

Passing the Torch

Aiea's Charter Members Share Their Stories and Wisdom



Top Left to Right: Bill Villegas, Ken Fujimoto, Gerald Ishihara, Kashin Kakazu

**Bottom Left to Right: Helen Yoshida, Betty Emoto, Joyce Villegas, Jane Oshiro,
Alice Okihiro, Ellen Nitta**

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Introduction: Passing the Torch

When I was tasked with putting together a 70th anniversary celebration for the Aiea Church, I soon realized that this might possibly be the last one as we've known one. You see, the charter members are few and very elderly. It is possible that most might not live to another anniversary mark. And even someone like me will be well into retirement in ten years if I live on. Aiea's history could become a dusty pamphlet if we don't literally and symbolically "Pass the Torch." With this in mind, "Passing the Torch" was born.

We will relive the early history not for the sake of nostalgia, but for highlighting the praise worthy deeds of our God. Lifting up the story of Jesus in Aiea is to challenge Aiea's members and especially its young people to put their trust in the God who raised this Church. God's story in Aiea must live on. The God who reached out and offered grace to cast off Okinawan kids of immigrant plantation workers, is the same Power who can do great things through Aiea today.

In this collection, you will find historical reflection through the charter members of Aiea. They also pass on their wisdom to the young people of Aiea. You will see what the impact of this history produced in the story of Rich Yamamoto. You will read the unique eye witness accounts of Aiea's history. Best wishes and gratitude will be conveyed. And you will read great counsel from a Pastor who grew up in Aiea Church. And you will even hear the gospel of Jesus Christ through the words of a 98 and a 100-year-old charter member.

A chronological history of the church that attempts to do analysis into the current millennium may be found in "Remembering the Kids, the Bible, and the Dream" released at the 60th anniversary and found on the Church's website. We hope that this tool and this production will give someone the base to take on the job of Aiea's historian.

It is the prayer of this Church that our members young and old will pick up the torch grasped by Kenneth Kakazu and others so long ago. With that flame we can drive out the darkness of this world. We can lift up Jesus who gives rest, love and salvation to all who come. And we can someday join all who've gone before us in that great cane field that will never pass away.

Melvin Villegas

Roy Kakazu

Roy Kakazu is the youngest of 5 Kakazu boys. He like his brother Kenneth went on to become a teacher. Roy's teaching career included stops in California, Hawaii, and the state of Washington. He was well recognized as a teacher receiving even the Zappara Award for excellence in teaching. And being the youngest Kakazu boy allowed Roy to be raised in the Aiea church, and therefore he participated first hand in such things as Aiea's first Pathfinder club. He is responsible from bringing us the Rich Yamamoto biography found later in this document.

From Cane Field to God's Field

"I, Roy, being the youngest of the Kakazu brothers was an eye witness to the founding of the Aiea SDA Church. I was not a charter member, because I was too young to be baptized. However, I followed my older brothers in their spiritual growth and can provide a narrative of what I witnessed and experienced as a young boy.

Aiea was a plantation town surrounded with sugar cane fields and 'Sugar was King' in the territory of Hawaii. Aiea, that unique town, with all vowels for its name was a special place because it had the only Sugar Mill that produced white refined sugar for the territory of Hawaii. I recalled the Sugar Mills of Ewa and Waipahu bringing the raw brown sugar to the Aiea Mill for refinery into the commercial white sugar.

From my house, just across the road, I saw the planting, harvesting, and hauling of the sugar cane. In fact, the sugar cane fields were our playground. Its reservoirs, ditches, rivers, and fruit trees provided us the playground during the summer months when school was on vacation.

The Military had a strong presence in Aiea, because Pearl Harbor, is in close proximity to the town. In fact, during the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, Japanese planes flew over our house to deliver their bombs on the ships anchored in the harbor. Walking to school we had to pass some naval installations located adjacent to our school.

On a dirt road above our school, was a sugar cane field with its ditches and rivers that meandered through the fields. It was here that a young Baptist sailor would read his Bible, meditate, and pray to his God, away from his fellow sailors, alone with his God, in the solitude of the sugar cane.

