

today



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Kukaiau Ranch

today

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about the cover

Louis Correia, head cowboy at Kukaiau Ranch—a Davies subsidiary—has lived all of his 52 years at the Big Island ranch. His father was Kukaiau's foreman and an employee for 52 years. Louis Correia's son participates in roundups and this year raised a championship steer. Being a cowboy is a family tradition for many who live at Kukaiau Ranch.



By Daniel P. McGivern

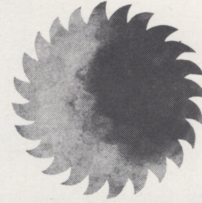
The first streaks of daylight cut into the dark clouds of night just before 6 a.m. at Kukaiaiu Ranch. Usually, the sun also rises. On my first morning at the ranch, the sun did rise.

It is a strange, beautiful sight. Nestled on the slopes of Mauna Kea, Kukaiaiu Ranch—a Davies subsidiary since it was formed in 1913—ranges all the way from an elevation of 2,200 to 8,500 feet. This means at sunrise, most of the clouds are below you and the sun shines brilliantly in a clear sky. The photograph on this page was taken just before sunrise from the living room of the ranch manager's home.

The view is similar to one you'd get if you were flying to Hawaii on a jet—with the sun rising above the clouds.

Whether the sun rises or not, one man is up at 4:30 a.m. every day. After getting dressed, he dons a heavily-lined Levi jacket and moves on into the kitchen to have a hearty breakfast and listen to the radio as he makes final plans for the new day, deciding the jobs his cowboys will tackle.

This man is Richard Penhallow, manager of Kukaiaiu Ranch since 1963 and unquestionably one of the state's most knowledgeable and efficient cattlemen. He has spent virtually his entire life in agriculture, having been a sugar plantation manager for many years before becoming a rancher. After 14 years at the famous Parker Ranch, including three years as



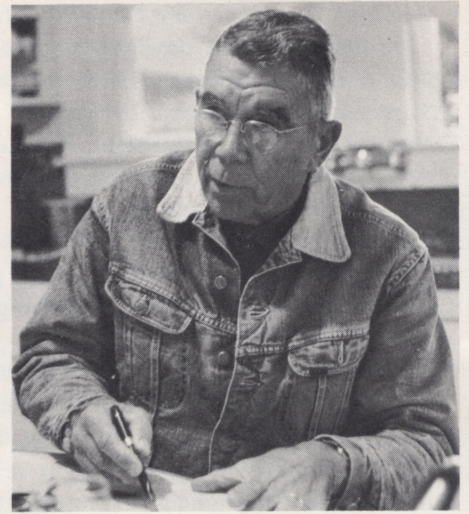
Kukaliau ranch



Richard Penhallow has been manager of Kukaiau Ranch since 1963 and he is one of the state's most knowledgeable cattlemen.



This is part of Umikoa, the small community of 14 homes where the 12 ranch hands and their families live.



manager, he joined Kukaiau Ranch, which has the largest polled hereford herd in the United States.

After breakfast, Penhallow puts a light under the coffee pot once more and rubs his calloused hands together. The temperature is 53° outside and it seemed to me not much warmer inside. I also wore a heavy Levi jacket to the breakfast table, provided by Penhallow who is probably accustomed to visitors who bring jackets too light to fend off the morning chill.

At about 6 a.m. I heard a truck coming down the road to Penhallow's home.

"That's Edward Boteilho, our foreman. He usually comes about 6:30 but on days when he has something on his mind, plans for the day or any special problems, he shows up at about 6," commented Penhallow.

Over coffee, it is decided that Boteilho will handle stringing a fence on the far side of the ranch. Penhallow will oversee a roundup of 200 head in a 600-acre pasture.

I was to learn that rounding up cattle is not an easy job but one that must be done almost every day. It's a job that takes men, extremely hardy men who have been toughened by ranch life and are outdoorsmen in every sense of the word.

En route to the stables—about three minutes from the manager's home—we went past the homes of the cowboys and their families, most of whom have spent virtually all of their lives on the ranch. All but two of the cowboys—there are a total of 12 ranch hands—have been living here since the day they were born.



The cowboys saddle up for the day's work at about 7 a.m. each morning.

There are occasional family trips into town, either Honokaa or Hilo. Penhallow said that most of the children attend school on the Hamakua coast, but some go as far as Hilo.

