

## THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF BEN FINNEY

Ben Finney was born on October 1, 1933 in San Diego. He began surfing in 1953, and earned a Bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley in history, economics, and anthropology in 1955. After college, he spent time surfing in Tahiti and learning French, and also worked in California's aerospace industry. He then did a stint in the navy in 1957 and 1958.

After his service, Ben moved to Honolulu to begin an MA in anthropology. Ben's teachers at UH Mānoa included Katherine Luomala, O.A. Bushnell, and Ken Emory. Ben wrote a masters thesis in 1959 on the history and practice of surfing, later published as *Surfing: The Sport of Hawaiian Kings*, a pioneering book that helped surfing gain respect and legitimacy.

After Mānoa, Ben went to Harvard to study for a Ph.D. in anthropology under Douglas Oliver, which he earned in 1964. Participating in Oliver's research project in Tahiti — on the shift to a capitalist economy — depressed Ben and showed him the urgency of preserving traditional Polynesian culture.

At UC Santa Barbara, Ben began his research on Polynesian voyaging and his attempt to sink the "Kōn-Tiki" drift theory that discredited traditional navigators. He built a double-hulled canoe, christened Nālehia by Mary Pukui. During this period He also traveled to Papua New Guinea, and wrote *Big Men and Business*, a book that painted a brighter picture, than the one in Tahiti, of adopting a cash economy. But from here on Ben would focus on traditional navigation and the lessons it held for the Pacific and the world.

In 1973 Ben took a job in the anthropology department at Mānoa, and founded the Polynesian Voyaging Society with Herb Kane and Tommy Holmes. Together, they

and many others built the Hōkūle'a and sailed it from Hawai'i to Tahiti in 1976. Ben, who was the society's first president, wrote *Hōkūle'a: The Way to Tahiti* to publicize the trip. Ben continued to write many related books, including *Voyage of Rediscovery* and *Sailing in the Wake of the Ancestors*.

In the 1980s, Ben looked over a new horizon. He took what he'd learned about ocean migrations and applied it to space. In books such as *From Sea to Space* and *Interstellar Migration and the Human Experience* he explored parallels between Polynesians setting off across the vast Pacific and humans leaving the small, blue planet Earth. He had a special focus on Russian theorizers of space exploration, researched in collaboration with his wife Mila.

But Ben's focus on Polynesia remained. He sailed on Hōkūle'a's 1985 voyage to Aotearoa, and her 1992 voyage to Rarotonga, and also covered the 1995 voyage from the Marquesas to Hawai'i from an escort vessel. In 2008 Ben and his colleague Rick Feinberg spent three months at field research on Taumako Island in the Solomon Islands' Temotu Province researching surviving practices from an earlier age of wayfaring. All the while he continued to research, publish, teach, and inspire.

Ben received the UH Regents Medal for Excellence in Research, the Royal Institute of Navigation Medal, and the French University of the Pacific Medal. In 2012 he was declared a living treasure by the Hongwanji Mission here in Hawai'i.

Ben is survived by his wife, Mila; sons Sean and Gregory; a stepdaughter, Anna Alepko; two grandchildren; and two step-grandchildren. His legacy is shared by the entire PVS 'ohana.



CELEBRATION OF LIFE FOR PVS FOUNDER

*Ben Finney*

1933 – 2017

SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 2018, 9 A.M. TO 11 A.M.

MARINE EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTER, 10 SAND ISLAND RD.

*The Finney family and the Polynesian Voyaging Society  
would like to thank each of you for helping to celebrate the  
life and legacy of Ben Finney...mahalo.*

*PVS and the Finney family would like to thank Alex Golub for providing Ben's obituary.*



Leon (Ben's Father), Ben, Sean, and Gregory Finney (clockwise from top left).



Ben Finney, Herb Kane, Kenneth Emory at launching ceremony for Hōkūle'a, 1975



Somewhere in the Pacific with Hōkūle'a and PVS founder Ben Finney.



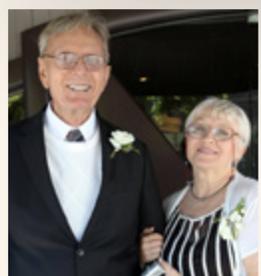
Sean and his brother Greg greet their father Ben Finney after he arrived in Tahiti aboard Hōkūle'a.



Ben captures a moment during Hōkūle'a's '76 voyage to Tahiti.



Ben visits with Hōkūle'a during drydock in 2008 – this is the same bunk he used during the original Tahiti voyage in 1976.



Ben and Mila at Sean's wedding in San Francisco.



Hawai'i State Legislature honors original 1976 crewmembers on Hōkūle'a's 40th birthday in April 2015.



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SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 2018, 9 A.M. TO 11 A.M.

**9:00 a.m. Aloha, Ben Reception**

Music by Coyne Street Trio  
Catering by Pili Group

**9:45 a.m. Aloha & Welcome**

Gregory Finney

**Blessing & Ceremony**

Kahu Kordell Kekoa

**Remembrances & Remarks**

Sean Finney

Joseph Genz

Puakea Nogelmeier

Nainoa Thompson

**10:45 a.m. Ceremony Closing**

**11:00 a.m. Ben's Farewell Sail on Hōkūle'a**

Finney Ohana & Hōkūle'a Crew