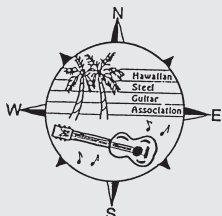


HSGA QUARTERLY

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by the Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association

Volume 19, Issue 73

Winter 2003-04



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Frank Della-Penna (left) and Dirk Vogel treat the Joliet 2003 audience to an acoustic steel guitar duet with Gerald Ross on rhythm guitar. Gerald and other members were interviewed by Chicago Tribune staff writer, William Hageman.

HSGA 'Cracks' the Chicago Tribune

We decided to give our trusty Joliet chroniclers, Betty and Bo' Bahret, a well deserved break and instead get an "outsider's" viewpoint. Chicago Tribune staff writer, William Hageman, attended our convention this year and wrote the following article, which appeared in the Chicago Tribune on October 19, 2003. Nice press if you can get it!

What better place to have a Hawaiian steel guitar convention?

It has come to this: There are only two places these days where you can hear quality Hawaiian steel guitar music. First, on "SpongeBob SquarePants." [ED: Check your cable

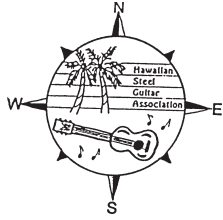
TV listings for "SpongeBob SquarePants" on Nickel-odeon.] "That's really good Hawaiian music," said Gerald Ross. And second, at the annual Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association convention, which recently held its 17th annual confab in Joliet. Some 200 people attended the four-day event, which featured nearly sunup-till-sundown live music, demonstrations, a lū'au, and innumerable Hawaiian shirts and floral-print dresses.

"I'd say 50 percent of the club are Hawaiian music fans who grew up in the '30s and '40s listening to Hawaiian music," said Ross, from Michigan, a member of the association's Board. "The younger ones, the Baby Boomers,

Continued on Page 2

HSGA QUARTERLY

Volume 19, Issue 73



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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association is a tax-exempt, nonprofit educational corporation in the State of Hawai'i under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Our primary purpose is to develop a global network of players and lovers of traditional Hawaiian music and to encourage the study, teaching, and performance of the Hawaiian steel guitar. Our primary financial goal is to provide scholarship assistance through donations to steel guitar students who demonstrate the ability and intent to become accomplished performers.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to all steel guitar players and non-players around the world who support the perpetuation of the Hawaiian steel guitar. Annual dues are US\$30. The membership year begins July 1. Members receive the *HSGA Quarterly* and other group benefits. The *Quarterly* is mailed four times a year First Class to addresses in the United States and by Air Mail to foreign addresses. Members can obtain an Associate Membership for a spouse or family member at a cost of \$10, added to the annual dues; an Associate Member is entitled to discounts at certain HSGA functions and can vote in HSGA Board elections.

SUBMIT LETTERS & EDITORIALS TO:

HSGA Quarterly, 45-600 Kamehameha Hwy, Kaneohe, HI 96744 USA. Tel: (808) 235-4742, Fax: (808) 235-9591, Email: <hsga@lava.net>, Website: <http://www.hsga.org>. Photos are welcome and will be returned on request. Quality original prints or high resolution digital camera output, please. *Mahalo!*

JOLIET 2003 Continued from Page 2

we're here because we want to learn the instruments."

Music and camaraderie are the order of the weekend. The high point of each convention, held at the Joliet Holiday Inn Select, is that big Saturday Night Lū'au.

"It's a traditional Waikīkī lū'au, with hula dancers and everything," Ross said. "Of course, it's kind of hard to find poi in Joliet."

Right... Joliet. The obvious question: Why does the Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association come to Joliet every year? Because of the surf and palm trees in Romeoville?

The short answer is that association members Frank and Donna Miller lived in Joliet and offered to run the convention. Because the Chicago area is centrally located for the group's membership—now at 400 and growing—Joliet seemed a reasonable choice.

But there's also the Midwest's long tradition of Hawaiian steel guitar music. Stop laughing. When the Hawaiian

music craze was hitting the U.S. more than a half-century ago, many of the West Coast-based steel guitar manufacturers opened facilities in the Midwest. Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio were hotbeds, so the manufacturers opened branches there to accommodate the music's legion of fans.

How big did it get? At a Tribune-sponsored music festival in 1946, some 2,000 Hawaiian steel guitar players performed all at once at Soldier Field.

Tradition has it that Hawaiian steel guitar music was invented by a Hawaiian schoolboy, Joseph Kekuku, in the 1890s. "He supposedly touched a piece of steel to the strings of his guitar. He was fascinated by the sighing, sobbing tone, and he found he could get notes out of it with practice," said **Bob Pulevai Waters**, the group's unofficial historian, who came in from Kentucky.

One of those who were hooked on the music early on was **Kay Koster**. When she was around 10, Koster became enthralled with the music after hearing it at a medicine show in a corn-

A nice shot of Duke and La Verne Ching (left), and Bob and Julie Waters (and ono food and libation!) at the Saturday Night Lū'au in Joliet this past October.





Bandleader, teacher, and steel guitarist Kay Koster from Rockford, Illinois delights the Joliet audience.

field. “On the way home, I told my grandmother, ‘When I grow up, that’s what I want to play.’”

Several years later, in 1940, she formed a band, the Aloha Islanders, and they have been playing together ever since. They still do about 50 dates a year (she also has a country band and a big band, and she has been teaching for more than 60 years).

“That’s my life, Hawaiian music,” said Koster, who lives in Rockford and who did a 30-minute set at the convention, kicked off with a rousing “On the Beach at Waikīkī.”

The Hawaiian music craze crested around the mid-forties. “It sort of dropped off after the war; newer instruments became popular,” said Waters. “And rock ‘n’ roll...” He nodded, knowing his listener understood.

“By the ‘60s, it had gotten a bad name,” Ross said. “People started associating Hawaiian music with coconut bras and the fat guy at the office party in a grass skirt.” So

Mahalo, Members!

Keep those great letters and photos coming! YOU are the heart of our association. If possible, send original photographs or output from a digital camera. We cannot use grainy or washed out photos. As always, photos will be returned on request. Please send news, comments, or photos to: 45-600 Kamehameha Hwy, Kaneohe, HI 96744; Contact us at (808) 235-4742; Fax: (808) 235-9591; Email: hsga@lava.net; Website: www.hsga.org. Mahalo!

the music got pushed further into the background. “The only time you can hear it anywhere is at Waikīkī at happy hour from 5 to 8,” Ross said. “Then they bring out the rock bands. That really upsets me.”

One of the association’s goals is to promote the music. The convention crowd was definitely an older demographic, the longtime aficionados. But they aren’t the only ones listening.

“The type of people we’re attracting these days are roots musicians, dobro players, bottleneck players, and old-timey musicians who want to expand their sound,” said Ross, who’s 49.

