

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Albert Halape Morita

Albert Halape Morita, one of eight children, was born in 1950 in Ho‘olehua, Moloka‘i, to Richard and Anita Morita. At the time of Albert’s birth, his father was a police officer on Moloka‘i.

About a year later, the family moved to Lāna‘i where Richard Morita secured the position of fish and game warden – a position he held for twenty-five years. The Moritas resided in Kō‘ele, former headquarters of Lāna‘i Ranch. Their neighbors were the Richardsons, the Kwons, the Sakamotos, and the McGuires.

As a youth, Albert Morita hiked, camped, fished, hunted, and participated in horse-related activities.

A 1968 graduate of Lāna‘i High and Elementary School, he majored in animal technology at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Returning to Lāna‘i in 1972, he was employed by the Kō‘ele Company in nursery and beach park maintenance at Maunalei and Hulopo‘e.

Following his father’s retirement as Lāna‘i’s sole fish and game warden, Albert Morita was hired as one of two conservation officers by the State of Hawai‘i.

Retired since 2007, he still resides on Lāna‘i. He is an active volunteer with the Lāna‘i Culture and Heritage Center.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Albert Halape Morita (AM)

Lānaʻi City, Lānaʻi

July 16, 2014

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Albert Morita on July 16, 2014, and we're at the Lānaʻi Culture and Heritage Center, Lānaʻi City, Lānaʻi. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

And so, good afternoon, Albert.

AM: Hi, good afternoon.

WN: First question is, what year were you born?

AM: Nineteen fifty.

WN: Okay, and where were you born?

AM: On Molokaʻi.

WN: What part?

AM: Hoʻolehua. The hospital there.

WN: Okay. Tell me about your father, first of all. What's his background?

AM: My father is Richard Morita. When we lived on Molokaʻi, he was a police officer. And raising a family. His parents, my grandparents, lived in Kalihi on Oʻahu, doing different things, but especially raising pigs up Kam[ehameha] IV Road on Oʻahu. So, my grandfather was Sakuzo Morita, and my grandma was Tsujie Morita.

WN: And so, he grew up on Kam[ehameha] IV Road.

AM: On Kam[ehameha] IV Road, Oʻahu.

WN: And in what year did he come to Molokaʻi?

AM: I guess somewhere in there, he met up with my mom. My mom was going to school on Oʻahu. And then, eventually, they got back to Molokaʻi. So, he became a police officer on Molokaʻi in the 1940s. And we stayed there, and about 1951 or so, we moved to Lānaʻi, when he got a

position with the Territory [of Hawai‘i] as a fish and game warden. I think that time it was either Department of Ag[riculture] or Department of Forestry, I think.

WN: Prior to DLNR [Department of Land and Natural Resources]?

AM: Prior to, yeah, the forerunners of DLNR.

WN: Okay. So that’s your Morita side, your father’s side. Do you know originally where his parents were from?

AM: No, I know very little about that. My grandfather was much older than my grandma, I think, and I understand he came about in 1893 or so. And that sticks out because that’s about the time Queen [Lili‘uokalani] was overthrown.

WN: Okay, so then, your father became a fish and game warden on Lāna‘i in 1951.

AM: About 1951, yeah.

WN: Tell me about your mother. You said your mother’s family is from Moloka‘i?

AM: From Moloka‘i, yeah. My grandma and my grandfather. My grandfather was Richard Hagemann, German. And my grandma was Grace Kaawakauo.

WN: Originally from what part of Moloka‘i?

AM: I understand my grandma was from the backside, Wailau and Pelekunu side. But in my growing up and knowing her, she was [living in] ‘Ualapu‘e, right across Kilohana [Elementary] School, and that’s where my Auntie Kitty [Hagemann Akutagawa] now lives.

WN: And then, you said your mother was going to school on O‘ahu?

AM: I understand she was going to Farrington [High School], I believe. And then she graduated, and then eventually somehow met up with my dad, and ended up back on Moloka‘i.

WN: Do you know if that was common for Hawaiian families on places like Moloka‘i to come to Honolulu and go school?

AM: I’m not sure. I thought it was little bit unusual, yeah? And I don’t know the details of who she stayed with, or—I don’t think the school had boarding at that time, but she probably stayed with family.

WN: So, they met up.

AM: Yeah.

WN: So, they decided to go back to Moloka‘i.

AM: To go back to Moloka‘i and live.

WN: Are you familiar with your mom’s side of the family in terms of where they lived or what kind of housing they had, or anything like that?

