Boulevard, the college’s enrollment grew rapidly during the ‘70s. So rapidly, in fact, that the need to move to larger quarters became a priority. In 1974, the UH Board of Regents provided for a phased transition and transfer of the Pensacola programs to a new 52-acre campus located on the slopes of Diamond Head. Occupying five temporary renovated buildings once owned by Fort Ruger, Kapi'olani CC received the distinction of being the first two-campus college in the system. But KapCC was turning heads for other reasons, too. In 1976, radiologic technician instructors Roland Clements and Harry Nakamura developed a new hip x-ray technique which earned the college national attention.

Growing up on Diamond Head
By 1980, plans to relocate the remainder of the campus to Diamond Head were continued on page 6

Art on the campus, such as this sculpture entitled “Spirit Way” by Sean Browne, adds to the unique setting and friendly learning environment at Kapi'olani Community College.
This edition of our UHCC Newsletter is the final pre-anniversary edition. Next month, at both our day-long Excellence in Education Conference and at our gala 35th anniversary celebration, we will be Celebrating Learning—Celebrating Excellence. I am excited about the variety of the 50+ small-group sessions available on the morning of April 16th, as well as the afternoon colloquium sessions. We do, indeed, have much to celebrate regarding our efforts to be truly learning-centered colleges.

I know, too, that many current and retired employees from throughout our UHCC system have been working to create retrospective displays from each campus which will be set up at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel in conjunction with our anniversary dinner. I look forward to sharing memories with all of you that evening.

Occasions such as significant anniversaries provide more than the opportunity to reflect on the past, however. They compel us to look ahead, as well. Last month in my message to you, I commented on the importance of being proactive in partnering with the legislature, the business community, and other agencies to build from our history of successes and to promote the economic well-being of our state. Some of the stories in this newsletter point to just such partnerships: exciting undertakings at Kapi‘olani CC, the Solutions 2000 series with Pacific Business News, the environmental and space exploration developments at Leeward and Windward CCs. The story of Latai Loa at Hawai‘i CC demonstrates another kind of community partnership that is also vital to our institution. Efforts such as these must be more and more a part of our future.

Another key partnership opportunity involves defining our Community Colleges as Partners for Life. Open Door institutions which stand ready to help all adult learners—regardless of their past academic achievement record, as they seek to improve their life situations. In the 21st century, technology will help our open door to swing ever wider—literally bringing us into the homes and workplaces of our students. Thanks to interactive television, cable television, the World Wide Web and other yet-to-be-defined technologies, we can conquer boundaries of space and time which once limited the ability of individuals to pursue learning opportunities. Now the only barriers to overcome are the barriers which we ourselves have created—policies or procedures which were written for an earlier era, when it was logical to expect that a student could be in only one place at one time.

In this new era of University Centers, e-mail, HITS and the like, we know that it is not only possible, but probable, that a working adult student may take courses from two or three … or more of our campuses at any given time. This is why we have a systemwide committee working to address issues related to distance education and concurrent enrollment.

Yet, there is no magic wand which we can wave in order to ease this process of transition from old to new. Our service to students can develop only as quickly as our commitment to collaboration. We are, indeed, partners in the learning process. As we celebrate thirty-five years of success, let us re-commit ourselves to this partnership and renew the sense of expanding educational frontiers.

Joyce S. Tsunoda
Senior Vice President and Chancellor for Community Colleges

“Occasions such as significant anniversaries provide more than the opportunity to reflect on the past. They compel us to look ahead, as well.”

Time to remember as well as plan our future
Dancers and Musicians of Bali
March 20 • 7:30 p.m.
Maui Arts & Cultural Ctr., Tickets: $22.50, $16.50 & $10.00

Maui CC Library Gala
March 27 • 7-10 p.m.
Fund-raiser on all three floors of the MCC Library. Call 984-3233.

Student Appreciation Day
March 30 • noon • Student Lounge

MCC Agriculture Plant Sale
April 1 • 8 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.
MCC Agriculture department.

