

Honolulu Advertiser 18 & UNDER

March 17, 1997

Aboard the Hokule'a

By Justina Cross
Kalaheo High School
Special to The Advertiser

Down at the Pier 7, streaks of sunlight barely lit the sky, which promised this January day would be hot.

For the moment, the Hokule'a was a ghost town on the water. We would soon come to know it as as alive as its crew and legendary navigator, but for now it was just a double-hulled voyaging canoe bobbing around the waters off Aloha Tower.

A group of us from Kalaheo High were at the canoe's docking as part of our History Day project (see story on Page C5), a video about the Hokule'a. Slowly, signs of activity appeared as the crew started to arrive and load huge bags and coolers aboard. Among the last to arrive was Nainoa Thompson, navigator and captain of the Hokule'a.

I nudged my partner and whispered, "That's him!" He's something of a hero to teens interested in Hawaiian culture.

"He was very helpful and enthused, and I could tell that he really cared about the project and us and seeing the Hokule'a project go further," says Melanie Fields, 17, my project partner and a junior at Kalaheo.

It doesn't matter how many Hokule'a stories I read or pictures I had seen for our research project, it wasn't until this particular morning standing on the pier, talking to Nainoa, that I began to realize what the true spirit of the Hokule'a was and why it had affected so many people: It's the real sense of community, belonging, cultural pride, and the effort to educate people about the project that the canoe and Nainoa radiate. I never once thought I'd sail on the Hokule'a, but that was about to change.

Self-consciously, Melanie and I stepped onto the floating dock that would take us to the canoe. We hurried aboard and stayed toward the back so the crew could prepare. We watched as they perilously stood on the railing to reach the end of the

See Hokule'a, Page C5

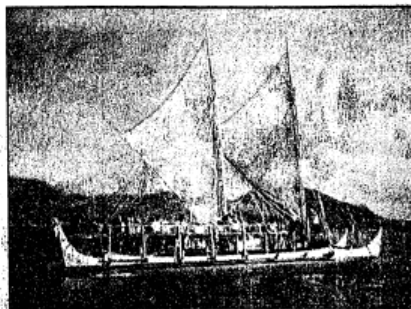


Photo courtesy of Melanie Fields

LEFT: The Hokule'a continues to sail into the hearts and minds of the young people who are offered the chance to experience the canoe as a floating classroom.

BELOW: Justina Cross, seated, and project partners Wendy Cross, left, and Melanie Fields, right, work on their History Day entry, a video on the Hawaiian voyaging canoe Hokule'a, at the Kalaheo High School communications arts learning center.

Teenagers catch the wave of excitement as they learn about cultural pride and teamwork



DOCUMENTS CAPTURED AS RECEIVED

Hokule'a: Floating classroom teaches cultural pride and teamwork

FROM PAGE C1

mast and attach the sail. I followed their movements with awe as I tried to picture the crew of ancient voyagers, replacing their silk-screened cotton T-shirts with traditional tapa clothing and taking away the miles of concrete surrounding the pier. It wasn't hard to do.

After seeing Hokule'a close up, "it was easier to imagine that the Polynesians had sailed great canoes just like this one," said another member of our History Day research team, Wendy Cross, a Kalaheo junior. "I still found it amazing that today, wayfinders can navigate using no modern methods." Nainoa, as he asked us to call him, was adamant that we sail that day, even though we didn't have the proper paperwork. He even offered to hold up the canoe while we chased down our parents' signatures, but we told him we would meet him in Hawaii Kai later that afternoon to go out on the canoe. I watched the double-hulled canoe depart from Pier 7 towed by a small boat. It was such a preposterous sight, but yet the tow rope seemed to link not only the Hokule'a to the small boat, but also the past and the present.

Wendy said, "It was a lot bigger than I expected."

All aboard

Later at Hawaii Kai, a small jet boat took us out to join the crowd of nearly 30 people aboard the Hokule'a.

On-board there were the crew plus students from Kaiser High School participating in a project that allows students from selected schools to learn how to work on the canoe. Educating all of Hawaii's people about the Hawaiian culture is one of the main goals of the Hokule'a project.

