



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of Natural History*

*The Navigators: Pathfinders of the Pacific, 1983*

Human Studies Film Archives  
Museum Support Center  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Human Studies Film Archives
<b>Title:</b>	<i>The Navigators: Pathfinders of the Pacific</i>
<b>Date:</b>	1983 2013
<b>Identifier:</b>	HSFA.2015.17
<b>Creator:</b>	Low, Sam
<b>Extent:</b>	57 Film reels (color sound; 57,388 feet; 16mm) Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Received from Sanford Low in 2015.

### Preferred Citation

*The Navigators: Pathfinders of the Pacific*, Human Studies Film Archives, Smithsonian Institution

### Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Please contact the archives for information on availability of access copies of audiovisual recordings. Original audiovisual material in the Human Studies Film Archives may not be played.

### Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

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## Scope and Contents

Edited film and outtakes of film shot on the atoll of Satawal in the Caroline Islands under the supervision of anthropologist Sam Low. The film explores the continuity of Polynesian navigational methods.

Supplementary materials: camera and shot logs

Legacy keywords: Language and culture ; Navigation ; Outrigger canoe ; Ethnology ; Fishing ; Sailing ; Boatbuilding ; Food preparation cooking ; Prayers

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or Anthropology Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Canoes  
Navigation

Types of Materials:

Sound films

Places:

Oceania  
Palau

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## Container Listing

The Navigators: Pathfinders of the Pacific, 1983

2 Film reels (58 minutes; color sound; 2,088 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film, shot on the atoll of Satawal in the Caroline Islands under the supervision of anthropologist Sam Low, explores the continuity of Polynesian navigational methods. These methods are introduced through over-dubbed interviews and subtitled footage of Mau Piailug, the last man on Satawal to be initiated in recognition of his control over navigation and magic. Mau and a crew sail a replica of a traditional Polynesian canoe from Hawaii to Tahiti without using modern tools; Mau is depicted teaching the crew ancient astral and wind navigation techniques. Other footage includes: boat handling, men building a canoe and braiding rope, a communal fishing expedition, prayer at a Christian chapel, and women preparing food including coconut and breadfruit. Substantial time is allotted to interviews with anthropologists, explanatory narration, and animation, establishing the wide historical reach of Polynesian sailors by identifying similarities in artifacts such as pottery and canoes among far-flung islands. Emphasis on navigation as dying art, both by Mau and the third-person narrative. Cinematography by Boyd Estus, directed by Sanford Low and Boyd Estus and written and produced by Sanford Low.  
HSFA 2015.17.2

The Navigators: Pathfinders of the Pacific (Outtakes), 1983

55 Film reels (color sound; 55,300 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Outtakes, shot on the atoll of Satawal in the Caroline Islands under the supervision of anthropologist Sam Low, explores the continuity of Polynesian navigational methods. Footage includes: boat handling, men building a canoe and braiding rope, a communal fishing expedition, prayer at a Christian chapel, and women preparing food including coconut and breadfruit. Emphasis is on navigation as dying art. Cinematography by Boyd Estus.  
HSFA 2015.17.1

The Navigators: Pathfinders of the Pacific, DVD animations, 2013

Notes: HSFA 2017.15.3 and HSFA 2017.15.4

Animation created by Sam Low for DVD release, designed to demonstrate how stars are used to find your way in the traditional Polynesian navigation system based on what Low had been told by traditional navigators, his research in general, and the research that went into his book *Hawaiki Rising*.