

MICHAEL C. "CORKY" BRYAN

Parker Ranch, Pu`uwa`awa`a Ranch, Hawai`i



As a kid from Ewa Plantation who wanted to be a cowboy, Corky Bryan didn't know he was destined to take a leadership role in Hawai'i's cattle industry. As a schoolboy working summers in O`ahu slaughterhouses, he had only heard of but never met many legendary Parker Ranch paniolo. He didn't know he would one day become the Vice President of Livestock Operations of that very ranch – a position he holds today.

One thing Corky did know - - he was going to make cattle his career. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree at California State Polytechnic College. When he returned, he went to work for Hawaii Meat Company's feedlot, then worked at Princeville and Kipu Ranches on Kauai. He served for ten years as Ranch Manager for Pu`uwa`awa`a Ranch on the Big Island before returning to Hawaii Meat company, eventually becoming General Manager. Corky joined Parker Ranch in 1991 as Livestock Marketing Manager and was later promoted.

Corky counts some Paniolo Hall of Famers among his many mentors, including Alex Napier who allowed him to begin his career in cattle, Jack Midkiff whom he worked under at Princeville, and Miki Kato and Robert Keakealani, Sr. at

Pu`uwa`awa`a, who taught him a love of the land, native flora & fauna, and a "can do" attitude.

Throughout his career, Corky has been a board member, a charter member, President, committee chair and/or member of numerous local and national organizations in the cattle and agricultural industries. Of all the credentials he has earned, Corky values most highly the Title, "Cattleman of the Year," bestowed by his peers in 2006.

He still wants to be a cowboy when he grows up.



Corky Bryan Interview

October 14, 2008

LW: Okay today is October 14th. This is Lynne Wolforth, I'm at Parker Ranch and in... Michael Corky Bryan's office. This is an interview for the O'ahu Cattlemen's Association, Paniolo Hall of Fame interview series. Okay. So we're most interested I think in you as a cattleman. First of all, the thing to ask you is what's a cattleman?

CB: Oh, my God. (Laughter.) Well I think it's changed over the years, obviously. I mean John Parker was a cattleman, he started out being a bullock hunter. Basically that's what he was. And then I think it's evolved over years to where cattlemen are caretakers of cattle, but not only that but they're also caretakers of lands that they run the cattle on because if you don't take care of the land you can't take care of the cows. And then it's evolved into... you can do that... and we do that really well. What's happened is we've had to become marketers as well as cattle raisers and cattle shepherds and all that and we've had to become fully integrated into the business because you know a lot of people say cowboying is a hobby. Well it is to a certain extent 'cause very few of us ever get rich doing that. But we're also in the retail business... we get involved in some retail stuff, we get involved with all that marketing and everything that has to do with marketing. And I think I lost my train of thought but anyway that's what we've become, so "cattlemen" and everybody thinks of hats and boots and big buckles and ropes and all that kind of stuff and pickups. And that's part of it. But the other part of it is something I've had to evolve into. You know going just from a trippy cowboy, although luckily I was educated. But now I'm into the other part where I'm not only working in the business now, I'm working on the business. Doing strategic planning. Doing what it takes to keep this thing running and keeping it profitable so it's not an easy answer. There's a continuum that has just gotten bigger and bigger as time has gone on. Is that enough to scare you?

LW: Yeah. Sure it is. But it's even more complex now because you're diversifying into certain non-cattle things...

CB: Yeah. And I try to, as much as I can, stay out of that part of it because I don't have the expertise. I mean I have ideas about that kind of thing but I try to let experts do that. Because I don't want somebody that's not in my field telling me what to do, so if you ask me a question you're going to get the answer but I don't try to get into all that. And you know we have our visitor division. You know, Kahua has the same thing. Monte has the same thing where we have all had to diversify.

LW: Let me ask you... well let's work through your life a little bit because I think what you've done is provided us with this fabulous little outline probably for many of you and your generation, where you start out a cowboy and end up to be a businessman of some sort.

CB: That's correct.

LW: So let's talk about early days. You grew up on Ewa Plantation?

CB: Right.

LW: So tell me about your first memories of horses, cattle, ranching, anything about your first interests and where you finally end up.

CB: I want to say probably my mother was an outdoors person and she introduced me to horseback riding. We went back to the mainland when I was seven years old, I guess. And she made me take riding lessons. No reason, My grandparents are in Colorado, and it was English riding lessons. And I wasn't so sure I liked that but there was something about that that really grabbed me. So the lessons kind of created that feeling and my mom was always very horsy. She had a horse when she was a child and all kind of stuff so I think she was the one that put that bug into my ear and so that was something I always had in the back of my mind but in the meantime I just wanted to go surfing and play baseball and basketball living in those days most of the sugar companies had ball fields, gymnasiums. I mean you see them all up and down the coast here and we had it in Ewa and Waipahu had one, Wailua had one, Kahuku had one. And all the plantations in O'ahu in those days and so as a kid that's what we did. Summer you had summer fun. All we did was go play baseball. I was on the first Little League team from Ewa back in nineteen 0 something or other. Well you know that was the center part of my life. But at the same time I had this interest in the horse deal. And so my mom actually asked Percy Sanborn, who was the manager at the Kahua in Honolulu or O'ahu at that time... he was the pre-cursor to Alex. Alex was the assistant manager and Percy Sanborn was the manager. My mom asked him if I could down to the slaughter plant there, and in the afternoon, they'd bring the cattle in for the next day's slaughter and so they rode a horse and sorted the cattle off and then turned the other cattle out and whatever stayed in the pen was for the next day. So they were riding horses in the afternoon, She asked if I could go and hang out, so luckily he said yeah, but I'd have to work in the slaughter plant in the morning in order to make my pay so I could go ride horse in the afternoon. So that was kind of the trade off. And this is when I was eleven or twelve... ten, eleven or twelve... something like that. Any way I just remembered... that's my first memory.

LW: So what'd you do there at age eleven or twelve?

CB: Oh all the rubbish kind jobs that eleven or twelve years old can do. I was pretty big, obviously for eleven and twelve year old. I knocked my first steer down when I was twelve in the slaughter plant. So from then on, every summer and every Christmas vacation, every time there was no school and they were working, I was the guy out knocking and I'd have to come in and wash the carcasses and weigh them and all that kind of stuff and this guy Masaru Sugai was the foreman then and he kind of took me under his wing. He was a really good guy, you know. He really taught me a lot of stuff and how to relate to people and how to work hard enough and not dog it. He was always saying I'm going to make you break your ass because one of these days you could be my boss. Well, you know I never became his boss but I could have been because of where I ended up going but any way... so he was another one of my real mentors. Kind of not on the business side but as a worker and he taught me a lot about how to work and all that kind of stuff. He used to give me all the junk jobs, you know. But also when I got older, well, I stayed, I did that every summer till I was a senior in high school. And so when it was summer time everybody would take a vacation. Whoever's job... whoever was on

vacation I'd do his job. So I did a lot of the skinning jobs and a lot of that kind of stuff. The only thing I never got good at was splitting the carcasses with a saw. I never could get good with that. But any way so...

LW: Who did that?

CB: Oh there was a couple of guys could do it so... the guy when he was on vacation, the other guy did it. You know they had enough people that could do it but I was always... you know... road gang. (Laughter.) And so I was able to do all that, you know. Salted the hides and do all that kind stuff.

LW: Wow.

CB: Those were... it was quite a deal.

LW: Well what... when would that have been about? Nineteen...

CB: From 1950... 5, 6, 7, 8, 9... 60. '61' when I graduated from high school I went to Kauai and worked for Jack Midkiff. So...

LW: So that's when you end up on Kauai.

CB: Well I just went for the summer. You know I went to work for the summer and then I went away to college and then I came back from college and I worked for Hawai'i Meat Company at the feed yard. And it was at the old feed yard there at Ewa Beach and then when I was there we moved into... where we met. My first year... in my first summer in college, I came back and worked at the feed yard at Ewa Beach and then so when I came back from college I came back and worked there full time and at that time we moved that feed yard from Ewa Beach right... it's all houses now... to Barber's Point. At the industrial park. Then of course, with the dairy in there, I learned how to run the feed mill. Ended up being the cattle foreman for that deal. That was a lot of fun. But I hated Honolulu. I mean Honolulu was so crowded. And this was in the late '60's you know. Honolulu was extremely crowded for me. You know. And they started building houses in Makakilo. We used to go shoot cats and stuff, and... well any way so it changed my perspective. And nothing... nowhere near what it's like now from my perspective. It had gotten pretty damn citified. So...

LW: Very citified.

CB: Yeah.

LW: So Midkiff was running which ranch then?

CB: He was at Princeville... at that time.

LW: Princeville.

CB: Yeah.

LW: And Princeville is a plantation ranch?

CB: Yeah it was a plantation ranch. It was Lihue Plantation ranch out on north shore, yeah.

LW: Lihue?

CB: Right at... it was at Hanalei. Now that's the golf courses and everything at Princeville.

LW: Yeah, yeah.

CB: That was all the ranch. We had about... we had about twenty-five hundred cows and...

