

Harold Sung Wa Aiu

Kapaa, Kaua`i



Harold Aiu was born and raised on Kauai in 1920. He learned the paniolo ways from two uncles who raised cattle on the Garden Isle. These were the legendary days when paniolo roped mostly dangerous wild bulls and tied them to trees in the mountains of Popai and Papalai in Kokee. They were paid \$15.00 for each animal roped. Harold started his own ranch in Wailua in the 1960's on the slopes of the Nonou Sleeping Giant mountain, and raised cattle for more than 25 years. Harold was the president of the Khokai Rodeo Club in Wailua and won the All-Around Cowboy title for Kauai 8 times. He later competed and won in California and Oregon and entered the U.S. Team Roping Championship Finals in Oklahoma. In 1995 he won the Century Team Roping at the makawao rodeo and in 1998 won his third trophy saddle at the age of 78. Harold is a gentle and humble man and credits his partners - horse and human - as his greatest assets.

Series 1, Tape 9
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
with
Harold Sung Wa Aiu (HA)
on January 4, 2001

in Kapa'a

BY: Anna Loomis (AL)

AL: So this is Anna Loomis interviewing Mr. Harold Aiu at his home in Kapa'a [Kauai] on January 4, 2001.

AL: Okay. Mr. Aiu, maybe you—just for the record—could you start out by telling me when and where you were born?

HA: I was born on Kauai, Lihue, in the dispensary—that's sort of a hospital like—July 7, 1919. In 1920, I'm sorry—1920.

AL: And did you grow up in Lihue?

HA: No, no. I grew up here in this area, but, see, my mother had to go to the hospital over there, so that's actually where I was **born**.

AL: So you grew up in Kapa'a.

HA: Kapa'a—Wailua, yeah. Wailua. Right close by.

AL: And what was Wailua like when you were growing up in the 1920s and '30s?

HA: Ah, very countrified. Hardly any people living there. It was mostly rice growing area, at that time. It was over fifty years ago, you know. Sixty years. No, **eighty** years ago!

AL: And your parents—were they rice farmers?

HA: No, my mother was a housewife and then she was a seamstress and a cook. Family cook. And my dad was an attorney; he studied and became an attorney—not through school, just by correspondence course.

AL: Self-educated?

HA: Self-educated, yeah.

AL: And were your parents born here on Kauai?

HA: No, my dad was born in Kona—yeah, my mother was born on this island.

AL: Could you tell me about—about how Wailua was when you were growing up? What did the town look like? What were the most important buildings?

HA: Oh, Wailua was just a—like I say, was a community made up of rice growers and family people, hardly—there wasn't actually a town here. There was a school, and not even a service station, because those days horse and buggy. Kapa'a was the main town, of course, with grocery stores and meat market, and stuff like that. Hardly anything that is—not anywhere near what it is now, now you've got all kinds of shops. So that's how it was, it was a very—farming town, actually, farming area, rice growing.

AL: So Kapa'a was where you ...

HA: Yeah, Kapa'a was the closest town to us. So Wailua was just an area where people lived, that's all.

AL: And so the neighbors that were living around you, when you were growing up—did you have extended family living near you? Or were they other families?

HA: Yeah, other families—many families around that area, you know, growing rice, and some of them worked for the plantation—there was a lot of cane growing here at that time. In fact, where I'm living used to be cane land, and then after the war it was cut up and sold to people like us who bid for it and build our own homes.

AL: For residential.

HA: Mm-hm.

AL: So it must have been a pretty hardworking community.

HA: Yeah, yeah. I'd say it was.

AL: What did people do for fun around here? On weekends or holidays ...

HA: What did they—what was the question?

AL: On the weekend or holiday, when you were growing up, what did people in town do for fun?

HA: Well, I suppose—gee, the weekends was just another working day. You had to attend the rice patches to make sure the birds don't eat all of the rice. There's always work around the area, the house. And then of course many of us went swimming, but this—as far as entertainment, it's nothing like what it is now, where you **seek** entertainment—you go surfing, and music in the evenings, and drinking, and stuff like that. Parties, you know. Very mild and low key.

AL: Your dad was an attorney. Who came to him for advice? Was it his neighbors that sought his advice, or was he an attorney for the plantation?

HA: Everybody just about stuck to themselves, you know, family entertainment, hardly intermingling in those days, anyway. Then we went to school, of course, when we got older.

AL: Could you tell me about your school?

HA: The school? Well, we had to go about three miles to Kapa'a to—no, no, there was one school right here up till ... third grade I believe it was, just one classroom, and Mrs. Aki was the schoolteacher, and also the principal. And when we went through that school, then we transferred to Kapa'a School, and then we started fourth grade, and went up to eighth grade, then we graduated over there. Kapa'a school is where it is now located, so there's lots of students all over the area coming—mostly farming area, plantation area, people from plantations would send their kids. Then after that, you graduate eighth grade, and we went to Kauai High School for four years. That's where a little more learning, high school.