Maui Kokua Service
April 20 • 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Maui CC Health Fair
April 20 • 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
MCC Agriculture department.

KAUAI COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Grand Opera and Broadway Hits
March 6 • 8 p.m.
Kauai CC Performing Arts Ctr.

Hawaiian Music Series
March 28 • 8 p.m.
Kauai CC Performing Arts Ctr

LEEWARD CC

Under Milk Wood
by Dylan Thomas
April 1 thru 10 • LCC Lab Theatre
Call 455-0385.

LCC Open House
April 8 • 4 to 7 p.m.
Fun, free and educational!

Street Sounds
April 10 • 8:00 p.m • LCC Theatre
Enjoy the vitality of this extraordinary a cappella quartet. Tickets: $14/$12

LCC Video Showcase
April 11 • LCC Lab Theatre
Adjudicated video festival winners. Call Bob Hochstein, 455-0302.

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Non-credit programs part of “Solutions”

UHCC Continuing Education and Training (OCET) programs have become sponsors of the Pacific Business News S2K (Solutions 2000) series of breakfast meetings that showcase various industries and innovative ways local businesses are succeeding in Hawai‘i’s challenging economy. This partnership is an important link for business people because it helps communicate the UHCC commitment to workforce development and providing customized training for business and industry. During the year, the breakfast meetings will focus on industries such as health care, travel and tourism, high technology, etc. Through sponsorship of S2K, OCET will be able to highlight educational programs and training solutions for business. The sponsorship also includes a series of ads that will run in Pacific Business News. The entrepreneurship of OCET directors and staff is evident in this new approach toward reaching the business community.

A recent OCET report indicated that 159,171 people took advantage of the events, performances and non-credit educational programs offered at the seven community colleges and at other locations around the state. This number is slightly lower than 1996 levels (189,390 people), primarily due to a decrease in theater performances, attributed in large part to economic conditions and fewer performances due to reduced operating budgets.

MCC students learn about justice

In mid-February, the Maui CC Criminal Justice Club (Nu Kappa Omicron) under the direction of Associate Professor John Wilt took its annual trip to Oahu. The group toured Halawa Prison, where students observed “custody levels” of prisoners, prisoner modules and work areas. They then went to the Honolulu Police Department and toured the crime lab and learned about the wide variety of services, ranging from drug analyses to firearms examination performed there. At Wai‘awa Community Correctional Center, students were introduced to the prison’s drug/ alcohol abuse rehabilitation program called “KASH Box.” The students also visited the Hawai‘i Youth Correctional Facility, the Women’s Community Correctional Center, and took part in the “Weed and Seed Program” held at Honolulu CC. The group is shown here visiting HPD’s Police Museum with Officer Croom.

A associate Professor John B. Wilt, who coordinates the Maui CC Administration of Justice Program, recently retired from the Air Force Reserve. At his retirement ceremony, Colonel Wilt was acknowledged for 30 years of combined active and Air Force Reserve service. He received the Legion of Merit and the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal for service to non-profit community organizations such as the Air Force Association, Maui Crime Stoppers, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Maui, Mediation Services of Maui, and the Neighborhood/ Business Crime Watch Programs. John Wilt is pictured here with his family (l to r —Ashley, Col Wilt, Jean Wilt, Anna and Todd) on the deck of the USS Missouri.
Making marks in environmental sciences

by WCC Assistant Professor Floyd W. McCoy

Hale ‘Imiloa, Windward CC’s new science building, is not even two years old, yet it’s already moving Hawai‘i’s environmental science education to new heights—and depths. Hale ‘Imiloa opened in the summer of 1997 with 33,000 square feet of classrooms and laboratories in astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, geology, microbiology, oceanography and physics. The acclaimed Aerospace Exploration Laboratory, a hands-on science museum and science center, is also part of the building. Now under construction adjacent to Hale ‘Imiloa is a new planetarium/multi-media facility. Scheduled for completion in mid-2000, there will be seating for 75 within the domed, octagon-shaped structure with a Digistar projector and special effects equipment. A 16-inch telescope will also be available for research and public viewing. With these new facilities, new curriculum has also been developed, enhancing Windward CC’s specialization in marine, earth and space sciences. Windward CC is also offering a new course in Polynesian voyaging that combines all sciences, physical and social, with aspects of long-distance voyaging and environmental stewardship.

