

## **ROBERT KAMUELA “SONNY” KEAKEALANI, JR. Pu`u`wa`a`a`a Ranch, Parker Ranch, Hawai`i**



Sonny was born into the paniolo life led by his father, Robert Lopaka Keakealani, described as “a true hard-core cowboy.” He introduced Sonny to ranch work when Sonny was only 3 years old, by taking him Ka`upu style (on the lap in the saddle), while they drove cattle. Nurtured and schooled by his father, uncles, grand-uncles and the old-time cowboys, Sonny accompanied the Pu`uanahulu paniolo on their daily round-ups. He was working cattle and had his own string of horses by the time he was 10. He spent time riding alongside paniolo from Pu`u O`o, Pu`uwa`awa`a, Huehue, Palani, McCandless, and other ranches. His mentors taught Sonny how to track, rope, tie and move the wild cattle out of the thick forests and drylands.

Sonny became a ranch hand, straw boss and eventually foreman at Pu`uwa`awa`a Ranch. He had earned his reputation as a knowledgeable all-around cowboy and skilled horseman. He spent 12 years at Pu`uwa`awa`a, and also served a two-year tour in Viet Nam.

Sonny moved on to Parker Ranch in 1975. He was to spend 27 years at Parker Ranch, where he did everything from re-building stone walls to artificial insemination of stock and horse training. Sonny epitomized the seasoned and reliable all-around hand so valuable to ranch work.

Sonny has been described by Dr. Billy Bergin as “a traditional native Hawaiian cowboy.” A man who knows and loves his roots, Sonny taught his own children to care for the land and the animals with love and respect for the balance of nature and all living things, to know who they are and where they came from, and to appreciate what they have. In the tradition of all true paniolo, Sonny has carried these values throughout his life and passed them on to future generations.

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Sonny Keakealani  
Oral History Interview  
Paniolo Hall of Fame  
Oahu Cattlemen's Association  
by Ilima Loomis  
Feb. 22, 2006  
Waimea

IL: It's February 22, and we're in Waimea with Sonny Keakealani for the Paniolo Hall of Fame oral history interview. So maybe you can just start with the basics, where and when you were born.

SK: I'm Sonny Keakealani. I was born in Kapaau, Kohala. Oct. 6, 1943.

IL: Your dad?

SK: My dad was from Puuwaawaa Ranch. Robert Lopaka Keakealani. That's him right there (indicates photo).

IL: Your dad was a paniolo?

SK: Dad was, my grandfather was, my great grandfather was. Yeah.

IL: Do you know how your family became a paniolo family?

SK: Well, I guess it was during Puuwaawaa days when they started shipping cattle out, and my grandpa, my great grandpa, my dad, they all train horses for pull cattle out in the water. My dad time, they did a lot of pulling, and I watched him and I admired him, pulling cattle out. The Alapai family were noted paniolos. My great-grandmas were Alapais, and my grandpa was Keakealani. He was Alapai. His grandmother was married to Alapai.

IL: That's your mother's side of the family?

SK: Dad's. My dad's father. My grandpa.

IL: The name Keakealani, do you know what the name means?

SK: Like clear heaven. Something like that.

IL: And then your mom's side of the family, were they also paniolo?

SK: No they were fishermen. Well, might be little bit on the cowboy side, but we're more fishermen, and my uncle was plantation, more of a machine man, crane operator. But I had other families on my mom's side that were cowboys too, yeah. They work on the

South Kona area, McCandless ranch. Where you're later going to interview Alfred Medeiros. My grandpa worked there long time ago as a ranch hand, not a cowboy.

IL: You said you were born in Kohala, Kapaau. Did you grow up there?

SK: I grew up there and was raised there to six years old, then I came Puuwaawaa and was raised in Puuwaawaa until I worked there. Then I moved to Parker Ranch.

IL: Why did you move from Kohala when you were six?

SK: My dad worked at Puuwaawaa. My mom, she give birth to me, then we move home with dad. And I stayed there till grammar school, then I went back and graduated from Kohala School, then went Hawaii Tech, graduated Hawaii Tech trade school, then went home back Puuwaawaa, worked down here a little while, then put in at the Mauna Kea Hotel. Then I worked Puuwaawaa for 12 years, and during that time went Vietnam, served my time, came home, and worked Parker Ranch after that, for 27 years. All my babies were raised up there, Puuanahulu.

IL: Can you tell me, when you were growing up at Puuanahulu, and this would be in the late '40s and the '50s?

SK: Yeah.

IL: What was the area like at that time?

SK: Rough. There were a lot of cactus. When I cowboied there, was rough. All my dad and them, all they spoke was only Hawaiian, and if you didn't understand Hawaiian, you were like somebody lost when you worked. We all learned how to talk Hawaiian when we worked. Everything when they worked was all olelo Hawaii, all in Hawaiian. And then the paniolo had their own dialect.

IL: Really?

SK: Yeah, we used some words that people don't even use today. Identification of animals, like that. Today, you go to school, they tell you identification of cow. We used to do that. But we also describe looks – the face of the cattle, the horns, if they would bend, crooked, straight, sharp, all that. We all did that in Hawaiian. Then if we would move, if you were in front, in Hawaiian, in the center, in Hawaiian, in the back, in the Hawaiian. Mamua, mawaena, mahape. Mahape means back, mawaena in the center, the front is mamua.

IL: You said the cowboys had their own dialect of Hawaiian. Was that different from ranch to ranch?

SK: No, like if we worked, if we moving cattle, they would say, "Ah, hikirole!" Like, the other dialect, we would say, "Piula." With the Hawaiian word, piula is tired. Like what

do you say, tired, “Hikiiole.” “Ah, kalihou. Homaha.” Means, “rest.” Pipi hikiiole – (cattle) tired. But if the Hawaiians would say piula, that’s what means tired. We use like hikiiole, especially working with the animals. What I mean, we have different. Like we say, “Oh, what’s the matter with you. You piula? You tired?” That’s like talking to a human. But when we working with cattle, we say, “Ah, hikiiole homaha.” Rest.

IL: Do you know where those other words came from?

SK: Yeah. We use it every day. It’s just a paniolo \_\_\_\_\_. The way my dad used to tell me, they used it every day. Kela no mau. Ale wale au pahiai, you know. Half. Half half. Like a lot of people in the early 60s, they started talking pahiai, because they said when they talking English and they use Hawaiian, you know. In between. The Hawaiian language pahiai – half. In other words, sorta like kapu. Instead of just speak fluently right through what you’re talking about. But they use English and they finish with Hawaiian, or they start with Hawaiian and finish with English. We had it every day. Even when I worked Parker Ranch, we worked everything in Hawaiian. Whether you were Portuguese, Japanese, Hawaiian, Filipino, everybody understood the language. I was very proud when I worked Parker Ranch, because we used it every day. We used it a lot. Especially when I was foreman for Parker Ranch. When you’re on your job you just use it. It just comes out, automatic.

IL: When you were growing up at Puuanahulu, was there a village there?

SK: Yeah, Puuwaawaa had families, 12, 15 families. Puuanahulu had like twenty-something families.

IL: How was that set up. Were you in ranch housing?

SK: There was ranch housing. Like the people in Puuanahulu, they had their own homestead, and the families had their own houses and everything. And then like up at the main headquarters at Puuwaawaa, they had ranch houses. They had like 10, 12 houses for the employees. But at Puuanahulu it was all Hawaiian homestead. Everybody owned their own land.

IL: And you guys were at Puuanahulu?

SK: Yes. Dad and them had their own land, and we were brought up over there.

IL: What kind of other buildings were there? Was there a school?

SK: There was a little Puuanahulu School that we had like first grade through eighth grade. First grade had like five kids. Second grade, two. Third, like that, until eighth grade you had like four, five. Had only about 16 to 22 kids just within that area, and yet it was operated under the county. Those days was territorial days, not state of Hawaii, until high school.

IL: Did you have a shop or a store in the area?