"A canoe as a classroom is fabulous!" said Bruce Blankenfeld, a crew member.

The crew began to take down not only sails, but the two masts in preparation to go under a bridge to the docking area. They worked together as

the Hokule'a adventure. Our clothes were damp, but it didn't seem to matter that much.

Melanie said her favorite part about the experience was "actually sailing on (Hokule'a) and seeing how it works."

Our second trip was just as memorable. We still panned video footage for the project, so we were again allowed to be on the canoe right before it sailed to Molokai. The second morning was cold and windy when the crew gathered to say a prayer in Hawaiian, as traditionally they do before a voyage.

The same small jet boat took us out to the canoe, where the anchor was stuck on something below. Nainoa must be part fish, he was always in the water so fast whenever it was needed.

Later, Nainoa said, "I am the

eyes of the canoe." After seeing him in the water working up the stubborn anchor, I believe it.

Naturally

The anchor was freed and once again the canoe had to be towed out by the boat due to the lack of wind. I heard some of the crew talking about the cloud patterns and the waves, they were so in tune with nature to guide the way for them, just as their ancestors once had been. Once we were out of the channel I looked back and admired the great canoe that we were trailing behind us. It is not only a voyaging canoe, it is also the flame that created the sparks for cultural revival in the Polynesian Triangle, espe-

cially in Hawaii.

Through the Hokule'a there has been an increased awareness about the Polynesian culture and its great explorers and because of it there are more canoes being built and sailed between the islands without modern instruments. Its legacy continues today.

The Hokule'a headed for Molokai as we went toward shore. Soon we were on land, just ordinary people, not ancient voyagers of many years past.

Justina Cross is a junior at Kalaheo High School. She is co-editor of the school paper, the *Ka Leo O Kalaheo*. Her group has devoted more than 100 hours to their History Day project about the Hokule'a.

History Day competition continues through April 19

What is History Day? Students from 6th to 12th grade compete in History Day, the history version of a science fair. About 2,250 students are participating in the seven-day state History Day competition this year, with the theme "Tragedy and Triumph."

There are three categories in which students can enter: media project or historical paper. Students are expected to learn research techniques, research their topic and document their learning.

District History Day competitions began in February and continue through April 10, when the State History Day competition will be held.

Winners in state competition go on to National History Day in Maryland, June 15-19. In four out of the last five years Hawaii has won awards at the national level for history projects.

For more information, call the Hawaii Committee for the Humanities, 732-5402.

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The crew began to take down not only sails, but the two masts in preparation to go under a bridge to the docking area. They worked together as if they were one entity. There was very little wind and poor sailing conditions, but still, we were actually out there in the ocean on the Hokule'a. When the Hokule'a was finally tied up well after the sun had set, I knew this was something I'd never forget.

After our first sail we walked fast. Being car-poolers, we were in a hurry, but because we were so full of energy from

C3
C4
C5

Living

TUESDAY, Jan. 26, 1993
The Honolulu Advertiser

TOMORROW: What's new on the Video Scene



WHAT: Bankoh
Hokule'a Family
Day — The
Return
Celebration.
ACTIVITIES: Meet
Hokule'a
navigators and
crew; slide
show of recent
voyages; native
Hawaiian crafts
and Hawaiian
entertainment.
WHEN: 10 a.m.-5
p.m. Saturday.
WHERE: Hawaii
Maritime
Center, Pier 7,
Honolulu
Harbor.
INFORMATION:
523-8151.

ABOVE: Adam and Joel Hijirida watch as the Polynesian double-hulled sailing canoe Hokule'a comes back to Pier 7 Saturday. Adam, a seventh-grader at King Intermediate, was one of the 20 first-place winners in the Advertiser contest. His big brother was his guest aboard the canoe for a two-hour "hands-on" sail.

LEFT: Hokule'a crew member Moana Doi shows Kealoha Kaawaloa, 10, and Abigail Thallas, 9, both from Pahoa Elementary on the Big Island, how to raise a sail and then wrap and tighten the lines to get them safely off the deck.

