Molokai—Forgotten

By ETHEL A. STARBIRD NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SENIOR STAFF   Photographs by RICHARD

Hawaii

A. COOKE III

Casting away care, *Sister Richard Marie takes a day off near Molokai's leprosy hospital, where she has worked since 1960. Independent, resourceful, generous, she shares the best qualities of Hawaii's most unspoiled major island.*

***Like thirsty giants,** the volcanic peaks of Molokai's eastern end steal rainfall from its flat, dry western end. Polynesians from the Marquesas Islands came to Hawaii about 1,200 years ago. They eventually settled on this island in numbers*

far greater than today's 6,000 population. The semicircular walls of coral and basalt seen in the shallow waters in the foreground enclose fishponds once used to capture and fatten mullet and other saltwater species for island royalty.

Beyond the farthest road *a primeval world unfolds in the lush valleys of the northeastern coast. The chill waters of Kahiwa Falls* **(left)** *drop 1,750 feet to the sea in Hawaii's longest cascade. Deep in the island's forest reserve, spray from another waterfall* **(above)** *mingles with the scent of eucalyptus and wild ginger. Amaumau ferns* **(right, center)** *stand as tall as six feet.*

For centuries, Molokai was revered as a place where religious rituals were performed by powerful kahuna, or priests. One of the most famous, Lanikaula, is said to be buried in a grove of kukui trees near the island's eastern tip **(below right)**. *To make lamp oil, Hawaiians traditionally took nuts from the kukui, now a symbol of Molokai.*

India. The deer multiplied rapidly, and they have been widely hunted over the years, along with goat, wild pig, pheasant, partridge, and other game birds.

A gift to the king, *axis deer from the upper Ganges River were shipped in 1867 to Kamehameha V by Dr. William Hillebrand, a botanist of Hawaiian flora, then traveling in*

Molokai

DANNY and Louise Kekahuna usually have their hands full—with the red soil of their native Molokai. With only one small outdated tractor, they work a 40-acre homestead on this moccasin-shaped island, which is anchored about midway in the major Hawaiian chain.

The day's hoeing and sowing were over. "Now we talk story." Which, in local language, means conversation on any subject.

Louise and I settled onto upended crates in their shady backyard. "I'm chop-suey Hawaiian; Danny's full-blooded. You have to be at least half Hawaiian to get a homestead. When we first moved in, he was working out, ranching. The Homes Commission say farm or forfeit—that's the law. We decided to stay."

Breaking and cultivating expanding fields of squashes and sweet potatoes can be a precarious pursuit. Barges may arrive late to pick up perishable produce for Honolulu, 50 miles away on neighboring Oahu. Without protective screens of wild cane or ironwood, boisterous trade winds can flatten a crop; a market glut may do the same to profits. And plant pests, finding the winterless weather as agreeable as humans do, munch and multiply year round.

To ease the strain of economic uncertainties—and for the pure pleasure of it—the Kekahunas, both in their early 50s, still reap the island's natural bounty as did their ancestors.

Together, we scooped sea salt from rocky pools above the reach of summer tides, plucked flowing manes of *limu,* edible seaweed, from south-shore shallows. With Louise, a patient teacher, I learned to select rapier-like *lauhala,* leaves from the pandanus tree, which she weaves into hats and mats and sells.

Danny needs no lessons on how to harvest the island's fish-rich reefs. "Spear squid, you quick bite between eyes where small brain is. You no kill fast, you maybe end up with a nose or ear full of squiggly arm." I opted to stay ashore and pick lauhala.

In the manner of Molokai people, the Kekahunas share. Neighbors had put a sack of onions on their boundary line; Danny would leave some surplus avocados and papayas in its place.

"That way, nothing go to waste. Everyone have at least a little taste of everything." Under this giveaway program, a mango I knew of changed hands four times.

Still more rural than most of Hawaii's other holdings,

***Pure Hawaiian** in origin and outlook, Rachel Naki tends taro patches today at 77 as she did as a child. The rootstock of the starchy taro plant is ground to make poi, for centuries a staple of the islanders. "In old days we eat mostly fish, poi, coffee, but all healthy people," she says. "We pick our own coffee—it just grow up." Hard work on the land has always been her way to express her love for God and for the island of Molokai.*

Molokai with its 6,000 inhabitants remains a sparsely settled enclave of scenic inconsistencies. Born of the fiery outpourings from three long-extinct volcanoes, the little island—only 38 miles long and 10 miles wide—divides almost evenly between arid, prairie-like west and lush, mountainous east. Despite its wide-open spaces and chronic lack of rainfall, the west contains what few businesses exist here—ranching, resort real estate, pineapple plantations, and Kaunakakai, the only town.