- AM: Well, when I left Moloka‘i, I was only about a year old. So, much of that, the details are beyond me. I don’t remember Moloka‘i at all. My earliest memories are from Lāna‘i. So, very few times went back in my childhood to Moloka‘i. I remember more my grandma coming to Lāna‘i to visit from Moloka‘i. So, I think the first time I went back to Moloka‘i that I can recall, I was maybe elementary or high school already, for sports or Future Farmers [of America], and field trips.
- WN: Your Auntie Kitty is still alive, yeah?
- AM: Yeah, she’s still alive. She’s very strong, and my cousins are there too, yeah, Billy and Myron [Akutagawa].
- WN: So then, your father moved to Lāna‘i with your mother.
- AM: Yeah.
- WN: Do you know why they moved from Moloka‘i?
- AM: Because he got the job with [Division of] Fish and Game.
- WN: Oh, okay.
- AM: So, from the police department—he resigned from police department—he was hired by Fish and Game to be a game warden on Lāna‘i.
- WN: So, did they ever did tell you why he didn’t want to be a policeman on Moloka‘i anymore?
- AM: He probably thought it was a good opportunity to change. And he was a pretty good fisherman and outdoors person, so I think that kind of appealed to him. So, he made the switch. So, in 1951 or so, he came to Lāna‘i. And then, he retired about 1976. So, about twenty-five years or so.
- WN: And you essentially took over part of his job?
- AM: You know, I look at that, and when he was hired, Fish and Game had control of all of Lāna‘i for game management purposes. So, that’s also within the pineapple field area. So, after he retired they hired basically two officers for Lāna‘i, and I was fortunate to get one of the positions. But by then, the [State DLNR Division of] Fish and Game for hunting only had a third of the island. So now, they have more people to do a smaller beat. So, I guess the old-time guys, they were really top. (Chuckles)
- WN: I’ll ask you that little bit later. But tell me, what was it like growing up on Lāna‘i? First of all, how many children in your family, siblings?
- AM: I have five sisters and two brothers, so a total of eight children in the Morita family, Lāna‘i Morita family. So, the oldest being Marlene, she’s ten years older than me, and then Phyllis, and then Alberta, and then Richard, and then myself. So, the first five were born on Moloka‘i. Then Hermina is the first born on Lāna‘i. And then, Trudy, and then the youngest is Wally. So, of that, my elder sister Marlene has passed away, and the rest are still alive. And four of us live on Lāna‘i. Alberta, Richard, myself, and Wally live on Lāna‘i. Phyllis on O‘ahu, Mina on Kaua‘i, and Trudy in Maryland.
- WN: Was there any time when all of you siblings were living in one house on Lāna‘i?

- AM: You know, I don't think so, because Marlene graduated in 1958. And then, Phyllis, 1959. And Wally was born in 1959. So, yeah, not quite. Of course, they would come back from school or from work, and then we would be all together at home. So, one of the things for our family is, there are very few family photographs with everyone in it. So, I can think of maybe only one down on the beach, and it's probably in 1960 or so.
- WN: All ...
- AM: With all the children, and my mother and father. So, it's quite rare. And there was one opportunity later for a family reunion, and right at that time, my sister became ill, and she missed that reunion. So, we didn't really get together again as a whole family. So, yeah, I guess we were moving all over. So, it's hard to corner everybody at one place. Still hard. (Chuckles)
- WN: Must be harder now. (Chuckles)
- AM: Must be harder now. It is much harder, yeah.
- WN: So, your father was Japanese; mother was Hawaiian, German.
- AM: Hawaiian and German, yes.
- WN: Hawaiian and German. Well, what was that like, growing up in this multicultural family?
- AM: I didn't even think of it, yeah? And even today, when people say, "Oh, you're part-Japanese, or you're part-Hawaiian," you know, I guess most of us today, we think of ourselves American. Although maybe it's not a good term nowadays in our climate, yeah? We rather be Hawaiian. But I didn't really think of that, you know. I cannot speak Japanese, I cannot speak Hawaiian, I cannot speak German. I can barely speak English (chuckles). It never even crossed my mind that we're Japanese or we're Hawaiian. We didn't really associate with one ethnic group or another, I don't think. And yet, I guess, that was the sign of the times, as most families were becoming integrated with mixed marriages. Maybe one generation and a half earlier, even on Lāna'i, was quite different. But we seemed to have grown up that way. And it was pretty neat growing up here. I liked it here.
- WN: So, when you were growing up, where were you folks living?
- AM: When we first came to Lāna'i, we lived down on Caldwell [Avenue]. And I don't remember that house. It was right across the street from where my brother Richard lives now, I understand. But the place I do remember is Kō'ele. So, shortly after we got there, the [Lāna'i] Ranch had closed down, so I guess the area was available. And Fish and Game got that area for residents, for their employees. So, there was my father, and there was a person named Richard Fuller. And then later, Fuller's position was taken by William Kwon. So, for most of my growing up, we were neighbors with the Kwon family right next door. And Bill Kwon worked for Fish and Game.
- WN: Fuller and Kwon, what were their positions?
- AM: They would be called wildlife aide, I think was the term. Or something similar to that. Whereas, my father was [fish and game] warden.
- WN: So, by that time, the ranch had closed down.

AM: Yes.

WN: As an operation.

AM: As an operation. So, we lived there right at ranch headquarters. The Kwons' home was the old ranch office. And then, the home we were in was, I understand, for the [ranch] foreman. So, different foremen had lived in that house. And those homes are still standing. But they moved it off—both homes were moved off the hotel property when they built the hotel at Kō'ele [i.e., The Lodge at Kō'ele], and the Richardson families [Ernest/Rebecca Richardson and John/Hannah Richardson] moved into those homes. So, the Richardsons were next to the Kwons, they were our next closest neighbors. And we spent a lot of time with the Ernest Richardson family, Ernest and Rebecca.

WN: So, tell me again, where did you folks live?

AM: At Kō'ele.

WN: I mean, where? I mean, you said part of the ranch headquarters?

AM: Yeah, right at the ranch headquarters. So, the present site is where The Lodge at Kō'ele sits today.

WN: I see.

AM: Yeah. So, right at the driveway [to the hotel], right where the cul de sac there is. At the driveway is where the Kwons' house was, and right where the great hall is now is where the Morita house was.

WN: So, I see a picture. There's a picture of the ranch headquarters, sort of one of those long pictures with sort of a round [cul de sac] thing.

AM: Yes.

WN: Is that where you folks lived?

