Chapter One

Life in Kalihi

The Cayetanos of Kalihi

Roughly translated, the Hawaiian word "Kalihi" means "place of transition." I was born there on November 14, 1939. I grew up and lived there until I left for Los Angeles in 1963.

Today, much of Kalihi is light industry, but back then it was a predominantly blue-collar residential neighborhood. I drive through it occasionally, mostly out of nostalgia; everyone I knew has moved out, so there is usually no other reason for me to go there.

A few years ago, the *Honolulu Advertiser* did a story on me and a former Kalihi youth gang leader who in his early 20s had reformed his ways. They set up a photo shoot at the duplex where I once lived.

Not surprisingly, the duplex looked rundown; after all, many years had passed. But time was only part of the reason for its demise. There was considerable rubbish strewn throughout the yard, and the empty beer cans stood out prominently. Window screens were torn and left unrepaired. Inside the duplex, I was stunned to find that the same gas stove from my youth was still being used—the thick black soot, which had accumulated over decades of use and poor maintenance, had become a permanent part of the stove itself. And the same small bathtub, the porcelain inside yellow with age, was still being used as well.

Mr. Leonida, our landlord back then, would never have tolerated such neglect. I suppose the fact that he and his family also lived there made a big difference. The current tenants had an absentee landlord who apparently was not inclined to pay attention to his or her Kalihi investment. Neither were the tenants. It was a sign of people not giving a damn. Kalihi had changed—but not for the better.

It wasn't always that way. Kalihi was not even always blue collar or light industry. In the early 1900s, it was a residential district for middle- and upper-middle-class Chinese, Hawaiian and Portuguese residents. By the late 1930s, however, Kalihi had evolved into a predominantly blue-collar community. Working families were attracted to the area mostly because rents and homes were affordable. Among these families were many Japanese and a lesser number of Filipinos who had left the plantation to work in the city. Kalihi became a kaleidoscope of ethnicities: Japanese, Filipinos, Hawaiians, Chinese, Koreans, Puerto Ricans and

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Portuguese. There were a few haoles: mostly military families who lived at nearby Fort Shafter.

Asato, Ching, Hayashida, Koda, Mau, Okuda, Pratt, Tawata and Steinhoff—these were the last names of my close childhood pals. The guys I played with as kids and hung out with as teenagers. We had different ethnic surnames, different skin tones, different facial features—and if asked about our ethnicity, we would answer, "Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Hawaiian-Chinese," whichever the case may have been, but we were different from our Mainland counterparts. Indeed, it would have been more accurate to describe us all as "local," rather than by our ethnicity, for we were born and raised in Hawaiʻi, spoke pidgin, loved local food and had a greater affinity for the Hawaiian culture—the culture of Hawaiʻi's native people—than for the ethnic culture of our grandparents' homelands, about which most of us knew little or nothing.

The homes in the area were modest, usually small and inexpensive; the well-kept yards were a sign of pride of ownership. The residents in my part of Kalihi were mostly Japanese, with an ample sprinkling of Filipinos, Hawaiians and Chinese. Most of the Puerto Ricans and Portuguese lived in upper Kalihi and Kalihi Valley, which are located mauka (mountain-side) of King Street. This is a major street running parallel to Nimitz Highway, the highway that leads to Honolulu International Airport and Hickam Air Force Base on the western side of Oʻahu and to downtown Honolulu and Waikīkī on the eastern side. We lived in a rented, second-story duplex on Silva Street in lower Kalihi on the makai (ocean) side of Nimitz Highway.

Kalihi was destined to become blue collar. It was close to the harbors and airport and, at the time, it was the western edge of the city's unofficial borders. The politicians saw Kalihi as a convenient and politically correct place for public work projects. Even today, Kalihi still has the largest concentration of low-income public housing in Hawaiʻi—at one time there was more there than in all of the rest of the state combined.

In 1914, the Territorial government built Oahu Prison—"OP"—Hawaiʻi's largest prison at the time, at the corner of Puʻuhale Road and Dillingham Boulevard—a stone's throw from my school, Puʻuhale Elementary School, about a mile from where I lived. Children walking to or from school on Puʻuhale Road would often see the prisoners playing sports or working in the prison yard. Sometimes the children would wave hello when they saw family friends or relatives among the inmates. I never knew anyone in the prison, but I would always wave to the prisoners—and to the guards armed with rifles in the two towers facing the road.

Two or three miles away, next to the Kapālama Canal—which was once clean enough for crabbing and fishing but today is polluted—dark gray or black smoke spewed from the smokestack of the city's 100-foot-high incinerator, as the daily collection of garbage and rubbish was burned. Decades later, the city

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shut it down, which actually improved air quality in the area.

Kalihi was an ideal place for light industry. Amid trucking companies, auto repair shops, junkyards and other small companies and businesses were Hawai'i's three largest pineapple canning companies—Hawaiian Pineapple (later Dole), Libby's and Del Monte. For two summers, during my sophomore and junior years in high school, I worked as a tray boy at Hawaiian Pineapple.

On Kalihi Street, a few blocks away from our duplex, was the Kalihi Poi Factory, owned and run by Japanese Americans. A few blocks away, on Homerule Street, was a crematorium—the "make (dead) man place," as we called it. On Mokauea Street, a hundred yards or so from our duplex, was the McCabe Stevedore Company, where stevedores would gather every morning before being transported to work on the docks.

At the end of Silva Street there is the Associated Steel yard, where steel workers cut rods and assembled frames for construction projects. Next to it was a wood shop where beautiful wood Hawaiian carvings were made, until the shop was closed because it could not compete with the flood of mass-produced foreign "Hawaiian" artifacts which tourist vendors found cheaper and more profitable.

Kalihi was a good place to grow up. Its residents were friendly and helpful. Most did not lock their doors at night. Most were hard working. There was respect among them.

Writers often romanticize Kalihi, describing it as "rough," "tough," "impoverished" and "poor." By most standards Kalihi was a "poor" and "impoverished" place—but frankly, I did not know it. I might not have had the healthiest and most balanced meals to eat or expensive clothes to wear, but my father made sure there was always something to eat and that I always had clean clothes and shoes.

Most poor kids, I believe, don't realize they are poor. They don't miss what they never had or knew anything about—unless, of course, they can make comparisons or are told they are poor and try to figure out why.

I believe they do know, however, if they are happy or sad. I probably went through all of the emotions and developed the insecurities of kids whose parents are divorced—divorce carried a stigma back then—but I made adjustments in my social life to deal with it. Overall, I was happy growing up in Kalihi.

My father, Bonifacio Marcos Cayetano (everyone called him *Ansing*), raised my brother and me. Like us, our next-door neighbors, the Estiamba brothers, were raised by their dad, as were the Steinhoff boys who lived on the corner of Mokauea and Silva Streets a few houses away.

I was about six or seven when my parents divorced. I don't remember anyone ever explaining to me why Mom was not living with us—in fact, I don't remember how or when the word "divorce" crept into my child's vocabulary. I learned quickly, however, how to take care of myself and make sure my brother, Kenneth, who is two years younger, brushed his teeth, took a bath, had breakfast and din-

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ner, dressed and got ready for school. Ken learned fast and soon was often more conscientious than me, doing it all by himself.

One thing that caused me some anxious moments was having to relight the pilot light on our gas stove when it went out, which happened often. Not knowing anything about gas stoves, except that they could be dangerous, I saw relighting the pilot light as an early test of my manhood. First, I'd tell Ken to step outside. Then I got a box of matches and virtually shut my eyes while nervously trying to relight it, expecting at any moment I might be blown up. As I got older, I found out that it wasn't as dangerous as I thought. I'm not sure why I remember this story, but I chuckle every time I think of it.

Dad worked as a waiter for the Outrigger Canoe Club, a private social club whose membership was limited to haoles and affluent Hawaiians. He worked there six days a week. Monday was his day off. He would leave home at 7 a.m. to catch the Kalihi bus. After two bus transfers, he'd get to the Outrigger about 8:30 and work the breakfast shift. When we were very young, he would come home by bus between shifts to cook dinner for us. It was a big strain on him, so often he would cook before he left for work. It didn't make sense for him to come home between shifts, so he would stay there, work lunch and dinner, and get off work at 9 p.m., sometimes 10. If he was lucky, he caught a ride home with a fellow worker. Otherwise, it would take him at least an hour by bus to get back home. By then, Ken and I would be fast asleep.

I knew Dad felt bad about his long work hours. Sometimes on a Saturday or Sunday, he'd take us with him to work, and we would go swimming or play on the beach while he worked. At lunchtime, the chef would prepare lunch for us and we'd eat in the employees' locker room. And on most Mondays, his day off, Dad would take Ken and me to the movies. We looked forward to it. Most of the time, we went to the old King Theater downtown to see cowboy movies. Those starring Hopalong Cassidy, the Durango Kid, Red Rider and Little Beaver, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, and Roy Rogers and his horse, Trigger, were among our favorites. (As we got older, John Wayne and Randolph Scott would replace them as my heroes.) Movies were simple in those days. The good guys always won. Most of the time, Dad would fall asleep about two thirds of the way through the movie while Ken and I would be stuffing ourselves with popcorn and hot dogs, washed down with soft drinks.

Often, we'd go to the Palama Theater, which resembles a smaller version of the famous Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood. The theater closed decades ago but still stands today, unusable and falling apart. It was legally designated a historical building and therefore cannot be torn down—stark testimony to how a well-intentioned law can have unintended consequences.

Dad liked the Palama Theater because it was easy to get to by bus, and after the movie, he would take us to eat saimin noodles and barbecue beef at a little

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Japanese saimin restaurant on Robello Lane right next to the theater. The place was always packed because they served the best saimin in Honolulu. I heard it closed sometime in the late 1960s because the owners' children had all gone to college and did not want to carry on the family business.

As we got older, Dad gave us a daily allowance for lunch and dinner. Health-wise, this was not a good idea. Too often, Hershey bars, Babe Ruths, ice cream and Cokes were happily substituted for healthy meals. Usually, however, my brother and I would eat dinner at Dot's Hut, a local restaurant owned and run by the Hamamura family. Dot's Hut was housed in a Quonset hut on Kalihi Street, a 10-minute walk from our duplex. The food was great. But I never felt comfortable having dinner there with Ken or by myself while my friends were having dinner at home with their families.

The Hamamuras were very kind to us. When Ken was about 10 years old, he began working for them, washing dishes and even helping to serve customers. He could keep his tips and got free meals. They couldn't hire him, because he was too young. But they knew our family situation, took a liking to Ken and found a way to help us. They were hardworking, honest and humble people—the sort one never forgets.

Like the Hamamuras, the Estiambas were good people. They lived in the other half of our duplex apartment. Ken and I felt safe with them as neighbors. Mr. Estiamba was a shipyard worker, a technician of some kind. In those days, it was a big achievement for an immigrant Filipino to have that kind of job. He enrolled his two sons, Albert and Carlos, at St. Louis High School, a private Catholic school. We knew when he got home from work because after dinner, around 6 or 6:30 p.m., he would sit on the back porch, light up a cigar, play his guitar and sing Filipino songs.

I looked up to the Estiamba boys, especially Albert, who was eight years older than me. Back then, for young Filipino boys like me, getting into St. Louis was like getting into Notre Dame. It was a big deal. Albert was a starting halfback for the 1949 St. Louis Crusaders football team. High school football was big in those days. Sell-out crowds at the old Honolulu Stadium were common. One year, either 1949 or 1950, Mom took Ken and me to the championship game against McKinley. St. Louis won, 13 to 6, with Albert scoring the two winning touchdowns. For a long time, I told everyone who would listen that Albert Estiamba, star halfback for the St. Louis Crusaders, was my next-door neighbor.

