

the hawaiian life *

Alan Yoshioka

The difference between an American in Hawaii and one on the mainland is great. The everyday life is similar, but a spirit hangs over the islands that makes living there a new experience. It would be impossible to touch on all the differences; for that matter, many aspects of life cannot be put into words. I will try to elaborate on three major points of life in Hawaii: the cosmopolitan atmosphere, the aloha spirit, and a sketch of a really Hawaiian community.

We are truly a cosmopolitan culture in Hawaii. The people there have learned to adapt to the customs of many lands. The most striking difference here lies in the background for life that we obtain by growing-up in Hawaii. Intermingling among the races is taken for granted. Take, for instance, my high school. We had an enrollment of 1,500 students. The school was named Henry Perrine Baldwin High School after a Caucasian leader on my island of Maui. Our principal was Japanese. Our head counselor was Caucasian. The librarian was Chinese. The head janitor was Filipino. Our athletic director was Korean. The head of our science department was Hawaiian, and the agriculture section was handled by a Portugese. Baldwin serves as a good example of how the people have mixed to work together for a better Hawaii.

We grew up liking many things that originated in far-off lands. The students of my high school came from homes in which they learned about their heritage. When we got to school, we would assimilate many characteristics from the other cultures. We ate hamburgers, steaks, kim chee, saimin, chow fun, bagoong, sashimi, teriyaki, pondoose, kalua pig, and opihis. We looked forward to bon dances, Rizal Day, Chinese New Year, President's Day, and Prince Kuhio's birthday. We played games such as baseball, soccer,

* Freshman Writing.

go, sipa-sipa, majong, and Kapu. Our taste in music ranged from classical pieces from the Orient to rock recordings from England. A surf report is given after every newscast, and it is a common sight to see surfers of all nationalities flocking to the beaches after work or school.

The following brought our population together and made for a better atmosphere. It felt different when I got to know city living on the continental United States. It seemed that people here don't have the time to be nice. They are always in a hurry to get things done or to go someplace. The people of Hawaii take their living seriously, but they make time to enjoy it too. We have a saying back home, "We operate on Hawaiian time, no pilikia." This translated literally means that you can be a little late with no trouble. It characterizes the attitude of time not being so important as it is here in the continental United States. This is all part of a spirit that hangs over the islands.

The word, "Aloha" means much love and welcome; it can also mean farewell, depending on the circumstances. The aloha spirit is the spirit of Hawaii. It is a feeling that we are living in a true paradise, and real happiness lies in sharing it with others. My island in particular is noted for this kind of spirit. "Maui No Ka Oi," or "Maui is the best" is our saying. Through the years, many tourists have learned how true the saying is. When they arrive they are part of our island, and when they leave, a little bit of them stays on. A bus wreck on Maui three months ago proved this. Almost forty tourists were injured when their bus overturned on their way to Lahaina. The people of Maui felt responsible and took care of these tourists. Flowers were brought every day to each of the injured people. Homemade cookies and cakes were given to complete strangers by housewives who had traveled miles to visit and cheer up these people. The mayor paid a personal visit to each one and extended the aloha of the population. When these tourists left the island, they had experienced what the aloha spirit can mean.

A place full of this Hawaiian spirit, because it is predominately Hawaiian, is the little village of Hana. In this lush tropical paradise where beauty is commonplace, the people know how to enjoy life. Most of the men there work for the County of Maui and make approximately \$400 a month. With this they support a family and often their parents. They value a simple life. Contentment is

catching a big fish or growing flowers. Television and radio are present, but these people are not "addicted to the tube" as the people here are. They cherish the beauty of the islands and never cease to take advantage of the splendors of nature. They go fishing almost every day. The children go to the beach often, and also into the mountains and their rainwater pools. The fruits that grow wild are always in season, so these people are never hungry. It is hard to find a really sad native or one that is plagued with ulcers. They are happy to share everything they have if it will make someone happy. These people would be referred to as backward here. Although it is not unlikely they would be considered to be included in the War on Poverty program, I don't think they want to change; in fact, I believe that they are better off now than they can ever be, and it would be a crime to force them to change.

But we in Hawaii are slowly changing. The people of Hana and communities like it are the links with the past. They illustrate how Hawaii has already changed. I hope that as the generations pass, the culture and spirit of Hawaii will stay the way it is. It is refreshing to live in a section of this country where you still can find a genuine love of others. I think the key word is love, because it is by this that all our actions are guided. The people that visit our fair islands know that this spirit is lacking on the mainland. This simple comparison is easy to draw. The difference is far greater than can be implied in such a short composition. I hope that I have given a picture that will let you start to understand the meaning of this difference; for the true reality will have to be experienced because no amount of vicarious knowledge will suffice.

