BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: William "Billy" Kalipi, Sr.

"This project was so meaningful for me because when I . . . erecting the wall and everything, your whole heart and soul going into the wall; your whole mana go to the wall. And then when you finish working, you're really, really exhausted and you go home and you feel real good. Every time I turn around and look at the wall, ho, we moved twenty feet today. . . . Once in a while. . . . the whole thing just possess you and drain you so you gotta stop. I take time off from coming to the fish pond because I gotta recuperate and get back my strength. Because working here is a spiritual thing for me that I aloha plenty, yeah. . . . But everything is content. You all satisfied, you all happy and everything is looking good."

William "Billy" Kalipi, Sr. was born April 9, 1942 in Honolulu, but was raised in Manawai, Moloka'i. His father was Philip Kualapai Kalipi and his mother, Phoebe Agnes Cockett. Through his father, Billy learned much about fishing.

After attending schools on Moloka'i, Billy eventually became manager of the Moloka'i Fishermen's Association, a subsidiary of Lokahi Pacific of Maui, a fishermen's co-op. Billy learned marketing skills since he often dealt with fish markets on Moloka'i, Maui, and O'ahu.

Using skills he acquired from his father and uncle, Billy today is actively helping his son, William "Tubz" Kalipi, Jr., restore 'Ualapu'e Fishpond. He lives in Kaunakakai with his wife, Pauline, and his children.
WN: This is an interview with William “Billy” Kalipi, Sr. on April 9, 1991 at the ‘Ualapu’e Fishpond in ‘Ualapu’e, Moloka‘i. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, let’s start. Billy, tell me first of all, where you were born and when you were born.

WK: I was born in Honolulu, O‘ahu, April 5, 1942 and, thereafter, moved to Moloka‘i.

WN: What were you doing in Honolulu, or what were your parents doing in Honolulu?

WK: My mom used to work for Pearl Harbor [Naval Shipyard], and my dad worked up here [Moloka‘i]. He was working for the County of Maui so we had two homes—one in Honolulu and one on Moloka‘i—and we traveled back and forth. So every summer I used to go down to Honolulu. Other than that, everything was Moloka‘i.

So my dad—my father—his name was Philip Kalipi. Philip Kualapai Kalipikailiuli is his full name. And my mom was Phoebe Agnes Cockett. She was a Cockett woman from Maui, was raised here. As I was growing up, my father taught me some of my skills in the ocean pertaining to the fish, the he‘e, and the kapu systems—what we can take, what we no can take—in the ocean.

And my uncle actually taught me building stone walls. Actually, he lived at ‘Ohi‘a, my uncle John Kawai Cockett. That’s my mother’s brother. So we used to repair the heiau. There’s a heiau on our property that was a farm-type heiau. So we used to rebuild the walls because the pig ‘eku go hulihuli the stones. So what we used to do is to reconstruct and put back the walls. And that’s the first experience I learned how to set stones without cement. Strictly the rocks, yeah. My uncle John taught me that. My uncle was a custodian for this man, Y.K. Yuen. He had the lease for Keawa Nui Fishpond from Bishop Estate.

WN: What was his name?

WK: Y.K. Yuen.

WN: Y.K. Yuen?
WK: Yeah.

WN: Chinese?

WK: Chinese. They do own a store, still yet exists today as Kualapu'u Market. It belongs to the Yuen family. So my uncle used to go repair the walls every time get one tidal wave come. And then, go down there and start repairing all the walls, the broken walls. And then had this guy Bill—"Buffalo"—we call 'em, mahi'ai. He was contracted to harvest the pond periodically from Y.K. Yuen. So he would bring in all these nets—he get huki nets—and he would cut the pond in three, four division parts. And section at a time, would drag, a whole bunch of us. We harvested I would say roughly maybe, easy, two, three thousand pounds coming out. This is papio and mullet.

WN: One crack?

WK: One crack. Just abundant with ulua, everything. Maybe more, because he had one, two, three, four, five mākahā. This was a kuapā type pond, Keawa Nui. And the five mākahā, he had trap system where the fish can come in but no can go out. The only fish that can go in and out was the mullet because there's no way you can hold a mullet in one trap system. But everything else comes in and cannot go out, so he had abundant 'ō'io, pāpio, ulua, weke. You name 'em, that's all you can see. Just the 'ale'ale of the fish moving all over the place. And Samoan crabs, that's what you were scared of. I think the scariest thing when you huki is the kākā, yeah, the barracuda. And the center man who stay in the back of the net for signal who going pull, you know, right or left, gotta pull for keep the net in one proper perspective cone. That's the guy, and it's real dangerous because of the barracuda. You get some four-footers, man. Big, big barracudas and I think that's the most dangerous thing in the pond.

WN: They're strong too, eh?

WK: Oh yeah, and Samoan crab, you pulling the net and all of a sudden you see this big green. . . . And you push 'em on the side and you keep going. But those were the days.

WN: Keawa Nui Fishpond is where?

WK: The Academy. You know where they get that school right now? Kamehameha get one school over there [Alternative Education], yeah.

WN: Uh huh.

WK: Right there. In fact, this Friday I supposed to go down and talk a little bit about fish ponds to the youth.

WN: That's the one owned by Bishop Estate, right, Keawa Nui?

WK: Yes, the whole ahupua'a. Keawa Nui Fishpond is [also] known as Mikimiki [Fishpond].

WN: Oh, okay.
WK: That's the Mikimikì Pond. Outside of Keawa Nui Fishpond there's another pond that is called Mikiawa. Now, the Mikiawa Fishpond---this is in the Summers' book, I think, Catherine Summers, [Molokai: A Site Survey]. It said that [Lohe'lohe, an ali'i], was in charge of constructing the pond, Mikiawa. Mikiawa Fishpond is a [loko] 'ume ild type fish pond. It's not the kuaptl [type] because they have twenty-six lanes and you get about, I think, sixteen lanes one side [going inward], ten lanes one side [going outward]. So one lane is going inward towards the pond and the other one is going outwards. And so what happened is---normally one pond is within an ahupua'a. This pond, the wahine wen summon in the districts of Ka'amola and Keawa Nui; two ahupua'a, all the people come together for construct this pond. And then how they shared the fish is with the mākahā system. So the one that's coming in belong to Keawa Nui. The ones that going out belongs to Ka'amola. So they had one mutual agreement, who going harvest what and where. [See Catherine Summers' book, Molokai: A Site Survey, pages 105-108, for a more detailed explanation of this system of shared harvests.]

WN: What you mean by lane?

WK: Lane is the---just like the mākahā or the sluice gates. That's what I call the lanes.

WN: But it wasn't a mākahā.

WK: It is. It's a trap mākahā. It's built like a cone and they weave their big baskets for the fish go in and no can come out. They'd set 'em into all these lanes and whatever fish go in, that's theirs. So they had one good system going. They even get trap doors, too, depending how long they going make the sluice gates for trap the fish. Over there is abundant; abundant with fish. It used to have a heiau right on the island of Kala'eloa, the island out there. There's an island that connects Mikiawa and Mikimikì Pond and this island had one heiau [Hualele Heiau] before, on top there. It [heiau] doesn't exist anymore. And I don't know if they used the rocks [of the heiau] for construct other fish pond walls, the Keawa Nui—Mikimikì—Fishpond, yeah, the face part. So I really don't know.

And then adjacent to Keawa Nui Fishpond had one more, Paialoa Fishpond. And this Paialoa Fishpond, I think, belonged to Sam Kealoha's wife's family. I don't know their name but that pond, also, was destroyed. It doesn't exist. You can see the base here and there but that pond was connected to Keawa Nui. And there's another pond down below Keawa Nui. They pond to pond. And all the ponds were nice. I remember [Russell] Apple. I think he wrote about fish ponds [Ancient Hawaiian Shore Zone Fishponds]. Apple and had one Japanese guy [William Kikuchi]; two of them wen evaluate the fish ponds of Hawai'i and they wen put one grading system to the ponds; prioritized which would be economic feasible and which wouldn't be. And 'Ualapu'e during their time, I think was in the fifties [the study was published in 1975], they said this pond was one good pond. And they name few ponds on Moloka'i. But myself, because I know about building walls, I think all ponds, like this pond right adjacent to 'Ualapu'e . . .

WN: What's the name of this pond?

WK: Ah, I really don't know. I get one fish pond book that identify all the ponds' name Halemahana Fishpond. But I think this type of ponds [Halemahana Fishpond] is more feasible in bringing 'em back because you don't have nothing mangrove on 'em, and the
whole foundation is intact. Maybe the wall itself is not because it's down, but the foundation is still there so it's real easy. This pond would take maybe three months for renovate 'em, bring 'em right back to its existence.

WN: You just gotta build up the wall, then? [Presently, the wall of Halemahana Fishpond lies submerged during high tide.]

WK: That's all. You no more mangroves for cut and dig. All the ponds can be renovated. The problem is time. Some ponds going take you one year, some ponds going take you two, three years depending what type of manpower you get.

Right now, I think, we're the first ever try renovate one whole pond. And the Hui o Kuapā is trying to find out what is the cost that we going endure and can anybody go to the state and say so. Cost factors that would reflect what kind cost you going endure as a private citizen trying to go into aquaculture utilizing existing ponds. In one way, they're doing good, and in one way, I disagree with the approach. When I say approach, I try evaluate that. Take myself, for example. If I gotta do this job, the cost not going be the cost factor like what Hui o Kuapā them have endured—only because they had funding and all that so they can utilize the cost factor. Myself, my own labor would be at cost, but for repair the pond going take my lifetime. So it's going be repaired, but it's going be repaired on a structure, me and my family going easy, easy, renovating the walls. Take ‘Ualapu’e Fishpond, for example. We started off by taking all the mangroves out. And my first thing that I wanted to do was repair the makaha. To me that was—should have been—the priority, that we reconstruct the makahas.

(Visitor arrives. Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WK: I wanted to set the makaha in one trap system like the old days and I wanted to catch anything and everything that can come into the pond. And while we working on [eradicating] the mangroves, the pond would be self-sufficient, bringing in product that within four months we could harvest. And I guarantee we would probably be making two, three grand [$2,000 to $3,000] selling. And then it's a rotation thing where the pond should be producing and start getting some turnovers for buy whatever equipment you need. That's what I wanted to do because that would be more ideal, in saying what can the pond yield; not talking technology. Right now you're closing the whole pond, which is not one Hawaiian style. Hawaiians never did lock the pond and just raise fish inside. That's modern technology, that. The modern man wen start go out, go get fish, bring, and all this kind stuff. Then they try raise the mullet. Hawaiians never did that. Hawaiians always had one trap.

Every fish was important to the Hawaiians themselves, that within the pond. Mullet was kapu for the ali‘i himself, but the caretakers could eat the weke, the pāpio, ‘o’io, you know. People who work the pond can eat certain fish. Only certain fish was kapu for the ali‘i.

WN: The mullet. Anything else?

WK: Oh, well, you get the mullet, you get aholehole. Sometime depending where the pond location is. If we talking about ponds anyplace from Kainalu up [i.e., east of Kainalu Fishpond] then the ponds would get red fish inside, which is kūmā, because they don't have that much fresh
water—artesian wells adjacent to the pond—so the salt contents are more high and the type of fish is different. They would get kala, palani, mānini, menpachi, ‘āweoweo, and kāmā. Where us [‘Ualapu‘e Fishpond], we no going get that type of fish. We do have baby kāmā. The baby offsprings come in and there are eggs laid in the mākāhā, but as they grow they move out to deeper coral reef. But up the other side, it’s a different type fish that comes into the pond. You can go as far as some ponds getting turtle inside. All these ponds over here, Keawa Nui district, this is known as just like the mud flats and we’re heavy with artesian wells—strong streams—so the fresh water content is ideal for awa, ideal for moi, mullet, clams, crabs. That’s the best. Ogo limu or the manauea limu we grow in here wouldn’t be ideal if we put it up at Waialua ponds because the type of fish that lives within those ponds, that would be their food. The palani, the kala, the mānini, they would just wipe out all this manauea. Down here, mullet no eat manauea.

WN: What do they eat?