Another new curriculum involves remote sensing (RS), geographic information systems (GIS), and global positioning satellite (GPS) use. The high-tech center contains computer workstations, scanner, printers and other equipment and provides training in GIS and use of RS, GIS and GPS in undergraduate science education. The center is also a resource to researchers, educational groups and community associations. Current cooperative users include Friends of He‘eia State Park, Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology, the Marine Option Program, the Space Grant Consortium, demonstrating the value these science resources bring to the community as well as to our students.

Hale ‘Imiloa is available to educational and environmental groups for meetings, tours and laboratory use. The new facility is quickly becoming a significant center for undergraduate environmental education, for adult retraining in new technologies and a community education center. Inquiries may be directed to Dr. Floyd W. McCoy at 235-7498.

East meets West at Milepost 70 in the Big Island’s Ka‘u district every semester as members from the Kona and Hilo campuses of the Alpha Psi Epsilon chapter of Hawai‘i’s CC meet to collect highway rubbish. Adopt-A-Highway is a service project of the honor society.

Leadership Institute for Chairs and Coordinators

The Office of the Chancellor for Community Colleges is coordinating a series of workshops as part of the UHCC Leadership Institute for Chairs and Coordinators. The workshops are limited to approximately 25 people, and reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis. Call Cammie Matsumoto at 956-3871 or email cammie@ccc.hawaii.edu to reserve your space.

March 4: Funding Opportunities for Faculty/Funding for Travel & Research

March 18: What a Great Meeting: Making your meetings productive

April 30: Higher Education: It’s a people business

May 18: Getting the CC’s Ready for 1999-2000: Annual meeting with Chancellor Tsunoda and Need to Know—Federal mandate on work study.

March 1999
KapCC’s entrepreneurial spirit directs future

continued from page 1

In this 1963 photo, at the Pensacola campus, these students were learning “modern” office skills in their adding machine class.

under way. A few people who opposed the college’s move at the time, though unsuccessful in stopping construction at its present site, caused developers to address their concerns. Buildings were slightly reconfigured, and more trees were preserved to help create the campus that today blends so beautifully with its scenic location.

As the new buildings sprung up on campus, so did new programs and recognition for excellence in several areas. In 1986, Kapi‘olani’s respiratory care program won a national award as an outstanding vocational education program. Meanwhile Emergency Medical Services started the mobile intensive care technician program at the college. The Gallaudet University Regional Center, the famous cactus garden, and the first Asia-Pacific Festival also took roots on campus in the late ‘80s.

Students and faculty of the Kapi‘olani CC culinary program had long been reaping awards, but they did not achieve Guinness record notoriety until 1990. That year, Kapi‘olani CC and Honolulu CC food service students helped McKinley High School celebrate its 125th anniversary by creating a record-breaking two-ton, 130 foot long cake. Also during the ‘90s the campus came alive with many new pieces of sculpture, fountains, murals and other art.

Looking into the future

Today, the college still strives to achieve new heights and attain important community goals. More than 7,100 students annually enroll in day, evening and weekend credit programs at the campus. An additional 25,000 students enroll through its extensive non-credit programs.

Kapi‘olani Community College has strong technical, occupational and professional programs in business education, food service and hospitality education, and nursing. Health sciences, emergency medical services and legal assistant programs are unique to the College and have received national recognition. The liberal arts program remains the largest of all eight campuses, enrolling more than 4,500 students.

