

*Reflections  
in Solitude*  
*Home In Hawaii*

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Home in Hawaii  
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To Mr.Potts & Mr. Taylor, former English Teachers at Iolani High School in Honolulu, Hawaii, and to my Professor in English Literature at Texas A&M University – a debt of gratitude for your inspiration which provided the lightning rod in my poetic journey in solitude.

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To Hank, where ever you are and where ever you may be, this book is dedicated to you.

Hossana, this is my legacy to you.



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# INTRODUCTION

Returning home from college presented me with a dilemma which could be equated with someone standing in a Wasteland not so much what T.S. Eliot described but certainly lost in consciousness as to what my future held in the forthcoming years.

There were many moments of solitude as I was forever immersed in my own self-pity and futility as to what I really wanted to do in life but eventually I was able to chart a path with goals and objectives and in so doing, I knew I would have a long struggle in accomplishing what I really wanted to do for my future.

Returning to school, however burdensome, would be that first step but financing my future education would be a problem that I had to overcome in order to achieve my goals.

In the intervening years between returning to school and working part-time to earn “my keep,” there were many moments of solitude where I found solace, consolation, peace and serenity in charting what I needed to do and it was in these moments of silence that I found peace in deciphering my conscious thoughts and putting it down on paper.

The poems written had an emotional effect on me and, in so doing, I translated my thoughts into a conscious beginning that would help me get through my ordeal where at times I was struggling with life’s problems.

Many of my poems were easily influenced by the English poets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Some people described them as “romanticists” but these poets never adapted to that moniker and simply wrote because they were influ-

enced by their own presence in nature, love, and beauty in that period of time.

Someone once asked Henry Wadsworth what is poetry and his response was that “poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.”

So be it with my poems. There were a few that came to me in moments of deep reflection and were written spontaneously as the thoughts crossed my mind.

I did not structure any outline nor did I research any of the subject matter.

I just wrote what came to my mind and, as in the poem “KUI,” I was able to translate my thoughts based on hearsay and the printed word in the news media about his life.

I knew Kui’okalani Lee only on a casual basis as I worked as a Host in his showroom and was fortunate that he shared many of his ideas and thoughts with me after work.

Having talked with his wife for brief moments about their life and background and the prolific songs he wrote, gave me more material to piece together a simple lyrical poetical composition of Kui’s life.

In the poem “Intimations of Hope and Beauty,” it was my delusion that someday I would meet the love of my life but that fantasy, dream, and illusion became only a passing fancy as the years went by but it gave me hope when I felt there was no hope in life sitting in misery in a dark period of my life.

All of my poems reflect life’s journeys in Love, Life, Death, Solitude, Grief, Greed, and Loneliness.

In times of solitude especially during the trial years between my grad-

uation from college in 1965 to the loss of someone so special in 1995, my reflections became my “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” that I translated with no form or fancy or any learned experience in formulating my poetic journey.

“Kui” was the first piece I wrote on this journey and was followed by “Intimations of Hope and Beauty” a decade later.

The remaining poems came during moments of silence, solitude, or deep reflections where it affected me slightly but impressed upon my conscious thoughts enough that I translated these thoughts into poetic form.

I will not linger any longer on the composition of these poems except to say that I kept these poems stored in the recess of my mind until I felt comfortable in my human form that it did make a difference in getting me through life’s trials.

My journey is typical of the travails of mankind as he searches for his self in a world that has become complicated in the struggle to survive and not yield to the pressures of the human race.



# KUI\*

They took him out in a canoe  
To lay forevermore in the Pacific Blue  
He had loved so much the sand and  
Surf of the sea  
That now only his name is a memory  
Known as Kuiokalani Lee.

What description of a Man was He  
That lived in a brief period of time  
I can only say without being so kind  
That He was short and emaciated  
Incapacitated with a dreadful disease that  
Had inflicted him – So without fear  
And not being fearful of saying that it  
Was a disease that led to his immortal  
Being affecting not so much the mind and  
Spirit but certainly the body's weakness.

His features were craggy and old  
But this is not all what I saw and was told  
Kui's mind was so active and creative and strong  
That I'm not surprised that his voice reflected  
This in many a song.

