

Interview #7 with Herbert Ka'aukai by Charles Langlas at Hawaiian Beaches 1/29/96 (Annie Kaaukai also participating)

Notes taken before tape started:

Herbert showed me his kaka line (his old one, made when he was young; not useable any more because his line is old and his hooks are rusty)

- the hooks were bought, have a barb—but old hand-made ones didn't have a barb
- kaka line is in three lengths; he used to put down only one length to see if the fish were biting first, then add the other two lengths; line used for 'ula'ula, about 40-60 fathoms down
- spreaders are of the new kind of bamboo (yellow with green stripe); other wood or Hawaiian bamboo are less good, break easily
- they used a gallon jub in later days instead of a rock as weight; could break it on rocks if give lots of slack, and then less weight to pull up to canoe (hard to pull)
- fish not so heavy if still alive and swimming, but if make already, heavier

CL: This guy Ben Hauanio, I've been talking to him about ulua fishing. But he doesn't remember the names of the kinds of Ulua.

HK: Kind ulua.

CL: Yeah, Na inoa o na `ano ulua. It says there's four kinds of like that, four different kinds of ulua.

HK: Even me I forget.

CL: You forget too.

HK: Yeah. From baby already it's papio.

CL: Yeah, right.

HK: Papio, then they get hāuliuli.

CL: Yeah, that's the dark one.

HK: Yeah. And then the 'aukea, the white one. 'Aukea is not broad. But Hāuliuli is broad, almost like 'ahi. You get five different kinds but I forget already other name. Ben, he went too late, you know learn, because the father died already, the father, and the brother, the brother, he should know. But I don't know if he know though.

CL: Oh I know which, yeah, not John but

AK: William?

CL: One other brother eh.

AK: William.

CL: William, is it William?

AK: I mean Gilbert.

CL: Gilbert, yeah Gilbert.

HK: Gilbert, oh he's not a fisherman. But Ben yeah. Had a brother John. Yeah one time the brother John, he went ulua fishing, I think was night time already. He fell down from the cliff in the water with a stick, ulua stick. And he swam about three quarter mile to an inlet come in. And right about, that's where Minnie and Willie Ka'awaloa live. Then he walk all the way back again to get his belongings and go back. Good thing the stick went fell down in the house, in the water because that went help him hang on. But he's a good swimmer anyway, John. He used to go spear fishing with my other older brother all them. They go dive with him. Ah that was nothing to him. But the thing he was doing the night.

CL: Yeah, well I guess you could see somewhat.

HK: Yeah. Ben ah

CL: Yeah, he said he used to know the names but he forgot.

HK: Yeah

CL: But that hāuliuli one, that's the one that's the strongest fighter?

HK: Dark one, dark color. Almost like 'ahi.

CL: Is it bigger than the other?

HK: What, 'ahi? Oh yeah. They come big. Shee boy, I seen the biggest ulua this guy, plus he caught em in Kapoho. And he brought em all the way back to Kalapana. So he went with one kama'aina from over there by the name of Kalupali because he told him, they met in church, was a Sunday, and talk story after church about olua fishing. So this old man from Kapoho, Kaulpali asked, told him, this guy's name was William Peleiholani, told William Peleiholani oh if he can come to Kapoho, sleep with him his house, the next day they go fishing for ulua. Oh, he no like. Peleiholani he no like. If for ulua he get right in front his house. Why should he go way over there? He said "No, this is

the big, great ulua." And he believed there's so many hooks in the mouth, they're stuck there. "Oh yeah, yeah." So this Kalapana man told this man from Kapoho, "You get ready, you go get the bait, everything." But no more line. He knew already no more line. Everybody who fish ulua those days, they don't have the line for that kind of ulua. So he went go talk story to the father-in-law. So the father-in-law went tell oh he believed so there's no more line. And not even the hook. So the son-in-law went tell the father-in-law, "Why you no make one, one hook there, right there?" The father-in-law told him "If I make the hook, gotta make the line too." You can not use this hook on that line plus he gonna break it. He can't do it with the, yeah he can but he going get all them that killed bring em to me and I make.

