

(8) The 1970's: New Era, Same God

The 1970's saw what one might call the end of the old Aiea and the start of modern Aiea. Sugar production was down to simple refinement in the Aiea Mill. Any harvested cane was probably taken into Waipahu. Sugar land had become more dominated with homes. The day of the large development had begun. With the Honolulu skyline developing, into the Aiea region came high-rise condos and apartments, Aloha Stadium, Pearl Ridge Center (phase one), and the super markets. Sugar irrigation reservoirs were defunct and filled in, or part of water hazards on golf courses. With the American folk music era dying, Aiea was a classic example of the song line "they paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

Improvements in audio technology brought new trends not only nationally, but to the music of the SDA church in general and the Aiea church specifically. With music recordings readily available in LP's, cassettes, or 8-tracks, the musical tradition of Aiea took a turn with the times in Adventism, as local groups resembled such ground-breaking groups as The Wedgwood (a group that brought the guitar into the SDA church against early opposition) and the Heritage Singers (who developed the use of PA into Adventist music). The music of Jeff Wood and Take Three became youth favorites even in Aiea.

Yet as the world was finding a growing market with "acid rock" and the disco age, Dr. Bennett Lau was leading Aiea into what might be called the Age of the Aiea Choir. Though Aiea always had a choir of sorts, what Dr. Lau started in the later 70's would take on a whole new horizon. What the Pathfinder program was to Aiea in the 50's and 60's, the Aiea Choir became the equivalent in the 80's and 90's. More will be explained in the next chapter; but as "pathfinding" began to live out its golden age as the 70's came to a close (though Aiea still had strong clubs under Mr. Leong Ko), the choir took over as the showcase of excellence for the Spirit's gifting of lives in Aiea.

Even though the church's ministry of music came to the forefront, the church's ministry to children continued. With a flair seemingly out of the hippie era, the Aiea youth department influenced a new breed of young urban professionals. Pastors Lyle Arakaki and Bob Michaelson, Drs. Gary Kerstetter, Annette Nitta, and Gary Young, Doctor of Music Cheryl Villegas, and nurses Dexter Emoto and Juliana Moniz all went through Aiea's youth division in the 70's. The Aiea youth division of the 70's was led by Craig Klatt, one who seemed so comfortable talking with converted hippies and who later became a pastor, Marshall Anders, one who seemed to have come out of the hippie era himself but who spoke with the wisdom of a *kupuna*, and Leslie del Prado, a math instructor for HMA and the Kamehameha Schools whose genius challenged everyone to rethink their faith. The continuing ministry to young people caused Leslie del Prado himself to see Aiea as a place of "young people" and people whose thinking was "young at heart."

The 70's included pastors James Finn, Jr. (who started in the late 60's), Richard Among, Frank Michaelson, Lloyd Herr, and Jim Pimentel. At times church attendance was so

great that talk of holding two services was entertained. And even though the media age had begun and the mini-skirt and leisure suit came and went, Aiea hung on to its ministry to children and its long tradition of outstanding music. In fact, the dawn of a new musical age had begun in the Aiea Choir.

The cane fields were now shopping malls and subdivisions. Where the feet of the plantation workers had trodden lay the offices, drive-ins and businesses. The irrigation ditches where the kids used to play were either gone, dredged into canals, or aesthetic touches to developments. A second generation was heading off to college or to the work world. Yet the Aiea church found new members, the Puuiki campout, and a new use for the improvements in audio technology with its choir.

That the church continued to flourish was not a stroke of luck or genius. The Spirit of God would find leaders who lived in the times and in the moment. Christian education would affect some, and the song of the cane fields and the under house church would take on the genre of 70's Adventism. Perhaps on a given sabbath in the 70's one could find guitar accompaniment and the recorder obligato of Leslie del Prado backing singers such as Juliana Moniz or Joanne Michaelson in a song with these words:

When I'm all alone
And I can't find my shadow
Jesus comes to comfort me
And love me
Always love me

All my life
I will be
By Your side eternally
And so we walk together
Side by side we three
That is how you'll find us now
Jesus, the Spirit, and me
Jesus, the Spirit, and me