

# Diamond Jub

*On Jan. 1, photo archivist and former school photographer Luryier "Pop" Diamond will mark his 50th anniversary with Kamehameha Schools*

**A**fter a half century of chronicling the images of life at Kamehameha Schools, Luryier "Pop" Diamond now finds the camera lens focused squarely on himself.

Diamond, 88, is marking the 50th anniversary of his date of hire at Kamehameha with the release of a compilation of his work. The book is titled *"Images of Aloha: Photography by Luryier "Pop" Diamond."*

"The book is representative of student activities for the most part, pictures I've taken over the years," Diamond said. "I never moved without a camera. Every time I went out the door, I had a camera. No matter what the kids were doing, they were photographed. That's how we got so many of the pictures that we have now.

"We've even got a high school photo of (Kamehameha Chief Executive Officer) **Hamilton McCubbin '59** in the book, throwing the shot put. He was quite an athlete."

McCubbin is just one of the thousands of Kamehameha students who have filled Diamond's lens. Consider that his first photo assignment with Kamehameha, on a freelance basis through Camera Hawai'i, was the dedication of Konia Hall in 1950.

After a few years of freelance work with the school, a Kamehameha staffer recommended Diamond for a full-time position.

He interviewed with then Kamehameha Schools president Col. Harold Kent. "The job was to do publicity – write stories – and photography," Diamond explained. "Col. Kent didn't know if I could write or not, so he asked me to cover an ROTC parade that Sunday.

"So I came up and took pictures, got the prints out right away, wrote up a story and got it to the newspaper. I knew the guys down at the city desk, so the story came out in the Monday paper. Col. Kent was happy with it, and he hired me."



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– Luryier "Pop" Diamond



To the cheers of Kamehameha Schools students, Pop Diamond receives the Order of Ke Ali'i Pauahi Medal from President Michael Chun.

**“Pop taught me to always be critical of your work, to not just admire what you’ve done, but to always try to find ways of improving it.”**

– Jeff DePonte

Diamond officially became a KS staffer – the coordinator of information – on Jan. 1, 1953.

“But I hated writing,” Diamond said with a laugh. “So I started getting involved with the photo club. The teacher who was handling it then didn’t know much about photography, he was just trying his best. So I got rid of him and I took over the club. Then I started teaching photography a year or two later.”

Diamond would go on to serve the school in various capacities. He was a substitute teacher for Spanish and French classes (he speaks fluent Spanish), was in charge of publishing the school annual *Ka Na’i Aupuni*, served as music director for the old campus radio station KVOK, and has shared his vast knowledge of opera as an opera lecturer and mentor to Kamehameha students.

A New York native whose Army service brought him to Hawai’i in 1943, Diamond was also a licensed pilot. Early in his career, he would fly a two-seat propeller airplane solo over the Kapālama Campus, letting go of the controls and hanging over the side of the plane to get his aerial shot.

“If the plane banked one way or the other, I’d just grab the wheel with one hand and straighten it out,” he said. It was probably after hearing stories like that one when Diamond’s late wife Lillian – better known as Tootsie – put an end to his flying career.

Diamond’s fondest memories are of shooting Kamehameha events. In the 1950s, his weapon of choice was the Speed Graphic camera, which used 4-by-5 inch negatives.

“Going to a football game at Honolulu Stadium was just murder!” Diamond said. “We had a lot of equipment to drag around with us. I had this Volkswagen, and the kids and I would load it down with a huge bag of flashbulbs and another big bag of loaded film holders.

“We’d shoot one flashbulb per picture, then *pau*. We had a film holder that held two pieces of film. You took one picture, turned the holder around, took another, then *pau*. We’d shoot quite a few pictures, so we brought a lot of film holders.”

In fact, it was the exploding flashbulbs, which resounded with a loud “pop” after each shot, that led to his ultimate nickname.

“Ernest Ho-a ’54 was my first student photographer, and he’s the one who named me Pop,” Diamond said. “Some of the faculty objected to that, because they thought it was disrespectful. They just went on and on about it. I said ‘It’s none of their damn business, and it doesn’t bother me any.’

“I wasn’t going to tell the kids not to do it. Pretty soon, all the kids were doing it, and before

long everyone was calling me Pop – even the staff and faculty.”

Diamond said that Ho-a, who still keeps in touch with him to this day, was a fine photographer. “The late **Charles Apo ’57** was excellent as well, and **Bruce Lum ’65** and **Jeff DePonte ’73** were also good,” Diamond said of his former students.

Both Lum and DePonte followed in Diamond’s footsteps, serving for several years as Kamehameha Schools’ photographers.

“Pop was very much an inspiration to me,” said DePonte, who went on to a career as a television producer, and today co-produces *imua tv*. “As a teacher, he was very strict, very tough. Pop was also a father figure to a lot of the students here. He got you to want to do good work, not just for yourself, but for him as well.

“In Pop’s time, his camera would hold just two shots, so you really had to think when you took a shot. He taught me about trying to capture that decisive moment, and not just spraying shots hoping you get a good one. Pop taught me to always be critical of your work, to not just admire what you’ve done, but to always try to find ways of improving it.”

Current KS photographer Michael Young said he admires Diamond’s skill in the art of photography.

“I think other photographers can appreciate what he accomplished more than most people,” Young said. “His composition, lighting and timing are wonderful, and have set a high standard for every staff photographer who follows him.

“Kamehameha has been very lucky to have a photographer of Pop’s caliber documenting student life for so many years. He easily could have worked for a newspaper or magazine and photographed news events for a much larger audience.”

In 1984, Diamond retired at age 70 because of a federal law that mandated it. He was hired back the next day, on a consultant basis, to serve as a photo archivist. He has since identified, reprinted and indexed more than 300,000 images of Kamehameha’s history, many of which he took himself.

He remains a valuable consultant to KS.

In 1996, Diamond was awarded the Order of Ke Ali’i Pauahi Medal, the highest honor bestowed by Kamehameha Schools.

Diamond’s sometimes crusty exterior belies a heart of gold, a heart which truly is filled with a passion for Kamehameha Schools and all that it stands for.

“I love this school,” he said simply. “I love what this school does for Hawaiian kids. It doesn’t seem like I’ve been here for 50 years. It’s gone by really quickly. This school has been my family for the last 50 years, and I’ve just loved it.”

## Help Us Celebrate with Pop!

All Kamehameha Schools students, alumni and staff with special memories and *aloha* for Pop Diamond are invited to help celebrate the publication of *Images of Aloha: Photography by Luryier “Pop” Diamond*. Pop’s book will be available for sale.

Please join us on Friday, Jan. 17, 2003 at Hale Pelekikena (the President’s House) on the Kamehameha Schools Kapālama Campus from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Come catch up with Pop, have him sign your copy of *Images of Aloha...* and enjoy some refreshments.

Send in the form below by Jan. 8, 2002 to reserve your spot, or send an email RSVP to [lobodine@ksbe.edu](mailto:lobodine@ksbe.edu).

Cut out the form below and mail to Kamehameha Schools Press, 1887 Makuakāne Street, Honolulu, HI 96817 by 12/31/02. Or fax to (808) 842-8895

### Yes! I’ll be attending Pop’s party!

NAME

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(PLEASE INCLUDE MAIDEN NAME IF MARRIED)

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EMAIL ADDRESS

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PLEASE CHECK ONE:

KS Class of \_\_\_\_\_

Current or former KS staff

**“Kamehameha has been very lucky to have a photographer of Pop’s caliber documenting student life for so many years.”**

– Michael Young