Largest in terms of territory, 80-year-old Molokai Ranch still owns most of the west end—70,000 acres, more than half the island's usable land.

Formula for Survival: Diversity

"We're a corporation now; we'd have a tough time if we depended solely on cattle raising, though we're still running about 6,400 head. We've had to diversify."

As we jounced over dusty tracks that vein his domain, manager Aka Hodgins pointed out some of the new directions the old ranch has taken.

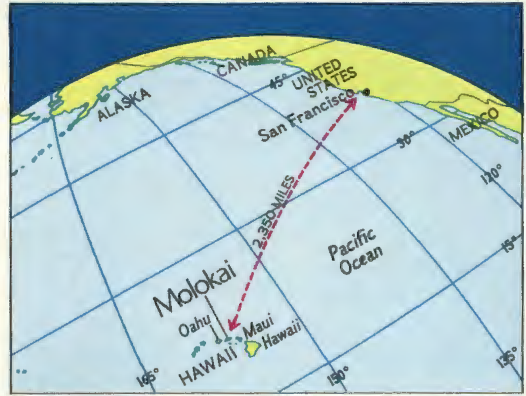
"Hay is doing well; we're selling about a thousand tons a month. Our abundance of axis deer and game birds has always attracted hunters. Now we're charging for shooting privileges, and we have more applicants than we can accommodate.

"Del Monte leases 3,500 acres from us for pineapple production. Dole did the same until 1976, when it closed out its Molokai operations. We're trying to find a new tenant for the vacated land, but we're having no trouble with takers for Mauna Loa, the company camp they built. There's a waiting list to rent the old housing units as we upgrade them."

Aka even found a use for a tract thorny enough to give a goat indigestion. He stocked it with wild African animals, creating Hawaii's first game park, a paying attraction for the tourist trade.

Molokai Ranch's most controversial decision was the sale of 6,700 prime acres to a mainland development company for house lots, condominiums, and a complete resort-hotel complex, the island's only one to date.

An old-timer expressed disgust: "You know who buying up alla Molokai? 'Uncle Kapu,' that who. Everywhere now you see his name." Indeed it has become prominent;



To soothe hard feelings *after a well-fought women's softball tournament, Annette Dela Cruz sways into an impromptu hula for rival players. The good-natured aloha*

spirit has helped Molokai's varied ethnic groups live together over the years. Of the total population, 37 percent are Hawaiians, the largest proportion in the major islands. Another 30 percent are Filipinos, and the rest are mainly Caucasians and Japanese. The 38-mile-long island, fifth largest in the chain, lies 25 miles east of Oahu.

many properties once freely crossed to reach common hunting and fishing grounds now bear signs reading *Kapu*. It's the Hawaiian word for "keep out."

The trend toward outside ownership and tourism, still in its infancy on Molokai, makes some natives restless, others openly hostile. Ripping off whatever they can from rental cars has become a popular sport; visitors have suffered violent, unprovoked attacks. Finding two-inch screws angled to puncture my front tires suggests a slow leak in the state's much touted aloha spirit.

At least one preacher on the island has tailored his love-thy-neighbor sermon to the times: "Someone give you *pilikia*—trouble—turn the cheek. Do again, turn other cheek. Third time, you on your own."

Prospects for the big boom many islanders fear seem a little overstated, even without a recent slackening in the tide of tourists to Hawaii. Except for that one remote development on former ranch property, shoreside hotels and condominiums now in place face a near-beachless sea, shoal lagoons often muddied by runoff, and shallows that won't wet a waist in a hundred-yard wade. Rare stretches of inviting sand and surf often hide tricky currents, treacherous undertows.

"My customers don't mind a bit," one hotel operator reported. "They only come here to start their tans. Once they're brown enough for a bikini, they're off to where the action is."

Pig out of its poke *is returned by James Mawae, whose family holds one of the homesteads set aside by the government in 1920 for people at least half Hawaiian in ancestry. By law, owners must farm or forfeit these homesteads, but only about 20*

One of Molokai's greatest attractions: It's where the action isn't.