Once, Albert got into a fistfight with a neighbor that spoke volumes about life in Kalihi. Albert wasn't a troublemaker; he was actually quiet and soft spoken. I never saw him get angry or heard him raise his voice. The neighbor was a guy named Henry (not his real name), who seemed like he was always moody or angry at something. Most of the kids avoided him. Henry got into an argument with Albert's younger brother, Carlos, which ended up with Henry slapping Carlos

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around. Henry was in his 30s. Carlos was only 15 or 16, still a kid. Whatever the reason, it didn't seem right to me. I was angry and frightened.

As soon as I heard Albert walking up the steps, I went to the front door. Carlos told him what happened. Albert went straight to Henry's apartment downstairs. I could hear them talking below. Pretty soon, Henry's voice sounded louder and angrier. Finally, he shouted repeatedly, "What? You young punk, I'll break your ass!" I saw Henry give Albert a hard shove, then another. Albert motioned calmly with his open hand, pointing to the street, and said, "Let's go." There, right in front of our duplex, in the middle of Silva Street, they squared off and started fighting.

My heart raced as I watched them from the porch. Henry, a stevedore, was a little bigger than Albert, and he already had the muscular build of a grown man. Almost as soon as the fight began, a dozen or more stevedores came running over from the McCabe Hamilton Stevedores building on Mokauea Street, about 100 yards away. When I saw them, I got really scared. I was frightened when the fight began, but now I was so scared I began trembling. I was worried that one or more of the stevedores would jump Albert.

But no one did. Instead, they stood in a circle around the two fighters. The circle got bigger as some male neighbors joined the crowd. A couple of drivers parked their cars to watch. No one said or did anything. The only sounds I heard were the thumps of punches and the grunts of two men wrestling and hitting each other.

The fight couldn't have lasted more than three to five minutes, but it seemed like it went on longer than that. Coming off the football season, Albert was in great physical shape. He had fast hands and knew how to use them. Soon youth and determination made the difference. Albert knocked Henry down two or three times. Each time Henry got up. His face was a bruised, bloody mess, and he looked exhausted. Once, after he went down, Henry called out desperately, "Times … times …" (pidgin for "time out"). It sounded so funny that as scared as I was, I wanted to laugh. But none of the adults laughed. Finally, after Albert knocked Henry down again, a huge Hawaiian stevedore stepped in between the two, helped Henry up and said, "Okay, fight over. He had enough. Everybody go home." No one argued. The fight was over.

Fifteen minutes later, the cops finally arrived. By then, the crowd was gone, the street deserted. When the cops questioned Albert and Henry, they both dismissed it as a "misunderstanding." Back then, that's the way things were done in Kalihi.

Later in the evening, I saw Henry, his face still red and swollen, walking slowly down the street, apparently looking for something. The next day, a grinning Carlos told me that Albert had hit Henry so hard, so many times, that he'd knocked Henry's gold fillings out of his mouth. That, along with the fact that Henry

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had called for a "time out" in a fight he had started, made him a subject of ridicule. The story of the fight was repeated in the neighborhood for a long time.

Jerry and Ansing

One day I heard the bell ringing from the ice cream man's car (I think it was a Jeep with a built-in freezer on it) as it was coming up Silva Street. I began rummaging through my father's dresser looking for some loose change, and then I found his life insurance policy. I must have been only 10 or 11 at the time, but I knew what life insurance was for. Later, as I went through it, I noticed that there was only one name listed as a beneficiary: Ken's. *Where is my name? Is it just a mistake? Why have I been left out?* These kind of thoughts ran through my mind. I was fearful I had done something wrong, although I had no clue what it could be.

I recalled once my brother Ken and I got into an argument that ended with me punching him out. Reduced to tears, he shouted angrily at me in pidgin, "You not my bruddah!" At the time, Ken's words went right over my head. Brothers, after all, argue all the time and say all kinds of nasty things to each other. But the insurance policy made me wonder. Physically, Ken and I do not look like brothers. I resemble my mother. Ken is a dead ringer for Dad. I had often wondered why Ken and I looked so different. Now I wondered whether we were real brothers—and whether Dad (Ansing) was my real father. I was afraid to bring it up with him or Mom—how does a 10- or 11-year-old ask his parents about something like that? I was worried how they would answer, and yet at the same time I had no idea what they would say. I decided that at the right time, I would ask Auntie Violet, Mom's youngest sister.

I was close to Aunt Violet. I often stayed over weekends at her home in Damon Tract. She was married to a haole from West Virginia—Ken and I called him Uncle Jack. She met Jack through her job at the Pearl Harbor Naval Base during World War II—he was a former Marine. I heard that he was wounded somewhere in the Pacific, sent to Tripler Army Hospital for treatment and later became an MP at Pearl Harbor. But I never heard him talk about his war experience.

Uncle Jack came from a very poor family. His full name was Jack Ayers; he was German American. Once I heard my Aunt Violet kidding him about his life as a hillbilly: how they were more backward than we were in Hawai‘i because they were still using outhouses in West Virginia. Whenever Uncle Jack criticized some of our local ways, Aunt Violet would bring up his hillbilly roots. Most of the time, it was good natured.

You couldn't miss Uncle Jack. He was handsome, brown-blond-haired, and stood at least six inches taller and weighed 50 pounds more than any of the Filipino men in our family. He liked fishing and struck up a friendship with a couple of older Filipino fishermen and regularly went fishing with them. It was

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nice to see this big haole exchanging fish stories with his shorter, brown-skinned friends. It took awhile for him to understand pidgin laced with a Filipino accent, but he eventually got the hang of it and learned how to speak pidgin with them. He was the only haole living on "N" Road in Damon Tract. He was always nice to me, and I liked him a lot.

They had three sons: Patrick, Jack Jr. and William. Each was taller and bigger than me. You could not tell they were part Filipino. My cousin Jack Jr., especially, with his blond hair, looked pure haole. The only way you could tell he was local was when he spoke pidgin. Billy also had mostly haole features, and I often joked with him that he was the biggest Filipino I ever knew (years later, he played center on the University of Hawaiʻi football team). I was the oldest among all of my cousins, and they all kind of looked up to me. We were all close; I was especially close to Pat, who was two years younger than me.

Damon Tract was located next to the old John Rodgers Airport, which is now part of Honolulu International Airport. It was in the flight path of the Hickam Air Force Base. In fact, during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the enemy planes that bombed and strafed Hickam Field flew right over Damon Tract. A couple of houses were strafed, and even though the owners patched up the bullet holes, you could still see the impressions under the newer paint.

Like Kalihi, Damon Tract was a blue-collar neighborhood. At the time, it was not the big industrial area it is today. Back then, there were mostly old homes, a pig farm run by the Oshiro family, the Asagi Chicken Farm, a grocery store, an elementary school and a Catholic church.

The roads in Damon Tract were named with the letters of the alphabet. Each road ran perpendicular from the edge of the airport up to Nimitz Highway, the main highway leading to Hickam. Every road was a dead end, ending at the fence that separated the airport from Damon Tract. It was a great place for cockfights because the cops would have to drive in from Nimitz Highway and could be easily seen from the dead-end side of the road where the cockfights were held.

To Filipinos, a cockfight was a sporting event—in their eyes it was just like a rodeo, except the dead cock became someone's dinner whereas the used-up rodeo horse might end up in a glue factory or as dog food. Typically, dozens, sometimes hundreds, of people attended. The yard would be teeming with activity; the few women there were usually selling snacks (most often Filipino pastries) and drinks. Owners proudly displayed their fighting cocks for the bettors to see. Gaffers could be seen expertly tying the razor-sharp gaffs onto the fighting cocks' spurs. Bets were made verbally, on the honor system (anyone who welched on a bet put his life in danger). There was even a weigh-in. A designated person would weigh the fighting cocks by holding one in each hand, his arms serving as a scale, and then he would announce whether one cock was heavier or lighter than the other. It wasn't very scientific, but everyone seemed to trust the system.

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The cockfights I saw were swift and deadly, usually ending within a minute or two. But there were rules. Before a cock could be declared a winner, it had to peck the loser's comb within a certain time limit—otherwise the cockfight would be declared a draw.

Most of the cockfights in Damon Tract were held in a big yard next to my Aunt Violet's home. Whenever the cops managed to pull a surprise raid, it resulted in chaos—people would be scattering everywhere, climbing over fences, running through yards, hiding in closets—it was hilarious.

I looked forward to staying at Damon Tract. Usually, Mom would pick me up and drop me off there—except the one time I walked. I had lost all of my dinner money playing the pinball machine at Dot's Hut. I was hungry and went home to see if there was anything to eat, but the only thing in our refrigerator was a quarter-piece of raw onion. I ate all of it with soy sauce, but of course, I was still very hungry. It was a Friday, so there was no school the next day. I decided to visit Aunt Violet. It was a five- or six-mile walk, mostly along busy Nimitz Highway. I told Ken to let Dad know.

Along the way, I stopped briefly to look for crabs along a bridge by Ke'ehi Lagoon. There were two bridges, which still stand today. We called them "First Bridge" and "Second Bridge." Cars were whizzing by, but I wasn't worried about them—I was more worried about the pack of wild dogs that frequented the area. So I picked up a baseball bat-sized piece of wood to protect myself. Fortunately, the dogs weren't there.

When I finally got to the street where my aunt lived, it was already getting dark. Aunt Violet happened to be standing outside her yard when she recognized me walking down the road. "Boy … [that was my nickname]. Boy, did you walk from Kalihi?" she asked in astonishment.

"Oh, it wasn't hard, Auntie," I replied, trying to sound nonchalant.

"No, but it is so dangerous with all those cars driving on Nimitz, don't you ever do it again, okay?" she scolded. Finally, she smiled and asked, "I bet you didn't eat dinner. Are you hungry?"

So one day, I finally worked up the nerve to ask Aunt Violet about my father.

"Auntie, is Ansing my real father?"

She hesitated for a moment and then confirmed what everyone else in my family but me seemed to know. Ansing was not my biological father, she said. He was my legal father—his name was on my birth certificate—but my biological father was a guy named Jerry. Jerry left Mom while she was still pregnant with me.

"Boy, I think you are old enough to know. He comes here all the time for the cockfights," she replied, "Next time he comes, I'll show you who he is."

Months later, when I was staying over, she called me to her second-floor bedroom window. "Boy, there he is, that man is your real father," she said, point-

ing to a man among dozens of Filipino men who were milling around awaiting the cockfights. He was short, of medium build and fair skinned. I don't remember his facial features except that I sensed that he truly was my biological father.

From then on, every time I stayed over, whenever there was a cockfight, I looked for him among the crowd. I saw him a couple of times, but he did not notice me. Then one day, I felt someone tap my shoulder. It was him. He asked, "You know me?" I was stunned by the tone of his voice. He sounded like he was doing me a favor by just talking to me—not a hint of warmth or friendliness, not even a smile. Who did he think he was? I glared at him and shot back sarcastically, "Yeah, I know you"—then turned my back and walked away.

That was it. He knew who I was and saw me often, but he never acknowledged me, not even a smile or hello. I was unimportant in his life. I don't recall feeling hurt, but any inner feelings I might have had for him would remain submerged forever. We never spoke to each other again. Sometimes I wonder whether things would have been different if he had shown some warmth, expressed some genuine interest in me.

When Mom was alive there were times I hoped she would tell me the real story about Jerry. Years later, I asked her why my middle name was "Jerome," and she said it was the first name of a famous lawyer she admired. She never knew that I knew the truth. I figured it was a part of her life she did not want me to know about. I never asked. It was okay. In the end, it didn't matter; I was glad she married Ansing. (In 1973, Jerry's name would come up again in an extraordinary case in which I was the lawyer defending a man accused of murder.)

Love for another, a psychologist friend once told me, grows largely from personal interaction rather than blood ties. When I first met Jerry my reaction was one of curiosity, not filial emotion. Ansing—Dad—was, after all, the only father I knew. He treated me as if I was his natural son. He was the only father I grew to love. My brief encounter with Jerry only strengthened my feelings for Dad.

