

Bruce: Where were we at?

Stephanie: So, you were telling me that it's better to be younger.

B: It's so much better to be younger. Like, Mau Piailug, our teacher, started learning it – literally from when he was a baby. And by the time he was 16 he made his first voyage. And then he got lost, and whatever– and the elders, his grandfather, they found him. And then he just kept going at it, so that by the time we met him he was in his 40s, he was truly a master, you know. And he was willing to teach us, which was something that wasn't really okay– in that kind of culture– to share that kind of knowledge. But we had talked about that, that we're really too old and stuff. But we just gotta do our best, right? And, the best is that we understand it. We can teach it. This knowledge is in the schools now, they teach it in the schools. And so, it's a living– it's part of a living culture, it's really neat. So, it's only going to get better, you know. These guys are much better than we were. Which is really nice. I like to say that, and validate that very fact: that they are much better than we ever were, and so it's really cool.

S: Yeah that's great, it's working.

B: Yeah, yeah. But I want to know about Taumako, what a fascinating place.

S: Yeah, I'm glad to do that after my dying battery. But before I do that, I was wondering if there's anything you thought I didn't ask you that you thought I should as you.

B: Oh my gosh. Well one of things is that... So. one of the things is that. You know, so, one of things that prompted the building of Hokule'a – there are the three individuals that got together. There was Herb Kane, an artist and historian; there was Bob Finney that was doing, I think he was doing his doctoral thesis on Polynesian Voyaging; and Tommy Holmes, just a local guy in Hawaii, water man, loved canoes, wrote a book about, called the Hawaiian Canoe. Really adventurous spirit. So, these three guys are kind of like the same wave length at that time, they're kind of going down that same path regarding voyaging in the Pacific. So they got together. In 1973 they got– call it the Polynesian Voyaging Society. Um, and a big part of that... Like Ben Finney's thing, there was a kiwi in New Zealand, his name was Andrew Sharp.

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B: Andrew Sharp had written a whole book on Polynesian Voyaging, and his basic concept was that the Polynesians could probably navigate with every sense of purpose and skill for 300 miles. So that's like 3 days of sailing, you know. I mean, it took us 11 days to get here. It takes you like... the fastest voyage from Hawaii to Tahiti is like 15 days. But 3 days, 300 miles purposeful sailing skilled, and after that you're at the mercy of the wind and currents. I mean, you, knowing what you know, went to Taumako and stuff like that – its like no way, those guys are like intelligent. And they're sharp and they're skilled. They ain't going to go out there for 3 days and then like wander like aimlessly. They just don't do that, it doesn't work like that. So, there's a direct challenge to that very idea. And then [?], in the '50's and Kontiki, and he stood by Kontiki being like a traditional, factual, migration of islanders. When in fact that's rubbish, you know? You don't do a one way voyage, and go over the falls at the reef at some random place. So, when you know in the stories.

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B: One story is Mo'ikeha. You know he came up from Hawaii to Tahiti. He got married, raised his family on the island of Kuai. In his later years he wanted to see his Tahitian son,

La'amaikahiki. So, he sends his grandson, Kila – his son Kila, to go down to Tahiti to bring his son La'amaikahiki back. Which he did, he brought La'amaikahiki back, and then to take him back to Tahiti. And then later on his grandson, Kahai (?), was also a voyaging chief, took the canoes down south to bring back different strains of breadfruit. So, you have this two way interaction stuff. You don't have one way slam dunk on a reef you know. I mean, Taumako guys, they'll get the biggest kick out of this concept, you know. The skills, that those guys have from Taumako. They're still masters. They still have skills that we don't even know. And um, that's why I say, with whatever skills we do have, we're still like 3rd graders compared to you like those old masters. And what they have to offer as far as teaching and knowledge and stuff.

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B: So, things are moving along. But its uh, yeah.. So really neat things like are happening. The beauty of it after that is that, you know, we're connected throughout the Pacific, and every place we go. Our family's bigger. You know, in Alaska like I said. One of our sailors is from Tahiti. He's one of the captains of a Tahitian canoe, and we sailed from Samoa down to Tonga. We had some Tonga sailors on board, and we had two captains from Otago, off of New Zealand with us onboard. So, sharing this knowledge, and building this capacity of friendship and close ties has been really awesome. Because it helps us, it helps them, and it helps the whole recovery of knowledge and culture and that stuff. Which we all believe is a key to us moving along, as native people and stuff like that.

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B: So, I don't know.. That's that. And then, so now the voyaging is in the schools, like I said, in the university system back in Hawaii. University of Hawaii is in total support of what have you. So, our home, for this canoe, when we get back home in Hawaii is at a marine education. They teach boat building skills and other skills there. It's part of the university system, so we've had a partnership with them since 2003. So, they teaching it in high schools, they teaching it all over the place. Cause there's a lot of value in it educationally. You learn oceanography, you learn the heavens, astronomy, you know. You lean, weather, meteorology. And then geography and just a whole ton of stuff. And then social –sociology, as far as the peoples and stuff like that. Its fascination, we are.. People in the pacific, what a feat you know in its own time. These people building this kind of craft, and then spreading out over this vast ocean. All the way from Madagascar, across the Indian Ocean, through Indonesia and the Philippines, through Micronesia, all the way across the Pacific to the Americas.

S: Hmm yeah it's pretty phenomenal.

B: Its phenomenal, yeah. So, people ask me, Americas? So yeah, did you know the genesis of any potato is from South America?

S: Really? That tells you something about...

B: So yeah. The sweet potato, it's on every... You can call it sweet potato, you can call it yams, whatever you're going to call it. But the genesis of all of those is on South America. And they're on pretty much every island in the south Pacific. Even up to Okinawa in Japan. And the fact that it's like that is one thing. And then the breadfruit, the genesis of the breadfruit is Indonesia. So, the fact that those trees and that fruit, is on pretty much every island, is a testament to that to those voyaging canoes and the interaction. And you know, there's other plants and things like that are - are like that but...

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B: Yeah, it's real.. When you learn more, and all the little things its super fascinating. And so, it brings credence to the whole idea, the whole concept that these canoes were on the move.

They're here, they're there. You know they moved around. You know, its not much different from uh the way things are done today. But just on a different type of mode.

S: Right

B: But it's just- I don't know, it's just mind boggling. What a body of knowledge, you know. The navigational skills. The ability to traverse across the vast ocean, find your way home, take people back to the islands and migration and things like that. And just start the whole new population, the whole population process on those islands. And all done by canoes.

S: Yeah, pretty powerful.

B: By the time Captain Cook, in 1778 or whenever he came to Hawaii. They say, by his estimate, doing a census, they had about 800,000 Hawaiians in the islands. But by other estimates it was closer to a million, and that was started by canoe migrations. And in New Zealand, the Maori's have the same history, right? Like, Kupe was the first navigator. And after Kupe, hundreds of canoes came. Hundreds of tribes there, tribes and sub-tribes that are related to a canoe that arrived there. So, that rich history – and you understand those guys were skilled man, they were awesome. And you look at that, and how much was – how much went to sleep or was lost in the pacific. It's just a wonderful time to revisit it. We're so lucky we're here.

S: Yeah

B: We're so lucky we're here to witness it and be a part of it. What a gift.

S: Good

B: Yeah

S: Yeah that was all good, and worth capturing.

B: [laughs] Alright.

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