

PRELIMINARY LISTING OF INSTITUTE SESSIONS

PANELS - Panels will feature 2-4 speakers with ample time for questions and answers.

- 1) **Have You Done Your Homework?** How writers incorporate an unfamiliar culture or language into their writing.
- 2) **Finding Your Own Voice** What is "voice"? Developing the author's and character's voice.
- 3) **Which World Do I Belong To?** Developing characters in your writing that straddle more than one identity, race, ethnicity or culture; on being hapa.
- 4) **Grappling with Gender and Sexuality** How does a writer create characters of the opposite sex? How to get a grip on gender and sexual identity formation?
- 5) **Gathering Family Stories and Weaving New Ones** How to gather stories and transform them into non-fictional or fictional writing.
- 6) **Writing Through Loss** How creative writing can be transformational--writers work through loss (death, tragedy, crisis, illness) to create in their writing.
- 7) **The Second "Great American Novel"** How to find inspiration for the next project.
- 8) **Heating Up Your Stories:** writing about romance in fiction.
- 9) **Non-Fiction Writing Under Deadline** Learn about writing under pressure.
- 10) **Performance Writing** Writing that goes beyond the printed page. Authors who perform their own work.
- 11) **Live Poets Society** Is poetry dead?
- 12) **The Art of Snappy Dialogue** Writing dialogue. Find out how.

WRITING WORKSHOPS - Writing workshops will feature a workshop leader conducting "hands on" writing exercises. Come prepared to experiment, have fun and write!

Eating Your Words: food and the writing process

with *Lani Uyeno*

Doing Oral History with *Warren Nishimoto*

Life Writing with *Ann Rayson*

Using Family History with *Pam Chun*

The Poetry Bag with *Eric Chock*

The Personal Essay with *Lisa Linn Kanae*

Adapting stories for stage or performance

Others

MASTER WORKSHOPS (additional \$50 fee required)

Master Workshops are 2 ½ hour writing workshops with experienced writers and teachers. Writers of all levels are welcome to participate in small group discussion and critique of your own work. Some workshops will require the submission of manuscripts prior to the session. It is highly recommended that Master Workshop participants register early as spaces are limited. Master Workshops run concurrently with the Institute panels and workshops during either a morning session (9:00-11:45 a.m.) or an afternoon session (12:45-3:30 p.m.).

Workshop leaders include:

Lois-Ann Yamanaka, fiction

Cathy Song, poetry

Nora Okja Keller, fiction

Eric Chock, poetry

Gail Harada, poetry
Ian McMillan, fiction
John Wat & Keith Kashiwada, performance
Others

Jody Helfand, poetry
Yokonaan Kearns, playwriting

OPEN MIKE SESSIONS

Open mike sessions will run throughout the Institute and will feature guest authors reading from their own work as well as hosting the open mike sessions. Participants are encouraged to sign up in advance for a 10-minute reading time.

Guest readers and hosts will include:

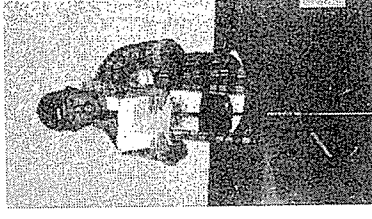
Lee Tonouchi

bradajo

Cedric Yamanaka

Brenda Kwon

Others



Try Write
Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute 2002

TRY WRITE 2002 T-SHIRTS

(DOLLAR OFF!)

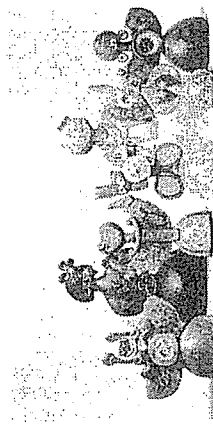
Red and white ink on front of black t-shirt.

Available in sizes S, M, L, & XL, regularly \$16, now \$15. Add \$3 shipping & handling.

WANNA HELP?

The Institute is supported by donations and volunteers. We welcome monetary donations as well as donations of door prizes, packet materials (portfolios, pens, notepads, bags, etc.). If you would like to help as a volunteer or in other ways, please contact us: 626-1481 or by e-mail:

brinfo@bambooridge.com



Art by Harue McVay from portfolio in BR #81, available in Sept 2002. Subscribe now and receive *Pele Ma* by Frederick Wichman and issue #81 for \$20; or 4 issues for \$35.

Photos on previous page by youngPHOTO.com

¹ You may become a BR Regular member by making a minimum \$20 donation.

Membership includes newsletter and book discounts good until 12/31/2002. Include your donation in the total.

² Currently enrolled secondary or college student. A limited number of registration scholarships for high school and college student writers are available. Contact us for details and an application.

