

## The Kalōpā Ditch

About a quarter mile below our home stretched the Hāmākua ditch. It was constructed of rock and concrete along the bottom and sides and about six to seven feet deep but the water running in it was only about two to three feet deep. Even though the ground in that area seemed relatively flat, you could see the water flowing towards the direction of Hilo; pulling along clumps of green limu that had formed along the way from Kohala.

Because we got our water supply at home from the two large wooden tanks behind the house (one provided water for the kitchen and one for the bathroom), the dry spell during the summer months forced us to take the laundry to the ditch to be washed. Sister Katy and I were responsible for this chore. One of us would carry the laundry and a bucket with a rope attached, while the other one carried the large galvanized wash tub and the wooden washboard as we headed for the ditch. First, we had to cross the main road in front of our house and then walk single-file along the edge of the canefield being careful not to slip and fall down the 25 to 30 foot drop into the gulch.

When we got to the ditch, we situated the tub close enough to the ditch so we could pull up water in the bucket and fill up the tub. Then we would take turns washing a few pieces at a time on the wooden board, using a large brown bar of laundry soap. Every so often, we would change the dirty water. After all the clothes had been washed, one of us would rinse, and the other would spread them over the low bushes close by to dry thus making the load lighter to carry home; otherwise, we had to both carry the tub with the wet clothes inside, and hang them out to dry on the line in our back yard. Sometimes, Dad would drive us to another area where the ditch was closer to the road. He would drop us off with the laundry and return in a few hours to pick us up.

We knew that the water in the ditch was supplying the towns situated along the Hāmākua coast, and the penalty for polluting the water by playing or swimming in it or dumping waste in it was \$25. A caretaker could be seen periodically patrolling along the ditch, checking out the situation.

Well, one day sister Katy and I decided to take a swim in the ditch after doing the laundry. The water in the ditch was too shallow but looked very tempting. We kept only our panties and slips on and jumped into the ditch by hanging on to the 4x6 boards that laid across the ditch. Our stomachs touched the bottom in an attempt to cover our bodies with water, so we just had to lay there. All of a sudden, we looked up and there was the Japanese caretaker on his big, brown horse glaring down at us. He told us to get out and take him to our house. Throwing our clothes on over our wet underwear, we ran home to call Daddy. The caretaker didn't fine us, but he gave us a stern warning. We were glad not to get the belt from Daddy. Of course, we never let it happen again, although we never stopped playing the "catch the limu"

game whenever we happened to be near the ditch, doing the laundry, or just looking for guavas.

To play the “catch the limu” game, we would bring some string from home, or look for the morning glory vines that grew near by. Then we tied either one to a rock and dropped it into the ditch. By maneuvering the string, we tried to catch the clumps of green limu floating by with the current. It was not as easy as you think it might be because sometimes, a big clump floating by would be out of your reach and somebody else would get it. You could still try to slide along on the 4x6 wooden boards that spanned the ditch, which could be a dangerous feat. Nevertheless, the object of the game was to see who could get the biggest pile of limu. There was no prize for the game, and the limu was not edible.

On the following pages are the words and music to *The Kalōpā Ditch* which my sister, Katy, encouraged me to compose in the year 2000. Have fun singing it!

### **The Sugar Cane Flume**

Running through the barren fields where the sugar cane was recently harvested, miles of v-shaped flumes were constructed as a means of transporting the burnt cane to the mill. This was especially necessary where the land was hilly and the heavy trucks could not get to the cane. These flumes were constructed high above the ground in certain areas, and close to the ground in other areas.

During the course of the work day, the cane workers would gather the cut cane in bundles and throw them into the flume; water from farther upland flowing in the flume would push the cane down for miles, directly to the mill, or to staging areas where trucks or rail cars could receive them and take them to the mill.

