

OHA: A Celebration Of Ten Years

OHA: The Beginning-Part One

With this special supplement marking the first decade of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Ka Wai Ola begins a series of monthly articles designed to help you understand OHA better.

"OHA: The Beginning" takes you back to the early 1970s and traces the growing awareness that the Hawaiian people were going to have to organize to survive.

by Curt Sanburn

Special to Ka Wai Ola O OHA

The story of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) began just over ten years ago in 1980, when nine Hawaiian men and women chosen by the Hawaiian community were sworn in as trustees... of an idea. The idea was hope for the Hawaiian people, the chance to control their rightful resources and determine their own destiny.

Looking back through two thousand years of Hawaiian culture and ahead to an unlimited Hawaiian future, the last two decades might seem unimportant, but they were pivotal years. These are the years when the idea of the Hawaiian nation was reborn and activated, when the nation itself gathered strength and the Hawaiian people were finally able to turn away from one hundred years of despair and dispossession. The story of OHA, still unfinished, is the story of hope.

The 1970s—A Decade of Conflict and Awakening

The decade of the 1970s was a hectic and unsettled period in Hawaii's history, as it was in American history. The social and cultural activism that blossomed on college campuses and in big mainland cities during the late 1960s was a national phenomenon by 1970. The values of the dominant culture were questioned and challenged by minorities of every kind in every community in the country. Racial minorities found new dignity in their native cultures and demanded equal treatment under the law. Idealistic young people questioned the morality of war and eventually brought the U.S. involvement in Vietnam to a halt. Women sought liberation from sexual stereotypes and oppression. "Ecology" became a new religion, at about the same time American astronauts brought back pictures from the moon of a bright little planet-blue, green and white-flecked—floating in the blackness of space.

Jumbo jets arrived in Hawai'i in 1970, quickly followed by jumbo hotels. In the next six years, the number of visitors to Hawai'i doubled. The world shrank and Hawai'i boomed. New resorts, new highways and new subdivisions sprouted on virgin shores and sprawled into valleys and cane fields as Hawai'i's population grew by 25 percent during the decade.

The stress on the local community was felt most deeply by the rural Hawaiians. Their lives on the fringes of modernity, in close contact with the land and sea, were suddenly shaken by eviction notices and "No Trespassing" signs as landowners and developers sprinkled luxurious hideaway resorts and exclusive golf communities in the most remote and untouched corners of Hawai'i Nei. In some cases, there was no place left for farmers and fishermen to go.

At Kalama Valley mauka of Sandy Beach on O'ahu, a proposed luxury suburb threatened to dislodge the tenant farmers, including many Hawaiians, who had lived on the scrubby Bishop Estate land for years. It was a replay of Waiālae-



In a ceremony filled with emotion, Chief Justice William Richardson (center) administers the oath of office to the first OHA Board of Trustees (left to right): Peter Apo,

Roy Benham, Malama Solomon, Frenchy DeSoio, Rod Burgess (behind Richardson), Joe Kealoha, Moses Keale, Walter Ritte. Not shown: Thomas Kaulukukui, Sr.

Kahala in the 1950s, when pig farmers were forced to make way for expensive suburbs.

The Kalama Valley farmers decided they weren't leaving quite easily. They organized Kokua Kalama and fought the eviction with noisy demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience. For the first time in almost one hundred years, the maka'ainana were standing up for their preferred way of life. The year was 1970, and Hawai'i would never be the same.

The battles that followed are legendary: armed farmers prepared to die for their farmlands at Waiahole-Waikane on O'ahu in 1974; the defense of Niumalu on Kaua'i; the dramatic march for access and trail rights on the West End of Molokai; Kaho'olawe, where wave after wave of heroic Hawaiians defied the U.S. Department of Defense to malama the wounded sacred island; the hopeless last stand of the fishing settlement on Sand Island; the beach access fights at Makena and Nukoli; and the tragedy of Hale Mohalu.

The fast pace of growth in Hawai'i meant that lands which had languished for years were suddenly targets for speculation and development. Kuleana lands were challenged and lost. An almost invisible avalanche of adverse possession proceedings, appropriately called "quiet title," dispossessed hundreds if not thousands of Hawaiian families from their rightful inheritance, as lawyers for the big landowning corporations sought to consolidate and substantiate their holdings.