WK: Well, they eat algae, but the manauea going play one major role on their eggs. Mullet lay their eggs in the seaweed, all over the limu. So that play one major role. And the whole ecology of the chain of the crab, everything that stays in the limu, it makes the whole cycle complete in the pond. And they [Hui o Kuapa] like eradicate everything and I don’t know if that’s wise to eradicate the whole works. Maybe for their purpose, maybe, because they’re closing the gates, yeah. They locking the gates so nothing can come in.

WN: What about here when you folks took out the predators, when you guys cleaned the pond?

WK: Yeah, we took out seventy-something barracuda.

WN: Yeah, you don’t want barracuda in here, right?

WK: Well, the barracuda, mullet is their main source of food, eh. So you trying to take out the predators. But I don’t know. I don’t think we can stop the predators [from entering the pond].

WN: I was wondering, the old Hawaiians, did they view some fish as predators and something to get rid of . . .

WK: No.

WN: . . . or did, like you were saying, did they keep everything in the pond and when it comes time to harvest they catch everything. You know what I mean?

WK: Yeah.

WN: Is it a modern technology thing to take out some species?

WK: Yes, yes, yes. It is a modern technology. Ancient time, everything was edible; everything was good. All fish was good. The key is the process; how you going process your fish. ‘O‘io, you no going cook ’em, but you know you going make raw. That’s raw fish right here, you no need go outside deep sea for go get your ‘o‘io. You get your ‘o‘io right in your pond. Your weke, your mullet, that’s all for lāwalu. You can [prepare] raw, too, but plenty they make
lōwalu in the imu or on top the open fire with ti leaf and they make their food, yeah. And then you get your aholehole.

What we got to realize is the culture of the Hawaiians. They were strong, religious people. Everything was worshipped, everything. Their whole lifestyle they relied on the gods. And sometimes when I look back and I think about the Hawaiians, I think, chee, they say they were real god-fearing people. Their penalty was death. Hell, you gotta fear. And yet when you read the Bible—Christianity—it tells you, you should fear God when you do something wrong. But the difference is our God [i.e., Christianity] is merciful, it forgives us. Ancient god is merciful, too, but we only hear the kapu side, the bad side. We don’t hear the good side; we no hear the repentant side, what you gotta do for make amends. And there is a system within a culture that make amends. We couldn’t come in a fish pond—any pond for that matter—if we had sores on our body. We called it kāki‘o. You get kāki‘o, you no go in the pond.

WN: Why was that?

WK: Okay, when you think about it, it’s common sense, really. The pond provides food for you, so if you get sores, you no go in one pond where this the food you going eat. And then same with the woman. The woman got ma‘i wahine, they get their [menstrual] period. They no go in the pond because this is like, we call, a modern ice box. You go to your ice box for eat your kau kau, you no going make kapulu or make lepo. So it’s a common sense thing. They were clean people and they never like you make hana‘ino the pond. And so certain things you no can do.

And certain things the Hawaiians, because was so strong in their belief, they had kapus on ponds. Like ‘Ualapu‘e Pond, the kapu was the mo‘o belonging to this pond. And so if you talk to all the old folks about ‘Ualapu‘e Pond, the first thing they going tell you, eh, you watch. You no go fool around inside that pond. Get one big puhi inside. The mo‘o is the watchman. So they only tell us this and then by word of mouth, generation to generation, it’s just like one fear or something. You no can fool around inside there because it was passed down to you; always passed down from generation to generation, the kapu. Like Keawa Nui was the manō. The manō belong to that pond. Kīpeke Pond was the he‘e. You know, they said the lauhala bloomed when the he‘e stay inside. If the lauhala no bloom, the he‘e stay outside.

So they had all kind different signs for each pond. Pūahala—the pond that they tried to develop—well, they had green light from state, county, everything. They had developers, had everything. You know, nothing could stop them. But the mo‘o wen stop them. They couldn’t build there. They tried everything they could. Three companies went bankrupt at Pūahala.

WN: What were they going to build?

WK: Hotels.

WN: Oh, oh.

WK: They tried to cover the pond, but as much as they dredged the ocean, they made harbors out
there, they poured all the coral that they dredged in this pond—and there’s no bottom. They just couldn’t fill it up. Three companies went bankrupt. So sometimes when you think about developers you think, chee, maybe we should get back our ancestors to help us spiritually instead of just saying oh, chee, we no can do nothing, this is progress. Hey, that was one ugly scar when they destroyed that pond. Really, really bad.

WN: The kapus for the pond—are the kapus similar as with the open ocean?

WK: Nah, different, different. Because open ocean, we no can take banana out in the ocean because banana resembles hemo, or open. So let’s say we going go lay net. We going outside next morning. If I took banana on a boat, number one I would get dirty licking. No, ifs or buts about it, I going get licking. Number two, we’re going home; we’re not going out. Pau already; pau fish for the day. Let’s say we go kā‘ili or hook fish, deep-sea fish. I get banana on the boat, that’s it. We’re going home already, pau. Get licking, then go home. Because the banana in the Hawaiians’ sign is for release—open—so you no can catch the fish with banana on the boat. That’s bad luck. You never take banana on a boat when you go fishing. And like us, young, yeah. We Christians, too, but our parents, they always went two side. As strong Christian as they was, they still yet wen maintain the kapu system. Because I guess all their life, so they no can just disregard this kind stuff.

At one time I was the manager of Moloka‘i Fishermen’s Association, dealing with fishermen. One of my major problems was trying to educate the fishermen to take ice out in the ocean. And I had a hard time convincing them because they said, “Eh, boy. You no count the eggs before the chicken hatch. No, no, no. You don’t know if you going catch and you go take your ice.” So I tried sit down trying to figure out how I going convince them that they gotta take the ice.

WN: These are the old-timers?

WK: Yeah, this is our kapuna, trying to tell them. And so I found one way and I told ’em, “You no take ice because you going catch fish. You take the ice because the ice is part of your equipment; it’s part of the boat. Whether you catch or no catch, you have to take the ice.” And so using that concept of equipment-wise versus “Eh, you better take ice bumbai your fish going spoil.” You know what I mean? So you gotta figure one different method and that method worked, when the ice became part of the equipment. Same like you gotta take gas for your boat, because it’s part of the equipment. Then they start taking the ice. Not, you know, if you catch. That’s all right. If you get ice you can drink ice water outside there, whatever. But now they take their ice, eventually. But it was one hard seller; hard learning how you going meet the old folks with their set ways, cultural ways.

I remember we have to plant banana or ulu trees, mango trees during the hua. The moon hua; full moon. We used to—young time—we prepared the holes already. All the holes are prepared prior to the planting time and when that evening came, we used to drag the banana or drag the tree. And heavy, and place ’em in the ground and plant ’em. I asked them why we do this. “This tree is just one little tree. You can lift ’em up with one hand, plop ’em in the hole, and pau.” But no, no, we had to go through this ritual thing of getting hard time. Then I found out that what my mom was trying to portray was that it’s a mental telepathy on spiritual, projecting that this tree, that the fruit is so big that it’s heavy. So we was portraying
that the tree already had fruit on top and this was the process of trying to get the banana tree in the hole with the huge fruit that going bear in the future. And it works. What I mean, the tree grew and hell, had twenty hands on one bunch banana. And my goodness, I look at 'em, chee, plenty banana. But it’s the belief. To me, I no care what culture a person believes in. The key is the faith in the individual’s culture. If he believe in 'em, it works. And if you don’t believe it, respect it. Not because ah, it’s superstitious. You just respect the other person’s culture and that’s it. You leave it at that.

WN: Did you find any conflict between your Christianity upbringing and the kapu system?

WK: Well, I think mine’s go deeper. The conflict would rise spiritual kind, yeah. Because as I was growing up there was one mano that belongs to a family. This mano, the family used to go down feed 'em, certain times. The family died, the one who fed this mano, and I wanted to be the caretaker for this mano. And at one time in my life I went head on with Hawaiian. Head on. My uncle, John Kawai Cockett, knew the prayers of farming. He knew the prayers of fishing and he had the gift to interpret dreams. That was his gift. And so everything in Hawaiian that I wanted to know, I consulted with him. Then he would tell me. I remember wanting to be this caretaker for this mano down Keawa Nui Harbor. And I wen try live the Hawaiian lifestyle where I did my prayers in the morning, at lunch, and at night. I never did miss the prayers. I was real faithful to 'em and everything. One night, we were staying at Keawa Nui, I heard people talking. And had three different people talking to my uncle in the room, all in Hawaiian. So I got up my wife and I told her, “Try listen to that.”

So she says, “Who’s that?”

I said, “Shh.”

And we sleep early yeah, those days. Eight o’clock, nine o’clock we sleeping already, so this thing happened about ten o’clock. I hear them talking so I no say nothing. But I all excited, I like know who’s this because I know that’s spirits. It’s not natural, this. So next morning—my uncle is up every morning at four o’clock—he’s drinking his coffee already so I come downstairs. I like look at him. And he stay pissed, man. You can see the expression; he mad. I don’t know what happened, but anyway I go make my cup coffee. I sit down on the same table with him, I watching him, then all of a sudden he tell me, “You want to be the kahu for this mano down here?”

So I look at him. I tell him, “Oh, yeah.” I don’t want to lie to him. I said, “How you know?”

He tell me, “Yeah, they came last night.” Two old Hawaiian kapuna and the mano, himself, came. Three of ’em came and they was questioning my uncle of who was I. How come I moved from Manawai and I stay Keawa Nui? How come I like be the caretaker? So my uncle said, “No, no, no. He no like. Ah, this boy don’t know nothing.” He wen send them away. So I stay on cloud nine, I all happy. I figure, eh, it works; the Hawaiian stuff works. So the first thing I ask my uncle is what was the mano’s name. He look at me and said, “What?”

“I want the name of the mano. Who was this mano, what his name?”
He don't know, he never ask. So I guess he knew afterwards because if we knew the name we could kahea, yeah, we could call. But we never know. I never know the name but I was excited about it. So that was that. And then couple weeks later, what happened was my kids got up in the morning and tell, “Dad, dad, dad.”

I said, “What?”

“Papa all jam up. His face all beat up.” So I look at my uncle, he had all black and blues on his face. And not the normal bruise that you can see from fighting. This was kepalō kind markings. Black, dark. I look at him and thinking chee, trying to figure out. So I tell him, “What we going do? We going use Hawaiian salt, we going use bamboo, we going use some ti leaf. What we going do?”

So he tell me, take him home—he was living at ‘Ōhi’a. He was born with ti leaf and he going fix himself with ti leaf. So I took him home that morning. That evening I picked him up. He was brand new. Nothing was wrong with him and I was so amazed. In fact, number one, I was mad already. I was mad that first time in my life I see one spirit physically harm a living person, my uncle. And when I asked my uncle what happened, my uncle said, “Last night my sister Mary came to me.”

And then when he said, “My sister Mary,” I trying to figure out, Aunty Mary, you know, which one of my aunties? My aunty died. She died in the forties or thirties but she died long time ago. He said my aunty came and wen pākt him or slam him down on the floor. That’s when I wen ask him what we going do. He told me, take him home. He born with ti leaf, he going fix himself with ti leaf. So when I picked him up in the evening he was brand new; nothing happened. So I look at him and I tell, “Uncle, you gotta teach me this. You gotta. What if this happen to me or my kids?”

You know what he said? He turn around and he tell me, “You know, boy, stick to Christianity. You stick to Jesus Christ, nothing going harm you.” And that was that, he left it at that. And that was that for me. I left it and I never go back to the Hawaiian style of worshipping or trying to be the caretaker for the manō or anything. I said, that’s it. I going stick to Christianity because as I was growing up I get lot of experience in the supernatural pertaining to spirits and fear and all that kind. I get scared. I don’t look forward to sleeping at night when I was about fourteen, fifteen years old. I always seen a black man come on the side of me. You can feel and you can see ’em within your mind. And when you try call out you no can get voice, nothing. I fear at night. I wen try see some Hawaiians for pray over. I went to Honolulu, Waimānalo, I had three women pray over me for three days. And they say everything was fine; I no need worry because they wen ‘oki. My personal ‘aumakua was one mo‘o; was my god. And then they took ’em away from me so I no need worry no more. Couple years after the three women prayed over me it came back again. So one of my uncles told me, “Oki means cut. They never uproot. So like a branch you cut, it grows back.” But I noticed that once I came to Christianity, then I never fear nothing. I wasn’t scared.