The life insurance thing hurt, but I accepted it. *Maybe one day he'll add my name,* I thought. Besides, I was the big brother. I could handle myself. Ken was younger; he was smaller, timid and quiet. He would need help if Dad died. Looking back, that's how I rationalized it. I wasn't Dad's real son but he treated me as if I was. Even to this day, whenever I hear people say "blood is thicker than water," I am amused. It's more folklore than reality.

Dad was born and raised in a small village on the outskirts of the city of Urdaneta, Pangasinan Province, Philippines. He told me he came to Hawai'i in 1928, imported along with thousands of other Filipino immigrants by the plantation owners who were searching the world for workers to plant and harvest Hawaiian sugar cane. His older brother, Pablo, became a steward on a merchant ship, leaving behind a wife to whom he would faithfully send money but whom he would never see again.

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Dad was Ilocano. Ilocanos were considered better workers than the fair-skinned Visayans, who were more heavily influenced by the Spanish culture and had a reputation for preferring frivolity and shunning hard work. Once, Dad told me that the difference between Ilocanos and the Visayans was that "Ilocanos work hard.… Visayans, they think they better than us but they lazy," a point of view disputed by Mom, who was part Visayan.

The haole plantation owners preferred Ilocano workers to Hawaiians, who often left the plantation fields, mainly because they could not adjust to plantation life and found it demeaning to work under the hot sun side by side with Asian immigrants. They also preferred them to the Chinese and Japanese, who were inclined to marry, start families and move to the city to find jobs or start small businesses, while most Filipinos saw working on the plantation as a temporary sacrifice. One day, they believed, they would return home with a nest egg to better the lives of their families.

Once, when I was in high school, I read a newspaper story about an old Filipino man who, after working on the plantation for nearly four decades, was finally returning to the Philippines to retire. Somehow, he had saved enough money to buy a small tractor, which he intended to take back with him. The story included a nice photo of him sitting on it. With his new tractor and his pension (a pittance in Hawaiʻi, but good money in the Philippines) the old man would make a heroic return to his village. The story was good public relations for the plantation owners—but the reality was that the old man was the exception rather than the rule.

By the late 1940s, two thirds of the plantation workers were Filipinos. For these men the biggest problem was the lack of women. One historian estimated that in 1930 Filipino men outnumbered Filipino women by more than 10 to one. All of the male Asian immigrants faced the same problem, of course, but they dealt with it in different ways. The pragmatic Chinese married Hawaiian women, thus accounting for the many Chinese Hawaiians in Hawaiʻi today. The ethnocentric Japanese shunned interracial marriage, opting instead for Japanese "picture brides." Most Filipinos, however, still clung to their dream of returning to their homeland one day. Tragically, too many Filipino men, unable to afford a ticket back to the Philippines or unwilling to return, lived out their senior years in loneliness, often in near- or abject poverty.

Bachelorhood brought social problems. Some Filipino men turned to prostitutes and gambling to make up for their loneliness. Some doted on their godchildren, showering them with gifts and money. Worse, competition for the few women available too often bred jealousy, manipulation and sometimes violence.

One day, an example of that kind of violence struck close to home. I must have been about 11 or 12 at the time when I saw my next-door neighbor, Carlos, crying, and later his older brother, Albert, teary-eyed. I had never seen Albert cry before, and I knew something was very wrong. I saw Dad talking to our landlord,

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Mr. Leonida, and some of our neighbors. When they were done, I asked, "Daddy, what happened?"

"Oh, son, a crazy man kill their mother," he replied sadly.

"Why?" I asked Dad.

"Because he is so jealous of her," he said, shaking his head.

Murder was big news in those days—and it seemed even bigger if Filipinos were involved. The story was plastered in large headlines on the front pages of the two major daily newspapers. My heart sank when I read them. The sight of Albert and Carlos weeping made me weep too. I thought about Mom. It was a terrible day for the Estiamba family. It would be a long time before we heard Mr. Estiamba play his guitar and sing his songs again.

Such tragedies bolstered the widespread stereotype that Filipinos were a people given to vice and violence. And Filipinos such as my father paid a steep price for it—suffering discrimination in the job market, being looked down upon socially and treated unfairly by the government. Years later, I was shocked to learn that until capital punishment was abolished in Hawai‘i in 1957, nearly one-half of those executed were Filipinos. Things are much better today, but back then Filipinos ranked near, if not at, the bottom of Hawai‘i's socioeconomic hierarchy.

Education has long been the key for minorities to attain parity in society. But for the haole plantation owners, the less educated the worker, the better. Illiteracy encouraged docility. Docility discouraged ambition, kept the workers on the plantation. Ironically, life was so bad in the Philippines that some well-educated immigrants would lie about their education to increase their chances of being chosen to work on Hawai‘i's plantations. I recall that on a few occasions my father would run into a friend and say to me, "Son, you see Maximo? He was a schoolteacher in Urdaneta." Or at a Filipino function the leader of a Filipino club would be introduced as "engineer" because he had been one in the Philippines, even though he was a hotel worker in Hawai‘i.

Like the majority of the Filipino immigrants he came with, though, Dad did not have much schooling. His third-grade education in a rural school in Urdaneta had taught him beautiful penmanship but only the basic elements of reading, writing and arithmetic.

But that did not stop him from leaving the plantation. The plantation was not what he wanted. The sun was hot, the work, backbreaking—and he did not want to get involved in the rising labor unrest, which eventually led to strikes and sometimes violence. Eventually, he found a job in the hotel industry, first as a busboy and then as a waiter at the old Palm Tree Inn in Waikīkī, and finally as a waiter at the Outrigger Canoe Club, where he worked for more than 20 years. Dad was a hard worker, and his warm personality and neat appearance made him well suited for the service industry.

I never learned how my father and mother met or why they married. I never

asked and no one ever told me. We just never talked about it. I was born on November 14, 1939. They divorced when I was about six years old. So they must have been married for at least six years.

But their divorce was inevitable. They were so different. Mom was aggressive and independent; Dad was easygoing and laid back. Intellectually, Dad was not curious—he took each day as it came. Mom, on the other hand, was always trying to learn. She was smart. Had she been born 50 years later, she could have been a lawyer or a teacher. The divorce was amicable, and they agreed that Dad would get custody of me and Ken.

Mom would drop by every other weekend to pick us up. Most of the time, she took us to places she wanted to go, places for adults. One day, she took us to lunch at Ciro's, a popular upscale restaurant in the old Alexander Young Hotel building in downtown Honolulu. "Boy, when you eat always use your fork to push the food away from you," she said. When I used my butter knife to cut a roll, she took the knife from my hand and instructed, "Boy, never cut a roll, always use your hands to break it," demonstrating how. I was getting a lesson in table manners. People at nearby tables would look and smile. I was embarrassed, but I wanted to please Mom. But I was still a kid, and I wanted to go to the beach, to the zoo, to be with other kids—with my cousins, my friends—and not have to worry about how I combed my hair, how I dressed or what my table manners were at Ciro's or other fancy places Mom took us.

As much as I wanted to see Mom, I dreaded going with her. She had a fetish about neatness. Wherever she lived, her home was super neat, everything in place, clean as a whistle. And whenever she visited our apartment, she would inspect the place and either clean something up or tell us to do it later. If we knew she was coming, Ken and I would scurry about trying to straighten up the house.

Every time we went out with her we had to wear clean, stiffly starched pants and shirts. She insisted we comb our hair in what she thought was a proper fashion. I had to use a big glob of greasy Three Flowers Brilliantine pomade to make it the way Mom wanted: left side parted, slicked straight down. I looked like a real Mommy's boy.

Mom was a great dresser, but conservative, preferring dark blues, browns, grays and muted greens. She never wore jeans. Once she saw me wearing a bright red shirt. She laughed and told me, "Boy, people with brown-skinned complexion [like me] should stay away from colors like red, orange and purple." Except for my old favorite light red, gingham-design shirt, which I wore a lot in high school, and a few ties, to this day I have never bought clothing that is red, orange or purple.

As I reached my teens, I'd often hide whenever Mom came to pick us up. I'd tell (threaten, actually) Ken not to tell her where I was. Sometimes I could hear her calling my name repeatedly, and I'd hide in the backyard until she left with Ken. She knew I was hiding, and it probably hurt her feelings.

Small-Kid Time Memories

Kalihi was like a big playground for me. Often, I'd walk a mile or so to play basketball or just hang out at nearby Puʻuhale Park, or a couple more miles to the Kalākaua Gym or the Kalihi YMCA. On weekends, if I wasn't staying over at my aunt's home, I would go with my friends to Sand Island.

Today Sand Island is crowded with warehouses, trucking companies and light industry. Back then, there were few businesses located there. A major part of Sand Island belonged to the U.S. Army, including the many abandoned buildings that became part of our playground. On weekends, the place was deserted, and, except for a lone MP at the gate by the entrance to Fort Ruger, we had it all to ourselves.

At the small harbor where sampans (wooden boats 10 to 15 feet long) were moored parallel to each other, I taught myself how to swim by kicking off one sampan and stroking my arms like crazy until I hit the next one. I learned how to "pump hole" for crabs in the adjoining mud flats by pumping one foot into one end of the crab's tunnel while someone was at the other end with a scoop net to catch the crab as it was pushed out by the force of the water.

As I got older, I became more adventurous. My friends and I would build canoes (we called them "tin boats") out of a sheet of corrugated roof iron, tar and pieces of wood to paddle out to Mokauea Island, about 300 to 400 yards offshore.

Usually the tin boat would start leaking as soon as the tar gave way; then it would sink and we would have to swim back to shore. But we would build another and try again. The closest we ever got was the halfway point. There are probably a half-dozen tin boats buried in the mud between Sand Island and Mokauea Island.

Thirty years later, I found myself chairing a hearing of the State House Committee on Transportation and listening with amused skepticism to a well-known environmental activist testify about the "sacred history" of Mokauea Island. Before the haoles discovered Hawaiʻi, the ancient Hawaiians had no written language. Their knowledge, customs and traditions were passed on to younger generations through chants, prayer, dances and art. As far as I can remember, the only people living on Mokauea Island were two or three elderly Filipino men, living in small shacks built on stilts above the water, eking out an impoverished existence. There was nothing "sacred" about the island back then.

My mother—to get back to her—was the oldest of three sisters, christened "Eleanor Infante." Mom and her sisters, Rachel and Violet, were the prettiest trio of sisters in all of Kalihi. Mom was about 5 foot 8, tall for a Filipina. She was fair skinned—a mestiza. Her parents were Visayans from Cebu. She had only an eighth-grade education, but she was very bright. She was "street smart"—but she could have been book smart, too, if she'd had the chance. She taught herself how to speak the Visayan, Ilocano and Tagalog dialects. Dad could only speak Ilocano.

Mom had a reputation for being tough. She was like the character played by

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the fine actress Gena Rowlands in the 1980 movie *Gloria*. In the movie, Gloria is a beautiful, tough but soft-hearted former mob moll who saves a young boy from being murdered by the mob. When I first saw the movie when it came out, Gloria reminded me of Mom. Mom was no mob moll, but she was beautiful, compassionate and tough.

One evening, Aunt Violet got into an argument with a male neighbor that ended with her being punched on the nose. Rather than call Uncle Jack, the first thing she did was to telephone Mom and tearfully tell her what happened. I was there and I could hear Mom's raised voice on the other end of the line. "What!" she said; "that bastard! I'll be right there!"

About 15 minutes later, I saw the headlights of a car turning from Nimitz Highway onto the street where my aunt lived. There were no streetlights in Damon Tract, so it was pitch black. As the car came closer, I saw the "TAXI" sign on the roof. Mom had arrived. She stepped out of the taxi, dressed in an expensive dress and high heels—also like Gena Rowlands in *Gloria*—took one look at my aunt (who made sure there was still some blood showing on her nose) and stormed over to the neighbor's house. We—my cousins and I—followed her like ducklings following their mother. Meanwhile, the neighbor had locked himself in his bedroom. I watched as Mom started kicking the door and shouting, "Come out here and pick on someone your own size, you coward! Come out, you punk, step outside!" The guy never came out. Mom was just awesome that night.

