

**GUEST: KEPAL MALY: LANAI AND THE SPIRIT OF PLACE**

LSS 524 (LENGTH: 26:46)

FIRST AIR DATE: 6/12/12

I believe Hawaiian, non-Hawaiian alike, we are touched by spirit of place. I also believe that sometimes, some of the bad decisions that are made down here in Honolulu are because we have insulated ourselves in cement, iron, glass molds that don't let us reconnect with the *aina*.

**Cultural consultant and Executive Director of the Lanai Culture and Heritage Center, KEPAL MALY, next on LONG STORY SHORT.**

***Aloha mai kakou*, I'm Leslie Wilcox. Kepal Maly was an introverted teenager, feeling isolated and so adrift that he left his home on Oahu for a new life on the island of Lanai. He was welcomed by the Kaopuikis as a *keiki hookama*, an older child taken in as one's own by another family. The only *Haole* boy in school, Kepal forged a connection with the native Hawaiian culture. He became a fluent speaker of the Hawaiian language. In fact if you close your eyes when he speaks Hawaiian, you think you're in the presence of old-style native speaker. Kepal eagerly immersed himself in the depth of knowledge of his elderly *hanai* parents, *Tutu Mama Hattie Kaenaokalani Kaopuiki* and *Papa Daniel Kaopuiki*, and other *kupuna*. All of that translates into an adult life in happy partnership with his wife *Onaona*, conducting oral histories and other research on Hawaii's people and places. These ethnographic studies have helped preserve island cultural treasures.**

I would—like summertime, you hit fifteen on Lanai, you go out and pick pineapple, right? I loved it when I got night shift, because I'm not a night person, but I'm an early morning person no matter what it is. And so, I would pick pineapple. We would get off close to midnight or something like that, so I'd get a few hours sleep. And *Tutu* would say, Oh up in Waiapaa where the springs, and in this spring, *Tutu* always said there was a *kananaka*, a mermaid, a *moo* form that lived in this spring, that when *Tutu Mama* was a girl, she would go up there. And her *kupuna* had warned her, [HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE]. You wait until the *moo* is gone, the winds have calmed, and then you go take your water. So I wanted to go see the spring. I never saw the *moo*, but I got up to Waiapaa. So they would talk about these places, or where the last purple blossomed *lehua*—

**You would go alone on your own to—**

Yeah.

**—find these places?**

Yeah. I was old enough. In my mid-teens up through high school. So it was great. And I would know when I had found them, come back, describe. Or else, *Tutu* would say there was *maile* up here, and I'd go find the *maile*. Or *Tutu* would say, Oh, had the sugar mill, the old sugar mill. No one knows there was a sugar mill on Lanai. *Tutu* folks, Uncle Lloyd Cockett, *Tutu* Maggie Kauwenaole, they would talk about this place or that. We would go out and find it. I would go find them. It was to me, it was, sorry, one last. When I was in high school, people like do you remember Donald Kilolani Mitchell, who was—

**Yes.**

—up at ka—yes. He and Hooulu Cambra them, and others from Bishop Museum would come to Lanai, and I would get pulled out of school to go take them to go *holo holo*.

**Because you'd already been around.**

Yeah.

**Now, your *Tutu* folks, were they too elderly to go with you on these—**

Yes.

**—explorations?**

Yes.

**How old were they?**

Well, 1898—

**1890.**

—and 1892. So *Tutu* them were in their late seventies, eighties. Their life continued, excuse me, up through their through their mid-90s, just about early to mid-90s.

**And were you the first child for them?**

No. They had sixteen of their own.

**Sixteen—**

Yeah.

**—children?**

Yeah. The oldest today, Auntie Lei, or Kuuleialoha Kaopuiki Kanipaa, is ninety-six. She is sadly, the last elder native speaker of Hawaiian language on the island.