LW: Hoo... big...

CB: He got it to be a pretty good sized ranch. They had their own little slaughter plant so I knew how to do that. But see, after my feed lot days I went and actually went back and worked for Jack at Princeville for a year and a half.

LW: Oh so you were out there twice.

CB: Yeah. Yeah.

LW: Two different times.

CB: Yeah. And then from there I move to Kipu which is right next to Lihue there. Worked for Mrs. Rice.

LW: So... tell me about Kauai.

CB: Kauai?

LW: Yeah, Kauai. Is the ranching there a little different or...?

CB: No, same. They got a lot of rain, which is nice, you know. Growing up in Ewa, you know, we were lucky to see green grass three months a year. But Kauai was nice. Of course, Princeville is really wet. I remember when I went with Jack... 1969 or something. Or late '68 when I went over to talk to him about moving out there and it was pouring rain. That old corral set-up was right kind of where the end... where that little shopping center is, there at Princeville. Well there was an old stable and a big corral set-up there and that was a little house on that *makai* side of that corral deal and then he said oh, you can live in this house and then when we got there, there was three feet of water running into that house. I mean it was like this from so much rain. And I said well I think maybe I'll go live down in the valley with you guys. 'Cause he had a little house behind his house there that I could use. But that was pretty wild. I saw the three feet of water sitting there... well, I don't think so. (Laughter.) I'm a surfer but that's a little bit too much for me.

LW: So what was Midkiff like?

CB: Midkiff... you know he was an interesting guy. He's probably the best cowman I remember. And Robbie Hind could tell you the same thing. 'Cause Robbie worked for him... at McCandless after Jack left the old Princeville. Well Jack worked at McCandless for a while first in the '50's... then he went... went and worked at Hawaiian Meat Company and then left Hawaiian Meat Company and went to Princeville.

LW: So he was here... first.

CB: He was here. He was here on this island first. Any way but... Jack was an extremely good cowman. I mean he knew every cow... almost... he almost had a name for every one. He knew every single, bloody cow on the place.

LW: Twenty-five... twenty-five hundred head?

CB: Yeah. He really had that way and he was a hard, hard guy. I mean he was a real task master. And no fool around... we like to have a good time... I pulled him out of how many bar fights and stuff but... you know. He'd get a few drinks and that old Irishman got out and he wanted to... he wanted to fight everybody in the world. And he didn't give a damn. But he was a good teacher, you know. He taught me a lot about cows and how to read them and how to select cattle and stuff like that. He was a tremendous cowman.

LW: So how do you select cattle and what's good cattle?

CB: Oh he just... there's certain things you'd look for, you know.

LW: Like what?

CB: Well you want a cow to look like a female. You want her to look like a woman. You want her to look feminine. And there's certain attributes that I'll tell you. You want the hide to be right. You want to have good, broad muscle. You want to have their hips be pretty wide so they have less trouble when they calve and all that kind of stuff. But he really had an eye and just watching him, And in those days... you know when I grew up, you didn't say how come you picked that cow? You don't say anything. You just watch, right. And then pretty soon you learned... pretty soon you started noticing that every cow has the same look, that kind of stuff.

LW: And he was picking moms?

CB: Yeah.

LW: In that case he was picking mother cows?

CB: Heifers.

LW: Heifers?

CB: Yeah, picking heifers to become mothers. So you know...

LW: Weeding out those to go to the meat.

CB: So that's what Jack was like. He was tremendous... and when I was working for him... and I went back to work for him after Hawaiian Meat Company. And they were shooting that film the Hawaiians. And they put out a call for a stand-in. I thought shoot... you know... maybe I can go... fool around, jump in the movies for a while, right. So I walked into the place after work one day and the guy went... I was the only tall *haole* in the whole island right? So... he said well, we'd like you to stand in for Charleton Heston. But we want to take you to Maui and Honolulu and through the whole time we're shooting this picture, it should be up to six or eight weeks. So you think you can do that? And I said I can ask. I'm sure I knew the answer but any way... I walked in... he had a little office there. And it was just two rooms, a little office right at the corral there. I walked in, I said hey Jack... the guys that are shooting this movie want me to go and stand in and be in the movies for the next six weeks. You think I can get off? And he just started laughing. I said... well that's the end of my movie career.

LW: But you caught up to him, though. You're both entering the Hall of Fame together.

CB: Oh yeah, that was pretty special. That was pretty neat.

LW: So... what do you think was the most valuable thing you learned from him?

CB: From Jack?

LW: Yeah.

CB: Probably two things. Two things was pasture management... the beginnings of what we call intensive grazing, 'cause he did that already in the '60's.

LW: No kidding.

CB: Yeah. And not as intense as we do it now but he still had that rotation and that kind of rest and recovery and moving cows around. That and also the fact that we could run twenty-five hundred cows with three guys. Or one part-time guy...four guys. And part of it because of that... getting the cows to moving and stuff so that three or four guys could handle that. I mean we'd just have four of us branding, you know. And ... so we got... you got pretty good with a rope, you also got pretty good knocking and of course, I was twenty-five years... twenty-six years old so it was a lot different. I mean I was in different kind of shape than I am now. Surf all afternoon and get up at five and go to work in the morning. Hanalei was that way, right?

LW: We're all in different shape.

CB: Yeah, yeah.

LW: Was Hanalei that way? Any way so wow... so Midkiff was already...

CB: And how to select cows. Those were the two things.

LW: Yeah.

CB: Yeah... those were the two things. And he started a little feed yard. That's why he hired me. And he wanted me 'cause I knew the feed yards. He had a little feed yard at Moloa'a... the old plantation warehouse there. He put a little feed yard in. He got pine bran from the old Kapa'a Cannery there. And we made fat cattle on Kauai. It was really cool.

LW: That is really cool. So you kind of recycle waste from the plantation and...

CB: From that old pine bran from that pineapple cannery there in Kapa'au. Yeah, that's kind of cool.

LW: Yeah.

LW: That was an interesting... just another phase that I was able to be a part of. It was great.

LW: That was way ahead of its time.

CB: Oh yeah. Well Jack, actually he was one of the first guys to use crossbred mother cows. Yeah... we crossbred Santa Gertrudis bulls on Hereford cows and kept those mothers and crossed them... and then bred them back to the Hereford bulls. And so I remember him going and giving talks to the guys in the mainland about how they use crossbred cows.

LW: Why did he... why did he cross breed with Santa Gertrudis?

CB: 'Cause they were there. Well... not there at the ranch but old man Moody had a pure bred herd there right next door right below where the old Hanalei Plantation Hotel was. And so he started doing that and they were good cattle. I mean they didn't... Santa Gertrudis as it turned out over the years weren't really that desirable from a carcass quality standpoint, but it made great cows and then that second cross back to the Hereford was a good one.

LW: Was a good one.

CB: And better yet if he had started crossing on a third breed that would have been great if he used something else.

LW: But better in the sense that they birth easier or their cows were fatter cows or better how?

CB: The... the calves would have been better quality carcass wise.

LW: Better carcass quality... with a little Santa Gertrudis in there?

CB: No, they weren't as good with the Santa Gertrudis, if you had a crossbred Santa Gertrudis cow, half Santa Gertrudis, half Hereford...

LW: Right... and...

CB: And you went back to the Hereford, then you'd pick up more of the carcass quality of the Hereford, see.

LW: Yeah.

CB: But as time has gone on, he was just one step behind where we are today which is taking that crossbred cow and breeding it to a third breed.

LW: Oh...

CB: Of an English type breed so what I did when I moved to Pu'u Wa'awa'a, we already had that cross going, that Santa Gertrudis... I mean. Santa Gertrudis/Hereford, I brought Red Angus in and crossed on those Santa Gertrudis cross cows.

LW: And you got better?

CB: Oh yeah. That was...

LW: Better than just pure Hereford?

CB: Yeah.

LW: Well, now what's better? Better means more meat?

CB: Better carcass quality, more performance. They got along better in the rocks at Pu'u Wa'awa'a.

LW: Oh.

CB: You know... they just did better. And then... and see when you're doing that you're using all those calves are terminal crosses so...

LW: Right.

CB: They're all going to go to market so you want those calves to have the carcass quality and the feed lot performance and all that kind of stuff because that's where the money is really.

LW: Right. That's expressly why you're breeding them like that.

CB: Right.

LW: So carcass quality means what? For those of us who don't know.

CB: Mostly there's four grades of carcasses. Prime, choice, select... so you get a larger percentage of a choice grade which is what everybody is after.

LW: And how they're priced... they're priced that way.

CB: Yeah... yeah, exactly.

LW: When you take them to market.

CB: Right.

LW: When you sell them.

CB: Right. And that's what we do here is that. We sell all our cattle basically in the box which is... I mean a lot of people just sell a live animal. And you get up until very, very recently, all live cattle were priced the same. Well we... we're working hard in our breeding program to make these cattle be better so I'm not going to sell them to a guy for the same thing as some guy doesn't give a damn about what he's raising. ... anything that's got four legs, you know. So we price all our cattle in the box, you know. In the carcass... what those cattle are worth when they cut them all up and put them in boxes to sell to the retailers. That's what we get paid. So that's...

