



Amanda Raleigh

Mauna Lani fishponds

WAIKOLOA: John Ruskin said "quality is never an accident, it is always the result of intelligent effort." And so it is with the Mauna Lani Fishponds.

Before Mauna Lani developed the ponds, Jean Boone and I spent many happy hours there sketching. It was truly a painter's paradise of murky waters reflecting trees that drooped gracefully to the surface, all with a backdrop of stately palms. There was a pervading mystery—a feeling that the past still lived and that all was untouched. A wild and untamed remnant of peace disturbed only by the splash of jumping mullet, the eerie clatter of palm fronds, and crabs clicking their claws.

The fishponds are gradually being restored to full productivity, beauty, and pristine glory through the efforts of Alike Cooper, backed by the Tokyu Group, headed by Noboru Gotoh. Cooper, who is in charge of fishponds, says management has been extremely sensitive to the environment, and that they are protecting the ponds in the traditional Hawaiian way. Proof of claim is amply supplied by the award Mauna Lani received in April from the prestigious Historic Hawai'i Foundation for the "restoration, maintenance, and preservation of the ancient fishponds at Kalahuipua'a," the historic park and trails. It is the first

time this award has been presented to a resort-hotel developer.

It was a shock, at first, to see deep into the ponds and watch the sinuous grace of mullet, awa and turtles. It's a new and different paradise. One of open areas, laced by repaired sea walls, hemmed by palms and native trees. Cooper is restocking the ponds and is constantly in search of blooming indigenous vegetation to surround the shimmering ponds. Cooper says his seven turtles are responsible for the cleanup. Turtles eat the limu (seaweed) that fish can't digest, and they vacuum the bottom.

For years Cooper has tried to convince the government that turtles needed help in the French Frigate Shoals, the main breeding ground of these large sea reptiles. Tiny turtles head for the sea as soon as they emerge from buried eggs. Three types of predators are waiting; birds swoop down, hungry fish circle the islets, and sharks lurk in deeper waters. Cooper wants to bring the babies to the fishponds until they can fend for themselves and then return them to the sea. Environmentalists and marine agencies both needed convincing, but soon Cooper will receive his first shipment. He also hopes to build a breeding ground for turtles.

being restored

Presently, the ponds are being dredged. Accumulated silt, hundreds of years old, is being conserved in holding ponds for future use. No weed killers or poisons are in use. Nature's balances are observed.

Alika Cooper's family has "farmed" fishponds for generations and he is passing on his knowledge to two sons and workers at the ponds. He patiently explains the makaha (gates) systems that control size, types, predators and other factors in the various ponds, which are a mix of salt and fresh water due to springs. Nutrients and baby fish flow through the sea gate, composed of irregular vertical branches. High tide sweeps them into a sluice canal. Solid gates keep them in the various ponds to grow and fatten. At high tide you see multitudes of fish gather at the sluice gate attracted by the fresh flow of nutrients. At that time fish may be easily harvested.

