

Keola Beamer

Mauna Kea - White Mountain Journal

I keep a journal of the things that happen in my life. Moments in time that mean something to me. I tried to write it all in a big black book. I found it hard to hunt for the words, and harder still to write with any fluency. As the years went by, I discovered that words placed limitations on the depth of my experiences. I came to believe that words were rather crude implements. Instead of really describing the beauty of an experience, the best I could do with words was to sort of, hack away at it. This is why I turned to music. I longed for a better way to convey what was in my heart. Music has since become my way of communicating these feelings. So I have written my journal with the sweet melody of the Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar, and with the rhythm and rest of the mountain winds. After all these years, I have finally found the tools that fit my hands the best.

Mauna Kea (The White Mountain) is described in a Hawaiian chant by my mother Nona Beamer as follows;

He lei keakea noho maila i ka mauna

Ka mauna ki'eki'e i luna ku kilakila

Kilakila 'o luna 'o luna i ke ao The soft white lei encircles the crest of the mountain

The mountain high above, standing in great majesty

Majestic on high, veiled in the clouds

I was raised by my Hawaiian family on the slopes of this mountain, by the quiet light of kerosene lamps and the distant sound of the *Pueo* (Hawaiian Owl). This is a recollection of my experiences, stories of my life and small observations I have made in this current of time. I hope I have at least opened the cover to this journal. Sit down. Relax. Come and turn the pages.

--- *Keola Beamer*

SET ONE

1. *'Imi Au Ia 'Oe*

by Charles E. King

In a small *koa* church, my Grandfather's voice would carry this song up along the pews, reverberating against the windows. As a small boy, I would stand next to him, holding my hymnal, not knowing about Good or Evil, who or what God was, just listening to the sound of the old man's voice and watching the skylarks high above the open fields.

2. *Manu Kai (Sea Bird)*

by Keola Beamer

On the weekends, we would sometimes spend the day at Kawaihae beach. Away from the ranch, the sea birds always fascinated me. With my shoulders browned by the sun and

feet anchored in the hot sand, I longed for their freedom, their boundless spirit as they skimmed above the waves.

3. ***Sweet Lei Mamo***
by Charles Hopkins

After the day's work was *pau* (finished), the old man would pull off his boots, sit in his favorite chair and serenade my Grandmother with his special baritone 'ukulele. He loved that 'ukulele and took real good care of it, polishing it with his red cowboy handkerchief, and taking it lovingly in his arms. With a mischievous twinkle in his eye, he'd settle into his big captain's chair and sing this song to my Grandmother. They had been childhood sweethearts and were married for 67 years when the old man died in 1990.

4. ***Keiki Dream (Child Dream)***
by Keola Beamer

The kids at the Beamer Ranch slept upstairs on a big *hikie'e* (large, flat, bed). Cousins, nieces, friends - you name it, all laid out in various directions. The trick was to carve out your little space and defend it ferociously against the wayward arm or leg from some other kid. If you couldn't do this, all was lost.

Before drifting off to sleep, I'd look out through the window. In the moonlight, the pasture land was cloaked in a fine mist that seemed to descend from the clouds. At night, Mauna Kea took on an entirely different countenance... an exotic and fascinating other-worldliness. Bathed in moonlight and crowned with stars, she lifted her soul to the heavens like some giant, glimmering angel.

5. ***Kaula 'ili (The Lariat)***
Traditional

My Grandfather was one of the best cowboys in Waimea, not just because the ranch was flourishing, but because Papa had a genuine love for the land and the creatures on it. Once when I was home from college a friend of mine wanted a pheasant to stuff and mount for his father. He asked me if I could shoot one for him. I told the old man and we set off with the shotguns. A beautiful male ring-necked pheasant came into view, proud and magnificent. I didn't have a clear shot, but my Grandfather did. He shouldered the rifle and took aim for a straight, easy kill. In the stillness of that late afternoon, I waited for the report of his rifle. It never came. He put the gun down, and slowly shook his head. With a flourish, that beautiful creature lunged into the air and flew straight into the setting sun. We stood there for a long time without saying a word. When we finally made our way back to the ranch house, someone asked, "See any pheasant?" "Nope," he said, "not today."