³ Master Workshops are open only to registered participants. You must pay the registration fee plus the Master Workshop fee. Master Workshops have limited enrollment and will likely fill. You are encouraged to register early.

Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute Registration Form

Mail or fax to: Bamboo Ridge Press P.O. Box 61781 Honolulu, HI 96839-1781

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Phone Day/Evening _____ Cellular/Pager _____

E-mail _____

| | Regular | Member ¹ | Student ² | Total |
|--|---------|---------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Registration | \$75 | \$55 | \$40 | \$ |
| Master Workshop ³ | +\$50 | +\$50 | +\$50 | \$ |
| Lunch | +\$5 | +\$5 | +\$5 | \$ |
| (Bento & Drink) <input type="checkbox"/> I request a vegetarian bento. | | | | |
| "Try Write" t-shirt, white & red on black shirt | | | | |
| (S, M, L, XL), \$18/ea. (\$15+\$3 S&H) Indicate size: _____ | | | | \$ |
| Donation (donations are tax-deductible; include your membership here) | | | | \$ |
| | | | Total | \$ |

Make check payable to: Bamboo Ridge Press. Charge my credit card: ☐ VISA ☐ MC
No refunds after October 15, 2002.

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Name _____

Signature _____

*Master Workshops Selection (List 3 in order of preference)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

☐ YES, please assign me a time for the Open Mike session.

For more information, call/fax Bamboo Ridge Press at 808.626.1481
e-mail: brinfo@bambooridge.com

6/13/01

2nd Annual Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute for writers, performers, teachers, students & readers

WRITE A POEM, WRITE A SHORT STORY, GET THAT SMALL KID TIME MEMORY DOWN ON PAPER. START A NOVEL, FINISH YOUR NOVEL, RECORD THE FAMILY MEMOIRS. WRITE A MOVIE, WRITE A PLAY, ADAPT A CHILDREN'S STORY FOR THEATER. TRY SCIENCE FICTION OR FANTASY, LEARN STORYTELLING, CREATE A PERFORMANCE PIECE. TAKE IN YOUR FAVORITE KID STORY WITH YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS. WRITE A POEM. WRITE A SHORT STORY, GET THAT SMALL KID TIME MEMORY DOWN ON PAPER. START A NOVEL, FINISH YOUR NOVEL, RECORD THE FAMILY MEMOIRS. WRITE A MOVIE, WRITE A PLAY, ADAPT A CHILDREN'S STORY FOR THEATER. TRY SCIENCE FICTION OR FANTASY, LEARN STORYTELLING, CREATE A PERFORMANCE PIECE. TAKE A WORKSHOP & TALK STORY WITH YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS.

Friday evening, October 25, 2002

Celebrate the latest issue of *Bamboo Ridge*

Meet authors reading from their work

7:30 p.m. UH-Mānoa Campus Center Ballroom
FREE, OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

&

Saturday, October 26, 2002

Conference Panels & Workshops

8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

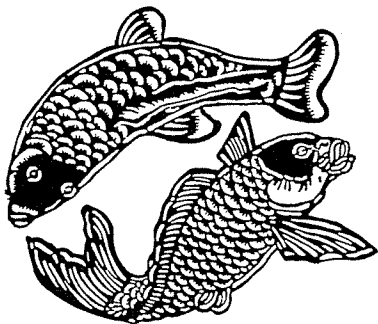
UH-Mānoa Campus Center Meeting Rooms
NOMINAL REGISTRATION FEE

New this year:

- more "hands on" writing workshops
- more Master Workshops with manuscript critique
- more Open Mike sessions
- workshops on life-writing, how to do an oral history and using family history
- writing about romance, writing dialogue, writing for performance
- more panels on how to get started, how to keep going and how to "finish" strong!



TRY COME, TRY WRITE, GOOD FUN!
visit us at www.bambooridge.com



vol. 5, #2 winter 2002-2003

BRidges

The Official Member Newsletter of Bamboo Ridge Press

To foster the appreciation, understanding, and creation of literary, visual, or performing arts by, for, or about Hawai'i's people

Continued Success: Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute 2002



BRWI 2002 co-chairs Ermile Hargrove, Juliet S. Kono, and Kent Sakoda—which one is funny kine?

Good job everyone! You pulled it off! All those weekend meetings when you'd rather have spent the day with your family, those late nights toiling by candlelight finishing up the mailings or brainstorming new marketing strategies, and those stress-induced ulcers that seemed to have popped up out of nowhere finally paid off.

