

Portrait of Louis Almodova Jr in Old Hanapepe Town in 2011 by Evelyn Ritter



REMEMBERING UNCLE LOUIS
DA MAYOR OF SALT POND
A friend to all he met

A tribute to our first friend on Kauai by Juan Wilson & Linda Pascatore 1/1/2015

CARETAKER OF SALT POND

By Betty S.

Published on Island Breath 1/1/2005

During the summer of 1980 I was with my teenage daughter and some friends, their 3 teenagers and grandmother camping at Salt Pond. We had spent an uncomfortable windy night and were collapsed on the beach that afternoon wondering whether to stay there or not, when Uncle Louis came to meet us and help. We all chatted awhile and he invited our group of 8 out to his daughter's family taro farm to help harvest taro.

We had no idea what we were getting into. His directions to the farm were Hawaiian style and we were very Mainland, so it was a challenge. We were to drive over the small bridge that branched off the main Hanapepe road, go past the goat farm, turn right at the tree. When I asked the address he looked somewhat puzzled and then said he'd put a newspaper over the mailbox.

We found the farm and upon going out back saw the taro growing in a watery field. We tentatively walked out to the taro field to help harvest the taro and somewhat squeamishly waded into the above ankle level watery, murky rows. Frogs and who knows what else were jumping around in there. With each step our thongs suctioned on the soupy mud base.

We all soon pitched in with his family and harvested some taro for about an hour or so. During this time we joined with them singing Hawaiian songs (we



Louis Almodova Jr in Hanapepe. Valley, 1980

hummed along) and then sang some songs we all knew. We were mud filled but happy. Despite initially not wanting to get dirty, even the 3 teen age girls with us had fun!

A tutu (it might have been Uncle Louis' mother, I'm not sure) had prepared pupus and afterward we all sat around and, as Uncle Louis would say, talked story. Uncle Louis bestowed our Hawaiian names on us and declared my friend's mother to be "Tutu".

This memorable afternoon was the beginning of a long and rich friendship with this dear man. We still talk about it from time to time and looking at the photos we took brings back the memories full force.

Since that time many of my friends have met Uncle Louis through me and some are still in contact with him. We all feel enriched by the spirit of Aloha he so generously gives to all with whom he comes in contact.



Uncle Louis and friends harvest taro in 1980.

ELEELE SCHOOL SONG



Children line up at Eleele School for 4th of July Celebration in 2004.

Uncle Louis sings the school song used in the 1920's

By Juan Wilson

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Uncle Louis Almodova found my wife, Linda, and I sitting at a picnic table as we dried off after a swim last weekend.

He told us about an invitation he had to go to Eleele School and visit his great-granddaughter's classroom and tell them a bit of history about the school.

Uncle Louis was at Eleele School in the early 1920's and it was the only school he ever attended. He still knew the schools athletic song and sang it for us at the beach under a palm tree.

Eleele school, formerly known as Hanapepe School, began in the late 1830's probably as a private school since the Department of Public Instruction was not established until 1840.

The date 1837 was determined through a 1937 school yearbook, which celebrated the school's 100th anniversary.

Eleele Sports Class Song

*There's a school on the hill above the sea,
with a team that knows how to play,
and when they get the ball,
you'll have no chance at all,
our boys are sure to win the game.
Eleele's name will mark the fame
when they win in the grand old way.*

*There's a school on the hill above the sea,
with a team that knows how to play,
Eleele, Eleele is the school that we love,
Eleele, Eleele, Eleele, black and gold.*

RHUMBA KINGS OF KAUAI



The Rhumba Kings - Louie Almodova Jr 3rd from left



By Linda Pascatore

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Uncle Louis Almodova Jr. and his band played rumba, samba, and bolero music.

Our friend, Louis, has always been great source of local history, lore and culture. We recently discovered that besides his careers as cane plantation foreman at the McBride Mill, a tour guide and a baseball player, Uncle Louis was also in a local Kauai band back in the late 1930's.

The Rhumba Kings played samba and bolero, which is a kind of foxtrot, as well as Rhumba music. Uncle Louis was 19 at the time, and all the band members were young and working day jobs. They had managed to buy an amplifier, and had homemade uniforms.