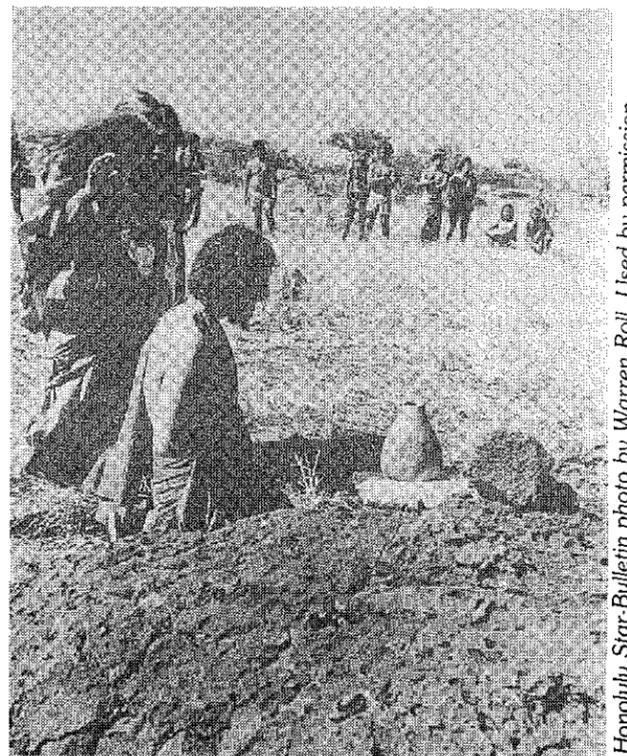
Meanwhile, Hawaiian musicians, dancers and artists echoed the life-and-death land battles all around them with new-found pride in their cultural heritage. With the vigor of a war chant, Palani Vaughan sang "Kaulana Na Pua" ("Famous are the Flowers"), a turn-of-the-century protest song about the annexation of Hawai'i by the U.S. Gabby Pahinui and Peter Moon sang anthems of "aloha 'aina." Defiant, yearning or hopeful, the flood of Hawaiian music and dance in the 1970s

fused the love of the land with the very survival of Hawaiian culture. The voyages of Hokule'a dramatically demonstrated the ancient Hawaiians' mastery of their oceanic universe and gave new cultural pride to an entire generation of Hawaiians.

New awareness in the Hawaiian community created new resolve and questions:

What about traditional Hawaiian gathering, water and access rights? And what about the 1.6 million acres of land held in trust by the State of Hawai'i which was supposed to benefit native Hawaiians?

continued page 12



Aunty Emma DeFries prays with Frank Hewett during ceremony on Kaho'olawe in 1979.

from page 11

Why was the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands so slow to place Hawaiians on the land and the waiting list of homestead applicants so long?

And lastly, if the overthrow of the sovereign Hawaiian government in 1893 was caused in part by the United States acting illegally, as modern historians now were claiming, should we demand reparations from the U.S. Congress?

To strengthen themselves and begin to answer the questions, various 'ohana pulled together and new organizations were born. A.L.O.H.A. (Aboriginal Lands of Hawaiian Ancestry), 'Ohana O Hawai'i, the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, Hui Ala Loa, the Waiahole-Waikane Community Association and others joined the ranks of older, more established organizations including the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs, the Hawaiian land trusts and service agencies such as Alu Like Inc., privately formed in 1975 to assist Hawaiians socially and economically.

Scholars, lawyers and researchers pored through old law books, title records and legal histories to understand better their rights and native entitlements. Ordinary citizens became fluent in the legalese of such documents as the Constitution of 1840, the Great Mahele, the Kuleana Act, the Land Act of 1895, the Annexation Act, the Organic Act, the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act and the Admissions Act.

Attention shifted northward to Alaska where, in 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was passed by the U.S. Congress. The act returned 40 million acres of land to Alaska natives and paid into a trust fund \$1 billion for title to land which was not returned by the U.S. government.

The Puwalu Sessions—Hawaiians Organize

Winona Rubin was the director of Alu Like at this crucial time. "There was a tremendous frustration in the Hawaiian community," says the respected community leader and Kaua'i native. "Part of the community was paralyzed. They had given up even *thinking* that change could occur. Hopelessness was part of the landscape.