This year's Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute kicked off on Friday and Saturday, October 25 and 26. The event, only in its sophomore year, created quite a buzz during the free reading in the UHM Campus Center Ballroom Friday night. There were no less than 19 local writers who stepped up to the podium to share their work and celebrate the release of *Bamboo Ridge* #81. People eager to listen to local artists doing their thing arrived well before the 7 p.m. reception and 7:30 p.m. start time. The seats in the ballroom soon filled up and many members of the audience stood along side the walls or around the back of the room in order not to miss a thing. The night was also used to recognize the artistic talents of Harue McVay, whose work provided the cover art and portfolio for *BR* #81.

And Friday was only the beginning. Early Saturday morning, BRWI participants and members of the public gathered 'round for a special opening reading by Lee Cataluna and Lois-Ann Yamanaka. The two women cracked the audience up in their traditional

continued on page 2

Calling All Members!

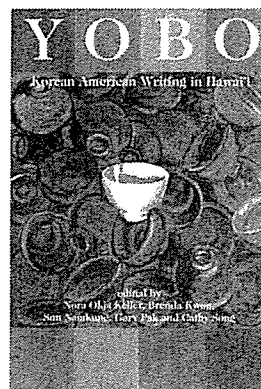
Remember that little card in your wallet with the fishies on it? Well, sorry to break the news to you, but pretty soon the only thing that card will be good for is the rubbish can. No more exciting newsletters, no more exclusive "members only" events. And those 10-20% discounts on books? Forget about it!

What? You don't want the BRP fun to end? Well then, it's time to renew your membership for 2003. It's simple really. Decide what type of member you would like to be for the coming year. (Remember, the bigger the better.) Decide how you would like to pay. (We accept check or charge—sorry, no cash through the mail, please.) Send in your donation and we'll send you a spiffy new membership card.

Don't wait until it's too late. Renew now and enjoy an entire year's worth of benefits!

WHAT'S IN STORE? BOOKS GALORE...

We've got three issues in the works—get ready for some serious reading!



YOBO: Korean American Writing in Hawai'i, in celebration of the centennial of Korean immigration to the islands, edited by Nora Okja Keller, Brenda Kwon, Sun Namkung, Gary Pak, and Cathy Song. The anthology includes poetry, fiction, and essays by Leomi Bergknut, David

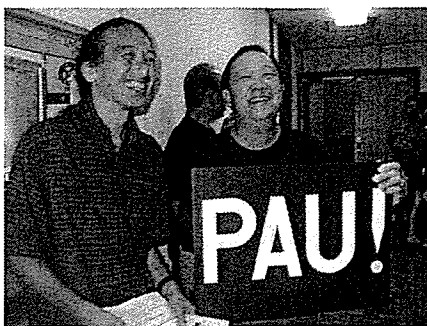
Choo, Victoria Chai Cintrón, Debra Kang Dean, David Hyun, Peter Hyun, Melvia C. Kawashima, Jacqueline Kim, Nolan W. K. Kim, Alvin Koo, Don Lee, Mary Paik Lee, Lucretia Leong, Walter Lew, Chris McKinney, Melanie Sukie McKinney, Trina Nahm-Mijo, Gregory Pai, Inez Kong Pai, Ty Pak, Robert Pennybacker, Daisy Chun Rhodes, Maxine Shea, Ellen Soo Sun Song (Kang), Wayne Wagner, Jackie Young, and others. Cover art by Kloe Kang. Scheduled for March release.

HE LEO HOU: A New Voice, an anthology of work by four native Hawaiian playwrights: Alani Apio, Tammy Haili'ōpua Baker, Lee Cataluna, and Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl, with introduction and commentary by John H. Y. Wat and Meredith Desha. Scheduled for April release.

Bamboo Ridge, Journal of Hawai'i Literature and Arts, 25th anniversary issue, featuring 35 new and established local writers. Scheduled for August release. Submissions are still being accepted until January 31, 2003. All submissions will be considered for the 25th anniversary writing contest. See details on page 11.



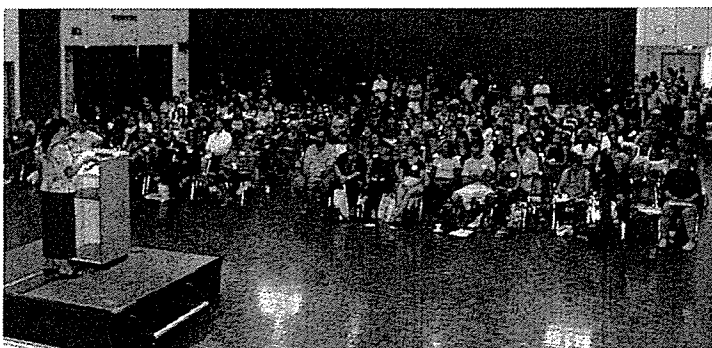
BRWI 2002 continued



Luckily, Eric and Darrell never had to use "the sign" on any of the readers. Photo by Wes Young.

talk-story style as they let it all hang loose. Lee and Lois-Ann, reading from issue #81 and *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* respectively, had the audience clutching their stomachs and wiping the tears from their eyes.