Kaunakakai's main street—Ala Malama—is only three commercial blocks long. At peak hours it's about as crowded as the shoot-out scene in that classic Western *High Noon*. The setting, too, is similar: hot, treeless, fringed with false-fronted buildings and the vacant Kamoi Theater, where the last picture show played four years ago.

Among its businesses—predominantly Japanese—the two most enduring and endearing flourish at opposite ends of the street. Neither family establishment has changed much in its years of operation: 65 for the Kanemitsu Bakery, 42 for the Mid Nite Inn (which closes three hours earlier).

Dorothy Kanemitsu isn't much taller than the company-baked loaves she sells—about a thousand a day throughout the state.

"My father-in-law start with one item—Japanese cookie, like doughy bun with soybean filling. He try bread; it gooey too. My husband improve, same recipe today, no preservatives, all natural ingredients.

"We almost quit three years ago. Our doctor daughter in California say, 'You come here or you'll never get a rest.' We try, but my husband no like mainland. Bad weather. Not easy to go fishing like here. So we come back where we can relax." Working 12 hours a day.

Tourism has benefited the bakery, but it bothers Dorothy. "Hawaiian Islands such a

*of 200 now actually work the land. Since 1927 when Del Monte began pineapple production, Kualapuu plantation **(below)** has been a key employer on the island, especially after Dole closed down its Molokai operation in 1976.*

MALA
NA PU
TAKE CARE OF
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small place. If it grow and grow, soon like mainland; people see same thing as there. Molokai best stay like always, so in years to come children born will know how it was. This is a fragile island, so easily destroyed.

"If we keep what we have, I think more visitors come if only for a short time. Better that than building another Honolulu."

Art Kikukawa's restaurant, the Mid Nite Inn, began as modestly as the bakery—with a *saimin* stand his mother opened. Four nights a week, departing travelers would eat the zesty noodle dish while waiting until midnight to board the interisland steamer. Hence the name.

A strapping fellow who looks more suited to cattle ranges than kitchen ones, Art admits he has never liked cooking. But he must be doing something right; he's got about all the customers he can handle.

"They're mostly regulars, who don't want any changes. They kicked up an awful fuss when I put in new booths; the old ones were riddled with termites. They'd probably riot if I switched stoves. They're convinced the food would suffer if I cooked on anything but this old cast-iron relic."

Finding Art's place—where saimin is still a best-seller and prices remain reasonable—used to frustrate strangers. There was no sign. "The original one blew away in 1947. I liked the way the street looked without it."

Art shades his support of the status quo with a practical view of the future:

"We're bound to get a new shopping center, and it may well have a restaurant. I don't worry about competition; it keeps me on my toes. Those who grumble about growth are the ones who don't want to work. Create more jobs and they'll have to."

To reduce Molokai's present 8.4 percent unemployment rate—Hawaii's highest—expanded agriculture seems the logical alternative to tourism. There's one big hitch, though. The native population may be fiercely possessive about their land, but few want to cultivate more than an occasional household garden plot.

George Harada regrets the lack of interest in large-scale farming; even at present capacity, the Molokai Irrigation Project he supervises can provide enough water—at minimal cost to homesteaders—for another 14,000 agricultural acres.

Marching in step *with land prices* ***(top),*** *an antigrowth sentiment is part of an evolving "Hawaiian consciousness" among some islanders, who resist resort projects and outside ownership of land historically Hawaiian. In June 1980, a grass roots group* ***(facing page)*** *successfully opposed plans by a California developer to build luxury condominiums near Pukoo, an old Hawaiian settlement. Resentment of wealthy strangers on Molokai may also be sharpened by the worst unemployment in the state.*

Mixing old ways with new, Danny and Louise Kekahuna ***(above)*** *cultivate sweet potatoes and squashes on their 40-acre homestead and collect natural sea salt and pandanus leaves.*

"There's plenty of water; it's just in the wrong place—our windward coast, where almost nobody lives. Nearly 100 million gallons spill into the sea each day.

"To bring it to where it's needed in the usually dry central plains, we bored a five-mile-long tunnel into Waikolu Valley to tap the streamflow there. Took four years. Care to have a look?"

Our jeep gurgled through the carwide conduit, the water in the flume barely to the tire rims. "Designed to carry 21 million gallons a day; doing less than a third that now."

