

November/December 1999

# Imua Polenisia

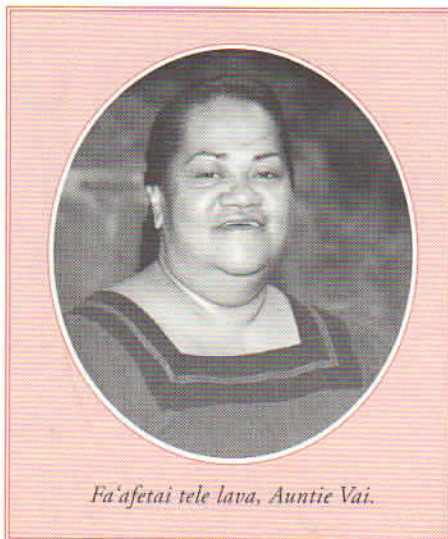
A Bimonthly Newsletter from the  
Polynesian Cultural Center



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*Fa'afetai tele lava, Auntie Vai.*

Vai Fa'amaligi, friend and inspiration to all who knew her.

## Aloha, Auntie Vai

All of Laie lost a dear friend October 3 when Vai Fa'amaligi passed from this life into a better world. She was just 48 years old, but "Auntie Vai" filled the community with enough spirit to last a millennium.

Ellen Gay Dela Rosa recalled her close friend with a mixture of sadness and admiration. "Everyone loved and respected Vai. She touched generations of people in a way that very few of us do," Dela Rosa said.

"She was well respected by the students who passed through the Center," continued Dela Rosa. "She surprised some with her honesty and directness, but she had a great impact in refining their performing abilities."

For more than 25 years Auntie Vai did it all for the Center, as a dancer, instructor, composer and choreographer. The Samoa program in "Horizons" was one of her crowning achievements.

*Continued on page 4*

### Message from President Lester W.B. Moore

## Aloha!

*It is hard to believe that 1999 is nearly over and that a new millennium awaits us. But as we enter the "Pacific Century" I am proud to say we do so on a high note.*

What a difference a year makes. At this time a year ago we were still recovering from the slide of the Asian visitor market and the painful, but necessary, decision to streamline our operations.

1998 was like a dark cloud that enveloped the Center with a brooding sense of gloom. It was a year of self-evaluation, a time for all of us, myself included, to look deep down and reassess our plans and objectives.

In contrast, 1999 has been like a beacon of light that continues to spread ever wider over a future of unlimited potential.

It has been one of our best years on record and not just for financial reasons. Yes, there is no denying that the Center increased its revenues and cut unnecessary expenses. We are a far more efficient and effective operation than ever before.

But what I will remember most about 1999 is how it revealed the true character of our management and employee team. Rather than hide from adversity, wallow in self-pity, or remain silently embittered, our collective minds, hearts and souls responded with a new spirit of direction, creative innovations, and a re-energized vigor for fulfilling our mission.

We did extensive market research and paid attention to the results. Then we executed the strategies needed to meet our objectives. Perhaps our most significant finding

was that visitors wanted to experience the Polynesian culture in its most authentic state.

We improved our product line from top to bottom—everything from the cultural presentations and retail goods to our food service. From open to close and from the villages to the night show, the quality of entertainment has never been better.

The villages are undergoing significant capital improvements to make them even more authentic, more in keeping with the ancient traditions and look of Polynesia. I am certain our visitors will love the changes.

Behind the scenes, we became more attuned to the needs of our guests, identifying areas of weakness and taking steps to aggressively correct them. We enhanced our sales packages, repackaged our admission rates, and expanded our marketing outreach.

Finally, we received approval to embark on an ambitious plan to expand our operations into the lush hills and tropical beaches of Laie, a plan that all but guarantees the Center's continued success into 2000 and beyond.

For more than two decades we have enjoyed our position atop Hawaii's visitor industry. As we chart a new course into the Pacific Century and cross into the new millennium, I have never been more pleased with how our team of employees responded to the challenge put before us.

In 1999 we turned a negative situation into a positive plan of action that has the Center poised to reach greater heights than ever.