I was about 12 when Dad bought me my first bicycle. I could hardly contain my excitement. It was a blue Schwinn, complete with horn, headlight, chrome fenders and whitewalls with spoked rims. I remember the price: $56. Ordinarily, Dad would not have been able to afford it, but he won some money gambling and decided to spend some of it on us. So he bought new bikes for Ken and me. Dad didn't make a lot of money, but when he had it, he was very generous.

With my new bike I became a home delivery boy for the *Honolulu Advertiser*. A 12-year-old businessman! Every morning I'd wake up at 3:30 a.m. and ride my bike about two miles to Dee-Lite Bakery at the corner of Dillingham Boulevard and Mokauea Street. Along with a couple of other delivery boys, I would wait there for the *Advertiser* dealer to drop off the morning newspapers. As soon as we got them, we would roll up each newspaper, bind it with a rubber band, put the bundles into the newspaper bag specially made to fit on bicycle handlebars and take off on our different routes to make deliveries.

My route was scary. Most streets in the neighborhood did not have streetlights, so it was usually very dark. Sand Island was our playground during daytime, but at 4:30 a.m. it was deserted and so dark I could hardly see the road. None of the handful of companies there were open at that hour. I was always worried about running into the pack of dogs that roamed the area. I was also very worried about running into Wilson.

Wilson, who looked like he was pure Hawaiian, might have been Hawaiʻi's first homeless person. None of us knew anything about his background or his family. We just knew that he was a hopelessly incurable alcoholic who lived in a huge, abandoned concrete pipe at Sand Island. Whenever we saw Wilson during the day, he would be drunk, wandering Sand Island, sometimes the neighborhood, holding a bottle in a brown paper bag, talking incoherently to some imagined person.

We thought Wilson was pupule (crazy), but no one ever teased him. We felt sorry for him. Sometimes we'd take up a collection of loose change and give it to him. Wilson was a good-sized man. Whenever I ran into him during the daytime I was wary but not afraid of him. The thought of running into him in the dark at 4:30 in the morning, however, was different. I got scared just thinking about it.

Whenever I was making deliveries, every time I heard a sound or saw a movement in the dark, my 12-year-old imagination ran wild. The worst was having to ride by the crematorium on Homerule Street. The crematorium was a mysterious place to kids in the neighborhood. If we saw smoke coming out of the high smokestack, we figured they were cremating a body. One morning, a movement in the dark scared me—prompting me to ride my bike past the crematorium as fast as I could. At the same time, I threw a newspaper on the run so hard that it broke the glass window on the customer's front porch. Later, I returned and apologized to the customer. Fortunately, he told me he would fix it himself, but just to be more careful the next time.

Almost every morning, I would go through some hair-raising experience. After six months, my father asked me to quit delivering newspapers. When I told him that I was doing it because I wanted to pay him back for the Schwinn, he laughed and said, "No need, son, you look so tired every morning and I worry you get hurt."

Having greater mobility opened new adventures for me. With our bikes, my friends and I were able to go to places we had never been before. We would bike to Waikīkī to bodysurf at "the wall" (which still stands today) or to Ala Moana Park to swim or to the reservoir (we called it "Tin Roof" because the water tower had a tin roof) way up in Kalihi Valley to catch crayfish and catfish.

But not all of our adventures were good ones. Once, four of us rode our bikes all the way from Kalihi to go spear fishing at the beach off Kāhala. We packed our Hawaiian sling spear guns, a floater, net and lunch. Bicycling the 10 miles from Kalihi to Kāhala was duck soup for us. We were young and fit. We parked our bikes at one of the public rights-of-way and began spear fishing along the reef, parallel to the shoreline. We were in the water a couple of hundred yards from the right-of-way when we heard someone shouting at us, "Hey, you kids get out of here!" A big, barrel-chested haole man was standing at the water's edge, yelling at us at the top of his voice. He was definitely annoyed by our presence in front of what I assumed was his home.

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We were about 50 yards from shore, so we moved back further, into deeper water, hoping to placate him. But he continued to yell. Red-faced, arms waving, he shouted, "I said get out of here, goddammit!"

One of my friends said, "Benny, we better go, the haole man is really mad."

"Why?" I asked. "He doesn't own the ocean!"

"No, let's go, the man is really mad," my friend repeated.

"Goddammit! I said get out of here!" the man shouted again.

By then we were angry ourselves—and a safe distance away from the haole man. I looked back at him and shouted, "Ah, fuck you!"

"Yeah, up yours!" someone else yelled, giving him the finger, as we all swam back to the right-of-way. We weren't in the water long enough to spear anything. We had nothing to show for our long bike ride.

Before leaving, we decided to eat lunch there. The four of us sat with our backs against the chain-link fence, eating our rice balls, Spam and Vienna sausage. The fence separated public from private property. As we ate, each of us did an impersonation of the angry haole man, each performance eliciting hilarious and loud laughter.

After about 15 minutes, we saw a policeman park his car and begin walking toward us.

"Hey, you kids have to leave, you're making too much noise," the cop ordered.

"Oh, sorry about the noise, we'll keep our voices down," I said.

"No, you guys have to leave now," the cop said, this time almost apologetically.

"Why? This is not private property," one of my friends said.

"Because the lady," the cop said, motioning to the fence, "wants you kids to leave, that's why."

"Can we finish our lunch?" I asked.

"Come on, don't give me a hard time, go now," he said in a way that left me feeling he had done this before.

Standing about five feet from the other side of the fence with her arms crossed was an elderly, white-haired haole woman. She did not say a word, but her stern look, her pursed lips, said everything she wanted to say. As I was packing up to leave, I kept looking back at her. I wasn't angry—I was perplexed. This had never happened to me before. First, the big haole man, now this distinguished-looking white-haired lady—I wondered, *What did we do to make them so angry? Do they hate us, or what?*

It was a different Hawai'i then. Later, as an adult, I would learn more about Hawai'i's history and how a small group of haoles—an oligarchy—ran Hawai'i like a South American banana republic. As a kid, the only haole I knew personally was Uncle Jack. I guess he was different because he came from a poorer back-

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ground than I did. Other than him, I just assumed whenever I saw a haole not in a military uniform that he was the boss. If I saw a haole working at a service station, a bakery, a hotel or any business, I assumed, subconsciously at least, that the guy was in charge.

Years later, I shared the story of being chased out of the water with former Chief Justice William Richardson. He chuckled and told me how as a kid he had had to stand at the water's edge at Waikīkī to watch people dancing in the hotels. Back then the hotel management treated the beach as if it was the hotel's private property. In 1973, as chief justice of the Hawaiʻi Supreme Court, he ended this practice by ruling in *County of Hawaii v. Sotomura* that the State owned the beaches all the way up to the vegetation mark, which effectively abolished all private beaches in Hawaiʻi.

A Primer in Politics

My introduction to politics came when I was elected treasurer of the eighth-grade class at Kalākaua Intermediate School. I swamped my opponent, getting about 80 percent of the vote. The president was Linda Au Hoy, a Chinese-Hawaiian girl. Larry Miike, who came from Damon Tract, and Nancy Oshiro, both Japanese Americans, were elected vice president and secretary.

We were good students (I never got a "C" in my report card until my junior year in high school). However, I must confess, I don't remember much about being in student government except trying to master Robert's Rules of Order, which I never succeeded in doing even as a State legislator. The following year both Linda and Larry transferred to private schools. Linda transferred to Kamehameha School (a private school for Hawaiians only, which, with its $10 billion trust, is probably the richest prep school in the nation), and Larry went to ʻIolani School, a private school well known for its academic excellence, where he became a star baseball player. (Years later, after I became governor, Larry, armed with medical and law degrees, would join my administration as director of the Department of Health.)

There were good reasons for their transferring to private schools. Kalākaua, named after King David Kalākaua, was a school with serious problems. Its nearly 2,000 students came from seven or eight feeder elementary schools. Half of the student body was teenage boys from Kalihi, for whom proving their toughness and courage became a rite of passage—a sure formula for trouble. Hardly a school day went by without a fight or incidents of hijacking and bullying. The school was simply too big for teachers and administrators to control. Not surprisingly, parents who could afford it did their best to send their children to private schools.

There were many good teachers at Kalākaua. Mrs. Burmeister was one of them. A local haole, she was known for her feisty, no-nonsense approach to teaching. She was best known, however, for her uncanny accuracy with erasers, usually

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thrown a fair distance from the blackboard at the disruptive student, always a boy, at the back of the room. The class would then carry on, with the guilty student sporting a white chalk mark on his head for the remainder of the class period. Today, she would be charged with criminal assault and the school would be sued. Back then, parents welcomed this kind of corporal discipline, and a student beaned by a Burmeister eraser would probably suffer a worse fate at home if his parents found out.

My favorite teacher was Harold Higa, the band teacher. The boys in the band—there were no girls in it back then—respected him. Great teachers have that something extra that separates them from the ordinary. Mr. Higa had it. We could tell he was completely devoted to his work. And he had the ability to inspire his students to do their very best. Most important, we all knew he respected and cared about us. Slightly built, stoop-shouldered, always looking over his eyeglasses, he appeared very ordinary—but he left an indelible mark on me and many of his students.

One day, Mr. Higa announced that he was being transferred from band to teach orchestra. This was a shock. To the boys in the band, the orchestra was for girls and sissies. Moreover, the orchestra at Kalākaua was pretty bad, often eliciting giggles and stifled laughter whenever we heard the violins screeching during practice. "Sorry, fellows," he said, "the decision has been made. I'm going to miss teaching you guys, but I'll still be here at Kalākaua. If you need help, come see me." Without exception, the boys were unhappy, but there was nothing we could do.

He then introduced his replacement, a Mr. Oga (not his real name). Mr. Oga was stepping into big shoes, but the boys were open to him. As soon as he started talking, though, I got the feeling he wasn't going to make it with us. He was tall and slim, and whenever he smiled it seemed more of a leer than anything else. The man was no Harold Higa.

Mr. Oga came across as very cold and stern. He didn't seem happy to be at Kalākaua. I got the impression he was just biding his time until he could be transferred to a school more to his liking. His attitude and teaching showed it. Unlike Mr. Higa, he would make sarcastic remarks whenever someone made a mistake. He always seemed to be annoyed.

Then came the foot-tapping incident. Nothing upset him more than musicians who tapped their feet when performing. One day, in the middle of a score, he stopped the band and announced that this was his pet peeve. He considered it unprofessional. "What's the matter with this Japanee?" someone said later. "It never bothered Mr. Higa."

In those days, the Kalākaua Band had some of the toughest boys in the school. Antonio Pascua, a clarinet player, was an amateur boxing champion, and later as a high school student at Farrington he would win the light-heavyweight crown at the Seattle Diamond Belt Tournament in Washington. And there were others, like Gerado Paet, a saxophone player built like a fire hydrant, who was

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about as nice a guy as one could meet but not someone to mess around with.

One day, Mr. Oga stopped the band and began lecturing us. I saw some of the guys signal each other. When the band resumed playing, they began to tap their feet again, louder than ever. Soon more joined in, until finally everyone was stomping their feet on the floor as hard as they could. The sound of 60 teenage boys pounding their feet on the old wood floor could be heard well beyond the band room. We'd had enough—and we wanted Mr. Oga to know it. Ignoring his orders for us to stop, we kept stomping until he stormed out of the room in disgust and anger. As soon as he left, the room erupted with loud "yahoo!"s and raucous laughter.

Word about the foot-stomping spread quickly—and it got to some of the thugs in the school. The next day, a couple of them confronted Mr. Oga, roughed him up and told him to get out of Kalākaua. We never saw him again.

Like most of the boys in the band, I felt badly for Mr. Oga. What happened to him was wrong—but I was glad he was gone. A few of the guys were not so charitable.

The next day, Mr. Higa was back. He was very somber, and the entire band was quiet. He lectured us about the wrongness of what happened. Coming from him, however, it did not sound like a lecture. Whenever he said something, everyone just listened.