"And yet there was the beginning of hope in the regeneration of cultural activities—the language and dance and perpetuation of things Hawaiian. It was a way of offsetting the hopelessness, but still, there was frustration that things were not happening fast enough and fear that certain of the native rights and landholdings would disappear by the time something happened."

In 1977, the Council of Hawaiian Organizations and Alu Like sponsored what become known as the Puwalu Sessions. Like the Kalama Valley resistance seven years earlier, the sessions were unprecedented in recent history. They were the



"Frenchy" DeSoto, chair of the Con-Con Hawaiian Affairs Committee, speaks before the assembled delegates. To her left,

delegate Mike Crozier, to far right of photo, delegate John Waihee.

Photos by delegate Milton Hirata.

first organized forums devoted to the discussion of Hawaiian issues by the Hawaiian community since Lili'uokalani's loyalists had been forced to disband at the beginning of the century.

Three hundred and fifty invitations were sent out to interested groups and individuals, and representatives from 28 different organizations attended the sessions at Kamehameha Schools. A third of the attendees did not belong to any organization; they were just Hawaiians concerned about their future, anxious to listen and share their mana'o.

The first session reached consensus regarding five top-priority goals for Hawaiians: to establish political credibility and equitable political influence in order to begin the journey toward self-determination; to establish a land base for use by Native Hawaiians; to ensure an education system that has relevance for the Hawaiian people; to achieve economic self-sufficiency; and to strengthen the spirit of *'ohana* and *puwalu*—unity and cooperation—within the great Hawaiian family.

In opening remarks which proved to be very influential at the Puwalu 'Ekolu (third) session, then State Supreme Court Chief Justice—and Hawaiian—William Richardson urged all Hawaiians to learn to use the courts to their

advantage to redress grievances, to challenge adverse possession laws and assert gathering, access and water rights.

"Our courts," he said, "have recognized that Hawaii's land laws are unique in that they are based, in part, upon ancient Hawaiian tradition, custom and usage. This means that in some cases . . . we can look to the practices of our ancestors as guidance to establish present day law."

In later Puwalu sessions on each of the islands, representatives were elected to serve as members of the Aha Kaukanawai, a mini-legislature which prepared a set of actual legislative proposals to be presented to the State Legislature on behalf of the community, called the Native Hawaiian Legislative Package.

One individual who was deeply impressed by Chief Justice Richardson's message was Adelaide "Frenchy" DeSoto, a community leader from Wai'anae who attended the Puwalu sessions as a member of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana.

"Justice Richardson and I had a sad conversation," DeSoto remembers. "It hurt him so much to see the Hawaiian people coming to court with no resources. We weren't able to sustain the onslaught by those with money who were quiet-titling the land. They were stealing. We had to do something."

DeSoto was at Makena Beach on Maui when her resolve strengthened. She was there with the Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, preparing to cross Alalakeiki Channel to Kaho'olawe under the cover of night.

"In the light of the bonfire," she says, "I watched our people preparing themselves as if going to war, and it hit me that there must be a better way to do this. I remember going to the island and listening to the kupuna plead through tears for some righteousness to be done to the Hawaiian people, so that we are not on our knees begging to eternity."

Back in Honolulu, DeSoto looked into a legislative bill proposed by State Rep. Henry Peters to create a private, non-profit agency for Hawaiians funded by a pro-rata share of the ceded lands trust.

Called Ho'ala Kanawai, the proposal went nowhere in the state legislature after constitutional scholars determined that the state cannot create a private (that is, *independent*, agency using public funds. However, Ho'ala Kanawai was just one of several concrete proposals to come out of the Puwalu Sessions and the 'Aha Kaukanawai executive session, proposals that were designed to improve the status and condition of the Hawaiian people.

In early 1978, Frenchy DeSoto decided to seek election as a delegate to the 1978 Hawaii State Constitutional Convention, representing Wai'anae. Her timing was perfect.

Key dates in changing Hawai'i

1964: John Dominis Holt publishes "On Being Hawaiian," a book that proudly counts the achievements of the Hawaiian people and refutes the stereotypes.

1970: Tenant farmers resist eviction from Bishop Estate land at Kalama valley on O'ahu, sparking protests and acts of civil disobedience.

1971: U.S. Congress passes Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

1972: A.L.O.H.A. (Aboriginal Lands of Hawaiian Ancestry) is formed to focus on reparations for the overthrow of the monarchy.

