

Imua Polenisia

A Bimonthly Newsletter from the
Polynesian Cultural Center



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PCC Headlines West Valley City's Annual "We Are Polynesia" Festival

It was an evening filled with Polynesian entertainment rarely seen outside Hawaii and the South Pacific—and it happened at West Valley City's E Center in Utah, March 27th.

"We Are Polynesia" showcased the collective talents of 400 Polynesian performers living in Utah. Special guest entertainers were PCC's own Tongan master drummer Maveni Palo and the International Promo Team.

While the entertainment was the attraction, the objective was to raise funds for the development of a Polynesian community center in West Valley City. With the area's large and growing Polynesian population, community leaders say a new center is essential to its future.

"It's our hope and dream that the funds generated by this show will help build the Polynesian community center needed to serve this area," said Soulee L.K.O. Stroud, a spokesperson and treasurer for the Polynesian Association of Utah, the non-profit group organizing the event. "The Polynesian community wants this center to perpetuate our heritage, especially among younger generations. The community involvement in this event demonstrates just how important it is to our future."

Story continued on page 4.

Fulfilling the Prophecy

Following Alumni from the Church College/BYU-Hawaii

How can a canoe, a hukilau and an undergraduate degree from a small college in Laie, Hawaii, influence the world? Hundreds of Pacific Island members of the Church are evidence they can.

A story of success and faith, graduates of BYU-Hawaii (once Church College of Hawaii) are now making a significant difference in their communities and are examples of humble dedication to a prophet's words. Typically coming from modest circumstances, most students have worked their way through school by performing at what has become Hawaii's #1 paid attraction, the Church-owned Polynesian Cultural Center.

Profiling a handful of these exemplary alumni would reveal to Church members around the globe an inspiring story of commitment to gospel values, to bettering the world around us and to following a prophet's voice.

In 1955, David O. McKay traveled to Laie, Hawaii, to help break ground for a school of higher learning he had envisioned several years earlier. As he moved the soil, he predicted its students would literally influence millions of people in the years ahead.

Within a few years, President McKay also authorized construction of the Polynesian Cultural Center—the fruition of a dream early Church missionary Matthew Cowley had planted in the hearts of the people—



which would provide much-needed, meaningful employment for the struggling students in Laie.

Today, we see the fulfillment of these prophetic actions in the thousands of graduates who "danced their way through school," earning their tuition by working at the PCC. Leaders in education, law, government, business and more, these alumni are testimony not only of education, but of a humble determination to bring the words of a prophet to realization. Brief biographies of just a few of these exemplary latter-day saints will appear in subsequent issues. See page two for the first of three biographies of these unique individuals.

Dr. Salu S. Hunkin

Profession:

Pres., American Samoa Community College.

Career Highlights:

- Earned B.A. at Church College of Hawaii; M.Ed. at BYU-Provo; Ed. D. at University of Hawaii at Manoa.
- Deputy Director of Instructional Services, Dept. of Education, Pago Pago, American Samoa—Directed development of all academic programs for Dept. of Education Grades K–12.
- Educational/Federal Grants Liaison Coordinator, Governor's Office, American Samoa Government—Assisted D.O. E. grant eligibility through research.

Perspective on President McKay's Statement:

Dr. Hunkin was an 8th grade student lining the street when President McKay and others walked by in procession to dedicate the Church College. She said she was very aware of his statement, and as a teenager visiting her parents' native Samoa, she decided to return to Samoa to make a difference once her schooling was done.

She enjoyed the community feel and gospel perspective at Laie's Church College and enjoyed earning her tuition by performing at the PCC. After receiving her degrees, she did leave the comforts and technology of the states to return to her family's rural American Samoa.

Starting as a history teacher and quickly moving into administrative and governmental roles, she became one of American Samoa's first female principals. She has gone on to help shape education at the elementary, secondary and higher education levels. Despite challenges with basics like electricity and phone systems, she is currently taking the community college to new academic levels for its 2,000 students.

Quoting a local saying, "Women can achieve," she said she has felt no discrimination in her efforts to improve life for others in American Samoa. And as a mother of six, it is clear she has achieved in more ways than one. ■



Polynesian Cultural Center Introduces New Twilight Package for Visitors on the Go

New Tour Package Combines Afternoon Departure Time from Waikiki with Premier Activities at the PCC.

With our new Twilight Package, the Polynesian Cultural Center is providing visitors with another option to fit a day of Polynesia into their schedule, without giving up the convenience of round-trip transportation from their hotel or missing the featured attractions.

We are introducing the new package after market research showed that many potential guests preferred more freedom early in the day and an afternoon visit to the PCC. "The Twilight Package lets visitors shop, go to the beach, or enjoy other morning activities and still have time to experience the essence of Polynesia," said Alfred Grace, PCC Vice President of Sales.

"While the ultimate Polynesian experience can only be achieved with a full day at the Center, this package works well for guests staying on Oahu for just a few days and looking to maximize their visit," he continued.