On that high note, participants dispersed to the Campus Center meeting rooms and Kuykendall Hall to attend their panels and workshops with various writers. Others gathered for open mic sessions led by hosts Kate Godwin, Cedric Yamanaka, Michael Little, and bradajo.



The audience filled the chairs and lined the back walls at the Saturday morning reading. Photo by Wes Young.



Did you get your copy of BR #81? Photo by Wes Young.

At midday, everyone broke for some ono grinds and a sneak preview of the upcoming *Bamboo Ridge* Korean centennial issue. Six writers—Leomi Bergknut, Jackie Kim, Nolan Kim, Lucretia Leong, Melanie Suki McKinney, and Maxine Shea—from *YOBO: Korean American Writing in Hawai'i* took the mic to read some of their work. This sampling only whet the audience's appetite for the great anthology to come.

The rest of the workshops and panels commenced after lunch and at 4 p.m., presenters and registrants gathered for a closing reception. Then BRWI 2002 was officially over—time to pack up and go home. Thanks to all the people involved, the second annual BR Writers Institute was a great success, surpassing the triumph attained last year. With the increasing popularity and wonderful turnout this year, who wants to help plan the next one?

—Dorian Nakamichi



Photo by Wes Young.

BRWI: What Did You Think?

Like? No like? We asked you to tell us how you felt about the BRWI and here's what you told us. Mahalo for all the comments and suggestions.

"I was impressed with the organization and efficiency of the conference. A very positive atmosphere. I think Bamboo Ridge provides a valuable outlet for writers to express themselves, both in print and at the open mic. As a first-time panelist, I enjoyed sitting with other writers discussing the mysterious craft of writing. It was encouraging to see so many young and older writers eager to pursue their passion for writing. Yes, we are not alone!" —Ed Sakamoto, playwright & BRWI panelist

"Make the master workshops at different hours so we can take part in more panels." [Many of you suggested this. We're working on it!]

"More hands-on writing workshops than panels."

"Lots of information. Panelist and presenters were very positive and encouraging."

"There wasn't enough for non-fiction people. Lots of people, plus me, wanted technique sessions, more how-to's, and publishing help."

"It's better when panelists discuss the subject rather than just read from their work."

"This conference was well organized and the content was beneficial to me as a starting writer. Just the opportunity to put faces to names of writers in the community was a valuable resource provided by this meeting of writers. I look forward to a '3rd annual' conference as well as other activities organized by Bamboo Ridge."

BRidges

Newsletter Editor
Lan Tu




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DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!
See right for details.

Behind the Open Mic at BRWI

The Head Honcho's Take



Intimate setting at open mic. Photo by Wes Young.

a crowd of strangers, then we've kicked it up a whole notch—virtually “neva neva land.” So kudos, mahalos, and alohas to all you participants at the Bamboo Ridge Try Write Again Writers Institute open mic sessions. Special mahalos to all the monitors who sat with great anxiety in anticipation of ringing down those rogue readers (lucky you no need had to). And of course, tanks ae all you hosts, Kate Godwin, Cedric Yamanaka, Michael Little, and bradajo Hadley...fantastic job...you wen make my life real easy...IOU.

For those of you who were not aware of it, we decided to go with a different format and venue. Open mic was

located past the book tables in a much smaller but more intimate listener-friendly setting. There were four sessions that ran concurrent with the panels and workshops. Each session had a guest host who did a reading first, then introduced the other readers. Each reader was allowed 7 minutes (and we were pretty strict about this). Overall, I'd say that this new open mic turned out to be very successful. Things ran smoothly and the audiences seemed to be really enjoying themselves...at least I know I did.

At first I was very skeptical about having open mic, but other members of the planning committee assured me that it would be something participants

Lisa Kanae's impromptu open mic performance. Photo by Wes Young.

would look forward to (at least it had been reported as being successful at other writers conferences) and that it was an added bonus. As people began registering for the Institute, the numbers expressing interest in the open mic began to swell. To make a long story short (I said I was a non-writer) the ranks got deflated, people started deserting when they found out that there would be concurrent panels and workshops. They wanted their money to be spent wisely, and Joy, Darrell, and I started to panic little bit. Anyway, thanks to a higher calling, or a greater need, or maybe my personality (yeah, right) most of the AWOL wen make like nothing wen happen...and so they came back. We got a bunch more signing up that morning and in fact we even got an impromptu in the form of Lisa Kanae jumping in at the close of a session. Success!...Oh what a relief it was...

For the lady who missed her chance (she came after everything was pau)...we see you next time around.

I not doing this again but!!!