1974: Farmers' protests force the State of Hawaii to act to protect Waiahole Valley from suburban development.

1975: Alu Like Inc., a private non-profit service agency to serve the social and economic need so the Hawaiians is founded.

1975: Activists trespass on the government-owned island of Kahoolawe to

protest the use of the sacred land as a practice bombing target.

1977: The Puwalu Sessions bring together diverse Hawaiian groups to share mana'o and find a common plan of action. Puwalu means "in the spirit of cooperation."

1978: The State Constitutional Convention proposes the establishment of an "Office of Hawaiian Affairs" to better the conditions of all Hawaiians. The proposals are ratified by Hawaii's voters, thus creating the Office. At the same time, Hawaiian becomes the State of Hawaii's second official language.

1979: The State Legislature determines that OHA will receive and administer funds equal to 20 percent of the revenue from the ceded lands trust.

1980: Nine trustees of OHA, elected by 54,000 Hawaiians, are sworn into office by State Supreme Court Chief Justice William Richardson.

Con Con: Hawaiians reach "political apex"

CON CON

The 1978 Constitutional Convention (Con Con) was called to review—and revise, where necessary—the document which spells out the functions and responsibilities of Hawaii's state government. One hundred and two delegates convened for 60 days of arduous work in the heat of summer at the Old Federal Building in downtown Honolulu, directly across King Street from 'Iolani Palace.

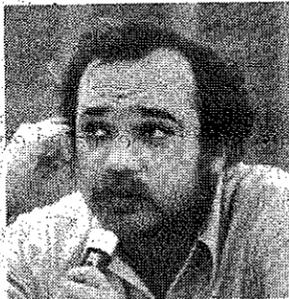
Called the "People's Con Con" because 90 of the delegates had never held elected office, the mood was hopeful, optimistic and reform-oriented as the opening ceremonies got under way with a "chicken-skin" chant by Edith Kanaka'ole and a prayer by David Kaupu, chaplain of Kamehameha Schools, followed by a tribute hula to Queen Lili'uokalani.

Despite the Hawaiian flavor, Hawaiian affairs were not at the top of anyone's agenda (except "Auntie" Frenchy's) going into the convention. Alu Like had spent some time and effort getting delegates to the convention, but the big issues were initiative and referendum, judicial selection, state spending limits and legislative reform.

To put his perspective DeSoto's one-woman crusade in historic perspective, at the previous Con Con in 1968 delegate James Bacon introduced a proposal that would require the state to "preserve and enhance Hawaiian conditions." The proposal met with mild amusement and Bacon was forced to defend it, saying it was "not a laughing matter." His proposal was defeated by a 46-26 vote.

Ten years later, a lot had changed.

Con Con's first task was setting up leadership. DeSoto backed William Paty, manager of the Waiāluā sugar plantation on Oahu, to be chairman. After Paty was duly elected to the post and a young Hawaiian activist/lawyer named John



Waihee

Waihee was named majority leader of the convention, Paty assigned DeSoto to be chairman of the newly created Hawaiian Affairs Committee.

Suddenly, Frenchy DeSoto had an official soapbox and the opportunity to change forever the way the State of Hawaii treated its native population.

The conception and birth of the idea called the Office of Hawaiian Affairs was played out in the chaotic Hawaiian Affairs Committee staff office among a bunch of young optimists led by "Auntie Frenchy".

It was during those long, hot summer days that she earned her title as the "mother" of OHA. Her dedicated "children" included committee staffers Steve Kuna and Martin Wilson, lawyers Sherry Broder and Jon Van Dyke, and a host of slipper-shod volunteers including Walter Ritte, Randy Kalahiki, Francis Kauhane, Mililani Trask, Kali Watson and the late Georgiana Padeken, who regularly brought stew and poi to the office to make sure the overworked staff had plenty to eat.

Organized support for the Hawaiian Affairs Committee and its work came from Alu Like, which funded several of DeSoto's staff positions and provided a priceless community network for getting input and educating Hawaiians about the many issues involved in the committee's work.

"Once a week," DeSoto remembers, "I would sit with different people and tell them what the committee was doing and try to get advice from them. It was real 'ohana system. When my staff and I worked late, people would come over with food and gather to pray, because what we were embarking on had never been done before. And it was what we call sometimes, *kaumaha*. They felt it was a burden that one person should not carry. We supported each other."