SK: No, we did our shopping at the ranch. They had a little quartermaster where they had food, you know. The main items. Clothes, shoes like that. Then rice, flour, sugar – whatever the families need. The main things, salt and all that. Nothing fancy like McDonalds, Dairy Queen, nothing (chuckles). Everything was done all homemade. Mom them made their own ice cream, everything all homemade. Wasn't that fancy. We was brought up with all the kukui hele po, you know. Everything fire, firewood, until the middle 50s, then we had kerosene stoves, kerosene lamps.

IL: Now your dad was a cowboy for the ranch?

SK: Yeah. He worked there (thinks) 55 years. All his life. Started when he was 11 years old. That's all he know – fishing and cowboy. But he know his land. He knew every corner, the beach areas everything. He knew all the names of it. He knew his aina, respected the land. The land took care of him. That's how I respect the land.

IL: What was his first name?

SK: Robert. And I'm Robert Jr.

IL: Oh yeah?

SK: Yeah. Robert. But my nickname's Sonny. If you say Robert, everybody's going to tell you, "who dat?" You say Sonny, they going tell you, "yeah, we know Sonny."

IL: So, when did your dad start taking you out on the ranch?

SK: Oh, I think when I was three years old I used to cry so he used to tie me. Maybe one or two days a week he used to make his waterline run, so he used to tie me in the saddle on the horse and just leave me on the back. If I sleep I just sleep on the horse. I was young.

IL: When did you start going out with him.

SK: Cowboy, like that? I started shoeing my own horses when I was nine years old. He told me, "Boy, you wanna go out with us you better learn how to shoe." Then I could shoe my own horses.

IL: Why did he want you to be able to shoe your horse?

SK: Well the area where we work is not like some areas you see in Waimea, or you go in the Kohala Mountains. When you work at Puuwaawaa, you get out about two feet and it's only stones. Those horses always have to be shod. That was the number one thing my dad taught me when you work cowoby – learn how to shoe your horses.

IL: So you always wanted to go out and be a cowboy with him?

SK: Yeah. That was always my dream.

IL: Why did you want that?

SK: I don't know, I just liked it. I just admired. When I was young, had so much ranches on the Big Island. And I had the advantage to go with people who been in certain areas. I stayed with them, I traveled with them. I wasn't always home with my dad. Had people like Buster Brown. I was like seven, eight years old – I traveled with that man. All the way down Volcano area. I went in areas where they were doing ranching, like Keauhou. I was very fortunate to travel like that. That's how I started to know the areas. And then when I got older, I worked in the areas – when I worked Puuwaawaa, we had area called Puuwaawaa; Holualoa, that's down Kailua area; and then we had South Kona, Honomalino.

IL: All part of the same ranch?

SK: That's all one ranch, but in sections. We have like three sections. One section was just cow-calf, that's Puuwaawaa, the main home. Then like the Holualoa-Kailua section was for market cattle – heifers, cow-bulls, cull cows. South Kona, Honomalino, that's where our replacement was. Everything was bred down there and then brought home. The areas that were for us was the front of Hualalai, not the back of Hualalai, and then the slopes of Mauna Loa – south Kona.

IL: When you were growing up your dad must have taught you a lot about cowboys. What kinds of things did he teach you?

SK: Make your own horse, make sure you have patience.

IL: What do you mean, make your own horse?

SK: Yeah – breaking, like that. People say “train,” but Dad used to tell me, he train, but mostly if he made a horse, he would make shipping horses especially, for pull cattle out in the water. He used to take it down to Kiholo, all the different areas. It wasn't a smooth place to just go in the water, where you pull cattle out. Was deep. They were down in the water and the cattle were still on the land. Just had different areas. He taught me how, and then to take care of myself. And my foreman was good. He taught me wild cattle and all that, when I worked there.

IL: Who was your foreman?

SK: Johnny Medeiros. He got inducted same time as me. He taught me more on cattle like. But Dad was mostly horses, and a little bit on cattle. He was a horseman, a horseman for the Hind family.

IL: Did your dad specialize in making horses?

SK: He train a lot of horses for the Hind family, especially like for the children, or guests. They'd round up all the horses, and had malihinis coming up. Dad would take two of his tame horses, or three. Whatever they ask for. He would take care a group of children, just for the day. But mainly he was a cowboy. He work cattle.

IL: What kind of things did he teach you about working with horses?

SK: Horses?

IL: Do you remember the advice he gave you?

SK: Make sure that – like when he retired, he told this: when your moopunas can ride, boy, you can leave them by themselves. That's how you make your horse quiet, tame. They can crawl between the four legs. You don't trust – I don't trust my moopuna in there. But sometime I forget, they just walk up to the horse's leg, hold it and kiss it! Then how much time you put on the animal – the more time you put and spend on the animal, they get more used to people being around them. And making their mouth soft, so you can control. That was the number one.

IL: So he liked a quiet horse.

SK: Dad always make it quiet. Certain styles – he had something for this job, something for that, and always kids horse – quiet, gentle. But working horses, had to have a little fire in 'em. He had two different stages of making the horses. It depend on what you wanna use 'em for. Like we get roping horses, we get horses for separating, we get horses for driving the cattle. You got your favorite.

IL: Different purpose.

SK: Yeah. But usually you try to make every one the same.

IL: May I close the door so it's a little quieter?

SK: Oh, yeah!

SK: (looking at pictures). Andrew Kauai, when he worked Kahuku Ranch. That's when Freddy came up and managed Kahuku Ranch. And George Manoa. If you know Sonny Boy Manoa in Makawao, his dad. I knew all them. And when I was young we roped, but Andrew did more riding. He was from Maui and I was from here, but when he worked at Kahuku Ranch, I worked Puuwaawaa, we always got together every fourth of July, down in Naalehu, that was one of the best ranch rodeos we had on the Big Island. Every fourth of july, that was something big. You got almost 20 ranches together to compete.

We had different styles on the Big Island. Especially, saddles like this were traditional. When we worked in the Kahuku area it was more Spanish style. Everything was covered with leather.

IL: So what kind of saddle is this?

SK: This is the Hawaiian tree. Everything is open.

IL: By that you mean, the rawhide is all uncovered?

SK: Yeah. Usually in Kau, like I admired Johnny Piper, that was one I admired, one of my favorite cowboys – cattleman, horseman, good roper – but their saddle was all covered. Just this part was open. This part was all covered with leather. Then when you went to Kukaiau, they're sort of more on the English side. Then when you go Kahua, Parker Ranch, this is Parker Ranch. Parker Ranch had lalas, Puuwaawaa they had lala.

IL: You were talking about being a kid on Puuwaawaa. When did you graduate to being a full cowboy?

SK: I graduated to...?

IL: Become a full time cowboy on the ranch.

SK: Oh. When I graduated from Hawaii Tech, that was in the 60s, 1962.

IL: Where's Hawaii Tech? Hilo?

SK: Yes

IL: What did you study?

SK: I took up welding. Two years.

IL: Why did you choose to go to school if you wanted to be a cowboy?

SK: I don't know! You just wanted to do something, they ask what you wanna do after high school, they ask you have an option, do you wanna go to the trade school Hawaii Tech? I said, yeah ok. And I just went. I loved the trade, I did it, and after that I just went cowboy. I had my old boss, Kuakini Cummins. When I came work Puuwaawaa, he said, "Sonny, you going do all the welding for all the cattle guards out there, and after that you can go cowboy." Then when I first worked for Puuwaawaa, they started making the headquarters. That's when the Hind family sold the lease to Dillingham, and I worked for Dillingham. I was sent to South Kona, Honomalino section. I stayed up there three months, cut posts for the building back there, the main headquarters, because the Dillinghams did away with the Hind's old ranch way, and they built their own. They



wanted posts, so we went down and cut. And from there I started working with Johnny Medeiros, who became my foreman. That's when I started working with wild cattle.

IL: About when was that?

SK: Back in 1963.

IL: So you started with the ranch as a cowboy in '62.

SK: I was fortunate that I went to school for a year, and then after that I didn't go school. I worked at Hawaii Industrial Steel, and Hilo Trailer. I made my hours with them. Then when I came home Puuwaawaa I finished up my hours, welding. So I made my hours and I graduated, I got my diploma.

