

Photo courtesy of Aloha Festivals

# The Spirit of Aloha

The Royal Court plays an essential part in the Aloha Festival ceremonies. This year they also participated in a special ceremony remembering victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

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## HO'OHANO HANO I NĀ HOLOKAI



## HONOR THE VOYAGERS

Artist Sithiporn Keller created this year's logo, which combines a variety of images to depict different aspects of the theme of Aloha Festival 2001.

What is the spirit of aloha?

In Hawaii, it's not just a catchy phrase found on T-shirts or bumper stickers in the tourist traps. It's a feeling that has been incorporated into everyday life.

That's why for the past 55 years Hawaii has held its annual Aloha Festival, the island's biggest and only statewide celebration.

Although this year's Aloha Festival celebration was postponed, rearranged and parts even canceled after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the Waikiki Ho'olaule did take place last Friday night. The downtown Honolulu Ho'olaule will also occur tonight, showing the importance of the spirit of aloha here in Hawaii.

According to the 2001 Aloha Festival's executive director Janet Hyrne, the ho'olaule is a giant street party celebrating all of Hawaii's cultural influences coming together.

"The ho'olaule is usually the festival's largest event," she said. "It's a really great chance to see a whole bunch of local cultures demonstrated in a fun-filled environment. Also, you can interact with local people while enjoying some really great Hawaiian entertainment for free."

This year Ho'olaule includes a variety of entertainers demonstrating many traditional dances like the Japanese bon dance or the Hawaiian hula. You can also catch a few local bands performing the latest pop hits off the radio. The streets are also filled with a number of food vendors serving up a taste of everything from typical American fare like pizza and ice cream to countless ethnic dishes. And local shopkeepers set up stands displaying items like fresh, colorful leis or local made-in-Hawaii crafts and gifts.

Almost 30,000 volunteers work together in this attempt to preserve

Hawaii's island traditions and honor its cosmopolitan heritage for its guests. "We really encourage military members and their families to come out to the festival. It's really a great opportunity to enjoy some great local entertainment and have a lot of fun," said Hyrne.

This year's Waikiki Ho'olaule celebration began differently - with the addition of a unique "Celebration of Life" ceremony remembering the victims of the Sept. 11 attacks. The ceremony also paid tribute to all the military, fire fighters, law enforcement and emergency medical personnel who selflessly are serving our nation.

The "Celebration of Life" occurred beside the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel with the Aloha Festival's Royal Court leading a number of catamarans, boats and canoes out to sea where they met the moku ahi (fire boat) and a helicopter. After a short service, the helicopter released donated flower blooms from the air and the boats dropped blooms from their decks into the sea. They also released Hawaii's rainbow pigeons, symbolizing hope for a peaceful future. The boats then returned to shore for a small ceremony of songs and prayers in the Sheraton courtyard before moving on to really kick off the Waikiki Ho'olaule's street party.

B.J. Whitman, Director of Public Relations for the Sheraton Waikiki, said "It's not just about the food and music. It's a celebration of our cultures, our spirits and our just gathering in one place to bring our state closer together."

The 2001 Aloha Festival's official theme is "Ho'ohano Hano I Na Holokai, Honor the Voyagers," chosen to honor the ancient voyagers who navigated their way throughout Polynesia and everyone from different cultures who left their homes to immigrate to Hawaii. But this year there also seemed to be a strong un-

spoken theme of pride, strength and unity in America. Beside many of the Aloha Festival ribbons worn by the crowds of people were ribbons and buttons of the American flag. "American pride" and "God bless America" shirts were also very abundant everywhere.

Tonight's Honolulu Ho'olaule celebration is expected to be similar as Bishop Street comes to life at 6:30 p.m. with more than three hours of free, non-stop entertainment on six different stages downtown. Some of Hawaii's most popular local bands are scheduled to perform along with a few military bands.

Navy Musician 2nd Class Christopher Griffin is a member of the Navy band "Tsunami" which is playing at both ho'olaule celebrations.

"This is where we're at our finest," remarked Griffin. "We know we're out here promoting the Navy, but when we see people out here having a good time, we feel it's fabulous."

Families with children can especially enjoy this year's keiki fun-zone, which features activities like a rock climbing wall, a wave slide, a bungee run, a jumping castle and an obstacle located by the Aloha Tower.

So what exactly is the spirit of aloha? Perhaps it's taking time to remember and help those who have felt a loss recently. Maybe it's the desire to share something you enjoy - like music - with those around you. Possibly it's all gathering together to share a bit of yourself and recognizing and embracing the differences between you and your neighbor.

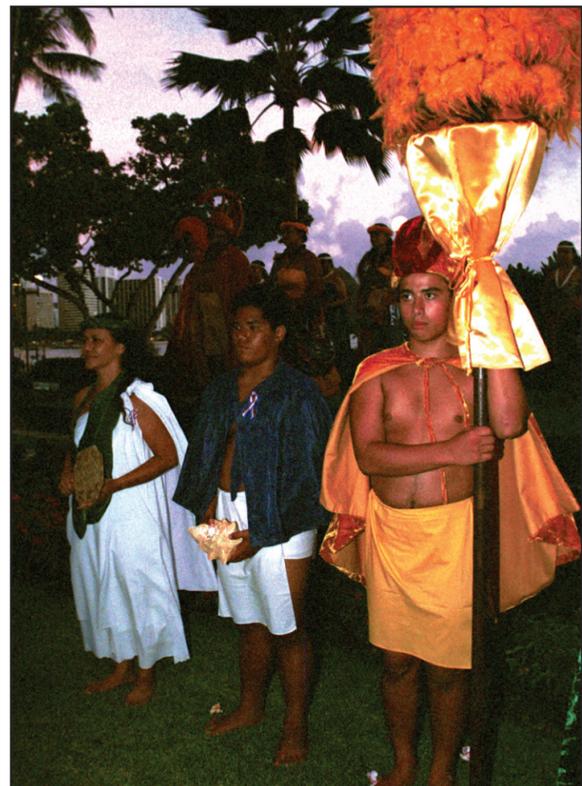
According to Webster's dictionary, it means "love, affection, kindness - often used to express a greeting or farewell."

But during the 2001 Aloha Festival, as well as the rest of year here in Hawaii, it's more of just a way of life.



JO2 Jim Williams photo

The Navy band "Tsunami" performs a pop song by the band "No doubt." "Tsunami" is one of many bands who are playing at both ho'olaule celebrations this year.



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Members of the Royal Court look on during the opening ceremonies of the Waikiki ho'olaule in the Sheraton Courtyard.