

Interview with Captain Bruce, on board the Hokule'a  
Australia, 2015

Stephanie: Alright, so, let's go see if I can track down Captain Bruce.

Unknown: Bruce you in there Bruce?

Stephanie: OK I'm gonna crawl in –

[Music playing in the background, with indecipherable talking]

0:00:40.41

S: OK so

Bruce: You want to sit up here-

S: Yeah we can do that, just trying to think about how to handle the music because I don't want you to have to shut it off-

B: We can turn it down

S: Well,

B: We can go to the back

S: Well, I think we can do it, let me just get a few minutes, a few seconds of it

B: Go to the back?

S: Yeah or we could go to the back, whatever you prefer

B: Yeah, OK, go to the back

S: OK, let's go to the back B: That'll soften it up 0:01:16.31

S: OK where's a good spot to sit I don't know, besides no where

B: You wanna sit? WE can sit here

S: OK.

[rattling noises, whistling]

0:01:59.01

S: OK

B: Have a seat

S: Or wait I might need to help here, or getting, or no, just climbing on your bucket. Alrighty, OK so tell me all about everything. So, yeah I was reading about you on the Hokule'a website, sound like quite a waterman.

B: We're all like that.

S: All?

B: Canoe paddlers, surfers, fisherman.

S: So where do we begin, let's talk about, tell me about that before we start talking about the Hokule'a, so give me a little run down about where you grew up what you did, how you ended up in this situation?

B: So, so I grew up on Oahu, the island of Oahu, Koolio'o, on the southeast corner of Oahu and pretty much like almost everyone I knew we grew up surfing. And then, then we got into canoe paddling at a young age, age 13, and we still paddle, we all still paddle, you know recreationally, competitively, and you know, through all through the years too we became fisherman of sorts and divers. And so, when this project came along, Hokule'a in 1975, it was, it was really fascinating and it was only actually the beauty of it. This canoe was built for one voyage in 1976 to sail down to Tahiti and back. But, it was so fascinating, within itself, so many stories and connections were made, so many stories were told, so many connections made that we were just like... I think it was understood that we were just touching the tip of the iceberg as far as culture, the possibility of learning and rediscovery of our roots and connection to others throughout the

Pacific. And so anyway, it just kept going, and I got involved in 1977, right the next year after that and I've been sailing with them ever since.

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S: So '76 did they actually make it to Tahiti?

B: They did,

S: I know the first voyage they didn't make it anywhere

B: They did, they did. So, the '76 voyage with that first crew the original crew they were, the navigation was done by our teacher, a Micronesian navigator, master navigator, from Satawal, Mau Piealog, and their first landfall was the atoll of Matahiva. And from there they went to Tahiti and that was, that was huge, just the whole concept of just him guiding the canoe just by the stars and the sun and the moon and the wind and the planets and the waves, it was so unbelievable. So, I was on the 2nd voyage, '78 that's the one that was really short lived. We got turned and Eddy Akau got lost at sea, so that was the 2nd voyage.

S: Ah, ok I thought that was the first voyage,

B: No, that was the second one. Yeah, that was 1978.

S: So, you were on that voyage.

B: Yup, yup so that was my first voyage my first experience and then Eddy Akaw, there were a lot of guys a few guys from the first crew but mostly new guys.

S: Yeah, so do you feel like talking about that voyage at all?

B: I can yeah. So, we're gearing, we started training in '77, but we trained mainly in you know outside of Waikiki, we did a lot of sheltered water kind of training, we never got into the deep water, but it wasn't so much that, the canoe is really good. The day, that night we left, the evening that we left, on that voyage it was like raging and it had been blowing about 30+ knots throughout the islands probably for about three or four days before. So, the whole seas and everything were developed and that was crazy. Anyway, we got out there and now,

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B: between each *yako*, each crossmember – each hull right beneath each crossmember – there's a watertight bulkhead, so we have 7 sealed off compartments and there's a three inch standpipe that's about a quarter inch off the bottom, so you can pump water if you get in there without opening up the hatch. And that design was a result of that swamping and the turnover in 78. But prior to that, prior to that, the redesign, there weren't watertight bulkheads, and you had, you had a bulkhead, it came up a little bit and water could jump from one to the other. And hence, it was so rough we were taking water in the front, it was just coming in like buckets. So, we had been in, we left, we left to get on the voyage probably about 5.