Kapi‘olani Community College is responsive to the needs of the community, identifying current interests or trends and providing programs that enrich public education. Close ties with business, government, social institutions and other community resources are critical to planning and development of the College’s curriculum. One example of this is the partnership with the Waikiki Lifelong Learning Center, which brings many of Kapi‘olani’s programs to Waikiki residents and place-bound workers. The Center, which is a collaboration with private industry, government,

Kapiolani College seeks phased move to Ruger

A majority of residents and area businesses approved of Kapi‘olani CC’s plans to move to Diamond Head, but the issue made local headlines many times during the early ‘80s.
union and education, has been a catalyst for workplace development in Waikiki and the rest of the state.

Kapi‘olani has taken the lead in blending credit and non-credit programs in an effort to be more responsive to the needs of the community, more flexible in its offerings, and more entrepreneurial in generating revenues that can be used for improving existing programs or creating new ones. By rethinking the way credit and non-credit programs relate to each other, Kapi‘olani has been able to make all of the campus’ resources and programs available to larger populations, thereby extending its outreach and accessibility to the community and fostering potential for new partnerships with business and industry.

For many years, Kapi‘olani has also been particularly successful in expanding its reach to international arenas, which is key to its goal of becoming a focal point for international outreach and education. New agreements with institutions in China and Sri Lanka offer opportunities for faculty, students and curriculum to move beyond the boundaries of the state, and for people from abroad to come here to share and gain knowledge. In addition to international partnerships and student, staff, and resource exchanges, the campus hosts an annual International Festival, the student conference on Asia and the Pacific and regularly features international speakers.

To administer and assist in these new international ventures, the college is planning to establish a Center for International Affairs, which will assist incoming international students and instruct Kapi‘olani’s own faculty and students on international opportunities for studying and teaching. In addition, this office will aid in the college’s ongoing efforts to expand its reach not just across the Pacific, but throughout the world.

Kapi‘olani will also be moving forward in the coming years with the development of the Culinary Institute of the Pacific (CIP), a culinary training ground that will rival any in the world, one that is uniquely positioned geographically to bring together the tastes and influences of Asia and the Pacific with those of the mainland United States and Europe. CIP will build upon the strong foundation of the College’s food service and hospitality education department, creating an advanced program that offers more options in non-credit training.

Meanwhile, the College will continue to respond to the needs of the community and to industry, creating programs that will produce graduates in fields that are vital to the state’s economy and development. Recently introduced programs in Media Arts and Sports Medicine are indicative of this responsiveness that will no doubt continue in coming years.

As the information age brings about changes in the ways we learn, Kapi‘olani CC will continue to look at alternative methods of delivery to make education more accessible to non-traditional students. 

From its origins as a technical school offering training in food service, Kapi‘olani CC’s culinary arts curriculum has grown into an internationally recognized program, and the cornerstone of the Culinary Institute of the Pacific.

Provosts of Kapi‘olani CC

Sherman Dahl (Kapi‘olani Technical School)
Raymond Won (1965-1972)
Fred Haehnlen (1972-1976)
Joyce Tsunoda (1976-1983)
John Morton (1984-present)

This article is the second in a series of retrospectives in celebration of our 35th anniversary. We will feature each campus and ETC in the months that follow.
Children may be one of the toughest audiences to please, but Cynthia See knows just how to do it. Her vibrant personality captures their attention and imagination, whether she's portraying the mother in *Bedtimes & Bullies*, or Mrs. Primm in *Lyle the Crocodile*. Cynthia See, born and reared in Hawai‘i, is a company actor with the Honolulu Theatre for Youth. She is also a teacher, playwright, director and Kapi’olani Community College graduate. Her lively performances enthral thousands of K-12 students throughout the state each year. She also directs, writes and teaches.