I began to realize that my Grandfather had a unique style of being a Hawaiian and was blessed with a poet's heart. He often spoke to us of the Hawaiian thought in songs. "*Kaula 'ili*," he said, "is not just a leather rope, it is a snare that will entangle your lover's heart."

6. ***Hi'ilawe***
Traditional

My Grandparents spoke fluent Hawaiian. To keep Papa awake when we were driving to Waipi'o, my Grandmother would chatter endlessly. Who was with who, what was going on in town, which lucky kid was going to get a tablespoon of cod liver oil that night, all the really juicy stuff was in Hawaiian. The old man sat at the wheel, grunting and groaning in the appropriate places. If he looked like he was going to stay awake for awhile, my Grandmother would ask me to recite the multiplication tables to her from the back seat. Before long the old man would start nodding off again.

Since they enjoyed visiting their friends in Waipi'o Valley, we'd drive to the top and go down the trail by mule with the taro farmers. Hi'ilawe Waterfall is always a spectacular sight. It is the highest free-falling waterfall in Hawai'i and one of the highest in the world. Winding down the narrow path, the mules would carefully choose each footing. To keep the mules awake, my Grandmother would talk and talk, all in Hawaiian, all the way down the mountain.

7. ***Pupu Hinuhinu (Shiny Shell Lullaby)***
by Nona Beamer

Those days down at the beach moved at a different pace. The bright summer days stretched out forever. It was as if time had overlooked our small island and went on to some place else. In the salt spray of the onshore winds, school and homework faded into the wavering heat like the tattered remnants of some kind of dream. This was real. This was our life together.

Leaning over the smoky ashes of the kiawe wood fire, Mother told us of our ancestors who found this land. With the sound of her voice rising over the pounding surf, she would speak of ancient battlefields, of demons and curses. Of love and light. Drifting in the sweet memories of her own childhood, she would sing us to sleep with this lullaby.

8. ***Ke'ena Malu (Quiet Place)***
by Keola Beamer

We used to play a child's game in the forest. The first kid ran yelling, "Charge," and threw a big stick at the other kid's fort. The other kid threw a stick in retribution. Many years later, I saw a wildlife television special and the monkeys were doing the same thing. I got caught in the middle of an aggressive charge, with my stick in the air and screaming like a demented banshee. For this unforgivable behavior, I was sentenced to a spend time in my "Quiet Place."

SET TWO

9. ***'Uli E (The Wandering Tattler Bird)***
by George Keahi

In the early mornings and late afternoons, the 'ulili bird was a frequent visitor to our family home in the small fishing village of Miloli'i on the Kona side of the Big Island. These were some of the greatest times of my young life. Fishing and learning how to play cards from my older (and somehow more disreputable) cousins. There were only Hawaiians living there back then, with naked kids and grunting pigs running around in the one street. The pigs ate the yellow seed pods that fell from the kiawe trees. Walking down the road in the late afternoon, I felt the warmth of many invitations given in that sweet Hawaiian way, with folks calling out from the little houses saying, "*Hui...eh boy...hele mai, 'ai,*" (Come...eat).

We learned that if you helped push the canoes up on the beach when the fishermen came in, they would always give you a big handful of *opelu* fish (mackerel). We pretended that we worked really hard and had the perspiration and acting abilities to cinch the deal. This was important, because we needed the bait. One gets hungry playing cards and laughing and laughing and laughing.

10. ***Pua Tubarose (Tuberose Blossom)***

by Kimo Kamana

To repent for some evil misdoing beyond my intellectual capacity to comprehend, the old man would try to redeem himself to my Grandmother by coming home with his arms laden with these fragrant white blossoms. He'd bow gallantly and present these to her when she came to answer his soft knock at the door. Nine times out of ten, she'd let him back in the house. Only once he had to sleep with the horses.

This is a guitar duet with my good friend George "Keoki" Winston. It was Keoki's idea to take this deep ballad approach to the interpretation, bringing to mind Papa coming up the steps in the hope of forgiveness.

11. ***Barefoot on the Range***

by Keola Beamer

We would saddle our horses in the afternoon and go down to the post box to get the old man's paper. The damn driveway was four miles long. On the way home, the horses knew that they would be fed grain, so they would run at top speed up the very last hill. It got to be quite competitive with the horses. We kids would hold on for our very lives. In Hawai'i, the horses have shoes, but the kids riding - they no more!

