

# Hokule'a sails through passage — into history

TAPUTAPUATEA, Raiatea — Hokule'a has become the first Polynesian voyaging canoe in historical times to return from a journey of exploration through Te Ava Ma'o (The Sacred Pass) to the legendary homeland of Hawaiki.

For Karim Tauavahiani Cowan, a bronzed Tahitian crewmember who was graduated from Damien High School, it was a lifetime dream. For me, it was an experience so uncanny I still can't quite believe it.

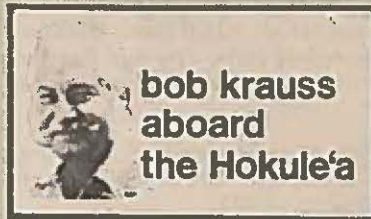
Nobody knows where Hawaiki is. It is the Garden of Eden of the Polynesians.

Legends place it at Raiatea, the ancient religious capital of the Tahitians. And the legends say that voyaging canoes set sail from the great marae — a Polynesian shrine — of Taputapuatea, the Vatican of East Polynesia, out through the sacred pass to Hawaii, to Rarotonga, to New Zealand.

Navigator Nainoa Thompson said old Tahitians were furious when Hokule'a returned to Raiatea during an earlier voyage but through the wrong pass. This time we were ready.

We had been purified on Moorea by walking on fire. There we had participated in the kava ceremony. We carried relics heavy with mana to propitiate the ancient gods of Taputapuatea, the most sacred marae in this part of the world.

The voyage from Huahine began under a heavy overcast, the first time since I had been on board Hokule'a that the weather had not been sunny. Huahine's green-robed peaks were shrouded in mist. A rain squall blotted



bob krauss  
aboard  
the Hokule'a

out Raiatea across the channel.

"It's unusual for us," said Raiatea resident Tom Cummings later. He's part of the Kauai Cummings clan, a cousin of old time musician, Andy Cummings. "We've had three weeks of sunshine. The weather report said it would be clear. Then, on the day Hokule'a arrived, it began to rain."

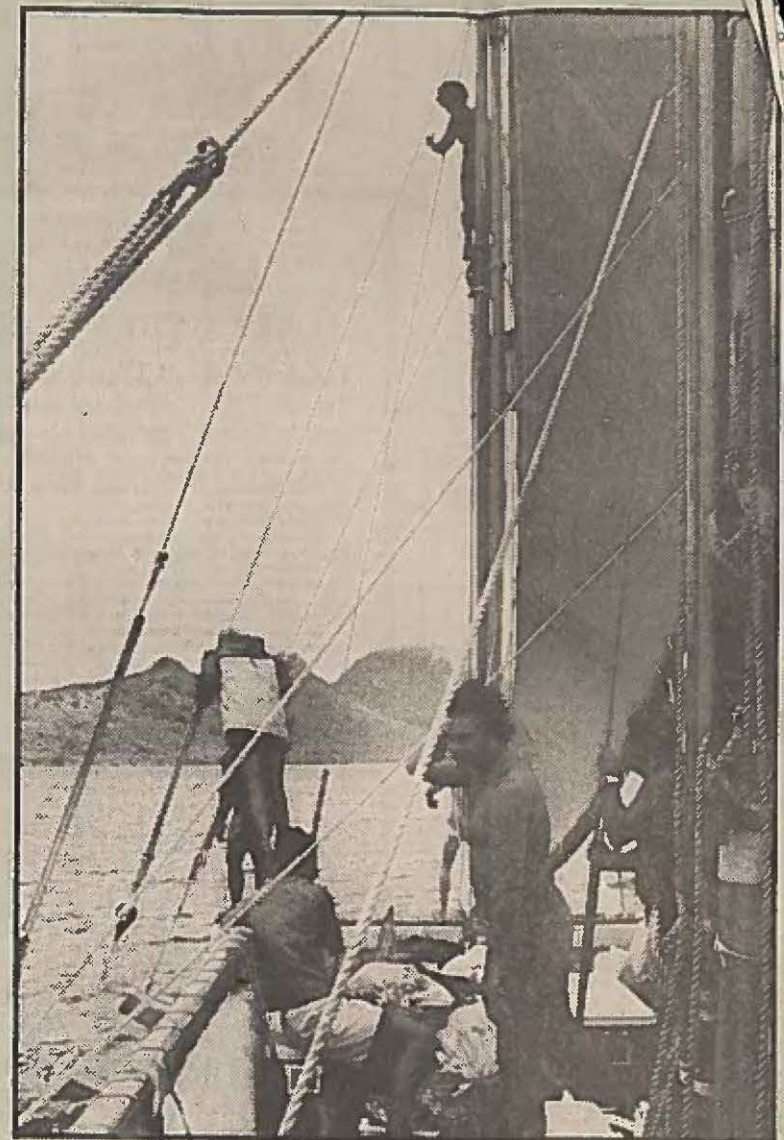
As we moved out of the channel at Fare, I noticed the foot of a rainbow to the right. The other foot showed below the overcast to the left. We were beginning our voyage by sailing under a rainbow.