One day, Minoru Azama, a friend of my brother Kenneth, had an encounter with this sailor reading his Bible. Minoru was curious and began a conversation with the sailor. He approached my brother and said, 'I met a sailor who was reading the Bible, he can explain its meaning to us. He is in the cane field above the school, come with me.' My brothers and some of his friends met with the sailor and soon were having Bible studies and learning to sing Jesus

songs. I followed my brothers since they were responsible to take care of me, the youngest male sibling in our family. I heard the story of Jesus why He died for us, and the gift of His grace.

Soon the sailor left for his military assignment, but he gave us some military New Testaments and prayed with us as he departed. We were saddened by his departure because he was our spiritual friend and guide. We were now left without our teacher and mentor.

One day while listening to the radio, my brother, Kenneth, heard the Voice of Prophecy broadcast. He requested the lessons and soon was completing all of the lessons. He discovered the Sabbath truth and was convinced that it was the truth. With his friends as his followers, he built a meeting place under my house to conduct his 'Bible' study classes. Having completed all the lessons, the Voice of Prophecy sent a representative to our house to meet with my brother. Soon my sisters became involved in the study of the Bible. The Mission decided to start an evangelistic tent effort in Aiea, and the start of the Aiea Church was born. The first Aiea SDA Church was located at the site where the evangelistic effort was started.

After several years at that site, we were able to purchase land at the present location and moved our church to where it is located today. I recall the days when we did not have the present structure as it stands today, but an old building that is located where the Sabbath School building is now located.

We had our Sabbath School and Church in that old building and I remember the days we had our Pathfinder meetings in that building. We had enough playground space to practice our marching, drills, and played volleyball after the meetings. It was our social life! Playing volleyball, ping-pong, and enjoying our socials was our routine on Sabbath evenings.

Our Pathfinder Club became the top club for marching and drill, and we won many first place awards as the top club in the Mission.

I had the opportunity to meet Rich Yamamoto on a HMA cruise, since my wife, Eileen, is his classmate. After talking to him I discovered his interesting biography. He was one of our Pathfinders, and I would like to share his story. 'Pathfinder to Army Colonel.' *See Rich Yamamoto's biography as written by Rich.

Another interesting experience that I encountered was in American Samoa. I was sent to American Samoa to present a 'Teacher's Workshop' for Walla Walla College to the teachers at the Iakina SDA School, in Pago Pago, American Samoa. While visiting a village, I mentioned to my guest that I knew a Chief John Ufuti, who was baptized, and was a member of our Aiea SDA Church. He took me to his gravesite and I saw Chief Ufuti's burial tombstone. Evelyn, his daughter, provided me with information on her father's life when I contacted her.

Chief Ufuti became a Sabbath keeper from the 'Signs of the Times' magazine that a Chinese literature evangelist gave to him. He would place the magazines in a pile in the corner of his house, and one day decided to read it. Upon reading the 'Signs' he discovered the Sabbath truth, and decided to keep the Sabbath with his family. When the Chiefs in his village

discovered what he was doing, they met in council and decided to relieve him of his position in the council. He left American Samoa and resettled in Hawaii.

During an ingathering encounter, he met Pastor George Kiyabu, who invited him to a Sabbath keeping church in Aiea. He began to attend church regularly and was soon baptized. Wanting to witness for the Lord, he started a company in Nanakuli that later became the Waianae SDA Church. Chief Ufuti moved to California and started a church in Vista, CA. Upon his return to American Samoa; he was reinstated by his village, and built the Vaitogi Village SDA Church. His son-in-law started and built a church in Afao Village.

Lessons we can learn from these stories:

1. Sailor: Importance of prayer and Bible studies. Sharing God's Word.
2. Kenneth Kakazu: Searching the scriptures. Seeking truth.
3. Rich Yamamoto: Importance of mentors. Aim high.
4. Chief Ufuti: Standing for principles. Sharing your faith.
5. The power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people. God's leading in the work of His church."

