

The graceful green turtle inspires name for sailboat

NOUMEA, NEW CALEDONIA

>> I'm on the road again, my road being the Pacific Ocean and my vehicle being my old friend Honu.

Craig and I bought the 37-foot French ketch in 1984 on the East Coast with the plan to sail it home to Hawaii. The first thing we did to prepare for the voyage was give the boat a Hawaiian name.

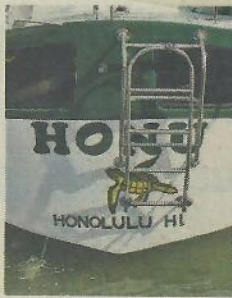
In nautical lore, changing a boat's name is supposed to be bad luck, but that idea came from men who thought bathing made you sick and that women on ships caused storms. We ignored the superstition, registered the boat as Honu and had an artist paint a sea turtle on the transom.

We picked the word for sea turtle because the boat reminded us of those graceful grazers, their shells heavy and wide yet efficient and seaworthy. Green turtles can weigh up to 400 pounds with shells 4 feet long, yet, like Honu's Fiberglas hull, they glide through the water like angels on wings.

It took us nearly a year, but the two of us sailed the boat to its new home in the Ala Wai Boat Harbor. As Honu's original blue paint, cushions and sail covers wore out, we replaced them in green, even though green turtle shells aren't green, but shades of gold and brown. The "green" in the name comes from turtles' green fat, once prized in soup.

When we named the boat Honu, the word wasn't widely used. But in testimony to the success of federal and state wildlife protection laws, today "honu" is common in Hawaii, both in term and turtles — but not in soup.

Honu and I have had some momentous passages together, and not just those



COURTESY SUSAN SCOTT

The 37-foot French ketch.

of the sea. When I was 55 I sailed to Palmyra, Tahiti and across the South Pacific to Australia.

During my voyaging I discovered that the word "honu" also sailed throughout the Pacific. In addition to Hawaii, "honu" also means "green turtle" in the native languages of Tahiti and New Zealand. Cook Islanders call turtles "onu," in Tonga they're "fonu" and Fijians say "vonu."

In all places, though, including here in New Caledonia, where Craig and I are preparing Honu for a passage to Australia, our boat's name gets smiles of recognition. OK, it's probably the turtle on the transom that draws the smiles, but the picture defines the boat's name.

By 2012, in Mexico, Honu needed new hull and deck paint. I hired out the huge job, flew home and returned months later to find the painting top-notch — with one exception. The boat's transom had a lovely new turtle painted below the name, but the O in "Honu" angled oddly to the right.

As I stared at the word, thinking, I must get this fixed, the American contractor said, "The O is a halo because turtles are angels of the sea." He shrugged. "That's what the artist said."

Honu's halo remains intact.

As lava again approaches their homes, most folks in Puna say they accept nature's unforgiving ways

By Dan Nakaso
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The ongoing eruption from Kilauea Volcano that began on Jan. 3, 1983, already has burned and buried more than 300 homes, including some that were rebuilt only to be destroyed again.

And still, the residents of Hawaii island's vast Puna district continue to coexist with an unpredictable lake of 2,100 degrees of heat and fire that once again is threatening homes and people.

"It's been lava flow after lava flow after lava flow," said Piilani Kaawaloa, who has been forced to evacuate three times and over the past three decades has watched dozens of homes owned by family members get slowly eaten by fire and lava.

Kaawaloa still lives in her family's three-bedroom, two-bath house in Pahoa, situated less than 2 miles from Friday's latest lava sighting.

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