12. ***Sase (Sassy)***

by Joseph K. Kokolia

The women of the Beamer family are all exquisite dancers. At our family gatherings, this *kolohe* (rascal) hula was a favorite. The musicians in the family all had interesting phrasing styles that they would constantly re-invent in their exuberance. I don't think they ever played it the same way twice.

13. ***For Sweetheart Grandma***

by Keola Beamer

Through an unfortunate accident of time, I never knew my Great Grandmother, Helen Desha Beamer. She passed away right after I was born. Although I grew up with her music deep in my soul, I never got to feel the touch of her hand or smell the freshness of her hair. I would give anything to go back in time and hold her in my arms.

She speaks to my heart with her music. I try to speak to her with mine. It's the best we can do.

14. ***Makika (Mosquito)***

by Keola Beamer

It is said that an angry crew of a whaling ship, bent on getting revenge on the missionaries, unleashed a horde of mosquitoes on the coastal town of Lahaina. The larvae had hatched in an old wooden water barrel during their voyage.

In this solo guitar piece - I express my appreciation for this gift. The triple slur ornament is my depiction of the mosquito, who just when you think you've got a bead on him, escapes and flits away.

Underneath my mosquito net in Miloli'i, I watched the mosquitoes diligently searching for the *puka* (holes). Patient little bastards.

15. ***Ka Wailele O 'Akaka ('Akaka Falls)***

by Helen Parker

'Akaka Falls is outside the town of Hilo, along the Hamakua coast of the Island of Hawai'i. You can sit up there amidst the 'ama'u fern and feel life's concerns lift from your heart. The old man said that the Cliff-God, Paoa, lived there. "You can see his face in the mountain."

Sitting there together, we could hear the rain forest breathing. It's as though God said to grow, and every single plant and tree plunged their roots deep into the soil with some fierce, fantastic life-force. There is life everywhere. We could feel the heartbeat of the Falls as it pulsed down to the rocks below.

The old man said softly, "It's a gift to be alive."

He was right about a lot of things.

Liner notes by Keola Beamer

NOTES ABOUT THE SONGS BY GEORGE WINSTON:

1. On **'Imi Au Ia 'Oe**, Keola created this arrangement for two nylon string guitars and one electric guitar, adding a second melody to fill out the song. He is especially noted for his ability to compose additional parts to instrumental arrangements of simple, yet profound Hawaiian melodies where the words have been the most important element. Keola plays the piece in his trademark C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-E), from lowest pitched string to highest. It is known in slack key circles as "Keola's C", since he is most associated with it. Wahine means a tuning that contains a Major 7th note, here the "B" note on the 2nd string, which is hammered on to produce the tonic note, one of the characteristic sounds of Wahine tunings.
2. In **Manu Kai**, Keola prominently uses the "hammer-on" and "pull-off" slack key techniques. A "hammer-on" is an ornament produced by plucking a note and immediately fretting above that note to produce a second tone. "Pull-off" refers to plucking a string and immediately pulling the finger off that note, producing a second note that is either open or fretted by another finger. Played solo on the steel string guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), Keola's unique sounding ornaments in **Manu Kai** can almost be felt as well as heard.
3. **Sweet Lei Mamo** is played solo in Keola's C Wahine tuning on the nylon string guitar.
4. **Keiki Dream** features two guitars: the steel string in Keola's C Wahine tuning, played in the key of C and capoed to the 9th fret to sound in the key of A; and the nylon string, in the same tuning, played in the key of G and capoed up to the 2nd fret to sound in the key of A. This is often done in slack key when two players play in the same key, but either use different tunings, or play in a different key in the same tuning using a capo, as Keola does here.
5. **Kaula 'Ili** is often associated with the late slack key guitarist, Sonny Chillingworth, who first recorded it in 1964 on his keynote album, WAIMEA COWBOY (Mahalo Records 4011). A very soulful slower version can be heard on his 1994 album, SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat 38005). Keola has added an original 18 measure melody to the middle of Kaula 'ili in his arrangement for two nylon string guitars in the D Wahine Tuning (D-A-D-F#-A-C#).
6. **Hi'ilawe** was the great slack key guitarist Gabby Pahinui's signature song, and he recorded it several times, beginning in 1946. Here, Keola takes an entirely different approach in his interpretation of this popular slack key piece, adding many new parts to the original melody. **Hi'ilawe** is played on two nylon string guitars in a G6th tuning (D-G-D-G-B-E).
7. **Pupu Hinuhinu (Shiny Shell Lullaby)** is played on two steel string guitars in an F Wahine tuning (C-F-C-G-C-E), and Keola composed the bridge.
8. **Ke'ena Malu (Quiet Place)** is played on two electric guitars in Keola's C Wahine tuning. Keola places part of a matchbook cover under the strings near the bridge on both guitars to create a muted effect.