**Lanai has a long history of weathering change brought on by the introduction of European livestock, pineapple production, an affluent tourist clientele, and other by-products of Western Contact. From Kepa Maly's many years of gathering the stories shared by *kupuna*, he brings Lanai's rich cultural history to life.**

Lanai, in at least the tradition of a chief by the name of Kaululaau, perhaps 1400-ish, based on genealogies, he goes to the island, which at that time is called Kaulahea, because named for the—the goddess that gave birth to it. He

encounters ghosts, *akua* who dwell on the island and who make it very difficult for anyone to survive there. He goes around the island—it's a wonderful story, and actually challenges the ghosts and vanquishes them. He reaches the top of the mountain, the highest point, and builds a house there. And he invites the last group of *akua*, ghosts to come to the housewarming party. They weren't very bright, apparently. Inside the house, he's thatched it with *pilali*, the gum of *oha* and *kapa*—uh, *papala*, trees that are like bird line that they would catch birds with to stick. Well, as it a ghost walks in, you have to kneel down to get into the door of old Hawaiian house, yeah, 'cause they weren't tall doors. And as each ghost comes in, he goes, [HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE]. He sticks them up face-first, closing their eyes against the thatching wall of the house, steps out, burns the house down, the ghosts are killed. The last ghost, king of the ghosts, is the last one to die, and on the day of his death, the island is called *Lanai*, day of victory, day of conquest.

**That's what the victory is.**

Yes. And so, Lanai Hale is the peak of the island ... the house of Lanai, built, as—as we said, by Kaululaau. But there are incredible place names, stories. The other peak of our island home is called *Haalelepaakai*, which means salt left behind or discarded. And it's a story of two fishermen who come across from Maui, *malihini*, yeah? They come across. And see, that's another word, *malihini*. *Malihini*—doesn't mean—they're someone who wasn't familiar to a given place. Okay.

**So it could be somebody like me from Honolulu going to—**

That's correct.

**—Lanai.**

Exactly; exactly. So these *malihini* come, and they're laden down with their *puolo* of *paakai*, their fishing gear. Early in the morning, they rise up to the summit, the second summit of Lanai Hale, and they look down into Palawai Basin, and they see a bed of white. Ah, *ae no ka paakai*, [HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE]. There's salt down there, we should just go ahead and throw away our salt, and we'll gather the salt below. Well, they get down there, now the sun is rising. Guess what? *Ho ka*, no more nothing. The salt's all gone, because it was mist.

**Oh-h-h ...**

And so, they ask a native of Palawai. *Ah, ihe a ka paakai?* Where's the salt? Ah, *kuihewa olua*, you made mistake. *Aohe paakai* [HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE]. It wasn't salt, but only mist. And so, Tutu folks taught in parables also, right? And one of the sayings was, *kekuhihewa o ke kanaka piikula o Lanai Hale* [PHONETIC]. The mistake of the men who ascended the slopes of Lanai Hale was to discard their salt. Don't act in haste. Yeah. Know what you've got. One of the fun things about growing up on Lanai was hearing Tutu folks talk about this place, and what it was known for, and these stories are really incredible. Whether they're recorded in *mele* and traditional chant form, or even in music. And of course, Lanai has been so out of sight, out of mind for

many people that there are not a lot—excuse me, not a lot of songs out about Lanai. And so, *Tutu* folks had their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary, and I composed a song for them. It was my way of expressing as a gift of *aloha*, 'cause I couldn't give them any—I had no money, right? Couldn't give them anything. So they had their wedding anniversary, and I composed a song for them. Then we come up to what was basically their seventy-fifty wedding anniversary. Imagine; seventy-five years of marriage, let alone just living that long, yeah? And I composed another song, and it was all based on the stories that they had told me about Lanai. A stronger section of the verse, a softer section of the verse being *Tutu* Papa and *Tutu* Mama, who always covered him, you know, gave him that softer, those qualities that, made life easier. And recently woke up crack of dawn with these words in my mind and this melody. And it was celebrating story places of *Kaa Ahupuaa*, which is the northwestern end of the Island of Lanai, where *Keahiakawelo* where you and I visited you know the Quote, unquote, Garden of the Gods. And the very point is Kaena, the beach, this miles along of white sand beach, Palihua, cove of eggs, because the turtles nested there. And that's celebrated in one of the few ancient *mele* of Lanai for the Pele migration, where Pele, you know [CHANTS], you know, calling, [HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE] is Pele. She wears a garland of *ieie* that is woven for her. As the lines of the *mele* go on, it describes that Pele eats of the turtles of Polihua. It was okay back then, because it was in their cultural context, yes? And it talks about these places, though, and about standing on top of Kanepuu and looking up to the heights of Lanai Hale. And you can see the cloud layer going down like a garland at Maunalei, which means Mountain Garland. So the song speaks of some of those famous places.

