

William E. Eby (Deceased 2010)



Bill Eby has been involved in the air-lifting of horses and cattle to and from Hawai`i for over 50 years and is responsible for introducing progressive bloodlines of cattle and horses to the islands. Born on Kaua`i and raised on Maui, Bill credits his early ranching experience to the Grove Ranch cowboys whom he was with all the time in his high school days. In 1942, Bill helped to gather and ship to Maui, all the cattle on Kahoolawe belonging to the Kahoolawe Ranch Company. The cattle were driven to pens along the shoreline, roped one by one and swum out to whale boats then hoisted aboard ship headed for Maui. The mares and colts that were being raised on the island were also being handled the same as the cattle. This was the only and accepted way of shipping livestock when there were no wharves to be used. Little did Bill know that these experiences were to become the foundation for a successful lifetime career in livestock transport for these islands. Bill also ran Honolua Ranch for 31 years and Nahiku Ranch for 10 years. Today he operates the Erehwon Ranch in Kula and his own ranch in Ha`iku.

Paniolo Hall of Fame
Oral History Interview

William E. "Bill" Eby

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By: Anna Ilima Loomis (I)

Bill Eby was born in Ele`ele, Kauai on Nov. 20, 1920, and his family moved to Maui when he was three years old, to accept a job for his father working on the building of Maui Pineapple's cannery in Kahului. The family lived first in Hamakuapoko, then in Haiku.

I What are your memories of growing up in "H-Poko"?

Well mainly a plantation community and then the high school was there -- its claim to fame, I guess. That was the only high school -- well Wailuku had one and then this was one. So the kids from Kula and everywhere came. And then they had oh, one, two, three big stores and a theater and then a post office. When we went to school, to grammar school, that was at Kaunoa School and there was a train every day. So for eight years I rode the train every day. It ended up here at Libby Cannery and went back and forth to Kahului.

I So you lived for how many years there?

Oh, from three to 26, 26 or 27, 27 I think. So that's 23, 24 years. We had a big house, in fact, we had two houses originally in H-Poko. Plantation house. It was a big house. And it was good living. I didn't have to do very much. There was a big stable there and all the work horses. And you know about the old mill there? There was a big sugar mill, old mill, there. That's where we used to play and they turned it into a stable afterwards. So it was full of stalls and upstairs we made big room for Boy Scouts and it was there they started their meetings.

I Were you a Boy Scout?

Yeah. (laughs) And we had basketball courts and all that sort of thing.

I How big was the town?

Oh gosh, I don't know, it was big though. Three churches. (laughs)

I How big was your family?

I had one brother and one sister.

I Your father, what kind of a guy was he to grow up with?

Oh, best father in the world (laughs). He always backed me up with everything I wanted to do. He got me between my mother and he took care of things. He was very down to earth, a very nice man.

I Was he into horses or cattle at all?

No, he was a boatman.

I Did he like to sail or?

Well, he didn't have much opportunity to, but his big project was he built a boat in one of the empty warehouse buildings next to the mill. And he built that boat from scratch. Oh, that was maybe a 30-foot boat. And it was built like iron. It was solid. So he spent all his spare time in that warehouse building this boat and he started a Sea Scout troop and all the members used to come and help him with his boat and they finally launched it, got it finished, launched it in Kahului with all the Sea Scouts there and they wore their uniforms.

I And did it float?

Yeah, it floated. It was a good boat. Then it wasn't a year or two after that he got cancer and he died. So he really never had a chance to enjoy it.

I How old was he when he died?

51 or 2.

I And your Mom, what was she like?

Oh she was from an old Scottish family, her parents came from Scotland. And she had five sisters. She was a nice lady.

I Now you went to - what was your education, you went to the elementary school and then, and that was in Kaunoha and then after that did you go to the high school?

Yeah, Maui High.

I And did you go on to college after that or did you stop?

I went to California Poly Technic. But I only lasted half a year. It was just when the war was about to start and I wanted to come home. So it didn't last very long. I tell people I went there to school but I don't tell them how long I stayed (laughter). And then I came back and went to business school in Honolulu. The Galusha School of Business. I stayed there almost two years. I thought I could learn a few things about bookkeeping and all that sort of stuff.

I Were you thinking of going into business for yourself?

