

Mikio "Miki" Kato, Puuwaawaa Ranch, Hawai`i



"Miki" Kato decided to become a cowboy after he spent several years working in the construction industry in Kona. He knew something about working with livestock, he liked riding horses, and he thought it sounded a lot better than what he'd been doing.

"Nobody's on your back eight hours a day. You're out in the open," he says.

Miki came to Puuwaawaa Ranch in 1956 and never looked back. today he's part owner of the ranch he first joined as a maintenance carpenter.

The land is dry, rough and rocky, but he loves it. His favorite spot, Hale Piula, or "iron roofs," named for the old water tanks that stood there, has a commanding view of the tough landscape. "You can see over half the ranch, from the mountain down to the ocean," he says.

Today, a freshwater well keeps the herd from going too thirsty, but Miki is a veteran of harder times. He remembers when ranchers had to find other ways of drawing moisture from the land during intermittent periods of drought.

"They used to burn the cactus, for the thorns, and cut it down for the cattle to eat," he recalls.

INTERVIEW WITH MIKI KATO

JANUARY 25, 2003

M: MIKI KATO

I: INTERVIEWER, ANNA ILIMA LOOMIS

TAPE 1, SIDE A:

I: Today is Saturday, the 25th of January, and we're sitting at Puuwaawaa Ranch, with Mr. Miki Kato. Can you start out by just telling me when and where you were born?

M: I was born in Kealahou, Kona. June 19th, 1928.

I: Can you tell me a little about your parents?

M: Well, my parents are oriental, they Japanese, and they originally came from Japan, my dad.

I: Where in Japan was he from?

M: Chee, I don't know.

I: And your Mom?

M: I think she's from Japan also. I think she's from Hiroshima.

I: What did they do?

M: My mom was a Japanese school teacher, I think. And my dad, he was a dairy farmer.

A dairy-ranch combination. So, that's how I grew up. With animals. (Laughter)

I: Did you have brothers and sisters?

M: Yeah, I had two brothers, and three sisters.

I: Tell me a little about what it was like when you were growing up.

M: Oh boy. Was real country those days, yeah. A lotta coffee farming, and people around the ocean, they were more, more fishermen.

I: Mm.

M: So what we used to do was, we used to deliver the milk, but we used to trade a lot. They take the milk, and pay, pay in fish. (laughs) Or if they wanted a bag of taro then they pay in fish. So it was lotta trade those days. Yeah.

I: How much fish could you get for a gallon of milk?

M: Chee, I don't remember. But, maybe for couple of months they pay us in one ka'au of dry opelu.

I: What part of Kealakekua were you in? The lower part or the upper part?

M: We were up on the upper part, the Mamalahoa Highway.

I: Tell me a little about your dad's dairy farm.

M: Well, it was dairy and ranch combination. I think it was about -- we had about 3000 acres, I think. We had dairy cattle plus beef cattle. And this was on the lower elevation, so it was mostly lantana, panini country. Rough places, yeah? It was leased land. I think was from Greenwell. And the owner of the dairy was a vulcanologist, a Dr. Jagger. So, my dad used to work for him.

I: I bet he put you to work too.

M: Oh yeah, (laughter) we had to do all the rounding up of all the cows, and everything, yeah. I used to hate milking cows, so my chore was going down and bringing all the calves and the cows out. (laughter) Yup. Get up at twelve o'clock and bring the cows in, and then go to sleep again. And then, during the day I had to saddle up and go down and look for newborn calves, and bring the cows back up.

I: So you went on horseback?

M: On horseback, yeah. (laughter) Lotta riding, though. Yup.

I: What about dogs. Did you use dogs?

M: Oh yeah, I had two dogs that used to help me bring cows and calves up. Yeah. Those dogs was really good.

I: Now, how long did you stay there at the dairy?

M: Ho, I think we moved when I was 16. But then I didn't like coffee farm either, so I would mostly go cowboying, you know, on the ranches around there. In my spare time, and summer break.

I: What ranches did you work on?

M: Oh, the Greenwell Ranches, and McCandless Ranches, yeah. Fifty cents a day! (laughter)

I: And what kinds of jobs did you do for fifty cents a day?

M: Oh, any kind of job they had, boy. If they driving cattle, we drive cattle, if fixing fences, we fix fences. Well, like McCandless they had all wild cattle, so it was catching wild cattle. Boy -- was a lotta action!

I: What made you more interested in cowboying, than farming?

M: Well, I tried construction when I graduated, but you know, construction you get somebody on your back eight hours a day. Ha. And then, the worst part is, I got stuck in the office doing all the calculation and looking at blueprints and the figuring material. So, I figured that was enough. So, I quit. I think I stayed about three years, and that was enough. Yeah. I think it was about 1945, '46.

I: Do you remember, from when you were young, why you were so interested in horses, and cowboys, and, cattle?

M: Well, with the dairy/ranch combination, I started riding horses, I think was six years old, you know. On my own. I had to go look for the cows and stuff, so (laughs) that how I got started, I suppose, yeah. But, those days you know, everybody used to ride horses. Not many cars. Everybody had to walk, or ride horses. Ha!

I: For today, I wanted to focus mostly on the ranching that you have done. But I understand that before you went to work for the ranch, you spent some time in the National Guard? Is that right?

M: Yeah, I spent National Guard, and then I was in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for about 6 months. When I came back, that's when I started on this ranch, in 1956.

I: But, you spent some time construction before that?

M: Before that, yeah.

I: What made you go into the National Guard?

M: Well, I didn't want to stay in the construction business, so. My boss won't let me quit, so I said, "I'm gone."
(laughter)

I: (laughing) And, how long did you stay with the Guard?

M: I think was 6 months. Special training, because when I went there to train for communication, the 101st was training at the same time, so I got stuck with 101st Airborne training, and communications. Boy, that was rough! (laughs) Yeah, because the Hundred 101st Airborne, they not regular Army. They paratroopers! So all the standards are different, you know. We had lotta RA's and National Guardsmen, but a lot of em dropped out, because I think we started with something like 120, 130 students -- only 72 or 73 graduated. (laughs)

I: So you didn't stay with the military after that.

M: No. Because I came back and I told my wife, I going go back, she said, "No!" (laughter)

I: Do remember about how old you were when you got married?

M: I think I was about 28 years old.

I: And you came back? And that's when you started working for Puuwaawaa? Can you tell me how you got that job?

M: Well, when I was in the Guard, the captain in the Guard was working for Puuwaawaa Ranch. So one day he saw me, he told me, "What are you doing?" I said, "Nothing, I'm just cruising." He tell me, well, you better come help work the ranch. So, that's how I got started.

I: What was his name?

M: Ah...Kua Cummings.

I: So, did you have to apply for your job, or just come in to ask for work?

M: No, he just told me come to work, and then couple of weeks later the main office called and told me to come up to the office and fill out all the forms. And that was it.

I: What was your first day of work like?

M: Well, let's see, what were we doing that time? I think we were building gates. Yeah. Because he knew I could do carpentry. The gates was all broken so our first project was put in all the gates down at the lower end, and that was in Holualoa section. And then we went over to the Honomolino side. And then when the general manager saw my name, he told me I'm gonna be put in charge of all the maintenance section. So then, I started coming up to Puuwaawaa, Holualoa, and Honomolino side. So that's how I started out.