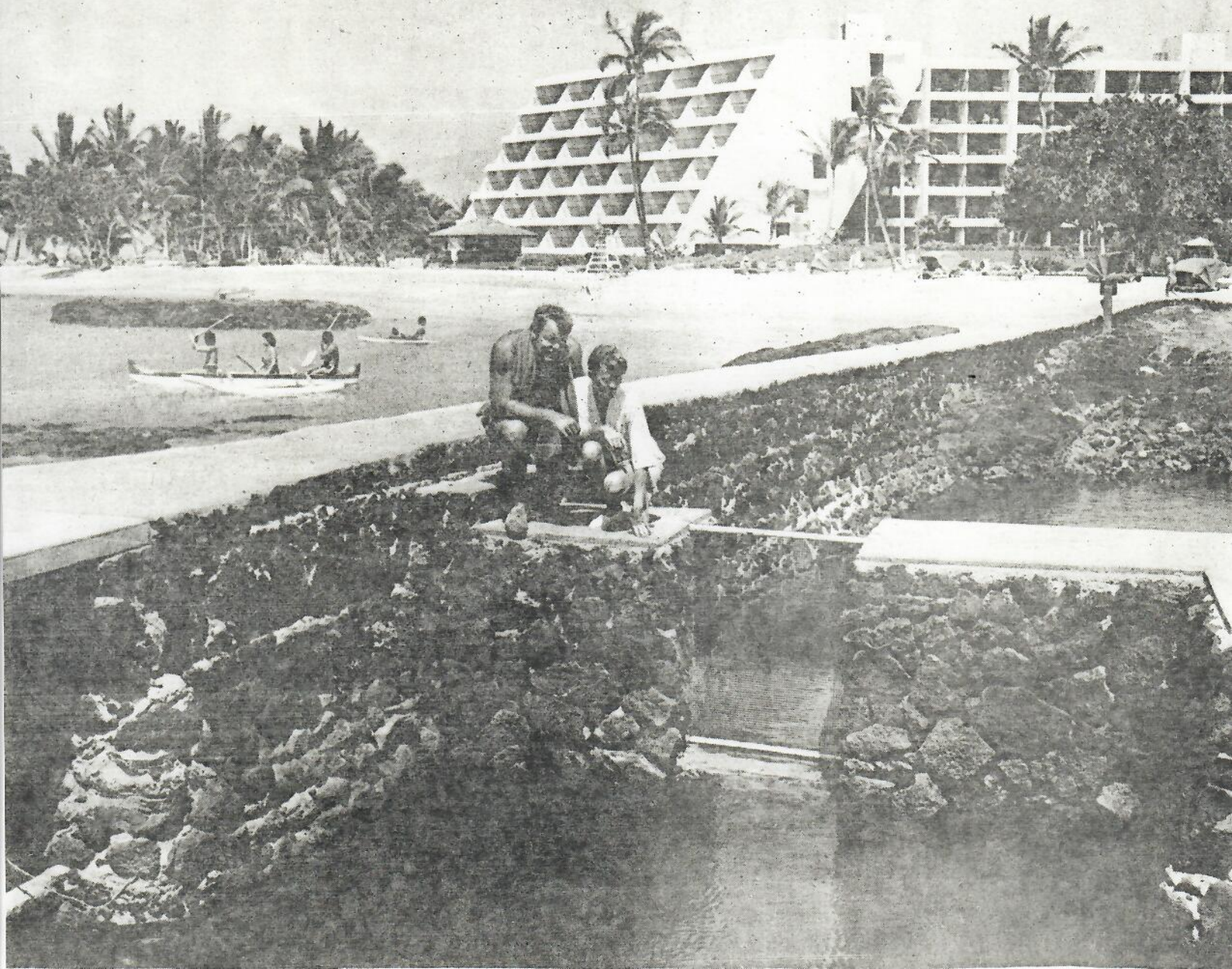
Prawns are being stocked in the golf course ponds. In the wells there are indigenous snails and opai (tiny red shrimp) which cause problems in the irrigation systems.

Mauna Lani considers the Kalahuipua'a Fishponds its most treasured asset with their inherent beauty and tranquility. They insure the conservation but capitalize on them to give an "on the water" concept to the resort.

I'm grateful to Francine Duncan and Momi Schumacher for having all the answers to my questions and providing for my needs.

WAIKOLOA IMUA will hold a membership meeting at 10 a.m. Saturday at Dorothy Chappell's house on Kimo Nui Street, just off Laie. Kate Smith will give a flower arranging workshop. It should be both beautiful and helpful to you in your home. Kate was an experienced florist before coming to the islands.

The Imua was first organized as an auxiliary for the Lucy Henriques Medical Center, but now does much for Waikoloa, as well. It trained members in CPR, provided money to train two first responders, helped buy air packs for our volunteer firemen, funded a mini-park for children, and other community projects. Chappell, new president, has many programs in mind for this year.



FISHPONDS RESTORATION — The ancient fishponds at Mauna Lani Bay foreground is part of a system that is being restored.