Rich Yamamoto

Aiea Pathfinder to Army Colonel to Federal Senior Executive

Nicknamed “Watermelon” for his protruding belly caused by poor posture, Rich learned to stand tall during the weekly Pathfinder drill team practices. Bill Villegas taught this impressionable boy leadership, self-discipline and the value of working hard. Auntie Jenny trained him in public speaking at Sabbath School; the Kakazu and Okihiro families encouraged and nurtures him and Mrs. Oshita infused Christian values into his character.

Pathfinder skills helped him lead the cadets of the Medical Cadet Corps at Hawaiian Mission Academy. They also enabled him to become the Commander of the Army ROTC Drill Team at the University of Hawaii where he earned a commission as a Second Lieutenant. His early assignments were to Okinawa, Vietnam, Japan, Georgia, California, Los Angeles for graduate school, and Alabama where he met and married his wife Susan, in 1977. These were followed by assignments to the Pentagon, Fort Leavenworth, KS, Fort Lewis, WA, and Berlin 110 miles behind the Iron Curtain. As the Berlin command’s Provost Marshal, he led the police, “Checkpoint Charlie” and anti-terrorism operations.

After a tour as a Battalion Commander, he was selected to be the Chief Command Center Operations at the Alternate National Military Command Center. As a Colonel, he was entrusted with the nation’s most sensitive nuclear documents and codes and was responsible for directly assisting the President with emergency national security support when conditions warranted.

In 1991, he was assigned to the Executive Office of the President and was selected to be the first Director for the high Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program in the Office of the National Drug Control Policy (White House Drug Policy Office). He was responsible for coordinating Federal, State and local law enforcement efforts to dismantle major drug trafficking organizations in the country. He expanded the program to over 700 law enforcement agencies in 31 States and Territories and received strong Congressional support that increased funding from \$80 M to \$184 M. Allured by the opportunity to re-engineer the Federal Protective Service, he became the Acting Assistant Commissioner responsible for the security of over 8,000 Federal facilities just prior to the 9/11 attacks.

While serving in the senior Executive Service at the Department of Commerce, he was recruited by Fannie Mae to direct corporate security, emergency management and business continuity in advance of the housing collapse of 2007.

Rich is a National FBI Academy graduate, Certified Protection Professional, Certified Farud Examiner, former member of the Board of Director for ASIS International, the largest security management association in the world, and one of the “25 Most Influential Security People in the Security Industry” (*Security* magazine, 2008). His military awards include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters, 4 Air Medals, and the Army Commendation Medal.

The lesson learned from his Aiea Adventist Church mentors enabled him to thrive during his challenges in the Vietnam War, Cold War, Drug War, War on Terror and Economic Crisis.

Edward Kakazu

Ed Kakazu is the third of four Kakazu boys. Ken remembers Ed as one of the main recruiters for his under house Bible study. Ed brought many of his friends and classmates, including Kenneth Fujimoto, to come and study the Bible. Ed went on to be a teacher for the SDA church, teaching in the Hawaii Conference and then for many years until retirement in Lancaster, CA.

“We walked to school about 2 miles away, bare footed. After school we usually walked through the sugar cane field to the pond that stored water to irrigate the sugar cane fields. One day at the pond, a sailor from Pearl Harbor invited us to his Bible class . . . We sang songs about Jesus and memorized Bible verses.

Soon the Christian sailor left us because his term of duty in Hawaii was over. My brother took over the Bible class as teacher and leader under our plantation house.

Yes, God surely moved in a mysterious way His wonder to perform in the stages of growth of the Aiea SDA church. First, a dedicated Christian sailor from Pearl Harbor formed a Bible class in the sugar cane field with a bunch of bare footed country boys. Inspired by the earnest Christian sailor, Kenneth Kakazu continued the Bible class under our plantation house. With the Voice of Prophecy Bible lessons, followed by Brother Alapa, a Bible Worker from Hawaiian Mission, the Branch Sabbath School was organized. Finally, Pastor Kiyabu and the earnest small group of young people sold Christian books all over Oahu that helped to build the Aiea SDA Church.

