

Narrator: Francis Iwamoto, a bottomfish fishermen in Kona, learned his craft through the years by being adaptive and persistent.

Francis Iwamoto: Well, it's been quite a while. I think I started fishing about 1970 -- about 1970. Then I acquired that small 14-foot skiff with a I think it was 15 horsepower Johnson outboard motor. I think it was 1974, I think, I'm not sure I ordered this kit boat, fiberglass kit, a 19-foot boat. It's a Luger boat and it took me several months to put it together. And that came with an inboard Volvo engine, with 130-horsepower engine. And so that's when I start to get the commercial license, and I went out to the grounds, you know, outside the Kaloko -- out there anyway. The grounds. We called it the grounds. At first, I was still using the kaka. And using the kaka, you catch a lot of rubbish fish and even the paka came small, you know, one pound. Some didn't make one pound, we had to throw it back. And then I change over to the what we call maki dog. It's a Japanese word, "maki dogu" that means you wrap your equipment. So that's just lead and a piece of cloth and you put your bait inside, and your palu. You wrap it up and tie it up and you drop that, and then you break it when it goes to the bottom. And that is off the bottom probably 10 or 20 fathoms off the bottom. And that's where we started to catch the bigger paka. So I never did go back to kaka. Always been that maki dog. At first, it was pull all the way from 130 fathoms, you have to pull with the hand for many years, though. But then this one fisherman by the name of Kenneth Llanes, he used to go bottom fish before, and he went charter boating. So he sold his equipment. I bought his line puller, hydraulic line puller. So that's when I started using hydraulic puller so now I don't have to pull with the hand. I like to fish myself, alone. I never take somebody. I don't know. I don't feel too comfortable. The only person I took out was my family, my son and my son-in-law, but nobody else.

Narrator: In the days before Global Positioning Systems became common on boats, fishermen had to rely on simpler methods to mark their fishing spots.

FI: For quite a while we had to use just landmark because at that time GPS wasn't in operation, I don't think. And yeah, even at first, we used we used to go onaga, like that, it's all by marks and we didn't have depth recorder. And so it's a hit and miss. Sometimes, it's too deep. Sometimes, it's too shallow. Even with the mark, you got to be precise. Then as the years went by, we bought depth recorders. So now you can go right to the edge where the onaga is, and so that's better. But then, some days, as you know, Kona have haze vog, vog, and you can't see the mark. So now you're lost. So you have to go more inland and try for uku then because as you go closer to shore, you can see the mark, but not out there in the onaga area. Later, the GPS came out. And how I got my GPS is I didn't buy it. I think it was Fish and Game, or somebody, when we came for some kind briefing, and we all attended this meeting, and they told us how to catch and release paka, and gave us tools for that, how to do it. And then they said, okay, we'll give you a free GPS, a small one, though. Not the big one. Small one. Said, fine, now I have to learn how to use that. So from that time on, you can go precisely to the spot. So fishing was made easier, yeah. But then that's a bad thing because Sometimes a trolling boat comes by, and he marks it. So next time you go, there's somebody there already. Yeah. This captain gave to a friend, fisherman friend, that oh, this guy fishing this spot. And so from that time on, there's so many fishermen, they know where to go. So all our spots are overtaken by fishermen. Maybe that's how the fishing went down. And they started going night fishing. I went night fishing a few times, but I don't like it. It's too cold. But there's a lot of people that went night fishing and they're hauling plenty night fishing, yeah. If you go night fishing, you have to anchor. But daytime, I don't like to anchor. I always go with the current, yeah. I used to back down with the

main engine. But I had a Volvo outdrive, and somehow using that reverse all the time, that clutch -- the clutch in the gear somehow smooths out, they don't -- don't hold. So it doesn't work. Then you have to take it to the repair shop to fix that. I did all that myself. I deglazed that clutch with grinding compound, and it works wonders. But after a few months you have to do it again. So I bought an outboard motor, 25-horsepower Johnson put it in the back, and you hold the boat with that. Put it in reverse, and you can hold the boat. And that way, you can keep your lines straight. But on a very windy day, you cannot hold that. So what we had to do was turn the boat around facing the wind with the forward motion and keep it that way. So on windy days, it was very hard fishing. But we had to endure that and go, still go. Funny thing is sometimes only the top going, see our line goes fast, but the bottom you don't know where the bottom is, and sometimes you catch up and then the line goes behind. So that means the bottom the current is not moving on the bottom only the top surface. So we kind of learned how to fish. Sometimes we'd let that line go out and just come back. And if you catch a fish like that, then we'd fish like that the whole day when the current is strong, let the line go out but the bottom stays, come back. And if you follow that too much you're going to run away from your palu. So you have to stay around your palu. So you have to kind of study how the current is, the top and the bottom. If they're both the same, easy, good, that's a perfect day. But a lot of times sometimes the current is going opposite. So those days are bad, a bad, low catch on that. When I first started, you know you can go to any place and catch it. You know, but as the years went by you get less here, then you have to find a new spot. And oh, okay, this is a good spot. So you kind of fish there. And then sit, and it's not good. So you move again, look, hunt around for another spot. Kona fishermen, they always keep to themselves. They don't ask you, where is a good spot. Maybe they know that nobody going to tell you where a good spot is. So we don't talk about, where is good fishing.