“Young people see us as a brand-new sound,” said **Lorene Ruymar**, who founded the association and who wrote the book on the Hawaiian steel guitar, literally (“The Hawaiian Steel Guitar and Its Great Hawaiian Musicians,” put out by Centerstream Publishing). “They don’t want to do what their grandfathers did. Or what their grandfathers’ fathers did.”

“We’re trying to perpetuate Hawaiian music and carry on the legacy of the Hawaiian steel guitar,” said **Duke Kaleolani Ching**, who came in from California for his eleventh convention. “It’s an instrument everybody loves. If it dies off, it’s a sound you’ll never hear.” ■

Steel Course Update

From Lorene Ruymar

I haven’t given you an update on my steel guitar course for quite awhile, so here ‘t is.

There are two new donations from Don Keene: one to the Maui Arts and Culture Centre and the other, to Lahainaluna High School in Lahaina, Maui.

I now have 101 courses spread throughout all of the islands. Some are with the Department of Education and the District Superintendents’ offices, and some are with colleges, private schools, music schools, arts and culture centers, and most of all, the intermediate schools and high schools.

Donations so far have been made from **Al Engler** to the Malamalama Waldorf School, from **Wally and Alma Pfeifer** to the Kaimuki High School, from **Don and Eleanor Sweatman** to the Moloka‘i High School, from **Vic and Nancy Rittenband** to J.B. Castle High School in Kaneohe, and the two donations listed above from **Don and Lynn Keene**.

Although the price of the course to anyone else is \$70 plus postage, if you want to donate a course to a school in Hawai‘i, just send me \$50 and name the school (or ask me to choose one for you). When I mail the course, I’ll ask the school to acknowledge you as the donor and send you a thank-you note. ■

Joseph Kekuku Celebration Planned for October 10, 2004

By Lorene Ruymar

What's this about? Well, did you know that Joseph Kekuku, the inventor of the steel guitar, is buried beside his wife Adelaide, in the cemetery at Dover, New Jersey?

I've been talking by email with some of the people of Dover who are interested in celebrating the life of Joseph Kekuku next October, the weekend following our Joliet convention. The date, Sunday, October 10, was chosen for that very reason. The people of Dover are hoping that some of us might want to join them in the celebration, bringing great steel guitar playing to make their festival complete.

This is not an HSGA function, just an invitation that I am passing on to you. Actually, this is more of a test run and if it goes well they plan to have the "reely big shoe" in the year 2005.

I've been checking maps, trying to find out more about the little town of

Doug Smith treating the Joliet audience to some acoustic steel guitar.



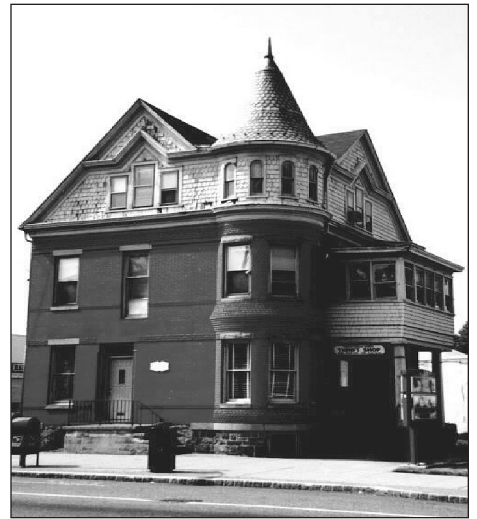
Dover. And that's just what it is, a little town. They are talking about closing off the street to turn the downtown section into a sort-of fall fair, and having one portion decorated Hawaiian style where they hope we'll be playing our steel guitars and where they will serve Hawaiian-style food.

They're kicking around a lot of other ideas, like having a contest in which someone wins a steel guitar course (I wonder whose? ...ahem) plus a 6-string acoustic guitar paid for by the town of Dover, or maybe having an actor type—who just happens to be able to play the wooden acoustic 6-string guitar—pretend to *be* Joseph Kekuku. I can just see Doug Smith doing that one.

I'm mentioning this to you many months in advance so you can think long and hard about it. What I visualize is perhaps only those club members who live east of Joliet might make the trip. I would hope we'd drive in a convoy so the daily stops are planned ahead and everyone stops for lunch at the same place, etc., etc. There would be no rush to get there. We enjoy what little time we have together at the convention, so more time together be better, right? If we don't have fun along the way it's not worth doing. Those of us who fly to Joliet will have to figure out whether we'll bus it or... how?

Right now I'm talking as if we had a huge group going to Dover. Pure fantasy! I'll remind you again in the spring newsletter, and maybe by mid-summer some of you will be able to tell me that you're 75% sure you'll go. Well, that will be good enough for me. Just let me know and I'll pass the word to the people in Dover because they will not be able to make specific plans until they know what kind of response we can expect from HSGA members.

All I can say now is that Art and I will do our best to get there, no matter



The Dover Museum in Dover, New Jersey

how many others go. We like the fact that Dover is no big city. And if we can borrow an amp and a rhythm guitar, we'll sit down by Joseph's grave and play some music for him. Is it possible to hear it, if a person turns over in his grave??? I'm pretty sure if he starts spinning we'd hear it. ■

HSGA Donations

Thanks HSGA members for your contributions this past fall. **Bernie Endaya** came through again with a generous donation of \$100. *Mahalo!*

Members wishing to donate can specify the General Fund or Scholarship Fund. The General Fund is used for basic club operating expenses and the Scholarship Fund helps provide lessons for promising steel guitar students.

The following members donated at least \$10:

Janis B. Crum, Williamston, MI
Wendell E. Dennis, Franklin, OH
Gertrud Johansson, Farila, Sweden
Leonidas Kopsachilis, Pompano Beach, FL
Dick and Donna Lloyd, Glendora, CA
Bernie Magness, Grass Valley, CA
Richard Schenk, Bulan, KY
Donna L. Schmid, Denver, CO
Warren J. Slavina, Southampton, PA

Letter From the Dover Historical Society

From George Laurie of the Dover Area Historical Society

Good morning, everyone, from Dover, New Jersey. First a little background. Dover is an old mining town, which was settled in 1722 when iron ore was so plentiful that it could be scooped up on the surface rather than mined underground.

Dover was incorporated as a village in 1826 when the iron ore mines were in full production in the surrounding hills. The Morris Canal was dug through Dover in 1832, which connected the Delaware River in Pennsylvania to the New York City harbor at Jersey City. This brought in an abundance of coal to the manufacturing plants in Northern New Jersey and the New York City market.