—Kent Sakoda, BRWI Co-Chair & One-Time-Only Boss of Open Mic

It is simply amazing—the fervor and passion writers came with at the open mic. For myself, as one who is a relatively uninitiated non-writer, I think of writing as a great chore, certainly lacking in this so-called “passion” and especially lacking in this “creative juices flowing” stuff. Now, if I gotta perform by reading from my own work in front of

Hearing the Voices

I volunteered to moderate one of the open mic hours at the second Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute because I love to be surprised, and there are invariably some surprises at these gatherings.

I often suggest to other writers that they read their work aloud, if only to themselves. It's especially useful for checking out dialogue. Reading aloud to others, of course is performance. It means putting your work out there and speaking the words you believe in. The words you don't believe in are probably crumpled in the trash, where they belong.

One thing about going to an open mic session, you hear new voices. Among the several lively readings during the hour was one by Karla Brundage, who read her poem “Wanna Be White Girl,” published in *Intersecting Circles: The Voices of Hapa Women in Poetry and Prose* (Bamboo Ridge Press, 1999). Karla, standing in front of the open mic audience, hesitated but finally decided to read a poem that I understand she normally does not read. We were glad that she did. It's a powerful poem, written from her life and emotions. Hearing the words in the writer's voice rather than seeing them on a page, were for me a moving and special moment and one of my strongest memories of the day.



—Michael Little, BRWI panelist & guest host at Open Mic

Photo by Wes Young.



An Open Mic Reader's Point of View

“What's not to like about a captive audience? I had a grand time, despite the non-working microphone. I read one of my columns (see below) from the Empress of Everything series in the *Hawaii Island Journal*. It's always so nice to feel a group respond favorably...you know how it is with writing—not an instant feedback medium usually. So I say thumbs up to the session. The coordinator was very friendly and he made us all feel welcome. The only drawback was that it meant I had to miss one of the workshop sessions...”

—Jeri Gertz, Open Mic participant

Badsong Singalong Syndrome

Dear Empress,

I am a middle-aged professional woman. I consider my taste in music to be somewhat sophisticated. I prefer classical music and good jazz, but every so often, I find myself singing an old song that is really terrible. I'll be in the car, and the song will come on the radio, and even though I hate it, and am ashamed of myself, I sing the whole stupid song. The song is “Muskrat Love.” What's up with that?

S. C., Hilo

Dear Sarah,

Live in shame no longer. I hold the key to the locked door of your mystery, and I gladly give it to you to use, so you may step through the threshold with new understanding. Even though you didn't give me your exact age, the song title is a tip-off to what ails you. There is an actual biochemical phenomenon responsible for your disorder and it has to do with car radios and being about sixteen years old.

Remember when you got your driver's license? Think back to that very first day of automotive autonomy. There you are, cruising along with your window rolled all the way down, no matter what the season. When you feel that happy and invincible, everything related to the



Photo by Wes Young.

continued on page 4

An Open Mic Reader's Point of View continued

experience takes on an unreal glow. The strip malls whizzing by seem glorious, just because you are in the driver's seat and nobody else is in the car. You turn the radio on, and whatever song is playing at that moment becomes not only an unintended anthem to your freedom, but according to groundbreaking scientific research, also creates an instant irrevocable bond with your long term memory and triggers a lifelong brain to vocal cord linkup. Without careful planning in this area, it's the luck of the draw. From what you describe, it sounds like your luck was wretched. At the crucial moment, you were exposed to Tenille, her captain, and their bizarre tune which describes muskrat Susie and muskrat Sam in heat.

I understand, Sarah, and I feel your pain. I too am a victim of this unhappy syndrome. Picture a young teen at the wheel, March 1972. The spring wind blows through her long, straight and parted-in-the-middle hair. She is so happy, she is allowing her left arm to make airplane swoops and dives. She delights in watching her paisley print sleeve fly in the wind, giddy with the knowledge that nobody will scold, "You put your arm right back inside this car—do you want to get it ripped off?"

I was a legal solo driver and at long last, I was going to experience life on the open road. And as I turned on the radio and pumped up the volume to match the magnitude of my unfettered joy, was I fortunate enough to get a cool Beach Boys' song to match all the good vibrations in the car? Nooo. I, like you, was one of the unlucky ones. When I turned on the radio, the insipid "Horse With No Name" was playing.

I was involuntarily grinning and singing along with the group America, even though the lyrics sounded like a first grader's attempt at describing the world: "there were plants and birds and rocks and things, there were sand and hills and rings." I even did, and to this day still do, the supremely stupid "la lahh la-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la laaah la" part. For years I have done this—all the time hating myself for being unable to stop singing an inane song that drones on and on about this guy and his no-name horse in the desert, singing that "there ain't no one for to give you no pain." (Stand-up comedian Richard Jeni has observed that we all could have been saved a lot of pain if the guy had just NAMED THE STUPID HORSE!)