Instead of the standard Waikiki departure in a tour bus at 11:30am, "Twilight Guests" are picked up at their hotel via mini coach

between 2–2:30pm. and arrive at the PCC by 3:30pm.

Depending on the type of package, this arrangement allows time for a canoe ride or an IMAX™ film presentation, and a guided tour through the island cultural villages. Guests then enjoy dinner at either the award-winning Ali'i Luau, Ambassador Fine Dining, or Gateway Restaurant before concluding the evening with the spectacular "Horizons" night show. They are returned to their hotel at approximately 10pm.

"The Twilight Package lets visitors shop, go to the beach, or enjoy other morning activities and still have time to experience the essence of Polynesia,"

—ALFRED GRACE
PCC Vice President of Sales

The Twilight Package includes round-trip transportation and a fully narrated tour along the lush, tropical coastline of windward Oahu, pre-arranged ticketing, an escorted tour of the top daytime activities and village presentations, an evening meal, and reserved seating at the night show. ■

Kingsley, Ariana and Titaina: Polynesian Cultural Center's Luau Keiki



Just when the sun is casting its red glow across the waves of Oahu, Hawaii, Kingsley Lei, Ariana Mahe and Titaina Pancee are rushing to finish their homework. After a short drive with their parents, they slip into dressing rooms, where they put on the first of their brightly colored costumes. A few minutes later the drums start their familiar island beat, and they step on stage.

Called “keikis” (kay-kees—which means children in Hawaiian), they delight visitors from around the world, performing six ancient and modern Hawaiian dances in the Polynesian Cultural Center’s evening luau. At 10 and 11 years old, they are at least 10 years younger than most of the other performers at the PCC, which is run by the Church and is one of Hawaii’s most popular tourist attractions.

As members of the Church, they also set an example. After they dance, they often talk to audience members, and their warmth and kindness help give people a good feeling about the Church.

Even though they all dance a lot—both Ariana and Titaina perform in other groups, as well—they say they don’t get tired of performing. Ariana points out that dancing gives her confidence, and Kingsley says that learning about his culture through dance

gives him background for his life. And they all make time for lots of other activities.

“When we introduce the young performers at the luau, the audience really melts. They stop eating and are surprised at how talented these kids are at such a young age.”

— DELSA MOE
PCC Theater Manager

Kingsley likes to watch his favorite wrestling star, Stone Cold Steve Austin, every Monday night. He and his friends practice wrestling moves. He also likes family beach parties with his mom, dad, brother and four sisters. Math is his favorite subject in school. At Church, he recently bore his testimony, and he felt the warmth of the Spirit.

Titaina enjoys school and has earned top student awards for several years. She also likes to draw, write poems and play the piano. Even though she doesn’t take piano lessons anymore, she teaches herself to play new songs, like “Search, Ponder and Pray.” She likes to spend time with her friends, talking and playing games like tag. Some of her favorite family times are spent with her parents and older sister, playing Scrabble and reading scriptures.

Guest Comments

Aloha!

My name is Chelsea and I’m thirteen. I recently visited the Hawaiian Islands for the first time. I spent December 8th to 10th on the Big Island, and the 11th to 15th on Oahu. I loved both places very much. On the 14th, I visited the Polynesian Cultural Center. My mom had been there before on a business trip and now that we were on vacation, she said I absolutely had to see this place. Though she didn’t tell me outright, I think the Polynesian Cultural Center was one of her main reasons for being in Oahu.

We purchased the Ambassador package, but I would have preferred to tour the place on my own. I really wanted to see everything. The only villages we got to see were Samoa, Tonga, and New Zealand. These three villages were adventures in themselves. (And off the record, it gives me a reason to come back! I want to see all there is to see.)

I just wanted simply to tell you that the Polynesian Cultural Center was the best part of all my time spent in Oahu. It was a very enriching, enjoyable experience, and I want to come back and do it all over again!

I’d also like to say “Talofa!” to So’o (“...in English, ‘So handsome’”) in the Samoan Village. His village was my favorite, and he was so funny! So please pass it on to him. I was also wondering if perhaps you could ask him to send me his autograph. I bet that sounds kind of weird, but I didn’t have a pen in the vicinity while I was there. (I know it would make some of my mom’s friends insanely jealous.) He wouldn’t remember me, I’m just another tourist in another typical day, but I remember him best of all.

Chelsea Crutchley; Calgary, Canada

Open for Free to Shoppers

Visitors circling Oahu can now stop at Hawaii’s #1 paid attraction and slip through the side gates for free to shop at the Treasures of Polynesia Marketplace. The broad selection features uniquely Polynesian gifts like Samoan war clubs, Maori poi balls, and Tongan nose flutes.

“We think this is Hawaii’s most authentic shopping experience,” said Retail Manager Eric Workman. Shoppers can participate in craft demonstrations, sample local-style foods, receive a free canoe ride, and a free CD with a \$25 purchase.

Open 11am–9pm daily except Sunday.