The boys were so happy he was back that someone came up with the idea of buying Mr. Higa a present. Each band member chipped in a dollar for a total of about $60. It was rumored that the watch cost only $40 and that the guys who thought up the idea kept $20 for themselves. But a $40 watch in 1953 was still a pretty good watch. It was a fitting gift for a great and highly revered teacher. Mr. Higa choked up a bit when the watch was presented to him. He was surprised and at a loss for words. He thanked us, looked at the watch and said softly, "Gosh, nothing cheap about you guys." We gave him a standing ovation.

(Years later, I learned that Mr. Higa had served as an interpreter for the U.S. Marines during the battle for Iwo Jima in World War II. To make sure that he wasn't mistaken for the enemy, he would sing or whistle American jazz tunes. He was so unassuming, quiet and humble it was difficult to envision him serving his country under such dangerous circumstances.)

As a teenager, I was always looking for ways to earn spending money. One day, as a bunch of us were walking to Sand Island, we noticed a lot of brass and copper wires, pipes and fixtures lying around in vacant lots and in old abandoned warehouses. To us, it was junk no one wanted. Someone got the idea of collecting the brass and copper and selling it to the scrap metal company at Sand Island. We were too young to sell it ourselves, so we paid an adult to do it for us. Our first sale exceeded our expectations. So we decided to do it again.

The second time, the boss of the company handled the sale. He looked at the brass and copper items, frowned a bit and asked, "Where did you kids get this

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stuff?" It was the first time it occurred to any of us that the stuff might not have been discarded waste after all. But he approved the sale anyway and paid us about 20 percent less than the going prices. We weren't happy about it, but we shrugged it off. In the next sale, however, the boss paid us only half the regular price. When someone pointed to a posted sign listing the prices per pound, he smirked and said, "If that's how you feel, go somewhere else." Well, there was no place else.

The next Sunday, we were walking to Sand Island to go swimming. As we passed the scrap metal company, someone noticed that there was nothing but loose coral at the bottom of the company's chain-link fence. One of the guys dug a hole in the coral, and the smallest among us squirmed under the fence. From there, he began throwing brass and copper items over the fence. We picked the stuff up, mixed it with the other brass and copper we had collected and, the next weekend, when the boss was out to lunch, we had someone sell the items back to the company. The guy had cheated us, but we more than evened the score by selling him back his own stuff. We never went back.

During my eighth-grade year, Ken was living with Mom and our new stepfather, Rudy, in Whitmore Village. I lived in Kalihi with Dad. I was alone a lot, especially at night. But sometimes I would hang out someplace and come home late at night, even after Dad returned from work. After Mom found out that I got into a nasty fight with a kid at school, she decided I had too much time alone and that I was heading for more trouble. She convinced Dad that I should move to Whitmore Village and live with her and Rudy. Dad agreed. Ken and I switched places. He moved back to Kalihi and I moved to Whitmore Village.

Whitmore Village was the kind of rural community where everyone knew each other. I recall staying over with Mom one weekend in 1951 or 1952. I was visiting Ken, who was still living there at the time. The Korean War was being fought, and a neighbor's son (I think his name was Eddie) was killed in action. He was a handsome, local Filipino in his 20s. Mom kept his photograph in the living room. In those days, it was legal to have a wake held in the home. In the Filipino culture, a panaje, or prayer ceremony, is held for nine days, with the deceased lying in state in the home. It seemed everyone in Whitmore attended Eddie's panaje. During each panaje, I could hear the voice of the priest carrying throughout the still night as he led the mourners in prayer. The people of Whitmore, mostly Filipino and Japanese plantation workers, were good Americans—as good as one could find anywhere in the country.

Mom owned and managed a dance hall in Wahiawā called the Rainbow Dance Hall. She took me with her to work a couple of times for an hour or two. A six-piece band provided the music. A couple of bouncers kept order. The customers were mostly single Filipino men and soldiers from nearby Schofield Barracks. The dance hostesses were tough ladies. They had to be. Most of their customers were lonely, horny men who were continually hitting on them.

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The dance hall would usually close at around 2 a.m. A few times, I got up from bed and watched Mom count the night's cash receipts at the kitchen table. The bills were stacked in neat piles by denomination alongside the small, pearl-handled .25-caliber automatic that Mom took with her whenever she went to the dance hall.

Later, I found out that the dance hall was going broke and Mom was becoming harder to live with as she worried herself sick trying to figure out ways to save it. Dance halls were very popular during World War II and the immediate postwar period. But by 1954, the business had begun to fade.

A year later, Mom closed the hall. Because of their financial situation, she took a job on the plantation as a field worker—something she'd sworn she would never do. Mom respected people who worked hard, but she saw working in the pineapple fields as a personal failure. Picking pineapples under the hot sun was a tough job for a man—but it was far tougher on a woman. It was tough on a woman's skin and complexion, and it hardened her hands. Regardless of the precautions they took, such as wearing heavy clothing that covered their faces, large hats and goggles, making them look like beekeepers, prolonged work in the fields was bound to affect women's physical appearance. Women who worked in the fields aged faster. There was no getting around it. Mom worked in the fields for only a year because she developed severe back problems, which would later require surgery and lead to a serious crisis for the entire family.

In 1955, I moved back to Kalihi to live with Dad and Ken again and enrolled at Farrington as a sophomore. I enjoyed living in Whitmore City and had made many good friends there. But I was a city boy, and I longed to return to Kalihi. I was glad to be home again.

Farrington High School was one of the largest high schools in the western United States. Named after a former governor, Wallace Rider Farrington, the school was reputed to be the toughest in Hawai‘i.

Contrary to popular perception, school discipline at Farrington was good. If there was trouble, it usually took place off campus. Things never got out of hand for a couple reasons: First, none of the teachers at Farrington were ever intimidated by students; second, the male teachers, coaches and ROTC instructors all worked together to help enforce school rules and discipline. They did not always follow the book. When necessary, one of them would take troublemakers into the boy's restroom or to the back of the ROTC building for a "talk."

Once during an ROTC parade, our company was ordered to "march time" (march in place) when a guy named George started fooling around, jumping up and down on two feet as if he were on a pogo stick. One of our ROTC instructors, Sergeant Jelf, walked up behind him and, as George began his ascent, gave him a swift kick in the rear, leaving a streak of dark brown shoe polish on the seat of George's pants. A sharp look from Sergeant Jelf stopped our giggling. George

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became the talk of the school for a long time.

Years later, in 1995, I met another one of my ROTC sergeants, Sergeant Arnold, at the 50th reunion of Farrington's Class of 1945. Sergeant Arnold, who bore a striking resemblance to the actor Ernest Borgnine, was living in a retirement community in Arizona but came home for the reunion. "Cayetano," he asked, "do you remember what I made you guys do when I caught someone chewing gum?" Remember? How could I forget? Sergeant Arnold took gum-chewing in his class as a personal insult. Whenever he caught someone chewing gum, he'd order the entire class to do push-ups. But that did not stop the gum-chewing—until the next (and final) infraction when he ordered everyone in the class to chew the same piece of gum and the guy who started it all to swallow it!

"Sergeant, if you did that today you would be in big trouble," I said with a chuckle. He smiled and retorted, "That's the trouble with the schools today. No discipline. No respect for teachers. Teachers are afraid of the students. But look at you guys—you all turned out okay, right?"

Encounter with the Law

The year 1958 was a turning point in my life. I was totally focused on cars and my girlfriend, Lorraine. I was working part time, pumping gas at a service station. Repeated counseling by my teachers, who kept assuring me I was college material and urging me to keep my grades up, fell on deaf ears. During my junior year, C's began appearing on my report cards. In my senior year, the roof fell in. I was on the verge of flunking out.

I had no desire to go to college. Instead, the few times I thought about life after graduation, joining the U.S. Air Force seemed like a reasonable option for me. But in June 1958, I graduated from Farrington. That year turned out to be unforgettable.

One August evening, I was sitting in my car with three friends at Scotty's Drive-In, back then a popular hangout for high school students. As usual, the place was packed with cars. Suddenly, we noticed two guys arguing with one of the security guards. They were the Kaeo brothers, Walter and Kalani. The brothers were very close and were always playing pranks on each other. The security guard, a guy nicknamed Dandy, had a reputation as a real hardnosed guy. Apparently, Walter had been using the restroom and Kalani had deliberately left the door open, exposing Walter to the people sitting in their cars or passing by.

Dandy, acting as if he was a cop, ordered Walter to leave the premises. Kalani tried to explain it was his fault, not his brother's. But Dandy was not interested in explanations and grabbed Walter by the shirt collar to physically throw him off the premises. Kalani punched him. The two other security guards quickly ran over to help. Simultaneously, the other boys from Pālama jumped out of their cars and joined in the fray. Outnumbered three to one, in a minute or two all three security

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guards were knocked to the ground.

While the guards lay dazed, the boys began dousing them with malts and Cokes and pelting them with half-eaten hamburgers and French fries. Four male workers burst out of the building to help the security guards. One guy, a huge haole, was dressed in a chef's uniform and waving a big pot in his hand. The Pālama boys got in their cars and quickly drove away.

Shige, one of the guys in my car, said, "Benny, we better get out of here, too." We had nothing to do with the fight, but we were parked right next to the Pālama boys, and leaving seemed like a good idea. It turned out to be a big mistake.

As I drove out of the drive-in and turned left on Keʻeaumoku Street, I looked in my rear-view mirror and saw a couple of cars moving fast toward us. I turned right on Kapiolani Boulevard and looked in the rearview mirror again and saw one of the cars coming up fast. It was the Metro Squad—the police vice squad unit feared for its roughhouse tactics.

One of the cops motioned for me to pull over and I did. "Move over," he said as he got in the driver's seat and drove my car back to Scotty's. I told him we had nothing to do with the fight. "Just shut your mouth," he retorted. Back at the drive-in, they ordered us to stay in the car. One of our guys, Clarence Pratt, managed to sneak away. He had just enlisted in the Army, so no one minded his getting away.

I watched the Metro cops talking to the chef, who was still holding the big pot. He pointed at us and said, "Yeah, those are the guys who jumped Dandy and the others." That was all it took. Before any of us could say anything, a couple of the younger Metro cops—these guys were all in great physical shape—came over, flung open the car doors, grabbed each of us by the shirt and threw us against the drive-in wall. "Don't move, punk, or I'll kick your ass," one said to me.

The place was packed with a couple hundred customers and onlookers who watched the cops manhandle us. When Shige protested the rough treatment, one of the cops grabbed him by the hair and pounded his head into my 1951 Ford coupe's right front fender, leaving a small indentation. I got angry and complained to one of the cops about what had been done to Shige. He looked at me sternly, and said, "Sonny, I tell you what, we call it even. I won't say anything about all those empty beer cans we found on your car floor and you forget what happen to your friend, okay?"

Unhurt but shaken, Shige was taken to and detained at the Juvenile Detention Center a few streets away from Scotty's Drive-In. At 18 years old, both Reynold and I were adults, and we were detained in the holding cell on the third floor of the old police station on the corner of Merchant and Bethel Streets.

When we were taken to the holding cell, I saw Harvey Pratt, Clarence's older brother. Back then, the police used inmates to do work at the jails. They were called "trustees." Harvey was wearing a blue denim trustee uniform. "Benny, what you kids doing here?" he asked, grinning. I told him the story and he just laughed. "So,

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my fat brother Clario made it, eh?" he smiled. "Well, you kids just take it easy; I'll be here all night."

Harvey was Portuguese Hawaiian, and like all of the Pratt brothers, he had that handsome part-Hawaiian look. He stood about 5 feet 10 inches and was solidly built. He was a nice guy, a tough guy, a motorcycle rider who was quick to use his fists. Once, he made the news when he punched out Richard Tregaskis, the famous writer of *Guadalcanal Diary* and other books, after a traffic accident in which Tregaskis' car damaged his motorcycle. To Harvey, it didn't matter who the other guy was or whose fault it was; he loved his Harley, and anyone who damaged it was in for trouble.

