

Journal of Momi Kawelo

Gifts from the Sea

(Weeks Five-Six)

Day 1 -Just before sunset, there was a tug on one of the fishing lines. All of us ran to the port side of the deck and hauled in our last catch of the day. I was really bummed when I saw what we had caught. It was a baby *manō* (shark). The *manō* was still squirming on the line. I made the guys pull it in. The *manō* was still alive, but he didn't look too good. I quickly but carefully removed the hook from his mouth. The guys helped me grab him by the tail, and we gently released him into the ocean. He kind of floated on the surface for a little while, then swam away. I hope he'll be okay.



Some of the crew couldn't understand why I didn't keep him to make shark fin soup. But good thing Kekai spoke up. He's the one that knows a lot about Hawaiian culture. He told them that all Hawaiians have *'aumakua* (family guardian), and that mine was the *manō*. He also told them that people are not supposed to eat their *'aumakua*. One of the guys said he wasn't sure that he believed in *'aumakua*.

Ho! You should have seen Kekai. He blew up. He said that was the problem with so many young people today. They don't believe the old

Hawaiian ways still apply to us today. In ancient times, 'aumakua were highly respected. They were our family's guardian spirits who helped us in time of need. For instance, if you were a fisherman whose 'aumakua was manō (shark) and you got into trouble out in the ocean, manō would come to help you. If you ever ate your 'aumakua, that was like sentencing yourself to death. After eating manō, her family's 'aumakua, one lady became very ill. Within days, she was dead.

Anyway, Kekai told everyone that even though some of us don't believe in our 'aumakua, we should still show respect for those of us that do. Boy! Did I ever have "chicken skin"!

Day 2 - Good sailing weather continues. We had some high surf last night and lost some rigging line. But we should be all right. We have enough in case an emergency arises.

Last night, I wasn't feeling too good. I had the "runs." Maybe it was what I ate. Funny thing though nobody else got sick. Doc gave me the young leaf buds of guava to chew. As I chewed, I thought about how bitter the juice of the young leaves was. Medicine used in the old days certainly did not have the tasty flavors our medicines have today. Yuck! Hope I feel better tomorrow morning.

Day 3 - I'm feeling great! The guava buds worked!

I was "talking story" with Kekai today about 'aumakua and fishing and all that kind of stuff. I don't know how we got on the subject, but he really started to get me thinking about nature and how important it is to keep it in balance. It's almost as if nature is on one end of the scale and

humans are on the other end and the two need to be balanced. If we take too much from nature — like too many fish from the ocean or cut down too many koa trees, then the scale tips.

Kekai said that in old Hawai'i, the people had a good system to make sure they didn't "overharvest" or take more than what they needed. It was called the kapu system. During the months of Ho'oilō (November - April) it was kapu or off limits to catch 'ōpelu (mackerel). Fishing for aku was forbidden during the hot and dry season of Kau Wela. If you were caught breaking a kapu, most times you would be immediately put to death. The kapu system was SERIOUS business. It allowed fish to reproduce and grow big. Kekai said that we should bring back the kapu for more fish today. 'Cause nowadays people are taking more than what they need.

My Uncle Sonny is one of the guys on the Lawai'a (fishing) committee. He's trying to get the government to pass laws that would stop people from fishing during certain times of the year — just like the kapu system. Too bad, it hasn't happened yet. But all of us who fish to make money to feed our families know it's really important. If we keep overfishing the way we have been, pretty soon we're not going to have any fish. And those of us who own fishing boats are going to be out of business. What a bummer it would be if you went to the supermarket to buy some smoked pāpio, and auwē no more!

Day 4 - Gee today I couldn't believe what I saw. A fishing boat was sighted off the starboard bow. (That's the right hand front side of the

boat.) As we closed in, we could see that they had set up an illegal drift net. It's against the law to fish using a drift net.

It looked like they had caught a school of aku. As they pulled the net in, we could see that they had also caught a couple of dolphins that looked dead. I was really upset by what I saw. I know that if they were in Hawaiian waters, they would have been in big trouble. I jotted down their ship's flag and I.D. number. As soon as we reach land, I'm going to call Uncle Sonny. He'll know what to do. This kind of stuff shouldn't be happening. The United Nations has a law of the sea to govern international waters. I know Uncle Sonny will know what to do.

Day 5 - I'm still upset about what I saw yesterday and the crew knows it. They've been real good about trying to keep my mind off of it.

We had a couple of hours of "down time" today. Everyone was sitting around playing cards and "talking story." We were reminiscing about when we were growing up during "small-kid time." Everyone used to share food. It was just like that old Hawaiian saying, "O ko a uka, o ko a kai." The people from the mountains share with the people from the ocean and vice-versa.

Mr. Lee would give our family mango, and we would give fish to Mr. Lee. Mrs. Kaneshiro would give us 'ulu (breadfruit) from her yard, and we would give her he'e (squid) *. Everyone would share. There was no such thing as being manini (stingy).

* He'e is defined as octopus, commonly called squid. In ancient Hawai'i, Hawaiians recognized the difference between squid and octopus. Mūhe'e=squid and he'e=octopus.

I remember one day it was low tide and my dad and I were out “poking squid” in front of Mr. Silva’s house. Mr. Silva wasn’t a fisherman. He was a retired plumber. Mr. Silva came outside of his house and stood on his seawall and waved to my dad, “Eh, Mr. Kawelo, what you got in your bag?” My dad went over to “talk story” with Mr. Silva. Pretty soon, my dad came back and his squid bag looked lighter. So I asked my dad what Mr. Silva wanted, and he shrugged and said he just wanted to “talk story.”