His eyes were lined like someone being out long  
In the sun  
Certainly in the days of his youth he was the one  
That had the most fun.  
Kui's voice was raspy and hoarse in tone and tune  
But no one can blame him when in June  
The fact that made him work harder for himself  
And for her  
Was because they told him he had Cancer.

Why, oh why, was he taken from us at the height  
Of his prime in so short a Time?

I first saw Kui in the fall of '65 and even then I  
Knew the great talent of a man was He.  
For He so loved the sea and the beauty of it all  
That it certainly was the key that unlocked the  
Wonders of his mind that produced music  
Certainly ahead of his time.

“I Remember You,” Kui, not as an angry man  
But as one who stood among them and  
Not of them.  
You were there on your stage in the sand  
Singing songs that pictured Beauty that  
Was and is no more or should it be said  
Evermore.

Island people came to see your show  
People who, like you, saw Beauty as a lost Love  
They all flocked to and fro,  
Hawaiians, Portugees, Pakes, Japanese, Haoles,\*  
All locals alike willing to spend some dough.  
Speaking from your heart and singing  
With all your love of the good  
'ol days beloved by one and thousand more.

There were many beautiful nights in  
October, November, and December  
More than I could ever remember  
While others were catering to tourists alike  
Entertainers, they called themselves, certainly they  
Could not draw the crowds that came to You at night.

With the backdrop of a moonlit glow  
And the soft sounds of surf and sea  
Who could ask for a better setting  
Certainly not you nor me.

You did not ask nor did you give  
Your show told it like it is  
Anyone or anybody who did not like the way you sang  
All You said was  
“AINT’T NO BEEG THING.”

We all loved you ‘cause you spoke and sang what we  
Always thought.  
The pictures you painted was not always bright.  
Surely you must have known how inside we fought  
To save this land that was neglected by our lost sight.

The story of Kui Lee does not begin at his peak of  
Popularity in late ‘65  
Rather still, one must reflect on his background of a  
Wild and Rebellious Youth kicked out of a Public school  
And certainly from another which he so loved –  
The beloved Kamehameha Schools.

His days of youth were filled with  
Experiences on the Beach at Waikiki  
Mixing well with the haoles and locals alike  
His living was certainly free and easy but  
Surely not without Pleasure nor Pain.

Kui, then and there, was not devoid of emotions  
And feelings for himself as a person and as part  
Of an environment he so loved that was being overrun  
Before him by PROGRESS....  
That destructive product of Man’s Creation.

A showman in part and person in whole  
Kui abandoned his days of youth and left  
To see what it was all about in the land they called  
The Mainland.

Arriving first in Florida and then New York City  
Kui began to witness the evil ills of society  
Man's Inhumanity to Man –  
But, being as he is, he was able to adjust to  
This type of life because he had been in the  
Good Life of Hawaii and wanted the experiences to  
Take back with him  
“Lucky You Live Hawaii!”

A racial mixture of many nationalities which  
Typify the cosmopolitan nature of Hawaii  
Kui was able to draw upon his many resources  
In adapting to Big City Life in New York City.

Seeking an existence as an entertainer, knife dancer,  
In the famous Hotel Lexington,  
Kui saw the rich and the poor, the white and black,  
The good and bad, the known and unknown which  
Left an indelible imprint on his mind.

Slowly Kui was fashioning a dream  
Producing a show of his own depicting  
Himself as a singer entertainer in Hawaii  
Reflecting his protest of the  
“UGLY AMERICAN.”

A perfectionist was he, not only as a knife dancer  
But a performer as well.  
This was the undercurrent which attracted and  
Distracted many to his performances at the  
Queen Surf Restaurant and Nite Club where  
Kui performed probably the best “local” show  
In town.

Returning home undaunted by odds that he  
Could not sing, he trained diligently and intensely  
In creating a voice and style that was certainly  
His Own.

Fate would have it, though some might disagree,  
That God's will on this young and fragile man  
Would be predestined for him to contract Cancer but  
That made Him work even harder.  
It certainly did not deter the will nor the spirit of  
This young man  
Distracted not by medical advice about the incurable  
Nature of his disease  
He developed a belief, a hope of his  
Curability.....  
This Was No Beeg Thing.

Moving to Maui was the best antidote for Kui Lee  
For it was on this most beautiful island that Kui saw  
Beauty – A Beauty that was no more in his beloved  
Waikiki.  
His impressions and use of imagery of the natural  
Setting of Lahaina Harbor with the mountains and  
Valleys as its backdrop created the lyrics and music  
To one of his most beautiful songs –  
“LAHAINALUNA.”