No, I wanted to buy cattle. It was a couple of people in Honolulu that used to go around the islands buying people's animals – that's the only way you could sell them in those days. And so I tagged along with them and helped them here and there and I thought, this is the kind of life to live. This is good. I said well I'll do this. So when I was going to school in Honolulu I was with them part of the weekends and then I would, I was down town, picking up contacts with the markets, so if I wanted to sell something, I could sell it. I made good contacts and when I finally came back here, you know, I was the only one could sell animals because I built up all this clientele. So I started buying here and nobody else was buying. So I had the field to myself.

I How did you do that, you went from ranch to ranch?

Yeah, I made contacts with everybody. And they would call me too. It all went good.

I Who, you said there were some guys in Honolulu who you went with and they showed you how to do it. Who were those guys?

One was Fred Viveros. He was a good fellow. And another one was John Ruis and another one, John Toledo.

I And what kind of things did they teach you?

Oh, how much to pay for the different types of animal. Well, there's lots of things too, little things – like there were no scales in those days. Everything was bought by the head and you had to look at it and see how much it weighed. And you get to be pretty good at that after a while. And you learn that in different areas, the same size animal would weigh differently. Like from here back to Hana cattle always were big and nice but they don't weigh anything. Then you take one from Kula and Makawao and behind the mountain, they won't be that big when they're fat, but they're heavy. It's because of the feed they eat. From here they're eating water. Ninety percent of the food is water. So, back here in the other side of the island is dry. It makes quite a difference. They're solid. You can tell by looking at them how solid they are.

I These three guys who helped you learn the business, what kind of guys were they and what kind of business men were they? Tricky?

You know, they weren't tricky. Oh, you'd get to know their little tricks. But they weren't out to fool you. They were honest.

I What made you think you'd want to go into it yourself? Why did you like the business?

There's more money in that than raising cattle. Those days there was. Now it's different, but those days -- because people didn't know what to do with their animals. And if you had an outlet somewhere then you were in charge and you could pay them what you wanted to pay. I wish it was that way now but it's not any more.

I Were they glad to have someone to buy the cattle or did they wish they were able to sell it themselves?

Yeah, they were happy. They would call me. Some of them for years kept calling me when they had something they wanted to get rid of.

I This was around 1942 that you started this business?

Yeah, from then on.

I Before that, when you were in high school you worked for Grove Ranch?

I didn't work at it. I went along.

I When did you start going there?

Oh, all my life I was there. It was quite a -- I wouldn't say community. You know where you go up Kokomo and you cross Maliku and you go over toward Haliimaile? Well as soon as you got to Baldwin Avenue, right across the road was Grove Ranch. They had families living there and all kinds of buildings, so I was quite close with the kids that were my age there when we grew up.

I What was the ranch like? How big was it?

Well it was - I don't know how big it was. But it was one of the biggest here. It was owned by HC&S Plantation. And they had land going from oh, Keanae out to Waikoa down to Kihei. So they had pastures all through here.

I How many guys did they have working for them?

Must have been about six or seven cowboys.

I And how did you fall in with that, I mean, how did you first get to go with them?

Oh, I was growing up with their kids. And so it was just natural that I would go.

I What was it about them that made you want to go along?

Oh, a good way of life, I guess. Those days when they were going to go somewhere they didn't go in a truck or trailer, they had to ride their horses and they'd come by our house and you could hear them coming from miles -- the horses on the road. I remember how I would run down to the road and see them all. I said oh, how I wish I could join them. They would have a branding or something, and when I was real small, I would go and sit on the fence. (laughs)

I The cowboys, were they nice to the kids?

Oh yeah, yeah. Everybody was nice. They had a slaughter house and once a week they would slaughter animals. They had a market in Paia, right across from the mill.

I Of the old timers that took you out, was there any one or two guys that, you know, befriended you and, you know, took care of you?

Yeah, one fellow that lived in H-Poko, and he would ride his horse every morning up to there and back every night. He always took good care of me.

I And what was his name?

Manuel Ferreira. He had children my age so he kind of mucked us all together. Yeah, I grew up with all the Portuguese families. That's why I don't speak too good English (laughter).

I Were there any Hawaiian cowboys on the ranch?

No, there were some Japanese, two Japanese.

I How did they get along with each other?

