

Narrator: Sueto Matsumura, a bottomfish fishermen in Kona, started knowing almost nothing, learned from well-experienced veterans, then became a link in a chain of the local fishing tradition to the next generation.

Sueto Matsumura: I was in the coffee for maybe three years helping my father. And then part time, I was a carpenter. And then . . . I went fishing with somebody that I caught eight ahi that day, and they caught none. So that's where I started off, and buy a boat. Somewhere around 1968, somewhere in there, buy one boat. My first boat was P14, an old Warrior. And . . . Then the next boat I had was a Glaspoly, a 16 footer. Altogether, I had five boats, you know. But then after the 16, I went to 17, then 19, and right now I have a 21. So that's all I going, that far. Well, part time, then I came full commercial ahi, then bottomfish. I learned from my friend, Haru Eguchi, and my friend Yano, Mr. Yano. But he passed away. And my brother Katz Matsumura. So I learned all from them, bottomfish. But only the big-timer was Haru, because everybody follow him, you know. I follow him around. But he said, you know, don't come too near. But I learned, you know, the hard way. Because those days, never had too much fishermen, huh. So I learned from him. During the day off he showed me how to tie the hook. Because when I tie the hook, he said, the fish won't bite that way. So he showed me how. I started off with seven hooks to bottomfish, and then came to 12 hooks, then 15 hooks. I want more fish, so I put more hooks. But sometimes when I go for onaga, like that, couple of times I go for onaga like that, I catch about 15 onaga one time and it happened to me five times in my life. Those days were big kine onaga, Some ten pounds, you know, from eight to ten pounds. They had big kine like, you know, 20 pounds, like that. But no more like that now. Didn't know the grounds. But you know, that grounds, there was a lot of fish here and there. So . . . Landmark. He took the landmark. So that's how I learned, you know. And then, the next day, I tried to go back again and I catch, and was fun. To know bottomfish, you learn the current, how fast, you know, and the weather. You know, if you get small boat, you cannot fish bottomfish because it get rough. Well, I study the current, you know and the current have a lot of lot of things to do with fishing that area. Sometime you go there and the fish won't bite because the current is going opposite way or double current. So I learned all those things, you know, and study my own. Now I rotate because I don't want to clean out that place, you know, let the fish grow some more.

Narrator: Kona is known for having clam water almost year-round. Sueto developed a weekly routine for fishing. ]

SM: Might be from Monday. I start off from Monday to . . . maybe Thursday and rest on Friday and the weekend. I fish at night before, and . . . nighttime fishing opakapaka is different. You know, they put light. But opakapaka, when you catch day time at 80 fathom. Nighttime, I fish, they come up to 50 fathom, you know. The difference over there and then they bite more in nighttime than daytime. Oh, we catch opakapaka. We catch tuna -- I used to get tuna, palu ahi

they call that and bottomfish, you know, when the tuna won't bite. But we catch pretty good, 500 pounds of onaga like that, and pakapaka might be 700 pounds.

Narrator: The fishing tackle evolved through the years and so did the equipment. We was using that, for, you know, Sunset line or that dacron line before. And then later part, they called it Bloodline came out. Bloodline is good because, you know, you can feel that line, you know. Later on I buy the hydraulic and then . . .that way it's faster instead of pulling it by hand.

Narrator: Along with learning about new gear, Sueto also learned that certain fish liked certain baits.

SM: Mostly at that time before we was doing, the first time I used was, uh . . .the squid, you know, like that and opelu, you know, bottomfish. But I learned from (inaudible), this old-time fisherman. He said onaga fishing, you catch some aku, like that, and then oi'oi, you know that small little aku. He said that's the best bait for onaga. And onaga, they want it long, long bait. They don't want short bait. They want long. And they want blood. So he tell me that when you catch the fresh bait, to catch onaga, you got to take off, cut a part of the skin off and leave only by the hook the skin because the onaga is kind of sensitive teeth, he said. So I tried that, and it worked, you know. Paka, we use anchovy. You know, that anchovy, like that. Well, before that, as I said, you know, with landmark and then later on we had the Furuno, the one with the paper one, the one you scratch, well, it was kind of good with that, you know. Then now we get this color depth finder, Furuno, it shows you what depth, it shows you what depth, you know, where the fish stays, like that. Right now, the Furuno -- you know, like before, the Furuno the Furuno, you got put underneath the dash under the deck because cannot see good. But right now they can put them outside, you see all colors, yeah. So it's nice. I'm a Furuno man, so. GPS is good because it has to go to the buoy, and then it tell you, you know, how far the buoy stay. So it's pretty accurate, I think. Especially when, you know, a lot of vog, and stuff like that, you cannot see the mark, use the GPS and the depth recorder. I was looking at a landmark, and he was here before and I started the thing, and go home. Put on my tablets and stuff like that so I can find the mark next day, huh. 'Cause, uh . . . kind of hard before. No fish finder, nothing. But now, right when you look at that landmark, there's a lot of houses coming up so the landmark has changed.

Narrator: Now at this part of his fishing career, Sueto is passing along what he knows to others, just like the way Haru did for him decades before.

SM: Well, my boy used to go with me and then . . .they have a job, so . . .kind of live and learn from me, and . . .take somebody with me and then... right now, I'm taking my good friend, Butchie Chee, you know him? He told me he wanted to learn something, bottomfish. So he tried and sometime, you know . . . when they wind up that line and he get all bundle come up, he said, oh, how come like this? I said, you got to practice because he's a beginner, yeah? I said,

practice make perfect.