

# Farewell

*It's aloha to Don Ho as thousands of friends, family and tourists gather at Waikiki to say goodbye*



HUGH GENTRY / SPECIAL TO THE STAR-BULLETIN

“Father, we thank you for this man. And on the beautiful, beautiful ocean in Waikiki ... the place he loved so much, we commit him back unto you, Father.”

**The Rev. Tom Iannucci**

*Delivering the eulogy as Don Ho's ashes were dropped in the ocean off Waikiki Beach*

**Haumea Hebenstreit Ho, widow of Don Ho, held the urn containing Ho's ashes before they were scattered at sea during yesterday's ceremonies in Waikiki.**

**The Memorial Service**

It was short, simple and to the point, just the way Don Ho would have liked it, so they could get to the entertainment.

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**The Crowd**

About 10,000 friends and fans gather at Waikiki to say goodbye to Hawaii's most famous entertainer.

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**The Entertainment**

The music flowed nonstop as many of Hawaii's most popular singers came out to pay tribute to Don.

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Family, friends and well-wishers paddled outrigger canoes, rode boats, surfed and even swam as Don Ho's were carried from shore to be scattered in the sea yesterday.

THE MEMORIAL SERVICE

# Standing ovation for the last encore

BY BURL BURLINGAME



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Hoku Ho, Do Ho's daughter, hugged Ho's widow, Haumea, at yesterday's memorial service, held beachside at the Sheraton Waikiki.

PERHAPS only in the entertainment business can a private memorial service be held on a public beach and broadcast over the airwaves, but then Donald Tai Loy Ho was perhaps the best-known Hawaiian of all time. His passing affected all of Hawaii, the epicenter of an emotional tsunami radiating out around the world.

A few hundred friends and family attended the semiprivate service for Ho, the chablis-voiced entertainer who created the modern, sophisticated image of Hawaiian entertainment, and in the process, helped Waikiki grow up. About a thousand more fans waited on the beach to bid aloha to Ho's ashes, scattered at sea — beyond the reef — by a fleet of outrigger canoes.

During the brief service, atop the Sheraton hotel's beachside hula platform and sandwiched between a Japanese wedding party and tourist kids cannonballing into the hotel pool, Ho's daughters and friends sang acoustic worship songs. Pastor Tom Iannucci offered a memorial prayer and reminiscence, and revealed that, as a former Marine serving in North Africa, he learned that Ho's music was a common feature at embassy "luaus."

"The world is a better place because of the gift he brought forth — that's aloha," summarized Iannucci. "Don Ho is not dead; he's just changed locations."

John Tilton of Tihati Productions said the event symbolized the "Sheraton and Hilton hotels coming together." Ho, at one time or another, was a featured performer in each of the chains. The Hilton Hawaiian Village Guards, dressed in red uniforms, trooped by to

pay respects, as did several dozen Hilton employees who crafted a 76-foot lei to drape over the canoe bearing Ho's ashes.

Another lei wasn't nearly as large, but it was made with love undiminished. Helen Hong, an old friend of Ho's for more than 40 years, made a new lei for him every day to wear at his shows. "Now I've made my last lei for Don," she said, eyes damp. "He was so nice, so down to earth. He had me bring him a new lei every night, and said he was proud to wear it. The last one I made ... it must have been for his birthday last August. Now this really is the last one. ..."

Daughter Laurie Hong, one of the paddlers in the canoe fleet, delivered the pikake lei.

"HE WAS a tremendous representative of the people of Hawaii," said Beulah Brown of Kailua. "Recognized worldwide as a symbol of aloha — you know, beyond the usual show-biz schtick."

Jim Roach, a record producer working on daughter Hoku Ho's next album, said that Ho "was really a kind man, a straight-up kind of guy. And an amazing golfer! I got to play golf with him, as well as a little bit of music."

"I was just a girl working as a cocktail waitress in Waikiki," recalled Barbara Saromines, an art professor. "It was 1967. Palani Vaughan was the doorman. An hour after he introduced me to the owner, I had a tray in my hand, serving drinks. I couldn't understand what anyone was saying. Don Ho took me aside, said that Hawaiians throw a pile of \$20 bills in the middle of the table, and just keep bringing Primo until all the 20s

"He had me bring him a new lei every night, and said he was proud to wear it. The last one I made ... it must have been for his birthday last August. Now this really is the last one ..."