LW: So then that means... technically you don't get... you don't sell the...

CB: The live animal.

LW: The live animal.

CB: No... we sell boxes.

LW: 'Cause you ship them away still owned by Parker, you feed them out there somewhere in Canada or something...

CB: In the Pacific Northwest and Texas.

LW: Pacific Northwest and Texas, and then you feedlot them where?

CB: There.

LW: Okay. And then you sell them right before they're...

CB: We sell them... they get killed, we still own them. When they get in the box, that's when we sell them.

LW: That's when you sell them. Wow. Interesting.

CB: The closer you get to the consumer, the more chance you have of... 'cause you got... there's margins all along the way, you know.

LW: Right. There are, aren't there.

CB: So we get all those margins. Last year we averaged ninety-eight cents a pound for fat... fat cattle, which would be a twelve hundred pound steer. And the average for the whole, across all of the U.S. was ninety-three fifty or something like that. So that's how much better we did by doing what we're doing because our cattle, the carcass quality is so much better.

LW: And Midkiff was kind of ahead of the...

CB: He was a little bit ahead of a curve on that deal, yeah.

LW: So you were in your twenties when you were there in Kauai.

CB: Yeah.

LW: So where do you go next, after Kauai?

CB: I went... let's see... Kauai until '74.

LW: Okay.

CB: Seventy-four... And so I was thirty-one when I...

LW: Wait, wait... and you were there... and you worked for Midkiff part of that time. And then the other one...

CB: And then I worked for Mrs. Rice.

LW: Mrs. Rice.

CB: Kipu Ranch, yeah.

LW: Mrs. Rice.

CB: Yeah. Pat Rice. She was a trip.

LW: Why is that? Tell us about Mrs. Rice.

CB: She had her flaming red hair and she was... you know, I really liked her. I really did but she was a character and she wasn't afraid of anybody or anything. You know, she survived the '46 tidal wave. Her original house was right where Kalapaki Beach where the hotel is now, that's where their home was. She had her one year old baby, her son Robin and her hanging on to a telephone pole. You know she said I survived that son of a bitch I can survive anything. And she talked just like that, too. (Laughter.) She was a character. She was really cool. And so I worked for her for four years and I really wanted to stay there but it was... five hundred mother cows and it was a small deal and it was really, really nice. We made grass fat cattle real old style. But I just wanted to do something more, and so I had an opportunity... actually I ran into... they were closing down the Kohala Sugar Company and I ran into the guy and he... I don't know how the heck I... for some reason I was talking to this guy and he worked for Castle and Cook and asked if I wanted to come up... just wanted to ask me about... they were putting a lot of that cane land into pastures... he wanted to know what I'd... had won some SCS thing for putting in pastures at Kipu. That was a lot of fun. And we replaced all this *uluhi* fern... we set that fern and ever seen *uluhi* burn? Whoa they explode... they just... whump...

LW: But it's all dry.

CB: Yeah 'cause we poisoned it, you know. And you know in those days you could fly with a helicopter and... no need worry and it was 2-4D... Agent Orange. Any way so I'd got in this deal. I guess somehow I told him... he found out that I'd won so he wanted me to come over to help him with this deal and... next thing you know he offered me a job to come to the Big Island, I said well that's where I want to end up any way. I love Kauai, but... Kauai's small... I hate to tell you that but it's... I mean, my kids... a bunch of my kids grew up there but I go over there and I get the heebie jeebies. It's small. (Laughter.) So anyway... I moved to Kohala... to Hawi... beautiful downtown Hawi. And those days when they were... are we going to stay open or close the plantation or keep it open or... but in the meantime I was in charge of the... Kohala Grain Company was the name of the outfit. They had figured out they were going to start doing corn and sorghum and they were going to save Hawai'i from the Hawaiians and not from the Hawaiians but you know they were going to save Hawai'i and produce all this food and all this kind of stuff. Well, first thing I found was you can't grow corn in this place. You can, but it costs you like crazy and... you'll get one real good crop... the next crop all the bugs have multiplied and they just eat you up. I mean it's... between the birds and the... and the bugs, there was no way it was going to work. And so... so then... my job was to close the grain company down. I was still planting grass... we planted about two thousand acres of grass while I was there. It was kind of cool. And then... it was great because we had all the plantation equipment... man could just call up and tractors up here from nowhere and... do all this stuff.

LW: So where'd you learn about grass? From Midkiff or at school?

CB: Oh from... actually at Kipu.

LW: Oh, at Kipu.

CB: Where I really... because I planted a bunch of grass at Kipu. Learned how to do it and that kind of stuff. I learned some of the little tricks of the trade. Drove the bulldozer around.

LW: What are tricks of the trade for planting pasture?

CB: Oh just you have to prepare the ground right and you have to cover it just right. You can't cover it really hard, you have to just lightly cover the *pulapula*, they call it, the cuttings. We'd actually go out and cut with a hand sickle, put it in the back of a pickup and throw it out. Well, we did the same thing at Kohala except we had these huge trailers that they'd build... the plantation had built... of course they knew how to build big stuff, right?

LW: Yeah.

CB: And all the school kids after... we'd load it up in the morning... all the school kids in the afternoon be up there throwing it out. The guy driving the tractor through the fields. Then the guy comes behind with a big disk on a D-8, so you know we had some... that was a big machine. I loved that. I never had that kind of machines around before. You know we were pretty low tech at Kipu. They were pretty high tech there.

LW: But you were planting it for pasture in Kohala.

CB: But the idea was that they were holding on to the land, so what do you do with the land? You just don't let it sit so that we were planting pasture and we actually did some fencing on some of that pasture so we could lease to guys that wanted to run cows on it. So at least we were...

LW: So you were going to harvest the grass or you were going to pasture it?

CB: Just pasture it.

LW: Oh just pasture it. Yeah. yeah. It had been in cane and you were going to turn...

CB: Yeah... and so we did. We turned a lot of it into pasture. And then... the guy at Pu'u Wa'awa'a said you want to come up and I want to talk to you about doing part-time... you know... run the ranch. He'd be just... his son-in-law tried to run it and didn't do a very good job.

LW: Who was the guy at Pu'u Wa'awa'a?

CB: The old man... Newell Bohnett. He had bought it from the Carlsmiths in '72 or something like that.

LW: Bohnett?

CB: Yeah... Sambo's Restaurants... in California. I'm sure you've heard of them. That's where he made all his money. And funny thing... his eldest daughter married one of my best friends from college.

LW: Who's that?

CB: Yeah... His oldest daughter was... this guy from California.

LW: Oh. Oh.

CB: They had actually moved here to Hawai'i and so any way... I saw her at a thing and she'd divorced my friend so I saw her up here, she was with her second husband who screwed the ranch up and I saw her at some horse deal or something. I said oh, I wish I'd known you were going to own a ranch. I'd a hung on to you a lot tighter when we were in college. (Laughter.) She didn't think that was very funny. She had no sense of humor.

LW: Well you get to reread these transcripts.

CB: I do. I get to red them out?

LW: Yeah, yeah. But any way. So Bohnett... he's the one who hired you on at Pu'u Wa'awa'a.

CB: Right.

LW: And you wanted to go there because it was...

CB: Well the thing at Kohala was kind of winding down, you know.

LW: All those efforts kind of...

CB: They closed the plantation... eventually closed the plantation and said we want you to be our land manager. I said I don't know about the land thing, you know.

LW: Yeah.

CB: I'm just a cowboy, you know, doing what I did for that year and a half over was just about killing me any way. But you know, it was a good experience. I learned a lot of things. I learned you can't grow corn, you can't grow alfalfa... I mean we did... we tried all of that stuff and...

LW: And that all relates to cattle, too.

CB: Yeah.

LW: Alfalfa certainly does and...

CB: And we actually made a little feed yard down at Upolu Point and fed some of Kalani Schutte's cattle down there and they did really good. The first bunch of silage we put up was really nice. The second bunch wasn't worth a damn... the cows started losing weight instead of gaining weight, you know.

LW: Oh, it didn't have the nutrients in it or what?

CB: Yeah we just didn't do a good job. Putting up silage is a real hard thing. You get a bunch of plantation guys that really never done it before, well there was a guy that knew about that from the mid-West but you know... plantation... and this is not meant to be negative or anything, but this is just a mindset. Back in the mid-West, if you missed a day of harvest you're dead, you know. On a plantation you got a two year crop but corn's a 90 day crop for silage so, 90 days, you got to get it out. You just got to do it. 24 hours a day, whatever it takes, you got to do it. Well plantation was different because you had a 2 year crop, in some cases out there a 3 year's crop. And it didn't make any difference if you couldn't get in the field this week. You get in next week. It's not going to make that much difference in the whole scheme of things so it was just a whole different mentality. Not bad or good or whatever. Just the way they were. And that's one of the things I learned about... by being out there... was that difference and I did... not that I didn't... I had... I had the plantation mentality. God, we grew up that way, you know. But I could see all of a sudden there was a disconnect 'cause all the guys that worked at the grain company were all ex-plantation guys. They didn't understand. It just wasn't their fault. They just never... they didn't understand why these things were so critical. And I didn't either. But one day makes a hell of a difference so any way let's end it. That's it for today.