IL: You started around '62.

SK: Puuwaawaa, yeah.

IL: And when did the Dillinghams take over?

SK: Uh, 1957, if I'm correct. I think it was the change over.

IL: So they were already in charge by the time you came on.

SK: Yeah, they were already. I was right out of Hawaii Tech.

IL: Did you specialize on the ranch, or did you do everything?

SK: Oh, fence work. We started out doing fence work. At Puuwaawaa, we learn how to make wall, build wall.

IL: With stones?

SK: Stone wall, yeah. Ninety percent of the area around Puuwaawaa is all stone walls. Not too much digging posts, because you gotta play with tutu Pele (chuckles). The stone was here before us. Was mostly wall, rock wall. Then we learn how to make our horses. We work three months in the breaking pen, like that. Dad took care all the horse programs, so if we had 25 colts we had about like three for each man. We had seven cowboys; with our foreman, eight of us.

IL: So each cowboy had a string of how many ...

SK: I had about like 12 horses. Because I made. We had nothing to do those days, so made a lot of horses. But after that, got down to eight horses.

IL: Why did they cut down?

SK: Well, if we worked Holualoa we took like three horses. You work Honomalino, another three horse. We work at Puuwaawaa – we work nine, ten months of the year cattle work. And then three months we'd be working all the horses. Breaking pen, three months.

IL: What was it like working on such rough terrain like that?

SK: Well, you got a lotta small time accidents, Hawaiians would call it hina pu. You stumble over and fall down in the puka, the cave. They had caves like this house, big like that. You can park one semi in it. Especially areas in the back of Puuwaawaa hill. It's just a big cave. Sometimes the area we work, like when I work Honomalino mauka, same kind terrain like Hualalai, and it's all covered with hapuu, uluhi, pamakani – you can't even see the pukas. Sometimes you're running and you just end up right inside of it, whole horse, you and the horse.

IL: It sounds dangerous.

SK: Yeah, I broke – my body all over there, from head to toe and toe back up to head. Everything. Broke neck, everything. But that was right here, with Parker Ranch. Home I broke, but during my time at Puuwaawaa, I never did go to the doctor. Because every time I got hurt, my ribs broke, my leg broke, my hand. Probably you heard – my tutu Joe Kahananui used to ka hea laau before. And he used to take care of me. The doctors never know he used to come inside the hospital room and just pule with me, bless, prayer on me. Next morning I'd be walking out.

IL: How did he do it?

SK: I don't know. His powers, I guess. And then we call that ka hea laau, in Hawaiian.

IL: Was he a relative of yours?

SK: He was my granduncle. He was a kahuna. He could either go two ways, the bad way or the good way.

IL: Really? Did he ever explain to you...

SK: Yeah, he just say, ah, moopuna aale, ale pololoi keia. Aale. But he could, he had the power. He shared that with my dad, but my dad went the good side, so my dad didn't come kahuna. He came as kahu. That way he would take care like houses. If it had problems, he would bless. And then the aina for ground-breakings. And people if they sick he would bless them.

IL: So you learned the blessings?

SK: No, I didn't. He took care of us when we got hurt. He would just take care. Put all our bones back. I don't know how he did it, but he did it. Till I came Parker Ranch, then they started casting my body. You know, I never did have that, it felt funny-kine.

IL: Did you granduncle ever tell you where he learned?

SK: They didn't share that. But in time of need, they were there. They shared, and that's it. Before we were taught, you don't say anything. Everything was in Hawaiian. And then when I was growing up they told us learn English. If they heard us talking Hawaiian outside in public, I would get lickings.

IL: For talking Hawaiian?

SK: Yeah. That's why they sent us to school, try to learn English. But at home every thing was walaau kanaka. Walaau kanaka, olelo kanaka. Today they say, Walaau Hawaii, olelo Hawaii. But our days, mamua, olelo kanaka. Our grandmother taught us how to talk. Because they were the ones taking care of us. Everything was all in Hawaiian. They feed you, whatever. All in Hawaiian.

IL: Did you want to learn English or did you want to speak Hawaiian?

SK: Well, my mom told us, "You folks learn English. Someday you going need it." During our time, their time, that's the way they were brought up. To us, I think, no it's good to learn English. If not, I wouldn't be like this. It would be no interviews, no paniolo – you gotta get someone who know Hawaiian to come interview me.

IL: It's good to be bilingual.

SK: Yeah!

IL: SO you were talking about the rough land.

SK: The terrain I worked on was very rough.

IL: It sounded very dangerous.

SK: Yeah, especially from Puuwaawaa all the way down to South Kona. All the way to Kau. The terrain is absolutely different from like when you coming back from Parker Ranch, Kohala Mountains going towards Hamakua.

IL: What is it like?

SK: Here (Waimea) it's just like a golf course. If you're going to run on something. Home, it's just different. The way you ride your horse is rougher, compared to riding on something like here on the grass land. Home, you always have to be wide awake. There's always something waiting to bite you. Soney. If you fall down, hopefully you can stand

up. Like when we used to fall down, my cousin and them, we used to help each other carry one another. Because some places you cannot get up, and you just lay there, sore. You broke your leg, broke your arm, your ribs. Bang up your head.

IL: What about the cattle? Is the land pretty open?

(Tape is turned over)

SK: We had, I don't know if you have them on Maui, we had lantana, stuff like that. We work up on the mountain area, was all covered with uluhi, hapuu, koa trees, ohia trees. When you work on the mountain area in Puuwaawaa or Honomalino, was all covered forest land, but rough. Some places you have to make your own road when you're going, especially for wild cattle, stuff like that. Then home we were at Puuwaawaa, they had cattle trails. But was mostly all lantana. Brushy.

IL: So when you went to round up the cattle, was it hard to find them? Did they hide in the trees?

SK: No, we had a system where the people go out and check cattle, so they get used to it. They're being rotated after branding, after weaning, or if the pasture has to be rotated. You don't push, you just drive. Let them go on their own, until they get out where you want 'em. You don't just force the animal. Just go slow. You've got the eight hours – just take your time. Get the job done.

IL: So they were pretty tame.

SK: Yeah. Always had somebody out there riding pasture. That's what make the animal more tame.

IL: You mentioned wild cattle. Were there many wild cattle?

SK: That's different. You gotta go look for them. If not, they come look for you!

IL: Really?

SK: (Laughs) Yeah, sometimes you go in too much, and they make you come back out two times faster! Especially in the bushes area, up mountain, like that.

IL: Did they have a lot?

SK: Well, the times we clean the areas, like Honomalino mauka, they would push about eighty acres, and then put log fence, go in, rope, then push another eighty acres. Clean out like that. Just eighty, eighty, eighty. Then hundred acres, another hundred. Just rope, until you clean 'em out. Then plant grass. Then you put your good cattle.

IL: What did the wild cattle look like? Were they just escaped cattle, or were they mixed up?

SK: Well, they had different kind. They were on their own, they were just running wild.

IL: Were they big or small?

SK: Some, if you hit the right ones they big. Where I worked at Honomalino, they had black angus, and they had strays, and they crossed with the wild cattle. And they got big – some were big. They had like, geez, 2,100 pound bulls! Big. But we had horses too. Those days, we had horses.

IL: Big horses?

SK: Big horses. Oh yeah. If you rope something big like 2,000 pounds, you could pull ‘em from here to the truck. Everythign was truck. You don’t have to have like today, two, three horses. No. Before, horses take care you and you take care.

IL: Who taught you about wild cattle?

SK: Johnny Medeiros. That’s the one got inducted. He’s my teacher.

IL: What did he teach you?

SK: How to chase, how to go get, how to watch, how to lead. When you go in, to pick up – how to tie on the tree. Everything. He taught me everything.

IL: Do you know where he learned all those things?

SK: When he was raised up in McCandless, he did a lot of his young days chasing wild cattle on Mauna Loa slope.

IL: Do you remember some of the tips and things that he taught you?