AM: Exactly, yeah. So, that round driveway is pretty much the layout today, almost exactly the same alignment. So, as you're going up the driveway, there's two big jacaranda trees on the left side. And they were there when we lived there, and those were probably planted in the early [19]20s or so. The other landmark there, that's still there, is the big Norfolk pine tree. And just beyond where the driveway is, is where the homes were. And so, when we lived there, the houses were quite old already, and there was quite a dense forest around there when we were growing up. So, it was quite surprising to me when they actually reinforced those buildings and moved it off-site and renovated it for use again as residences.

WN: Right, right. So, Ernest lived in one and John lived in the other?

AM: Yes. After they moved the original cowboy-time houses, yeah?

WN: Right, okay. So, what was your childhood like? What did you do to have fun as a kid, growing up in Kō'ele?

AM: Well, because it was the ranch headquarters, it became a home for what's called the Lāna'i Horse Club. So, lot of horse activities. We had our own horses. So, right out the door, we could keep our horses. Then often, the horse club would have gatherings. Other than that, you know, we had friends on weekends from school come up, camp. Camp right in the park or camp under the banyan tree that's there. Go up in the mountains, go hiking. And then, later on as I got to be hunting age, you know, go on a lot of hunting. Lot of activities, yeah. So, it was fun.

WN: What did you hunt in the early days?

AM: There was deer right back of the house. And there still is up there. And then, later, as we could get out to more remote areas, hunting goats. When I first started hunting, sheep were just starting, so it wasn't legal yet. But then, later, as the population grew, then we can start shooting. And then, of course, game birds too.

WN: So, there were sheep originally over at the ranch, yeah?

AM: Yeah, there was both domestic sheep and then, feral sheep.

WN: Right, right.

AM: And the feral sheep, they were eliminated probably in the early [19]50s. Then shortly after that, they brought in the mouflon sheep more as a game animal. So, that's what we have today. We just have the mouflon sheep and the deer.

WN: So, when you were growing up, who were your friends?

AM: Oh, of course, my classmates. The ones we started with in kindergarten, a lot of 'em made it through, so we spent twelve years of our lives together. So of course, my classmates, those within our age group, and then of course, my siblings, my brothers. So, you know, in and out, had quite a few different friends. And of course, the neighbors. The Kwons, the Kwons had children about our age.

WN: Who else were your neighbors?

AM: We had the Richardsons. The Richardsons were a little bit older than me, they were more my elder sister's age, both on the Ernest Richardson and the John Richardson sides. And then, in some of the other houses that were still occupied, there were different families that came and went over the years. I recall a Sakamoto family. And I think in the Kō'ele interviews that you and Mina did [Center for Oral History, *Lāna'i Ranch: The People of Kō'ele and Keōmuku*, 1989], I think you interviewed one of the daughters of [Kuniichi] Sakamoto, who worked for the ranch. In fact, we have pictures of him in our display at the center. After that, there was a succession of families that stayed in that home. One that I remember is the McGuire family.

WN: McGuire?

AM: Yeah, Kenneth McGuire and his wife Carol. Kenneth was a police officer for MPD, Maui Police Department. They lived right down the hill from us. They had several children. Let's see, who do I recall? Maxine was the eldest daughter, and then Stacy McGuire. And there was one boy, I believe his name was Chucky. I think there was one more I'm missing in there. And then, after they left Lāna'i, I think they had several more children. Who else can I remember from that house? That house seemed to have people move in and out. Oh, another family there was the

school principal, who used to live in Kō‘ele, too. The Department of Education had a house up there, principal’s house. Some of the principals I remember there is a Tanner, I think his name was Elmo Tanner. They had children about our age or my sister’s age.

WN: This is the Lāna‘i [High and Elementary] School principal?

AM: Yeah, Lāna‘i High and Elementary School. Some other principals were there, but that’s the only one I really remember. I think that’s the only one that had children. Then I think, there were others that came that stayed there maybe a short time, but didn’t have children, so I didn’t get to know them family-wise. Of course, I didn’t know them too much in school, because I didn’t go in the principal’s office too much. Not at all, I think. I hope.

(Laughter)

WN: I’m going to ask your sister this.

AM: (Chuckles) Yeah. Who else had families up there? That’s about the main ones that I can recall. Some other families, there was a Pang family. I think Pang was a storekeeper or worked in a store. I guess after the ranch had closed down, there was housing available. So, they moved people in and out for a while. Then after that, as a home became vacant, they didn’t put anyone in. And for a while, there were the two Richardsons, the home where the principal was, the home where the McGuires were, and then the Kwons and Moritas. And there was a bunch of empty homes up there. So the empty homes, they didn’t fill it up, and then eventually, they started to tear them down. So, eventually, only had the Richardsons, Moritas, and Kwons.

WN: I’m wondering—I know the ranch had closed down already. I was wondering, was there a difference in lifestyle between growing up in Kō‘ele, as opposed to growing up here in Lāna‘i City?

AM: I thought we were kind of special to be outside of the city. We could have our horses right there. I kind of liked it, and I think it was a special place to grow up. Once in a while, I had some friends, and I stayed overnight in town. That was little bit different, yeah, you hear the cars nighttime driving by. (Chuckles) So, traffic. So, I remember staying a couple of times in town at a friend’s house. So, I was bothered by the traffic, I guess, and the lights. (Chuckles) Hard to imagine, yeah?

WN: So, your house in Kō‘ele, how many bedrooms had?

AM: It’s a strange layout. I think it was two bedrooms, and then a small little room off the front porch that had a bed in it, was used as a bedroom.

WN: And how many in one room?

AM: Oh, everybody stack up. There was another room, like a dining room and it had a bed in there, too. So, everybody just spread out wherever. I cannot think of how many was. In the bigger bedroom had one, two, maybe three beds, and then in the small side—off the porch, one bed. So, about four. We made it work, though. And one bathroom. Not like today’s house, minimum two bathrooms, yeah?