LW: Your real calling was as a cattleman, yeah?

CB: Yeah, I was... I was a cowboy. That's all there was to it, you know. And so... I had a chance to cowboy at Pu'u Wa'awa'a for 10 years which was fabulous and I just... learned a lot of stuff. Broke a lot of fingers, you know.

LW: How'd you break fingers? What do you mean?

CB: Hit the ground a lot of times in the rocks. Oh, you know... had a chance to spend time with Miki and Uncle Robert. My only regret is that I never was able to do this kind of a thing with Robert. 'Cause we'd be riding along, going to do a job, and he'd be pointing out trees and telling me what they were for and all that kind of stuff and showing me old trails and stuff and... *poho*, yeah? I mean you paid attention but...

LW: But not enough.

CB: You figured this was never going to end. We'd always be here and be able to do the same things over and over again.

LW: So how old are you then? Your 30's.

CB: 32.

LW: Yeah, you pretty well think you're going to live forever in your 30's.

CB: Oh yeah... it's bullet proof and bomb proof and every kind of proof there was, you know.

LW: So who was there when you got there and you were... you were cowboying when you got there?

CB: No, I was hired to manage the cows.

LW: Okay.

CB: And so it was Robert and Miki...

LW: And what were their positions?

CB: Robert... Robert was kind of the foreman and Miki was kind of... see, Miki was kind of all around. He could build anything and all that kind of stuff. And Casey DeSilva. He was there. He was the mechanic. Isaac Kala was there. He was the machine operator. But he also could cowboy. Let's see... oh there was a... there's kind of two bunches. There was a cowboy gang and there was the construction gang. 'Cause Newell loved to fiddle around so he ended up actually hiring this other guy next... airplane pilot guy. Air Force guy to run the construction part. Where we rented the D-9's or the D-7's. You know that road down to Weliweli. We built that road. Pono called me up. He got tired of... that's a whole 'nother story. We built the road down to Pono's place at Welewele. We just did it. Walked the machine down from Pu'u Wa'awa'a 'cause we're right above there, right. And all that land used to be all Pu'u Wa'awa'a. It was all part of Pu'u Wa'awa'a's lease so... you know, we were just putting a road in on our lease, right?

LW: That was just a big, huge lease?

CB: Yeah.

LW: How much land was there.

CB: A hundred and one thousand acres.

LW: Wow. That is big.

CB: Ten miles wide, ten miles long. Something like that.

LW: And how... can I ask... I know it's a delicate question and you don't have to answer. How many head were there then?

CB: When I first got there, there were about twelve hundred cows. When I left it was almost two thousand.

LW: Wow.

CB: When I first got there, there were fourteen employees. When I left there was just me, Miki, John Balucan and that was it. And then Chris Hunt came in part-time to help us.

LW: Is that?

CB: Yeah. I made my kids bust their ass in the summer time, too.

LW: But do you consider that part of what you value as a cattleman? As being able to work a large herd with the few people or...?

CB: Yeah, I think... it's not one large herd 'cause we had them all split up into small pieces and I think that you have to do it that way. You just cannot... Labor is one of our largest costs outside of... I mean... and all of that kind stuff, but labor's huge and it 's not just the labor. It's all the other ancillary stuff and it's not bad or good. You have to do it. You have to take care of the people today. And here at this place, you have a tremendous benefit package and it's just really it's unbelievable. And especially when Richard was alive, it was even bigger. But now we have beneficiaries we have to kind of keep that in mind and we do it, huh. But any way... you learn how to run that same ranch with one-third the... one-quarter of the people. Of course, we didn't have all the machines and we didn't have all that stuff either and so you know... I find in my life that those things are great, but they create geometric stuff. In other words you have a D-7, well you can't just leave it sitting. You got to drive it around, right? So you have got to have a guy that knows how to drive it around. You have to have a guy that knows how to fix it. Or you have to call up Caterpillar to come and fix it so maybe that machine only costs five thousand dollars a year in depreciation. But that's the start. It's a multiple of that, you know. Just to keep. When I got here, at Parker Ranch we had two D-7's that were working all the time. Now we have one that works whenever we need it. So... it's just that mentality that I'd rather work a little... a lot smarter, and maybe sometimes a little harder, but we can still get the same thing done. I mean I don't have to do everything today. I can set it up so I can do it in two days and I'm only paying three guys for two days instead of ten guys for one day. Sometimes that's the kind of thought process I go through any way.

LW: Sure. And some of that you kind of learned at Pu'u Wa'awa'a.

CB: Yeah. That was a tremendous learning experience for me. Oh, the place is just gorgeous, of course and all that, but it's rough. I mean it's probably like McCandless... and Kapapala. But see, we didn't have the rubbish that Kapapala has. And we were a lot more open but the same kind of a'a lava... big lava tubes, you know. The water system was pretty complex. Lots of pumping and that sort of thing. Learned a lot about that part of it. Hydraulics and all of that stuff that you have to learn. It was really fun.

LW: So when you say rough you mean... a lot of exposed rock... or what do you mean by that?

CB: All that whole place is nothing but rock. Grass growing over rock. And there's a few small *kipukas* of dirt here and there but very few. And so you carry horse shoes and nails and hammer with you every place you go. That's the only way I could... and I couldn't shoe a horse to save my ass but I sure could stick one on and get me home.

LW: Yeah that's one of the things that... when the photographs that came back from Pu'u Wa'awa'a... they are all browns and oranges and yellows. All the photographs that come from Pono Holo... green, yuh. Different... really different places.

CB: Well Pono... Pono Makai is brown and yellow, too. Just like our makai country.

LW: Yeah... so McCandless is rocky, too.

CB: Oh, yeah.

LW: And Kapapala?

CB: All of South Kona is.

LW: Oh, Kapapala is rocky... yeah.

CB: Yeah.

LW: Would you place Kahuku in rocky, too?

CB: Some of it...

LW: Or part depends?

CB: Well see, they got that nice green place around *makai* there but up *mauka* is all rocks. It's all... any time you get new lava and new... relatively speaking new. You know 'cause we don't have the rain to break it down or what.

LW: Right. But Pu'u W'a'awa'a was still... it was still a good place to have a ranch?

CB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

LW: Isn't it one of the oldest ranches?

CB: No. I think Robby's uncle put it together in the turn of the century.

LW: Yeah... it's reasonably...

CB: Yeah... it was a wonderful place. I just I had more fun there. I mean I was just able to have a feed yard there. Built a feed yard way down... Robert called it *Kiawe Lanai*... which was a place down there in the... in the *kiawe* trees... there's was lots of *kiawe* shade. Put a fence in the *pahoehoe*... and the cattle ate the grass and we had self feeders out there. Made some of the fattest pigs in the country. We had guys coming over and sneaking in poaching pigs all the way from Laupahoehoe and Hilo. Yeah. We knew because we caught them. But you know... I mean it was... we did all kinds of stuff... I mean we had a... we had a great time.

LW: Like what kinds of stuff?

CB: Well, like building that feed yard and we went into intensive grazing and upgrading the water system. Once we went into that intensive grazing system methods, what we could do was we just limited the number of water troughs we had to check every day. We really simplified everything and that helped. The system helped, to where we only needed three guys. And once the cows get used to moving... I mean I used to go up with a couple of dogs and just move all of the cows by myself. Just ride down in the middle of the paddock and just let the dogs work and the cows know the dogs and as soon as the cows saw the dogs with me they just start moving. It's a real simple deal and that's why we all today can get away with what we're getting away with. Being able to use less people because you got the cattle trained... we got smaller paddocks... we're not driving all of Mauna Kea down to Puehale any more, when we needed fifty or a hundred guys.

LW: Yeah. You got them in a smaller area. They're kind of trained for this frequent movement...

CB: Yeah. Yeah.

LW: I remember Frank Botelho telling us that he'd turn off the water a day or two before...

CB: Yeah.

LW: Or maybe the day before he wanted to move them. And they'd get to thinking oh, no water, that must mean we need to move and you'd show up the next day and they'd be all ready... they'd be right at the fence waiting for you.

CB: Right. Exactly. We do the same thing here. Yeah, yeah. We just turn off the water and in fact our guys... we still have two thousand... twenty-five hundred, three thousand acre paddocks up here and our guy turns off the water and then he goes through the gate where he wants them to go and turns on the siren.

LW: Oh, no kidding?

CB: And he gets out of the way. Because those cows... whew... and we have a thousand cows in that bunch... I mean they just make it... they know it's time to move.

LW: And they're interested.

CB: Yeah. And it's all about training them.

LW: Fresh grass, fresh water.

CB: And even if you want to take them a different way, they'll follow that siren so you know cows will get into a routine. They'll go one way and if you ever want to change that it's really hard, but if they have that siren... that's the trick.

LW: The cue.