With the arrival of the railroad in 1848, Dover became a boom town with a surge in population. By the late 1800s Dover was a major market and manufacturing town in Morris County and Northern New Jersey. It hosted some of the finest hotels in the state and had one of the largest and finest vaudeville theaters in the entire region. At its peak, Dover was a major stop-over for distinguished guests such as Thomas Edison, and, at one time or another, at least five presidents of the United States have lodged at the Mansion House Hotel in Dover.

That Dover was a major showcase on the vaudeville circuit is why we believe Joseph Kekuku appeared here at the Baker Theater in one of his shows, loved the town, befriended some of the local residents, and perhaps later came back to Dover to settle down and open a private music business giving lessons to local residents.

There are still a lot of missing pieces to the puzzle. We still need to research the local funeral homes to see if there

are any records left pertaining to Joseph Kekuku. We have already scanned many old newspaper accounts, but to date could only find his obit in 1932. We've been looking for possible ads advertising his business, stories relating to his activities in Dover, and even some of the old vaudeville theater playbills to see if and when his act was booked at the Baker Theater.

The fact remains, Joseph Kekuku is buried in Dover, New Jersey next to his wife at the Orchard Street Cemetery. He was a visitor of Dover, New Jersey and finally became a resident of Dover, New Jersey. He died and was buried in his final resting place in Dover, New Jersey. In order for his memory to live on forever, it is up to us, the living, to honor his accomplishments and the gift he gave to mankind. He has carved a place in history that should never be forgotten. A monument of high class should be erected at his gravesite so future generations can visit and always remember who this person was.

In [October] 2004, we will attempt a rather small festival in memory of Joseph Kekuku. Once we complete the plans and get the word out on who Joseph Kekuku was and why we are holding this event, we will begin a much larger production in 2005, which may run over a two-day weekend.

For the 2004 event, we really have no backup plan in the event of rain. Usually when it rains on a Sunday, the outdoor flea market, which takes up the entire downtown business district with traffic blocked off and everything, gets cancelled and does not return until the following Sunday. If it rains, we could have a rain date for the following Sunday, but that wouldn't do much good for visitors from out of state.

After the holidays, our committee will begin in earnest developing a program for 2004. We will keep you posted on our progress so that at any time along the way, you will be able to offer suggestions and ideas. We will

keep in mind that if anyone wishes to travel to Dover in [October] 2004, we will try to organize a welcome committee to plan some luncheon or suggest a visit to New York City or something in the event of rain.

Thanks for your continued interest. This keeps us motivated and determined to see this through. ■

Delivery Problems?

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Steel Guitar ‘Down Under’

From Bruce Clarke

I have often considered contributing an article on the impact that the music of Dick McIntire, Andy Iona, Sol Ho‘opi‘i and other Hawaiian musicians had on Australian popular culture during the 1930s and ‘40s. The spark that finally lit my fire was Andy Volk’s new book, “Lap Steel Guitar.” After reading his wide-ranging interviews I reflected upon the many opportunities that Australia had offered me and began to compare it with the American experience that threaded its way through most of Andy’s book.

The question that intrigued me was, Why had my rewarding 60-year music career been such an easy ride, while so many talented players—in what outsiders are generally led to believe is the land of opportunity—found it next to impossible to sustain full-time employment without accepting the uncertainty and stress of life on the road? Was it because I had been trained by great teacher and initiated into music in a very positive way? Or was it just plain luck?

Let’s go back to the beginning... By 1930 the large traveling troupes of Ernest Kaai, and David and Queenie Kaili had kick-started the craze for Hawaiian style music in Australia. But it was the arrival of Charles and Rua Thompson from New Zealand in the early ‘30s that really set things buzzing. After touring the east coast vaudeville circuit as Buddy Waikara and Lani Kalua with their glamorous steel guitar and hula act, they settled in Sydney where Buddy and his business partner Jack Lynch established their first Hawaiian Club teaching studio.

Over the next few years, as the recordings of Sol Ho‘opi‘i, the McIntires, and Andy Iona captivated the ears and imagination of the listening public, the Hawaiian Club expanded into every capital city and major country center. Buddy—a colorful figure, a loveable rogue, but a topflight showman—drew together the best players and teachers in the land: Les Adams, Charlie Lees, the Kahn brothers (Neville and Jango), Billy Kalua (steel and rhythm guitar), and Johnny Wade (uke and vocals) were just a few of the big names in Buddy’s tremendous line-up of talent. Their artistry, inspired by and coupled with the many recordings and radio transcriptions of the above Hawaiian masters, resonated from the nation’s radio stations. Their nightclub and theatre appearances, and most important of all, their dancehalls performances, raised Hawaiian music and the sound of the island-style steel to unprecedented levels of popularity.

Those all-important dance halls offered the young enthusiasts or wannabees the opportunity to dance and listen, or watch and learn first-hand from their heroes for



A 1939 photo taken at the Palm Grove Ballroom near Melbourne. (left to right) Dudley Richards (rhythm guitar), Billy Kalua (uke), Faye Rogers (vocals), Jango Kahn (steel, rhythm guitar), unknown guy (probably a drummer), Neville Kahn (steel) being kissed by the dog, Buddy Waikara (standing), and seated on the far right, Jimmy Buchan (bass).

three or four hours at a time. They could even get to know them socially.

By 1939 Buddy had Hawaiian bands in every major dance hall along the east coast. But with the advent of hostilities and the loss of his all-star team to various Armed Forces Entertainment Units, he closed down or sold off his satellite studios and focused his operations in Melbourne, where, in 1941 at age 16, I entered the picture and enrolled as a Hawaiian Club student.

My Maori teacher, Tui Hamilton, and those confusing war years opened up a world of opportunity for me. Since radio was our main form of home entertainment, I was infatuated with the sound of the steel guitar, and as my lessons picked up, I simply couldn’t get enough of it. By this time Buddy was supplying quality groups led by Jim Jensen, Jim Snelling, Jack Wilson, and others to the city’s leading dance halls.

Throughout 1942 I spent most Saturday nights at St. Kilda’s plush Palm Grove Dance Palais soaking up their sounds. I was particularly intrigued by Snelling’s fusion of a beautiful Hawaiian touch and tone with bluesy phrasing. By 1943 I was in trios and quartets led by my teacher, steeling my way around the ever-proliferating Armed Forces entertainment venues and military hospital theatres that lay within a 300-mile radius of Melbourne. This ultimately led to the fulfillment of my Maori buddy’s pipedream, the Matariki South Sea Entertainers: 24 singers, dancers, and musicians drawn from Melbourne’s small Polynesian population and like-minded Australians.

Once I had revealed an aptitude for the instrument and its repertoire, Tui insisted that I acquire a thorough understanding of its theoretical harmonic and rhythmic principles. His credo was: If you don't know what you're doing, there's no point in doing it!