**What about that wind you told me about—**

Oh—

**—with that—**

—yes.

**—lovely, just gorgeous name?**

See? Again, that beauty of the Hawaiian poetry and language and of their mind comes from their *naau*, from their very gut, their essence, yeah? Um, the wind's name is *Hoomoepili*. *Hoomoe*, cause to lay down the *pili* grass. And of course, when we stand out there, you can see how that wind can cause actually sometimes things more than *pili* grass to lay down. [CHUCKLE]

**That's right; the rocks get eroded.**

Yes, yes. And rolling away bits and flakes of rock like an onion, unpeeling one layer after another, and being blown off into the wind.

***Hoomoepili*.**

*Hoomoepili*; yeah.

**And *pili* is a word that you use a lot.**

Yeah. Well, *pili* is not just that grass, but it is the connection, the relationship, the closeness, yeah, that we feel. And I believe Hawaiian, non-Hawaiian alike, we are touched by a spirit of place. I'm sorry, I also believe that sometimes, some

of the bad decisions that are made down here in Honolulu are because we have insulated ourselves in cement, iron, glass molds that don't let us reconnect with the *aina*.

**Can't even see it.**

Yeah. Yeah. So you know, these kinds of things. Can I share with you a little bit of that *mele*?

**Oh, I'd love to hear it.**

That talks about that. You know, we just—

**So this is a tour of the northwestern side?**

The northwestern side of Lanai, Kaa—

**Now, there's a Kaena on Oahu that's—**

That's correct.

**—also northwestern. Is that—**

Yes.

**Does that mean ...**

It's—

**That means heat, doesn't it?**

Well, it can, but it also means wrath.

**Wrath.**

Because the currents that come from the Koolau and the Kona sides of the islands meet there, and they—

**Oh-h-h ...**

—roil. Yeah, so—

**That's it. And I've seen them—**

Yes; exactly.

**—butt up against each other.**

That's right.

[UKULELE/SINGING-HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE]

Now, we're gonna go up to Kanepuu and look up to Lanai Hale. We were there.

[UKULELE/SINGING-HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE]

The last line of the song is nine verses, so I'm not gonna do 'em all.

[UKULELE/SINGING-HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE]

So the last line says, These are among the storied places of Lanai which is beloved and set there in the calm. And this comes from *Tutu* folks, their stories, the—the stories, the traditions that are handed down. And so, we need to keep people connected to this beauty. It's all that we have that no one else has, right?

**That last word, *malie*, calm.**

Yeah.

**In 2007, Kepa Maly found the opportunity to honor his adopted island home. As the Executive Director of the non-profit Lanai Culture and Heritage Center, Kepa showcases Lanai's past and provides a gathering place for living history.**

Office of Hawaiian Affairs gave us seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars to engage young local people of Lanai who were otherwise unemployed in stewardship out in the field, and in creating a climate controlled museum and engaging people in documenting and collecting their history. You walk in, the space is well used. We have a timeline that I've got people from the Smithsonian and other places coming and saying, This is a model for communities across the nation. So there's a timeline that takes you from the island rising above sea level, to the close of the plantation in 1992. We have artifacts that were found by native families and given to Kenneth Emory in 1921 and 22, when he did his initial archeology on Lanai.