CB: If the siren's over here instead of over there they'll go to the siren.

LW: No kidding?

CB: Yeah.

LW: So better to train them to the siren?

CB: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Or to whatever you want to use.

LW: Very interesting. So now what did Napier, Sr. think of stuff like that... smaller pastures, different hydraulics? I mean he's kind of an older generation, yeh?

CB: Yeah, but you know Alex was a businessman. You know that's what label he was. He ran the meat company, he was a salesman and the sales deal. I mean he was very politically connected, he was really a very interesting guy and I don't know how close he got to any of this type of stuff. But I think that he liked it. I think he understood why people do what we did and I never did have that conversation with him.

LW: But you said you rode with him and he would point out trees and stuff...

CB: Oh, you mean Robert.

LW: Oh, Robert... yeah.

CB: Yeah... yeah, Robert.

LW: The older man...

CB: I thought you said Alex, senior...

LW: No, I meant...

CB: Keakealani?

LW: No, no. Oh... oh, when you said you would ride with somebody, it wasn't Mr. Napier?

CB: No, it was... Uncle Robert...

LW: It was Uncle Robert?

CB: Yeah.

LW: Oh, okay, okay.

CB: Roberto we call him. Roberto.

LW: Well did he think about that stuff?

CB: Oh, I think he liked it. I think he saw the wisdom in it. I think he liked the ease of it... the. Most of that stuff came right about the time he retired.

LW: Oh, yeah.

CB: And so... he wasn't really going full speed when he was still working. But he's still coming up for branding and other stuff.

LW: So...

CB: We kept him involved... as involved as we could, you know.

LW: Yeah. So from your perspective, having worked with him... so what made him... kind of an older cowboy. Tell me a little bit about that. About working with him and seeing how he was different than where you're going with the newer trajectories and...

CB: Well... I have to be careful 'cause I'm getting up there, too, so I got be... (laughter)...

LW: Well here you were thirty something in this.

CB: Yeah, yeah. Well you know Robert for some really took me under his wing. He really... and actually Miki did. They both did for some reason. And I think I never had a cross word with Robert. Miki only got mad at me once in ten years. And any way, for some reason they were very... they thought the things that we were doing was the right thing to do. And they were always very supportive. Now if they weren't, I sure as hell didn't know about it because I never heard it from either one of them or I never heard it from anybody else or they never tried to sabotage... you know some people will do that rather than tell you straight up that they'll try to sabotage... these guys never did that. They were always supportive and they were always helpful. They always made good suggestions. One of the things that... I don't know if you want to put this in the deal... one of the things my...

LW: Well you can choose when you read it. But... what... what had made him special as a cowboy?

CB: He just understood the land. He really did. I think that was his real forte. He knew every rock in that place. And he knew everything about it and he was always so willing to share that. And that was what I really loved about him. And unfortunately... you know I really feel badly that I wasn't able to retain a lot of that knowledge. And Miki, too. Miki's still got it and he and I talk every now and then. You know... over stuff. And a tremendous depth of knowledge that we lose every time somebody like that goes, you know.

LW: Was Miki younger than Mr. Keakealani, yuh?

CB: Pretty close you know. Pretty close. I'm trying to think. Robert retired in '62... Miki may have been six or eight years younger or something like that. I'm trying to think.

LW: Than you...

CB: Than Robert.

LW: Oh, gee.

CB: Oh, Miki's eighty.

LW: Wow.

CB: Yeah, Miki's at least eighty, I think.

LW: Last time I saw Miki was a branding up at Pu'u Wa'awa'a. When the DeLuz's were managing it.

CB: Yeah.

LW: He takes off his shirt. Two brands, you know. Toss them in the fire... going at it.

CB: Yeah... he's still riding colts, that guy. Going crazy man. And everybody said Robert was a good horseman. And he was. Don't get me wrong. But nothing like Miki.

LW: Miki's really a horseman.

CB: Oh man. It takes him a while. I mean you know... two or three years... but when you get on... when he's done with that horse... I took one of his... he let me ride one of his horses when I was playing polo. A horse that he bought when it was a baby and then he raised it and then he broke it and rode it and everything. And a nice horse. I asked him... you think this horse can play polo? Oh yeah... go try him, brah... I took that horse, never hit a polo ball in its life. Took him off to Waiki'i and played two chukkas on that horse just like he'd been playing for years. That's how broke that horse was. Unbelievable. And every one of his horses was like that. Just get on and go. And he'd do anything you want. Pretty cool. And never was in a hurry. Just get on him every day and go do what he was going to do and then work a little bit in the afternoon. He was great. *Ho'o manawa nui.* (Very patient.)

LW: Where did... what did you just say... something. *Honuinui?*

CB: *Ho'o manawa nui.*

LW: Just'cause she won't be able to hear that. Unless you said it again.

CB: No, no... she knows what I said.

LW: Yeah in the tape... I just need to do a saving. Let's see so... so did Pu'u Wa'awa'a shut down then? At... at...

CB: No what happened was we lost a good part of the lease. They took all that real good mauka country and put it into a bird preserve. A bird forest reserve deal. And we all figured that was four or five hundred

cows out of the deal. Didn't need me any more so... see ya. But you know, as it turned out it was probably the best thing every happened to me. And I went and worked for the Feds in '85. They had Molokai. I was an appraiser for the depopulation. That was another whole trip. Hoo!

LW: What depopulation are we talking about?

CB: They depopulated all the cattle off Molokai in 1985. Because of the tuberculosis.

LW: Because of cattle tuberculosis?

CB: Cattle tuberculosis.

LW: Oh, I didn't know that.

CB: And...

LW: You mean it was only there and they needed to get rid of those cattle?

CB: Yeah. And part of it... you know, there was... everybody says it was kind of a BS deal and that Molokai Ranch set it up 'cause they needed... they wanted to get the money and all this stuff and that may have been part of the deal, but we were starting to ship cattle to the mainland at that time. Elmer Rabin had been here and was buying cattle and taking them in and... well because Molokai was still considered a Tuberculosis... you know... area. In order to get the whole State over Tuberculosis... tuberculosis free, we had to depopulate Molokai. So it was a two pronged deal. Anyway, that was six weeks on Molokai. That was a very interesting time.

LW: You must know the Duvachelles...

CB: You know all the De dises and De dats. Yeah. And Jimmy's still a very good friend of mine. I love him to death. But you know it was just a fabulous experience.

LW: Now why... was that?

CB: It just... number one you got to have a visa to go to Molokai. (Laughter.) But you know... that was in the mid '80's and it was just a look back at Hawai'i ... back fifty years... kind of a thing. And the people were... actually the people were extremely nice and they were extremely... to me any way. And what I did was I felt the Feds were taking their cows and most these cows... these cattle on that island were onesies and twosies and belonged to the guys at Ho'olehuli or a guy had a few in his back yard. They were like pets. So you know... really...

LW: Freezer... freezer cattle...

CB: Just broke your heart. So I just gave them as much money as I could, you know. What's the maximum I could give them, you know. And I'd tell them that. I'd say you know, you guys... I'll give you the max so that when you... if you want to... repopulate in a year, you can do it. Stick it in a jar in the back yard and you know...

LW: I see.

CB: But I learned... I met a lot of people there and I'm still friends with a whole bunch of them and there are some real characters over there.

LW: Yeah... like who?

CB: Well... what's his name... De Coit? Mike De Coit.

LW: We've heard about him.

CB: Oh God... Mad Mike... oh God, he's a classic. He's one of the funniest guys in the world.

LW: Why'd they call him Mad Mike?

CB: I call him Mad Mike.

LW: Oh. Cowboy?

CB: No... yeah, he had cattle. But he wasn't a cowboy, you know. He had some up at Kualapu. And the Pedros from the west... the east end. And of course, there was Aka Hodgins... I know him from high school. And I had time with Jimmy and got to know the island.

LW: Jimmy? Jimmy who?

CB: Duvachelle.

LW: Oh, Duvachelle. And he's a cattleman?

CB: Oh yeah. He's a cowboy.

LW: So what... tell me about him.

CB: Who Jimmy? He's just one of the nicest men in the world. He really is

CB: He's good cowman, too. He's a good cowman.

LW: And what made him a good cowman?

CB: Just the way he handles cattle and he understands them. Understands... I mean you know. Anybody can be a cowboy.

LW: But not everybody can be a cattleman.

CB: Stick a girl on the top of a horse and she's a cowboy, you know. But you need to... there's guys that are cattlemen, cow men... the guys that understand cattle, that understand how to be with them and not have them... the cattle do what you want them to do and not know that they're doing what you want them to do kind of thing. I guess that's one way to put it. You're making me think of stuff I've never thought about. (Laughter.)

LW: Well that's it 'cause then it gets written down and...

CB: Yeah... and you tell secrets. (Laughs.) I want to let everybody know the secret. But anyway that's kind of... what it means in my view. Plus he loves people and he's really a people person kind of guy. He's... he's a *kahu* and all that kind of stuff.

LW: Oh yeah, yeah.

CB: Good guy.