At the stables, several of the cowboys were already rubbing down and combing their horses. I chatted with a few of the men but spent most of my time taking photographs. As the sun climbed in the sky, the air became warmer and the morning chill was almost gone. Penhallow told the men the plans for the day as they saddled up and his jeep was being gassed up by the ranch's single pump.

Penhallow doesn't ride a horse, except for pleasure. He uses a Land Rover jeep because it is the only way he can cover as much ground as he has to every day. As manager, his responsibilities carry him to the far-flung corners of the 35,000-acre ranch.

This morning, there will be five hands on the roundup. Just before 7:30 they ride into the highlands. We climbed into our jeep, and after stopping at the house to make a phone call, we followed the cowboys using a road that was at first asphalt, then gravel, then dirt and soon there was no road—although there are generally tire marks where he has traveled many times before.

In about 45 minutes, we reached our destination—a grassy hillside covered with small trees about 300 yards from the corral where the cowboys would drive the herd.

We talked softly, so as to not

“spook” the cattle. The countryside was beautiful, rugged terrain. Mauna Kea was behind our backs and we could see the ocean and Maui from our vantage point.

Soon, we heard the yips and yells of the five cowboys as they came riding their horses down the slope. The cattle were in front of the cowboys, closely herded together along a fence. They had to be expertly herded into the corral. One cowboy, whose timing had to be perfect, cut the charging cattle off from the front—right at the entrance to the corral. The cattle turned to the left, blocked from the front and right side, going right into the corral.

“Timing is important on this type of an operation. If they had missed getting the cattle into the corral the first time, it would have taken hours to round them up and they'd have scattered all over this pasture,” said Penhallow, as he started the jeep and we headed down to the corral. The cattle were all in the right half of the corral and now had to be driven through a narrow chute, wide enough for only one animal at a time. The other half of the corral was again divided in half. As the cattle went through the chute, one man separated the heifers from the steers by swinging a cutting gate back and forth.

In about 25 minutes—and another 20 photographs later—the job was done.

The heifers will go back to pasture. Penhallow calls these cattle the ranch's future “calf factories.” There are about

3,400 calves born each year.

There are two breeding seasons—one starting in November and the other beginning in May. The breeding herds are given special attention. Cattle which don't measure up to the high standards are culled out and heifers taking their place are specially selected.

All of the cattle are inoculated against disease and receive mineral supplements.

The herd is at its peak in June, when there are about 11,000 head on the ranch. At the end of the year, there are about 8,300 head. From 300 to 400 cattle are sold each month beginning in April to the end of the year.

I learned that it has taken decades to build the herd up to its present size and quality.

Most of the 100 steers garnered in this morning's roundup are about 16 months old. They will be shipped the next morning on large cattle trucks to Kawaihae Elevator's Puako feed lot. After 100 to 110 days at the feed lot for special feeding, they will be sold—probably to GEM Stores or Big Way Super Markets.

“Right now, we don't have enough cattle to keep up with demand. People realize that island beef is extremely tasty and tender, particularly after the cattle are fed grains,” said Penhallow. Hawaii only produces one-half of the beef consumed in the Islands.

As we drove along Penhallow pointed out a water reservoir and spoke of water conservation at the ranch. Water tanks and reservoirs hold

14,000,000 gallons of rain water. I had learned from Mrs. Penhallow the day before that water was as precious as gold at the ranch. I tried to use only what was necessary. It was too cold for a shower anyway. The water is needed because usually each year (except this summer) there is about a four-month drought in the summer.

After a relatively short bumpy ride, we reached the spot where the fence was being laid. The wire, eight strands wide, was stretched out on the ground. A number of fenceposts were already in and more holes were being dug. After enough fence had been laid on the ground and fastened to the farthest post, a truck would pull the fence taut against the posts in the ground.

It is hard work—in spite of the modern equipment available to the cowboys such as the truck and power saws.

“I just thought you’d like to see this work being done,” said Penhallow. “Ranch life isn’t as glamorous as it is made out to be on television and in the movies.”

“I’ve learned that already this morning,” I replied. He knew that my original reason for going to Kukaiau Ranch was to write a story on the life of a modern cowboy. But it didn’t take me long to discover that a cowboy’s life isn’t much different today that it was 100 years ago.

Certainly, there are some modern

conveniences, such as power saws to build fences, but in general it’s still the man and his horse who are needed just as they were decades ago.