At the end of the day, there was always some water flowing in the flumes. It was our chance to grab some cane that had fallen to the ground, or climb into the flume and ride it for a ways. If the flow of water was not enough, one person would get into the flume behind you and dam up the water until there was enough force to push you along. Then that person would jump out and let the water push you for a nice ride. It was scary and dangerous because there were no rails on the side. Besides, the crudely constructed flumes had nails sticking through the lumber, which could hurt you. Of course, many times we went home with our pants torn up from those nails. We never told our parents about riding in the flumes. We also had to look out for the luna (supervisors) riding around checking the flumes for damage. Needless to say, those were fun times. And there's a song that I wrote about that, too! The words and music to the *Sugarcane Flume* are also included on the following pages.

# The Kalopa Ditch

Amy Kekoolani Akao

Chorus: The Ka-lo-pa Ditch, the Ka-lo-pa Ditch, have you ev-er been to the  
Ka-lo-pa Ditch. There are things to do and there are things to see, It's a great fun place to  
be. ① Pick a morning glo-ry vine and tie it to a rock, throw it in the ditch  
and pull the li-mu up. You can stack it in a pile, oh, so very high, and  
leave it in the sun to dry. ② We must wash the dirty clothes on a wooden board  
Rinse it in a tub, til it's clean and bright. Ma-ma's gon-na check it out when  
We get home, so we'd bet-ter do it right. repeat chorus  
③ If we get a lit-tle warm we can take off all our clothes, Jump in to the ditch  
And freeze our lit-tle toes, But watch out for the man on the big brown horse  
He's the ditch care-ta. Ker's boss. ④ He will take you to your house and

Handwritten musical score in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps). The score includes lyrics and guitar chords (G, A7, D).

Call your fa-ther out, Tell him all a- bout it and let your fa-ther shout, So you'd  
 bet-ter hang your head 'til your fa-ther's heart melts, or you're gon-na get the belt!

Chorus: The ka-lo-pa Ditch, the ka-lo-pa Ditch, have you ever been to the  
 Ka-lo-pa Ditch, There are things to do and there are things to see, It's a  
 great fun place to be.

Transcribed - Jan McCune  
 August 31, 2000

# The Sugar Cane Flume

Amy Kekodani AKAO

1. Come a-long and ride with me in the sugar cane flume  
 2. High a-bove the ground we climb in the sugar cane flume

Grab some  
 It's a  
 cane to sit u-pon in the sugar cane flume  
 rol-ler coast er ride in the sugar cane flume  
 Throw your  
 You got-ya  
 hands up in the air - and if if you're smart you'll see a  
 watch out for the nails - it's just a flume without the rails  
 Prayer  
 rails

'cause it's a sea-ry ride - in the sugar cane flume  
 And it's a sea-ry ride - in the sugar cane flume

Chorus: oh, the sugar cane flume goes winding down the hill Like a  
 great big centi-pede - on the way to the mill So, if you  
 want to have some fun in the sugar cane flume Spread the  
 word to ev'ry one - a-bout the sugar cane flume You're gon-na  
 'have to take a chance - you're going home with Paka pants - 'cause it's a  
 danger-ous ride - in the sugar cane flume

**Coda**  
 'cause it's a sea-ry ride - in the sugar cane flume

*ritardando*

Transcribed by Jan McCune  
 August 31, 2000

## Games We Played In Kalōpā

Kalōpā was country. There were no stores, except Ishii Store a few miles away. We made up our own games or learned them from the older folks. Among those that I can remember are the following:

1. *Hide-and-go-peek*. Because we had a big front and back yard beside Daddy's huge vegetable garden, there were all kinds of places to hide - a) up in the guava trees; b) behind the two big water tanks; c) inside the thick red hedges; d) behind the Norfolk pine tree; e) up on the roof of the garage where more tall red hedges branched over it; f) under our big house; g) up in the mulberry tree; and h) even in the outhouse (if you didn't mind the smell).

