

# 'Ewa's Old Man of the Sea

by Mike Byers

APRIL 2017

Mike Byers met Robert Takamoto in the summer of 1962 when Mike and Robert's daughter became friends in college. He said, "Joyce knew I loved the sea and fishing so she introduced me to her folks. Robert and I became good friends and spent many afternoons in 'Ewa and on the beach. Mr. Takamoto passed away about 10 years ago."

Mike graduated from the University of Hawai'i and was on the UH swim team coached by Olympic Coach Soichi Sakamoto. Mike is a retired attorney and paddles for Hui Heihei Wa'a in Silverdale, Washington.

■ Ignoring sharks and other creatures of the deep, Robert Takamoto would swim out 300 yards or more from the beach at Barber's Point and Campbell Estate in hopes of catching the "big one". Many people who knew him had their doubts.

On January 19, 1963, Mr. Takamoto caught a world-record 233 1/2-lb sea bass from shore off Barber's Point on O'ahu, Hawai'i, at 4 p.m. This was the largest deep-sea bass caught from shore with 60-lb test line, according to a newspaper.

Robert Takamoto was born in 1916 and worked for 'Ewa Plantation where he lived and raised his family next to the cane fields. I had the privilege of going fishing with him late one afternoon in 1962. I watched him cook a white eel, which he always used for bait in hopes of one day catching the "big one." Wearing his "bamboo goggles," he swam far out to sea and dropped the line in deep waters. We slept on the beach and waited for the bell on his rod to ring, signaling a catch, but it did not happen.

In 1963 I received a letter from him along with a photo and newspaper clipping revealing his dream come true.

Robert's daughter, Joyce (Takamoto) Tanisaka, recalled, "My father would always use white eel, hook it on and swim out until I could barely see him out at sea, drop the hook in the right spot and swim back to the beach. While he was swimming back, he would dive for lobster, eel and fish using his homemade spear gun."

Joyce stated, "I recall my dad taking young, good swimmers from 'Ewa fishing with him, and they came back scared because of the very strong currents and the walk on the coral and rocks in order to get back on shore, or the time he was bit by an eel and required stitches."

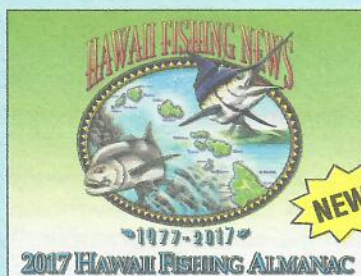


Robert Takamoto and his world-record 233 1/2-lb sea bass caught off O'ahu in 1963. Photo from Mike Byers.

Mr. Takamoto gathered the community together during the big sugar plantation strike in 1958 before Hawai'i became a state. Joyce recalled, "He created a soup kitchen in each community where families on strike could gather and have a nice, hot meal. The vegetables came from our home garden. My dad arranged for entertainment from the people living in the community, and I danced hula at age 14."

I still have a picture in my mind of the Takamoto's plantation home with all the flowers, the vegetable garden next to the cane field, koi fish tanks where Mr. Takamoto raised them and the miso soup made by Mrs. Takamoto for me when I had a sore throat.

... Mike



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