

Entwined and dependent, in a good way

**The Hawaiians:
Reflecting Spirit**

Produced and directed by Edgy Lee
Distributed by FilmWorks Pacific, 2005
DVD, 58 minutes, \$26.95

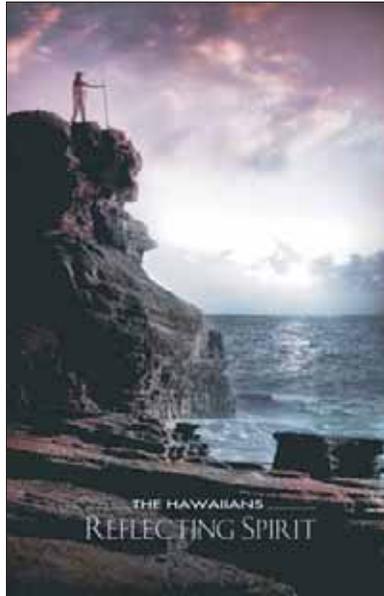
By Josephine Bridges
The Asian Reporter

The *Hawaiians: Reflecting Spirit* packs a staggering amount of information into less than an hour, beginning with the birth of the Hawaiian islands from both a spiritual and a geological perspective. In a Hawaiian creation story related here, nature is “the elder brother of mankind.” Not only are humanity and nature inextricably connected, “the land is chief, man is her servant.”

Against the background of stunning photographs of molten lava amid breaking waves, the geological story of Hawaii’s beginnings unfolds. Hawaii is not only one of the world’s largest mountain ranges, “with most of its mass hidden under water,” it is also “one of the most isolated places on earth.”

It took millions of years for plants, animals, and humans to populate the bare rock that was Hawaii’s original landscape, but it took only two centuries to make this idyllic locale “the endangered species capital of the world.” In 1778, with the arrival of Captain James Cook, the westernization of Hawaii began. This brought such advantages as a written language — within 20 years of its inception, Hawaii had attained the highest literacy rate in the world — and such disadvantages as smallpox, cholera, venereal disease, and typhoid to a people who had never suffered so much as the common cold. Ninety percent of Hawaii’s population perished from these diseases.

As if the few remaining native Hawaiians didn’t have troubles enough, by the mid-1800s foreign business interests and governments pressured Hawaii’s king to treat the land not as an elder to be respected, but as a commodity to be divided, bought, and sold. In 1893, with the nation of Hawaii deeply in debt, the queen was deposed in an illegal coup. Five years later the islands were annexed to the United States. Grover Cleveland,



BIG ISLAND. *The Hawaiians: Reflecting Spirit* airs on Oregon Public Broadcasting on May 17 at 11:00pm. (Photo courtesy of FilmWorks Pacific)

who had ordered an investigation into U.S. participation in the coup and opposed the annexation during his presidency, wrote, “As I look back upon the first steps in this miserable business, and as I contemplate the means used to complete this outrage, I am ashamed of the whole affair.” Twenty years later, 42 percent of the entire native population of Hawaii was living in the city of Honolulu, far from their elder brother, the land. In 1959, Hawaii became the 50th of the United States. “While masses celebrated in

the streets, many felt profound sadness.”

The final portion of *The Hawaiians: Reflecting Spirit* is a series of interviews with Hawaiians who are trying to nudge their future in the direction of their distant past, rather than their recent past. Inspired by the U.S. civil rights movement, within a decade of Hawaii’s statehood, Hawaiians began to explore their own heritage.

Nainoa Thompson is Hawaii’s first celestial navigator of modern times. Exploring the Pacific as his ancestors did in a large seafaring double-hulled canoe, he maintains, “Our culture wasn’t lost, it wasn’t dead, it was sleeping.”

Hawaiian healer Alapai Kahuena learned about the medicinal properties of plants from her grandmother and one of the islands’ most respected healers. She shares her knowledge freely, including some concepts unfamiliar to Westerners, such as, “You have to have faith that the medicine will work.”

The first Hawaiian to receive a Ph.D. in science, Dr. Isabella Abbott is a professor of botany and ethnobotany at the University of Hawaii. “A scientist and a Hawaiian, her life and career have proven one can embody both modes of thinking — intuitive and empirical.”

John Kaina, a farmer, speaks with eloquent simplicity: “Take care of the land. That’s where we all came from and that’s where we’re all going.” Wilma Holii’s family has been making salt since the 1700s. “Despite intrusive government interference wanting to regulate the making of salt and others who are disrespectful of the culture,” she says, her voice quavering with passion, “despite all odds, we continue.”

Composer and musician Keri Kealii Reichel, “who brought Hawaiian music, dance, and chant into the mainstream of world music,” is respected both internationally and at home in Hawaii. His complex and compelling rhythms play in the background as he contends, “It is never a question of whether I can make my Hawaiian-ness fit into my career, it’s making my career and whatever else I do in my life fit my Hawaiian-ness.”