S: Wow, AM?

B: PM. So really about 8:30 you know it was starting to flood, it was coming in that much. So, it was just one of those crazy things, inattentiveness, poor seamanship, and anyway it all resulted in swamping and then a capsizing, yeah. So that was that, it was at sea upside down for about a day. So, all through the night, that night and all through the next day. And then that next night is when we got spotted by an aircraft, interisland, Hawaiian airlines spotted one of our flares.

S: And what was your role on the boat that trip?

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B: Oh, I was just a fisherman.

S: And you guys were headed to Tahiti?

B: We were headed to Tahiti. And the other thing was, the other crazy thing was we didn't have a companion vessel like now we have Gershon 2. We didn't have a companion vessel, they had all

this communication gear on board that leadership within the society thought that was more than accurate to stay in communications in case of emergency, or hell, good thing it all happened right there, right? In the channel right between Oahu and Molokai, actually between Oahu and Lanai, because it was in that hull and it all swamped and it was underwater and it was useless. Anyway.

S: Yeah, huh. So that was a very short, but big on learning?

B: Big on learning, big! It was a fatal, you know, the loss of Eddy Akau but huge on learning and moving. And since then, so here's a little statistic, is you know up to that point the voyage to Tahiti one way is 2500 miles so the first voyage in 1976 was 5000 miles and then all the interisland training you could probably add another 2000 miles. So, up to that point the canoe had sailed let's say 7000 miles, but after all of that refit and the redesign she sailed over 150,000 miles over the years up to this point. So, all those little things the watertight bulkheads, we raised the hatches, the coamings coming up, and the standpipes get the water out. And so that's all helped. To keep safe.

S: So, after the '78, after that voyage it didn't turn you off from sailing

B: Oh no, I was still stoked about it. Couple guys, most of us came back and sailed, actually from that voyage there are about 3, 4 guys that never came back but most of the guys all came back to continue on.

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B: K, Aloha.

S: Yeah and so, so you stayed on with Hokule'a, you've been— did you ever go to your own thing and come back to Hokule'a, or have you been with Hokule'a the whole time?

B: Yeah. Hokule'a. Well at that time I mean this was the only canoe in the 70s. And all through the 80s this was the only canoe. In the 90s is when other canoes were started to being built. Yeah. And actually, it wasn't it was '95 when some of the other canoes that were travelling throughout the Pacific were built so there's one on the big island Maka Liki, was built in '95 and did her first voyage then. Actually '92 they built the Teodede in NZ, and Teodede sailed in '92 and then I think she was the only other one. And in the Cook Island they built 2 canoes, one was '92 they built the Takitumo and '95 they built the Teotonga. And then we built another canoe in '95 back home called the Hawaii Loa; it was built from native materials, yeah.

S: It that still afloat?

B: Yeah, it's still afloat. There's a group that takes crew of her, she's not doing a whole lot of sailing, but she's still afloat, she's a great canoe.

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S: So, out of all of the, it sounds like you surf, you fish, you sail, you paddle – so out of all of it does it feel like this is where my heart really is?

B: Yeah, I mean that's why I enjoy.

S: I mean out of all of it, is there something in particular. I mean is it when you're on your canoe or is it when you're surfing

B: oh

S: Is there one or the other where you're like oh man this is the—

B: Well it's when I'm paddling actually especially when we're doing ocean races interisland, I really enjoy that. I do enjoy this, but I, the thing I like about the paddling is it keeps me stronger and healthier, but with this there's not a lot of, it's more mental than physical, it's more mental and spiritual than physical. The paddling is all of it. So, I really enjoy that.

S: And so, what's the point, I mean what's the point of getting on a boat and smacking yourself around in the waves to get from one place to the next when you could fly you could take a car, so what's the point?