**Helen Hong,**  
*Made Don Ho's for all of his shows*

were gone. It wasn't much, but helped me keep my job."

U.S. Rep. Neil Abercrombie was subdued. "He told me once that the bigger you get, the smaller you need to be. That's advice I've tried to follow all my life, but it's difficult. The only other guy in Ho's league was Gabby Pahinui. Real gentlemen."

THERE WAS a shattering volley from the Air Force honor guard, a 21-gun salute.

And then family members, led by an emotionally staggered Haumea Ho, his widow, marched in procession onto the beach, carrying Ho's ashes in ti-leaf wrappings, flanked by conch blowers who had difficulty finding breath, ranked by citizens of the vast pool of humanity whom Ho befriended, many of them weeping, all respectful, making way for the family walking heavily in the damp sand, and then, one paddle, two paddle, setting to sea under a lowering sky to make Donald Tai Loy Ho one with the ocean he loved.



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A homemade sign expressed a final message of aloha to Don Ho as the services moved offshore while a Honolulu Fire Department fireboat shot streams of water, creating a rainbow. Below, after the service, Leighton Tseu, left, and Ed Enos took the flowers from the lei that draped the pilot boat.



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To the trumpeting of conch shells, Don Ho's family walked across the sand toward the waiting canoes. Although the memorial service was private, hundreds lined the beach to watch the final procession.

THE MEMORIAL SERVICE

# 'The ceremony was fitting for the man that he is.'

Lei Richmond | She flew in from Los Angeles to attend yesterday's service



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A member of the Hickam Air Force Base Honor Guard presented the American flag to Haumea Ho, Don Ho's widow, during the late-afternoon ceremony. Thousands came to pay their respects and say goodbye to Ho, who had popularized Hawaii with such hits as "Tiny Bubbles" and "I'll Remember You." Ho was an Air Force command pilot before becoming a famed entertainer.



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Haumea Ho, in the orange muumuu, led the procession toward waiting canoes. Ho's ashes were scattered by family members into the ocean shortly before sunset, as an F-15 of the Hawaii Air National Guard honored him with a flyover.



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Don Ho's family and close friends boarded outrigger canoes yesterday at Waikiki Beach. Thousands of well-wishers lined the sand to watch the ceremony, which was held beachside at the Sheraton Waikiki and Royal Hawaiian hotels.



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Family, friends and well-wishers paddled outrigger canoes, rode boats, surfed and even swam offshore to watch Ho's ashes scattered at sea. Here, a paddle was raised in salute as others silently watched during the ceremony.



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Hawaii residents and tourists alike gathered to remember Don Ho and the Waikiki entertainer's influence on their lives.



A crowd estimated at 10,000 gathered at Queen's Surf, stretching out along the Kapahulu groin to watch an evening memorial concert celebrating Don Ho's legacy.

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## THE CROWD

# 'He brought a lot of smiles, a lot of warmth, a lot of aloha'

BY ROBERT SHIKINA

THE SANDS of Waikiki were covered with people — young and old — who came to say aloha to Don Ho. As they have for decades, fans of different generations brought flowers and reminisced about the late entertainer's earlier years.

"I remember my mom would swoon every time she heard him sing. My dad would get so mad," said Rick Williams, of Visalia, Calif., who was wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with Ho's unforgettable smile. "Hawaii was two things back then: Don Ho and Pearl Harbor."

Fans converged on every open spot of sand in Waikiki. Waves gently rolled in as Ho's playful music could be heard coming from several outdoor bars.

Children played in the water while their parents listened to the music on stage.

Honolulu Police Maj. Randy Macadangdang estimated the crowd at the memorial celebration concert at about 10,000 people.

Macadangdang said it was a peaceful and orderly event. About 15 regular beat officers were joined by 30 additional officers to maintain security. "We're celebrating Don Ho's legacy. He deserves everything he's got. You can see the offering of love with everybody showing up," said Macadangdang. "We haven't had any problems."

TALAI PUNIVAL brought his mother-in-law from Oregon. The Nuanu resident called it "amazing." "It's the greatest idea," he said. "Just by being here when his ashes were scattered. It was touching."