The panorama from the far portal is ample payoff for an hour of dank and dark. Waterfalls, silvered with sunlight, jet from out-of-sight heights; dense forests shade gentler inclines with a dozen tones of green; wild ginger blossoms scent the air.

Once out in the open, George turned the jeep around; the narrow passageway permitted only straight-ahead navigation. He grinned. "It'll be faster going out. After all, we've got the current with us."

Once banished because of their fearful disease, leprosy victims were put ashore to die at a colony established in 1866 at Kalawao, shown in this early photograph (**above**). Isolated by 2,000-foot cliffs, the windswept peninsula became a natural prison over the years for thousands of disfigured souls. Siloama Church (**left**), first built in 1871, marks the original site of the colony, later moved across the peninsula to Kalaupapa.

*Touched by their suffering, Father Damien (**right**) served the outcasts for 16 years until 1889, when he too died of their disease.*

DAMIEN MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES (ABOVE AND TOP)

Waikolu had shown me a small sample of Molokai's other world—the magnificent east end. From Kaunakakai to Halawa this half of the island erupts in a jumble of razor-backed ridges, corded slopes, and deep-cleft valleys. On the north side the volcanic landscape ends in fortress-like *pali*—cliffs—that plummet some 3,200 feet into an unruly surf. Here, frequent rains streak the rocks with myriad cascades, some exploding into wind-whipped mist and rainbows before they reach the sea.

Today this is a ghost coast, too rugged for any road to reach. Its few foot trails would slow a Sherpa, and even boatmen distrust its swells except in summer calms.

But its spectacular valleys—Waikolu, Pelekunu, Wailau, and Halawa—once sustained sizable settlements. Halawa, dead end for today's motorist, has a few hideaways occupied by the antiestablishment set; all earlier dwellings were washed away by a 36-foot tsunami in 1946 and not rebuilt.

No one knows who set foot on Hawaiian

soil first. But midway in the eighth century Polynesians from the Marquesas Islands began to populate the archipelago. They must have reached Molokai in large numbers: House foundations, rock walls, and *heiau*—temples—litter the landscape, even in places now barely accessible.

In 1833, when the newly arrived missionaries first counted, 6,000 people were living on the island, most of them on the east end. Apparently, until then, nothing had happened here to dilute their pure Polynesian lineage. Even Capt. James Cook, England's globe-girdling explorer, bypassed Molokai in 1778 when he became Hawaii's first known visitor from the Western world. So did all those whalers and sailors who followed in his wake.

Which may be why Molokai, of the state's six largest islands, retains the highest number of native Hawaiian people—37 percent. Most still live as did their early forebears on the east end, though nowadays they favor the protected south shore.

The Nakis have been exposed to both east end exposures—north and south. Rachel, born in Pelekunu, spent the first 17 of her 77 years in Wailau, where she met and married Imu, 78. In those years he helped deliver mail to the valley's 300 residents, scaling the pali each week and walking 22 miles to bring the mail from Pukoo.

"Everything we need grow good there—wild pigs, goats, coffee, fish all aroun'. Papaya, mango, plenty *pili* grass for make house. Roots, leaves for med'cine. But mostly we raise taro for poi; it hard work, you got no time for sick."

When a flash flood (about 1915, as Rachel recalls) erased taro patches laboriously walled and terraced, the Wailau community began to dissolve. Nowadays only

__Undaunted__ by his handicaps, John Kaona __(left)__ fashions unusual dolphin-shaped jewelry __(below right)__ from sandbox tree seeds in a workshop he built at the Kalaupapa colony.

Despite its centuries-old stigma, leprosy is rarely contagious. Thousands of people a year visit the colony, operated by the Hawaiian Department of Health, to find a cheerfulness expressed by patient Ed Kato on a rock message __(above right)__.

No complete cure has been discovered for the most severe forms of leprosy, which is named Hansen's disease after the Norwegian physician who isolated the bacillus. But sulfone drugs used since the 1940s control the disease and prevent contagion so successfully that Kalaupapa's patients can come and go as they please. Yet many, now in their 60s, prefer to remain among friends in the quiet collection of well-kept cottages they have long known as home.

an occasional hunter or fisherman ventures into the valley.

Shifting to a south-side address, the Nakis are still doing what comes naturally—raising taro. And a flock of free-roaming chickens, a Molokai method of centipede control.