B: The major thing, I'm glad you asked me that question; someone asked me that question yesterday. You know, so, one major thing is that you know the Hawaiian culture and the Hawaiian people were just crushed by a bunch of Western force, colonization, you know missionary stuff, religion the whole thing. And it got to a point where if you ask anybody, anybody, if anybody on this planet was able to look at things that they held dear to themselves – spiritual beliefs, religion, family values, and you got that just crushed, even your own language, how you express yourself, crushed to the point where it was like invalid and you using it is like shameful and invalid you become like a second rate citizen in your homeland. Then the cultural aspect of who we are just went down, almost died. So, my grandparents, my parents, they had very little if any affiliation or connection to the culture. So, in the 70s, so that was a point in the '70s, when a lot of it was coming around, a lot of those questions; what is a Hawaiian? What is a Hawaiian culture? What is this?

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B: I mean when you ask questions like that, it's like really something's seriously wrong here. So, going forward to this point when this canoe is built it was just another way to first of all bring a bit of validity and recapture the beauty of like building these canoes and navigating. Just an incredible feat that there are people that didn't believe it wasn't actually possible. Well you've been to Tawako, and you see those guys. I mean it's not only possible, they live that. So, for those people if that was taken away from them it would be so crushing to them because it's such a big central part of who they are, and gives them this inner strength to live life daily. So, the reason we do it is that there's so much to learn, and then like it's our responsibility at this point to get all these younger guys to feel that and learn that and to be the next wave to carry it on. So, you really, we don't really get beat up out here, you get a little cold you get a lot of wet, but you know we grew up in the ocean it's not a big thing. So, that's mainly it, I mean this is our culture and a culture has to be a living culture.

S: So, when you say that your parents and grandparents have any connection to their culture they weren't out on the water at all?

B: They were fishing, but like the language was snatched away so, I mean they had no connection to the language. Hula was kind of like snatched away so there wasn't there was just like pockets like that, it's not like celebrated worldwide like it is. The music, because the language was snatched and the music in the music there is a language and a storytelling that whole thing was just a jumble of confusion where guys were singing Hawaiian words and not pronouncing them right and not understanding what the hell the song was about, so there's all this craziness going on. And I mean it held on, the people held on to whatever shreds of culture they could hold on to. So anyway, that was just how it was, so now when I talk to my dad about it, you can just see all this glassy eyed like what are you talking about kind of stuff.

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S: What do you mean?

B: Well when I talk to him about all the things we're learning about the canoe and the cultures and our connection to the Maori people in New Zealand and to Tahitians and the spiritual nature and all the stories we're learning that's one thing. But the other thing that we're leaning in Hawaii, across the board, is the illegal overthrow of the islands by a bunch of businessmen and they're aided and abetted by military, US military and learning about that and how they treated

the Queen, you know, Liliuokalani at the time. And just all the bogus crazy things that were going on just in their headlong rush just to take over the islands and then so they go and do that and then after that they annex, the annexation of the islands as a territory to the US doing it within the old congressional, in congress and not one Hawaiian was there to say no, stuff like that. So, when you look at all of that and then from that point on just the laws, like they outlaw the Hawaiian language, you can't teach it in schools you can't use it in schools, you can't use it in any everyday usage, like in business or anything like and stuff like that. So slowly but surely it's just whittling away at that to just make the culture defunct and almost disappear. So that was the world they grew up in. So at that point in time, really for survival and for the betterment of who they are, they just go to school, learn and get as educated as you can, and go to work, put your nose down and go to work. And so that's what they did. And then along comes us guys who our heads up you know and we're listening to all the stories and then you know we're getting more aware of all the stuff that happened that they never learned about.

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B: So, getting back to my dad, when I try to educate my dad and tell him about this he just sits there and goes 'oh that's really interesting' but he never takes any step to try and learn for himself and stuff like that you know, and I guess they just resigned themselves to that's how it is. Anyway.

S: Hang on one sec

[Sound of airplane]

S: I guess the airports pretty close, I don't know.

B: yeah

S: So, my cousin actually did a film about Hokule'a for Nat'l Geographic.

B: Oh yeah who is that?

S: Wade Davis.

B: Oh yeah, I've heard of that name

S: Year he went out with you guys maybe ten years ago, a while ago. Anyway, OK go ahead as you were.