AL: And where was that located?

HA: That was located in Lihue. Yeah, pretty far away. We had to have transportation, you know, automobile.

AL: You got there by car?

HA: Yeah, by car. My uncle—one of my uncles lend me his car, and I would pick up five or six students, and they'd pay me a monthly rate so they'd have a ride, and I would drive the car to the school. Daily, five days a week. That's how we went to—it's about fifteen miles away from where we used to live.

AL: That's quite a distance.

HA: Yeah.

AL: Um, you mentioned that your dad was an attorney, and I wanted to ask you who his clients were.

HA: Well, mostly people—mostly divorce cases, buying land—they needed an attorney to draw papers, and domestic—and then he would go to court.... Well actually, at that time we didn't pay much attention to what he did, so I'm not that familiar with what he would do. Mostly what a lawyer is required to do, write a lot of briefs, and attend court, and then later on he became—he was chosen to become assistant county attorney—they call it **county** attorney. The fellow there was a Hawaiian guy who won the election as county attorney, and hired my dad to be his assistant. So that was pretty good for him to earn enough money to support his family, because what he was doing prior to that wasn't very lucrative, because people didn't have money to pay, so they'd pay in chickens, or hog, or eggs or something. Those who couldn't afford the money. But it was very inexpensive—I mean, it was hard making a living.

AL: Um, when you were growing up around here, did you have many animals around your house?

HA: Hm ... I remember tending a water-buffalo—that's what my grandparents used to till the rice pastures. Most people that's what they used, because those water-buffalos could go into the mud and pull a plow, whereas horses wouldn't be able to, so that's—and there was no machinery like now, so that was the main method of working the land, water-buffalo. They're huge animals, big horns, but they were tame, and they were tied with a ring around their nose so they wouldn't fight the rope. Because, if you put a rope around their neck, well their neck is so strong that they just—you know, like a rhino or something, very strong. But with a ring around their nose, they become very docile. So that's how it was, and you strap a plow behind them, or a harrow, and went into the water. Those are about the only animals—of course there's the dogs and cats—not too much other animals.

AL: Where did your grandparents get their water-buffalo?

HA: Oh, I imagine he purchased it from somebody. They had one tied around the place, and we'd have to attend to the buffalo.

AL: Did it have a name?

HA: No, I don't remember—it was a long time ago.

AL: I never even realized they had water-buffalos around this area, I never heard of that.

HA: Yeah, water-buffalos. Sorry I don't have a picture of it, but they're stocky, and very strong, and they have a round horns, you know. In fact, I don't see too much of them, except perhaps if you see a picture of in Vietnam or those backwards countries, they still have it. But of course now they use tractors and all kinds of modern equipment that goes into the mud and do the work.

AL: Could you tell me about when you first started learning about cattle?

HA: Oh. When I first—it was some time ago, when I was in high school. My uncle used to be invited to go to a ranch to do roping and work cattle, but his friends and him make friends with—these were all Hawaiian cowboys, yeah? So he would take me along to show me what he did, how he rode a horse. And then little by little I started to get interested in riding horse, and cattle. I don't know what year it was though. It must have been, maybe, I was ten or twelve years old. So it would be about 1930 or '35 [I] started to learn little bit about cattle, but nowhere near what I learned later on about rodeo, cattle, anything. And then ... 1965 ... I think it's after '65, I started to get interested in raising cattle. And—I think it was 1965. I think it's in here (refers to a list of dates he's written down)—started to look around for land. The main thing is land, yeah? You get land. So I was able to lease some land and put fence around it, develop it into pastures. You call it "pastures," yeah? Actually it's too small to call a ranch. Fence it into sections so to rotate the animals as they graze so they don't spoil the whole area. Maybe if you have 25 acres you would cut it up into five, six acres and rotate the animals around. So that's how we used to do it—not too much fertilizing, or—in fact we didn't have any equipment, only when we could borrow somebody's....

AL: Before we talk more about your pastures, could you tell me about—you had one uncle, or two uncles who taught you ...

HA: Two.

AL: Could you tell me more about them? Could you tell me what their names were?

HA: Oh. One of them his name was Earnest Apana. He work for the County—of Kauai—and part time he would raise cattle and work cattle. And the other one, his name was Ching Fat. And he worked for the county also, and he had lots of land that he would raise cattle on, and we would go and help him move the cattle, round-up. That's the two person.

AL: Earnest Apana—was he a calabash uncle? Or was he maternal or paternal?

HA: He was my mother's brother. And the other one, Ching Fat, he was very close friends—I call him Uncle, you know. And he had a pretty good-sized ranch. So I would go and help him much of the time.

AL: What kind of guys were they?

HA: Hm?

AL: What kind of men were these two guys? What were they like?

HA: What kind of **men**?

AL: What was the character like, the personality?