2. *Jacks*. If we found a golf ball, we would look for little rocks alongside the road and play jacks on the concrete sidewalks or on the paved road, listening for cars coming by. Once in a while (maybe at Christmas time, or when Dad and Mom took us to Hilo town), we would go to Kress Store and buy a set of real jacks which we could play inside the house.

3. *Tops*. We would look for the dried, elongated nuts from the eucalyptus trees and twirl them by the stem to spin like a top. The one whose top spun the longest won the game. Once you found a good one, you hung on to it.

4. *Hop-Scotch*. We would mark out the blocks on the concrete sidewalk with chalk or crayons, and then use safety pins or crossed bobbie-pins as kini (markers) to throw into the blocks.

5. *One-two-three Oleary*. Using an old tennis ball or even a basketball, you had to bounce the ball in front of you and at the same time, call out "one, two, three" and on "oleary", throw your right leg over the ball as it bounced (use left leg if left handed). Then, you had to continue bouncing the ball and call out "four, five, six" and on "oleary", throw your leg over the ball. Then continue on to "seven, eight, nine" and throw your leg over on "oleary". Then finish with "ten, oleary", throwing your leg over the ball again. Then you call out "post man" while bouncing the ball two times without throwing your leg over the ball.

Repeat the first round but this time, place your left hand in a clap motion under the back under part of your right hand while bouncing the ball.

Next, following the first routine (with right hand only), add feet motions placing the right heel forward on one, with left toes in back; left heel forward on two, with right toes in back; right heel forward on three with left toes in back; and then on "oleary", throw your right leg over the ball as it bounces calling out "postman" while bouncing the ball two times.

Repeat round 3, but follow step 2.

Then use the first routine, but hold the hem of your skirt with your left hand to form a loop or hole, then divert the ball into the loop on three, six, nine, and ten, "oleary".

Note: make up more of your own routine if you can!

6. *Jump Rope*. With two people at opposite ends swinging the rope with outward, circular motions, a person would jump into the middle while the rope was in the air, and jumped up when the rope hit the ground under their feet. The one who jumped the longest won. Agility and endurance was essential. We even played tag while playing this game. Using double ropes was challenging, too.

7. *Touch Football*. We played this game with the neighborhood kids in someone's big yard (usually Andrew Kamauoha's or Joe Gomes').

8. *Softball*. Joe Gomes had a perfect yard for this game. I remember getting hit hard in my stomach when I was the pitcher once. That was the last time I played that game.

9. *Walking on empty cream cans*. We would save the little cream (evaporated milk) cans and cut it all around on one end. Then we made two holes on each side of the other end, and tied a string through the holes so we could put our feet on the clean flat side and tie the string around our feet, or make the string long enough so we could maneuver the cans with our hand movements. Then we walked around on them. Otherwise, there was a tree (I don't remember if it was the 'ōhai ali'i tree or not) that had a bean with sticky stuff in it. We used the sticky stuff to rub on the can, and it would stick to the soles of our feet so we could walk around on the can.

## Activities That Kept Us Busy

After school and on Saturdays, we ran over to the guava field behind the LDS church. We had all the sweet guava trees marked so we didn't have to waste time with picking the sour ones, unless we were going to cut them up into pieces and soak them in vinegar, sugar, salt, and shoyu.

Before leaving home, the girls would tie an old belt or a piece of string around their waists. That way, we wouldn't have to take a package or bag to put the guavas in. We could just pick the guava and drop them in our clothes. By the time we walked home, we looked like pregnant women, but it was fun and so convenient to reach into our dresses and pull out a guava to eat. If we picked any sour ones by mistake, or if we saw any worms crawling out of the guava because it was over ripe, we just threw it away and reached back in for another one. Of course, we were periodically warned by our mother that it would be castor oil for us if we got constipated.