So, since he wished to concentrate on building the troupe's stagecraft and overall presentation, I was charged, at the age of 18, with writing musical arrangements for the Matariki's 8-piece band, composing appropriate 'between-act' interludes, and supervising the performances. Tui, aided by two ex-professional hula dancers, choreographed the ballet sequences and added authenticity to the vocal selections.

Until late 1945 The Matarikis continued on with their Armed Forces appearances and regular self-funded (and mostly profitable) shows for the general public, usually under the title of "A Night In Honolulu." Then for several months their performances were augmented by a dozen Tahitians, who were on Rest and Relaxation during fighting with the Free French Forces in the Middle East. Our time with them was truly a mind-boggling experience.

On December 26, 1946 the Entertainers gave their final performance to a packed Melbourne Town Hall. The next day I left town with a new group of friends and, surrendering to the kiss of a new music, entered a 3-year semi-professional apprenticeship on jazz guitar. For a while I kept one foot in the Hawaiian camp, making occasional nightclub appearances with a trio of steel, rhythm guitar, and a hula dancer, and the other foot deeply entrenched in jazz.

The Hawaiian Club closed its doors in 1946 and for a while Buddy struggled along as an agent, but interest in his products was waning; he died a broken man around 1956. After the Matarikis, Tui returned to New Zealand and died in 1952.

By this time I was firmly cemented into the studio world – recording, composing, arranging, producing, and conducting for radio, recordings, film, and a few years later, television. I watched from the sidelines as many of those great pre-war steel men were 'elbowed from the table' as the music they loved fell from favor. Several, who had been ignored by record companies during their prime, were sadly documented by small independent labels long after they had passed their 'use-by' dates. Comparing Les Adams' pre-war Hawaiian Club 78s with his late '50s LPs is much like comparing David Keli'i in his Al Perry heyday with his later Maple LP: both had developed wobbly vibratos.

After the war Jango Kahn, a top-flight steeler, worked mainly as a bassist. His brother Neville—in my opinion, possibly the only player one could ever compare to Dick McIntire

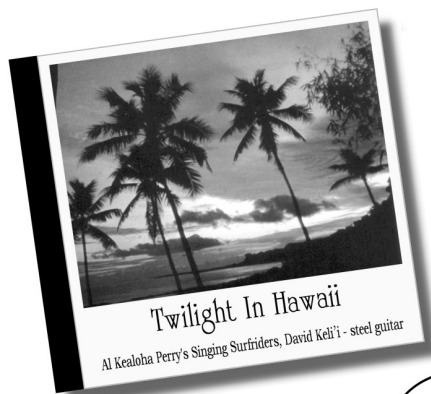
in the areas of tonal beauty and expression—worked into the '50s with Johnny Wade's Hawaiians and then drank himself to death as rock 'n' roll took over the world. Today Jim Jensen and I are the sole survivors from those unforgettable Hawaiian Club years.

As time turtled into the eighties and I took stock of my life's work, it became clear that everything I had achieved was due to my Hawaiian music beginnings and the wonderful legacy that my one and only teacher had handed down, and an interest in that magical music was rekindled. After a 30-year break I returned to the steel. In the late nineties I acquired the time, desire, and technical skills to restore those inspiring and much-loved classics into the digital domain, and so the Cumquat Hawaiian Project was born. I guess it's a kind of payback for what the music gave to me! ■

You ain't heard nothin' yet...

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Attn: Local O'ahu Musicians!

From HSGA President, Kamaka Tom

Aloha to all lovers of Hawaiian music: Announcing a welcome addition to our list of venues in Honolulu for local Hawaiian musicians, sponsored by retail outlet Native Books at the Ward Warehouse Shopping Center.

Ms. Ellen Martinez is the contact person for these concert series, held Sunday afternoons at the Ward Warehouse Amphitheatre. Interested performers of traditional and contemporary Hawaiian music receive welcome public exposure and may also promote their recordings through Native Books' retail outlet on site.

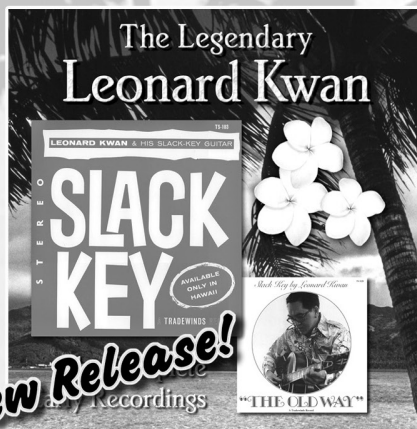
Please feel free to share this good news with family and friends. Come and enjoy!



Sharon Denney of Whiteland, Indiana sheds her pedals and plays it "straight." In the trenches: (right to left) L.T. Zinn on guitar, "Emperor" Bernie Endaya on 'ukulele, Lorene Ruymar on guitar, and Virginia Grzadzinski on upright bass.

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Honolulu 2004 Update

From Wayne Shishido

As you know, HSGA conventions are held in Hawai'i on odd-numbered years. However, many members choose to gather around the first week of May on even-numbered years on an informal basis. For this reason, we have requested that the Queen Kapi'olani Hotel hold 12 rooms for our members from April 24 through May 8, 2004.

Members who are coming to Hawai'i during this time period and want to stay at the Queen Kapi'olani should make their reservations with the hotel's Central Reservations Office. *Do not call the hotel directly.* The toll free number is (800) 367-2317, and the local phone number is (808) 922-4671. Their mailing address is:

Central Reservations
175 Paoakalani Ave.
Honolulu, HI 96815-3797

Guests must advise the reservations agent that they are reserving the Queen Kapi'olani Hotel through our group name: **Hawaii Steel Guitar**—this will get you the special rate!

The rate per Superior room is \$67 per day. Rollaway beds are available at additional charge. A mandatory portage charge of \$5.73 (in/out) per person will be assessed. Hawai'i State Tax of 4.166% and hotel room tax of 7.25% will be added on the per night rate. Guests will be responsible for guaranteeing their own rooms and will be responsible for their own charges. If you have questions on any of the above, please ask Central Reservations.

The deadline for making reservations is March 24, 2004, after which the hotel will release any rooms not booked by HSGA members. Availability is on a first come, first served basis. ■

Buy & Sell

Instruments Wanted

Wanted continuously by Michael Cord for his awesome collection: All models of vintage lap steels (like Hilos, Konas, Weissenborns, Rickenbackers), vintage amps and basses. Contact Michael Cord toll free at (877) 648-7881.

Vibraphone Wanted

Want to buy, a Deegan Vibraphone, the small, portable type. Tom Ikehata Tohma, 505 4-1-9 Hiroo, Shibuya-ku Tokyo, 150-0012 Japan; Email: atoma@tokyo.interq.or.jp.