HA: Personality? Well, they were working men. And they seemed to—like my uncle, Earnest, he also loved to fish. He was good at sea—fish in the ocean, and throwing his net—that's his love. And riding horse, and roping, that's another love. The other one is—Ching Fat—he was a hard worker. Much of his time was spent developing the ranch, cutting the trees and tending the animals and stuff. So they were working men, they work for the county.

AL: Were they quiet men, or more fun-loving?

HA: Quiet—quiet people.

AL: Was it common or uncommon for a cowboy to be of Chinese ancestry?

HA: To be Chinese? Well, I would say, at that time it was kind of common because there was all kinds of nationalities. There's Hawaiians, there's Portuguese ... Chinese. Not too much Japanese—they stuck to their farming, regular farmers, or rice growers, and they work for the plantation for another type of farming. So these people—like myself, I'm Chinese—and it's kind of unusual, but usually it's part Hawaiian, or white people that are good at it. But in those days, there weren't that many white people here. It was only the local. I wouldn't say it was uncommon, because there were others that ...

AL: For the area.

HA: Yeah.

AL: You went and you helped work on Ching Fat's ranch?

HA: Yeah, ranch. We'd help him. Almost weekly, when his animals were ready for slaughter, we would go to his different pastures, and catch those animals that are ready for slaughter, maybe two or three, and rope them out in the open, and lead them about one or two miles away [to] where his slaughterhouse is located, and take it into the slaughterhouse, and then the next day we'd go and slaughter the animals. So that's the routine, and then of course once a year, maybe twice a year, he'd round up his cattle, separate the calves, and brand them, and castrate them, whatever. Then they grew up and we'd put them in the fattening pen, and when they old enough we'd put them in the fattening pen, and that's where we'd go to catch them, and lead them.

AL: Um, who worked with you on the ranch? Did he have employees, or ...

HA: No, just my uncle, myself, Ching Fat. And he had two boys, but they were too young at the time, so we were the kind of main helpers for him.

AL: What happened on the typical work-day at the ranch? Say you'd be going to slaughter a certain number of cattle ...

HA: See at that time I was still in school, so this would be maybe on Friday afternoon, and then Saturday, Sunday would be our off-days, eh? So we would have our work at home ... we were not actually working on the ranch per se, as ranch hands.

AL: But say, maybe on a Saturday you would go over and help him ...

HA: If he needed help, yeah. If he needed help.

AL: Yeah, so if he needed help, and he called you and you came over, what would—your typical day helping out on the ranch, how would it start? What would you do over there?

HA: Well if he had a certain project, if he had to round-up the cattle to take away so many small ones, and transfer it to another pasture, we'd do that to help him out. It always takes a lot of people, several people to round-up the cattle. And chase them in the corral, and separate them. And in those days we didn't have much transportation, so we'd have to drive them on the road, and block the exits until we got to the point where he wanted them. So that took lots of people who knew animals and who knew how to block the exits, and there were lots of that before, because not too many people had property fence up.

AL: Was it—did you look forward to doing that, or was it like a chore?

HA: No, no! We look forward to doing that, because it doesn't really come often, that often. Maybe couple times a month, or something. It was an outing for us, riding horse and getting onto the horse. And when they say, "we have to go out and catch two," oh, everybody was all anxious to go and show that they can rope, ride. So that's about the activities that we did on his ranch, but he had his own—what he did on his own I don't really know.

AL: Eventually you spent some time working for Kekaha Plantation, is that right?

HA: Oh. That was my father-in-law—my wife's dad—used to be the ranch foreman. So he needed to catch animals that were running wild in the hills of Kokee, because they were multiplying, and he didn't have enough men to round them up, so he would offer us, myself, himself, and his son, the bounty of fifteen dollars a head if we caught it and tied it up on the tree. And of course, Kekaha Plantation had trailers—this was several years later on—and trucks to go up and haul it the next day.

So that's what we would do, we would go and go up into the hills early in the morning, I would take my horse from here, on the trailer, and go to Kekaha, and go on their trucks up to the hills. And then we would scout for the bunch. And as soon as we saw a bunch, everybody, the three of us, would know that we would have to catch one and tie it up by ourselves, because each one catch, you get paid fifteen dollars a head, is big money. So very exciting—we roped the animals and drag them to a stout tree, and tie it up to the tree. And that would be money earned, because once it tied to the tree, it's easier to load them onto the trailer, yeah? So that's what we would do, and we'd do that every—just about every weekend we'd go up.

I'd look forward to that because it's a very exciting day, roping out in the open, roping wild cattle—and some of them are really wild. And you know, that's the funny part about it, is we'd go up, and the three of us, instead of catching the smaller ones—you get the same pay—we'd go look for the biggest ones, especially the bulls. They're fierce, you know! After you catch them, you dare not go near them—your horse would be lively, because they would charge you and try to gore you with their horns.

AL: Why would you pick the bulls?