My mother learned to make guava jams and jellies and bottled them for our food storage closet. It was our responsibility to pick as many guavas as she needed. The ladies in church also learned to make ketchup from the guava pulp, and bottled it in old soda bottles that were sterilized. It tasted the same as real ketchup, except that no one used red food coloring so it

**retained** the pink color of the guava. Whenever we had that ketchup on the table, I ate with **my eyes** closed, which made my mother very angry. Imagine my surprise (in the year 2000) **when** I read in the newspapers that the Heinz company had started introducing green ketchup **in plastic** squirt bottles as a push for kids to pull it out of the fridge more often. At least their **reasoning** was that tomatoes come in red or green. They just needed to add more green food **coloring**.

Daddy always took us along the gulches to pick the delicious common mangoes. He used a **tall bamboo** pole with a little bag on the end of it. We normally had our fill of it first, and then **packed** up the rest in bags or buckets to take home to Mom. She liked to bottle them, make **jams** and jellies for the house or to give to neighbors. We used the green mangoes to pickle in **vinegar** and shoyu, and Daddy gave the skins and over ripe mangoes to the pigs.

Another favorite and delicious fruit that we loved to gather with Dad was the purple poka (**passion** fruit). It looked just like the yellow passion fruit although it was a little smaller in size **and** a lot sweeter. These poka vines grew abundantly along the gulches, winding themselves **around** the guava trees up to the top branches and forming a thick umbrella over the entire **tree**. Because of its thick shell, the inside fleshy pulp and seeds were well protected and edible **even** after the fruit had fallen to the ground. So we could pick the poka from the vines as well **as** harvest them from the ground. There was never enough to take home to make jams and **jellies** because we never seemed to get enough to eat. We didn't even need a knife to cut it **open** because we could bite right through the soft shell. Another variety of the purple and **yellow** passion fruit was the orange colored lemiwai. Its shell was almost as thin as the egg **shell**. but the fruit was extremely sweet, and one was enough to satisfy the taste for it.

The way to eat a poka is simply to take a bite of the fruit and tear it apart with both hands. **Then** putting one half of it down somewhere, hold the other half with the shell part in your **hand** with the fleshy seeds facing you. Then using the index and middle finger on your free **hand**, dig into the fruit while holding it close to your face; slurp the fruit, including the seeds, **right** into your mouth. Let it roll around in your mouth to get the taste, then swallow it and roll **your eyes** in delight. Continue the process until the shell is empty, then start on the other half. **The person** with the most empty shells in front of them is the PIG.

And what about the loquats - those luscious golden fuzzy oblong fruit with a pair of shiny **brown** seeds inside its golden flesh. Getting the fruit was somewhat difficult if the trees were **tall**, but not to worry if you could pull the branches down. The road from Kalōpā to Kapa'ahu **was** normally lined with loquat trees, and Dad knew when the fruit was in season. The way to **eat** the loquats was to peel off the outer skin like a banana, even though it is not as large as a **banana**. After the fuzzy skin was peeled off along with the head part of the fruit, you could **gently** bite into the fruit and spit out the seeds to finish eating the rest of the fruit. It tastes a



little like peach or papaya, although it takes a lot to make a mouthful. Mom never canned or preserved the loquats.

## **Cliff Pond**

Cliff Pond was off limits to the children who lived in Kalōpā, simply because it was a dangerous area to venture. Starting down the trail into the Kalōpā Gulch from the main highway was fairly easy, but soon the trail became narrow along the 50-100 foot drop from the cliff into the gulch. This narrow section was only for a short distance of about 6-10 feet; the only way to get past this section was to face the wall, and hug it with outstretched arms while sliding slowly along the cliff. Once you got past this short section, the path widened again and you could see the pond. It was a great swimming hole, shallow in some places, but there were boulders near the deep end that made excellent diving off places.

Even during the summer time, when rain was scarce, Cliff Pond always seemed to have water; so, of course, it was a popular place to go.

I don't know who first discovered the pond because it was really out of the way and quite dangerous to get to. But it seems that the word got around the neighborhood, so parents had to constantly monitor their kids and warn them of the danger.