WN: You guys had indoor plumbing by the time you were . . .

AM: Yeah.

WN: So, no outhouse.

AM: There was still an outhouse. But it wasn't for our home. It was for another home that was further in the back, which had been torn down. It was already collapsing. Well, once in a while, we would have to use that outhouse. It was kind of—was like a two-seater, I think. Was kind of nice, and had concrete flooring. Two *puka*. So, was cesspool system. So, if it clogged up, the cesspool overflows, we would have to use the outhouse.

WN: Did that happen often?

AM: Not too often. I remember having to use that.

WN: What about, like, bath?

AM: The bath was attached to the house. Indoor bath with toilet, shower, and a bathtub. You know, kind of freestanding bathtub, old type with the legs on it. The shower was kind of—wouldn't pass code today. Was like most showers, because of damp wood and everything rotten. And it was always on a tilt, it seemed. And now looking back, it was kind of ...

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

I guess what is memorable about the bathrooms was the hot-water system. Was kerosene heater. So, kerosene heater, if someone doesn't go light it, and that was usually the young ones, ten- or eleven-year-olds, fill up the heater and go light it before *pau hana* so that you have hot water for take a bath in the evening. So, if you was late lighting the heater, not enough hot water. Also, if you had bad weather, if it was rainy or windy, often the thing would not light, or would die out. So again, in the time you need the most hot water, you might not have it. So, often it was cold-water showers. You know, with that many people in the house, if you're the last one, you probably will not get hot water. Then it was a bit of a step-up when they finally put in an electric water heater for that house. I think I was probably in high school when they did that.

WN: And there was a kitchen in there, in the house?

AM: There was a kitchen in the house. The kitchen had—pretty modern, electric stove and refrigerator. What else was in there? Big long sink, and a washboard.

WN: And laundry?

AM: The laundry was in a washhouse. That's where the kerosene water heater was. Was a concrete-floor building, maybe about eight-by-ten, I think. And washing machine—we had different kinds of washing machines. One was the old type with rollers, to squeeze out. Wash drum, and then the rollers you feed the clothes in to squeeze out the water. Then after that was a big step up was the double drum that washes and it spins. Then after that, we had automatic type of washers. I don't know how we didn't get electrocuted, because the floor was wet all the time. Concrete floor and the pipes, everything was leaking. You're washing in there probably with slippers, my sisters or mom, or sometimes even my dad, whoever was washing, would often be standing on a wet floor. So now looking at it, the way the electrical wiring and everything was, it's amazing no one was injured or even killed from that setup. So, in some ways, it was quite primitive. (Chuckles) And

yet, considering some families were still using washboard or cooking their clothes in the *tarai*, yeah?

WN: *Tarai*, yeah.

AM: And boiling the clothes, and with the big paddle.

WN: Your mother used to do that?

AM: My mother didn't do that, but the Richardsons did. Rebecca Richardson used to cook her clothes, you used to call it, yeah? And then, she'd be out there stirring it, especially the heavy canvas [clothing].

WN: With the soap inside?

AM: With the soap inside, yeah. And boil 'em up with a *kiawe* fire, or whatever wood would cook it outside. And of course, with laundry, which we never do today, they starched the clothes. With that house at Kō'ele, the trees were huge around the house, right up to the house. And you only had a small window of sun, you know, to dry the clothes. So often, the clothes would still be damp, especially in rainy weather. You would have a hard time drying clothes. And for that many in the family, it was always a big concern. It was big, big chore to keep everybody in clothing.

WN: Did your mother or anybody do laundry for others?

AM: Not that I can remember.

WN: Too many kids, you guys had.

AM: Yeah, we had too much for our own. We probably could have used one ourselves. But that was one of the chores we all helped with, and we were taught to wash clothes and expected to wash and help. So, I remember my sisters, from very young time, they were already doing that type of chores. Like most families, they were already pitching in and doing their share.

WN: What about the boys, what kind of chores did you guys have?

AM: Same thing, clean yard and of course, washing clothes. We had to wash clothes, too, and even iron our own clothes. My mother, when she was able to work pineapple, she taught us how for iron clothes. Those days, our clothes for school, we used to iron. So, sprinkle 'em [with water] and iron 'em in the morning. Cleaning yard, take care the animals. We had animals, we had chickens. I think early on, my father had—little while, some turkeys, too. But we almost always had chickens. Sometimes in cages, sometimes running loose.

WN: Was for eating, or for eggs?

AM: Was mostly for eating. But sometimes, if we had the eggs, we would collect the eggs, but mostly was for eating.

WN: So chickens, turkeys. That's it?

AM: I cannot recall if we had one pig one time.

WN: How often would you guys eat, like, wild game?