CL: That was ah

HK: He made the hook and he made the line. And the line was the hau skin, you know the hau wood? Do the skin, pull em like that. That's what he did. But he weave em, he had weaved that, four strand. So like how they make a skin rope. Cowboys they used cable out of the cow hide but this was out of the hau skin. He strip em and then he went braid em in four braid. He finished then he made the hook. When I first learned from this old man how to make hook, I thought he was making from a common wire or a iron, piece an iron. Or usually a file, you know the round file or a square file. They used to heat it in the fire. That's how they do it. But no. It was, the hook was made out of a horse shoe. Before Pahoia town, you know they get plantation, early plantation days when they had the train run through Pahoia, haul the cane, and they had mules to push the wagon in the field to where they load the cane. And this mule is, oh I no see the kind mules now, big kind mules. The leg, the feet is so big. So the iron is also big. So they used to dump it in the dump. So, oh how can we get that? Oh, we go see the two guys, stable man, they know where, go show them. Oh yeah get couple, they bring em home. The father-in-law made the hook.

CL: Who's the father-in-law?

HK: John, John Kaheiki, John Kaheki. The son-in-law William Peleiholani. William Peleiholani's the champion. Nobody touch him. Record twenty-six ulua he caught. Before lunch time go home already from early morning he got twenty-six.

CL: In one day?

HK: One day. No more one day. Only half day. From early in the morning till no more twelve o'clock, he's home already. Twenty-six. He can not eat it all but on his way... He can not use all that but on his way home each house he drop, but if he's home he get two. That's good enough for him. He no need the rest. But

because the excitement and you know, he still like to catch. But to the Hawaiians, they don't like that. You too greedy.

CL: Yeah, that's what I thought.

HK: Why you take that much. But like I say was you know, good fun catching eh. He liked the catching, kept on catching. But I guess he knew if he catch that much he going give all you know. Because on his way home a lot of people along side the road, he going stop give em hand, give em their fish. If he's home with two fish, that's enough for him that ulua. And I see the ulua caught, more long than this table. He lived next to me, them neighbor, and they get a big monkeypod tree, hoh but high. He throw the rope over, tie the olua by the tail and the mule pull it, push em up. Eh was more long, past this table. Gee about eight feet I think. Some big. Poor mules when he bring em home. The head and the tail almost drag on the ground.

CL: This the one from Kapoho?

HK: Yeah. But why he bring em all the way there like that. That's damn far but hard to believe you know. But from Kapoho. Recently, now so long ago, or was later part, last year, I went go fishing down there with some of my relatives. First time I go down there but I was finally way at that spot they went catch that ulua, but I couldn't find. But I found certain place where I think the lava went cover. And then where it's still bare, the old way, oh all underbrush already. Oh lotta weeds growing, hard to find. Because this guy, he told us after they caught the ulua they had to pull it with a mule. Good thing they had a mule there to bring it up.

CL: So it must be a big cliff, long cliff then. Must be a high cliff.

HK: No not too high. Oh maybe like this wire. But still they cannot pull it by man. But good thing they had the mule. So they had put the ulua stick, pull em up and put em by the edge of the cliff like that and the fish over there and the mule over here and they pull it so it don't catch the ground. That's how they got em. They couldn't get up all the way up so they lasso the tail. I wouldn't bother make that whole fish like that. Oh hell, I would have just cut one piece of that fish and let go the rest. But that bugga, all the way Kalapana from Kapoho. Almost dark they reach Kalapana. But the funny part, he had two sons, they good for nothing.

CL: Peleiholanis.

HK: They don't take the father's trade you know. The father make them throw net, they make that hook, ulua line, here go go fish. Take em up they leave it like that. They don't like that. They don't like animal or anything touch them--the hook, the line. You

wash the line, stack em up and don't let em touch the ground. When dry you coil em up. For the next time ready go, clean. The fish no like that kind kapulu kind. They like nice line, nice hook, nice bait. Only they use the eel for bait. And the best bait is the, get two kind..