I: How long did it take before you were moved up to being in charge of maintenance?

M: I think it was about 4 months. Yeah. What he told me was he saw my name on the payroll roster, and he asked someone of the office girls, and they say, yeah, I've been working there for about 4 months. So then he, that's when he called me in. (laughter)

I: So then, he didn't know that you were working? The boss?

M: Well, not the general manager.

I: Who was the general manager at the time?

M: Uh, Mr. **Dye Frasier**.

I: And who was the owner?

M: At that time, the owner was -- Dillingham just bought that ranch from the Hines family. Lowell Dillingham.

I: How many other guys worked here?

M: Ho, boy. Those days they had the coffee company, they had the garage and the sales section of the car section....They had a whole, whole bunch of guys. Yeah, plus the ranch. The ranch alone I think had about 30 employees. Because they had 3 ranches. Over here, Honomolino, and Holualoa. Yeah, I think they had roughly about close to 30 -- that's the cowboys, mechanics, everything, including water checkers or whatever.

I: What were the, the different operations of Puuwaawaa at that time? What kinds of business was it in?

M: Well, Puuwaawaa, Holualoa, and Honomolino was mostly ranching, but the coffee company was in Captain Cook. They had the Captain Cook Coffee Company, and then also they had that in Captain Cook, they used to sell the Ford cars, so they was selling cars also. And then the coffee company had the farmers, plus the coffee mill down below, so. They had lotta employees.

I: And ah, you said there were 3 ranches.

M: Three different location. One here, and one in the middle of Kona, one way on the south end of Kona.

I: And did those ranches only raise cattle? Or other kind of livestock?

M: Oh, they were strictly cattle. All these ranches was strictly cattle. Except I think when the Hines was operating this ranch, they also had turkey, I think. They were shipping turkeys, and they also had milk cows, I think. They used to ship to the Oahu, and then Hines got a dairy in Oahu. But when Dillingham came into running the ranch, was strictly cattle ranching, Yeah. That's when I came in.

I: The three ranching areas...was each managed separately, or did they cross over?

M: They had one manager, but they had sub-managers for all three locations, yeah.

I: You were head of maintenance? How many guys did you have working under you?

M: Oh, boy. As the time went on, a lot of improvement projects came into being, so I think had about 30 employees at one time. We had to do the catchment, we had to do the -- see when I came in, there was only one road on this ranch that was going up, and you can only can come down one way. So Dillingham said he's gonna send in 3 dozers from Hawaiian Dredging, he's gonna cut rows, cut fence line, fix fence line, build the water catchment. I tell you, he did **lots** of improvement. Not only on this ranch, but also on his other ranches too, you know. So, I had to be in charge of most of those things, so, I had lotta employees. Fence gang, and laborers, and dozer operators.

I: In the first 10 years that you worked here, what was the major improvement project that you had to do?

M: Ah, mostly he wanted roads so that they wouldn't have go all the way with horses, they could use pickup trucks. That was the number-one priority. And then, fixing all the fences. He had the roads built up so that they could go in and fix all the fences around there. And the other thing was, building the water catchment system, because they didn't have a water catchment system. We used to haul water from Waimea. Day and night. So the first priority was putting the water catchment, building water storage reservoirs. And then after that, at the same time, all these houses he was putting in, all these new houses. So we had contractor building houses (laughs).

I: That was for the workers?

M: For the employees, for the workers, yeah.

I: Can you tell me about how you guys built the roads?

M: Mostly secondary roads, for the jeeps and the pickup trucks that's on the ranch. Dirt roads. Everything was dirt road, yeah. (laughter)

I: Can you tell me how you built them?

M: Bulldozers, mostly. Three bulldozers, leave up to the operators to make the road. And then he built, he found out this was a fire-prone area, and fire used to start along the highway, so what he did was, every chance he had, he cut the paddocks in about 600- to 700-acre grids, you know? Next to the highway.

I: Hm!

M: And he put in all the bulldozer roads so in case fire, we can contain it between the 500 to 7 acre paddocks. So everything was built in grids. And those things really took time with the dozers. Because you got about 5 miles of road, along the highway. And he did it on the other side, the other half first, because that's where the cattle was. And toward Waimea side, he was going do it later on, but then he sold the lease.

I: Um, what were the hardest roads for you to build?

M: The hardest was on the pahoehoe.

I: Really?

M: Yeah. Boy, those days the dozers was the D8 was the biggest, and then the ripper wasn't that strong, you know? So in the pahoehoe you don't have materials, you have to make materials, or haul it in. It was hard work.

I: What about the catchment. Can you talk about how you built those?

M: Well, first they build it, they put the aluminum sheeting on -- no, no, they put the plastic on it. But then here comes the wind, it took it all off! So then they went into aluminum sheeting, and the wind took that also. So then, the next thing, we paved it. (laughter) Yeah! 7 acres of pavement. That was a big job. Had the big cleanup after the aluminum sheeting got thrown off, you know. Had to gather it all up.

I: Did it work?

M: Well, after we paved it, it worked. Yup. But then after they sold the ranch, and the new owner was taking care of the catchment, when the lease was gonna expire, he couldn't get additional lease terms, so, naturally, he's not gonna maintain the thing. Today, it's mostly overgrown with grass and weeds. Still catching a little water, but, yeah. The big tank is still there, though. Yeah.

I: You guys put that in? How'd you do that?

M: Well, that first one, the dredging crew came in, and they put the first one up, with all their tools and equipment. And then, the Hawaiian Dredger's supervisor told me, "well, the next one is up to you to put it in, because you got the labor," so I had to put it up. (laughter) It was a learning experience.

Yeah, boy those days, everything was capital improvement. They spend real big money improving this ranch. He put in all the roads, new fences, new pipeline, new catchment, new tanks, additional tanks, and then the cattle. He upgraded the cattle; he told me this Hereford is not cutting it over here, not doing so good, so he told me he's going to go to Texas and buy some bulls. And I thought he was just kidding. And about two months later, he told me, "Well, I bought 36 bulls in Texas -- and you're gonna go get them."

I looked at him, I tell, "What?" He tell, "Yes!"

I think was 1965 or '66. Somewhere around there. (laughter) So I had to go all the way to Texas and get those bulls, truck it over to San Francisco on three double-decker trucks. Then we came into San Francisco, and we got stuck, because the ship that was supposed to take the bulls was stuck outside of the San Francisco harbor. The shipping was stopped, and ships couldn't go in and out, because a gasoline barge was burning right in the middle of the bay.

So here I come in with three truckloads of bulls, on the wharf, and I got stuck with the bulls! (laughs) I couldn't send it back! (laughs) So what I did, I had to call the big boss, Dillingham in San Francisco. So he hustled up and found a company that was handling oversea shipping of big animals, so we lined up all these big crates, just like double-deckers, right on the wharf. They put the bulls in those, and I was stuck on the wharf with the bulls for three nights and four days! (laughter)

But these were all range bulls, so you couldn't go in there. We couldn't get near to them, because they're kind of wild. But the fun part is, when we loaded it up, it was alright, because they brought this big forklift and they hoisted the thing up to the deck level, and they just opened this gate and let 'em go into the pen; they had a pen built on the ship, see?

