

A Letter from Iraq

Hawaiian soldier fights for the United States and Kamehameha Schools

by Col. **Kimo Bacon '71**

As a Kamehameha graduate serving in Iraq with the United States Army, I am greatly saddened and disturbed by the recent federal appeals court ruling pertaining to the admissions policy of the Kamehameha Schools.

Our beloved Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop desired that her people become good and industrious citizens. Many of us choose to do so in the service of our nation, and through our efforts we have served all the people of Hawai'i and the United States.

Because of her gift, I have taught and mentored hundreds of Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians in the United States Army. All of them knew I was Hawaiian, knew that I was a Kamehameha graduate and benefited from the vision of Pauahi.

It is an appalling feeling that numbs you when you lose a friend in combat. We have all experienced it here, but nothing prepared us for the shocking news from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling.

The reason I ended my Army retirement and deployed to Iraq was to be with those soldiers.

We do not get much news here. We are constantly on guard against the terrorists who would seek to end our lives, as we free the people of Iraq. It is a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week struggle in a hostile environment and under extreme weather conditions.

We have lost many men and women here, many of them friends and family and some of them, graduates of the Kamehameha Schools.

It is an appalling feeling that numbs you when you lose a friend in combat. We have all experienced it here, but nothing prepared us for the shocking news from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling.

The report traveled quickly though our informal network of more than 50 graduates in Southwest Asia. I remember getting the e-mails and visits. All of us felt betrayed and saddened. We questioned why, as we fight for the freedom of so many, our own people are denied the benefits of an education from a private personal gift of our last *ali'i*.

This was inconceivable to all of us. Many of us became extremely angry and lost our focus on our



combat mission here, which put us in extreme danger.

We felt the same emotions we did when Sgt. Frank Tia'i was killed outside the gate here in Balad last month. Anger, sadness, revenge and rage pummeled our senses.

With the spirit and discipline of a Kamehameha education and

our beloved Princess Pauahi, we regained control. We talked, and prayed for our people.

Gradually we overcame the negative emotions and vowed to strive to do what is *pono*, to continue to be good and industrious citizens and to return to Hawai'i alive and ready to once again demonstrate that the gift of a Kamehameha education benefits all the people of the world.

The legacy of the Kamehameha Schools is being felt in Iraq, Afghanistan and everywhere else Kamehameha graduates live and travel. It also continues keeping a native people's hope for the future alive.

My prayers and thoughts are with all of you back in Hawai'i, as I and other graduates continue to serve our nation. I pray that the court system of the United States will see the error of its judgment and understand that our desire is to allow the Kamehameha Schools to continue to produce good and industrious Hawaiian citizens, which benefits everyone.

(Kimo Bacon is a United States Army colonel (retired) serving with the U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command in Balad, Iraq.)



(L to R) Kimo Bacon, Bruce Oliveira, Alan Kahanu, Jeff Hickman, Dion Kaimihana (Costa), Reginald Puana.

Aloha Kamehameha 'Ohana

We, the Kamehameha alumni and soldiers currently serving in Iraq, are greatly saddened and disturbed by the recent Federal Appeals Court ruling pertaining to the admissions policy of the Kamehameha Schools.

As volunteer citizen soldiers, we joined the military with the desire to protect and serve our state and country – a value instilled by the Kamehameha Schools and galvanized through its former JROTC program. Now, at a time when the needs of Kamehameha Schools are at its greatest, we are here in Iraq correcting injustices and unable to help with our own injustices at home.

We are distraught that we cannot be there to participate in the cultural and social battles to come or to help heal the emotional wounds that this crisis is inflicting on the very soul of Hawaiians. However, it lifts our spirits to know that Hawaiian people from different backgrounds and political views are rallying for this cause. As your thoughts and prayers are here with us in Iraq, so are ours with you at home.

We would like to thank all the people of Hawai'i, both Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian, who support the Kamehameha schools. Thank you for understanding what Kamehameha means to us. More than just a school, it is a legacy that continues to produce Hawaiian leaders for all the people of Hawai'i.

Mahalo a nui loa to Governor Linda Lingle for her immediate public support of an issue that is so important to Hawaiians. On that sunny day in Aloha Stadium where she bid us farewell so many months ago, Linda Lingle promised to us that she would take care of our families while we were gone. Thank you, Governor Lingle, for keeping your promise. For by supporting the Kamehameha Schools, you are taking care of our brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, our children and our children's children. Your foresight and leadership will not be forgotten.

Duty calls for the Hawaiian people, and although we cannot be there with you, we will continue our struggle here in Iraq with due vigilance and hope to soon come home and help continue the fight for our Hawaiian Legacy.

I mua,

Col. **Bruce Oliveira '72**

Maj. **Paul Wilson '87**

Maj. **Darrel Lindsey '78**

Cpt. **Dion Kaimihana (Costa) '89**

1Lt. **Alan Kahanu '85**

Sgm. **Colin Brede '70**

Sfc. **Reginald Puana '90**

Sgt. **Steven Awa '00**

Spc. **Robert Aiwohi '01**

Spc. **Shaun Alsadon '00**

Spc. **Kuikalani Gapero '02**

Spc. **Brian Soon '02**

Maj. **Paul Tamaribuchi '80**

Spc. **Charles Kuahine '03**

Spc. **Billy Palaualelo '03**

Ltc. **Alan Ostermiller '82**

Spc. **Chris Kaopuiki '90**

Spc. **Alfred Van Geisen '99**

Pfc. **Kekoa Wong '03**

Pfc. **Joshua Akiona '04**

Maj. **Robin Lau '88**

Cpt. **James Kanoholani '88**

Spc. **Grant Chartrand '00**

Maj. **Duke Kahanu '84**

1Lt. **Jeff Hickman '89**

Sfc. **Jerry Kikiloi '74**

Spc. **Dane Antoque '00**

Spc. **James Lee '87**

Sfc. **Sue Ann Kauanui '84**

Col. (Ret.) **Kimo Bacon '71**

(The signers of this letter express their views as individuals and not as representatives of their military units)