MOLOKA'I
The Isle of Kites

Here's a twist on an old saying: Give a
boy 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 Mo'okai'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
Hawaii's skies with color. First they ran
the gamut of crafting, trying to eke out a
creative living on Hawaii's least com-
mercial 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 deco-
rations 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
at the Honolulu Kite Festival a few years
back, but that's a mosquito compared with
the "A'nehuie," 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 Aerea-
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