

Narrator: For brothers, Nathan and Mike Abe, fishing isn't just another job, it's a lifelong passion.

Mike Abe: For me was . . . it was we started off fishing I started fishing since I was second grade on the canoe, and mostly net opelu. And then . . . we used to go in the canoe, and then later on we'd fish on the boat, opelu fishing. And then . . . we would fish opelu half day and then go bottom fishing the second half of the day because we had fresh bait now. And then we used to give bait he used to give bait mostly to Haru. We'd fish two boats.

Nathan Abe: We learned how to fish because my father was a commercial fisherman. So, you know actually, my grandfather fished also. So this is like the third generation, and like we did what they call, net opelu. Net opelu is just like - they call it, aquaculture of the sea. Why they do that is because you've got to feed it every day, every day. So we had two canoes and one was at -- by the King Kam Hotel and one was at the Honokohau Fishing Village. It was a Filipino fishing village when there wasn't even the harbor there. And, actually . . . at the beginning I didn't do too much bottom fishing because I was the . . . I used to run the . . . run the boat that caught the bait and, you know, I did more hoop-netting opelu.

MA: It's like a funnel, and it's one-inch mesh, and you feed it. And then when you get so much eating, you throw the net in the water and then you feed it and then you put the palu above the net, and you just pull the net straight up, basically. It's a technique, though. You need to know that - it's like bottom fishing, but we get to see in the glass box, we get to see how the fish reacts, how they eat, what the current is. Every day. And we'd go -- I would say, we'd do fishing back in those days, if there were 365 days in a year, we'd probably fish I'd say 350 days, or more, in a year. Just mostly opelu, ahi and bottom fishing. More opelu and ahi, yeah. Yeah. Bottom fishing was just like when was season or if the ahi price was cheap or if the ahi wasn't biting, then we'd go bottom fishing. Or if the current was slow, then we'd go bottom fishing. Yeah?

NA: Yeah.

MA: Then we got a bigger boat, and then we had the smaller boat, and the bigger boat we'd catch bottomfish or ahi, and the smaller boat we'd catch opelu and give the bigger boat bait every day.

NA: Like, I just stuck to bottom fishing and inshore fishing, but, you know, my brother went on to -- I go offshore fishing now.

MA: He goes offshore fishing, yeah.

NA: But I still go bottom fishing when it's slow or, you know, like, these kind projects with Clay.

MA: Yeah, but he does it with a 65-foot boat, and I do it with a 27-foot boat. And also, like, you know, the boats, if it wasn't for my brother, because my brother is one of the best boat builders. He's a really good boat builder, and he built my boat. He built two of my boats. He designed my last boat just for bottom fishing. I don't do ahi as much anymore.

Narrator: Not all the fish they catch goes to the market.

MA: I would say for me, 90 percent is sell, 10 percent is give away to my friends or we eat on the boat.

Interviewer: How about you, Nate?

NA: About the same, because I give away a lot of fish. I mean . . . Yeah . . . That's how I get for all my favors or anything else, like -- you know, it's all about bartering, you know. Fix my rope, you know, things like that, you know. This is the key. If you give somebody one onaga, they going to remember you for life, you know. I mean, that's the whole part of fishing. Everybody in Kona eats fish, yeah. Actually, in Kona, it's really hard to sell fish because everybody gives them away and there's a whole bunch of boats in Kona. Yeah, because the water is so flat. You know, like you see these people with 16-foot boats, you know. I used to sell it to this guy named Glenn Ross of Marina Seafood, and I always sold it to a broker because when I was younger I would go every day. So you cannot -- you know, I cannot like spend the day selling my fish. And then I also sold to some restaurants.

MA: Me, I sell to UFA, United Fish Auction. If it's New Year time, I'll catch for give away and then sell some to pay the fuel and stuff, expenses. But other than that, it's just when we do projects with Clay, we'll go. And then we went couple of times just for go.

NA: But we used to go to South Point a lot, Michael.

MA: Yeah. Back in the days, we used to go bottomfish a lot.

NA: When you bought your first Radon, huh?

MA: Yeah, I used to bottomfish in the grounds nighttime, and go South Point.