So when they came to Oahu, to **unload** it, that was the fun part. They got there at something like 8:00 in the night. Had to put the big gangplank down, to the truck. So the big truck was waiting down below, but the lights are shining up, and the bulls won't come out. Ha! So we had to play matador, and tease the bulls until the bulls chase us, and we duck on the side, and the bulls would go four at a time out. I think we ended up -- 36 bulls took us until about **one**-thirty in the morning. (laughter) Yeah! But that was some experience. (laughter)

I: Tell me a little about Mr. Dillingham. What was he like?

M: Well, I don't know if you know, he built the shopping center in Ala Moana, and he owned the Hawaiian Dredging. He was a good, smart businessman. Yeah. He's kinda on the impatient side. He wants to get things done, you know? But, I'm glad that I had an opportunity to work with somebody like that, because he can see way ahead. Those businessman, I don't know how they can do it, but they can foresee things gonna be happening. He told me, "Five years from now, this state is going to be real hard to do business in." I think that was in 1969? And 1972, he sold. This company. And then, after that, the Big Three all started pulling out. So what he told me was the truth.

I: How did he treat you and the other people who worked on the ranch?

M: Oh, he treated us **real** good, because he looked at the situation, you know this company need to have adequate housing. That's why he built all this new housing. And he was going to do 'em all, but then he sold, you see.

I: When did he build the housing?

M: I think he started in '62. He built six new cedar homes. And then he gave the employees. He treated the employees real good, yeah. Because he told me, if you're gonna be the supervisor, whatever, if you need to work overtime, **make** sure the overtime is not mandatory. If you're gonna want overtime employees, **ask** them if they to want to make overtime. Because most of them have families, they need to go back to their families after 8 hours a day, you know. So, you have to treat the employees, otherwise they not going treat you right. And sure enough, that's true, right?

So he told me treat the men right, and they'll produce for you. (laughter) What didn't put out, well, he sent 'em down the road. (laughs)

I: Was he ever harsh with you?

M: No, not ever. But he would let you know, what he wants done. But he'll never speak harsh on you, or talk loud to you, or anything. He would just, call you in, and, he'll just point out what he wants done, on a sheet of paper. He would list it down, say, this, this, this, this, I want done. And he kinda set a deadline. But if you cannot meet the deadline, you better have an answer for him. (laughs) Yeah!

I: Did he supervise you directly, or did he have a manager who supervised you?

M: He had three managers, and one was the manager for the cowboys. And then, then had office staff. And the, construction side was -- I had one, but, he left it all up to me, because he knew that he and I had direct communication. And then, of course, we had the general manager of the head office. He also had a lotta things for me to do. So I had just like two bosses. (laughs)

I: Who was the general manager at that time?

M: Mr. Dye Frasier.

I: Now, I was interested in asking you, how did they divide up the work on the ranch? What were the different divisions inside the ranch?

M: Well, when I came in, they already had the ranch manager here. And he, I think, had all the staff under him, was foremans and sub-foremans. And some guys take care of the water, checking water and stuff, and the other guys take care of...whatever thing they need to do on the ranch. Mostly I think was...the whole crew, most of the crew was -- oh yeah, they had the mechanic crew, and the truck drivers, too.

I: So they had the mechanics and the truck drivers, and they had water?

M: Water checker. I think the water checker came under the cowboy foreman. And the mechanics, they came under the ranch manager, I think. And the ranch manager and I work together, because lotta things he told me that I had to do, but then I had lotta meetings direct with the General Manager, and Dillingham, so. They were really kinda flexible. Yeah.

I: You were talking about the houses. That he built. He had you guys build the housing?

M: No, because we didn't have enough carpenters and stuff. I think he had, what, six A-frame, he gave it all to the one contractor, and he build it all up. (laughs) That makes it easy, yeah, for me. Cause I just spot check it every now then, and that's it.

I: Where did you guys live before?

M: I lived in Kealahou, Kona. I used to commute. Yeah, because then I come up this side, I had to go, Honomalino, way on the south end, and also had the middle section, so. Then, when this house was finished, they tell me I can move up here. So I moved!

I: I wanted to find out a little bit about life around the ranch, at that time.

M: Oh, at that time, yeah, that was, what, 1960's? Yeah. Mostly cowboys up here.

I: With their families?

M: Families, yeah. All families. And then, the Puuanahulu families was all tied in with the ranch, see. The community down Puuanahulu. They were all working for the ranch, yeah. In fact, this whole community was under the ranch.

And then, he sold it in 1972, to Mr. Bohnett. And then Mr. Bohnett found out that we was hauling water, because when you get drought, nothing catches water at the catchment. He was interested in drilling a well. So asked me, I tell, "Well, Dillingham tell me there's water under here, but his partner didn't want to go into drilling the well, so." I told Mr. Bohnett that. Then he made a study himself. And that's when he found out there's an aquifer right under here. He spent the money to drill the fresh-water well. So, that was the biggest improvement that ever happened here, on the ranch. I think it was 1975, 76, somewhere's around there.

I: What kind of a difference did it make to have a well here?

M: Well, we have fresh water to drink. And we didn't have to, store it in, during the drought. We didn't have to store it in tanks anymore, you know? So, that was a big plus. Only thing is, costly, because the pump is run by electricity. So right now we're paying about, nine dollars and seventy cents per thousand gallon. Which is still too low to keep up the maintenance and cost of the water system. So eventually I think the rates are gonna go higher. (laughs) Yeah. That's how it goes.

I: Hm. I'd like to come back and talk again about the well, and Mr. Bohnett in second, but first I'd like to stay in the '50s, and the Dillinghams, and more about what it was like to live here back then. It must have been pretty isolated back then. What did you guys do for entertainment?

M: Well, the Puuanahulu community had their own softball team going, they used to play softball. Yeah, competing against all these other divisions in Kona. And I think they used to do a lot of their own entertainment, play music, get together, yeah. But since the road was open, they used to go to Kailua. Weekends, get down town. (laughter)

I: You said there were a lot of families living around here. What did, what did they do for schooling, for the children?

M: They had their own school up here, in Puuanahulu. They had one school teacher that teach, up to 8th grade, I think it was.

I: What was it like raising kids out here?

M: I guess it was pretty good. But my kids, when I came here, I think the Puuanahulu School was already closed, so. They supposed to go to Kealakehe. But my kids, since my wife was going to work in Kona, they went to Konawaena.

I: What about medical service out here?

M: Medical service, we have to go to doctor either in Kona or Waimea, I think was mostly in Kona, yeah. I think during the Hines' time, the doctor used to come make house calls, every so often. The ranch used to pay for those.

I: In your time, did the ranch provide for health insurance?

M: Yeah. That's one thing Mr. Dillingham provided health insurance, dental, yeah. Til today, it's still the same. Well, not today, they don't have any employees, so. (laughs) But, I think Mr. Bohnett, he did the same thing. For all employees. Plus retirement, yeah. Yeah, employees are well taken care of.

I: What other things did the um, ranch do for the employees?

M: Well, every quarter, everybody used to have so much meat. So, the ranch used to provide free meat. That was one thing. And other than that, I don't know -- had medical coverage, retirement, free housing -- they didn't charge any house rent. But they didn't pay any water bills. (laughter) Yeah. I think all our needs was electric and telephone bill.

I: What about churches?

M: I think there was two churches down there, yeah. One was Mormon, and the other one, I forgot what it was. But most of those community people down there was Mormon, see. And I think the Christian church, and the Catholic church was in Kalaowa. Yeah.