On another occasion, Harvey got drunk and was raising hell in the old Kalihi Bowling Alley. The management could not get him to leave and called the cops to arrest him. When the cops arrived, they found that Harvey had stationed himself between two racks of bowling balls with his back to the wall. When they approached him, he started rolling bowling balls at their feet to keep them at bay. Bowlers looked on incredulously, some laughing at the sight of the cops jumping up, down and sideways to dodge the heavy balls. Finally, they got to him, handcuffed him, took him outside and worked him over a bit before taking him to the police station.

Reynold and I weren't the only ones in the holding cell. There was an older guy who looked like he was in his 30s. He appeared to be Portuguese. He was big, about 5 feet 10 inches and at least 250 pounds. He was lying on a cot and appeared to be sleeping. I whispered to Reynold that the guy's nose was bleeding. He wasn't sleeping. "What? You punks talking stink about me?" he asked angrily. Despite our denials, he got up and started toward us. Soon he was chasing Reynold and me around a long, iron table. Soaking wet, I weighed about 125 pounds, and Reynold was only slighter bigger than me. The guy looked like he wanted to kill us. "Take it easy, bruddah, we neva talk stink about you," I said several times in pidgin as we ran around the table as if we were playing musical chairs.

Hearing the commotion, Harvey came into the room and asked, "Benny, what's the matter? This Portagee bothering you guys?"

"Yeah, he thinks we were talking stink about him," I stammered.

Harvey looked at the guy and ordered, "Eh, Portagee, come heah!" He reached through the bars, grabbed him by the shirt collar and started banging the guy's head against the cell bars. Each time his head hit the bars it made a loud sound. "Leave the kids alone (bong!), otherwise I'm coming in there (bong!) and I'll break your fucking ass! (Bong!) You understand, fucker?" (Bong! Bong!) The big guy slumped to the floor, holding his head, and just sat there, obviously dazed. We had no more trouble after that.

(Several years later, Harvey's free-spirited lifestyle caught up with him when he was killed in a motorcycle accident.)

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The next morning, Mom came in a taxi to pick me up. A police captain questioned me for the last time: "Okay, Benjamin, you say you were not involved in the fight and I believe you [he didn't], but I know you know the guys who were involved. Now standing before your mother, if you love her, tell me the names of the guys who caused the fight." There was no way I could squeal on the guys. After a long pause, I said meekly, "I don't know." Mom had a pained look on her face.

It was the first time I had ever been arrested and jailed. Luckily, no charges were filed against me, Reynold or Shige. The fear that ran through me as we were chased in the holding cell made me vow I would never do anything to land in jail again.

(Years later, Walter Kaeo came to my law office for some legal advice. He had just gotten out of Oahu Prison, having served 10 years for armed robbery. We talked and joked a bit about the Scotty's incident. He was no longer the kid I remembered from years ago. He was all muscles, his body chiseled like a body-builder's. "Walter, you're a little bigger than I remember," I joked.

"Benny," he laughed, "we had nothing to do at OP except lift weights and smoke joints. Besides," he continued, "I had to hold my own against the bulls in OP … know what I mean?" A year after we talked he was dead—shot by his wife. She said he was beating her and she shot him in self-defense. She was never charged.)

A few weeks after our night in the holding cell, I was shooting pool with my friends at our usual hangout, the Waiakamilo Pool Hall on Dillingham Boulevard and Waiakamilo Street. Around 9 p.m., a car stopped in front of the pool hall. A guy named Alex stepped out. Alex was from Pālama and we all knew him. We did not know the other guys. "Eh, howzit guys," Alex said. "We going to Pālolo Housing to settle some business there. Can you guys come to back us up?" Without giving it much thought, three of us—me, Gary and Warren—got into our friend Kabo (Herbert Koda)'s car (he was driving his mother's 1954 Mercury) and followed them to Pālolo Housing.

"What is this all about?" I asked Kabo.

"I don't know, but Alex said if there is a beef, it will be between two guys and we just have to make sure it is up-and-up," he replied. Beef?

We arrived at Pālolo Housing at around 10. "Eh, you guys can wait in the car, but if anything happen come give us a hand," Alex said. "Shit, we don't even know these guys," I complained again. Three of us got out of the car and stood by silently. Kabo stayed in the car in case we had to get out of there quickly. We watched as five of the other six guys approached two guys sitting outside one of the apartments. For a minute or so, we heard them talking. Suddenly, someone threw a punch, and then blows were being exchanged. It was five against two, so we just stood watching, expecting the fight to end quickly. Unknown to any of us, there was a bunch of older men, probably construction workers, drinking at another apartment on the other side of the building. Quickly, they came running to see what was going on. And then they got into it. Other men were pouring out of the apartments. It seemed all of

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Pālolo Housing was jumping into the melee. Quickly it turned into a rout. The driver of the other car had locked himself in his car as his attackers were smashing his windshield, one of them wielding a two-pound sledgehammer. The other five guys were either beaten unconscious or had run away. Then someone shouted, pointing to us, "There's more of them over there!"

"Kabo, get your car out of the parking lot," I said, trying to remain calm. One of the first men who reached us shouted, "You punks came looking for trouble, eh? Now we going give you the same thing we gave your friends!" Another guy joined him, and they tried to grab us and take one of us down. We began backing up, fighting back when we were attacked. We could see more men running quickly toward us. It was time to get out.

The three of us started running down the street with the men in pursuit. We were younger and faster. Soon we outdistanced them. While we were running, we could hear the cries of the guy who was trapped in his car: "Enough, brah, I had enough." His cries echoed through the quiet night in Pālolo Valley. We just kept running as fast as we could. My heart was racing like crazy. Finally, we reached Wai'alae Avenue. It was near midnight and the streets were deserted. Then we heard the police sirens and saw the police cars driving up to Pālolo Housing. We ducked behind a building and watched.

In our panic, we had run across a field. I had stepped on some kiawe thorns that pierced one of my slippers. Apparently, my adrenalin level was so high, I did not feel a thing while running. But the cuts began to hurt and I was trying to nurse my foot. We were out of breath and sweating heavily.

Warren said, "Eh, we gotta go back, we left Kabo behind. If we don't go back everyone will think we yellow." Gary and I looked at each other in disbelief and shook our heads.

"Kabo drove out of the parking lot," I said. "I think he is okay."

"Yeah, but the other guys going think we yellow," Warren replied.

"Fuck them, we don't even know those guys—why the hell did we come in the first place?" I asked, angry and humiliated.

The next day, September 4, 1958, the story of the fight (the newspaper called it a "riot") was on the front page of both daily newspapers, along with a photograph of the car with its windshield and windows smashed. "They came looking for trouble and they found it," a police detective was quoted as saying.

Later, we met Kabo. He was unhurt. While we ran away from Pālolo Housing, he was trapped and was forced to run farther into the housing and hide for an hour. After the cops left the scene, he began to make his way back to his mother's car in the parking lot. Luckily for him, one of our friends visiting her relatives there saw him and asked the Pālolo guys to leave him alone. Kabo drove off in his mother's car, the two headlights and windshield smashed by the guy wielding the sledgehammer.

The story did not end there. The day after the fight, nearly 100 cars filled with high school boys and men from Kalihi drove through Pālolo Housing looking for revenge. And for months afterward, any Pālolo guy who ventured into Kalihi put himself at risk of a beating.

Alex, who was arrested, never informed the police about us. Alex was a tough kid. If he'd squealed on us he would never have been able to live it down. It was a close call, but we lucked out. We were just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Family Man

Several weeks later came the biggest turning point in my life. On September 20, 1958, Lorraine and I got married. Kabo was my best man. I was 18 years old.

Lorraine was only 17. My cousin Billy once told me when he first saw her he thought she was the "prettiest Filipino girl" he had ever seen. Because she was a minor, her father had to sign the marriage application on her behalf. He wasn't happy. He told Lorraine he didn't think I would amount to anything. He didn't show up at the wedding. It angered me because I knew he had hurt Lorraine's feelings. "He'll soften up when the baby comes," Mom told me. At that point, I didn't really care if he did or not. I'd had my fill of fathers who didn't support their kids.

Our first-born, Brandon, came two months later. I was totally unprepared for fatherhood—but happy to become a father. A year and a half later, our daughter, Janeen, was born. My first priority was to find a better job. I quit my summer job as a laborer at O'ahu Metal Supply, a company owned by the Fujino family. Rick Fujino was one of the nicest bosses one could hope to have. But I needed a better-paying job.

I got a good break when I was accepted in the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) apprenticeship program. I was excited. At $1.64 per hour, I would be earning much more money. After four years of apprenticeship, I could become a journeyman electrician.

I worked for a company called Halfhill Electric. The haole owner, Stanley Halfhill, seemed like a good man. His workers, who were mostly AJAs, were very loyal to him. It was a good company to work for.

One day we were working on a project at Fort DeRussy in Waikīkī, and our foreman came over to me carrying a shovel and a five-gallon can. "Cayetano," he said, pointing, "I want you and Roger [another apprentice] to clean out the mud in that manhole. You'll need a ladder and rope for the five-gallon can." *Ladder? Rope?* I thought. *What for?*

Roger and I walked over to the manhole and lifted the cover. The manhole was filled with mud right to the top. So we took turns: One would shovel the mud into the can and the other would carry the can and dump the mud. More than a week later, I found out why we needed a ladder and rope. The manhole was about

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the size of a small bedroom, but a couple of feet deeper. We needed the ladder to get in and out.

I complained to one of the journeymen: "Why are Roger and I doing this kind of work? We're apprentices; this is work that should be done by laborers."

Clearly annoyed, he asked, "Cayetano, how much do you make an hour?"

"A dollar sixty-four," I replied, beginning to realize that I had asked the wrong question.

"Well, a laborer makes $1.90 an hour and you make $1.64—now do you understand why you and Roger are doing it and not some laborer?" I stared at him blankly.

I enjoyed being an apprentice. For a while, I thought seriously about becoming a journeyman electrician. But the construction industry suffered a downturn in 1959, and I was laid off. Like many others, I waited for a call from the union to go back to work. Meanwhile, I collected unemployment compensation.

Back then, there was a bit of a stigma to collecting unemployment. It was as if one was collecting welfare but really did not deserve it. Each time I went to collect my unemployment check, I wore dark glasses and a cap.

I began worrying about how we were going to make ends meet once the unemployment benefits ended. After two months of waiting for the union to call me and collecting unemployment, I decided to look for another job, any job. I found one, driving a truck for a company called Hawaiian Wholesale Food Plan, which paid $1.35 an hour for delivering frozen meats and vegetables to people's homes. Freezers were not in common use with local people, and most of the customers were upper-middle-class or wealthy haoles. For the first time, I would get a better insight into how they lived.

And although I would often deal with maids or housekeepers, on the few occasions that I dealt with the homeowner directly, usually the wife, some of my experiences were pleasant, while a few were unforgettable.

Once, I was walking alongside a swimming pool, carrying a 50-pound box of frozen beef cuts on my shoulder, when a huge dog came out of nowhere and blindsided me into the pool. Fortunately, I fell into the shallow end and did not drop the box into the water. The lady of the house, a haole woman in her 60s, came running out the house, grabbed the dog, whose tail was wagging, and asked, "My goodness, are you all right?" Except for standing in four feet of water with the box still on my shoulder, I was fine—just soaking wet. She asked her maid, a Japanese woman, to bring some towels while I sat dripping on a chair by the pool. "Oh, I'm so sorry about our dog. You can stay here until you dry off," she said.

"Thank you, ma'am, but I have other deliveries to make," I replied. Putting her hand to her mouth, she stifled a laugh. I wanted to laugh, too. The whole episode was pretty funny. Without doubt, I would be the topic of conversation at her home for a long time.

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On another delivery in the Kāhala area, I saw a woman painting by the pool. She was tall and very pretty. "Good morning," I said as I entered the yard, "I'm here to deliver your order from Hawaiian Food Plan."