Gradually, a Hawaiian plan or "package"



Photos by delegate Milton Hirata.

Con-Con chairman William Paty presides before assembled delegates as delegate John

Waihee (center) stands to speak.

emerged from some of the earlier proposals outlined in the Puwalu Sessions, proposals that were refined and added to in endless bull sessions and amended with input from community leaders, other delegates, and, of course, lawyers.

Looking back at Con Con 13 years later, Martin Wilson, who started out on DeSoto's staff and never stopped working for OHA, makes an important point about the nature of OHA's beginnings compared to the other big issues of the convention.

"There were no battalions of brains coming to Frenchy's aide during Con Con," Wilson says. "The State didn't help, the UH Law School didn't help, Bishop Street didn't help. For Frenchy, it was just a handful of people. Georgiana was a social worker. Mrs. Rubin was an educator.

"Very few people rushed to the aide of the Hawaiians. Nobody really worked against OHA or the idea of OHA, but they didn't go out of their way to help it, either. This was Hawaiian. The Hawaiians did it."

"Hawaiians must have the freedom to develop as Hawaiians—to take their two-thousand-year-old culture and let it become all that it can become over the next two thousand years."

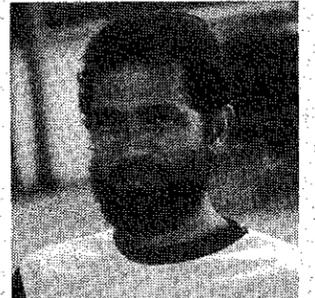
"A Call for Hawaiian Sovereignty"
by Michael Kioni Dudley
and Keoni Kealoha Agard

The final Hawaiian rights package approved by the convention included the following five amendments to the State Constitution:

- An amendment authorizing the creation of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the election by Hawaiians of its nine-member board of trustees with the power to administer all government lands and funds set aside for the benefit of native Hawaiians and Hawaiians; and setting aside a pro-rata share of ceded land trust for native Hawaiians.
- An amendment protecting traditional native fishing, hunting, gathering and access rights for religious and subsistence purposes, subject to state regulation.
- An amendment prohibiting the use of "adverse possession" to acquire land parcels of five acres or more.
- An amendment recognizing the importance of the Hawaiian culture and including the Hawaiian language alongside English as one of the state's two official languages.

• An amendment strengthening the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands by allowing more flexibility and legislative funding of the department's administrative costs.

Convention debate on the Hawaiian package was mostly positive with little opposition, a situation that observers credited to the committee's hard work and to DeSoto's persuasive, sometimes intimidating oratory, as well as to the pro-Hawaiian mood in the state generally. As activist and volunteer lobbyist Walter Ritte put it, "This was no time to tell the Hawaiians 'No.'"



Ritte

Delegates with any reservations had only to witness the hundreds of Hawaiians who travelled from all the islands to march from 'Iolani Palace to Kawaiaha'o Church, accompanied by chanting and the pealing of Kawaiaha'o's bells. The lively demonstrators packed the crucial Committee of the Whole hearing and effectively silenced whatever opposition there might have been with their moral righteousness.

Another undeniable political factor noted by observers at the time was the convention leadership's keen desire to keep the Hawaiian and pro-Hawaiian vote in the Democratic camp for the upcoming re-election campaign of incumbent Governor George Ariyoshi.

The only serious argument came from those who felt it might be unconstitutional to use public funds to benefit one race or exclude other racial groups from the election of trustees for a publically funded agency. (This concern resurfaced later in OHA's history).

Legal opinion, however, sided with DeSoto's committee, noting that native American people had a history of separate treatment under the law due to their unique constitutionally recognized status.

What started as a non-issue in the convention had become the Con Con's most far-reaching achievement: the establishment, subject to voter ratification, of an independent state agency with a mandate to "better the conditions of native Hawaiians and Hawaiians."

As one newspaper headline put it, "Hawaiian Renaissance Reaching Political Apex."

During the debates, delegate Jim Shon expressed his support for Hawaiian access rights and Hawaiian values more eloquently than most

continued page 14

from page 13

when he quoted a speech by a 19th-century native American Indian which was addressed to non-natives who wanted to purchase the land he lived on:

"Our land is more valuable than your money. It will last forever. It will not even perish by the flames of fire. As long as the sun shines and the waters flow, this land will be here to give life to men and animals. We cannot sell the lives of men and animals; therefore we cannot sell this land. It was put here for use by the Great Spirit and we cannot sell it because it does not belong to us. You can count your money... but only the Great Spirit can count the grains of sand and the blades of grass of these plains. As a present to you, we will give you anything we have that you can take with you, but the land, never."