Therefore, never forget the inspired words of Ellen White. ‘We have nothing to fear for the future except we forget how God led us in the past.’ So for your 70th anniversary of the Aiea Church, your future is bright and prosperous with the providential guidance of Jesus Christ.”

Irene Kobashigawa

Irene is the 5th of 6 Kakazu girls. Kenneth remembers her as being very involved in the fundraising efforts to build the church building. Irene and her husband Shige have blessed Aiea with their talent and support through the years. Though not technically a charter member, Irene has been with this church for 70 years.

My Weird Brother Ken

Ken and I are 4 years apart. He was a 'strange' kid who loved to try to be like his 'super hero' the 'Great Houdini.' He got himself a pair of handcuffs and made me his 'assistant' for his 'disappearing act.' He told me to put the handcuffs on his wrist and he was going inside the old trunk and see if he could escape. If he failed he will call for help and I am to open the trunk and let him out. And that is exactly what happened. He was no 'Houdini' after all. So then, he tried to hypnotize me and that didn't work either.

One day, a friend invited him to meet a young sailor boy in the cane fields above the school. Here Ken heard about God and Jesus and became interested in the Bible studies. Unfortunately, the day of departure arrived but a promise to send someone else was made and the boys looked forward to that day. The promise was fulfilled one day when another young sailor appeared and the Bible studies continued. The young man, O'dell Mitchell, took the boys to the Baptist Church in town and eventually the boys were baptized. The day came for O'dell to leave and he asked the boys to remain faithful and told Ken to continue the Bible studies.

Ken started a 'church' made up of sugar plantation kids from the camp and called them the 'True Sabbath Keepers.' They met under the house and made a crude pulpit and benches and met every afternoon. They enrolled in the Voice of Prophecy Bible course and faithfully turned in their lessons until the subject of 'Clean and Unclean Food' came up. Ken determined that this was not right and that these people were a 'Cult' and immediately stopped with the lessons.

Sometime later, a Hawaiian man came looking for Ken. I was certain that he was in big trouble. I wondered what he could have done this time as the man came back time and again and Ken was nowhere to be found. I was concerned about my brother. One day the man waited till the sun had set and Ken finally showed up. They talked for a while and the man left. The man was Mr. John Alapa, a Bible instructor. He came every now and then to meet with the boys.

Soon a small company of believers was formed and the older siblings joined Ken and his group and formed a 'church.' And this is how the Aiea SDA Church began.

Harriet Miyashiro

Harriet is the youngest of 6 Kakazu girls, Alice Okihiro and Ellen Nitta being the oldest. Though Harriet was only a child when the Aiea church got started, she does remember most of its beginnings, as you will see. She was the only Kakazu girl to gain a college education. And she went on to become a surgical nurse. She and her husband Frank have been very active Adventists all of their lives. They currently reside in Lodi, California though have plans to shortly move to Colorado.

“Brother Ken was the first to introduce our family to the true God of the Universe. He had a bible given to him by a sailor and decided to make our ‘under house’ his preaching platform. The small group of neighborhood boys formed the first ‘True Sabbath Keepers’ church. I was in attendance many times and found it very interesting. I was 4-5 years old. Eventually, as I was later told, because they were enrolled in the Voice of Prophecy Bible Study Course, Elder Alapa was sent to our house.

I have some happy memories of the times during Elder Kiyabu’s attempt at forming a church in Aiea. We had a tent meeting and Carol Nitta and I were told we had to sing ‘Jesus Loves Me’ at the first meeting that was held in Aiea. I was about 5 years old. I had never sung in public and was scared but still we somehow managed to get through.

