

Harry Lui - Waimea Gazette 2005

Eighty two years old this year, Harry Lui was born in Honolulu, February of 1924. He started visiting the Big Island in the early fifties because of his interest in training hunting dogs. The wide open spaces on the Big Island allowed for excellent field trials for dogs, and Lui said Richard Smart used to allow use of Parker Ranch for the field trials.

“They don’t have the field trials here anymore,” said Lui, who has lived in Waimea for over thirty years now. He explained that these were contests, where two dogs were matched and competed to find and hold a bird until their owner reached them. The judges would be on horseback, while the dog handlers would be on foot or on horseback. A trial would last for one hour and the dogs were let loose. “Sometimes they would run one to a mile and three-quarters out...hardly can see,” Lui said.

The dogs were judged on how mannerly they would be; if one dog was holding a bird, the other dog would have to honor that “point” or he wouldn’t get credit. Lui said he really enjoyed training his dogs for hunting and competitions and that he would go to the annual racing trials in Maui. “Parker Ranch was abundant with birds. People don’t realize what we had in those early days,” said Lui.

For most of his career, over forty years, Lui worked for the US Airforce as an aircraft maintenance man. “I had a good life with them,” Lui said, who was a general foreman. Although he was stationed in Honolulu, Lui traveled all over the US for his work, meeting with other aircraft maintenance people to set up inspection requirements for hydraulics, landing gear, flight controls and steering. “We had a different climate in Hawaii compared to some of the other cities, so we would get together to discuss heavy maintenance in our different cities,” Lui said.

Lui remembers being in the southern states in the fifties when bathrooms were still separated and labeled “colored” and “whites.” “Those days I had to use the colored bathrooms,” Lui said. “Hawaii didn’t have this issue.”

When flying over to the Big Island from Honolulu for the field trials, Lui said they would land at Upolu Point in Kohala and passengers were then bussed to Waimea in a Hawaiian Airlines truck. “Those days, our dogs sat on our laps during the flight and we didn’t have to pay for them,” Lui said. He laughed when he recalled how some of the dogs would fight and it would “scare the stewardesses.” “Then they started charging us five dollars each for our dogs, but they could still sit with us,” he said.

Lui believes that Waimea’s climate is much drier than it used to be, as he remembers it being cold, dark and damp for days at a time. Even though it was cold, he said that kids would still go around barefoot because people “couldn’t afford.” “Everyone had luau feet around here,” laughed Lui. “They said we would be good swimmers, [alluding to wide paddling feet], but we never take advantage.”

Life was simpler then, and Lui said when he first came to Waimea, people were still riding their horses to work. He added that later, “lots of people” drove old Army surplus jeeps. “That’s what we had...our pride and joy around here.” He recalls friends of his who worked for Parker Ranch, shearing sheep at three cents per head. “Those days they worked so hard,” Lui said. “Can you imagine? They got \$3 a day for shearing one hundred sheep.”

Growing protea is what Lui does now in his “retirement.” He used to grow vanda orchids, but he said it is too cold in Waimea. “I enjoy myself, stay busy, and try to stay out of trouble,” Lui said.