



Pulse of '62



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(The Saint Louis Class of 1962)
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Beyond the Golden Years (Continued from October, 2010)

Because we live on a tiny group of islands in the middle of the sea – truly the most isolated spot on earth; there has evolved in Hawaii a wonderful blend of the three main cultures, the Asian, the Hawaiian and the Western. Many Hawaiian words have been taken into everyday spoken English. No one translates them or explains them. In the past 170 years living as one society, each has adopted the words – “`ohana”—family, “kuleana”—duty, “kokua”—help, “malama” – care for, into their own ethnic traditions. The conversations of the two following classmates reflect the views of the melding of the cultures in Hawaiian society today.

Part II

Six months later, just before summer, Larry Woode sat in the same crowded, bustling main dining room of Little Village. Right from the start, when he picked up the mu shiu pork and began talking, he seemed the perfect image of the dutiful eldest son. It was further emphasized by the very Chinese surroundings. One made a mental note of it as he



talked, “I’ve been caring for my parents since 1992. They hadn’t many assets. So we knew we could never afford to put them into a care home. Both my

parents were lifetime asthma sufferers and each had begun to develop more serious illnesses. My younger brothers and sisters tried to take care of them; but my father was especially difficult. He couldn’t handle the reversal of the roles. He was head of the family and he was in charge; and that was that. As the eldest son, I knew I had to step up.”

Larry was eating the seafood chow mein when he began to speak of his dad, “I was working for a defense contractor and living in Arizona. So the dry desert air was perfect for my parents’ asthma. The floor plan of our three-story house made it possible for my parents to have their own space. It was perfect. But my dad’s diabetes became serious. He was put on a restricted diet of 2,000 calories a day and medications. My father loved his food so he re-

belled; but I stood my ground. He developed high blood pressure and serious heart problems. I went to all his doctors’ appointments. I made myself familiar with his dietary restrictions and his medications. I made a regimen for him with his doctor. We stuck to it. But my father still couldn’t deal with the fact that



his eldest son was telling him what to do. If I told him it was time to take a bath he would fly into a tantrum and slam things around. I kept my cool. He did it. If he went out for a

ride to town with someone else, he would buy food and treats and hide them in his room and break his diet. He was like a teenager. But I stood firm. I never lost my composure; I’m glad of that now. And that’s really the only advice I can give to anyone who has to care for a parent or a loved one over a long period of time: control your emotions, never lash out, and don’t scold. When the person you are caring for is gone, you will be filled with a very great regret. Several people have told me that.”

Larry’s mom was very easy to care for however. Besides her asthma, she developed severe osteoporosis. She has had two bad falls with bad results. A bone splinter pierced her spinal column touching a nerve. Through it all she was a good patient and did as her doctors and Larry told her. Her condition still persists so she must be very careful not to fall. She also has high blood pressure and heart problems. At present she takes 26 prescription medications every day. Larry supervises this with his wife who is a nurse at Tripler.

In 2003 Larry sent his parents back to Hawaii. His brothers and sisters looked after them while Larry closed down his real estate business and put his affairs in order. He returned to Hawaii. His father died of his ailments in 2004. Larry continues to care for his mom. He is able to get away for personal time because his brothers and sisters take turns looking after her. If Larry goes on a trip with his wife, his mom’s sister stays over. “We are very lucky. Everyone is willing to help so we can get away for a little while. My mom is so agreeable to her regimen.”

Larry served as a combat arms officer in the US Army for 20 years, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in

1988. Following retirement, he worked for a while for a defense contractor and then went into real estate. He and his wife have tailored a long term care plan to suit their needs and income. They are presently paying premiums of \$177 a month. Asked if he had any other ideas on long term care, he sipped his tea; when he put down his cup he smiled, “Yes, the best thing is to live long and die quick”. We should all be so lucky.

Driving from Waikiki to Maunawili is like going to another world. At the foot of the Koʻolau range with a dramatic view of the back of Mount Olomana,



Dennis Lau’s “little spread” is just exactly that—another world. One might call it a family compound. Dennis sat on the lanai. He offered his ideas on care giving. Two massive

Rottweilers lay at his feet begging to be scratched and rubbed. From the house came the voices of women talking about the daily chores and of small children playing. And all the time the cool breeze carried the lush smell of the place and the sound of the birds across the lanai. There was that calming silence that one can find only in the country—heaven on earth.

“My father died when I was 14. I had just entered Saint Louis. There were seven of us kids and it made us very close. We bonded together to help our mom. After school, I went to work at a gas station and on the family farm. We’ve all been close throughout our lives.”

Then the conversation digressed to the beauties of Maunawili and living with children and animals running about the place. Dennis came back to the subject, “When we built this house, we designed it with our own future care in mind. The hallways, bathrooms and showers are wheelchair-accessible. When I’m old and sick I want to be here with my family around me. My daughter’s house is just across the way here and I love having the grandkids running through the place. But I also had my mom’s care in mind too. And when we came here I asked her to come and live with us. She said, ‘No, I’m not ready yet.’. You know, my father has been dead for fifty two years and my mom has been fiercely independent through all that time.”

However, in 2005 Mrs. Lau Sr. fell in her laundry room and lay there for most of the day until her worried family found her. Her hip had a hairline fracture and she was hospitalized. The whole family helped out during her recovery. But still she insisted on liv-

ing on her own. So the family took turns looking in on her. It was during this time in 2006 that Dennis started having some health problems. It was during a physical exam that an irregularity showed up in his aorta. He was on the verge of an aneurysm. He needed surgery at once. Dr. Michael Dang of Saint Louis’s Class of 1960 did the job. Dennis said, “I made a good recovery. It took me two years to get to the point where I could walk six to 8 miles a day. I was so lucky to have this place where I could walk around and be with the animals and the kids. You know, my 2 older grandchildren were with me during my recovery. That was great and highly instrumental in my recovery. My granddaughter Kylah had been accepted previously at Punahou, and grandson Damon was just accepted for kindergarten at Punahou in August. There were many applicants for limited places—they took him. I was proud at his acceptance as I was of Kylah’s previous acceptance. Yes, my family means everything to me—that’s how we are.”

But it wasn’t long after that Dennis’s mom had to be hospitalized for complications. She was at St. Francis for a period of time. This time, at age 92, she has agreed to spend a few days with each of her children so they all share in her care. During the time this article was being written, Dennis’s father-in-law passed away. His mother-in-law, 88, fell and injured her back, affecting her sciatic nerve. It was also found that she needed surgery for an abdominal disorder. She spent her recovery time with Dennis’s family and made rapid improvement. She told Dennis, “I love being here with the great grandchildren. This house is so full of love.” Both sides of the family share in the care of their mothers. Dennis said, “That’s how I want it to be for me. That’s why we built this house in the way that it is. When I pass on I want my family with me. I want my ashes to be spread at Maunawili with Tina’s when she passes on. That’s what I want.” And yet, here is a man who only wants to spend his life and all of eternity with his family, at one with Nature and close to the earth. What else is there? That is the only certainty in this very uncertain world.

Shortly before his death in 1774 Louis XV of France uncaringly said, “Après moi, le déluge.” – “After me, the flood.” It was exactly fifteen years from his death until the French Revolution. In the workings of the government fifteen years is but the blink of an eye. We cannot be so uncaring as to leave to our children and their children and so on, and so on, to clean up after the flood.