"The service entrance is on the other side of the garage!" she said sternly, cutting me off with an angry look. I apologized and headed for the service entrance, recalling what one of the old-time drivers told me: Remember, the customer is always right—especially the rich ones.

One day in August 1959, I was making deliveries when it was announced that Hawai'i had just become a state. Everyone celebrated the news throughout the Islands. On O'ahu, church bells rang everywhere, motorists beeped their horns, emergency sirens blew and it seemed celebrations were being held everywhere.

As I was packing frozen foods into a customer's freezer, I could hear the national anthem being played at a nearby school. I paused for a moment. The customer, the wife of a naval officer, smiled and said, in a well-intentioned but ludicrous attempt at pidgin, "You be state now."

"Yes, we be state now," I replied, smiling, mimicking her and trying to sound like an Indian chief at a powwow.

The majority of Hawai'i's people supported statehood. Around 1954, I recall statehood supporters holding a pro-statehood petition-signing drive in downtown Honolulu. The response was terrific. The newspapers gave the event front-page coverage. Nearly 120,000 people signed it—remarkable for a population of only about 500,000 at the time. The petition, a 250-pound roll of paper, made quite an impression on Congress.

Of course, not everyone supported statehood. Opposition came mostly from the haole elite and the upper-class Hawaiians who feared that statehood would result in their losing political power to the "Asian menace"—the ever-growing Japanese-American population, which had become the biggest ethnic group in Hawai'i. But the anti-statehood people were in the minority. In the 1959 general election, the overwhelming majority—estimated at 96 percent—of Hawai'i's voters supported statehood.

The 1959 election produced some historical milestones: Republican Hiram Fong was elected to the U.S. Senate, Democrat Dan Inouye to the U.S. House of Representatives. They were the first Asian Americans elected to Congress.

The big surprise, however, was the Republican Bill Quinn's victory over Democrat John A. Burns. No one did more than John A. Burns to get the statehood bill passed. But instead of returning home to campaign, Burns stayed in Washington, D.C., tending to his duties as Hawai'i's delegate to Congress. It was a big mistake.

Quinn had the advantage of serving as Territorial governor—in terms of patronage and duties, it was a post more powerful than many State governorships. Moreover, he was handsome, articulate, a graduate of Harvard Law School and the

first governor to have his own television program. In fact, he was seen as something of a boy wonder. And he was quite a singer, an important asset for the festive Hawai'i style of politics of those times. (Singing, by the way, did not save Inouye's Republican opponent, Ben Dillingham, who was known for singing "Three Blind Mice" in Hawaiian. Inouye won by a huge margin.)

I knew little about Burns until he was he was pitted against Quinn in the 1959 special election to elect Hawai'i's first State governor. I knew Burns was Hawai'i's delegate to Congress and that he was considered the architect of the "Alaska First" strategy that subsequently opened the way for Hawai'i's statehood. The strategy was simple: Once Alaska became a state, its two new United States senators would support statehood for Hawai'i. Moreover, because Alaska, like Hawai'i, was not contiguous to the mainland United States, one of the most effective arguments against Hawaiian statehood—that Hawai'i was too far from the Mainland—would be eliminated. Some congressmen, I suspected, used this argument as a convenient smokescreen for the real reason they were against Hawaiian statehood: racism against Hawai'i's non-white population.

Burns did not get many accolades for his role in achieving statehood for Hawai'i from Hawai'i's two pro-Republican daily newspapers—but many among those who favored statehood acknowledged his work. The talk on the street was that Burns was favored to win the election hands down.

I was a skinny 19-year-old too preoccupied with learning about parenthood and supporting Lorraine and our year-old son to take a strong interest in local politics. But I admired Bill Quinn. It was hard not to. Handsome, charismatic, articulate, able—the Harvard lawyer was a popular Territorial governor. His sunny disposition and optimism won over a lot of local people. Back then political rallies were colorful events, and Quinn often used his sonorous Irish tenor voice to belt out songs like "Blue Hawaii" and "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling," to the delight of the crowd. And when *TIME* magazine put his photograph on the cover of its 1959 statehood issue (a post-election gift from Clare Booth Luce, *TIME*'s powerful and politically shrewd owner and a part-time Hawai'i resident) Quinn's political stature got a great boost.

In the last two weeks of the 1959 campaign, Quinn's announced his "Second Mahele"—a land-distribution scheme by which Quinn, if elected, would release a couple hundred thousand acres of State land for sale to ordinary citizens. The idea caught everyone by surprise. It sounded bold and visionary, and the pro-Republican news media, particularly the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, played it up.

Quinn's promise of making it possible for the common person to be able to buy land in fee for $50 an acre, in a state where most homeowners were forced to lease, struck home with many local voters. Land reform had been a winning political issue for the Democrats. For Republicans, who usually fought the Democrats

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on land reform, Quinn's Second Mahele was their answer.

Caught flat-footed, the Democrats attacked the proposed Second Mahele—among them, I would find out years later, the first Hawai'i lawyer I worked for, Frank Padgett. It was a measure of Padgett's character that he set aside his friendship with Quinn to expose what he thought was a virtual hoax on the people. But it was too late. As political consultants will attest, more elections are won by emotion than by merit. And the Second Mahele generated a lot of emotion.

In many ways, Quinn was like Ronald Reagan. His warm and charismatic personality made it seem improbable that the man was capable of engaging in political hi-jinks. On its face, the Second Mahele seemed like a great idea—and I was one among thousands of people who believed Quinn's bold proposal could make it possible for us to own our own homes. I had grown up in rented housing, and Quinn gave me hope. I was only 20 years old, a year short of being eligible to vote, but had I been old enough, I would have voted for Quinn. On Election Day, Quinn upset Burns by 4,000 votes.

As it turned out, Quinn and the Republicans won the battle, but they would lose the proverbial war. Quinn's days were numbered. Democratic legislators, who dominated the new State Legislature and were angered by Burns' loss, blocked him at every turn, dumping some of his appointees to key boards and commissions.

As Quinn himself would admit later, his choice of the title "Second Mahele" was a big mistake. Apparently, Quinn and his advisors were not well versed in Hawaiian history (I wasn't either back then). If they had been, they would have known that most Hawaiians considered the "Great Mahele"—a land-distribution scheme proclaimed by Kamehameha III that among other things allowed haoles to buy and own land—the foot in the door which allowed the haoles to "steal the land" from their ancestors. Not surprisingly, the Democrats, led by well-known Hawaiians like Bill Richardson, attacked Quinn's Second Mahele as an "insult to Hawaiians." The Second Mahele was hung like an albatross around Quinn's neck.

Adding to Quinn's problems was his rift with Lieutenant Governor Jimmy Kealoha. Kealoha, apparently angered that Quinn did not live up to his alleged promises to share political appointments with him, vented his anger by running against Quinn in the 1962 Republican primary.

To me, Kealoha came across as a rank opportunist. It seemed a bit much that the part-Hawaiian Kealoha, an accomplice to Quinn's Second Mahele in 1959, was now asking local people like me for our vote. Kealoha, a former mayor of the Big Island and seasoned politician, was in a real bind. His complaints about Quinn breaking his promise to share power with him would hardly move voters who saw such behavior as common among politicians. So Kealoha played the "local boy" card.

"If you want to see your local boy, your son of the land, be governor, this

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is your chance," Kealoha said at one rally. Kealoha's plea fell on deaf ears among haole Republicans, and few Democrats crossed over to vote for him in the Republican primary. Quinn beat him handily—sending Kealoha into retirement from politics.

Anger is a powerful motivation for people to act. By 1962, angry was how many local voters felt about Bill Quinn. Like many who had supported Quinn in 1959 I felt betrayed. The Second Mahele was just another in history's real or imagined long list of shenanigans by the haole elite to take advantage of locals.

Scores of State workers, ignoring the State law prohibiting their getting involved in political activity, joined in helping the Burns campaign. I was one of them. Like the others, I felt as if I had been had. "We were like the sand ʻōpū [a scavenger fish]; he threw us the bait and we swallowed it hook, line and sinker," a fellow State worker complained ruefully.

Hawaii Pono

The fallout from Quinn's Second Mahele hurt him badly in the 1962 election. But adding fuel to the fire was the book *Hawaii Pono*, authored by visiting professor Lawrence H. Fuchs and released in 1961.

Hawaii Pono is shunned today by Hawaiian activists but is still considered by many to be the classic study of Hawaiʻi's social and political history (it was cited by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Rice v. Cayetano*). It chronicled the impact of the haole entrepreneurs and missionaries on the Hawaiian Kingdom, the growth of the Asian immigrant groups and the events leading to the Democratic Political Revolution of 1954.

Fuchs, a distinguished and respected scholar who would later become dean of the American Studies Department at Brandeis University, wrote as a detached observer. The reaction, however, was anything but detached. *Hawaii Pono* generated great controversy. Republicans took issue with many of the Fuchs' findings and accused him of being unfair and distorting the facts. Democrats, Japanese and Filipinos in particular, found verification that the haoles had unfairly wielded their economic and political power to treat them like second-class citizens.

For me, *Hawaii Pono* was a political clarion call. I had heard all the stories, but it was the first time anyone had laid out in plain terms the social and political history of our state. Fuchs was no political pamphleteer for Democrats—indeed, unlike some of the revisionist Hawaiian historians today, he did not lay the blame for the plight of Hawaiians solely on the haoles; he noted the good the missionaries had done and how the Hawaiian monarchs themselves had helped the haoles to acquire economic and political power, albeit eventually at the expense of their own people and culture.

Those nuances of history escaped my attention at the time. I was young, and

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what caught my eye was how the haole elite had treated Asian immigrants like my father as if they were second class.

Fuchs' depiction of the powerful, arrogant and racist Walter Dillingham hit me hard. Testifying before the U.S. Senate in the 1920s, the virulently anti-Japanese Dillingham was asked why Hawai'i's plantation owners did not import white workers. Dillingham's unforgettable response was the kind of racist talk that would assume a life of its own and stigmatize the Republican Party as the "haole" party for decades:

"When you are asked to go out in the sun and go into the cane brake, away from the tropical breeze, you are subjecting the white men to something the good Lord did not create him to do. If He had, the people of the world, I think would have had a white pigment of the skin, and not variegated colors."

Dillingham was the stereotype of how many locals viewed haoles during those times. Stereotyping any ethnic or racial group is hardly fair, but to a political neophyte like me, Dillingham was no different from the big haole man who had chased me and my friends out of the ocean in front of his home when we were kids.

Unrepentant in his views about Asians, fearful of the growing Japanese-American political power, Dillingham used his considerable influence with members of Congress to oppose statehood for Hawai'i. His son, Ben, described by *TIME* magazine as a "turn-of-the-century conservative," was the chairman of Hawai'i's Republican Party. There were, of course, moderate haole Republicans who disagreed with Dillingham's racist views and saw the need for social reform, but Dillingham overshadowed them all. There was no room for people like me in the Republican Party. I became a Democrat—and never looked back.

About the only thing Burns and Quinn had in common was that they were both tall haoles. Unlike Quinn, Burns was unsmiling, seemingly dour at times, and he was not a good speaker. A former Honolulu police captain, Burns did not have a college degree. Quinn was a Harvard lawyer. When Burns and Quinn debated on television, Burns stuttered at times and struggled for the right words. It was painful to watch. Art Woolaway, who was the chair of the Republican Party, quipped, "The debate showed why John Burns should not be elected governor."

For those who saw verbal agility as a sign of leadership, Woolaway's words hit home. Quinn performed like an animated John F. Kennedy. Unfortunately for him, the Second Mahele debacle colored everything he said. On the other hand, Burns' sincerity and conviction seemed utterly genuine. He wasn't as polished as Quinn, nor was he a good speaker—but those traits, which so many haoles saw as shortcomings, were seen as superficial by local people who had come to identify with Burns as one of their own. For them, character more than anything else was what they sought in their governor.