B: Nah, I was just explaining about that thing with my dad and with that generation, they're really resigned just to be, their American ideals are just the western way of life. Get educated, go to work, make money, take care of you family. I mean that's ok, we're all doing that anyway, but at the same time we're being a part of supporting all the different aspects of the culture that is just blossoming. For instance, Kawika, he's worked with the immersion language school on Molokai, his wife is one of the leaders on that. Kaleo, walking outside with a cap, from high school, not doing anything, went on to college; he's a really good speaker, native speaker, talking in Hawaiian and stuff. And a lot of the other guys are, well even TV? Guys, Maui, basically what they do is native televisions, they document everything cultural. So, it's a big support of that and every time you support it you make it stronger and stronger and stronger and the only reason you make it stronger is because it's part of the land, and it was a part of that land in Hawaii for over 1000 years, and it became invalid just for 100 years, just a short time. So now it's a recovery and a bounce back, so it's really pretty awesome.

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S: Do you feel like coming to Tahiti and the other islands helps you with that recovery?

B: It does because it helps you realize that they went through the exact same thing. You know Tahiti, the Cook Islands, Maori in New Zealand. I mean gosh the aboriginals, here I think they probably got it worse than anybody else, you know, but they all went through the same thing and

they're all going through the same renaissance resurgence of their cultures and stuff and for no other reason than that the cultures is the lifeblood of those islands and those people you know. And so, the recovery of it is really a part of restoring the spirit of the land and the people. It's a big part; yeah it's a good.

S: So, the other part of it, the other part of the question: why bother? Is why bother going out on the ocean.

B: Well it's the only way you can do it.

S: What do you mean?

B: Well, it's the only way that the navigation is valid and it's gonna, it's gonna stay alive is that you must voyage. You cannot do it in a classroom, I mean it's worthless in the classroom. They know, that too, like native speakers if you learn Hawaiian language and you learn it in a classroom setting, you can become proficient but once you get out into a Hawaiian community and you start talking, because they have a whole different tempo and their words gets changed a little bit, and your ear is tuned to a university-taught Hawaiian language. It's just so different, I mean that's just one analogy. But the thing is, these canoes, the spirit of these canoes was built to sail, and so we come along and it's our *kooleana*, our responsibility, to take that next step to plan for the voyage to train our crew up and like. So Kaleo, out there with the hat, he's one of our young core navigators so right now we have about 10 or 12, core of young navigators that are really good. They know the heavens, they can tell you what star is what, what direction is what, the movement of the sun and the moon they know how to read ocean swells to maintain a relatively decent even in constant overcast, full overcast. So, you know that's was an art that was totally gone from our islands so we can do that now.

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B: So, I guess that's it, I mean we gotta carry on.

S: Yeah so the ocean is the only place to do that

B: Yeah it's the only place; I mean these are deep-sea ocean voyaging canoes they're made for long spans long distances.

S: Yeah, so tell me a little bit about the canoes. Let me grab my cover up because we're getting a bit of a breeze now... losing some of your words just to back chatter but don't want to lose any to the winds. So, it just, deflects any air that hits it, it just deflects it and so it deflects the sound that the air passing... yeah. It's great....

\*Can't hear\*

S: So where were we?

B: About the canoe...

S: So, let me just say a bit about my understanding was the original idea behind the hokule'a was to build a traditional canoe. And this is not –

B: No

S: Strictly speaking, so let's talk about the evolution.

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B: It is and it isn't. So, there were no really models of voyaging canoes, extant for like well over 400 years of the Pacific. Actually not in Hawaii anyway, when Capt. Cook went to some of the other places like Tonga, Fiji they had some big canoes. So, Hawaii not over 400 years. But our history, our oral history is based – this is a huge part of our histories. Like we can name our navigators and our voyaging chiefs, but in the story, no idea about the canoes. So, what happened was Herb Kane, who was a world-renowned artist. You may have heard of him.