LW: We get some of those fun stories, too. Let's see now. Okay so that's...

CB: So that's how I left Pu'u Wa'awa'a... I went and did that. Then they called... the guy from... had a big change over Hawai'i Meat Company in Honolulu... had a new manager... general manager... and the first thing he did was get rid of the guy who was running the feed yard. So the guy called and asked if I wanted to go and run the feed yard. 'Cause I was the only guy in Hawai'i that ever...

LW: Ran the...

CB: ...yeah, did work there and you know... there was lots to learn. I didn't want to go home. I just did not want to... I still lived up in Waimea... but you know... another opportunity. I should go do it. My father still lived in Honolulu and he actually had a little house on the beach there at Niu Valley and so I said well... I told Dad if he would rent me that I house I would come and take this job. So he did it. Took a lot of arm twisting. He had rented it to some other folks. I don't know... wouldn't rent it to me but anyway. That's just the way he was. So any way we moved down to Honolulu. And I worked at the feed yard out at Barber's Point... at the industrial park and ran that. And I probably knew how to run a feed yard but until I got there I didn't know anything. I knew how to sort that fat cattle and that kind of stuff but I didn't know about the business part. Because all I'd done was I was just the cattle foreman you know, when I was 25 years old. I didn't know anything about whole thing. So interestingly enough... the guy we had... feed yards have what they call nutritionists and they're the guys that put the feed rations together, and all that kind of stuff. And they also help you with managing the yard... and so. The guy comes up with this guy who's the new nutritionist... 'cause once they gotten rid of the whole feed yard manager, the nutritionist went with him... so any way... so it turns out that the guy that came as a nutritionist, when tells me the story later that when I was cowboying at the feed yard back in the early mid-'60's this kid from New Mexico came and he was an apprentice for the company that was running the feed yard then. The management company. And his name was Baxter Black. And so Baxter came out and worked with me for the summer and we did not have any fun. We never had a lick of fun the whole summer. And so anyway this guy came... he came over and he said... you know Bax told me when I got to Hawai'i, the first guy I had to look up was Corky Bryan. Guess who the first guy I met was. It was me.

LW: Yeah.

CB: Any way Bax and I are good friends for... since the '60's. So any way... so this guy showed me how to run the feed yard. All I had to do was do what he said to do and everything went just perfect. And it just... we had a union... we broke the union. It was... you know...

LW: And where did he come from again?

CB: Who was that... the nutritionist guy?

LW: Yeah.

CB: From beautiful, downtown Hereford, Texas.

LW: Oh, wow.

CB: He and I are still great friends and the ranch owns a piece of the feed yard down there and he's the nutritionist there, too, now.

LW: Well so he became your nutritionist at Hawai'i Meat Company when you were running it?

CB: Yeah.

LW: Oh, okay. And he knew the business, too? So he helped you with the business, too?

CB: Oh yeah... he was this guy... I mean he consults for over a million cattle.

LW: Oh, gee.

CB: He's got a feed yard with a list this long, you know. Any way the guy's really good. He's one of the best in the country. The best in the country in my view. So any way he taught me how to run the feed yard. All I had to do was do what he told me to do and... there's stories about that feed yard if you want to hear them, too.

LW: Well, tell us one... that we can hear.

CB: Well actually the union deal.

LW: Okay.

CB: Of course I'd grown up with the union being plantation. And I worked with the union when I was in Kohala but it was pretty... you know... kind of *alu alu* (relaxed, casual) kind. But these guys were really union. Hardcore. And what happened was it was the same union that was the union for the meat company that's slaughter time and the processing deal in Honolulu. But what happened was the meat company went into this big throes of stuff and the union guys in Honolulu took a pay cut to keep the thing going, but the guys at the feed yard never took that pay cut. So we went aha! And the feed yard was struggling so we said, you know you guys can take the same pay cut. Well of course, strike, right. Well one of the things that was happening in the feed yards, we were bringing grain in from Canada... excuse me... whole boatloads. And we were sharing these boatloads with Hawaiian grain and other people and there was a lot of feed manufacturing people in Honolulu at that time. And so we... it just happened that the day after they decided that they were going on strike, the ship shows up. And it's a twenty-four hour deal. You're hauling grain from the trucks from the pier all the way to Barber's Point twenty-four hours a day. Takes about three days.

LW: To unload that...

CB: Ten thousand... ten thousand tons.

LW: To unload that big truck?

CB: No, no. The ship.

LW: To unload that big boat.

CB: Yeah, the ship is forty thousand tons and we took ten thousand tons of it.

LW: Cheez.

CB: The rest of it stayed in Honolulu so any way... twenty-four hours a day. Okay... we can figure it out. There was myself and we had three supervisors and so we were going to do it, right. I'd take one shift, one guy'd take one shift. One guy... you know, we had to have a load operator... you know two guys... loader operator. Any way, we were going to make it work. And of course, the guys were walking the line in front and everything so... policeman were there. Walk the line... bring the truck in. We had to do that whole trip, right? And I'm just... it's driving me crazy because... any way... middle of the night... one of those guys from the... from the line... sneaks in, opens up the gates on about 60 or 70 percent of the pens in that whole feed yard. We had cattle all over the place. Luckily it's all fenced in so they weren't running around on the highway or anything like that.

LW: Yeah... really.

CB: But we had eight thousand cattle all mixed up. Different owners, different stages of this and that. And so any way we spent the next six weeks putting all of those cattle back together. Seven days a week. I worked seven days a week, fourteen, sixteen hours a day for six weeks.

LW: Just to put that right.

CB: Yeah... and plus run it.

LW: Yeah.

CB: Plus run it and do all the other things we had to do. So in the meantime we hired a couple of brothers from Nanakuli that wanted to come and work at the... and a lot of these guys were from Waianae and Nanakuli and they were in the union guys. They see these guys coming, they just get out of the way. So that's a good lesson, too. You know. When you want somebody to keep an eye on you, you hire the biggest, baddest guy you can find. I learned that from... Allan Savory. Any way... that's a whole 'nother story. Any way so that's what we did. So we had to put it all back together and it took us six weeks. Bobby Napier helped us. He was a big help. He'd come and help us... Bud Gibson... came down and he loved it... Bud thought it was the greatest thing. He'd practice his damn cutting horses and all that stuff. Hey Bud, get that son of a bitch out of here and any way we had a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun but it was a lot of work.

LW: And that broke the union, too, at the same time.

CB: And then the union kind of... after a while it just disappeared. I mean in fact a couple of the guys came back to work after about two or three weeks. They just said I want to work...

LW: At that pay cut?

CB: Yeah. Yeah. But see what happened is...

LW: You never settled with the union.

CB: Never settled with the union. We actually continued to use the union contract in terms of the benefits and all that kind of stuff because it was fair, you know.

LW: Yeah.

CB: But... and then... we were able to give raises and stuff on merit rather than just by showing up at work and that kind of stuff and it really worked out well. Then we closed it down in 1991.

LW: Oh, right, right, right. That's why Parker started shipping away calves. Calf... cow calf operation... wow, so some bit of mischief on the part of one of these striker guys kind of ended up resulting in the breaking of the...

CB: Well it... you know, that had nothing to do with it. It's just that they finally just got tired of staying up all night and walking across the thing or even during the day or... I mean... pretty soon there'd be only... you know they'd start with ten guys and pretty soon there was one guy and then pretty soon nobody and then he'd show up a week or something like that just to... and thank God for Richard Lee, you know. He was a non-union trucker. He didn't care.

LW: He still worked.

CB: Yeah, yeah.

LW: So you could still keep the yard working even with this chaos thing without these regular workers.

CB: Yeah. Yeah.

LW: Yeah, so they didn't have any leverage, basically.

CB: No, no.

LW: Yeah.

CB: They thought we couldn't do without them.

LW: Guess what, you could. Interesting. Well... cowboy up but I think there's something about changed methods in there, too, a little bit. Which is partly what you seem to be saying.

CB: And we were putting in a computer feed system, we were putting in a whole different set of... I mean that feed yard was running without a computer. I mean that's like... I don't want to tell you what it's like but it's pretty archaic.

LW: And this is in the '80's.

CB: '85... '86...

LW: And that was archaic... at the time.

CB: Yeah. Not to have a computer. Every feed yard in the mainland was running by computer. All the...

LW: What did the computers do?

CB: They'd tell you how much to feed each pen. You'd go read... look how much feed was left in the pen in the morning. Tell you how much feed to feed this... I mean... before it was the feed truck driver decided how much to feed them.

LW: And there's a lot of waste there.

CB: A lot of waste... or not enough or... you know...

LW: Right.

CB: Feed truck driver's not supposed to be able to figure that. He doesn't have to worry... all he has to do is put the feed out every day. That's all he has to do.

LW: A nutritionist needs to control it.

CB: That's exactly right.

LW: And they're aware of the cow and they're aware of the business, too. Pretty interesting.

CB: I started to say... everybody said oh, you did a great job at the feed yard. I said yeah, right. All I had to do was do what Hansen said. I looked like a hero.

LW: That's what that guy's name was... Hansen?

