

Ka'ena Fermandez

1/30/20

O'ahu ocean/coastal 2nd

Hukilau Bay

On the island of O'ahu as the sun rises in the Lā'ie Bay of Hukilau the tops of the *naupaka* (*Scaevola*) on the shore rustle in the breeze. Small waves crawl up the shore and flow back into the ocean. My feet sink into the damp sand and the smell of *pa'akai* (salt) and *limu* (seaweed) travels through the wind. A couple of fish jump out of the water and a turtle floats at the surface of the water. Loud myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) birds chirp when they fly by the tops of ironwood trees. The community gathers on the shore in their swim clothes and hats. My dad and some uncles have their snorkels in hand and a large net in the other as they get ready to swim out where all the fish are. When the sun starts to peak through the clouds, onshore everyone holds on to the long rope with *kī* (ti leaf, *Cordyline Fruticosa*) tied to it, and the *hukilau* begins.

By the time I was four years old, my father got a job at Brigham Young University, so as a family we moved to Lā'ie. We became a part of the Lā'ie second ward and in the summertime, a ward camp was held at Hukilau Bay. There were so many tall trees and the strong wind seemed to blow me off my feet. I was very interested when everyone gathered on the beach and a long rope with ti leaf tied to it was laid along the shore. Men with snorkels swam out into the deep with a large net in their hands. Everyone onshore picked up the rope and as I grabbed onto the rope together we started to pull. Then I realized the literal meaning of *hukilau*. *Huki* means to pull and *lau* are leaves. A numerous amount of fish were caught in the net consisting of *weke* (goatfish, *Mulloidichthys*), *nenu* (rudderfish, *Kyphosus bigibbus*), and 'ama'ama (mullet, *Mugil*

cephalus). Later that night we cooked and ate the 'ono (delicious) fish. Farther west there was also a river that leads out into the *hukilau* called Kahawainui. The nutrients carried into the ocean would help the coral reef to grow so the fish would grow big. For the *hukilau* we would surround a large area of where the reef was, with the net (because where there is a reef there are fish) and pull the ropes with *kī* (ti leaf) tied to it to scare the fish into the nets.

The bay has changed since I first went but the delightful feeling I get when I go to *hukilau* never fades away. From the shore, you can see the small island of Moku'auia also known as Goat Island. The sun always warms my skin and the occasional small white cloud provides shade. At noon the sun is in the middle of the sky and the tide starts to rise. The water invites me in with its blue and turquoise sparkle. Smooth sand still warms my feet when I run across the shore. Big waves seem to play on the shore and my hair flies in the wind as I run into the water. The familiar cold saltwater still refreshes my body with each stroke I take. Sometimes *limu 'ele'ele* (*Ulva intestinalis*) and *limu pālahalaha* (*Ulva fasciata*) brushes against my fingers and toes as it is carried by the current. Memories with family and friends fill the ocean that is so familiar to my heart. I am reminded of my childhood with each step I take into the ocean.

When I sit on the sand I am surrounded by driftwood and leaves. Sadly there is plenty of plastic and trash along the shore. It wasn't there before. My family and I go to Hukilau and pick up as much trash as we can. Multiple beach clean-ups have been held at Hukilau that I have been a part of. There has been a decrease in fish and *limu* and as a community, our goal is to protect the fish and wildlife from plastic and pollution. The more plastic and pollution the less *limu* and coral will grow. Without our reefs, there will be little to no fish in

Hukilau and without any fish, we cannot continue to *hukilau*. Many problems have occurred, but there are still positive changes that can and will be made by the whole community.

According to my father, Kali Fermantez when he first went to Hukilau in the 1980s there was an abundance of fish *weke* (goatfish, *Mulloidichthys*), *nenu* (rudderfish, *Kyphosus*), *moi* (threadfin, *Polydactylus*), and '*ama 'ama* (mullet, *Mugil*). There were a lot of *pōhinahina* (*Vitex rotundifolia*) along the shoreline and around the Kahawainui river. To this day the vines and purple flowers still grow. The *naupaka* (*Scaevola taccada*) grew on the sand dunes and the tall ironwood trees were just a couple feet tall. On the sand, my father and his brothers would catch '*ōhiki* (sand crabs) which are still very abundant today and we continue to go crab hunting and find '*ōhiki*. According to my dad, the "shore has eroded over the past few decades and there used to be more *limu* caught in the Hukilau nets. There was *limu kala* (*Sargassum echinocarpum*), *limu 'ele 'ele* (*Enteromorpha prolifera*) and *limu palahalaha* (*Ulva fasciata*) growing on the reef. "I could smell the *lipoa* (*Dictyopteris plagiogramma*) as I drove past Hukilau and the water was as clear as glass. The sand was smooth and soft." The waves would break along the shore and he would slide on his sandboard. Then the sun would start to set and turn the sky pink and orange.

When the moon comes out and the tide goes down I can hear the small waves rolling on the shore. One of the most beautiful sights of all is the moons beautiful reflection on the ocean like a glowing path on the water. Twinkling stars dance in the night sky while the shooting stars fly by. Sitting with my older brother and sister on the shore I can see some white clouds overhead with the light of the moon. The wind brushes the hairs on our skin and sends a chill through our bodies. In our swim clothes, we decide to take a midnight swim. When we jump

into the waves we are warmed from the cold night air. Standing in the ocean and looking out as far as I can it feels like a magical dream and I don't want to wake up. When we start to shiver we run out and sit on the shore with our towels wishing on shooting stars that another night like this will come again soon. I hope in future generations the beauty of Hukilau will continue to be loved and cherished by the people of Lā'ie.

Work cited

Tissot, Brian N. (2005). Fishes of Hawai'i. Retrieved from

www.coralreefnetwork.com/marlife/fishes/hname.htm.

University of Hawai'i. (2002). Edible Limu... Gifts from the Sea. Retrieved from

www.hawaii.edu/reefalgae/publications/ediblelimu/.