

# “I Remember When...”

by Janet Hopkins Richards '31

**A**t the 70th reunion of the KS Class of 1931 in July of last year, a few eyes looked wistfully over the edge into Kalihi Valley. We were looking for the trees we had planted so many years ago. How could any of us who took part in those “Arbor Days” ever forget the promise of growth while trying to balance on that steep slope.

Sharing in the upkeep of the school was probably the major teaching method for building good and industrious students. With tuition at \$50, who could complain? The jobs rotated about every six weeks. There were tables to be set, silver and napkins carefully placed (and much as I hated it, to this day I fold the dinner napkins as I was taught), dishes to be washed in a commercial machine, potatoes and carrots to be peeled, linen to be ironed, the housemother’s room to be straightened, the halls and public rooms to be swept and dusted, and yes, the main staircase, too. It descended three floors landing on the first floor in two separate symmetrically designed flights. Those stairs were swept with dustpan and brush. A modest sign on the wall above the fifth step read “There are no elevators in the house of success.”

The housemother checked your thoroughness and meted out discipline. Taking a short cut from one floor to another via the window and fire escape was sternly disapproved. Penalties consisted of having to learn and recite a psalm to the housemother before you could leave on Saturday morning. A reasonably active student could graduate with all the psalms committed to memory.

There was assembly every morning at eight for the whole school. We sang hymns, had morning prayers, heard announcements and sometimes had a brief little talk by the faculty, Mr. Frank Midkiff – president of the schools, someone of local interest, or national fame. At the moment, I can only remember Helen Wills. It was also an opportunity to explore our talent for making harmony.

There was the usual English, history, math, typing, history of the Pacific, Hawaiian from Papa Wise, who encouraged us with Hershey bars, and there was oral interpretation. This is not

**“Monitors listened at the doors, and it was advisable that you were practicing Bach or Haydn rather than ‘Sweet Leilani.’”**

– JANET HOPKINS RICHARDS

meant to be a complete list. Oral interpretation took us into improvisation. We were challenged one day to present a skit involving four of us. A country store in Maui was the set, and the storekeeper was ignorant of pidgin and Hawaiian. Jackie Rosario was a demanding customer wanting a bar of “Brown Shope”. The unscripted exchange was incredibly funny. The skit ended with one of the characters clutching her purchase and suggesting that the salesman “Charge in the book. When the book full, trow way.” We were delighted to be invited to clubs in town and to McKinley High School to do our improvisations.

We could not dance the hula, but in dance class, we



Janet Hopkins Richards (left) with Class of 1931 classmates Lillian Kaaa DuPont (center) and Tamar Mookini.

were taught eurythmy – a rhythmical or graceful movement in harmony with the rhythm of the spoken word. Sounds like the hula, doesn’t it? Except that the accompaniment was carefully selected poetry. I was never curious about how eurythmy got to Kamehameha until I saw a class doing it in a university in Switzerland some years ago. “How do you suppose eurythmy got to Hawai’i back in the 1930s?” I asked my host, an elder of the university staff. “That’s easy,” he replied. “Did you know Grace Richards? She had a beautiful voice and she came here from Hawai’i to study. I am confident that she took eurythmy home with her.” We think she was Trustee Theodore Richards’ sister.

Occasionally, the dance class would present a drama, primarily a Hawaiian legend revealed in dance. And we were encouraged to hear matinees of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra at the Princess Theater. Admission was 25 cents. Piano, violin, cello, and voice lessons were free, and practice rooms were assigned in the main building on campus. Monitors listened at the doors, and it was advisable that you were practicing Bach or Haydn rather than “Sweet Leilani.”

On Thursday evenings, the girls in the choir walked in a group to the chapel across King Street to practice with the boys for Sunday’s services. It was always a rehearsal eagerly anticipated.

Senior Cottage was a wonderful learning time. Taking care of an infant for a week: feeding, bathing, doing the laundry, and taking the baby to the pediatrician was real training. Each of the functions of managing a home was directed by Louise Struve as each girl in the cottage rotated through all the functions. Remember planned nutritionally balanced meals within a budget?

And now and then, an old Ford jalopy with four or five musicians from across the street would circle our building shortly after lights out. Sometimes they’d manage two circles before the night watchman shooed them out. But, oh how sweet, to hear them playing softly, “Goodnight Sweetheart.” Many hearts beat faster, but there was only one face with a knowing smile.

*Aloha no.*

*Janet Hopkins Richards lives in San Diego, Calif.*