SK: Yeah. When you go pick up, rememeber how you go in to lead back out. Remember how entering. And then how to get up. Make sure you cut their horns and lead them. And when you lead, make sure that your slack don’t get tangled up. And don’t make too long in the bushy areas, you gotta make ‘em short. That’s why sometimes you gotta sacrifice a little bit, but you got the horns. Make sure the slack don’t get under the horse’s back leg.

IL: It sounds like you had to be very careful.

SK: Yes. I mean, you gotta be all the time alert and lively. Always the next day when you gotta lead, that was more action to me. Instead of roping. Roping, once you rope ‘em you pull ‘em up to the tree. The next day was to go get them.

IL: You leave 'em overnight?

SK: Leave 'em overnight. And he always told me, Sonny, it's very important that you get the animal. Before we used to rope like 15, 20 head and sent all of 'em to market, and that was like our paycheck when I first worked. When you lead, come out, make sure that thing end up at the truck on its four legs. If it can't get out on it's four legs no sense roping the animal, and no sense going in there and leading. He taught me everything, was very important.

IL: Why did you leave it overnight?

SK: If you had the bigger bulls, it would soften up them. And they easier to lead next day and they shrink a little bit. If you rope them today, they're heavy, they're mad, they get hot quick. You won't get them to where you want them, especially to the trucks. No trailers, all truck. We have to lead them, we put like eight, nine bulls in the trucks. Every time you rope wild cattle you rope all the big bulls first, leave all the secondary for after. You get the bulls, that's the main thing. And always get 'em on their four feet, because they have to go market. That's one good thing that I learned – make sure they come out on their four feet.

IL: Why did you go get the bulls first?

SK: Because you want to cut down the wild herd. You get out the bulls, that's the main ones. You know your breeding – if you cut down the bulls, it's better. The bulls was the main one. Everything before was, go get the big boys. That's all he yell at you. "Nevermind the cows, nevermind the other small. Just go get the bulls." Then we go back roping the cows. The bulls was more rough and spooky. If you could get them out of the way it would be easier to go back and rope the other ones. They were the main ones to get out. Although they gave you bad time. Sometimes you work with 'em one hour, two hour – especially in the brushy area. But main thing you caught 'em.

IL: So how large an area were you working in?

SK: Well, what we do when we used to work Honomalino mauka, had area like about four, five-hundred acres, but had these little places, might be about sixty, eighty acres. We used to trap them coming in. Then when they're in there, we used to go in that eighty acres and rope them. All brushy areas, guavas, like that. No more hapuu. This area, further down to the ranch headquarters, we could handle them. Easier to handle. But we trapped them from outside. Sometimes when it's dry, they move down. We don't use a pasture, close it up, and then we open the bar gate, they see all that fresh feed, and sometimes 30, 40 come in, clean 'em out, they're trapped again. Then we used to bait

IL: Really? You put out molassas?

SK: Yeah. Before was all plantation so molassas was cheap. Hawaii was 80 percent plantation from Kau to Hilo and all the Hamkua coast, Kohala.

IL: You mentioned also that the horses were different back then.

SK: Yeah. Our horses was all – wasn't too much quarter horses. Maybe a little bit half quarter horse. But we had a little bit thoroughbred with part-heavies in it. Plow kind. Not big draft horses like the mainland. My tutu-man them had like plow horses from here down. Puuwaawaa before. That's how they cross-bred.

IL: Why did they put the draft horses in there?

SK: The back. The power. Just to fight against weight. They could. You had something small you couldn't fight something that had 2,000 pounds. And they had good footing. Depend the terrain, if they were all raised on Puuwaawaa they were all good hoof. But yet you had those stone horses come here (Waimea) on the mud area, there was a difference too. Where these horses here would just lick the stone horses. And when these horses go there, the stone horses would just lick them. That's the difference with mud horses. Yet, we had some good horses that work in areas that were muddy too. Up higher country, like when you're working in the Holualoa area. We had the whole beach area – you seen the Morman church, when you're in Kailua? Ok, from that temple, we had there, from Keopu mauka, come down, all the way back to Keauhou. In between we had small ranches like the Gomes, the Gouveias. But actually, when you talk Dillingham, he had the biggest area down there. That's where we kept all the market cattle.

IL: So you saw the ranch when it was owned by the Hind family, and when it was taken over by Dillingham. How did it change?

SK: And then by Bohnett, then I quit.

IL: (Laughs) How did it change?

SK: It didn't change as much. It was still a family lifestyle. I loved what we were doing. I had no complaints. And at Puuwaawaa, families, we had Kiholo, that we would go down. During the Hind time, ah, the Hind families used to make all the Puuwaawaa, Puuanahulu families go down, spend one big weekend, three day weekend down at Kiholo, which was owned by the Hind family too. They had the ponds and the lagoon at that time. It wasn't all cleared out by the tidal wave. The families had places to go enjoy, and we looked forward every year to go down at Kiholo, when I was a young boy, growing up at Puuanahulu.

IL: Where is Kiholo?

SK: Down below Puuwaawaa. If you look straight down. That was all included with the Hind. Their family still have a little plot down there. Then the Dillinghams took over, still you had family life. Might be more modernized, because that's when bulldozers came in. Hawaii Dredging, was owned by the Dillinghams. Some of my cousins quit cowboying, they went to work on Young Brothers tug boats. We were the ones that stayed back,

during Dillingham times. It changed. During Dillingham time compared to Hind time, the horses – during Dillingham we had good quarterhorses, and we started to do a lot of arena roping. The work wasn't as rough as my dad, them, days. Where they traveled mostly on horse. It changed, from truck, to trailers. We traveled a lot.

IL: When did they stop doing the swimming cattle.

SK: Oh, I guess was maybe 1955 – '54, '55, around there.

IL: Did you ever participate in that?

SK: Nope, I watch my dad a lot. I always went with my dad. When he made the shipping horses for pull cattle down at Kiholo, that's how I learn to swim good, because he used to pull them out, like in high seas, then he used to make them go inside the waves when they pull out. You know, sometimes you've got a big wave. I used to go swim, and that's how I learned how to swim.

IL: So he taught them to be comfortable in the ocean, the waves.

SK: Yeah, just don't get spooked in the waves. Especially in the high seas. Sometime you gotta ship cattle, you don't know. Today look good, tomorrow morning, all of a sudden...you gotta be prepared. He did that. Get them used to all that.

IL: So how did you do the shipping in your time, when you were working.

SK: Ah. It's all – we did it, just back up the truck, the barges come out, just push them in the barges. My dad and them, they pull the cattle out. I mean, you seen that.

IL: So you mentioned that you left after Bohnett took over.

SK: Yeah, 1973 I left.

IL: So what happened?

SK: I worked for Freddy Rice for two years. When Bohnett took over Puuwaawaa, Freddy come in. And I worked with FR Quarterhorse. You know Freddy, the family's from Maui. I knew Freddy good.

IL: What, Freddy came in to Puuwaawaa?

SK: Yeah, and took over the cattle side. And I worked with him just for two years. And then after that, '75, I left.

IL: Why did you leave?



SK: (Hesitates) Ah, I couldn't .... you like know the truth? (Laughs) It was just the man. He wasn't worth working for.

IL: Bohnett?

SK: Yeah.

IL: What did he do about the operations that you didn't like?

SK: Well, what he did on the land I didn't like He just – I would say, money was land, and just do what you like. I didn't like that. Up mountains, the koa, the hapuu. I used to just run in those lands before, with the horse, and enjoyed something hitting you. When you see them just cut the trees – no. Especially raised up there. The Hind's really took care of it. They came, the Bohnetts, they had money, they didn't care. They were so – Hawaiians would call it hookano. I just left. I felt bad.

IL: So where did you go after that?

SK: I came to Parker Ranch, in 1975.

IL: You mentioned you did a stint in the military.

SK: I went to 'Nam in 1968. The Tet Offensive. I went down there.

IL: You took a break, from Puuwaawaa?

SK: Yeah. After I help my sister go to college. She graduated from CCH. I decided to push my draft, and I went.

IL: What branch of the military were you in?

SK: I was Army.

IL: And what rank did you achieve?

SK: I got out E5. I earned every stripe.

IL: '68 you said?