Joliet honored guest, Hale Seabury Akaka (left), pictured with Joanne and Herbert Hanawahine at the Saturday Night Lū'au.

Announcing HSGA 2004 Board Elections

From Isaac "Doc" Akuna

As a member of your nominating committee I would like to announce that we have formulated a list of candidates for election to the HSGA Board of Directors to serve from July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2006.

Thanks to all who so graciously allowed their names to be among those submitted for possible service to HSGA. I interviewed all of them personally and can tell you that we have a class group here. The candidates are:

Betty Bahret *	Lorene Ruymar
Phil Bender	Tom Ikehata Tohma *
Duke Ching *	Kamaka Tom *
Bill Creller	July Waters *
Joanne Hanawahine *	Don Weber
Wally Pfeifer	Don Woods
Gerald Ross *	

* Denotes incumbent

As you can see, the quality of candidates is particularly strong this year. Our by-laws limit the Board to nine members, so it's a shame, but some seriously qualified people won't be able to serve on the Board this time around. The good news is that the club will benefit from the leadership of a strong Board regardless of who gets elected.

Please vote for 9 of the above candidates using the ballot provided with your *Quarterly*, then sign the ballot and send it to our office before March 10, 2004. *Mahalo!* ■

Call of the Islands

(Music By Mike Scott)

C6th Tuning

Arr. By Leonard T. Zinn

INTRO

Chords: C, Db, C, Dm, G7, C

1
2
3
4
5
6

Chords: Ab9, Em7, Ebm7, Dm7, G7, C, C#°

1
2
3
4
5
6

Chords: Dm7, G7, C, Ab9

1
2
3
4
5
6

Chords: Em7, Ebm7, Dm7, G7, C, Fm, Ebm, C

1
2
3
4
5
6

Db9 Gm7 C Db9 Gm7 C Db9 Gm7

1 2 3 4 5 6

1. C D7 G7 C

1 2 3 4 5 6

Ab9 Em7 Ebm7 Dm7 G7 C Em Dm

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Em G7 C D7 G7 Ab7 Db

1 2 3 4 5 6

Db A9 Fm7 Em7 Ebm7 Ab7 Rit A7 Db

1 2 3 4 5 6

Seeking the ‘Hawaiian Touch’ on Pedal Steel Guitar

By Akitomo (Tom) Ikehata Tohma

In 1956 I bought a Teisco 6-string lap steel guitar from a friend for \$17. He was giving up on lessons at a Hawaiian music school. It was set up with his teacher’s tuning, an F6th (high to low: F D C A F D). Having a year of ‘ukulele playing experience and only a few months playing bass, I started a reckless challenge to play steel guitar without a teacher or instruction book. I had no intention of learning from anyone because I had a strange hunch when I first touched the steel guitar that “maybe I can.”

In the 1950s, Hawaiian music was “booming” in Japan with many professionals, including Buckie Shirakata, Tony Ohtsuka, Setsuo Ohashi, and others, who were big stars in the Japanese musical world. The biggest steel guitar star was Buckie Shirakata from Hawai‘i who played a strong single-note style on his A minor tuning, which almost all amateur steel players at that time admired and copied.

But I had a feeling that these players, including Buckie, sounded different from the Hawaiian steel guitar I had been familiar with. When I was 3 or 4 years of age I listened to recordings of Sol Ho‘opi‘i, which my father bought in the U.S. in 1936, including Sol’s version of “Kolopa” and “Maori Brown Eyes.”

With the Teisco 6-string I bought from my friend, I tried to reproduce the Hawaiian sound but I got interested in chord playing after hearing Hal Aloma and Jules Ah See. For playing chords, I bought a new Fender 8-string double neck and tried to create the sounds I had dreamed of. But I was never satisfied with my playing even after hard practice.

When I graduated from college in 1961, I had to put my steel guitar aspirations “on ice.” In 1977, after a 16-year break, I bought a Fender 10-string single neck with 10 pedals from a country and western steel guitar pro. This guitar was an engineering masterpiece, designed to create any chord combinations a player could think of. Each pedal raised or lowered 2 strings and a player could create his own setup using the adjustable changer.

The Fender was already set up to a C6th with a high G; I changed the bottom string to C. I learned later that most C6th players use an E for the top string. The setup I used was (high to low) G, E, C, A, G, E, C, A, G, C. The problem with the top G-string is it’s too thin and shrill sounding, which doesn’t fit the Hawaiian sound as Jerry Byrd pointed out. And the string breaks often, since my pedal work raises it up to a high A.

After years of struggling, I completed a chord variation chart, a pattern of strings to be raised and lowered using ped-



Tom Ikehata and Setsuko at the 2003 Steel Guitar Ho‘olaule‘a.

als, and an arrangement of pedals for easy footwork. It took years to learn the footwork for smooth pedal use. In May 1984, I special-ordered a single neck Excel pedal steel guitar from the Fuzzy Company using my own system (10 strings, 10 pedals, and 2 knee levers).

Skillful and effective use of 10 pedals and 2 knee levers enables me not only to play chord variations but also to play improvisations easily because all the chord tones are located on a vertical line. Shortly after I bought it, I changed the pickup magnet to get a mellower sound and widened the nut to increase the space between strings in order to avoid accidentally touching adjacent strings.

Most pedal steel guitars are used in country and western music and Excels are no exception; Mitsuo Fujii, the owner of Fuzzy Company, used to be a country and western steel guitar player. However, Excel non-pedal steels are getting more popular with Hawaiian steel guitar players. In the 1980s, Jerry Byrd gave Mitsuo, his longtime friend, remarkable advice on magnetic pickup winding for non-pedal to make a mellow Hawaiian sound. Jerry’s advice led to the great sound of the Excel ‘Jerry Byrd Frypan’ model.

Jerry Byrd has given me a lot of steel guitar advice since I first met him on his second visit to Tokyo with Hiram Olsen and Kalani Fernandes in 1979. He is no doubt “King of the Steel Guitar” in Japan as in the U.S. where Hawaiian music and country and western music have been well accepted. The most important suggestion he gave me was “Play it just like you talk!”

Pedal players often discuss complicated chord setups and they often ask me what chord combinations I can get with my own pedal work. But I don’t remember them all. My feet just work on “automatic” from my many years of practice. I often use diminished, augmented, major 7th

chords, and others without knowing their names. And I don't read music so I always stay out of music theory discussions.

When I play my pedal steel guitar, I take off my shoes because it's easier for me to manage the pedal work. In May 2004, my Excel will have its 20th anniversary since its "birth" when I special-ordered it. I'll continue to seek Hawaiian touch with this "alter-ego" and "play it like I talk" as Jerry said—while my wife Setsuko makes sure my socks are clean and have no holes! ■

Members, Don't Forget to Vote!