Elder Kiyabu consumed so much of our time with his energy and excitement. It seems as if it were just yesterday when I sat in the old abandoned Methodist church listening to bible studies while observing holes in the floor. Our only light was from the broken windows and the place smelled moldy. So when Elder Kiyabu came to our house all excited about seeing a building that the military was trying to sell off, it was the best news ever! I was lucky he made me tag along to see the building that we purchased, and that became Aiea’s first SDA church. I loved that church because I have fond memories there. We never forgot the incident when Mrs. Alapa broke a string on her violin while she was playing the special music. I also remember many of the young kids going down the hill to the store next door to spend their offering money to purchase a piece of candy or other snack. I can truthfully say I was never tempted to do that.

The church was growing fast and the members wanted a newer and larger church. I know that the older folks went to businesses in Aiea to ask for donations. I also remember members going door to door asking for donations or selling books to help raise funds. I might have tagged along with an adult but didn’t do any talking. The only other memory I have is that the work to build the present church was done by most of the members. I may have gone there to help feed the men folks but I don’t recall doing any of the work. I can’t even remember the day the church opened for worship. All I know is that it was a team effort and we were proud of what God had wrought through young people. My roots are still in Aiea Church and I feel at home whenever I visit there. It’s special because God used young people to build Aiea Church and I know the end-time work will be done with zealous young men and women too.”

Aunty Harriet

Kenneth Kakazu

Kenneth is considered one of the core groups that started the Aiea Adventist Church. He was responsible for keeping the sailor-led Bible Study going and bringing the group to meet under his house; after which Pastor George Kiyabu and Mr. John Alapa organized the group into what would later become the Aiea Adventist Church. Kenneth would go on to become a teacher for the SDA system and the public school system. Today he resides in Oak Harbor, Washington.

“The Aiea Adventist Church met in a temporary building on the area where Baker Hall now stands. The charter members and Pastor George Kiyabu decided to build a new church on the front of the lot. Pastor Kiyabu took our plan and approached the President of the Hawaiian Mission (Conference) to ask for help and permission to start the building project.

The president just ‘smile’ and said, “Pastor, your congregation is mostly kids. What can a bunch of kids do?”

Pastor replied, “May we go ahead on our own and raise funds?”

President answered “Sure but you’re on your own.”

The bunch of kids teamed up with an older Japanese-speaking member and stepped out in faith to take on this almost impossible task. They made a deal with the Adventist Book Center to sell paper back Christian books for a dollar and keep half of the money. They sold books throughout all of West Oahu, including Waianae and Kahuku, and the East Coast.

The Japanese-speaking group led by Mr. Tetsuo Toyama solicited Japanese (Okinawan) businessmen in Aiea and Honolulu. This was true teamwork. The young and the old people were working together to achieve one goal. You know the rest of the story. The church building now stands as a monument of faith and teamwork.

On the evening when the last dollar was raised, it started to rain. Led by Pastor Kiyabu, we all ran out in the rain with our hands raised towards heaven and sang the Doxology... “Praise God from whom all blessings flow”

In your life’s journey you will encounter many obstacles, challenges, and problems, some as huge as a mountain. Don’t let that stop you from pressing forward towards your goals. Place your faith in God; team up with your family and friends and in Jesus’ name just press on. Even mountains of problems standing in front of you will disappear. As Jesus said, “You shall say to this mountain, ‘move from here to here.’ And it will move; and nothing shall be impossible to you.” Matthew 17:20

Alice Okihiro and Ellen Nitta

At the time I interviewed Aunty Alice and Aunty Ellen, they were in their 100th and 98th years of life. Needless to say, even though Aunty Alice dozed of a couple of times, and Aunty Ellen had to find her hearing aids during the interview, it was evident that these were two women of great faith and commitment to the Aiea church. And hopefully you will see their great humor coming through in what I've recorded—and also the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Melvin Villegas 5-4-2017

Where was Aiea church when you first began to attend?

Aunty Alice: "On the corner, by the chop suey house.

Aunty Ellen: "Nah. . .it was below the Catholic church.

(After some back and forth)

Aunty Ellen: "But, it was a small navy building.

Who was the first pastor?

Aunty Alice: "It was one haole guy."