S: Yeah he was my neighbor,

B: Yeah, so Herb –it’s just incredible– did all this research, envisioned this canoe and he drew up –

[to someone off-mic: "That's Mine, yup stays on there, on the shelf and put my backpack in there... Thanks"]

Herb envisioned this canoe in this art, and then he got Rudy Choy who was a boat builder and built like a ton of catamarans. So, Rudy helped Herb, Herb had the design, Rudy helped by lofting it with the length, the width, the depth, the whole thing. To make it able to carry the weight of people, and food, and water and supplies across the ocean for a month at sea. So, but because like I said earlier, this canoe was only built for one voyage, this is like a replica of a voyaging canoe. So, the (??) got native materials and all of that just to do one voyage down to Tahiti and back. Doesn't make sense, if you're going to do something like that you've got to have a larger plan than that. So that was really the vision and the scope of the plan just to build this in one year. So, they built the canoe in 1974, they trained the people in 1975 within the islands and they sailed in '76 and that was it. And that's why it's built like this. So, the nontraditional part of this is the materials which is plywood and fiberglass and other materials but the traditional part is there's over 6 to 8 miles of lashing that holds this whole puzzle together so that the traditional part is the lashing, the other traditional part are the hoy, the steering mechanisms and the other – the standing rigging and stuff – but the other traditional stuff is the navigation. That's the lynchpin that's the evidence of it.

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S: But so. I mean so Herb came up with the design from what?

B: Just all of his research throughout the Pacific through art renderings of artists on Capt. Cook and Vancouver's voyages. And then other even, like Laparuse, and other voyages that came through that might have had art. So, lot of it was based on that, and lot of it was based on canoes we still had on the islands and just the look of them.

S: And so. what's the point of going out, I heard this was the first voyage out of the Pacific.

B: Yeah.

S: So, what is the point, if this is about Polynesian heritage, Polynesian pride education what's the point of going out beyond the pacific?

B: Got it, so since all of the recovery of the ocean skills and the navigation we can teach that now. We can teach that. But this worldwide voyage so, you see this name back here on the solar panel frame, Lacey, so you ever heard of Lacey Veach?

S: mm mm (no)

B: So Lacey Veach was a local boy from Hawaii he was an astronaut and in 1992 the PVS had a partnership with NASA for education. It was pretty neatm and we sailed down to the Cook Islands and back from the Cook Islands, and on the way back there was a particular day where they figured out where the space shuttle was right overheads relatively speaking and from the canoe we hooked up with them through single side band radio through a dispatch from Hawaii that had this entity – this presence – called Peace Satellite, PeaceSat, and they could connect hand radios and single sideband. So we worked with them a lot. And on that voyage we connected with a space shuttle and it was just a huge thing. It was just a big thing, but after that voyage–

S: That was what year again?

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B: That was 1992, so that year we came into Kaunakakai Hawaii, we stopped in Kaunakakai, and the 3 astronauts on board that were on the space shuttle. They joined us on Kaunakakai and

sailed to Oahu with us, to Puolua, so it was Lacey Veach, Bill Shepherd his was the commander and then Steve McClain– he was the Canadian astronaut– and so those three sailed with us and we sailed back home. And it was really interesting, talking with them 'cuz they had a chance to experience how we do what we do, how we navigate and all of that. And they were fascinated. But it was just that whole endeavor was educational. That was our big first educational push where education became very integral with what we do. So anyway, at one of the dinners we had, Nainoa, Nainoa's dad Thompson was sitting down at the table with Lacey and they were just talking about the wonders of the voyage and everything that's going on and stuff. So, Lacey brought up the basic idea he just says. 'well you know if this truly is something to be shared you know, the beauty of it and the possibilities of it we should share it with the world'. And so that was 1992. So since '92 '95 we sailed down to Tahiti and back with 6 canoes. 99 we sailed to Rapa Nui and back, 2004 we sailed up the to NW Hawaiian Islands all the way up the line, to Kiri and back. 2007 we sailed to Japan and shipped the canoe back and then in 2009 we sailed to Palmyra and back and it's always been, education has always been integral and then in 2010 and we just stripped her down to a bare hull and built her again because there was a lot of dry rot. But this was the time to go pick up where that conversation ended that maybe you should go around the world. So, from that time it's been a lot of think tanks and connections and partnerships. And really what this whole voyage is about is that it's a good time to try and use the canoe as an ambassador for friendship, education, and just basic benefit for all those who really don't have, who just get run over you know. So, celebrating native wisdom, celebrating native voices, and connecting and trying to get people on board to help