*Yes, it's time to elect your Board of Directors for the 2004-2006 term. **Regular and Associate members are allowed to vote.***

Just mark the ballot included with your Quarterly, sign it, and return it to our office before March 10:

*Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association
45-600 Kamehameha Hwy
Kaneohe, HI 96744.*

Election results will be announced in the Spring 2004 issue of the HSGA Quarterly.

COCO WIRE

From Vivian Bangs: "Thought you'd like to know that **Vivian Lou Bangs Edwards** has married **Col. Bill Biely**, USAF (Ret.). So happy for them; the good news is they will live here; she's building a beautiful home and they will sell the home he's building in Santa Maria, California. They're one busy couple building two homes at the same time 700 miles apart!!" ■

Nice Joliet smiles from Vivian Bangs, Pat McAuley, and Myrel Carr.



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MEMBERS' CORNER

Gene Carpenter, Lake Forest, CA

[ED: Gene sent us the following with his new member application:] I played non-pedal steel from 1946 to 1953. Jerry Byrd gave me some tips on playing and tuning in Cincinnati. In 1947 I won a local talent show on the radio with Jerry's arrangement of "Wabash Blues." I saw Jerry again in 1985 in Honolulu. He wanted me to take up the instrument again. Just three months ago I started re-learning on a pedal steel.

James Connolly, Bound Brook, NJ

Please harass Jerry Byrd into keeping in touch even if it's just brief updates on what he's been up to, or comments about things of interest. [ED: 'Harass' is one of the tools of our trade here at HSGA. No promises, though. If only we could make Jerry write an article for every time he jumped on stage with a pair of wire cutters!]

Duane Reide, Dunnellon, FL

[ED: Duane, another new member, sent us the following with his application:] I checked the HSGA website and it stirred my interest. I am 76 and play a 12-string universal steel and an 8-string Fender. My favorites are Hawaiian and western swing. I have been going to the St. Louis Convention since 1978. I have never been to Hawai'i and

would like to but my wife is afraid to fly. We attended the Winchester Hawaiian show.

I've been playing on and off for 40 years but only at home. Guess I was too busy to play out nights.

I am a retired engineer. I like Jerry Byrd and John Ely plus many of the players down there such as Alan Akaka and the others.

I like keeping in touch through the magazine. The last two I subscribed to went broke. Thanks for the good website. It got me back into it again. [ED: Duane's email is GuitarManDR@netzero.net]

L.T. Zinn, Muskegon, MI

I've been real busy doing shows around the country and some studio session work. I have a couple of local gigs and I'll finish the year doing a show in St. Louis for Scotty. It's a Steel Guitar Hall of Fame show with several steel players from Nashville. Take care and much aloha.

Wally Pfeifer, Joliet, IL

Alma Pfeifer would like to thank all her HSGA friends for the cards and the prayers said for her during her recent surgery, hospital stay, and recovery. She is recovering slowly and with further treatment should be "ready to go" for the HSGA Joliet Convention next October. See you all there! ■

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CLOSING NOTES

The steel guitar world lost a real giant this past November. Legend **Speedy West** passed away on Saturday, November 15, 2003 at the age of 79 in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

Speedy is best known for his exciting, attacking style, which landed him countless recording sessions in the early and mid '50s with the top performers of the day, including Tennessee Ernie Ford, Johnny Horton, Johnny Bond, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, Frankie Laine, Jo Stafford, Doris Day, Spike Jones, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, and many others.

Speedy was born Wesley W. West on January 25, 1924 in Springfield Missouri. His father was a linotype operator at a gospel publishing company, and in his spare time, played guitar and sang gospel songs.

Young Wesley showed interest in music early, and got his first steel guitar at age 9—an inexpensive \$12 Hawaiian guitar. Wesley's interest in music continued to grow and he yearned for a more expensive instrument, namely, a National steel-bodied resonator model costing \$125, which the West family could not afford. In order to give Wesley what he so desperately wanted, his father sold his own guitar in order to buy the National. In the 9th grade he won a prize in a school amateur contest.

By the late 1930s Wesley spent countless hours practicing and listening to steel players like Leon McAuliffe, Billy Robinson, Jerry Byrd, and others. He played with local musicians whenever he could. Wesley was playing at a jam session sponsored by KWTO when Slim Wilson, a local country music personality, introduced Wesley to the audience as “Speedy West,” a name that he would later adopt.

On June 13, 1946, with only \$150 in his pocket, Speedy and his wife and their 2- year old son packed all they could into a 1936 Lincoln Zephyr and headed for Los Angeles.

Speedy took a fulltime position at a local dry cleaning shop to pay the bills, but played as much as he could at night and on weekends and soon began to find his way in the music business.

In 1947, Tex Williams auditioned Speedy to replace Joaquin Murphey, who had left the band. Although Speedy didn't get the job, he fondly remembered how Tex encouraged him to sit in with the band, and to keep pursuing his ambition.

In 1948 during a stint with the Spade Cooley Band, Speedy was introduced to Cliffie Stone, assistant A&R man for Capitol Records. Within months, Speedy was working full time doing recording sessions. In 1950, Speedy got his big break, a recording session with Tennessee Ernie Ford and Kay Starr, which featured the songs “I'll Never Be Free” and “Ain't Nobody's Business But My Own.” Both songs were top hits on country and pop charts.



Photo of Speedy West with Jimmy Bryant at Capitol Records in 1950.

Speedy's playing on “I'll Never Be Free” landed him a contract with Capitol Records as an instrumentalist. He did his first session in January 1951 with Jimmy Bryant accompanying him on guitar. This was the beginning of the famous West/Bryant collaboration that produced classic instrumental recordings and gave both artists international recognition.

Between 1950 and 1955, Speedy played on over 6,000 recordings with a total of 177 different artists.

Speedy and Jimmy Bryant did their final recording session for Capitol as a team on October 9, 1956. However, Speedy's contract with Capitol was renewed, and he continued to record as a single until 1962.

With the advent of rock 'n' roll, the opportunities declined for country musicians in the Los Angeles area. Speedy moved to Tulsa in September 1960 to go to work for Fender Musical Instruments as manager of their warehouse in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Speedy had to discontinue playing because of a stroke in 1981, but became a permanent fixture at Scotty's International Steel Guitar Convention and other steel guitar events.

Speedy will be remembered for generations to come as the steel guitar virtuoso he was, but those he touched personally will also remember him as one helluva of a nice guy who would support and encourage other players at every opportunity.