Voter ratification of the Hawaiian rights amendments during the Nov. 7, 1978 general election was not an automatic sure thing. In fact, the five Hawaiian amendments just barely squeaked by in the statewide voting with the largest number of "no" votes of any of the 34 ballots amendments, all of which were finally approved. For those who had worked so hard, the narrow vote was an unsettling reminder of the reality of being a minority in your own homeland.

The Establishment of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs

In 1979, the legislature passed House Bill No. 890, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 3, Conference Draft 1, which Gov. Ariyoshi signed into law as Act 196, implementing Sections 4, 5 and 6 of Article XII of the State Constitution and subsequently coded as Chapter 10 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes. The legislature also appropriated \$125,000 for the establishment of OHA that year.

Chapter 10 outlined the general purpose of the Office, which included receiving a *pro rata* portion of the ceded land trust revenues for the betterment of native Hawaiians; bettering the conditions of Hawaiians; serving as the state's principal agency for matters pertaining to Hawaiians, with the exception of those activities within the jurisdiction of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands; advocating for the benefit of Hawaiians; receiving and disbursing grants for Hawaiians; and, lastly, serving as receiving agent for future reparations.

In 1980, the legislature continued to define the new agency when it determined that the actual pro-rata share of ceded land trust revenues would be 20 percent though it still did not clarify which ceded land trust revenues would apply. An appropriation of \$100,000 was made to actually operate the Office itself.

If suddenly the story of OHA seems to have taken a confusing, complicated, bureaucratic turn, that is because it did. As Frenchy DeSoto says in retrospect, "When we decided to leave the implementation of OHA to the legislature, we made a horrendous mistake. Only now, ten years later, are we reaching the self-sufficiency and self-governance we envisioned back then."

Despite the slow, grudging response of the legislature, the Hawaiian people nevertheless had some electing to do.

In late 1979, Steve Kuna, Martin Wilson, Winona Rubin and other veterans of Con Con opened an office in the Federal Building called VOHA (Volunteers of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs). Their task was to begin the arduous job of putting together the November 1980 election for OHA trustee.

Through Alu Like, VOHA made contact with Senator Dan Inouye who expedited a \$50,000 federal grant to publicize the OHA election in the Hawaiian community and beat the bushes for the best possible candidates.

VOHA, Alu Like, the Council of Hawaiian Organizations, the civic clubs, canoe clubs and churches all rallied around what became one of the most successful voter registration drives in Hawaii's history. Martin Wilson estimates over 50,000 Hawaiians registered to vote in the

10-year veteran trustee recalls upbringing

"Pa'a ka waha. Hana me ka lima"—that's what they used to tell me all the time. It means shut your mouth and do the work. Don't ask any questions. Don't question anybody. That's what I was told," says Uncle Tommy, Thomas Kaulukukui, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the only trustee who has served continuously since the first election in 1980.



Kaulukukui

"They told me all the time to go outside and play. This is when we lived in Kalihi. My mother and father spoke Hawaiian in the house, but never outside. When I grew up, being Hawaiian was not the thing to be, the way I see it. They always told us, 'Don't speak Hawaiian outside.' The Hawaiian language is not supposed to be spoken outside. And the hula was "obscene," then, you know?"

"My mother and father spoke Hawaiian when they were together and with us kids, but never outside."

"I knew Hawaiian, but I went to UH and took Hawaiian there. Up there they called Hawaiian a foreign language. But I knew I could get an "A" and I did."

"But that's what my parents said, 'Don't ask questions and don't speak Hawaiian outside.'"

"My mother must have been through something... why would she tell me these things? When I was

growing up, she didn't think I knew too much Hawaiian. They had a quilting bee and my mother's friends all came to our parlor and they had this quilt... and they were talking Hawaiian and I was listening. They talk about why they're not supposed to speak Hawaiian outside, why the missionaries are telling them not to speak the language. I heard anger among them. My mother would say "Go outside and play—get out."