"The timing is really good. It feels like being home again. It reminds me of all the things I went through when I was younger," said Joe Salvador, 50, of Olympia, Wash.

Rosemary Kent was sitting with her son under a palm tree eating ice cream during the show.

"He brought a lot of smiles, a lot of warmth and a lot of aloha," she said.

"I'm just here because he did so much for Hawaii and to pay tribute to the man that he was," said Cherie Kawamoto of Milliani. "He introduced Hawaii to a lot of people on the Mainland. He's such a great man. People think of him as an entertainer. He was a lot more."

"We want to celebrate him. He's an icon of Hawaii, just like the Duke" (Kahanamoku) said Carole Lilleberg of Hawaii Kai.

"He just made everyone feel very welcomed. He didn't stand out like an arrogant individual. He just wanted to be like the people and entertain them. He connected with the people."

Enos Thomson and the Kaala Boys were per-



Honolulu resident Sue Anne Haskins, right, blew bubbles during the memorial service. Haskins' mother, Sally Freitas, knew Ho for 52 years and worked with him for 35.

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forming at Duke's during the memorial service in front of the Sheraton Waikiki. They offered an instrumental of "I Remember You" as the canoes paddled out.

"For me as a musician, to be playing at this historical ceremony, it just happens for a reason. It's a calling. It's like passing a torch. We carry on that legacy," Thomson said.

Hundreds of people crowded on the beach just before sunset to see the canoes depart to spread Ho's ashes. Many filmed the event and said they

were happy to be part of it.

"It was a nice send-off. It was a beautiful ceremony," said Tom Schmidt.

"It was beautiful," echoed Bill Daehler. "We don't have this in Park City, Utah. "With the surroundings and the sunset, it was just gorgeous." He added that he would be proud to tell his friends that he was at the memorial service for Don Ho.

Connie Algothah flew in Thursday from Buckeye, Ariz., just to attend the memorial. She ar-

rived at the balmy beach eight hours before the 6 p.m. tribute, to stake out a front-sand seat.

Algothah, 43, said she'd had a huge crush on Ho and used to skip school as a teenager in Oklahoma to watch "The Don Ho Show."

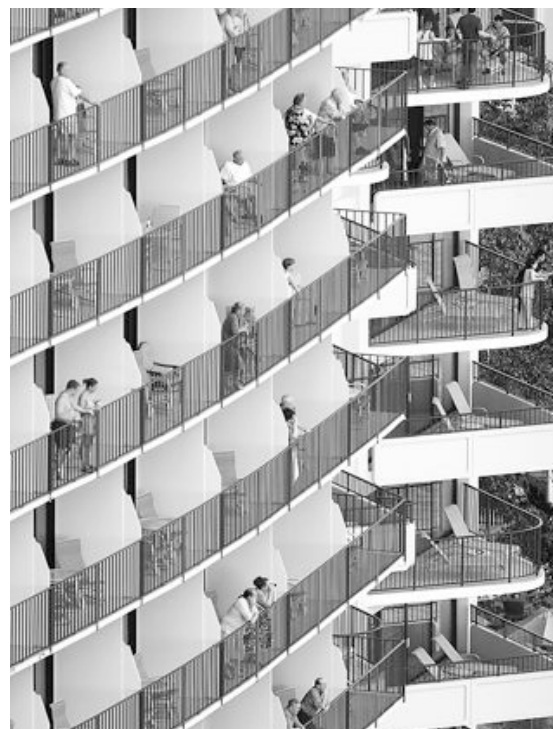
"We were extremely poor in this little rundown apartment. He was my escape into something beautiful," she said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.



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Zeelon Zeden, above, and other employees of the Hilton Hawaiian Village, made a 76-foot lei to memorialize Ho's 76 years of life. Zeden worked with Ho at the Hilton Dome and recalled how a "tremendous amount of love would come from him." At right, Sheraton Waikiki hotel guests stood on their lanais to watch the canoes paddle to sea with Ho's ashes.



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Every patch of sand was covered in front of the screen normally used for Sunset on the Beach films — but on this night, it was a concert for Don Ho.