SK: Yes, and I got out in '69.

IL: What was that experience like?

SK: I'm lucky to be talking. Had 17 of us family members join and went down. Some didn't make it home. Some is all banged up. I'm lucky that I can talk. Some of my cousins, they're still shell shocked. Some just went their first mission, get all bus' up.

Today they're crippled. Their experience, we don't know what for. But my family were always in the military, from uncles to cousins. My grandpa was World War I. My mama's dad. Then my uncles were all in World War II. Then my cousins went to the North Korean conflict. Then I went, and my cousins went to the Vietnam War. Then all our cousins, nephews went to the Iraq Kuwait war. My family always went for the country.

IL: Why was that important to you?

SK: I don't know. It's just – you just have to do it, I guess. (Laughs) Just go do it. Get it over with. If anybody talks, we can say, "We did our share."

IL: What was it like to come back to the ranch after having that experience? What was it like coming back home?

SK: It was good. Because I think that's what made me strong – what was home, the family. My mom, my dad, and the family was strong. Everybody was always happy – my aunties, my uncles, my cousins. We always look over each other, always took care one another. Whether we were down the beach, whether we were up mountain. When we worked on the ranch we shared. There was a lot of sharing when I was brought up at Puuwaawaa. When you had something, you always share. We go down the beach, come home, we had good luck – hey, even if it's four, five, four, five, everybody had. "Oh, cuz, how come I didn't get?" (Laughs) We just kid one another. But it's always taking care. Never had much, but we had plenty.

IL: So it sounds like you had pretty strong family ties then. Everyone support each other.

SK: Yeah. And after I came work Parker Ranch, we all went our separate ways. But home Puuwaawaa, Puuanahulu, no. Was always together. All the way to Kailua-Kona, Kalaoa, Kohala – was always close. Waimea, was always. Even Hilo, Kau. When we had time to travel that far. We made time. Maybe was short, like one weekend, but we made sure was good time, memorable.

IL: You mentioned that coming back from the military service you felt that made you stronger. Do you mean that the service made you stronger or the family?

SK: Just that the family backed up. Just that you appreciate it. That's what I look today, and I always tell my children: appreciate. Maybe you don't have everything, but appreciate it. Every morning I wake up, I pray, I thank the Lord – I get one more day, right? Yeah, that's how I looked at it when I came home. That I could go see my old friends when I work. Maui, Honolulu – brother Andrew. We always got together. He always stayed here with me, right here. His aloha is still in there. And when I go Maui I see him, every fourth of July. Until my son moved Mainland, then I don't get so much travel.

IL: So after Puuwaawaa, you went to Parker Ranch.

SK: I moved there, I worked for Parker Ranch.

IL: How did that happen? Who offered you the job?

SK: Dr. Bergin and I are good friends, and one day I said, "I wonder how if I can go, apply for Parker Ranch." "You know, Sonny, I'm the veterinarian there, maybe I'll go see inside." Had Don Hansen at the time was General Manager, and Walter Slater was the livestock manager. So I came in and they interviewed me, and I got hired. I guess my reputation at home at Puuwaawaa as a cowboy already, so when I came here, I guess I just fell in the slot.

IL: Was it easy to go from one ranch to the other, or was there like a rivalry between them?

SK: No, I knew the people, because half of them were like my family. I used to come here and enjoy drink with them when I worked Puuwaawaa. I knew people here already. And when we had ropings at Puuwaawaa, they all got invited. That's what I meant about family. When you grow up on the ranch – we're losing that. It didn't mean whether you were Parker Ranch or Ulupalakua Ranch or Puuwaawaa. It was always like family. I just fell in. And before I came here, I was six years' foreman, at Puuwaawaa. Johnny made me foreman. That was the experience I had working with personnel when I came Parker Ranch.

IL: So you had been foreman.

SK: Yeah, Puuwaawaa, six years. Then I came Parker Ranch.

IL: What were the duties of the foreman.

SK: Well, you had personnel, you had to make sure they come work. And then water cattle, fencing, stuff like that. Horse program – you had to make sure that everything's in tact. No more kid stuff, make sure your men, when they work, don't get hurt – that's number one for me. Make sure they know what they're doing. Maybe they get burned from me a little (laughter) a little words, but get that thing together. You work cowboy, you can get hurt like that, you know? But I learned a lot when I came Parker Ranch, especially working with numbers.

IL: Numbers?

SK: Numbers. Especially when you put over a thousand head in the corral, and when they're talking to you, you can't hear nothing – just the bawling of the cattle. You know? That's right.

IL: So you're working with a lot more cattle than you ever did.

SK: Yeah. When I first started, the first six months on probation, Parker Ranch had a lease in Kau, so I got to go to Kau for the first three years. I worked in Kau, because I came from that kind of terrain. They said, well Sonny, since you come from Puuwaawaa, we got Kau, same kind terrain, so we have to ship you to Kau. It was like going to Siberia – or Vietnam! Nah, not as bad as that. But I had family down there. I was happy. I was at home. I come from that kind area – that’s my turf, my kind cowboy, you know? And worked a lot of wild cattle down there too. There was a lot of stray cattle that had to be roped. Stayed down there – we went down there June of ’75, and I came home January of ’79. If we stayed there for five years, we would have to be there another 35 years – we’d still be there. That would have been the contract with C. Brewer. But we left before five years were up. The contract just went out.

IL: Was it difficult to have the ranch operation so far spread apart?

SK: No. When I first worked Parker Ranch, I learned – their system was sharp. I learned plenty from them. The cattle, the horses, the men. Everything worked like this. It wasn’t hard. They knew what they were doing. Oh, no. I wish was still like that! I’d still be working there! But hey, it got all screwed up – so sad!

IL: It was coordinated.

SK: Ah. We had a system that we were like 90 miles away from the main ranch, but we had a program that you just do, like a division, you know?

IL: So how did that system work?

SK: It worked perfect.

IL: No, I mean, how did it go along?

SK: It was kind of rough when we went down there, because a lot of boys from here wasn’t to used to the area. That kind type of terrain – rough. I was used to it, because I had come from that kind. But a lot of cowboys that went down had to get adjusted, especially working in the brushy areas. Hot. Heat. We work from Keauhou, was not too bad, Volcano area was cool, like this kind area, little bit rocky, but not as back as when we move back to Pahala. Then Kapapala was rough. Lotta holes. Caves. Was just getting adjusted to the land. That was one of the problems.

IL: Were you managing guys down there or just working as a cowboy?

SK: No, no. Maybe the first year I went, then after that they just made me one foreman. We were working, and they said, “you be the foreman as of today.” And I say, “what?” They say, “you be the foreman.” And from then on I been foreman for Parker Ranch till I retired. I took that package deal (a retirement buy-out from the ranch) about three years ago.

IL: You mentioned that they were very well organized at that time. How did the system work?

SK: Well, their breeding, like I said, their cow-calf operation. That was one. Then they came to their marketing. Then their replacements, their bull batter. Everything had a system. Like the bulls don't just stay in their bull batter (groups), they're being culled. Young ones come in they had a specialty herd that was all artificially inseminated. Then those special herd went to the pure bred. Then they picked from the pure bred. They didn't have to go buy bulls. They did it just right on the main ranch that they took the kept bulls from the pure bred: Angus, Hereford, Brangus, and put it out on the commercial herd on the main ranch. That was – they had their thing together. Same with the horse program. Billy Bergin had one of the best animal health programs. It worked. We had beautiful horses. The men enjoyed. Everything was....

No more now. I don't know what happened.

IL: How did they coordinate. If you were working cowboy, how did they coordinate the job site you were doing.