9. On '**Ulihi E**, Keola uses another variation of a C Wahine tuning, played in the key of G on the steel string guitar. In this Wahine tuning, the guitar is tuned to G Major "Taro Patch", but with the lowest string dropped to C (C-G-D-G-B-D). This C Wahine tuning is also known as "Dropped C" tuning because the lowest pitched string is tuned down one whole step. It is also commonly referred to as "Leonard's C" Wahine tuning, because it is the favorite tuning of the very influential slack key guitarist Leonard Kwan.
10. In this duet of **Pua Tubarose**, I (Keoki) play the solo introduction on an 8-string steel string guitar in basically what is Leonard's C Wahine tuning with a low F on the 8th string and a low C on the 7th string, combined with the G Major "Taro Patch" tuning (F-C-D-G-D-G-B-D). From the second verse on, Keola plays the lead melody on the nylon string guitar in his C Wahine tuning.
11. **Barefoot on the Range** is played on the nylon string guitar in the D Wahine tuning.
12. **Sase** is arranged for two nylon string guitars, both in Keola's C Wahine tuning and capoed up two frets to sound in the key of D. Note the nice verse played in harmony.
13. **For Sweetheart Grandma** is played solo on the electric guitar in the G6th tuning, capoed up to the 2nd fret to sound in the key of A.
14. **Makika** is played solo on the steel string guitar in F Wahine tuning. Keola again uses his trademark "hammer-on" and "pull-off" ornaments, including discordant notes that are not heard directly but are played for a percussive effect. He demonstrates this on his instruction video (see [Discography](#)). This is the first time these types of ornaments have been recorded in this tuning.
15. On **Ka Wailele O 'Akaka ('Akaka Falls)**, Keola plays the nylon string guitar in his C Wahine tuning in the keys of F and C. He uses a beautiful VI to VII to I chord progression as the modulation sequence to both keys (Ab to Bb to C in the key of C; Db to Eb to F in the key of F). This is the first time that anyone has played predominantly in the key of F in this C Wahine Tuning.

MAHALO

Francis Keali'inohopono Desha Beamer (my Grandfather), "Dambie" Louise Leiomalama Kamaka Walker (my Gramother), Nona Beamer (my Mother), Moana Beamer (my Wife), Kaliko Trapp (my *hanai* (adopted) brother), Keola Donaghy (my friend and web-master), Su Gatch (my friend and graphics ace), Heather Gray (my friend and list queen), Marty Kirkman (my manager and Bocce Ball champion), George Winston (my friend and fellow traveler in the land without words), and ll the relatives I didn't mention but who are here in these memories with me.

For more information about my music, guitar tablature, performance videos, slack key instruction, and other way cool stuff, wax up and surf to my web page at www.kbeamer.com.

Steve Grimes of Grimes Guitars, PO Box 537, Kula, Hawai'i 96790, custom builds my guitars out of *koa* and mango wood.

John Pearse Strings (1-800-235-3302) makes my guitar strings.

Artist Management: Marty Kirkman/Starscape Music, PO Box 589, Felton, CA 95018, Tel: 831-465-9180, Fax: 831-465-9181, email: mbkirk@ix.netcom.com

Produced by George Winston

Recorded, engineered and mixed by Howard Johnston

Additional engineering by Mark Slagle, Porter Miller and Dave Russell

Mastered by Bernie Grundman at Bernie Grundman Mastering in Los Angeles, CA

Graphic design and cover digital painting by Nelson Makua of Nelson Makua Design, Hilo, Hawai'i

Cover photograph of Keola by David Cornwell