



Don't Miss it!

PMKCA's Annual Summer Picnic

This Saturday, Aug. 8, 10:30am to 2pm

New location - the Pa'auilo Park Pavilion

(makai on Pa'auilo Hui Rd, below the playing field)

Friends, food, projects & demos, and general fun!

***Bring aloha, a potluck dish to share,
and go home happy.***

August 2026 PMKCA Newsletter

Local Talent: A Pair of Peripatetics

Wanderers take root in our neighborhood.

Denning Powell
PMKCA Board Member
www.pmkca.org

Yup, right here in our own Pa'auilo, a couple of confirmed peripatetics. Melissa Pochop-Miller used that term to describe her life journey with husband Michael Miller. It somehow ended up with a bookstore in Honoka'a along with a herd of rescued animals on their spread in Pa'auilo.

The term comes from the Greek peripatetikos meaning "given to walking about". I googled it: the ancient Greeks used it to describe the philosopher Aristotle, who was famous for

walking around the Lyceum in Athens while debating ideas with his students. So, this Michael/Melissa tale is a bit of a gypsy story, and a bit of a philosophy story.

The couple met in Phoenix, Arizona; at that time Michael was a journalist and Melissa a biomedical engineering student at Arizona State University. Words and animals... an interesting combo. Over time, evolving jobs and duties took them, gypsy-like, to different mainland locations. Melissa ran clinical trials and worked on developing wearable mechanical devices to assist with physical mobility. Michael moved from local newspaper reporting to ad agency work, to creative writing and videos for healthcare marketing companies. During two sojourns in Seattle, they raised two kids, a son now 28 and a daughter now 25. Their homes were always replete with animal pets, many of them rescued. And of course Seattle has always been replete with books and bookstores.

Animals and words. Two different seeds blossomed over time. In a contemplative what-do-we-wanna-do-next philosophical gypsy moment during the Covid pandemic, the seeds came together, cross-fertilized, and triggered a visit to our Big Island. After scouting the whole island to find a suitable property, the couple discovered and loved Hamakua; they bought their seven-acre property in 2021.



Melissa and Michael just horsing around.

The animal thing... Melissa grew up with animals, particularly horses, and has loved to ride them since she was a child. The spread in Pa'auilo presently hosts four: a Belgian mare, a mini-pony, a mule and a mini-mule. These are rescued animals, along with four sheep, saved from kill pens. Some were dropped off by local owners no longer capable of caring for them, some were even flown here from the mainland. Many arrive ragged and starved. They get cared for and rehabbed, with support from local farriers and veterinarians. Where possible they get re-homed. Some of the horses get re-trained for riding; this is a paniolo community with old traditions. Their project is called Singing Whale Rescue and Rehab. No actual whales onsite as yet, but it's surely a full house otherwise.



Human-equine bonding.

On arrival at their place I was greeted by a friendly mini-pony who ambled up to nuzzle my hand. Melissa slipped me a treat to give her, which meant instant bonding (to which the pony didn't say neigh).

The word thing... Michael grew up with words -- he spent a fair amount of his free time in his youth in libraries and bookstores. He's older now but remembers the feel of physical books in his young hands and still prefers them to digital screens. He and Melissa saw a glaring gap in our Honoka'a town: it had no bookstore. Some research said that maybe there had been one, back in the town's sugar-cane heydays, but nothing since. So in 2024 Beach Dog Books was born on Mamane Street, conveniently next door to the Hamakua Coffee Roasters coffee shop.



BDB fans Gretchen and Kyra in the bookstore.

Startups of any small business are risky, of course, but patronage is growing steadily. Both local residents and island visitors are attracted. They wander in, say hi or aloha, and browse through an incredible variety of books for such a small place. Other offerings include t-shirts, mugs, cards and postcards, an eclectic collection of trinkets and

souvenirs. Whether swapping stories with Michael and Melissa or mingling with fellow browsers, visitors always find a friendly communal niche.



Authors visit Beach Dog Books frequently.

[Image 4 about here](#); captioned **Authors visit Beach Dog Books frequently.**

Authors stop in periodically to share their work with an enthusiastic audience. Recent ones are:

- Hawaiian author Sara Kehaulani Goo wrote *Kuleana*, a true story of Hawai'i, its native people, and their long struggle to hold on to their land and culture.
- Heather Herrick, a marine science educator who teaches oceanography in Hawai'i and coaches adults in open-water swimming along the Kona coast, wrote *Windy Possibilities*, her debut novel.
- Tony Peckham wrote the screenplay for *Invictus*, a movie biopic about Nelson Mandela that starred Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon and was directed by Clint Eastwood.

- Sara Ackerman is a nationally acclaimed author and Kamuela resident whose first published novel, *Island of Sweet Pies and Soldiers*, is set in Honoka'a.

The animal thing and the word thing have underlying philosophical bonds: human contact; wandering into a store and chatting with the owner; human/animal empathy that works in both directions; contemplative moments. Maybe even creating talk-story moments like Aristotle did back in his day – a tradition that would seem to resonate better these days than sitting alone in a corner focused on fast-paced electronic information streams.

The website is beachdogbookshawaii.com. Visit it. A thoughtful Aristotle would approve.

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