Good.

I The cowboys?

Good.

I Yes? Did it seem like they were all friends or. . .

Yep. Mm hm.

I When you were riding with the kids and with Manuel Ferreira, what kind of stuff did he show you and teach you?

Oh, I don't know. I know we'd be driving cattle along the road and we would come to driveways and places without fences and you have to go block those places -- you don't just run your horse along the road, you got to - the one in the front is going to take care of it and he's going to move a little bit over and you in the back, you've got to cover from him. And then somebody will cover from you as you move on. So it was little things like that, you learn. And a couple of screams sometimes from them, if you don't do it right.

I What kinds of things did they yell at you about?

To hurry up or go slow or, yeah? I worked for Kaupo Ranch one time for a year and those are all Hawaiians. They talk Hawaiian and you'd be surprised how fast you can pick up the language. And they would yell something and it meant go below or go above and you got to figure those things out. but it's good, that's how you learn.

Well, I started buying cattle, I was how old – 21 or 22 when I started – and then I kept on buying cattle, buying cattle, and then eventually I started raising my own cattle, 1947 was when I bought out Honolulu cattle ranch.

I What kind of things did you do when you were riding along with the ranch. Did you do the cattle drives, the brandings, those things?

They always kept telling me that I was always carrying a little rope around wherever I was going with the stable and H-Poko. And I was always playing with a rope, and I got to be a pretty good roper. And I feel very honored that they realized it too and that they kept telling me someday you're going to be a good roper. You're always playing with that rope and I carried it on afterwards. They would always, if they had some roping to do somewhere, they would always call on me -- so it was an honor. I don't want to boast about it but I was a pretty good roper.

I Who taught you how to rope?

Nobody, you just picked it up.

I What was your secret?

No, no secret really, just practice. (laughter)

I So what kind of work did you like doing most for them?

Oh, I don't know what was the most, everything was good.

I Did you like - when you went on cattle drives, how far would you go?

Oh, those days you'd go far. So that was always something to look forward to. Leave Makawao at - or Kula, at midnight, you'd wait for a full moon. And then you'd get to Kahului at 5 o'clock in the morning. No more traffic, no cars. I remember buying cattle in Kailua and somebody, one of the families there, so we drove them down here to the slaughterhouse down here. And as we would come along the road we'd meet other people there and they'd say oh I got one cow, you want to take her? Okay, and we went to catch this cow and all the way we were picking up animals, all kinds. It was a good life.

I Now, I think it was 1942 you helped move the cattle off Kahoolawe, is that right? Can you tell me about doing that?

Oh, well it was gathering different sections of the island and lock them up, and then the boat would take them to Kihei and take over maybe 20 or 30 at a time. They would control their going and coming by the water. They would shut off water troughs at different places, so they would keep coming closer to the home corral, and eventually they would all end up there.

And there's still some outlaws that would never come. One day we were at the side closest to Maui, we were riding horses. I said we'd better go look down this gulch, this valley going down to the ocean, and look down there to see if there's anything there. And they went there and came back, they said, "oh, that steer we've been trying to catch for years is down there," a big, huge steer. So I said, "oh, we'd better go catch him then."

And we all went down and a guy roped him, I don't know who it was, and they tied him to a tree. Oh, he was just a tremendous thing, you've never seen anything that big in your life. Then they said, "now what are we going to do with him?" We said, "send him back home." We said, "well, you send one man back to get the boat." So one man rode back to the house and got hold of the boat, the boat was parked right there that night.

And that boat came around, and the little boat came into shore, and then they pulled this steer out to the boat and tied him to the boat and took him out to the big boat and loaded him up, took him back home. And unloaded him there, put him in the corral and he wouldn't eat, he just wouldn't eat nothing. We used to bring cane tops from the plantation to feed these animals in the pens there. He wouldn't eat, and they brought him back to Grove Ranch, put him in a pen with all kinds of feed, he still wouldn't eat and he died. It was such a shame because he was such a big thing.

I On the island, where did they get their water from?

They would catch it when it rains in big cisterns. They had cisterns in the gulches, big ones. And when it would rain the water would run down and fill up these cisterns and they would siphon it out.

I They were moving the cattle on the ranch because the Navy had taken the island over. What was the feeling among the ranchers at the time?