- AM: Oh, you know, in those days, funny, there wasn't as much game as today. So, eating deer meat was not as common as today. You know, we had goats. Especially when I was in high school, then that's when I recall eating more of goat and deer, because we were hunting those game more. But prior to that, was mostly, I think, game birds. Had plenty for hunting season, pheasants, chukar. But comparatively, I think in those days, game meat was more scarce. The population was probably less, less hunting. For instance, public hunting, when I first started hunting in 1962, about twelve years old, you only had one opportunity to hunt deer per year on the state lands. Whereas today, you probably have . . . oh, plenty. You can go on Pūlama lands, you can go on the state land one time. You can also buy a permit to hunt. You know, you can go archery almost every day, hunting. So, comparatively, there's much more hunting opportunities today. But goats were quite plentiful then. Later, towards about [19]70s or so, then they started really strong to try and eradicate the goats from Lāna'i. But for me through high school, there was still quite a bit of goats at least.
- WN: So, your dad was the game warden from the 1950s to the [19]70s, yeah?
- AM: Yeah.
- WN: In the early days, if you remember, what was his job? What did he do?
- AM: Well, it was mostly hunting and fishing law enforcement. Lāna'i was a good hunting area, and they had the whole island for hunting. So, it was a big deal for off-island people to come to Lāna'i and hunt, as it still is. And outside of that is fishing enforcement. So, keeping track of fishermen and making sure they comply with the seasons and bag limits. So, those were the two main areas for him.
- WN: So, his job was mostly to patrol, or I mean, what did he actually do?
- AM: A large part of the fieldwork is patrolling. And then being in the field and monitoring the hunting and fishing.
- WN: So, his office was responsible for permits, and things like that?
- AM: The permits were—some of the licensing, yeah, issuing licenses and along with the wildlife section with Mr. Kwon, issuing permits for hunting.
- WN: So, did he ever tell you about some problems like poaching, or anything like that?
- AM: Oh, there's always poaching, yeah? And some of the problems that he had, they were all passed on to my generation. And in fact, it's still some of the main problems we have today. Some of the netting violations, the closed-season violations for mullet. I think today, as far as hunting violations, in his time, probably night hunting for deer, spotlighting for deer was not especially a large problem compared to maybe Moloka'i.
- WN: You cannot go hunting for deer at night?
- AM: Not legally. So, that would be part of—he would be looking after that. When I first started working, we did have night-hunting problems, but as time went on, we seemed to have less and less of that.
- WN: Why is that illegal?

AM: Several reasons. Well, one is what we call a fair chase. You know, when you spotlight game at night, lot of times, they're just standing and staring at the light, not running. And then the other is safety. So, you can imagine people hunting at night, only being able to see what's in their spotlight can become very dangerous. So the combination of that, being unfair to the animals and safety, I think, are the two main issues with night hunting.

WN: I see.

AM: The landowners or farmers can get permits to hunt game at night after [Department of] Land and Natural Resources inspects and find that there truly is a problem, and they'll issue a permit for that. But still, if you have to resort to night hunting, it points to a bigger problem. You shouldn't even get to that point where you need that.

WN: It's like it's not a sport anymore, yeah?

AM: No, not a sport.

WN: Because you're just blinding the animal.

AM: Blinding the animal, and it becomes a liability all the way around.

WN: What about now that they have eradication and so forth? Are they relaxing that at all?

AM: Not really. The landowner still needs a permit if they want to hunt at night. So, it can be a big part of their overall program. I've monitored night hunting, I've participated in night hunting on the control hunts, and my final assessment is, for the amount of effort, it's not very efficient. And I think safety-wise, it's something that you always have to consider. Especially today, you know, with so much more people on the island, when you're shooting, you never know what's in the dark. It might be someone—like just the other day, I saw a person, looked like he was planning to camp out. Someone just came off the boat. What if he was right in the bushes and—the deer don't care, they can live right around people. So you could easily kill or injure someone by not seeing them. So, it's not a good idea to hunt at night.

WN: So, back to your young days. You know, you did a lot of hunting.

AM: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: What else did you do to have fun as a kid?

AM: Well, growing up we had school activities too. We had Boy Scouts, you know, going out camping with Boy Scouts, hiking with Boy Scouts. School trips, we had. After we got a little bit older, participating in different clubs at school. Sports, basketball especially, I played. And then Future Farmers of America, vocational ag program, were some of the things that we did.

WN: What about unorganized stuff?

AM: Unorganized stuff, like. . . whatever comes up. (Chuckles) I think whatever else came up unorganized, it's probably related to maybe hunting and fishing. Yeah, hunting, fishing, camping, and going around, using horses to go hunting when we had a chance.

WN: Did each of your siblings have their own horse?

- AM: No, we had family horses. I think when we came from Moloka‘i we had one, and then probably at the peak, we maybe had about five or six horses. So, it was fun. Training horses in high school was—and later after I graduated and came back to Lana‘i, raising and training horses was a good pastime and good hobby. I enjoyed that.
- WN: So, did the neighbors and so forth that lived in Kō‘ele, like the Kwons and so forth, they all had horses, too?
- AM: Kwons didn’t have horses, but the Richardsons had horses. The Tanners, I don’t think they had horses. McGuires had horses. McGuires had some really nice horses. I think he liked pintos, and I remember him bringing in a pinto, really nice horse.
- WN: When you say bringing in, where did they bring it from?
- AM: I’m not sure where this one came from, off-island somewhere. It wasn’t a Lāna‘i horse. So, probably he got it maybe on O‘ahu or Maui, or Big Island somewhere.
- WN: Did they have wild horses on Lāna‘i?
- AM: No, they all belonged to people. I was going to say they belonged to someone, they were domestic horses, but maybe not as well trained or not as tame as some other horses. But not truly wild, where born and raised—or what you call like a mustang. Some of ‘em, the horses who were out there in the pasture—it was kind of a big pasture that the club had. Oh, maybe 600-plus acres. So, they were kind of almost like wild horses, because had several herds and you go out there, and they’re just roaming within this big paddock. And you had to go with your feed and go catch them so you can ride them.
- WN: And seems like, you know, you guys were on the ranch, but this was after the ranch had closed down.
- AM: Mm-hmm [yes].
- WN: And I was just wondering, how long did this ranch-type lifestyle survive? I mean, you know, the horses and so forth.
- AM: With the horses?
- WN: Yeah.
- AM: Oh, all the way until we left there, and continued even after that. And the Richardsons, they continued having horses, so a lot of the activity kind of focused around the horses. I’m going to say it survived probably until the horses got a little bit older, the owners got a little bit older. We still have the horse club.
- WN: Still have it today?
- AM: Yeah, but with much fewer members. From a peak of, in the [19]70s, maybe thirty-plus members, we’re down to five members today. And with a peak of, in the [19]70s, maybe 120 or so head of horses, we’re down now to 6 horses.
- WN: You still have a horse?