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B: figure out or get in. You know, use our resources and share our knowledge to take that next step to deal with sea level rise, other environmental misgivings and things like that. So, a lot of the voyage centers around education relating to culture and the environment. Which is something at the heart of cultures throughout the world. And so that was the idea, and it's not so much that we're, it's nothing to do with we have something special to share. I think one thing special to share is the *va'a*, because what the *va'a* brings is the whole concept of dreaming the impossible dream and actually making it happen. To me that's the biggest part of it, and it brings that up, but it really is about meeting people, talking to people, getting their stories, seeing what fascinating wonderful things that they're doing in their own lands, that would probably be beneficial in other peoples' places. Like things that they'd never even thought about that these guys are already two steps ahead of everybody else, because they've been that much smarter or wiser. So that's what this voyage is about and the other part which I talked about earlier is building the capacity and the next generation of voyagers to take over, to be the next generation of leaders 'cuz us guys are getting older, you know like we're all close to 60 and our voyaging days are numbered big time.

S: Yeah, well yeah.

B: I mean you know actually going to see, I mean on this plaque back here are all the names, there's a plaque back there with names, it says Nauma Kua.

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S: Let me take a look back here.

B: Back there on the, those are all people who have sailed, have passed on. All those people have passed already, they either sailed on the *va'a* in past voyages, or they've been major supporters that have helped the voyaging efforts. And those names are from the Pacific Rim and there's names on there mostly from Hawaii. But from everywhere we've travelled, to Tahiti, Marquesas, Rapa Nui, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Satawal you know Micronesia, Alaska and

that's pretty much it. All the places we've travelled and so they've all those years they've either travelled with us or worked to support it to make it happen.

S: Yeah, so as you know I'm pals w your escort boat, and I'm really interested in the relationship between your escort boat and your boat.

B: Yeah so, so basically they're there for safety reasons. So, a good example of when we left New Zealand like when we were in Auckland I mean they had to get the canoe up the line to Aurora, which was about I don't know 100 miles. And because the winds were just calm or in your face we don't have the luxury of waiting weeks, just because of the nature of the voyage you've got a schedule that you want to try to within reason, so they towed the canoe up there just because it has no motor so that's what they did. So, we were there and then when we left New Zealand they towed us out of the harbor, so that's one of their big things, is to enter and to exit ports. Like they got us here with little dinghies and stuff, but once we get outside and are clear we just break away and sail and they just follow us and in case of man overboard or in case of any type of emergency they assist ya. Man overboard is really the big one. The other one that escort boats have assisted in, in 1987, one of our guys older guys he had a real bad infection on his leg that he couldn't get past and the doctor after 20 days at sea use up all the antibiotics that we had on board, all the bandages and just made the decision. We got to medevac this guy or this guys' gonna lose his leg. So, the escort boat comes in just to keep the navigation on this boat pure and unobstructed they would work with radioing for the rescue efforts and stuff and give them the position so they can kind of hone in on where we are.

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B: And so, then a navy ship came out and we did a medevac at that time. So, this last voyage we're going they're sailing they follow us until just about we're outside Lord Howe Island. and because there's a big low out here with big winds, the winds at that time was either going flat or totally in our face from the West. And if we didn't get them to just tow us to get us in here, we'd still be out there for 3 or 4 more days. And nothing's wrong with that, but we're expected to be in Sydney on the 15th and we'd kind of planned it to have this nice cushion of time. But we're not going to make it. But there's a lot going over there with education and outreach and cultural things and whatever. Which that's part of what the crew is trained in and what they're going to be doing. So that's really what the escort boat you know, and before it was like for documentation as well, but not so much anymore.

S: So, you don't have— tell me what instrumentation you don't have. So you don't have a GPS?

B: We do, if we need to use it we use it, but it's tucked away but nobody ever looks at it. And we have chart plotter in there, and we'd use that for man overboard.

S: And so what else do you have that's just used for like emergency?

B: Well like on that man overboard pull back, there you see that horseshoe, that's the man overboard pull and across wrapped up in that little black case there's individual man overboard signal that AIS can pick up we have things like that. You know we have satellite capability through that, through our EV. And they're constantly sending me daily reports and photos about what's going on here. And we've got hundreds and thousands of classrooms. We're including tons of classrooms that are following our voyage and asking questions and stuff.