I don't think that they were upset. They might have been – I don't know. I know that I would have been upset. But it was one of those things you just accept.

They used to have a bunch of brood mares over there too. They would just run all over. And some of them got pretty wild; they were nice colts they used to bring out of there. So when they were trying to get the last horses out, we drove them and there was one old mare that was -- she was just a stinker. She'd always been

trouble. But we finally got them down to the ocean, not too far from where the – the cliff was maybe 10 to 20 feet down to the water -- and we were holding them over there. And this mare was getting awfully kind of Finally she shot down there, to the edge of the water and swam around outside and came back another side and off she went. It was the last we saw of her; she must have died there. But she knew how to get away. She was the only one that did that.

I How long were you on the island?

Oh, I would say a week at a time and come back for a little while and go back again.

I How many weeks did it take to get rid of all the cows?

It took a long time. I was just playing really. If I had something I had to do around here I would come home but then I would go back.

I What was that experience like, shipping the cattle on the ocean?

That was the way it was done so you would just accept those things. I used to have some pictures we took of that but I've been looking for them and I can't find them. But this guy on his big horse, he would have a saddle that was just a saddle tree, and the stirrup leathers I think were rope because if you put regular leather it would rot in the ocean. Just as simple a saddle you ever saw. And then there was one dog that used to stay by the gate and as soon as the steer crossed that gate, or cow, or whatever, he would be on it and she would jump and every time she jumped she'd be in the ocean already.

I How many people did it take to do the job?

Oh, not many. The hardest part was there was maybe six or eight ties on this boat and we take them out on this whale boat, they're tied on each side. We put a big rope halter around and tie them on the side. So when you get to the big boat they put this winch down, it's a chain really with a hook on it. And you've got to drop it alongside the animal and then you tie the (inaudible) with a long pole with a hook on it to go reach underneath and catch that chain. And then you ring it around and hook it up again. That's where most of the work was done. Dragging them out was nothing. And then the people in the boat would have to tie them up but there was six or seven men.

I Did the sharks ever bother the cows?

Not that I know of. I heard stories that they did, people say that. But I never seen them. On the other side of the island it's all cliffs. Cliffs, and we would go goat hunting and we'd shoot a goat on these cliffs and he would fall down into the ocean, then you could see the sharks just come. But I didn't see any on this other side. Lots of turtles though. Turtles used to lay their eggs over there.

I Who was the manager at the time?

The manager was, at the time we lived on the island, Manuel Pedro. He lived there mostly all his life, I think. All by himself.

I And what was he like?

Oh, very strict old man. We were all scared of him. But he was a good fellow.

Oh yeah. All the sides were stones and when you get up on top of the island it's all flat. Flat, but rocks too. And we used to go chasing sheep as fast as your horse can go. But you didn't think anything of it. You're a cowboy. You do that.

I Was there a macho attitude among the cowboys?

No, not really. This was kind of a vacation for them to get away from home.

I Now when you came back from Kahoolawe you - that's when you were working for yourself as a cattle buyer. And then eventually, you bought Honolua Ranch?

I bought all the animals they had, then I rented the land.

I How big was it?

Oh, I don't know, pretty big. The cattle were almost wild. We had to rope every single one.

I How many cattle did you get?

Oh, over 500. Luckily I sold the majority of them to Pioneer Mill for their ranch and if they hadn't bought them I don't know what I would have done with them all. But I was lucky.

I Why did you decide to buy the ranch?

Well I heard that they were going to have some animals for sale so I went to see the owner and he said, "you want to buy some cattle? You come back and see me in two weeks and I'll have lots of cattle for you if you want. Come back to see me – we're going to close the ranch." It was people were going to strike, the workers, so if they were going to strike the ranch was going to quit giving them beef. They were slaughtering a couple of animals a week for the workers. "If they don't want that they're going to get nothing. If you're interested you can take the whole thing." He said, "you want to rent the land too?" And I said yeah, okay. A long way to go from Haiku to come over there every day. But it was nothing. Maybe 50 (?) miles. Most of the ranch was beyond where the pineapples are.

I And what was the terrain?