I told dad, “Not. He just called you over so that he could get he’e (squid) from you.” Daddy just looked at me with the “stink eye” and said, “No you’re wrong, girl. I **wanted** to give Mr. Silva he’e. He’s our neighbor. We should be sharing what we have — not keeping it all for ourselves.”

To this day, I still remember that moment with my dad and Mr. Silva. That’s probably why I’m so broke. I’m always giving away my fish instead of selling them. Sometimes I wonder if the he’e my dad gave Mr. Silva was part of the payment for the new plumbing he installed in our house.

Day 6 - It was Kalani’s birthday today. We sang happy birthday to him, and I made a big musubi (rice ball) and put a candle on it. Doc got his ‘ukulele and played “Ka Uluwehi O Ke Kai.” Kekai got up and danced the hula. All the guys expected me to dance just ‘cause I’m a wahine (woman). But I explained to them that I didn’t know how to dance hula. My father taught me how to fish. That was it. That was my role growing up.

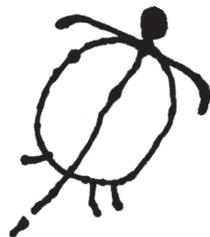
Nainoa said that Mau also had a role growing up. That role was to become master navigator for his island in Micronesia. When he was one year old, his grandfather would place him in small tide pools around the island just so that he could get used to the ocean and its surroundings.

When he was 10, Mau was feeling seasick so his grandfather tied his hands together and dragged him through the ocean on his boat! I guess this was one way to get rid of seasickness! Nainoa told us that Mau knew the ocean so well that he could lie in the hull of the canoe with his eyes closed and tell what direction the boat was sailing and how fast it was going. He is awesome! And he is one person who really knows his *kuleana* (responsibility).

Day 7 - We had a real “chop suey” breakfast this morning. All kinds of food. We had rice, dried *aku*, pork and beans and canned fruit. So far, we've been real careful about our rubbish. We've taken extra care in bagging everything that we plan to throw away — from paper towels to empty food tins to bottle caps.

On the first voyage of the *Hōkūle`a* back in 1976 there wasn't any kind of campaign against pollution. The crew didn't know better so every bit of rubbish went overboard into the ocean. It's sad to think about, but to this day, there's probably empty cans of pork 'n beans sitting on the bottom of the ocean.

Since that voyage, the crew has been really careful not to pollute. If you think about it, everything that gets thrown into the ocean affects what lives there. *Honu* (turtles), coral, *limu* (seaweed) and even that tiny stuff they call plankton can be affected — and even killed — by pollution. Get out of the loop. Don't pollute!



Week 6

Day 1 - It's exhilarating to be sailing on the open ocean. The spray and smell of the salt air as we clip along puts the crew in high spirits. But you can tell everyone is anxious to land. I'm excited because our first stop enroute to Rapa Nui is the Marquesas. That's where we'll make a brief stop to replenish our food supplies and to do a crew change. And that's where I get off. But that's okay 'cause I'll be able to rest up and then I'll fly over to meet the "gang" in Rapa Nui. I can't wait!

I made a mental note of things I wanted to do once I reached port. The two most important are an 'au'au (bath) — with hot water of course — and to eat some 'ono grinds. After being at sea for so many days, you really learn to appreciate the little things you usually take for granted — like a hot shower and a hot meal!

Day 2 - Today, we ready ourselves and our canoe for our arrival at the Marquesas. I kinda feel like I'm coming down with something, but I've ignored it. I'm too excited to think about getting sick.

Moke was teasing me that I looked like a piece of *limu kohu* (a type of seaweed). Check him! I told him "no act." And he told me, "Yeah, your skin stay kind of blondish-red and your hair is 'bodingee' (wiry) just like the *limu kohu*." I gave him a friendly whack and said, "Well, at least *limu kohu* is 'ono to eat." Moke chuckled and agreed.

Wow, just talking about *limu* makes me 'ono for it. Gee, I hope there's *limu kohu* in the Marquesas.

Day 3 - We've made it! Nainoa just told us that land is near. He noticed several sea birds and *limu* (seaweed) floating on the water. As we get closer, we see stationary clouds bunched up around the top of the mountain, just like we saw at Mauna Kea when we left. I got chicken skin standing on the deck looking at this land which is new to me. I wonder if this is how our ancestors felt when they saw Hawai'i for the first time. And, although I feel joy at finally arriving, I feel a certain sadness that this part of our voyage is over. I will miss my canoe `ohana.

Everyone is busily preparing for our landing. We are so "pumped."

Day 4 - We're waiting just offshore for the signal that would allow us to enter the bay. We can see the throngs of people lining the shore. A marker is raised, which signals us to move forward. As Hōkūle'a approaches, we hear chanting. The people of the Marquesas are there to welcome us.

Suddenly, Kekai begins his *oli* (chant) responding to those on shore. We all join him. The protocol process is solemn yet important. The chant that we do identifies who we are and where we're from. And asks special permission for us to disembark from our canoe.

I stood there feeling proud to be representing Hawai'i and its people. All of a sudden, I felt like my body was going to crumble. I took a few steps anchoring myself to the mast. My head was spinning and my legs felt like jello. Then I collapsed. All I remember were a sea of faces leaning over me. And then everything went black.