



A Monument to Paniolo Pride

by Paniolo Preservation Society | Jul 27, 2020



A long time ago, at a rodeo far, far away, three Hawaiian paniolo thrilled the fans in Cheyenne, Wyoming with spectacular wins. It was 1908, and Eben Low, great grandson of John Parker I, sent Archie Ka'au'a, Jack Low

and Ikua Purdy to the Frontier Days World Championship, where all three took titles, and Ikua won the Steer Roping contest in 56 seconds. In Eben's words, "You cannot imagine the noise of the applause our boys received from those 30,000 watchers... the kanakas had won!"

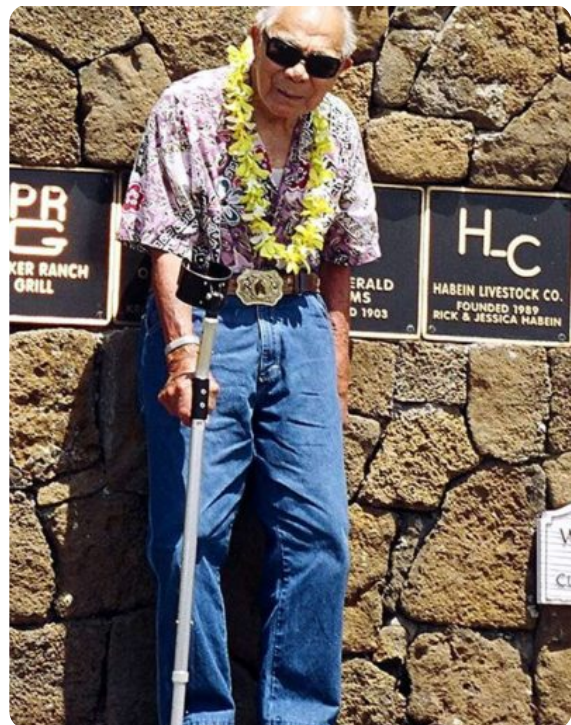
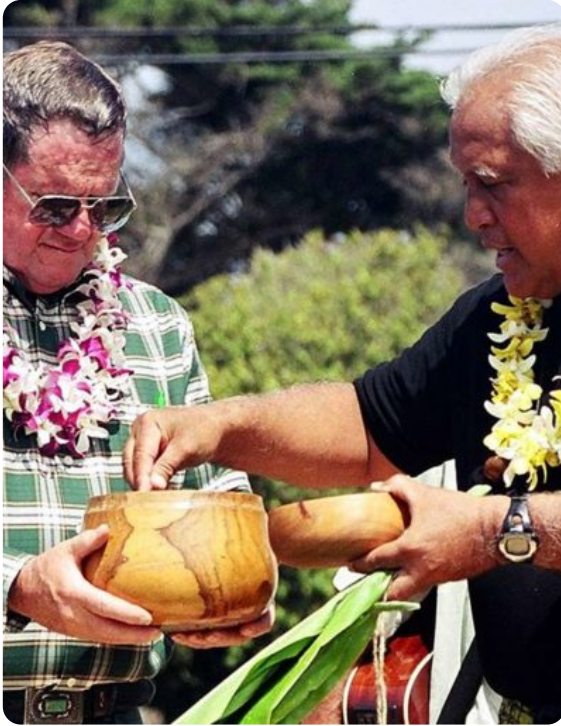
Almost 100 years later, Ikua was inducted into the National Cowboy Museum Hall of Fame, and Paniolo Preservation Society commissioned famed cowboy artist Fred Fellows to sculpt a monument in Ikua's honor. Fred, an annual visitor to Waimea for over 20 years, worked with a foundry in Kalispell, Montana to create the larger-than-lifesized bronze statue, for a price of \$300,000. To raise money for the project, PPS sold 36 small-scale models to individual investors.



Statue unveiling with Fred Fellows

In January 2003, the finished statue—27 feet long and 65 tons—arrived by Young Brothers tug into Kawaihae Harbor and was trucked up to Waimea on a giant flatbed trailer. It resided in a warehouse until February, when a massive crane placed it in a prepared site near the post office at [Parker](#)

Ranch Center. Kahu Danny Akaka gave a traditional Hawaiian blessing, and paniolo families, including the Purdys, draped lei around the statue's base, near brass replicas of their brands. Afterward, the community celebrated with hula, music, and storytelling.







In 2006, the shopping center expanded, and there was an opportunity to relocate the monument to a more prominent site along the highway. A team of professionals came together for the project: Tom Zambeck of [Zambeck Construction](#), Phil and Celeste Joy of Phil Joy Housemovers, Cyrus Mead, Brooks Crandlemire, Allen Viger, and trucker Melvin Miranda. They cleared the site, prepared a concrete and lava-rock base, lifted, transported and placed the huge sculpture, as Waikoloa photographer Mike O'Brien documented the entire four-day process.





Tom Zambeck of Zambeck Construction Inc. in Waimea, remembers the occasion well. “I did not realize how important the statue was to the community until after we started prepping it for the relocation,” says

Tom. “And, meeting Uncle Martin and Aunty Doris {Ikua’s son and wife}, the stress level went up a few notches.”

Tom continues, “Funny story, when we lowered the statue onto the trailer, the tires went almost completely flat! Here I am thinking “This is the strongest trailer on the island and it can’t hold the weight. What do I do now?”” After a few minutes, Melvin came over to talk with him. “He explained that he keeps the tires low on air when the trailer is empty,” says Tom. “So all he had to do is air up the tires, and we were good to go.”

The move across the parking lot took place after dark, and, once the statue was secure, everyone gathered at Tante’s for a celebratory pau hana.

Phil Joy remembers seeing Uncle Martin as they came across the parking lot with the sculpture. “His son Martin {83} was playing music at one of the Parker Ranch shops {Tante’s} came out for pictures,” says Phil. “It brought tears to his eyes to see his father ride again as he said ‘that’s my Dad.’”

“We moved it in August 2006, and the earthquake came in October 2006,” says Tom. “I had to go check out the statue to see how it weathered... Still intact and level. Whew!”

In 2008, the monument stood as a landmark during the community’s “Waiomina” celebration of the 100th anniversary of the paniolos’ victory in Cheyenne, Wyoming. And so it remains, reminding all who pass by of their paniolo pride, and a homegrown cowboy hero whose force is still with us.

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