Aunty Ellen: "Yeah, one haole guy. . .but we can't remember the name. . ."

(I interjected here "What about Kiyabu-san!")

Aunty Alice: "Nah, Kiyabu-san was after the haole guy.

(I brought up that Evangelist George Munson held a tent meeting before the little building was set up.)

Aunty Ellen: "After the sailor boys, we took Voice of Prophecy bible studies, and the Hawaiian man came every Sunday. Who was his name? (I mentioned John Alapa) Yeah after Alapas then came Kiyabu,"

Do you remember who baptized you?

(After asking Aunty Ellen what I meant, Aunty Alice responded.)

Aunty Alice: "We were baptized at the Kaimuki church.

Aunty Ellen: "Aiea never had a baptizing pool so we went to Kaimuki church, and one fat guy baptized us. What was his name?"

(Aunty Joyce who was witnessing this interview recalled: "It was Albert Munson, George Munson's father.")

Aunty Ellen: "He was kinda big, yeah?"

Aunty Joyce: "Yeah."

What would you say to the young people of Aiea today, as 70-year members of this church?

Aunty Alice: "We were gung ho when we went out to raise money to build the church."

Aunty Ellen: "We went and sold books all the way to Kahuku."

(Here Aunty Joyce implored Aunty Ellen to let Aunty Alice finish her piece. When I turned back to Aunty Alice she had nodded off. After waking her and getting her back on topic. . .)

Aunty Alice: "I would tell the young people to work hard for the Lord."

Aunty Ellen: "I would tell the young people to trust in Jesus. . .to believe that He is Lord. . .to believe that He is the son of God. Believe that He came down to earth to save us, and that He gave His life for us." (At this point I held back a tear knowing I had just heard the true gospel of Jesus Christ spoken by my 98 year old Aunt. To God be the glory.)

Joyce Villegas

Joyce Villegas is the 4th of 6 Kakazu girls. She and her husband Bill spent many of their younger years mentoring the children and youth of Aiea. Aunty Joyce has worked with the Pathfinders, VBS, children's Sabbath school, and the infamous harvest ingathering among other things. Many of her later years were spent working for the Adventist Book Center here in Hawaii and northern California. She has played a strong role in all of Aiea's anniversary celebrations including the current 70th.

To the Young People of Our Church

"To the future leaders of the church, I am so thankful that we have a lot of young people in our church, from babes in arms through the young adults. You are our blessing. Whenever you perform up front, singing, reciting memory verses, clapping hands, holding posters, or whatever you are doing, you do it so well. By participating in thirteenth Sabbath programs, nativity, VBS programs, and outreach programs, you are praising and honoring God. I enjoy seeing and hearing the youth leading in song services, doing skits, giving testimonies, playing their instruments, dancing the hula. This is remarkable. You are using your talents for the Lord. And to the young adults, I appreciate you helping as deacons and deaconesses as well as helping in other ways. You are doing a great job.

To the clubs from Little Lambs to the Pathfinders: all the honors and achievements you have accomplished are outstanding. You look sharp in your uniforms. I enjoy your programs. It's colorful and patriotic. All the trophies you've received represent all the hard work you have done. Keep it up! We want to thank all the leaders who have helped the young people to stay in church to serve God and His fellow men.

Someday soon we will march into the city of God with all our precious children. I hope no child will be left behind. May God bless you all.

Claim God's Promises

Read 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, as often as possible. 'And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.' 1 Corinthians 13:13

'And love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.' Matthew 22:38-40

'He who does not love does not know God for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.' 1John 4:8-9

'May God, the source of hope, fill you with all the joy and peace by means of faith in Him, so that our hope will continue to grow by the power of the Holy Spirit.' Romans 15:13

'For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any men shall boast,' Ephesians 2:8-9

'Looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.' Titus 2:13

'Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.' Revelation 2:10

'Only one life twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.'

My prayer is to accept God's gift of salvation, ask God to forgive your sins, and to live a life of joy, peace, and happiness. Amen.