AM: I still have one more. Yeah.

WN: So, where do you live now? You live still in Kō‘ele?

AM: I live in town. No, not in Kō‘ele. I wish I lived Kō‘ele. But I live on the opposite end now at Lālākoa II subdivision.

WN: Oh, this side.

AM: Yeah, right on the end of this side. In the old days, I would call it Down Camp. The north side was Up Camp, and then this side was Down Camp.

WN: Kō‘ele was always called Kō‘ele?

AM: Or Ranch Camp.

WN: Ranch Camp.

AM: Yeah. Those days was kind of rare, I think, to be called Kō‘ele. They said, We’re going up Ranch. So, we just knew where that was.

WN: What about like, Keōmuku side, what did they call that? Just Keōmuku or . . .

AM: Just Keōmuku.

WN: So, did you associate with any of the families from Keōmuku side?

AM: By the time—my earliest recollection, already most of the Hawaiian families, the Kaopuikis at Keōmuku had already moved. The people who lived there were mostly older Filipino men who were either retired or chose to live down along the coastline. And so, some of ‘em would be raising chickens, maybe some pigs, collecting whatever they could to survive. Make a few dollars. One man I remember is Victor Amalsa, I think was his last name. He lived right on the southeast side of Kalaehī, White Stone. So, my father used to go down and kind of check on all these guys. So, I guess he almost was like social worker too. Go down and see how they are. Every now and then, these guys would ask him to buy stuff. Give him the money, and then he would buy crackers or rice, whatever, maybe bring water or something like that. So, he was kind of looking after that way too. So, just took it as part of the . . .

WN: Because that’s a really isolated place.

AM: Pretty isolated, yeah. And like Victor, he didn’t have a car. So, you know, if he needed to come up to town, he would walk, and he had a wheelbarrow. So, my father would kind of help him out. So, Victor, I think he raised pigs, he collected coconuts to bring up, crack ‘em and take ‘em into the store, grow a little vegetables and stuff. And many others were down there. It was kind of a busy place with these older, mostly Filipino men over there. So, as you come in off the road from Maunalei—oh had quite a few of these little shacks, little homes inside where these people would live. I think lot of them wanted to live down there, because it was warmer. I guess as you’re getting older, you get rheumatism and arthritis, you know. Then kind of little bit more freedom for them, or maybe it was cheaper living, too.

WN: But never have store or anything down there, yeah?

- AM: Not down there. I have to go check one day, try to recall all the different people. Victor is one that kind of stands out in my memory.
- WN: He's still there?
- AM: Oh, no, he passed away. He passed away when I was in high school, I believe, so probably in the early [19]60s or so.
- WN: The church is still there?
- AM: The church is still at Keōmuku, yeah. That's the last standing building. So, in my growing up time, there were no families at Keōmuku itself in the vicinity of that church.
- WN: I see.
- AM: The Kaopuiki family had already moved up to town. So, I kind of miss that. The Richardsons would talk about going down, spending the weekends with the grandparents at Keōmuku. But in our time, was already they moved out. And I cannot remember the house, too, at Keōmuku that they lived in. I only remember pictures.
- WN: When Mina was doing these interviews, long time ago in the late [19]80s, you know, she was interviewing the older generation.
- AM: Yeah.
- WN: So they could talk about Keōmuku and the houses, and who lived where, and stuff.
- AM: Yeah.
- WN: Now, it's the next generation, you guys.
- AM: So for us, it's Kō'ele, yeah?
- WN: Yeah.
- AM: And now, Kō'ele is no more pretty much, except for John Richardson, who's the last of the . . .
- WN: John's still there?
- AM: He still has the house.
- WN: Oh, he still has the house.
- AM: I understand he's on O'ahu now.
- WN: John is still alive?
- AM: John, Jr.
- WN: John, Jr. Oh, okay.

- AM: Yeah, John, Jr. So, they still have the home there. So that's the last of the old-time Kō'ele residents. So everybody else after that is newcomers. Another fading part. But at least they still have the homes there. I hope they keep those two old homes. Even if they're not in the same location, at least it's still a remnant of the past.
- WN: So, you went to Lāna'i High and Elementary School, yeah?
- AM: Mm-hmm [yes].
- WN: What was school like for you? What did you want to be? What did you want to do while you were going to school? Did you have any aspirations?
- AM: Not in the younger days, but as I got older, I was kind of pointing to ag, agriculture. And then animals, yeah? So, I love my animals, I love the horses. So, I got into animal science at UH [University of Hawai'i], and I was hoping to work for a ranch. One of the other things I ended up doing on a suggestion of a friend was to learn how to shoe horses. So, I did learn, and I did do horse-shoeing part-time, to make some money, and then help me through school. It was a good trade to learn.
- WN: Who would you shoe horse for? I mean, for like families or . . .
- AM: Yeah, individual horse owners on O'ahu—of course, start with the people you know.
- WN: Oh, you would shoe horses on O'ahu?
- AM: On O'ahu.
- WN: While you were going UH?
- AM: Yeah.
- WN: Who were the families who had horses?
- AM: Some of the families, from right here, like Richardsons, the daughter. Their family, the Nakoas, yeah? "Suki" [Richardson] married Buddy Nako. So, that whole family, Nakoas, had horses. My *hānai* brother "Hoss" Richardson, he had horses down there.
- WN: Where, though?
- AM: In various places. Then his cousins, the other John Richardson, Arnold Richardson, they had horses, too, in Kunia, Kualoa, and different places around the island. And then, another one I shoed horses for was Alton Lopez—Lopaka [i.e., entertainer and polo player Al Lopaka, aka Lopez].
- WN: Yeah.
- AM: So, I did some shoeing for him and some of the other polo players. So, Pancho was a good contact for me, because he introduced me to other polo players, and then they found out I shoe horses, so they ask me to shoe for them. And then, word got out that I can shoe a horse, so it was pretty good.
- WN: So, that's like extra pay for you while you were going UH?