Uncle Louis played accompanying tenor guitar when he wasn't dancing with the girls—he was quite the ladies man. His friends the Rivera brothers were band members. Silva Rivera was the band leader, and played the maracas, Daniel played bongos, and Nick

played guitar. Jacob Pacheco also played guitar, with Joseph Robley on tenor guitar and Ceasar Robley playing lead tenor.

They often played the Aloha Theatre in Hanapepe Town and the Roxy in Kapaa. The Episcopal Church Hall in Eleele was another venue. The band was even popular enough to earn a gig in Oahu at the Pulama Gym. They were broadcast live on KGU radio in Honolulu.

A sad incident caused the band to break up. They had another gig in Oahu one night and were on their way to Nawiliwili Harbor to catch the boat. However, the road was closed because of an automobile accident at Knudsen Gap involving some relatives of the band members. The band never made it to the gig in Oahu, and broke up after that.

We can imagine the dance halls full of swooning girls swaying to the salsa beat of this band of handsome fellas, and wish we were there! Thanks Uncle Louis, for sharing this rich piece of old time Kauai before the war, when the Rhumba was King.

THE LAST FOOTBALL GAME



By Juan Wilson

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I had a knee injury recently after a minor bike accident. It really was not very serious, but it kept me off my usual swimming routine for a couple of weeks. Today, 27 June 2007 was the first time my wife and I were back doing our laps down at Salt Pond Beach Park. When we had finished up, and were drying off at the main pavilion.

The late afternoon at Salt Pond is a special time. The main pavilion is almost nightly occupied by senior locals cooking dinner, sharing a brew and talking story. We have been lucky enough to share a picnic table with these folks and hear a few good stories.

As we got ready to go, Louis Almodova Jr., known at Salt Pond as "Uncle Louis", came over to chat. He will be ninety this year. Our parents, from the mainland have passed. We think of Louie as our adopted father on Kauai and are always impressed with the number of people he has known, and their stories. When I told Louie about my knee he related this tale.

Louis grew up in Eleele, went to the school there and bought a house overlooking the fields of McBryde Mill. Before World War II he joined the Army and was stationed on Puolo Point at a barracks on Lele Road. Back then, Hanapepe was a strategic spot with a harbor and an airport.

The squad he was with had the luxury of hanging out at night in Hanapepe. Fifteen or more pals would sit on benches near the USO and pool hall (where the Banana Patch Studio is today). That was across the street from where the Jardine Theater sat. It wasn't bad duty. There was always something going on in town.

There were three movie houses, a roller rink, dance hall, plenty of bars and great cheap restaurants. Louis' squad even had members on the Kauai US Army football team. Louis was always a baseball player. Even into his senior years he played competitively. In his pocket he carries a 1997 Senior World Series trophy ring. Even though he was a baseball player first, he was a member of the Army football squad.

On December 6th, 1941 the Kauai Army football team hosted a football game against Saint Lukes College from Oahu. The game was at Eisenberg Stadium in Lihue, near where the existing Lihue Neighborhood Recreational Center is. Louis played his first competitive game for the Army. As it turned out, it was the last and only football game Louie played for the Army.

During the game Louis injured his ankle badly enough to be pulled out of the game. It swelled up so bad he had to stay off it. The next day he was in his barracks. The barracks was on Lele Road, the one that leads down to Salt Pond Beach Park. His ankle was so bad, Louis was in the barracks office to get a transfer to the hospital for treatment.

While he waited outdoors for a meeting, he saw an armada of planes moving towards Oahu. It was the first wave of attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7th. Not knowing exactly what they had seen, people on Kauai could only look as the planes disappeared into the east and wonder. It was only later they received news of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Uncle Louis was subsequently stationed to defend the southern shore of Kauai for the duration of the war. He is still here today, welcoming visitors instead of defending against attackers.

LEGEND OF SPOUTING HORN



By Louis Almodova Jr.

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The Legend of the Spouting Horn is about a lizard family, consisting of a brother and two sisters.

The three left their homeland for a swim. After they swam a long way they spotted two islands. The closer one was named Niihau and the farther one was named Kauai.

The brother could see that, although far away, Kauai was beautiful and lush. He wanted to go and visit Kauai, but the sisters were too tired and wanted to rest.