One afternoon, while sister Katy and I were supposed to be watching sister Myra (five years younger than me), we wanted to join some of the other children who were going to Cliff Pond. We told sister Myra to go and play in the garden where Dad was working, and we ran away with the other kids.

A few hours later, when we returned home, Dad was standing by the steps in front of the house with his belt in his hand. I walked behind Katy and pushed her ahead. Dad did not say a word. He just raised his hand holding the belt and hit Katy on her legs. I screamed before he even got to me, and he said, "Why are you crying, when I didn't even hit you?"

"I don't want to get the belt", I said.

Daddy scolded Katy because she was the older one and should have known better than to take me to such a dangerous place, but I could see the relief in his face that we had come home safely. I believe that was the last time we ever went back to Cliff Pond.

## **Jim Pond**

Dad used to take us to Sand Gulch when we went to look for poka and other fruit. Actually, the name of the gulch was the Kalōpā Gulch, which started in the Kalōpā Forest Reserve at the foot of Mauna Kea, and ran into the ocean. But I guess people called it Sand

Gulch because as you entered the gulch right off the main road, there was a large, gray, sandy area before you got to the stream. Dad used to take us into the stream to look for shrimp and the black hihiwai (fresh water 'opihi), that were stuck to the rocks. He used to make soup with them.

Jim Pond was located about a mile or so up the gulch, an ideal pond to swim in, but you had to climb on boulders along the way so it wasn't often that we went there to swim. There were other nameless ponds in the smaller gulches that we swam in whenever it rained hard enough to fill it and make it worth our while to jump in. The boys and girls swam together, the girls with only their panties, and the boys in their underwear. We were too young, and everybody in the neighborhood was like family. Cousin Ella, who was a little older than us, used to fill up the front of her panties with guava leaves because she had sprouted some hair, and she wore a bra.

## **Ishii Store**

Ishii Store was the only store serving the little community of Kalōpā, although I was told that Mr. Antone Ferreira also ran a small general store in front of his home before I was born.

Ishii Store was a two-story building with large picture windows in the front; its sidewalk sat right off the main road. It was a typical country general store stocked with canned goods, vegetables, fruits, school supplies, clothes, shoes, candies, soda, and the most delicious cracked seeds and other Chinese preserved seeds that made your mouth water just by looking at them in the big glass bottles with heavy covers on them. What is generally sold today for \$5.00 could be purchased for a mere 25 cents.

Mr. Ishii would scoop the sweet smelling seeds into small brown paper bags that would soon absorb the liquid, or gravy as we used to call it. After the package was emptied from being passed around a few times, the bag was evenly broken into pieces to accommodate each person, and then the real climax arrived. After a few chews and swallows, the tasteless paper bag was reluctantly spit out and thrown away.

There was also one of those tall gas containers with the top half made of glass and wrapped with heavy metal wire to protect it. It looked like a huge measuring cup that indicated how many gallons of gas had been pumped into your car. Always, to the dismay of my mother, Daddy only purchased one or two gallons of gas at a time, and it was only because funds were low. Mr. Ishii was always accommodating. He and his family lived on the second floor of the square wooden building so even when the store was closed, Mr. Ishii would respond to anyone's call for service.

We kids in the neighborhood, usually the cousins and our friends, would eagerly make the

three or four mile trek to Ishii Store if we had a dime or quarter. The walk was fun, and we looked for some guavas and stopped to break some juicy sugar cane to chew on. It was against the law to take any cane from the fields, but we always had a look out man while a few of us snuck into the fields out of sight, and left the evidence there. Our return trip was spent eating what we had purchased, and by the time we arrived home, there was nothing left to share with anybody else. Most of the time, we never told anyone we were going to Ishii Store.



The above picture of Ishii Store was taken in 1999, rounding the bend and crossing over the bridge of a gulch on the way from Honoka'a town, heading into Kalōpā. The old fashioned gas pump can be seen past the store. The store is now closed, and is used as a family residence.

In the photo below, the large glass windows have been boarded up.