Oh, lantana and guava. All lantana. They made no effort, although there was one pasture they had improved, they planted grass, but only one pasture. And when we went there we had beautiful, big gulches, just full of koa. It's the best cattle feed in the world. These koa, ten, 20 feet tall. Just solid, the big gulches. I said oh, look at that, this is where we should be, not around in Lantana fields. So we started fencing those gulches. And we had a gang of Filipinos, camping down on the beach, making fences every day. And we fenced oh, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, about thirteen gulches, I think. And then we start to cut those koa down – it was so tall, nothing could eat it. And we cut down about this height and then it just all burst out. Oh, the cattle would get fat in there, as fat as they could be.

I I didn't know cattle ate koa leaves.

Oh yeah, they love it Very high protein. So we had some of the fattest cattle in the country. All the meat companies in Honolulu we used to send the cattle too – it was a co-op, all the ranchers in the state belonged to it, Parker Ranch owned the majority of it. They were slaughtering over a hundred a day. Bosses were telling us one day that the fattest cattle that ever came into the slaughterhouse were from me and from a Portuguese guy in Kona. So we hold a pretty good distinction.

I How long were you on Honolua Ranch?

Oh, 31 years.

I How was it for you to go from cattle buyer to a rancher.

Well, it was getting harder to buy cattle as time went on. People got more educated and scales became – You couldn't say they weighed so much when they only weighed so much. So it was better – keeps you busy all the time.

I Did you prefer it?

Oh, sometimes I did and sometimes I didn't. It really tires you. You wish you were out buying cattle, but there wasn't that much cattle. There was still some, in fact there's still some around here. An old lady in Kaupo, she had a ranch there and she did all the work on the ranch, with a couple of Filipinos, and I started buying her cattle and she was very nice. You'd go to her place, get there at seven o'clock in the morning, and the first thing you have to do is have breakfast. And she would cook you a meal that you would never have seen. Everything! And then you'd go look at her cattle.

But she was easy because she had them all priced already and according to their age. If they were five months old it was \$50. If they were six months they were \$60. So there was no arguing or anything and she was quite a nice old lady. She was a schoolteacher in Kaupo all her life, and she retired and her husband had died, and so she was running everything. And she had these Filipinos working in the pasture cleaning weeds and stuff. And she'd look at her watch and say, "oh, ten o'clock," blow her whistle, "recess gang, recess!" All these Filipinos would take a break and it was recess time! She was a school teacher through and through.

I After you finished at Honolua Ranch you got another ranch, Hanahuli Ranch?

We just bought the cattle from them. They wanted to close the ranch. They had about six hundred animals, so I bought all of them.

I And how was that, how was the property out there?

It was a good place. It's a lot of upkeep. You got to fight guavas all your life, and those people were tired of that. We were just moving the cattle out and such. They gave me three months or six months to get them off. I had to get rid of them.

One bunch went to Kahua Ranch on the Big Island, they bought a bunch of cows, and Pioneer Mill bought some more. And some went to Honolulu. And I got rid of them all. We were starting in business, we had no

money and if you buy a good bunch of cattle you need money to buy and pay for them with, you know? And we didn't have money. But they gave me -- Honolulu Ranch, I was telling the foreman, the manager, that I don't have money to pay you and he said, that's all right, you know what you do is you sell something, sell one bunch and they pay you for them, you pay us. So it worked out good. I didn't have to have a big pile of money. And then this Hanahuli Ranch was the same thing. They said we'll give you so many months to pay us. And when I would sell them I would pay.

I Were you able to make money off the deals?

Yeah, yeah. An attorney in Wailuku, an old farmer, he couldn't understand the business and he had written papers for us and I was trying to tell him how it was going to work and he couldn't understand it. We wouldn't make any money. I tried to show him how and then he said, well, when you finish, you come tell me. Well, I think that Hanahuli one, I think we made ten thousand dollars. Oh, he thought that was the greatest thing. It wasn't a lot but in those days it was quite a bit of money.

And from there I went to work for Kaupo Ranch for one year. Down here, this big house with a white fence around it. Dwight Baldwin, he owned it. So he would go over there every week or so for a couple days. Took me over (inaudible) quite a few times, when he wanted company I went with him and finally he says, why don't you come work for us? Well okay, I'll try. A year was enough.

I Why?