CL: Uha eh?

HK: The uha. And another one, the gray one.

CL: Kauila?

HK: No. Akapa.

CL: Akapa. Oh, kapa, kapa.

HK: Now nobody go, no one. Ben, he go you know, once in a while. He the only one now.

CL: And Aku, Aku goes too. Aku, yeah he goes.

HK: You seen how they do?

CL: Yeah. I went with him one time.

HK: Where did him, the guy go?

CL: Ah to pipiulua.

HK: Yeah, pipiulua.

AK: Yeah, he does, he go. Him and Sam.

CL: Yeah Sam Kaho'okaulana, I think he goes too.

HK: Ah yeah, he was too.

AK: Sam Ka'awaloa.

HK: Yeah, but he died so

CL: And that one too, yeah.

HK: And before days, from Kaimu, Kalapana, all the way to Kapa'ahu, all this ulua spots they get stick stand, ohia stick. Yeah that's why

CL: They leave the stick?

HK: Yeah they put em in the crack, leave it like that. Maybe Kalapana get three, Kapahu get four, and eight between. Everybody

goes but they put back. But this when happen one day this guy had a wife was going fishing. When she got there they had some, I think one Japanese fisherman, four or five of them were camping. They went chop all the stick from this house and for make fire they would. That bugger was soo mad.

CL: They probably didn't know. They didn't know what those sticks were for.

HK: He went grab all their stuff and all went throw em in the ocean and he went home. I think those guys knew already you know what they did. Their fault. They went forgive him. They never know what this thing. Hey you can see. People no leave like that for nothing. If you like use you come you everydoby use, but for fishing that not for cut em and build one house. Kalapana all over get same. By those sticks you know that's the ulua point, right there. Not today, no more.

CL: And I heard too there was some places in the rock where people pound palu.

HK: Oh yeah, yeah. They kinda smooth em up a little bit, make one cup. And that's the time, some place they get the stone for pound. They leave it there or in the crack or under one little cave like. Had em over there for the next guy who like use can use. And if I catch plenty oh I take em to him, I give him some. Whoever the closest neighbor to me, I give em. We no need that much fish. Yeah Ben good. I tell you all right, you carry on that tradition, the old way of fishing ulua.

CL: So is one kind of ulua more strong at fighting?

HK: What?

CL: Is one of those kinds of ulua more of a fighter than the others?

HK: Well the blue one.

CL: The blue one. That's the hāuliuli.

HK: Yeah, that bugga heavy. But the other one no, 'aukea no. But every ulua you have to fight em. But this hāuliuli the longest one to fight with.

CL: The other thing I wanted to ask you Herbert is what kind of uala you grew, when you were young?

HK: What that?

CL: What kind of 'uala did you grow when you were young?

HK: Potato.

CL: Yeah. Do you remember the names?

HK: They have Kaua'i two kinds, the red and the white. They call Kaua'ike'oke'o and Kaua'i'ula'ula. And the skin is red, the peel outside is red.

CL: And the inside?

HK: And then they get another one, the apo.

CL: Apo?

HK: Apo, a-p-o. That is white inside and get grain of purple. That one no more, I no see today. I don't know. Nobody plant that's why. Apo, oh get already. Get plenty different. I forget.

CL: What about huamo, did you ever plant that?

HK: What that?

CL: Huamo.

HK: Oh yeah, huamo yeah.

CL: You planted that?

HK: Yeah, yeah. We planted that too.

CL: What's that look like?

HK: That yellow inside.

CL: And the outside

HK: Yeah not dark, kinda light yellow.

CL: And the outside is what color?

HK: Ah, yellow but the fade kind yellow. Not dark color.

CL: You doing better than anybody else. Nobody else remembered any kinds.