One of my commercial endeavors was, we used to dive for turtle. We were commercial turtle divers and we dived thirty, forty feet and that’s all shark-infested waters. But my thoughts were strong on Christianity so to me, my responsibility was for my family. I gotta work and feed my family. His responsibility is just keep the sharks away from me. I not supposed to be
looking for sharks while I was trying to work. So with that in mind, I feared nothing in the ocean and I just went. We catch three turtles a day. I fished with this guy Milton Place, and me and him we sold our turtle in Lahaina, on Maui, to all the restaurants. And I thought we had one good business going until the feds wen supersede the state.

WN: Oh, make it illegal.

WK: Right, illegal, eh. And Moloka'i, I can take you where get hundreds and thousands of turtle, just infested with 'em. We kind of no like Maui's technique of fishing our turtle because they used bang-stick. We gaff our turtle and from time to time the turtles take off the gaff and, you know, fair game. He run away. That's fine, but we never did used bang-stick like . . .

WN: What is bang-stick?

WK: Bang-stick, it's a power head they use now for protect themselves against sharks. It's a sling with a power head bullet on top. So when they hit the turtle the turtle is dead. But if they hit the turtle on the back, the whole turtle is ruined. So just like they gotta hit 'em on the head so only the head blow up. But it does two things. The bang-stick draws shark to the area because of the blood, number one. Number two, which is the worst one, the blood of the turtle in the turtle's house kills the turtle house. All the turtles, once they leave their house, they not going come back for the next ten years. That house is dead because the blood of the turtle come in that area. So to me it was one of the worst way of trying to commercialize turtle, by using bang-stick. And we told the guys in Maui, "You come here, you gotta fish our style. We free dive and we gaff our turtle." And then when we go out there and we start seeing sharks, we know something wrong. These guys using the bang-stick, yeah.

I remember every day catching turtle. We used to take the lā'au or the fat of the turtle and we dry 'em in the sun. And the oil from the turtle's fat we keep and that was the medicine if you get real bad bum. This fat turtle oil would guarantee you not going get scars. And plus, you get that sickness called pink eye.

WN: Yeah.

WK: This is the medicine for the pink eye, the turtle oil. You just put 'em on and you heal. So we used that medicinally. But it gotta be from the sun. If you going cook 'em, it doesn't have the effect. Gotta be nature.

WN: So how did you get your first—how did you get started in commercial fishing?

WK: I would say, it's not commercial fishing. That's home consumption. We fished all our life. Every day we fished. In fact, from the time I could walk, I remember going down the beach. And what we used to do, we used to [move] the ʻiliʻili next to streams coming down. And at the ʻiliʻili had what we call one pile stone just like one imu. All these pile stones all over the place piled neatly. We used to go down and I get my bucket with me and I rebuild the pile by taking away this pile stone and reconstruct a new pile. But what we really doing is catching what we call ʻalamihī, the black crab. The small, little black crab. And we catch plenty. And that was one of the best raw crabs, but you have to catch plenty because it's small, yeah. But the imu was all over with this ʻiliʻili. And then sometimes when you come down the beach
you see your imu broke you get pissed off, you get mad. Chee, guys. You get wahines go catch crab they go 'ili'ili to 'ili'ili broke it down for catch the crab, but they no put 'em back. So you live within your district, you get mad. Chee, these guys, maha'oi boy. Why they no make their own?

Anyway, I used to fish every day. I remember growing up taking my spear. My brother, Wilfred Kalipi, taught me how to throw net. And he taught me—Hawaiians we used to throw the stone in the water. You know, in the dirty water you throw the stone and you count till three seconds then you throw your net where you threw the rock. I did that, ho, caught one 'anae about three pounds. Big mullet. But everything was processing; I was learning. Every day I go out I learn how to fish. I learn the lifestyle of the fish.

Just like when I teach kids—make presentation about fishing to kids in school—I say the first thing we learn was when we going prepare ourselves for fishing we get our shoes ready, our clothes ready, everything ready. And when we going we say we going holoholo, or we going 'auana, or we going mauka.

And so the kids say, "Why? Why you gotta say you going mauka? Why you no say we going fishing?"

I say okay, again when we look at culture we’re right back to ancient times. Because we worship the wind, makani, we no can say we going fishing. Because if we say fishing, the wind going take our words down to the sea and going tell the fish we’re coming. So when we reach there no going get the fish. So we gotta be tricky; we gotta think something else so we say we going mauka, which means mountain. Now the wind going to mountain and tell the birds go because we going come get their feathers. Now we trick them. We go down the beach, nobody wen warn the fish. So this is one method that still exists in modern time of when we say we going holoholo, visiting, we going mauka, and all that kind.

I’m a throw-net fisherman; I catch all my fish with throw net. I can surround fish but I enjoy throwing because it’s one of my exercise. You know, some guys golf for get away from the rat race. I throw net and that’s my recreation. So in fishing you need the sun for throw net, unless you’re throwing for moi and you get certain holes, you just go over there and you just throw your net. And the key is the tide; what tide it is for just throw your net and catch the fish. I’m a mullet fisherman. I throw for mullet, weke, kala, manini, that type reef fishing, throw net. So when I go fishing now, I don’t wear anything white. I can wear blue, black, brown, any dark color because the brighter the color, if you can see the fish, the fish can see you. That’s one thing you gotta remember.

WN: You caught weke wearing white (chuckles).

WK: Oh, yeah. Okay, but the fish is feeding, yeah, and the tide is running [now]. When the tide run, then the fish they hungry because when no more water they no can come up eat. And then when the water start running, the fish come real hungry, they start coming up and just like eh, nobody going stop me. It’s lunchtime or dinnertime. Morning and evening is the best time for fish. Morning time the fish just got up, they’re coming up, they’re looking for their food. Nighttime and late evening, let’s eat fast before come dark. Because soon as come dark they gotta go sleep. So these were the best times to fish, early in the morning or late in the
evening. Another thing is good running tide. The tide gotta be running up. When the tide running up, all the fish start coming in; all species of fish feed with the running tide.

So like this morning was good running tide so I go out. Then you gotta get one good wind. Without the wind then the fish going see you. When got clear water the fish see you from far, you no can get close to the fish. So you need the wind and the wind gotta be behind your back and the sun gotta be behind your back. Because if you going against the wind when you throw the net, the net going come back down to you. You throw with the wind. The sun is behind you, that way you can see far, you’re not looking into the sun.

WN: So gotta have direct sun? Cannot have like overcast days?

WK: Okay, you can get overcast pertaining what kind fish you looking for and pertaining if you understand the fish feeding and habits. I remember my father fishing right within his district. He walked down to the beach, he stand there all day, one spot. So we say, “Oh, that’s Kalipi’s spot.” The other side was Won’s spot and Willie Place’s spot. All the old-timers had their own area for fish. And then during that time I never know about the *ahupua’a* concept, but they knew *ahupua’a*. And as I was growing I studied the fish. And as I studied the fish I knew how the fish travel. And they travel all on these old-timers’ spots; where everybody standing the fish would travel that way. So now modern, I no stand by my father’s spot. I walk down where all these old-timers used to stand and I walking on the path of the fish and the fish all coming up towards me while I walking down. And so, maybe it’s because I’m impatient; I no more enough patience and I like action fast.

WN: Maybe get less fish, too, though, now days.

WK: Yes, yes. Well, I don’t think so. I think the fish is still here.

WN: Oh, yeah?

WK: It’s still here. I know one teacher told me, “Which is your favorite fishing ground?”

And I told him, “That’s a loaded question there.” I said, “Anyplace in the ocean is my favorite ground because if you know the habits of fish, you can go anyplace, even in Honolulu, and catch fish.” Cause I remember Paiko Drive, living ‘Āina Haina and I taught one of my landlord, Ing, one Chinese, how to set net out there. We had three tub mullet.
reaction. And one school fish might be thirty yards away. This fish right in front of you will run and scare that fish thirty yards away or fifty yards away. So you gotta really know how to walk, what to avoid. Some coral is brittle. When you walk on it, crack, that sound travel and scare the fish. So you gotta know. And then your lepo. When you're walking you gotta watch your dirt. That going scare the fish.

Okay, when you fish, sometime you get what you call nature; the nature of the clouds. The overcast hides the sun and it casts one big shadow on the ocean. This shadow, when it hits the school of fish, scare the fish. So the fish automatic run back to the harbor. That's nature. When nature scare the fish, it takes three minutes, four minutes, the fish come right back out and they start feeding again. Whether the sun is up or not, the fish going come back out, okay. Now if I wen scare the fish, or worse yet the tourist wen scare the fish, and Moloka'i we get helicopter come and watch us. When we throwing net they come by us. And you know the “taka-taka-taka.” That vibration scare the whole fish and they [tourists] stay waving at us (WN laughs). And we stay over there, you know, cussing. Oh, man, chee! Then the whole fish run. And when you scare the fish, forget about it, because remember, you racing against the tide. So now, it going take half an hour before these fish going come back out and you no can wait half an hour. The tide change drastically within that half an hour. Our running tide over here is real fast and you gotta move with 'em. So if the fish went, just look for the next school.

So, like me, throw net. Squidding, I was taught—this is a good story. My father taught me how to squid. I go with him every day watch him squidding, him and my mom, and I'm too young, I stay on the boat. And I see him eating [something]. Ho, I don't know what he eating but I'm hungry, man. So I tell, “Pa, I like some.” So he turn around he give me his Star chew tobacco. He bust one small piece and give me. Ho, it burn the hell out of me! I stay drinking the salt water. Then the second time we went squidding again. Again I came hungry and he's eating something I don't know, but I know it's not chew tobacco. So, “Pa, I like some.” And we no talk. We listen, we watch, and when we ready for do we going do 'em, but we never did say, “Oh, I like do that.” No, bumbai we do 'em wrong and we going get licking. So everything observation. You learn, you learn. If you like learn you watch 'em. So he eating again so I tell 'em, “Oh, Pa, I like some.”

He grab one squid and he broke the 'ala'ala from the squid. He said, “Here.” And I'm like, oh no, not this. You know, put 'em in my mouth, tears coming down my eyes and I eating it. I dare not spit it out, man. Today, I no can die. I can go out, I hungry, I just rip that 'ala'ala, I can eat 'em when diving. But that time, ah (chuckles), that was horrible, horrible, man. You know, tears coming down my eyes and I eating that raw squid 'ala'ala, eh.

Then one day, I was about I'd say nine years old, he told me, “Jump off the boat and follow the boat behind me.”

I said, “Oh, okay.” We used to take the coconut and we chewed that coconut and every time we come by one squid hole, he spit the coconut and the [water] come glass. The water just glass. You can see right down on the bottom. Or, we take kukui nut, we smash 'em, and used to get Durham bag, yeah, you roll your own [cigarettes]. We put the kukui all inside the Durham and every time we dip 'em in the water with the rope. We just dip 'em down and then the whole water come glass because the kukui oil. Anyway, I was walking behind the
boat now, and as I walked behind the boat, come calm yeah, right in the back of the boat. My father said follow him, so I following the boat. All of a sudden I see this big squid, probably maybe seven, eight pounder. Big! So I look, wow! “Pa, Pa, big he'e over here.”

“Poke 'em, poke 'em.” He keep going so I stay over there catch my first squid. Ho, all happy, big squid. Seven-pounder, take 'em home. Reach home now, I keep my squid separate from his squid 'cause I caught this squid, that's my squid. Then we reach home. So I tell my ma, “Ho, Ma, look my squid.”

So she went to ask my father, “Oh, this boy caught this squid?”

My father said, “Yeah.”

I said, “Yeah, Ma. Pa makapa'a. He blind (chuckles).” Ho, but I never know he was teaching me. That was his method of teaching me by making me follow the boat and purposely running over the squid, then see if I'm going—'cause if I miss 'em, he would go right around and come back to 'em, because that was a too big squid, that. There's no way you can miss that. But that's his method of teaching me and today I realize that. That time, ah he was blind (chuckles).