## THE MUSICAL CELEBRATION

# Chorus of voices joins to sing his praises

BY GARY C.W. CHUN

LAST NIGHT'S memorial concert to Don Ho couldn't have begun better. As Pili Smith of the Royal Hawaiian Band finished an oli (chant) calling all of the islands to stand together and honor Ho, a jet flew along the horizon, then went into a steep climb, ascending to the heavens.

The evening progressed on Waikiki Beach in a manner well suited to the memory of an entertainer known for his laid-back personality — and who operated free of such constraints as time.

As the sun set, the Royal Hawaiian Band played songs associated with Ho, including the march song of the Kamehameha Schools — Ho graduated with the class of 1949 and played football for the school. The classic voices of Gary Keawe Aiko and Nina Keali'iwahamana evoked a romantic sound of a Hawaii gone by, and brought to life in memory of Ho.

Kumu hula Sonny Ching and Halau Na Mamo O Pu'uamahulu offered a hula kahiko calling on the ancestors to give Ho's spirit a proper send-off.

From then on, the music flowed nonstop. In the true spirit of the night, the Society of Seven performed a medley that concluded with "The Greatest Love of All."

Continuing in that vein, Imaikalani Young and his band, with Brickwood Galuteria, did one of Ho's classic showroom tunes, the jazzy "Nani Waimea." They continued in their capacity as the evening's house band as Keali'iwahamana sat in for "Hawaii Calls," with the evocative strains of the steel guitar behind her.

Iva Kinimaka sang the gentle "He Aloha Mele," a song that inspired Ho to give the name Hoku to his daughter, a well-known singer. The music varied from the sentimental — Marlene Sai singing "I Love You" and Melveen Leed doing "Kanaka Waiwai" — to Ho's good friend Sam Kapu stating that "The Night Life Ain't No Good Life (But It's My Life)."

"That's for you, braddah!" he shouted at the end.

THE PARADE of official tributes was long. Lt. Gov. Duke Aiona gave Ho's widow Haumea a proclamation stating, to hearty applause, that yesterday was Don Ho Day. Mayor Mufi Hannemann drew applause as well when he said that the message of Ho's life was that if you come from Hawaii, it doesn't mean you're second-rate, and that you can be successful by doing it Hawaiian style, staying true to the islands' roots and culture. Gov. George Ariyoshi gave a heartfelt speech, remembering Ho as "a man of great aloha" and thanking him in particular for his help during gubernatorial campaigns.

The Brothers Cazimero sang a sweet tribute to Ho, a man they remember let them sneak into Duke Kahanamoku's in the International Marketplace to watch when they were still in high school. The duo did a rendition of "Night Life," a song with a definite nostalgic tinge.

Jackie Bay, an integral part of Ho's shows at the Waikiki Beachcomber, hosted a feature showcasing the voices of young Hawaii that were also part of the man's act. They included 7-year-old Maka'ala Perry and 10-year-old Jasmine Ildica, showing an onstage confidence that belied their



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"That's for you, braddah!"

**Sam Kapu**

After singing "The Night Life Ain't No Good Life (But It's My Life)"

youth, and 15-year-old Matthew Pablo, honoring the armed services with a well-received "God Bless the USA." Arsheil Calatava, 12, sang "One Moment in Time."

Star ukulele player Taimane Gardner was also a hit, her assuredness on the four-stringed instrument receiving a hana hou. Willie K., and Ho's children Kea and Hoku, ended the memorial before the crowd stood and sang "Hawaii Pono'i."

But it was veteran jazz singer Jimmy Borges who put it all in perspective. He ended a special rendition of the Frank Sinatra classic "My Way," with the words: "He said the things that he would feel / we love you so / you're our Don Ho / you said it's my way."



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The Brothers Cazimero, above, recalled their high school days, when Ho would let them sneak into his shows at the International Marketplace. They sang "Night Life," particularly appropriate to the man's legacy. At left, Iva Kinimaka sang "He Aloha Mele," which includes the phrase "pretty Hoku," and inspired Don Ho to name his daughter Hoku.



Thousands gathered on the sand before the giant screen at Queen's Surf for the concert. The music began as the sun was setting and continued until past 9 p.m.

RICHARD WALKER / RWALKER@STARBUCKET.COM