See readily credits her instructors and classes at Kapi’olani CC with helping her to discover her natural talents for drama. She recalls, “When I graduated from Kalani High School, I had the grades to go on to college, so I did. But I only lasted a year at UH Mānoa. I lacked direction and was simply overwhelmed.” Yet she knew she needed to continue her education. The following year, she returned to college at Kapi’olani CC. Once there, her future began to take shape. “Most of my classes were at the Diamond Head campus, and I loved it. The small class sizes made it easy to connect with teachers. They were more like graduate level seminars, where discussions are open and thoughtful. They helped me develop a sense of self-worth.” During a speech class at Kapi’olani CC, her professor, Sandra Perez, asked what her plans were. “I enjoyed speech class, and wanted to do something worthwhile for children, so I responded ‘I might become a speech therapist.’” Perez also remembered the conversation, and said, “Cynthia had quite a bit of talent, yet she seemed unaware of it. I suggested she take one of my drama classes. I was really pleased to see her in my class the following semester. From her very first moment on stage as Juliet waiting for the Nurse to bring word of Romeo, I knew she had that special spark.”

See realized it, too. Upon completion of her Associate in Arts degree, she went on to UH Mānoa as a drama major and graduated in 1984. Even before graduation she began work with the Alliance for Drama Education, an organization dedicated to bringing drama into the schools. She also auditioned for and got several parts in Honolulu Theatre for Youth productions. “I had not actually studied children’s theatre in college, but I soon found I loved performing for them,” See said.

See’s first attempt at directing was for the Starving Artists Theatre Company, and she was honored with a Po‘okela Award nomination. She was hired as a drama education specialist for the Honolulu Theatre for Youth in 1989, and became a company actor in 1993.

Of HTY, See says, “It is a real honor to serve the children and families of the state as an actor. Our productions reflect the unique culture of Hawai‘i, and I love the opportunity to play these special roles.” See also enjoys the challenges that children’s theatre affords. “Children’s performances are, of course, shorter, and they allow for more color-blind and age-blind casting. Because children’s theatre is often musical, I’ve also had to learn to sing and even to play some musical instruments,” See laughs.

The Honolulu Theatre for Youth provides theatre and drama for Hawai‘i’s young people regardless of ethnic, cultural or economic background. In its 42 year history, HTY has played to more than 4 million people. With lively, dedicated artists such as Cynthia See behind and in front of the curtain, HTY will surely continue to enrich the lives of Hawai‘i’s children.
first generation immigrant from Finland—Sinikka Hayasaka. Hayasaka said, “Also being an immi-
grant, I could identify some of the special challenges that faced Victor. We both still chuckle when reminisc-
ing about my attempts to teach Victor English through Japanese.” Lin took several classes from Hayasaka, and she introduced him to other opportunities an Associate in Arts degree could open up for him. Lin went on to complete his A.A. at LCC, and his B.A. and professional diploma at UH Mānoa. He came back to LCC from time to time to report his progress and discuss issues in grammar and linguistics with his first sensei (respected teacher). Upon completing his degree, Lin was hired as a lecturer and later as an instructor in Japanese at LCC, and is now in his ninth year of teaching. “America has been wonderful to my family,” says Lin, “and I am certainly proud to be employed by my American alma mater and will do my best to con-
tribute to its instructional mission.” 

Victor’s colleagues worry that he will wear himself out because he puts his heart and soul into his endeavors. “After all these years, Victor still calls me ‘Sensei.’ When we team teach, the students enjoy observing the interaction between us,” adds Hayasaka. And the children? The four children came to LCC as “early admit” students from Aiea High School. Leeward CC’s East Asian Language Instructor, Victor Lin, brought his family to America from Taiwan in 1978. He wanted to assure that his children would receive a quality education. He knew that, in America, education is accessible to anyone, not to a privileged few as it tends to be in some Asian countries. Yet, even in Lin’s wildest dreams, he probably never imagined that, in the summer of 1991, five members of his family would receive university degrees.

Victor’s eldest son, David, received a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from Ohio State University; his eldest daughter, Gloria, also a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry, but from UCLA; his third child, Jean, a B.A. in East Asian Languages, from UH Mānoa; and the youngest, Robert, a B.A. in Biology from Harvard. The fifth member to receive a diploma was Victor himself; he was awarded a Professional Diploma in Japanese Secondary Education from UH Mānoa.