CB: Yeah. Keith Hansen.

LW: Keith Hansen. And he's in Texas now?

CB: Yeah. He's been in Texas. He and Baxter grew up together in Las Cruces, New Mexico and then...

LW: I swear I heard about Baxter before.

CB: Yeah, you should have.

LW: Somebody told me about him. I wonder who that would be. I'd have to go back and look at the interviews and stuff.

CB: Old Baxter... he's another buddy. I didn't see him for about ten years. And I ran into... walked into a function in Southern California... we were... all of us were half in the bag and there he was. I hadn't seen him in ten years... hey Bax, how you doing. Oh, okay... how's it? and he get... he always puts in his little pidgin... he's an entertainer, you know, so he puts on pidgin English... Bax... are you still married to that miserable bitch you were married to? (Laughter.) 'Cause when he came to work he had just gotten married and this woman... she was just miserable. She was just... bitch, bitch, bitch, bitch about everything. And he's says you know... I finally got rid of her last year.

LW: So but he grew up out here?

CB: No, no. He grew up in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

LW: Oh, yeah.

CB: And he went to Colorado State and then he became a veterinarian and then he... that's why he was working at the feed yard. 'Cause he was...

LW: He was a vet.

CB: He was a vet. He was training...

LW: But that was a...

CB: It was his summer internship while he was still in vet school.

LW: But that was on...

CB: That was in Honolulu.

LW: Oh, in Honolulu. But when you were really young. When you met Bax.

CB: Yeah... close to twenty-five... twenty-four.

LW: Yeah, okay. Okay. Just trying to...

CB: We were young pups. Played a lot of songs and drank a lot of booze and never had any fun.
(Laughter.)

LW: Okay... wait now where are we? We're in the mid-'80's and you're at the feed lot and how long were you there?

CB: I was in the feed lot for about four years. Then the guy that hired me retired. And Mr. Gunderson who was the head of the trustees at Parker Ranch at that time said how'd you like to go and move from Honolulu and run the Hawai'i Meat Company? I went... are you asking me? And I said... well, why not. Of course that was the big job in Hawaii, you know. Hawai'i Meat Company was the biggest deal there was, you know. And I said... okay. I can do this, I think. So I brought a whole 'nother meaning to the word executive when I moved into Honolulu to run the meat company, I can assure you.

LW: Why is that?

CB: Well, not too many cowboys go ahead and run a meat company. And I turned my pickup in for a Buick and the whole deal. Still wore my boots, and all that stuff. Yeah... I had to do that. But this is a... I do this because I... it wrecks my back... my boots are killing me. Oh, I'm just kidding.

LW: Let's see... so... but you ran the meat company for...

CB: Two and a half years. Ended up eventually closing it down, really.

LW: At the end.

CB: And we looked at trying to build a new slaughter plant at the industrial park next to the feed yard and stuff but it just wasn't economical.

LW: But at that time didn't the meat company run cattle at Kahuku and have this big consortium of places there?

CB: Actually that was way before.

LW: Oh, that was before?

CB: Yeah. That was up until... see, Tong bought the Honouliuli Ranch. It was all that hill above Ewa. And also back in Nanakuli Valley. They may have had some Kahuku country. But they're actually right next door to the old Kahua slaughter house in Honouliuli is where Hawai'i Meat had their... that was for their stable area... and it was for the ranch part of that. And actually they had a little feed yard there, too. That first little feed yard was right there in Honouliuli in the '50's. Any way... they sold that thing to Rudy Tong. And I want to say around the late '60's or early '70's. I want to say that that's when they sold out that... you know... Honouliuli...

LW: So when you were there it's mostly the processing and the...

CB: All of that was the feed yard and I still ran the feed yard but the guy that was assistant manager was actually running the feed yard. I was still the general manager, I guess was what they called them. So I ran the processing and the kill floor and all that stuff.

LW: And the...

CB: That was kind of... that was wild, too.

LW: Why is that?

CB: Well, you know... I had to join the Pacific Club and I had to do this and I just...

LW: You mean as an executive it was a different life style.

CB: Yeah. Oh yeah. Totally different. But you know, I probably learned... it was that two years... was really, really good for me. One, it showed me I could do anything I wanted to. And it taught me how to... and not that it taught me... it didn't teach me, but I became cognizant of the fact that you allow people to do what they do. And then if you do that, they will, and if there's something that goes wrong you talk to them about it and don't yell and scream and jump up and down and stuff. And you have to know what you know... you have to really know what you don't know. And that's basically what I told these guys. And there was the guy who was the controller at Hawaiian Meat, I'd known him from when I was at the feed lot when I was a kid. He was an accountant at Hawai'i Meat Company then. So I knew him. So you know that was really good. Bert

Fujikawa. And he was, again, an invaluable... just Bert... you do what you do. Tell me what I need to know. And we had a full time big old German guy that ran the plant. And same thing. And you know the younger guy... Reggie... I don't know his last name... the old man... the old German guy retired so Reggie took over and... I mean I was the only manager of Hawai'i Meat Company that ever showed up at 6:00 o'clock in the morning like the rest of them. In fact... they were looking around trying to figure out what was wrong, you know. I'd just go sit and talk to the guys or sit and talk to Reggie, find out what's going on, and just let them do their job. It's not that they didn't want to... they always wanted to do their job so let them do it. Just get out of their way. That's the way I always worked. You want me to do a job, get the hell out of my way. So I figured if that's if the way I wanted to be treated, just treat other people that way. And we had wonderful people that worked there for 30, 40 years. Just salt of the earth... they knew their job. It was really cool. It was really fun. I learned about retailers. And in the cow business there's always this big fight between the feed lot operators and the packing houses. There's this thing about distrust and all this stuff. This goes back for a fair amount. This is in America now. On the mainland.

LW: Now why do they...

CB: That just is because...

LW: Why do they distrust each other?

CB: Well because the packing house is trying to buy cattle cheap and the feed yards were trying to sell cattle high... you know...

LW: For profit?

CB: Yeah. So there's always this deal. Well I always tell the feed yard guys in the mainland, I says... you think packers are tough. Retailers make packers look like Sunday school teachers. Because they are cutthroat son of a guns. See in the middle of all this... Frannie Morgan's trying to save the cow business by getting into the cow business over here at Hamakua. So they're paying more... too much for cattle and selling them cheaper than I could sell them and we lost some of our biggest... Foodland, Times and all those... we lost those accounts. But... what ended up happening was... we stayed with the middle... midsized guys and the moms and pops. And we made more money. 'Cause they weren't beating us over the head like Foodland and those guys. You know to drive their price down.

W: The retailers... and they were the retailers?

CB: Yeah the big retail guys. So Bert says this is great. Look... we're making more... our... our margins are bigger plus not having to deal with those jackasses.

LW: But he could do that because he was very experienced?

CB: Oh, all of them could. The sales guys... Reggie was a sales guy. I mean we had one lady Gloria... she was old buddy of some of the old entertainers in Honolulu and she had those guys, those buyers from the stores just eating out of her hand. She would just sing and dance them to death. I loved her. She was fabulous. And then a lot of those people moved over and went to work for Palama Meat after they left us. So any way...

LW: Wow... so there's just... every time I listen to you guys there's just so much I don't know, it's incredible. 'Cause mostly I was talking to ranch managers for the exhibit so you're bringing this whole side... this other side of the cattle industry which is the feedlot and the processing plant... but so now... that's a big deal. I mean when I talked to ranch managers, the closing of that big operation is like a turning point for Hawai'i cattle industry.

CB: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah.

LW: Now so they just...

CB: And I'm at the Legislature... doing all this stuff... I'm having to carry the flag, so to speak for the deal and you know it breaks my heart because I'd always thought that this was going to be the way that things always were. And as it turns out... again, it was one of the best things that ever happened to our industry. I mean... we weren't making any money. None of us were.

LW: Right... depending on that operation.

CB: Yeah. Yeah. We had to bring all our feed in and that was crazy. It's just... and once the shipping thing got perfected... the cowtainers and all that stuff, once you started using that ship to go to Canada... boy, the whole world opened up to you.

LW: Oh, no kidding.

CB: It was just like...

LW: So who figured that out?

CB: Well... Elmer Rabin actually. He was the guy that started shipping calves from Hawai'i to the mainland. He came over here and he was an old cow buyer from California, One of the characters of the world, He knew every cattleman west of the Mississippi. And every packer and every feed yard guy. And he came over here and he saw this is easy pickings. Some of the guys would... back in those days, you take your cattle, you send them to feed yard in Honolulu, and then they kill them and then they send you a check for the difference between what they sold them for and what the feed bill and all that stuff was, right? Well some of these guys owed the meat company money. See... that's how good this deal was. And all of a sudden, I could sell my calves for twenty-five cents and get paid today. and not have to go through all that stuff... hey, that was a pretty good deal. At least I had some money. Before I didn't have any money, right? But you know, this could take hours but there was something good about that whole process that we're back in now on the mainland. 'Cause we understand that vertical integration, see. Whereas most of THE cowboys, they sell their calves at the gate and they don't even want to care... they don't care where they go or what happens to them after that, see. But that's not the way to do it 'cause the closer you get the end product, the more money you're going to make because you make that margin all the way.