And he had his own ways in teaching. I remember going in the mountain with him. We used to take the kukui tree and we slit maybe six inches. The tree is a huge tree, but we just strip six to eight inches about two foot long and we take the bark home and pound 'em, pound 'em, and put his throw net in 'em. And his net turned brown, reddish. That's the way he used to dye his net with the kukui bark. Then we used to hang it up. And then I get plenty stones—anchor stones like—with holes and we used to hang the nets up with these big boulders that they drill hole in. Then we stretch the knot on the net. He had all linen net, the olden days. When you throw the net those days, get the yellow flower rock. If the net get caught on that, ho boy, you cry for open 'em, man. You cry for open (chuckles). That stuff just like it grabs the coral.

And then I remember, I was raised with the Kalilikanes. John Aiona Kalilikane was one of the greatest fishermen living at East End. His nickname was Jack, too, Jack Kalilikane. He had twenty children and his life was a fisherman, but he was the only man that fishes for specific. If he want akule, he going get akule. He like menpachi, he going get menpachi. He like kala. . . . You know, he identified what he going catch. Other fishermen they just lay their net, and anybody can lay net, anybody can. Some fishermen over here even lay net surround blind. They know about here the fish stay so they surround the whole area and then they catch their fish. Jack looked for his fish. He see his fish and he surround his fish. And I learned plenty from him. We used to go surround white weke, red weke, and then I used to be one scout. And I was raised with the Kalilikanes, the Sagaras. We all raised all together and we learn everything. And to me, I was going with the Kalilikanes so I can learn more in fishing. He was a commercial fisherman so I was the scout. They send me out and I go and scout the area. And then I see the fish, I look at the size of the fish. If was big enough, then I wave my hand, then they surround me. I'm the target point. Then we bring the net in. He taking out fifteen tub to twenty tub, he shipping 'em to Honolulu to auction block. Big kind weke. He give me five gallon fish. Eh, I'm so happy about it. To me, it's the not the fish that I wanted, it's the knowledge of learning how to fish. And to me, that was priceless, what I was learning
from these old folks. I learned that type of fishing from Jack Kalilikane.

Then I learned, when the fish go up on certain road, you let the fish go up, you close, wherever the road is, the fish going come right back where the fish went up. And this running tide. So let’s say there’s a reef with all the coral sticking up. Now the tide going run. As the tide come up, the fish get certain place, like one makaha, the fish going come up. And the fish going run the same place. So all you need is one piece net and as the fish come up you close this area. The whole fish going come back the same place and you catch all your fish. So was real simple. To today we use that technique.

Then, I start learning bull pen [net fishing] from this Filipino, Queenie, another old-timer. To me, bull pen should be our new technique. What I mean, during kapu season of mullet—mullet is kapu from December first to March. We should be closing the mullet in October, not December. I’m a fisherman. I catch mullet October, November, and they’re full with eggs during this period. So I really say October should be the month for close, not December. And if we look at bull pen net, it’s hard purse net. It’s making one fish pond in the ocean. You catch everything except the mullet. That’s the only fish you no can catch.

WN: Why?

WK: Because that fish he climbs to the surface and that fish can see. He can see where the opening stay and he comes right out; it doesn’t stay in. You know, you catch everything. Only the mullet it doesn’t catch.

WN: How big is a bull pen?

WK: A bull pen can range from—the bag would be 200 feet, 250 feet, just the bag alone, okay. Let me show you one diagram of bull pen fishing. Why I’m so with the bull pen, the bull pen fishing you preserve the fish, number one. You get quality fish when you pick ’em up. You can take the money fish and let go the junk fish. And the fish is live. We lay outside the breakers breaking over here. Your bag is roughly in about eight to ten feet [deep] water, that’s where you put your bag. Now, eight to ten feet of water is low tide, not high tide now. Because next morning what going happen? No going get water in the ocean. You lay this during nighttime at the highest tide. You set your bag first. Then you come out in the evening and you run your wings. The wings close the ‘auwai. You get ‘auwai coming in, you close that. You know what I mean?

WN: Mm hm.

WK: And then this is known as your fence. The fence run all the way to land. This fence can be three feet high. It doesn’t have to be the seven-foot net, but all your nets are hard purse, it doesn’t gill anything, okay.

WN: It’s like a fence, actually.

WK: Yeah, it’s a fence. So now when the fish travels this way or this way—up or down—it hits the fence and automatic the fish going out. When they go out they hit here, they going in here. Once they in the bag, they going be swimming like that.
WN: How come they no swim the other way?

WK: They don’t, they don’t. What you mean? They going follow, they follow. If they come back they going in this pocket and go right back here. This is why you get your wings. And once they in here—this mouth opening is about five feet opening—so once they in here, pau. They no can come out through here. They just going back and forth like this. And when you do check your net, the first thing you do is you close your pen; you close your mouth.

WN: How often you check? You check the next day?

WK: Next day you check, you harvest already. You get six, seven hundred pounds inside here. And when you look in your pen—your bull pen—you think you at Sea Life Park (WN laughs). Get *ula* here. . . . The first thing we look if get shark inside. If get shark we go close to the shark and with the pole stick or the *ko’o* you push your net down for let the shark cross over the net. Then you free already. Then you close your bag, you jump in the net, and you get the school *weke* here, the school *kāmā* here, all the species are within their own sections within the net. The school *kala* moving, the *enenue*. Everything is inside here. And so what you do now is you look for all the balloon fish and you take the balloon fish out, throw ’em out of the pen. Then after that you can section your net, then you go get what we call a bag. We put our bag down, the current shooting this way we make the bag this way. And then the bag stay long like that, yeah, we can lift this thing up. We push all the fish inside, we lift ’em up, then we bring the boat inside. Then with the scoop net we start scooping.

WN: Oh.

WK: Scooping everything off the bag and putting ’em in the boat. But it’s live, fresh, and your ice—you’re brining while you’re pulling your fish right into the brine already. And top grade quality fish. Only thing you no can catch is mullet. And so this is the type fishing I *wen* like the commercial fishermen go in during the close season of the mullet. Because as long we use gill net, there’s no way we going stop the fishermen from catching the mullet. To me, we should make this the law that we can use hard purse net and no gill net. Any gill net found, you confiscate ’em and that’s a fine, automatic. No ifs, buts about it. No gill net belong near the beach during *kapu* season.

WN: Because you can catch *kapu* fish like mullet?

WK: Oh, you going drop your net you going catch ’em. But the law no say you no can use the net. The law say you no can catch mullet. So now they trying to look at laws saying: let’s say, you no can lay 200 feet from shoreline. Who going measure? And even if I lay over 200 feet outside, I still yet going catch the mullet. That’s the point! Mullet travel in and out. I know where mullet travel on the outside beyond 200 feet. Then if he tell me, “Oh, you no can lay [within] 200 feet,” I going out lay beyond 200 and catch all the mullet. What, nothing wrong with that? And that’s what I no understand, you know. So it cannot be. I’m fascinated by the ancient Hawaiians because their *kapu* season was November, December, January, February, the *makahiki*. And you look at the *makahiki* it was strictly worshipping of Lono, god. Nobody can fish. And the emphasis wasn’t, the fish is within this spawning period. The emphasis was, this is the time for worship Lono, a time for peace and fun.
And whereas we, with modern technology, know this is spawning period for all the fish—all fish during November, December get eggs, all fish. And so we make laws. Our laws is a $500 fine. We make laws that we no more enough staff for police. Ancient laws, you broke 'em, death is the penalty so you'd think twice before you da kine. We no more teeth in the law and I don't know if our politicians are really serious about the fishing industry in Hawai'i. Right now, the fishermen are complaining about ciguatera poisoning from eating fish. And yet, the state doesn't fund the University of Hawai'i. We had one doctor over there, one Japanese guy, who do all the tests. He no more money for do more research and try to cap this. And so ultimate, all the fishermen take the loss. Now if the fishermen no can catch the fish, the merchants no can sell. You know, the infrastructure going hurt.

WN: They gotta go outside to get the fish.

WK: Yeah, you forcing them go to deep sea. Plenty guys say that deep sea is the answer. It's yes and no. Yes, if you get financial and if you get the knowledge. You know, I used to try make my fishermen go deep sea fishing. And I thinking, how can I do that? The Portuguese can go out, the Japanese can go out. They stay three, four days. Their fish boxes stay full before they come home. Hawaiians, they gotta come home. They go out, they come home already because they like watch the late show or they like watch TV. It's a culture thing of how one live. But when you really, really look at 'em, it's educational. How you going train the guy to be one fisherman. A Japanese and a Portuguese fisherman, it's an inheritance; they wen learn when they was young. They know what bait for use, how to enter the boat, they know everything about the fish. Same like me, I know everything about throw net. Same with the deep sea. How I going try convert one guy, "Eh, go deep sea fish." He don't know what he doing from the time he drop his bait. I remember throwing our line, and just like no more end. How come no more end? How come no more bottom? Not realizing the current was pulling [the line]. My hook was straight. It was right under the boat and going straight that way, wasn't going down. So you gotta know what kind weight you need for your hook for get 'em down to the bottom. All that different kind.

Then the state wen let go what they call taape or perch. The perch is not only reef but it's in the deep sea. It's eating 'opakapaka food.

WN: Taape?

WK: Yeah, the taape. So here now the fishermen who know where the 'opakapaka stay, they throw their line and all of a sudden they say, what the hell is this small little fish? No more money, eh. It hurts them. With all that finance investment. But what you going do now? It's there already. The taape is there, you no can stop 'em and it's by the ton.

WN: That's introduced fish?

WK: Yeah, taape is not local. Have you ever seen this half-breed crab, 'ala'eke? That's introduced. Our young days we can go, you know the imu I talked about, you go make your hand, you can catch all these 'alamahi. Today you no can do that. If you do that the half-breed Samoan crab would bite your hand. You no can do that no more. ['Ala'eke was] introduced, but that was a good introduction because it's edible. Only that crab was killing the Samoan crab. When the Samoan shed it's shell for soft then this crab start killing 'em. But
our Samoan crab is gradually coming back because everybody catches the ‘ala’eke. Every luau [la’au] you go, going get that crab. That’s part of the raw crab, menu.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, so when you were going school and everything, you were going fishing, then.

WK: Yes, in fact at Kilohana School when we went to tenth grade, I remember whenever used to be malie or glass water, we cut out from school. We wen go look squid yeah. Squid run during the month of October, November. In ancient times, the squid used to just be abundant. When I say abundant, I thought my father was one of the best squidders in the district. One day he would go out, he would pick up 200 squid and I said, “Damn, my old man can squid.” Then when I go school I found out this guy Kanahele—he’s an old-timer down Kamalō—came home with 400 squid. I think, wow, 400 squid. Eh, the most I ever caught was 100, one day. And that was a killer because your back gets sore. You keep poking the squid. That’s all you see is squid. Those days there was so much squid, we used to kaula’i the squid, dry all our squid. And we sell ’em to Ah Ping. You know Ah Ping? He used to buy our squid dollar quarter [$1.25] a pound. So one year I told my uncle, “Eh, Uncle, I going look for one market.” We had about 200 pounds dried squid. I said, “I going fly Honolulu look for one market for us.” So I flew down and I went to Tamashiro [Market]. I think was Larry. He give me two dollar half [$2.50]. Ho, I all excited. Two dollar half for 200 pound squid. Wow, we going score. So I come home, I go to my uncle and said, “We got a buyer.” So he’s smiling and he tell me oh, he sold ’em.

I tell, “What?” He sold ’em to Ah Ping for dollar quarter [$1.25].

(Laughter)

WK: And Ah Ping would take ’em to Tamashiro and sell ’em for two dollar half [$2.50].

“Oh, Uncle, we had ’em!” But anyway, we fish like that. You know, glass water, me and couple of our friends who live in this area we just play hooky—we cut out from school—and we right in the ocean. If we not in the ocean then we’re in the mountain gathering whatever we like, pick up bamboos. And when we were young we used to see all the deer but we never know how to hunt because we were too young. So eventually, as we came into our teens, then we wen start kolohe. When you’re young you do mischievous things so we no different. So when we were young kid we did kolohe stuff. But that was food; that supplement for the table.

WN: Ah Ping used to buy your fish a lot?

