

# Sumo legend Kuhaulua: My heart is on Maui

KAHULUI, Hawaii (AP)— Sumo legend Jesse Kuhaulua went from speaking pidgin English to fluent Japanese when he left Maui for a career in sumo and life in Japan 50 years ago.

He broke cultural barriers, reached the third-highest rank in the centuries-old national sport, and became a coach to up-and-coming wrestlers. But Kuhaulua still remembers his roots fondly and holds the Valley Isle close.

“Still my heart is on Maui. I will never forget,” a white-bearded Kuhaulua told *The Maui News* during a visit home last month.

Kuhaulua was a 19-year-old recent Baldwin High School graduate when he left for Japan in 1964. He has never lived anywhere else since.

Although he was treated graciously, even having American food cooked for him when he first arrived in Japan, the training was tough. He endured hours of exercise, the food was different, and teachers whacked students when they behaved badly or performed sumo techniques incorrectly.

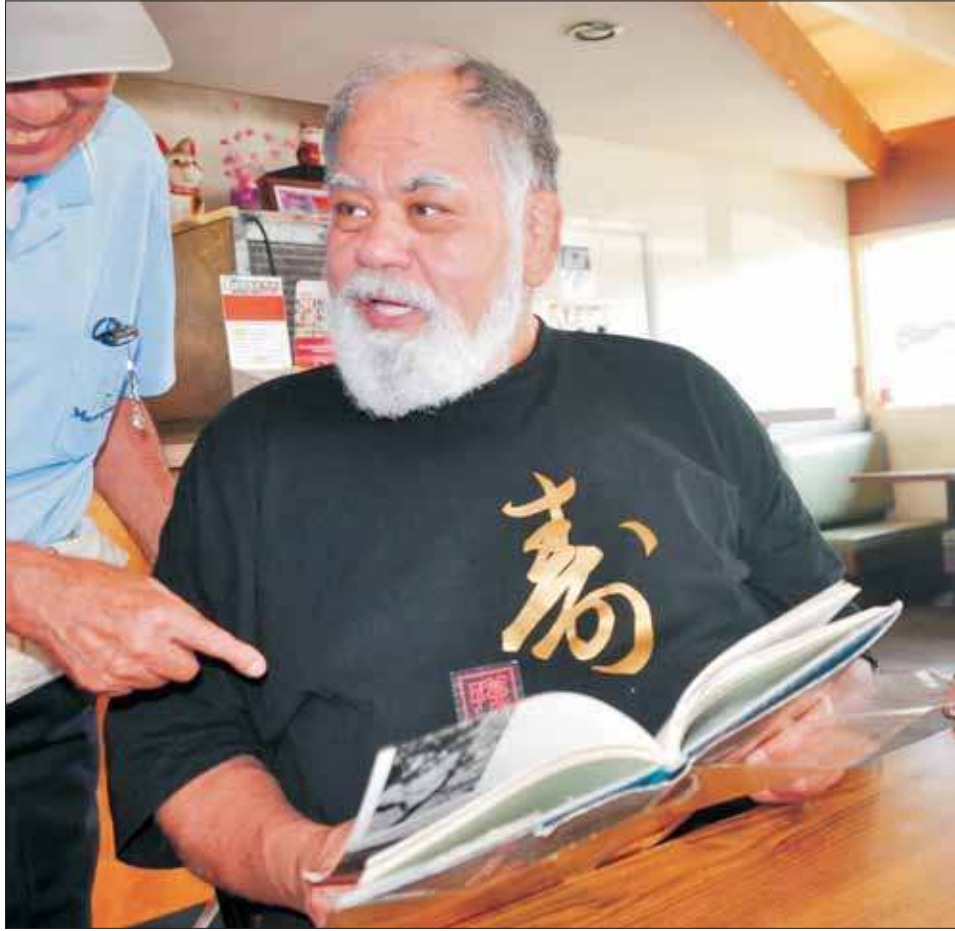
“They would hit a *rikishi* (sumo wrestler) with a broomstick,” Kuhaulua said. “You call it encouragement.”

Adjusting to a foreign culture and the endless physical training was gruelling for Kuhaulua, who fought under the name Takamiyama.

The “first three years [were] hard,” he said, but “something just kept me there,” he remembered.

He recalled receiving letters of encouragement from Hawaii. “(It) made me feel I got to try harder,” he said.

Kuhaulua reached sumo’s third-highest rank, *sekiwake*, in 1972. That was the highest by a foreigner until fellow Hawaii



wrestlers Salevaa Atisanoe, or Konishiki, reached the next highest rank of *ozeki*, or champion, and Chad Rowan, who wrestled as Akebono, and Fiamalu Penitani, who wrestled as Musashimaru, attained the highest rank, *yokozuna*, or grand champion.