LW: That's what you mean by vertical integration?

CB: Yeah. Yeah. Vertical integration, see. But now we call it vertical cooperation 'cause we don't own the whole process. Whereas Hawai'i Meat owned the whole process. Parker Ranch owned the whole process from the ranch all the way to the retailer, right. And Kahua the same way, except that they had to feed their cattle. they didn't have to, but they fed their cattle at Hawai'i Meat's feed yard. And then they went back from Kahua, to their Kahua Meat Company to the deal so... Hawai'i Meat and Kahua were competitors. I mean literally... to the point of almost sue jobs and stuff like that over a couple of years.

LW: Oh, wow.

CB: But now... you know now, it's all changed 'cause this... all us younger guys who are not that young any more but when we became involved, we were all friends. So now there's no competition. It's...

LW: But you... but it's different now because you keep you calf till the...

CB: Yeah. Well, they did, too, in those days but it was the Hawai'i Meat and the Kahua were... were fighting the Times and Foodland and all those markets in Honolulu, see.

LW: Oh, I see. I see.

CB: It was a dog eat dog deal, man.

LW: But now how does... the Times buys them now from... not directly from you?

CB: No. Everything for those guys comes in from the mainland.

LW: Yeah. Yeah.

CB: So any way... Hawai'i Meat Company, we closed it down, everybody freaks out. How can you do that? And luckily I was friends with all these guys and I'd tell them straight. Can't afford it. Doesn't make money. You guys know that. And then the ranch, which was almost fifty percent of the production through Hawai'i Meat Company, decided they were going to send their cattle to Canada. And we'd actually looked at bringing cattle from New Zealand to Hawaii, to run through the feed yard to keep the numbers up.

LW: Oh, no kidding.

CB: And when this guy was buying a lot of cattle and people were shipping, we actually looked at that process. And the quarantine... they had a horrendous quarantine requirement that we would never be able to...

LW: Get around...

CB: ...get around. But any way... so that's where that whole thing started so then Robbie heard about it, 'cause Robbie and I talked a lot because Robbie was the cattle... the livestock manager here. And so he said ah... I wonder if we take that boat to go to Canada and so...

LW: Oh, the boat that was coming from New Zealand...

CB: Yeah the same shipping company that we looked at...

LW: Yeah, 'cause it's like Dutch or...

CB: Yeah, it's Danish.

LW: Danish?

CB: Yeah. So they brought some guys from Canada and they said here's what we can do and how it'd work. We're still... we still use the same guy that we started with in 1990.

LW: What guy? On the mainland?

CB: Yeah, in Canada.

LW: So you were already pasturing in Canada?

CB: No, no. He set all that up. Set the whole deal up.

LW: Oh. So these guys came from Canada and said you can use the Danish boat to take from Honolulu to Canada...

CB: Yeah... from Kawaihae to Canada.

LW: Kawaihae to Canada. Ship your calves away...

CB: Yeah. and we'll put them on grass and put them in the feed yard and you can make more money than if you did it in Hawaii.

LW: If you sold your calf at the gate in Hawaii.

CB: And/or...

LW: Or cow...

CB: Or continued to do the Hawai'i Meat Company thing.

LW: Oh, I see.

CB: Then in the meantime City and County of Honolulu, they said that they wanted the site of the packing house and the slaughter plant for the bus barn.

LW: Oh. So there was municipal money then, to buy up that land or something.

CB: Yeah. Condemnation money.

LW: Condemnation...

CB: That's what it was. It was sale under threat of condemnation. In the meantime I put together a deal for Parker Ranch to buy out the minority stockholders. Now that's another part of this thing that I learned about. How to do that.

LW: When you were at Hawai'i Meat.

CB: Hawai'i Meat Company, yeah.

LW: And an executive.

CB: Yes.

LW: Okay.

CB: Such as it was.

LW: Well, you know that image of selling in the pickup truck and buying the Buick, that's significant so we're...

CB: Yeah... yeah. So I learned how to do that. We put together a deal with Parker Ranch, we went and bought off all the minority shareholders of Hawai'i Meat Company. And so that Parker Ranch could do what they wanted to do which was close the meat company. Sell the deal to the City and County. Ship cattle to the mainland and do all that. So...

LW: Wow.

CB: I mean it was a good... it was a good business move, you know.

LW: Yeah, yeah.

CB: You know who the second largest stock holder in Hawai'i Meat Company was?

LW: No.

CB: Carl Carlson.

LW: No kidding?

CB: Because he was Huehue Ranch. And then when Huehue sold, he got the stock.

LW: Oh God, I'd never keep all this straight. Okay. Well we'll ask him about that.

CB: Yeah, I know where a lot of...

LW: All the skeletons are buried...

CB: I buried a few of them myself. (Laughter.)

LW: Now, that's an executive talking. Wait now. So then when Hawai'i Meat Company closes, you come here?

CB: Yeah. Thank God. Yeah, they decided that Parker Ranch needed somebody... so I became the marketing manager.

LW: Marketing manager?

CB: So I said...

LW: So Robbie... Robbie Hind was still the...

CB: Livestock manager.

LW: Livestock manager.

CB: And I was the livestock marketing manager.

LW: You were the marketing manager.

CB: So I set up all the stuff on the mainland. Did the Canadian stuff... in the meantime we got an exemption from the Jones Act to cross cattle from Canada into the U.S. Before we couldn't do it because of the Jones Act. We got a customs ruling that allowed us to do that.

LW: Oh.

CB: So then we stopped leaving cattle in... we left a few cattle in Canada, crossed everything... a lot of them into the U.S. And so we could take advantage of the U.S. deal. And so I set up all of the U.S. stuff. Which was a lot of fun. That was a whole 'nother thing. I mean we got to see a lot of the country and met a lot of great people and two of them that we started dealing with... well, outside of Bruce... I mean he still helps us but people in Oregon... that Wilson Cattle Company and... Vince Genco in California, we still do business with him.

LW: So that's why you had the Wilson cowboys come down for the rodeo.

CB: No, that was a different deal.

LW: Oh, different.

CB: Those were the Wyoming Wilsons, but these are the guys from Oregon. So anyway and then we wanted to move into Texas so I called Keith. I said Keith... we want to come... 'cause Texas is where the prices are set for the whole country, basically. And so I said we want to get there. Get these calves there light... less money per calf to get them there when they're light. So we hooked up with him... I mean we tried several different places there. And I ended up buying part of this feed yard.

LW: Do you truck them down from Canada?

CB: Yeah.

LW: Unbelievable.

CB: It's a two and a half, three day deal. Well we stop, rest them and... well anyway, so that was a lot of fun doing all that. And you know we tried... we went all over the place, did this and that, tried all of this stuff and we were very fortunate we never got into a big wreck anywhere.

LW: Yeah.

CB: I mean no place... nobody ever... only one guy in New Mexico was a little bit slimy... we lost eight out of two thousand steers. And he never could account for them, but no big deal you know, but still.

LW: Yeah.

CB: We never had to worry. We even pastured on the Jicarillo... Apache reservation in Chauma, New Mexico.

LW: Yeah, 'cause after all that's like money on the hoof, right?

CB: Yeah.

LW: I mean... you have trouble out here with people poaching your stuff.

CB: There's fifty thousand acres and if we just run those cattle on fifty thousand acres... so how do you get them... he says when it starts snowing they all start coming home. That's exactly what happened.

LW: Really?

CB: Yeah.

LW: Wow, interesting.

CB: I think we were only two or three short out of that whole bunch that went up there. But any way... you know that all those kinds of stuff, it was just a great learning experience and... like I say I met some really, really great people. Never had any fun. (Laughter.)

LW: Never. We can tell.

CB: Work, work, work. You know.

LW: Well what do you think is the essence of being a cattleman or what would you like to see... you know what kind of... statement do you want to make about cattlemen?

CB: Hmm... I don't know. I think... well, number one it's a tremendous life. And we're... none of us get rich doing it. But... if you like your individuality, I think that's a part of it. You like to have fun... 'cause that's a big part of it, too. We all have fun. You have great people... you know, country people are great everywhere... so that's part of it. You get to live in a place like this. And I could probably make more money moving to the mainland or doing something like that but this is where I live. Let's see... oh, we're all naturalists... nature lovers, any way... I mean all of us... and so we get to do that. We get paid for it. You get up on the mountain in the morning and it's unbelievable. I tell the cowboys that you guys should be paying us for this stuff. (Laughter.) Of course, that doesn't go over very well. God, it's cold up here. I said yeah, but look, you know how many people would pay money to come and do this? And to be here where you are and stuff like that. You know it's hard... when you're in that ... but... it's just amazing, and you know we get to see things that people don't ever get to see, do things that people don't ever get to do... for me it's just living a dream.

LW: So true. So true. Well, we've been going an hour and a half.

CB: No kidding. You're cutting into my beer time. We got a beer bust down at the shop.

END OF TAPE. +