



Big Happiness: The Life and Death of a Modern Hawaiian Warrior

Mark Panek

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"*Big Happiness: The Life and Death of a Modern Hawaiian Warrior*, is an absorbing look at the life of professional sumo wrestler Percy Kipapa, as it intertwines the relationship between rampant post-statehood development and Hawaii's deeply imbedded drug problem, and Kipapa's hometown in rural Windward Oahu. After a successful career in Japan as a sumo wrestler, reaching the *sekitori* rank, Kipapa (known professionally as Daiki, or Big Happiness) returned to a Hawaii that had little to offer him in the way of economic opportunity and he drifted into ice addiction. Seven years after his return, Kipapa was found murdered in the pickup truck of a friend a drug dealer out on bail who later confessed to the killing.

Big Happiness is extremely important to our community. Mark Panek's biography of Percy Kipapa speaks to the consequences of the destruction of Hawaii's rural neighborhoods, unchecked development, the ice epidemic, the failures of government, sumo, intricate family and neighbor relationships, and more. What is most impressive is Panek's ability to weave all of these complex topics together in a seamless narrative that connects all the dots. Part mystery, part investigative journalism, part poignant Island portrait, this work contains an emotional element that binds the reader to the subjects in a dignified yet touching way, showing compassion and even affection for people while revealing their flaws and shortcomings. This book will resonate with an Island audience and with anyone interested in Hawaii." --Victoria Kneubuhl, Hawaii writer and playwright

This book tells of personal triumphs and failures, and also the triumphs and failures of families, communities, organizations, agencies, governments, and churches dealing with the multiple consequences of progress in contemporary Hawaii. There have been heroes and villains at all levels frequently, the same individuals and agencies are both at the same time. The story of Percy Kipapa is especially poignant because professional sumo gave him a unique opportunity to transcend Hawaii's culture of colonialism, racism, poverty, and drug addiction, which in the end all brought him down anyway. Mark Panek has done a masterful job of weaving these strands together." --Reverend Bob Nakata, former Hawaii state senator

"Spanning the history of Waikane and the brutality of Japan's national sport, *Big Happiness* is a remarkably ambitious piece that links one man's murder to the ice epidemic, land development, and political corruption in Hawaii. Mark Panek's meticulously researched, skillfully written, heartbreaking story, filled with voices that ring true, is an indictment of an entire system that crushed a gentle giant. While other Hawaii writers dwell in take me back to da kine nostalgia, Panek tells it like it really is." -- Chris McKinney, author of *The Tattoo* and *Mililani Mauka*

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