The Lin family’s saga is remarkable in itself, but the story is even more special because all five Lins entered American higher education through Leeward Community College. The Lins had settled in Aiea, and the children, ranging in age from nine to sixteen, entered public school while Victor and his wife worked several jobs to carve out a living. Victor, anxious to test the waters of American higher education, had heard good things about LCC from fellow work-
ers. It was affordable... had easy parking...was close by...and had patient teachers. He decided to try an evening class and chose Japanese language.

His first teacher was a blue-eyed,
Students of Hawai’i Community College at the UH Center at West Hawai’i recently completed a four-stage cycle of historical seeing as they climbed two of the Big Island’s major mountains, took an historic Kohala tour, and planted more than 400 trees.

To see into the deep past of the island and gain an elevated perspective of the present and future, lecturer Richard Stevens’ World and Hawaiian history classes formed the Five Mountains Club with the goal to climb the five major mountains of the Big Island during the school year. Hiking through the lush native forest atop Kohala and the starkly beautiful lava flows of Mauna Loa, students tuned into the world of the dynamic natural interaction of sights and sounds present long before the first people arrived. Mauna Kea, Hualalai, and Kilauea will be climbed during the spring semester.

During the Kohala tour, students, along with family and friends (pictured at right), saw into the deep, intermediate and recent past of the historic northern end of the island. They heard stories of the great Pololu Slide, which formed much of the rugged coastline, the early development of Hawaiian culture, Kamehameha’s life, the immigration and plantation period, and recent changes in the land.

Finally, looking into the future, the students planted 417 native trees from seven species in one of the island’s most beautiful kipuka, the Pu’u Huluhulu Native Tree Sanctuary on Saddle Road. The tree-planting project, one of a continuing series in which over 1,500 native trees have been planted by West Hawai’i students, exemplified two more of the students’ goals: community/earth service and showing aloha for the `aina in action. From historical seeing—seeing into time and examining the connections between the past, the present, and future and among humans and nature—came the commitment among the students to play an active role in history, not merely to see but to do, a concept very much in line with the HawCC mission.

Maui Community College will celebrate the completion of two facilities on campus at a blessing and ceremony on March 19 at 5 p.m. One of the buildings is a new complex that will house the University Center and Continuing Education and Training functions. OCET will offer classes in computing skills, personal and community enrichment, and visitor industry training and economic development. The former business instruction facility is the other building to be blessed. It has been totally renovated for student services, which directs counseling, on-campus student housing, financial aid, admissions and records, the Educational Opportunity Center, Upward Bound, and Hawaiian student support programs. In essence, the new center will be a “one-stop-shop” for students seeking information or assistance with admissions and tuition matters. There will also be a groundbreaking ceremony for a new distance education and computing/media technology facility.

These new facilities will not only help Maui CC serve its students, but will also help the college reach out to the community more effectively.
Fritz Osell’s dream of creating a public observatory park on Leeward CC's campus is slowly and steadily becoming a reality. Osell is the first to admit that his vision of offering the local and global community an in-depth look into Hawai'i’s night skies might never have come to fruition if it weren’t for the generosity and commitment of many local businesses, unions, organizations and individuals.

Osell completed the first public observatory at Leeward CC in 1995, which includes a 12-inch telescope. Much of the work and materials were donated, and the completed project cost about $12,000. The Department of Defense awarded LCC a grant covering costs of a second telescope and dome. However, money to cover the costs of the observatory to house the 20-inch remote access telescope were not included in the grant. Osell again turned to the college and community for help. What has emerged is an amazing tribute to the dedication and generosity of individuals, organizations, unions, and businesses and our community college campuses.

