shut it down. So meanwhile, what happened with the cattle operation is... this is something we wanted to pursue, but we're busy shutting down this plantation that was going for 145 years. And so, everything kind of took a back seat from a cattle perspective, and, from Alexander & Baldwin's perspective, this kind of checks all the boxes, you know. This thing can work. And so, what ownership decided to do was, you know, we're going to invest in our own slaughter plant. And A & B said we're going to fence 4,000 acres. And there was this agreement that was done and it was in writing, but you know it was... it was an agreement that made both parties comfortable. Not locked in, you know, because we're kind of pioneers in this whole thing. So, we started to do that, and then we set various things to justify getting into the cattle business with Alexander & Baldwin...we need to slaughter X number of head, etc., etc. We geared up with the slaughter plant, invested in the slaughter plant and getting that going and all of that, and then they... basically what happened was Alexander & Baldwin sold to Mahi Pono. It's not in the write up there. They sold to Mahi Pono. They bought the entire plantation for \$252,000,000 dollars and Mahi Pono is all in favor of this continuing where H C & S left off. But this is a big machine, you know. They just took on 45,000 acres. And they're not only going to raise cattle, they're going

to raise orchards, potatoes and onions and all this kind of stuff. So meanwhile it goes through this period that didn't lend itself to consistency from a cattle perspective. It was just an adjustment period. So pretty much, we felt that here's a segment of the market that we've been waiting for, that we have irrigation... we have all of this... we have good crop land for pasture, etc., etc. And now we have a land owner that is interested in taking it a step further. In addition to that, they want to be a partner in Maui Cattle Company. Mahi Pono. So, Mahi Pono eventually buys 70% of Maui Cattle. And takes it over. Meanwhile, the pasture deal is still... they're still working on that. But that's Maui Cattle Company. That's kind of the history of it all. But one other thing I'm going to add to Maui Cattle Company.... Greg Friel from Haleakala Ranch approached me one day and said, Alex, I was going through the ranch archives, you know, Haleakala Ranch is about a hundred and twenty-five years old... something like that. They were going back through the archives and back in the early 1900's, there was a group of ranchers that got together with Haleakala Ranch and formed a meat processing company. They called it Maui Cattle Company. I have that. And so that I thought was kind of amazing. What... 70 years later we're doing the same thing.

LW: Yeah... yeah...

AF: That's the deal, so pretty much that's kind of where we're at, and that's kind of my history of where we're at. And now, Maui Cattle Company is being run by Elli Funakoshi. The lady that we hired. I still help her from time to time. But that's kind of what I have.

LW: I had two more questions for you. One of them is, what in your history of ranching do you feel the most proud of?

AF: Well... I would say, I feel very good about the partnership that we formed with the ranches here in Maui. Collectively... collectively, it was a great set of ranchers. They all came together. They all supported what we were trying to do. They all got involved. They went on promotional campaigns with us. They were always there. And we saw the thing grow. And, that was a great feeling. We had the misfortune of the drought which kind of turned that in a different direction, but hopefully, we have laid a foundation where they can... you know, again, the resources are there to grow the company even bigger. And hopefully, they can pool all those resources together to make it work. When we started Maui Cattle Company, we didn't have all the resources. You know... we didn't have the pastures. We didn't have the slaughter plant. And we had a processing plant. But now you have the pastures, you have the slaughter plant with the potential of moving our rented processing space where the slaughter plant is and go from there. And one other point, I forgot to make... here I am at Kaupō Ranch. Everything is going good. We're running cattle and that sort of thing, and I get into Maui Cattle Company and get back into the beef processing and slaughter again. So, I get in, I get out, but I guess it's kind of how it was meant to be. But it was... it was nice working with that group of people and trying to get it growing, and it was nice to break into Whole Foods... just getting started in the plant, and I remember when they first came here and we started to work with them... you know... I'm trying to remember the meat buyer. But anyway, the meat buyer

from Whole Foods told me, working here in Hawai‘i is like working with a third-world country. I got insulted. I really did. I felt insulted. And we became good friends. But after he worked with us for a couple of years, he said you know, “We have a great working relationship working with you and we like how things are going etc., etc., etc.” That was an accomplishment when that happened. And then, when the drought hit, we decided in honor of our customers, we had over a 125 accounts... including Whole Foods, we decided that we’re going to stick with the small guys that got us going. And what we did was, we put Whole Foods with Hawai‘i Beef Producers on the Big Island, and Jill Mattos, who is retired as well... with some of the ranchers on the Big Island is supplying that market along with Michelle Galimba and that sort of thing so other ranchers have basically filled in the gap.

LW: So, what do you think of the future of ranching here in Hawai‘i?

AF: You know... definitely the land resources are there. There’s a definite desire by the public fueled by many reasons for food security. I mean this pandemic has brought that even more to the forefront. To try to produce as much of our local food as possible. The beef cattle industry in general, if you look at what’s happening, like if you look at Parker Ranch, for example. Parker Ranch is a pretty good program with food safety. And hats off to them... they’ve done a good job. And one of the biggest things I was concerned about when Parker Ranch was going to come on board was, we all go after the same markets. And they made it a point not to touch any of the existing markets that was developed, and they developed a market with Safeway, and they have a very good rapport with them. So that’s good. I believe the challenges that we have is we’re separated by all of this water between us. And so, we’re fragmented from the stand point... the highest possible segment is beef slaughter and beef processing. And the way to drive those costs down is to run more cattle through the least amount of facilities as is possible. There’s no way Hawai‘i can have one big processing facility. You have to have one or two good solid processing facilities on each island that work hand in hand with each other. For this thing to go just to the next level... you know again, it’s made so they compete against each other. Like what we have with the school lunch program. The school lunch program goes out on a bid. And we have processing plants competing against processing plants to get the bid, and that’s a natural way a business runs, but it would be nice that somehow, and I think it can happen, that all of those entities could kind of work together to fill this large market. ‘Cause right now the school lunch program is not being satisfied a 100% by local product because of its size. And I know there’s a lot of potential for that sort of thing. The governor is making... there’s more pushes for more local products and that sort of thing, so to me, the resources are there, the will is there, everything is there. The biggest thing working against us is again...as time goes on, the cost goes up and up and up and up. We got to figure out a way to control those costs and being as efficient as possible. And so, the potential is definitely there.