HK: Eh sometime we just, we don't plant too many a variety. We just go for good one, Kaua'i, that's the best. Good one, that's all. We don't plant that too much. They may four or five that's the most used ones, the rest they don't use too much of, in Puna. I forget their names already.

CL: You think those kinds grow better in Puna?

HK: Well according to Ellis, when he toured there during his time, when he came across Kamoamo a someplace, he found vines of potato, potato leaf. Then when he started pull that thing in oh that thing went way down in the crack. Found potato there. Unusual. He thought was wild. He tell no, the Hawaiians was wild, they plant that. The crack, there was a potato in there. So they grow any kind place. You get the dirt place, oh way better.

CL: But do you think some kind grows better in Puna than other kind?

HK: Oh yeah. Certain kind potato they don't care much because rooted, too much root inside. I forget the name. They don't kill that kind. That kind they plant but not to eat. They use that to make potato swipe. Yeah that's a liquor, ferment em then they drink that.

CL: Do you remember what kind that was?

HK: Forget already. They use other types too. But this other type more they use because it's not too good to eat.

AK: It's so hard to remember when you don't do the planting. You don't grow them often. You know and naturally you gonna to forget all the names. Just like the taro, same thing.

CL: But Herbert's better than most. Most people do not remember any sweet potato names.

HK: Oh the purple one, kalika.

CL: Kalika. Purple inside?

HK: Yeah, all purple. Oh they get pū, the pumpkin, orange inside.

AK: You know some of them..

CL: Do you think there was any difference in the taste of the different kinds, the different names?

AK: I don't know.

CL: Did they all taste the same?

HK: I think some different, some different. Maybe apo itself,) different taste. Huamo a itself. Kaua'i they both the same, the red and the white, both the same thing, no different. And as a popular one they used to mix both of them together, Kaua'i. Then we had some Japanee kind potato too, Okinawa type.



CL: The same one that they have today? It's one, white and purple that I see around today. They say is Okinawan. Has a white skin.

HK: Yeah, white skin. You know who really know about this is I think Helen Lee Hong.

CL: I don't know if I asked her about kinds. Maybe I didn't ask her.

HK: Because the brother Gabriel, he's a farmer. And I worked for him, me and my brother, for a long time ago. We only prepare the hill and then Gabriel he plant or he get. I can't tell by the color, all different over there. But this kind size no pass, not market. Not the kind like this, small kind. You know where Kehena? Where the camp is. Right across. Now Hanohano own that. Plant all hala trees.

CL: Yeah. Oh that place is full of hala yeah.

HK: Yeah, yeah. Right there that's where it's

AK: You folks haven't get the chance to talk to her? Hana Hanohano.

CL: No I didn't talk to her.

AK: How old is she? Older than you.

HK: Oh yeah. About 77.

CL: That's the one, she's sister of, she's from the Kamelamelas, right?

AK: Yeah. She speaks Hawaiian. They were all from down there too, from Kalapana.

HK: I think she's planting yet, you know. Potatoes, oh she get plant taro.

AK: I think she knows a lot of name of these sweet potato and taro, cause she growing them. I mean she's still lively. She's still out there in the yard yet.

CL: Yeah, well that would be good.

AK: You haven't had a chance to

CL: I didn't, no. But I know her name and I've gotta, took me a long time to get through people these days so I'm going to finish with Herbert first.

AK: I know. I think Larry Kimura had approached her but I think she

CL: She wouldn't talk to him?

AK: I think he went to see her to go and teach at the University.

CL: Oh probably, yeah.

AK: But she, but for getting all this kind variety and

CL: Yeah, she might be more willing to show her sweet potatoes.

AK: I think so she might know. But I don't know if she willing to give it out.

CL: That's an easy thing to ask about.

AK: It doesn't hurt to ask. You know her daughters?

CL: I don't think so.

AK: Katie, Sarah. Well they're gone, either Honolulu or to the mainland, college.

CL: But I know Melissa, you know Melissa Kirkendall?

AK: No.

(end of interview)