So they decided to stay where they were on the beach on the island of Niihau and let their little brother explore.

The brother headed off toward the island of Kauai. He swam and swam. As he got near Kauai he could see beautiful green mountains in the distance.

After a while he got tired and decided to land as soon as he could. He came to rest at the old Koloa Landing and waited there for his sisters.

He waited a long time, but they never arrived.

He was lonely and being that they didnt come, he swam back to Niihau and went looking for them.

When he landed on Niihau he searched and searched.

All he found were two large rocks, boulders really, near where he had left them on the beach. At last he realized that the two large rocks were all that was left of his sisters.

Sadly he swam back to Kauai. He cried and he cried, and when he got near Koloa Landing he was caught by a big wave that pushed him along the shore.

He missed Koloa Landing and passed Kukuioa Bay and then was shoved by the wave under a lava tube just short of Lawaii Kai. He has been trapped there since.

Whenever the waves come back you can hear him moan and see his breath bursting from the lava tube at Spouting Horn.

MENEHUNE FISH POND LEGEND



By Louis Almodova Jr.

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The Menehune Fish Pond is located along the Niumalu River. What the Menhune built was a bank, separating the river from the fish pond.

According to legend, the Menehune were the little people who worked at night. A princess and her brother contracted them to build the Fish Pond.

The princess and prince were curious as to how the little people worked, so they sneaked up on them.

The Menehune caught the pair, and they were automatically turned to rock.

To this day, if you look up ahead to the right front of the Fish Pond, there you will see two sharp peaks, that represent the Princess and her Brother.

After this incident, the chief of the Menehune gathered his people together, and they moved to the north side of the island, by the dry cave.

There the little people were so friendly, they were marrying the Hawaiian girls.

Their chief didn't like that, so he once again gathered his people, and this time moved them off the island of Kauai.

Later, when a census was taken on Kauai, sixty-five Hawaiians registered themselves as Menehune.

So the race of little people lives on in the Hawaiian bloodlines to this day.

FAMILY MOCHI POUNDING



Men of the Yamamoto family pounding mochi

By Linda Pascatore

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My husband and I were recently invited to a Mochi Pounding gathering Gerry Yamamoto. The invitation came from our dear friend,

Uncle Louis, the our local Ambassador of Aloha, and the subject of many previous articles on our website.

The Japanese traditionally make Mochi for New Years. Eating mochi, which is pounded sweet rice, is supposed to bring good luck for the coming New Year.

Our neighbors had a big gathering of family and friends, and everyone participated in making the mochi in the traditional way.

The mochi rice is cooked over a mesquite wood fire outdoors. On the fire sits a metal base for big pan of water to steam the rice.

The sweet mochi rice is put in steamers which are nested one on top of the other over the water.

The Yamamotos have antique redwood steamers that are handmade and joined with wooden pegs.

Once the rice is steamed, it is put into an old stone bowl for pounding. The Yamamotos' bowl had cracked and has been repaired by building a concrete reinforced housing around it.

The pounding of the mochi is done with wooden mallets made of guava or hau wood.

Two men alternate in pounding, and it is a sight. My husband got a little carried away and split a mallet on the side of the stone bowl, but the guys were ready to repair it with another mallet head.



Women of the Yamamoto family shaping mochi

Besides the men, all the young boys were called on to take a turn pounding.

Gerry said that the real purpose of the gathering is to bring the family together, and that she was so pleased to see the younger folks involved in learning and carrying on the tradition.

There were five generations of the family represented at the gathering.

Of course, all the workers stopped for a break and a feast of “broke da mouf” local food. Tom had deep fried some ono octopus and pork.

There was guardini rice and pot patelles, and I had to get the recipe for a delicious coconut milk spinach chicken casserole that Gerry’s daughter Jeannie cooked.

We were so thankful to be included in this wonderful seasonal event. Everyone took home some wonderfully flavored mochi to share with their families for a lucky New Year!

After the rice was pounded, it was time for the girls to take a turn. The batch of rice was divided into small portions on a long table dusted with cornstarch.

The women and girls lined the table, and kneaded and patted the mochi into little round cakes. Some are filled with tasty red azuki beans.