**What kind of artifacts?**

Typical things, like the *poi* pounders, *ulumaika*, sling stones, lures. We have an incredible *pu*, a conch shell. It was found actually by John Stokes in 1911, 1912 down at Kanaele. And I got brave one day, and tried to blow it. It has the cleanest, clearest sound. It's just—and imagine, who did that herald. Who did that conch, that *pu*, herald the arrival of sometime in antiquity, yeah? Our program focuses on a thousand years basically of residency on Lanai; that Hawaiian period up through a ranch. We were an active ranch for a hundred years, longer than we were a pineapple plantation. The ranch ... was owned by Walter Murray Gibson. Gibson starts the ranching operation, formalizes it basically as a sheep ranch, and began exporting sheep, wool, and mutton from the island to the Honolulu market. Then, he passes away in 1888. His daughter-in-law—daughter, Talula, and son-in-law, Frederick Hazelton, take over and try various facets of business, and in 1898, come up with this idea that reminds me of modern ideas, and creates a sugar plantation. Lots of water, no worry, we can develop eight million gallons of water a day on Lanai. We going plant three thousand acres of sugar. They build a locomotive, a train, they have a sugar mill, they have a community of like eighty or ninety houses, a little hotel. All this stuff. And by 1901, they formalize it in 1899, in March of 1901 they're bankrupt. And three thousand acres of land are left uncultivated, with grazing animals over it, our reefs are buried under sedimentation, the beautiful reefs and fishponds. Today, when you go to Lanai to Keomoku Village, we're restoring through an AGAPE Foundation grant, we've engaged community members, and we're restoring the old church, the last wooden building of Keomoku Village. It's beautiful. Once you get there now, we have the sugar mill trail

open, the church is restored. The old boat that ended on the shore is now three hundred feet inland, because that much sedimentation in a hundred years—

**Ah ...**

—has occurred. There are things to see. We've uncovered the locomotive, the 1837 mortar, stone and mortar school, church houses also. See, what we're doing is, our program has allowed us and the landowner has given us a right of entry agreement to do this. What I believe is, we're creating added value for our own *kamaaina* experience on Lanai, but for people who come and want to. Why would I drive that long, dirty *keawe* over-laden road if no more nothing to see? So you know, our program, as I said, spans this thousand years of ranch, a three-year-long sugar mill, seventy years as a pineapple plantation up until 1992. Imagine; when Onaona and I returned to Lanai the graduating class of 2006 was the first class to graduate children that had never seen pineapple growing commercially on Lanai. The continuity on Lanai, from one business endeavor to the next, has always been the people. And there are some people, even among the plantation period, families of Japanese, of Filipino, of Korean mixed ancestries, they are on Lanai because it is home. We've just finished an oral history project, recording elder *kamaaina* families of Lanai. And how many of them tear up when they say they came from the Philippines, or they came from somewhere else, or from Japan, Lanai is my home. There are few places like Lanai now, and I think that that's an asset for us. It's a way, actually, to remain sustainable and viable if we care for these unique qualities.

**There used to be a lot more people living on Lanai—**

Yes.

**And they didn't need a barge coming in for food, either.**

You got it. The Kenneth Emory, and actually, Dr. Emory and I walked around Lanai together in 1975. It was fifty years of his celebrating the publication of his *Archaeology of Lanai*. But when Kenneth was on Lanai in 1921 and 22, he gave estimates based on what he saw of a population of about three thousand people. We've been doing, funded by Office of Hawaiian Affairs, archaeology in the Kaa District of Lanai. And with the archaeologists, we know that we can rewrite the history of Lanai, and actually, the [INDISTINCT] settlement and residency history of Lanai. We know also that based on the archaeological evidence ... at least six thousand people lived on Lanai, and what you just said, it was sustainable. Everything they need, they caught from the ocean or they grew on the land. Today, one week, southerly storm, Kona storm come in, *naulu* blowing in like that *pau*, the barge doesn't go in. Milk is nine, ten dollars a gallon. Eh, you want good gas mileage; five seventy-nine a gallon right now.

**I think I paid that price.**

[CHUCKLE]

**It's five-seventy now.**

Yeah.

**Yeah. I mean—**

Yeah.

**It's gotta be, what ... well, it is one of the highest—**

Yes.

**—prices.**

It is the highest, yes.

**Is it The?**

I believe it's the highest.