After 36 years under canvas, they moved into a new house and need no longer toil hard for a living. But it's a habit they don't intend to break. "Sit aroun', we dry up, we die. Stretch and bend, it keep us strong." Imu flexed his biceps, an impressive sight.

Rachel voiced disgust with a neighbor who, to curb through traffic, had strung a wire across the lane leading to the Nakis' taro terraces. "God no like greedy land. It all belong to Him; He expect us to take care of what He lend us."

Among the last of Molokai's taro growers, Imu and Rachel take care with a passion. No weed stands a chance amid their plants. "Everybody want poi, but most too lazy to tend it. Soon no more taro, no more poi."

Most east enders do prefer other pursuits—like fighting further development, which they feel endangers their traditional lands and life-style. Many know what overbuilding has done to Honolulu; others see without leaving home the sky rises that now shadow Maui's once unblemished beaches.

Recognizing the need for more sophisticated weapons than talk, prayer, and demonstrations, leaders of the movement are fast learning how the law can be used for as well as against them. Already their educated efforts have paid off with one stunning victory—defeat of a large project planned for the Pukoo area.

Antidevelopment sentiment is fueled in part by a statewide drive among native Hawaiians to secure lands they feel are rightfully theirs by virtue of their ancestry.

Yet, historically, landownership among these islands was limited to a privileged few. For almost a thousand years, local *alii*—chiefs—controlled all property under a strict, often cruel feudal system. Kamehameha I put an end to their power when he annexed the islands and became king in 1810. The vast holdings of the alii passed to the monarchy, which during its century-long reign doled out large parcels to those who won royal favor.

Like American Charles R. Bishop. In 1875 he was granted half of what would become Molokai Ranch. His wife, Bernice Pauahi, last descendant of Kamehameha I, acquired the rest through inheritance. The complete 70,000-acre package sold in 1898 for $251,000, the price of a condominium apartment there today.

Among the leftovers of the alii period is a remarkably well-preserved chain of offshore fishponds looping along the south coast (pages 190-191). In these tidal corrals, expertly enclosed with snug-fitting stonework, early Polynesians raised fish, mostly mullet, to feed the ruling class.

Esidoro and Sifriana Pascua, an elderly Filipino couple, keep this ancient form of aquaculture alive—but they may give up soon. The pond they tend is being smothered by mangroves; rent for it has almost doubled in the past several years; their catch has dwindled to an occasional Samoan crab.

"Baby mullets still swim up channel from sea; for 30 years we put in pond to grow. Baby barracuda get in too and grow." Wading around to net mature food fish, Sifriana has suffered three serious barracuda bites—a painful memory that's taken the edge off her enthusiasm for the fishpond business.

***The big time on Molokai** is sleepy Kaunakakai's three-block-long business center, where master of ceremonies Butchie Dudoit introduces Moana's Dance Troupe **(right)** for a lively hula during Aloha Week. A celebration of things Hawaiian, the festivities take place each October. The false-fronted wooden buildings on the main thoroughfare **(above)** of this largest island settlement retain a Wild West charm—with an Oriental flavor lent by Japanese-American merchants.*

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BOBO'S
AUTO SERVICE

ALOHAWEEK
HAWAII

"Once so many mullet they come when I whistle. A partner want to put in *tilapia*. We say no, a no-good fish, eat other fishes, taste muddy. Partner no good either; he dump in tilapia when we not here. To get rid, must poison whole pond, wait two years, start all over. Someone else maybe, not us."

These days Esidoro spends less time at the pond, more at "school," as Filipinos call their weekend social center, a back-street yard in Kualapuu's plantation community. There's a lot to learn there—if you can find the place. Nobody's going to volunteer the information.

Main attraction: Illegal chicken fights and games of chance that police tolerate as long as they're small scale and locally run. A patron named Joe approves the arrangement. "But just in case, the house takes a small cut. For possible fines or legal fees."

Pineapple Economy Slows Romance

Because pineapple growing is labor intensive and the last importation of field workers originated in the Philippines, 30 percent of Molokai's population belongs to that ethnic group. Recruited in their teens at wages that precluded the luxury of family life, many of its men remained bachelors until retirement. A lot have made up for lost time since, returning home, sometimes after a 30-year absence, to acquire young brides often prechosen by relatives or friends there.

Ponciano Raguindin made this pilgrimage five years ago when he was 65, his wife 20. "It's good to be married. New happiness for years I have left. Some make fun, call me the old man. Then how come I got three kids already?"