I: Did your family go to church?

M: Yeah. We go to church way over in central Kona. (laughs) My wife, she was a historian for the church for a while, so that's where we go. Central Kona Union Church.

I: Was church-going a big part of life for most of the ranch employees?

M: Out here, yes. Yeah. This community was, real church-going community, yeah. I think til today, I think there's still some, church, yeah. Which is good.

I: What kinds of things did you and your family and the other employees do when you had time off, on your weekend?

M: Well, lotta time they, they used to go fishing down Kiholo, because they had exclusive right to the beach. Lotta people and their families used to go down and camp overnight, and over the weekend they fish, and they come home. Things like that, and then -- well, if you stay home, you got nothing to do, so naturally you gonna do something around the ranch. You'll go hunting, fix the house, or something.

I: What did you most enjoy doing on your time off?

M: Well. My time off was, what, either go down the beach, fool around with the wild horses, training horses. Because, nothing else to do, yeah? And my friends used to come up, and we used to go riding. Things like that. Trail riding, just holoholo, whatever.

I: Now um, the work that you were doing. I know you were in charge of maintenance. Did you also help out on the cowboying, or were you exclusively doing maintenance?

M: In the beginning, it was, mostly maintenance, because we had **so** much to do, but eventually, the managers knew that I could handle cattle, so when they shorthanded, they start putting me, more and more, into the cattle side. And then, I was, more like half and half, you know.

And then when Mr. **Bohnett** took over, then I was also doing maintenance, but doing cattle side too. And I forget what year it was, but I became the manager of the whole operation under Mr. **Bohnett**. I forget what year it was.

I: Before we move on from the Dillingham time, I just wanted to ask, what were the most significant events that happened to the ranch, in that time?

M: I think the main thing was infrastructure. He put in a **lotta** infrastructure. He upgraded all the corrals, the roads, the fences, and he brought in new trucks and equipments, yeah. And then, at that time, I think we also

stocked at the feed lot, down below. He was trying to feed and his own cattle, yeah. And then what happened was that -- he brought in the feed from the mainland, was Matson. Always raising the rates (laughs). We found we can fatten the cattle, but the cost of fattening the cattle wasn't worth it, because the feed cost was so high. So then when he sold the operation, then we did away with the feeding. Then we started sending the feeders to the local guys, who handle feeders.

I: We talked earlier about having had to bring in water, sometimes. Were there any major droughts in Dillingham's time?

M: Yeah! I think I experienced one big major drought. But you see, this drought runs in cycles; every ten to twelve years, you get about three years continuous drought. But every three to five years you get one year drought. (laughs) Yeah! So we had drought. But ah, I think I experienced one major drought that we had.

I: How did you handle the drought when it came?

M: Well, the first one was funny, because, those days, waaay on the upper elevation, we didn't have any water system. All we had was catchment. But if the catchment went dry, the cows lived off the dew in the grass. Yeah. And once they accustomed to that, they can manage. You know, the only thing is, we didn't move those cows around, we left it alone, you know. And the lower area we used to haul water day and night from Waimea. And then, distribute it by pump.

And then the state, I don't what year that was, I think in the 60's, they were going to build a well, and they down below and got nothing but brackish water. So what Mr. **Bohnett** did was, he tapped into the brackish water, and he pumped it up, and fed the cattle the brackish water. (laughs) And we had to drink the brackish water also. (laughs) Yeah! The water wasn't so bad, if you put the container in the icebox and drink it cold.

I: What does it taste like?

M: Well, the worst part is you cannot take a hot shower, because if you use hot brackish water for a hot shower, you stink up the whole house, you know? (laughs) So everything was cold. Cold shower, yeah.

I: Did you do anything else for the cattle, when there was a drought and no water?

M: Um, yeah, in the Hines' time, I think what the old timers used to tell me was they used to have a lot of cactus over here. They used to, go out and burn the cactus, for the thorns, then cut it down for the cattle for eat. Plus, they used to cut the halepepes, and whatever trees they can. And that's how they survived. But...when I came, there was enough water -- they used to pay to haul the water. It wasn't easy. But that is

why Dillingham looked at the situation and said the Hereford cow is not going to survive very long in this drought, with this kind of conditions. That's why he went and bought the Santa Gertrudis bulls. He started cross-breeding. They're better for dry country because the Santa Gertrudis are adaptable to dry climate, and with harsh condition. So today, the cattle are mostly cross-bred cattle.

I: Were there any other disasters when you were here, like fires?

M: Oh yeah, fires was every year. Oh, boy. On the ranch here, not much, because we had the grass pretty much under control by grazing. On the **Puuanahulu** side, where there was no grazing ... see, what happened was, 1930 or something, they started eradicating the goats. Wild goat herd. And then about 7 years later, here comes the fire, because the goat herd was keeping the grass under control. After they started eradicating the goats, the goat herd went down, the grass came up. So after about five, six years, all the dry mat is accumulated, here comes the fire, and boy -- **big** problem. We can't fight the fire. Had to get the dozer and cut fire breaks. You cannot fight **Puuanahulu**. Especially, during the summer, the wind start blowing. You get about 10, 15 miles an hour wind, how the hell you gonna get ahead of the fire? So usually the fire start going, and it goes close to Pohakuloa. *Thousands of acres.*

I: What was the worst fire you had to deal with?

M: (sighs) I think that worst fire was one that started in Waikoloa someplace, and that day the wind was about 15, 20 miles an hour, and boy, that thing came up fast! And jumped the highway, went straight up across, and then -- the dryland forest was still there, but I think that fire took most of 'em, what was left of the dryland forest. Til today, if you go the other side, you hardly see any trees.

And then the other one was 1999. Back here. It started from the lower highway, and within two hours, two-and-a-half hours it was close to this highway up here. The wind just carried it off and we fought back, we had to keep it from jumping across, and lucky that we held it. But we lost I don't know how many thousand acres that time. That was scary, yeah. What Dillingham used to do was, he used to have, always, one dozer. Fire station, one dozer, standby. Weekend. And one dozer, always on the lower area. With one tanker truck. Just in case. On call. (laughter) I think, what the Division of Forestry and Wildlife is saying now, is they're gonna do the same thing, too.

I: How did the fires get started?

M: I think 75, 80% is arsonist along the highway.

I: On purpose?

M: On purpose! In fact this, just this year we had, I think it must be the same guy that started -- all in the same spot, four in the morning! Of course, you get lightening too, yeah, and then guys travelling around, careless. You know, park the car with the catalitic converter in dry grass. So that's why we so afraid of campers. Because campers get careless, you know. If they're not aware of this area's fire potential, boy. They get carried away, and -- there goes the fire. In fact, the big fire at the wild bird sanctuary, started on this north end, was either by catalitic converter, or somebody smoking. And the fire took off. Burned a couple thousand acres. We thought we gonna lose the whole sanctuary. In fact, DOFAW compiled the costs of fire fighting and total loss runs into millions to the government. So it's better to try and prevent fires, than to try and fight it. (laughter)

I: What other kinds of natural disasters affected you guys?

