



# TALK STORY

with  
**FRED BOLL**



Photo courtesy of Nate Yuen

**Joined HTMC:** 1998

**Favorite hike (currently):** Poamoho

**Favorite trail food:** anything along the trail (including coffee beans!)

**Favorite hiking book:** Stuart Ball's *Hikers Guide to O'ahu*

**Interviewed by:** Hawkins Biggins, John Braum, Susan Vesel

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## WHEN and WHY did you join HTMC?

I joined sometime in the 1990s. I had been hiking alone or with a small group of friends for a long time and then I sometimes met the club on hikes by accident. I came to realize that they knew about trails that I didn't know about, so I joined to see if I could pick up some new hikes for myself. I didn't go on all the hikes, I just picked the ones I wanted to learn about. I got more involved sometime around 2002 after I retired, although that was kind of by accident too. I started leading hikes because they needed someone desperately at the time and **someone said let's put Fred in there he knows the trail and won't get lost.**

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## Tell us about hiking in Hawai'i BEFORE GPS and smartphones. How did you know where to go?

It helps that I have an innate ability to remember trails. I can sit here right now and tell you there is a rock at this point and a tree at this point. Only one time I misjudged a hike and I had to spend the night outdoors, on the Poamoho to Laie trail, it was very muddy and took me



twice as long as I thought it would take, it was fairly cold, I was wet and I was not prepared as I would have liked, I was cold and wet and could not wait for the sun to rise.

Dale Turner was the big red bulldozer that we followed, he always wore a red shirt and shredded shorts and two walking sticks - get behind him and you could go anywhere, I have followed him for miles. Memorable hikes with Dayle were DeCorte Park and the initial trail clearing for Halapepe.

Sometimes we would just go without even having a clue where we were going. We'd just go and get out of the car someplace and set out! I had topo maps of every section of Oahu, and I would look at the map and say I am at point A and I want to be at point B and I don't care if there is a trail, I just want to figure out how to get there. I will give you an example— I made two new separate club hikes at Kealia. The [main] trail is a hot, sunstruck trail so I made one hike down Keana and back through the cool shade and another hike up Kealia and back through Dillingham Ranch. I took Stuart Ball and Steve Brown through the new hikes before they would let me lead it.

Those are the things I worry the club is going to lose. The coordinators can not get lazy, otherwise, why is there a reason to join HTMC? **I want the club to provide an experience that people can not get on their own.** There is no

reason to join the club if HTMC is only hiking state trails.

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## Are there trails or areas of O'ahu you know best?

I mostly hiked in the Mokuleia/Kealia trail area because it was handy to home. I could go up **Kealia** in the afternoon after work and get up to the picnic table and get a little exercise. I hiked in the Waianaes and sometimes Pupukea. I was not –am not– very familiar with east O'ahu at all.

In **Pupukea**, preparation for [leading] hikes was the key. I put up lots and lots of ribbons so no one could possibly go astray, and I got really familiar with the area.

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## Tell us about MEMORABLE HTMC or other hikes

Once I was assisting on one of the new **Kealia** hikes that I mapped out and managed to lose 18 people on one hike! I don't know if they'd want me to tell this story. To make it worse, it was two different groups that got lost in different ways. They got lost at the same place but they didn't go to the same place, so I had to chase two lost groups. I got half of them out and then had to go back and get the other half out. Everything turned out okay but I believe 18 people lost is a club record!



The last time I led the **Makua Rim** hike it was absolutely torture. I remember Lynn Matsuyama said, Fred, this hike has everything, beautiful views, wonderful sunrises, etc . . . the only thing it lacks is footing!!!

[Another memorable hike was] at the back of the **Waihole Valley**, when it gets to the very top of where the irrigation ditch area, the club hike turns right, but well I am a Robert Frost kind guy and take the road less traveled. So I turn left and get into this shale where every step is trying to push me down into the valley. Finally I got to a big hole in the rock I walked through and came out of the windward side of the trail and right at the irrigation tunnel with all the Japanese names carved in the wall... I don't think we have access anymore because of problems with Waikane Valley access, but there is a book titled [Sugar Water](#) and it's about the irrigation ditches on all the islands.

Stuart Ball and I organized Poamoho hikes under Dole Food Company's onerous rules - coordinating 4 wheel drive vehicles at least three times - allowing over 100 members to hike this beautiful trail.

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### **What are your FAVORITE TOOLS for trail clearing?**

That evolved. I used mostly a brush cutter by Fiskars and I always carried a

saw with me for the Hau trees. **I was famous for cutting Hau trees**, because I could cut them in such a way they would slap the guys behind me and knock them backward. Even did it to my wife (not on purpose)! Hau trees have some tension on them and when you cut them they had a tendency to snap back. My wife claims I was an expert at that - one time on the trail, the hau tree snapped and hit her in the chest and she screamed so loud it attracted a crowd to see if they could help her. That was not a pleasant rest of the day for me.