Fringe benefit of these May-December marriages: a pool of energetic young women eager for plantation jobs that many young males now spurn.

With some 300 employees at peak season, Del Monte is still Molokai's leading *luna*—boss. Manager Robert R. Kehlor has no worries about a personnel shortage.

"Scientific and technical advances, changing practices, they're increasing faster than the labor supply is shrinking. New plantings are yielding three crops now instead of two, and we're converting rapidly to drip irrigation. So we can get along with fewer people."

By local measure Del Monte is a most impressive operation: 3,500 acres under production; 26,000 plants an acre; 60,000 tons of fruit a year for its Honolulu cannery.

While most Molokai people tend to congregate, as do Del Monte employees and retirees, in small communities or subdivisions, Joyce Kainoa (pages 216-17) has other tastes. A 34-year-old widow and the mother of six, she prefers the seclusion of an uninhabited north coast valley. To discourage strangers, only one helicopter pilot is cleared for landing; the hazards of her rock-strewn harbor hold curious boatmen at bay.

Despite this voluntary isolation, Joyce is a warm, outgoing woman deeply involved in preserving what's left of old Hawaii, securing landrights for native people, procuring legal aid for those in need. She has simply elected to re-create for her family the uncomplicated life-style of her Hawaiian antecedents, which is how she, too, was raised.

"For years I fished commercial, living summers in Wailau Valley to work these windward waters. Sure, the kids went with me; they knew what they were getting into when we moved here.

"There's too much hassle on the outside, too much dependency on nonessentials. After two years here, we're eating better than most, harvesting what nature provides—fishes, goats, pigs, fruits from the forest. But we never take more than we need."

The Kainoas and Joyce's friend Mike have given nature quite a nudge. Behind their bluff-top house, carefully sited for compatibility with its surroundings, one and a half acres of terraced gardens bear the bounty of their industry: taros, cabbages, corn, beans, potatoes, squashes, sugarcane, wheat for flour, bananas, avocados, figs.

"No chemicals. We don't know good bugs from bad bugs, so we don't fight them. We just grow enough for everybody."

Joyce occupies land to which she holds a title, but she has built her home without the necessary permits.

"If I waited for permits, we still wouldn't have a roof over our heads. We're more careful than regulations require about erosion, pollution, conservation, sanitation. After all, we're the victims if we mess up."

All the Kainoa youngsters respect and protect their environment, a lesson too few

learn at any age. And their unorthodox education is more meaningful in many ways than standard schoolroom fare.

"I teach them all I know—reading, writing, about plants and animals, about agriculture, about what lives in the sea. They know our fish, recognize which to avoid for safety's sake and when the ocean wants to be left alone.

"They've learned first aid and preventive medicine from a doctor friend of ours; also a lawyer who sometimes visits is giving them a continuing course in our legal system, vital knowledge for all Hawaiians who want to keep what little they have left. The kids know that they will be on the losing end if they play hooky in this household."

So far, the family has suffered no major mishaps except the loss in a storm of their only transport—the scow and powerboat that brought them here. "God willed it. Maybe He thought that was too much luxury. Perhaps it was."

In an emergency the Kainoas must hike or swim for help. Afoot, it's about 20 miles over rough and tilted terrain to the nearest road. Usually the surf is even less inviting.

"Best head for Kalaupapa around the bend. Take off from our point and even if you're not a strong swimmer the current will sweep you straight to Waikolu Valley, which is a couple of miles away. The

Ancient and alternative life-styles join *as Molly and Jade Brushjel exchange vows on the site of an old Hawaiian temple. Peggy Hau Ross, a kahuna, conducts the traditional Hawaiian wedding. The couple's week-old daughter, Olawa, in a gown cut from her mother's dress, attends in the arms of a friend. A handful of families has resettled the remote Halawa Valley, depopulated in 1946 by a 36-foot tsunami.*

settlement is only a short walk beyond."

In 1866 a pitiful band was cast ashore near the same spot, forever banished to empty, windswept Kalawao with only their waning strength to provide food and shelter to sustain their maimed bodies.

Thus Molokai received its first of many innocent outcasts whose only crime was contracting leprosy. Now known as Hansen's disease (for the Norwegian doctor who in 1874 identified the microorganism that causes it), the disfiguring ailment was then uncontrollable and believed far more contagious than it really is.

