

# Sonny Kaniho: Profile in Hawaiian Courage (1922-2009)

Sonny Kaniho, born on October 10, 1922, in Honolulu, Hawaii, was a legendary waterman who embodied the spirit of Hawaiian courage and perseverance. As a surfer and canoe paddler, he excelled in his chosen sports, but his true legacy lies in his dedication to preserving and perpetuating Hawaiian culture.



## Sonny Kaniho: A Profile in Hawaiian Courage 1922–2009 by Lawrence Grobel

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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This article will delve into the life and accomplishments of Sonny Kaniho, exploring his contributions to Hawaiian surfing, canoe paddling, and cultural preservation. His story serves as an inspiration to all who strive to live a life of purpose and passion.

### **Early Life and Surfing Career**

Sonny Kaniho grew up in Waikiki, where he developed a love for the ocean at a young age. He began surfing at the age of 12 and quickly became known for his fearless approach to riding waves. In 1941, he won the first Duke Kahanamoku Surfing Classic, solidifying his status as one of the top surfers in Hawaii.

During World War II, Kaniho served in the United States Navy as a frogman. His underwater demolition training further honed his skills as a waterman and prepared him for the challenges he would face in the years to come.

### **Canoe Paddling and Cultural Preservation**

After the war, Kaniho turned his attention to canoe paddling. He joined the Outrigger Canoe Club (OCC) in Honolulu and quickly became one of the club's top paddlers. In 1959, he was part of the OCC crew that won the Molokai Hoe, the world's most prestigious outrigger canoe race.



Kaniho's passion for canoe paddling extended beyond racing. He was deeply committed to preserving and perpetuating Hawaiian culture. He served as a cultural advisor to the OCC and helped to establish the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association (HCRA).

### **Hokule'a's Voyage**

In 1976, Kaniho was part of the crew that sailed the Hokule'a, a replica of an ancient Polynesian voyaging canoe, from Hawaii to Tahiti. This groundbreaking voyage, which proved that the Polynesians had the skills and knowledge to navigate the vast Pacific Ocean, had a profound impact on Kaniho's life.

The Hokule'a's voyage helped to reawaken interest in traditional Hawaiian navigation and wayfinding. Kaniho became a strong advocate for these ancient arts, and he dedicated the rest of his life to sharing his knowledge with future generations.

## **Legacy and Impact**

Sonny Kaniho passed away on August 19, 2009, at the age of 86. He left behind a legacy that continues to inspire watermen and Hawaiian cultural practitioners alike.

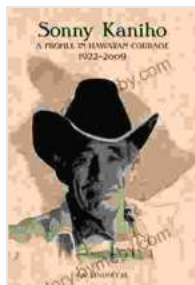
Kaniho's contributions to surfing and canoe paddling are immeasurable. He was a skilled and respected competitor, and his victories helped to raise the profile of both sports. However, his true impact lies in his work to preserve and perpetuate Hawaiian culture.



Through his involvement in the Outrigger Canoe Club, the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association, and the Hokule'a's voyage, Kaniho helped to revitalize Hawaiian traditions and inspire a new generation of cultural practitioners. His legacy as a waterman and a cultural icon will continue to endure for generations to come.

Sonny Kaniho was a true Hawaiian hero. He embodied the courage, perseverance, and aloha spirit that are at the heart of Hawaiian culture. His contributions to surfing, canoe paddling, and cultural preservation have left an enduring mark on the islands and beyond.

Kaniho's life story serves as a reminder of the importance of following our passions and living a life of purpose. By embracing our culture, traditions, and the spirit of adventure, we can all make a positive impact on the world.

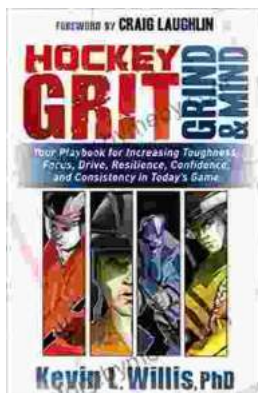


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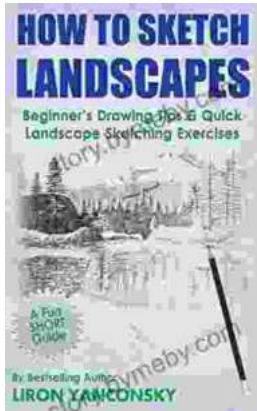
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