M: Drought and fire. But drought is...you gotta put up with it anyway, so we accustomed to it. The other one is fire. You gotta address the fire situation, otherwise you gonna lose this whole place. Finally, the federal government -- I guess with all the fires burning on the mainland, too, they found out if you don't take care of the fire fuel, the understory, you gonna have fire. So we have this fire fuel management project now, it's federal and state funded. And we participated in that by using cattle to control the grass. And now, they're recommended to use cattle as a management.

So now, today, I think the ranching focus is not ranching per se, it's gonna be fire field management. Which still gonna be workable, for the rancher. But, he has to change his priorities. The Rancher, they want us to save the land, to go by the guidelines of DOFAW. Otherwise he's not gonna be in here as a rancher. He's gonna have somebody else replace him. That's the way I see it.

I: Talking about um, when Dillingham sold the ranch, did he ever talk to you about why he sold it?

M: Well, for one thing, at the beginning he told me this may be his retirement place, but when he sold the ranch, he told me, "The business climate has changed." So he said Hawaii is going to be a hard place to do business. But in the meantime, he bought a ranch in Australia. So he told me, "Well, why don't you go to Australia?" I said, "What I gonna do in Australia?" Take up with my family, and go to Australia, my kids? In those years, you get what, 8-year work visa. He said, "Nah, you can renew it every now and then." But then I was thinking, "Yeah, but...I gonna do the same thing." So I opted to stay back, yeah.

I: But he asked you to come with him? You must have had a good, close relationship with him.....

M: Pretty close, yeah. That's why I said I was very fortunate to be able to work with someone like him. I **learned** a lot.

I: So he wanted to sell the ranch, and go to Australia?

M: Well, I think he diversified his business. To the mainland, I think, mostly. And then he upgraded Hawaiian Dredging, I think he expanded more in Oahu. And then I think he he invested a lot on the mainland. Yeah. And **Bohnett** bought his, Lease. Out. You know?

I: That was in 1972?

M: 1972. Yeah.

I: Did he ever tell you why he bought the place?

M: Well, I think -- well, I better not say this on the (laughter) (Bohnett) said he wanted to expand ... Because he had a big holding on the mainland. He had **Sanbo's** Restaurant, and some other restaurants, and stuff like that so. He had to spend his money.

I: Mhm.

M: But he also had a good holding in Oahu, his home on Kaneohe, but he wanted to come on the Big Island, too. See what kind of business, that he can expand into. And one thing, I think that time, the real estate was going real strong. So I think, the fee simple that went with this Lease area was about, 600 acres of fee simple. And that is what he was interested in developing, you see. Because he can develop the fee simple into the subdivision, or whatever. And at the same time, improve on the ranch, as a hobby or whatever.

So today, the subdivision in Puulani was his fee simple. Build that up into a subdivision. And then that 400 acres down there, he sold that to the golf course. Cause he didn't want to develop a golf course. (laughter)

I: How did the ranching operation change after **Bohnett** came in?

M: Oh, we were already shipping cattle to the mainland. The feeders. So he just kept up with it. And then he wanted to try and improve on the feed lot, but that didn't work so he gave that up also. Mainly, the market was on the mainland. I know he upgraded the herd, going to Kauai and then bringing in some Brangus bulls, and stuff like that, yeah. But generally, basically, I think the ranch and operation was mostly same, like when Dillingham left it. When he left, yeah. It was pretty good. He bought it pretty much up-to-date.

So, we just keeping up...and then I went to Kauai and bought, bought some more bulls. The Brangus bulls. And he integrated that with too, with the Santa Gertrudis and the Beefmasters I bought from Kauai. So today we got three-way crosses, four-way crosses (laughter) But it does good! I went to the feedlot on the mainland to see how they were doing, and, they like it. Yeah! They said these cross-breds, they do good up there. They put on a lot of weight.

I: Did um, **Bohnett** change the operations at all?

M: No, not really. The only thing he tried was the feedlot. And then he gave that up, because he wasn't making money, and then after that, it was pretty much, what Dillingham had set up. He just followed on that.

I: And at the time that he came in, what was your position?

M: I was kind of a supervisor. Maintenance and cattle side -- both sides. Of course he hired a regular manager for the cattle side. And then he changed manager again, and then, after the second manager went out, then, I got stuck with it. (laughs)

I: How many employees were on the ranch? At that the time when he came in?

M: I think had about...at least 15. On the ranch side. And then he graaactually reduced it. Because, he discontinued a lotta things. And he upgraded a lotta things, so we didn't need that many, especially because we didn't have Honomalino and Holualoa, so we only had this side, see.

I: When were those sections separated from the rest?

M: 72. When he bought this ranch. He only bought this one. He didn't want to buy the other two.

I: What happened to the other two?

M: Aaah, I really don't know. I think...Honomolino...I think Mr. Johnny Medeiros took over that operation. Because he was also employed with the Dillingham. He was the last livestock manager when Dillingham sold. I think he purchased that Honomolino lease, and he ran it on his own. And the Holualoa section, what happened, whether Bishop, Bishop Estate took it back, or what, I don't know. I know nobody ranched up there.

I: Beginning in '72, for the first ten years that **Bohnett** was in charge, what were the major events that happened on the ranch?

M: 72 to 80....(thinks)...I think what happened was, we opened the hunting, bird hunting, up to the public. Because, until then, hunting was...not allowed. Not public hunting. When **Bohnett** bought this place, I think we started bird hunting in the 80's, yeah. Because there was so much clamor from the public, you know. And there was so much wild game over here. (laughs) Poaching was heavy. Poaching, and all kind humbug. So I think it was 1980-something when I finally became manager, the DOFAW headman was Charlie Wakita. I told Charlie, "Why don't they open it up for the public?" Charlie said, "Well, let's try bird hunting first, and see how much damage they gonna do to the ranch." Which was no damage at all. What we found out, if you open it up to the public, the public has access, there's more eyes watching, less poaching, you know? And at least, the public is glad that they can come in, so they not gonna destroy their chance of continuation. It was a plus thing, so we said, okay, that's good, so. We opened up for the mammal hunting in the meantime, the poaching dropped, the rustling stopped. And then the hunter education classes start coming in, and they start educating the youngsters ... It's a plus-plus situation today. It's working out real good! And the hunters helping the state in planting real native trees. And they volunteer. Hunting tracking station, they man the tracking station.

I: Is the hunting all free?

M: They get the hunting license fee.

I: But they don't pay the ranch anything?

M: No, no.

I: Was it surprising to you that it worked out, as well as it did?

M: Well, I was kind of on the fence, but I figured, I had nothing lose, because if we don't open it up, they was poaching anyway. (laughter) But what was surprising was, the poaching stopped.

I: So you're talking about poaching the wild game. Not poaching of livestock.

M: Well, that, too, was happening. Rustling of livestock. But when the hunting was open, all those things got dropping down, dropping down, and today, we hardly have no rustling for how many years.

I: How did you deal with the rustling when it was happening?

M: (breath) How you gonna deal with rustlers? They...they gonna rustle anyway. (laughter) When they had the feedlot down there, they was supposed to catch only the pigs, you know, they find? They take the big steers too. They take the hindquarters, and leave the rest!

I: They just, butcher it right there?

M: Yeah, butcher it right there. And how you gonna catch 'em? So I figure, well, try this way, and sure enough, everything stopped. Well, you gotta figure, the lifestyle of the native people was to put, put food on the table by hunting, also. So if you eliminate that, they gonna have to put food somehow. You know? I don't blame 'em. Because that's the way I was brought up also, you see.