The treatment in those early days varied little: Round up all the islands' afflicted, adults and children alike; dump them at Kalawao without professional care; deprive them of their civil rights.

The settlement endured a painful record of hardship, lawlessness, and misery that was almost totally ignored by the outside world until the arrival in 1873 of Joseph de Veuster, a Belgian-born Roman Catholic priest known as Father Damien. Learning of the plight of Molokai's forgotten exiles, he chose to spend the rest of his life serving their spiritual and physical needs. After 16 years

Too rough to ride *on a windy October day, the surf boils onto Papohaku Beach, where a hotel chain has built Molokai's only major resort complex. Stretching two*

of extraordinary accomplishment, Father Damien contracted the disease himself and died at the age of 49.

Inspired by his martyrdom, other volunteers began to arrive under relaxed rules of nonpatient residency; more public and private funds started trickling in—never enough of either until very recent years. The first real hope for the afflicted emerged in 1945 when sulfone drugs proved effective in arresting most cases.

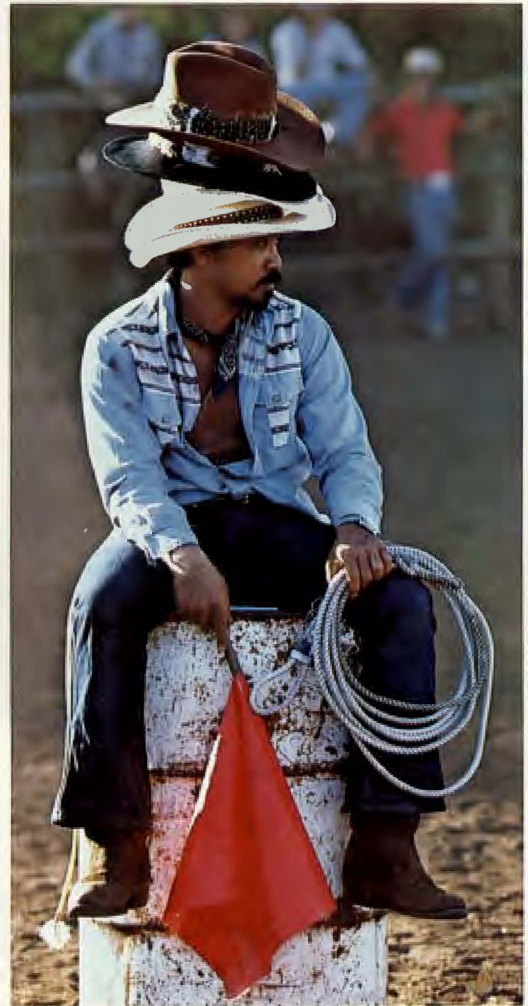
Today's scene is a far cry from those tragic years of neglect and suffering. The 118 remaining patients (admissions ceased in 1969) live in a neat cottage community called Kalaupapa, directly across the peninsula from the now deserted east side where Father Damien began and ended his labor of love. Residents enjoy all the amenities of this modern age, including regular air service connecting them to anywhere in the world. They may go and come as they please, leave forever if they wish. (New cases are treated as outpatients by a Honolulu clinic.)

Day visitors willing to respect the patients' privacy are welcome: Each year thousands descend *(Continued on page 218)*

miles along the western coast, the beach offers a haven to visitors seeking solitude. In the evening the lights of Oahu wink across the channel.

Cowboy of the Year *Buzzy Sproat, here showing off his daughter and 1980 trophy* ***(right)****, works at Tropical Rent-A-Mule when not competing in one of Molokai's frequent rodeos. As chief mule skinner, he guides visitors on muleback down a precipitous 3½-mile trail to Kalaupapa. Flagman Boy Negrillo* ***(below)****, safeguarding the hats of several contestants, is a carpenter by trade. Regardless of profession, nearly everyone on the island shares a passion for the cowboy life.*

Through clouds of red dust, the hands of 70,000-acre Molokai Ranch herd the first of 6,400 head of Santa Gertrudis cattle to new pastures on the main drive of the summer ***(left)****. Before the ranch was established in 1898, King Kamehameha V also raised cattle on this prairie-like west end.*



MULE DAYS

***Practicing what she teaches,** defender of Hawaiian tradition Joyce Kainoa moved her family to an isolated northern peninsula (**right**) and revived old ways. She gives her children survival courses—from reading and writing to farming and fishing. At one session she reviews the meaning of Hawaiian place-names (**below**). At another (**bottom**) she shows how to relieve a sudden case of muscle spasms.*