Osell happened to learn that Hawai'i contractor Mike Lurvey was a student at Leeward. Mike, working toward his engineering degree, offered assistance to Osell. Lurvey laughs, “I am a great believer in the importance of education, and eagerly offered to lend a hand. Little did I realize that Osell also wanted my heart, head and soul.” Lurvey helped lay underground cabling, designed the building, helped with grant-writing, and talked with many area suppliers who graciously donated materials.

In the meantime, Interim Provost Sharon Narimatsu also received an offer of help. Longtime friend Phil Ching, formerly of Bank of Hawaii, and Walter Kupau, president of the Hawai'i Carpenters’ Union were enjoying lunch with Narimatsu at Honolulu and Kapi‘olani CC apprenticeship students gain valuable experience while helping Leeward CC construct a valuable community resource—a public observatory park.

Narimatsu had another idea. She called Kapi‘olani CC’s Randy Francisco, and inquired whether his building maintenance apprentices might benefit from the same hands-on work. Experience laying concrete, installing windows, and wood framing would also benefit Kapi‘olani CC’s hotel and restaurant industry building maintenance students.

To add to the educational and cultural value of the park, Nainoa Thompson is collaborating with Leeward staff to construct an Hawaiian Star Compass next to the observatories. The project entails placing 32 rocks strategically to form a compass. Thompson is very excited about the possibility and hopes to ask each of the Pacific Islands he has visited with the Hokulea to send a rock to be placed in the compass.

LCC is also creating a partnership with the Central and Leeward school districts to participate in a summer Upward Bound program involving students in the compass project and the Polynesian Voyaging Society’s forthcoming trip aboard the Hokulea to Rapa Nui.

The result of all this is an incredible success story, as the second observatory takes shape. Osell’s dream is lightyears closer thanks to Honolulu and Kapi‘olani CC’s apprenticeship students, faculty and staff, to apprenticeship program instructors Sam Gallante and Jeffrey Uyeda, to Honsador Lumber, Killabrew and other organizations and individuals who have supported this exciting effort to reach the stars.
On a rainy night in November 1996, a talented young Samoan dancer with Tihati Productions, Latai Loa, was in a tragic car accident on Oahu, and his fire-knife dancing career at the Princess Kau‘ulani Hotel was over in a flash.

Loa spent five months at the Rehabilitation Hospital of the Pacific. For two months he was able only to move his arms. On Christmas Day, he was able to move a toe and his hands and subsequently he regained more mobility. When he was released from REHAB, he moved to his family’s Big Island home. Nursing Home Without Walls assisted him, with personal care provided by home health aides through Kokua Nurses, a privately funded organization in Hilo. But Loa quickly became bored with his sedentary life. Before coming to Hawai‘i from Samoa, he had studied welding and decided it was time to continue his studies. Loa’s brother is currently studying to be an auto body mechanic, and the two plan to open an automotive shop some day.

The first obstacle for Loa was going to class because a bus with a ramp was available only one day per week. Through the Center for Independent Living-East Hawaii, he was able to move to Hale O‘hana, an independent housing center near Hawai‘i CC, and in the fall 1997 semester, he began classes using his motorized wheelchair. Now, home health aides come to his home every day to help him get ready for school. He also receives assistance from the State Department of Human Relations, Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind. Special welding garments were constructed for him by Island Skill Gathering through the vocational rehabilitation program, and his wheelchair was equipped with tires with tubeless inserts to protect against metal fragments and sparks in the welding shop.

Loa is meeting his challenges with great determination. Notetakers have been assigned for all his academic classes, his classmates have rallied to his aid, and professors Ken Muranaka and Bill Derasin (with Loa in the above photo) have been very supportive of his efforts.

Latai’s love of Samoan dance has not diminished. He has taught students in the Samoan Club at Hawai‘i CC and UH-Hilo the first motions of the slap dance, for which he is also the caller.

Latai Loa will continue to rely on the services of this community, but his spirit and determination will undoubtedly make it happen, for as he states, “Disabled people should not give up. There are plenty things to hope for the future, and it is not the end of the world!”

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