I: What um, were the legal issues involved in allowing people on the ranch?

M: The legal issue was with DOFAW, because they said liability. So that is why I told DOFAW, "You folks run the hunting operation. You folks run the hunting station. I don't want to be liable for anybody getting shot or hurt on the ranch while they hunting." So the DOFAW said okay, the station will be liable. So then they controlled the hunting, good.

I: And it's never been a problem for you?

M: Nope. Never been a problem. Only time, only thing sometime they forget to close the gate. But so what, you know? (laughter) Some people, they make a **big** issue of ... and I tell, eh, to me it's nothing.

I: The liability?

M: No, the closing of the gate.

I: Oh.

M: Well, the liability, yeah, that was a big issue, because that, that's dangerous. You can get sued. But, if they wanna sue now, they gotta sue the state. And the state is covered. They make sure they're covered, so.

I: Mhm.

M: Ha.

I: So that was one of the big changes that came about in the 1980s. Any other big changes happen?

M: Well, gradually DOFAW is extending who can come in and do what. They used to have tree people come in, and birdwatchers come in, but they all come in with the DOFAW staff, see. One of them is guiding them, or they get the okay from DOFAW to come in and do those things. But, those are plus things, because more people are having a chance to come in and look at all these things. And there are rare species of tree over here, there's only few left, you know? And people are making a study, and they figuring out how to save 'em. Other than that, yeah, until then, nobody was allowed to come in, except only ranch employees.

I: But what about the ranching operations. Were there any major changes there?

M: No, not really. Only changes I've made was, from open breeding to seasonal breeding. You know. I found out, seasonal breeding, I have, I have more calf crop than open breeding. Because if the area is rough, for the bulls to be chasing around all over place, in rough place, he's not gonna want to do that. (laughs) It's too rough, yeah.

I: Tell me a little more about **Bohnett**'s drilling the well. When did he do that?

M: I think it was 1973, '74, he was making the study. I think '75, '76 he put the well in. Somewhere's around that time. He hired this company. That group came in, and they drilled the well, yeah. It was one of those, just like an oil rig? Day and night? Making noise. (laughs)

I: What kind of a difference did it make when it came in?

M: Oh when we got the water? Oh, big difference, yeah. Gooooood fresh water. But, the cost was more than hauling water. But then, it was more convenient. You know, you have the water there, as you needed. You don't have to haul and wait. So the water and water that we use, you know, is always there, yeah. Til today.

But the cost is there. And then, he put in a lotta improvement on the distribution line also. And he put in a big lake, down here.

I: You said earlier that **Bohnett** was more ranching for a hobby?

M: I think he -- I don't know how to put it, but ... he enjoyed what he did, yeah. Improvement to the land. You know, that's how he put it. Because when he came in, Dillingham put in lot of employee quarters, but anytime an employee had to organize a party or something like that, funeral services, it was in somebody else's garage. So then he said, "You know, this, this not right," so he put the...they call it the party house, or the Lake House, where the community can come in and use the facility. That's **Bohnett**, put that. Plus, his guests come in, they used to stay at his house. So then he said, "The guests want to enjoy their...quietness and what not," so he put in a guest house down there, also. That was for his guests only. (laughs)

I: Was he running the ranch as a viable business?

M: Yeah. He was. But whatever money that he made on the ranch, he spent it, you know? But see, the lease was a master lease, from the state. So if you owned the master lease, you're required to put in so many thousands of dollars of capital improvement. So that is why I think he put in those things. Like the reservoirs, he upgraded the reservoir, the transmission lines, and he put in this guest house and the party house, and stuff like that. Because he had to put in the improvement, you see. Of course, he already put in his own airstrip, and then stuff like that (laughs).

I: He put in his own airstrip?

M: Airstrip, because he was a pilot. (laughter)

I: Where did that go?

M: This side down here, yeah. I mean, he spent the big money ... but I guess he had to spend the money, otherwise Uncle Sam take 'em, eh?

I: What was he like as a person?

M: Oh, he was a colonel. Full colonel in the Army air force. He was a fighter pilot. You can imagine, he was just **so**. You had to be on time! That's one thing I found out. You make an appointment with him, five minutes

late, he's gone. (laughter) You gotta be there on time, or little bit ahead. Because he is punctual. (laughter) But he's strict, but he's fair. Yeah. And he's a no nonsense guy. Oh, boy. I guess...if you want things done, and you have power, you gotta be like that, yeah. You cannot just, let things slide off. But the good part about a person like that is, they can make decisions. Because they cannot be on the fence, you see. So it was easy to work for him. Yeah! He make, bang-bang-bang, I want this, I want this, I want this. You know what he wants! So, it's up to you to go from there, you know! (laughter)

I: When did you get promoted to be manager?

M: I don't know what year ... 89? Or something. After the other manger left, yeah. He told me, I'm gonna manage the ranch, and the whole thing. I say, "What?" He tell, "Yup." But he and I got along, because I can understand his military background, you see.

I: Tell me about the kinds of things you had to do, as manager of the ranch.

M: Well, first thing I had to bring it out of the hole. That's when the secretary told me, "You know, we in a hole, so you gotta bring 'em outta the hole!" And that's what he told me too. So had to cut expenses, cut employees. And then, what I did was, I did away with the intensive grazing method. They had this modernized intensive grazing method. But this didn't work out on this semi-arid country, because, the land wouldn't come back fast enough, because no rain. So I went back to my original rotation system.

I: Can you explain that system?

M: Oh, it was a four paddock rotation system. One paddock is maybe thousand acres, next one, 800 acres. We had one herd rotating between the four paddock system. But then, (clears throat) I changed it to five paddock system, because there was so much pressure on having the native dryland trees come back. So what I did was, I get 1, 2, 3 major herds. Then I assign 5 paddocks to each herd. That they can rotate in, and then. I started the rainy seasons pattern. And then, if the rainy season is gonna be for 4 continuous, 4 years in straight, you would think that 5 paddock system, by resting one paddock entirely for 5 years so that the trees come back, see? But then, after 5 years, either you going have one year drought, or else you going have to, go in and take care the accumulation of dry ah, the fire fuel. So then, I put the cows back in again. By then, the trees are pretty big, ah? And that, that's how I, started managing the forest. The regrowth, yeah? But it depends -- the higher elevation area come back faster than the low elevation. The low elevation, it doesn't come back sometime. No matter what.

I: What other things did you have to do when you became manager?

M: Well, we had a lotta pressure about abusing the land, see. But then, on the other side of the picture was, you had to reduce fire fuel. So where is the happy medium, (laughs) you know? If you gonna have to reduce fire fuel, you have to keep the cows in for so much amount of time. And then take 'em back out, and let the paddock recover. But to what extent can you let it recover, you see, before it becomes a fire hazard again. Oh, I tell you, it's a real challenge. Til today, I can tell all those guys that if you want fire fuel reduction along the highway, you can take it down, but at what cost to the machinery -- which is the cattle. So, at what point you have to take the cattle to the new pasture. And that it is where we are at now. If the grass is this high, you take it down this much, the cattle is still good; if you take it down this much, the condition of the cattle gonna be worse. They gonna start getting skinny, because no nutrients,

I: When did the Environmentalists start coming into the ranch and asking for these changes?