WK: Yes. Ah Ping and this guy Jessie Dudoit. Jessie used to buy everything we can produce for fifty cents a pound. You know, this is ‘o’io, mullet. Eh, we come in with thousand pound, he buy ’em right off of us.

WN: Dudoit was what? He had a store or . . .

WK: No, no, he ship ’em to auction block in Honolulu.
WK: You know, he was the brokerage and us was, "Eh, if I can get one guy buy all my fish one place, you got it, man. Fifty cents, I no care, here take 'em all."

WN: You guys ever thought of being your own brokers and going out yourself?

WK: No, not during that time when I was growing up. All we wanted to do was fish, fish. Every day fish and sometimes we gotta stop fishing. My mom lived on fish, my dad lived on fish. My mom couldn't eat rice, she got choked. She gotta eat poi with fish; everything fish. And then I tell 'em, you gotta get one better freezer. So she bought a big huge freezer. My brother was a good diver, my brother Philip. And he dive for uhu, big kind parrot fish. I was one diver but I was more net man. I figure, you dive four hours you catch maybe thirty pound of mānini. I go throw net one hour I going catch hundred pound mānini. So there's no comparison with what the net can do. And I like throw net, yeah. So anyway, we fish a lot so my mom bought one huge freezer. Within a week or two we fill up the freezer right to the top with fish and we no can go fish no more 'cause no more room. I still yet fish because I give my fish away. I go house to house to the old folks and just, "Eh, get plenty fish. Here, here." I just give 'em. And we enjoy doing that with the old folks.

WN: Tubz told me that he would go like to cockfights and stuff like that. Did you folks do that?

WK: Yes, yes. Yeah, in the sixties—during the sixties, seventies—I came home. My uncle gave me my first throw net; now I got my own throw net. I was unemployed and all I got to do, I fish; I fish and hunt for a living. And I do lot of trading. I sell my fish at the chicken fight to the Filipinos, and then my deer that I catch, I swap 'em to this guy, Harriet Ne's husband—Jacob Ne. I take my deer down, I give 'em a deer, he give me pig—live pig—baby pig. And every time I get deer I go give him he give me baby pig. So I get enough pigs, now.

WN: Good deal.

WK: Yeah, and then I remember The Neighborhood Store was run by the Filipino Federation [of America]—these guys . . .

WN: Oh, Moncado?

WK: Yeah. They no eat meat so I used to catch fish and take 'em up there and trade fish for milk for my kids. You know, I trade for rice. I did heavy trading. I take the fish, I barter, here. And that Jacob Ne who gave me baby pigs I told 'em, "Thank you, thank you, Uncle, I get enough pig." He give me chicken now. Live chicken. So I think wow, what I going do with all this chicken? But Hawaiians, if you going say no, that's one insult. There's no way you going say no. I take 'em, "Thank you, thank you."

She [mother] tell me, well, I gave her something, you gotta give back. So I tell I going take some squash. I give 'em vegetables too because I not working so we plant and we fish and we hunt. So we do a lot of trading and we sell all our fish at the Filipino camps and we peddle the fish.
Eventually I worked for Lokahi Pacific, it's a community development corporation from OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] of Maui County. So I became the chairman and eventually I worked for the subsidiary of Lokahi which was Moloka'i Fishermen's Association and I was the head manager. The first thing I try analyze is how I can get the most money from the fish. I represent the fishermen now. So I said the first thing I going do, I going take away the middleman and I going direct to the retailer so I can get more for my money. So I had all of Safeway, they buy all my fish. All of Safeway, Big Way, Foodland, all of Maui, Ooka's, Ah Fook's, all buy our fish. Then I found out one thing with the retailer. Although they're not the middlemen, they were particular on what they wanted. The retail wanted the best fish. They never care for the junk fish. They wanted kāmā, the top of the grade. And they couldn't handle the volume. So I stay evaluating all my marketing techniques: the strategy, the advantage, disadvantage. I figured eh, we cannot do this. There's no way I can run one business where they [retailers] can say, "Oh, I can take thirty pound 'o'io."

"I get thousand pound inside there and you only like thirty pound?" Eh, something gotta change. So now I think I gotta go through the wholesaler. I gotta look for one good wholesaler. So what I did, I think was ideal, was I went to the University of Hawai'i and I wen look at who was doing marketing [research]. And one woman over there was doing her thesis on marketing in Hawai'i, the fishing industry. And this woman, I got a hold of her, we sat down. We talked about everything. You know, I needed information on marketing. She recommended to me Maeda Fish Market was the best market that—through her whole interview—was up and up with the fishermen; up and up with the dealers he dealt with. Everything pertaining to marketing, Maeda was the number one wholesaler.

WN: Where's Maeda?

WK: Maeda Fish Market was by 'A'ala Park side on [O'ahu]. But it doesn’t exist anymore. But anyway, I went straight to him [when] I was with Lokahi Pacific

They [Lokahi Pacific] were in the restaurant industry—fish, in Maui—and we used to ship our fish to Maui—our reef fish—and it spoiled. And just like they were purposely saying eh, they into deep sea fish where the money is at. They no more time for this reef thing. I used to get mad. And had one Haole guy, Fredericks, I think, his name. He was the best market and restaurant. I learned plenty from him. But pertaining to retail outlet with the Japanese, no. He never understand the cultural lifestyle and the concept of marketing with the local entity. So I wen put lot of pressure on them 'cause I said, "You guys not helping Moloka'i. Moloka'i right now, we get fish." In fact, my first fight with Lokahi Pacific is I needed markets. They said, "No, we need fish."

I said, "You need markets." So it's just like the eggs and the chicken concept.

They said, "No, you need the fish to prove that you need the market."

I said, "Eh, you need the market. You can always tell a market, 'Eh, when you ready, you like deal.' " You no need make commitment to the market, but you gotta establish your market.

They said, "No, no, no. You gotta get your fishermen committed."
I was so mad so I said, "Okay, okay." So I called a meeting. We had about twenty-something local fishermen, East End. We all came to Kilohana School and had a meeting. And I said, "Okay, you traditionally sell your kala [for] dollar, one fish." That's our tradition, Moloka'i. Dollar one fish, and one fish is about fifteen pounds. So I said, "Lokahi Pacific is willing to buy our fish for thirty cents to fifty cents a pound. Now, think about it. Fifty cents a pound for fifteen pounds."

So they say, "Shoot, let's go." One weekend they went out they wen pick up 7,000 pounds kala. Seven thousand pounds! The guy who was handling the fish that time at the co-op called Honolulu. Honolulu could handle only 1,000 pounds of kala. We were stuck with 6,000 pounds. So the guy never know what for do. He threw the kala away down the rubbish pile. We fired the guy. The guy got fired instantly because we said, "You could have given the kala to anybody for dollar, one. Sell 'em at loss, but no throw the fish away. That's waste, that." But anyway, this Lokahi took the loss because Lokahi wen have to pay all the fishermen, guarantee. But this showed Lokahi, eh, you get fishermen so we need the markets now. Now, let's establish markets. But, what a way for learn. So the first thing they told me, 'cause I never know nothing about business, they told me, "Okay, Billy, you gotta give us one projection. One one year projection of what you guys going be producing, how much pounds." I thought the guy was joking me.

I looking at the guy and I said, "You must be kidding."

They said, "What you mean?"

I said, "I don't know how much fish we going catch."

They said, "No, you gotta get me one projection."

I told 'em, "What you mean I gotta give? How we going know if going get rough and all that." But I never understand the business world.

So they told me, "You gotta get one projection. We gotta get figures to work by." So from there I sat down and I said okay, I identified January all the way down, the good months, the bad months. And in December was high money but we no going get fish.

They tell me, "Why?"

I said, "Because the fishermen get their own markets, they no need us. All their life, plus January going be bad."

They said, "Why?"

I said, "They all drunk already. They going stay drunk for the . . ." You know, all this kind stuff. And we had so much fun with them. I wen learn so much with Lokahi Pacific.

**WN:** What was your position?

**WK:** I was the head manager for the Moloka'i Fishermen's Association. And so, I went down to
Honolulu, I met Willie Maeda. When I came back to my board of directors I said, “Okay, we going get ripped off.” Ho, boy, they no like that.

They said, “Oh, how come?”

I said, “Well, my evaluation on co-ops, number one, is it doesn’t last.” Now, you gotta put yourself in the buyers’ position. They say, “Oh, there’s another co-op coming up, let’s rip ’em off, okay.” That’s trying to be real realistic in business. Number one, we’re going to have to establish two things before we can even talk business.

They said, “What?”

I said, “We gotta get quality supply and consistent supply. If we can establish these two things, red carpet. We can name our price. But we first gotta do that.” This is where I was telling you about the education of fishermen about ice. So work it out, work it out. Now, we getting consistent. In three years I brought the weke from ten cents a pound—the fish market pay us, ten cents a pound—in three years we was getting dollar seventy cents [$1.70] a pound for the same fish, white weke. And so when the fishermen come here and tell me, “Eh, the market ripping us off,” I open this big chart of the fish price movement.

And I say, “Look at ’em. I don’t think the market is ripping us off.” And the negotiation, just like I went down with—the guy’s name was Grant Fredericks, over at Lokahi Pacific. He was with the deep sea fish. He went out and never like negotiate with the market. He [would] just go down and say, “Oh, I want to sit down and . . . .” Eh, you don’t do that. You don’t take out your book and say, “I like know what kind prices we can go on red weke. What you can give me on the kāmā?” No, it doesn’t work that way. So I sit back, I watch the guy. He pissed off already because Maeda no like talk to him. Maeda busy. He own one company and he gotta sell fish. So I look at him so pau, the guy tell him, “We should dump this guy. We should go deal with Haili Fish Market.”

I said, “No, no, no. I going make my own market out there.” So I go to Willie, I said, “Willie, when we can meet?”

So Willie tell, “Oh, lunchtime. What you doing lunchtime?”

I tell, “Oh, okay.” So the first thing I learned, pertaining to the marketing, is personality; it’s becoming friends. It’s knowing Willie, knowing his family, telling him about my kids, my family. Eh, to hell with the fishing industry. Right now we go out, we go down the bar, we drink one, two bottle beer, talk story about—he get some old friends over here. “Eh, you know this guy, you know that guy?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah.” We talk, “Oh, he’s all right.” But we start become socialize. To me, that’s more important than getting to the nitty gritty of economics. We, Hawaiians local, is we socialize first. Then eventually Willie tell, “Eh, what your fishermen think.”

“Ah, chee, Willie, they like more money for their kāmā.”

“How much?”
"Eh, they like at least two dollar a pound."

He said, "Eh, tell 'em they get 'em. They get 'em. The price two dollar a pound."

"Shoot." Go back. Eh, maybe I establish only two, three fish price, but I establish. It's a forward movement and it's time that you build with the market. Consistency. So I tell 'em, "Eh, how the fish looking?"

He tell, "Eh, top shape. Top shape, Kalipi." I remember one disaster had in Honolulu. Moloka'i, on the fishing industry, was hard because the only time we would make 'em was when we can produce 15,000 to 20,000 pounds per month. And from time to time, we produced 5,000 to 8,000 pounds a month. You no can, you never going make 'em. So what I did is I wen act as a brokerage. I imported fish from Willie. I imported salt salmon and butterfish. And 'opelu from Lāna'i. So this was just like helping me. From here the demand was greater than the supply so I had one outlet, Moloka'i retail outlet. And I had what we call one telephone sale system. I knew all the people who liked certain type fish and I had categories. 'O'io, all the guys' names here; kāmā, all the guys' names; mullet. So when the fish come in I set 'em up, grab the phone. I no need even put 'em out, it's all sold already. I tell, "Eh, I get x number of pounds kāmā over here.

"Okay, I put 'em over here." And as I'm putting 'em down, my girl over there is loading it all up and putting the name and putting 'em on the side. Then they drive down pick up their fish. So I had one telephone sale system. If I had too much, I went through telephone, the rest I ship 'em out to Willie. So then I had fishermen from Lāna'i fishing for me. And then how I worked with the fishermen was on a trust system. You call me, you tell me how many pounds fish you got. I write you your check and I tell you ship the fish certain place and I write him the bill. Now, if you fool me one time, that's all you can fool me. Only once. I can take loss only one time and we no do business no more. Hey, that stuff on honest, eh, was working perfect.