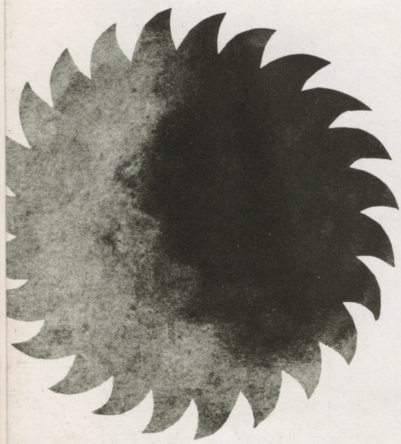
We then left the men who were laying the fences and headed back to Penhallow’s home, using a bumpy dirt road. There weren’t as many stops to open gates on the way back. I asked Penhallow why so many gates were needed. He said that the ranch has about 50 pastures, each of which is totally fenced off. The reason for this is that the cattle graze in a given pasture every six months for a period of about six weeks. The rest of the year the pas-

(continued on page 8)

Swinging the cutting gate is Stanley Boteilho, son of the ranch foreman.

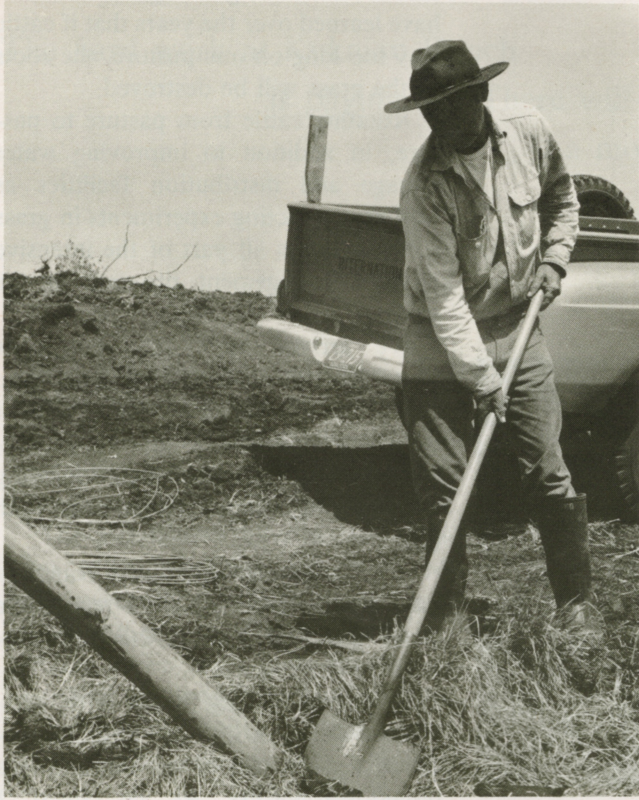


About 200 head of cattle were driven into this corral.