SK: We had – we called in every Friday, we had a supervisor-foremans meeting. That time, when I first started, the supervisors would get together with the foremen – like we had four divisions – well, when they had Kau, they had five. But when we came back, had four divisions – Kohala, Keamuku, Mauna Kea and Mana. And then out of that four divisions had four supervisors. Every division had like two foreman, and two sections. Always the supervisor would lay out the schedule for the week. Every Friday they had meeting, and they would set up: marketing, breeding, that was all included. So if you're going to do the marketing, OK, Mauna Kea you're this month. Next month Kohala. Next month Mana. But what they did, they just said no. Mauna Kea will just take care the marketing of cull cows. All you guys, the three divisions, when you cull cow – they have a cull cow program in the Mauna Kea division. The marketing, that's us: Mana division, Kohala division. They would take care all the market heifers, the steers. At that time we had Hawaii Meat in Honolulu, until they closed up the feed lot. And we did all the preconditions – the areas that took care the market heifers and steers. Although they raised smaller numbers on the commercials cows, because of the marketing heifers and steers. Then the main ranch at Mauna Kea, they had the big numbers, for the cow-calf. And Keamuku.

IL: How did the cow-calf operation work?

SK: Good. We had about like 90 some percent when I work.

IL: No, how did it happen –

SK: They got the numbers – when I worked they had, oh, 50,000 head of cattle when I worked.

IL: Over the whole ranch?

SK: Yeah.

IL: Oh.

SK: That's what I meant by numbers. When we branded at Waikii section, that's Mauna Kea division, we branded like 1,200 calves one day! That's cowboy. Everybody, you just work. And I used to do castration – we had two guys castrate, two guys brand. We had like eight to 10 ropers at a time, pull the calf to the side. We started at 6:30 on the nose, and we done by 11 o'clock. Let them go with the mamas, horses unsaddled. Everybody kalua pig, whatever, salt beef, back bone – everybody kaukau, had good time.

IL: Eleven o'clock in the morning or at night?

SK: In the morning, yeah. We're done.

(Tape is changed.)

IL: So you were talking about how you guys could do it so fast...

SK: Yep. Especially when you handling knife and fire, you know? Rope, pulling the calves. You got so much personnel on the ground. That's what I meant about "system." It worked so well, that everybody knew – everybody knew what for do, he knew his job. If you were going to kulai – kulai means to knock down – that's all you do. Knock down. And if you don't have your calf come to you, you see your other brother there getting hard time, you help him get his calf over. Then come back. That's how you work. This branding man take care of four calves that way, this branding man take care of four calves this way. Depend how many ropers. I castrate one side, I got four calves, I just go down this way. The guy there got four calves, you got always two men on each. Everything just go smooth.

IL: So doing 1,200 calves one day, how does that compare to what you would do at a place like Puuwaawaa?

SK: Puuwaawaa? Well, they didn't have the numbers, because of the terrain. They didn't have the grassland. They didn't have areas where you could put out numbers. Like home, when I work for Puuwaawaa, we ran about 7,000 mother cows. Just was there. That's all we did: raise cows, brand, wean, then they go to Holualoa. We didn't keep any weaned calves at Puuwaawaa, it just was cow-calf operation.

IL: So if you did a branding, how many calves would you brand?

SK: Uh, total...the biggest would be like 600.

IL: So Parker Ranch almost twice as much, huh? One day.

SK: Yeah. Because when I first worked for Parker Ranch, we had, what, like almost 40 cowboys. (Long pause) And it was cut down to 25.

IL: So after you came back from Kau, you were in charge of ...

SK: Mana division. They put me out Mana division. I was foreman of that.

IL: And that was market...

SK: Uh, we had cow-calf. But not big numbers like Mauna Kea division. We run just about maybe 2,500 mother cows, that's all. Oh, if you talk like Mauna Kea, they would run, hoo, easy almost 5,000 mother cows.

IL: Wow. So what were your main responsibilities that you were in charge of?

SK: Oh, the water was number one. Then fencing, your cattle, and then your personnel.

IL: What do you mean?

SK: I had four, five guys work under me. And then horses. I was responsible for all that, the area. You take care of poachers and that thing. You were involved with that. And people that raise hell, like bikers, we were responsible for that. But mainly you were in charge of the cattle, for sickness, make sure they weren't dehydrated. The water was number one for them. Mineral. You always make sure their range supplement was put out. And then fences, repairing. We had a budget that the main ranch crew, fence crew come in, and they would do one mile, two mile fence job. But just for minor repair, we took care of it.

IL: You mentioned that water was your top responsibility. What work was involved with that, checking water lines ...?

SK: Water lines, and then your tanks, making sure they were all filled. You go Mondays and Fridays. Then putting out mineral, range supplements for your animal. Same for your horses. Make sure your horses that every three months they were wormed. Every six months they got their strangles shot, and everything. And then with the cattle, it wasn't only just water; rotation of paddocks. Move, transfer, change paddocks. We don't leave 'em in there all year round.

IL: Were you on rotational grazing at that time?

SK: Well, we had cells in certain areas, down in the market side, down on Mana. But we had personnel that took care that area. But I had the commercial cows, I took care of that. Little while we had cells, rotation of cells, like that. But mostly was market cattle in there. They come in, stay there three months, then get all shipped out.

IL: So what were your big work days?

SK: Oh, that would be like working the commercial herd. Branding, weaning. And then rotation of paddock, because you're moving big numbers. You're moving like 800 cows. A thousand cows. Twelve-hundred. Fourteen-hundred cows. The most I moved was 1,600 cows.

IL: How many guys did you have helping you?

SK: When we move the 1,600, you like to know?

IL: Yeah.

SK: Just me, Brocky and Jarry Boy.

IL: (Laughing) You're kidding me.

SK: You laugh. No!

IL: Who were the other guys?

SK: Brocky Joaquin and Jarry Boy Rapozo. That was my two cowboys.

IL: How did you do that with just three guys?

SK: I don't know, I just did it I guess. Just work with the animal. They used to sometimes be calving, and it just worked out for us the way we moved them. I don't know. I made it happen. I say, "we do this," and the two cowboys say, "OK, Sonny." We had eight hours to do it. Just go with the mama cows, don't fight 'em. The way they going, they going end up where you want 'em to go. It worked out.

IL: Did you use dogs?

SK: Uh, I had dogs. I used to dog mostly around headquarters. But for outside, calving time, I don't take dogs. Because you get nothing but cows coming back for the dogs. No, I don't take dogs when we work with the calves. The smaller bunch, like 600, 800 cows, yeah, then I use dogs. But other than that – the big herd like the 1,200, 1,400, 1,600, no!

IL: Now, why would you use it for the smaller but not the bigger.

SK: Well, the area was bigger where we had to go. Sometimes your dogs, they get tired. And you don't want the cows fighting with the dogs out in one 6,000- 7,000-acre paddock. Then you won't get 'em to where you want to get 'em. You don't take something like that – that's trouble. You use 'em someplace home, where you're working inside. You're talking maybe 825 acres. Eight hundred cows, 600 cows. You're talking half that what you gotta move in a big pasture. That way the terrain is all like this, and you don't want the animal to get tired quick, especially with the baby calves. You just



want the cows to go and the calves just follow in the back of them. And you looking like 800, 900, whatever, 1,000 cows going, you just want them to go like that, you don't want the cows to turn around and fight.

IL: So you're happy if they walk slow.

SK: I was taught by my dad – the way that the cow go, that's the way you go. They no going more faster than that! (chuckles) Go with the flow. Hoo manao, the Hawaiians say. Oh, the Parker Ranch cowboys all easy, easy. Just go slow. Main thing they get to where they're going. Because when you push big number like that, it looks easy the way you do it, but yet you gotta know what you're doing. People come ride horse with me, they say, "Those cattle way down there, look like ants!" And you can see Jary Boy way down on the bottom with his whip going ("crack!"). Those cows all...And Brocky on the center, and me in the lahai. Three guys.

IL: How did you like working in this terrain here, after all the rough lands you've been on.

SK: I enjoyed it. When I first came out, we worked areas on top of Waipio. Lot of calves. You work in the swamp. The mud right up to the horse's (belly). I got stuck a couple times, and a couple boys pulled me out. Just running one time, boom, in the swamp. Right up to the horse's stomach. Poor horse can't move.

IL: How did they get him out?

