

THE TRUE MYTH OF A LEGENDARY STRAIN.

# MAUI:



# WOWIE

As told to Ellen Freeman.  
Photography by Sanford Hill.



In the 1970s, Sanford Hill was living in a house surrounded by pineapple and root ginger fields, taking photography classes at Maui Community College, and “making money from the earth”: breeding pedigree German shepherds, fishing, selling avocados, or throwing a rope over a waterfall and climbing down to gather opihi shellfish to sell to fancy restaurants.

One day a friend called him to come and see something in his garden. It was a six-foot-tall cannabis plant with such heavy buds that he had sticks holding up each one. As a high school surfer, Hill had sold pot brought over from Vietnam, but he hadn’t known it was possible to grow it in Hawaii. He started cultivating his own plants, making it up as he went along until he landed on a cross between an Afghani hash plant and a Thai sativa, tall enough for the wet climate, with long clumps like baseball bats. “The proof was in the smoke,” he says.

“Most people could only take a hit or two, and they were done.” Then a neighbor kid ripped off the whole stash. But Hill had saved a baggie full of the seeds, and the seeds grew into something special. Here, he tells the tale of his “life in the rainbow,” a moment when plants, people, and place were aligned:

There are some places on this planet that are truly unreal. Hāna, Maui is one of them. It’s isolated by a long, sometimes one-lane road that winds slowly through the Hawaiian rainforest. The road forces you to slow down from Maui-time to Hāna-time, where days and years mean nothing. It was like stumbling into a paradise that nobody knew about; back then, the only way you could find it was by accident. I first lived in lower Nahiku along the rugged, pristine coastline surrounded by miles of tropical jungle and streams. When it rains there, everything turns into crystals. It’s the perfect place to grow weed.





When someone found one of my patches, instead of ripping me off he left me a note: “Wow, nice buds. Come have a beer.” That’s how I met the Nahiku Guerillas, who had their own baseball team. We’d go to Hamoa, Koki, or Waikoloa Beach in the morning and hang out all day, surf, smoke, build a fire, grab some lobsters out of the ocean. The water was 80 degrees and the air was 80 degrees. The pot grew by itself, and we’d go take care of it.

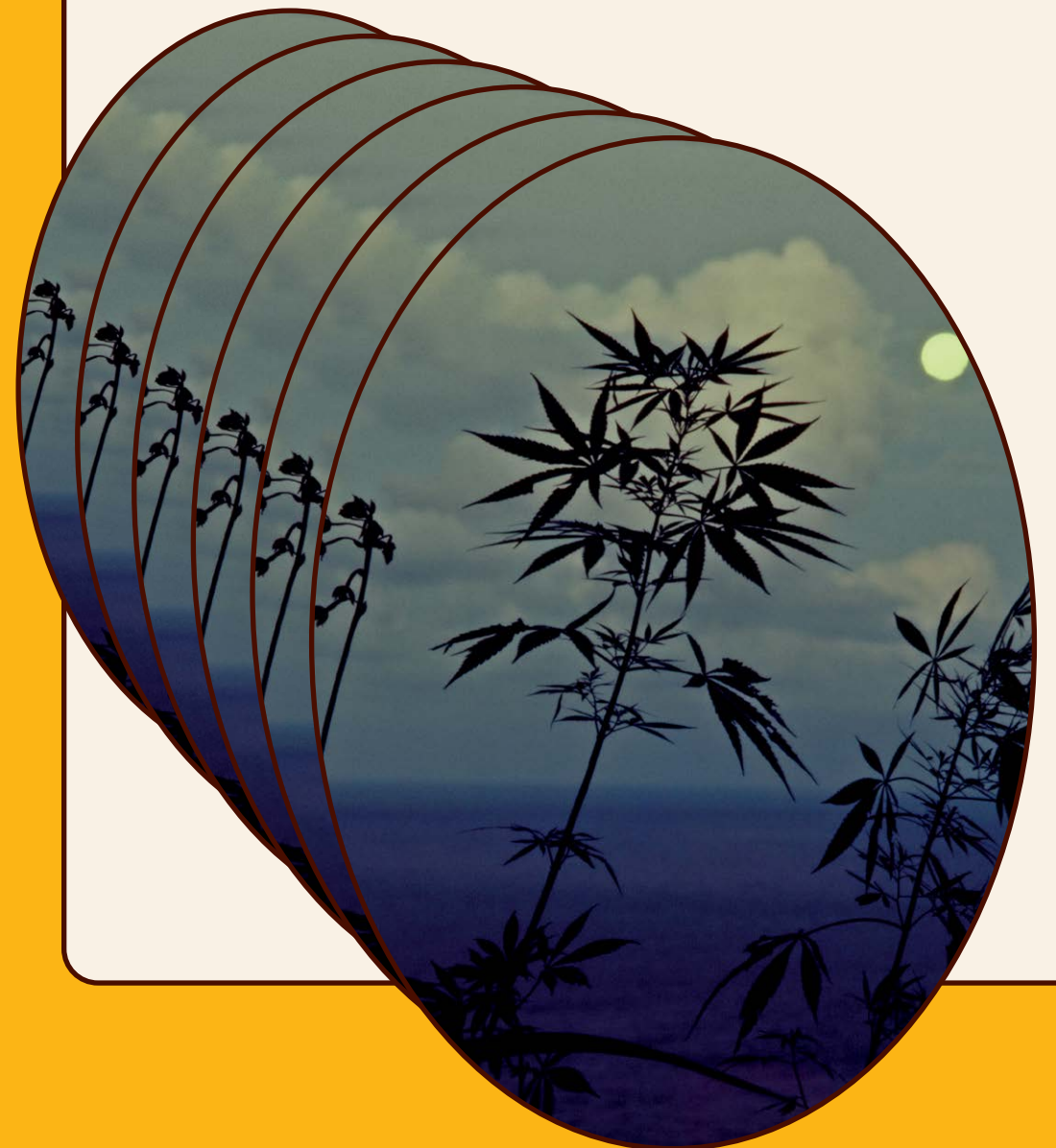
My feelings about my plants were really strong. I didn’t go up and sing to them or anything like that, but they were very important to me. At the end of harvest season, someone would throw a party for three days with six or seven bands, hundreds of people would show up, and we’d have a bud contest with buds from all over Hawaii, and I won that.