HA: I don't know! It's just challenge, I guess. But the—one thing though, it would be easier that they would charge you, and you would run towards the tree, and circle the tree, and they'd snare themselves around the tree, and it would lock over there. Then you could jump down and tie them to the tree, see? But the others, like a cow or a smaller one, it would be difficult to get them to a tree—and there's not too many trees around the place. So you'd have to look for a good sized tree, within a close distance. They call it—now we call it *po'o wai u, po'o wai u*, but at that time we just were tying the cow to the tree. Yeah, that was a lot of fun, an experience that I gained that not too many people have had that opportunity. Well, my father-in-law was boss, so he could invite me, yeah?

AL: Do you remember some of the exciting stories? Any of the exciting things that happened to you up there sometime?

HA: Well, at one time my brother-in-law caught this young bull, and he was dragging it. I went too close, and I was helping him chase it to a tree, and I think I went too close, and the bull turn around and poked my horse. That's the one time. Another time, going down the road, and we all separated, and I caught one—going full steam down the road. And luckily I roped the

horns, and I had him tied to my saddle. And then he cut off to the right into—you know they call it wash—where the water had washed the road off, and all holes and bumps. And I thought sure I was going to fall, if my horse stumbled, and get hurt, because it was going full blast. Luckily, the horse that I had at that time was sound, good horse, and he knew his footing, and he just held back on him, and he just ran over this wash and knocked that bull down, and we didn't get hurt.

And then one other time, we caught that huge—my father-in-law—no, I caught a huge bull with big horns on the hillside, and he started to pull me down towards the edge. And my father-in-law came, and normally we put two ropes on an animal like that. He tried, and he couldn't get the rope over those big horns, it was so massive. And he tried and tried, and in the mean time we were moving down—the bull was so strong. But he finally put his rope on, and both of us was able to handle that bull with two horses, so that was okay, but scary at that time.

But the other time was sort of routine—you catch one, you find a tree, you drag him down. So it was alright.

AL: What was the terrain like up there, the land?

HA: Hm?

AL: What was the landscape like?

HA: Oh. It was pasture land, with several trees growing. It wasn't real like beautiful pasture land where there's no trees. No, it was wild country, wild country. That's why they had a difficult time rounding the cattle. They were short-handed, actually, they couldn't spend that much money to hire people just to run a ranch, and the income doesn't justify it.

AL: Was it hilly country, or flat land?

HA: Hilly country, very hilly. You haven't been to Kokee?

AL: No.

HA: No. It's a rolling hill—it's a flat and then this hillside, you know? They go down to the bottom to get their water, and I guess the grass is pretty lush down there, and every so often they come up. So we go down in the valley and chase them up on flat, and each one of us would pick one, and then go for it. If we—on a good day we might catch six—because the horse would get tired, too.

AL: Did your father-in-law or your brother-in-law, did they teach you any tricks of the trade?

HA: No, not really. By that time I was pretty experienced already—I worked here with helping my uncle doing the regular ranch work.

AL: What about camping? When you went up there, was it just for the day? Or did you camp overnight?

HA: No, just for the day. We'd take lunch and water, and lunchtime we'd break and have sandwiches.

AL: How early would you have to start to get up there?

HA: To come—?

AL: How early in the morning would you leave ...

HA: Oh, yeah—about—I would leave home five o'clock in the morning, and I had a small little horse trailer, load my horse. But it would take me about an hour and a half to get there, and then same thing in the evening, when we get through, I would load up and come home. To me it was pretty far, but it was okay. We got paid for it anyway, and money was hard to come by in those days. Well, even now is.

AL: What year was this, about, that you were spending time up there?

HA: Oh boy. Let me see (consults list of dates). Nineteen—I'd say when I was about—1935, around there ... I think around there, because 1940 was the war years already, and at that time we couldn't go because it used too much gasoline. I'd say ... within the 1930s, I'd think, '35 to '40.

AL: What was your father-in-law's name?

HA: Joseph Kanoa. K-A-N-O-A. And my brother-in-law's name was Mervin Kanoa. M-E-R-V-I-N. We call him "Buddy."

AL: Did you have a nickname?

HA: Who, me?

AL: Yeah.

HA: No.

AL: Between the time you were helping out for the Kekaha Plantation, and when you started raising your own cattle, what did you do during that period?

HA: Oh just riding my horse around, and if anybody needed help I would go help. But nothing much ... uh, there was no rodeos that I would enter in, in fact we were not capable yet at that time, it came later on, and learn the tricks of the trade, and became exciting. So....

AL: Let's see. In 1965 you were in your mid-forties. What made you decide to start raising cattle?

HA: Well, all my friends were raising cattle, you know, and I was able to acquire a lease of land—I started with 25 acres, and then my uncle ... turned over some areas to me, to help me out. And those were good years, because I raised a lot of animals. But I would only buy the weaners—they call them weaners, yeah, the young ones—and raise them up, and fatten them up, and then slaughter it to ship to the market, you know? No more _____ or anything like that, just the sole purpose of raising the animals was for meat. I didn't have to breed them or anything. My operation was buying young ones, raising them in one good pasture, and when they came of age, and fattened up, contact the market to take it.