SK: Put the rope on the pommel, the other two cowboys just pull the whole horse, everything. With the saddle, everything. One hold the head up, don't broke the neck. When the horse start fighting, the horse can broke their neck, just the neck going like this. So what you do, have somebody, like if I hold the horse head, we just broke ginger and throw it on the mud, so you don't sink yourself. Plus your raincoat, you throw it on the mud and step on the raincoat, and just hold the horse's head up. And two cowboys just put their rope on the pommel, and pull 'em out. I mean, you gotta think all the time. Nobody going tell you to do that. But some guys they just jump off the horse and leave 'em there.

IL: No! Really?

SK: Nah. That's cowboy. All common sense what you do out there.

IL: You really gotta know the land.

SK: Yeah. Puuwaawaa, when I worked, you work up in those mountains. You fall down, you get hurt, my cousin or I hop on with my cousin, behind of him, hold him all the way down to the place we can get a car come. Now when you fall down in the cave you get gash in the head, or broke hand. Shin bone broke, like my leg just dangled...yeah.

IL: You said you had broke your back before?

SK: My neck.

IL: Your neck. How did that happen?

SK: Uh, pulling calves to the fire, working Parker Ranch.

IL: What happened.

SK: Well, I roped the calf, then pulling him up to the fire. Then you get your men that gonna knock it down. Why he was doing that, my horse went on a buck. So I un-dallied (demonstrates). I was like this. Horse started bucking. I pulled out my dally, and I let go, and I threw it. But this rope got in here.

IL: You got tangled.

SK: All tangled up, pulled me in the back of him.

IL: So you tried to throw the rope away...

SK: The horse is bucking this way, and this caught in my hand, yanked me back, and I landed on my head.

IL: So you tried to throw the rope away, but you got tangled in it.

SK: Tangled in here like this. But it happened. Just a freak accident. That's cowboy life.

IL: How did you get cured after that? How did you get healed?

SK: I don't know. I just went down the beach. My wife held me in the water. I went Hawaiian style, Hawaiian way how I learned from my tutu them. I went like, five days, seven days. I went seven times before dark, and I went five times at 12 noon, and she threw salt water on my neck. And then about six weeks – I was making two colts already, and my insurance caught me. I don't know who went squeal on me, but that's all.

IL: Was that the worst injury that you ever had?

SK: No.

IL: What was the worst.

SK: My leg – wen' busted the shin bone right here, and dangled. Up mountain. I jumped over one cave, roping wild cattle, and then I didn't reach the end. I caught the animal, and the animal was on the ground. He pulled me back down, and boom, my leg came up against the cave like this.

IL: So you didn't clear it when you jumped over? Oh, my God!

SK: The other end, no. When I (jumped) it, it was still slack yet. But no, when I was in the air, the animal pulled and it came tight. So with the weight of the animal, he was running, it just pulled me back down in the cave, and my leg just (hit) it, and it got busted.

IL: Now how did you get out of that? You were deep in the forest?

SK: My cousin hapai'd me.

IL: Carried you out?

SK: Yeah. Put sling, everything.

IL: Then your tutu –

SK: Tutu came, bless me. Everyone. My hands, my legs, my ribs – he pule me.

IL: Sounds like it worked – you're still here, right?

SK: Yeah! Come black like that avocado over there. He came (obake??). The eyes just – just that power, you can feel it. Everything just....Yeah, no more that kind. I wish we still had. No need pay big money for go doctor. Every time cousin guys hapai me, or we hapai cousin them inside, next morning we walking out. It worked. Never go doctor until went Parker Ranch.

IL: So when you were working for Parker Ranch, where did you live? Did you have ranch housing, or did you live in town?

SK: Yeah. Always ranch housing.

IL: Where was that?

SK: In Kau?

IL: When you came back here.

SK: Ah. When I first started, I came back from Kau, they put me down by Parker School, down there by the park. Got a little red house. That was our ranch house before. That was where the families used to have, way before when I worked Parker Ranch, that used to be Barber Hall, they called that. That's where the families used to have their Christmas. I was staying there. And then from there they moved me here.

IL: To the house where we're in now. So the ranch provided the housing for you.

SK: Yeah, at that time. And as you go along, you get to buy the place. Like how it's now.

IL: What other things did the ranch provide for you?

SK: At that time we had meat.

IL: How much meat did they give you?

SK: Oh, depend on your family. At my time, 10 years ago, that all got changed, yeah, when Richard (Smart) died. But when he was alive, uh-uh. Everything was good. Now days...

Yeah, like when the people were staying in their own houses, he paid for their houses.

IL: So the ranch really took care of you.

SK: Yeah, when Richard was alive. When he died everything just changed. The rich came more rich.

IL: Did you have a family yourself at that time?

SK: Yeah, I had a wife, and three children.

IL: When were you married?

SK: Uh, 1970.

IL: So that was before you came Parker Ranch?

SK: Yeah. I was working Puuwaawaa.

IL: Three kids, you said?

SK: Yeah. Two daughters, and a son.

IL: Do you remember the years that they were born?

SK: Yeah. My oldest one, 1970. Then the other one, 71, then the other one, four years from the oldest.

IL: What are their names.

SK: One's Deborah, nicknamed Deedee, that's the oldest. Deborah Kehaulani. She's married to Kamuela Bertelman. Then my number two is Roberta Kuulei Keakealani. That one's not married. Then my son, Sonny Boy. Sonny Boy Keakealani. He's in

Washington. Yeah, Mainland boy. He's half haole, anyway. My children all half haoles. But we divorced. I been divorced for over 10 years.

IL: What was it like raising your kids on the ranch?

SK: It was good. Yeah. They loved the lifestyle, my oldest especially. Then my number two, the one who's here with me. I got two little moopunas. And then my oldest got two moopunas. The oldest is 14.

IL: That's from...

SK: Deedee. And then she got the youngest, two years old. And then in between, I get nine and seven, I think. And then the number two, it's five and six.

IL: So raising your kids on Parker Ranch...

SK: Yeah, they were raised on Parker Ranch.

IL: Were you able to raise them on the ranch like your dad raised you?

SK: Yeah. Like my dad, they went work with me, drive cattle, make one big Puolu lunch for them. When I was up Mana they all get about three, go with me, and the other cowboys bring theirs too. And at lunch time, they all look forward to lunch time. Drive cattle time you just – Parker Ranch open, so you can see them. Just tell them stay in line, and they like that. Our children like that, yeah.

IL: And what was the schooling like for them?

SK: My Deedee graduated from Kam school.

IL: On Oahu?

SK: Yeah. She graduated '88. My youngest son graduated 1993, Honokaa. Kuulei, 1989.

IL: Why did you decide to send your oldest to Kamehameha?

SK: They just asked us if we wanted, so we just did. I guess we were lucky Hawaiians. We just paid 25 cents for the air fare, that's all. Everything, Alu Like took care. I guess we were lucky. I guess I was lucky. That's all we paid for Deedee, we never paid nothing else. Just 25 cents a mile. For come home on holidays, and go back. That's all. We never paid nothing else.

IL: When you were raising them on the ranch, aside from taking them out to work with you, were you able to spend family time together in your time off?

SK: Ah, yeah. Down the arena, roping like that, family days, driving horse, or trail rides, like Kona, Hualalai, Mauna Loa, Mauna Kea.

IL: So you guys could all go ride.

SK: Yeah, all together. But not just me. With Dr. Bergin's family, or some other families. Or you see the Hawaiian Homes families get branding, oh, we're going to help this family brand. Next week the other family brand. Five, six brandings. Always had something. Or else we're off to rodeos, like Hilo, Honokaa, Kona, Kau. Always had something. Or right here in Waimea. Or friends would call, "Oh Sonny, Kahua got branding." Everybody grab their kids, go in Kahua. Or else, we go down the beach. When Richard Smart didn't sell Anaehoomalu. The families had like five cabanas down there, and every family have a cabana one week, it just rotate families. At least the families had some place to go. They had the beach, they enjoyed the beach. When Richard died, everything changed. It was too bad what happened. Yet we were one of the biggest in the world. Today they're still saying that. That's bull ass. Never happen. It's so small. Get other ranches more big in the world – know what I mean? We're not in the world anymore. They just use it for advertisement. People who never knew Richard, don't know the ranch tradition – today, Parker Ranch, they forget the tradition, the culture, and where it came from. They look forward to selling the land, selling this land. Sold all the prime land already.