**And there's one gas station—**

One gas station.

**—in Lana'i City.**

Yes. And—and of course, the nice thing is there's only thirty miles of paved road, the rest is dirt. So, you know, not like we gotta drive far.

**Yeah, but when you have a stomachache, it's not a good time to go for a drive.**

That's right.

**The small but well-organized Lanai Culture and Heritage Center is a revelation for visitors and some residents as well. While pineapple production was tough on the land, Lanai still has special cultural places and they are simply not as well-known as those on other islands. At the heritage center in the heart of little Lanai City, community volunteers take care of some of the learning programs, sharing island history and spirit.**

Well, most of our people say Lanai, and they say White Stone or Sweetheart Rock, or Garden of the Gods. One of Onaona's big missions, and this why in our website we have this place names. Speak our traditional names, speak the names of our *kupuna*. And it engages people. That's what we have. So you can get a nice resort with good service anywhere; what you can't get are the stories of the people, the storied faces and places of Lanai. Yeah?

**I know at Manele Bay, the—**

M-hm.

**—the—**

[CHUCKLE]

**The tourists love the story of Sweetheart Rock.**

Yes.

**Now, is that based on fact, or on true legend?**

Yes.

**Not made up—**

—it is.

**—legend?**

But it—it's—it's—it's an interesting account in that Puupehe, or Pehe, was the name of a young, beautiful woman of Lanai. She was betrothed to a gentleman by the name of Makakehau, dewy misty eyes. So you get an idea that maybe there's not a real cheerful personality there, yes? He loves her greatly, but he's also jealous, and when he leaves to go to the uplands or goes

out to go fishing, he wants her to stay in the cave of Malauwea, which is where Puupehe sits here, and then the higher peak is here. There's a cave right underneath there. Well, the cave faces out to the Kona storms. One day, Makakehau is ascending the slopes and getting ready to go gather *uao* birds off of the mountain lands. He looks back down and sees off of Kealahikahiki ... Kahoolawe, a *naulu* storm, raging storm suddenly swell coming in. He drops what he's doing, and runs back down, but is too late. Pehe has died, killed by the wave surge. He laments her passing, gathers her body, and that night she's prepared for interment. But at the close of night, he asks her family, who are rather peeved at him, to allow—

**Rather?**

Yeah. To allow him to watch vigil over her this one last time. They agree. Early the morning, the sun is arising. They go to the *hale*, to the house site. No more them; they're gone. And off in the distance, *Auwe!* [HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE]. You know, *Auwe!* My love has passed on, never shall we two swim in the waters protected by the shark *Ahipuhi*, never shall we gather the *uau* of the uplands or eat the *ohelo* berries, or walk the sandy shore at Ulopoe. They follow the voice, and they see that he is atop of that island's steep-side at eighty, ninety feet high, something like that, and there's a platform built on top of it with an upright stone in it. Still see it today. He ends his *uwe helu*, his lament, and leaves off and kills himself. So, the only junk thing about that is, is that it's not a real good sweetheart story, right?

**[CHUCKLE]**

And so, they don't usually tell that part of the story.

**But did it really happen, or is that a legend based on something?**

We have to believe that it is tradition, that it was handed down to folks told the story. Walter Murray Gibson collected the story from, I believe it was Piianaia, who was with Kamehameha on Lanai when during the Kamehameha period. It has been handed down.

**At the time of this conversation in 2012, Kepa Maly lives on Oahu for medical reasons. He visits Lanai each month to keep the vision strong at the Lanai Culture and Heritage Center. *Mahalo piha*, Kepa Maly for sharing your "Long Story Short," and thank YOU for watching and supporting PBS Hawaii. I'm Leslie Wilcox. *A hui hou kakou*.**

---

You know, we have a mesic, a dry forest complex; it's struggling. But there are things found, like a beautiful *iliah*, a *maile* whose leaf was the size of my little fingernail that was famed in native language accounts as being gathered and bedecked with a *lei* as you went down to Polihua. The *puanau* or *nanu*, the native gardenia five wild trees left on Earth there.