AL: You sold them to the market on Kauai?

HA: Yeah, right on Kauai, in Kapa'a, with my friends. They're still doing it, you know.

AL: And where is your pasture land located?

HA: Right in the back of Sleeping Giant, Wailua Homesteads, they call it. Of course, the land that I had was over 25 acres, but it's subdivision now. Yeah.

AL: And could you describe the—could you describe the land for me? What's the land like?

HA: Well it—it's at the foothill, in the back foothill of the Sleeping Giant. And it's sloping, nice flat land. So now it's a huge subdivision—they call it the Queens Acres now, but it's a nice little flat land, yeah. Uh, sloping land, because it's at the foothills of the mountain, yeah? So not really really flat like over here or something.

AL: Is it a dry area, or does it get a lot of rain?

HA: Hm, medium I'd say. During the summer it's dry, and in the winter it's a little wet. Overall it's pretty nice.

AL: Just right.

HA: Mm-hm.

AL: Could you tell me about the different kinds of work that your ranch land required, your pastures?

HA: What was the question again?

AL: Could you tell me about the different kinds of work that you needed to do on your land, to maintain the land?

HA: Oh, yeah. The biggest problem is obnoxious weeds growing, we'd have to get rid of those. And it's lantana, it's guava, it's elephantopus. And now it's wedelia. It's a terrible thing. But what I would do is contact the University of Hawaii, and get the instructions on what kind of chemical to use, herbicide, and go and spray it. I would borrow my friend's sprayer, mechanical sprayer, and put it on my trailer, and drive around the pasture spraying stuff, mow it and spray. That you can do by yourself.

And now I'm still confronting those kinds of obnoxious weeds, but I go with a knapsack sprayer—you know you strap it on your back, yeah? Three gallons, and then it's manageable. And then I walk around and look at it, and pump one hand and spray the other. But it's a constant battle with—you see, you kill the mature one, and the seeds sprout up. It's constant. If you don't do it, pretty soon your pasture is overrun with these obnoxious weeds, so you have to constantly keep at it. Right now, my sons have their horses with me, I take care of their horses, and so any time I need help spraying, I call them, and they would come up, and we would all have a sprayer, and walk around the pasture, and spray it to keep the.... But you have to do it, otherwise it just overwhelms you.... That's what it is.

AL: Did you do work—did you work on horseback?

HA: No, no. On foot, on foot, yeah. What I do now is I load all the equipment on the trailer—I have a four-wheel-drive, you know that wagon—it'll go in the pasture and park any place we want,

and we take the water and the chemicals and mix them on the trailer. When your sprayer is out of chemicals you come back to the trailer and load up again.

AL: But when you're working with your cows, your cattle ...

HA: Yeah ...

AL: You work on horse ...

HA: On horseback, yeah. That's where I gained a lot of expertise working with cattle—you know you have to know what to do. I would brand them and castrate them and separate them, yeah.

AL: Could you tell me about some of the things you learned by working ...

HA: Well, how to go and—well, mine is different: I didn't have to raise them from motherhood.

Tape ends and is turned over.

AL: So you said that you bought those that were ...

HA: Buy—lot of people—several people, ranchers—not ranchers, but private owners, would have maybe ten heads of weaners—they call them weaners, they wean them from the mother—for sale, and you hear about it and you go look at it, and you make an offer, or accept what they want, maybe a hundred dollars a head. And you buy it, and you come with your trailer, you load them up and haul it away. They most likely are branded already. So it was—a pretty good deal for me. That's what I, as far as my experience with ranching with cattle is raising them up. And I would go to a slaughterhouse, and help slaughter those animals, and deliver it to the meat market. That would be on Saturday mornings, we'd get up at four o'clock ... it was hard... No social life on Friday nights! But it was interesting. That's part of the experience.

AL: Could you tell me what the most challenging thing is about having a private cattle operation, for you?

HA: (Pause) You hope you make money (laughs). It's something—the challenging thing about it is to—every so often, they have a disease called pink-eye, and you have to treat those animals, you have to put medicine. And that, I thought was—cause you cannot do it by yourself, you have to have help, and you have to treat each one of them with medication so that they don't get blind—they can get serious and blind, yeah? They call it pink-eye. But I don't know. Now I don't hear too much about it. Maybe they breed them with resistance, that they resist that type of diseases.

AL: When you need help, where do you get it?

HA: Oh, I have friends that are in the same kind of a operation like I was, and we were all willing to help each other. We're all willing to help each other. Somebody—one of them needed to round up their herd, to work them, we'd go. Usually we'd do it on the weekends, Saturday, Sunday. That way we had more time, yeah, to do. I used to work as an accountant, so not too much time, yeah?

AL: What's your favorite thing about running a private cattle operation?