Early election returns showed clearly that Burns was on his way to a decisive

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victory, the only question being the size of the margin. I drove to the Burns headquarters on Merchant Street to watch the celebration. Standing outside and looking through a window, I saw Burns in person for the first time; he was laden with leis, among which a red carnation rope stood out conspicuously, and he stood on a chair to speak to the overflowing and boisterously happy crowd. I couldn't hear what he said. It didn't matter; all I knew was that Hawai'i was in for big changes—changes for the better for local people like me. I was happy—and hopeful.

In a complete reversal of his narrow defeat in 1959, Burns defeated Quinn by 30,000 votes—a huge landslide back then. Quinn, the once-popular governor, whose name had been bandied about as a potential vice presidential running mate to Nelson Rockefeller, seemed finished politically. But in 1976, GOP leaders coaxed him out of retirement to run for a U.S. Senate seat against Democrat Sparky Matsunaga. He was badly beaten. Timing is everything in politics—and Quinn's time had long passed. He never ran for public office again. A promising political career came to a sad end.

When John F. Kennedy met Quinn when he visited Hawai'i in 1960, he reportedly said, "I like that Quinn fellow better than Burns"—a story that, according to University of Hawai'i history professor Dan Boylan, Quinn himself loved to tell.

Indeed, likeability was Bill Quinn's biggest asset. I never stopped liking Quinn. He had many of the attributes I wanted in a political leader. Many agreed he had been a good Territorial governor. His Second Mahele—which some believe was the creation of the popular disc jockey J. Akuhead Pupule—seemed out of character for him. There is, however, little sentiment in politics, and there are few second chances. Quinn's lapse of judgment, his moment of weakness in succumbing to winning at any cost, cost him dearly and, sadly, tarnished his reputation. No political office was worth such a high price. It was a lesson I would take with me into my own political career.

During my first term as governor, I appointed Quinn to the prestigious East-West Center Board of Governors. Unknown to many, Bill Quinn had a role in starting the East-West Center, for which he never got much credit. By the mid-1990s, U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich and his band of conservative Republicans who dominated Congress saw the East-West Center as just another Democratic pork-barrel project and made huge cuts to the Center's operating budget.

Had it not been for the efforts of U.S. Senator Dan Inouye, who used his considerable influence with his Republican colleagues to get funding, the State either would have been forced to step in and take over the East-West Center or abandon it. Besides the huge cost involved, I believed that turning the Center into a State institution would diminish its status as an independent and international body. Bill Quinn, I thought, could help lobby the Republicans to restore the funding.

Deep down, as I began to become more experienced in politics, I was sad-

dened that Quinn's political career had ended the way it did. To be sure, his 1962 defeat was largely self-inflicted, but as the years passed and I learned more about him, I felt badly that his one misstep had denied him the privilege of public service. As governor, I believed it was fitting that he be given the opportunity to serve again.

He eagerly accepted my appointment to the East-West Center Board. Out of the hundreds of appointments I made as governor, few pleased me more than this one. I was glad he accepted. Unfortunately, three months later, Quinn resigned for personal health reasons. He was nearly 80; the passage of time had taken its toll.

The Interview

Shortly after the 1959 election, I accepted a position as a rodman with the State Highway Department. A year later, I took an exam and was promoted to civil draftsman. I worked indoors and got a nice pay raise. I enjoyed drafting, something I had been good at in high school.

In 1962, an unforeseen event had a profound impact on the course of my life. The State announced several openings for higher-paying draftsman positions. I was very interested in competing for a position in a section that did structural work. I spent long hours preparing for the test. Finally, along with 100 or more applicants, I took the test. My score exceeded my expectations. A 99.1 percent! Almost perfect. I was ranked first on the list. But the written test only accounted for 70 percent of the application process. The remaining 30 percent would turn on the personal interview.

I felt well prepared for the interview. However, a few minutes after it began, I knew I wasn't going to get the job. The guy who interviewed me was just going through the motions. At the end, he handed me back the samples of my work and said, "You do good work, but I'm looking for someone who has completed his military obligation. With your high score, I'm sure you'll be picked up by another section."

I was very disappointed. But I've always felt guilty about never serving in the military. In 1962, there were still many veterans of the Korean War who were competing for jobs. I recalled reading that on a per capita basis, Hawai'i's casualties were the highest in the nation. Most came in the early years of the war when poorly trained and equipped U.S. Army units stationed in Hawai'i were rushed to Korea to fend off the North Koreans. The Hawai'i boys had served with great courage against overwhelming odds. No, I had no complaints if a veteran who had served his country got the job instead of me. They deserved higher priority.

I ended up in the Advanced Planning Section. It was an important section. One of its big projects was planning the route for the proposed H-3 freeway through Moanalua Valley. I liked the people I worked with, but the work was not

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at the level I expected. Soon I was bored.

Quintin Alfafara was a close friend and former classmate at Farrington. Quint had been raised by his divorced father. Like me, he married his high school sweetheart, Sally, right after graduation. Sally is Japanese, and Filipino-Japanese marriages were uncommon back then.

One day, Quint called and told me, "Benny, Sally and I are moving to Los Angeles. I think there are better opportunities for work and school up there. Besides, Filipinos don't have much of a chance here. If you are not haole, Japanese or Chinese, you can't get ahead. They just don't think we're good enough. I'll keep in touch and let you know how we're doing." Quint had no relatives in Los Angeles; he and Sally were going up cold. That took guts—something Quint never lacked. I respected him and felt sad he was moving away. But I realized I had never fully appreciated the depth of his feelings about racial matters in Hawaiʻi.

One day, nearly a year after the interview, while I was making copies at the copy machine pool, I struck up a conversation with a young local guy who was using another machine. "Where do you work?" he asked me.

"Advanced Planning," I replied. "What about you?"

"Structural," he said.

After a few minutes, it became apparent that this young man was the person who had gotten the job I wanted. I found out he was only 20, had never been in the military and had a draft status of 1-A (mine was III-A), which meant that if war broke out he would be among the first to be called.

I had been lied to. I had studied hard for the test. I had gotten a nearly perfect score. I was ranked first—and the guy lied to me. I was devastated. Disillusioned. And angry. By the time, I got home from work, I was furious. *This is what Quint was talking about. This was the kind of shit that angered him so much he moved to L.A.*, I said to myself. It wasn't the first time something like this happened to me. But this one really hit home; it hit me hard. It was unfair not only to me but to Lorraine and the kids.

It gnawed at me. It affected my work. I became more sensitive to slights, real or imagined. One day, an engineer named Roy suggested, "Ben, why don't you go to the Mainland? You can work during the day and get a college degree at night." Over the next couple of months, Roy and several other engineers, all of them AJAs in their 30s, told me about their experiences on the Mainland, urging me to go and take advantage of the opportunities for school there.

Go to college? At Farrington, going to college had seemed beyond my reach, a distant dream all but forgotten. When I was in the eighth grade, I did a book report on Clarence Darrow, the famous lawyer. It inspired me, at least at the time, to think about becoming a lawyer. Reality—poor grades, no money, no ambition, no college graduates in my family—brought me back to earth.

Thereafter, my dream of becoming a lawyer was left to my imagination, Wal-

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ter Mitty stuff. I thought seriously about joining the police force, but I was too short to meet the 5-foot 8-inch height requirement—a requirement that is now illegal but which, historically, was a big reason the Honolulu Police Department was dominated by the taller haoles, Hawaiians and Portuguese. And so I turned to thoughts of the military. I decided to join the U.S. Air Force, which seemed like a good idea at the time. Beyond that, I had nothing planned.

But marriage and children had changed everything. Getting a good job was my highest priority, but time after time, I felt doors were closed to me because of my lack of education or connections, or my ethnicity—or a combination of all these things. I was learning fast about the realities of adult life.

Life in Hawaiʻi in the 1950s and early 1960s was a paradox when it came to ethnicity and race. Socially, most people got along very well. But those were times of dramatic social and political change, and each ethnic group took care of its own. When it came to employment, ethnic or racial preference was often listed as a requirement in many of the newspaper classified ads.

Today, one may find it surprising that job ads back in the 1950s and early 1960s calling for "Caucasians only" or "Japanese only" or "Chinese only" were not only legal but commonplace. But that's the way things were then. The practice of overt discrimination began to fade in the mid-1960s when the Civil Rights Movement began to peak. To their credit, Hawaiʻi's two major newspapers, the *Honolulu Advertiser* and the *Star-Bulletin*, both announced they would no longer run classified ads which promoted racial or ethnic discrimination. The 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawed racial discrimination in the job market—but old and long-accepted attitudes and practices did not die easily.

In those days, Filipino Americans had little political and economic power—and even less community respect. In the hierarchy of Hawaiʻi's ethnic groups, Filipinos ranked down at the bottom, a place shared with Samoans and other Pacific Islanders. In my eyes, the only way to break down those barriers and change minds—win respect—was through education. A high school diploma was not enough—getting a college degree was the key.

"Let's move to Los Angeles. Quint and Sally will help us get settled," I said to Lorraine. She agreed, and we began planning for it. Mom did not like the idea. Brandon and Janeen had added a joy to her life that she had never experienced before. The thought of her grandchildren being so far away in a place she knew little about was hard to accept. She took some comfort, however, in knowing that we didn't have the money to move, that it would take time for us to save what we needed. In the interim, she would spend a lot of time trying to change our minds.

Mom was right about the money. We began scrimping and saving and I accumulated as much vacation time as State regulations allowed—all with an eye to moving to L.A. Then fate lent us a helping hand. I was no stranger to gambling; I'd learned how to shoot craps in high school, and for a couple years I had been buying

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football and baseball pool tickets from Uncle Jack, who was selling them for a guy who worked in the shipyard. Back then, the shipyard was always a good source for them. I had never won anything.

Then came the day of a Los Angeles Rams-San Francisco 49ers game. For the first time in years, I had a shot at winning. It came down to the point after the touchdown. If the kicker missed the conversion, I would have the winning ticket. At the time, Lorraine and I were sitting in our 1954 Ford, waiting for the traffic light to change on Ward Avenue, listening to the game on the radio. Pro kickers rarely miss a conversion, so I was resigned to being disappointed. Not this time, however. When I heard that the kicker missed the kick, I went wild with joy. "A thousand bucks!" I shouted. Drivers in the cars beside mine must have thought I was nuts. Unbelievably, a month later, I hit another one! Another $1,000 within a month! I couldn't believe our good luck.

I called Quint and told him we were ready to move to Los Angeles. He and Sally were going to buy a new home in Whittier. If we could wait a couple months, he said, we could take over renting his apartment in Los Angeles. A new home? Quint and Sally had been in L.A. for only three years! We waited three or four months before leaving Hawaiʻi.

"Boy, why do you want to go to Los Angeles?" Mom asked. "You already have a good steady job here, you don't even know what to expect on the Mainland. It's so dangerous there … people are different."

"Mom," I replied softly, "there's not much for us here. We can't make it here … and I don't want to live in Hawaiʻi anymore. I have to go. On the Mainland I can work during the day and go to college at night. I want to become a lawyer."

"Boy … think of the kids, they'll be so far away from our family … it's good to be ambitious, but don't reach for the moon," she said, tears welling up in her eyes. She was thinking, of course, about Brandon and Janeen. Her two grandchildren had become such a big part of her life.

In March 1963, we left for Los Angeles. Dad was at Queen's Hospital, still recovering from stomach surgery for ulcers. Lorraine and I and the kids visited him before leaving for the airport. "Dad, after you get well and we get settled in Los Angeles, come up and live with us," I told him.

"Son, you take care the kids," he replied, hugging them. Like many Asian men of his generation, Dad hardly used the word "love." He showed it through his actions, not words. As expected, Mom was very emotional, hugging Brandon and Janeen as if she would never see them again.

That night, we headed for Los Angeles. "Unless things change, I don't want to ever come back," I said to Lorraine. Despite my harsh words, leaving Hawaiʻi was tearing me up inside. But it was time for us to go—time for us to reach for the moon. ❖

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