Some of the rice was cooked with mint which is grown specially for the purpose of flavoring some of the mochi and giving it a light green coloring. In modern times, some color the mochi with food coloring, but the Yamamotos use only the natural, traditional methods.

D7 IN WAINIHA VALLEY



By Juan Wilson

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I spent lunchtime on December 29th, 2006 at a mochi pounding party at the end of my street in Hanapepe Valley.

At 89 years old, Louis Almodova, sometimes called the Mayor of Salt Pond, was the senior guest present. His daughter, Gerry, was the hostess.

As the men steamed and then pounded the rice with wooden mallets, the women formed and flavored the resulting mochi with mint and sweet beans.

Louis sat in the shade towards the back so he could see everybody, including a few great great grandchildren.

My wife, Linda, and I sat with paper plates loaded with food that Gerry and other family members had prepared, while Louis told us the following story.

Louis worked for the McBryde Mill in Numila for four decades starting in the 1930's. He began with a hoe in his hand and ended as a dispatcher and transportation foreman.

On more than one occasion he had to take a crew all the way around, to the north side of the island, to Wainiha Valley to do work on the hydroelectric plant there. McBryde Mill built the power plant to provide electricity for its operations.

Maintenance for the equipment had to come from their facilities on the south side.

In 1968, after a particularly bad winter in Wainiha Valley, the water intake dam, way above the power generator was washed out with flooding from heavy rain.

A large bulldozer would be need far up the valley to manage the repairs.

It was Louis' job to get a team and the Caterpillar D7 to the site. The flatbed truck to carry the bulldozer was a wide load.

Louis had to get a special permit to move such a rig. Louie, driving a McBryde pickup, was the lead vehicle in the caravan, with flashing warning lights.

Besides the bulldozer, tractor trailer, and crew there would be plenty of other equipment and material needed just to get to the mouth of Wainiha Valley.

The first real challenge came just before Hanalei, in what is now Princeville. The McBryde caravan had to stop at the top of the hill before descent to the one lane bridge over the Hanalei River.

There they unloaded the D7 from the truck. After some negotiation and discussion, a plan was executed. The river bridge could not handle the load.

To get around the Hanalei Bridge, the D7 had to be driven mauka along what is now Kapaka Street as far as Ahonui Place.

There a gentle enough slope would allow the bulldozer to driven down to the bottom of Hanalei Valley. Then the D7 could cross through the river and emerge on the west bank.

Louis arranged for the D7 to earn its passage by providing favors for land owners along the way.

Once across the Hanalei River, the D7 could rejoin the caravan where Ohiki Road met the Kuhio Highway on the west side of the river. But after the Hanalei River there were more challenges.

There were a few stone small concrete bridges that could take the loaded tractor trailer but not the bridge then over the Lumahai Stream.

Near Lumahai Stream, at the west end of the beach, again the caravan had to stop and unload the bulldozer.

The crew had brought old tires with them to lay down on the highway to protect the surface of the road from the treads of the bulldozer. They drove the D7 along the beach and when they got to the stream built a sand bridge for a crossing.

It took most of the a day to reach Wainiha Valley. Finally, they headed up Powerhouse Road to get to the damaged intake.

The caravan unloaded the D7 for a week of work at the site and then headed back to the Mill. When the work was done the whole process was reversed to bring the D7 back to the southside.

This adventure was repeated on more than one occasion when the hydroelectric power plant needed repair. Louis said sometimes his smile was the only permit they rode with.

Louis ended his story telling us about an accident he witnessed back then with the D7.

They were in the valley, pushing over a tree that was in the way of a job they had to do. The bulldozer operator was downhill from the tree and tipped the tree up the slope.

The spread of roots was huge and wide. When the tree went over the root ball emerged from the ground, caught the blade and flipped the bulldozer on its back, killing the driver.

A nasty surprise for everyone.

THE MAYOR OF SALT POND



Uncle Louie works the crowd at Salt Pond in 2004

By Linda Pascatore

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We first met Uncle Louis, before we lived here, when we visited Kauai on a vacation in 1997. We came to Salt Pond Beach Park and he greeted us.

We were really impressed by his open, friendly manner; and enjoyed his stories and jokes. He gave us a lesson in local lore and history, which was fascinating to us.