HA: The favorite thing? (Chuckling) When they ready for the market. This was when, you know, the return of what you invested comes back, see. If I bought a calf, a weaner for a hundred dollars, and I keep him for three years or so, and fatten him out, and slaughter it, all that work is not counted as an expense, because I putting it in. And then you get three or four hundred dollars worth of beef. The margin of profit is pretty good at that time. So that was the reward, I'd say, of ranching. I don't know how they—maybe now it's still good yet, but the part that forced me out of it was not enough land. The area is—now Amfac [Sugar] is out of business, I guess you heard about it ...

AL: Yeah.

HA: So there's lots of land available. But they want to sell it to people who are going to develop it. But at that time, when they were in business, they were very few land. That's why I located in the back of these mountains where there's still yet lots of pasture land. But a lot of people—in fact, my friend has about forty, fifty acres that he just lost because they're going to develop it to house lots. There's always development encroaches.

AL: So this land is leased from the State?

HA: No, not from the State, from private owners. The one that I had was comparatively small, but I would look around and get ten acres here, five acres there, but it was enough to shift my animals around, all over Wailua Homestead. So that's about my experience as far as ranching—I didn't run a big ranch, but I did deal with cattle when they were small and to the market ... marketing the beef.

AL: How do you go about negotiating the market price of your ...

HA: Oh, it's set already. The market offers a certain price per pound delivered to their markets. Dressed—they call it dressed weight. And so if your steer dresses out at 500 pounds, at maybe 90 cents a pound, then that time you get 450, 500 dollars worth of beef that you've sold. But you had to raise him to maturity, and you already bought a hundred dollars worth of young one, and you fertilized the field, and you herbicide the field. You know, that's all the added cost, and the running back and forth. So it's not totally deep profit, but it's enough that you get rewarded at least some of your efforts. So that's what it is.

But my—so that's about the experience of raising animals, you know ranching. I'm not a total rancher, you know, big rancher with a lot of land. You know, small type. But my expertise, my *paniolo* experience is entering rodeos, you know, competing.

AL: When did you first start competing in rodeos?

HA: Hm. I think was in ... gee, I got to go consult my notes, huh? Oh—around the mid 1960s, after—you see, I was working in a cannery, as an accountant in the office, and then in 1965 they closed down the cannery, the one in Kapa'a, which was the biggest. Oh, the reason for it closing down was the competition was too keen. They had gone and taught the foreigners how to raise pineapple cheaper, because labor was cheaper. And less mechanical. And so they—they had to close down, because they were not making money. So that's when I lost my job, and I'd been working there for twenty—twenty-some odd years. So after that, I went into government—I became assistant to the chairman of the—assistant mayor to Kauai. For only couple years, because we lost the election. And then after that, then I really started—sixty five, seventy I think—I started to enter rodeos. I think—over here it says—nineteen sixty ... yeah, early 1960, became president of the rodeo club that was started here in Wailua, and

other clubs—there was one in Waimea, so we'd go back and forth, and compete. It was fun, though. Not as stringent as the mainland, but it was—for us it was good.

AL: What were the rodeos like?

HA: Uh, there was an arena we made down in where the hotel is now, and there was one in Kealia, and there was one in Hanalei, and there was one in Kekaha. All over the island. And mostly attended by cowboys that, you know, work on ranches, and they try their skill. But I—my skill wasn't learned on the ranch, it was developed—I personally developed it, because I felt that if I had to compete, island-wide, or other islands, which I did go to different islands and compete in the rodeos—I had to be a little better—just as good or a little better than the other guys.

So that's what it is, and then I attended clinics, put on by professionals _____, from the mainland.

AL: Do you remember—do you remember how or why you decided to start a rodeo club?

HA: Yeah, there were this bunch of guys that I used to hang around with, decided that we should start a club, all had that same interest in riding and roping, so we formed a club, and we got it going, and we invited off-islanders to come. But always they showed, they were much better than us competition-wise, because they were exposed to a lot of competition on Oahu. So much later I became a little more adept at competing. I went to Honolulu, Oahu, and I had two boys there that had horses. And that made it easy for me, because I didn't have to ship my horse. And mounted their horse and competed. I think I did quite well. With the practice I got over here, and mounted on good horses in the competition. They weren't actually that much better than us, but they had more practice, more time to rope.

AL: You mentioned that when you started doing rodeo you set about to develop your skills ...

HA: Yeah ...

AL: How did you do that?

HA: By practicing, and like I started off roping the head—so you got to practice, and at home you rope the dummy. You practice and practice, just about daily you practice in how to ... and you get skillful in handling the rope. But then my boy, my son, used to heel for me—the second one, Tommy. And we won, father and son, first place in our Kalia arena. I headed and he heeled, and we got a trophy, koa wood, given by the governor, for that. Then, it was difficult getting a heeler that is good enough, so I wasn't doing very well. So I decided to switch ends, and go to heeling. You know what heeling is?

AL: When you rope the ...