M: I think this was going on at least ten years. But their target date was when the master lease expired from Mr. B. Which was about five years ago. They really started putting pressure.

I: What did they come in and start trying to do?

M: Well, they wanted to save the dryland forest, for one thing. Which is good. I don't have no objection to that, but how were they gonna do that? Nobody knew how to do it. Until DOFAW did a lot of study. **We** did a lot of study. And along the way, we found out the biggest problem was if you don't address the fire problem, if you let it go, and try to save the trees, the fire fuel build up, and you gonna lose the forest. Because not only along the highway we get fire, we get fire up in the mountain, in between.

And we found out cattle is the number one thing that you can do. You have to control the fire fuel build up. But, you have to manage how to graze it, so that you don't abuse the land. That is where we at now.

M: The number two thing is that we need water resources to fight the fire. We have to have water. So, those are the two things, very important. If we don't have water, DOFAW's plan of rejuvenating or reforesting is not gonna work. Because, we have to have water. And the water is costly, but.

I: Can you name some of the special trees that you have growing here?

M: Oh, we have a lotta sandalwood, and ohemakai, sandlewood...that's iliahi, and aiea, and ala'a, which is Hawaiian hibiscus, they call that the kokio? Yeah. And ah, haukuahiwi, which is another one that's rare. And a'e...I mean we only get about a dozen trees.

I: And does this area continue to be um, endangered birds' habitat?

M: Also, yes. I think we had a lot of 'Alala, but I don't think we have any more now. And then we had Hawaiian honeycreepers, which are still there. I cannot name 'em all, but I think 'I'iwi, and Alapaio, yeah.

I: Did you know about ah, these endangered species from before? Or did you only learn about this stuff when the environmentalists came in?

M: Well, the interesting part that I still remember is Mr. Dillingham and I were riding to **Waihou** one day on his truck, and he told me, "You know, this dryland forest is something that we need to preserve." And I know he told me that in the 60's. I didn't know at that time what varieties of trees was endangered, but I learned from the old timers that this is one, this is one, you know? And then as the years went on, I think DOFAW started, putting out the printouts. They started their own study, and found out how much rare trees are still here. And that is when they really opened my eyes as to what kinds of trees are still here, and what wasn't even discovered, you know? I think it was in the 70's, yeah.

I: How did you feel when you started to realize the rare trees that were on your land? Was it a positive for you? Or were you afraid that people were come in and try to take the land away?

M: Well, I found out from DOFAW personnel that the best thing you can do, Miki, is that you can try and save these trees, because if you lose these, the species is lost and gone forever! It's not what somebody else can come in and do, but how can you save it? And I figured, how the heck can you save 'em, you know? (laughter) And that's when I teamed up with DOFAW, and then those guys started teaming up with the ranchers til we figured out how to save these trees.

The main menace was the fire. Aside from trying to go out and save it individually, by putting fenced enclosures around it. They tried that too, you know, in the beginning. But he can fence around maybe two acres, or whatever. It's not enough, you know. (laughter) So my idea was we address the fire problem; I went into the five-paddock rotation so we can save at least an 800 acre paddock, or a 500 acre paddock at a time. And then if we can do that, it's enclosed -- 500 acres or thousand acres -- if they want to come in and plant other endangered species in there, that's fine. I think we are at that stage now.

But it's kinda exciting, you know. If you can save something that's not gonna be lost. I think we lost the 'Alala, but still, they're raised in captivity, we may be able to reintroduce, in the future.

I: So you've worked on the ranch doing this preservation work. Why was it that you wanted to be doing that?

M: Well, the old timers tell me, if you don't have the land -- I think it goes back to the Native Americans and Native Hawaiians -- the **land** was the important thing. And if I don't try to save the endangered species, some other ranch is gonna come in, who is interested. DOFAW or the environment people, they said, "Hey, if you don't want to save this, we're gonna get somebody else come in to save it." So why not me? Why don't I try it? I'm already here, right? (laughs) And that's the way I look at it. If I don't have the land -- because I lose it by not trying to save these endangered species -- how can I be here?

And the way I look at it is, I can still ranch, have the livestock operation, and it doesn't have to be the way the ranches was run in the old ways. It can be modified, it can be changed, you gotta be flexible. But you still going have livestock.

I: What changes did you make from the old ways of doing things? To protect the native plants?

M: That's when I went to the five paddock rotation, yeah. So that I can at least, save maybe 800 acre here, another 500 acre there...until now, nothing has been saved, nothing has been put aside. Only the first project I made was about 300 acres, right next adjacent to the sanctuary, which I didn't graze for five years. I found out later, the trees can come back, you know? (laughter) So that was my eye-opener, you know.

I: What kind of ah, threat did the cattle present to the trees?

M: If you overgraze, the young seedling won't come back. When the tree is only three or four feet high they're **eaten**, see. You gotta have it taller than the cattle can push it down. So like, the koa tree, if they're five years old, they're gonna be taller. But then, they might push it down again. You know, to get the leaves. So, you can put the cows back in for another maybe, three, four months, get the grass under control little bit, bring it back out, rest it for three, four months again, and it put back out, so they take it down some more... And then, rest the paddock maybe another three years. By that time it's eight years old, the trees are big enough,

But that's how I brought it back. And I, when I tried it, at that 300 acres, that thing works! So then I tried it on another section, and as I said, depending on the elevation, ah, and the type of soil, you know, how much trees can come back.

I: Do you receive any um, financial support from the Government?

M: No, no. Because I didn't plan on trying it. I had to prove to myself, first. (laughter) But I think now, because DOFAW has already looked at it, and the Federal Government, they looked at the fire fuel management thing, and, I think we going have funding for that too now, yeah. In fact, the Federal guys are saying they going have three to five test project on the other side of the lava flow. So that's a plus again, you know? But, I tell you, restoring this native dryland forest is not short term projects. At least thirty to fifty years

down the line you gotta look, ahead. But if you can show the people, or show that it can be done in a small scale, it can grow from there.

I: You know, a lotta of the conservation people often have studied restoration, things like that, they also have their own ideas about how to restore things. What do you think that um, they could learn from ranchers, about land management.

M: Well, for one thing, they found out that if you don't control the grass, you may have the forest growing for about fifteen, twenty years, but sooner or later you have enough fire fuel accumulated so that when the fire come, it's gonna take everything. So they found out they have to control the growth. And by what better way than using the animal? But **how** to use the animal, and **when** to use the animal? You cannot leave it up to the rancher. You can if the rancher is conscientious enough to take it out, and put it back. But that's the agreement that they have to come to. Originally, the rancher was, "I'm the rancher, I'm gonna do the ranching." And, he's going for profit. Because he cannot keep alive, he won't be there,

But today...I'm talking with the DOFAW staff, the Federal guys, "What if the Rancher cannot be viable?" You gonna lose all your project, because he cannot stay alive? Somehow they gotta compensate. It's not only one guy making the money. It's everybody being in there. And that's why they started, that DOFAW is going on now, is so exciting. It's something that's totally new for this area. We've talked about it for years, but, finally it's taking hold.

But like I said, the ranchers have to have their priorities changed, and if they cannot be ranching, they gotta go as fire fuel management. Grass control, you know.

I: Is it possible that the rancher could be financially viable at the same time that they're working on the conservation project?

