



JOE CAMACHO

When one reviews the life of our classmate, Joseph Camacho, there is one word that seems to fit perfectly: “INSPIRATIONAL.”

Joe was the tall, slim boy playing percussion instruments in the back row of the KHS band. Who would know that music would play such a major role in his life? His path followed the irresistible pull of music, religion and art, from which he melded his spirit. His peers respect him as a master in his passions as an entertainer, composer of liturgical (religious) music and teacher.

After graduating from Kaimuki, Joe attended UH Manoa from 1969 – 1972. In 1971, his halau was the first winner of the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival. This was a life-changing event for this young and impressionable man. Although it led to an interruption of his studies at UH, it presented him with a far greater education in music and culture. As part of the award-winning troupe, Joe left Hawai‘i and toured Japan with his halau. He worked in Japan for five years as an entertainer, and also traveled and entertained audiences throughout Asia. He even traveled to Iran.

When Joe was ready to return to Hawai‘i in 1976, he finished his schooling at UH Manoa and Chaminade University, earning his bachelor’s degree, specializing in the Montessori method of teaching. He moved to Hilo and became the director and head teacher at Hale o Kamali‘i Montessori Preschool in Keaukaha from 1981 – 2001. He was also the musical/choral director of Malia Puka o Kalani Catholic

Church from 1976 – 2003. Joe was one of the founders of the Big Island Liturgy and Arts Conference in Hilo that attracted musicians belonging to the Roman Catholic Church from all over the globe. Due to its success, the conference is now held at Chaminade University in Honolulu.

Throughout this period, Joe did not confine his activities to Hawai‘i. He traveled throughout the U.S. mainland, Australia, Mexico, Samoa, Tahiti, New Zealand, the Marshall Islands and 14 European countries, composing and performing musically.

Joe moved to Volcano Village in 2002, and one of his proudest achievements was designing and building his home there. He retired in 2003, but has continued his music and teaching activities. He enjoys meeting the parents of former students and hearing how the students are progressing and what they have achieved. Joe is currently an artist-in-residence at Hale Lokahi, a retreat center in Volcano. In addition, he’s involved with Halau Hula O Kahikilaulani as part of its musical support. His main work, however, continues to be composing liturgical music based on biblical scripture to foster and develop a community based on Christian values. For the past 15 years, he has taught high-school and college students at a conference at St. Katherine’s Women’s College in St. Paul, Minn. Joe also serves as a teacher and resource person in music and cultural conferences all over Hawai‘i. His music has been captured on many liturgical music CDs.

To hear one of Joe’s most moving compositions, go to:
http://www.mondoymusic.com/MM_Chair/chr_ahahimeni11.htm and click on “Malama Pono.”

Joe’s fondest memories of KHS are related to being in the percussion section of the band, and making lifelong friends. He reunites with those friends when he travels to Honolulu and they continue to create happy memories together.

When asked, Joe cannot think of anything that has occurred in his life that would surprise anyone. He is grateful for the life he has been given. While no one might be surprised that he has achieved so much, given his love of music, God and his fellow man, plus his tremendous talent and dedication, it is still amazing and delightful to see the man that Joe Camacho came to be.