It sounds kind of dumb, but it was a big deal: I was the best bud grower in Hawaii. The proof was in the smoke; most people could only take a hit or two and they were done.

A guy named Cowboy Rick who managed the stables at the Hotel Hāna Maui bought a lot of my buds and sold them to the stars. He said, “You know what they’re calling your pot? They’re calling it ‘Maui Wowie!’” I said, “What?!” We called it Hāna Buds, or Da Kine for the really killer stuff. (Da kine is a pidgin word; it means “the best.”) Maui Wowie was a hippie, mainland-type name that didn’t reflect who we were. We never used the name ourselves until Tommy Chong, who hung out in Nahiku, used it in his 1978 movie “Up In Smoke.” Then everyone and their uncle began calling their weed “Maui Wowie.”

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For rockstars, rip-offs, organized crime, and helicopter raids, read the rest of Hill’s “Maui Tales” at [mauitales.com](http://mauitales.com).

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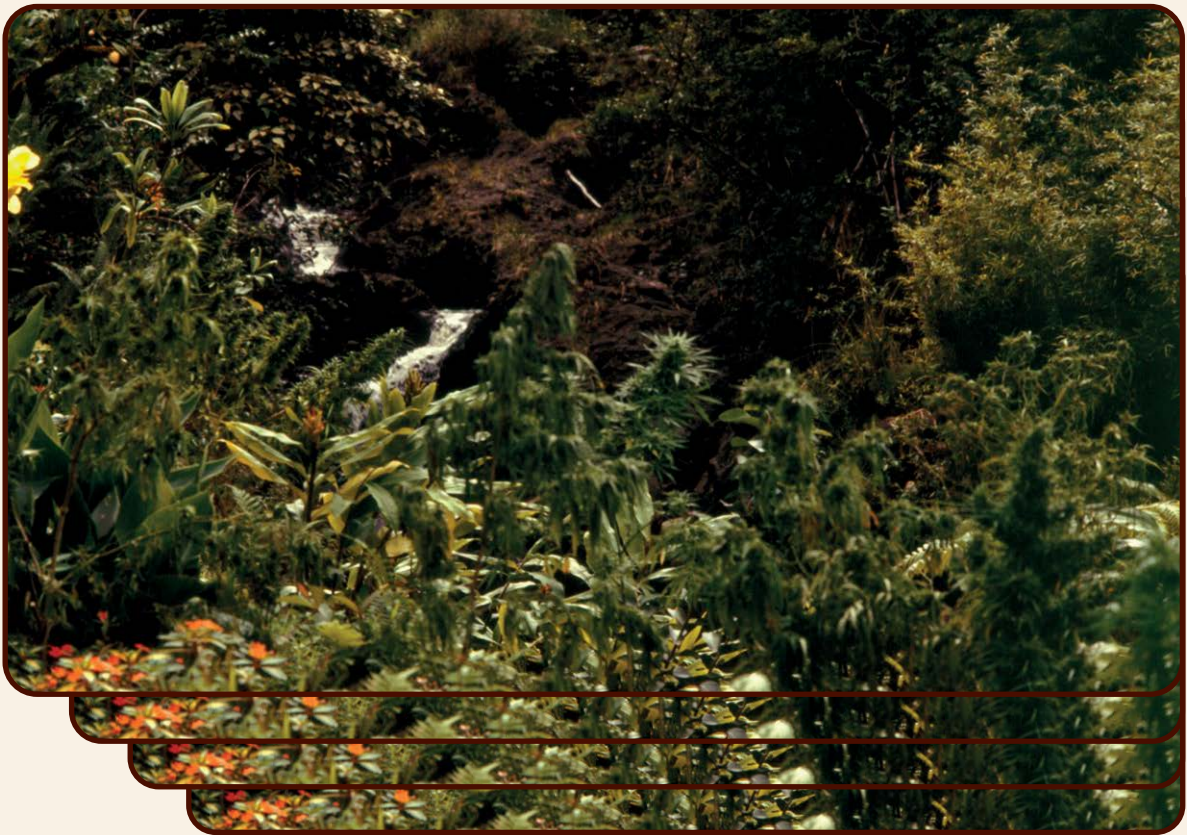








“I was part of the Maui cell of the movement to protect Kaho’olawe [an island used for military bombardment training]. Bombing the island was considered sacrilegious. A few people found out that if they went over and hid on the island, they wouldn’t bomb until they found them. I donated a lot of money to it from my pot. I was scheduled to go over, and the people that went instead of me were killed.”



Taking photos of your own pot was considered not that bright—it could be used as evidence to put you away for 20 years. But I knew this was a unique moment in time and no one would believe me without photos. Our plan was to make posters that reflected our lifestyle, the times, and the weed, so we brought models over from Oahu because we didn’t want to use any of the people actually involved. All the plants were harvested the day we took the photographs, and the next day they were gone.