"Those things they were saying... it was underneath but nobody did anything about it then. They couldn't. They talked among themselves, but they didn't want to say anything more outside."

Thomas Kaulukukui married a Chinese woman, a woman whose parents didn't want her to marry a Hawaiian, even though he was part Chinese himself. "Because I was a Hawaiian and Hawaiians were 'lazy,'" he explains.

In 1978, Thomas Kaulukukui retired as a U.S. Marshal and was asked to run for office as trustee of a new organization called the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Kaulukukui was born in 1917 while Lili'uokalani was still alive. "It didn't occur to me when I was growing up, but now I remember some of those things my parents said to me, and it registers to me why they were saying those things. They were talking about the situation they were facing."

"What the people needed, what my mother needed, and my grandparents and all the people around the quilt... what they needed was a voice."

November 1980 election. It was a momentous occasion: The first time since the election of David Kalakaua in 1874 that the Hawaiian community had had the opportunity to elect its own constitutionally recognized leaders, and it was probably the first mass political action by native Hawaiians since 29,000 Hawaiians signed the 1897 "monster" petition to Congress protesting annexation.

Meanwhile, the search for trustee candidates was on. Moses K. Keale Sr. grew up under the watchful, paternal eyes of the Robinson family on Ni'ihau and at Makaweli on Kaua'i. He spoke Hawaiian with his family; eventually he wrote a book detailing the history of Ni'ihau, the "forbidden island."



Keale

In 1980, Keale was living with his wife and children on Hawaiian Homestead land at Anahola on Kaua'i. A union man, he worked four jobs: for the state welfare department, as a disc jockey on KUAI radio, part-time at a hotel and he taught Hawaiian to a halau hula. One day, two men drove up to Keale's house asking for directions. He couldn't help them, but they got to talking anyway.

The two men were John Agard and Bob Freitas from the Council of Hawaiian Affairs. Their job was to set up meetings on Kaua'i to let people know about the upcoming OHA election and to recruit potential candidates. Keale listened to the men's story, offered to help and before he knew it, he was running for trustee himself.

"I knew the Hawaiian renaissance was happening and I had seen the palapalas (documents) about Con Con, so when I looked at this thing they were talking about, I thought, this thing is powerful. For once they're giving Hawaiians something that is powerful. I couldn't sit on the sidelines."

By the time of the election, over 100 candidates had registered to run. A huge pre-election was held at 'Iolani Palace. Governor Ariyoshi agreed to fly the Hawaiian flag over the palace for the first time since the overthrow in 1893.

"It was a glorious day," Martin Wilson, now OHA administrative services officer, remembers.

"Every candidate got to stand up and say something. I wish I had the tape of everything that was said. There was so much excitement and hope in the air."

On Nov. 4, 1980, 54,000 Hawaiians went to the polls.

- Keale was elected.
- Frenchy DeSoto was elected.
- Walter Ritte, who had spent the year after Con Con in the sanctity of Pelekunu Valley with his family, emerged from the isolation of Molokai's north shore to run and win from Molokai.
- Malama Solomon, a heavily educated 28-year-old professor at UH-Hilo was elected.
- Thomas Kaulukukui, a retired U.S. Marshall from Honolulu, was elected.
- Peter Apo a Wai'anae school teacher, was elected.
- Joseph Kealoha, a real estate developer from Maui, was elected.
- Roy Benham, a retired government worker from Hawaii Kai was elected.
- Rodney Burgess, a Honolulu businessman, was elected.

The nine men and women were sworn in as the trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs on Nov. 27, 1980. The ceremony was officiated by Chief Justice William Richardson, the same man who, three years earlier, had exhorted a loose-knit band of Hawaiian activists and community leaders to meet the challenges of the modern world and fight to "retain within us the learning and wisdom of our ancestors."

Now, in the Senate chamber of the State Capitol, standing before the nine trustees-elect, the Chief Justice cried. Walter Ritte, one of the nine about to be sworn in, remembers the moment vividly: "Chief Justice Richardson cried when he made his opening speech. He said OHA can do anything. He couldn't believe it. There were no limits. He saw the potential. We all saw the potential."

In the next issue OHA confronts the realities of its difficult mission and begins the long, slow journey toward leadership in the Hawaiian community.

Curt Sanburn is a local writer, educated at 'Iolani School and Yale, who writes on Hawai'i affairs.