Speedy was inducted into the Steel Guitar Hall of Fame in 1980. The inscription on his plaque reads: “Uniquely identifiable stylist who so combined chordal executions and single-string riffs that public recognition of the steel guitar and his name were achieved. He pioneered the “crash-bar” technique, composed instrumentals that became classics to the instrument's players, and is “steel's foremost showman.” ■

The Jerry Byrd Lifetime Achievement Award

[ED: Last issue we announced that John Marsden is the latest recipient of the Jerry Byrd Lifetime Achievement Award. Well, for those of you that aren't sure what this award is all about, Lorene Ruymar has done a little research to clear things up. Here's Lorene:]

For several years now I've heard that someone was given a "Jerry Byrd Lifetime Achievement Award" but I didn't know what it was about. I asked Jerry but he just grinned and said he really didn't know either! I got the hint that there really is a story to tell, so I asked Scotty.

Scotty says that it actually is an award given by Jerry although Scotty helps with the logistics of it – producing the plaque and having it presented in person if at all possible.

So you could say there's a link to the Steel Guitar Hall of Fame. The first award was given in 1996 and it's an annual event. The wording on the plaque is: "The Steel Guitar Hall Of Fame, Inc. presents the Jerry Byrd Lifetime Achievement Award. Presented to: [Name of the Recipient]"

for your lifetime support and tremendous contribution to the most fascinating instrument in the world, the Steel Guitar. Presented [Date] signed by Jerry Byrd." The bottom line reads: "The Steel Guitar Hall Of Fame, Inc. Saint Louis, Missouri."

Here's the list of those who have been honored:

- 1996 – Elmer Ridenhour
- 1997 – Leonard T. Zinn
- 1998 – Bill Sevesi (New Zealand)
- 1999 – Jess Hurt
- 2000 – DeWitt Scott, Sr.
- 2001 – Kenny Kitching (Australia)
- 2002 – Bill Stafford
- 2003 – John Marsden (England)

Congratulations to all these fine people! And thank you, Jerry, for showing appreciation on behalf of all of us. ■

Please send news, comments, or photos to: 45-600 Kamehameha Hwy, Kaneohe, HI 96744; Contact us at (808) 235-4742; Fax: (808) 235-9591. Mahalo!



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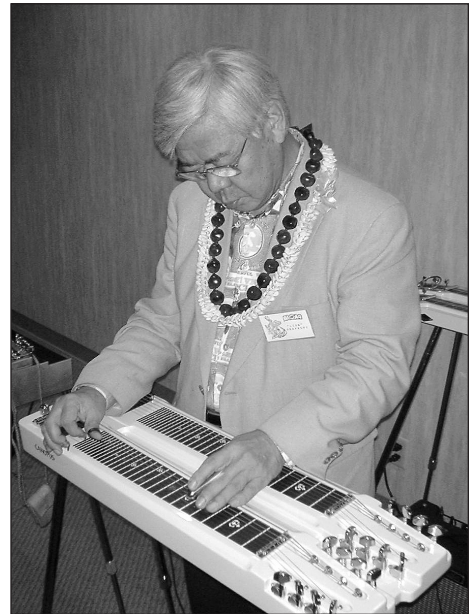
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Joliet 2003 Photos

(Clockwise from upper left) A nice shot of Lorene Ruymar playing her frypan with Kamaka Tom and Julie Waters on backup; Doug Smith treating the Joliet audience to some virtuoso roping; guest artist Hale Seabury Akaka playing it sweet at the Saturday Night Show; L.T. Zinn giving a steel guitar clinic; all the way from Tokyo, Kiyoshi "Lion" Kobayashi playing "straight" steel; Mae Lang playing her 10-string E-Harp with Virginia Grzadzinski on bass; and guitar whiz Vern Cornwall from South Bend, Indiana.



DISC 'N' DATA



Twilight In Hawaii

Al Kealoha Perry's Singing Surfriders, David Keli'i - steel guitar

"Twilight in Hawai'i" – Al Kealoha Perry's Singing Surfriders with David Keli'i on steel guitar

Review by John Ely

I got the Hawaiian "bug" back in 1987 and spent countless hours in motels rooms and tour buses listening to fourth generation cassette copies of "Hawai'i Calls" radio transcriptions and other priceless recordings HSGA members had supplied me. I kept returning to a couple of them over and over—one of them, a recording of Al Kealoha Perry with David Keli'i on backup. I had no idea what the songs were but I was mesmerized by the easy-going, free flowing, swingy sounds on that recording.

Imagine my surprise when I got a hold of Cumquat's latest release "Twilight in Hawai'i" and heard every tune on that old ragged tape, but this time free of tape defects and every note clear as a bell! Bruce Clarke has done it again.

The CD contains 17 tracks and covers a nice variety of styles and tempos. Keli'i's cool swinging touch is not to be missed on the hapa haole tune, "The Hula Oni Oni E" or the chant "Nani Wale Ka Mahina." Other hapa haole tunes include "Poki'i," "Hawaiian Cowboy," "Polynesian Love Song," and "Twilight in Hawai'i." Some of the mele included

on the CD are "Kalaniana'ole," "Lanakila," "Pau Hau O Maleka," "Pele," and "Kalākaua," all nicely arranged vocally and instrumentally. Hilo Hattie is the featured vocal on a few tracks, including a beautiful rendition of "Manuela Boy."

One of the enigmatic elements of David's style is his way of playing backup behind a singer. He has an instinct for counter-melody and percussive little chord punctuations that, by all rights, should get in the way of the singer—but it doesn't! It's almost like he supplies a second voice that offsets and adds interest to the singer's line. Examples abound in this CD.

Great job, Bruce. From the liner notes, it looks like two more CDs in this series are coming out soon. Bring 'em on!!



Tropical Heatwave

A historic survey of the heatwave that put Hawaiian Steel Guitar on the map!
featuring, on steel guitar—
David Kaili, Pale K. Lua, Freddie Pilipo, Sol Bright, Eddy Bush and Bob Knight.

"Tropical Heatwave" – Featured Steel Guitarists : David Kaili, Pale K. Lua, Freddie Pilipo (Phillips), Sol Bright, Eddy Bush, and Bob Knight

Review by John Ely

Cumquat's new release, "Tropical Heatwave" traces the evolution of steel guitar from the early acoustic steel recordings, to the blending of acoustic steel sounds with Big Band rhythm and harmony, through the transition to electric steel guitar in pre-war Hawaiian dance bands. The sound

quality is just what you'd expect from a Cumquat release, and as you listen to this recording you can feel the 'heat-wave' building as the traditional march-style recordings give way to the flash and sophistication of a bigger, more modern sound.

The early period is demonstrated by classic versions of "Hawaiian Hotel March," "Kohala March," and "Honolulu Stomp" by David and Queenie Kaili, David Kaili (rhythm) and Pale K. Lua (steel), and the Freddie Pilipo, respectively.