AM: For a time, it was my only side job. So, it was pretty good. And then, I went for two summers to the Big Island, worked for Dr. Mac Smith at the racetrack on the Big Island, which was the Parker Ranch.

WN: Parker Ranch.

AM: Parker Ranch racetrack. Then that summer, Dr. Smith had a contract to train the Parker Ranch surplus horses and sell them. So, I worked there doing that, helping train horses and get them ready for sale, and selling the horses. Then I did work for Parker Ranch the following summer.

WN: So, you graduated Lāna‘i High in [19]68?

AM: [Nineteen] sixty-eight.

WN: Went UH four years.

AM: Four-and-a-half years.

WN: You were in animal husbandry, or . . .

AM: Animal technology, they called it. College of Tropical Ag[riculture].

WN: And you dormed at UH?

AM: Yeah, Johnson Hall. And then, for a little while, one semester, I think, we were in the athletic dorm down in the quarry. Actually, was more like the athletic dorm annex, I think. Just some simple, almost barrack-like building. Then after that, my brother and I got an apartment in Pālolo Valley, and we stayed there until he moved back to Lāna‘i. Then I went stay with my sister Marlene and her family for a while, and then some with another family until I came back to Lāna‘i.

WN: So, after you graduated from UH in [19]72, you told me that you tried to get a job at Parker Ranch?

AM: Mm-hmm [yes], I was planning to go back to Parker Ranch. But that previous year, as I was leaving that previous summer, one of the old cowboys that I worked with up in Waikīkī kind of strongly suggested I don't come back. His reasoning was that the ranching industry was kind of changing and losing money, and things were going to be very different for the ranches. And they were already changing. They were already looking at ways of cutting costs. It was like every other business. I think he was right on, you know, because lot of big changes came about at Parker Ranch. You know, they were asking people to retire early, or take the early severance packages to kind of pull back a little bit and regroup.

WN: So, like what kind of changes were taking place in ranching?

AM: Well, the big one was the rising costs of everything. I think they were having more problems with getting the animal feedlots. They all seemed to be losing money and they were looking for redevelopment and trying to sell off their nonproductive land. I think Parker Ranch sold a lot of their lands, trying to earn money to prop up the ranching side, regroup. And that was not just ranching. Pineapple and sugar was facing the same challenges. And although cowboys didn't

make a lot of money, I think that kind of [wages] were still rising, along with every other expense of business.

WN: What about the use of horses?

AM: We still used horses. For Parker Ranch, was still . . .

WN: So, that wasn't declining at all?

AM: No. Well, the horses were still a mainstay for the ranch when I was there those summers.

WN: And then, when you worked in the summers, what did you do besides shoe horses?

AM: When I worked for Dr. Smith, was shoeing horses and training horses. We call it green break. Just getting the horses where you can saddle and ride 'em. And then, put them up for sale. So, we had—I'm not sure how many horses, I've lost count of how many horses we had. But the big project for that summer was to get a group of horses ready for sale. And towards the end of summer, they had an auction and sold horses. If I recall correctly, I think the average per head was like \$500, which is really nothing compared to today's prices. But at that time, it was considered pretty good income for green broke horses.

WN: And so, they weren't mechanizing more, you know, like using four-wheel drives instead of horses, or things like that?

AM: When I was there, it was not—some of the other ranches were. For Parker Ranch, I guess they changed management in the early [19]70s. And I guess the horses were seen as a big expense. And they had a lot of horses. Some of the cowboys had maybe a dozen or more horses for their string. And often, because they had such large areas to cover, they needed those horses. But the management was trying to cut back. You know, maybe instead of twelve, maybe six. So, the surplus would go through our program, and then be up for sale. So, it was a big inventory reduction for the ranch on the horses. But when I was there, was still—they never issued us ATVs. (Chuckles) Was still horses. So, at least I got a glimpse of that life. And of course, they're still going strong, ranching is still going strong on the Big Island. Lāna'i, we've had our ups and downs.

After Hawaiian Pine [closed], never have cattle on Lāna'i again, commercial herd, until Mr. [David] Murdock took over. He brought in a person who started up cattle again, and bringing in cattle. That lasted for a few years, but different conditions, especially the drought, you know, eventually they gave up and kind of farmed out the cattle side to another operation, the Aoki family. Now, even the Aokis are not raising cattle. So basically, there's no commercial ranching again on Lāna'i. I think the only cattle we have is a few head at the stables for our roping stock, rodeo stock.

Well, we have quite a bit of good grazing land on Lāna'i, but for me, looking at the way drought is always constant for Lāna'i, you can depend on drought. You know, if you go out to a field today, you look, wow, look at all this nice grazing land, and looks beautiful. But in a few years or a year, you can bet on it that it's not going to stay that way. We're going through another drought cycle again, and we're going to be back to how we were three, four years ago when we had a lot of dead animals in the field. We had game starving, not enough food. So right now, it's good, but the cycle will come again. So if any ranching takes place [in the future], it can be done, but it has to be very conservative, and be always mindful that these good conditions will change.