When I finally learned about the B.S.—Badsongsingalong Syndrome—I felt better, and I hope you do too. At least now we, the afflicted, understand the genesis of a behavior that makes us and others around us cringe. Hey, it could have been worse. At that critical time, we might have been listening to Richard Harris whine about the cake he left out in the rain....

The Healing Touch

Cathy Song's master workshop was a wet experience. With the simple exercise of writing a letter to unburden our heart, she had me and almost everyone else in the circle crying from the very start. We shed more tears as we listened to each other's writings, and the three hours we spent together became a sweet delving into some of the most intimate details of our lives.

I loved the class so much that I shared the writing exercises with a group of friends I paint with every week. But instead of writing with a pen on an 8 1/2" x 11" writing pad, we wrote and painted with thick oil slicks and brushes on canvas and heavy pieces of paper. The difference in experience was shocking!

Where the writing in Cathy's class was tender (I wrote about feeling like a little bird), as artists we roiled in fury and rage (I wrote/painted things like "You bitch, you f***** bitch!"). The energy of making large movements across a larger space obviously accesses different emotions. I had always known it somehow, but this was the first time it really hit me: I'm a different person when I paint than when I write. What a kick to know!

My heartfelt thanks to Cathy Song for her sensitive guidance and healing presence, and to Bamboo Ridge for putting on such a fine conference!

—Elsha Bohnert, aka Alshaa Rayne, BRWI participant

Poetry in the Air



Panelists (left to right) Joseph Stanton, Darlene Javar, Michael McPherson, Elmer Omar Pizo, and Wing Tek Lum. Photo by Wes Young.

"Poetry has to happen. You can't not write poetry."

These were sentiments expressed by Joseph Stanton on Saturday, October 26, 2002, in the "Poetry, Passion, Perseverance" panel for the BRWI. The panel was moderated by Wing Tek Lum, one of Bamboo Ridge's most passionate poets, famous for his first collection of poetry *Expounding the Doubtful Points*. Lum felt that the panel featured "differently wonderful and wonderfully different poets," and he was right.

Joe Stanton believed that he has a compulsive nature and the desire for the goal of perfection, which he accomplishes with poetry by putting the best words in their best order. He read an excerpt from "On Trying to Write a Mark Maguire," in which he compared poems to home runs. "Poetry is about stepping up to the plate and taking a swing," he described.



Panelists deep in discussion about poetry. Photo by Wes Young.

Similarly, Darlene M. Javar, whose work has appeared in *Chamianade Literary Review*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Earth's Daughters*, and many others, declared that poetry was her automatic response to "life." Javar's response to her mother's battle with illness was poetry. Her work, including "The Passing of Time,"

is featured in the latest *Bamboo Ridge*, issue #81. In order to gain perseverance through hard times in her life, she needed to "live" poetry.

Contrasting Javar and Stanton were the two other panelists, Michael McPherson and Elmer Omar Pizo. Mike McPherson, whose poetry has been known in Hawai'i for 30 years, related that his poetry had been heavily shaped by his literary influences, namely T.S. Eliot. An excerpt from *Manuela Boy*, his book-length prose currently in progress, is featured in *Bamboo Ridge* #81.

Similar to McPherson, Elmer Omar Pizo says that he encountered poetry by accident, when he picked up a book by Wendell Berry in a rubbish can. With his background in agriculture, he worked as a greenhouse agriculturist in Saudi Arabia. His work in *Bamboo Ridge* #81, such as "Tilapia," is influenced by his times in Saudi Arabia where he worked under inhumane conditions.

Last but not least, Wing Tek Lum shared a bit of his notion on what his passion for poetry was. He felt not that poetry has to happen, but that poetry is a spontaneous, word-spewing event in which epiphany and serendipity play vital roles. To Lum, poetry is a still-life, a snapshot of life, and a suite of snapshots, therefore, is a novel.

From these five "wonderfully different" poets, we learned how other poets thrive to keep their fire burning within. Whether writing poetry is a need or a conscious effort, Joe Stanton sums it up well when he declared that "persistence is the key."

—Shimi Rii



Photo by Wes Young.

Building BRidges

resources for writers—teachers—students—readers

Share your response to BR. Share your writing or teaching strategies.

Write, fax, or e-mail us <brinfo@bambooridge.com>.

We'd love to hear from you!

Scholarship Recipient Response

Bamboo Ridge awarded a total of 40 scholarships to both high school and college students for the 2002 BR Writers Institute. We're glad that we can provide an opportunity for young people to pursue their writing.