*Thank you everyone for your faith and your commitment to our success Mahalo nui loa,*

**Lester W.B. Moore**



## Baywatch Meets Stardom



PCC's own Seamus, Baywatch's Kala'i Miller, and two young Destination Stardom contestants share a little of the Maori Culture.

The Center stole the show recently for a taping of Destination Stardom, hosted by Kala'i Miller, one of the new Baywatch Hawaii actors, and aired on PAX-TV. Destination Stardom showcases the musical talents of tomorrow's stars—today.

Viewers will see the fun-loving Miller guiding two young contestants through the winding village pathways and experiencing the cultural activities that make the Center a star of its own, namely as "Destination Polynesia."

The segment is scheduled to air nationwide later this year and will provide great exposure for the Center. PAX-TV is rapidly building an impressive network of national affiliates since starting operations just a few short years ago.

The network's format is strictly family entertainment, perfect for the Center and perfect for the audiences we want to reach.

### Good Job Everyone!

#### October Employees of the Month.

##### Guest Services:

Japanese Guides: ..... Seiya Komatsu  
Multi-purpose Guides: ..... Rustin Wayas  
Canoe Guides: ..... Daniel Thomas

##### Maintenance Department:

Part-time: ..... Jared Walters  
Full-time: ..... Fasia Mikaele  
Lead: ..... Victor Daguio

## Keiki Hula Shines at "Horizons"



First place winners, Halau Hula Olana, dazzle the audience as they take center stage at the Pacific Theatre in Horizons.

One of the most heartwarming trio of performances in the Center's history took place the last three Saturdays in October.

The top three finisher's of the Ninth Annual Moanikeala Keiki 'Auana Hula Competition each took their turn in the spotlight as guest performers of the Hawaii segment for "Horizons."

Immediately following the August 28th competition, Center officials, inspired by the graceful interpretation of the keiki hula halau, made a spur-of-the-moment offer to the halau that led to these special performances.

In addition, the Center provided each halau with tickets to sell at a discounted rate, with the halau keeping a portion of every ticket sold. One halau is using the money raised to help fund a trip to California and the Big Island.

"These keiki hula performers were so good, it seemed only fair to reward their diligence with this opportunity to raise money and perform in Horizons," said Marketing Vice President Dave Cole. "Their dedication to perpetuating Hawaii's form of dance is truly impressive."

On October 16, Hula Halau 'O Hukulani, led by Kumu Hula Hukulani and Larry DeRego of Mililani, took the stage with more than 100 keiki dancers before a packed house. Their program included an ancient kahiko from Maui and a tribute to Kumu Hula Kawai Cockett.

Then, on October 23, over 70 keiki hula dancers from Halau Hula Olana, under the leadership of Kumu Hula Olana and Howard Ai of Aiea, performed before another sell-out. Halau Hula Olana used the Hawaiian poetry of dance to honor the island of Kauai and Kumu Hula Lovey Apana, who passed away recently.

**"These keiki hula performers were so good, it seemed only fair to reward their diligence with this opportunity to raise money and perform in Horizons."**

*Dave Cole, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING*

Finally, on October 30, Hu'i Park Hula Studio, led by Kumu Hula Kepo'omaikalani Park-Chun of Honolulu performed a program in tribute to the island of Maui.

After each performance, it was smiles and congratulations all around. The technical crew was spot-on perfect, and the night show performers enjoyed mingling with the keiki and vice versa. Best of all, the audience loved the special performance as much as the halau.

Helping keiki hula is in keeping with the spirit of the annual competition, which is an ongoing tribute to Sally Wood Nalua'i and Sunday Mariteragi, both of whom have been instrumental to the success and popularity of keiki hula in Laie.



# Hukilau Store Debuts and is a Great Success!

*"...Everybody loves a hukilau, where the lau lau is the kau kau at the big luau. We throw our nets out into the sea and all the 'ama 'ama come a swimmin' to me..."*



The grand opening was a big success! Lots of locals and PCC employees showed up for the festivities. The store looks great!

The October 23rd grand opening of the new Hukilau Store was a trip down memory lane to an era when times were simple and Laie was an undiscovered treasure for most of the world.

It wasn't the traditional Hukilau refreshments—pake cake, manapua, and soda in glass bottles—being served that set the mood.