WN: You pay the fishermen by the pound?

WK: Yeah.

WN: Depending on what fish they get.

WK: Yeah, he call me and say, "I get 125 pound, 200 pound menpachi."

I say, "Okay, two dollar half a pound." I writing one check already. Boom, off. And I tell 'em, "Okay, ship 'em to this market or ship 'em to that market."

They say, "Okay." Boom, hang up, everything. I writing the bill for the market already. I no see nothing, I just mail everything out and then the market pay me. And one week later I see the check.

WN: This is when you were with Lokahi?

WK: Yeah. When I was with Moloka'i Fishermen's Association, we were a subsidiary of Lokahi
WN: That was strictly commercial, Lokahi?
WK: No, Lokahi is non-profit.
WN: Yeah, Lokahi. Okay, that’s what I thought.
WK: Yeah, Lokahi is non-profit but I was a subsidiary. We were non-profit also, but our money go right back.
WN: But you guys still had to make a living, then.
WK: Oh yeah, you gotta pay my salary. I was damned fool. They paid me $1,000 a month and it didn’t work. So in three months I noticed we couldn’t make ’em, I went back to the board and I said, “Eh, no can make ’em. Cut me back to $500.” So they paid me $500 a month plus I wen go through the welfare to subsidize the rest of my income, because I gotta live. But although I wen cut my salary in half for $500 a month, I still yet was putting in fourteen hours a day, seven days a week.
WN: You cut your salary so you could qualify for welfare?
WK: No, no, I cut myself because we couldn’t make ’em.
WN: Oh, oh.
WK: We—the business couldn’t go. So I wen tell the board I gotta cut back. The only thing I know is myself. Me the only worker. So the fishermen helped me pack fish and everything about the fish. But my family did most of the work. Tubz [William “Tubz” Kalipi, Jr., WK’s son] them were small kids. They were packing fish and loading fish on the . . .
WN: Yeah, he told me.
WK: Yeah, they worked hard. But that’s how we did it. I think the best thing I did with Lokahi Pacific is I had incentive programs built into the Moloka’i Fishermen’s Association, where I identified “fisherman of the month.” I tell you eh, I had one big chart with their names. Every time they come in they give their poundage, I put ’em on the board. They come in they no care about their fish, they like know who’s leading. Who’s leading!

(Laughter)
WN: And what they got, though?
WK: Oh, they get one big award. Some get trophies with the ulua, and it says, “Fisherman of the Month.”
WN: Was it total poundage, any fish?
WK: Total poundage, any fish. Total poundage. Some fishermen was mad with other fishermen. They said, “Eh, I one fisherman. The guy bringing in hthtwai or ‘opihi. That’s not fish.” Still yet, they’re members of this co-op.

(Laughter)

WN: ‘Opihi count, too?

WK: Yeah. Eh, ‘opihi and hthtwai. Some good fun, boy. The fishermen—eh, I can name all who won. Every fisherman on this island I can tell you who won.

WN: So real competitive, then.

WK: Oh, and it’s not how much money I make, it’s how many pound? Who leading? Eh, boy I tell you, they were fishing like crazy, boy.

WN: So you had competition here?

WK: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Had other, da kine, associations?

WK: No, no, no more. No more. We the only one. And then I had two type of membership. I had one membership and one non-member. The membership had the full benefit and I take my 10 percent off the top. The non-members, if I can take 200 percent, I’m taking 200 percent. You know what I mean? And I think that’s business.

WN: How do you become a member? Pay dues?

WK: Yeah, by joining a co-op, pay your dues, or sincerely all your product come to us. And we just take consignment. So whatever you give me, boom, I ship ’em out and then work on consignment basis. Non-members mostly like cash, they don’t like consignment. They want pay now. I say fine, and then that’s where I come fat. The market pay me two dollars, you still only going get fifty cents a pound, man, because you want ’em cash. But if you one member—all the members, they fish, their check coming in weekly. Every week some two, three checks coming in because every day they’re fishing. But the key was—I remember Big Island, Hilo, Miloli’i Fish Market, this guy Naka. That’s in Hilo, this. Call me Christmas—the Christmas week—and told me, “Kalipi, I need aku.” And I think, aku, Big Island. Jesus Christ, that’s where the aku stay, Big Island. I said, “I no more nothing aku.”

“I need aku.”


He said, “Yeah.”

“How many pound?”
"Three thousand."

"I like 'em all. Ship 'em here. How much?"

"Dollar half [$1.50] a pound."

"Okay, dollar half."

"Okay, Naka, 3,000 coming."

"How much?"

"Two dollar half [$2.50]."

"Yeah, ship 'em." Boom. Eh, I no even see the fish.

WN: So you dealt between fish companies or dealers, too, then?

WK: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Because you knew 'em all.

WK: Yeah.

WN: How you got commission for that?

WK: I don't. I don't. I just make my markup for my co-op, period. And I enjoyed that. I really enjoyed marketing because you meet people. I remember one other Chinese market. He like kāmā so badly eh, he give us anything we like when he buy. ʻOpae, me I was so shocked when I see the prices of ʻopae. And at wholesale. ʻOpae you get 'em dirt cheap and I no see how come they sell 'em so high. Honest, ʻopae, the dried ʻopae. I thinking, chee, the people getting ripped off, man. I don't know. I gotta give our merchants credit because when I was running the fish co-op over here, marketing, they gave everything. "Eh, Kalipi, you run 'em." They wen stop selling butterfish, they wen stop selling salt salmon. Everything, we had 'em controlled. We sold everything. My salt salmon was just two dollar half [$2.50] a pound. You got to the store, it's five dollar plus, so plenty people could eat my salt salmon. So I figured chee, we had one good thing going.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 19-25-1-91; SIDE ONE

WK: The only thing that happened was when we were making money, I went back to Lokahi Pacific and I said, "Okay, I want back my $1,000 raise. I like back my original salary."

And they told me, "No."
And I said, “Bye.” My pride was hurt, everything, so I pulled out. One week later they run back they tell me, “Eh, eh, we going pay you the $1,000.”

I said, “Nah.” I wen start working for [Maui] County. I was one research statistician.

WN: So how long did you work for them [Lokahi Pacific]?

WK: Three years.

WN: Oh, three years?

WK: Three years.

WN: Not too long then, yeah?

WK: No. But I was so disappointed. When I wen pull out of the co-op, plenty fishermen wen pull out and I told 'em, “Stick to the co-op ’cause that’s one good thing.” They said plenty guys was fishing because of me. They said, “You work so hard, you show us the prices come up.” Then everything went downhill.

I remember being one commercial fisherman at one time, me [and] Moses Kalilikane. He's a deep sea fisherman today. But Moses Kalilikane, myself, and John Shoemaker, three of us, and Jack Kalilikane, Moses’ father. Four of us fished the reef and we wipe out the reef. I mean, wipe out. So three of us young, yeah. I’m young, Shoemaker was a young boy, and Moses was a young boy. Three of us come together and we say we no can do this. Our reef was getting wiped out; let’s let Jack fish. So we wen let Moses’ father handle all the fish. We wen stop for two months’ period during the Christmas months. We just wen hold off because I think we was over fishing the reef. And we seen the change of no more too much fish. So we said we no can do this. So we wen stop for a while.

I remember one Japanese coming to me—approach me—from Kaua‘i. And he represent the Japan outlet for fish for Japan. And they said they buy everything from us dollar a pound. And what I mean, kala, palani was only ten, fifteen cents a pound. ‘O‘io was twenty-five cents, twenty cents a pound. This Japan outlet was giving us dollar a pound right across the board for anything and everything we could produce. So the fishermen were all excited. We hold one big meeting. I think I played one major role on how people reacted or moved. And so they wanted my thoughts and I told ’em, “If we deal with Japan then we going get fat for a while, one to two years. We all going make money, but what you gotta look at is we cutting out our local entity because we no longer can sell to our local outlet or retail. We can fish the way we fish every day with our net; letting the fish come up, surround ’em, for the rest of our life. But if we’re going into the deep where we can surround the whole thing and take the whole thing, then our kids no going get ’em. So what you gotta look at is lifestyle of long range. You guys like get fat overnight and then we suffer in the long run, for what? To me, I don’t think it’s wise for us jump with Japan because they’re talking about 50,000 pounds a week. That’s talking about raping our land and I no think we can afford that.” So we all voted no. The fishermen all said no, so I went back to the Kaua‘i representative and I tell ’em, “Eh, Moloka‘i no going come in. Sorry about it.” Because our—it’s too delicate. Really, when you look at the reef, it’s too delicate. And so I think we made the right choice.
by not going in.

Right now we get Filipinos raping the baby mullet right now. And then as much as you turn 'em in, the game wardens are only limited in what they can do. And so just like I told Tubz, "Eh, we supposed to be going out, catch all the mullet, and throw 'em in the pond."

He told me, "Oh, I no like rape the ocean."

I told Tubz, "You not raping the ocean. What you're doing is you're bringing the mullet, you're throwing 'em in the pond, and then that's bringing more mullet. Whereas, you get the Filipinos rape the fish, nobody going get the fish." So I no think what they're doing is right. But that's rough, yeah?

WN: Yeah. What are the laws regarding getting the baby mullet?

WK: Whether it's one baby mullet or one big mullet it's $500 fine, one fish.

WN: Oh, when it's off season?

WK: Yeah, kapu season. These guys they just taking the baby mullet and that's under one pound. The law is one pound and up [for mullet caught during non-kapu season]. They catching all the baby kind. And they selling 'em. That's what makes it worse. They commercializing on 'em. And I think, oh, my goodness.

WN: These are Filipinos that live here?

WK: Yeah, yeah. So I tell them what I'm disappointed in. When I look back, before days, they had plenty dollar-a-year game wardens, yeah. But the dollar-a-year game wardens was mostly guys who owned plenty ranch, all the ranch kind. They deputize the ranch guys. So the goddamned game wardens did more chasing on private land than doing their job on public [land]. I get pissed off. So I look at 'em, Jesus Christ. We could go deputize. If I gotta deputize, I'd deputize all the fishermen. "You. I deputize you. You watch your area. All where the baby mullet stay, I go by that guy's house and deputize that guy and tell, "You become the game warden." 'Cause this is where all the mullet stay. The best guy is the guy who live there. Common sense kind, yeah?

I don't know. That's why sometimes I don't know if the state really serious about fishing. Like us, we born and raised with the fishing industry. And I get mixed feeling. I get friends who live off 'oama, baby 'oama. They throw net, small eye. But that's part of their lifestyle, that's their culture. They eat that every day. They 'ono that with the poi. And yet, that's against the law for catch. And that's hard because chee, this guy, all his life I know him. All his life, that's all he eat. That's why, to me, the [fish] ponds are the answer. The ponds—we have fifty-six ponds—getting 'em back. That gotta be the answer. It take time. You can imagine fifty-six ponds along the coast of Moloka'i? We would be in National Geographic. They would come over here because we're the only type, within the United States, have one aquaculture process like this. And the infrastructure of tourism coming down for see the lifestyle, hey, everything would just be massive, man. But they gotta try go more to ancient than to modern technology. Modern technology costs too much money.
One good example is this pump [which 'Ualapu'e Fishpond manager, William “Tubz” Kalipi, Jr., utilized to stock fingerling—pu'a—mullet prior to their release into the fish pond]. Tubz, he turn 'em off because it cost him $800 a month put gas for run the pump, run the generator for get the pumps going. And he said, “Jesus Christ.”

I told 'em, “Eh, why you never buy diesel? Then would cost $30 a month.”

He said, “Diesel, was $7,000 for the diesel.”

I said, “Eh, you pay $800 a month, in ten months you going pay $8,000. You know, you guys gotta look at this kind stuff, economically, on long range.”

WN: You talking about the pump for the . . .

WK: The pump for this three, four tanks.

So I said, “Chee.” I told Tubz [that he should] fence [off one] quarter of this pond and throw all the [pu'a] mullet inside there. Number one, you no need feed 'em. Over here [in the tanks], you gotta feed dog food. Over there [in the fish pond] you no need feed. And number two, you no need aeration. Over here [tanks] you need aeration and you need water. Over there, no need. All you need as your investment is your plastic nets. It would alleviate your costs—$600, $700 investment, and you get two sets. So, when ready for change the net you put the second set, you take the other net out, dry 'em for clean [out] the limu.