Maui Wowie is still being sold all over the place, but that’s not Maui Wowie. It’s this branded legend to make money—which is kind of what happened to Hāna. I watched Oahu get totally destroyed, then I came to Maui, and it happened here. The Hāna of that time does not exist anymore, and that strain doesn’t exist, either. Maybe I’ll recreate it now that I’ve got my medical cannabis card and can grow seven plants. Maybe if I live long enough, I can bring back at least that part of the past. ●



# TIME TRAVELERS

## THREE SUGGESTIONS FOR TRANSPORTING YOURSELF TO ANOTHER TIME AND PLACE.



## Wandering Bud

Sometimes you need to float away in a bubble. Those times call for a bubbler from Wandering Bud, a woman-owned studio crafting handmade ceramic smoking accessories in Kansas City, Missouri. With dreamy finishes like mother of pearl and 22k gold luster, their water pipes offer a smooth, cool hit in the palm of your hand. Then when the bubble pops, use your bubbler as a sweet bud vase. *Presented in partnership with Wandering Bud ([wanderingbud.com](http://wanderingbud.com)).*



## Dose

Take a field trip with your golden teacher—but instead of a magic school bus, get there with a Seremoni Psilocybin Chocolate Bar. Their sea salt variety is made with 70% organic dark chocolate, sea salt, and golden teacher mushrooms (*Psilocybe cubensis*) grown with care on the West Coast. Each bar contains 3000mg of psilocybin mushrooms divided into 15 squares, ideal for microdosing or sharing a trip with fellow explorers. *Presented in partnership with Dose (dose.land).*



## acknowledge

Close your eyes and imagine your body as a landscape: see its flowing rivers, rising mountains, thriving forests, and humming grasslands. Travel lightly through this terrain, scattering seeds of care. That's the mission of Acknowledge Farms, a woman-led, artisanal CBD company committed to restoring ecosystems and healing people through regenerative practices. Based on the East Coast, they consciously cultivate the finest quality hemp to support the body and the land. *Presented in partnership with [acknowledge \(acknowledgefarms.com\)](https://www.acknowledgefarms.com).*

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