I felt good in spite of the rain. Maybe it was the two-day stay on laid-back Huahine where I caught up on my sleep. Maybe it was the excitement of seeing the most famous marae in Polynesia. Maybe it was the rainbow. Anyway, I felt in excellent spirits.

The sun tried to peek out. A strong northeast wind sent Hokule'a flying. Maybe that's why I felt so good. It's exhilarating to bowl along in a brisk, fresh breeze in the canoe.

Karim stood on the bow, like an etching of an ancient Polynesian voyager, peering into the mist ahead.

I climbed into the port side navigator's platform to photograph the set of the sails and scenes of activity on deck.



Advertiser photo by Bob Krauss

Hokule'a crewmembers keep a sharp watch as the canoe sails through The Sacred Pass.

Nainoa squatted by the rail forward. I got him in the viewfinder and noticed a piece of rainbow arching over his head.

Another rainbow had formed, this time to starboard, over the sacred pass. But we didn't know it then because Nainoa had gotten the wrong sailing directions and was steering too far to port.

By this time, everybody on the canoe was talking about the rainbows.

Karim came aft. He has helped his father build a double-hulled canoe in Tahiti hoping to sail on the old Polynesian migration routes. But they have run into problems of money and hull design. I asked him how it feels

to sail on Hokule'a.

"I saw Hokule'a being built in Hawaii when I was going to school," he said. "When Mr. (Myron) Thompson told me I would sail on her to Raiatea, I got goose skin because I go to Taputapuatea through the pass.

"There is so much mana. My grandmother's land is next to Taputapuatea. She said when you go through the pass if you see a rainbow it is good luck. When you go through the pass, strange things will happen that not all the people understand. A lot of things will be lift up."

Karim went back to the bow. By this time Raiatea

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showed clearly ahead, half hidden by mist, a long, mysterious lizard of an island.

I looked down at the steering paddle. It was lashed to the deck. "Hey," I said to Leon Sterling, "who's steering the canoe?" He explained that on certain points of the wind the canoe can be steered by the set of her sails. This was the first time it happened since I had come on board five days before.

Nobody had touched the steering paddle since we set the sails. We were dead on course. A little later I heard Nainoa mutter to himself, "She's taking herself straight to the pass."

It was not until we came close to the reef that we saw that we had been steering a little too far to the left. The pass was on our right. Snake Ahee on the tiller pulled her over and we swept through to safety.

The people of Raiatea clustered on a small marae at the shore under towering coconut palms with ghostly gray trunks. There are two small marae on shore, one for Maui who sailed away, the other for a brother who stayed.

The delegation from Moorea ferried Hokule'a's crew ashore in their boat. We were met by Mayor Philippe Brotherson of the district of Uturoa on Raiatea; and by Mayor Charles Smith of the district of Taputapuatea.