- WN: And the people that were ranching later on, these were all like private landowners?
- AM: Yeah.
- WN: Wasn't the company, yeah?
- AM: Was Mr. Murdock, and then after that, the Aoki family. Aoki family had the grazing rights for a while. So, for whatever reason, they discontinued the operation.
- WN: So, you were saying you went back to Parker Ranch, and then they told you don't come back.
- AM: One cowboy did.
- WN: Okay. How come he told you that?
- AM: Yeah, well, because he felt that the ranch was changing. And it wasn't going to be stable.
- WN: Right.
- AM: Basically he was saying, "Well, you went to school, you have all these other opportunities that can open up to you." And he was saying, "Well, us cowboys, that's all we had, yeah? We never have choice, and this is the life that we had, and that's why we're doing it." And he said, "It's been a good fun life, we did support our families." But he was saying, well, like many parents, they were looking for better things for their children. Just like [working] pineapple field, none of our parents really wanted us to come back and work, especially if we had to work in labor in pineapple. They all expected better things for us. So, this cowboy was kind of maybe hoping that I could do things that he didn't do, and look for opportunities that he didn't have. He was a great cowboy, in my estimation, and he was real *akamai* and good horseman, good cattleman. So, I took his advice quite seriously.
- WN: So, he told you, in essence, "You have college degree, you can do better than being a cowboy."
- AM: Yeah.
- WN: Did you disagree at all at the time, or . . .
- AM: I took it—you know, I really respected his advice. And for him to actually come out—he could have not even cared, yeah? But I kind of took his advice quite seriously. So, when I did graduate during the fall term of [19]72, and when I came back to Lānaʻi on a visit, you know, Lānaʻi was just starting to develop, too. The Lānaʻi Company was starting up, already been going maybe a year or two already. So, you know, talking story with some of the people here, one of the managers for the Lānaʻi Company said, "Oh, come back. We need people to work, so come back and apply for a job, any kind of job, and see what happens." So I did, and I applied.
- WN: This was in [19]72, yeah?
- AM: [Nineteen] seventy-two, yeah, about December, [19]72 or [19]73. So, I did come back, and I did get a job with—first of all, was Kōʻele Company, I believe.
- WN: That was the original name of Lānaʻi Company?

- AM: Lāna‘i Company was more the [land] development company [under Castle & Cooke, Inc.]. Kō‘ele Company was more responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the island properties, so that was kind of how the organization was. So, I got work with Kō‘ele Company, working in the nursery and the beach park, maintenance.
- WN: This was down Maunalei?
- AM: In Maunalei, I worked with Johnny Sabino and his crew.
- WN: And also, Hulopo‘e?
- AM: And Hulopo‘e Beach Park, yeah. The crew would go down to Hulopo‘e too, maybe once or twice a week and clean up down there, take care the bathrooms and the landscaping down there, water plants.
- WN: So, Lāna‘i Company was actually [created] by Castle & Cooke to sort of address the end of pineapple and the beginning of [land development] . . .
- AM: Yeah, looking for options. Realizing that pineapple was on the decline, like all our big agriculture, pineapple and sugar. So, looking at ways they could utilize their assets, the land, and you know, continue. We always talk about diversification, not have all your eggs in one basket, so this was their charge to do it. Come up with a plan for Lāna‘i, to take us into the future, the next chapter of Lāna‘i, so to speak. So, they were looking ahead for the island. Probably one of the first and biggest hurdles was to get land use reclassification through the [State] Land Use Commission. And that—many, many plans and meetings went through. It was just like today. Lot of it was contentious. Lot of people not agreeing with the plans or the methods, or the ideas. A lot of the ideas were formulated by that Lāna‘i Company under Mr. Don Rietow’s leadership.
- WN: So, this was attempts to reclassify from conservation to . . .
- AM: Conservation and the ag, the pineapple lands to the urban and rural classification.
- WN: Right.
- AM: Yeah, with the State Land Use Commission. So along with that is coming up with a master plan for development. And so, the idea for the two resorts, the luxury home developments, the development of the commercial districts, that, really, to me, got off the ground in the [19]70s with Mr. Rietow. And I think lot of the ideas that were hatched back then were kind of carried forward by the next generation, Mr. Murdock and his company.
- WN: So, Rietow was before Murdock?
- AM: Yeah, way before, yeah.
- WN: I see. So, what was Rietow’s background?
- AM: He was quite a while with Castle & Cooke, you know, and I think always in the land assets side. And then, Castle & Cooke, I think Oceanic Properties was one of their divisions. So, I think he was always in the land side, and maybe for a while, in the pineapple side. I think he was on Lāna‘i in the early [19]50s too, on the pineapple side. So at any rate, he had a good knowledge of Castle & Cooke, being among the key people of Castle & Cooke, either in the pineapple or in the

land side. So, I think he was probably a pretty good choice for Lānaʻi, having lived and worked here, knowing the island and the people.

WN: We're just about out of battery here

AM: Yeah. Okay.

WN: You know, I anticipated me, you know, being not fully qualified to interview you.

AM: Why?

WN: Because you know so much.

AM: Well, that's quite a compliment. I don't know if I am making sense or what, but these are my views. My take on Lānaʻi, I guess.

WN: Okay.

AM: Okay, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

Lāna‘i:

Reflecting on the Past; Bracing for the Future

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