Senator Daniel Akaka has represented Hawaii in the U.S. Senate since 1990. His parents, who grew up during Hawaii’s monarchy, believed that their children should learn English and become Westerners, but when he began to raise his own children, Daniel Akaka “felt strongly that my family should be more Hawaiian than I was.”

There’s a fascinating look at Niihau, also known as the Forbidden Island, which is privately owned and inhabited by native Hawaiians “who speak the dialect their ancestors spoke centuries ago.” Kupuna Kahala Kanahele, a Niihau elder, tells her own life story with the same grace and dignity usually reserved for a society’s most revered chronicles, beginning and ending with the same sad words.

But *The Hawaiians: Reflecting Spirit* ends on a happy note. Against the backdrop of the ocean and the faces of Hawaiian elders, the narrator reiterates the goals of native Hawaiians — to sustain an identity, determine a future, self-govern, share the wisdom of the ancestors, and lead the world in the spirit of Aloha — and concludes, “From the creation myths of Hawaii, we have always known we are entwined and dependent on the beauty and abundance of nature.”

The Hawaiians: Reflecting Spirit is scheduled to air on Oregon Public Broadcasting at 11:00pm on Wednesday, May 17. For more information, call (503) 293-1982 or visit <www.opb.org>.

Tours highlight areas in Oregon and Portland’s Chinatown

“Chinese in Eastern Oregon” tour

History buffs will have a chance to explore Chinese-American landmarks and history in beautiful eastern Oregon this summer as the Northwest China Council presents its “Chinese in Eastern Oregon” tour. The two-and-one-half day tour by chartered bus will leave Portland at 10:00am on June 16 and return around 8:00pm on June 18.

Among the planned attractions are the Thomas Condon Paleontology Center at the John Day Fossil Beds, the Kam Wah Chung & Co. Museum in John Day, the Ah Hee Diggings and Chinese Wall in the Wallawa-Whitman National Forest near Granite, the Pendleton Underground Tour in Pendleton, and the Chinese

Cemetery, Old Town city center, and Oregon Trail Museum in Baker City.

The price includes transportation, double-occupancy lodging, and site admission fees, but meals are not included. The reservation deadline is May 15. To learn more, or to register, call (503) 973-5451 or visit <www.nwchina.org>.

“Asian Roots” walking tour

On May 7, businesses in Portland’s Old Town Chinatown neighborhood will distribute itineraries for a self-guided walking tour highlighting the area’s Asian heritage. The yellow tour cards can be picked up at Saturday Market, the Portland Classical Chinese Garden, Union Station, and other cooperating businesses.

The previous day, May 6, is

Honoree Day at the Chinese Garden, when seniors age 70 and above are admitted to the Garden free to enjoy the spring blossoms. Events include demonstrations and special performances by seniors from the Asian Health and Service Center. Grandparents, parents, and all family members are invited to enjoy the beauty of the garden, which will be open from 9:00am to 6:00pm.

Other “Asian Roots” tour events include a demonstration of Asian kite-making for kids at Saturday Market, presented by the Radio Disney crew.

For information on Honoree Day at the Chinese Garden, call (503) 228-8131 or visit <www.portlandchinese garden.org>.

健 Honoring Chinese Culture and Heritage
OCOM ACUPUNCTURE & HERBAL CLINIC
acupuncture, herbs, and massage

Call for an appointment: 503-253-3443 x550

Access to Affordable Health Insurance
Any Doctor or Hospital, Dental*, Vision*, Life, Disability*

James Boscole
(503) 625-7650
(971) 226-0034
your_security@hevanet.com



Association membership is required. Underwritten by The Mega Life & Health Insurance Company. Home Office: OMC, OK. *Optional benefits require additional premium. Exclusions & limitations apply (25875, 25417 or your state’s variation. M000727 Exp 6/07m)

Read The Asian Reporter online!
Visit
<www.asianreporter.com>
and click on “Online Paper (PDF)” link to download this week’s issue.

Premier Mortgage Group



Tu Phan

Zero Down
FHA
VA
Purchases
Refinances
Commercial Financing

10001 SE Sunnyside Rd.
Suite 150
Clackamas, Oregon 97015
(503) 496-0531
(503) 656-4145 (fax)
<tu@PremierMtgGroup.com>

DISCOUNTS.

See me today and get the discounts and service you deserve.



Locke Insurance Agency Inc
Mariko Locke, Agent, ChFC
Portland, OR 97215
Bus: 503-231-4663
mariko.locke.cw61@statefarm.com

LIKE A GOOD NEIGHBOR, STATE FARM IS THERE.
statefarm.com

State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, State Farm Indemnity Company - Bloomington, IL