After moving to Kauai, we began to swim regularly at Salt Pond Beach. We soon realized Uncle Louis was there daily welcoming everyone he encounters.

If you visit Salt Pond Beach, chances are you will be greeted by Uncle Louis. He is the self appointed mayor of Salt Pond Beach Park and he greets and chats with visitors and locals alike.

Tourists often get their only taste of local culture while listening to him. Many tourists are so taken by his charm that they continue to correspond with Uncle Louis on return to homes all over the world. We still look forward to our daily talk. He is a wealth of information about Kauai in general, and the west side in particular.

Louis Almodova Jr was born in Eleele, and is of Puerto Rican ancestry. At 86 years old, his memory spans several generations of island history.

The Brydoco Digest was a publication for employees of the McBryde Sugar Company. In July 1967 the Digest described Louis as “always on the move” and named him Man of the Month.

He worked for years for McBryde, first, in 1929, as a hoe-hana boy. He became a regular employee in 1931 and became irrigation contractor then a harvester, loading machine operator and finally as transportation foreman.

He served in World War II, and also worked part time as a bus tour operator on Kauai. He has lived his whole life in the Hanapepe area. Louis stays connected with an extended family on Kauai, Ohau and the mainland.

Uncle Louis was an avid baseball player throughout his youth, and later was a respected umpire. He has played in senior leagues, and has stories of attending tournaments on the mainland.

He fondly recalls his dancing days. He could “cut a rug” with the best, and especially enjoyed the “kachi-kachi” dances. A knee problem prevents him from dancing right now, but he still swims and snorkels at Salt Pond beach regularly.

Uncle Louis serves as a model for staying active and engaged with life while aging gracefully. He embodies the Aloha Spirit of Kauai.

The high point of our afternoon swimming trip to Salt Pond Beach Park is a chat with Uncle Louis. Stop by Salt Pond Beach and say aloha!

SALT POND DEDICATION

On his 94th birthday Uncle Louis Almodova Jr has a beach park pavilion named in his honor



Uncle Louis receives dedication from Mayor Carvalho.

By Juan Wilson

Published on Island Breath 10/25/11

Before 11:00am on October 24th, 2011 his family and friends were there the in main central pavilion at Salt Pond Beach. Moreover many of Kauai County's key political figures were on hand.

As council members Dickie Chang and JoAnn Yukimura were having their photos taken with Louis. I spotted county councilman Tim Bynum in the crowd.

I quipped to the Garden Island photojournalist Dennis Fujimoto that we almost had a County Council quorum, when low and behold Nadine Nakamura arrived.

As usual Uncle Louis was charming and hospitable to everyone he spoke to.

Soon Kauai Mayor Bernard Carvalho was there in the county pavilion reading a declaration of the renaming of structure in Uncle Louis' name.

Why this man and this structure?

For decades Uncle Louis has dedicated part of almost everyday to enthusiastically greeting everyone he meets at Salt Pond Beach Park in front of the main pavilion.

He works the crowd, especially the visitors, with good humored jokes and island anecdotes.

He can talk with personal experience about plantation work, playing rhumba music, WWII, katchi katchi dancing, operating a tourist bus back in the day and, and world championship baseball - He's got a Senior's World Series Ring in his pocket.

After mayor Carvalho spoke it was time for Louis to speak. His closing comment was made as he pointed to all assembled. "Everything I am today is because of you".

Then the crowd at the pavilion formed a circle and thanks were said, then it was time for a generous lunch for all present organized by his daughters Gerry and Pat.

When I first met Uncle Louis, back in 1997, I was showing my wife Kauai for the first time and we crossed the lawn in front of the pavilion. Then Uncle Louis was a spry eighty-years-old. He shouted out "Aloha! Welcome to the park!"

He carried a golf club handle fashioned with a spike for snaring abandoned soda cans and blowing paper. We talked and talked.

We moved to Kauai in 2001 and have been lucky to see Uncle Louis several times a week. We have gotten to know his family too. My wife and I lost our dads.

Louis may be your uncle, but for us he is kind of our local dad.

ALOHA UNCLE LOUIS



The Louis Almodova Jr Pavilion at Salt Pond Beach Park in January 2012.