



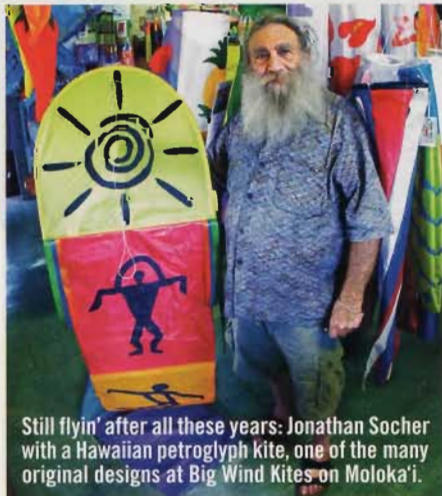
MOLOKA'I  
The Isle of Kites

Here's a twist on an old saying: Give a kid a kite and he'll fly for a day. Teach him to make a kite and he'll fly for a lifetime. That might as well be a mantra for Jonathan and Daphne Socher of Moloka'i's Big Wind Kite Factory. They've been making kites for thirty years, and a big part of their business is teaching others to do the same.

The Sochers didn't set out to fill Hawai'i's skies with color. First they ran the gamut of crafting, trying to eke out a creative living on Hawai'i's least commercial island. They made silver jewelry, sold batik art. On weekends beginning in 1980, they'd deck the gazebo at the former Sheraton Molokai with kites and wind-socks and sell their wares. When the decorations got more attention than the crafts, they opened Big Wind later that year.

At first they sold prefab commercial kites, but customers wanted something original, so they began to design and build

their own. Their son Zack got into the act, and the Sochers now offer more than a hundred original designs, including the popular "Hula Dancer," "Whale's Tail" and Zack's own "Gecko with Sunglasses." Their thirty-foot "Paniolo" wowed 'em



Still flyin' after all these years: Jonathan Socher with a Hawaiian petroglyph kite, one of the many original designs at Big Wind Kites on Moloka'i.

at the Honolulu Kite Festival a few years back, but that's a mosquito compared with the "Anuenue," a one-off kite with a sixty-five-foot rainbow tail that they made for the yacht *Island Star*.

But flying a premade kite isn't nearly as much fun as flying your own. In addition to offering kite-making lessons in the back of the shop, there's a free video on their web site and a downloadable PDF of folding techniques. Those who are able to get to the shop in Maunaloa can take free flying lessons in the park next door, "our 'Aeronautical Testing Facility,'" says Jonathan.

Running a small business is never easy, but after thirty years Big Wind is still flying. "The kite business is always looking up," says Jonathan. "We love to tell people that because it is the nature of kites to generate lift—the more you buy, the lighter your luggage gets."

—Tom Bentley / Photos by Richard Cooke

[www.bigwindkites.com](http://www.bigwindkites.com)