I used the brush cutter to cut guinea grass way down at the root. Doing that on a trail from the paved road to Peacock Flats going up to the campground, I went to clear that by myself one time and I ended up with stress fractures in my back and was down for three or four months after that! I had stress fractures a second time that put me off the trail. Trail clearing at Pupukea with Larry Oswald, I was cutting all the guavas way at the bottom. I made a big mistake, my back warned me and I didn't heed the warning and I ended up I could not even get out of bed. [My advice is] **Listen to your body, if you think something is wrong, it probably is**. My pappy always told me you don't learn a thing, the second time you get kicked in the head by a mule.



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## Do you have any FAVORITE SNACKS or FOOD to take on hikes?

Not really. Toward the latter part of the time I was hiking, I was drinking a lot of Ensure, that seemed to give me vitality, but I don't have any favorites in particular. In fact I would eat anything! If there were coffee beans I'd eat those, (I eat the skin on the outside and spit out the hard bean) ... strawberry guava...and pickleweed. And I always leave a cooler in my truck with cold beer for the end of the hike.

I always hiked with people who knew more than I did when it came to eating things on the trail. With pickleweed, I saw someone eating it and tried it and liked it. I remember one time on a beach on the Big Island, Richard McMahon and I spent the day lounging around in the water and eating pickleweed and drinking rainwater out of a container labeled non-potable water. Richard McMahon and I drank almost half the tank and never got sick. We hiked together about twice a week for several years, he is a very talented individual. He has a degree in English and History, is a retired colonel, [and wrote several books](#), I think even a novel, he is an amazing man.

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## Do you have concerns about the FUTURE OF HIKING in Hawai'i?

There have always been concerns because the land owners hold all the cards, it is much easier for them to say no than it is to say yes. I think getting permission for hikes is going to become increasingly more difficult because society is becoming more litigious. The other aspect is scoff laws, people destroying property and stealing crops, so the land owners are getting more concerned. Increasingly land owners are sighting incidents of people setting crops on fire and destroying equipment. People are hooking up their truck to the gate and going in and having wild parties at night. Monsanto tells me the same thing at Kunia, someone set their tool shed on fire, they lost crops, they are having too many incidents of vandalism, one after the other, Dole, Monsanto and Stephanie Tom, the lady who owns the property above Hapaki Street - parties and bonfires - residents were scared to death. (this area includes most of the Halepepe Nui hike)

And then you have another problem, when we do a trail clearing close to a road or a street, the trail becomes obvious, and it's not just an obvious trail, it is a temptation for trespassing. My most recent experience from that was with Board of Water supply in Halawa valley, I think we could have gotten a permit to keep using that trail except we



cleared the trail from the parking lot to the stream, people would come to visit the Halawa tunnel and see the trail and follow it back, so we ended up with an “attractive nuisance” and they were not be able to control it. So the Board of Water Supply closed the door on us.

We are going to get problems, more and more, there are too many bad actors out there, more and more stupid things going on. Everything has a consequence these days when it comes to trails. There sure as hell is a danger of losing more trails, but I am always an optimist. If you are not going to win the damn war, don't pick up the gun. I will talk to anyone.

We can encourage the city to put rubbish cans and serve them at various trail heads, like Kuliouou and the Manana Trailhead - places that are losing favor with the public, but I don't think they would do it. There are more and more people hiking, so there are more and more people around the neighborhoods. The bad actors come in and naturally you are not going to have a good reaction to any of that, as there are more hikers, there is going to be more pushback. We have one law to help protect our trails, it says anyone who subdivides has to provide access to the mountains. I did put in a call from my state legislator about that, to make sure that it will be enforced. I did get a response and they are investigating that, so I will let you know what

happens, access is a real problem. **I am working on access everyday, when I am not actually talking to somebody, I am formulating a plan.** You can see what land owners' needs are and fulfill those and see if you can get a few hikes out of them a year. People are only strangers for the first five minutes, so you are not calling up a stranger, because they are not a stranger after five minutes. The person who I thought was going to be my enemy now wants to go have coffee with me! I enjoy doing this [trail access] work.

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## About Fred Boll



Fred was born in Des Moines Iowa in 1936. He used to lead hikes for HTMC unfortunately his vision is failing so he is not able to enjoy the trails like he used to. Currently he leads HTMC's Trail Access Committee. Fred has dedicated his time to the issue of trail access and over the years he has worked with Towne Realty, Newtown Estates, Pioneer Seed Corn, Dole Food Corporation, Kennedy Wilson Realty, Monsanto, Kunia Farms, KSBE, Board of Water Supply, US Army, Mr. Nick Azari and SFA Enterprises.