WN: And you raise the mullet in . . .

WK: In the pond. In the pond. That’s what pond was made for. So I can put 'em in there. You wen eradicate the pond [of predators], why you worry about the fingerlings? You know, I looking at alleviate the costs. Well, let’s go use the pond to its fullest maximum. Get two ponds, then one you raise [pu'a] over there. The only thing you can get in [the tanks] is the modern technology of inducing the eggs into the fish or turning the male into female, I can see tanks where you can go do that. But for get one pond nice like this and you going concentrate on that, that is where the money going eat you.

WN: So you’re saying to just make it naturally and just . . .

WK: As natural . . .

WN: . . . stock the pond and let them grow.

WK: Yeah, stock the pond. Well, again I get one different theory in stock. I look at the past fishermen who owned ponds. Had one fisherman, he had a pond, Gene Duvauchelle. He owns the Pānāhāhā Fishpond [in Pūko'o]. Well, he used to catch fish outside, throw inside. Now, if you look at the fish itself when you raise the fish in the pond, it takes you one to two years before the fish come one pound. Now, economic development, that’s what you call tying up your assets when you gotta raise 'em one year, two years. Now, as soon as the fish hit one pound, it’s marketable. The demand is for one-pound size, not three-pound hānai, the ones we like. It’s one pound because it fits the plate nicely and it’s cheaper. You know, one-
pound fish is more cheap than one three-, four-pound fish. So, the restaurant industry, like Chinese, they like the one-pound fish and all that kind. Anyway, they start taking the fish at one pound. They harvest the fish and then what happen is they right back where they started from. What I mean, they no more fish now, they gotta go back out catch the baby pua, refill and restock the pond.

Now, I remember my uncle saying that in the ancient time what happened was when you go down to the fish pond and take the fish, you take the one pound but you no take the big ones. So I look at 'em, "Jesus Christ." Now let's say we get maybe five-hundred-pounds of fish in this pond right now. Instead of harvesting 'em as soon when hit one pound, let's bypass all that and let's get these fish comes up to three to four pounds. Okay now, they going be known as the makua kāne, the main fish for this pond, the big ones. And when they start multiplying, their babies—when the babies come one pound, that's when we harvest; we take the babies. Now, if I take one-pound mullet and I take one four-pound or three-pound mullet, who going spawn more babies, the one-pound or the three-pound? I say the three-pounds because they're more potent, they more matured, and they more tame. They going get more babies than the one-pound. Common sense tell you that. 'Cause when the fish is bigger, he get bigger eggs. So now if they can wait. Like this is a good project for do exactly that. Wait for the five years, wait for the six years till you get the new generation of mullet. Then every time you harvest you throw the big one back and you take the small one for sell, because the big one is the reproduction system. Then you no need go outside of the pond for restock your pond. But that's what never been done because economic, they no like tie the asset. They gotta take for sell already, so nobody get time and patience for wait for let the process work itself towards that stage.

WN: For this ['Ualapu'e Fishpond] project, are they thinking of doing it . . .

WK: I don't know.

WN: . . . taking the big fish?

WK: This is where I'm coming from.

WN: I see.

WK: I trying to tell them this would be ideal for not to take the fish. But Walter Ritte says, "Economic. We here for make money." To me, it's culture. Whether it become successful or not, I think getting all the ponds back [in production] would generate infrastructure towards tourism, coming to the islands and seeing the whole structure. And some of the ponds, you can use different ponds for different purposes. Maybe one pond strictly crustaceans, oysters, clams. You know, we get plenty ponds. The experimentation or whatever you like call 'em would be ideal for economic growth on Moloka'i. I really—that was one of my dreams, for getting all the ponds back.

WN: When the pua are born, what's the danger of them going out of the pond?

WK: It's not.
WN: They’re not?

WK: Not, because the *pua* going—well, the *pua*, this is why you get the balance. That’s why the *makahā* is open, because the *pāpio* come in the pond, the *pāpio*, the *ulu*. Now, all the *pua* no like come close to the *makahā*. They all stay close to the taro patch, that’s why you get these shallow mud flats where you get the smallest and work your way out to the biggest. They not going come out because the *pāpio* is waiting. So they [*pua*] all run into the taro patch. That’s why you need your connection, you need your land base.

WN: Now, you guys—is it part of the plan to develop *lo‘i* over here?

WK: Oh, I hope so. I hope so. And then like this one [WK points to taro patch adjacent to ‘Ualapu’e Fishpond], eventually we going get one trench, one tie-in to the pond come straight up.

WN: Oh, oh, I see.

WK: And this going be one of the—they just going down that and your offsprings going be in here, and it’s tied directly to the pond. And all you do is keep making outlets.

WN: What about up, you know, *mauka*?

WK: Oh, would be better yet.

WN: Put *lo‘i* up on the *mauka* side of the . . .

WK: ‘Cause over there do have taro patches. All, that whole section is taro patches.

WN: Is somebody taking care?

WK: No, well, get few guys. That whole land can be turned into taro patch, but that’s all private lands, yeah. Plenty *kuleana* so you gotta go to the private owners and ask ’em if you can, or whatever. But we should—that would make ’em complete. Walter Ritte like this whole place come one *ahupua‘a*, which is, to me, just the wrong district because we get too much *kuleana*. Now, if we went Bishop Estate, Keawa Nui, one owner, would have been easy for the process of one *ahupua‘a* concept.

WN: That means the state has to work with Bishop Estate, though.

WK: No, not necessarily. Not necessarily. Oh, yeah, I guess so. Yeah, you’re right. That’s private that’s why, yeah.

WN: Yeah.

WK: But I think Bishop Estate would really want that and they would probably put that under the education structure so you get some tax write-off. And then the whole concept would be beautiful.
WN: What about this pond over here [i.e., Halemahana Fishpond, adjacent to ‘Ualapu’e Fishpond]? Isn’t this state . . .

WK: [Halemahana.]

WN: Isn’t this state-owned, too?

WK: State pond, yes.

WN: So . . .

WK: We should be renovating that.

WN: They should be doing ’em same time (chuckles).

WK: Definitely. Definitely. Well, I guess Governor [John Waihee] made one good speech of cutting the red tape and getting these projects off the ground so I really hope this is not one piecemeal or one political front. You know, “We doing this for goodwill.” Eh, no, man. Let’s look bigger than just generosity of the state. You know, when I was growing up, I used to tell myself the state is negligent because they’re letting our ponds deteriorate. And it’s their fault; nobody else fault. And like you and I, we walk up for go get [i.e., apply to lease and operate] one fish pond, there’s no way I can get one fish pond. I go through the whole process then, “You no more one biology degree.” How do you put one biology degree on one permit? My ancestors never have biology degree, they wen build the goddamned pond. And now I like go get one pond I gotta go through this kind bullshit red tape? You know what I mean? No, I no can understand that. Chee, they make laws, sometimes they mean well. But they gotta look, like Moloka‘i, the difference is, Moloka‘i, we live the history; while Honolulu, you like know Hawaiian you go down Bishop Museum and you see all. Over here, no. We live the culture. That’s our lifestyle, this.

Walter [Ritte] was grumbling about the permit system. And I look at the state permit and I say, eh, I like this. It looks appropriate, it’s protecting everything. You gotta know all this before you can even implement anything. And I think nothing is wrong with ’em. It’s time consuming, but nothing wrong. You just do ’em one at a time until everything finish then go ahead. The only thing I was disagreeing with in the permit structure is the biology degree. . . .

WN: Is that right? You have to have one?

WK: Eh, I went to Maui for go try get. One of the question was, if I get one marine science or biology degree. And I look at ’em, Jesus, what the hell I going need that for?

WN: (Chuckles) Well, that’s real western culture.

WK: I know, I know. And well, maybe they no like any Tom, Dick, and Harry get one pond just for the sake of getting one pond, but . . .

WN: There’s gotta be other ways to show that you have the knowledge, right?
WK: They should, they should. But again, right now, the pond is one in thing today. You go down to the state right now, how many Tom, Dick, and Harry, permits all coming in. They like pond; everybody like one pond.

WN: This is what, privately-owned ponds or they want to buy?

WK: No, no, this is [leasing from the] state.

WN: Oh, all is state. What about like the private ones like Kūpeke?

WK: Kūpeke Pond well, you get some guys leasing the pond now, but I think they’re doing more harm than good. What I mean harm is, they taking all that but they not putting back. That’s why, when the ['Ualapu'e] Pond [project] came I was so happy about the pond. Now we going be putting back; we not going be taking now. And when I say putting back, same like the mullet when my boy said they going feed dog food.

WN: For real? Dog food?

WK: Yeah, chow. [Purina Dog] Chow. Something like that. And I’m thinking, Jesus Christ. So my son tell me, “Oh, what would I feed the fish?”

I said, “Tubz, us Hawaiians we feed ’em pumpkin, we feed ’em ‘uala, potato, taro. All that is part of the processed food. You gotta feed your fish.” The more you feed your fish, the more tame the fish come. He come fat and tame so the fish no going like leave his home. You look at all the—you go to the Pagoda [Hotel in Honolulu], you can pet the fish [carp], you can feed. They tame. Same with the mullet. You feed ’em they going come tame.

WN: Keep ’em happy, yeah.

WK: Yeah.

WN: So they no like leave.

WK: If you no keep your fish happy—we get what we call the Kona wind, Kona storm. When the Kona come, all the fish migrate up [toward the open ocean]. Why they go up, we don’t know why. During the Kona storm, strong wind, strong rain, everything coming. The fish going to the wall and they going jump over the wall. So I was telling Tubz, chee, we gotta figure one way how we can make one big pole with net so when the fish jump they no jump out of the pond. But I keep thinking about it and I tell nah, you feed ’em. You keep feeding ’em, I think we can hold ’em in. ’Cause I remember I gotta go build my father’s boat—we get one sixteen-foot skiff—I gotta go down build boat every time we get storm. One day I run down go build boat, six ‘anae in the boat; six big ones swimming in the boat. I look, “Wow!” I catch ’em all, bring ’em back. All happy, yeah, catch six big mullet. But what wen happen is during the night of the storm, the mullet all jumping, going up, and plenty jump in the boat. The six went into the boat. Yeah.

WN: I wonder, did the old Hawaiians feed the mullet or they just let ’em eat the [nutrients, such as algae, in the pond] ...
WK: Had too much; too much abundance. Maybe in the ponds they probably did, in ancient times, but had too much fish. Because I remember in the fifties, when kapu season, you know where all the school of mullet stay; you can count 'em. You can count that school, that school. Same with the kala. Was so abundant, we used to go and we ko'o the boat down on the reef and we look at what school kala we like. Because you talking about 3,000 kala in this pile. You going down, “No, no, no, too big. Eh, here one school.” We surround and get about maybe forty-five kala. We surround this pile, just right for us. But you come choosy, you no like hit the big school 'cause too much fish.

And never had icebox those days so everything was pa'akai, salt. We salt all the fish; dried fish heavy on the salt 'cause no more icebox. So I remember my uncle telling me they catch maybe one ton kala and they put 'em on the kind hoehoe rowboat—whaler's boat—and they row to Maui for go sell their kala, five cents one kala. They reach over there, the Maui guys know they come from Moloka'i, nobody buy 'em. So they gotta give all the kala away. Because they know you no going take back the 5,000 kala [to Moloka'i]. So the Maui guys just wait.

(Laughter)

WK: Ho, boy. Moloka'i take a loss, boy. Yeah, they wait until you ready for go home and then guarantee you going give, “Eh, take, take. Eh, come, come, come.”

(Laughter)

WN: So you remember Harry Apo?

WK: Yeah.

WN: He used to what, drag net or he used to . . .

WK: No, he was strictly clams. Strictly, he was all clams. The fish was just extras.

WN: So you don't remember somebody actually fishing in here ['Ualapu'e Fispond] for commercial purposes.

WK: The commercial was only clams.

WN: Only clams.