M: Yes and no, yeah. Right now, this present day, the water costs is the one that's gonna kill the rancher. We paying over fifty thousand dollars a year alone on water. And that is gonna go up some more. So if you're gonna pay a lease rent of forty thousand, and another fifty thousand for the ranch water cost, plus expenses, operating expenses, we not gonna make it.

So where can they be compensated? Oh, some non-profit come in, and take over the livestock operation. And just use the cattle as a management tool. That's one way, you know.

Whatever money that you make goes right back into this operation, see? Because I think, if the water rate goes up--because right now, we just about breaking even, or making few thousand dollars a head. But, I can

see that the water company have to raise the rates substantially to stay alive. And we have to have the water company alive, otherwise, **everybody** loses.

So, where does it go from there? That's the interesting question! But they know they need the livestock. Because, if they don't address the fire situation, this whole plan is, you know, mostly gonna go down the drain.

I: Do you think that this plan could apply to other ranches in the State of Hawaii? Or is it unique to this area?

M: It's unique to this area, yeah. But I think other locations in the state, part of it can be applied, yeah. The forest restoration and stuff like that can be applied. But the rancher has to change his outlook on how to manage the land, you know. Whether he'll be willing to sacrifice so many thousand acres, 500 acres, or what, for so many years, or set it aside, and let the conservationists go there, and put seedlings in that area. While it's resting.

There's other ways that you can do...like the hunters, what they're doing is, they're planting , they plant the seedlings out in the hunting area, and putting tree tube around it, you know? But, everything takes time and money.

I: As of right now, where does the money come from, for the restoration?

M: I don't know! Nobody's paying me for doing what I'm doing. But I know in Oregon and New Mexico, if the ranchers are doing service project for the forestry, they get paid a service fee. You know, that was my argument in the beginning. I tell, "If I do this, you know, you supposed to get service fee." But over here, it's the other way around. You do the service, but you still have to pay the state for the pasture rental!

I: Tell me about the bird sanctuary. When did that go in?

M: Oh, I think that went in 1970? '68? Somewheres around there. I think it's four thousand some-odd acres.

I: Did they take away from the ranch to put that in?

M: Yeah, they took that portion out of the lease, yeah.

I: How did you feel about it at the time when they took it out of the lease?

M: Hhh. That was in Dillingham time, yeah. Well, I don't know. Hh! I don't know how I felt, you know, I didn't really think about it. But I figured, well, the main purpose they said was for the 'alala. But then, some of the DOFAW staff say, well, maybe they want to try and see how fast the trees can come back. So after about two years, I started seeing all these trees coming back, so it looked kinda interesting! If you see how many koa trees came back, and the mamananes and things -- awesome, it's awesome! So, that was a good thing, you know. But at the same time, in 1999, or something like that, big fire started in the sanctuary, burned thousands of acres. So that, also opened eyes, that you have to control the undergrowth. But in the meantime, that noxious poko, banana poko was taking over also! And crawling all over those trees and killing 'em. Then they told me, you gotta put the cows back in, to see what effect it would have on the banana poko.

I: And did it work?

M: It worked. At least, to take care of the banana poka. But then, it also takes care of the grasses. But then, if the trees are big enough, the animal's not gonna hurt the trees, yeah.

My feeling is, **if** we can work with this concept, we're gonna stay alive, one way or the other. We have to. (laughter). But if you're opposed to this concept, then you're not gonna be in it, and you're not gonna be here.

I: Do you sometimes wish that you were in a completely different area that didn't have these issues going on?

M: I don't know. I've been into New Mexico, Idaho, Oregon -- they all had this. Conservationists, environmentalists, yeah. But, the way I look at it is, if you're gonna go only on your way, you're gonna lose the other side. You know, what's on the other side is also nature. If you want to save where you're at, then you have to work with what nature has there. So you have to be able to come together. Iron out your differences.

I: You took over the Lease in 1997, is that right? How did that happen?

M: Well, I figured -- well, I don't have enough capital myself to take it over and make it run, you know. Operating expenses, what not. So I figured, I call my friends, and if they're interested ... Well, they were interested, all right, you know? So they came in.

I: Who are your partners?

M: Ernest and Stephen Deluz.

So that's when we came in and took over the livestock section. And then the master lease was set aside, until, I think, DOFAW could come up with some proposal. Something like this. And I think this is the proposal they came up with. This is going to be the one. (The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Feb. 26, 2002, as requested by Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife).

So, right now, we're on a month to month grazing lease. We don't have the master lease, you see.

I: So, how did they work out -- Bohnett wanted to get out of it?

M: Yeah, Bonet said he wanted to get out of ranching, because he was getting old. And he wants to slow down, you know? His subdivision is going well, he's selling most of the lots out... And, I think he felt that he accomplished what he wanted to accomplish.

I: When was that?

M: I think this was in 1997? Yeah. That's when he told me, "You know, if you guys wanted to buy me out, fine." Or else, that he was gonna, tell DOFAW that he's gonna give it up anyway.

I: So you actually bought his cattle operation?

M: Yeah. We wanted the whole master lease and all, but then DOFAW said wait a while, because they wanted to come up with a revised proposal. Because already they saw that this is a chance to put the new ideas to work. And we got word, from several years back, before '97, that they was looking at it, you know.

I: Why did you want to take over the cattle operation?

M: Well, I was already here managing the thing, and I figured well, at least, if I don't buy out, then I gotta do something else, someplace. (laughter) Why not here? Because I've been here, what, forty-something years, yeah? So I know the situation, I know the climate, I know the area, I know the condition, yeah.

I: Did you have any goal that you wanted to accomplish after you took over?

M: Well, I think my biggest goal is, after reading the history of this area, and looking at the whole, overall picture, I would like to see ranching retained. In this area. Because, the way I look at it, Eben Low and Hines started this ranch in eighteen-something. And it has always been in ranching. Until today. And what I found out is, if the cattle can be used so that it will benefit this area, why not? And now that they found out that they **need** it to keep this place alive, well, why not? And I think that's my biggest goal. I always wanted ranching retained in this area. I felt that way from 1970-something. Ha.

I: Why did you think it mattered that much to you?

M: Well, if you worked the land as long as I have over here, you kinda get to like the land, yeah. (laughs)

And if you don't have cattle, then what going happen, you gonna burn it up, and everything else gonna change. Or else somebody else happen, and you don't know what.

But I think the livestock's gonna be here. In the large scale, what, I don't know, but – it still has to be here to maintain the grass. Otherwise we all know that you gonna lose it. DOFAW knows it, federal guys knows it, and I think even the conservation guys they know, and the rancher knows it.

But it's how you manage it. How much livestock, you know? How intensively you can use livestock. Or...how less you can use it, you see?

At least, the ranching operation will be retained, in some capacity, over here.

I: And do you think that you will be able to do it in a way that, you'll keep the ranch in the black financially?

M: Well, it's hard to say. I've been talking with the federal guy, I already mentioned to him that we are breaking even and just making little bit, with what we're paying now, in expenses. And I don't think the cattle prices are gonna go up, to accommodate, whatever, (laughing) expenditures gonna arise, so. He and I was talking, you know, if that's the case somebody may have to subsidize some part of it. Or maybe the state lease would be withdrawn, then we don't pay lease, but we use the cattle ranch too, as a non-profit. But it's still gonna be there, you see? Haha.