HA: The two heels [the back legs]. So I would—I found that that was more challenging and more rewarding, because I developed the skill of heeling, and I picked good headers, they would catch for me and I would come in. So I had good times and a lot of wins on that. Win good money.

AL: Did you do events besides team roping?

HA: Hm?

AL: Did you do other events besides team roping?

HA: Yes, I had—I did double mugging, they call it. I would come and rope the head, and my partner would come and between he and I would knock the cow down, the steer down, and I would tie the rope. I have pictures of that to show you. That was one. I used to do calf roping, and I used to do *Po'o Wai U*, which the same thing we did in the mountains, you know, *Po'o Wai U*, but now I concentrate on heeling. I just do heeling—and I like that sport. So I have my own horse, he's a heeler. _____. My son Tommy has a heeling horse, and my son Bobby has a heading horse. So three of us. In fact this coming Sunday we're going to go to Hanalei—to Hanalei, and compete in the jackpot roping. They call it jackpot.

AL: Jackpot roping.

HA: Are you able to stop that for a little while?

Tape is stopped while Mr. Aiu gets up for a moment.

AL: Okay, we were talking about your rodeo competitions. And I know that you went to the State Championships ...

HA: Yes, I went to Honolulu quite often because I had a horse there, and I would compete, and that's where I won my first trophy saddle, with Clayton Hee—in Kahaluu? Up in the hills?

AL: Yeah, Kahaluu.

HA: This fellow by the name of Ron Derese owns a covered arena—he put up a covered arena ...

AL: I know that place.

HA: Huh?

AL: I know that place. Is it Rocking J ranch?

HA: Yeah. I think so. And that's where I won that first saddle. And I have here the time that I ... that was in 1990. In 1990, let's see ... (consults notes). Yeah, I did it—you see, we go by seconds—the time starts when the header comes out and ropes his animal, and then the heeler comes in the back and ropes the two hind legs, and they face each other, and the flag goes down, and that's when the time is taken. And that one there, I run it in six-tenths of a second, with Bobby Farias, Junior, and then I won another one with ... Charlie Stevens ... no ... Kenny Miranda ... no. Then another one that—this other one, it was kind of with other people. But the last one that I won, [with] Kahea White, at Makawao was seven seconds, so I won another saddle, a third saddle.

AL: When was that, in Makawao?

HA: That one was in 1998, that one. It's kind of recent there.... The one here was 1992.... And the other one was 1990. Three saddles. Then I won numerous buckles—fourteen buckles.

So, it's kind of rewarding for me, you know, because I have trophies and buckles and stuff to show that ... it was only contribution. And I made some money. Of course, you pay money to enter, and if the end of the day, if you did good, you get paid back.

AL: You get your money back.

HA: Yeah, you get money—**more** than money back, because you win prizes, eh? So, that's it.

AL: Could you tell me if you have any memories—if you have in mind one of the most memorable rides that you had in competition, you know?

HA: Well, okay.

AL: Maybe the most thrilling ride that you remember ...

HA: Well I'll go back to this last saddle that I won. There were lots of competitors, all vying for saddles, yeah? This boy, his name is Kahea White, he's from Kauai, and he and I went over to Makawao, and we had to borrow horses, yeah? It's not like you riding your own horse and you're used to it. And we came out that first time, we qualified in two runs. And we had a good time on the first run—a lot of people had good times too. Then on the second run, which was the final run, he came out and he caught his steer on the head very quickly, and I came out just in perfect precision, and caught two legs, and stretched it out. And we had seven second run, which was very rewarding at that time. Seven second run, and I won a saddle! And that saddle, since I don't need it, I gave it to my son, Tommy, and he's using it now. So I think that one was the—to me, I thought it was a very exciting run.

Another time, I partnered with a fellow by the name of Kenny Miranda, out at Kualoa Ranch. The prize was a trailer, covered trailer, that was the prize—

AL: A horse trailer?

HA: Yeah, covered trailer. So I had two or three real good partners, but the first one that came out, I caught two bulls, but I think the header wasn't quick enough, so the time wasn't that exceptional. Then others went, and oh the time was getting better and better. So we needed—let me see—we needed five-tenths of a second run in order to win the trailer. Not me, but my partner, Kenny Miranda—he's a real top-notch header. We came out and look at each other and said, "we'll get 'um." So he came out and he just caught this steer so fast, and I just came out and I just caught my two leg that fast, only in five-tenths of a second we had that steer caught. And he won the trailer! Oh, he was so happy, and I was happy too, cause I was able to help him. So I think that was one other time that I thought was very rewarding to be able to ...

AL: So you also went to some national competitions, some ones on the mainland, is that right?

HA: Pardon?

AL: You also went to some competitions and rodeos on the mainland.

HA: Yep—you see that picture over there, on the ... ? That's one I went to at Oklahoma City, with my partner, Leland Nishek, who lives here on this island. We went up there, but we had to use borrowed horses, so you don't know the horses that well. We did alright but never made money.