His views were different than mine and some of the things he wanted to do and ... it wasn't the right thing in my mind, anyway. The way they were selling the animals. One time I know he had some big fat cows that had calves all their life I think and I was telling him that, you got to get rid of those cows. "Oh no, we can't do that, they're the nicest looking cows we have." I said, oh my goodness! They're nice looking but they don't make any money. It was more of a hobby ranch for them, I think then. They didn't need to make money. If they lost money, that was okay. But if you're the manager and people say you're losing money, they don't blame the owner, they blame you. So I thought, I don't want to be connected with this.

I So you were there as manager?

Yeah. I think it was around 1947, maybe.

I It sounds like you always like to be in business for yourself.

Mm mm. Yeah, that's right. You'll find that out.

I You think that's a better way to go?

Yeah, if you can. Not everybody can. You work hard though. We fenced all those gulches in there and that took years. And I hate doing that. Cutting all that koa down. In those days there was no chain saws. It was all cane knives and axes. I know we'd leave, we'd leave here about five o'clock in the morning and drive over there. There was no pavement or road, it would take an hour and a half or so to get there. And when we got home at five o'clock maybe, then we'd have to go load up the truck with posts and stuff for tomorrow. So we were working into the night. But, we didn't mind.

I What was the best thing about being in business for yourself?

Oh, you don't have to justify your movements to somebody else. If you want to do something, you do it.

I What made you eventually leave Honalua Ranch behind?

The marijuana growers. They moved in over there. Anyway, it kept getting worse and worse and they were connecting in to all our pipe lines. Had a lot of pipe lines there. Some of them were quite long and they were hooking into that to water their marijuana plants in these gulches. And then they start stealing our cattle too and they stole a lot of cattle. And then the golf courses started and that put a cramp in our style because you couldn't have an animal get out and run on the golf course. They want to charge you fifty cents a hoof print (laughs). And all this just kept going until I finally said no, enough already. But 31 years I stayed there. That's a good place, it was a good place.

I Until when did you stay?

Oh, maybe 1980, somewheres around there. When we left we had such a good relationship with those people there and I really felt bad because it consumed a good portion of my life over there. And we knew everybody and everybody knew us and they all treated us nice. So, I really felt bad for a while. The people who worked for the company. They were good people.

I And how did they react when you were going to leave?

Oh, they understood because they was a different element of people that moved in over there. And then, people that don't have money, they'll steal anything. Well, we were there when times were good.

They used to sell watermelons. They had a big watermelon field, way up, beyond all the pineapple fields. It was real flat up there and all those water melons, and the cattle pasture beyond that. It was dry and -- and so when the water melon season comes the cattle would go in the water melon pasture at night (laughs). And we'd go there sometimes and get there just about dark. And bring the horses and the truck and then wait for the cattle to come in the field, in this clear, open field. Boom, we'd chase them and rope them. We'd chase these cattle through the water melon patch (laughs). Then we'd catch half a dozen or so, and come home at the end of the night and with the truck front seat just loaded with watermelons. You couldn't fit another water melon in. So we lived pretty high on water melons for a while. One of the fringe benefits, yeah? (laughter)

I Where did you go after you left that location?

Well, I lived around here in Haiku already and we had started - I got Nahiku ranch too. And the object of that was to -- when it gets so dry over there, we would get the cattle and put them in Nahiku. But that didn't work, no. You don't do that, we found out. Animals don't like to be moved. And it was two extremes, they get back from the dry to a very wet and the cattle didn't accept it at all. And it's a long ways to go too. So it was, then we eliminated that and just kept Nahiku for ten years.

I So it sounds like 1980 was when you were moving out of the areas you had been for a long time then. Is that when you started moving up into Haiku and raising cattle here?

Well, we always had some here. I think it was when we moved to Kula too. Erehwon Ranch. You know what Erehwon means? Nowhere spelled backwards (laughs). I don't know why we picked it. That's what we named it. It was very appropriate though. It was a terrible place (laughs). It's between the rainfall and no rainfall. It's in the dry section. Rainfall on this side comes occasionally. This side it never reaches. So it's very dry. When it rains it's a good place. But when it doesn't rain it's not worth nothing. So, we've still got half of it left but we may disappear too from it one of these days.

I How many years that you had it was it getting enough rain?

