

# Kane was convicted along with Tassill

WAILUKU — Republican House candidate Kalani Tassill's 1990 misdemeanor conviction for "taking" a green sea turtle also involved another office seeker — Democrat Dain Kane, a Maui County Council candidate.

Tassill, 40, of Paukukalo, and Kane, 36, of Wailuku, were arrested June 4, 1990, according to Wailuku District Court records.

Kane, a Maui High School teacher who is seeking the council's Wailuku-Waihee-Waikapu residency seat, said Wednesday he made a mistake and regrets the incident.

The candidate said he and Tassill were working

together as car salesmen in 1990 when they went on an East Maui fishing trip. They put some nets in the water and left them overnight.

When they returned the next day, they found two sea turtles ensnared in the nets. One was dead, and another was alive, according to Kane.

They took the turtles and Tassill left them at his brother's house where a neighbor apparently saw them and called police, Kane said.

"I went to bail him out and I was arrested," Kane said.

The live turtle was released back into the ocean. Kane and Tassill pleaded no contest and were

## in green sea turtle case

sentenced to 30-day suspended jail terms, \$500 fines, a year of probation and 72 hours of community service.

"We all make mistakes in life," Kane said. "I don't even go fishing anymore."

Tassill said he, too, has stopped fishing, even though it was a part of his life and culture.

"I grew up fishing," he said. "I'm a Native Hawaiian, and my culture places strong emphasis on using what we take from the sea to nourish our bodies. I realize that not returning the turtle to the wild was wrong. I performed community service, and I don't fish anymore."

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WAILUKU — Republican state House candidate Kalani Tassill is disputing details provided in court records about his convictions for abusing his wife and assaulting a tourist.

Tassill, a 40-year-old Paukukalo resident who is trying to unseat Speaker Joe Souki in the 8th House District, called a press conference last week to disclose his criminal record of three misdemeanor convictions and one petty misdemeanor conviction. He said he decided to reveal the information after receiving a letter from United Public Workers leader Gary Rodrigues inquiring about the convictions.

The candidate has accused Rodrigues and Souki of collaborating in a smear campaign. Souki denies knowing anything about the matter. The Maui News has been unsuccessful in contacting Rodrigues.

At the press conference, Tassill downplayed the incidents, attributing his earlier troubles to an alcohol problem he said he has since gotten under control. He maintains the important thing is that he has turned his life around and is active in his church and community. His pastor, his attorneys and others have come forward to vouch for Tassill's improved character.

Tassill said his 1982 conviction for misdemeanor assault was the result of a fight that occurred after a bigger man "tore off his shirt and

came charging at me."

"I got hit and I hit back," he said.

Court records show the incident occurred Oct. 11, 1981, when Tassill was driving with a passenger on Kilohana Drive in Kihei, following four tourists on mopeds headed toward Piilani Highway.

One of the moped riders was Robert Alcaraz, now 48 and a sergeant in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. He told The Maui News Wednesday that Tassill tried to run over his wife.

"She screamed and went up an embankment, fell off the bike and hurt herself," Alcaraz said.

When he and others yelled for the car to stop, Alcaraz said, Tassill turned the vehicle around and the two men became engaged in a mutual brawl.

Alcaraz said he had turned to look toward his wife when Tassill "sucker-punched me" with the cast on his

right arm. He described the attack as "deliberate" and said Tassill was "mean, aggressive" and "extremely violent."

Alcaraz is 6 feet tall and muscular, and Tassill is 6-foot-1 and said he weighed about 190 pounds at the time.

According to grand jury transcript contained in public court records, the visitors told police that Tassill also drove his car toward Alcaraz's wife after she had gone to a house on Mapu Place to call police, and that before driving off, Tassill and his passenger threatened the visitors.

According to the transcripts, the passenger, Christopher Campos, told police that Tassill turned the vehicle around after Campos told him one of the moped riders swore at them as the car passed.

Campos said Alcaraz provoked Tassill, who had wanted only to scare the moped riders.

Tassill was indicted on two counts of first-degree terroristic threatening and second-degree assault, but on June 29, 1983, the state dismissed the terroristic threatening charges and Tassill pleaded no contest to a reduced charge of third-degree assault. His sentence included a year of probation, a three-month suspended jail term, and a \$500 fine.

Tassill said there are "many mis-statements" in the court account of the altercation that occurred in Kihei and that he was defending himself. He noted that defendants are not allowed to tell the grand jury their side of the story or cross-examine witnesses.

Former Public Defender Jan Apo, who represented Tassill in the assault case, said the prosecutor's willingness to reduce three felonies to a single misdemeanor count lends credence to Tassill's version of events and that it was "an unfortunate inci-

dent in which both men lost their temper."

The county prosecutor who handled the case, Larry Goya, is now with the state Department of the Attorney General. He said he could not recall the matter.

In describing the incident that led to his 1992 misdemeanor conviction for criminal abuse of a family member, Tassill said at his news conference that it "was essentially nonviolent and involved my carrying my wife back into our home after an argument."

But in a court filing seeking a restraining order against Tassill, his wife said he punched her to keep her from leaving their house June 17, 1992. "He pulled my jeans off, tearing them in half and leaving a big bruise on my inner left leg," her statement said.

When she began walking down the street, "he attacked me . . ." she

said. "He dragged me in the headlock position all the way up the stairs and into the house. He brought out all the knives and asked me which one I wanted him to kill me with. He was really drunk."

A judge granted a temporary restraining order prohibiting Tassill from living in the home or harassing his wife from June 30, 1992, to July 13, 1993.

After entering a plea in the case, Tassill was sentenced to two days in jail and placed on a year of probation. Court records show he completed the Alternatives to Violence program for batterers.

Tassill said Wednesday he could contest the details in statements made by his wife, but "I'm not going to do so."

"We are happily married today and have been ever since I stopped drinking," he said.

Tassill's wife, Emma, said that since the 1992 incident, "Kalani has changed his life completely. He's a good husband and father, he's hard-working and a good provider."

She said the couple, who have three children, continue to get counseling from their pastor at Pukalani Nazarene Church, where Tassill serves as assistant pastor.

"I love my husband and everything is good," she said.

The candidate's two other convictions were a 1990 misdemeanor for taking a green sea turtle and a 1984 petty misdemeanor for disorderly conduct for refusing to leave a bar.

## Candidate Tassill disputes details about criminal record