Love, Aunty

Joyce"

Helen Yoshida

Helen and later her mother joined the Aiea SDA Church as a result of an evangelistic effort the Aiea Church conducted in the plantation community of Koalipea. As you will read, she and some of her fellow village converts would take the flame from Aiea and carry it to many parts of the world.

The Lord is gracious and knows the needs of His children even before we ask. I was brought up in a sugar cane plantation village where my dad was the foreman. Unfortunately, my dad died early in my childhood and my mother was widowed with six children: Three boys and three girls.

One day Elder George Kiyabu who graduated from Pacific Union College in Angwin, California, came to our house and asked whether we would like to have him come to our village to tell us about Jesus Christ. We were delighted and our entire village attended the meetings, three of whom accepted the Lord that night and made a decision to attend the Pacific Union College in Angwin, California: Shigenobu Arakaki, who became a minister, his sister Betty Arakaki Emoto who became a nurse, and Helen Iha Yoshida, who became a registrar-secretary and business-ed teacher. May we continue to be faithful! What a wonderful Savior we serve!

Helen Yoshida

Dr. Shigenobu Arakaki

If someone knows Dr. Arakaki well, he or she would not realize he came from such humble beginnings and the early Aiea church. Dr. Arakaki has served the SDA church as a teacher, pastor, school principal, university president and conference president. It was his spiritual commitment and faith that were integral to Aiea church's beginnings.

Waipahu Boy

"I was a senior and my sister a junior at Waipahu High School in 1946. Both of us were baptized the same Sabbath afternoon at Honolulu Central Church.

Unfortunately, our parents did not attend our baptismal service because they were opposed to our becoming Christians. They could not understand how we could love the invisible God more than our visible parents.

Friends have always been very important to me. When I became a Christian, I was fearful of losing instead of gaining friends. But to my surprise, I gained more friends—many, many times more friends when I became a Christian.

I consider friends the best gift God gave me before and after I became a Christian. And best of all, Jesus became my favorite, special friend, and He is also the favorite friend of all my friends.

Five years after my baptism, my mother was baptized at the Aiea Church. It is remarkable that she learned to love Jesus more than herself.

After her conversion, my mother was happy that I loved Jesus more than her. And when she learned to love Jesus more than herself, she lived a life of joy.

Let us all love Jesus, so we will dwell together in heaven with Him.

Pastor Lyle Arakaki

Lyle Arakaki was brought to Aiea church as a young boy by his Aunt Betty Emoto. He would subsequently educate himself in the Adventist school system and go on to be the first pastor tracing his roots back to the Aiea church. Pastor Lyle served a long tenure at Oahu's Japanese Church, pastored in Oregon, and is now pastoring in Everett, Washington.

It is an honor and a privilege to be invited to share my thoughts regarding the 70th anniversary celebration of the Aiea Seventh-day Adventist Church. From my own personal experience and from many years of observation while pastoring a sister church on Oahu, the Aiea Church has maintained a sacred tradition of carefully and intentionally nurturing its young people. I know that I am far from being alone in benefiting from this tradition and in tracing the foundation of my Christian experience back to growing up in this church.

My spiritual journey began with my Aunty Betty Emoto bringing me as a young child to Sabbath School. It continued with dedicated Pathfinder leaders like Bill Villegas and Manuel Juarros. And there were many other members who were not just teachers and leaders, but who cared for me, encouraged me, and love me like one of their family. I will be eternally grateful to all of these church members who not only taught me about the love of God, but also lived it.

With all that is going on in the world around us, it is clear to all who are familiar with Bible prophecies that it won't be long before we will celebrate the greatest anniversary of all in God's Kingdom of Glory. In these final hours of earth's history, I hope and pray that the current members of the Aiea Church will continue its holy tradition of treasuring, nurturing, and empowering its young people. Carrying on this tradition will prepare the way for the fulfillment of the end-time prophecy of Joel 2:28 – "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."