Kui performed on Maui for the better part of a year.  
Gaining invaluable experience and enjoying the  
Camaraderie of the local lifestyle and ease of  
Living ...  
Kui was ready to return home and perform  
For his many folks and friends alike.

First in the country on the windward side of the  
Island of Oahu  
Then on the outskirts of his beloved Waikiki  
By Fate and Chance Kui was offered a contract to  
Perform at the Queen's Surf Restaurant and Nite Club\*  
Located on the very sand and surf he loved and cherished  
In the Reflection of his Days of Youth.

So Kui o Kalani Lee followed his dream and made  
The Impossible Possible  
A former beach boy, high school dropout,  
Kui Lee developed his education  
On the Beach at Waikiki.

Here he was back a Conquering Hero to the old and  
New spirit that now existed on that very  
Sand and Surf of the days of his Youth.

Kui Lee must be remembered for what he did and  
Represented.....  
A composer of songs that reflected the new Hawaii  
A representative of the SILENT PROTEST to the  
Gradual Deterioration of Local Customs and Culture.

To say that he was the pioneer to publicly  
Perform in protest of the growing dislike of what  
He saw in Hawaii Nei  
Is not being kind enough to say that  
He was, without rhythm and rhyme,  
Ten Years Before His Time.

The scene was set for Kui's entrance and the show was on  
Reflecting his mood for the coming summer was  
His opening number for it brought many  
Memories of his days as a beach boy in Waikiki  
Especially during summertime.

Mixing words of humor and discontent he did not  
Curb his anger nor disenchantment of the  
Present or the Future of Hawaii as an Island State.

Mixing sarcasm with humor at the many racial  
Groups in Hawaii  
The Haoles, Mainlanders, were his prime target of attack  
But no one particular group escaped his critical comments.

Kui was as he is – outspoken and one among the crowd.  
He was his own man – Brilliant, Creative, Inventive, and  
A Perfectionist.

Without being so kind Kui worked hard and those  
That were associated with him had to stand the  
Burden of his Drive for Perfection in his shows.

He embarrassed and angered one and many  
People alike not to mention  
The love of his wife for whom he wrote the song  
“I REMEMBER YOU.”

Integrated in his show was not only his  
Emotional feelings about the land  
He so loved but also his Philosophy of Life  
“AIN’T NO BIG THING.”

It “Ain’t No Beeg Thing” whether People  
Liked or Disliked Him.  
He was doing his own thing  
Offensive as it may be  
He was a man of both hate and love.

“LAHAINALUNA”  
Certainly reflected his Love of the Island  
Everyone should know and love – Maui –  
It was at that time certainly No Ka Oi.

“THE DAYS OF OUR YOUTH”  
Formed another portion of Kui’s life  
Probably more memorable simply because he lived  
His Youth on that very Beach where he so  
Entertained.

To say the least and not the best of Kui Lee  
Would be no memoriam at all.

Yet one cannot end without explaining why  
It should end, if at all.

Kui Lee's meteoric rise as the top entertainer  
For local folks was short and intermittent  
Due not to mind and spirit but the  
Physical tragedy that can afflict Man  
With Death.

To see his frail body depleted by God's Will  
Was certainly a Human Tragedy yet Kui was  
Always striving, always seeking, always finding  
Never Yielding.

Kui Lee succumbed in a hospital away from the  
Sand and Surf of the Days of His Youth.

I will now end my verse not without any line  
Nor with any rhythm and rhyme  
It shall be done with one verse of lesson  
Taken from the works of Tennyson\*

“And though we  
Are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are,  
We are, one equal temper of heroic hearts  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

I REMEMBER YOU.

## POETRY NOTES

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- \* Kuikolani Lee was a Hawaiian singer-composer of many popular island songs who died from cancer in December, '66.
- \* Haoles = a slang term used to describe white, Caucasians, people from the mainland.
- \* Queen's Surf Restaurant & Nightclub was located on the outskirts of the main center of Waikiki below the foot of Diamond Head situated on the Beach where the beautiful white sand and ocean was its backdrop. The restaurant & nightclub was eventually demolished in a political turn of events in 1971.
- \* Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Ulysses."