

HUI LIMA KOKUA HAWAII CUB NEWSLETTER

JULY 2021

HAPPY 4TH OF JULY (HAUOLI LA 'EHA O IULAI)

This month we are featuring an amazing, unbelievable man who is so unassuming, I was surprised by all his accomplishments. Enjoy reading his story.

Aloha from an associate member, Al Beridon

It will be a pleasure to share with you my experiences on the mainland and the Hawaiian Isles. I grew up in Canoga Park, CA, without a father who died of cancer when I was four years old. I was raised by my mother and grandmother. I was always involved in many activities, e. g. Little League, Cub/Boy Scouts and accordion. I really enjoyed scouting the most because of the fellowship of the boys and the men who helped take the place of my father. I had a difficult time swimming and getting my merit badge which was required for the Eagle Scout Award. Eventually I learned to swim, got the merit badge, life-saving badge and the Eagle Scout Award.

I graduated from Canoga Park High School in 1960 and was an average student and part of the gymnastics team.

Upon graduation I went on a vacation to Hawaii with my mom and another scouting family. We stayed at the Hilton Hawaiian Village where my friend and I spent most of our time in the lagoon. The Hawaiian bug had bitten me, and we had the best times of our lives. In 1961 I attended Pierce College for two years and was involved in gymnastics. I continued gymnastics while attending San Fernando Valley State College (now known as Cal State U, Northridge).

In the summer of '61, I was asked to become a counselor at Central YMCA in Honolulu, HI. I was just a kid and my big dilemma was to leave the Boy Scouts to join the YMCA? I asked a gymnastics friend, Mark, if I was making the right move, and the next thing I knew, we were on our way to Oahu, Mark, to Hawaiian Lawn Sprinklers, and I to the YMCA. We lived at the Central YMCA and met many friends, one of whom was Napoleon who owned a surfboard rental shop. We surfed most hours after work. We also met a gentleman named Mr. Steven Cook who invited us to spend a weekend on Molokai where his family owned property. We went deer hunting in a jeep, but never hit a deer.

Working at the Y was a great experience being with the boys and teaching them new skills. We had many day trips to Aiea Park, Makapuu Beach and a one week trip to Camp Erdman. This camp was on the other end of Oahu from Central YMCA. Another camp counselor Paul Okamoto and I got permission to hike to Camp Erdman instead of taking the bus with the campers. We got started Friday evening, later than we had originally planned, and wound up in the pineapple fields which was infested with mosquitoes. We couldn't sleep that night and ended up sleeping on the deck of a little country store near Camp Erdman where the bus load of campers found us. We had a wonderful week with the boys. After the YMCA summer job, I went back to CA. And in '62 I returned to HI without Mark and took his job at Hawaiian Lawn Sprinklers for \$1.25/hr., \$.25 more than minimum wage. On July 8, 1962, I experienced the most spectacular event which was the atomic bomb test above Johnston Island which is located 516 miles from Hawaii. At 11 p.m. "the bomb flashed with instantaneous daytime brilliance in Honolulu's southwest sky." The first flash was followed by a greenish color, then a pink which deepened into rose and then a deep red.

In 1965 I joined the U. S. Naval Air Reserves which sent me to Memphis, TN, for basic training and advanced training with jet engines. I was on active duty in Los Alamitos, CA; Seattle, WA; San Diego, CA and Barber's Point, HI. We flew many flights over the Islands and I took many aerial photos and dropped dummy bombs on Kahoolawe. I went to work for Western Airlines in 1966 and ended up working as an accountant for the In-flight Services Department.

I got married to Rhonda Schnitter in November 1967 and we had a son Trevor in 1972.

In 1969 we attended an Interline party hosted by several airlines. We won a one week trip to Oahu at the Hilton Hawaiian Village where I had stayed after graduating from high school. This time we were treated like royalty. I left Western Airlines in 1973, as they were merging with Delta Airlines. My choice was to stay in CA or move to Atlanta, GA.

In 1975 my wife and I opened a picture frame business in Ventura and owned "Frame Works" for 14 years.

For fun and recreation, I have been singing in choirs since 1980 and have continued until Covid hit. In 1989 I started perfecting my tennis game and joined the Ventura Tennis Club. I still play tennis but less competitively. In 2017 I played tennis on Oahu at the Diamond Head courts with a Vietnam Marine fighter pilot Ed Schroder while Rhonda and I were on our way to New Zealand on Crystal Cruise.

In 1991 I began cycling and have ridden three charity 500 mile rides and 13 Mexico 50 mile specials, and have since retired from cycling.

I started playing the ukulele about five years ago at Java Joe's and bought my first uke from Bill Brown. I began stamp collecting with the Ventura Philatelic Club in 2018 and enjoy every minute of it.

As my love for Hawaii and its people grow, I love being a member of Hui Lima Kokua.

Many Mahalos and Aloha,

Al