S: And so, I'm assuming this is all because of that voyage in '78 that you have this instrumentation.

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B: No, it's really because of the first voyage which kind of brought to the forefront the value of this, the value of the canoe education culturally and it just kind of the technology's here kind of.

And in 1980, that was the second voyage; we didn't have any of this. It was kind of like almost the same as the '76 voyage we sailed down we sailed back. And then '85 to '87 we sailed from Hawaii all the way to New Zealand and back it was a 3-year effort. We had single sideband on board and we did a bit of stuff but not education. And '92 was that next time when we were partners with NASA. and the education kicked into gear big time and since then it's been all about – it's been integral and expected the educational part of it.

S: yeah

B: Yeah.

S: And so, meaning that the instrumentation is helping you to get from point A to point B? Gonna do the work of the education is that what you mean?

B: No, I mean I get from your question the navigation part from point a to point b.

S: I mean I guess I just assumed, and maybe I was wrong, but I guess I just assumed that there must have been a debate at some point with the hokule'a between traditionalists who wanted to have canoe that only went under sail that only used traditional navigation, that only you know, and people who might have been more focused on the canoe performing other tasks and so providing it with more amenities. And so, was there ever that kind of debate?

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B: No, no, because a lot of this technology wasn't around back then right in the 70s and the no. 1 the very, the number one overriding factor's safety of the crew and the canoe and so because we're doing this voyage and we have a lot of stuff on board now and because we're going through places like the Tasman Sea the Indian Ocean around the Cape of Good Hope the South Atlantic Sea, places that we've never been. Places that can be pretty frickin' notorious for bad weather you know, the safety is gonna be a big part of it is like having the capacity to get information to deal with it. I mean that's what happened with this one, I mean those guys they can email us and we can call them back home and they can say, you guys have some really bad weather coming in, it's gonna be light which is was, it's gonna be like this, it's probably gonna be better to get on the giddy up and take a tow from Gershon and get to the next port. And that's what we did, and then from here we get down to Sydney and through Brisbane and we did enough good stuff on the navigation prior to that and other canoe performance that that's all good.

S: So, but can you seek out that same information from Gershon?

B: Well we could, but they were having a lot of problems, like their AIS kept going down and they don't have the email capabilities that we have and they weren't getting the emails that were being sent to them, so there was a big hole there. And part of an expedition and going into the wild like that is having some redundancy. I mean this isn't like, I mean you're going into the wilderness regardless, being 1000 miles from anywhere and you deal with what you deal with, storms, big seas, whatever, but this isn't like expedition for survival, it's an expedition for culture and learning and education.

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S: Oh, so my understanding from Steve was that he had information about the weather that he didn't give you cuz he thought he wasn't supposed to.

B: Oh yeah, that's fine, I mean, no, no he's not supposed to give us.

S: Oh alright that's fine.

B: Unless it's really brutal, but those calls like Nainoa's back home, because he's the overall head of this project a lot of the weight and the stresses on those kind of things, fall on his shoulders. So the basic understanding is he won't step in and do anything unless he feels that it's compromising safety. And if he feels that it's compromising safety he'll help work through that process of dealing with it.

S: Oh, ok so Nainoa is tracking all the time.

B: Yeah, I mean everybody's tracking us all the time. But the weather, you see that, that little half dome is on both of our va'a on both of our canoes and you can go on the website and can see exactly where the canoe is. And just through that, he's just monitoring the weather he can see where we are what's the weather like what's crossing our path because we've sailed w heavy weather with this guy and she does well.

S: Yeah so I hear

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B: 2009 we sailed home from Palmyra and it was over 30 knots the whole time, big seas we just went over a 70 foot rogue wave and everything was crazy it was really rough but she did really a great job and that was kind of at the tail end of, that was right before we did a full refit, there was a lot of rot in her. So, she's always done really well.

S: Was that scary?

B: No not for me, but I think for some of the guys on board thought it was scary. The big seas hit the canvas, and the canvas got broken 4 times, and the big seas boom hit the canvas and break it, and we get out our sail repair kit and sew it up and then a couple days later another wave hits it and so we have to sew it up. And we did that about 4 times.