No, it was seeing hukilau old-timers together again, cherished elders like Jojo Au, Walter Wong, Nona Warner and David Mohetau.

**"A lot of elderly folks are already gone so it's a nice tribute to them because of how hard they worked to get money to build a church."**

*Nona Warner, HUKILAU PARTICIPANT*

"I think it's a wonderful idea to link the old hukilau with the PCC. The only thing they don't have is the actual hukilau, but they have everything else," said Au.

The Hukilau Store connects to the IMAX Theater and is configured so that guests pass through it following each presentation. The newly designed space measures 5,000 sq. ft.

and features wall-sized photos of old hukilau images and three waterfalls. Along with authentic hukilau gift items, there are modern amenities like a giant-screen TV and an air-conditioned lounge area.

"I think the new store is one of the best things we've ever done," said Marketing Vice President Dave Cole.

Nona Warner was eight when she started working at the hukilau, decorating tables,



June Chang, BJ Lee, Pola Wong, original Hukilau performers, reminisce about old times.

-serving food, and dancing. Today, she works in the Center's seamstress department. "I'm excited about them opening the new store," Warner said. "A lot of elderly folks are already gone so it's a nice tribute to them because of how hard they worked to get money to build a church."

Church members started the hukilau in the 1940s to help raise the money needed to build a chapel in place of one that burned down. The entire experience—the throwing of nets, catching of fish, and a festive luau with entertainment on Laie's beaches—was such a hit, tourists started arriving in droves and it led to one of Hawaii's most popular "hapa-haole" songs.

Today, longtime residents often credit the hukilau's success as inspiration for developing the Center.

Take time to see the store and relive the memories from a piece of Laie's history.



The hard work and effort put into giving the Hukilau store an authentic look is shown in every detail, like these fishing nets.



## Aloha, Auntie Vai (continued)

From the choice of music, choreography, comedic routines, and style of costumes, she had every detail covered.

"It's so sad to lose a person like Vai," said President Lester Moore. "It's such a blow to the entire community. You just can't measure the impact she had in Laie."

Auntie Vai filled her life—and countless others—with service to church, family, community, and her Samoan heritage. She always found time to tutor students each week at Laie Elementary and direct the school's annual May Day program.

"Vai was very active in the Samoan community. Anything to do with Samoan culture in Hawaii, she got involved," Dela Rosa said.

"She was a special friend and always promoted the Samoan culture with class," said Kumu Hula O'Brian Eselu, who is entertainment director for Paradise Cove.

Eselu recalled that last year Vai brought a group of young girls to a Hawaii Theater concert to perform traditional Samoan dances. At the show's outset, it was obvious the audience knew little about Samoan culture. "The group brought the house down. It was the highlight of my experience with her," Eselu said.

### Vai beamed with joy. That's how we should remember her.

Sadly, Vai's time on earth was also scarred by two harshly painful family tragedies. An auto accident took her husband's life two decades ago, and also claimed her only daughter in 1996. Yet, she rarely lamented her misfortune.

She was the youngest daughter in a close-knit family of five brothers and five sisters. Today, Auntie Vai's spirit at the Center continues to live on through her brother Pulefano Galeai and her son, David Galeai.

Pule, as everyone knows, does a tremendous job overseeing the cultural presentations at the islands and also coordinates the annual World Fire Knife Dance Competition.

In May, David, 20, won the fire-knife championship for the first time with a dazzling acrobatic routine. No one was happier for his hard-earned victory than his mother. Vai beamed with joy. That's how we should remember her.

*Fā'afetai tele lava, Auntie Vai.*

## Kona Temple Gets Laie Woodcarvings



*When the beautiful new Kona Temple opens in January a design feature sure to draw lots of oohs and ahhs will be the woodcarvings on the pews of the Telestial Room. The artistry comes straight from the hands of the Polynesian Cultural Center's team of carver's.*



William Mahoni's attention to detail is apparent in his these magnificent carvings, perfect for the new Kona Temple.

Skilled Artists William Mahoni and Jared Pere, with help from Master Carver Barney Christy, and his son Doug Christy, recently finished 14 pew panels, each of which presents a three-dimensional image of overlapping sugar cane leaves.