NA: A lot. You used to go a lot.

MA: If we'd go down South Point, we would go in the morning, fish nighttime, stay two nights. We'd catch 800 pounds in one day. So it would be like 1600 pounds for one trip bottom fishing. But South Point, there's so much variables over there. It's like the wind, the current, the porpoise, the sharks, hard down there. You got to live down there to make money. We would launch our boat from Honokohau Harbor and drive down. So hard to make money that way.

Narrator: The amount they catch depends on when and where they fish, and that has changed over time.

MA: For me, I think mostly when we go now, we go far. I mean, we go around Hilo and we go Maui. I think we catch way more now, and bigger. I think just because all the old-timers are all not fishing anymore. They're either passed or there's hardly any fishermen, you know, places where we go.

Narrator: Mike is passing along what he's learned to the next generation.

MA: For me, just my son. But they're not into it. I think kids nowadays are like a little bit lazy. They're not like the old days.

NA: Yeah, but my brother, he actually teaches a lot.

MA: But I have always crew. I always have crew, that's why.

NA: And he teaches a lot. I mean, he . . . my brother, he treat his crew really well and, like . . . I'm just proud of my brother because, like . . . and he's willing to teach. He teaches everybody.

Narrator: While Mike fishes with a crew, Nathan fishes by himself.

NA: No. You no believe me? Because I have a temper. Everybody know I have a temper. I fished by myself my whole life. By myself. Just ask my brother. Tell them, Michael. Yeah?

MA: Yeah.

NA: All my life fish myself. So my back is kind of like not there anymore. So that's why I just went strictly bottom fishing, no ahi. I do a lot of ahi fishing, too. You know, I was the older brother and I was, you know, I can be a little bossy and then my brother, I love him so much, I no want him to deal with me. I mean, it's the truth, though, right? I mean, it's -- yeah. Yeah. We don't want to like, you know --

MA: You know how it is when you run a business, right? You don't want family involved. So we just kind of -- it's sort of like Sueto and his brother.

NA: Yeah.

MA: Sueto had a brother, right? They don't fish together, right? See!

NA: I would say we're both the same, though.

MA: He is. I don't go bottom fishing that much. I mostly go ahi fishing. We only go ahi fishing, longline and handline.

NA: Our father used to do a lot of bottom fishing, though. Nobody knew what he was doing because he sold it all to the block. And like . . .he was really good friends with that guy Haru Eguchi and Sueto, too. Those guys --

MA: I know Sueto. He probably knows us when we was little kids fishing on the boat right, Sueto? We was this small. I mean, I know him for years.

NA: Okay. I got one more thing to say, though. Okay . . .You know, 50 years, so hard work, and to be a good fisherman, you need the passion. Because I seen a lot of fishermen, like . . .You know, they would fish, they would fish and their passion would like you know, they just would, you know, lose the passion so they would stop fishing. Because it's so hard work. You've got to like prepare for the night before you -- I mean, there's so much preparation. Ask what -- right, Sueto, you've got to like get ready -- Day and night. And then you know -- then you've got to sell the fish. That's another story, too. But that's why we always sold to the broker. Because if you want to fish the next day, you've got to sell to the broker.

MA: Yeah, you cannot peddle the fish if you're one commercial fishermen. Hard. Because then you're going to lose one or two days of fishing. Fishing, for be one successful fisherman you got to go every day. No more such thing as a birthday, Christmas, New Year's, whatever. We go every single day.

NA: But like guys like Sueto, or even my brother, when you still get excited about fish . . . catching one fish, or like your camaraderie with your crew is oh, so it's all about fun, that's when you know that's one true passionate fisherman and that they're going to be one guy like Sueto going last 80 years. A lot of the fishermen -- I mean, there's only a few of them that are like that that are going to last like Sueto, Haru or -- you know. You know. They're going to give up, like, you know, their engines break down or they're going to sell their boat. But . . .you need passion, man, to fish.

MA: Yeah. I think a guy like Haru.

NA: It's crazy . . .To this day, he dream about fishing. Yeah. It's crazy.

MA: Wish he could go fishing, still, yeah. A guy like Haru -

NA: Unbelievable . . .Yup.