A sailing trip of a lifetime

By Beverly Creamer
Advertiser Staff Writer

"Look, we're going the wrong way," piped up Rocco Kaheiki, a 9-year-old fourth-grader from Pahoa Elementary on the Big Island, as the Polynesian double-hulled voyaging canoe Hokule'a cut through the waves off Waikiki.

"The current's taking us out. No more steering wheel on this!"

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With master navigator Nainoa Thompson and half a dozen other veteran Hokule'a crew members, they spent two hours jibing and tacking and steering and hoisting aboard the canoe that has stimulated a resurgence of traditional navigational skills and lore throughout the Pacific.

The young people were the first-place winners in the Advertiser's statewide contest to correctly estimate the number of days it took the Hokule'a to return home from Rarotonga last fall on the last leg of a "Voyage of Education."

The day's outing gave a glimpse of the canoe's potential as a hands-on teaching tool, something envisioned by Thompson and the Hawaii Maritime Center, which owns the canoe and plans educational programs around it, including Saturday's "Hokule'a Day." (See box.)

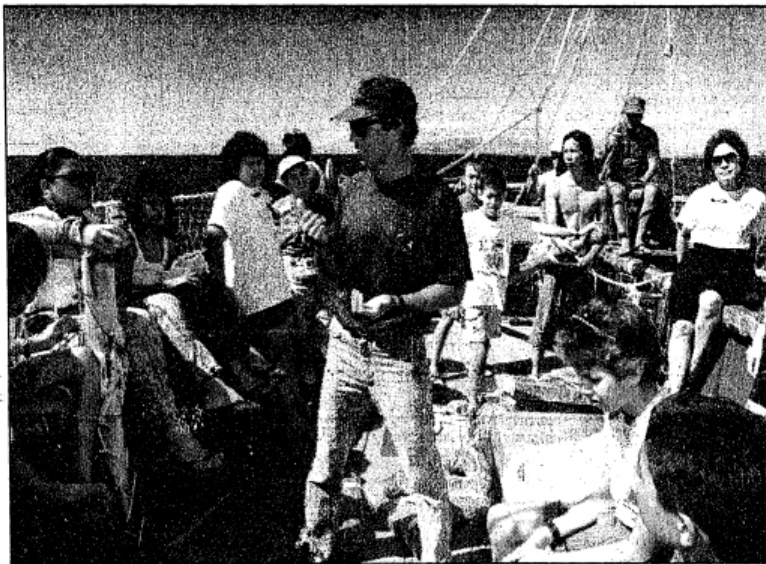
"Hands-on stuff is what sinks in," said UH-Hilo nursing student Deb Wingard, one of only four adults among the total number of 50 first- and second-place winners.

Thompson envisions an ever-expanding educational program with Hokule'a as a floating classroom to teach students not only about ancient culture, but about themselves and how to reach goals, take responsibility, meet challenges, and solve problems.

"Where's East?" he asked, beginning with the fundamentals of how to position yourself on the ocean with nothing but wind, sun, moon, stars and waves to help.

"Thataway," piped up 12-year-old Adam Hijirida, a King Intermediate seventh-grader, waving an arm in several directions — one of which almost certainly included East.

Suddenly, swells hit the canoe,



Advertiser photos by Carl Vis

Nainoa Thompson gives Saturday's guest crew a lesson in traditional navigation.

which began to rock wildly — at least from the students' perspective.

"Hang on," yelled Thompson. "You guys feel OK?"

Just as quickly, the boat leveled off. "What makes the swell?" asked Thompson.

"The wind," said a sharp Hijirida.

The "Voyage of Education" journeys last summer and fall to Tahiti, the Cook Islands, and back again, were designed to make the ancient Hawaiian canoe tradition real for apprentice navigators and Hawaii students. As part of the program, thousands of school children plotted the canoe's progress daily in their classrooms.

Mapuana Chow's fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade Hawaiiana classes at Pahoa Elementary had an incredible 10 contest winners. The Big Island children got so involved that the school principal has even given

permission to block out a Hokule'a floor-plan on the courtyard.