Made from maple and measuring 28-inches long, 14-inches wide and 2-inches thick, each panel will be framed onto a pew end facing toward the center aisle, thus providing a "walk through the leaves."

The project was a true labor of love for the carver's. Mahoni said each panel took approximately 15-20 hours to carve and another 15-20 hours to sand until it was deemed "Temple quality." The panels are being stained with a cherry wood finish.

The Center's carver's regularly draw raves from visitors for their woodworking skills. Their brand of craftsmanship will now be displayed in West Hawaii for church members worldwide to enjoy.



Fale Fatu Le'au'anae, Enitosi Tumanu'avao, William Mahoni, Douglas Christy, Aaron Uyehara, and Master Carver Epanaia Christy used their talents to carve these lovely panels for the Kona Temple.



## Miss Universe Visits Center, Designing Men, Too



Miss Universe enjoyed many of the islands here at PCC.

The Center continues to maintain a special relationship with the first lady of the galaxy. On September 13, the current Miss Universe, Mpule Kwelagobe of Botswana, spent the day relaxing with friends.

The visit marked the third consecutive year that the Center and Miss Universe have brought their one-of-a-kind talents together in paradise.

Two years ago Brook Lee, Hawaii's own Miss Universe, took a day off to get away from it all here in Laie and revisit her roots. Lee's parents met at the Church College of Hawaii three decades earlier.

Last year, some of the Center's night show performers and Sielu, were featured in the Miss Universe Pageant's production at the Stan Sheriff Center and seen worldwide by a television audience of more than 500

million viewers in 75 countries.

You just never know which celebrity is going to show up at the Center these days. On September 13 world-famous clothes designer Jean-Paul Gaultier of France quietly took full advantage of the Super Ambassador Tour with some friends.

Gaultier spent the day relatively incognito. However, one visitor that recognized him was Miss Universe Mpule Kwelagobe, who couldn't believe her eyes when the famous designer strolled by. She may wear beautiful clothes for a living, but he creates them. Not surprisingly, Miss Universe hustled over and quickly made his acquaintance. Who knows, maybe it was the start of a beautiful relationship—of gowns and formal wear.



Designer Jean-Paul Gaultier enjoying the show in the Samoan Village.

## Ads Win National Acclaim

The Center again showed why it is #1 in Hawaii, winning a prestigious national award from the Travel Industry Association of America for its advertising excellence.

President Lester Moore accepted the honor October 21 at TIA's Annual Awards in Pittsburgh. "It's a thrill to have the Center recognized nationally for its marketing," said Moore. "It's further proof that we're one of the top attractions in the country."

The Center won an Odyssey Award in the Domestic Travel Advertising category for a multi-level advertising campaign based on the slogan: "Why travel thousands of

miles to visit Polynesia and then not really see it?"

Winning the award was especially impressive since it came in TIA's most competitive category, with entrants received from throughout the country.

This is the third major marketing award the Center has won in the past year. In 1998 the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions presented the Center with two Brass Ring Awards, both for first place, for a print ad and brochure.

The bottom line: our marketing works! Even though Hawaii's overall visitation remains flat, visitors to the Center have increased from a year ago. Way to go.

## PCC Dancers Highlighted in New Era

Article as shown in New Era September 1999 issue

### I LOVE IT!

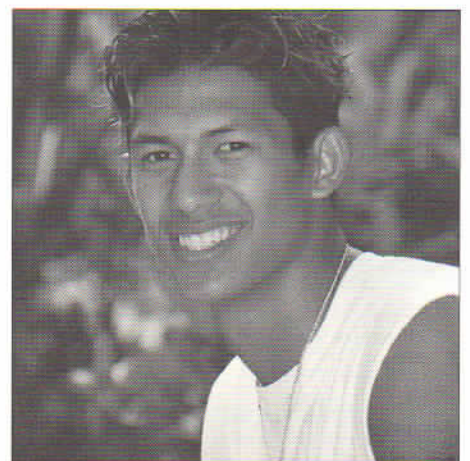
Wilma Nautu, 19, grew up in Apia, Western Samoa, and arrived in Hawaii to attend BYU-Hawaii in 1998. One of the benefits of attending school there is the opportunity she has to work at the Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC), a Church-owned facility in Laie that celebrates the cultures and traditions of the people of the South Pacific. "I've always been dancing. I love smiling at the people, and it makes me feel good," she says. Wilma does native Samoan dances, as well as Maori dances from New Zealand.