I really gained a lot of insight from the workshops and panels. It was really cool to be in the same room with so many well-known and published local writers. They were all extremely friendly, encouraging to everyone, and genuinely pleased to see young writers my age attending the workshops and panels.



Lee Cataluna. Photo by Wes Young.

At the opening session, Lee Cataluna read some of her monologues that described life in Hawai'i, through the eyes of a local person. All of them were really funny. When I wasn't laughing at her uncanny accuracy about life in the Islands, I was smiling and staring in awe of the girl from Kaua'i. One of my favorite monologues was the one about the girl-watching boyfriend. I know a couple of guys like that. They fail miserably in explaining to their girlfriend why they were looking at another chick's okole. Lee Cataluna is so funny and cool. I am definitely asking my Mom to switch our subscription to *The Honolulu Advertiser* so I can read her column. I am interested in going into journalism and playwriting. It's great to find a role model in Lee Cataluna!

I also found another role model in Lois-Ann Yamanaka. She also read one of her hilarious monologues at the opening session. Lois-Ann really made me laugh when she totally described some of the Asian girls that go to my school. These girls want double eyelids so badly they use Scotch tape and plenty of make-up to create that illusion. Some of the more desperate ones beg their parents to pay for expensive cosmetic surgery. At some schools, there are girls who dislike all the other girls who do not look full-on Asian, especially the local Hawaiian girls like me. I used to wonder why. Now I know why. I think it's because I have double eyelids and they don't. It's empowering to find a writer like Lois-Ann who has suffered through high school days like me and laughs at the same kind of stuck-up chicks.



Lois-Ann Yamanaka. Photo by Wes Young.

After the opening session, I went to my first panel, "Which World Do I Belong To?" The writers who conducted the class were of mixed ethnic background, just like me. I learned that people can sometimes use your ethnicity to stereotype you as a person. I really related to Karla because people often assume her ethnicity is Black, Filipino, or Hawaiian. People often think I am one or all those things. I am probably the only Hawaiian, Chinese, Iranian, and Egyptian female in Hawai'i. Such a unique background can make me feel alone. Like Karla, I tried to be something and someone else, what seemed normal or common. I then realized I couldn't change

my ethnic makeup and it was easier to not define myself that way. This workshop taught me that it's okay to be mixed and not be defined by your ethnicities because such freedom allows you more opportunities.

Next, I went to the workshop "From Book to Stage," put on by Lisa Matsumoto. My Mom recommended Lisa's workshop because she was the creative playwright who wrote about how the B-52 cockroaches got their wings. I also remembered how much I enjoyed her plays when I was in elementary school. Lisa was really friendly and gave good advice on finding the right time and place to write. She also described the process of adapting a book, like *Wailana the Water Bug*, into a spectacular musical. Lisa even showed us a video of the production.

After chowing down on the delicious "local kine" bento, I went to my final workshop, "Playwriting." Yokanaan Kearns was our instructor. He was entertaining and easy to talk to. I enjoyed all the writing exercises we did during class. First we wrote a dialogue about a man and a woman falling in love. Then we expanded on that with character monologues describing how they felt about falling in love and about each other. Mr. Kearns shared some of his work with us, like *How Kitty Got Her Pidgin Back* and his play currently in production, *Dis/Troy*. It was cool because I got to read Kitty's part and one of my friends played her dad. The last thing we wrote was a monologue with subtext. The characters had to be at an event and use subtext to talk about a conflict. My characters, Samantha and Max, were at the zoo watching the penguins. Needless to say it turned out to be a really funny monologue. Mr. Kearns' workshop helped me with my assignment for the playwriting class I'm taking.



Yokanaan Kearns. Photo by Wes Young.

All the workshops and panels were interesting and fun. I learned something new in every one. I was deeply affected during the first few minutes of the Writers Institute. When students who received scholarships were asked to stand up as our names were called, everybody applauded. It was like we were Lee Cataluna or Lois-Ann Yamanaka after a well-received reading. I didn't know so many people sincerely supported young writers. I am extremely grateful to know I have mentors and friends in the local community to help me pursue my dreams of acting in and writing plays.

Thanks for giving me an opportunity to meet and work with Hawai'i's best writers and helping me truly discover and improve one of my talents.

With Much Aloha,

Sherri Keahilaniakala Setarah Lee, Kaimuki High School



The Past is the Present is the Future



Edward Sakamoto. Photo by Harry Wong III.

Edward Sakamoto was one of the presenters at the Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute in October. He has published two books of plays with the University of Hawai'i Press, *Hawaii No Ka Oi: The Kamiya Family Trilogy* and *Aloha Los Vegas and Other Plays*. This article was previously reproduced in *Iolani*, (Vol. XLIV, No. 1) the *Iolani* school bulletin. Reproduced with permission of the author.