"I try to have them visualize how much walking space you have," said Chow. "You got 13 people, for 30 days, in this much space, you gotta get along. You cannot just walk out."

"I thought it was huge," admitted Rocco, as he took up a precautionary position close to the side in case the swells got the best of his stomach.

Later, he had a chance to lean his full body weight against the center "sweep," and realize that the long central paddle is what guides the canoe, not a steering wheel.

"One, two, three, huki (pull)," called out crew member Moana Doi as she led a group of kids in raising the center sail.

Wendy Takeguchi, a sixth-grader at Pearlridge Elementary, leaned her full weight on the rope, and still almost went flying.

She's doing a video about the Hokule'a and brought along her video partner, Evan Ito, who spent much of the voyage behind his camera.

"This is for the future of the children, to learn things we never knew before," said Takeguchi.

The canoe's size, and especially the narrow, and constantly damp sleeping quarters, surprised the children. So did the lack of conveniences.

"I'd bring better stuff, not boring stuff like canned food, eeyooo," said Abigail Thallas, a 9-year-old Pahoa Elementary fourth-grader. "I'd bring a computer and computer games ... And a microwave."

As the canoe turned to head back to its berth at the Hawaii Maritime Center near Aloha Tower, Takeguchi tossed her head lei into the water.

"I want the Hokule'a to return to Hawaii wherever it goes."

NAINOA THOMPSON

He brought adventure
to Hawai's youth

By Pat Bigold

Star-Bulletin

THE traditional purpose of the Hokulea's expeditions has been to strengthen and celebrate Hawaiians' cultural ties with the sea.

But on his fourth voyage aboard the 17 year old double-hulled Hawaiian voyaging canoe, senior navigator Nainoa Thompson wanted to bring the spirit of the adventure to everyone he could possibly reach.

The 39 year-old visionary Hawaiian fulfilled this dream despite being in charge of the most daring of all Hokulea's voyages.

Covering six months and 5,500 miles the journey was to take the crew from Hawaii to French Polynesia and the Cook Islands. They would return home through the treacherous seas of November — something a Hokulea crew had never done before.

The trick was to slip between the hurricane seasons of the South and North Pacific without benefit the summer stars.

But Thompson tried not to let anything stop him from fulfilling his mission, "No Na Mamo" Voyage of Education — For the Descendants.

He arranged for 7,000 Hawaii students to track the vessels' homeward progress from Rarotonga, beginning on Oct. 20, via radio and text reports, and sets of plotting tools provided by the Hawaii Maritime Center.



So dedicated to the educational aspect of the journey was Thompson that he even hesitated to head for port in Papeete, Tahiti, when confronted with an approaching storm on Nov. 1.

He said at the time that he didn't want to break the continuity of the voyage for the students. But concern for the safety of his crew became the overriding consideration.

In his attempt to share the voyage with the youth of Hawaii, Thompson also imparted the inherent danger of the challenge.

"The ocean is really very unforgiving for the incompetent or the unprepared," Thompson said in a Dec. 9 address to the student body of his alma mater, Punahou School.

He again seized an opportunity to educate Hawaii's young people on Oct. 28 in a live joint TV hookup with the Hokulea crew and the space shuttle, Columbia.

On July 5 when the Hokulea and Columbia were both crossing the equator the two voyaging vessels communicated by ham radio linkup.

When Columbia Commander Dick Richards said he envied the Hokulea sailors, Thompson immediately invited the shuttle crew to join the sea voyage later in the year.

On Dec. 4 Columbia crewmen Charles Lacy Veach, Bill Shepherd and Steven MacLean boarded the Hokulea when the canoe stopped on Molokai in preparation for its final leg to Oahu.

"All of the people of Hawaii have reason to celebrate Nainoa's vision, knowledge and skills."

His work to help others toward cultural enlightenment through his dedication to "No Na Mamo" and to the concept of Hokulea, said Dr. Ben Tamura, the vessel's physician for the journey to French Polynesia.

"What Nainoa has done is to achieve victory without losers."

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”