S: And, so it's good to hear like your whole like logical about why you are voyaging, and it makes a lot of sense and it sounds really powerful but I also get the sense that there's something more to it?

B: It's very spiritual at the heart of what it is, it's spiritual. At the heart of the culture and the heart of us guys. It's not a project, you know to keep the va'a going and other things in the culture and nature you have got to make it part of your life. You know like we become to that degree our generation the older guys have become the teachers. We become what they call kubu a course of information. So it is our responsibility to a large degree, because we're like the receptacles of this information a holding of a lot of knowledge so we have to teach.

S: So there's the actual knowledge of how to, but what else?

B: It's just the spiritual nature of the culture, I mean that the, like I said, you've been to Talmako and places like that. The navigation and a lot of other things within the culture is the lynchpin of who they are, and what they feel deep inside, and why they hold their heads up and feel that inner strength that we should all feel. And it's not like arrogance or pride, but it's something that can carry you through the worst days of your life. And so with that being said, it is the culture. I mean I just read some book, Gandhi had said that culture is the spirit of the people. You know, it's not just doing things a certain way, it is the heart and soul and the spirit of the people. And it's really interesting, because I've seen after growing up in the younger years when it was basically not even part of our existence in the islands, to like, you know, 70s even in the University of Hawaii back then, Hawaiian culture only had like 1 classroom and the stuff that was being taught was written by a westerner that learned as much as he could about Hawaiian culture and so many things we left out. But when the Hawaiian in the 90s, after the whole Hawaiian studies campus was built on the University of Hawaii, since then most of the graduates within the Hawaiian studies curriculum have either gone on to get their masters or their doctorates, and all those guys

who have gotten doctorates have rewritten the history. And they've really showed why the early histories there was so much absence of some real substance. So many half-truths and untruths

and just some simple things like the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii that was never taught, never taught. And there's a reason it was never taught, they don't want anybody to know.

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B: For whatever reason but now all this stuff is coming around and full circle it is important. Every little aspect of the culture and the strength of it is important. So, kind of getting back to your question, why do we sail? That's at the heart of it, that's why we sail.

S: So, can you imagine in your head, was it any particular day or some day where it kind of all, where you were sailing, where it kind of all came together for you?

B: oh my gosh, umm, I guess, I guess, like I did my first navigation as an apprentice in 92 and talk about deer in the headlights. You know everything academically, but you didn't know it instinctually so that was alright. Then the next voyage I did in 95 that was my first solo voyage and that was good. That worked out for the most part, but it wasn't complete. And then '99 I did a third, my third solo voyage and that was also really good, but it just didn't really feel complete and I think was after all the voyaging we do. But I think 2000, coming home from Tahiti it wasn't really voyaging, but I was helping some of the younger navigators learn and I had decided at that time to keep the navigation more instinctual and simple instead of so academic and at that point became more relaxed.

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B: And it worked actually better than trying to think with so many figures and everything. For instance, like just working with the moon and stuff like that. There I was— this one story, this gal was navigating on the way home in '99, 2000 rather, it was totally overcast. She knew the stars and everything so well as long as you had stars in the sky she could pinpoint with accuracy where we were headed. And then we got totally overcast, and she was just stressed out and then, so she came to me and she goes, 'I don't know what to do', and stuff like that. And I said, 'using the swells', [she said] 'but yeah I'm not real confident,' and I said 'well have you seen the moon yet?' And then she turns around and the moon was right where it was supposed to be, and we were right on course.

So, I said, 'you're right on course, there's your moon you know just work with that the glow of the moon.' Oh man, I could just see all this weight drop off her shoulders and she got back in the groove, but that was a great example of just using things instinctually, instead of totally numbers on that voyage. So, after that voyage I just got more comfortable with the whole thing. And you know to tell you the truth; you know we've learned the navigation at such a late age, at that time I was in my 30s when I was learning it, and that's not ideal. You should be leaning that when you're a younger individual. So, we can do it, we can do the navigation and we can teach it.

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B: It's really awesome that these guys are learning it right out of high school and all of that and like I said "HEY how're you doing, look at that, he just got some honey...."