

## (9) The 1980's: The God of the Song and Videotape

By the 1980's the Aiea church would have its choir loft, and its pastor's office. By the end of the decade, Moanalua Road would be widened and the church would lose its front parking area. In the area around Aiea, the 80's would find cane fields a thing of the past, and the urban sprawl of Honolulu would reach through and past Aiea into Pearl City and almost central Oahu. Industrial areas would expand in Halawa, Pearl City, and Waimalu. Pearl Ridge would expand, and even the old Leeward Hospital would develop into Pali Momi. By the end of the 80's probably the only thing that remained of old Aiea was the Sugar Mill and the Sumida watercress farm.

The 80's would be the start of the computer age. The average consumer began to experiment with the personal computer when such relics as the Commodore 128 became affordable. The video age began, and everyone wanted to buy a betamax and eventually a VHS system. At the end of the decade CD audio was taking over and the newer generation began to laugh at the memory of the 8-track. When the camcorder came into being, one began to realize that the microchip, integrated circuit, and fiber optic cable were about to revolutionize not only Aiea, but the world.

It was in the ministry of the Aiea choir that the explosion of technology was used to the glory of God. Dr. Lau used "canned music" to accompany his choirs. And with the improvements to amplification and mixing, the Aiea choir had a sound worthy of the day and age. Many of Aiea's cantatas were captured on VHS or 8mm videotape.

Aiea's choir was more than just a musical group to be proud of. In the choir one could see a spirit-touched fusion of young and old in age, new and old in church membership, and skilled and unskilled in musical ability. It is amusing, yet sobering, how God could take a tenor that sings soprano (just kidding the late Uncle Terry), or a Filipino lady with an accent, and fuse the sound into praise and glory to the name of Jesus. The Aiea choir of the 80's and 90's would provide the avenue of service for many, and the performers it appears would be spiritually helped themselves as they sung for the Lord. After hearing a very good choir from another congregation sing at Aiea, Mr. Eric Tamura once remarked, "But no can beat the Aiea Choir."

Another very important strength of Aiea that came into focus in the 80's was a strong military presence that benefited the church. Of course, we know that two navy sailors made the first Christian contact, but military members would always contribute to Aiea. It wasn't that Aiea was located close to Pearl Harbor, Hickam, and Aliamanu that drew the military personnel, but the spirit-fed fruit of kindness, goodness and hospitality. It wasn't uncommon to see such members as Uncle Joe Hirata or Uncle Shige Kobashigawa talking to and befriending the men and women of the armed forces.

The church of the 80's recalls the contribution of Captain Fred Spruel and Chaplain Dick Stenbakken. Later Aiea would be blessed to have such men as Chaplains Torgerson, Smedley, Castanon, and Forrester. It must also be noted that several military families

have chosen to retire in Hawaii and contribute to the Aiea church. We think today of the Severins and the Lanes.

As the 80's was the age of the Aiea Choir, the one pastor who served for most of the decade, John Sharp (80-87), would be remembered as Aiea's most known "singing pastor." Pastor Sharp and his wife Muriel, were both gifted with incredible singing voices, and this really gave strength to the Aiea choir. Pastor Phil Mothersbaugh (87-90), also a musician, contributed to Aiea's musical tradition. Those who remember the choir programs of the 80's and 90's realize that the God of the cane fields inhabited the music.

The church of the 80's has been remembered by many as a friendly church. Lima and Teri Laupola remembered the "friendliness of the people" above all else on their first visit to Aiea. And Lima himself would become part of Dr. Lau's choirs and contribute to the musical ministry and youth division of Aiea. The fruit of kindness and hospitality was noted in the 80's especially as touching military personnel. Potluck as we know it reached its pinnacle in the 80's. And it has been said that seeing a visiting military family sampling chopsticks at an Aiea potluck, would sum up this spirit-fed gift of the Aiea congregation.

Though the Aiea of the past was no longer recognizable in the 80's, and the dawn of the techno age had begun, the Aiea church was still standing upon the Rock of Ages. One of the cantatas that the Aiea choir sang featured a song with the line "He remains the Cornerstone." No doubt, it was on the foundation of Christ that the Aiea church found its resolve to continue and to find a relevant identity in a modern age. The Christmas and Easter Cantatas that would be performed in Aiea and on every neighbor island, were not just showcases of talent. The gospel story and the God of the songs were lifted up. This same God of the cane fields and under house would touch singer and listener, and the Spirit would inspire and work.