Ariana likes to play soccer with her friends. She also enjoys drawing and usually sketches pictures about basketball and other sports. One of her favorite family activities is going to McDonald's with her parents, three sisters and one brother. She has fun performing at the PCC and hopes to be a singer someday.

They all share an appreciation for the gospel. Kingsley learned about the power of prayer when a car he and his dad were driving broke down. After praying for help, the car started, and they were able to get home. Ariana's favorite scripture hero is Nephi, because he taught the people about Jesus Christ and helped them get to the promised land. Titaina has also had answers to prayers and has felt the comforting feeling of the Holy Ghost since she was confirmed.

Each of these keiki performers feels it is a privilege to be part of the PCC. The PCC was dedicated by Prophet David O. McKay to share the Polynesian cultures with the world. Ariana's mom is from New Zealand, and her dad is from Tonga. Titaina's mom is from Tahiti, and her dad is from Hawaii. Kingsley's parents are both Hawaiian. These young performers learn about their different cultures at home, and they get to share that heritage with PCC visitors from as far away as Japan, Africa and Sweden.

And how they share their culture makes a difference with the visitors. Delsa Moe, who is theatre director for the PCC, said, "When we introduce the young performers at the luau, the audience really melts. They stop eating and are surprised at how talented these kids are at such a young age."

For these kids, though, it's not tough to do what they love. They think it's fun to fit in two to three weekly performances, work hard in school, have fun with friends and enjoy time with their families. Most of all, they think it's great to share their culture and the gospel with others from around the world. ■


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Please visit our website at www.polynesia.com

The Polynesian Cultural Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the cultural heritage of Polynesia while providing educational opportunities for students at adjoining Brigham Young University-Hawaii. Founded in 1963 by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Villages Bustle With New Presentation Times

Just 30 minutes has made a day's worth of difference in the villages.

The Center recently revised the starting time of the village presentations from every half-hour to each hour. But what was a seemingly minor scheduling change has created a remarkable revival in the villages.

"The whole atmosphere is much more relaxed. I was very impressed how guests are experiencing the villages and participating in the cultural activities."

— KALO SOUKOP
PCC Board Member

No longer are guests rushing from village to village trying to make the start of each presentation. Now they are taking time to meet the people, enjoy the culture and participate in the activities.

Presentations Director Logo Apelu says

the employees also appreciate the change. "The new schedule lets our people share their culture in much more detail," noted Apelu. "The interaction is greater and guests leave with a better understanding of our culture."

The villages buzz with energy. Guests are exploring the huts, examining the exhibits, participating in traditional games and, best of all, learning about Polynesia's heritage. Demonstrations like tapa cloth making and cooking authentic foods are constantly in demand.

PCC Board Member Kalo Soukop immediately noticed the change on a recent visit. "The whole atmosphere is much more relaxed. I was very impressed how guests are experiencing the villages and participating in the cultural activities."

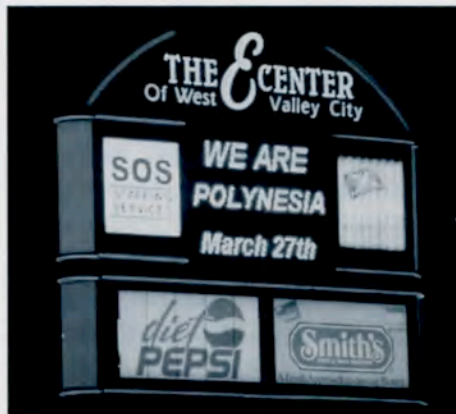
Stop by and see for yourself. And all it took was just a little time. ■

"We Are Polynesia": Continued from page 1

Stroud said the cast of hundreds was eager to perform the music, songs, and culture of Polynesia, including that of Hawaii, Fiji, Samoa, Maori New Zealand, Tonga, and Tahiti. That enthusiasm was shared by the PCC. "We're honored to help support the effort to raise funds for a Polynesian community center in West Valley City," said Ellen Gay Dela Rosa, Director of the International Promo Team. "Our mission is to promote greater understanding about the people and culture of Polynesia around the world. The performers were thrilled to be part of the show."

"Maveni is a wonderfully joyous person and a fantastic drummer," said Ellen Gay Dela Rosa. "The audience was wowed by how much effort he put into his performance that depends so much on perfect rhythm. He always puts on a great show."

The International Promo Team has been sharing the music and dance of Polynesia with the world for over three decades. Last year alone, the troupe thrilled audiences in Poland, China, Japan, Taiwan, the South Pa-



cific, and throughout the continental U.S. At the E Center they will perform the music, dance, and culture of Tahiti and Maori New Zealand.

While in Utah, the Promo Team also performed for the annual "Living Legends" concert at Brigham Young University—Provo, University of Utah, Utah Valley Community College, schools and a shopping center. All the major press covered the event and the PCC's involvement.

Soulee Stroud said, "The event was a big success, and PCC's involvement was the highlight of the show. A big mahalo to the Center for their participation." ■