Oh, it used to rain quite a bit. Some years it rained long. And then the next year it wouldn't rain nothing. Everybody has tried that place. Ulupalakua rented it for years and years. Then they gave up and Haleakala Ranch took it over and they were there 20 years. They gave it up. And the people that owned it, the Von Tempsky family, I went to school with the boys and so they wanted me go up there. So up I went and I stayed fifteen years in the first lease and then sporadically ever since, but ...

I And your land in Haiku, about how much property do you have here?

I think over fifty acres. This is the best place in the world.

I Oh yeah? What makes it?

Always get a little rain. The climate is good. We're right at the edge of the rain, you know? From here on it doesn't rain very much. Some mornings it's been raining heavy all night here, and I go down there, to Hana Highway, and it hasn't rained a drop.

I How is it different nowadays from when you first started in the business?

Well one thing, those days a cow was a cow, didn't matter how good she was or how bad, she was a cow. But today you have to improve your animals, you have to put more of a quality product, you're not competing with somebody in Honolulu, you're competing with the Mainland now. So you have to, you have to shape things up pretty well. It slowed business down for a while. People didn't realize those things. They just thought a steer was a steer. So it took a while for people to get it in their heads that it's not right. And now you've got a different group of people raising cattle, the young people. The old ones are ready to give up (laughs). So you have to be more selective.

I What advice do you have for people who want to try to get into the business today?

I'd tell them go do something else (laughter). It's hard, starting off. For one thing, everything is so expensive. Land is expensive, you cannot buy land, you don't have the money to. You don't have money. Well, we were fortunate when we needed money but people understood and helped us out but today if you don't have a good reputation, you're not getting any money. It's hard. One old man from Texas came out and bought a place in Kaupo, and he was raising cattle. Nice old gentleman. He was head of the San Antonio Loan and Trust Company. And we were talking one day and he said, you know, young folks should never leave where they've been brought up, he said, because you're known. People know you, they know your family, your reputation is there. He said, you just come into a place cold and nobody knows you, you're going to have a hard time. And I always remembered that. Which is true. It takes a while to get your reputation up and then people sell their reputation for a couple of dollars.

I Before we finish, I wanted to ask you about your business Pacific Airlift. When did you start that business?

I think it was in the sixties, I think. We used to ship cattle on a boat, horses and cattle. But then the airplane came into being so we quit the boat and we used to charter planes before. And charter a big plane, and then you could put anything you wanted into it. And we had horses, cattle, everything you can think of -- pigs. We went for quite a few years like that but it involved -- they'd go to Honolulu first. They'd get to Honolulu just

about dark. Then they get into Hilo around midnight. And we were loading cattle and unloading cattle, and I don't know how those people put up with us. We used to buy a lot of cattle on the Big Island because every time we went to charter this plane we had to fill it to go back and we would fill that thing until you couldn't put another one in. And it was 200, 250 a crack.

I Was that a new idea at the time, to move animals by plane?

Mm hm (indicating yes).

I How did people react when you started doing it?

Oh, they didn't care really because they were selling the animal right there at the airport, you know? But this idea was started first by Transamerica Airlines, they initiated this airplane hauling. They were hauling cattle all over the world. So we were friendly with them and they helped us out.

I How is the business today?

Since September 11th it hasn't been good but it's getting better. Now we're competing with those people that are -- they belong to a kind of a co-op these ranchers joined and they ship their cattle together to the mainland and they get somebody to take care of them and this and that and so we're competing against them. Our prices are a little bit higher but we can't convince these people that a few dollars doesn't mean anything because you're comparing five hours transportation time to seven days. And people don't realize, their cattle die on these boats.

But the majority of these people, they don't care. It's funny. The little differences, a lot of these bigger ranches, they don't care because it's not their animals, it's some company owns that are - you take a little rancher, he'll worry about every animal and he can understand that it's better to put them on an airplane five hours, they don't get sick, there's no stress. You put an animal seven days in a container and he's standing in all that manure -- they get sick. Not only do they get sick, but the recovery time on the mainland is months. By the time they get there they're so under stress that they catch every bug that floats by. A lot of people now are talking, we hear stories, they're unhappy with their co-op and they've been calling us. So we have quite a bit of cattle booked to go. Yeah, and once a month we have a horse flight, and bring horses and take horses back. And so many people they really like their horses, they're willing to pay for the service.