IL: You knew Richard Smart?

SK: No, the guys who took over.

IL: No, did you know him?

SK: Ah, yeah! Oh, yes. We were his men. The supervisors and the foremen. When he come up, he would say, "Oh, hello Sonny! How's Mana? How's our pipi? How's our work men?" That's his first words coming out. "How you? How the family?" He goes up to his men individually. His employees was the number one. When I first started the ranch, I remember him giving my little Sonny Boy ice cream. He used to hold the ice cream and feed Sonny Boy. I looked at that and said, wow. That's, like I say, from the heart. Take care. No more, now.

IL: So when did you decide to retire?

SK: I thought I was going to retire Parker Ranch. But they had the package deal that came up three years ago. Had like 22 of us went out. And out of that 22, all foremens and supervisors went. That was all Richard Smart's key men. And his key men, that was us. They made it to where, all the trustees came in. They're not even around here, today. To tell you the truth, they screwed up the ranch. There was beautiful land up my area, Mana section, where I took care of the Paahau section, just beautiful grass land. Today they got trees in 'em. And look so ugly. And for the last five years, the land just been idling with the trees. Now, if we had like 6,000, 7,000 head of cattle on it, the ranch would have been

making money. With the lifestyle of ranching. But, they just look for money. I dropped tears when they came up there and kill the grass. The machine came in, just dig up the land, you know what I mean? Was like that about three weeks, and you look how ugly the land came. Today you got trees standing there, and nobody want to harvest the trees. Yet before, we used to get beautiful, way away from the town, about 10, 15 miles away from here, and just beautiful land. They just carved the land. Like oh, down, they're building hotels. The goats no more – the donkeys no more house. Where they moving? They moving right in the backyard of people now. Why? Because men are so destructive. I don't know – I tried when they do that up there. I just ride on the horse – people so greedy, so selfish, and yet they don't know what is appreciation, you know? And people – half of this world is killing one another. And yet, we had that thing \_\_\_\_\_ on that, Richard set for us. We could just every day enjoy it. Now, no. Go do something else. You the one, bring the humbug, trouble. Oh yes. Oh, like this houses behind here. Bumbye going to get plenty humbug. Before Richards time, no more. Just the families take care, enjoy appreciate. Not today. They telling us what for do, and yet we been here all our life, know what I mean? They just moved behind there about six months ago, and telling you this – your dog barking. Oh wow, brah! Where you came from? Yet we been here since the day Richard put us here. All the guys that work for him today don't even know him. Hey don't know them. But they act like they know him. That's why the Parker Ranch culture, heritage and tradition, you know, the paniolo – *make*. Dead. Nobody know about it, how it was.

IL: What do you see as the future of the ranch?

SK: No more, I think, Parker Ranch. Where I'm proud in Waimea is of Hawaiian Homes. Hawaiian Homes, it's all cattle ranches. Not big like Parker Ranch, but small. But that paniolo tradition will always be here. No matter what. Parker Ranch can sell all their land, but not Hawaiian homes. When you look Hawaiian Homes, it's way bigger than Parker Ranch. It will always be horses, paniolo, cattle. Thank you, to Hawaiian Homes.

IL: What about for the rest of the island. Do you see ranching in the future of the island?

SK: Well, when I used to go with brother Andrew on Maui – do you mean? They got a strong paniolo culture. Same thing. It's just – they're getting smaller. They sorta kinda fade away way ahead of us. Here, you know you can go Kohala Mountains. Get Monty (Richards) and Pono. You know that mountain going to be strong cattle people. Here in Waimea, I don't know. They just sell the land. And yet, you think, the cattle business is up there. Today people working at Parker Ranch don't know nothing about cattle. None of 'em. They only worry about their pay check, drive around in nice cars with Parker Ranch sign on the side. Nah. Our days, no. Money never mean nothing to me. We were happy to be Parker Ranch – we rode for the brand. And not only me, all of us who left on the livestock side. We had young boys coming up – they would be right next to us for continue the culture and tradition of Parker Ranch, the heritage. No. The young ones all went. Good cowboys – Billy Andrade, Wayne Teixeira. All those young boys. Mark Yamaguchi. They were right in the back, man. We retire, boom, they'd be the next, you

know? No. Here they just pretend today they know Parker Ranch, and blah blah blah blah. Mm-mm. Old ones would call that pala kukai.

IL: What's that?

SK: (Pause) You no like know. (Laughs)

IL: What about your kids? Did they stay involved?

SK: My oldest daughter got Hawaiian Homes. She got 300 acres. And then my son-in-law, with my daughter, got cattle makai side, before the golf course in Puuanahulu.

(Tape is turned over)

SK: My other cousin is on the makai side of the road going towards Kona, that's below the mauka, Puuwaawaa. It's all family, but we just stay.

IL: Leased land?

SK: Uh, lease? Well, yeah. They looking how we going, might get happy or lucky, get a long lease. Working out good. At least down home, that's where I come from. I go home every week, I ride makai. I got one horse, Makamai, and I ride makai. I go to check cattle, check water. (Pause) Chase goat, chase pig (laughs). At Puuwaawaa. When you're going back to Kona, before the golf course, you see right on the makai side, that pipe corral. OK. That's the lease that goes all the way down.

IL: So you kind of went back to where you started.

SK: Yeah! Home. That's where I was brought up. That's my kind of terrain and turf. Yeah, I like to go around sometimes, just scratch around, feel the stone under you. (Long pause). Hm. Yeah. We were brought up the hard way, but paniolo way, happy. Appreciate what you get. Today no more. Today everybody just get up today, tomorrow, they don't know what they have, or where they came from. Today, we forget where we came from, or how was. Or supposed to be. Sometime, everybody just ignore it. Just gotta make it work. No need money, just make it happen. I had three men, I move 1,600 head. I never need 40 cowboys like how Parker Ranch had long time ago. I made it happen, I made it work. And I could move 'em up. We move 'em up hill, we move 'em across, we move 'em down. And with calves like this, small. You couldn't believe me, but we make small. Some, the piko three days old, and those calves just bobble behind the mama like this. And not just one – maybe out of 1,600 cows we had 800 calves. We made it happen. That's cowboy. Paniolo.

IL: Of all the places you worked in your long career, what was the time that you're most proud of.



SK: I had my own, when I worked in Puuwaawaa, but my time in Parker Ranch, my pride would be here. Although, my pride would be home, where I came from. I would always go back and say, hey, this is where I was taught. This is where I was brought up. The respect was home. And then like how you said. I got my respect from home, but the pride from here, Parker Ranch.

IL: From what you learned.

SK: Yeah. But the respect is always home. But the pride is from here. That way, it just went like this (hits table) here. You figure it out, you work it out. It's in your head. The opportunity and the responsibility. That's where I got the pride...Hey, you're working with numbers. When you work with four or five hundred head, and when you're still working with eight, nine, ten, ho ho ho. Oh, you no more time from sun up to sun down, no. That's when you change your tactics. It wasn't a challenge. It was just like one job. When I work Puuwaawaa, work wild cattle, that's challenge. When you work your cattle on that kind of terrain, that's challenge. Here, no. You make it work. That's why I say, pride. But my respect, where I learned, the door was open, I took that path, that's home.

IL: Well, Sonny, thank you for sharing so much with us. Is there anything else we should talk about that we haven't covered?

SK: I don't know, you're the one asking questions. I'm not much of a talker. Next week we're going to the Gene Autry thing.

IL: What's that for?

SK: Ah, I'm taking up one saddle. I'll strip it apart, and then explain it in Hawaiian, (the different parts), all that. All in Hawaiian. Then I'll just put it back. All the parts of the saddle, in Hawaiian. We get like a group of 125. Then Lucky Puhi going up, talking about the food we were brought up with before. Like aipaa, that taro, the uwala, smoke pork, pipi kaula. We going take up, explain to the haole people.

IL: Well, thank you very much.

SK: You're welcome.