Twelve tracks by Sol K. Bright's Hollywaiians show the transition to a more mainstream sound, including the title track "Tropical Heatwave," "Malihini Mele," "Tomi Tomi," "He Ono," "Akaka Falls," a rousing "Tahiti Nui," and, of course, "Hawaiian Cowboy." Sol plays some interesting stuff on acoustic steel and the group provides some interesting twists on standard tunes and nice arrangements of tunes you may not be familiar with, such as "Oi Oi E," "La Rosita," and "Rena Awapuhi."

On the modern side, "Ulili E" and "Makalapua" feature trumpeter Mannie Klein with Eddy Bush on electric steel, and provide good examples of full-on big band arrangements, four-part vocal harmony, and even a 12-bar blues section, unusual for any Hawaiian recording.

This CD, first of a two-volume series, will be a nice addition to your collection with a variety of steel guitar styles from different periods, interesting vocal performances, and more of that Cumquat restoration magic. ■

Moving?

If you are moving, please keep us informed for uninterrupted delivery of your Quarterly. Contact us at: 45-600 Kamehameha Hwy, Kaneohe, HI 96744; Telephone: (808) 235-4742.

Halekulani Mainstay Kamahale Retires



Any HSGA member who has made the trip to Honolulu along with the “mandatory” visits to the Halekulani Hotel’s ‘House Without a Key’, knows Sonny Kamahale as a fixture of the Waikiki music scene. Alas, all good things must come to an end, and after 20 years Sonny has stepped down. Thanks for the great times, Sonny, and we hope to continue to see you around Waikiki hotspots! Thanks to Mike Kelly of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin for permission to reprint the following article by John Berger, which ran last August.

A glorious era in Hawaiian music ends [on August 26, 2003] when Sonny Kamahale performs for the last time as a member of the Hawaiian trio that’s been a fixture at the Halekulani Hotel’s open-air House Without a Key restaurant.

“I was going to retire sometime, but not this soon,” Kamahale said Saturday afternoon as he reflected on his career.

Kamahale turns 82 Thursday, and is [one week shy of a full 20-year run at the hotel]. He’ll go out as he came in, playing the traditional Hawaiian and *hapa-haole* songs he grew up with in the decades before statehood.

“When I went to the Halekulani Hotel to try for the job, which was in 1983, September 3, I said to myself that I’d play the same stuff that we always played when I was younger, and we took it from there. We played Hawaiian music and we stayed like that. We never changed the music,

and we never changed the style of our uniforms.”

Kamahale’s immaculate all-white uniforms—a traditional look for musicians during the territorial era—became the standard at the Halekulani, and the hotel became an oasis of traditional Hawaiian and *hapa-haole* music even as other hotels experimented with video game rooms and karaoke. Kamahale and kindred spirits played an important part in making traditional music accessible for visitors and *kama’aina*.

Kamahale tried a few other jobs over the years, but whenever he had to choose between music and doing something else, the music won, providing “enough income for me.”

By any measure, Sonny Kamahale has had a tremendous career. He was born Solomon Kamahale Jr., in Honolulu on August 28, 1921, and was barely 8 when he became the performing “mascot” of the Honolulu Police Glee Club. Even at that age he knew he wanted to be a professional musician like his father.

He wore a kid-size police uniform, and recalls his work with the glee club as “good discipline training.”

Kamahale and the others would go out on a tugboat to serenade arriving passenger liners. One of his most memorable youthful performances was greeting President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

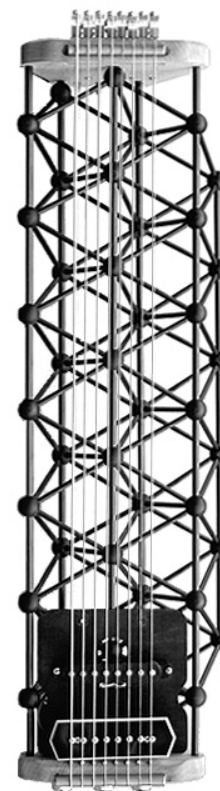
Kamahale moved to the mainland after World War II and spent almost a decade playing Hawaiian music in Hollywood; he worked with Sam Koki at the Seven Seas, played in Henry Owens’ orchestra on television, and appeared in movies.

He sang (falsetto and lower register), danced hula and played several instruments, including guitar, ‘ukulele and steel guitar.

Like many other Hawaiian musicians of his generation, Kamahale

Continued on Page 20

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— Bobby Ingano —

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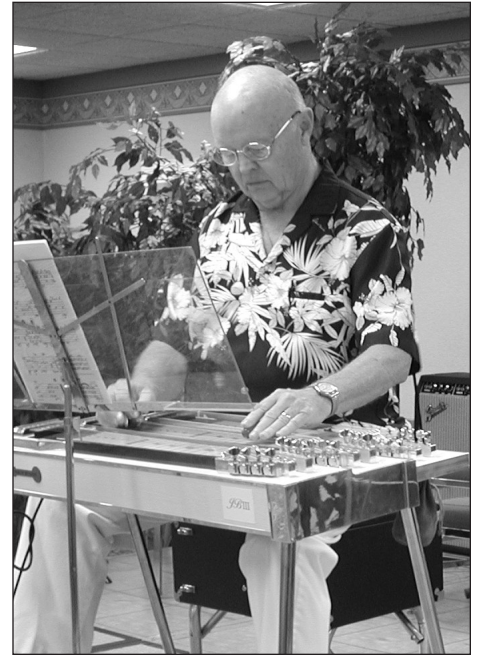
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Phil Bender from North Vernon, Indiana



'MAINSTAY KAMAHELE RETIRES' Continued from Page 19

acquired most of his early training by watching and listening to older musicians, but he also learned to read music “in a hurry” after Owens told him that his job with the orchestra depended on his ability to work with charts.

“That’s why, when I came home (in 1956), I was able to work in different areas.”

Kamahele joined Alfred Apaka’s all-star backing band at Kaiser’s Hawaiian Village, then went on to lead his own group at the Royal while helping to book musicians at other venues. He was part of the “Hawaii Calls” family until the show sputtered out in 1974.

Some of his best times as a musician were spent working with Benny Kalama backing Apaka and on “Hawaii Calls.” Kalama and Kamahele earned Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Hawai’i Academy of Recording Arts in 1993 and 1996, respectively. Their final gig together was at the Halekulani and lasted until 1998, when Kalama retired; he died the following year.

“I’ve worked with so many musicians, and the funny thing is, they’re all gone. All of the people I worked with, men and women, unbelievable, they’re all gone.” After he takes his final bow, Kamahele plans to “take it easy and just live the rest of my life,” he says. ■

(top left) Board member and hula instructor, Joanne Hanawahine, from Las Vegas treats the Joliet audience to some smooth hula. (bottom left) A great shot of Board member Julie Waters, and standard guitar and Hawaiian steel guitar ace Ian Ufton on the Joliet stage.