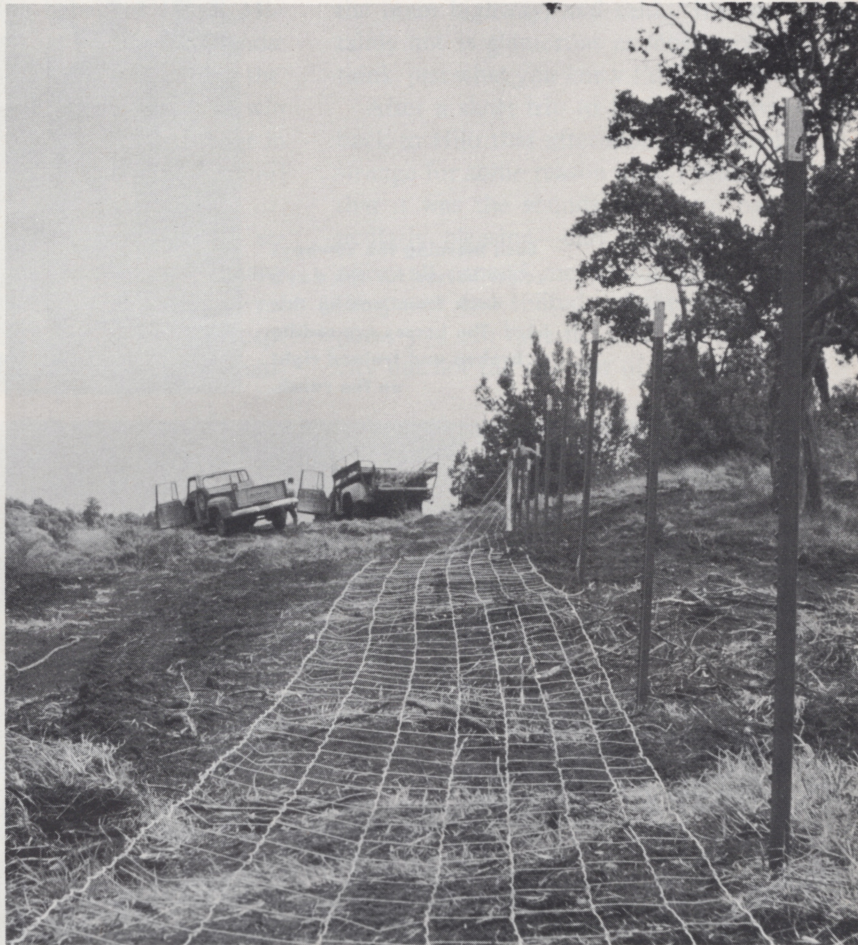


Cattle were driven along this narrow chute leading to the cutting gate where the heifers were separated from the steers.





William Johansen, a Kukaiau Ranch employee for 25 years, digs a hole for the heavy wooden post.



After the fence is stretched out on the ground, it is pulled up against the fenceposts by the truck and the men.



Straining to pull the fence taut against the post is Edward Botelho, foreman of the ranch.

Each morning the cowboys select horses for the day's work from among this herd. The horses are saddle broken and trained right on the ranch.



ture is allowed to grow again. Ranchers have learned over the years that if cattle stay too long on one pasture, the roots of the grass will be destroyed.

Rotating cattle from pasture to pasture, in addition to improving water storage and distribution facilities as well as conducting experiments in grass fertilization, is all part of the intensive pasture management program at the ranch.

We arrived back at Penhallow's home about noon. After lunch, he worked in his office, which is part of the rambling house. There is a considerable amount of paperwork, including bookkeeping, which must be done each day.

The hard work at Kukaiau Ranch is paying off. There will be a reasonable profit this year with further improvement in the future.

I finished a light lunch with Mrs. Penhallow, who, like her husband, radiates a great deal of warmth and is a thoughtful hostess. As we talked, I noticed that clouds were drifting across the ranch.

"It's often like this," she said. "Sometimes I can't even see my mother's house," which is about 100 feet from the kitchen window.

The skies became darker and the clouds did not lift for the rest of the day, reminding me of my visits to the Volcano House, where the same thing happens virtually every day.

I spent the afternoon in the house while Penhallow worked in his office. I made a few notes on my experiences that morning and made plans for changing the story approach. Ranch life certainly wasn't as romantic as the Marlboro commercials with "The Magnificent Seven" theme playing in the background.

The afternoon and evening were quiet. Life at the ranch, I believe, is a quiet, orderly, sometimes lonely one. The ranch is separated from the Hamakua community by 10 miles of long winding road through cane fields.

Life is comfortable, however, and there are special times that everyone looks forward to, such as Christmas. Heavy reindeer horns are placed on the heads of two horses which pull a "sleigh" down the hills to the 14-home community, called Umikoa, on Christ-

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is paying off. There will be
a modest profit this year.

mas eve. Each child meets Santa and receives a present from him. A Christmas play is held, using mostly children. Before the evening ends, everyone sings Christmas carols.

The Penhallows have a deep concern for the employees and their families—particularly the children, 33 in all. The Penhallows' two children are already grown and one is attending a mainland university, so the Penhallows take a special interest in helping other youngsters to continue their education

after high school. Penhallow recently wrote a letter on behalf of James Miranda, son of the late William Miranda—a colorful cowboy for 37 years at the ranch—which helped the youth to win a scholarship to South Plains College in Texas. Another Kukaiau cowboy, Earl Spence, attended the same school.

After our dinner that evening, we watched television and discussed many things about the ranch. Television reception, relayed from Maui, is exceptionally good on all three major chan-

nels. By 9 p.m., Dick Penhallow's long day begins to catch up with him. As he watches television, he dozes off—sitting up. Shortly afterward, we all called it a day.

After breakfast the next morning, I drove up to the cattle loading platforms to say goodbye to Penhallow. The day was cloudy and a little chilly.

"I hope you got a good idea of what ranch life is like," said Penhallow.

I turned to him, before getting into the car and the 15-minute ride back to the main highway, and said, "It's certainly not as glamorous as most people think, just what you knew I'd discover."

After a short trip to Haina, I drove back to Hilo that afternoon. It seemed strange for some reason until I realized that it was the sounds that were particularly pleasing—cars going by and noise all around me, definitely unlike the peace and solitude of the ranch. I guess you can take the man out of the city but not the city out of the man.