Then there's Leonard Peters. One day he's doing the Sasa, a Samoan slap dance about killing mosquitoes and flies, and on another he's coming over from his safety position and picking off a quarterback's pass.

Leonard is beginning his senior year at Kahuku High School in Hawaii. His team won the state championship last year and was rated by USA Today as one of the country's best teams. He is also in his eighth year dancing at the cultural center.

"I've learned a lot about my heritage by working here," says Leonard, who came to Hawaii from Western Samoa when he was seven. "This job has given me a feel for what a mission will be like. I've been able to greet people, and visitors come and talk to me, wanting to learn more about the PCC and the Church. I'm glad I can share my talents."

"I always have people waiting to talk to me after a performance, and it's fun to answer their questions," Wilma adds. "I might be able to help others, but I know my gospel knowledge has increased so much."



Leonard Peters local athlete and promo team dancer at PCC.



## Tour Guides Give It All

Market research, guest surveys, and just plain old common sense tell us over and over again how crucial it is to treat each guest with the utmost professionalism and courtesy.

A group of employees that constantly earns high marks with guests are the Multi-purpose guides. Based on feedback and compliments the Center receives, it is clear they give 110 percent in everything they do.

The guides are not necessarily performing their jobs with a higher degree of skill than anyone else. Rather, all indications are that they treat each moment at the Center as a new experience for our guests.

Kara Kennerly is a great example. Recently, a guest wrote to tell us how wonderful Kara was as their tour guide. Kara made the Polynesian experience that much more enjoyable and memorable.

It is almost a certainty that these guests will tell family, friends and co-workers back home about the terrific service they received from Kara. Some may possibly come see the Center based on that recommendation alone.

Enthusiasm, kindness and a willingness to always give that little extra, these are all qualities that Kara and the other tour guides bring to the Center every day.

**Thanks team, and keep up the good work.**



Kara has made a positive impact on visitors through her courtesy and professionalism.

  
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## Joseph F. Smith Profiled

*The life of Prophet Joseph F. Smith and the pivotal role he played as one of the Church's first missionaries in Laie was recently captured on film here.*

A production crew from Salt Lake City spent three days filming at the Center, recapturing the lasting influence of a man and his beliefs on a community of disciples. Between 20-25 employees and community residents served as film extras and the Center provided logistical support for the production.

"It was truly a privilege to help tell the story of this incredible man and all that he did in spreading the faith of the Church in Hawaii and the Pacific," said PCC President Lester Moore.

The story of Joseph F. Smith in Hawaii is one of the more remarkable examples of perseverance and success in the Church's history. From the simple roots he planted in Laie's early development more than a century ago has sprouted his vision of a community living in the spirit of aloha and inter-cultural harmony.

Without a doubt, if he were with us today, President Smith would look upon life in Laie with pride and satisfaction at the results



of his steadfast commitment.

The Joseph F. Smith video will be available for purchase through Church outlets in January.

## PCC Tops in Attractions Survey

**We're #1! We're #1! We're #1!**

That's the findings of Market Trends Pacific in a survey conducted earlier this year and published in the September issue of North American Bulletin.

Market Trends Pacific did statewide airport exit interviews with 508 North American visitors from February to June 1999. Of the 345 tourists who came to Oahu, 109 or 32 percent, visited the Center, making it the state's most popular attraction.

Hanauma Bay ranked second with 30 percent of the visitors, and Pearl Harbor/Arizona Memorial finished third with 28 percent, even though both are free to the public.

Even more impressive was that the Center overwhelmingly outscored the other attractions in visitor satisfaction. But that's not all. More than half of those surveyed said the Center exceeded their expectations.

Our ability to exceed expectations takes on even greater significance considering that 24 percent of the Center's visitors made their arrangements before arriving in Hawaii—so their expectations were high to begin with. Typically, the vast majority of Hawaii visitors decide which attractions to see after they arrive.

**Congratulations, everyone! We're #1!**