Kuhaulua also was the first foreigner to win sumo’s coveted Emperor’s Cup for winning a tournament in 1972.

He stopped wrestling at 39 after an injury, but he went on to coach up-and-coming wrestlers at his own sumo stable

for 25 more years until the mandatory retirement age of 65.

Sumo is a sport where bigger is often better, but Kuhaulua now sticks to a

**HAWAIIAN HEART.** Sumo wrestler Jesse Kuhaulua (wearing dark shirt) talks with friend Mitsuyuki Tamae of Nagoya, Japan as the two and others were having lunch at a restaurant in Kahului, Hawaii. Sumo legend Kuhaulua went from speaking pidgin English to fluent Japanese when he left Maui for a career in sumo and life in Japan 50 years ago. He broke cultural barriers, reached the third-highest rank in the centuries-old national sport, and became a coach to up-and-coming wrestlers. But Kuhaulua still remembers his roots fondly and holds the Valley Isle close. (AP Photo/The News, Melissa Tanji)

specific diet most days. Though on vacation in Hawaii, he had an orange, oatmeal, and milk for breakfast.

Kuhaulua said he’s lost around 115 pounds after dieting for about a year. He’s now down to about 300 pounds.

Attending the 50th reunion for his Baldwin High School class last year prompted him to eat healthier. He also wants to be alive for the 2020 Olympic games in Tokyo.

Kuhaulua said he did not face prejudice or animosity as a *gaijin*, or foreigner, from America. But as a *gaijin*, he had to push himself to do better than others.

“You got to work hard,” he said.

While his life is comfortable in his adopted homeland, Kuhaulua says that at times he still longs for Maui.

“The weather, the people, and the warm aloha” are what he misses most, he said.

## Florida artist smashes \$1M vase in Miami museum

By Curt Anderson  
AP Legal Affairs Writer

**M**IAMI — An artist is facing a criminal charge after police say he smashed a \$1 million vase at Miami’s new art museum to protest what he called its favoritism for international rather than local art.

Maximo Caminero, 51, was charged with criminal mischief after the incident at the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM). According to a Miami Police Department arrest affidavit, a security guard told officers that Caminero picked up a colored vase by Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei. When told to put it down, the security guard said Caminero smashed it on the floor.

A police affidavit says Caminero told officers he broke the vase to protest the museum’s lack of local artist displays and because “the museum only displayed international artists’ art.”

The police affidavit lists the value of the vase as \$1 million, quoting the museum’s security officials. Criminal mischief can be a third-degree felony punishable by up to five years in prison when the property damaged is worth more than \$1,000.

Caminero had a recent showing at the JF Gallery in West Palm Beach that offered patrons a chance to meet him and “view a sampling of the work from his 30-year career as an artist.”

The urn, dating back about 2,000 years to China’s Han Dynasty, was one of 16 on display that Ai had dipped in bright industrial paint, making them look like much more recently produced pots. The installation aims to “trigger questions about authenticity and the value and meaning of original artwork,” according to the museum’s website.

On a wall behind the vases are a series of large photographs of Ai dropping a Han Dynasty ceramic urn that smashed on the floor at his feet, one of his best-known works.

Ai said he was miffed about another artist destroying one of his vases in Florida and did not agree with Caminero’s tactic.

“Damaging other people’s property or disturbing a public program doesn’t really



**PRICY PROTEST.** Artist Ai Weiwei speaks to journalists at his studio in Beijing in this file photo. Ai, who helped make his name smashing a valuable vase in the name of art, said he was miffed about another artist destroying one of his vases in Florida. Maximo Caminero was charged with criminal mischief after destroying a vase valued at \$1 million that was part of Ai’s exhibit at the Perez Art Museum Miami. The Florida artist said he smashed the vase to protest the institution’s lack of displays by local artists. (AP Photo/Alexander F. Yuan, File)

support his cause,” Ai said in an interview in Beijing. Ai said the artist’s apparent inspiration was “misleading.”

“You cannot stand in front of a classical painting and kill somebody and say that you are inspired by” the artist, Ai said, adding that “this doesn’t make any sense.”


Caminero later apologized to *The Miami Herald*, saying he had no right to destroy someone else’s art.

The “Ai Weiwei: According to What?” exhibit runs through March 16 at the museum. Museum officials confirmed the incident in an e-mail, and noted that an upcoming show will feature a local artist, Miami’s Edouard Duval-Carrié. The Haiti-born artist’s show, beginning March 13, is titled “Imagined Landscapes.”

A sculptor, designer, and documentary filmmaker, Ai has irked Beijing by using his art and online profile to draw attention to injustices in China and the need for greater transparency and rule of law. He was detained for 81 days in 2011 during a crackdown on dissent.

AP writer Louise Watt contributed to this report.



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