BRONWEN JAMES

Like the Swiss Family Robinson, *the Kainoas live by their wits. But unlike the characters of the Johann Wyss novel, who built ingenious contraptions for conveniences, the Kainoas seek to harmonize with their surroundings. As their Hawaiian ancestors did, they take pigs, goats, fish, and fruit from the forests. Their organic garden produces taros, sweet potatoes, sweet corn, and Irish potatoes. After a storm destroyed their boats last year, they decided not to replace them. So when visitors arrive by sea, Joyce ferries their belongings in a washtub* ***(left)****. A friend stays with her children when Joyce periodically returns to the outside world to lobby for Hawaiian land rights and legal aid for the needy. Pursuing her dream of independence, she helps other Hawaiians find their way.*

the three-and-a-half-mile cliff trail by mule-back or plane hop in from Honolulu to the peninsula's tiny airstrip.

Only the fortunate few make the airport run with Kenso Seki, who has spent 52 of his 70 years here. We traveled in style in his 1928 Model A Ford, its fenders filigreed by salt-air corrosion, its leaking radiator averaging a mile a gallon—of water.

As we rattled past the movie theater, I asked Kenso why, in writing the current attraction on the blackboard marquee, someone had included its rating: R. He grinned. "With us, you can't be too careful. After all, our average age is only 61."

Kenso is on the move as much as anyone at Kalaupapa. His living room is papered with pennants from the many places he's been—from San Francisco to the Kennedy Space Center, Mexico to Niagara Falls. He's saving now for an Australian tour.

"I don't mind visitors; it's one way for them to see they needn't be afraid. I would hate to have to leave here for good; it's the only home I know. But at the rate our numbers are going down, we may have to go one day. Upkeep will be too expensive for just a few."

Kenso needn't worry. Lifetime tenancy has recently been guaranteed by the state government, which operates the facility with federal funds. Concerned about what will happen after the last are gone, patients overwhelmingly supported legislation, which was passed in December 1980, to make the peninsula a national park.

Paul Harada, one of Kalaupapa's prime movers in this matter, applauds the act for preserving many of the present structures "as a memorial to what has happened here and will never happen again. I'm one of the last generation to be admitted; I don't want to hang around after the neighborhood is down to a handful. But I believe most of the buildings should remain where they are."

Paul is glad his case preceded the sulfone breakthrough. "My wife and I—she's a patient, too—have seen our prospects for a long and full life advance dramatically. We've achieved a degree of normalcy we never expected back then. Kind of a deliverance, in a way."

Patients realize Hansen's disease is not the only enemy; their incidence of blindness and kidney failure is well above average. Yet in this peaceful setting of flowering shade trees, immaculate lawns, and gardens painstakingly tended by badly crippled hands, I sensed a general feeling of contentment, camaraderie; the oneness of a close family. As if everyone has taken to heart the message Ed Kato lettered on a streetside stone: Smile . . . It No Broke Your Face.

A Growing Future for Molokai?

Topside, as Kalaupapa residents refer to the rest of Molokai, the public mood is more difficult to diagnose. Certainly there's no oneness here over the one issue uppermost in every mind: to grow or not to grow.

Last of the state's major islands to be discovered by developers, Molokai has just begun making waves among speculators and those who think the nearest thing to earthly paradise (to say nothing of a foolproof investment) is to own a piece of Hawaii.

This sudden attention after years of being ignored frightens some, delights others.

Many of Hawaiian descent as well as other native-born Molokaians have joined Caucasian immigrants from the mainland and neighbor islands to form a substantial antibuilding bloc. Cerebral rather than combative in their efforts, they've made progress in staving off the megabuck invasion.

A splinter group seeks to do the same but through more militant means. Another faction frankly favors the input of outsiders to fatten the island's too lean economy.

A pretty standard stratification in many desirable spots these days.

Split as they may be over the expected onslaught by off-islanders, nothing will divide Molokai's people on their determination to preserve their identity, to control their destiny. Perhaps they're in time to do both. □

A world away *from sophisticated society, Joyce Kainoa's son Sammy may well count the blessings of an untouched part of Molokai. But as pressures build to change the island, he may also wonder how long his home will remain as natural and unspoiled as a boy daydreaming on a rock.*