WK: Only clams. Yeah, they was strictly clams. Other than that, they lay gill net for get the mullet, yeah. And had plenty barracuda, too, inside here. But the clams was the main one. And he liked his Japanese wine, eh. What you call that?

WN: Sake.

WK: Sake. He drink up his sake, man.

WN: So he had the pond, he was leasing the pond. Was he making money?
WK: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he had the best clams in Hawai‘i.

WN: So he sold 'em to where?

WK: Honolulu.

WN: Yeah?

WK: Yeah, all the clams was going down Honolulu. Eh, the clams was from here to the end of the pond. Clams. And his house was right on top where that—over there.

WN: Oh, yeah?

WK: Yeah, right there where the cement stay. Small, little house. Kia‘i, the [pond] guardian, keeper’s house.

WN: I know a lot of old-timers remember going to get clams and Harry Apo let 'em go. I mean . . .

WK: Yeah. No, he wasn’t one—to me, he was an all-right guy. He like drink his sake every time but other than that. . . . But you gotta ask him because he no like you pick any kind place, yeah. He tell you where you can go because he plant his beds all over and then he tell you what place for go. He no let you take that one if not ready yet, too small. So he just knew where all the beds was; how he made his bed. I don’t know why the clams all died, but was . . .

WN: He used to restock? Was it sophisticated like that where . . .

WK: Yeah, yeah. He had baby clams. It was one constant thing he did. Guaranteed harvest. Every month he harvest, no ifs, buts about it, but he had one system going where he know what size. I don’t know where he got the baby clams from, but he had his clams, man, and was one of the best clams we had in the state, Harry Apo.

WN: So he was the caretaker as long as you remember?

WK: Yeah, yeah. And had all taro patch down here. All taro patch; all the way come down.

WN: Who took care of the taro patch?

WK: Oh, the Kaauwai [family].

WN: Oh.

WK: The Kaauwais, adjacent to the pond. All taro patch. Small kid time we come, we see the mudhen. The mudhen used to be right next to the road, taro patch already. That’s all backfill already, that land, eh. But all taro patches, man. Nice. Everybody owned taro patch and everybody had pānāwai, because never had county water too, eh. So get the wells. Everybody drink from the well. I remember they wen introduce the bufos, poison toad, and my mom
used to try catch the toad and throw 'em in the bag at night for try get rid of the frogs. And then I used to come out with one stick and I hit that frogs at night. And my dad stay under the hibiscus tree playing slack key. And I never see him. I stay out with my stick and I just playing baseball with the frogs. So my father tell me, “Boy, no kill the frogs. Bumbai the chicken eat 'em and they die.”

“Oh, okay Pa,” so I go back in the house. Then I looking if kinda dark and I think my father went sleep already. We get two house, yeah, one big one and one small one. My father stay in the small house. So I sneak out and I get my stick, I going killing frogs. He still yet under the hibiscus tree, but he wasn’t playing slack key.

So I hear, “You son-of-a-gun kid!” I take off for the house. He walked right in the house, opened his buckle, and I get good licking. Oh, boy. Yeah, killing the frogs.

WN: What was the name of the place you folks—where your house was?

WK: Ah, we lived in Manawai.

WN: Manawai.

WK: Manawai.

WN: That’s right down here?

WK: Yeah, right down.

WN: Right where Wavecrest [condominiums]?

WK: Yes, Wavecrest is Manawai. We had property in Manawai, we had property in ‘Ōhi’a. That’s adjacent to this [area], too. West ‘Ōhi’a, they call ‘em.

WN: And the one store around here was Ah Ping?

WK: Yeah, that’s the only store had, Ah Ping. With Ah Hong and Ah Ing and Lee Wai.

WN: I told you, yeah, I talked to Ah Hong?

WK: Yeah, yeah. Was good. I really enjoyed them. Everybody—you never see him lately, yeah?

WN: No, I did.

WK: Oh, you did?

WN: Last month.

WK: You told him about the ukulele [‘ukulele]? The one we was telling about the signatures he got of everybody?
WN: No.

WK: You gotta ask him.

WN: Oh, yeah?

WK: He get one treasure right now with all our parents. Everybody who live up East End wen sign his book.

WN: Oh, yeah?

WK: Yeah, 'cause, you know, you small, you growing up, so when you small you gotta go store. So he tell, “Eh, you like one free ukulele?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah.”

“Come, come, come. Come sign your name over here.” So we sign the book, eh. So every time after that we go see him, “Eh, when my ukulele coming?”

He tell, “Chee, you never hear the barge wen sink (chuckles)? The ukulele was coming on the barge.” Bumbai get strike. He tell, “Ah, they wen strike, no can make the ukulele.” But he caught all of us.

WN: Oh, he told me he loved to play with you guys, I mean, just joke around.

WK: Oh, we called him “Fut.” That’s his nickname, “Fut.” They get horse those days and get the hitching post where you tied your horse. You go in the back [of Ah Ping Store], all the old folks live in this district all behind, gambling. And they carry gun; they get their gun with them. Get maybe five, six Hawaiians sitting down gambling, all talking Hawaiian and laughing. We used to go watch them. But you no see that [anymore]. Everybody owned horse in the old days. Was dirt road, yeah, over here. Never had the paved road, nothing.

WN: So even as recent as the forties and fifties they was riding horse.

WK: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Because you not that old.

WK: No, just going make fifty. Yeah, never have the [paved] road. In the forties never had, but everybody owned taro patch. I no forget all the taro patches. I remember one time catching 200 green frogs for Tamashiro [Market] (chuckles). Catching green frogs, ship 'em to Tamashiro, dollar a pound. I reach down there, he took half only. The other half I went Wai'anae with one friend, we ate all the frogs down there (chuckles). Yeah.

WN: Okay, I going turn off the tape recorder. Anything [more] you want to say?

WK: I think I had one good culture life. I learned plenty things from my uncle, my friends, relatives, everybody on Moloka‘i. I no like fight too much about anything. I rather let’s just
stop talking and let’s get some action done with fish ponds or whatever. This is one of the reason why I really wen push Tubz, yeah. I mean, let’s just get ’em done. I remember [George] Peabody at one time had the lease of this fish pond. And then he built one stairway—cement steps—right across the fish pond [wall]. And so somebody said, “Eh, we should take picture and we’ll pick on Peabody.”

I said, “Eh, that’s passed already. Let’s just rebuild the wall right over these steps and look forward already for the future.” Because to me, you going sit down and grumble and bitch and fight, nothing. I rather we get our act together and just implement the stuff. You know, if you like the culture, then you no only wala’au, but you live ’em and you do ’em. This project was so meaningful for me because when I work—the [regular] job I get not physical, so when I come out and I do labor job—erecting the wall and everything—your whole heart and soul going into the wall; your whole mana go to the wall. And then when you finish working, you’re really, really exhausted and you go home and you feel real good. Every time I turn around and look at the wall, ho, we moved twenty feet today. Ho, gee whiz, wow. So as you progress, you turn back and you can see everything coming back alive. You can feel ’em; you can feel the wall, you can feel everything. And then so once in a while it just drains you, the whole thing just possess you and drain you so you gotta stop. I take time off from coming to the fish pond because I gotta recuperate and get back my strength. Because working here is a spiritual thing for me that I aloha plenty, yeah. And so that’s why when we work every day, when we go home, we sleep early and we get up early. But everything is content. You all satisfied, you all happy and everything is looking good. You know, I lost maybe three, four nails—fingernails—working the pond but that’s where your mana go, yeah. To be one stone builder you gotta lose couple nails in the apprenticeship, yeah. If you lose all your nails, well, you become journeyman.

(Laughter)

WN: What is the art of matching the stones?

WK: Okay.

WN: I was wondering about that.

WK: The key on the stones is, you gotta remember the inner side of the [fish pond] wall always must be lower than the outer side. All stones get face, and you, with your own imagination, can see the face of a stone. But the key is, the inner side of the wall as you’re constructing the wall, has to be lower than the outside. And then you’re going to have to—all stones gotta be locked. Just like it’s a puzzle but you gotta lock the stones in and you gotta fill ’em in with your 'ili'ili and all your fill for really get the strength. Other than that, if you no do ’em right—if the outside is lower than the inside—then when you put the next layer of stone upon the stone, it’s tendency is to slide. It slides off because you get the front lower than the back. And you gotta know the weight of your rock, where the weight stay for get ’em locked. ’Cause if you put the weight wrong side, even look right but it’s wrong, the whole wall can come crumbling down. And then—well, that’s about it.

To me, it becomes natural and when you doing spiritual kind work, the rock fit itself. Every time you drop your rock, you turn around and you just put ’em in and it fits. And you no
need turn the rock all over for find the right technique. When you stay in one spiritual mood, you can feel; you can feel everything. You just placing the rock on the wall and the stones going in place without you even setting 'em. You just putting 'em down, and you look at 'em and you think, chee. You know, you marvel. Sometimes it's that simple and sometimes all day you can turn rocks around and it's just not the day. Today you should stay home and rest. Better you stay home instead come and then you no can get the rocks fitting no matter how you try. So that kind day is the time for you go ho'omaha. Go rest, go take a day off. Then when you come back then everything come better.

I remember working for Sonoda Rock in Honolulu. I was in mason construction when I was just finished [with] school. And then this old Japanese man, small little guy, I was bigger than him—and I busting rock. We were making cornerstones for stonewall. And I pound, pound, pound the stone with the sledgehammer and I no can bust the rock. And this skinny Japanese guy, he just slightly hit the rock and the rock bust. And I looking and I thinking chee, how he do 'em? So he come to me and then he tell me, “Oh, I like see your hammer, boy,” so I give him my sledgehammer. He lift up my hammer and he tell, “Ho, this hammer I think too light for you. You need one sixteen pound,” or he tell me what pound I need. So I go get. So he tell me, “Early in the morning you work with the stone, you pound the stone.” He tell, “When you come in, the stone in the morning is soft. You come in the afternoon, the stone come hard.” But he get technique. The Japanese, he teach me. After that, no need strength. It's a technique of how to hit the stone and the stone just bust. Ho, boy. I thinking chee, here me, young blood, I figure strength, pound, pound, pound. No can broke the stone. Bumbai this Japanese, he teach me.

And I remember working Sea Life Park. And all the pillars, we constructed the pillars. I was on apprenticeship. I was working with this Hawaiian boy and this Hawaiian boy said, “Eh, brah, I gotta tell you something. I no going teach you nothing because bumbai you take my job.”

I said, “No, you no need teach me nothing. I can learn on my own.” And I was surprised this Hawaiian tell me that, just straight up. And I said, “Eh, that's all right, no big deal. I can learn 'em on my own.” And so I worked. But plenty—even like cement kind, I had Japanese teach me. I was one tile setter, masonry, K.M. Masonry in Honolulu. And so plenty stuff, the Japanese taught me more than the locals pertaining to tile setting, building stone [walls] with cement, and all that kind. The stone [walls] was easy because plenty time I no need cement because I do Hawaiian style eh, so I can build my stone real fast and just throw in the mud later on. And so to me was simple. Only the cement—the stone method is you can make the stone stand straight up, one long rock. In Hawaiian we lay 'em down for get the strength of the wall. With cement you stand the long rock up so you can come fast and you can build 'em up. That's the difference with using the ancient style. And if you look at the ancient walls, all the ancient walls all get glass inside. Plenty wall, especially boundary lines, yeah. You look when you repair boundary walls like that, you can see all the old folks show all the glasses. They no throw the glass any kind place, but they all were put in the walls. Even get piko stone, yeah, stone with holes inside. And that is when a baby is born, they take the piko and they place 'em in that hole and they cap 'em so the rat—'lole—no eat 'em. 'Cause if the rat eat your piko you going be one thief.

(Laughter)
WK: Yeah.

WN: Yeah, is that right?

WK: Yeah. And they had one *lomilomi* system. I wish we really still yet had that. Like when the baby born they get one method of massaging the baby’s foot all the way till she come big or he come big and he never going get sprained ankle. And we lost that. And hope that somewhere, somebody can bring that *lomilomi* process back, how to massage the baby’s feet.

WN: Well, okay, thank you very much.

WK: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW
'UALAPU'ŒE, MOLOKA'I
Oral Histories from the East End

Volume I

Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

June 1991