As a playwright I'm always looking back at the past, which is a living thing in my imagination. A writer, of course, probes the past at his or her peril because not everything conjured up will be a happy memory.

After Eugene O'Neill finished his masterpiece about his tortured family, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, he dedicated the play to his wife, Carlotta, a "play of old sorrow, written in tears and blood...with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness..."

I wonder if the richness of the past somehow eludes the racing minds of young people gazing into the future. I remember standing on the second floor of an Iolani School building in 1958, looking out at the athletic field and beyond to the Ala Wai Canal and wondering, "What will my life be like in twenty years?" Strange that I could still recall that exact moment in time after 44 years. Or maybe not. Iolani students are probably asking the same question today. Will they in 2022 look back at their past and recall that precise thought of 2002?

In 1987 I wrote a play, *Stew Rice*, about three high school pals from a private boys school who survive their junior and senior years in Act I and come back together in Act II 20 years later to appraise their lives. Yes, it took me nearly 30 years to write it, but I did go back to the time I was a senior wondering about my future.

Because I've worked in theater for many years, I've come to love my actors. They work hard, often with little monetary gain. They thrill me, sometimes they disappoint me. But I always appreciate their dedication. An actor always thinks, "What is my character's motivation?"

Why is he behaving this way, why does he say that?" Often the answer is in the script if he studies the play carefully. But there are times when not enough information is provided for a character study. Then the actor will devise a "back story"—in other words, the past life of the character. The actor must know, even if he has to invent it. Maybe the character was fired from his job as a truck driver because of alcoholism. Or he failed his buddies in a Vietnam War battle because of cowardice. That might help an actor realize his motivation for action.

In the same way, in our personal lives, we have back stories, a past that influences our behavior. Actors need to understand motivation. So do we. Why did we behave a certain way and say hurtful things to someone? Was it jealousy, anger over something that was said years ago, guilt for something that occurred yesterday?

Writers strive to pinpoint motivation. I frequently think back to the actions and dialogues of my life to better understand myself and others. I reflected often on my high school days before writing *Stew Rice*. Sometimes a forgotten corner of my life was illuminated and a lesson was learned. As one of my characters says in that play: "You always see something new in your life every time you play it back."

Exploring the past has its benefits. I took the time to record an oral history with my mother before she died. I think she enjoyed talking about her life on a family coffee farm in Kona, and I loved hearing her reminisce, a young girl again picking red coffee berries with her parents and sisters and brother. I was never able to interview my grandparents because they spoke no English and my Japanese consisted of a few words and phrases. However, my mother related enough choice morsels about my grandparents for me to create their back stories. The information I gleaned from my mother I was able to use in a play, *The Taste of Kona Coffee*, and a short story, "The Family." My father died when I was 19, and I never had the chance to talk to him about his early life because I was preoccupied with my teen life. Again, my mother was able to help uncover the aspects of his life for me. Better late than never to know.

For me, weaving the stories of my parents and grandparents in my plays keeps them alive long after they've passed away. The past is the present is the future, and life is a string of stories tied together by a writer's imagination and empathy.

Writing Through Loss

The workshop with Juliet Kono was a very sensitive and empathetic class. Juliet handed out a packet including information about medical directives, a living will, power of attorney for health care decisions, and a paper doll. The paper doll was divided into six sections, labeled ability to walk, bowel and bladder continence, ability to eat, \$100,000, ability to think, ability to communicate, and in the center of the doll was a heart with the word life written in the middle. Juliet asked us to decide which aspect of life we would be willing to take away first. The majority of the class said \$100,000 first. We then had to continue taking away certain aspects of life. At the end, it was decided that the ability to communicate was the most difficult aspect to lose.

Our next exercise was to write a paragraph about what we were grieving. The grief each felt ranged from loss of a generation, feeling failure as a parent, family death, loss of a job, loss of a child, loss of previous life, and grief for a generation who uses language and does not understand the true meanings of their chosen words. After deciphering what our specific grief was, we wrote a paragraph or two describing our grief, not explaining it. We were creating mental images of what our grief looked like and what it felt like. The class discussed how grief never truly leaves the heart or the mind—it just changes form, meaning that one never truly stops

grieving. Our final exercise was to write a minute by minute scene involving someone connected to our grief.

In this workshop, I learned how to express my thoughts

more clearly. I left this workshop with a better understanding of how consuming one's thoughts and feelings are and that by expressing them accurately, one's writing can turn into great literature and can be a healing process as well.

—Alexis Underwood, Hawai'i Pacific University

[Editor's Note: Juliet will be conducting a Master Workshop online in 2003. See page 7 for more information.]



Participants share their stories about loss and grief. Photo by Wes Young.