Another time—it was a good experience because you competing with all the top-notch mainland people, those in the same category with us. They good, they really good. So we didn't come home with money, but some pictures and fond memories.

And one time, 1975 I believe, we went to—let me see (consults notes)—yeah, 1994. My son and I—which is why it's exciting and rewarding, because you do it with your sons, see ... he and I, he came out—he was roping the head that time, in 1994—in Pomona, California. We were invited to go up there, and we had the horses loaned to us, and in the number seven category. It was December 31, I remember. My son Tom caught the head, and I caught the legs, and we won \$300. Out of all those people over there—they were so experts, much of them real good, and they practice a lot, and they rope a lot. But we were able to win something over there!

AL: What was it like to just walk around the rodeo grounds and see the other people there?

HA: Well, some of them you recognize and you know that they're really top-notch. And most of them you don't know them, so it's—it's mostly just a social gathering, but you don't know who are good until you see them operating. Here, in Hawaii, we know who are the good ones, and really top-notch, and who are just mediocre, you know? But we all friends, it's just that in competition you don't want to be stacked against a really top-notch guy—you might not be able to beat him. So that's how it is, yeah.

AL: How were you received by the other cowboys on the mainland? How did they act?

HA: Oh, they don't—they look at us and they know that in order to be up in the mainland we're good back home—otherwise we wouldn't be spending our big bucks going up there and competing, see. So they showed respect and admiration, but they out to also show us that they better than us. So we go there and we try our best, but like I say, you have to mount someone's horses, they usually don't lend you the best horse they have. I mean, they don't want you to win the money and go home. That's about it.

But they are respectful, and they admire you for being there, competing, but they also want to take the money away from you.

So that was one of the times that my son Tommy and I won some money, and it was a good feeling.

And then I go to Oregon, with Leland, my friend—by the way, he's president of Kauai Nursery and Landscaping, and he has lots of work done. In fact his company just received an award for doing a beautiful Japanese-style yard in Hanalei. But he loves to rope, also. So ...

AL: And his last name?

HA: Nishek. N-I-S-H-E-K. Yeah. And his wife owns an Arabian ranch up here. He's in landscaping.

So, we had to go up there and borrow horses. So we went to Oregon one year, he and I, and we competed up there—we made money but nothing—you know, a lot of people, you don't know them, so you partner with them but they not that terrific, so you don't get to make money. You know the sad part about it, is sometimes you partner with a really good partner—and they miss at the last run! Ohh! How many times that has happened to me! Even though we went together, this last time that I went to Oregon, we had that event cinched if he had caught. Because I was able to rope fairly well, and I had a good horse. We caught the first one, and then came down to the second one—he missed. Uhh—so disappointing! I feel that if he had

caught, I would have been able to produce and do my part, and we would have won big bucks and made a thousand dollars or something. Because a lot of people enter in, yeah? But ...

But when he misses, what can happen? So that's what happened. But I think I made about nine hundred dollars—seven or nine hundred dollars, roping in the different events, yeah? They have different categories. That was exciting.

AL: Well there was just one more question that I wanted to ask you.

HA: Shoot.

AL: It seems to me that, in your life so far, you've been a cowboy on the range, outside, you've been a private—you've raised your own cattle privately, and you've competed and won in lots of rodeos. So you've sort of done the all around cowboy. And what I wanted to ask you, is when you were a little boy growing up, did you always want to be a cowboy ...

HA: No.

AL: Or did it just happen to you?

HA: It was farthest—I was not exposed to—as a little boy, exposed to it like if I was living on a ranch. Lot of this young kids coming up now, their dads are competitors, so they go around with them and they exposed to riding horse and seeing how these people operate, and they have their own little ropes, and they practice and practice. Well, I didn't have that type of up-bringing. I was totally away from cattle. It's only later years when I started to go with my uncle, and exposed a little bit to it, but I wasn't given the opportunity of handling a rope and roping, stuff like that.

So that makes a difference. I think probably if I had been exposed to like how these young kids that have parents entering this type of sports—some of these kids they can rope really good. I don't know how they operate when on their own in an arena, but that'll be years from now. So I have not had that opportunity of being exposed to roping and cattle until later years. Which is alright, I guess. I'm enjoying it. I'm still enjoying it. This Sunday we going to—my two boys coming up, we're going to Hanalei and compete. That's going to be fun. They call it Jackpot. You partner with anybody—it's only five dollars a head so you partner with anybody and you can afford it. You try your best to catch—do what you're supposed to do.

AL: When's your next big rodeo?

HA: Uh, I think—I don't know, this fellow that—my friend that is—he just got a lease for this Kealia—right just in Kealia town, there used to be a 4-H arena. But now he took over, and I think he's going to put on a big rodeo sometime soon. And do you know Jimmy Miranda? You know him?

AL: I know of him.

HA: Yeah. He has an arena, and he's going to put one on, I think—soon, I think. This coming month? But not too much on Kauai, you know. So we try to keep track of everything.