And I wish to point out to the young people of the church that God has placed upon you a great honor to be living at this climactic time of earth's history. To use a phrase from the world of sports, this is "crunch time." In the final moments of any game, every action, every decision takes on dramatically greater impact and significance. What is done in "crunch time" often determines the outcome of the game. And it's during "crunch time" that any coach will choose to have the best players on the field or on the court.

God has chosen you to be alive now, the "crunch time" of earth's history. What an honor! Don't disappoint our Great Coach! By God's grace and power, live your lives to honor and glorify Jesus. Be faithful in attending church; get involved with your church's ministries, be

an encouragement to your pastor by supporting efforts to share the gospel with the Aiea community. By your lives, demonstrate to the entire universe that Jesus has indeed, already secured victory for us, His people!

Maranatha! Even so come, Lord Jesus!

In Memory

Bill Villegas

Known to Aiea's faithful as 'Uncle Bill,' Bill Villegas carved out a unique legacy firmly etched in Aiea church. Pathfinder leader for nearly 20 years, he led Aiea's club to unprecedented honors. He served in many other capacities including elder, teacher, and conference representative. He is best remembered however, for his wit and jovial spirit in such things as 'monkey see monkey do,'

I recently sat in on a 'Capital Improvement' committee of the church and heard an outline of many things in need of repair or replacement in the church. From 1991, when Uncle Bill retired, until his passing in 2011, you would never hear of such repair and 'not-working' items. Why? Because Uncle Bill was quietly being the church's unpaid maintenance man spending sometimes 5 days a week working at the church.

After his passing, the first Sabbath back at Aiea church for me was very difficult. You see, as I walked around, every physical part of the church reminded me of him—because he had either fixed it, painted it, renovated it, repaired it, or installed it, etc. And in his later years I had often helped him when I could, so only I knew all he had done. His life was in this church.

Though my personal journey and love of Jesus have changed my life and belief system; and when sin and self-absorption have threatened to pull me to places of danger, I cannot simply trample upon my own father's legacy. Grounding my life in the humanity of Aiea church, gives me life, and is my life. I want to be as committed and faithful as my father was. For it is in giving ourselves to Jesus and the cause of his creations that we truly live.

Melvin Villegas

In Memory

Kenneth Fujimoto

Ken Fujimoto passed away soon after the 60th anniversary of Aiea Church. It was my hope that he knew how integral he was in the history of Aiea. In my journey of finding and writing Aiea's history, and in my life journey growing up in the Church, Ken Fujimoto was always there. He could be found in the under house "True Sabbath Keepers" meeting place. He could be seen in Pathfinder pictures, working on the building of Baker Hall, singing in the Aiea quartet, and even leading the Aiea choir. I had him in mind when I put together the talk of "faithfulness" in the 1960's chapter of Aiea's history.

When he was interviewed at one of the anniversaries, I remember he held up the importance of friendship as a strong force that fueled his stay in Aiea. Many of the old timers of Aiea would speak of Ken as a true friend. And in his friendship and love to his fellow members, this was a real statement of his friendship with God. For his strong commitment to Aiea Church and his great love for people (and God), Ken Fujimoto will always be remembered.

Melvin Villegas

In Memory

Manuel Juarros

Uncle Manuel recently went to rest just short of 100 years of life. He has seriously left his mark on the Church he loved. The church's baptistery and restrooms were the first major building project that Uncle Manuel led as lead contractor. The building of Baker Hall and its classrooms soon followed that. Later he led in the construction of the choir loft.

Besides his profession of construction, his love of outdoor activities also allowed him to lead in Pathfinder hikes, waterskiing 'parties,' and other youth friendly activities. He and his wife Lei are easily remembered by all of Aiea's 'old timers.' They were very involved in Aiea and its young people.

At his memorial service, Pastor Christman revealed Uncle Manuel's personal Bible that was well marked and which showed someone solidly entrenched in his beliefs and inspired by a God he followed. He will always be remembered for the large estate contribution he designated to Aiea Church upon his passing, but more so, for the passion he exhibited in what he built here and the talent he used to serve God and all God's children.