

## Likened to space exploration

# Kids honor Hokule'a navigator

"Exploring space is like exploring the ocean. It's dangerous," teacher Cecilia Lindo told 310 elementary students at Hongwanji Mission School yesterday.

"Today we are honoring someone who is willing to go beyond what we know."

Then she introduced the new hero of her fourth grade class, the person they had asked to meet. He turned out to be not an astronaut nor a football star but Nainoa Thompson, navigator of the voyaging canoe Hokule'a.

It is ironic that canoe voyager Thompson made his appearance on the same morning that seven space voyagers were killed aboard the space shuttle Challenger.

Lindo said she often makes the comparison to her class between space voyaging into the unknown and the voyages of Hokule'a without instruments. Many of the questions and their answers applied as well to space as to canoe voyaging.

One of the questions asked by students of an enrichment class was: Are you ever afraid?

"I think there is always a certain amount of fear when you go to sea in a canoe," Thompson said. "You minimize that by preparation. Fear makes you more cautious and alert."

Thompson was asked if the limited space aboard Hokule'a is a problem on long voyages.

"I think the limitation of space is a mental thing," he answered. "If you go on the canoe feeling cramped and that everybody is in your way, that's the way it will be. The deck space is 40 by 15 feet."

"If you think of the ocean all around you as being huge and that you're part of it, you don't feel cramped at all. I like it."

A student asked Thompson what he does when the canoe capsizes.

"Capsizing is the worst possible situation," he answered. "What we



**bob  
krauss**

do is take all measures to avoid capsizing. In a storm, we take the sails down and tie them to the deck until the storm dies."

Another student asked how he feels on a voyage.

"On a long trip you go through all kinds of emotions," he said. "When it's a real good day with a good wind and we're going in the right direction, it's very exciting; the most exciting thing I've ever done. In the doldrums, it's boring."

He told the students his favorite subjects in school were science and Hawaiian history and that he first began to learn about the ocean while fishing on the reef when he was about the same age as his audience.

Thompson said the Hokule'a crew had to learn to sail the canoe.

"The first time we sailed on Kaneohe Bay we were all out of control," he recalled. "Our steering sweep broke and we ran on a sandbar because we didn't know what we were doing."

"We jumped out and pushed off the sandbar. Then the wind caught the sail and the canoe sailed away by herself. It was pretty crazy."

After the session, Thompson signed about 200 autographs. The students loaded him down with leis and boxes of fruit.

Asked if they would rather be Chicago Bears quarterback Jim McMahon or Hokule'a navigator Thompson, a group of fourth grade boys voted unanimously to be navigators.



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Students at Hongwanji Mission School mob Hokule'a navigator Nainoa Thompson for autographs.

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